



# **DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS**

**TOPIC**

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**DETOXIFYING INDIA'S  
ENTRANCE EXAMINATION  
SYSTEM**

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# DETOXIFYING INDIA'S ENTRANCE EXAMINATION SYSTEM

## Context

- Recent controversies around **paper leaks, irregularities, and opacity in major entrance examinations** such as NEET, JEE, CUET, UGC-NET have raised questions about the credibility of India's exam system.
  - With nearly 1.5–2 crore students appearing annually in various national and state-level entrance tests, the system's efficiency, fairness, and transparency directly affect **India's demographic dividend**.

## Issues with Current System

- Psychological and Emotional Toll:** Students as young as 14 are pushed into intense preparation, sacrificing adolescence, peer bonding, and holistic growth.
  - Constant competition and performance pressure lead to stress, depression, anxiety, and alienation, at times leading to tragic outcomes.
- Integrity & Security Concerns:** Frequent reports of paper leaks and impersonation rackets (e.g., NEET 2024, Bihar/Jharkhand incidents).
  - Weak coordination between NTA, state agencies, and cybercrime units.
- Inequity and Social Divide:** Coaching fees (6–7 lakh for two years) exclude economically weaker students and privilege wealthier families.
  - Urban–rural, gender, and regional disparities are worsened as students in smaller towns/villages lack access to premium centres.
- Merit Measurement:** Entrance exams attempt to distinguish between negligible score differences (e.g., 99.9 vs 99.7 percentile), which is unreasonable and unfair.
  - A student with 70–80% in Class 12 PCM is well-suited for B.Tech, but the system demands extraordinary marks due to scarcity of quality seats.
- Limited Opportunities vs Huge Aspirations:** 15 lakh aspirants for 18,000+ IIT seats creates an unrealistic funnel.
  - Scarcity of quality institutions forces overemphasis on IITs, amplifying pressure and unhealthy competition.
- Societal and Ethical Concerns:** Students are reduced to rank-holders, not individuals with diverse talents.
  - Fuels toxic obsession with individual superiority, ignoring structural factors like privilege, access, and luck.
- Lack of Transparency & Accountability:** Poor grievance redressal, delayed results, and opaque normalisation policies.
  - Lack of independent oversight over NTA functioning.

## Steps Taken So Far

- Establishment of **National Testing Agency (NTA) (2017)** to standardise exams.
- CBT (Computer-Based Testing)** introduced in JEE, CUET.
- Exam reforms committees constituted after every controversy.
- State initiatives:** Some states moving towards school board performance-based admission models.

## Global Inspirations

- Lottery-Based Admissions (Dutch Model):** The Netherlands uses a weighted lottery for medical school admissions, introduced in 1972 and reinstated in 2023.
  - Students meeting a minimum threshold enter the lottery.
  - Higher grades improve odds, but all eligible students have a chance.
  - Relevance for India:** Reduces bias and unhealthy competition.

- Promotes diversity and fairness.
- Avoids over-reliance on minor score differences.
- **Curbing Coaching Dominance (Chinese Model):** In China, the 2021 “double reduction” policy banned for-profit tutoring for school subjects, nationalising coaching overnight to reduce financial burdens, address inequalities and protect student well-being.
  - ♦ **Application in India:** Nationalise coaching if entrance exams continue.
    - Provide free online lectures, study materials and mentorship.

### Way Forward (Detoxifying the System)

- **Multiple Pathways & Continuous Assessment:** Reduce dependence on single-exam filters. Blend board performance + aptitude testing + interviews for admissions.
- **Strengthening NTA Governance:** Independent regulatory oversight body with exam security experts.
  - ♦ Ensure third-party audit of exam systems annually.
- **Equity and Social Mobility:** To enhance equity, 50% of IIT seats could be reserved vertically for rural students educated in government schools, promoting social mobility and reducing structural inequality.
- **Academic Support:** If entrance examinations persist, coaching should be nationalised, with free online study materials and lectures.
- **Student Exchange Programmes:** To foster diversity, the IITs could introduce an annual student exchange programme, randomly selecting students to study across different IIT campuses over four years.
- **Mental Health Interventions:** Mandatory counselling cells in exam hubs.
  - ♦ Inclusion of well-being modules in school curricula.
- **Faculty Exchange Incentives:** Incentivising the transfer of professors between IITs could also ensure uniform academic standards, dismantling artificial hierarchies and reinforcing the equal value of a B.Tech from any IIT.

### Daily Mains Practice Question

- The credibility of India's entrance examination system is critical to ensuring equity, transparency, and access in higher education. Critically examine the challenges facing the current system and suggest reforms to make it more inclusive and reliable.

Source: TH

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