



DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

**VIKSIT BHARAT NEEDS A CLEAN
SYSTEM: GROWTH DEPENDS ON
FIGHTING CORRUPTION**

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Context

- A clean, transparent, and accountable system needed for economic growth and national development, as India aspires to become Viksit Bharat (developed nation) by 2047.

Corruption in India

- The **Santhanam Committee Report (1964)**, foundational to India's anti-corruption framework, **defines corruption** as '*Behaviour by officials in the public sector, whether politicians or civil servants, in which they improperly and illegally enrich themselves or those close to them, or induce others to do so by misusing their position*'.
- According to the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC): '**Corruption = Discretion + Mystification – Accountability**'
 - ♦ It reflects how corruption thrives when officials have unchecked decision-making power, lack transparency, and face minimal consequences.

Current Landscape and Global Rankings

- **Economic Cost of Corruption:** Research since the 1990s consistently links corruption with slower economic growth, lower investment, and weaker job creation.
 - ♦ A study found that **even a 1% rise in corruption** can **decrease GDP per capita by up to 1.5%**.
 - ♦ Corruption leads to inferior goods and services, widening income inequality, disrupting welfare delivery, and preventing subsidies.
- **Judicial Backlog and Enforcement Gaps:** According to the CVC, over 7,000 corruption cases investigated by the CBI are **pending trial in courts**, and 379 cases have been **pending for more than 20 years**.
 - ♦ The Lokpal, India's anti-corruption ombudsman, has ordered probes in only 24 cases and granted prosecution sanctions in just 6 over five years.
- **India's Global Corruption Rankings:** Transparency International's **Corruption Perceptions Index 2024** placed India **96th out of 180 countries**, with a score of **38/100** — **unchanged from 2014**, showing stagnation despite years of reform rhetoric.
 - ♦ Similarly, the **World Bank's Control of Corruption Index 2023** rated India **42/100**, ranking **108th out of 193 nations**.
 - ♦ It places India behind several of its regional peers and highlights the persistent perception of public sector corruption.
- **Institutional Non-Compliance:** The CVC flagged 34 major cases of non-compliance where government departments diluted or ignored its recommendations against corrupt officials, **undermining institutional integrity**.

Institutional Response and Legal Framework

- **Ethics in Governance (2nd ARC Report):** It emphasized that ethical governance is **essential for a just and transparent administration**. Key ethical principles outlined include:
 - ♦ **Integrity:** Public servants must act with honesty and avoid conflicts of interest.
 - ♦ **Accountability:** Officials should be answerable for their actions and decisions.
 - ♦ **Transparency:** Governance must be open and accessible to public scrutiny.
 - ♦ **Fairness and Equity:** Decisions should be impartial and serve the common good.
- **Training Module on Ethics in Governance by DARPG:** It highlights how ethical lapses — such as favoritism, misuse of discretion, and lack of transparency — create fertile ground for corruption.
- **Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964:** These were amended to **include a code of ethics** for government employees, mandating absolute integrity, devotion to duty, and commitment to constitutional values.

- **Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988** (Amended in 2018): Defines corrupt acts by public servants and introduces corporate liability for bribery.
 - ♦ The amendment in 2018 mandates prior sanction for prosecution of public officials.
- **Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) Act, 2003:** Empowers the CVC to supervise vigilance activities across ministries and public sector units.
- **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013:** Establishes independent anti-corruption ombudsmen at the central and state levels.
- **International Cooperation and Policy:** India's anti-graft minister emphasized a **zero-tolerance approach at the G20** Anti-Corruption Ministerial Meeting, advocating for global cooperation on asset recovery and legal assistance.
 - ♦ However, domestic implementation remains uneven.
- **'Zero Tolerance Against Corruption' Policy:** Implementing several measures to combat malfeasance:
 - ♦ **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):** Reduces leakages in welfare schemes by transferring subsidies directly to beneficiaries.
 - ♦ **E-Governance and E-Tendering:** Digitization of public services and procurement processes to minimize human discretion and enhance transparency.
 - ♦ **Government e-Marketplace (GeM):** Streamlines procurement and reduces scope for favoritism.
 - ♦ **Discontinuation of Interviews:** For Group B and C posts to curb nepotism and bribery in recruitment.

Strategies for Reducing Corruption

- **Simplify the Regulatory Framework:** A dense web of regulations across land, taxation, and trade fosters bureaucratic discretion and rent-seeking.
 - ♦ Streamlining these processes through digitization and clear rules can reduce contact points where bribes are solicited.
- **Enhance Accountability of Bureaucrats:** Senior officials often enjoy strong protection from prosecution.
 - ♦ It frequently shields corruption, while this aims to prevent harassment.
 - ♦ An **automatic income and assets audit every 10 years** — triggering investigation when unexplained wealth is found — could introduce real accountability.
- **Reform the Judicial Process:** Corruption cases drag on for decades, eroding deterrence.
 - ♦ **Fast-track courts and dedicated anti-corruption benches** can ensure timely justice, increasing the cost of corrupt behavior.

Conclusion

- Corruption will continue to erode governance, deter investment, and perpetuate inequality, without decisive action — keeping India from realizing its true potential.
- For India to achieve its aspiration of becoming a developed nation by 2047, it must confront corruption head-on. The moral, administrative, and judicial reforms required may be politically challenging, but they are indispensable.

Source: BS

Daily Mains Practice Question

[Q] Discuss how corruption acts as a barrier to India's vision of becoming a Viksit Bharat by 2047. Evaluate the role of governance reforms and institutional accountability in promoting sustainable development.

