Sanskriti IAS

THE HINDU | The Indian EXPRESS

SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT EDITORIALS

10th Mar 2026

TOPICS:-

1. **Social media ban may make children less safe online**

   (GS Paper I - Society)

2. **Why algorithmic sovereignty should be India's top priority**

   (GS Paper III - Science and Technology)

3. **When the state pays for babies: Some lessons from Sikkim**

   (GS Paper II - Governance)

DELHI CENTRE:
636, Mukherjee Nagar
New Delhi-110009

PRAYAGRAJ CENTRE:
1/1/8A, Stanley Rd,
Maharana Pratap Chauraha,
Civil Lines, Prayagraj, UP - 211002

☎ 9555-124-124
sanskritiias.com

1. SOCIAL MEDIA BAN MAY MAKE CHILDREN LESS SAFE ONLINE

(GS Paper I - Society)

This editorial '**Social media ban may make children less safe online**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 10th Mar 2026, highlights how **banning minors from social media** may backfire by pushing children into less visible and less safe digital spaces.

Why the ban premise is weak

- The Karnataka proposal assumes that restricting access will sharply reduce children's **digital engagement**, but the survey of **1,000** children aged 10-15 suggests otherwise.
- Children are more digitally adept than policymakers assume, so blanket **prohibition** is likely to trigger workarounds rather than compliance.
- Around **69%** of surveyed children had used digital devices for more than a year, and nearly half were comfortable changing account and device settings.
- A ban may therefore shift children to alternate accounts or harder-to-monitor **platforms**, reducing rather than improving safety.

Age-gating is already undermined

- Children's social media use often works through a **"double-proxy"** pattern rather than direct individual ownership.
- Nearly **71%** of surveyed children reported using a family member's social media account, making formal age-gating weak in practice.
- Even when children create their own profiles, they often bypass age-based **restrictions**.
- The editorial reinforces this with Australia's **eSafety Commissioner** survey, where despite services requiring users to be at least 13, about **80%** of respondents aged 8-12 had an account.

Online spaces are not only harmful

- The editorial argues that the digital world is also a space of **opportunity**, not merely risk.
- Close to **55%** of surveyed children reported positive interactions with strangers online.
- Online communities may offer learning networks, emotional support and safe spaces, including for **LGBTQ+ youth**.

Why prohibition may worsen harm

- The piece accepts that online interaction with strangers can increase the risk of **exploitation**.
- But banning social media may displace children towards more private, encrypted or poorly moderated **platforms**.
- That would reduce visibility for parents, educators and regulators over children's online activity.

The real policy task

- The editorial calls a social media ban an **abdication of responsibility**, because the online world is already woven into how children learn, socialise and express themselves.
- It argues that serious child protection requires **awareness programmes** and digital safety education within school curricula.
- Parents must also be equipped with the knowledge and tools to guide children's **online behaviour**.
- The editorial's closing position is that the policy task is not prohibition, but **preparation**.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Need for a child-centred digital safety framework

- **Build digital literacy early**: Schools should teach **online safety** early, as **NCERT** and **MHA** already publish cyber-safety handbooks for students.
- **Equip parents for guided supervision**: Families need better **digital awareness**, as the editorial itself notes many children use shared or proxy family accounts.
- **Strengthen platform accountability**: Social media companies must improve **safety-by-design**, as the **IT Rules, 2021** impose due-diligence obligations on intermediaries.
- **Use age-appropriate regulation**: Policy should prefer calibrated **child protection** norms over bans, as the **DPDP Act, 2023** requires verifiable parental consent for children's data.
- **Expand reporting and grievance systems**: Children need accessible **complaint mechanisms**, as **NCPCR's eBaalNidaan** already provides an online child-rights complaint portal.

- **Support vulnerable children online**: Digital policy must protect **at-risk groups**, since official child-safety material recognises threats like cyberbullying, predators and privacy harms.
- **Combine regulation with preparedness**: Effective policy should balance **supervision and education**, as **CERT-In's Suraksha Guide** also focuses on cyber hygiene for children.

2. WHY ALGORITHMIC SOVEREIGNTY SHOULD BE INDIA'S TOP PRIORITY

(GS Paper III - Science and Technology)

This editorial '**Why algorithmic sovereignty should be India's top priority**' was published in **The Hindu** on 10th Mar 2026, highlights how **dependence** on **foreign Artificial Intelligence systems** can distort India's legal, geopolitical and knowledge frameworks, making algorithmic sovereignty a strategic necessity.

AI is not a neutral interpreter

- The editorial begins with an **Artificial Intelligence** response on the sinking of **IRIS Dena** in Sri Lanka's **Exclusive Economic Zone**, which reportedly declared the act "not illegal" without engaging India's interpretation of **UNCLOS**.
- When confronted, the system acknowledged that it had relied heavily on **Western legal scholarship** and naval doctrine, exposing how model outputs mirror dominant training traditions.
- The larger point is that such bias is not a minor technical flaw but a **geopolitical** problem, because AI increasingly mediates what counts as law, legality and accepted conduct.

Bias in data becomes bias in global interpretation

- On contested issues such as **Article 58** of **UNCLOS**, legal interpretation often turns not only on text but on power, persuasion and dominant discursive frameworks.
- The editorial argues that AI systems trained disproportionately on Western authorship and institutions reproduce that imbalance, making **Global South** positions appear marginal or "alternative".

- It cites a parallel omission in the AI's treatment of the **Second Geneva Convention**, where the duty to rescue was initially ignored despite evidence that Sri Lanka carried out the rescue after the attack.
- Thus, machine outputs may quietly encode **power asymmetries**, privileging one interpretive tradition while making others less visible.

Why this matters for India

- The **IRIS Dena** case is used as a reminder that the Indian Ocean is no longer insulated from extra-regional conflict and that U.S. preoccupations may not align with India's priorities.
- More importantly, the interpretive architecture that shapes policy thinking is becoming increasingly **algorithmic**, as policymakers and analysts routinely turn to AI tools.
- If those tools systematically favour one school of thought, that preference gains outsized **institutional influence**, with consequences extending beyond academia into statecraft.

The strategic case for algorithmic sovereignty

- The global AI landscape is moving towards **bipolarity**, dominated by U.S. and Chinese systems that reflect their own data, assumptions and strategic preferences.
- The editorial rejects both passive consumption and narrow application-level dependence, arguing that India must become a producer of **models, datasets and interpretive frameworks**.
- Dependence on externally controlled compute, models and data pipelines risks **digital colonialism**, where foreign systems shape data flows, innovation boundaries and knowledge production.
- India's diversity, democratic complexity and geopolitical position require ownership of the **algorithmic layer** that will shape future cognition.

What India must build

- The piece argues for sustained investment in **domestic compute**, indigenous training data, secure data infrastructure and models that treat Indian languages and lived realities as first-order inputs.

- It warns that adopting a foreign **AI stack** may appear efficient, but leaves sovereignty contingent on outside permission if core infrastructure and frontier models remain externally controlled.
- The editorial also critiques the pragmatic view that India should simply embed world-class foreign engines into local workflows, because this closes only the deployment gap, not the **sovereignty gap**.
- Its preferred approach is **strategic autonomy** with global integration, allowing India to participate in world ecosystems without surrendering control over cognition and narrative.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Policy pillars for achieving algorithmic sovereignty

- **Build sovereign compute capacity**: India must expand **domestic compute**, as the **IndiaAI Mission** has already onboarded over 38,000 GPUs through a subsidised national facility.
- **Develop indigenous foundation models**: India should invest in **homegrown AI models**, as **Sarvam AI** has been backed to build India's sovereign LLM ecosystem.
- **Create trusted national datasets**: Public institutions must build **high-quality datasets**, as **AI Kosh** already hosts thousands of India-based datasets and sectoral models.
- **Prioritise Indian languages**: AI systems must treat **Indian languages** as first-order inputs, as **BHASHINI** already supports multilingual digital access and hosts 350+ language AI models.
- **Secure data and infrastructure**: India needs resilient **data architecture**, as the **DPDP Act, 2023** and Rules, 2025 now provide a citizen-centric data protection framework.
- **Align AI with legal and strategic interests**: Domestic AI must reflect **Indian law**, as the **India AI Governance Guidelines** explicitly link AI governance to national policy and regulation.
- **Pursue strategic autonomy with collaboration**: India should build **global partnerships** without surrendering control, as official policy now frames AI growth through autonomy plus ecosystem integration.

3. WHEN THE STATE PAYS FOR BABIES: SOME LESSONS FROM SIKKIM

(GS Paper II - Governance)

This editorial '**When the state pays for babies: Some lessons from Sikkim**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 10th Mar 2026, highlights how **financial incentives** alone are unlikely to reverse falling fertility, as reproductive decisions depend more on long-term **social and economic confidence.**

Why the debate has resurfaced

- **Andhra Pradesh** Chief Minister **N. Chandrababu Naidu's** proposal of Rs 25,000 for couples having a second or third child has revived concern over India's falling fertility.
- Andhra Pradesh's fertility rate is cited at about **1.4 children per woman**, well below the replacement level of **2.1**.
- The editorial frames the larger concern as ageing, shrinking workforce size and the long-term economic effects of very low fertility.

What Sikkim tried

- The editorial presents **Sikkim** as India's clearest experiment with pronatalist policy, launched around **2022** when its fertility rate had fallen to about **1.1**.
- For government employees, the State linked **salary increments** to childbirth, with an additional increment for the second child and two increments for the third.
- It also expanded support beyond cash, offering **state-funded childcare attendants**, one-year maternity leave and paternity leave.
- Women in the private sector were promised monthly support of **Rs 5,000** after a second child and **Rs 10,000** after a third child.
- Through the **Vatsalya scheme**, the government also funded up to two **IVF** cycles for eligible couples, directly addressing infertility.

Why incentives did not deliver the expected turnaround

- Despite this broad package, **Sikkim's fertility rate** remained extremely low and the expected baby boom did not materialise.

- The State later partnered with national research institutions to understand why fertility continued to decline.
- The editorial's core inference is that fertility decisions are rarely determined by **financial incentives** alone.
- Even generous one-time payments or monthly subsidies may not significantly alter the deeper calculus of family formation.

The global lesson

- The piece cites **Singapore**, **South Korea**, **Japan**, **China** and **Hungary** to show that governments worldwide have offered subsidies, tax breaks, childcare support and housing incentives with limited results.
- Singapore's **Total Fertility Rate** is placed at about **1.0**, despite decades of baby bonuses and childcare-housing incentives.
- South Korea, at about **0.7**, is presented as the starkest case of large public spending failing to halt fertility decline.
- China's fertility rate is cited at about **1.3**, with policy relaxation also failing to produce the expected rebound.
- Among developed countries, only **Hungary** is described as a partial success, though even there the gains remain debated and below replacement level.

The deeper drivers of fertility decline

- Across modern societies, falling fertility is linked to **structural change** rather than a simple lack of incentives.
- Women are marrying later and pursuing longer careers, while urban living raises the costs of **housing, education and childcare**.
- Many couples now prefer to invest more resources in fewer children rather than expand family size.
- The editorial argues that reproductive choices depend ultimately on confidence in a family's **economic future** and social stability.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Limits of pronatalist policy

- **Cash incentives have weak impact**: One-time **birth incentives** show limited effect, as Andhra Pradesh proposed ₹25,000 for second or third births amid low fertility concerns.

- **Sikkim shows policy limits**: Even a wider package of **increments, leave and IVF support** did not produce a clear baby boom, as the editorial itself notes from Sikkim's experience.
- **Fertility decisions are structural**: Couples respond more to **economic security** than short-term rewards, as low-fertility East Asian societies still struggle despite support schemes.
- **High child-rearing costs matter**: Rising **housing, education and childcare** costs reduce family size, as Singapore's TFR was 0.97 in 2024 despite long-running support policies.
- **Women's life choices have changed**: Later marriage, longer education and stronger **career aspirations** have reshaped fertility behaviour across advanced Asian economies.
- **Global evidence is cautionary**: Countries like **Singapore, South Korea and China** show subsidies alone rarely restore replacement fertility, with recent TFRs around 0.97, 0.8 and nearly 1.0 respectively.
- **Policy cannot purchase confidence**: Pronatalist schemes may help at the margin, but cannot replace broader **social stability** and livelihood assurance in family decisions.