Polity & Governance · GS - II

“The right to peaceful protest is essential to democracy, but it is not absolute.” Discuss this statement in the context of constitutional freedoms and public order in India.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 19/10/2026	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Article 19(1)(a), Article 19(1)(b), Article 19(2), Article 19(3), peaceful dissent, reasonable restrictions, public order, judicial review, democratic accountability.

Model Answer

Introduction

Peaceful protest enables citizens to express dissent, highlight grievances and hold public authorities accountable. It is an important instrument of participatory democracy in India.

Constitutional Protection

1. **Freedom of speech:** Article 19(1)(a) protects citizens’ freedom to express opinions and criticism.
2. **Freedom of assembly:** Article 19(1)(b) guarantees the right to assemble peaceably and without arms.
3. **Reasonable restrictions:** Articles 19(2) and 19(3) permit restrictions on these freedoms under specified constitutional grounds, including public order.

Balancing Rights and Public Order

The State may regulate protest routes, timings and locations to protect public safety and ensure that the rights of others are not unduly affected. However, restrictions should be lawful, proportionate and non-arbitrary. Authorities should assess genuine security concerns without treating peaceful dissent itself as wrongdoing.

Conclusion

A democratic State must protect peaceful protest while maintaining public order. Transparent decisions, proportionate restrictions and effective judicial review can ensure that security concerns do not become a pretext for suppressing legitimate dissent.

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