



Sanskriti IAS



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SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT EDITORIALS

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TOPICS:-

- 1. A missed opportunity to guarantee minimum wages**
(GS Paper II - Polity)
- 2. G7 meet underlines fractures in the West**
(GS Paper II - International Relations)
- 3. We need a green exit from the urea trap**
(GS Paper III - Economy)

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1. A MISSED OPPORTUNITY TO GUARANTEE MINIMUM WAGES

(GS Paper II - Polity)

This editorial 'A missed opportunity to guarantee minimum wages' was published in **The Hindu** on 30th Mar 2026, highlights how the new **VB-G RAM G Act fails to guarantee** statutory minimum wages and may deepen wage suppression in rural employment schemes.

Why wage rates are central

- **Wage rate** determines worker participation, programme credibility and overall employment generation under guarantee-based schemes.
- Higher wages can energise participation, while wage suppression can weaken or gradually phase out such programmes.
- Under **Section 6** of **MGNREGA**, the Centre may notify wages, but until such notification, State-specific minimum wages for agricultural labourers apply.

How the wage-setting framework changed

- When MGNREGA began in **2006**, the Centre did not notify wages under **Section 6(1)**, so State minimum wages applied.
- In many States, agricultural minimum wages then exceeded market wages, helping make MGNREGA attractive.
- In **2009**, the Centre began notifying MGNREGA wages, marketed as pro-worker, but this later let it moderate wage growth.
- Since then, MGNREGA wages have largely been revised only for price rise, not for broader real-wage improvement.

Effects of the real-wage freeze

- MGNREGA wages gradually fell behind **minimum wages** in many States, undermining its role as a floor wage.
- By **2025-26**, MGNREGA wages were often far below agricultural minimum wages, defeating the programme's minimum-wage function.
- This also raises a legal issue over whether the government can pay MGNREGA workers less than statutory minimum wages.
- MGNREGA wages also began lagging behind market wages, unlike **2009-14**, when rural real wages rose rapidly and the labour market tightened.

- By **2014**, the MGNREGA-to-agricultural wage ratio was about **60% for men** and **75% for women** at the all-India level.
- Market wages are usually paid on time, often the same day, while MGNREGA wages are frequently delayed and sometimes not paid at all.
- Payment failures linked to the **Aadhaar-based Payment System** and **National Mobile Monitoring System** have intensified worker discouragement.

Leakages and weakening of accountability

- Wage delays and depressed returns create a strong **discouragement effect**, pushing many workers away from MGNREGA.
- When workers disengage, vigilance falls, which can strengthen leakages and local corruption.
- The editorial links the widening gap between official employment figures and actual employment to rising leakages during this period.

Why the VB-G RAM G Act is a policy failure

- The new Act adds no strong provision to ensure timely wage payment or curb corruption.
- It retains central power to determine wages under **Section 10**, though the earlier justification for such control has faded.
- Unlike MGNREGA, where the Centre fully funded wages, the new Act shares wage costs **60:40** between Centre and States.
- Yet instead of restoring the principle behind **Section 6(2)**, it drops it and preserves central discretion over wage fixation.
- **Section 6(1)** of MGNREGA had a non-obstante clause overriding the **Minimum Wages Act, 1948**; the new Act lacks an equivalent provision.
- Without such legal cover, paying below minimum wages under the new law becomes even harder to justify.
- The missed correction is clear: wage rates should have been notified at or above State minimum wages under either scheme.

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Constitutional and labour-rights concerns

- **Legal floor:** A public employment scheme loses moral force when it pays below the statutory wage floor, as the Supreme Court held in *Sanjit Roy* on famine-relief wages.

- **Rights lens:** Sub-minimum wages raise concerns of dignity and fair treatment, much as **PUDR** linked underpaid labour with constitutional protection against forced labour.
- **State duty:** The government cannot claim to secure livelihood while weakening wage norms, especially when the **Code on Wages, 2019** bars payment below notified minimum wages.
- **Labour justice:** Delayed and depressed payments turn guaranteed work into uncertain relief, a concern repeatedly raised in Parliament over pending **MGNREGS** wage liabilities and delay compensation.
- **Norm erosion:** If the State itself undercuts wage norms, enforcement credibility weakens in the wider labour market, despite the universal wage-protection logic of the **Code on Wages**.
- **Federal tension:** Central wage control despite State-specific labour realities weakens decentralised welfare design, even as **MGNREGS** implementation depends heavily on State-level conditions and coordination.
- **Welfare test:** The real test is not enrolment alone, but whether work secures lawful and dignified wages, since courts have treated sub-minimum payment as constitutionally suspect.

2. G7 MEET UNDERLINES FRACTURES IN THE WEST

(GS Paper II - International Relations)

This editorial ‘**G7 meet underlines fractures in the West**’ was published in **The Indian Express** on 30th Mar 2026, highlights how the **Iran crisis has exposed deep divisions** within the West even as India’s diplomatic role gains salience.

Crisis context and G7 response

- The **G7** foreign ministers met near Paris amid the **US-Israel** military campaign against Iran and its wider global fallout.
- They sought an immediate halt to attacks on civilians and **civilian infrastructure**, while stressing protection of diplomats, foreign nationals and missions.
- The ministers called for coordinated **humanitarian assistance** and a return to diplomatic channels.

- They warned that disruption in key shipping waterways threatens the **global economy**, given their role in oil and gas transit.
- The G7 also indicated readiness for coordinated **maritime security** efforts to protect freedom of navigation.

Fractures within the West

- The statement masked widening rifts between **Washington** and its **NATO** partners over the Iran conflict.
- **Trump** publicly pressed European allies to back the US against Iran, exposing alliance tensions.
- Many Europeans, already angered by US decisions on **Ukraine**, opposed joining a war they viewed as illegal.
- Italy's Foreign Minister **Antonio Tajani** reflected this unease, signalling refusal to participate.
- European resentment is sharpened by the view that the Ukraine war was largely shaped by **America's** choices, not Europe's.
- Trump's claim that the war on Iran would end within weeks further deepened strategic mistrust.
- The editorial treats these divisions as **structural**, not merely temporary or tactical.

India's diplomatic positioning

- **S. Jaishankar** attended the Paris meeting as a special invitee along with counterparts from Brazil, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Ukraine.
- He used the forum for collective and bilateral engagement with **G7** ministers on ending the war.
- Jaishankar and his French counterpart agreed on close coordination over security in the **Strait of Hormuz**.
- The two ministers also confirmed Prime Minister **Narendra Modi's** participation in the G7 Summit in June.
- India's presence underlined its growing role in addressing **macroeconomic imbalances** and international partnerships.
- The Paris meeting signalled India's rising **global salience** amid instability within the West.
- As Western unity weakens, India's contribution to stabilising the **Gulf** gains greater urgency.

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India's diplomatic space in a fragmented global order

- **Strategic opening:** Divisions within the West, visible in the G7's failure to issue a joint communiqué, create more room for India to act flexibly rather than within rigid blocs.
- **Bridge role:** India's participation alongside Brazil, Saudi Arabia and South Korea shows it can engage the **G7**, Gulf states and the wider **Global South** at the same time.
- **Issue coalitions:** A fractured order increases the value of flexible partnerships around energy, shipping and de-escalation, as seen in the Paris focus on the **Strait of Hormuz**.
- **Balanced posture:** India's credibility rises when it is seen as a stabilising actor without entering camp-led interventions, a line reflected in its recent **MEA** messaging on West Asia.
- **Regional stakes:** Instability in West Asia directly affects India through energy flows, diaspora exposure and maritime routes, with the Hormuz disruption at the centre of the current crisis.
- **Voice expansion:** As Western unity weakens, countries like India gain more space to shape debates on peace and economic stability, reflected in its invitation to the ministers' meeting and the June summit.
- **Order shift:** The episode reinforces that global influence now depends less on bloc discipline and more on trusted **multi-alignment**, as wider partner countries are drawn into crisis diplomacy.

3. WE NEED A GREEN EXIT FROM THE UREA TRAP

(GS Paper III - Economy)

This editorial 'We need a green exit from the urea trap' was published in **The Indian Express** on 30th Mar 2026, highlights the need to **shift India from import-dependent grey urea to green urea** through structural reform, technology integration and consumption rationalisation.

India's urea dependence and fiscal burden

- The **Green Revolution** made India heavily reliant on **urea** for nitrogen supply, with urea accounting for 56% of fertiliser use and nearly 80% of nitrogenous fertilisers.
- Over 80% of domestic urea is produced using imported **natural gas**, while more than a fifth of total consumption is directly imported.
- Nearly 90% of urea consumed in India is import-dependent, exposing food security to energy shocks and geopolitical uncertainty.
- The **urea subsidy** rose from under Rs 500 crore in 1980-81 to Rs 1.65 lakh crore in 2022-23, imposing a major fiscal burden.

Grey-to-green transition opportunity

- Urea production requires making **ammonia** from hydrogen and nitrogen, then reacting it with CO₂.
- Current Indian production uses hydrogen and CO₂ from natural gas, producing **grey urea**.
- Green urea is feasible through **electrolysis**, carbon dioxide from air, and nitrogen from the atmosphere using electricity.
- The editorial notes that core technologies already exist through **CCU** and older domestic experience with hydrogen-based production.

Economic case for green urea

- A study of all 36 urea plants suggests **green urea** may become the cheapest option for a new plant by 2028.
- By 2030, its levelised cost is projected to be 20% lower than grey urea, and by 2050 the advantage could approach 100%.
- Between 2025 and 2050, average levelised cost is projected at **\$475/tonne** for green urea against **\$540/tonne** for grey urea.
- Current global market rates near **\$600/tonne** for grey urea further strengthen the case for transition.

Policy redirection and mission approach

- Existing programmes should be redirected toward this transition instead of operating in silos.
- The **National Green Hydrogen Mission** now focuses on exports and non-urea sectors, but should also prioritise domestic urea production.

- The recent Budget allocation of **Rs 20,000 crore** over five years for carbon capture, utilisation and storage should support urea plants.
- Integrating these schemes with strategic clarity can reposition the urea sector toward a green pathway.

Need to curb overuse and restructure the sector

- India must optimise **urea consumption** because it is significantly overused, worsening land, water and climate damage.
- The editorial proposes a **Green Urea Mission** to shift production from natural gas to green hydrogen, improve efficiency and rebalance the fertiliser mix.
- By 2040, diverting 90% of urea production to green hydrogen can raise the area under non-chemical farming to 30% and improve nitrogen-use efficiency by 30%.
- It can also reduce urea's share in nitrogenous fertilisers by 30%, with large cumulative gains.
- The projected effects include elimination of imports, a 65% fall in subsidies and over 60% reduction in sectoral **GHG emissions**.
- Water and air pollution would also decline, with cumulative benefits estimated above **Rs 1 trillion** over 25 years.
- This requires structural reform, as heavy regulation and low profitability have reduced innovation; the viable path is phased **market correction**.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Why fertiliser reform must go beyond subsidy management

- **Structural trap:** India's urea problem is not merely fiscal, but also reflects distorted use patterns, which **PM-PRANAM** now tries to correct by rewarding lower chemical-fertiliser consumption.
- **Usage reform:** Lower subsidy outgo alone is insufficient unless application becomes more scientific, as the **Soil Health Card Scheme** promotes field-specific nutrient use.
- **Input balance:** Excessive urea use has crowded out balanced nutrition, even as the **Nutrient Based Subsidy** scheme covers 21 fertilisers and supports customised and fortified alternatives.
- **Innovation gap:** Heavy regulation has slowed cleaner input shifts, though **Nano Urea** and **Nano DAP** show that higher-use-efficiency substitutes are already being pushed.

- **Farm transition:** Fertiliser reform must connect with **natural farming**, as the **National Mission on Natural Farming** aims to reduce dependence on externally purchased inputs.
- **Institutional design:** A durable shift needs convergence across agriculture and fertiliser delivery, since farmers can already buy subsidised fertilisers using **Soil Health Card** recommendations through **PMKSKs**.
- **Reform goal:** The objective should be a productive and sustainable fertiliser system, not merely subsidy compression, as official policy now links balanced use with long-term soil and ecosystem health.