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SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT EDITORIALS

17th Mar 2026

TOPICS:-

- 1. Belém as a test of a new model of forest finance**
(GS Paper III - Environment & Ecology)
- 2. Importance of sex education in academia**
(GS Paper I - Society)
- 3. Wangchuk's release is welcome, and sobering**
(GS Paper II - Polity)

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1. BELÉM AS A TEST OF A NEW MODEL OF FOREST FINANCE

(GS Paper III - Environment & Ecology)

This editorial ‘**Belém as a test of a new model of forest finance**’ was published in **The Hindu** on 17th Mar 2026, highlights that the **credibility of tropical forest finance** depends on whether it shifts power, participation and accountability toward forest communities.

TFFF and its proposed model

- The **Belém summit** refocused attention on tropical forests and presented Brazil’s **Tropical Forest Forever Facility** as a new global conservation finance model.
- The **TFFF** seeks to compensate countries for maintaining standing forests, not only for reducing deforestation.
- It has already secured over **\$5.5 billion** in initial commitments, including a **\$3 billion** pledge from Norway.
- Unlike donation-led funds, it is designed to generate returns and reward long-term forest conservation.
- At least **20%** of its performance-based payments are reserved for indigenous peoples and local communities.

Inclusion claims and representation gaps

- Indigenous and local communities were deeply involved in co-designing the facility, with **400+ community leaders** participating in global consultations.
- The model offers not just financial support but also formal decision-making space.
- Yet key gaps remain, as indigenous representatives still lack voting rights on the Fund’s main governing bodies.
- This raises doubts over how genuinely inclusive the eventual decision-making structure will be.

Critiques of market logic and weak delivery

- The **Global Forest Coalition** called the fund “colonialistic”, arguing it benefits intermediaries more than forest peoples.
- Critics say its market-based design may not address structural drivers of deforestation such as **agribusiness**, oil, mining and infrastructure.

- Rewarding standing forests without curbing exploitative activity may create only a superficial conservation narrative.
- Earlier proposals offering about **\$4 a hectare** were criticised as inadequate relative to the ecosystem services forests provide.
- There is also concern that **national governments** may **absorb most funds**, leaving local communities with little benefit.
- The fund's success will **depend less on size** than on strong delivery systems and locally accountable institutions.

Power, land rights and accountability

- Brazil announced a digital platform with partners such as **UNDP, FAO, WWF** and **GATC** to help countries navigate TFFF eligibility.
- The platform promises **technical assistance, capacity building** and **peer collaboration**, while remaining outside the Fund's governing structures to avoid conflicts of interest.
- The **deeper issue** is that forest conservation has long ignored **power imbalances**, especially for indigenous communities for whom the Amazon is tied to survival.
- At **COP30**, protesters demanded territorial rights and rejected treatment of land as a commodity.
- Ahead of COP30, the **Forest and Climate Leaders' Partnership** renewed its Forest and Land Tenure Pledge, committing **\$1.8 billion** from 2026 to 2030 for indigenous, local and Afro-descendant communities.
- **Civil society groups** argued that climate justice and nature protection cannot be separated, and that sidelining indigenous leadership weakens both climate action and human rights.
- Financing alone cannot **offset pressures** from infrastructure, agribusiness and extractive industries if accountability remains weak.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Way Forward for Equitable Forest Finance

- **Prioritise governance:** The real test is not fund size but whether power, participation and accountability shift towards forest communities, not just **\$5.5 billion** commitments.
- **Ensure representation:** Co-design is insufficient unless indigenous groups also get voting rights in governing bodies, beyond consultations with **400+ community leaders**.

- **Secure land rights:** Durable conservation will remain weak if territorial claims stay unresolved, as seen in **COP30** protests rejecting land commodification.
- **Strengthen delivery:** Funds must reach communities directly instead of being absorbed by intermediaries, despite the **20% payment** earmark for local communities.
- **Curb key drivers:** Finance alone cannot protect forests unless agribusiness, mining, oil and infrastructure pressures are checked, especially across the **Am-azon**.
- **Avoid shallow markets:** Rewarding standing forests should not create a superficial green narrative, especially when earlier proposals offered only **\$4 a hectare**.
- **Embed justice:** Forest policy must align indigenous leadership with conservation goals, as reflected in the **\$1.8 billion Forest and Land Tenure Pledge**.

2. IMPORTANCE OF SEX EDUCATION IN ACADEMIA

(GS Paper I - Society)

This editorial ‘**Importance of sex education in academia**’ was published in **The Hindu** on 17th Mar 2026, highlights the need for **inclusive, comprehensive sex education** in academia to address stigma, mental health, consent and structural inequality.

Why academia cannot ignore sexuality education

- **Sexuality**, intimacy and mental health are closely linked, but stigma and silence deepen shame, fear and mental distress.
- The **WHO** has warned that suffering increases when people lack bodily autonomy, fertility control and access to safe, consensual and satisfying sexual relations.
- In **2024**, the **Supreme Court** underlined the need for comprehensive sex education programmes to promote open discussion on intimacy and sexual health.
- The authors’ India-Germany classroom experience showed that higher education still marginalises lived intimacies and discourages informed, empowering discussion.
- Academic spaces often privilege a **biomedical approach** and majoritarian norms, while neglecting pleasure and socio-cultural oppression in intimate life.

Limits of current institutional approach

- In India, the mental health curriculum is often **heteronormative** and cisgendered, ignoring sexual marginalisation and human diversity.
- Sexuality is reduced to **heterosexual dysfunctions, consent** and **sexual politics** as a medical issue, erasing complex lived realities and structural violence faced by queer people.
- This weakens the cultural and **structural competence** needed for effective clinical practice.
- **Sexual minorities** often face institutional discrimination and inadequate support when accessing counselling services.
- As universities increasingly appoint **psychologists** to tackle suicide and mental health problems, such gaps reduce the ability of professionals to enable structural change on sexuality, gender and relationship equality.

Need for safer pedagogic methods

- Teaching **intimacy, violence** and **mental health** in higher education is difficult because students may feel unsafe discussing personal experience.
- A workshop and film screening at the **University of Münster** using unconventional pornography as **sex education** showed these classroom tensions.
- Students were unsure whether to speak personally or remain **detached, impersonal** and **abstract**, as academic culture often expects.
- The authors' interactions in India and Germany highlighted the need for safer and more accountable classroom spaces for sensitive topics.
- Beginning classes with **icebreakers**, reflection exercises and small-group discussions can help students connect course material to their own lives.
- Questions such as "**What does intimacy mean to you?**" help build trust, rapport and open communication in classrooms.

Inclusive classrooms and long-term support

- Education should use classroom diversity to cultivate **critical thinking** and awareness, not merely transfer knowledge or workforce skills.
- This is urgent amid **anti-democratic trends** that erase and marginalise **LGBTQ+** experiences and promote exclusionary ideas of sexuality and intimacy.
- It is also necessary to address mounting mental health pressures on young people from family expectations, social demands and multiple global crises.

- In **2025**, the **Supreme Court** sought the government's response on integrating transgender-inclusive comprehensive sexuality education into school curricula.
- The Court also issued **pan-India guidelines** on suicide and mental health among students, where gender and sexual orientation appeared as grounds of discrimination in higher educational institutions.
- **Diversity-aware, compassionate** learning environments can help students navigate contemporary challenges and build a more inclusive, equitable and just world.
- Sustainable change requires enduring **allyship and care communities**, not just short-term fixes such as isolated workshops or hiring more professionals.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Building Inclusive and Safe Academic Spaces

- **Reform academic curricula:** Higher education must move beyond **heteronormative** and cisgendered frameworks, as the editorial notes about India's mental health curriculum.
- **Normalize informed dialogue:** Universities should enable open discussion on intimacy and sexual health, as urged by the **Supreme Court** in **2024**.
- **Adopt inclusive pedagogy:** Icebreakers, reflection exercises and small-group discussions can make sensitive themes safer, as seen in the **University of Münster** workshop.
- **Strengthen counselling systems:** Campus services must address discrimination based on **gender** and **sexual orientation**, flagged in the Court's pan-India student mental-health guidelines.
- **Recognise queer realities:** Teaching must include **LGBTQ+** experiences instead of reducing sexuality to heterosexual dysfunctions, as the editorial criticises.
- **Build compassionate classrooms:** Diversity-aware spaces can foster trust and open communication, as shown by the **India-Germany** classroom interactions.
- **Ensure long-term support:** Sustainable change needs allyship and care communities, not just one-off workshops or hiring more psychologists, as the editorial warns.

3. WANGCHUK'S RELEASE IS WELCOME, AND SOBERING

(GS Paper II - Polity)

This editorial 'Wangchuk's release is welcome, and sobering' was published in **The Indian Express** on 17th Mar 2026, highlights that **Sonam Wangchuk's release** exposes the dangers of **preventive detention** laws and the need for democratic dialogue in Ladakh.

Detention and release

- The Centre revoked the detention of **Sonam Wangchuk** on **March 14**, after nearly six months in custody.
- He had been detained on **September 26**, two days after a protest in Ladakh for separate statehood and inclusion within the **Sixth Schedule** claimed four lives.
- Wangchuk, known for his non-violent activism, was detained under the **National Security Act**.

Concerns over the NSA

- **Section 3** of the NSA allows preventive detention to stop acts deemed prejudicial to India's defence, foreign relations or security.
- The revocation came only three days before the **Supreme Court** was to hear arguments on Wangchuk's habeas corpus petition.
- This raises concern that the Centre itself doubted its ability to defend the detention in court.
- The law enables detention without formal charge or trial, making it a strong instrument to curb political dissent.
- The NSA also removes the detainee's right to be produced before a magistrate within **24 hours** and does not permit a bail application.
- In **Rekha v. State of Tamil Nadu (2011)**, the Supreme Court called for "meticulous compliance with procedural safeguards" to prevent misuse of such power.

Ladakh's political context

- Wangchuk had welcomed the **BJP** government's **370** and bifurcation decisions that gave Ladakh **Union Territory** status without a legislature.
- He later became vocal about the Centre's move and its implications for Ladakhi people and their future.

- His detention revived concerns in Ladakh about exclusion from decisions affecting the region.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Balancing security with civil liberties

- **Use detention sparingly:** Extraordinary laws like the NSA should address genuine security threats, not non-violent activism such as **Sonam Wangchuk's** protest-linked mobilisation.
- **Protect due process:** Preventive detention is severe because it allows custody without trial, denies magistrate production within **24 hours**, and bars regular bail.
- **Follow judicial safeguards:** In **Rekha v. State of Tamil Nadu (2011)**, the Supreme Court demanded meticulous compliance to prevent misuse of detention powers.
- **Separate dissent from danger:** Democratic demands like **statehood** and **Sixth Schedule** protection in **Ladakh** should not automatically be treated as security threats.
- **Restrain executive overreach:** Revocation just before the **Supreme Court** heard Wangchuk's habeas corpus plea raised doubts about the detention's legal defensibility.
- **Build regional trust:** In sensitive regions like **Ladakh**, detention after the **September 26** protest deaths can deepen alienation and exclusion.
- **Prefer democratic engagement:** Lasting stability requires dialogue with dissenting voices, not suppression through **preventive detention** under laws like the NSA.