

Q-1- Analyse the impact of e governance initiatives such as e-filing of taxes and online tracking of public services on reducing corruption and promoting transparency?

Approach -

In this question candidates need to analyse the impact of e governance initiatives such as e filing of taxes and online tracking of public services on reducing corruption and promoting transparency .

Introduction -

E-governance is ubiquitous and broad,nearly every form of government service and its delivery have the potential to fall within the remit of e-tools and services. Government platforms provides transparency portals with information on various government activities and helping reducing corruption and promote transparency.

Body -

Electronic governance or e-governance implies government functioning with the application of ICT (Information and Communications Technology). Hence e-Governance is basically a move towards SMART governance implying: simple, moral, accountable, responsive and transparent governance.

- The development of e-government has not necessarily been driven by policy goals to prevent or reduce corruption. Nevertheless, an important consequence of the increased use of effective e-government tools is reduced interface with government officials, as well as better documentation.
- This is relevant to the private sector because companies' bribery risk assessments often include information on the level and frequency of interactions with public officials in connection with business activity.
- Such interactions are often classified as potentially presenting increased bribery risks often warranting risk mitigation measures.
- The alternative to such measures is to reduce or eliminate personal contact with government officials. The presumption is that by removing face-to-face exchanges with public officials, opportunities for bribery will decline or cease altogether.
- The evolution of the concept of e-government, related definitions and its scope are outlined below, followed by the correlation between corruption and e-government
- Its purpose is to reduce corruption and increase accountability. It also enables a Citizen Centrist Administration where citizens can participate effectively.

Importance of E-Governance in digitization era:

- Transforming lives: The government has been trying hard for digitization to induce economic inclusiveness and social transformation, through initiatives like, 'Digital India', 'Make in India' and Skill India.
- India, as a result, is gearing up for an era of increased digitization. E-governance is important to distribute various benefits of economic growth due to digitization

to all the sects of society. Blending technology and citizen centricity, catalyzing, government operations to create a safer, more efficient and sustainable society.

- Good governance: The complex nature of governance in India demands a holistic approach. Shedding old methods and embracing new technologies in governance, would lead to faster, smarter and more pro-active government needed in the age of digitization catering its citizens.
- Modern problems : With world moving towards new era of digitization, it is necessary for government to adopt modern methods of governance to tackle new threats of modern time like cyber fraud, fake news etc.
- Ease of Business: It is important for making doing business for economic growth of the country. Timely approval of projects and tracking of the projects and policies is important and can be made easy through E-governance.
- Ease of services: E-governance include the digitization of land records, single-window handling of grievances and maintenance of essential services; easing tax payments and government dues; along with internet based delivery of services. It led to faster work culture with reduction in inefficiencies and better services to Indian citizens.
- Real Time Governance: With the help of E-Governance, the government can swiftly resolve citizen grievances and monitor infrastructure projects, incidents and weather & climatic events across the state in real time, leveraging technology services.
- Cost Reduction: Most of the Government expenditure is appropriated towards the cost of stationary. Paper-based communication needs lots of stationary, printers, computers, etc. which calls for continuous heavy expenditure. Internet and Phones makes communication cheaper saving valuable money for the Government.
- Transparency: Use of ICT makes governance transparent. Most of the information of the Government is made available on the internet. The citizens can see the information whenever they want to see. E-governance helped in reducing corruption by online track of various government activities.
- Accountability: As the governing process is made transparent the Government is automatically made accountable. Accountability is answer-ability of the Government to the people.
- Many e-government initiatives introduce technology to improve efficiency and avoid potential human bias. Electronic tax filing (e-filing) is an important example, as developing countries increasingly adopt online submission of tax declarations to replace in-person submission to tax officials.
- Firms that e-file have lower compliance costs, spending five fewer hours each month on fulfilling tax obligations.
- Among firms previously more likely to evade, e-filing doubles tax payments, likely by disrupting collusion with officials. Conversely, among firms less likely to have been evading, e-filing reduces tax payments, suggesting that officials had previously required them to pay more.
- These firms also pay fewer bribes, as e-filing reduces opportunity for extortion. In all, the results indicate that e-filing reduces compliance costs and makes the distribution of tax payments across firms arguably more equitable.

Conclusion -

Governance is a challenge in a country as vast, diverse and rapidly developing as India. That's where new technologies intervene and enable large-scale transformation and help in the implementation of ambitious government plans. E-governance thus is important to make governance effective and easy catering to the needs of people.

2. Examine the role of technology in promoting transparency and accountability in election processes and suggest measures to improve it.

Approach

Candidates can start the answer with giving basic idea about election process and the involvement of the technology in it then highlight some measures to improve with use of technology.

Introduction

Free and fair elections are the bedrock of any healthy democracy. In India the robust electoral machinery and the processes have ably been aided and strengthened by technology.

Body

Transparency and accountability with use of technology:

- A major push to use of technology in the Indian elections came with the use of electronic voting machines (EVMs). It entirely disrupted the way the elections were conducted.
- Use of EVMs was not simply the replacement of sturdy ballot boxes and ballot papers. It was a paradigm shift for everyone including the transparency and accountability for the voters.
- The use of Election Photo Identity Cards for voters at the time of voting has again been a technological intervention to achieve the goal of fair elections.
- It is another matter that other proofs of identity are also allowed on the day of poll to absolutely ensure that no one is deprived from exercising his franchise.
- Use of suitable software has also ensured cropping of the elector's image on the electoral roll. This ensures prohibition of forged voting on the day of poll.
- Linking of electoral roll with Aadhar database would further buttress the integrity with transparency of the roll and thus purity of the election process.
- Now, with centralized monitoring system through a portal with GPS facility, the vehicle with EVM management has become far clear.
- With introduction of Sugam portal- another technological intervention- all the permission processes have been made absolutely transparent.
- Like Sugam portal, there is another Portal called Samadhan which is used to monitor the complaints received from different quarters. The action taken on

every complaint is recorded and is visible to all the stakeholders it sets the accountability.

- The Election Commission has been using another technological marvel- video conferencing – very extensively for monitoring of the entire election process. The Commission has been taking innumerable meetings with the election machinery in the field through video conferencing for accountability.
- Commission has introduced 'Cvigil' app which can be used by the citizens for posting their complaints directly. The still photographs and videos can be uploaded. The app is in public domain.

Measures to improve:

- Voter Verification: Implementing secure and reliable methods of voter verification, such as biometric identification or online voter roll management, to prevent fraud and ensure the accuracy of election results.
- Secure Systems: Ensuring that voting systems and online platforms are secure and protected against hacking, tampering or any other form of interference.
- Accessibility: Providing accessible technology for all eligible voters, including those with disabilities, to enable them to participate in the election process.
- Cybersecurity Training: Providing training for election officials and staff to help them identify and prevent potential cyber threats, and implement best practices for security.
- Cybersecurity Training: Providing training for election officials and staff to help them identify and prevent potential cyber threats, and implement best practices for security.
- Independent Auditing: Conducting independent audits of the technology used in the election process to ensure the integrity of the results and identify any potential vulnerabilities.

Conclusion

The massive technological intervention in conduct of election at every stage has certainly made it more credible. It has helped in creating level playing field for all the players in the game leading to free and fair elections- sine qua non for a true democracy.

3. Evaluate the success of e-governance initiatives in increasing public participation in policy-making and decision-making processes and suggest ways to further improve it.

Approach

Candidates can start the answer with giving basic idea of E governance and then write the positive outcome of the E governance also mention some of drawbacks in the end suggest some measures.

Introduction

The use of technology for e governance has made it easier for citizens to engage with their governments and participate in policy-making processes, but in others, digital divides and lack of access to technology have hindered their success.

Body

Success of E governance:

- **Increased Accessibility:** E-governance initiatives can provide wider access to information and increase transparency in policy-making processes, enabling citizens to more easily engage with their government.
- **Convenience:** Technology makes it easier for citizens to provide feedback, make suggestions and participate in decision-making processes from the comfort of their own homes, without having to physically attend meetings.
- **Improved Efficiency:** E-governance initiatives can streamline the policy-making process, reducing the time and resources required for government to consult with citizens and incorporate their feedback.

Drawbacks of E governance:

- **Digital Divide:** The success of e-governance initiatives is dependent on access to technology and the digital literacy of citizens. A significant portion of the population may be excluded if they do not have access to the internet or the skills to use technology effectively.
- **Security and Privacy:** E-governance initiatives can also raise security and privacy concerns, as sensitive information may be at risk of being compromised.
- **Infrastructure:** Lack of basic infrastructural facilities like electricity, internet, etc. Initiatives like BharatNet and Saubhagya are steps taken in this regard.
- **Cost:** e-Governance measures are costly affairs and require huge public expenditure. In developing countries like India, the cost of projects is one of the major impediments in the implementation of e-Governance initiatives.

Suggestions:

- **Bridging the Digital Divide:** Providing access to technology and digital literacy training to all citizens, particularly in disadvantaged communities, to ensure equal participation in e-governance initiatives.
- **User-Friendly Platforms:** Designing e-governance platforms that are user-friendly and accessible to all, including those with disabilities.
- **Encouraging Active Participation:** Providing incentives and opportunities for citizens to actively participate in policy-making and decision-making processes, such as through online forums, surveys and town hall meetings.
- **Ensuring Transparency and Accountability:** Providing transparent and accessible information on the policy-making process and decision-making outcomes, and making it easy for citizens to hold their government accountable.
- **Addressing Security and Privacy Concerns:** Implementing robust security measures to protect sensitive information and ensuring that citizens' privacy is protected in e-governance initiatives.

- Collaborating with Stakeholders: Engaging with stakeholders, including civil society organizations and private sector entities, to increase public participation in policy-making and decision-making processes.
- Evaluating and Improving: Continuously evaluating and improving e-governance initiatives to ensure they are effective in increasing public participation and meeting the needs of citizens.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while e-governance initiatives have the potential to increase public participation in policy-making, their success depends on a number of factors, including access to technology, digital literacy, and the effective management of security and privacy concerns.

IASBABA