Polity & Governance · GS - II

Initially Civil Services in India were designed to achieve the goals of neutrality and effectiveness, which seems to be lacking in the present context. Do you agree with the view that drastic reforms are required in Civil Services. Comment

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2017	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Political neutrality; administrative efficiency; merit-based recruitment; lateral entry; performance appraisal; accountability; civil service reforms

Model Answer

Introduction

Indian civil services provide continuity in administration and implement laws and public policies. Their traditional ideals of neutrality, integrity and effectiveness remain important, but contemporary governance demands institutional reforms.

Why Reforms Are Needed

- **Political interference:** Frequent transfers and pressures can weaken impartial decision-making.
- **Procedural delays:** Excessive hierarchy and complex processes may reduce administrative responsiveness.
- **Accountability deficits:** Weak performance evaluation and limited consequences for misconduct can affect service delivery.
- **Skill gaps:** Emerging areas such as digital governance, climate policy and advanced technology require specialised expertise.

- **Citizen-centric governance:** Public services need greater transparency, accessibility and sensitivity to vulnerable groups.

Major Areas of Reform

- **Tenure stability:** Ensure reasonable fixed tenure and transparent transfer procedures.
- **Performance management:** Use measurable outcomes alongside integrity, professionalism and public-service values.
- **Capacity building:** Promote continuous training and specialised expertise through programmes such as Mission Karmayogi.
- **Merit and specialisation:** Use appropriate recruitment and lateral-entry mechanisms where specialised skills are required, with transparent safeguards.
- **Ethics and accountability:** Strengthen codes of conduct, vigilance systems, citizen charters and grievance redressal.
- **Technology:** Expand digital service delivery while ensuring privacy, accessibility and accountability.

Need for Balanced Reform

Reforms should not weaken constitutional safeguards or turn civil servants into instruments of political interests. Neutrality must coexist with democratic responsiveness and lawful ministerial direction.

Conclusion

Civil service reform is essential, but change should be systematic rather than merely drastic. Professional competence, stable tenure, ethical conduct and citizen-oriented administration can improve effectiveness while preserving neutrality.

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