

UPSC Enhances Accessibility with ‘Centre of Choice’ Safeguards for PwBD Candidates

**Adds Three New Exam Centres for Prelims and Mains each;
Introduces Survey of Candidate Preferences for Future
Expansion**

**No cap on examination centre capacity for PwBD candidates
will ensure greater ease and convenience, says UPSC
Chairman, Dr. Ajay Kumar**

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The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has launched a series of technological interventions for the Civil Services Examination (CSE) 2026 and the Indian Forest Service Examination (IFoS) 2026, with a focus on enhancing candidate accessibility and strengthening examination security. The notifications for 2026 announce a total of 933 vacancies under the Civil Services Examination and 80 vacancies under the Indian Forest Service Examination.

As part of its ongoing efforts to improve efficiency, transparency, and candidate convenience, the Commission has introduced a revamped Online Application Portal for the submission of applications and conduct of examinations. The redesigned portal aims to reinforce integrity across various stages of the examination process while simplifying the application experience for candidates.

In a significant reform aimed at supporting Persons with Benchmark Disabilities (PwBD), UPSC has overhauled its examination centre allocation framework. Under the revised mechanism, there will be no capping on examination centre capacity for PwBD candidates. Initially, the existing capacity of each centre will be utilised by both PwBD and non-PwBD candidates. However, once a centre reaches full capacity, it will no longer be available for selection by non-PwBD candidates, while PwBD candidates will continue to have the option to select the same centre. Additional capacity will be created wherever required to ensure that no PwBD candidate is denied their preferred examination centre.

Explaining the rationale behind the move, Dr. Ajay Kumar, Chairman, UPSC, said “an analysis of examination centre data over the past five years revealed that certain centres - including Delhi, Cuttack, Patna, and Lucknow - reach capacity at a very early stage due to high application volumes, creating difficulties for PwBD candidates. “With the revised mechanism, every PwBD candidate will be assured of their preferred examination centre, ensuring greater ease and convenience while appearing for UPSC examinations,” he said.

The Commission has also expanded its network of examination centres to reduce pressure on high-demand locations. Meerut has been added to decongest Delhi-NCR, Kanpur to ease pressure around Lucknow, and Bhubaneswar to supplement centres near Cuttack. These three centres have been added for

the Preliminary Examination, increasing the total number of prelims centres from 80 to 83. For the Mains Examination, the number of centres has been increased from 24 to 27, with the addition of Bhubaneswar, Srinagar, and Imphal.

Further strengthening its centre planning process, the revamped application portal now includes a new feature related to examination centre preferences. In addition to selecting from notified examination centres, candidates will be asked to indicate preferred nearby cities through a dropdown list. This data will serve as a survey of candidate preferences and may be used to identify locations for the creation of new examination centres, where feasible.

The portal also incorporates a technology-enabled measure of photo verification and face recognition to enhance the overall integrity of the examination process. This intervention strengthens identity verification across various stages of examination, contributing to a more robust and transparent system.

Emphasising the Commission's approach, Dr. Ajay Kumar noted that "the Commission has adopted the use of the latest technology to ensure a free, fair, inclusive, and accessible examination process, with a strong focus on enhancing candidate convenience and ease of participation, while ensuring that selections are made strictly on the basis of merit."

These initiatives form part of UPSC's Centenary Year celebrations and reflect the Commission's continued efforts to evolve its processes in line with contemporary requirements, while upholding the highest standards of fairness, transparency, and integrity.

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