Empowering MPs through Data

Why in news?

For Members of Parliament (MPs) to effectively engage with their constituents, data has the potential to serve as an imperative tool to understand and prioritise the issues most impacting their communities.

What is Data-based policy making?

- Data-based policy making is an approach of optimal use of data, and collaborate with citizens to co-create policy.
- **Benefits**
    - Redressal of inter and intra-district inequalities
    - Targeted resource allocations
    - Improves transparency in policy making
    - Greater accountability in public services
    - Promotes peoples' participation in the governance

What is the significance of empowering MPs with data?

- In a democratic set-up, the parliamentary constituencies (PCs) offer a natural unit for policy deliberation and governance.
- **Identification of priorities** - The data-based monitoring and governance of populations are central to identifying priorities in the parliamentary constituencies (PCs).
- **Synergy** - There is a need for better synergy between district administration and elected representatives.
- Effective coordination - MPs are empowered with appropriate data related to the populations they have been elected for them to effectively coordinate with multiple district administrations.
- **Independent functioning** - The MPs can serve independently without having to rely on the district administration which finds it difficult to provide accurate data on the parliamentary constituencies.
- **Mapping the critical issues** - Timely and accessible data at the PC-level can transform the work of MPs by bringing to light the most critical issues and at-risk populations.
- **Raising policy questions** - It can also empower MPs to raise policy questions at multiple levels of governments, from the floor of Parliament to their frequent interactions with the district administrations.
- **Civil society engagement** - It facilitates the MPs to independently initiate meaningful dialogue with civil society NGOs and other stakeholders to collaboratively address the issues most important to their constituents.

What efforts were taken regarding data governance?

- **National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDAP)** – It was launched in 2012 to make a variety of data related to population health and well-being from current GOI schemes more accessible.
- **Department of Science & Technology (DST)** would be the nodal department for all matters connected with overall co-ordination, formulation, implementation and monitoring of the policy.
- **District-level data** - District-level data from GOI administrative data and independent surveys such as the National Family Health Surveys (NFHS), has emerged as a key input for policy deliberations.
- **District Coordination and Monitoring Committee (DDMC) -** The Ministry of Rural Development issued an order in 2016 to all states and Union Territories to constitute a DDMC.
- DDMCs are to be chaired by district MPs for implementation and monitoring of central schemes more efficiently.
- **PC data tracker** - A new interactive PC data tracker developed by the Geographic Insights Lab at Harvard University has for the first time provided data on crucial population, health, and well-being estimates.
- **National Data Governance Policy** - The announcement of a National Data Governance Policy during the 2023 budget session is a step in the right direction for good governance.

References

1. The Indian Express | How data can empower MPs to serve people
2. DST | National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP)

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