1. **India has achieved self sufficiency in food production, but not able to trickle it down to the grassroot level due to the leakages. How the IT applications can be used to control pilferages in PDS system? Discuss with examples.**

Answer:

- Ensuring food security ought to be an issue of great importance for a country like India where more than one-third of the population is estimated to be absolutely poor and one-half of all children malnourished in one way or another.
- There is a need to shift from the existing expensive, inefficient and corruption ridden institutional arrangements to those that will ensure cheap delivery of requisite quality grains in a transparent manner and are self-targeting. For this, IT applications can be used which are discussed as follows:

a) **Integrated Weight Management System (IWMS)** - Vehicles carrying food grains are weighed and the weights are automatically transmitted to and stored on remote servers, without any manual intervention. If there is a difference in the weight of food grains on arrival vis-à-vis that of food grains dispatched, an SMS alert is sent to the concerned officials and a theft report is generated.

b) **Management Information System (MIS)** - MIS has been introduced to computerize record keeping under the PDS. It contains data on godowns, transporters and trucks, movement of grains, stocks, sale outlets, etc. It provide reports relating to daily activity pertaining to the PDS such as orders, sales, financial transactions, etc.

c) **GPS-based fleet tracking** - Trucks transporting grains are fitting with GPS. If a truck transporting grains from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to the State Food Corporation godowns diverts from the pre-planned route, SMS alerts are automatically sent to concerned officials. This has been done in Munger district in Bihar.

d) **Sale to beneficiary** - Sales to beneficiaries at outlets are recorded using Point-of-Sale (PoS) terminals. Coupons brought by the beneficiaries are scanned using a barcode scanner, and the information is directly uploaded to the main MIS server where sales reports can be generated.

e) **Citizen interface** - Beneficiaries can register on the PDS portal for various SMS alerts. The system automatically generates an SMS to all members of the ward or panchayat level vigilance committee informing them about grain off-take by dealers within the ward.

f) **Use of UID:** Integration of PDS with the UID program lead to better identification of individuals and families leading to better targeting and increased transparency and therefore better functioning of the system and increased public approval.

Example:

Government of Chhattisgarh has used ICT based module to reform, to improve its Public Distribution System (PDS) also ensured a transparent and accountable delivery mechanism.

To address the leakages in PDS, the State of Chhattisgarh implemented an end-to-end information technology solution in 2007. Operations at every level of the scheme - from procurement of produce, to storage and transportation to state warehouses and Fair Priced Shops- have been computerized.

There is continuous monitoring of operations at all levels via reports uploaded onto the web in real time. Web management has led to enhanced accountability of operations. The online platform provides an account of commodity stocks which helps decision makers in utilizing the inventory of commodities with greater efficiency.

A unique feature of PDS in Chhattisgarh is the innovative citizen interface portal through which citizens can track the movement of PDS commodities and also register their grievances.

The ICT solution being used in Chhattisgarh has shown very encouraging results.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Answer the following Questions

1. The policy of Dhamma advocated by Ashoka through his edicts remains relevant in the context of issues in public life even today. Elucidate with examples. (150 words)

2. Arguably, poverty is not only a matter of statistics. It is a reflection on the kind of society we live in. In this context, discuss the ethical implications for a society that witnesses high incidence of poverty. (150 words)