

# EDITORIALS – 17TH JUN 2026

## 1. Primed to treat

(GS Paper I Society)

This editorial 'Primed to treat' was published in The Hindu on 17th Jun 2026, highlights Kerala's Nipah containment as a lesson in One Health-based pandemic preparedness.

### Kerala's Nipah Risk and Health-System Response

- Kerala's recurring Nipah vulnerability reflects its ecological mix of forest fringes, fruit bats and anthropogenic activity, making monsoon-season spillover a repeated risk.
- The single active case from Ramanattukara in Kozhikode, with no fresh cases after intensive contact tracing and screening, reflects Kerala's robust containment capacity.
- WHO classifies Nipah as a priority pathogen due to lethality and outbreak potential, making its early containment crucial for public health security.
- Kerala has faced Nipah cases or outbreaks in 2018, 2019, 2021, 2023, 2024 and 2025, with the 2018 outbreak causing 17 deaths and affecting 23 people.
- India's Nipah history began with a devastating 2001 West Bengal outbreak, followed by later cases in 2007 and two laboratory-confirmed health-care worker infections in January 2026.

### One Health and Pandemic Preparedness Lessons

- Nipah transmission is linked to contaminated fruits or bat-contaminated water sources, showing that human activity near bat habitats can convert zoonotic risk into human infection.
- Kerala's response shows that containment needs a One Health approach integrating environment, animals and humans, not a narrow health-care lens.
- Past outbreaks have helped Kerala prime primary and secondary hospitals for health emergencies, enabling early suspicion of acute encephalitis cases and cluster detection.
- Kerala's system combines clinical efficiency, deployment protocols and medical access, limiting spread while ensuring those exposed or infected receive timely care.

## Beyond Editorial

### Risk Communication in Zoonotic Outbreaks

- Public trust: Outbreak control needs credible messaging, as Kerala's Nipah advisories improved cooperation with testing, isolation and contact tracing.
- Rumour control: Health departments must counter misinformation early, as seen during COVID-19, when panic and stigma discouraged testing and reporting.
- Behaviour change: Safe fruit handling, covered wells and avoiding partially eaten fruits can reduce Nipah spillover without demonising bats or wildlife.
- Community networks: ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers and local volunteers can translate advisories into household action, as seen during COVID-19 surveillance.
- Stigma prevention: Patients, contacts and health workers need social protection, as COVID-19 stigma showed how exclusion delays reporting and treatment.
- Local language: Malayalam advisories, tribal dialect outreach and visual messages can improve compliance in Kerala's rural, forest-fringe and low-literacy areas.
- Ethical communication: Public alerts must protect privacy, as COVID-19 contact lists showed how careless disclosure can harm livelihoods and deepen fear.

## 2. The long-term implications of the U.S.-Iran deal (GS Paper II International Relations)

This editorial 'The long-term implications of the U.S.-Iran deal' was published in The Hindu on 17th Jun 2026, highlights the fragile U.S.-Iran ceasefire and its deeper implications for West Asian geopolitics, deterrence and energy security.

### Ceasefire Fragility and Negotiation Burden

- The June 14 MoU offers only a 60-day negotiation window, as recent bloodletting and entrenched mistrust make even limited U.S.-Iran compromise difficult.
- Tehran and Washington's measured statements show recognition that asymmetric wars were militarily unwinnable, though both sides still face domestic pressure and nationalist posturing.
- The talks face complex issues: U.S. sanctions, frozen Iranian assets, Lebanon, U.S. bases, reparations, nuclear enrichment and Iran's sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz.

- Trump's demand for a "better deal" after rejecting the JCPOA clashes with Iran's refusal to export enriched uranium, requiring prolonged and creative diplomacy.
- Israel, GCC states, China, Russia and Pakistan will influence the negotiations, while a possible \$300 billion reconstruction deal adds a transactional layer.

### Strategic Undercurrents in West Asia

- The Iran wars exposed limits of U.S. military superiority, as Iran survived through asymmetric tactics, strategic reserves, resilient command structures and defence production.
- Coercive diplomacy's failure may revive multilateralism, making chokepoint security, preventive diplomacy, robust supply lines and strategic reserves central to national planning.
- Regional peace could still disrupt energy markets, as falling hydrocarbon reserves, demand destruction and price volatility may hasten the long-term peak-oil scenario.
- U.S.-Israel ties remain strategic, but Trump-Netanyahu relations weakened, while GCC states felt exposed by U.S.-Israeli wars and doubtful American protection.
- GCC states may reassess alignments through Iran accommodation, collective defence or militia recalibration, especially amid Saudi-Emirati rivalry and distrust of external patrons.

### Iranian Deterrence and Regional Risks

- Iran's regime has survived existential pressure, but sanctions, domestic blowback and radicalisation may push it toward stronger nuclear latency and Hormuz-based deterrence.
- Attacks on Iran may weaken nuclear ambiguity, as leaders may conclude that deterrence capacity protects sovereignty better than restraint.
- Tehran's control over Hormuz remains globally risky, yet a littoral management framework could make Iran *primus inter pares* instead of a destabilising chokepoint power.
- Israel's anti-Iran strategy may strengthen Sunni non-state actors, while weakened pro-Iran militias in Iraq and Lebanon could trigger underground mini-wars.

### Beyond Editorial

#### India's West Asia Exposure

- Energy security: Hormuz disruption can raise India's crude import bill, fuel inflation and current account pressure, as seen during the 2019 tanker attacks.

- Diaspora safety: Gulf-based Indians need evacuation readiness, as Operation Rahat, Operation Ganga and Operation Kaveri showed crisis-logistics challenges.
- Remittance risk: Gulf instability can hit household incomes in migrant-dependent States such as Kerala, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.
- Maritime routes: India's trade needs secure Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea and Red Sea routes, as Houthi attacks exposed shipping vulnerability.
- Connectivity delay: Conflict can weaken the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor by raising insurance costs, delaying ports and reducing investor confidence.
- Strategic autonomy: India must balance Iran, Israel, the U.S. and Gulf states, as Chabahar, I2U2 and energy ties show competing stakes.
- Energy transition: West Asian volatility strengthens strategic petroleum reserves, supplier diversification and renewables, as India's SPRs remain limited.

### 3. Punjab can ill afford a religious flashpoint (GS Paper I Society)

This editorial 'Punjab can ill afford a religious flashpoint' was published in The Indian Express on 17th Jun 2026, highlights how religious directives and sacrilege politics risk deepening Punjab's political instability.

#### Akal Takht Directive and Political Fallout

- The Akal Takht declared Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann "Gurudokhi" and "Khalsa Panth virodhi" over an alleged sacrilege video, directing Sikhs to avoid socialising with him.
- Mann rejected the forensic finding of no tampering, denied being in the video and accused Sukhbir Singh Badal of orchestrating a campaign to malign him.
- The directive adds a political-religious dimension just after Arvind Kejriwal projected Mann as AAP's Chief Ministerial face for the next Assembly election.
- The move gives Mann's opponents, especially the Akali Dal, fresh political ammunition against the AAP government.

#### Sacrilege Politics and Institutional Tensions

- Religious edicts have long intersected with Punjab politics, as seen when Badal was declared a tankhaiya by the Akal Takht in 2024.
- Sacrilege has gained sharp political overtones since the issue contributed to the Akali Dal's 2017 defeat and subsequent decline.

- The 2026 anti-sacrilege law has intensified tensions by expanding sacrilege's definition and prescribing stringent penalties.
- AAP's criticism of the Akali Dal's handling of the 2015 sacrilege cases and police firing keeps the issue politically charged.

### Governance Priorities and Risk of Polarisation

- Mann's response is crucial because Sikh ministers and legislators were summoned on June 29 over passing the anti-sacrilege law without consulting Sikh institutions.
- Punjab can ill afford prolonged political-religious confrontation when it already faces drug abuse, rising gangsterism and economic stress.
- Governance and development must remain central to Punjab politics, rather than controversies that deepen social divisions.

### Beyond Editorial

#### Constitutional Secularism in Statecraft

- **Secular balance:** The State must respect religious sentiment while keeping law-making constitutional, as S.R. Bommai affirmed secularism as a basic feature.
- **Rule of law:** Sacrilege allegations need evidence-based probe and due process, as the 2015 Bargari cases show risks of politicised investigation.
- **Institutional restraint:** Parties should avoid weaponising religious edicts, as Akal Takht directives against leaders can harden identities and weaken democratic trust.
- **Public order:** Punjab's militancy experience makes symbolic religious conflicts sensitive, requiring calibrated policing, dialogue and prevention, as seen after Operation Blue Star.
- **Legislative prudence:** Religious-offence laws need consultation and clarity, because vague provisions can invite misuse and friction, as Section 295A IPC debates show.
- **Youth vulnerability:** Drug abuse, gangsterism and unemployment make polarisation dangerous, as the Moosewala killing showed criminal networks' wider social impact.
- **Governance priority:** Punjab needs focus on jobs, policing, farm stress and peace, not flashpoints that divert energy from drug control and development.