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SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT EDITORIALS

21st Mar 2026

TOPICS:-

1. Restoring rights

(GS Paper I - Society)

2. On GLP-1 drugs, match access with vigilance

(GS Paper II - Governance, GS Paper III - Science and Technology)

3. Our water challenge is stark. Here are four ways to reimagine the solution

(GS Paper III - Environment and Ecology)

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1. RESTORING RIGHTS

(GS Paper I - Society)

This editorial '**Restoring rights**' was published in **The Hindu** on 21st Mar 2026, highlights that **adoptive mothers** must receive the **same maternity rights** as biological mothers, with broader recognition of equal and gender-neutral parenting responsibilities.

Court ruling and immediate significance

- The **Supreme Court** recognised **maternity leave** for adoptive mothers as a basic human right rooted in evolving social realities and a feminist reading of the Constitution.
- It ruled that adoptive mothers are entitled to **12 weeks** of paid maternity leave regardless of the child's age at adoption.
- The judgment struck down the earlier restriction limiting leave to women adopting children below **three months** of age.
- The case arose from a challenge to provisions in the **Maternity Benefit Act**, now replaced by the **Code on Social Security**.

Why the restriction was held unjustified

- The petitioner argued that legal adoption itself often takes over **three months**, making the earlier eligibility rule exclusionary.
- The Court held that an adoptive mother has the same rights and obligations towards the child as a biological mother.
- It read adoption as an expression of **reproductive autonomy**, not a lesser form of parenthood.
- The judgment stressed that parental bonding is consciously built through time, presence, and sustained caregiving.
- Adoption was described as an equally valid path to family formation, based on shared meaning, responsibility, and emotional bonds rather than biology alone.

Equality, care work, and social security

- The editorial notes that maternity benefits support women in the early phase of motherhood by providing **financial security** and reducing dependence on family members.
- It holds that this protection must apply equally to both **biological** and **adoptive** mothers.

- The judges also urged legal recognition of **paternity leave** as a social security benefit.
- Parenting was recognised as a non-solitary function, pointing toward a more **gender-neutral** framework of child-rearing.
- The ruling challenges patriarchal assumptions that feminise caregiving while undervaluing or inadequately compensating it.

Wider gender implications

- The judgment is presented as conferring equal rights to adoptive parents while restoring child-rearing to a **gender-neutral parenting** paradigm.
- The editorial links unequal caregiving burdens to structural gender inequality in labour markets.
- It cites **Claudia Goldin's** work showing that the gender pay gap often widens with the birth of a first child.
- The Court is seen as offering India a chance to correct inadequate maternity leave laws in adoption and, more broadly, gender imbalance in society.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Towards a gender-just and inclusive parenting framework

- **Recognise shared caregiving:** Parenting should be treated as joint responsibility, especially when India already grants **15 days** of paternity leave to many male government employees.
- **Broaden leave architecture:** Social security should move beyond a mother-only model, as the **ILO** notes mothers still receive about five more months of paid leave than fathers on average.
- **Include diverse families:** Parenting protections should reflect adoption and other family forms, since even current Indian rules recognise **adoption-linked paternity leave** in limited cases.
- **Value unpaid care:** Child-rearing remains economically undervalued, though women still spend about **3.2 times** more hours on unpaid care work than men globally.
- **Reduce career penalties:** A fair parenting framework can soften labour-market setbacks, as **Claudia Goldin's** work showed earnings gaps widen sharply after the first child.

- **Normalise gender-neutral care:** Law can reshape norms by signalling that early childcare is not exclusively maternal, a view the **Supreme Court** itself recently urged through paternity-leave recognition.
- **Keep the child central:** Parenting benefits should support bonding and welfare, not just employment status, consistent with wider **ILO** family-responsibility standards.

2. ON GLP-1 DRUGS, MATCH ACCESS WITH VIGILANCE

(GS Paper II - Governance, GS Paper III - Science and Technology)

This editorial ‘On GLP-1 drugs, match access with vigilance’ was published in The Indian Express on 21st Mar 2026, highlights that wider affordability of GLP-1 drugs can improve metabolic health outcomes only if accompanied by strict regulation, prescription control, and long-term monitoring.

Why wider access matters

- Expiry of **semaglutide’s patent** in India marks a major shift in the country’s public-health landscape.
- **GLP-1 receptor agonists**, known through brands such as **Ozempic** and **Wegovy**, are likely to become much cheaper as domestic generic production expands.
- As many as **50 brands** may enter the market, reducing costs to at least **one-third to one-fifth** of current prices.
- In a country facing **diabetes** and an **obesity epidemic**, wider access for middle- and lower-income patients is presented as a clear gain.
- Along with lifestyle changes, these drugs help regulate **Type-2 diabetes**, support sustained weight loss, and reduce **cardiovascular risk**.
- Affordable medication could ease disease burden in an already overstretched healthcare system.

Risks of misuse and scientific concern

- The same features that make these drugs transformative also make them vulnerable to **misuse**.
- Rapid entry of multiple brands may outpace **regulation** and clinical scrutiny.

- Their reputation for quick weight loss may attract people who are not medically eligible.
- The editorial stresses that **GLP-1 drugs** have side effects and are not meant for casual or cosmetic use.
- Global prescribing thresholds, including **BMI cut-offs**, are largely based on Western populations and may not suit Indian conditions.
- Since metabolic risks appear at lower body weights in India, imported thresholds may be misleading.
- Monitoring of outcomes, adverse effects, and long-term use in the Indian population is therefore essential.

What regulatory guardrails are needed

- The challenge is to build firewalls so that easy access does not undermine the drugs' public-health value.
- The **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation** classifies **GLP-1 medicines** as **Schedule H** drugs.
- A valid **prescription** is legally required for procurement, though India's over-the-counter culture often weakens such safeguards in practice.
- The editorial calls for tighter prescription protocols, stronger **pharmacovigilance**, and clearer eligibility criteria.
- Drug advertising must not repackage a serious therapy as a lifestyle shortcut.
- **CDSCO** has already issued an advisory to manufacturers on that front.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Way Forward for responsible and evidence-based metabolic drug governance

- **Indianise norms:** Imported **BMI** thresholds can mislead, as Indian guidance already flags risk from **BMI 23/27.5** in many workflows.
- **Enforce prescriptions:** **GLP-1** drugs need strict doctor-led use because they are treated as **Schedule H** prescription medicines in India.
- **Track adverse effects:** Wider use needs active monitoring through **PvPI**, which already runs ADR forms, helplines and monitoring centres.
- **Target high-risk groups:** Public-health use should prioritise diabetes and obesity patients, not casual users, especially in India's rising metabolic-risk setting.

- **Curb misleading marketing:** Promotion must not turn therapy into aspiration, especially when fast generic entry can blur treatment and lifestyle messaging.
- **Build Indian evidence:** Long-term safety and adherence data must come from Indian populations, not mainly Western prescribing assumptions.
- **Protect trust in access:** Cheaper generics will help only if affordability is matched by monitoring, rational use and regulatory vigilance.

3. OUR WATER CHALLENGE IS STARK. HERE ARE FOUR WAYS TO REIMAGINE THE SOLUTION

(GS Paper III - Environment and Ecology)

This editorial ‘**Our water challenge is stark. Here are four ways to reimagine the solution**’ was published in **The Indian Express** on 21st Mar 2026, highlights that **India’s worsening water stress** needs a broader, **asset-based strategy** centred on soil moisture, farm reform, circular water use, sponge cities, and stronger governance.

Scale of the water crisis

- India has **18%** of the world’s population but only **4%** of its freshwater.
- Per capita water availability fell from **1,816 cubic metres** in **2001** to **1,486** in **2021**, and may approach the scarcity threshold of **1,000 cubic metres** by **2050**.
- Rapid urbanisation and rising demand are already straining sustainable water supply, with consequences for growth, investment, and wellbeing.
- The **Indian monsoon** is no longer behaving as it once did, deepening water uncertainty.
- In **5%** of tehsils, rainfall in the past decade rose by over **10%** compared with the previous three decades, but this came with heavy bursts that overwhelm drainage.
- In **11%** of tehsils, largely in the **Indo-Gangetic plains**, rainfall has shown critical declines during the **June-September** season.
- Between **2019 and 2023**, extreme climate events cost India about **Rs 5 lakh crore**, and over **80%** of the population now lives in districts vulnerable to hydro-meteorological disasters.

Water as a strategic national asset

- The editorial argues water should no longer be treated as a free resource, but as a **strategic national asset**.

- Because water affects every sector, stronger governance can make it a catalyst for wider economic transformation.
- The proposed shift is from managing water merely as a problem to optimising it as a resource.

First, recognise green water and repair landscapes

- Water policy has focused mainly on **blue water** such as rivers, lakes, and aquifers, while neglecting **green water** stored in soils.
- Globally, around **60%** of rainfall is stored in soils as green water.
- This invisible reserve sustains rainfed agriculture across much of India.
- Healthy soil organic carbon is described as the cheapest and most effective water storage system.
- Chemical-intensive farming degrades soils and reduces their moisture memory.
- The editorial calls for **regenerative practices** such as mulching, no-till farming, and cover cropping.
- It also urges protection of upstream natural forest cover and a **National Green Water Mission** linking water and landscapes.

Second, fix distortions in agriculture

- The **Green Revolution** improved food security but also made Indian agriculture intensely water-dependent.
- Agriculture now consumes nearly **90%** of India's water.
- Yet crop water productivity is only about **\$0.52 per cubic metre**, roughly one-third of China's.
- India is using scarce water in the most productive regions in suboptimal ways.
- Procurement and fertiliser subsidies are locked into water-intensive rice.
- Shifting just **3.6 million hectares** from rice to millets and pulses could save **29 billion cubic metres** of water annually, about one-fifth of India's household water use.
- Such diversification would also deliver nutrition, environmental gains, and subsidy savings.

Third, build a circular urban water economy

- The editorial calls for a **National Circular Water Economy Mission** treating water as a resource, not waste.
- Only **28%** of urban used water is treated today, while reuse remains negligible.

- A treated used-water economy could unlock market value of **Rs 3.2 lakh crore** by **2047**, recover biogas and fertilisers, and create over **1 lakh** jobs.
- This requires city-specific reuse targets, **public-private partnerships**, and a shift from disposal to recovery.
- The technology exists, but the missing element is implementation architecture at scale.

Fourth, reimagine cities as sponge cities

- India's built-up area has increased by nearly a third since **2005**, creating impervious surfaces that block groundwater recharge and worsen flood risk.
- Cities need **blue-green infrastructure** such as wetlands, urban forests, permeable surfaces, integrated into urban design.
- Such design can absorb stormwater, slow runoff, and recharge aquifers.
- The editorial notes that half of Delhi's **1,300 water bodies** have been lost to encroachment.
- Protecting and restoring this natural infrastructure, as in the **Yamuna Biodiversity Park**, strengthens climate resilience and economic prudence.
- It also suggests extending **Swachh Bharat Mission 3.0** to peri-urban areas to centralise waste treatment and reduce pollution at source.

Governance and pricing reforms

- The editorial calls for **transparent water accounting** and enforceable regulation under a stronger water governance model.
- India's digital public infrastructure can support real-time water accounting and bulk-water trading.
- Tariffs should move toward cost recovery for those who can pay, with direct subsidies for the vulnerable.
- Current tanker prices often exceed official tariffs, while official tariffs frequently fail to recover service costs.
- With supply chains weaponised and natural resources becoming geopolitical tools, water is described as too important for poor planning.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Water insecurity as a systemic development challenge

- **Climate volatility is intensifying risk:** Water stress now reflects both scarcity and extremes, as **Chennai's urban floods** showed alongside wider monsoon instability.

- **Agriculture remains structurally exposed:** Farm water stress has become systemic because **PMKSY's Per Drop More Crop** itself centres water-use efficiency in irrigation.
- **Urbanisation is worsening hydrological stress:** Impervious growth is reducing recharge and raising flood risk, a pattern visible in repeated **urban flooding** episodes.
- **Ecological buffers are weakening:** Loss of wetlands and local water bodies reduces resilience, while **Yamuna Biodiversity Park** shows restoration can aid recharge.
- **Water inefficiency is hurting development:** India's water stress is already economy-wide, with **NITI Aayog** noting hundreds of millions face high to extreme stress.
- **Governance remains fragmented:** Water cuts across agriculture, cities and disasters, which is why **NITI Aayog's CWMI** pushed coordinated water-sector measurement and reform.
- **Human vulnerability is deepening:** Water stress now affects health, livelihoods and disaster exposure, with **about 600 million** Indians facing high to extreme stress.