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Q6

Today we find that in-spite of various measures of prescribing codes of conduct, setting up vigilance cells/commissions, RTI, active media and strengthening of legal mechanisms, corrupt practices are not coming under control. (10 Marks) (a) Evaluate the effectiveness of these measures with justifications (b) Suggest more effective strategies to tackle this menace.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · GS IV · 12 marks · Probity in Governance

Probity in Governance: Concept of public service; Philosophical basis of governance and probity; Information sharing and transparency in government, Right to Information, Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Citizen's Charters, Work culture, Quality of service delivery, Utilization of public funds, challenges of corruption.

Core demand of the question

- Despite codes of conduct, vigilance, RTI, media and stronger law, corruption continues. (a) Evaluate how effective these measures have been. (b) Suggest more effective strategies

Revision summary

Conduct rules, vigilance, RTI, media and stronger statutes have worked where records exist and e-payment killed the counter.

They are weak against collusion, election finance and slow trials, and can freeze honest officers if misused.

Corruption continues because desperate demand still meets discretionary supply.

Better strategies shrink discretion, speed fair trials, audit assets, clean political funding and change social honour.

Example at the top and unsold postings matter more than one more pledge.

Introduction

India has piled tools against graft. The tools are not empty. They have also not ended the market in files. The question is why the pile is not enough, and what else must sit beside it.

Body**(a) Evaluate the measures**

- Codes of conduct (Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964 and All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968) name integrity, gifts and unbecoming conduct. They work when inquiries are real. They fail when a violation is rewarded with a better posting.
- Vigilance cells and the **Central Vigilance Commission** create a specialist eye. They have caught traps and big files. They can also become a fear machine that freezes honest signatures, or a parking place for inconvenient officers.
- The **Right to Information Act, 2005** has exposed ration theft, muster fraud and admissions scams. Effectiveness is high where records exist and Commissions are strong; it is weak where

files are "not traceable" or applicants are threatened.

- Active media has made some scams unsustainable and has also run trials by headline. It deters the visible thief more than the quiet collusion.
- Legal strengthening - **Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988** (and later amendment), **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013**, money-laundering law - raises the formal cost of crime. Trials that last a decade lower that cost again.
- Overall: these measures have reduced some open counter-bribes, especially where e-payment killed the clerk's window. They have not broken political-business collusion, election-time cash, or small everyday speed money where the citizen is desperate.
- **Justification:** corruption continues because demand (a citizen who must get a licence this week) and supply (discretion plus weak punishment) still meet. Tools that attack only the clerk leave the patron.

(b) More effective strategies

- **Shrink discretion:** e-procurement, faceless assessment, online permissions with published criteria, and direct benefit transfer so that a rupee does not pass through ten palms.
- Fast, fair trials for corruption, with specialised courts that actually sit, so that the Act is not a scarecrow.
- Protect whistle-blowers in practice, not only on paper; punish the leaking of an identity.
- Political funding transparency and a real ceiling that is enforced; much public corruption is the recovery of election cost.
- **Social norm:** stop celebrating the fixer as efficient. School and training must treat a stolen rupee as shame.
- Random third-party audit of high-risk works, geotagged assets, and social audit as in MGNREGA, with police follow-up, not a closed meeting.
- Blacklisting of firms that bribe, and corporate liability that the 2018 amendment already points toward.
- **Rotate and declare:** property returns that are verified, not filed and forgotten; conflict-of-interest recusal that is public.
- **Integrity in recruitment and transfers:** if the posting itself is sold, no code at the desk will hold.
- **Technology plus analog justice:** a camera that can be switched off is not a strategy. Pair digital trails with independent prosecution and a citizen who can reach a help-line that answers.
- Leadership example still outperforms a new circular. A minister who lives simply and does not call about a tender changes the price of honesty.

Flow diagram

Codes CVC RTI media law -> Some exposure and less open bribe

Codes CVC RTI media law -> Collusion slow trials demand

Less discretion fast courts clean funding norms -> Lower corruption

Conclusion

Codes, vigilance, RTI, media and law have dented open petty graft and exposed some large thefts. They fail where discretion, slow trials and political money remain. The next strategy is less cash at the window, faster punishment, cleaner politics, and a culture that does not clap for the fixer.

Facts & figures

Central Vigilance Commission

Apex vigilance body for the Union; useful as a specialist eye, limited if ministries sit on advice and trials crawl.

Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988

Principal criminal statute on public-servant graft; 2018 changes added commercial-organisation liability and altered sanction and bribe-giver rules.

Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013

Created a Lokpal architecture; effectiveness depends on actual inquiries, not on the date of the Act.

Right to Information Act, 2005

Has exposed many local frauds; fails when records vanish or applicants are intimidated.

Direct benefit transfer and e-procurement

System reforms that cut palm-to-palm cash; among the few tools with visible reduction in some schemes.

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