

EDITORIALS – 11TH JUN 2026

1. Foreseeable accidents (GS Paper III Disaster Management)

This editorial 'Foreseeable accidents' was published in The Hindu on 11th Jun 2026, highlights how recent industrial mishaps expose accumulated organisational safety failures rather than isolated accidents.

Industrial Mishaps as Preventable Safety Failures

- The Surat septic-tank deaths and Visakhapatnam steel-plant blast show that industrial casualties often arise from known hazards, not unavoidable mishaps or isolated accidents.
- Confined-space work requires mechanical ventilation, standby rescue teams, breathing apparatus, harnesses and communication, as toxic fumes often kill both workers and unprotected rescuers.
- Septic-tank deaths and manual scavenging fatalities are rarely unforeseeable events; they reveal persistent failures of safety management and prohibition of unprotected entry.
- Steelmaking remains intrinsically dangerous because extreme temperatures, pressurised gases, heavy equipment and stored heat energy can turn minor process failures into multiple casualties.

Accumulated Organisational Weaknesses

- In Visakhapatnam, workers linked the blast to reduced staffing, heavier workloads, ageing equipment, deferred maintenance, contractual labour dependence and investment constraints after disinvestment plans.
- Contracted workers face higher risk because limited training and weaker voice within systems fragment accountability and reduce effective occupational protection.

- India's uneven occupational safety framework exposes how industries remain shaped by manpower shortage, caste-class hazardous labour patterns, and cost-over-safety thinking in stressed units.

Beyond Editorial

From Industrial Safety to Risk Governance

- Risk mapping: Hazardous sites must be mapped in advance, as Bhopal gas tragedy and LG Polymers leak showed how known risks can become mass disasters.
- Prevention first: Safety must shift from compensation to prevention through gas detection, ventilation, protective gear and rescue drills, especially in septic-tank work.
- Contract labour protection: Contract workers need safety training, task briefing and equal protective gear, as Silkyara tunnel collapse showed frontline workers face the highest risk.
- Inspection reform: Factory and municipal inspections must be risk-based and surprise-driven, as Anaj Mandi fire exposed unsafe units operating despite legal norms.
- Emergency coordination: Employers, fire services, hospitals and local bodies need joint rescue protocols, as Silkyara rescue showed the value of multi-agency coordination.
- Worker voice: Safety committees and anonymous reporting can prevent accidents, since workers often notice ageing equipment and unsafe practices before regulators.
- Accountability chain: Liability must cover contractors, principal employers and agencies, as septic-tank deaths often reveal fragmented responsibility after fatalities.

2. Argumentative Indian must also listen, spirit of samvad must not be lost (GS Paper I Society)

This editorial 'Argumentative Indian must also listen, spirit of samvad must not be lost' was published in The Indian Express on 11th Jun 2026, highlights how India's argumentative culture must recover the listening spirit of samvad for deeper learning and strategic maturity.

From Samvad to Argumentative Defensiveness

- Keji Mao's experience with Indian and Vietnamese audiences showed a contrast between attentive learning and defensive argumentation over the same critique of China's industrial ecosystem.
- David Malone's remark that Indian diplomacy is better at winning arguments than winning friends reflects a wider cultural reflex, not merely a diplomatic weakness.
- India's older tradition of samvad treated debate as a search for higher truth, but modern argument often becomes a performative contest where conceding appears like defeat.

Roots of Defensive National Assertion

- India's colonial experience created a persistent need to defend civilisational history, traditions and economic potential against external judgments seen as patronising or motivated.
- Foreign critique is often treated not as objective feedback but as a move within geopolitical dominance, especially when it comes from a competitor or rival model.
- Chinese criticism of India's industrial ecosystem becomes difficult to accept because it is read as a comparison between "superior" China and India's national image.
- India's aspiration for global power sharpens sensitivity to being "seen" correctly, making external assessment feel like an attack on self-perception.

Strategic Cost of Winning Arguments

- Defensive argumentation may protect ego temporarily but weakens feedback loops, limiting the ability to convert criticism into practical learning.
- Vietnam's response to Mao's critique showed how openness can turn external assessment into actionable insight, while Indian defensiveness risks losing meaningful exchange.
- The Guru-Shishya tradition values knowledge transmission, yet Indians often reject insight from foreigners or peers when they are not recognised as authoritative "gurus".
- A mature strategic culture must distinguish between attacks on ego and challenges to assumptions, asking whether a response improves understanding or merely asserts hierarchy.

Beyond Editorial

Listening as Democratic and Strategic Capital

- Deliberative democracy: Listening deepens democratic culture, as Constituent Assembly debates showed how disagreement on rights, federalism and minorities improved constitutional design.
- Institutional humility: Public institutions gain credibility when they treat criticism as feedback, as seen when public consultation helped refine the draft National Education Policy.
- Strategic learning: Foreign policy benefits from uncomfortable assessments, as India's post-1962 defence reforms showed how failure analysis can strengthen long-term preparedness.
- Civilisational confidence: A confident society can learn without insecurity, as Japan's Meiji reforms showed how external ideas can be adapted without abandoning identity.
- Public discourse: Media and academic spaces should reward evidence and nuance, as parliamentary committee deliberations often improve Bills through expert testimony.

- Policy correction: Listening strengthens governance feedback loops, as social audits under MGNREGA exposed leakages and improved local accountability.
- Soft power: India's global image improves through dialogic openness, as the G20 New Delhi Declaration showed consensus-building amid sharp geopolitical divisions.

3. Economic story is one of transition. Challenges exist, but so do strengths (GS Paper III Economy)

This editorial 'Economic story is one of transition. Challenges exist, but so do strengths' was published in The Indian Express on 11th Jun 2026, highlights how India's growth, FDI and rupee debates must be assessed through evidence, macro fundamentals and global context.

Growth and Investment Evidence

- Surjit Bhalla links weakening reforms, declining investor confidence and the revised BIT framework to lost economic momentum, but the editorial finds this conclusion insufficiently supported.
- Excluding crisis years, India's average GDP growth rose from about 7.2% in 2005–2014 to nearly 7.4% in 2014–2024 despite Covid, supply-chain shocks, geopolitical conflicts and tighter global finance.
- The assumption that BITs drive FDI is weak: a 2014 UNCTAD study covering 146 economies over 27 years found no conclusive evidence of significantly higher bilateral FDI inflows.
- The G20 Investment Report (2020) ranked investor protection only 10th among investment factors, while political stability, market size, infrastructure quality and growth prospects remained principal determinants.

BIT Reforms and Investor Confidence

- India's revised BIT regime did not weaken confidence, as gross FDI remained robust after the 2015 restructuring and reached around \$95 billion in 2025–26.
- Lower net FDI need not imply weak investor confidence because mature economies see higher profit repatriation by foreign firms and overseas investment by domestic companies.
- India's BIT reforms seek balance between investor rights and regulatory interests, making them a recalibration of policy rather than a retreat from reform.
- Brazil, South Africa, Indonesia, Ecuador and Bolivia show that countries revised or avoided traditional ISDS-based treaties while investment confidence remained shaped by fundamentals, not arbitration clauses alone.
- India's Model BIT requires investors to first pursue domestic remedies for a specified period, but arbitration remains international before neutral tribunals under customary international law.

Rupee, RBI and Macroeconomic Fundamentals

- The rupee's 10.6% depreciation in FY26 was sharper than broad dollar strength, but must be read alongside a manageable current account deficit of about 2% of GDP in FY27.
- Despite RBI foreign-currency sales of around \$53 billion in FY26, India's forex reserves stood at about \$682 billion by April 2026, covering nearly 11 months of imports.
- The claim that rupee depreciation resulted from earlier exchange-rate management is not data-backed, as depreciation episodes have historically coincided with RBI intervention and reserve depletion.
- Treating the rupee purely as a shock absorber risks allowing market players to dictate currency value, delinking depreciation from macro fundamentals and central-bank judgment.

Beyond Editorial

Quality of Growth Beyond Macro Stability

- **Employment quality:** Growth becomes socially meaningful only with secure jobs and formal work, as PLFS trends show informality remains a key labour-market challenge.
- **Rule of law:** Investor confidence needs contract enforcement and tax certainty, as Vodafone and Cairn disputes showed how retrospective taxation damaged policy credibility.
- **Export depth:** India needs stronger export competitiveness, as electronics exports under PLI show how scale, logistics and global value chains can support manufacturing.
- **Private investment:** Durable growth requires private capex revival, as public infrastructure spending through roads and railways cannot alone sustain long-term investment momentum.
- **Productivity gains:** Long-term resilience depends on technology and skilling, as UPI, GST e-way bills and Skill India show productivity gains need institutional support.
- **Inclusive resilience:** Macro stability must protect households and MSMEs, as Jan Dhan, ECLGS and PM SVANidhi helped cushion vulnerable groups during shocks.
- **Institutional credibility:** Economic strength needs trusted data and policy consistency, as RBI's MPC framework shows how transparent institutions improve macroeconomic credibility.