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Mains Practice Questions

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Q. The quality of service delivery in a public organisation can be improved by internal and external appraisal. Discuss (250 words)

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Approach

- Introduce by briefly explaining the meaning of service delivery
- Divide the body of the answer in two parts. You may first describe internal checks such as citizen charter, sevottam model, etc. While in the second part the role of judiciary, media, social audits can be stated as external checks.
- Enlist the challenges pertaining to public service delivery.
- Conclude your answer suitably.

Introduction

- Service delivery in public administration involves engagement of civil servants with citizens, residents or any such stakeholder as a **service provider**.
- Quality service delivery ensures the commitment of public organisations or public service providers to provide quality, high-standard services, including mechanisms for grievance redressal.

Body

There is an imperative need to improve the service delivery mechanism in our country. To achieve this both internal and external appraisal is needed to reform and evolve the existing system.

Internal Appraisal

- Internal appraisal means to evaluate the public organisations own capacities and to manage service delivery efficiently. For this, certain standard principles of service delivery can be :
 - Quality – Improving the service quality.
 - Choice – For citizens wherever possible.
 - Standards – Specifically mention what to expect within a time frame.
 - Value – For the taxpayers' money.
 - Accountability – At the level of the individual and the organisation.
 - Transparency – in rules, procedures, schemes and grievance redressal
 - Participative- Consult and involve.

- **Citizen Charters in India** To attain better standards in service delivery, citizen charters (documents of commitment an organization makes regarding the standards of service which it delivers) have been adopted by many organisations in India.
 - For example, the **Sevottam Model** was proposed by the second Administrative Reforms Commission for improving the Public Service Delivery.
 - It is now regarded as a standard model for providing services, making governance more citizen centric.
 - This model endeavours to rectify the drawbacks in the earlier mechanisms of public service delivery like Citizen Charters (CC), and is gradually adopted by various departments under the Central and State government.

External Appraisal

It involves evaluation, feedback and reporting on performance of a Public organization in service delivery. Its source can be other branches of government like members of central and state legislatures or different levels of court in the judiciary, the media and the civil society. For example:

- Reporting of crimes by the media is an important source of appraisal for the performance of police organizations.
- Social audit fixes accountability of public servants, increases efficacy and effectiveness of service delivery in local development programmes.

Challenges Pertaining to Public Service Delivery

- **Policy paralysis:** Delays, inaction and inability to take policy decisions by the government or its various departments and agencies is one of the main causes of delay in service delivery.
- **Bureaucratic attitude:** Sometimes despotic attitude and obstructionist attitude of officials especially in higher echelons of bureaucracy acts as hindrance in carrying out public service effectively.
- **Inadequate political will:** Like recently due to inefficiency and underutilisation of funds, the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) has been suspended for two financial years.
- **Red tapism:** Due to over regulation and practice of requiring excessive paperwork and tedious procedures before official action hinders implementation of schemes and projects, thereby it affects process of effective public fund utilisation
- **Lack of public participation:** With a high level of illiteracy and ignorance about government policies and schemes, many citizens (especially poor) could not demand their rightful services from the Government.

Conclusion

Quality service delivery is an important component of good governance. It requires a number of reforms such as efficient utilisation of public funds, decentralisation of power, plugging legislative loopholes, strengthening the public Institutions like CVC and RTI, enhancing administrative accountability and making society more democratic. These reforms could improve public service delivery more efficiently in the long run.