



## National Recruitment Agency

This editorial analysis is based on the article [For employers and job aspirants, National Recruitment Agency and CET promise transparency](#) which was published in the Indian Express on 27th of August 2020. It analyses the newly announced body National Recruitment Agency and its consequences for the students in India.

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Modi has decided to set up a [National Recruitment Agency \(NRA\)](#). The proposed NRA will conduct a common preliminary examination for various recruitments in the central government.

At present, candidates seeking government jobs have to appear for separate examinations conducted by multiple recruiting agencies for various posts. After the advent of the NRA, the whole process would be unified and will make the cumbersome process easy for students and the agencies.

### National Recruitment Agency (NRA)

- NRA is a testing agency which would conduct the Common Eligibility Examination (CET) for non-gazetted Group B and C posts.
- Initially it will conduct the recruitment examinations for Railway Recruitment Boards (RRBs), Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS) and Staff Selection Commission (SSC) and would gradually expand its operations.
- National Recruitment Agency will be a Society registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- The NRA will be a specialist body bringing the state-of-the-art technology and best practices to the field of Central Government recruitment.
- However, the present recruitment agencies i.e., IBPS, RRB and SSC will remain in place.
- Based on the screening done at the CET score level, final selection for recruitment shall be made through separate specialised Tiers (II, III, etc.) of examination which shall be conducted by these respective recruitment agencies.

### Composition

- It will be headed by a Chairman of the rank of the Secretary to the Government of India.
- The NRA will have representatives from the Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Finance/Department of Financial Services, Staff Selection Commission (SSC), Railway Recruitment Boards (RRBs) and Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS).

### The Process

- The examinations will be conducted in 12 languages and will be based on a common curriculum.
- There will be a common registration, single fee and gradually the candidates need not travel

outside the district to appear for the examination.

- There will be a special focus on creating examination infrastructure in the 117 [Aspirational Districts](#).
- A standardised question bank with multiple questions of similar difficulty levels will be created in a central server.
- An algorithm will be used to jumble and dole out different questions, so that each candidate receives a different question paper, reducing the chances of cheating and paper leakage.
- Scores will be generated quickly, delivered online and be valid for a three-year period.
- Students can write the test multiple times as long as they are within the eligible age limit, with their best score being taken into account.
- The test will be conducted for three levels i.e, graduate, higher secondary (12<sup>th</sup> pass) and the matriculate (10<sup>th</sup> pass) candidates.

## The Need

- As of now, aspirants have to take different exams that are conducted by various agencies for central government jobs.
- According to the Department of Personnel and Training, on an average 2.5 crore to 3 crore aspirants appear for about 1.25 lakh vacancies in the central government every year.
- At present, candidates seeking government jobs have to appear for separate examinations conducted by multiple recruiting agencies for various posts.
- Candidates have to pay fees to multiple recruiting agencies and also have to travel long distances for appearing in various exams.
- Women candidates especially from rural areas face constraints in appearing in multiple examinations as they have to arrange for transportation and places to stay in places that are far away.

## Benefits

- Aspirants **do not have to apply and appear separately for multiple recruitment** exams. They will be able to apply once for a single or multiple recruitment exams in various departments and take the Common Eligibility Test (CET).
- CET would significantly **reduce the lengthy recruitment cycle** as some of the recruitment departments might decide to skip their tier 2 or second level test and go ahead with the recruitment based on CET score followed by physical tests and medical examination. This will reduce the time taken by the agencies to hire the candidates.
- Candidates who clear CET once, will be eligible to attempt for the second level exam thrice (once every year).
  - Currently, those who pass the PT and fail in Main exam (tier 2) have to again appear for the PT next year and start afresh. This way, CET will **save their time and energy and will also improve their quality** as they would devote their time for mains exam and not screening exam.
- Candidates will have the facility to give a **choice of centres** and they would be allotted the chosen centres, based on availability. They will be given an option to schedule their own tests at their choice centres.
  - The ultimate aim is to reach a stage wherein candidates can schedule their own tests at Centres of their choice.
- Government has sanctioned a sum of Rs 1517.57 crore for the NRA. The expenditure will be undertaken over a period of three years. The cost will also be incurred for setting up exam infrastructure in 117 districts with large numbers of aspirants. The proposal is expected to ease the access to aspirants residing in rural areas.
- Candidates especially residing in **hilly and rural areas** will not have to incur additional expenses for travel, boarding, lodging to reach their exam centres that are usually far from their hometown. Single exam will reduce the financial burden on candidates.
- Girls generally depend on a guardian (father/brother/ husband) to accompany them in reaching their exam centres if it is far away from their hometown. The location of test centres in every district **would benefit the candidates, particularly women**.
- CET would be **available in a number of languages**, benefitting aspirants from different regions of the country. Presently, most of the exams are conducted in English and Hindi languages.

## Challenges

- With growing emphasis on transferring services to the private sector, there may be fewer government jobs on offer in the future.
- Only 14% of public employment comes under the purview of the Centre (predominantly in railways & defence), with the rest falling within the purview of States. Similar reform is needed at State level.
- The long-term relevance of such reforms will depend on the commitment of governments to raise the level of public employment and expand services to the public.

## Conclusion

- The NRA stands out as a unique model as it marks a paradigm shift in the government recruitment process.
- It's also in tune with the Modi government's mantra of **"Ease of Living for the Young Job Aspirants"** by facilitating ease of recruitment, selection and job placement.
- The NRA is a combination of convenience and cost-effectiveness for candidates.
- Moreover, the multiple recruitment examinations are a burden on the candidates, as also on the respective recruitment agencies, involving avoidable/repetitive expenditure, law and order, security related issues and venue-related problems.

The infographic features a central light blue diamond shape with a white border. On the left, there is a photograph of two women sitting at a desk, looking at a document. The top left corner contains the logo of the Department of Personnel & Training, Government of India, with the text 'कार्यक और प्रशिक्षण विभाग DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL & TRAINING GOVERNMENT OF INDIA'. The top right corner has the 'my GOV मेरी सरकार' logo. The main title 'National Recruitment Agency (NRA) GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH TRANSPARENCY' is written in bold blue and green text. Below the title, four blue diamond icons are arranged vertically, each followed by a text box describing a benefit of the NRA: a clock icon for 'Reduces time taken in selection process', a document icon for 'Mitigates hardships for candidates from appearing in multiple exams of multiple agencies with similar eligibility conditions', a person icon for 'CET to be conducted at over 1000 centres, every District will have at least one exam centre, including the 117 aspirational districts', and a magnifying glass over a person icon for 'Better access to rural, underprivileged candidates and women'.

**National Recruitment Agency (NRA)**  
**GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH TRANSPARENCY**

- Reduces time taken in selection process
- Mitigates hardships for candidates from **appearing in multiple exams of multiple agencies** with similar eligibility conditions
- CET to be conducted at over 1000 centres, every District will have at least one exam centre, including the 117 aspirational districts
- Better access to rural, underprivileged candidates and women

### Drishti Mains Question

Analyse the need of a National Recruitment Agency in India. Can it bring transformation in the public sector recruitment process.

This editorial is based on [“Down, but not out: On Islamic State”](#) which was published on August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

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