1. How does e-governance lead to better performance and efficiency in administration? Explain with the help of suitable examples.

Approach- Question is straight forward. Candidate can define e-governance and state the benefits with the help of appropriate examples.

Introduction

Electronic governance or e-governance can be defined as the usage of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by the government to provide and facilitate government services, exchange of information, communication transactions and integration of various stand-alone systems and services. In other words, it is the use of technology to perform government activities and achieve the objectives of governance. Through e-governance, government services are made available to citizens and businesses in a convenient, efficient and transparent manner.

Body

E governance and better performance in administration
- e-Governance is basically a move towards SMART governance implying: simple, moral, accountable, responsive and transparent governance.
- Simple — implies simplification of rules and regulations of the government and avoiding complex processes with the application of ICTs and therefore, providing a user-friendly government.
- Moral — meaning the emergence of a new system in the administrative and political machinery with technology interventions to improve the efficiency of various government agencies.
- Accountable — develop effective information management systems and other performance measurement mechanisms to ensure the accountability of public service functionaries.
- Responsive — Speed up processes by streamlining them, hence making the system more responsive.
- Transparent — providing information in the public domain like websites or various portals hence making functions and processes of the government transparent.

Interactions in e-Governance, There are 4 kinds of interactions in e-governance
- G2C (Government to Citizens) — Interaction between the government and the citizens. This enables citizens to benefit from the efficient delivery of a large range of public services. Expands the accessibility and availability of government services and also improves the quality of services. The primary aim is to make the government citizen-friendly.
- G2B (Government to Business): It enables the business community to interact with the government by using e-governance tools. The objective is to cut red-tapism which will save time and reduce operational costs. This will also create a more transparent business environment when dealing with the government.

The G2B initiatives help in services such as licensing, procurement, permits and revenue collection.

- G2G (Government to Government)- Enables seamless interaction between various government entities. This kind of interaction can be between various departments and agencies within government or between two governments like the union and state governments or between state governments. The primary aim is to increase efficiency, performance and output.
- G2E (Government to Employees)- This kind of interaction is between the government and its employees. ICT tools help in making these interactions fast and efficient and thus increases the satisfaction levels of employees.

Benefits/ Outcomes of E-Governance

- Enhanced Transparency and Accountability.
- Expanded reach of Governance.
- Improved Public Administration.
- Enables Environment for Promoting Economic development.
- Improved service delivery in the form of better access to information and quality services to citizens.

Initiatives under e-governance

- A National Task Force on Information Technology and Software Development was set-up in 1998.
- The Ministry of Information Technology was created at the Centre in 1999. A 12-point agenda was listed for e-Governance for implementation in all the central ministries and departments.
- The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), provides a holistic view of e-Governance initiatives across the country.
- Bhoomi Project (Karnataka): Online Delivery of Land Records- Bhoomi is a self-sustainable e-Governance project for the computerized delivery of 20 million rural land records to 6.7 million farmers of Karnataka.
- e-Seva (Andhra Pradesh)- Designed to provide 'Government to Citizen' and 'e-Business to Citizen' services. 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.
- e-Courts- Launched by the Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice. The Mission Mode Project (MMP) aims at utilizing technology for improved provisioning of judicial services to citizens.

Conclusion

With the penetration of technology in the hands of a layman, e-governance aims to empower citizens with service delivery without time delay and in effective manner. India is emerging as the country with highest monthly internet usage. The more steps need to be taken to increase the penetration of services in effective and efficient manner.

2. What are the limitations of digital governance in India? Examine.

Approach

Since the question is asking you to examine, you have to probe deeper into the topic and understand the topic in detail. Here you are expected to investigate and establish the key facts and issues related to the question.

Introduction

Digital Governance can be defined as the application of communication and information technology for providing government services, exchange of information, transactions, integration of previously existing services and information portals. Governments all over the world are initiating steps to involve IT in all governmental processes due to the rapid rise of the internet and digitization.

Body

THE LIMITATIONS OF DIGITAL GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

E-governance uses IT technology to provide basic facilities to deliver government services. Its limitations are:

- Universal public Internet access and dynamic IT applications-oriented literacy is a far-fetched theory.
- Literacy in India is a key for social-economic progress, and the literacy rate is currently 74.04%.This literacy rate is the reason that acts as a challenging task for the government to implement e-governance in the country.
- Reliability of the digitally published information when rules, regulations, and requirements get changed on daily basis remains questionable.
- Inequality of Income plays an important role in proving as a challenge of digital governance. this imbalance of income will act as a major challenge for the government because there is still a very large part of the whole population that cannot even afford to spend money on satisfying their hunger; " then how can we expect them to go digital.
- The absence of interpersonal communication with and by the governmental agencies can leave many stakeholders unattended and disappointed.
- The Indian population is a bunch of diversified cultures and emotions that do not always goes in the same direction. This may play a part as a hindrance while implementing e-governance.
- It has no concrete solution to deal with a complex relationship between personal privacy and big data which could have implications for both higher surveillance and monitoring and the breach of the right to privacy.
- Complex issues are difficult to address and resolve through e-governance.
- Before Internet literacy, Internet infrastructure to interconnect computers and users on the Internet is an essential requirement. This infrastructure includes

physical hardware, transmission media, and software; without this, e-governance is a remote service.

- A personal internet infrastructure is needed to avoid giving personal data to a third party.
- Implementing, maintaining, and optimizing e-governance incurs regular costs, perhaps, this necessitates an e-governance budget.
- Its inaccessibility to the underprivileged is a serious concern.
- A prerequisite for e-governance is the full integration of e-services across administrative boundaries, which has more political implications.
- The lack of ICT skills is one of the major challenges to e-governance service delivery.

Conclusion

The e-governance applications allow citizens, trades and government entities to access available government information round the clock including every second and make the delivery of government services more effective and reachable across various government domains. The potential which e-governance has makes public administration responsive and effective, and can truly involve citizens in the process of governance by broadening their scope of interacting with policymakers throughout the policy cycle for the social and economic growth of the nation.
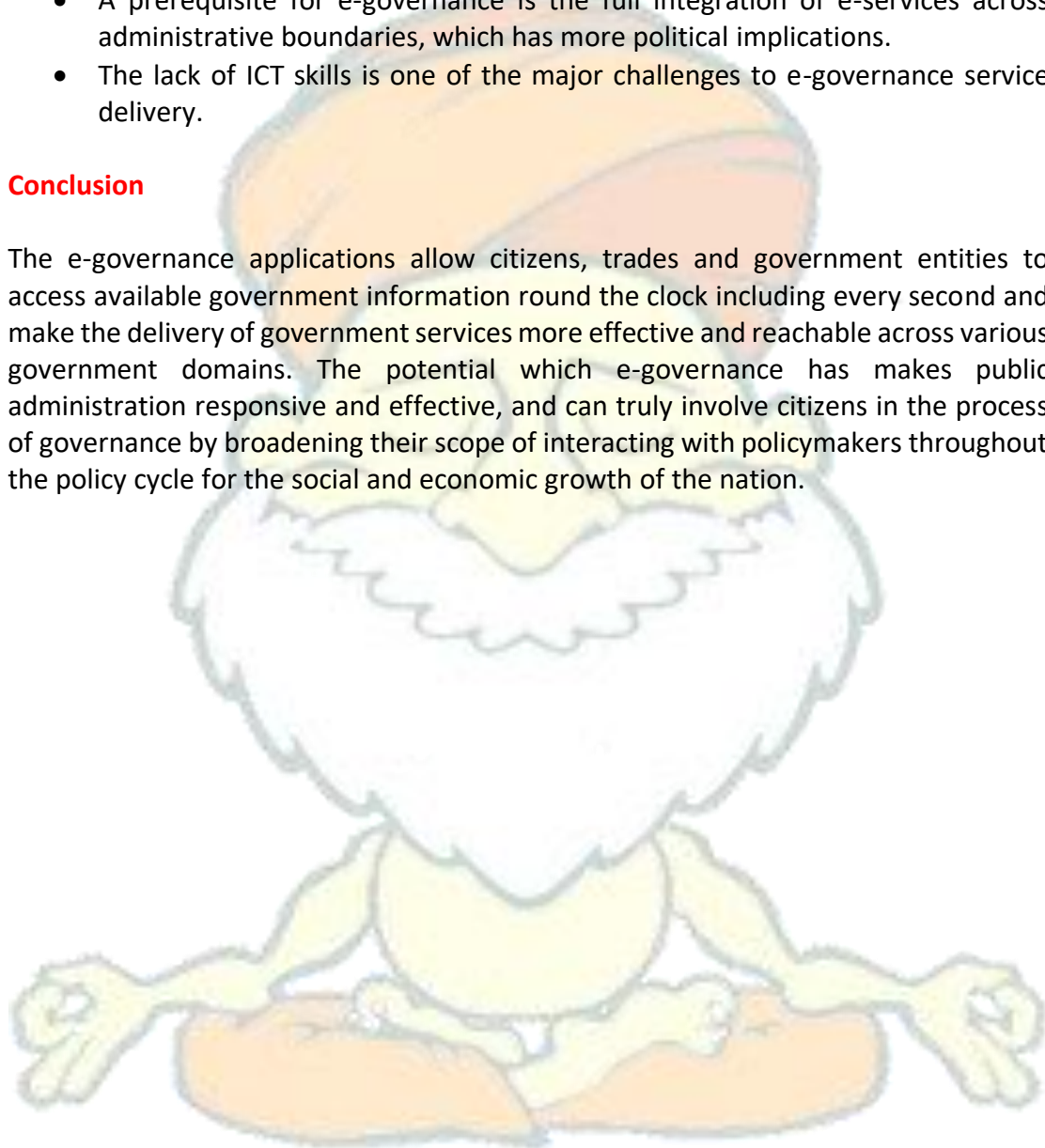
3. What are the recent steps announced by the government for improving digital literacy? Discuss.

Approach:

The question demands to explain the current measures of transparency in the policy making in the country. The answer should mention about the CBI, CVC, Lokpal and RTI as main parts and also include social audit and CAG as other accountability and transparency measures.

Introduction:

Digital India is a campaign launched by the Government of India in order to ensure the Government's services are made available to citizens electronically by improved online infrastructure and by increasing Internet connectivity or making the country digitally empowered in the field of technology. The initiative includes plans to connect rural areas with high-speed internet networks. It consists of three core components: the development of secure and stable digital infrastructure, delivering government services digitally, and universal digital literacy.

Body:

Digital India was launched by the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi on 1 July 2015, with an objective of connecting rural areas with high-speed Internet networks and improving digital literacy. The vision of Digital India programme is inclusive growth in areas of electronic services, products, manufacturing and job opportunities. It is centred on three key areas – digital infrastructure as a utility to every citizen, governance and services on demand, and digital empowerment of citizens.

- Aadhaar identity platform is one of the key pillars of 'Digital India', wherein every resident of the country is provided with a unique identity or Aadhaar number. The largest biometrics based identification system in the world, Aadhaar is a strategic policy tool for social and financial inclusion, public sector delivery reforms, managing fiscal budgets, increase convenience and promote hassle-free people-centric governance.

- Bharat Broadband Network Limited is a special purpose vehicle set-up under Companies Act by the Government of India with an authorized capital of Rs. 1000 cr. It has been mandated to create the National Optical Fiber Network (NOFN) in India. A total of around 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats spread over 6,600 Blocks and 641 Districts are to be covered by laying incremental fiber.

- The Digital Saksharta Abhiyan or National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM) Scheme has been formulated to impart IT training to 52.5 lakh persons, including Anganwadi, ASHA workers and authorised ration dealers in all the States/UTs across the country. The initiative aims at training non-IT literate citizens to become

IT literate to enable their active and effective participation in the democratic, developmental process, and enhance their livelihood too.

- DBT was initiated with the aim to reform government delivery system by re-engineering the existing process in welfare schemes for simpler and faster flow of information/funds and to ensure accurate targeting of the beneficiaries, de-duplication and reduction of fraud. DBT will bring efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability in the Government system and infuse confidence of citizen in the governance. Use of modern technology and IT tools will realize the dream of MAXIMUM GOVERNANCE MINIMUM GOVERNMENT.

- Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS) is a plan scheme conceived in the light of experience of a non-plan scheme namely - Common Integrated Police Application (CIPA). CCTNS aims at creating a comprehensive and integrated system for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of policing through adopting of principle of e-Governance and creation of a nationwide networking infrastructure for evolution of IT-enabled-state-of-the-art tracking system around 'Investigation of crime and detection of criminals'.

- e-Granthalaya is an Integrated Library Management Software developed by National Informatics Centre, (NIC), Department of Electronics & Information Technology. The application is useful for automation of in-house activities of libraries and to provide various online member services.

- eBiz is being implemented by Infosys Technologies Limited (Infosys) under the guidance and aegis of Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India. The focus of eBiz is to improve the business environment in the country by enabling fast and efficient access to Government-to-Business (G2B) services through an online portal.

- National Agriculture Market (NAM) is a pan-India electronic trading portal which networks the existing APMC (Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee) mandis to create a unified national market for agricultural commodities. The NAM Portal provides a single window service for all APMC related information and services. This includes commodity arrivals and prices, buy and sell trade offers and provision to respond to trade offers, among other services.

Conclusion:

Several academic scholars have critiqued ICTs in development. Some take issue with technological determinism, the notion that ICTs are a sure-fire antidote to the world's problems. Instead, governments must adjust solutions to the specific political and social context of their nation. Others note that technology amplifies underlying institutional forces, so technology must be accompanied by significant changes in policy and institutions in order to have meaningful impact.

4. How can e-governance initiatives help in increasing farmers' income? Illustrate.

Approach

A simple and straightforward question where in the candidate needs to illustrate how e-governance initiatives can help in increasing farmers' incomes with suitable examples and substantiation.

Introduction

Agriculture's importance in India is difficult to overemphasize where it accounts for about 13 percent of the country's GDP and employs about 45 percent of its workforce. Digital applications can play a critical role in improving yields — as well as reducing costs and increasing the market value of crops — by making it easier for farmers to obtain finance, optimize agricultural inputs, and increase direct access to markets.

Body

- A Centrally Sponsored Scheme namely National e-Governance Plan in Agriculture (NeGPA) was initially launched in 2010-11, which aims to achieve rapid development in India through use of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) for timely access to agriculture related information. In 2014-15, the scheme was further extended for all the remaining States and 2 UTs.
- Realizing the significance of new digital & emerging technologies, the Committee on Doubling Farmers' Income (DFI) has recommended further expanding and augmenting of the digital agriculture initiatives of Government of India.
- The report focused on modern management of agriculture viz. Remote Sensing; Geographical Information System; Data Analytics and Cloud Computing; Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning; Internet of Things; Robotics, Drones & Sensors and Block-chain.

E-governance initiatives helping in increasing farmers' income can be seen from the following points –

- Enabling digital financing and insurance pay-outs by facilitating consolidated information, credit scoring models, and yield forecasting models using satellite and weather data. For example, Digital applications are making crop insurance system faster and more accurate.
- The timely availability of right information: The timely information and practical solutions of the agricultural problems allows the farmers to adopt good agricultural practices, make better choices of inputs and to plan the cultivation properly. Its proper utilisation is indispensable for agriculture. Ex: Kisan Call Centres, M-Kisan etc.
- Introducing precision agriculture using data analytics, with an integrated agricultural data platform across all existing and new data sources. This

initiative could raise farm productivity by 15 to 20 percent. For example, Real-time agricultural data can help to increase yields and decrease costs.

- Implementing online agricultural marketplaces linked to a unified, nationwide market with a set of institutional market facilitators and common assaying and grading standards. Such e-marketplaces could cover 40 to 60 percent of agricultural produce sold in India, leading to 15 percent farmers' price gains, as demonstrated by pilots. For example, Technology is bringing transparency to India's agricultural markets.
- The e-Choupal model has been specifically designed to tackle the challenges posed by the unique features of Indian agriculture. 'e-Choupal' also unshackles the potential of Indian farmer who has been trapped in a vicious cycle of low risk-taking ability > low investment > low productivity > weak market orientation > low value addition > low margin > low risk-taking ability.

Government Initiatives –

- Kisan Suvidha, a Digital India initiative, is a mobile app providing information to farmers. Farmers can be informed on the weather alerts, market prices, availability of seeds and fertilisers, agro advisories etc.
- Pusa Krishi is an app designed for farmers to use in the fields. It provides information on the weather so that farmers can take measures to save crops.
- mKISAN is a mobile based advisory service linked to call centres connected to research centres. Knowledge is disseminated to farmers that is timely, specific, holistic and needs based.
- Soil Health Card promotes integrated nutrient management through the use of chemical fertilisers and organic manures. Provides soil test based recommendations and ensures quality control of fertilisers.
- National Agriculture Market (eNAM) is a pan-India electronic trading portal creating a national market for agricultural commodities through a government platform. It includes commodity arrivals and prices.
- AgMarknet provides agricultural market information and price trends through a government platform.

Conclusion

It is essential to mobilise States and UTs to own and target stipulated goals with the help of concerted and well-coordinated efforts in terms of e-governance initiatives and their implementation for the Country to achieve the goal of doubling farmers' income by the year 2022.

5. Do a critical assessment of the Digital India initiative.

Approach:

Candidates are expected to write about digital India initiative, and then do critical assessment of the digital India initiative.

Introduction

The Digital India initiative has been launched with an aim of transforming the country into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. 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.

Body

There are major nine pillars of Digital India that are mentioned below:
- Broadband Highways
- Universal Access to Mobile Connectivity
- Public Internet Access Programme
- e-Governance
- e-Kranti
- Information for All
- Electronics Manufacturing
- IT for Jobs
- Early Harvest Programmes

Progress and Impact of Digital India Programme:
- Overall 12000 rural post office branches have been linked electronically.
- Increased in electronic transactions related to e-governance as it is estimated that there are more than 100 cr mobile phones in India.
- 2, 74,246 km of optical fiber network has connected over 1.15lakh Gram Panchayats under the Bharat Net programme.

Critical assessment of Digital India initiative:
- Less co-ordination among various departments: As we know it is very large project that consist of many departments. So, timely and strong support of departments is very important for properly and timely completion of the projects.
- Implementation Cost is very high: As shown above still very high amount is required to implement the Digital India plan.
- Infrastructure: Robust and large data centre (used to store large data of entire country) are other supportive infrastructure require for National Optic Fibre Network (NOFN) project. It is planned to build for high speed broadband highway. The biggest challenge faced by 'Digital India' is the slow and delayed infrastructure development. Spectrum availability in Indian metros is about a tenth of the same in cities in developed countries.

- Excess time: Project like NOFN has been delayed several times and taken almost 2 year so, it has also delayed other related projects. The project will be successful when it completed on time.
- Contribution of Private Players: Many regulations as well as very long and delayed projects are inhibiting the entry of private organization in Digital India programme. Private organization will play a necessary role in its success.
- Rural area problem: Many people in rural areas have no Internet connection, and also the content in regional languages is not sufficient to keep the readers engaged. Only 15% of the households can access the Internet, and few people can access mobile broadband. This scenario is despite the increasing affordability of ICT environment in the country.
- Digital illiteracy: According to World Economic Forum (WEF) 2016 report, nearly 33% of Indian population is functionally illiterate, one-third of youth do not attend secondary education. There are vast differences in urban centers such as metropolitan cities and remote rural areas, where an even basic service for example electricity is unavailable to run the Digital India program.
- Cyber security: India's growing economy and digital push have caught the attention of hackers and an increasing wave of cyber attacks could soon badly impact the country.

Conclusion

The Digital India initiative is the beginning of a digital revolution, once properly implemented; it will create numerous new opportunities for the citizens. However, the Digital India program success will associate with the regulatory framework. The Government completely ensures that these regulations create such an environment in which private organizations come in, work together and create efficient ecosystems. The Government role should be line with administration that is Maximum role of Governance and Minimum role of Government, With these efforts India will be digitally ready within three years.