



UPSC & STATE PCS CURRENT AFFAIRS · UJIYARI.COM

EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Is the Deal Still Good: The Examination Protests as a Referendum on Trust

 NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

26 July 2026 ·

POLITY

SOCIAL ISSUES

GS2

GS4

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

 [linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

ALSO FROM THE CREATOR

BharatNotesFree UPSC notes, MCQs, PYQ analysis. **100% Free.**bharatnotes.com → **ADVERTISE****Advertise with Ujiyari**

Reach thousands of UPSC aspirants daily.

 epicbharat@gmail.com

Is the Deal Still Good: The Examination Protests as a Referendum on Trust

 The New Indian Express

26 July 2026

GS2

GS4



INTERVIEW ANGLE

"A minister resigned only after sustained public pressure. Does that strengthen ministerial accountability as a convention, or weaken it by showing it operates only under duress?"

✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

THE LIFT LINE

The crowds were asking one question, and it was not about a minister. Nationalising examinations nationalises the trauma when papers leak, and what began as a grievance about integrity became a referendum on whether the system can be trusted at all.

WHY THIS EDITORIAL MATTERS FOR YOUR EXAM

This is a **GS2** answer on the citizen-state compact and the limits of coercive protest management, and an unusually good **GS4** answer on trust as an administrative value. Ethics papers reward candidates who can discuss institutional trust concretely rather than in platitudes; this supplies the concrete material.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The agitation radiated from Jantar Mantar to cities and towns across India. **Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation** as education minister on Saturday was the first such event in twelve years, and only the third occasion this government has reversed course, after the Land Acquisition Bill in 2015 and the farm laws in 2021.

The composition of the protest is the analytically interesting part. Present at Jantar Mantar were the mother of Anitha, the first victim associated with NEET, and the parents of a 2026 victim. Hindi sloganeering came from Tamil Nadu. Young women from small towns slept on Delhi pavements and reported feeling safe. Gurdwaras and mosques opened their doors. Itanagar and Indore produced the same slogans. Alongside the students came engineers, consultants, designers, flight attendants on a day's leave and retired teachers, people with nothing personal at stake.

THE CORE ARGUMENT / ISSUE

The trigger was integrity; the subject was trust. For years, lakhs of aspirants have travelled, sometimes clinging to trains, to keep appointments with a recruitment system that could not guarantee a fair test. Across India a son or daughter is preparing for some entrance examination, sustained by years of discipline, coaching fees and parents rearranging their lives around examination calendars. That generation's grievance is precise: they are expected to play fair in a game where the house does not.

The protest-management playbook was two decades out of date. Barricades, closed metro stations, suspended internet and water cannon assume a protest that can be isolated physically and informationally. This one could not be. When the internet is suspended, participants switch to **Bluetooth-based mesh messaging**. When a road is blocked, another route is already on someone's phone. Every baton charge is filmed and circulating before the officer has walked away.

The register was unfamiliar to the state. There was music, humour and irreverence: dancing under water cannon, memes mocking official releases, reels parodying ministers, police and media. It is easy to dismiss this as theatre. It is more accurate to treat it as the language the generation actually speaks, and its effect was to make the movement legible and shareable rather than merely angry.

Force confirmed rather than corrected the impression. Police wading into crowds of young people barely out of college persuaded many that the authorities had misread the mood entirely. The image that stuck was not of a politician but of a girl in Delhi, crying after a lathi charge, saying she would never sit the civil services examination now, and of a young woman in Mumbai standing in front of a police van and not moving. Neither looked like a professional activist.

A leaderless movement is a double-edged instrument. Its diffusion made it resilient and hard to decapitate. That same diffusion carried risk: in Bihar, police-student confrontation looked capable of escalating. Ending the agitation with a soft bat rather than a hard one was the wiser course precisely because a sprawling, leaderless movement has no one able to call it back.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (ANALYTICAL FRAME)

Use the **legitimacy ledger**. State authority draws on two accounts: *legality*, the formal power to act, and *legitimacy*, the willingness of citizens to accept that action. **Coercion** spends legitimacy to enforce legality. A state with deep legitimacy reserves can afford occasional withdrawals. A state facing a grievance shared by a quarter of its population cannot, which is why the retreat, when it came, was rational rather than weak.

For GS4, frame trust as an **administrative resource** that is slow to accumulate and fast to spend, and note that the resignation restored a procedural norm, ministerial accountability, that had itself fallen into disuse over twelve years.

THE DIAGRAM IN WORDS

Picture a contract with two signatures. On one side the citizen commits years of study, family savings and deferred earnings. On the other the state commits a fair test, an honest result and a real opportunity. For years only one party has been visibly performing. The protest was not a demand to tear up the contract. It was a demand to see the other signature, which is why the participants included people with no examination to sit and nothing personal to gain.

WAY FORWARD

- **Institutionalise the accountability that was conceded.** A resignation extracted by protest is a precedent only if it becomes a norm applied without protest.
- **Close the specific grievances.** Compensation to bereaved families and withdrawal of cases against students are cheap, quick and directly restorative of trust.
- **Retire the coercive playbook.** Internet suspension and water cannon against a networked, filmed movement now generate more legitimacy cost than order benefit.
- **Resist the conspiracy reflex.** Attributing a domestic grievance to outside instigation forfeits the diagnostic information the protest carries.
- **Keep the compact visible after the streets are quiet.** Parliament resumes and ministers rotate; the unwritten contract is what has to be maintained between crises.

PYQ LINKAGE AND PRACTICE

UPSC has examined the role of civil society and pressure groups, ethical governance and **probity**, and trust in public institutions. This editorial connects all three to a single live episode.

Practice question: “Coercive protest management spends institutional legitimacy to enforce legal authority.” Examine with reference to a recent mass agitation, and suggest alternatives available to the administration. (250 words)

Interview angle: A minister resigned only after sustained public pressure. Does that strengthen ministerial accountability as a convention, or weaken it by showing it operates only under duress?

Sources: The New Indian Express, PIB

Source: Is the Deal Still Good: The Examination Protests as a Referendum on Trust — Ujiyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Editorial Analysis

RELATED DAILY ARTICLES

26 Jul **First Villages, Not Last: PM Interacts with Viksit...**

25 Jul **Dharmendra Pradhan Resigns Over Exam Leaks: Ministerial...**

24 Jul **Tougher Penalties for Exam Paper Leaks: The 2026...**

23 Jul **The Supreme Court Number of Judges Amendment Bill 2026**



CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

[in linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)[Read Full Article on Ujiyari →](#)<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/07/nie-trust-deficit-state-citizen-compact-2026/>

ALSO FROM THE CREATOR

BharatNotes

Free UPSC study platform — subject-wise notes across all 4 GS papers, Prelims MCQs, Mains answer frameworks, PYQ analysis & progress tracking. **100% Free • No Login Required.**

[Start Preparing → bharatnotes.com](#)

📌 OPPORTUNITY

Advertise with Ujiyari

Reach **thousands of serious UPSC & State PCS aspirants** daily through our PDFs, website, and social channels.

Ideal for: Coaching institutes • EdTech platforms • Book publishers • Exam prep apps

[✉ epicbharat@gmail.com](mailto:epicbharat@gmail.com)

Write to us for rates & media kit

Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs · ujiyari.com · bharatnotes.com