

INDIAN ADMINISTRATION

COURSE CODE: M23PA06DC

Postgraduate Programme in Public Administration
Discipline Core Course
Self Learning Material



SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

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The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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To increase access of potential learners of all categories to higher education, research and training, and ensure equity through delivery of high quality processes and outcomes fostering inclusive educational empowerment for social advancement.

Mission

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Pathway

Access and Quality define Equity.

Indian Administration
Course Code: M23PA06DC
Semester - II

Discipline Core Course
Postgraduate Programme in Public Administration
Self Learning Material
(With Model Question Paper Sets)



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Public Administration

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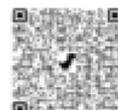
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MESSAGE FROM VICE CHANCELLOR

Dear learner,

I extend my heartfelt greetings and profound enthusiasm as I warmly welcome you to Sreenarayanaguru Open University. Established in September 2020 as a state-led endeavour to promote higher education through open and distance learning modes, our institution was shaped by the guiding principle that access and quality are the cornerstones of equity. We have firmly resolved to uphold the highest standards of education, setting the benchmark and charting the course.

The courses offered by the Sreenarayanaguru Open University aim to strike a quality balance, ensuring students are equipped for both personal growth and professional excellence. The University embraces the widely acclaimed "blended format," a practical framework that harmoniously integrates Self-Learning Materials, Classroom Counseling, and Virtual modes, fostering a dynamic and enriching experience for both learners and instructors.

The University aims to offer you an engaging and thought-provoking educational journey. The MA programme in Public Administration provides an in-depth understanding of modern governance challenges and solutions. It integrates cutting-edge theory with real-world applications, emphasizing innovative approaches to public service delivery. The curriculum spans strategic planning, policy analysis, public sector economics, and governance-related spheres. Through these, learners cultivate advanced problem-solving and decision-making skills. This programme also equips future leaders to drive positive change in public institutions, NGOs, and international bodies. The Self-Learning Material has been meticulously crafted, incorporating relevant examples to facilitate better comprehension.

Rest assured, the university's student support services will be at your disposal throughout your academic journey, readily available to address any concerns or grievances you may encounter. We encourage you to reach out to us freely regarding any matter about your academic programme. It is our sincere wish that you achieve the utmost success.



Regards,
Dr. Jagathy Raj V.P.

01-05-2025

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BLOCK 1
Central Level Administration

UNIT 1

Evolution and Structure of Central Administration in India

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ▶ identify key features of the Mughal and British administrative systems that have influenced modern central administration in India
- ▶ explain the functions and importance of the Central Secretariat, Prime Minister's Office (PMO), and Cabinet Secretariat in India's administrative structure
- ▶ illustrate how historical administrative models have shaped contemporary governance practices in India
- ▶ compare and contrast the roles and responsibilities of the PMO and Cabinet Secretariat in policymaking and governance
- ▶ assess the relevance and effectiveness of the current central administrative structure in addressing India's governance challenges

Background

The administrative structure of India has evolved through centuries, drawing from the rich legacies of past empires and colonial rule. The Mughal administration, renowned for its centralized governance, offered a well-organised system with hierarchical divisions for revenue collection, military management, and justice delivery. The emperor sat at the apex of this administrative pyramid, supported by ministers and officials who oversaw vast territories. This sophisticated framework, despite being rooted in medieval governance, laid the foundation for centralized administration in India, influencing future systems of governance.

The British administration in India further shaped the country's central administrative structure, embedding modern bureaucratic principles and creating enduring institutions. With the establishment of the British East India Company and later the Crown rule

in 1858, India witnessed the formation of structured secretariats, centralised decision-making bodies, and a professional civil service. The Indian Civil Service (ICS) became the backbone of colonial administration, and the legacy of hierarchical control, procedural governance, and accountability measures continues to influence India's bureaucratic framework.

Post-independence, India retained many British administrative practices while adapting them to suit the needs of a sovereign democratic republic. The central administration evolved around the pivotal institutions of the Central Secretariat, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), and the Cabinet Secretariat. These entities ensure coordinated policy formulation, effective execution, and streamlined communication across various ministries. The Central Secretariat serves as the nerve centre for administrative functions, while the PMO provides critical leadership and strategic direction. The Cabinet Secretariat acts as the administrative arm of the Council of Ministers, facilitating smooth governance. This unit delves into the historical foundations, structural organisation, and dynamic roles of these key institutions, offering a comprehensive understanding of India's evolving administrative landscape.

Keywords

Mansabdari System, Revenue Administration, Tenure System, Coordination.

Discussion

1.1.1 Historical Evolution of Central Administration

The foundations of administration in ancient India can be traced back to the Indus Valley Civilisation, one of the world's earliest urban societies. Excavations at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro reveal remarkably advanced urban planning, featuring well-laid roads, efficient drainage systems, and standardised housing structures. The civilisation also demonstrated a sophisticated system of weights, measures, and a common script, reflecting early administrative organisation. In Vedic and post-Vedic periods, the administrative system was centred around the king, who wielded executive authority with the support of a structured central administration. This included mantris (ministers), amatyas (high-ranking officials), and sachivas (secretaries), who played crucial roles in governance. The mantris, in particular, were trusted advisors and guardians

► Ancient
Administrative
Foundations



of public welfare, while the amatyas formed a professional cadre from which key officials like chief priests, ministers, and treasurers were appointed. Kautilya's Arthashastra provides further insights into this intricate administrative framework, highlighting its enduring influence on governance in ancient India.

1.1.1.1 Mughal Administration

The Mughal administration, renowned for its highly centralised system, was marked by an intricate bureaucratic setup and well-defined administrative divisions. It exhibited features of monolithic governance, emphasising the authority of the emperor as the ultimate source of power and governance. Below is a structured and detailed overview of the Mughal administrative system, highlighting its centralisation, revenue administration, judicial organisation, and the role of mansabdars and provincial governance.

► Centralised Mughal Governance

Characteristics of Mughal Administration

1. Centralised and Paternalistic Administration

The Mughal emperor functioned as an autocrat, enjoying absolute power. The administration was highly centralised, with all important decisions revolving around the monarch. The Mughal emperors considered themselves as God's representatives on earth. They claimed to be the 'Shadow of God' or 'Waqil to God', etc. It was similar to the Mauryan administration, where the king did not allow the provinces to become too powerful.

► Divine Kingship and Centralisation

2. Bureaucracy and Mansabdari System

The Mughal bureaucracy was militaristic in character and primarily recruited based on loyalty to the emperor. Akbar introduced the Mansabdari system. The system refers to the granting of a jagir to every official. Jagir was the revenue assignment as a substitute for a cash salary (not land) for the services delivered. The Mansabdar could collect revenue from his jagir through the zamindars collecting dues from the cultivators. The mansabdari system remained a cornerstone of military and administrative governance throughout the Mughal period.

► Mansabdari Revenue Administration

3. Revenue Administration

Revenue collection was a critical aspect of the Mughal administration, primarily focused on sustaining the vast empire and its military apparatus. The chief diwan, also known as the wazir, was responsible for supervising revenue collection and expenditure. Under him, various diwans managed specific aspects, such as state lands and salaries. The system operated efficiently as long as the emperor maintained strong control; however, mismanagement and corruption often emerged when this grip weakened. Several Mughal rulers imposed taxes such as jizya in accordance with Islamic laws.

► Structured Revenue Supervision

4. Judicial System

The judicial system under the Mughals was characterised by the roles of the Sadr and the Qazi. While the Sadr served as a civil judge, the Qazi handled both civil and criminal cases. The judiciary maintained a distinction between civil and criminal jurisdictions, although sometimes these roles were combined in one official. Justice was administered in a manner that reflected the personalised and centralised nature of the administration.

► Centralised Judicial Authority

5. Benevolent Despotism

The Mughal emperors accepted two primary duties for themselves—‘Jahan Bani’, that is protection of the state, and ‘Jahangiri’, which means extension of the empire. They attempted to create conditions that were conducive to the economic and cultural progress of their subjects. These were similar to ancient and medieval kingdoms of India. Further, the Mughal administration was not entirely based on Islamic tenets. At least important emperors like Akbar did not work under the influence of ‘Ulemas’. Even Aurangzeb, though a devout Sunni, never allowed the ulemas to dictate him in administration.

► State Protection and Progress

6. Provincial and Local Governance

The empire was divided into subas (provinces), sarkars (districts), parganas (sub-districts), and chaklas (revenue units). Each suba was governed by a provincial governor who was accountable to the emperor. Within the sarkars, the faujdar acted as the executive head responsible for maintaining law and order, while the amalguzar managed revenue collection. Parganas were managed by officials like the shiqqdar, amil, and qazi, each handling law enforcement, revenue, and judicial functions, respectively.

► Hierarchical Provincial Administration



7. Policing and Public Security

► Multi-tiered Policing System

In rural areas, policing was managed by village headmen and watchmen, a system that persisted well into the 19th century. In urban centres, Kotwals were responsible for maintaining law and order, arresting criminals, regulating prices, and overseeing market activities. District-level policing and law enforcement were overseen by Faujdars, who also commanded military forces to suppress rebellions and investigate crimes.

1.1.1.2 British Administration

► British India's administrative evolution

The British Administration in India laid the foundation for centralized governance and introduced several administrative frameworks that significantly influenced the country's post-independence administrative structure. Spanning from the establishment of the East India Company's rule in 1757 to India's independence in 1947, this administration can be broadly categorised into three phases: the early establishment phase (1757-1858), the period of reorganisation and reforms (1858-1919), and the administrative transition phase (1919-1947). Initially, the Governor-General's office and civil departments such as treasury, audit, accounts, and political residencies played key roles in managing the empire. The introduction of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) during Lord Cornwallis's tenure institutionalised a structured bureaucratic system, albeit dominated by Europeans. Subsequent reforms from 1858 onward streamlined departmental responsibilities, marking the development of the secretariat system, which became crucial for policymaking. The creation of new departments and the adoption of procedural innovations, such as the portfolio and file-noting systems, underscored the growing complexity of governance in British India. The bureaucratic ethos, systems, and structural frameworks established during this period had a lasting legacy, significantly shaping the administrative machinery of independent India.

Initial Establishment and Centralisation (1757-1858)

► Governor-General's Central Role

The administrative framework during the initial phase under the East India Company was centred around the office of the Governor-General. Departments such as Treasury, Audit and Accounts, the Post Office, and the Mint played critical roles in managing colonial governance. The Governor-General relied heavily on the Private Secretary and political residents, who acted as intermediaries between native rulers and British

interests. Other developments during this period were -

- **Political Residencies and Central Control:** Residents, appointed in princely states, wielded immense power and ensured British dominance over local courts. They acted as eyes and ears for the British government, monitoring developments at royal courts and protecting colonial interests.
- **Emergence of the Civil Service:** Initially, the British administration recruited Company writers and merchants as civil servants, but their efficiency was questionable. Cornwallis addressed this by introducing Europeanisation of civil services, ensuring that only British officials occupied senior positions.
- **Training and Education:** Lord Wellesley recognised the need for professional training of civil servants and established the College of Fort William in Calcutta, later replaced by Haileybury College in England. The syllabus emphasised a combination of liberal arts, jurisprudence, and Indian languages to equip administrators for their multifaceted roles.

Administrative Reforms (1858-1919)

Important developments in administration during this phase include the following.

- **Departmental Reorganisation:** With the establishment of direct Crown rule post-1858, administrative structures were formalised and streamlined. Departments such as Military, Home, Foreign, and Finance were created to handle specific aspects of governance. The establishment of the Public Works Department in 1855 marked the beginning of infrastructural development.
- **Legislative and Specialised Departments:** New departments emerged in response to administrative needs, including the Legislative Department (1869) for lawmaking, the Agriculture and Revenue Department (1871) for famine management, and the Industries and Commerce Department.

► Administrative Structure Formalised

► Specialised Departments Created



► Portfolio and Secretariat Systems

► Merit-Based Civil Services

ment (1905) to boost economic activities.

- **Portfolio and Secretariat Systems:** Lord Dalhousie's introduction of the portfolio system ensured clearer allocation of responsibilities among Council members. The system of classifying papers based on urgency and adopting efficient file management practices streamlined governance. Lord Curzon later refined these processes to reduce bureaucratic delays.
- **Growth of Civil Services:** The evolution of the civil services saw a shift towards meritocracy with the introduction of competitive examinations in 1855, as recommended by the Northcote-Trevelyan Report. This marked the gradual decline of patronage-based appointments.

Administrative Transition Phase (1919-1947)

1. Administrative Reforms of 1919

The Government of India Act of 1919 marked significant administrative changes by introducing several changes in administrative structure.

Government of India Act of 1919

- **Introduction of Bicameral Legislature:** The Government of India Act of 1919 introduced significant changes by establishing a bicameral legislature.
- **Division of Central and Provincial Subjects into Central Subjects** which included defence, foreign affairs, railways, post, and income tax, and **Provincial Subjects** which included education, agriculture, local self-government, health, and justice.
- **Categorisation of Provincial Subjects as Reserved List** which was managed by councillors accountable to the Secretary of State and the governor and **Transferred List** which was managed by ministers responsible to the provincial legislative council.
- **Dyarchy System:** Reduced the Secretary of State's control over 'transferred' subjects while maintaining authority over

'reserved' ones. Key Principles of the Act included:

1. Separation of central and provincial powers.
2. Provinces as experimental grounds for self-governance.
3. Providing people with a say in central administration.

Administrative Reforms of 1935

The Government of India Act of 1935 also made significant changes to the administration in India.

Government of India Act of 1935

- **Focus on Provincial Autonomy:** The Government of India Act of 1935 emphasised increased provincial autonomy and proposed an all-India federation.
- **Abolition of Indian Council:** Replaced by a group of advisers to assist the Secretary of State for India.
- Introduced Dyarchy System at Central Level and at Provincial Level it was abolished.
- **Accountability Structure:** Federal executives remained accountable to the Governor-General rather than the legislature.
- Categorisation of Administrative Responsibilities into Federal List which included 59 subjects, Provincial List having 54 subjects and Concurrent List having 36 subjects which were shared between federal and provincial governments.

Impact on Post-Independence Administrative Structures

The post-independence administrative framework evolved by retaining and adapting several features of the British colonial system. The administrative and bureaucratic systems established during British rule served as a blueprint for independent India's governance structure. While these systems contributed to efficiency and stability, they also presented challenges that required reforms in a democratic context.

Notably, the Indian Civil Service (ICS) emerged as the backbone of India's administrative framework after

► Blueprint for Independent India's Governance Structure



► Maintaining Administrative Stability

independence. Renowned for its efficiency and integrity, the ICS played a pivotal role in managing the vast and diverse Indian state during colonial rule. Post-independence, it was renamed the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). Despite criticisms of elitism and authoritarian tendencies, the service continued to be regarded as a crucial element in maintaining administrative stability and ensuring effective governance. Its transformation also marked efforts to adapt to democratic principles, with a stronger emphasis on inclusivity and public accountability.

► Centralised Secretariat System

The centralised secretariat system, a hallmark of British administration, remained a critical part of India's administrative setup after independence. Ministries and departments were organised in hierarchical structures, which ensured a well-defined chain of command and accountability in decision-making processes. This structure, although effective in policymaking, often limited participatory governance and imposed rigid administrative procedures, which have occasionally hindered flexibility and responsiveness.

► Departmental Specialisation

The British era also introduced the concept of departmental specialisation, laying the groundwork for India's modern bureaucratic setup. Departments dealing with essential sectors such as health, education, and infrastructure development were created to ensure focused administrative attention and service delivery. These specialised departments continued in independent India, forming the basis for comprehensive sectoral policies and governance models.

► Professional Training for Civil Servants

Another significant legacy was the emphasis on professional training for civil servants. The British practice of training administrative officials was adapted in independent India through the establishment of institutions like the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA). This institution became the cornerstone for training IAS officers and other civil servants, imparting professional skills and fostering a sense of responsibility towards the democratic ethos.

► Parliamentary model

India's judicial and legislative structures also bore a lasting imprint of British governance. The parliamentary model and the adoption of common law principles became fundamental aspects of India's legal and legislative systems. These frameworks provided stability and continuity while being adapted to suit the needs of a democratic and independent nation.

While the British administrative system contributed to

► Rigid structures

efficiency, it entrenched a top-down approach that was often incompatible with participatory governance. Efforts to democratise administration post-independence faced challenges due to the hierarchical nature inherited from colonial rule. Despite reforms, the administrative system continued to be characterised by rigid structures that sometimes hindered responsiveness and grassroots participation.

► Inclusive and citizen-centric administration

In fact, the transition from colonial governance to a democratic framework required significant adaptation. The transformation of the ICS into the IAS was a critical step in this process. In the course of time, efforts were made to make administration more inclusive and citizen-centric, aligning it with the values and aspirations of a newly independent nation. Although many features of the British administrative legacy were retained, India's post-independence journey demonstrated a concerted effort to make its administrative system more responsive to democratic needs and developmental challenges.

1.1.2 Structure and Functions of the Central Secretariat

► Central Secretariat's Crucial Role

The Central Secretariat is the nerve centre of the Indian administrative machinery and plays a pivotal role in policymaking, implementation, coordination and administration. It serves as the essential mechanism to aid ministers in the execution of their responsibilities. Its origin dates back to British India when it served as the office of the Governor-General. Over the years, the Secretariat has evolved to accommodate the growing complexity and expanding scope of government functions. With its distinct hierarchical structure and specific functions, the Central Secretariat stands as a critical organ for ensuring the smooth functioning of the Union Government.

1.1.2.1 Functions and Role of the Central Secretariat

► Policy Support and Coordination

The Central Secretariat's main function is to assist ministers in policymaking, parliamentary activities and ensuring efficient execution of government policies. It also plays a crucial role in legislation, sectoral planning, and managing inter-ministerial coordination.

The Central Secretariat serves as the administrative backbone



for each ministry, playing a pivotal role in policy formulation, legislation, and inter-ministerial coordination. It supports ministries with their parliamentary responsibilities, policy drafting, and overseeing policy implementation. Additionally, it contributes significantly to financial management and budgeting. The Secretariat's core functions can be summarised as follows:

- **Coordination and Policy Support:** The Secretariat coordinates administrative functions across ministries and provides technical advice during policymaking, especially when ministers lack expertise in a given area.
- **Research and Analysis:** It supplies ministries with well-researched data, comparative analyses, and policy proposals to aid informed decision-making.
- **Implementation Oversight:** The Secretariat monitors the execution of government policies and projects to ensure they are implemented effectively and achieve intended outcomes.
- **Financial Management:** It participates in budgeting processes and financial oversight, helping to ensure the proper allocation and utilisation of public funds.
- **Record Keeping:** As custodian of government records, the Secretariat manages official files, reports, and documents systematically, enabling prompt retrieval and safeguarding sensitive information.
- **Communication Facilitation:** It acts as a key link among the President, Vice-President, and ministers, ensuring an efficient flow of information and timely decision-making.

In essence, the Central Secretariat acts like a conductor of an administrative orchestra, harmonising different elements of governance to create a cohesive framework that supports growth and development.

1.1.2.2 Organizational Structure

► Hierarchical administrative structure

The Central Secretariat in India is a hierarchical administrative structure. It is composed of ministries and departments. At the top of this hierarchy are ministries, each headed by a minister and supported by a secretary. Ministries are further divided into

departments, wings, divisions, branches, and sections, creating a well-defined chain of command.

The detailed breakdown of the structure is given below:

- **Ministries**

- Political organisation: Cabinet ministers or ministers of state having independent charge constitute the political head.
- Administrative organisation: Immediately below the political head, there is a secretariat organisation of the department. It is headed by a secretary who is usually an IAS officer.

- **Departments**

- Political head: Ministers of state or deputy ministers are in charge of the departments.
- Administrative head: It consists of secretary, special secretary, additional secretary etc...
- Internal Structure of a ministry

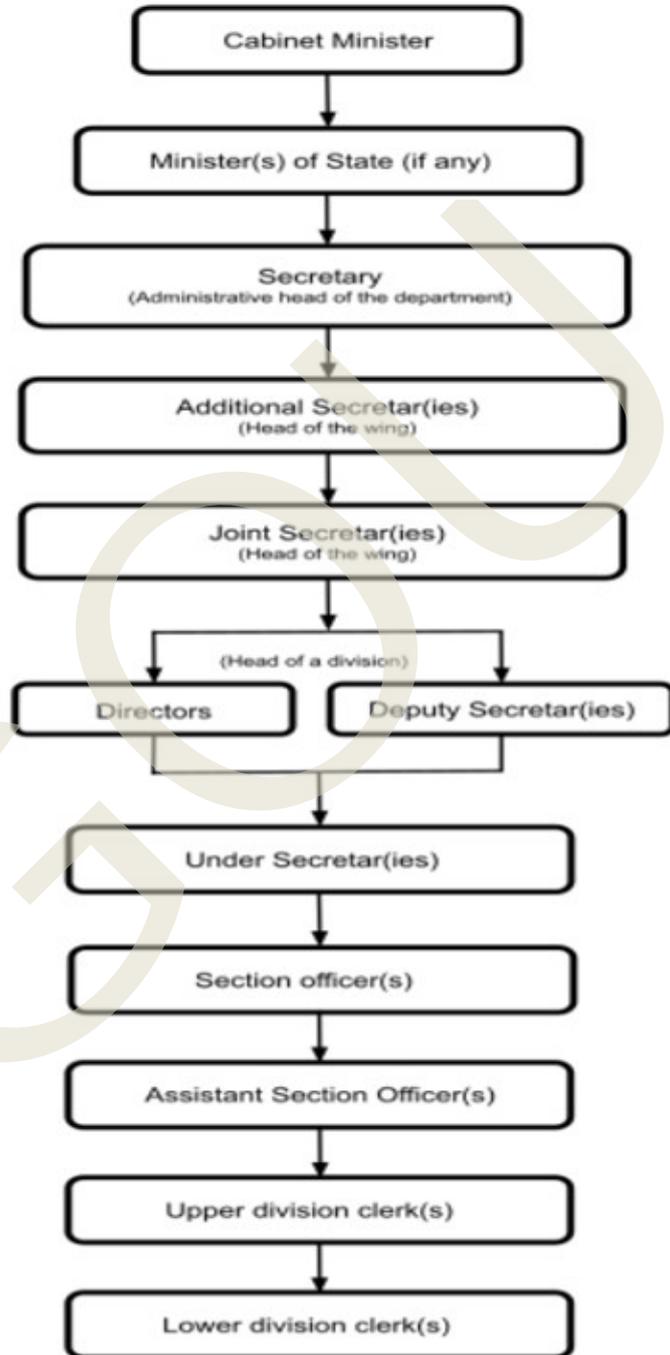
A ministry may be further divided into wings, divisions, branches, and sections.

1. Wings: A wing is charged with a specific area of responsibility.
2. Divisions: Each wing is divided into divisions, each handling specific functional areas.
3. Branches: Divisions are again subdivided into branches. Each branch is responsible for handling specific tasks.
4. Sections: Branches are further divided into sections. It is the lowest level in the secretariat hierarchy. Each level in the hierarchy is headed by specific grade officers, such as secretary, joint secretary, deputy secretary, undersecretary, section officer, and other subordinate staff.

This structured hierarchy ensures that responsibilities are clearly defined and that decision-making flows smoothly from top to bottom at all levels of the administration.



Organizational structure of a department in
The Government of India



Responsibilities:

The Central Secretariat's primary responsibilities are:

- Policy formulation

- Oversight and Control
- Coordination and Integration
- Collection and record of information

1.1.2.3 Functions of Different Grades of Officers

► Grades of Officers

- **The Secretary:** The Secretary is the highest administrative head of the ministry or department and serves as the principal adviser to the minister. They are responsible for ensuring that the ministry's activities align with government objectives and parliamentary mandates. They provide overall leadership and guidance.
- **Additional and Joint Secretaries:** They support secretaries in policy formulation, coordination and monitoring.
- **Deputy Secretaries** handle specific functional areas and assist in policy implementation.
- **Under Secretaries** are responsible for executing day-to-day tasks, managing files, and coordinating the various stakeholders.
- **Section Officers** handle routine administrative tasks and oversee the work of their teams.

The secretariat advises the ministers or the political head and also provides necessary materials on which they have made decisions. The secretariat is often described as the 'brain centre' of the administrative body, directly controlling all administrative activities.

1.1.2.4 Tenure System

► Tenure System Ensures Coordination

A distinctive feature of the Central Secretariat is the tenure system, where officers from the States or Central Services are deputed for a specific period before returning to their parent cadre. This system, established in 1905 and continued post-independence, serves multiple purposes. Firstly, it fosters administrative coordination between the Centre and the States and promotes a unified approach to federal governance. Secondly, it allows the Secretariat to benefit from the field experience of bureaucrats who have firsthand knowledge of district and state-level administration. Thirdly, the system prevents bureaucrats

from becoming disconnected from ground realities by ensuring that they periodically return to field postings.

► Tenure System
Limitations

Despite its advantages, the tenure system faces criticisms. Bureaucratic work has become increasingly specialised, making the generalist approach less effective in some areas. Moreover, the tenure system can create dependency on the Secretariat's administrative processes, leading to bureaucratic inefficiencies.

1.1.2.5 Challenges and Reforms

► Need for Specialised
Expertise

The Central Secretariat faces several challenges, including bureaucratic inefficiencies, lack of specialisation, and over-dependence on tenure-based officers. As administrative functions have become more complex, the need for specialised knowledge has become increasingly evident. The generalist approach, once the hallmark of the Indian bureaucracy, now faces limitations in addressing sector-specific issues.

► Reforms for
Administrative
Efficiency

To address these challenges, several administrative reforms have been introduced. The establishment of the Central Administrative Pool in 1957 marked a significant step in enhancing administrative efficiency. The pool system aimed to overcome the uncertainties of the tenure system by maintaining a reserve of officers for specialised and general-purpose posts. Furthermore, the government has initiated various modernisation efforts, including the adoption of e-governance practices, streamlined decision-making processes, and enhanced training programmes for bureaucrats. These initiatives aim to make the Secretariat more responsive, accountable, and capable of handling the dynamic needs of governance.

► Central Secretariat's
Evolving Role

Overall, the Central Secretariat remains the backbone of India's administrative framework. Its structured hierarchy, well-defined functions, and cadre of competent officers have enabled it to play a crucial role in policymaking and administrative coordination. However, to meet the demands of a rapidly changing governance landscape, continuous reforms and modernisation efforts are essential. Addressing bureaucratic inefficiencies and fostering a culture of specialisation will further enhance the Secretariat's ability to contribute effectively to national development.

1.1.3 Prime Minister's Office (PMO)

► Evolution of PMO

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) was initially known as the Prime Minister's Secretariat when it was established after India gained independence. In its early phase, the Secretariat provided the Prime Minister with essential secretarial assistance for public activities and functions as the head of the government. During Jawaharlal Nehru's tenure, the PMO was small in size and played a limited role. However, as administrative demands grew, the number of personnel steadily increased.

► PMO's Rise to Power

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, the Secretariat evolved into a regular department headed by a full-fledged Secretary, marking a significant increase in its influence on top-level policymaking. Lal Bahadur Shastri appointed L.K. Jha as Secretary of PMO. Under Jha's dynamic leadership, the office became a formidable force in decision-making. This trend was further amplified during Indira Gandhi's tenure, where the PMO grew into an independent executive force, shaping much of the country's domestic and foreign policy. The transformation reached its peak during Indira Gandhi's prime ministership (1966–1977) when the Secretariat expanded in size, power, and authority. By 1968–69, it had around 200 personnel and became the epicentre of decision-making, particularly during the emergency period from 1975 to 1977, earning a reputation as an extra-constitutional power centre.

Following the Janata regime's rise to power in 1977, there was a deliberate attempt to reduce the Secretariat's size and authority. It was officially renamed the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in June 1977. However, when Indira Gandhi returned to power in 1980, she again strengthened the PMO. This trend continues to this day.

1.1.3.1 Functions and Responsibilities

The PMO is the administrative and policy nerve centre of the government, with several critical functions:

1. **Policy Advising and Monitoring:** The PMO plays a pivotal role in advising the Prime Minister on national and international policy issues. It monitors the implementation of government policies and ensures the efficient functioning of ministries and departments.
2. **Coordination with Ministries and States:** One of its prima-

► Nerve Centre of the Government



ry responsibilities is to maintain liaison with various ministries, departments, and state governments. The PMO ensures a cohesive and coordinated approach to governance, particularly in matters that require inter-ministerial collaboration.

3. **Strategic Initiatives and Crisis Management:** The office acts as a think tank, helping the Prime Minister manage strategic initiatives and respond to crises. This role became evident during major national and international challenges, where the PMO's input was instrumental in formulating the government's response.
4. **Public Relations:** The office manages public relations for the Prime Minister, including contact with the press and the general public.
5. **Providing Assistance:** The office provides assistance to the Prime Minister in the examination of the cases submitted to him for orders.
6. **Maintaining Liaison:** The PMO helps to maintain liaison with the President, governors, and foreign representatives.

1.1.3.2 Organisational Structure of the PMO

The PMO is politically headed by the Prime Minister and administratively managed by the Principal Secretary. Additionally, it consists of one or two additional secretaries, three to five joint secretaries, and a number of deputy secretaries and undersecretaries. There are also other officers like private secretaries, officers on private duties, social secretary, research officer, Hindi officer, and so on. These officers are supported by the regular office establishments. These personnel are generally drawn from the civil service and posted for various periods.

► Staffing and Roles

1.1.3.3 Significance in Governance

The PMO is often regarded as the nerve centre of executive decision-making in India. Its significance lies in its ability to assist the Prime Minister in maintaining official communication with Union Ministers, the President, governors, Chief Ministers, and foreign representatives. The office also handles public grievances and parliamentary questions on general subjects that do not fall under specific ministries.

► Central Coordination Role

► PMO's Strategic Policy Role

As the think tank of the Prime Minister, the PMO contributes to formulating critical policy decisions and provides strategic input on matters of national importance. It serves as the Prime Minister's interface with the media and the general public, managing public relations and ensuring that the government's message is effectively communicated.

1.1.3.4 Challenges and Criticisms

► PMO's Controversial Power Concentration

The PMO's expanding role has not been without controversy. During the Emergency period (1975–1977), it was perceived as an authoritarian power centre, overshadowing the Cabinet Secretariat and other constitutional bodies. Critics often viewed it as a "micro-cabinet," alleging that it attempted to supplant the Cabinet in major policymaking functions. The Janata government sought to curtail the PMO's power and reduce it to a purely secretarial role. However, the trend of concentration of policymaking power within the PMO resurfaced in subsequent years, raising concerns about its influence over the democratic process.

1.1.3.5 Current Role and Importance

► Enduring Strategic Role

Today, the PMO continues to play a vital role in India's governance structure. While its public profile may be relatively lower than during earlier decades, its strategic importance remains undiminished. The office's ability to provide comprehensive support to the Prime Minister, coordinate with various stakeholders, and act as a think tank ensures that it remains central to the country's administrative and policy framework.

► Evolving Centrality in Governance

In conclusion, the PMO's evolution reflects the changing dynamics of governance in India. Its functions, responsibilities, and organisational structure have adapted to meet the demands of a complex and dynamic political environment. As the nerve centre of executive decision-making, the PMO will continue to be a critical institution in shaping the country's future.

1.1.4 Cabinet Secretariat

► Key Executive Coordinator

The Constitution of India provides for a parliamentary system of government with the Cabinet as the real executive. The Cabinet, headed by the Prime Minister, is responsible for the entire administration of the Government of India. In this task, the Cabinet is assisted by the Cabinet Secretariat. It operates

under the leadership and direction of the Prime Minister. It has an important coordinating role in the process of policymaking. It is headed politically by the Prime Minister and administratively by the Cabinet Secretary. The Cabinet Secretariat came into existence in 1947, replacing the secretariat of the Governor-General's Executive Council.

1.1.4.1 Organisational Structure

► Three main wings

The Cabinet Secretariat is organised into three main wings: the Civil Wing, the Military Wing, and the Intelligence Wing.

1. **Civil Wing:** The civil wing is the main wing. It provides aid, advice, and assistance to the union cabinet. It frames the Rules of Business and coordinates the allocation of responsibilities among ministries.
2. **Military Wing:** Manages secretarial assistance to the defence committee of the cabinet, the military affairs committee, the national defence council, and other committees dealing with defence matters.
3. **Intelligence Wing:** Assists the Joint Intelligence Committee in intelligence-related matters.

In addition, the Cabinet Secretariat includes the Joint Communication Electronics Committee. The Cabinet Secretary leads this structure and ensures the efficiency of cabinet operations by preparing agendas, providing necessary information for deliberations, recording decisions, and monitoring their implementation.

1.1.4.2 Functions of the Cabinet Secretariat

► Primary functions

The cabinet secretariat plays a crucial role in the Indian government. It provides secretariat assistance to the cabinet and facilitates the smooth operation of government. It ensures inter-ministerial coordination and monitors the implementation of cabinet decisions.

The primary functions of the Cabinet Secretariat include:

- **Coordination of Cabinet Meetings:** Preparing and circulating agendas, facilitating discussions, and recording decisions.

- **Policy advice:** It advises the prime minister and the cabinet on policy matters, including legislative proposals.
- **Implementation of Government Decisions:** Ensuring ministries follow up on cabinet directives and reporting progress. The secretariat monitors the implementation of policies and programmes to ensure they are effective and achieve their intended goals.
- **Secretarial Assistance:** Providing support to the Council of Ministers, cabinet committees, and inter-ministerial consultations.
- **Information Dissemination:** Keeping the President, Vice President, and ministries informed through summaries and notes on significant matters.
- **Business Allocation:** Finalising the Rules of Business and allocating government responsibilities among ministries under the Prime Minister's direction.
- **Crisis Management:** The cabinet secretariat plays a vital role in managing major crisis situations, ensuring coordination and effective government response.

1.1.4.3 Cabinet Secretary

The office of the cabinet secretary was created in India in 1950. He is the head of the cabinet secretariat. He succeeded the secretary to the General's Executive Council. He is given top place among the civil servants in the official warrant of precedence. Thus, he is the senior-most civil servant in India, ranking eleventh on the Indian order of precedence.

► The head of the cabinet secretariat

► Ex-officio head of the civil service board

The cabinet secretary is the ex-officio head of the civil service board, the cabinet secretariat, the Indian Administrative Service, and all civil services under the Rules of Business of the government. He is under the direct charge of the prime minister. He assists the council of ministers, advises the prime minister, and ensures the smooth functioning of the government.

Functions and role:

- He monitors the implementation of decisions taken by the cabinet and its committees.
- The cabinet secretary facilitates smooth transactions of



► He provides secretarial assistance to the cabinet and its committees

► Ensures smooth functioning of the Cabinet and its Committees

business between ministers and ministries.

- He prepares agendas and provides necessary information for the cabinet meetings.
- He watches the implementation of cabinet decisions by the concerned ministries.
- He ensures smooth functioning of the government.
- He acts as the chief coordinator of the central government.
- Ensures that the civil services function unbiasedly and with discipline.

The Cabinet Secretariat oversees the administration of the Government of India and ensures the smooth functioning of the Cabinet and its Committees. It coordinates the government's business across ministries and departments. Its key functions include:

- **Coordination of Government Business:** Facilitates smooth transactions of business across ministries and departments, providing secretarial support to the Cabinet and its committees.
- **Inter-ministerial Coordination:** Resolves inter-departmental differences and fosters consensus among ministries, often through standing or ad hoc Cabinet committees.
- **Information Management:** Prepares and circulates summaries of ministerial activities to keep the President, Vice-President, and Cabinet informed of key developments in all ministries and departments.
- **Crisis Management:** Manages major national crises and emergency situations on behalf of the government.

1.1.5 Comparative Analysis Cabinet Secretariat with the PMO

The Cabinet Secretariat and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) have distinct but complementary roles within the Indian administrative framework.

Aspect	Cabinet Secretariat	Prime Minister's Office (PMO)
Roles and Functions	Coordinates cabinet functions, inter-ministerial consultations, and provides secretarial assistance.	Acts as the Prime Minister's personal office, offering policy advice, monitoring key projects, and functioning as a think tank.
Hierarchical Positioning	Operates under the overall supervision of the Prime Minister but maintains administrative autonomy.	Directly attached to the Prime Minister, playing an immediate and dynamic role in decision-making.
Scope of Activities	Ensures coordination across ministries and oversees policy implementation.	Focuses on strategic planning, political management, and high-level decision-making inputs.
Overall Significance	Ensures administrative efficiency and smooth coordination of government functions.	Supports the Prime Minister in policymaking and strategic oversight.

In conclusion, the Cabinet Secretariat and the PMO are both vital to the governance of India. While the Cabinet Secretariat ensures administrative efficiency and coordination, the PMO supports the Prime Minister in policymaking and strategic oversight.

Summarized Overview

The unit offers a comprehensive analysis of the historical and institutional development of India's central administrative framework. It begins by exploring the administrative legacy inherited from the Mughal and British eras. The Mughals established a highly centralised governance model characterised by efficient revenue administration and the Mansabdari system. The British administration introduced the Indian Civil Service (ICS) and a robust secretariat system, which laid the foundation

for India's post-independence administrative structure. Understanding these historical influences is crucial for comprehending contemporary governance practices.

The structure and functioning of the Central Secretariat and key administrative offices form the next focus. The Central Secretariat plays a pivotal role in policy formulation and inter-ministerial coordination, while the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is the nerve centre for executive decision-making and strategic initiatives. The Cabinet Secretariat complements these functions by coordinating cabinet decisions and providing essential secretarial support. This unit delves into the roles, hierarchical relationships, and distinctive contributions of these vital institutions to India's governance landscape.

The unit concludes with an analytical evaluation of the evolution and modernisation of central administration. While administrative continuity has been maintained, reforms like e-governance and organisational modernisation have emerged as solutions to inefficiencies. Discussions on bureaucratic challenges and comparative analyses between the PMO and the Cabinet Secretariat provide critical insights into enhancing administrative effectiveness. Through lectures, case studies, group activities, and assignments, students are encouraged to critically engage with the complexities of India's central administration.

Self-Assessment

1. Evaluate the relevance of Mughal administrative practices in shaping contemporary governance structures in India.
2. Discuss the key features of the British administrative system and its impact on post-independence central administration.
3. Compare and contrast the roles and functions of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and the Cabinet Secretariat in the context of executive decision-making.
4. Explain the organisational structure and key functions of the Central Secretariat and its role in inter-ministerial coordination.
5. Assess the challenges faced by the central administration in India and suggest reforms for enhancing efficiency and accountability.
6. Trace the evolution of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and its growing significance in the administrative landscape of India.
7. Analyze the continuity and changes in India's central administration from historical models to modern governance frameworks.
8. Describe the role of the Cabinet Secretariat in ensuring effective implementation of government decisions and its relationship with other administrative offices.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

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UNIT 2

Administrative Machinery at the Central Level

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ▶ explain the structure, functions, and relevance of central ministries and departments in India's administrative setup
- ▶ evaluate the role and significance of All India Services and other central services in maintaining an integrated administrative system
- ▶ assess the practical implications of coordination between central ministries and departments for efficient policy implementation
- ▶ critically examine the effectiveness of administrative mechanisms at the central level in addressing contemporary governance challenges
- ▶ design recommendations for improving the coordination and efficiency of central services to meet emerging administrative demands

Background

The administrative machinery at the central level plays a pivotal role in implementing government policies, delivering public services, and maintaining the rule of law in India. It consists of a vast network of ministries, departments, and specialised services that ensure the smooth functioning of the Indian government. This machinery operates under the overall framework of the Union Government and serves as the nerve centre for policy formulation and coordination across states.

Central ministries and departments are responsible for formulating and implementing policies on a range of critical issues such as finance, defence, external affairs, and education. Each ministry is headed by a Cabinet Minister and supported by junior ministers and a bureaucratic hierarchy led by a secretary. These departments ensure efficient decision-making and provide specialised inputs in their respective areas of governance. Their coordination is crucial for fostering coherent national development strategies and effective inter-governmental relations.

The All-India Services (IAS, IPS, and IFS) and other central services form the backbone of India's civil administration. These services offer the Union and State Governments skilled personnel who manage administrative functions and maintain law and order. Their presence ensures a unified and integrated governance structure across the federation. Understanding the structure, functions, and significance of these services is essential for comprehending how public administration is conducted at the central level in India.

Keywords

Functional classification, National integration, Cadre allocation, Ministerial responsibility, Administrative neutrality

Discussion

1.2.1 Administrative Machinery at the Central Level

The administrative system at the central level is designed to ensure effective implementation of laws, policies, and programmes across the country. The executive authority of the Union is vested in the President of India, as outlined in Article 53 of the Constitution, which states that executive powers are to be exercised either directly by the President or through subordinate officers in accordance with the Constitution. Although the President is the nominal head, real executive power rests with the Council of Ministers, headed by the Prime Minister, who aids and advises the President in the exercise of executive functions.

► Central Executive Power Structure

► Evolution of Ministerial System

As we previously discussed, India's administrative framework has evolved from the British-era system, where the Governor-General-in-Council was responsible for executive decisions. Over time, the portfolio system was introduced, enabling individual members to oversee specific departments. This system continued post-independence, evolving into the current structure where ministries are headed by individual ministers accountable to both the legislature and the Council of Ministers. To ensure efficient functioning, ministries are organised into departments responsible for distinct functions.

1.2.1.1 Central Ministries and Departments: Structure

► Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961

The allocation of business at the central level is governed by the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961. These rules prescribe the distribution of work among various ministries and departments, ensuring clarity in roles and responsibilities. The President, on the advice of the Prime Minister, allocates ministries and departments to different ministers.

► Ministries operate at three levels

Each ministry typically comprises one or more departments. A cabinet minister heads the ministry, often assisted by ministers of state and deputy ministers. The administrative structure within ministries operates at three levels:

- 1. Political Level:** Comprising the minister, ministers of state, and sometimes parliamentary secretaries. Their primary functions include policy initiation, supervision of policy implementation, representation in Parliament, and coordination with other ministries.
- 2. Secretariat Level:** Headed by a secretary, this level provides expert advice and assists in policy formulation. The secretariat functions as the nerve centre of the ministry, overseeing administrative processes and ensuring coordination across various divisions.
- 3. Executive Level:** Comprising various officials responsible for executing the decisions and policies formulated by the ministry.

1.2.1.2 Functions and Responsibilities of Ministries

► Formulating and implementing policies

Ministries are responsible for formulating and implementing policies in their respective domains. For instance, the Ministry of Defence handles national security and defence-related matters, while the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare oversees public health policies and programmes. The work distribution among ministries can be categorised based on the following bases:

Bases of Departmental Organisation:

In any organisation, work must be divided effectively.



► Four main bases of departmental organisation

According to Luther Gulick, departments can be organised on different bases. The four main bases of departmental organisation are:

- **Function or Purpose:** Departments are organised by their functional purpose (e.g., Defence, Education, Transport). This functional structure means each department aligns with a specific purpose. Most government departments in India are organised on this basis.
- **Process or Profession:** Departments are grouped by specialised processes or skills. For example, departments of Medical Services, Engineering, or Legal Affairs consist of professionals trained in those fields.
- **Clientele (Person Served):** Departments focus on the group of people they serve. For example, a Rehabilitation Department may assist displaced persons, and a Welfare Department may focus on refugees or tribal communities.
- **Territory or Area:** Departments are organised by geographic region. Examples include the Ministry of External Affairs (dealing with foreign countries) and the Ministry of Rural Development, which are structured around areas of responsibility.

1.2.1.3 Coordination Mechanisms Between Ministries

► Coordination mechanisms

To ensure smooth functioning and avoid duplication of efforts, various coordination mechanisms are in place:

1. **Inter-Ministerial Consultation:** Matters affecting multiple ministries require consultation to ensure alignment and coherence.
2. **Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and Cabinet Secretariat:** These bodies play a crucial role in coordinating activities between ministries and resolving inter-departmental issues.
3. **Cabinet Committees:** These committees facilitate decision-making on critical issues involving multiple ministries.

1.2.1.4 Working of Ministries/Departments

Ministries are structured to ensure efficient administration and effective delivery of services. As we discussed in the previous unit, the typical hierarchy within a ministry is as shown in the table below.

Position	Role and Responsibilities
Secretary	Administrative head; advises the minister, represents the ministry in parliamentary committees, and ensures efficient administration.
Special Secretary	Occasionally appointed for specific functions; may disrupt the traditional hierarchy.
Additional/Joint Secretary	Heads a wing within the ministry and oversees specific divisions.
Deputy Secretary/Director	Leads a division and ensures policy implementation.
Under-Secretary	Manages a branch within a division
Section Officer	Leads a section and handles day-to-day administrative tasks.

1.2.1.5 Challenges in Allocation and Functioning

The distribution of work among ministries is not always rational or consistent. Political and personal considerations often influence the creation of independent ministries or departments. For instance, ministries may be created to accommodate political leaders or weaken the influence of certain ministers by reallocating departments. Historical examples include the separation of the Department of Rural Development from the Ministry of Agriculture and the creation of the Ministry of Fertilizers and Chemicals. Despite these challenges, the central administrative machinery remains a critical component of governance in India, ensuring the smooth implementation of policies and programmes for the nation's development.

► Distribution of work among ministries



1.2.2 All India Services (AIS)

1.2.2.1 Historical Evolution and Legal Framework

▶ Indianisation of administration

The All-India Services (AIS) have a distinctive place in the Indian administrative structure. Historically, their roots trace back to the Indian Civil Service (ICS) established during the British era. Initially, these services were directly controlled by the Secretary of State for India and were considered elitist and unaccountable to public opinion. The reforms introduced under the Government of India Act of 1919 and 1935 made incremental changes to these services. However, Indian leaders consistently demanded greater Indianisation and control over administrative functions.

▶ Unified administrative framework

Post-Independence, the new government recognised the importance of a unified administrative framework. In 1946, under the leadership of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the foundation was laid for the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS) to replace the ICS and IPS. According to Article 312, if the Rajya Sabha passes a resolution supported by not less than two-thirds of its members present and voting that it is necessary or expedient in the nation's interest to do so, Parliament may provide for the creation of one or more All India Services. These services are common to the centre and the states.

▶ All-India Service Act, 1951

The recruitment and conditions of service under it can be regulated by an act of Parliament. Under this power, Parliament has made the All-India Service Act, 1951. The conditions of service, recruitment, conduct, discipline, and appeal of the members of the All-India services are now regulated by rules made under this act.

▶ Inter-state coordination

The object of the provision is to ensure great inter-state coordination and implementation of policies of the central government through these officers. This also enables the central government to exercise control over the states in matters of the execution of union laws. Members of the services have the mandate to serve in any part of the country and are employed under the authority of both the states and the central government.

The AIS currently comprises the following services:

Indian Administrative Service (IAS)

The Indian Administrative Service (IAS) is one of the three All-India Services and is often described as the "steel frame" of

► Steel frame

India. IAS officers occupy senior positions in the administrative structures of both the central and state governments. They ensure that administration functions in line with laws, norms, and policies. The main roles and functions of IAS officers include:

1. **Policy Formulation and Implementation:** They formulate and implement government policies at various levels, ensuring alignment with national objectives.
2. **Departmental Management:** They manage and oversee the functions of government departments and public sector undertakings.
3. **Service Delivery Improvement:** They work to improve public service delivery in areas such as healthcare, education, and sanitation.
4. **Financial Management:** They ensure proper financial management and effective use of public funds and resources.
5. **Crisis Management Coordination:** They coordinate and integrate national efforts during emergencies and natural disasters, acting as central actors in crisis response.
6. **Advisory Role:** They provide expert advice to the government on various policy and administrative matters.
7. **Coordination and Liaison:** They coordinate activities between different government departments and between the government and the public.

► Roles and functions

Indian Police Service (IPS)

The Indian Police Service (IPS) is the premier All-India service for law enforcement and internal security. IPS officers hold senior positions in state police forces, central armed police forces, and other security agencies. They ensure the effective functioning of the country's policing and security apparatus. Key roles and responsibilities of IPS officers include:

- **Maintenance of Law and Order:** Overseeing police operations to ensure public safety and order.
- **Crime Prevention and Detection:** Leading efforts to prevent crime and conduct criminal investigations.
- **Traffic Management:** Managing traffic enforcement and ensuring road safety.

► Law enforcement and internal security



- **Security and Intelligence:** Overseeing internal security and intelligence gathering to protect the nation.
- **VIP Protection:** Ensuring the security of important government officials and dignitaries.
- **Agency Coordination:** Collaborating with central agencies such as the CBI and NIA.
- **Leadership of Special Units:** Commanding specialised security organisations like the Intelligence Bureau, CBI, RAW and central armed police forces such as the BSF and ITBP.
- **Counter-terrorism:** Leading efforts to prevent and respond to terrorism.

► Management and conservation of forest and wildlife resources

Indian Forest Service (IFS)

The Indian Forest Service (IFS), established in 1966, is responsible for the scientific management and conservation of the country's forest and wildlife resources. The roles and functions of IFS officers include:

- **Forest Management:** Formulating and implementing policies for forest conservation, biodiversity protection, and afforestation.
- **Wildlife Conservation:** Protecting and preserving wildlife species and their habitats, including the management of national parks and sanctuaries.
- **Environmental Protection:** Implementing measures to address environmental issues such as pollution and climate change.
- **Research and Planning:** Conducting research and developing strategies for the sustainable use of natural resources while maintaining ecological balance.
- **Stakeholder Coordination:** Collaborating with local communities, NGOs, and government bodies to promote sustainable development and forest protection.

Service	Role and Responsibilities
Indian Administrative Service (IAS)	Acts as the backbone of the country's administrative machinery. Responsible for policy formulation, implementation, and governance at the central and state levels. Officers hold key positions such as District Magistrate, Commissioner, Secretary in ministries, and Chief Secretary at the state level.
Indian Police Service (IPS)	Ensures law enforcement, public safety, and internal security. Officers serve as Superintendents of Police (SP), Commissioners, and Directors General of Police (DGP). They also work in central agencies like the CBI, IB, and RAW, tackling crime, terrorism, and national security threats.
Indian Forest Service (IFS)	Manages and conserves the country's forests, wildlife, and environment. Officers work in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, as well as in state forest departments, overseeing afforestation programmes, wildlife conservation, and sustainable forest management.

The selection of officers for the All-India Services (AIS) is conducted through a rigorous nationwide examination administered by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). The process involves three stages: a preliminary examination

► Selection and training

to screen candidates, a main examination to assess their in-depth knowledge, and a personality test (interview) to evaluate leadership qualities and decision-making abilities. Only the most meritorious candidates are selected, after which they undergo foundational and specialised training at designated academies such as Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) for IAS officers, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy (SVPNPA) for IPS officers, and Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (IGNFA) for IFS officers. This comprehensive training equips them with the skills necessary to handle the complexities of public administration, law enforcement, and environmental conservation.

1.2.2.2 Cadre allocation

► Contribute to both regional development and national policymaking

Once selected, AIS officers are allocated to specific state cadres, where they serve under a dual governance structure involving both the central and state governments. This unique framework ensures that officers contribute to both regional development and national policymaking. While officers primarily work within their assigned state, they may also be deputed to central ministries, agencies, and international organisations, allowing them to gain diverse administrative experience. This system fosters cooperative federalism, enabling a seamless exchange of governance practices between the centre and the states, ultimately strengthening India's administrative machinery.

1.2.2.3 Functions and Responsibilities at Central and State Levels

Central Level

► Formulation and implementation of national policies

At the central level, administrative functions and responsibilities are vast and multifaceted. A key responsibility is the formulation and implementation of national policies that impact the entire country. This involves developing strategies and frameworks across sectors such as education, health, defence, and finance. Coordination between various ministries and departments is essential to ensure seamless governance and the successful execution of these policies.

Moreover, central-level officials often represent the country in international forums. Their roles in global negotiations,

► Representing in international forums

treaty discussions, and diplomatic engagements contribute to maintaining India's global presence and fulfilling international obligations. Additionally, central-level administrators are often deputed to key roles within the central government, where they handle specialised functions and critical decision-making processes.

State Level

► Within the state's geographical boundaries

At the state level, responsibilities focus on governance and development within the state's geographical boundaries. One of the primary functions is the maintenance of law and order, which involves ensuring the safety and security of citizens and addressing civil disturbances. Revenue collection and the implementation of development schemes are also crucial responsibilities, contributing to the state's economic stability and growth.

► Integrating various departments and agencies

Coordination of state-level administrative functions ensures efficient governance by integrating various departments and agencies. State administrators also play a pivotal role in advising state governments on policy matters, helping tailor national frameworks to local needs and circumstances. Their involvement in decision-making and policy execution at the state level is essential for responsive and effective governance.

► Policy synchronisation and knowledge exchange

1.2.2.4 Importance in National Integration

All India Services (AIS) officers play a crucial role in fostering national integration by harmonising administrative efforts across states and the central government. They ensure policy synchronisation by implementing central policies uniformly across states, thereby minimising disparities and promoting coherence. Additionally, they facilitate knowledge exchange by bridging regional and national perspectives, sharing best practices, and enhancing policy frameworks. Through capacity building, AIS officers develop administrative expertise by serving in various inter-state and central tenures, thereby fostering a sense of unity and administrative consistency.

► Four groups of services

1.2.3 Central Civil Services

The central civil services are under the exclusive control of the central government and are recruited to administer the subjects allocated to the Union government under the Constitution of



India. These services are categorised into four groups based on responsibilities and pay scales:

- Group A (Class I): High-responsibility positions with senior-level policy implementation roles.
- Group B (Class II): Middle-level supervisory officers with direct functional roles.
- Group C (Class III): Clerical and subordinate staff positions.
- Group D (Class IV): Supporting roles such as peons, messengers, and other lower-level tasks.

Generally, discussions around central services primarily focus on Groups A and B officers, as they hold key administrative and managerial positions. Recruitment to these groups is made through the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and the Staff Selection Commission (SSC).

1.2.3.1 Important Central Services

1. Indian Revenue Service (IRS)

► Administration of direct and indirect taxes

The IRS plays a crucial role in the administration of direct and indirect taxes in India. Officers in this service handle taxation policies, enforcement, and investigation of tax fraud. Their work contributes significantly to the financial stability of the country by ensuring tax compliance and maximising revenue generation. Key responsibilities of the IRS include:

- **Formulation and implementation of tax policies.**
 1. Collection of income tax, corporate tax, excise duty, and customs duty.
 2. Investigation of tax evasion and fraud cases.
 3. Administration of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

2. Indian Audit and Accounts Service (IAAS)

► Maintaining financial accountability in government expenditures

The IAAS is responsible for maintaining financial accountability in government expenditures. Officers in this service conduct audits across ministries, public sector undertakings (PSUs), and autonomous bodies to ensure transparency and fiscal discipline. Main responsibilities of the IAAS are:

- Auditing government receipts and expenditures.
- Conducting performance and compliance audits.
- Ensuring proper financial reporting in public institutions.
- Providing audit-based recommendations for improving financial governance.

3. Indian Foreign Service (IFS)

► Diplomatic relations and foreign policy

The IFS manages India's diplomatic relations and foreign policy. It is considered one of the most prestigious central services, ranking next to the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and superior to the Indian Police Service (IPS) in pay scales. Officers represent India on international platforms and engage in global negotiations to protect and promote national interests. The main responsibilities of the IFS include:

- **Representation of India in international organisations such as the UN, WTO, and IMF.**
 - Negotiation of treaties and bilateral agreements.
 - Strengthening India's diplomatic ties with other nations.
 - Promoting trade, investment, and cultural exchange with foreign countries.

1.2.3.2 Recruitment to Central Civil Services

► Recruitment to Groups A and B central services

Recruitment to Group A and B central services is conducted through the UPSC, while Group C services are primarily recruited through the Staff Selection Commission (SSC). The Civil Services Examination (CSE) conducted by the UPSC is the primary mode of entry for several prestigious services, including all three All India Services (IAS, IPS, IFS) and the following central services.

1. Central Services (Group A):

1. Indian Foreign Service (IFS)
2. Indian Revenue Service (IRS)
3. Indian Audit and Accounts Service (IAAS)
4. Indian Defence Accounts Service (IDAS)
5. Indian Civil Accounts Service (ICAS)
6. Indian Railway Services (Traffic, Accounts, and Personnel)

7. Indian Trade Service (ITS)
8. Indian Information Service (IIS)
9. Central Engineering Services (Electrical, Mechanical, Civil)
10. Indian Ordnance Factories Service (IOFS)
11. Indian Postal Service
12. Indian Economic and Statistical Services

2. Central Services (Group B):

1. Central Secretariat Service (CSS)
2. Railway Board Secretariat Service
3. Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Daman and Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli Civil Service (DANICS)
4. Pondicherry Civil Service (PCS)
5. Customs Appraisers' Service

Additionally, the UPSC conducts separate examinations or interviews for specialised services such as the Geological Survey of India, Botanical and Zoological Survey of India, and Meteorological Service. These services ensure the smooth functioning of various government departments and contribute to national development.

► Specialised services

1.2.3.3 Functions and Administrative Roles of Central Services

► Administrative functions

Central services play a pivotal role in the effective functioning of the central government by undertaking a range of administrative functions:

- Policy Development and Implementation: Crafting and executing policies in specialised domains such as finance, defence, and commerce.
- Regulatory Compliance: Ensuring adherence to government rules and regulations through meticulous auditing and inspections.
- Strategic Representation: Representing India's interests in

both domestic and international contexts.

- **Inter-departmental Coordination:** Facilitating seamless collaboration between various departments to achieve administrative goals.

1.2.3.4 Contribution to Governance at the Central Level

► Strengthening governance at the national level

The contributions of central services are instrumental in strengthening governance at the national level:

- **Policy Implementation:** They ensure the efficient execution of national policies across diverse sectors.
- **Administrative Efficiency:** Officers guarantee the smooth functioning of central government departments.
- **Accountability Mechanisms:** Strengthening financial and operational accountability through audits and inspections.
- **Specialised Expertise:** Leveraging domain-specific knowledge to provide well-informed solutions and effective governance strategies.

The All-India Services and Central Services form the backbone of India's administrative machinery. While the AIS ensures seamless integration between the Centre and states, central services provide the specialised expertise necessary for efficient governance. Together, they uphold the democratic ethos, promote good governance, and contribute to India's development and national integration.

1.2.4 Significance of Central Administrative Machinery

► Relationship between ministers and secretaries

The central administrative machinery plays a pivotal role in formulating and implementing policies. The relationship between ministers and secretaries is central to the efficiency of administration. While ministers provide political leadership and establish policy objectives, secretaries serve as key advisors and implementers. Their roles are intertwined, with secretaries interpreting the minister's vision while ensuring adherence to administrative rules and guidelines. Cooperation between these

two levels is essential for smooth and effective governance. However, challenges arise when there is poor coordination or when secretaries are reduced to mere executors without providing meaningful input.

The relationship between ministers and secretaries often faces friction due to factors such as frequent portfolio changes, differences in decision-making approaches, and a lack of role clarity. Personal rapport and mutual trust are crucial for productive collaboration. While secretaries are expected to offer impartial and honest advice, ministers may sometimes disregard their input, perceiving it as obstruction. Recommendations by the A. D. Gorwala committee report in 1954 emphasise that secretaries should not be passive executors but proactive advisors capable of expressing free and frank opinions.

1.2.5 Challenges of Central Administrative Machinery

1. Political interference and bureaucratic neutrality: One of the major challenges is political interference in administration, which undermines the effectiveness of the machinery. Politicians often bypass formal administrative channels, directly influencing lower-level officials for personal or political gain. This results in favouritism, arbitrary transfers, and harassment of civil servants who insist on following rules. The notion of bureaucratic neutrality, which requires civil servants to work impartially for any lawful government, has weakened, with many bureaucrats becoming politically affiliated or ideologically inclined.

► Erosion of Bureaucratic Neutrality

2. Rift causes and impact on administration: Several factors contribute to conflicts between ministers and secretaries, including ministers' interference in routine administration, unrealistic expectations, and secretaries submitting inadequate proposals. These issues weaken administrative efficiency and disrupt the policymaking process. A cooperative relationship based on well-defined roles and responsibilities is necessary to mitigate these challenges and ensure smooth governance.

► Minister-Secretary Conflicts

3. Recommendations for improving efficiency: To improve administrative efficiency, experts suggest defining clear roles for ministers and secretaries to prevent overlaps and encroachments. Building a culture of mutual respect and trust can help create a collaborative working environment. Additionally, curbing political interference and restoring the neutrality of civil

► Improving Administrative Efficiency

servants are essential steps toward enhancing the effectiveness of central administration. Transparent decision-making processes and adherence to ethical administrative practices can further strengthen the administrative framework.

By addressing these challenges and fostering constructive relationships between political and administrative levels, the central administrative machinery can function efficiently and uphold democratic values.

Summarized Overview

The administrative machinery at the central level in India plays a crucial role in policy formulation, implementation, and governance. It operates within the constitutional framework and is structured into various ministries, departments, and services. Central ministries and departments form the backbone of governance, with a well-defined hierarchy that ensures coordination for effective decision-making. Each ministry focuses on specific sectors, while the departments implement policies at the grassroots level.

The All-India Services (AIS), including the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS), and Indian Forest Service (IFS), serve as a critical link between the central and state governments. Established to foster national integration and uniformity in administration, these services are governed by legal frameworks and recruitment through the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). Their contributions span policy planning, law enforcement, and environmental management.

Other central services, such as the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), Indian Revenue Service (IRS), and Indian Audit and Accounts Service (IA&AS), provide specialised expertise in fields essential to national and international governance. Despite its importance, the central administrative machinery faces challenges such as bureaucratic red tape, overlapping functions, and the need for modernisation. Strengthening inter-ministerial coordination, adopting technology-driven solutions, and fostering accountability are vital steps toward enhancing administrative efficiency and effectiveness.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain the constitutional framework that governs the administrative machinery at the central level in India.
2. Discuss the structure and functions of central ministries and departments, highlighting their significance in governance.
3. Evaluate the historical evolution and significance of the All India Services (AIS) in promoting national integration.
4. Analyse the recruitment process and functions of the All India Services (AIS) at the central and state levels.
5. Outline the key functions of any two important central services and their contributions to governance.
6. Identify and discuss the major challenges faced by the central administrative machinery in India.
7. Suggest measures to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of central-level administration.
8. Assess the role of inter-ministerial coordination in strengthening the administrative machinery at the central level.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

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UNIT 3

Mechanisms of Accountability and Reform

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ▶ identify the key accountability mechanisms at the central level of Indian administration, including CAT and parliamentary committees
- ▶ explain the role of parliamentary committees, expert bodies, and administrative reforms in ensuring effective governance
- ▶ evaluate the effectiveness of current accountability mechanisms and reforms in addressing administrative challenges
- ▶ propose recommendations for strengthening accountability and reform mechanisms in India's central administration

Background

Accountability mechanisms are crucial for ensuring that administration functions effectively, efficiently, and transparently in India's democratic setup. With the complex and dynamic nature of public administration, the role of mechanisms that promote accountability has become increasingly significant. Central administrative bodies, legislative oversight, and reform initiatives play a critical role in aligning governance practices with constitutional values, citizens' expectations, and global governance trends.

One of the key elements of accountability in India's administrative structure is the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT), which provides speedy and efficient justice to public servants in service-related matters. As the volume of administrative litigation continues to rise, CAT serves as a critical forum to resolve disputes, ensuring the rights of public officials while maintaining administrative discipline and efficiency. Understanding the functioning of CAT is essential for analysing administrative justice in India.

Moreover, parliamentary committees and expert bodies serve as vital instruments for ensuring government accountability to the legislature and the public. These committees provide detailed scrutiny of legislation, policies, and administrative activities, enhancing transparency and promoting good governance. Administrative reforms further complement these mechanisms by introducing structural and process innovations aimed at modernising and improving the performance of public administration. A comprehensive understanding of these mechanisms is vital for evaluating the evolving administrative landscape in India and promoting a culture of accountability.

Keywords

Grievances redressal, Standing Committee, Ad hoc Committee, Administrative innovation, E-governance

Discussion

1.3.1 Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT)

1.3.1.1 Establishment and Objectives

The Central Administrative Tribunal is a quasi-judicial body established under the Administrative Tribunal Act, 1958. It aims to provide a specialised and efficient platform for resolving disputes and complaints regarding recruitment, conditions of service and other service matters of the central government employees. It offers a speedy and less expensive alternative to the regular courts. The recommendation for setting up administrative tribunals was first made by the Administrative Reforms Commission (1966-70) and later reinforced by the J.C. Shah Committee in 1969. The Supreme Court in 1980 also highlighted the need for Civil Service Tribunals to prevent public servants from being entangled in prolonged legal battles. Following these developments, the Constitution was amended through the 42nd Amendment (Article 323-A) to facilitate the establishment of administrative tribunals.

► Administrative
Tribunal Act, 1958

1.3.1.2 Jurisdiction and Composition

The Administrative Tribunals Act of 1985, enacted by Parliament, formally established CAT, which commenced

► Jurisdiction

operations on November 1, 1985. CAT has jurisdiction over service-related disputes concerning members of the All-India Services, central services, civil posts under the centre and civilian employees of defence forces. However, it has no jurisdiction over defence force officers, staff of the Supreme Court and secretarial staff of the Parliament.

► State Administrative Tribunals (SATs) and Joint Administrative Tribunals

CAT operates through multiple benches, with the principal bench located in Delhi and additional benches in cities like Allahabad, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai. The Act also allows for the creation of State Administrative Tribunals (SATs) and Joint Administrative Tribunals for multiple states upon request.

Composition

The composition of the Central Administrative Tribunal is as follows:

- **Chairman:** The chairman is a retired judge of the Supreme Court or a retired chief justice of the High Court. He is appointed by the president.
- **Judicial members:** The CAT consists of judicial members who are retired judges of the Supreme Court or retired chief justices of the High Court.
- **Administrative Members:** The CAT also includes administrative members who are officers having special knowledge and experience in administrative matters. These members provide administrative and technical support to the tribunal. The chairman and members are appointed by the president after consultation with the Chief Justice of India.

► Organizational Structure

Each tribunal consists of a Chairman, Vice-Chairmen, and judicial and administrative members. A bench typically includes one judicial and one administrative member. The President of India appoints the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen, and members, with consultation from the Chief Justice of India for judicial appointments. Members are selected based on their experience in the judiciary or senior administrative roles.

1.3.1.3 Functions and Significance

► Specialised forum to address disputes and grievances

The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) serves as a specialised forum to address disputes and grievances related to public service employees of the Government of India and certain statutory bodies. It plays a crucial role in maintaining administrative efficiency and employee satisfaction. The main functions of CAT are the following:

► Autonomous and dedicated platform

1. Independent Forum for Speedy and Cost-effective Adjudication

CAT provides an autonomous, dedicated platform for resolving service-related disputes without the procedural delays often associated with traditional civil courts. By bypassing the lengthy processes of regular judicial systems, it ensures that cases are resolved faster and with minimal financial burdens on both employees and government departments. For example, an employee denied a promotion based on unclear rules can approach CAT for a swift hearing and fair adjudication without bearing exorbitant legal expenses.

► Efficiency of the judiciary

2. Reducing Backlog in Traditional Courts

Before the establishment of CAT, service-related cases clogged the dockets of civil courts and High Courts. With the tribunal taking exclusive jurisdiction over service matters, judicial resources in regular courts are now better utilised for other important legal issues. This shift contributes to the overall efficiency of the judiciary. For example, by transferring hundreds of service-related disputes to CAT, courts in Delhi and Mumbai have witnessed a reduction in case backlogs over time.

► Uphold principles of natural justice and fairness

3. Ensuring Fairness and Transparency in Service Grievances

CAT fosters accountability by upholding principles of natural justice and fairness. It ensures that both the government and employees have an equal opportunity to present their cases, thereby promoting transparency in administrative processes. The tribunal's quasi-judicial nature, guided by administrative and legal experts, ensures impartiality in its decisions. For example, a disciplinary action against a government employee for alleged misconduct is carefully examined by CAT, which ensures that due process is followed before any punishment is imposed.

4. Enhancing Employee Morale

The existence of CAT offers a structured and predictable grievance redressal mechanism, thereby enhancing the confidence and morale of government employees. Knowing that there is an impartial body to address grievances helps employees focus on their work without the anxiety of unresolved administrative disputes. Through this method, a sincere and long-serving officer unfairly transferred without valid justification can seek relief at CAT, improving their trust in the system.

► Impartial body to address grievances

5. Provision for Appeals and Judicial Review

Although CAT is designed to function independently of the conventional judiciary, its decisions are subject to review. Following the Supreme Court's 1997 judgment, CAT orders can be appealed to the Division Bench of the concerned High Court, ensuring judicial oversight and maintaining the integrity of the legal system. In cases where either the government department or the aggrieved employee is dissatisfied with CAT's decision, they can seek a review at the High Court level through a writ petition under Article 226 of the Constitution of India.

► Decisions are subject to review

6. Legal and Procedural Representation

Government departments typically present their cases through legal practitioners or departmental officers, while aggrieved individuals can appear personally or appoint legal representatives. This flexibility ensures that all parties are fairly represented, further contributing to a balanced and efficient adjudication process. For example, an aggrieved employee unable to afford a lawyer can present their case directly to the tribunal, making justice accessible to all.

► Flexibility

1.3.2 Role of Parliamentary Committees

Parliamentary committees are groups of members of Parliament appointed to examine specific issues, legislation, or government policies. Given the vastness and complexity of Parliament, which cannot promptly and thoroughly address every issue that arises, committees are indispensable for facilitating detailed and focused deliberations. They conduct essential preparatory work, providing valuable insights and recommendations for Parliament's consideration.

► Parliamentary Committee Functions



1.3.2.1 Standing Committees and Ad hoc Committees

► Standing vs Ad hoc

Parliamentary Committees are classified into two types: Standing Committees and Ad hoc Committees. Standing Committees are permanent in nature and are either elected or appointed periodically. They function on a continuous basis and include committees like the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), the Estimates Committee, and the Committee on Public Undertakings (COPU). These committees perform vital roles in overseeing government expenditure, budget planning, and the implementation of public policies. In contrast, Ad hoc Committees are constituted for specific purposes, such as examining a particular bill or issue. Once their task is completed and a report is submitted, they are dissolved.

1.3.2.2 Categorisation of Parliament Committees

► Three categories

Parliamentary committees broadly fall under three categories. The first category comprises committees focused on the organisation and power of the houses, such as the Rules Committee, Privileges Committee, and Business Advisory Committee. These committees ensure smooth functioning and adherence to parliamentary procedures. The second category encompasses legislative committees, which assist in the law-making process. These include select and joint select committees formed to scrutinise important bills. Lastly, financial committees like the Public Accounts Committee, Estimates Committee, and the Committee on Public Undertakings fall under the third category. They play a pivotal role in maintaining fiscal discipline and transparency.

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC)

► “Watchdog” of public finance

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) is one of Parliament’s oldest committees, established in 1921. It is reconstituted annually and consists of 22 members (15 from the Lok Sabha and 7 from the Rajya Sabha), with its chairman elected from among opposition members. The PAC is often called the parliamentary “watchdog” of public finance. Its primary function is to examine the government’s expenditure to ensure it is in accordance with Parliament’s intentions. The committee can summon persons and records, and its recommendations are conventionally binding on the government. The functions of the PAC include:

- **Examining Government Expenditure:** Scrutinising the government's annual financial accounts to ensure expenditures are lawful and efficient, reviewing economy and formality.
- **Scrutinising Financial Transactions:** Reviewing government expenditure to identify wastefulness, extravagance, lack of probity, or other irregularities.
- **Reviewing CAG Reports:** Examining audit reports submitted by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) and ensuring appropriate follow-up action.
- **Identifying Mismanagement:** Highlighting instances of financial mismanagement or inefficiency and raising them in Parliament.
- **Recommending Corrective Measures:** Suggesting steps to improve financial practices and accountability.
- **Reporting to Parliament:** Presenting its findings and recommendations to Parliament.
- **Building Public Accountability:** Raising public awareness about financial accountability and generating pressure for transparency in public spending.

Estimates Committee

► Examines government budget estimates

The Estimates Committee, established in 1950, examines government budget estimates for economy, efficiency, and improved administrative performance. It consists of 30 Lok Sabha members. Its functions include:

- Reviewing the form and arrangement of budget estimates and suggesting economies in public expenditure.
- Ensuring that public funds are utilised within the policy framework implied by the estimates.
- Recommending the format in which estimates should be presented to Parliament.
- Promoting efficiency and administrative reform in government spending.



► Examines the functioning of public sector enterprises

Committee on Public Undertakings (COPU)

The Committee on Public Undertakings (COPU) is a parliamentary committee with 22 members (15 from Lok Sabha, 7 from Rajya Sabha). Established in 1964, it examines the functioning of public sector enterprises. Its functions include:

- **Efficiency Oversight:** Assessing whether public undertakings are managed efficiently and according to sound business principles.
- **Financial Examination:** Reviewing the reports and accounts of public enterprises, including audit reports, and evaluating their performance.
- **Accountability:** Ensuring accountability of public enterprises by scrutinising compliance with financial and commercial standards.

(Note: COPU does not examine government policy or day-to-day administration of the undertakings.)

1.3.2.3 Department Related Standing Committees

► Evolution of Committee System

The introduction of the new Parliamentary Committee System in 1993 marked a pivotal reform in legislative oversight. Initially comprising 17 department-related standing committees, their number was increased to 24 in 2004. These committees are aligned with key ministries such as Commerce, Home Affairs, Defence, and Environment. Each committee includes 30 Lok Sabha members and 15 Rajya Sabha members, serving a one-year tenure. The Speaker of the Lok Sabha consults party leaders for the nomination of chairpersons, ensuring balanced and representative leadership.

► Key Functions of Committees

The primary functions of these committees involve examining grant demands, scrutinising bills, reviewing annual reports, and evaluating policy documents. By facilitating detailed and focused discussions outside the often time-constrained plenary sessions, they contribute to more effective parliamentary functioning. The department-related standing committees have become instrumental in enhancing legislative scrutiny and fostering informed decision-making, ultimately contributing to more efficient governance and a stronger policy direction.

► Expert Bodies' Contributions

1.3.3 Role of Expert Bodies

Expert bodies complement the work of parliamentary committees by providing technical expertise, evidence-based insights, and independent evaluations. These bodies play a critical role in ensuring accountability in governance through the following functions:

- **Policy Analysis and Evaluation:** Expert bodies assess the effectiveness of government policies and programmes, offering recommendations for improvement.
- **Independent Monitoring:** They provide unbiased evaluations of government schemes, ensuring that objectives are met efficiently.
- **Capacity Building:** By offering technical assistance and training to government agencies, expert bodies enhance administrative capabilities.
- **Public Engagement:** Expert bodies often engage with civil society organisations and the public, fostering participatory governance and transparency.

Growing Importance of Committees and Expert Bodies

The legislature's limited capacity to conduct detailed examinations and gather evidence has increased the importance of expert bodies. As committee proceedings are not open to the public or press, members can operate more freely, setting aside party lines to consider issues from broader perspectives. This collaborative approach ensures well-informed decisions. Important expert bodies at the central level are the following.

1. **NITI Aayog:** Policy think tank and successor to the Planning Commission, providing strategic advice and fostering cooperative federalism.
2. **Finance Commission of India:** Constitutional body responsible for recommending the distribution of financial resources between the Centre and the States.
3. **Election Commission of India (ECI):** Constitutional body



that ensures free and fair elections in the country.

4. Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG): Constitutional authority responsible for auditing government finances and ensuring financial accountability.
5. Central Vigilance Commission (CVC): Statutory body tasked with combating corruption in government departments.
6. Central Information Commission (CIC): Statutory authority responsible for enforcing the Right to Information (RTI) Act.
7. Law Commission of India: Advisory body that recommends legal reforms.
8. National Human Rights Commission (NHRC): Statutory body tasked with protecting and promoting human rights.
9. Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI): Regulatory body overseeing the securities market and investor protection.
10. Reserve Bank of India (RBI): Central bank responsible for regulating monetary policy and maintaining financial stability.
11. National Statistical Commission (NSC): Expert body promoting sound and efficient statistical systems.
12. Competition Commission of India (CCI): Ensures fair competition in the market by preventing monopolistic and anti-competitive practices.
13. Lokpal and Lokayuktas: Anti-corruption ombudsman bodies for investigating cases of corruption against public officials.
14. Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT): Regulatory body for the administration of direct tax laws.
15. Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB): Regulatory body for environmental protection and pollution control.

1.3.4 Collaborative Efforts for Effective Governance

The collaboration between Parliamentary Committees and expert bodies creates a comprehensive framework for

► Committee-Expert Synergy

accountability and reform. While committees ensure that government policies and expenditures are transparent and efficient, expert bodies provide the technical expertise required for policy innovation and evaluation. This synergy enhances the overall governance framework and fosters a more responsive and accountable government.

► Enhancing the effectiveness of the legislative process

Role of Parliamentary Committees

Parliamentary committees play a vital role in enhancing the effectiveness of the legislative process. They allow for detailed scrutiny of government policies, bills, and expenditures that would be difficult in full parliamentary sessions. Key functions of parliamentary committees include:

- **Expertise Development:** Committees enable MPs to specialise in specific domains (e.g., finance, foreign affairs) and build expertise.
- **Executive Oversight:** They hold the government accountable by examining policies and identifying flaws or loopholes in governance.
- **Bill Examination:** Committees review proposed legislation clause by clause, often consulting experts and stakeholders to improve the quality of laws.
- **Consensus Building:** With members from multiple parties, committees provide a forum for dialogue and consensus-building, enhancing the legislative process.
- **Leadership Training:** Serving on committees helps MPs develop skills in analysis, debate, and policy-making.
- **Microcosm of Parliament:** Elected by proportional representation, committees mirror the party composition of Parliament, effectively serving as “mini-parliaments.”
- **Legislative Improvement:** Committee reports often lead to strengthened laws through practical recommendations.

► Challenges and Reforms

Despite their importance, committees face challenges such as limited staffing and research support, infrequent or short meetings, and sometimes insufficient participation from members. They have also been criticised for a lack of

transparency (since meetings are often closed to the public) and for occasional political interference. To address these issues, reforms have been suggested:

- **Enhancing Resources:** Providing committees with more expert staff and research capacity.
- **Strengthening Independence:** Ensuring committees operate without undue political pressure and have secure tenures.
- **Encouraging Participation:** Involving civil society experts and ensuring greater member engagement.
- **Increasing Transparency:** Publishing reports promptly and allowing public access to proceedings (e.g., via live streaming).
- **Promoting Bipartisanship:** Fostering a culture of consensus so that all stakeholders' views are considered.

In summary, parliamentary committees are essential for efficiency, accountability, and depth in the legislative process, contributing significantly to good governance.

1.3.5 Administrative Reforms

1.3.5.1 Historical Context of Administrative Reforms

► Deliberate and systemic changes in administrative processes and structures

Administrative reform is defined as deliberate and systemic changes in administrative processes and structures to improve efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness. It has been central to improving governance in India. Historically, the need for such reforms emerged due to rapid technological progress, socio-economic transformations, and growing expectations from public administration. Administrative reform, as Gerald E. Caiden noted, involves inducing administrative transformation despite resistance.

► Bridging the gap between policy intent and implementation.

Post-World War II developments shifted attention from mere functions to processes and institutions. Administrative reforms evolved to ensure effective decision-making, public ethics, and accountability in governance. In India, administrative reforms were crucial in transforming public administration into an efficient instrument for executing socio-economic policies and

bridging the gap between policy intent and implementation.

Administrative reforms in India since independence can be divided into four phases: the initial institution-building phase (1947-1964), a comprehensive reform phase under the Administrative Reforms Commission (1964-1976), the emergence of new ideas post-emergency (1977-1990), and a decentralisation and privatisation-oriented phase from 1990 onwards.

1.3.5.2 First Phase of Administrative Reforms in India (1947–1964) (post-independence era)

► Foundational efforts to establish efficient administrative structures

The first phase of administrative reforms in India, spanning from 1947 to 1964, was characterised by foundational efforts to establish efficient administrative structures in the newly independent nation. Significant milestones during this phase can be summarised as given below.

Formation of Committees and Initial Structural Changes:

- **Secretariat Reorganisation Committee (1947):** Addressed the shortage of officers and optimised government operations.
- **Economy Committee (1948):** Headed by Kasturbhai Lal-bhai, aimed at reducing wasteful expenditure.

Significant Reports and Recommendations:

- **N. Gopaldaswamy Ayyangar's Report (1949):** Recommended grouping ministries for better coordination and establishing a centralised financial advisory system.
- **A.D. Gorwala's Report (1951):** Assessed administrative preparedness and influenced the First Five-Year Plan.
- **Paul H. Appleby Reports (1953, 1956):** Focused on streamlining government functions, recruitment, and inter-departmental relations.
- **Asoka Chanda Report (1954):** Advocated financial and project execution reforms.



Establishment of Key Institutions:

- Planning Commission (1950): Guided administrative strategies to support development plans.
- Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA): Promoted administrative studies and reforms.
- O&M Division (Organizational & Methods Division): Focused on improving work efficiency.

Anti-Corruption Measures:

- Santhanam Committee (1962): Formed to address growing corruption concerns.
- Central Vigilance Commission (1964): Established to combat corruption in administration.

Economic and Administrative Innovations:

- Growing involvement in public enterprises necessitated evaluations of bureaucratic efficiency.
- The emergence of pay commissions and Parliament's role highlighted the effort to make administration transparent and responsive.

1.3.5.3 The Reform Phase under the Administrative Reforms Commission (1964-1976) (period of comprehensive reforms)

The second phase of administrative reforms in India, spanning from 1965 to 1976, initially followed a fragmented and ad-hoc approach. Committees were formed during this period but mostly suggested minor adjustments rather than structural changes. There was limited examination of the administrative system as a whole, with recommendations often met by governmental apathy and delayed implementation. K. Hanumanthaiya's critique aptly highlighted that the period witnessed "adjustments, not reforms." The turning point came with the establishment of the First Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) in 1966. The First Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) was set up in 1966 under Chairman Morarji Desai to review public administration and suggest improvements.

► Minor adjustments rather than structural changes

It produced 20 reports with 537 recommendations on topics such as finance, personnel, district administration, Centre-State relations, planning, and citizen grievance redressal. Its key recommendations included:

- Establishing formal grievance redressal institutions (e.g., Lokpal and Lokayukta) to combat corruption and enhance transparency.
- Creating an Inter-State Council to improve cooperation and coordination between the Union and the States.
- Overhauling civil service recruitment, training, and service conditions to modernise personnel administration.
- Streamlining economic administration by delegating authority, cutting red tape, and improving decision-making processes.
- Reforming the management of public sector undertakings for greater efficiency and accountability.
- Strengthening and streamlining planning machinery at all levels and empowering local governing bodies.
- Reducing political interference in bodies such as the National Development Council and Planning Commission.

The First ARC thus played a crucial role in shaping India's subsequent administrative reforms by addressing foundational governance issues.

1.3.5.4 Third Phase of Administrative Reforms in India (1977-1990) (period of new ideas and reforms)

The third phase of administrative reforms in India, spanning from 1977 to 1990, marked significant efforts to revitalise public administration post-Emergency. With the Janata Party's rise to power in 1977, various commissions were established to investigate Emergency-related excesses, although tangible administrative improvements were limited. After Congress returned to power in 1980, the reform process gained momentum with the establishment of pivotal committees. The Fazal Committee (1980–1982) emphasised the need for

► Revitalise public administration post-Emergency



accountability in public enterprises, while the Jha Commission (1981–1985) advocated for a performance and results-oriented approach to governance. Following their recommendations, institutional and structural reforms were introduced.

Institutional Reforms and Accountability Measures

- Adoption of Annual Action Plans (AAP) to improve institutional accountability.
- Emphasis on work culture, grievance redressal, and decentralised governance under Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.
- Establishment of the Ministry of Programme Implementation (MPI), which adopted management-by-objective techniques.

Structural and Operational Reforms

- Formation of the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions (1985) to strengthen administrative infrastructure.
- Introduction of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) system to align public enterprises with government objectives.
- Modernisation of government offices and enhanced grievance redressal mechanisms.
- Introduction of compulsory training programmes for IAS officers and structured training courses for civil servants.

The emphasis on institutional training saw the rise of structured courses, but criticisms persisted over the lack of serious engagement by civil servants and inadequate training resources. This phase laid a critical foundation for administrative modernisation, contributing to the institutionalisation of accountability and the introduction of public grievance mechanisms in Indian governance.

1.3.5.5 Fourth Phase of Administrative Reforms in India (1990 Onwards) (period of privatisation and decentralisation)

The fourth phase of administrative reforms in India, commencing in the 1990s, marked significant political, economic, and administrative transformations. With unstable minority governments at the centre, the period saw the adoption

► New Economic Policy in 1991

of the New Economic Policy in 1991, initiating liberalisation, deregulation, and delicensing in industrial policy. These changes simplified industrial processes and promoted market-oriented growth. In addition, the landmark 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts of 1992 decentralised governance by constitutionalising Panchayati Raj and municipal bodies, fostering grassroots democracy. A pivotal reform during this period was the establishment of the Tax Reforms Committee under Dr. Raja J. Chelliah in 1991, which highlighted the need to enhance the competence and integrity of tax authorities to improve compliance and public perception. The committee's recommendations, submitted in 1992, underscored improving service conditions, technical skills, and the work environment for revenue officials.

Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2005) and Key Reforms

The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) was established in 2005 under Chairman Veerappa Moily, with the goal of making the administration more proactive, responsive, accountable, and efficient. It produced 15 reports focusing on good governance and citizen-centric administration. Important recommendations included:

- **Right to Information:** Strengthening RTI as a tool for transparency and repealing outdated secrecy laws.
- **Civil Service Reforms:** Enhancing education, training, and values for civil servants.
- **Ethics in Governance:** Introducing a code of ethics for public officials and reinforcing vigilance and grievance mechanisms.
- **Legislative Measures:** Enacting a False Claims Act and enhancing whistleblower protections.
- **Public Order:** Recommending police reforms to improve accountability and effectiveness.
- **Local Governance:** Empowering local bodies and promoting democratic decentralisation with community participation.
- **Counter-terrorism:** Encouraging a multifaceted approach including community engagement and better intelligence sharing.

- **e-Governance:** Promoting the use of information technology to improve service delivery, reduce corruption, and move towards paperless administration.
- **Citizen-centric Administration:** Reorienting services around citizens' needs and feedback.
- **Organisational Restructuring:** Rationalising government structures for improved efficiency.
- **Financial Management:** Introducing performance budgeting and other reforms to increase fiscal transparency and accountability.
- **State & District Administration:** Enhancing administrative efficiency at state and district levels, including further decentralisation of power.

The Second ARC's recommendations have significantly influenced reform efforts, providing a roadmap for modernising the administrative machinery of the government.

1.3.5.6 Recent Trends and Innovations in Administration

Administration in India has witnessed a dynamic transformation with the adoption of digital technologies to improve governance efficiency. Digital initiatives such as Aadhaar-based services and the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system have revolutionised service delivery by ensuring that subsidies and welfare benefits reach beneficiaries directly, minimising leakages. Automated data management systems and decision-making tools have streamlined operations, enabling real-time monitoring and predictive analysis. Furthermore, the emphasis on E-Governance has improved public access to government services and enhanced administrative transparency.

► Adoption of digital technologies

Another significant trend is the shift towards performance-based management in public administration. Government departments are increasingly adopting performance-linked incentives and annual action plans to ensure accountability and encourage productivity. These measures have redefined organisational culture within the bureaucracy, fostering a merit-driven work environment. Simultaneously, the focus on transparency has been bolstered by the Right to Information (RTI) Act, which empowers citizens to access information and demand accountability from the administration.

► Performance-based management

► Participatory governance

Participatory governance has also gained prominence, with decentralisation efforts being strengthened through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. These reforms have institutionalised grassroots democracy, enabling local governments to play a more active role in decision-making and service delivery. Additionally, process simplification has been a key administrative reform, with the government reducing bureaucratic red tape, delegating decision-making powers, and establishing effective grievance redressal mechanisms to enhance citizen engagement and administrative responsiveness. Collectively, these reforms have positioned India's central administration on a path toward innovation, inclusivity, and efficiency.

► Efficient, transparent, and citizen-centric Governance

Major Administrative Reforms by the Government

Based on past recommendations, the Government of India has introduced major recent reforms to make governance more efficient, transparent, and citizen-centric. Key initiatives include:

- **Mission Karmayogi:** A national capacity-building programme to create a future-ready civil service with updated skills aligned to national objectives.
- **Lateral Entry:** Hiring experts from the private sector into select government positions on a contractual basis, infusing specialised expertise and a culture of performance.
- **e-Samiksha:** An online monitoring system that tracks the implementation of major government programmes and decisions, especially at the apex level.
- **e-Office:** A Mission Mode Project to transition ministries to a paperless office environment, improving efficiency in file management and decision-making.
- **Citizen Charters:** Mandated charters for all ministries outlining service standards, timelines, and grievance redress commitments, reviewed annually.
- **Good Governance Index (2019):** An index launched by the Ministry of Personnel to quantitatively assess and compare governance levels across states and Union Territories, promoting best practices.

- **National Conference on e-Governance:** A platform for government and experts to share experiences and knowledge on digital governance initiatives.
- **CPGRAMS:** An online portal for citizens to lodge and track grievances against government services.
- **e-Governance Service Delivery Assessment:** Evaluates government websites and digital services on criteria like accessibility, content, ease of use, and security.
- **PM Awards for Excellence in Public Administration:** Annual awards recognising outstanding contributions in public service at the national and state levels.

These reforms aim to improve efficiency, accountability, and citizen focus. However, challenges such as bureaucratic inertia, limited political will, resource constraints, and gaps in training remain. Continued efforts are needed to ensure the intended benefits of these reforms reach citizens.

Summarized Overview

This unit begins by introducing the concept of accountability within central administration, emphasising its importance in ensuring transparent, ethical, and efficient governance. The constitutional and institutional framework that underpins accountability mechanisms in India is highlighted, showcasing the foundational role of laws and institutions in promoting administrative integrity. A key focus is on the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT), established to address service-related disputes of government employees. Its objectives, jurisdiction, composition, and case studies illustrate how CAT functions as a specialised body for swift and cost-effective justice, enhancing administrative efficiency.

The unit then examines the role of Parliamentary Committees and expert bodies in ensuring government accountability. Parliamentary Committees such as the Public Accounts Committee, Estimates Committee, and Committee on Public Undertakings play a critical role in legislative scrutiny and financial oversight. The composition, powers, and functions of these committees are detailed, along with their impact on public administration. Expert bodies contribute by providing technical insights and independent evaluations, strengthening policy formulation and implementation. Their complementary role alongside Parliamentary Committees underscores a multi-dimensional approach to accountability.

Lastly, the unit explores administrative reforms, tracing their historical evolution and examining major initiatives such as the Administrative Reforms Commission reports, e-governance programmes, and citizen charters. Despite the successes, challenges such as resistance to change and political interference persist. Recent trends in administrative reforms, including the adoption of digital technologies and participatory governance, are also discussed.

Self-Assessment

1. Define accountability in the context of central administration and explain its importance for good governance in India.
2. Evaluate the constitutional and institutional framework that supports accountability in India. How does it ensure transparency and integrity in public administration?
3. Discuss the establishment, jurisdiction, composition, and functions of the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT).
4. Analyse the significance of the Central Administrative Tribunal in reducing the backlog of service-related cases and enhancing administrative efficiency. Support your argument with key case studies.
5. Explain the role of Parliamentary Committees, particularly the Public Accounts Committee, Estimates Committee, and Committee on Public Undertakings, in ensuring government accountability.
6. Critically assess the role of expert bodies in policy formulation and administrative evaluation. How do they complement the functions of Parliamentary Committees?
7. Trace the evolution of administrative reforms in India and describe major reform initiatives such as the ARC reports, e-governance initiatives, and citizen charters.
8. Identify and analyse the challenges in implementing administrative reforms in India. Suggest recent trends and innovative measures that can strengthen accountability mechanisms.

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BLOCK 2

State Level Administration

UNIT 1

Structure and Functions of State Administration

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ▶ understand the constitutional provisions that define the structure and powers of the state executive
- ▶ explain the role and importance of the Council of Ministers in state governance
- ▶ differentiate between the roles and responsibilities of the Governor, Chief Minister, and Chief Secretary in the state administration
- ▶ assess the effectiveness of the State Secretariat in policy implementation and coordination among administrative departments

Background

State administration plays a crucial role in the governance framework of India, serving as the bridge between the Union government and local self-governing institutions. The Constitution of India provides a federal structure where states have significant autonomy; yet they function within the overarching framework of the Union. The effectiveness of state administration is shaped by constitutional provisions, institutional structures, and the interplay between the executive, legislature, and judiciary. A well-functioning state administration ensures efficient policy implementation, public service delivery, and crisis management, making it a cornerstone of democratic governance.

At the helm of state administration is the State Executive, which includes the Governor, the Chief Minister, and the Council of Ministers. While the Governor is the constitutional head of the state, the real executive authority lies with the Chief Minister and the Council of Ministers. Additionally, the State Secretariat, led by the Chief Secretary, is the principal coordinating body responsible for policy execution, interdepartmental coordination, and administrative reforms. Understanding these components is essential for analysing how governance functions at the state level and how power dynamics influence policymaking

Keywords

Constitutional head, Collective Responsibility, Chief Secretary, Coordination, Crisis Management

Discussion

2.1.1 Constitutional Provisions and State Executive

2.1.1.1 The Governor's Role (Articles 153–167 and Article 213)

The Governor is the constitutional head of a state and acts as a liaison between the Union and the State. Article 153 establishes the office of the Governor; each state has one, and the same person may be appointed Governor of two or more states. The Governor is appointed by the President for a five-year term but holds office at the President's pleasure.

Qualifications: Under Article 157, a Governor must:

- Be a citizen of India.
- Have completed the age of 35 years.
- Not hold any office of profit under the Government of India or any State Government.
- Not be a member of either House of Parliament or of the State Legislature.

The Governor exercises several categories of powers:

1. **Executive Powers:** The Governor is the executive head of the state. All executive actions of the state are taken in his or her name. The Governor appoints the Chief Minister and, on the Chief Minister's advice, the Council of Ministers. The Governor also appoints the State's Advocate General, the State Election Commissioner, and the Chairperson and members of the State Public Service Commission. If the state machinery fails to follow constitutional provisions, the Governor may send a report to the President.

- 2. Legislative Powers:** The Governor is part of the legislature (though not a member). The Governor summons, prorogues, and dissolves the State Assembly and addresses it at its first session each year. No bill can become law without the Governor's assent; the Governor may also reserve certain bills for the President's consideration (Article 200). The Governor nominates one-sixth of Legislative Council members (if any) from individuals distinguished in arts, science, literature, or social service. The Governor also has the power to promulgate ordinances under Article 213 when the legislature is not in session.
- 3. Financial Powers:** The Governor's consent is required to introduce money bills in the state legislature. He recommends the Annual Financial Statement (state budget) to the Assembly. No demand for grants can be made without the Governor's recommendation. The state's Contingency Fund is also under the Governor's control.
- 4. Judicial Powers:** Under Article 161, the Governor can grant pardons, reprieves, respites, or remissions of punishment for offences against state laws (with certain exceptions, e.g., death sentences). The Governor also appoints or transfers district judges in consultation with the High Court.
- 5. Recommendation of President's Rule:** Under Article 356, a President's Rule can be imposed on the Governor's report of failure of constitutional machinery in the state. The Governor's report thus triggers potential central intervention and shifts legislative power to Parliament during that period.
- 6. Special Responsibilities:** In certain northeastern states (e.g., Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram), the Governor has special powers under the Sixth Schedule to protect the administration of tribal areas and the welfare of indigenous people.
- 7. Special Privileges:** Article 361 provides that the Governor is immune from prosecution for his official acts during the term of office. Civil proceedings can only be initiated against the Governor with two months' notice and within prescribed limits.

8. Discretionary Powers: The Governor has specific discretionary powers, including appointing a Chief Minister when no party has a clear majority, reserving bills for the President's assent, and seeking information or reconsideration of a ministerial decision. The Governor can also advise the President to impose President's Rule at his discretion.

The Governor's role has often been subject to controversy. Critics argue that Governors have sometimes exercised discretionary powers in a partisan manner, favouring the ruling party at the centre. Similarly, the Governor's actions, like reserving bills for the President's consideration, have sparked political and legal debate.

The Governor's Discretion and Controversies

While the Governor is expected to act on the advice of the Council of Ministers, situations arise where discretionary powers come into play. Some contentious issues include:

- **Appointment of Chief Ministers:** When no single party secures a majority, the Governor decides whom to invite to form the government.
- **Dismissal of a Ministry:** If the government loses majority support, the Governor may recommend its dismissal.
- **Dissolution of the Assembly:** While typically it is dissolved on the Chief Minister's advice, instances exist where Governors have acted contrary to this convention.
- **Emergency Powers:** There have been allegations that some Governors have not exercised discretion judiciously in recommending President's Rule.

Recent Instances of Governor vs State Government Tensions

The Governor's role has often been at the centre of political disputes for decades, especially when the state is governed by a non-ruling party at the central level. Some of the recent examples are:

- **Tamil Nadu (2023-24):** Governor R.N. Ravi and the state government clashed over delayed approval of bills and appointments, leading to legislative pushback.
- **Punjab (2023):** Governor Banwarilal Purohit and the state government had disputes over summoning the budget session of the Assembly and pending bills.
- **West Bengal (2023):** Governor C.V. Ananda Bose's conflicts with the state government over the Governor's unilateral appointment of Vice Chancellors.

In conclusion, the Governor, as the constitutional head of the state, plays a crucial role in maintaining governance, upholding the Constitution, and acting as a bridge between the Union and State governments. However, the mode of appointment and discretionary powers often lead to political friction, raising questions about the impartiality of the office. The need for a more structured approach to the Governor's role, with defined limitations on discretion, remains a pressing concern in India's federal polity.

2.1.1.2 Chief Minister: Role and Powers

The Chief Minister serves as the key executive authority at the state level, performing functions similar to those of the Prime Minister at the Union level. While the executive power of the state government is vested in the Council of Ministers, the Chief Minister plays a pivotal role in its functioning. Rather than being just the first among equals, the Chief Minister acts as the central force behind the executive machinery of a state.

► Chief Minister as the central force behind the state's executive machinery

► Governor's crucial role during political instability

The Chief Minister is appointed by the Governor and remains in office at the Governor's pleasure. However, in cases where a single party holds a clear majority in the Legislative Assembly, the Governor's role is largely ceremonial. The Governor is obliged to invite the leader of the majority party to form the government and cannot dismiss them as long as they enjoy the Assembly's confidence. The Governor's discretionary powers come into play in situations of political instability, where no party has a clear majority, allowing the Governor some leeway in deciding government formation.

Chief Minister and the Council of Ministers

► Powers of Chief Minister

As the head of the Council of Ministers, the Chief Minister exercises significant authority over its functioning. This includes the allocation and reshuffling of ministerial portfolios, ensuring coherence in decision-making across various departments, and leading the Council in the Legislative Assembly. The Chief Minister is responsible for maintaining the collective responsibility of the Council of Ministers to the Assembly, setting the Cabinet agenda, and influencing major policy decisions. In addition, the Governor appoints ministers based on the Chief Minister's advice, and ministers hold office at the Governor's pleasure, effectively making their tenure subject to the Chief Minister's discretion. The ability to dismiss ministers or alter their portfolios strengthens the Chief Minister's authority over the Council.

► Coalition governments

The extent of the Chief Minister's power is influenced by the political landscape. In states where a single-party government exists, the Chief Minister enjoys considerable authority, with ministers often deferring to their leadership. This is particularly pronounced in states dominated by regional parties, where the Chief Minister is not subject to national party leadership. However, in coalition governments or faction-ridden parties, the Chief Minister's influence is diluted due to the need for internal compromises and consensus-building.

Chief Minister and the Governor

The Constitution does not explicitly define the Chief Minister's powers in relation to the Governor. There has been an attempt to establish a convention wherein the Chief Minister is consulted before the appointment of a Governor, though this practice has not always been followed. The Chief Minister indirectly exercises executive power in the Governor's name, ensuring that the Governor's public statements and ceremonial addresses align with the policies set by the Council of Ministers. Notably, the Governor's annual speech to the Assembly requires prior approval from the Cabinet.

Chief Minister and the Legislature

As the leader of the House, the Chief Minister plays a crucial role in legislative affairs. He/She determines the legislative agenda, ensuring that key government bills and policies are presented for discussion and approval. While private members

► Role as the leader of the House

can introduce bills, the chances of these being passed remain limited, as they lack the backing of the ruling party and access to comprehensive governmental resources. In addition to shaping legislative priorities, the Chief Minister is responsible for keeping the Assembly informed about governmental activities by responding to questions, making statements, and participating in debates.

Chief Minister and the State Bureaucracy

► Control over bureaucratic apparatus

As the head of the political executive, the Chief Minister exercises substantial control over the state's bureaucratic apparatus. He/She oversees the administrative machinery with the assistance of the Secretariat, led by the Chief Secretary. Major appointments, including Secretaries, Department Heads, and Public Sector Undertaking officials, require the Chief Minister's approval. Through the Cabinet, the Chief Minister influences service conditions, disciplinary actions, and the overall functioning of the state's bureaucracy. Leadership and supervision are key aspects of this role, ensuring efficient governance through policy implementation, oversight mechanisms, and feedback from administrative channels, party workers, and public grievances.

In summary, the Chief Minister serves as the linchpin of state administration, holding a dominant position in governance through their influence over the Council of Ministers, the Governor, the Legislature, and the Executive. However, the extent of their authority is shaped by the political context, ranging from absolute dominance in a majority government to a more constrained role in coalition or factional settings.

2.1.2 Role of the Council of Ministers in State Governance

► Council of Ministers as real executives

In the Indian constitutional framework, the executive authority of a state is exercised in the name of the Governor, who serves as the constitutional head. However, the Governor operates on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, with the Chief Minister as its head, except in a few discretionary matters. This structure ensures that the real executive power lies with the Council of Ministers, which is responsible for governance and policymaking.

The Council of Ministers is appointed by the Governor based on the Chief Minister's recommendation. Ministers hold office



► Different types of ministers

at the Governor's pleasure. This means they can be removed upon the Chief Minister's advice. The state-level Council of Ministers mirrors the Union government in structure, comprising Cabinet Ministers, Ministers of State, Deputy Ministers, and in some cases, Parliamentary Secretaries. However, unlike the Union government, where only Cabinet Ministers attend Cabinet meetings, in state governments, all ministers often participate, which can sometimes complicate decision-making. To streamline governance, some states have adopted Cabinet Committees, which may be permanent (standing committees) or temporary (ad-hoc committees) to address specific issues. However, this practice is less prevalent in states compared to the Union government.

► 91st Constitutional Amendment Act of 2003

A significant constitutional development regarding the composition of the Council of Ministers came with the Ninety-First Constitutional Amendment Act of 2003. This amendment stipulates that the total number of ministers, including the Chief Minister, should not exceed 15% of the total strength of the Legislative Assembly. However, a state must have at least twelve ministers in its Council of Ministers.

► Constitutional constraints and laws enacted by the Union and State Legislatures

The Council of Ministers serves as the highest policy-making authority in the state government, shaping policies within the legislative and administrative domain. It is also responsible for reviewing policy implementation and making necessary amendments based on feedback. As the Governor exercises executive power on ministerial advice, the Council operates without major limitations except for:

► The 'portfolio system'

To ensure efficient administration, governance at the state level follows the principle of Ministerial Responsibility, wherein the Council of Ministers is collectively accountable to the State Legislative Assembly. However, given the vast scope of state governance, it is impractical for the entire Council to deliberate on every issue. Historically, during British rule, the Governor-in-Council collectively made decisions, but as governmental responsibilities expanded, the 'portfolio system' emerged. This system assigns specific subjects to individual ministers while reserving critical matters for the entire Council's consideration.

► Role of 'Allocation of Business Rules'

Article 166(3) of the Constitution empowers the Governor to frame rules for efficient government functioning. Accordingly, states have developed 'Allocation of Business Rules' to distribute responsibilities among ministers based on function, clientele, geography, or a combination of these factors.

However, personal and political considerations often influence portfolio distribution.

Ministers handle most of the work related to their assigned subjects, but some matters require higher-level intervention:

1. **Chief Minister's Consideration:** Some decisions, termed 'coordination cases,' must be referred to the Chief Minister. In such instances, the concerned minister records recommendations and submits them for the Chief Minister's approval.
2. **Cabinet's Consideration:** Key policy matters with broader implications or inter-ministerial disagreements are presented before the Cabinet for resolution. The Chief Minister may also mandate that specific cases be brought before the Cabinet.

Typical cases that require Cabinet approval include:

- The Annual Financial Statement and supplementary grant demands.
- Proposals affecting state finances that lack Finance Minister approval.
- Exemptions from the jurisdiction of the State Public Service Commission.
- Proposals for new taxation measures.

Thus, the Council of Ministers plays a pivotal role in state governance by formulating policies, ensuring their execution, and maintaining accountability to the legislature, making it the real centre of executive power in a state.

2.1.3 State Secretariat: Structure and Functions

The State Secretariat forms the topmost administrative structure at the state level, acting as the central coordinating body for policymaking and governance. It comprises various departments and administrative divisions, each responsible for distinct sectors of governance, functioning under the leadership of respective ministers and secretaries.

► Central coordinating body

Departments and Administrative Divisions

► Structure of the secretariat

The State Secretariat consists of multiple departments, each headed by a secretary who is responsible for policymaking and overall supervision. These departments are structured hierarchically with officers at different levels, including Additional Secretaries, Joint Secretaries, Deputy Secretaries, and Under Secretaries. Below them, the office staff, including superintendents, section officers, assistants, clerks, and typists, provide essential support functions.

A unique aspect of the Secretariat system is the distinction between temporary administrative officers and the permanent office staff. While officers hold tenure positions and may be reassigned, the permanent office ensures continuity in governance. The lowest organisational unit within a department is a section, managed by a Section Officer, which, when combined with another section, forms a branch under the charge of an Under Secretary. Multiple branches constitute a division headed by a Deputy Secretary, and in cases where the workload is extensive, wings are established under the leadership of a Joint Secretary. The entire department is overseen by a Secretary, ensuring smooth policy implementation and coordination.

Coordination Mechanism and Policy Implementation

The Secretariat is the nerve centre of state administration, facilitating the development and execution of policies through a well-structured coordination mechanism. It plays a crucial role in:

- Assisting ministers in formulating policies and legislative measures.
- Drafting laws, regulations, and amendments as required.
- Ensuring interdepartmental coordination and supervising programme execution.
- Allocating and overseeing budgetary resources and expenditure control.
- Acting as a liaison between the state government and the central government, as well as with other states.
- Maintaining institutional memory through records and

► Separation of policymaking from execution

documentation, ensuring policy continuity.

- Monitoring the implementation of policies and evaluating their impact on governance.

A key principle in the Secretariat system is the separation of policymaking from execution. This allows the administrative apparatus to focus on long-term policy planning while delegating day-to-day implementation to field-level agencies. The Secretariat also serves as an impartial advisory body to the ministers, ensuring balanced and well-informed decision-making.

2.1.4 Chief Secretary

The Chief Secretary is the senior-most civil servant and the principal advisor to the Chief Minister of a state. He is the ex-officio head of the state secretariat, the State Civil Services Board, and the state's All India Services cadres. The Chief Secretary also serves as Secretary to the Cabinet. As per the order of precedence, the Chief Secretary ranks 23rd, equivalent to a Secretary to the Government of India.

Appointment: The Chief Secretary is selected by the Chief Minister and formally appointed in the name of the Governor. Selection usually follows a “seniority-cum-merit” principle, considering service record and performance.

Role and Responsibilities: As the administrative head of the state government, the Chief Secretary guides and controls the entire administrative machinery. He chairs the State Civil Services Board, which oversees transfers and postings of All India and state service officers. He is assisted by Additional Chief Secretaries and Special Secretaries in managing various departments. Key functions include:

- **Principal Advisor:** Advising the Chief Minister on all matters of state administration, policy formulation, and implementation.
- **Secretary to the Cabinet:** Ensuring the smooth conduct of Cabinet meetings and coordination between different ministries.
- **Coordinator:** Acting as the main liaison between the state

and central governments and among state departments to facilitate effective policy execution.

- **Crisis Manager:** Leading the state administration during emergencies such as natural disasters, public health emergencies, or major events.
- **State Representative:** Representing the state in national meetings and official events with foreign delegations and dignitaries.
- **Resource Person:** Providing expert guidance and analysis to government departments on administrative issues.

In Union Territories without legislatures, centrally appointed Administrators govern, often assisted by Advisers performing functions similar to a Chief Secretary. In UTs with legislatures (Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Puducherry), the elected government appoints a Chief Secretary, subject to the Lieutenant Governor's approval.

Administrative Leadership and Crisis Management

In addition to administrative coordination, the Chief Secretary plays a crucial role in leadership and crisis management. This includes:

- Overseeing the functioning of the General Administration Department, which is directly under the Chief Minister.
- Ensuring efficient management of state civil services and maintaining discipline within the bureaucracy.
- Managing emergencies such as natural disasters, political crises, or law-and-order situations, coordinating with various departments for swift action.
- Leading administrative reforms to enhance governance efficiency and service delivery.
- Acting as the principal spokesperson for the state government on administrative matters.

The office of the Chief Secretary is unique to state administration and has no direct equivalent at the central level. While the Union Government has multiple high-ranking officials

► A unique office to state administration

such as the Cabinet Secretary, Home Secretary, and Finance Secretary to oversee different functions, the Chief Secretary in a state is responsible for a broad range of administrative duties, making the role highly significant in governance. During periods of President's Rule, where the central government assumes direct control of a state, the Chief Secretary often takes on additional responsibilities, ensuring continuity in administration until elected governance is restored.

In conclusion, the State Secretariat and the Chief Secretary form the backbone of state administration, ensuring coordinated governance, policy implementation, and crisis management. Their role in maintaining administrative efficiency, intergovernmental relations, and policy execution makes them indispensable components of the Indian federal structure.

Summarized Overview

State-level administration in India is structured within a parliamentary framework, ensuring a clear division of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The Governor, appointed by the President, serves as the constitutional head of the state and exercises executive, legislative, and judicial functions, largely on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers led by the Chief Minister. However, the Governor also holds discretionary powers, which have led to political controversies, particularly in cases involving government formation, dissolution of assemblies, and withholding assent to bills. The role of the Governor in state politics remains a subject of debate, with recent instances highlighting tensions between the central and state governments.

The Chief Minister is the real executive authority, leading the Council of Ministers and shaping state policies. The CM advises the Governor, oversees legislative processes, coordinates with the bureaucracy, and manages administration. Their effectiveness depends on factors such as party strength in the legislature, coalition politics, and federal interactions. The Chief Minister plays a crucial role in directing governance and ensuring the implementation of policies through the State Secretariat, the administrative hub of the state government.

The Council of Ministers, headed by the Chief Minister, is responsible for policy formulation, governance, and executive decision-making. Ministers oversee various departments and collectively advise the Governor. The Ninety-First Constitutional Amendment Act (2003) restricts the size of the Council to 15% of the strength of the legislative assembly, improving efficiency and curbing excessive appointments. The principle of collective responsibility ensures accountability to the State Legislative Assembly, balancing constitutional mandates and democratic governance.



The State Secretariat is the highest administrative body in a state, assisting the government in policymaking and implementation. It comprises various departments that provide advice, prepare policy drafts, and oversee execution. The Chief Secretary, as the head of the State Secretariat, acts as the principal advisor to the Chief Minister and the Council of Ministers. The Chief Secretary ensures coordination among departments, implements government policies, and serves as the main link between the political leadership and the bureaucracy. Their role in crisis management, financial administration, and inter-departmental coordination is critical for the smooth functioning of state governance.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain the constitutional provisions governing the appointment and tenure of the Governor in India.
2. Discuss the discretionary powers of the Governor and their implications for state politics.
3. Analyse recent controversies between Governors and state governments in India.
4. How does the Chief Minister influence the functioning of the Council of Ministers?
5. Compare and contrast the roles and responsibilities of the Governor and the Chief Minister in state administration.
6. Evaluate the legislative powers of the Governor and their impact on state governance.
7. Explain the concept of collective responsibility in the context of the Council of Ministers at the state level.
8. What is the State Secretariat, and how does it contribute to governance in Indian states?
9. Discuss the role and responsibilities of the Chief Secretary in state administration.

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UNIT 2

Administrative Machinery at the State Level

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ▶ identify the structure and functions of state civil services and regulatory bodies
- ▶ describe the recruitment process and administrative role of the Kerala Administrative Service (KAS)
- ▶ analyse the necessity of administrative reforms on state-level governance
- ▶ evaluate the role of state regulatory bodies in policy implementation and public administration

Background

The administrative machinery at the state level operates within a federal framework where power and responsibilities are constitutionally divided between the Centre and States. State civil services play a crucial role in executing welfare programmes, maintaining law and order, and facilitating local development. Understanding the structure, functioning, and challenges of state administration is essential for comprehending how governance translates from policy decisions into tangible public services.

Similarly, the State Administrative Services, such as the Kerala Administrative Service (KAS), serve as a bridge between policy formulation and ground-level execution. These officers are responsible for managing various state departments, ensuring efficient public service delivery, and implementing administrative reforms. In recent years, administrative restructuring and technological interventions have been emphasised to enhance governance efficiency, transparency, and accountability. The role of the State Public Service Commission in recruiting and managing administrative personnel also requires close examination, as it influences the overall effectiveness of the state's governance structure.

Apart from general administration, state regulatory bodies play a vital role in overseeing specific governance areas such as finance, human rights, and public information. Institutions like the State Finance Commission, State Human Rights Commission, and State Information Commission are integral to maintaining accountability, protecting



citizen rights, and ensuring resource allocation efficiency. Examining their role helps in understanding how decentralised governance functions effectively. This unit will provide an in-depth analysis of these administrative structures, their challenges, and the ongoing reforms aimed at enhancing state-level governance.

Keywords

Recruitment, Transparency, e-governance, Financial autonomy, Economic Planning

Discussion

2.2.1 State Civil Services

2.2.1.1 The State Public Service Commission

Each state has a Public Service Commission (PSC) responsible for recruiting candidates to civil services. The State PSC conducts exams and interviews for state services and functions independently alongside the UPSC.

Composition: The State PSC consists of a chairman and members as determined by the Governor. The Governor appoints them for six-year terms or until age 62. At least half the members must have held a government office (Union or State) for at least ten years.

Removal: Although appointed by the Governor, the Chairman and members can only be removed by the President on grounds such as unsound mind, holding an office of profit, or proven misconduct (after a Supreme Court inquiry). A Chairman or member cannot be reappointed to the same PSC after their term ends, though they may serve on other commissions.

Independence: The autonomy of State PSCs is protected by law. Its Chairman and members have secured salaries and allowances drawn from the Consolidated Fund of India (not voted by the state legislature) to prevent political influence. Their service conditions cannot be altered to their disadvantage after appointment.

Key Functions of State PSCs

The State PSCs are entrusted with multiple responsibilities under Articles 320 and 321 of the Constitution, primarily revolving around recruitment, service conditions, and administrative oversight. Their core functions include:

1. Conducting Competitive Examinations and Interviews:

- PSCs organise and administer state civil service examinations for various government positions, ensuring a selection process based on merit and competency.
- They also conduct departmental examinations for in-service officers seeking promotions or career advancements.

2. Advising the State Government:

- The State PSCs must be consulted on all matters relating to the method of recruitment to civil posts.
- They are also consulted on principles to be followed in making appointments, promotions, and transfers and sustainability of the candidates.
- They may also give advice on disciplinary matters affecting public servants.

3. Evaluating Service Conditions and Policy Modifications:

- State governments frequently consult PSCs on modifications in pay scales, pension benefits, and service rules for public servants.
- The commissions review such proposals and provide recommendations to streamline service conditions, ensuring fairness and efficiency in governance.

4. Ensuring Transparency and Accountability:

- PSCs act as watchdogs of fair recruitment, preventing favouritism, nepotism, and undue political interference in appointments.
- They prepare and submit annual reports to the Governor,



who shall cause it to be laid before the state legislature. The function of the commission is only advisory and has no provision to make it obligatory upon the government to act upon the advice of the commission in any case.

2.2.1.2 Significance of State PSCs in Good Governance

Despite having primarily an advisory role, PSCs significantly impact the governance structure by ensuring a fair, merit-based selection process that upholds institutional accountability. Their role in strengthening the administrative machinery contributes to a more professional and efficient government workforce. However, their overall effectiveness is dependent on:

- The level of operational autonomy granted by state authorities.
- The state government's willingness to implement their recommendations.
- Measures to prevent political and bureaucratic interference in recruitment and service-related matters.

A well-functioning State Public Service Commission not only enhances the efficiency of public administration but also reinforces the foundational principles of fair governance and public trust in the recruitment process. Therefore, strengthening their independence and ensuring strict adherence to their recommendations is crucial for maintaining the credibility of state administration.

2.2.2 Components of Civil Service at the State Level

The civil services at the state level in India are composed of two distinct categories: State Services and All India Services. While state services are recruited by individual state governments to manage administrative functions within their jurisdiction, the All India Services (AIS) operate under a dual system, serving both the Centre and the states. The Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS) are the most prominent examples of AIS. This dual structure ensures a balance between state autonomy and national coherence in administration.

► State Services and All India Services

► Elite cadre of officers

2.2.2.1 All India Services (AIS)

The All-India Services were created to maintain an elite cadre of officers who could efficiently handle high-ranking positions across states and the central government. Officers are recruited by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and assigned to a specific state cadre. Their careers follow the Tenure System, allowing them to alternate between state and central postings for the first two decades before transitioning permanently to central roles. The AIS ensures a uniform standard of administrative talent across all states and provides the Centre with experienced policymakers who have field expertise.

IAS officers typically hold key positions such as District Collectors, Divisional Commissioners, Secretaries to the government, and Chief Secretaries. Similarly, IPS officers occupy roles like Superintendents of Police (SPs) and other senior police positions within the state.

2.2.2.2 State Services

State services are recruited through State Public Service Commissions and cater to various administrative, technical, and law enforcement needs within the state. These services cover diverse sectors, including administration, police, judiciary, education, agriculture, forestry, medicine, engineering, and taxation. While state service officers primarily work at the state level, some may be deputed to central roles on a temporary basis.

Inter-relationship Between AIS and State Services

State services function under the supervision of AIS officers, occupying middle-level positions within the administrative hierarchy. To ensure upward mobility and talent retention, two key mechanisms exist:

- 1. Promotion Opportunities:** State service officers can be elevated to senior positions usually reserved for AIS officers.
- 2. Induction into AIS:** A certain percentage of state service personnel are inducted into the IAS or IPS, providing them with broader career prospects.

Classification of State Services

State services are classified under two primary systems:

1. Hierarchy-Based Classification

- **Group A & B:** Officer-level positions with significant administrative responsibilities.
- **Group C & D:** Clerical and manual positions supporting the administrative framework.

2. Gazetted vs. Non-Gazetted Services

- **Gazetted Officers (Group A & B):** Senior officials whose appointments and promotions are published in the Official Gazette.
- **Non-Gazetted Officers (Group C & D):** Lower-tier employees handling clerical or manual tasks.

Recruitment and Promotion Mechanisms

- Group A posts are filled through promotions from Group B services or by direct recruitment via competitive exams conducted by State Public Service Commissions.
- Group B services include both generalist and specialised roles, with recruitment through a combination of open competition and promotions.
- Group C services comprise subordinate executive positions (e.g., Deputy Tehsildars, Police Sub-Inspectors) and clerical staff, recruited through department-level exams.
- Group D services include manual and support staff (e.g., drivers, watchmen, peons), with their service conditions improving in recent years.

2.2.3 A Case Study: Kerala Administrative Service (KAS)

The Kerala Administrative Service (KAS) is the backbone of the government of Kerala. The service is responsible for the effective implementation of policies and programmes in the

state. Established in 2018, KAS seeks to cultivate a cadre of skilled officers equipped to address the dynamic challenges of public administration in Kerala.

Structure and Recruitment Process

The recruitment process is rigorous and competitive, conducted by the Kerala Public Service Commission. It involves a three-stage examination.

- 1. Preliminary Examination:** This initial phase comprises two objective-type papers: General Studies Paper I and General Studies Paper II, each carrying 100 marks. Candidates are allotted 90 minutes per paper, with a negative mark of one-third mark for every incorrect response. The screening test is based on their general awareness, aptitude, and knowledge of Kerala.
- 2. Main Examination:** Candidates who clear the preliminary stage must undergo a written examination consisting of descriptive papers designed to assess the candidate's knowledge and understanding of the various aspects of governance, administration, and current affairs.
- 3. Interview (Personality Test):** The final stage involves a personality assessment to evaluate the candidate's suitability for a career in public service.

Upon successful selection, candidates undergo an intensive 18-month training regimen. The initial 12 months focus on pre-service training, encompassing administrative theories, practical skills, and field exposure. The subsequent six months involve on-the-job training, which must be completed before the probation period concludes. This comprehensive training ensures that KAS officers are well-prepared to navigate the complexities of state administration.

Aims and Objectives of KAS:

1. To create a pool of highly skilled and motivated officers.
2. To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government operations.
3. To promote professionalism and specialisation.
4. Strengthening local governance.



Role in Policy Implementation and Service Delivery

KAS officers play a multi-faceted role in the state administration. Their key responsibilities are:

- **Policy Implementation:** KAS officers are responsible for translating state-level policies into actionable programmes. Their scope also includes ensuring effective implementation at district and local levels.
- **Project Management:** Project management involves planning, executing, and monitoring various government projects and schemes.
- **Coordination and Supervision:** Coordination and supervision are also equally important functions. They coordinate the activities of various government departments and agencies. They also exercise general supervision over their activities.
- **Public Service Delivery:** They oversee the provision of essential public services, such as health care, education, social welfare, and infrastructure development.
- **Public Grievances Redressal:** Addressing public grievances and ensuring prompt resolution of citizens' complaints is another area to be considered by the service.
- **Maintaining Law and Order:** The scope of their services also includes maintenance of law and order and ensuring peace and harmony in the state.

In short, KAS officers contribute significantly to the state's administrative machinery, driving development initiatives and ensuring that governance remains responsive to the needs of Kerala's populace.

2.2.4 Need for Administrative Reforms at the State Level

State Public Service Commissions (PSCs) play a critical role in ensuring merit-based recruitment in the state services. However, several challenges undermine their effectiveness,

► Political and bureaucratic interference

necessitating comprehensive reforms. One major issue is political and bureaucratic interference in recruitment processes, leading to favouritism and undermining meritocracy. Ad-hoc appointments and the inclusion of politically affiliated individuals as PSC members compromise the commission's neutrality and efficiency. Additionally, the exclusion of certain posts from PSC jurisdiction allows executive authorities to make direct appointments, creating inconsistencies in recruitment standards. Further, delays in appointment and recruitment processes often result in competent candidates moving to other professions, leaving critical vacancies in governance and public service delivery. These systemic inefficiencies have led to public distrust due to a lack of transparency and accountability, where allegations of corruption, manipulation of merit lists, and favouritism in selection procedures frequently surface. Structural weaknesses, including outdated administrative norms, interdepartmental coordination issues, and resistance to modernisation, further impede the effectiveness of state bureaucracies.

► Legal and institutional safeguards

To address these challenges, enhancing the independence of PSCs is crucial. Strengthening legal and institutional safeguards can ensure these commissions operate without external pressures, while mandating the publication of selection criteria and results can improve transparency. Expediting recruitment and appointment processes through strict timelines and automated tracking systems will reduce unnecessary delays. Ensuring merit-based appointments is another essential reform, which can be achieved by establishing independent oversight committees to review PSC decisions and address grievances. Moreover, preventing the appointment of politically affiliated individuals in PSCs will reinforce their autonomy and credibility. Digitalisation and e-governance interventions such as AI-based evaluation systems and online recruitment processes can minimise human intervention and corruption, ensuring a more transparent and fair selection process.

Strengthening accountability mechanisms is equally important in restoring public trust in state-level services. Establishing independent review bodies to assess PSC functioning and implementing whistleblower protection laws can encourage reporting of corrupt practices. Additionally, enhancing administrative efficiency through modernisation, performance-based evaluations, and continuous training of civil servants will help build a more competent and responsive

► Strengthening accountability mechanisms

bureaucratic system. By implementing these reforms, state civil services can become more transparent, accountable, and efficient, ultimately improving governance and service delivery. A robust and fair administrative system will not only enhance institutional integrity but also ensure that the state machinery serves the public interest effectively and equitably.

2.2.5 State-Level Regulatory Bodies and Their Functions

State-level regulatory bodies play a pivotal role in ensuring effective governance, transparency, and the protection of citizens' rights. These institutions, established under various legislative frameworks, function autonomously to oversee and regulate specific domains within the state. Key bodies among these are the State Finance Commission, State Planning Board, State Human Rights Commission, and the State Information Commission.

1. State Finance Commission

The State Finance Commission (SFC) is a constitutional body established under Article 243-I of the Indian Constitution to ensure equitable distribution of financial resources between the state government and local self-government institutions, including Panchayats and Municipalities. Constituted every five years, the SFC plays a pivotal role in ensuring fiscal devolution and strengthening the financial autonomy of local bodies. It evaluates the tax-sharing mechanisms, grants-in-aid, and other financial support systems that help local governments carry out their functions efficiently.

► Ensuring fiscal devolution

Origin and Significance

The concept of a State Finance Commission was introduced through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments to address the financial constraints faced by local bodies. These amendments aimed to institutionalise decentralisation and grant financial independence to rural and urban local bodies. Before the establishment of SFCs, local governments relied heavily on discretionary grants from the state government, which often led to fiscal imbalances and inefficiencies. The SFC was therefore designed to bridge this gap and create a structured financial framework for local governance.

► Structured financial framework for local governance

Composition of the State Finance Commission

The composition of SFCs varies across states, but generally, they consist of a Chairman and a few expert members in the fields of public finance, economics, administration, or municipal affairs. The Governor appoints the Chairman and members, and the tenure of the SFC is five years. While some states have clear eligibility criteria for members, others do not have standardised appointment procedures.

Functions and Responsibilities of the State Finance Commission

The primary functions of the SFC include:

- Recommending the distribution of net proceeds of taxes levied by the state between the state and local bodies.
- Suggesting measures to improve revenue mobilisation for local governments, including taxation policies and fiscal reforms.
- Advising on grants-in-aid to local bodies from the Consolidated Fund of the State.
- Reviewing the financial position of local bodies and suggesting ways to enhance their resource mobilisation capacity.
- Measures to improve the financial position of local bodies.

Additionally, in some states, SFCs are tasked with assessing the accountability of local bodies in utilising funds and maintaining financial records. They may also be required to suggest strategies for better fiscal management and debt regulation among local governments.

Challenges and Implementation Issues

The major challenges of the commission are listed below:

1. **Lack of political will:** The government is not willing to fully devote powers and resources to local bodies as envisaged by the 73rd and 74th amendments.
2. **Resource deficiencies:** Lack of readily available and or-



ganised information hampers their efficiency.

3. **Deficiencies in expertise:** Many state finance commissions are run by bureaucrats or politicians, lacking dominant experts and professionals. The absence of qualified technocrats diminishes the credibility and quality of their recommendations.
4. Ignorance of the commission's recommendations by the state governments is another problem. It undermines their role in shaping fiscal policies for local government.
5. **People's resistance:** Local bodies face neglect with low political awareness, which worsens the state of fiscal decentralisation.
6. **Political interference:** In some cases, political and administrative hurdles prevent the SFC from functioning independently.

Impact of SFC Recommendations on Local Governance

The State Finance Commissions have played a crucial role in strengthening fiscal decentralisation by providing a structured mechanism for revenue-sharing. However, the impact of their recommendations depends on the political will and administrative efficiency of the state government. For instance, while some states have successfully implemented fiscal reforms suggested by their SFCs, others have failed to act upon key recommendations, limiting the effectiveness of local governance.

To enhance the efficiency of SFCs, it is essential that:

- States constitute SFCs on time and ensure periodic reviews of local finances.
- Recommendations are implemented effectively, with clear accountability mechanisms.
- Better coordination is established between SFCs, the State Government, and local bodies to ensure financial stability at all levels.

2. State Planning Board

The State Planning Board (SPB) is an advisory body constituted by state governments to formulate development

► Advisory body constituted by state governments

strategies and assist in economic planning. It evaluates resource availability and prepares comprehensive economic plans to guide the state's long-term socio-economic development. The board consists of experts in various fields, including economics, social welfare, infrastructure, and industry, to provide strategic insights for state development policies.

Origin and Significance

The establishment of State Planning Boards was recommended by the Planning Commission in 1967 to strengthen the planning machinery at the state level. The First Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) emphasised the need for SPBs to ensure integrated, pragmatic, and efficient state-level planning. The introduction of the NITI Aayog in 2015 replaced the Planning Commission, significantly altering the role of state planning bodies. While SPBs continue to function, their influence and operational structure vary across states.

Composition of the State Planning Board

The Chief Minister serves as the Chairman of the SPB, with a Vice-Chairman (usually an expert) and multiple ministerial and non-ministerial members. These members typically include:

- Ministers of key departments (Finance, Transport, Water Resources, Revenue, etc.)
- Non-official members (experts in economics, planning, and development)
- Chief Secretary and senior bureaucrats
- Member Secretary, responsible for executing board decisions

Some SPBs, like the Kerala State Planning Board (KSPB), also have Technical Divisions, District Planning Offices, and IT Wings to assist in plan formulation and evaluation.

Functions of the State Planning Board

The primary functions of the SPB include:

- Assessing resource allocation and formulating Five-Year and Annual Plans for state development.



- Conducting economic and social research to aid policy-making.
- Coordinating with local and national planning agencies to ensure policy coherence.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of state government schemes and suggesting improvements.
- Providing advisory support for decentralised planning, integrating district and local body plans with state policies.
- Identifying economic priorities and allocating resources efficiently.

In states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu, SPBs play a significant role in monitoring development indicators, human development indices, and regional planning frameworks.

Performance and Challenges of State Planning Boards

The effectiveness of SPBs varies across states. In Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Meghalaya, SPBs have played an active role in shaping development policies, conducting research, and supporting decentralised governance. However, challenges persist:

- 1. Limited Authority:** SPBs are primarily advisory bodies and lack executive power, making the implementation of recommendations dependent on political will.
- 2. Bureaucratic Hurdles:** In states like Rajasthan and Bihar, bureaucratic resistance and lack of coordination have reduced the effectiveness of SPBs.
- 3. Lack of Regular Meetings:** Some SPBs, like Odisha's, have been largely inactive despite their establishment.
- 4. Insufficient Funding:** Many SPBs struggle with financial and human resource constraints, limiting their ability to conduct research and analysis effectively.

The State Planning Board is essential in aligning state development plans with national priorities while addressing state-specific needs. While some states have successfully leveraged SPBs for effective planning and governance, others need institutional reforms to improve their functioning. Strengthening SPBs is vital for ensuring sustainable, inclusive,

and well-coordinated state development planning.

3. State Information Commission

The State Information Commission (SIC) is an independent body established under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005. Each SIC includes a State Chief Information Commissioner and up to ten Information Commissioners, appointed by the Governor. Members must be eminent individuals with experience in fields like law, social service, media, or administration, and cannot hold any other public office.

Appointment: Commissioners are appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of a selection committee comprising the Chief Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and a cabinet minister. They serve five-year terms or until the age of 65. They can only be removed by the Governor under conditions similar to those for removing a High Court judge.

Functions: The SIC handles complaints and appeals under the RTI Act. It can inquire into cases where a citizen was denied information (due to refusal, excessive fees, incomplete answers, etc.). It may also initiate suo motu inquiries. During such inquiries, the SIC can inspect any relevant government record. It also hears appeals from RTI applicants dissatisfied with the responses from public information officers.

The SIC can order public authorities to disclose information as per the RTI Act. It submits an annual report on its activities to the state government, which then presents it to the legislature.

Challenges: State Information Commissions often face heavy backlogs and limited staff, causing delays. Their powers are generally limited to ordering disclosure; they cannot penalise officials beyond that scope. Recent Supreme Court directions have urged governments to promptly fill vacancies and strengthen these commissions.

In summary, State Information Commissions are crucial for ensuring transparency and accountability in public administration by upholding citizens' right to information.

4. State Human Rights Commission

Each state may establish a Human Rights Commission under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. The State Human



Rights Commission (SHRC) is a quasi-judicial body tasked with protecting human rights at the state level.

Composition: The SHRC includes a chairman (a former Chief Justice of a High Court), one member who is or has been a High Court judge, one member who is or has been a district judge, and two members with expertise in human rights. They are appointed by the Governor on recommendations from a committee including the Chief Minister, Speaker, Home Minister, and Leader of the Opposition. Commissioners serve five-year terms or until the age of 70 and are removable by the President.

Functions: The SHRC investigates alleged human rights violations concerning subjects in the State or Concurrent Lists. It can act on petitions, suo motu cases, or court referrals. The Commission visits jails and detention centres to assess conditions, reviews legal safeguards, and suggests measures for improvement (including in areas like counter-terrorism). It also promotes research and awareness in human rights.

Nature of Role: The Commission's recommendations are advisory; it has no power to punish violators. Authorities must inform the Commission of actions taken on its recommendations. Despite this, the SHRC plays an important role as a watchdog and provides recourse for victims of human rights abuses in the state.

Summarized Overview

The administrative machinery at the state level in India operates through a structured framework comprising the State Public Service Commissions (PSCs), State Administrative Services, and various regulatory bodies. The State PSCs, established under Article 315 of the Constitution, play a pivotal role in recruiting civil servants through competitive examinations and interviews. They function as independent bodies, ensuring merit-based selection and advising the state government on personnel policies, promotions, and disciplinary actions. To maintain autonomy, PSC members have tenure security, financial independence, and restrictions on post-retirement employment. Their effectiveness, however, depends on the extent of operational autonomy granted by the state government and the implementation of their recommendations.

State administrative services, such as the Kerala Administrative Service (KAS), form the backbone of state governance. Officers selected through rigorous examination

processes undergo extensive training before taking charge of policy implementation and public service delivery. Their responsibilities include executing government programs, managing resources, coordinating interdepartmental activities, and ensuring citizen-centric service delivery. Recent reforms, including digitalisation of recruitment, streamlining of administrative processes, and enhanced grievance redressal mechanisms, aim to improve the efficiency and transparency of the system. The success of these reforms, however, largely depends on the commitment of state governments to administrative efficiency and fairness.

State-level regulatory bodies such as the State Finance Commission, State Planning Boards, State Human Rights Commission, and State Information Commission play a crucial role in governance by ensuring financial devolution, protecting citizens' rights, and promoting transparency. The State Finance Commission (SFC), established under Article 243-I, is responsible for recommending financial distribution between the state and local governments, strengthening fiscal decentralisation. However, delays in constituting SFCs and the selective implementation of their recommendations remain key challenges. Strengthening these institutions through better accountability measures and timely implementation of recommendations is essential for improving governance at the state level.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain the role and responsibilities of the State Public Service Commission (PSCs) in India.
2. How do the constitutional safeguards ensure the independence of State PSCs? Provide examples.
3. Discuss the key challenges faced by State PSCs in maintaining fair and transparent recruitment processes.
4. Outline the structure and recruitment process of a state administrative service (e.g., Kerala Administrative Service - KAS).
5. Why are administrative reforms at the state level in India important?
6. Analyse the functions of the State Finance Commission and its significance in financial decentralisation.
7. Discuss the role and importance of the State Planning Board.
8. Explain the role of state regulatory bodies like the State Human Rights Commission and State Information Commission in ensuring good governance.



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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

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UNIT 3

Decentralisation and Local Governance

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ▶ identify the constitutional provisions and structural framework of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and the State Election Commission
- ▶ explain the role and functions of PRIs in decentralisation and democratic governance
- ▶ analyze the operational challenges faced by local governments and the role of the State Election Commission in ensuring free and fair elections
- ▶ evaluate the impact of financial constraints, administrative challenges, and policy innovations in strengthening local governance
- ▶ propose innovative solutions for improving participatory governance and enhancing the effectiveness of local self-government institutions

Background

The governance of a vast and diverse country like India requires an administrative structure that ensures participation, inclusivity, and responsiveness at the grassroots level. Decentralisation, a core principle of democratic governance, empowers local institutions to address region-specific issues and strengthen participatory democracy. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (1992) institutionalised Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), marking a significant shift towards self-governance at the village, block, and district levels. These institutions play a crucial role in delivering essential services, implementing rural development schemes, and fostering local decision-making. However, their effectiveness depends on adequate financial resources, administrative autonomy, and support from state governments.

A key component of democratic decentralisation is the State Election Commission (SEC), an independent body responsible for conducting free and fair elections at the local level. The SEC ensures that electoral processes for Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies are conducted transparently, fostering legitimacy and accountability in governance. Despite its constitutional status, the SEC often faces challenges such as political interference, resource constraints, and issues related to voter awareness. Ensuring fair representation and electoral integrity is vital for strengthening local democracy.

Despite the constitutional mandate, local governance in India faces multiple challenges, including financial dependency on the state and central governments, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and lack of citizen participation. Innovations in e-Governance, participatory budgeting, and community-led development models have emerged as transformative tools to enhance transparency and efficiency. Strengthening local institutions through capacity-building, financial empowerment, and policy reforms is critical for achieving effective decentralisation. This unit aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of PRIs, the role of the SEC, and the evolving landscape of local governance in India, equipping learners with the knowledge to critically assess and contribute to grassroots governance mechanisms.

Keywords

Three-tier system, Electoral Process, Participatory Governance, Financial Devolution, Social Audit

Discussion

2.3.1 Decentralisation and Governance

Democratic decentralisation is the process of devolving power, responsibility, and decision-making authority from the state to elected representatives at lower levels of governance. The primary rationale for this arrangement is that many issues can be addressed more effectively at the local level. The Government of India adopted this concept to promote good governance and facilitate the development of rural and urban areas at the grassroots level. The government believed that without decentralisation, the challenges of poverty alleviation and sustainable development would remain unfulfilled aspirations.

► Concept of decentralisation

In 1992, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments were enacted to give effect to this decentralisation. The 73rd



► L.M. Singhvi
Committee

Amendment introduced Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) as units of local self-government. However, the concept itself was not new; village-level governance under the Gram Panchayat system had existed for centuries. In 1986, the Government of India appointed the L.M. Singhvi Committee to examine the implementation of self-governance in rural areas. Based on the committee's recommendations, PRIs were granted constitutional recognition as the third tier of India's federal democracy. These institutions were tasked with the development of rural areas.

► Part IX and Part
IX-A of the
Constitution

The 74th Amendment, passed in the same year, aimed at the development of urban areas. It empowered municipal bodies with the authority to plan for economic development and to implement relevant schemes. These Amendments introduced two new parts to the Constitution: Part IX, titled "The Panchayats" (73rd Amendment), and Part IX-A, titled "The Municipalities" (74th Amendment). Additionally, two new schedules were added: the 11th Schedule outlines the powers, authority, and responsibilities of Panchayats, while the 12th Schedule does the same for Municipalities.

Article 40 of the Constitution directs: "The State shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government." Accordingly, the devolution of authority and resources to local governments is intended to be permanent. However, state governments typically do not grant local bodies the authority to levy taxes. Instead, they provide funding, manage taxation, and supply the necessary staff to help local governments fulfil their responsibilities. Since local governance is a state subject under the Constitution, the extent of devolution is ultimately at the discretion of the individual states.

Decentralised Urban Governance

► Significance of 74th
Amendment

In the context of urban governance, the 74th Amendment stands as a landmark reform. It granted constitutional status to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), formalised the process for their establishment, and defined their structure, functions, and mechanisms for generating resources. The Amendment aimed to clarify the relationship between state governments and ULBs, particularly regarding the devolution of adequate powers and resources, enabling municipalities to function effectively as units of urban local self-government.

2.3.1.1 Significance of Decentralised Rural Governance

► Institutionalisation of grassroots democracy

As previously mentioned, the Parliament enacted the 73rd Constitutional Amendment to ensure the effective participation of rural populations in local governance. This Amendment established a three-tier system of Panchayati Raj Institutions in every state, at the village, intermediate, and district levels. With its passage, rural local self-governance received much-needed constitutional recognition, marking a significant milestone in the institutionalisation of grassroots democracy in India.

► Reservation of seats

The Amendment includes provisions for the reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and women. It mandates that not less than one-third of the total number of seats at all panchayat levels be reserved for women. Each tier, village, intermediate, and district, has a five-year term, though early dissolution is possible. The Act makes it mandatory to conduct panchayat elections regularly and in a timely manner. In the event of dissolution, elections must be held within six months.

► State Election Commission

At both the Block and District levels, ex-officio members from Parliament and State Legislatures have been granted voting rights. Members of Block and Zilla Panchayats are to be directly elected by the people, along with members of the Gram Panchayat. To ensure free and fair elections, the Act provides for the establishment of an independent State Election Commission.

► State Finance Commission

The panchayats have been empowered with the responsibility of local planning and the mobilization of their own resources. They are authorised to impose and collect taxes as per the provisions established by the respective state governments. Furthermore, the Act calls for the establishment of a State Finance Commission every five years to review the financial position of the panchayats and recommend the quantum of grants to be provided by the state government. This ensures financial autonomy and viability.

► Formation of Gram Sabhas

The Amendment authorises panchayats to formulate and implement plans for economic development and social justice in areas listed in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution. It also mandates the formation of Gram Sabhas, which serve as the foundational units of the Panchayati Raj system. Finally,

the provisions of the Act extend to the Union Territories and are applicable with certain modifications to the states of Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Mizoram due to their unique socio-cultural conditions.

2.3.2 Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) - Structure, Role, and Functions

The Panchayati Raj System in India is a three-tier system of local governance. It comprises Gram Panchayat at the village level, Panchayat Samitis at the intermediate level (or Block level), and Zila Parishad at the district level. These bodies are responsible for local self-governance, empowering communities, and promoting grassroots democracy.

1. Gram Panchayat (Village Level)

The Gram Panchayat is the foundational institution of rural governance, responsible for the implementation of various welfare and development programmes. It functions as the executive committee of the Gram Sabha and operates under different names across states. Membership typically ranges from five to thirty-one elected representatives, known as Panches, with the President (Sarpanch) elected through direct or indirect methods, depending on the state.

The Gram Panchayat undertakes essential governance functions, including implementing development programmes, maintaining village infrastructure, and ensuring social justice. While state governments may assign additional responsibilities, Gram Panchayats often face challenges such as inadequate financial resources, limited autonomy, lack of administrative support, and internal rivalries. Despite these hurdles, the institution remains crucial in rural development and local governance.

State governments exercise control over Gram Panchayats through jurisdictional alterations, electoral management, staff appointments, and financial oversight. They also have the authority to suspend or remove a Panch or Sarpanch under specific conditions. Nevertheless, Panchayats strive to overcome these limitations and continue to serve as effective institutions of grassroots governance.

► Foundational institution of rural governance

► Essential functions of Gram Panchayats

► Control of State government over the Gram Panchayats

2. Block Panchayat (Panchayat Samiti – Intermediate Level)

► Implementing Community Development Programmes

The Block Panchayat, or Panchayat Samiti, operates at the intermediate level and serves as the principal executive body within the PRIs. It is responsible for implementing Community Development Programmes and acting as an agent of the state government. The tenure of a Block Panchayat varies from three to five years, depending on state laws.

► Structure of Block Panchayats

A Block Panchayat consists of ex-officio, associate, and co-opted members, including the Sarpanches of Gram Panchayats, Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs), Members of Parliament (MPs), and representatives from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women. The President of the Block Panchayat, elected from its members, holds significant authority over the Block Development Officer (BDO) and other administrative functions.

► Key functions

The key responsibilities of the Block Panchayat include supervising and supporting Gram Panchayats, providing technical and financial assistance, and scrutinising budgets. It also plays a role in implementing civic amenities and developmental initiatives. However, unlike Gram Panchayats, Block Panchayats do not heavily rely on taxation for revenue; instead, they receive financial allocations from the state government, including a share of land revenue. The Block Development Officer ensures the execution of policies and resolutions passed by the Block Panchayat, making it a crucial intermediary institution in rural governance.

3. Zilla Parishad (District Level)

► Apex tier in PRIs

The Zilla Parishad is the apex tier in the Panchayati Raj system and functions as a corporate body overseeing rural governance at the district level. It serves as a coordinating and supervisory institution, ensuring that developmental plans and policies are efficiently implemented.

► Structure of Zilla Parishads

The Zilla Parishad consists of elected representatives, ex-officio members, and co-opted members, with urban local bodies within the district also having representation. The President (Chairman) of the Zilla Parishad, elected from its members, supervises administrative activities, oversees the implementation of resolutions, and provides reports to higher authorities.

► Responsibilities of
Zilla Parishads

The Zilla Parishad's responsibilities include coordinating development plans prepared by Panchayat Samitis, advising the state government on rural development, monitoring local administration, and collecting statistical data on local governance. It also provides recommendations to the state government on the distribution of work among Gram Panchayats and Block Panchayats. The funding for Zilla Parishads comes from taxes, non-tax revenues, and state government grants.

Despite its significant role in local governance, Zilla Parishads face challenges such as illiteracy, caste-based politics, financial constraints, bureaucratic interference, and irregular elections. Addressing these challenges is crucial for enhancing their effectiveness as rural development institutions.

4. Grama Sabha

► The lowest body of
PRIs

It is the lowest body of Panchayat Raj. It consists of all persons whose names are included in the electoral roll for the panchayat at village level. The term 'Grama Sabha' is defined in the constitution under Article 243 (b). It meets twice a year. Quorum is one-tenth. It works as a watchdog of the Grama Panchayat. The constitution mentions that Grama Sabha exercises such powers and performs such functions at the village level as the legislature of the State may, by law, provide.

The following are its main functions:

1. It elects members of the Grama Panchayat.
2. It approves the administrative report of the Grama Panchayat.
3. It approves the budget of the panchayat.
4. It approves development programmes to be undertaken during the current year.
5. It approves the village production plan.

The decisions taken by the Grama Sabha cannot be annulled by any other body except itself.

Functions of Grama Panchayat

The PRIs perform certain functions that are important. They directly influence the day-to-day lives of citizens. The important functions are summarised as follows:

1. Developmental plans for the promotion of small-scale and cottage industries, cooperation, execution of plans for agricultural and irrigation development.
2. Civic amenities like building roads, drains, tanks, wells, street lights, registration of births, deaths, and marriages.
3. Law and order functions - maintenance of watch and ward service of the village volunteer force.
4. Welfare functions - famine relief, welfare plans for women and children, backward classes, management of village fairs, management of libraries and reading rooms.
5. Commercial functions - supervision of panchayat enterprises such as community orchards and fisheries.
6. Administrative functions - maintenance of accounts, collection and maintenance of records, supervision of public schools.

Sources of Income

1. Income from taxation on village property, animals, vehicles, electricity and water tax, house tax, licence tax, toll tax, professional tax.
2. Grant-in-aid received from the state.
3. Public contributions and voluntary donations.
4. Village fairs, common land, tanks, and forests.

Importance of the Panchayati Raj system

Panchayati Raj is of great importance. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru called it a revolution. The importance of the system is clear from the following roles:

Promotion of democratic representation: The Panchayati Raj system typically consists of three levels: the Gram Panchayat at the village level, the Block Panchayat or Panchayat Samiti at the intermediate level, and the Zilla Panchayat at the district level. This multi-tiered structure fosters cooperation among people in rural areas and serves as a significant institutional framework for democratic decentralisation. Often referred to as the bedrock of grassroots democracy, the Panchayati Raj system provides an effective mechanism for the devolution of power

► Bedrock of grassroots democracy



from higher to lower levels of government. It empowers local governing units to exercise authority with active participation from the community. In this way, democratic decentralisation, through local self-government, brings governance closer to the people. This is why the Panchayati Raj is often described as a form of government at the grassroots level. As Lord Bryce aptly observed, “The best school of democracy and the best guarantee for its success is the practice of local self-government.”

Effective and efficient planning: The Gram Panchayats in the country have been entrusted with providing basic services to the villagers and planning for local economic development. The Grama Sabha discusses the development work plan of the Grama Panchayats and elects representatives to execute the plan.

Promotion of good governance: Consensus building and people’s participation are two important pillars of good governance, and the Panchayat Raj Institutions help in ensuring both these pillars.

Achievements of PRIs

1. **Increasing representation of women:** The proportion of women elected representatives has been steadily rising since the enactment of the 73rd Amendment. Currently, India has about 260,512 Panchayats with 3.1 million elected representatives, of which a record 1.3 million are women.
2. **Creation of healthy competition among various states:** The passage of the 73rd and 74th Amendments has created healthy competition among various states regarding the devolution of the 3 Fs: Funds, Functions, and Functionaries. For instance, Kerala has devolved 29 of its functions to Panchayats. Rajasthan, taking inspiration from Kerala, devolved many key departments such as health, education, and agriculture to Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Challenges and Issues

Local government is a state subject under the Constitution of India. As a result, the devolution of power and authority to panchayats is left to the discretion of individual states. In several cases, crucial subjects necessary for the effective functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have not been devolved. The

major challenges are outlined below:

1. Insufficient Funding

Despite constitutional provisions, local bodies face significant financial constraints in executing the functions assigned to them.

2. Infrastructure Deficiencies

Some Gram Panchayats lack their own office buildings and are forced to share space with schools, Anganwadi centres, or other public institutions. Many also lack basic facilities such as toilets, drinking water, electricity, and internet connectivity, which hampers efficient functioning.

3. Staff Shortages

Many local governments lack adequate staff to carry out even basic administrative functions. The Standing Committee on Rural Development (2018) highlighted a severe shortage of key personnel, such as secretaries, junior engineers, computer operators, and data entry operators. This significantly affects their ability to function effectively and deliver public services.

4. Delayed Elections

State governments often postpone panchayat elections, violating the constitutional mandate of holding elections every five years. For example, in Tamil Nadu, panchayat elections have not been conducted for over two years, resulting in the loss of Finance Commission grants from the Union Government.

5. Corruption

The increasing financial flows to local governments have attracted criminal elements and contractors to local elections. This has led to the emergence of a corruption network involving elected representatives and officials. However, there is no concrete evidence to suggest that decentralisation has increased corruption.

6. Erosion of Institutional Role

In many instances, panchayats have been reduced to mere implementation agencies rather than policy-making bodies. The advent of centrally designed, technology-driven schemes has further diminished their autonomy and relevance.



Suggestions for Improvement

1. Revitalising Gram Sabhas

Gram Sabhas and Ward Committees must be revitalised to ensure genuine grassroots participation in governance.

2. Strengthening Organisational Structures

Panchayats require a robust organisational structure supported by adequate manpower. There should be a focused effort to recruit support staff to facilitate smooth and effective functioning.

3. Developing a Comprehensive Taxation Mechanism

A structured and comprehensive local taxation framework should be devised to improve financial autonomy.

4. Efficient Funding Mechanisms

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj should actively monitor the timely release and proper utilisation of Finance Commission grants. Delays should be avoided, and funds must be spent effectively.

5. Constitution of Audit Committees

State governments should establish Audit Committees at the district level to ensure transparency and financial accountability in local governance.

India's decentralisation initiative is one of the largest democratic experiments in the world. The country has a strong institutional framework for local governance that is constitutionally insulated from interference by both the central and state governments. However, a vibrant democratic culture is essential to bring this structure to life.

The government must take decisive steps to devolve the “3Fs”—Funds, Functions, and Functionaries—to panchayats. These institutions must empower marginalised communities, particularly the poor and women, and effectively plan for economic development and social justice. An empowered Panchayati Raj system forms the cornerstone of good governance. To conclude in the spirit of Gandhiji's vision of Gram Swaraj, as Venkata Raman rightly observes:

“The Indian ethos has been in favour of participation of all

sections rather than rule by majority. We must therefore devise a system in which there would be adequate participation.”

2.3.3 State Election Commission: Role and Functions

► Constitutional body

The State Election Commission is an independent constitutional authority responsible for conducting elections to panchayats, municipalities, and other local government institutions. Prior to the constitutionalisation of Panchayati Raj institutions, elections to these bodies were conducted by the respective State Governments. However, the 74th Constitutional Amendment provided for the establishment of a State Election Commission to oversee elections to local bodies. Articles 243K and 243ZA were inserted into the Constitution to mandate the creation of a State Election Commission in every state as a constitutional body.

► Structure of the Commission

The State Election Commission comprises a State Election Commissioner, who is appointed by the Governor. The tenure and conditions of service of the Commissioner are also determined by the Governor. Importantly, these conditions cannot be varied to the Commissioner’s disadvantage after appointment. The Commissioner can only be removed from office in the manner and on the grounds prescribed for the removal of a High Court judge.

Powers and Functions

The State Election Commission has the powers of superintendence, direction, and control over the preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of elections to panchayats and municipalities within the state. According to the provisions of the Local Bodies Act, the Commission does not prepare a separate voter list for local body elections. Instead, it uses the electoral rolls prepared by the Election Commission of India under the Representation of the People Act, 1950.

Delimitation Power

The Commission is responsible for delimiting all constituencies prior to elections, which typically occurs every five years.

Registration and Deregistration of Political Parties

The Commission is also empowered to register and deregister political parties at the state level.



In addition to these major functions, the Commission performs the following duties:

- a. Appointing dates for nomination
- b. Issuing public notices for elections
- c. Managing the nomination process of candidates
- d. Publishing the list of contesting candidates
- e. Fixing the date and time for polling
- f. Rescheduling polls in case of emergencies
- g. Overseeing the counting of votes and ensuring timely elections

In *Kishan Singh Tomar v. Municipal Corporation of Ahmedabad and Others*, the Supreme Court held that elections to local bodies must be conducted in accordance with the Constitution and relevant election laws. The Court emphasised that elections cannot be delayed or challenged solely due to the government's failure to carry out fresh delimitation or update electoral rolls.

Challenges to the Commission's Autonomy

Despite being a constitutional body, the State Election Commission faces several challenges that compromise its autonomy, authority, and effectiveness in conducting free and fair elections. Major issues include:

1. **Legal Ambiguities and Overlaps:** The legal framework governing the Commission often contains ambiguities and overlaps with the powers of the State Government, leading to confusion and conflict.
2. **Lack of Judicial Support:** In several instances, the judiciary has not upheld the autonomy of the Commission in disputes with the State Government.
3. **Delays in Elections:** State Governments frequently delay elections, citing administrative or logistical issues.
4. **Political Interference:** There have been cases of State Governments attempting to exert undue influence over the Commission, thereby undermining its independence.

The Election Commission is a cornerstone of India's democratic framework. Free and fair elections are fundamental to democracy, and to uphold this principle, the Commission must function independently and without external interference. The encroachment of one organ of the state upon another must be actively discouraged to ensure a robust and credible electoral system.

Electoral Process at the Local Level

The electoral process for local governance follows a structured approach to ensure representation at various levels of administration. The SEC is responsible for conducting elections to the three-tier Panchayati Raj system—Gram Panchayat, Block Panchayat (Panchayat Samiti), and Zilla Parishad—as well as elections for Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils, and Nagar Panchayats in urban areas.

The local electoral process involves several stages:

1. **Delimitation of Wards:** The SEC determines and revises the boundaries of constituencies based on population changes.
2. **Preparation and Revision of Electoral Rolls:** Voter lists are regularly updated to ensure comprehensive and accurate voter records.
3. **Notification of Elections:** The SEC issues election notifications, setting dates for nominations, polling, and results.
4. **Filing of Nominations:** Candidates file nomination papers, which are scrutinised by election officials.
5. **Election Campaigning:** Candidates engage in electioneering, subject to the Model Code of Conduct.
6. **Polling and Counting of Votes:** Elections are conducted using ballot papers or Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), followed by vote counting and result declaration.
7. **Resolution of Electoral Disputes:** The SEC handles complaints and disputes related to electoral malpractices.

The SEC ensures that local elections are free from undue influence and that all candidates and voters have equal opportunities to participate in the democratic process.



Challenges in Conducting Free and Fair Local Elections

Despite its constitutional mandate, the SEC faces several challenges in ensuring free and fair elections at the local level. Some of the key issues include:

1. **Political and Bureaucratic Interference:** State governments often exert influence over the SEC, impacting its autonomy in decision-making and election administration.
2. **Resource Constraints:** The SEC often lacks adequate financial and human resources, affecting its ability to conduct elections efficiently.
3. **Electoral Malpractices:** Issues such as vote-buying, booth capturing, and coercion of voters undermine the integrity of local elections.
4. **Delayed Elections:** State governments sometimes postpone local elections for political reasons, violating constitutional provisions.
5. **Lack of Voter Awareness:** Many rural and marginalised communities are unaware of their electoral rights, leading to low voter turnout.
6. **Weak Enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct:** Ensuring compliance with electoral guidelines is challenging due to political pressures and inadequate enforcement mechanisms.

To address these challenges, greater financial and administrative autonomy must be provided to the SEC. Regular training of election officials, digitalisation of electoral processes, and voter awareness campaigns are essential for enhancing the credibility of local elections.

The State Election Commission plays a crucial role in strengthening democratic governance by ensuring the proper conduct of elections at the grassroots level. While constitutional provisions grant the SEC significant authority, practical challenges often hinder its effective functioning. Strengthening the SEC's autonomy, providing adequate financial support, and enforcing strict electoral laws are essential steps toward enhancing the credibility and efficiency of local body elections in India.

2.3.4 Challenges and Innovations in Local Governance

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have played a significant role in rural governance for over six decades. While they have successfully enhanced democratic participation at the grassroots level, they continue to face financial, administrative, and structural challenges. Addressing these issues requires innovative approaches, including the integration of technology and participatory governance models.

Financial and Administrative Constraints

One of the primary obstacles facing PRIs is their limited financial autonomy. Despite constitutional provisions mandating financial devolution, many Panchayats lack adequate resources to implement development plans effectively. Their dependence on state government grants and the narrow tax base restricts their ability to function independently. Additionally, cumbersome administrative procedures and bureaucratic control impede efficient decision-making and implementation of welfare schemes.

► Limited financial autonomy

Another challenge is the uneven social representation in PRI leadership. While reservations exist for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and women, dominant social groups often influence decision-making processes, limiting inclusive governance. Coordination between PRIs and development agencies remains weak, further exacerbating administrative inefficiencies.

► Uneven social representation

Role of Technology in Strengthening Local Governance

The integration of technology in local governance has the potential to transform PRIs into more efficient and transparent institutions. Digital initiatives such as the establishment of Common Service Centres (CSCs) at the Gram Panchayat level provide citizens with access to essential government services, thereby enhancing accessibility and accountability.

► Accessibility and accountability

E-Governance tools, including online grievance redressal mechanisms, real-time monitoring of welfare schemes, and digital record-keeping, contribute to improved governance. The use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and data analytics aids in better planning and resource allocation. Digital literacy programmes are essential to ensuring that rural populations and

► Digital literacy programmes



Panchayat officials can effectively utilise these technological advancements.

Participatory Governance and Best Practices in PRIs

Participatory governance is essential for strengthening PRIs as institutions of self-government. The success of Panchayati Raj depends on community engagement, transparency, and accountability. Best practices from states like Maharashtra, Kerala, and Karnataka highlight the importance of effective devolution, active citizen participation, and social audits.

States that have successfully implemented decentralisation measures have ensured:

- Regular Panchayat elections and financial devolution as mandated by the Constitution.
- District Planning Committees to align local development with broader state policies.
- Social audits and public accountability mechanisms to track the utilisation of funds and implementation of welfare schemes.
- Capacity-building programmes for PRI representatives to enhance their administrative and leadership skills.

To ensure sustained progress, PRIs must adopt more inclusive, technology-driven, and citizen-centric approaches. Strengthening their autonomy, fostering digital empowerment, and promoting community participation will significantly improve local governance effectiveness.

Summarized Overview

Decentralisation and local governance in India are primarily facilitated through the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), which operate as a three-tier system at the village, block, and district levels. The Gram Panchayat, the foundational tier, is responsible for local development, infrastructure maintenance, and social welfare. The Block Panchayat (Panchayat Samiti) serves as an intermediary institution, coordinating development programmes and providing financial and technical assistance to villages. At the district level, the Zilla Parishad supervises and integrates rural development efforts. The 73rd

Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 granted PRIs constitutional status, outlining their administrative, economic, social, and environmental functions. However, challenges such as financial constraints, bureaucratic interference, and political influence hinder their efficiency.

The State Election Commission (SEC) plays a crucial role in ensuring free, fair, and transparent elections for PRIs and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). Empowered by Articles 243K and 243ZA, the SEC oversees the electoral process, including voter roll preparation, election scheduling, and dispute resolution. The electoral framework ensures grassroots representation, but challenges like political interference, resource constraints, and electoral malpractices continue to undermine local democracy. The SEC's independence is essential for maintaining the integrity of decentralised governance.

Strengthening PRIs and the SEC requires comprehensive reforms, including financial autonomy, capacity-building initiatives, and legal safeguards against political manipulation. Effective decentralisation fosters participatory governance, empowering local bodies to implement development programmes efficiently. Addressing the challenges in local governance will enhance the role of PRIs and the SEC in promoting sustainable rural development and democratic participation.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain the structure and functions of the three tiers of the Panchayati Raj System in India.
2. Discuss the significance of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in strengthening grassroots democracy.
3. Analyse the financial challenges faced by PRIs and suggest measures for improving their financial autonomy.
4. Evaluate the role of the State Election Commission in ensuring free and fair local elections.
5. How does the Gram Panchayat contribute to rural development? Discuss with examples.
6. What are the key responsibilities of the Zilla Parishad, and how does it coordinate with other levels of PRIs?
7. Identify and discuss the major challenges faced by the State Election Commission in conducting local elections.
8. In what ways can state governments play a more effective role in strengthening PRIs and local governance?



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Suggested Reading

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU



BLOCK 3

District Level Administration

UNIT 1

District Administration: Structure and Functions

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ▶ describe the structure and significance of district administration in India
- ▶ explain the historical evolution and responsibilities of the District Collector
- ▶ examine the coordination between district administration and state/central authorities
- ▶ analyse the changing profile of the District Collector in the wake of new reforms
- ▶ evaluate the effectiveness of citizen-centric administration in district governance

Background

District administration in India serves as the fundamental unit of governance, ensuring the implementation of policies and maintaining law and order at the grassroots level. Historically rooted in colonial administrative structures, the role of district administration has evolved to become more participatory and development-oriented. The office of the District Collector, which once focused primarily on revenue collection, now encompasses a wide range of responsibilities, including disaster management, social welfare, and governance reforms.

In the contemporary governance framework, district administration plays a crucial role in coordinating with state and central government agencies, ensuring the smooth execution of welfare schemes and development programmes. With decentralisation and digital governance initiatives, the traditional bureaucratic model has undergone significant transformation. Today, district-level officers are expected to engage with multiple stakeholders, including local self-governments, civil society organisations, and private sector entities, to facilitate effective service delivery.

The changing profile of district administration is shaped by policy reforms,



globalisation, and technological advancements. The integration of e-governance tools, participatory decision-making, and improved grievance redressal mechanisms have strengthened public trust in district administration. As the governance landscape continues to evolve, understanding the district administration's structure, functions, and emerging challenges becomes vital for scholars, policymakers, and citizens alike.

Keywords

Revenue Administration, Law and Order, Disaster Management, Citizen-Centric Administration

Discussion

3.1.1 Meaning, Significance, and Evolution of District Administration

District administration serves as the fundamental unit of governance in India, ensuring the execution of public affairs within a designated territorial boundary. According to the Oxford Dictionary, a district is a 'territory marked off for special administrative purposes,' and administration refers to the management of public affairs. Thus, district administration entails the governance of public affairs within a defined territorial jurisdiction. The scope of district administration is determined by the nature of the state; in a democratic welfare state, it extends to diverse functions that contribute to public welfare and national development.

► Fundamental unit of governance

► Evolution of district administration

S. S. Khera describes district administration as the total functioning of government within a district—dynamic and comprehensive in its management of public affairs. The evolution of district administration can be traced back to ancient times, where administrative divisions akin to modern districts existed under various ruling dynasties. During the Mauryan and Gupta periods, districts were administered by officials like Sthanikas and Rajjukas. The Mughal administration introduced military officers such as the faujdar, who oversaw law enforcement, while revenue collection was managed by the amil or amulguzar. Under British rule, Warren Hastings

formally institutionalised the position of the Collector in 1772, primarily for revenue collection and judicial functions. However, Lord Cornwallis later separated executive, revenue, and judicial functions, refining the role of the Collector into its present form. Even after independence, district administration remains a crucial framework for implementing state policies and ensuring local governance.

Constitutional and Legal Framework

India's district administration operates within the governance structure established by the Constitution of India. The Seventh Schedule delineates the division of powers between the Centre and the States, shaping the administrative functions at the district level. Various legal provisions regulate key areas such as revenue administration, law and order, local governance, and disaster management. Additionally, decentralised institutions like Panchayati Raj bodies and urban local governments function within the district administration, reinforcing grassroots governance. The framework also facilitates coordination among central, state, and local authorities, ensuring more effective governance and service delivery at the district level.

► Governance structure

3.1.2. Role of the District Collector

A District Collector is the head of district administration and the official agent of the state government in the district. The office of the District Collector is unique and has no parallels in the administrative systems of other countries (except in France). The chief responsibilities of a District Collector include managing revenue administration, maintaining law and order, and fostering economic and social development in the district.

► Agent of the state government

Titles of the Collector

A District Collector is also known by other titles in various states of India:

- **Deputy Commissioner** – in Karnataka, Assam, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, and Jharkhand.
- **District Magistrate** – in West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, and Tripura.
- **District Collector** – in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana,



Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Maharashtra, Sikkim, Odisha, Gujarat, Puducherry, and Lakshadweep.

Administrative Hierarchy

The District Collector belongs to the General Administration Department of the state government (i.e., the Secretariat). Politically, this department is headed by the Chief Minister, and administratively by the Chief Secretary. The Divisional Commissioner supervises and controls the work of the District Collector. The place of the Collector in the state administrative system can be illustrated as follows:

Level	Administrative Head	Political/Executive Head
State Government	Chief Secretary (Administrative Head of the Secretariat)	Chief Minister (Political Head)
Division	Divisional Commissioner	—
District	District Collector (also called District Magistrate or Deputy Commissioner)	—

Evolution

District is the basic geographical unit of administration in India. Originally, the Constitution of India made no mention of the word “district” (except in Article 233, which mentioned district judges). However, the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution later included the term “district” in many provisions under Parts IX and IX-A (dealing with Panchayats and Municipalities respectively).

► Basic geographical unit of administration



The office of the District Collector as a unit of administration has a long history. It dates back to the Mauryan era in ancient India. During Mughal rule, a district was called a Sarkar and it was headed by a Karori or Faujdar – a military officer who functioned under the direct control of a Subedar.

► Powerful functionary

The present-day system of district administration and the post of District Collector came into existence under the British East India Company. This office was created in 1772 by Warren Hastings, the then Governor-General of India. In 1787, the Collector was made responsible for civil justice and magistracy in addition to revenue collection. The Collector became a very powerful functionary and was often described as a “Little Napoleon.”

► Importance of the District Collector

During the British period, various observers commented on the importance of the District Collector. The Simon Commission (1930) remarked that the District Collector “is, in the eyes of most of its inhabitants, the government” at the district level. Ramsay MacDonald compared the District Collector to a tortoise on whose back stands the elephant of the Government of India. Lord Lytton noted that the English in India would be remembered not by grand edifices, but by the institution of the District Collector and the ideals it embodied. After Independence, however, the status and authority of the Collector’s office somewhat declined due to various administrative changes.

Functions and Role

The District Collector is a key figure in district administration, responsible for maintaining law and order, managing revenue, overseeing development, and coordinating governmental functions at the district level. Collectors are also tasked with law enforcement, disaster management, and ensuring the smooth implementation of government programmes. The Collector’s chief functions can be broadly discussed under the following heads:

I. Revenue Administration

The District Collector is the head of revenue administration in the district. Historically, the collection of revenue was the first function of the District Collector. He is responsible for the collection of revenue for the government, often through the Board of Revenue or Revenue Tribunals. As the head of revenue administration, the Collector is responsible for the

following functions:

1. To collect land revenue;
2. To collect other government dues;
3. To distribute and recover taccavi (agricultural) loans;
4. To maintain land records;
5. To collect rural statistics;
6. To exercise the powers of Land Acquisition Officer;
7. To implement land reforms;
8. To look after the welfare of agriculturists;
9. To assess crop losses and recommend relief;
10. To supervise treasuries and sub-treasuries;
11. To enforce stamp act provisions;
12. To disburse rehabilitation grants;
13. To manage government estates;
14. To hear revenue appeals against the orders of lower authorities;
15. To oversee the payment of compensation under Zamindari abolition.

► head of revenue administration

II. Law and Order Administration

Maintaining law and order in the district is the principal duty of the District Collector. Before Independence, the Collector acted as both the Executive Magistrate and the Judicial Magistrate in the district. After Independence, the judiciary was separated from the executive under Article 50 of the Constitution. As a result, the Collector's role as a judicial magistrate came to an end, and those judicial functions were transferred to a new functionary called the District Judge (under the supervision of the High Court).

► judiciary was separated from the executive

However, the District Collector still functions as the District Magistrate (the executive magistrate). In this capacity, he is responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the district. For this purpose, the District Police force (headed by the Superintendent of Police) is kept under the Collector's control, supervision, and direction.

► maintenance of law and order

In his capacity as District Magistrate, the Collector performs the following functions:

1. To control and supervise the subordinate magistrates in the district;
2. To issue orders to avert any threat to public peace and safety;
3. To dispose of all petitions received from the public and from government regarding law and order and other matters;
4. To release prisoners on parole;
5. To inspect jails;
6. To submit an annual criminal administration report to the state government;
7. To grant, suspend, or cancel licences (for arms, hotels, explosives, petroleum, etc.);
8. To supervise and control the actions of local bodies in the district;
9. To direct and coordinate the actions of the district police;
10. To call upon the armed forces as needed to aid the civil administration during emergencies;
11. To prosecute offenders under special acts like the Factories Act and the Trade Marks Act;
12. To order the disposal of unclaimed property;
13. To recommend schemes for the development of forests.

III. Development Administration

The role of the District Collector in development has gained great importance since the initiation of planned development and the Panchayati Raj system. The District Collector is often seen as the captain and leader of the development efforts in the district.

► Programmes and projects for rural development

Several government programmes and projects for rural development are implemented under the Collector's supervision for the benefit of all sections of the people, especially the underprivileged and downtrodden. Numerous development schemes related to health, education, employment, housing,



and agricultural marketing (among others), as well as special programmes for women, children, and youth, are in full operation under the Collector's oversight. These programmes aim at eradicating poverty and improving the living standards of the poor. A number of special projects (such as the Desert Development Programme (DDP) and others) are also undertaken at the district level. The Collector is responsible for implementing all these schemes. In fact, the Collector is often described as the "captain and commander" of the development work in the entire district.

IV. Disaster Management Administration

The Collector acts as the crisis administrator-in-chief during natural calamities and other emergencies in the district. He chairs the District Disaster Management Committee, which is responsible for preparing both immediate and long-term plans to handle disasters effectively. During emergencies, the Collector coordinates all relief operations and is vested with considerable powers to carry out disaster management activities efficiently. Government decisions regarding relief operations and the distribution of aid are often based on the Collector's assessment of the local situation.

► Administrator-in-chief during natural calamities

V. Election Administration

The District Collector is designated as the District Election Officer and serves as the Returning Officer for parliamentary elections in the district. In other elections (such as state assembly or local body elections), he supervises all the returning officers in the district. The Collector is also responsible for the preparation and periodic revision of electoral rolls, and for ensuring that free and fair elections are conducted in the district.

► Returning Officer for parliamentary elections

VI. District Civil Supplies Administration

The District Collector oversees the management of the Public Distribution System (PDS) in the district. The PDS operates through fair price shops that sell essential commodities like rice, wheat, sugar, kerosene, and other necessities to the public at subsidised rates (usually via ration cards issued to citizens). The Collector has authority over the District Supply Officer (who is in charge of all the fair price shops in the district) and ensures that these commodities are adequately available and distributed fairly. He also has the power to conduct raids on

► Management of the Public Distribution System (PDS)

these businesses; if any illegitimate or illegal operations are discovered, he can shut them down to uphold the integrity of the system.

Other Powers and Functions

In addition to the above, a District Collector has various other duties and powers, including:

1. Acting as the District Census Officer – he conducts the census operations in the district every ten years.
2. Serving as the chief protocol officer in the district – he handles protocol for visits of VIPs and dignitaries.
3. Presiding over the District Plan Implementation Committee – coordinating development plan execution.
4. Representing the state government at ceremonial and official functions in the district.
5. Serving as a buffer between citizens and the administration – addressing public grievances and connecting people with government services.
6. Supervising the local administration (such as municipalities and panchayats) in the district.
7. Acting as the Public Relations Officer of the government in the district – communicating government policies and programmes.
8. Handling personnel matters of the district staff (as the head of district administration).
9. Overseeing work related to Civil Defence in the district (preparedness for emergencies).
10. Maintaining liaison with military authorities for any defence-related coordination in the district.
11. Collecting various dues such as excise duties, irrigation dues, income tax dues and managing arrears.
12. Acting as an arbitrator in land acquisition disputes and ensuring accurate maintenance of land records.

► Issuing various statutory certificates such as nationality, domicile, marriage, caste (SC/ST/OBC) and EWS certificates to residents

Changing Role: Over time, the role of the District Collector has been evolving from a primarily revenue collection and law-and-order focus to a more development-oriented, multi-



faceted role. This shift has been driven by factors such as the establishment of Panchayati Raj institutions (local self-governance) and the push for more effective governance and grassroots democracy. The Collector is now expected to be a facilitator of development, a coordinator of various government schemes, and a change agent at the district level. He is tasked with coordinating numerous government programmes, overseeing development initiatives, and acting as a problem-solver within the district administration.

Constraints

Despite the crucial role they play, District Collectors face several constraints that can hinder their performance. Notable challenges include:

- 1. Frequent Transfers:** Collectors often experience frequent transfers from one district to another. This prevents them from fully understanding the local environment and building the necessary long-term relationships within the community, disrupting continuity.
- 2. Workload:** The workload of a Collector is continuously increasing, adding to the challenges of the job. They are expected to handle an ever-expanding array of duties, which can overwhelm the administrative capacity.
- 3. Political Pressures:** Collectors frequently encounter political pressures that can compromise their objectivity and integrity. These pressures may relate to sensitive matters such as land acquisition decisions, issuing of licences, and other high-stakes administrative decisions.
- 4. Protocol Duties:** Collectors are required to perform various protocol and ceremonial duties (for example, receiving and accompanying visiting dignitaries). These duties, while important, can interrupt their regular work schedule and add to their burden.
- 5. Law and Order Challenges:** Although the Collector's role in day-to-day policing is indirect, they are held accountable for the maintenance of law and order in the district. Public complaints about police performance or incidents of crime can increase scrutiny on the Collector's effectiveness, straining the delicate relationship between the police administration and the Collector.

6. Crisis Management: Collectors are also responsible for handling crises such as communal disturbances, natural disasters, and other emergencies. Managing these crises demands immediate attention and can divert focus and resources away from the long-term developmental functions of the Collector.

► Need to realign and prioritise

Therefore, District Collectors face challenges such as heavy workloads, frequent transfers, and potential political interference, all of which can impact their ability to perform their duties effectively. There is a need to realign and prioritise the Collector's responsibilities – focusing on core functions like law and order, disaster management, and inter-agency coordination – in order to ensure efficient administration. By doing so, the Collector can concentrate on areas where their leadership is most essential for public welfare.

3.1.3 District Administration: Structure and Functions

► Bridge between the local government and the state

District administration is the key mechanism responsible for the proper functioning and development of a district. It is a crucial aspect of public administration and governance, acting as a collective bridge between the local government and the state government. The chief responsibilities of district administration are: revenue administration, maintenance of law and order, and promotion of the economic and social development of the district.

Features of District Administration

A district administration typically exhibits the following features:

- 1. Hierarchical Structure:** A district administration is hierarchically structured, ensuring smooth functioning and clear delineation of responsibilities at various levels.
- 2. Wide Range of Functions:** It performs a broad array of functions ranging from maintenance of law and order to implementation of developmental programmes. This wide scope means the administration deals with diverse aspects of governance at the district level.
- 3. Intermediary Role:** It acts as an intermediary between the local bodies (like Panchayats and Municipalities) and higher levels of government authority. In other words, the

district administration links grassroots governance with state-level administration.

► Clear delineation of responsibilities

4. **Flexible Approach:** Despite having a rigid structure, the administration can adopt a flexible approach to cater to the specific needs and situations of the district. This adaptability allows for localised solutions within the broader framework of government policy.
5. **Accountability:** District administration is accountable to both higher authorities (state government) and the public. It ensures transparency and integrity in its functioning. The effectiveness of the district administration is vital to the welfare of citizens, as it directly impacts the quality of services delivered at the local level.

Structure of District Administration

A district administration is generally structured in a hierarchical manner, with the District Collector at the apex. The key elements of a typical district administrative structure include:

- **District Collector / District Magistrate (DC):** The District Collector is the highest-ranking official in the district and the chief executive officer of district administration. He is responsible for the overall administration of the district and oversees all aspects of governance within the district.
- **Additional District Magistrate (ADM):** Assists the District Collector in administrative duties and may be assigned specific responsibilities (e.g., land acquisition, development projects, etc.). The ADM helps share the workload and can act on behalf of the Collector when needed.
- **Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO):** Large districts are divided into sub-divisions, each headed by a Sub-Divisional Officer. SDOs manage the administration of their respective sub-divisions, handling revenue, law and order, and development tasks at a level below the district.
- **Tehsildar / Talukdar:** Tehsildars (also known as Talukdars in some states) are in charge of smaller administrative units called tehsils or talukas (sub-districts). Their duties include

► Elements of a district administrative structure

maintaining land records, collecting land revenue and other government dues, and overseeing day-to-day revenue matters in their area.

- **Patwari / Village Officer:** At the village level, administration is often handled by the Patwari (also called Village Officer). The Patwari maintains village land records, updates crop harvest data, and serves as the primary point of contact for villagers on revenue matters. This officer is the grassroots representative of the district administration, facilitating communication between villagers and the government.

Other Key Officers and Departments

In addition to the revenue hierarchy, a district has other key departmental officers who work alongside the Collector to manage different sectors:

- **Superintendent of Police (SP):** Responsible for maintaining law and order in the district. The SP manages the district police force, ensures public safety and security, and works under the oversight of the District Collector (especially when coordinating during emergencies and law and order situations).
- **District Medical Officer (Chief Health Officer):** Oversees health services and programmes in the district. The Health Officer coordinates various health institutions (district hospitals, primary health centres, community health centres) to ensure healthcare delivery and implementation of public health programmes.
- **District Forest Officer (DFO):** Manages forestry and wildlife-related administration in the district. The DFO is responsible for conservation efforts, protection of forests, and implementation of environmental and forestry programmes.
- **District Panchayat Officer:** Oversees the functioning of Panchayati Raj institutions (village, block, and district panchayats) in the district. This officer coordinates between the district administration and local self-government bodies to ensure that development plans and schemes are effectively carried out at the grassroots level.

► key departmental officers

- **Other Functional Departments:** There are various other departmental officers at the district level – for example, officers for Agriculture, Education, Public Works, Social Welfare, Industries, Cooperation, etc. Each department has its own structure but works in tandem with the District Collector to achieve the district’s development and governance objectives.

Functions of District Administration

District administration performs a wide range of functions critical to governance at the local level. Some of the major functions of district administration include:

1. **Maintenance of Law and Order:** Ensuring peace and security in the district is a primary function. The district administration, through the District Magistrate and the police, works to prevent and control crime, manage public safety, and respond to any law-and-order situations or emergencies.
2. **Revenue and Financial Administration:** The administration handles the assessment and collection of land revenue and other taxes, maintenance of land records, and proper management of government funds at the district level. It also involves overseeing the treasury, budgeting for district-level offices, and implementing financial regulations.
3. **Development Administration:** Implementing development programmes and schemes is a core function. This includes rural development projects, urban development within the district towns, infrastructure building (roads, schools, irrigation, etc.), poverty alleviation programmes, and social welfare schemes. The district administration coordinates with various departments to ensure these programmes reach the intended beneficiaries and improve socio-economic indicators in the district. (The district administration’s role in development often extends to providing relief and rehabilitation to people affected by natural disasters, as part of its development and welfare mandate.)
4. **Disaster Management:** The district administration is the focal point for disaster management and emergency re-

response at the field level. This involves preparing contingency plans for floods, earthquakes, cyclones, droughts, and other calamities; mobilising relief materials and personnel when disasters strike; coordinating with state authorities, NGOs, and other stakeholders for effective disaster response; and overseeing rehabilitation efforts post-disaster. The District Collector, as crisis manager, is vested with special powers to carry out these operations efficiently.

5. Other Important Functions: In addition to the above, the district administration handles a variety of other functions, such as:

- **Supervision of Panchayati Raj institutions:** guiding and monitoring the work of local self-government bodies (village panchayats, block samitis, and Zilla Parishad) to ensure compliance with laws and proper use of funds.
- **Coordination with various departments and agencies:** acting as the coordinating hub for different government departments at district level (education, health, public works, etc.) to ensure smooth implementation of policies and programmes.
- **Conducting Elections:** managing the conduct of elections (national, state, or local) in the district, including voter registration, polling arrangements, counting of votes, and declaration of results under the guidance of the Election Commission.
- **Ensuring supply of essential commodities:** monitoring public distribution systems (fair price shops) and market supplies to ensure essential commodities (like food grains, fuel, etc.) are available and to check hoarding or black marketing.
- **Overseeing public health and sanitation:** coordinating public health initiatives, epidemic responses, sanitation drives, and immunisation campaigns at the district level in collaboration with health officials.
- **Regulating markets and trade activities:** enforcing regulations in markets (e.g., market fees, fair weights and measures), issuing licences for various trades, and ensuring that trade activities comply with the law.



► Governance at the local level

The effectiveness of the district administration in performing these functions is crucial to the welfare of citizens, as it directly impacts the quality of services provided at the local level.

Need for Reforms

The current system of district administration faces several challenges and there have been calls for reforms to make it more effective. Key issues and areas for reform include:

► Coordination

- **Union–State–Local Relations:** District Collectors are expected to implement welfare and development activities of both the Central and State governments impartially. However, better coordination between the Centre and the State is needed so that schemes are supervised and implemented effectively at the district level, avoiding overlaps or conflicts between different levels of government.

► Balanced approach

- **Focus on Development Management:** There is an imperative to shift district administration towards a stronger focus on development management. This means improving how resources are utilised and how development programmes are executed. Training administrators in modern management skills is necessary so that they can plan and implement development programmes and policies more efficiently.

- **Balancing Law and Order with Development:** While maintaining law and order is a critical function of government, in the pursuit of development administration the focus on law and order should not be neglected. Adequate attention (such as building police infrastructure, intelligence networks, and grievance redressal systems) must be given to law and order to ensure a balanced approach. In short, governance reforms must ensure that development and law-and-order responsibilities are both given due importance at the district level.

- **Democratic Decentralisation and District Administration:** With the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, significant powers have been decentralised to local governments (Panchayati Raj institutions and Urban Local Bodies). However, bureaucratic resistance and elitist attitudes

► Redefine the Collector's role

have sometimes hindered effective decentralisation. The role of the District Collector in a democratically decentralised setup needs clarity – there is ongoing discussion on how to redefine the Collector's role so it complements local self-governance rather than dominating it. Issues like mistrust between rural local leaders and the bureaucracy need to be addressed as part of these reforms.

Thus, reforms are necessary to overcome challenges related to Union–State coordination, development management, law-and-order administration, and democratic decentralisation. Redefining the role of the District Collector (to avoid overlap with elected local bodies), promoting better coordination among agencies, and empowering Panchayati Raj institutions are crucial steps. These measures will help ensure more efficient administration and effective implementation of programmes at the district level.

In conclusion, the district administration plays a crucial role in ensuring efficient governance and development at the grassroots. It performs a wide range of functions that affect people “from cradle to grave.” The district administration is responsible for making sure that the benefits of development and good governance reach people at the grassroots level. By promoting transparency, accountability, and public participation in governance, the district administration becomes the primary vehicle through which government policies and services touch the lives of ordinary citizens.

3.1.4 Changing Profile of District Administration

73rd Amendment and Decentralisation

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 marked a significant shift in the structure and governance of district administration by institutionalising Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). This amendment sought to empower local self-government, ensuring greater participation of citizens in decision-making processes. Historically, the District Collector functioned as the central authority, overseeing all administrative and developmental activities. However, with the introduction of PRIs, power was decentralised, reducing the dominance of the Collector in local governance while strengthening elected bodies at the grassroots level.

► Empower local self-government



► Coordinating between the PRIs and state government

Despite this shift, the Collector still plays a crucial role in coordinating between the PRIs and state government, ensuring policy implementation aligns with broader governance objectives. In many states, the District Collector serves as an ex-officio member of the District Planning Committee (DPC) and facilitates the integration of local and state development plans. While the power dynamics have evolved, the Collector remains an essential figure in ensuring administrative efficiency, financial accountability, and policy coherence at the district level.

Role of Technology and E-Governance

► Transformation in governance practices

With the advent of technology, district administration has witnessed a transformation in governance practices. E-Governance initiatives, such as Digital India, e-District Projects, and Aadhaar-linked service delivery, have significantly enhanced the efficiency, transparency, and accessibility of public services. The role of the District Collector has expanded to include overseeing digital initiatives, ensuring seamless integration of technology in administration, and promoting digital literacy among citizens.

► Essential services

One of the most significant impacts of e-governance has been in service delivery and grievance redressal mechanisms. Portals such as e-District facilitate online applications for essential services like birth certificates, ration cards, and property registrations, reducing bureaucratic delays. The integration of GIS mapping, biometric authentication, and AI-based predictive governance has also improved decision-making in areas like disaster management, urban planning, and social welfare. The Collector, as the head of district administration, now ensures the successful implementation of these technological innovations, bridging the gap between government policies and citizen needs.

Citizen-Centric Administration and Participatory Governance

► Increased engagement with local communities

A key aspect of modern district administration is its shift towards citizen-centric governance, emphasising participatory decision-making and increased engagement with local communities. Unlike the traditional bureaucratic model, where decision-making was centralised, contemporary district administration encourages the direct involvement of citizens

through platforms such as Gram Sabhas, Ward Committees, and Jan Sunwai (Public Hearings).

► Facilitating participatory governance

The District Collector plays a pivotal role in facilitating participatory governance by acting as a mediator between the government and the public. Initiatives like social audits, RTI (Right to Information) facilitation centres, and public grievance redressal forums have enhanced transparency and accountability in district administration. By integrating public consultations in policy formulation and implementation, district authorities ensure that governance is more responsive to local needs. Furthermore, citizen feedback mechanisms, such as mobile applications and community monitoring tools, have strengthened the role of people in shaping development priorities at the district level.

► Enabler in governance

Overall, the profile of district administration has evolved from a purely regulatory framework to a more inclusive, technology-driven, and decentralised model. The role of the District Collector has transitioned from being a sole authority figure to a coordinator, facilitator, and enabler in a governance system that values local self-government, digital empowerment, and citizen participation.

Summarized Overview

The district administration in India has been a core pillar of governance since ancient times. It serves as the fundamental unit of governance, ensuring the implementation of policies and maintaining law and order. Historically, administrative divisions similar to modern districts existed under different ruling dynasties, such as the Mauryas and Guptas, where officials like Sthanikas and Rajjukas managed district affairs. The British colonial administration institutionalised the role of the District Collector, initially for revenue collection, but over time, this role evolved to include administrative and judicial responsibilities. Post-independence, district administration remained central to implementing state and national policies, evolving further with decentralisation and participatory governance.

The District Collector is the head of district administration and plays a crucial role in governance. His responsibilities extend across revenue administration, law enforcement, disaster management, and developmental activities. As the District Magistrate, he ensures law and order, supervises the police force, and enforces government regulations. In addition, he is responsible for implementing welfare programmes in sectors such as

health, education, and rural development. Over time, the Collector's role has transformed from being a purely regulatory authority to an administrative coordinator, working alongside Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and other local governance bodies.

With the 73rd Constitutional Amendment (1992), district administration has undergone decentralisation, leading to a shift in power dynamics between District Collectors and PRIs. The focus has shifted towards participatory governance, citizen engagement, and digital administration. E-Governance initiatives such as Digital India and e-District projects have transformed public service delivery, making governance more transparent and accessible. The District Collector now plays a key role in implementing technology-driven solutions, ensuring that government services reach citizens efficiently. The integration of citizen feedback mechanisms and public grievance redressal systems has further strengthened democratic governance at the district level.

Self-Assessment

1. Define district administration and explain its significance in Indian governance.
2. Describe the historical evolution of district administration in India from ancient times to the colonial period.
3. Discuss the constitutional and legal framework governing district administration in India.
4. What are the key functions of the District Collector in revenue administration and law enforcement?
5. How does the District Collector contribute to disaster management and relief operations?
6. Explain the role of the District Collector in implementing welfare and development programmes.
7. How did the 73rd Constitutional Amendment impact district administration and decentralisation?
8. Discuss the significance of e-Governance in district administration and its role in enhancing service delivery.
9. Analyse the changing profile of district administration in the context of globalisation and policy reforms

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



SGOU

UNIT 2

District Planning and Development

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ▶ define the concept and significance of district planning
- ▶ discuss the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in district development
- ▶ illustrate the planning process at the district level, including integration with national policies
- ▶ analyse the functions and impact of development agencies like DRDA
- ▶ critically assess district-level development initiatives such as the Haritha Keralam and Aardram Mission

Background

District planning is a critical aspect of regional development, ensuring that the unique needs of different districts are addressed through tailored policies and initiatives. With the advent of decentralised governance, district-level planning has gained prominence in India's developmental framework. The involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) has strengthened participatory governance, enabling local communities to play an active role in decision-making processes.

The planning process at the district level integrates national and state priorities with local development needs. Institutions such as the District Planning Committee (DPC) and District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) play a vital role in formulating and executing development strategies. These agencies work alongside government departments and private stakeholders to implement projects related to infrastructure, education, healthcare, and livelihood generation.

Several district-level initiatives in Kerala, such as the Haritha Keralam Mission (focusing on sustainable environmental development) and Aardram Mission (targeting health sector transformation), demonstrate the effectiveness of local planning in

addressing critical issues. As India moves towards a more decentralized and inclusive planning framework, the study of district planning and development remains essential for understanding how governance can be made more effective and citizen-centric.

Keywords

Decentralized Planning, District Planning Committee (DPC), Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Financial Devolution, Participatory Governance, Resource Mobilization

Discussion

3.2.1 Concept and Significance of District Planning

District planning serves as a crucial link between national, state, and local-level governance, ensuring that development initiatives align with the specific needs of a district. In a decentralised planning framework, districts function as sub-state decision-making units, allowing for more localised and need-based development strategies. According to the 1984 Working Group Report on District Planning, district planning supplements national and state-level strategies by conducting an in-depth examination of local resources, challenges, and growth potential. The objective is to tailor investment programmes and policy interventions to match the district's unique socio-economic landscape.

► Specific needs of a district

► Balanced regional development

The significance of district planning lies in its ability to promote balanced regional development, optimise resource utilisation, and enhance governance efficiency. By integrating spatial, economic, and social planning, district-level strategies ensure that development initiatives reach marginalised and underdeveloped areas. The approach also supports national objectives such as poverty alleviation, employment generation, and infrastructure enhancement, making district planning a fundamental aspect of India's multi-level planning system.

Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments

institutionalised Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), granting them a pivotal role in district planning. PRIs function as decentralised governance units in rural areas, while ULBs oversee urban governance. Their inclusion in district planning ensures greater community participation, transparency, and accountability in local administration.

► Policies that reflect the actual needs

PRIs, through Gram Panchayats, Block Samitis, and Zila Parishads, actively participate in formulating district development plans by identifying local priorities, mobilising resources, and implementing welfare schemes. Similarly, ULBs focus on urban infrastructure, sanitation, housing, and municipal services, aligning city development with broader regional planning frameworks. By integrating PRIs and ULBs into the District Planning Committee (DPC), district administration fosters grassroots democracy and participatory governance, ensuring that development policies reflect the actual needs of the people.

District Development Plans (DDPs) and the Planning Process

District Development Plans (DDPs)

► Blueprints for the socio-economic development

District Development Plans (DDPs) are comprehensive blueprints for the socio-economic development of a district. They are prepared by the District Planning Committee (DPC) as mandated by Article 243ZD of the Constitution of India. A DDP outlines the development priorities, objectives, and strategies for a specific district. It also aims to translate national and state-level plans into concrete actions at the district level. In formulating these plans, the DPC considers the resources available in the district and the needs of the local population (including marginalised sections of society). District Development Plans are prepared with inputs from representatives of various local bodies and government departments, playing a key role in the formulation and implementation of development initiatives at the district level.

Key Aspects of DDPs

1. **Bottom-up Approach:** DDPs are built from the ground up, starting with plans at the local body level. Village Panchayats, Block Samitis, and Municipal bodies contribute their local plans, which are then aggregated into the dis-



trict plan. This bottom-up planning ensures local needs and ideas form the foundation of the district plan.

2. **Consolidation and Integration:** The District Planning Committee consolidates all the local plans and integrates them into a single coherent district plan. DDPs serve as the point of integration for various sectoral plans, aligning local projects with state and national objectives in a coordinated way.
3. **Implementation Framework:** A DDP provides a framework for implementing various government schemes at the district level. It links together different departmental programmes (ranging across agriculture, education, health, infrastructure, etc.) and ensures they work towards common district development goals.
4. **Coordination:** DDPs facilitate better coordination between different departments and agencies operating in the district. By having a unified plan, overlaps are reduced and resources can be utilised more efficiently among, say, the agriculture, irrigation, and rural development departments.
5. **Citizen Participation:** Although not all planning documents explicitly state it, most DDPs emphasise community participation in the planning process. Stakeholder meetings, public consultations, and involvement of local leaders are often part of formulating the plan. This participatory approach promotes community ownership of development efforts.

Objectives of District Planning

► Coordinated development

The chief objectives of district planning are to promote integrated, participatory, and coordinated development of a local area, to ensure efficient use of resources, and to address regional disparities. Essentially, district planning creates a development vision at the district level. Key objectives include:

Integrated and Participatory Development: Ensuring that development initiatives are planned in an integrated manner with active participation from local communities. This means different sectoral plans (for health, education, infrastructure, etc.) are combined into one plan, and community input is considered so that plans reflect local needs.

- **Efficient Resource Utilisation:** Making the best use of available resources by avoiding duplication of efforts and focusing on priority needs. Efficient planning leads to better allocation of funds and resources to areas where they have the most impact.
- **Addressing Regional Disparities:** Reducing imbalances between different parts of the district. For example, if some areas are less developed in terms of roads, schools, or healthcare, the district plan will prioritise those areas to bring them at par with others.
- **Creating a District Vision:** Developing a clear long-term vision for the district's development. This may include setting targets for economic growth, human development (literacy, health indicators), infrastructure milestones, etc., tailored to the district's context.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Emphasising the building of essential infrastructure such as roads, bridges, water supply, sanitation, electricity, and internet connectivity which form the backbone for other development activities.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Incorporating sustainable practices and environmental protection into development plans. This ensures that development does not come at the cost of degrading natural resources; for instance, planning might include watershed management, afforestation, and pollution control measures.
- **Economic Growth and Employment:** Fostering local economic development and creating employment opportunities. Objectives here would include encouraging small industries, improving agricultural productivity, developing markets, and skills training programmes for youth.
- **Social Justice:** Promoting inclusive development that benefits marginalised groups such as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, women, and the poor. The plan aims to ensure that all sections of society gain from development initiatives (for example, through targeted welfare schemes

and anti-poverty programmes).

These objectives collectively guide the district planning process to ensure holistic and equitable development of the district.

The Planning Process

District development planning involves a multi-stage process. It includes identifying local needs, formulating plans, coordinating with higher-level plans, and obtaining necessary approvals before implementation. The process emphasises participatory approaches, data-driven decision-making, and focuses on sustainable, integrated development. Broadly, the planning process includes the following steps:

► Participatory approaches

Need Assessment: The District Planning Committee (DPC) assesses the needs and priorities of the local population. This involves engaging with village councils, urban municipal bodies, and other stakeholders to gather input on what the people of the district require (such as schools, healthcare facilities, irrigation projects, etc.).

- **Data Collection:** Relevant data on the district's socio-economic conditions, infrastructure status, demographics, resource availability, etc., is collected. This data might include statistics on literacy rates, health indicators, crop production, roads and electrification, etc. Accurate data provides the evidence base for planning.
- **Analysis and Planning:** The collected information is then analysed to formulate the plan. This step typically involves:
 - **Situational Analysis:** Understanding the current state of affairs in the district (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats).
 - **Sectoral Analysis:** Examining the performance and needs of different sectors like agriculture, education, health, industry, etc., in the district.
 - **Spatial Analysis:** Looking at the geographical distribution of development – identifying which areas of the district are lagging (for example, certain remote villages) and which are more developed, to address intra-district

disparities.

- **Preparation of Draft Plan:** Based on the above analyses, a draft district development plan is prepared. Local bodies (panchayats, municipalities) contribute by developing plans for their respective areas, which are then incorporated into the draft. The draft plan includes proposed projects, required budget, and timelines.
- **Public Consultation:** The draft DDP is typically opened for public consultation and feedback. This could involve workshops, public hearings, or community meetings where citizens, NGOs, and other stakeholders review the plan and suggest changes or express support/concerns. Public input helps ensure the plan has community buy-in and addresses real issues.
- **Approval and Submission:** After revisions (if any) from public feedback, the finalised draft plan is placed before the District Planning Committee for approval. Once approved at district level, it is submitted to the state-level planning authorities (such as the State Planning Commission or relevant department) for their endorsement and integration with state plans.
- **Implementation:** Upon approval, the plan is put into action. This means executing the projects and programmes outlined in the plan through various government departments and agencies. The District Collector and other officials mobilise resources, assign responsibilities, and coordinate the implementation of development works.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The progress of the plan is regularly monitored. District officials track the implementation of projects, utilisation of funds, and outcomes achieved. They send periodic reports to the state. Evaluation is done to see if the objectives are being met. Based on monitoring, necessary adjustments or corrective actions are taken (for instance, re-allocating funds to a project that is lagging, or changing an approach if something isn't working as expected).

► Review the plan and suggest changes

► Multi-level approval

► Regularly monitored



This iterative process ensures that district development plans are continually refined and remain responsive to the needs of the people.

Importance of DDP

District development planning is a comprehensive and participatory process aiming to achieve sustainable and integrated development within a specific geographical area. It requires collaborative effort among various stakeholders and a commitment to data-driven decision making and monitoring. The importance of having a District Development Plan can be understood in the following ways:

DDPs are crucial because they ensure that development initiatives are tailored to the specific needs of a particular area, fostering more equitable and sustainable growth. By focusing on local resources and needs, DDPs facilitate better resource allocation and address local issues. The bottom-up approach also promotes greater community participation and ownership of development initiatives.

► Tailored to the specific needs

Some key points regarding the importance of DDPs include:

► Specific needs

1. **Targeted Development:** A DDP allows for a detailed examination of the specific needs of the people, the area's growth potential, and available resources. This leads to more targeted and effective development interventions, as projects are designed to address the actual gaps in the district (e.g., a region with low water supply will get a water project prioritised).

► Holistic and balanced approach

2. **Balanced and Inclusive Growth:** DDPs facilitate coordination between different sectors, enabling a holistic and balanced approach to development. By looking at the district as a whole, planners can identify and address intra-district disparities – ensuring that not just the main towns but also remote villages receive attention. This promotes a more equitable distribution of development benefits and opportunities.

► Transparency and accountability

3. **Participatory and Democratic Governance:** District planning under DDP encourages the involvement of local communities in the decision-making process. It ensures that citizens' needs and preferences are taken into account,

thereby fostering transparency and accountability in how development programmes are implemented. When people have a say in planning, they are more likely to support and monitor projects, leading to better outcomes.

4. **Decentralised and Efficient Planning:** The DDP process utilises the expertise and knowledge of local government officials and elected representatives, leading to more informed decision-making. Decentralised planning means decisions are made closer to the ground level. It often results in reduced bureaucratic red tape and can cut down costs associated with planning (since local data and inputs are readily available, and plans are made in a focused manner).
5. **Efficient Implementation and Monitoring:** A well-crafted district plan provides a clear framework for prioritising development activities and allocating resources. By having a detailed plan, it becomes easier for administrators to monitor the progress of development programmes and make necessary adjustments. In essence, DDPs improve the efficiency of implementing government schemes and allow for better tracking of outcomes.

Reforms and improvements in the DDP process are continuously considered to overcome challenges in areas like Union-State coordination, development management training, balancing law-order with development roles, and strengthening democratic decentralisation. By addressing these issues – for example, clarifying the Collector’s role vis-à-vis local governments, and enhancing coordination at all levels – district planning can be made even more effective as a tool for local development.

Integration of Local, State, and National Plans

For district planning to be effective, it must align with higher-level governance structures, ensuring vertical and horizontal integration. This means that while district plans focus on local priorities, they must also contribute to state and national development goals. The seventh Five-Year Plan emphasised the need for district planning to support broader economic and social transformation, ensuring that policies remain cohesive and interconnected across governance levels.

► Cohesive policies



The integration process involves state-level guidance, sectoral coordination, and financial devolution, ensuring that district plans complement larger development agendas. The allocation of funds is based on geographic, demographic, and economic factors, with special emphasis on backward regions requiring targeted interventions. By ensuring policy coherence and efficient resource allocation, district planning bridges the gap between local aspirations and national development strategies.

Role of the District Planning Committee (DPC)

The District Planning Committee (DPC) is a statutory body responsible for formulating and consolidating district development plans. Established under the 74th Constitutional Amendment, the DPC integrates rural and urban planning by harmonising the efforts of PRIs and ULBs.

Composition

It consists of the following members –

- ▶ Members of the Lok Sabha who represent the whole or part of the district
- ▶ All members of the State Legislative Assembly whose constituencies lie in the district.
- ▶ President of the Zilla Parishad
- ▶ President of the Municipal Corporation
- ▶ About 4/5th of the DPC will be elected from among the elected members of the district panchayat and municipalities.
- ▶ Chairman of the District Co-operative Bank and Land Development Bank
- ▶ The Chief Executive Officer (Secretary of the DPC)
- ▶ Deputy Commissioner of the District (Chairperson of the DPC)

Functions

- ▶ Decentralised Planning

- ▶ Sector Specific Plans (e.g. Agriculture, infrastructure, women & childcare etc.)
- ▶ Resource management

3.2.2 Development Agencies at the District Level

Development at the district level is supported by a network of state and centrally sponsored agencies that play a crucial role in shaping and implementing various policies and programmes. These agencies focus on rural and urban development by addressing economic planning, resource allocation, financial management, and sectoral growth. Key agencies involved include the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), the Finance Commission of India, State Planning Boards, and District Planning Boards and Committees.

1. District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) and Its Functions

The District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) is the principal entity at the district level responsible for overseeing the implementation of various anti-poverty and rural development programmes initiated by the Ministry of Rural Development. Established as a dedicated agency, the DRDA plays a facilitating and coordinating role, ensuring that development initiatives are effectively planned, implemented, and monitored.

▶ Implementation of programmes

While the actual execution of programmes is carried out by Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), line departments, and other implementing agencies, the DRDA ensures that necessary linkages are provided between different agencies to achieve maximum efficiency in poverty alleviation. The agency is not an implementing body but acts as a catalyst in the development process, focusing on improving the quality and impact of rural development programmes.

Policy Direction and Planning

A critical function of the DRDA is to provide policy direction and planning support for district-level development programmes. It ensures that all anti-poverty initiatives align with national and state development goals while addressing the specific needs of the local population. To achieve this, the DRDA:



- ▶ Develops long-term district development strategies based on local needs and priorities.
- ▶ Ensures resource mobilisation for the effective execution of government schemes.
- ▶ Guides Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in planning and executing development programmes.
- ▶ Prepares annual action plans, ensuring that they are aligned with both state and central government objectives.

The agency plays a pivotal role in integrating different development programmes to create synergies among government departments, NGOs, banks, and private sector entities. This ensures that the benefits of various schemes reach the target groups, especially Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), women, and differently-abled individuals.

Monitoring and Evaluation

An essential function of the DRDA is to monitor and evaluate the progress of rural development programmes. Given the large-scale investments made in poverty alleviation programmes, the agency ensures financial discipline and proper utilisation of allocated resources. The key monitoring mechanisms include:

- ▶ Conducting regular field visits to assess the effectiveness of programme implementation.
- ▶ Collecting and analysing periodic reports from implementing agencies.
- ▶ Ensuring transparency and accountability through social audits and public disclosures.
- ▶ Submitting performance reports to the Zilla Parishad, State Government, and Central Government.

In addition, the DRDA is responsible for ensuring that all beneficiaries, particularly from marginalised and disadvantaged groups, receive their rightful entitlements. The agency also conducts research and evaluation studies to assess the impact of rural development programmes and recommends necessary modifications to improve outcomes.

▶ Rightful entitlements

Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening

To enhance the effectiveness of rural development initiatives, the DRDA actively promotes capacity building among local government bodies, self-help groups (SHGs), and community-based organisations. The agency:

- ▶ Conducts training programmes for government officials, PRIs, and other stakeholders.
- ▶ Strengthens institutional mechanisms for improved programme execution.
- ▶ Encourages community participation by raising awareness about development programmes.
- ▶ Facilitates technical support and financial assistance to implementing agencies.

By focusing on skill development and knowledge sharing, the DRDA empowers local institutions and communities to take ownership of development initiatives, ensuring long-term sustainability.

Transparency and Public Awareness

Ensuring transparency in rural development programmes is a core objective of the DRDA. To achieve this, the agency:

- ▶ Periodically publishes programme details, fund allocations, and implementation status.
- ▶ Conducts public awareness campaigns to inform citizens about various welfare schemes.
- ▶ Facilitates the Right to Information (RTI) process to enable public scrutiny of development programmes.
- ▶ Encourages social audits and beneficiary feedback mechanisms to improve accountability.

By fostering greater transparency and public participation, the DRDA ensures that development efforts are responsive, inclusive, and effective.



Financial Management and Fund Allocation

The DRDA is responsible for managing financial resources allocated for rural development programmes. The agency ensures that funds received from Central and State Governments are utilised in accordance with programme guidelines. Key financial management responsibilities include:

- ▶ Maintaining separate accounts for each development programme.
- ▶ Ensuring timely disbursement of funds to implementing agencies.
- ▶ Conducting financial audits to track expenditures and prevent misappropriation.
- ▶ Submitting utilisation certificates and financial reports to regulatory bodies.

The DRDA follows a strict financial discipline framework, ensuring that rural development funds are used efficiently and transparently for their intended purposes.

2. The Finance Commission of India

Established under Article 280 of the Constitution, the Finance Commission of India plays a fundamental role in determining the distribution of financial resources between the Central and State Governments. The commission provides recommendations on the devolution of taxes, allocation of grants-in-aid, and measures to augment state revenues for Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). Additionally, the Finance Commission has the authority to assess the fiscal health of states and propose strategies for ensuring financial stability in development planning.

3. State Finance Commission

Complementing the role of the Finance Commission, the State Finance Commission (SFC) is responsible for reviewing the financial aspects of local self-governance. As per the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, every state is mandated to constitute an SFC every five years to evaluate and recommend financial policies for Panchayati Raj Institutions and municipalities. The SFC recommends the distribution of state revenues, taxes, tolls, and fees between the state and local governments. The reports of the SFC play a crucial role in determining resource

allocations and strengthening the financial autonomy of district-level institutions.

4. State Planning Boards

To assist in formulating development strategies at the state level, State Planning Boards were established to complement the efforts of the Planning Commission. These boards focus on assessing state resources, preparing annual economic reviews, and coordinating with District Planning Committees to ensure balanced regional growth. The key functions of State Planning Boards include:

- ▶ Preparing annual and long-term development plans for the state.
- ▶ Assisting District Planning Officers in designing district-level proposals.
- ▶ Identifying economic obstacles and suggesting measures for addressing regional disparities.
- ▶ Monitoring plan implementation and recommending policy adjustments.

By supporting data-driven decision-making and inter-agency collaboration, these boards play a crucial role in integrating state and district development priorities.

5. District Planning Boards and Committees

As we mentioned before, the District Planning Boards and Committees function as the key institutional mechanisms for ensuring decentralised governance and local-level development planning at the district level. Established under the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, these committees consolidate plans from Panchayats and municipalities, ensuring alignment with state and national policies. Their core responsibilities include:

- ▶ Formulating district development strategies based on local needs.
- ▶ Preparing priority-wise lists of schemes considering available resources.
- ▶ Monitoring the implementation and progress of develop-



ment projects.

- ▶ Encouraging community participation to enhance accountability.

The District Planning Committees (DPCs) serve as a platform for inter-agency coordination, ensuring that rural and urban development initiatives are implemented efficiently. By bridging the gap between policy formulation and on-ground execution, these agencies strengthen decentralised governance and participatory planning at the district level.

3.3.3 Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in District Development

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) have emerged as a significant model for infrastructure development and service delivery at the district level. A PPP is an arrangement between a government entity and a private sector entity for the provision of public assets or services, involving investments and management by the private sector for a specified period, with risks and rewards shared between both parties.

In the context of district development, PPPs offer several advantages:

- ▶ **Resource Mobilisation:** Attracting private capital to supplement public funds, thereby enhancing the financial viability of development projects.
- ▶ **Efficiency and Innovation:** Leveraging private sector expertise to introduce innovative solutions and improve the efficiency of project implementation.
- ▶ **Risk Sharing:** Distributing risks between public and private partners, leading to more balanced and sustainable project outcomes.

For instance, the redevelopment of Mumbai's Dharavi slum into a modern district is being undertaken through a PPP model, aiming to transform the area while addressing the needs of its residents.

By integrating PPPs into district development strategies, local governments can enhance infrastructure, improve service delivery, and promote sustainable economic growth.

Collectively, these agencies and partnerships play a pivotal role in driving comprehensive development at the district level, ensuring that initiatives are effectively planned, executed, and sustained.

3.2.4 Case Studies of District-Level Development Missions

Now let us look into some of the successful development missions at the district level in Kerala. The state's commitment to sustainable development and enhancing public welfare is exemplified through two pivotal district-level initiatives: the Haritha Keralam Mission and the Aardram Mission.

3.2.4.1 Haritha Keralam Mission: Sustainable Environment and Water Conservation Initiatives

The Haritha Keralam Mission is one of the four missions formed by the state government to build a 'New Kerala'. The mission was launched on 8th December 2016 with the aim of promoting cleanliness, water abundance, water security and safe food production. The mission's objectives are clear in its unique motto of water, hygiene and harvest. The mission is carried out under the leadership of local self-government bodies. The mission works in co-ordination with various departments and agencies within local self-government bodies.

One of the mission's notable campaigns is "Garbage-free New Kerala: People's Campaign," which emphasizes scientific waste management and sanitation practices to transform Kerala into a waste-free state. This initiative has led to significant improvements in waste management infrastructure and public awareness, fostering a culture of environmental responsibility among citizens.

Another significant initiative under the mission is "Basin to Coconut Tree and Water to Soil," focusing on water conservation through the rejuvenation of streams and the implementation of water budgeting in local bodies. As of March 2025, the mission has successfully rejuvenated 84,131 kilometres of streams and conducted water budgeting in 341 local bodies, significantly enhancing water conservation efforts across the state.

The mission also emphasizes the importance of water quality by establishing 321 water testing laboratories across the state.



These labs play a crucial role in monitoring and ensuring the safety of water resources, thereby safeguarding public health and promoting sustainable water management practices. Through these multifaceted initiatives, the Haritha Keralam Mission has made substantial progress in promoting environmental sustainability, enhancing water conservation, and fostering community participation in ecological preservation efforts.

3.2.4.2 Aardram Mission: Health Sector Transformation and Citizen-Centric Service Delivery

The Aardram Mission is a health initiative launched by the government of Kerala in February 2017, as part of the Nava Keralam mission. Its primary objective is to transform the public health sector of the state. The mission's objectives are –

- ▶ to ensure adequate and comprehensive facilities in the health sector
- ▶ measures for the prevention and treatment of ailments
- ▶ rehabilitation and palliative care for the deserving
- ▶ control of communicable diseases
- ▶ mother and child services
- ▶ universal immunisation

The transformation involves a series of infrastructural and administrative changes, including the enhancement of outpatient services to be more patient-friendly, ensuring access to comprehensive health services for marginalized and vulnerable populations, and standardising services across all levels of healthcare delivery. This comprehensive approach ensures that healthcare services are not only curative but also promotive, preventive, rehabilitative, and palliative, thereby addressing the broader determinants of health and improving health outcomes sustainably.

A key aspect of the Aardram Mission is its focus on Sustainable Development Goal 3, which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. By redefining the SDGs in the context of Kerala's unique health landscape, the mission has set both short-term goals to be achieved by 2020 and long-term goals to be achieved by 2030, formulated by various expert committees addressing prevalent health issues in the state.

▶ Access to comprehensive health services

► Series of infrastructural and administrative changes

The mission's emphasis on re-engineering PHCs into FHCs is a phased series of infrastructural and administrative changes aimed at providing comprehensive health care at the grassroots level. This transformation is in line with the Government of India's objective of providing comprehensive health care via health and wellness centres, thereby addressing the underlying causes of ill health and improving health outcomes sustainably.

Through these strategic initiatives, the Aardram Mission aims to create a more equitable, efficient, and responsive health system in Kerala, ensuring that all citizens have access to high-quality healthcare services that are both comprehensive and people-centric.

Summarized Overview

District planning plays a critical role in India's decentralised governance framework, acting as a bridge between national, state, and local-level development initiatives. It ensures that district-specific socio-economic conditions are taken into account while formulating policies and programmes. The concept of decentralised planning was reinforced by the 1984 Working Group Report, which emphasized the need for localized strategies that optimize resource utilization and promote balanced regional development. Through spatial, economic, and social planning, district planning fosters employment generation, poverty alleviation, and infrastructure enhancement, making it a key component of India's multi-tiered governance structure.

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments institutionalised the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in district planning. PRIs, operating at the village, block, and district levels, identify local development needs, mobilise resources, and implement welfare schemes in rural areas, whereas ULBs focus on urban governance and infrastructure development. The District Planning Committee (DPC), established under the 74th Amendment, consolidates rural and urban development efforts, ensuring participatory governance and alignment with broader policy objectives. This institutional framework strengthens grassroots democracy by integrating local voices into the planning process.

The district planning process consists of four key phases: pre-planning, planning, implementation, and monitoring & evaluation. A well-structured district development plan (DDP) includes sectoral and spatial components that address agriculture, industry, health, education, and infrastructure. Effective district planning requires vertical and horizontal integration, ensuring that local priorities complement state and national development goals. Financial devolution and sectoral coordination play a vital role in

achieving coherence across governance levels, helping address disparities and promoting inclusive growth, particularly in underdeveloped regions.

At the district level, various development agencies facilitate policy execution and resource mobilization. The District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) plays a crucial role in coordinating rural development programmes, ensuring transparency, and monitoring progress. Other key institutions such as the Finance Commission of India, State Planning Boards, and NITI Aayog contribute to financial planning and policy direction at different levels. By fostering collaboration among government agencies, NGOs, and private sector entities, district planning enhances efficiency, sustainability, and accountability in local governance, ultimately driving holistic regional development.

The Haritha Keralam and Aardram Missions exemplify successful district-level development strategies through their comprehensive, community-centric approaches. Haritha Keralam integrates waste management, organic farming, and water resource preservation, fostering environmental sustainability by engaging local self-governments and citizens in grassroots activities. Similarly, the Aardram Mission aims to revamp public healthcare by transforming primary health centres into family health centres, ensuring accessible and quality healthcare services for all. Both missions operate under the broader Nava Kerala Mission, reflecting a commitment to addressing local challenges with sustainable solutions. Their success lies in participatory governance, tailored interventions, and alignment with global sustainable development goals, making them exemplary models for district-level initiatives.

Self-Assessment

1. Define district planning and explain its significance in decentralised governance.
2. Discuss the role of the 1984 Working Group Report on District Planning in shaping district-level development strategies.
3. Explain how Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) contribute to district planning in rural areas.
4. Analyse the importance of the District Planning Committee (DPC) in integrating rural and urban planning.
5. Describe the four key phases of the district planning process and their significance.
6. How does financial devolution influence the effectiveness of district planning?
7. Discuss the role of the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) in implementing rural development programmes.

8. What are the key challenges in ensuring effective integration of district, state, and national development plans?
9. Assess the impact of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments on participatory governance in district planning.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

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UNIT 3

Public Service Delivery

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ▶ identify key mechanisms in public service delivery at the district level
- ▶ describe the role of e-Governance in improving service accessibility
- ▶ demonstrate the use of digital platforms for grievance redressal
- ▶ examine the impact of district administration's coordination with government departments in public service delivery
- ▶ assess the effectiveness of welfare schemes in addressing social inequalities

Background

Public service delivery is a cornerstone of governance, directly impacting the quality of life of citizens. Traditionally, service delivery mechanisms faced several challenges, including bureaucratic delays, lack of transparency, and inadequate infrastructure. However, with the introduction of e-Governance, many of these challenges are being addressed through digital platforms that enhance accessibility, efficiency, and accountability.

The role of district administration in managing public services extends across multiple sectors, including education, healthcare, and social welfare. Digital initiatives such as e-District projects, the Digital India campaign, and ICT-based grievance redressal systems have played a crucial role in transforming governance. Additionally, local self-governments have become important stakeholders in ensuring effective service delivery, especially in rural and semi-urban areas.

Social welfare administration at the district level involves the implementation of schemes related to food security, healthcare, education, and women's empowerment. Successful models of public service delivery, such as the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), highlight the impact of well-executed welfare programmes. As governance continues to evolve, understanding

the role of technology, decentralisation, and accountability in public service delivery remains a critical area of study.

Keywords

E-Governance, Urban Local Bodies, Digital India Initiative, Grievance Redressal, Transparency and Accountability

Discussion

3.3.1 Public Service Delivery at the District Level

Public service delivery refers to the provision of essential services such as education, healthcare, agriculture, law enforcement, and infrastructure development to citizens through administrative mechanisms. It plays a crucial role in ensuring social welfare, economic growth, and governance efficiency. In a vast and diverse country like India, where governance is structured across multiple tiers, effective service delivery at the district level is vital for maintaining the quality of life and ensuring that government schemes reach the grassroots level. The significance of public service delivery is further enhanced by its direct impact on citizens' daily lives, determining access to healthcare, education, sanitation, and other fundamental services.

► Ensuring that government schemes reach the grassroots level

► Participatory and responsive governance

With the enactment of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, local governments at the Panchayati Raj level in rural areas and urban local bodies in cities were empowered to deliver services more efficiently. These amendments allocated specific functions to local governments, as listed in the 11th and 12th Schedules of the Indian Constitution. This decentralisation ensures that governance is more participatory and responsive to the unique needs of local communities. In this framework, district administrations function as a critical link between state governments and local bodies, ensuring coordination and implementation of policies effectively.

Mechanism in Service Delivery in Rural and Urban Areas

► Structured administrative framework

Public service delivery in India operates through a structured administrative framework, where governance is divided across national, state, district, and local levels. The national government provides broad policy guidelines, while the state governments create and oversee the implementation of policies at the district level. District administrations act as the execution arm of the state government and coordinate with various departments to ensure seamless service delivery. Each district is divided into administrative units such as blocks for development functions and tehsils for revenue functions. The head of the district administration, known as the District Collector, the District Magistrate (DM), or Deputy Commissioner, is responsible for implementing government policies and programmes within the district.

► Line departments

The delivery of services in both rural and urban areas is facilitated through various line departments, each headed by a district-level officer responsible for overseeing specific functions. These include departments for health, education, agriculture, forestry, and animal husbandry, among others. For instance, the District Medical Officer ensures the proper functioning of healthcare facilities, while the District Education Officer oversees schools and educational programmes. The Superintendent of Police manages law and order, further contributing to an environment conducive to effective service delivery.

► Unique requirements

In rural areas, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) play a key role in delivering services such as drinking water supply, sanitation, rural healthcare, and agricultural support. They work closely with district administrations to ensure local needs are met efficiently. Similarly, in urban areas, municipal corporations and urban local bodies handle infrastructure development, waste management, public transportation, and other civic amenities. These urban bodies function under the directives of the state government but maintain a degree of autonomy to cater to the unique requirements of cities and towns.

The success of public service delivery at the district level largely depends on the coordination between various administrative units and departments. The District Collector serves as the nodal officer, ensuring that all state line departments work in harmony to implement government schemes and address citizens' grievances effectively. Through a structured hierarchy

and well-defined responsibilities, district administrations ensure that essential services reach every citizen, thereby strengthening governance and enhancing overall quality of life.

3.3.2 E-Governance at the District Level

► Empower the local administration

E-Governance at the district level refers to the use of technology (especially information and communication technologies, ICT) to deliver government services and facilitate citizen interaction with the local administration. It brings governance closer to the people by providing many services online and making administrative processes more transparent and efficient. In essence, e-government initiatives at the district level contribute to the decentralisation of decision-making and empower the local administration to deliver services more effectively.

One of the primary ways e-governance is implemented is through the e-District Mission Mode Project (MMP), which is a nationwide initiative. Under e-District projects, a range of high-volume citizen services are made available electronically at the district and sub-district levels. This typically includes issuing certificates (birth, death, income, caste, etc.), licenses, social welfare disbursements (pensions, scholarships), and providing information like electoral roll details – all through online platforms. To oversee these efforts, many states have established District e-Governance Societies headed by the District Collector, which guide and monitor the rollout of e-governance programmes in the district.

3.3.2.1 Key Aspects of E-Governance at the District Level

- **E-District Project:** This is a flagship e-governance project implemented at district and sub-district levels. The e-District project aims to streamline and modernise the delivery of citizen services. It involves automating workflows, digitising records, and integrating services across different departments onto a single platform. Citizens can access various services through e-District web portals or common service centres, reducing the need to visit government offices physically.

- ▶ **District e-Governance Society:** These societies (often registered entities) are typically chaired by the District Collector and include officials from key departments. They provide overall guidance and support for e-governance initiatives in the district. The society helps coordinate between different departments (like revenue, health, education, etc.) to ensure the effective implementation of the e-District project and other IT-driven services.
- ▶ **Citizen Service Delivery:** Through e-governance, citizens in the district can avail themselves of many services online. For example, residents can apply for and obtain certificates (birth, death, caste, income certificates, etc.) without having to travel to the district headquarters; they can avail pension services, get copies of land records, pay utility bills or taxes, and even file applications for government schemes via online portals or local service centres. This greatly enhances convenience and reduces delays.
- ▶ **Transparency and Accountability:** E-governance initiatives promote transparency in government operations. Since many processes are online, information (such as the status of an application or the list of beneficiaries of a scheme) is easily accessible to the public. Citizens can track the status of their requests or grievances in real-time through the online system. This openness reduces opportunities for corruption and ensures government officials are more accountable, as digital trails are created for transactions.

Beyond these aspects, e-governance at the district level also often involves initiatives for internal efficiency, such as e-office systems for file movement tracking, digital attendance for staff, and video conferencing facilities for meetings between the district and sub-district offices.

3.3.2.2 Case Study: Kerala e-District Project

The Kerala e-District project is a customised initiative designed to reduce effort and time, providing prompt and effective services to the public. The project aims to provide government services to citizens through Common Service Centres (CSCs),

which are easily accessible. Services from different departments are consolidated under one umbrella at any CSC, with some services also available through an online portal. This approach utilises backend computerisation to e-enable service delivery, ensuring transparency and uniform application of rules. The project involves integrated and seamless delivery of services to the public by automation, integration, and incorporating Business Process Re-Engineering (BPR) where required. In summary, e-District is a tailored programme for minimising effort and time to provide prompt and effective services to the public.

Key Features of e-District Kerala

The Kerala e-District project offers several key features to enhance public service delivery:

- ▶ **Unified Service Access:** Citizens can access services from multiple government departments through Common Service Centres (CSCs) and an online portal, streamlining processes and reducing the need to visit multiple offices.
- ▶ **Single Account Management:** Users can create a single account to manage multiple profiles for themselves and family members, simplifying the application process for various services by reusing basic details.
- ▶ **Transaction History Tracking:** The platform maintains a comprehensive record of all transactions, including certificate applications and utility payments, allowing users to download certificates and track application statuses conveniently.
- ▶ **Integration with DigiLocker:** e-District is connected to DigiLocker, enabling users to securely store and access their certificates digitally, with over 25 lakh certificates already available on the platform.
- ▶ **Enhanced Transparency and Efficiency:** By automating processes and incorporating Business Process Re-Engineering (BPR), the project ensures transparent, uniform, and efficient service delivery, minimising effort and time for the public.

3.3.2.3 Use of ICT in Grievance Redressal and Transparency

The integration of ICT in grievance redressal mechanisms has revolutionised public administration at the district level, ensuring swift resolution of citizen complaints and enhancing government accountability. Various online grievance redressal portals, such as the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) and state-level grievance portals, enable citizens to lodge complaints digitally and track their resolution status. These platforms facilitate direct communication between the public and government officials, reducing bureaucratic red tape and improving response times.

Transparency in governance is further enhanced through the use of ICT-enabled platforms like RTI (Right to Information) online portals, dashboards for real-time monitoring of government projects, and mobile applications for citizen engagement. Many districts have implemented GIS (Geographic Information System)-based monitoring tools to track the progress of developmental projects, ensuring accountability in public expenditure. Additionally, social media and mobile apps are being increasingly used by district administrations to provide real-time updates, interact with citizens, and gather feedback on government services.

► Transparency in governance

Overall, the adoption of e-Governance at the district level has significantly improved service delivery, reduced corruption, and empowered citizens by making government services more accessible and transparent. As technology continues to evolve, the future of district-level governance will increasingly rely on digital solutions to enhance efficiency and citizen participation in governance.

3.3.3 Role of District Administration in Public Service Delivery

District administration plays a crucial role in public service delivery by acting as the primary interface between the government and citizens at the grassroots level. Its effectiveness hinges on several key functions:

Coordination with Different Government Departments

A fundamental responsibility of district administration is to ensure seamless coordination among various government

departments to deliver services efficiently. The District Collector serves as the chief coordinating authority, overseeing the implementation of policies related to health, education, agriculture, and more. This coordination is vital for integrating efforts across departments, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of service delivery.

Role of Local Self-Governments in Service Delivery

Local self-governments, comprising Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in rural areas and municipal bodies in urban regions, are integral to the decentralised governance framework in India. Empowered by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, these bodies are entrusted with functions related to health, education, and infrastructure development. In Kerala, for instance, the administrative decentralisation has led to the transfer of public service delivery institutions to local governments, enabling them to manage services more effectively.

► Transfer of public service delivery

Accountability and Citizen Engagement

Ensuring accountability and fostering citizen engagement are crucial for responsive governance. District administrations employ mechanisms such as public grievance redressal systems, social audits, and participatory planning to involve citizens in decision-making processes. In Kerala, the introduction of awards for Gram Panchayats that excel in health-related indicators has been suggested to enhance collaboration between local self-governments and the health sector, thereby promoting accountability and community involvement.

In summary, the district administration's role in public service delivery is multifaceted, encompassing coordination among government departments, collaboration with local self-governments, and the promotion of accountability through active citizen engagement. These elements collectively contribute to a governance system that is efficient, transparent, and responsive to the needs of its citizens.

► Responsive governance

3.3.4 Social Welfare Administration at the District Level

District administration plays a pivotal role in implementing various welfare schemes, particularly in the sectors of education, health, and food security. District administrations act as the

primary agencies responsible for executing national and state policies to ensure that essential services reach the grassroots.

► Implementing various welfare schemes

Women and Child Development (WCD) programs are pivotal components of social welfare at the district level in India, focusing on empowering women and ensuring the holistic development of children through various initiatives. These programs are implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), which serves as the nodal agency for formulating plans, policies, and programs to promote the welfare of women and children across the nation.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

► For women and children

One of the flagship programs under the MWCD is the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), launched on October 2, 1975. This centrally sponsored scheme aims to provide a comprehensive package of services, including supplementary nutrition, immunisation, health check-ups, referral services, and non-formal pre-school education to children under six years of age, as well as to pregnant and lactating mothers.

The ICDS operates through a network of Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) at the village level, serving as the focal point for delivering these services. Each AWC is managed by an Anganwadi Worker (AWW) and an Anganwadi Helper (AWH), who are pivotal in implementing the program at the grassroots level. Their responsibilities include conducting regular growth monitoring, organising immunisation drives in collaboration with health departments, and providing early childhood care and education.

Impact on Maternal and Child Health

► Combating malnutrition

Studies have demonstrated that women with primary or secondary education levels have higher odds of receiving counselling during pregnancy, highlighting the program's impact on maternal health. The ICDS's focus on educating mothers about nutrition, health, and childcare practices has contributed to improved health outcomes for both mothers and children. Additionally, the provision of supplementary nutrition has been instrumental in combating malnutrition among children under six years of age.

Mission Shakti

In line with its commitment to women-led development, the Government of India launched 'Mission Shakti,' a scheme in mission mode aimed at strengthening interventions for women's safety, security, and empowerment. Mission Shakti seeks to address issues affecting women on a life-cycle continuum basis and make them equal partners in nation-building through convergence and citizen ownership.

► Women-led development

The scheme encompasses various components, including the Women's Helpline (WHL), which provides 24x7 emergency and non-emergency response through a toll-free number (181). The helpline links women with appropriate authorities such as police, One Stop Centres, hospitals, and legal services authorities, ensuring timely assistance and support. Another component, Nari Adalat, offers an alternative grievance redressal mechanism at the Gram Panchayat level, resolving cases of harassment, subversion, or curtailment of rights through negotiation, mediation, and reconciliation.

Mission Vatsalya

Mission Vatsalya is another significant initiative by the MWCD, focusing on child welfare and protection. The mission aims to ensure a healthy and happy childhood for every child in India by promoting a safe and conducive environment for their development. It encompasses various components, including family-based non-institutional care, emergency outreach services, and child protection services at the district level.

► A healthy and happy childhood

Capacity Building and Training:

The MWCD emphasises capacity building and training to enhance the effectiveness of WCD programs. For instance, the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA), under the MWCD, organises training workshops for social workers, chief medical officers, and other stakeholders involved in child welfare and adoption processes. These training sessions aim to standardise procedures, improve service delivery, and ensure the well-being of children in need of care and protection.

► Standardise procedures

Challenges and the Way Forward

Despite the significant progress made, WCD programs

face challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and socio-cultural barriers that hinder effective implementation. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach, including strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, enhancing community participation, and fostering inter-departmental convergence to ensure holistic development outcomes.

► Multi-faceted approach

Women and Child Development programs are integral to social welfare at the district level, focusing on empowering women and ensuring the holistic development of children. Initiatives like ICDS, Mission Shakti, and Mission Vatsalya play a crucial role in addressing the diverse needs of women and children, contributing to their well-being and development. Continued efforts to strengthen these programs, address existing challenges, and replicate successful models can significantly enhance social welfare outcomes across India.

Summarized Overview

Public service delivery at the district level is a critical component of governance, ensuring citizens have access to essential services such as education, healthcare, agriculture, law enforcement, and infrastructure. This mechanism plays a significant role in socio-economic development, reducing disparities, and improving quality of life. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments have empowered local self-governments, decentralising service delivery through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in rural areas and urban local bodies in cities. This structural arrangement enhances participatory governance, ensuring that policies and programs are implemented effectively at the grassroots level.

The mechanism for service delivery varies between rural and urban areas, with district administrations acting as the primary coordinating bodies. District Collectors, along with department heads such as the District Medical Officer and District Education Officer, oversee the execution of government programs. In rural areas, PRIs play a crucial role in delivering essential services like water supply, sanitation, and agricultural support, while urban local bodies manage infrastructure, waste disposal, and public transportation. Effective coordination between these administrative units ensures seamless governance and improved citizen services.

E-Governance has revolutionised service delivery at the district level, enhancing efficiency, transparency, and accessibility. Initiatives such as the e-District project under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) enable citizens to access services digitally,

reducing bureaucratic inefficiencies. Platforms like DigiLocker, Aadhaar-enabled services, and Common Service Centres (CSCs) promote digital inclusion, making government services available even in remote areas. The Kerala e-District project serves as a model for integrated service delivery, leveraging ICT solutions to streamline governance.

District administration plays a pivotal role in ensuring accountability and citizen engagement through grievance redressal mechanisms and ICT-based monitoring systems. Online portals such as the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) provide citizens with direct access to government departments, improving responsiveness. Transparency measures, including RTI portals and GIS-based project tracking, further enhance accountability. By integrating digital solutions and strengthening coordination across departments, district administrations ensure that public services are delivered effectively, fostering inclusive and participatory governance.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain the meaning of public service delivery and why it is important.
2. How do the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments impact service delivery?
3. Discuss the role of the District Administration in public service delivery.
4. How do Panchayati Raj Institutions contribute to rural service delivery?
5. What are the key features of the Kerala e-District project?
6. How does e-Governance improve public service delivery at the district level?
7. Discuss the role of district administration in social welfare administration.
8. How does digital inclusion enhance transparency and accessibility in governance?

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

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BLOCK 4
**Emerging Issues and Challenges in
Indian Administration**

UNIT 1

Administrative Ethics and Accountability

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ define key concepts of administrative ethics, corruption, transparency, and accountability
- ▶ explain the significance of accountability mechanisms in governance
- ▶ analyse the role of institutions like Lokpal, CVC, and RTI in curbing corruption
- ▶ evaluate the effectiveness of Citizen Charters in improving public service delivery
- ▶ propose innovative strategies to enhance administrative ethics and accountability

Background

In a democratic system like India, administrative ethics and accountability are essential to maintaining public trust in governance. The rise of corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and lack of transparency have led to declining confidence in government institutions. Scandals involving misuse of power and financial irregularities have highlighted the need for stringent ethical standards in public administration. Mechanisms such as the Right to Information (RTI) Act, the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, and the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) play a critical role in ensuring accountability and deterring corruption.

The increasing complexity of governance, digital transformation, and citizen participation demand a stronger framework for ethical administration. Global indices on corruption perception and governance effectiveness have shown that nations with strong administrative ethics tend to perform better in economic development and social welfare. Citizen Charters, which define service delivery standards, have emerged as a significant tool in enhancing transparency and responsiveness in administration.

However, their implementation has faced challenges due to bureaucratic resistance and lack of public awareness.

To build an accountable and ethical governance system, administrative institutions must integrate ethical decision-making, strengthen anti-corruption laws, and ensure the effective implementation of accountability measures. As India continues its developmental journey, ensuring administrative integrity will be crucial for sustaining economic growth, reducing inequality, and strengthening democratic values.

Keywords

Corruption, Transparency, Ethical Dilemma, e-Governance, Citizen Charters

Discussion

4.1.1 Concept of Administrative Ethics and Accountability

Administrative ethics refers to the principles, values, and moral standards that guide public administrators in decision-making, policy implementation, and service delivery. It encompasses honesty, integrity, transparency, and impartiality, ensuring that governance remains fair, just, and aligned with public welfare. Ethics in administration is essential for building trust between the government and citizens, fostering efficiency, and preventing corruption.

► Administrative ethics

The need for ethical administration also arises from the increasing complexities of governance, where officials must balance competing interests while upholding democratic values. Ethical governance ensures accountability, minimises bureaucratic misconduct, and promotes a culture of responsibility in public service. In India, where bureaucracy plays a crucial role in policy implementation, adherence to ethical standards is vital for maintaining the legitimacy of democratic institutions.

► Ethical governance

4.1.1.1 Ethical Challenges in Governance

Despite institutional frameworks to uphold ethical administration, governance in India faces multiple ethical challenges such as:

1. Corruption and Nepotism

Corruption remains a significant challenge in Indian administration, undermining trust in public institutions. The misuse of discretionary powers, bribery, and favouritism in decision-making affect service delivery and hinder equitable development. High-profile corruption cases, such as the 2G spectrum scam and coal allocation irregularities, highlight the ethical deficits in governance.

▶ Misuse of discretionary powers

2. Lack of Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability are crucial for ethical governance. However, bureaucratic secrecy and lack of public access to information often create opacity in administrative functioning. While the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005 has improved transparency, its implementation is often hindered by bureaucratic resistance and delays in responding to public queries.

▶ Bureaucratic secrecy

3. Conflict of Interest

Public officials sometimes face dilemmas where personal gains conflict with official responsibilities. Situations where politicians or bureaucrats have vested interests in policy decisions can lead to unethical practices, such as preferential contracts or biased regulations favouring specific groups.

▶ Personal gains conflict with official responsibilities

4. Political-Bureaucratic Nexus

The close ties between politicians and bureaucrats sometimes lead to compromised governance, where administrative decisions align with political interests rather than public welfare. This erodes institutional integrity and weakens the autonomy of civil services, affecting policy implementation.

▶ Compromised governance

5. Bureaucratic Apathy and Citizen-Centric Ethics

Bureaucratic inefficiency and lack of responsiveness towards citizens' concerns dilute the ethical foundation of governance. Instances of administrative apathy, where officials neglect their duties or engage in red tape, reduce public trust in institutions and hinder inclusive development.

▶ Lack of responsiveness



6. Ethical Dilemmas in Policy Implementation

► Socio-economic consequences

Public administrators often face ethical dilemmas when implementing policies that have socio-economic consequences. For example, issues related to land acquisition, environmental regulations, or welfare distribution require balancing legal mandates with ethical considerations, such as social justice and sustainability.

► Misuse of entrusted power

4.1.2 Corruption in Administration

Corruption is a universal phenomenon and is prevalent across the globe. The whole nation and society have been caught by the menace of corruption and misuse of public office. It's essential to understand the meaning of corruption. Corruption can be defined as "the misuse of entrusted power by government officials for illegitimate personal benefits." In other words, corruption is dishonest or illegal behaviour, especially by powerful people, such as government officials or police officers. It undermines trust in institutions, slows economic growth, and hinders the development of society.

► Misuse of official posts

Corruption has engulfed the whole Indian society. Kautilya recorded that misuse of official posts was common in Ancient India. Macaulay observed that any human being put in a position of public office is tempted to use official powers for personal advantage or for the good of kith and kin and friends. Corruption is pervading everywhere, be it in politics or in public life or in government transactions or in public welfare or even in sports. Hardly there's any aspect of human life which is free from corruption. It has made inroads into every system of Indian society.

► Hinders human development

Corruption is rooted in human nature. It's a part of human vice, such as greed and lust for power and wealth. Corruption comes in the way of good governance. It hinders human development, deepens poverty levels, undermines economic development and growth, lowers investments, decreases government resources, and increases injustice in society and undermines the legitimacy of the state.

► Black Money and Corruption Nexus

Corruption manifests in various forms, including bribery, embezzlement, extortion, and nepotism. It often involves the misuse of public office for personal benefits, impacting the fairness and integrity of the system. India's scenario today is a monument to the corruption and inefficiency of the departments – Customs, Central Excise, Income Tax and Enforcement

Directorate.

Key players

Corruption will flourish because of the failure of laws to punish the corrupt and the criminalisation of politics. The honest public servants who try to implement the laws become misfits in such a situation. Today the entire sectors of our public life have become corrupt. There are four key players in our system to encourage corruption. They are:

► Four key players

- The corrupt politicians
- The corrupt bureaucrats
- The corrupt businessmen
- The corrupt NGOs
- The criminals

Why does our system encourage corruption?

Here one can identify certain reasons which encourage corruption.

► Root Causes of Corruption

- Lack of transparency and accountability. Weak rule of law, and inefficient bureaucracy can create opportunities for corruption.
- Scarcity of goods and services.
- Red tapism and delay caused by rules and procedures.
- The legal safety net. Under the law, everyone is presumed to be innocent until proved guilty. The net result is that the corrupt are able to engage the best lawyers.
- Tribalism in which corrupt public servants protect one another, and
- The people of India are not awakened or enlightened. They fear raising their voices against anti-social elements.

In addition to all these factors, certain social, economic, and political factors are accountable for this state of affairs.

In India, corruption manifests in various forms:

1. **Bribery** – The most common form, where public officials demand or accept money for performing or withholding a service.



► Forms and Impact of Corruption

2. **Embezzlement** – Misappropriation of public funds by officials, seen in scams like the fodder scam and Commonwealth Games scam.
3. **Nepotism and Favoritism** – Appointing relatives or close associates to positions of power, ignoring merit.
4. **Fraud** – Falsification of records, manipulation of contracts, and financial irregularities.
5. **Political Corruption** – The use of public resources for electoral gains, political horse-trading, and criminalisation of politics.

The deeply entrenched nature of corruption in Indian administration has led to inefficiencies, delayed public services, and loss of public confidence in governance.

Causes and Consequences of Corruption

Several socio-political and economic factors contribute to corruption in India:

- **Bureaucratic Red Tape:** In the administrative structure, lengthy procedures and excessive regulations create opportunities for bribery.
- **Political-Bureaucratic Nexus:** Close ties between politicians and bureaucrats encourage manipulation of policies for vested interests.
- **Weak Legal Enforcement:** Despite stringent anti-corruption laws, loopholes and delays in judicial proceedings allow offenders to escape punishment.
- **Low Public Awareness:** Lack of awareness among citizens about their rights enables corrupt officials to exploit the system.
- **Socio-Cultural Factors:** Practices like favoritism and informal payments have normalised corruption in governance.

Corruption has far-reaching implications for governance and development:

- **Erosion of Public Trust:** Citizens lose confidence in government institutions, leading to democratic decline.
- **Economic Inefficiency:** Misuse of public funds reduces

► Consequences of Corruption

budget allocations for essential services like healthcare and education.

- **Social Inequality:** Corruption widens the gap between the rich and poor, as those with influence benefit at the expense of marginalised communities.
- **Hindrance to Foreign Investments:** A corrupt business environment discourages foreign investors, affecting economic growth.
- **Weakening of Rule of Law:** When law enforcement agencies themselves become corrupt, legal institutions fail to deliver justice effectively.
- **Economic Harm:** Corruption diverts resources from public services like education and healthcare, slowing economic growth and increasing inequality.
- **Social Breakdown:** It erodes trust in government and institutions, leading to social unrest and a decline in civic participation.
- **Environmental Degradation:** Corruption can incentivise the exploitation of natural resources for personal gain, causing environmental damage.
- **Weakened Rule of Law:** When corruption is tolerated, it undermines the legitimacy of the legal system and its ability to enforce justice.
- **Lack of Quality in Service:** In a system with corruption, there is no quality of service. To demand quality, one must pay for it.
- **Loss of Proportion:** Corruption in the judiciary leads to improper justice, and the victims have to bear the brunt of it ultimately.
- **Poor Health and Hygiene:** In countries with more corruption, one can notice more health problems among people. There will be no pure drinking water, proper roads, quality food grain supply, milk adulteration, etc.

The institutional framework to check corruption is not very strong. We have many legislations, provisions, and institutions to prevent corruption. India has established several key institutional and legal mechanisms to combat corruption. These include the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (amended in 2018), provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) at the central level, vigilance departments or commissions in the states, and the Central

► Weak Anti-Corruption Mechanisms

Vigilance Commission (CVC), which serves as an apex integrity institution. Furthermore, the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 was enacted to establish an independent ombudsman to investigate complaints against public functionaries. The Lokpal has been constituted, though its functioning is still evolving and has faced challenges in becoming fully operational. Many states in India have established Lokayukta to prevent the menace. Despite all this, corruption has assumed alarming proportions and raised a big question mark over the development of the country. The main reason for this state of affairs is that most of the law enforcement agencies expected to check the spread of corruption are manned by police officers. But the Indian police force is not free from corruption.

Zero Tolerance of Corruption

► Zero Tolerance Approach

What we need to do is apply the principle of Zero Tolerance to Corruption. It means that no case of corruption will be tolerated and that the corrupt will be punished. In our system, the bribe taker and the bribe giver are both guilty. The only exception is the members of parliament. The Supreme Court of India in the JMM case observed that the bribe receiver (MPs) is not guilty, but the bribe giver, even if he is a member of the House, is guilty. However, recently the Supreme Court has overruled this decision. It is a welcome development.

► Low Conviction and Delays

The efforts made to check corruption have failed because the guilty invariably do not get punished. The conviction rate in the Indian courts is only 6%. There are three crore cases pending in the courts. The average time taken for disposal of cases ranges from ten to twenty years. As per anti-corruption cases handled by the CBI, about 15,000 cases are pending for investigation.

► Simplifying Administrative Procedures

Corruption is one of the major factors that have made the life of the common man miserable. In this context, certain pertinent suggestions are given:

Simplification of Rules and Procedures: There's a need to simplify the methods and adopt a single-window approach, minimising the hierarchy of tiers, and stipulating time limits for disposal, etc.

► Accountability Through Transparency

Transparency and Empowerment of People: Transparency in government operations and accountability for public officials can help to reduce corruption. Associated with it, the active participation of citizens in monitoring government actions and holding officials accountable is also essential.

► Stronger Punishment and Vigilance

Effective Punishment for the Guilty: Corruption flourishes because it's a low-risk, high-profit activity. Effective, speedy, and prompt punishment should increase the risk. The punishment prescribed by the Prevention of Corruption Act is not strong enough to deter those in the habit of taking and giving bribes. Apart from this, cases of bribery should be disposed of quickly by the courts. Further, persons who are found guilty should be debarred, apart from confiscation of property and awarding punishment. In this connection, the Law Commission suggested that the property of public servants and politicians who own wealth beyond their legal means of income can be confiscated without the present elaborate procedures. Another action that can be taken immediately is to prescribe provisions for confiscation of benami property. If there are any cases of corruption or any complaint thereof, then they can be reported to the CVC. It has the responsibility for creating more awareness among people regarding the consequences of taking and giving bribes and other forms of corruption.

► Urgent Reform and Swift Action

Associated with the above tasks, punishment should be increased and strengthened. Today, punishment is possible under two circumstances: one is through prosecution and another is through departmental action. In prosecution, it is slow. We should therefore focus on departmental action. All departmental actions should be completed within six months. The Corruption is all-pervasive and has engulfed the entire Indian social system; it is one of the major factors that have eaten into the very vitals of national income and made the life of the common man miserable. The disease has assumed monstrous proportions and has to be chopped off, as patchwork would not do. The malady should be treated appropriately with simplification of rules and procedures, empowerment of people, and speedy and effective punishment of the guilty apart from foolproof laws. However, the most important aspect is that our legal safeguards against corruption are sleeping in the archives. It's high time that public-spirited people, including intellectuals, mould public opinion against corruption and demand necessary reforms to discourage it, if not root it out altogether.

► India's Anti-Corruption Framework

4.1.3 Institutional Mechanisms to Curb Corruption

Corruption has long been a formidable challenge to governance, undermining public trust and impeding national progress. Recognising its pervasive nature, India has developed several institutional mechanisms to counteract corrupt practices at various levels of governance. These mechanisms are

designed to foster transparency, accountability, and integrity in public administration. However, despite their establishment, several hurdles—such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, delayed enforcement, and lack of independent oversight—continue to hamper their effectiveness.

4.1.3.1 Lokpal and Lokayuktas

► Lokpal Act and Inclusive Oversight

To address corruption at the highest echelons of government, India enacted the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, which empowers independent bodies to investigate corruption allegations against public officials, including the Prime Minister, Members of Parliament, and government employees. This legislative framework seeks to enhance accountability and deter the misuse of public office.

At the national level, the Lokpal serves as an anti-corruption ombudsman, while Lokayuktas function at the state level to investigate regional and local government malpractices. The composition of the Lokpal includes a chairperson and eight members, with provisions ensuring 50% representation from marginalised communities, including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, minorities, and women. This inclusive structure aims to reinforce democratic values and fairness in governance.

► Challenges in Lokpal Functioning

The powers of the Lokpal include conducting inquiries, recommending prosecutions, and initiating disciplinary action against guilty officials. However, in practice, its effectiveness has been questioned due to delays in appointments, lack of independent investigative authority, and bureaucratic obstacles that hinder its operational efficiency. Strengthening the Lokpal's autonomy and ensuring prompt action on corruption cases remain key challenges in realising its intended impact.

4.1.3.2 Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)

► CVC: Key Anti-Corruption Body

Established in 1964, the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) plays a pivotal role in overseeing corruption-related complaints and ensuring integrity within government departments and public sector undertakings (PSUs). It is tasked with monitoring, detecting, and investigating corrupt practices, making it one of the most crucial institutions in India's anti-corruption framework.

One of the CVC's core functions is to supervise cases referred by the government and provide guidance to the Central Bureau

► CVC's Supervisory and Preventive Role

of Investigation (CBI) in handling corruption-related inquiries. Additionally, the CVC offers recommendations on preventive measures, helping to formulate policies that minimise opportunities for corruption within public administration. The CVC Act, 2003, further empowered the Commission, granting it statutory status and ensuring a greater degree of independence in its operations.

► Limited Enforcement Power

Despite its vital role, the CVC faces certain limitations. Notably, it lacks prosecution powers, meaning it must rely on investigative agencies like the CBI to take legal action against corrupt officials. This dependency sometimes dilutes its authority and hinders its ability to swiftly address corruption cases. Strengthening the CVC's autonomy and equipping it with greater enforcement capabilities would significantly enhance its effectiveness in tackling corruption.

4.1.3.3 Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988: The Legal Framework for Accountability

► Primary legal framework

The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, serves as the primary legal framework for combating corruption in India. This legislation provides a comprehensive definition of corrupt practices, covering offences such as bribery, embezzlement, abuse of power, and misappropriation of public resources. To deter public officials from engaging in corrupt activities, the Act prescribes stringent punishments, ranging from fines to imprisonment.

► 2018 Amendment

To strengthen deterrence, the 2018 amendment to the Act introduced criminal liability for bribe-givers, ensuring that those offering illicit financial inducements are also held accountable. By making both the giver and receiver of bribes legally culpable, the amendment aimed to create a more balanced and effective anti-corruption mechanism.

► Enforcement Challenges in Corruption Law

However, challenges persist in enforcing this law effectively. India's judicial system often experiences delays in legal proceedings, procedural inefficiencies, and gaps in enforcement, which allow many corrupt officials to evade timely justice. Strengthening judicial processes, ensuring faster trials, and enhancing investigative capabilities are necessary steps to make the Prevention of Corruption Act a more potent tool against corruption.

The Road Ahead: Strengthening Institutional and Legal Frameworks

While India has established robust institutional mechanisms such as the Lokpal, CVC, and the Prevention of Corruption Act, their effectiveness remains constrained by bureaucratic inefficiencies, political interference, and inadequate enforcement mechanisms. Overcoming these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach:

► Strengthening Anti-Corruption Measures

1. Ensuring Institutional Autonomy – Strengthening the independence of anti-corruption bodies by reducing government influence and expediting appointments.
2. Enhancing Legal Enforcement – Accelerating judicial proceedings and improving investigative efficiency to ensure swift prosecution of corrupt officials.
3. Leveraging Technology – Promoting the use of digital governance tools, e-surveillance, and online transparency platforms to minimise opportunities for corruption.
4. Empowering Citizens – Encouraging greater public participation through mechanisms like the Right to Information (RTI) Act, whistleblower protection laws, and citizen-led monitoring initiatives.

By reinforcing these institutional and legal frameworks, India can take significant strides toward a governance system that is more transparent, accountable, and resilient against corruption. While complete eradication of corruption may remain a distant goal, a well-functioning institutional ecosystem can ensure that corrupt practices are systematically curtailed, fostering greater public trust in governance.

4.1.4 Transparency and Accountability in Administration

► Building public trust and preventing corruption

Transparency and accountability are the fundamental principles of good governance that are essential for building public trust and preventing corruption. Transparency allows citizens to be informed about government action, while accountability ensures that those in power are answerable for their decisions. Together, they form the pillars of good governance that promote trust, curtail corruption, and enable effective governance.

► Enables Good Governance

Transparency – The free flow of information is the foundation of transparency. All citizens have the right to know the policies and activities of the government which affect them, such as legislative activities, policy-making, legal provisions, policy enforcement, budget, public expenditure, and other relevant political information. Transparency is also essential for ensuring accountability and enabling genuine participation. The greater the degree of transparency, the greater the level of good governance.

► Accountability Curtails Corruption

Accountability – Accountability ensures that public officials are responsible for their actions and decisions. It includes being answerable for their decisions and accepting responsibility for any consequences. This can be achieved through public audits, whistle-blower protection, and independent oversight bodies. The government must be accountable at all levels because accountability is closely related to eliminating corruption, which is widely regarded as the major deficiency in governance. Accountability ensures that public officials act in the best interests of citizens and are held responsible for their performance.

Mechanism for Transparency and Accountability

The growing demand for responsiveness and answerability in governance has led to the adoption of various mechanisms. The key mechanisms designed to ensure transparency and accountability are given below:

Parliamentary control

Parliament plays a significant role in maintaining transparency. Its members can ask questions and supplementary questions to ministers on policy matters; during Question Hour, the government is put on trial. Parliament also has instruments such as the no-confidence motion, call-attention motion, cut motions, etc. Committee hearings and investigations (notably the Public Accounts Committee) institute enquiries in cases of fraud, financial irregularities, and leakage of revenue, thereby tightening financial control.

Comptroller and Auditor-General of India (CAG)

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, often regarded as the guardian of the public purse, is constitutionally mandated to audit the accounts of the Union and State



governments. It scrutinises the use of public funds to ensure legality, efficiency, and transparency in public expenditure. The CAG functions independently, based on constitutional provisions and legislative mandates, and submits its audit reports to the President or Governors, who lay them before the respective legislatures. High-profile scandals such as the 2G spectrum allocation and the Commonwealth Games were brought to public attention through CAG audits, underscoring its critical role in promoting accountability and safeguarding public resources.

Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)

The CVC was established in 1964 following the Santhanam Committee's recommendation. It is the apex anti-vigilance body monitoring activities in public undertakings and institutions under the Central Government. While it gives advice on vigilance matters, it has no punitive powers.

Social Audits

Gaining prominence after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, social audits assess the impact of government initiatives on communities and ensure funds are used effectively. By increasing community participation, they strengthen grassroots democracy.

e-Governance

Defined as the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at all levels of government to provide services to citizens, interact with business, and exchange information between departments in a timely, efficient, and transparent manner.

e-Procurement

The Central Public Procurement Portal is a secure platform providing complete transparency in public procurement for the Government of India, most States, and local governments.

Right to Information Act (RTI)

Enacted to replace the Freedom of Information Act 2002, RTI aims for more transparent, accountable, and responsive governance. It grants any Indian citizen access to information

held by public authorities, with a 30-day response limit (48 hours where life or liberty is involved). Officers who delay or destroy information are liable to fine/discipline. Passed 15 June 2005; in force 12 Oct 2005; RTI has become a powerful tool for citizen oversight.

Citizen's Charter

A Citizen Charter represents an organisation's commitment to deliver services to citizens — specifying standards, timeliness, and redressal mechanisms, and embodying transparency and accountability. The Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions (Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances) co-ordinates the formulation and operation of Charters to create a more responsive, citizen-friendly administration.

Lokpal

An anti-corruption ombudsman for the Union, empowered to investigate corruption charges against central public officials and related matters.

Lokayuktas

State-level ombudsmen (anti-corruption authorities) appointed to investigate grievances and allegations against public servants. The Administrative Reforms Commission (1966-70) recommended Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayuktas in the States.

Public Interest Litigation (PIL)

Introduced by Justices V.R. Krishna Iyer and P.N. Bhagwati, PIL brings justice to the weak, unorganised, and exploited who lack access to courts due to prohibitive costs. Any citizen or group may approach the Supreme Court or High Courts on issues affecting the public interest, making justice participatory and socially accountable.

Importance

1. Accountability has to be obligatory on the individual or an organisation to accept responsibility for their actions and to disclose them in a transparent manner.
2. Accountability results in answerability and punishment in

► Essence of
Accountability



case of malpractices.

3. If citizens can hold their government accountable, they must be able to find out what it is doing.
4. Fighting acts of corruption and poor-quality public services, especially in developing countries, has increased the demand for accountability from both civil society and the State.
5. Social accountability has been brought into focus for combating corruption, especially in countries with a systematic problem of corruption in public service delivery.

Challenges

Despite its merits, the operation of transparency and accountability in public service delivery faces several challenges:

1. Lack of political will – strong political intent is needed; it is good publicity jargon but required to enforce reforms.
2. Resistance to change – many officials resist transformation; bureaucratic inertia persists.
3. Lack of resources – money, skilled manpower, and technology are often inadequate.
4. Lack of citizen awareness – low levels of citizen awareness dampen the effectiveness of tools like RTI.
5. Technological gaps: uneven digital infrastructure limits the reach of e-governance initiatives.

► Barriers to Effective Governance

Suggestions

To overcome these challenges, the following suggestions may be considered:

1. **Information dissemination:** necessary steps may be taken to democratise information among the masses. It is the essence of the “3 R” principle—regular, reliable, and relevant information.
2. **Reform in participatory models:** community-based organisations (CBOs), NGOs, and local-government participation can strengthen governance.

► Strategies to Enhance Transparency

3. **Capacity building:** training should be imparted to officials and citizens on the importance of transparency and on using instruments (e.g. RTI).
4. **Education & awareness:** steps should be taken to inculcate transparency values through curricula and mass campaigns.
5. **Strengthening grievance redress & social audits:** robust, timely feedback loops reduce corruption.
6. **ICT & e-governance:** expand digital tools to improve transparency and accountability in e-governance.

4.1.5 Citizen Charters and Public Service Delivery

A Citizen Charter is a formal document jointly prepared by citizens and administration to ensure service standards, quality, and accountability. It spells out standards, timeliness, rights, grievance-redress mechanisms, and transparency obligations.

► Citizen Charter for Public Services

The concept originated in the United Kingdom in 1991 under Prime Minister John Major. In India, the idea was adopted after the 1997 Conference of Chief Ministers resolved that every public-service organisation should frame Citizen Charters. The Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DARPG) took the lead; pilot charters were drafted the same year.

Objectives of a Citizen Charter

1. Improve the quality of public services by setting standards and timelines.
2. Provide an accessible framework for remedy and grievance redressal.
3. Ensure transparency and accountability in service delivery.
4. Achieve value for money and efficiency in resource use.
5. Encourage citizen participation in monitoring and evaluation.

Features of a Citizen Charter

1. **Service standards** – minimum and maximum time limits



for each service.

2. **Performance promises** – comprehensive information on services, costs, and redressal.
3. **User consultation & feedback** – mechanisms for incorporating citizen views.
4. **Courtesy & helpfulness** – foster a culture of respect and prompt response.
5. **Grievance redressal** – establish a robust system; monitor trends for systemic improvement.
6. **Monitoring & evaluation** – periodic review, independent assessment and public reporting.

Citizen Charter in India

In 1996, the Government of India launched a National Debate to promote a more responsive administration. A key outcome was the introduction of Citizens' Charters for public service organisations, which received strong support at the 1997 Chief Ministers' Conference. The conference focused on three goals: making administration accountable and citizen-friendly, ensuring transparency and the right to information, and improving civil services. A committee and a core group were formed to guide and monitor the implementation of these Charters by ministries and departments.

► Citizen Charters
Across Government
Bodies

The Consumer Coordination Council (CCC), along with Common Cause and the Cabinet Secretariat, helped promote the Citizens' Charter by conducting surveys in sectors like healthcare and electricity. The Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DAR & PG) provided guidelines to help government bodies prepare effective Charters. By early 2010, over 130 Charters had been created at the Union level and more than 700 by State governments and agencies, setting clear service standards for the public.

Shortcomings of Citizen Charters

1. **Poor design & content** – many charters lack clearly classified information; measurable standards are absent.
2. **Lack of commitment** – organisations seldom inform citizens about commitments made in charters.
3. **Top-down approach** – charters prepared without citizen participation; awareness is low.

► Limitations of
Citizen Charters

4. **Resistance to change** – personnel are not motivated or trained; implementation suffers from inertia.
5. **Ownership issues** – charters often become outdated; revisions are not carried out in time.
6. **Redress mechanisms weak** – many charters do not specify effective complaint-redress systems.
7. **Performance evaluation absent** – independent assessments are rare; audit loops are weak.
8. **No officer accountability for default** – responsibility for failure is unclear.
9. **Limited civil-society involvement** – without active citizen engagement, the charter risks remaining a paper document.

To make Citizen Charters meaningful, periodic review, wide publicity, staff training, performance evaluation and strong civil-society participation are essential. To face the challenges, the following reforms are suggested:

- Redress mechanism in case of default: The Citizen Charter must clearly lay down the relief that the organisation is bound to provide whenever it fails to meet the promised standard of delivery.
- Periodic evaluation: There should be continuous, preferably external, evaluation of performance against the Charter.
- Hold officers accountable for defaults: Specific responsibility must be fixed on individual officers whenever services are delayed or denied.
- Involve civil society in the process: Civil-society groups outside the direct user circle should participate in monitoring, publicity and feedback.

To conclude, the Citizen Charter is a means, not an end. Continuous review, wide publicity, external evaluation, strong grievance redress and staff capacity-building can transform a Charter into a genuinely citizen-centric, meaningful instrument of service delivery.

► Strengthening
Citizen Charters

Summarized Overview

Administrative ethics form the foundation of good governance, ensuring that public officials adhere to principles of honesty, integrity, and accountability. These ethical standards are essential for maintaining public trust and preventing misconduct in administration. In India, where bureaucracy plays a critical role in implementing policies and delivering services, ethical governance is necessary to uphold democratic values and social justice. Ethical dilemmas arise when administrators must balance public interest with political and bureaucratic pressures, making adherence to ethical norms a crucial aspect of effective administration.

Despite the existence of legal and institutional safeguards, Indian governance faces several ethical challenges. Corruption, nepotism, and lack of transparency remain significant hurdles, undermining public trust in institutions. Bureaucratic secrecy, political interference, and conflicts of interest often result in decisions that favour vested interests over public welfare. The political-bureaucratic nexus further erodes institutional integrity, leading to inefficiencies and ethical compromises in policy implementation. Additionally, issues such as bureaucratic apathy and ethical dilemmas in policy execution—especially in areas like land acquisition and environmental regulations—pose challenges to ethical governance.

To address these concerns, India has established various institutional mechanisms to combat corruption and promote accountability. The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 provides an independent framework to investigate corruption cases involving high-ranking officials. The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), established in 1964, oversees anti-corruption efforts within government departments and public sector undertakings. The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, further defines corruption-related offences and prescribes penalties for misconduct. However, these mechanisms often face limitations due to bureaucratic delays, lack of enforcement, and political interference, affecting their overall effectiveness.

Transparency and accountability are essential components of ethical administration, ensuring that governance remains responsive to public needs. Mechanisms like the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, social audits, and e-governance initiatives have enhanced transparency in decision-making processes. However, resistance to information disclosure, delays in responding to public queries, and procedural hurdles continue to hinder accountability efforts. Strengthening these frameworks, ensuring strict legal enforcement, and fostering a culture of ethical governance through public awareness and administrative reforms are vital for building a more accountable and corruption-free administration in India.

Self-Assessment

1. Define administrative ethics and explain its significance in public administration.
2. Discuss the major ethical challenges in governance in India.
3. How does corruption impact the efficiency and legitimacy of public administration? Provide examples.
4. What are the different forms of corruption in India? Explain with relevant cases.
5. Analyse the role of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005 in promoting transparency and accountability.
6. Examine the functions and limitations of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 in curbing high-level corruption.
7. Discuss the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) and its role in ensuring integrity in public service.
8. Explain the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and its amendments in tackling corruption.
9. Suggest measures to strengthen transparency and accountability in Indian administration.

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UNIT 2

Central – State Conflicts

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ describe the constitutional framework of Centre-State relations in India
- ▶ discuss the role and controversies surrounding the Governor in federal governance
- ▶ examine the financial conflicts arising from tax devolution and fiscal federalism
- ▶ assess the impact of inter-state disputes on governance and policy implementation
- ▶ suggest policy measures to strengthen cooperative federalism and resolve Centre-State conflicts

Background

India's federal system is unique, balancing a strong central government with state autonomy. However, conflicts between the Centre and the States have been a persistent issue, particularly in areas of governance, finance, and legislative authority. The role of the Governor, who is appointed by the President but functions at the state level, has often been a source of political contention. There have been instances where Governors have been accused of acting as agents of the Centre, leading to tensions in Centre-State relations.

Similarly, financial relations between the Centre and States have also been a contentious issue, especially regarding tax devolution, grants-in-aid, and the functioning of the Finance Commission. The introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) has significantly altered the financial landscape, with States depending on compensation from the Centre. Disputes over fiscal federalism and resource allocation have often led to demands for greater financial autonomy by States.

Other than the role of the Governor and financial conflicts, several other issues contribute to Centre-State tensions. These include legislative disputes, delays in inter-state water sharing agreements, and conflicts over the implementation of national policies

at the state level. With the rise of regional parties and coalition politics, these conflicts have become more pronounced, necessitating better mechanisms for cooperative federalism.

Keywords

Federalism, Unitary Bias, Residuary Powers, Discretionary Powers, Fiscal Federalism

Discussion

4.2.1 Nature of Centre-State Conflicts

Constitutional Framework of Centre-State Relations

The Indian Constitution establishes a federal structure wherein the powers and responsibilities of governance are divided between the Centre and the States. This framework is enshrined primarily in the Seventh Schedule, which classifies subjects under three lists: the Union List, the State List, and the Concurrent List. While this division of power suggests a clear demarcation between the Centre and the States, various provisions embedded in the Constitution introduce unitary tendencies, leading to potential conflicts in Centre-State relations.

► Centre-State Power Division

► Federal structure

The federal structure in India, unlike classical federal systems, is unique due to its centralised tilt. Although states are granted autonomy over specific matters, the Centre retains substantial authority, particularly in cases of legislative, administrative, and financial matters. These inherent unitary features often lead to tensions between the Centre and the States, particularly in matters of legislation, resource allocation, and governance during emergencies.

Unitary Bias vs. Federal Aspirations

The Indian federal structure has been designed with a pronounced unitary bias, often raising concerns regarding the autonomy of states. The unitary tendencies arise from various constitutional provisions that empower the Centre to intervene



in state affairs under specific circumstances. The following aspects highlight this unitary tilt:

1. Dominance of the Union List

▶ only the Parliament can legislate

The Seventh Schedule classifies legislative subjects into three lists. The Union List consists of 97 subjects of national significance, on which only the Parliament can legislate. These include critical areas such as defence, foreign affairs, atomic energy, and railways. In contrast, the State List comprises 61 subjects that are primarily of local or regional concern, like police, public health, and agriculture. However, the predominance of the Union List underscores the centralisation of legislative powers in the hands of the Centre.

2. Supremacy of Union in the Concurrent List

▶ Central legislation prevails

The Concurrent List contains 52 subjects where both the Centre and States have legislative authority. However, in cases of conflict between a parliamentary law and a state law on a concurrent subject, the central legislation prevails. This provision reinforces the dominance of the Centre in legislative matters, often at the expense of state autonomy.

3. Residuary Powers with the Union

▶ Falls under the Centre's jurisdiction

Unlike the United States and Australia, where residuary powers rest with the states, the Indian Constitution vests such powers with the Union under Article 248. This means that any new subject not explicitly mentioned in the three lists automatically falls under the Centre's jurisdiction. This ensures that emerging fields of legislation, particularly in technological and economic domains, remain within the purview of the Union government.

4. Parliament's Power to Override State Legislation

Under Article 249, if the Rajya Sabha passes a resolution by a two-thirds majority citing 'national interest,' the Parliament can legislate on a subject listed in the State List. This provision further curtails the legislative independence of states.

5. Emergency Provisions and Central Authority

▶ Converting the federal structure into a unitary one

The emergency provisions of the Constitution (Articles 352-360) provide the Centre with sweeping powers to take control of state functions during crises. Under Article 356, in case of failure of constitutional machinery in a state, the President can

assume control over the state administration. Similarly, during a national emergency (Article 352), the Centre can legislate on any subject in the State List, effectively converting the federal structure into a unitary one.

6. Financial Centralisation

Financial federalism in India also reflects a strong central bias. The Centre controls major sources of revenue, while states are largely dependent on central transfers. The Finance Commission, GST Council, and centrally sponsored schemes further illustrate the Centre's dominance in financial matters, often leading to disputes regarding resource allocation.

In conclusion, the Indian federal system, while designed to balance the Centre-State relationship, leans significantly towards a unitary structure. The constitutional framework, with its emphasis on a strong Centre, often results in conflicts between the two levels of government. These tensions primarily arise due to legislative overlaps, financial dependencies, and the Centre's power to override state autonomy in crucial matters. As India's political and economic landscape evolves, addressing these conflicts through cooperative federalism becomes imperative for maintaining harmony in Centre-State relations.

► Centre's dominance
in financial matters

4.2.2 Role of the Governor in Centre-State Relations

Constitutional Provisions Related to the Governor

The Governor, as the constitutional head of a state, derives powers and responsibilities from Articles 153 to 162 of the Indian Constitution. Appointed by the President under Article 155, the Governor serves as the link between the Centre and the state, ensuring that the administration is carried out per constitutional provisions. Article 163 grants discretionary powers to the Governor, allowing independent decision-making in specific circumstances. However, Article 164(1) stipulates that the Governor shall appoint the Chief Minister and the Council of Ministers, who hold office at his pleasure. Additionally, Article 356 empowers the Governor to recommend President's Rule in a state if governance is not conducted per constitutional norms. While these provisions aim to maintain a balance in Centre-State relations, their interpretation and application have led to considerable debate and controversy.

► Constitutional head
of a state



Controversies and Political Debates Over the Governor's Role

► Misuse of discretionary powers

One of the most persistent criticisms of the Governor's role in India's federal structure is the alleged misuse of discretionary powers. The appointment of Governors often raises concerns as they are frequently selected from among retired politicians, bureaucrats, or individuals closely associated with the ruling party at the Centre. This practice has led to accusations that Governors act as agents of the central government rather than as impartial constitutional authorities.

► Toppling opposition-led state governments

There have been instances where legislative assemblies have been kept in suspension, allegedly to allow the ruling party at the Centre to manipulate the formation of an alternative government. The imposition of President's Rule on grounds of corruption, law and order issues, or political instability has also drawn criticism, with claims that such actions have been selectively employed to dismiss opposition-led state governments. The period of coalition politics saw Governors allegedly aiding the central government in toppling opposition-led state governments despite their majority in the legislature. Such instances highlight the political rather than constitutional role played by Governors, eroding the democratic and federal structure of the country.

► Recent conflicts

The controversy surrounding the Governor's role has been particularly evident in recent conflicts between Governors and Chief Ministers in states such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal. Critics argue that the Governor's actions in these states have often been partisan, leading to tensions between state governments and the Centre. The Sarkaria Commission, set up to review Centre-State relations, recommended that Governors be appointed based on merit rather than political considerations and should not engage in active politics after retirement. Implementing such recommendations remains crucial in ensuring that the Governor's role aligns with constitutional principles and democratic governance.

► S.R. Bommai v. Union of India

Judicial Pronouncements on the Governor's Discretionary Powers

The Supreme Court has played a crucial role in defining the scope of the Governor's discretionary powers. In the *Shamsher Singh v. State of Punjab* (1974) case, the Court held that the Governor must act on the advice of the Council of Ministers, except where the Constitution explicitly provides discretionary powers. The *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India* (1994) case further

limited the Governor's authority, ruling that the imposition of President's Rule under Article 356 is subject to judicial review and cannot be arbitrarily exercised.

► Cases concerning the appointment

Judicial scrutiny has also been applied in cases concerning the appointment of Chief Ministers and the dissolution of state assemblies. In *Rameshwar Prasad v. Union of India* (2006), the Supreme Court ruled that the Governor cannot dissolve an assembly based on personal opinions about potential instability and that it should be based on objective material and grounded in circumstances well in tune with the spirit of the Constitution. These judicial pronouncements emphasise that while the Governor holds discretionary powers, they must be exercised within constitutional boundaries and cannot be misused for political gains.

► Political misuse

In conclusion, the controversies and judicial interventions surrounding the Governor's role highlight the urgent need for reforms in their appointment, tenure, and functions. As Rajeev Dhavan aptly stated, "If political pluralism is to survive, there is a need for the appointment of good statesmen as Governors." The institution of the Governor has suffered from political misuse, undermining democracy and federalism. To restore its credibility, a transparent selection process and adherence to constitutional principles are essential. The implementation of the Sarkaria Commission's recommendations and further judicial safeguards can help ensure that the Governor functions as an impartial constitutional authority, rather than a political instrument of the Centre.

Centre-State Financial Relations and Conflicts

There is often dispute between the Centre and the States over resources, chiefly finances. Critics hold that India's federal set-up, especially before 1990, was highly centralised. States repeatedly complain that the Centre has encroached on their tax base and discretion.

Allocation of resources - The Constitution divides legislative, executive, and fiscal powers between Union and States. The Centre collects ~70% of total revenues, while the States undertake ~60% of public spending. This vertical fiscal imbalance forces States to depend on tax-devolution and grants. Though successive Finance Commissions try to correct the gap, perception persists that transfers are inadequate or tied to

conditions. Horizontal imbalance among States – rich vs. poor, resource-rich vs. resource-poor – compounds the friction.

Key sources of conflict

1. **Cesses & surcharges:** Levies kept outside the divisible pool deny States a share.
2. **Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS):** Proliferation of CSS dictates priorities and compels matching funds from cash-strapped States.
3. **Reduction in grants-in-aid to States:** Grants fell from roughly ₹3.75 lakh crore (2015-16) to about ₹1.65 lakh crore (2020-21), shrinking States' discretionary space from 16.2% to 6.5%.
4. **Uncertainty over GST compensation:** Introduction of GST caused revenue anxiety; compensation dues have been delayed, eroding trust.
5. **Distribution of duties & royalties:** States argue that mineral royalties, excise on fuel, customs-duty cuts, and ad-hoc cesses curtail their legitimate share.
6. **Devolution formula debates:** The 15th Finance Commission's use of 2011 population data is viewed as penalising population-control States in the south.

Concerns of State Governments

The Union now raises ever-larger shares through non-shareable cesses; States' share in the divisible pool is not rising commensurately. The 15th Finance Commission's weightage for 2011 population, area, forest & ecology (10%), demographic transition, tax-effort, etc., has worried Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh.

Yet instruments of co-operative federalism – GST Council, Inter-State Council, NITI Aayog – provide space for negotiation, even if States complain of Union dominance.

Challenges and Other problem areas

Until 1967, one-party rule reduced Centre-State friction. Post-1967, with different parties in office, new irritants emerged:

The major areas of conflict are briefly discussed below:

► Taken over by the Centre

Industries of National Importance - The Industries (Development & Regulation) Act empowers Parliament to specify those industries that must be centrally regulated “in the national interest.” The Act, originally passed by the Union Government, provides that in cases of mismanagement such industries may be taken over by the Centre. States complain that repeated Central intervention encroaches upon their economic jurisdiction and limits policy autonomy.

► Uniform standard of administration

All-India Services - Provision for All-India Services secures a uniform standard of administration but places key personnel under dual control. The IAS, the IPS, and the IFoS are recognised under Article 312 of the Constitution. They are recruited by the UPSC and allotted to State cadres, yet the Union retains decisive power over cadre rules, transfer, posting, and discipline. State governments argue that they lack complete control over officers working under them.

► Failure of constitutional machinery

Article 356 (President’s Rule) - Article 356 empowers the President to dismiss an elected State ministry on the ground of “failure of constitutional machinery.” Critics charge that successive Union governments have misused this discretionary power for partisan ends. The Supreme Court’s *Bommai* judgment (1994) laid down strict tests, but controversy persists whenever Article 356 is invoked.

► Restore order and protect life and property

Deployment of paramilitary forces - Sometimes law-and-order situations cannot be controlled by local police. In such cases, the Union Government deploys paramilitary or military forces in the State to restore order and protect life and property. The Centre may do so even against the wishes of the State. State authorities view this as interference, although during floods, fairs, or elections, the presence of Central forces is normally accepted.

► Holds office during the President’s pleasure

Appointment of Governor - The Governor is the constitutional Head of the State. He is appointed by the President and holds office during the President’s pleasure. Since 1967, the office has become controversial. States complain that

- a) Governors are appointed without consulting the State;
- b) The office is misused by the Centre to destabilise hostile State ministries;
- c) Governors recommend President’s Rule and dissolve assemblies on partisan advice;



d) In hung houses, they sometimes invite parties with inadequate support.

The Sarkaria (1988) and Punchhi (2010) Commissions suggested guidelines to make the office impartial.

► Arbitrary reservation

Reservation of Bills for President's assent - Article 200 allows a Governor to reserve a State Bill for the President. Judges, most notably the Supreme Court in *Kaiser-i-Hind* and subsequent rulings, have held that indefinite or arbitrary reservation is unconstitutional; nevertheless, disputes arise whenever politically sensitive Bills are withheld.

Redress mechanism in Citizen Charters - A Citizen Charter must clearly lay down the relief the organisation is bound to provide if it fails to meet promised standards. Periodic external evaluation and explicit officer accountability are essential. Involving civil society groups helps make the Charter citizen-centric and meaningful.

Central investigative agencies - Law and order is a State subject, yet Central agencies like CBI, NIA and ED operate within States, sometimes without consent. States regard this "parallel jurisdiction" as an encroachment on their authority.

Intelligence agencies - The Intelligence Bureau reports to the Union Home Ministry; States have their own special branches. When the IB conducts political enquiries without sharing inputs, friction develops.

Challenges faced by the Centre - The Supreme Court has struck down arbitrary gubernatorial actions; GST Council decisions bind both tiers; yet exclusion of cesses from the divisible pool, proliferating Centrally Sponsored Schemes, and tied grants continue to vex States. Co-operative forums—Inter-State Council, NITI Aayog—must be strengthened to balance autonomy with national unity.

Inter-State Water Disputes

► Water-sharing agreements and allocations

Water disputes between states remain a significant challenge in Indian federalism. As rivers often flow across multiple states, conflicts arise over water-sharing agreements and allocations. The Inter-State River Water Disputes Act of 1956 was enacted to address such conflicts, but issues persist due to competing

claims over river resources. Some of the most notable disputes include the Cauvery water dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, the Krishna-Godavari dispute involving Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana, and the Sutlej-Yamuna Link dispute between Punjab and Haryana.

Under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act of 1956, if a State Government requests the resolution of a water dispute and the Central Government determines that negotiations are insufficient, a Water Disputes Tribunal is established to adjudicate the matter. In 2002, the Act was amended to incorporate key recommendations from the Sarkaria Commission. These amendments introduced a one-year timeframe for establishing water disputes tribunals and a three-year timeframe for reaching a decision.

► Water Disputes Tribunal

Although the establishment of water tribunals has provided a mechanism for resolution, delays in the adjudication process and non-compliance with tribunal awards continue to fuel tensions. The Centre's role in facilitating negotiations and ensuring equitable distribution remains crucial in resolving these disputes while maintaining cooperative federalism.

Role of NITI Aayog in Cooperative Federalism

The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) was established in 2015, replacing the Planning Commission, with the primary objective of promoting cooperative federalism. Unlike its predecessor, NITI Aayog involves state governments in the policy-making process, ensuring that national development strategies reflect regional aspirations and challenges. It serves as a central repository of best practices, facilitates knowledge exchange, and tailors policies to address the unique needs of individual states, thereby reducing regional disparities and promoting equitable growth.

► Promoting cooperative federalism

NITI Aayog's composition ensures representation from both the Centre and States, with the Prime Minister serving as its Chairperson, a Governing Council comprising Chief Ministers and Lt. Governors of Union Territories, and a Vice-Chairperson appointed by the Prime Minister. Additionally, it includes full-time and part-time members, four ex-officio members from the Union Council of Ministers, a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), and special invitees with domain expertise.

► Representation from both the Centre and States

The institution plays a pivotal role in shaping India's contemporary policy landscape. It provides evidence-based

► Evidence-based policy recommendations

policy recommendations, facilitates economic reforms, and promotes structural adjustments to enhance productivity and competitiveness. NITI Aayog also supports innovation and entrepreneurship through initiatives like the Atal Innovation Mission and advises on social sector reforms in education and healthcare. Moreover, its commitment to sustainable development aligns national growth objectives with global environmental standards, ensuring that India's development remains inclusive and environmentally responsible. By fostering a collaborative approach to governance, NITI Aayog strengthens Centre-State relations and enhances cooperative federalism in India.

Summarized Overview

The Indian Constitution establishes a federal structure with a division of powers between the Centre and the States, primarily outlined in the Seventh Schedule. However, India's federalism exhibits a unitary tilt, leading to frequent conflicts between the two levels of government. Key areas of contention include legislative authority, financial distribution, administrative control, and emergency provisions. The Centre's ability to legislate on State List subjects, override state laws in the Concurrent List, and retain residuary powers further strengthens its dominance. These conflicts often manifest in disputes over resource allocation, governance autonomy, and emergency interventions.

The Governor, appointed by the President, serves as the Centre's representative in the states, with constitutional powers that sometimes fuel Centre-State tensions. While the Governor is expected to function impartially, political appointments and discretionary actions have led to allegations of bias. The use of Article 356 (President's Rule) has been criticised as a tool for central intervention in state governance. Judicial pronouncements, such as in *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India (1994)*, have limited the arbitrary use of these powers, emphasising that Governors should act within constitutional boundaries rather than political considerations. The need for reform, as suggested by the Sarkaria Commission, remains crucial for ensuring a balanced federal structure.

Financial federalism in India is marked by the Centre's dominance over revenue sources, while states remain dependent on central transfers. The introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) through the 101st Constitutional Amendment Act sought to streamline taxation, but it also led to new conflicts. The GST Council, designed to promote cooperative federalism, has witnessed disagreements over revenue-sharing, compensation payments, and state autonomy in tax decisions. Delays in GST compensation and concerns over states' financial independence have heightened Centre-State tensions, necessitating reforms to ensure a more equitable fiscal relationship.

Self-Assessment

1. Discuss the constitutional framework governing Centre-State relations in India.
2. How does the Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution contribute to Centre-State conflicts?
3. Explain the impact of residuary powers on the federal structure of India.
4. Analyse the role of the Governor in Centre-State relations and the controversies surrounding it.
5. What are the major financial conflicts between the Centre and the States in India?
6. Evaluate the role of the GST Council in Centre-State financial relations.
7. How do emergency provisions in the Indian Constitution affect Centre-State relations?
8. Suggest measures to strengthen cooperative federalism in India.

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UNIT

3

Challenges in Indian Administration

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ identify key challenges in Indian administration, including data security and inclusive development
- ▶ explain the significance of Aadhaar in governance and associated privacy concerns
- ▶ analyze the barriers to inclusive development in India
- ▶ evaluate the impact of government initiatives like Jal Jeevan Mission and PMJDY
- ▶ recommend policy improvements for better implementation of welfare programs

Background

The rapid advancement of technology and the increasing need for inclusive governance have posed new challenges for Indian administration. One of the most pressing concerns is data security, particularly with the widespread use of Aadhaar for authentication and service delivery. While Aadhaar has improved efficiency in welfare programs, concerns about privacy, data breaches, and potential misuse of biometric information have raised serious ethical and legal questions. The Supreme Court's verdict on the Right to Privacy as a fundamental right has further emphasised the need for a robust data protection framework.

Another major challenge is ensuring inclusive development, where economic growth benefits all sections of society. Despite numerous policies aimed at poverty reduction, social inequalities persist, particularly in rural and marginalised communities. The government's initiatives, such as the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) and the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), have sought to bridge gaps in water accessibility and financial inclusion. However, their implementation faces hurdles such as inadequate infrastructure, bureaucratic delays, and regional disparities.

Keywords

Privacy, Data Security, Inclusive Development, Safe Drinking Water, Financial Inclusion

Discussion

4.3.1 Data Security and Aadhaar: Challenges and Concerns

Aadhaar and Digital Governance

Aadhaar, India's unique digital identity project, has emerged as a cornerstone of digital governance. It is the world's largest biometric identification system, designed to streamline access to government services, financial transactions, and welfare programmes. Aadhaar is central to the IndiaStack initiative, which integrates digital payments, identity verification, and data sharing to improve governance efficiency. The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, oversees the Aadhaar project. By enabling biometric authentication and electronic Know Your Customer (e-KYC) services, Aadhaar has facilitated financial inclusion and improved transparency in subsidy distribution. However, this extensive reliance on a centralised database raises significant concerns about data security and privacy.

► Biometric Identity and Governance

Issues of Privacy and Data Security

Aadhaar's implementation has sparked debates over privacy and data security. The primary concern is the potential for mass surveillance and unauthorised access to sensitive personal data. The collection of demographic and biometric data, including fingerprints and iris scans, increases vulnerability to data breaches. While UIDAI mandates encryption and security protocols, many incidents of data leaks in the country have raised doubts about the robustness of Aadhaar's security framework.

► Privacy and Data Concerns

The concept of metadata aggregation further complicates privacy concerns. Metadata, which includes authentication logs and usage patterns, can be analysed to track individuals'

► Metadata Surveillance Risks

movements and behaviours, even without accessing core biometric data. Such metadata-driven surveillance could enable both state and private entities to monitor citizens' activities extensively. This concern is heightened by the absence of a strong data protection framework, as the proposed Personal Data Protection Bill remains under deliberation.

► Risks of Mandatory Linkage

Another significant issue is the mandatory linkage of Aadhaar to various services, including bank accounts, mobile numbers, and PAN cards. While aimed at curbing tax evasion and financial fraud, this compulsory linkage exposes citizens to identity theft and fraud risks. Unauthorised access to Aadhaar-linked databases can compromise sensitive financial and personal information, leading to potential misuse.

► Judicial Safeguards for Privacy

Supreme Court Rulings on Aadhaar and the Right to Privacy

Judicial intervention has played a crucial role in addressing Aadhaar-related privacy concerns. The landmark Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) & Anr. v. Union of India case in 2017 recognised privacy as a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. This ruling set the stage for evaluating Aadhaar's compliance with privacy norms.

In the 2018 Aadhaar judgment, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of Aadhaar but imposed significant restrictions to balance state interests with individual privacy. Key rulings included:

► Aadhaar Judgment Restrictions

- **Mandatory vs. Voluntary Use:** Aadhaar was deemed mandatory for availing government welfare benefits but not for mobile connections or bank accounts.
- **Storage Limitations:** The court ruled that authentication logs should not be retained beyond six months, reducing the risk of metadata surveillance.
- **Restrictions on Private Entities:** Private companies were barred from demanding Aadhaar authentication for services, ensuring that individuals are not coerced into using their Aadhaar credentials for commercial transactions.
- **Data Protection Measures:** The court emphasised the need for a robust data protection law to regulate Aadhaar usage and prevent unauthorised access.

► Ongoing Privacy Challenges

Despite these safeguards, concerns persist regarding the adequacy of existing protections. The Supreme Court's ruling attempted to strike a balance between digital governance and privacy rights, but the effectiveness of these measures depends on their implementation. The absence of a comprehensive data protection law continues to pose risks, necessitating further legislative and judicial oversight.

► Aadhaar: Digital progress, privacy risks

In conclusion, Aadhaar has revolutionised digital governance in India but remains a double-edged sword. While it enhances service delivery and curbs corruption, the risks of data breaches, surveillance, and privacy violations cannot be ignored. Though Supreme Court rulings have mitigated some concerns, stronger legal safeguards and data protection measures are essential to ensure that Aadhaar aligns with constitutional privacy standards. The future of Aadhaar hinges on the establishment of a well-defined privacy framework that prioritises citizen rights while enabling efficient governance.

4.3.2 Inclusive Development and Its Challenges

Meaning and Importance of Inclusive Development

► 'Equitable growth access

Inclusive development is a process that ensures the benefits of economic growth reach all sections of society, particularly marginalised and disadvantaged groups. It emphasises equity, participation, and empowerment, ensuring that individuals, regardless of their socio-economic background, have equal opportunities to contribute to and benefit from development.

► Philosophical foundations

The concept of inclusive development has historical and philosophical roots. The Indian ethos of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world as one family) and African Ubuntu philosophy emphasise interconnectedness and collective well-being. Similarly, Amartya Sen's concept of development as freedom highlights that true development occurs when individuals have the capability to lead lives they value.

► Equity and sustainability

In contemporary policy discourse, inclusive development is linked to sustainable development, focusing on reducing inequalities in income, education, healthcare, and access to resources. It acknowledges that development must not be limited to economic growth but should also encompass social, political, and cultural dimensions.

4.3.3 Issues of Poverty, Inequality, and Social Exclusion

Despite significant economic progress, India continues to grapple with poverty, inequality, and social exclusion. These issues are deeply rooted in historical, structural, and policy-related factors.

Poverty

Poverty remains one of the biggest obstacles to inclusive development. The World Bank defines poverty not just as a lack of income but as deprivation in multiple dimensions, including access to education, healthcare, and opportunities for economic participation. The multidimensional poverty index (MPI) highlights that poverty is more than just income levels; it includes lack of access to clean water, sanitation, and housing. Programs like MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) have attempted to address this by providing rural employment guarantees, but challenges in implementation persist.

► Multidimensional poverty challenges

Inequality

Economic inequality in India is stark, with the top 10% of the population owning a significant share of national wealth, while the bottom 50% struggles with inadequate access to resources. Gender, caste, and regional disparities further compound economic inequality. Gender inequality, for instance, is reflected in low female workforce participation and wage gaps, while caste-based discrimination continues to limit opportunities for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Regional disparities in development—where states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu fare better in human development indicators than Bihar and Uttar Pradesh—also highlight structural imbalances.

► Socioeconomic disparities

Social Exclusion

Marginalised communities, including Dalits, Adivasis, women, and persons with disabilities, often face systemic discrimination that limits their access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. The absence of inclusive policies in urban planning has also led to the growth of slums, where the urban poor live in precarious conditions. Social exclusion is reinforced through limited political participation, lack of representation, and inadequate access to justice.

► Systemic exclusion of marginalized



► Key Inclusion Policies

Policy Initiatives for Inclusive Development

Governments and international organisations have implemented various policy measures to promote inclusive development. In India, several policies and programmes aim to reduce disparities and promote equitable growth.

Social Inclusion Policies

- **Affirmative Action:** Reservations for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in education and employment aim to enhance social mobility.
- **Gender Empowerment Initiatives:** Programmes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Self Help Groups (SHGs), and Maternity Benefit Schemes support women's economic and social empowerment.
- **Urban Inclusion Policies:** Programmes like the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) seek to provide affordable housing for the urban poor, ensuring better living conditions.

Economic Inclusion Policies

- **Rural Employment Programmes:** MGNREGA guarantees 100 days of wage employment to rural households, promoting livelihood security.
- **Financial Inclusion:** Jan Dhan Yojana aims to provide banking access to all, ensuring financial security for the unbanked population.
- **Skill Development Initiatives:** Skill India Mission focuses on vocational training and skill enhancement to improve employability.

Political Inclusion Policies

- **Panchayati Raj System:** The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments provide local governance structures that empower marginalised communities through decentralised decision-making.
- **Women's Representation:** Efforts to increase female rep-

resentation in political institutions, including reservations for women in local governance, aim to promote political inclusion.

In summary, inclusive development is essential for creating a just and equitable society. While India has made progress in addressing poverty, inequality, and exclusion, challenges remain in ensuring effective implementation of policies. A holistic approach—encompassing economic, social, and political inclusion—is necessary to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth. Stronger institutional mechanisms, better policy execution, and active citizen participation are crucial in making development truly inclusive and beneficial for all.

► Creating a just and equitable society

4.3.4 Government Initiatives for Development

1. Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM): Ensuring Safe Drinking Water for All

The Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), launched in 2019 by the Government of India, is a transformative initiative aimed at providing Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) to every rural household by 2024. This mission seeks to ensure access to adequate and safe drinking water, improving the quality of life for millions, particularly in rural India. By focusing on community participation and sustainable water management, JJM represents a significant step toward achieving inclusive development.

► Functional Household Tap Connections

Vision and Mission

The vision of JJM is to enable every rural household to have access to safe and sufficient drinking water on a long-term basis, thereby enhancing public health and socio-economic well-being. The mission assists states and Union Territories (UTs) in planning and implementing decentralised, demand-driven, and community-managed rural water supply strategies. Additionally, JJM promotes community ownership by involving local stakeholders in water supply management, fostering a sense of responsibility and sustainability.

► Every rural household to have access to safe and sufficient drinking water

Key Objectives of JJM

JJM has several critical objectives designed to ensure comprehensive water security in rural areas:

► JJM core objectives



- **Universal Access:** Providing tap water connections to every rural household.
- **Priority to Vulnerable Areas:** Focusing on drought-prone, desert regions, and water-quality-affected areas.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Ensuring functional tap connections in schools, Anganwadi centres, Gram Panchayat buildings, and healthcare facilities.
- **Sustainability:** Strengthening water sources and infrastructure to ensure long-term supply.
- **Community Participation:** Encouraging local contributions through cash, kind, or labour (shramdaan).
- **Capacity Building:** Training human resources in plumbing, water quality management, and system maintenance.
- **Water Quality Assurance:** Implementing water quality monitoring and contamination removal measures.

Components Supported under JJM

To fulfil its objectives, JJM supports a variety of initiatives that enhance water security and sustainability:

- **Infrastructure Development:** Establishing piped water supply systems in rural villages.
- **Water Source Augmentation:** Strengthening or developing reliable drinking water sources.
- **Technology and Innovation:** Deploying contaminant-removal technologies in water-quality-affected areas.
- **Bulk Water Transfer and Treatment:** Constructing treatment plants and distribution networks to cater to rural needs.
- **Greywater Management:** Promoting wastewater treatment and reuse.
- **Awareness and Training:** Conducting Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) programmes, along with skill development initiatives for water management.

Impact and Progress of JJM

JJM has significantly improved public health, sanitation, and rural livelihoods by reducing dependence on unsafe water

► Take charge of water security

sources. The mission has strengthened local governance and community ownership, empowering rural populations to take charge of their water security. Several states and UTs have already achieved 100% FHTC coverage, showcasing the mission's success. However, efforts continue to ensure nationwide water security and sustainable water management.

2. Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY): Financial Inclusion and Its Impact

► Universal access to banking services

The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), launched on August 28, 2014, is a landmark financial inclusion initiative by the Government of India. The scheme aims to provide universal access to banking services, including savings accounts, remittances, credit facilities, insurance, and pensions. Targeting the unbanked population, PMJDY has played a crucial role in integrating marginalised sections of society into the formal financial system, ensuring economic security and financial empowerment.

Achievements of PMJDY

Since its inception, PMJDY has achieved significant milestones, transforming India's financial landscape. As of August 2023:

- **Bank Account Expansion:** Over 50.09 crore (500.9 million) bank accounts have been opened under the scheme, ensuring widespread access to financial services.
- **Deposit Growth:** The total deposits in these accounts have reached ₹2,03,505 crore (approximately USD 27.4 billion), reflecting increased banking engagement among beneficiaries.
- **RuPay Debit Card Distribution:** Approximately 31.95 crore (319.5 million) RuPay debit cards have been issued, promoting digital financial transactions and reducing dependency on cash-based transactions.

► Significant milestones

Impact on Financial Inclusion

PMJDY has had a profound impact on financial inclusion by bridging the gap between the formal banking sector and economically weaker sections of society. The scheme's influence is evident in several key areas:



1. Financial Empowerment

By providing millions with access to bank accounts, PMJDY has empowered individuals, especially those in rural and economically weaker sections, to save securely, access credit facilities, and benefit from government schemes. This initiative has strengthened financial stability at the grassroots level and contributed to economic self-sufficiency.

► Economic self-sufficiency

2. Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) and Transparency

One of the major advantages of PMJDY has been its integration with Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT). Government subsidies and welfare benefits are now directly credited to beneficiaries' bank accounts, eliminating middlemen and leakages. This has improved efficiency in welfare distribution and reduced corruption in the disbursement of subsidies for LPG, pensions, and other welfare schemes.

► Financial inclusion impact

3. Women's Financial Inclusion

PMJDY has significantly contributed to gender inclusivity in financial services. Notably, 55.5% of new account holders are women, allowing greater financial autonomy and economic decision-making power. This has enhanced women's participation in household savings and credit accessibility, fostering long-term economic stability for families.

► Gender inclusivity in financial services

4. Increased Digital Transactions and Financial Awareness

With a vast number of RuPay debit cards issued, PMJDY has accelerated the shift toward digital financial transactions. Beneficiaries are increasingly engaging in digital payments, reducing reliance on cash and fostering a more transparent and efficient financial system. Additionally, the scheme has enhanced financial literacy, encouraging responsible financial practices among the underserved.

► Shift toward digital financial transactions

5. Reduction in Dormant Accounts

Initially, a significant number of Jan Dhan accounts remained dormant due to a lack of transactions. However, active participation has increased over the years, reflecting a behavioural shift in financial engagement. The government's push to link these accounts with various financial products, including microcredit and insurance, has encouraged sustained usage.

► Behavioural shift in financial engagement

► Economic growth
and social upliftment

In conclusion, PMJDY has laid a robust foundation for financial inclusion in India. By providing banking access to the underprivileged, streamlining welfare disbursement, and promoting digital transactions, the scheme has fostered economic growth and social upliftment. While challenges remain in ensuring continued engagement and financial literacy, PMJDY has undeniably transformed India's banking ecosystem, making financial services accessible to millions who were previously excluded from the formal economy.

Summarized Overview

Aadhaar, India's unique biometric identity system, plays a pivotal role in digital governance, enabling efficient service delivery and financial inclusion. However, concerns over data security and privacy persist, given its vast centralised database. Issues such as unauthorised access, data breaches, and mass surveillance highlight the vulnerabilities of Aadhaar. Judicial interventions, particularly the 2017 K.S. Puttaswamy case, established privacy as a fundamental right, leading to the 2018 Supreme Court ruling, which imposed restrictions on Aadhaar's usage. Despite safeguards like limiting authentication log storage and restricting private entities from Aadhaar-based verification, the absence of a strong data protection law remains a challenge.

Inclusive development emphasises equitable access to resources and opportunities for all, particularly marginalised communities. Inspired by theories like Amartya Sen's development as freedom, it aims to reduce socio-economic disparities. However, India faces structural and policy barriers, including poverty, gender and caste-based inequality, and regional imbalances. Sustainable and inclusive development requires targeted interventions in healthcare, education, and financial inclusion, ensuring that economic growth benefits all sections of society.

Despite economic progress, poverty remains a major issue in India, with millions lacking access to basic services. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) highlights disparities in income, education, and healthcare. Economic inequality is stark, with wealth concentrated among the top 10%, while marginalised groups such as Dalits, Adivasis, and women continue to face social exclusion. Policy responses include MGNREGA for employment security, Jan Dhan Yojana for financial inclusion, and affirmative action policies. However, challenges in policy implementation hinder their full impact.

To address developmental challenges, the Indian government has launched initiatives such as the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), which aims to provide safe drinking water to all rural households by 2024. This programme focuses on community participation and sustainable water management, enhancing rural health and livelihoods. Effective

implementation of such initiatives is crucial for achieving sustainable and inclusive development in India.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain the role of Aadhaar in India's digital governance system.
2. Discuss the major privacy concerns associated with Aadhaar and its data security framework.
3. How did the K.S. Puttaswamy case impact Aadhaar and the right to privacy in India?
4. What are the key challenges to achieving inclusive development in India?
5. How do caste, gender, and regional disparities contribute to economic inequality in India?
6. Discuss the impact of Jan Dhan Yojana on financial inclusion in India.
7. Explain the objectives and challenges of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM).
8. Suggest policy measures to enhance the effectiveness of government initiatives in achieving inclusive development.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



SGOU

MODEL QUESTION PAPER SETS





SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE:

Reg. No :

Name :

SECOND SEMESTER - MA PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION EXAMINATION

**DISCIPLINE CORE COURSE - M23PA06DC - Indian Administration
(CBCS - PG)**

MODEL QUESTION PAPER- SET- I

2024 Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any ten of the following. Each question carries one mark

(10X1 = 10 Marks)

1. Who introduced the Mansabdari system in Mughal administration?
2. What is the full form of PMO?
3. What is the topmost position in the Central Secretariat?
4. In which year was the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act enacted?
5. Name the body that conducts recruitment to All India Services.
6. What is the primary function of the Cabinet Secretariat?
7. Who heads the State Secretariat?
8. Mention any one challenge faced by urban local governance in India.
9. Which constitutional amendment is associated with urban local bodies?
10. What is the lowest tier of Panchayati Raj Institutions?
11. Name one All India Service other than IAS.
12. What is the full form of IAAS?



13. Which British Governor-General introduced the portfolio system?
14. What is meant by 'tenure system' in Indian administration?
15. Which institution ensures people's participation in rural governance?

SECTION B

Answer any five questions in two or three sentences each. Each question carries two marks.

(5X2 =10 Marks)

16. State any two features of Mughal administration.
17. Briefly explain the significance of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) during British rule.
18. What are the responsibilities of a Cabinet Secretary?
19. What is meant by cadre allocation in All India Services?
20. List two challenges faced by the Central Secretariat.
21. What are the main functions of the Chief Secretary in a state?
22. Mention two functions of the Gram Panchayat.
23. Differentiate between Group A and Group B central services.
24. What is meant by the term urban local bodies?
25. What are the roles of Additional and Joint Secretaries in a ministry?

SECTION C

Answer any five questions in a paragraph. Each question carries four marks.

(5X4 = 20 Marks)

26. Explain the role and functions of the Central Secretariat.
27. Explain the structural hierarchy within a ministry.
28. Discuss the significance of the Indian Foreign Service in India's diplomacy.
29. Discuss the administrative importance of the State Secretariat.
30. Discuss the constitutional provisions related to urban governance in India.
31. Describe the legacy of British administrative practices in post-independence India.
32. Discuss the significance of the 74th Constitutional Amendment in urban governance.
33. What was the significance of the Government of India Act, 1935 in administrative development?



SECTION D

Answer any three questions in two pages. Each question carries ten marks.

(3X10 =30 Marks)

34. Critically analyse the administrative features of Mughal rule and their influence on modern governance.
35. Examine the significance of the Government of India Acts (1919 & 1935) in shaping Indian administration.
36. Explain the structure and functions of the Central Secretariat. Evaluate its role in policy formulation and inter-ministerial coordination.
37. What are the major challenges faced by the central administrative machinery in India? Suggest practical measures to improve its efficiency.
38. Examine the organisation and responsibilities of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and its importance in the executive decision-making process.
39. Describe the structure and functions of Panchayati Raj Institutions after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment.



QP CODE:

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SECOND SEMESTER - MA PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION EXAMINATION

DISCIPLINE CORE COURSE - M23PA06DC - Indian Administration

(CBCS - PG)

MODEL QUESTION PAPER- SET- II

2024 Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any ten of the following. Each question carries one mark

(10X1 = 10 Marks)

1. Name the chief revenue officer in the Mughal empire.
2. In which year was the Government of India Act introducing bicameralism enacted?
3. Who heads the Indian Administrative Service?
4. Mention one function of the Indian Audit and Accounts Service.
5. Mention one example of a central civil service in India
6. What is the constitutional article related to the creation of All India Services?
7. What is the key role of the District Collector?
8. Under which article are Panchayati Raj institutions granted constitutional status?
9. What does ICS stand for in the colonial administrative context?
10. Who chairs the Gram Sabha?
11. Who is the constitutional head of a state in India?
12. Under which ministry does the Indian Forest Service function?



13. What is the primary function of the State Secretariat?
14. What is the full form of PRI?
15. Which central service manages India's tax collection?

SECTION B

Answer any five questions in two or three sentences each. Each question carries two marks.

(5X2 =10 Marks)

16. Mention two major reforms introduced by the Government of India Act, 1919.
17. What is the role of the Principal Secretary in the PMO?
18. What were the main objectives of the Indian Civil Service during the colonial period?
19. Highlight the significance of the 74th Constitutional Amendment.
20. Write a brief note on the functions of the State Secretariat.
21. Explain the main judicial functions of the District Collector.
22. Mention two sources of revenue for Panchayati Raj Institutions.
23. What are the key features of the Mansabdari system under the Mughals?
24. State two key functions of the Indian Revenue Service (IRS).
25. Write a short note on the functions of the Joint Secretary in a ministry.

SECTION C

Answer any five questions in a paragraph. Each question carries four marks.

(5X4 = 20 Marks)

26. Describe the main characteristics of the British administrative legacy in India.
27. Discuss the evolution of the Prime Minister's Office since independence
28. Analyse the importance of the Cabinet Secretariat in inter-ministerial coordination.
29. Explain the functions and responsibilities of the District Collector.
30. What are the challenges in the implementation of the 73rd Amendment?
31. Describe the structure and functions of the Zila Parishad.
32. Examine the impact of the Government of India Act, 1919 on provincial governance.
33. Explain the challenges faced by urban local bodies in India.

SECTION D

Answer any three questions in two pages. Each question carries ten marks.

(3X10 =30 Marks)

34. Trace the evolution of central administration in India from the Mughal period to the post-independence era.
35. Discuss in detail the evolution, structure, and strategic role of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).
36. Evaluate the role of All India Services in promoting national integration and cooperative federalism.
37. Explain the constitutional and administrative role of the Governor in the Indian states.
38. Describe the structure and functions of the State Secretariat. What is its role in the day-to-day administration of the state?
39. Outline the main features of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act. Evaluate its impact on the structure and functioning of urban local bodies in India.



സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യായാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം
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