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Q10

Case study. Vikas is a government officer with over a decade of service in public administration. He has recently moved as the District Collector (DC) of Nainipura, a remote hilly district bordering a forest. Due to Nainipura's low levels of economic development, one of his major duties is to ensure proper functioning of the public distribution system (PDS) amongst the economically weaker sections (EWS). During his on-site visits, Vikas was apprised of a typical administrative challenge in operating the PDS. To prevent leakages, all distributors were required to carry out real-time biometric identification of the beneficiaries, whose fingerprints were tallied with identity card records. This was creating problems as the operating system sometimes rejected fingerprint matching in the cases of growing children, manual labourers and senior citizens. The problem was further compounded in periods of low WIFI connectivity. The distributors, in such cases, resorted to personal discretion when they could identify the recipient. Vikas had to address this problem on priority. Strictly adhering to 'government regulations' would ensure fiscal probity but would greatly trouble the proposed beneficiary, i.e., EWS. It may even impinge on their fundamental right to life as per Article 21 of the Constitution. Conversely, leaving the resolution solely to the discretion of the distributors could lead to misuse and leakages. (a) What are the options open to Vikas? How should he balance fiscal probity with empathy towards the designated beneficiaries? (b) Discuss the ethics of using technology as a gatekeeper for welfare schemes.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2026 · GS IV · 20 marks · Ethics Case Studies

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Case Studies on above issues.

Facts & figures for this PYQ only.

Numbers move. Confirm the latest Budget, Economic Survey or census round.

Right to Life (Article 21)

Constitutional guarantee encompassing the right to food and dignified living for all citizens.

Public Distribution System (PDS)

State-managed distribution network ensuring food security for economically weaker sections.

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