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SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT EDITORIALS

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TOPICS:-

- 1. Our stakes are high in West Asia. Delhi must call for diplomacy, de-escalation**
(GS Paper II - International Relations)
- 2. Is the Supreme Court doing enough to tackle hate speech?**
(GS Paper II - Governance)
- 3. In sinking of the Dena, a Catch-22 for India**
(GS Paper II - International Relations)

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1. OUR STAKES ARE HIGH IN WEST ASIA. DELHI MUST CALL FOR DIPLOMACY, DE-ESCALATION

(GS Paper II - International Relations)

This editorial ‘**Our stakes are high in West Asia. Delhi must call for diplomacy, de-escalation**’ was published in **The Indian Express** on 6th Mar 2026, highlights **India’s high strategic and economic stakes in West Asia** amid a widening conflict that demands diplomacy and de-escalation.

Immediate crisis and collapse of diplomacy

- The war, ignited by the missile strike on Tehran on February 28, has shattered a fragile regional order and deepened global uncertainty.
- For **India**, the conflict is a direct threat because the **Gulf** is tied to its energy security, millions of citizens, trade interests and development goals.
- The strikes came when **U.S.-Iran negotiations** were making progress on curbing Iran’s nuclear programme through sanctions relief and material controls.
- By preferring battlefield action over negotiations, the **U.S.** and **Israel** signalled that diplomacy had become secondary to the larger goal of regime change.
- Trump’s remark on **Ayatollah Ali Khamenei** indicated that future outcomes were being shaped more by bloodshed than statesmanship.

Limits and dangers of regime change

- The stated objective of denying Iran a nuclear weapon had largely been addressed through ongoing diplomacy before the strikes.
- History shows **regime change** is rarely achieved from the air, because military precision can destroy infrastructure but cannot build a new political order.
- Removing a leadership from above in a country of 88 million without a viable alternative risks either harsher authoritarian restoration or a far worse failed-state outcome.
- A large-scale collapse in Iran could create a power vacuum more dangerous than the regime its opponents seek to remove.
- Strategic questions persist over whether the war is driven by a wider aim to create a **unipolar West Asia** and pull Iran into world markets under a more compliant regime.

Regional spillover and civilian costs

- The conflict is already bleeding across borders, with Iranian retaliation extending beyond the main belligerents.
- Strikes have hit countries not overtly hostile to Tehran, including sites beyond **U.S. bases**, causing casualties among locals and foreign residents.
- The war risks dragging the region into a wider conflict through indiscriminate retaliation against **American interests** and civilians.
- In modern warfare, when regime survival is at stake, the line between **civilian** and military targets rapidly erodes.
- The prospect of proxy attacks, assassinations, terrorism and economic disruption rises if Iran is degraded without a political settlement.

Economic shock and India's exposure

- Closure of regional airspace and the **Strait of Hormuz** has sent shockwaves through global markets because a major share of world seaborne oil passes through this chokepoint.
- **Oil prices** rose from the pre-war \$65 to \$83 per barrel, insurance costs surged and **Qatar** declared force majeure and suspended gas shipments.
- Iran appears intent on widening the conflict to disrupt the wider Middle East's commercial and energy networks.
- The combined effect of economic shock and pressure on neighbouring "safe havens" could push **Washington** toward deeper military involvement.
- For India, millions of workers in the **Gulf** face uncertainty, thousands of travellers remain stranded or transit-disrupted and costly oil threatens domestic growth.
- India's developmental priorities therefore make regional peace, stability and diplomatic restraint an immediate national necessity.

India's required stance

- India must lead calls for **de-escalation**, since unchecked missile exchanges can pull the whole region into catastrophe.
- Its national interest lies in pressing the international community to restore **diplomacy** rather than normalise open-ended escalation.
- The conflict has grown beyond a limited exchange and now threatens to engulf all if the abyss widens further.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Strategic options for India

- **Sustain multi-vector diplomacy:** India should engage **Iran**, Israel, Gulf states and major powers simultaneously, as **IMEC** itself links India with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Europe and the U.S.
- **Press for de-escalation:** India must consistently back **ceasefire** and diplomatic restraint, as recent **MEA statements** on West Asia have stressed dialogue and avoidance of escalation.
- **Strengthen energy resilience:** India should diversify **oil and gas** sourcing and use strategic reserves, as **ISPRL** facilities at Visakhapatnam, Mangaluru and Padur support energy security.
- **Protect the Indian diaspora:** Policy must prioritise **citizen safety** through evacuation readiness, as **Operation Ajay** brought back over 1,300 people from Israel in 2023.
- **Secure maritime interests:** India should support safe **sea lanes** and stability around Hormuz, as Gulf shipping disruptions directly threaten its energy and trade lifelines.
- **Use multilateral platforms:** India must leverage the **United Nations** and other forums to advocate restraint, as its official position has repeatedly favoured diplomacy over wider conflict.
- **Balance autonomy with realism:** India's response should protect **national interest** without military entanglement, as evacuations from Sudan, Israel and West Asia show a pragmatic crisis-response model.

2. IS THE SUPREME COURT DOING ENOUGH TO TACKLE HATE SPEECH?

(GS Paper II - Governance)

This editorial 'Is the Supreme Court doing enough to tackle hate speech?' was published in **The Hindu** on 6th Mar 2026, highlights the **limits of judicial action** against hate speech without clear legal standards, sustained supervision and consistent enforcement.

Nature of hate speech and why criminalisation is difficult

- **Hate speech** often works less through explicit incitement and more through prejudicial discourse targeting vulnerable communities.
- Its harm lies not only in words used but in unequal **power structures** and social hierarchies within which it operates.
- Not every divisive expression can attract penal sanction, so the threshold for **criminal liability** remains high.
- Much hate speech operates through **ambiguity** and dog whistles, allowing speakers plausible deniability.
- Its effect depends both on what is said and how it is **perceived**, making legal delimitation difficult.
- It reinforces exclusion by targeting groups already socially or politically **vulnerable**.

Can hate speech be treated as a constitutional tort

- Where authorities repeatedly fail to act, **constitutional tort** offers a basis to hold the state accountable.
- The principle is that when state inaction causes harm, the state must assume **responsibility** and compensate those wronged.
- Electoral politics increasingly uses communal rhetoric to secure **polarisation** and political dividends.
- When such rhetoric comes from the top, lower-level functionaries often imitate it.
- Failure of institutions such as the **police** and even the **Election Commission of India** compounds the problem.
- Treating hate speech as a constitutional tort could help courts fix **accountability** and award compensation.

How effective has the Supreme Court been

- In **Tehseen Poonawalla v Union of India** in 2018, the Supreme Court issued directions to curb mob lynching and related hate crimes.
- It later ordered appointment of **nodal officers** by States.
- In 2023, it further directed States to **suo motu** register **FIRs** in hate speech cases.
- Yet violations continue, showing weak compliance and poor implementation.
- The Court can initiate **contempt** against officials who fail to act and can use **Article 142** to do complete justice.

- Despite these powers, it has at times been reluctant to proceed directly against erring state authorities.
- In the case involving **Himanta Biswa Sarma**, it declined direct action and sent petitioners to the High Court.
- Petitioners had wanted the matter kept as a **continuing mandamus** so the Court could monitor compliance.
- Closing such proceedings despite continuing violations reflects a serious failure of **constitutional duty**.

Need for law, but also its limits

- Specific criminal provisions on **hate speech** may help, but enforcement remains the real challenge.
- India already has legal tools capable of addressing such speech.
- The **Representation of the People Act, 1950** contains provisions that empower the Election Commission to act against candidates using hate speech in campaigns.
- In practice, however, there is little evidence of such powers being exercised with consistency.
- Even stricter penal laws may remain vulnerable to **arbitrariness**.
- Existing legal approaches often ignore the broader **social context** in which hate speech operates.
- Some speech merely causes offence, while other rhetoric deepens structural harm to already marginalised communities.
- Law alone cannot solve the problem without a wider **social consensus** against stereotypes, tropes and targeted propaganda.

Debate on the Karnataka Hate Speech Bill

- The **Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill, 2025** is seen as well-intentioned but inadequate.
- It does not sufficiently capture the **discriminatory** dimension of hate speech.
- Its focus remains on injury, offence and disharmony, which frames the issue mainly as a **law-and-order** concern.
- This misses the deeper realities of discrimination and marginalisation produced by hate speech.
- The Bill's definitions are also overly broad, creating scope for **arbitrary application**.
- Its effectiveness can only be assessed after enactment and implementation.
- Any conceptual gaps, especially in definition, would need later **amendment**.

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Need for a multi-institutional response

- **Strengthen police accountability:** State police must act promptly, as the **Tehseen Poonawalla** ruling itself required nodal officers and preventive coordination.
- **Activate Election Commission powers:** The **Election Commission of India** should act firmly, as the **Model Code of Conduct** bars appeals to caste or communal feelings.
- **Enforce political party responsibility:** Parties must discipline **leaders and candidates**, as the ECI's **2024 notice** stressed their role in ethical campaigning.
- **Improve platform regulation:** Social media **intermediaries** should curb harmful amplification, as the **IT Rules, 2021** impose due-diligence and grievance obligations.
- **Build local preventive mechanisms:** District administrations need **early-warning systems**, as the Supreme Court required inter-district coordination to prevent mob violence.
- **Promote civic and social reform:** Schools, media and civil society must counter **prejudice**, as law alone cannot address the social spread of communal stereotypes.
- **Ensure institutional coordination:** A durable response needs **courts, police, ECI and platforms** together, as fragmented enforcement has repeatedly weakened compliance.

3. IN SINKING OF THE DENA, A CATCH-22 FOR INDIA

(GS Paper II - International Relations)

This editorial 'In sinking of the Dena, a Catch-22 for India' was published in **The Indian Express** on 6th Mar 2026, highlights the **political, diplomatic and military dilemmas** for India after a U.S. submarine sank an Iranian warship near Sri Lanka.

Strategic and diplomatic embarrassment

- The sinking of **IRIS Dena** by a **U.S. submarine** in the Indian Ocean off Sri Lanka creates awkward political, diplomatic and military questions for India.

- The incident is more sensitive because **Dena** had participated in India's **International Fleet Review** at Visakhapatnam in February.
- Fleet reviews carry military symbolism, signalling naval credibility, sovereign recognition and regional maritime primacy.
- Since **Dena** was sunk only 40 nautical miles from Sri Lanka, the politico-diplomatic optics are particularly uncomfortable for India.
- The incident has widened a regional conflict into the **global maritime domain**, beyond air and missile exchanges.

India's awareness and operational dilemma

- The episode places Delhi in a **Catch-22**, centred on India's awareness of submarine activity in nearby waters.
- If India was unaware, it raises doubts about its **underwater domain awareness** in proximate waters.
- If India was aware, it raises questions on whether Delhi knew of the proposed action when **Dena** sailed from Visakhapatnam for Iranian waters.
- Any affirmative answer to either possibility could create discordant domestic and regional consequences for India.
- The episode therefore tests not only surveillance capacity but also political handling of maritime-security ambiguity.

Maritime law and rescue concerns

- The U.S. justified the torpedo strike as the targeting of an enemy warship in **international waters**.
- Even if the attack is legally defended, compliance with **international humanitarian law** and maritime rescue obligations remains uncertain.
- Professional naval practice expects an attacking submarine to facilitate survival or pickup of survivors where feasible.
- The key ethical and legal grey zone is not only the strike itself, but what happened to survivors after the sinking of **Dena**.
- Reports of Indian Navy coordination with **Sri Lanka** for search and rescue are therefore significant and appropriate.

Wider regional and economic implications

- The Indian Ocean carries critical **global shipping lanes**, especially for hydrocarbon and energy imports used by major Asian economies.

- India imports nearly **88 per cent** of its crude oil, much of which transits these sea lines.
- Escalation could disrupt maritime communication, raise **insurance costs** and trigger rerouting, affecting India's economy and energy security.
- India has historically feared major-power conflicts spilling into the South Asian neighbourhood.
- The probability that **Dena** marks the trigger for something larger cannot be ruled out, given the wider regional context.

Need for sober national response

- The Sri Lankan government and navy's rescue response deserves support because it aligns with maritime rescue protocols.
- The effects of the incident on regional stability should be discussed in India with **dispassion**, not partisanship.
- The sinking of **Dena** should not become a polarising domestic debate when its larger significance is strategic and regional.

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Lessons for India's maritime security strategy

- **Strengthen underwater awareness:** India must deepen **underwater domain awareness**, as **IMAC** already anchors maritime information fusion and monitoring.
- **Upgrade anti-submarine capability:** The Navy should enhance **ASW preparedness**, as **MH-60R** helicopters have already been operationalised on fleet ships.
- **Expand maritime surveillance:** India needs denser **ISR coverage**, as **P-8I** aircraft are already integral to naval anti-submarine operations and exercises.
- **Improve neighbour coordination:** Closer cooperation with **Sri Lanka** is essential, as the **Colombo Security Conclave** prioritises maritime safety and security.
- **Secure sea lanes of communication:** India must prioritise **SLOC protection**, as about **88%** of its crude oil needs are met through imports.
- **Refine crisis-response protocols:** India should develop clearer **maritime contingency planning**, as the **Colombo Security Conclave** also covers humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.
- **Align naval readiness with strategy:** Maritime posture must reflect **regional realities**, as exercises like **Varuna 2025** included advanced anti-submarine warfare drills.