

1. QR Codes for Food Products: A Step Towards Informed Choices

Introduction

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has recommended the introduction of QR codes on food products to enhance accessibility for visually impaired individuals. This initiative aims to provide consumers with detailed information about the products they purchase, allowing them to make informed choices in a growing market of packaged foods.

Significance of the Move

India is a significant market for packaged foods and is experiencing an increasing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). This rise is linked to the popularity of aggressively marketed, readily available pre-packaged foods. Consumers have the right to know the contents and quality of the products they buy. This move ensures transparency and empowers consumers to make informed decisions.



Information Provided by QR Codes

The QR codes on food products will offer comprehensive details, including ingredients, nutritional information, allergens, manufacturing date, best before/expiry date, allergen warnings, and customer contact information. It is essential to note that the inclusion of QR codes does not replace mandatory product label information.

Legislation and Accessibility

This initiative aligns with the FSSAI's Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2020, and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. These regulations emphasize the rights of individuals with disabilities and the importance of providing accessible health information.

Global Trends in QR Code Usage

Countries like the U.S., India, France, and the U.K. are leading users of QR codes. A survey reveals that consumers value QR codes for obtaining specific product details and find them convenient. The global packaged food market is also witnessing significant growth, further emphasizing the role of QR codes in providing essential information to consumers.

Relevance: GS Prelims

Source: The Hindu

2. Implementation of DNA Systems in Police Stations

Introduction

The Indian government is introducing a system for collecting, storing, and analyzing physical and biological samples, including DNA and facial recognition, of arrested persons. This initiative is part of the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act (CrPI) passed in April 2022. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) is overseeing the implementation, but several challenges and concerns surround this new system.

Why the Legislation?

The CrPI Act replaced the outdated Identification of Prisoners Act, 1920, and enables modern techniques for capturing and recording body measurements. The aim is to enhance identification and data recording capabilities.

Role of NCRB

NCRB is responsible for storing, processing, and sharing records of these measurements in a common database accessible to authorized police and prison officials nationwide. They prescribe equipment specifications and storage methods, with records retained for 75 years.

Current Status

While police are trained to record fingerprints using the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS), the implementation of iris scanners, DNA capture, and facial-recognition systems faces delays. NAFIS workstations are operational in many states.

Challenges and Concerns

Privacy Concerns: Questions regarding data protection and fundamental rights, including privacy, have been raised in Parliament.

Recording Detainees: Many police officers are unaware of rules stating that measurements should not be recorded for persons detained or arrested under prohibitory and preventive sections of the law unless coupled with serious criminal charges.

Data Destruction: The responsibility for destroying data after 75 years lies with the individuals whose data was collected. This may pose challenges for people without access to legal processes.

Types of DNA Samples: The specific DNA samples that can be collected by police are yet to be defined.

Scope in Different Crimes: The scope of DNA sample use in various crimes, beyond sexual offenses, is unclear.

Safeguards Against Misuse: The NCRB has cautioned against database misuse and stresses the need for safeguards to ensure only designated officials access the data in real-time.

Connectivity Issues: Smaller states face challenges related to connectivity, making it difficult to fulfill secure Internet lease line requirements.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu & The Indian Express

3. New Housing Scheme in Jharkhand - 'Abua Awas Yojna'

Introduction

The Jharkhand Cabinet recently approved the 'Abua Awas Yojna' (AAY), a housing scheme aimed at providing eight lakhs pucca houses to homeless individuals in the state. This scheme has a total budget of Rs 16,320 crore. It seeks to address housing issues among the state's poor population.

Need for AAY

While Jharkhand already has existing housing schemes like Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Rural and Ambedkar Awas Yojna, they have not covered all eligible beneficiaries. Around 8 lakh deserving individuals were excluded from these schemes due to data discrepancies and other issues, as reported by the state government. Despite requests to include these eligible individuals under existing schemes, their pleas were not addressed, leading to the launch of the AAY.

AAY's Offerings

Under AAY, beneficiaries will receive a three-room house with one kitchen, covering an area of 31 sq m. The government has allocated Rs 2 lakh per beneficiary to be disbursed in four installments. This is a significant improvement compared to PMAY-Rural, where beneficiaries receive a house with only two rooms and one kitchen, with a provision of Rs 1.2-1.3 lakh per beneficiary. Additionally, AAY beneficiaries can participate in the MGNREGS to earn wages for building their houses. The scheme also allows for the addition of a toilet during house construction, funded by Swachh Bharat Mission or other available schemes. All houses built under AAY will be registered in the name of women in beneficiary families.

Relevance: GS Prelims

Source: The Indian Express