

NEET BILL: TOUGHER LAW, BIGGER STAKES

The Lok Sabha's passage of the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, marks a necessary tightening of India's response to the menace of examination paper leaks. Introduced by Union Minister Jitendra Singh on July 27 and passed by voice vote on July 29 amid Opposition protests, the legislation raises the stakes considerably for those who compromise the integrity of public examinations. Under the amendments, individuals involved in unfair means can face five to ten years in prison and a fine of up to Rs 50 lakh. For organised examination fraud, the minimum imprisonment rises to seven years and the minimum fine to Rs 10 crore. Service providers can face higher penalties and an eight-year debarment. The Bill also provides for special fast-track courts, the completion of investigations within two months, and trials within three months of the filing of a chargesheet.

There is little doubt that such provisions are welcome. Paper leaks are not minor administrative lapses. They destroy the credibility of examinations, waste years of students' lives and reward dishonesty at the expense of merit. A strong deterrent is therefore essential. Speedy prosecution is equally important because a law that takes years to secure convictions can hardly deter an organised racket. Yet, the Opposition has a point that deserves serious consideration: a tougher law does not automatically create a leak-proof examination system. Congress Deputy Leader Gaurav Gogoi pointed out that leaks continued despite the 2024 law and questioned the effectiveness of the existing institutional framework. Other Opposition members argued that the Bill concentrates on punishment while failing to address wider systemic weaknesses and accountability.

The Opposition's objections, therefore, should not be reduced to opposition for opposition's sake. Nor should the government dismiss every criticism as political obstruction. The real question is whether prevention has received as much attention as punishment. The government itself has acknowledged the need for broader reform by setting up a high-powered panel on examination reforms. An earlier expert committee made 101 recommendations, including greater use of computer-based testing and multiple shifts, but several important measures have yet to be fully implemented.

The way forward must therefore be comprehensive. Every stage of the examination chain—from paper setting and printing to encryption, transportation, storage, distribution and digital access—must be independently audited. Service providers need stringent background checks, financial scrutiny and real-time security monitoring. Technology must be used not merely after a leak but to make leaks substantially harder in the first place. The NTA and other examination bodies must also have clearly defined accountability, with responsibility fixed at the appropriate level when serious failures occur. The new law can be a strong deterrent, but it cannot, by itself, restore public faith. India needs a tougher, smarter and more accountable examination system

Sharmila Das

Sustainability has become fashion's favourite conversation. Brands proudly discuss organic cotton, recycled polyester, regenerative agriculture, renewable energy, water conservation, carbon footprints and circularity. Industry conferences are filled with ambitious targets and inspiring presentations. Reports are published. Commitments are announced. Awards are presented. And meanwhile, somewhere in a garment factory, a small zipper is wondering why nobody has invited it to the discussion. Ecology& Environment

The reality is that sustainability in fashion often resembles a group photograph where everyone crowds around the fabric while the trims are accidentally cropped out of the frame.

Yet these seemingly insignificant components—buttons, zippers, sewing threads, labels, elastics, drawcords, rivets, eyelets and other trims—may have a far greater influence on a garment's real-world sustainability than many people realise. The fashion industry has become remarkably skilled at talking about what a garment is made of. It is still learning to talk about everything attached to it. Consider a simple example. A jacket made from recycled polyester sounds like a sustainability success story. But what happens if the zipper is made from a different material, the sewing thread from another, the labels from yet another, and the decorative trims from several more? Suddenly, the garment that appeared recyclable becomes significantly more challenging to recycle at the end of its



life. The fabric receives the sustainability headline. The trims quietly complicate the outcome—unless the brand consciously uses recycled-material trims, in which at least 30-50 per cent less virgin material is used.

Or consider durability. A garment may be made from an exceptionally sustainable fabric. Yet if a button falls off after a few uses or a zipper fails within months, the consumer's relationship with that product changes immediately. The garment may be discarded, replaced or forgotten in a wardrobe. In sustainability terms, the environmental impact of a failed trim is rarely limited to the trim itself. Sometimes a ten-gram component determines the future of a five-hundred-gram garment. That is a remarkable amount of influence for something most consumers never notice.

If trims could speak, they might reasonably ask for better representation. After all, sustainability is not simply about what enters a product. It is equally about how long that product remains useful, repairable, reusable and recyclable.

And trims influence every one of those outcomes. A thoughtfully selected zipper can extend prod-

uct life. A durable button can reduce replacement frequency. A repair-friendly fastening can encourage continued use. A responsibly sourced label can improve transparency. A recyclable trim can support circularity. A traceable trim can strengthen supply chain accountability.

None of these decisions generates the excitement of a revolutionary new fibre. Yet collectively, they shape the practical reality of sustainable fashion. Perhaps this is why trims remind me of yoga. When people first encounter yoga, they often focus on the visible aspects—the postures, the flexibility and the impressive poses. These receive attention because they are easy to see. What receives less attention are the quieter elements: the breath, the alignment, the awareness and the consistency of practice. Yet experienced practitioners know that these invisible factors often determine the effectiveness of the entire experience. The pose may attract attention. The breath creates transformation. Fashion sustainability faces a similar challenge. The fabric attracts attention. The details often determine performance. Ecology& Environment

Much like yoga students who

eagerly attempt advanced postures while forgetting to breathe, the industry occasionally becomes fascinated by large sustainability ambitions while overlooking the smaller decisions that support them. The result can be surprisingly familiar.

An impressive sustainability claim attached to a product that is difficult to repair. A recyclable garment that cannot be efficiently recycled. A durable fabric paired with components that fail prematurely. A circularity strategy interrupted by non-circular design choices. In other words, sustainability is holding its breath. Yoga teaches that balance emerges when all parts of a system work together. Fashion sustainability is beginning to learn the same lesson. A garment is not a fabric with accessories. It is a system. And systems succeed or fail through the interaction of all their parts.

This perspective becomes increasingly important as brands pursue circularity. The future of sustainable fashion depends on products that generate less waste and can be easily repaired, disassembled, recycled, reused and recovered. Achieving this will require not only innovative fabrics but also thoughtfully designed trims. Can components be easily separated? Can materials be accurately identified? Can damaged parts be replaced? Can products remain functional for longer? Can end-of-life processing be made simpler? These questions often lead directly back to trims. The industry is taking cognisance of all these issues and monitoring them, but much more needs to be done. The concept is still nascent but is evolving. Ironically, the smaller the component, the easier it is to overlook. Yet sustainability

repeatedly teaches the same lesson: small decisions create large consequences.

A few grams of unnecessary packaging, multiplied by millions of units, become significant waste. A more thoughtful trim specification can influence durability, recyclability and resource efficiency throughout an entire product lifecycle. The impact may be hidden. The results are not.

Perhaps the greatest opportunity lies in changing how we think about sustainability itself. For many years, sustainability has been associated with grand gestures—major innovations, transformative technologies, ambitious targets and industry-wide commitments. These remain important. But lasting progress often emerges from quieter improvements repeated consistently across systems. Ecology& Environment

Once again, yoga offers a useful reminder: lasting benefits come not from a single spectacular session but from small actions practised consistently over time. Sustainable fashion progresses in much the same way—one material choice, one design improvement, one repair-friendly feature and one responsibly sourced trim at a time. The future of fashion will require not only innovation but also attention to the details that determine whether sustainability works in practice rather than merely in theory. So, the next time sustainability conversations focus only on fabrics, spare a thought for the quiet contributors standing just outside the spotlight—the button, the zipper, the label, the thread and the elastic. While the fabric may become famous, the button may very well save the planet.

RAGE BAIT: WHEN ANGER BECOMES THE PRODUCT

Sakshi Sethi

Some social media posts are designed neither to inform, entertain nor inspire, but simply to provoke anger.

They are easy to recognise: the sudden surge of indignation, the tightening of the jaw, the thumb already hovering over the reply button.

What often escapes notice in that moment is that the outrage was never accidental. It was the intended outcome, carefully engineered and delivered. The individual's anger was the product.

Rage baiting, the deliberate fabrication of provocative, false or upsetting content to elicit outrage, has become one of the internet's quietest yet most potent motors.

The creator may not even believe what has been posted. What matters is not the belief behind the content, but the reaction it produces: comments, reposts, quote-shares and ultimately, the algorithmic reward that follows.

Young people are especially vulnerable to this economy of outrage. As an educator, I often see students arrive at school already disturbed by something they encountered while scrolling through their phones. They carry a borrowed anger that they cannot



fully explain, directed at people or issues they barely understand.

Their vision of the world is increasingly moulded not by what is real, but by what is incendiary. When fury is rewarded online, discipline begins to appear weak and brutality starts disguising as heroism. That is a dangerous curriculum for any child.

The consequences are not merely personal. A society trained to react rather than

reflect becomes easier to manipulate and harder to govern.

Rage bait reduces complex questions involving education, faith, gender and public policy to shouting matches in which the loudest voice appears to win. Genuine disagreement is essential to democracy, but meaningful debate is increasingly drowned out by conflict designed merely to attract attention.

We begin to mistake digital noise for national conversation.

What makes rage baiting especially insidious is that it hides behind our virtues. The instinct to challenge falsehood, defend the vulnerable and speak against injustice is precisely what the rage baiter exploits.

The angrier and more righteous we feel, the more useful we become to someone quietly monetising our attention. The defence is not indifference, but discernment. Before sharing or replying, one should ask: who benefits if I amplify this?

Often, the answer is not the cause we imagine we are supporting, but the person who provoked us.

This is a sort of digital literacy that must be taught purposefully, both in classrooms and at kitchen tables. Children should learn to evaluate the emotional architecture of a post as thoroughly as they examine its words. They must be taught to understand when content is aiming to control their feelings rather than educate their judgment. FamilyLaw

We already teach children not to trust a stranger who tries to frighten them on the street. We must now teach them to recognise the stranger who tries to terrify them through a screen.

The enduring bond between alumni and their alma mater

Anuradha PS

The unexpected energy of the courtyard was the same as 25 years before: laughter weaved its way through the trees, a gentle buzz of voices sharing stories, and the faces crowding under the college arch. The theme of the evening was not only “Rewind” but the actual feel of returning alumni to celebrate, reconnect, and reflect. From its inception, a band of students has since evolved into a sturdy alumni family, where each member has an individual story to tell about the college. Colleges& Universities

As students arrived back then, the campus was a place to discover. Clubs, study groups and late-night talks were introduced during freshers' week and linked strangers together as companions. The early connections grew stronger with group assignments, campus festivals, and the intense competition of exams. The students were varied and energetic: artists, coders, activists, athletes

and thinkers who exchanged thoughts in the library, on the field and over a cup of chai. This diversity has been a hallmark of the alumni community, and continues to be a rich source of talents and perspectives that enhance every alumni gathering and effort.

The alumnus was transformed into a network of individuals over the years and now consists of a group of people. The alumnus has grown from a list of names into a living network over the years, and is now a collection of individuals. It's the managers creating sustainable solutions, teachers influencing young minds, entrepreneurs starting businesses and professionals securing meaningful careers across a range of industries. A lot of people have turned their passions at the campus into meaningful careers. A surprising majority says that work today is “satisfying”, not just “stable”, when queried. Work offered growth, values and creative contribution.

Replays of the best songs of youth drifted about throughout the night. There were tales of late-night trips to the library when deadlines were near, and someone was always there with a cup of coffee; there were stories of the impromptu drama performances that used empty classrooms as stages; there were stories of the cricket team's untimely triumph that brought the campus to a state of celebration. Nostalgia was lodged in the mundane: A cherished bench beside the canteen, graffiti on the arts block, and an old notice-board covered in posters from past fests. Such common memories are not just funny; they are a bond that connects alumni over time, and they foster a sense of the moments that formed them.

One of the most heartbreaking events was when I, who had been a teacher since those days and am still one today, encountered the class that graduated in 2001. It was an amazing experience to see those faces, which were once

mine, those of my students, now seasoned professionals themselves, and parents. They spoke with ease; they spoke of the careers they had built and made their own with the foundation we provided them in our classrooms, of the challenges they faced and how they grew in that experience, of how the values we talked about then continue to guide them. I heard from them about their families, their work and their small joys. The exchange was a good reminder that teaching is an ongoing conversation; the teacher-student relationship evolves but never ends. Education

In addition to the nostalgia, it highlighted that the evening was a testament to the fact that alumni are the lifeline of long-term relationships with an institution. The alumni association is not just a roll call, it is a community that has a forward momentum and is reciprocal, contributing to the college's ongoing vitality and future. Alumni provide institutional memory, men-

toring, and materials and are a link to industry and research and to civic life. Their connection provides job opportunities, internships, and project connections for current students, and also serves as a way for alumni to remain connected to a place that helped make them. This is “affection made concrete” – memories of friends and family inspire tangible commitments that invest in the institution.

This was the point made evident by a number of concrete projects announced that night. Alumni will be matched with students for career advice in mentorship programs, internships will be arranged at alumni workplaces and collaborative projects will bring together student teams to work with advisors from industry. Finally, several alumni made commitments to hosting workshops, supporting research, and supporting campus festivals. These pledges demonstrate the power of an organized alumni community.

As the night drew close, groups stayed under the light and reminisced about their favorite moments, some taking pictures that would be shared on social media timelines. It was more than just a smile of memory; it was a smile of reassurance: friendships last through the years, careers can be rewarding and the ties that bind alumni together are unbroken. Rewind was more than an evening, it was a testament to the fact that the college's history lives on in its people.

Many people felt lighter walking away, as they had reconnected and had plans for the future. The alumni went back to their lives with new networks and new purpose; empowered by the great feeling that comes when they are part of an alumni community that will remember, support and celebrate them.

The writer is a Professor in the Department of Commerce, CHRIST (Deemed to be University); Views presented are personal.