

Civics from Bits of Paper: Learning about Ministries from Newspaper Advertisements

Jerry Jean Preston



In our daily lives we have often seen government advertisements in newspapers and blatantly flipped the pages. These dreary boxes are usually topped with a thick black band that contains the name of a government institution. Sometimes we might pay closer attention to them if they contain job notifications that suit our profiles. Most of them are usually invitations for ‘*tenders*’.

However, these serious black boxes can be wonderful illustrations for civics at work. They can provide unconventional leads for research on the organizational structure of government ministries. This project will be educative for students of classes 9 and 10 and also for students of *political science* in classes 11 and 12.

Learning about ministries in the Indian government is also an important aspect of preparing for the *Civil Services Examination (CSE)* conducted by the *Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)*. Therefore, the project can also be a memorable learning activity in the otherwise drab preparation for IAS, IPS, IFS careers that might interest a child in future. So studying about the government and how it works need not always be boring.



The following are samples of advertisements placed by government agencies in various newspapers. The original ones have been shortened here for demonstrative purposes.

INDIA INSTITUTE OF ASTROPHYSICS

Koramangala, Bangalore

(An Autonomous Body Under Department of Science & Technology – Govt. of India)

Applications invited for the post of STORES AND PURCHASE OFFICER

Source: *The Times of India* (4 November 2015)

TRANSLATIONAL HEALTH SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE

Faridabad

(An Autonomous Institute of the Department of Biotechnology, Govt. of India)

Applications invited for PhD Programme in Biomedical Science

Source: *The Times of India* (4 November 2015)

rites limited

(A Govt. of India Enterprise)

Lucknow

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Source: *The Times of India* (4 November 2015)

Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited

(A Govt. of India Enterprise)

TENDER NOTICE

Source: *The Times of India* (4 November 2015)

**WEST BENGAL STATE ELECTRICITY
TRANSMISSION COMPANY LIMITED**

(A Government of West Bengal Enterprise)

ABRIDGED NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER

Source: *The Times of India* (4 November 2015)

National Highways Authority of India

(Ministry of Road Transport & Highways)

Notice Inviting Tender

(Competitive Bidding through e-tendering mode only)

Source: *The Times of India* (5 November 2015)

KHADI AND VILLAGE INDUSTRIES COMMISSION

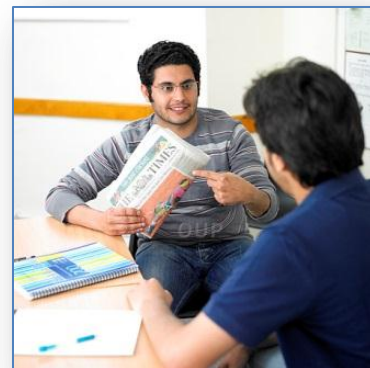
(Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises, Government of India)

STATE OFFICE (KERALA), TRIVANDRUM

Tender Notice: Physical Verification of PMEGP units, Kerala & Lakshadweep

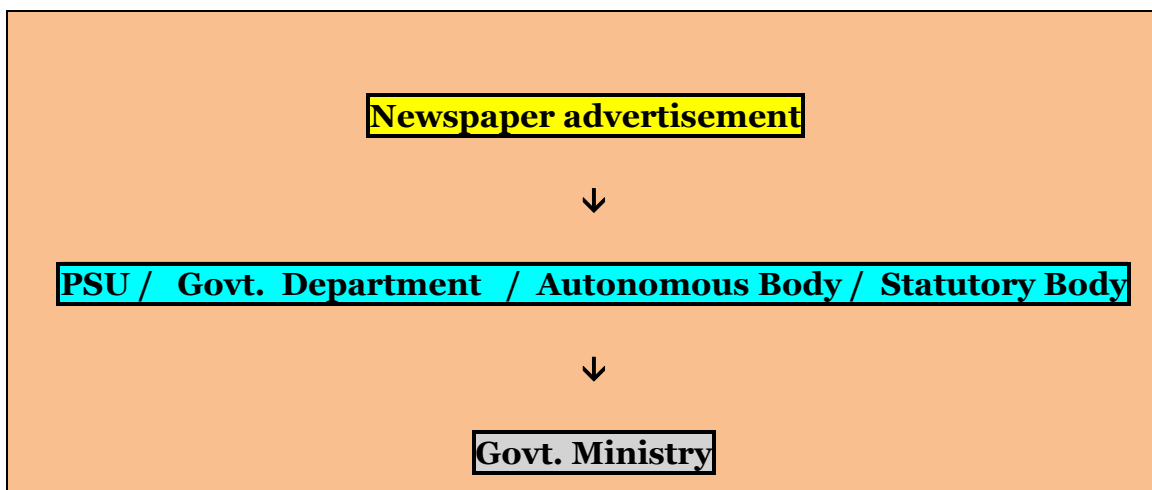
Source: *The Hindu* (9 November 2015)

If one takes a closer look at these advertisements, one would notice a pattern emerging. After the first line which states the name of the organization, there is a line in brackets such as '*(An Autonomous Body Under Department of Science & Technology – Govt. of India)*' or '*(A Govt. of India Enterprise)*'. This bracketed second line holds the key to an interesting and informative civics lesson. When we encounter the term *Govt. of India Enterprise* or *Government of West Bengal Enterprise*, it means that the respective organization is a **Public Sector Undertaking (PSU)**. This information can lead to an in-depth lesson on PSUs, particularly helpful in the *political science* classes.



There are also various ministries mentioned in the second line such as *Ministry of Road Transport & Highways* and *Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises*. Sometimes, the term '*Department*' is mentioned too in these advertisements, for instance, *Department of Science & Technology* and *Department of Biotechnology*. These are organizations which come under various ministries. Both the *Department of Science & Technology* and the *Department of Biotechnology* come under the *Ministry of Science and Technology*. Certain other terms such as '*autonomous body*' and '*autonomous institute*' also feature in the bracketed second line.

Many of these terms are explicitly related to civics and the government. However, it requires a bit of unravelling and research and that is what makes the lesson unique. It is now clear that each organization is attached to a particular ministry. The ministries constitute the executive branch of the Indian government, which in turn comprises the legislature, executive and judiciary. So the newspaper advertisements are entry points into the various government agencies and departments, and thereby they are leads into researchable topics on the government.



The answers to the following questions can broaden the student's knowledge on civics:

- ❖ What is the relation between the organization and the ministry?
- ❖ Who is the Union Minister heading the ministry, if it is a *Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSE)*?
- ❖ Who is the State Minister if it is a *State Level Public Enterprises (SLPE)*?

However, a few terms that can be encountered during the research have to be clarified at the outset.

Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs)

In India, corporations owned either by the central or state governments are called *Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs)*. In a PSU, majority of the shares are held either by the central or the state government.

In the above advertisements, the term '*Govt. of India Enterprise*' means that the respective organizations like *Rites Limited*, *Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited*, etc. are PSUs under the central government. Similarly, *West*

Bengal State Electricity Transmission Company Limited is described as a '*Government of West Bengal Enterprise*'. This means that it is a PSU owned by the state government of West Bengal.

Many PSUs in India have received special titles such as ***Maharatna***, ***Navratna*** and ***Miniratna***. These refer to various levels of financial autonomy (in decreasing order), to help these PSUs compete on a global scale.



Ministries and Departments

A ministry is a specialized organization within the government responsible for public administration, and is headed by a minister. In India, many ministries have sub-organizations within them. They may be variously termed as ***departments***, ***autonomous bodies*** or ***statutory bodies***. For e.g., *Translational Health Science and Technology Institute* is an autonomous institute of the *Department of Biotechnology*, which in turn comes under the *Ministry of Science and Technology*.

Tenders

While two of the given ads are a job invitation and an invitation for PhD registration respectively, the rest are tender invitations. So the students need to know what tenders refer to.

The word '*tender*' means a bid or an offer in economics and business to provide services or equipment. In many respects, it is like a quotation, however, it is more elaborate and formal.

A ***request for tender (RFT)*** or ***invitation to bid (ITB)*** invites prospective suppliers to submit a bid on materials or services.

The *Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL)* invited tenders for remote operated shut-off valves on 4 November 2015 in *The Times of India*. In response to this ad, various vendors will submit their tenders to the BPCL. The tenders will be evaluated and the most competitive one will be selected to supply the required goods. This is an example of a tender invitation for goods.

Tenders can also be invited for performing various services. In *The Times of India* dated 4 November 2015, *Rites Ltd* invited bids for fabrication, supply and erection of 61 mts open web girder and 18.3 mts composite girder for railway bridges. Bidders will submit their tenders and the most favourable tender will be selected for the project.



Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity (DAVP)

Since we are dealing with advertisements by the government, it can be mentioned that the *Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity (DAVP)* under the Government of India is responsible for the publicity and advertising requirements of various ministries, PSUs and other government institutions.

Jerry Jean Preston is a teacher based in Coimbatore, who has taught in various colleges like Jain University – Centre for Management Studies, Bangalore (CMS); Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kerala; St Xavier’s College for Women, Aluva, Kerala, etc. She has a PhD in English and is currently teaching in PSG College of Arts and Sciences, Coimbatore. She is interested in creative writing and developing methods that will make the teaching-learning process a more interesting one.

Lesson Plan: Project on Ministries and Agencies through Newspaper Advertisements

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Classes: 9 and 10, and *political science* students of classes 11 and 12

Objective: To create a dossier of ministries and select government agencies coming under it. Newspaper advertisements will provide the inspiration and will guide the choice of agencies.

Method: Research and student collaboration

Materials required: Old newspapers with pages containing advertisements by government agencies, internet connectivity/access, list of ministries and the constituent agencies.

Time required:

- 1 week for preliminary research
- 1 hour for class discussion
- 3 weeks for detailed research

Project Sequence

Preliminary Research: Students should pick an old newspaper of a particular date, maybe a month old. The teacher should ensure that each student chooses a different date, to avoid overlap in their choices.

Table: Preliminary Information on Government Agencies from Advertisements

SL NO.	NAME OF GOVT. AGENCY	TYPE OF ADVERTISEMENT	TYPE OF GOVT. AGENCY	DEPARTMENT/ MINISTRY
1	India Institute of Astrophysics	Job notification	Autonomous Body	Department of Science & Technology, Ministry of Science and Technology
2	Translational Health Science and Technology Institute	Invitation for PhD Applications	Autonomous Institute	Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology
3	Rites Limited	Tender Request	PSU	Ministry of Railways
4	Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited	Tender Request	PSU	Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas
5	West Bengal State Electricity Transmission Company Limited	Tender Request	PSU of West Bengal	Ministry of Power, Govt. of West Bengal
6	National Highways Authority of India	Tender Request	Statutory Body	Ministry of Road Transport & Highways
7	Khadi and Village Industries Commission	Tender Request	Statutory Body	Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises

The students should survey the advertisements by government agencies in the newspaper and make a table, as shown above (The sample table is based on the advertisements shared earlier.). It can contain heads such as '**Name of Government Agency**', '**Type of Advertisements**', '**Type of Govt. Agency**' and '**Department/Ministry**'. This table is based on information obtained from the advertisements. Sometimes the parent ministry will have to be checked online via Google search. Students should skim through the roles of the agencies and parent ministries on the internet, and then, tentatively, choose 5 government agencies for research after this preliminary study.

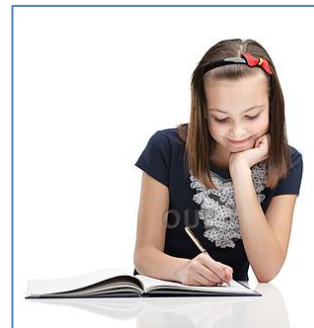


Class Discussion: The teacher should lead a discussion in the class on government ministries and its constituent agencies. Each student should call out his/her chosen government agencies based on their collection of newspaper advertisements. Then the teacher should draw a table of 'Ministries', 'Departments', 'PSUs' and 'Bodies' on the board, based on the choices of the students. Against each government agency, the students' names who will research it can also be written. The teacher should ensure that more than 2 students have not ended up choosing the same government agency.



This table is the content outline for a collaborative dossier of government ministries and agencies. This outline can be filed and also put up on the notice board for students to refer to during the course of their project.

Detailed Research and Write-up: Students research their chosen government agencies and contribute their pages to the dossier. They should try to make their pages as interesting as possible using images and trivia. Some facts that should feature in all the write-ups are: the parent ministry of the agency, Minister of the parent ministry and location of the agency.



In the *Civil Services Examination*, questions on the locations of various institutes are often asked. For instance, where is the *Indian Institute of Advanced Studies* under the *Ministry of Human Resource Development*? (Ans: **Shimla**). A student who has encountered an advertisement by this government body in the newspaper and has written on it as part of this project will be able to quickly remember the answer to this question.

Given below are certain pointers on what can go into the write-ups:

- ✓ Think about the reason for a government agency coming under a particular ministry. Why is there a separate department or agency devoted to a particular field? For instance, *Department of Bio-Technology*?
- ✓ If *Rites Ltd* is one agency under the *Ministry of Railways*, which are the others? If a government agency is a PSU, does it have a **Ratna** status (**Maharatna**, **Navratna** or **Miniratna**)?
- ✓ Certain PSUs such as *Neyveli Lignite Corporation Limited (NLC)*, *Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL)* and *Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL)* are interesting, because they have place names as their company names. The teacher should try to locate these places on the map. Students will then never forget these places and the associated PSUs.

Tips for the Students: Don't forget to stick the newspaper advertisement which led to this research in the first place! Stick it at the beginning of the write-up on each agency. Also, mention the publication in which it appeared and the particular date. This way the newspaper advertisement will serve as a strong visual memory aid. The mere thought of the ad can bring to memory various facts with regard to a particular agency featured in it.

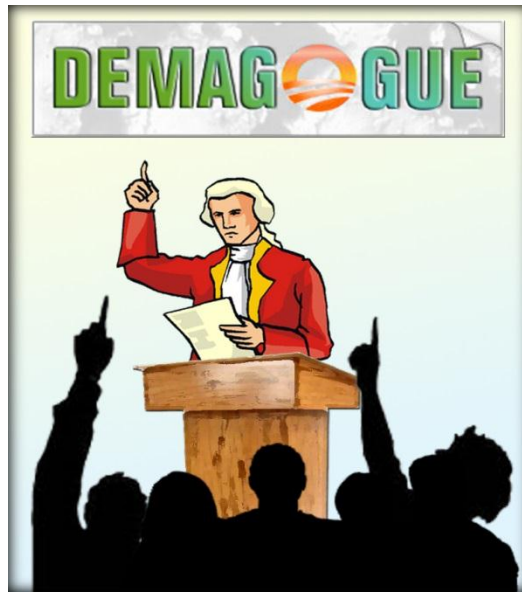
File and Create a Dossier: Finally, each student should submit their pages on a particular government agency to a consolidated class file. Each student will thus make contributions to various ministries, and the dossier on a particular ministry will have been written by many students, being a collaborative as well as mixed-group effort.

Happy studying the various facets of governments!



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Words Section



Demagogue (noun)

- A political leader who seeks support by appealing to popular desires and prejudices rather than by using rational argument. In ancient Greece and Rome, the term also referred to a leader or orator who espoused the cause of the common people. (*Oxforddictionaries.com*)

Origin (and additional information) ~ The term's first known use was in the mid 17th century, sometime around 1648. It originated from Greek *dēmagōgos*, from *dēmos* (meaning 'the people') + *agōgos* (meaning 'leading'), which in turn had originated from *agein* (meaning 'to lead').

The word *demagogue*, meaning *a leader of the common people*, first arose in ancient Greece, originally with no negative connotation, but eventually came to mean a troublesome kind of leader who occasionally arose in Athenian democracy. Even though democracy gave power to the common people, elections still tended to favour the aristocratic class, which in turn favoured deliberation and decorum. Demagogues were new kind of leaders who emerged from the lower classes and relentlessly advocated action, usually violent — immediately and without deliberation. Demagogues appealed directly to the emotions of the poor and uninformed, pursuing power, telling lies to stir up hysteria, exploiting crises to intensify popular support for their calls to immediate action and increased authority, and accusing moderate opponents of weakness or disloyalty to the nation. While all politicians in a democracy must make occasional small sacrifices of truth, subtlety, or long-term concerns to maintain popular support, demagogues do these things relentlessly and without self-restraint.

Words Section

The Greek historian **Polybius** thought that democracies are inevitably undone by demagogues. He said that every democracy eventually decays into "*a government of violence and the strong hand,*" leading to "*tumultuous assemblies, massacres, banishments.*" Throughout its history, the word *demagogue* or *rabble-rouser* has been used to disparage any leader thought to be manipulative, pernicious, or bigoted.

The Athenian leader **Cleon** was known to be a notorious demagogue mainly because of the events described in the writings of **Thucydides** and **Aristophanes**. **Alcibiades**, a prominent Athenian statesman, orator, and general, convinced the people of Athens to attempt to conquer Sicily during the Peloponnesian War, with disastrous results. He led the Athenian assembly to support the notion of making him commander by claiming that the victory would come easily, appealing to Athenian vanity, and to action and courage over deliberation.

Gaius Flaminius Nepos was a Roman consul most known for being defeated by **Hannibal** at the Battle of Lake Trasimene during the second Punic war. Flaminius was described as a demagogue by **Polybius**, in his book *The Rise of the Roman Empire*. Because he was ill suited, he made 15,000 Romans lose their lives, his included, in the battle.

Joseph McCarthy was a U.S. Senator from the state of Wisconsin from 1947 to 1957. Though a poor orator, McCarthy rose to national prominence during the early 1950s by making false proclamations related to the United States federal government and military. Ultimately his inability to provide proof for his claims led him to be censured by the United States Senate in 1954, and consequently, to fall from popularity.

Usage ~

- i. While his friends admired him as a nationalist leader, his enemies simply considered him a demagogue and a dangerous man.
- ii. The Senator was a gifted demagogue, with particular skill in manipulating the press.
- iii. Tradition condemned the demagogues as tyrants who manipulated public opinion for their own selfish ends.

Derivatives ~ *demagogic*, adjective; *demagoguery*, noun; *demagogy*, noun