

## EDITORIALS – 19TH JUN 2026

### 1. NFHS-6 reveals progress amid nutrition challenges

(GS Paper I Society)

This editorial 'NFHS-6 reveals progress amid nutrition challenges' was published in The Hindu on 19th Jun 2026, highlights India's improved health-service access but persistent child nutrition gaps due to weak feeding practices, diet quality and local support systems.

#### NFHS-6: Gains and Remaining Nutrition Deficits

- Stunting declined from 35.5% to 29.3%, showing modest progress from better health access, immunisation, maternal education, housing, water and sanitation.
- Wasting shows no major improvement except severe wasting, indicating that feeding practices and quality diets remain weak.
- Institutional births reached 90%, with 91% skilled attendance and 95% antenatal contact, but these gains have not ensured early breastfeeding.
- Vaccination coverage for children aged 12-23 months reached 87%, largely due to ASHA, AWW and ANM outreach, though regional disparities persist.

#### Feeding Practices, Care Burden and Diet Quality

- Early breastfeeding remains low at about 50% despite high institutional delivery, showing weak health-system support for immediate newborn nutrition.
- Complementary feeding is inadequate, as 60% of children aged 6-8 months get semi-solid food but only 15% aged 6-23 months receive an adequate diet.
- Delays in annaprasana can worsen growth faltering, making timely cultural reinforcement of complementary feeding important for reducing undernutrition.
- Maternal time poverty weakens child feeding, as unpaid work, informal labour, absent crèches and sibling care reduce breastfeeding and complementary feeding quality.
- Processed foods are rising in household expenditure, but dietary diversity through packaged foods does not ensure ICMR-NIN nutritional adequacy.

- Diet affordability remains a barrier, as pulses, millets, fruits, vegetables, animal foods and nuts remain unaffordable for a sizeable population.
- The first 1,000 days need preventive focus, because growth faltering begins early, while POSHAN prioritises identification and rehabilitation of severe malnutrition.

#### Local Nutrition Governance and Frontline Capacity

- Monthly anthropometric data must be locally analysed and shared with ASHAs and AWWs for timely action, not merely collected.
- District capacity needs nutritionists and data analysts, while digital tools should support in-person counselling on age-wise, locally available healthy foods.
- Behaviour change must be culturally grounded, linking practices such as annaprasana with timely and appropriate complementary feeding.
- Convergence remains weak, so child nutrition must become a standing Gram Sabha and Panchayat agenda with focus on Anganwadi infrastructure, safe water and sanitation.
- Care support must include men, shared domestic responsibilities and community crèches, improving childcare while reducing women's unpaid care burden.

#### Beyond Editorial

##### Lifecycle Nutrition for Human Capital

- Maternal nutrition: Child nutrition begins before birth, so PMMVY and Janani Suraksha Yojana matter for reducing low birth weight and early deprivation.
- Adolescent health: Anaemic adolescent girls often become vulnerable mothers, making Anaemia Mukt Bharat important for breaking intergenerational malnutrition.
- Early learning: Malnutrition weakens brain development and school readiness, so Anganwadi nutrition must link with NEP 2020's early childhood focus.
- School meals: PM POSHAN supports nutrition beyond preschool years, while also improving attendance and dietary security among poorer children.
- Local food systems: Millets, pulses and regionally suitable foods can improve diets when local procurement supports both nutrition and farmer incomes.
- Portability gap: Migrant children need portable nutrition access, as One Nation One Ration Card shows how mobility affects welfare delivery.
- Capability investment: Nutrition spending builds human capital, because early deprivation reduces learning, productivity and India's demographic dividend.

## 2. Lopsided solution

(GS Paper II Governance)

This editorial 'Lopsided solution' was published in The Hindu on 19th Jun 2026, highlights why prescription-only cough syrup sale is inadequate without stronger pharmaceutical quality control, testing and regulatory enforcement.

### Regulatory Response and Cough Syrup Risk

- The government's prescription mandate for syrup-based medicines seeks to restore trust after India-made cough syrups linked to EG-DEG contamination killed over 300 children since 2022.
- The Health Ministry removed "syrup" from Schedule K of the Drugs Rules, 1945, requiring cough syrups to be sold only through licensed pharmacies with prescriptions.
- The measure is credible but defensive, because WHO warnings in 2022 and 2023 had already questioned assumptions about India's export quality-control system.
- Many OTC cough syrups combine bronchodilators, antihistamines and decongestants, causing tremors, palpitations, sedation, agitation, faints and blood-pressure effects.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics says cough suppressants are ineffective for children under six and may be unsafe, as they can mask pneumonia or asthma.

### Manufacturing Failure and Weak Enforcement

- Contamination reflects failures in manufacturing quality, raw-material testing and regulatory oversight, not merely inappropriate consumer access or self-medication.
- Prescription-only sale may reduce misuse but cannot prevent contaminated products from entering the market without stronger quality control at production stage.
- The government has tolerated industry claims that higher testing standards will bankrupt small manufacturers, weakening reform despite public-health risks.

- The Indian Pharmacopoeia and Pharmacopoeia Internationalis updated analytical methods to detect EG-DEG, but testing and enforcement gaps persist.
- India has nearly three dozen State drug controllers, yet they remain understaffed, so the notification may be ignored in rural areas without inspectorate expansion.

#### Public Health and Global Reputation

- India's entrenched OTC culture normalises primary-care bypass, especially in rural and semi-urban areas, but access restrictions alone cannot fix unsafe supply chains.
- Poor medicine enforcement is dangerous in any globalised economy and more damaging for India, which seeks to remain the world's pharmacy.

#### Beyond Editorial

##### Batch-to-Bedside Drug Safety Governance

- Supplier scrutiny: Drug safety must begin with raw-material checks, because contaminated solvents can make finished medicines dangerous.
- Batch traceability: QR codes and batch tracking can help identify unsafe medicines quickly and support faster recalls.
- Risk inspection: Regulators should prioritise paediatric medicines, high-risk products and repeat violators, not only routine paperwork compliance.
- Laboratory capacity: State drug labs need trained staff and modern equipment, otherwise stronger standards remain weak without credible testing.
- Recall protocol: Fast public alerts and mandatory recalls are essential once a medicine batch is suspected to be unsafe.
- Federal coordination: CDSCO and State drug controllers need shared inspection data to prevent regulatory escape across jurisdictions.
- Export credibility: India's "world's pharmacy" image depends on strict quality assurance, not only low-cost generic production.

### 3. 75 years on, the First Amendment still casts a long shadow

(GS Paper II Polity)

This editorial '75 years on, the First Amendment still casts a long shadow' was published in The Indian Express on 19th Jun 2026, highlights how India's First Constitutional

Amendment curtailed fundamental rights, empowered state control and created lasting risks for liberal democracy.

### Constitutional Optimism and Early State Discomfort

- India's Constitution began with global acclaim in 1950, but by 1951 Nehru's government saw it as a barrier to social policy and state-led progress.
- The government's anxiety centred on judicial protection of free speech, non-discrimination and property, which limited censorship, reservation policy and land reform.
- Courts struck down censorship in *Organiser* and *Cross Roads*, invalidated caste-community quotas in *Champakam Dorairajan* and questioned Bihar land reform compensation.
- These rulings were framed by the government as courts blocking the will of the people, making the Constitution appear as an obstacle to elected authority.

### First Amendment and Rights Dilution

- The First Amendment curtailed property rights and enabled special provisions for "backward classes", reducing the force of equality-based judicial limits.
- The Ninth Schedule shielded listed laws from judicial review even when they violated fundamental rights, weakening constitutional remedies for citizens.
- Free speech restrictions expanded to include public order, incitement to offences, foreign relations and state security, enlarging the state's censorship toolkit.
- A.G. Noorani described the Ninth Schedule as an obscenity, reflecting how rights-protection was subordinated to legislative and executive convenience.

### Long Shadow on Democracy

- The amendment damaged early Indian liberalism by creating tools for restrictive laws, executive overreach and retrospective constitutional correction of adverse judgments.
- It established a precedent where parliamentary majority could override constitutional principles, allowing party agendas to dominate rights and civil society.
- Contemporary attacks on criticism through labels such as "fake news" and "subversive activities" echo the amendment's logic, though not always its exact language.
- Syama Prasad Mookerjee warned that such powers could become an uncontrollable weapon, later used against the very forces that once supported them.

## Beyond Editorial

### Guardrails Against Rights Dilution

- **Basic structure:** Kesavananda Bharati limited Parliament's amending power by protecting the Constitution's basic structure.
- **Judicial review:** I.R. Coelho showed that Ninth Schedule laws can still face scrutiny if they damage basic constitutional principles.
- **Proportionality test:** Puttaswamy requires rights restrictions to be lawful, necessary and proportionate, especially in liberty-related cases.
- **Speech protection:** Shreya Singhal struck down Section 66A, showing that vague speech restrictions can chill dissent.
- **Legislative scrutiny:** Rights-limiting laws need committee review, so temporary political goals do not become permanent constitutional distortions.
- **Sunset safeguards:** Exceptional restrictions need time limits and review clauses, otherwise emergency-style powers can become routine governance tools.
- **Constitutional culture:** Rights survive when institutions defend dissent, minority protection and judicial independence against majoritarian pressure.