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DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS

BEST FOR UPSC | UP PCS EXAM

DATE : **AUGUST 12, 2026**



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DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FROM STATIC PART

Q.1. With reference to the **Buddhist tradition in ancient India**, consider the following statements:

1. The Buddhist monastic institution provided an organised framework through which the teachings of the Buddha could be preserved and transmitted beyond the immediate circle of his disciples.
2. The Buddha's rejection of the authority of the Vedas necessarily implied a complete rejection of all existing social distinctions and resulted in the immediate disappearance of caste-based identities within Buddhist society.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) Statement 2 only
- (b) Both statements
- (c) Neither statement
- (d) Statement 1 only

Answer: (d) Statement 1 only

Detailed Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct.** The **Sangha** was central to the institutional development of Buddhism. It provided an organised monastic community through which the Buddha's teachings were preserved, practiced and transmitted. Monks and nuns followed prescribed rules of conduct and contributed to the spread of Buddhism across different regions.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect.** Buddhism challenged the ritual and social authority associated with Vedic orthodoxy, but it would be historically incorrect to conclude that the emergence of Buddhism immediately abolished caste or social distinctions. Buddhist literature itself contains references to different social groups. The Sangha was comparatively more open in principle, as admission was not exclusively determined by birth, but wider society continued to retain social hierarchies.

The important UPSC distinction is between **challenging the religious basis of Brahmanical ritualism** and **completely eliminating social stratification**. Buddhism should therefore not be interpreted as an instantaneous social revolution that erased every existing hierarchy.

Q.2. In the context of ecological conservation, which one of the following best explains why **biodiversity hotspots are considered strategically important despite covering only a relatively small proportion of the Earth's land surface**?

- (a) They contain almost all species found on Earth and therefore function as complete ecological substitutes for other ecosystems.
- (b) They combine exceptionally high levels of endemic biodiversity with substantial habitat loss, making conservation intervention particularly significant.
- (c) They are regions where biodiversity is naturally increasing because human interference is inherently lower than in other ecosystems.
- (d) They are identified exclusively on the basis of the absolute number of species present, irrespective of endemism and habitat loss.

Answer: (b)

Detailed Explanation:

A **biodiversity hotspot** is not simply an area containing a large number of species. The concept combines two crucial dimensions:

1. **High degree of endemism**, particularly among vascular plants.
2. **Severe historical loss of original habitat**.

Thus, the hotspot approach attempts to identify areas where conservation investment can protect a disproportionately large amount of unique biodiversity under serious threat.

The important conceptual trap is the assumption that **species richness alone defines a hotspot**. A region may possess enormous biodiversity but not necessarily qualify as a hotspot if it does not satisfy the prescribed criteria relating to endemism and habitat loss.

The hotspot framework is therefore a **conservation-prioritisation mechanism**, rather than a claim that hotspots contain most of Earth's biodiversity.

India is associated with parts of several recognised biodiversity hotspots, including the **Himalaya, Indo-Burma, Western Ghats–Sri Lanka and Sundaland**. The Indian portions of these regions are particularly important because of their high ecological uniqueness and pressure from habitat fragmentation, infrastructure development, invasive species and other anthropogenic factors.

Q.3. With reference to the **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act**, consider the following statements:

1. The FRBM framework seeks to institutionalise fiscal discipline by placing statutory requirements on the Union Government concerning fiscal indicators and fiscal transparency.
2. The FRBM Act makes the numerical fiscal deficit target of 3 per cent of GDP an absolutely immutable constitutional requirement.
3. The statutory framework permits deviations from prescribed fiscal paths under specified exceptional circumstances, subject to the conditions laid down in law.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: (b) Only two

Detailed Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct.** The **FRBM Act, 2003** was enacted to promote fiscal discipline, transparency and macroeconomic stability. It requires the Union Government to present specified fiscal policy statements and establishes a framework for controlling fiscal imbalances.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect.** The commonly cited **3 per cent of GDP fiscal deficit target** should not be confused with a constitutional requirement. It is part of the statutory/fiscal-policy framework and has undergone changes and deviations over time.

- **Statement 3 is correct.** The framework recognises circumstances in which deviation from the prescribed fiscal trajectory may be justified. The amended framework incorporates an **escape clause** for specified situations such as national security, war, national calamity, severe agricultural collapse and certain other exceptional circumstances.

The major UPSC trap here is the distinction between **constitutional rigidity** and **statutory fiscal rules**. FRBM is a legislative framework, and fiscal targets cannot be treated as permanently immutable constitutional ceilings.

Q.4. With reference to a **Money Bill** under the Constitution of India, consider the following statements:

1. A Bill can be treated as a Money Bill only if it contains exclusively provisions dealing with matters specified in Article 110, apart from provisions incidental to those matters.
2. The Rajya Sabha can reject a Money Bill passed by the Lok Sabha if a majority of its members vote against it.
3. The Speaker of the Lok Sabha has the constitutional authority to certify whether a Bill is a Money Bill.
4. The Rajya Sabha is required to return a Money Bill to the Lok Sabha within fourteen days, failing which the Bill is deemed to have been passed by both Houses in the form in which it was passed by the Lok Sabha.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: (c) Only three

Detailed Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct.** Article **110(1)** defines a Money Bill. It must contain provisions dealing **only** with matters specified in Article 110(1)(a) to (g), along with matters incidental thereto.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect.** The Rajya Sabha **cannot reject or amend a Money Bill**. It may recommend amendments, but the Lok Sabha may accept or reject those recommendations.
- **Statement 3 is correct.** Under **Article 110(3)**, if any question arises whether a Bill is a Money Bill, the decision of the **Speaker of the Lok Sabha** is final in the constitutional scheme.
- **Statement 4 is correct.** Under **Article 109**, the Rajya Sabha must return a Money Bill within **14 days**. If it does not, the Bill is deemed to have been passed by both Houses in the form in which it was passed by the Lok Sabha.

The critical UPSC distinction is between a **Money Bill** and an **ordinary financial Bill**. Every Money Bill is a financial Bill in a broad sense, but every financial Bill is **not** a Money Bill. The constitutional procedure for a Money Bill gives the Lok Sabha a substantially stronger position.

Q.5. Consider the following:

Assertion (A): The occurrence of **land and sea breezes** is primarily associated with the differential heating of land and water surfaces.

Reason I: Land generally heats up and cools down more rapidly than water because water has a higher heat capacity and is capable of distributing heat through a greater depth.

Reason II: During the day, the relatively warmer land surface heats the air above it, causing it to rise and producing a pressure gradient that favours movement of comparatively cooler air from the sea towards the land.

Which one of the following is correct?

- (a) Both Assertion (A) and Reason I are correct, but Reason I does not explain Assertion (A); Reason II correctly explains Assertion (A).
- (b) Both Assertion (A) and Reason II are correct, but Reason I is incorrect.
- (c) Assertion (A) is correct, and both Reason I and Reason II are correct, and both correctly explain Assertion (A).
- (d) Assertion (A) is incorrect, but both Reason I and Reason II are correct.

Answer: (c)

Detailed Explanation:

The **Assertion is correct**. Land and sea breezes are **local/periodic winds** produced principally by differential heating and cooling of land and water.

Reason I is correct. Land has a relatively low effective heat capacity compared with water and generally responds more rapidly to changes in incoming solar radiation. Water also mixes vertically and distributes heat through a greater depth. Consequently, land tends to heat and cool more quickly.

Reason II is correct and directly explains the daytime sea breeze. During the day, land becomes warmer than the adjacent sea. The air over the heated land expands and rises, creating relatively lower pressure near the land surface. The relatively cooler and denser air over the sea then moves towards the land, producing a **sea breeze**.

At night, the reverse situation generally develops:

Land cools faster → air over land becomes relatively cooler and denser → relatively higher pressure over land → air moves from land towards sea → land breeze.

The question is designed to distinguish **local winds caused by differential heating** from planetary winds such as the trade winds and westerlies. Land and sea breezes are also **periodic**, because their direction reverses approximately on a daily cycle.

DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FROM CURRENT AFFAIRS

Q.1. With reference to the recently introduced **Protection and Indemnity (P&I) insurance product under the Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool (BMIP)**, consider the following statements:

1. P&I insurance primarily protects shipowners against specified **third-party liabilities** arising from the operation of vessels, rather than primarily covering physical damage to the vessel itself.
2. The development of a domestic P&I framework is intended, among other things, to reduce India's dependence on foreign P&I arrangements and strengthen sovereignty over an essential component of maritime trade.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Statement 2 only
- (b) Both statements
- (c) Neither statement
- (d) Statement 1 only

Answer: (b) Both statements

Detailed Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct.** Protection and Indemnity insurance is fundamentally a **liability cover** in maritime insurance. It can cover liabilities such as claims relating to crew, passengers, cargo, pollution, wreck removal and other third-party liabilities arising from vessel operations. It is therefore conceptually distinct from **Hull & Machinery insurance**, which principally concerns physical loss or damage to the vessel.
- **Statement 2 is correct.** India's traditional dependence on international P&I arrangements created vulnerabilities during geopolitical disruptions, sanctions and instability affecting maritime trade. The government has therefore sought to develop domestic capacity in maritime insurance. The Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool has been part of this broader effort, with the government outlining a roadmap for developing a domestic P&I product and eventually exploring a mutual-club structure compatible with international standards.

The key conceptual distinction for UPSC is:

Hull & Machinery → physical damage to vessel
Cargo insurance → loss/damage to cargo
P&I → third-party liabilities arising from vessel operations

The domestic P&I initiative therefore has both an **insurance-sector dimension** and a **maritime strategic-autonomy dimension**.

Q.2. Nipun, recently associated with India's maritime security and underwater operational capabilities, is best described as:

- (a) An indigenous nuclear-powered attack submarine designed primarily for anti-submarine warfare.
- (b) An indigenous Diving Support Vessel designed to support deep-sea diving, underwater salvage and submarine rescue operations.
- (c) An autonomous unmanned underwater vehicle designed exclusively for seabed mineral exploration.
- (d) A specialised hydrographic survey vessel primarily intended for preparation of navigational charts.

Answer: (b)

Detailed Explanation:

Nipun is the second vessel of India's indigenous **Diving Support Vessel (DSV)** class, following **INS Nistar**. It was delivered to the Indian Navy on **30 July 2026** and was built by **Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL), Visakhapatnam**.

A DSV is a specialised naval platform intended for demanding underwater operations. Nipun is associated with:

- Deep-sea diving operations.
- Underwater salvage.
- Submarine rescue support.
- Diving support systems.
- Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs).
- Dynamic Positioning Systems for maintaining position during operations.

The vessel can also function as a **mother ship for the Deep Submergence Rescue Vehicle (DSRV)**, making it particularly significant for India's submarine rescue capability.

The important UPSC trap is to confuse a **DSV with a submarine, survey vessel or combat vessel**. Its significance lies primarily in **underwater support and rescue infrastructure**, rather than direct offensive combat.

Q.3. With reference to the **Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971**, consider the following statements:

1. The Act provides statutory protection against specified acts of insult to the Indian National Flag and the Constitution of India.
2. Mere criticism or expression of disapproval of the Constitution or the National Flag, when intended to seek amendment or alteration through lawful means, is by itself treated as an offence under the Act.
3. The Act prescribes imprisonment of up to three years, or fine, or both, for specified acts involving the National Flag or Constitution.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: (b) Only two

Detailed Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct.** Section 2 of the Act deals with insults to the **Indian National Flag and Constitution of India**. Certain acts such as burning, mutilating, defacing, destroying, trampling upon or otherwise showing disrespect to these national symbols, when covered by the statutory provision, attract punishment.

- **Statement 2 is incorrect.** The Act specifically contains an important qualification. **Comments expressing disapprobation or criticism of the Constitution or National Flag with a view to obtaining an amendment or alteration by lawful means are not covered merely because they constitute criticism.** This distinction is crucial: the law targets specified forms of insult/disrespect rather than constitutionally protected criticism as such.
- **Statement 3 is correct.** The punishment under Section 2 may extend to **three years' imprisonment, or fine, or both.**

A further current-affairs dimension is important. The **Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026**, introduced in the Rajya Sabha on 24 July 2026, proposes extending specified protections under the Act to the **national song, Vande Mataram.**

Thus, UPSC may test the distinction between **constitutional freedom of criticism** and **statutorily prohibited disrespect.**

Q.4. With reference to **India's first Telecom Manufacturing Zone (TMZ)**, consider the following statements:

1. The first Telecom Manufacturing Zone is being established at Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh through cooperation between the Department of Telecommunications and the State Government of Madhya Pradesh.
2. The Zone is conceived as a specialised manufacturing ecosystem that can include telecom equipment manufacturers, technology companies, data-centre-related activities and chip manufacturers.
3. The plug-and-play character of the Zone implies that prospective industrial units can access pre-developed infrastructure and facilities rather than having to create the entire basic industrial infrastructure independently.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: (c) All three

Detailed Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct.** India signed an agreement on **30 July 2026** to establish its first Telecom Manufacturing Zone in **Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh**. The MoU was signed between the **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** and the Madhya Pradesh government's Industries Department.
- **Statement 2 is correct.** The TMZ is designed as an integrated ecosystem for the telecom manufacturing value chain, with scope involving **telecom equipment, technology companies, data centres and chip manufacturers**, among other stakeholders.
- **Statement 3 is correct.** The project follows a **plug-and-play** model. In industrial policy, this broadly means that necessary infrastructure and facilities are developed beforehand so that enterprises can establish operations more efficiently.

The project has a wider strategic significance beyond merely establishing an industrial park. It seeks to:

- strengthen domestic telecom manufacturing;

- develop supply-chain resilience;
- encourage MSMEs and start-ups;
- promote investment and employment;
- reduce dependence on imported telecom equipment;
- strengthen India's position in emerging technologies such as 6G.

The first phase is expected to attract substantial investment and employment, while the longer-term objective is to create a globally competitive telecom manufacturing ecosystem.

Q.5. Consider the following statements regarding **Shaheed Udham Singh**:

1. Udham Singh assassinated Michael O'Dwyer in London in 1940.
2. His action was associated with his desire to avenge the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919.
3. Michael O'Dwyer was the British officer who personally ordered General Dyer to open fire on the gathering at Jallianwala Bagh.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: (b) Only two

Detailed Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct.** Udham Singh assassinated **Michael O'Dwyer at Caxton Hall, London, on 13 March 1940**. O'Dwyer had served as the Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab during the period of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.
- **Statement 2 is correct.** Udham Singh's revolutionary action was closely associated with his determination to avenge the **Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 13 April 1919**. He was present in Amritsar at the time and regarded the massacre as a defining colonial atrocity.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect.** This is the deliberate trap.

General Reginald Edward Harry Dyer was the military officer who ordered troops to fire upon the gathering at Jallianwala Bagh.

Michael O'Dwyer, on the other hand, was the **Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab** and subsequently defended/supportively endorsed the actions of the authorities.

Thus, UPSC may test the distinction:

General Dyer → ordered the firing at Jallianwala Bagh

Michael O'Dwyer → Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab; associated with the broader administrative responsibility and support for the action

Udham Singh was subsequently tried and executed in 1940. His use of the name **Ram Mohammad Singh Azad** is also frequently discussed in the context of his anti-colonial and inclusive nationalist symbolism.

Q.6. Consider the following statements regarding the **Iberian Peninsula**:

1. The Iberian Peninsula is located in the southwestern part of Europe.
2. Spain and Portugal constitute the principal countries occupying the peninsula.
3. The Pyrenees form the major natural mountain barrier separating the Iberian Peninsula from the rest of continental Europe to the north.
4. The peninsula is bounded exclusively by the Mediterranean Sea and does not have an Atlantic coastline.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: (c) Only three

Detailed Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct.** The Iberian Peninsula occupies **southwestern Europe**.
- **Statement 2 is correct.** **Spain and Portugal** constitute the principal territories of the Iberian Peninsula.
- **Statement 3 is correct.** The **Pyrenees** constitute a major mountain barrier between the Iberian Peninsula and the rest of continental Europe, particularly towards France.
- **Statement 4 is incorrect.** The Iberian Peninsula has extensive **Atlantic as well as Mediterranean** maritime exposure. Spain and Portugal together form the core of a peninsula bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the west and the Mediterranean Sea to the east and south, with the Cantabrian Sea along the northern coast.

Map-based UPSC Takeaway

For map questions, remember the broad spatial sequence:

France → Pyrenees → Iberian Peninsula → Spain & Portugal

And around the peninsula:

Atlantic Ocean → West

Mediterranean Sea → East/Southeast

Cantabrian Sea → North

Strait of Gibraltar → South → gateway towards North Africa

This location is also important for understanding the climatic contrast between the **Atlantic-influenced north and west** and the comparatively more **Mediterranean/drier regions** of the peninsula.

DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAINS ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

GS Paper I: World History

Q.1 “The Industrial Revolution was not merely a technological transformation; it fundamentally altered the social, economic and political structure of Europe and subsequently reshaped the global order.” Discuss.

NCERT Reference: *Themes in World History*, Class XI — Industrial Revolution / Displacing Indigenous Peoples and related themes.

Sample Answer

The **Industrial Revolution**, which began in Britain in the late eighteenth century and subsequently spread to continental Europe and other regions, represented a fundamental transformation from an agrarian and handicraft-based economy to one increasingly dominated by mechanised production, factories and industrial capitalism. Its significance extended far beyond technological innovation because it transformed social relations, economic organisation, political thought and the international balance of power.

Economically, mechanisation dramatically increased productive capacity. The invention and improvement of the **steam engine**, mechanised textile production, iron and steel technologies and improved transportation reduced production costs and expanded markets. The factory system gradually displaced many traditional forms of household and artisanal production. Industrial capitalism consequently strengthened the position of entrepreneurs and industrial bourgeoisie while creating a large wage-dependent working class.

Socially, industrialisation accelerated **urbanisation**. Cities such as Manchester became centres of manufacturing and attracted large numbers of rural workers. However, early industrial cities were often characterised by overcrowding, poor sanitation, hazardous workplaces and low wages. The emergence of a distinct industrial working class generated new forms of class consciousness and collective mobilisation.

The political consequences were equally profound. Industrial society contributed to the growth of **liberalism, socialism, trade unionism and working-class political movements**. Thinkers such as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels analysed industrial capitalism through the lens of class conflict. Governments gradually introduced labour legislation, factory regulations and social-security measures in response to growing political pressure.

The Industrial Revolution also transformed **imperialism and global economic relations**. European industrial powers required raw materials and markets for manufactured goods, encouraging colonial expansion. Railways, steamships and telegraph networks facilitated deeper integration of colonial economies into global capitalist structures, often in highly unequal ways.

Critical Assessment

However, the Industrial Revolution should not be understood exclusively as a European success story. Its benefits were accompanied by:

- exploitation of workers;
- child and female labour;

- environmental degradation;
- colonial extraction;
- widening inequalities;
- displacement of traditional industries in several regions.

At the same time, industrialisation eventually created conditions for higher productivity, technological diffusion, mass education, improved transportation and rising living standards.

Thus, the Industrial Revolution was a **structural transformation of human society**, not simply a sequence of inventions. It altered the relationship between capital and labour, accelerated urbanisation, encouraged new political ideologies and provided the material foundations for European imperial dominance. Its contemporary legacy can still be observed in global capitalism, industrial urbanisation, technological change and debates over inequality and sustainable development.

GS Paper II: Governance

Q.2 “Good governance is not synonymous with merely efficient administration. It requires transparency, accountability, participation, responsiveness and equity.” Discuss the statement in the context of contemporary Indian governance.

NCERT Reference: *Indian Constitution at Work*, Class XI; *Politics in India Since Independence*, Class XII.

Sample Answer

Governance refers to the processes through which public institutions formulate policies, deliver services, regulate society and remain accountable to citizens. **Efficiency is an essential component of governance, but it cannot by itself constitute good governance.** An administration may deliver services rapidly while remaining opaque, exclusionary or unaccountable. Therefore, good governance requires efficiency to be combined with constitutional values and democratic accountability.

Transparency is fundamental because citizens have a right to know how public decisions are made and resources are utilised. The **Right to Information Act, 2005** strengthened this principle by creating an institutional mechanism through which citizens can obtain information from public authorities. Transparency reduces information asymmetry and can deter corruption.

Accountability ensures that public officials remain answerable for their decisions. Legislative oversight, parliamentary committees, audit institutions, judicial review, vigilance mechanisms and social audits are important accountability mechanisms. The **Comptroller and Auditor General**, for instance, contributes to financial accountability by examining public expenditure.

Participation represents another essential dimension. Democratic governance cannot be reduced to periodic elections. Gram Sabhas, public consultations, citizen feedback mechanisms, participatory planning and decentralised institutions allow citizens to influence policies that affect them directly. The constitutional recognition of Panchayati Raj and urban local bodies strengthened the institutional basis for decentralised governance.

Responsiveness means that administration reacts effectively to citizens' needs. Digital governance has significantly enhanced this capacity through online service delivery, digital payments, grievance portals and direct benefit mechanisms. However, digitisation must not become an end in itself.



This introduces the crucial principle of **equity**. A digitally efficient system may nevertheless exclude citizens lacking internet access, digital literacy, documentation or technological resources. Hence, technology-driven governance must incorporate accessibility, assisted service delivery and inclusion.

Major challenges

Contemporary Indian governance faces several challenges:

- bureaucratic delays and procedural complexity;
- corruption and rent-seeking;
- inadequate institutional capacity;
- centre-state and inter-agency coordination problems;
- digital divide;
- weak grievance redressal;
- limited citizen participation;
- excessive centralisation in certain policy domains.

Way Forward

India requires a transition from “**government-centric administration**” to “**citizen-centric governance**.” This requires outcome-based administration, stronger local governments, social audits, open data, responsive grievance mechanisms, ethical civil services and greater use of technology without compromising privacy or accessibility.

Thus, good governance is best understood as a **constitutional and democratic process**, not simply an administrative performance metric. Efficiency determines *how quickly* government acts; good governance

additionally asks **whether it acts transparently, fairly, accountably, inclusively and in accordance with constitutional values.**

GS Paper III: Internal Security

Q.3 “The security challenges of Northeast India cannot be addressed through a purely military or law-and-order approach. Examine the interplay of geography, identity, development, borders and external linkages in creating security challenges in the region.”

NCERT Reference: *India: People and Economy*, Class XII; *Security in the Contemporary World*, Class XII.

Sample Answer

Northeast India occupies a strategically sensitive position because of its **geographical isolation, difficult terrain, ethnic diversity and proximity to multiple international borders**. The region is connected to the rest of India through the narrow **Siliguri Corridor**, while it shares international boundaries with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China and Myanmar. Consequently, its security challenges possess both internal and external dimensions.

Historically, insurgency in parts of the Northeast has been influenced by a combination of **ethnic identity, political grievances, perceived economic marginalisation, demands for autonomy and territorial aspirations**. The region's extraordinary ethnic and linguistic diversity has sometimes generated competing claims over political representation, land and resources.

Geographical dimension

Dense forests, mountains and difficult terrain can facilitate guerrilla operations and make state presence difficult in remote areas. Long and porous international borders create additional challenges related to:

- arms trafficking;
- narcotics trafficking;
- illegal migration;
- human trafficking;
- movement of insurgent groups.

The **India–Myanmar border** is particularly sensitive because of difficult terrain and the presence of ethnic communities spread across both sides of the international boundary.

External dimension

Insurgent organisations have historically benefited, at different points, from cross-border sanctuaries, informal networks and arms routes. Therefore, intelligence cooperation, border management and diplomatic engagement with neighbouring countries are crucial.

However, a purely coercive approach has limitations. Security operations may temporarily suppress violence without resolving the underlying political and socioeconomic causes.

Development and connectivity

Poor connectivity, unemployment, limited industrialisation and inadequate access to markets have historically contributed to perceptions of marginalisation. At the same time, infrastructure development must be sensitive to ecological and tribal concerns.

Initiatives relating to **Act East**, multimodal connectivity, border infrastructure and regional trade can transform the Northeast from a perceived peripheral region into a strategic gateway towards Southeast Asia.

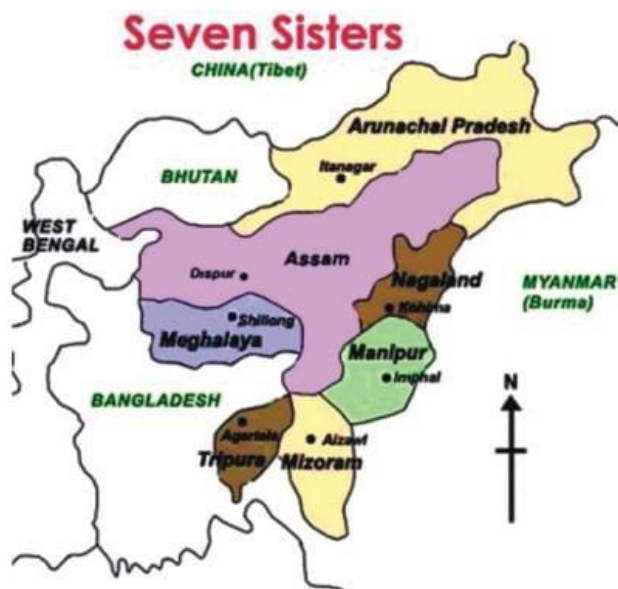
Way Forward

A comprehensive strategy should combine:

Security + Development + Dialogue + Connectivity + Constitutional accommodation.

This requires:

- strengthening intelligence networks;
- improving border infrastructure;
- modernising policing;
- preventing arms and narcotics trafficking;
- promoting inter-state coordination;
- expanding employment and educational opportunities;
- strengthening autonomous councils where constitutionally appropriate;
- pursuing sustained political dialogue;
- ensuring sensitive rehabilitation and reintegration of former insurgents.



The **Sixth Schedule** and other constitutional mechanisms demonstrate that India's approach to the Northeast has historically recognised the importance of differentiated governance.

Ultimately, the Northeast should not be viewed merely as a security frontier. It is simultaneously a **strategic gateway, ecological region, cultural mosaic and development opportunity**. Sustainable peace will emerge when citizens perceive the Indian state not merely through the presence of security forces but through justice, opportunity, connectivity and meaningful political participation.

GS Paper IV: Ethics

Q.4 “Ethical governance requires not only integrity of individuals but also integrity of institutions.” Explain. How can public institutions be designed to reduce the scope for unethical conduct?

NCERT Reference: *Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude* — UPSC GS Paper IV framework; relevant constitutional values from *Indian Constitution at Work*, Class XI.

Sample Answer

Ethics in public administration is often discussed in terms of individual virtues such as honesty, integrity, impartiality and empathy. However, ethical governance cannot depend exclusively upon the moral character of individual officials. **Institutions themselves must be designed in a manner that encourages ethical behaviour, limits discretion where necessary and makes misconduct detectable and accountable.**

An honest officer working within an opaque and poorly designed system may still face incentives that encourage unethical conduct. Conversely, well-designed institutions can substantially reduce opportunities for corruption even when individual motivations are imperfect.

Institutional integrity means that procedures, rules, incentives and organisational cultures collectively support constitutional values. For example, transparent procurement systems reduce opportunities for arbitrary favouritism. E-procurement creates digital records and reduces unnecessary face-to-face interaction between officials and contractors.

Similarly, **separation of powers and institutional checks and balances** prevent excessive concentration of authority. Parliamentary oversight, judicial review, audit institutions and independent regulatory bodies create multiple points of scrutiny.

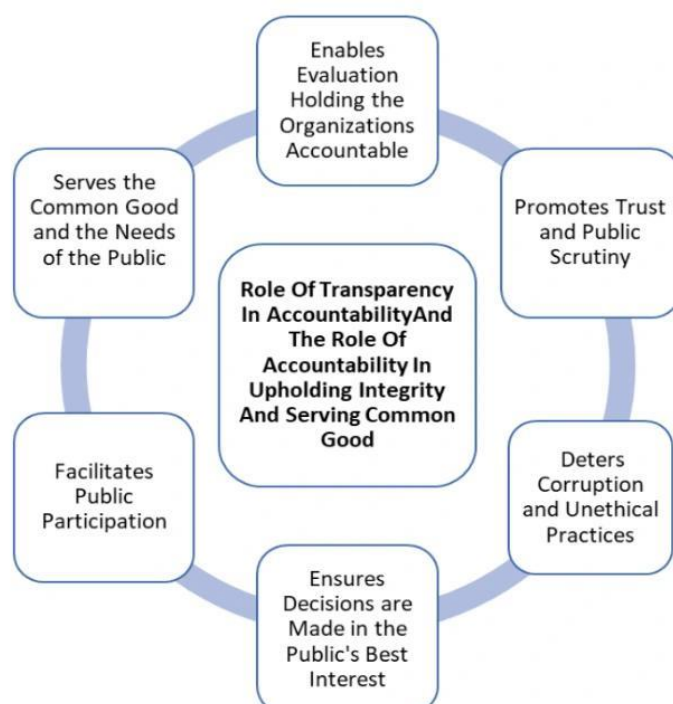
Individual integrity versus institutional integrity

Individual integrity involves:

- honesty;
- moral courage;
- impartiality;
- commitment to duty;
- empathy;
- avoidance of conflict of interest.

Institutional integrity involves:

- transparent procedures;
- predictable rules;
- independent oversight;
- accountability;
- grievance redressal;



- protection for whistle-blowers;
- objective performance evaluation.

Consider a hypothetical procurement officer who is offered a substantial bribe by a contractor. His refusal demonstrates **individual integrity**. But if the procurement process is completely opaque, the same opportunity for corruption may recur with another officer. Introducing transparent e-tendering, multiple-level scrutiny and audit trails addresses the **institutional dimension** of the ethical problem.

Similarly, in welfare delivery, an honest official may distribute benefits fairly. Yet a system based entirely on discretionary beneficiary selection may continue to generate opportunities for favouritism. Clear eligibility criteria, social audits, grievance mechanisms and publicly accessible beneficiary lists can reduce such risks.

Institutional design for ethical governance

India can strengthen institutional ethics through:

1. **Transparency by design** — proactive disclosure and open data.
2. **Accountability mechanisms** — independent audits and legislative oversight.
3. **Reduction of excessive discretion** — clear rules and standardised procedures.
4. **Digital traceability** — maintaining verifiable decision trails.
5. **Conflict-of-interest frameworks** — disclosure and recusal mechanisms.
6. **Whistle-blower protection** — enabling reporting without fear of retaliation.
7. **Ethical leadership** — senior officials setting organisational standards.

However, excessive proceduralisation should also be avoided. Ethics cannot be reduced to compliance alone because real administrative situations frequently involve competing values.

Therefore, ethical governance requires a **synergy between virtuous individuals and well-designed institutions**. The objective should be to create systems in which doing the right thing is not merely morally desirable but also institutionally encouraged, transparent and sustainable.

Current Affairs: India's Next Growth Frontier Report

Q.5 “India's next phase of economic growth will depend less on merely reducing regulatory barriers and more on improving the quality of competition within markets.” In the light of the *India's Next Growth Frontier* report, examine the significance of competition-oriented structural reforms for India's productivity and global competitiveness.

Sample Answer

India's economic transformation increasingly depends upon its ability to move from an economy characterised by fragmented markets and regulatory distortions towards one where **competition, productivity, innovation and efficient allocation of resources** drive growth. The recently released *India's Next Growth Frontier: Reducing Anti-Competitive Market Distortions to Build on India's 2010–2023 Reform Progress* examines this issue through the **Market Distortions Performance Index (MDPI)**.

The report was produced by the Competere Foundation in collaboration with the Centre for Trade and Investment Law at IIFT.

The report indicates that India's position improved from **82nd to 57th** between **2010 and 2023** on the MDPI. The index examines three broad dimensions: **property-rights protection, domestic competition and international competition**. This improvement reflects the cumulative effect of structural reforms rather than a single policy intervention.

Several reforms have contributed to this transformation. The **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** helped create a more integrated domestic market by reducing the multiplicity of indirect taxes. The **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)** strengthened mechanisms for resolving distressed assets and potentially improved capital allocation. Trade facilitation and regulatory reforms have also reduced certain transaction costs and improved the investment environment.

However, the next stage of reform presents a more complex challenge. Removing a regulation does not automatically create effective competition. Markets can remain distorted because of **entry barriers, concentrated market power, asymmetric information, regulatory capture, unequal access to infrastructure or technology and sector-specific investment restrictions**.

The digital economy illustrates this challenge particularly clearly. Digital markets can generate network effects, economies of scale and data advantages that allow dominant firms to acquire substantial market power. Consequently, competition policy must increasingly focus on **consumer welfare, innovation and contestability**, rather than merely the number of firms operating in a market. The report specifically calls for evidence-based competition policy for digital and emerging sectors.

Significance for India

A stronger competition framework can:

- improve allocative efficiency;
- encourage innovation;
- lower prices and improve consumer choice;



- increase productivity;
- facilitate investment;
- strengthen MSME competitiveness;
- improve India's integration with global value chains.

At the same time, competition policy must be calibrated carefully. Excessive intervention can discourage investment, while insufficient regulation can allow monopolistic or oligopolistic structures to emerge.

India should therefore pursue a **three-dimensional reform strategy**:

Domestic competition + International competitiveness + Consumer welfare.

This requires stronger competition institutions, transparent regulatory processes, periodic review of sectoral restrictions, predictable investment rules and coordination between competition, sectoral and trade regulators.

The report is therefore significant because it shifts the discussion from the traditional question of “**How much regulation should India have?**” towards the more sophisticated question of “**Do India's rules and institutions create competitive, productive and innovation-oriented markets?**”

For India to sustain high growth and achieve greater global competitiveness, structural reform must increasingly focus on **efficient markets, institutional quality, innovation and contestability**, rather than deregulation alone.

