Polity & Governance · GS - II

Examine the significance of the principle of proof beyond reasonable doubt in protecting individual liberty while ensuring accountability in criminal justice.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 24/11/2026	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

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Answer Hint

Principle of presumption of innocence, burden of proof, Article 21, fair trial, wrongful conviction, rule of law

Model Answer

Introduction

The principle of proof beyond reasonable doubt is a cornerstone of criminal jurisprudence. It ensures that an individual is not deprived of liberty or punished unless the prosecution establishes guilt through legally admissible and convincing evidence.

Significance in Criminal Justice

1. **Presumption of innocence:** An accused is presumed innocent until proven guilty, placing the primary burden of proof on the prosecution.
2. **Protection of liberty:** Article 21 requires deprivation of personal liberty to follow a fair, just and reasonable legal procedure.

3. **Prevention of wrongful convictions:** The high evidentiary threshold reduces the risk of punishment based on suspicion, unreliable testimony or investigative shortcomings.
4. **Judicial independence:** Courts must assess evidence objectively, irrespective of public pressure, political considerations or the gravity of allegations.
5. **Rule of law:** Consistent application of evidentiary standards reinforces public confidence in the impartiality of criminal courts.

Balancing Accountability and Fair Trial

1. **Effective investigation:** Scientific evidence, forensic capabilities and professional investigation must strengthen prosecution cases.
2. **Witness protection:** Safeguards against intimidation can improve the availability and reliability of testimony.
3. **Prosecutorial responsibility:** Prosecution agencies must present credible evidence and disclose relevant material fairly.
4. **Victim-sensitive justice:** Timely trials and appropriate victim support should complement, rather than compromise, the rights of the accused.

Conclusion

A credible criminal justice system must punish the guilty without sacrificing procedural fairness. The seriousness of an offence strengthens the need for effective investigation, not a dilution of the standard of proof.

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