**1. Lack as well as excess of accountability can affect governance? Do you agree? Analyse.**

**Introduction:**

Accountability can broadly be defined as the obligation of those holding power to take responsibility and be held answerable for their behaviour, actions and responsibility. Accountability is important in evaluating the on-going effectiveness of public officials and government and to ensure better governance.

**Body:**

Accountability ensures actions and decisions taken by public officials are subject to oversight to guarantee that government initiatives meet their stated objectives and respond to the needs of the community they are meant to be benefiting, thereby contributing to better governance.

**Importance of Accountability:**
- Accountability ensures the rule of law and respect for institutions
- It ensures commitment to promises, manifestos and citizen's charters.
- It empowers citizens and aids their development.
- It reduces corruption and builds trust among the governors and the governed.

**Lack of Accountability will lead to:**
- Inefficiency and corruption at the level of delivery of public programs.
- Transgression of decision-making capacity by officers and arbitrary decision making of the government.
- Rising of issues like conflicts of interests, partisanship.
- Reduced professionalism and dedication.
- Dispute arousal among different government bodies or officials as none will be ready to take responsibility for decision or action taken.
- Government officials will be demoralized as there will be no accountability of good work done by them. Moreover, the senior official can claim credit of that work done.
- Misallocation of funds and wastage of resources.

**Excessive Accountability will lead to:**
- According to ARC, Accountability might act as a deterrent. The fear of consequences might lead to inactivity of government officials.
- Promote red-tapism and consume more time for decision making and service delivery.
- Backchannel mechanism may develop – corruption, informal gratification.
- Excessive Accountability curbs the free will, which ultimately reduces innovation and creativity in public service delivery.

**Conclusion:**

Overall, accountability isn't the silver bullet to ensure efficient and good governance. It must also be paired with some level of discretion to allow the system to reap all the positive impacts of accountability while avoiding the negative ones. Thus only we can ensure good governance. RTI Act is a good step in this direction.

**2. How is the government leveraging ICT to deliver its services faster and without leakages? Illustrate with the help of suitable examples.**

**Introduction:**

While Governance relates to safeguarding the legal rights of all citizens, an equally important aspect is concerned with ensuring equitable access to public services and the benefits of economic growth to all. Governance basically associated with carrying out the functions and achieving the results through the utilization of ICT (Information and Communications Technology) is E-governance.

**Body:**

**Benefits of leveraging ICT in governance:**

- **Transparency**: Use of ICT makes governing profess transparent. All the information of the Government would be made available on the internet. The citizens can see the information whenever they want to see.
- **Accountability**: Once the governing process is made transparent the Government is automatically made accountable.
- **Improved Customer Service**: E-Government allows redeploying resources from back-end processing to the front line of customer service.
- **Data management**: ICT provides efficient storing and retrieval of data, instantaneous transmission of information, processing information and data faster than the earlier manual systems.
- **Decision making**: Speeding up governmental processes, taking decisions expeditiously and judiciously, increasing transparency and enforcing accountability. It also helps in increasing the reach of government – both geographically and demographically.

**Various initiatives by government to leverage ICT are:**

**Government to Citizen (G2C) Initiatives:**

- **Computerization of Land Records**: In collaboration with NIC. Ensuring that landowners get computerized copies of ownership, crop and tenancy and updated copies of Records of Rights (RoRs) on demand.
- **Bhoomi Project**: Online delivery of Land Records. Self-sustainable e-Governance project for the computerized delivery of 20 million rural land records to 6.7 million farmers through 177 Government-owned kiosks in the State of Karnataka.

- **E-Seva (Andhra Pradesh):** The highlight of the E-Seva project is that all the services are delivered online to consumers /citizens by connecting them to the respective government departments and providing online information at the point of service delivery.

**Government to Business (G2B) Initiatives:**

- **MCA 21**: By the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. The project aims at providing easy and secure online access to all registry related services provided by the Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs to corporate and other stakeholders at any time and in a manner that best suits them.

**Central government initiatives:**

- **Immigration, Visa and Foreigner's Registration & Tracking (IVFRT)**: India has emerged as a key tourist destination, besides being a major business and service hub. Immigration Check Post is the first point of contact that generates public and popular perception about the country, thus necessitating a state of the art system for prompt and user-friendly services.
- **Public Distribution System**: Computerization of the PDS is envisaged as an end-to-end project covering key functional areas such as supply chain management including allocation and utilization reporting, storage and movement of food grains, grievance redressal and transparency portal, digitization of beneficiary database, Fair Price Shop automation, etc.
- **E-Courts**: A clear objective – to re-engineer processes and enhance judicial productivity both qualitatively and quantitatively to make the justice delivery system affordable, accessible, cost effective, transparent and accountable.
- **Direct Cash transfer**: To facilitate disbursements of Government entitlements like NREGA, Social Security pension, Handicapped Old Age Pension etc. of any Central or State Government bodies, using Aadhaar and authentication thereof as supported by UIDAI.
- **E-Kranti scheme**: This is project for linking the internet with remote villages in the country. This scheme will broaden the reach of internet services to the rural areas in the country.
- **Digital India Programme**: The Digital India would ensure that Government services are available to citizens electronically. It would also bring in public accountability through mandated delivery of government's services electronically; a Unique ID and e-Pramaan based on authentic and standard based interoperable and integrated government applications and data basis.

**[NAM, Shagun portal, AirSewa portal, E-pashuhaat, DigiLocker system etc are other examples of service delivery through ICT.]**

**Conclusion:**

Slow pace of project completion, red-tape and resistance from the side of government employees and citizens too are some challenges to be addressed for the

successful implementation of an ICT enabled governance. The concept of e-governance and m-governance has evolved in Indian scenario, and can be leveraged to build a robust governance system if ensured with the right approaches.

**3. The NITI Aayog has altered the philosophy and meaning of planning for development. Do you agree? Critically comment.**

**Introduction**

The National Institution for Transforming India, also called NITI Aayog, was formed via a resolution of the Union Cabinet on January 1, 2015. It has replaced the erstwhile Planning Commission established in 1950. NITI Aayog is the premier policy 'Think Tank' of the Government of India, providing both directional and policy inputs.

**Body**

**Uniqueness of NITI Aayog:**

- **Bottom-up approach**: NITI Aayog policy making is shaped by bottom-up approach rather than top-down approach followed by Planning Commission.
- **Co-operative federalism:** NITI Aayog has fostered co-operative federalism through structured support initiatives and mechanisms through states.
- **Competitive federalism:** NITI Aayog has put the onus of making states an attractive investment destination and timely implementation of implementing projects on the Chief Ministers, thus promoting competitive federalism among the states.
- **Customized approach**: NIT aayog engaged in outcome-based monitoring with states in sectors such as healthcare, education and water supply. It is now mooting the idea of ranking each state based on health, education and water index, and identifying "champion states".
- **Target specific:** approach of measuring and monitoring progress through ranking and encouraging competition among states is akin to the approach adopted in promoting ease of doing business reforms. Example: composite water management index.
- **Fund allocation:** Moving of fund allocation responsibilities to the ministry of finance, it has been empowered with the allocation of funds to central ministries, apart from overseeing fund flow from the Centre to the states.

**NITI Aayog is old wine in new bottle:**

- **Difficulty in implementation**: Capacity constraints, inadequate resources, lack of incentives to perform, no disincentives for non-performance, absence of policy and regulatory clarity among others.
- **Practical vs theory:** NITI Aayog has written a couple of policy papers on issues that involve the Centre and states; it's unclear how effective it has been in changing policy.

- **Customized approaches are difficult:** Differ with sector, geography and demography
- **Statistics and data**: Data plays a key role in identifying causes and designing solutions. Agencies grappling with implementation should not be burdened with additional responsibilities of data collection and analysis.

**Conclusion**

It is high time that NITI Aayog realizes that it needs to metamorphose into an organization which can transform implementation of policy reforms in the country. It should be in a position to garner available independent expertise and capacity to objectively analyse specific governance or development challenges in a non-partisan manner, and design and implement solutions at different levels of governance

**4. What are the impediments that affect quick decision making in the government? Analyse the root cause of this conundrum. Can you suggest some measures to expedite decision making?**

**Introduction**

"Governance" means: the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). So, in order to deliver Good Governance to people, Quick decision making is an essential factor to be considered.

**Body**

**Impediments that affect quick decision making in the government:**

**Lack of Data**
- Information plays vital role in decision making. A decision is made in the interest of self, organisation or society. For this the effect of a decision on various stakeholders must be known to optimise the benefit and for the decision to have integrity and be objective and inclusive.
- Eg. Hydro power project in Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh got clearance initially but was cancelled later. The environment assessment did not consider the impact of the project on the vulnerable black-necked crane as the bird was not mentioned in people biodiversity register of the region

**Issue of finance:**
- Decision can't be made in free hand, if there is a insufficiency of funds. Even if there are sufficient funds, either there is a delay in their release or misuse of funds.

**Bureaucracy**
- Bureaucracy in India suffer from issues like Red tapism, corruption and **lethargy** which delay the decision making process.

**Accountability**

- Accountability might act as a **deterrent**, as acknowledged by ARC reports. The fear of consequences might lead to **inactivity** from decision makers.

**Participative governance**
- Conflicting aspirations and demands of various section of society.
- Delay in arriving at a consensus due to engrained difference among various community and failure of government to arrive at a compromise.

**Legislations:**
- Many have raised the concern that Government laws like **RTI** stifles decision making as it makes the officials stay cautious and averse to take risk. It prevents bureaucrats from taking bold decisions because of the fear of getting questioned and public criticism. This results in policy paralysis.

**Others:**
- Pressure groups like tribal NGOs opposing projects
- Insufficient Devolution of powers Eg. Panchayats
- Political interests of various parties and individuals, litigations and stays, resources scarcity and population pressure are some of the other reasons which also leads to delays.

**Measures to expedite decision making:**
- As recommended by ARC reports, measures like :
    1. **Rewards** and **prizes** should be instated
    2. Performance reviews to be conducted and their use in deciding promotions etc.
- Govt initiative like mygov.in and **PRAGATi** portal should be extensively used.
- Usage of **Big Data** in Decision making saves lot of time and cost,
- Fixing **timeline** of projects e.g Bogibeel bridge in Assam
- Strengthen the Panchayati Raj bodies especially Gramsabha to ensure equitable and inclusive growth.
- Encouraging the **Single window system** of approvals helps in streamlining the decisions and projects and cuts time.
- Promoting Social audits and EIA.
- Cutting red tapism and codification of procedures can help in enhancing accountability in decision making.
- Even though RTI does results into cautiousness. Officials should see it less as a fear factor and more as a motivating factor.

**Conclusion**

India needs to accelerate its development. For which Faster decision making is going to be crucial for the socio-economic upliftment of people and in providing Good governance.

**5. What are your views on the provisions of compulsory retirements for civil servant under 56J? Don't you think such provisions affect the morale of bureaucracy? Critically Comment**

### Introduction

According to Rule 56J of fundamental rules for civil services, the government shall have absolute right to retire any government servant (in public interest). Though this provision existed, but still the usage was minimal. However, the present government has evoked 56J to retire many civil servants has sparked off a debate.

### Body

**Views**

- For better administration, it is necessary to remove government servant who promotes the culture of corruption and unethical practices.
- Such moves would ensure efficient and effective work by other civil servant who is more vulnerable to corruption.
- This provision is not treated as punishment under Article 31 of Indian constitution (Supreme Court in Umedbhai Patel Vs. State of Gujarat 2003 case upheld this).
- Still there are doubts raised with regards to forced retirement (Especially political motives).
- Such uncertainty of tenure leads to fear and instability by public servants.
- When Honest officers are wrongfully punished, this leads to inefficiency and demotivation for others in the department.

Morale refers to state of mind and emotions, effecting the attitude and willingness to work. 56J Affecting morale of bureaucracy:

- The young officers watching, his senior officials get terminated, might lack will to effectively implement schemes.
- Bureaucrat might not be able to take a strong stand for any issue.
- Would blindly support every decision of the government of the day, thereby compromising on foundational values of civil services.
- The one who is intended to replace the previous officer, knows what is expected out of him, thereby he just acts as a remote controller.

However, this can in turn restrict corrupt practices and cause fear for those who resort to unfair means. This will be promote the foundational values such as integrity, impartiality etc in the organization.

### Conclusion

There exists a need for setting up standards of Service records, this will ensure only honest officers are promoted to senior levels. Civil servants are lifelines of a healthy democratic society and play a major role in good governance.