

EDITORIALS – 14TH JUL 2026

1. Unsafe practices (GS Paper II Governance)

This editorial 'Unsafe practices' was published in The Hindu on 14th Jul 2026, highlights how weak enforcement of basic safety protocols can turn expanding adventure tourism into preventable tragedy.

Phú Quốc accident and immediate safety failures

- Survivor accounts link the capsizing to rough weather and a sharp turn, which shifted passengers and destabilised the speedboat.
- Absence of effective seat restraints allowed passenger weight to move suddenly, causing loss of vessel stability and overturning.
- People near the open front escaped, while trapped passengers drowned despite subsequent first aid and resuscitation efforts.
- The tragedy killed 15 Indians, while 17 Indians and four Vietnamese crew members survived from the corporate incentive group.

Tourism expansion and systemic safety gaps

- Nearly three crore Indians travel abroad annually, with non-metro tourists increasingly driving growth in South-East Asian tourism.
- Rapidly developing destinations such as Phú Quốc have not always matched tourism growth with stronger safety standards and operator accountability.
- Life jackets may be distributed without compulsory use; in this case, their provision was reported but mandatory wearing remained unconfirmed.
- Even minor passenger movement can destabilise speedboats, making secure seating and weight distribution essential safety requirements.
- Vietnam has promised a safety review, but effective protection also requires government oversight and greater traveller awareness of fire and water risks.

Beyond Editorial

India's institutional response to overseas tourist emergencies

- Pre-departure advisories: The Ministry of External Affairs issues country-specific warnings, such as its January 2026 advisory against non-essential travel to Iran.
- Emergency access: Indian missions accept requests through walk-ins, email, social media and 24×7 helplines, enabling faster assistance during medical or security crises.
- Digital grievances: The MADAD portal allows Indians abroad to register, track and escalate consular grievances instead of depending solely on informal communication.
- Welfare assistance: The Indian Community Welfare Fund supports deserving distressed Indians through temporary accommodation, air passage, legal aid and emergency evacuation.
- Evacuation capacity: Operation Ganga evacuated 18,282 people from Ukraine, while Operation Kaveri brought 4,097 people out of conflict-affected Sudan.
- Operator verification: Tourism Ministry recognition guidelines require adventure operators to maintain specialised equipment, trained personnel and prescribed safety arrangements, providing a due-diligence benchmark.
- Insurance protection: Overseas travel policies registered with IRDAI commonly cover emergency medical evacuation and repatriation of remains, which corporate tour packages should expressly include.

2. Why policy needs to focus on gender wealth inequality (GS Paper I Society)

This editorial 'Why policy needs to focus on gender wealth inequality' was published in The Indian Express on 14th Jul 2026, highlights how labour-centric measures conceal women's unequal ownership of wealth and productive assets.

Labour-centric measurement of gender inequality

- The World Inequality Report 2026 and Counting What Counts examine gender mainly through employment and earnings, overlooking wealth ownership.
- This labour-market bias makes asset inequality largely invisible, producing an incomplete assessment of women's economic status.
- Measuring gender wealth inequality matters because assets shape well-being, productivity, livelihoods and earnings independently of employment outcomes.

Importance of women's asset ownership

- Three decades of Global South evidence show maternal asset ownership improves children's survival, health and educational outcomes, even within similar classes.
- Women owning immovable property face lower risks of domestic violence and poverty following marital breakdown.
- Access to farmland and inputs can raise women's productivity while strengthening national agricultural growth, according to FAO-linked research.
- The PLFS 2023-24 shows 86% of women workers and 91% of rural women workers remain in informal employment.
- Among rural women workers, 77% work in agriculture and 73% are self-employed, often unpaid on family farms or small enterprises.
- Land, tools, carts and stalls therefore provide essential productive assets for viable livelihoods where stable wage employment remains scarce.
- Despite widespread de facto farming, Indian women own land in only 12-16% of rural landholding households, according to NFHS, ICRISAT and IHDS data.

Methodological gaps and policy implications

- Hourly earnings undercount women's contribution by conflating unpaid productive work on family farms and businesses with domestic labour.
- Hourly comparisons also poorly capture self-employment, making female-to-male annual earnings a more credible indicator.
- The reports attribute lower female employment to childcare, transport, leave and discrimination but overlook asset ownership as an economic enabler and source of wealth accumulation.
- Lower wages affect savings, but inheritance remains the principal driver of wealth inequality rather than current labour earnings.
- The claimed data constraint is weak because gendered pension, top-wealth and landownership data already exist across the Global North and South.
- Policies addressing gender wealth inequality must complement household-level redistribution by confronting unequal intra-household ownership.

Beyond Editorial

Implementation deficit in women's property rights

- Statutory equality: The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 made daughters coparceners by birth with the same rights and liabilities as sons.
- Judicial clarity: In Vineeta Sharma v. Rakesh Sharma, the Supreme Court held that a daughter's right applies even when her father died before September 2005.
- Ownership gap: The Agriculture Census 2015-16 recorded women as only 13.87% of operational holders, controlling merely 11.57% of operated agricultural area.
- Housing titles: PMAY-U mandates female ownership or co-ownership; by April 2026, women held individual or joint titles in 96% of houses sanctioned under PMAY-U 2.0.

- Stamp incentives: Delhi charges women 4% stamp and transfer duty on property purchases, compared with 6% for male purchasers, encouraging formal female ownership.
- Mutation reform: Tamil Nadu introduced automatic patta mutation across all taluks in 2021 and had processed over 8.45 lakh transfers by 2025.
- Legal assistance: Women can approach NALSA institutions or dial the 15100 helpline for free legal support in inheritance, partition and property disputes.

3. The problem is, the regional party does not hold (GS Paper II Polity)

This editorial 'The problem is, the regional party does not hold' was published in The Indian Express on 14th Jul 2026, highlights how organisational decline, centralised leadership and narrow social politics have weakened regional parties against the BJP.

Decline of regional parties

- Electoral setbacks confronting the TMC, SP and Jan Suraaj reflect a broader crisis of regional parties rather than isolated leadership failures.
- The BJP's centralising politics, backed by uniformity, fear and patronage, has steadily constrained regional parties and weakened the federal field.
- However, regional parties also reversed earlier federal gains by allowing internal decline despite their national rise during the 1990s.
- Their present erosion stems from prolonged organisational hollowing, not merely the BJP's expansion or recent electoral defeats.

Organisational and leadership failures

- The traditional mass-party model weakened when parties in public office became detached from movements and subordinated grassroots organisation.

- Regional parties increasingly centralised authority around a single leader, family or elite, prioritising elections over durable cadre-building.
- Dependence on governments, bureaucracies and professional consultants replaced internal deliberation, weakening local leadership and institutional continuity.
- The TMC's reliance on IPAC transferred political decision-making outside the party and alienated experienced organisational workers.
- Although national parties face similar corrosion, regional parties remain more vulnerable because their platforms are narrower and organisational buffers weaker.

Social limitations and the SP example

- The Samajwadi Party remains constrained by perceptions of dynastic control, Muslim-Yadav dominance and past lawlessness under its rule.
- Its shift from M-Y politics to the PDA formulation broadens electoral arithmetic but does not yet constitute a new political or economic model.
- The BJP's social coalition excludes Muslims, yet the SP's uneven record prevents it from credibly presenting itself as an inclusive alternative.
- Regional parties trapped in family, caste or community politics may either harden their support bases or accelerate the BJP's dominance.
- Even emerging cracks in BJP control may remain unexploited because opposition parties lack the organisational strength and political imagination required.

Beyond Editorial

Regulatory framework for internal party democracy

- Statutory gap: Section 29A regulates party registration, but the Law Commission found no express legal framework governing the internal democracy of existing political parties.
- Periodic elections: ECI registration guidelines expect fixed organisational tenures and regular internal elections, but these

requirements lack effective penalties for subsequent non-compliance.

- **Public verification:** The ECI now publishes organisational-election filings, including the NCP's declared February 2026–February 2031 cycle, enabling greater public scrutiny.
- **Candidate selection:** The Law Commission proposed requiring party executives to consider resolutions and recommendations passed by concerned local units while selecting electoral candidates.
- **Secret-ballot governance:** Its proposed framework required party resolutions to follow majority voting through secret ballots, reducing domination by unelected leaders or political families.
- **Enforceable compliance:** The Supreme Court restricted the ECI's deregistration power in 2002, while the 2025 delisting of 334 inactive parties shows that clear statutory grounds permit meaningful sanctions.
- **Comparative benchmark:** Germany's Basic Law expressly requires political parties to follow democratic internal organisation and publicly disclose their assets, funding sources and expenditure.