

CIVICS

Chapter 9: Public Facilities



Public Acilities

Public Facilities

Public facilities are provided by the state to its citizens. For example, water, sanitation and health facilities are provided by the Government to its citizens in almost every country.

Public' refers to the people in general. So public facilities are services, institutions, etc. that are used by the people in general. For example-trains, buses, roads, power supply and water supply. In this chapter, we will discuss why it is necessary for the government to ensure that everyone has access to certain facilities and how this is done in our country.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT

When you need new clothes, you go to a shop to buy them. When you want to watch a film or eat out, you go to a cinema hall or a restaurant. Shops, cinema halls, restaurants, some schools and hospitals, and so on, are privately owned. People run them because they can make a profit out of selling goods (food, clothes, etc.) or services (healthcare, education, etc.). But there are certain things that everyone needs, such as wells and drains, which no one wants to make or maintain because no profit can be made from them. This is one of the reasons why the government has to get involved in providing such facilities.

Another reason relates to the question of equity (equality) or social justice. Article 21 of the Constitution entitles everyone to the Right to Life. The Right to Life does not only mean the right not to have one's life taken away except according to the process of law. It also means the right to have the basic necessities of life. According to the Constitution and various decisions of the high courts and the Supreme Court, the Right to Life includes the right to a clean environment (that is, clean air and water), the right to food, the right to a livelihood, and so on. This is where the government comes in. It tries to provide the basic necessities of life, either free of cost or at a price that most people can afford. However, providing for such a vast population is a problem. So quite often, there are shortages, and it is the poor who are the worst affected.

WATER SUPPLY

In urban areas, the responsibility of supplying water lies with the municipal authority. In most cases, however, the water supply department (of the municipality) is unable to meet the requirements of the people.

RIGHT TO WATER

- In a case related to the Narmada Bachao Andolan, the Supreme Court said: "Water is a part

of the Right to Life...the right to a healthy environment is also a part of the Right to Life."

- In April 2005, Santulan, an NGO, filed a PIL in the Bombay High Court on behalf of stone quarry workers at Wagholi in the district of Pune in Maharashtra. The high court upheld the workers' right to safe drinking water and directed the state government to complete a water supply scheme for the workers within four months.

Those who can afford it solve the problem of short supply by buying water from private companies or by digging bore-wells. Those who cannot, have to Manase with far less than what is generally considered the minimum requirement of about seven buckets per person. Thus, people living in slums may have to manage with less than one bucket per person, while people living in well- to-do neighbourhoods may use more than forty or fifty buckets per person.



In poorer neighbourhoods, people often queue up for water and ugly fight sometimes ensue.

If this is the condition even with the government trying to provide water to meet the needs of the people, you can imagine what would happen if the supply of water were left in the hands of private companies. People often argue that privatisation would lead to greater efficiency, but it would also lead to greater inequalities. The price of water would become so high, that the poor would not be able to afford it. Thus, the government must have the overall responsibility of water supply to keep the price at a level that is affordable for everyone. Also, the distribution of water must be equitable (fair).

The problem of water supply is far more acute in villages, where the sources of water are natural water bodies and (mostly) privately owned wells and tube-wells. What is more, these sources are often polluted due to the lack of sanitation. The lack of safe drinking water leads to diseases, such as dysentery and typhoid, which may lead to death.

Swajaldhara is a project launched by the government in 2002 to supply clean water to rural households. Here the government plays the role of facilitator (helper) rather than provider. It helps the community design, create, and manage its drinking water resources. The community shares the cost by making contributions in cash or kind (things needed to dig a well, for example) and is

responsible for maintenance. It also takes steps for the conservation of water, for example, recharging groundwater by not allowing rainwater to run off.

SANITATION

When we speak of sanitation, we usually mean a hygienic system of disposing of human excreta.

EQUITY AND WATER SUPPLY

- The responsibility of water supply in Cochabamba (in Bolivia) was handed over to a private (multinational) company in 1999. This led to a hike in the price of water, which triggered widespread protests lasting almost a year. Finally, after a four-day general strike and clashes between the police and protesters, the government decided to hand over the job to community leaders and the price of water returned to the earlier level.
- In January 2000, farmers near Jamnagar (Gujarat) staged a protest over the decision of the authorities to draw water from the Kankavati dam (used for agriculture) to supply the town of Jamnagar. Three farmers died in the clash between the police and protesters.

The problem of sanitation is even greater than that of safe drinking water. According to government figures, while 68% of households have access to drinking water, only 36% have access to sanitation. Here too, it is the poor in villages and towns who are the worst affected. The lack of toilets and a proper system of garbage and wastewater disposal leads to the pollution of sources of water and water-borne diseases.

The Central Rural Sanitation Programme was launched by the government in 1986, with the aim of providing household and community toilets in rural areas. The idea was to improve the quality of life in villages and provide 'dignity and privacy' to women and girls, who are the worst affected by the lack of toilets. This programme was replaced by the Total Sanitation Campaign, in which the government again played the role of the facilitator. The community was encouraged to build sanitary and pom-flush toilets to meet its needs. Several NGOs partnered the government in providing safe drinking water and sanitation to the poorer sections. The Sulabh International is one such NGO that has been constructing community toilets and toilet complexes (with bathing and washing facilities) in urban areas.

In 2012, the Total Sanitation Campaign was renamed the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, which was then restructured into the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in 2014. The primary aim of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is to eliminate open defecation by motivating the people and constructing community and individual toilets. It also aims at creating awareness and encouraging people's participation in keeping towns and villages clean. The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is the largest cleanliness drive in the country so far. It has attracted the participation of NGOs, corporate houses (business and industry),

schools and colleges, celebrities and ordinary people. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have extended financial and technical support, and several business houses have undertaken to build community toilets.

Discuss

Bal panchayats are self-government bodies of rural children supported by UNICEF. These bodies are working in several states in areas such as drinking water supply, vaccination and sanitation. Do you think you could start such a body in your neighborhood? What would you like your panchayat to work on?

OTHER FACILITIES

Healthcare

Healthcare, education, transport and power supply are some of the other basic facilities that the government tries to provide for. In rural areas, healthcare is provided through primary health centers and community health centers. Community health centers have a laboratory, X-ray facility and beds for patients who need hospitalisation. A community health Centre covers 80,000 to 120,000 people, which shows that a lot more needs to be done in the field of rural healthcare. In urban areas, there are district hospitals, medical college hospitals and other government hospitals.

Education

Elementary education was made a Fundamental Right for children in the age group of 6-14 years by an amendment to the Constitution in 2002. In 2001, the government launched the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan to cover all children in this age group. Special attention is given to girls and children of weaker sections under this programme. The mid-day meal scheme, under which schoolchildren are provided one meal a day, was launched in 1995 to improve the nutritional status of children and encourage them to attend school. However, we are still far from achieving universal elementary education. Besides, many government schools lack basic facilities, such as drinking water and sanitation. They also have a shortage of teachers. Navodaya Vidyalayas are residential co-educational schools set up by the government to provide quality education to talented children from poor families, especially in rural areas. There is one such school in every district.

Q. Do you think we need more such schools?

Transport

Railways, roads and modes of public transport, such as buses, are maintained by the government (Central and state). There are problems of inequality and insufficiency here too. In towns and cities, people often complain about overcrowded buses and local trains, while many villages are not connected by roads, so there is no question of public transport. In many towns and cities, private buses are given permits (licences or permission) by the state or city transport authority, which regulates the fares to be charged. Taxi fares and auto-rickshaw fares are also fixed by the government.

Power

Generally speaking, the demand for power is much higher than the availability, so people face hours of power cuts even in urban areas. In rural areas, the situation is much worse. According to the 2011 Census, only 55.3% of rural households use electricity for lighting. Solar power (power generated from sunlight, using solar panels) and power generated from biogas are being explored as alternatives, especially to meet rural demand.

The distribution of power is mostly controlled by the government. In Kolkata, Mumbai and Delhi, private power distribution companies have been allowed to function.

The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, which has been passed by the Lok Sabha, aims to enhance the safety of road users and develop an efficient road transport system. Some of its important features are greater penalties for traffic rule violations, improvement of the licencing system, setting up of a fund to provide relief to road accident victims and holding vehicle manufacturers liable for faulty design. Two other developments that may help to reduce road accidents and save lives are directives from the Supreme Court. In 2016, the Supreme Court gave its approval to guidelines issued by the government to protect Good Samaritans who help accident victims. The Supreme Court's approval makes it legally binding for the police and other authorities not to harass such helpful people or force them to record a statement, give evidence in court, etc. The Supreme Court has also banned the selling of liquor along state and national highways to discourage people from drinking and driving.

Privatisation sometimes leads to an increase in tariffs (charges), but the government retains the right to control tariffs. In Delhi, for example, the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission controls the rates charged by the private companies.

FUNDING OF PUBLIC FACILITIES

The annual budget contains an account of the expenses incurred by the government in the past year and an estimate of the expenses for the next year. A part of these expenses is related to the cost of providing public facilities. Money is needed, for example, to pump and treat water and to lay pipes to carry water. Similarly, money is needed to set up and run schools and health centers. The money for government expenditure comes from taxes. (The Finance Bill contains proposals for new taxes, increase in taxes and relaxation of previous taxes). A part of the money spent on public facilities also comes from the money people pay for using public facilities, for example, water and electricity.

SPECIAL TAX OR CESS

Sometimes the government charges a special tax or cess to meet the cost of a particular service or

facility. The education cess, for example, is an extra tax that people pay to fund the government's expenditure on education. According to one estimate, the government collects Rs. 27,500 crores through the education cess. Another example is the Swachh Bharat cess of 0.5% on all services imposed by the government in November 2015. The money collected will be used for the Swachh

Bharat Campaign. The difference between other taxes and a cess charged for a particular facility is that all the money that is collected through a special cess is supposed to be spent on providing that facility. A cess may also be charged to meet expenses on an unexpected emergency, for example, a cess had been charged to provide relief to the victims of the Gujarat earthquake in 2001.

Water as Part of Fundamental Right to Life

- Water is an essential requirement. It is used not only for drinking but also for various domestic purposes apart from cooking. Safe drinking water can prevent many water-related diseases.
- Provision of safe drinking water is extremely important in a country such as India which experiences many water-related diseases such as cholera, dysentery and diarrhoea.
- Right to Water is an important part of the Right to Life under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. According to this right, every person-rich or poor-should get adequate amount of water to fulfil his/her daily needs at an affordable price. Thus, our Constitution guarantees universal access to water.
- High Courts and the Supreme Court have upheld the right to safe drinking water as a fundamental right.
- In 2007, a case in the High Court was filed by a villager of Mahabubnagar district. He filed a case against a textile company which was discharging poisonous chemicals into a stream which was the main source of drinking water and irrigation. The judge decided the case in favour of the villagers and directed the company to supply 25 litres of water to each person in the village.

Public Facilities

- Public facilities are some essential necessities which are provided by the Government to the people.
- Every person irrespective of caste, class, gender and sect can use public facilities.
- Health, water, sanitation and electric supply are some public facilities which benefit millions of people across the country.

The Role of the Government

- A democratic government is a welfare government. It provides many facilities to the people at subsidised prices.
- The Government has the responsibility of providing essential services to the people because private companies operate for earning profits in the markets. They are not willing to involve themselves in activities which do not provide them with profits.
- Sanitation, maintaining cleanliness, cheap transport, basic health facilities and supplying of cheap drinking water are some necessities which have to be fulfilled by the Government.
- Although we may find private hospitals and bottled drinking water, these facilities are extremely expensive. The Government has to provide these facilities at an affordable rate to the citizens.
- Because our Constitution guarantees the Right to Life to every citizen of the country, most basic facilities have to be provided by the Government.
- Money collected by the Government through taxation is used for providing essential public facilities

to the people at affordable costs.

Water Supply - Chennai

- Chennai faces a shortage of water. The supply of water by the Municipal board meets the requirements of only half of the people of Chennai.
- While some areas get more supply of water, some areas get less supply of water.
- It is the poor section of society which suffers because of acute water shortages. The middle and upper classes are able to meet their daily requirements of water through the use of tankers and bottled water.
- While the rich section of society is capable of getting access to clean drinking water by using purifiers, the poor section of society suffer from many water borne diseases because of the contamination of water.
- Water shortages have benefited private companies. For example, in Chennai, many private companies are providing water to cities. They exploit water resources of nearby village lands and sell it in cities. Prices of extracting water from a village land are given to the landowner. This has reduced the water table in many villages.

Water – Alternatives

- Most Indian cities experience acute water shortages during the summer months.
- Water shortages have been used by private companies who are selling water for profits.
- India also suffers from inequalities in water use. According to Urban Water Commission, in urban areas, water supply per person should be about 120 litres. In slums, people get less than 20 litres of water, while in luxury hotels, people may consume as much as 1,600 litres of water per day.
- Many people contend that because the Government is not able to meet the demand of people, private companies should be given the task of supplying water.
- However, many people argue against the idea. This is due to the following reasons:
 - In most countries, the Government supplies water to the people. There are hardly any cases of water being supplied by private companies.
 - In some regions in the world, the Government has been able to provide universal access to water. For example, in Porto Alegre, a city in Brazil, the water department has been able to achieve universal access of safe drinking water to the citizens. The average rate of water is low, and the poor people are charged only half of the basic water rates. The profits earned by the department are used for improving water supply. People have a direct say in major decisions taken by the water board.
 - It has been widely experienced that the countries in which water supply was handed over to private companies, there were rises in the prices of water which could not be afforded by the poor section of society. Bolivia experienced an increase in water rates when private companies were given the responsibilities of supplying water. This resulted in the eruption of riots and demonstrations.
 - In India, some water departments have been successful in their work. The water supply department in Mumbai is capable of raising enough money to meet its expenses on supplying water. The water department in Hyderabad has been able to increase its revenue collections. Similarly, the water department in Chennai has encouraged people for harvesting rainwater in order to increase the groundwater table.
 - Sometimes, the water departments give permission to tankers to provide water in cities.



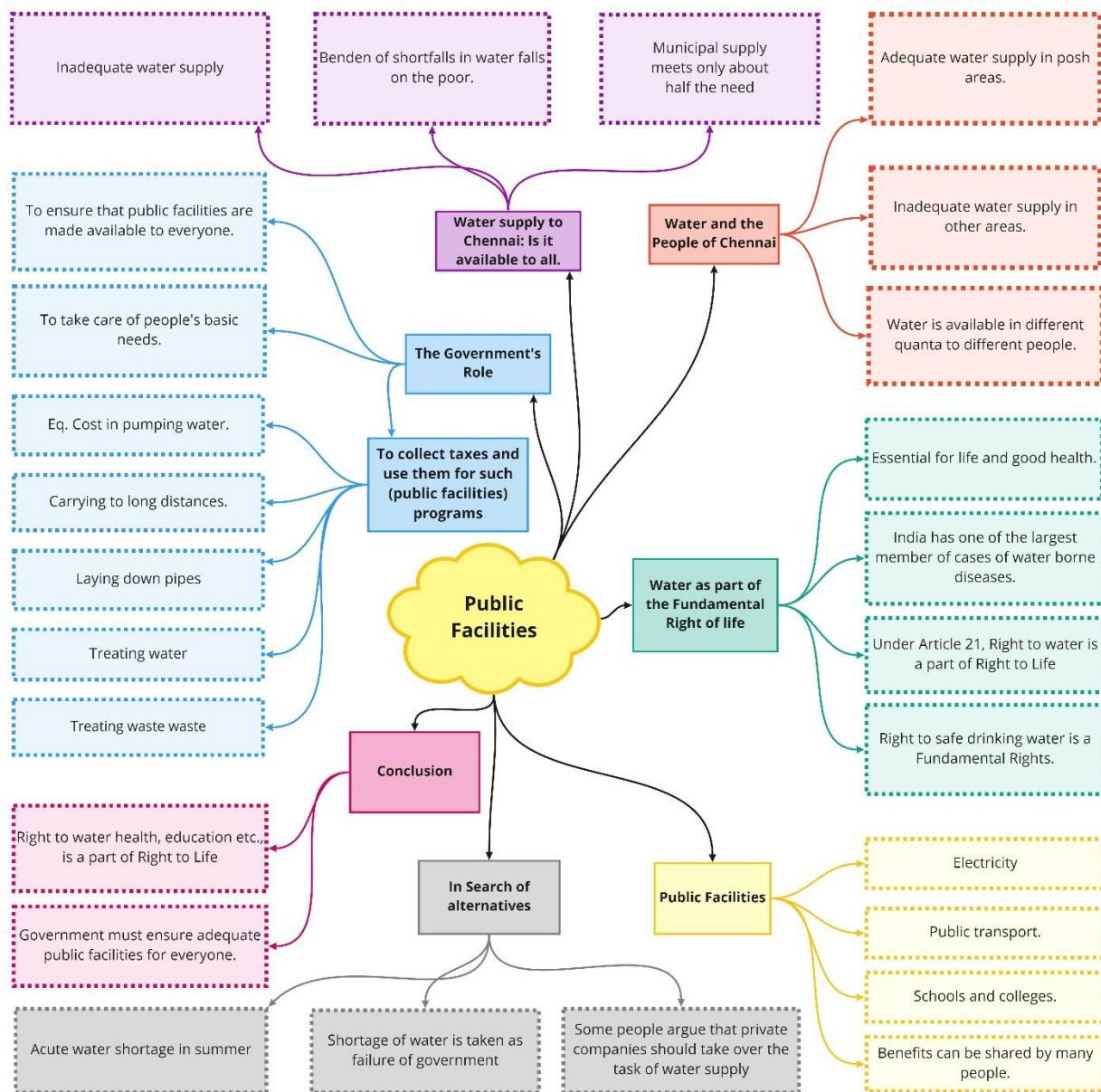
Protests in Bolivia took place when a private company increased water rates

However, the water rates of tankers are decided by the department. Such tankers are called working 'on contracts'.

We find that public services are essential. However, it has been noticed that there have been inequalities in water supply. The Government has to ensure equal distribution of water and other facilities to the people irrespective of wealth or locality.



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Chapter 9 Public Facilities



Important Questions

Multiple Choice Questions-

Question 1. Which is one of the major reasons Siva can't bring his family to Chennai.

- (a) Shortage of money
- (b) Shortage of living facilities
- (c) Unemployment
- (d) Shortage of water

Question 2. Which companies provide public facilities but at price that only some people can afford.

- (a) Private companies
- (b) Public companies
- (c) Semi-government companies
- (d) None of the above

Question 3. Porto Alegre is a city in

- (a) Australia
- (b) Bangladesh
- (c) Brazil
- (d) India

Question 4. The census 2001 put rural household electrification at.

- (a) 44%
- (b) 78%
- (c) 49%
- (d) 52%

Question 5. Mumbai suburban is well functioning public transport system.

- (a) Roadways
- (b) Waterways
- (c) Railways
- (d) None of the above

Question 6. Under which Article of our Constitution, Right to Water gets recognition?

- (a) Article 20

- (b) Article 21
- (c) Article 22
- (d) Article 23

Question 7. For what purpose bore well water is not used?

- (a) Toilets
- (b) Washing
- (c) Gardening
- (d) Cooking and drinking purposes

Question 8. What are the important characteristic of public facility?

- (a) It benefits privileged section of the society
- (b) Its benefits can be shared by many people
- (c) It benefits underprivileged sections of the society
- (d) None of these

Question 9. What are the main source of water for the poor people?

- (a) Bottled water
- (b) Municipal water
- (c) Water tanker
- (d) Private bore well

Question 10. Which is the world's densest railway route?

- (a) Mumbai
- (b) Delhi
- (c) Patna
- (d) Mathura

Question 11. What is special about Porto Alegre?

- (a) Highest infant death rate
- (b) Lowest adult death rate
- (c) Lowest infant death rate
- (d) None of these

Question 12. What do you mean by the term 'Universal access'?

- (a) Physical access to property
- (b) Physical access to good

- (c) Physical access to water
- (d) None of these

Question 13. What do you mean by right to life?

- (a) Provide public facilities by government to people
- (b) Provide tax free facilities
- (c) Provide job facilities
- (d) None of these

Question 14. What of the following is not considered as our basic needs?

- (a) Food
- (b) Internet
- (c) Water
- (d) None of these

Question 15. What are some public facilities essential for everyone?

- (a) Electricity
- (b) Public transport
- (c) Both a and b
- (d) None of these

Very Short:

1. Where were Amu and Kumar travelling through?
2. What did Amu and Kumar observe while travelling through Chennai?
3. How is water essential?
4. Under which article does the Constitution of India recognize the Right to water?
5. What did the judge direct the Mahbubnagar district collector?
6. What are public facilities?
7. Where is the government budget presented?
8. What is meant by Basic Needs?
9. What is often taken as a sign of failure of the government?
10. What is the quantity of water supply in India in an urban area?

Short Questions:

1. Why it is noticed that there are great inequalities in water use?
2. What is the condition and statistics of water diseases in India?

3. What are the other public facilities other than water that are needed to be provided to everyone?
4. Define Sanitation.
5. How can it be said that the private companies which provide public facilities are not suitable for public actually?

Long Questions:

1. What is the scenario, of public water supply in Porto Alegre?
2. Discuss the role of the government in regard to public facilities.
3. Why should the government bear the responsibility to provide public facilities to everyone?
4. Do you think water is available in Chennai and affordable by all? Discuss.

Answer Key:

MCQ:

1. (d) Shortage of water
2. (a) Private companies
3. (c) Brazil
4. (a) 44%
5. (c) Railways
6. (b) Active 21
7. (d) Cooking and drinking purposes
8. (b) Its benefits can be shared by many people
9. (b) Municipal water
- 10.(a) Mumbai
- 11.(c) Lowest infant death rate
- 12.(b) Physical access to good
- 13.(a) Provide public facilities by government to people
- 14.(b) Internet
- 15.(c) Both a and b

Very Short Answer:

1. Amu and Kumar were travelling through Chennai in a bus.
2. They observed the water facilities are available in different parts of Chennai.

3. Water is essential for life and for good health.
4. The Constitution of India recognises the right to water as being a part of the Right to Life under Article 21.
5. The judge directed the Mahbubnagar district collector to supply 25 litres of water to each person in the village.
6. Essential facilities that need to be provided for everyone like healthcare, sanitation, electricity, schools and colleges etc. that are also necessary are known as public facilities.

	Is it available?	How can it be improved?
Water	Yes	The availability of water should also be at evening time.
Electricity	Yes	In this regard people should be loyal to pay their bills on time and companies should arrange much more proper machinery to prevent load shedding types of problems.
Roads	Yes	Similar to the main roads government should take responsibility of the streets too.
Public Transport	Yes	Metro fair which has been hiked recently is very costly for some group of people and it should be cut.

government budget being presented in the parliament.

8. Primary requirement of food, water, shelter, sanitation, healthcare and education necessary for survival.

9. The shortage of municipal water is often taken as a sign of failure of the government.
10. The supply of water per person in an urban area in India is about 135 litres per day.

Short Answer:

Ans: 1. It is fact that there is a great in-equalities in water use. Because the supply requirement of water in urban areas of India should be about 135 litres (About 7 Lac buckets) per day. It is said to be standard set by the urban water commission. But people living in slums gets availed with less than 20 litres a day per person. On the side as much as 1600 Litres (80 buckets) of water per day is supplied at the same time to luxury hotels.

Ans: 2. India has one of the largest number of cases of diseases such as diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera over 1600, Indians, most of them children below the age of five reportedly die every day because of water disease in India.

Ans: 3. Same as water there are other essential facilities that are needed to provide to everyone. For example, healthcare, sanitation, electricity, public transport, schools and colleges. These all are also known as public facilities.

Ans: 4. Provision of facilities for the safe disposal of human urine and feces. This is done by construction of toilets and pipes to carry the sewage and treatment of wastewater. This is necessary so as to avoid contamination

Ans: 5. Though private companies provide the public facilities but they provide it with the purpose of profit making and they provide facilities at a price that only some people can afford. This facility not available to all at an affordable rate.

Long Answer:

Ans: 1. Porto Alegre is a city in Brazil. Though there are many poor people in this city, what is remarkable is that it has a far lower number of infant deaths as compared to most other cities of the world. The city's, water department has achieved universal access to safe water, and this is the main reason behind the lower number of infant deaths.

The average price of water is kept low, and the poor are charged half basic rate. Whatever profit the department makes is used to improve the water supply. The working of the water department is transparent, and people can have a direct say in deciding which projects the department should take up. Through a process of public meetings, people hear what the managers have to say and also vote on their priorities.

Ans: 2. Public facilities are associated with our basic needs. Our Constitution recognises many of the public facilities as being a part of the Right to Life. Therefore, the government must see that these rights are protected so that everyone can lead a decent life. But its efforts are not successful to some extent. There is a shortage in supply and there are inequalities in distribution. Metros and large cities are not in very bad condition, but towns and villages are underprovided. In comparison to wealthy localities, the poorer localities are underserved. The government is expected to take steps in

order to make all the public facilities accessible to everyone. So far, we are concerned, we must cooperate with the government.

Ans: 3. If private companies are given the responsibility to provide public facilities such as water, they will charge more. In such a situation only, some people can afford to buy water. Thus, even though private companies are providing the facility of water, but this facility is not available to all at an affordable rate. If we go by the rule that people will get as much as they can pay for them many people who cannot afford to pay for such facilities will be deprived of the opportunity to live a decent life. Obviously, this is not a desirable option. Public facilities relate to our basic needs. The Right to Life that the Constitution guarantees is for all person living in this country. Therefore, it should be the government's responsibility to provide public facilities to all.

Ans: 4. • Water supply in Chennai is marked by shortages.

- Municipal supply meets only about half the needs of the people of the city, on an average.
- There are areas which get more water regularly than others. Those areas that are close to the storage points get more water whereas colonies further away receive less water.
- Apart from the availability of water access to 'safe' drinking water is also available to some and this depends on what one can afford.
- The burden of shortfalls in water supply falls mostly on the poor.
- The middle class, when faced with water shortages are able to cope through a variety of private means such as digging bore wells, buying water from tankers and using bottled water for drinking.