

'Sharing is Caring'

If you have friends preparing for Civil Services, tell them that they can also receive Updates from PrepMate IAS by sending 'Name' and 'State' through WhatsApp on 75979-00000

1. How undergraduate students could soon complete college degrees within longer or shorter durations**Overview****UGC approves new "Accelerated" and "Extended" degree programmes for undergraduates**

E Undergraduate students will soon have flexibility in completing their programmes in less or more time than the standard three or four years, following a recent decision by the University Grants Commission (UGC).

Whether students opt for an 'accelerated' or 'extended' timeline, they will earn the same degree as those on the standard track, provided they fulfil all academic requirements. Higher education institutions can offer these

options starting with the 2025-26 academic session.

What are 'Accelerated Degree Programmes' (ADPs) and 'Extended Degree Programmes' (EDPs)?

At the end of the first or second semester, but not beyond, undergraduate students will be allowed to opt for an ADP or an EDP. Students enrolled under an ADP will follow the same curriculum and must earn the same number of credits as required for a three- or four-year UG programme. However, they can complete their programme sooner by earning additional credits starting from the semester they choose the ADP.

Under this scheme, a three-year UG programme can be completed in five semesters instead of the standard six (shortened by a maximum of one semester), while a four-year UG programme can be completed in six or seven semesters (shortened by a maximum of two semesters) rather than eight.

On the other hand, students who choose the EDP will be allowed to earn fewer credits per semester compared to the standard programme, allowing them to take longer to complete their course. Their course duration can be extended by a maximum of two semesters.

What is the objective behind ADP and EDP, and who may benefit from it?

UGC Chairman M Jagadesh Kumar said the National Credit Framework allows students to complete UG courses in accelerated or extended programmes to accommodate “diverse academic needs and cognitive abilities”.

How will they be implemented?

The UGC’s recently approved Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) calls for higher education institutions to set up a committee to scrutinise the applications they receive for ADP and EDP at the end of the first or second semester and select students accordingly. According to the SOP, the committee will evaluate the “credit-completing potential” of the student based on their performance in the first or second semester. An institution can earmark up to 10% of the sanctioned intake for ADP students.

The committee will also decide the minimum number of credits a student must earn in each semester under the ADP and the EDP, considering the UGC’s Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Governance

Source: Indian Express

2. V-P Jagdeep Dhankhar refuses Rule 267 notice in Rajya Sabha again: The ‘Brahmastra’ now allowed sparingly

Introduction



On day one of the Budget Session, Opposition MPs in the Rajya Sabha gave notices under Rule 267 seeking a discussion on the contentious order by some district administrations in Uttar Pradesh asking shops along the Kanwar Yatra route to display names of their owners and staff.

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, rejected the notices, saying they were “neither in conformity to requirements of Rule 267 nor to directions given by the Chair”.

Rule 267

Rule 267, included in the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States, and invoked by the Opposition to raise “urgent matters” says: “Any member, may, with the consent of the Chairman, move that any rule may be suspended in its application to a motion related to the business listed before the Council of that day and if the motion is carried, the rule in question shall be suspended for the time being: Provided further that this rule shall not apply where specific provision already exists for suspension of a rule under a particular chapter of the Rules.”

Over the last couple of years, the rule has emerged as a constant point of friction between the Opposition and the Rajya Sabha presiding officers under the Narendra Modi government.

Dhankhar and Opposition

The opening day of the 2023 Monsoon Session in the Rajya Sabha was disrupted after the government and Opposition differed on the format of the discussion on the Manipur situation. While the government agreed to a short-duration discussion, the Opposition insisted that PM Modi make a suo motu statement followed by a discussion, with suspension of all business under Rule 267.

Criticism against Opposition

There is also criticism that the Opposition has been trying to use Rule 267 as equivalent to the adjournment motion in Lok Sabha. Through an adjournment motion, scheduled business can be set aside by allowing an MP to urge the Speaker to adjourn the House's business "to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance". The Speaker has to decide whether to allow the MP to move the motion. It results in the House dropping its scheduled list of business to discuss this urgent matter.

Evolution of Rule 267

When Rule 267 was framed, it stated, "Any member may, with the consent of the Chairman, move that any rule may be suspended in its application to a particular motion before the Council and if the motion is carried the rule in question shall be suspended for the time being." However, in 2000, under the A B Vajpayee-led NDA government, the Rules Committee of the Rajya Sabha had amended this Rule, noting that MPs were using Rule 267 to "seek discussion either on a matter not listed in the agenda for the particular day or on a subject that has not yet been admitted". The committee had recommended an amendment to tighten Rule 267 only to allow the suspension of a Rule for a matter "related to the business listed before the Council of that day".

It had also added a proviso that if an existing procedure allowed suspending Rules (like suspension of Question Hour), an MP could not use 267. So now 267 can be used only to suspend a Rule, and only to take up matters that are already in the list of business.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

3. Electronic tracking of undertrials on bail: benefits and challenges

Overview



section titled "Electronic Tracking of Prisoners".

Recently, President Droupadi Murmu released a report titled "Prisons in India: Mapping Prison Manuals and Measures for Reformation and Decongestion". The report, authored by the Supreme Court's Centre for Research and Planning, suggests a variety of measures to address overcrowding in prisons, including a

Though the court itself in July held in strong terms that bail conditions that allow the police to track the movement of an accused would violate the right to privacy, the report and other authorities, including the Law Commission of India and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs, suggest that tracking would be beneficial with the right guardrails.

What are the benefits to electronic tracking, and what are the challenges?

A cost-effective alternative to incarceration

According to statistics by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), prisons in India suffer from significant overpopulation with a 131.4% occupancy rate as of December 2022 — 5,73,220 inmates in comparison to a total capacity of 4,36,266 in jails across India. In addition, 75.8% of prisoners in India are undertrials. The Prisons in India report suggests that electronic monitoring “could prove to be a cost-effective method to decongest jails in India”.

The report cites statistics from Odisha where the state government spends roughly Rs 1 lakh annually on a single undertrial prisoner. A tracker “would cost around Rs 10,000 to 15,000”, the report says. In 2023, a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs submitted a report titled “Prisons – Conditions, Infrastructure and Reforms”, which spoke about the potential benefits of electronic tracking using ankle or bracelet trackers.

It states, “Through the use of these kinds of trackers, administrative machinery or human resources staff involved in keeping track of prisoners who are out on bail can be reduced and it could be a cost-effective method for keeping track of such prisoner without the involvement of large administrative staff strength”.

Lessons from the US: the drawbacks of electronic monitoring

However, some studies claim that electronic monitoring simply amounts to incarceration by a different name, often referred to as ‘e-carceration’. In the United States of America, where electronic monitoring and movement restrictions for persons on parole or in the pre-trial stage is a widespread practice, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) published a report titled “Rethinking Electronic Monitoring: A Harm Reduction Guide”.

In the report, they claim that “EM serves as an extension of the carceral crisis, expanding the punitive power of jails and prisons beyond their traditional physical walls as a system of “e-carceration”...overuse of government surveillance can create oppressive, criminalizing environments, especially for communities of color”.

A broad comparison can be drawn with India where, like communities of colour in the US, people from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes backgrounds are overrepresented in prison populations. The latest NCRB data shows that 68.4% of prisoners belong to SC, ST and OBC communities.

There is also the question of who will bear the costs when it comes to electronic monitoring. The Supreme Court’s report suggests that it would be the government, but in jurisdictions such as the US (which has been cited as an example in the court’s report), the costs are often

borne by the individual being monitored and include daily charges of \$3-\$35 along with \$100-\$200 in setup charges according to the non-profit Electronic Frontier Foundation.

There is also the possibility of stigma that comes with visible ankle or bracelet devices, a concern acknowledged by the Prisons in India report, stating "Some individuals may resist wearing tracking devices due to concerns about social stigma or a perception of invasive surveillance".

The ACLU in a piece titled "Three People Share How Ankle Monitoring Devices Fail, Harm, and Stigmatize" note that "the stigma, social isolation, and stress that results from being monitored exacerbates depression and anxiety for wearers".

Privacy and electronic tracking

On July 8, a Bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan struck down an unusual bail condition imposed by the Delhi High Court on two foreign nationals booked for offences under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985. The Delhi HC granted bail to the accused persons and ordered that they must "drop a PIN on the google map to ensure that their location is available to the Investigation Officer of the case".

The court held that such a condition would violate the fundamental right to privacy under Article 21, stating that "The investigating agency cannot be permitted to continuously peep into the private life of the accused enlarged on bail". The court then deleted this bail condition. The Parliamentary Standing Committee in 2023, while advocating for the cost benefits of electronic monitoring, noted that such measures must only be taken with the consent of the inmate in question. "At the same time, it must be ensured that to avoid any kind of human rights violation this scheme or method should be used on voluntary basis after procuring the consent of inmates".

The 268th Law Commission report acknowledges the "grave and significant impact on constitutional rights" that such a measure might have. It suggests that such monitoring "must be used only in grave and heinous crimes, where the accused person has a prior conviction in similar offences" and states that criminal legislations should be amended accordingly.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express