

The Role of R. V. Deshpande as Chairman of the Karnataka Administrative Reforms Commission-2 – A Study

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Abstract: Public administration is inherently evolving, with changes needed in times of crisis and for development. The Karnataka Government appointed two administrative reform commissions in 2009 and 2021, respectively, to find defects and make changes scientifically in administration. The second administrative committee was restructured in 2024 and appointed Shri R.V. Deshpande as chairman of the commission. The Commission has submitted the 8th, 9th, and 10th reports to the government with various changes, reforms, and suggestions for effective administration, improved efficiency, and protection of the economic interests of the state. Shri. R.V. Deshpande's leadership has prepared an effective report through his expertise in the administration.

Keywords: Administration, Reforms, Commission, Reports, Leadership, Recommendations, Government.

1. Introduction

Shri R.V. Deshpande, a politician from Karnataka state, held a key portfolio in the Karnataka Government since 1994. He completed a BA and an LLB, and he started his public life as president of the Karnataka State Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Bank. His political career started in the Janata Parivar, and then he joined the Indian National Congress in 1999. He is a nine-time MLA and served as Industrial Minister for 13 years between 1994 and 2004 and 2015 and 2018. He also served as the president of the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee between 2008 and 2010. He served as Protem Speaker of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly (Vidhana Sabha) in 2024. Currently, he is serving as Chairperson of the Administrative Reforms Commission with Cabinet Minister rank and as a member of the legislative assembly for the Haliyal constituency.

2. State Administrative Reforms Commission

The Karnataka State Administrative Reforms Commission is the commission appointed by the State Government to give recommendations for reviewing the public administration in Karnataka State. The first Administrative Reforms Commission was appointed in 2000 under the chairmanship of Shri. Haranahalli Ramaswamy. The commission submitted its report in December 2001 and made 256 recommendations, of which

234 were implemented.

3. Administrative Reforms Commission-2

The Government of Karnataka constituted the Administrative Reforms Commission under the chairmanship of Sri T. M. Vijay Bhaskar, IAS (Retd), and there are no other members or terms, and references are

1. Review the implementation of the recommendations of the First Administrative Reforms Commission.
2. Restructuring of departments and rationalisation of staff strength.
3. Identification of unnecessary cadre and staff.
4. Comprehensive study and evaluation of governance.

This committee submitted seven reports to the government in 3 years, comprising 5039 recommendations covering 39 departments.

In view of tracking the implementation of recommendations of the previous commission and covering the uncovered areas or sectors, the Government of Karnataka extended the terms of the Administrative Reforms Commission for 2 years with effect from 01/01/2024 and appointed Shri RV Deshpande, former minister and MLA of Haliyal Constituency, as the chairman of the commission-2.

Terms and References as Follows:

The commission aims to propose a comprehensive set of administrative and structural changes using the latest technology to address the evolving needs of the 21st century. This includes the exploration and incorporation of innovation, digital solutions, automation, and data-driven approaches to enhance the efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness of government functions. The focus extends beyond mere adaptation to technology, emphasizing the integration of cutting-edge solutions to streamline processes to improve service delivery and foster a governance framework.

The commission, in specific terms, shall cover the following:

1. The commission shall review the implementation of recommendations made by the first and second Administrative Reforms Commission. In addition to tracking the implementation of recommendations from both commissions. The commission may provide

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suggestions and guidance to the department for effectively implementing the recommendations made by previous commissions.

2. The commission will conduct a thorough review of state sector schemes. Recommending the simplification of schemes to draw those that are not useful to the stakeholders with lesser financial allocations.
3. The commission will actively collaborate with stakeholders and follow further recommendations to enhance transparency and efficiency in citizen-centric services.
4. A comprehensive study and evaluation of the existing administrative system within state-owned boards, corporations, and societies will be undertaken to explore the possibility of merging boards and corporations, redeploying staff, and submitting recommendations accordingly.
5. A comprehensive study of workload against each department and the resizing of departments accordingly. Revision of staffing patterns of each department and suggesting necessary amendments to comply with C&R rules.
6. A thorough review of various recruitment rules and procedures adopted by the KPSC, KEA, and other recruitment committees will be carried out, with suggestions for reviewing the syllabus of department examinations based on current requirements.
7. Recommendations will be made to increase the revenue resources of the state government, including a study of the potential for asset monetization across departments in order to enhance state revenue.
8. The commission can make additional recommendations it deems necessary during its tenure. Covering any areas or sectors that may have been overlooked by previous commissions.

4. 8th Report by ARC

Shri. R. V. Deshpande proposed over 189 reforms in various departments, submitted on 22nd May 2025, to the Chief Minister of Karnataka, Shri. Siddaramaiah. The aim of the recommendations is to revitalize key sectors such as temple management, food and civil supplies, government recruitment, and healthcare to bring better governance, transparency, and accountability to the development of public services.

Key Focus Area:

1. **Temple Task Force:** The commission has proposed the creation of a temple task force to handle crowd control, emergency responses, ticketing, and distribution of prasada.
2. **Delegation of Power:** Delegate the power to sanction new staff posts to the Endowment Commissioner, bypassing the current dependency on the finance department approval, in order to increase efficiency in temple operation and transparency.
3. **Salary of Temple Staff:** Currently, temple staff salaries are paid by the state exchequer. The Commission

suggested that temple staff salaries be funded by temple income, not the state budget.

4. **Transparency in Appointment:** To ensure transparency and check corruption in recruitment and enhance the integrity of exams conducted by KPSC and KEA, the Commission has suggested installing CCTV surveillance and mobile jammers. Secure storage of question papers and answer sheets was mandatory, and a two-tier exam system was introduced to reduce candidate volume and enhance monitoring.
5. **Digital Governance:** The commission recommended modernisation of frontline offices such as Gram Panchayat, Primary Healthcare Centre, Raitha Seva Kendra, and Police Station. The report says these offices currently lack basic infrastructure such as adequate hardware, internet connectivity, and furniture.
6. **Ration Card:** It has proposed streamlining the process of issuing Ration Cards through the integration of state-run platforms such as Bhoomi, Aadhar, Kutumba, or Seva Sindhu.

5. 9th Report of the Administrative Reforms Commission

On 16th October 2025, the chairman of the committee, Shri R. V. Deshpande, submitted a report to the Karnataka Chief Minister, Shri Siddaramaiah.

A. Scope of the 9th Report

It covers new and emerging issues not addressed in the earlier reports and presents 449 new recommendations across four major themes.

1. Continued focus on implementation of earlier recommendations
2. Restructuring Boards, Corporations, Societies, and Authorities.
3. Land acquisition and related reforms.
4. General administration, financial, and digital governance reforms.

The 9th Report contains 449 recommendations, which were circulated separately to the concerned departments for necessary action.

B. Key focus area

1. **Restructuring of Public Sector Bodies:** Reviewed 82 boards and corporations and recommended merger or closure of 16 entities to eliminate duplication and improve efficiency. Recommended to prepare a consolidated action plan within six months for the merger or closure of sick, defunct boards and corporations.
2. **Land Acquisition Reforms:** The commission observed contradictions between various acts of Karnataka State: the KIADB Act 1966, the BDA Act 1976, the KHB Act 1962, the Slum Area Act 1973, the Irrigation Act 1965, and the RFCTLARR Act 2013. The Commission recommended reviewing and deleting contradictory provisions or adopting the RFCTLARR

Act 2012 in full. A high-level committee should be constituted to examine the proposal, and also appoint a special land acquisition officer, and their tenure should be fixed. Land acquisition data integrates with Bhoomi or E-office-CCMS and establishes a single land acquisition portal. The government should formulate uniform rules across all agencies for the acquisition of consent-based land.

3. *General Administration and Digital Reforms:* The commission recommended that the Public Works Department (PWD) establish a Quality Assurance Division, Training Institute, and sanction 500 engineer posts.
4. *Digital Infrastructure:* KSWAN 3.0 to expand connectivity from 7600 to 20,000 government offices. Modernise the Karnataka State Data Centre with 250 crores in funds for the infrastructure of upgradation.
5. *Continue Initiative:* Continue to monitor the implementation of programs, prepare department-wise redeployment plans, and convey stakeholders' consultation.

“Every recommendation should translate into a measurable improvement in governance and service delivery. Our aim is to make administration citizen-centric, technology-driven, and accountable at every level,” said Shri R. V. Deshpande.

C. 10th Report of ARC

The 109th Report was submitted by Shri R. V. Deshpande to the Karnataka Chief Minister, Shri Siddaramaiah, on 30th December 2025 and made crucial recommendations to the Government.

1. *The conversion of absolute clerical post into technical or executive post:* Freezing of the indiscriminate expansion of group C and D Cadres, and optimising outsource practices.
2. *The Commission advised the Government not to launch new welfare schemes* for an indefinite period or to have a fixed time frame of three to five years for such schemes.
3. *One In One Out Policy:* When launching new schemes, the government should adopt a One In One Out framework. Where one scheme is stopped to start another to avoid the state's limited resources being stretched thin.
4. *Continuation of Schemes:* Even if the scheme is continued beyond five years, it should not be automatic. Any extension may be permitted only after an independent performance evaluation. Clear achievement of intended outcomes and continuing relevance of the intervention.
5. *New Initiative:* During the budget, the government should institutionalise an annual exercise to close, merge, or discontinue an equal number of schemes. This would ensure adequate fiscal space for new initiatives and the availability of required manpower for the effective implementation and monetisation of schemes announced in the budget.

6. *Evaluation of Ongoing Scheme:* It is mandatory to undertake an evaluation of all ongoing schemes, including an assessment of their objectives and physical and financial performance. The scheme of low impact, persistent underperformance, or overlap with a similar intervention may be discontinued or considered for merging with a similar scheme.

7. *Redeployment of Staff:* The commission recommended the redeployment of surplus staff from low-workload units to frontline and service delivery functions.

The commission was formed in 2021 and has submitted 10 reports to the government. The final report has 355 recommendations, bringing the total to over 6000 recommendations across 42 departments. As per government data, 2014 recommendations made over the year were fully implemented, 186 were partially implemented, and 2274 were being examined by the respective departments, while others were under implementation.

6. The Leadership of Shri R. V. Deshpande

Under the leadership of Shri R. V. Deshpande, multiple reports were submitted to the government in 2025, emphasizing structural rationalization to curb duplication and enhance accountability. The 8th Report proposed 189 reforms, including reforms in the management of government-run temples, giving importance to revenue generation and asset maintenance. The 9th Report in October 2025 contains 449 recommendations, advocating closing seven entities and merging nine others. Eliminate overlapping functions and redirect resources towards core governance priorities. Deshpande highlighted low budget utilization rated around 61% in the same sector in the development. The 10th Report, consisting of 355 recommendations, gives more stress to the restricting implementation of the New Welfare Scheme and the One In, One Out policy, and to continue the schemes, they should be studied and evaluated. If they have good outcomes, then they have to be continued, and optimising outsourcing practices for C and D group cadre posts and redeployment of staff—all these things have been highlighted under this report.

Karnataka's 2025 political dynamics, including cabinet reshuffle speculation and fiscal strains from the guarantee scheme, intersect with broader aspects of expenditure patterns. He advocated for transparency in fund allocation to prioritise outcomes over populist expansions. He has reduced administrative overhead and improved service delivery in spite of the risk of politicisation, delay of implementation, and delusion due to vested interests in maintaining bodies. Deshpande has stressed a simplified procedure for welfare execution, but verifiable adoption rates will determine efficiency potential, offering a model of data-driven governance.

7. Conclusion

Shri. R V Deshpande's administrative experience and knowledge have helped to prepare the Reports of the Karnataka Administrative Reforms Commission, and he studied every

aspect of administration, the constraints of financial resources and the continuation of popular schemes as a token of guarantee. He has tried to make changes in the administrative structure and given more stress to technology-led administration by using already existing platforms. If the government implements the report effectively, it will help the state, and its expertise should be utilised by the government effectively.

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