



Mains Practice Question

Q. Do you agree that the Right to Information Act, 2005 is a master key to good governance? Justify. (150 words)

18 Jun, 2020 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- Briefly explain the Right to Information Act (RTI), 2005 establishing its relationship with good governance.
- Discuss the role of RTI in attaining the elements of good governance like accountability, transparency etc. and give some examples.
- Discuss the limitations of RTI how it sometimes impedes good governance.
- Write a conclusion assessing the arguments given in your answer.

Introduction

Under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005 citizens can obtain information from state or central government departments and offices as a legal right in a time bound manner. RTI Act has strengthened pillars of good governance like Participation, Transparency, Legitimacy and Responsiveness. It is a tool of participatory democracy which augments good governance and socio-economic service delivery.

Body

Role of RTI in Good Governance

- **Checking corruption:** The Right to Information Act has become the most effective instrument to check corruption.
 - Under RTI Act many cases of corruption have been exposed like Adarsh Housing Society Scam and Commonwealth Games Scam.
 - Recently villagers in Madhubani district, Bihar used RTI to expose a solar-light scam, leading to charges against 200 corrupt officials.
- **Brings transparency:** Under RTI Act, citizens seek information as a right from the state and it thereby promotes openness, transparency in administration by making the government more open to public scrutiny.
 - It has empowered the people to question, audit, review, examine, and assess government acts.
- **Increases Accountability:** The RTI Act has empowered the people to hold public authorities accountable for the principles of public interests, good governance and justice.
- **Decentralisation of Power:** RTI Act democratized the information and decentralized the power. Power no more remains confined to select few, rather it has been made available equally to all the citizens.
- **Promoting Participatory Democracy:** It enables maximum participation of people in functions of a democratic country including governance.

- After enactment of the RTI act, people have shown increased interest in the affairs of government and sought information regarding various issues affecting their lives and well-being.

Limitations of the RTI

- Frivolous overuse of RTI obstructs national development. Valuable time of public authorities is wasted furnishing information to applicants instead of discharging their regular duties.
 - The Act does not emphasize on active intervention in educating people, especially when India has levels of illiteracy and poverty which excludes a large section of society from using their rights under RTI.
 - RTI Act fails to protect whistleblowers so that they can speak out if they find malpractice in an organisation.
 - Recently, the Right to Information (Amendment) Act 2019, took away the stature of information commissioners from the equivalent of election commissioners, with their salaries and service conditions to be specified by the government.
- This reduced the autonomy of the Central and State information commissions and thus weakened the RTI Act to some extent.

Conclusion

RTI Act is complementary and supplementary to good governance. However, it is important to undertake the measures to strengthen this powerful tool that can further deliver significant social benefits and strengthen the roots of democracy and good governance in India.

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