



General Studies-2; Topic: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

E-governance in Urban Local Governance

Introduction

- As India grows more urban, the **importance of effective governance and service delivery by city governments becomes central to the well-being of Indians.**

The concept of Smart Cities

- A smart city is a network of smart functions and departments.
- A smart city requires good data to inform decision-making.
- The reliable way to get good data is to design 'smart systems' that generate such data.
- Given the complexity of our cities, and the various entities that are involved in their governance, this journey will have to be undertaken one step at a time.
- Smart cities must emerge, not from the top down, but from collaboration between departments, employees, and citizens.**

Towards Digitisation

- Local government employees have to switch from using pen and paper and records to using digital tools and systems. This is the first step in the e-governance journey.
- The reality in most local government offices in India is that records are kept on paper.
- To ensure digitisation, city leaders must use a combination of expectation-setting and incentives of digitisation.

- They can demonstrate the time saved and ease of work gained when digital tools automate away record creation and retrieval.
- In Andhra Pradesh, ULB employees reported saving an average of 11 hours every week after a digital system was adopted.
- Leaders can set phased targets for adoption of the new tools, and ensure adequate technical support and education for employees during the transition.
- These internal reforms have to reflect in better experience and empowerment for citizens.
- The **true measure of digital nations is the readiness of governments to use technology to create open and participatory public systems.**

E-governance

- What governance must achieve is a reliable system of digital welfare.
- The benefits of e-governance depends upon adoption by local government employees and citizens themselves.
- This will bring various departments in a city to collaborate with each other — and also with non-governmental partners — to create a virtuous cycle of co-creation, learning, and efficiency.
- A beginning has been made through government-to-citizen services using Common Service Centres, advice to agriculturists, digital payments of welfare benefits through bank accounts etc.

Role of Intermediaries

- Intermediaries help citizens overcome barriers to awareness (of availability of digital services and rights from the state).
- Intermediaries support individuals by placing complaints, directing them to the right authorities, and following up.
- Intermediaries enable the state to do its work better and they are fundamental to governance.
- Increasing digitisation of governance across domains including healthcare, financial inclusion, justice and social services is inevitable.
- We need to ensure that during this transition, we work with intermediaries to raise citizens' awareness, build intermediaries' skills and capabilities.
- In doing so, we will be able to support the process of responsible, responsive and data-driven governance across domains.