Polity & Governance · GS - II

The conduct of local elections in Ladakh highlights the importance of democratic decentralisation in geographically remote and strategically sensitive regions. Examine how grassroots self-government can strengthen participatory governance, while discussing the institutional challenges specific to Ladakh.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 22/11/2026	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Democratic decentralisation, Panchayati Raj, municipal governance, 73rd and 74th Amendments, Sixth Schedule demand, Autonomous Hill Development Councils, geographical constraints, tribal representation, fiscal devolution

Model Answer

Introduction

Local elections in Ladakh provide an opportunity to strengthen grassroots democracy in a strategically important and geographically challenging Union Territory. Effective decentralisation can make governance more participatory and responsive to local needs.

Significance of Grassroots Self-Government

1. **Participatory democracy:** Panchayats and municipalities enable residents to influence local development priorities and public-service delivery.

2. **Local planning:** Elected institutions can address region-specific concerns such as drinking water, sanitation, roads, tourism and livelihood development.

3. **Accountability:** Regular elections strengthen citizen oversight and improve responsiveness of local administration.

4. **Inclusive representation:** Decentralised institutions can provide greater participation to remote and marginalised communities.

Institutional Challenges in Ladakh

- **Geographical constraints:** Sparse settlements, difficult terrain and harsh winters increase the cost of service delivery.
- **Institutional coordination:** Overlapping responsibilities among elected councils and administrative authorities can affect implementation.
- **Fiscal limitations:** Dependence on higher-level funding can restrict local planning autonomy.
- **Representation concerns:** Local institutions must adequately reflect the region's distinct tribal and cultural interests.

Way Forward

Strengthen financial and functional devolution, improve coordination with Hill Councils, build local administrative capacity and ensure transparent participatory planning.

Conclusion

Democratic decentralisation in Ladakh must combine constitutional principles with sensitivity to its geographical, cultural and strategic conditions. Empowered local institutions can strengthen both development and democratic legitimacy.