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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

DAILY MCQ'S

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 14/09/2026 (MONDAY)

- **Static mcq's**
- **Current Affairs mcq's**
- **Mains Practice Questions**



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DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FROM STATIC PART

Q1. With reference to the Industrial Revolution and its impact on colonial societies, consider the following statements:

1. The expansion of mechanised textile production in Britain contributed to a structural change in the pattern of India's textile exports during the nineteenth century.
2. The decline of Indian handloom exports to Britain was caused exclusively by the technological superiority of British machinery, without any role being played by British commercial or tariff policies.

Which one of the following is correct?

- (a) Both Statement 1 and Statement 2 are correct, and Statement 2 is the correct explanation for Statement 1.
- (b) Both Statement 1 and Statement 2 are correct, but Statement 2 is not the correct explanation for Statement 1.
- (c) Statement 1 is correct, but Statement 2 is incorrect.
- (d) Statement 1 is incorrect, but Statement 2 is correct.

Answer: (c)

Explanation:

Statement 1 is correct. The Industrial Revolution transformed Britain's textile industry through mechanisation, particularly in spinning and weaving. The resulting mass production increased Britain's demand for markets and altered the traditional pattern of textile trade. India, which had historically exported high-quality cotton textiles, increasingly became a market for machine-made British textiles and a supplier of raw cotton.

Statement 2 is incorrect because the decline of Indian textile exports cannot be attributed *exclusively* to technological superiority. British commercial interests, discriminatory tariff arrangements, restrictions on Indian manufactures and the broader colonial restructuring of India's economy also played significant roles. Thus, the question requires distinguishing between **technological change as an economic force** and **colonial policy as an institutional force**.

The deeper implication is that deindustrialisation in colonial India was not simply a spontaneous market outcome; it occurred within an unequal imperial economic structure.

Q2. Which one of the following most accurately explains why biological control is generally considered preferable to indiscriminate chemical control in an integrated pest-management system?

- (a) Biological-control agents invariably eliminate the target pest completely and therefore prevent any subsequent pest resurgence.
- (b) Biological control can exploit ecological interactions to suppress pest populations while potentially reducing collateral effects on non-target organisms and environmental systems.
- (c) Biological-control agents always reproduce faster than their target pests and therefore remain permanently dominant in agricultural ecosystems.
- (d) Biological control eliminates the need for crop rotation, resistant varieties, monitoring and other components of integrated pest management.



Answer: (b)

Explanation:

Biological control involves the deliberate use or conservation of natural enemies such as predators, parasitoids and pathogens to regulate pest populations.

Option (b) is correct because biological control attempts to utilise **existing ecological relationships** rather than relying primarily on broad-spectrum chemical toxicity. When appropriately designed, it can reduce pesticide residues, secondary pest outbreaks and harmful effects on beneficial organisms.

The traps are in the words “**invariably,**” “**always,**” “**permanently,**” and “**eliminates the need.**” Biological control does not necessarily eradicate pests. In fact, complete eradication is neither necessary nor usually desirable. The objective is generally to keep pest populations **below economically damaging levels.**

Option (a) is therefore wrong because pest suppression is not synonymous with complete elimination. Option (c) is incorrect because the population dynamics of predators, parasitoids and pests depend upon environmental conditions and prey availability. Option (d) is contrary to the concept of **integrated pest management (IPM)**, where biological control functions alongside monitoring, resistant varieties, cultural practices and carefully targeted chemical intervention.

Thus, the conceptual distinction is between **eradication-oriented control** and **ecologically informed population regulation.**

Q3. With reference to India's economic reforms since 1991, consider the following statements:

1. Liberalisation sought to reduce the extent of direct governmental control over economic decisions without implying the complete withdrawal of the State from economic activity.
2. Privatisation necessarily implies transfer of ownership of every public-sector enterprise to private investors.
3. Globalisation increased the integration of the Indian economy with international markets, but its effects have not been uniform across sectors, firms and categories of workers.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Answer: (b)

Explanation:

Statements 1 and 3 are correct, while Statement 2 is incorrect.

Statement 1 is correct. Liberalisation refers broadly to reducing unnecessary regulatory restrictions and controls over economic activity. It does **not** mean that the State disappears from the economy. Regulatory, welfare, redistributive and macroeconomic functions of the State continue to remain important.

Statement 2 is incorrect. Privatisation is a broader concept than simply transferring ownership of *every* public-sector enterprise. It may involve partial disinvestment, greater private participation, transfer of management control, restructuring or other forms of reducing the government's direct role. Moreover, strategic public ownership may continue in particular sectors.



Statement 3 is correct. Globalisation has increased India's integration with international trade, investment, technology and production networks. However, its gains and adjustment costs have been uneven. Export-oriented and technologically advanced sectors may benefit substantially, while some small producers or workers exposed to intensified competition may face adjustment pressures.

The major conceptual trap is treating **liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation as interchangeable terms**. They are related components of economic reform but represent distinct processes.

Hence, **two statements are correct**.

Q4. With reference to the Indian Constitution as a living document, consider the following statements:

1. The procedure for constitutional amendment enables the Constitution to respond to changing social, political and institutional circumstances.
2. Judicial interpretation can contribute to constitutional evolution even when the formal text of the Constitution remains unchanged.
3. Every constitutional amendment requires ratification by at least one-half of the State Legislatures.
4. The existence of a constitutional amendment procedure means that Parliament possesses unlimited authority to alter every provision of the Constitution.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Answer: (b)

Explanation:

Statements 1 and 2 are correct; Statements 3 and 4 are incorrect.

Statement 1 is correct. The Constitution provides different amendment procedures depending upon the nature and importance of the provision being amended. This allows constitutional continuity while permitting adaptation to changing circumstances.

Statement 2 is correct. Constitutional evolution does not occur exclusively through formal amendments. Judicial interpretation can significantly develop the meaning and application of constitutional provisions. The interpretation of Fundamental Rights, federalism, separation of powers and other constitutional principles illustrates this dynamic character.

Statement 3 is incorrect. Ratification by at least half of the State Legislatures is required only for certain constitutional amendments dealing with specified federal or institutional provisions. It is **not required for every amendment**.

Statement 4 is incorrect. Parliament's amending power is not unlimited. The Supreme Court's **Basic Structure doctrine** places substantive limitations on the amending power. Parliament may amend the Constitution, but it cannot destroy its basic structure.



The central conceptual distinction is between **constitutional flexibility and constitutional supremacy**. A Constitution can evolve without becoming legally unlimited, and the Indian model deliberately attempts to balance adaptability with continuity.

Q5. Consider the following assertion and the two reasons given below:

Assertion:

The development of large-scale irrigation in regions with an otherwise water-deficit agricultural environment does not necessarily ensure long-term agricultural sustainability.

Reason I:

Irrigation can increase agricultural productivity while simultaneously contributing to problems such as groundwater depletion, soil salinisation and waterlogging when water use is poorly managed.

Reason II:

The sustainability of irrigation depends not merely upon the quantity of water supplied but also upon the relationship between water availability, cropping patterns, soil conditions, drainage and local ecological limits.

Which one of the following is correct?

- (a) Both Reason I and Reason II are correct, and both of them explain the Assertion.
- (b) Both Reason I and Reason II are correct, but only Reason I explains the Assertion.
- (c) Both Reason I and Reason II are correct, but only Reason II explains the Assertion.
- (d) Both Reason I and Reason II are incorrect.

Answer: (a)

Explanation:

The Assertion is correct. Irrigation is a crucial instrument of agricultural development, particularly in areas where rainfall is inadequate or highly variable. However, irrigation by itself does not guarantee sustainability.

Reason I is correct and directly explains the Assertion. Excessive or inefficient irrigation may raise short-term agricultural output while generating long-term environmental costs. Poor drainage can cause **waterlogging**, while accumulation of salts in the soil can result in **salinisation**. Excessive groundwater extraction may lower the water table and undermine future agricultural productivity.

Reason II is also correct and directly explains the Assertion. Sustainable agricultural planning requires a systems-based understanding of the relationship between water, soil, climate, crops and local ecological conditions. A water-intensive cropping pattern in a water-stressed region may remain unsustainable even when irrigation infrastructure is extensive.

The analytical trap lies in assuming that “**more irrigation = more development = more sustainability.**” Irrigation can certainly enhance agricultural productivity, but its developmental value depends upon how the resource is managed over time.

Therefore, both reasons independently establish why irrigation infrastructure, although important for agricultural development, cannot by itself guarantee **long-term sustainable agricultural development.**

Hence, (a) is the correct answer.



DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FROM CURRENT AFFAIRS

Q1. With reference to the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) and international dispute settlement, consider the following statements:

1. The PCA is an intergovernmental organisation that provides an institutional framework and administrative support for arbitration, conciliation and fact-finding in international disputes.
2. Despite its name, the PCA is not a conventional permanent court whose disputes are invariably adjudicated by a fixed bench of permanent judges.

Which one of the following is correct?

- (a) Both Statement 1 and Statement 2 are correct, and Statement 2 correctly explains Statement 1.
- (b) Both Statement 1 and Statement 2 are correct, but Statement 2 does not correctly explain Statement 1.
- (c) Statement 1 is correct, but Statement 2 is incorrect.
- (d) Statement 1 is incorrect, but Statement 2 is correct.

Answer: (a)

Explanation:

Both statements are correct, and Statement 2 explains an important conceptual feature of the PCA.

The **Permanent Court of Arbitration** is an intergovernmental organisation established to facilitate the resolution of international disputes. It can provide administrative support for arbitral tribunals constituted for particular disputes involving States, State entities, international organisations and, in appropriate circumstances, private parties.

The major trap is the word **“Court.”** The PCA should not be understood in exactly the same institutional sense as a conventional standing international court such as the International Court of Justice. The PCA provides an institutional framework, procedural rules and administrative machinery, while the particular arbitral tribunal may be constituted for the dispute concerned.

Thus, the adjective **“Permanent”** refers primarily to the permanence of the institutional framework rather than to a permanently sitting judicial bench deciding every dispute.

Q2. The “distinguished jurist” provision of the Constitution of India is best understood as:

- (a) a provision under Article 124(3)(c) permitting a person of exceptional legal scholarship to qualify for appointment as a Supreme Court judge even without being a practising advocate or a High Court judge.
- (b) a provision under Article 124(3)(c) permitting the Chief Justice of India to nominate any eminent academic directly to the Supreme Court.
- (c) a provision under Article 124(3)(c) requiring every Supreme Court Bench to include at least one distinguished jurist from outside the judiciary.
- (d) a provision under Article 124(3)(c) enabling Parliament to appoint an eminent jurist to the Supreme Court through a special resolution.

Answer: (a)



Explanation:

Article **124(3)(c)** provides that a person is qualified for appointment as a judge of the Supreme Court if, in the opinion of the President, he or she is a **distinguished jurist**.

This provision is significant because the Constitution does not make prior service as a High Court judge or prior practice as an advocate the *only* conceivable route to Supreme Court eligibility. An eminent legal scholar, academic, author or researcher with exceptional juristic learning may potentially fall within this constitutional category.

However, the provision is about **qualification**, not automatic appointment. Therefore, the wording of the Constitution should not be distorted into suggesting that a distinguished jurist can simply be nominated by the Chief Justice of India or appointed by Parliament.

The question deliberately tests the distinction between **constitutional eligibility** and the **actual appointment mechanism**.

Q3. With reference to the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), consider the following statements:

1. UPI enables interoperable digital payments by facilitating transactions between participating bank accounts through a common payment infrastructure.
2. A UPI transaction necessarily requires the payer and payee to maintain accounts with the same bank.
3. The widespread adoption of UPI illustrates how an interoperable payment architecture can reduce the significance of individual bank-specific payment interfaces for retail digital transactions.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Answer: (b)

Explanation:

Statements 1 and 3 are correct, while Statement 2 is incorrect.

Statement 1 is correct. UPI is designed around an interoperable payment architecture through which users can make digital payments using participating bank accounts and supported applications. Its importance lies not merely in digitising payments but in enabling **interoperability** across participating institutions.

Statement 2 is incorrect. UPI does **not** require the payer and payee to maintain accounts with the same bank. The architecture is specifically designed to permit transactions across participating banks.

Statement 3 is correct. This is a more analytical implication of interoperability. Traditional banking arrangements could make digital transactions appear closely tied to individual institutions. UPI allows the payment experience to operate across institutional boundaries, thereby reducing the practical dependence of retail users on a single bank's proprietary payment interface.

The trap is to confuse **bank-account ownership** with **payment-interface ownership**. A user may hold a bank account with one participating bank while using a supported UPI application/interface for transactions involving another bank.

Hence, **two statements are correct**.



Q4. With reference to Mission Rangeen Machhli 2031, consider the following statements:

1. It is a Strategic Action Plan aimed at organising and developing India's ornamental fisheries sector.
2. Its proposed interventions encompass aspects such as broodstock management, breeding, hatchery operations, quarantine, fish health, traceability and transportation.
3. The plan seeks to promote ornamental fisheries only as a domestic aquarium activity and does not envisage international market access.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Answer: (b)

Explanation:

Statements 1 and 2 are correct, while Statement 3 is incorrect.

Statement 1 is correct. Mission Rangeen Machhli 2031 is a Strategic Action Plan for the development of India's **ornamental fisheries** sector. It seeks to bring greater organisation, scientific management, quality assurance and regulatory coherence to the sector.

Statement 2 is correct. The plan takes an end-to-end approach rather than concentrating merely on the final sale of ornamental fish. It envisages standardised practices relating to broodstock management, captive breeding, hatcheries, quarantine, fish health, traceability, handling, transportation and trade.

Statement 3 is incorrect. The initiative explicitly has a broader market orientation, including improving product quality, certification and access to **domestic as well as international markets**.

The analytical significance is that ornamental fisheries are being approached as a **value chain**, involving production, biosecurity, certification, logistics, livelihoods and markets, rather than merely as the commercial keeping of aquarium fish.

Hence, **two statements are correct**.

Q5. With reference to Exercise Super Garuda Shield, consider the following statements:

1. It originated as a bilateral military engagement between Indonesia and the United States before evolving into a broader multilateral exercise.
2. Its contemporary format involves multiple dimensions of military cooperation and seeks to enhance interoperability among participating armed forces.
3. India has participated in the 2026 edition of the exercise.
4. The exercise is conducted exclusively in the maritime domain because its principal objective is naval interoperability in the Indo-Pacific.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one



- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Answer: (c)

Explanation:

Statements 1, 2 and 3 are correct, while Statement 4 is incorrect.

Statement 1 is correct. Garuda Shield began as a bilateral Indonesia–United States military engagement and subsequently developed into **Super Garuda Shield**, a much larger multilateral exercise.

Statement 2 is correct. The contemporary exercise is considerably broader than a traditional bilateral army drill. It encompasses multiple training activities and seeks to improve interoperability, readiness and coordination among participating forces. The 2026 edition included activities involving cyber defence and multinational coordination, among others.

Statement 3 is correct. India was among the participating armed forces in the 2026 edition. Singapore's Ministry of Defence lists India among the 14 participating armed forces in the 2026 exercise.

Statement 4 is incorrect. The exercise is not confined to the maritime domain. Its activities span multiple military dimensions and locations in Indonesia. The 2026 exercise included land-oriented training as well as cyber and other components.

The key UPSC trap is to associate “**Shield**” and **Indo-Pacific** exclusively with naval exercises. Super Garuda Shield is fundamentally a **multilateral interoperability and readiness exercise**, not an exclusively maritime drill.

Therefore, **three statements are correct**.

Q6. Consider the following statements regarding the Southern Alps:

1. They extend along much of the length of New Zealand's South Island.
2. They are closely associated with tectonic activity along the Alpine Fault.
3. Their presence contributes to a marked contrast in precipitation between the western and eastern parts of the South Island.
4. Aoraki/Mount Cook, the highest peak of New Zealand, lies within the Southern Alps.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only two
- (b) Only three
- (c) All four
- (d) Only one

Answer: (c)

Explanation:

All four statements are correct.



The **Southern Alps / Kā Tiritiri o te Moana** form the principal mountain chain of New Zealand's South Island and extend for roughly 500 km along much of its length. Aoraki/Mount Cook, at about **3,724 metres**, is New Zealand's highest mountain and lies within the Southern Alps.

The range is strongly associated with the **Alpine Fault**, where the Australian and Pacific plates interact. Continued tectonic movement has contributed to the uplift of the Southern Alps and makes the region highly active tectonically.

The range also produces an important **orographic effect**. Moist westerly air encounters the mountains, producing very high precipitation on the western side, whereas areas east of the range, including parts of Canterbury, are comparatively drier and can experience drought conditions.

Thus, the Southern Alps are significant not merely as a mountain system but as an intersection of **plate tectonics, glacial geomorphology, orographic precipitation and regional climatic differentiation**.

Hence, all four statements are correct — (c).

DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAINS ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Q1. “The interaction between philosophical ideas, religious beliefs and material conditions transformed the intellectual and cultural landscape of early Indian civilisation.” Discuss with reference to the major religious and philosophical developments of ancient India.

Answer:

The intellectual history of ancient India cannot be understood merely as a sequence of religious doctrines. It was shaped by the interaction of **philosophical inquiry, changing social structures, economic transformations and political developments**. The emergence and evolution of Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain traditions illustrate how ideas responded to, as well as influenced, the changing material and social environment.

The later Vedic period witnessed important transformations in the nature of religious thought. As agriculture expanded, settled communities became more prominent and social differentiation deepened. The increasing importance of ritual specialists and elaborate sacrifices generated philosophical questions about the nature of existence, the self and ultimate reality. The **Upanishadic tradition** represented a significant intellectual transition from an exclusive emphasis on external ritual towards philosophical speculation concerning *Atman*, *Brahman*, karma and liberation.

At approximately the same historical moment, the **Buddhist and Jain traditions** emerged within a wider intellectual environment characterised by debates among various *shramana* traditions. They questioned several assumptions of the established ritual order. Buddhism emphasised the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, ethical conduct and liberation from suffering, while Jainism placed particular emphasis on non-violence, asceticism, karma and liberation.

These movements were also connected with broader socio-economic transformations. The growth of towns, long-distance trade and monetisation created new social groups, including merchants and urban communities. Such groups could find attraction in religious traditions that did not depend exclusively upon



elaborate sacrificial rituals. The patronage extended by rulers and merchants helped Buddhist and Jain institutions expand.

The **Mauryan period**, especially under Ashoka, demonstrates the interaction between political authority and ethical ideas. Ashoka's *Dhamma* did not simply reproduce Buddhist doctrine; it represented an attempt to construct an ethical framework emphasising tolerance, compassion, respect for different sects and welfare.

Material culture also provides evidence of intellectual and religious change. Stupas, monasteries, cave architecture, sculptures and inscriptions demonstrate how religious ideas became embedded in public and cultural institutions.

However, these developments should not be interpreted as a simple replacement of one system by another. Brahmanical traditions adapted and evolved, while Buddhism and Jainism themselves developed diverse schools and practices.

Thus, ancient India's intellectual history reflects **dialogue rather than complete rupture**. Religious traditions responded to changing economic and social conditions while simultaneously reshaping ideas of morality, authority, social conduct and the meaning of liberation. This dynamic interaction produced one of the most diverse philosophical traditions in world history.

Q2. “The rise of alternative centres of power after the Cold War has transformed international politics from a predominantly bipolar structure into a more complex and contested order.” Examine.

Answer:

The end of the Cold War fundamentally altered the structure of international politics. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 ended the bipolar competition between the United States and the Soviet Union and initially produced a period often described as **unipolarity**. However, the subsequent rise of alternative centres of power has made the international system increasingly **multipolar, fragmented and issue-specific**.

The European Union represents one important alternative centre of power. Although it does not possess the conventional military capabilities of a superpower, its enormous economic weight, regulatory influence and diplomatic presence allow it to exercise substantial **normative and economic power**. Its ability to shape global standards through trade and regulation demonstrates that power in international relations is not restricted to military strength.

China's rise has been more comprehensive. Its economic expansion, technological capabilities, military modernisation, infrastructure diplomacy and growing international institutional presence have challenged the earlier predominance of Western powers. Initiatives associated with the Belt and Road framework and China's expanding role in global institutions demonstrate its aspiration to translate economic capacity into strategic influence.

Similarly, Russia remains an important military and geopolitical actor despite the structural decline of its post-Soviet economy relative to the United States and China. Japan, India and other regional powers have also acquired greater strategic significance.

The rise of **BRICS and other groupings** further illustrates the diffusion of influence. These arrangements reflect demands for greater representation of developing economies in global governance institutions. However, alternative centres of power do not necessarily constitute a cohesive anti-Western bloc. Their interests frequently diverge.



The transformation is therefore not simply from **one hegemon to several equivalent powers**. Contemporary international politics contains multiple layers of power: military, economic, technological, demographic, financial, institutional and normative.

For India, this changing order creates both opportunities and challenges. Strategic autonomy becomes more valuable because India can engage simultaneously with multiple centres of power. At the same time, rivalry among major powers can generate pressure on India's diplomatic choices.

Thus, the contemporary world is best described as **complex multipolarity rather than straightforward multipolarity**. Power is distributed unevenly and varies across domains. The key challenge for global governance is to convert this plurality of power centres into cooperative mechanisms rather than allowing it to generate permanent geopolitical confrontation.

Q3. “An economy can experience an increase in productive capacity without experiencing a proportionate increase in actual output and employment.” Explain the statement using the Keynesian concept of aggregate demand.

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Answer:

The Keynesian framework emphasises that an economy's actual level of output and employment is determined not merely by its productive capacity but by the level of **aggregate demand**. Therefore, an economy may possess adequate factories, labour and technological capacity while still operating below its potential because demand is insufficient.

Aggregate demand broadly consists of consumption expenditure and investment expenditure in a simple economy, with government expenditure and net exports added in a more comprehensive model. Keynes argued that firms make production and employment decisions based on expected demand for their output. If aggregate demand is inadequate, firms have little incentive to utilise their full productive capacity.

Consider an economy in which firms possess sufficient machinery and workers to produce ₹100 units of output, but households and firms collectively demand only ₹80 units. Firms are unlikely to produce the remaining ₹20 merely because the capacity exists. Producing unsold goods would increase inventories and reduce profitability. Consequently, firms may cut production and employment.

This explains the distinction between **potential output and equilibrium output**. Potential output refers to the level that could be produced when available resources are efficiently utilised under prevailing technological conditions. Equilibrium output is determined by the interaction of aggregate demand and aggregate supply within the macroeconomic framework.

The concept of the **multiplier** strengthens the argument. An initial increase in autonomous expenditure can generate a larger increase in national income because one person's expenditure becomes another person's income, part of which is subsequently spent again. Conversely, a decline in investment or consumption can have a multiplied contractionary effect.

This also explains why economies may experience involuntary unemployment. Workers may be willing to work at prevailing wages, and firms may possess productive capacity, but insufficient demand prevents firms from hiring them.



Government policy can therefore influence economic activity through fiscal measures. During periods of deficient demand, increased public expenditure or reductions in certain taxes can stimulate aggregate demand. However, excessive demand stimulus when the economy is already near capacity can create inflationary pressures.

The Keynesian insight remains particularly relevant during recessions: **unemployment can be a consequence of inadequate effective demand rather than simply a shortage of productive resources.**

Therefore, economic capacity and actual output should not be treated as identical. The utilisation of productive capacity depends critically on the level and composition of aggregate demand. This distinction helps explain why economies can simultaneously possess unused resources, unemployed labour and substantial productive potential.

Q4. “Ethical governance requires public officials to reconcile legality with substantive justice, rather than treating legal compliance as the complete meaning of ethical conduct.” Discuss.

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Answer:

Public administration operates within a framework of laws, rules and procedures. **Legality is therefore indispensable to ethical governance**, because arbitrary exercise of public power undermines equality, accountability and the rule of law. However, legality alone does not exhaust the meaning of ethical conduct. An action may technically comply with rules while producing an outcome that is unjust, discriminatory or insensitive to legitimate human concerns.

The distinction can be understood through three concepts: **lawfulness, morality and justice**. Law establishes minimum standards that public officials must observe. Ethics asks whether the exercise of authority reflects values such as integrity, impartiality, compassion, transparency and public interest. Justice further requires officials to consider whether decisions distribute benefits and burdens fairly.

For example, an administrative officer may strictly apply an eligibility rule and reject an individual's application because a document was submitted late. Such an action may be legally defensible. However, if the delay occurred because of a documented natural disaster or administrative failure, rigid application of the rule may produce an inequitable outcome. Ethical governance requires the official to examine whether the legal framework itself permits discretion, review or remedial action.

This does not mean that officials should ignore laws in the name of personal morality. Such an approach could produce arbitrary administration. Instead, ethical discretion must operate **within constitutional and legal boundaries**. The objective is not to substitute personal preferences for law but to interpret and implement rules in accordance with their legitimate purpose.

The constitutional values of **justice, equality, dignity and fraternity** provide a broader ethical framework for public administration. Civil servants therefore need qualities such as empathy, objectivity, courage of conviction and accountability.

Ethical governance also requires sensitivity to the difference between **procedural equality and substantive equality**. Treating everyone identically may sometimes perpetuate disadvantage. A genuinely ethical administration may require reasonable accommodation of vulnerable groups while remaining within the law.



Mechanisms such as transparency, social audits, grievance redressal, reasoned orders, citizen charters and independent oversight can institutionalise ethical behaviour rather than leaving it entirely dependent upon individual virtue.

Ultimately, the ideal public servant must neither be a **rule-blind bureaucrat** nor an individual who treats personal morality as superior to law. The appropriate approach is principled discretion: respect for law combined with constitutional morality, compassion and concern for public welfare.

Thus, ethical governance emerges when **legality provides the boundary, integrity provides the motivation, and justice provides the direction.**

Q5. Mission Zero: Depalpur's Legacy Waste Transformation demonstrates that urban waste management is not merely a sanitation problem but a question of governance, resource efficiency and behavioural change. Critically examine the lessons that Indian cities can draw from the initiative.

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Answer:

The challenge of urban waste management in India has increasingly shifted from the simple question of “where to dispose of waste” towards the more complex question of **how to prevent waste, recover resources and scientifically remediate accumulated legacy waste.** Depalpur's Mission Zero provides an important example of this transition.

Depalpur, in Madhya Pradesh, became the first city under the **Swachh Shehar Jodi** initiative to achieve zero legacy waste by scientifically remediating approximately **1,250 metric tonnes of waste** accumulated over five years under SBM-U 2.0. The initiative involved cooperation between Depalpur Nagar Parishad and Indore Municipal Corporation through an **Each One Teach One mentor–mentee model.**

One major lesson is the importance of **source segregation.** Depalpur achieved 100% door-to-door collection with segregation into four categories. Segregation improves the possibility of recovering recyclables and prevents contamination of potentially valuable material.

Second, the initiative illustrates the principles of the **circular economy.** Approximately 4.5 tonnes of plastic, metal and glass were recovered and supplied to authorised recyclers, while around 50–60 tonnes of refuse-derived fuel was sent for processing and subsequent co-processing in cement factories. Thus, waste was treated partly as a resource rather than simply as a disposal burden.

Third, the initiative demonstrates the importance of **inter-city institutional learning.** Instead of requiring every urban local body to develop waste-management capacity independently, the mentor–mentee model allows successful practices to be transferred to cities with weaker technical and managerial capabilities.

Fourth, waste management requires integration of **technology, municipal capacity and community participation.** Scientific remediation of legacy waste can reduce landfill dependence, but long-term success requires preventing new waste accumulation through segregation, collection, processing and behavioural change.

The initiative also highlights an important governance principle: **environmental outcomes depend upon institutional coordination.** Municipal bodies, sanitation workers, recyclers, private processors and citizens must operate within an integrated system.



However, replication should not become mechanical. Cities differ in waste composition, land availability, fiscal capacity, population density and institutional capability. Therefore, the Depalpur model should be adapted rather than copied identically.

The transformation of the remediated dumpsite into a green public space, beginning with plantation of 200 saplings, also demonstrates how environmental remediation can generate a visible **public dividend**.

Going forward, Indian cities should strengthen source segregation, decentralised processing, material recovery facilities, scientific landfill remediation, data-based monitoring, integration of informal waste workers, extended producer responsibility and user participation.

Hence, Mission Zero is significant not because it simply removed an old dumpsite, but because it demonstrates a shift from **waste disposal to resource recovery, from isolated municipal action to institutional cooperation, and from sanitation infrastructure to sustainable urban governance**.

