Civil Services Conduct Rules

Why in news?

Being a civil servant comes with many perks and benefits, but it also brings with it its own limitations and various rules surrounding an officer's conduct.

What are the civil services?

- The civil services recruited by Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) are categorised into two types.
- **All India Services -** the Indian Administrative Service, the Indian Police Service and the Indian Forest Service.
- All India Services are governed by *Article 312* of the Constitution of India.
- These services are selected by the central government with officers allotted to various state cadres.
- The bureaucrats who work directly for the Centre are from each state on central deputation.
- **Central Civil Services -** Indian Foreign Service, the Indian Revenue Service, Customs and Central Excise Service and several others.
- These services are under the central government itself with no state cadre system.

What are the rules for civil servants?

> *Conduct rules for civil servants are the set of rules for the standards of behaviour of people working in the civil services.*

- Civil servants are governed under two sets of rules for the two types of services. They are
  - The All India Services (AIS) Conduct Rules, 1968
  - Central Civil Services (CCS) Conduct Rules, 1964
- These rules were framed based on recommendations of the *Committee on Prevention of Corruption*, headed by *K.Santhanam*.
- The committee was constituted by then Minister of Home Affairs Lal Bahadur Shashtri in 1962.

What are the restrictions for civil servants under these rules?

- **Vague -** The Conduct Rules cover a wide range of issues, some rules are vague and some rules are more specific.
- Rule 3(1) states 'shall do nothing which is unbecoming of a member of the Service' and gives the ambiguous idea of personal integrity.

- **Political neutrality -** Rule 5(1) states civil servants are not allowed to be part of or assist political parties.
- While members can hold personal political beliefs, these rules restrict the degree to which they can act on them.
- **Personal opinion -** Expressing personal opinions also has similar restrictions.
- Rule 7 of AIS Rules restricts expressing personal opinion over public media in any form which has adverse criticism on government activities is restricted.
- **Dowry -** Both giving and receiving dowry is strictly prohibited under rule 11 (1-A) of the AIS Rules on 'Giving or taking of dowry'.
- **Gifts -** Rule 11(1) deals with the receiving of gifts under certain conditions.
- Any gift whose value exceeds Rs.25, 000 by a civil servant needs to be reported to the Government.

What are the newly added rules?

- Though the conduct rules are from the 1960s, the rules are amended and added from time to time.
- In 1979, the government added that, 'The direction of the official superior shall ordinarily be in writing.'
- In 1998, the government added that 'No member of the Service shall employ to work any child below the age of 14 years.'
- In 2014, few sub-rules were added to the Conduct Rules.
- Every member of the Service shall maintain -
    - High ethical standards
    - Political neutrality
    - Integrity and honesty
    - Accountability and transparency
    - Responsiveness to the public
    - Courtesy and good behaviour with the public.
- The threshold of Rs 25,000 for receiving gifts was last fixed in 2015.

How about the coverage of the rules and the penalty?

- **Coverage -** Officers are covered under the rules as soon they join training.
- Certain rules continue to apply post retirement as well.
- **Penalty -** Failing to comply by the rules invite penalties.
- Transgressions can attract two kinds of penalties - major and minor.
- Major penalties can include 'dismissal' from the service as well.

References

[The Indian Express | Code of conduct for civil servants: A review]

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