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EDITORIAL 01

Cleansing NEET: On a recast test

Next year, the test must have safeguards against malpractice and inefficiency

What comes undone is best redone. The latest development in the **prolonged** National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) 2024 saga has played out in the court, and will answer the question raised initially — the unusually high number of toppers this year. The Supreme Court of India's ruling on the right answer to a particular physics question in the NEET paper, based on the expert opinion of IIT Delhi professionals, has brought down the number of toppers from 61 to a more reasonable number — 17. The wrong answer for the disputed question was chosen reportedly by four lakh students, including 44 in the list of toppers. As a result, all these students will lose five marks each. Ruling that there could be only one correct answer, the Court directed the National Testing Agency (NTA) to revise the scores based on the correct answer. It also emerged during the hearing that the wrong answer for the question was actually present in the older (until 2021) NCERT textbooks. The



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Court had earlier refused to cancel the entire NEET, which over 23 lakh applicants took. While the scheduled date of counselling, July 24, is past already, and with the NTA having to re-tally the marks with the revised answer, the counselling has been delayed again, but will take place as soon as possible.

While the scenario, as it stands today, seems **ostensibly** resolved sufficiently to let the process move forward, the truth is that an **unprecedented** number of violations have occurred in a manner that **vitiated**, possibly for good, the faith in NEET as a fail-safe entrance route. From charges of paper leaks, giving out the wrong question papers, damaged answer keys, **impersonation** by students, and an analysis of marks that showed an unusually high number of toppers from certain centres in the country, NEET-UG 2024 has been a **string** of bad news this year. Notably, the interventions to right the course have come mostly from the judiciary, with the executive stopping short of initiating significant or decisive action required to clean its **Augean stables**. For starters, the extraordinary emphasis that has come to be placed on medicine as a career choice, with over 23 lakh students hoping to compete for over one lakh MBBS seats, will have to be **dialled** down, with a healthy promotion of other scientific streams as viable career options. The

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government also has no option but to **unwind** the entire **spool**, and cast it out if it must, **reorienting** all systems so that the next NEET can be conducted professionally, and with adequate safeguards in place to prevent malpractice or inefficiency.

SUMMARY

The Supreme Court of India has ruled that the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) 2024 has a high number of toppers, with the wrong answer chosen by four lakh students, including 44 in the list of toppers. The Court has directed the National Testing Agency (NTA) to revise the scores based on the correct answer. The court has also revealed that the wrong answer was present in older NCERT textbooks. The NEET-UG 2024 has been a string of bad news this year, with charges of paper leaks, wrong question papers, damaged answer keys, impersonation by students, and an analysis of marks showing an unusually high number of toppers from certain centers. The government has the option to unwind the entire spool and reorient all systems to ensure the next NEET can be conducted professionally and with adequate safeguards against malpractice or inefficiency.

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Vocabulary

1. Prolonged

Synonyms: Extended, lengthened, protracted

Antonyms: Shortened, brief, abbreviated

2. Ostensibly

Synonyms: Apparently, seemingly, purportedly

Antonyms: Actually, really, truly

3. Unprecedented

Synonyms: Unparalleled, unmatched, novel

Antonyms: Common, ordinary, familiar

4. Vitiating

Synonyms: Spoiled, corrupted, tainted

Antonyms: Purified, improved, strengthened

5. Impersonation

Synonyms: Imitation, mimicry, portrayal

Antonyms: Authenticity, genuineness, originality

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6. String

Synonyms: Cord, thread, strand

Antonyms: Fragment, piece, segment

7. Augean Stables

Meaning: The term "Augean stables" refers to a place or situation that is extremely dirty, messy, or corrupt, requiring an extraordinary effort to clean up or rectify. It originates from Greek mythology, where Hercules was tasked with cleaning the stables of King Augeas, which had not been cleaned for years and contained an enormous accumulation of filth.

8. Dialled

Synonyms: Called, phoned, contacted

Antonyms: Ignored, neglected, avoided

9. Unwind

Synonyms: Relax, loosen, de-stress

Antonyms: Tense, tighten, stress



10. Spool

Synonyms: Reel, bobbin, cylinder

Antonyms: Uncoil, unwind, unravel

11. Reorienting

Synonyms: Adjusting, redirecting, realigning

Antonyms: Maintaining, sticking, ignoring

EDITORIAL 02

Not in order: On the Kanwar Yatra and directive on display of names

*The directive's on display of names on Kanwar Yatra route must
be withdrawn*

The Supreme Court of India on Monday stopped the **enforcement of directives** issued by the Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand governments that required food stalls on the route of the Kanwar Yatra — an increasingly popular **pilgrimage** that Shiva devotees undertake — to prominently **exhibit** the names and other

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identity details of their owners and employees. Petitioners argued that the directives would result in discriminatory outcomes, besides **negating** the secular character of the country. The Court accepted the need for urgent judicial intervention in the matter and issued notices to the States that fall in the route — Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh. The case will come up for hearing again on Friday. The yatra takes place during the Hindu month of Shravan when those who worship Shiva — popularly known as Kanwariyas or Bhole — walk hundreds of kilometres carrying pots of Ganga jal, known as kanwar (a structure made of bamboo that has containers suspended on both sides of a pole), to the temples in their home town. The yatra is increasingly popular, particularly among the Dalit and Other Backward Classes in the Hindi heartland. The police in Muzaffarnagar, western U.P., were the first to issue the controversial directive last week, which they said was done to ‘prevent any untoward incident’.

The discriminatory nature of this move became clear soon, and was criticised by the Opposition and National Democratic Alliance allies. Amid the criticism, U.P. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath extended the requirement across the entire route of the pilgrimage in the State. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in neighbouring Uttarakhand followed suit. Reports **emerged** of Hindu hotel owners being asked by the administration to remove their Muslim workers; there were also accounts of **harassment** of

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meat shop owners. BJP allies, the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) and the Janata Dal (United), joined the Opposition Congress and the Samajwadi Party in calling out the **brazenly** communal move of the BJP governments. Many pilgrimages in India are undertaken and organised jointly by people of different faiths, and as it turns out, there are Muslims too who **trek** with Hindus to take part in this unique form of Shiva worship. All along the route, they have, for years, been served by Muslim shop owners and even volunteers. Muslim artisans make a living by making the kanwar in some parts. The economic, cultural and social aspects of the Kanwar Yatra — as with any other pilgrimage — are shared by people of various sects and religions. The government directive was unreasonable and achieved nothing other than promoting communal **enmity**. U.P. and Uttarakhand should withdraw their directives without waiting for the decision of the Court.

SUMMARY

The Supreme Court of India has stopped the enforcement of directives by the Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand governments that required food stalls on the Kanwar Yatra route to prominently display the names and other identity details of their owners and employees. Petitioners argued that the directives would result in discriminatory outcomes and negate the secular character of the country. The court issued notices to the states that fall in the route,

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including Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, and Madhya Pradesh. The yatra, an increasingly popular pilgrimage, is undertaken during the Hindu month of Shravan when devotees walk hundreds of kilometers carrying pots of Ganga jal, known as kanwar, to their home town. The case will come up for hearing again on Friday.

Vocabulary

1. Enforcement

Synonyms: Implementation, application, execution

Antonyms: Neglect, disregard, omission

2. Directives

Synonyms: Instructions, orders, guidelines

Antonyms: Suggestions, options, freedoms

3. Pilgrimage

Meaning: A pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred place or shrine, often undertaken for religious or spiritual reasons. It can also refer more broadly to any significant journey or quest.



4. Exhibit

Synonyms: Display, showcase, present

Antonyms: Conceal, hide, suppress

5. Negating

Synonyms: Denying, refuting, contradicting

Antonyms: Affirming, confirming, validating

6. Emerged

Synonyms: Appeared, surfaced, materialized

Antonyms: Disappeared, vanished, receded

7. Harassment

Synonyms: Intimidation, abuse, mistreatment

Antonyms: Support, assistance, kindness

8. Brazenly

Synonyms: Boldly, shamelessly, audaciously

Antonyms: Timidly, modestly, shyly



9. Trek

Synonyms: Journey, hike, expedition

Antonyms: Stay, rest, idleness

10. Enmity

Synonyms: Hostility, animosity, antagonism

Antonyms: Friendship, amity, goodwill

