

EPFO hosts Prabhat Kumar, Former Cabinet Secretary and First Governor of Jharkhand

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The Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya National Academy of Social Security (PDUNASS) of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) hosted the 21st edition of Reimagining Governance: Discourse for Excellence (RGDE) today with Prabhat Kumar, Former Cabinet Secretary of India, First Governor of Jharkhand, President of the IC Centre for Governance, and Chancellor of Usha Martin University, Ranchi.



Delivering the keynote address on the theme “Beyond Compliance: Embedding Ethics in Public Service”, Prabhat Kumar drew on his decades of experience to stress that governance must rest equally on justice and compassion. Recalling Chaudhary Charan Singh’s counsel to “see the lives behind every file,” he said that when there are multiple right answers, civil servants must choose the one that is both compassionate and just.

He underlined humility as the ability to accept truth from anywhere and urged officers to “do more than what is expected, more than what the charter of duties prescribes.”

Referring to Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s vision for the Golden Quadrilateral, he noted that leadership lies in raising the level of discourse “not merely joining corners of the country, but uniting cultures, languages, and people.”

Responding to a question on whether the Cabinet Secretary is the “boss” of organised civil services, Kumar clarified: “The Cabinet Secretary is not a boss in the hierarchical sense. His role is to inspire confidence as the sole leader and mentor for all public servants in the country. Only then will the culture of working in silos begin to melt.”

He also observed that while corruption is a grievous offence, it represents only a narrow slice of the unethical spectrum. Ethics in governance, he said, is defined equally by everyday choices—how colleagues and citizens are treated, whether responsibility is owned, and whether unearned credit is claimed. “Ethics is the distinction between what we do and what we ought to do,” he noted, adding that ethics in governance must be anchored

not only in compliance, transparency, and accountability, but also in the spirit of service.

Kumar shared the IC Centre for Governance's three-dimensional framework for ethics:

1. Do what is right.
2. Do not only what is right but also what is just and compassionate.
3. Do more than what is expected

Concluding his remarks, he said: "Viksit Bharat must be accompanied by Naitik Bharat."

Ramesh Krishnamurthy, Central Provident Fund Commissioner, underlined EPFO's critical role as custodian of trust for crores of workers, pensioners, and employers. Highlighting reforms such as faster digital claim settlements, grievance redressal through Nidhi Aapke Nikat, and the forthcoming unified IT platform, he said: "Technology is important, but ethics is what gives our systems durability and trust. The Government's confidence in EPFO to implement the Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana is both an honour and a responsibility."

Kumar Rohit, Director, PDNASS, described RGDE as a forum to pause, reflect, and reconnect with the values of public service. He highlighted two new training initiatives: Compassion in Governance, developed with Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi's Movement for Global Compassion, and a Design Thinking workshop with the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad—both aimed at turning ethical principles into practical tools for governance.

Moderator Uttam Prakash, RPFC, introduced Prabhat Kumar with a light-hearted profile, observing that his career continues to prove that "sharp minds don't retire, they just reframe the questions."

About 800 officers and officials joined this online session, that is held every month.

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