

1. What are the key tools of accountability in public administration? Discuss. How effective these tools have been? Critically examine.

Approach- Question is straight forward. Candidate can define accountability and discuss the tools with the help of suitable examples while examining their effectiveness.

Introduction

Accountability is a form of liability that refers to who and for what and what is accountable, which is understood as the obligation of the holder of the trust to provide accountability, presenting and reporting all activities that are his responsibility to the party who provides the trust has the authority to hold such accountability.

Body

Key tools of accountability

- **Right to information act, 2005-** The path-breaking Right to Information Act which has come into effect in 2005 has been heralded as the most significant reform in public administration in India in the last 72 years. RTI Act has lent voice to the aspirations of ordinary citizens in issues of governance. It gave the common people a defining power to shape the government schemes and policies. RTI is the most effective instrument to check corruption where the citizen has the right to take the initiative to seek information from the state.
- **The Right of Citizens for Time Bound Delivery of Goods and Services and Redressal of their Grievances Bill, 2011 (Citizens Charter)-** seeks to create a mechanism to ensure timely delivery of goods and services to citizens. It requires every public authority to publish a CC within six months of the commencement of the Act and levies a penalty of up to Rs 50,000 for failure to render services.
- **Social audit-** A social audit is a way of measuring, understanding, reporting and ultimately improving an organization's social and ethical performance. A social audit helps to narrow gaps between vision/goal and reality, between efficiency and effectiveness. Social audit fixes accountability of public servants, increases efficacy and effectiveness of local development programmes.
- **Lokpal-** The Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013 provided for the establishment of Lokpal for the Union and Lokayukta for States. These institutions are statutory bodies without any constitutional status. They perform the function of an "ombudsman" and inquire into allegations of corruption against certain public functionaries and for related matters. Jurisdiction of the Lokpal included the Prime Minister except on allegations of corruption relating to international relations, security, the public order, atomic energy and space.

To what extent tools of accountability have been successful?

- RTI- The act did brought some accountability but it lacks structural and functional robustness The Information Commissions were envisioned as the watchdogs in the implementation of the RTI act. CIC currently has more than 30,000 pending cases. Delay in appointments of Information Commissioners has resulted in huge vacancies.
- The Amendments under the 2019 bill will lead to the dismantling RTI as they empower the Central government to unilaterally decide tenure, salary, allowances and other terms of service of Information Commissioners. The Commission which is vested by law with status, independence and authority, will now function as a department of the Central government.
- Shortcomings of Citizens charter- Devoid of participative mechanisms - in a majority of cases, not formulated through a consultative process with cutting edge staff who will finally implement it. Lack of public awareness: only a small percentage of end-users are aware of the commitments made in the CC since effective efforts of communicating and educating the public about the standards of delivery promise have not been undertaken.
- Social audit- The scope of social audits is highly localised and covers only certain selected aspects. Social audits are often sporadic and ad hoc. Monitoring is informal and unprocessed. The findings of social audit cannot be generalised over the entire population.
- Lokpal- The institution of lokpal has tried to bring a much needed change in the battle against corruption in the administrative structure of India but at the same time, there are loopholes and lacunae which need to be corrected. Five years have passed since the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act 2013 was passed by parliament, but not a single Lokpal has been appointed till date indicating the lack of political will. The 2013 act did not provide concrete immunity to the whistle blowers. The provision for initiation of inquiry against the complainant if the accused is found innocent will only discourage people from complaining.

Conclusion

The Indian democracy remains procedural democracy. The well charted tools of accountability seems effective in their structure but lack tooth when it comes to the actual implementation of the acts. Lack of political will and lack of awareness among people are the reasons for the ineffectiveness. The superstructure of procedures in the acts will fail to bring the expected results unless they are provided with the necessary infrastructure and the spirit to work in a free environment.

2. How does transparency strengthen local governance? Explain.

Approach

Since the question is asking you to explain, it expects you to basically clarify a topic.

Introduction

Transparency, in a business or governance context, is honesty and openness. Increasing transparency at the local level has come to be recognised as an important element in tackling some of the challenges to sustainable development. Transparency improves governance because it enhances citizen participation, fosters greater accountability and helps combat corruption.

Body

WAYS IN WHICH TRANSPARENCY CAN STRENGTHEN LOCAL GOVERNANCE INCLUDE:

- Poor transparency at the local level increases the exclusion of poor and marginalised citizens and limits their access to resources and opportunities. Conversely, access to information can empower them.
- With transparency, access to relevant, up-to-date information can create a basis for natural exchange, allowing both official and the public to better access decisions taken and policies implemented.
- Transparency can help build trust between civil society and local government and improve the responsiveness of urban authorities. This will support greater engagement by citizens and the private sector.
- Greater transparency can also bring benefits to government themselves, directly or indirectly. Therefore, transparency is also considered to be a key component of public policy and efficiency.
- By promoting better access to information, transparency improves the accountability of all actors to development goals and each other.
- Free and guaranteed access to information enables citizens, the media and law enforcement agencies to use official records as a means to uncover cases of corruption and maladministration.
- Increasing transparency increases the risk of detection of corrupt practices and this can act as a deterrent to future corruption.
- Corruption can be tackled by activities to enhance transparency and accountability at the local level. These can be developed within 'local integrity systems' that involve all stakeholders.
- Transparency offers a strategic entry point for promoting good urban governance and encouraging public participation.
- The more a local government can provide in the way of transparency, the more it increases trust, honesty, and integrity in the government leaders.

Conclusion

Transparency is also inextricably linked to governance, one definition of which is "a way of implementing policies through cooperation whereby representatives of the government, market and civil society participate in mixed public and private networks". Transparency is an important principle of good governance since a degree of clarity and openness about how decisions are taken can help to build the capacity of the poor and/or marginalised to play a role in policy formulation and implementation; to influence these decisions that affect their lives; and to encourage decision- and policy-makers to exercise their power for the greater good.



3. What are the current institutional measures for ensuring transparency in policy making? 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:

Transparency and accountability in administration are sine qua non of participatory democracy. Government secrecy fosters disbelief of government on the part of the citizenry and transparency eliminates the wall of secrecy built against the common people by those holding power. Accountability goes beyond the mere responsibility of delivery of a task or service. It also means answerability if a service is not delivered in a timely and efficient manner such that it becomes a burden.

Body:

UNDP describes governance as “a system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political and social affairs through interactions within and among the state, civil society and the private sector.”

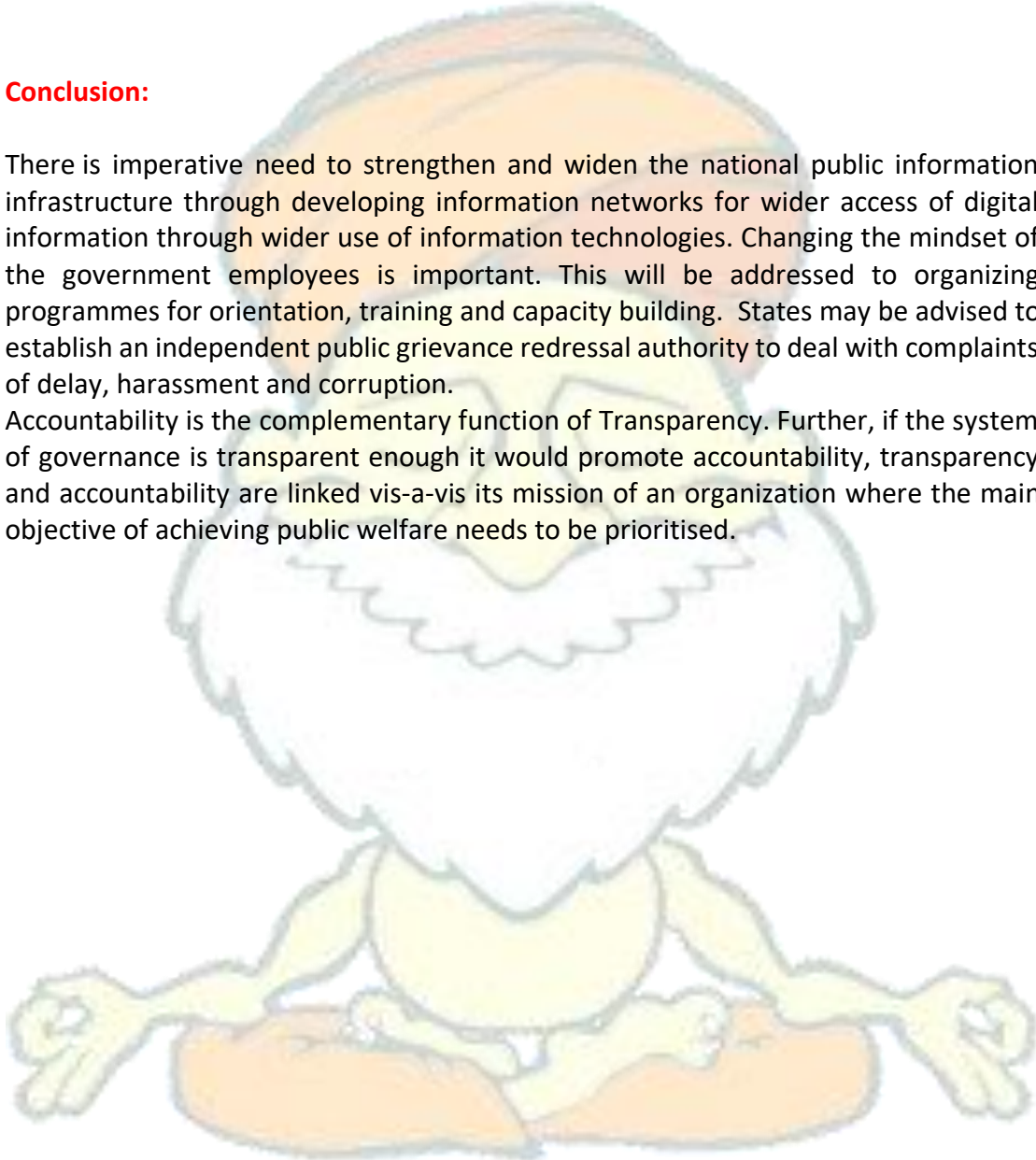
- Transparency is broadly accepted as a major principle of good governance. Transparency allows stakeholders to collect information that may be critical to uncovering abuses and defending their interests. Likewise, transparency increases accountability of the Government officials.
- Transparency means that the criteria, process and systems of decision-making are openly known to all in a public manner. Citizen’s charter becomes an important measure for transparency in institutional setup.
- The declaration of Right To Information Act (2015) set the stage for transparency in the functioning of the government and its various agencies. Under this Act, access to information from a public agency has become a statutory right of every citizen.
- Major Initiatives to Enhance Transparency in India include – Right to Information Act, Public Services Bill, Citizens Charters, e-Governance, e-Bhoomi, e-Choupal, e-procurement.
- Transparency is required to make the system of public service delivery effective. However, sheer knowledge of what entitlements are, and who is responsible for fulfilling them, is not sufficient to ensure that public services are passably and effectively delivered to the ‘intended’ recipients
- The RTI has been seen as a landmark evolution to empower public on information relating to public authority [under section 2[h)]. Its recent expansion by including CJI under its ambit shows its relevance.

- Citizen charters have ensured a way for transparent and citizen centric administration. For instance, on measures of grievance redressal, etc.
- The e – governance have ensured it by- Transparency through online public procurement.
- Delivery of welfare schemes through JDY and thus avoiding leakages and corruption.
- Models like PRAGATI for good and efficient public service and governance system.

Conclusion:

There is imperative need to strengthen and widen the national public information infrastructure through developing information networks for wider access of digital information through wider use of information technologies. Changing the mindset of the government employees is important. This will be addressed to organizing programmes for orientation, training and capacity building. States may be advised to establish an independent public grievance redressal authority to deal with complaints of delay, harassment and corruption.

Accountability is the complementary function of Transparency. Further, if the system of governance is transparent enough it would promote accountability, transparency and accountability are linked vis-a-vis its mission of an organization where the main objective of achieving public welfare needs to be prioritised.



4. What are citizen charters? Are they effective? Critically examine.

Approach

A simple and straightforward question where in the candidates need to explain what are citizen charters in the first part of the answer while in the second part, they need to critically examine the aspect of their effectiveness with proper substantiation.

Introduction

The concept of a citizen's charter was initiated by former British Prime Minister John Major in the year 1991 intended to improve quality of public service. In India, the concept of citizen's charter was first adopted at a 'Conference of Chief Ministers of various States and Union Territories' held in May 1997 in the national capital.

Body

- Citizen charter is the written voluntary declaration by service providers highlighting the standards, timeline, grievance redressal mechanism and other service-related information.
- An ideal citizen's charter must contain: Vision and mission statement of the organization, information about the nature and quality of service delivery, the time frame within which the service must be delivered, expectations from the client and grievance redressal infrastructure in case of noncompliance.

Effectiveness of Citizen's Charter –

- **Quality of service:** It promotes good governance. It increases organizational effectiveness and performance by making a public commitment to adhere to measurable service delivery standards. E.g. Bangalore police responding to distress calls within 10 minutes.
- **Accountability:** It enhances accountability by providing citizens with a clear understanding of service delivery standards, including timetables, user fees for services, and options for grievance redress. E.g. Timely delivery of Pizza failing which it will be free.
- **Service Monitoring:** It creates a way for both internal and external actors to objectively monitor service delivery performance. It ensures better service quality and grievance redressal. E.g. Details of services provided under municipality.
- **Reduce corruption:** It increases government revenues by ensuring that the money citizens pay for services goes into the government's coffers (and not into employees' pockets). E.g. online payments, refunds as a promise under charter.
- **Citizen Charter increases participation of common man in efficient working of an organisation by making the citizens aware of the aims and goals of the**

organization. It sets standards of service, allowing high expectations from an organisation, pushing them to work diligently.

- Grievance redress mechanism: makes the organization communicate with the public and improve itself based on complaints and feedback. This creates an organizational culture of learning from mistakes as well as promote participative governance.

Citizen charter, not an effective instrument –

- Lack of public awareness: While a large number of public service providers have implemented citizen's charter only a small percentage of end-users are aware of the commitments made in citizen charter.
- Charters was rarely updated: charters reviewed rarely showed signs of being updated even though some documents dating back from the inception of the citizen charter programme nearly a decade ago.
- Inadequate groundwork: Government agencies often formulate citizen's charter without undertaking adequate groundwork in terms of assessing & reforming its processes to deliver the promises made in the charter.
- Just a formality: The general perception of organisations which formulated Citizens' Charters was that the exercise was to be carried out because there was a direction from the top. They are nothing but pious statements of intention which do not contain any objective goals.
- Unrealistic Charter: In some cases, the standards/time norms of services mentioned in Citizens' Charter were either too lax or too tight and were, therefore, unrealistic and created an unfavourable impression on the clients of the Charter.
- Resistance to change: The new practices demand significant changes in the behaviour & attitude of the agency & its staff towards the citizen.
- No legal backing: The Citizen's Charter is not legally enforceable and, therefore, is non-justifiable. This had made them toothless tool to the citizens.

But citizen charter being a complete failure is an exaggeration. It has produced and is a reason for many reforms and successes like –

- Sevottam model as suggested by 2nd ARC and 6th pay commission has been adopted by many ministries and departments. Citizen charter of Indian post is one of the success stories.
- As a next step to citizen charter, states like Madhya pradesh, Kerala etc., have passed right to service.
- Citizen report card, Jan Bhaagidaari in cities like Bangalore, Delhi etc., are offshoots of citizen charter.

Way Forward –

- Include Civil Society in the process: to assist in improvement in the contents of the Charter, its adherence as well as educating the citizens about the importance of this vital mechanism.
- Hold officers accountable for results: fix specific responsibility in cases where there is a default in adhering to the CC.

Conclusion

Therefore, with effective implementation strategy, simplified meticulous design and deployment of enthusiastic staff and with adequate awareness campaigns, possible external audits, we can go a long way in making Citizen Charter a tool for better governance.



5. What role do civil servants play in India's electoral democracy? Illustrate.**Approach:**

Candidates are expected to write about civil servants in democracy in India and illustrate on the role of the civil servants in the electoral democracy of India.

Introduction

In a democracy, the civil services play an extremely important role in the administration, policy formulation and implementation, and in taking the country forward towards progress and development.

Body

Polling personnel:

- The majority of polling personnel are temporary staff recruited from virtually every branch of government. They comprise teachers, engineers, clerks, accountants, administrative and support staff from across departments including government laboratories and hospitals, security and police personnel, bus drivers, railway staff, anganwadi workers responsible for early childhood care as well as primary healthcare workers.
- Nearly five million polling personnel and police forces, according to the Election Commission of India's 2016 annual report. In the 2014 general election, the staff deployed in polling booths alone numbered 37,31,897, not counting the vast numbers of security and other personnel.

Role of civil servant in electoral democracy:

- Government staff are deployed because they would be subject to the control and discipline of the government at all times as per former Chief Election Commissioner SY Quraishi. Employees from the private sector were deliberately kept out of election duties as no administrative control could be exercised over them once the elections were over.
- The Election Commission of India consists of the chief election commissioner and two election commissioners all senior bureaucrats. They are supported by a secretariat that is composed in part of officials transferred from other departments and those recruited directly into the Commission.
- This apex body decides the schedule, the election process and its monitoring, the codes of conduct and their enforcement, how the electorate is registered and identified and how grievances are addressed.
- It deposes general observers, expenditure observers and police observers to the states as well as expenditure monitoring committees and poll code monitoring staff to all 543 constituencies.
- Despite the tight control over all staff and agencies involved, the conduct of a general election is a remarkably decentralised affair. Government officials at the state and district levels play important roles.

- At the state level, the Election Commission is represented by a chief electoral officer again a senior bureaucrat. They are assisted by several special and deputy chief electoral officers. Together, with nodal officers on deputation, they oversee voter registration and education, deal with political parties active in the state, approve campaign material and activities, monitor the media, enforce the code of conduct and address grievances.
- In a general election, the Parliamentary constituency sees maximum action. Here, the returning officer is in charge. The district administration handles the details – hiring cars, organising wheelchairs, randomising the selection of polling staff and electronic voting machines, enforcing the model code and investigating its violations, receiving and scrutinising nomination papers, securing the machines and finally, organising counting.
- The Presiding Officer is responsible for setting up the Polling Station and conduct a mock poll before the polling commences. He/she has to ensure that voting compartments are properly arranged and cables connecting balloting units and VVPATs to their respective Control Units are clearly visible.
- The Presiding Officer is also responsible for ensuring the polling begins and ends at the fixed time and that there is no delay. He/she should also keep an eye on voters, making sure no one goes away without voting. He/she also has to periodically check that ballot units and VVPATs have not been tampered with. The officer also seals the EVMs and election records and hands them over to the Returning Officer at the reception centre.
- It is a special job profile created under the EC guidelines where the micro observer reports deviations in the polling process in the polling station to the General Observer of the constituency. They are appointed in sensitive polling areas. Mostly retired civil servants are appointed.
- The returning officer of a parliamentary or assembly constituency is responsible for the conduct of elections in the parliamentary or assembly constituency concerned as per the Representation of the People Act, 1951. Returning officer is the statutory authority to conduct the polling, counting process and to decide validity of ballot paper and election commission has no power to overrule him or her.

Conclusion

The permanent Executive who form the civil servants are the backbone of the administration in a country. It is with this branch of executive that the common man mostly comes into contact with and it is through this branch that the national government establishes its contacts with the rank and file of citizens.