

Academic Integrity and the Menace of Paper Leak in India: A Critical Exploration

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Abstract

On one hand, there is rising unemployment, on the other hand, the notifications for filling up vacant posts are issued after 2-2 years, on top of that, 2-2 years more are spent in going through the long process of conducting the examination and the youth who prepare hard and make the journey somehow to take the exam fall prey to the paper leak mafia. Many times, after coming out of the examination centre, it is found out that the paper was leaked at some other centre. Poor people, whose hard work and parents' hard earned money is wasted, only they know how their mountain of hopes breaks! The paper leak problem is not limited to the job recruitment exams only. It has also bitten the CBSE, medical and engineering exams of 10th and 12th. Amidst the controversy over NEET and UGC-NET exams, now the central government has implemented a law made to stop the cases of paper leak.

Keywords: Examination, Paper leak, CBT system, Law.

Introduction:

Youngsters work hard for years. Then suddenly the news comes that the paper has been leaked. It often happens that the exam is cancelled after the paper is leaked. As soon as the exam is cancelled, all the hard work and hopes of the candidates are ruined.

Years of hard work and in one stroke, due to the greed of some people, the paper is leaked, then the exam is cancelled and then a long wait for the second exam.

The increasing cases of paper leak have put the future of students in our country from North to South in darkness. Away from their home and family, these students go to different cities of the country and study for years. The financial condition of many students is such that they do not even get two meals a day, yet they are ready to cross every difficulty to achieve their goal. But

'paper leak' is neither allowing them to reach their destination nor is it allowing their dreams to come true.

The Web of Paper Leak Spread Across The Country

Paper leak has become a big problem for India. Due to this, the future of students is in danger. In the last 7 years, hundreds of cases of paper leak have come to light across the country, which have affected about two crore students. Most of the cases of paper leak are coming from Rajasthan. UP is also not behind, a big case of paper leak came to light here in February, which created an uproar in the whole country. Police recruitment examination was held on 17-18 February in 75 districts of Uttar Pradesh.

More than 48 lakh applications were received for 60 thousand 244 posts of UP Police, which included more than 16 lakh girls. On February 17, on the day of the examination, a paper started going viral on social media. The situation was such that on the day of the examination, the students were given papers on Telegram for Rs 50-50, whose answers were also written absolutely correctly. After a lot of uproar and protest, the government canceled this examination on 26 February.

Paper Leaked 12 Times in 4 Years In Rajasthan

Incidents of paper leak are coming to light one after the other from Rajasthan too. On an average, three papers have been leaked every year in the state since 2019. This has affected the future of about 40 lakh students. During an investigation, police officials found evidence that the accused have received Rs 5 to 15 lakh in exchange for leaking each paper.

About twenty-six cases of paper leak have been registered in the state between 2011 and 2022. Of these, 14 have been registered in the last four years only. Rajasthan remains the hot state of India in the paper leak case.

Paper Leak Gang Busted in Madhya Pradesh

The School Education Department had also admitted that the paper was leaked in Madhya Pradesh Board Exam 2023. FIR was registered in Bhind and Bhopal of the state regarding paper leak. 3 accused in the paper leak were arrested from Gujarat. Along with this, strict action was

taken by registering FIR against the president and representative of the center from which the police got information about the paper leak in their investigation.

Apart from this, cases of paper leak have also been reported in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Bihar and Haryana. If we talk about South Indian states, the Physics paper leak case of Karnataka PSC, Karnataka Engineering Examination, Tamil Nadu TNPSC, Maharashtra HSC and Kerala SSLC has been in the headlines. On the other hand, the result of Haryana HHSC and Kashmir Junior Engineer Recruitment Examination has been prominent. Paper leak cases point towards corruption as well as put a question mark on the entire system.

How Does A Paper Leak Happen?

While investigating the competitive exam paper leak case, the police found that each state had a different way of leaking the paper. For example, in Assam, the entire paper was leaked on WhatsApp within a few seconds of the start of the exam and sent to thousands of candidates. On the other hand, the police investigation in Madhya Pradesh revealed that the accused of paper leak had hacked the server of the Mumbai company which was given the responsibility of organizing the exam.

On the other hand, when the paper was leaked on social media in Maharashtra, the candidates complained about it to the police. Whereas in Rajasthan, which is on top in terms of paper leak, the paper was not leaked on social media but by stealing it from the government office. In the UP Police Recruitment Exam, STF found out in its investigation that the entire game of paper leak was run in connivance with the company of Transport Corporation which was given the responsibility of transporting the paper from the warehouse after it was printed.

Sometimes the paper was leaked from the examination centre as well. The game of paper leak is played in such a way that a deal is made to sell a paper for 25 to 50 lakhs. Now it is not easy for a single student to pay such a huge amount, so many students are added together and then the same paper is sold at a low price, even for Rs 500.

Who Are These Paper Leak Mafia?

Career expert Pawan Kumar, who has been running a campaign against paper leak for the past several years, says that he has the numbers of many such gangs who leak papers. We keep tracking such people. We also gave the numbers to STF but no action was taken. If any exam is to be held, then the preparation for leaking the paper starts months before that.

Dilip Sharma, who filed a case in the High Court in the nursing exam paper leak case in Madhya Pradesh, said that the problem of paper leak in competitive examinations is very serious. Some mafia-type people keep doing such acts to fulfill their personal interests, which spoils the hard work of the eligible candidates. To a large extent, governments are also responsible for the paper leak cases of competitive examinations. The question is that how do the accused get released easily even after being caught, when there is a strict provision of punishment in the law.

What Do The Victim Students Say

Nursing student Kunal Kumar says that I had given the nursing recruitment exam in 2022, two years have passed but nothing is known about that exam yet. The government should pay attention to the fraud that happened and take the exam again, because two years of nursing students have already been wasted. At the same time, Gwalior student Sandesh Kumar says that wherever the exams are being held, papers are being leaked. The government should pay attention to this. Later the government says we are doing this, we are doing that while the government is not doing anything. We are ruining the lives of the youth. We are nursing students, our exams have not been held for the last two years.

Paper Leak Is The Failure Of The Entire System

Padma Shri Super 30 founder Anand Kumar says that there cannot be any worse impact on students than this. All their hard work goes to waste. They start feeling helpless and finally take the wrong step. Paper leak is the failure of the entire system. Some wrong people play with the entire system. Entry of wrong people in the system and contact with wrong people is the main reason for this. Question papers are leaked just for some money.

Anand says paper leak is a terrible disease. All the solutions are available to deal with it. In India, the youth put special emphasis on jobs. They appear in exams in thousands and lakhs. It is the dream of the family and society. Today there is a need to adopt self-employment. No matter how many jobs there are, everyone cannot get them. With time, the nature of jobs has also changed. Therefore, there is a need to change ourselves and our thinking.

How Are Papers Monitored

It is not that the government does not have a system to prevent paper leaks. The government makes tight security arrangements at examination centers to prevent cheating in every competitive and professional examination. For example, it includes installing CCTV cameras at examination centers, deployment of examination center security squads or police personnel, deployment of flying squads, installing jamming equipment at examination centers, making tight security arrangements to keep the examination material safe and forming a special investigation team to catch those who leak the paper. From the professor who makes the paper to the printers as well as the people who deliver the paper to the examination centers, all are under tight security, and everyone is monitored 24 hours a day. Despite this, the paper leak raises many questions.

The NEET exam for admission to medical colleges is in controversy due to irregularities. The Center's National Testing Agency (NTA) conducted this exam on May 5 this year. About 24 lakh students participated in it. The result came on June 4.

There are 67 children who scored 100%, that is, they scored full 720 marks in the exam of 720 marks. This is the first time that such a large number of students have scored full 100% marks. In the year 2023, only two students got 100% marks.

After this it was found that 1563 students were given grace marks. Then the leak of the exam paper was also revealed. The matter reached the Supreme Court, after which the Center canceled the score cards of 1563 students with grace marks and said that their examination will be taken again on June 23.

So far 5 petitions have been filed in the Supreme Court regarding the irregularities in NEET and the demand for re-examination. The Supreme Court will hear all these petitions on July 8.

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Step Taken By Government

After the increasing cases of paper leak, the central and state governments have come into action. To stop this crime, the central government has brought the 'Public Examination (Prevention of Malpractice) Bill-2024'. In February, this bill was passed in both the houses of Parliament, in which it has been proposed to include all the public examinations conducted by the government for admission in educational institutions and jobs including UPSC, SSC, JEE, NEET, Railways, Banking, CUET.

According to this bill, mass cheating will be non-bailable. If someone is caught cheating, he will have to pay a jail term of 3 years and a fine of Rs 10 lakh. On the other hand, if someone is involved in paper leak, then there can be a jail term of up to 10 years and a fine of up to one crore rupees.

Professor Furqan Qamar says that there are also such institutions in our country which have been conducting competitive examinations for many decades, but till date no paper has ever been leaked. UPSC is also one such institution where no incident of paper leak has come to the fore. Institutions like UPSC should be made role models, we should learn from them. The way they conduct exams, the same model should be followed in other places as well. Technology can also play a big role in preventing paper leak, which should be adopted.

Computer Based System To Prevent Paper Leak.

Students across the country keep preparing for competitive exams. So that they can get government jobs. But many times exams get cancelled due to paper leak.

But IIT Kanpur has a technology with which if the exam is conducted, then the problem of paper leak will be completely eliminated. Know what this technology is and how it works.

JEE exam for engineering is conducted across the country. Along with this, NET exam is also conducted through computer based test system. Where no case of paper leak has ever come to the fore. This system was prepared by various IITs across the country including IIT Kanpur. Through which the exams are computer based and the possibility of paper leak in it is almost negligible. These exams are being conducted on this pattern for the last 5 years. In this, the paper reaches the exam center half an hour before the exam through online medium and as soon as the paper is downloaded in the center, the internet service is completely shut down there. Internet cannot be accessed on any phone or other gadget.

Exams Through Computer Based System

The paper reaches the students' computer 5 minutes before the exam which comes through the local area network. In such a situation, there is absolutely no possibility of paper leak and students give the exam on the computer itself. Senior Professor Manindra Agarwal of IIT Kanpur told that exams are being conducted through computer based system for the last 5 years. In which problems like cheating or paper leak have never come up. If the government will ask for help from them or to make such a technology. Which can solve the problems like paper leak and cheating. For that, exams can be conducted through this technology.

Anti Paper Leak Law

This year has been full of challenges in terms of examinations. In February, the paper of UP Police Recruitment Exam was leaked, then UP RO ARO Recruitment, then NEET UG and UGC NET. The process of paper leak is not stopping. Due to this, the future of crores of candidates is in danger. But now a strict law has been made to stop this. Anti Paper Leak Law will help in preventing such unfortunate incidents.

There is a debate on NEET paper leak and UGC NET paper leak across the country. This is being discussed everywhere. Meanwhile, the government has implemented the 'Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024' i.e. Anti Paper Leak Law. Let us tell you that the Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act was passed in the Lok Sabha on 6 February this year and in the Rajya Sabha on 9 February. President Draupadi Murmu approved the bill on February 12 and converted it into law.

From school-college examinations to competitive examinations, incidents of paper leak and cheating have become very common. Despite strictness at the examination centers, cases of paper leak and cheating come to the fore. Such cases seem to challenge the system directly. This upsets those students who really work hard to prepare for the exam. In such a situation, following the anti-paper leak law will help in preventing these cases. There is a provision of punishment and fine under this.

15 activities have been highlighted in the Public Examination Act 2024. Participation in any of these can lead to imprisonment or ban. In these situations, a sentence of 3 to 10 years of imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs 1 crore can be sentenced.

- 1- Leaking the question paper or answer key before the examination.
- 2- On being involved with other people in leaking the answer key or paper of any examination.
- 3- On seeing or possessing the question paper or OMR sheet without any special or legal right.
- 4- In case any unauthorized person tells the answers of 1 or more questions during the examination.
- 5- In case of directly or indirectly helping any candidate to write the answer in the examination.

- 6- In case of tampering with the answer sheet or OMR sheet.
- 7- In case of any manipulation in the assessment without any authority or without bonafide error.
- 8- In case of deliberately ignoring or violating the standards and rules prescribed by the Central Government for any examination.
- 9- In case of tampering with any document which is considered necessary for shortlisting the candidate or determining his merit or rank.
- 10- In case of deliberately violating the security standards with the intention of causing disturbance in the conduct of the examination.
- 11- In case of tampering with computer network, computer resource or any computer system.
- 12- In case of tampering with the seating arrangement of the candidate, exam date or allocation of shift with the intention of cheating in the examination.
- 13- For threatening people related to the Public Examination Authority, Service Provider or any government agency or causing disruption in any examination.
- 14- There is also a provision of punishment for creating a fake website to extort money or commit fraud.
- 15- There can also be punishment for conducting fake examination, issuing fake admit card or offer letter.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court has heard several times in the last fortnight regarding many irregularities including paper leak in NEET UG-2024, the all India entrance examination in the medical field, but the all-India protest of the candidates has not stopped yet. Apart from the Supreme Court, different petitions are also being heard in the High Courts of different states in this regard. It can be guessed to what level the rigging has increased in the entrance examinations in the country and especially the examinations for selection in government jobs. The worrying thing is that this is the situation when eight states of the country have strict laws to deal with paper leak and rigging in examinations.

The question is that when already eight states have stringent laws to deal with cheating and malpractices in job related examinations, still the various types of malpractices in examinations are not stopping, then how can it be expected that this problem will be solved just by the introduction of one more law?

Actually this problem is not a small one because this crisis has been present in all the important and big states of the country for a long time, against which even after trying many types of laws till now, there has not been even an iota of reduction in such crimes.

The facts are witness to the fact that this disease is very complex and has taken deep roots. In fact, if we want to get rid of this disease, then the government will have to be very strict and do a deep invasive surgery of the examinations to get rid of this disease. Only then can we get rid of this problem.

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