National Automated Facial Recognition System

What is the issue?

- The implementation of National Automated Facial Recognition System has raised concerns regarding the inadequate safeguards.

What is National Automated Facial Recognition System (NAFRS)?

- It is a biometric technology that uses distinctive features of the face to identify and distinguish an individual.
- It works primarily by capturing the face & its features through camera and algorithms are used to reconstruct the faceprint
- The system compares the faceprint generated with a large existing database of faceprints for identification or verification

Was AFRS used in India Earlier?

- In August 2018, Telangana police launched their own facial recognition facility.
- Ministry of Civil Aviation's **"DigiYatra"** has used the facial recognition system, on a trial basis in Hyderabad airport
- NCRB's Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems **(CCTNS**) uses automated facial recognition

How is it useful?

- To identify criminals, missing people, and unidentified dead bodies as used in CCTNS
- It will prevent the use of fake citizen IDs by fraudsters, infiltration of terrorists, illegal immigrants,etc.
- It is easier and automatic and doesn't need huge manpower
- Use of NAFRS eases the checking procedural delays in airports

What are the implications of using NAFRS?

- ***Mass surveillance*** – Automated face recognition might lead to a police state

For instance, China uses automated face recognition system for surveillance of Uighur Muslims in Xingiang province

- ***Accuracy*** - The accuracy of facial recognition is around 70% with the a possibility of producing false positives
- ***Right to privacy*** – this system violates the privacy of individuals which is a fundamental right as envisaged in *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India (2017)*
- ***Storage of data*** - Personal Data Protection Bill (PDPB) is still pending and absence of clear guidelines compromises data security
- ***Impact on civil liberties*** – The technology dis-incentivises independent journalism, right to assemble peaceably without arms etc.

How can the issues be addressed?

- Proper data protection framework must be in place before implementing the Automated Facial Recognition System
- NAFRS needs statutory backing for legitimacy
- Since police and law and order are state subjects, indepth analysis of the system by states is needed before implementation

Source: The Hindu

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