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SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT EDITORIALS

8th April 2026

TOPICS:-

1. Systemic reckoning

(GS Paper II - Governance)

2. Limits of neutrality in addressing caste

(GS Paper I - Society)

3. In Delhi's support for Arab Gulf, a return of the Bombay school of thought

(GS Paper II - International Relations)

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1. SYSTEMIC RECKONING

(GS Paper II - Governance)

This editorial ‘**Systemic reckoning**’ was published in **The Hindu** on 8th Apr 2026, highlights how the Sattankulam verdict exposes **police brutality** and reinforces **judicial accountability**.

Truth behind the Sattankulam case

- **Jayaraj** and **Benicks** were tortured in Sattankulam police station in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu, and later died in custody.
- The trial court in **Madurai** convicted all nine surviving **policemen** arraigned in the case; a tenth accused had earlier died of COVID-19.
- The victims were first booked on false **lockdown** charges, and Benicks was detained after confronting police over his father’s assault.
- The two men were stripped, beaten overnight, and forced to clean their own blood, showing sustained **custodial torture** and **dehumanisation**.
- A government doctor issued a dubious “**fit for remand**” report, and the jurisdictional magistrate mechanically ordered **judicial custody**.
- The case may have been buried as another suspicious custodial death but for overwhelming **evidence** and strong **public outrage**.

Role of judiciary, witnesses and investigation

- Justice required an engaged **judiciary**, courageous **witnesses**, and a determined investigation capable of assembling irrefutable evidence.
- A Judicial Magistrate found the station atmosphere hostile and intimidating, exposing entrenched **impunity** within the **police station**.
- Madras High Court judges **P.N. Prakash** and **B. Pugalendhi** took **suo motu** cognisance and ordered revenue officials to secure evidence.
- A head constable, **Revathi**, testified against her colleagues, providing a crucial internal **witness account** in the prosecution.
- The **CBI** relied on scientific evidence, including blood samples from the station that matched the victims’ **DNA**.
- **Call data records** confirmed the presence of both victims and accused at the relevant time, materially strengthening the **prosecution case**.

Legal significance and institutional message

- The conviction signals that police in **uniform** cannot wield **force** against unarmed citizens as if it were a statutory right.
- The death penalty awarded by the trial court sits uneasily with **rehabilitative justice**, though the convictions themselves carry larger **institutional value**.
- The trial court appears to have applied uniform **proportionality** in assigning **culpability** to all accused.
- That approach may face scrutiny in higher **courts**, especially given differentiated culpability seen in the **Rajiv Gandhi** assassination case.
- The editorial's central thrust is not punishment alone, but sensitising the **police force** that **excesses** will not go unpunished.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Need for safeguards against custodial violence

- **Arrest discipline:** Strict adherence to arrest procedures, as laid down in **D.K. Basu**, can reduce illegal detention and custodial abuse, as seen in repeated judicial reliance on these safeguards.
- **Medical independence:** Credible and independent **medical examination** is essential, because dubious fitness certification, as alleged in the **Sattankulam** case itself, can normalise torture through remand.
- **Magisterial vigilance:** Active **judicial scrutiny** at remand can prevent mechanical custody orders, especially where the detention atmosphere appears coercive or intimidating, as noted by courts in custodial abuse cases.
- **Electronic oversight:** Functional **CCTV coverage**, as mandated in **Paramvir Singh Saini**, can deter violence, preserve evidence, and strengthen later accountability in police stations.
- **Record integrity:** Accurate **custody registers** and digital logs can expose false timelines and cover-ups, much like call records and forensic reconstruction did in **Sattankulam**.
- **Witness protection:** Secure conditions for **insider testimony** can break police silence, as seen when head constable **Revathi** testified against her colleagues in the Sattankulam prosecution.
- **Preventive reform:** The larger goal is not only punishment after death, but building **institutional safeguards** that make future custodial violence harder to commit and conceal.

2. LIMITS OF NEUTRALITY IN ADDRESSING CASTE

(GS Paper I - Society)

This editorial ‘Limits of neutrality in addressing caste’ was published in **The Hindu** on 8th Apr 2026, highlights how **caste-neutrality** can weaken protection against **structural discrimination** in higher education.

Regulatory context

- The **Supreme Court** interim stay on the **UGC** equity regulations has reopened debate on caste discrimination in higher education.
- The rules arose from **Abeda Salim Tadvi v Union of India**, linked to caste discrimination and student suicides.
- Regulation 3(c) defines **caste-based discrimination** against **SC, ST, and OBC** students in higher education.
- This specificity is presented as recognition of **historical marginalisation**, not exclusion of **other groups**.

Why neutrality fails

- A **caste-neutral** definition assumes discrimination is symmetrical, but caste operates through entrenched **hierarchies**.
- Such neutrality reduces **systemic oppression** to individual **grievances**, weakening the law’s focus on structural power.
- The editorial says **SC/ST** students have long faced exclusion, humiliation, and institutional **bias**.
- These realities, including distress and **suicides**, show caste discrimination is systemic, not **incidental**.
- Treating caste oppression as evenly shared shifts attention from **structural exclusion** to abstract **formal equality**.

Constitutional and policy thrust

- The Constitution supports **substantive equality**, not abstract **sameness** across unequal social locations.
- **Articles 14 and 15** permit differential treatment to remedy **historical disadvantage** and social exclusion.
- Defining caste discrimination through marginalised groups is therefore not **arbitrary**, but grounded in **constitutional logic**.

- The larger weakness lies in poor **implementation**, not in the regulation's targeted **definition**.
- The editorial prioritises **complaint mechanisms**, audits, oversight, and accountability for institutional **non-compliance**.
- The central question is whether institutions will **respond** effectively when **discrimination** occurs.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Need for inclusive campuses beyond legal definitions

- **Campus climate:** Legal rules alone cannot ensure equality unless institutions cultivate an **inclusive environment**, as repeated discrimination complaints in higher education have shown.
- **Sense of belonging:** Students from marginalised groups need not only admission, but also **dignity** and emotional security, as the **Rohith Vemula** case brought into national focus.
- **Support networks:** Strong **mentoring systems** and counselling support are vital for vulnerable students, especially where social isolation compounds academic and institutional stress.
- **Faculty sensitisation:** Teachers and administrators must be trained to identify subtle **caste prejudice**, not just overt acts, because exclusion often appears through routine institutional behaviour.
- **Peer culture:** Informal exclusion in hostels and classrooms can deepen **alienation**, as cases such as **Payal Tadvi** highlighted in professional educational spaces.
- **Representative institutions:** Greater social diversity in faculty and committees can improve **trust** in grievance processes and reduce perceptions of institutional bias.
- **Educational purpose:** Higher education serves democracy only when it promotes **mobility** and dignity, rather than reproducing hierarchy through silence, stigma, and weak response systems.

3. IN DELHI'S SUPPORT FOR ARAB GULF, A RETURN OF THE BOMBAY SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

(GS Paper II - International Relations)

This editorial 'In Delhi's support for Arab Gulf, a return of the Bombay school of thought' was published in **The Indian Express** on 8th Apr 2026, highlights how India's renewed support for the Arab Gulf reflects a revival of the **Bombay School** view of **maritime security**.

Strategic argument and historical frame

- The editorial says the **Gulf** has moved to the top tier of India's **strategic priorities**.
- It argues this shift is long overdue because the Gulf is tied to India through deep **economic** and **security** links.
- The piece frames this as revival of an older debate between the **Bombay School** and **Ludhiana School**.
- These schools represented two enduring visions of India's **geopolitics** and preferred **security instruments**.

Bombay versus Ludhiana schools

- The **Bombay School** viewed India's security as beginning at sea and extending across the **Persian Gulf** and Arabia.
- Its leading figures, **John Malcolm** and **Mountstuart Elphinstone**, treated Persia and Arabia as India's natural outer ring of defence.
- It prioritised **sea lanes**, ports, trade, naval power, and political ties with Arab coastal principalities.
- The **Ludhiana School** emerged from continental concerns and focused on **Central Asia**, Afghanistan, and landward defence.
- Figures such as **Henry Lawrence** and **John Lawrence** relied on frontier fortification, tribal militias, and overland diplomacy.
- The two approaches differed not on defending India, but on **geographic focus** and **policy methods**.

Historical evolution of the two approaches

- The debate began after Napoleon's 1798 Egypt campaign, which exposed India's western vulnerability and widened imperial anxieties.

- The **First Anglo-Afghan War** of 1839-42 became the decisive collision between the two strategic schools.
- The failed Kabul venture discredited the **Ludhiana** push outward and vindicated the **Bombay** caution over continental expansion.
- Yet Punjab consolidation and fears of Russian advance later entrenched the **Ludhiana mindset** in official thinking.
- After **1947**, Pakistan inherited this frontier logic through its Afghan policy, proxies, and dependence on overland strategy.
- Partition also weakened India's maritime orientation as **Bombay**, Calcutta, and Madras lost strategic primacy to land-centred capital politics.

Why the Gulf has regained centrality

- The editorial says the rapid rise of the oil-rich **Gulf** and its labour, remittance, energy, and capital links changed India's strategic map.
- Nearly **9 million Indian workers** and almost **\$50 billion** in annual remittances make the Gulf central to India's interests.
- These ties have made the region vital to India's **economic extension** and **social space**.
- The 1979 Iranian Revolution limited engagement with Tehran, but the Arab Gulf steadily gained the centrality earlier held by Persia.
- Economic reforms in the **1990s** and the new trade focus further strengthened the logic of maritime engagement.
- The editorial argues Delhi can no longer treat the Gulf as a peripheral **regional theatre**.

Present policy implication

- Support for the **Arab Gulf** signals return to the Bombay School without abandoning concern over Pakistan and the land frontier.
- The task, as framed here, is to anchor maritime India firmly in the **Gulf** while maintaining credible military deterrence on land.
- Political reform and economic openness in Arab states are contrasted with Pakistan's **religious extremism** and proxy dependence.
- The Arab Gulf's evolution is presented as a counterweight to instability emanating from **Pakistan** and **Iran**.
- The editorial's core claim is that Delhi's current Gulf policy marks a strategic **return to the Bombay School**.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

India's stakes in the Gulf beyond strategy

- **Diaspora security:** The Gulf matters not only geopolitically, but also because millions of **Indian workers** there make regional instability a direct domestic concern, as evacuations repeatedly show.
- **Energy dependence:** Stable relations with Gulf states remain crucial because India's **energy security** continues to be closely tied to West Asian suppliers.
- **Trade connectivity:** The Gulf is not only a strategic arena, but also a major **commercial corridor** linking India with West Asia, Africa, and Europe.
- **Remittance stability:** Large **remittance flows** routed through Gulf exchange channels support household incomes and local economies across India.
- **Maritime relevance:** Strong Gulf engagement reinforces India's wider **sea-lane strategy**, especially across the Arabian Sea and western Indian Ocean.
- **Crisis response:** Close regional partnerships improve India's evacuation capacity, as **Operation Kaveri** brought back 4,097 people from Sudan in 2023.
- **Comprehensive engagement:** A durable Gulf policy must integrate **strategic, economic, and human interests**, as seen across evacuation, labour, remittance, and connectivity concerns.