

I appeared for the personality test for civil services 2016. Below follows a transcript of my interview along with other related details.

Date: 20th March 2017 (First day of the interview) Session: Forenoon, Duration: 40 Minutes, Board: Mr. Arvind Saxena, Optional: Public Administration, Attempt: Third, Work Experience: ~ 4 Years (An E&P company in Petroleum Sector)

I was assigned to table XIX. There were five candidates in my group. I was the third one to be interviewed.

There were four panel members (M1, M2, M3, M4) in addition to the chairman (Ch). There was one lady member (M1).

Chairman

Ch: (Reads my DAF. Key points, educational background etc). You are working in XYZ Company earning X lacks per month. Do you realize that you will have to go for a salary cut when you will join civil services?

Me: Yes Sir. (Smiles)

Ch: Explain me the logic why you want to quit this high earning job and come to civil services.

Me: Sir, the main reason is the kind of work I do and what impact it will make. In my current company I can be a good petroleum engineer or a good reservoir engineer but in civil services I will get opportunity to work in so many areas, there are so many opportunities and so much diversity; I can work for rural development, I can work in areas of health, education, finance etc. This diversity and dynamism is one reason.

Sir, the other aspect is that civil services is also a very respectable career option where I will get so much responsibilities and so many challenges and that too at a very early age. It will also give me ample scope to work in areas of governance and development. This way my actions will have a very wider impact compared to what I can do in a private company or in any other role.

Ch: Ok, the sense I am getting is that private sector role and private sector work is not that important. Is this what You are referring to?

Me: No sir, what I am trying to say is that private sector jobs are domain specific, they focus on one sector like petroleum industry or construction etc; while in civil services one will have diversity and wide opportunity. In that sense private sector is contributing in a different way and civil services in a different way.

Ch: You are working in petroleum industry. Recently there was a crisis where US shale gas was in news. Many big investment banks invested their money in US shale gas, but due to declining oil prices they are now in trouble. Why did this happen? Why couldn't this oil price crash be prevented?

Me: Sir, US alone cannot control oil prices. There is an organization called OPEC which is the biggest supplier of crude oil in the world. They supply close to 60% of world crude. They are actually controlling the oil market and OPEC had to be brought on board to prevent this crude crash.

Ch: Why couldn't OPEC be brought on board? Was it Saudi Arabia?

Me: Sir, OPEC countries, especially Saudi Arabia didn't want to lose oil market. Reason is that Saudi Arabia's economy is primarily dependent on crude oil. Also, The Saudi crude is such that it can be extracted at a very low crude price, even if crude prices are 35 to 40 dollar per barrel because it has got very low operating expenditure, whereas US shale is not viable below crude prices of 50 to 55 dollar per barrel.

(Chairman interrupts) ..That's my point why can't US pressurize Saudi to prevent this lowering of prices.

Me: Sir, Saudi Arabia can't do on itself, this decision has to be based on Consensus among the OPEC countries.

Ch: Ok, Alright.

You have heard about Syria. How much was the role of oil in Syrian crisis and intervention by US?

Me: Sir, US has been interfering in gulf countries and Middle East for many reasons. Crude oil has been one of the reasons. In case of Syria, crude oil can be said to be one reason but there were many other factors. The revolt by Syrian people against the current regime was the main factor for current crisis. There was involvement of Russia and many other countries....

(Interrupts again) ..What was Role of Russia here?

Me: Sir, Russia under Mr. Putin has been supporting the current regime of Mr. Assad in Syria.

Ch: Do you think Russia got involved here because it wanted to control European markets for selling its gas?

Me: Sir, I don't think that was the main reason. The issue was more ideological. Also, after Western sanctions against Russia; after it annexed one country, I am forgetting its name, it was

in the Mediterranean sea (It was Crimea. Couldn't recall this name at that point of time)..after that US and European countries put sanctions on Russia. Then Russia started looking towards eastern part of the globe, towards China as well in central Asian region....

Ch: Speaking of China, yesterday there was a news that mentions a retired Chinese official who said that if Tawang region is given to china, it will stop demanding for other regions in Aksai chin, Ladakh etc... (Couldn't properly heard this question, I heard Taiwan instead of Tawang)..What do you think of it?

Me: Sir, china follows a "One china policy" where it assumes Taiwan to be its essential part..

(Chairman interrupts)..No, no I am talking about Tawang region not Taiwan.

Me: Ok sir,(pause for few seconds) Tawang is an essential part of India and China has claimed it to be its part...(At this point I forgot what was the question and hence couldn't find a direction to speak)..

I beg your pardon sir, I forgot the question, what was the question?

Chairman: This Tawang region, Why do you think China is claiming it to be their part?

Me: Sir, China assumes Tawang to be their region, it is important for strategic reasons, it is very close to Arunachal Pradesh and hence they are making such demands.

Ch (nods head)..Yes

(Chairman didn't pursue his original question at this point and signals M1, the lady member to continue).

Member 1(The only lady member of the board)

M1: You have studied in Bihar, UP and Jharkhand. You know,all these places are very poorly developed, they are called BIMARU states. Coming to Bihar and Jharkhand, This place is so important; it also has a great history and great culture. There were huge resources, minerals also. Why are these places not developed then?

Me: Ma'am you are asking about Bihar or Jharkhand? (Sought clarification)

M1: I am referring to undivided Bihar.

Me: Ma'am, If we look at the history of Bihar, just after independence, and excluding the last one decade, There were huge law and order problems, especially in the 80s and 90's..Which have been improving these days. Due to this there was very low investment in the state, the industrialization couldn't take place.

Also, the low literacy of the state is another challenge. We have huge population and the human development, their skilling is poor. This also affected the development process.

M1: You have written that you watch English Sitcoms and Adventure TV series. What serials you have watched?

Me: Ma'am, in situational comedies, I have watched Friends, Big bang theory, Two and a half men...etc and in Adventure TV series..I have watched LOST, GAME OF THRONES, DEXTER, BREAKING BAD etc

M1: Ok, which one you liked most?

Me: Ma'am I liked breaking bad the most.

M1: Why do you like it so much?

Me: Ma'am basically for the message it sends. This series tells us that you can become anything at any point of time, you should never give up and its never too late. In the show there is a chemistry professor who thinks that he has not lived upto his potentials throughout his life and then he comes to know that he had lung cancer. At this point of time he decided that he will be fearless from now onwards and will live his life on his own terms. (Didn't elaborate further on his drug empire: p)

(Chairman nods his head :p) and signals to M2.

Member 2

He basically asked Question about my college and IIT and on relevance.

Answered accordingly. Also asked about Liquor ban in Bihar.

M2: You have heard about Bihar liquor ban? Do you think it has led to improvement in law and order situation?

Me: Sir, the liquor ban was mainly done to target the low wage earning population who were wasting their money on alcohol. It was also a promise made to women voters of the state. It was not that much linked to law and order situation.

M2: But do you think the state has lost so much revenue by this ban?

Me: Yes sir, there was a direct loss of 4000 crore rupees to exchequer of Bihar government.

M2: Then what benefits did we get by imposing liquor ban?

Me: Sir, the liquor ban was done keeping social benefits and long term benefits in mind...(interrupts)

M2: What are those social benefits?

Me: Sir, the first is that those low wage earning families, they will not waste money on liquor, so they will have money for other important works. There will be awareness also that excessive liquor consumption is not good... **(interrupts again)**

M2: You can also say that there was a decline in divorce cases, domestic violence etc..

Me: Yes sir, thank you sir

M2: You should have idea about these things.

Me: Sorry sir, I couldn't get into these details. (Sheepish smile)

At this point chairman signals to M3 (Aap puchhiye...)

Member 3

He picked from one area of my DAF where I had mentioned that I was a class teacher for an NGO in my college days.

M3: How did this NGO work, how did you get time to be a class teacher during the studies?

Me: Sir, the NGO was a student initiative, started by my seniors. We used to teach slum children, those who were living just behind our campus, it was very close to our hostels and as a class teacher we had to teach for 2 hours twice in a week, so it was not a big problem.

M3: So what did you teach? What was your role? Aren't there government institutions to teach these slum children? (So many questions at one time).

Me: Sir, our role was to initiate the process of education as these children were not coming to schools and there were lack of opportunities in those areas.

M3: But there are government institutions for that. what you guys were doing?

Me: Sir, our role was to provide them an opportunity and make them ready for education.

M3: How old were these children?

Me: Sir, they were 5 years to 14-15 years old.

M3: So why were they not coming to schools?

Me: Sir, I think the main reason is the kind of families they have. They mostly come from very poor background and for these people the livelihood is main challenge and hence they couldn't focus much on the education of their children.

M3: So what government has done to improve the situation at elementary level?

Me: Sir we have enacted Right to education, RTE, under which children upto 14 years of the age are to be provided mandatory primary education. **(Interrupts...)**

M3: What are the incentives offered by government to attract students to school?

Me: Sir, there is ASHA in villages who try to initiate the education process and bring these children to formal education system. **(Interrupts..)**

M3: Have you heard of mid-day meal scheme?

Me: Yes sir.

M3: What do you think of this?

Me: Sir, it is a very good scheme which tries to provide incentive to children to come to school. It will also improve the nutritional status of children.

M3: What are the other schemes and programs which try to address elementary education and child development?

Me: Sir, there is RTE, Sarva Siksha Abhiyaan, Integrated child development scheme...

M3: But you know these programs are not working properly, you read public administration. What you have to say?

Me: Sir, the government has made programs and policies but the implementation has been poor. This is where the private sector, NGOs are helping.

M3: So suppose you are made Sub Divisional magistrate, how will you ensure that these children come to schools?

Me: Sir, I will focus on village by village approach, will go to particular villages and make an assessment –what are the main families who are not sending their children to school and based on this assessment I will focus on these families, can create a special team to look into these areas.

M3: But it is not possible for you to go every village and then investigate. What innovative measures you will take to ensure this?

Me: Sir, I can use social media like facebook and twitter and can identify few volunteers in each area who can directly message me or tweet me about those families who are not sending their children to schools. Based on this information, I will take specific actions and address the problem.

(He seemed satisfied).

M3: One final question, Russia has been getting closer to Pakistan and has been selling weapons. Do you think we should worry?

Me: Sir, we should see this in terms of what is happening in the world. After Western sanctions Russia started looking towards China and Pakistan. India which used to be the biggest purchaser of Russian weapons has now diversified its purchasing sources; we now buy weapons from Israel, and France and US also. Hence Russia had to look for new buyers.

M4: So do you think we should be worried about this?

Me: Sir, I would say we should be cautious, rather than worried and see things in broader perspective. **(Nods...seems satisfied)**

Chairman signals M4. (Aap Puchhiye ...)

M4: Give a description of India's GDP?

Me: Sir, India's current GDP is 2.3 trillion dollars based on nominal values; in terms of purchasing power parity our GDP is third largest in the world. We recently had Quarter3 GDP figures. Our GDP for Q3 grew up by 7% and it is expected that overall GDP for Fiscal Year 2016-17 will grow by 7.1%.

M4: So, what are the areas that contribute to GDP?

Me: Sir, if we look into the sectoral contribution to GDP..**(At this point he interrupts....Yes..tell me those sectors first and their contribution)**

Sir, agriculture contributes to 16-17% of GDP, manufacturing around 18% and services from 55% to 60%. I am not sure of the exact numbers hence mentioning the range.

M4: You are right. So that means we are primarily a services dependent economy.

Me: Yes sir.

M4: What are our export and import figures? Which is more?

Me: Sir, I am not aware of the exact figures but I know that we import more than we export because we have current account deficit.

M4: How much is that?

Me: Sir, our current account deficit is in the range of 1.2 % to 1.4% of GDP.

M4: What are the major items we export?

Me: Sir we export petroleum products, that forms a big chunk, we also export IT services. We also export cereals from time to time.. (Couldn't recall major export items)

M4: What are the transport modes of export? Rail, road, air or anything else?

Me: Sir, we use road and railways to transport loads/materials from interior regions to sea ports. Then from seaports we use navigation channels, sea routes for cargo movement. Air traffic is costly and hence is not a preferred mode of export. We also export IT services from our country. Like the way BPO works. So can say that we use **internetway** also. (smiles)

M4: You mentioned about ports. How many ports are there in India?

Me: Sir we have 12 to 13 major ports, exact number I am not able to recall. And we have many small ports apart from these 12 to 13 major ports.

M4: Have you heard about maritime security of India. You mentioned ports, so you must be aware.

Me: Yes sir, maritime security is crucial for safe passage of our cargo. We have listening ports in Seychelles, Mauritius and we are also investing in Indian Ocean region as well as in south china sea to counter Chinese influence which has been developing ports in Indian ocean regions like Srilanka and Pakistan.

M4: What are those ports, can you mention?

Me: Sir, there is a Hambantota port in Srilanka and Gwadar port in Pakistan. (Seems satisfied)

At this point Chairman said. Thank You, Your interview is over.

I thanked everyone and left the room.

Overall experience: Very cordial board and apart from M3's constant interruptions all members were cooperative and made you feel at ease.