

## Indian Bureaucracy

**Syllabus:**GS IV - Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude.

*Civil/Public Service Values and Ethics in Public Administration*

### Why in news?

Recent article on the conflict between democracy and fair administration highlights the issues on bureaucracy Integrity in India.

### What is bureaucracy?

- **Bureaucracy** - It refers to a system of administration characterised by complex rules, hierarchical structures, and formal procedures.
- **Definition** - Max Weber defined it as the only legal-rational authority to exercise the state's legitimate power.
- **Role in administration** - It is the core of any public administration.
- It helps to realize the dream of true democracy and bridge the gap between the people and their representatives.
- **In India** - Though colonial in origin, it was deeply Indian in ethos and spirit.
- Its importance becomes even more pronounced in India, the world's largest functioning democracy with the largest population.
- Independent India's bureaucracy is an institution to which the common citizen looks up.

### What constitutes Indian Bureaucracy?

- It consists of officers working under the Central and All India Civil Services and the State Civil Services.
- **Top bureaucrats** - Among the Central and All India Services, the highest-ranking officers form the most elite group under the Central Government of India.
  - Indian Administrative Service (IAS),
  - Indian Police Service (IPS)
  - Indian Revenue Service (IRS), and others.
- Each of these services plays a specific role in India's public administration.
- Among them, the IAS occupies a unique role, as its officers are preferred for senior positions in government at both the state and central levels.
- **State-level Bureaucracy** - Officers of the State Civil Services are selected by individual states.
- They work entirely under the state government and different services like
  - State Administrative Service (SAS)

- State Police Service
- State Revenue Service.
- Among them, the SAS, much like the IAS, occupies key positions within the state-level administration.

## What are the strengths and weakness of bureaucracy in India?

Bureaucrats are referred to as the **steel frame of India** by Sardar Patel, bureaucrats are responsible for implementing government policies and making decisions.

### Strengths of Indian bureaucracy

- **Provide continuity in governance and administration** - It ensures that policies and programs initiated by one government are carried forward by the next.
- **Deliver efficient governance** - It provides a *professional and experienced cadre* of administrators who are well-trained in various aspects of governance, such as policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation.
- **Check on the power of elected officials** - It ensures that decisions are made *based on merit* and not political considerations.
- **Ethical bureaucracy** - Ethical leaders are considered honest, caring, and principled individuals who make *balanced and fair decisions*.
- Such ethical and conscious leadership can promote integrity within institutions.
- **Prioritise public welfare** - In the Covid times when everyone feared death, these brave officers *set aside their personal lives*, responsibilities and fears to serve the nation, with some even laying down their lives.

### Weakness of Indian Bureaucracy

- **Lack of accountability & transparency** - *Opacity in governance* and lack of accountability leads to culture of impunity where civil servants can get away with poor performance or even corruption without fear of consequences.
- **Sluggish administration** - It include *delays in justice and bureaucratic red tape*, with high-profile cases dragging on for years due to inefficiencies.
- **Abuse of power** - Incidents such as *extrajudicial killings, custodial deaths*, and police inaction in politically sensitive cases raise serious concerns about fairness in administration.
- **Erosion of trust** - *Corruption, bureaucratic apathy* during disasters, and undue political influence over decision-making further erode trust.
- There are also concerns about *favouritism and cronyism*.
- **Bureaucratic culture of hierarchy & seniority** - They can *stifle innovation* and discourage younger civil servants from taking risks.

## What lies ahead?

- **Strengthening public trust** - It can be done by increased transparency and accountability in governance.
- **Reforming police** - Reforms can be taken to transform policing into a service-oriented institution.
- **Making People-centric services** - For instance, the khaki should symbolize unimpeachable integrity in thoughts, words, and deeds.
- **Embody ethical leadership** - Encouraging bureaucrats to develop ethical behaviour as a defining personality trait and to have an ethical consideration in public life.

*Every great institution is the lengthened shadow of a single man. His character determines the character of the organization. Only then can fair administration and democracy go hand in hand - Ralph Waldo Emerson*

## **Reference**

[The Indian Express| Bureaucracy and Fair Administration](#)

