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## Scam effect: State cuts KPSC interview marks

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**Bengaluru:** The Karnataka Public Service Commission (KPSC), which has been hit by four big scams in the past 20 years in selection of candidates for the Karnataka Administrative Service, has introduced a major reform that strikingly diminishes the importance given to personality tests, besides slashing the number of marks it carried from 200 to 50.

The Karnataka government has taken a leaf out of the UPSC (Union Public Service Commission) playbook and turned the personality test into a tiebreaker in case candidates scored equal marks. Also,

### POWER OFFICES

- KPSC exams are held as and when vacancies arise; every year or once in 3-4 years
- Through exams, candidates are picked to be assistant commissioners and above (grade A) and tahsildars and below (grade B)
- Interview panel comprises KPSC chief and members; the panel size increases if candidates are more

the number of exam papers has been cut from seven to five: English, Kannada, general knowledge and two optional subjects (it was four earlier).

► 'Ensure transparency', P A

## KPSC reform will ensure transparency, says expert

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On June 4, the government issued a notification amending the Karnataka Recruitment of Gazetted Probationers (Appointment by Competitive Examinations) Rules, 1997, that will see all appointments to posts of Group A and B officers with reduced marks in the personality test.

With allegations of irregularities surfacing in the selection process of Group A and B officers in 1998, 1999, 2004 and 2011, the Siddaramaiah government had prepared a rigid framework for ensuring that members on the commission did not enjoy arbitrary powers.

A retired bureaucrat told TOI: "Between 1999 and 2006, the level of corruption and extent of examination-fixing were unbelievable. If a merit student scored 1,200 marks in the written exam, then the

personality test would see him get only 40 marks. However, an aspirant 'acceptable' to the board would have got 1,100 marks in the written test, but would get 150 in the personality test. This would place him above the merit student and deny a chance to eligible candidates."

The amendment says the board must state the reason for awarding a student less than 20 marks or more than 40 out of the total 50 in the personality test. As a result, the personality test will have very little bearing on the selection of candidates for the probationary officers' posts and curtail possibilities of an arbitrary decision of the KPSC board. "It makes the personality test almost irrelevant. It comes into play only in a tight race between candidates. It brings greater transparency in the system," said a former KPSC member.