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Governance

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Syllabus

- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.
- Development processes and the development industry —the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.
- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.
- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.
- Issues relating to poverty and hunger.
- Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance-applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.
- Role of civil services in a democracy.

Previous Years Questions

2024

- Public charitable trusts have the potential to make India's development more inclusive as they relate to certain vital public issues. Comment.
- The Doctrine of Democratic Governance makes it necessary that the public perception of the integrity and commitment of civil servants becomes absolutely positive. Discuss.
- The Citizens' charter has been a landmark initiative in ensuring citizen-centric administration. But it is yet to reach its full potential. Identify the factors hindering the realisation of its promise and suggest measures to overcome them.
- e-governance is not just about the routine application of digital technology in service delivery process. It is as much about multifarious interactions for ensuring transparency and accountability. In this context evaluate the role of the 'Interactive Service Model' of e-governance.

2023

- Discuss the role of the Competition Commission of India in containing the abuse of dominant position by the Multi-National Corporations in India. Refer to the recent decisions.

- e-governance, as a critical tool of governance, has ushered in effectiveness, transparency and accountability in governments. What inadequacies hamper the enhancement of these features?

2022

- To what extent, in your opinion, as the decentralisation of power in India changed the governance landscape at the grassroots?

2021

- To what extent, in your view, the Parliament is able to ensure accountability of the executive in India?
- “Pressure groups play a vital role in influencing public policy in making in India.” Explain how the business associations contribute to public policies.
- The jurisdiction of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) regarding lodging an FIR and conducting a probe within a particular state is being questioned by various States. However, the power of the States to withhold consent to the CBI is not absolute. Explain with special reference to the federal character of India.
- Do Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees keep the administration on its toes and inspire reverence for parliamentary control? Evaluate the working of such committees with suitable examples.
- Can civil society and Non-Government Organisations present an alternative model of public service delivery to benefit the common citizen? Discuss the challenges of this alternative method.

2020

- “Institutional quality is a crucial driver of economic performance”. In this context suggest reforms in Civil Service for strengthening democracy.
- “The emergence of Fourth Industrial Revolution (Digital Revolution) has initiated e-Governance as an integral part of the government”. Discuss.

2019

- What are the methods used by the farmer’s organizations to influence the policy-makers in India and how effective are these methods?
- Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based projects/programmes usually suffers in terms of certain vital factors. Identify these factors and suggest measures for their effective implementation.

- On what grounds a people's representative can be disqualified under the representation of people act, 1951? Also, mention the remedies available to such a person against his disqualification.
- 'In the context of the neo-liberal paradigm of developmental planning, multi-level planning is expected to make operations cost-effective and remove many implementation blockages'- Discuss
- The need for cooperation among various service sectors has been an inherent component of development discourse. Partnership bridges the gap among the sectors. It also sets in motion a culture of 'collaboration' and 'team spirit'. In the light of statements above examine India's development process.
- Performance of welfare schemes that are implemented for vulnerable sections is not so effective due to the absence of their awareness and active involvement at all stages of the policy process. Discuss.

2018

- Q1. "Policy contradictions among various competing sectors and stakeholders have resulted in inadequate protection and prevention of degradation to the environment." Comment with relevant illustrations.
- Q2. E-governance is not only about utilization of the power of new technology, but also much about the critical importance of the 'use value' of information.
- Q3. How far do you agree with the view that the focus on lack of availability of food as the main cause of hunger takes the attention away from ineffective human development policies in India?

2017

- 'Simultaneous election to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies will limit the amount of time and money spent in electioneering but it will reduce the government's accountability to the people' Discuss. (150 words)
- 'To ensure effective implementation of policies addressing water, sanitation and hygiene needs, the identification of beneficiary segments is to be synchronized with the anticipated outcomes' Examine the statement in the context of the WASH scheme. (150 words)
- Does the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 ensure an effective mechanism for empowerment and inclusion of the intended beneficiaries in the society? Discuss (150 words)
- Hunger and Poverty are the biggest challenges for good governance in India still today. Evaluate how far successive governments have progressed in dealing with these humongous problems. Suggest measures for improvement. (150 words)

- ‘Poverty Alleviation Programmes in India remain mere show pieces until and unless they are backed by political will’. Discuss with reference to the performance of the major poverty alleviation programmes in India. (250 words)

2016

- “In the Indian governance system, the role of non-state actors has been only marginal.” Critically examine this statement.
- “Effectiveness of the government system at various levels and people’s participation in the governance system are interdependent” Discuss their relationship in the context of India.
- Has the Indian governmental system responded adequately to the demands of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization started in 1991? What can the government do to be responsive to this important change?
- Examine the main provisions of the National Child Policy and throw light on the status of its implementation.

2015

- Khap Panchayats have been in the news for functioning as extra-constitutional authorities, often delivering pronouncements amounting to human rights violations. Discuss critically the actions taken by the legislative, executive and the judiciary to set the things right in this regard.
- Examine critically the recent changes in the rules governing foreign funding of NGOs under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 1976.
- The Self-Help Group (SHG) Bank Linkage Programme (SBLP), which is India’s own innovation, has proved to be one of the most effective poverty alleviation and women empowerment programmes. Elucidate.
- In the light of the Satyam Scandal (2009), discuss the changes brought in corporate governance to ensure transparency, accountability.
- “For achieving the desired objectives, it is necessary to ensure that the regulatory institutions remain independent and autonomous.” Discuss in the light of the experiences in the recent past.

2014

- Though 100 percent FDI is already allowed in non-news media like a trade publication and general entertainment channel, the government is mulling over the proposal for increased FDI in news media for quite some time. What difference would an increase in FDI make? Critically evaluate the pros and cons.

- The setting up of a Rail Tariff Authority to regulate fares will subject the cash strapped Indian Railways to demand subsidy for obligation to operate non-profitable routes and services. Taking into account the experience in the power sector, discuss if the proposed reform is expected to benefit the consumers, the Indian Railways or the private container operators.
- National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in India can be most effective when its tasks are adequately supported by other mechanisms that ensure the accountability of a government. In light of above observation assess the role of NHRC as an effective complement to the judiciary and other institutions in promoting and protecting human rights standards.
- Do government's schemes for up-lifting vulnerable and backward communities by protecting required social resources for them, lead to their exclusion in establishing businesses in urban economies?
- Has the Cadre based Civil Services Organization been the cause of slow in India? Critically examine.
- Two parallel run schemes of the Government, viz the Adhar card and NPR, one of voluntary and the other as compulsory, have led to debates at national levels and also litigations. On merits, discuss whether or not both schemes need run concurrently. Analyse the potential of the schemes to achieve development benefits and equitable growth.

2013

- Many State Governments further bifurcate geographical administrative areas like Districts and Talukas for better governance. In light of the above, can it also be justified that more number of smaller States would bring in effective governance at the State level? Discuss.
- The product diversification of financial institutions and insurance companies, resulting in overlapping of products and services strengthens the case for the merger of the two regulatory agencies, namely SEBI and IRDA. Justify.
- The concept of Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme is almost a century old in India with early beginnings in Madras Presidency in pre-independent India. The scheme has again been given impetus in most states in the last two decades. Critically examine its twin objectives, latest mandates, and success.
- The Central Government frequently complains of the poor performance of the State Governments in eradicating the suffering of the vulnerable sections of the society. Restructuring of Centrally sponsored schemes across the sectors for ameliorating the cause of vulnerable sections of the population aims at providing flexibility to the States in better implementation. Critically evaluate.

- Electronic cash transfer system for the welfare schemes is an ambitious project to minimize corruption, eliminate wastage and facilitate reforms. Comment.

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Governance

Important Aspects of Governance Transparency and Accountability

- *E-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential*
- *Citizens Charters, Transparency & Accountability and institutional and other measures.*
- *Role of Civil Services in a Democracy.*

Important Aspects of Governance

What is Governance?

- The term "governance" is not brand-new. It has existed since human civilization began. To put it simply, "governance" means: **the procedure for making decisions and putting those decisions into action** (or not) Corporate governance, international governance, national governance, and local governance are all examples of governance contexts.
- An analysis of governance focuses on the formal and informal actors involved in decision-making and implementing the decisions made, as well as the formal and informal structures that have been established to arrive at and implement the decision. **Since governance is the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented.**
- Governance can encompass low-level responsibilities like issuing birth and death certificates and driving licenses to high-level responsibilities like setting the budget and managing foreign relations, among other things.

What is Good Governance?

- The institutions, procedures, and practices by which issues of common concern are decided upon and regulated are referred to as governance. A normative or evaluative quality is added to the governance process by good governance.

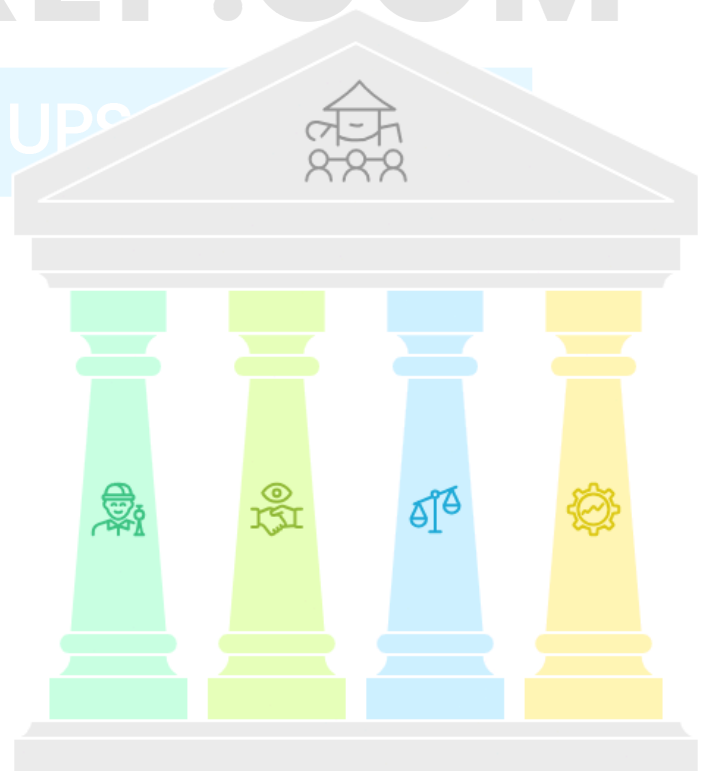
- It primarily refers to the process by which public institutions guarantee the realization of human rights, conduct public affairs, and manage public resources from a human rights perspective.
- In a nutshell, the political and institutional procedures and outcomes that are required to achieve development objectives are part of good governance. The degree to which "good" governance fulfils its promise of human rights is the true test: rights in the areas of culture, politics, the economy, and society.
- **The crucial inquiry is: Are the right to health, adequate housing, sufficient food, high-quality education, fair justice, and personal safety effectively guaranteed by governance institutions?**

Main Pillars of Good

Governance

Good governance aims at providing public services effectively, efficiently, and equitably to the citizens. Good governance aims at providing an environment in which all citizens irrespective of caste, class, and gender can develop to their full potential.

Foundations of Governance



Eight Principles of Good Governance

1. **Responsive:** Institutions and processes must serve all

Ethos

The spirit of public service and dedication to citizens.

Ethics

Upholding honesty, integrity, and transparency in all actions.

Equity

Ensuring fair treatment and empathy for all, especially the vulnerable.

Efficiency

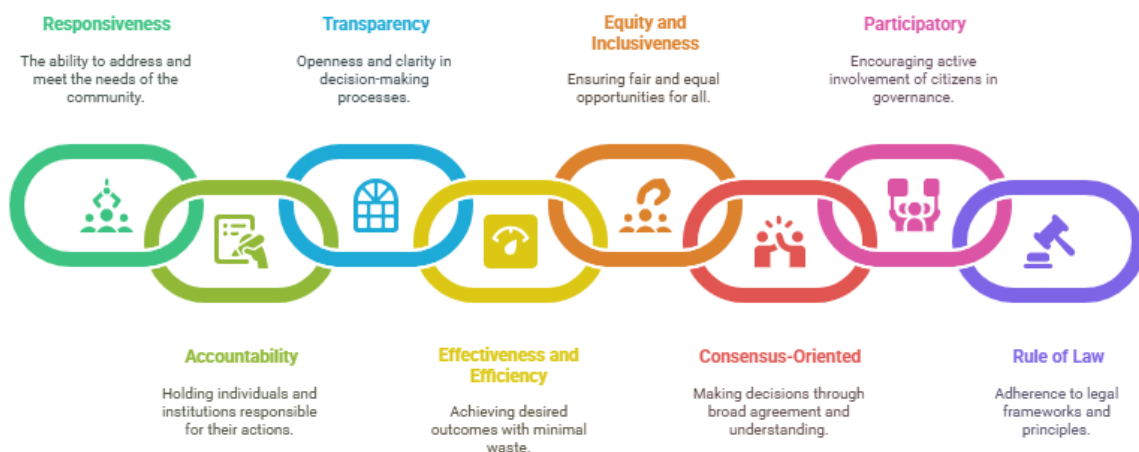
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stakeholders within a reasonable time frame.

2. **Accountable:** Good governance seeks to improve people's lives, and this cannot happen until the Governmental institutions, commercial sectors, and civil society organizations are held accountable to public and institutional stakeholders.
3. **Transparent:** The public should have access to information about the functioning of the government.
4. **Effective and Efficient:** The community's resources should be utilized wisely to maximize the production and demands of their community.
5. **Equity and Inclusiveness:** A just society is ensured by good government.
6. **Consensus-oriented:** Decision-making assures that, even if everyone does not accomplish everything they desire, a common minimum can be obtained by everyone that is not harmful to anyone.
7. **Participatory:** Men and women, as well as disadvantaged parts of society, backward classes, minorities, and others, should be free to express themselves through authorized local organizations or representatives.
8. **Rule of Law:** The legal framework, particularly human rights laws, should be enforced impartially. The strong will dominate over the weak if there is no rule of law.

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Foundations of Good Governance



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QUIZ

1. A city council quickly implements a flood relief program after receiving complaints from residents about rising water levels.

Which principle of good governance does this example illustrate?

- a. Transparent
- b. Responsive
- c. Participatory
- d. Equity and Inclusiveness

2. The local government publishes all budgetary allocations and expenditures online for public viewing.

Which principle of good governance does this example illustrate?

- a. Equity and Inclusiveness
- b. Transparent
- c. Responsive
- d. Accountable

3. A new public park is designed with ramps and accessible facilities to ensure that everyone, including people with disabilities, can enjoy it.

Which principle of good governance does this example illustrate?

- a. Equity and Inclusiveness
- b. Transparent
- c. Effective and Efficient
- d. Accountable

4. Residents are invited to attend town hall meetings to voice their opinions on proposed zoning changes.

Which principle of good governance does this example illustrate?

- a. Equity and Inclusiveness
- b. Effective and Efficient
- c. Transparent

d. Participatory

5. A government minister resigns after being unable to justify the misuse of public funds during an audit.

Which principle of good governance does this example illustrate?

- a. Accountable
- b. Effective and Efficient
- c. Rule of Law
- d. Consensus-oriented

6. A municipality reduces waste collection costs by 20% while maintaining daily pick-up schedules.

Which principle of good governance does this example illustrate?

- a. Effective and Efficient
- b. Consensus-oriented
- c. Rule of Law
- d. Participatory

7. A community group reaches an agreement on the location of a new school after considering input from all residents, even those who initially opposed the plan.

Which principle of good governance does this example illustrate?

- a. Participatory
- b. Consensus-oriented
- c. Rule of Law
- d. Responsive

8. A local court ensures that a powerful business tycoon is fined for environmental violations, demonstrating that no one is above the law.

Which principle of good governance does this example illustrate?

- a. Responsive
- b. Rule of Law

- c. Consensus-oriented
- d. Accountable

Need of Good Governance

Economic Development

A state's economic progress will be unstable if it lacks strong administration.

All aspects of economic development encounter challenges, including production, distribution, investment, and even consumption.

Such barriers will be removed if excellent governance is achieved, and a fair distribution of state resources will be achievable.

Social Development

In a civilization, people of various religions, castes, and social strata coexist. Now, if income is not distributed fairly among all of these people, societal unrest will rise.

Again, equitable wealth distribution is insufficient. We need to make accommodations for minorities to be able to walk without fear.

Similarly, several reform measures must be established in order to close the gender gap in society.

Political Development

It has a significant association with political growth.

Its success is primarily dependent on the political leadership's honesty and adherence to the political establishment's rules and regulations.

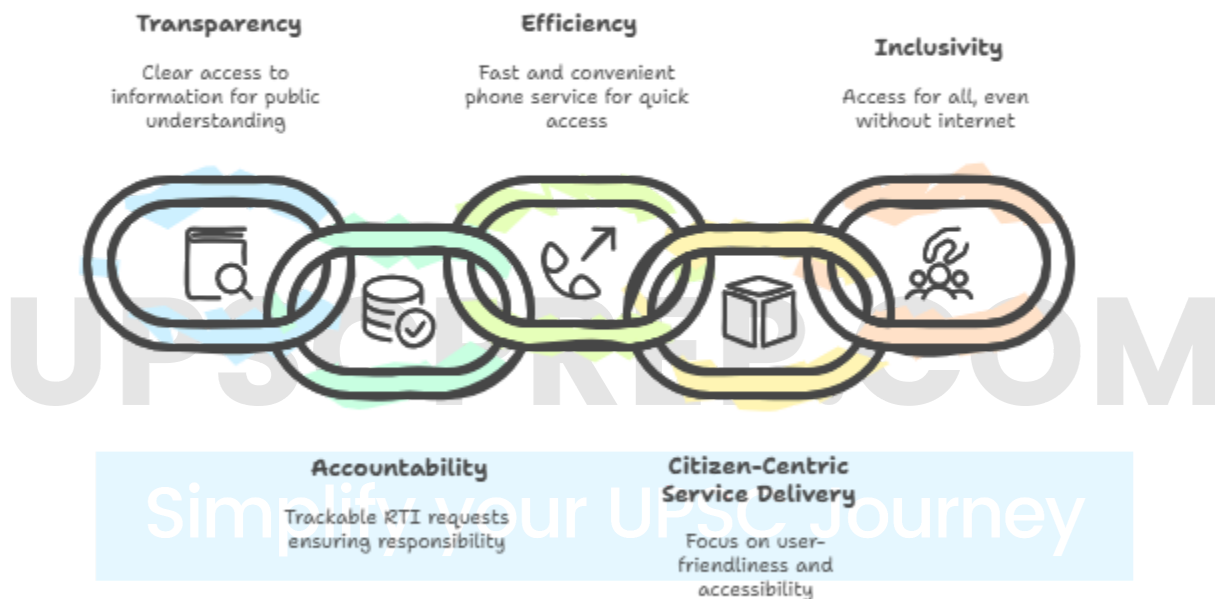
The design of policies for the welfare of the people, as well as constructive cooperation between political institutions and political parties, play a significant role in developing good competition and good governance among themselves.

Examples of Good Governance: Making Right to Information Simple

Bihar's unique attempt to accept Right to Information (RTI) applications through phone calls ('Jaankari' project) has been selected for the first prize for 'outstanding performance in citizen centric service delivery' at the National Awards for e-Governance.

Under this facility, anyone can make a phone call at the specified number (a call centre) and the call centre person will record all the details, charges for making the RTI application are included in the phone call charges.

Core Principles of Effective Governance



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Barriers to Good Governance

- Attitudinal Problems of Civil Servants – As per the 2nd ARC report Civil Servants have become inflexible, self-perpetuating, inward-looking.
- Lack of Accountability – Very rarely disciplinary actions are initiated against delinquent officers. There is no performance evaluation structure.

- Red Tapism – Bureaucracies have to adhere to rules and procedures which are important for good governance, however sometimes these rules and procedures are ill-conceived and cumbersome, and they do not serve the very purpose of their existence.
- Low Levels of Awareness of the Rights and Duties of Citizens – Awareness of rights and duties would ensure that officials and other citizens discharge duties effectively and honestly.
- Ineffective Implementation of Laws and Rules – We have a large number of laws to protect the rights of the citizens and vulnerable sections of society, but the weak implementation of these laws erodes the faith of the citizens in the Government machinery.

How to promote good governance?

- Enhancing the governance structures: Parliament is India's most powerful representative body. The electorate is represented by the political representative. On numerous fronts, concerns are frequently expressed regarding the falling standards of participation quality, procedure, and other aspects. As a result, good parliamentary practices and procedures must be developed and Parliament must become a dynamic institution that adapts to changing times. enhancing the efficiency of the bureaucracy and civil service.
- In the end, policy implementation is the responsibility of the permanent executive. It is necessary to create a civil service that is flexible, enthusiastic, and responsive to people's needs. Creating an independent and accountable judiciary to reassure the public. The judiciary is to be regarded as an efficient means of upholding social justice and upholding the rule of law. Making the private sector accountable by adhering to rules and regulations, protecting consumers' interests, and using ethical business practices.
- Making citizens partners in all development activities and educating them about their rights and responsibilities. The issues and challenges of governance necessitate the efficient operation of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, as well as the establishment of appropriate connections between them.
- Judiciary independence and parliamentary supremacy must be balanced in governance. Since the state, the private sector, and civil society all play a significant role in the

governance process, it is necessary to clearly define their roles and responsibilities so that they can work toward genuine people-centered development initiatives.

- The executive, legislature, and judicial branches of the state are all permanent political institutions that carry out their functions. People always got the majority of their services from the government. The well-defined framework underpins the operation of the federal system of government at the central, state, and district levels. The broader concept of governance, which encompasses the government, the private sector, and the people, gradually emerged as a result of global developments over the past three decades.

Good Governance Initiative in India

To address governance concerns, India has implemented a variety of good governance projects. The following are a few of them:

- Sevottam model of service delivery
- Mission Karmayogi for Civil services reforms
- Citizen charter
- Codification of labour laws
- Insolvency and bankruptcy law
- Right to information act
- E-Governance and use of ICT tools like E-kuber, Digishala etc.
- 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment to decentralise people participation
- Aspirational district program to eliminate regional disparities
- Social audit
- Centralised public grievance redress and monitoring system (CPGRAMS for public grievance redress.)
- Impetus to social infrastructure projects, resulting in more jobs, improved ease of life, and equitable access to infrastructure for all, making growth more inclusive. Economic and social infrastructure projects are included in the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP).

E-Governance

The World Bank defines “E-governance as the use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government”. E-governance is the use of the power of information technology by the government to ease the process of governance.

Evolution Of E-Governance In India

The inception of e-Governance proceeded through four stages in India:

- **Computerization:** The bulk of government offices are fully equipped with computers in the initial stage, thanks to the availability of personal computers. Word processing was the first application of computers, followed by data processing.
- **Networking:** In this stage, some units of a few government organizations are connected through a hub leading to the sharing of information and flow of data between different government entities.
- **Online presence:** In the third stage, With increased internet connectivity, there was a need to maintain a digital presence. As a result, government departments and other groups have to maintain their websites. In general, these web pages/web-sites featured information about the individual government entities' organizational structure, contact information, reports and publications, objectives, and vision statements
- **Online interactivity:** The opening up of communication channels between government agencies and individuals, civil society organizations, and other organizations was a logical consequence of online presence. The main goal of this stage was to reduce the amount of personal interaction with government bodies by making Forms, Instructions, Acts, and Rules available for download.

With 820 million internet users, India ranks second in the world, accounting for more than 12% of all internet users. According to government statistics, half of India's population lacks internet connectivity, and even if they do, only 20% of Indians know how to use digital services.

SMART Features of E Governance

The purpose of the implementation of e-governance is to raise the level of performance and ensure the proper delivery of services to all this will be possible through five main features of e-governance termed as “SMART”.

- **S-Simple:** Government rules and procedures need to be simplified to make them more user-friendly.
- **M-Moral:** Since anti-corruption and vigilance agencies have improved, officers are being instilled with ethics and values.
- **A-Accountable:** ICT aids in the establishment of performance criteria and the effective measurement of those standards.
- **R-Responsive:** Service delivery that is efficient and government that is responsive to the people.
- **T-Transparent:** Information that was once kept secret is now available to the public, bringing equity and the rule of law in government departments.

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Models Of E-Governance

In e-governance, there are four types of Models;

- G2G (Government to Government)
- G2C (Government to Citizens)
- G2B (Government to Business)
- G2E (Government to Employees)

E-governance models spectrum from internal to external focus.



G2G (Government to Government)

- In this case, ICT is being used not just to restructure government procedures but also to boost the flow of information and services inside and between government bodies.
- This type of contact occurs only inside the realm of government, and it might be horizontal, i.e. between different government agencies and functional areas within an organization, or vertical, i.e. between national, provincial, and local government agencies and levels within an organization. The major goal is to boost efficiency, productivity, and output.
- Examples: Khajane Project in Karnataka, SmartGov (Andhra Pradesh), etc.

G2C (Government to Citizens)

- In this case, the government and citizens collaborate to establish an interface that allows citizens to profit from the effective delivery of a wide range of public services.
- On the one hand, this increases the availability and accessibility of public services while also improving the quality of such services.

- It allows citizens to choose when and how they interact with the government, as well as when and where they interact with the government.
- The main goal is to make the government more user-friendly.
- Examples: Computerisation of Land Records, e-Courts, India Portal, Bhoomi Project: Online delivery of Land Records (Karnataka), eSeva (Andhra Pradesh), Project FRIENDS in Kerala, etc.

G2B (Government to Business)

- Here, e-Government solutions are utilized to help the business community – producers of goods and services – interface with the government in a more seamless manner.
- When interacting with the government, the goal is to remove red tape, save time, lower operational expenses, and create a more transparent corporate environment.
- Transactional G2B activities, such as licenses, permits, procurement, and revenue collection, are possible. In areas like trade, tourism, and investment, they can also be promotional and facilitative.
- These measures assist in creating a welcoming climate for businesses, allowing them to operate more efficiently.
- Examples: GeM, e-Procurement Project in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, MCA 21 by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, etc

G2E (Government to Employees)

- The government, by far the largest employer, must contact its employees on a daily basis, just like any other organization.
- This is a two-way conversation between the employer and the employee.
- On the one hand, using ICT tools makes these interactions faster and more efficient, while on the other hand, it increases employee satisfaction.
- Examples: HRMS portals, Appraisal portals etc.

INITIATIVES BY GOVERNMENT TO PROMOTE E-GOVERNANCE

PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

- **Aadhar:** The collaboration between the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) and various private entities enables the Aadhaar-based authentication system, facilitating access to government services and subsidies.
- **Digital Locker (DigiLocker):** DigiLocker is a digital document storage and sharing platform that allows citizens to store, access, and share their digital documents and certificates issued by various government agencies.
- **Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance (UMANG):** UMANG is designed to deliver government services to citizens via mobile devices. UMANG offers access to a vast number of government services, including over 1,570 services and more than 22,000 bill payment services.
- **e-District Project:** The e-District Project aims to deliver various government services electronically to citizens at the district level, including issuance of certificates, land records, and revenue administration.
- **e-Courts Integrated Mission Mode Project:** The e-Courts project aims to digitise court processes and procedures to enhance access to justice and improve judicial efficiency through e-filing, case tracking, and virtual court hearings.
- **Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS):** CPGRAMS enables citizens to lodge grievances online, track their status, and receive timely redressal across various government departments.

HEALTHCARE

- **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM):** ABDM aims to establish the essential infrastructure required for the integrated digital health ecosystem in the country.

- **Covid Vaccine Intelligence Network (Co-WIN):** CoWIN is an open platform that has been designed for the registration, scheduling of appointments, and management of Covid-19 vaccination certificates.
- **Aarogya Setu App:** The app was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide citizens with real-time updates on the spread of the virus, self-assessment tools, and information on nearby COVID-19 testing centres and healthcare facilities. It played a crucial role in contact tracing and containment efforts.

EDUCATION

- **National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR),** launched in 2021, aims at unifying national digital infrastructure in order to energise and catalyse the country's education ecosystem.
- **SWAYAM** (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds): SWAYAM is an online platform that offers free courses and resources from various universities and institutions across India. It provides access to high-quality educational content in diverse subjects, enabling learners to study at their own pace and convenience.
- **SWAYAM Prabha** is a group of several DTH channels dedicated to broadcasting educational content 24x7. These channels cover various disciplines, including school education, higher education, and skill development, and aim to reach students in remote areas with limited internet access.
- **DIKSHA** (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing): DIKSHA is a national digital platform that provides teachers with access to e-content and teaching resources. It offers interactive textbooks, lesson plans, quizzes, and other learning materials to support classroom teaching and enhance student engagement.
- **ePathshala:** ePathshala is an initiative by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) that provides digital textbooks and educational resources for school students. It offers interactive e-books, audio-visual materials, and supplementary learning resources to support classroom learning and revision.
- **National Academic Depository (NAD):** NAD is a digital platform that stores academic certificates and transcripts in a secure and tamper-proof manner. It allows students to

access and share their academic records digitally, eliminating the need for physical documents and simplifying the verification process for educational institutions and employers.

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- **National Agriculture Market (e-NAM):** e-NAM is an online trading platform that facilitates transparent and competitive bidding for agricultural produce. It connects agricultural markets (mandis) across the country, enabling farmers to sell their produce to buyers anywhere in India. e-NAM promotes price discovery, reduces intermediaries, and ensures fair prices for farmers.
- **M-KISAN:** M-KISAN, through its mKisan Portal, disseminates crop-related advisories to registered farmers via SMS.
- **Soil Health Card (SHC) Scheme:** The Soil Health Card Scheme provides digital soil health cards to farmers, containing information about soil nutrients, fertilisers, and recommendations for crop-specific nutrient management. It helps farmers make informed decisions about soil health management, optimise fertiliser use, and improve crop productivity.
- **e-Krishi Samvad:** e-Krishi Samvad is an online platform that enables farmers to seek agricultural advice and information from experts. It facilitates two-way communication between farmers and agricultural scientists through toll-free helplines, SMS, and web portals.

FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND INCLUSION

- **Unified Payments Interface (UPI):** UPI revolutionises digital transactions by offering seamless, and secure money transfers between bank accounts through mobile phones. With UPI, users can conveniently make payments, split bills, and conduct transactions across various platforms and banking institutions.

- **Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS):** AePS allows citizens to access financial services using Aadhaar authentication, enabling them to make transactions, withdraw cash, and check account balances through micro-ATMs operated by banking correspondents.

URBAN AND RURAL GOVERNANCE

- **Digital Literacy Mission:** As part of the Digital India initiative, the National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM) is a campaign designed to digitally educate at least one member of every rural family. The mission is aimed at providing, IT training to a target of 52.5 lakh individuals, encompassing villagers, Anganwadi and ASHA workers, as well as ration shop dealers.
- **Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA):** PMGDISHA is a scheme aimed at digitally literating six crore individuals in rural areas across various States and Union Territories. It targets approximately 40% of rural households by ensuring at least one member from each eligible household receives digital literacy training.
- **National Optical Fiber Network (NOFN):** The NOFN project in India aims to provide broadband connectivity to over 250,000 gram panchayats, enabling delivery of e-governance services to rural areas.
- **e-Gram Swaraj:** e-Gram Swaraj is a digital platform that facilitates online governance and service delivery in rural areas. It enables panchayats to digitise administrative processes, maintain records, and provide citizen services online. e-Gram Swaraj promotes transparency, accountability, and efficiency in rural governance.
- **e-Municipality Portals:** Many urban local bodies have developed e-Municipality portals to provide citizens with online access to various municipal services and facilities. These portals enable citizens to pay property taxes, apply for building permits, request birth and death certificates, lodge complaints, and track the status of their applications from the comfort of their homes.

ELECTION MANAGEMENT

- **Election Commission of India (ECI) Portal:** The Election Commission of India has developed a comprehensive online portal to provide voters with access to electoral information, including voter registration, electoral rolls, polling station locations, and election schedules.
- **Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT):** The introduction of EVMs has revolutionised the voting process in India, ensuring faster and more accurate counting of votes. The implementation of VVPATs provides voters with a physical paper trail of their votes, enhancing transparency and confidence in the electoral process.
- **Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC) Management System:** The EPIC Management System digitises the process of issuing and managing EPICs, enabling the Election Commission to maintain accurate records of voters and prevent electoral fraud.
- **C-Vigil Mobile App:** The C-Vigil mobile app allows citizens to report violations of the Model Code of Conduct and other electoral malpractices by capturing and uploading photos or videos of such incidents in real-time. Election authorities can take immediate action based on these reports, enhancing the integrity of the electoral process.

TRANSPORTATION AND LOGISTICS

- **VAHAN and SARATHI:** VAHAN and SARATHI are national-level e-Governance initiatives for vehicle registration and driving licences, respectively. These online platforms enable citizens to apply for and renew vehicle registrations and driving licences, make fee payments, and access relevant documents and information.
- **e-Challan System:** Many states in India have implemented e-challan systems for traffic enforcement. These systems use technology such as cameras and sensors to detect traffic violations such as speeding and jumping red lights. Violators receive electronic fines

(e-challans) which can be paid online, reducing the need for physical paperwork and improving the efficiency of traffic management.

- **e-Toll Collection:** The implementation of electronic toll collection (ETC) systems such as FASTag has transformed toll collection on highways in India. FASTag is a prepaid electronic toll collection system that uses RFID technology to enable automatic deduction of toll charges as vehicles pass through toll plazas.

SOCIAL WELFARE AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

- **National Career Service (NCS):** The National Career Service (NCS) is an initiative by the Ministry of Labor and Employment that is aimed at providing a variety of employment-related services to job seekers and employers. It offers services such as job matching, career counselling, skill development courses, and information on government schemes and vacancies.
- **Pensioners' Portal:** The Pensioners' Portal provides a single platform for retired government employees to access pension-related information, download pension payment orders, and submit grievances online.
- **Shram Suvidha Portal:** The Shram Suvidha Portal is an online platform launched by the Ministry of Labour and Employment to consolidate labour-related compliances and facilitate ease of doing business.
- **e-SHRAM Portal:** The e-SHRAM portal is an online platform for registering and tracking unorganised sector workers under various social security schemes.

Benefits Of E-Governance

- **Inclusive government:** E-Governance helps in building trust between governments and citizens, an essential factor in good governance by using internet-based strategies to involve citizens in the policy process, illustrating government transparency and accountability.

- **Easy implementation:** With e-governance, paperwork has been reduced and made simple. It facilitates sharing of information and ideas between all government agencies and departments to build one mega database.
- **Speedy process:** Technology makes communication easier and speedier. Internet, phones, cell phones have reduced the time taken in normal communication. Through e-governance, the decision-making process of government will also fasten.
- **Reduces costs of running a government:** Most of the government expenditure is appropriated towards the cost of stationery. Paper-based communication requires lots of stationery, printers, computers, etc. which calls for continuous heavy expenditure.
- **High operational efficiency:** The quality of the government's interactions with citizens is used to assess its effectiveness. In a typical government system, processing paperwork is a complex task that takes a lot of resources, and time spent on paper-work adds little value to residents.
- **Transparency:** The use of information and communication technology (ICT) improves the transparency of the governance process. The government's entire information would be available on the internet. The citizens have access to the information at any time. However, this will only be achievable if the government's whole data set is uploaded on the internet and made accessible to the public.
- **Accountability:** Once the governing process is made transparent the government is automatically made accountable. Accountability is the answerability of the government to the people. It is the answerability for the deeds of the government. An accountable government is a responsible government.

CHALLENGES:

- **Digital Divide:** The digital divide refers to disparities in access to digital technologies and internet connectivity among different population groups. Bridging this divide is essential to ensure equitable access to e-governance solutions for all citizens.
 - According to the India Inequality Report 2022: Digital Divide by Oxfam, the richest 60 per cent of Indians are four times more likely to use digital payment facilities than the poorest 40 per cent.

- **Data Privacy and Security Concerns:** E-governance solutions involve the collection, storage, and sharing of sensitive citizen data, raising concerns about data privacy, security breaches, and unauthorised access to personal information.
 - The Aadhaar data breach incident raised concerns about the security and privacy of citizens' personal data stored in the Aadhaar database, highlighting the need for robust data protection measures and cybersecurity protocols in e-governance systems.
- **Infrastructure Limitations:** Inadequate digital infrastructure, including broadband connectivity and digital literacy levels, can pose challenges to the effective implementation of e-governance solutions, particularly in rural and remote areas.
 - Limited internet connectivity and electricity infrastructure in remote areas pose challenges to the effective implementation of e-governance solutions, hindering access to digital services and information for citizens in underserved regions.
- **Resistance to Change:** Resistance to change from stakeholders within government agencies, as well as from citizens accustomed to traditional offline processes, can hinder the adoption and implementation of e-governance solutions.
 - Resistance from government officials and citizens accustomed to traditional paper-based processes may impede the adoption and acceptance of e-governance solutions, requiring awareness campaigns and capacity-building initiatives to promote digital literacy and change management.
- **Technical Complexity:** Developing and maintaining e-governance platforms requires technical expertise, resources, and infrastructure, which may pose challenges for governments with limited technical capacity or budget constraints.
 - The rollout of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India faced technical challenges such as system crashes and glitches due to the complexity of integrating multiple tax systems and databases, underscoring the need for rigorous testing and technical expertise in e-governance projects.
- **Legal and Regulatory Frameworks:** E-governance initiatives must comply with legal and regulatory frameworks governing data protection, cybersecurity, and digital rights, which can vary across jurisdictions and pose challenges for implementation and enforcement.

- **User Experience and Accessibility:** E-governance solutions must be user-friendly, accessible, and inclusive to ensure that citizens with diverse needs, abilities, and digital literacy levels can effectively navigate and utilise digital platforms.

National e-Governance Plan (NeGP)

- Launched in 2006, the NeGP aimed to bring public services closer to home for citizens, even in the rural areas, leveraging the widespread reach of information and communication technology (ICT).

Components of NeGP:

- State Wide Area Networks (SWANs): To provide the core infrastructure for data communication.
 - Example: Imagine a district collector's office in a rural area needing to send a report to the state government in the capital city. SWAN ensures that the report is transmitted securely and quickly, making the process smoother and more efficient.
- State Data Centers (SDCs): To consolidate services, applications, and infrastructure to provide efficient electronic delivery of G2G (Government to Government), G2C (Government to Citizen), and G2B (Government to Business) services.
 - Example: Suppose a citizen needs to apply for a birth certificate online. The State Data Center holds all the necessary data, like birth records and personal details, and ensures the application is processed quickly.
- Common Service Centers (CSCs): To provide a physical facility for delivering e-Services to rural and remote locations where the availability of computers and internet was negligible or mostly absent.
 - Example: A farmer in a remote village may not have access to the internet, but through a Common Service Center, they can apply for a land record, check crop insurance, or even get a government loan for farming.
- e-Governance Projects (Mission Mode Projects) : Implementation of various mission mode projects (MMPs) at the central, state, and integrated levels for streamlining operations.

- Example: Aadhar-based Identification: Aadhar cards (unique identification numbers) are used for services like direct bank transfers, subsidies, and welfare programs. This ensures that the benefits reach the right person.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES RELATED TO E-GOVERNANCE INTERNET SHUTDOWN AND E-GOVERNANCE

An Internet shutdown, according to Pulse Shutdown Tracker, is a deliberate interruption of Internet-based communications that renders them inaccessible or unavailable for a certain population, area, or kind of access.

Need for Internet Shutdowns:

- **Maintaining peace:** Internet shutdowns have been imposed to prevent misinformation and rumors to control deteriorating law and order situations. E.g. during Delhi riots.
- **Containing fake news:** The Internet is a faster medium to spread fake news and therefore, it has become essential for the government to impose internet shutdowns to prevent fake news through audio and video.
- **Against terrorism:** Internet shutdown also becomes essential for governments to defeat the nefarious designs from hostile states to propagate terrorism, e.g. internet shutdown in Kashmir after abrogation of Article 370.
- **Prevent misuse of data services:** Internet shutdowns have also been imposed to prevent the misuse of the data services by elements that have potential to scale up violent activities, e.g. Recent internet shutdown in Punjab in crackdown on Khalistani elements.
- **Exams:** The Internet has also been shut down in states to prevent cheating during exams.

Impact of Internet Shutdowns

- **Economic impact:** The standing committee on communications and information technology observed that telecom operators lose Rs. 24.5 million per hour in every Circle Area where there is a shutdown or throttling.

- **Fundamental right:** Access to the internet is a fundamental right under Article 19. Further internet shutdowns affect the right to speech and expression, conduct business and movement of people in a state.
- **Against digital India:** While the government is promoting digital India, frequent internet shutdowns go against it with impacts on digital payments, especially for street vendors.
- **Risk to Privacy:** People try to overcome restrictions via untrustworthy VPNs which put their privacy at risk.
- **Social Disruptions:** Internet has become part of daily lives of people for communication and internet shutdowns impacts the ability of people to share information and participate in social movements.
- **Disrupts Political Transparency:** Internet shutdowns undermine or eliminate access to digital tools that are critical for campaigning, promoting public discussions etc.

Supreme Court Ruling:

- The Supreme Court in Anuradha Bhasin vs Union of India, laid down guidelines to test the validity of internet suspension orders and their periodic review. The court mandated that:
- An order suspending internet services indefinitely is impermissible under the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Service) Rules, 2017.
- Suspension can be utilized for a temporary duration only.
- Any order suspending the internet issued under the Suspension Rules must adhere to the principle of proportionality and must not extend beyond the necessary duration.
- Any order suspending the internet under the Suspension Rules is subject to judicial review.

Exceptions as per the judgment:

- Instances of Internet suspension to only those exceptional situations where there is a public emergency or a threat to public safety and the legislatively mandated prerequisites for restricting Internet access.

- Unfortunately, these promises have remained unfulfilled:
- The year following the decision, India saw more instances of Internet shutdown than the year preceding it.
- India's Internet restrictions also accounted for more than 70% of the total loss to the global economy in 2020, and India remains infamous as the Internet shutdown capital of the world.

ADVERSE IMPACT OF DATA DENIABILITY

Data deniability refers to the denial of access to such data about the performance of government, organizations etc. that enable analysis of programmes, condition of the economy etc.

DATA DENIABILITY PRACTICED:

- Face saving: Governments and organizations often indulge in data deniability to prevent public disclosure of any adverse data about their performance. E.g. Many companies hide data about data leakages.
- Elections: Elections are generally the period when governments try to conceal data to prevent electoral damage. E.g. non-disclosure of PLFS data in 2019.
- Incompleteness of data: Sometimes data is not comprehensive, complete and lacks methodological correctness for public disclosure, e.g. 2011 caste census data is "unusable".

ADVERSE IMPACT OF DATA DEFICIT:

- Lack of solid data prevents specialists from engaging in meaningful discussion on a variety of national and international issues that impact India's interests.
- Data suppression on the side of the government leads to power consolidation and misuse of government power.

- Creates misleading political narratives about government success stories, influencing voters' election decisions.
- Government avoidance of accountability and responsibility.
- Policy and governance are impacted: False data makes policy and governance difficult on the ground.
- Impacts citizens' freedom of speech: The growing knowledge gap between the state and citizens has an influence on citizens' freedom of expression.
- Data extraction from residents without enough data from the state results in a power asymmetry between the state and citizens, making citizens vulnerable.
- Data deniability reduces the confidence of the investors in the government and the organizations.

WAY FORWARD:

- Understanding long-term impact: Governments and organizations should understand the long-term negative impact of data deniability on the reputation instead of looking after short-term goals.
- Independence of data organizations: Data collection organizations such as NSO etc. should be provided sufficient autonomy to prevent interference in their work.
- Statutory Framework: The organizations collecting data should be given statutory backing with answerability to parliament.
- Integrated Framework: Data collection should be integrated with the utilization of AI, Big data etc. e.g. integration of GSTN with banking network.
- Dynamic collection of data: Data collection should be made dynamic with the digitalisation of public service delivery points, such as hospitals to collect data about birth rates etc.

CONCLUSION

Governments need to address the ICT expertise shortage in e-governance by prioritizing digital literacy for citizens and technological training for public servants. Investing in education and training will help bridge the digital divide and empower more comprehensive participation in

digital governance. Additionally, to keep up with evolving e-governance, it is crucial to protect citizen data and maintain system integrity through strong cybersecurity, transparency, and effective monitoring.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

Has digital illiteracy and lack of ICT accessibility hindered socio-economic development, especially in rural areas? (2021)

One Nation One Subscription: Empowering India's Research Ecosystem

One Nation One Subscription Key Objectives

- The initiative will provide access to subscription to more than 13,000 international e-journals from around 30 publishers.
- The aim is to encourage detailed interdisciplinary research that particularly benefits Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.
- The scheme will be used to streamline the digital process through a unified portal for faster and easier usage by various students, researchers and faculty members.

Benefits of ONOS

- Democratization of Knowledge: The initiative ensures equal access to international research, particularly benefiting scholars in tier-2 and tier-3 cities, thus bridging regional gaps in research opportunities.

- **Enhanced Research Quality:** Access to high-quality journals will enhance research capabilities, empowering Indian researchers to contribute to advanced global innovations.
- **Cost Efficiency:** By centralizing funding, ONOS will reduce redundant subscriptions by individual institutions, leading to cost savings for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and research centers. Discounts on APCs will make it more affordable for Indian researchers to publish in prestigious journals.
- **Encouraging Global Collaboration:** ONOS fosters international and interdisciplinary research collaborations, helping India strengthen its presence in the global research community.
- **Supporting National Development:** The initiative strengthens India's R&D ecosystem, particularly in key areas such as STEM, medicine, and social sciences, contributing to the country's growth and self-reliance.
- **Improved Academic Infrastructure:** ONOS complements other government initiatives, such as the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), to create a more robust research infrastructure.

Challenges of ONOS

- **Administrative Complexity:** Managing subscriptions for over 6,300 institutions with varying needs presents significant logistical challenges.
- **Digital Divide:** Access to digital resources may be hindered in rural areas due to issues such as poor internet connectivity and lack of digital literacy.
- **Limited Coverage:** The scheme's initial phase focuses only on select international journals, leaving some researchers without access to certain resources.
- **Sustainability:** Ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of this initiative requires careful planning to maintain quality without compromising its viability.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Assessing the real-world impact of ONOS on research output, innovation, and India's position in global R&D will be a complex task.
- **Dependency on Global Publishers:** Heavy reliance on foreign publishers may reduce India's negotiating power, potentially leading to higher costs over time.

Way Forward

- Enhancing Infrastructure: Improve digital connectivity and provide training on the effective use of digital resources for institutions in underserved regions.
- Phase Expansion: Gradually expand ONOS to include more journals, databases, and resources in regional or Indian languages to broaden access.
- Promoting Open Access: Encourage Indian researchers to publish on Open Access (OA) platforms and build national repositories to freely share research outcomes.
- Strengthening Negotiation Power: Collaborate with other countries to negotiate better terms with publishers, such as lower APCs and reduced subscription fees.
- Focus on Research Outcomes: Develop metrics to measure the impact of ONOS on research quality, innovation, and India's global ranking in R&D.
- Support for Smaller Institutions: Offer additional resources to smaller or less well-resourced institutions to help them fully benefit from ONOS.
- Public Awareness and Training: Launch campaigns and workshops to educate researchers, faculty, and students on how to maximize the benefits of ONOS.

MeitY Releases Draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025

- The government released the draft of Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025 for public consultations.
- Once notified, the Rules will enable the effective implementation of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDP Act).
- The DPDP Act is a legislative framework established in India to protect individuals' personal data and ensure it is only shared with their consent. It governs the handling of digital personal data and sets out provisions to preserve privacy in the digital era.

Applicability:

The Act applies to the processing of digital personal data within India, whether the data is collected online or offline and subsequently digitized. It also extends to the processing of digital personal data outside India, provided it involves offering goods or services to data subjects within India.

Key Highlights of the Draft Rules

- **Data Fiduciaries:** All major tech companies including Meta, Google, Apple, Microsoft, and Amazon are expected to be classified as significant data fiduciaries.
- **Data Protection Officer:** It is the person authorised by the Data Fiduciary to respond to any communication from the Data Principal for the purpose of exercise. “Data Principal” means the individual to whom the personal data relates.
 - The officer should be based in India; be an individual responsible to the Board of Directors or similar governing body of the Significant Data Fiduciary
- **Transparency:** Data Fiduciaries must provide clear and accessible information about how personal data is processed, enabling informed consent.
- **Restriction on flow of Data:** The Union Government will specify the kind of personal data which can be processed by “significant data fiduciaries”
 - It is subject to the restriction that such personal data is not transferred outside the territory of India.
- **Rights to Citizens:** Citizens are empowered with rights to demand data erasure, appoint digital nominees, and access user-friendly mechanisms to manage their data.
- **For Children:** It allows tech companies to implement a mechanism for collecting “verifiable” parental consent before processing personal data of children.
- **Data Protection Board:** The Board will function as a digital office, with a digital platform and app to enable citizens to approach it digitally and to have their complaints adjudicated.
- **Data Breach:** In the event of a data breach, data fiduciaries will have to intimate impacted individuals without delay, including the measures implemented to mitigate risk.

The penalty for not being able to take enough safeguards for preventing a data breach could go as high as Rs 250 crore.

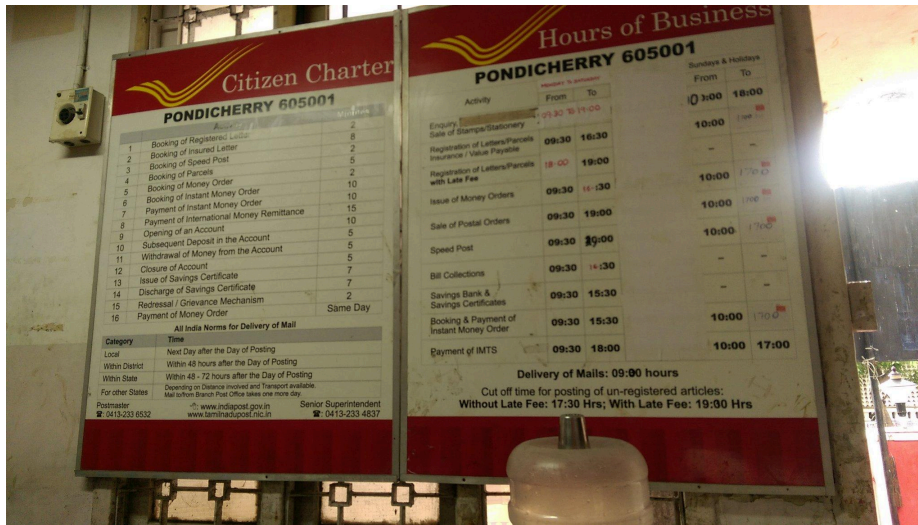
Significance

- Empowering Citizens: The rules empower citizens by giving them greater control over their data.
- Enhanced Trust on Digital Platforms: Provisions for informed consent, the right to erasure and grievance redressal enhance trust in digital platforms.
- Maintain Fine Balance between Growth and Rights: Unlike restrictive global frameworks, these rules encourage economic growth while prioritizing citizen welfare.
- Quick Grievance Redressal: The Data Protection Board's digital office approach would ensure quick and transparent resolution of complaints.

Critically examine the key provisions of the Draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025. How do these rules balance data privacy with operational needs, and what challenges might they pose for businesses and consumers?

CITIZEN'S CHARTER

Citizen's Charter is a document which represents a systematic effort to focus on the commitment of the organization towards its Citizens in respect of Standard of Services, Information, Choice and Consultation, Non-discrimination and Accessibility, Grievance Redress, Courtesy and Value for Money. It evolved in the United Kingdom in 1991 under the UK PM John Major.



Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances in the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Government of India, coordinates the efforts to formulate and operationalize Citizens' Charters in Central Government, State Governments and UT Administrations. It provides guidelines for formulation and implementation of the Charters as well as their evaluation.

Simplify your UPSC Journey

Components of Citizen Charter

- Vision and Mission Statement of the Organisation
- Details of Business transacted by the Organisation.
- Details of 'Citizens' or 'Clients'
- Statement of services including standards, quality, time frame etc. provided to each Citizen/ Client group separately and how/ where to get the services.
- Details of Grievance Redress Mechanism and how to access it.
- Expectations from the 'Citizens' or 'Clients'

Six Principles of Citizen Charter

- **Quality:** Commitment to providing high-quality services that meet the needs and expectations of citizens.

- **Transparency:** Clear information about the types and standards of services offered, including the procedures, processes, and time required for each service.

- **Choice:** Providing choices to the citizens wherever possible, which fosters a sense of empowerment and engagement.

- **Accountability:** Clearly outlining

the accountability mechanisms in place, ensuring that citizens can hold service providers accountable for their performance.

- **Accessibility:** Ensuring that all citizens, including those with disabilities and those from marginalized communities, can easily access services without any discrimination.

- **Grievance Redressal:** Establishing an efficient and responsive grievance redressal mechanism to address the concerns and complaints of citizens regarding service failures or lapses.



Fig. Principles of Citizen Charter

Shortcomings of the citizen charter

- Lack of legal mandate reduces the effectiveness and enforceability of the citizen's charter.
- General nature of citizen charter (copy paste citizen charter). E.g., similar charters for different ministries.
- Lack of citizen's charter in regional languages reduces its efficacy.
- Citizen's charters are not disabled friendly. E.g., charters not available in the Braille language.
- Fail to meet public aspirations due to inadequate public consultations and lack of periodic revisions.

Institutional Hurdles:

- Lack of adequate funds to carry out the mandate of the charter.
- The employees are not sensitized with the principles and vision of the charter.
- Lack of motivation and accountability in the employees.
- Limited institutional measures to raise awareness about the citizen's charter among citizens.

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Suggested Reforms

The Second Administrative Reforms Commission(ARC)

- The Second ARC, with Veerappan Moilly as Chairperson, was set up with a resolution of the Government of India as a committee of inquiry to prepare a detailed blueprint for revamping the public administration system.
- The Second ARC concurred that the Citizen's Charter had become nothing but a set of pious declarations by ministries and departments.
- In light of this observation, it recommended some reforms:
 - Wider base of consultation while drafting the Citizen's Charter.
 - Orientation of staff towards the salient features of the Charter.
 - Devising mechanisms for firm commitments.
 - A steady and efficient grievance redressal mechanism.
 - Periodic evaluation and evolution of the Charter as needed with time.

Deeper Citizen Engagement:

- Active Feedback: Use surveys, public hearings, and focus groups to collect citizen input.
- Co-Creation: Collaborate with citizens to draft and update Charters for better relevance and engagement.
- Enhanced Awareness and Accessibility:
- Multi-channel Communication: Use various channels including print, radio, social media, and community events.
- Clear and Accessible Materials: Present information in local languages and include visual aids for clarity.
- Fostering Service Ethics and Accountability:
- Educate Citizens and Providers: Inform both groups about their rights and Charter obligations.
- Recognize and Reward: Reward employees who exemplify Charter principles to encourage service excellence.

Technology for Accessibility and Grievance Redressal:

- Digitize Charters: Offer online access to Charters and a system for tracking complaints and feedback.
- Robust Grievance Mechanisms: Implement effective online resolution tools, with feedback loops and independent oversight.

Sustainable Implementation and Monitoring:

- Secure Funding: Ensure adequate resources for awareness, implementation, and training.
- Monitor and Evaluate: Continuously assess Charter impact through data analysis, citizen feedback, and independent reviews.

The Citizens' Charter is an ideal instrument of organizational transparency and accountability, but it has its own limitations. Identify the limitations and suggest measures for greater effectiveness of the Citizens' Charter. (2018)

SEVOTTAM MODEL

The Sevottam Model, aptly named after the Hindi words "Seva" (service) and "Uttam" (excellence), seeks to elevate the quality of public service delivery in India. Developed by the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) and launched in 2006, it offers a comprehensive framework for organisations to assess and improve their citizen-centric approach.

3 MODULES OF THE SEVOTTAM MODEL

- **Citizen Charter:** Requires effective charter implementation, which creates a mechanism for people to provide feedback on how organizations decide service delivery requirements.

- **Public Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** Needs a good grievance redress mechanism that, regardless of the final judgment, leaves the citizen more comfortable with how the organization relates to grievances.
- **Services Delivery Capabilities:** An organisation could have exemplary service delivery efficiency only if it manages the key components for successful service delivery well and builds its own capacity to boost delivery continuously.

7 STEPS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF SEVOTTAM MODEL:

The Sevottam system was introduced in 10 government departments with broad public interfaces from April 2009 to June 2010. Later, the IS 15700:2005 standard was developed by the BIS, which allows public service organizations to be awarded the Sevottam symbol of excellence if they adopt and can demonstrate compliance with a collection of management systems.

The Sevottam Model outlines seven crucial steps for implementation:

- **Define services and identify clients:** Clearly outline services offered and understand the diverse needs of citizen groups.
- **Set standards and norms:** Establish measurable benchmarks for service quality, accessibility, and timelines.
- **Develop capability:** Invest in training, technology, and resources to empower personnel for citizen-centric delivery.
- **Perform to achieve the standards:** Ensure adherence to defined standards across all levels of the organisation.
- **Monitor performance:** Regularly track performance against standards and address identified gaps promptly.
- **Evaluate impact:** Conduct independent evaluations to assess the model's effectiveness and impact on citizen satisfaction.
- **Continuous improvement:** Utilise data and feedback for ongoing improvement and adaptation of the model.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SEVOTTAM MODEL:

The Sevottam Model carries significant implications for public service delivery in India:

- **Quality Management:** It provides a structured framework for organisations to systematically assess and improve their service delivery performance.
- **Citizen-Centricity:** It emphasises citizen inputs, grievances, and expectations, promoting a service-oriented mindset within organisations.
- **Sustainable Improvement:** The continuous improvement aspect ensures ongoing adaptability and relevance in a dynamic environment.
- **Credible Self-Assessment:** The model guides organisations in conducting self-assessments for citizen-centric service delivery.

What are the key principles and elements of the Sevottam model? How can its implementation help in overcoming the challenges and limitations of Citizens' Charters in India?
(15 M, 250 Words)

“A citizen charter enhances the trust between government and citizen”. How do citizen's charters ensure transparency and accountability in administration?

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Transparency

Transparency in government is the cornerstone of a healthy and accountable democratic system. It involves the open and **accessible sharing of information, decisions, and actions taken by public officials and institutions.**

Accountability

Accountability refers to the process as well as norms that make decision makers answerable to ones for whom decisions are taken i.e., the decision maker and the beneficiary.

Ensuring Transparency:

- **Clearly Defined Service Standards:** The Citizen Charter sets clear and measurable service standards, making citizens aware of what they can expect from government agencies. For example, the Right to Information Act in India outlines timelines within which information must be provided.
- **Open Dissemination of Information:** Charters encourage government agencies to provide real-time information about their services. Transparency portals and websites, such as India's RTI Online, empower citizens by providing easy access to government information.
- **Public Procurement Transparency:** Citizen Charters can address issues of corruption by introducing transparency in public procurement. The government e-marketplace (GeM) in India is an example of a platform that minimizes corruption through transparency in public procurement processes.

Ensuring Accountability:

- **Defining Responsibility:** Citizen's Charters assign specific responsibilities to government agencies and officials. When agencies are held responsible for their actions, it builds trust in the system. For example, the Aadhaar Enabled Biometric Attendance System (AEBAS) ensures accountability by tracking government employees' attendance.

- **Grievance Redressal Mechanisms:** Charters establish mechanisms for citizens to file complaints and grievances if they are dissatisfied with the service provided. Prompt redressal demonstrates that the government values citizens' concerns, reinforcing trust.
- **Social Audits and Monitoring:** Citizen Charters can encourage social audits, where citizens and civil society participate in evaluating government programs and schemes. This not only holds authorities accountable but also enhances public trust.

ROLE OF CIVIL SERVICES IN DEMOCRACY

Civil Services in India consist of government officials who form the permanent executive branch of the nation. These services have played a crucial role in transitioning from a colonial governance system to one focused on welfare. Often described as the steel frame of governance, the civil services have provided stability and facilitated seamless transitions between governments over the years.

Constitutional Provisions Related to Civil Services

- **Articles 53 and 154:** The executive power of the Union and the States is vested in the President or Governor, either directly or through subordinate officers.
- **Articles 308-323:** These officers make up the permanent civil service and are regulated by Part XIV of the Constitution.
- **Article 309:** This article authorizes Parliament and State legislatures to establish regulations regarding recruitment and service conditions for individuals appointed to public services and posts related to Union or State affairs.
- **Article 311:** This article deals with the dismissal, removal, or reduction in rank of individuals employed in civil capacities under the Union or a State.
- **Article 312:** This article pertains to the creation of All India Services.

Need for Civil Services in a Democracy

- Civil services play a crucial role in the governance of a democracy by providing the administrative framework needed to address the nation's complex and varied requirements. Their key functions include:
- **Stability and Continuity:** Civil services ensure consistent governance and policy continuity through political transitions. For example, the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) helps maintain governance stability across different political regimes.
- **Expertise and Specialization:** Recruitment through competitive exams, such as the UPSC Civil Services Exam in India or staffing at the Federal Reserve in the U.S., brings specialized knowledge into public administration, enhancing decision-making and policy formulation.
- **Impartiality and Non-partisanship:** Civil servants are expected to maintain neutrality and prioritize public welfare over political interests. This principle fosters trust and efficiency, as seen in Singapore's Civil Service.
- **Local Adaptation of Policies:** Civil services facilitate the implementation of national policies while adapting them to meet regional needs. For instance, India's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) adjusts employment solutions to rural requirements.
- **Efficiency and Accountability:** Civil services are responsible for effective policy implementation and are held accountable for their actions. Systems are in place to address misconduct, exemplified by the UK's meritocratic and accountable civil service system.

Role Played by Civil Services

- **Advisory Role in Policy Making:** Civil services support the executive in shaping policy areas. They formulate policy proposals, evaluate various options and solutions, and develop action plans for existing policies, making adjustments as needed.
- **Institutionalizing Socio-economic Change:** Civil services are pivotal in development and function as instruments of the welfare state. They introduce and promote modern ideas and reforms in society.

- **Continuity in Governance:** Civil services ensure the stability of the governance system with minimal disruption. They contribute to maintaining the existing order and stabilizing the social structure.
 - In a Positive Sense: They facilitate the continuity and stability of the system.
 - In a Negative Sense: They may resist changes and slow the pace of societal experimentation, such as when bureaucratic lobbying seeks to preserve the primacy of IAS over other services.
- **Agent of Development:** Civil services undertake various developmental functions, such as promoting modern agricultural techniques, fostering industry and trade, advancing banking functions, and bridging the digital divide.
- **Leadership in Committees:** Major committees that recommend significant changes are often chaired by former civil servants. For example, the Rajiv Mehrishi Committee, which assessed the impact of COVID-19 on the economy.
- **Discharge of Delegated Functions:** Civil servants are entrusted with power and accountability at different levels of government, carrying out delegated functions effectively.
- **Administration of Law:** They enforce laws and regulations, governing societal behavior and ensuring compliance with legal standards.
- **Watchdogs:** Civil services act as guardians of public assets and protect public property. An example is Sanjiv Chaturvedi's work in Kurukshetra, where his team registered an FIR against contractors for illegal tree felling and poaching.
- **Continuity During Political Instability:** They ensure the continuation of governance during political transitions, such as changes in government due to elections.
- **Record-Keeping:** Civil servants maintain records of daily operations according to government standards and requirements.
- **Channel of Communication:** They operate at the grassroots level, providing feedback to executives and ministers, and serve as a conduit between citizens and policymakers.

Ailments/Issues Affecting Indian Civil Services

Challenges Related to Generalist Civil Service

- The generalist nature of the civil service can be problematic in specialized socio-economic contexts. For instance, a generalist civil servant might not be well-suited for the specialized role of the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- Inefficient Incentive Systems: Meritorious and honest civil servants are often not adequately rewarded. For example, Ashok Khemka (IAS) was transferred 56 times over his 30-year career, highlighting issues with the incentive system.
- Outdated Rules and Procedures: Existing rules and procedures can hinder civil servants from exercising independent judgment and performing effectively. For instance, promotions are often based on seniority rather than performance or efficiency.
- Lack of Adequate Transparency and Accountability: Committees and surveys have identified a rise in unethical practices within the civil service, leading to a decline in public trust regarding their integrity and fairness. An example is the use of physical torture instead of scientific investigation by IPS officer Balvir Singh in Tamil Nadu.
- Apathy Among Civil Servants: Due to factors such as job permanency and high workload resulting from vacancies (with IAS having a 22% vacancy rate), civil servants may display apathy towards citizen needs. An example includes a District Magistrate in the northeast who was reported to have slapped citizens for COVID-19 regulation violations.
- Arbitrary and Whimsical Transfers: Political interference often results in unjust transfers and tenure instability. For instance, Sanjiv Chaturvedi (IFS) faced a refusal of central deputation by the Haryana government.
- Absence of Objective Systems: The lack of an objective evaluation system fosters a poor work culture, rewarding complacency and ignoring merit. For example, the cylindrical promotion system ensures career progression for entire batches regardless of individual performance.

Civil Services Reforms

Recent Initiatives to Promote Efficiency and Accountability in Civil Services:

- **Robust Vigilant Mechanism:** Strengthen institutional mechanisms to prevent and detect corruption. This includes reviewing and enhancing existing vigilance frameworks.
- **Centralized Public Grievance Redressal and Monitoring System (CPGRAMs):** Improve and reinforce the implementation of CPGRAMs to better address public grievances.
- **Implementation of e-Office:** Accelerate the adoption of e-Office across all ministries and departments, and encourage states and Union Territories (UTs) to implement this system.
- **e-Samiksha:** Utilize this real-time online system to monitor and follow up on decisions related to the implementation of significant government programs and projects.
- **Prompt Delivery of Services:** Simplify departmental processes to reduce administrative delays and establish participatory feedback mechanisms to enhance service delivery efficiency.
- **Promoting Mid-career Training:** Launch programs like Mission Karmyogi to improve continuous learning and knowledge among civil servants.
- **Lateral Entry Reform:** Introduce personnel from the private sector into administrative roles, even if they have not been part of the traditional bureaucratic system, to bring in diverse perspectives and expertise.

CIVIL SERVICE-RELATED ISSUES IN NEWS

Lateral Entry in Civil Services

Lateral Entry Overview: Rather than promoting traditional civil servants, lateral entry involves the direct recruitment of domain experts at middle or senior levels within the administrative hierarchy.

Recommendations of Various Expert Groups/Committees Regarding Lateral Entry:

- **1st Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC):**
 - Recognized the need for specialization due to the increasing diversification of government functions.

- Suggested adopting performance appraisal methods from the armed forces to help identify and address non-performers.
- Both the Surinder Nath Committee (2003) and the Hota Committee (2004) recommended incorporating domain expertise into civil services.
- 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) (2005):
 - Recommended implementing lateral entry at both Central and State levels to enhance expertise and efficiency.
 - Reiterated the importance of performance appraisals from the armed forces to eliminate non-performers.

Earlier Instances of Lateral Entrants:

Notable figures such as Nandan Nilekani, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Vijay Kelkar, Arvind Subramanian, and Raghuram Rajan have been recruited from outside the traditional civil services to lead various committees and organizations.

Need for Specialist or Domain Experts:

- **Technical Knowledge:** Domain experts provide valuable insights into the practical challenges of policy formulation and implementation, bringing in-depth technical knowledge and real-world experience to the administrative process.
- **Complex Situations:** Administrative functions are increasingly complex, technical, and subject-specific. Specialists are better equipped to handle these intricate issues effectively.
- **Lack of Field Knowledge:** Traditional generalist bureaucrats often lack practical field experience. For instance, IAS officers with an Arts background may struggle to address cybersecurity challenges adequately.
- **Improvements in Governance and Performance:** NITI Aayog's Three-Year Action Agenda for 2017-2020 emphasizes that incorporating specialists into the bureaucracy will enhance competitiveness and improve overall performance.

- **Filling Officer Vacancy Gaps:** There is a significant shortage of IAS officers, with nearly 1,500 vacancies according to the Ministry of Personnel. The Baswan Committee (2016) recommended lateral entry as a means to address this shortfall.
- **Entry and Retention of Talent:** The Sixth Central Pay Commission report (2006) suggests that lateral entry will help attract and retain talent in government positions, particularly those in high-demand sectors where there is competition with the private sector.

Arguments Against Lateral Entry:

- **Lacking Field Experience:** External talent often lacks the extensive field experience that civil service provides. For example, Wall Street bankers may struggle to grasp the social impacts of their economic policies.
- **Issue with Execution:** Career civil servants are typically more adept at bridging the gap between policy-making and on-ground execution compared to external experts.
- **Instances of Failure:** Domain experts have sometimes failed in their roles. A notable example is the case of Air India, where experts did not succeed in addressing underlying issues.
- **Non-Conducive Milieu:** The operating environment significantly affects efficiency. Even the best managers may struggle to produce results in a setting characterized by red tape and inefficiency.
- **Motivated Interest:** Individuals may have varying motivations and interests. Lateral entrants, especially if their tenure is short-term, might engage in unethical practices driven by personal gain.
- **Internal Tussle:** Large-scale lateral induction could lead to a lack of confidence in the existing government personnel management system.
- **Undermines the Role of Civil Servants:** Established civil servants are already operating effectively within well-defined systems. Lateral entry could undermine their role and lower their morale.

Way Forward:

- **Strengthen Internal Management:** Rather than relying on external leadership, focus on developing a strong management structure that fosters and nurtures creativity and innovation from within the existing civil service.
- **Enhance Performance Assessment:** Address the need for reforms through more rigorous performance evaluations and improved staff management, rather than depending solely on lateral induction.
- **Implement Civil Service Reforms:** India's civil service should undergo reforms to protect against political coercion and to establish specialization-based career paths to better align skills with roles.
- **Selective Lateral Entry:** Consider lateral entry for specific mission-mode projects and public-sector organizations where private-sector expertise is crucial. This approach should integrate both private-sector professionals and existing government employees to optimize performance.

Mission Karmayogi: National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building

Mission Karmayogi

India's ambitious vision of becoming a global manufacturing hub, a critical exporter of value-added services, and a mass supplier of human skills to an ageing developed world by 2047 hinges on efficient governance and competent civil services. Recognising this, the Prime Minister of India launched Mission Karmayogi, the National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building to transform India's three million civil servants into citizen-centric, future-ready, and result-oriented 'Karmayogis'.

Approach For Mission Karmayogi

- Capacity Building Commission (CBC): It provides policy guidance and tools to enhance civil servants' capabilities at all levels.
 - Collaborating with institutions like Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya and the National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes, and Narcotics, the CBC curated digital training courses.
 - These courses equipped civil servants with skills to apply to PM Gati Shakti for project planning and coordination across departments.
- Competence Rooted in Indian Ethos: Mission Karmayogi aims to create a competent civil service rooted in Indian values.
 - It fosters a shared understanding of the country's priorities, emphasising effective and efficient public service delivery.
- Technology-Enabled Karmayogis: The program focuses on making civil servants more creative, constructive, imaginative, and proactive.
 - It encourages transparency and leverages technology for better governance.
 - It can be done either in-house or through knowledge partners. Carefully crafted and vetted content from top-notch institutions, universities, private content providers and individual resources will be made available as training modules.

Guiding Principles of Mission Karmayogi

- **Shift from rule to role based training and capacity building:** This means a shift from rule-based, supply-driven capacity building to role-based, demand-driven capacity building.
- **Moving to a competency driven approach for capacity development:** Competencies can be defined as a combination of attitudes, skills and knowledge (ASK) that enable an individual to perform a task or activity successfully in a given job.
- **70-20-10 Mandate:** 70% of learning comes from on the job experiences and reflections, 20% is derived from working with others; and 10% comes from planned training.

- **Link goal setting, planning & achievement:** Mission Karmayogi aims to align learning and capacity building with organisational goals and career goals of individual officials and performance measurement.
- **Establishment of unbiased systems of evaluation:** Under Mission Karmayogi, there will be objective, fair and independent assessments to determine performance.
- **Democratising and enabling continuous, lifelong learning opportunities.**
- **Move beyond silos in the Government**
- **Integrated Government Online Training (iGOT) Karmayogi Platform:** Act as a launchpad for Mission Karmayogi.
 - It is a comprehensive online portal to guide government officials in their capacity building journey.
 - Performance of all users of iGOT-Karmayogi platform is monitored and evaluated on key performance indicators including individual learner, supervisor, content provider and creator etc.

Concerns associated with NPCSCB - Mission Karmayogi

- **Scalability:** Given the vast number of government officials (1.5 crore) across different levels, effectively scaling training and capacity-building initiatives could be difficult.
- **Over-centralization:** Its emphasis on training and learning through a centralized institutional framework may lead to resistance from states, affecting implementation and desired outcomes.
- **Resistance:** Indian bureaucracy is alleged to be status-quoist, reluctant to change and thus, a reform at this scale may face several resistances within the bureaucracy.
- **Relevance to Job Functions:** Designing training modules for civil servants, tailored to address the specific issues, needs, and demands of citizens poses a challenge.
 - For example, the issues faced by civil servants in Himalayan states differ significantly from those in desert areas.

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