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INDIAN EXPRESS Page 12

SAPNIDA MARRIAGE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 – Indian Society)

Why Delhi HC reaffirmed the ban on 'sapinda' marriages

AJOY SINHA KARPURAM
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

THE DELHI High Court last week rejected a challenge to the constitutionality of Section 5(v) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 (HMA), which prohibits marriage between two Hindus if they are "sapindas" of each other — "unless the custom or usage governing each of them permits of a marriage between the two".

In its order passed on January 22 on a petition filed by a woman who had been trying for long to have this section struck down, the court said, "If the choice of a partner in a marriage is left unregulated, incestuous relationship may gain legitimacy."

What is a sapinda marriage?

A sapinda marriage is one between individuals who are related to each other within a certain degree of closeness. Sapinda relationships for the purposes of the HMA are defined in Section 3 of the Act.

"Two persons are said to be sapindas of each other if one is a lineal ascendant of the other within the limits of sapinda relationship, or if they have a common lineal ascendant who is within the limits of sapinda relationship with reference to each of them," Section 3(f)(ii) says.

Under the provisions of the HMA, on the mother's side, a Hindu individual cannot marry anyone who is within three generations of them in the "line of ascent". On the father's side, this prohibition applies to five generations.

In practice, this means that on their mother's side, an individual cannot marry their sibling (first generation), their parents (second generation), their grandparents (third generation), or an individual who shares this ancestry within three generations. On their father's side, this prohibition would extend up to their grandparents' grandparents, and anyone who shares this ancestry within five generations.

EXPLAINED LAW

Are there any exceptions to the prohibition?

Yes, the sole exception is when the customs of each individual permits sapinda marriages.

The definition of the word "custom" is provided in Section 3(a) of the HMA. It states that a custom has to be "continuously and uniformly observed for a long time", and should have gained enough legitimacy among Hindus in a local area, tribe, group, or family, such that it has obtained "the force of law".

A custom may not be protected even after these conditions are fulfilled. The rule in question must be "certain and not unreasonable or opposed to public policy" and, "in the case of a rule [that is] applicable only to a family", it should not have been "discontinued by the family".

Why was the law challenged?

In 2007, the woman's marriage was declared void after her husband proved they had entered into a sapinda marriage, and that the woman was not from a community where such marriages could be considered a custom. This ruling was challenged before the Delhi HC, which dismissed the appeal in October 2023.

The woman then approached the HC again, challenging the constitutional validity of the prohibition on sapinda marriages. She argued that sapinda marriages are prevalent even when there is no proof of custom. Hence, Section 5(v), which prohibits such marriages unless there is an established custom, violates the right to equality under Article 14 of the Constitution.

The petitioner also argued that the marriage had received the consent of both families, which proved the legitimacy of the marriage.

What did the HC say?

A Bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora held that the petitioner did not provide "stringent proof" of an established custom.

The Delhi HC also held that the woman did not present any "cogent legal ground" to show that the prohibition against sapinda marriages was violative of the right to equality.

Are similar marriages allowed in other countries?

In several European countries, the laws on relationships considered incestuous are less stringent than in India.

In France, the crime of incest was abolished under the Penal Code of 1810, so long as the marriage was between consenting adults. Portuguese law also does not criminalise incest. Under Italian law, incest is a crime only if it causes a "public scandal".

In the United States, incestuous marriages are banned in all 50 states, though consensual incestuous relationships are allowed in New Jersey and Rhode Island.

Context: Recently, the Delhi High Court dismissed a challenge to the constitutionality of **Section 5(v) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 (HMA),** which bars marriage between two Hindus if they are "sapindas" of each other, unless their respective customs or usages permit such a union.

Sapinda Marriage

- **About:** It is a marriage between individuals who are related to each other within a certain degree of closeness. Sapinda relationships for the HMA are defined in Section 3 of the Act.
- **HMA Prohibitions on Marriages**
  - **Mother's side:** Marriage is prohibited within three generations (siblings, parents, and grandparents).
  - **Father's side:** Prohibition extends to five generations, including grandparents' grandparents.
  - **Exceptions to Prohibition:** The sole exception is when individual customs permit sapinda marriages.
- **Conditions for Custom Legitimacy**: Custom must be continuously and uniformly observed for a long time.
- **Legal Challenge and Background**: In 2007, a **sapinda marriage was declared void** due to a lack of community custom proof.
  - Delhi HC dismissed the appeal in October 2023, challenging the constitutional validity of the prohibition.
  - The petitioner argued the right to equality under Article 14.
- **HC Ruling on Custom Proof**: Delhi HC held that stringent proof of an established custom was lacking.
  - No cogent legal grounds were presented to show the prohibition violated the right to equality.

THE HINDU

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END-TO-END ENCRYPTION

Syllabus GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)



What is end-to-end encryption and how does it secure information?

Encryption is the act of changing some consumable information into an inconsumable form based on some rules. There are several ways to encrypt information depending on the level of secrecy and protection required

Vasudevan Mukunth

Information is wealth, and an important way to protect it is encryption. End-to-end (E2E) encryption in particular protects information in a way that has transformed human rights organisations', law-enforcement agencies', and tech companies' outlook on their ability to access information about individuals to protect, prosecute or profit from their engagement, as the case may be.

What is encryption?

Fundamentally, encryption is the act of changing some consumable information into an inconsumable form based on some rules. There are different kinds of such rules. For example, the Data Encryption Standard (DES), plus some settings, encrypts the words "ice cream" to AdNgzrrtxcpeUzzAdN7dwA== with the key "kite". If the key is, say, "motorcycle" instead, the encrypted text becomes 8n8+8aZxL89fAwru/+VyXw==.

The key is some data using which a computer can 'unlock' (decrypt) some 'locked' (encrypted) text, knowing the set of rules used to 'lock' it.

Say I write down AdNgzrrtxcpeUzzAdN7dwA== on one piece of paper and "kite" on another piece of paper, crumple them both, and throw them at my friend across the room. Suddenly a man I didn't notice in the middle of the room leaps up to snatch the piece of paper saying AdNgzrrtxcpeUzzAdN7dwA== and runs away with it. But since this fellow doesn't know the key ("kite"), he won't know what the piece of paper says.

This is how encryption protects digital information, digitally.

What is E2E encryption?

E2E is encryption that refers to particular locations between which information moves. Say you are chatting with your friend on a messaging app. When you send a message, it first goes to a server maintained by the company that built the app; based on its instructions, the server routes the message to your friend. In this setup, two important forms of encryption are encryption-in-transit and E2E encryption.

Encryption-in-transit means before a message is relayed from the server to you (or vice versa), it is encrypted. This scheme is used to prevent an actor from being able to read the contents of the message by intercepting the relay. In E2E encryption, the message is encrypted both in transit and at rest – that is when being relayed from your phone to the server (or vice versa) and when it is sitting inside the server. It is only decrypted when your friend receives the message.

How is information encrypted?

There are several ways to encrypt information depending on the level of secrecy and protection required. If some information is to remain encrypted for 100 years, a computer must require more than 100 years to decrypt it without the key.

One broad distinction is between symmetric and asymmetric encryption. In symmetric encryption, the key used to encrypt some information is also the key required to decrypt it. DES is a famous example of a symmetric encryption protocol. In a stronger version of DES, called Triple DES, the key a user provides is split into three parts. Let's say they are "mot", "orcy", and "cle". Then, the message –"ice cream" – is encrypted by the first part ("mot"); the result is decrypted by the second part ("orcy"); and its result is again encrypted by the third part ("cle"). The garbled text thus produced is then transmitted to the recipient along with the key. Symmetric encryption is useful when the sender and the recipient are the same person, for example when you encrypt the hard drive of your computer. The Advanced Encryption Standard (AES), which you might have noticed when setting your WiFi password, is also a symmetric encryption algorithm.

In asymmetric encryption, if the message "ice cream" is encrypted using the key "motorcycle", it can be decrypted using a different key that corresponds to "motorcycle" in a predetermined way. For example, say you and your friend agree that if you use the key "motorcycle" to encrypt the message, your friend will use the key "helmet" to decrypt it, and if you use "banana" to encrypt, your friend will use "pineapple" to decrypt. You and your friend go to a party and find yourself standing far from each other, and you wish to send them a message. So you encrypt "ice cream" with "banana" as the key, and you shout out the encrypted text to your friend along with the word "banana". Your friend now knows that they should decrypt the text using the key "pineapple" to reveal the underlying message. In this situation, using asymmetric encryption, you have been able to reveal the encryption key without compromising your or your friend's privacy. The key you shouted out is called the public key; the corresponding key you agreed your friend would use is called the private key.

Asymmetric encryption will work as long as the private key and the correspondence between the public key and the private key are kept secret. In advanced implementations of asymmetric encryption, this correspondence is 'stored' in the solution of a mathematical problem that even a computer would require a long time to solve. It is useful when the sender and the recipient are different. The level of protection it confers is greater the longer the key is.

There are different symmetric and asymmetric schemes that encrypt messages in different ways. For example, the messaging app WhatsApp uses the Curve25519 algorithm to create public keys for messages. Curve25519 uses the principles of elliptic-curve cryptography (ECC), which is based on some concepts in algebraic geometry. ECC's advantage is that it can provide the same level of security as an asymmetric encryption algorithm but with a shorter key.

Can E2E encryption be 'cracked'?

Messaging apps with E2E encryption promise that even their parent companies won't be able to read messages sent and received by its users. However, the informational content of the messages can still be acquired in other ways.

A common example is the man-in-the-middle (MITM) attack. This is related to the example earlier of an unnoticed man in the middle of the room jumping up to intercept your message to your friend. In that instance, the man didn't have the key and couldn't decrypt the message. In an MITM attack, this man is the attacker and he has been able to acquire the key to decrypt the message, either by hacking your device to obtain the encryption key as well as the correspondence between the encryption and decryption keys or by hacking your friend's device to acquire the decryption keys. MITM attacks can be prevented by using and comparing fingerprints. Each fingerprint is some data that uniquely identifies a key. Users can compare the fingerprints of their public keys in a separate channel (that is different from the one susceptible to an MITM attack) to make sure an attacker doesn't intercept a message, modify it, re-encrypt it with a different key and send it to the recipient.

Another issue with E2E encryption is that it could induce complacency in a user who believes an attacker can't access, say, an image they're sending over a messaging app in any other way. Since the image may be stored on the sender's device, an attacker can hack the device to obtain it. Some potent malware can also 'snoop' on your messages by infiltrating your device via other means, an SMS, and reading them before they are encrypted.

Finally, the company that installs E2E encryption on its products can install a backdoor or an exception that allows the company to surmount the encryption and access the messages. Such a thing may be required by law, such as companies being expected to retain and, in the event of litigation, share that information with lawyers. Illegal use also abounds, of course, such as that exposed in the Edward Snowden affair in 2013. The whistle-blower revealed, for example, that Skype had installed a backdoor on its application that allowed it to access and make copies of the contents of messages to share with the U.S. National Security Agency even though the messages were E2E-encrypted.

If the goal is to surveil a user, an actor can do so if they can access the messages' metadata, that is data about the messages, such as when they were sent, to which user, how often at different times, from which location, etc., instead of the messages themselves.

Context: End-to-end encryption has revolutionized the perspectives of human rights organizations, law enforcement agencies, and technology companies regarding their access to and utilization of information by safeguarding it comprehensively.

Encryption

- **About**: It is the act of changing some consumable information into an unconsumable form based on some rules.

E2E Encryption

- **About:** E2E is encryption that refers to particular locations between which information moves.
- **Encryption in Data Privacy**: The term "encryption" is commonly associated with ensuring the privacy of stored data.
- **Data Protection**: Encryption safeguards data from unauthorized access or tampering by converting it into a secret code decipherable only by the intended recipient.
- **Versatile Applications**: Encryption proves beneficial in securing online communications, storing sensitive information, and verifying digital identities across various scenarios.
- **Symmetric Encryption**: In this encryption, the same key is used for both encrypting and decrypting data, ensuring that the key used for encryption is also required for decryption.
- **Asymmetric Encryption**: In this encryption utilizes a pair of keys - one public and one private. The public key can be shared openly, while the private key must be kept confidential.

PIB

Jan 28

SUPREME COURT OF INDIA
(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Polity)

PM inaugurates Diamond Jubilee celebration of Supreme Court

Context: The Prime Minister of India recently inaugurated the Diamond Jubilee celebration of the Supreme Court.

Supreme Court of India

- **About:** The Supreme Court of India is the Apex Court and is the final interpreter of the Constitution and the laws.
- **Articles: 124 to 147 in Part V of the Constitution deal with the organisation, independence, jurisdiction, powers and procedures.**
- **Structure:** 31 judges (one chief justice and thirty other judges)
- **Appointment by**: President
- **Other judges are appointed by**: President after consultation with the CJI
- **Tenure**: Age of 65 years
- **Collegium System:** In this system, decisions about choosing judges or promoting lawyers to the Supreme Court and moving judges between High Courts and the Supreme Court are made by a group consisting of the Chief Justice of India and the four most experienced judges of the SC.

Power and Functions

- **Writ Jurisdiction**: The Supreme Court has the authority to issue directives, orders, or writs, such as habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibition, quo warranto, and certiorari, for their enforcement.
- **Appellate jurisdiction**: It seems to handle appeals against the decisions of lower courts and possesses extensive appellate authority.
- **Advisory jurisdiction**: The advisory jurisdiction, as outlined in Article 143 of the Constitution, empowers the President to request the Supreme Court's opinion in two specific categories:
  - Regarding any question of law or fact of public significance that has emerged or is likely to arise.
  - Concerning disputes arising from pre-constitutional treaties, agreements, covenants, engagements, sanads, or similar instruments.

NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Jan 28

EEL SPECIES

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env and Eco)

Two eel species discovered from southern coasts of Tamil Nadu, Kerala

Context: Researchers of the National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources (NBFGR), functioning under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), have discovered two eel species

Eel Species

- **About**: The recently found Congrid eels belong to the Ariosoma genus, and authoritative research articles on these species have been published and approved.
- **Species Naming**: Eels from the Gulf of Mannar are named 'Ariosoma kannani' after the late Prof L Kannan, while those from the Kerala coast are named 'Ariosoma gracile' based on morphological characteristics.
- **Growing in Indian Waters**: The discovery contributes to the understanding of marine biodiversity in Indian waters, especially regarding the less-explored group of eels (Anguilliformes).
- **Understanding Species Evolution**: Researchers emphasize the necessity of a comprehensive study to understand the species and its evolution, including protein profiling for potential public consumption recommendations.
- **Recognition:** The holotype specimens of the new species are registered at the National Fish Museum, Lucknow, and published in 'Zoosystematics and Evolution,' further registered in ZooBank for zoological nomenclature.

ALL INDIA RADIO

Jan 28

NAUSHERA TUNNEL

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Infrastructure)

BRO achieves breakthrough of 700 meter long Naushera Tunnel on Akhnoor– Poonch National Highway

Context: The Border Road Organisation recently achieved a major milestone by breaking through Naushera tunnel on the highly strategic 200 kilometers long stretch.

Naushera Tunnel

- **About:** NH 144A is a dual-lane road established by the central government in 2015, connecting Jammu to Rajouri and Poonch districts.
- **Road Connectivity**: Originating from Jammu, NH 144A provides vital road links to Akhnoor sub-division and a portion of Reasi district.
- **Significance of Upgradation**: The national highway is undergoing a transition from two to four lanes to enhance year-round, efficient connectivity for the border districts of Rajouri and Poonch, as well as parts of Jammu and Reasi.
- **Socio-economic Impact**: The upgradation is expected to foster socio-economic development in Jammu, Reasi, and the Pir Panjal region, reducing travel time between Poonch-Rajouri and Jammu to 4.5 hours from the current 6-7 hours.
- **Strategic Importance**: The upgraded highway facilitates rapid movement of defense vehicles along the Line of Control, bolstering connectivity from Akhnoor to Poonch district, even during wartime.
- **Reduction in Travel Time**: The project aims to cut travel time between Poonch-Rajouri and Jammu, benefiting residents and enhancing overall regional accessibility.
- **Four Major Tunnels**: Kandi tunnel, Sungal tunnel, Naushera tunnel and Bhimber Gali tunnel

PIB

Jan 28

PURPLE REVOLUTION
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

CSIR's Republic Day Tableau highlights the Purple Revolution through Lavender Cultivation in Jammu & Kashmir

Context: The Council of Scientific & Industrial Research's Republic Day Tableau highlighted the unleashing of a Purple Revolution ushered through Lavender cultivation in Jammu & Kashmir.

Purple Revolution

- **About**: The Union Ministry of Science & Technology launched the Purple Revolution in 2016 through CSIR's Aroma Mission.
- **Free Lavender Saplings for New Farmers**: First-time farmers received free lavender saplings under the mission, while experienced growers were charged Rs. 5-6 per sapling.
- **Economic Shift to Aroma Crops**: High monetary returns prompted farmers in Jammu and Kashmir's hilly areas to transition from traditional farming to aroma crops like lavender.
- **Resilience of Aroma Crops**: Aroma crops, including lavender, demonstrate resistance to both drought and pests.
- **CSIR's Technical Support for Agri Start-ups**: CSIR is actively providing technical support to promote the Agri Start-up trend in the Union Territory.
- **Expansion to Other Hilly States**: CSIR plans to extend the cultivation of aroma crops to hilly states with similar climates, including Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and the North-Eastern states.

Lavender Cultivation in India

- **About**: It is primarily focused in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Jammu & Kashmir.
- **Ideal Lavender Hub**: Agriculture experts highlight Himachal Pradesh in northern India as the most suitable region for lavender cultivation.
- **Climate Advantage**: Himachal Pradesh boasts a mild climate with low humidity and abundant sunshine, creating an ideal environment for lavender growth.
- **Soil Conditions**: The region's well-drained soils play a crucial role in supporting successful lavender cultivation.

LIVEMINT Jan 28

POEM-3
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

ISRO successfully completes all missions under POEM-3; set to make re-entry into Earth

Context: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Saturday informed that the space agency has performed all experiments in Payload Orbital Experiment for Microgravity (POEM-3) mission launched.

PSLV Orbital Experimental Module-3 (POEM-3)

- **About**: It is India's cost-effective space platform created from the spent PS4 stage of the PSLV-C58 vehicle, which successfully launched XPoSat on January 1, 2024.
- **Launched by**: PSLV-C58 vehicle
- **Objectives**: Deploying XPoSat into a 650 km orbit, followed by a descent to a 350 km circular orbit to minimize orbit decay time post-experiment completion.
- It is a **three-axis-attitude controlled platform equipped with power generation**, telecommand & telemetry capabilities to support various payloads.
- **Orbital**: By its 25th day in orbit, POEM-3 completed 400 orbits and currently orbits at approximately 322 km by 352 km.
- **Payload Operations**: POEM-3 carried nine payloads from VSSC, PRL, Academia, and Space start-ups through IN-SPACe. All payloads, including ARKA200, RUDRA, LEAP-TD, WeSAT, BeliefSat0, RSEM, DEX, 100 W Fuel Cell Power System, and Si-C based High Power Li-Ion Battery, met their objectives with data collection during every orbit.
- **Debris-Free Mission**: With POEM-3's anticipated orbital decay and re-entry in three months, the PSLV-C58 XPoSat mission stands out for leaving zero debris in space, contributing to responsible space exploration practices.

HINDUSTAN TIMES

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India: Concerned over bid to rush IPCC report

Jayashree Nandi

letters@hindustantimes.com



IPCC chair Jim Skea

NEW DELHI: India along with other developing countries has flagged serious concerns over attempts by developed nations to shorten the timeline for the delivery of the seventh assessment cycle report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), people familiar with the matter said.

The 60th session of the IPCC, held in Istanbul between January 16 and 20, was fraught with intense debates on how and when the panel will inform the world about the state of the crisis. While the meeting, attended by 195 member countries, was held to draw out a schedule for the 7th, and possibly the most important cycle with time running out on meeting the Paris goal of 1.5°C, observers said the meeting ended with the IPCC bureau failing to arrive at a consensus on delivery of reports.

According to the schedule, the final Synthesis Report of this cycle is expected by the end of 2029.

"Many developing countries were concerned that the agenda of the developed countries was to rush the IPCC AR7 for completion in less than five years (four and a half years or less) and therefore, compromise on the quality of the reports. Some developed countries also shared these concerns, notably Russia. Many other developed countries were initially for a longer timeline like the developing countries but slowly fell in line with the US, which was pushing for an early timeline," a senior official from India's delegation told HT.

The IPCC informs governments about the state of knowledge of climate crisis by examining all relevant literature on the subject. The panel completed its sixth assessment cycle last year with the Synthesis Report — a summary of its earlier reports — releasing in March 2023.

On Friday, the Third World Network, a non-profit international research and advocacy group, reported that the US, Jamaica, Grenada and other island nations supported the light cycle option (with fewer products and shorter timeline than the AR6). These nations also called on IPCC to respond to the invitation by the UNFCCC to provide information for the second global stocktake (GST) scheduled for 2027-28 period. The first GST, which reviewed the progress made globally on curbing climate crisis in line with the Paris Agreement, was completed last year.

The Indian official said that it was clarified repeatedly by IPCC co-chairs that while accelerating reports was possible, it involved many compromises that went against interests of developing countries. "As is clear from the TWN (Third World Network) report, with an early timeline, there would be less time for our scientists to prepare and publish adequate literature reflecting our point of view, including equity, climate justice, common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, sustainable production and consumption and other aspects. With an accelerated timeline, it would be dominated by the literature from developed countries which overwhelmingly ignore these aspects as happened in AR6 with the Special Report on 1.5 Degree Warming. Given their much higher capacities and availability of resources, this is certain to happen and developing countries, therefore, need the time for their scientific community to be heard," the official said, requesting anonymity. The IPCC process is such that developing countries, including India, devote a lot of time and effort to review draft reports to avoid inclusion of biased information, officials said, adding that authors also need the time to reflect on the review comments in subsequent drafts.

"The outcomes demanded by the US included also eliminating the Synthesis Report which is very important, and the normal practice, in order to provide an integrated overview of all aspects of climate change and how to tackle it," the official said. "...it became clear that the purpose of the developed countries in speeding up of the reports was not based on any scientific requirement at all but merely trying to get some findings before the second GST, which would end by late 2028. By rushing the findings in this manner, the final IPCC output could be tailored to favour the developed country viewpoint," he added.

IPCC

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env and Eco)

Context: India along with other developing countries has flagged serious concerns over attempts by developed nations to shorten the timeline for the delivery of the **seventh assessment cycle report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC),** people familiar with the matter.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

- **About:** The IPCC, created in 1988 by the WMO and UNEP, assesses climate change science for the United Nations.
- **Membership**: Boasting 195 member countries, the IPCC serves as a universal body for climate-related evaluations.
- **Objective**: To evaluate scientific, technical, and socio-economic data pertaining to human-induced climate change and propose mitigation and adaptation strategies.
- **Key Activities**: Primarily, the IPCC produces assessment reports, special reports, and methodology reports, influencing global climate change negotiations.
- **Research Approach**: The IPCC does not conduct original research but synthesizes global scientific literature, involving scientists worldwide in drawing logical conclusions.
- **Working Groups:** Comprising three working groups, the IPCC focuses on climate physics, impacts and adaptation, and mitigation strategies.
- **Working Group Responsibilities**: Working Group I examines climate change physics, Group II assesses impacts and adaptation, and Group III concentrates on climate change mitigation.
- **Reports Compilation**: The three working groups release individual reports, later synthesized into a comprehensive document known as the synthesis report.

INDIAN EXPRESS

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UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Social Issues -Education)

Centre clarifies de-reservation policy after uproar over UGC draft guidelines

Centrally funded universities will not de-reserve any reserved faculty positions: Education Ministry

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

THE EDUCATION Ministry and the University Grants Commission (UGC) clarified on Sunday that centrally funded universities will not de-reserve any reserved faculty positions after an uproar over UGC's draft guidelines suggesting the possibility of opening unfilled vacancies for SC, ST, OBC candidates to general candidates in "rare and exceptional cases".

On December 27, the higher education regulator had shared draft guidelines on implementing the reservation policy in higher education institutions for public feedback by January 28. This draft, prepared by a four-member committee headed by the director of the Institute of Public Administration, Dr H S Rana, had a chapter on de-reservation of unfilled quota posts meant for teachers, officers, and employees of a university.

The chapter stated that while there is a "general ban on de-reservation of reserved vacancies in case of direct recruitment", in exceptional circumstances it can be done if the university can provide adequate justification for it.

The draft guidelines specify that proposals for de-reservation concerning job positions designated for Group A and Group B posts should be submitted to the Education Ministry, while proposals for Group C and D posts should be forwarded to the Executive Council (the top decision making body) of the university for special permission. The proposal would have to provide information such as the designation, pay scale, name of the service, responsibilities, required qualifications, efforts made to fill the post, and why it cannot be allowed to remain vacant.

In current academic practice, reserved faculty positions are not converted to recruit general candidates. While the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) permits de-reservation in exceptional circumstances exclusively for Group A posts, according to sources, this provision has not been put into effect in universities. Unfilled quota positions undergo re-advertisement, and universities organise special recruitment drives until suitable candidates are identified, without opening these positions to the general category.

The draft UGC guidelines were seen to be paving the way for de-reservation in faculty positions in universities, which sparked an uproar. "The constitutional provisions related to affirmative action are not mere words but expressions of a constitutional commitment... UGC seeks to topple whatever growth made in this direction since independence. The proposition to introduce de-reservation is a preposterous act in itself. The de-reservation provision will open a window of discrimination against reserved category candidates," read a statement jointly signed by former president of Delhi University Teachers' Association Aditya Narayan Misra and four members of the Delhi government's OBC Commission.

On Sunday, UGC chairman M Jagadesh Kumar posted on X, "This is to clarify that there has been no de-reservation of reserved category positions in Central Education Institutions (CEI) in the past, and there is going to be no such de-reservation. It is important for all HEIs to ensure that all backlog positions in reserved category are filled through concerted efforts."

Reiterating that the proposal had nothing to do with de-reservation of any posts, Kumar told *The Indian Express*, "What is put out is just a draft and anything related to de-reservation will be taken out of it while making the final document."

Proposals for Govt aid: NAAC accreditation, NIRF ranking, 75% teachers as per quota

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

THE UNIVERSITY Grants Commission (UGC) in its new draft guidelines has proposed to make participation in NAAC or NBA programmes, NIRF ranking, and 75% of sanctioned teaching positions filled, to be crucial criteria to receive grants from the Centre. If approved, the draft guidelines "UGC (Fitness of Colleges for Receiving Grants) Rules, 2024" will replace 1975 UGC guidelines that cover all institutions recognised by the commission. The new rules, aligned with the National Education Policy 2020, will be applicable to every college affiliated to universities that are established by a central or under a state act under Section 2(f) of the UGC Act, 1956.

Expanding the scope of the earlier guidelines, the UGC has proposed that universities should either have accreditation awarded by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) or have at least 60% of the programmes, in case a college offers more than three programmes accredited by the National Board of Accreditation (NBA). In case a college offers less than three programmes, then each of the eligible programmes must have been accredited, the guidelines states.

In case the educational institutes does not have both NAAC or NBA accreditation, then they should be ranked in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) at least thrice after participating five times or at least twice after participating thrice. To be eligible, the draft states, colleges that not only charge a reasonable fee prescribed by the appropriate authority at the Central or state government but also do not take capitation fees or any unauthorised fees will be considered for receiving grants. Colleges will be required to have at least 75% of the total sanctioned teaching posts filled and duly follow reservation policy, the draft states. The teachers will have to be paid according to the UGC policy as well.

Context: Recently, the Education Ministry and UGC clarified that centrally funded universities will not de-reserve reserved faculty positions, amidst uproar over draft guidelines proposing vacancy opening for SC, ST, OBC candidates to general candidates in "rare and exceptional cases."

University Grants Commission

- **About:** Established in 1956, this statutory body's primary responsibilities include the coordination, determination, and maintenance of higher education standards in India.
- **Coordination and Standards**: Charged with coordination, determination, and maintenance of standards in higher education.
- **Recognition and Funding**: Provides recognition to Indian universities and disburses funds to recognized universities and colleges.
- **Pre-Independence Roots**: Originally formed in 1946 to oversee three Central Universities, expanding to all existing universities after independence.
- **Post-Independence Evolution**: University Education Commission in 1948 recommended the UGC's reconstitution, aligning it with the UK's University Grants Commission model.
- **Function**: Granting recognition to universities and colleges across the country.
    - It is responsible for disbursing funds to the universities and colleges that have received recognition.

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INS VISHAKHAPATNAM

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

Indian Navy's INS Visakhapatnam comes to rescue after distress call from ship in Gulf of Aden

Context: Indian Navy's guided missile destroyer, INS Visakhapatnam, deployed in the Gulf of Aden, responded to a distress call from MV Marlin Luanda.

INS Visakhapatnam

- **About**: Commissioned on November 21, 2021, it is the flagship and first in the Indian Navy's Visakhapatnam-class **stealth guided-missile destroyers.**
- **Symbol**: Make in India initiative towards achieving 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.
- **Size**: Measures 163m in length, 17m in breadth.
- **Displacement**: Weighs 7,400 tonnes, making it one of the largest destroyers in the Indian Navy.
- **Propulsion:** Driven by four robust Gas Turbines in a Combined Gas and Gas (COGAG) configuration.
- **Speed**: Capable of achieving speeds exceeding 30 knots.
- **Stealth Features**: Reduced Radar Cross Section (RCS) through efficient hull shaping, full beam superstructure design, plated masts, and use of radar-transparent materials on exposed decks.
- **NBC Warfare Capabilities**: Prepared for Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical (NBC) warfare conditions.

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