



PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OPTIONAL – PAPER II

UPSC CIVIL SERVICES (MAIN) EXAMINATION 2026

Paper Summary, Classification, Question Demand and Strategic Analysis

Prepared for IAS Pass
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2026 PAPER II: FROM FORMAL INSTITUTIONS TO IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY

A detailed reading of the paper through Indian Administration, Paper I linkages, constitutional governance, state capacity, decentralisation and reform implementation.

I. OVERALL CHARACTER OF THE 2026 PAPER II

Public Administration Paper II, 2026 is a deeply institutional paper, but not a conventional institution-description paper. Its recurring concern is the gap between formal design and administrative performance: institutions exist, reforms have been announced, constitutional provisions are available, yet outcomes depend on capacity, coordination, political culture, implementation and accountability.

The paper therefore rewards candidates who can combine the Indian Administration syllabus with Paper I concepts. A General Studies-style answer can identify the institution or current issue, but a Public Administration answer must explain the administrative process underneath it - autonomy, accountability, coordination, capacity, political-administrative relations, organisational behaviour, implementation and state-society interaction.

Five broad characteristics stand out.

1. The dominant theme is the implementation gap

- PSE reforms are "enduring but evolving" - reform is continuous rather than a one-time event.
- NITI Aayog is examined through the shift in planning philosophy and institutional design.
- Lateral entry "has not moved in the intended direction" - the question is about why reform intent has not become scale and institutionalisation.
- Mission Karmayogi is explicitly described as supplementary to the wider state-capacity problem.
- Prakash Singh police reforms are tested through State-level non-compliance.
- Administrative reforms are described as double-edged and later linked directly with lack of political will.
- Zero-tolerance anti-corruption policy is tested as a multi-pronged governance architecture rather than as a list of laws.

2. State capacity is the hidden master theme

Capacity appears directly in Q.6(a), but it also underlies planning, district-local linkages, lateral entry, police reform, rural institutional silos, mega-city management, disaster risk management and administrative reform. The paper repeatedly asks whether Indian institutions possess the personnel, coordination, fiscal space, information systems and political support required to convert formal mandates into outcomes.

3. Federalism is tested as operational governance, not only constitutional design

- Competitive federalism and its possible parochial tendencies.
- Pith and Substance and Severability in Union-State legislative relations.
- Governor-State disagreements and the constitutional practice of Article 200/163-type discretion.
- State public debt and prudent fiscal management.
- NITI Aayog and the changing relationship between national planning and State participation.

4. Decentralisation is tested through coordination and social transformation

- District administration versus local self-government linkages.
- Law-and-order and development roles of district administration.
- Rural development institutions and State-level agencies operating in silos.
- Mega-city governance as a metropolitan coordination problem.
- Women in Panchayats as challengers of patriarchal and structural inequalities.

5. Technology enters Paper II as a governance and rights problem

- Ease of Living Index is used to test data-driven urban planning and the limits of indicator-based governance.
- AI in policing is framed through ethics, privacy, due process and cybercrime capability rather than technological novelty alone.
- Digital systems also sit behind anti-corruption, capacity building, performance management and contemporary urban governance.

A striking contrast with Paper I, 2026

Paper I made the internal architecture of many questions visible through marks such as 5+10, 7+8 and 3+6+6. Paper II does not use that device. It returns to aggregate 10- and 20-mark notation. Therefore, the candidate must infer internal weight from the wording, clauses and directive. In Paper II, demand-decoding becomes less numerically visible but no less important.

II. UNIT-WISE MARKS DISTRIBUTION

The calculation below assigns each sub-question to its primary unit only. Interdisciplinary linkages are analysed separately so that marks are not double-counted.

Unit	Questions	Marks
Evolution of Indian Administration	1(a), 2(a)	30
Philosophical and Constitutional Framework of Government	1(e), 2(b), 2(c)	40
Public Sector Undertakings	1(b), 3(b)	30
Plans and Priorities	1(c), 3(a)	30
District Administration since Independence	1(d), 4(b)	30
State Government and Administration	3(c), 4(a), 4(c)	40
Union Government and Administration	5(b)	10
Civil Services	5(a), 6(a)	30
Financial Management	6(b)	20
Administrative Reforms since Independence	5(c), 8(b)	30
Rural Development	7(b), 8(c)	30
Urban Local Government	5(d), 8(a)	30
Law and Order Administration	5(e), 7(a)	30
Significant Issues in Indian Administration	6(c), 7(c)	20

Total sub-questions: 28

Total marks represented in the full paper: 400

III. WHAT THE UNIT DISTRIBUTION TELLS US

Highest primary weightage: 40 marks each

- Philosophical and Constitutional Framework of Government
- State Government and Administration

This confirms that Paper II remains strongly anchored in constitutional-administrative relationships: constitutionalism, political culture, horizontal rights, federal doctrines, competitive federalism and the Governor-State relationship.

A very broad middle: nine 30-mark units

- Evolution of Indian Administration
- Public Sector Undertakings
- Plans and Priorities
- District Administration since Independence
- Civil Services
- Administrative Reforms since Independence
- Rural Development
- Urban Local Government
- Law and Order Administration

The distribution is unusually spread out. It discourages selective preparation. No single reform unit dominates; instead, UPSC samples across the entire architecture of Indian Administration.

Lower primary marks do not mean low conceptual presence

- Union Government and Administration - 10 marks
- Financial Management - 20 marks
- Significant Issues in Indian Administration - 20 marks

These units reappear through cross-linkages: Cut Motions are also financial accountability; State debt is also federalism; corruption is also ethics, accountability and digital reform; disaster management is also decentralised governance.

IV. QUESTION-WISE CLASSIFICATION

The full wording of every question is reproduced below. No question has been shortened or converted into a shorthand label.

Q. No.	Marks	Unit	Subtopic	Full Question
1(a)	10	Evolution of Indian Administration	Kautilya's Arthshastra	Learnings from Arthashastra could make governance effective even today. Explore the potential.
1(b)	10	Public Sector Undertakings	Problems of Autonomy, Accountability and Control	The reforms in public sector enterprises is not only enduring but also evolving. Explain.
1(c)	10	Plans and Priorities	'Indicative' Planning	The present model of strategic planning has its roots in indicative planning. Comment.
1(d)	10	District Administration since Independence	District Administration and Democratic Decentralization	Linkages between the district administration and local self governments have not evolved to the desired extent. Evaluate.
1(e)	10	Philosophical and Constitutional Framework of Government	Constitutionalism	Constitutionalism in India paves the way for rule of law and social justice. Elaborate.
2(a)	20	Evolution of Indian Administration	Legacy of British Rule in Politics and Administration	An important characteristic of the British Civil Service was its open refusal to be influenced by commercial and industrial interests of India in the name of neutrality. Explain.
2(b)	20	Philosophical and Constitutional Framework of Government	Political Culture	The political culture in India shapes bureaucratic behaviour, professional integrity and civil service conduct. Explain with suitable examples.
2(c)	10	Philosophical and Constitutional Framework of Government	Salient Features and Value Premises	Under an Indian Constitution fundamental rights are usually enforced only vertically, whereas Vishaka case represents the horizontal application. Comment.
3(a)	20	Plans and Priorities	Process of Plan Formulation at Union and State Levels	Planning Commission planned for economic development and social justice, but NITI Aayog has been structured to realise growth potential across the sectors. Discuss.
3(b)	20	Public Sector Undertakings	Impact of Liberalisation and Privatisation	Government of India has done Corporatisation of Ordnance Factory Boards. Discuss the rationale in the light of Disinvestment Policy of the government.
3(c)	10	State Government and Administration	Union-State Administrative, Legislative and Financial Relations	Competitive federalism in India while intended to have healthy competition among States has shown tendencies towards parochialism.

				Comment.
4(a)	20	State Government and Administration	Union-State Administrative, Legislative and Financial Relations	Doctrine of Pith and Substance, and the Doctrine of severability in the legislative relations between the Indian Union and states are supplementary in nature but distinct in application. Discuss.
4(b)	20	District Administration since Independence	Changing Role of the Collector	District administration in India is characterised by the dichotomy between law and order maintenance and development management, even though both functions are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Explain.
4(c)	10	State Government and Administration	Governor	Trace the reasons for growing incidences of disagreements between the Governors and state governments.
5(a)	10	Civil Services	Structure, Recruitment, Training and Capacity Building	Lateral Entry in Government of India has not moved in the intended direction. Explain the reasons.
5(b)	10	Union Government and Administration	Executive, Parliament, Judiciary - Structure, Functions, Work Processes	Though seldom enacted, Cut Motions remain vital instruments of parliamentary accountability. Comment.
5(c)	10	Administrative Reforms since Independence	Major Concerns	Administrative reforms in India have been a double-edged sword. Comment.
5(d)	10	Urban Local Government	Development Dynamics, Politics and Administration with Special Reference to City Management	Ease of living index lays the foundation for data driven approach to urban planning. Analyse critically.
5(e)	10	Law and Order Administration	Police-Public Relations; Reforms in Police	Ethical and privacy issues limit the emerging use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) by police to combat cyber crimes. Comment.
6(a)	20	Civil Services	Structure, Recruitment, Training and Capacity Building	Civil services is grappling with severe capacity issues and which is a major bottleneck in implementing ambitious programmes across sectors. Mission Karmayogi can only supplement but not solve the entire capacity constraint. Give your opinion.
6(b)	20	Financial Management	Role of Finance Ministry in Monetary and Fiscal Area	Public debt of states in India has increased significantly in the last one decade. In this context discuss the constraints of the states in planning prudent fiscal management.
6(c)	10	Significant Issues in Indian Administration	Disaster Management	Community based Disaster Risk Management is a response to the gaps within the existing Disaster Risk Management strategy. Evaluate.
7(a)	20	Law and Order Administration	Police-Public Relations; Reforms in Police	Supreme Court of India in Prakash Singh case laid the foundation for effective police reforms in India, but the states have frittered the

				opportunity. Discuss.
7(b)	20	Rural Development	Institutions and Agencies Since Independence	Disconnect between the rural development institutions and state level agencies have led to each operating in silos at both levels resulting in inefficiencies. Find the reasons.
7(c)	10	Significant Issues in Indian Administration	Corruption and Administration	'Zero tolerance against Corruption', commitment of Government of India has multi-pronged approach. Critically analyse.
8(a)	20	Urban Local Government	Development Dynamics, Politics and Administration with Special Reference to City Management	Discuss the major management challenges faced by Indian Mega Cities and explore sustainable, inclusive urban development strategies for balanced future growth.
8(b)	20	Administrative Reforms since Independence	Problems of Implementation	Lack of political will to support several administrative reforms has led to their inadequate implementation. Critically validate.
8(c)	10	Rural Development	73rd Constitutional Amendment	Women in panchayats challenge the established patriarchal norms and contest structural inequalities in society. Explain.

V. INTERDISCIPLINARY / CROSS-UNIT CHARACTER OF PAPER II

Paper II is inherently applied and therefore almost every strong answer can use Paper I. The following are the clearest questions where the cross-unit linkage is part of the demand rather than optional enrichment:

- 1(d) - District Administration → Rural/Urban Local Government: district coordination versus democratic decentralisation.
- 1(e) - Constitutional Framework → Administrative Law / Accountability: constitutionalism, Rule of Law and social justice.
- 2(a) - Evolution of Indian Administration → Civil Services / Administrative Ethics: colonial neutrality versus democratic neutrality and public interest.
- 2(b) - Political Culture → Civil Services + Administrative Behaviour: ecology, politicisation, integrity and conduct.
- 2(c) - Constitutional Framework → Administrative Law + Gender Justice: vertical and horizontal application of rights.
- 3(a) - Plans and Priorities → State Government + Development Dynamics/Public Policy: NITI, federalism, growth and social justice.
- 3(b) - Public Sector Undertakings → NPM/LPG + Organisations: corporatisation, autonomy, state-market relations and strategic control.
- 3(c) - State Government → Plans and Priorities: competitive federalism, NITI-style benchmarking and cooperative safeguards.
- 4(a) - State Government → Administrative Law: federal legislative competence and judicial doctrines.
- 4(b) - District Administration → Law and Order + Development Administration: regulatory and developmental roles of the district state.
- 4(c) - State Government → Constitutional Law / Accountability: gubernatorial discretion, conventions and judicial control.
- 5(b) - Union Government → Financial Management + Accountability: Cut Motions as parliamentary financial control.
- 5(d) - Urban Local Government → Techniques of Administrative Improvement: data, indicators and performance governance.
- 5(e) - Law and Order → Administrative Ethics / Law / Technology: AI, privacy, fairness and accountable policing.
- 6(a) - Civil Services → Personnel Administration + Organisations: competency, learning systems, workforce and institutional capacity.
- 6(b) - Financial Management → State Government / Fiscal Federalism: debt sustainability within intergovernmental constraints.
- 6(c) - Disaster Management → Local Governance + Participation: community-led resilience and formal DRM institutions.
- 7(a) - Law and Order → Judicial Control / Personnel Administration: police autonomy, tenure, complaints and State compliance.
- 7(b) - Rural Development → District Administration / Organisations: scheme silos, coordination and incomplete devolution.
- 7(c) - Corruption → Accountability / Ethics / E-Governance: preventive, punitive, participative and digital vigilance.

- 8(a) - Urban Local Government → Organisations / Financial Administration / Development Dynamics: metropolitan coordination, finance and inclusion.
- 8(b) - Administrative Reforms → Political Culture / Administrative Behaviour: political will, resistance and implementation.
- 8(c) - Rural Development → Gender / Participation / Social Justice: representation as a challenge to structural power.

VI. DETAILED QUESTION-WISE ANALYSIS

Each question is reproduced in full before analysis. The framework follows the 2025 Paper II analysis model and the 2026 Paper I analysis approach: Syllabus Map → Core Demand → Underlying Concept → Core Concepts → Theories/Models → Thinkers/Committees/Cases → Micro-topics/Contemporary References → Paper I Linkages → Answer-Writing Direction.

Question 1(a)

Q.1(a) (10 Marks)

“Learnings from Arthashastra could make governance effective even today. Explore the potential.”

Syllabus Map: Evolution of Indian Administration → Kautilya's Arthashastra

Core Demand: Identify the administrative lessons in Kautilya's Arthashastra that retain contemporary value, while distinguishing usable principles from features incompatible with a constitutional democracy. The answer should apply Kautilya, not merely reproduce the Saptanga theory.

Underlying Concept: Arthashastra treats governance as an integrated problem of state capacity: selection of officials, fiscal strength, security, welfare, intelligence, regulation, accountability and crisis management. Its central administrative message is that authority must be backed by competence, information, resources and concern for *yogakshema* - security and welfare of the people.

Core Concepts / Elements

- *Yogakshema*: security and welfare as the end of state action
- *Saptanga*: interdependence of ruler, officials, territory/population, fortifications, treasury, coercive capacity and allies
- *Amatya* selection: competence, integrity, testing and role-fit in public personnel
- Fiscal prudence: treasury, taxation, revenue administration and avoidance of arbitrary extraction
- Anti-corruption: audit, supervision, rotation/testing of officials and recognition of opportunities for embezzlement
- Market and economic regulation: weights, measures, trade, prices, public works and protection against exploitation
- Intelligence and information systems for anticipatory governance and internal security
- Contingency orientation: famine, disaster, war and protection of productive capacity

Theories / Models to Invoke

- State-capacity perspective - capable institutions are a precondition for policy effectiveness
- Proto-welfare administration - legitimacy linked to material well-being rather than coercion alone
- Weberian parallel - specialization, hierarchy, records and rule-bound officialdom, though Arthashastra predates modern legal-rational bureaucracy
- Principal-agent logic - monitoring and sanctions reduce opportunism by officials

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- Kautilya - Arthashastra: administrative realism, *yogakshema*, fiscal strength and supervision
- Max Weber - useful as a comparative lens for rationalisation and official specialisation, not as a claim that Kautilya was Weberian
- Paul Appleby - contemporary Indian administration also turns on capacity, responsibility and workable institutional design
- 2nd ARC - ethics, citizen-centricity and administrative capacity provide modern constitutional equivalents of some state-capacity concerns

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Use contemporary parallels: competency-based civil services, audit trails, public procurement, fiscal discipline, disaster preparedness and evidence-based intelligence
- Link anti-corruption to preventive vigilance rather than only punishment
- Use Kautilya's emphasis on productive agriculture, irrigation and markets as an early recognition that governance must protect the economic base of society
- Add a constitutional caveat: espionage, coercive severity, social hierarchy and *raison d'etat* cannot be transplanted uncritically into a rights-based democracy

Paper I Linkages

- Administrative Thought - bureaucracy, organisation and managerial control
- Accountability and Control - vigilance, monitoring and control of discretion
- Financial Administration - taxation, treasury, audit and fiscal capacity

- Development Dynamics - state capacity and welfare orientation

Answer-Writing Direction: A strong 10-marker should move quickly from 2-3 Kautilyan principles to modern administrative applications, and end with the constitutional-democratic limits of transplantation.

Question 1(b)

Q.1(b) (10 Marks)

“The reforms in public sector enterprises is not only enduring but also evolving. Explain.”

Syllabus Map: Public Sector Undertakings → Problems of Autonomy, Accountability and Control

Core Demand: Explain why Public Sector Enterprise reform in India is a continuing process and show how its instruments have changed over time - from autonomy and performance reform to listing, strategic disinvestment, corporatisation, restructuring, closure, merger and market discipline.

Underlying Concept: PSE reform is not a one-time privatisation exercise. It reflects the changing balance between developmental objectives, strategic control, commercial viability, managerial autonomy, accountability and competition.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Post-1991 disinvestment and exposure to competition
- Navratna/Maharatna/Miniratna autonomy and professionalisation
- MoU/performance orientation and board-level accountability
- Listing and minority stake sale to bring market disclosure and capital discipline
- Strategic disinvestment/privatisation where government ownership is not considered essential
- New PSE Policy 2021: bare-minimum public-sector presence in strategic sectors; privatisation/merger/subsidiarisation/closure elsewhere where feasible
- Corporatisation as a distinct reform instrument - commercial form and autonomy without necessarily transferring ownership
- Asset monetisation, digital transformation, ESG expectations and professional governance as newer reform layers

Theories / Models to Invoke

- New Public Management - managerial autonomy, performance, competition and commercial disciplines
- Principal-agent model - autonomy must be paired with clear targets and accountable boards
- Public choice/state-market debate - limits of state production versus strategic/public-value objectives
- Corporate governance model - separation of ownership, management and regulatory roles

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- New Public Sector Enterprise Policy, 2021 - strategic/non-strategic classification and reduced government presence
- DIPAM - strategic disinvestment, minority stake sale and capital-market objectives
- 2nd ARC/First ARC traditions - autonomy with accountability in public enterprises
- OFB corporatisation is a useful bridge to Q.3(b): seven 100% government-owned defence companies show that reform can mean corporatisation without immediate privatisation

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Avoid equating all reform with privatisation
- Discuss autonomy-accountability tension: freedom from ministry control versus public accountability for assets and strategic functions
- Use examples such as listing, board professionalisation, merger/closure and sectoral restructuring rather than only Air India-type disinvestment
- Note that strategic sectors may justify continued state presence even within a market-oriented policy

Paper I Linkages

- Introduction - LPG and New Public Management
- Organisations - autonomy, structure and performance
- Accountability and Control - public accountability of commercial entities
- Development Dynamics - strong state versus market

Answer-Writing Direction: The phrase “enduring but evolving” is the heart of the question. Organise the answer chronologically or by reform instruments and show continuity plus changing rationale.

Question 1(c)

Q.1(c) (10 Marks)

“The present model of strategic planning has its roots in indicative planning. Comment.”

Syllabus Map: Plans and Priorities → ‘Indicative’ Planning

Core Demand: Show how contemporary strategic planning inherits the logic of indicative planning - signalling priorities, coordinating actors and shaping investment without command allocation - while becoming more flexible, mission-oriented, data-driven and adaptive.

Underlying Concept: Indicative planning emerged where the state guides rather than commands the economy. Strategic planning retains this non-command character but focuses more sharply on long-term priorities, scenario choice, outcomes, institutional coordination and adaptive execution.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Indicative planning: guidance through information, incentives, targets and coordination rather than compulsory physical controls
- Shift from five-year command-style allocation to vision, strategy and action agendas
- Priority-setting under scarcity
- Public-private and Centre-State coordination
- Outcome orientation and monitoring
- Scenario planning and adaptation to uncertainty
- Sectoral strategies rather than a single rigid economy-wide plan
- Data and dashboards for course correction

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Strategic management - mission, environment scanning, priorities, implementation and feedback
- Indicative planning - state as guide/facilitator in a mixed/market economy
- Incremental/adaptive planning - strategy must adjust to feedback and changing conditions
- Network governance - strategic outcomes require multiple public and non-state actors

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- NITI Aayog - strategy documents, SDG monitoring, sectoral policy support and cooperative/competitive federalism
- Mintzberg - useful caution against treating strategy as only formal planning; emergent strategy matters
- Lindblom - incremental adaptation can complement strategic direction in complex policy environments

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Contrast "plan allocation" with "strategic steering"
- Use examples such as SDGs, Aspirational Districts/Blocks, infrastructure pipelines, climate/energy transitions and sector strategies
- Mention limits: weak fiscal leverage, fragmented implementation, data quality and coordination deficits

Paper I Linkages

- Public Policy - policy formulation, implementation and evaluation
- Development Dynamics - planning, state-market relations and development administration
- Techniques of Administrative Improvement - performance monitoring and data
- Organisations - inter-organisational coordination

Answer-Writing Direction: Do not merely define the two terms. Establish the line of continuity and then show how strategic planning goes beyond classical indicative planning.

Question 1(d)

Q.1(d) (10 Marks)

“Linkages between the district administration and local self governments have not evolved to the desired extent. Evaluate.”

Syllabus Map: District Administration since Independence → District Administration and Democratic Decentralization

Core Demand: Evaluate why the administrative relationship between district administration and constitutionally empowered local self-government remains underdeveloped, and show what a workable district-local partnership should look like.

Underlying Concept: India has layered elected local governments onto a historically strong district administration without fully redesigning authority, staff, planning, finance and accountability. The result is coexistence rather than seamless integration.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Collector-centric district administration versus elected Panchayats/Municipalities
- Incomplete devolution of 3Fs - functions, funds and functionaries
- Parallel line departments, parastatals, missions and societies
- Weak District Planning Committees and fragmented planning
- Dual accountability of officials to State departments and local bodies
- DRDAs/sectoral agencies operating alongside Panchayati Raj structures

- Coordination in land, disaster response, elections, welfare delivery and infrastructure
- Need to preserve local autonomy while using the Collector as coordinator/facilitator rather than substitute decision-maker

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Democratic decentralisation - authority should move closer to citizens
- Subsidiarity - functions should be located at the lowest capable level
- Network governance - district outcomes depend on coordination among elected and administrative actors
- Systems approach - local bodies and district administration are interdependent subsystems

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments
- 2nd ARC, State and District Administration - clearer district coordination and stronger local institutions
- Balwantrai Mehta tradition - democratic decentralisation and local participation
- District Planning Committee under Article 243ZD as the formal integration mechanism

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Differentiate "coordination" from "control"
- Mention State reluctance to devolve staff and finances
- Use scheme convergence and disaster management as areas where district-local cooperation is indispensable
- Suggest empowered DPCs, activity mapping, integrated data platforms, cadre rationalisation and predictable fiscal devolution

Paper I Linkages

- Organisations - coordination and inter-organisational relations
- Accountability and Control - multiple accountability lines
- Good Governance - participation and subsidiarity
- Development Dynamics - participatory development

Answer-Writing Direction: Because the directive is "Evaluate", show both the administrative necessity of district coordination and the democratic risk of allowing district bureaucracy to overshadow local self-government.

Question 1(e)

Q.1(e) (10 Marks)

“Constitutionalism in India paves the way for rule of law and social justice. Elaborate.”

Syllabus Map: Philosophical and Constitutional Framework of Government → Constitutionalism

Core Demand: Explain how constitutionalism - limited, accountable and value-bound government - institutionalises both Rule of Law and the transformative objective of social justice in India.

Underlying Concept: A Constitution is a legal text; constitutionalism is the practice of limiting power through rights, institutions, procedures and values. Indian constitutionalism combines liberal restraints on state power with a transformative commitment to substantive equality and social reform.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Supremacy of the Constitution and limited government
- Fundamental Rights and judicial review
- Separation of powers/checks and balances
- Federalism and constitutional distribution of authority
- Due process/fair procedure under Article 21 jurisprudence
- Equality under Article 14 and substantive equality through affirmative action
- Directive Principles and welfare-state commitments
- Constitutional morality, accountability and protection of minorities/vulnerable groups

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Rule of Law - legality, equality and controlled discretion
- Transformative constitutionalism - Constitution as instrument of social change
- Substantive equality - equal treatment may require differentiated support
- Constitutional governance - power legitimated and constrained by institutions

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- B.R. Ambedkar - constitutional morality and institutional methods
- Granville Austin - Indian Constitution as both a charter of governance and social revolution
- Kesavananda Bharati - basic structure and limits even on constituent power
- Maneka Gandhi - fairness, reasonableness and the integrated rights framework
- Minerva Mills - balance between Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Use social justice examples: reservations, welfare rights, decentralisation, gender justice and access to justice
- Distinguish Rule of Law from rule by law
- Note that constitutionalism depends on conventions and institutional behaviour, not courts alone

Paper I Linkages

- Administrative Law - Rule of Law, judicial review, natural justice
- Accountability and Control - constitutional checks
- Administrative Ethics - constitutional values
- Development Dynamics - social justice and inclusive development

Answer-Writing Direction: The answer should link constitutional design to administrative practice: discretion, welfare, affirmative action and judicial control - not remain a pure polity note.

Question 2(a)

Q.2(a) (20 Marks)

“An important characteristic of the British Civil Service was its open refusal to be influenced by commercial and industrial interests of India in the name of neutrality. Explain.”

Syllabus Map: Evolution of Indian Administration → Legacy of British Rule in Politics and Administration

Core Demand: Explain the colonial meaning and contradiction of British civil-service "neutrality": insulation from Indian commercial and industrial interests did not mean value-neutral administration, because the service remained structurally accountable to imperial priorities.

Underlying Concept: The colonial civil service cultivated impartiality, hierarchy and insulation from local pressures. Yet neutrality operated within an imperial state whose economic and political goals were not neutral between Britain and India. Administrative insulation could therefore become indifference to Indian economic interests.

Core Concepts / Elements

- ICS ethos: permanence, hierarchy, generalism and district dominance
- Political neutrality versus socio-economic neutrality
- Insulation from local business and political pressures
- Colonial accountability to the Crown/Secretary of State rather than democratic accountability to Indians
- Revenue and law-and-order priorities over representative developmental accountability
- The "steel frame" as both source of administrative continuity and instrument of imperial control
- Indianisation as response to representational and legitimacy deficits
- Post-independence inheritance of neutrality, anonymity and permanence - transformed by constitutional democracy

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Weberian neutral competence - useful benchmark for professional bureaucracy
- Ecological perspective - bureaucratic behaviour reflects the political-economic environment in which it is embedded
- Administrative state versus representative accountability - insulation can protect integrity but also produce alienation

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- Lord Cornwallis reforms and later ICS professionalisation as historical context
- Macaulay and competitive recruitment - merit logic, but within colonial institutional purposes
- Dadabhai Naoroji's drain critique - useful for showing why "neutral" administration could still serve an unequal political economy
- Paul Appleby - post-independence administration required development orientation and democratic responsiveness, not colonial insulation

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Explain that the question is not asking whether every British officer was personally biased
- Acknowledge later departures such as tariff protection/industrial policy debates, but maintain the structural point about imperial accountability
- Conclude with the modern lesson: neutrality must mean non-partisanship and impartiality within constitutional goals, not detachment from citizens' developmental interests

Paper I Linkages

- Weber - neutral competence and legal-rational bureaucracy
- Administrative Ethics - neutrality, integrity and public interest
- Comparative Public Administration - ecology and context
- Development Dynamics - bureaucracy and development

Answer-Writing Direction: A 20-marker needs historical nuance: first explain the claimed virtue of neutrality, then expose its colonial limitation, and finally contrast it with democratic-neutral civil service after 1950.

Question 2(b)

Q.2(b) (20 Marks)

“The political culture in India shapes bureaucratic behaviour, professional integrity and civil service conduct. Explain with suitable examples.”

Syllabus Map: Philosophical and Constitutional Framework of Government → Political Culture

Core Demand: Explain the mechanisms through which India's political culture influences bureaucratic behaviour, integrity and conduct, using examples that show both pathologies and democratic/constitutional correctives.

Underlying Concept: Bureaucracy does not operate in an institutional vacuum. Norms of authority, patronage, hierarchy, caste/community, electoral competition, federalism, citizen mobilisation, judicialisation and media scrutiny shape what civil servants perceive as legitimate, risky and professionally rewarding.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Political-administrative relations and politicisation
- Transfer/posting culture and tenure insecurity
- Patronage/clientelism versus merit and rule orientation
- Social hierarchy and bureaucratic distance from citizens
- Electoral competition and pressure for quick/populist implementation
- Federal and regional political cultures producing variation across States
- Civil-society/media/judicial scrutiny strengthening responsiveness
- Professional integrity as interaction between personal ethics and institutional incentives

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Riggsian ecology - administrative systems reflect surrounding social and political environment
- Almond and Verba - political culture as orientations toward authority and participation
- Waldo - administration is embedded in values and politics, not value-neutral
- Principal-agent framework - political principals can create both democratic control and opportunistic interference

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- Constitutional neutrality and All India Services framework as professional safeguards
- 2nd ARC - ethics, civil service reforms, fixed tenure and professionalisation
- Civil Services Boards/tenure safeguards as responses to arbitrary transfers
- Election administration and disaster response as examples where professional norms can resist partisan pressure

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Use examples generically: frequent transfers, local patronage networks, political pressure in policing/land administration, but also citizen charters, social audits and transparent digital systems
- Distinguish responsiveness to elected government from partisan subservience
- Show that integrity needs institutional design - tenure, transparent postings, reasoned orders, protection for honest decision-making - not moral exhortation alone

Paper I Linkages

- Administrative Behaviour - organisational culture, motivation and decision-making
- Administrative Ethics - neutrality, integrity and public interest
- Comparative Public Administration - ecological approach
- Accountability and Control - political control versus professional autonomy

Answer-Writing Direction: Avoid a one-sided "politicians corrupt bureaucracy" answer. Political culture can also deepen accountability, participation and social sensitivity.

Question 2(c)

Q.2(c) (10 Marks)

“Under an Indian Constitution fundamental rights are usually enforced only vertically, whereas Vishaka case represents the horizontal application. Comment.”

Syllabus Map: Philosophical and Constitutional Framework of Government → Salient Features and Value Premises

Core Demand: Explain the vertical-horizontal distinction in Fundamental Rights and show how Vishaka extended constitutional norms into the workplace, including private employment, while noting that the Constitution already contains some directly horizontal rights.

Underlying Concept: Fundamental Rights are primarily enforceable against the State because Article 12 defines the public authorities bound by most rights. Yet private power can also threaten dignity and equality. Courts and legislation therefore sometimes give constitutional rights horizontal effect.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Vertical effect: citizen versus State/public authority
- Horizontal effect: constitutional norms shaping relationships between private persons/entities
- Vishaka guidelines binding employers and workplaces pending legislation
- Articles 14, 15, 19(1)(g) and 21 read with CEDAW in Vishaka
- POSH Act, 2013 as statutory institutionalisation of workplace obligations
- Directly horizontal constitutional provisions: Article 15(2), abolition of untouchability under Article 17, forced labour under Article 23 and child labour under Article 24
- Positive obligations of the State to protect rights from private interference
- Constitutionalisation of private power without erasing the public-private distinction

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Transformative constitutionalism - equality and dignity penetrate social institutions
- Positive-obligation approach to rights - the State must create protective frameworks
- Rule of Law and rights-based administration

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (1997) - judicial guidelines on sexual harassment at workplace
- Justice K.S. Puttaswamy - dignity/privacy as constitutional values relevant to regulation of private data power
- POSH Act, 2013 - legislative horizontalisation of workplace equality and dignity

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Clarify that Vishaka did not convert every Fundamental Right into a general cause of action against every private person
- The key administrative dimension is regulatory responsibility: government must build institutions and procedures that secure rights in private settings
- Useful examples: workplace harassment committees, labour regulation, data protection and non-discrimination obligations

Paper I Linkages

- Administrative Law - rights, judicial review and legal control
- Accountability and Control - judicial control and rights protection
- Administrative Ethics - dignity, equality and fairness

Answer-Writing Direction: The phrase "usually enforced only vertically" requires qualification. A high-quality answer should explicitly identify constitutional provisions that already have horizontal operation.

Question 3(a)

Q.3(a) (20 Marks)

"Planning Commission planned for economic development and social justice, but NITI Aayog has been structured to realise growth potential across the sectors. Discuss."

Syllabus Map: Plans and Priorities → Process of Plan Formulation at Union and State Levels

Core Demand: Compare the developmental philosophy and institutional design of the Planning Commission with NITI Aayog, and assess the shift from allocative planning for development/social justice to strategic facilitation of sectoral growth.

Underlying Concept: The change from Planning Commission to NITI Aayog reflects a broader transition from centralised plan allocation in a state-led economy to strategic, cooperative and competitive governance in a more market-oriented federal economy.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Planning Commission: Five-Year Plans, resource allocation, plan grants, public investment and national priority-setting
- Social justice and balanced regional development within planned development
- Critiques: centralisation, one-size-fits-all plans, overlap with Finance Commission, weak State ownership
- NITI Aayog: think tank, policy coordination, Governing Council, knowledge and monitoring role
- Cooperative federalism and State participation
- Competitive federalism through indices, rankings and performance benchmarking
- Sectoral growth, innovation, SDGs, Aspirational Districts/Blocks and data-based monitoring
- Loss of direct financial allocation power - flexibility but weaker implementation leverage

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Indicative/strategic planning - steering rather than commanding

- Network governance - Centre, States, experts and private actors
- New Public Management - results, benchmarking and performance
- Development administration - social justice must remain part of growth strategy

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- NITI Aayog's official twin emphasis on cooperative and competitive federalism
- Governing Council as the principal Centre-State deliberative platform within NITI
- Amartya Sen - growth should be evaluated through capabilities and social outcomes, not sectoral output alone
- Planning Commission legacy - Mahalanobis-era resource planning through later inclusive-growth approaches

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Do not present NITI as merely a renamed Planning Commission
- Balance growth potential with distribution, regional inequality and social-sector capacity
- Use current tools: SDG India Index, Aspirational Districts, sectoral strategy papers, State support/peer learning

Paper I Linkages

- Public Policy - policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation
- Development Dynamics - state-market relations and development administration
- Good Governance - collaborative and performance governance
- Techniques of Administrative Improvement - indicators and monitoring

Answer-Writing Direction: Use a comparative structure: mandate, instruments, federal role, financial power, implementation leverage and normative orientation.

Question 3(b)

Q.3(b) (20 Marks)

“Government of India has done Corporatisation of Ordnance Factory Boards. Discuss the rationale in the light of Disinvestment Policy of the government.”

Syllabus Map: Public Sector Undertakings → Impact of Liberalisation and Privatisation

Core Demand: Explain the rationale of OFB corporatisation and locate it correctly within the wider public-enterprise/disinvestment philosophy, while clearly distinguishing corporatisation from privatisation.

Underlying Concept: Corporatisation shifts a departmental production system into company form to create managerial and financial autonomy, clearer accountability and commercial discipline. It can be part of a broader PSE reform strategy without immediately transferring ownership to private hands.

Core Concepts / Elements

- OFB production units converted into seven 100% government-owned Defence Public Sector Undertakings from 1 October 2021
- Functional autonomy and faster managerial decision-making
- Product specialisation and clearer business accountability
- Cost efficiency, quality, innovation and competitiveness
- Ability to diversify, export and enter partnerships
- Separation of purchaser, producer and administrative roles
- New PSE Policy 2021 and strategic-sector logic - defence is strategic, so state presence remains important
- Corporatisation versus strategic disinvestment: change in organisational form is not the same as sale of ownership/control

Theories / Models to Invoke

- New Public Management - corporatisation, performance contracts and managerial autonomy
- Principal-agent model - clearer ownership goals and board accountability
- State-market continuum - reform need not be binary public versus private
- Transaction-cost/organisational design - company form can reduce departmental procedural rigidity

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- Cabinet decision of 2021 and Department of Defence Production restructuring of 41 units into seven DPSUs
- DIPAM New PSE Policy, 2021 - bare-minimum state presence in strategic sectors and restructuring options
- Government rationale: autonomy, efficiency, growth potential, innovation, specialisation, competitiveness and cost-quality improvement

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Benefits: commercial accounting, benchmarking, professional boards, market responsiveness
- Risks: labour anxiety, strategic supply obligations, monopoly conditions, possible short-term commercialism and need for robust defence procurement governance

- Mention that strategic orders and public-service obligations require safeguards beyond ordinary corporate profitability

Paper I Linkages

- New Public Management and LPG
- Organisations - structural reform and autonomy
- Accountability and Control - autonomy-accountability balance
- Development Dynamics - strong state versus market

Answer-Writing Direction: The most important conceptual correction is: OFB corporatisation was not itself privatisation. Use the disinvestment policy as the broader reform context, not as a synonym.

Question 3(c)

Q.3(c) (10 Marks)

“Competitive federalism in India while intended to have healthy competition among States has shown tendencies towards parochialism. Comment.”

Syllabus Map: State Government and Administration → Union-State Administrative, Legislative and Financial Relations

Core Demand: Assess how competitive federalism can improve State performance yet drift into parochial, zero-sum or exclusionary competition if not balanced by cooperative institutions and equalisation.

Underlying Concept: Competition among States can generate policy innovation, investment, service improvements and learning. But States have unequal capacities and incentives; unregulated competition can privilege narrow territorial gains over national solidarity and shared externalities.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Competition for investment, jobs, infrastructure and rankings
- Benchmarking and performance indices
- Policy experimentation and horizontal learning
- Race to the top versus race to the bottom
- Tax/incentive competition and fiscal externalities
- Local protectionism/nativism and narrow state interest
- Unequal starting capacities of richer and poorer States
- Need for national minimum standards, equalisation and intergovernmental coordination

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Public choice/fiscal federalism - jurisdictional competition can improve responsiveness
- Competitive-cooperative federalism - competition embedded within collaboration
- Game-theoretic collective action - individually rational State strategies may create nationally suboptimal outcomes

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- NITI Aayog - competitive and cooperative federalism as twin mandates
- Finance Commission - equalisation and fiscal transfers as counterweight to unequal capacities
- Inter-State Council/Zonal Councils/GST Council as cooperative mechanisms

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Use NITI indices and Aspirational Districts as examples of constructive competition
- Use environmental spillovers, inter-State water, labour mobility or investment subsidies to illustrate areas where parochial competition can harm collective outcomes
- Suggest peer learning, transparent rankings adjusted for capacity, common standards and cooperative forums

Paper I Linkages

- Development Dynamics - competition, state-market relations and regional development
- Public Choice - incentives and intergovernmental competition
- Good Governance - benchmarking and performance
- Accountability - transparency of comparative performance

Answer-Writing Direction: Do not reject competitive federalism. The better conclusion is "competition within a cooperative constitutional framework".

Question 4(a)

Q.4(a) (20 Marks)

“Doctrine of Pith and Substance, and the Doctrine of severability in the legislative relations between the Indian Union and states are supplementary in nature but distinct in application. Discuss.”

Syllabus Map: State Government and Administration → Union-State Administrative, Legislative and Financial Relations

Core Demand: Explain why Pith and Substance and Severability both protect legislation from invalidation but operate at different stages and answer different constitutional questions.

Underlying Concept: Federal legislative disputes often involve overlap and partial invalidity. Pith and Substance identifies the true nature of a law to decide legislative competence despite incidental encroachment. Severability asks whether an invalid part can be separated so the valid remainder survives.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Article 246 and Seventh Schedule distribution of legislative competence
- Pith and Substance: true nature, object and effect of the legislation
- Incidental encroachment on another list does not automatically invalidate a law
- Severability: invalid provisions can be cut away if the valid remainder is independent and workable
- Legislative intent and functional separability
- Both doctrines favour constitutional preservation over wholesale invalidation
- Distinct trigger: competence/characterisation versus partial invalidity
- Federal balance and judicial restraint

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Doctrine of occupied field/repugnancy is related context but should not be confused with these doctrines
- Presumption of constitutionality and judicial minimalism - courts preserve valid legislative choices where possible

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- Prafulla Kumar Mukherjee v. Bank of Commerce, Khulna (1947) - classic Pith and Substance articulation
- State of Bombay v. F.N. Balsara (1951) - severability and partial validity
- R.M.D. Chamarbaugwala v. Union of India (1957) - tests for severability

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Use a compact comparison table in the answer: purpose, question asked, operation and effect
- Avoid saying severability is only a federalism doctrine; it applies more broadly to unconstitutional portions of laws
- Connect both doctrines to judicial federalism and legislative continuity

Paper I Linkages

- Administrative Law - judicial review and constitutional control
- Accountability and Control - courts as constitutional controllers
- Rule of Law - legality and limited government

Answer-Writing Direction: The phrase "supplementary in nature but distinct in application" should govern the structure: first common purpose, then precise distinction.

Question 4(b)

Q.4(b) (20 Marks)

"District administration in India is characterised by the dichotomy between law and order maintenance and development management, even though both functions are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Explain."

Syllabus Map: District Administration since Independence → Changing Role of the Collector

Core Demand: Explain the historical and functional separation between regulatory/law-and-order and developmental roles of district administration, and then show why effective governance requires their coordination rather than rigid separation.

Underlying Concept: The District Collector evolved from a revenue-magisterial authority into a development coordinator. Post-independence specialisation created separate police, line departments and elected local bodies, but district outcomes remain deeply interdependent.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Colonial collector: revenue, magisterial and regulatory authority
- Post-independence development administration and welfare programmes
- Police/law-and-order chain versus developmental line departments
- Local self-government and district planning
- Security as enabling condition for investment, schooling, health and welfare delivery
- Development deficits as sources of grievance, conflict and vulnerability
- Disaster management, elections, land conflict and communal tension as integrated district tasks
- Collector as coordinator, crisis manager, facilitator and convergence point rather than sole controller

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Development administration - change-oriented and goal-oriented administration
- Systems theory - law/order and development are interdependent subsystems
- Riggian ecology - administrative roles evolve with social and developmental context
- Collaborative governance - coordination across police, local bodies, departments and civil society

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- 2nd ARC, State and District Administration - changing role of District Officer and need for coordination
- Balwantrai Mehta and democratic decentralisation - development must include elected institutions
- Disaster Management Act framework - district coordination illustrates convergence of regulatory and developmental capacity

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Use examples: land acquisition/rehabilitation, riots and relief, insurgency-affected development, disaster response, large infrastructure projects
- Discuss role conflict: excessive law-and-order orientation can crowd out development; excessive projectism can neglect regulatory legitimacy
- Suggest integrated district planning, interoperable data, joint situation reviews and clear role protocols

Paper I Linkages

- Organisations - coordination and role conflict
- Development Dynamics - development administration
- Accountability and Control - multiple accountability centres
- Administrative Behaviour - leadership and conflict management

Answer-Writing Direction: A mature answer treats the "dichotomy" as analytically useful but operationally porous.

Question 4(c)

Q.4(c) (10 Marks)

"Trace the reasons for growing incidences of disagreements between the Governors and state governments."

Syllabus Map: State Government and Administration → Governor

Core Demand: Trace institutional, constitutional and political reasons for the rise in Governor-State Government conflicts, with emphasis on discretionary spaces, Bill assent, government formation and the weakening of conventions.

Underlying Concept: The Governor occupies a dual position: constitutional head of the State and appointee of the Union. Conflict grows when ambiguous constitutional discretion intersects with partisan competition and weak conventions.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Appointment/removal by Union and perceived lack of political neutrality
- Article 163 discretion and ambiguity over aid and advice
- Article 200 - assent, return and reservation of State Bills
- Government formation, floor tests and assembly sessions
- Article 356 history and federal distrust
- University chancellorship and statutory appointment disputes in several States
- Public political comments and breakdown of informal consultation
- Different parties in Union and State intensifying institutional contestation

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Principal-agent/federal umpire problem - Governor must be neither Union agent nor State executive rival
- Constitutional conventions - formal text cannot resolve every situation
- Cooperative federalism - trust and restraint are institutional resources

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- Sarkaria Commission - Governor should be eminent, detached from local politics and act with restraint
- Punchhi Commission - clearer conventions and federal balance
- B.P. Singhal v. Union of India (2010) - removal cannot be arbitrary despite pleasure doctrine
- Nabam Rebia (2016) - limits on gubernatorial discretion in legislative functioning
- State of Punjab v. Principal Secretary to Governor (2023) - Governor cannot indefinitely stall legislative business
- State of Tamil Nadu v. Governor (April 2025) and the November 2025 Presidential Reference advisory: the later Constitution Bench rejected fixed judicial timelines/deemed assent as a general solution while holding indefinite inaction constitutionally impermissible and open to limited judicial directions to act

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Separate structural causes from immediate partisan triggers
- Mention delayed assent as a major contemporary source of friction
- Reforms: transparent selection norms, adherence to Sarkaria/Punchhi conventions, reasoned action, timely consultation, limited discretionary activism and judicial review of constitutional inaction where appropriate

Paper I Linkages

- Administrative Law - constitutional discretion and judicial review
- Accountability and Control - constitutional checks
- Good Governance - cooperative federalism
- Administrative Ethics - neutrality and constitutional morality

Answer-Writing Direction: Because the question says "Trace the reasons", the answer should be causal rather than a generic note on the Governor's powers.

Question 5(a)

Q.5(a) (10 Marks)

"Lateral Entry in Government of India has not moved in the intended direction. Explain the reasons."

Syllabus Map: Civil Services → Structure, Recruitment, Training and Capacity Building

Core Demand: Explain why lateral entry has remained limited relative to its stated goals of bringing domain expertise and augmenting middle/senior management capacity.

Underlying Concept: Lateral entry addresses specialist and capacity gaps, but isolated appointments cannot transform a career-based bureaucracy unless recruitment scale, role design, tenure, integration, accountability, compensation and social legitimacy are aligned.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Objective: specialised domain expertise and additional managerial capacity
- Since 2018 recruitment at Joint Secretary/Director/Deputy Secretary levels through UPSC selection
- Limited scale relative to the size of Government
- Short/contractual tenure and time needed to understand public systems
- Role ambiguity and mismatch between specialist expertise and general administrative responsibilities
- Integration with career civil servants and possible organisational resistance
- Compensation/opportunity-cost issues for high-end private expertise
- Conflict-of-interest, post-employment and accountability safeguards
- Reservation/social-justice concerns around single-post recruitment
- Weak linkage with a broader specialist career architecture and workforce planning

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Generalist-specialist debate
- Human-resource planning - recruitment must be linked to competency mapping and role design
- Boundary-spanning/knowledge transfer - lateral entrants need organisational integration to transfer expertise
- NPM - openness to external talent, but public accountability differs from private management

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- NITI Aayog/sectoral reform recommendations that supported lateral induction
- Economic Survey 2023-24 - argued that lateral entry should be expanded and paired with accountability and appropriate tenure
- Government data: 63 lateral appointments had been made since 2018 by early 2026 - significant as an initiative, but small relative to systemic capacity needs

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Do not frame lateral entry as inherently superior to career services
- Better design: cluster posts, transparent competency criteria, cooling-off/conflict rules, structured induction, performance contracts, knowledge-transfer obligations and integration with Mission Karmayogi
- Use it as complement to internal specialisation, not substitute for cadre reform

Paper I Linkages

- Personnel Administration - recruitment, specialist-generalist debate and career systems
- Organisations - integration and role clarity
- Administrative Ethics - conflict of interest and neutrality
- NPM - external managerial expertise

Answer-Writing Direction: The question assumes under-performance relative to intent; explain implementation constraints rather than spending most of the answer on advantages of lateral entry.

Question 5(b)

Q.5(b) (10 Marks)

“Though seldom enacted, Cut Motions remain vital instruments of parliamentary accountability. Comment.”

Syllabus Map: Union Government and Administration → Executive, Parliament, Judiciary - Structure, Functions, Work Processes

Core Demand: Explain why Cut Motions remain important instruments of legislative financial accountability even though they rarely succeed in reducing demands for grants.

Underlying Concept: A cut motion is both a financial procedure and a political accountability device. Its significance lies less in actual reduction of expenditure and more in forcing debate, criticism, explanation and political responsibility.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Demand for Grants and Lok Sabha control over voted expenditure
- Policy Cut - reduction to Re. 1 to signify disapproval of policy
- Economy Cut - specified reduction to demand economy
- Token Cut - reduction by Rs. 100 to ventilate a specific grievance
- Government defeat on a cut motion has confidence implications
- Ruling-party majority makes passage rare
- Debate exposes departmental policy, expenditure and grievances
- Financial control becomes deliberative accountability even when formal sanction is unlikely

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Legislative control of administration
- Principal-agent model - Parliament monitors executive expenditure
- Accountability as answerability plus consequences; cut motions often strengthen the answerability component

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- Constitutional budget process and Lok Sabha's control over Demands for Grants
- Public Accounts/Estimates mechanisms complement ex-ante cut-motion scrutiny
- Parliamentary conventions linking major financial defeat with government confidence

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Distinguish cut motions from guillotine, appropriation and audit
- Critically note anti-defection, party majority, limited sitting time and guillotine can reduce practical effectiveness
- Yet their agenda-setting, information and opposition-accountability value remains

Paper I Linkages

- Financial Administration - legislative control and budget
- Accountability and Control - legislative control over executive
- Public Policy - parliamentary scrutiny of policy choices

Answer-Writing Direction: The phrase "seldom enacted" invites a distinction between formal effectiveness and deliberative/accountability significance.

Question 5(c)

Q.5(c) (10 Marks)

“Administrative reforms in India have been a double-edged sword. Comment.”

Syllabus Map: Administrative Reforms since Independence → Major Concerns

Core Demand: Explain why administrative reforms can simultaneously improve efficiency, transparency and responsiveness while generating centralisation, exclusion, disruption, surveillance, marketisation or reform fatigue.

Underlying Concept: Reform changes incentives, structures, technology and power. The same instrument that solves one administrative problem may create a new accountability or equity problem. Therefore reforms must be judged by second-order effects, not intent alone.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Digitalisation: speed/transparency versus exclusion, privacy and algorithmic opacity
- Process simplification: ease versus weakening of checks if badly designed

- Performance management: clarity versus target gaming and quantitative fixation
- Privatisation/PPP: efficiency versus fragmented accountability and access concerns
- Centralised platforms: standardisation versus reduced local discretion
- Lateral entry/specialisation: expertise versus integration/equity concerns
- Mission-mode programmes: focus versus silo creation
- Reorganisation: coordination gains versus transition costs and institutional memory loss

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Change management - reform requires stakeholder ownership and sequencing
- NPM versus Public Value/New Public Governance - efficiency must be balanced with equity and democratic accountability
- Unintended consequences/goal displacement - formal targets can alter behaviour in unexpected ways
- Institutional path dependence - reforms interact with inherited structures

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- 1st and 2nd Administrative Reforms Commissions as major reform traditions
- 2nd ARC - citizen-centric administration, e-governance, ethics, financial management, district/state administration
- Reform experience of GSTN, DBT, GeM, e-office, SPVs and performance dashboards can be used selectively

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- A good answer should present 3-4 reform examples each with gain + downside
- Conclude with principles of better reform: pilot, consultation, capacity, privacy/equity safeguards, interoperable systems, independent evaluation and feedback loops

Paper I Linkages

- Techniques of Administrative Improvement - O&M, ICT and process reform
- NPM and Good Governance
- Administrative Behaviour - resistance to change
- Accountability and Control - reform-related accountability gaps

Answer-Writing Direction: Do not interpret "double-edged" as anti-reform. The evaluative point is that design and implementation determine whether reform gains are sustainable.

Question 5(d)

Q.5(d) (10 Marks)

"Ease of living index lays the foundation for data driven approach to urban planning. Analyse critically."

Syllabus Map: Urban Local Government → Development Dynamics, Politics and Administration with Special Reference to City Management

Core Demand: Assess how the Ease of Living Index can provide evidence for urban planning while examining methodological and governance limits of index-driven decision-making.

Underlying Concept: Urban planning needs comparable, granular and outcome-oriented data. An index converts multiple dimensions of urban life into indicators that can reveal gaps, benchmark cities and prioritise investment. But indices simplify reality and can distort incentives if treated as substitutes for local knowledge.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Ease of Living Index as a multidimensional urban benchmarking instrument
- Official EoLI framework used pillars of Quality of Life, Economic Ability/Growth and Sustainability, supported by indicator-based assessment and citizen perception
- Data-driven identification of service and infrastructure deficits
- Comparability and benchmarking across cities
- Priority-setting and resource targeting
- Performance accountability and public transparency
- Risk of data-quality differences, outdated data and aggregation masking intra-city inequality
- Indicator gaming and "what gets measured gets managed" bias
- Need to combine administrative data with citizen experience and neighbourhood-level evidence

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Evidence-based policy and performance management
- Balanced-scorecard logic - multiple dimensions rather than one output
- Goodhart's Law - when a measure becomes a target, it can cease to be a good measure
- Participatory planning - quantitative data must be combined with citizen voice

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Ease of Living Index 2020 and Municipal Performance Index 2020
- SDG-linked urban indicators and City Finance/open-data initiatives as supporting ecosystem
- 74th Amendment planning architecture - data should strengthen, not bypass, elected urban governance

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Use cases: public transport access, water, sanitation, housing, green space, safety, employment and resilience
- Suggest ward-level disaggregation, open methodology, independent validation, geospatial data and citizen perception surveys
- Link index results to statutory city plans and budgeting rather than isolated rankings

Paper I Linkages

- Techniques of Administrative Improvement - MIS, performance indicators and e-governance
- Public Policy - evidence, evaluation and feedback
- Good Governance - transparency and citizen-centricity

Answer-Writing Direction: The directive "Analyse critically" requires both planning utility and limitations of indexification.

Question 5(e)

Q.5(e) (10 Marks)

"Ethical and privacy issues limit the emerging use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) by police to combat cyber crimes. Comment."

Syllabus Map: Law and Order Administration → Police-Public Relations; Reforms in Police

Core Demand: Explain why AI can strengthen cybercrime policing but must be constrained by privacy, fairness, due process, accountability and technical reliability.

Underlying Concept: AI expands police capacity to detect patterns, prioritise threats and analyse large data sets. Yet policing involves coercive state power, so opaque or biased systems can magnify constitutional harms at scale.

Core Concepts / Elements

- AI uses: anomaly detection, link analysis, malware/phishing detection, threat intelligence, triage and digital forensics
- Privacy and mass-surveillance risks
- Purpose limitation and data minimisation
- Algorithmic bias and disparate impact
- False positives and wrongful suspicion
- Explainability and ability to contest automated inferences
- Human oversight and chain of responsibility
- Cybersecurity of police AI systems and model/data poisoning
- Cross-border/platform data and evidentiary reliability
- Need for audit logs, procurement standards and independent oversight

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Risk-based AI governance - higher safeguards for high-impact/coercive uses
- Procedural justice - legitimacy depends on fairness of decision process
- Principal-agent/accountability - vendors and algorithms cannot become unaccountable decision-makers
- Privacy proportionality - legality, legitimate aim, necessity and proportionality

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- Justice K.S. Puttaswamy - privacy as a fundamental right and proportionality framework
- Digital Personal Data Protection framework and Rules, 2025 - current data-governance context, subject to statutory exemptions and law-enforcement requirements
- Constitutional Articles 14 and 21 - non-arbitrariness, fairness and dignity
- BPR&D/MHA modernisation context - technology should augment, not displace, lawful investigation

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Differentiate AI-assisted investigation from autonomous policing decisions
- Use facial recognition/predictive profiling as examples of high-risk applications; cyber threat analytics as comparatively narrower applications
- Recommend human-in-the-loop, bias testing, auditability, retention limits, judicial/independent oversight and clear evidentiary protocols

Paper I Linkages

- Administrative Ethics - privacy, fairness and responsibility

- Administrative Law - rights and proportionality
- Techniques of Administrative Improvement - AI/ICT
- Accountability and Control - transparency and audit of automated systems

Answer-Writing Direction: The answer should not become a generic "AI benefits and challenges" note. Keep the focus on police power, cybercrime and rights safeguards.

Question 6(a)

Q.6(a) (20 Marks)

“Civil services is grappling with severe capacity issues and which is a major bottleneck in implementing ambitious programmes across sectors. Mission Karmayogi can only supplement but not solve the entire capacity constraint. Give your opinion.”

Syllabus Map: Civil Services → Structure, Recruitment, Training and Capacity Building

Core Demand: Take a reasoned position on the claim that Mission Karmayogi is necessary but insufficient to solve the wider capacity constraints of the civil services.

Underlying Concept: Capacity is not identical to training. It includes workforce size and composition, role clarity, competencies, organisational processes, technology, leadership, interdepartmental coordination, incentives, tenure, decentralised capacity and political-administrative conditions. Mission Karmayogi primarily strengthens the learning/competency architecture.

Core Concepts / Elements

- National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building - shift from rule-based to role-based HRM
- iGOT Karmayogi and continuous digital learning
- Competency framework: behavioural, functional and domain competencies
- Capacity Building Commission, annual capacity-building plans and training-institution standards
- Need for state-level and local-level capacity, not only Central civil services
- Vacancies and understaffing in technical/frontline cadres
- Generalist-specialist imbalance and weak domain career paths
- Short tenure/transfer instability and loss of institutional memory
- Process complexity, silo working and weak delegation
- Digital/data capability and procurement/project-management capacity
- Organisational culture, incentives and leadership as constraints beyond training

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Human Resource Development - capacity is continuous and multi-dimensional
- Peter Senge - learning organisation; individual courses do not automatically create organisational learning
- Competency-based management - role-competency fit
- Systems theory - capacity bottleneck can sit in structures, processes, resources or inter-organisational dependencies

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- Mission Karmayogi/NPCSCB and Capacity Building Commission
- Economic Survey 2023-24 - linked Mission Karmayogi with wider state-capacity needs and called for stronger tenure/accountability and lateral expertise
- CBC Year-End Review 2025 - expansion of capacity-building plans, state engagement, domain competencies and behavioural training

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Explain "supplement but not solve" through examples: a trained officer cannot compensate for missing staff, fragmented authority, delayed procurement or weak local institutions
- Complementary reforms: workforce planning, specialist cadres/lateral induction, fixed tenure, delegation, process reengineering, data systems, team-based work, local-government capacity and performance management

Paper I Linkages

- Personnel Administration - training, career development and competency mapping
- Organisations - structure and coordination
- Administrative Behaviour - learning, motivation and leadership
- Techniques of Administrative Improvement - process and digital capacity

Answer-Writing Direction: State your opinion clearly: Mission Karmayogi addresses an important component of capacity, but capacity is an ecosystem property. Then prove the distinction.

Question 6(b)

Q.6(b) (20 Marks)

“Public debt of states in India has increased significantly in the last one decade. In this context discuss the constraints of the states in planning prudent fiscal management.”

Syllabus Map: Financial Management → Role of Finance Ministry in Monetary and Fiscal Area

Core Demand: Identify why rising State debt constrains prudent fiscal management and explain the institutional/federal choices States face in balancing debt sustainability, committed expenditure and developmental spending.

Underlying Concept: State fiscal management operates within a constrained federal architecture: borrowing limits, intergovernmental transfers, uneven revenue capacity and high committed expenditure. Debt becomes problematic when servicing obligations compress productive and social expenditure or when hidden liabilities reduce transparency.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Outstanding debt/liabilities and debt-service burden
- FRBM fiscal-deficit/debt rules and borrowing ceilings
- Interest payments, pensions and salaries as committed expenditure
- Subsidies and unconditional transfers reducing discretionary fiscal space
- Revenue uncertainty and post-GST dependence on shared taxes/transfers
- Uneven tax bases and development needs across States
- Centrally Sponsored Schemes and matching-fund obligations
- Off-budget borrowings and guarantees/contingent liabilities
- Power-sector and State PSE liabilities
- Need to protect capital expenditure while consolidating debt
- Interest-free/SASCI-type capital support from Centre and its conditionality
- Medium-term fiscal frameworks and transparent debt registers

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Fiscal federalism - assignment of revenue/expenditure responsibilities and transfers
- Musgrave - allocation, distribution and stabilisation across levels of government
- Debt sustainability - growth-interest dynamics and primary balance
- Golden rule logic - borrowing should preferentially finance productive capital rather than recurrent expenditure

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- RBI State Finances: sustained prudence but outstanding liabilities remain above pre-pandemic level; emphasis on transparent reporting of off-budget borrowing and guarantees
- State of State Finances 2025-26: aggregate State debt remained above recommended levels and committed expenditure constrains flexibility
- Sixteenth Finance Commission 2026-31 - contemporary framework for devolution and fiscal stability

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Avoid reducing the answer to "populist freebies"; include structural revenue and federal constraints
- Solutions: expenditure review, subsidy rationalisation with protection of vulnerable groups, tax administration, user charges where appropriate, asset management, PSE reform, transparent guarantees, debt glide paths and capex prioritisation
- Mention unequal fiscal capacity - poorer States may need equalisation rather than uniform consolidation

Paper I Linkages

- Financial Administration - fiscal policy, budget and debt
- Development Dynamics - development expenditure and state capacity
- Accountability and Control - transparency of off-budget liabilities

Answer-Writing Direction: The question asks for constraints on prudent management, not merely causes of debt. Structure around constraints, consequences and a prudence framework.

Question 6(c)

Q.6(c) (10 Marks)

“Community based Disaster Risk Management is a response to the gaps within the existing Disaster Risk Management strategy. Evaluate.”

Syllabus Map: Significant Issues in Indian Administration → Disaster Management

Core Demand: Evaluate community-based disaster risk management as a corrective to top-down, response-centric and capacity-deficient disaster management, while recognising that community action cannot substitute for state capacity and scientific systems.

Underlying Concept: Disaster risk is locally experienced and socially differentiated. Communities possess first-mile knowledge, networks and response capacity that centralised institutions often lack. Effective DRM therefore requires an all-of-society, locally led approach integrated with formal institutions.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Local hazard and vulnerability mapping
- Community-based early warning and last-mile communication
- Local volunteers, SHGs, youth groups and resident associations
- Traditional/local knowledge and risk perception
- Inclusion of women, elderly, persons with disabilities and marginal groups
- Preparedness drills, evacuation routes and shelter management
- Decentralised relief and accountability
- Social capital and trust as disaster assets
- Limits: uneven local capacity, elite capture, misinformation, resource shortages and extreme events beyond community capability

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Sendai Framework - State has primary responsibility but DRR is shared with local government, civil society and other stakeholders
- Resilience theory - adaptive capacity built before disaster
- Participatory governance/co-production - citizens are co-producers of safety
- Subsidiarity - local action with higher-level technical/financial support

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030
- UNDRR 2026-30 strategic emphasis on locally led DRR
- Disaster Management Act institutional architecture - national, state and district levels need local-community integration
- 2nd ARC Crisis Management - prevention, preparedness and community participation

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Examples: cyclone shelters/community volunteers, village disaster management plans, urban ward resilience, SHG networks in relief
- Link local plans to scientific forecasts, district EOCs, interoperable communications and professional responders
- Emphasise community-based does not mean community-only

Paper I Linkages

- Development Dynamics - participatory development
- Good Governance - participation and co-production
- Organisations - network coordination
- Administrative Behaviour - communication and trust

Answer-Writing Direction: Evaluate by showing both the gaps it fills and the conditions needed for it to work.

Question 7(a)

Q.7(a) (20 Marks)

“Supreme Court of India in Prakash Singh case laid the foundation for effective police reforms in India, but the states have frittered the opportunity. Discuss.”

Syllabus Map: Law and Order Administration → Police-Public Relations; Reforms in Police

Core Demand: Explain the institutional logic of the Prakash Singh police-reform directives and analyse why State compliance has remained partial, delayed or formalistic.

Underlying Concept: Police reform seeks to reconcile two democratic requirements: operational professionalism insulated from illegitimate political pressure and strong accountability against abuse. The reform package therefore combines autonomy, tenure, separation of functions and independent complaint mechanisms.

Core Concepts / Elements

- State Security Commission to insulate policy direction from partisan misuse
- Merit-based DGP selection and minimum tenure
- Minimum tenure for key operational officers
- Separation of investigation from law-and-order functions

- Police Establishment Board for transfers/postings and service matters
- Police Complaints Authorities for external accountability
- National Security Commission for central police organisations - part of original framework
- Core problem: political control over postings, weak incentives to surrender patronage, legislative dilution, resource constraints and institutional resistance

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Autonomy-accountability balance
- Principal-agent problem - both political capture and police impunity are risks
- Rule of Law/procedural justice - professional investigation and complaint mechanisms build legitimacy
- Institutional reform versus implementation gap

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- Prakash Singh v. Union of India (2006) - foundational directives
- Thomas Committee monitoring documented non/partial/paper compliance
- Supreme Court follow-up on DGP appointments, including 2018/2019 directions and continuing 2026 orders, shows that implementation remains an active judicial concern
- Model Police Act/Police Act reform debates as legislative follow-up context

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Explain why States resist: police/public order are State subjects; elected executives value control over coercive machinery; independent bodies alter patronage structures
- Add capacity constraints: investigation staff, forensic support, training and technology
- Reforms should combine fixed tenure with performance accountability, independent complaints, investigation capacity and legislative ownership

Paper I Linkages

- Accountability and Control - judicial control and institutional accountability
- Administrative Law - rule of law
- Personnel Administration - tenure, transfers and professionalisation
- Administrative Ethics - integrity and impartiality

Answer-Writing Direction: Do not merely list seven directives. The marks lie in explaining the logic of each cluster and the political-administrative reasons for non-compliance.

Question 7(b)

Q.7(b) (20 Marks)

“Disconnect between the rural development institutions and state level agencies have led to each operating in silos at both levels resulting in inefficiencies. Find the reasons.”

Syllabus Map: Rural Development → Institutions and Agencies Since Independence

Core Demand: Diagnose why rural development institutions and State-level agencies operate in parallel silos and how this produces duplication, weak convergence and blurred accountability.

Underlying Concept: Rural development is implemented through a dense architecture of Panchayats, DRDAs/mission structures, line departments, State societies, district administration, banks, SHGs and central schemes. Functions were added over time without fully integrating authority, staff, finance and information.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Scheme-based vertical silos and separate guidelines
- Incomplete devolution to Panchayats
- Parallel societies/missions and State-level programme agencies
- Dual control over staff and functionaries
- Weak District Planning Committees/Gram Panchayat Development Plan convergence
- Separate databases, fund flows and monitoring systems
- Departmental incentives favour upward accountability over horizontal coordination
- Capacity asymmetry between State agencies and local bodies
- Political/administrative reluctance to share control
- Audit and outcome accountability fragmented across institutions

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Silo problem and horizontal coordination
- Systems theory - subsystem optimisation can reduce system-wide performance
- Network governance - rural outcomes require structured interdependence
- Subsidiarity - local planning with State technical/financial support

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- 73rd Constitutional Amendment and Eleventh Schedule
- 2nd ARC - recommended stronger Panchayat role and integration/merger of parallel district development structures in appropriate settings
- GPDP and convergence approach as contemporary planning mechanism
- DAY-NRLM/SHG institutions illustrate potential for community-state partnership but also need alignment with PRIs

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Consequences: duplicated assets, contradictory priorities, delayed fund use, multiple reporting burdens, weak ownership and accountability gaps
- Solutions: activity mapping, single district/rural outcomes framework, interoperable MIS, joint planning, predictable devolution, shared technical cells and outcome-based convergence reviews

Paper I Linkages

- Organisations - coordination, departmentalisation and silos
- Development Dynamics - participatory rural development
- Accountability and Control - fragmented accountability
- Techniques of Administrative Improvement - integrated MIS

Answer-Writing Direction: The directive "Find the reasons" demands diagnosis. Keep recommendations brief and make the causal architecture the centre of the answer.

Question 7(c)

Q.7(c) (10 Marks)

"Zero tolerance against Corruption", commitment of Government of India has multi-pronged approach. Critically analyse."

Syllabus Map: Significant Issues in Indian Administration → Corruption and Administration

Core Demand: Critically examine the Government of India's multi-pronged anti-corruption strategy by organising it into preventive, punitive, participative, technological and institutional pillars, and then assess remaining gaps.

Underlying Concept: Corruption is not controlled by prosecution alone. It is produced by discretion, opacity, monopoly, weak accountability, political finance, procurement risks and social tolerance. A credible strategy therefore combines system redesign with detection, sanction and citizen oversight.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Preventive vigilance: process simplification, rotation, risk mapping, integrity pacts
- Punitive framework: Prevention of Corruption Act, disciplinary action, investigation/prosecution
- Institutional framework: CVC, CBI, Lokpal, departmental vigilance, CAG and legislative oversight
- Digital prevention: DBT, e-tendering, GeM, e-office, online services and audit trails
- Participative vigilance: citizens, RTI, social accountability and whistleblowing
- Asset disclosure/conflict-of-interest and procurement integrity
- Data analytics for fraud detection
- Gaps: prosecution delays, institutional overlap, capacity, political/administrative interference, local-level corruption, opaque discretion and whistleblower vulnerability

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Klitgaard-style corruption logic: monopoly + discretion - accountability
- Principal-agent and collective-action perspectives
- 2nd ARC Ethics in Governance - systemic reform rather than multiplying agencies
- Good Governance - transparency, accountability and citizen participation

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- Government's stated "Zero Tolerance Against Corruption" approach
- CVC framework of punitive, preventive and participative vigilance
- PCA amendment 2018 and operationalisation of Lokpal
- Government measures officially highlighted in 2025: DBT, e-tendering, e-governance, GeM, service/disciplinary reforms and Integrity Pacts
- Whistle Blowers Protection Act remains a cautionary implementation issue: notification/operationalisation has historically remained incomplete

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Critically distinguish reduced petty discretion through digital systems from grand corruption and collusive corruption
- Technology can relocate rather than eliminate corruption if algorithms/procurement are opaque

- Strengthen independent oversight, time-bound sanction/prosecution, whistleblower protection, open contracting, beneficial-ownership transparency and local social accountability

Paper I Linkages

- Accountability and Control - vigilance and citizen accountability
- Administrative Ethics - integrity and public interest
- Techniques of Administrative Improvement - e-governance and process simplification
- Administrative Law - anti-corruption legal framework

Answer-Writing Direction: The word "multi-pronged" gives the answer structure. The word "critically" requires evidence of both institutional breadth and implementation gaps.

Question 8(a)

Q.8(a) (20 Marks)

“Discuss the major management challenges faced by Indian Mega Cities and explore sustainable, inclusive urban development strategies for balanced future growth.”

Syllabus Map: Urban Local Government → Development Dynamics, Politics and Administration with Special Reference to City Management

Core Demand: Identify the distinctive management problems of Indian mega cities and propose a governance strategy that simultaneously addresses sustainability, inclusion, resilience and metropolitan-scale coordination.

Underlying Concept: Mega cities are economic systems that exceed municipal boundaries. Their problems are not merely infrastructure shortages; they are governance problems of scale, fragmented authority, metropolitan externalities, unequal citizenship and weak municipal finance.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Fragmented authority among municipal corporations, development authorities, transport/water agencies, State departments and SPVs
- Weak or non-functional Metropolitan Planning Committees under Article 243ZE
- Land-use and transport disconnect
- Housing informality, slums and exclusionary land markets
- Congestion, air pollution, waste, water stress and heat/flood risk
- Municipal finance constraints, weak own-source revenues and dependence on State transfers
- Limited professional cadres and project-management capacity
- Digital/data fragmentation across agencies
- Migration and metropolitan labour/service demands
- Climate resilience and disaster preparedness
- Weak mayoral authority and blurred accountability

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Metropolitan governance/polycentricity - multiple centres need rules for coordination
- Network governance - public, private and community actors
- Transit-oriented and compact urban development
- Resilience and sustainable-development frameworks
- Public value - growth must be judged with inclusion, liveability and legitimacy

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- 74th Constitutional Amendment and Twelfth Schedule
- Metropolitan Planning Committees under Article 243ZE
- Sixteenth Finance Commission focus/studies on municipal reform, urbanisation and urban fiscal devolution
- MoHUA urban reforms, AMRUT/Smart Cities/urban digital platforms as contemporary instruments

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Strategies: empowered metropolitan authority/MPC with democratic accountability; integrated land-use-transport plan; predictable municipal finance; property-tax reforms; municipal bonds where viable; rental/affordable housing; blue-green infrastructure; universal basic services; public transport/NMT; ward-level participation; open metropolitan data
- Use Delhi, Mumbai or Bengaluru only as brief illustrations of multi-agency fragmentation, not as anecdotal substitutes for analysis

Paper I Linkages

- Organisations - inter-organisational coordination and network structures
- Development Dynamics - urbanisation and inclusion
- Financial Administration - local finance and investment
- Good Governance - participation, transparency and service delivery

Answer-Writing Direction: Because the question asks both challenges and strategies, make the solution architecture mirror the diagnosed management failures.

Question 8(b)

Q.8(b) (20 Marks)

“Lack of political will to support several administrative reforms has led to their inadequate implementation. Critically validate.”

Syllabus Map: Administrative Reforms since Independence → Problems of Implementation

Core Demand: Critically test the proposition that inadequate political will is a major reason for weak implementation of administrative reforms, while showing why institutional capacity, incentives, federalism and bureaucratic behaviour also matter.

Underlying Concept: Administrative reform redistributes power, discretion, resources and accountability. Political leaders may announce reforms but resist elements that reduce patronage or short-term control. However, even strong political backing cannot overcome poor design, capacity deficits or lack of administrative ownership.

Core Concepts / Elements

- Reform versus implementation gap
- Political costs and concentrated losers from reform
- Patronage networks and reluctance to surrender appointment/transfer/procurement discretion
- Short electoral horizons versus long-term institutional benefits
- Centre-State variation in reforms requiring State legislation/ownership
- Bureaucratic resistance, turf protection and path dependence
- Weak follow-up after commission reports
- Pilot-success without scale-up
- Capacity, finance and technology constraints
- Reform overload and lack of sequencing
- Citizen demand and crisis as catalysts for political commitment

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Political economy of reform - winners, losers and veto players
- Change management - leadership, coalition-building, communication and institutionalisation
- Path dependence - inherited structures constrain feasible reform
- Implementation theory - policy success requires resources, clarity, coordination and street-level acceptance

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- 1st and 2nd Administrative Reforms Commissions - large reform agendas with uneven implementation
- Prakash Singh police reforms - judicial direction but political/legislative implementation gaps
- Local-government devolution - constitutional reform with uneven 3F devolution
- Civil-service tenure/posting reforms and anti-corruption safeguards as areas where political incentives matter

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Validate the proposition with examples but avoid monocausal reasoning
- Distinguish symbolic political support from sustained implementation support
- Reform strategy: bipartisan/State consultation, legal anchoring, implementation units, milestones, public dashboards, capacity budgets, independent evaluation and citizen coalitions

Paper I Linkages

- Administrative Behaviour - resistance to change
- Public Policy - implementation gap
- Accountability and Control - reforming discretion
- NPM/Good Governance - reform paradigms and their limits

Answer-Writing Direction: The best conclusion: political will is often necessary, especially where reform redistributes power, but it is not sufficient; institutionalisation converts will into durable reform.

Question 8(c)

Q.8(c) (10 Marks)

“Women in panchayats challenge the established patriarchal norms and contest structural inequalities in society. Explain.”

Syllabus Map: Rural Development → 73rd Constitutional Amendment

Core Demand: Explain how women's political participation in Panchayats can disrupt patriarchal authority and structural inequality, while recognising persistent constraints such as proxy representation, caste-class hierarchies and unequal control over resources.

Underlying Concept: Reservation changes who occupies public office, but its deeper significance lies in changing voice, agenda, social legitimacy and role expectations. Representation can generate substantive empowerment when women exercise autonomous authority and gain administrative capacity.

Core Concepts / Elements

- 73rd Amendment reservation for women in Panchayats and chairperson offices
- Many States have increased reservation to 50%
- Descriptive representation versus substantive representation
- Agenda effects: water, sanitation, health, education, violence, livelihoods and care infrastructure
- Public visibility and normalisation of women in authority
- Leadership spillovers to SHGs, community organisations and younger women
- Intersectionality: caste, tribe, class and literacy shape experience
- Proxy representation/"sarpanch pati" and household control
- Administrative capacity, digital literacy, finance and procedural knowledge
- Violence, intimidation and social sanctions against autonomous women leaders

Theories / Models to Invoke

- Empowerment framework - access, agency, participation and control over resources
- Participatory democracy - inclusion changes decision priorities and legitimacy
- Critical mass/representation theory - institutional presence can alter norms over time
- Social capital - women's networks and SHG-PRI linkages can strengthen collective agency

Thinkers / Committees / Cases / Reports - What Exactly to Use

- 73rd Constitutional Amendment
- Ministry of Panchayati Raj initiatives on women elected representatives and women-friendly Panchayats
- Current policy concern with proxy representation and capacity building of elected women representatives
- Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan - capacity-building context

Micro-topics / Contemporary References to Weave In

- Use "challenge" and "contest" as active verbs: women question who speaks, who decides, what counts as a public issue and who controls local resources
- Balance success stories with institutional barriers
- Measures: leadership/capacity training, financial powers, protection from intimidation, independent decision protocols, SHG-PRI linkages, digital access and social-norm campaigns

Paper I Linkages

- Development Dynamics - gender and development/participation
- Administrative Behaviour - leadership and empowerment
- Good Governance - inclusion and participation
- Accountability and Control - social accountability at local level

Answer-Writing Direction: Do not reduce the answer to reservation statistics. The core is how representation changes power relations and structural inequality.

VII. MAJOR THEMATIC LEARNINGS FROM PAPER II, 2026

1. The central question of Paper II is no longer "What is the institution?" but "Why is the institution not delivering as intended?"

NITI Aayog, lateral entry, Mission Karmayogi, police reform, administrative reform, district-local relations and rural-development institutions are all examined through the distance between formal design and operational outcomes. Preparation must therefore contain a dedicated implementation layer for every major institution and reform.

2. State capacity has become a unifying concept across the syllabus

Capacity is not confined to Civil Services. Fiscal space, municipal finance, police professionalism, district coordination, data quality, local-government competence and reform implementation are all expressions of state capacity. Candidates should prepare capacity as personnel + organisation + finance + technology + coordination + legitimacy.

3. Federalism is now administrative, fiscal and political at the same time

Competitive federalism, legislative doctrines, Governors, State debt and NITI Aayog show that federalism cannot be prepared merely through Articles and commissions. The examiner wants the lived operation of intergovernmental relations.

4. Decentralisation questions are becoming more sophisticated

The paper does not ask only the 73rd/74th Amendment provisions. It asks about district-local institutional linkages, siloed rural agencies, metropolitan governance and women challenging social power. Thus decentralisation must be prepared as institutional design + administrative capacity + social transformation.

5. Administrative reform is being tested through political economy

The 2026 paper repeatedly asks why reform is diluted, partial, double-edged or under-implemented. Committee recommendations are useful only when connected to incentives, losers, organisational resistance, political control, fiscal capacity and implementation machinery.

6. Law and judicial decisions are integral to Indian Administration

Vishaka, Pith and Substance, Severability, Governor-State conflict and Prakash Singh show that Paper II requires constitutional and administrative-law literacy. But the answer must translate law into administrative consequences: discretion, accountability, institutional autonomy and implementation.

7. Technology has moved from e-governance to high-stakes governance

AI policing and data-driven urban indices mark a shift from simple digitisation questions to algorithmic accountability, privacy, bias, evidence, indicator design and human oversight. Technology should be prepared as an administrative institution, not merely a tool.

8. Paper I–Paper II integration is no longer optional value addition

Riggs helps explain political culture; NPM helps analyse PSE corporatisation; systems theory explains district and rural silos; principal-agent logic clarifies police and anti-corruption reforms; public value and governance models sharpen urban and decentralisation answers. Without these conceptual anchors, Paper II risks becoming a GS paper.

VIII. ANSWER-WRITING LESSONS FROM PAPER II, 2026

A. Preserve the complete demand of the question

Many 20-markers contain two linked intellectual tasks even though UPSC has not printed a split mark. For example, Q.3(b) requires both the rationale of corporatisation and its location within disinvestment policy; Q.8(a) requires management challenges and sustainable-inclusive strategies. Do not answer only the familiar half.

B. For 10-mark questions, move from concept to judgement quickly

Q.1 and Q.5 are explicitly about 150 words each. A short definition followed by 3-4 analytical dimensions and a one-line judgement is more effective than a long background.

C. Use a Paper II answer architecture: Institution → Administrative problem → Conceptual explanation → Evidence/example → Reform/judgement

This prevents GS-style description and keeps the answer anchored in Public Administration.

D. Use committees and cases precisely

One relevant case or commission with the exact proposition is worth more than a list. Example: Prakash Singh for autonomy-accountability architecture; Sarkaria/Punchhi for Governors; 2nd ARC for district/local coordination and reform implementation.

E. Paper I thinkers should perform analytical work

Use Riggs to explain ecology, principal-agent to explain accountability, NPM to analyse corporatisation, systems/network approaches to diagnose silos, Senge/HRD for capacity. Do not insert thinkers decoratively.

F. Contemporary data should illuminate the administrative argument

Use current official developments - Mission Karmayogi/CBC, State debt frameworks, current Governor jurisprudence, police-reform monitoring, urban indices - only where they sharpen the concept.

G. Avoid extreme conclusions

The paper repeatedly contains tensions: autonomy versus accountability, competition versus parochialism, technology versus privacy, district coordination versus local autonomy, political control versus police professionalism. UPSC rewards balanced institutional design rather than absolutism.

H. In Paper II, implementation is often the hidden conclusion

Ask at the end of every answer: what institutional mechanism would convert this principle or reform into durable practice?

IX. FULL QUESTION PAPER – TEXT VERSION

The entire English question paper is reproduced below in text form for reference. The wording has been retained as printed in the paper, including unusual grammatical constructions. No question has been abbreviated.

SECTION 'A'

Q.1 - Answer the following in about 150 words each: 10×5=50

1(a) Learnings from Arthashastra could make governance effective even today. Explore the potential. [10 Marks]

1(b) The reforms in public sector enterprises is not only enduring but also evolving. Explain. [10 Marks]

1(c) The present model of strategic planning has its roots in indicative planning. Comment. [10 Marks]

1(d) Linkages between the district administration and local self governments have not evolved to the desired extent. Evaluate. [10 Marks]

1(e) Constitutionalism in India paves the way for rule of law and social justice. Elaborate. [10 Marks]

Q.2

2(a) An important characteristic of the British Civil Service was its open refusal to be influenced by commercial and industrial interests of India in the name of neutrality. Explain. [20 Marks]

2(b) The political culture in India shapes bureaucratic behaviour, professional integrity and civil service conduct. Explain with suitable examples. [20 Marks]

2(c) Under an Indian Constitution fundamental rights are usually enforced only vertically, whereas Vishaka case represents the horizontal application. Comment. [10 Marks]

Q.3

3(a) Planning Commission planned for economic development and social justice, but NITI Aayog has been structured to realise growth potential across the sectors. Discuss. [20 Marks]

3(b) Government of India has done Corporatisation of Ordnance Factory Boards. Discuss the rationale in the light of Disinvestment Policy of the government. [20 Marks]

3(c) Competitive federalism in India while intended to have healthy competition among States has shown tendencies towards parochialism. Comment. [10 Marks]

Q.4

4(a) Doctrine of Pith and Substance, and the Doctrine of severability in the legislative relations between the Indian Union and states are supplementary in nature but distinct in application. Discuss. [20 Marks]

4(b) District administration in India is characterised by the dichotomy between law and order maintenance and development management, even though both functions are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Explain. [20 Marks]

4(c) Trace the reasons for growing incidences of disagreements between the Governors and state governments. [10 Marks]

SECTION 'B'

Q.5 - Answer the following in about 150 words each: 10×5=50

5(a) Lateral Entry in Government of India has not moved in the intended direction. Explain the reasons. [10 Marks]

5(b) Though seldom enacted, Cut Motions remain vital instruments of parliamentary accountability. Comment. [10 Marks]

5(c) Administrative reforms in India have been a double-edged sword. Comment. [10 Marks]

5(d) Ease of living index lays the foundation for data driven approach to urban planning. Analyse critically. [10 Marks]

5(e) Ethical and privacy issues limit the emerging use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) by police to combat cyber crimes. Comment. [10 Marks]

Q.6

6(a) Civil services is grappling with severe capacity issues and which is a major bottleneck in implementing ambitious programmes across sectors. Mission Karmayogi can only supplement but not solve the entire capacity constraint. Give your opinion. [20 Marks]

6(b) Public debt of states in India has increased significantly in the last one decade. In this context discuss the constraints of the states in planning prudent fiscal management. [20 Marks]

6(c) Community based Disaster Risk Management is a response to the gaps within the existing Disaster Risk Management strategy. Evaluate. [10 Marks]

Q.7

7(a) Supreme Court of India in Prakash Singh case laid the foundation for effective police reforms in India, but the states have frittered the opportunity. Discuss. [20 Marks]

7(b) Disconnect between the rural development institutions and state level agencies have led to each operating in silos at both levels resulting in inefficiencies. Find the reasons. [20 Marks]

7(c) 'Zero tolerance against Corruption', commitment of Government of India has multi-pronged approach. Critically analyse. [10 Marks]

Q.8

8(a) Discuss the major management challenges faced by Indian Mega Cities and explore sustainable, inclusive urban development strategies for balanced future growth. [20 Marks]

8(b) Lack of political will to support several administrative reforms has led to their inadequate implementation. Critically validate. [20 Marks]

8(c) Women in panchayats challenge the established patriarchal norms and contest structural inequalities in society. Explain. [10 Marks]

— End of Paper II Analysis —