

- Odisha declaration can enhance people's participation and more the people's participation; less is the likelihood of corruption.
- People's participation can also be increased if more information about assets of public officials is published regularly.
- The Odisha government has adopted technology and online transactions to reduce discretion.
- In the last one year alone, state government has either dismissed, removed or compulsorily retired 100's of non cooperative government servants.

What more can be done?

- Currently monitoring practices rely only on inspections, raids, intelligence reports which has to be a institutional approach in identifying targets of those inspections.
- Randomised audits using technology and artificial intelligence without any human bias in the selection of auditee can be another logical step.
- The anti-corruption exercise should promote and safeguard whistle-blowers & the existing **Whistle Blower Protection Act, 2014** needs to be operationalised.
- It can also notify a separate framework for protection of whistle-blowers.
- Those who enjoy power should also be subjected to the **Prohibition of Benami Property Transactions Act, 1988**.

6. INDIA & ITS NEIGHBORHOOD

6.1 India Out of Colombo Terminal Project

Why in news?

Sri Lanka decided to overturn tripartite agreement to develop Colombo's East Container Terminal.

What is the importance of this project?

- This project was a key marker for infrastructure investment in the Sri Lanka, where Chinese projects are most prominent.
- More than 2/3rd of trans-shipment at this port is tied to India, making it an important trade and connectivity link.
- Joint venture between India and Japan to invest in the ECT project provides South Asia with viable and sustainable alternatives for financing and development.

Why was this project overturned?

- This was due to growing pressure from port union groups which opposed any foreign participation.
- It is worrying that whether the country will honour the commitments made by the previous government.
- Also there is suspicion that there is a Chinese hand behind this decision & it is curious that despite Sri Lanka's financial difficulties it took this decision upsetting donors.

How has India responded to this?

- It continues to engage Sri Lanka on the ECT issue but it remains silent on Colombo's alternative offer of developing the West Container Terminal.
- Over the past years, Indian government has invested much time and resources Sri Lanka- new credit line, currency swap agreement, COVID-19 assistance and vaccines.
- NSA Ajit Doval and EAM S. Jaishankar have visited Colombo more than once and Mr. Modi has hosted President Gotabaya and Prime Minister Mahinda.
- India has also set much store by its partnership with Japan as a counter to China's BRI & there is much at stake for all three countries to derail the partnership.
- A compromise formula to restore a deal needs to be arrived.