



Mains Practice Question

Q. What is data sovereignty? Discuss its importance in transforming India into a knowledge economy. (150 words)

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Approach

- In introduction, explain the concept of data sovereignty.
- Discuss how it is important in transforming India into a knowledge-based economy.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

- Data sovereignty basically provides for protection of an individual's personal data, in digital form on cloud, from any misuse.
- It strictly demands that an individual's data which is stored in cloud binary digital form must be kept within the country in which that particular individual resides and must be subjected to laws of that country.

Body

Importance of **digital sovereignty** in transforming India into a **Knowledge economy**:

- **For increased data security:** The Digital India initiative seeks to provide delivery of public services related to health, education, banking etc. via e-governance mode to citizens from metros to gram panchayats.
 - Towards this, there would be a need to upload huge information in digital form on the cloud. Thus, if there is an absence of strong data security, it can be a recipe for disaster.
- **Help reap the digital dividend:** There is a need to reap the digital dividend of faster growth, more jobs and better services by expanding affordable and safe Internet access to all.
 - In this context, data sovereignty enables the citizen to have access to the data and utilise it for the development of the society.
- **Helps in leveraging information technology:** Data sovereignty helps in leveraging the information technology. As today it is said that data is new currency or oil, data sovereignty could allow better use of Big data analytics and help in policy making in India.
- **Helps in Digital India:** Data Sovereignty also has its importance for the Digital India and Make in India initiative.
 - Digital India mission lays down a vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.

Steps that can be taken

A strong data protection legislation can help to enforce data sovereignty. In this context, Justice Srikrishna

recommendation on data protection can be the first step towards this.

- The committee has proposed strict standards for cross-border transfer of data and storage.
- Critical personal data, to be notified by the government, must be stored and processed at a data centre located in India.
- Personal data can be transferred outside India but will need to comply with conditions of security, purpose limitation, storage limitation, data principals' rights as laid down under the Indian law.
- Every data fiduciary will need to store at least one serving copy of personal data on a server or data centre located in India.

Conclusion

Digital sovereignty cannot be undermined and should be seen as the first step for the success of Digital India, Make in India, various poverty eradication schemes and creation of a digitally empowered society and knowledge-based economy.

Also, adequate infrastructure and adequate attention need to be given to the interests of India's Information Technology enabled Services (ITeS) and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industries, which are thriving on cross border data flow.

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