

Editorials – 9th Jun 2026

1. The trust deficit in India–Bangladesh ties (GS Paper II International Relations)

This editorial ‘The trust deficit in India–Bangladesh ties’ was published in The Hindu on 9th Jun 2026, highlights how mistrust, political rhetoric and water-sharing uncertainty are straining India–Bangladesh relations.

Diplomatic Outreach Without Substantive Reset

- Over 100 days after the Tarique Rahman government took charge, India–Bangladesh ties remain largely unchanged despite early expectations of improvement.
- India made early outreach through S. Jaishankar’s Dhaka visit, Vikram Misri’s invitation–carrying visit and Om Birla’s presence at Rahman’s swearing–in.
- The BNP sees these gestures as insufficient because India has not reversed Yunus–era restrictions on transshipment, visa services and Bangladeshi market access.
- New Delhi’s assurance on Sheikh Hasina’s presence in India has not satisfied Dhaka, despite marking a softer shift from the interim government’s earlier hard line.

Political Messaging and Deepening Trust Deficit

- Delhi’s official use of illegal immigration after BJP victories in West Bengal and Assam has sharpened Dhaka’s concern over sensitive rhetoric.
- Bangladesh expected less rhetoric and more focus on visa restoration and the 1996 Ganga Water Treaty, but election campaigns around Bangladesh–related issues widened distrust.
- Khalilur Rahman’s April 7–8 Delhi visit tested engagement with Ajit Doval and S. Jaishankar, but Hasina’s interviews and Indian campaign rhetoric created a sense of betrayal in Dhaka.
- Rahman’s reported plans to visit Malaysia and China reflect frustration over limited progress with India and the search for alternative diplomatic openings.

Water Security, Domestic Pressure and Strategic Risk

- Bangladesh’s ties with China and the U.S. have improved since August 2024, while India ties remain disrupted by the 2024 uprising and interim–rule legacy.
- Dhaka’s assessment suggests that without Indian assurance on the Padma–Ganga river, Bangladesh’s plans may not proceed smoothly beyond 2026.

- Ainun Nishat warns that delay in renewing the Ganga treaty will hurt the Ganges-Kobadak irrigation project, dry-season cropping and western-central Bangladesh.
- Uncertain water supply will hurt Bangladesh's economy, already strained by the energy crisis triggered by the U.S.-Israel war on Iran.
- The Rahman government faces pressure over measles deaths of at least 600 infants, weak health response and rising sexual violence, reflecting wider law-and-order breakdown.
- The Awami League may gain ground despite a ban if Rahman fails to renew the Ganga agreement with Delhi before December 31, 2026.

Beyond Editorial

Borderland federalism and subnational diplomacy

- **Border States:** India-Bangladesh ties directly affect West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram, as the 4,096-km border shapes migration, trade, river flows and security.
- **Cooperative federalism:** New Delhi must involve border States in bilateral planning, because migration rhetoric in Assam, West Bengal and Tripura can quickly damage diplomatic trust with Dhaka.
- **River governance:** Ganga, Teesta and Feni river issues require Centre-State coordination, since the 1996 Ganga Treaty and Teesta deadlock affect agriculture, ecology and politics.
- **Border economy:** Border haats, Petrapole-Benapole trade and Agartala-Akhaura links can convert frontier regions from security-heavy zones into livelihood and trust corridors.
- **Security balance:** Border management must combine BSF surveillance with legal repatriation norms, as unilateral "push-in" claims can deepen alienation among border communities.
- **Connectivity diplomacy:** Maitri Setu, Sabroom ICP and Northeast-Bangladesh corridors can strengthen trade and strategic depth, but local consent and State execution remain crucial.
- **Trust building:** Subnational engagement, as seen in the 2015 Land Boundary Agreement, can reduce mistrust through practical cooperation on trade, transport, water and communities.

2. Fifteen FTAs, 27 countries, four challenges

(GS Paper III Economy)

This editorial 'Fifteen FTAs, 27 countries, four challenges' was published in The Indian Express on 9th Jun 2026, highlights how India's expanding FTA network is creating trade deficits, weak exporter gains, inverted duties and offshore manufacturing incentives.

Expanding FTA Network and Rising Deficits

- With the India-Oman agreement taking effect on June 1, India now has 15 FTAs covering 27 countries, and nine more could extend access to 69 countries and nearly 75% exports.
- India's post-FTA trade deficit rose sharply with ASEAN, Japan and South Korea, reaching about \$62 billion over three years despite expected export gains.
- Newer FTAs created large deficits, with FY2025 imports reaching \$48.6 billion from UAE, Australia, Mauritius and EFTA countries against exports under \$50 billion.
- The deficit risk may grow as India's trade surplus with South Asia shrank from \$6.7 billion to \$20 billion during the same period.

Low Tariff Asymmetry and Weak Exporter Benefits

- India's MFN tariffs average about 12.6%, while partners such as Singapore, Japan, Australia and Malaysia have near-zero or low duties, giving their exporters larger gains from Indian tariff cuts.
- About 50% tariff reduction by India gives partner exports a major price advantage, while Indian exporters gain little where partner duties were already low or zero.
- Actual flows confirm the asymmetry: nearly all Singapore imports enter duty-free, above 80% from Japan and Malaysia, and over half from the EU, while only 6% of Indian exports enter partner markets duty-free under MFN.

Poor FTA Use by Indian Exporters

- Indian exporters underuse FTA preferences because savings of 1-3% rarely justify compliance costs linked to rules of origin, certification and paperwork.
- Only 20-30% of eligible Indian exports use FTA concessions, so small firms often choose lower administrative burden over marginal tariff savings.

Inverted Duties and Manufacturing Distortions

- FTAs deepen inverted duty structures when raw materials face 7.5-10% MFN duties but finished goods enter duty-free from partners.

- Indian producers of aluminium, chemicals, plastics, rubber and textiles face higher input costs, while finished imports benefit from zero-duty entry.
- This tariff pattern favours downstream manufacturing abroad, weakens domestic value addition and makes Make in India harder to achieve.

Offshore Manufacturing Incentive

- FTAs encourage firms to manufacture in ASEAN and export duty-free to India, as seen in electronics, steel, chemicals, plastics, consumer goods and engineering products.
- Chinese companies increasingly use ASEAN hubs such as Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia to assemble products and access India at lower duty.
- When producing abroad becomes cheaper than producing in India, FTAs can turn Make in India into “Make in ASEAN, Sell in India”.

Beyond Editorial

Domestic competitiveness before external liberalisation

- Export readiness: FTAs benefit India only when firms meet standards, scale and delivery timelines, as seen in pharmaceuticals and auto components entering regulated markets.
- MSME capacity: Small exporters need easier rules of origin, digital documentation and handholding, otherwise concessions under ASEAN and UAE FTAs remain underused.
- Logistics reform: PM Gati Shakti, NLP and port-led connectivity must reduce logistics costs, because expensive freight can neutralise tariff advantages under FTAs.
- Industrial depth: FTAs should support domestic value addition through PLI-linked manufacturing, not encourage duty-free finished imports in electronics, chemicals and steel.
- Standards ecosystem: BIS testing labs, QCOs and product certification support are essential for exporters facing strict EU, Japan and Australia market standards.
- GVC integration: India must connect MSMEs with global value chains, as Apple’s supplier ecosystem shows that exports rise when firms supply intermediate goods competitively.
- Policy coherence: Trade policy, PLI, RoDTEP and tariff rationalisation must move together so liberalisation strengthens Make in India rather than bypassing it.

3. On India's EV transition, it's time to shift gears

(GS Paper III Economy)

This editorial 'On India's EV transition, it's time to shift gears' was published in The Indian Express on 9th Jun 2026, highlights the need for a comprehensive, collaborative and solution-oriented policy for India's transition to electric vehicles.

Policy Push and Transition Timeline

- Vehicular pollution harms India's global image, while the auto industry has historically resisted pollution-control policies due to revenue loss and technology-shift concerns.
- The government should announce a comprehensive EV policy for two- and four-wheelers by 2028, with charging points in parking lots, petrol pumps and public spaces.
- Stopping new vehicle registration after 2028 will not eliminate repair jobs immediately, as older vehicles will still require mechanic services.

Strategic Gains and Misplaced Vulnerability Concerns

- Fears of China dependence are overstated because Delhi, where EV sales are mandated, is under 4% of the national vehicle market and cannot damage the two-wheeler economy.
- EVs reduce global vulnerabilities because batteries and magnets are not consumables, unlike fossil-fuel vehicles that require continuous petrol imports.
- India can stockpile critical minerals through mechanisms like the National Critical Mineral Mission, whose 2026-27 budget highlights access to critical minerals and rare earths.

Cost, Labour and Industrial Adjustment

- Delivery workers will not necessarily face higher costs, as CSEP analysis shows lifetime costs of electric two-wheelers are far lower than petrol vehicles.
- Higher EV purchase costs can be addressed through government-supported real-credit programmes, while the gig economy has already adopted electric two-wheelers.
- Industrial transition will create stranded assets for internal combustion firms, but forced depreciation can be offset by innovation and higher R&D spending.

Collaborative Transition Ecosystem

- The government should avoid working alone and instead support interim stockpiling, innovative charging models and utility-company involvement in compensation systems.
- Battery reuse and recycling need policy support, especially as the automotive industry can use its extensive networks to assist government efforts.
- India's EV transition will succeed best through industry-government collaboration, not a hostile relationship with firms facing unavoidable technological disruption.

Beyond Editorial

Just transition and urban governance capacity

- Worker protection: Mechanics, small garages and fuel-pump workers need reskilling support through ITIs, as EVs reduce engine, clutch and oil-service jobs.
- Charging access: EV transition needs local bodies, DISCOMs and urban planners to expand chargers across Delhi Metro stations, parking lots, markets and highways.
- Grid readiness: DISCOMs must upgrade transformers, feeders and smart meters, because dense charging demand in Delhi, Bengaluru and Mumbai can stress urban grids.
- Equity concern: Affordable credit and targeted support are needed so delivery workers using Ola, Uber and Zomato fleets are not excluded from EV adoption.
- Battery governance: Battery reuse, recycling and safe disposal need enforcement under Battery Waste Management Rules, 2022, to prevent lithium-ion waste risks.
- Public transport: EV policy should prioritise e-buses under PM e-Bus Sewa and Delhi's e-bus fleet, not only private vehicle replacement.
- Urban planning: Cities must integrate EV charging with parking rules, building by-laws and public transport networks, as Delhi's EV Policy attempted through charging mandates.