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- **Customized solution** based on Diagnosis.
- One to One **Mentorship.**
- Personalized schedule **planning.**
- Regular **Progress tracking.**
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- Topic wise **Notes Making sessions**.
- One Pager **(1 Topic 1 page)** Notes session.
- **PYQ** (Previous year questions) Drafting session.
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GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN VARIOUS SECTORS AND ISSUES ARISING OUT OF THEIR DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

- A **policy** is a plan of action designed to achieve specific goals. **Public Policies** are governmental decisions about what gets done, who benefits, and how things are accomplished.
- These policies are often a mix of clear-cut rules, procedures, and considerations of fairness, effectiveness, and political realities. Put simply, policies determine who gets what, when, and how.
- It necessitates a deeply intertwined relationship and interaction between the major governmental agencies like the political executive, legislature, bureaucracy, and judiciary.

MAJOR TYPES OF PUBLIC POLICY

Public policies can be categorized in several ways, depending on their purpose, target audience, and scope. Here's a breakdown of some key classifications:

I. BY TARGET GROUP

- **Substantive Policies:** These policies focus on overall societal well-being and development. Examples include
  o **Right to Education Act**, which guarantees free and compulsory education for children aged 6-14.
  o Economic stabilization policies that aim to control inflation, unemployment, and economic growth.
- **Distributive Policies:** These policies target specific sections of society to provide essential goods and services. Examples include the Public **Distribution System (PDS)** which distributes essential food items at subsidized prices and public healthcare programs for affordable medical care to citizens.
- **Redistributive Policies:** These policies aim to achieve social and economic equality by restructuring existing policies. Examples include: **JAM Trinity (Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile)** and **DBT Scheme**, which improves the delivery of government subsidies by linking bank accounts, mobile numbers, and Aadhaar cards.
- **Capitalization Policy:** It provides financial assistance from the central government to state and local governments. For instance, the **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)** offers loans to non-corporate, non-farm small or micro-enterprises.

II. BY SCOPE

- **Domestic Policies:** These are actions taken by the government to impact its citizens directly. Examples include:
  o **Regulatory Policies:** These set rules and standards for businesses, safety, and public utilities (e.g., RBI regulations).
  o **Economic Policies:** These influence economic activity (e.g., Mudra Yojana, LPG reforms).
  o **Social Policies:** These address social issues and promote well-being (e.g., National Nutrition Policy).
- **Foreign Policy:** This refers to a country's strategy for interacting with other nations. Examples include:
  o **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)** promotes neutrality and peaceful co-existence.
  o **Neighbourhood First Policy** focuses on strengthening relations with neighboring countries.

NATURE/CHARACTERISTICS OF PUBLIC POLICY

- **Public Interest:** The guiding principle is the **well-being of the citizens**. **Example:** The **National Policy on Persons with Disability (PwD)** by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment exemplifies this focus on public interest.
- **Goal-Oriented:** Policies are crafted to achieve specific **objectives set by the government**. **Example:** The **Swachh Bharat Mission (Clean India Mission)** is a goal-oriented policy aiming at improved sanitation across the country.
- **Collective Action:** Policymaking involves collaboration between government officials and various stakeholders. Example: Under Swachh Bharat Mission, the government nudges both citizens and institutions towards cleanliness.
- **Participatory and Consultative: Stakeholders have a voice** in shaping policies. Public consultations are increasingly used to gather citizen feedback on draft policies, promoting a more inclusive approach.
- **Dynamic and Evolving:** Policies adapt to **changing circumstances and societal needs**. Example: National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- **Future-Oriented:** Policies consider **long-term implications and potential challenges.Example:** Policies on climate change and infrastructure development.
- **Government's Commitment:** Policies reflect the **government's response to critical issues** and are backed by **legal authority**. **Example:** Policies like **minimum wage regulations**, **Motor Vehicles Act** address societal concerns and are enforced through legal frameworks.

Understanding these characteristics is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of public policies.

PUBLIC POLICY IN INDIA

India's public policy landscape is shaped by its diverse demographic, cultural, and economic characteristics, reflecting

the nation's democratic ideals and aspirations for **inclusive growth**, **sustainable development**, and **social justice**.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

- **Pre-Independence:** The fight for self-rule was intertwined with policies promoting education, social reform, and economic self-sufficiency.
- **Post-Independence (1947):**
  - **Focus on Nation-Building:** The Constitution provided the framework for policy, emphasizing equality, justice, and fundamental rights.
  - **Planned Development:** Five-Year Plans guided economic development, with a focus on industrial and agricultural growth.
  - **Era of Economic Reforms (1991):** India opened its economy to globalization and liberalization, shifting towards a market-oriented approach while prioritizing social welfare.
- **Public Policy Experience in India:**
  - **Structural Intervention:** Land reforms aimed to change the socio-economic structure but faced challenges in implementation due to lack of political will, weak bureaucracy, and limited public participation.
  - **Technological Intervention:** The Green Revolution boosted agricultural production but also led to regional disparities. This highlights the need for balanced development strategies.
  - **Anti-Poverty Intervention:** Programs like the National Rural Employment Programme aimed at poverty reduction but faced issues like inadequate coverage, corruption, and weak monitoring.
- **Learning from Experience:** India's public policy experience underscores the importance of a holistic approach. Effective policy requires:
  - **Strong Implementation:** Clear strategies, efficient bureaucracy, and public participation are crucial for successful implementation.
  - **Evaluation and Monitoring:** Regularly assessing policy impacts helps identify and address shortcomings.
  - **Balanced Development:** Policies should consider potential social and economic consequences to ensure equitable progress.

POLICY PROCESS/CYCLE IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

Navigating the policy cycle in India involves several key stages, each crucial for effective governance:

- **Problem Identification:** Policymakers identify pressing issues requiring government intervention, often in response to societal demands or emerging crises.
- **Agenda Setting:** This stage involves prioritizing specific problems by drawing attention to them through mass media and engaging public officials, setting the stage for subsequent decision-making.
- **Policy Formulation:** Stakeholders, including interest groups, executive offices, and legislative committees, develop policy proposals by defining objectives, assessing costs, selecting appropriate instruments, and engaging relevant stakeholders.
- **Adoption/Legitimation:** Decision-makers, which may include legislative bodies, executive authorities, or interest groups, select the most viable policy solution and ensure its legitimacy through approval mechanisms within India's federal structure.
- **Implementation:** Policies are put into action through bureaucratic structures and executive agencies, necessitating the creation of effective networks to facilitate coordination and accountability.
- **Evaluation:** Government agencies assess the impact and effectiveness of implemented policies, identifying areas for improvement and adjustment based on outcomes.

Stakeholders in public policy making in India
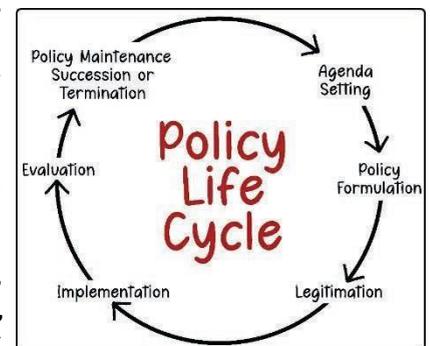
- **Policy Maintenance, Succession or Termination:** Policymakers decide whether to maintain, modify, or terminate policies based on their performance and evolving needs, with a focus on continuous improvement and adaptation to changing circumstances.

In India's dynamic governance landscape, policymakers must navigate federalism, diverse stakeholder interests, and evolving socio-economic contexts to ensure effective policy outcomes.

BUREAUCRATIC ROLES IN POLICY CYCLE

1. POLICY FORMULATION:

- **Role:**
  - **Information Advantage:** Bureaucrats possess extensive data and experience, serving as the government's "think tank."
  - **Expertise:** Their long tenure provides deep sectoral knowledge, allowing them to propose innovative solutions.
  - **Continuity:** Bureaucrats offer stability and institutional memory, ensuring policy coherence over time.
  - **Advisory Role:** They analyze problems, present alternative solutions, and advise political leaders on potential consequences.
- **Challenges:**
  - **Ministerial Leadership:** Strong ministers may limit bureaucratic influence, particularly if policies align with party ideology.
  - **Agency Ideology:** Bureaucrats may resist change, preferring policies aligned with existing programs.
  - **Objectivity vs. Advocacy:** They must balance providing objective analysis with advocating for solutions they believe are best.

2. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION:

- **Role:**
  - **Implementing Policy:** Executing policies, assessing resource needs, and developing implementation strategies.
  - **Advising Political Leaders:** Providing critical advice on feasibility, resource allocation, and potential roadblocks.
  - **Liaison with Public:** Interpreting policies, managing public perception, and persuading compliance.
  - **Street-Level Bureaucracy:** Directly interacting with citizens, influencing policy outcomes.
  - **Discretion and Decision-Making:** Exercising discretion while implementing policies, facing situations requiring independent decisions.
- **Challenges:**
  - **Balancing Political Will and Expertise:** Navigating between government agenda and expertise while advocating for public good.
  - **Resource Constraints:** Successful implementation hinges on adequate resources like personnel and funding.
  - **Ministerial Control:** Political executive guides implementation, sometimes prioritizing aspects based on political considerations.
  - **Accountability:** Held accountable for policy failures, despite challenges beyond their control.

3. POLICY MONITORING:

- **Role:**
  - **Goal Achievement:** Ensuring policies are implemented effectively to achieve intended goals.
  - **Data Collection and Analysis:** Gathering information on policy outcomes (impact, efficiency) using various methods.
  - **Comparison and Discrepancy Identification:** Comparing actual results with policy objectives to identify areas where the policy falls short.
  - **Ministerial Support:** Acting as advisors and informants to ministers, keeping them updated on policy progress.
  - **Field-Level Oversight:** Field-level bureaucrats play a crucial role in monitoring policy execution at the ground level.
- **Challenges:**
  - **Frequency of Monitoring :** Whether it is to be done periodically (monthly, annually) or continuously, it depends on the complexity of the task.
  - **Clarity and Measurability:** Identifying clearly defined and quantifiable policy goals is a challenge. This makes monitoring more efficient and meaningful.
  - **Workload Management:** Bureaucrats constantly struggle to balance daily tasks with dedicated time for in-depth policy monitoring.
  - **Information Constraints:** Data availability and cost can limit the scope and comprehensiveness of analysis.

4. POLICY ANALYSIS:

- **Policy Analysis Process:**
  - **Goal:** To improve policy formulation and effectiveness through systematic examination.
  - **Dimensions:** These include purposes and interventions, political feasibility, underlying values and objectives.

- o **Types of Analysis:** Include descriptive, prescriptive, and comparative.
- ▪ **Bureaucrats as Policy Analysts:**
  - o **Responsibilities:** Identifying policy goals, analyzing alternative solutions, and participating in policy formulation.
- ▪ **Challenges:**
  - o **Workload Pressures:** It may limit dedicated time for analysis thereby affecting the overall quality.
  - o **Training Needs:** Lack of training in specific policy analysis techniques may hinder the quality.
  - o **Balancing Innovation:** Balancing innovation with established procedures is a pertinent challenge.
- ▪ **The Bigger Picture:**
  - o **Importance of Training:** Specialized training in policy analysis methods is necessary for effective participation.
  - o **Political Context:** Influence of political actors on policy formulation must be considered.
  - o **Implementation and Beyond:** Analysis should examine not only policy design but also implementation mechanisms and actors involved.
  - o **Evolving Landscape:** Globalization and diverse actors necessitate adapting policy analysis methods for contemporary governance.

Bureaucrats play multifaceted roles throughout the policy cycle, from formulation to analysis. Recognizing their contributions and addressing challenges is essential for effective policy making and implementation.

FEATURES OF INDIAN PLANNING

The planning era has ended with the planning commission but here are some of the key features of Indian planning for academic purposes.

- ▪ **Comprehensive Planning:** Indian planning aimed for not just **economic growth but also social progress**. **Example:** While early plans focused on heavy industries like steel, later plans incorporated investments in education and healthcare (e.g., Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan for education).
- ▪ **Inclusive Growth:** A core objective was to bridge **economic disparities**. **Example:** The Gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality, in India remained above 0.3 throughout the planning era, indicating persistent challenges, though **poverty rates have declined** significantly since the 1990s.
- ▪ **Democratic Planning: Public participation** was emphasized in both **policy formulation and implementation**. **Example: Panchayati Raj institutions** (local village councils) were involved in plan implementation at the grassroots level, though their effectiveness has been uneven.
- ▪ **Prospective and Perspective Planning:** Plans combine **short-term goals with long-term vision**. **Example: Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2007-2012)** aimed for rapid economic growth alongside long-term goals like poverty reduction and infrastructure development.
- ▪ **Financial Planning:** Plans focused on **resource allocation rather than solely on physical targets**. **Example:** Budgetary allocations for critical social sectors like health (e.g., Ayushman Bharat) reflect this approach.
- ▪ **Public Sector Focus with Market Regulation:** Initially, India prioritized the **public sector**. **Example:** The Mahalanobis Model in the Second Five-Year Plan heavily emphasized state-led industrial development.
- ▪ **Regulation of Private Sector:** The government aimed to **control private sector excesses**. **Example:** The **Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act** (MRTP Act) aimed to prevent monopolies and promote fair competition.
- ▪ **Public Distribution System (PDS):** The government ensured **essential goods reached the population**. The PDS continues to play a crucial role in food security, though challenges like leakages persist.
- ▪ **Shift Towards Private Participation:** Since the 1990s, the role of the **private sector has grown**. **Example:** India's **Foreign Direct Investment** (FDI) inflows have significantly increased in recent years, reflecting greater openness to private investment.
- ▪ **Rethinking Development Approach:** The **trickle-down theory** (economic growth leading to social development) has been reevaluated. **Example:** Schemes like **MGNREGA** (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) directly target poverty alleviation and rural development.

Indian planning has had its share of achievements and shortcomings. Analyzing these features provides valuable insights into India's development journey.

FLAWS IN PLANNED DEVELOPMENT

- ▪ **Jobless Growth:** Despite India's rapid GDP growth, the labor force participation rate stagnated around 46% (KPMG, 2022). **Example:** A 2020 Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) report found automation and lack of skill development among youth led to "**jobless growth**" in sectors like textiles.
- ▪ **Persistent Inequality:** India has the third-highest number of billionaires (**Forbes**, 2023), while 22.5% of the population lives below the national poverty line (**World Bank**, 2022). **Example:** The 11th Five-Year Plan (2007-2012) focused on inclusive growth, but a 2013 Planning Commission report itself acknowledged limited success in poverty reduction.

India's GDP from 1960-2020
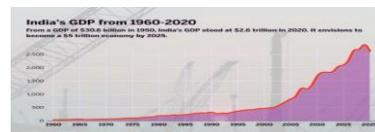
- **Underdeveloped Agriculture:** Though prioritized in plans, the Economic Survey 2022-23 reveals agriculture's average annual growth rate at only 4.6% in the last six years, lagging behind the overall GDP growth. **Example:** The Green Revolution (1960s-70s) aimed at agricultural self-sufficiency, but uneven distribution of benefits and lack of focus on infrastructure like irrigation limited its long-term impact.
- **Price Instability:** Throughout the planning period, India witnessed price fluctuations. Inflation in India peaked at 7.8% in 2022 (Reserve Bank of India data) remained above the targeted range, impacting the common people. **Example:** The high inflation during the 1970s eroded the purchasing power of the middle class, despite earlier economic growth.
- **Stagnant Living Standards:** While per capita income increased, rising inflation (RBI data) squeezed household budgets. **Example:** Proliferation of slums in major cities like Mumbai highlights the inadequate improvement in living conditions for the urban poor.

NITI AAYOG: A NEW PARADIGM FOR POLICY MAKING

India's population has skyrocketed from **340 million in 1947 to 1.4 billion in 2023 (Worldometer).** This, coupled with rising living standards, has led to a population with evolving needs and aspirations.
- The Indian economy has grown exponentially since independence. The service sector, driven by the IT boom, has surpassed agriculture as the GDP leader.
- The 1990s LPG reforms redefined the roles of government and the private sector. This necessitated a reevaluation of the Planning Commission's effectiveness.
- The **Standing Committee on Finance (15th Lok Sabha)** acknowledged the need for change: "The Planning Commission needs to align the planning process with economic reforms, particularly for the poor".
- **Establishment of NITI Aayog (2015):** It replaced the Planning Commission, aiming to be more responsive to contemporary India's needs. Its establishment involved extensive public consultations through MyGov, reflecting a commitment to inclusive policy making

NITI AAYOG'S SUCCESS HINGES ON ITS ABILITY TO:
- **Promote Cooperative Federalism:** NITI Aayog's success stories incl initiatives like **Aspirational Districts Program**, which fosters collaborat between central and state governments for regional development.
- **Champion Evidence-Based Policymaking: NITI Aayog's "Sustaina Development Goals - India Index"** (2022-23) provides data-dri insights for policymakers.
- **Drive Innovation:** Initiatives like the **Atal Innovation Mission** aim create a vibrant innovation ecosystem across India.
- By adapting to a changing India, NITI Aayog strives to be a catalyst effective policy making in this dynamic nation.

CHANGE IN POLICY FORMULATION AFTER NITI AAYOG:
- **Decentralized Planning**: **NITI Aayog engages state governments** clos exemplified by the Aspirational Districts Program (ADP), foster collaboration for development in lagging districts.
- **Evidence-Based Policymaking**: **NITI Aayog prioritizes data-driven decisions**, evident through its Knowledge and Innovation Hub, providing insights like the "Sustainable Development Goals - India Index."
- **Long-Term Vision**: **NITI Aayog focuses on future needs**, as seen in initiatives like the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), aiming to enhance urban infrastructure in 500 cities by 2022.
- **Cooperative and Competitive Federalism**: **NITI Aayog promotes collaboration and competition among states**, highlighted by the "States' SDG India Index," fostering improvement in SDG performance.
- **Expert-Driven Approach**: **NITI Aayog taps into diverse expertise**, forming task forces like the one on Artificial Intelligence, including prominent figures for informed policymaking.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation**: **NITI Aayog actively tracks program impact**, employing tools like the "Real-Time Monitoring System" for efficient implementation and corrections.

MAJOR INITIATIVES/STEPS BY NITI AAYOG-
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING:
- **Strategy for New India @75**: A visionary document aiming for a **9-10% economic growth rate** and a **$4 Trillion economy** by 2022-23.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELFARE:
- **Aspirational Districts Programme**: Launched to uplift districts lagging in key social indicators, fostering

comprehensive development.

- **National Health Stack**: A digital platform revolutionizing healthcare delivery, enhancing efficiency, and improving accessibility of health services.
- **Development Support Services to States**: Providing technical assistance and capacity building support to states for effective implementation of development initiatives.

INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY:

- **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)**: Fostering innovation and entrepreneurship through various programs, empowering startups, and driving innovation-led growth.
- **National Strategy on Artificial Intelligence (AI)**: Formulated to leverage AI for socio-economic growth, addressing challenges and maximizing opportunities in various sectors.
- **National Data and Analytics Platform (NDAP)**: A centralized platform facilitating access to diverse datasets for evidence-based policymaking and decision-making.
- **India Innovation Index**: Measuring innovation capabilities of states and union territories, guiding policy interventions, and fostering innovation ecosystems.
- **Champions of Change**: Recognizing and promoting innovative solutions and exemplary practices across various sectors, fostering a culture of excellence and entrepreneurship.

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY:

- **National Strategy for Clean Air**: Developed to address air pollution challenges, promoting clean technologies and sustainable practices to improve air quality nationwide.
- **Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy Framework**: Drafted to promote adoption of electric vehicles, reduce pollution, and enhance energy security.
- **Blue Economy Policy Framework**: Drafted to harness the potential of maritime resources and promote sustainable development of coastal and marine sectors, including fisheries, aquaculture, and tourism.

EDUCATION AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT:

- **Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs)**: Established in schools to nurture creativity, innovation, and problem-solving skills among students through hands-on learning.
- **AIM-PRIME (Program for Researchers on Innovations, Market-Readiness & Entrepreneurship)**: Bridging the gap between research and commercialization, providing support to researchers and innovators.
- **India-ASEAN Youth Summit**: Fostering cultural exchange, collaboration, and mutual understanding among youth from India and ASEAN countries, promoting regional cooperation and connectivity.
- **National Education Policy (NEP) Implementation**: Supporting the effective implementation of the National Education Policy 2020, aimed at transforming the education landscape and promoting holistic development.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE:

- **Smart Cities Mission**: Collaborating with state governments to develop and implement smart city projects aimed at enhancing urban infrastructure, services, and sustainability.

FINANCIAL INCLUSION AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION:

- **Digital Payments Mission**: Promoting digital payments adoption, financial inclusion, and cashless transactions through various initiatives and campaigns.

LABOR AND MIGRATION:

- **National Strategy for Migrant Workers**: Developed to address the challenges faced by migrant workers, ensuring their welfare, protection, and integration into the formal economy.

These initiatives collectively reflect NITI Aayog's commitment to fostering inclusive growth, leveraging innovation and technology, and driving sustainable development across India.

LIMITATIONS OF NITI AAYOG: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

- **Limited Influence:** NITI Aayog's advisory nature limits its ability to enforce recommendations, as seen in instances like **demonetization** and **GST rollout**, potentially affecting outcomes.
- **Investment Impasse:** Despite efforts, NITI Aayog struggles to significantly impact **private sector investments**, with India's **private investment rate** remaining stagnant, hindering robust growth.
- **Financial Constraints:** NITI Aayog lacks **financial autonomy**, impeding its ability to allocate funds directly to states for **ground-level change**, evident in delays during the **Aspirational Districts Programme**.
- **Socioeconomic Concerns:** Critics argue that NITI Aayog's efforts have not visibly reduced **poverty** and **inequality**, with the **wealth gap** persisting and the richest 1% holding a substantial share of **national wealth**.
- **Questionable Neutrality:** Allegations regarding **political bias** raise concerns about NITI Aayog's objectivity, especially with the appointment of retired political figures to key positions.
- **Top-Down Approach:** Critics highlight NITI Aayog's tendency towards a **one-size-fits-all planning** model, overlooking **regional diversity** and leading to ineffective policies.
- **More Focus on Large Scale Projects:** Prioritization of large-scale **infrastructure projects** over social sectors like **education** and **healthcare** could exacerbate existing inequalities.

- **Data Transparency Issues:** Concerns about **transparency** in data used by NITI Aayog hinder informed public discourse and independent evaluation of recommendations.

To overcome these limitations, NITI Aayog must adapt its approach by fostering collaboration with states, enhancing data transparency, and broadening its focus to encompass holistic development metrics.

ISSUES IN INDIA'S PUBLIC POLICY

- **Issues with Policy Formulation:**
  - **Over-centralization:** Power concentration at the top hampers responsiveness to local needs, as seen in the uniform approach of the **Goods and Services Tax (GST) rollout,** causing initial disruptions for businesses.
  - **Data Disconnect:** Policy decisions often lack empirical grounding, as exemplified **by farm loan waivers,** which despite good intentions, can strain the banking system and create moral hazards.
  - **Political Sway:** Short-term political gains often overshadow long-term benefits, as evidenced by the **prioritization of loan waivers**, undermining sustainable economic solutions.
  - **Limited Public Participation:** Valuable external expertise remains untapped, as policy structures lack mechanisms to incorporate inputs from affected communities and experts, potentially leading to flawed policies.
- **Issues with Policy implementation:**
  - **Weak Administration:** Corruption, rent-seeking, and elite capture of schemes weaken delivery mechanisms at the state level, impeding effective program execution.
  - **Skill Gaps in Delivery:** Inadequate infrastructure and technical skills among implementing agencies hinder program rollout, as seen during the initial stages of schemes like the **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY**) due to insufficient training for distributors.
  - **Faulty Targeting:** Poor beneficiary identification results in exclusion of deserving recipients and diversion of benefits to ineligible individuals, posing challenges to the effectiveness of social welfare programs.
  - **Public Awareness Deficit:** Lack of knowledge about programs and entitlements among intended beneficiaries impedes effective program utilization, highlighting the need for enhanced communication and outreach initiatives.

MEASURES NEEDED TO BE TAKEN-

FOR BETTER POLICY FORMULATION:

- **Decentralization and Stakeholder Inclusion: Empowering local bodies** like Panchayati Raj institutions, where the Gram Sabha plays a crucial role in policy decisions, can ensure policies are grounded in local realities. (e.g., **MGNREGS** empowering rural communities)
- **Data-Driven Decisions:** India needs to move away from ad-hoc policy making. Initiatives like the **National Productivity Council** and **Performance Management and Evaluation System** are positive steps, but real-time data collection and analysis are crucial. (e.g., Using data to target social welfare programs for maximum impact)
- **Scrutiny and Continuity: Judicial activism** ensures robust legal frameworks for policies. This, coupled with empirical analysis, can minimize policy reversals due to changing governments. (e.g., **Right to Information Act** promoting transparency)
- **Bridging the Knowledge Gap:** Collaboration between **government agencies and academic institutions** can bring fresh perspectives and expertise to policy making.

FOR BETTER IMPLEMENTATION:

- **Effective Delivery Mechanisms:** Active citizen participation at the ground level is essential. Schemes like **MGNREGA**, which involve local communities, demonstrate successful delivery mechanisms.
- **Convergence for Efficiency:** Combining similar schemes can streamline administration and empower beneficiaries. (e.g., Convergence of health and nutrition schemes for better outcomes)
- **Empowering Beneficiaries:** Public awareness campaigns and **social audits** ensure transparency and empower beneficiaries to claim their entitlements. (e.g., **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan**'s focus on community mobilization)

By adopting these measures, India can bridge the gap between policy formulation and implementation, leading to more effective and impactful governance.

EVALUATING POLICY EFFECTIVENESS

While **strong policy formulation and implementation** are crucial, ensuring their effectiveness requires a multi-pronged approach:

- **Moving Beyond Anecdotes:** Policy evaluation must shift from subjective narratives to **data-driven analysis**. The **NITI Aayog**'s recent use of satellite data to monitor rural development schemes (e.g., **PDS**) exemplifies a data-centric approach for better evaluation.
- **Building Strong Institutions:** Effective policies rely on **robust institutions**. The success of **Aadhaar** in streamlining social welfare programs highlights the importance of a strong institutional framework that fosters stability, continuity, and accountability.
- **Harnessing Citizen Power: Inclusiveness** is key. Platforms like the **"PG Portal"** (Public Grievance Portal) allow citizens to voice concerns and participate in policy discussions. This diverse perspective gathering, as seen in the drafting of the **National Education Policy 2020**, leads to more responsive policies.
- **Adapting to Change:** Policies must **evolve with society**. For instance: TheThe **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana**

(PMJAY), initially focused on secondary and tertiary healthcare, recently incorporated mental healthcare coverage, demonstrating the need for regular updates to address emerging challenges.

- **Feedback Loops:** Effective **feedback mechanisms** are essential. Initiatives like **"MyGov"** allow citizens to share opinions on policy drafts. Analyzing this feedback, like the modifications made to the **Land Acquisition Act** based on public input, allows for course correction and policy improvement.
- **Minimizing Leakages: Resource efficiency** is critical. Schemes like **Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT)** in LPG subsidies have reduced leakages and improved policy outcomes. Continued efforts are needed to streamline resource utilization across all programs.

India's future governance will necessitate navigating complex challenges. Robust public policy analysis, where every stakeholder's voice adds value to the development discourse, is key. By focusing on these aspects of policy effectiveness, India can bridge the gap between policy design and impactful outcomes, ultimately achieving good governance.

ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICT PROGRAMME

The **Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP)** aims to improve the **socio-economic indicators** of underdeveloped districts in India. Launched in 2018, it focuses on **Health and Nutrition, Education, Agriculture and Water Resources, Financial Inclusion and Skill Development**, and **Basic Infrastructure**. The **UNDP** has praised the ADP as a successful model for local area development.

3 core principles of ADP

- **Targeted Interventions:** The **NITI Aayog** anchors the initiative nationally, with individual ministries driving district growth. States establish committees under **Chief Secretaries**, and central **Prabhari Officers** provide local feedback.
- **Collaboration for Impact: Convergence** between central and state schemes fosters collaboration among government, market, and civil society.
- **Accountability and Competition:** A spirit of **competition** among districts cultivates a sense of **accountability** within local governments.
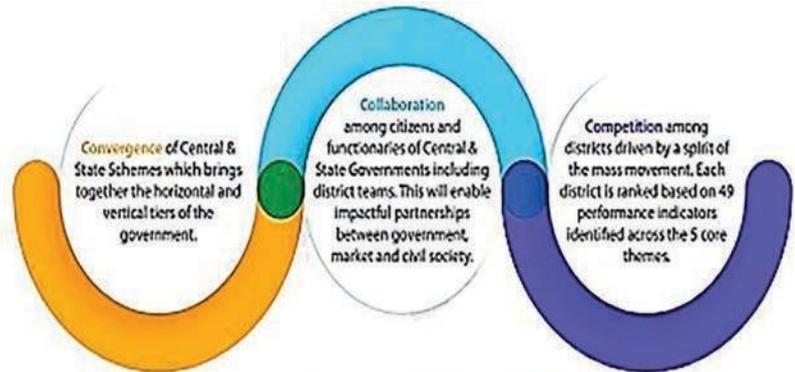
FOCUS AREAS:

- **Health and Nutrition:** Targeting a **50% reduction in Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM)** by 2024.
- **Education:** Notable increase in **secondary school enrollment** reported in ADP districts.
- **Agriculture and Water Resources: Dholpur district** saw a **25% increase in water efficiency impacting 550 rural families,** with solar-powered irrigation pumps.
- **Financial Inclusion and Skill Development:** Aiming for **100% basic bank account coverage** in eligible households by 2024.
- **Basic Infrastructure:** Over **1,500 villages** achieved complete **household electrification** by March 2024.

CHALLENGES:

- **Resource Constraints:** Addressing the challenge of limited **resources** by acknowledging the need for increased budgetary allocations.
- **Inter-Ministerial Coordination:** Overcoming the hurdle of fragmented **governance** through improved collaboration among **government departments**.
- **Data Quality:** Tackling the issue of **data reliability** and **accuracy** by investing in robust data management systems.
- **Quality over Quantity:** Balancing the focus on **quality metrics** with traditional indicators to achieve more holistic **policy outcomes**.

THE WAY FORWARD:

- **Refining Indicators:** Regular review to ensure relevance, with a shift towards **renewable energy access**.
- **Targeted Support:** Additional resources and interventions for **underperforming districts**.
- **Building Capacity:** Deployment of dedicated personnel like **Aspirational District Fellows** and partnerships for technical expertise.

The ADP's success sets a precedent for accelerating growth nationwide. By addressing challenges and fostering collaboration, India can narrow the development gap and create a brighter future for all its citizens.

BEST PRACTICES FROM INDIA'S ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS PROGRAMME

The Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) aims to improve socio-economic indicators in India's underdeveloped districts. Here are some successful initiatives across various focus areas:

- **Health and Nutrition**

- o **Arogya Kunji (Chatra, Jharkhand):** Provides medical kits to improve rural healthcare access.
  - o **Centralised Kitchens (Nandurbar, Maharashtra):** Offers hot meals to children in tribal schools.
  - o **Model Anganwadis (Ramgarh, Jharkhand):** Promote best practices in childcare and community outreach.
  - o **'Hamar Swasthya' App (Rajnandangaon, Chhattisgarh):** Enables early detection of chronic diseases.
  - o **Hostels for Pregnant Women (Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh):** Offer prenatal care and support.
  - o **Kanya Taru Yojana (Hailakandi, Assam):** Encourages institutional deliveries by gifting fruit trees to parents of newborn girls.
- **Education**
  - o **Aakar Residential School (Sukma, Chhattisgarh):** Provides inclusive education for differently-abled students.
  - o **Bal Sansad (Shrawasti and Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh):** Empowers students through mock parliaments.
  - o **BALA - Building as Learning Aid (Shrawasti, Uttar Pradesh):** Creates child-friendly learning environments.
  - o **Project Second Innings (Dahod, Gujarat):** Recruits retired teachers to boost attendance and learning outcomes.
  - o **Shiksha Saarthi Yojna (Singrauli, Madhya Pradesh):** Appoints teachers in rural areas to improve student-teacher ratios.
- **Agriculture and Water Resources**
  - o **Agriculture Entrepreneur Scheme (Ramgarh, Jharkhand):** Trains farmers in sustainable and profitable practices.
  - o **Horticulture Price Agreement Initiative (Chhatarpur, Madhya Pradesh):** Guarantees fair prices and market access for farmers.
  - o **Sarvajal Project (Udham Singh Nagar, Uttarakhand):** Provides decentralized drinking water solutions in underserved areas.
  - o **'Taanka' rainwater harvesting (Sonbhadra, Uttar Pradesh):** Conserves water for dry seasons.

- **Financial Inclusion and Skill Development**
  - o **Solar MAMAs (Gumla, Jharkhand):** Trains women to manufacture solar lights for unelectrified villages.
  - o **Khawa cluster concept (Osmanabad, Maharashtra):** Helps farmers increase income by processing milk into a shelf-stable product.
- **Basic Infrastructure**
  - o **Green technologies in Road Construction (Goalpara, Assam):** Uses recycled materials and reduces dependence on natural resources.
  - o **'Liter of Light' Portable Lights (Ranchi, Jharkhand):** Provides low-cost lighting solutions using recycled plastic bottles.
  - o **Patsendri: Model colony under PMAY (Mahasamund, Chhattisgarh):** Demonstrates convergence of various government schemes for holistic development.
  - o **Swajal Water Testing (Barpeta, Assam):** Empowers communities to test their drinking water quality.
- **Governance**
  - o **BDO Scorecards (Hazaribagh, Jharkhand):** Transparently assesses the performance of block development officers.
  - o **Lok Sewak App (Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh):** Uses geotagging to monitor attendance of government officials.
  - o **Infrastructure Snapshot App (Goalpara, Assam):** Allows citizens to report infrastructure issues using their smartphones.
  - o **Maha Land Bank System (Washim, Maharashtra):** Creates a central repository of government land for efficient allocation.
  - o **Meekosam Meal Scheme (Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh):** Provides subsidized meals to petitioners attending grievance hearings.

ASPIRATIONAL BLOCKS PROGRAMME

Building on the success of the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP), the government has launched a new initiative, the Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP)

KEY FEATURES:

- **Launched in** Union Budget 2022-23 (mentioned again in 2023-24)
- **Goal:** To improve the performance of **500 lagging blocks** across **31 states and Union Territories**.
- **Geographic Coverage:** Initial phase focuses on **500 blocks**, with over half concentrated in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal. However, states can add more blocks later.
- **Focus Areas:** Similar to the ADP, the ABP tackles five key domains of Health and Nutrition, Education, Agriculture and Water Resources, Financial Inclusion and Skill Development and Basic Infrastructure
- **Saturation of Services:** Aims to ensure all essential government services reach these blocks.
- **Performance Measurement:** Tracks progress using **15 key socio-economic indicators (KSIs)** across various domains. States can add additional indicators to address local challenges.
- **Healthy Competition:** Regularly releases rankings based on KSI performance, fostering competition and improvement among blocks.

ABP Programme Implementation Strategy

- **Focus on Governance:** Aims to improve governance at the block level to enhance the quality of life for citizens. This includes:
  - **Convergence:** Bringing together different government departments to bridge administrative gaps.
  - **Outcome-oriented Approach:** Defining clear goals and constantly monitoring progress.

WHY FOCUS ON BLOCKS?

- **Inclusive Development:** Block-level infrastructure ensures a larger share of development should reach marginalized communities, ensuring inclusive development.
- **Locally Adaptable Planning:** Blocks function as administrative and monitoring units, allowing for flexible planning based on local needs, leading to optimum utilization of resources.
- **Grassroot Participation:** It will make decision-making closer to the people, thereby improving the participatory planning process in democracy.
- **Convergence for SDGs:** Effective block-level implementation can bridge administrative gaps and achieve critical Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
  - The ABP holds immense potential to accelerate development at the most granular level, bridging the gap between government initiatives and the last mile of implementation. By learning from the ADP and addressing existing challenges, the ABP can play a vital role in empowering these blocks and fostering inclusive growth across India.

KEYWORDS:
Citizen-Focused Development Policy, Strict Regulation to Facilitative Approach, Government-Centric to Citizen-Centric, Short-Term to Sustainable Growth, Proactive, Innovative, and Adaptive Government, Results-Driven Attitude, Modern Local Governance, Multiple Crises to Cross-Sector Progress
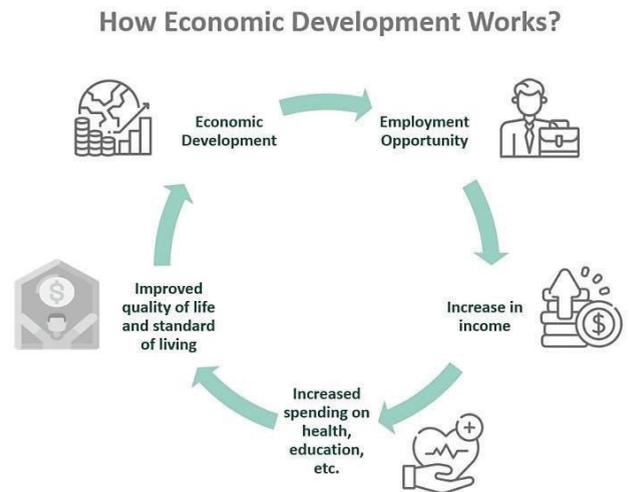
DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES AND THE DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY — THE ROLE OF NGOs, SHGs, VARIOUS GROUPS AND ASSOCIATIONS,

DEVELOPMENT: MEANING AND INTRODUCTION

Development can be **characterized as the journey towards societal transformation**, **empowering individuals** to fulfill their inherent capabilities. Amartya Sen's perspective views development as a political endeavor, aiming to eradicate constraints that impede citizens from exercising their reasoned agency, thereby expanding their choices and opportunities.

DIMENSIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

- **Human development:** Amartya Sen advocated a human capability approach to human development. It focuses on the well-being of those at the bottom rather than the efficiency of those at the top.
- **Political development:** It is described as anything done by a government agency (or a development organization) for the benefit of others (**e.g.** farmers in a developing country). It's referred to as a democratic mechanism because it raises concerns about who has the authority to do something to whom.
- **Economic development:** The mechanism by which a country develops the economic, political, and social well-being of its citizens.
- **Social Growth**: Investing in people is what social development entails. It necessitates the elimination of obstacles so that all people can confidently and dignifiedly pursue their dreams.
- **Sustainable Development:** The Brundtland Report describes sustainable development as development that meets current needs without jeopardizing future generations' ability to fulfill their own. The United Nations has developed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are a set of broad objectives that must be met by 2030.

How Economic Development Works?

Economic Development → Employment Opportunity → Increase in income → Increased spending on health, education, etc. → Improved quality of life and standard of living
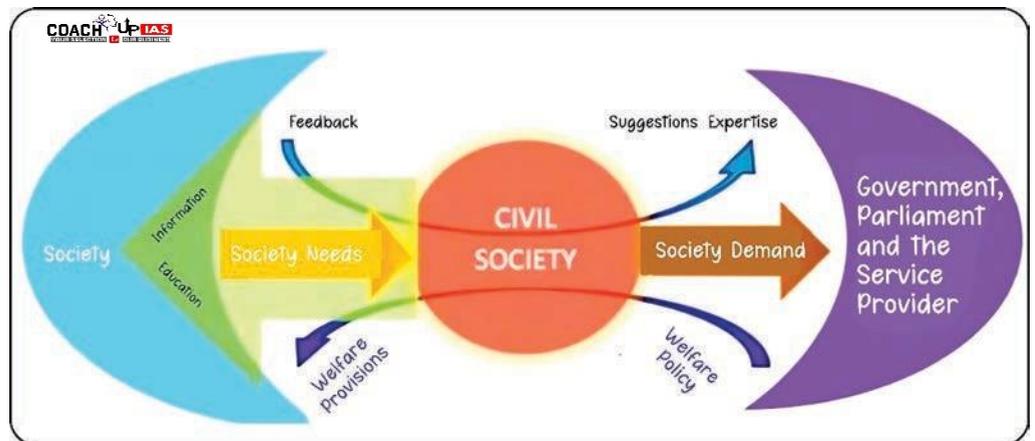
CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

- **Flawed Implementation of land reforms:** After independence, land reforms failed to achieve its target. This not only led to stagnant agricultural growth but also further exacerbated the historical unequal resource distribution.
- **Inter-regional disparity:** Due to agricultural failures and poor industrial planning, regional disparities increased, leading to social unrest and demands for caste-based reservations. Example: Demand for caste-based reservations in the state of Maharashtra, particularly with the Maratha community.
- **Education and Health remained neglected:** Health and Education are two key investments to increase workforce productivity. However, poor-quality education and the relatively high prevalence of certain diseases in India are risking its future economic growth.
  - The combined expenditure on education by the Centre and States, as a percentage of GDP, has remained stagnant at 2.9% from 2019-20 to 2022-23.
  - The doctor-to-patient ratio remains low, which is merely 0.7 doctors per 1,000 people whereas the World Health Organisation (WHO) average is 2.5 doctors per 1,000 people.
- **Gender Disparity:** Gender inequality remains entrenched in various aspects of Indian society, influencing economic participation, education, and health outcomes. The Global Gender Gap Report 2023 ranks India 127 out of 146 countries, reflecting severe disparities in health, education, economic opportunity, and political empowerment.
- **Economic Inequality:** According to the a research paper published by World Inequality report 2024, the top 1% holds an average of Rs 5.4 crore in wealth, 40 times the average Indian. This inequality is not just a metropolitan phenomenon but extends across rural and urban divides, affecting economic mobility and access to resources.
- **Environmental Concern:** According to the 2023 World Air Quality Report India ranked as the world's third most polluted country. Report highlighted that 9 out of the top 10 most polluted cities in the world are from India.
- **Underutilization of natural resources:** Despite the abundant resources in India, there is underutilization of natural resources due to outdated technology and financial constraints. **Example:** In Jharkhand mining areas are often in remote and inaccessible locations.

WAY FORWARD

- **Policy Formulation and Planning: Define clear, measurable goals** based on needs assessments. **Example:** The 2015 **Smart Cities Mission** aimed to develop **100 cities** with advanced urban planning and technology.
- **Stakeholder Engagement: Involve all relevant stakeholders** to ensure support and gather insights. **Example:** The **Swachh Bharat Mission** engaged communities to tailor local sanitation strategies.
- **Legislation and Regulation: Create legal frameworks** to support and enforce policy implementation. **Example:** The **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** was established through new laws to unify the tax system across India.
- **Resource Allocation: Provide sufficient funding** for policy execution. **Example: MGNREGA** was funded to guarantee rural employment for **100 days per household annually**.
- **Implementation and Execution: Efficiently manage resources** to meet policy objectives. **Example:** The **National Health Mission** was executed through decentralized management to cater to state-specific health needs.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation: Set and assess performance metrics** to track policy success. **Example:** The **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana** used monitoring to track new bank accounts, assessing financial inclusion efforts.
- **Feedback and Adaptation: Use evaluation data** to refine and improve policy methods. **Example:** Adjustments in **PMJDY**, like overdraft facilities, were made in response to the initial high number of zero-balance accounts.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS		
1.	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.	2020
2.	The concept of Mid Day Meal (MDM) scheme is almost a century old in India with early beginnings in the 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.	2013

ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION

Civil Society encompasses a diverse range of entities, including organisations, community groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, and foundations, as defined by the World Bank.

FEATURES OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION

- **Voluntary Participation:** Individuals freely choose to be involved, driven by shared goals and passion.
- **Non-Profit Motivation:** Primarily focused on social good, not driven by maximising profit.
- **Pluralism and Diversity:** Encompasses a wide range of groups with varied interests and approaches
- **Accountability:** Responsible to members, beneficiaries, and the broader public.
- **Independence:** Operates autonomously from the government and business sectors.
- **Advocacy and Representation:** Gives voice to marginalised groups and promotes their interests.
- **Innovation and Experimentation:** Develops and implements new solutions to social challenges.
- **Collaboration:** Builds partnerships and alliances to achieve shared goals.
- **Education and Awareness Raising:** Informs and empowers citizens on critical issues.
- **Community Building and Social Cohesion:** Fosters connections and strengthens social bonds within communities.
- **Some examples of C.S.Os are** World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Greenpeace, The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and Reporters Without Borders.

SIGNIFICANCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN GOVERNANCE

▪ **Mobilizing Resources: The Tata Trusts** in India, harnessing private wealth for public good, have invested in health, education, and rural livelihoods, complementing government efforts.

▪ **Promoting Transparency and Accountability: Transparency International India**, an NGO, works on improving governance and reducing corruption by enhancing transparency and accountability in government operations.

▪ **Investing in Capacity Building: The Azim Premji University** offers specialized courses for NGO professionals, boosting their ability to manage and lead organizations effectively.

▪ **Enhancing Communication and Collaboration:** The creation of the NGO **Darpan portal by NITI Aayog** facilitates better interaction between the government, NGOs, and the private sector.

▪ **Encouraging Volunteerism:** The **National Service Scheme (NSS)** and other platforms offer opportunities for young Indians to volunteer in various public services, enhancing civic engagement.

▪ **Bridging the Divide:** NGOs like the **Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)** play a watchdog role, ensuring environmental policies are both formulated and implemented effectively.

▪ **Promoting Democracy and Rule of Law:** The **Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)** actively works to improve electoral transparency and supports legal frameworks that uphold democratic processes.

▪ **Enhancing Government Accountability:** The **Common Cause Society** conducts litigation and advocacy to hold governmental and corporate powers accountable, promoting transparency and reducing corruption.

▪ **Facilitating Citizen Participation: Janaagraha Centre for** Citizenship **and Democracy** engages citizens in urban governance projects to make cities more livable and governance more interactive.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGO)

NGO is **defined by the World Bank** as "a not-for-profit organization that pursues activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development".

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS RELATED TO NGO

▪ Article 19(1)(c): Allows the right to form associations.
▪ Article 43 to promote cooperatives in rural areas.
▪ The Concurrent List mentions charitable institutions, charitable and religious institutions.

REGISTRATION OF NGO:

NGOs in India are divided into: **Societies, Charitable, Companies and Trusts.**

ROLE AND IMPACT OF NGO:

▪ **Welfare scheme implementation:** Due to their proximity to the public, NGOs serve as a link between the government and end users. Thus, NGOs broadly play three roles in the implementation of government welfare schemes: **implementer, catalyst, and collaborator**.

- **Capacity building:** They play a critical role in bridging gaps by conducting research to aid policy-making, building institutional capacity, fostering independent dialogue with civil society and assisting people in leading more sustainable lives.
- **Fighting social evils and protecting human rights**: Thanks to the efforts of NGOs, the government has outlawed sex determination of fetuses because it contributes to evils such as the abortion of female fetuses.
- **Economic growth and development:** NGOs have emerged as key players and collaborators in Economic growth and development efforts. They are on the front lines of aiding in acquiring basic needs and amenities, recognising concerns, and raising awareness.
- **Function in areas where the government is reluctant to enter**: Caste is a topic with which no government wants to tinker.
- **Complement state services:** Education and healthcare are two major examples where government-run schools and hospitals are in short supply, particularly in rural areas, lacking adequate resources. However, these programs are supplemented and complemented by NGOs.
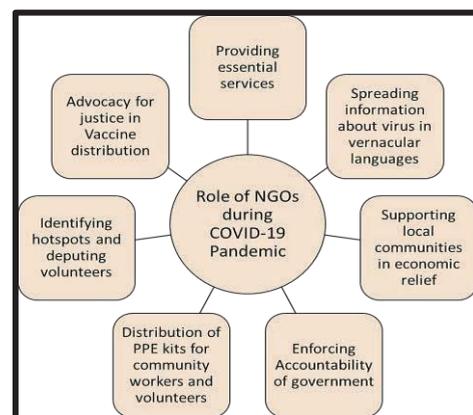
THE IMPACT OF NGOs: CASE STUDIES FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING

- **Imparting education: Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad**, a massive NGO, is largely responsible for the state's 100 percent literacy rate.
- **Securing the interest of the poor: NGOs in cities like Mumbai,** such as **YUVA** and **SPARC**, have consistently protested the demolition of huts and simultaneously worked to improve the quality of life in the sprawling slum clusters.
- **Raising voice for minorities**: NGOs also spoke out against multinationals' oppression of indigenous people, as seen in the **Vedanta vs. Posco case**. Many of these NGOs have collaborated with Gram Panchayats to ensure that laws such as the **Forest Rights Act and the CAMPA Act** are properly implemented.
- **Role in disaster management:** NGOs assist in rescue operations during disasters and also provide vocational training centers. E.g. Rapid Response is an award-winning NGO, providing disaster response and preparedness services across India**.**
- **Fighting environmental pollution:** NGOs can bring in global deals, such as reforms to combat hazardous waste controls, landmine bans, and greenhouse gas and pollution control on a global scale.
    - **E.g. The Centre for Science and Environment** has been a leading voice on pollution, toxins in food and beverage, and other important issues.
- **Protecting health and life: E.g.** During the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in India, **Aid India** had already been working on welfare initiatives. However, its efforts gained momentum during the second wave. The organization specifically focused on the villages where it had initiated education initiatives. In addition to the volunteers already associated with the organization in each village, several others also joined their cause.
- **Child rights: Bachpan Bachao Andolan** have liberated more than 90,000 children in India from child labour, slavery and trafficking.
- **Good Weave International, a network of non-profit organizations** dedicated to ending illegal child labour in the rug-making industry provided the first voluntary labelling, monitoring, and certification system of rugs manufactured without the use of child labour in South Asia.

NGOs AND COVID-19 PANDEMIC:

- Government responses to the pandemic have disrupted civil society globally with lockdowns confining people to home and physical distancing measures restricting meetings. However, the civil society actors rose to the pandemic challenge in myriad small and large ways.

EXAMPLES OF THE WORK OF NGOs DURING COVID-19
• NGO India provided essential services in Delhi, Bengaluru, Mumbai and Patna.
• Salaam Bombay Foundation engaged with slum children to keep them engaged mentally and emotionally.
• The Perro Ayuda Welfare Foundation helped stray animals.
• The Hemkunt Foundation organized oxygen, medicines and hospital beds for those in need.

CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH NGOs:

- **Concerns related to their Legitimacy and Accountability:**
    - According to the CBI, there is one NGO for every 600 Indian people. However, there is a lack of transparency among NGOs in India and Just 10% of NGOs filed annual income and expenditure statements.
    - Thousands of nonprofits and volunteer groups receive government grants but fail to specify how they use them.
    - In a study, the Intelligence Bureau accused "foreign-funded" NGOs of funding anti-nuclear and anti-coal-fired power plant protests as well as anti-GMO protests across the world, accusing them of "acting as instruments for

foreign policy interests of Western governments." The NGOs are said to be collaborating with a network of local organizations to reduce GDP growth by 2–3%.

- **Corruption and Misuse of Funds**: It is a common occurrence for serious allegations of misuse and misappropriation of funds obtained as grant-in-aid from the government, and international donors, and collected from the NGOs' resources.
- **Legal and Regulatory Constraints:** Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) provides for Stricter regulations and limitations on receiving foreign funding (e.g., mandatory single account, reduced administrative expenses) have significantly impacted operational capacity and funding stability for many NGOs.
- **Lack of Professionally Trained Personnel**: One of the major challenges faced by NGOs in India is a lack of professionally trained personnel.
- **Inequality in rural areas**: NGOs in urban areas are more developed than in rural areas. The backwardness of NGOs in rural areas is because of-
  o To the backwardness and ignorance of rural people.
  o Lack of willingness among social workers to work among them in the absence of basic amenities.
- **Lack of Volunteerism/Social Work among Youth**: Volunteerism is dwindling and becoming more professionalized daily and recent social work graduates are interested in pursuing a career in professionalism.
- **Lack of Funds**: The majority of NGOs in India are operating on a shoestring budget. The government does not have 100% grants in assistance and delays the approval of grants for a variety of programmes.

STEPS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT:

- In India, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) monitors foreign funds donated to NGOs and organizations through the FCRA. Certain NGOs are registered under Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) and are regulated by the Finance Ministry. Recently Apex court upheld amendments to FCRA.
- Recently, New accreditation guidelines for NGOs had been formed based on recommendations of the **Vijay Kumar Committee**.
- NITI Aayog has been appointed as the nodal agency for the registration and accreditation of NGOs seeking funding from the Government.

FCRA AMENDMENT 2020 IN CONTEXT OF NGO ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- Branch of State Bank of India, a government-owned bank to receive foreign funds. This reflects government's distrust regarding sources of funding in NGOs.
- The 2020 amendment prohibits NGOs from transferring FCRA funds to any other organization or person, reflecting suspicion regarding use of FCRA funds. Administrative expenses have been capped at 20% (50% earlier).
- The amended FCRA gives government powers to stop an NGO from utilization of foreign funds by putting the account under 'summary inquiry'.
- The office bearers are required to provide Aadhaar card, or passport details (for foreigners). This will provide government a database of persons in control of NGOs receiving foreign contributions.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Vijay Kumar Committee:**
  o The details of NGOs should be available as searchable database information.
  o A nodal body to oversee the various interfaces between NGOs and the government has recommended that NITI Aayog be vested with the power.
- **2nd ARC:** The powers under FCRA should be decentralized and delegated to State governments or district administration.
- **Enhanced Oversight Mechanism:** Establish commissions or committees to scrutinise fund utilisation by NGOs, ensuring transparency and preventing misuse of resources.
- **Public Awareness Campaign:** Engage young graduates in organising public seminars, meetings, and utilise local media to promote the significance of volunteerism and share success stories of NGOs.
- **Academic Collaboration:** Foster collaboration between universities, colleges, and schools with NGOs, facilitating campus interviews for graduates interested in volunteerism. Encourage participation in voluntarism from early education through programs like NSS and NCC.
- **Rural Focus and Incentives:** Recognize the importance of rural operations for NGOs, particularly in a country where 65% of the population resides in rural areas. Provide special provisions and eligibility conditions for grants to NGOs working in rural communities.
- **Quality Recognition:** Encourage NGOs to uphold high service standards by recognizing and rewarding those that excel, motivating others through awards and additional grants.
- **Revise Personnel Compensation:** Revise pay scales and allowances for NGO personnel to align with the importance of their work. Allocate special funds for training personnel at the grassroots level.
- **Utilise Technology:** Promote the adoption of modern technologies such as the internet and websites for fundraising, establishing collaborations, advertising products, and recruiting efficient personnel within the NGO sector.

- According to Supreme Court decision, non-government organizations (NGOs) that receive government funding are now subject to the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005.
- **"Public authority"** is described in Section 2(h) of the RTI Act as "any authority, entity, or institution of self-government created or constituted."
- **Funding:** Substantial funding is not specified in the RTI Act. In its decision, the Supreme Court broadened the concept of significant financing.

BENEFITS OF PUTTING NGOs UNDER THE RTI ACT:

- Will upholds Accountability, Independence, and Reliability of NGOs.
- **Access to information to citizens:** Since NGOs obtain public funds, citizens must have access to information about how those funds are spent under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.
- **Effectiveness of NGOs as a social service delivery agent**: Many bodies, Like Hospitals and educational institutions, will now fall under the category of "public authorities" (Section 2(h) of the RTI Act), as they are located on government-owned property.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Better cooperation between the government and NGOs is needed** to ensure that social welfare schemes are delivered effectively rather than being hampered in their implementation.
- NGO regulators should ensure that **laws are followed in a fair, open, and non-partisan manner**, free of political interference, to increase public trust and confidence in both the regulator and the NGOs.
- To ensure compliance by NGOs, a **National Accreditation Council,** composed of academics, activists, and retired bureaucrats should be formed.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS		
1.	Examine critically the recent changes in the rule governing foreign funding of NGOs under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 1976.	2015
2.	How can the role of NGOs be strengthened in India for development works relating to protection of the Environment? Discuss throwing light on the major constraints.	2015
3.	"In the Indian governance system, the role of non-state actors has been only marginal." Critically examine this statement.	2016

PRESSURE GROUP

Pressure groups are individuals voluntarily organising to advocate for and safeguard their shared interests. Their objective is to influence public opinion and government policies in favour of their members by applying external pressure. These groups employ legal and legitimate methods, including lobbying, correspondence, petitioning, public debates, and discussions with legislators, to impact government policy-making and implementation.

TYPES OF PRESSURE GROUPS:

- **Institutional Interest Groups:** These formal groups consist of professionals employed within the government machinery, such as political parties, legislatures, armies, and bureaucracies. They express their concerns through constitutional means and in accordance with established rules and regulations.

- **Associational Interest Groups:** These specialized groups are formed to advocate for specific interests and limited goals. **Examples** include trade unions, organizations of businessmen and industrialists, and civic groups.
- **Anomic Interest Groups:** These groups emerge spontaneously from society and include actions such as riots, demonstrations, assassinations, and other similar forms of direct political engagement.
- **Non-Associational Interest Groups:** These groups, characterized by informal structures, articulate interests based on kinship, lineage, ethnicity, region, status, and class. **Examples** include caste groups, language groups, and other community-based associations.
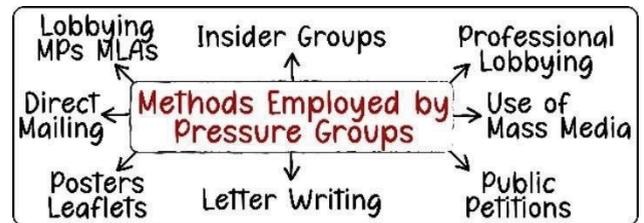
ROLE OF PRESSURE GROUPS IN PUBLIC POLICY MAKING

- **Advocacy for Public Demands**
  - Pressure groups effectively articulate the demands and needs of their constituents, especially when these issues lack political significance. An instance is the Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers filing a petition in the Supreme Court seeking social security benefits for gig workers.
- **Advisory Function**
  - Governments often seek advice from pressure groups on significant policy matters of a commercial and economic nature. Acting as a two-way communication channel, pressure groups, such as the Confederation of All India Traders and Retail Association of India, have notably influenced the government's e-commerce policies.

- **Legislative Influence**
  - o In the legislative process, pressure groups actively engage in lobbying with legislators to shape desired laws or amendments. Notable examples include the All-India Trade Union Congress, Centre of Indian Trade Unions, and Hind Mazdoor Sabha, which have played key roles in finalising labour codes.
- **Policy Evaluation**
  - o Pressure groups critically evaluate laws, rules, decisions, and policies that directly or indirectly impact the interests they represent. The protests by farmer unions and farmer producer organisations against the three farm laws in 2021 resulted in the government repealing those laws.
- **Enhancing Social Cohesion**
  - o By providing a "safety valve" for individual and collective grievances and demands, pressure groups contribute to increased social cohesion and political stability.
- **Public Opinion Formation**
  - o Playing a leading role in shaping public opinion, pressure groups influence the government through mechanisms such as op-eds in newspapers, meetings with the political class, sloganeering, sit-ins, road- and rail-blockades. These efforts have led to decisions like farm loan waivers.

LIMITATIONS OF PRESSURE GROUPS
- **Undue Influence on Government**
  - o **Silencing the Majority:** Powerful and articulate groups can lobby for their interests, potentially drowning out the voiceless majority.
  - o **Example:** The Farm Laws repeal, highlighted by the Supreme Court-appointed panel, could be seen as favouring a vocal minority over the silent majority who might have supported the reforms.
- **Internal Conflicts and Partisanship:**
  - o **Conflicts of Interest:** Internal power struggles or vested interests within groups can undermine the issues they represent.
  - o **Example:** Trade unions might be influenced by internal politics, jeopardising the welfare of the workers they claim to represent.
- **Resistance to Change and Protectionism:**
  - o **Trade Union Conservatism:** Unions sometimes advocate for protectionist policies or resist necessary reforms, hindering economic progress.
  - o **Example:** Protests against farm laws could stem from a preference for existing structures despite potential benefits of reform.
- **Intransigence and Disruption:**
  - o **Uncompromising Tactics:** Prolonged protests or disruptive actions can alienate the public and damage the cause.
  - o **Example:** The intransigence displayed during some farm law protests might have weakened public support for the movement.
- **Foreign Interference and Security Concerns:**
  - o **External Manipulations:** Groups susceptible to foreign influence can pose threats to national security and sovereignty.
 - o **Example:** The "toolkit" controversy raised concerns about external attempts to manipulate protests.

Pressure groups play a significant role in democratic societies by articulating interests, engaging in political processes, influencing decision-making, improving accountability, and facilitating social progress. However, they also have shortcomings that need to be addressed for effective and responsible participation in the political system.

SELF-HELP GROUPS (SHG)

A Self-Help Group is defined as a **"self-governed, peer-controlled information group of people with similar socio-economic background and having a desire to collectively perform a common task."**

OBJECTIVES OF SHGs:
- Members' savings and banking practices should be instilled.
- To protect them against financial, technological, and moral threats.
- To allow for the use of a loan for constructive purposes.
- Obtaining economic stability using a loan or credit.
- To profit from mutual experience in terms of organizing and handling their finances, as well as sharing the proceeds among themselves.
- To raise awareness among women in the target area about the importance of SHGs and their role in their empowerment.
- Encourage women to save and make it easier for them to build their own capital resource base.
- To encourage women to take on social responsibilities, especially those related to women's growth.
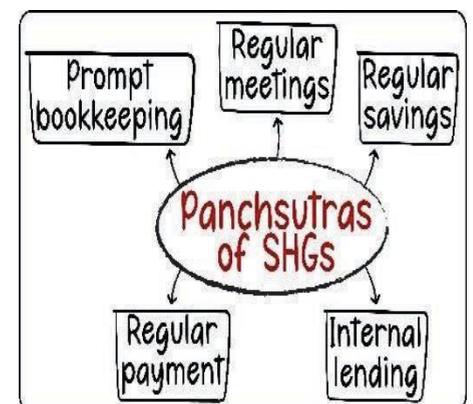
ORIGIN OF SHGs IN INDIA:

- Self Help Groups (SHGs) originated in India as a **grassroots approach to addressing poverty and empowering marginalized communities, particularly women**.
- The concept gained momentum in the **1980s** with the establishment of the **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).**
- Organizations like **MYRADA** and **PRADAN** played a significant role in popularizing the SHG model, recognizing the potential of collective action and self-help.

Origin of SHGs in India

NEED OF SELF-HELP GROUP (SHG) IN INDIA:

- **Tackle poverty:** The very presence of SHGs is critical in making people living in poverty optimistic and self-reliant.
  - o SHGs serve as a mechanism for getting this group of people into the mainstream of society by helping them increase their income, raise their standard of living, and elevate their social status.
- **Implement government programmes:** Various programmes for rural upliftment have been implemented by the Indian government and by various state governments.
  - o Rural poverty and unemployment, on the other hand, persist in the region. This issue is getting more serious and acute. According to the most recent data available on the Indian economy, the rural poor account for roughly 26% of the country's total population.
- **Women empowerment:** Women play an important role in the Indian economy, both on a national and household level. They account for one-third of the country's workforce.
  - o Indian women devote a much greater share of their earnings to basic family maintenance than their male counterparts, resulting in women's earnings having a positive and immediate impact on the incidence and security of poverty.
- **Local support:** SHGs are based on cooperative concepts which provide a platform for participants to offer each other support. It is regarded as a source of empowerment.
  Access to the formal financial system: SHGs bring together very vulnerable people who do not have access to the formal financial system. Transparency and accountability are usually missing in communities.

BENEFITS OF SHGs:

- **Socio-Economic benefits:** Economic self-sufficiency, involvement in village affairs, and education, literacy are some of the socio-economic benefits.
- **Improves women's status:** Women's social capital is built through regular group meetings, which increases their status in the family and society.
- **Improves health and living standards:** According to an NFHS-4, women who engage in "participatory learning and intervention" have a lower maternal mortality rate and lower neonatal mortality rate.
- **Women from rural areas are mobilized:** SHG architecture is estimated to have mobilized about 46 million rural poor women. These organizations have proven to be successful, particularly in terms of providing financial intermediation services to unbanked rural women.

CHALLENGES OF SHGs:

- **Penetration of SHGs in Rural Areas Faces Socio-Cultural Obstacles:**
  - o Till March 2021, the southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu accounted for 71% of the related SHGs.
  - o Poorly performing states include those with a high poverty rate, such as UP and Bihar.
  - o States where patriarchy is deeply ingrained and women's financial and social roles are restricted.
  - o Due to family obligations, most women members are unable to devote their full attention to their businesses.
- **SHG members lack the necessary expertise and orientation** to pursue viable and profitable livelihood options.
- **Poor Infrastructure**: The majority of these SHGs are in rural and remote areas with no road or rail access. Electricity continues to be an issue.
- **Lack of training and capacity building**: The majority of SHGs operate on their own, with no assistance from the government in terms of professional development or capacity building.
- **Politicization:** In SHGs, political affiliation and intervention have become major issues.
- **No security:** The SHGs depends on the members' shared trust and confidence. The SHGs' deposits are not stable or safe.

MEASURES TO MAKE SHGs EFFECTIVE:

- The **government should be a facilitator and promoter,** and create a conducive atmosphere for the SHG movement's
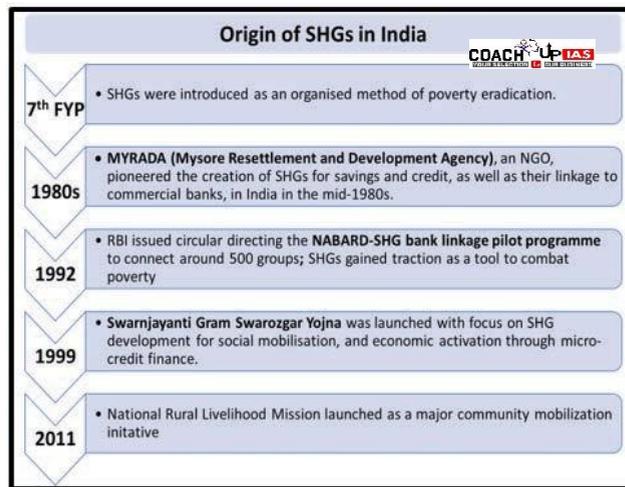
growth and development.
- **Increasing the number of SHGs** in credit-deficient areas of the country, like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and the North-Eastern states.
- **Focus on Rapid expansion of financial infrastructure** as well as comprehensive IT-enabled connectivity and capacity-building initiatives.
- **Extension of Self-Help Groups to Urban/Peri-Urban Areas** given the fact that many Urban poor remain financially excluded, attempts should be made to increase their ability to generate income.
- **A separate SHG monitoring cell** must be created that collects both quantitative and qualitative data.

E-SHAKTI PROJECT OF NABARD

- eShakti, or SHG Digitisation, is a project of NABARD's Micro Credit and Innovations Department.
- The project aims at the digitization of all the Self-Help Group (SHG) accounts. This initiative seeks to bring SHG members under the umbrella of financial inclusion, enabling them to access a broader range of financial services. Additionally, it aims to enhance bankers' comfort in credit appraisal and linkage by ensuring proper digital documentation and record-keeping.
  - Improving the quality of the interface between SHG members and Banks for efficient and hassle-free delivery of banking services by using the available technology.
  - Facilitate convergence of delivery systems with SHGs using Aadhaar-linked identity.

CASE STUDIES: SHGs

- **Mahila Arthik Vikas Mahamandal (MAVIM) in Maharashtra:**
  - MAVIM established a community-run resource center (CMRC) to provide financial and livelihood services to SHGs.
  - CMRC is self-supporting and offers programmes based on needs.
- **Kudumbashree in Kerala:**
  - Kudumbashree is a government-run organization with a budget and employees who are paid by the government.
  - It began in Kerala in 1998 with the aim to eradicate total poverty through collective action and is the country's largest women's empowerment initiative.
  - **Social Initiatives:** The network has initiated various social initiatives aimed at addressing social issues such as education, health, sanitation, and environmental conservation.
  - **Political Representation:** Kudumbashree members have become elected representatives in local government bodies, giving them a platform to voice the concerns and needs of their communities.
  - **Philanthropic Contribution:** During a severe flood in Kerala, Kudumbashree members selflessly donated Rs 7 crore to the Chief Minister's relief fund, surpassing the contributions of tech giants like Google.
  - **Community Spirit:** Despite being victims of the flood themselves, Kudumbashree workers displayed a strong sense of community and solidarity by actively participating in relief efforts and contributing to the welfare of others.

COOPERATIVES IN INDIA

- A cooperative society is a **voluntary association of individuals having common needs who join hands for the achievement of common economic interests.**
- Its **aim** is to serve the interest of the poorer sections of society through the principle of self-help and mutual help.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF COOPERATIVES IN INDIA

- **Agriculture and related sectors gave birth to India's cooperative movement:**

  - Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the problems of rural indebtedness and the resulting conditions of farmers provided an atmosphere for chit funds and cooperative societies.
  - Farmers considered cooperative movement as a tool for pooling their limited resources to solve common problems such as credit, input supplies, and agricultural product marketing.
  - The **Cooperative Credit Societies Act of 1904 and 1912, the Constitutional Reforms in 1919** and the recommendations of various committees such as the **Royal Commission on Agriculture (1928),** and **Committee on Cooperative Planning (1945),** during the British regime contributed a lot in shaping the organizational structure of cooperatives in India.
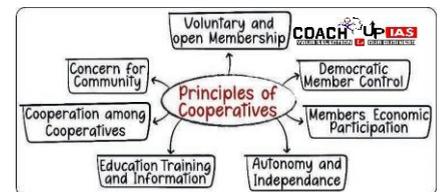
- Article 19 states that the Right to form cooperative societies is a fundamental right.
- The Constitution (97th Amendment) Act, 2011
  - In Part III of the constitution, after the words "or unions" the words "Cooperative Societies" was added.
  - In Part IVA, a new Article 43B was inserted, which says: ``The state shall endeavor to promote voluntary formation, autonomous functioning, democratic control and professional management of the co-operative societies".
  - Part IXA of the constitution, a Part IXB was inserted to accommodate state vs center roles.

NATIONAL POLICY ON COOPERATIVES, 2002:

- Provide support for the promotion and development of cooperatives.
- Reduction of regional imbalances.
- Strengthening of cooperative education, training, and human resource development.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE COOPERATIVES SECTOR TO INDIA'S GROWTH STORY:

- **Boost to the rural economy:** Cooperatives cover around 97% of Indian villages and around 19% of the agricultural credit is disbursed by the cooperatives.
- **Economies of scale:** The cooperative sector has been able to foster economies of scale. E.g., In the dairy sector, there are more than 45,000 cooperatives with nearly 60 lakh members.
- **Inclusive growth:** The cooperative sector has been instrumental in the prevention of economic power accumulation and provided for a wider dispersal of ownership of productive capital.
- **Fertilizer sector:** Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Ltd. is a cooperative of more than 40,000 cooperatives. With its vast network, it has been able to reach more than 5.5 crore farmers.
- **Promotion of Organic Farming: Sittilingi Organic Farmers Association** is a cooperative engaged in organic farming and promotion of Ragi, bajra etc. It has been improving the incomes of farmers engaged with payment of Rs. 2 to 3 per kg more than the market price for produce.
- **Innovation:** The cooperative sector has been instrumental in innovation in rural areas. E.g **AMUL** has added 102 new products, and IFFCO has organized rigorous training in the usage of drones for its members.
- **Welfare:** Cooperative societies provide bargaining powers to their members, e.g. **Cooperative Spinning Mills and Weavers cooperative societies** have helped to prevent the exploitation of lakhs of weavers.
- **Employment:** The cooperative sector imparts self-employment to more than 17.8 million people and the cooperatives related to fisheries, labor, and gender cooperatives have played an important role in improving the socio- economic conditions of weaker sections.

Cooperatives have a rich history and have also contributed extensively to the development process of India, however, we have not been able to realize the full potential of the cooperative sector due to multiple issues and challenges that besiege them.

SUCCESS STORY OF AMUL

- Amul began the dairy cooperative movement in India by the formation of an apex cooperative organisation Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd. (GCMMF) which is jointly owned by some 2.2 million milk producers in Gujarat.
- Dr. Verghese Kurien, founder chairman of GCMMF is the man behind the success of AMUL. Amul has spurred the White Revolution of India, which has made India one of the largest milk producers in the world.

CHALLENGES IN THE COOPERATIVES SECTOR:

- **Regional imbalance:** The cooperative sector is more developed in the western and southern parts of the country as compared to eastern such as West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar and north-eastern areas.
- **Restricted coverage:** Most of these societies are confined to a few members and their operations extended to only one or two villages. As a result, they have limited resources.
- **Lack of professionalism:** The cooperatives are facing a shortage of skilled workforce and an inability to attract efficient personnel.
- **Absence of timely elections:** The cooperatives face the issue of lack of timely elections to the governing bodies and often these elections are affected by the money power of the candidates.
- **Dual regulation of cooperative banks:** Cooperative banks are under dual regulation of RBI and the State government which reduces their accountability. E.g., the PMC Bank crisis etc.
- **Lack of spontaneity:** In India, the cooperative movement is lacking in spontaneity because it has not come from the people themselves. They rarely volunteer to form cooperatives on their own initiative.
- **Horizontal and vertical linkages:** Though, structurally established, have not yet operationally become effective.
- **Defective management:** The cooperative credit system has been chastised because it is mostly controlled by landlords and large farmers. As a result, small and medium-sized farmers and marginalized sections do not receive their fair share. They are also denied help from cooperative societies.
- **Political interference:** According to sociologists like **Sujata Patel and Daniel Thorner**, political intervention is a

formidable barrier to the growth of cooperative movements. In rural India, cooperative societies have become a hotbed of politics. Beneficiaries are often chosen based on political reasons.

- **Lack of coordination:** At the grassroots stage, there has been a lack of coordination among the institutional entities. Co-operative defaulters may become borrowers for other agencies. Due to a lack of coordination, such double funding and overlap are discovered.

ISSUES CONCERNING COOPERATIVES IN AGRICULTURE:

- **Neglecting the demand aspect**: Cooperatives have approached the issue of agricultural credit from the perspective of "supply." The element of "demand" is overlooked.
- **Negligence of non-credit aspects**: The majority of Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies only disburse credit and have not yet developed into true multipurpose organizations that perform a variety of functions in addition to credit.

STEPS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT:

- **Ministry of Cooperation:** The ministry has been established to realize the vision of '**Sahakar se Samriddhi**' (prosperity through cooperation).
- **Banking Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2020:** It gives RBI powers to supersede boards of the Cooperative banks and allows cooperative banks to raise money via public issue and private placement, of equity or preference shares.
- **NAFED:** The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation has been established to assist the marketing cooperatives in the States to develop their marketing business and to help them render better services to their members.
- **NCDC:** The National Cooperative Development Cooperation has been set up to aid schemes of marketing, processing, storage and practicing in the share capital of cooperative sugar, cooperative spinning and weaving mills, in the form of loans and subsidies.
- **Computerisation of PACS:** The Cabinet had approved the Computerisation of 63,000 functional Primary Agriculture Credit Societies to bring transparency, and efficiency, improve trustworthiness and help PACS to become the nodal delivery service at the point at the Panchayat level.
- **Cooperative societies on the GeM Platform:** The cabinet has approved the registration of cooperative societies as 'Buyers' on Government e-Marketplace.
- **Multi-State Cooperative Societies (Amendment) Bill, 2022:** The Bill has been introduced in the Parliament to amend MSCS Act, 2002 with a view to strengthening governance, enhancing transparency, increasing accountability and reforming the electoral process, etc. in the Multi-State Cooperative Societies.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Enlarge credit portfolio:** To enroll the younger generation, cooperatives must provide financial services for the construction of houses and the purchase of consumer durables in the digital form.
- **Digitalisation:** Cooperatives need to adopt digital technologies and computerisation in a big way to attract youth as well as reach out to marginalized and needy people.
- **Participation and empowerment of Society members:** Legally specify the contours of democratic participation by members and enhance member education programmes by comprehensively revamping the existing arrangement for education.
- **Improve Governance and professionalism:** Red-tapism, political interference, administrative bottlenecks etc. must be done away with.
  - The officials should not succumb to local pressure, political or otherwise. Powerful village lobbies should not be allowed to interfere unnecessarily in the functioning of cooperative societies.
- **Visionary leadership:** Leaders such as Tribhuvandas Patel (Amul), Vithalrao Vikhe Patil and Thathya Sahib Kore had the ability to convert a crisis into an opportunity. The cooperative sector is again in need of such leadership.
  - The **weak and inefficient cooperative societies should either be abolished or merged** with strong and efficient ones.
  - Institutional credit should be earmarked not only for small farmers, tenants and sharecroppers but also for landless workers and artisans.

RECENT ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS IN COOPERATIVE SECTOR

1. MINISTRY OF COOPERATION

- The newly formed Ministry of Cooperation aims to strengthen the cooperative movement in the country.
- The cooperative movement certainly needs reform and revitalisation. Beset by political interference, many cooperative societies do not hold elections regularly, while some are superseded frequently.
- **Significance of Ministry of Cooperation:**
  - **Separate administrative setup**: Ministry of Cooperation will provide a separate administrative legal and policy framework for strengthening the cooperative movement in the country.
  - **Promoting cooperatives at the grassroots level**: It will help deepen cooperatives as a true people-based movement reaching up to the grassroots.

- **Ease of doing Business**: The Ministry will work to streamline processes for 'Ease of doing business' for co-operatives and enable the development of Multi-State Co-operatives (MSCS).

2. RECENT OBSERVATION OF SUPREME COURT ON COOPERATIVES
- Part of the 97th Amendment Act, as well as Part IX B of the Constitution, which oversees the country's "Cooperative Societies," were struck down by a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court.
- **Cooperatives is a State Subject:** The 97th Amendment Act, on the other hand, was approved by Parliament without being ratified by state legislatures, as the Constitution requires.
- The Supreme Court ruled that Part IXB of the Constitution only applies to Multi-State Cooperative Societies within the several States and in the Union Territories.
- The Supreme Court has ruled that state legislatures have "exclusive legislative power" over cooperative groups.
- **Significance of the Verdict:**
  - **Empowering the states:** Co-operative societies come under the "exclusive legislative power" of State legislatures.
  - The judgment may be significant in the background of fears voiced by States whether the new Central Ministry of Cooperation would disempower them.

Principle of the cooperative movement is to unite everyone, even while remaining anonymous. The cooperative movement can solve people's problems. New areas are emerging with the advancement of technology and cooperative societies can play a huge role in making people familiar with those areas and technologies.

3. THE MULTI-STATE COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES (MSCS) (AMENDMENT) ACT & RULES, 2023
- These have been notified on 03.08.2023 and 04.08.2023, respectively. The amendments aim to strengthen governance, enhance transparency, increase accountability, and reform the electoral process in the Multi-State Cooperative Societies (MSCS). These changes supplement existing legislation and incorporate provisions from the Ninety-seventh Constitutional Amendment.

Key Provisions Introduced:
- **Cooperative Election Authority:** Ensures timely, regular, and transparent conduct of elections in multi-State cooperative societies.
- **Appointment of Cooperative Ombudsman:** Central Government appoints an ombudsman to address grievances of members.
- **Appointment of Information Officer:** Multi-State cooperative societies to appoint an Information Officer to provide information to members, thereby improving transparency.
- **Concurrent Audit:** Introduced for societies with turnover/deposits of more than 500 crore rupees from a panel of auditors approved by the Central Registrar. Ensures early detection of fraud or irregularities and allows for prompt corrections.
- **Audit Panels:**
- Panel for societies with turnover/deposits up to 500 crore rupees for carrying out Statutory Audit.
- Panel for societies with turnover/deposits more than 500 crore rupees for carrying out Statutory and Concurrent Audit.
- **Audit Reports:** Audit reports of Apex multi-State cooperative societies to be laid in Parliament to improve transparency.
- **Accounting and Auditing Standards:** Determined by the Central Government to ensure uniformity in accounting and auditing.
- **Annual Reports:** Must include Board decisions that are not unanimous to improve governance and transparency.
- **Prudential Norms:** Determined by the Central Government for societies involved in thrift and credit to ensure proper liquidity and exposure management.
- **Curbing Nepotism and Favoritism:** Directors must recuse themselves from discussions and voting on matters where they or their relatives have an interest.
- **Director Disqualification:** Additional grounds for disqualification to improve governance and ensure better recovery of dues.
- Investment of Funds: Redefined to ensure safer investments and remove references to colonial-era securities.
- **Committee for Audit and Ethics:** Board of multi-State cooperative societies to constitute this committee to ensure financial discipline and transparency.
- **Appointment of CEO:** Criteria for the appointment of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) stipulated to strengthen governance.
- **Quorum for Board Meetings:** Prescribed to enhance democratic decision-making in the societies.
- **Central Registrar's Inquiry Powers:** Can conduct inquiries if informed that business is being conducted fraudulently or unlawfully.

- **Provision for Winding Up:** If registration was obtained by misrepresentation or fraud, societies may be wound up after giving an opportunity to be heard.
- **Expulsion of Members:** Minimum period of expulsion increased from 1 year to 3 years to discourage actions against collective interests.
- **Subsidiary Institution Definition:** Institutions with majority equity shares held by members or their relatives would not be considered as subsidiary institutions to prevent a few members from benefiting disproportionately from the society's resources.

These amendments aim to bring greater transparency, accountability, and democratic processes within the multi-State cooperative societies, fostering a more robust and equitable cooperative movement.

SOCIETIES

- A society is **a group of seven or more people who have come together to promote literature, fine arts, science, and other things.**
- The **Societies Registration Act of 1860** governs their registration. It allows for the establishment of a Society for any literary, science, or charitable cause, as well as any other purpose specified in Section 20 of the Act.

TRUST

- Trust is a unique type of organization that arises from a will. The creator of a will passes exclusive possession of a property to be used for a specific reason.
- The **Indian Trusts Act of 1882** was the initial legislation in India that primarily focused on regulating private trusts, which are established with the aim of assisting specific individuals. On the other hand, when the objective is to benefit the general public or society as a whole, it is known as a public trust.

RELIGIOUS ENDOWMENTS

- Religious Endowments and Waqfs are **religious trusts established for religious purposes**, such as supporting Hindu and Muslim deities, charities, and religions.
- Unlike Public Trusts, they are not required to be registered, and they do not place a strong emphasis on a triangular relationship between the donor, the Trustee, and the beneficiary.
- **Religious endowments are created when property is dedicated to religious purposes**.
  - Waqfs are formed as a result of the Muslim community's coordinated action.
  - Waqfs bind the land and give the usufruct to the people. The Religious Endowments Act of 1863 was essentially a private endowment law that put a property under the care of a Trustee/Trustees under a will for a group of predetermined beneficiaries.

During the later years of British rule, numerous Zamindars and merchants established endowments, which eventually led to certain agreements becoming unclear and giving rise to various legal disputes. To address this issue, the government **enacted the Charitable Endowments Act of 1890**, which aimed to introduce oversight measures. This legislation established the position of a treasurer in each state, tasked with supervising the functioning of charitable endowments. Thus, this law marked the initial stage of government involvement in monitoring charitable organizations.

WAQFS (WAKFS)

Under Muslim rule in India, the concept of Waqf, an irrevocable dedication of property for charitable purposes, became more established. Governed by the Wakf Act of 1995, which applies across India except in Jammu and Kashmir and Dargah Khwaja Saheb, Ajmer, there are about 300,000 Waqfs managed. The act outlines the roles of the State Waqf Boards as both administrative and judicial bodies in charge of managing Waqf affairs and resolving disputes. Additionally, the Central Wakf Council acts as a consultative body at the national level. Significant amendments to the Wakf Act in 2013 include allowing non-Muslims to establish Waqfs, empowering the Central Wakf Council to direct State Boards on various administrative matters, and establishing a Board of Adjudication for disputes. The amended act also increases protection of Waqf assets by prohibiting their sale, mortgage, or transfer and extends lease terms up to 30 years for certain uses, subject to state government approval.

KEYWORDS:
People-Centered Development, Population Stagnation, Government as a Facilitator, Pillar of Development, Collaborative Economic Development, Sahakar-se-Samriddhi (Prosperity through Cooperation), From Opportunity to Future Assurance

| PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS		
NGO-Civil Society		
1.	Discuss the contribution of civil society groups in facilitating women's effective participation and representation in state legislatures in India.	2023
2.	Do increasing dependencies on donor agencies for development diminish the importance of community participation in the development process? Justify.	2022
NGO		
3.	"The emergence of Self Help Groups (SHGs) in contemporary times points to the slow but steady withdrawal of the state from developmental activities." Examine the role of SHGs in developmental activities and the measures taken by the Government of India to promote them.	2017
4.	Critically examine the recent changes in the rules governing foreign funding of NGOs under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 1976.	2015
NGO-SHG		
5.	Can the vicious cycle of gender inequality, poverty, and malnutrition be broken through microfinancing of women SHGs? Explain with examples.	2021
6.	Can Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations present an alternative model of public service delivery to benefit the common citizen? Discuss the challenges of this alternative model.	2021
7.	How can the role of NGOs be strengthened in India for environmental protection-related development works? Discuss the major constraints.	2015
8.	The penetration of Self Help Groups (SHGs) in rural areas for promoting participation in development programmes is facing socio-cultural hurdles. Examine.	2014
Pressure Group		
9.	"Pressure groups play a vital role in influencing public policy making in India." Explain how business associations contribute to public policies.	2021
10.	What methods do Farmers organizations employ to influence policymakers in India, and how effective are these methods?	2019
11.	How do pressure groups influence the Indian political process? Do you agree that informal pressure groups have become more powerful than formal ones in recent years?	2017
12.	Pressure group politics is sometimes seen as the informal face of politics. Assess the structure and functioning of pressure groups in India.	2013
13.	The Gati-Shakti Yojana needs meticulous co-ordination between the government and the private sector to achieve the goal of connectivity. Discuss.	2022
14.	The need for cooperation among various services 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.	2020
15.	Discuss the role of the Public Accounts Committee in establishing accountability of the government to the people.	2017

FROM GOVERNANCE TO GOOD GOVERNANCE

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 1997, defined governance as "the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences."

RELATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNANCE

- Government, as the infrastructure, establishes policies for equitable resource allocation while governance ensures the participation of Citizens in decision making processes for socio-economic development.
- The government is a body whose sole responsibility and authority is to make binding decisions in a given geopolitical system (such as a state) by establishing laws.
- Governance is the way rules, norms and actions are structured, sustained, regulated and held accountable.

G $\longrightarrow$	Genuine
O $\longrightarrow$	Optimistic
V $\longrightarrow$	Versatile
E $\longrightarrow$	Ethical
R $\longrightarrow$	Responsive
N $\longrightarrow$	Non-partisan
A $\longrightarrow$	Accountable
N $\longrightarrow$	Nurturing
C $\longrightarrow$	Competent
E $\longrightarrow$	Enterprising
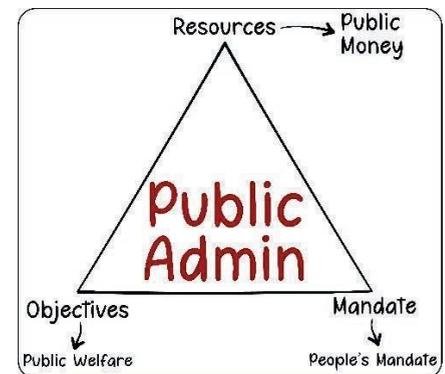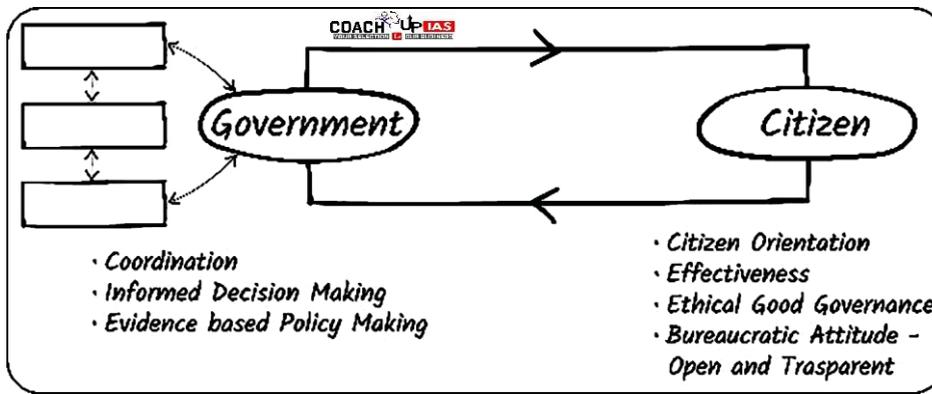
About Governance

- It comes from the Greek term 'Kybernan,' which means "to steer and pilot or be at the helm of things." Harland Cleveland (1972) coined the phrase "governance".
- The colonial view of the Government used to be as a 'controller' and 'ruler'. However, with Independence and democracy, it changed to that of an enabler, coordinator and provider of certain services to the citizens, just like an organization is responsible for managing a value chain that leads to output.

MEASURING GOVERNANCE: WORLDWIDE GOVERNANCE INDICATORS PROJECT – WORLD BANK

The **Worldwide Governance Indicators Project** by the **World Bank** ranks more than 200 countries based on six key indicators of governance as shown in figure. The project aggregates perspectives from a broad spectrum of enterprise, citizen, and expert survey respondents across industrialized and developing countries.

GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION

The Indian Constitution doesn't explicitly mention "good governance," but several provisions promote its principles:

- **Preamble:** Justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity form the foundation.

Stakeholders of governance
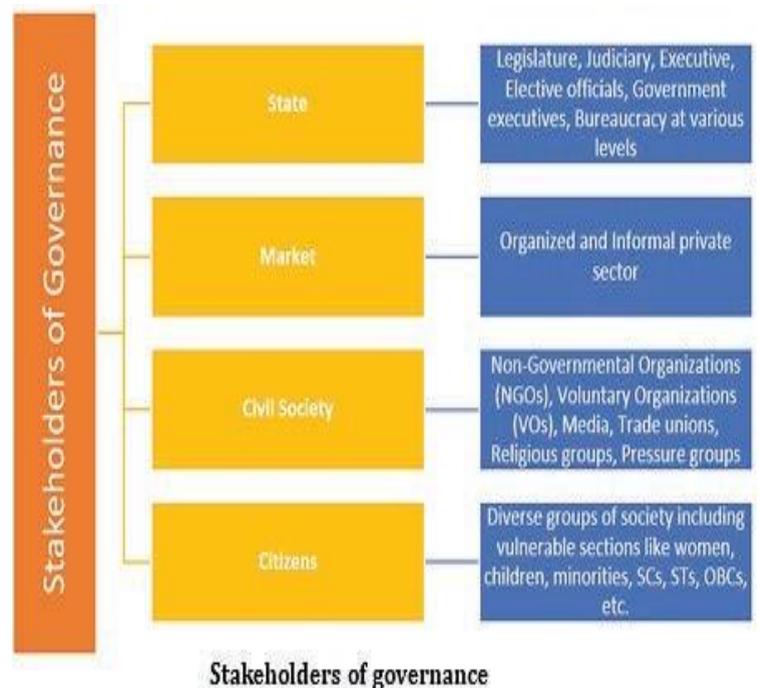
- **Directive Principles:** Articles 38-40 emphasize social welfare, resource distribution, and village governance.
- **Fundamental Rights:** Articles 14, 15, and 21 ensure equality, non-discrimination, and right to life (interpreted broadly).
- **Right to Information:** Not originally in the Constitution, but the RTI Act (2005) promotes transparency.
- **Judiciary:** Article 50 implies separation of powers, supporting rule of law.
- **Local Government:** Article 243 recognizes Panchayats and Municipalities, fostering decentralization.
- **Accountability:** Articles 311 & 360 address civil servant protection and financial stability, respectively.

Governance Issues	Governance Components	Indicators
The Process by which Governments are selected, monitored, and replaced	• Voice and Accountability • Political Stability	• Extent of citizens participation in selection of governments • Civil liberties , political rights • Perceptions that the government in power will be destabilised by possible unconstitutional means
The Capacity of the government of effectively formulate and implement policies	• Governance Effectiveness • Regulatory Quality	• Perceptions of quality of public service provision, quality of bureaucracy, competence of civil servants, independence of civil service from political pressures, credibility of government's commitment to policies. • The incidence of market unfriendly policies such as price controls
The respect of citizens and the state for institutions that govern economic and social interaction among them	• Rule of Law • Control of Corruption	• Success of the society in developing an environment in which fair and predictable rules form the basis for economic and social interactions • Perceptions of the incidence of crime, effectiveness and predictability of judiciary and enforceability of contracts. • Perceptions of corruption

DIMENSIONS OF GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) has developed a framework for assessing governance in India. This framework categorizes governance into **five** key dimensions, providing a comprehensive view of the country's governing system.

Dimension	Description	Key Components	Focus	Example
Political	Assesses the quality of political participation, conduct of political actors, and citizen trust.	Exercise of franchise, Profile of political representatives, Functioning of legislature	The role of the state alongside civil society in the governance process.	Decentralization of power to local bodies.
Legal & Judicial	Evaluates adherence to the rule of law, law and order, human rights protection, and access to justice.	Law & order, Safeguarding of basic rights, Access to justice	Upholding the rule of law and ensuring justice for all.	Initiatives to improve police accountability and fast-track court cases.
Administrative	Measures efficiency in service delivery, resource management, and transparency.	Citizen interface, Resource management, Delivery of basic services	Efficient and transparent delivery of government services.	E-governance initiatives and Right to Information Act (RTI).
Economic	Ensures macro-economic stability, fosters economic activity, and supports primary sectors.	Fiscal governance, Business environment, Support to agriculture	Creating a stable and enabling environment for economic growth.	Initiatives like the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code for ease of doing business.
Social & Environmental	Focuses on welfare of vulnerable sections, role of civil society, and environmental management.	Welfare programs, Role of civil society, Environmental management	Promoting social equity and environmental sustainability.	Schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (education) and Mid- Day Meal scheme, declaration of Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZs).

GOOD GOVERNANCE

The World Bank described good governance in its study "Governance and Development" published in 1992 as **"the way power is exercised in the development management of a country's economic and social resources."**
Alternatively, Mahatma Gandhi advocated the concept **'Ram Rajya'** for India based upon the principles of good governance which necessarily meant dreaming of India as a welfare state where the necessities of the down-trodden, the welfare of the commoner and their progress through indigenous industries would become the hallmark.

Good Governance in India

- **Ancient Roots**: Found in 'Raj Dharma', emphasizing ruler's duty for **public welfare** as depicted in ancient scriptures.
- **Kautilya's Arthashastra**: Stresses king's happiness tied to **people's welfare**, highlighting governance's core principle.
- **Mahabharat's Shanti Parva**: Emphasizes king's role in promoting the subject's **welfare**.
- **Bhishma Pitamaha's Wisdom**: Focuses on **righteousness** in public affairs for effective governance.
- **Rig Veda's Ideals**: Underlines government's role in both **spiritual** and **worldly welfare**.
- **Brihadaranyaka Upanishad**: Highlights king's responsibility to uphold **Dharma** and ensure **equality**.
- **Modern Recognition**: World Bank's concerns in the 1990s spurred attention to governance challenges.
- **Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002)**: Addressed governance weaknesses in plan programs.
- **Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007)**: Defined governance as enabling **capabilities** for **human development**.
- **Perspectives on Good Governance:**
  - **Kautilya's Perspective:** He emphasized **good governance** in his work "Arthashastra." He advocated for a powerful ruler responsible for the state and citizen welfare, effective **economic management** through taxation and revenue collection, strategic intelligence gathering and **diplomacy** for security, and **transparency** with **accountability** measures to combat corruption.
  - **Plato's Perspective:** He envisioned governance led by **philosopher-kings** committed to the common good. He structured society into classes, with **guardians** embodying wisdom and virtue, and highlighted the importance of **justice** and **virtue** within the ruling class to achieve societal harmony.
  - **Aristotle's Perspective:** He proposed a mixed form of government called **polity**, combining elements of democracy and oligarchy for stability. He underscored the middle class's role in maintaining balance and advocated for the **rule of law** and **constitutional government** to ensure rulers govern for the common good.
  - "Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development"- Kofi Annan
  - "We cannot be mere consumers of good governance; we must be participants; we must be co-creators." -Rohini Nilekani.
  - "The happiness of the king lies in the happiness of his subjects; the king shall never consider as good only that which pleases him but treat his subjects as himself."- Kautilya
  - "Good governance is about creating an environment where everyone can flourish" - Mo Ibrahim

CORE CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE:

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recognizes eight core characteristics of good governance:

- **Participation:** People may participate in the decision-making, execution, and monitoring of government activities through participatory governance. **E.g. MyGov** is an innovative platform launched to ensure citizens' engagement in decision making by the Government.
- **Consensus oriented**: Good governance necessitates the mediation of various societal interests to achieve a broad consensus about what is best for the entire group. **E.g.** Decentralization of the decision-making process through Gram Sabha and social auditing provisions.
- **Rule of Law**: Equal legal structures that are uniformly implemented are needed for good governance. **E.g.** Laws like the **Fugitive Offenders Act and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code** enforce the rule of law in financial sectors.

Characteristics of Good Governance: Participation, Consensus-Oriented, Rule of Law, Transparent, Accountability, Responsiveness, Effective & Efficient, Equitable & Inclusive

- **Transparency:** Transparency refers to how decisions are made and how they are implemented by laws and regulations. It also implies that information is readily available in easily readable formats and is available to those who will be impacted by such decisions and their implementation.
  - **E.g. Section 4(1)(b) of the RTI Act** mandates proactive disclosure of information by Public Authorities, promoting transparency.
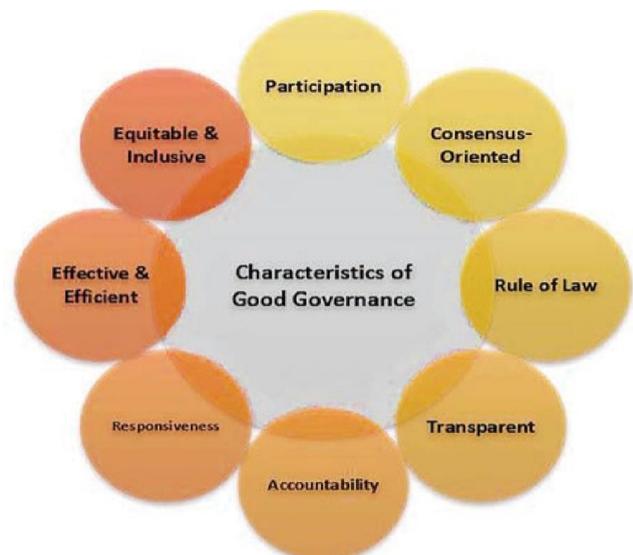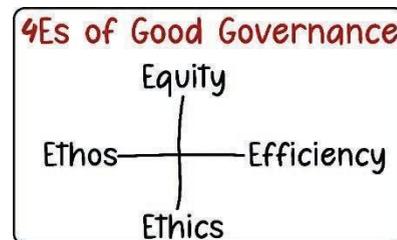
- **Accountability**: The acceptance and assumption of responsibility for actions, services, decisions, and policies are known as accountability. Accountability is made up of four elements: accountability, penalty, recourse, and system reform.
  E.g.: RTI Act, Citizen charter, E-governance initiatives, civil society movements etc are a few mechanisms to aid accountability among others. Mechanisms like the office of Lokpal and Lokayukta and the RTI Act ensure accountability in governance.
- **Responsiveness**: Institutions and procedures must strive to represent all stakeholders within a fair timeline as part of good governance. E.g., **Initiatives like Ease of Doing Business and PRAGATI portal** ensure timely delivery of services, enhancing responsiveness.
- **Effective and Efficient:** Good governance entails that systems and organizations deliver outcomes that make the best use of the resources available to them. As a result, it also addresses the fair use of natural resources and environmental conservation E.g. Initiatives like the **LiFE mission** promote energy and resource efficiency for effective governance.
- **Equitable and Inclusive**: People should be given the chance to improve or preserve their well-being. This necessitates providing opportunities for all groups, especially the most vulnerable, to enhance or sustain their well-being.

4Es of Good Governance

Equity

Ethos —— Efficiency

Ethics

THE NEED FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

- **Social and Economic Development:** Recent data from the **World Bank** highlights the direct link between governance improvements and **GDP per capita growth**. Initiatives like the **GST** and **PMJDY** demonstrate how **good governance** drives **economic development**.
- **Poverty Reduction and Equality:** Transparency International's **CPI** underscores the connection between **corruption** and **poverty**. Schemes like **Ayushman Bharat** and **PM-KISAN**, coupled with digitization efforts, showcase India's commitment to **poverty reduction** through **good governance**.
- **Security and Stability:** The **World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index** emphasizes how the **rule of law** contri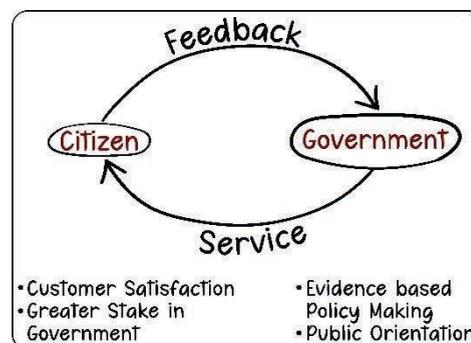butes to lower **crime rates**. Investments in **police modernization** and initiatives like the **Smart Policing Project** in Rajasthan illustrate how **good governance** enhances **security**.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** India's robust implementation of the **RTI Act** empowers citizens to demand **transparency** from authorities, leading to increased **accountability**. Digitization and online grievance redressal mechanisms further improve **transparency**.
- **Inclusive Growth:** Despite challenges, initiatives like **Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao** and **gender budgeting** demonstrate efforts to address **gender disparities**. These initiatives aim to promote **women's empowerment** and **inclusion** in development processes.
- **Efficient Service Delivery**: The **COVID-19 pandemic** accelerated the adoption of digital governance solutions. Platforms like **Aarogya Setu** and **Co-WIN** showcase the potential of **technology** in improving **service delivery**, while **Aadhaar integration** enhances targeting in welfare programs.
- **Combating Corruption:** The **Central Vigilance Commission's** proactive measures have led to a significant increase in inquiries into **corruption cases**. E-procurement platforms and **integrity pacts** in government contracts enhance **transparency** and reduce **corruption** opportunities.

Feedback

Citizen → Government

Service
- Customer Satisfaction
- Greater Stake in Government
- Evidence based Policy Making
- Public Orientation

BARRIERS TO GOOD GOVERNANCE:

While the laws of the Legislature may be sound and relevant, they are very often not properly implemented by government officials. This acts as a roadblock in the path of achieving citizen-centric administration. The 2nd ARC in his 12th report "**CITIZEN CENTRIC ADMINISTRATION: The Heart of Governance**" identifies the following barriers to Good Governance.

- **Organizational Bottlenecks**
  - **Accountability Deficit**: Within government structures, there is a significant **gap between authority and accountability**.
    - **Data:** According to a **2023 report by Transparency International**, India scored 40 on their **Corruption Perception Index**, highlighting the necessity for a stronger **whistleblower protection system to** encourage citizens to report **wrongdoing**.
  - **Red Tape Labyrinth**: India's bureaucratic machinery, while adhering to established rules, can be **sluggish and risk-averse**.
    - **Example:** As evident in **implementation of** the **Right to Information (RTI) Act**, over **3.2 lakh appeals and**

complaints were pending (June 2023), indicating **delays in** resolving **transparency requests**.

- o **Ineffective Law Enforcement**: Weak **implementation undermines** even the best-intentioned **policies**.
  - ▪ **Example**: A **2022 study by PRS Legislative Research** showed that only **37%** of **central government laws enacted** between **2014-2019 have** witnessed the formulation of **rules**, a crucial step for effective **enforcement**.
- o **Digital Disconnect**: Limited **digitization in** government offices and inadequate **IT infrastructure create hurdles in** ensuring **transparency and accountability**.
  - ▪ **Example**: A **2023 report by** the **National Institute of Smart Governance Emphasized** the need for bridging the **digital divide within** the government sector to improve **service delivery and citizen engagement**.
- ▪ **Issues with the Political System**
  - o **Empowering Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)**: Local governance bodies need greater **autonomy and resources to** function effectively.
    - ▪ **Example**: A **2023 report by** the **Centre for Policy Research States** that strengthening **financial devolution** to **PRIs** is crucial for bolstering **grassroots-level development**.
  - o **Electoral Reforms and Decentralization**: The undue influence of **money in elections undermines democratic principles**. **Campaign finance reform and decentralization of** power to regional bodies are essential steps towards ensuring a more **level playing field and** promoting **citizen participation**.
  - o **Archaic Legal Framework**: Outdated laws hinder **progress**. The government's focus on modernizing **legal frameworks to** align with **contemporary needs is** crucial for fostering a **business-friendly environment** and promoting **economic growth**.
- ▪ **Institutional Shortcomings**
  - o **Erosion of Institutional Capacity**: Legal and regulatory institutions often lack the **robustness** and **efficiency to** address complex modern challenges. Strengthening institutions like the **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** and the **Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)** through improved **investigative techniques and** enhanced **autonomy is** essential for tackling **corruption effectively**.
  - o **Judicial System Overhaul**: The **internal functioning of** the judicial system, including **legal proceedings and judicial training**, requires modernization. A **2023 report by** the **Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy Underscored** the need for **judicial reforms such** as **fast-tracking court cases and** leveraging **technology to** improve **efficiency**.
  - o **Low Public Awareness**: Limited citizen **awareness of** their **rights** and **responsibilities weakens public participation and accountability mechanisms**. Initiatives like the **Central Vigilance Commission's (CVC)** annual **Vigilance Awareness Week are** a positive step, but broader **public education campaigns** are needed to **empower citizens** and **strengthen democratic processes**.

By acknowledging and addressing these challenges, India can bridge the **gap** between **policy pronouncements** and **practical realities**. A more **accountable**, **efficient**, and **inclusive governance system** is vital for ensuring **equitable development** and realizing the true potential of the **world's largest democracy**.

MAJOR INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE GOOD GOVERNANCE

- ▪ **Decentralization:** Local governments have been strengthened by 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments that mandate the establishment of Panchayats and municipalities as elected local governments.
- ▪ **Right to Information**: The Right to Information Act, 2005 which marks a significant shift in Indian democracy and ushered in a new era of empowerment of the common man in India. Through this act one can examine, audit, review and assess the government works and decisions to ensure that these are consistent with the principles of public interest, integrity and justice.
- ▪ **National Centre for Good Governance:** It was set up in 2014 under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions to work in areas of public policy, governance, reforms, and capacity building of civil servants.
- ▪ **E-Governance:** E-Governance effectively delivers better programming and services in the era of newly emerging information and communication technologies (ICTs), which herald new opportunities for rapid social and economic transformation worldwide. (E-governance is covered separately – please refer to the topic E-governance).
- ▪ **Measures To Ensure Transparency And Accountability In Governance:** Public Services Bill, Citizens Charters, e-Governance, e-Bhoomi, e-Choupal, e-procurement, DBT (Direct benefit transfer) Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS)
- ▪ **Good Governance Index:** Provide quantifiable data to compare the state of governance in all states and Union Territories, enable states and Union Territories to formulate and implement suitable strategies for improving governance and shift to result from oriented approaches and administration.
- ▪ **Criminal Justice Reforms**: The Central Government has scrapped nearly 1,500 obsolete rules and laws with an aim to bring about transparency and improve efficiency, filing e-FIRs etc.
- ▪ **Mission Karmayogi:** The National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building has been rolled out to transform capacity building in the bureaucracy through institutional and process reforms.
- ▪ **Ease of Doing Business:** To improve business conditions including legislation meant to improve the country's

business environment and policy ecosystems.
- **Other initiatives** include MCA21, online Income tax return, Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation(PRAGATI), Digital India mission etc.

ROLE OF STATE, MARKET, AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN GOVERNANCE

- **The State:**
  - **Policy Formulation and Implementation:** Enacts laws, regulations, and policies (e.g., **National Rural Employment Guarantee Act - NREGA**), implements them through administrative machinery.
  - **Service Delivery:** Provides essential services like healthcare, education, and social welfare (e.g., **National Health Mission - NHM**, **Public Distribution System - PDS**) ensuring equitable access.
  - **Regulation and Oversight:** Regulates markets, industries (e.g., **Securities and Exchange Board of India - SEBI**), ensures fair competition, and environmental sustainability.
  - **Public Goods Provision:** Invests in infrastructure, national defense, law enforcement (e.g., **Vande Bharat Trains**).
  - **Social Justice and Equity:** Promotes inclusivity, human rights, and empowers marginalized communities (e.g., **reservation quotas**).
- **The Market:**
  - **Economic Growth:** Drives growth, innovation, and productivity, creates jobs, and generates wealth (e.g., **Information Technology sector - IT**).
  - **Resource Allocation:** Efficiently allocates resources, fosters entrepreneurship and investment (e.g., commodity markets determining agricultural produce prices).
  - **Innovation and Entrepreneurship:** Encourages creativity, efficiency, and technological advancements (e.g., **Reliance Industries** investing in research and development).
  - **Wealth Distribution:** Distributes wealth through wages, profits, dividends, and investments, reduces poverty (e.g., Indian stock market).
  - **Promoting Competition:** Enhances sectors like telecommunications, aviation, and retail (e.g., private telecom operators lowering tariffs).
- **Civil Society:**
  - **Advocacy and Activism:** Advocates for citizens' rights, promotes social justice, holds governments and businesses accountable (e.g., **Greenpeace** raising awareness about environmental issues).
  - **Service Delivery:** Provides social services, humanitarian aid, and development assistance (e.g., **Akshaya Patra** providing mid-day meals to schoolchildren).
  - **Community Engagement:** Fosters civic engagement, grassroots mobilization, and social cohesion (e.g., **Self-Employed Women's Association - SEWA** empowering women).
  - **Monitoring and Oversight:** Monitors policies, conducts research, enhances transparency, and accountability (e.g., **Transparency International India** combatting corruption).

Effective governance necessitates collaboration among the state, market, and civil society. Each sector contributes unique strengths, perspectives, and resources, emphasizing the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement in addressing societal challenges and achieving common goals.

EMPOWERING LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN INDIA: PANCHAYATI RAJ AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Local governments in India, particularly Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs), play a critical role in shaping social change and building inclusive communities. Year 2023 marks the 30th anniversary of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments, a landmark reform for local governance in India. While the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have brought significant improvements, challenges remain.

EVOLUTION OF PANCHAYATI RAJ
- **Vision**: Empowering villages through self-governance (Gram Swarajya).
- **Structure**: Three-tier system with elected representatives at village, block, and district levels.
- **Empowerment**: The 73rd Constitutional Amendment (1992) strengthened PRIs by mandating regular elections, decentralizing power, and reserving seats for women and marginalized groups.

KEY FEATURES OF THE AMENDMENTS
- **Constitutional Status**: Established PRIs and Municipalities as institutions of self-government.
- **Structure**: Created a three-tier system of Panchayats at village, block, and district levels.
- **Reservations**: Mandated reservations for marginalized groups in elected positions.
- **Decentralization**: Devolved power and responsibilities to local bodies.
- **Financial Resources**: Mechanisms for funding PRIs through state budgets and central grants.
- **Examples**

- o **Van Panchayats in Uttarakhand**: Women-led initiatives for forest conservation.
- o **Nyaya Panchayats**: Village courts resolving minor disputes.
- o **Tribal Traditional System of Khasis':** Traditional system features a clan council, 'Durbar Kur', helmed by the clan headman.

IMPACT OF PANCHAYATI RAJ:

- **Gender Inclusivity**: Reservation of seats for women in PRIs has increased their participation in decision-making. For example, in Rajasthan, women hold 50% of seats, leading to initiatives like the Women Sarpanch Leadership Program.
- **Social Justice**: PRIs promote social justice by implementing development plans focused on education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. In Bihar, they have improved access to services in rural areas.
- **Decentralization**: Empowering local bodies fosters accountability and responsiveness to local needs. In Kerala, it has enhanced service delivery in areas like sanitation and water supply.

- **Empowerment**: PRIs boost citizen participation, especially among women, empowering marginalized communities. In Uttar Pradesh, initiatives like the Mahila Samakhya Programme promote women's involvement in governance.
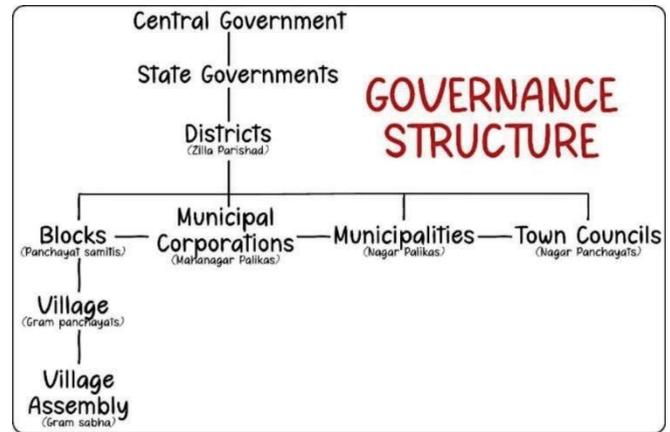
CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

- **Social Inequalities**: Caste, class, and gender disparities hinder inclusive participation, as seen in Madhya Pradesh.
- **Capacity Building**: Strengthening PRI capacity for resource management is crucial, as shown by initiatives like the Gram Panchayat Development Plan in Odisha.
- **Transparency and Accountability**: Mechanisms for transparent decision-making are essential, highlighted by Karnataka's use of online platforms like LGDIR.
- **Limited Resources**: Inadequate funding hampers service delivery, as observed in West Bengal.
- **Bureaucratic Control**: Excessive oversight from state governments impedes PRI autonomy, seen in conflicts in Maharashtra.
- **Urban-Rural Divide**: Unified governance structures are needed to bridge this gap, demonstrated by initiatives like ULGM in Telangana.
- **Women's Empowerment**: Proxy participation undermines gender reservation goals, as seen in Haryana.
- **Digital Divide**: Infrastructure and literacy barriers hinder e-governance initiatives, exemplified in Jharkhand.

THE WAY FORWARD

- **Allocate adequate resources** to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to ensure **effective functioning** and **service delivery**.
- Invest in comprehensive **capacity-building programs** for officials working in PRIs to enhance their **skills** and **knowledge**.
- Empower PRIs with greater **autonomy** and **decision-making authority** to address local issues efficiently.
- Consider reviewing **urban governance structures** to create **unified frameworks** for both **rural and urban areas**, ensuring **consistency** and **effectiveness**.
- Ensure genuine participation of **women** in **leadership roles** within PRIs, promoting **gender equality** and **inclusive governance**.
- Improve **infrastructure** and promote **literacy** to bridge the **digital divide**, enabling all citizens to access and utilize government services effectively.
- Encourage **citizen participation** in local **decision-making processes** to foster **community engagement** and **ownership** of developmental initiatives.

Panchayati Raj holds immense potential for empowering local communities, fostering social change, and building a more inclusive and equitable India. Continued efforts to strengthen PRIs are crucial for deepening democracy, promoting social justice, and ensuring inclusive

development across India.

NAVIGATING LOCAL GOVERNANCE: BALANCING DEMOCRACY AND DECENTRALIZATION

- Decentralization: Transfer of power from central authorities to local levels, encompassing administrative, fiscal, and political spheres.
- **Local Democracy**: Emphasizes citizen participation in local decision-making, distinct from mere decentralization of power.

THE INDIAN CONTEXT: PANCHAYATI RAJ

In the **Indian context** of **Panchayati Raj**, challenges persist despite **constitutional amendments** empowering **PRIs**.
- These challenges include **limited devolution** of functions and **elite domination** affecting **marginalized groups**.
- The **subsidiarity principle** advocates decision-making at the most **local level feasible**.
- This principle necessitates **strong local governance structures** and **active citizen engagement**.

LEVERAGING DECENTRALIZATION FOR DEMOCRATIC ENDS

- **Empowerment of Local Governments:** Kerala and Karnataka have notably bolstered PRIs by increasing financial allocations, enabling independent developmental activities.
- **Enhancing Citizen Participation:** The Bawana ward committee in Delhi exemplifies effective citizen involvement, leading to community-driven initiatives like waste management.

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AND MOVING FORWARD

- **Fiscal Devolution:** Despite progress, PRIs receive only 5-7% of total government spending, necessitating further fiscal empowerment for effective service delivery.
- **Institutional Capacity Building:** "Mission Antyodaya" in states like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh provides governance and financial management training, enhancing PRI officials' skills.
- **Citizen Participation:** Rajasthan's Jan Sunwai initiative facilitates transparent public hearings, fostering trust and improving service delivery.

Local democracy and decentralization, while distinct, are intertwined concepts crucial for effective governance. Leveraging decentralization for democratic ends requires addressing challenges and fostering citizen participation, thereby strengthening India's local governance system.

EXPANDING AUDIT OVERSIGHT FOR STRONGER LOCAL GOVERNANCE

The **Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)** of India plans to extend its auditing reach to the district level, encompassing all three tiers of **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)**. This expansion aims to strengthen **accountability** and **transparency** in local government spending.

THE NEED FOR REFORM:

- **Limited Reach**: CAG audits only state government accounts, leaving local bodies unchecked despite managing significant public funds.
- **Inconsistent Practices**: Existing auditing of PRIs lacks uniformity, raising concerns about financial management.

CASE IN POINT:

Malur, Karnataka An audit of the **Taluk Panchayat (TP)** in Malur, Kolar district, Karnataka, uncovered misappropriation of Rs. 1.74 crore by the Executive Officer. The Sub-Treasury Officer facilitated this by approving fraudulent bills without proper verification. This case highlights the critical role of robust auditing in detecting and preventing financial irregularities within PRIs.

PROPOSED REFORMS:

- **Qualifications for CAG**: Clearly define the qualifications and experience required for CAG personnel to effectively audit local government finances.
- **Constitutional Status**: Grant constitutional status to the state **Accountant General**, solidifying their independence and authority.
- **Universal Oversight**: Expand CAG's mandate to encompass all publicly funded bodies, ensuring comprehensive financial oversight.
- **Quasi-Judicial Powers**: Equip CAG with quasi-judicial authority to address financial irregularities identified during audits.

BENEFITS OF ENHANCED AUDITING:

- **Accountability**: Audits ensure proper utilization of public funds allocated to local bodies.
- **Transparency**: CAG's oversight brings transparency to various funding mechanisms like public-private partnerships and municipal bonds.
- **Strengthened Decentralization**: Effective auditing bolsters democratic decentralization by ensuring responsible use of resources at the local level.
- **Public Awareness** and **Risk Assessment**: Audits involving PRIs raise public awareness about financial management and help identify potential risks.

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE OVERSIGHT:

- **Standardized Accounting**: CAG can mandate standardized accounting practices and formats for local government

accounts, facilitating efficient audits.
- **Dedicated Audit Agency**: Consider establishing a dedicated agency, potentially under CAG's supervision, to specialize in auditing local governments.
- **Legislative Review**: CAG's reports on PRIs should be reviewed by a dedicated state legislative committee, similar to a Public Accounts Committee, for further scrutiny and action.
- **Capacity Building**: Enhance the technical skills of local government auditors to improve auditing efficiency and effectiveness.
- **Social Audit Development**: Implement social audits alongside CAG audits to strengthen accountability and empower citizen participation in monitoring PRI activities.

By implementing these reforms and strategies, India can create a robust system of auditing for local self-government. This will ensure responsible use of public funds, promote transparency, and strengthen democratic decentralization at the grassroots level.

ROLE OF PRI'S IN BRINGING GOOD GOVERNANCE

Mahatma Gandhi
"The voice of the people is the voice of god, the voice of the Panchayat is the voice of the people,".

- Good governance depends on the effective working of local institutions. **The Prime Minister** in 2017 had said, "Panchayats are effective ways to fulfill the aspirations of people in rural India.
- They are playing a vital role in India's transformation, and they are transforming the face of governance.
  - **Bringing services at the doorstep:** The 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats in the country have been entrusted to provide basic services in the villages and plan for local economic development.
  - **Practice of direct democracy:** Gram Sabha is a channel to include the less privileged section of society and ensure their participation in the village level governance and fulfillment of their developmental aspirations.
  - **Ensuring resource efficiency:** Pimpri Gavali in Maharashtra State achieved water security through watershed development activities with the participation of Gram Sabha.
  - **Inclusive growth and poverty reduction:** Gariba Gram Panchayat in Bihar improved infrastructure in villages by engaging local folks and providing them the opportunity to work.
  - **Women empowerment:** The Kudumbashree system of Kerala, which encourages women to form self-help groups, acts as an organized civil society with collaboration of the panchayats.

CASE STUDY

- Odisha state delegated sarpanchs with the powers of a district collector to impose quarantine at a village level.
- Andhra Pradesh, came up with a village volunteer system. They have conducted a survey to help the state trace people with travel history to foreign countries and prevent the spread of COVID-19 infections in the state.

KEYWORDS:
Evenhanded Strategy, Political Acumen, Fact-Based Interventions, Culture of Inactivity, Community Perspectives, Unified Standards of Behavior, 3P (Pro-Poor Public) Welfare, Departmental Separation, Shift from Biased to Comprehensive Governance, Decisive Administration, Limited Authority, Swarajya (Self-Governance) and Surajya (Effective Governance), Reform, Transform and Perform


	PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS	
1.	To what extent, in your opinion, has the decentralization of power in India changed the governance landscape at the grassroots? (150 words, 10 Marks)	2022
2.	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.	2015
3.	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 to run concurrently. Analyze the potential of the schemes to achieve development benefits and equitable growth.	2014
4.	The basis of providing urban amenities in rural areas (PURA) is rooted in establishing connectivity. Comment.	2013

E-GOVERNANCE

"The beauty of e-governance is that a few keystrokes can bring smiles on a million faces" - **PM Narendra Modi**

E – GOVERNANCE DEFINITION

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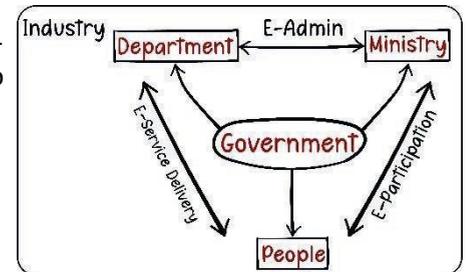
FACT-WISE
With 820 million internet users, India ranks second in the world, accounting for more than 12% of all internet users. According to government statistics, half of India's population lacks internet connectivity, and even if they do, only 20% of Indians know how to use digital services.

E-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

E-Governance in India originated in the 1970s, focusing on internal applications like defence, economic monitoring, and data-intensive tasks such as elections and tax administration.

- The establishment of the **Department of Electronics** in 1970 was a pivotal moment, indicating the government's commitment to advancing electronic governance.
- The **National Informatics Centre (NIC)** launched the **District Information System** in 1977, aiming to computerise all district offices and streamline administrative processes.
- The introduction of the **National Informatics Centre Network (NICNET)** in 1987, facilitated by satellite technology, laid the foundation for e-governance initiatives across the country.
- India's journey into e-governance began with the implementation of **NICNET** and the **District information system of National Informatics Centre (DISNIC)** program, focused on digitising district-level administration.
- The **National E-Governance Plan (NeGP)**, initiated in 2006, aimed to revolutionise government service delivery by enhancing accessibility, efficiency, transparency, and affordability.
- Under NeGP, various initiatives such as Digital India, Digi-Locker, Mobile Seva, and myGov.in were launched to promote e-governance and digital empowerment among citizens nationwide.

SMART FEATURES OF E-GOVERNANCE

The purpose of 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.
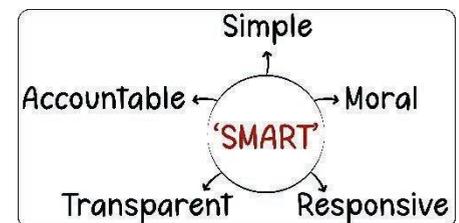
COMPONENTS OF E-GOVERNANCE

According to 2nd ARC interactions in governance happen at Government To Citizen (G2C), Government To Government (G2G) including Government To Employees (G2E), and Government To Business (G2B) LEVEL. The significance of e-governance can be understood by analyzing the impact of e-governance on these interactions.

GOVERNMENT TO CITIZEN (G2C): E-GOVERNANCE FACILITATES SERVICE DELIVERY TO CITIZENS

- **Ease of service delivery:** Ensuring speedy, quality, easy and last mile service delivery. For instance, maintaining digital land records helps correct identification of the beneficiaries of government programs **E.g.** beneficiaries of EWS reservation.
- **Plug loopholes and leakages:** Availability of information in the public domain and its ease of accessibility to citizens induce transparency and accountability in the delivery process: **E.g.** online tracking options.
- **Facilitates consensus-oriented governance** by facilitating people's participation in governance.
- **Real time governance**: With the help of e-governance, the government can swiftly resolve citizen grievances, incidents and weather and climatic events across the state in real time, leveraging technology services. **E.g.** CPGRAM.
- **Enhanced security for citizens:** Better coordination and timely sharing of intelligence between security agencies.

GOVERNMENT TO BUSINESS (G2B): E-GOVERNANCE FACILITATES EASE OF BUSINESS

- **Improved interaction with industry and business**.
- **Timely approval of projects and tracking** of the projects and policies are important for industrial growth.
- ICT **helps provide single window clearance**, thus improving Ease of doing business. **E.g.** Central Board of Excise and Customs begun implementation of the Single Window Project to promote Trading Across Borders in India as part of the "Ease of Doing Business" initiatives

GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT (G2G)

- **e-Administration**: Automation of Administrative Processes increases the efficiency of operations and processes and reduces unnecessary delays.
- **Real Time Monitor Infrastructure Projects:** E–Samiksha is used by the cabinet secretary and Prime Minister to monitor the progress of projects and policy initiatives, as well as the follow-up activities of different ministries, in real-time.
- **Flatter organization**: ICT led to the involvement of all levels in decision-making thus reducing hierarchy.
- **Improved relationship** between the government and its workers by increasing accountability. **E.g. Sandes messaging application etc.**
- **Cost and Paperwork Reduction**: Due to interconnectivity through LAN, transfer of information and files take place online, thus reducing the physical movements and consumption and storage of huge piles of paper.

INITIATIVES BY GOVERNMENT TO PROMOTE E-GOVERNANCE

The NeGP has enabled many e-Governance initiatives, the foremost being the Digital India Mission (2015). Its primary components include establishing a secure and resilient digital infrastructure, delivering government services digitally, and ensuring universal digital literacy. Similarly, several other initiatives have been taken to leverage technology in the field of governance and administration.

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.
- **e-Sampark Portal:** e-Sampark is a citizen engagement platform that enables interaction between citizens and government departments, allowing citizens to provide feedback, file grievances, and access information about government services.

HEALTHCARE

- **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM):** ABDM aims at establishing 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.
- **e-Rupi:** e-Rupi is a digital payment solution launched in 2021 to promote targeted and efficient delivery of welfare benefits and subsidies. It is a prepaid voucher-based system that enables seamless and contactless digital transactions, ensuring transparency and eliminating leakages in the distribution of government benefits

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 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.

STATE LEVEL E-GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES:

- **E-Seva (Andhra Pradesh):** facilitates payment of utility bills, issuance of certificates, licenses and permits.
- **Khajane Project (Karnataka):** digitalized the treasury system of the state.
- **FRIENDS (Kerala):** is a single-window facility to pay taxes and other financial dues to the State government.
- **Lokvani Project (Uttar Pradesh):** Single-window solution relating to the handling of grievances; land record maintenance and providing a mixture of essential services.

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 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.

To effectively enhance e-Governance in India, several key steps can be taken:
- **Improving Digital Infrastructure:** Expand projects like BharatNet to provide high-speed connectivity to all gram panchayats, supporting e-Governance across rural areas.
- **Increasing Digital Literacy:** Continue and expand initiatives like PMGDISHA to improve digital skills among rural households, ensuring broader access to e-Governance.
- **Ensuring Data Security and Privacy**: Implement robust cybersecurity measures and legislative frameworks, like the Personal Data Protection Bill, to protect citizens' data and boost trust in e-Governance.
- **Streamlining Services:** Leverage platforms like UMANG to offer seamless access to government services, promoting 'Faceless, Paperless, Cashless' interactions.
- **Promoting Inclusivity and Accessibility:** Make e-Governance tools accessible in multiple regional languages and adapted for differently-abled users to ensure wider inclusivity.
- **Fostering Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborate with private sectors for expertise and innovation, as seen with the Aarogya Setu app development.
- **Regular Feedback and Improvement:** Utilize platforms like MyGov for continuous citizen feedback, driving improvements in e-Governance services

CASE STUDY ON E-GOVERNANCE: EMPOWERING CITIZENS IN TELANGANA

- **Telangana** is one of the leading states in India for implementing e-governance projects. There are a plethora of initiatives rolled out for citizen empowerment as well as the smooth running of the various government departments in the state.
- For delivering e-governance through a web-based platform, **MeeSeva portal** currently boasts of over 550 services in its platform and is one of the most widely used online G2C service delivery platforms in the country.
- **M-governance delivered through an App called T AppFolio**, is a recent release of the Telangana Government and aims to radicalize how services are being delivered in the state.
- **T Wallet**, is a digital wallet which citizens can use to make payments for both government and private transactions to avail services.
- **India Enterprise Architecture (IndEA):** IndEA is a paradigm for creating a holistic architecture that treats the government as a single enterprise or, more realistically, as a collection of functionally interconnected enterprises.
- **Meghalaya Enterprise Architecture Project:** Using the power of digital technologies, the project strives to improve service delivery and governance for people.

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 of 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.
- o **Exams:** The Internet has also been shut down in states to prevent cheating during exams.
- ▪ **Impact of Internet Shutdowns**
  - o **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.
  - o **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.
  - o **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.
  - o **Risk to privacy:** People try to overcome restrictions via untrustworthy VPNs which put their privacy at risk.
  - o **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.
  - o **Disrupts political transparency:** Internet shutdowns undermine or eliminate access to digital tools that are critical for campaigning, promoting public discussions etc.

Concerns associated with internet shutdowns:
- ▪ **Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology:** The committee made following observations on the 2017 rules for Internet Shutdowns.
  - o **Inadequate rules:** There is no proper procedure for lifting of internet shutdown.
  - o **Undefined Grounds:** Both 1885 Act or the 2017 rules have not defined the two grounds of internet shutdown, i.e., 'Public Emergency' and 'Public Safety', that depend on the subjective assessment by District level officers.
  - o **Use for other purposes:** Shutdowns have been resorted to as a tool for routine policing and even administrative purposes, such as preventing cheating in exams to defusing local crime.
  - o **No records for Internet shutdown:** There are no records with Home Affairs or Department of Telecom on how many states have issued internet suspension orders, including their details, reasons etc.
  - o **Use of Section 144:** As opposed to ordering shutdown under Suspension Rules, 2017, states have been ordering shutdowns under Section 144 of CrPC However, internet shutdowns under section 144 have been unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.
  - o **Fundamental Rights are Affected:** The majority of Indians utilize the internet on their mobile phones for daily activities, and the suspension of the internet has an impact on their fundamental right under Article 19(1) (g).
  - o **Arbitrary Action and Non-compliance**: The government does not publicize Internet shutdown orders, as required by the Anuradha Bhasin Judgment.
  - o **Lack of Understanding of Major SC Judgments:** Non-compliance with important SC Judgments develops a lack of awareness among central and state government personnel.
- ▪ **Supreme Court Ruling:**
  - o 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:
  - o An order suspending internet services indefinitely is impermissible under the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Service) Rules, 2017.
  - o Suspension can be utilized for a temporary duration only.
  - o 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.
  - o Any order suspending the internet under the Suspension Rules is subject to judicial review.
- ▪ **Exceptions as per the judgment:**
  - o 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:**
  - o The year following the decision, India saw more instances of Internet shutdown than the year preceding it.
  - o 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.

Measures need to be implemented:
- ▪ **Parliamentary Standing Committee Recommendations:**
  - o DoT to lay down clear-cut principles of proportionality and procedure for lifting of internet shutdown in coordination with the Home Ministry.
  - o Centralized database of all internet shutdowns by the states can be maintained by DoT or MoHA.
  - o Expansion of the review committee that reviews the order of telecom services suspension under the Telecom Suspension rules, 2017.
  - o GoI should conduct a study to assess the impact of internet shutdowns on the economy.
  - o Important guidelines issued by the Supreme Court from time to time require formal recognition.
  - o It will ensure compliance and raise awareness about critical Supreme Court decisions that affect citizens' rights and livelihoods.

- o To avoid the label of "internet shutdown capital of the world," strict adherence to Supreme Court instructions is required on the side of the administration.
- **Selective banning**: Instead of complete internet shutdowns, certain websites, apps such as whatsapp can be banned to allow access to other internet services.
- **Role of internet companies:** Internet companies should engage with the government to prevent misuse of their platforms to prevent fake news etc.
- **Digital literacy:** Improvement in digital literacy can promote use of the internet for productive use and people themselves can participate in prevention of circulation of fake news, misinformation etc.

More faithful compliance with the Supreme Court guidelines on the part of the executive government is needed to rid ourselves of the tag of the "internet shutdown capital" of the world and fulfill Digital India's potential.

DIGITAL INDIA INITIATIVE

Digital India Program is a flagship initiative launched by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India in 2015, to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. This comprehensive program aims to leverage digital technologies to bridge the digital divide, improve access to digital services, and promote inclusive growth across the country.

3 Visions of Digital India
- Providing digital infrastructure as a source of utility to every citizen.
- Governance and services on demand.
- To look after the digital empowerment of every citizen.

OBJECTIVES OF DIGITAL INDIA MISSION:
- **Digital empowerment of citizens**: Provide universally available digital resources and services in numerous Indian languages to all citizens. The introduction of collaborative digital platforms, the online availability of all papers and certifications, and the cloud availability of all entitlements.
- **Deliver Efficient Governance**: To seamlessly integrate processes and information across departments and jurisdictions to provide real-time services to citizens on both online and mobile platforms,
  - o To digitally enable business processes.
  - o To create a digitally enabled cashless economy.
  - o To create a cloud-based repository for easy access by citizens, as well as better planning and decision-making using GIS.

Nine Pillars of Digital India

Broadband Highways	e-Governance: Reforming Govt. through Technology	Electronics Manufacturing
Universal Access to Mobile Connectivity	e-Kranti - Electronic Delivery of Services	IT for Jobs
Public Internet Access Programme	Information for All	Early Harvest Programme
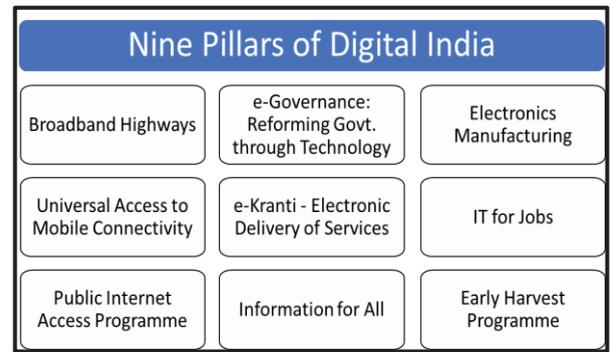
ACHIEVEMENTS OF DIGITAL INDIA MISSION:
- **Digital connectivity:** BharatNet programme has undertaken the task of connecting 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats by fiber-optic network.
- **Common Service Centres:** CSCs have improved the access to government services. There are more than 5.2 lakh CSCs functional (including urban and rural areas) across the country, out of which 4.14 lakh are at Gram Panchayat levels.
- **Unique identification:** Aadhar is the most significant achievement of Digital India, covering 99% of the Indian population, allowing them to digitally access government services.
- **DigiLocker:** It has more than 13.7 crore users and more than 562 crore documents are made available from 2311 issuer organizations.
- **UMANG:** Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance is providing more than 1668 e-Services and over 20,197 bill payment services to citizens through mobile.
- **MyGov:** More than 2.76 crore users are registered with this citizen engagement platform and participating in various activities hosted on the platform.
- **Digital Village:** Under the Digital Village Pilot Project, 700 Gram panchayats were covered and offered digital services like Digital Health Services, Education Service, Financial service etc.
- **National Knowledge Network:** Under this, high-speed data communication network 1752 links to institutions have been commissioned and made operation.
- **UPI:** Under this digital payment platform, 376 banks have been onboarded and facilitated 730 crore transactions worth Rs. 11.9 lakh crore.

AADHAAR

About: The Aadhaar number is a 12-digit random number issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) to the residents of India.

Voluntary Enrollment: Any individual, irrespective of age and gender, who is a resident of India.

Virtual ID: VID is a temporary, revocable 16-digit number linked with the Aadhaar, useful for authentication or e-KYC services are performed.

Furthermore, Digital India Mission has led to digital literacy in far off regions of the country, increased entrepreneurship and innovation in the digital space, as well as a focus on strengthening cybersecurity infrastructure and awareness.

AADHAR & ITS UTILITY FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE
DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY

- **The right of a state to manage its network in order to serve its national interests**, the most essential of which

are security, privacy, and commerce, is known as digital sovereignty.
- It's the power to be in charge of one's own digital destiny, including the data, hardware, and software that one uses and generates.

DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY'S IMPORTANCE:
- **Eliminate technical dependency:** Identify and reduce reliance on foreign data infrastructure, combat unfair competition in digital marketplaces, and address vulnerabilities related to upcoming technologies such as 5G and AI.
- **Guaranteed data access**: Digital sovereignty is also required for national political autonomy, commercial innovation, and research institution freedom since appropriate technology and data must be made available through guaranteed access.
- **Internal security and country unity**: One major fear regarding the preservation and potential exchange of personal data is that it could be exploited to pose a danger to any country's internal security.
- **Digital colonialism:** Technology corporations from the United States and China may be perceived to have market domination, which might lead to new forms of hegemony and exploitation.

DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY'S OBSTACLES
- **Trade Barrier**: Competing in a linked world without traditional borders has quickly become the new normal, and the Internet's pervasiveness and all of its offshoots now impact and influence how we work, live, and play.
- **Transnational networks are on the rise**: Within national jurisdictions, the complexity of nested obligations and the global reach of networks cannot be adequately addressed.
- **Against Liberal democracy**: Those opposed to liberal democracy include, Surveillance and social and political control are aided by data localization methods.

WAY FORWARD
- **Identifying the country's reliance on foreign technologies and digital services, as well as its shortcomings,** is the first step toward outlining the capabilities that will be required to improve digital sovereignty.
- **Implement an ambitious data strategy and increase investment in research and development** as well as digital skills for the workforce in order to unlock untapped potential and remove barriers in the digital single market.
- **Engage in international collaboration to improve global data governance**, digital markets, emerging technologies, and international data flows.
- As a sovereign response to transborder connectivity, governments are enforcing data localisation, which requires corporations to keep digital data locally within their jurisdiction.

No one country or corporation in the free world can credibly preach to others on the right path to digital salvation. Democratic forces need to consult each other and collaborate in developing new norms for managing the digital world.

ADVERSE IMPACT OF DATA DENIABILITY

Data deniability refers to **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 to 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 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. These steps are vital for using technology to develop resilient, responsive, and inclusive governance systems.

KEYWORDS:

Cyber Inclusion, Knowledge Bubble, Online Traces, Data Accessibility, Environmentally Friendly, Paper-Free Offices, Digital Sovereignty, Digital Democracy, Tech-Driven Transformation, Virtual Empowerment, Digital Renaissance, eGovernance Renaissance, Tech-Enriched Administration, Digital Inclusivity, eGovernance Upliftment, Digital Outreach, Digital Emancipation

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS		
1.	What inadequacies hinder the enhancement of effectiveness, transparency, and accountability in **e-governance**?	2023
2.	Has digital illiteracy and lack of **ICT** accessibility hindered socio-economic development, especially in rural areas?	2021
3.	Discuss the profound impact of recent amendments to the **Right to Information Act** on the autonomy and independence of the **Information Commission**.	2020
4.	How has the emergence of the **Fourth Industrial Revolution** initiated **e-Governance** as an integral part of government?	2020
5.	Identify factors hindering the implementation of **ICT**-based projects/programs and suggest measures for effective implementation.	2019
6.	Explain the critical importance of the 'use value' of information in **e-Governance**, beyond just the utilization of new technology.	2018
7.	Identify the limitations of the **Citizens' Charter** as an instrument of organizational transparency and accountability, and suggest measures for greater effectiveness.	2018
8.	Discuss the role of the **Public Accounts Committee** in establishing accountability of the government to the people.	2017
9.	Discuss the inter-dependent relationship between the effectiveness of the government system and people's participation in the governance system in India.	2016
10.	Analyze the legal, political, economic, social, and cultural factors contributing to the decline of public morality in India, as reflected in **Transparency International's integrity index**.	2016
11.	Discuss the changes brought in corporate governance post the **Satyam Scandal** (2009) to ensure transparency and accountability.	2015
12.	Critically evaluate the potential consequences of passing the amendment bill to the **Whistleblowers Act, 2011**, in terms of protection for whistleblowers.	2015
13.	Analyze the gap between the formulation of **Citizen's charters** by public service delivery organizations and the level of citizens' satisfaction and quality of services provided.	2013
14.	Discuss the limitations of a **national Lokpal** in resolving the problems of immorality in public affairs.	2013

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE

MEANING

- **Social Governance:** The formal and informal structures that guide interactions within a society, promoting social justice, equity, and well-being. This encompasses institutions like education systems, healthcare frameworks, and social welfare programs.
- **Economic Governance:** The framework of rules and institutions that influence a nation's economic activity. This includes fiscal and monetary policies, business regulations, and trade agreements, with the goal of fostering a stable and prosperous economy.
- **Socio-Economic Governance:** A holistic approach that integrates both social and economic considerations. It recognizes their interdependence and strives for a balance between economic growth and social development. This framework often emphasizes sustainable development and corporate social responsibility.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION & THEIR IMPACT

Affirmative action policies in India aim to address historical discrimination and enhance diversity in various sectors by increasing opportunities for historically marginalized groups based on gender, race, ethnicity, and other factors. These policies focus on providing equal opportunities through preferential treatment in education, employment, and public services.

- **Education:** Initiatives such as the Post-Matric and Pre-Matric Scholarship Schemes for Scheduled Castes and the National Fellowship Scheme have significantly improved enrollment in educational institutions for marginalized communities, enhancing access to quality education and socio-economic benefits.
- **Employment:** Reservation quotas in government jobs for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) help level the playing field and reduce socio-economic disparities, supported by special recruitment drives and promotions.
- **Legal Protection:** Laws like the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, and the Domestic Violence Act, 2005 protect against discrimination and violence, improving legal awareness and access to justice.
- **Welfare Programs**: Initiatives such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) have uplifted socio-economic conditions, with over 118.63 lakh houses sanctioned under PMAY by 2024.
- **Political Representation:** Reserving seats in legislative bodies for SCs, STs, and women, including a recent **(106th Amendment) Act, 2023**,that reserves one-third of these seats for women, ensures broader political representation.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR DEVELOPMENT

MGNREGA: EMPOWERING RURAL EMPLOYMENT

- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), launched in 2005 by India's Ministry of Rural Development, is one of the largest employment guarantee schemes globally. It aims to empower rural communities by providing guaranteed wage employment for 100 days each financial year to adult members of rural households willing to do unskilled manual labour.

AAJEEVIKA (NATIONAL RURAL LIVELIHOODS MISSION)

- The National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), initially launched as the Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) in 1999 and restructured into NRLM in 2011, aims to reduce poverty by improving access to self-employment and skilled wage opportunities for poor households. Now known as "Aajeevika," it operates on a demand- driven strategy rather than allocation-based, empowering states to develop their own poverty reduction plans focused on livelihoods.

PRADHAN MANTRI AWAS YOJANA (PMAY)

- The Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY), launched in January 1996, aimed to address rural housing needs. However, a 2014 performance audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India highlighted several issues such as unassessed housing shortages, lack of transparency in beneficiary selection, poor quality of houses, insufficient technical supervision, lack of program integration, low loan uptake by beneficiaries, and inadequate monitoring. To overcome these challenges and achieve the government's goal of "Housing for All" by 2024, IAY was restructured into the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (PMAY), which includes two segments: PMAY - Urban (PMAY-U) and PMAY - Gramin (PMAY-G).
- **PMAY-U:** Since **June 2015**, the PMAY-U has been a flagship program of the Government of India, administered by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)**.

- It aims to provide **durable homes** to eligible urban beneficiaries nationwide through States/UTs/Central Nodal Agencies.
- PMAY-U covers all urban areas, including statutory towns as per Census 2011 and notified planning/development areas, and operates through four verticals: **Beneficiary Led Construction/Enhancement (BLC), Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP), In-situ Slum Redevelopment (ISSR), and Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS)**.
- In August 2022, the **Union Cabinet extended PMAY-U until December 2024**, excluding CLSS, to complete already sanctioned houses by March 31, 2022.

- **PMAY-G:** Launched on **April 1st, 2016**, Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana Gramin (PMAY-G) is the central government's primary rural housing initiative overseen by the **Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) and implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)**.
  - PMAY-G aims to provide durable housing with essential amenities to households without homes or living in inadequate kutcha or dilapidated dwellings.
  - PMAY-G has been extended for an additional two years, until **March 31st, 2024**.
  - As of Feb, 2024, **2.56 crore houses have been built out of the targeted 2.95 crore**.
  - Beneficiaries are identified based on parameters from the **Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) and verified by Gram Sabhas**.

BHARAT MALA PROJECT
- **About:** Bharatmala Project is a centrally funded road and highway development project conceptualised in 2 phases across India.
  - **Objective:** To develop road connectivity linking Border areas, Coastal roads and port connectivity of major and Non-Major ports, improvement in the efficiency of National Corridors, development of Economic Corridors, expressways, Inter Corridors and Feeder Routes along with integration with Sagarmala.
  - **Phase I:** It is to develop economic corridors, feeder roads, and expressways. It covers 34800 km out of the total length of 74942.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Road Transport and Highway
- **Implementing Agencies:** National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL), and State Public Works Department.
- **Funding Mechanism:** The project will be funded through, Cess collected from Petrol & Diesel (as per Central Road & Infrastructure Fund Act, 2000) ; Toll Tax ; Monetisation of National Highways through TOT (Toll-Operate-Transfer) ; Internal & Extra Budgetary Resources (IEBR) ; Private Sector Investment.

NATIONAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (NSAP)
- The Constitution of India includes **Directive Principles of State Policy**, which mandate the state to implement various welfare measures within its resources.
- Notably, **Article 41** directs the state to offer public assistance to citizens facing unemployment, old age, sickness, disablement, and other forms of destitution within its economic constraints and developmental capabilities.
- Aligned with these principles, the Government of India initiated the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) in 1995.
- Currently, the NSAP encompasses the following **five schemes**:
  - **Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS):** This scheme provides a monthly pension of Rs. 200/- to BPL individuals aged 60 years or above, up to 79 years, and Rs. 500/- thereafter.
  - **Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS):** BPL widows aged 40-59 years are eligible for a monthly pension of Rs. 200/-.
  - **Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS):** BPL individuals aged 18-59 years with severe and multiple disabilities receive a monthly pension of Rs. 200/-.
  - **National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS):** BPL households receive a lump sum amount of Rs. 10,000/- upon the death of the primary breadwinner aged between 18 and 64 years.
  - **Annapurna:** Eligible senior citizens who are not covered under NOAPS receive 10 kg of free food grains per month under this scheme.

DIGITAL INDIA LAND RECORDS MODERNIZATION PROGRAMME (DILRMP)
- To advance the modernization of the country's land records system, a revised initiative called the Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP), formerly known as the **National Land Records Modernization Programme (NLRMP)**, has been devised.
- This revamped program combines two centrally sponsored schemes: the **Computerization of Land Records (CLR)** and the **Strengthening of Revenue Administration and Updating of Land Records (SRA&ULR)**.
- NLRMP focuses on digitising land records, computerising land registration processes, updating cadastral maps, and establishing online systems for land-related services.
- By leveraging technology and adopting best practices, NLRMP aims to improve **land governance, enhance land tenure security, facilitate land transactions, and prevent disputes** related to land ownership and usage.

SWACHH BHARAT MISSION(SBM)/TOTAL SANITATION CAMPAIGN (TSC)

- In 2014, the **Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA)** scheme was discontinued and replaced by the revamped Swachh Bharat scheme with the goal of achieving an **Open Defecation Free (ODF)** India by October 2, 2019, in honour of Mahatma Gandhi.
- The program resulted in the construction of over 10 crore individual household toilets, increasing sanitation coverage from **39% in 2014 to 100% in 2019,** with approximately 6 lakh villages declaring themselves ODF.
- Studies indicate that the SBM-G campaign had significant economic, environmental, and health impacts, particularly benefiting women, and also led to the **accomplishment of SDG 6.2 (Sanitation and Hygiene),** 11 years ahead of schedule.
- In February 2020, the Government of India approved Phase-II of the SBM-G with a total outlay of Rs. 1,40,881 crores, focusing on sustaining the ODF status and implementing **Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM)** in villages to achieve **ODF Plus status** by 2024-25.
- Community participation remains integral to the success of these efforts.
  - During the **Swachhata Hi Seva 2023 campaign,** over 109 crore individuals and 71 Ministries and Departments of the Government of India participated, demonstrating widespread engagement and commitment to the cause of sanitation and hygiene.

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT LOCAL AREA DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (MPLADS)

- The inception of the Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) dates back to **1993**.
- This initiative was introduced to offer Members of Parliament a platform to suggest developmental projects aimed at establishing lasting community assets and offering essential amenities, such as community infrastructure, in response to locally identified requirements.
- Each Member of Parliament (MP) has the authority to propose **works amounting to Rs. 5 Crores annually** to be undertaken in their respective constituency, as suggested to the District Collector.

SMART CITIES MISSION

- The Smart Cities Mission, inaugurated on **June 25, 2015,** aims to cultivate cities that offer **essential infrastructure, a clean and sustainable environment**, and a high quality of life to their residents through the implementation of innovative solutions.
- The mission seeks to stimulate economic growth and enhance living standards by addressing various aspects of city life, including **social, economic, physical, and institutional development**.
- Its emphasis lies on fostering sustainable and inclusive growth by establishing scalable models that can serve as **guiding examples for other aspiring cities.**
- Through a competitive two-stage process, **100 cities have been chosen** for transformation into Smart Cities.
- The Mission operates as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**.
- Funding for these projects is projected to come from various sources, with 45% from Mission grants, 21% from convergence, 21% from PPP, and the remainder from other channels.

PM STREET VENDOR'S ATMANIRBHAR NIDHI (PM SVANIDHI)

- The **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** initiated the Prime Minister Street Vendor's Atma Nirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme on June 1, 2020.
- PM SVANidhi a central sector scheme aims to provide **collateral-free working capital loans** to street vendors impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, facilitating their business restart.
- The scheme's objectives include:
  - Offering collateral-free working capital loans up to ₹10,000 for one year, with increased amounts of ₹20,000 and ₹50,000 in subsequent tranches upon timely repayments.
  - Providing an **interest subsidy of 7% per annum** to encourage regular repayments.
  - **Incentivizing digital transactions** with cashback rewards of up to ₹1,200 per year.

SVANIDHI SE SAMRIDDHI PROGRAMME

- Launched on January 4th, 2021, in 125 cities during Phase 1.
- Objective
  - Map the socio-economic profile of PM SVANidhi beneficiaries and their families.
  - Evaluate their potential eligibility for various Central welfare schemes and facilitate their access to these schemes. Eligible schemes are outlined in the provided infographics.
- The **Quality Council of India (QCI)** serves as the implementing partner for the program.

JAL JEEVAN MISSION (JJM)

- The program is led by the **Ministry of Jal Shakti** in collaboration with the state government.
- The JJM aims to ensure that every rural household in India has access to safe and sufficient drinking water through individual household tap connections by the year 2024
- **Key Features**
  - Shifts focus on water supply from **'habitations to households'**

- o Emphasizes **'service delivery' and 'functionality'** of public utilities
- o Promotes **community ownership** for long-term sustainability
- o **Empowers women and weaker sections** in managing water supply
- o Ensures **piped water supply** in schools, anganwadi centres, and ashramshalas
- o Addresses potable drinking water needs in quality-affected habitations
- o Includes **surveillance of water quality** by the local community, particularly involving women.

SAMARTH (SCHEME FOR CAPACITY BUILDING IN TEXTILES SECTOR) SCHEME

- ▪ **Samarth is a placement-oriented skilling program under the Ministry of Textiles, operating until March 2024.**
- ▪ **It aligns with the broader skilling policy of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship.**
- ▪ The program aims to complement industry efforts in creating jobs within the organized textile sector, c**overing the entire value chain except for Spinning and Weaving**.
- ▪ Samarth incorporates cutting-edge features such as the **Aadhaar Enabled Biometric Attendance System (AEBAS), Training of Trainers (ToT), CCTV recording of training sessions, a dedicated call center with a helpline number, a mobile app, a web-based Management Information System (MIS),** and **online monitoring** of the training process.

CREDIT GUARANTEE FUND TRUST FOR MICRO AND SMALL ENTERPRISES (CGTMSE)

- ▪ The scheme was formally initiated **in 2000** through the establishment of the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) by the **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, GoI, and SIDBI**. The corpus of CGTMSE is contributed by the GoI and SIDBI in a 4:1 ratio.
- ▪ Eligibility criteria encompass **both existing and new enterprises** engaged in manufacturing, services (including trading), and educational/training institutions, while **SHGs and agriculture are ineligible**.
- ▪ **Lending institutions**: Scheduled Commercial Banks, selected Regional Rural Banks, NBFCs, Small Finance Banks (SFBs), Scheduled Urban Co-operative, and Microfinance Institutions (MFIs), are eligible to participate.

FASTER ADOPTION AND MANUFACTURING OF (HYBRID &) ELECTRIC VEHICLES IN INDIA (FAME INDIA) SCHEME

Other UDAN Initiatives
KRISHI UDAN: initiated by the Ministry of Civil Aviation in August 2020, aims to facilitate the transportation of agricultural products for farmers, thereby enhancing their value realization. **International UDAN:** the program intends to establish direct air connectivity between India's smaller cities and key foreign destinations in the vicinity. **Lifeline Udan:** A governmental initiative, facilitates the air transportation of medical cargo and essential supplies throughout India during the Covid-19 crisis. The program is spearheaded by the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

- ▪ The initiative was **launched in 2015**, as part of the National Mission on Electric Mobility (NEMMP) initiated in 2013.
- ▪ Under the **Ministry of Heavy Industry and Public Enterprises,** the scheme aims to achieve 6-7 million sales of hybrid and electric vehicles annually from 2020 onwards.
- ▪ Implementation of the FAME scheme involves several components, including **Demand Incentives**, establishment of **charging stations,** and **administration** of the scheme.

UDE DESH KA AAM NAGRIK (UDAN)

- ▪ Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik (UDAN) was introduced **in 2016 as part of the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS)** under the purview of the **Ministry of Civil Aviation**.

- ▪ Launched to fulfil the aspirations of the common citizen by following the vision of 'Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik', with an enhanced aviation infrastructure and air connectivity in **tier II and tier III cities**.
- ▪ Objectives
  - o Foster the growth of the regional aviation sector.
  - o Offer affordable, financially sustainable, and profitable air travel options on regional routes, extending access to air travel even in smaller towns for the general populace.

PRADHAN MANTRI SHRAM YOGI MAAN-DHAN (PM-SYM)

- ▪ This Central Sector Scheme, managed by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, offers a voluntary contributory pension for unorganized workers earning up to ₹15,000 per month.
- ▪ Enrollees, aged 18-40, contribute through auto-debit until they turn 60, at which point they receive a guaranteed ₹3,000 monthly pension. The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) manages the pension funds, while enrollment is handled by Common Services Centres (CSC) without charge. Contributions can be monthly or periodically, with government matching. Upon the subscriber's death, their spouse receives 50% of the pension.

SVAMITVA (SURVEY OF VILLAGES ABADI AND MAPPING WITH IMPROVISED TECHNOLOGY IN VILLAGE AREAS) SCHEME

Launched in 2021 under the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, this Central Sector Scheme aims to provide rural India with property ownership solutions by issuing Property Cards/Title Deeds as a record of rights to village household owners. Targeting 6.62 lakh villages from the Financial Year 2020-21 to 2024-25, the scheme has a budget of ₹566 crore allocated for this five-year period.

Key activities under the scheme include:

- **Large Scale mapping with Drones:** Survey of India will use drones to map rural inhabited areas.
  - Generated maps are geo-referenced, capturing digital property images.
  - State Governments are responsible for preparing and distributing Property Cards based on these maps.
- **Establishment of Continuous Operating Reference Station (CORS):** This network supports accurate geo-referencing and land demarcation.
- **SVAMITVA Dashboard:** A centralized online monitoring tool for real-time progress tracking.
- **DigiLocker App:** Beneficiaries can access and download property cards via the DigiLocker App.
- **Gram Manchitra:** National Informatics Centre (NIC) funds enhancements for the 'Gram Manchitra' spatial planning application.
- **Information, Education, and Communication (IEC)** activities to raise scheme awareness.
- Setting up **Programme Management Units** at the National and State levels.

AYUSHMAN BHARAT

Ayushman Bharat, launched in accordance with the National Health Policy 2017 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aims to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC). This initiative consists of two interconnected components: Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) and Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY). It offers up to ₹5 lakh per family annually for secondary and tertiary care, covering surgical, medical, and day care treatments, including medicines and diagnostics, through fixed-rate health benefit packages that prevent extra charges at hospitals.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can be defined as **any web or mobile based platform that enables an individual or agency to communicate interactively** and enables the exchange of user generated content. Social media has become synonymous with social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter etc. In 2022, on average there are about 470.1 million active social media users in India on a monthly basis.

POSITIVE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

- **Government and citizens:** Social media has enabled two-way communication between the government and citizens, **e.g.** use of Twitter by ministers during COVID-19 etc.
- **Increased democratic potential:** Social media has increased the democratic potential with people expressing their opinions and lodging protests over social media, **e.g.** use of social media in the **Arab Spring.**
- **Women empowerment:** Social media has empowered women by providing them a platform to raise their concerns and issues, **e.g. MeToo campaign** etc.
- **Global connect:** Social media has connected people to the world more extensively and people are much more aware about global events, cultures etc.
- **Interest groups:** It has enabled creation of special interest groups and provided support to everyone and anyone in the society.

NEED FOR REGULATION:

- **Threat to democracy:** Social media platforms have been used for promotion of misinformation during elections which threaten free and fair elections. e**.g. 2016 US elections.**
- **Social media trolls:** Social media trolls are quite active with targeted attacks. There have been many complaints of cyber bullying, online stalking and harassment of women.
- **Invasion of privacy:** Social media platforms have been allegedly compromising the privacy of users and there is a need to protect personalized data of users. **E.g. Cambridge analytica case.**
- **Fake news:** Social media platforms have become the source and promoter of fake news, **e.g.** fake news over child kidnapping etc.
- **Terror promotion:** Social media platforms have been used by terror organizations for radicalisation, recruitment and training of their cadre.
- **Fake trends:** Many groups with their vested interest promote fake trends on social media, **e.g.** fake trends by Pakistan's ISI against cricketer Arshdeep Singh.
- **Hate speech:** Social media platforms have been used for promotion of hate speech and rumors which have led to riots, **e.g.** Delhi riots of 2020.

STEPS TAKEN:

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (INTERMEDIARY GUIDELINES AND DIGITAL MEDIA ETHICS CODE) RULES, 2021

The IT Rules 2021 signify the first significant attempt to regulate social media intermediaries, OTT platforms and digital news publishers in India. These address the rising concerns over issues like misinformation, offensive content, lack of grievance redressal on online platforms. These come after repeated calls for better regulation of big tech companies and more accountability from such platforms.

The key features of IT Rules 2021 are:

- **Due Diligence:** The rules mandate additional due diligence for significant social media intermediaries (above 5

million users) to appoint grievance officer, nodal officer and chief compliance officer.

- **Grievance Redressal:** Rules require appointing a grievance officer and time-bound grievance redressal mechanism by social media platforms as well as OTT platforms.
- **Traceability:** Significant social media intermediaries are expected to identify originators of problematic information to assist government investigations.
- **Automated Content Flagging:** Intermediaries should deploy technology-based automated tools for proactively identifying and removing unlawful information or content.
- **Compliance with Law:** Rules establish code of ethics for online news portals and OTT platforms requiring adherence to norms around certain types of content.
- **Oversight Mechanism:** Formation of inter-departmental committee, self-regulatory bodies and oversight mechanism introduced to look into potential violations.
- **Penalties:** Platform rules non-compliance can lead to losing intermediary status, effectively opening up liability for content posted by users.

DIGITAL PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION ACT 2023 (DPDPA)

The law applies to the processing of digital personal data within India, collected online or offline and digitised. It extends to processing personal data outside India if offering goods or services in India.

Features of the Act:
- **Consent:** Personal data processing requires lawful purpose consent after providing a notice detailing the data to be collected and the purpose.
- **Lower Age of Consent:** The central government can prescribe a lower age of consent, facilitating safe internet access for minors.
- **Ease of Cross-Border Data Flows:** Cross-border data flows will transition from whitelisting to a blacklisting mechanism, significantly easing international data transfers.
- **Impact on Social Media Companies:** Significant Data Fiduciaries must implement user verification mechanisms to reduce anonymity and mitigate issues like trolling and fake news.
- **Exemptions:** Certain cases are exempt from data principal rights and fiduciary obligations, including prevention of offences and enforcement of legal rights.
  - The central government may exempt specific activities, such as processing by government entities for security purposes.
- **Data Protection Board of India:** The central government will establish the Data Protection Board of India to monitor compliance, impose penalties, and address grievances. Board members will serve two-year terms and may be reappointed.
- **Penalties:** Penalties for various offences range up to Rs 250 crore, imposed by the Board after an inquiry.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACT:
- **Empowering Citizens:** The enactment empowers citizens by granting them the right to know and control their personal data.
- **Limiting Surveillance and Profiling:** It restricts possibilities of corporate and government surveillance and citizen profiling, with exceptions for national security and interests.
- **Balancing Exceptions:** While there may be debates over the extent of exceptions allowing government use of personal data, the overall intention and enforcement of the law aim to serve the people of India effectively.

OVER THE TOP PLATFORMS

Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms deliver audio, video, and other media content via the internet, eschewing the need for traditional platforms like cable, broadcast and satellite television. E.g. Netflix, Amazon Prime etc. These are subscription-based video on demand platforms that allow consumers to access a wide range of content from around the world.

POSITIVE IMPACT OF OTT:
- **Access:** The OTT platforms provide freedom to view content at any time and from any location.
- **Democratization:** OTT platforms have democratized the entertainment industry with many people from social media finding their feet in the entertainment industry through OTT platforms.
- **Boost to small industry:** OTT platforms have given a boost to smaller entertainment industries with low budgets, especially in regional cinema.
- **International access:** The OTT platforms have enabled access of Indian viewers to new and high-quality international content, e.g. Money Heist etc.
- **Affordability:** Being affordable, OTT platforms have provided a new mode of entertainment for people.
- **Overcoming language barriers:** OTT platforms have broken the language barriers as most platforms have a range in multiple languages.

NEED OF REGULATION:
- **Rapid growth:** OTT platforms have grown rapidly in recent years, **e.g.** by the end of 2022, India's OTT base grew

20% to 424 million people from 353 million people in 2021.

- **Obscenity:** The language and content on some of the OTT platforms promote obscenity, representing a danger to the social and moral upsides of our country.
- **Lack of censorship:** There is lack of censorship and therefore, people of all ages, particularly children are exposed to all kinds of content that might not be suitable to their age.
- **Threat of cybercrime:** There are threats of cybercrime with OTT platforms, where people share their confidential information like bank details, credit card etc.
- **Threat to social harmony:** Some of the OTT platforms have promoted communally-sensitive content that can disrupt social harmony in the country.

STEPS TAKEN:

Government has notified **Digital Media Ethics Code Relating to Digital Media and OTT Platforms** to regulate OTT platforms that provide for:

- **Self-classification of content:** The platforms have to classify their content into U, U/A 7+, U/A 13+, U/A 16+, and A, provide parental locks to U/A 13+ or higher and age verification for A category.
- **Observe norms:** Publishers of news on digital media would be required to observe Norms of Journalistic Conduct of the Press Council of India and the Programme Code under the Cable Television Networks Regulation Act thereby providing a level playing field between the offline (Print, TV) and digital media.
- **Three level grievance redressal mechanism:**
  o **Level-I:** Self-regulation by the publishers by appointing grievance redressal officers.
  o **Level-II:** Self-regulation by the self-regulating bodies of the publishers headed by a retired judge of the Supreme Court, a High Court or independent eminent person and have not more than six members.
  o **Level-III:** Oversight mechanism - MoI&B shall publish a charter for self-regulating bodies, including Code of Practice. It shall establish an Inter-Departmental Committee for hearing grievances.

CHALLENGES THAT REMAIN:

- **Freedom of expression:** With regulation of OTT platforms concerns over freedom of speech and expression of writers/editors/publishers and of artistic expression are raised.
- **Lack of compliance:** Although the rules mandate the display of contact details relating to grievance redressal mechanisms and grievance officers on OTT websites/interface, compliance is very low.
- **Jurisdiction issue:** Many of the OTT platforms are based outside India that makes it difficult to enforce regulations and accountability.
- **Ambiguity in rules:** There is ambiguity around content regulation, **e.g.** many OTT platforms have removed news channels from their platforms.
  Lack of comprehensiveness: While the Rules require disclosure of grievance details by publishers and self-regulating bodies, the reporting formats only capture the number of complaints received and decided.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Data protection law:** Government needs to enact data protection law at the earliest to protect users from violation of their privacy and to protect their personal data.
- **Periodic campaigns:** The OTT industry associations could be mandated to run periodic campaigns in print and electronic media about the grievance redressal mechanism.
- **Local language description:** The interpretation of age rating and the content descriptors (**e.g.** 'violence') could be in the respective languages of the video apart from English.
- **Periodic audit:** An independent body may be set up to undertake a periodic audit.
- **Single dashboard:** The Ministry can provide a dedicated umbrella website wherein the details of applicable Rules, content codes, advisories, contact details for complaints/appeals, etc. are published.
- **Lesson from Singapore:** The government can learn from Singapore that has a common regulator for different media and promotes media literacy through public education.

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND THEIR POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON GOVERNANCE

CYBERSECURITY AND GOVERNANCE

Cybersecurity plays a crucial role in preserving the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of government data and services. It ensures trust in digital transactions, protects critical infrastructure, and safeguards national security interests. Without robust cybersecurity measures, governments are vulnerable to cyber threats such as data breaches, ransomware attacks, and cyber espionage, which can disrupt governance processes and erode public trust. For example, the **Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant in Tamil Nadu** reportedly fell victim to a cyberattack in 2019. The attack, attributed to the Lazarus Group, a North Korean hacking group, targeted the plant's administrative network, raising alarms about the security of India's nuclear facilities.

Governments worldwide have enacted regulatory frameworks and standards to address cybersecurity risks and enhance resilience in governance. For example -

- In India, the **Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000**, and initiatives like the **National Cyber Security Policy, 2013**, provide the legal framework for cybersecurity governance and enforcement.
- India also launched the **National Cyber Coordination Centre (NCCC)** and the **Cyber Swachhta Kendra (Botnet Cleaning and Malware Analysis Centre)** to enhance cybersecurity capabilities and mitigate cyber risks.
- Further, the Indian **Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In)** works to enhance cybersecurity preparedness and coordinate incident response efforts to safeguard India's cyberspace from threats and vulnerabilities.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND GOVERNANCE

Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a crucial role in enhancing governance efficiency. By leveraging AI tools and technologies, the Government of India aims to streamline administrative processes, improve service delivery, and promote inclusivity. For instance:

- **Bhashini - National Language Technology Mission (NLTM):** Launched as part of the NLTM, Bhashini provides language technology solutions through the BHASHINI platform. Using AI/ML and NLP, Bhashini develops open-source models and tools for Indian languages, facilitating digital inclusion and access to government services for all citizens.
- **India Urban Data Exchange (IUDEX):** Managed by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, IUDEX is a data exchange platform that enables Indian cities to share urban governance-related datasets. AI-powered analytics on IUDEX help policymakers make data-driven decisions for better urban planning and service delivery.

- **Ideal Train Profile by Indian Railways:** Indian Railways utilises AI-driven programs like the Ideal Train Profile to optimise capacity utilisation and revenue generation in reserved mail express trains. This AI module analyses demand patterns and allocates vacant berths, enhancing passenger experience and ticket availability.
- **Digidhan Mitra Chatbot:** Developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC), the Digidhan Mitra Chatbot provides customised information on digital payments and transaction trends. By leveraging AI, the chatbot delivers real-time insights, enhancing financial literacy and promoting digital payment adoption.
- **AI Virtual Assistant of IRCTC:** IRCTC's AI-powered virtual assistant, AskDISHA 2.0, revolutionises ticket booking with voice and chat-based interactions. By simplifying the booking process and enhancing user experience, AskDISHA 2.0 demonstrates the transformative impact of AI in passenger services.

INDIA'S INITIATIVES TOWARDS AI

01 **'AI for all'** is a self learning platform designed to teach AI to people from all walks of life. India's effort towards AI journey focuses on social empowerment and inclusion at the core.

02 **India's AI Vision:** India wants to take the Digital Public Infrastructure or DPI approach with AI, where it aims to build underlying systems – both databases and compute capacity – for facilitating the spread of AI.

03 **IndiaAI Hub:** It is the national portal to provide an ecosystem for innovation and adoption for social impact.

04 **YUVAai:** It is a platform to enhance the skills of school students from classes 8 to 12 on using AI to tackle critical problems and become future-ready.

05 **National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence:** It is an upcoming strategy to help India leverage technology effectively..

BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY AND GOVERNANCE

Blockchain technology has garnered significant attention from the Government of India, which recognizes its potential to revolutionise public sector operations. The release of the "National Strategy on Blockchain" by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) underscores the government's commitment to integrating blockchain across various sectors, including healthcare, agriculture, finance, voting, and e-governance.

Government Initiatives and Applications:

- **Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC):** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is developing its own CBDC, the digital rupee, to modernise payment systems and reduce reliance on physical cash. CBDC implementation will enhance payment efficiency and mitigate risks associated with private cryptocurrencies.
- **Land Registration and Digital Certificates:** Blockchain technology is being deployed for land registration, issuance of digital certificates, and customs duty payment, streamlining administrative processes and enhancing transparency.
- **Sectoral Adoption:** Regulatory bodies like the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) are exploring blockchain applications in telecommunications and financial markets, respectively.

CASE STUDIES AND EXAMPLES:

- **NFTs for Land Mutation in West Bengal:** The New Town Kolkata Development Authority has implemented NFTs for land mutation, ensuring transparent land ownership records and eliminating manual paperwork. Municipal corporations in Durgapur and Bankura districts have adopted blockchain for issuing birth certificates.
- **Tamil Nadu Blockchain Backbone:** The initiative aims to provide citizens with a unique state ID consolidating
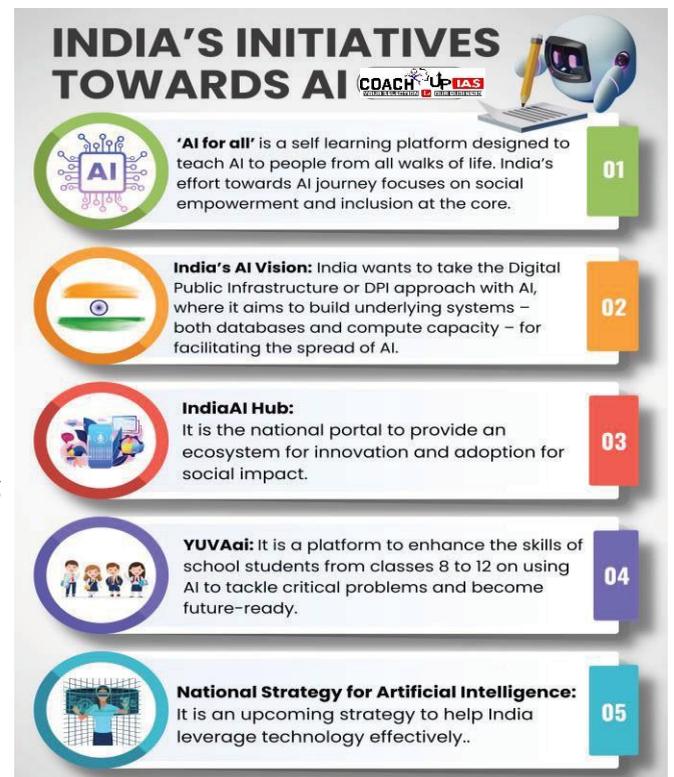
essential documents into a digital wallet. The e-Pettagam App allows secure sharing of documents with various entities.
- **Unified Land Management System in Karnataka:** Similar to Tamil Nadu's initiative, Karnataka aims to streamline land records management through a unified digital system.
- **Firozabad Public Grievance Management System:** The Uttar Pradesh Government, in collaboration with Polygon, has launched an online portal for filing and tracking complaints using blockchain technology, ensuring transparency and integrity of records.

REGULATION OF ONLINE GAMING

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeiTY) has recently amended the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. These amendments are designed to enforce greater due diligence by intermediaries in online gaming and social media, particularly concerning online games and the dissemination of fake, false, or misleading information related to government business.

The amendments to the IT Rules 2021 have been issued under Section 87 of the Information Technology Act, 2000, which originally established regulations for social media intermediaries.

Key Features of the Rules on Online Gaming are as follows:
- **Definitions:**
  - **Online Games:** Defined as games offered on the Internet and accessible to users via a computer resource or an intermediary.
  - **Online Gaming Intermediary (OGI):** Refers to any intermediary that allows users to access one or more online games through its computer resource.
- **Role of Intermediaries:**
  - Intermediaries are required to make reasonable efforts to prevent hosting, publishing, or sharing any online game that could harm users or that has not been verified as permissible by a designated Self-Regulatory Body (SRB).
- **Advertisements and Promotions:**
  - Intermediaries must ensure their platforms do not host advertisements or promotions of non-permissible online games.
- **Additional Obligations on OGIs:**
  - Display a mark of verification for online games involving real money, as provided by the SRB.
  - Inform users about policies regarding the withdrawal or refund of deposits.
  - Obtain Know Your Customer (KYC) details of the users.
  - Prohibit credit provision or third-party financing for game participants.
- **Self-Regulatory Bodies (SRBs):**
  - The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeiTY) may notify multiple SRBs to verify whether an online game is permissible.
  - SRBs must be not-for-profit entities registered under Section 8 of the Companies Act 2013, with representatives from the online gaming industry that promote responsible gaming. They must include provisions for grievance redressal, adhere to the arm's length principle, and have clear membership criteria.
- **Authority and Responsibilities of SRBs:**
  - SRBs have the authority to categorize a game as permissible if it meets certain criteria: the game does not involve wagering on any outcomes, both the OGI and the game comply with legal age requirements (currently 18 years) for contracting, and adhere to the safeguard framework established by the SRB.
- **Prohibition:**
  - Any online game that involves gambling or related advertising will be prohibited.

DEEPFAKE REGULATION IN INDIA

Deepfakes are digital media — video, audio, and images edited and manipulated using technologies such as AI and machine learning, thereby blurring the lines between fiction and reality. With their hyper-realistic capabilities, they pose risks such as reputation damage, evidence fabrication, and erosion of trust in democratic institutions.

EXISTING LEGAL FRAMEWORK:
India lacks specific laws governing deepfake technology.
- Sections 67 and 67A of the Information Technology Act (2000) are applied for defamation and explicit material.
- India's IT Rules, 2021 mandate the takedown of reported deepfake content within 36 hours.
- Sections 66C (identity theft) and 66E (privacy violation) of the IT Act, 2000 are also applicable.
- Section 500 of IPC provides punishment for defamation, while Section 292 addresses obscene content, and Sections 465 and 469 deal with forgery and harming reputation.

GOVERNMENT ADVISORY ON DEEPFAKE REGULATION
- **Directive to Intermediaries:** The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) issued an advisory to ensure compliance with IT rules, particularly concerning misinformation powered by AI, including deepfakes.
- **Communication of Prohibited Content:** Intermediaries must communicate prohibited content clearly and precisely

to users, emphasizing legal consequences.

- **Enforcement of IT Rules**: Intermediaries are required to exercise due diligence in promptly removing prohibited content, as specified in Rule 3(1)(b) of the IT Rules.
- **Stakeholder Engagement**: Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar convened stakeholder meetings to address deepfake concerns, emphasizing strict adherence to existing laws and regulations.
- **Future Measures**: MeitY will monitor intermediary compliance and consider further amendments to IT rules or legislation to ensure internet safety and trust.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Responsibility of Social Media Intermediaries**: Platforms should develop technologies to detect and report deepfakes, such as Microsoft's Video Authenticator.
- **Blockchain-based Deepfake Verification**: Utilize blockchain to trace media origin and modification history, discouraging malicious deepfakes.
- **Digital India Act**: Enact legislation with penal provisions for malicious deepfakes, learning from China's regulations.
- **Public Awareness and Responsibility**: Promote awareness about fake videos and encourage responsible sharing on social media.
- **Implementing Bletchley Declaration Principles**: Lead in establishing a global AI regulatory framework in line with the declaration's principles.

PROVISIONS FOR A SPECIAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- **Clear Definitions**: Define deepfake videos clearly within the legal framework.
- **Prohibitions Against Misuse**: Prohibit fraudulent, impersonating, or election-interfering uses of deepfakes.
- **Timely Redressal**: Establish an efficient mechanism for rapid response and redressal of deepfake dissemination.
- **Involving Social Media Platforms**: Mandate platforms to detect and remove deepfakes promptly.
- **Legal Remedies**: Provide legal recourse for victims against creators and distributors of deepfake videos.
- **Protection for Minors**: Ensure legal protections for minors affected by deepfake content.
- **Artist Rights Protection**: Balance artist rights with fair use principles, considering copyright and privacy concerns.

E-PRISON PROJECT

The Ministry of Home Affairs' E-Prisons **initiative intends to computerize the country's jail system**, including the digitisation and availability of prisoner data.

WORKING OF E-PRISON:

- The E-Prisons initiative will aid in the creation of a centralized database of standard information.
  - Under the Interoperable Criminal Justice System, data from e-prisons has been connected with police and court systems.
- E-Prisons use data from the **National Prisons Information Portal**, which is managed by the states and union territories, in accordance with e-Prisons guidelines.
  - Through the Interoperable Criminal Justice System, authorized officials of Law Enforcement Agencies and Prisons can access the system through a secure network (ICJS).
- It also makes online visit requests and grievance resolution easier.

IMPORTANCE OF E-PRISON:

- Help in sharing active information/lookout alerts (SMS/email) with police and other agencies for proactive policing.
- **Tracking After Release:** Aids in the tracking of criminals released on parole, furlough, or early release.
- **Detecting Post-Release Convicts Violating the Law:** It will also aid in the tracking of such prisoners if they continue to break the law, engage in criminal activities, or breach the rules of premature release.
- **Ensure an Alert Mechanism:** Recent images of inmates will assist in alerting the system in the event that any inmate flees from police or court custody.
- Undertrial Detainees would be monitored with accurate and up-to-date information.
- The interconnection of police stations via CCTNS and ICJS will **boost data availability** for e-prison records even further.

Despite the issues, the e-prison initiative has aided in the resolution of India's jail administration difficulties by providing a centralized information repository.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS	
1.	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. (150 words, 10 marks)	2019

GOVERNANCE OF SPORTS IN INDIA

Sports governance refers to **the system by which the sports organizations are governed** in the country. It includes the process of oversight and the directions based on which decisions are made and implemented in a sports organization.

NEED OF SPORTS GOVERNANCE

- **Administrative issues:**
  - o **Unclear roles and responsibilities:** Multiple organizations at national, state and district levels lead to issues of confusion, duplication of services and gaps in sports administration.
  - o **Harassment charges:** The people at senior and powerful positions in sports organisations face charges of sexual harassment, **e.g.** recent protest of wrestlers.

  - o **Lack of professionalism:** There are issues of fiefdom, factionalism, nepotism, and irregular elections because of the stronghold of politicians, bureaucrats and businesspersons over sports.
  - o **Unethical practices:** There is prevalence of unethical practices such as **doping** to enhance performance of sports persons. **E.g** Unethical practices in sports is the 2018 Commonwealth Games doping scandal. Indian athlete Sanjita Chanu, who won a gold medal in weightlifting, tested positive for a banned substance. This incident highlighted the issue of doping and its impact on fair competition.
  - o **Discrimination:** Sportspeople face discrimination based on region or sex. According to a study conducted by the NGO **Child Rights and You (CRY)** in India, female athletes face discrimination in sports, with only 5% of girls having access to sports facilities. Additionally, regional bias exists, with the majority of funding and support being allocated to athletes from certain regions.
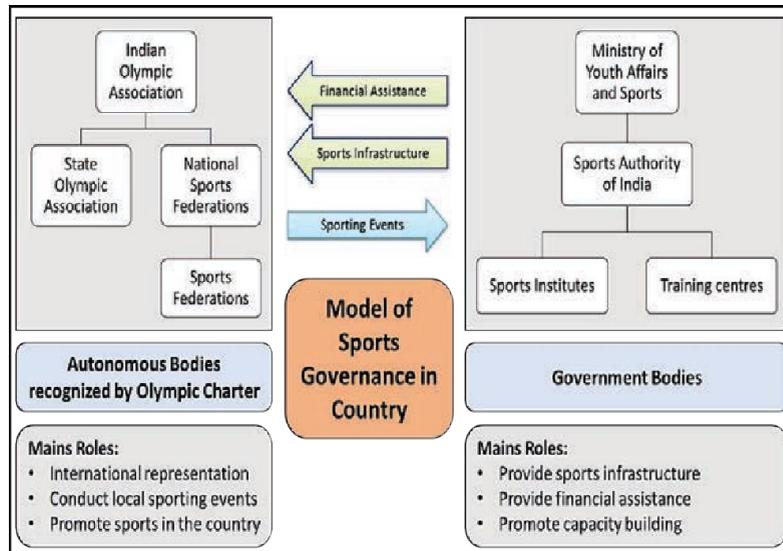
- **Financial issues:**
  - o **Limited funds:** The size of the sports industry in India is around $100 billion in the last 5 years, but the majority of it is concentrated around cricket and other sports do not receive sufficient funds.
  - o **Limited central government funding:** Sports is a state subject under entry 33 of state list and therefore there is limited funding from the central government.
- **Cooperation and Coordination issues:**
  - o **Governance structure:** Except for some sports such as cricket, hockey etc. there is lack of clear and functional sports architecture in the country, e.g. **Ban on AIFF by FIFA due to third-party influence**.
  - o **Multiple actors:** The ground level cooperation in sports becomes difficult due to multiple stakeholders such as state government, district administration, private players etc.
- **Transparency issues:** Sports organizations have large discretionary powers which lead to opaque decision making, corruption etc.

STEPS TAKEN

- **Financial assistance:** Government has provided direct and indirect financial assistance to sports federations such as tax benefits.
- **Sports facilities** are provided for hosting events for the National Sports Federation.
- **National Sports Development Code of India, 2011:** It provides for minimum standards to be complied by the sports body to retain the sports ministry's annual recognition and enjoy the privileges.
- **National Anti-Doping Act, 2022:** The act provides for the constitution of the National Anti-Doping agency as a statutory body for regulating anti-doping activities in sports.
- **Draft National Code for Good Governance:** The draft National Code for Good Governance in Sports 2017 is a proposed set of guidelines for the management and administration of sports bodies in India.

CHALLENGES IN SPORTS GOVERNANCE

- **Sports as hobby vs. profession:** There is considerable challenge to transform sports from just a hobby due to its low success rate, academic pressure and job-seeker mentality to sports as a profession.
- **Religious barriers:** Some sports like swimming and athletics require attire that does not fully cover a woman's body and is against the laws of some religions.
- **Biasedness:** The enthusiasm in sports is mainly concentrated in cricket which easily attracts investment and pays the cricketers a hefty sum of revenues.
- **Lack of implementation of PoSH Act, 2013:** Despite the enactment of Prevention of Sexual Harassment Act, 2013, there are 15 out of 30 National Sports Federations which do not meet this mandatory requirement of having an

Internal Complaints Committee.
- **High performance pressure:** A high degree of pressure is inflicted upon a sportsperson to perform or else be prepared to live a vulnerable life.
- **Resource deficit:** There is a dearth of good-quality sporting infrastructure available across the country. The government has developed some good stadiums in urban regions, but the situation is very poor in rural regions.

WAY FORWARD:
- **Sports legislation:** There is a need to have comprehensive sports legislation that separates the governance and management parts of sports with checks and balances.
- **Sexual harassment:** There is need to implement Prevention of Sexual Harassment Act, 2013 in letter and spirit in the sports bodies.
- **Professionalism:** There is a need to have professional sports governance and administration to curb the abuse of power, **e.g.** qualifications on selection and retention of members in sports bodies.
- **Collaboration:** There is a need to develop educational resources on governance and promote collaboration to optimize resource use.
- **Accountability:** There is a need to enforce accountability and transparency requirements such as mandatory Public Disclosures for administrative decisions, regular issuing of statements etc.
- **Bottom-up approach:** There is a need to adopt a Bottom-up approach to reconstitute and reform district and state bodies which will influence the national sports bodies.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Consumer protection is **the practice of safeguarding buyers of goods and services, as well as the public, against unfair practices** in the marketplace. Consumer protection measures are often established by law with the intention of preventing businesses from engaging in fraud or other specified unfair practices. These laws aim to prevent businesses from gaining an advantage over competitors or misleading consumers. Additionally, consumer protection laws may provide extra safeguards for the general public, even if they are not the direct purchasers or consumers of a particular product or involved in its production.

NEED FOR CONSUMER PROTECTION MECHANISM
- **Quality of products:** To safeguard the consumer from poor quality of products.
- **Fraudulent practices:** To ban fraudulent practices adopted by some of the consumer goods and services providers, such as deceitful warranties etc.
- **Effective grievance redressal:** There is a need to provide for an effective grievance redressal mechanism against the complaints raised by the consumers.
- **Protect rights of consumers:** There is a need to protect rights of consumers such as right to know about the product, right to choose etc.
- **Faster dispute resolution:** There is a need to have a mechanism for faster dispute resolution outside the courts that are overburdened.
- **Unite consumers:** While the businessmen and traders in our country are united, consumers are not united and such a mechanism unites them.
- **Hoarding:** Sometimes, the firms or producers create artificial scarcity of essential products by hoarding products which leads to increased prices.

STEPS TAKEN:
- **Consumer Protection Act, 1986:** The Act has provided a separate mechanism for consumer protection through separate consumer courts, recognition of six rights of consumers etc.
- **Consumer Protection Amendment Act, 2019:** The 1986 Act was amended to provide for the following:
  o **Expansion of consumer rights** such as right to information on other aspects, complaint from anywhere and to seek compensation under product liability.
  o Coverage of e-commerce under the ambit of the Act.
  o Expansion of definition of **unfair trade practices** such as failure to issue a bill or receipt, refusal to accept a good return within 30 days, disclosure of personal information unless any law requires in public interest.
  o Complaints can be filed where the consumer resides.
  o Inclusion of provision of mediation as an Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanism.
  o Establishment of the Central Consumer Protection Authority to promote, protect and enforce the rights of consumers.
  o Raise the pecuniary jurisdiction of Consumer Dispute Resolution Commissions.
  o **District level:** Up to Rs one crore. (further reduced to Rs. 50 lakh)
  o **State level:** Between Rs one crore and up to Rs 10 crore; (Further reduced to 50 lakhs to 2 crores)
  o **National level:** Above Rs 10 crore. (Further reduced to Rs. 2 crores)

- **E-Daakhil Portal:** The Central Government has set up the E-Daakhil Portal, which provides a hassle-free, speedy and inexpensive facility to consumers to conveniently approach the relevant consumer forum.
- **Consumer Protection (e-Commerce) Rules, 2020:** The rules provide that sellers cannot refuse to take back goods or withdraw services or refuse refunds, prohibit the e-commerce companies from manipulating prices of goods etc.
- **Guidelines on Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022:** The guidelines have been notified to protect the consumers from misleading advertisements and protect the consumers' rights.

CHALLENGES THAT REMAIN:
- **Pendency:** Currently there are more than 5.5 lakh pending consumer cases in the country which includes more than 4,029 pending cases filed before the year 2000.
- **Lack of remedy to producers:** There is little or no provision for the victims (producers) of product recalls which not only damage the financial position of such companies but also impairs its reputation among consumers for a long period of time.
- **Violation of rules:** Despite guidelines against misleading advertisements, there has been violation of those guidelines, especially in the gaming industry such as Winzo, MPL etc.
- **Arm-twisting of weaker parties:** Certain provisions of the Act such as mediation for dispute resolution provide stronger parties an opportunity to arm-twist the weaker parties.
- **Vacancies:** There are more than 250 vacancies for members in district commissions that hampers the working of the commissions.

WAY FORWARD:
- **Ranking:** Various district commissions can be ranked on the basis of their performance in dispute resolution to bring competitiveness in their functioning.
- **Executive intervention:** There is a need for swift executive intervention to ensure compliance with the guidelines for misleading ads, tele-marketing, multi-level marketing etc.
- **Awareness:** There is a need to raise awareness among the masses about their rights through social media, Jagriti mascot etc. to ensure that they are vocal about their rights.
- **Guidelines for celebrity endorsement:** There is a need to have separate guidelines for celebrities regarding unhealthy food, alcohol etc.
- **Duties of consumers:** Along with the rights, consumers should also exercise their duties such as filing complaints, class action suits, indulging in activism to ensure their rights are safeguarded by the institutions.
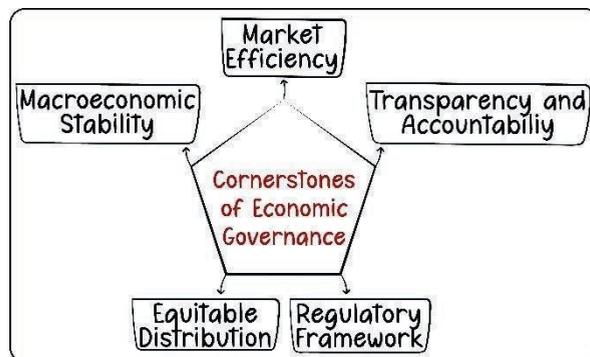
ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE

Economic governance involves rules, institutions, and processes that guide a nation's economic activities, aiming to ensure macroeconomic stability, foster sustainable growth, and achieve equitable resource distribution to improve citizen well-being.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW
India's economic governance evolved from a mixed economy post-independence to embrace liberalization, privatization, and globalization in the 1990s, significantly transforming the economic landscape.

CORNERSTONES OF ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE
- **Market Efficiency:** Enhancing market efficiency through the Competition Commission of India which prevents monopolistic practices, and initiatives like 'Startup India' that bolster entrepreneurship.
- **Macroeconomic Stability:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) manages monetary policies to control inflation and maintain economic stability, while fiscal discipline is upheld through policies like the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act.
- **Equitable Distribution:** Programs like MGNREGA and financial inclusion initiatives such as Jan Dhan Yojana help address income disparities and broaden access to financial services.
- **Regulatory Framework:** Consumer protection and securities regulation ensure market integrity and protect consumer and investor rights.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** The Right to Information Act and corporate governance requirements under the Companies Act enhance transparency and ethical business practices.

FISCAL POLICY AND BUDGETARY PROCESS AS PILLARS OF ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE
- **Fiscal Policy:** Utilizes taxation, government spending, and public debt management to influence economic conditions and meet specific economic objectives.
- **Budgetary Process:** Involves the formulation, approval, implementation, and monitoring of government budgets, reflecting national priorities and ensuring efficient use of resources.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN INDIA

RESERVE BANK OF INDIA (RBI)

- Manages monetary policy, oversees financial institutions, and maintains financial stability.
- Notable impacts include inflation control within target range, expansion of the formal banking sector through initiatives like Jan Dhan Yojana, and growth in digital payments via UPI.

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE BOARD OF INDIA (SEBI)

- Regulates capital markets, ensuring investor protection and facilitating capital mobilization.
- Key achievements include a significant increase in market capitalization, growth in mutual fund assets, and enhancements in corporate governance.

OTHER FINANCIAL MARKET REGULATIONS

- Includes Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDAI) overseeing insurance, Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) managing retirement savings, and Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) regulating forex transactions.
- Outcomes highlighted are growth in insurance penetration, increase in pension assets, and stability in forex reserves.

CHALLENGES OF ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE

- **Balancing Competing Priorities:** The Government of India often faces the challenge of balancing infrastructure development with social welfare schemes. For instance, allocating budget between developing smart cities and expanding rural employment schemes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), which aims to enhance livelihood security in rural areas.
- **Managing Fiscal Deficits and Debt:** India's struggle with fiscal deficits is well-documented. The government aims to keep the fiscal deficit within manageable limits, such as the target of 3% of GDP under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, although it has often exceeded this limit due to various economic pressures like the need for increased public expenditure during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Political Pressures and Short-termism:** During election cycles, there is often an increase in populist measures such as loan waivers for farmers or cuts in taxes that can have short-term benefits for political gains but may not necessarily align with long-term economic stability. Such decisions can exacerbate fiscal deficits and divert resources from essential long-term investments in sectors like healthcare and education.
- **Inefficiencies and Corruption:** Corruption and inefficiencies in public sector projects have historically led to cost overruns and delays. A notable example is the delay in the rollout of various infrastructure projects, such as road construction or railway upgrades, where inefficiencies not only escalate costs but also hinder economic growth. Programs like Digital India aim to enhance transparency and reduce corruption by increasing the use of technology in government processes.

WAY FORWARD

- **Regulating Emerging Technologies:** Develop regulatory frameworks for blockchain, AI, and fintech to balance innovation with consumer protection.
- **Regulatory Sandboxes:** Create testing environments for new financial products, promoting experimentation and financial inclusion.
- **Enhancing Regulatory Efficiency:** Implement risk-based supervision and perform regulatory impact assessments to optimize resources and ensure informed decisions.
- **Harmonization and Coordination:** Work with international bodies to standardize regulations and prevent regulatory arbitrage.
- **Addressing Systemic Risks:** Strengthen cybersecurity measures and integrate climate risks into financial regulations to protect and promote sustainability.
- **Promoting Financial Inclusion and Social Impact:** Design regulations to improve financial access for marginalized groups, support impact investing, and boost financial literacy to empower informed decision-making.

CONCLUSION

Integrating social and economic governance is essential for holistic national development. This integration ensures that economic growth benefits all segments of society and that social policies contribute to economic stability and growth.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND ETHICAL GOVERNANCE

ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

Environmental governance involves decision-making and policy implementation to manage and protect the environment.

- **Stakeholders:** It requires coordination among governments, businesses, communities, and NGOs.
- **Objectives:** Address environmental challenges and promote sustainable development.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE:

- **Integration:** Environmental considerations should be incorporated into all decision-making processes and activities.
- **Interconnection:** Recognizing the interconnectedness of urban centers, societies, economies, and governance with the environment.
- **Interdependence:** Emphasizing the mutual reliance between individuals and the ecosystems they inhabit.
- **Transition:** Advocating for a shift from linear, wasteful systems to circular, regenerative approaches.

KEY CHALLENGES IN ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE:

- **Balancing Act:** Striking a balance between **economic development** and **environmental preservation** is crucial. For instance, projects like the **Sardar Sarovar Dam** in India face criticism due to ecological concerns despite their developmental benefits.
- **Resource Constraints:** Limited **funding** and **staffing** hinder environmental initiatives. Efforts to tackle water pollution in rivers like the **Ganges** and **Yamuna** suffer due to inadequate resources.
- **Policy and Coordination Issues:** Ambiguity in environmental goals and disjointed policies across sectors, seen in challenges like **plastic pollution**, undermine comprehensive governance strategies.
- **Financial and Knowledge Barriers:** Restricted access to **financial resources** for sectors like **renewable energy** and inadequate integration with international agreements hinder progress.
- **Government Capacity Constraints:** Limited **resources** and **technical expertise** hinder compliance with international environmental obligations, such as those outlined in the **Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants**.
- **Social and Cultural Challenges:** Exclusion of **women** from decision-making and resistance from **local communities**, as seen in **wildlife conservation** efforts, pose significant barriers.
- **Scientific Uncertainties:** Challenges in establishing causal links between human activities and environmental impacts, like **deforestation**, complicate policy formulation.
- **Limited Understanding of Complex Systems:** Incomplete comprehension of environmental dynamics, such as those related to **climate change**, impedes the development of effective adaptation measures.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND REGULATIONS IN INDIA

KEY LEGISLATIONS:

- **Environment Protection Act (1986):** Provides framework for environmental protection and pollution control.
- **Water Act (1974):** Aims to prevent and control water pollution.
- **Air Act (1981):** Addresses air pollution by regulating emissions.
- **Wildlife Protection Act (1972):** Protects wildlife and their habitats.
- **Hazardous Waste Management Rules (2016):** Manages hazardous waste disposal.
- **Coastal Regulation Zone Notification (2019):** Regulates development in coastal areas.
- **Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules (2021):** Aims to eliminate single-use plastic.

FOREST RIGHTS ACT AND CONSERVATION POLICIES:

- **Forest Rights Act (2006):** Recognizes forest rights of tribal communities.
- **National Forest Policy, 1988 & Biodiversity Action Plan, 2008:** Promote forest conservation and biodiversity.
- **Project Tiger & Project Elephant:** Initiatives to protect endangered species.
- **National Afforestation Programme:** Promotes afforestation and reforestation.
- **Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act (2016):** Mitigates impacts of forest diversion.
- **International Agreements:** India is a signatory to conventions like CBD and Paris Agreement, guiding its conservation efforts.

FOREST (CONSERVATION) RULES, 2022 OVERVIEW:

- Released by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (**MoEFCC**) under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, replacing the 2003 rules.

KEY PROVISIONS:

- Establishment of **Advisory** and **Project Screening Committees** in each state/UT to advise on forest conservation matters.
- State governments tasked with protecting traditional forestlands of **Scheduled Tribes** to safeguard tribal rights.
- Applicants in certain regions can compensate for forest land diversion through **afforestation** in other states/UTs.

CRITICISM:
- Allow private developers to clear forests without consent from forest dwellers, contrary to the **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006**.
- Union Government authorized to clear forests without informing authentic residents, conflicting with the requirement of **free, prior, and informed consent** from forest dwellers.

ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATORY BODIES:

- **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC):** Formulates and implements policies for environmental protection, forest conservation, and climate change mitigation.
- **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB):** Monitors and controls pollution nationwide, covering air, water, and noise pollution.
- **State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs):** Implements environmental laws, issues permits, conducts inspections, and enforces pollution control measures within each state and union territory.
- **National Green Tribunal (NGT):** Specialised court for handling environmental protection and conservation cases, ensuring prompt resolution.
- **Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB):** Combats organised wildlife crime across India, functioning under the MoEFCC.
- **Forest Departments:** Responsible for managing, conserving, and protecting forests and wildlife resources at both central and state levels.
- **State Forest Departments:** Implement forestry-related policies, including afforestation and wildlife conservation, at the state level.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS) AND INDIA

The Sustainable Development Goals outline an exceptionally ambitious and all-encompassing agenda for worldwide development by 2030. India has implemented numerous proactive measures to integrate the SDGs into the policies, schemes, and programs of the government.

SDR 2023: India's Status

Tracking India's Governance Efforts and Progress in Sustainable Development Goals		
Sustainable Development Goals	**India's Efforts and Progress**	**Notable Initiatives**
SDG 1: No Poverty	• Women's labor force participation increased to **37.0%**. - **33.98 lakh** Self Help Groups (SHGs) connected to bank credit. • Institutional assistance for **1.20 lakh** senior citizens provided in **2022-23**.	• Implementation of **Kudumbashree** in Kerala since **1998**. • **National Rural Livelihood Mission** & **Deendayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana**.
SDG 2: Zero Hunger	• NFSA coverage increased to **97.6%** in **2018-19**. - Soil health cards distributed: **23.58 million**. • Organic farming covers **3.9%** of total land area.	• Establishment of **Breast Milk Bank** in Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu. • Central kitchens in Nandurbar, Maharashtra.
SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being	• Ayushman Bharat PMJAY provided health insurance to **100 million** families. • Maternal Mortality Ratio decreased to **97 in 2018**. • Malaria incidence decreased to **0.13** per **1000** cases in **2022**.	• **YSR Aarogyasri Health Insurance Scheme** in Andhra Pradesh. • Establishment of **Child Protection Unit** in Muzzafarpur.
SDG 4: Quality Education	• Dropout rates reduced at elementary and secondary levels. • Gender Parity Index for higher education improved to **1**. • GER in Higher Secondary Education: **57.6% in 2021-22**	• **Unnayan Banka Smart Classroom Model** in Bihar.
SDG 5: Gender Equality	• PMJDY opened **381 million** bank accounts, **54%** by women. • **75%** of MUDRA Yojana beneficiaries are women. • Women's political participation in parliament: **14.36%**.	• **Children First** initiative in Muzzafarpur.
SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	• Rural households with access to improved drinking water: **99.25%**. • Rural individual household toilets: **100%**. • **97.4%** of schools have separate toilets for girls.	• **'TAANKA' Technique** for Water Conservation in Uttar Pradesh. • **Subsurface Dams** in Y.S.R Kadappa, Andhra Pradesh.
SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	• Households with access to clean cooking fuel: **99.8%**. • Renewable energy capacity target by **2030**: **450 GW**. • Contribution of renewables to electricity generation: **22.5%**.	• **Suryashakti Kisan Yojana (SKY)** in Gujarat.
SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	• Patents issued increased to **34,134**. • DPIIT recognises 1, 17,254 startups as on 31st Dec 2023 • Banking outlets per 1 lakh population: **98.8**.	• **Atal Incubation Center (AIC)** supporting entrepreneurship.
SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	• Investment in Bharatmala program tripled. • Sagarmala project increased port cargo handling capacity. • India ranks as third-largest domestic market for civil aviation.	• **Streamlining ease of doing business** in Mumbai and Delhi for construction permits.
SDG 10: Reduced Inequality	• **MUDRA scheme**: 48% of loan accounts held by SC, ST, and OBC entrepreneurs. • 44.4% of seats in panchayati raj institutions held by women.	• **Sweekruti Scheme** in Odisha for transgender community empowerment.

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	• Completed houses in urban areas: 3.2 million. • 98% of wards achieved 100% door-to-door waste collection.	• **Bhubaneswar One** electronic portal in Odisha. • Panaji's **"Boardwalk"** amidst mangroves in Goa.
SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production	• India ranks 9th globally in organic agriculture land. • Waste segregation at source in 75% of municipal wards.	• **"Nirmala Bhavanam Nirmala Nagaram"** project in Alappuzha, Kerala.
SDG 13: Climate Action	• Solar power installed capacity has increased from 2820 MW in March 2014 to 72002 MW in Oct 2023, i.e. an increase of around 25.54 times. • Emission intensity of GDP reduced by 21%.	• **India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP)** to ensure sustainable cooling.
SDG 14: Life Below Water	• India ranks 16th in maritime nations, 2nd in fish production. • Maximum sustainable yield in fishing increased by 43%.	• **Sindhudurg Mainstreaming Project** in Maharashtra.
SDG 15: Life on Land	• 1.69 million hectares of land under afforestation initiatives. • 26 million hectares targeted for restoration by 2030.	• **Green Highways Policy** for sustainable highways.
SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	• More than 90% enrolled in **Aadhaar**. • Decrease in overall crime rate.	• **Police Uncle Tutorial** program in Simdega, Jharkhand.
SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals	• India enhanced tax-to-GDP ratio for resource mobilization. - Provided over 306 **Lines of Credit (LoC)** to 65 countries.	• **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** to promote solar energy deployment.

SDG INDIA INDEX

- The SDG India Index monitors the advancement of all States and Union Territories based on crucial national indicators, evaluating their progress regarding the outcomes of interventions and programs implemented by the Government of India.
- The SDG India Index aims to offer a comprehensive perspective on the social, economic, and environmental conditions of the nation along with its Union Territories and States
- India stands as the pioneering nation in creating a government-led sub-national gauge of SDG progress.
- **It was formulated in partnership with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), the United Nations in India, and the Global Green Growth Institute.**
- **Published by:** The publication of the SDG India Index is overseen by **NITI Aayog**.
- Through this Index, the government tracks the advancement of SDGs in India across states and Union Territories.

SDG INDIA INDEX 2020-2021

The Performance of India in the SDG India Index 2020-2021 is as follows:

- India's comprehensive SDG score rose by 6 points, advancing from 60 in 2019 to 66 in 2020-21,
- This was attributed to enhancements in delivering amenities such as clean water, sanitation, and accessible and sustainable energy, among other factors.
- State wise performances were as follows:
- **Kerala led the index,** securing a score of 75, **followed closely by Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu**, both scoring 74.
- Conversely, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Assam **ranked lowest among the states** in the SDG India index.
- Among Union Territories, Chandigarh retained its top position with a score of 79, followed by Delhi at 68.
- In terms of progress, Mizoram, Haryana, and Uttarakhand emerged as the **leading gainers** in 2020-21, showcasing significant score improvements compared to 2019
- **Government schemes in the direction of SDGs:** In alignment with these goals, various programs are being executed, including
  - National Health Mission for healthcare services, Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PMJAY) for healthcare coverage.
  - Swachh Bharat Mission for household toilet access.

- o Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA) for employment.
- o Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (PMAY) for rural and urban housing.
- o Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) for connecting unlinked settlements, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojna (PMJDY) for financial services access.
- o National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) offering social pensions to the elderly, widows, and people with disabilities.

BALANCING DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION: CHALLENGES

Balancing development and environmental conservation involves navigating the delicate equilibrium between economic progress and preserving natural resources. It presents several challenges, including:

- **Infrastructure Development**: Balancing infrastructure needs with environmental preservation poses challenges like habitat loss and pollution. The **Char Dham** highway expansion in the Himalayas illustrates these concerns.
- **Natural Resource Extraction**: Exploiting resources for growth can harm ecosystems and biodiversity. India's mining industry, especially in **Goa**, faces sustainability concerns and environmental activism.
- **Industrial Growth**: Expansion leads to pollution and health hazards. The **Bhopal Gas Tragedy** and ongoing industrial pollution highlight these risks.
- **Land Use Changes**: Converting habitats disrupts ecosystems. Forest conversion for agriculture or urbanization threatens biodiversity, exemplified by the **Great Indian Bustard's** habitat loss.
- **Climate Change Mitigation**: Balancing emissions reduction with growth is challenging. India's transition to renewables while sustaining economic growth exemplifies this challenge.
- **Population Pressure**: Rapid growth strains resources. India's burgeoning population puts immense pressure on natural resources, leading to overexploitation and pollution.
- **Policy and Regulatory Challenges**: Weak enforcement allows violations. India's inadequate enforcement of environmental regulations undermines conservation efforts.
- **Socioeconomic Inequities**: Development disproportionately affects marginalized communities, worsening poverty. Large-scale projects often displace indigenous tribes, exacerbating disparities.

Addressing these requires sustainable development, integrating environmental, social, and economic concerns, promoting green technologies, investing in renewables, enhancing regulations, fostering community participation, and prioritizing long-term environmental sustainability.

ELEMENTS OF A BALANCED APPROACH
SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT:

- **Invest in renewables and green infrastructure:** Prioritize solar, wind, and other renewable energy sources. Promote energy-efficient buildings and sustainable transportation systems.
- **Enhance EIAs and community engagement:** Conduct comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and involve local communities in decision-making.

RESPONSIBLE RESOURCE EXTRACTION:

- **Promote efficiency and enforce regulations:** Adopt technologies to minimize waste. Enforce robust environmental regulations.
- **Invest in alternatives and ensure community benefits:** Promote renewable energy. Ensure impacted communities share benefits.

CLEAN INDUSTRIAL GROWTH:

- **Adopt green technologies and enforce pollution control:** Invest in clean technologies. Strengthen emission standards.
- **Engage communities and uphold corporate responsibility:** Inform communities. Encourage responsible industry practices.

SUSTAINABLE LAND USE MANAGEMENT:

- **Conserve ecosystems and empower communities:** Protect ecosystems and support sustainable land management. and empower local communities.
- **Implement smart urban planning and minimize land acquisition:** Invest in green spaces and compact cities. Minimize land acquisition and provide fair compensation.

Effective governance is essential for driving sustainable development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Transparent, accountable, and participatory governance frameworks enable countries to address complex challenges, foster inclusive growth, and ensure citizen well-being. By promoting partnerships among governments, civil society, private sector, and international organisations, nations can leverage collective expertise to tackle issues like poverty, inequality, climate change, and social injustice.

ETHICAL GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

Ethical governance refers to the practice of conducting public affairs with fairness, transparency, integrity, and accountability. It emphasises using power responsibly, prioritising the public good, and upholding moral principles in

decision-making. It is crucial for building a strong and inclusive democracy, fostering economic development, and ensuring social justice.

PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF ETHICAL GOVERNANCE:

- **Kautilya's Arthashastra:**
  - **Citizen-Centricity:** Kautilya stressed the king's duty to prioritize the welfare of his subjects, stating, "In the happiness of subjects lies the happiness of the king."
  - **Combating Corruption:** He advocated for strict measures like "Kantakshodhana" to purge corruption, highlighting transparency and accountability.
- **Gandhi's Vision of Ramrajya:**
  - **Ramrajya:** Gandhi envisioned an ideal state based on moral principles like nonviolence and truth, believing governance must be rooted in morality.
  - **Swaraj:** His concept of self-rule emphasized citizen participation as crucial for ethical governance.
- **Aristotle's Distinction:** Aristotle classified governments as either "perverted" or "legitimate," emphasizing the latter's focus on the public good over the ruling class's interests.
- **Other Philosophical Traditions:**
  - **Confucianism:** Stresses ethical leadership, social harmony, and meritocratic selection for public office.
  - **John Locke and Social Contract Theory:** Highlights the consent of the governed and protection of individual rights.
  - **Utilitarianism:** Advocates maximizing happiness and well-being for the greatest number of people.

These historical insights underscore the importance of ethical leadership, citizen engagement, and constant vigilance in achieving a just and fair society.

ETHICAL ISSUES IN INDIAN GOVERNANCE

- **Abuse of Authority:** Officials exceeding **powers**, making biased decisions, or misusing **resources** erode
- trust. Recent reports cited unauthorized **land acquisitions** by government officials, bypassing legal procedures.
- **Negligence and Dereliction of Duty:** Failures by **public servants** lead to inefficiency and harm. Recent incidents include healthcare workers neglecting duties, resulting in substandard care and avoidable deaths.
- **Bribery and Corruption:** Rampant **corruption** diverts resources from public needs. Notable cases involve high-profile
- officials accepting bribes for awarding contracts, undermining fair competition and public welfare.
- **Complacency and Lack of Motivation:** Many officials prioritize personal **benefits** over public service. Surveys reveal widespread dissatisfaction, with lack of recognition and incentives cited as demotivating factors.
- **Patronage and Favouritism:** Nepotism and favoritism in **appointments** undermine transparency. Recent controversies include political leaders appointing unqualified individuals based on personal relationships rather than merit.
- **Excessive Secrecy and Lack of Transparency:** Opacity in decision-making obstructs **accountability**. Instances of withholding crucial information about public projects raise concerns about conflicts of interest.
- **Nepotism and Cronyism:** Appointment of relatives or friends bypasses **meritocracy**. Recent cases involve influential figures using their influence to secure contracts or positions for close associates.
- **Lack of Empathy and Compassion:** Insensitivity to public needs results in unjust outcomes. Recent reports highlighted officials showing callousness towards vulnerable communities during crises.

STEPS TAKEN IN INDIA TO PROMOTE ETHICAL GOVERNANCE

- **Accountability to Parliament:** Administrators are answerable to political executives, who are accountable to Parliament. Financial accountability is ensured through legislative authorization before expenditure.
- **Code of Conduct for Ministers:** A Code of Conduct applies to Ministers at both Union and State levels, with recommendations for a code of ethics suggested by parliamentary committees.
- **Committees on Ethics:** Both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha have Committees on Ethics overseeing the moral conduct of Members of Parliament.
- **Disclosure of Interest:** Mandatory disclosure of interest in both Houses of Parliament ensures transparency, with members required to declare any personal pecuniary interests.
- **Code of Conduct for Civil Servants:** Civil servants adhere to a prescribed code of conduct to prevent private interests from influencing government decisions.
- **Legal Mechanisms to Check Corruption:** Laws such as the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act, 1988, and Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, to combat corruption.
- **Right to Information Act, 2005:** This Act promotes participatory governance and democracy by granting citizens access to government information.
- **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013:** Independent bodies at central and state levels prevent and control corruption, addressing public demand against corruption.
- **Whistle-blowers Protection Act, 2014:** Protects whistle-blowers and establishes mechanisms to receive complaints related to corruption or misuse of power.

- **Vigilance and Investigative Framework:**
  - o **Central Vigilance Commission:** Oversees vigilance activities under the Central Government and conducts preliminary inquiries into corruption complaints.
  - o **Central Bureau of Investigation:** Investigates anti-corruption, economic crimes, and special crimes.
  - o **National Investigative Agency:** Investigates offences impacting India's sovereignty, security, integrity, and foreign relations.
- **Right to Public Service Delivery Legislations:** States have enacted Public Services Guarantee Acts, guaranteeing citizens timely public services and grievance redressal, promoting accountability and efficiency.

WAY FORWARD

While India has taken commendable steps towards strengthening its ethical framework, further action is needed to fully address the challenges and secure lasting progress. Here are some key areas for improvement:

1. Strengthening legal frameworks and accountability mechanisms:
- **Clarity and Comprehensiveness:** Ensure laws are clearly defined and easily accessible.
- **Accountability Mechanisms:** Outline clear consequences for unethical conduct.

2. Enhancing management practices and whistleblower protection:
- **Anti-Corruption Training:** Equip officials to identify and report corruption.
- **Internal Compliance Systems:** Establish robust systems for ethical conduct.
- **Whistleblower Protection:** Strengthen laws and provide anonymous reporting channels.

3. Implementing robust integrity audits and addressing recommendations:
- **Regular Assessments:** Conduct integrity audits to identify vulnerabilities.
- **Proactive Measures:** Implement preventive actions based on audit findings.
- **Addressing Recommendations:** Act on suggestions like partial state funding of elections.

4. Combating corruption with stronger measures:
- **Confiscation of Property:** Expand confiscation scope to deter corrupt practices.
- **Speedy Trials:** Streamline judicial processes for swift action.
- **Damages for Corruption:** Hold corrupt officials financially accountable.

These focused areas provide a roadmap for India's pursuit of ethical governance, fostering transparency, accountability, and integrity in public service.

KEYWORDS:
Environmental Governance: Green Governance, Sustainable Development Governance, Eco-Governance, Environmental Stewardship, Protecting Our Planet for Future Generations, Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation. Ethical Governance: Responsible Leadership, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Transparency & Accountability, Building Trust & Integrity, Business Ethics & Anti-Corruption, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I), Sustainable Business Practices, Stakeholder Engagement

CITIZEN CHARTER

Citizen's Charter is a document which represents a systematic effort to focus on the commitment of the organisation 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.

COMPONENTS OF CITIZEN CHARTER

A good citizen's charter should have the following components:

- 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'

Additional commitments such as compensation in the event of failure of service delivery.

SIX PRINCIPLES OF CITIZEN CHARTER

1. **Quality:** Commitment to providing high-quality services that meet the needs and expectations of citizens.
2. **Transparency:** Clear information about the types and standards of services offered, including the procedures, processes, and time required for each service.
3. **Choice:** Providing choices to the citizens wherever possible, which fosters a sense of empowerment and engagement.
4. **Accountability:** Clearly outlining the accountability mechanisms in place, ensuring that citizens can hold service providers accountable for their performance.
5. **Accessibility:** Ensuring that all citizens, including those with disabilities and those from marginalized communities, can easily access services without any discrimination.
6. **Grievance Redressal:** Establishing an efficient and responsive grievance redressal mechanism to address the concerns and complaints of citizens regarding service failures or lapses.
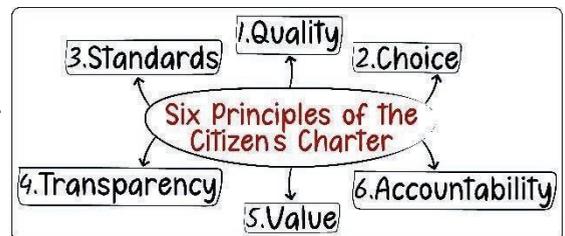
SALIENT FEATURES OF CITIZEN CHARTER

- **Set of standards for service delivery**: The Charter should provide clear service quality standards so that people know what they should expect from service providers. These standards should be appropriate, reliable, observable, precise and in a time bound manner.
- **Openness and information about service delivery**: Users have access to accurate and succinct information at the right time and in the right place. The Charters should provide complete and detailed details about the resources available in layman's terms.
- **Choice and communication with users**: Wherever possible, the Charter should offer consumers a choice of services. Users of the service should be consulted on a frequent and systematic basis to establish service expectations and ensure the consistency of service delivery.
- **Fairness and supportiveness in service delivery**: The Charter will aid in the establishment of a culture of friendly and attentive public service.
- **Provision of redress of complaints and grievances of citizens**: There is a close correlation between providing high-quality service and managing complaints effectively. The reasons for complaint can be minimised by encouraging and reacting to complaints. The service provider can address structural and persistent issues by recognising "**trends**"
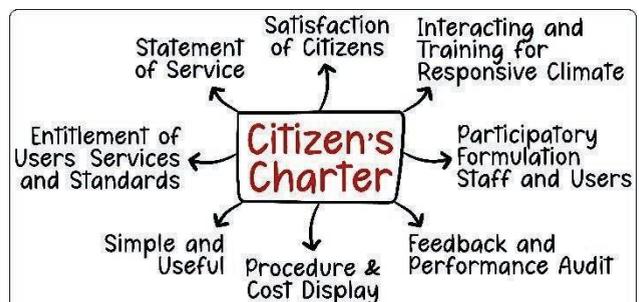
regarding complaints.

SIGNIFICANCE OF CITIZEN CHARTER AT THE GRAM PANCHAYAT LEVEL

- **Bring Professionalism**: It improves Panchayat functioning and assists in reaching out to all sectors of society without prejudice.
- **Proper Monitoring of Delivery of services**: The Panchayats' commitments serve as excellent benchmarks for monitoring and evaluating service performance.
- **More Accountability at grassroots level**: On the one hand, it will assist residents understand their rights, and on the other, it will hold Panchayats and their elected representatives directly accountable to the people.

However, this progress has not been without challenges. According to experts, the Citizen Charter Movement in India suffers from multiple Shortcomings.

Citizen charters are a vital aspect of public administration because they are the best way for people to be aware about the services they will receive while also providing input to help service providers improve.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF CITIZEN CHARTER IN INDIA

- **Progress of citizen charter movement in India:**
  - It was introduced during the conference of chief ministers, in 1997, where a decision to formulate the Citizen charter was taken, especially in those sectors that have a large public interface.
- **Legislative step:** In 2011 a legislative step was initiated to give statutory backup to citizen charter in India through
  - The Citizens Charter Bill, 2011 aims to provide a framework for ensuring timely delivery of goods and services to citizens.
  - It mandates that any public authority publish a citizen charter within 6 months of the Act's implementation, and it imposes a penalty of up to Rs 50,000 for failure to do so.
- **Government platform**: The Indian government has created and launched a detailed platform for citizens' charter, it contains the Citizens' Charters issued by different Ministries, Departments, and Organizations of the Central Government.
- **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** released a Model Panchayat Citizens Charter. It has been developed for the delivery of services across the 29 sectors, aligning actions with localized Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

SHORTCOMINGS OF CITIZEN CHARTER

- Lack of legal mandate reduces the effectiveness and enforceability of the citizen's 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.

MEASURES TO MAKE CITIZEN CHARTER EFFECTIVE: 2ND ARC RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Standardization**: The charters should clearly spell out the remedy penalty compensation in case there is a default in meeting the standards spelt out in the charter.
- **Wide consultation process**: Citizen Charter should be formulated after having advocate consultation within organization and between organization and civil society.
- **Adequate grievances redressal mechanism:** In case of default Citizen Charter should clearly lay down the relief the organization is bound to provide if it defaults on the promised standards of delivery.
- **One size does not fit all**: The capability and resources and responsibility among government organizations are not equivalent and there is a need to implement Citizen Charter significantly across the country.
- **Firm Commitments**: Citizen Charter should be precise and expel commitments of service delivery standards to citizens in quantifiable terms whenever possible.
- **Periodic evaluation**: The citizen's charters should be reviewed and revised regularly.

OTHER MEASURES

- **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:**

- o **Educate Citizens and Providers:** Inform both groups about their rights and Charter obligations.
  - o **Recognize and Reward:** Reward employees who exemplify Charter principles to encourage service excellence.
- ▪ **Technology for Accessibility and Grievance Redressal:**
  - o **Digitize Charters:** Offer online access to Charters and a system for tracking complaints and feedback.
  - o **Robust Grievance Mechanisms:** Implement effective online resolution tools, with feedback loops and independent oversight.
- ▪ **Sustainable Implementation and Monitoring:**
  - o **Secure Funding:** Ensure adequate resources for awareness, implementation, and training.
  - o **Monitor and Evaluate:** Continuously assess Charter impact through data analysis, citizen feedback, and independent reviews.

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 SEVOTTAM MODEL

1. **Citizen Charter**: Requires effective charter implementation, which creates a mechanism for people to provide feedback on how organizations decide service delivery requirements.
2. **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.
3. **Services Delivery Capabilities:** 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 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.

KEYWORDS:

Empowering Citizens, Right to Service, Improved Service Delivery, Charter for Good Governance, Citizen-Centric Administration, Service Delivery Excellence, Citizen Satisfaction, Innovation in Public Service Delivery, SEVA (Service), UTTAM (Excellence), Last-Mile Delivery, Minimum Standards in Service Delivery, Citizen Feedback, Grievance Redressal Mechanisms, TQM (Total Quality Management) in Government Services

"Accountability is the first principle of good governance." - **Amartya Sen**

"In a democracy, information is the currency of good governance." - **Arun Shourie**

"A government held accountable to the people is the only truly democratic one." - **B. R. Ambedkar**

"Without transparency, there can be no real accountability." - **Jayaprakash Narayan**

INTRODUCTION

Transparency and accountability are foundational principles of good governance essential for promoting trust, efficiency, and integrity in public administration. Ensuring transparency and accountability is not just desirable but imperative for fostering public confidence, combating corruption, and promoting inclusive development. This chapter delves into the critical importance of transparency and accountability in Indian governance, the challenges faced, and the strategies for enhancing these principles in the country's administrative framework with special focus on RTI Act, 2005 and Social Audit and their role in enhancing transparency and accountability in India.

Importance of Transparency and Accountability in Indian Governance:

- **Building Trust:** Transparency in government actions, decisions, and policies fosters public trust by enabling citizens to understand and scrutinize the functioning of public institutions. It promotes openness, honesty, and responsiveness in governance, thereby strengthening the relationship between the government and its citizens.
- **Combating Corruption:** Transparency acts as a potent tool in combating corruption by exposing malpractices, misuse of power, and financial irregularities within the government machinery. Access to information empowers citizens and civil society to hold public officials accountable for their actions and demand accountability in the management of public resources.
- **Enhancing Efficiency:** Transparent and accountable governance processes facilitate efficient delivery of public services, resource allocation, and decision-making. It reduces bureaucratic red tape, enhances administrative effectiveness, and ensures that public resources are utilized judiciously for the benefit of all citizens.
- **Promoting Inclusivity:** Transparency and accountability in governance promote inclusivity by ensuring equitable access to information, opportunities, and resources for all segments of society, including marginalized and vulnerable communities. It enables meaningful participation of citizens in decision-making processes and ensures that their voices are heard in shaping public policies and programs.

Challenges in Achieving Transparency and Accountability:

- **Lack of Access to Information:** Despite the enactment of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, access to timely and accurate information remains a challenge for many citizens due to bureaucratic resistance, lack of awareness, and limited capacity of information dissemination mechanisms.
- **Weak Enforcement Mechanisms:** The effectiveness of transparency and accountability measures is often undermined by weak enforcement mechanisms, inadequate penalties for non-compliance, and delays in the resolution of grievances and complaints against public officials.
- **Political Interference:** Political interference and influence pose significant challenges to transparency and accountability in governance, particularly in decision-making processes, appointments, and allocation of resources. Nepotism, favoritism, and patronage networks undermine meritocracy and breed corruption within the system.
- **Lack of Public Participation:** Limited opportunities for meaningful public participation and engagement in governance processes hinder the effectiveness of transparency and accountability initiatives. Building a culture of civic engagement and participatory democracy is essential for ensuring the active involvement of citizens in holding public institutions accountable.

Strategies for Enhancing Transparency and Accountability:

- **Strengthening Legal Frameworks:** Enhancing the legal and regulatory frameworks governing transparency and accountability, including robust implementation of the RTI Act, whistleblower protection laws, and anti-corruption measures, is essential for promoting accountability in Indian governance.
- **Promoting Open Government Initiatives:** Embracing open government initiatives, such as open data portals, e-governance platforms, and participatory budgeting mechanisms, can enhance transparency, citizen engagement, and collaboration between government and civil society.
- **Strengthening Oversight Mechanisms:** Empowering independent oversight institutions, such as the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), and Lokpal, with adequate resources, authority, and autonomy is critical for ensuring effective oversight of government activities and promoting accountability.
- **Enhancing Civic Education and Awareness:** Promoting civic education, awareness campaigns, and capacity-building programs aimed at empowering citizens with knowledge of their rights, responsibilities, and avenues for redressal can strengthen the demand for transparency and accountability in governance.
- **Citizen Monitoring and Oversight:** Encourage citizen-led monitoring and oversight initiatives to track government

performance, expenditure, and service delivery e.g. Social Audit.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

- Right to Information (RTI) law, was the **result of a vibrant grassroots movement**, led not just by the educated elite but common man across the country, that eventually resulted in the passage of the historic law in 2005.
- **RTI as Fundamental right**: The right to information has been upheld by the Supreme Court as a fundamental right flowing from Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution, which guarantees every citizen the right to free speech and expression.
- **RTI help formulates opinion:** Without access to relevant information, people's ability to formulate opinions and express themselves meaningfully is curtailed.
- **Accountability**: Since its enactment, the RTI law has been used by people to seek information to actively participate in decision-making processes and hold governments accountable.

In recognition of the need for transparency in public affairs, the **Indian Parliament enacted the Right to Information Act in 2005.** It is a path breaking legislation empowering people and promoting transparency.

EVOLUTION OF RTI IN INDIA

India's RTI Act, enacted in 2005, empowers citizens with the right to access information from public authorities. This transparency fosters accountability, strengthens democracy, and fuels movements for social justice.

ROOTS OF THE ACT:

- **Kulwal vs. Jaipur Municipal Corporation (1986):** Supreme Court recognized RTI as part of free expression, emphasizing proactive information disclosure.
- **Grassroots Movement (1990s):** Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) in Rajasthan used RTI to expose corruption and empower communities.

LEGISLATIVE JOURNEY:

- **1996:** NCPRI and Press Council championed RTI advocacy.
- **1997:** H.D. Shourie Committee report provided a framework for the Act. Tamil Nadu passed the first state-level RTI law.

- **2001:** Parliamentary committee recommended RTI for transparency and good governance.
- **2002:** Supreme Court directed enactment of a strong RTI law.
- **2005:** After revisions and deliberations, On the advice of the National Advisory Council (NAC), the bill for the current RTI Act, 2005 was passed in May into effect on **October 12, 2005**.

SALIENT FEATURES OF RTI ACT, 2005

- **Public Information Officer (PIO):** Any citizen can apply in writing or electronically, addressing the concerned PIO. PIOs are officers designated by the public authorities in all administrative units or offices under it to provide information to the citizens requesting for information under the Act.
- **Timely Response:** Upon receiving an application, the PIO is required to respond within 30 days. In exceptional cases where the information concerns a third party, the response time is extended to 45 days. However, If information sought concerns the life or liberty of a person, it shall be supplied within 48 hours. In case the application is sent through the assitant public Information Officer of it is sent to a wrong public authority, five days shall be added to the period of thirty days or 48 hours, as the case may be.
- **Right to Appeal:** The Act recognizes the right to appeal for both the applicant and the PIO.
  - If an applicant is not satisfied with the response received or does not receive a response within the stipulated time frame, they can file an **appeal with the first appellate authority**.

- o If the applicant is still dissatisfied with the decision of the first appellate authority, they can **approach the Information Commission**, the final appellate authority.
- **Disclosure Obligations:** Public authorities must disclose information related to their organization, functions, decision-making processes, and public schemes.
  - o **Type of Information that can be requested through RTI:** The information as defined under section 2 (f) has to be disclosed to the public.
    - Records, documents, memos, and e-mails.
    - Opinions, press releases, circulars, log books, Contracts, data material held in any electronic form and Information relating to any private body
    - It can be accessed by a public authority under any other law for the time being in force.
  - o **Exemptions:** While promoting transparency, Section 8 of the RTI Act provides specific exemptions to defence and security-related matters, trade secrets, personal information, and cabinet proceedings.
  - o Provision for Exceptions under **Section 8 of the RTI Act**:
    - The sovereignty and integrity of India
    - Security, strategic, scientific or economic interests of the State
    - Relations with Foreign States
    - Lead to incitement of an offence
    - Section 8 (2) provides exemption under Official Secrets Act, 1923.
- **Whistleblower Protection:** It includes provisions for whistleblower protection to encourage whistleblowing and safeguard those who expose corruption or wrongdoing.
  - o It prohibits the disclosure of the whistleblower's identity and provides penalties for any harm caused to them.
  - o **Information Commissions:** It provides for the constitution of the **Central Information Commission (CIC)** at the centre and the **State Information Commission(SIC)** in the state.
  - o **Proactive Disclosure:** Section 4 of the Act calls for proactive disclosure of information by all authorities so that the public minimally resorts to using this RTI Act to obtain information.

KEY PROVISIONS OF THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION (RTI) ACT

- **Applicability (Section 1(2)):** Nationwide reach.
- **Definition of Information (Section 2(f)):** Specifies information mediums.
- **Designation of PIOs (Section 5):** Appoints PIOs and Assistant PIOs.
- **Right to Information (Section 2(J)):** Grants rights for access.
- **Proactive Disclosure (Section 4):** Mandates suo motu disclosure.
- **Procedure for Information (Section 6):** Prescribes request process.
- **Transfer of RTI Requests (Section 6(3)):** Requires timely transfers.
- **Time Frame for Response (Section 7):** Sets response deadline.
- **Free Information Provision (Section 7(6)):** Mandates free information.
- **Communication of Rejection (Section 7(8)):** Requires reasons for rejection.
- **Denial Due to Resource Constraints (Section 7(9)):** Allows denial due to resource limitations.
- **Exemptions from Disclosure (Section 8):** Lists disclosure exemptions.
- **Redaction of Exempted Information (Section 10):** Details redaction process.
- **Definition of Public Authority (Section 2(h)):** Includes government bodies and civil societies funded by public money.
- **Third-party Procedure (Section 1):** Outlines third-party request handling.
- **Copyright Infringement (Section 9):** Allows rejection on copyright grounds.
- **Appeal Mechanism (Section 19):** Establishes appeal tiers.
- **Complaint/Appeal Process (Sections 18 & 19):** Describes complaint and appeal procedures.
- **Penalties for Non-compliance (Section 20):** Prescribes penalties for non-compliance.

ROLE OF RIGHT TO INFORMATION (RTI) ACT IN GOVERNANCE

- **Transparency:** RTI enables citizens to access government records, promoting **transparency** in decision-making and enforcement processes. For example, RTI requests revealed irregularities in a village water supply project in Rajasthan (2022).
- **Predictability:** Transparent governance enhances objectivity, leading to increased **predictability** in government actions. E.g., Firms use RTI to anticipate changes in government policies and plans.
- **Accountability:** RTI empowers citizens to hold the government accountable by seeking explanations for decisions and their consequences. RTI exposes corruption, such as in a school meal scheme in Madhya Pradesh (2020).
- **Participation:** By providing access to information, RTI encourages citizen participation in governance, reducing power imbalances and fostering democracy. RTI prompts citizen engagement, like in a sanitation project in Pune (2019).

- **Decentralization of Power:** RTI decentralizes information and power, strengthening grassroots democracy and promoting local governance participation. RTI empowers local communities, as seen in a rural development scheme in West Bengal (2018).

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION OF RTI

- **Dysfunctional:** Due to exceptions, the Information Commissions have remained dysfunctional.
  - **Satark Nagrik Sangathan** in its recent study of State Information Commissions' performances found that **four out of 29 are defunct and at least three are still headless.**
- **Vacancies in Information Commissions:** In 10 commissions, the waiting time for hearing after filing an appeal is over a year.
  - Nineteen of the 29 Commissions have not cared to file their annual report, mandatory under the Act.
  - The CIC itself boasts of only three commissioners with eight vacant posts. At this rate, there is hardly any hope of clearing backlogs.
  - **Lack of Diversity in Appointments:** Despite RTI Act requirements, 84% of Central Information Commissioners (CICs) come from bureaucratic backgrounds, undermining diversity and expertise.
- **Casual approach of officers in dealing with RTI queries:** The PIOs frequently miss the 30-day timeline and often give incomplete information as a reply to the RTI.
- **Penalty Reluctance:** Despite the RTI Act allowing penalties up to Rs 25,000, they were imposed in only 3.8% of cases, signaling a reluctance to enforce compliance.
- **Lack of Valid Rejections:** 40% of RTI rejections lacked valid reasons, including 90% from the Prime Minister's Office, undermining transparency.
- **Denial of Information:** Section 8(1)(j) was frequently invoked for denial, impacting public interest and transparency. **E.g.,** The Agriculture Ministry denied an RTI request on pre-legislative consultations regarding farm reform laws, citing sub-judice status, limiting transparency
- **Information Exemptions:** Section 24 is frequently used to exempt security and intelligence-related information, contributing to one in five permissible rejections.
- **Constraints in Record Inspection:** Inadequate training of PIOs and APIOs hinders effective utilization of provisions for information provision, hampering transparency and access.
- **Rising Pendency:** The pendency of cases under the CIC has been rising. Three lakh twenty-one thousand appeals were pending before the various Commissions as of June 30, 2023. Several RTI cases are embroiled in judicial procedures.
- **Frivolous RTIs:** An oft-repeated excuse by bureaucrats for their unprofessional attitude is the number of frivolous queries or those with perverse motives. However, it is only around 4% of the total appeals, which can easily be managed.
- **Dependence on Subordinate Rules:** The RTI Act's implementation is dependent on subordinate Rules made by the Union Government and State Governments. Ex - States like **Tamil Nadu do not accept Indian Postal Orders (IPOs).**
- **Threats to RTI Activists:** According to the **Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)**, across India, 99 RTI activists have lost their lives, 180 were assaulted and 187 were threatened since 2006.

DENTS ON THE FOUNDATION OF RTI ACT OVER TIME

- **Resistance by Political Parties:**
  - CIC's 2013 attempt to subject political parties to RTI met with defiance, undermining CIC's authority and fostering distrust.
  - Political parties resisted RTI scrutiny, ignoring legal judgments.
- **Limited Access to Information:**
  - Withholding information on **national security and foreign relations** hinders public access to historical documents.
  - For instance, PM Care Fund kept out of RTI's purview, limiting transparency.
- **RTI Amendment Act 2019:**
  - **Term and Appointment:** Amendment allows the central government to determine the term of CIC and ICs, **removing the fixed five-year term.**
  - **Salary Determination:** Original act tied salaries to CEC, ECs, and state Chief Secretaries; amendment gives central government power to specify salaries, allowances, and service conditions.
  - By vesting excessive powers with the central government, this amendment has hampered the autonomy of CIC.
  - The RTI Act does not seek to make the Information Commission a constitutional body.

Revival of RTI Act: SC's verdict on Electoral Bond
• Association for Democratic Reforms and Anr vs Union of India Cabinet Secretary and ors: The Supreme Court declared the electoral bonds scheme violative of the right to information and free speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution. • Broad Scope of RTI: The SC averred that RTI is not confined only to state affairs but also includes information necessary for participatory democracy. Political parties are relevant units in the electoral process, and their funding information is essential for electoral choices. • Emphasis on Transparency and Accountability: The principles of transparency and accountability, the fundamental objectives of the RTI Act, were considered by the judges in rendering their unanimous decision.

PM-CARES FUND

• It has been set up with the primary objective of managing any type of emergency or distress situation, like that posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and providing aid to the affected.
• PM Care Funds should come under the RTI, this is because of following reasons:
    ○ A PM Care fund can be treated as public authority under section 2(h) of the RTI Act.
    ○ The Fund has used government machinery to raise resources such as engaging Embassies etc.
    ○ Public sectors have donated significant amounts through Corporate Social responsibility (CSR) fund
    ○ It has been exempted from the FCRA Act and hence to bring transparency, it should be brought under RTI Act.
    ○ There is tax exemption relief for the donors.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAY FORWARD

- **Recommendation Implementation:** Implement suggestions from the report card on the Performance of Information Commissions in India by **Satark Nagrik Sangathan (SNS)** and the **Centre for Equity Studies (CES)**. This includes addressing issues such as defunct commissions and vacancies.

- **Timely Response Mechanism:** Establish mechanisms for prompt and comprehensive responses to **RTI** requests within statutory time limits. The pendency of cases under the **CIC** has been rising, with **three lakh twenty-one thousand** appeals pending before various Commissions as of **June 30, 2023**.

- **Transparency and Online Access:** Ensure transparency on information commission websites, with details on appeals, complaints, pending cases, and orders. Collaborate with governments to develop online portals for filing **RTI** applications, enhancing accessibility.

- **Balancing with Privacy Rights:** Balance the **right to information** with **privacy rights** under Article **21** of the Constitution. This includes addressing concerns related to exemptions from sharing information and privacy infringements.

- **Committee Formation and Code of Conduct:** Establish a committee led by the Minister of Personnel to address **RTI** issues and enhance transparency. Develop a code of conduct for Central and State

- **Revitalizing Defunct Commissions:** Fill vacancies in defunct state commissions to revive their functionality. This includes addressing issues such as vacant **PIO** posts and commissions functioning without a chief information commissioner.

- **Maintaining Autonomy and Performance Audit:** Uphold press freedom and democratic institutions while punishing errant officials and preserving information commission autonomy. Conduct performance audits of **RTI** implementation, as recommended by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

- **Awareness, Education, and Vernacular Language Accessibility:** Raise public awareness and provide comprehensive training to government officials on information laws. Ensure information related to the **RTI Act** is available in local languages to enhance accessibility.

The Right to Information Act of 2005 is an instrument that effectively combats corruption and ensures the accountability of various government bodies, agencies, and departments to the public. By doing so, it serves as a safeguard against arbitrary state action, thus epitomizing the essence of responsible democracy. Collaboration among the RTI activists, civil society organisations, and government agencies is essential for monitoring the implementation of the RTI Act and addressing emerging challenges.

RTI ACT AND OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT

The Official Secrets Act (OSA), 1923, prohibits retired officials from disclosing information without clearance. Serving civil servants are restricted from expressing personal opinions on policy matters.

- **OSA Background:** The **Official Secrets Act (OSA)**, rooted in the colonial era, was enacted in **1923** to govern matters of secrecy and confidentiality in governance.
- **OSA Provisions:** It encompasses penalties for spying, disclosure of secret government information, and espionage.
- **RTI vs. OSA:** Section 22 of the RTI Act declares its "overriding effect" over the OSA in specific situations. Public interest in disclosure can outweigh the need for secrecy, allowing access to some information even under the OSA.
- **Landmark Judgments:** The Supreme Court has played a crucial role in defining the boundaries. For instance, the Court ruled in favor of transparency in the Rafale deal case, highlighting RTI's primacy. Additionally, in 2019, the Court declared the Chief Justice of India's office subject to RTI scrutiny, a significant step towards judicial accountability.

REASONS FOR STRINGENT SECRECY NORMS

- **National Security:** Secrecy safeguards authorized national security operations, preventing harm from leaks or disclosures.
- **Dynamic Security Challenges:** Ever-evolving security challenges require stable policies, necessitating some level of secrecy.
- **Limits to Freedom of Expression:** Absolute freedom of expression does not exist, especially concerning sensitive national security information.

OSA AND 2ND ARC RECOMMENDATIONS

- **2nd ARC Proposal:** The **2nd ARC** proposed repealing the OSA to enhance transparency.
- **RTI Act and Judicial Accountability:** In a landmark verdict, the **Supreme Court** ruled in **2019** that the Chief Justice of India's office falls under the purview of the RTI Act, enhancing judicial transparency.

CONCERNS REGARDING OSA

- **Subjectivity in Data Interpretation:** Sensitive data's interpretation may vary among succeeding governments, leading to inconsistencies.
- **Challenges in Declassification:** Experience in declassifying secret files and addressing over-classification issues remains limited.
- **Balancing Transparency and Security:** Officials must balance disclosing governance issues with safeguarding national security interests.

India navigates a complex space between transparency and national security. The RTI Act plays a vital role in promoting openness, while the OSA safeguards sensitive information. Ongoing legal interpretations and potential legislative reforms will determine how this balance evolves in the future.

SOCIAL AUDIT

Social audit entails a collaborative evaluation of government schemes by both officials and affected individuals, emphasizing **transparency** and **accountability**. It empowers beneficiaries, fostering **active participation** and ensuring schemes are genuinely intended for their welfare.

PURPOSE AND PROCESS

Evaluation of Social Performance: Social audit evaluates an organization's **impact** on stakeholders, facilitating a deeper understanding of its social and ethical responsibilities.

- **Transparency and Accountability**: Through public platforms, social audit shares details of resources utilized in development initiatives, allowing stakeholders to scrutinize the **effectiveness** of programs.
- **Measurement of Social Accountability**: It serves as a tool to gauge an organization's **commitment** to social responsibility, gaining prominence after the 73rd amendment related to Panchayati Raj institutions.

EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL AUDIT IN INDIA:

- **Pioneering Initiatives**: The concept of **social audit** emerged in India in 1979 with Tata Iron and Steel Company Limited (TISCO) conducting the first instance. Subsequently, in the mid-1990s, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) pioneered village-based Jansunwai.
- **RTI Integration**: These initiatives laid the groundwork for integrating the Right to Information (**RTI**) as a tool for social audit, emphasizing public participation and accountability. RTI empowered citizens to demand accountability, encapsulating the essence of social

audit with the slogan "Hamaara paisa, Hamaara hisab" (our money, our accounts).

- **MGNREGA Mandate**: The introduction of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (**MGNREGA**) in 2006 mandated social audits, with **Kerala** becoming the first state to conduct a total social audit of MGNREGS.
- **Incorporation in NRLM**: The National Rural Livelihoods Mission (**NRLM**), launched in 2011, integrated social audit to empower marginalized communities.
- **Legal Recognition and Guidelines**: Social audit gained national recognition with provisions included in various laws and policies, ensuring accountability across sectors.
- **Expansion Beyond Rural Programs**: Social audit expanded beyond rural development to encompass sectors like health, education, and infrastructure.
- **Institutionalization and Capacity Building**: Efforts were made to institutionalize social audit, with dedicated units established within government departments. **Meghalaya** notably implemented a law making social audit a government practice.
- **Technology Integration**: The use of digital platforms and mobile applications facilitated data collection, reporting, and dissemination of social audit findings.
- **Civil Society Engagement**: Civil society organizations, like the Social Accountability Forum for Action and Research (**SAFAR**) in Rajasthan and Bihar, actively contributed to institutionalizing social audit, ensuring transparency and accountability in governance processes.

PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL AUDIT:

Eight fundamental principles have been delineated based on global Social Auditing practices:

- **Multi-Perspective/Polyvocal:** These principles ensure that the views of all stakeholders are considered.
- **Comprehensive:** The audit covers all aspects of the organization's operations and performance.
- **Participatory:** Stakeholders are actively engaged in the audit process and encouraged to share their values.

- **Multidirectional:** Feedback from stakeholders is solicited on various aspects of the organization's activities.
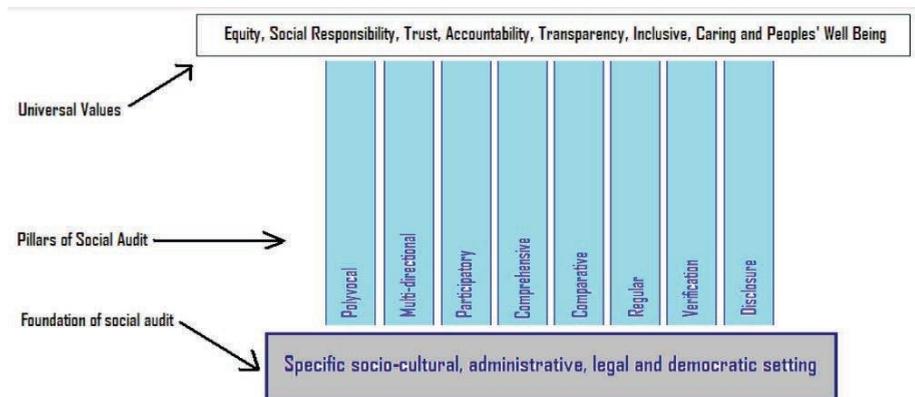- **Regular:** Social audits are conducted periodically to ensure that the practice becomes ingrained in the organization's culture and covers all activities.
- **Comparative:** The audit allows organizations to compare their performance against benchmarks and that of other organizations.
- **Verified:** Audited accounts are reviewed by impartial experts or agencies with no vested interest in the organization.
- **Disclosed:** The audited accounts are made available to stakeholders and the wider community to promote transparency and accountability.

These principles serve as the foundation of Social Audit, incorporating socio-cultural, administrative, legal, and democratic elements to operationalize the process.

SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIAL AUDIT FOR SOCIAL SECTOR PROGRAMS

Social auditing is a powerful tool for improving the effectiveness and transparency of social sector programs. Here's how it benefits various stakeholders:

INCREASED TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY:

- **Reduces Corruption:** Social audits deter corrupt practices, ensuring funds are used appropriately. (e.g., MGNREGA social audits in **Rajasthan** and **Andhra Pradesh**)
- **Enhances Public Trust:** Organizations demonstrate commitment to ethical practices, fostering public trust.
- **Strengthens Oversight:** Publicly available data allows monitoring of government programs and addressing grievances. (e.g., Social audit facilitators in India resolved **32%** of grievances)

IMPROVED PROGRAM DESIGN AND DELIVERY:

- **Identifies Implementation Gaps:** Social audits reveal discrepancies between program goals and outcomes.
- **Informs Policy Advocacy:** Data from social audits helps advocate for policy changes and program improvements.
- **Promotes Stakeholder Engagement:** Stakeholders' voices are heard, leading to more inclusive and effective programs.

STRONGER GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES:

- **Empowers Local Communities:** Social audits strengthen Gram Sabhas, promoting participatory democracy. (e.g., Social audits in **Kumli Gram-Panchayat Chhattisgarh**)
- **Enhances Learning and Improvement:** Organizations learn from past experiences and continuously improve program delivery.
- **Supports Inclusive Development:** Social audits ensure marginalized communities' needs are addressed.

PROMOTES EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING:
- **Provides Data for Impact Measurement:** Social audits provide data for measuring program impact and informing future interventions. (e.g., Society for Social Audit, Accountability and Transparency [SSAAT] in **Andhra Pradesh**)
- **Increases Efficiency and Effectiveness:** Social audits identify areas for improvement, leading to better program outcomes. (e.g., Over **Rs. 5 crore** recovered in **Telangana** through MGNREGA social audits)

CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL AUDIT IN INDIA: STIFLING POTENTIAL

LIMITED SCOPE AND IMPLEMENTATION
- **Fragmentary Focus**: MGNREGA social audits in Andhra Pradesh often overlook work quality and labor law compliance, as per a **2021 CAG report**.
- **Sporadic Nature**: Social audits across states like Rajasthan lack consistency, with varying frequencies observed, according to a **2023 study by PRS Legislative Research**.
- **Data Constraints**: Tracking migrant populations poses challenges for assessing program reach and impact, especially in initiatives like adult literacy, as highlighted in a **2022 report by the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability**.

LACK OF CAPACITY AND STANDARDIZATION
- **Auditor Expertise**: Many states lack trained social auditors, leading to superficial audits missing critical details, as noted by **Transparency International India in 2021**.
- **Actionable Findings**: Instances of inaction on social audit reports in states like Madhya Pradesh, undermine their effectiveness.
- **Standardization Issues**: The absence of a standardized social audit mechanism hinders effective comparison of program effectiveness across states, according to the **PRS Legislative Research study**.

INSTITUTIONAL AND IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES
- **Independence Concerns**: Social audit units in Telangana lack independence, being housed within the government machinery, according to a **2022 CAG report**.
- **Weak Enforcement**: Inadequate penalties for social audit norm violations undermine their deterrent effect, as highlighted by **PRS Legislative Research**.
- **State Responsiveness**: Weak state responses to audit findings hinder corrective actions, as reported by the **Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability in 2023**.
- **Gram Sabha Awareness**: Lack of awareness among Gram Sabha members about their social audit rights and responsibilities limits effective participation, as revealed by a **2021 survey by Accountability Initiative**.

These challenges curtail the effectiveness of social audits in India. Strengthening institutionalization, enforcing stricter mechanisms, enhancing auditor capacity, and increasing Gram Sabha awareness are essential for realizing the **transparency** and **accountability** potential of social audits in social sector programs.

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL AUDIT IN INDIA: RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

ENHANCING THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK
- **Model Social Audit Act**: Enact a national social audit act based on Meghalaya's Community Participation and Public Services Social Audit Act (2017), empowering communities and mandating public service audits.
  - **Meghalaya's Experiences:** The act facilitated constructive discussions, raised public awareness of rights, facilitated beneficiary identification, and provided a platform for grievance redressal.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY
- **Independent Audit Units**: Establish independent social audit units with adequate staff and resources, free from government influence (e.g., Andhra Pradesh's Society for Social Audit, Accountability, and Transparency).
- **Strengthening CAG Audits**: Support the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in conducting propriety audits and implementing social audit guidelines for institutionalization.
- **PRI Capacity Building**: Increase the institutional capacity of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) at block and district levels for information storage, dissemination, and social audit processes.

EMPOWERING STAKEHOLDERS
- **Public Awareness**: Invest in education and awareness campaigns for Gram Sabha members and the public to understand their rights and roles in social audits.
- **NGO Support**: Provide support to committed NGOs to play a catalytic role in social audit training and execution.
- **Media Engagement**: Encourage media focus on rural development and social audits for wider dissemination and

public scrutiny.

- **Recognition and Rewards**: Recognize and reward individuals and communities who actively participate and contribute to strengthening social audits and improved service delivery.

STANDARDIZATION AND TRANSPARENCY

- **Online Accessibility**: Develop an institutional framework for online access to PRI accounting audits and social audit reports, promoting transparency and public participation.
- **Proactive Disclosure**: Encourage proactive disclosure of information from the government and implementing agencies to facilitate social audits.

IMPROVING SOCIAL AUDIT PROCESSES

- **Standardized Guidelines**: Develop and implement standardized guidelines and methodologies for social audits across sectors, ensuring consistent and comparable findings.
- **Auditor Capacity Building**: Invest in training programs and workshops to enhance the capacity of social auditors in methodologies, standards, and reporting processes.
- **AI Integration**: Explore the potential of integrating AI tools into social audit processes for increased efficiency and effectiveness.
- **Stakeholder Participation**: Actively involve stakeholders, including community members, civil society organizations, and marginalized groups, in the social audit process.
- **Whistleblower Protection**: Implement strong mechanisms to protect whistleblowers who report irregularities or non-compliance during social audits.

EFFECTIVE MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT

- **Public Disclosure**: Ensure social audit reports are publicly available in a clear and accessible format for public scrutiny and holding organizations accountable.
- **Monitoring and Enforcement Mechanism**: Establish a system for monitoring compliance with social audit requirements, including periodic checks, random audits, and penalties for non-compliance.
- **Integration with Government Programs**: Integrate social auditing into government programs, particularly social welfare, poverty alleviation, and rural development initiatives, to assess program effectiveness and drive accountability.

LEARNING FROM BEST PRACTICES

- **Chhattisgarh**: The state collects complaints beyond MGNREGS, fosters community involvement through wall writing of audit details, and ensures active participation.
- **Karnataka**: The State rotates social audit staff after every three rounds to promote objectivity and effectiveness.

By implementing these recommendations and learning from successful practices, India can significantly strengthen its social audit framework, promoting transparency, accountability, and improved social program outcomes.

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

- Social accountability is **an obligation and responsibility on the part of the government** to be answerable to the citizens for its actions. Accountability of government officials is a cornerstone and a must for ensuring good governance.
- Social accounting is a method of auditing a government programme with the active participation of the program's intended beneficiaries.
- The process concludes with the holding of public hearings at which the findings are reviewed and disparities are revealed in front of service providers, officials, and beneficiaries.
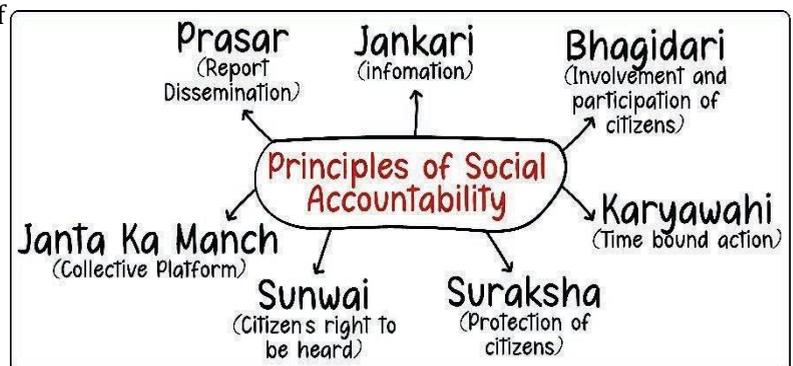
NEED FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY:

- **Empowering Citizens**: Citizen empowerment defines opportunities and accessibility provided to citizens by their leaders and representatives, to develop capabilities that are valuable to actively participate in the development and decision making of a community.
- **Governance**: Improving the trust between governments and citizens is fundamental to good governance.
- **Accountability and Transparency**: Social accountability augments traditional auditing processes. Thus, it will remove biases in funding allocation and auditing.

CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY:

▪ **Coercion from Vested Interests:** Communities hesitant to participate in social accountability due to **coercion** from influential entities. **Example:** Recent cases show communities facing **intimidation** from powerful stakeholders, inhibiting their engagement in accountability initiatives.

▪ **Ineffective Grievance Redressal:** Lack of effective mechanisms to address grievances diminishes the impact of social accountability projects. **Example:** Recent data reveals instances of **unresolved grievances**, leading to disillusionment with accountability efforts.

▪ **Resistance to Reform:** Entrenched interests obstruct transparency efforts by withholding critical information. **Example:** Recent studies highlight instances of **denial of access** to essential documents like budget papers, hampering accountability initiatives.

▪ **Citizens' Complacency:** Powerful individuals benefiting from corruption or wrongdoing undermine overall accountability efforts. **Example:** Collusion among community leaders and officials perpetuates corruption, diminishing the effectiveness of social accountability measures.

The current era necessitates enactment of a central law on social accountability in order to make the system more accountable, transparent, and efficient, thereby making government programmes more accessible to the poor, marginalized, and disadvantaged segments of society and assisting in poverty reduction and development.

WHISTLEBLOWERS' PROTECTION ACT, 2014

Whistleblowing allegations have increased in the private sector in recent years, with reports of governance issues in **Adani Group by the Hindenburg Research**. The Vice-President indicated that all corporations should promote whistleblowing mechanisms and have appropriate protections for whistle-blower safety.

▪ Whistleblowing is the **act of exposing the alleged bribery, incompetence, corruption, fraud, or unethical behavior within public, private, or third-sector organizations** by an authority figure or the public.

EVOLUTION OF WHISTLEBLOWERS' PROTECTION ACT, 2014

1. Catalyst for Change:
▪ **Event:** Satyendra Dubey, an engineer with India's National Highways Authority, exposed corruption in the Golden Quadrilateral project in Bihar in 2003.
▪ **Outcome:** Dubey's murder in November 2003 sparked **public outrage** and highlighted the need for whistleblower protection.

2. Judicial Intervention:
▪ **Action:** In response to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL), the Supreme Court of India urged the government to establish protection mechanisms for whistleblowers.
▪ **Result:** The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) issued the **Public Interest Disclosures and Protection of Informers Resolution (PIDPIR)** in 2004.

3. Institutional Recommendations:
▪ **Initiative:** The Second Administrative Reforms Commission advocated for enacting new legislation to safeguard whistleblowers.
▪ **Impact:** This recommendation reinforced the call for legal protection of whistleblowers, emphasizing the importance of legislative action.

4. International Alignment:
▪ **Commitment:** India signed the **UN Convention against Corruption** in 2005, underscoring its commitment to providing adequate protection for whistleblowers.
▪ **Significance:** The convention provides a framework for protecting those who report corruption and ensures safeguards against retaliation.

5. Legislative Milestone:
▪ The **Whistle Blowers Protection Bill** was introduced in 2011 and eventually passed as the **Whistleblowers' Protection Act** in 2014.
▪ The enactment of this law marked a significant step towards providing legal safeguards for whistleblowers in India.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE ACT

WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTIONS:

- **Identity Protection:** The Act ensures the anonymity of whistleblowers. Only the Vigilance Commission can disclose their identity to the department head if absolutely necessary. Penalties are enforced for any unauthorized disclosure.
- **Protection from Victimization:** Individuals who file complaints in good faith are shielded from harassment or retaliation.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES:

- **Time Limit:** Anonymous complaints are prohibited. The complainant must disclose their identity for the investigation to proceed. Complaints can be lodged within a period of **seven years from the occurrence of the wrongdoing.**
- **False Complaints:** Intentionally or unknowingly making false accusations can result **in imprisonment (up to 3 years) and a fine (up to Rs 50,000).**
- **Dispute Resolution:** Individuals dissatisfied with a Competent Authority's decision have a window of **60 days** to appeal to the High Court.

EXCEPTIONS AND ADDITIONAL POINTS:

- **SPG Exclusion:** The Act does not extend to staff or officers of the Special Protection Group (SPG).
- **Superseding the Official Secrets Act:** Whistleblowers are empowered to report wrongdoing even if it may contravene the **Official Secrets Act**, provided it does not compromise national security.
- **Private Sector Coverage:** Listed companies are mandated by the **Companies Act (2013)** to establish an audit committee for investigating whistleblower complaints.

CHALLENGES WITH WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT, 2014

1. **Lack of Anonymity:** The Act mandates disclosing the whistleblower's identity, posing a significant threat in cases where revealing oneself could be dangerous. Fear of retaliation discourages individuals from reporting corruption, undermining the Act's effectiveness. **Example:** The case of Satyendra Dubey illustrates the risks associated with disclosing identities, deterring potential informants.
2. **Ineffective Organizational Implementation:** Many organizations lack clear guidelines or training programs to educate employees about the whistleblower program. This creates confusion and discourages employees from utilizing the proper channels for reporting.
3. **Limited Protection for Whistleblowers:** The Act offers minimal protection for whistleblowers, making them hesitant to submit evidence to authorities for fear of repercussions.
4. **Rise in Whistleblower Complaints:** Despite limitations, whistleblower complaints are increasing in India. Companies listed on the National Stock Exchange received over 3,500 complaints in 2018. This highlights the prevalence of corruption and underscores the potential effectiveness of a strengthened Act.
5. **Flawed Whistleblower Amendment Bill (2015):**
   - **Issues:** The proposed amendments weakened the original Act by:
     - Restricting disclosures prohibited under the Official ecrets Act (OSA).
     - Excluding national security concerns from its purview.
     - Creating excessive exemptions that limit public access to information.
   - **Status:** The Bill failed to pass in Rajya Sabha and lapsed in 2019.

The Whistleblower Protection Act, while well-intentioned, faces significant flaws. Amending the Act to address anonymity concerns, improve implementation, and offer stronger whistleblower protections is crucial to encourage reporting and combat corruption effectively.

Case Study: GLOBAL WHISTLEBLOWERS AND PROMINENT LEAKS

- **Edward Snowden (2013):** Leaked classified documents revealing NSA surveillance programs, sparking global debate on privacy and security.
- **Chelsea Manning (2010):** Leaked classified documents on Iraq, Afghanistan wars, exposing civilian casualties, and diplomatic cables.
- **Wikileaks (2006-Present):** Founded by Julian Assange, platform for anonymous leaks on war crimes, corruption, and malpractices.
- **Frances Haugen (2021):** Leaked Facebook documents revealing awareness of product harm and misinformation.
- **Irena Buzhinska (2016):** Leaked Panama Papers exposing offshore tax havens for the wealthy.
- **Xu Zhiyong (2011-Present):** Exposed human rights abuses and corruption in China, facing harassment and detention.
- **Reality Winner (2017):** Leaked NSA document on Russian election interference, sentenced to prison.
- **The Pegasus Project (2021):** Revealed governments using Pegasus spyware to target activists and journalists.
- **LuxLeaks (2014):** Exposed tax avoidance schemes by multinational corporations in Luxembourg.
- **The Implant Files (2019):** Leaked medical device safety data exposing potential risks.
- **The Panama Papers leaks (2016):** Detailed offshore entities, exposing global tax evasion.

MEASURES NEEDED

2ND ARC RECOMMENDED FOLLOWING MEASURES:

- Appropriate legislation must be enforced to protect innocent whistle blowers.
- Legislation should be enacted immediately to provide protection to whistleblowers on the following lines proposed by the **Law Commission:**
  - Whistleblowers exposing false claims, fraud or corruption should be protected by ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, protection from victimization in career, and other administrative measures to prevent bodily harm and harassment.
- The legislation should cover corporate whistleblowers unearthing fraud or serious damage to public interest by wilful acts of omission or commission.
  - SEBI recently introduced a tipping mechanism. SEBI will award up to ₹1 crore for information and successful action against insider traders. It has also created a "cooperate and confidentiality" mechanism.

BEST INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES

1. Canada: To receive reports and investigate matters that maintain a whistles' privacy, Canada has established a Commissioner for Integrity in the Public Sector.
2. UK: Likewise, the UK has a Civil Service Office to promote honesty, integrity and impartiality in the public sector.
3. United States: The United States adjudicates the decisions by the Bureau of Supervisory Counsel and the Merit System Protection Board (MSPB).

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS		
1.	If the amendment Bill to Whistleblowers Act, 2011 tabled in the parliament is passed, there may be no one left to protect." critically evaluate	2015

LOKPAL AND LOKAYUKTAS ACT 2013

BACKGROUND AND EVOLUTION IN INDIA:

- In response to a public campaign in 2011, the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act of 2013 was enacted to establish anti-corruption ombudsman entities.
- The concept was first suggested in the 1960s and gained momentum with movements like Anna Hazare's "India Against Corruption."

NEED OF INSTITUTION:

- Addressing maladministration and corruption is crucial for the effective functioning of governance.
- Existing anti-corruption agencies lack independence and transparency.

SALIENT FEATURES OF LOKPAL ACT 2013:

- **Wide Jurisdiction:** Empowered to investigate corruption allegations against top officials and entities receiving significant government funding.

- **Appointment Process:** Involves a selection committee headed by the Prime Minister.
- **Powers of the Lokpal:** Includes inquiry, prosecution, and recommendation of action against corrupt officials.

ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH LOKPAL ACT:

- **Lack of Constitutional Backing:** The absence of constitutional support undermines the authority of Lokpal.
- **Political Interference:** Concerns about politically motivated appointments and delays in appointments.
- **Exclusion of Judiciary:** Excluding the judiciary raises questions about the effectiveness of the institution.

MEASURES REQUIRED TO BE TAKEN:

- **Enhanced Accountability:** Ensuring transparency, right to information, and citizen empowerment.
- **Functional Autonomy:** Strengthening Lokpal's independence and operational capabilities.
- **Timely Disposal of Cases:** Addressing the backlog of pending cases and expediting the resolution process.
- **Active Participation of Opposition:** Ensuring active involvement of opposition parties in the appointment process for impartiality and accountability.

By addressing these issues and implementing necessary reforms, the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act can fulfill its mandate of combating corruption and promoting transparency in governance.

> **KEYWORDS:**
> Citizen Vigilance, Right to Know, Open Government, Holding Power Accountable, Responsive Administration, Public Participation, Information is Power, Grassroots Monitoring, Empowering Communities, Citizens as Watchdog, India: Open, Informed, Empowered; From Shadows to Sunlight, Whistleblowers: Guardians of Integrity

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS	
1.	'A national Lokpal, however strong it may be, cannot resolve the problems of immorality in public affairs.' Discuss.	2013

CENTRAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (CBI)

ESTABLISHMENT AND MANDATE:

- Established in 1963 by the Government of India on the recommendations of **Santhanam Committee** on Prevention of Corruption (1962–1964) in order to investigate serious crimes related to defense, **corruption**, fraud, and black-marketing.
- Derives powers from the **Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act 1946.**
- Provides assistance to the **Central Vigilance Commission, Lokpal,** and coordinates investigations for Interpol member countries.

CHALLENGES FACED BY CBI:

- **Political Interference:**
  o Dubbed a "**caged parrot**" by the Supreme Court due to excessive **political meddling**.
  o Often used by administrations to suppress misdeeds and control opposition.
- **Operational Challenges:**
  o Delayed investigations, exemplified by prolonged inquiries such as the Jain hawala diaries case.
  o Loss of credibility due to mishandling of high-profile cases like Bofors and Hawala scandals.
- **Accountability and Resources:**
  o Exempted from **Right to Information Act**, lacking public accountability.
  o Acute shortage of personnel and limited financial resources hamper effectiveness.
- **Limited Powers and Access:**
  o Investigative powers subject to state government agreement, restricting jurisdiction.
  o Need prior authorization from Central Government to probe officials at high levels.

MEASURES NEEDED FOR REFORM:

- **Autonomy and Statutory Standing:**
  o Separate CBI from government control to ensure independence.
  o Provide statutory standing similar to other institutions like Comptroller and Auditor General.
- **Enhanced Resources and Infrastructure:**
  o Increase financial resources and administrative empowerment with accountability.
  o Invest in better infrastructure facilities to improve efficiency.
- **Legal Reforms:**
  o Replace DSPE Act with a dedicated statute, enhancing operational clarity.
  o Introduce new legislation to regulate CBI's operations, as recommended by the Second Administrative Reforms Commission.

Withdrawal of General Consent by States: Understanding the Story

- **Legal Framework:**
  - **Section 6** of the **Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946**, mandates State consent for CBI investigations outside Union Territories.
  - **Entry 80** of the **Union List** allows extension of police powers with State permission.
- **Types of Consent:**
  - **General Consent:** Enables CBI to probe cases without seeking fresh permission for each investigation.
  - **Specific Consent:** Required when general consent is withdrawn, hindering seamless investigations.
- **State Actions:**
  - **Mizoram** became the first state to withdraw general consent in **2015**, followed by **Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Kerala**, and **Mizoram**.
  - Allegations of the central government using CBI for **political targeting** prompted the withdrawals, primarily in **opposition-ruled states**.
- **Impact of Withdrawal:**
  - CBI loses power to register fresh cases involving central government officials or private individuals without state consent.
  - Officers lose police powers upon entering the state, hindering investigations.
- **Impact on Pending Investigations:**
  - Withdrawal doesn't affect ongoing investigations or cases in other states leading into the territory of the withdrawing state.
  - High Courts retain authority to order CBI investigations irrespective of consent status.
- **Legal Precedents:**
  - In **Kazi Lendhup Dorji v. CBI** (1994), withdrawal didn't affect pending investigations.
  - Calcutta HC's ruling in **Vinay Mishra vs. CBI** emphasized equal treatment in corruption cases regardless of consent status.

ENFORCEMENT DIRECTORATE

- **Mandate:** The ED, under the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, investigates **money laundering** offenses under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (**PMLA**), and enforces laws including the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (**FEMA**).
- **Structure of ED**
  - **Headquarters:** Located in New Delhi, the ED is led by the **Director of Enforcement**.
  - **Regional Offices:** Spread across Mumbai, Chennai, Chandigarh, Kolkata, and Delhi, each headed by **Special Directors of Enforcement**.
  - **Zonal and Sub-Zonal Offices:** Consisting of 10 Zonal offices and 11 sub-zonal offices, each led by **Deputy Directors** and **Assistant Directors** respectively.
  - **Functions:** It conducts investigations into money laundering and foreign exchange law violations, takes actions like attachment and confiscation of proceeds of crime, and prosecutes individuals involved in money laundering.

TENURE EXTENSION FOR CBI AND ED DIRECTORS

- **Background:** Stemmed from the **Vineet Narain case**, addressing corruption allegations in the 1990s. Amendments in 2021 aimed to ensure leadership continuity and effectiveness in fighting corruption and financial crimes.
- **Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) Act Amendment, 2021:** Allows extension of the ED Director's tenure up to **5 years**, with yearly extensions recommended by a committee.
- **Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act Amendment, 2021:** Permits extension of the CBI Director's tenure up to **5 years**, with yearly extensions advised by a committee.
- **Issues Raised:**
  - Potential **compromise** of CBI and ED independence.
  - Concerns over **executive control** of autonomous agencies.
  - Impact on **case outcomes** and agency integrity.
  - Lack of clarity on the term **"public interest"** for extension criteria.
  - Use of **ordinances** for tenure extension bypassing the legislative process.
  - Perceived **politicization** of CBI and ED operations.
  - Contrary to **Supreme Court** directives on tenure duration for agency heads.

ROLE OF CIVIL SERVICES IN DEMOCRACY

INTRODUCTION

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 vests in the President or Governor directly or through officers' subordinate to him.
- **Article 308- 323:** These officers constitute the permanent civil service and are governed by Part XIV of the Constitution.
- **Article 309:** It empowers the Parliament and the State legislature to regulate the recruitment, and conditions of service of persons appointed, to public services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of any State respectively.
- **Article 310**: Anyone holding any post connected civil services holds office during the pleasure of the President or Governor of the State.
- **Article 311**: Dismissal, removal or reduction in rank of persons employed in civil capacities under the Union or a State.
- **Article 312:** All India Services.

NEED OF CIVIL SERVICES IN DEMOCRACY

Civil services are essential to the governance of a democracy, providing the administrative backbone that manages the nation's complex and diverse needs. Key functions include:
- **Stability and Continuity:** Civil services maintain governance stability and policy continuity across political changes, exemplified by the Indian Administrative Service's role in supporting governance through different political regimes.
- **Expertise and Specialization:** Recruitment through competitive exams, such as the UPSC Civil Services Exam in India or the Federal Reserve's staffing in the U.S., brings specialized knowledge into public administration, enhancing decision-making.
- **Impartiality and Non-partisanship:** Civil servants uphold neutrality, focusing on public welfare over political interests, a principle central to the trust and efficiency seen in Singapore's Civil Service.
- **Local Adaptation of Policies:** They bridge national intentions and local needs, adapting policies to regional specifics. This is crucial in programs like India's MGNREGA, which tailors employment solutions to rural demands.
- **Efficiency and Accountability:** Civil services ensure timely policy implementation and are accountable for their conduct, with systems in place for addressing misconduct, as seen in the UK's meritocratic and accountable civil service system.

ROLE PLAYED BY CIVIL SERVICES

- **Advisory Role in Policy Making:** They assist the executive in defining policy-making areas. They formulate policy proposals, evaluate different options and solutions, develop a programme of action for current policies, as well as make necessary corrections.

8 Spheres of Professional Public Servant
→ Reponsibility
→ Equality
→ Justice
REJ I LITE
→ Impartiality
→ Legality
→ Integrity
→ Transparency
→ Efficiency

- **Institutionalise Socio-economic change:** They play a critical role in development and act as an instrument of the welfare state and harbinger of modern ideas in society.
- **Continuity in Governance:** At the same time then ensure continuity of existing order with minimal effort and stabilize the social order in positive and negative sense.
  - In a **positive sense**, they help in continuity of the system.
  - In a **negative sense**, sometimes they reject changes and slow down the rate of experimentation in society. E.g. Bureaucratic lobbying to retain primacy of IAS over other services.
- **Agent of development:** The services perform a variety of developmental functions like promoting modern techniques in agriculture, promoting the industry, trade, banking functions, bridging the digital divide, etc.
- Various committees which recommended major changes are headed by former civil servants.
  - E.g. **Rajiv Mehrishi Committee** on measuring the impact of COVID-19 on the economy.
- **Discharge Delegated Functions:** At various levels of government, power and accountability are delegated to civil
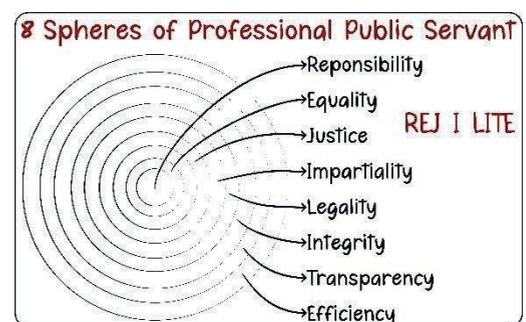
servants.

- **Administer Law of the Land:** It governs the behavior of people in society by enforcing rules.
- **Watchdogs:** They act as protectors of public assets and safeguard public property. E.g. **Sanjiv Chaturvedi's IFS in Kurukshetra** registered a FIR against contractors for illicit tree felling and poaching of hog deer.
- **Continuity in times of Political Instability**: Civil services carry on the governance when governments change due to elections etc.
- **Record-Keeping:** Civil servants keep record of day-to-day functioning as per the standards set by the Government and as per the requirements.
- **Channel of Communication**: They work on the ground level from where they provide input to executives and ministers and act as a channel of communication between citizens and policymakers.

AILMENTS/ISSUES AFFLICTING INDIAN CIVIL SERVICES

- **Challenges related to Generalist Civil Service**: A generalist civil service is criticized for being unable to meet challenges thrown by a specialized socio-economic set up. Eg. a generalist civil servant may not be suited for the specialized role of the governor of RBI.
- **Inefficient Incentive Systems**: The meritorious and honest civil servants are not rewarded. **E.g.** Ashok Khemka (IAS) transferred 56 times in his 30 years of service.
- **Outdated Rules and Procedures:** Prevent civil servants from exercising independent judgment and performing efficiently. **E.g.** Promotion is based on seniority and not based on performance and efficiency.
- **Lack of Adequate Transparency and Accountability Procedures**: Various committees and surveys have found that unethical practices have become common in the civil service and that public perceptions of their uprightness, neutrality, and fairness have deteriorated. **E.g.** Physical torture instead of scientific investigation by IPS officer Balvir Singh in Tamil Nadu.
- **Apathy Among Civil Servants:** Civil servants exhibit apathy towards the needs of the citizens due to multiple reasons including permanency of their post as well as heavy workload due to high number of vacancies (IAS alone has 22% vacancy). Eg: DM in north-east slapping citizens for violation of covid19 regulations.
- **Arbitrary and Whimsical Transfers**: Political interference has resulted in unfair transfers and tenure instability. **E.g.** Sanjiv Chaturvedi (IFS) refused central deputation by Haryana government.
- **Absence of an objective system:** Absence of leads to a poor work culture that incentivizes lethargy and overlooks good work. E.g. ensured career progression (cylindrical system where the whole batch is promoted) irrespective of merit and performance.

This creates an inherent need for the lateral entry of professionals into government service.

CIVIL SERVICES REFORMS

RECENT INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE EFFICIENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN CIVIL SERVICES:

- **Robust Vigilant Mechanism**: Strengthen institutional mechanisms for prevention and detection of corruption. Thus, there is a need to review existing vigilance mechanisms.
- There is a need to **strengthen implementation of a Centralized Public Grievance Redressal and Monitoring System (CPGRAMs).**
- **Implementation of e-Office**: Implementation of e-Office may be expedited in all ministries/ departments; all states/UTs may also be encouraged to adopt it.
- **e-Samiksha**: A real time online system for monitoring and follow up action on the decisions taken by the Government in respect of implementation of important Government programmes/projects.
- **Prompt delivery of services**: Every department should seek to simplify their processes to cut administrative delays and ensure participatory feedback mechanisms for efficient service delivery.
- **Promoting Mid-career training**: Mission Karmyogi was launched to enhance learning and knowledge.
- **Lateral Entry Reform:** Personnel from the private sector are selected to an administrative post of the government despite them not being selected in or being part of a bureaucratic setup.

ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS COMMISSION (ARC):

The Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) plays a key role in shaping and refining the civil services in India. Established with the objective of reviewing and recommending improvements in the administrative setup, the ARC has undergone multiple iterations to address evolving challenges.

Examples of key committees and their recommendations regarding civil services in India.

- **First ARC (1966):** Headed initially by Morarji Desai and later by K. Hanumanthaiah.
  - Recognized the need for specialisation in government functions, leading to the formulation of a selection method for senior management posts in both functional and non-functional areas. Focused on lateral entry to technical posts at the senior level, aiming to bring in expertise from various domains.
- **Second ARC (2005):** Constituted in 2005, it was chaired by Veerappa Moily. Its key recommendations include:
  - **Restructuring the Civil Services Examination:**

- Conducting Preliminary and Main Examinations together on consecutive days or shortlisting candidates based on Preliminary results.
- Inducting officers of State Civil Services into IAS through a common examination.
  - **Mandatory Training and Capacity Building:**
    - Mandatory training at the induction stage and periodically throughout a government servant's career.
    - Implementation oversight of the National Training Policy (1996) through a monitoring mechanism.
  - **Accountability and Anti-Corruption Measures:**
    - Suggestions for a Code of Ethics for civil servants.
    - Amendments to protect honest civil servants from malicious prosecution and harassment.
    - Establishment of Lok Pal and Lok Ayuktas for complaint redressal.
  - **Performance Appraisal and Promotion:**
    - Shift from Annual Confidential Report (ACR) to performance assessment.
    - Emphasis on objective assessment against agreed work plans for promotions.
  - **Decentralisation and Citizen-Centric Governance:**
    - Shifting focus from governance to effective governance with decentralization.
    - Viewing civil society organizations and the private sector as partners in governance.
- **Kothari Committee (1976):** The Committee recommended a sequential system for civil service examination. The committee believed that the quality of candidates would progressively improve through stages. This innovative approach led to a three-stage examination process: a Preliminary examination with an objective type format covering Optional and General Studies, a Main examination with 9 written papers, and a concluding Personality Test.
- **Satish Chandra Committee (1989):** In 1989, the Satish Chandra Committee was tasked with suggesting reforms to the existing Civil Services Examination pattern proposed by the Kothari Committee. While retaining the essence of the Kothari model, the Satish Chandra Committee recommended minor adjustments. Notably, an 'Essay' paper was introduced, and the marks allocated for the Interview were enhanced.
- **Y.K. Alagh Committee (2001):** With a vision for comprehensive re-shaping and re-structuring, the committee proposed significant changes to the Civil Services Examination. This forward-looking approach aimed at aligning the economic and administrative apparatus of the government with the evolving demands of the contemporary era.
- **Hota Commission (2004):** The Hota Committee, officially known as the Committee on Review of Mechanisms for Civil Services Examinations, was constituted by the Government of India in 2001. It made several recommendations which include:
  - Reforming the civil service examination to introduce domain specialization.
  - Reducing the weightage of the General Studies paper in the civil service examination and putting more emphasis on specialized subjects.
  - Raising the age limit for the civil service examination from 28 years to 30 years.
- **Khanna Committee (2010):** The Civil Services Aptitude Test (CSAT) was introduced in 2010 after the recommendations of the Khanna Committee. However, this exam was reduced to the nature of just a qualifying exam after protests from Hindi medium students.
- **Baswan Committee (2016):** The Committee recommended the reduction of the upper age limit for general category candidates to be brought down to 26 years from 32 years at present.

Do you Know?
- The **T. S. R. Subramanian & Ors. v. Union of India & Ors. The case** marked a significant ruling by the Supreme Court of India. In this case, the Court clarified that civil servants were not obligated to adhere to verbal instructions.

CIVIL SERVICE-RELATED ISSUES IN NEWS

THE GENERALIST VS SPECIALIST DEBATE

The Generalist vs Specialist debate is an ever present discussion in the bureaucratic, political, media, and civil society circles.
- **Generalists:** These individuals possess broad knowledge and skills across various administrative functions. They offer flexibility and adaptability, effortlessly navigating diverse roles and challenges. However, their expertise in specific areas might be limited, requiring collaboration with specialists.
- **Specialists (Technocrats):** These experts boast deep knowledge and expertise within a specific field, offering invaluable technical insights. They provide effective solutions for complex problems within their domain. However, their broader administrative experience and understanding of systemic interactions might be lacking.

Aspect	Generalist Bureaucracy	Specialist Bureaucracy
Roles and Responsibilities	Versatility in roles, adaptable across various administrative areas.	In-depth focus on specialized roles with deep domain expertise.
Leadership Positions	Assumes leadership positions at higher administrative levels.	Expert advisors in specific domains may; face challenges in leadership roles requiring diverse skills.
Decision-Making	Broad administrative perspective, contributing to holistic policy development.	Specialized knowledge for evidence-based decision-making in specific fields.
Training Programs	Comprehensive training programs, like those at LBSNAA, to develop a broad skill set.	Domain-specific training to excel in technical and specialized roles.
Adaptability Challenges	May face challenges in specialized technical roles requiring deep domain knowledge.	Necessitates adaptability to the rapidly evolving governance landscape.
Strategies for Balance	Rotational postings, inter-service collaboration, and flexible recruitment policies.	Emphasizes flexibility, collaboration, and opportunities for rotational roles to balance expertise.

CADRE ISSUE FOR CIVIL SERVANTS

- The Supreme Court said that successful civil services aspirants have no right to be allocated a cadre of their choice or their home state, and also noted that before selection they opt to serve anywhere in the country 'with eyes open' but later scramble for home cadre.
- **Affirming with All India services**: The applicant as a candidate for the All-India Service with eyes wide open has opted to serve anywhere in the country.

CHANGES IN IAS CADRE RULES

Recent changes in the All India Services (AIS) Rules:

- **Authority for Central Government to Act Against Civil Servants and Withdraw Pensions:**
  o The central government has granted itself the authority to take action against officers from the **Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS), and Indian Forest Service (IFoS)**. This includes the power to **withhold or withdraw their pensions** in cases of severe misconduct or serious criminal convictions. The revised rules stress that the Central Government's decisions on pension withholding or withdrawal are deemed final.
- **Shift in Pension-Withholding Authority:**
  o Previously, Rule 3(3) within the **All India Services (Death-cum-Retirement Benefits)** Rules, 1958, allowed the Central Government to withhold or withdraw pensions based on references from the respective State Governments. The recent amendments grant the Central Government more direct authority in such matters.
- **Definition of "Grave Misconduct" and "Serious Crime":**
  o The amended rules specify that **"grave misconduct"** pertains to actions like the **unauthorized communication or disclosure** of documents or information covered by the Official Secrets Act. A "serious crime" encompasses any offense falling under the purview of the Official Secrets Act.
- **Restrictions on Members of Security and Intelligence Organizations:**
  o Members of intelligence or security-related organizations are **subject to restrictions.** They are **prohibited from writing or publishing materials** without obtaining prior clearance from the head of their respective organization. This regulation aims to safeguard **sensitive information and maintain security.**
- **Opposition of States:**
  o **No Consultation with States**: The Amendment requires the state government to make such a number of officers available for deputation as the Central Deputation Reserve requires.
  o **Confrontational Federalism**: Making unilateral choices may have an adverse effect on cooperative federalism by raising tension between the Center and the States.
  o **Low morale among AIS officers**: The proposed modifications have serious repercussions for IAS officials' independence, security, and morale.
  o **Deputation to the Center**: Past experience suggests that IAS officers might be deputed to the Centre as

punishment posts if they do not want to go on central deputation.
- o **States may reduce the number of IAS officers hired**: Reduce the number of IAS cadre jobs and the number of IAS officers hired each year.
- o **State Autonomy is Affected**: The proposed change goes against India's federal polity concept and state autonomy. This amendment makes states as mere appendages in civil services.
- o **Misuse by the Centre:** States' ability to release AIS officers in "particular situations" and in the public interest may be abused for political purposes. **E.g.** Appointment of Archana Ramasundaram IPS as DG of SSB.
- ▪ **Repercussions of these changes:**
  - o **Long-term damage:** The contemplated changes have grave implications for the independence, security and morale of IAS officers.
  - o If States begin to doubt the loyalty of IAS officers, they are likely to reduce the number of IAS cadre posts and also their annual intake of IAS officers.
  - o This also seriously impinges on the state's autonomy to maintain its cadre of civil servants. The autonomy of states is curtailed affecting the federal polity of the county.

In a federal setup, it is inevitable that differences and disputes would arise between the Centre and the States. But all such quarrels should be resolved in the spirit of cooperative federalism and keeping the larger national interest in mind.

LATERAL ENTRY ISSUE:

- ▪ Rather than nominating traditional civil servants by promotion, lateral entry applies to the direct recruitment of domain experts at the middle or senior levels of administrative hierarchy.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF VARIOUS EXPERT GROUPS/COMMITTEES REGARDING LATERAL ENTRY-

- ▪ **1st Administrative Reforms Commission:**
  - o It recognised the need for specialization as the functions of the government had become diversified.
  - o ARC highlights that performance appraisals may be adopted from the armed forces, which could aid in weeding out non-performers.

Need for Lateral Entry → Domain Expertise in Government → Private Expertise for Public Development → Shortfall of Bureaucracy → Competition→Improve Efficiency

  - o Surinder Nath Committee in 2003 and Hota Committee in 2004 also recommended domain expertise in civil services.
- ▪ In 2005, the **second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) recommended** lateral entry at both the Central and state levels.
  - o ARC highlights that performance appraisals may be adopted from the armed forces, which could aid in weeding out non-performers.
- ▪ **Earlier instances of lateral entrants:** Nandan Nilekani, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Vijay Kelkar, Arvind Subramanian, and Raghuram Rajan have all been brought in from outside the services to lead various committees and organizations.

NEED OF SPECIALIST OR DOMAIN EXPERT:

- ▪ **Technical knowledge:** These domain experts can provide ground level insight and real challenges associated with policy formulation and its implementation.
- ▪ **Complex situations:** The functions related to administration are now becoming more and more complex, technical and subject specific, hence only a specialist can deal with them effectively.
- ▪ **Lack of field knowledge:** The generalist or traditional bureaucrats are not aware of reality in the field. **E.g.** IAS officers with Arts as education background cannot understand cyber security challenges.
- ▪ **Improvements in governance and performance:** NITI Aayog's Three-Year Action Agenda for 2017-2020, as this will "add competitiveness to the existing career bureaucracy."
- ▪ **Fill the officer vacancy gap**: The country is short of nearly 1,500 IAS officers (Ministry of Personnel Data), **E.g. Baswan Committee (2016)** also advocated lateral entry to fill these vacancies.
- ▪ **Entry and retention of talent in government**: According to the Sixth Central Pay Commission report (2006), lateral entry will "ensure entry and retention of talent in the government even for those positions that have a high demand and premium in the open sector.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST LATERAL ENTRY:

- ▪ **Lacking Field Experience:** External talent lacks the breadth and scope of field experience that the civil service provides. **E.g.** Wall-street bankers fail to understand the social impact of his economic policies.
- ▪ **Issue with execution**: Career civil servants are better at bridging the gap between policy making and ground level execution than external talent.
- ▪ **Instances of failure:** Even the domain experts at times have failed miserably. **E.g.** The Case of Air India.
- ▪ **Non-conducive milieu**: The enabling atmosphere has a big impact on efficiency, and even the best managers can't produce results in a bad operating environment like red tapism.
- ▪ **Motivated interest:** People have different motivations and interests. Thus, lateral entry of officers for a short period

can lead to unethical practices.
- **Internal tussle:** A vote of no confidence in the government personnel management system will result from a large-scale lateral induction.
- **Undermines the role of civil servants:** Civil Servants are already institutionalized operating in the well-established scenarios with efficiency. Lateral entry will kill their morale.

WAY FORWARD:
- Instead of pursuing leadership from outside, a strong management structure encourages and nurtures creativity from within.
- The solution is not lateral induction, but rather more stringent performance assessment and better staff management.
- India's civil service needs reforms such as protection from political coercion and specialization-based career paths.
- The government can consider lateral entry for some mission-mode projects and public-sector organizations where private-sector expertise is critical. It should be a combination of the private sector and government employees.

CIVIL SERVICES AND COVID-19

- "Indian government which is inquisitive and paper-obsessed was constantly putting its foot wrong because it ill-informed about current happenings" - Late Sir CA Bayly
- This became more evident during the Covid crisis. The worst phase of the 2nd wave of the pandemic was the outcome of a grossly inadequate response of government to the Covid crisis compounded by a failure of bureaucracy at the Central and State levels.
- **Systemic failure:**
  - **Lack of synergy** between the different wings of the government and awareness of the capabilities of each of them dampened the government's response to Covid.
  - **Failed to utilize resources:** The availability of resources not audited which caused a failure of health governance. In some area, there was duplication of efforts.
  - **Neglecting approach:** Neglecting unplanned urban clusters. **E.g.** Dharavi was neglected until it was too late.
  - **Cumbersome process:** In the last few months' government came with more than 400 rules and regulations, making the situation for citizens more and more documentation based. **E.g.** Document for availing solatium.
  - **Centralized tendency:** During the first Covid-19 wave, epidemiologists accused the government of listening to modelers and bureaucrats in deciding the Covid-19 strategy.

CASE STUDIES AND BEST PRACTICES: COVID AND BUREAUCRACY

- A doctor-turned-bureaucrat, Dr Rajendra Bharud, the collector of Maharashtra's Nandurbar has managed to keep the district running with adequate supply of medical oxygen, hospital beds, isolation wards for Covid-19 patients and a well-planned vaccination drive.
- Migrant labour residing in Lohit district working for have not gone back home instead the district administration under Prince Dhawan IAS not only took care of them with rations and supplies when the lockdown was imposed, but offered them jobs when restrictions were lifted.
- The 'Bhilwara model' has been so successful in curbing the spread of Covid-19 - "ruthless containment". Bhilwara's district magistrate, credited with its conceptualisation.
- Railways coaches converted into Isolation ward. The Railways has deployed a fleet of nearly 4000 Isolation coaches with almost 64000 beds to serve as Isolation Units. These Isolation Coaches can be easily moved and positioned at places of demand on the Indian Railways network.

CIVIL SERVICES BOARD

- For transfers and postings of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers in Punjab, the state government has formed a three-member Civil Services Board (CSB).
- **Evolution of Civil Services Board in India:**
  - Following the recommendations of the Hota Committee (2004) and 2nd ARC, the Department of Personnel Rules of 2016 made it mandatory for all states to create such boards.
  - The Supreme Court in **T S R Subramanian and others v. Union of India case (2013)** ordered the Centre and states to establish a civil services board to consider promotions and postings of bureaucrats, among other things, to protect the bureaucracy from political interference and to put an end to frequent transfers of civil servants by political bosses.

COMPOSITION OF CIVIL SERVICES BOARD:

- The CSB is led by the state's Chief Secretary, with members including the state's senior most additional chief secretary or chairman, the Board of Revenue, the Financial Commissioner, or an officer of comparable rank and status.
- It will also have a member secretary who will be the state government's Principal Secretary or Secretary, Department of Personnel.

NEED FOR CIVIL SERVICES BOARD:

- **Ensure security of tenure:** An IAS officer still spends just about 15 months on average in a position, which is much less than 3-5 years mandated.
- **Negative impact on governance:** civil servants are not allowed to remain in a post long enough to gain sufficient knowledge and experience in their job.
- Recurrent and unreasonable promotions of officers before completing a satisfactory term on any post have long been blamed for the deterioration of administrative standards.
- Lack of transparency and corruption result from frequent transfers and postings.

SIGNIFICANCE OF CIVIL SERVICES BOARD:

- **Insulate civil servants from political pressure:** It helps to protect the bureaucracy from political pressure and puts an end to unnecessary and frequent transfers of civil servants, which is a major cause of low civil servant morale and low administrative standards.
- **Promote sense of objectivity:** It will also facilitate civil servants in maintaining neutrality and objectivity in their work.
- **Promote sense of term security:** Officials would be able to have effective administration if they have a set tenure and it will ensure good governance in service delivery.

THE CIVIL SERVICE BOARD'S LIMITATIONS:

- **Lack of Compliance:** To date, only 20 states have created a CSB, with Punjab being the most recent to do so in 2020. Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, for example, have not followed the mandatory rules for establishing the board.
- **Conflict of Interest:** The board would be led by bureaucrats who may have a vested interest in the outcome of the process. Neutrality is not ensured.
- **Interference of political class:** Governments have the authority to amend, change, or refuse the civil service board's recommendation for reasons that must be recorded in writing.
- Insecurity in the political executives believe their control has been diminished by the fixed tenure clause, since the CSB has sole authority to review a transfer recommendation.

OTHER MEASURES TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT TO DEAL WITH TRANSFER AND POSTING:

- The **All India Services (AIS) Rules** have been revised, and provisions have been made for the fixing of tenure AIS officers.
- The Indian Administrative Service (Fixation of Cadre Strength) Regulations, 1955, were amended in 2010, establishing a minimum tenure for civil servant postings in all States.
  - "**Maharashtra Government Servants Regulation of Transfer and Prevention of Delay in Discharge of Official Duties Act, 2005.**" It provides for both IAS officers and certain State government employees to serve for three years.

Each and every commission to date has stressed the need for minimum tenures, but the government continues to stall. Now is the time to ensure that the Civil Services Board's decisions are not overturned by governments on frivolous grounds. Parliament may also introduce legislation in this region. This will ensure the independence of civil services, allowing them to act impartially and without bias, which is essential for good governance in India.

MISSION KARMYOGI

In September 2020, the Union Cabinet gave its approval to 'Mission Karmayogi,' the National Civil Service Capacity Building Programme (NPCSCB).

AIM:

- For efficient public service delivery, a comprehensive reform of the capacity-building apparatus at the individual, institutional, and process levels is needed.

- It aims to create a future-ready civil service with the right mindset, skills, and expertise, in line with New India's vision.
- Its aim is to make Indian public servants more innovative, positive, constructive, creative, progressive, knowledgeable, enthusiastic, open, and technology empowered for the future.

NEED OF MISSION KARMYOGI:
- India is developing at a rapid pace along with it comes new challenges for which governance capacities need to be strengthened proportionately.
- In the bureaucracy, there is **a need to improve domain expertise** in addition to administrative capability.
- To find the best individual for the right work, the recruiting process must be formalized and the public service must be matched to a bureaucrat's competence.
- The Indian bureaucracy needs change, and a major reform has been undertaken in recent years to transform it.

SALIENT FEATURES:
- The scheme would **cover 46 lakh central government employees** at all levels and will cost Rs. 510 crores over five years. The half financial burden will be financed by multilateral assistance to tune 50 million.
- **Change from a 'rules-based' to a 'Role based HR Management' approach**. Human Resource (HR) Management involves aligning civil servants' work assignments by matching their skills to the job requirements.
- **To build a common training technology environment,** which includes learning materials, institutions, and staff.
- To apply a Framework of Roles, Activities, and Competencies (FRACs) approach to all Civil Service positions.
- Apart from domain awareness preparation, the scheme will also concentrate on "functional and behavioral competencies," as well as a performance assessment management process.
- **Programme module and institutional structure:** The Integrated Government Online Training (iGOT) Karmayogi Platform will be utilized to deliver the program. In terms of capacity building, the platform will incorporate carefully curated digital e-learning content. Additionally, it will integrate other service-related matters such as confirmation following a probationary period, deployment, job assignment, and vacancy notice.
- **Human Resources (HR) Council of the Prime Minister:** Under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister, it will act as the apex body for providing strategic guidance to the mission.
- **Capacity Building Commission: formed to play following oversight role-**
  o It will create and track annual capacity-building plans, as well as audit the government's human resources.
  o Exercise functional oversight of all Central Training Institutions that deal with the development of civil service capacity.
  o Recommend government policy initiatives in the fields of human resources management, recruitment, and capacity building.
  o The coordination unit will be headed by the Cabinet secretary.

CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROGRAMME:
- **Conservative outlook of Indian bureaucracy:** The Indian bureaucracy remains essentially unchanged and conservative. It opposes reforms and new ideas.
- Distance self-learning can help frontline workers gain complementary skills and refresh their experience, but it isn't always the best option for developing core knowledge.
- **Overcentralization of the system:** A decentralized training and learning framework is required for a dynamic public service workforce.

INTENDED BENEFITS OF MISSION KARMYOGI:
- **Accountability and Transparency** in service delivery will enhance governance. Further, this will promote the responsiveness of civil servants toward the need at local level.
- **Citizen-Centered Approach:** "On-site learning" will help bridge the gap between the government and the people. Further, this will promote the responsiveness of civil servants toward the need at local level.
- The lack of mid-level training at all levels has created a disparity between generalization and specialization. Thus, it will reduce this gap.

MISSION KARMAYOGI: SIX PILLARS OF THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR CIVIL SERVICES CAPACITY BUILDING — Developing Competencies to Serve Citizens
- Policy Framework
- Institutional Framework
- Competency Framework
- Digital Learning Framework iGOT-Karmayogi
- The electronic Human Resource Management System
- The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

- Civil servants of India become more creative, competent, progressive, and technology-enabled as a result of technology-driven learning and standardization of training goals and pedagogy across institutes.
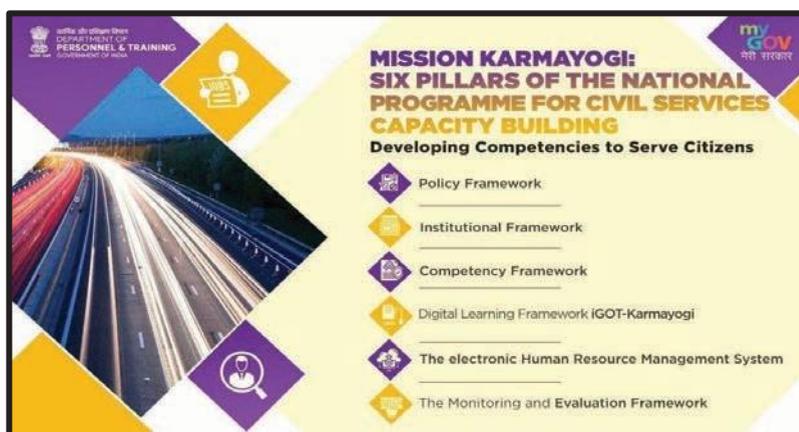
The ultimate goal of Mission Karmayogi is to bridge the divide between the government and the people. By providing them with "Ease of Living" for the common man, as well as Citizen-Centricity and "Ease of Doing Business", which bridges the divide between the government and the people.
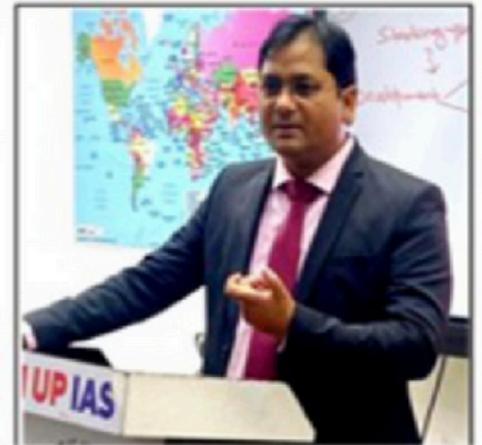
	PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS	
1.	"Institutional quality is a crucial driver of economic performance". In this context suggest reforms in the Civil Service for strengthening democracy.	2020
2.	The central administrative tribunal which was established for redressal of grievances and complaints by or against central government employees nowadays is exercising its power as an independent judicial authority. Explain.	2017
3.	Initially Civil Services in India were designed to achieve the goals of neutrality and effectiveness, which seems to be lacking in the present context. Do you agree with the view that drastic reforms are required in Civil Services. Comment.	2017
4.	"Traditional bureaucratic structure and culture have hampered the process of socio-economic development in India." Comment.	2016
5.	"Demographic Dividend in India will remain only theoretical unless our manpower becomes more educated, aware, skilled and creative." What measures have been taken by the government to enhance the capacity of our population to be more productive and employable?	2016
6.	In the integrity index of Transparency International, India stands very low. Discuss briefly the legal, political, social and cultural factors that have caused the decline of public morality in India.	2016
7.	Has the Cadre based Civil Services Organization been the cause of slow change in India? Critically examine.	2014
8.	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 smaller States would bring in effective governance at State level? Discuss.	2013

Saarthi

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