



The 11th Edition

SHISMUN '26

Model United Nations Conference

National Testing Agency

AGENDA:

Contemplation on Examination Security Failures and Paper Leaks in National-Level
Competitive Examinations

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE

The NTA is India's autonomous body for conducting major competitive examinations such as NEET, JEE, and CUET. Its mandate is to ensure transparent, efficient, and reliable testing.

Examination security and integrity are critical to maintaining public trust in national-level tests. Delegates will discuss measures to prevent paper leaks and security failures like the 2026 NEET paper leak, including printing press security, transport protocols, exam centre invigilation, digital encryption, and post-incident responses.

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Letter from the Executive Board

Greetings Members!

It gives us immense pleasure to welcome you all to this simulation of the **National Testing Agency** at “**SHIS MUN 2026**”. We look forward to an enriching and rewarding experience.

The agenda for the session is “**Contemplation on Examination Security Failures and Paper Leaks in National-Level Competitive Examinations.**”

This study guide is by no means the end of the research; we would very much appreciate it if the members are able to find new realms in the agenda and bring them forth to the committee. Such research, combined with good argumentation and a solid representation of facts, is what makes an excellent performance.

In the session, the executive board will encourage you to speak as much as possible, as fluency, diction, or oratory skills have very little importance as opposed to the content you deliver. So, just research and speak, and you are bound to make a lot of sense.

The Executive Board looks forward to an efficient & progressive committee as the issue is very sensitive. We therefore expect you all to play your roles with responsibility. Hopefully, we, as members of the Executive Board, will also have a chance to gain from this committee. We regret any error that may have inadvertently crept into this guide and would appreciate it if you could bring it to our notice. Please do not hesitate to contact us regarding any doubts that you may have.

All the best!

Regards,

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I. Committee Overview



As a premier autonomous testing organization established under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, the National Testing Agency (NTA) stands at the center of India's higher education and public recruitment ecosystem. Entrusted with conducting efficient, transparent, and international-standard assessments like NEET, JEE, and UGC-NET, the NTA plays a pivotal role in shaping the futures of millions of youth. Serving as a high-level administrative, regulatory, and policy-making body, this NTA committee focuses on structural reforms, technological interventions, and crisis management to safeguard the sanctity of national examinations.

The NTA committee in an MUN aims to mimic this critical reality by reproducing the rigorous policy debates, technological evaluations, and crisis response mechanisms required to govern India's massive testing infrastructure. Delegates represent a diverse array of stakeholders, which includes NTA officials, state education representatives, academic experts, and external educational groups. While stepping into the shoes of their assigned roles, the committee expects its representatives to be well-versed in their respective organizational mandates, state interests, or political affiliations. This helps delegates grasp the multi-layered processes that go behind educational governance, providing them with an explicit experience of the strategic negotiations and administrative hurdles faced in securing modern examination systems.

Note - Representatives are especially requested to be well-versed with the basic principles of the Constitution, domestic laws regarding examination security, their party or organizational ideology, and to display a character role-play befitting that of their allocated portfolio.

II. Agenda

“Contemplation on Examination Security Failures and Paper Leaks in National-Level Competitive Examinations.”

III. Introduction

India's demographic dividend is inextricably linked to the ability of its state apparatus to provide fair, transparent, and merit-based avenues for higher education and public employment. Competitive examinations represent the most critical and visible interfaces between the citizenry and the state. However, the foundational integrity of this ecosystem has been repeatedly compromised by a systemic proliferation of question paper leaks, organized cheating syndicates, and administrative negligence. Over the past decade, examination security failures have evolved from isolated incidents of local malpractice into highly sophisticated, technology-driven organized crimes heavily entrenched in deep financial and political nexuses.

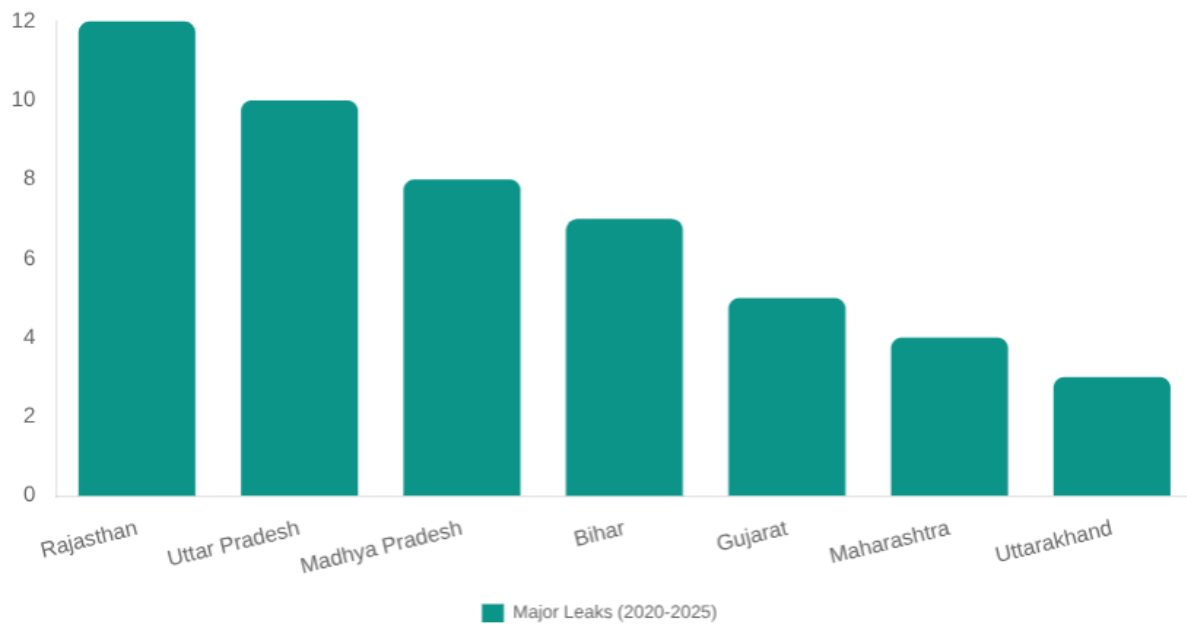


The sheer scale of this crisis represents a generational catastrophe. Comprehensive investigative reports indicate that over the past five years alone, there have been at least 41 documented instances of examination leaks across 15 states, disrupting the recruitment processes for over 1.04 lakh posts and devastating the aspirations of approximately 1.4 crore candidates. Political figures and opposition leaders have presented even more severe estimates during public addresses, alleging that 152 examination papers have been leaked over the past decade, adversely affecting nearly 7.5 crore aspirants while yielding a near-zero conviction rate. The economic burden on families is equally staggering, with estimates

suggesting that families spend upwards of Rs 1.32 lakh crore annually on coaching and examination preparation—an amount comparable to the national education budget—only to be defrauded by compromised testing systems.

For a rapidly growing aspirational middle class, national-level examinations such as the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET), the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE), and the University Grants Commission–National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) act as the primary gateways to social mobility, higher education, and financial security. When these gateways are corrupted, the ensuing failure undermines public trust in state institutions, compromises the quality of future professionals, and fosters a pervasive sense of cynicism and psychological distress among the youth, frequently culminating in tragic incidents of student suicides. As the NTA committee convenes to contemplate the escalating incidents of examination security failures, delegates must navigate a highly complex matrix. This includes addressing the structural vulnerabilities within

autonomous testing agencies, dismantling the lucrative underground economy of the "education mafia," resolving center-state constitutional frictions regarding educational governance, and enacting stringent legislative and technological deterrents.



IV. Historical Precedents: The Evolution of Examination Fraud

To fully comprehend the contemporary crisis, it is essential for legislators to analyze the historical evolution of examination malpractices. What were once localized attempts at cheating have transformed into industrialized operations, effectively operating as parallel, illicit economies.

The Vyapam Scam: A Blueprint of Systemic Corruption

The most prominent historical case study of systemic examination fraud is the Vyapam scam in Madhya Pradesh. The Madhya Pradesh Professional Examination Board (MPPEB), known by its Hindi acronym *Vyapam*, was an autonomous body responsible for conducting 13 different entrance examinations for medical students and state government employees, including police personnel, teachers, and forest guards. While localized irregularities were reported as early as the mid-1990s, the scam was unearthed in its full, industrial magnitude in 2013.

The Vyapam model demonstrated a highly organized, multi-layered collusion involving politicians, senior bureaucrats, middlemen, and candidates. Over 3.2 million students took these exams annually, creating a massive target pool for fraudsters. The operators utilized several distinct methods of subversion. The first was impersonation, wherein bright medical graduates or practicing doctors from neighboring states were paid millions of rupees to impersonate candidates and write the pre-medical tests (PMT). The second was the infamous "engine-bogie" system, where examination hall seating arrangements were strategically manipulated through bribes. A highly capable "engine" (a paid solver) was seated directly between two "bogies" (paying candidates), allowing the latter to copy answers seamlessly. The third method involved OMR manipulation, where candidates were instructed to submit blank Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) sheets, which were subsequently filled in with correct answers by compromised officials operating within the examination board's strongrooms.

The Vyapam scam highlighted the deadly nature of the education mafia. Subsequent to the exposure and the initiation of investigations by the Special Task Force (STF) and later the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), dozens of individuals connected to the scam died under highly suspicious circumstances. While official reports noted between 23 and 40 unnatural deaths, unofficial estimates claimed over 100 individuals—including whistleblowers, accused persons, and journalists—perished, underscoring the violent lengths to which organized syndicates would go to protect their operations. Opposition parties, including the CPIM, alleged deep political nexuses, claiming that hard disks containing the names of prominent political

figures were tampered with to protect high-ranking officials from prosecution.

The SSC CGL 2017 Controversy

The vulnerabilities of computer-based and centralized recruitment tests were exposed during the Staff Selection Commission Combined Graduate Level (SSC CGL) examination of 2017. The SSC conducts examinations to recruit non-gazetted staff across various central ministries for Group C and D categories, with millions of applicants annually. In February 2018, widespread protests erupted in New Delhi following allegations that the question paper and answer keys for the Tier-II examination had been leaked on social media.

The controversy led the Supreme Court of India to intervene heavily. In August 2018, the apex court stayed the declaration of the 2017 results, observing prima facie that the entire recruitment system appeared "tainted" and that individuals benefiting from the scam could not be permitted to enter public service. The Court mandated a CBI probe and suggested that the examinations be conducted afresh by the National Testing Agency (NTA) or the CBSE. Petitioners highlighted that the contract with the private technology vendor, Sify Technologies Pvt Ltd, had expired, raising critical questions about the efficacy and security of outsourcing sovereign examination duties to private entities.

V. The Anatomy of the National Testing Agency (NTA) and Systemic Vulnerabilities

The recurring failures observed in recent years are symptomatic of deep-rooted vulnerabilities across the logistical, institutional, and technological paradigms of India's testing infrastructure, primarily centered around the National Testing Agency (NTA).

Established on May 15, 2018, under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, the NTA was envisioned as a premier, autonomous, and self-sustained specialist testing organization designed to relieve bodies like the CBSE of the burden of conducting massive entrance exams. Its mandate included conducting efficient, transparent, and international-standard tests for admissions. However, the agency rapidly morphed into a procurement office, outsourcing its core functions—including printing, transport, invigilation, and evaluation—to third-party private vendors, thereby multiplying its points of vulnerability.

Unlike the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), which derives its authority and autonomy as a Constitutional body under Article 315, the NTA functions with a "legal lightweight" status. This deprives the NTA of the administrative authority and sovereign immunity required to manage high-stakes national crises. Furthermore, the NTA lacks a permanent, dedicated professional cadre. It relies heavily on contractual staff, third-party operators, and officers on short-term deputation, which prevents the cultivation of an internal culture of strict secrecy, long-term psychometric expertise, and institutional memory.

Logistical Frailties and Outsourcing Risks

The prevailing model for mega-exams like NEET-UG involves testing over 20 lakh candidates simultaneously on a single day. This "single-point failure design" creates an astronomical risk profile; a breach at any single geographic node instantly compromises the entire national process. To manage this scale, the NTA heavily outsources critical functions such as question paper printing, secure warehousing, and physical transportation to private logistics firms. Every human touchpoint in this outsourced chain presents an opportunity for bribery and leakage. Additionally, due to a shortage of government-owned infrastructure, exams are frequently hosted in private schools or unverified colleges that lack standardized security apparatuses, such as functioning CCTV networks, mobile signal jammers, or adequately trained, incorruptible invigilators.

The OMR Paradox vs. The Digital Divide

The reliance on Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) pen-and-paper tests is largely driven by the cost-effectiveness and feasibility of testing millions of students simultaneously in regions lacking robust digital infrastructure. However, the physical transportation of printed question papers to thousands of centers, and the subsequent return of marked OMR sheets to scanning hubs, creates massive vulnerabilities for transit leaks and post-exam tampering.

Conversely, transitioning to Computer-Based Testing (CBT) effectively eliminates physical paper leaks but introduces sophisticated cybersecurity threats. India currently lacks a sufficient network of high-capacity, government-owned digital testing centers. The NTA's maximum capacity for a single CBT shift is approximately 1.5 lakh candidates. Testing 24 lakh NEET candidates would require testing across multiple days and shifts, necessitating complex score normalization processes that often lead to accusations of arbitrariness and unfairness, as recently noted by the Supreme Court. Furthermore, reliance on private cyber-café-style centers has led to remote-access hacking, where solver gangs remotely take control of a candidate's computer via software exploits or mirrored screens.

The Political Economy of the "Education Mafia"

The proliferation of paper leaks cannot be divorced from the extreme scarcity of higher educational and employment opportunities in India. With over 23 lakh students competing for roughly 1 lakh MBBS seats, the desperation to secure a stable future creates inelastic demand for illegal shortcuts. This demand is met by a highly organized, multi-state "education mafia" that functions with corporate precision.

Investigations reveal that leaked papers are sold at exorbitant rates: approximately Rs 40 lakh for a NEET paper, Rs 15 lakh for IIT-JEE, and similar figures for state-level police and public service commission exams. This illicit economy is often integrated with elements of the massive private coaching industry. Unscrupulous coaching institutes utilize leaked papers to ensure their students secure top ranks, thereby advertising these results to attract thousands of new enrollments in a highly lucrative feedback loop. The financial barrier to accessing leaked papers means that examination fraud fundamentally attacks the constitutional guarantee of equality (Article 14), transforming a meritocratic process into a plutocratic auction where affluent students purchase the rights to public goods, disproportionately harming honest aspirants, first-generation learners, and the socio-economically marginalized.

VI. The 2024 and 2026 Examination Crises: A Timeline of Institutional Collapse

The structural inadequacies of India's testing infrastructure culminated in a cascade of unprecedented crises during the 2024 and 2026 examination cycles, shaking public confidence in the national testing apparatus.

NEET-UG 2024: The Catalyst for Reform

The NEET-UG 2024 examination, conducted on May 5, 2024, for approximately 23.33 lakh candidates competing for 1.08 lakh medical seats, was engulfed in controversy almost immediately upon the declaration of results. The anomalies manifested in several distinct ways. First, an improbable 67 candidates secured the perfect score of AIR-1 (720/720), a stark contrast to previous years where only two or three students achieved this feat. Suspicion deepened when it was discovered that eight top scorers emerged from the exact same examination center in Haryana, and a disproportionate number of high scorers originated from specific coaching hubs like Sikar in Rajasthan.

Second, the NTA arbitrarily awarded compensatory "grace marks" to 1,563 students. This was ostensibly done to compensate for the loss of examination time and to address an ambiguous physics question that had two correct options. Following public outrage, the Supreme Court mandated an expert review by an IIT-Delhi committee, which concluded that only one option was correct, forcing the NTA to revise the scores and withdraw the grace marks.

Third, and most critically, credible allegations and subsequent arrests by the Bihar Economic Offences Wing confirmed that the question paper had been leaked to a localized group of candidates in Patna and Hazaribagh a day prior to the exam. Candidates were allegedly gathered in safe houses and forced to memorize the answers.

The UGC-NET and CSIR-NET Cancellations

The UGC-NET June 2024 examination, taken by over 9 lakh candidates for Junior Research Fellowships and Assistant Professor eligibility, was held on June 18, 2024, across 83 subjects in OMR mode. The very next day, on June 19, the University Grants Commission (UGC) received urgent inputs from the National Cyber Crime Threat Analytics Unit of the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The intelligence indicated a severe security breach: the highly confidential question paper had

been leaked prior to the exam and was being circulated on encrypted platforms, including the Darknet, matching the original paper perfectly. Prioritizing the sanctity of the examination process, the Ministry of Education abruptly canceled the exam and handed the probe over to the CBI, triggering widespread student protests across the country. Shortly thereafter, the June edition of the Joint CSIR-UGC-NET was also postponed indefinitely, with the NTA citing "unavoidable circumstances and logistic issues," further fueling anxiety among aspirants.

NEET-PG Postponements and Supreme Court Mandates

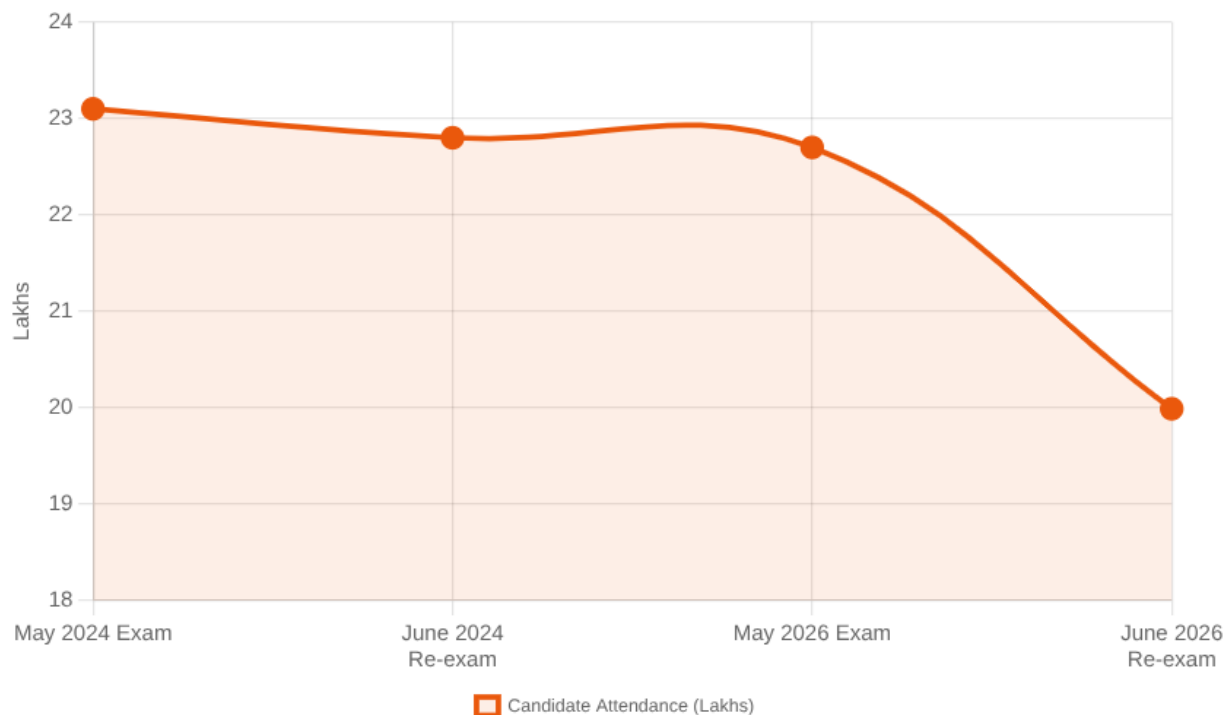
The postgraduate medical examination ecosystem also suffered significant disruptions. The NEET-PG entrance examination, conducted by the National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences (NBEMS)—an autonomous body under the Health Ministry—was abruptly postponed as a "precautionary measure" on June 22, 2024, just hours before it was scheduled to be held on June 23. The Health Ministry cited the need to undertake a thorough assessment of the robustness of the examination processes in light of the NEET-UG allegations.

The situation was further complicated by judicial interventions. The Supreme Court severely criticized the NBEMS for intending to conduct the rescheduled NEET-PG 2025 examination in two separate shifts. The Bench observed that holding exams in multiple shifts utilizes different sets of question papers, inherently leading to varying difficulty levels. The Court ruled that statistical normalization processes are arbitrary and fail to provide a constitutionally mandated level playing field. Consequently, the Court directed the NBEMS to conduct the examination in a single, nationwide shift to ensure absolute transparency and parity. This directive forced a massive logistical scramble, causing further postponements as the NBEMS required weeks to identify and outfit 900 additional CBT testing centers equipped with signal jammers and AI-surveillance to accommodate all candidates simultaneously. This reallocation led to severe candidate distress, with the All India Students Union (AISU) petitioning against students being assigned centers hundreds of kilometers away from their home cities.

The NEET-UG 2026 Catastrophe

The systemic rot reached its absolute zenith during the NEET-UG 2026 cycle. Despite claims by the NTA that it had built an "absolute fortress" utilizing AI and biometric monitoring, the examination conducted on May 3, 2026, for over 22.7 lakh candidates suffered a catastrophic breach. Within days of the exam, whistleblowers revealed that a highly accurate handwritten "guess paper" circulating in paid Telegram and WhatsApp groups matched 120 out of the 180 questions on the actual exam perfectly. Investigators found that all 90 Biology questions and all 45 Chemistry questions appeared in identical sequence, down to the punctuation.

The scale and undeniable nature of the leak left the government with no alternative. On May 12, 2026, the NTA officially canceled the exam, and Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan admitted a "breach in the command chain". The CBI took over the probe, uncovering an expansive organized syndicate and arresting over a dozen individuals, including suspects who sold the PDF files for upwards of Rs 10 lakh. Strikingly, the CBI informed courts that the trail pointed toward internal subject-expert panelists and insiders within the NTA's own question-setting and auditing process, signifying a profound institutional compromise rather than a mere logistical failure during transit.



Data indicates an 87.72% attendance rate for the June re-exam, a sharp decline compared to the historical average of 95%+

To salvage the academic year, a massive re-examination was mandated for June 21, 2026. Highlighting the desperate state of examination security, the government deployed the Indian Air Force (IAF) to airlift the new question papers across the country, while the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) were tasked with implementing a strict two-layer security cordon for the physical transit of materials from printing hubs to bank treasuries, and finally to the examination centers. Despite these measures, the re-exam witnessed a historic drop in attendance. Only 19.99 lakh candidates appeared, resulting in an attendance rate of 87.72%—a drop of over 2 lakh candidates compared to the May 3 exam. Education experts attributed this to candidate fatigue, the financial strain of traveling to newly allotted distant centers, and a profound loss of faith in the system.

VII. The Legislative Response: Central and State Anti-Cheating Frameworks

Historically, law enforcement relied on general provisions of the Indian Penal Code (now the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023) such as cheating (Section 419), forgery, and criminal conspiracy, alongside the Information Technology Act, 2000 (Section 66) for cyber-related tampering and hacking. However, a shockingly low conviction rate—merely 2 convictions out of 45 major paper leak cases between 2002 and 2025—highlighted the severe inadequacy of general penal laws to combat specialized, highly organized crime. In response, both the Parliament and state legislatures have enacted draconian, specialized anti-cheating statutes.

The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024

Enacted by the Parliament and brought into force on June 21, 2024, this Central Act serves as a comprehensive framework to deter examination fraud across all federal agencies, including the UPSC, SSC, Railway Recruitment Boards, and the NTA.

The Act introduces several stringent provisions. It provides an exhaustive definition of "unfair means," covering the leakage of question papers, unauthorized possession of OMR sheets, tampering with computer networks, creating fake websites for monetary gain, providing unauthorized solutions during exams, and manipulating seating arrangements to facilitate cheating. Any individual resorting to these unfair means is liable to imprisonment ranging from 3 to 5 years, along with a fine of up to Rs 10 lakh.

A critical component of the Act is the accountability imposed on service providers. A private service provider engaged to support exam conduct faces a staggering fine of up to Rs 1 crore, recovery of the proportionate cost of the examination, and a four-year ban from conducting any public exams if found complicit or negligent in reporting an incident. Furthermore, if it is established that senior management (Directors, Managers) were involved with consent or connivance, they face 3 to 10 years of imprisonment and a Rs 1 crore fine.

Recognizing the mafia-like nature of the crime, the Act specifically defines "organized crime" in relation to examinations as unlawful acts committed by a group to pursue shared interests for wrongful gain. Perpetrators of organized crime face 5 to 10 years of imprisonment and a minimum fine of Rs 1 crore, and institutions involved are subject to property attachment and forfeiture. To ensure procedural rigor, all offenses under the Act are classified as cognizable,

non-bailable, and non-compoundable, meaning the police can arrest without a warrant and bail is not a matter of right. Investigations are restricted to officers not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) or Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP). Crucially, the Act shields *bona fide* candidates from criminal liability under this specific statute, keeping them subject only to the standard administrative disciplinary rules of the examination authority, ensuring that innocent students affected by undetected leaks are not criminalized.

State-Level Statutory Frameworks

Several states, heavily afflicted by localized paper leaks in state public service commission and police recruitment exams, have implemented laws that are even more severe than the Central legislation, often incorporating elements of asset forfeiture and life imprisonment to obliterate the financial incentives of the education mafia.

State	Legislation	Key Punitive Provisions	Special Features & Enforcement Mechanisms
Rajasthan	Rajasthan Public Examination (Measures for Prevention of Unfair Means in Recruitment) (Amendment) Act, 2023	Up to Life Imprisonment . Fines ranging from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 10 crore.	Directs the confiscation, attachment, and demolition of movable and immovable property acquired through exam fraud. Incorporates elements of the Rajasthan Control of Goondas Act.
Uttarakhand	Uttarakhand Competitive Examination (Measures for Control and Prevention of Unfair Means in	Life Imprisonment for syndicates, printing presses, and service providers. Fine up to Rs 10 crore.	Confiscation of illegal assets. Candidates caught cheating face up to 10 years in prison (for repeat offenses) and a 10-year ban

	Recruitment) Act, 2023		from all competitive exams.
Uttar Pradesh	UP Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024	Life Imprisonment specifically targeting "solver gangs". Minimum fine of Rs 50 lakh, extending to Rs 1 crore.	Allows the District Magistrate to immediately order the attachment of the accused's property even prior to the court taking formal cognizance of the offense.
Gujarat	Gujarat Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2023	Up to 10 years imprisonment. Fine of not less than Rs 1 crore for organized crime.	Mandates the seizure and auction of properties of the accused to recover wrongful gains. Debarment of convicted candidates for 2 to 3 years.

These legislative actions reflect an absolute zero-tolerance policy at both the federal and state levels, effectively equating organized examination fraud with heinous organized crimes and economic terrorism.

VIII. The Judicial Response: Judicial Interventions and Jurisprudence

The Indian judiciary has played a highly active and moderating role in managing the fallout from examination leaks, tasked with balancing the public demand for absolute systemic purity with the practical, devastating consequences of mass exam cancellations.

Vanshika Yadav v. Union of India (2024)

In the aftermath of the NEET-UG 2024 controversy, numerous petitions under Article 32 were filed before the Supreme Court seeking a writ of mandamus to cancel the entire examination and order a nationwide re-test due to the paper leaks in Bihar and Jharkhand. The three-judge bench, led by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, alongside Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, ultimately refused to cancel the exam.

The judgment established a crucial jurisprudential framework for exam cancellations: **The Doctrine of Systemic Breach**. The Court held that an examination of this magnitude (involving 23 lakh students) should only be scrapped in its entirety if the breach is truly "systemic"—indicating that the foundational integrity of the exam is irreparably destroyed, making it impossible to separate the tainted candidates from the untainted ones.

Relying heavily on granular data analytics provided by an IIT-Madras committee and investigative status reports from the CBI, the Court concluded that the leak was geographically restricted to specific centers in Hazaribagh and Patna, benefiting a mathematically identifiable set of approximately 155 students. The Court determined that canceling the exam would inflict immense psychological trauma on millions of honest students, derail the national medical education calendar, and severely prejudice marginalized students who benefit from reservation policies and cannot afford to prepare for a re-test. While the Court upheld the exam results, it acknowledged massive administrative flaws within the NTA. It subsequently widened the mandate of the government-appointed Radhakrishnan Committee to implement binding structural reforms to ensure such leaks are not repeated.

IX. The Dr. K. Radhakrishnan Committee: A Blueprint for Reform

In response to the severe institutional failures of 2024, the Ministry of Education constituted a High-Level Committee of Experts chaired by Dr. K. Radhakrishnan (former ISRO Chairman). The committee, which included prominent figures such as Central University of Hyderabad Vice-Chancellor Professor B.J. Rao, former AIIMS Delhi Director Randeep Guleria, and psychometric experts, was tasked with undertaking a root-and-branch review of the NTA and its examination methodology. The committee conducted exhaustive consultations, taking in over 37,000 suggestions from students, parents, and stakeholders, eventually delivering a 185-page report containing 101 comprehensive recommendations.

The strategic roadmap formulated by the Radhakrishnan Committee revolves around restructuring the NTA from a mere outsourcing agency into an empowered, technologically sovereign institution. The primary recommendations include:

1. **Structural Revamp of the NTA:** The expansion of the NTA to include permanent, in-house domain experts in psychometrics and data security. The NTA must develop its own dedicated data security vertical to build tighter network protocols, drastically reducing reliance on third-party IT vendors for core functions.
2. **Digital Identity and Biometrics:** The creation of a "Digi-Exam" identity layer, modeled after the DigiYatra aviation system, integrating end-to-end biometrics and AI verification to eliminate impersonation from the application stage entirely through to college admission.
3. **Migration to Computer-Based Testing (CBT):** A fundamental transition away from physical OMR sheets to full CBT models by 2027, thereby completely eliminating physical transit handling, warehousing, and printing vulnerabilities where leaks typically occur.
4. **Computer-Assisted Secure Pen-and-Paper Testing (CPPT):** Recognizing that India currently lacks the digital infrastructure to test 24 lakh candidates in a single CBT shift, the committee proposed a hybrid CPPT model as an interim solution. In this model, highly encrypted question papers are transmitted digitally to confidential servers inside the examination centers mere hours before the exam, and are printed on-site under extreme, localized surveillance.
5. **Election-Style Logistical Apparatus:** To secure the physical footprint of exams, the committee recommended deploying the state apparatus exactly as is done during general elections. This includes forming district-level coordination committees chaired by District Collectors, supported by local intelligence, cyber police, and 5G signal jammers, thereby

terminating the reliance on unverified private schools.

However, the implementation of these reforms has faced significant hurdles. Following the NEET-UG 2026 disaster, Pankaj Bansal, a member of the Radhakrishnan committee, publicly expressed disappointment, noting that systemic weaknesses in paper movement—from printing to transportation—remained unaddressed by the NTA, allowing the education mafia to thrive.

X. Federalism and the Center-State Conflict in Educational Governance

The debate surrounding national-level centralized examinations cannot be isolated from the constitutional frictions of Indian federalism. Historically, at the commencement of the Constitution, education was exclusively a State subject (Entry 11 of the State List in the 7th Schedule). However, the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1976 transferred education to the Concurrent List (Entry 25). This allows both the Union and State legislatures to pass laws regarding education, though Article 254 dictates that Central law prevails in the event of a conflict.

Despite this concurrent power, the Union derives supreme authority to enforce centralized examinations like NEET through Entry 66 of the Union List. This entry grants the Parliament exclusive power over the "coordination and determination of standards in institutions for higher education or research". The Supreme Court, in *State of Madhya Pradesh (2016)*, validated this framework, ruling that while states retain the authority to regulate structural aspects like admissions and fee fixation under Entry 25, they cannot dilute or bypass the minimum academic standards and national entrance exams established under Entry 66 by Central statutory bodies like the UGC or the Medical Council of India.

7th Schedule List	Relevant Entry	Scope and Implications for Education
Union List (List I)	Entry 66	Grants the Centre exclusive legislative power over the coordination and determination of standards in higher education and research institutions. Serves as the constitutional basis for mandating nationwide exams like NEET and UGC-NET.
State List (List II)	Entry 11 (<i>Omitted</i>)	Education was originally a state subject, granting states complete autonomy over regional educational policies until 1976.
Concurrent List (List III)	Entry 25	Transferred via the 42nd Amendment (1976). Allows both Union and States to legislate on education, including universities and technical training. However, state laws are subject to the supremacy of Entry 66 and Article 254.

The Tamil Nadu Resistance

The centralization of exams through NEET has encountered fierce political and legislative resistance, spearheaded predominantly by the state of Tamil Nadu. The opposition is rooted in arguments of state sovereignty, linguistic identity, and stark socio-economic disparities.

Political leaders in Tamil Nadu, led by the ruling DMK, argue that NEET heavily biases medical

admissions toward affluent, urban CBSE-board students who can afford expensive private coaching. Conversely, it systematically disadvantages rural students, first-generation learners, and those studying under the State Board curriculum, who historically gained medical admissions based solely on their Class XII board marks. The distress caused by this systemic disadvantage has manifested tragically in multiple student suicides across the state, prompting intense political outcry.

In response, the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly has repeatedly passed resolutions and legislative bills seeking to bypass NEET and restore the pre-2016 state-board merit system. This led to a severe constitutional standoff with Governor R.N. Ravi, who initially withheld assent and delayed forwarding the anti-NEET bills to the President of India. The state government escalated the matter to the Supreme Court (*The State of Tamil Nadu v. The Governor of Tamil Nadu*), leading to a landmark 2024 judgment where the Court reprimanded the Governor's prolonged inaction as unconstitutional and mandated time limits for governors to act on bills passed by state legislatures.

The federal conflict underscores a critical policy dilemma: whether the pursuit of uniform national academic standards (Entry 66) justifies the erosion of state autonomy (Entry 25) and the creation of exclusionary barriers for marginalized students. Recommendations from federalism watchdogs, such as the Sarkaria Commission, have historically suggested that while the Union should set the standards, implementation and contextual adaptation should be entrusted to the States to maintain cooperative federalism. Decentralizing the exams or allowing states to conduct customized exams for their 85% state-quota medical seats remains a potent proposal to mitigate the risk of a single national point of failure while respecting regional nuances.

XI. Political Opinions and Public Outcry

The discourse surrounding examination security failures is highly politicized, with opposition parties using the crisis to question the competence and integrity of the ruling government, while the government emphasizes its corrective measures and zero-tolerance policies.

The Opposition Narrative: Opposition leaders have heavily criticized the government's handling of the examination ecosystem. During the 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' event in Dehradun, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, launched a scathing attack on the government, alleging that 152 paper leaks had occurred over the past decade, affecting 7.5 crore students with zero convictions. He emphasized the severe financial extraction from the middle class, stating that families spend approximately Rs 1.32 lakh crore annually on exams like NEET—an amount equivalent to the national education budget—calling it "pure theft". Highlighting the emotional toll, Gandhi shared the platform with the father of a deceased NEET

aspirant, demanding the removal of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. Other opposition figures, including AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal and SP president Akhilesh Yadav, have echoed these sentiments, calling the NTA a "disgrace" and accusing the government of failing to fix accountability for the recurring destruction of the youth's future. The CPIM has historically highlighted the nexus between politicians and the education mafia, as seen in their critiques of the Vyapam scam, pointing to systemic corruption deeply embedded within the state apparatus.

The Government Defense: Conversely, the government has defended its intent while acknowledging administrative shortcomings. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan publicly took responsibility following the 2026 NEET cancellation, admitting that despite implementing the Radhakrishnan committee recommendations, there was a "breach in the command chain". The government has repeatedly emphasized its "zero tolerance" policy toward malpractices, pointing to the immediate handover of cases to the CBI for thorough investigations and the swift enactment of the draconian Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024. Furthermore, the government has committed to structural reforms, notably the transition of NEET-UG to a fully Computer-Based Test (CBT) format by 2027 to permanently close physical logistical loopholes.

XII. Strategic Avenues and Recommendations for the NTA Committee

As the committee deliberates on this agenda, structural, legislative, and technological reforms must be synthesized to forge an impenetrable examination ecosystem. Delegates should consider the following strategic avenues for debate and policy formulation:

1. **Technological Overhaul and Phased CBT Implementation:** The transition to Computer-Based Testing must be accelerated, but not at the expense of equity. The government must aggressively invest in building high-capacity, state-owned digital testing infrastructure in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities to support single-shift CBT examinations. This will eliminate the reliance on compromised private cyber cafes and mitigate the need for contentious statistical normalization. Where immediate CBT implementation is unfeasible, the Radhakrishnan Committee's hybrid CPPT model (encrypted digital transmission to local secure printers) should be institutionalized.
2. **Enforcement of the Public Examinations Act, 2024:** The mere existence of draconian laws is insufficient without rapid enforcement. The Union must establish specialized fast-track courts dedicated to examination fraud under the 2024 Act to ensure swift convictions. Furthermore, aggressively utilizing the asset forfeiture provisions—mirrored in state laws like those of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan—will dismantle the financial foundations of the coaching mafia and solver syndicates.
3. **Restructuring the NTA:** The NTA must be legally reconstituted as a statutory body via an Act of Parliament, granting it the robust legal standing and sovereign backing equivalent to the UPSC. It must establish a permanent cadre of cybersecurity experts and psychometricians, ending its hazardous dependency on outsourced logistics and third-party personnel.
4. **Re-evaluating Centralization through Cooperative Federalism:** The committee must deliberate on the socio-economic impact of absolute centralization. Acknowledging the legitimate grievances of states like Tamil Nadu, a balanced federal approach could involve allowing State Public Service Commissions or state education boards to administer localized entrance exams for state-quota seats, utilizing standardized, randomized question banks provided centrally by the NTA. This would decentralize the operational risk while maintaining the academic standards mandated by Entry 66.

The contamination of India's examination system by organized syndicates is not merely an administrative lapse; it is an existential threat to the nation's meritocratic foundations. Restoring the sanctity of these examinations is imperative to safeguarding the morale, aspirations, and future of India's youth.

XIII. Focus Questions

1. Structural & Cadre Overhaul

How can the NTA transition from an outsourcing-heavy operational model reliant on third-party vendors and deputed personnel to a self-sustained institutional framework with a permanent, specialized testing management cadre?

2. Physical Logistics & Chain-of-Custody

What concrete technological and procedural protocols (such as tamper-evident smart vaults, real-time GPS tracking, biometric handoffs, and localized printing options) are required to safeguard the physical chain of custody for pen-and-paper examinations from printing presses to exam halls?

3. Cybersecurity & CBT Vulnerabilities

In Computer-Based Testing (CBT) environments, what technical defense systems (e.g., zero-trust network architectures, hardware-bound anti-remote-access software, and encrypted local server protocols) must be mandated to neutralize remote desktop hijacking and LAN server tampering at test centers?

4. Operationalization of the Public Examinations Act, 2024

How can the statutory provisions of the *Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024* be operationalized to accelerate investigations against organized inter-state paper-leak syndicates ("solver gangs") and enforce strict financial and criminal liabilities on defaulting service providers?

5. Standardizing the Judicial Cancellation Threshold

What objective, quantifiable criteria should the committee establish to clearly distinguish between a **localized/isolated breach** (where compromised candidates can be segregated) and a **systemic contamination** that legally and administratively warrants the complete cancellation and re-conduct of a national-level exam?

6. Balancing Educational Federalism & National Uniformity

How can national competitive testing strike a balance between maintaining uniform, meritocratic evaluation standards across India and addressing state-level concerns regarding educational

autonomy, state board syllabus disparities, and rural-urban candidate accessibility?

7. Question Bank Cryptography & Normalization Transparency

What protocols should be instituted for automated, encrypted digital question paper generation at test centers minutes prior to the exam, and how can statistical normalization formulas (e.g., equipercentile methods across multi-shift exams) be made transparent, standardized, and legally resilient?

8. Regulation of the Coaching & EdTech Ecosystem

What regulatory oversight, security clearance protocols, and conflict-of-interest guidelines should be imposed on private coaching conglomerates and EdTech platforms to prevent insider collusion, illegal test-paper trading, and hyper-competitive market distortion?

9. Intelligence, Whistleblower Protection & Dark-Web Monitoring

What multi-agency frameworks (involving the CBI, cybercrime units, and state police) and encrypted whistleblower platforms should be established to proactively track dark-web channels, social media leak networks, and financial transactions before exam administration occurs?

10. Student Redressal & Aspirant Welfare

What institutionalized grievance-redressal mechanism, standard operating procedure for time-loss compensation, and candidate support system should the NTA adopt to rebuild public trust, protect student mental health, and alleviate the socio-economic strain on candidates affected by exam disruptions?

XIV. Suggested Pattern for Researching

To prepare effectively for the committee simulation, participating delegates should structure their research using the following step-by-step approach:

1. **Analyze Your Portfolio Mandate:** Start by researching your assigned role (e.g., NTA official, Examiner, Legal Officer, EdTech representative, or political stakeholder). Look through past news clippings, official releases, parliamentary responses, organizational statements, and official social media handles to determine your character's stance on paper leaks, NTA reforms, and centralized testing.
2. **Master the Core Agenda:** Gain a detailed understanding of the agenda using this guide, statutory laws, academic papers, judicial records, and government reports.
3. **Segment into Key Sub-Topics:** Divide the agenda into actionable focus areas (e.g., *Logistical Chain Security*, *Legal & Statutory Enforcement*, *Digital & CBT Cyber Security*, *Federal Rights & State Autonomy*). Draft position papers and speeches tailored to these sub-topics.
4. **Develop Practical Solutions:** Formulate detailed, actionable solutions that your portfolio can champion during resolution drafting (e.g., SOP amendments, technological implementations, structural governance frameworks).
5. **Compile Valid Evidence:** Collect verifiable data, Supreme Court rulings, and statutory references to back every claim made in the committee. Ensure research is up-to-date using verified news outlets and official publications.
6. **Evaluate Other Portfolios:** Research the mandates and known stances of other delegates in the committee to anticipate arguments, identify potential allies for coalitions, and spot policy contradictions during unmoderated caucuses.

Note: This guide is meant to provide participants with foundational context upon which further research can be built. It does not reflect the personal opinions or political leanings of the Executive Board. The Executive Board remains neutral at all times.

XV. List of Valid Sources

Delegates must base their documentation, allegations, and arguments on recognized, credible sources. The following are considered valid sources within the committee:

- **Government & Parliamentary Documents:** Reports of Parliamentary Standing Committees, Press Information Bureau (PIB) releases, and official Ministry of Education notifications.
- **Statutory Texts:** The Constitution of India, *The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024*, *Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023*, and *Information Technology Act, 2000*.
- **Judicial Records:** Certified judgments, affidavits, and interim orders of the Supreme Court of India and State High Courts.
- **Official Agency Data:** NTA press releases, public notices, brochures, and verified statistical reports.
- **Credible News Agencies:** Press Trust of India (PTI), Sansad TV, Doordarshan (DD News), and established national broadsheets.
- **RTI Disclosures:** Official Right to Information (RTI) responses issued by government departments or autonomous testing bodies.

XVI. Important Links & Reference Archives

- **Constitution of India:** <https://www.india.gov.in/my-government/constitution-india>
- **Ministry of Education (MoE):** <https://www.education.gov.in/>
- **National Testing Agency (NTA) Official Portal:** <https://nta.ac.in/>
- **Ministry of Law & Justice:** <https://lawmin.gov.in/>
- **Supreme Court Judgment Archives:** <https://main.sci.gov.in/judgments>
- **Legislative Bills & Acts (Sansad Archive):** <https://sansad.in/>
- **Press Information Bureau (PIB):** <https://pib.gov.in/>
- **Press Trust of India (PTI):** <https://www.ptinews.com/>
- **RTI Online Portal:** <https://rtionline.gov.in/>