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SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT EDITORIALS

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1. **Beyond the rhetoric of the north-south divide**
   (GS Paper II - Polity)
2. **To ease the pain, a timely cut**
   (GS Paper III - Economy)
3. **On climate change, India has a good story to tell**
   (GS Paper III - Environment)

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1. BEYOND THE RHETORIC OF THE NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE

(GS Paper II - Polity)

This editorial '**Beyond the rhetoric of the north-south divide**' was published in **The Hindu** on 28th Mar 2026, highlights that India's north-south divide is a **structural economic-political fault-line** that needs equitable representation and internal social reform, not reactive regionalism.

Nature of the divide

- India's long-held assumption of national economic convergence has weakened as the gap between the **Great Indian Plain** and the **Peninsular States** has hardened into a structural fault-line.
- The divide is not only regional or fiscal; it reflects a deeper asymmetry where **economic prosperity** is increasingly separated from **political power**.
- Southern States such as Tamil Nadu and Kerala show far higher per capita incomes and stronger **human development** outcomes than the Hindi heartland.
- The Hindi belt, despite demographic weight, remains behind on multiple indicators of modern progress, creating a mismatch between **population strength** and **development capacity**.

Political risks of demographic asymmetry

- In stable federations, economically productive regions generally also hold major population weight, aligning **wealth creation** with **political representation**.
- India faces the opposite risk, where a productive minority may be compelled to subsidise a poorer but politically dominant majority.
- The article warns that post-**Census** seat redistribution based purely on population could sharply reduce the South's parliamentary voice.
- Such an outcome may deepen perceptions of the South as an "extractive colony" for the ambitions of the Hindi-speaking **cow belt**.
- If unmanaged, this can convert a developmental imbalance into a wider political rupture between the **heartland** and the **peninsula**.

Delimitation and representation

- The revised **delimitation** debate has revived the conflict between northern population growth and southern development-led demographic restraint.

- The article backs a model of "degressive proportionality", discussed by **P. Sainath Mehrotra**, to reconcile population size with State equality.
- This model gives larger States more seats but fewer per person, and smaller States fewer seats but more per person.
- By balancing **population** with **State equality**, it seeks to prevent total domination by larger States while preserving representative legitimacy.
- Such calibrated representation is presented as a better safeguard of **national unity** than strict population-based redistribution.

The South's internal crisis

- The South's problem is not reducible to grievance against the Centre; it also faces a deep internal crisis that can stall its rise to high-income status.
- The region risks a **middle-income trap** because its growth remains extractive, unequal, and weakly distributed.
- The gap between elite wealth and labour incomes is stark; in Tamil Nadu, per capita income is about triple Bihar's, but daily agricultural wages are not even double.
- The gains of the South's "growth explosion" are portrayed as being captured by a narrow elite rather than socially diffused.
- Inequality in Hyderabad's gated communities and in the hinterlands of Patna reflects a wider Indian pattern, with **Kerala** treated as a partial exception.
- **Patriarchy**, casteism, and weak enforcement of traffic and environmental laws indicate that economic success has not translated into deeper social transformation.
- Literacy gaps within southern States, and urban concentration of wealth in Karnataka and Telangana, show the limits of headline prosperity.

Why natural convergence looks unlikely

- Hopes of a "grand bargain" where the north first gains economically before translating it into political power now appear remote.
- With about a **300% differential** in per capita income, natural north-south convergence would take generations.
- Large-scale migration from the Hindi heartland to the peninsula is not creating cohesive integration but a class of "internal outsiders".
- Migrants continue to vote in the north as Northerners, limiting any corresponding increase in the South's **political clout**.

- The alternative expectation that the South's growth would pull the entire country up is also weakening because southern States themselves underperform institutionally.

Need for sober dialogue

- The article rejects reactive **regionalism** and calls for sober intellectual dialogue on the fault-line.
- Prosperous States are increasingly forced to spend heavily on compensating for economic failure and social fragmentation rather than future investment.
- The South's priority should shift from celebrating urban unicorn-led success to building **internal inclusivity**.
- Real progress lies in the daily wage of the poorest labourer and literacy in the weakest district, not in enclave prosperity.
- The Centre's push for hegemonic control can intensify the divide, but southern States must also confront their own fragile social foundations.
- Without stronger **social cohesion**, better human capital, and less extractive growth, the South may become economically dynamic yet politically marginal.

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Need for a new federal compact

- **Delimitation must be carefully balanced**: A purely **population-based delimitation** can weaken slower-growing southern States, even as the **15th Finance Commission** rewarded demographic performance.
- **Fiscal federalism needs recalibration**: Resource-sharing should balance **developmental need** with performance, as the **15th Finance Commission** used both population and demographic criteria.
- **Federal forums must regain centrality**: Bodies like the **Inter-State Council** under **Article 263** and the **GST Council** should resolve regional tensions through structured consultation.
- **State equality needs stronger safeguards**: The **Rajya Sabha**, as the Council of States, should better protect federal balance when **Lok Sabha** politics becomes more population-driven.

- **Development must shape federal incentives**: A mature Union should reward gains in **human development** and governance, not demographic size alone, as shown by the demographic-performance criterion.
- **Regional distrust needs institutional mediation**: Frictions such as delayed **GST compensation** payments show why rules-based burden-sharing is vital for Centre-State trust.
- **National unity needs cooperative federalism**: India's cohesion will depend not only on electoral arithmetic, but also on **institutional trust**, fair devolution and stronger federal forums.

2. TO EASE THE PAIN, A TIMELY CUT

(GS Paper III - Economy)

This editorial '**To ease the pain, a timely cut**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 28th Mar 2026, highlights that the Centre's **excise-duty cut** on petrol and diesel shifts part of the crude-price shock from consumers to the government, but **creates fiscal strain** if high oil prices persist.

Relief through duty reduction

- The Centre cut **excise duty** on petrol and diesel by **Rs 10/litre** each, shifting part of the global crude-price burden from consumers to the government.
- The move reduces inflationary pressure, supports household budgets, and offers some relief to firms facing higher input costs.
- India's crude basket has risen sharply from **$69/barrel** in February to **$147.24/barrel** in March, driven by war-related disruption.
- Before the cut, combined daily under-recovery of **OMCs** was about **Rs 2,400 crore**, severely straining oil-marketing finances.
- The revision partly offsets these losses, reflected in gains in shares of **IOC**, **HPCL**, and **BPCL**, though pump prices remain unchanged.

Revenue implications for governments

- Petroleum is a major source of public revenue for both the Centre and States through taxes, duties, dividends, and royalty.
- In **2024-25**, total sector contribution to the exchequer stood at **Rs 7.4 lakh crore**.

- Of this, about **Rs 4.15 lakh crore** accrued to the **Central government**, while **Rs 3.25 lakh crore** went to the States.
- In **Budget 2026-27**, the Centre projected **Rs 1.69 lakh crore** from special additional excise duties on petrol and high-speed diesel alone.
- The latest cut makes the eventual revenue shortfall difficult to estimate, but economists cited in the editorial expect sizeable losses.
- **SBI Research** estimates the Centre may lose at least **Rs 1.1 lakh crore** in **FY27**.
- The **10-year bond yield** has risen to **6.925%**, reflecting market concern over fiscal stress.

Why the pressure may continue

- The West Asian conflict has disrupted global supplies, making elevated **crude prices** a wider macroeconomic risk.
- Asian economies are already considering energy-conservation steps, including work-from-home measures, to curb demand.
- India has also imposed an **export tax on diesel** to discourage overseas sales and protect domestic availability.
- The unresolved issue is whether retail fuel prices can remain unchanged if global crude stays high for long.
- If elevated oil prices persist, the present burden-sharing formula between consumers, **OMCs**, and the government will become harder to sustain.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

From Fuel Tax Relief to Energy Resilience

- **Fuel pricing cannot remain purely reactive**: Repeated **excise-duty** cuts and ad hoc tax changes cannot substitute for a stable framework to manage external oil shocks.
- **Energy imports remain a structural vulnerability**: Heavy crude dependence keeps India's inflation and fiscal position exposed, despite efforts like **Strategic Petroleum Reserves** at Visakhapatnam, Mangaluru and Padur.
- **Strategic reserves need stronger integration**: **ISPRL** storage should work as part of a wider price-stabilisation strategy, especially as Phase II capacity is being added at Odisha.

- **Diversification must reduce oil dependence**: Expansion of **ethanol blending**, **EVs** and gas can lower oil vulnerability, as seen in near-20% blending and the **PM E-DRIVE** scheme.
- **Tax design needs greater predictability**: A transparent fuel-tax framework can better balance consumer relief, **OMC** viability and government revenue during price shocks.
- **Demand-side management also matters**: Conservation, efficiency and cleaner mobility need policy backing, with **PM E-DRIVE** already incentivising e-buses, e-trucks and two- and three-wheelers.
- **Energy security must support macroeconomic stability**: India needs a durable strategy linking fuel security with **inflation control**, fiscal resilience and long-term growth stability.

3. ON CLIMATE CHANGE, INDIA HAS A GOOD STORY TO TELL

(GS Paper III - Environment)

This editorial '**On climate change, India has a good story to tell**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 28th Mar 2026, highlights that India has set **credible climate targets** and notable clean-energy progress, though adaptation, regional cooperation, and international support remain essential.

India's updated climate commitments

- India announced revised **Nationally Determined Contributions** for **2030-2035** under the **Paris Agreement**, amid war, weakened multilateralism, and renewed fossil-fuel dependence.
- The editorial presents these targets as credible because India had already raised ambition in **2022** against the **2005** base year.
- India now targets a **47% reduction** in emissions intensity of GDP by **2035**, up from the earlier 45% target for 2030.
- With actual emissions intensity already at **36%** below 2005 levels, the editorial expects the **47% target** to be surpassed.
- Further cuts will be harder because intensity declines become progressively difficult after early efficiency gains.

Clean power progress and limits

- On **non-fossil fuel** installed capacity, the earlier **50% target** for 2030 has already been crossed, with current share at **52.5%**.
- The new target of **60% by 2035** is described as realistic despite a more difficult energy outlook.
- The editorial cautions that **installed capacity** is not the same as generation, since renewable sources currently contribute only about **20%** of actual generation.
- Future planning must therefore focus not only on capacity addition but also on raising renewable electricity generation substantially.

Carbon sink target and ecological caution

- India's earlier carbon-sink goal of adding **2.5-3 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent** by 2030 is now estimated at **2.296 billion tonnes**.
- The revised **2035** target sets the sink at **3.5-4 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent**, which the editorial treats as achievable.
- The main concern is the kind of plantations counted under this target, since ecologically harmful plantations can create severe environmental costs.

Adaptation as a central priority

- The editorial stresses that **adaptation** is indispensable because accumulated greenhouse gases will keep driving climate impacts even if emissions fall sharply.
- A tropical country like India must protect **open fields** and other highly exposed locations from rising temperatures.
- Nationwide **Heat Action Plans** are described as a timely and necessary response.
- Climate risks linked to the **Himalayas**, including glacier melt and glacial lake outburst floods, require cross-border monitoring with neighbours.
- Marine adaptation also needs cooperation on **sea health**, mangroves, fisheries, and coastal protection.

Energy transition pathways

- **Hydrogen** is identified as a major future energy source because its only waste product in use is water.
- But hydrogen's climate value depends on production method, since hydrogen derived from **petrochemicals** remains carbon-intensive.
- India's **green hydrogen mission** is seen as promising for addressing both climate change and energy security.

- The editorial also underlines the role of **nuclear energy** in supplying clean power for a growing economy.
- The **SHANTI Act, 2025** opens nuclear generation to private players, allows up to **49% FDI**, and amends liability provisions.
- India aims for **100 GW nuclear capacity by 2047**, against current installed capacity of **8.8 GW**.
- **Small Modular Reactors** of **200-250 MW** are presented as a possible route to decentralised and distributed power.

Equity and the global context

- India's annual per capita electricity consumption is only **1,460 KWh**, far below the world average of **3,800 KWh**.
- The challenge is to increase consumption needed for development while keeping the pathway ecologically sustainable.
- The editorial argues that India's overall climate record is strong and offers lessons for the **Global South**.
- It also holds that the world must recognise that clean-energy transition in developing countries needs resources not presently available without international support.
- The editorial criticises developed countries for retreating from earlier climate commitments and shifting burdens onto the developing world.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Making the Energy Transition Socially Just

- **Climate action must remain socially balanced**: India's energy transition cannot rely only on targets; it must also protect workers, consumers and vulnerable regions from disruption.
- **Coal-dependent regions need transition planning**: Mine-linked districts need reskilling and diversification, a concern reflected in the **Coal Ministry's** just-transition focus and mine-closure framework.
- **Affordable energy access must be preserved**: Clean transition will endure only if it keeps power affordable, as seen in **PM Surya Ghar**, which subsidises rooftop solar for households.

- **Green growth should create broad-based jobs**: Renewables, batteries and hydrogen should generate employment, not only capacity, with **PLI-ACC** backing domestic battery manufacturing.
- **Distributional impacts need policy attention**: Climate measures must account for unequal State and sectoral capacities, since better-prepared regions can absorb green investment faster than weaker ones.
- **Regional inequalities may widen without safeguards**: Green investment can cluster unevenly unless transition planning supports lagging regions and fossil-fuel-dependent local economies.
- **A just transition strengthens climate legitimacy**: India's climate pathway will be more durable if decarbonisation is aligned with inclusion, jobs and energy justice.