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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY
&
STUDY CENTRE

DAILY MCQ'S

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 18/09/2026 (FRIDAY)

- 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 Roman Empire and its interaction with the societies of the Indian subcontinent, consider the following statements:

1. The Roman Empire's demand for Indian luxury goods contributed to the expansion of long-distance maritime trade across the Arabian Sea, with ports on the western coast of India becoming important nodes in this exchange.
2. The discovery of Roman gold coins in India necessarily establishes that the Roman Empire exercised direct political control over the regions where such coins have been found.

Which one of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a)

Detailed Explanation:

Statement 1 is correct. Roman demand for commodities such as pepper, pearls, precious stones, textiles and other luxury goods was an important component of the long-distance trade connecting the Mediterranean world with the Indian Ocean. The development of knowledge regarding the **monsoon wind system** facilitated more direct maritime movement between the Red Sea region and the western coast of India.

Ports such as **Muziris**, traditionally associated with the Malabar Coast, became important centres of Indo-Roman commercial exchange. Roman literary sources, archaeological evidence and coin finds collectively testify to these commercial connections.

Statement 2 is incorrect. The presence of Roman coins does **not** establish Roman political sovereignty over the territory where they were discovered. Coins can travel considerably beyond the political boundaries of the issuing state through trade, tribute, payments, gifts or subsequent circulation.

This distinction between **economic penetration and political control** is a significant historical trap. Archaeological evidence of foreign coins can establish the existence or intensity of economic contacts, but political control requires additional evidence such as administrative structures, inscriptions, military presence or demonstrable territorial authority.

The broader significance of Indo-Roman trade lies in the fact that the Indian Ocean was not an isolated geographical space. It was integrated into a wider commercial network linking India with the Roman Mediterranean, Arabian Peninsula and Southeast Asia.

Thus, while Roman commercial influence was substantial in parts of the Indian subcontinent, it should not be automatically translated into Roman territorial control.

Q2. Which one of the following best explains the ecological significance of keystone species in an ecosystem?

(a) They are necessarily the most abundant species and therefore contribute the largest share of ecosystem biomass.

(b) Their ecological influence is disproportionately large relative to their population or biomass, so their removal may trigger substantial changes in community structure.

(c) They occupy only the highest trophic level and therefore regulate every lower trophic level directly.

(d) They are species with the widest geographical distribution and are consequently resistant to ecological disturbances.

Answer: (b)

Detailed Explanation:

A **keystone species** is one whose ecological impact is disproportionately large compared with its numerical abundance or biomass.

The concept is important because ecosystem structure cannot always be understood merely by counting organisms or measuring biomass. A species may be relatively uncommon but exert strong regulatory effects through predation, competition, habitat modification, seed dispersal, pollination or other ecological interactions.

Removal of such a species can therefore produce a **trophic cascade** or substantial restructuring of the ecological community.

Option (a) is incorrect because a keystone species need not be abundant. In fact, the defining feature is precisely that its ecological effect is disproportionate to its abundance.

Option (c) is incorrect because keystone species are not necessarily apex predators. Keystone effects can occur at different trophic positions.

Option (d) is incorrect because geographical range is not the criterion for identifying a keystone species.

A useful conceptual distinction is between:

- **Keystone species** → disproportionately large ecological influence.
- **Dominant species** → often numerically or biomass-wise dominant.
- **Indicator species** → useful for assessing particular environmental conditions.
- **Foundation species** → substantially modify or create habitat and ecosystem structure.

The UPSC-level trap is to confuse **ecological importance with abundance**. Ecosystem functioning depends heavily upon interactions, not merely population size.

Q3. With reference to the distinction between economic growth and economic development, consider the following statements:

1. A country can experience positive real GDP growth without a proportionate improvement in human development outcomes.
2. Economic development necessarily implies that the benefits of rising national income are distributed equally among all sections of the population.
3. Improvements in health, education and access to basic capabilities can constitute development even when their immediate contribution to measured GDP is limited.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

Answer: (b)

Detailed Explanation:

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

Statement 1 is correct.

Economic growth generally refers to an increase in the production of goods and services, commonly measured through changes in real GDP or related aggregates. However, GDP growth alone does not capture the distribution of income, quality of education, health outcomes, environmental sustainability or access to essential services.

Therefore, an economy may grow rapidly while significant sections of the population continue to experience poor social outcomes.

Statement 2 is incorrect.

Economic development does not require equal distribution of income. A more appropriate conceptual understanding involves improvements in people's capabilities, opportunities, living standards and access to essential services.

Equality and development are related policy concerns, but they are not identical concepts. An economy can experience improvements in average living standards without achieving perfect income equality.

Statement 3 is correct.

Education and healthcare are fundamental components of human development. Improvements in these areas can enhance human capabilities, productivity and quality of life even when their immediate effects are not fully reflected in conventional GDP measurements.

For example, improved preventive healthcare may reduce future economic losses while simultaneously improving quality of life. Similarly, better education can generate long-term productivity gains that may not appear immediately in national-income statistics.

The deeper conceptual distinction is therefore:

Economic growth → primarily quantitative expansion of economic activity.

Economic development → broader improvement in human well-being, capabilities and structural conditions.

This is why indicators such as literacy, life expectancy, nutritional outcomes, gender equality and access to basic services complement income-based indicators.

The question deliberately uses the word **"necessarily"** in Statement 2. UPSC frequently tests such absolute formulations because development does not have to mean equal income distribution to qualify as development.

Q4. With reference to the regional aspirations that emerged in post-Independence India, consider the following statements:

1. The demand for greater autonomy by a State within the Indian Union is not, by itself, equivalent to a demand for secession.
2. Linguistic reorganisation of States demonstrated that accommodation of regional identities could be incorporated within the constitutional framework.
3. The creation of new States has historically occurred only when the concerned movement explicitly rejected the Indian Union.
4. India's approach to regional aspirations has involved a combination of democratic negotiation, constitutional restructuring and, in some circumstances, political or administrative intervention.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) Only three

(d) All four

Answer: (c)

Detailed Explanation:

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

Statement 1 is correct.

A demand for greater autonomy within the constitutional framework is conceptually different from a demand for sovereignty or secession. Regional movements can seek greater fiscal, administrative, cultural or political autonomy while continuing to accept the territorial integrity of India.

This distinction is central to understanding India's federal experience.

Statement 2 is correct.

The linguistic reorganisation of States was an important example of accommodating regional identities through constitutional and democratic mechanisms. The States Reorganisation Act, 1956 significantly altered India's internal administrative map.

The initial apprehension that linguistic States might weaken national unity was not borne out in the simplistic manner feared. Instead, the constitutional system demonstrated considerable flexibility in accommodating linguistic identities.

Statement 3 is incorrect.

The formation of new States has not required the concerned movement to reject the Indian Union. Several State-formation movements have sought a separate State **within India**, rather than independence from India.

This is a crucial distinction between **sub-nationalism and secessionism**.

Statement 4 is correct.

India's management of regional aspirations has employed multiple methods. These have included:

- creation or reorganisation of States;
- constitutional arrangements;
- political negotiations;
- electoral accommodation;
- institutional mechanisms;
- decentralisation; and
- where necessary, administrative and security measures.

Thus, regionalism cannot be understood through a simple binary of "accommodation" versus "coercion".

The broader lesson from *Politics in India Since Independence* is that India's unity has often depended upon the ability of its political institutions to **accommodate diversity without abandoning constitutional authority**.

The question is deliberately framed around the distinction between **regional autonomy, regionalism and secessionism**, which are frequently but incorrectly treated as synonymous.

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the geographical significance of ocean currents:

Assertion (A): The climatic conditions of western coastal margins of continents are not determined solely by their latitude.

Reason I (R-I): Cold ocean currents along certain western continental margins can reduce evaporation and atmospheric moisture availability over adjacent coastal areas.

Reason II (R-II): The general circulation of the atmosphere and the prevailing wind systems influence the direction and distribution of ocean currents.

Which one of the following is correct?

(a) Both Assertion and Reason I are correct, and Reason I is the correct explanation of the Assertion; Reason II is not correct.

(b) Both Assertion and Reason II are correct, and Reason II is the correct explanation of the Assertion; Reason I is not correct.

(c) Both Reason I and Reason II are correct, and both provide explanations for the Assertion.

(d) Assertion is correct, but both Reason I and Reason II are incorrect.

Answer: (c)

Detailed Explanation:

The **Assertion is correct**. Latitude is an important control over climate, but it does not independently determine climatic conditions. Ocean currents, atmospheric circulation, prevailing winds, relief and continentality can substantially modify the climatic character of coastal regions.

Reason I is correct.

Cold ocean currents can lower sea-surface temperatures along adjacent continental margins. Cooler water generally reduces evaporation and therefore limits the supply of moisture to the overlying atmosphere.

This mechanism contributes to the extreme aridity observed along some western continental margins in the subtropical zone. The **Peru (Humboldt) Current**, for example, is associated with the climatic conditions along the western coast of South America, including the Atacama region.

However, cold currents should not be treated as the sole cause of coastal deserts. Atmospheric subsidence associated with subtropical high-pressure belts, offshore wind patterns and topography can also contribute substantially.

Reason II is also correct.

Ocean currents are influenced by several mechanisms, including:

- prevailing winds;
- Earth's rotation and the Coriolis effect;
- differences in temperature and salinity;
- density gradients;
- configuration of continents and ocean basins.

Consequently, atmospheric circulation and ocean circulation are closely interconnected components of the global climate system.

Both reasons therefore contribute to explaining why latitude alone cannot adequately explain the climate of western coastal margins.

The important conceptual trap is that **Reason II does not merely describe ocean currents; it establishes the atmospheric-oceanic interaction through which geographical climate patterns are produced.**

Hence, the Assertion is supported by both Reason I and Reason II, making **(c)** the appropriate answer.

DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FROM CURRENT AFFAIRS

Q1. With reference to the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDCs), consider the following statements:

1. The recent extension of the LAHDC framework to all seven districts of Ladakh represents an expansion of an existing statutory decentralisation mechanism rather than the creation of a constitutional body under the Sixth Schedule.
2. The LAHDCs derive their authority directly from the Constitution of India in the same manner as the Autonomous District Councils constituted under the Sixth Schedule.

Which one of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a)

Detailed Explanation:

Statement 1 is **correct**.

The LAHDCs are statutory, elected district-level institutions established under the **Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils Act, 1997**. Until recently, the framework operated in Leh and Kargil. In September 2026, the Ladakh Administration approved the establishment of LAHDCs in all seven districts, extending the system to the five newly created districts—**Sham, Nubra, Changthang, Zanskar and Drass**.

This is an important distinction: the extension of LAHDCs strengthens decentralised governance, but it does not by itself convert them into constitutional institutions.

Statement 2 is **incorrect**.

LAHDCs should not be equated with the **Autonomous District Councils under the Sixth Schedule** of the Constitution. The Sixth Schedule provides a constitutionally entrenched framework of autonomous administration for specified tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

LAHDCs, by contrast, operate under a **statutory framework** specific to Ladakh. The Ladakh Administration's recent notification was explicitly issued under the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils Act, 1997.

The conceptual trap is therefore between **statutory autonomy and constitutional autonomy**. Both may involve decentralisation and local participation, but their legal foundations are different.

The recent development is significant because the elected local-government framework that previously existed in Leh and Kargil is now being extended across all seven districts.

Q2. The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) is best understood as:

(a) A military alliance created primarily to provide collective defence against external powers in the Pacific

(b) A Pacific trade bloc restricted exclusively to sovereign island states and excluding Australia and New Zealand

(c) A UN specialised agency responsible for administering Pacific island territories

(d) A regional political and economic organisation whose members collectively pursue the "Blue Pacific" vision

Answer: (d)

Detailed Explanation:

The Pacific Islands Forum is a **regional political and economic organisation**, established in **1971**, and currently comprising **18 members**. Its membership includes Australia and New Zealand along with Pacific island states and territories.

The Forum's regional approach is strongly associated with the concept of the **"Blue Pacific"**, which treats the Pacific not merely as a collection of small island states but as a connected geopolitical, ecological and economic region.

The PIF's agenda extends well beyond traditional trade matters. It includes:

- climate change;
- sustainable development;

- regional security;
- economic resilience;
- ocean governance;
- social inclusion; and
- strengthening Pacific regionalism.

The **2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent**, adopted in 2022, represents a major articulation of this collective regional vision.

Option (a) is incorrect because the PIF is not a conventional military alliance.

Option (b) is incorrect because its membership is broader than sovereign small island states; the Forum includes Australia, New Zealand and territories such as French Polynesia and New Caledonia.

Option (c) is incorrect because it is not a UN specialised agency.

The UPSC-level conceptual trap is to interpret the PIF purely through the lens of **island states**. Its significance increasingly lies in collective regional agency—particularly on climate change, oceans, development and geopolitical affairs.

Q3. With reference to the Offline Verification Seeking Entity (OVSE) framework associated with Aadhaar, consider the following statements:

1. An OVSE can perform Aadhaar-based offline verification without connecting to the Central Identities Data Repository (CIDR).
2. Secure QR Code and Aadhaar Paperless Offline e-KYC XML are recognised modes through which offline verification can be undertaken.
3. An OVSE is permitted to retain the Aadhaar number or Virtual ID of the resident in its offline verification logs whenever the resident has consented to such retention.

Which of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only 1 and 2

(b) Only 2 and 3

(c) All three

(d) Only 1 and 3

Answer: (a)

Detailed Explanation:

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

Statement 1 is correct.

Offline Aadhaar verification enables an organisation to verify identity-related information **locally**, without connecting to the Central Identities Data Repository (CIDR). Organisations undertaking such lawful offline verification are termed **Offline Verification Seeking Entities (OVSEs)**.

This distinction is important because offline verification is conceptually different from Aadhaar authentication involving a real-time interaction with the central repository.

Statement 2 is correct.

Two important forms of offline verification are:

- **Secure QR Code**, available on Aadhaar documents such as the Aadhaar letter, e-Aadhaar, Aadhaar PVC card and m-Aadhaar; and
- **Aadhaar Paperless Offline e-KYC XML**, downloaded through UIDAI mechanisms.

The data contained in these forms is digitally signed by UIDAI, allowing the verifier to check its authenticity without requiring direct access to CIDR.

Statement 3 is incorrect.

Even where an OVSE maintains verification-related logs with the resident's consent, the applicable framework places restrictions on what can be stored. The regulations specifically state that an OVSE maintaining such logs **shall not store the Aadhaar number or Virtual ID** of the Aadhaar number holder.

This question tests a subtle distinction between **offline verification** and **centralised storage**. The purpose of the framework is not simply to shift Aadhaar verification offline while reproducing unrestricted centralised data retention at the verifier's end.

Thus, only Statements 1 and 2 are correct.

Q4. With reference to the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), consider the following statements:

1. The CCPA is primarily concerned with protecting, promoting and enforcing the rights of consumers as a class.
2. It can investigate violations of consumer rights and unfair trade practices.
3. It can issue directions for recall of goods, refund of the price, or discontinuation of practices found to violate consumer rights or constitute unfair trade practices.
4. The CCPA is itself the appellate judicial authority over all decisions of the District, State and National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) Only three

(d) All four

Answer: (c)

Detailed Explanation:

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

Statement 1 is correct.

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 created the CCPA to **protect, promote and enforce the rights of consumers as a class**. It is particularly concerned with systemic consumer-protection issues, including unfair trade practices and misleading advertisements.

Statement 2 is correct.

The CCPA has investigative powers relating to violations of consumer rights and unfair trade practices. It can undertake inquiries and investigations into matters falling within its statutory mandate.

Statement 3 is correct.

One of the important powers of the CCPA is to issue directions concerning:

- recall of goods;
- refund of the price;
- discontinuation of practices; and
- modification or discontinuation of false or misleading advertisements.

It can also impose penalties in specified circumstances relating to misleading advertisements.

Statement 4 is incorrect.

The CCPA should not be confused with the **Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions**, which constitute the quasi-judicial three-tier consumer dispute-redressal machinery at the District, State and National levels. The Department of Consumer Affairs specifically distinguishes the CCPA from this commission structure.

The conceptual distinction is crucial:

CCPA → regulatory/enforcement authority for consumer rights as a class, unfair trade practices and misleading advertisements.

Consumer Commissions → quasi-judicial mechanism for adjudicating consumer disputes.

Thus, three of the four statements are correct.

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the Northern Goshawk:

1. It is a forest-associated raptor whose prey includes birds and small mammals.
2. In India, it is protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, while its global IUCN status is Least Concern.
3. Its ecological distribution in India is restricted exclusively to mangrove and coastal wetland ecosystems.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

Answer: (b)

Detailed Explanation:

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

Statement 1 is correct.

The Northern Goshawk, **Accipiter gentilis**, is a raptor associated primarily with forest and woodland habitats. Its prey base includes birds and small mammals. It is also described as an opportunistic hunter and is highly territorial.

Statement 2 is correct.

In India, the Northern Goshawk is protected under **Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**. Its global IUCN Red List category is **Least Concern**. It is also listed under **Appendix II of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS)**.

This creates an important UPSC trap: a species can have a global IUCN category of Least Concern while still receiving a high level of legal protection within a particular country.

Statement 3 is incorrect.

The Northern Goshawk is not restricted to mangrove or coastal wetland ecosystems. It is primarily associated with **forest and woodland habitats**, including deciduous and coniferous forests. In India, its distribution extends across suitable forested landscapes.

The distinction between **global conservation status, domestic legal protection and habitat preference** is particularly important. These three concepts should not be treated as interchangeable.

Hence, only Statements 1 and 2 are correct.

Q6. Consider the following geographical description:

It is a coastal protected area on the eastern coast of India, located in the deltaic region of the Brahmani and Baitarani river systems. It is particularly renowned for its extensive mangrove ecosystem and is associated with the conservation of the saltwater crocodile. It also lies close to the Gahirmatha coast, an important mass-nesting site of Olive Ridley turtles.

The protected area described above is:

(a) Similipal National Park

(b) Chilika Wildlife Sanctuary

(c) Bhitarkanika National Park

(d) Satkosia Gorge Wildlife Sanctuary

Answer: (c)

Detailed Explanation:

The correct answer is **Bhitarkanika National Park**.

Bhitarkanika is located in **Kendrapara district of Odisha**, in the deltaic environment associated principally with the **Brahmani and Baitarani river systems**. It is one of India's important mangrove ecosystems.

The area is particularly significant for **saltwater crocodile conservation**. The crocodile conservation programme in the region predates the declaration of Bhitarkanika National Park.

The protected-area complex is also geographically linked with **Gahirmatha**, which lies to its east and is famous for mass nesting of **Olive Ridley turtles**. Gahirmatha was declared a Marine Wildlife Sanctuary in 1997, while the core area of the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary was declared a National Park in 1998.

Bhitarkanika was also designated a **Ramsar Site in 2002**, highlighting the international wetland significance of the ecosystem.

The other options are deliberately plausible:

- **Similipal** → major forested protected area in northern Odisha, associated particularly with deciduous forests and tiger conservation.
- **Chilika** → major brackish-water lagoon ecosystem of Odisha.
- **Satkosia** → associated with the Mahanadi river gorge ecosystem.

Therefore, the combination of **Brahmani–Baitarani delta + mangroves + saltwater crocodile + proximity to Gahirmatha** uniquely identifies **Bhitarkanika National Park**.

DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAINS ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Q1. "The Mughal agrarian system was characterised by a complex interaction between the peasantry, zamindars and the state, rather than by a simple landlord–tenant relationship." Examine the nature of these relationships and explain how they shaped the functioning of the Mughal rural economy.

Sample Answer

The agrarian economy constituted the material foundation of the Mughal Empire. Agriculture generated the principal surplus on which the imperial administration, military establishment and urban economy depended. However, the Mughal countryside was not organised through a simple relationship between a central state and passive cultivators. Instead, it involved continuous interaction among **peasants, zamindars, local intermediaries and the imperial revenue machinery**.

Peasants as active economic agents

The peasantry was not a homogeneous or powerless category. Cultivators included different groups with varying degrees of access to land, livestock, implements and labour.

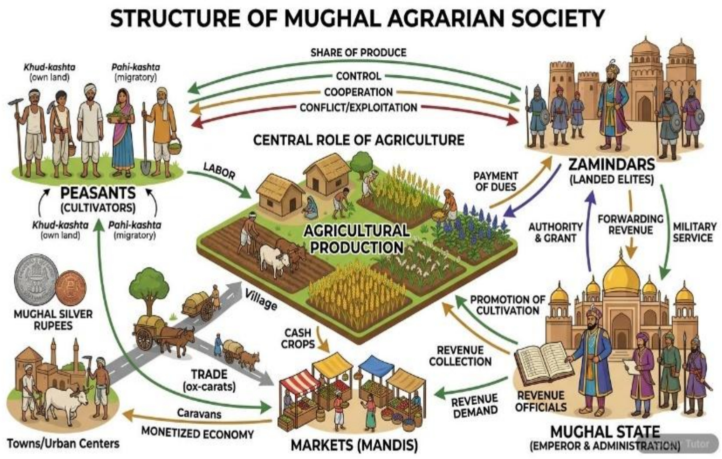
Peasants cultivated both subsistence and commercial crops. The expansion of crops such as cotton, sugarcane and indigo indicates that rural production was connected with markets beyond the village.

The state generally sought to extract a substantial portion of the agricultural surplus as revenue. However, excessive extraction could undermine cultivation itself. Consequently, the Mughal fiscal system required a degree of equilibrium between **state demand and cultivators' capacity to produce**.

Role of zamindars

Zamindars occupied an intermediate but powerful position. They were not simply equivalent to modern landlords. Their authority could derive from hereditary rights, control over local resources, social status, military capacity and recognition by the state.

They could collect revenue, exercise influence over villages and mobilise armed retainers. Some zamindars controlled substantial territories, while others possessed relatively modest local influence.



Their relationship with the state was therefore simultaneously **cooperative and competitive**. The Mughal administration relied upon local intermediaries for effective revenue extraction, but it also attempted to regulate and subordinate their autonomous power.

State and agrarian surplus

The Mughal state developed sophisticated systems for assessing and collecting land revenue. Under Akbar, the reforms associated with **Raja Todar Mal** sought systematic assessment of cultivated land, crop yields and revenue obligations.

The state was therefore not merely extracting revenue randomly; it attempted to make agricultural production fiscally legible.

However, the relationship remained dynamic. Changes in cultivation, crop prices, local resistance and climatic conditions could affect revenue collection.

Village community

The village was an important institutional space where cultivators, artisans, headmen and other groups interacted. Rural society also exhibited considerable differentiation based on caste, occupation, access to land and economic resources.

Thus, the village should not be romanticised as an egalitarian self-contained unit.

Wider economic significance

Agrarian production supported urbanisation and long-distance trade. Agricultural surplus financed imperial expenditure, while commercial crops linked villages with merchants and urban markets.

Consequently, the Mughal countryside was simultaneously:

a site of subsistence production + revenue extraction + commercialisation + social hierarchy.

Conclusion

The Mughal agrarian system functioned through a negotiated and often contested relationship between the imperial state and local society. Peasants produced the surplus, zamindars mediated and exercised local power, and the state attempted to appropriate a portion of the surplus through an increasingly elaborate revenue system. Understanding these relationships helps explain both the **strength of Mughal fiscal power and the persistent tensions embedded within the rural economy**.

Q2. "The dominance of the Congress system in the early decades after Independence should not be confused with the absence of political competition." Discuss the factors responsible for Congress dominance and explain why India nevertheless remained a competitive democracy.

Sample Answer

The first three general elections of independent India—in 1951–52, 1957 and 1962—were dominated by the Indian National Congress. Yet describing this period simply as "one-party rule" would be misleading. The Congress enjoyed electoral dominance within a **genuinely competitive democratic framework**.

Factors behind Congress dominance

First, the Congress possessed a historical legitimacy derived from the freedom struggle.

It had participated in the national movement for decades and therefore possessed organisational networks extending across large parts of the country. Many voters associated the party with national independence and the establishment of the new republic.

Second, its social and ideological breadth was exceptional.

Congress functioned as a broad political coalition containing multiple ideological tendencies. It accommodated conservatives, socialists, liberals, rural elites, minorities and different regional interests.

This gave it an electoral reach that narrowly ideological parties often lacked.

Third, organisational penetration was substantial.

The party had local-level networks and political workers across numerous constituencies. In contrast, many opposition parties were regionally concentrated or organisationally weaker.

Fourth, opposition parties were fragmented.

Communists, socialists, Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Swatantra Party and various regional formations represented different ideological and social constituencies. Their fragmentation reduced the possibility of a unified electoral challenge.

Why was it not one-party rule?

The distinction between **one-party dominance and one-party state** is crucial.

India retained:

- periodic elections;
- universal adult franchise;
- independent political parties;
- opposition representation;
- freedom of political mobilisation; and
- constitutional institutions.

Opposition parties could contest elections and occasionally achieve significant victories.

The **Communist Party's victory in Kerala in 1957** was particularly significant because it demonstrated that electoral alternation was constitutionally possible even during Congress dominance.

Moreover, the Congress itself was internally pluralistic. Many political conflicts occurred within the Congress organisation rather than solely between Congress and opposition parties.

Democratic significance

The early Congress system therefore represented a peculiar form of democratic competition in which one party was overwhelmingly successful but did not abolish electoral contestation.

This distinction is important because political dominance can arise through **electoral legitimacy**, whereas authoritarian one-party rule rests on eliminating meaningful political competition.

Limitations

Congress dominance nevertheless created certain risks. The enormous organisational and electoral advantage of the party could weaken the institutional capacity of opposition parties. In some States, political competition remained uneven.

Furthermore, dependence upon factional balancing within Congress could make political accountability less direct.

Conclusion

The first phase of Indian democracy demonstrates that **electoral competition and electoral dominance can coexist**. Congress's dominance was facilitated by its role in the freedom movement, broad social coalition, organisational reach and fragmented opposition. Yet the survival of elections, opposition parties and constitutional procedures meant that India remained a competitive democracy. The experience illustrates the distinction between **winning repeatedly within democracy and eliminating democracy itself**.

Q3. "An economy integrated into global financial and trade markets gains opportunities for efficiency and capital allocation, but simultaneously becomes vulnerable to external shocks." Explain this duality in the context of an open economy. What policy instruments can help manage such vulnerabilities?

Sample Answer

An open economy is one that interacts extensively with the rest of the world through **trade in goods and services, capital flows and foreign exchange transactions**. Global economic integration can increase efficiency and access to capital, technology and markets, but it can also transmit external disturbances rapidly into the domestic economy.

Benefits of openness

International trade enables countries to specialise according to comparative advantage. Access to larger markets can generate economies of scale and encourage productivity improvements.

Capital mobility can provide developing economies with additional resources for investment. Foreign direct investment can also bring technology, managerial practices and integration into global production networks.

Similarly, imported intermediate goods can improve the productivity and competitiveness of domestic industries.

Sources of vulnerability

The same channels that transmit benefits can transmit shocks.

1. Exchange-rate shocks

A depreciation of the domestic currency can increase the domestic cost of imported commodities, particularly energy and intermediate goods. If the economy depends heavily on imports, this can contribute to inflationary pressures.

2. Capital-flow reversals

Large capital inflows can finance investment and strengthen financial markets. However, sudden reversals can generate exchange-rate pressure, asset-price volatility and liquidity stress.

3. External demand shocks

An economic slowdown in major trading partners can reduce exports and adversely affect sectors dependent upon international demand.

4. Commodity-price shocks

Import-dependent economies can experience substantial deterioration in their trade balance when global prices of crude oil or other essential commodities rise.

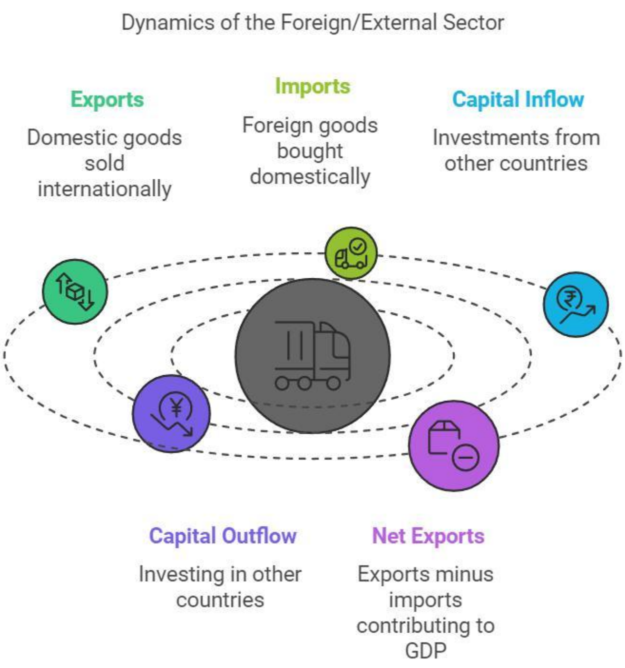
Macroeconomic policy responses

The central bank can intervene in foreign-exchange markets to manage excessive volatility, although persistent intervention cannot permanently override underlying economic fundamentals.

Monetary policy can address inflationary pressures, but tightening monetary conditions during an external shock can also weaken domestic demand.

Fiscal policy can support vulnerable sectors during temporary downturns, provided fiscal sustainability is preserved.

Foreign-exchange reserves can provide a buffer against disorderly external adjustment.



Structural measures

The most sustainable response is not permanent protection from global markets but greater domestic resilience.

This requires:

- diversification of export markets;
- development of domestic supply chains;
- reduction of excessive import dependence in strategic sectors;

- prudent external borrowing;
- adequate foreign-exchange reserves;
- deeper domestic financial markets; and
- macroprudential regulation.

The policy dilemma

Open-economy management involves balancing multiple objectives. Excessive capital controls may reduce financial integration, while completely unrestricted capital flows can amplify volatility. Similarly, an artificially fixed exchange rate can provide short-term stability but become difficult to sustain if economic fundamentals diverge.

The challenge is therefore to distinguish between **productive openness and unmanaged vulnerability**.

Conclusion

Global integration should not be understood as inherently beneficial or inherently destabilising. It creates channels through which **productivity gains, capital and technology** can enter an economy, but the same channels can transmit financial, commodity and demand shocks. Effective macroeconomic management therefore requires a combination of flexible adjustment, adequate buffers, prudent regulation and structural diversification. The objective should be **resilient integration rather than isolation**.

Q4. "Ethical governance requires more than compliance with rules; it requires public officials to exercise discretion in a manner consistent with constitutional values." Discuss with suitable examples. How can institutional mechanisms prevent discretion from becoming arbitrariness?

Sample Answer

Public administration operates through rules, procedures and delegated authority. Yet no legal framework can anticipate every possible administrative situation. Consequently, civil servants inevitably exercise **discretion**. The ethical challenge arises when discretion becomes detached from public purpose and turns into arbitrariness, favouritism or abuse of authority.

Rules provide the minimum framework for administrative conduct, but ethical governance demands that their implementation also reflect constitutional values such as **justice, equality, dignity, impartiality and accountability**.

Why discretion is necessary

Consider a district administration responding to a natural disaster. Procurement rules ordinarily require prescribed procedures, competition and documentation. However, an immediate threat to life may necessitate emergency procurement.

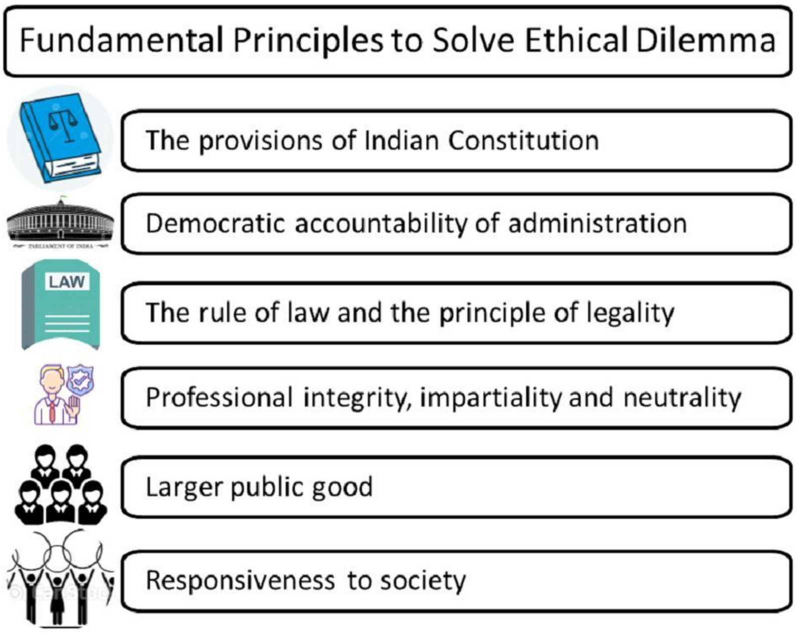
Similarly, welfare legislation may establish eligibility criteria, but vulnerable citizens can face exceptional circumstances not anticipated by standard administrative forms.

Therefore, eliminating discretion entirely is neither realistic nor necessarily desirable.

When discretion becomes problematic

Discretion becomes arbitrary when:

- similar cases are treated differently without relevant justification;
- decisions are influenced by personal relationships;
- political or private pressure overrides public interest;
- reasons are deliberately concealed;
- procedures are selectively relaxed; or
- benefits are distributed for extraneous considerations.



For example, granting a public contract to a preferred firm despite objective evidence favouring another would transform legitimate administrative discretion into patronage.

Constitutional morality as a guide

Constitutional values provide an ethical compass.

Equality requires that similarly situated persons be treated similarly unless a relevant distinction exists.

Justice requires attention to substantive consequences rather than merely procedural correctness.

Dignity requires humane treatment of citizens.

Secularism and impartiality require officials to avoid discrimination based on irrelevant personal characteristics.

Institutional safeguards

Individual morality cannot be the sole defence against arbitrary discretion. Institutions must constrain and guide decision-making.

1. Reasoned decisions

Officials should record reasons for significant discretionary decisions. This makes decisions reviewable.

2. Transparency

Disclosure mechanisms and proactive transparency reduce opportunities for arbitrary action.

3. Audit

Financial and performance audits can identify deviations from established procedures.

4. Judicial review

Courts can examine whether executive discretion has been exercised arbitrarily, irrationally or contrary to law.

5. Grievance redressal

Citizens require accessible mechanisms to challenge administrative decisions.

6. Conflict-of-interest safeguards

Officials should disclose and recuse themselves where personal interests could influence official decisions.

7. Objective criteria

Where discretion is unavoidable, governments should establish transparent criteria and standard operating procedures.

Ethical leadership

Institutional safeguards are necessary but insufficient. Administrative culture also matters. Senior officers must demonstrate that integrity, impartiality and public service are valued more highly than short-term political or personal convenience.

Conclusion

Discretion is an unavoidable feature of governance, particularly in complex and rapidly changing circumstances. The ethical objective is therefore not to abolish discretion but to **discipline it through law, reason, transparency, institutional review and constitutional values**. When discretion remains explainable, reviewable and oriented towards legitimate public interest, it becomes an instrument of responsive governance rather than arbitrary power.

Current Affairs – Internal Security

Q5. "The Jhiram Ghati massacre illustrates that counter-insurgency cannot be reduced to a contest between security forces and armed extremists; it is equally a test of intelligence coordination, state capacity, political security, tribal rights and development legitimacy." In the light of the Jhiram Ghati attack and subsequent developments, critically examine the lessons for India's strategy against Left Wing Extremism.

Sample Answer

The **Jhiram Ghati massacre of 25 May 2013** was a major Maoist attack in Bastar, Chhattisgarh, in which a convoy of Congress leaders returning from a political programme was ambushed. The attack killed at least 27 people and injured 38, including prominent political leaders. In September 2026, a Special NIA Court in Jagdalpur convicted ten accused and subsequently sentenced them to death; the sentences remain subject to the appellate process.

The incident remains significant not merely because of its scale but because it demonstrated how insurgent violence can exploit **terrain, intelligence vulnerabilities, political movements and gaps in state presence**.

1. Intelligence and operational coordination

The first lesson concerns intelligence.

Counter-insurgency requires integration of:

- human intelligence;

- technical intelligence;
- local police knowledge;
- central intelligence agencies;
- surveillance;
- communication networks; and
- real-time threat assessment.

A large political convoy travelling through a conflict-affected forest zone requires security planning that integrates the political programme with the prevailing threat environment.

The Jhiram episode therefore highlights the importance of **actionable intelligence rather than intelligence accumulation alone**.

2. Security and development are interconnected

The Maoist challenge historically gained strength in areas characterised by difficult terrain, weak connectivity, limited administrative presence and socio-economic grievances.

However, development should not be conceptualised simply as a counter-insurgency instrument. Roads, telecommunications, healthcare, education and welfare services have intrinsic developmental value.

The appropriate model is therefore:

security → territorial access → governance → development → institutional legitimacy.

The "Clear, Hold and Develop" approach reflects this interdependence.

3. Tribal rights and state legitimacy

A purely militarised approach can generate alienation if local communities experience state institutions primarily through coercive mechanisms.

The history of **Salwa Judum** demonstrates the ethical and institutional dangers of outsourcing or informally expanding coercive functions through civilian mobilisation. The Supreme Court's 2011 intervention concerning the arming of tribal youth as Special Police Officers is an important constitutional lesson.

Counter-LWE policy must therefore protect:

- constitutional rights;
- due process;
- tribal land and forest rights;
- dignity of civilians; and
- accountability of security personnel.

4. Political security as part of internal security

Jhiram Ghati also demonstrated that insurgent organisations can target democratic political leadership rather than only security installations.

The attack consequently raises a broader question: **protection of democratic institutions is itself an internal-security objective**.

Political leaders travelling through conflict-affected areas require security protocols based on threat assessment without undermining democratic political activity.

5. Justice and institutional credibility

The long judicial process also highlights the difficulty of prosecuting complex insurgency-linked crimes. The Special NIA Court's September 2026 verdict followed years of investigation and trial. Ten surviving accused were convicted, and the subsequent death sentences have entered the appellate stage.

At the same time, some victims' families have continued to seek investigation into alleged wider dimensions of the conspiracy. Such claims remain contested and should not be treated as established facts merely because they have been publicly asserted.

This distinction illustrates an important principle: **justice requires both accountability for proven offences and institutional mechanisms capable of examining credible unresolved questions through lawful procedures.**

6. Way forward

India's counter-LWE strategy should therefore emphasise:

- intelligence fusion;
- secure communications;
- specialised jungle warfare capabilities;
- better road and telecommunications connectivity;
- permanent administrative presence;
- tribal participation;
- implementation of forest and land rights;
- rehabilitation and reintegration where legally appropriate;
- financial disruption of insurgent networks;
- protection of civilians; and
- rapid and credible investigation of security failures.

Conclusion

The central lesson of Jhiram Ghati is that insurgency thrives where **security deficits, governance deficits and information deficits intersect**. Conversely, durable counter-insurgency requires more than eliminating armed cadres. It requires making the constitutional state physically present, administratively capable, developmentally responsive and legally accountable.

Thus, the long-term objective should be not merely **"defeating an insurgency" but making insurgent governance unnecessary and constitutional governance credible**.