Polity & Governance · GS - II

“The debate in Ladakh highlights that development and democratic autonomy need not be competing objectives.” Examine the constitutional, administrative and developmental dimensions of the demand for greater autonomy in Ladakh.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 14/11/2026	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Constitutional safeguards, Sixth Schedule, democratic representation, local identity, land and resource protection, ecological fragility, participatory development, cooperative federalism.

Model Answer

Introduction

Ladakh’s demand for greater autonomy reflects concerns over democratic representation, protection of local identity and control over land and natural resources following its transition into a Union Territory without a legislature in 2019.

Constitutional and Administrative Dimensions

The Sixth Schedule provides Autonomous District Councils with legislative and administrative powers over specified local matters. Ladakh’s existing Hill Development Councils are statutory institutions and do not enjoy equivalent constitutional status. The demand therefore raises questions about meaningful devolution, local participation and accountability.

Developmental Dimensions

Ladakh’s fragile Himalayan ecosystem requires carefully regulated tourism, infrastructure and resource use. Local participation can improve the legitimacy and sustainability of development decisions. At the same time, inadequate investment, limited employment opportunities and weak connectivity can constrain socio-economic progress.

Way Forward

A consultative constitutional framework, empowered local institutions, transparent fiscal devolution, environmental safeguards and inclusive employment policies can address these concerns. Dialogue between the Union Government and regional stakeholders is essential.

Conclusion

Development and autonomy are complementary when people participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their land, culture and future. Ladakh needs a governance model that combines constitutional protection with sustainable economic opportunity.

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