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UPSC CSE MAINS

Previous Year Questions

Union-State Relations & Federalism — GS-II

Previous Year Questions (verbatim, official syllabus)

22 Questions

Year range: 2013–2025

Verbatim from official UPSC papers

"Master Mains with PYQs — consistency is key"

— Neil Sir, Founder, UnlockIAS

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22 Questions across 2 Sections

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Issues and challenges of the federal structure

2025 GS-II 15M · 150W

Q3. Examine the evolving pattern of Centre-State financial relations in the context of planned development in India. How far have the recent reforms impacted the fiscal federalism in India?

2024 GS-II 15M · 150W

Q3. What changes has the Union Government recently introduced in the domain of Centre-State relations? Suggest measures to be adopted to build the trust between the Centre and the States and for strengthening federalism.

2023 GS-II 15M · 150W

Q4. Account for the legal and political factors responsible for the reduced frequency of using Article 356 by the Union Governments since mid-1990s.

2022 GS-II 15M · 150W

Q3. While the national political parties in India favour centralisation, the regional parties are in favour of State autonomy." Comment.

2021 GS-II 15M · 150W

Q2. The jurisdiction of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) regarding lodging an FIR and conducting probe within a particular State is being questioned by various States. However, the power of the States to withhold consent to the CBI is not absolute. Explain with special reference to the federal character of India.

2020 GS-II 10M · 150W

Q2. How far do you think cooperation, competition and confrontation have shaped the nature of federation in India? Cite some recent examples, to validate your answer.

2019 GS-II 10M · 150W

Q2. From the resolution of contentious issues regarding distribution of legislative powers by the courts, 'Principle of Federal Supremacy' and 'Harmonious Construction' have emerged. Explain.

2018 GS-II 15M · 150W

Q4. Whether the Supreme Court Judgement (July 2018) can settle the political tussle between the Lt. Governor and elected government of Delhi? Examine.

2015 GS-II 12.5M · 150W

Q3. The concept of cooperative federalism has been increasingly emphasized in recent years. Highlight the drawbacks in the existing structure and the extent to which cooperative federalism would answer the shortcomings.

2014 GS-II 12.5M · 200W

Q2. Though the federal principle is dominant in our Constitution and that principle is one of its basic features, it is equally true that federalism under the Indian Constitution leans in favour of a strong Centre, a feature that militates against the concept of strong federalism.

2013 GS-II 10M · 200W

Q5. Many State Governments further bifurcate geographical administrative areas like Districts and Talukas for better governance. In light of the above, can it also be justified that more number of smaller States would bring in effective governance at State level? Discuss.

Devolution of powers and finances to local levels and challenges there...

2025 GS-II 15M · 150W

Q4. "In contemporary development models, decision-making and problem-solving responsibilities are not located close to the source of information and execution defeating the objectives of development." Critically evaluate.

2024 GS-II 10M · 150W

Q2. Analyse the role of local bodies in providing good governance at local level and bring out the pros and cons merging the rural local bodies with the urban local bodies.

2023 GS-II 10M · 150W

Q7. "The states in India seem reluctant to empower urban local bodies both functionally as well as financially." Comment.

2022 GS-II 10M · 150W

Q2. To what extent, in your opinion, has the decentralisation of power in India changed the governance landscape at the grassroots?

2020 GS-II 15M · 150W

Q3. The strength and sustenance of local institutions in India has shifted from their formative phase of 'Functions, Functionaries and Funds' to the contemporary stage of 'Functionality'. Highlight the critical challenges faced by local institutions in terms of their functionality in recent times.

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2019 GS-II 15M · 250W

Q12. "The reservation of seats for women in the institutions of local self-government has had a limited impact on the patriarchal character of the Indian Political Process." Comment.

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2018 GS-II 15M · 150W

Q2. Assess the importance of the Panchayat system in India as a part of local government. Apart from government grants, what sources the Panchayats can look out for financing developmental projects?

2017 GS-II 10M · 150W

Q3. "The local self-government system in India has not proved to be effective instrument of governance." Critically examine the statement and give your views to improve the situation.

2016 GS-II 12.5M · 150W

Q5. Discuss the essentials of the 69th Constitutional Amendment Act and anomalies, if any, that have led to recent reported conflicts between the elected representatives and the institution of the Lieutenant Governor in the administration of Delhi. Do you think that this will give rise to a new trend in the functioning of Indian federal politics?

2015 GS-II 12.5M · 150W

Q4. In absence of a well-educated and organized local level government system, 'Panchayats' and 'Samitis' have remained mainly political institutions and not effective instruments of governance. Critically discuss.

2013 GS-II 10M · 200W

Q7. Discuss the recommendations of the 13th Finance Commission which have been a departure from the previous commissions for strengthening the local government finances.

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