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- ❖ **Strategic Future of India-Japan Relations**
- ❖ **BRICS and the Politics of Multipolarity**
- ❖ **INSTC Corridor Pluralism and Interdependence**
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Paper Leak and Sagging Trust

Contemporary India is young India, with nearly 37.1 crores (371 million) citizens are in the age group of 15 to 29. The broader definition of the National Youth Policy (15 to 35 years) makes India home to over 65 crores (650 million) youth. Young India is a rhetoric which is high sounding but there is flip side of it, which is very frightening. Indian government is tasked to provide job to this workforce. Failure would lead to umpteen number of unforeseen crisis, including the sagging trust of citizens in the system.

Impending and brewing issues amidst paper leak and the emergence of Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) are some of the immediate reflections of such crisis. Paper leaks before competitive and regular exams of school, colleges and universities have been an age-old phenomenon. With passage of time it has assumed wider proportion and scale of a systemic crisis. Undoubtedly, this is driven by intense competition for limited government jobs and academic seats. This also reflects the growing corrupt networks of rent seeker's syndicates (or paper leak mafias), coaching centers, printing press staffs, academicians, and political leaders. Most such sections of the India society are being revealed to be in loop of paper leak stories. Successive government may have ignored; but the present political dispensation seems to have almost failed.

NEET-UG one of the highly competitive national medical entrance exam has been repeatedly hit by paper leak controversies. Allegations and alleged fraud have led to nationwide protests. The newly formed Cockroach Janata Party has taken up the issue into prominence. The UGC-NET-JRF for assistant professor post and admission to Ph.D. program was abruptly canceled due to suspected malpractices. About state recruitment and board exams, lesser said is better. States like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra have been into news on account of leaked papers, forcing cancellation of tests. These are to name a few of them.

Technology has come to play a complementary role in it. It has reduced the cost and difficulty of cheating. A single corrupt employee with access to question paper and a smartphone can photograph the master copies and distribute the same within seconds to number of purchasers. They make millions within no time. Then there are students who have cleared the same level of exams over the recent past for themselves. Such students are approached and lured with millions to become paper solver. These practices must have been in practice over a period of time. However, it is being discovered now because of the growing number of students as competitors. Students are revealing themselves the way it has been happening and being executed by some rich people with money attempting to purchase all happiness including the system.

Millions of applicants compete for small little jobs offered by public sector organizations and premier university spots (like MBBS and Engineering). Cake is too small and everybody wants a loaf to eat, as they are hungry. Precisely, this widely prevalent situation makes the parents and students (job seekers) vulnerable to the 'education mafia' wherein they pay through their nose in millions to accost success through the back door.

Million dollar question is the way the culprits go scot free or are protected by the same system which is ought to prohibit it and provide security to the question papers. Investigations, thus far, have revealed a remarkably low conviction rate, which have emboldened organized networks to resurface across multiple exam cycles. Anti-leak laws are in place, both at the Central as well as at State levels. Heavier penalties including longer prison sentences are provided to deter the exam mafias. Yet, it happens and has been happening. More than laws common sense approach is needed as roping in Air Force, Rapid Action Force or Army is attempt to dilute these sacrosanct specialized bodies. This only reveals the high-level frustration of ruling dispensation and their bankruptcy with ideas and political will. Crisis of governance and legitimacy is writ large.

Educational bodies and different governmental and non-governmental agencies are constantly tightening logistical security, like secure printing, end-to-end digital tracking, CBI investigation to name a few of them; but in vain. The solution lies towards expanding the cake and nurturing the individuals through education alone; else it would never be checked. Trust of people in electoral democracy of India is fast becoming long-term casualty, which requires immediate restoration. Solution is not in law but in political will.

—BK