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1. A Bill to prevent the use of unfair means in job recruitment exams has been brought in Parliament with tough penalties. What are unfair means, and what is the government's rationale for such a law?

Why in news?

The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024, was introduced in Lok Sabha. The Bill aims to prevent "unfair means" in order to "bring greater transparency, fairness and credibility to the public examinations system".

What is meant by the use of "unfair means" in an examination?

Section 3 of the Bill lists at least 15 actions that amount to using unfair means in public examinations "for monetary or wrongful gain".

These acts include: "leakage of question paper or answer key or part thereof" and colluding in such leakage; "accessing or taking possession of question paper or an Optical Mark Recognition response sheet without authority"; "tampering with answer sheets including Optical Mark Recognition response sheets"; "providing solution to one or more questions by any unauthorised person during a public examination", and "directly or indirectly assisting the candidate" in a public examination.

The section also lists "tampering with any document necessary for short-listing of candidates or finalising the merit or rank of a candidate"; "tampering with the computer network or a computer resource or a computer system"; "creation of fake website" and "conduct of fake examination, issuance of fake admit cards or offer letters to cheat or for monetary gain" as illegal acts.

Which exams are "public examinations" as defined in the Bill?

Under Section 2(k), a "public examination" is defined as any examination conducted by a "public examination authority" listed in the Schedule of the Bill, or any "such other authority as may be notified by the Central Government".

The schedule lists five public examination authorities: (i) the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), which conducts the Civil Services Examination, Combined Defence Services Examinations, Combined Medical Services Examination, Engineering Services Examination, etc.; (ii) the Staff Selection Commission (SSC), which recruits for Group C (non-technical) and Group B (non-gazetted) jobs in the central government; (iii) the Railway Recruitment Boards (RRBs), which recruit Groups C and D staff in the Indian Railways; (iv) the Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS), which hires at all levels for nationalised banks and regional rural banks (RRBs); and (v) National Testing Agency (NTA), which conducts the JEE (Main), NEET-UG, UGC-NET, the Common University Entrance Test (CUET), etc.

Apart from these designated public examination authorities, all "Ministries or Departments of the Central Government and their attached and subordinate offices for recruitment of staff" will also come under the purview of the new law.

The central government can add new authorities in the schedule through a notification as and when required.

What punishment does the proposed law provide for violations?

Section 9 of the Bill states that all offences shall be cognizable, non-bailable, and non-compoundable — which means that an arrest can be made without a warrant and bail will not be a matter of right; rather, a magistrate will determine whether the accused is fit to be released on bail. A non-compoundable offence is one in which the case cannot be withdrawn by the complainant even when the complainant and the accused have reached a compromise, and a trial must necessarily follow.

Punishment for "any person or persons resorting to unfair means and offences" can be three to five years in prison, and a fine up to Rs 10 lakh.

Under Section 10(2), a service provider who is engaged to provide "support of any computer resource or any material, by whatever name it may be called" for the conduct of the examination can be fined up to Rs 1 crore, along with other penalties.

The Bill provides for harsher punishment in cases of organised paper leaks, where "organised crime" is defined as unlawful activity by a group of persons colluding in a conspiracy "to pursue or promote a shared interest for wrongful gain in respect of a public examination".

Section 11(1) says the punishment for organised crime will be "imprisonment for a term not less than five years but which may extend to ten years" and a fine "which shall not be less than one crore rupees".

Why has the government brought this Bill?

There have been a very large number of cases of question paper leaks in recruitment exams across the country in recent years. An investigation found at least 48 instances of paper leaks in 16 states over the last five years, in which the process of hiring for government jobs was disrupted. The leaks touched the lives of at least 1.51 crore applicants for about 1.2 lakh posts.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

2. Indians win big at Grammys

About Grammy Awards

The Grammy Awards (stylized as GRAMMY), or simply known as the Grammys, are awards presented by the Recording Academy of the United States to recognize outstanding achievements in the music industry. They are regarded by many as the most prestigious and significant awards in the music industry worldwide. They were originally called the Gramophone Awards, as the trophy depicts a gilded gramophone.

The Grammys are the first of the Big Three networks' major music awards held annually, and are considered one of the four major annual American entertainment awards with the Academy Awards (for films), the Emmy Awards (for television), and the Tony Awards (for theater). The first Grammy Awards ceremony was held on May 4, 1959, to honor the musical accomplishments of performers for the year 1958.

Categories of awards

The "General Field" are four awards which are not restricted by music genre.

1. The Album of the Year award is presented to the performer, featured artists, songwriter(s), and/or production team of a full album if other than the performer.
2. The Record of the Year award is presented to the performer and/or production team of a single song if other than the performer.
3. The Song of the Year award is presented to the songwriter(s) of a single song.
4. The Best New Artist award is presented to a promising breakthrough performer (or performers) who in the eligibility year releases the first recording that establishes their public identity (which is not necessarily their first proper release).

As of 2024, an additional two awards were added to the "General Field".

The Producer of the Year, Non-Classical award is presented to a producer for a body of work released during the eligibility period. It was first presented in 1974 and was not previously part of any specific field.

The Songwriter of the Year, Non-Classical award is presented to an individual who works primarily as a songwriter for a body of work released during the eligibility period. It was first presented in 2023 and was not previously part of any specific field.

Other awards are given for performance and production in specific genres and for other contributions such as artwork and video. Special awards are also given for longer-lasting contributions to the music industry.

Five Indian musicians won the 2024 Grammy awards

While Mr. Hussain was India's big winner with three Grammys, Mr. Chaurasia picked up two awards. Singer Shankar Mahadevan, violinist Ganesh Rajagopalan and percussionist Selvaganesh Vinayakram, Mr. Hussain's collaborators in the fusion group Shakti, won one Grammy each.

Best Global Music Album

Shakti won the 2024 Grammy Award for best global music album for *This Moment*. The album features the four Indians as well as its founding member, legendary British guitarist John McLaughlin. *This Moment*, which released to critical acclaim in June 2023, is the group's first studio album in more than 45 years.

Besides his award for Shakti, Mr. Hussain won two other awards — the best global music performance for Pashto and best contemporary instrumental album for *As We Speak*.



Shankar Mahadevan, Ganesh Rajagopalan, Ustad Zakir Hussain and V. Selvaganesh of *Shakti* pose with the award during the Grammy Awards in Los Angeles

Global Music Category

The best global music performance category had eight nominees, including Abundance In Millets, a song by Falu and featuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Shadow Forces by Arooj Aftab, Vijay Iyer, and Shahzad Ismaily, and Alone by Burna Boy.

Mr. Rakesh Chaurasia, nephew of legendary flautist Hariprasad Chaurasia, bagged two Grammys as part of the ensemble of American banjo player Béla Fleck and American bassist Edgar Meyer for Pashto and As We Speak.

Relevance: GS Prelims

Source: The Hindu

3. Key takeaways from Uttarakhand's Uniform Civil Code Bill

Why in news?

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami tabled the state's proposed Uniform Civil Code Bill in the Legislative Assembly. An expert panel had earlier made recommendations for the Bill, which seeks to "govern and regulate the laws related to marriage and divorce, successions, live-in relationships, and matters related thereto."

Here's what the Bill says on some major areas related to personal laws:

1. Provisions of the UCC Bill do not apply to tribal communities

Currently, personal laws in India are complex, with each religion following its specific regulations. The idea of the UCC is to create a set of uniform laws applicable to all the communities in India when it comes to personal laws on marriage, inheritance, divorce, etc.

However, this Bill's provisions will not apply to tribal communities. Given the unique customary practices of tribal communities, many have criticised the idea of the UCC over the years.

2. The Bill aims to regulate live-in relationships

The Bill makes it "obligatory for partners to a live-in relationship within a State, whether they are resident of Uttarakhand or not, to submit a statement of live-in relationship under sub-section (1) of section 381 to the Registrar within whose jurisdiction they are so living."

The procedure for doing so is also mandated, where partners living together must submit a "statement of live-in relationship to the Registrar concerned..."

The registrar will then conduct a "summary inquiry" to ensure that the relationship does not fall under any of the categories mentioned under Section 380. This includes: "where at least one of the persons is a minor" and "where at least one of the persons is married or is already in a live-in relationship".

For couples who have been in a live-in relationship for more than a month and have not submitted the statement, a punishment has been prescribed – with imprisonment up to three months or a fine up to Rs 10,000 or both.

Also, the registrar will have to be informed in case of termination of the relationship through the submission of a "statement of termination of relationship".

3. The Bill prohibits bigamy or marriages with more than one person

Under Section 4, the Bill lists five conditions for marriage. It says a marriage may be solemnised or contracted between a man or a woman if those conditions are fulfilled. The first condition is: "neither party has a spouse living at the time of the marriage", thus prohibiting bigamy or polygamy.

4. Marriage age of men and women, and "degrees for prohibited relationship" exception remain

The third condition under Section 4 on marriage relates to the minimum age for marriage. The marriageable age for men and women remains 21 and 18, respectively.

Under the fourth condition, the Bill retains the "custom" exception from the Hindu Marriage Act for married parties within the "degrees of prohibited relationships".

Two people are said to be within the "degrees of prohibited relationship" if they share a common ancestry or they are the wife/husband of a common ancestor. This exception applies to those communities, which have an established custom allowing marriage within the degrees of prohibited relationships.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance
Source: The Indian Express

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