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K Radhakrishnan Committee Report Highlights Need for Comprehensive Reforms in India's Examination System

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Recent Developments:

- Following the **NEET-UG 2026 paper leak controversy**, the Supreme Court heard petitions seeking reforms in examination conduct, after which the Union Government informed the court about the constitution of a new high-powered committee under **Nandan Nilekani** to recommend the next phase of examination reforms.
- The government also introduced the **Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026** in the Lok Sabha to strengthen the legal framework against paper leaks and unfair practices in public examinations.
- These developments have renewed focus on the earlier **K Radhakrishnan Committee Report (2024)**, which provided a comprehensive blueprint for improving examination security, institutional capacity and transparency of the **National Testing Agency (NTA)**.

Background and Formation of K Radhakrishnan Committee:

Need for Examination Reforms:

- The **K Radhakrishnan Committee** was constituted in **2024** after the **NEET-UG 2024 paper leak controversy**, which created widespread concerns regarding the credibility, transparency and security of national-level entrance examinations.
- The committee was established to restore public confidence in competitive examinations and recommend measures for creating a reliable, technology-driven and error-free testing system.

Mandate and Consultation Process:

- The committee was headed by former **ISRO Chairman Dr K Radhakrishnan** and submitted its report to the **Ministry of Education** in October 2024.
- The committee conducted **23 full-day physical meetings** and received more than **37,000 public responses** through the **MyGov platform** to understand stakeholder concerns.
- Its vision was to transform the **National Testing Agency (NTA)** into a **nimble, zero-error, adaptive and integrative examination organisation** capable of conducting large-scale assessments securely.
- The initial mandate included improving examination processes, strengthening data security and reviewing the structure and functioning of the NTA.
- Following directions of the Supreme Court in **Vanshika Yadav vs Union of India**, the committee's scope was expanded to include:
 - Examination security and administration,
 - Technological safeguards,
 - Policy and stakeholder engagement,
 - International collaboration,

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- Staff training,
- Student mental-health support.

Key Findings of the Committee:

Examination Life Cycle Vulnerabilities:

- The committee rejected the idea that paper leaks are isolated incidents and identified weaknesses throughout the entire **Testing Life Cycle**, including question paper preparation, printing, transportation, candidate verification, examination centre management and grievance resolution.
- It emphasised that examination security requires an integrated approach covering technology, institutional capacity and human resource management.
- The report highlighted that vulnerabilities at any stage of the examination process can compromise the credibility of the entire system.

Challenges in National Testing Agency:

- The committee observed that the NTA was functioning as a **single-window agency** despite conducting more than **240 examinations involving approximately 5.4 crore candidates** since its establishment.
- It concluded that the agency required major enhancement of capacity, specialised expertise and institutional restructuring to manage large-scale examinations effectively.
- The committee recommended reducing excessive dependence on outsourced agencies for critical examination-related activities to improve accountability and security.

Major Technological Recommendations:

Computer-Assisted Secure Pen-and-Paper Testing:

- The committee proposed **Computer-Assisted Secure Pen-and-Paper Testing (CPPT)** as a major technological solution to reduce paper leak risks.
- Under this model, encrypted question papers would be transmitted electronically to secure examination centre servers and printed shortly before the examination begins.
- The system would allow candidates to continue writing conventional pen-and-paper examinations while eliminating the risks associated with long-distance transportation and storage of printed question papers.
- This approach aims to protect the examination process during sensitive stages such as printing, storage and movement of question papers.

DIGI-EXAM Authentication Framework:

- The committee recommended **DIGI-EXAM**, a digital authentication framework inspired by **Digi Yatra**, to ensure that the same candidate who appears for the examination continues through the admission process.
- It proposed multi-stage authentication using:
 - **Aadhaar-based verification,**
 - **Biometric authentication,**
 - **Artificial Intelligence-based analytics.**
- The framework aims to strengthen identity verification during application submission, examination participation and final admission stages.

Institutional Reforms for National Testing Agency:

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Strengthening Governance Structure:

- The committee recommended restructuring the **NTA Governing Body** into an empowered and accountable **Apex Body** responsible for strategic direction and oversight.
- It proposed that the NTA should be headed by a **Director General** not below the rank of **Additional Secretary to the Government of India**.
- The committee suggested creating **10 dedicated institutional verticals**, including:
 - Nationwide Testing Centre Infrastructure,
 - Information Security,
 - Vigilance and Forensics,
 - Research and Development.
- These specialised divisions would improve operational efficiency, security management and innovation in examination systems.

Testing Centre Infrastructure Reforms:

- The committee recommended establishing at least **1,000 Secure Testing Centres** in phases at reputed government institutions.
- These centres should provide:
 - Reliable electricity supply,
 - Adequate seating arrangements,
 - Technical support,
 - Phone lockers,
 - Proper ventilation,
 - Help desks,
 - Waiting areas for families.
- It also proposed mobile testing centre buses equipped with laptops and servers for remote and underserved regions, with each unit capable of serving around **150 candidates**.
- For large-scale examinations, the committee recommended **Multi-Session Testing** across several days or weeks with transparent and scientifically justified score normalisation methods.
- It also suggested a gradual transition towards **Computer Adaptive Testing**, where question difficulty changes according to the candidate's performance level.

Student-Centric Examination Reforms:

Mental Health and Grievance Redressal Mechanism:

- The committee recognised increasing examination-related stress among students and recommended establishing a dedicated **mental health support system** within the NTA.
- It suggested:
 - Tele-counselling services,
 - Student assistance helplines,
 - Teacher sensitisation programmes.
- The committee also recommended strengthening the **Grievance Reporting and Redressal Cell** through Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning-based chatbots capable of responding in candidates' preferred languages.

Regulation of Coaching Ecosystem:

- The committee suggested developing a regulatory mechanism for coaching institutions due to concerns related to excessive student pressure, financial burden on families and unhealthy competition.

- It emphasised creating a balanced educational environment where examination preparation does not negatively affect students' mental well-being.

Implementation Framework and Way Forward:

Mission Mode Implementation Mechanism:

- Recognising that expert recommendations often remain partially implemented, the committee proposed establishing a high-powered steering committee under the **Ministry of Education**.
- The proposed mechanism would:
- Monitor implementation progress,
- Guide the NTA,
- Resolve administrative bottlenecks,
- Submit regular progress reports.
- The committee recommended implementing reforms in a time-bound manner through a mission-oriented approach.

Ensuring Secure and Transparent Examination System:

- India requires a comprehensive examination reform framework based on:
- Secure technology adoption,
- Institutional accountability,
- Transparent governance,
- Strong grievance mechanisms.
- Examination systems should balance technological innovation with accessibility, fairness and student welfare.
- Effective implementation of reforms is essential because public examinations directly influence educational opportunities, employment prospects and social mobility.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Prelims Facts:

- The **National Testing Agency (NTA)** was established in **2017** as an autonomous organisation under the **Ministry of Education** to conduct entrance examinations.
- The **K Radhakrishnan Committee** was constituted in **2024** following concerns regarding examination integrity after the **NEET-UG 2024 paper leak controversy**.
- The **Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024** provides legal measures against unfair practices in public examinations.
- Secure examination systems require integration of **cyber security, data protection, biometric authentication and institutional accountability**.

Mains Answer Enrichment:

- **GS Paper II:** Examination reforms are linked with governance, transparency, accountability and institutional efficiency.
- **GS Paper III:** Technology-based solutions, cyber security and digital governance play an important role in improving examination systems.
- **Essay Linkage:** Competitive examinations represent equal opportunity and social mobility; therefore, maintaining their integrity is essential for public trust.

Conclusion:

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- The **K Radhakrishnan Committee Report** provides a comprehensive roadmap for transforming India's examination system through technology, institutional restructuring and student-focused reforms.
- However, the success of these reforms depends not only on policy design but also on sustained implementation, accountability and effective governance.