



भारत सरकार Government of India
रेल मंत्रालय Ministry of Railways
रेलवे बोर्ड Railway Board



No.2026/O&M/3/1

New Delhi, Dated: 29th June, 2026

**The General Managers, All Indian Railways
Production Units and Other Units,
The Director Generals, RDSO & CTIs,
CAO/PLW, CAO/RWP.**

Sub: Circulation of 'Guide on Conducting Effective Meetings' issued by the Cabinet Secretariat.

A copy of the Cabinet Secretary's D.O. letter No. 502/2/3/2026-Cab.III dated 12th June, 2026, along with its enclosed "Guide on Conducting Effective Meetings," is forwarded herewith for information and compliance.

2. The enclosed guide outlines practical steps to optimise daily routine work, specifically focusing on:

- Preparation: Checking if a meeting is essential, setting a clear purpose, and distributing structured agendas in advance.
- Conducting: Restricting invites to key stakeholders, allocating explicit roles (Facilitator, Minute-taker, Time Keeper), and ensuring two-way communication.
- Efficiency: Keeping meeting durations ideally within 20 to 50 minutes to eliminate directionless, overstretched sessions.
- Minutes: Formulating and issuing action-oriented minutes within 2-3 days.

3. All officers and staff across Zonal Railways, Production Units, and within the Railway Board's office are requested to imbibe these instructions in the right spirit to maximize administrative efficiency and productivity.

4. Please ensure wide dissemination and strict adherence in all meetings conducted under your control.

Encl: As above.


29/06/2026
(R. MOHANRAJA)

Secretary/Railway Board

Email ID: secyrb@rb.railnet.gov.in

Tele No.: 011-47844714

No.2026/O&M/3/1

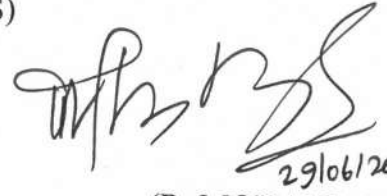
New Delhi, Dated: 29th June, 2026

Copy for information and internal circulation to:

CRB&CEO, M/T&RS, MF, MI, MO&BD
DG/HR, DG/Safety, DG/RHS, DG/RPF
All AMs/PEDs/Independent EDs
JSs/EDs/Directors, Railway Board
All Officers and Branches in Railway Board's Office.

Copy to:-

EDPG/MR, EDPG/MoSR(R), OSD/MoSR(S)



29/06/2026

(R. MOHANRAJA)

Secretary/Railway Board

Email ID: secyrb@rb.railnet.gov.in

Tele No.: 011-47844714

भारत सरकार/GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
रेल मंत्रालय/MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
रेलवे बोर्ड/RAILWAY BOARD

सं.2026/ओएंडएम/3/1

नई दिल्ली, दिनांक: 29 जून, 2026

महाप्रबंधक, सभी क्षेत्रीय रेलें
उत्पादन इकाइयाँ एवं अन्य इकाइयाँ,
महानिदेशक, अ.अ.मा.सं. और के.प्र.सं.,
मुख्य प्रशासनिक अधिकारी/प.रे.का, मुख्य प्रशासनिक अधिकारी/रे.प.का.

विषय: मंत्रिमंडल सचिवालय द्वारा जारी 'प्रभावी बैठकें आयोजित करने पर मार्गदर्शिका' परिपत्रित करना।

मंत्रिमंडल सचिव के दिनांक 12.06.2026 के अ.शा. पत्र संख्या 502/2/3/2026-सीएबी.।।। की प्रति, जिसके साथ संलग्न "प्रभावी बैठकें आयोजित करने पर मार्गदर्शिका" सूचना और अनुपालन के लिए अग्रेषित की जाती है।

2. संलग्न मार्गदर्शिका दैनिक कार्य को अधिक प्रभावी बनाने के लिए व्यावहारिक पहलों की रूपरेखा प्रस्तुत करती है, जिसमें विशेष रूप से निम्न पर जोर दिया गया है:

- तैयारी: यह जांचना कि क्या बैठक आवश्यक है, स्पष्ट उद्देश्य निर्धारित करना और अग्रिम में निर्धारित कार्यसूची वितरित करना।
- संचालन: केवल प्रमुख हितधारकों को आमंत्रित करना, स्पष्ट भूमिकाएं निर्धारित करना (सुविधाप्रदाता, कार्यवृत्त नोट करने वाले, समयपालक), और द्विपक्षीय संचार सुनिश्चित करना।
- दक्षता: दिशाहीन, अति-विस्तारित सत्रों को समाप्त करने के लिए बैठक की अवधि आदर्श रूप से 20 से 50 मिनट तक सीमित रखना।
- कार्यवृत्त: 2-3 दिनों में कार्रवाई-केन्द्रित कार्यवृत्त तैयार करना और जारी करना।

3. क्षेत्रीय रेलों, उत्पादन इकाइयों और रेलवे बोर्ड कार्यालय के सभी अधिकारी और कर्मचारियों से अनुरोध है कि प्रशासनिक दक्षता और उत्पादकता को अधिकतम करने के लिए इन अनुदेशों को उचित भाव से अपनाएं।

4. कृपया आपके नियंत्रण में आयोजित होने वाली सभी बैठकों के संबंध में इसका व्यापक प्रसार और सख्त अनुपालन सुनिश्चित करें

संलग्न: यथोक्त

आर. मोहनराजा
29/06/2026
(आर. मोहनराजा)
सचिव, रेलवे बोर्ड

ईमेल आईडी: secyrb@rb.railnet.gov.in

टेलीफोन सं.: 011-47844714

सूचना एवं आंतरिक वितरण हेतु प्रतिलिपि:

अध्यक्ष एवं मुख्य कार्यकारी अधिकारी, रेलवे बोर्ड, सदस्य/कर्षण एवं चल स्टॉक, सदस्य वित्त, सदस्य अवसंरचना, सदस्य (परिचालन एवं व्यवसाय विकास)
महानिदेशक/मानव संसाधन, महानिदेशक/संरक्षा, महानिदेशक/रेलवे स्वास्थ्य सेवा, महानिदेशक/रेल सुरक्षा बल
सभी अपर सदस्य/प्रधान कार्यपालक निदेशक/स्वतंत्र कार्यभार वाले कार्यपालक निदेशक
संयुक्त सचिव/कार्यपालक निदेशक/निदेशक, रेलवे बोर्ड
रेलवे बोर्ड कार्यालय के सभी अधिकारी और शाखाएँ।

प्रतिलिपि सूचनार्थ:

कार्यपालक निदेशक जन शिकायत/रेल मंत्री, कार्यपालक निदेशक जन शिकायत/रेल राज्य मंत्री (आर), विशेष कार्य अधिकारी/रेल राज्य मंत्री (एस)

आर. मोहन राजा
29/06/2026

(आर. मोहनराजा)

सचिव, रेलवे बोर्ड

ईमेल आईडी: secyrb@rb.railnet.gov.in

टेलीफोन सं.: 011-47844714

डा. टी.वी. सोमनाथन
Dr. T.V. Somanathan



मंत्रिमंडल सचिव
भारत सरकार
CABINET SECRETARY
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

D.O. No 502/2/3/2026-Cab.III

2510603

12th June, 2026

Dear Secretary,

As Cabinet Secretary, I have the pleasure of meeting many officers of all services, whether posted in the Central Government or the State Government. Several middle-ranking officers have told me that (while they are happy with the subject-matter training, online and in-person), they feel a need for more practical guidance in so-called "routine" matters, tailored to the Governmental/ public sector context, which can help them become better administrators and managers.

2. "Routine", though it may seem boring, is often extremely important and, thus, during our long careers in the civil service, we may need to pause and revisit it. As civil servants, having put in a good number of years behind us, we tend, alas, to fall into set habits. In our office rigmarole, we tend to forget some of the basic precautions or practices that we could follow in order to improve the quality of our professional output. The habit of self-reflection and introspection and the ability to honestly reflect on our day's work, to look back on our failures and deficiencies, admit them and improve upon them, can be valuable. It may be useful to ask ourselves:-

- Are we improving ourselves with each passing year and doing something better each year; or
- Are we simply following the beaten track of our own past habits of working without making any efforts at self-reflection or self-improvement?

3. If we are simply following a beaten track, then towards the end of our career, we may be faced with the question of whether our experience was "30 years' experience" or "one year's experience repeated 30 times".

4. The purpose of this long preamble is not to expect you to give yourself a drastic inflection to your personality. It is only to say that we, as civil servants, must take care of small things and see if, by changing them in our daily official routine, we can achieve better output, or reduce our stress level, or both. These "small things" could range from the way we conduct our meetings, the way we manage our time, the way we communicate with peers, superiors or subordinates, the way we engage with our visitors, or the way we motivate our team by trusting them and delegating to them important responsibilities.

5. These things may seem trivial, but from my experience and observation, I would argue that they are very important. They often distinguish an outstanding officer from a mediocre one, even more than domain knowledge. There is perhaps a need to rekindle, in civil servants, an interest in these small things that, cumulatively, may substantially impact their professional conduct including their efficiency and the quality of work disposal.

6. To that end, the Cabinet Secretariat will, in consultation with the National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), be issuing simple guidelines in the form of "Guides" from time to time, regarding various practical steps that we could take during 'a day in office' as a civil servant.

7. As a first step, kindly find enclosed a Guide on precautions and suggestions for conducting and chairing an official meeting. You might ask why this topic of 'Conducting an Official Meeting' has been chosen as the first. This is because meetings consume a lot of our time on a daily basis. Many officers have told me that many of our meetings tend to start late, be overstretched and directionless, and often lead to no tangible 'takeaways'.

8. You are requested to circulate this Guide to all the civil servants working under your jurisdiction asking them to imbibe the contents in the right spirit.

With best wishes,

Encl.: As above.

Yours sincerely,



(T.V. Somanathan)

All Secretaries to the Government of India

**Guide on
Conducting Effective Meetings.**

[This guide contains suggestions intended to assist officers. It is not, and should not be construed as, an instruction and officers are free to deviate from it. Needless to say, the suggestions herein, including the hypothetical examples provided in the annexures, are not to be followed blindly or without reference to context; there may well be situations in which they cannot, or should not, be followed. In the event of any divergence between this guide and any formal instructions of the Government or other authorities, the latter will prevail.

The support of the National Centre for Good Governance in the preparation of this guide is acknowledged.]

1. Background:

It is often said that *if we take care of minutes, hours will take care of themselves*. Attention to small details in preparing for a meeting, setting the agenda, circulating the agenda notes etc. are crucial but often ignored. As years pass by, we tend to get absorbed in the routine way of doing things. Since meetings are part of our routine, we all suffer, often knowingly, from the malaise – “Routine is routinely ignored”.

Ill-planned and ill-prepared meetings where there is either no clarity on the purpose and/or the agenda or where the participants are not actively engaged, tend to be unproductive. Small precautions and adequate preparations can go a long way in increasing the effectiveness of meetings. We can do very little on time management if we are “attending” a meeting. However, if we are “conducting” a meeting ourselves, we can surely improve the efficiency of the meeting.

A brief but well structured road map for conducting a meeting is therefore very handy for a civil servant. You may be aware of all these points mentioned below, but yet you will realise that you often do not follow them because they have become part of your “routine”.

2. Preparation for the Meeting

2.1 Purpose of the Meeting: First of all, you should be clear about what you wish to achieve by holding the meeting. Meaning thereby, the officer should know ‘why’ the meeting is being called and what ‘outcome’ is expected to be achieved; whether you want to:

- a. arrive at a decision;
- b. convey a decision;
- c. resolve a problem;
- d. review an ongoing project/scheme;
- e. plan for a new project/scheme;
- f. brainstorm/ discuss a new idea or initiative.

2.2 Is the Meeting Essential? Once the purpose is clear, you should think whether a meeting is necessary or there are better ways of achieving that purpose. You should avoid calling a meeting if -

- a. You can achieve the purpose through e-mails, phone, text messages etc.
- b. You need certain specific opinions from specific persons, possibly on a sensitive issue. In that case, calling a meeting may not be helpful as people may suffer from "herd mentality" and they may not come out with their inspiring ideas in an open meeting because no one wants to upset the status quo. In such cases a one-to one interaction may be more fruitful.
- c. You do not have enough time to prepare for the meeting.

2.3 Timing of the meeting: As far as possible, important meetings should not be held a day before or after a holiday, as there is greater chance of necessary participants being on leave. Meetings to consult on an emerging situation can be held at short notice, but meetings to discuss a document or proposal requiring some prior study should be scheduled with adequate notice.

2.4 Setting the Agenda:

- a. The agenda points must be clearly defined in the notice of the meeting. Any reading material relating to the agenda points must also be enclosed so that the attendees read it and come prepared.
- b. In case you require the attendees to bring certain data, or send it in advance, then a format should also be annexed with the meeting notice in which you expect them to bring or send the data.
- c. As far as possible, the agenda items should have a logical flow, for example by scheduling related topics next to each other.
- d. Assign each agenda item to a particular participant(s).
- e. For small meetings, the agenda may be relatively loose / unstructured but for larger meetings, agenda should be highly structured so that the deliberations are meaningful and productive.
- f. For formal meetings, it may be desirable to indicate how much time each participant is allowed to speak. If this is done, the time slot should be indicated in the meeting notice itself, against each agenda point.
- g. If the agenda items are likely to be complicated or challenging, then the simpler items may be taken up first and complex items can follow.

- h. Complex agenda may be broken down into manageable parts for smoother deliberations
- i. Complex agenda should not be kept just before / after lunch.
- j. Ask your subordinates to check that all equipment which is essential to conduct the meeting viz. VC equipment, Wi-Fi signal, mikes, laptops, power points, air conditioners etc. are working smoothly in the meeting hall.

[A sample meeting agenda along with speakers may be seen at Annexure 'A']

3. Conducting the Meeting:

3.1 Whom to Invite:

- a. Except in formal committee meetings with fixed composition, it is very important for you to decide whom to invite and how many to invite. There are no hard and fast rules for deciding the size of a meeting. However, a small gathering is best to actually decide or accomplish something, a medium sized meeting is ideal for brainstorming and a large sized meeting could be for communicating about initiatives / decisions already taken and their significance.
- b. Thus, depending upon the purpose of the meeting, you should carefully select whom to invite. Your participants may vary from your peers, subordinates, public representatives, unions and general public to participants from the private sector, expert groups, international organizations, etc. As a thumb rule, to take a decision on a particular issue, you must invite the following:
 - i. The decision makers who might assist you in the decision;
 - ii. The people with information and knowledge about the subject;
 - iii. The people who will be required to implement the decision;
 - iv. The people likely to be most affected by the decision or such other stakeholders.
- c. It is usually a good idea to consult your subordinates on who they think need to be invited.

3.2 Initiating the Meeting

- a. The word 'meeting' implies the presence of at least two persons. For formal meetings convened according to rules or laws, you must check that the necessary quorum (if any) fixed in the rules (the minimum number of attendees prescribed) is present; if the quorum is not present within a reasonable (or prescribed) time, the meeting has to be adjourned.
- b. **Taking attendance:** In important / formal meetings, names / designations and initials of those present should be taken on an attendance sheet (kept ready in advance with the date, venue and subject).

- c. **Context Setting and Breaking the Ice:** While initiating the meeting, you may begin on a pleasant note and perhaps mention some interesting event (not connected with the purpose of the meeting) to lighten the atmosphere. Thereafter, you must introduce the participants (if they are first time attendees) and then introduce the purpose and the expected outcome of the meeting. If it is the first of a recurring meeting, in your introductory remarks, you should clearly indicate this and the frequency (weekly / fortnightly / monthly/ intermittent) should be specified. Lastly, you may lay down the "Ground Rules". Typically, these might be that –
- i. You wish to finish the meeting in a time bound manner.
 - ii. You wish everybody's participation, and new ideas would be highly welcome. [Alternatively, if the meeting is held to quickly convey instructions without feedback, that should be made clear; however even in such meetings you should welcome questions seeking clarification for better understanding of the instructions.]
 - iii. You would not allow interruptions and everyone should listen to each other.
 - iv. You want a decision or just inputs from the participants.
 - v. You have certain constraints of your own (perhaps on account of your own superiors).
 - vi. You would request (or instruct, depending on the nature of invitees) that participants should not engage in other activities like texting, checking e-mails or any other activity on their mobile phones. Where an instruction might be impolite, a polite way of encouraging this is for you to emphasize that *you want to finish the meeting on time and hence you need everybody's complete and undivided attention.*

Generally, in a meeting you should:

- i. Maintain open communication with participants and address them respectfully.
 - ii. Encourage the participants to express their opinions freely.
 - iii. Acknowledge their previous work, skills and accomplishments.
 - iv. Empathize with their professional constraints and appreciate their output.
- d. **Assigning Roles:** - Being the chair, you must ensure that everybody, who needs to, speaks and has a role to play. Though these may vary from meeting to meeting, generally, the following roles may be assigned by you to the participants at the beginning of the meeting (one person may take on more than one role, especially if the meeting is small or informal):
- i. **The Facilitator:** You may yourself play the role or assign it to your next line of leadership who are likely to rise to your level in future. The facilitator could even take on the role of introducing the meeting and laying down the ground rules. The facilitator is a prominent role

and the person must be neutral and ensure fair and balanced conversation. A potential critic is sometimes an ideal person for this role, if he is professional and disciplined.

- ii. The Minute-taker: This person notes down the discussions and captures the key points, ideas and decisions as the meeting proceeds. These key points will later on develop as the "Minutes of the meeting".
 - The White Board: - It may be useful to keep a white board in the meeting hall. You yourself, or the facilitator or minute taker, may write down important points emerging during the discussion. It should be ensured that the white board is visible to the virtual attendees. Else, take a picture of the white board and send it to all.
- iii. The Time Keeper: One person may be assigned this role who should ensure that no agenda is over-stretched and is capable of reminding everybody, including yourself, in case somebody is over-shooting the time. The Time Keeper may send slips to persons, including yourself, in such a case.
- iv. The Contributor(s): These may be persons who keep the discussion on track by offering their ideas. You may consider sounding these Contributors beforehand so that they speak up about their respective ideas.
- v. The Expert: He / She is the person who has knowledge or information on a particular issue / agenda by virtue of his / her experience and specialization. These experts may be required for some agenda items while for other items, an expert may not be necessary.

3.3 Maintaining Two-Way Flow: While maintaining the flow of the meeting is your responsibility, you must take care of the following points:

- a. You must encourage a two-way flow and allow feedback at the end of every agenda item.
- b. Except in meetings held to convey instructions or information, you must particularly encourage participants to come up with a different view which is 'against the norm'.
- c. Someone may be encouraged to play the 'Devil's Advocate' so that the participants are aware that you are open to different ideas.
- d. You should not allow louder / vocal attendees to dominate. Even the quieter ones may be encouraged to speak up.

- e. You should make sure that your virtual participants are heard and are able to contribute. You should keep asking the virtual attendees their feedback at crucial moments.
- f. As the leader, you should keep an eye on all the participants and encourage someone who is eager to speak. In such cases, you must acknowledge with a nod that you have seen them and will shortly call them out to speak.
- g. During the entire course of the meeting, you should never forget the "Golden Rule" of a good leader – *"Praise in public and criticize in private"*. Any deviation should be rare and only with strong reasons and pre-meditation, and not through casual or loose remarks.

3.4 Avoiding Long Meetings: As a person chairing the meeting, you should ensure that:

- a. The meeting begins on time and ends on time.
- b. One agenda should not take too much time and a single person should not be allowed to speak too much or hijack the agenda or allow the meeting to go haywire.
- c. A typical meeting duration should be 20/50 minutes so that in case some agenda gets extended or a new topic suddenly comes up for discussion, you may still finish the meeting in 30/60 minutes. Excessively long meetings should be avoided. Typically, a meeting should end in 60 minutes, though longer meetings may sometimes be necessary.

3.5 Concluding the Meeting: Towards the end of the meeting, you may conclude by summarizing the key conclusions and the decisions taken. You should also discuss the possible next steps that might evolve as a result of the discussions in the meeting.

4. Minutes to be drawn up – What? Who? When? -

4.1 The minutes of the meeting should be drawn up very carefully and should be preferably issued within 2-3 days. In the minutes, it should be carefully described against each agenda what are the actionable points and who is to implement which action point and by what time the action point should be implemented. The level of detail in the minutes on the discussions is a matter of judgement.

4.2 There may be different types of meetings which may require different formats for preparing the minutes. For example: -

- a. Decision / Problem Solving Meeting: A typical meeting chaired by you, which only requires a decision(s) to be taken or a problem to be

- addressed, could have a standardized format for preparing the minutes. A typical standardized format is enclosed as Annexure 'B'.
- b. Selection Meeting: Where the purpose of the meeting is to make a selection of a person, then the format of the minutes would be different. Standardized format for such meetings is enclosed as Annexure 'C'.
 - c. Expenditure Finance Committee Meeting: In meetings where a particular project is discussed whether by an EFC or Public Finance Committee / Standing Committee on Finance, the proceedings of such meetings must be drawn differently. A format for such a proceeding may be seen at Annexure 'D'.
 - d. Stakeholder Consultation: At times you may have to invite various stakeholders from outside your department / organization and proceedings have to be minuted. In such case care must be taken to record the opinion / feedback of the stakeholders. Format for such a proceeding may be seen at Annexure 'E'.
 - e. Sensitive subjects: When dealing with sensitive matters, the possibility of misunderstanding or misinterpretation of comments (e.g. if quoted out of context) may need to be kept in mind. In such cases, minutes may be more brief, and record only the main points of argument (albeit enough to convey the logic and justification for a decision) and the action points. Annexure B1 is an example; it is a modified version of Annexure B. Alternatively, a Record of Discussion (see below) may be kept.
 - f. Record of Discussions: Not every meeting has to be minuted with the minutes being circulated to all attendees. There are some issues which are internal to your organization / department or sensitive in nature which you do not want to circulate. In such cases, it is preferable to prepare a "Record of Discussions" (RoD, also known as "Record of Deliberations") which may not be circulated to anyone and just be kept for your own internal use and future reference. Only the operative part where action is required by a Dept./Organisation is conveyed to them separately. A format for such a RoD may be seen at Annexure 'F'.

5. Some specific types of meetings

Certain kinds of meetings may need greater emphasis on one or more of the guidelines set out above.

5.1 Meetings where participants are all subordinates

Subordinates are often reluctant to speak frankly for fear of contradicting the boss. However, you and your organization will benefit from hearing the contradictory views to help you take a better decision and anticipate problems. In such meetings, it is easy for you to impose your will, so the expression of a contrary opinion does not impede you in any way in

whatever course of action you ultimately decide to take. Therefore, unless the meeting is just for conveying instructions, it is particularly important to make the participants feel confident enough to express their opinions.

You may inform them that you welcome their views even if they are contrary to yours, but will take the final decision which should then be sincerely followed by them. You may try to lighten the mood with some pleasantries or humour. You may also specifically call upon the relatively junior or shy participants and ask if they have anything to say. If you think many of them are too shy to contradict you, ask one of your subordinates to be the Facilitator, who introduces and largely conducts the meeting while you listen. You can intervene at the end after all have had a chance.

The principle of starting on time equally applies to such meetings.

5.2 Meetings where participants are colleagues or seniors

In a meeting where several or all the participants are at the same or a higher level in the hierarchy, it may not be possible for you to 'impose your will', though it may be your responsibility to get to a conclusion and/or to a desirable conclusion.

It is better to be more formal in preparing the agenda (including perhaps allotting a suggested time per subject), in setting out the ground rules etc. (at the beginning of the meeting), in the manner described in paragraph 3.2, and ensuring that relevant material is sent in advance etc. The written agenda will help you to keep the meeting on track by referring back to it when the discussion is deviating. You also need to be more careful to acknowledge all points of view and mention them when summarizing the discussion.

If the meeting is one where formal decisions are to be taken, it is desirable to ask one of your staff to brief you on the purpose, the agenda and if possible (or if known in advance) the likely stand that will be taken by the key participants. Depending on the importance of the meeting and the contentiousness of the agenda, this briefing could be done a few minutes before the meeting, or (if of high importance) at least a day or two in advance. This will help you to prepare mentally and / or speak to key participants to better anticipate issues that may arise.

Depending on the importance of the meeting, it may be a good idea to have a brief chat in advance with key participants either in person or on the phone, and this can be useful in conducting the meeting itself. Alternatively, you could ask one of your staff to go and brief one or more of the participants and then come back and de-brief you. If you can get one of the seniors who is supportive to play the role of facilitator in the meeting, it might help.

During the meeting, you may need to disagree with participants who outrank you. When doing so, take special care to be polite in your choice of words and tone. Words like "I would submit...." or "With all due respect...." or

"I must humbly point out..." or "I request you to kindly consider / reconsider..." are useful prefaces.

If there are major disagreements which do not get resolved, you may think of forming a sub-group or sub-committee of the disagreeing persons (and perhaps a more neutral person), who can be given some time to come back after a specified time with a reconciled position if possible. Even if they do not come back with a full solution, it will usually narrow down the extent of disagreement.

If any one participant objects unduly to a decision which all or most others are agreed upon, it may be a good practice to assure them that their contrary or dissenting views will be recorded faithfully in the minutes. If a participant is expressing views of superiors or their departments, this enables them to show that they had faithfully expressed the view.

If any participant is disruptive, s/he may be politely and tactfully reminded of the authority based on which, or the larger public purpose for which, the meeting is being held, including instructions from your seniors who may outrank the objector.

5.3 Meetings intended for problem-solving

For such meetings, the hierarchical structure needs to be by-passed so that staff of all different levels feel able to speak freely.

In such meetings, it is a good practice to invite people to speak approximately in the order of juniority, as staff may be reluctant to contradict their seniors. In your 'ground rules' you may mention that the meeting is not for taking any formal decision and hence you welcome all views, including those contrary to your own. Explicitly requesting contrary and contrasting views helps those junior to you to speak more freely. If junior staff make a good point, compliment them. If they make a bad point, do not dismiss it or criticize it, even if you are not accepting it.

If you are the senior-most person, while you may speak to elicit views or get clarifications, try not to give your own view until the end, or do not give it at all; in the latter case you can summarise the main ideas and think over the discussion after the meeting, before arriving at the next steps. Alternatively, you could convene another meeting in which you can give your considered views.

Such meetings should usually allow for a longer time and even a flexible duration, as problem-solving may not occur as per a fixed time allocation.

5.4 Meetings with non-government participants

In such meetings, it is important to ask participants from the government side and the others to introduce themselves mentioning the organisations or companies they are affiliated with. In such meetings, you

should take extra care to be courteous to the participants who are under no obligation to attend your meeting. Punctuality in starting and conducting the meeting is even more important.

If the purpose is to hear from them, then it should be ensured that adequate time is earmarked for that. As in the case of subordinates, private sector participants may be reluctant to give their frank opinion unless they are clearly put at ease and encouraged to speak frankly. A statement from you that you are awaiting their suggestions on how to improve or to solve a problem, or even a little bit of self-criticism, may help in emboldening them to speak frankly.

6. A Good Meeting and a Bad Meeting:

6.1 At the end of the meeting if you are able to clearly achieve the outcome and/or decide the plan of action/ timelines for each agenda, then it may be called a 'Good Meeting'.

6.2 If, however, there was no consensus on the agenda items or the attendees end up confused, or if one person dominates the discussion, or keeps repeating the points already made, or the required participants arrive late or leave early, or the 'elephant in the room' is deliberately not discussed, then such meetings are 'Bad Meetings'. In such cases, a 'course correction' may be necessary.

6.3 However, if in spite of all your efforts, you find that a meeting is going in a bad direction, it is better to break for the day and reschedule the meeting after a few days, instead of 'hurrying' through a decision and later repenting at 'leisure'. In such cases, it may be desirable to speak individually with some of the key participants who had contradictory views, think of ways of narrowing the differences and then reconvene the meeting.
