

The Hindu EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

25th December 2024

**PREPARE FOR BANK (PO/ CLERK), SSC, UPSC,
State PSC, CAT, CTET, RAILWAY EXAMS, CDS,
TET, NDA/AIRFORCE, NET and all Govt.
Exams**

VOCABULARY

1. Surreptitiously (गुप्त रूप से)

Meaning: In a secretive manner, especially to avoid notice or attention.

Synonyms: Secretly, stealthily, covertly, clandestinely

Antonyms: Openly, overtly, transparently

Example: The spyware was surreptitiously installed on the phones of unsuspecting users.

2. Obfuscation (जटिलता / भ्रम पैदा करना)

Meaning: The action of making something unclear or difficult to understand.

Synonyms: Confusion, ambiguity, obscurity, complication

Antonyms: Clarity, transparency, simplicity

Example: The government's obfuscation on surveillance issues has raised concerns about accountability.

VOCABULARY

3. Tampering (हस्तक्षेप)

Meaning: The act of interfering with something to cause damage or alter its intended function.

Synonyms: Interference, meddling, manipulation, sabotage

Antonyms: Preservation, safeguarding, protection

Example: Allegations of tampering with election machines have led to widespread mistrust.

4. Jeopardize (खतरे में डालना)

Meaning: To put something at risk of harm, loss, or failure.

Synonyms: Endanger, threaten, imperil, compromise

Antonyms: Protect, safeguard, secure

Example: The government's silence on cybersecurity issues may jeopardize public trust.

VOCABULARY

5. Dissidents (असंतुष्ट व्यक्ति)

Meaning: Individuals who disagree with or oppose an established policy or authority.

Synonyms: Protesters, rebels, dissenters, oppositionists

Antonyms: Conformists, supporters, loyalists

Example: Dissidents were allegedly targeted using surveillance software.

6. Impetus (प्रेरणा)

Meaning: A driving force or stimulus that encourages action or progress.

Synonyms: Momentum, motivation, catalyst, incentive

Antonyms: Deterrent, hindrance, obstacle

Example: The ruling provided new impetus to investigate allegations of spyware misuse.

VOCABULARY

7. Draconian (कठोर)

Meaning: Excessively harsh or severe.

Synonyms: Oppressive, authoritarian, stringent, harsh

Antonyms: Lenient, mild, permissive, flexible

Example: Critics labeled the new surveillance laws as draconian measures.

8. Plausible (संभव)

Meaning: Seeming reasonable or probable.

Synonyms: Believable, credible, likely, feasible

Antonyms: Implausible, unlikely, improbable, doubtful

Example: The explanation provided by the officials seemed plausible at first glance.

VOCABULARY

9. Repercussions (परिणाम)

Meaning: Unintended consequences or effects, often negative, of an action or event.

Synonyms: Consequences, outcomes, fallout, ramifications

Antonyms: Causes, antecedents

Example: The decision to restrict public access to poll documents may have severe repercussions.

10. Exacerbate (बिगाड़ना)

Meaning: To make a problem or situation worse.

Synonyms: Aggravate, worsen, intensify, heighten

Antonyms: Alleviate, mitigate, improve, ease

Example: The lack of transparency only serves to exacerbate public mistrust.

VOCABULARY

Phrasal Verbs:

1. Mooch around

Meaning: to walk around without a specific purpose.

2. Phase in

Meaning: to gradually introduce or start using something over a period of time.

3. Touch on

Meaning: to speak briefly about something.

4. Flare out

Meaning: get angry suddenly

VOCABULARY

Idioms & Phrases

1. Behind the times

Meaning: not modern or fashionable

2. Bells and whistles

Meaning: attractive additional features or trimmings

3. Best thing since sliced bread

Meaning: used to emphasize one's enthusiasm about a new idea, person, or thing

VOCABULARY

4. Thick in the head

Meaning: someone is stupid or lacks the ability to absorb ideas easily

5. To be off base

Meaning: not being in agreement with what is true

Article for Reading

**Damning silence: On
India's Pegasus probe**

A U.S. court's decision holding an Israeli company liable for surreptitiously installing Pegasus, a spyware suite, on the phones of targeted individuals through WhatsApp, has brought the focus back on the Centre's questionable inaction when such surveillance allegations surfaced in India in 2021. The U.S. District Court for Northern District of California ruled that NSO Group Technologies violated both federal and State laws against computer fraud and abuse. WhatsApp sued the NSO Group in October 2019, alleging that its system was used by the Israeli company to plant malware on approximately 1,400 mobile phones and devices for surveilling their users. In a summary judgment, the court agreed with WhatsApp that its application had been reverse-engineered or 'decompiled' to create a modified version called 'WhatsApp Installation Server' or WIS. In the backdrop of this ruling, the question that arises in India is about the fate of reports submitted by a court-appointed expert committee in 2022 to the Supreme Court of India.

The then Chief Justice of India (CJI), N.V. Ramana, had read out a few paragraphs from the report of the panel's overseeing judge, Justice (retired) R.V. Raveendran. The report said the Technical Committee found no conclusive evidence on the presence of Pegasus, but there was some kind of malware in five out of the 29 phones examined. The reports are yet to be made public. Even if there was no effective hearing or follow-up action, what cannot be forgotten is that CJI Ramana had observed in open court that the government did not cooperate with the committee's investigation. It was conduct typical of the Modi regime, which has repeatedly demonstrated that silence, denial and obfuscation form its stock responses whenever allegations emerge. It showed no interest in probing disclosures that the phones of journalists, activists, doctors and court staff were targets of spyware. It made a strange claim that the country had such ironclad laws that illegal surveillance was not possible.

It adopted the untenable position that acknowledging that its agencies possessed any particular software would jeopardise national security. All this, despite admitting in Parliament that it was aware of some users being targeted by Pegasus through WhatsApp. It did not respond to credible reports that Pegasus may have been used to plant evidence on computers to frame dissidents. In the light of a judicial decision, albeit an overseas one, that the NSO Group is liable for the use of its spyware by its clients, solely government entities, the time has come for sealed reports to be opened and deeper probes begun. The government should come clean on whether it possesses surveillance software. Otherwise, citizens will be rendered even more vulnerable to illegal surveillance.

Summary

The passage discusses a U.S. court's decision holding the Israeli company NSO Group liable for using its spyware, Pegasus, to target individuals via WhatsApp, emphasizing its implications for India. It highlights the Indian government's inaction when allegations of illegal surveillance through Pegasus surfaced in 2021. A Supreme Court-appointed committee in India found no conclusive evidence of Pegasus but detected malware in some phones. Despite this, the government neither cooperated with the investigation nor clarified its stance, citing national security. The author urges the government to be transparent about its surveillance capabilities in light of the U.S. judgment, warning that a lack of accountability increases citizens' vulnerability to illegal surveillance.

The tone of the passage is critical and urgent, as it scrutinizes the Indian government's evasive approach and underscores the need for transparency and accountability.

Reading Comprehension

Based on the above passage, answer the following questions:

Question 1:

What is suggested as the government's typical response to allegations of surveillance in the passage?

- a) Proactively addressing and investigating the allegations.**
- b) Denying involvement while providing evidence to counter claims.**
- c) Cooperating fully with judicial investigations to ensure transparency.**
- d) Adopting silence, denial, and obfuscation to avoid accountability.**
- e) None of the above**

Question 2:

Why does the passage argue for opening the sealed reports and conducting deeper probes into the Pegasus issue?

- a) To confirm whether Pegasus was used for national security purposes.**
- b) To determine if surveillance laws need to be revised.**
- c) To assess whether the government possesses surveillance software and ensure accountability.**
- d) To clarify the role of the judiciary in overseeing surveillance activities.**
- e) None of the above**

Question 3:

What legal development in the U.S. is cited as relevant to the Pegasus controversy in India?

- a) A Supreme Court ruling banning the sale of surveillance software like Pegasus.**
- b) A U.S. court ruling holding NSO Group liable for violating computer fraud laws.**
- c) A court decision declaring NSO Group's activities illegal under international law.**
- d) Legislation requiring disclosure of all spyware-related activities by tech companies.**
- e) None of the above**

Article for Skimming

**Hide and seek: On
the ECI and the
election process**

The Election Commission of India (ECI)'s explanation on December 24 in response to the Congress party's charges regarding voter turnout data in the recent Assembly elections is unlikely to allay growing concerns regarding the integrity of the election process. It was on December 20, on the recommendations of the ECI, that the Centre had amended the Conduct of Election Rules to restrict public access to poll documents except for those that are specifically mentioned in them. The ECI has also said it does not want to share CCTV footage of the booth, citing privacy and security reasons. This change in the rules happened after the Punjab and Haryana High Court directed the ECI to share all documents related to the Haryana Assembly elections, including CCTV footage, to a private citizen. The court ruled that this was permissible under 93(2) of the Rules which allowed public access to all "papers" which were not specifically barred.

The amended rule now says that only those “papers” that are specified in it are open to public inspection. For an institution that is so central to the functioning of democracy, and yet facing an unprecedented challenge to its credibility, less secrecy and more transparency must be the way forward. Sadly, the ECI is falling short on this count, and damaging its own credibility. Allegations of electronic tampering of voting machines are misplaced and misguided but concerns regarding the conduct of elections — police high-handedness, partisanship of local administration, and voter suppression through various means — are valid. They require a thorough and impartial investigation. Of particular concern is the dramatic rise in voter turnout in the final figures, compared to what was announced at the end of polling time, noticed in recent elections. The ECI may well be right in saying that voters who are in queue at the closing hour get recorded only in the final figures.

But the easiest and perhaps the most credible way to establish this claim is to allow wide inspection of the relevant video footage. The ECI has explained that the candidates have access to all documents, papers and records and nothing has been amended in the rules in this regard. It remains unclear how its officials will deal with requests from candidates for records including video footage while the public will face a default denial in most cases. The privacy and security arguments are weak if candidates can access records anyway. In effect, the change in rules does not solve any problem that the ECI says it does, other than time and effort. And it has raised more questions about the ECI's intentions.

Question 4:

What does the passage suggest as the most credible way for the ECI to address concerns about voter turnout discrepancies?

- a) Allow candidates to inspect all polling documents and video footage.**
- b) Conduct impartial investigations into allegations of voter suppression.**
- c) Make relevant video footage widely available for inspection.**
- d) Use electronic voting machines with enhanced security measures.**
- e) None of the above**

Question 5:

According to the passage, what is the likely impact of the ECI's amended rule on candidates?

- a) Candidates will no longer have access to election-related documents.**
- b) Candidates will face stricter scrutiny in accessing polling documents.**
- c) Candidates will need court approval to access polling records.**
- d) Candidates' rights to access documents remain unchanged.**
- e) None of the above**

Today's Descriptive Question

- Write an essay of 200 words about highlighting the importance of Conservation Efforts for Endangered Species.

Conservation efforts for endangered species are crucial for maintaining biodiversity and the health of our ecosystems. Each species plays a unique role in its habitat, contributing to the stability and functionality of the environment. The loss of even a single species can disrupt food chains, leading to unforeseen consequences for other species, including humans.

Endangered species often serve as indicators of environmental health. Their decline signals broader ecological issues that may also affect other wildlife and human populations. For instance, the plight of pollinators like bees points to widespread problems in agricultural practices and pesticide use, which have direct implications for food security. Moreover, conserving endangered species has ethical and intrinsic value.

Many cultures and communities view wildlife as integral to their heritage and identity. Protecting these species ensures that future generations can enjoy and benefit from the natural world.

Conservation efforts also drive scientific and medical advancements. Many plants and animals have unique biological properties that can lead to new medicines and technologies. By preserving these species, we maintain a reservoir of genetic diversity that can be crucial for scientific research and development.

In conclusion, conservation efforts for endangered species are essential for ecological balance, cultural heritage, and scientific progress. By protecting these species, we safeguard the intricate web of life that sustains our planet.

- **Write a letter to a news or media outlet regarding a social issue or event.**

[Your Name]

[Your Address]

[City, State, ZIP Code]

[Email Address]

[Phone Number]

[Date]

[Editor's Name]

[News Outlet Name]

[News Outlet Address]

[City, State, ZIP Code]

Subject: Urgent Coverage Needed on [Specific Social Issue/Event]

Dear [Editor's Name],

I am writing to bring your attention to a critical social issue/event impacting our community: [specific social issue/event, e.g., rise in homelessness, increasing violence, lack of healthcare access].

Recently, [briefly describe specific incidents, e.g., homelessness has doubled, violent incidents have increased, many residents lack basic healthcare]. This issue is seriously affecting our community's well-being and safety.

Coverage from [News Outlet Name] could raise awareness and drive necessary action from authorities and stakeholders. Your reporting can make a significant difference in addressing this urgent problem.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Contact Information]

Match the column

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Behind the times | A. used to emphasize one's enthusiasm |
| 2. Bells and whistles | B. not modern or fashionable |
| 3. Best thing since sliced bread | C. someone is stupid |
| 4. Thick in the head | D. attractive additional features |
| 5. To be off base | E. not being in agreement with what is true |

Answer:

1-b

2-d

3-a

4-c

5-e

Vocabulary

1. **Surreptitiously:**
2. **Obfuscation:**
3. **Tampering:**
4. **Jeopardize:**
5. **Dissidents:**
6. **Impetus:**
7. **Draconian:**
8. **Plausible:**
9. **Repercussions:**
10. **Exacerbate:**

Rc ans

1.

Answer: d) Adopting silence, denial, and obfuscation to avoid accountability.

Explanation:

Reference: “It was conduct typical of the Modi regime... silence, denial and obfuscation form its stock responses.”

The passage criticizes the government’s consistent pattern of avoiding accountability through silence, denial, and obfuscation whenever surveillance allegations arise.

- a) Incorrect: The government did not address or investigate allegations proactively.
- b) Incorrect: It did not provide evidence to counter claims but rather denied involvement.
- c) Incorrect: The government failed to cooperate with investigations.

2.

Answer: c) To assess whether the government possesses surveillance software and ensure accountability.

Explanation:

Reference: “The government should come clean on whether it possesses surveillance software.”

The passage advocates for transparency and accountability, urging the government to disclose whether it possesses surveillance software like Pegasus.

- a) Incorrect: The focus is on accountability, not national security purposes.
- b) Incorrect: Surveillance law revision is not the central argument here.
- d) Incorrect: The judiciary’s role is not questioned in this context.

3.

Answer: b) A U.S. court ruling holding NSO Group liable for violating computer fraud laws.

Explanation:

Reference: “The U.S. District Court... ruled that NSO Group Technologies violated both federal and State laws against computer fraud and abuse.”

The passage references a U.S. court ruling that held NSO Group liable for violating federal and state computer fraud laws, linking it to the misuse of Pegasus spyware.

- a) Incorrect: No such Supreme Court ruling is mentioned.
- c) Incorrect: The focus is on U.S. laws, not international law.
- d) Incorrect: Legislation is not discussed in this context.

4.

Answer: c) Make relevant video footage widely available for inspection.

Explanation:

Reference: “The easiest and perhaps the most credible way to establish this claim is to allow wide inspection of the relevant video footage.”

The passage asserts that allowing wide inspection of video footage is the most straightforward and credible way to address concerns about voter turnout discrepancies.

- a) Incorrect: This is already allowed but does not address the public’s concerns.
- b) Incorrect: Investigations into voter suppression are valid but not the suggested solution here.
- d) Incorrect: Security measures for EVMs are not the focus.

5.

Answer: d) Candidates' rights to access documents remain unchanged.

Explanation:

Reference: "The ECI has explained that the candidates have access to all documents, papers and records and nothing has been amended in the rules in this regard."

The passage clarifies that while public access has been restricted, candidates' access to documents and records has not been affected by the rule change.

a) Incorrect: Candidates retain access to documents.

b) Incorrect: No new restrictions are imposed on candidates.

c) Incorrect: Court approval is not mentioned for candidates' access.

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