Way forward:

- Greater transparency in campaign financing will make involving candidates with criminal background less attractive.
- Augmenting state capacity to neutralise the preference of the electorate to vote for 'strongmen' in order to get their work done.
- Disqualification of tainted politicians at the stage of framing of charges, with adequate safeguards.
- Conviction on the charge of filing of a false affidavit must be grounds for disqualification.
- Political parties should uphold high ideals by promoting internal democracy, financial transparency and avoiding fielding candidates with a criminal background for elections.
- Media and civil society organizations should be vigilant with regard to the profile of the electoral candidates and the practices adopted by them.
- Any disproportionate increase in the assets of the legislators should be thoroughly examined.
- State funding of elections to curb corruption and the high cost of campaigning and provide a level playing field.

12. **Focusing on technology without realizing that e-Governance is basically about ushering reforms in governance has meant that the potential of e-governance has not been realized. Discussing the statement, suggest what should be done to address this situation.**

Approach:

- Give a brief overview of e-governance in India.
- Discuss the reasons for slow progress with regards to e-governance in India.
- Suggest measures to be implemented for e-governance initiatives to be successful in India.

Answer:

E-Governance is the application of Information Technology to processes of government functioning to bring about Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent governance. Thus, at its core e-governance is about reforming governance to be people centric and technology is tool to achieve this objective. Since the adoption of National e-governance programme in 2006 India has made important progress in technology adoption as evident in initiatives such as the Aadhaar, JAM and portals like mugov.in and e-sampark.

Despite the progress made so far, the true potential of e-governance has been hindered by the fact that traditional approach to e-governance has been one of IT enablement of existing processes, without much change to the underlying processes. Thus IT enablement initiatives included:

- Automation of existing processes through the use of IT.
- Making services of the department available online (providing e-forms for submission of applications, File Management System etc.)

In these cases, the process remains the same, but is carried out electronically. Furthermore the following factors also explain the need for focussing beyond technology:

- Approximately 70% of the population lives in rural areas where illiteracy is high. Further, the lack of vernacular internet platforms is a major constraint in rural areas.
- Despite a push given to e-governance initiatives, many government departments continue insisting upon physical forms and signatures.
- Security and privacy of information is a technical challenge for e-governance implementation as people are wary about sharing their information with the government agencies.
- There is a significant digital divide in India between the urban and rural areas.
- Internet diffusion is still very low in India. Around 160 million in urban India and 732 million in rural India do not use internet.
- Internet service providers are located outside the interior of the country and internet charges are expensive for people, especially those living in rural areas. Thus, accessibility and affordability remain a constraint.