EDITORIALS - 16TH JUL 2026

1. Export gains
(GS Paper III Economy)

This editorial 'Export gains' was published in The Hindu on 16th Jul 2026, highlights how India's import pressures remain episodic while merchandise export resilience is becoming structural.

Trade Deficit Surge and Import Composition

- June's trade deficit rose 430%, but concentrated merchandise imports made the headline deterioration less alarming.
- Crude oil imports increased 40% in value as the West Asia crisis raised global oil prices.
- Gold imports rose amid regional uncertainty and doubled import duties, both contributing to higher June prices.
- West Asian gas supply constraints pushed fertiliser imports 201% higher by value compared with last June.
- Rising electronics imports reflect expanding domestic assembly; customs-duty removal supports high-end manufacturing, though eventual input localisation remains necessary.

Merchandise Export Resilience and Services Weakness

- Merchandise exports grew 15.5% in June and 16% during Q1 2026-27, showing sustained momentum.
- Non-petroleum exports rose 16.5% in June and 12.4% in Q1, confirming broad-based export strength.
- Exports increased to every region except West Asia, with gains in both volume and value, reflecting rapid diversification.
- Services exports grew only 2.9% in June and 6.2% in Q1; Global Capability Centres cannot justify complacency.

Beyond Editorial

Employment Quality of Export Growth

- Employment intensity: The India-UK CETA expands market access for textiles, leather, footwear, handicrafts and food processing, sectors expected to generate substantial employment.

- Labour absorption: The India-New Zealand FTA offers zero-duty access to apparel, leather, engineering goods and processed foods, supporting jobs within MSME-dominated sectors.
- Domestic value addition: India's textile and clothing exports exceeded $36.9 billion in 2024-25, demonstrating how export growth can sustain manufacturing employment.
- MSME participation: The Districts as Export Hubs initiative trains small enterprises in e-commerce, product imaging and digital cataloguing for global markets.
- Regional inclusion: Foreign Trade Policy 2023 promotes district-specific products and resolves local bottlenecks, connecting dispersed production clusters with international buyers.
- Women's employment: The India-Oman CEPA explicitly links labour-intensive exports with opportunities for artisans, women-led enterprises and smaller businesses.
- Sustainable competitiveness: India-UK CETA provisions encouraging responsible resource management show how environmental compliance increasingly influences export opportunities and livelihood security.

2. Iran's disruptive strategy, its global consequences (GS Paper II International Relations)

This editorial 'Iran's disruptive strategy, its global consequences' was published in The Hindu on 16th Jul 2026, highlights how Iran's coercive regional strategy delivers tactical gains but risks strategic isolation, economic stagnation, and global instability.

Iran's Strategy of Disruption

- Iran's actions in the Strait of Hormuz may appear operationally successful but constitute long-term strategic blunders.
- Its opposition to Western imperialism and support for Palestinian resistance lacked broad endorsement across the Islamic world.
- Survival during the Iran-Iraq War emboldened Tehran, while frustration against the U.S. and Israel encouraged proxy warfare.
- Iran developed Hezbollah, Hamas and the Houthis as the Axis of Resistance, enabling widespread regional disruption.
- These tactical successes deepened global isolation, leaving mainly Russia, China and North Korea aligned with Iran's disruptive posture.

India's Response and Global Consequences

- Unlike Iran, India challenges the global order through multilateralism, emphasising dialogue and consensus rather than disruption.
- India maintained transactional ties involving energy, trade corridors and Chabahar Port, while navigating Western sanctions and reducing Iranian crude imports.
- Given limited diplomatic leverage, India avoided mediation and preferred backchannel diplomacy alongside repeated calls for restraint.
- India co-sponsored UNSC Resolution 2817, condemning attacks on GCC countries and Jordan and protecting international navigation through Hormuz.
- Proposed transit charges and tanker attacks demonstrate coercive brinkmanship, threatening global energy supplies and trade corridors, including India's interests.

Strategic Choice Before Iran

- Iran's military survival and continued IRGC dominance could encourage isolated belligerence below the conflict threshold.
- Collective pressure from non-Western countries is required as Iran risks overplaying its temporary geopolitical advantage.
- Iran should seek legitimate leverage through asset de-freezing and expanded energy exports, unlocking its considerable growth potential.

Beyond Editorial

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Risks

- Verification breakdown: The IAEA reported in June 2026 that it had lost continuity of knowledge over previously declared Iranian nuclear material.
- Safeguards breach: The IAEA Board found Iran non-compliant in June 2025 after unresolved undeclared material and inadequate cooperation obstructed verification.
- Radiological danger: Attacks on Natanz, Esfahan, Arak and other facilities prompted IAEA warnings about degraded nuclear safety and potentially grave consequences.
- Institutional backlash: Iran suspended cooperation with the IAEA after the 2025 attacks, illustrating how military escalation can further weaken nuclear transparency.
- Diplomatic precedent: The 2015 JCPOA and the 2025 Cairo safeguards agreement demonstrate that negotiated monitoring arrangements remain possible despite prolonged confrontation.

- Military limitations: The 2025 strikes damaged facilities but also forced inspector withdrawal, showing that attacks may reduce oversight without resolving proliferation concerns.
- India's position: India has historically supported IAEA safeguards, Iranian cooperation and continued dialogue, providing a principled basis for backing renewed diplomacy.

3. A law to give women farmers their due (GS Paper I Society)

This editorial 'A law to give women farmers their due' was published in The Indian Express on 16th Jul 2026, highlights Maharashtra's pioneering legal framework for recognising women farmers independently of land ownership.

Persistent Gender Gaps in Agriculture

- Maharashtra became India's first state to enact the Women Farmers Empowerment Act, 2026, addressing women's inadequate institutional recognition.
- Women contribute across agrifood systems but face restricted credit, insurance, technology and markets because benefits remain linked to land ownership.
- The Fourth Policy for Women, 2024 committed Maharashtra to women's control over productive assets, entitlements and agricultural income.
- Agriculture employs 82% of rural women in Maharashtra, yet women hold less than one-fifth of operational landholdings.
- Statewide consultations involving farmers, civil society, bankers and officials shaped the Bill through a participatory process and legislative scrutiny.

Recognition, Entitlements and Implementation

- The Act adopts broad definitions under the National Policy for Farmers, 2007, covering cultivators, labourers and allied agricultural workers.
- Women may obtain a Woman Farmer Certificate from gram sabhas or nagar panchayats without proving land ownership.
- The certificate enables access to government schemes, extension services, credit and markets, while formally recognising women's productive contribution.
- It supports gender-responsive schemes, skill development and targeted assistance for single women farmers.
- A digital registry, special fund, empowerment cell and designated field officers will support coordinated implementation.
- Monitoring by the Chief Secretary-led committee and guidance from the Chief Minister-led council establish institutional accountability.

Wider Social and Environmental Significance

- The law addresses entrenched inequalities in access to land, water and natural resources, advancing substantive gender justice.
- Male migration increasingly leaves women responsible for food and nutrition security amid climate change and resource depletion.
- Supporting women's recognised role in climate adaptation can strengthen more inclusive and sustainable agrifood systems.

Beyond Editorial

Scope for National Replication

- Federal adaptation: Agriculture and land fall within the State List, requiring each State to tailor recognition laws to local tenure systems.
- Title-based exclusion: PM-KISAN covers landholding farmer families, demonstrating how cultivators without recorded ownership may remain outside major income-support schemes.
- Inclusive eligibility: RBI's Kisan Credit Card framework already covers tenant farmers, oral lessees, sharecroppers and their SHGs or Joint Liability Groups.
- Collective farming: Kerala's Kudumbashree facilitates around 60,000 women's Joint Liability Groups cultivating approximately 53,000 hectares while accessing institutional agricultural credit.
- National convergence: Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana had covered over 33 lakh women across 17 States, offering an existing platform for replication.
- Grievance protection: PM-KISAN requires beneficiary databases and State-level grievance mechanisms, providing an administrative model for correcting wrongful certification exclusions.
- Outcome measurement: Replication should assess actual access to KCC credit, insurance, procurement and markets rather than merely counting certificates issued.