**MPGA Issue Brief: NEET-UG conducted by National Testing Agency (NTA)**

**Overview**

* The NEET-UG 2024 situation while the case is being under deliberation by the honourable supreme court, there are critical questions on the state of past and future of NEET-UG exam that need to be known for the benefit of nearly 20 lakh students that give the exam every year.
* Tamil Nadu’s NEET Opposition: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has opposed NEET, citing concerns about its impact on educational equity and social justice. They constituted a committee, and the Rajan Committee's findings support this stance.
* NEET UG is closely tied to the functioning of National Testing Agency (NTA) which administers most central examinations leading to admission in undergraduate courses.
* NTA’s failure over the recent months with NEET UG concerns and inadvertent postponement of UGC-NET raised critical questions on the structure, functioning and resources that NTA has to conduct exams in a fair, efficient and transparent manner.

### National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET-UG)

* NEET UG was first implemented in 2013, intended to replace various state and college-level entrance exams.
* The exam was designed to bring uniformity, transparency, and fairness in medical admissions.
* Initially conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), NEET is now administered by the National Testing Agency (NTA).

#### Tamil Nadu’s Opposition

The state's opposition is rooted in concerns about educational equity and social justice, which were highlighted by the findings of a high-level committee led by Justice A.K. Rajan. The committee's extensive analysis highlighted the adverse effects of NEET on various student demographics within Tamil Nadu​.

**Rajan Committee Findings**

* + Post-NEET, there has been a marked decline in the number of students from rural areas, Tamil-medium schools, lower-income families, and state board schools securing admissions in medical colleges.
  + The proportion of Tamil-medium students admitted to medical colleges dropped significantly from 14.88% in 2016-17 to between 1.6% and 3.27% after NEET was implemented​​.
  + The share of rural students in government medical colleges fell from an average of 61.5% pre-NEET to 49.91% in 2020-21.
  + Students from higher-income families saw an increase in their share of admissions, while those from lower-income backgrounds experienced a decline.
  + Students from CBSE schools gained a distinct advantage over those from Tamil Nadu state board schools. The share of state board students in medical college admissions fell from 95% pre-NEET to 64.27% in 2020-21, while the share of CBSE students rose from 3.17% to 32.26% during the same period​​.
  + The committee reported that nearly all the students who secured admissions in 2019-20 had received coaching for NEET, which keeps the admissions dependent on expensive coaching beyond the regular school.

#### 2024 NEET Controversies

The NEET UG 2024 is an evolving situation as the Supreme Court is currently hearing multiple petitions and the status of the exam may change. The following are the major highlights of the concerns

* Nearly 24 lakh students gave the NEET UG examination, the results were released on June 4th 2024, much before schedule and many students were surprised over the inflation of marks.
* An unprecedented number of perfect scores and a significant rise in high scores.
* Grace marks led to improbable scores for many candidates (which is now resolved with a new exam for the concerned as ordered by the Supreme Court)
* Several anecdotes of cheating, paper leaks, and other irregularities were raised and investigated by state police in Bihar and Gujarat.
* A large increase in high-scoring students (that can secure a government seat) raised questions about the exam's integrity.
* NTA’s head was dismissed from the position in June, few weeks after the NEET exam results were announced.

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#### Questions:

Will the Minister of Education be pleased to state:

(a) whether the government has conducted any studies or assessments on the effectiveness of NEET in achieving its intended objectives, ensuring socio-economic and regional equality;

(b) if so, the details of the findings of such studies or assessments;

(c) whether there are any plans to modify or improve NEET based on these findings;

(d) if so, the details thereof?

Will the Minister of Education be pleased to state:

(a) whether the government has taken note of the Tamil Nadu government's opposition to the NEET exam and the findings of the Rajan Committee;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the government's response to the concerns raised about NEET's impact on educational equity and social justice in Tamil Nadu;

(c) whether the government is considering the Rajan Committee's recommendation to use normalised Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) scores instead of NEET for medical admissions;

(d) if so, the steps proposed to ensure that the medical admission process is fair and equitable, considering regional and socio-economic disparities

Will the Minister of Education be pleased to state:

(a) whether the government is aware of the role and functions of the National Testing Agency (NTA);

(b) the reasons for the establishment of the NTA and how it aims to improve the conduct of competitive exams in India;

(c) the measures taken by the NTA to ensure transparency, security, and fairness in the examination process;

(d) the steps being taken to enhance the credibility and efficiency of the NTA in light of recent controversies?

Will the Minister of Education be pleased to state:

(a) The key objectives and mandate of the National Testing Agency (NTA) as outlined during its establishment;

(b) The composition and governance structure of the NTA, including the process for appointing key officials and total size of the workforce;

(c) The specific measures taken by the NTA to incorporate global best practices in its examination processes;

(d) The challenges faced by the NTA in maintaining the integrity and transparency of national-level entrance examinations.

Will the Minister of Education be pleased to state:

(a) Whether the National Testing Agency (NTA) has faced operational challenges since its inception in 2017;

(b) If so, the details of these operational challenges and the measures taken to address them;

(c) Whether the NTA plans to increase its staff and reduce reliance on third-party service providers;

(d) If so, the steps being taken to achieve this;

(e) The initiatives undertaken by the NTA to ensure the security and confidentiality of examination materials;

(f) The evaluation criteria used to assess the success and effectiveness of the NTA's operations

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