



UPSC & STATE PCS CURRENT AFFAIRS · UJIYARI.COM

EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Testing Troubles: NTA, NEET-UG 2026, and the Credibility Crisis

THE HINDU

14 May 2026 · POLITY · SOCIAL ISSUES · GS2

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

ALSO FROM THE CREATOR

BharatNotesFree UPSC notes, MCQs, PYQ analysis. **100% Free.**bharatnotes.com →

ADVERTISE

Advertise with Ujiyari

Reach thousands of UPSC aspirants daily.

epicbharat@gmail.com

Testing Troubles: NTA, NEET-UG 2026, and the Credibility Crisis

 The Hindu

14 May 2026

GS2

 The Hindu

3 tags ▾



INTERVIEW ANGLE

"Should high-stakes entrance testing in India be conducted by a statutory body with quasi-judicial powers rather than a Societies-Registration-Act NTA?"

EDITORIAL SUMMARY:

The Hindu argues that the cancellation of NEET-UG 2026 following the Sikar paper leak is not an isolated administrative failure but the latest symptom of a systemic credibility crisis afflicting the National Testing Agency (NTA). Despite reform promises since the 2024 NEET fiasco – including the Radhakrishnan Committee recommendations and the enactment of the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 – the agency continues to operate as a Societies Registration Act body without statutory authority over examination logistics. The editorial calls for a structural overhaul: independent oversight, decentralised exam logistics, and judicial accountability to restore trust in high-stakes entrance testing.

A CRISIS THAT REFUSED TO RESOLVE

The cancellation of NEET-UG 2026 after the Sikar question-paper leak has plunged India's largest medical entrance into its second credibility crisis in two years. Over 24 lakh aspirants who appeared on a single Sunday across more than 5,000 centres now face indefinite postponement, with the academic calendar of every government and private medical college thrown into disarray. Coming after the 2024 NEET fiasco – which produced an unprecedented 67 candidates with perfect scores, an admitted grace-marks scandal and a CBI investigation that traced leak networks across Bihar, Gujarat and Maharashtra – the 2026 episode confirms that the reforms promised since 2024 have not held.

THE NTA'S STATUTORY WEAKNESS

The National Testing Agency was established in 2017 as a society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, with the **mandate** to conduct entrance examinations for higher educational institutions. From the outset, its design was problematic. A society has no statutory powers of search, seizure, prosecution or quasi-judicial adjudication. It relies entirely on state police, district administrations and private centre operators for the actual conduct of examinations – the precise layer where leaks originate. The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024, brought into force after the 2024 leaks, criminalised paper leaks and impersonation with penalties up to ten years' imprisonment and Rs 1 crore fines. But the law penalises offenders *ex post*; it does not change the NTA's structural inability to prevent the offence.

The Radhakrishnan Committee on NTA reforms, constituted in 2024, recommended a digital-first hybrid model, biometric verification, encrypted question-paper distribution and decentralised centre audits. The 2026 leak suggests these recommendations have been implemented patchily, if at all.

THE ARTICLE 14 AND ARTICLE 21A QUESTION

The constitutional stakes are substantial. Every NEET aspirant is a similarly-situated test-taker under Article 14, entitled to a uniform, fair and uncorrupted examination. A leak that benefits a subset of candidates in one geography violates that equality guarantee at its core. The Article 21A right to education, while focused on elementary schooling, extends in spirit to the gateway examinations through which higher education is allocated. When a single failed examination postpones the careers of 24 lakh students, the right to education and the right to livelihood under Article 21 are both implicated.

THE COMPARATIVE LESSON

International testing regimes provide instructive contrasts. The United States runs SAT and ACT through private non-profits (College Board, ACT Inc.) with decentralised, multi-window administration and computer-adaptive options. The United Kingdom's A-levels are conducted by competing examination boards under Ofqual regulation. Both systems distribute risk across multiple windows, multiple papers and multiple administrators, so that a single leak does not collapse the entire cycle. India's single-day, single-paper, pan-India NEET concentrates every risk into one fragile event. Reform requires not merely better policing but architectural redesign.

WHAT THE UGC–NTA BOUNDARY REVEALS

The Radhakrishnan Committee also flagged a long-standing role conflict. The University Grants Commission (UGC) is the statutory regulator for higher education under the UGC Act, 1956, while the NTA is the operational examiner. When the operational arm fails, the regulator has neither the power nor the accountability framework to discipline it. A statutory NTA – created by Parliament with defined powers, an independent governing council and a parliamentary oversight committee – would close this gap.

UPSC MAINS ANALYSIS

GS Paper 2 – Governance, education, statutory bodies and accountability

Key arguments:

- NTA's design as a Societies Registration Act 1860 body leaves it without statutory authority to police examination logistics that span multiple states and 5,000-plus centres.
- The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 penalises leaks ex post but does not redesign the architecture that produces them.
- A single-day, single-paper, pan-India model concentrates risk; decentralised, multi-window testing (as in US SAT/ACT and UK A-levels) distributes it.
- Article 14 (equality of test-takers), Article 21 (livelihood) and Article 21A (education) are all implicated when leaks invalidate an entire cycle.
- The Radhakrishnan Committee on NTA reforms (since 2024) recommended biometric verification and encrypted paper distribution – implementation has been patchy.

Counterarguments:

- A statutory NTA could become bureaucratically inflexible; a society allows operational agility.
- Decentralised multi-window testing raises comparability and item-bank security issues unique to high-stakes ranking exams.
- The 2024 Act and CBI probe are recent; reforms need a longer runway before being declared a failure.

Keywords: NTA, NEET-UG 2026, Sikar paper leak, Societies Registration Act 1860, Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act 2024, Radhakrishnan Committee, Article 14, Article 21A, UGC Act 1956, Article 21 livelihood, comparative testing SAT/ACT/A-levels.

The Hindu's view is that the NEET-UG 2026 cancellation is the moment to choose between two futures for Indian testing – one in which the NTA limps from leak to leak under the cover of penal legislation, and one in which Parliament gives the country a statutory testing authority with quasi-judicial powers, independent oversight, and an architecture that distributes risk rather than concentrating it. The Sikar leak did not merely lose a question paper; it lost the faith of 24 lakh young Indians in the fairness of the gateway. Reforms that do not restore that faith are not reforms at all.


PRACTICE TODAY'S QUIZ

[Take the 14 May 2026 Quiz →](#)


RELATED DAILY ARTICLES

14 May **Current Affairs Today -- May 14, 2026**

14 May **NEET-UG 2026 Cancelled: NTA Annuls Paper-Leak Exam, CBI...**

14 May **South Coast Railway: India's 18th Railway Zone...**

13 May **Current Affairs Today -- May 13, 2026**

OLDER EDITORIAL →

**Plea Bargaining: A Reform the New Criminal
Laws Missed**



CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)[Read Full Article on Ujyari →](#)<https://ujyari.com/editorials/2026/05/hindu-nta-need-testing-troubles-2026/>

ALSO FROM THE CREATOR

BharatNotes

Free UPSC study platform — subject-wise notes across all 4 GS papers, Prelims MCQs, Mains answer frameworks, PYQ analysis & progress tracking. **100% Free • No Login Required.**

[Start Preparing → bharatnotes.com](http://bharatnotes.com)

📌 OPPORTUNITY

Advertise with Ujyari

Reach **thousands of serious UPSC & State PCS aspirants** daily through our PDFs, website, and social channels.

Ideal for: Coaching institutes • EdTech platforms • Book publishers • Exam prep apps

[✉ epicbharat@gmail.com](mailto:epicbharat@gmail.com)

Write to us for rates & media kit

Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs · ujyari.com · bharatnotes.com