Mains Practice Question

Q. The principle of "minimum government, maximum governance" has been central to recent policy initiatives in India. In this context, assess how effectively this approach has been implemented in the country. (250 words)

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Approach

- Introduce the answer by defining minimum government maximum governance
- Assess the status and effectiveness of Minimum Government, Maximum Governance in India
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

"Minimum government, maximum governance" seeks to **minimize governmental intervention in everyday activities**, empowering citizens to drive their own and the nation's development.

- This approach encompasses simplifying government processes, **reducing red tape and corruption**, and promoting **e-governance.**

Body

Effectiveness of Minimum Government, Maximum Governance:

- **Digital Governance and E-Services:** The digital revolution has been at the forefront of implementing "minimum government, maximum governance." The Digital India program, launched in 2015, has been instrumental in this regard.
    - **Effectiveness:**
        - Significant reduction in direct citizen-government interactions for routine services
        - Enhanced transparency and reduced corruption in service delivery
        - Improved accessibility of government services, especially in remote areas
    - **Examples:** Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance (UMANG), DigiLocker, **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** leveraging the **JAM (Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile) trinity.**
    - **Assessment:** While these initiatives have dramatically improved service delivery, challenges remain:
        - Digital literacy gaps, particularly in rural areas and among older citizens
        - Infrastructure limitations in remote regions
        - Concerns about data privacy and security
- **Ease of Doing Business Reforms:** A key aspect of "minimum government" has been simplifying the regulatory environment for businesses.
    - **Effectiveness:**
        - Significant improvement in India's ease of doing business ranking (from 142 in 2014 to **63 in 2019**)
        - Reduced time and cost for starting and operating businesses

- Increased foreign direct investment inflows
  - **Examples:**
    - **Single Window Clearance**: States like Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have implemented effective **single-window systems,** reducing the time for business approvals from months to weeks.
    - **Labour Code Reforms**: Consolidation of **29 labor laws into 4 codes** aims to simplify compliance for businesses while protecting workers' rights.
    - **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)**: Significantly improved the resolution of stressed assets and exit mechanisms for businesses.
  - **Assessment**: While progress is evident, challenges persist:
    - Implementation varies across states, leading to uneven outcomes
    - Small and medium enterprises still face hurdles in navigating regulatory requirements
    - The informal sector, which employs a large portion of the workforce, remains largely untouched by these reforms
- **Administrative Reforms**: Streamlining government operations has been crucial to the "minimum government" approach.
  - **Effectiveness**:
    - Reduced layers of decision-making in government departments
    - Improved efficiency in policy implementation
    - Enhanced accountability of public officials
  - **Examples:**
    - **Empowered Committees of Secretaries**: Replaced multiple layers of committees, speeding up policy formulation.
    - **Lateral Entry:** Induction of domain experts at Joint Secretary levels brings fresh perspectives and expertise into governance.
    - **Mission Karmayogi:** Enhancing the government-citizen interaction, with officials becoming enablers for citizens and business
    - **Faceless Assessment Scheme:** Evaluation carried out electronically without requiring the taxpayer to physically visit the tax office or meet the assessing officer in person.
  - **Assessment:** While these reforms have shown promise, concerns include:
    - Resistance from the bureaucracy to changes in established practices
    - Potential **loss of checks and balances in decision-making processes**
    - Need for more comprehensive civil service reforms
- **Citizen Empowerment and Participation:** Empowering citizens is a crucial aspect of "maximum governance."
  - **Effectiveness:**
    - Increased citizen participation in policy-making and governance
    - Enhanced transparency in government operations
    - Improved grievance redressal mechanisms
  - **Examples:**
    - **MyGov Platform**: Allows citizens to contribute ideas and feedback on various government initiatives.
    - **Right to Information (RTI) Act:** Despite some controversies, it remains a powerful tool for citizens to access information and ensure accountability.
    - **Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS):** Online platform resolving millions of citizen grievances, improving government responsiveness.
  - **Assessment**: While these initiatives have enhanced citizen engagement, challenges remain:
    - Uneven awareness and utilization across different socio-economic groups
    - Concerns about the **dilution of the RTI Act's effectiveness**
- **Decentralization and Local Governance:** Empowering local bodies is crucial for "maximum governance" at the grassroots level.
  - **Effectiveness:**
    - Enhanced local participation in development planning
    - Improved responsiveness to local needs
  - **Examples:**

- **15th Finance Commission Recommendations:** To increase in allocation to local bodies, with performance-linked grants.
- **Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act:** Empowers tribal communities in self-governance.
  - **Assessment:** While progress is evident, issues persist:
    - Many local bodies still lack adequate financial and human resources
    - **Capacity building of local officials remains a challenge**
    - Political interference often hampers true decentralization

Conclusion

The implementation of "minimum government, maximum governance" in India has shown **promise in reducing unnecessary government intervention** and empowering citizens, but its success ultimately depends on consistent implementation, adaptive policies, and a commitment for continuous **Reform, Perform and Transform** by addressing the diverse needs of India's vast and complex socio-economic landscape.

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