Polity & Governance · GS - II

Examine the role of Gram Sabhas in protecting tribal land rights and ensuring participatory governance in Scheduled Areas.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 21/11/2026	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

PESA Act 1996, Fifth Schedule, Gram Sabha consent, tribal self-governance, land alienation, mining projects, Forest Rights Act, community resources, informed participation, accountability.

Model Answer

Introduction

The Gram Sabha is a foundational institution of tribal self-governance. Constitutional safeguards and legislation such as PESA, 1996 seek to protect tribal communities from land alienation and ensure their participation in decisions affecting their resources and livelihoods.

Role in Protecting Tribal Rights

1. **Community decision-making:** PESA empowers Gram Sabhas to safeguard customary practices, cultural identity and community resources.
2. **Land and resource protection:** It provides safeguards against unlawful land alienation and recognises community participation in resource management.
3. **Mining regulation:** Section 4(k) requires recommendations of the Gram Sabha or appropriate Panchayat before granting mining leases for minor minerals in Scheduled Areas.
4. **Forest rights:** The Forest Rights Act, 2006 recognises Gram Sabha's role in initiating and determining individual and community forest rights.

5. **Democratic accountability:** Gram Sabhas provide a platform for affected communities to participate in development decisions.

Challenges

Weak implementation of PESA, inadequate awareness, administrative interference, pressure from commercial projects and limited access to legal remedies undermine these safeguards.

Way Forward

Ensure genuine prior consultation and legally required consent, transparent disclosure of project impacts, independent social impact assessments and stronger Gram Sabha capacity.

Conclusion

Gram Sabha empowerment is essential for reconciling development with tribal rights. Development in Scheduled Areas must be participatory, lawful and sensitive to community interests.

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