EDITORIALS - 11TH JUL 2026

1. OVER AND ABOVE

(GS Paper I Society)

This editorial 'Over and above' was published in The Hindu on 11th Jul 2026, highlights the gap between women's rising higher-education enrolment and their limited access to degree-aligned, secure employment.

Enrolment Gains and Unequal Academic Choices

- Female enrolment rose 42%, from 1.57 crore in 2014-15 to 2.24 crore in 2023-24, outpacing male growth of 22.16%.
- Women constitute 49.7% of 4.5 crore students, while the Gender Parity Index of 1.08 records 108 women per 100 men.
- Enrolment among Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe women increased by 51.4% and 75.7%, respectively, reflecting broader access for marginalised groups.
- Women form 44% of STEM students, but remain concentrated in general sciences at 54.6%, while their engineering and technology share is only 31.1%.
- This disciplinary segregation limits women's participation in future-oriented sectors, particularly artificial intelligence and software engineering.

Institutional and Employment Pipeline Gaps

- A nearly gender-balanced student body coexists with only 82 female teachers per 100 male teachers and limited women in leadership positions.
- Rising enrolment has coincided with expanding low-tier private colleges facing faculty shortages and inadequate infrastructure, weakening education-to-employment outcomes.

- The Female Labour Force Participation Rate remains constrained by social expectations, domestic responsibilities and safety barriers, exposing the education-employment disconnect.
- The Periodic Labour Force Survey 2025 shows men dominating regular salaried work, 26.5% against 18.2%, alongside a persistent gender earnings gap.
- Average monthly earnings are ₹24,217 for men against ₹18,353 for women, despite growing female participation in higher education.
- Although 64.2% of women are classified as self-employed, the category includes unpaid household and farm work, obscuring their actual employment outcomes.

Beyond Editorial

From Degrees to Decent Work

- Apprenticeship bridge: Paid apprenticeships and Pradhan Mantri National Apprenticeship Melas can connect women graduates with industry experience.
- Childcare continuity: The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 mandates crèches in establishments employing 50 or more workers.
- Workplace safety: Internal Committees under the POSH Act, 2013 can address harassment and reduce women's workforce withdrawal.
- Career re-entry: TCS Rebegin and Tata SCIP help experienced women resume careers through training, mentoring and flexible recruitment.
- STEM pipeline: Vigyan Jyoti encourages schoolgirls to pursue underrepresented science, engineering and technology disciplines.
- Research retention: Women in Science and Engineering-KIRAN supports qualified women returning after career interruptions.
- Institutional reform: Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions assesses scientific institutions and promotes systemic gender equality.

2. EASING ON CHINA IS RIGHT MOVE AT RIGHT TIME

(GS Paper III Economy)

This editorial 'Easing on China is right move at right time' was published in The Indian Express on 11th Jul 2026, highlights the need for calibrated Chinese investment to strengthen Indian manufacturing while safeguarding strategic interests.

Policy Context and Trade-Investment Imbalance

- India rejected the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in 2019 and introduced Press Note 3 in 2020, requiring approval for investments from land-bordering countries.
- Despite political uncertainty, Chinese imports reached $131 billion in 2025-26 and accounted for nearly half of India's non-oil goods trade deficit.
- Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from China totalled only $2.5 billion since 2000, making approval of the Dixon-Vivo joint venture a significant policy shift.

Economic Rationale and Recent Liberalisation

- India gained little from the China+1 strategy, while countries such as Vietnam attracted a larger share of production diverted from China.
- The Economic Survey 2023-24 proposed deeper Chinese supply-chain integration or increased investment, favouring the FDI-led approach.
- Cabinet-approved FDI policy changes seek greater inflows from land-bordering countries, aligning regulation with India's manufacturing requirements.

- Approval of the Dixon-Vivo venture, customs-duty waivers on 85 manufacturing inputs and Chinese participation in power-sector tenders signal gradual easing.

Need for a Calibrated China Strategy

- China remains integral to global manufacturing supply chains and a major source of outward investment, making complete economic disengagement impractical.
- The World Investment Report notes Chinese investment increasingly targets greenfield manufacturing, energy, infrastructure and critical raw materials through South-South corridors.
- India must balance strategic and security concerns with economic imperatives by deepening domestic manufacturing, increasing value addition and integrating with global supply chains.

Beyond Editorial

Strategic Red Lines for Chinese Capital

- Sectoral screening: Chinese investment in defence, telecom, critical minerals and strategic infrastructure requires enhanced security scrutiny.
- Ownership transparency: Press Note 3 covers beneficial owners from land-bordering countries, limiting indirect investment through third countries.
- Trusted procurement: India's trusted-source framework for telecom equipment can guide screening across other critical networks.
- Data security: India's 2020 ban on 59 Chinese applications showed that digital market access remains conditional on national security.
- Local value addition: Investment approvals can require domestic sourcing, local manufacturing and supplier development, as encouraged under PLI schemes.
- Continuing compliance: The Critical Telecommunication Infrastructure Rules, 2024 mandate audits, risk assessments and supply-chain documentation.

- Periodic review: Conditional approvals and reassessment can address changing ownership, technology and geopolitical risks without blocking productive investment.

3. Next leap will come from bringing AI and digital public infrastructure together

(GS Paper III Science and Technology)

This editorial 'Next leap will come from bringing AI and digital public infrastructure together' was published in The Indian Express on 11th Jul 2026, highlights how integrating Artificial Intelligence with Digital Public Infrastructure can strengthen state capacity, formalisation and employment."

India's Data Advantage and AI Opportunity

- Aadhaar reduced pension fraud, improved welfare efficiency and helped catalyse digital payments, showing DPI's potential to transform governance.
- India lacks a leading generative AI model, but its population-scale digital datasets make AI deployment potentially more employment-generative than AI creation.
- Jio, UPI and GST transformed India from data-poor to data-rich, replacing delayed surveys with continuous administrative data.
- UPI processes 23 billion monthly transactions, while GST payments, FASTag activity and Aadhaar authentications generate large datasets on consumption, logistics and welfare delivery.
- Population-scale digital data can accelerate development, though stronger academic research, think tanks and open public data commons remain necessary.

AI-DPI Integration and State Capacity

- India's economic transformation has been constrained by weak state capacity, especially during the transition from agricultural to non-farm employment.
- DPI improves resource allocation, service delivery and fraud detection, but fragmented digital silos, limited technical capacity and PDF-based governance weaken outcomes.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) can process unstructured data, improve interoperability and expand multilingual access within a strong consent architecture.
- AI-enabled interfaces can widen labour and education access, improve public-health spending and operationalise the principles of Jan Vishwas Siddhant.
- Unlike American private-data and Chinese platform-led models, India can pioneer population-scale DPI integration, where AI converts infrastructure into enhanced state capacity.

Formalisation, Jobs and Strategic Gains

- AI deployment requires organisational capability and human capital, allowing India to prioritise applications that extract economic value rather than compete only in frontier models.
- Integrating AI with enterprise DPI, including universal enterprise numbers, entity DigiLocker and API Setu, could make India the global capital of AI use cases.
- A universal lifetime social security account linked to Aadhaar could deepen formalisation through private innovation built over a public, non-profit digital layer.
- Integrated systems can reduce information asymmetry and transaction costs while improving credit allocation, worker-job matching, logistics and high-wage non-farm employment.
- Combining India's DPI strengths with Jan Vishwas reforms could raise state capacity, especially as 66% of connected Indians use the Internet for entertainment but only 11% access government services.

Beyond Editorial

Who Governs the Algorithmic State?

- Risk classification: The European Union Artificial Intelligence Act imposes stricter obligations on systems affecting rights and essential services.
- Impact assessment: Canada requires departments to assess automated decision systems before deployment, with safeguards linked to risk levels.
- Human review: Australia's Robodebt programme showed how poorly supervised automation can generate unlawful welfare debts.
- Privacy limits: A Dutch court invalidated the SyRI fraud-detection system because its opaque surveillance violated human-rights protections.
- Bias audits: NITI Aayog's Responsible AI framework stresses equality, non-discrimination, accountability and responsible facial-recognition deployment.
- Public disclosure: European Union rules require registration of several high-risk public-sector AI systems in a public database.
- Accessible remedy: Canada and UNESCO emphasise transparency, human oversight and effective recourse against harmful automated decisions.