



Mains Practice Question

Q. Which are the institutions in India that promote ethical accountability in public service and what are the challenges in ensuring it? (250 words)

28 Feb, 2019 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- Explain in brief about 'Accountability' in the introduction.
- Examine the institutions in India that promote ethical accountability in public service
- Explain the challenges in ensuring accountability.
- Give a way forward.

Introduction

- **Accountability:** Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- It helps achievement of ethical standard in the governance system.

Body

In all democratic countries, civil servants are accountable both to the political executive and to citizens for ensuring responsive, transparent, and honest policy implementation and service delivery. But ensuring accountability for performance is not a simple task in government services; there are immense complexities involved in making public officials answerable for output and outcomes.

In India accountability mechanism is broadly categorized as those are located within the State and those outside.

'Within the State'

Outside the executive:-

- **Accountability to Parliament:** India has adopted Parliamentary democracy wherein the government is responsible to the Parliament which represents the people. The administrators are responsible to the political executives, who in turn are answerable to the Parliament.
- **Judicial Accountability:** The vast discretionary powers conferred on administrative authorities are required to be properly checked and controlled. If a citizen is aggrieved with any action or inaction of the administration, he may seek redress through a court of law.
- **Lokpal and Lokayuktas:** It aims to prevent and control corruption at the central level and state level that would receive complaints relating to corruption against most categories of public servants and ensure that these are properly investigated and, where warranted, effectively prosecuted.
- **Central Vigilance Commission:** Designated Agency to receive written complaints for disclosure on any allegation of corruption or misuse of office and recommend appropriate action.
- **The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)** is an important constitutional functionary. He is a

facet of the entire principle of accountability, which is the cornerstone of the Indian Constitution.

Within the Executive:-

- Superior officers – Rewards/Punishment; Disciplinary procedure; Performance Management System.
- CBI/police/vigilance.
- Internal audit
- Grievance Redressal Mechanisms

Outside the State

- To the people through election
- Through RTI Act to citizens
- Citizens' oversight committees
- Civil society/watchdog bodies
- Media
- Service delivery surveys
- Citizens charter

The challenges in ensuring accountability:-

- **Narrow definition:** A narrowly defined public accountability is one of the reasons contributing to inefficient public accountability. The fundamental issue therefore is to define public accountability in the context of changing public policy and public management discourse in India.
- **No performance linkage:** The issue of ensuring public accountability is further more complex as there has been no emphasis on linking performance management with public accountability
- **Over-Reliance on 'Command' Model:** The institutional structure of top down management, bureaucratic inertia and isolated managerial efforts have proved inadequate for satisfying performance i.e. delivery of results and outcomes.
- **Lack of ownership:** Most of them don't have a feeling of ownership/ duty within their organization.
- **Corruption** is one of the biggest challenges to ensure accountability.

Way forward

Following can bring more accountability in the public service:

- **Greater decentralization:** The rationale for decentralization stems from the assumption that bringing governments closer to people enhances accountability by more accurately reflecting citizen needs and preferences and crucially, making it easier for citizens to monitor performance and thereby demand accountability.
- **Greater monitoring of public expenditures**
- **Mandatory social auditing.**