

Bill Summary

The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026

- The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026 was introduced in Lok Sabha on July 27, 2026. It seeks to amend the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024. The Act aims to prevent unfair means in public examinations conducted by specified public examination authorities. These include: (i) Union Public Service Commission, (ii) Staff Selection Commission, (iii) Railway Recruitment Boards, (iv) Institute of Banking Personnel Selection, (v) National Testing Agency, (vi) Ministries of the central government and their attached offices, and (vii) other authorities notified by the central government.
- **Increase in penalties:** The Bill increases the quantum of imprisonment and fines for various offences (Table 1).

Table 1: Penalty under the Act and the Bill

Offence	Act	Bill
Use of unfair means by a person	Imprisonment between three and five years, and a fine up to Rs 10 lakh	Imprisonment between five and 10 years, and fine up to Rs 50 lakh
Unfair means by a service provider	Fine up to one crore rupees	Fine up to five crore rupees
Persons-in-charge of a service provider	Imprisonment between three and 10 years, and a fine of one crore rupees	Minimum imprisonment: five years, and fine: five crore rupees
Organised crime	Imprisonment between five and 10 years, and fine not less than one crore rupees	Minimum imprisonment: seven years, and minimum fine: Rs 10 crore

- **Debarment of service providers:** The Act also debars a service provider engaging in unfair means for four years, from being assigned any responsibility for conduct of any

public examination. The Bill enhances the period of debarment to eight years.

- **Special Task Force for investigation:** Under the Act, the central government may refer investigation of offences to any central investigating agency. The Bill empowers the central government to constitute a special task force to investigate offences.
- **Timeline for investigation:** The Bill adds that investigation of an offence must be completed within two months.
- **Special Fast Track Courts:** The Bill requires every state and UT to designate a Court of Session as a Special Fast Track Court to try offences under the Act. The Special Fast Track Courts will also try any connected offences under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 or other laws, in the same trial. Every state and UT must also appoint one or more special public prosecutors for each Special Fast Track Court. All pending cases under the Act will stand transferred to Special Fast Track Courts.
- **Timeline for trial:** The Bill adds that trial must be conducted on a day-to-day basis, until all the witnesses in attendance have been examined. The Court may adjourn beyond the following day, if necessary, after recording reasons in writing. Trial must be completed within three months from the date of filing of the chargesheet. Trial in the transferred pending cases must be completed within three months from the date of transfer.
- **Appeals:** The Bill adds that appeals against judgments, sentences, or orders of the Special Fast Track Courts will lie before a bench of two Judges of the High Court. Appeals must be disposed of, as far as possible, within three months from admission. Appeals against orders granting or refusing bail will also lie before the High Court. Appeals must be filed within 30 days of the order. The High Court may entertain delay for sufficient cause, but no appeal may be entertained after 90 days.

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