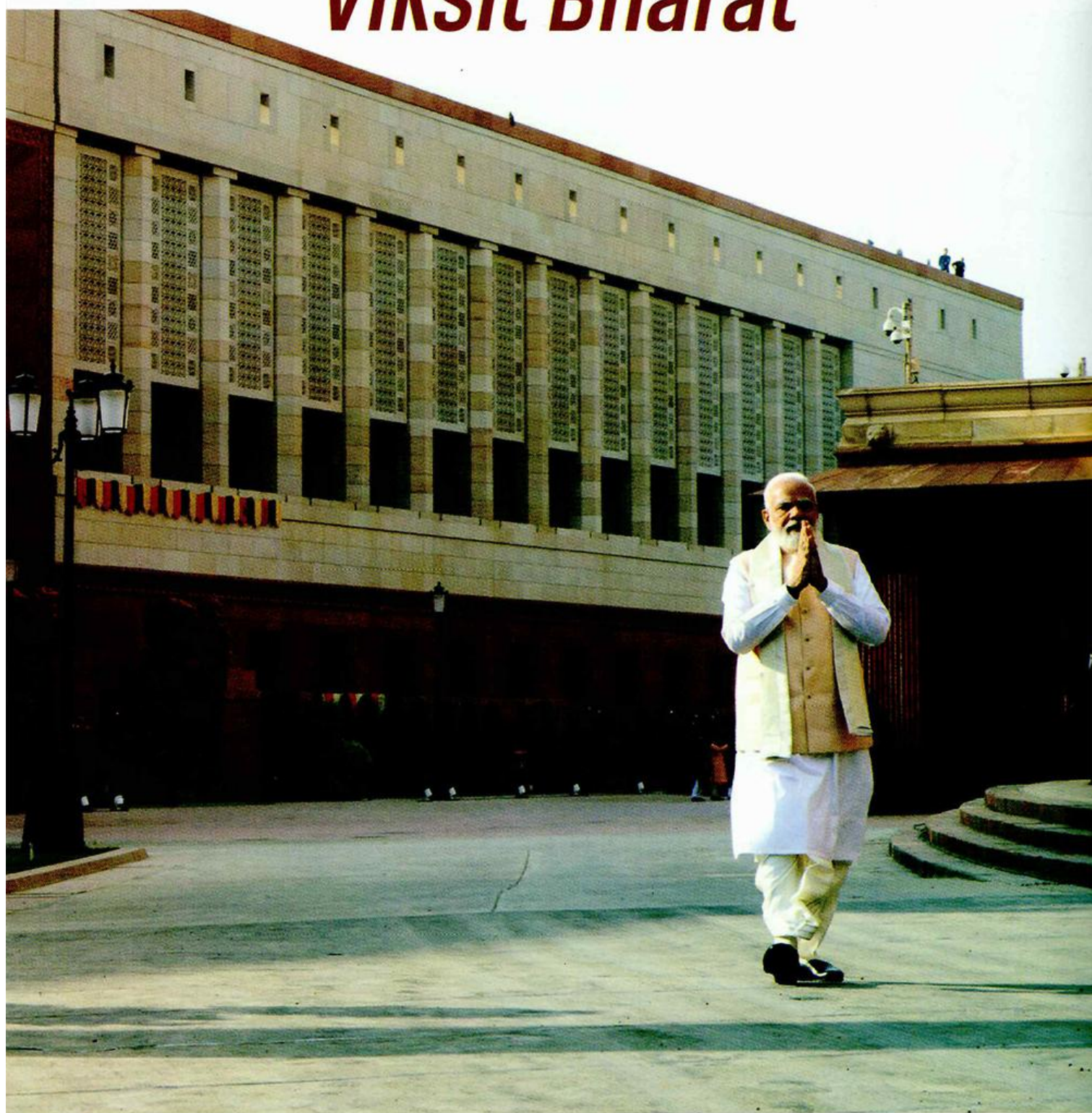




S Radha Chauhan

Enhancing The Civil Services' Performance The Capacity Imperative for *Viksit Bharat*



Every government inherits the same basic instrument: a civil service that outlasts election cycles, implements decisions made by its predecessors, and is judged by results it does not always control. Reformers everywhere agree the civil service is the backbone of the state, with varying views on how to strengthen it. Most directly point to capacity building, which is easy to announce and hard to sustain, and returns take years to show.

The arc traced here is worth examining as a case study in institution building rather than the history of a single scheme. It begins not in Delhi but in Gandhinagar, in the aftermath of a natural disaster

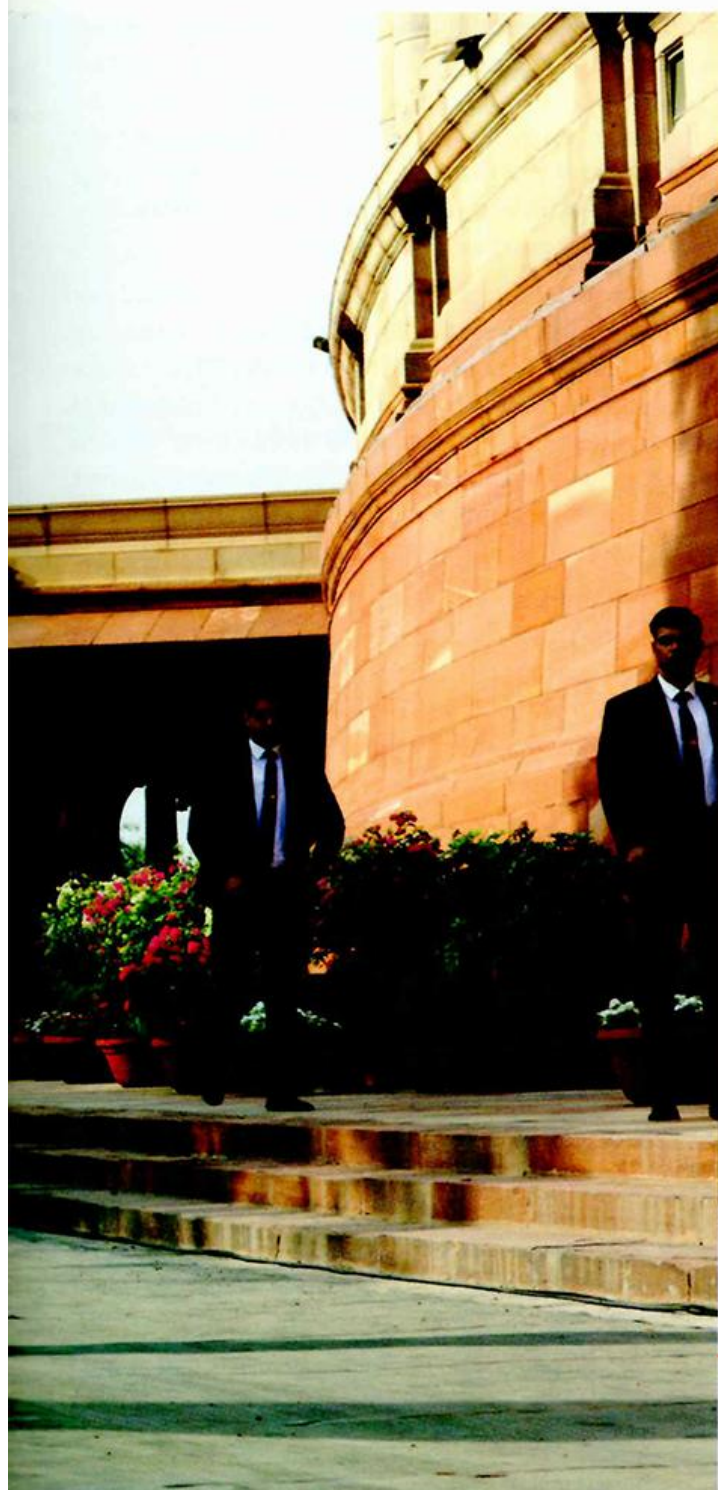
that exposed how thin administrative capacity can be when it is tested. It runs through a state level initiative turned national mission, and arrives, most recently, at a moment when a five year old programme produced its first hard evidence of scale: over three crore learning completions logged in a single week, and a slate of new reforms meant to carry the mission from initiation to institutionalization.

2001 to 2013: A Government Tested, Then Institutionalised

Shri Narendra Modi took oath as Chief Minister of Gujarat on 7 October 2001, months after the Bhuj earthquake put to test the state machinery's ability to respond to crisis at scale. For the incoming government, the need to strengthen this state machinery became a governing premise rather than a passing scheme: systems, not intentions alone, determine whether a state can serve its citizens when it matters most.

Training Institutions will become an integral part of the continuing cycle of capacity building. By providing holistic visibility into workforce competencies, they will further support competent authorities in workforce planning. This integration will enable the government not only to build the right capacities for the right role at the right time but also to identify the right person for the right role at the right time.

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Two years into that tenure, Gujarat instituted an annual retreat for its top bureaucracy, ministers, the Chief Secretary, principal secretaries and district collectors, called the Chintan Shibir, or “contemplation camp,” where officials spent three days in structured discussion on governance itself rather than simply receiving instructions. Getting cabinet ministers and career secretaries to sit through structured self-examination was as much a political achievement as an administrative one. The Shibir became an annual fixture, has continued under successive state governments, and is now run regularly by Gujarat’s Administrative Reforms Department. Alongside it, the state built complementary systems over the following decade, electronic grievance tracking, expanded e-governance, a cadre wide emphasis on outcomes over procedural compliance, tested and refined over more than a decade of continuous tenure.

2020: From State Practice to National Architecture

The move from Gandhinagar to Delhi in 2014 posed a harder problem than replicating a scheme: could a working culture built over a decade in one state’s bureaucracy translate to the scale and diversity of the Union government, across dozens of ministries and All India Services cadres trained under separate traditions.

On 2 September 2020, the Union Cabinet approved the national programme, i.e. Mission *Karmayogi* or the National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building (NPCSCB). It draws its name from the *Bhagavad Gita*’s *Yogah Karmasu Kaushalam*, skill in action, and was designed as standing institutional architecture, moving India’s HR management of civil servants from a rule-based to a role-based system. Leading to a system that helps the government build the right capacities for the right role at the right time.

Two anchoring pillars give this national mission its institutional strength. The Capacity Building Commission (CBC) steers the capacity-building policy framework, sets standards and guides institutional reform. *Karmayogi Bharat* operates iGOT *Karmayogi* and manages the mission’s digital learning assets. Together, they connect policy direction with the infrastructure needed to deliver continuous learning across government.

The importance accorded to the mission is reflected in its oversight architecture. The Prime Minister’s Public Human Resource Council (PMHRC), chaired by

Prime Minister Shri Modi himself, is envisaged as the apex body for strategic direction and monitoring. The Cabinet Secretariat Coordination Unit, headed by the Cabinet Secretary, monitors implementation across government. Capacity building is thus placed at the highest levels of national governance.

2020 to 2025: Laying the Foundations

In the initial years, CBC and *Karmayogi Bharat* established the foundations for competency-based public human resource management. It introduced Capacity Building Plans (CBPs), a systematic, empirical approach to identifying capacity building needs of every unit of the government. Analysis of departmental mandates, roles and functions, supported by consultations and assessments, helped identify various competencies required for effective performance. Training priorities could now be grounded in the work officials actually perform and the outcomes departments must deliver. The *Karmayogi* Competency Model provided for a common vocabulary of competencies across government.

A parallel effort addressed the quality of Training Institutions. Introduced in 2022, the National Standards for Civil Service Training Institutions (NSCSTI) created a common framework for accreditation and institutional improvement. Institutions could assess their faculty, pedagogy, resources and training practices against shared standards and after benchmarking, progress on their own quality improvement journeys.

The National Learning Week, launched by the Prime Minister in October 2024, helped establish a shared culture of continuous learning. Programmes such as *Rashtriya Karmayogi Jan Seva* reinforced empathy and service orientation. Meanwhile, iGOT expanded access to learning across locations, levels and languages. By the end of 2025, iGOT stood at over 1.5 crore learners registered, more than 8 crore cumulative course completions and over 4,600 courses hosted in multiple Indian languages on the platform. Together, these efforts addressed the demand for competencies, the quality of learning and the behaviour through which public service is experienced.

2026: From Foundations to Institutionalisation

These foundations made a deeper reform possible. Under the Prime Minister’s guidance, the mission is now advancing towards institutionalisation. In April 2026, during his address during *Sādhana Saptah*, the next edition of National Learning Week, he called

for individual transformation to lead to institutional transformation, alongside better coordination and a whole-of-government approach.

This requires learning to become part of how departments plan, allocate responsibilities, review performance and improve services. An official trained in data analysis, for example, needs reliable information, suitable tools and decision processes that allow evidence to be used. Institutional capacity determines whether individual learning can improve government performance. Leadership, organisational processes and workplace culture must therefore develop alongside individual competencies.

As artificial intelligence changes government work, this includes preparing officials and their organisations to use it responsibly, with human judgement and accountability.

The National Departmental Summit in May 2026 on the theme "Institutionalising Capacity Building: From Training to Performance-linked Governance" carried this agenda forward. It brought together the Centre, States/UTs and Training Institutions into deliberations on institutionalising capacity building. It laid strong emphasis on connecting various platforms within the capacity building ecosystem and the need for Training Institutions to transform themselves to institutionalise

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi addressing the Officer Trainees of the Civil Services Foundation Course, at Aarambh Conference.

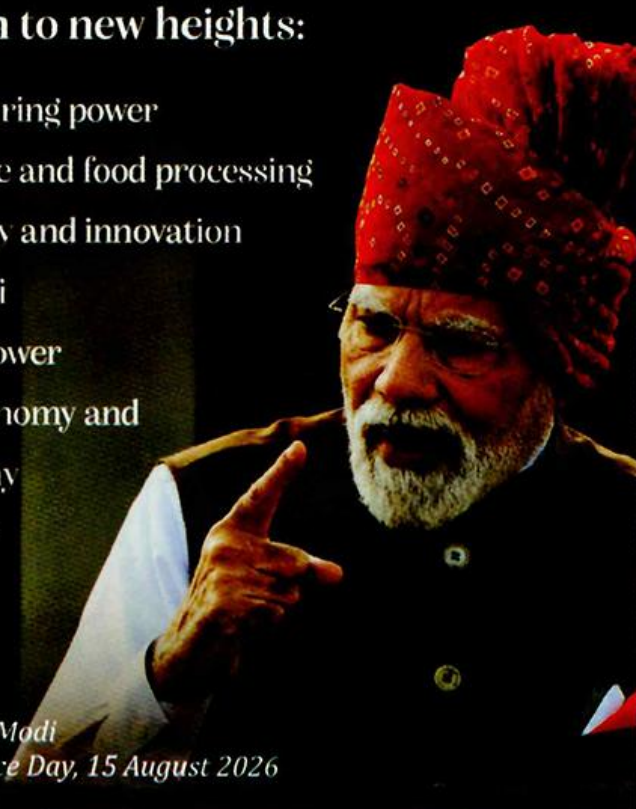


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In the coming years, these Saptadharas will drive India forward and take the nation to new heights:

1. Manufacturing power
2. Agriculture and food processing
3. Technology and innovation
4. Gati Shakti
5. Defence power
6. Green economy and Blue economy
7. Soft power

*Shri Narendra Modi
on Independence Day, 15 August 2026*



capacity building across the nation's civil services, Centre as well as States/UTs.

From NSCSTI to UNNATI: Transforming Training Institutions

Training Institutions are central to this endeavour of institutionalising capacity building. Their proximity to departments and field administration equips them to interpret governance challenges, develop contextual learning and support its application. Their role must expand to include diagnosing competency needs, developing faculty, undertaking applied research, supporting organisational change and assessing results. This makes them enduring partners in improving government performance.

The progression from NSCSTI to UNNATI gives this changing role a practical foundation. Building on accreditation and quality improvement, UNNATI is being developed as a common national framework

and digital platform connecting the Training Institution ecosystem. It will strengthen institutions through visibility, collaboration, demand-based planning and continuous capability improvement, while preserving their mandates and autonomy.

CBPs will provide the demand signals. Each institution will be able to see the competencies required by the workforce it serves, including needs for which it must develop new capabilities. This will help it align curricula, faculty development and training calendars with departmental priorities. Officials can then be brought together for learning around shared competency requirements and the context in which they apply them.

A shared view of faculty, infrastructure, courses and subject matter experts will enable institutions to draw on one another's strengths. Joint programmes and shared learning resources will help extend specialised expertise across the country. The Capability Index built into UNNATI will support continuous assessment and targeted institutional

improvement, using current evidence on institutional resources, delivery and outcomes. This evidence will guide faculty development, resource allocation and support for institutions that need strengthening.

Progressive integration with iGOT and eHRMS/ State HR systems will connect identified competency needs, digital and institutional learning, and officials' professional records. This will help administrators identify relevant groups for development, track learning and build a fuller picture of workforce capabilities. Training Institutions will become an integral part of this continuing cycle of capacity building. This integration, by providing holistic visibility into workforce competencies will also further support competent authorities in their workforce planning. This will enable the government to not just build the right capacities for the right role at the right time but also help identify the right person for the right role at the right time. □