**General Studies – 2: Topic: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability:**

**Governance and public service delivery in India**

1) **Introduction**
- Governance and the quality of public services can impact a country’s economic growth.
- The objective of public services is to deliver social protection to the poor and vulnerable and to alleviate poverty.
- Public services reduce inequitable distribution of resources and correct historical inequities, such as caste based discrimination and gender inequities.

2) **State of Public service delivery in India**
- Public service delivery is unsatisfactory when compared with other countries at similar levels of development.
- Weak monitoring and leakages in Public services and programmes
- leakages from the PDS
- Expenditure on education by the state accounted for approximately 3% of the GDP in 2015-16 (Economic Survey of India 2015-16)
- Annual budgetary allocations for health, including water and sanitation, have remained stagnant at less than 1.5% of GDP
- Low levels of human capital and inadequate access to basic infrastructure.

3) **Concerns / Challenges**
- Large disparities between the poor and non-poor in the country and it is the poor that suffer much more due to weak public service delivery
- The climate of ‘identity politics’, with citizens preferring to vote for politicians belonging to the same community, caste, or religion as them.
- The share of elected politicians with criminal backgrounds has been rising and this can negatively impact economic growth
- Politicians foresee electoral returns to providing assistance to citizens
- Corruption has often been cited as the primary cause of governance deficit
- The poor are not fully aware of the returns of health and education
- In this age of social media we have Whatsapp rumours and fake news.
- There are administrative challenges associated with the use of ICT services.

4) **Government Initiatives**
- The Sevottam model developed with the objective of improving the quality of public service delivery in the country.
- Direct Cash transfer to facilitate disbursements of Government entitlements.
- The Digital India programme to ensure that Government services are available to citizens electronically.
- MyGov citizen portal to engage citizens in the task of “good governance”
- E-Kranti scheme to broaden the reach of internet services to the rural areas.
5) **Policy measures**

- **Decentralisation**
  - a. Natural resources may be better conserved by local rather than top-down governments
  - b. Strengthen capacity of local governments through regular training of public officials

- **Affirmative action**
  - a. Improved access to public services for marginalised groups

- **Performance-related pay**
  - a. Performance-related pay can increase overall effort by public officials and hence, improve public service delivery
  - b. Non-monetary incentives, e.g. transfers to preferred location, can be an easy and effective reward for good performance.

- **Community mobilisation**
  - a. Low-cost method of putting pressure on public officials to deliver.
  - b. Participation of women from poor, lower-caste, vulnerable households in Self-Help Groups (SHGs)
  - c. A lot of the change that we are aspiring for is going to come through collectives of poor households coming together for their entitlements and rights.

- **Technology**
  - a. Technology can be leveraged to monitor and improve accountability in service delivery.
  - b. Recent advances in using biometric identification and electronic transfers of benefits have led to reduction in programme leakages
  - c. Using information and technology to enhance efficiency of health care delivery.
  - d. Need for increase in tele-density and broadband penetration

- **Cohesion and consensus among states**
  - a. All of these public services are essentially implemented at the state level.
  - b. Hence, cohesion and consensus among states should be promoted and laggard states need to be incentivised to undertake reforms.

6) **Way Forward**

- Research is required in the area of bureaucratic reforms
- Build strong accountability structures and media has an important role to play here.
- A platform where all media houses can come together and contribute to an informed debate on what is ailing our public systems.
- Linkage between media and academia: “Academics need to communicate in a language that people outside of their community can understand”
- Issues of last-mile access need to be tackled.
- Raise the efforts of frontline providers of health and education as their services cannot entirely be mechanised
- Public Private Partnership to fill in the gaps in service delivery for optimal utilization of resources.