

1. A bureaucracy that is amenable to novel ideas and can adapt to new developments are essential for good governance. Comment.

Approach

Since the question is asking you to comment you have to express an opinion or reaction. It is important to pick out the main points/core and give one's opinion based on the information or the arguments originated from the reading. One should take a neutral ground and write facts and viewpoints.

Introduction

Since time immemorial bureaucracy has been the lifeline of any nation. It is responsible for translating the policies and programs formulated by the political authority. The quality of the citizen's life depends on the attitude and performance of bureaucracy. Moreover, in all walks of life of a person, bureaucracy plays a very significant role. There is no denying that an effective, efficient, flexible and responsive bureaucracy is a requisite to good governance. The competence of bureaucracy at all levels determines the performance and efficacy of an administrative system. They should be bold, honest and assertive in the discharge of their responsibilities. They should not hesitate to give right advice to the political authority no matter whether they accept it or not. They are the "catalytic agents of change by virtue of their education and exposures".

Body

A BUREAUCRACY THAT IS AMENABLE TO NOVEL IDEAS AND CAN ADAPT TO NEW DEVELOPMENTS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

- No civil service structure can be static in its character. It has to be dynamic and has to change with the times. As models of governance or politico-economic environments change, it has to adapt and re-engineer itself.
- Building in "redundancy," or excess capacity and back-up systems, can help protect core functions of government in times of crisis.
- Resilient bureaucracy proactively plans for a wide variety of emergencies yet maintain the adaptive organizational capacity to shift course quickly based on evolving needs.
- It can also help governments adapt to different working modalities such as home-based work, and authorize remote access to key information systems.
- The country has to ensure that rapid growth and welfare measures are inclusive for all sections of society. This necessitates an impartial, dynamic and accountable civil service which can ensure that these objectives are actually achieved.
- While coordination structures vary from one country to the next, what matters most for effective good governance is that their bureaucracy is

amenable to novel ideas and their effectiveness in allowing government actors to align priorities, implement joint responses, support one another, and foster day-to-day information sharing.

- Flexibility and adaptation can exist even within rigid bureaucratic cultures. Flatter organizational structures, with devolved but clear decision-making authority, can promote resilience and an enabling environment for innovation and strategic action.

Conclusion

Bureaucracy is often considered to be rigid not lending themselves too well to adaptation but public administrations around the world are now under intense pressure to be flexible, as they work to contain the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and mitigate its socioeconomic and health impacts. To quote Goethe, the great German writer “It is not enough to know; One must also apply. It is not enough to wish; one must also act.” There is need for the civil service to change with the times, moving away from the mindset of a regulator to one of a facilitator.

2. How does transparency deter corruption? Illustrate.

Approach:

Candidates are expected to write about the transparency in the administration and the government. Also illustrate how the transparency deters the corruption.

Introduction

The term ‘transparency’ refers to the ‘increased flow of timely and reliable information, which is accessible to all the relevant stakeholders’. In other words, transparency is the dissemination of regular and accurate information. It is about making decisions and actions visible and about sharing and disclosing the necessary information to the stakeholders involved.

Body

Transparency in Governance:

- Transparency in governance is the idea that the people have a right to know, what their government is doing, and the government has an obligation to provide that information. It means that the criteria, process and systems of decision-making are openly known to all in a public manner.
- Thus, transparency is about shedding light on rules, plans, processes and actions. It is about knowing why, how, what, and how much. It ensures that public officials, civil servants, managers, board members and businessmen

act visibly and understandably, and report on their activities and it means that the general public can hold them to account.

- 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.
- Corruption is a key driver of the growing inequality, persistent poverty and the exclusion of the most vulnerable from the gains of economic growth. Transparency deterring corruption:
- Open government increased disclosure of information and enhanced citizen participation in government decision-making is a powerful way to address the complex governance and corruption we have faced for so long.
- Promoting open government and empowering grassroots' communities to increase transparency and accountability at the local level and improve service delivery. Mitigating integrity risks which are cause of corruption in key sectors for human development such as water, health, education, and the judiciary.
- Citizen Charter is a voluntary and written document that spells out the service provider's efforts taken to focus on their commitment towards fulfilling the needs of the citizens prevents corruption in the organization.
- Transparency allows stakeholders to collect information that may be critical to uncovering abuses and defending their interests. Likewise, transparency increases the accountability of Government officials both enhance the efforts against the corruption.
- Transparency makes sure that people know exactly what is going on and what is the rationale of the decisions taken by the Government or its functionaries at different levels maintains the propriety in the administration.
- However, sheer knowledge of what entitlements are, and who is responsible for fulfilling them, is also sufficient to ensure that public services are passably and effectively delivered to the 'intended' recipients and curb leakages and corruption.
- Greater transparency may bring about lower rates of political corruption because it can facilitate legal, administrative or electoral mechanisms of punishment. Formal and informal mechanisms of transparency and accountability encourage government officials to act in the public interest. Without public access to records of governance and other information, public resources may be squandered and mismanaged.
- E-Governance initiatives for providing transparency in administration include a framework for efficient handling of public grievances through the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System which is already in place.
- 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.

Conclusion

Transparency is necessary to guarantee good governance. Information is valuable to the electorate for democratic processes to function successfully. Citizens have an interest in knowing about government actions and processes, allocation and redistribution decisions, market barriers and restrictions, tax and subsidy incidences and so on.

3. Should the civil servants be made accountable for the recent surge in COVID cases? Critically comment.

Approach

The candidate needs to comment on the aspect of whether civil servants should be held accountable for the recent surge in COVID cases in India and also critically comment on the aspect with proper substantiation.

Introduction

Almost overnight, the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has transformed the work and workplaces of the civil servants. Civil servants are playing a leading role in the response to the pandemic. Civil Servants are finding novel ways to design and channel unprecedented economic stimulus spending and manage severe spikes in unemployment.

Body

Recently, India's COVID tally climbed to 1,32,05,926 with a record spike of 1,45,384, according to the Union Health Ministry. There is no clarity on why the numbers are rising so sharply, with a section of people blaming the civil servants for the recent rise. Their arguments can be seen from the following points –

- Civil servants are important actors at the forefront of framing, implementing and evaluating the state's response to the pandemic, and uniquely positioned between the political executive and India's massive frontline state, which necessitates them towards being pro-active in controlling a pandemic.
- There was a lowering of guard and complacency in the approach of executive under civil servants, after the first wave of pandemic subsided. Poor implementation of mask and social distancing norms are a case in point. Allowing of Kumbh Mela in the middle of a pandemic can also point to failure of civil servants as well as executive, where the event risks turning into a super spreader event.
- Civil servants have control over the testing capacity and proactive testing approach would've helped in avoiding this massive surge. Consistently high TPR (Test Positivity Rate) in some states is a clear example of the same.

- Information dissemination by the authorities diminished as compared to last year, when there used to be daily/weekly briefings, which helped in creating scientific awareness in media and public. Information regarding vaccines and newer variants, as well as COVID appropriate behavior was not effectively communicated to the larger public.
- Control over vaccine production and distribution is another factor where civil servants played a major role, which saw poor performance. Centralizing tendencies and red tapism led to slow roll out of essential vaccination drive, which would've curtailed the second wave.
- At the same time, it is important to remember that the abrupt and brutal disruption by the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown the public service and civil servants into a frenzy, forcing them to not only deal with fighting its spread but trying to manage its accompanying socioeconomic fallout. Here, the second wave's rapid spread has many other factors, some of which include –
- People not following COVID-19 protocol, including people not continuing with precautions even after being vaccinated, and a sluggish vaccination drive are responsible.
- A new factor is emerging mutants -- both imported and home-grown. Here, the UK strain is considered more virulent and is one of the reasons for rapid spread.
- Flaunting of rules and protocols by the political executive, especially in election rallies and religious congregation, which involve huge crowds as well as capacity to spread virus far and wide.
- Population which escaped the first wave of pandemic is one of the reasons for present rapid growth as earlier unaffected population provides a fertile ground for the virus and the spread in second wave shows similar pattern.
- During the Covid-19 pandemic, the civil service's role in India's governance and administration increased further. With most people including politicians staying home for their safety, the health, economic and social crises were handled by collectors/magistrates at the district level, chief secretaries at the states and union territories' level, and empowered groups of secretaries at the national level.
- Further, the Indian state and bureaucracy rose to the occasion and responded well in time of crisis, demonstrating capabilities to mobilize, motivate, innovate and communicate that are unfortunately missing in action in its routine functioning.
- The civil servants felt the autonomy given to them due to lack of political interference in administrative actions, and the consequent ability to deploy all resources to a single cause, enhanced their performance.
- Associations representing officers of central civil services, including the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS), have formed an initiative called 'Caruna' to support and supplement the government's efforts in fighting coronavirus.

Conclusion

In the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, civil servants are working under life-threatening circumstances where they are both expected to deliver services despite the pandemic while at the same time suffering its impact, either by being directly infected or having family members who are. Recognizing this fact becomes important as also the fact that civil servants are also the frontline warriors or COVID warriors and people to collaborate and co-ordinate to fight this virus menace to emerge victorious.

4. What are the key objectives of good governance? Also, discuss the principles of good governance.

Approach:

Candidates are expected to write about the good governance and its objective first and then discuss the principle of the good governance.

Introduction

According to a document released by the World Bank in 1992 titled, 'Governance and Development', good governance is an essential complement to sound economic policies and is central to creating and sustaining an environment which fosters strong and equitable development.

Body

Good governance:

The World Bank defines governance as 'how power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development.'

Objectives of good governance:

To provide the foundation for a high-performing organisation the achievement of goals and sustainable success requires input and support from all levels of an organization.

To ensure the organisation is well placed to respond to a changing external environment business today operates in an environment of constant change.

To encompasses the processes by which organisations are directed, controlled and held to account. It includes the authority, accountability, leadership, direction and control exercised in an organisation.

Principles of the good governance:

- **Consensus oriented:** Consensus oriented decision-making ensures that even if everyone does not achieve what they want to the fullest, a common minimum can be achieved by everyone which will not be detrimental to

anyone. For this, a proper understanding of the society's historical, cultural and social contexts is needed; along with sustainable human development.

- **Participation:** A vital cornerstone of good governance is participation by all sections of society. This includes men and women, vulnerable sections of society, backward classes, minorities, etc. Representative democracy does not necessarily translate into the representation of all people. This is where good governance comes into play.
- **Transparency:** This means easy access to information to all concerned and especially to those being affected by the decisions made. This also implies information is available to the media. Another important facet is that all decisions are taken and enforced in such a manner that all rules and regulations are followed.
- **Rule of Law:** Rule of law warrants that fair legal frameworks are implemented impartially. It also means protection of human rights. This also requires an adequate and impartial judiciary and police force.
- **Responsiveness:** This implies that processes and institutions should serve all stakeholders within a reasonable time frame.
- **Equity and inclusiveness:** Good governance assures an equitable society. In such a society, no one or no section feels left out and marginalized. Opportunities should be given to all irrespective of their backgrounds, and no one should be discriminated.
- **Effectiveness and efficiency:** Good governance implies that institutions and processes create results that meet the wants of society while making optimal use of resources at their disposal. This also encompasses the sustainable use of natural resources and the conservation of the environment.
- **Accountability:** This is a key trait of good governance. Accountability is not possible without the rule of law and transparency. Accountability should be there not just for the government, but also for citizens, the private sector, industry, NGOs, and all stakeholders.

Challenges in India for pursuing the good governance:

- **Criminalization of Politics:** According to the Association of Democratic Reforms, 43% of Members of Parliaments of Lok Sabha 2019 are facing criminal charges. It is a 26% increase as compared to 2014.
- **Centralization of Administrative System:** Governments at lower levels can only function efficiently if they are empowered to do so. This is particularly relevant for the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), which currently suffer from inadequate devolution of funds as well as functionaries to carry out the functions constitutionally assigned to them.
- **Corruption:** According to the Corruption Perception Index - 2019 (released by Transparency International, India's ranking has slipped from 78 to 80.

Conclusion

There is a need to reformulate our national strategy to accord primacy to the Gandhian principle of ‘Antyodaya’ to restore good governance in the country. India should also focus on developing probity in governance, which will make the governance more ethical

5. Why good governance at the local level is imperative for the realization of national aspirations? Examine.

Approach-

Candidate can define good governance and then outline the importance of grassroot level institutes in the process of realization of national aspirations.

Introduction

According to World Bank, good governance is defined as “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development”. It is participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law.

Body

What constitutes good governance?

- Consensus Oriented – Mediates differing interests to meet the broad consensus on the best interests of a community. Example: GST council-Centre and states together.
- Participation – People should be able to voice their own opinions through legitimate immediate organizations or representatives. Example: MP’s, Pressure Groups.
- Equity and Inclusiveness – People should have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being. Example: affirmative policies for women, children and backward classes.
- Accountability – Governmental institutions, private sectors, and civil society organizations should be held accountable to the public and institutional stakeholders. Example: elections.
- Transparency – Information should be accessible to the public and should be understandable and monitored. Example: RTI, Draft bills made public to get feedback.
- Responsiveness – Institutions and processes should serve all stakeholders, respond to their grievances. Example: GST council rationalizing tax structure and slew of measures keeping in mind MSME sector, PRAGATI Platform.

Importance of good governance at grass root level

- Panchayati raj institute was introduced after undergoing structural adjustment programme. India was under compulsion to introduce good governance.
- Good governance required transparency and accountability, which cannot be achieved without citizen centric governance.
- But there has been a massive failure of this experiment and the empowerment remains temporary without much financial powers to local levels.

Why local good governance imperative for realization of national aspiration?

- Grassroots involvement is important for social accountability. It helps in civic engagement to promote conservation and sustainable development.
- Deeper outreach of grassroots organizations and SHGs helps information dissemination easier. Moreover, most of them are women centric which provides opportunity to bring behavioral change.
- Grass roots governance would allow proper distribution of funds and resources of any scheme and would help in better implementation of laws and rules.
- Thus grass root governance can ensure effective strategies for conservation and development efforts. 'Citizen-centric governance' (2nd ARC) is important for inclusive development and people's participation would ensure democratic way of tackling problems.
- Faster decision making- Every small decision to be taken on ground level will take lots of time if directions have to arrive from the top most level. By decentralisation of power, smaller decision can be implemented easily without waiting for directions unnecessarily.
- Precision- The decentralisation allows the authorities to focus on the group of beneficiaries more precisely. This precision can ensure that welfare measures of the government reaches every citizen without any discrimination.

Conclusion

Local level governance forms backbone of our development process. If they are not empowered enough and not made financially independent we might loose on a big asset. For realization of true potential we have to decentralize more powers and more funds to local institutes of governance and make them agents of development, through good governance.

6. How does failure of governance create challenges for the health sector? Illustrate.

Approach:

Since the question is asking you to illustrate it mean you have to 'explain' whereby you are asked to show the workings of something, making use of definite examples and statistics if appropriate to add weight to your explanation.

Introduction

The healthcare industry is facing many changes that pose new challenges to medical organizations big and small. The COVID-19 pandemic has produced mass market and governance failure in global private health, particularly in tertiary care. In particular, the fast-evolving government regulations, technological innovations, and patient expectations create a new environment in which running a medical practice isn't just about treating patients anymore.

Body

HOW DOES FAILURE OF GOVERNANCE CREATE CHALLENGES FOR THE HEALTH SECTOR

- The COVID-19 pandemic very quickly witnessed numerous and catastrophic instances of governance failure in health. Be it failing supply of personal protective equipment (PPE), medical masks, gloves and surgical gowns, as well as medical oxygen or the lack of vaccine production capacity.
- Indian states have moved through their own trajectories of responses to the service and pricing crisis, with even pro-market ruling BJP administrations becoming increasingly aggressive toward private providers.
- Despite multiple states capping prices for treatment of patients, and despite sequestration of beds and capacities by legal means and emergency powers, the situation has been anarchic, with tensions and real divisions emerging between state governments and private providers.
- Firms are still routinely breaching price caps and gouging, turning away COVID patients and hoarding beds, with reports of unseemly black markets for beds emerging.
- States have reacted with the sequestration of hospitals, enforced openings, prosecution, and other measures, but circumvention of law and emergency measures have continued through nonetheless.
- The startling chaos in India reveals that governments have not factored in reliance of profit-seeking and market-driven providers into national pandemic preparedness, and the mismatch between private sector reliance in LMICs' national health systems and pandemic emergency needs.

Conclusion

The pandemic has sharply reminded us once again how health policies and increasing privately-focused health systems fail to meet both national needs and those of the most marginalized and vulnerable.

Amid widespread national governance failures—either crisis bound or historic—with regards to poorly resourced public health services and burgeoning private health—governments have responded with increasing legal and financial interventions into national health markets. In contrast, multilateral governance has been path dependent with regard to on-going commitments to privately provided health.

7. What are the issues pertaining to the autonomy of institutes of higher education in India? Discuss.

Approach

A simple and straightforward question where in the candidate needs to discuss the issues with respect to the autonomy of institutes of higher education in India.

Introduction

UNESCO defines institutional autonomy as, “a degree of self-governance, necessary for effective decision making by institutes of higher education regarding their academic work standards, management, and related activities”. Here, Academic autonomy is a generic concept, implying self-governance of a university and not limited to a narrow sense of designing the academic curriculum.

Body

- Higher education in India is highly centralised and institutions have very limited autonomy, regardless of their public or private status. This is especially true with colleges.
- The Gajendragadkar Committee Report (UGC, 1971) states “The concept of University autonomy is often misunderstood. The concept of university autonomy means that it would be appropriate on the part of democratic legislatures not to interfere with the administration of university life, both academic and non-academic.”
- Presently, Higher education in India is highly centralised and institutions have very limited autonomy, regardless of their public or private status. This is especially true with colleges. Universities have some substantive autonomy in theory while private institutions have more leeway in terms of procedural autonomy.
- In India, there is a skewed allocation of limited funds to central universities while state universities face a paucity of funds. Moreover, the existing system of governance and regulation needs to be re-examined.
- Under the affiliation system, most parent universities are responsible for regulating admission, setting curricula, and conducting examinations for the affiliated colleges under the general oversight of the UGC.
- The system of command and control does not promote accountability. The institutions are constantly subjected to governmental pressures and

decisions are often made based on non-academic considerations. This intervention starts at the highest level with the appointment of the Vice Chancellor.

- Academic curricula of professional courses are subject to oversight by their professional councils. Both public and private universities can modify curriculum and propose new programmes with UGC approval but have no or limited autonomy over areas like fees.
- Private universities also have their fees determined by state committees headed by prominent public figures who ensure that these institutions are not profiteering. Neither public nor private universities can determine faculty or staffing salaries.
- The current systems of regulation-based autonomy have ignored the recent demographic and compositional shifts in education. Currently, the number of private institutions is almost twice that of government institutions. Yet, the model of governance has been relatively slow to change.
- Finally, most of the existing regulations are based on the affiliating model which does not seek to address the aspirational value of Indian institutions in quality and diversity. In short, institutions of higher education (IHEs) in India need to be looked through a different lens to conceive the reality of autonomy.

National Education Policy 2020, a blueprint for the development of education over the next 10 years, proposes a departure from the current top-down system to allow considerable autonomy to institutions. Its measures can be seen from the following points –

- Under graded autonomy, academic, administrative and financial autonomy will be given to colleges on the basis of their accreditation status under the three categories, with top research universities having the highest levels of autonomy.
- A National Research Foundation or NRF will be set up as a top body for promoting a strong research culture and building research capacity across higher education.
- The NRF will identify research-focused universities and help to develop their state-of-the-art research facilities to enable researchers to undertake highly advanced, innovative and pioneering research.
- Universities and colleges restructured in the other two categories will focus more on teaching and granting degrees, with the affiliation of colleges to degree-granting universities phased out in 15 years and a stage-by-stage mechanism established for granting graded autonomy.
- Rather than the overarching University Grants Commission, the current regulatory body which will be scrapped under the NEP 2020 proposals, boards of governors would supervise the day-to-day operations of individual universities.

Conclusion

The post-Covid-19 time is ripe to act and seize the opportunity to set things right in the higher educational sector where a data-driven approach can help in providing a new measure of institutional autonomy and academic freedom in India where introducing an Indian Index of Institutional Autonomy (i3A) can be a good start.

8. What measures have been taken to improve the employability of graduates in India? Why haven't we achieved much success on this front? Examine.

Approach

The candidate needs to highlight the measures taken in India to improve the employability of graduates in the first part of the answer while the second part should examine the reasons for limited success on this front of employability of graduates.

Introduction

Employability and education have been two of the top issues for the citizens of the country. Here, employability skills are defined as a range of competencies or abilities that are necessary for graduates to gain success in the labour market at all employment levels which benefits themselves, the community and the economy.

Body

How Government is Increasing Employability of Engineers in India –

- AICTE in association with various organisations carries out an employability Skill Test of pre-final and final year graduate students of AICTE approved institutions annually.
- To increase the employability of graduates in the country, Ministry of Human Resource Development is working along with Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) under National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) to undertake Apprenticeship/Internship embedded degree programmes with the core focus on the development of knowledge, skills, aptitude and on-job training.
- Furthermore, the government has also recommended that courses on nine emerging technologies like AI, data science, IoT, cyber security, robotics, design, quantum computing, AR/VR, Block chain and 3D printing and should be introduced in UG engineering courses.
- In order to revamp the engineering curriculum and to impart the requisite skill set to the students to enhance the employability of engineering students, AICTE has approved an action plan with the following objectives:

Induction Training, Revision of Curriculum, Mandatory Internships, Industry Readiness and Mandatory Accreditation.

- Further, AICTE is implementing schemes namely National Employment Enhancement Mission (NEEM) and Employability Enhancement Training Program (EETP) to enhance the employability of the students.
- In addition, AICTE has also partnered with Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), Govt of India, Internshala, NETiit and LinkedIn to provide internship opportunities and industry exposure to students for aligning their technical knowhow with industry requirements.
- Apart from that, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) is taking the following measures to increase the employability of graduates in the country, particularly engineering graduates:
 - Preparation of outcome-based model curriculum for Diploma, Undergraduate (UG) and Post Graduate (PG) courses in Engineering and PGDM/MBA Courses.
 - Exam reforms and formulation of comprehensive teacher's training. 8 modules are proposed for the incumbent as well as in-service teachers.
 - Mandatory internship, Revision of model curriculum, and Industry readiness accreditation.

The employability of the fresh graduates has risen as a result of different measures taken by Government. As per the data maintained by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), the overall employability has increased from 34% to more than 45% in the last five years. This showcases the success of governmental initiatives, but these have been limited in nature. The reasons for the same include –

- Uncertainty among graduates: Lack of focus and definite career path among graduates. As per a latest report, around 40% of the engineering graduates is preparing for various competitive exams in government sector which is not even related to engineering.
- Sanction of new institutes: The ease of securing approval from the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to set up engineering colleges and other higher education regulators has led to the mushrooming of institutes. These are understaffed and lack in qualified, competent and suitable faculty members. E.g. the number of approved institutes in Maharashtra alone is around 650.
- Teaching methods: Most of the institutions still follow traditional way of teaching without realizing that the information is available over the internet and the need of the hour is the application level teaching for practical purposes.
- There is no policy framework for participation of foreign universities in higher education. Also, there is no overarching funding body to promote and

encourage research and innovation. Public funding in the sector remains inadequate.

Conclusion

In today's era, staying updated with technological advancements and rapid changes in surrounding are of prime importance for both success and growth of Individual and employability where to effectively skill, up-skill and re-skill India's workforce, all stakeholders must coordinate upon improving the larger economic prospects as well as new end employment prospects.

9. Do a critical assessment of India's performance on the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Approach

Candidates are expected first to write about the sustainable development goals and then do critical assessment of India performance to achieve the SDG.

Introduction

Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. This most widely accepted definition of Sustainable Development was given by the Brundtland Commission in its report Our Common Future (1987). Sustainable development (SD) calls for concerted efforts towards building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and planet.

Body

India got committed to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals India played a significant role in making the declaration and its progress in achieving these goals are crucial such as:

- There is notable progress on SDGs 6, 7, 9 and 11. While, a decline in the Maternal Mortality Ratio has contributed to our improved performance in the area of 'Good Health and Well-Being', ramping up toilet coverage under Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan has raised the country's score on 'Clean Water and Sanitation'.
- The commendable performance on Goal 7 is due to expanded access to clean cooking fuel and the government's massive electrification drive. Similarly, on Goal 9, the progress can be attributed largely to a significant improvement in rural road connectivity and increased mobile phone penetration.

- Our performance on Goal 11 has been boosted by better access to housing through the Pradhan Mantri Aawas Yojana as well as more widespread adoption of door-to-door waste collection and processing.
- NITI Aayog has undertaken a mapping of schemes as they relate to the SDGs and their targets, and has identified lead and supporting ministries for each target. They have adopted a government-wide approach to sustainable development, emphasising the interconnected nature of the SDGs across economic, social and environmental pillars.
- The reforms have included fiscal consolidation, inflation targeting, improved governance all around, accelerated infrastructure development (SDG 9), curbing of corruption (SDG 16), Aadhaar Act for providing unique identity.
- The MGNREGA provides a legal guarantee of a minimum of 100 days of wage employment programme generated over 2 billion person-days of employment (SDG 8) during the last year. Women and disadvantaged groups have been the largest beneficiaries (SDG 5 and SDG 10) of the programme accounting for 56% and 39% of person-days of work generated during last year.
- There is now compelling evidence that rapid growth India has achieved following the economic reforms initiated in 1991 has led to significant reduction in poverty. The evidence shows that poverty fell across all economic, social and religious groups nationally and in all states in the post-reform era.
- Kerala's top rank is attributed to its superior performance in providing good health, reducing hunger, achieving gender equality and providing quality education. Himachal Pradesh ranks high in providing clean water and sanitation, in reducing inequalities and preserving mountain ecosystem.

Still there is need to strengthen institutional arrangements by identifying support departments and defining roles and responsibilities let us assess conditions:

- As per Sustainable Development Report 2020 India has been ranked 117th in the index with overall score of 61.92. The score can be depicted as the percentage of SDG achievement.
- While this progress is heartening, there are certain indicators where focussed attention is required. For instance, India's tuberculosis notification rate is still high, thus limiting our overall progress on Goal 3.
- The CAG found deficiencies regarding the adaption of the 2030 Agenda and stressed upon the need to develop a roadmap to be aligned with defined milestones to be achieved in year 2020, 2025 and 2030, which it found has not been attempted yet. The auditor was concerned that the vision document was still under preparation and states did not complete the exercise to prepare policy documents.
- The agency squarely blamed the Union Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation for its failure to finalise the National Indicator Framework (NIF). The delay in approval of NIF held up finalisation of monitoring and reporting framework on implementation of SDG.

- The audit highlighted that three crucial ministries of AYUSH, tribal affairs and home affairs were not involved in the national consultation on transitioning from Millennium Development Goals to SDGs.
- In states, the health spending as a percentage of total expenditure, ranged from 3.29 to 5.32 per cent, which shows that there is a need for considerable augmentation.
- COVID-19 pandemic hit at a time when the SDGs were gaining traction and a significant number of steps have been taken and were making good progress. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruptions to plans and timelines.

Conclusion

India will continue to pursue the implementation of the SDG agenda through close collaboration between the national and sub-national governments as well as active participation of all other relevant stakeholders. Localisation of SDGs is crucial to any strategy; essentially we need better adapting, planning, implementing and monitoring the SDGs from national to local levels by relevant institutions to achieve goals.

10. What are the components of social security? Discuss. How is India performing on the key indicators of social security? Examine.

Approach- Question is straight forward; candidate can define social security and give account of India's performance with the help of suitable government schemes.

Introduction

According to International Labour Organisation, "Social security is the protection that a society provides to individuals and households to ensure access to health care and to guarantee income security, particularly in cases of old age, unemployment, sickness, invalidity, work injury, maternity or loss of a breadwinner".

Body

What constitutes social security?

- The principle of Universality of social security is enshrined in various goals related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Right to a Standard of Living- adequate for the health and well-being, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services.
- Right to Income Security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond any person's control.

- In the ILO conventions and UN instruments, it is considered to be a basic human right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) recognises the right to social security for all. It helps the recipients to ensure their rights to family protection and assistance, an adequate standard of living and adequate access to healthcare.
- Social security acts as an umbrella for people during adverse situations. Social welfare is not possible without social security. It acts as a buffer against all odds in the time of need. It helps in lifting millions of people out of poverty and thus, raises people's standard of living.

Types of social security in India

- Gratuity, Old-age pension
- Health and medical insurance
- Maternity benefits
- Disability benefits, Minimum Wages Act

Need of social security in India

- Majority of Work Force is in Unorganised Sector: The organised sector workers constitute less than 10% of all workers in India.
- The lockdown necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic has caused misery to almost all sections of society, but the vulnerable section viz. people below the poverty line, migrant workers have been affected the most.
- Too Expensive Private Healthcare Expense: Out-of-pocket health expenses, which create barriers to seeking healthcare and can push marginal households into poverty, form as much as nearly 90% of private expenditure on health.
- Also, in a dynamic market-economy, workers will lose jobs at a faster pace with technological changes. Thus, workers need to keep learning to stay productively employed.
- Covid-19 has highlighted the urgency for providing universal free health care. It has demonstrated that private health care can be afforded only by the wealthy.

Performance of India in social security

- India has a broad aim of social protection programs, but the overall public expenditure on social protection (excluding public healthcare) is only approx. 1.5% of the GDP, lower than many middle-income countries across the world.
- However, in spite of great attention given to skills development in the last 15 years, the results are not very encouraging.

What can be done?

- Skill Development via 'Learning while Earning' Model-The principle of "learning while earning" should be more vigorously applied to improve India's skill development systems.

- MGNREGA has proved its utility by providing employment to millions of workers who have reverse migrated. Thus, there is a case for extending this programme to urban areas with municipal bodies
- Providing Universal Health Coverage-There is a need to establish the Ayushman Bharat-National Health Agency at all levels of governance for management of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana (PM-JAY).
- Atal pension yojana- The APY will be focussed on all natives in the unorganized sector, who join the National Pension System (NPS) managed by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)
- Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) and Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) would give protection cover in the terrible occasion of death by any reason/demise or inability because of a mishap.
- The target of raising the share of expenditure on health care to 2.5% of the GDP, as envisaged by the National health policy 2017, in the next two years would be a good beginning.

Conclusion

Covid-19 pandemic exposed our vulnerabilities of social securities. The poor healthcare and social infrastructure needs immediate revamping to provide BASIC right to life to the marginalised and vulnerable.

11. 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.

12. 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

13. 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), and 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.

14. 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, and 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.

15. 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 centres 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.

16. 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.

17. 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

18. 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.

19. 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 promotes 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., is 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.

20. 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 staffs 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 deputes 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 forms the civil servants is 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.

