The Hindu News Analysis – 22nd July 2019 – Shankar IAS Academy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>News Articles</th>
<th>Page Number*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The tremor of unwelcome amendments (Editorial)</td>
<td>C 8</td>
</tr>
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<td>T 8</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Anayoottu a feast for the eyes too</td>
<td>C 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T 1, 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>An invasive and inefficient tool (OPED)</td>
<td>C 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>B 11</td>
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<td>D 11</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>‘Listing of NGOs in social stock exchange will promote transparency and reliability’</td>
<td>C -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>B 2</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Little room for SC/ST scientists in biotech bodies</td>
<td>C 1</td>
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<td>T 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Practice cum Revision - MCQs</td>
<td>C 1</td>
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*C – Chennai; B – Bengaluru; D – Delhi; T – Thiruvananthapuram
The tremor of unwelcome amendments

A movement has been initiated at the Right to Information (Amendment) Bill to preserve the aspect of transparencies and the idea of democracies. It is a call for transparency, accountability, and constitutional rights.

Imported are the amendments in some ways to highlight the importance of information. These changes have been brought in two steps to maintain the spirit of transparency and accountability in the working of the public authority. The amendments aim to protect the rights of citizens and ensure that information is available to them.

Part B—Main Examination

PAPER-III

General Studies- II: Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations.

- Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.
- Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.
- Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

PAPER-V

General Studies- IV: Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude

- Public/Civil service values and Ethics in Public administration: accountability and ethical governance
- Probity in Governance: Information sharing and transparency in government, Right to Information

⇒ RTI act 2005

- a practical regime of Right to Information for citizens
- to promote transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority
- has First Appeal and Second Appeal procedures

CIC

First Appellate Authority (FAA)

Public Information Officer (PIO)

⇒ The RTI Act

- Constant challenge to misuse of power
- fundamental shift - empowering citizens' access to power and decision making
  → Cornerstone of RTI Act - Section 19 (8)(C) and Section 20
- a threat to arbitrariness, privilege and corrupt governance
- Challenge to ‘unaccountable’ power

⇒ Independence

- by fixed term of office
- by status
Present Bill - aims to “regressively” amend the RTI Act 2005

*‘regressive’- going back to secrecy and exclusive control of information

Only if, CIC & SECs function independently, citizens will receive complete information in second appeal

Independent functioning → non-interference - separation of powers - ensuring checks and balances to the govt.

Election Commissions - ECI and State Election Commissions - monitor and regulate elections

Information Commissions - CIC & SECs - monitor and regulate access to information

ECI & SECs = CIC & SECs in democracy

no need to reduce the status of Information Commissions

Amendment Bill

* affects power equations - from the people to the govt.

* Weakens federalism

* affects independent functions of Information Commission

* Undemocratic

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Part A — Preliminary Examination

Paper I — (200 marks)

- Current events of national and international importance.
- General issues on Environmental ecology, Bio-diversity and Climate Change - that do not require subject specialization.

Part B — Main Examination

PAPER-II

General Studies-I: Indian Heritage and Culture, History and Geography of the World and Society.
- Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

PAPER-IV

- Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.
Anayoothu Festival

- Vadakkumnatha Temple, Thrissur
- 'Ana' - elephant; 'Ootu' - feeding
- Elephants are worshipped and fed
- Elephants in musth and with unruly behaviour
  - NOT allowed

Elephants in India

- 2017 - around 27,000 elephants
  - More than 35% - North Eastern States
  - Southern region - largest number of elephants
  - 80% - in NE region and Southern region

Statewise → Karnataka - 1st
  Assam - 2nd
  Kerala - 3rd

- Indian Elephant - Asiatic Elephant
  - 'Endangered' Category - IUCN
  - Population trend - decreasing
  - Schedule 1 - WPA 1972

Project Elephant

- 1992 - Centrally Sponsored Scheme

Objectives:
1. To protect elephants, their habitats and Corridors
2. To address the issues of Man-Animal Conflict
3. Welfare of Captive elephants

- Captive Elephant (Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960)
  - Permanent or temporary confinement
  - Mobility restricted

- Captive Animal (WPA 1972)
  - Any animal specified in S1, S2, S3 and S4, that is captured or kept or bred in captivity
An invasive and inefficient tool

Use of Facial recognition technology in law enforcement can have disastrous consequences

**Yüksekdogan**

The Automated Facial Recognition System (AFRS) recently proposed by the Ministry of Home Affairs is not only ethically questionable but also raises serious concerns about privacy, security, and efficiency. The system is designed to identify, track, and monitor individuals in real-time using facial recognition technology. This is done by collecting and analyzing facial data captured from sources like CCTV cameras, photographs, and social media platforms.

**Advantages**

- Modernizes the police force
- Helps in identifying the criminals
- Sharing of information between law enforcement agencies
- Images from sources like CCTV cameras, newspapers, etc.
- Images compared with existing records in Crime and Criminal Tracking Networks and Systems (CCTNS) database

**Disadvantages**

1. Violates the privacy of the individuals
   - Govt claims
     - Will not violate the privacy of the individuals
     - Only the law enforcement agencies will be able to access the data
   - Author
     - AFRS will create biometric map of our faces
     - Track, classify, and possibly anticipate our day-to-day activities
     - Technical approach → system will record the entire activities
     - Any individual can be put under questioning
     - "Criminals only" tracking not possible
2. Low efficiency levels
   - Aug 2018 - Delhi Police - Accuracy rate of facial recognition system - 2%
   - Same trends observed worldwide (UK, USA, etc.)
   - Accuracy rates will be low in case of vulnerable groups - minorities, women and children
   - Subjected to "false positives"

3. Image recognition is an extremely difficult task
   - Ineffective when used in consequential sectors like law enforcement

4. Fears of Mass Surveillance
   - Data protection not possible once face recognition is in place
   - Absence of data protection law in India
   - Law enforcement agencies can make use of details from AFRS as per their own discretion → Mission ‘Creep’
   - Personal Data Protection Bill 2018
     - Exceptions given to law enforcement agencies must be reconsidered

Author

* Notion → "Sophisticated Technology will give greater efficiency" → Critical Analysis required

* Usefulness of technology → practically less
   - Police Departments of London under pressure to ban facial recognition systems
   - San Francisco → Complete ban on police use of facial recognition

* India should learn from the mistakes and come up with alternative solutions.
Union Budget 2019 has proposed for Social Listing of NGOs → Views of Sudha Murthy

Proposal to set up social stock exchange → good for India’s Social entrepreneurship → good for India’s Social Innovation landscape

How? → Public listing promotes reliability, accountability and transparency

2014 → Central Govt made a 2% Corporate Social Responsibility mandatory → resulted in mushrooming of NGOs

But no proper statistics on funds, allocated, actual delivers on the ground etc.

Proposed social exchange to function under SEBI → provides access to capital

Idea of ‘performance based rating mechanism’ → Govt to assess all social ventures based on their performance and delivery of goals → performance rating → increase reliability & transparency of NGOs

Political will is crucial → quick decision making reduces red tapism

Eg: Restoration of Panchakalyani Lake → by Infosys Foundation → largest ancient lake in Melukote, Mandya, Karnataka → local authorities gave quick permissions
How this move will help NGOs?

1. Accreditation of NGOs by performance rating
   * Social credibility
   * Efficient functioning

2. Social innovation ecosystems → new ideas → helps govt in policy making

3. Public listing gives access to capital
   * Resolves issues related with foreign funding

4. Capital from market → less dependence on govt. for funds → can raise voice against govt policies if needed

5. Transparency
   * Accusations of diverting funds for anti-developmental protests, organised crimes, etc.

⇒ Other countries with Social Stock Exchanges (SSE)
   * United Kingdom
   * Brazil
   * Canada
   * Jamaica, etc.
   * South Africa

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Little room for SC/ST scientists in biotech bodies

* Under-representation of scientists from SC & ST category
  * Scientific institutions funded by Dept. of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology
  * Prescribed reservation criteria → 15% for SC
  * 7.5% for ST

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institute</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>SC/ST</th>
<th>Scientists</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Institute of Animal Biotechnology</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Institute of Immunology</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Institute of Plant Genome Research</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics</td>
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<td>Institute of Bioresources and Sustainable Development</td>
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Regional Centre for Biotechnology
- established under the auspices of UNESCO
- Govt. of India & UNESCO signed agreement in 2006
- Started functioning in 2010
- Focus - cooperative working towards shared biotechnology growth in the Asia-Pacific Region

Reason for Underrepresentation & Solution
- No. of people completing post-graduation & PhD is very less
- Financial constraints

Discrimination from guides and peer groups
- Guides not evaluating projects
- Addressing with caste name

Solution → Awareness through print and visual media in vernacular language about vacancies & tests in different govt. departments

Benefits enjoyed by ‘top layer’ in SC/ST category

Solution → National Commission for SCs, STs & Minorities to take adequate measures

PRACTICE QUESTIONS
DISCUSSION
Practice Question – Prelims

Q1. Consider the following statements.

1. The Right to Information is a fundamental right explicitly mentioned in the Indian Constitution.

2. Better access to the information of the public authorities is a progressive measure of transparency and accountability.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Practice Question – Prelims

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding ‘Project Elephant’.

1. It is a central sector scheme.

2. One of the objectives of this ‘Project Elephant’ is to take appropriate measures for the welfare of Captive elephants.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Practice Question – Prelims

Q3. ‘Anayoottu’ is a festival celebrated in the state of

(a) Tamil Nadu
(b) Assam
(c) Kerala
(d) Telangana

Practice Question – Mains

Q1. Discuss the implications of the proposed amendments to the right to Information Act, 2005.
Q2. The Union Budget 2019 has proposed public listing of NGOs and other social ventures. Discuss the advantages it offers to the effective functioning of social ventures.