

EDITORIALS – 12TH JUN 2026

1. R&D underspending in India has no one cause. It's systemic as well as cultural

(GS Paper III Economy)

This editorial 'R&D underspending in India has no one cause. It's systemic as well as cultural' was published in The Indian Express on 12th Jun 2026, highlights India's chronic corporate R&D underinvestment as a product of captive markets, colonial legacies, premature financialisation and democratic uncertainty.

Structural and Historical Roots

- India's R&D weakness reflects interacting systemic and cultural causes, where culture means historically conditioned business orientations, not fixed ethnic traits.
- India's vast domestic market insulates firms from export pressure, reducing incentives for quality upgrading, frontier innovation and risk-heavy technological investment.
- The captive market creates an R&D-like Dutch disease, where consumer abundance weakens competitive discipline that harder foreign markets would otherwise build.
- Colonial-era deindustrialisation redirected enterprise from manufacturing toward commerce, intermediation and arbitrage, weakening production-linked innovation capabilities.
- The destruction of India's textile industry symbolised a wider loss of manufacturing instincts, while surviving manufacturing families show what wider industrial continuity could have produced.

Financialisation and Short-Termism

- India's corporate sector experienced premature financialisation, shifting priorities from productive capability-building to financial returns before adequate industrial depth had emerged.
- William Lazonick's 2014 research showed S&P 500 firms spent 54% earnings on buybacks and 37% on dividends during 2003–12, leaving little for R&D.
- The shareholder-value doctrine converted long-term competitiveness into short-term stock-price maximisation, weakening investment in productive and technological capabilities.
- Executive stock options incentivise earnings management over distant-payoff projects, since R&D lowers near-term profits while benefits may emerge after executive tenure.
- Asker, Farre-Mensa and Ljungqvist's 2015 study found public firms invest less than comparable private firms because quarterly reporting increases sensitivity to stock prices.
- India absorbed financialised capitalism before building capabilities like Germany, Japan and South Korea, keeping R&D intensity below its strategic ambitions.

Democratic Uncertainty and Investment Horizon

- Competitive democracy in a large developing economy creates long-term uncertainty through diverse voters, multi-level governance, hostile neighbourhoods and competing stakeholders.
- Firms price this uncertainty through a higher discount rate, making decade-long R&D commitments less attractive than near-term profitability.
- India's R&D underinvestment is therefore not simple irrationality but rational response to uncertainty, though it weakens capabilities India urgently needs.

Beyond Editorial

Policy Ecosystem for Risk-Taking Innovation

- Patient capital: Long-gestation R&D needs grants, concessional finance and venture debt, as BIRAC's BIG scheme shows for early biotech start-ups.
- Public procurement: Government demand can create innovation markets, as defence iDEX shows through support for indigenous drones, robotics and dual-use technologies.
- University-industry link: Research universities and applied labs can convert knowledge into products, as IIT Madras Research Park shows through industry-linked innovation.
- Failure tolerance: R&D policy must treat failed trials as learning costs, as Chandrayaan-2's setback enabled later learning for Chandrayaan-3.
- IP commercialisation: Patents need licensing, incubation and scale-up finance, as CSIR technologies show that invention alone does not ensure market adoption.
- Mission-mode research: Strategic sectors need focused missions, as ISRO, vaccine development and Digital Public Infrastructure show state coordination crowding in capability.
- MSME innovation: Small firms need shared labs and testing centres, as MSME tool rooms and cluster facilities support product upgrading without heavy firm-level R&D.

2. Implosion of Trinamool Congress raises a question: How relevant are regional parties today? (GS Paper II Polity)

This editorial 'Implosion of Trinamool Congress raises a question: How relevant are regional parties today?' was published in The Indian Express on 12th Jun 2026, highlights the debate on whether regional parties deepen Indian democracy or are losing relevance among new-generation voters.

Regional Parties as Democratic Deepeners

- Regional parties emerged after Congress dominance weakened, translating linguistic, cultural and economic aspirations into organised democratic representation.
- They strengthened Indian federalism by making Centre–state negotiation meaningful, especially during the coalition era from the late 1980s to 2014.
- Regional formations gave political voice to marginalised communities, challenged entrenched elites and widened participation in national politics.
- The Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu showed how social–cultural assertion could become durable political power and reshape federal discourse.
- Regional parties in Punjab, Assam, Odisha, Telangana and West Bengal articulated identity, resource and developmental concerns within democratic institutions.
- Growing centralisation and national–party expansion have weakened regional bargaining power, but regional aspirations persist beneath electoral shifts.
- The delimitation debate may revive regional anxieties, as southern states fear population–based seat redistribution reducing their federal weight.
- India’s diversity requires accommodation, not a binary between national and regional politics, because democratic vitality depends on incorporating regional aspirations.

Limits of Regionalism and Party Decay

- The Trinamool Congress crisis reflects a party built around patronage networks, not ideological coherence or institutional organisation.
- The party’s internal collapse is attributed to nepotism and succession politics, especially the attempt to hand control to a leader lacking mass legitimacy.

- TMC's model relied on anti-incumbency and resentment rather than a durable ideology, cadre structure or long-term political vision.
- Regional parties formed around caste, identity or local grievance may struggle when new voters seek national opportunities and wider aspirations.
- The new generation is less bound by sub-nationalism, using social media and exams to imagine mobility within a national rather than purely regional frame.
- The TMC's sub-national appeal exhausted itself because Bengali identity was not rooted in civilisational depth or coherent developmental vision.
- A party without ideological anchor becomes vulnerable when facing a nationally organised party like the BJP, which offers broader political imagination.

Federalism vs Generational Aspiration

- One view sees regional parties as essential to plural federalism, while the other sees many as decayed vehicles of patronage, coercion and family control.
- The debate is not about regional identity's disappearance but about whether regional parties can modernise beyond personality cults and transactional politics.
- Regional politics remains relevant where it expresses genuine local aspirations, but loses legitimacy when reduced to dynastic succession or coercive machinery.

Beyond Editorial

Institutionalising Regional Aspirations in Federalism

- Federal forums: Inter-State Council, GST Council and zonal councils can institutionalise Centre-state dialogue, as GST rate-setting shows beyond electoral bargaining.

- Fiscal autonomy: Stronger state finances are essential because regional aspirations need predictable resources, as GST compensation disputes showed during COVID-19.
- Local governments: Panchayats and urban bodies deepen regional democracy, as the 73rd and 74th Amendments took representation below state-level elites.
- Rajya Sabha role: The Council of States must act as a federal chamber, as state-specific concerns often need scrutiny beyond Lok Sabha majorities.
- Issue-based federalism: Regional politics gains legitimacy when focused on jobs, migration, climate and urban governance, as Kerala's migration economy shows.
- Asymmetric accommodation: Sixth Schedule areas and Article 371 provisions show flexible federalism can integrate diversity without weakening national unity.
- Cooperative delivery: Centre-state coordination in health and disaster management is vital, as COVID-19 vaccination and cyclone response showed.

3. Dowry deaths are about patriarchy and much more (GS Paper I Society)

This editorial 'Dowry deaths are about patriarchy and much more' was published in The Indian Express on 12th Jun 2026, highlights how dowry deaths arise from patriarchy plus region-specific marriage, kinship and debt relations rather than patriarchy alone.

Patriarchy and Regional Variation

- Dowry deaths need patriarchy-plus explanation: patriarchy exists globally, but dowry violence is concentrated mainly in North India and not uniformly across regions.

- Uttar Pradesh records over 2,000 dowry deaths annually, while Kerala has barely double-digit figures despite patriarchy being present in both regions.
- Maharashtra has low dowry-death incidence despite conviction rates as low as Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, weakening a purely legal-enforcement explanation.
- The missing link is marriage practice, because northern bride-giver relations place the woman's family in lower ritual and social status.

Marriage, Kinship and Dowry Logic

- In the north, the bride-giver's family is treated as socially inferior, making the bride the first gift and dowry a continuing obligation through the logic of kanyadaan.
- The groom's family becomes the bride-taker, while the bride's family remains trapped in repeated prestations that institutionalise asymmetry and dependence.
- The bride's subordinated status explains why natal parents are reluctant to take her back even during harassment, making daughters appear as lifelong liabilities.
- Southern kinship differs through cross-cousin marriage, especially with the mother's brother's daughter, keeping the bride within familiar kin networks.
- In southern practice, the bride is neither a stranger nor a supreme gift, reducing the asymmetry between bride-giver and bride-taker.
- Birth of a son changes a woman's position by making her a bride-taker, symbolically aligning her with male authority inside the husband's household.

Debt, Dowry and Farmer Suicides

- States with high dowry deaths, such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, have low farmer-suicide rates, while low-dowry regions often show higher farmer suicides.

- In northern indebted households, the male farmer can seek help from his wife's family without deep shame, as borrowing follows the dowry-linked kinship flow.
- In southern kinship, borrowing from the wife's father or brother is viewed as shameful because the husband's family is expected to remain socially superior.
- When a southern farmer cannot repay borrowed money from affinal kin, the resulting humiliation and family pressure can contribute to suicide.

Beyond Editorial

Strengthening Women's Autonomy Against Marital Coercion

- Women's agency: Kinship explains vulnerability, but education, jobs and mobility matter, as higher female literacy improves exit from abusive marriages.
- Legal enforcement: Dowry laws need sensitive policing and timely trials, as Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 and BNS dowry-death provisions require credible enforcement.
- Economic security: Independent income and inheritance access reduce marital dependence, as Hindu Succession Amendment, 2005 strengthened daughters' property rights.
- Shelter support: Safe homes and counselling are crucial, as One Stop Centres provide emergency aid, legal help and psychosocial support to distressed women.
- Norm change: Marriage reform must shift prestige away from dowry and lavish weddings, as anti-dowry pledges in Kerala show community-led correction.

- Community accountability: Local institutions and women's collectives can challenge dowry norms, as Kudumbashree and SHGs often intervene beyond formal policing.
- Preventive education: Gender-sensitisation in schools and premarital counselling can address dowry culture early, as CBSE life-skills modules promote equality.