

Current Issue

Aravalli Issue

Question 02

You are the District Magistrate (DM) of a mining-intensive district in the Aravalli region. A recent Supreme Court ruling has adopted a technical definition: only landforms above 100 metres are considered "protected Aravallis." This has effectively excluded 90% of the local hills from statutory protection, opening them up for a massive "New City" real estate project and stone crushing units.

The state government is eager to fast-track these projects to boost local employment and state revenue. However, local environmentalists and tribal communities are protesting, claiming the "100-metre rule" ignores the ecological reality that even smaller hillocks act as groundwater recharge zones and barriers against the Thar Desert. Reports suggest that if these hills are mined, the National Capital Region (NCR) will face a severe water crisis and increased desertification within a decade.

Questions:

- 1. Identify the ethical issues involved in the "redefinition" of natural boundaries.**
- 2. As the DM, how will you balance the state's developmental pressure with your duty as a "Trustee" of the environment?**
- 3. Evaluate the relevance of the Precautionary Principle and Intergenerational Justice in this context.**

Question Understanding - Finding Information

- **Precise Syllabus Mapping:** Case Study on Current Aravalli Issue (**GS Paper – IV**)
- **Case study writing five step approach:**
 1. **Introduce the Contextualizing the Dilemma:** Briefly summarize the scenario. Instead of just repeating the question, identify the Core Ethical Conflict.
 2. **Stakeholder Analysis:** List all parties affected, directly or indirectly.
 - **Direct Stakeholders:** You (the Officer), the Government, the affected local community.
 - **Indirect Stakeholders:** Future generations, the environment (voiceless stakeholder), and the credibility of the institution.
 3. **Identification of Ethical Dilemmas:** Explicitly name the values at play. Use "vs." to show the dilemma.
 4. **Evaluation of Options:** Present 3–4 courses of action. For each, provide a brief merit and demerit.
 5. **Final Course of Action & Justification:** Provide a multi-stage, practical solution. Immediate Steps, Long-term Steps and Justification.
- **Decision Maker and his role:**
 - **District Magistrate:** Constitutional authority, moral agent, environmental trustee, development facilitator.
- **Focal points of the questions:**
 - Legal technical compliance vs ecological reality
 - Short-term economic gains vs long-term environmental & social costs
 - State pressure vs public trust doctrine
- **Key Stakeholders:**
 - State government
 - Local communities (tribal groups)
 - Environmentalists
 - Future generations
 - NCR population (external stakeholders)

Answer Writing Structure (Outline)**1. Identify the ethical issues involved in the "redefinition" of natural boundaries.****Approach:**

- Identify ethical principles violated or at stake
- Move beyond legality → focus on morality, justice, governance ethics

Structure (Bullet Points Preferred):**Ethical Issues Involved:**

- **Ethics of Scientific Reductionism**
 - Using a narrow technical definition (100-metre rule)
 - Ignoring ecological interconnectedness
- **Public Trust Doctrine**
 - Natural resources held in trust for people
 - Redefinition dilutes state's moral responsibility
- **Environmental Justice**
 - Disproportionate impact on: Tribal communities, Downstream NCR population
- **Conflict of Interest**
 - Revenue and real estate interests influencing policy decisions
- **Intergenerational Ethics**
 - Short-term development at the cost of future water security
- **Procedural Ethics**
 - Lack of stakeholder consultation
 - Marginalisation of indigenous knowledge

➤ Ethical Summary Line: The issue reflects moral evasion through legal compliance.

2. As the DM, how will you balance the state's developmental pressure with your duty as a "Trustee" of the environment?
Approach:

- Show practical wisdom (phronesis)
- Avoid absolutism (neither blind clearance nor total halt)
- Use ethical + administrative tools

| Step | Action | Ethical Rationale |
|------------------|---|---|
| Immediate | Stay on Clearances: Use district-level powers to pause new project approvals until the Management Plan for Sustainable Mining (MPSM) is finalized (as per the SC 2026 mandate). | Prudence: Prevents "fait accompli" where damage is done before the plan arrives. |
| Technical | Micro-Zoning: Commission a GIS-based terrain mapping that identifies "Low-relief High-recharge" zones even if they are below 100m. | Objectivity: Uses local relief data to defend critical aquifers. |
| Political | Upward Communication: Formally apprise the State Government of the "Cumulative Impact" on NCR's water security, citing the Section 3 of the Environment Protection Act. | Courage of Conviction: Fulfilling the duty to provide objective advice to the executive. |
| Social | Gram Sabha Consultations: Include tribal leaders in the definition process to document "Sacred Groves" and local water sources. | Inclusivity: Respecting traditional ecological knowledge. |

- **Trusteeship Lens:** Duty of DM is not just to implement orders, but to prevent irreversible harm to public goods.

3. Evaluate the relevance of the Precautionary Principle and Intergenerational Justice in this context.

Approach:

- Define briefly
 - Apply directly to facts
 - Avoid generic theory dumping
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- **Precautionary Principle:** In the absence of scientific certainty that "sub-100m hills" are ecologically redundant, the law must err on the side of caution. Mining should be halted because the risk of NCR parching is too great to ignore.
 - **Intergenerational Justice:** The Aravallis are 3.2 billion years old. Leveling them for a "New City" provides 20 years of economic growth but causes 2,000 years of desertification. This is a "predatory" transfer of resources from our children to our current real estate market.
 - **Ethical Verdict:** Development that destroys life-support systems is ethically indefensible.

Dos & Don'ts

- **Do for Maximum Marks**
 - ✓ Use recent trends, not Cold War-era Non-Alignment alone
 - ✓ Use ethical terminology (trusteeship, justice, prudence)
 - ✓ Show balanced decision-making
 - ✓ Link ethics to administrative action
 - ✓ Be realistic, not heroic
 - ✓ Align actions with constitutional values

- **Don't do these Common Mistakes**

- × Don't defy Supreme Court outright
- × Don't sound activist or emotional
- × Don't ignore employment concerns
- × Don't give vague moral preaching
- × Don't skip stakeholder perspective



Get your Answer Evaluated
and **Discuss with Mentor**

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