Polity & Governance · GS - II

“Traditional bureaucratic structure and culture have hampered the process of socio-economic development in India.” Comment.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2016	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
12.5	~200 words

Answer Hint

Colonial administrative legacy; hierarchy; red-tapism; accountability; citizen-centric governance; administrative reforms; decentralisation; capacity building

Model Answer

Introduction

India's bureaucracy provides continuity, administrative expertise and implementation capacity. However, certain traditional structures and work cultures inherited from colonial administration can obstruct inclusive socio-economic development.

How Traditional Bureaucracy Can Hamper Development

- **Excessive hierarchy:** Multiple approval levels slow decision-making and delay projects.
- **Red-tapism:** Complex procedures and compliance burdens discourage enterprise and delay public services.
- **Rule orientation over outcomes:** Officials may prioritise procedural compliance over measurable improvements in citizens' lives.
- **Weak accountability:** Diffuse responsibility and poor performance evaluation can allow inefficiency to persist.
- **Centralisation:** Limited delegation can prevent local officials from responding quickly to community needs.
- **Resistance to innovation:** Risk aversion and rigid procedures can discourage experimentation and technology adoption.

- **Citizen-administration distance:** An impersonal or paternalistic approach can weaken public trust.

Why Bureaucracy Remains Important

A professional civil service safeguards continuity, implements laws, coordinates complex programmes and supports disaster response. The problem is not bureaucracy itself, but structures and practices that weaken responsiveness and accountability.

Reform Measures

- Simplify procedures and delegate appropriate decision-making powers.
- Link performance assessment to outcomes, service quality and citizen feedback.
- Strengthen lateral expertise and continuous professional training.
- Improve digital service delivery while maintaining access for digitally excluded groups.
- Protect civil-service neutrality and establish transparent transfer and promotion systems.
- Strengthen local governments, social audits and time-bound grievance redressal.
- Encourage ethical leadership, innovation and interdepartmental coordination.

Conclusion

India needs a professional, impartial and capable bureaucracy that combines rule of law with outcome-oriented administration. Structural reform and a citizen-centric work culture can make it a stronger driver of socio-economic development.