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SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT EDITORIALS

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TOPICS:-

- 1. Transforming India's nuclear power landscape**
(GS Paper III - Economy)
- 2. Elastic rules**
(GS Paper III - Environment)
- 3. The World Trade Organization is failing**
(GS Paper III - Economy)

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1. TRANSFORMING INDIA'S NUCLEAR POWER LANDSCAPE

(GS Paper III - Economy)

This editorial 'Transforming India's nuclear power landscape' was published in **The Hindu** on 6th Apr 2026, highlights how India's 100 GW nuclear target needs **SHANTI Act**-based reform, **private investment**, and clear implementation.

Reform architecture and policy shift

- The **2025-26 Budget** set a rise in installed nuclear capacity from **8,180 MW** to 100 GW by 2047.
- The **SHANTI Bill** ended the exclusive dominance of the **DAE** by opening nuclear generation to private participation.
- The law gives statutory backing to the **AERB** and recasts the **liability** framework to attract investment.
- The **Atomic Energy Act** of 1962 and **CLNDA** 2010 are to be replaced by **SHANTI Act 2025**.
- The target now depends less on legislation alone and more on **rules and regulations** aligned with the Act.

Why nuclear gains strategic relevance

- The twin drivers are **Viksit Bharat** by 2047 and **net-zero** by 2070.
- Rising development shifts energy use toward **electricity** from traditional fuels, transport fuels, and industrial **coal**.
- India's 2024 per capita electricity generation was **1,418 kWh**, far below **China** at 7,097 kWh.
- India's per capita energy use was **7,893 kWh**, showing only one-fifth of total **consumption** comes through electricity.
- In June 2025, India had **476 GW** capacity, with roughly half from **non-fossil** sources.
- Yet installed **capacity** masks actual generation, because renewables depend on time, season, and **geography**.
- In 2024-25, **thermal power** produced 75% of electricity while **nuclear** delivered steady baseload with minimal capacity share.
- Renewable expansion now faces **storage** constraints, with 40 GW projects stuck

without **power-purchase contracts**.

India's present nuclear base and cost logic

- India's first nuclear reactor began at **Tarapur** in 1969, and **NPCIL** now manages 24 plants.
- Current installed nuclear capacity is **8,780 MW**, built around **PHWR** systems with one Rawatbhata reactor shut.
- The original **220 MW** design was indigenised and scaled into **540 MW** and 700 MW variants.
- The recent average **DAE budget** of ₹24,000-26,000 crore cannot finance the required **expansion** alone.
- India's **700 MW PHWR** cost is about \$2 million per MW, among the lowest in global nuclear **power**.
- Adding 90 GW over two decades needs over **\$200 billion**, making **private capital** unavoidable.
- The 2017 approval for ten **700 MW** reactors in **fleet mode** still has not moved to construction.
- Imported reactor proposals at **Jaitapur** and **Mithi Viridi** remain delayed, with next-generation costs above \$5 million per MW.

Implementation pathway for the 100 GW target

- The article proposes a **three-front** strategy centred on localisation, **research**, and regulatory clarity.
- New **EDF** and Westinghouse designs must be indigenised to cut **costs** and avoid prolonged import dependence.
- The **DAE** should identify institutions for indigenous **SMRs**, especially for molten-salt reactor development.
- Work on **HALEU** and thorium cladding can offer an alternative to the **Breeder Reactor** route.
- The indigenous **220 MW PHWR** can be modularised as a viable replacement for fossil-based **captive plants**.
- Industries such as **steel** and data centres have shown interest in such reliable **power** options.
- Since nuclear has high upfront but low long-term costs, **financing** design becomes as important as **technology** choice.

- Existing **exclusion zone** rules for multi-reactor sites need revision for single-unit **captive reactors**.
- Clear rules are needed on **tariffs**, fuel ownership, waste management, insurance, liability, and **dispute settlement**.
- A transparent divide between strategic **nuclear activities** and civilian **generation** is essential for investor confidence.
- The article also stresses an autonomous **regulator** and transparent **governance** for durable sectoral transformation.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Industrial strategy gains from a domestic nuclear manufacturing ecosystem

- **Supply-chain deepening:** A scaled nuclear programme can create demand for heavy forgings, control systems, specialised valves, and turbines, as seen in L&T's role in India's reactor supply chain.
- **Technology absorption:** Indigenising reactor systems can move industry from licensed assembly to deeper design capability, as India did by scaling 220 MW PHWRs into 540 MW and 700 MW variants.
- **MSME linkages:** A wider nuclear chain can generate opportunities for smaller firms in fabrication, instrumentation, and maintenance, much as ancillary networks support BHEL and NPCIL-linked industrial activity.
- **Import substitution:** Greater domestic manufacturing can reduce reliance on imported reactor components and designs, unlike delayed foreign-linked projects such as Jaitapur and Mithi Viridi.
- **Jobs multiplier:** Nuclear manufacturing can generate skilled work for engineers, welders, safety specialists, and materials experts, as seen around reactor construction and servicing clusters in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.
- **Export potential:** If India standardises indigenous reactor platforms, especially modular designs, domestic firms could later target overseas markets, much as Indian industry now exports heavy engineering equipment.
- **Strategic capacity:** A strong nuclear ecosystem can advance energy security and technological self-reliance together, as the Kudankulam and Kakrapar experience shows the value of long-term domestic capability.

2. ELASTIC RULES

(GS Paper III - Environment)

This editorial ‘**Elastic rules**’ was published in The Hindu on 6th Apr 2026, highlights how weakened **plastic collection** obligations are undermining India’s **EPR regime**.

Purpose and limits of the rules

- The **Plastic Waste** Management Rules seek to push producers toward **recycling** so less plastic is dumped.
- The rules reflect policy **evolution** since 2016, but plastic’s **ubiquity** makes collection and reuse inherently difficult.
- Plastic’s low cost and wide **accessibility** increase consumption, while its flexibility weakens **retrieval** incentives.
- The editorial treats the Rules as necessary, but questions whether current **design** can enforce real **accountability**.

EPR targets and recent dilution

- Since 2022, the **EPR** regime required firms to collect and process waste equal to rising **marketed plastic** shares.
- Collection targets moved from **35%** of 2021-22 plastic to 70% in 2022-23 and 100% by 2024-25.
- The 2026 amendments add mandatory **recycled content** in packaging, with rising minimum **percentages** over time.
- For **Category I** rigid packaging, recycled material must reach 30%, rising to 60% by 2028-29.
- Similar **reuse obligations** exist, but firms missing 2025-26 targets can carry forward **shortfalls** for three years.
- The rule requires only one-third of the annual **deficit** to be recovered, weakening immediate **compliance** pressure.
- This effectively allows the 2025-26 **target** to be met only by **2028-29**.

Why the amendments weaken enforcement

- There is no evidence that all firms currently meet **100% collection** and **processing** obligations.
- Government responses to **Parliament** put compliance at only **50%-60%**, exposing a major enforcement gap.

- Yet no fresh **targets** are set for 2025 and beyond, signalling retreat from stricter **collection** enforcement.
- The policy focus appears to shift from source-linked **recovery** to merely using **recycled plastic**.
- Provisions on **trading certificates** suggest market logic is replacing direct **environmental** responsibility.
- Without credible **reckoning** of collection and recycling, already flexible **reuse** targets risk becoming meaningless.
- The result is that ignored **risk** could undercut the original **intent** of EPR itself.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Behavioural and market barriers to reducing plastic dependence

- **Convenience lock-in:** Plastic remains embedded in daily consumption because it is cheap, light, and durable, as seen in widespread use of sachets, carry bags, and food-delivery packaging.
- **Price distortion:** Alternatives often remain costlier or less convenient than plastic, so firms keep choosing plastic, as seen in the continued dominance of multilayered snack and shampoo packaging.
- **Collection disincentive:** Low-value and multilayered plastics are often not worth collecting at scale, weakening recovery systems, unlike PET bottles which attract better collection due to resale value.
- **Informal dependence:** Much of retail and packaging depends on plastic for affordability and transport efficiency, especially among small vendors using disposable cups, pouches, and wrapping films.
- **Design problem:** Products are often made for easy disposal rather than repeated use, as seen in single-use cutlery, laminated packets, and e-commerce protective packaging.
- **Consumer habits:** Takeaway culture and convenience buying keep plastic demand high, as visible in online food delivery, bottled beverages, and grocery packaging across urban markets.
- **Policy implication:** Plastic reduction needs changes in product design and incentives, not only compliance mandates, as deposit-return systems show in improving recovery of beverage containers.

3. THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION IS FAILING

(GS Paper III - Economy)

This editorial ‘**The World Trade Organization is failing**’ was published in **The Hindu** on 6th Apr 2026, highlights how **MC14** exposed a deepening **WTO crisis** in trade multilateralism.

MC14 and the wider crisis

- **MC14** failed to produce even a ministerial **declaration**, exposing weak consensus within the 166-member WTO.
- The **WTO Director General** instead cited a Yaoundé package of draft decisions still pending **finalisation** at Geneva.
- The wider stress comes from rising **U.S. unilateralism** and attempts to weaken **MFN**-based trade rules.
- The editorial sees this as the biggest test for trade **multilateralism** since the **Second World War**.

Breakdown over the two moratoriums

- MC14 broke consensus on the **e-commerce moratorium**, under which members since 1998 avoided **customs duties** on digital trade.
- With the moratorium lapsing on **March 31**, countries are now free to impose **tariffs** on electronic transmissions.
- Such tariff space may raise **revenue** for some states but burden **consumers** and businesses.
- At the same time, 66 WTO members signed an **ECA** barring customs duties on **digital trade**.
- This creates two parallel legal frameworks, the **WTO** permitting tariffs and the **ECA** prohibiting them.
- The second moratorium since 1995 had barred **non-violation complaints** under the **TRIPS Agreement**.
- Under WTO rules, countries may challenge measures that nullify expected **benefits** even when no legal **violation** exists.
- Developing countries fear public-health **laws** could face claims linked to **intellectual property** interests.
- Yet the editorial notes such complaints rarely succeed, citing failure of all 10 **non-violation** cases in goods **trade**.

Plurilateralism and institutional drift

- A key MC14 test was inclusion of the **IFD Agreement** into Annex 4 of the **WTO Agreement**.
- Though backed by 129 of 166 countries, the **IFD** was blocked because of India's **opposition**.
- India argued there were no legal **safeguards** for incorporating plurilateral deals into the WTO **acquis**.
- The editorial holds that plurilateral agreements should be **open** and **inclusive**, not exclusionary.
- Failure to include the **IFD** has deepened the WTO's **legislative crisis** over 21st century trade rules.

No reform roadmap and rising unilateralism

- MC14 offered no clear **road map** for **WTO reform**, including revival of the appellate dispute system.
- Attempts by the developed world, especially the **U.S.**, to weaken **MFN** and special treatment must be resisted.
- The editorial links weak trade **multilateralism** with renewed **American unilateralism**, as seen in the early 1970s.
- It cites **Section 301** of the U.S. Trade Act, 1974 as a past instrument of unilateral trade action.
- A similar trend is visible now, but with greater **vengeance** and without **Congressional approval**.
- Failure at **MC14** may accelerate rule-making outside the **WTO**, further reducing its centrality.
- To stay relevant, the WTO may need **plurilateral** solutions supported by stronger legal **guardrails**.
- The editorial assigns India a possible role in shaping legal frameworks for future **plurilateral agreements** within the WTO.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Strategic choices for India in a fragmenting trade order

- **Forum balancing:** India must work within multilateral rules while using other platforms strategically, as seen in its parallel engagement with the WTO, IPEF, and bilateral trade talks.

- **Rule-shaping role:** India cannot stay only defensive and must shape emerging trade rules, as shown by its active positions on e-commerce, investment facilitation, and public stockholding.
- **Development priority:** Trade strategy must preserve space for industrialisation and public welfare, as seen in India's long defence of food security programmes at the WTO.
- **Coalition building:** Working with developing countries can strengthen India's bargaining power, as seen in G-33 coordination on agriculture and subsidy-related negotiating issues.
- **Selective engagement:** India may support plurilateral arrangements when they remain open and inclusive, while resisting exclusionary designs, as reflected in its stand on the IFD Agreement.
- **Domestic readiness:** External bargaining strength also depends on internal competitiveness, as the PLI push seeks to improve manufacturing depth and export capacity in key sectors.
- **Strategic objective:** India should preserve fair multilateralism while preparing for contested trade politics, as recurring U.S. tariff actions and WTO disputes have already demonstrated.