Polity & Governance · GS - II

Indirect elections to key positions in urban local bodies highlight the importance of institutional design in grassroots democracy. Examine how the constitutional framework governing urban local bodies promotes democratic decentralisation and identify the challenges affecting their effective functioning.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 23/11/2026	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

74th Constitutional Amendment, Part IX-A, democratic decentralisation, municipal governance, State Election Commission, fiscal autonomy, political representation, urban accountability

Model Answer

Introduction

The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 gave constitutional recognition to urban local bodies through Part IX-A of the Constitution. It sought to strengthen democratic decentralisation by enabling elected municipal institutions to participate in urban planning and governance.

Constitutional Framework

1. **Municipal institutions:** Article 243Q provides for Nagar Panchayats, Municipal Councils and Municipal Corporations according to the nature and size of urban areas.

2. **Democratic representation:** Article 243R deals with municipal composition, while Article 243T provides reservations for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women.
3. **Electoral autonomy:** Article 243ZA assigns municipal election supervision to the State Election Commission.
4. **Functional responsibilities:** Article 243W and the Twelfth Schedule provide a framework for municipal functions such as urban planning, sanitation, public health and water supply.
5. **Financial provisions:** Article 243Y provides for State Finance Commissions to review municipal financial positions and recommend resource distribution.

Major Challenges

1. **Limited autonomy:** State governments often retain substantial control over municipal functions and decision-making.
2. **Financial dependence:** Inadequate own-source revenue and irregular transfers constrain service delivery.
3. **Political instability:** Conflicts between elected representatives and administrative authorities can weaken governance.
4. **Inadequate capacity:** Shortages of trained personnel and technical expertise affect urban planning.
5. **Incomplete devolution:** The transfer of functions, funds and functionaries remains uneven across states.

Way Forward

1. Strengthen municipal finances through property tax reforms and predictable fiscal transfers.
2. Ensure clear functional responsibilities and greater administrative autonomy.
3. Improve transparency, citizen participation and ward-level accountability.
4. Strengthen municipal planning institutions and professional capacity.

Conclusion

Constitutional recognition alone cannot ensure effective urban decentralisation. Genuine devolution of powers, financial resources and administrative capacity is essential for making urban local bodies accountable institutions of democratic self-government.

BECOME IAS
AI POWERED UPSC PREP