



Mains Practice Question

Q. The RTI Act is a strong weapon that enhances accountability, citizen activism and, consequently, participative democracy. Comment. (150 words)

21 Nov, 2019 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- Mention the significance of RTI Act.
- Explain how it functions as a weapon to enhance accountability.
- Explain how it is important to have a participative democracy in place.

Introduction

The **Right to Information Act, 2005** allows any citizen of India to request information from a 'public authority' which is required to reply expeditiously or within thirty days under certain circumstances. It also requires 'public authorities' to computerize their records for wider and proactive dissemination of public information.

Body

- RTI is a powerful tool that **strengthens democracy** and promotes **good governance** by enhancing the **citizen's ability to participate in the process.**
- Free flow of information is essential for a democratic society.
 - RTI empowers the citizens to promote transparency and accountability in the working of every Public Authority, enhancing citizen activism.
 - It reduces the gap between the information provider and the information seeker, hence promoting the participative approach to governance. It enhances efficiency in the administration of public authorities.
 - It mitigates corruption and promotes good governance. E.g. RTI disclosures were helpful in exposing the commonwealth games scam, the 2-G spectrum scam, etc.
- However, the RTI Amendment Act 2019 which allows the Central government to decide the salary and tenure of Chief Information Commissioners (CIC) and Information Commissioners (IC) is often criticized as a threat to the independence of the institutions. Hence, the RTI act must be enacted in letter and spirit.
- The recent order to include the Supreme Court under the ambit of the RTI Act is an enabling decision. This should set an example for bringing other institutions such as political parties, CBI, etc under the RTI ambit to make them more accountable to the citizens of the country.

Way Forward

- There is a need for a **sustained mass awareness campaign** and for greater **voluntary disclosure** of information held by public authorities.
- Better implementation of this law requires not only **political will** but also an **active civil society** and an acknowledgement of its role. It requires a commitment from all to uphold the rule of law.

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