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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Impunity for Exam Leaks Undermines Trust

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 **The Indian Express** 6 June 2026 **GS2**

Source: ujjyari.com — Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs



INTERVIEW ANGLE

"A tough anti-cheating law already exists. If leaks still recur, is the problem the law, the investigation and prosecution, or the institutional design of the exam bodies themselves?"

Source: [Original editorial](#)  [The Indian Express](#)

 Every fact web-verified against primary sources **HOW**

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

India passed a stringent anti-cheating law in 2024, yet high-stakes public examinations keep facing leaks and cancellations. The Indian Express argues the problem is **impunity**, not the absence of a law. For an aspirant, this is a GS2 case on **governance, accountability and institutional design**, and one that bites personally, since it concerns the integrity of the very examination system they are preparing for.

THE CRUX IN 60 WORDS

A tough law, the **Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024**, already exists, but **leaks persist** because investigation and prosecution are weak and exam bodies are unreformed. The cost falls on **aspirants** and on the meritocratic promise. The fix is not another statute but **swift, certain accountability**, professional exam security, and **institutional reform** of testing agencies.

THE ISSUE, DECODED

ELEMENT	WHAT IT IS	WHERE IT FAILS
The 2024 Act	Central anti-cheating law with stiff penalties	Under-enforced
Deterrence	Punishment that is swift and certain	Slow, uncertain in practice
Exam-body design	How testing agencies are structured	Lacks security capability and accountability
Meritocratic trust	Aspirants' faith in a fair exam	Eroded by each leak

THE ANALYSIS: WHY LEAKS RECUR DESPITE A LAW

- ❶ **Statute is not deterrence.** A law deters only when punishment is swift and certain; slow, uncertain prosecution blunts it.
- ❷ **Investigations miss the organisers.** Reaching petty intermediaries while the masterminds escape leaves the network intact.
- ❸ **Institutional vulnerability persists.** Bodies lacking professional security and clear accountability repeat the same failures.
- ❹ **Aspirants bear the cost.** Lost time, money and mental health, and a damaged belief in merit.

DATA AND INSTITUTIONS VAULT

Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024, penalties up to **10 years** and fines up to **Rs 1 crore** for organised leaks/cheating. **The trigger context:** the **NEET-UG** integrity crisis (a national entrance exam affected by a leak and re-test). **Bodies:** the **National Testing Agency (NTA, 2017)** conducts major entrance exams; **NCERT** and **CBSE** are the other key education bodies. **Constitutional anchor:** education is on the **Concurrent List** (42nd Amendment, 1976); equality of opportunity under **Articles 14-16**. **Reform reference:** expert-committee recommendations on overhauling exam-conduct and security.

THE DEBATE

Argument that the law needs time: The 2024 Act is recent; high-profile prosecutions will eventually establish deterrence without further structural change.

Argument that impunity is structural: Without swift enforcement and institutional reform, a new law simply joins the old ones in being under-applied.

The balanced verdict: Time alone will not fix it. The law must be matched by **certain prosecution** and by **reforming the bodies** that conduct exams, otherwise deterrence stays theoretical and trust keeps eroding.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (TRANSFERABLE SKILL)

When a problem persists despite a law, the strong answer asks three questions: is the law adequate, is it enforced, and is the institution that implements it fit for purpose? Usually the gap is enforcement and institutional design, not statute. This diagnostic applies to exam leaks, pollution, food safety and corruption alike.

DIAGRAM-IN-WORDS

Tough 2024 law -> but weak investigation + slow prosecution + unreformed exam bodies -> leaks recur -> aspirant trust erodes. The fix: certain prosecution + professional exam security + institutional accountability -> deterrence + trust.

THE WAY FORWARD

- ① **Enforce the 2024 Act** with swift, certain prosecution reaching the organisers.
- ② **Professionalise exam security**, with secure item-banking, encryption and logistics.
- ③ **Fix accountability** for officials whose lapses enable leaks.
- ④ **Reform the institutional design** of testing agencies so each failure has an owner.

THE TAKEAWAY BOX

“Recurring exam-paper leaks are a failure of accountability, not of law.” Critically examine via the 2024 Act. (250 words)

“A statute without certain enforcement is a deterrent only on paper, and aspirants do not lose their year to paper deterrents.”

Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 (up to 10 years / Rs 1 crore) · NTA (2017) · NCERT, CBSE · education on the Concurrent List · Articles 14-16 (equality of opportunity).

A tough law already exists. If leaks recur, is the problem the law, the prosecution, or the design of the exam bodies?

Connects to GS2 PYQs on governance, accountability and statutory bodies; probable forward question is the accountability-not-law framing above.

the prior NTA/NCERT/CBSE editorial; static GS2 on governance, transparency and accountability.

Sources: Indian Express, Ministry of Education, PIB

Source: Impunity for Exam Leaks Undermines Trust — Ujiyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Editorial Analysis

● KEY ARGUMENTS AT A GLANCE

Recurring public-examination paper leaks persist not because India lacks a law but because perpetrators face little real

accountability, with weak investigation, slow prosecution and unreformed exam bodies corroding the trust of millions of aspirants.

 **SUPPORTING**

- The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 created stiff penalties, yet leaks have continued, showing that deterrence depends on enforcement, not statute alone.
- Each leak inflicts a heavy cost on aspirants, lost time, money and mental health, and damages the meritocratic promise the exam embodies.
- Exam bodies that lack professional security capability and clear accountability for failures allow the same vulnerabilities to recur.

 **COUNTER**

Some argue the law is recent and needs time, and that high-profile prosecutions will eventually establish deterrence without further structural change.

 **WAY FORWARD**

Match the 2024 law with swift, certain investigation and prosecution, professionalise exam security, fix accountability for officials, and reform the institutional design of testing agencies.

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MAINS ANSWER FRAMEWORK

QUESTION

"Recurring exam-paper leaks are a failure of accountability, not of law." Critically examine in the light of the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024. (250 words)

INTRODUCTION

India does not lack a law against exam-paper leaks; it passed a stringent one in 2024. That leaks have continued anyway points to a failure not of legislation but of accountability.

BODY

The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 introduced severe penalties, including long imprisonment and heavy fines, to deter organised cheating and leaks in central recruitment and entrance examinations. Yet high-stakes exams have continued to face leaks and cancellations, the NEET-UG episode being the most visible.

The gap is enforcement: deterrence works only when punishment is swift and certain, and when investigation and prosecution actually reach the organisers behind a leak rather than petty intermediaries. The cost of this impunity falls on aspirants, who lose time, money and mental health, and on the meritocratic promise that the examination is supposed to guarantee.

Beneath the enforcement gap lies an institutional one: testing agencies often lack professional examination-security capability and clear accountability for failures, so the same vulnerabilities recur.

The corrective is therefore threefold, swift and certain prosecution under the 2024 Act, professionalisation of exam security (secure item-banking, encryption, logistics), and reform of the institutional design of bodies that conduct exams so that someone owns each failure.

A law unmatched by enforcement and institutional reform is a deterrent only on paper.

CONCLUSION

The remedy for recurring leaks is not another statute but the certainty of consequence and the reform of the bodies that run exams. Trust is rebuilt by accountability, not by announcements.

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