# Jan Soochna Portal (JSP)

## What is the issue?

The Jan Soochna Portal (JSP) launched by the government of Rajasthan is a remarkable achievement in furtherance of the Right to Information (RTI).

## What is the JSP?

- This portal mainly furthers the Section 4 of the RTI Act that deals with proactive disclosure of information.
- Transparency must be accompanied by accountability, and that is where the JSP has great value and significance.
- This is because it places the power of making the State government accountable to those who access the information available on the portal.

## Has transparency accompanied by accountability brought about transformation in any system?

- **National Judicial Data Grid** was launched, keeping in mind the transparency in the justice delivery system.
- This grid gave information about all pending cases across the country.
- When a year-wise breakup of pending cases was given on the grid and it was found that more than 70,000 cases were pending for over 30 years.
- These figures meant nothing until the justice delivery system was asked to account for the enormous delay in such a large number of cases.
- Now many courts have begun to concentrate on the disposal of old cases with considerable success.
- This is a good example of transparency accompanied by accountability brought about by civil society.

## What are several access points?

- Details of every activity of the government such as implementation of various schemes and a variety of other information are available on a real-time basis virtually making it a Janta Information System.
- JSP has been arrived at through a regular and rigorous consultative process between government officials, IT professionals and civil society.
- Such a process of dialogue should be practised in all spheres to genuinely harness the benefits of Information Technology (IT).

- Digital divide is a serious problem in India. To bridge this, care should be taken to ensure that access points are open and free.
- Since the information is available on the Internet, every citizen has access to the information.
- The government of Rajasthan, like some other States, has waived farmers' loans. JSP gives the details of every farmer in every bank branch whose loans have been waived, along with the amounts.
- It provides is about mining leases. This is helpful as illegal mining is a major issue in different parts of the country.
- It provides details of production and royalties and taxes paid. This kind of information can facilitate a progressive partnership between government and citizens for a cleaner society.
- Ample information is available on the files of the Rajasthan government, which till date could only be accessed through the filing of RTI applications.
- However, with the use of technology and digitisation of records and information, this information is made freely available on the JSP.
- There is no need for anyone to take recourse to the RTI Act and await a response. All information can be accessed immediately, free of cost.

## What are the key challenges?

- The huge challenge is with regard to maintenance issues and ensuring that there is no let-up in the availability of information.
- With this in mind, draft guidelines have been framed for the development and maintenance of the JSP.
- Once implemented, this will ensure that the information system continues uninterrupted.
- Various government departments of Rajasthan have been given a set of obligations that they are expected to fulfil like to ensure digitisation of records.
- The Department of IT will serve as the nodal department for the development, operationalisation and maintenance of the JSP.
- This department also has obligations like adherence to the norms and standards laid down by a digital dialogue advisory group, the monitoring agency.
- Grievance redressal officers will be appointed so that citizens can make the State government truly accountable.

## How the citizens are to be trained?

- The Rajasthan government has taken steps to train citizens so that they are aware of the facilities available.
- It has been decided to host the JSP in decentralised locations, right down to

the municipal ward and panchayat levels.

- They will have access to welfare schemes, revenue activities such as mining, and other service delivery issues such as health and education.
- It would be wonderful if all other State governments follow the Rajasthan government's initiative, which aims to make people, including the marginalised sections, a part of the governance process.

**Source: The Hindu**

