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PrepAlpine

Email: info@PrepAlpine.com

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GS Paper III: Security

1. Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022: Nationwide DNA Profiling and Criminal Identification Database

a. Introduction

Police across several States have begun collecting DNA profiles of persons arrested for heinous offences under the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) has already generated more than one lakh DNA records, integrating them with fingerprints, iris scans, facial photographs and other biometric identifiers into a national searchable criminal identification database.

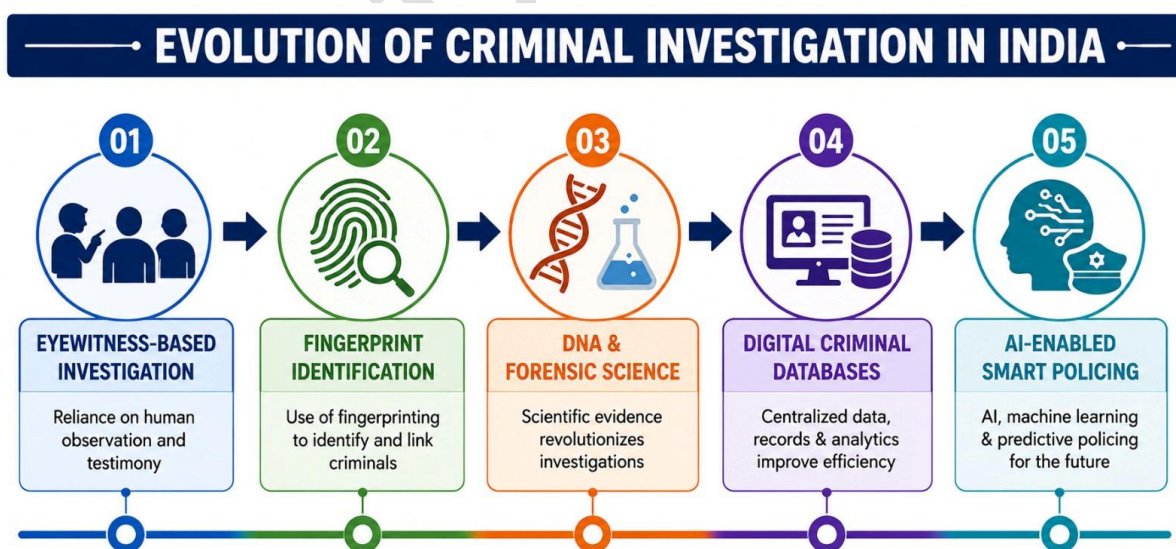
Modern policing increasingly relies on scientific evidence and digital technologies. The Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022 represents a significant step in India's transition towards technology-enabled criminal investigation.

b. Background Context

Contemporary policing has gradually shifted from relying predominantly on eyewitness testimony and confessional statements to adopting scientific and technology-driven methods of investigation. Biometric identification, DNA profiling, artificial intelligence, forensic science and integrated digital databases enable investigating agencies to identify suspects more accurately, detect repeat offenders and solve complex crimes that extend across State boundaries.

The Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022 replaced the colonial-era Identification of Prisoners Act, 1920, significantly expanding both the categories of persons from whom measurements may be collected and the range of measurements that may be recorded. The legislation forms part of India's broader efforts to modernise policing and strengthen evidence-based criminal investigations.

The expanded scope of the Act can be better understood by examining its objectives and institutional framework.



c. What is the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022?

The Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022 authorises law enforcement agencies to collect physical and biological measurements from specified categories of arrested persons and convicted offenders for the purposes of criminal investigation, identification and prosecution.

The Act empowers the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) to collect, preserve, process and share these records with authorised law enforcement agencies across the country.

Its primary objective is to strengthen scientific policing, improve the accuracy of criminal investigations and facilitate the identification of offenders through advanced forensic technologies. By creating a nationwide digital repository of criminal identification records, the Act seeks to improve inter-State coordination and enhance the efficiency of criminal justice administration.

The effectiveness of the legislation depends upon the comprehensive nature of the national criminal identification system established under the Act.

d. Key Features of the Criminal Identification System

The national database maintained by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) integrates multiple forms of biometric and forensic information to facilitate rapid identification and investigation.

Comprehensive Biometric Database

The database incorporates:

- DNA profiles obtained from biological samples such as blood or saliva.
- Fingerprints and palm prints.
- Iris and retina scans.
- Facial photographs.

Unique Identification Number

Each individual is assigned a unique identification number, enabling records to be searched efficiently across jurisdictions and facilitating the identification of repeat offenders.

Long-Term Record Retention

The Act permits records to be retained for up to seventy-five years, thereby creating a long-term national repository for criminal identification.

Inter-Agency Access

The database is accessible to authorised agencies, including:

- State Police.
- Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).
- National Investigation Agency (NIA).
- Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).
- Other competent law enforcement authorities.

Integration with Emerging Technologies

The system is integrated with the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS) and supports emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence-enabled facial recognition and closed-circuit television (CCTV)-based video analytics for suspect identification.

The legislative framework is further strengthened by recent procedural reforms that emphasise forensic investigation as an essential component of criminal justice.

e. Link with the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023

The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 reinforces the role of forensic science by making forensic examination of crime scenes mandatory for offences punishable with imprisonment of seven years or more.

Together, the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022 and the BNSS, 2023 seek to transform criminal investigation from a confession-centric model towards an evidence-based, technology-driven

and scientifically robust policing system. The two legislations complement each other by integrating modern forensic practices with procedural reforms in criminal investigation.

f. Significance

- **Strengthens Scientific Investigation:** The Act significantly improves the accuracy, speed and reliability of criminal investigations by enabling scientific identification through biometric and forensic evidence.
- **Improves Detection of Organised Crime:** The integrated national database facilitates the identification of inter-State criminal networks and repeat offenders, improving coordination among law enforcement agencies across the country.
- **Enhances Quality of Evidence:** Greater reliance on forensic evidence reduces dependence on eyewitness testimony and confessional statements, thereby improving the credibility of prosecutions and reducing the risk of wrongful convictions.
- **Supports Police Modernisation:** The legislation promotes technology-driven policing, improved crime analysis, faster identification of unknown persons and greater efficiency in criminal investigations.
- **Strengthens Internal Security:** A nationwide searchable database enhances the capacity of law enforcement agencies to investigate terrorism, organised crime, human trafficking and other offences that involve cross-border or inter-State criminal networks.

g. Concerns

- **Privacy and Fundamental Rights:** The collection and long-term retention of DNA profiles and other sensitive biometric information raise important concerns regarding the right to privacy under Article 21, particularly in light of the Supreme Court's judgment in Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017).
- **Risk of Surveillance and Data Misuse:** The creation of a large centralised biometric database increases the possibility of data breaches, unauthorised surveillance, profiling and misuse of personal information if adequate legal and technological safeguards are not maintained.
- **Weak Forensic Infrastructure:** India continues to face shortages of forensic laboratories, trained personnel and technical expertise, which may affect the quality, reliability and timely processing of forensic evidence.
- **Need for Robust Legal Safeguards:** There remains a need for clear statutory safeguards governing data collection, storage, access, sharing, retention, deletion and independent oversight to ensure that investigative powers are exercised consistently with the constitutional principles of proportionality, necessity and due process.

The long-term success of the legislation will depend upon balancing investigative efficiency with constitutional guarantees relating to privacy and civil liberties.

h. Way Forward

- **Strengthen Forensic Capacity:** India should significantly expand forensic laboratories, DNA testing facilities and specialised human resources to improve the quality, speed and reliability of scientific investigations.
- **Ensure Robust Data Protection:** Strict compliance with the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, supported by strong cybersecurity standards and encryption protocols, should be ensured to safeguard sensitive biometric information.
- **Establish Independent Oversight:** Independent oversight mechanisms, periodic audits and transparent accountability systems should regulate access to the national database and prevent misuse of sensitive personal information.
- **Develop Uniform Standard Operating Procedures:** Comprehensive Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) should govern the collection, preservation, storage, analysis, sharing and

destruction of biological samples to maintain evidentiary integrity and uniformity across jurisdictions.

- **Balance Security with Civil Liberties:** The adoption of advanced forensic technologies must be accompanied by effective legal safeguards that balance the requirements of national security, efficient criminal investigation, individual privacy, proportionality and due process of law.

Conclusion

The Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022 marks a major step towards modernising India's criminal justice system through scientific, technology-driven investigation. However, its long-term legitimacy and effectiveness will depend on strengthening forensic infrastructure while ensuring robust safeguards for privacy, data protection and due process, thereby maintaining an appropriate balance between public security and individual rights.

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While every effort has been made to balance depth with brevity, please keep the following in mind:

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This compilation is curated primarily from the UPSC Mains perspective — with emphasis on conceptual clarity, analytical depth, and interlinkages across GS papers.

However, the PrepAlpine team is simultaneously developing a dedicated Prelims-focused Current Affairs Series, designed for:

- factual coverage
- data recall
- Prelims-style MCQs
- objective pattern analysis

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- lists
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