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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

DAILY MCQ'S

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 26/09/2026 (SATURDAY)

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



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DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FROM STATIC PART

1. With reference to Sangam literature, consider the following statements:

1. The distinction between *akam* and *puram* in Sangam poetry broadly corresponds to the domains of interior/personal life and public/heroic life, respectively.
2. The *Tolkappiyam*, though primarily a work on grammar and poetics, provides important information on the social and cultural conventions underlying Sangam literary traditions.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Both are incorrect
(d) Neither one nor two

Answer: (b) Only two

Explanation:
Both statements are correct.

- **Statement 1 is correct.** Sangam poetry is conventionally classified into *akam* and *puram*. *Akam* deals principally with the inner world of human emotions, especially love and relationships, while *puram* concerns the public sphere, including warfare, kingship, generosity, heroism and social action. The distinction is not simply between "religious" and "secular" poetry; it represents two different poetic domains with their own conventions.
- **Statement 2 is correct.** *Tolkappiyam* is the earliest extant Tamil grammatical work and is also significant for its treatment of **poetics, literary conventions and social-cultural categories**. Its discussion of *tinai* is particularly important for understanding the relationship between landscape, human activity and poetic themes.

The major trap is to treat *Tolkappiyam* as merely a grammatical text having no historical value. Although it is not a conventional historical chronicle, its grammatical and literary prescriptions provide valuable evidence for reconstructing aspects of early Tamil society and culture.

2. In a biochemical wastewater treatment system, the Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) of a water sample is best understood as:

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(a) the total quantity of dissolved oxygen physically present in water at the time of sampling

(b) the amount of oxygen required by microorganisms to biologically decompose biodegradable organic matter under specified conditions

(c) the amount of oxygen consumed exclusively by aquatic plants during photosynthesis

(d) the quantity of oxygen chemically added to water to neutralise inorganic pollutants

Answer: (b)

Explanation:
BOD measures the amount of dissolved oxygen that microorganisms require to decompose **biodegradable organic matter** present in a water sample under specified conditions, conventionally measured over a defined incubation period.

A high BOD generally indicates a high load of biodegradable organic matter. When untreated sewage or organic waste enters a water body, microorganisms decompose the organic material and consume dissolved oxygen. If oxygen consumption becomes excessive, the resulting **oxygen depletion** can adversely affect aquatic organisms.

- **(a)** describes dissolved oxygen (DO), not BOD.
- **(c)** is incorrect because photosynthesis generally **produces** oxygen rather than defining BOD.
- **(d)** confuses BOD with a chemical treatment process.

A crucial distinction for Prelims is between **BOD and COD**. BOD is associated with biologically biodegradable organic matter, whereas Chemical Oxygen Demand measures oxygen equivalent required for chemical oxidation of oxidisable substances and is generally broader in scope.

3. With reference to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) in India, consider the following statements:

1. FDI generally implies a lasting interest and a significant degree of influence or control in an enterprise, whereas FPI generally represents investment in financial assets without the same degree of managerial control.
2. A foreign investor acquiring equity in an Indian company necessarily constitutes FDI, irrespective of the size of the holding or the applicable regulatory classification.
3. Compared with FDI, portfolio flows are generally more sensitive to changes in global interest rates, risk perceptions and financial-market conditions.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: (b) Only two

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

Statement 1 is correct. The fundamental distinction concerns the nature of the investment. FDI involves a foreign investor's **lasting interest** and generally a significant influence or control over the enterprise. Portfolio investment normally involves acquisition of financial securities primarily for investment returns without comparable managerial control.

Statement 2 is incorrect. Foreign acquisition of equity does **not automatically mean FDI** merely because equity has been acquired. The applicable regulatory framework and prescribed thresholds/classifications matter. A foreign investor can acquire securities as portfolio investment without obtaining the degree of ownership or control associated with FDI.

Statement 3 is correct. FPI tends to be more mobile because portfolio investors can relatively quickly reallocate financial assets in response to changes in interest rates, exchange-rate expectations, global risk appetite and market conditions. FDI is generally considered comparatively more stable because it involves longer-term commercial commitments and physical or managerial interests.

The UPSC trap here is the word **"necessarily"** in Statement 2. The distinction is not simply "equity = FDI"; rather, the **nature, extent and regulatory classification of the investment** are important.

4. With reference to motions in the Parliament of India, consider the following statements:

1. A substantive motion is a self-contained proposal generally capable of expressing a decision or opinion of the House on a matter of concern.
2. A substitute motion seeks to replace the original proposition under consideration with an alternative proposition.
3. An amendment is necessarily an independent substantive motion and can be moved only after the original motion has been finally adopted by the House.
4. A closure motion is intended to bring debate on a matter to an end so that the question can be put to vote.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: (c) Only three

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

Statement 1 is correct. A **substantive motion** is an independent proposal on which the House can take a decision. It is not merely dependent upon another motion.

Statement 2 is correct. A **substitute motion** proposes an alternative to the original proposition. If adopted, it replaces the original motion.

Statement 3 is incorrect. An **amendment** is not necessarily an independent substantive motion. It is generally moved to modify, add to, omit or otherwise alter part of a motion or proposal under consideration. It must be considered in relation to the original proposition and is not something that is moved only after the original motion has already been finally adopted.

Statement 4 is correct. A **closure motion** is designed to terminate debate on a matter before the House and enable the question to be put to vote, subject to the applicable parliamentary rules and the Speaker/Chair's authority.

Conceptual Trap

UPSC can test parliamentary motions by distinguishing their **relationship with the main proposition**:

- **Substantive motion → independent proposition**
- **Substitute motion → alternative proposition**
- **Amendment → modification of a proposition**
- **Closure → termination of debate**

Thus, merely memorising names without understanding the procedural relationship among these motions can lead to an incorrect answer.

5. Consider the following Assertion and Reasons:

Assertion (A): Clouds having substantial vertical development are not necessarily associated with precipitation reaching the ground.

Reason (R1): The occurrence of precipitation within a cloud does not necessarily imply that the precipitation survives its descent through the atmosphere and reaches the Earth's surface.

Reason (R2): Strong vertical development of a cloud is determined primarily by its horizontal geographical extent rather than by atmospheric instability and vertical air movement.

Which one of the following is correct?

(a) Both R1 and R2 are correct, and both explain Assertion (A)

(b) Both R1 and R2 are correct, but only R1 explains Assertion (A)

(c) R1 is correct, but R2 is incorrect

(d) R1 is incorrect, but R2 is correct

Answer: (c)

Explanation:
The **Assertion is correct**, and **R1 is correct**, whereas **R2 is incorrect**.

Why is the Assertion correct?
Clouds with considerable vertical development, such as cumulonimbus, have strong upward and downward air movements and can produce significant precipitation. However, the mere presence of vertical development does not guarantee that precipitation will reach the ground. Hydrometeors may evaporate while descending through relatively dry air, producing **virga** rather than surface precipitation.

R1 is correct. Precipitation formed within a cloud must pass through the air column below the cloud. If the surrounding air is sufficiently dry or other atmospheric conditions prevent the hydrometeors from reaching the surface, the precipitation may evaporate or otherwise dissipate before reaching the ground.

R2 is incorrect. Vertical development is fundamentally associated with **vertical atmospheric motions, instability, moisture and convection**, rather than primarily with horizontal geographical extent. Cumuliform clouds can develop vertically when rising moist air undergoes condensation and continues to rise under favourable atmospheric conditions.

The important Prelims distinction is therefore between **cloud morphology** and **precipitation reaching the surface**. A cloud's appearance or vertical extent alone does not establish that measurable precipitation is occurring at ground level.

DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FROM CURRENT AFFAIRS

1. With reference to the Ramanathaswamy Temple at Rameswaram, consider the following statements:

1. The temple is predominantly associated with the Dravidian tradition of temple architecture, but its present architectural complex is the cumulative result of additions and patronage spread across different periods rather than the work of a single dynasty.
2. The monumental corridors for which the temple is particularly famous are substantially associated with the Nayak architectural idiom and the patronage of the Sethupathy rulers of Ramanathapuram.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Neither one nor two
(d) Both one and two

Answer: (d) Both one and two

Explanation:

Both statements are correct.

Statement 1 is correct. The Ramanathaswamy Temple represents the **Dravidian architectural tradition**, characterised by features such as monumental gopurams, enclosed prakaras, mandapas and extensive pillared corridors. However, the present complex was not constructed in one phase. The temple received additions and patronage over several centuries. The Tamil Nadu government's district portal notes that rulers were involved in its construction from the 12th century onward, with the Sethupathy rulers playing a major role in its later development.

Statement 2 is correct. The temple's celebrated long pillared corridors display a strong **Nayak architectural influence**, while the **Sethupathy rulers of Ramanathapuram** were major patrons responsible for substantial additions. Historical architectural accounts particularly associate the famous third prakara/corridor with the Nayak idiom and Sethupathy patronage.

A major UPSC trap is to ask **"Who constructed the temple?"** as though there were a single answer. The historically safer understanding is that the temple is a **multi-period architectural complex**. The earliest masonry construction is also associated in historical accounts with **Parakrama Bahu of Sri Lanka**, while subsequent rulers substantially expanded the complex.

Thus, linking the entire temple exclusively either to the Nayaks or to the Sethupathys would be an oversimplification.

2. The World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF) 2026, held in India, is best understood as an international platform primarily concerned with which one of the following?

(a) Negotiating legally binding global targets for reducing greenhouse-gas emissions from heavy industries

(b) Accelerating the transition from a linear "take-make-dispose" economic model towards resource efficiency, reuse, recovery and circular value chains

(c) Establishing a global carbon market exclusively for developing countries

(d) Coordinating international trade in hazardous wastes under the Basel Convention

Answer: (b)

Explanation:

The correct answer is **(b)**.

The **World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF)** is a global platform focused on accelerating the transition towards a **circular economy**, in which resource use, product design, production and consumption are reorganised to minimise waste and keep materials and products in circulation for as long as possible.

The 2026 edition was held at **Gandhinagar, Gujarat, from 15–18 September 2026**, marking the first time the forum was hosted in South Asia. It was organised jointly by the **Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra and India's Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)**, with support from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the Government of Gujarat.

The theme was:

"Circular Economy: Transition for People and Prosperity."

The forum addressed areas such as:

- resource efficiency;
- waste reduction;
- sustainable material flows;
- circular supply chains;
- financing for circularity;
- business-model transformation;
- innovation and technology;
- policy frameworks.

The conceptual trap is to equate **circular economy with climate policy alone**. Climate mitigation can be an important co-benefit, but circular economy is broader. It concerns the **entire lifecycle of materials and products**, including designing products for durability, repair, reuse, refurbishment and recycling.

Nor is WCEF a treaty-making body comparable to a formal negotiating conference under the UNFCCC. It functions principally as a **global knowledge, partnership and solutions platform**.

3. With reference to the Table Top Exercise (TTX) conducted under the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) in 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The exercise was conducted at the Eastern Naval Command in Visakhapatnam and involved simulated scenarios rather than deployment of naval assets for an actual operation.
2. Its focus on maritime terrorism, narcotics smuggling, human trafficking and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing reflects the CSC's broader emphasis on non-traditional maritime-security challenges.
3. The principal objective of the exercise was to conduct a live multinational naval war-fighting exercise involving the physical deployment of participating fleets in the Indian Ocean.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: (b) Only two

Explanation:

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

Statement 1 is correct. The three-day Table Top Exercise under the CSC concluded at the **Eastern Naval Command, Visakhapatnam**, on 11 September 2026. It involved simulated operational scenarios designed to rehearse coordinated responses rather than an actual fleet deployment.

Statement 2 is correct. The exercise focused on non-traditional maritime-security threats including:

- maritime terrorism,
- narcotics smuggling,
- human trafficking, and
- illegal, unreported and unregulated (**IUU**) fishing.

Participants also reviewed **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** and information-sharing mechanisms to strengthen **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)**.

Statement 3 is incorrect. A **Table Top Exercise** is essentially a simulated decision-making and coordination exercise. It allows participating authorities to test procedures, information-sharing mechanisms and command responses without necessarily deploying actual forces for a live operational mission.

The distinction is therefore important:

Table Top Exercise → simulation, coordination, decision-making and rehearsal

rather than

Live military exercise → physical deployment and operational manoeuvres.

The exercise was conducted under the **Colombo Security Conclave**, a regional maritime-security framework in the Indian Ocean region. Its focus therefore illustrates the increasing importance of **non-traditional security threats** alongside conventional maritime security.

4. With reference to the Subansiri River, consider the following statements:

1. It is a major north-bank tributary of the Brahmaputra.
2. Its transboundary character arises because its upper course lies in Tibet before it flows through Arunachal Pradesh and subsequently enters Assam.
3. The river's relatively steep gradient and flashy flood characteristics are partly associated with the geomorphological and climatic conditions of the Himalayan tributary system.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: (c) All three

Explanation:

All three statements are correct.

Statement 1 is correct. The Subansiri is one of the major **north-bank tributaries of the Brahmaputra**. The Assam government's description of the Brahmaputra river system specifically lists Subansiri among the major north-bank tributaries.

Statement 2 is correct. The river has a transboundary course. Its upper reaches are in the **Tibet Autonomous Region**, where it is known as the **Chayul Chu**, after which it flows through **Arunachal Pradesh** and ultimately enters the plains of **Assam**, joining the Brahmaputra.

Statement 3 is correct. North-bank tributaries of the Brahmaputra generally possess steep slopes, coarse sediment loads and flashy flood characteristics. The Assam government notes that such tributaries have steep slopes, shallow braided channels in considerable stretches and generally flashy floods.

The Subansiri's geography is particularly important because its upper Himalayan section has a **very substantial elevation gradient**. Technical documentation records a marked fall in riverbed elevation through its Himalayan sector before the river reaches the Assam plains.

UPSC trap

Do not confuse:

- **Subansiri → north-bank tributary of Brahmaputra**
- **Dhansiri (South) → south-bank tributary**
- **Dikrong and Ranganadi → associated tributary systems in the same broader Brahmaputra drainage**

The phrase **"transboundary river"** does not mean that the entire river forms an international boundary. It means its drainage/course extends across international territories.

5. With reference to the Bishkek Declaration adopted at the 2026 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit, consider the following statements:

1. It was adopted at the 26th meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO and marked the organisation's 25th anniversary.
2. The declaration treated the SCO as a military alliance with collective-defence obligations comparable to those of NATO.
3. India supported the inclusion of English as an official language of the SCO and the proposal for an SCO Civilisation Dialogue Forum.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: (b) Only two

Explanation:

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

Statement 1 is correct. The **26th SCO Summit** was held in **Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan**, on 1 September 2026, and the summit marked **25 years of the SCO**. The Bishkek Declaration was adopted as the principal joint outcome document. The SCO's official document database records the Bishkek Declaration of the 25th anniversary dated 1 September 2026.

Statement 2 is incorrect. The SCO does **not** define itself as a military alliance equivalent to NATO. The Bishkek Declaration reaffirmed the organisation's character as a multilateral regional organisation based on principles including sovereign equality, mutual respect and cooperation. Contemporary reporting specifically noted the SCO's position that it is **not a military-political bloc**.

Statement 3 is correct. India supported several initiatives reflected in the Bishkek outcomes, including **English as an official SCO language** and the proposed **SCO Civilisation Dialogue Forum**. India's Prime Minister also stated that India would host the first edition of the Civilisation Dialogue Forum later in 2026.

The important conceptual distinction is between a **regional organisation with security cooperation** and a **formal military alliance**. SCO cooperation covers security, counter-terrorism, connectivity, energy, technology, culture and other areas, but this does not automatically transform it into a collective-defence alliance.

6. Consider the following geographical locations:

1. **Papikonda National Park — Eastern Ghats**
2. **Papikonda National Park — Godavari River basin**
3. **Papikonda National Park — Andhra Pradesh**

Which one of the following combinations is correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3

Explanation:

All three associations are correct.

Papikonda National Park is located in **Andhra Pradesh**, primarily across the northern Eastern Ghats. It extends across areas associated with the **Godavari River**, and its landscape is characterised by rugged hill tracts, riverine terrain, forests and rich biodiversity.

The park covers approximately **1,068 sq km** and lies principally in the districts of **Alluri Sitharama Raju and Eluru** in Andhra Pradesh, with its broader landscape extending towards neighbouring Telangana.

The mapping trap is particularly important because the name **Papikonda** may lead candidates to associate it simply with a hill or district rather than a protected area situated within the **Godavari landscape of the Eastern Ghats**.

Its geographical associations can therefore be remembered as:

Eastern Ghats → Godavari landscape → Andhra Pradesh → Papikonda National Park.

The park was originally declared a **wildlife sanctuary in 1978** and was subsequently upgraded to **National Park status in 2008**.

DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAINS ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

GS Paper I — Art & Culture

Q1. "Buddhism transformed the religious landscape of ancient India not merely through its doctrines, but also through new institutional forms, artistic expressions and patterns of patronage." Examine.

Sample Answer

Buddhism emerged in the sixth century BCE in the context of profound social, economic and intellectual changes in the Gangetic plains. Its significance extended beyond the philosophical teachings of the Buddha. Through the **Sangha, stupas, chaityas, viharas, pilgrimage networks and new forms of artistic patronage**, Buddhism contributed substantially to the transformation of India's religious and cultural landscape.

1. Institutional transformation

The establishment of the **Sangha** represented an important institutional innovation. Religious life was no longer confined to householders, ritual specialists or isolated ascetics. The organised monastic community provided a relatively permanent institutional framework for Buddhist teachings.

The Sangha also created mechanisms for:

- admission and discipline of monks and nuns;
- preservation and transmission of teachings;
- movement of monks between regions;
- interaction between monastic and lay communities.

The **Vihara** consequently became not merely a residence but an important centre of learning and intellectual activity.

2. Transformation of religious practice



Buddhism challenged the centrality of elaborate sacrificial ritual by emphasising:

- ethical conduct;
- self-discipline;
- the Middle Path;
- karma;
- cessation of suffering;
- liberation through knowledge and practice.

This made religious pursuit less dependent upon large-scale sacrificial rituals.

However, Buddhism did not completely reject existing social practices. Over time, Buddhist traditions incorporated devotional practices, relic worship, sacred sites and increasingly elaborate rituals.

3. Transformation of architecture

Buddhist religious requirements encouraged the development of distinctive architectural forms.

The **stupa** evolved as an important sacred monument associated with relics and commemoration. Sites such as **Sanchi and Bharhut** illustrate the development of stupa architecture and narrative sculptural traditions.

The **chaitya** served as a prayer hall, while **viharas** provided residential spaces for monks.

Rock-cut architecture at **Ajanta, Karle, Bhaja and other sites** demonstrates the technological and artistic sophistication associated with Buddhist institutions.

4. Transformation of visual culture

Buddhist art provided an important impetus to narrative representation.

The **Jataka stories** were represented in sculptural and pictorial traditions, allowing complex ethical narratives to be communicated visually.

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The development of Buddhist art also went through important representational changes. Early traditions frequently used **aniconic symbols**, such as the Bodhi tree, empty throne, footprints and wheel, to evoke the Buddha. Later, particularly under the Gandhara and Mathura traditions, anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha became prominent.

5. Patronage and social networks

Buddhist institutions were supported not only by kings but also by **merchants, guilds, artisans and ordinary lay devotees**.

This is important because it indicates that religious patronage was connected with expanding trade networks and urbanisation.

Monasteries often emerged along important routes, allowing Buddhism to interact with:

- merchants;
- travellers;
- political authorities;
- local communities.

Critical assessment

The transformation was not linear. Buddhism itself diversified into different schools, and later developments such as **Mahayana** encouraged increasingly elaborate devotional and artistic traditions.

Moreover, Buddhism coexisted and interacted with Brahmanical, Jain and other traditions rather than simply replacing them.

Conclusion

Buddhism's historical significance therefore lies not merely in the spread of a new philosophical doctrine. It created a **new institutional ecology of monasteries, pilgrimage, artistic patronage and knowledge transmission**, leaving a lasting imprint on Indian architecture, sculpture, painting and intellectual traditions. Its contribution was consequently both **religious and civilisational**.

GS Paper II — International Relations

Q2. "The Quad has evolved from a predominantly strategic consultation mechanism into a broader platform for delivering public goods in the Indo-Pacific." Discuss India's interests in the Quad and examine the constraints on its institutionalisation.

Sample Answer

The **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)** brings together **India, Australia, Japan and the United States**. Its evolution reflects the growing strategic significance of the Indo-Pacific and the need for cooperation on maritime security, resilient supply chains, critical technologies, health, climate and infrastructure.

Evolution of the Quad

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The Quad originated from consultations among the four countries in the aftermath of the **2004 Indian Ocean tsunami**, followed by a formal meeting in 2007.

After a period of inactivity, the mechanism was revived in 2017 and subsequently elevated to the leaders' level.

Its agenda has progressively expanded beyond traditional security.

India's interests

1. Maritime security

India possesses a geographically central position in the Indian Ocean. Cooperation with Quad partners can strengthen:

- maritime domain awareness;
- humanitarian assistance and disaster relief;
- maritime surveillance;
- protection of sea lanes;
- capacity-building among Indo-Pacific partners.

2. Strategic autonomy

India's participation in the Quad does not automatically imply membership of a formal military alliance.

This allows India to cooperate with major powers while retaining **strategic autonomy**.

3. Critical and emerging technologies

The Quad provides a platform for cooperation in:

- telecommunications;
- semiconductors;
- artificial intelligence;
- quantum technologies;
- cybersecurity;
- space.

Such cooperation can support India's technological and manufacturing ambitions.

4. Supply-chain resilience

The COVID-19 experience demonstrated vulnerabilities in globally concentrated supply chains.

India can use Quad cooperation to diversify production networks and strengthen resilient supply chains in areas such as pharmaceuticals, critical minerals and advanced technologies.

5. Infrastructure and connectivity

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The Quad can support transparent, sustainable and financially viable infrastructure alternatives in the Indo-Pacific.

Why has the Quad not become a formal alliance?

First, divergent strategic priorities.

The four countries do not perceive every regional threat identically.

Second, India's strategic autonomy.

India has traditionally avoided rigid military alliances and maintains important relationships with Russia, Iran, ASEAN states and other partners.

Third, ASEAN sensitivities.

An excessively alliance-oriented Quad could generate concerns among Southeast Asian states regarding bloc politics.

Fourth, institutional flexibility.

The Quad's relatively flexible structure allows members to cooperate on different issues without being bound by treaty obligations.

Quad versus military alliance

A critical distinction must be maintained:

Quad	Formal military alliance
Diplomatic and strategic grouping	Treaty-based security commitment
No collective-defence clause	Usually collective-defence obligation
Flexible agenda	Formalised obligations
Consensus-based cooperation	Treaty-defined commitments

Way Forward

India can maximise the Quad's utility by concentrating on:

- maritime domain awareness;
- disaster relief;
- resilient supply chains;
- critical minerals;
- technology standards;
- cybersecurity;
- health security;
- infrastructure;
- climate resilience.

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Conclusion

For India, the Quad represents an instrument of **issue-based strategic cooperation rather than a conventional alliance**. Its effectiveness will depend less on institutional expansion and more on its ability to convert strategic convergence into tangible public goods while preserving India's strategic autonomy and ASEAN centrality.

GS Paper III — Economy

Q3. "Monetary policy transmission determines whether changes in the policy rate actually influence inflation and economic activity." Explain the role of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) in controlling inflation in India. Why can monetary tightening also generate economic costs?

Sample Answer

Inflation refers to a sustained increase in the general price level, reducing the purchasing power of money. In India, monetary policy seeks to influence inflation and macroeconomic conditions primarily through the **policy interest rate and associated liquidity and transmission mechanisms**.

The **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** is the statutory body responsible for determining the policy rate required to achieve the inflation target while keeping growth in mind.

Role of the MPC

Under India's inflation-targeting framework, the MPC determines the policy rate, principally the **repo rate**, with the objective of maintaining price stability while keeping growth in mind.

The mechanism operates through several stages.

1. Policy rate → market interest rates

When the RBI increases the repo rate, borrowing costs for banks tend to rise.

Banks may consequently increase lending rates.

2. Interest rates → consumption and investment

Higher borrowing costs can reduce:

- demand for consumer durables;
- housing investment;
- corporate borrowing;
- private capital expenditure.

This reduces aggregate demand.

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3. Demand → inflation

When aggregate demand becomes less excessive relative to productive capacity, demand-side inflationary pressures can moderate.

4. Expectations channel

Monetary policy also affects **inflation expectations**.

If households and businesses believe that the central bank is committed to price stability, wage and price-setting behaviour may become more restrained.

5. Exchange-rate channel

Higher domestic interest rates can influence capital flows and exchange-rate conditions. A relatively stronger currency can reduce the domestic cost of imported commodities, although the relationship is neither automatic nor uniform.

Why monetary policy may not immediately control inflation

A major limitation is that not all inflation is caused by excess demand.

India can experience **supply-side inflation** arising from:

- food shortages;
- weather shocks;
- international crude prices;
- supply-chain disruptions;
- geopolitical events;
- commodity-price increases.

A higher policy rate cannot directly produce more vegetables, crude oil or rainfall.

Costs of monetary tightening

Monetary tightening can have significant side effects.

1. Investment slowdown

Higher interest rates can discourage private investment.

2. Employment effects

Reduced investment and consumption may weaken employment generation.

3. Fiscal cost

Higher borrowing costs can increase the government's interest burden when market yields rise.

4. Financial stress

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Highly leveraged firms and households may face greater repayment burdens.

5. Growth-inflation trade-off

Aggressive tightening can reduce inflation but may simultaneously weaken economic growth.

Why transmission matters

The policy rate is not itself the final economic variable.

The chain is:

MPC decision → financial-market rates → bank lending/deposit rates → credit → consumption/investment → aggregate demand → inflation

The effectiveness of this chain depends on banking-system liquidity, competition, expectations, financial conditions and the nature of the inflation shock.

Way Forward

Inflation management therefore requires coordination between:

- monetary policy;
- food-supply management;
- agricultural policy;
- logistics;
- trade policy;
- fiscal policy;
- energy policy.

Conclusion

The MPC is essential for maintaining macroeconomic credibility, but monetary policy cannot independently resolve every inflationary shock. Effective inflation control requires **credible monetary policy combined with supply-side reforms and fiscal prudence**. The objective should therefore be not simply to suppress inflation through higher interest rates, but to achieve **durable price stability with minimum disruption to productive economic activity**.

GS Paper IV — Ethics

Q4. "An ethical administrator must be capable of questioning both an unjust order and an inefficient convention." Discuss with reference to integrity, conscience, accountability and public interest.

Sample Answer

Public administration involves the exercise of authority on behalf of citizens. A civil servant therefore faces situations where **legal compliance, administrative convention and ethical responsibility may not always point in exactly the same direction**.

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An ethical administrator requires more than obedience. He or she requires **integrity, moral courage, constitutional values, empathy and accountability**.

Integrity

Integrity means consistency between one's values, decisions and conduct.

An administrator with integrity:

- does not manipulate rules for personal gain;
- resists corruption;
- discloses conflicts of interest;
- treats public resources as a public trust.

Integrity is therefore more than honesty. It requires **ethical consistency even when misconduct may remain undetected**.

Conscience

Conscience represents an individual's internal moral awareness of right and wrong.

Suppose an officer is instructed to deny a legitimate citizen's entitlement because of an informal political direction. Blind obedience would conflict with:

- constitutional principles;
- rule of law;
- fairness;
- public interest.

Conscience can therefore serve as an internal ethical check.

However, personal conscience cannot become a justification for arbitrary behaviour. In public administration, conscience must operate within the framework of **law, constitutional morality and institutional accountability**.

Accountability

An officer must be able to justify decisions.

This means distinguishing between:

"I was instructed to do it"

and

"I am institutionally responsible for the decision I implemented."

Accountability therefore prevents administrative responsibility from disappearing into hierarchical structures.

Moral courage

Moral courage is particularly important when an administrator encounters:

- corruption;
- discrimination;
- misuse of public resources;
- suppression of legitimate information;
- unlawful orders.

The officer may need to record dissent, seek written instructions, use institutional grievance mechanisms or escalate the matter to competent authorities.

Public interest

The ultimate purpose of administration is not personal convenience or institutional prestige but **public welfare within the constitutional framework**.

An efficient decision that violates rights cannot automatically be considered ethical.

Similarly, a compassionate decision that violates established legal safeguards may also create arbitrariness.

Hence ethical administration requires balancing:

Legality + fairness + efficiency + compassion + accountability

Questioning inefficient conventions

Administrative practices can persist simply because "this is how it has always been done."

An ethical administrator should ask:

- Does the procedure serve citizens?
- Does it create unnecessary delays?
- Can technology simplify it?
- Does it disproportionately burden vulnerable groups?

This is where **ethical innovation** becomes important.

Conclusion

The ideal administrator is neither a **blind rule-follower** nor an individual governed solely by personal morality. The ethical civil servant is one who possesses the courage to question injustice, the humility to question inefficient conventions, and the discipline to pursue reform through **lawful, transparent and accountable institutional mechanisms**.

Current Affairs — GS Paper III

Q5. The "Grass Mache" technique illustrates how environmental waste can become a source of livelihood and cultural innovation. Examine its significance as a model of circular economy, wetland conservation and inclusive green entrepreneurship.

Sample Answer

The **Grass Mache technique**, developed by a Srinagar artisan, uses discarded aquatic weeds and grasses removed from **Dal Lake** as raw material for handicrafts. The technique adapts principles associated with Kashmir's traditional papier-mâché craft and converts biological waste into decorative and utility products.

1. From waste to resource

The conventional linear economic model broadly follows:

Extract → Produce → Consume → Dispose

The Grass Mache approach introduces a circular alternative:

Waste biomass → Processing → Product → Economic value

Aquatic weeds that would otherwise constitute waste are collected, dried and processed into fibrous material. The material can then be moulded into products such as:

- flower vases;
- hanging decorations;
- ornaments;
- home décor.

The technique has also explored applications such as fire-resistant switchboards and panelling.

2. Link with wetland conservation

Dal Lake faces multiple ecological pressures, including excessive aquatic vegetation.

Removing unwanted aquatic weeds can form part of lake-management activities. However, the ecological objective should not be reduced to simply removing every aquatic plant.

Wetland vegetation can perform legitimate ecological functions, including:

- habitat provision;
- nutrient cycling;
- stabilisation of ecological processes.

Therefore, sustainable harvesting must be based on **scientific assessment of which biomass should be removed and at what scale**.

This is an important policy distinction between:

ecological management

and

commercial extraction of biomass.

3. Circular economy dimension

The Grass Mache model embodies several circular-economy principles:

- waste minimisation;
- resource recovery;
- material substitution;
- local production;
- value addition;
- reuse of biological resources.

The use of discarded biomass and recycled paper can potentially reduce dependence on virgin plant or wood-based materials.

4. Livelihood dimension

The model also connects environmental conservation with **green livelihoods**.

This is particularly important because conservation initiatives sometimes impose costs on communities dependent upon natural resources.

A waste-to-wealth approach can potentially transform conservation from a perceived restriction into an economic opportunity.

The technique creates possibilities for:

- local entrepreneurship;
- artisan livelihoods;
- women's employment;
- skill development;
- community participation.

The current-affairs source specifically identifies its potential as a **women-led livelihood model**, providing opportunities for women and girls to participate in sustainable handicrafts.

5. Cultural sustainability

The technique does not simply represent a new handicraft.

It adapts the knowledge and skills of **Kashmiri papier-mâché** to a new raw material.

This creates an important intersection between:

traditional knowledge + innovation + environmental sustainability.

Such adaptation can help traditional crafts remain economically relevant in changing markets.

Challenges

The model nevertheless faces limitations:

Market scalability: niche handicrafts may have limited demand.

Quality standardisation: natural biomass can vary in composition and durability.

Raw-material logistics: collection, drying and processing require organised systems.

Ecological safeguards: commercial demand should not create incentives for indiscriminate removal or harvesting.

Intellectual property and benefit-sharing: traditional knowledge and local communities need appropriate recognition.

Way Forward

The model can be strengthened through:

1. scientific biomass assessment;

2. community-based lake management;
3. artisan cooperatives and FPO-like structures;
4. design and packaging support;
5. e-commerce access;
6. green certification;
7. skill-development programmes;
8. institutional procurement;
9. research into durable and fire-resistant materials;
10. integration with wetland restoration programmes.

Conclusion

The Grass Mache technique demonstrates that environmental conservation need not be separated from economic development. Its deeper significance lies in creating a **closed-loop relationship between ecological restoration, traditional knowledge, entrepreneurship and livelihoods**.

However, its replication should follow the principle:

"Conservation first, commercialisation within ecological limits."

If supported by scientific resource assessment, community participation and viable markets, such models can convert environmental challenges into **inclusive green economic opportunities** while preserving cultural knowledge.

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