

Course correction – The measure of tests

Allowing students to take JEE and NEET twice a year is logical

In an ideal system, admission to higher education courses would be based on assessment of **aptitude** and suitability, and a testing process that is **transparent**, **accessible** and fair. India's policymakers have struggled to create a **credible** national admissions **apparatus** for professional degree programmes that accommodates the **diversity** and **plurality** of the country. The two-level Joint entrance Examination (JEE) for admission to technological institutes such as the IITs, NITs and IITs, and the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for undergraduate medical courses are steps in this direction – although much work remains to be done to make them accessible, especially for rural students who suffer from various handicaps, not the least of which is **shaky** school education system. Viewed against this background, the decision of the Centre of form a National Testing Agency to conduct these and some other examinations is a progressive move. A professional agency would look at nothing other than the suitability of the candidate to pursue a particular programme. Of course, there will be those that contend that the better run States could have their own agencies perform the same task, but the expertise of a national agency is preferable. The objective of aptitude testing in a **populous** country should be to enable **mobility**, and access to courses offered in any State. Peer-reviewed standards and **curbs** on commercialisation can help expand higher education. In the case of medical courses, a common test such as NEET should make it possible to attend any of about 350 medical colleges, of which 175 are run by private **entities**.

The idea of multiple opportunities to take a test in a single year, which the Centre has now adopted for JEE (Main) and NEET, is not really new, and is familiar to students entering universities abroad, particularly those in the United States. In fact, the Ashok Mishra committee set up by the Human Resource Development Ministry to review the JEE three years ago recommended that an online aptitude test be offered two or more times a year. The move to make both JEE (main) and NEET available twice a year is **consistent** with that advice. However, a computer based test should not turn into a **barrier** for students from rural backgrounds, and **impose** additional expenditure on candidates for preparation, travel to a testing centre and so on. The reservations about online testing on such grounds should be overcome with good planning and **allocation** of sufficient funds. Equally important is the issue of regulation of coaching institutes – a sector worth about Rs.24,000 crore a year, according to the Ashok Mishra Panel – in order to ensure that the changes do not result in further exploitation of students. Ultimately, any process of reform at the level of entrance examinations can be meaningful only if the school education system is **revamped**, and learning outcomes are improved.

WORD LIST

1. **Aptitude**: (quickness at learning, inclination)
Synonym : ability, capability, cleverness, competence, intelligence, proficiency
2. **Transparent**: (see-through, obvious, understandable)
Synonym : clear, crystal-clear, lucid, cellophane
3. **Accessible**: (approachable; ready for use)
Synonym : attainable, available, employable, open, exposed, handy, obtainable, operative, practicable, public

4. **Credible**: (believable)
Synonym : Colorable, conceivable, conclusive, creditable, dependable, plausible, possible
5. **Apparatus**: (Organization or system) (Equipment with a purpose)
Synonym : bureaucracy, command, hierarchy, network, setup, structure
6. **Diversity**: (variety, difference)
Synonym : distinction, distinctiveness, divergence, diversification, heterogeneity, multiplicity
7. **Plurality**: (large part of a group)
Synonym : bulk, greater part, majority, mass, most, profusion, preponderance
8. **Shaky**: (doubtful, trembling)
Synonym : dubious, indecisive, not reliable, precarious, problematic, questionable, uncertain, unclear, unreliable, unsettled.
9. **Populous**: (packed with inhabitants)
Synonym : crawling, crowded, dense, heavily populated, jammed, legion, numerous, peopled, overpopulated, populated, thick
10. **Mobility**: (ability to move)
Synonym : adjustability, flexibility, motility, movability, portability
11. **Peer-review**: (subject to peer a review)
(a process by which something proposed is evaluated by a group of experts in the appropriate field)
12. **Curb**: (restraining device; check, repress, restrict)
Synonym : barrier, brake, bridle, control, deterrent, hindrance, ledge, rein, limitation, restrainer.
13. **Entities**: (object that exists, nature of a being)
Synonym : article, being, body, creature, existence, individual, item, material, organism, presence.
14. **Consistent**: (constant, regular, compatible)
Synonym : dependable, even, expected, invariable, logical, persistent, rational steady.
15. **Barrier**: (obstruction, obstruction to goal)
Synonym : bar, barricade, blockade, curtain, ditch, fence, fortification, impediment, limit, obstacle, hurdle, confines.
16. **Impose**: (set, dictate)
Synonym : appoint, burden, charge, command, compel, demand, force, constrain
17. **Allocation**: (distribution)
Synonym : allotment, appropriation, portion, quota, ration
18. **Revamped**: (renovate)
Synonym : clean, make over, overhaul, refresh, rehabilitate, remake, remodel, renew, repair, restore

Course correction – Transit Gambit

The Centre needs to do more to ease the shift to e-way bills for transport of good

Already **grappling** with the Goods and Services Tax **transition**, businesses are now **anxious** about how the roll out of e-way bills will **pan out**. Stating February 1, all inter-State movement of goods worth over Rs.50,000 will be **tracked** with the introduction of the e-way bill system under the GST **regime**. All **consignments** moving more than 10km from their origin will require prior registration and generation of an e-way bill through the GST Network, which will be valid for varying durations depending on the distance travelled. While a few States have already **imposed** their own requirements for such bills since the GST roll-out in July, all States must **implement** the bill system for **capturing** intra-State trade by June 1. Therefore, a fully integrated tracking system for all taxable goods can be expected only then. This **poses** an **interim** headache for firms operating across States, as they will now face differing **compliance** requirements for inter-State trade and intra-State trade, depending on when individual States **launch** their own e-way bill systems. To be fair, inter-State movement of goods was also tracked under the VAT (value added tax) regime, but intra-State transactions were not. Over 150 items of common use, including LPG cylinders, vegetables, food grain and jewellery will be exempt from such transport permits, which can be checked by **designated** tax officials by intercepting a transporting vehicle. Goods moved on non-motorised conveyance, such as carts, have been left out.

In October, the GST Council had decided to introduce e-way bills in a **staggered** manner from January 1, with a nationwide roll-out on April 1, 2018. After easing the GST burden on small businesses and exporters in its recent meetings, the GST Council's decision on Saturday to advance the **implementation** of e-way bills just two days after polling closed in Gujarat signals that there are serious concerns on the tax collection front. After a monthly Rs.90,000 crore plus inflow in the GST's first three months, revenue in October **plummeted** to just over Rs. 83,000 crore. And this was even before substantive tax rate cuts made by the Council kicked in. with States claiming a revenue shortfall of about Rs. 40,000 crore so far under the GST, the Centre, which has to fill that gap, is also feeling the **pinch**. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, who faces a serious **fiscal dilemma** even before he presents the Union Budget in less than two months, has said the next set of GST features, such as e-way bills and matching of **invoices**, will make tax evasion difficult and bump up collections. **Plugging** revenue leakages is essential, and encouragingly, Karnataka's e-way bill experience in the first month saw very few glitches. Given industry's nervousness, the government must simplify the onerous rules proposed for e-way bills (a one day validity for distances up to 100 km, for instance), ensure that the IT backbone is robust, and make inspections the exception, not the norm.

WORD LIST

1. **Grapple** : (grab, wrestle)
Synonym : confront, contend, cope, deal with, clash, clasp, clutch, combat.
2. **Transition** : (change, often major)
Synonym : Changeover, conversion, development, evolution, growth, passage, progress, shift, transformation, upheaval

3. **Anxious** : (worried, tense)
Synonym : afraid, apprehensive, careful, concerned, distressed, fearful, fidgety, jittery, nervous, restless, scared, uneasy, uptight
4. **Pan out** (phrasal verb of Pan) : (end up; conclude)
Synonym : result, develop, evolve, eventuate
5. **Tracked** : (traced)
Synonym : followed, chased, hunted, pursued, trailed
6. **Regime** : (leadership of organisation)
Synonym : administration, establishment, government, management, reign, rule, system.
7. **Consignment** : (entrusting, handing over)
Synonym : distribution, assignment, committal, dispatch, relegation, transmittal
8. **Impose** : (set, dictate)
Synonym : appoint, charge, demand, enforce, establish, foist, force, inflict, introduce, laydown, levy, order, promulgate.
9. **Implement** : (start, put into action)
Synonym : enforce, begin
10. **Capture** : (catch and forcefully hold)
Synonym : apprehend, arrest, conquer, grab, occupy, secure, snatch, trap
11. **Pose** : (artificial position)
Synonym : mannerism, mien, posture, affectation, attitudinizing, pretention, masquerade.
12. **Interim** : (temporary, interval)
Synonym : provisional, makeshift, stopgap
13. **Compliance** : (agreement)
Synonym : conformity, consent, acquiescence, amenability, assent, docility, submission.
14. **Launch** : (send off, begin, initiate)
Synonym : fire, barrage, bombard, bung, cast, catapult, discharge, dispatch, eject, fling, hurl, lance
15. **Designate** : (name, entitle)
Synonym : label, nominate, baptize, call, christen, denominate, dub, nickname
16. **Stagger** : (walk falteringly)
Synonym : Career, falter, lurch, reel, shake, teeter, wobble
17. **Implementation** : (exercise)
Synonym : application, discharge, employment, exertion, operation, practice, pursuit.
18. **Plummet** : (fall hard and fast)
Synonym : collapse, crash, decline, decrease, descent, dip, dive, drop down, fall, plunge, skid, tumble.
19. **Pinch** : (tight pressing)
Synonym : compression, confinement, contraction, cramp, grasp, hurt, limitation, pressure, squeeze.
20. **Fiscal** : (monetary)
Synonym : budgetary, economic, financial

21. **dilemma** : (crisis)
Synonym : difficulty, embarrassment, impasse, mess, plight, predicament, problem, puzzle, quandary
22. **Invoice** : (itemized bill)
Synonym : account, check, note, statement
23. **Plug** : (stop up, publicize)
Synonym : clog, fill pack, seal, block, bung, close, congest, cork, obstruct, occlude, secure
24. **Glitch** : (error)
Synonym : bug, deflect, flaw, hitch, malfunction, mishap, problem set back, snafu, snag
25. **Robust** : (healthy, strong)
Synonym : booming, hearty, hefty, potent, powerful, prosperous, sturdy, tough, vigorous
26. **Norm** : (average, standard)
Synonym : pattern, benchmark, rule, criterion, measure, model

WORD LIST

27. **Inherently** : (innately)
Synonym : constitutionally, genetically, intrinsically, naturally, congenitally, natively
28. **Onlooker** : (Person observing an event)
Synonym : bystander, observer, sightseer, spectator, viewer, watcher, beholder, eyewitness, looker on
29. **Inadequate** : (defective, insufficient, incompetent)
Synonym : deficient, faulty, lacking, meagre, poor, scarce, skimpy, unequal, weak
30. **Unleash** : (let loose)
Synonym : discharge, free, release, vent
31. **Earmark** : (reserve)
Synonym : allocate, designate, set aside, label, maintain, name, slot, tab, tag
32. **Arena** : (building or enclosure for entertainment or sports)
Synonym : field, gym, gymnasium, park, ring, rink, square, stadium, stage
33. **Monitor** : (listen, watch carefully)
Synonym : audit, check, control, follow, keep an eye on, observe, oversee, scan, supervise, survey, track
34. **Tame** : (adj. Tamer, tamest) (changed from the wild or savage state; domesticated)
Example : a tame bear.
35. **Mockery** : (joke, parody) (insult, disrespect)
Synonym : farce, sham, travesty, butt, caricature, deception, imitation, jest, mimicry, mock spoof.
36. **Forefront** : (Prominence)
Synonym : Cutting edge, fore, leading edge, limelight, vanguard, beginning, foreground, front, lead
37. **Stance** : (position, posture)
Synonym : attitude, posture, stand, viewpoint
38. **Amiss** : (wrong, defective)
Synonym : awry, improper, untoward, confused, crooked, erring, erroneous, faulty

39. **Wary** : (careful, cautious)
Synonym : attentive, circumspect, considerate, distrustful, frugal, leery, prudent, suspicious, vigilant, watchful, alert, cagey, canny
40. **Condem** : (blame, convict)
Synonym : castigate, censure, chide, criticize, decry, denounce, punish, sentence, adjudge, belittle, damn, deprecate
41. **Heed** : (care, thought)
Synonym : attention, application, carefulness, caution, cognizance, concentration, concern, consideration, deliberation, heedfulness.
42. **Fence** : (barrier used to enclose a piece of land)
Synonym : barricade, block, dike, net, rail, railing, roadblock, wall.
43. **Hyper** : (as in active, anxious, beyond, distressed)
Synonym : aggressive, alive, bold, busy, determined, diligent, dynamic, eager, energetic, engaged, enthusiastic, forceful, intense, keen, lively, quick, ready, resolute.
44. **Miscreant** : (evil, immoral)
Synonym : criminal, degenerate, reprobate, corrupt, depraved, infamous, rascally
45. **Wreak** : (force, cause)
Synonym : bring about, inflict, unleash, wreck, create, effect, execute, exercise
46. **Rampage** : go crazy; storm
Synonym : rage, tear, run wild, run riot, run amuck

SOME IMPORTANT IDIOM AND PHRASES

1. A bird's eye view:
Meaning-A view from a very high place that allows you to see a very large area
Sentence-The Singapore Big Wheel offers a bird's eye view of the city.
2. A litmus test:
Meaning-A method that helps to know if something is correct
Sentence-Taking up the job served as a litmus test for me to know how good I was at applying my knowledge.
3. At the drop of a hat:
Meaning-Willingness to do something instantly
Sentence-She expects me to make dinner at the drop of a hat even if I am very busy with office work.
4. A house of cards:
Meaning-A poor plan
Sentence-The State's new scheme was initially welcomed, but later turned out to be a house of cards when it was discovered how easy it was to perpetrate a scam.
5. Break the ice:
Meaning-To initiate a social conversation or interaction
Sentence-At the start of the lecture, the new professor tried to break the ice by telling a joke.

6. Black and blue:
Meaning-Full of bruises
Sentence-The young lad was all black and blue after a tiff with a raging senior.
7. Be on cloud nine:
Meaning-Be very happy
Sentence-I will be on cloud nine when my first article gets published.
8. Bone of contention:
Meaning-A subject or issue over which there is continuing disagreement
Sentence-The examination system has long been a serious bone of contention in the HRD Ministry.
9. Afraid of one's own shadow:
Meaning-To become easily frightened
Sentence-Her creepy encounter with the supernatural had a devastating effect on her. She is now afraid of her own shadow.
10. Eat humble pie:
Meaning-To apologize humbly
Sentence-He will have to eat humble pie for the disrespect shown to the Captain.
11. Fool's paradise:
Meaning-False sense of happiness or success
Sentence-They were living in a fool's paradise, refusing to accept that they were facing poverty.
12. Give cold shoulder:
Meaning-To ignore
Sentence-I sent her a message to apologize for my misbehavior, but she gave me the cold shoulder.
13. Get a raw deal:
Meaning-To not be treated as well as other people
Sentence-The fact is that students in government schools get a raw deal.
14. Hit the nail on the head:
Meaning-To do the correct thing
Sentence-She hit the nail on the head when she laid out a list of justifiable grievances she had with the company.
15. Hand to mouth:
Meaning-live on only basic necessities
Sentence-The severe drought led the farmers to live hand to mouth.
16. Hit the bull's eye:
Meaning-To be exactly right about something or achieve the best result possible.
Sentence-The detective hit the bull's eye when he figured out that nobody but the doctor could have had access to the poison.
17. Let the cat out of the bag:
Meaning-To reveal the secret carelessly or by mistake
Sentence-Now that she had let the cat out of the bag, she had no option but to confess.

18. Make a face:
Meaning-To show dislike or disappointment through facial expressions
Sentence-Little Stella made a face at the sight of bitter gourd in her food.
19. Open Pandora's Box:
Meaning-To find a source of great troubles and problems
Sentence-Finding the wallet on the road opened up a Pandora's box. I was arrested for stealing when I went to report it at the police station.
20. It's Greek to me
Meaning-Something that is not understandable
Sentence-I failed my commerce test; it was all Greek to me!
21. Don't put all your eggs in one basket:
Meaning-Do not put all your resources in one basket.
Sentence-The boy put all his money into his dream startup that eventually failed. I had told him not to put all his eggs in one basket.
22. To call a spade a spade:
Meaning-To be brutally frank, outspoken, blunt in speech.
Sentence- Let's call a spade a spade – popular he may be, but that man is a liar.
23. To be a Good Samaritan:
Meaning-To be kind and compassionate to someone in distress
Sentence-I was sure I would be stuck on the highway till the morning, but a Good Samaritan offered me a ride home.
24. To put in a nutshell:
Meaning-To say in a few words or to make something concise
Sentence-The Textbook Development Committee decided to put the 30-page chapter in a nutshell to help save time for students during revision.
25. To pour oil on troubled waters:
Meaning-To make peace
Sentence-I am always stuck pouring oil on troubled waters when my mother and wife start their bickering.

*The
struggle
you're in today
is developing the
strength
you need for tomorrow*