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SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT EDITORIALS

22nd May 2026

TOPICS:-

- 1. Ladakh seeks belonging through representation**
(GS Paper II Polity)
- 2. Should the NEET-UG be decentralised?**
(GS Paper II Governance)
- 3. On measuring freedom of the press in India**
(GS Paper II Governance)

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1. LADAKH SEEKS BELONGING THROUGH REPRESENTATION

(GS Paper II Polity)

This editorial ‘Ladakh seeks belonging through representation’ was published in **The Hindu** on 22nd May 2026, highlights **Ladakh’s demand** for democratic representation, constitutional safeguards, and locally accountable decision-making.

Administrative Decentralisation Cannot Replace Representation

- The Centre’s district-based solution reduces **democracy** to **administration**, treating access to offices as a substitute for political agency.
- Five new districts may improve **service delivery** in difficult terrain, but cannot decide Ladakh’s constitutional, ecological, cultural or developmental future.
- Districts are **administrative units**, not representative institutions, as district officials implement policy while legislatures shape public priorities.
- Ladakh’s demand is framed against **colonial logic**, where people were once seen as too poor, divided or immature for self-rule.
- Strategic sensitivity cannot justify denying **representation**, because politically enfranchised border citizens defend national lines more strongly.

Broken Promises and Northeast Precedents

- The BJP promised **Sixth Schedule** safeguards before the 2019 and 2020 elections, but later withdrew from those commitments.
- Arunachal Pradesh shows that a vast, sparse and strategically sensitive **frontier region** can have full statehood without weakening national security.
- Nagaland, Mizoram, Sikkim and Arunachal gained political status despite small **populations**, proving numbers cannot decide democratic entitlement.
- Fiscal dependence is not a valid objection because Indian **federalism** rests on redistribution, central devolution and grants-in-aid.

Why Ladakh Needs Its Own Voice

- Ladakh faces large **renewable energy** projects, including the Pang region plan with nearly 13 gigawatts and major investment.
- Decisions on solar parks, roads, mining, tourism and land use affect **grazing rights**, ecology, jobs, royalties and inter-generational sustainability.
- Local questions require **accountable representatives**, not appointed officials, because development negotiations shape people’s land, livelihood and future.

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Institutional Pathways Between Districts and Statehood

- **UT legislature model:** Ladakh can get an elected legislature without immediate statehood, like Puducherry, while Union control protects security-sensitive matters.
- **Council empowerment:** LAHDCs can receive stronger planning, taxation and regulatory powers, like Bodoland Territorial Council, making local governance more substantive.
- **Sixth Schedule route:** Constitutional safeguards can protect tribal land, culture and customs, as in Meghalaya and Mizoram, without weakening national integration.
- **Project consent:** Major mining, tourism and solar projects should need structured local consultation, like Gram Sabha consent under PESA.
- **Fiscal design:** Formula-based grants and locally planned expenditure, like Finance Commission transfers, can reduce dependence on discretionary central decisions.
- **Ecological governance:** A Himalayan framework can protect Ladakh's cold-desert ecology, like SECURE Himalaya's focus on snow leopard landscapes.
- **Security balance:** Representation and border security can coexist, as in Arunachal Pradesh, if defence and strategic infrastructure remain protected subjects.

2. SHOULD THE NEET-UG BE DECENTRALISED?

(GS Paper II Governance)

This editorial 'Should the NEET-UG be decentralised?' was published in **The Hindu** on 22nd May 2026, highlights how NEET-UG's **centralised design, weak regulation and repeated lapses** have intensified demands for decentralised and equitable medical admissions.

Centralised Exam and Equity Concerns

- NEET reduced multiple entrance tests and improved **uniform access**, but rural, poor and disadvantaged students remain constrained by unequal coaching access.
- Single-window admissions increased **exam pressure**, as one annual attempt decides entry into medical courses across India.

- Tamil Nadu's proposed **7.5% quota** for government school students is presented as a corrective for structural disadvantage within NEET-based admissions.
- Private colleges retain low **eligibility thresholds**, allowing affluent low scorers to access management seats while poorer high scorers struggle financially.

Paper Leaks, Coaching Pressure and High-Stakes Design

- Repeated paper leak allegations reflect a massive **stakes gap**, with 22 lakh aspirants competing for fewer than two lakh medical seats.
- Paper leaks are driven by **money power** and desperation, especially among repeaters investing heavily in coaching.
- A two-stage exam, suggested by the **Radhakrishnan Committee**, could filter candidates early and reduce incentives for cheating.
- Limiting NEET attempts may curb repeater pressure, while extra chances for **SC/ST** and **BPL** students can preserve fairness.

Regulatory and Institutional Failures

- Weak regulation of private and deemed colleges has deepened **admission inequity**, as fee regulation covers only 50% of seats in private colleges.
- The **National Medical Commission Act** allows government control over limited seats, leaving many private seats exposed to high fees.
- The NTA ignored key **Radhakrishnan Committee** recommendations, including CCTV surveillance, secure transport and computer-based examination.
- Coaching centres should be **registered**, regulated and fee-controlled, but making NEET optional may revive multiple entrance examinations.

Decentralisation and Admission Reform Options

- State governments could get greater autonomy under the National Medical Commission Act to adopt Plus Two marks, talent tests or blended systems.
- NEET could remain for all-India quota, AIIMS, JIPMER, deemed universities and private colleges attracting national or NRI applicants.
- Admissions to State-controlled seats may rely on Plus Two marks or State exams, reducing uniform-exam pressure without ending national routes.

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Reforming the School-to-Medical Education Pipeline

- **School inequality:** NEET reform must address unequal school quality, as ASER reports show, since exam redesign cannot neutralise coaching-driven advantages.

- **Public preparation:** Free mentoring, bridge courses and digital test support, like Delhi's Jai Bhim scheme, can help government-school students compete.
- **Language equity:** Regional-language aspirants need accurate translation and standardised terminology, as NEET's multilingual papers often face translation concerns.
- **Seat expansion:** Affordable government medical seats must expand, as AIIMS-like institutes show, because extreme competition keeps NEET high-stakes.
- **Private regulation:** Stronger fee control and transparent admissions, as attempted under NMC rules, can reduce financial distortion of merit.
- **Counselling transparency:** Digital, auditable and time-bound counselling, like MCC's online process, can reduce litigation and post-result uncertainty.
- **Student wellbeing:** Mental-health support is essential, as Kota suicides show, because repeat attempts and coaching pressure create severe distress.

3. ON MEASURING FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IN INDIA

(GS Paper II Governance)

This editorial '**On measuring freedom of the press in India**' was published in **The Hindu** on 22nd May 2026, highlights the limited but useful **role of global press freedom rankings** in assessing broad media trends.

Limits of Global Rankings

- International rankings can reveal broad **press freedom** patterns, but remain unreliable as precise judgements across complex societies.
- India's rank of **157** in the **World Press Freedom Index** raises concern, but the methodology also produces questionable comparisons.
- The ranking places Ukraine, Qatar, Burkina Faso, Oman and Kuwait above India, showing how **comparability** can become analytically weak.
- The index excludes some contextual factors, as Norway's press environment can still reflect **racial prejudice** without affecting its top position.

Indian Media Stress and Political Communication

- India's low ranking reflects genuine **media stress**, shaped by market pressures, state measures and constrained political questioning.
- Prime Minister Modi has not addressed a **press conference** as Prime Minister, making political communication increasingly one-way.

- Across leaderships, public communication now avoids difficult questions from the **legislature** and **media**, reducing contestation.
- Media space mirrors wider society, as state control over **movement**, thought, learning and association often produces multiple pressures.

Context, Selective Rejection and Methodological Caution

- Norway's homogeneous society differs from diverse India, where conflicting **viewpoints** and political contestation create multiple media narratives.
- Dismissing Western standards is selective when the same critics celebrate foreign **rankings** on business or honour conferred abroad.
- Rankings are often **methodologically** weak, shaped by subjective factors, bias or prejudice, and cannot be treated as absolute truth.
- The index's extreme conclusions weaken its credibility, but do not erase evidence that Indian **journalism** remains under pressure.
- The better position is neither blind acceptance nor rejection, but using rankings as **blunt instruments** for broad patterns.

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Need for a Domestic Press Freedom Measurement Framework

- **Indian index:** India can develop a domestic press freedom framework, like India Justice Report, reflecting federal, linguistic and regional media diversity.
- **State-wise mapping:** Press freedom varies across States, as seen in Kashmir restrictions, so regional assessment can reveal hidden pressures.
- **Multiple indicators:** Journalist safety, ownership concentration, legal pressure and editorial independence, like PCI concerns, should be measured together.
- **Institutional credibility:** Universities, Press Council and independent researchers can jointly design methodology, like CSDS surveys, to reduce partisan distrust.
- **Legal environment:** Defamation, police action, digital regulation and RTI access, as seen in FIRs against journalists, should be tracked.
- **Government communication:** Press conferences, RTI responsiveness and official briefings, like PIB interactions, can measure openness in public communication.
- **Public trust:** A domestic framework can shift debate from foreign-ranking rejection to evidence-based reform, like India Justice Report did.