Important Vocab For the Editorial

1. **emulation** (noun) – matching effort; imitation; reproduction of the function/action of a different computer, software system, etc.
2. **transparency** (noun) – clarity, straightforwardness, unambiguity.
3. **groundbreaking** (adjective) – innovative, pioneering, distinctive.
4. **shed light on** (phrase) – explain, elucidate, clarify.
5. **accountability** (noun) – responsibility, liability, answerability.
6. **sanitation** (noun) – it generally refers to the provision of facilities and services for the safe disposal of human urine and faeces (Courtesy: **WHO**)
7. **beneficiary** (noun) – inheritor, receiver, assignee.
8. **gamut** (noun) – range, spectrum, sweep; a wide range of positions, opinions, etc. between two extreme points.
9. **laudable** (adjective) – commendable, admirable, praiseworthy.
10. **expeditiously** (adverb) – quickly and efficiently.
11. **citizenry** (noun) – all the people/citizens (of a place/country considered as a whole).
12. **sea change** (noun) – a profound transformation, change, modification.
13. **well informed** (adjective) – well educated, knowledgeable, enlightened.
14. **exponentially** (adverb) – rapidly, quickly, fast.
15. **activism** (noun) – practice of vigorous action/involvement.
16. **be part and parcel of** (phrase) – be an important aspect/feature of.
17. **pertain to** (verb) – concern, relate to, be connected with.
18. **dilution** (noun) – reduction in value/power/force of something.
19. **impinge on** (verb) – influence, have an effect on, encroach on.
20. **autonomy** (noun) – independence, freedom, self-government/rule.
21. **flurry** (noun) – spate, series, succession.
22. **aftermath** (noun) – consequence, result/outcome, repercussion.
23. **enjoin** (verb) – prohibit, ban/bar, prevent.
24. **holistically** (adverb) – comprehensively, totally, completely.
25. **so far** (phrase) – until now, up to the present, up to this point.
26. **parse** (verb) – interpret/understand, explain, analyse.
27. **deploy** (verb) – use, utilize, employ.
28. **one-shot** (adjective) – achieved with a single attempt.
29. **objective** (noun) – aim, intention, purpose.
30. **unhampered** (adjective) – unbounded, out of control, unrestricted.
31. **literacy** (noun) – competence, knowledge in a specific field.

Effort worth emulation: On Rajasthan's public information portal

Rajasthan's Jan Soochna portal is a step in the right direction for transparency in governance

Fourteen years since the implementation of the groundbreaking Right to Information (RTI) Act, which has helped shed light on government works and administration, the launch of the "Jan Soochna Portal" (public information portal) by the **Rajasthan** government on Friday marks a milestone in increasing transparency and accountability in governance. The portal details various schemes run by 13 government departments — the employment guarantee programme, sanitation, the public distribution system among others, by not only explaining the schemes but also providing real time information on beneficiaries, authorities in charge, progress, etc. The information provided is in-depth, covering the whole gamut from the districts, blocks and panchayats, allowing access to details of schemes implemented at these levels. This is a laudable effort by the State government which is worthy of emulation by other States. The RTI Act had dealt with the citizen's right to know about public information and required public authorities to expeditiously provide information on request from the citizenry. This aspect of the Act brought a sea change in accountability and has led to the possibility of a well-informed citizenry on the workings of the government.

While RTI filings have increased exponentially and RTI-activism has become part and parcel of civil society, there have been dilutions in the Act pertaining to the appointments of information commissioners, therefore impinging on their autonomy. Besides, the response rate to RTI requests has also slowed down compared to the flurry in the immediate aftermath of the Act's implementation. These problems with the RTI law apart, it is important to note that Section 4(2) of the Act, which specifically enjoins upon public authorities to publish information pro-actively, has not been implemented holistically so far. While government departments have successfully taken to e-governance and there has been a rapid release of public information on various government-run websites, this information has often been parcelled, dispersed and difficult to parse. Some of the better maintained central websites have also tended to deploy "dashboard" information, which is meant more to showcase data and records rather than release structured information for extensive study and for the knowledge of the citizenry. As a one-shot portal for public information on government programmes, the JSP, therefore, can advance the objective of transparency. The challenge would be to ensure that the information flow remains unhampered over time. Besides this, it is important to educate the citizenry about the use of data on the portal. While digital connectivity and literacy have increased over time, these have not adequately translated into digital knowledge of public affairs.