

SANSKRITI IAS EDITORIALS HIGHLIGHTS

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What Does the New Bill to Prevent Exam Fraud Say?

(THE HINDU PAGE NO 8)

Syllabus Mapping

1. **GS Paper:** GS Paper 2
2. **Syllabus Topics:**
 1. Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.
 2. Structure, organization, and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary (Fast-track special courts and judicial pendency).
 3. Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education and Human Resources.

What does the new Bill to prevent exam fraud say?

What is the purpose and what are the provisions of the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026? How is it different from the 2024 Act? How does it deal with procedural delays? What are the common bottlenecks faced by trial courts?

Maitri Porecha
The story so far:
The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026 was passed by both Houses of Parliament following widespread protests over the leak of the undergraduate (UG) paper of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) and the subsequent resignation of Union Education Minister, Dharmendra Pradhan. The Bill seeks to curb examination malpractices through time-bound investigations and speedy trials.

While a copy of the proposed Bill was circulated among parliamentarians on July 25, the Bill was introduced on July 27. It was passed in the Lok Sabha by a voice vote on July 29 and passed a day later in the Rajya Sabha. The legislation has now been sent for the President's assent to officially become law.

What were the incidents over the years leading up to the passage of the Bill?
The crisis surrounding India's competitive exams began with the NEET-UG 2024 exam, where question papers were allegedly leaked in regions including Patna in Bihar and Hazaribagh in Jharkhand. There was panic after 67 students scored full marks, with controversial grace marks, triggering massive student protests and intense judicial intervention. The Supreme Court and the Central Bureau of Investigation

The 2024 Act did not secure a single conviction over its two years of operation

subsequently uncovered deep-rooted syndicates allegedly involved in the paper leak. The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act was enacted in 2024 to tackle cheating.

Despite the law, concerns over institutional accountability persisted, and the Ministry of Education cancelled the NEET-UG 2026 exam after discovering that the question paper had been leaked and the integrity of the exam had been compromised. This affected about 22 lakh students and led to nationwide protests, backed by the newly formed Cockroach Janta Party. Consequently, the government pushed stricter legislative amendments, notably the 2026 Bill.

What is the primary purpose of the Bill? How have penalties been revised as compared to the 2024 Act?
The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026 is a revised version of the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024. Its primary purpose is to curb exam malpractices, ensure time-bound investigations and speedy trials, and create stronger deterrence against organised crime groups and institutions involved in such offences to safeguard transparent and merit-based selections.

As per the Bill, investigations must be concluded within 60 days – whether conducted by local police, Central investigating agencies, or a Special Task Force – and trials must be wrapped up within three months of the chargesheet being filed in designated special fast-track courts. Also, High Court appeals must be heard by a two-judge Division Bench and resolved within three months.

The penalty for general offences under Section 100) has been increased from 3-5 years of imprisonment and a fine of up to ₹10 lakh under the 2024 anti-cheating law to 5-10 years of imprisonment and a fine of up to ₹50 lakh. Fines for service providers have also been raised from a maximum of ₹1 crore to ₹5 crore, alongside a debarment extension from 4 years to 8 years. For directors and senior management held responsible, the fine has been increased from at least ₹1 crore to ₹5 crore and the jail term has been increased from 3-10 years to 5-10 years. For organised crime networks under Section 11, the Bill proposes a minimum imprisonment of 7 years, up from 5 years, along with a fine of up to ₹10 crore, compared with the earlier limit of ₹1 crore.

How does the Bill address procedural delays and court adjournments?
Courts are restricted from granting adjournments beyond the following day without explicit, exceptional reasons. All ongoing cases under the 2024 Act will instantly be transferred to newly designated special fast-track courts. States and Union Territories are mandated to appoint special public prosecutors exclusively for these trials.

What major limitation has been pointed out regarding the investigation timeline?
According to an analysis by PRS Legislative Research, unlike other robust legislation such as the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 or the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, the Bill contains no provisions or accountability mechanisms explaining what happens if the two-month investigation timeline is missed. Nor does it require officers to record reasons for delays in writing.

Also, the timeline could conflict with Supreme Court rulings. In 2002, the Supreme Court held that it is neither advisable, feasible, nor judicially permissible to prescribe a rigid outer limit for the conclusion of criminal proceedings, and criminal courts are not obliged to terminate trials merely due to the lapse of time.

How does the Bill propose to handle speedy adjudication and what structural challenges do these courts face?
The Bill provides for designating a court of session by each State and Union Territory as a special fast-track court. However, data show severe system-wide pendency. Existing fast-track special courts have battled massive backlogs, with pending cases swelling from over 2.02 lakh in 2023 to 2.45 lakh by 2025. Furthermore, average trial times vary drastically across regions – for example, from 257 days in Andhra Pradesh to 1,717 days in Delhi for Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act fast-track special courts cases.

What common ground-level bottlenecks routinely delay trial courts, as noted by the Law Commission of India?
Key bottlenecks include the absence of accused individuals or the non-production of undertrial prisoners, lack of proactive police efforts to apprehend absconding suspects, frequent and unjustified adjournments sought by advocates or caused by the non-attendance of official witnesses, and deficiencies in judicial case management and court and staff strength.

What was the conviction track record of the preceding anti-cheating law passed in 2024? The 2024 Act did not secure a single conviction over its two years of operation.

Resignation Is Step One.

Protesters celebrate the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in Mumbai. AFP

SPACE BEYOND POLITICAL PARTIES

(INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE NO 11)

Syllabus Mapping

3. **GS Paper:** GS Paper 2

4. **Syllabus Topics:**

1. Pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.
2. Salient features of the Representation of the People's Act and political party dynamics.
3. Important aspects of governance, citizen participation, and democratic dissent.

Space beyond political parties



ACROSS THE AISLE
BY P CHIDAMBARAM

THE JANTAR Mantar agitation started by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) taught a lesson that was not learned by political parties in 79 years of democratic politics in India. The first hint of such a 'lesson' was visible earlier this year, but of that a little later.

Hitherto, history has taught us that political parties, through struggle and winning elections, can bring about change. That lesson still remains true. Congress led the movement that won independence. By winning successive elections, Congress erected several pillars of Indian democracy such as Constitutional rule, secularism, reservation, linguistic states, an independent central bank, devolution of resources, etc. Regional parties — for example, the Dravidian parties — won elections in states and asserted the primacy of the State's language, States' rights, cultural identity, land reforms, etc. The JP-led movement in 1975 replaced a central government and enacted Constitutional safeguards for liberty. The AASU movement in 1978 triggered legal provisions to control cross-border migration. In fact, it can be confidently asserted that all major changes in the governance of India were brought about by political parties through struggle and elections.

Unusual Qualifications

CJP is not a political party in the conventional sense. It was born out of the angry reaction of one person, Mr Abhijeet Dipke. Evidently, Mr Dipke and some of his friends were deeply hurt by a seemingly provocative remark. Mr Dipke started a platform and asked "What if all cockroaches got together?". He declared that anyone can join the platform who is 'unemployed, lazy, chronically online and having the ability to rant professionally'. Apparently, there are many including students and scholars who meet the unusual qualifications! There are also many who are employed but are chronically online and can rant professionally. These include honourable men and women such as artists, teachers, doctors, nurses, advocates, businesspersons, journalists, other professionals and junior government employees.

The platform has a founder-leader, spokespersons, grit and little else. As far as is known, there is no organization, no membership, no registration, no declaration of policies, or any other features of a political party. Yet, through a 35-day protest, CJP has obliged two Cabinet ministers to negotiate, extracted the resignation of a minister, forced the government to withdraw the cases against the protesters, and got written commitments from the government

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sighted in 2026 in Tamil Nadu. Mr Joseph Vijay announced a political party (Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam or TVK) in February 2024 but it not take the 'form' of a regular party; by all accounts it remained an amorphous Fans' Association. Mostly, the office bearers of the Fans' Association became office bearers of TVK at various levels. TVK candidates were selected defying conventional political wisdom — ignoring caste, religion, gender, legacy, wealth, etc. Over 200 of the 234 candidates did not have or spend money. In the vast majority of constituencies, TVK candidates did not have the semblance of a campaign. Many TVK candidates were strangers to the constituency concerned and they had few booth agents or polling agents or counting agents. Mr Vijay held a few roadshows and spoke at fewer meetings. Apparently, the only things that mattered to the voters were 'Mr Vijay' and the 'whistle' symbol. The alchemist was the social media (Instagram and YouTube): Mr Vijay was seen everywhere and he was heard in every home. TVK won in 108 constituencies against the two formidable political and election machines of DMK and AIADMK, and polled 35 per cent of the votes.

No political party, no leader, no journalist, and no pollster foretold a TVK victory. When election results poured in, it was received with as much surprise by the TVK as it was received with shock by the established political parties.

The political change in Tamil Nadu was brought about by citizens occupying the space beyond and outside political parties. Following the Tamil Nadu example, it is not beyond imagination that change can be brought about by citizens who may not know each other, may not talk to each other, may not belong to an organization, but vote in the same manner and elect sufficient number of representatives to form a government.

Challenge to Political Parties

Political parties should closely examine the phenomenon of the election result in Tamil Nadu and the outcome of the Jantar Mantar protest. Organized political parties may not become obsolete but traditional concepts such as High Command, Executive Committee, General Council, Mahasabha, membership and party elections may become irrelevant. The obnoxious phrase 'vote bank' may vanish.

The citizens have shed silence thanks to the mobile, Twitter (now X), Facebook and Instagram; now, they seem to have shed fear. Khaki or blue, police, lathis, tear gas, guns, and arrest/detention no longer intimidate the youth, and older citizens may follow. I wish the political space beyond and outside political parties will grow larger.

Gen Z and other protesters have challenging tasks ahead of them:

- First, they must drag the Universities out of medievalism and obscurantism.
- They must stand up to the brute force of the uniformed police, moral policing, and Bajrang Dal-like 'enforcers'.
- They must fight against legislated morality and discrimination.
- Gen Z must stop the oppressive corruption in local revenue and registration offices, hospitals, ration shops, local bodies, etc.

After Jantar Mantar, every change for the better seems possible.

Why Did FIFA Scrap Its World Cup Stake Sale? (THE HINDU PAGE NO 8)

Syllabus Mapping

5. **GS Paper:** GS Paper 2
6. **Syllabus Topics:**
 1. Governance, transparency, and accountability in international regulatory bodies and non-profit sports federations.
 2. Issues relating to commercialization, private equity investment, and institutional ethics in global governance.

Why did FIFA scrap its World Cup stake sale?

What was FIFA's plan to sell stakes in the World Cup? What would FIFA's member associations have gained? Who opposed the proposal and why? Has FIFA faced similar resistance before? How did Gianni Infantino respond to the pushback?

Anirudh Velamuri

The story so far:

In July 31, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) abandoned its controversial plan to sell stakes in the World Cup to private investors. What began as FIFA president Gianni Infantino's vision for a new commercial subsidiary, backed by venture capitalist Joshua Kushner, quickly unravelled amid fierce opposition from the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), other confederations, and FIFA's own senior staff.

What did FIFA propose?

Shortly after the 2026 World Cup, Mr. Infantino unveiled plans to create a new subsidiary called FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE). This entity was to consolidate all of FIFA's revenue-generating operations – broadcasting, sponsorships, ticketing, licensing, and tournament operations – under one structure. FIFA stated that it would retain majority control of FFE and bring in outside investors to hold minority, non-controlling stakes. In that regard, venture capitalist Joshua Kushner, through his holding company Thrive Eternal, was reported to be the lead investor under consideration. Mr. Kushner is the brother of Jared Kushner, U.S. President

By selling stakes now, FIFA would allow private investors to benefit from future growth that would otherwise accrue entirely to FIFA and football

Donald Trump's son-in-law. Mr. Infantino shares a close relationship with Mr. Trump, as seen in his awarding of a FIFA peace prize to the President and allowing his intervention to overturn U.S. striker Folarin Balogun's suspension during the World Cup.

What did FIFA's member associations stand to gain from this proposal?

By selling stakes now, FIFA, a non-profit organisation under Swiss law, would allow private investors to benefit from future growth that would otherwise accrue entirely to FIFA and football. FIFA had reportedly offered its 211 member associations an upfront \$20 million payment upon approval, followed by three more payments of \$20 million, \$22 million, and \$24 million between 2027 and 2038.

In an official press release, Mr. Infantino explained that his move would democratise football. He said, "We intend to invest heavily even in the smallest or most remote parts of the footballing world, places that are too often passed over. Every FIFA member association, whatever its size, resources, or geographic location, will have a voice and the opportunity to determine its own course. Football has become a truly global game and so the benefits must be felt globally."

FIFA gave its 211 member associations until September 19 to decide whether to support the plan, or risk losing the one-time payout offer.

What was the immediate response?

UEFA, the wealthy and powerful European football governing body, held an emergency meeting with its 55 member nations on July 30 and voted to boycott World Cups if FIFA moved forward with the plan. In a statement, UEFA said, "We unanimously and unequivocally reject FIFA's proposal to transfer ownership interests in the World Cup and other FIFA competitions to private investors. The World Cup cannot be treated as an investment product. It is one of football's greatest sporting legacies. It has been built over generations by players, national teams and supporters across every continent. No part of it should ever be surrendered to private investors. The World Cup is not for sale."

Has FIFA ever faced such opposition before?

Yes. In 2018, Mr. Infantino pursued a similar

investment deal with Japan's SoftBank to fund the Club World Cup, but that plan fell apart amid public criticism. In 2021, UEFA's threat to boycott helped derail Mr. Infantino's proposal to hold the World Cup every two years instead of every four.

Is UEFA alone in opposing this?

UEFA was the first to oppose FIFA's plans. UEFA has had other run-ins with FIFA too: its president boycotted the World Cup final in protest against FIFA's decision to overturn Mr. Balogun's suspension after Mr. Trump's intervention; and it also criticised other FIFA decisions such as hydration breaks.

But UEFA was not the only one to oppose this plan. CONCACAF (Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football) and AFC (Asian Football Confederation) also raised concerns about the lack of transparency in the process, as did individual federations such as England's FA (Football Association) and the global players' union FIFPRO (Fédération Internationale des Associations de Footballeurs Professionnels).

OFC (Oceania Football Confederation) refused to immediately state how it viewed FIFA's plans and instead said that the proposal would be considered by the OFC Executive Committee at a meeting later this month.

Has anyone from FIFA addressed this issue?

Carlos Cordeiro, Mr. Infantino's senior adviser who represented FIFA on the White House Task Force at the World Cup, resigned and urged other senior FIFA staff to speak out. "I cannot stand by while FIFA considers selling a stake in the World Cup. I oppose it unequivocally," Mr. Cordeiro said in a statement. Kevin Lamour, FIFA's chief operating officer, also issued a statement about the lack of transparency. "Not only must this project not go ahead. The time has now come for football political leaders to ask themselves the right questions and make the right decisions. And if that means I lose my job, then so be it," he said.

How has FIFA responded?

On July 31, Mr. Infantino announced that FIFA would not be moving forward with the proposal. "Having listened carefully to all the views, it has become clear that the project has created divisions of a nature that, regardless of the level of support, are no longer in the interest of the objective set out in the first place. Our purpose has always been – and will always be – to unite and improve. As a result, this proposal will not proceed," he said in a statement.



File photo of FIFA President Gianni Infantino speaking during the 2026 FIFA World Cup play-off tournament draw in Zurich. AFP

A SLICE OF EUROPE IN AFRICA: CEUTA (THE HINDU PAGE NO 9)

Syllabus Mapping

7. **GS Paper:** GS Paper 2

8. **Syllabus Topics:**

1. Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on global issues (International migration, border management, and refugee crises).
2. Human rights frameworks and judicial rulings governing territorial sovereignty and asylum procedures.

A slice of Europe in Africa

Ceuta

The Spanish exclave witnessed one of its largest migration crises as up to 60,000 Moroccans breached its borders and arrived in the city, seeking asylum

Smriti Sudesh

“They told us we would have a place of refuge in Spain, and it was a lie”. That is how one migrant described his journey to Ceuta. He was among tens of thousands who believed Europe had finally opened its doors. Some scrambled over razor-wire fences. Others slipped through gaps in the chain-link barrier. Many plunged into the Mediterranean wearing wetsuits, kicking with flippers or clutching inflatable rings as they swam towards the tiny Spanish enclave on Morocco’s northern coast.

For a few hours, Europe seemed within reach.

By Friday evening, the illusion had vanished. According to Spain’s Interior Ministry, more than 48,000 migrants had already crossed back into Morocco. Hungry, exhausted, and disappointed, many took the same route they had taken only hours earlier. At least 67 people died in the chaos. Once again, the spotlight fell on Ceuta: a territory barely 15 square km in size but one that has repeatedly found itself at the centre of Europe’s migration politics. Ceuta, together with Melilla, further east, is one of only two Spanish territories on the African mainland. Although both are located on



Morocco’s Mediterranean coast, they have remained under Spanish sovereignty for centuries. Today, they constitute the EU’s only land borders with Africa.

For migrants fleeing war, poverty, or economic hardship, Ceuta is one of the shortest routes into Europe. But reaching Ceuta does not necessarily mean reaching Europe in the way many would imagine. While the enclave is part of Spain and the EU, migrants cannot continue to mainland Spain. For many, Ceuta becomes a waiting room rather than a gateway.

And that reality has transformed the enclave into one of Europe’s most heavily guarded frontiers. Double-layered border fences topped with razor wire, surveillance cameras, motion sensors, observation towers, and constant patrols by Spanish security forces line the frontier. Yet, despite heavy border security, migrants continue to attempt dangerous crossings.

Spanish authorities estimate that about 60,000 migrants entered Ceuta over two days. As thousands poured into the city, residents largely stayed indoors while shops and businesses shut their doors.

Court ruling

Why so many people attempted the crossing remains unclear. Spanish officials say trafficking networks spread false claims that asylum could easily be obtained in Spain.

On June 29, Spain’s Supreme Court ruled that migrants arriving by sea cannot be summarily deported because they do not cross the physical border referenced in Spanish law. Some believe traffickers and migrants interpreted the ruling as protection against deportation for those entering Ceuta by sea. Many migrants said, according to an NYT report, Moroccan security personnel appeared unusually permissive and even encouraged them to

“come to Spain”. Spain-Morocco ties have long been shaped by disagreements over migration, border management, and the disputed territory of Western Sahara.

The Ceuta crisis also quickly spilled into domestic politics. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez swiftly travelled to the exclave, describing the mass crossing as a “violation of Spain’s territorial integrity”. The Opposition, meanwhile, saw things differently. Conservative parties and the far-right Vox accused Mr. Sánchez of encouraging irregular migration through policies that offer pathways to legal residency for undocumented migrants already living in Spain. Human rights organisations, on the other hand, criticised the authorities, pointing to overcrowded reception centres and Spain’s long-standing practice of rapidly returning migrants from the enclaves.

Most of those who entered Ceuta have now returned to Morocco, and the immediate crisis may have subsided. But for many migrants who believed Europe had finally opened its doors, the journey ended with them back where they had started. “They had nothing for us,” one migrant said. “They were screaming, ‘Get out of Spain.’”