BLOGS

Passage-Based Questions on Legal Reasoning for CLAT UG [Part 4]

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Passage 1 (P.1)

In 2024, the Ministry of Social Justice rolled out an Artificial Intelligence–based digital screening system to process and evaluate applications submitted under various central and state government scholarship schemes. The stated objective of the system was to improve administrative efficiency, reduce processing delays, and identify potentially fraudulent claims by analyzing historical beneficiary data, income declarations, educational records, and region-specific trends. Based on these inputs, the system generated a “risk score” for each applicant. Applications that crossed a predetermined risk threshold were automatically classified as “high risk” and were rejected without human review.

The affected students received a standardized, system-generated notification stating that their applications had been denied due to a “high-risk assessment,” without providing individualized reasons, data points relied upon, or an opportunity to clarify or challenge the decision. Several students contended that such automated rejection had serious civil consequences, including the loss of access to education and financial assistance. The petitioners approached the High Court, arguing that the process violated the principles of natural justice, particularly the doctrine of*audi alteram partem*, which requires that a person affected by an adverse administrative decision be given a reasonable opportunity to be heard.

They relied on judicial precedents holding that administrative authorities exercising powers that affect rights or legitimate expectations must provide reasons and ensure procedural fairness. The government defended the system by emphasizing the need to safeguard public funds, prevent misuse of welfare schemes, and adopt modern technological tools to manage large volumes of applications.

The High Court observed that while the use of automated systems and data-driven tools can assist in decision-making and promote efficiency, such tools cannot operate in a manner that completely

displaces the fundamental obligation of transparency, accountability, and fairness, especially when the decision produces adverse civil consequences for the affected individuals.

1. Which principle of natural justice is primarily invoked by the petitioners?

a. Nemo judex in causa sua

b. Audi alteram partem

c. Res judicata

d. Stare decisis

2. Under Indian constitutional law, the doctrine of audi alteram partem is derived from which broader legal concept?

a. Rule of law

b. Separation of powers

c. Judicial review

d. Parliamentary sovereignty

3. Which Article of the Constitution empowers High Courts to issue writs against administrative action?

a. Article 32

b. Article 136

c. Article 226

d. Article 124

4. Which Supreme Court case is considered the leading authority on the requirement that administrative and quasi-judicial authorities must record reasons for their decisions?

a. Mohinder Singh Gill v. Chief Election Commissioner

b. S.N. Mukherjee v. Union of India

c. Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India

d. State of Orissa v. Binapani Dei

5. In which case did the Supreme Court hold that even administrative orders involving civil consequences must follow principles of natural justice?

a. Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala

b. Golaknath v. State of Punjab

c. Minerva Mills v. Union of India

d. A.K. Kraipak v. Union of India

Passage 2 (P.2)

In 2023, a widely used fitness and health-tracking mobile application introduced a comprehensive update to its terms of service, expanding the scope of how user data could be collected, processed, and shared. The revised terms permitted the company to share sensitive personal and health-related information with a broad category of entities described as “strategic partners,” including marketing agencies, research firms, and affiliated technology service providers. Existing users were informed of these changes through a brief in-app pop-up notification that stated that continued use of the application would constitute acceptance of the revised terms and conditions.

The update did not offer users a meaningful option to selectively opt out of data sharing while retaining access to the core services of the app. The only alternative presented was to discontinue the service entirely by deleting the account. A group of users filed a legal complaint, arguing that such consent could not be considered “free consent” under the Indian Contract Act, 1872, because the agreement was imposed on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, leaving users with no realistic bargaining power.

They also claimed that the expanded data-sharing practices infringed upon the right to informational privacy recognized by the Supreme Court as part of the broader right to personal liberty. The company defended its policy by characterizing the agreement as a standard commercial contract applicable uniformly to all users and maintained that users retained the freedom to stop using the service if they found the terms unacceptable.

The court was called upon to examine whether standard form digital contracts, particularly those involving sensitive personal data, could undermine the voluntariness and genuine consent required for a legally valid contractual relationship.

6. “Free consent” under the Indian Contract Act, 1872 is defined under which section?

a. Section 10

b. Section 13

c. Section 14

d. Section 16

7. Which case is a leading authority on the enforceability of standard form contracts in India?

a. Central Inland Water Transport Corporation v. Brojo Nath Ganguly

b. Carlill v. Carbolic Smoke Ball Co.

c. Hadley v. Baxendale

d. Lalman Shukla v. Gauri Dutt

8. Which statute currently governs digital personal data protection in India?

a. Information Technology Act, 2000

b. Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023

c. Consumer Protection Act, 2019

d. Aadhaar Act, 2016

9. Which constitutional article was interpreted to include the right to informational privacy?

a. Article 14

b. Article 19

c. Article 21

d. Article 32

10. The company's defense relies on which contractual principle?

a. Doctrine of frustration

b. Freedom of contract

c. Quantum meruit

d. Privity of contract

Passage 3 (P.3)

During a state legislative assembly election campaign in 2024, rapid advancements in artificial intelligence and digital media tools led to increased circulation of manipulated audio-visual content on social media platforms. In response to concerns raised by civil society organizations and election observers, the Election Commission issued a formal directive prohibiting political parties and candidates from creating or disseminating deepfake videos and AI-generated audio clips that falsely simulated the voice or appearance of rival candidates.

The directive stated that such content had the potential to mislead voters, distort public perception, and undermine the integrity and transparency of the electoral process. It emphasized the Commission's constitutional mandate to conduct elections that are free, fair, and based on

informed choice rather than deception or technological manipulation. A political party challenged the directive before the court, arguing that the prohibition imposed an unreasonable and excessive restriction on its freedom of speech and political communication guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.

The Commission defended its action by asserting that the restriction fell within the permissible limits of Article 19(2), which allows the State to impose reasonable restrictions in the interests of public order, decency, morality, and other specified grounds. The court was required to examine whether preventing the use of deceptive and misleading digital content during an election campaign could be considered a constitutionally valid and proportionate restriction aimed at preserving the fairness and legitimacy of the democratic process.

Questions (Passage 3)

11. Which of the following grounds is NOT expressly mentioned under Article 19(2) as a basis for restricting freedom of speech?

a. Public order

b. Defamation

c. National interest

d. Decency or morality

12. Which Supreme Court case laid down the "Model Code of Conduct" as enforceable through the Election Commission's constitutional powers?

a. Mohinder Singh Gill v. Chief Election Commissioner

b. Union of India v. Association for Democratic Reforms

c. PUCL v. Union of India

d. Subramanian Swamy v. Union of India

13. The right to vote in India is classified by the Supreme Court as?

a. Fundamental right

b. Constitutional right

c. Statutory right

d. Human right

14. Which legislation governs the conduct of elections to Parliament and State Legislatures in India?

a. Representation of the People Act, 1950

b. Representation of the People Act, 1951

c. Election Commission Act, 1991

d. Delimitation Act, 2002

15. The political party's challenge is based on which constitutional right?

a. Article 14

b. Article 21

c. Article 32

d. Article 19(1)(a)

Answers

1. B
2. A
3. C
4. B
5. D
6. C
7. A
8. B
9. C
10. B
11. C
12. A
13. C
14. B
15. D