

Editorials – 23rd Jun 2026

1. Deadly fumes (GS Paper III Disaster Management)

This editorial 'Deadly fumes' was published in The Hindu on 23rd Jun 2026, highlights weak industrial safety enforcement after Tamil Nadu's deadly ammonia gas leak.

Industrial Disaster and Recurring Risk

- Tamil Nadu's deadliest ammonia leak killed eight migrant women workers and hospitalised 68 at a Tiruvallur seafood unit.
- Since the 1980s, recurring ammonia leaks around Chennai have caused mass hospitalisation, eye irritation and breathing difficulties.
- The Thoothukudi 2024 incident was the rare earlier fatal leak, where one worker died.
- The 2023 Ennore leak released 67.638 tonnes of ammonia during Cyclone Michaung, but caused no casualties.
- The Tiruvallur tragedy occurred in worker accommodation, making exposure from the ammonia pipeline to ice-flaking machinery unusually severe.

Regulatory Failure and Enforcement Deficit

- The factory allegedly ignored DISH inspection warnings on alarm systems and fire hydrants, weakening basic emergency preparedness.
- It reportedly lacked revised plan approval for installing an ice-flaking machine, though liability remains sub judice.
- Earlier DISH recommendations after Ennore on ammonia sensors, water-curtain systems and fire-water nozzles were not universally enforced.
- The State will inspect 6,669 hazardous industries, but existing rules already require coordinated checks, stronger penalties and political will.

Beyond Editorial

Worker-Centric Industrial Disaster Justice

- Worker safety: Industrial safety must include safe accommodation, mock drills and hazard communication under the Factories Act, 1948.
- Migrant vulnerability: Migrant workers need safeguards under the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979, not unsafe housing near hazardous premises.

- Occupational health: Toxic exposure cases, as after Bhopal 1984, require long-term monitoring beyond immediate hospital treatment.
- Corporate liability: Preventable negligence, as seen in the Vizag styrene leak, must attract accountability for ignored safety systems.
- Community preparedness: Local residents near hazardous units need NDMA-style chemical disaster alerts, evacuation protocols and risk awareness.
- Compensation justice: Victims' families need timely relief under the Employees' Compensation Act, 1923, not only inquiry committees.
- Governance lesson: Industrial disasters require DM Act, 2005 coordination, treating worker safety as disaster governance, not routine inspection.

2. As El Niño looms, guard against food inflation (GS Paper I Geography)

This editorial 'As El Niño looms, guard against food inflation' was published in The Indian Express on 23rd Jun 2026, highlights the risk of El Niño-driven monsoon stress turning into food inflation.

Monsoon Deficit and El Niño Risk

- The southwest monsoon is in serious deficit, with June 1–22 rainfall 42.8% below normal.
- The deficit is linked mainly to weak monsoon winds, despite El Niño's impact usually becoming clearer later.
- Monsoon arrived three days late on June 4, then weakened as dry northwesterly winds suppressed further advance.
- The Madden-Julian Oscillation turning eastward slowed clouding and moisture, leaving no monsoon progress during June 15–21.
- June weakness is worrying because agencies expect El Niño to intensify into strong or very strong conditions by October–January.
- Earlier strong El Niño years, 2023–24 and 2015–16, caused drought, raising similar risks for 2026–27.

Food Prices and Agricultural Cushion

- Recent food stability rests on two good agriculture years, with bumper crops in India and record global harvests.
- Abundant stocks of wheat, rice, maize, sugar, soyabean, rapeseed and palm oil have prevented food-price spikes.

- Food prices have not followed crude oil, gas, coal, fertilisers and metals, partly due to supply comfort.
- The worst of the West Asia conflict may be over, but El Niño can still disrupt kharif and rabi crops.

Policy Response and Farmer Protection

- El Niño will affect ongoing kharif sowing, while October–January peaking could hurt winter–spring rabi crops.
- Higher temperatures may worsen crop stress, making future food inflation likely without advance supply planning.
- The government should keep the import window open instead of resorting to knee-jerk export bans.
- Farmers need protection through crop surveys and insurance payments against prevented sowing, failed sowing or yield loss.
- The V–BG–RAM rural employment programme must become operational from July 1 in its launch year.

Beyond Editorial

Climate-Resilient Food Security

- Climate resilience: Food security planning needs NICRA seeds, FCI storage and IMD advisories, not panic imports.
- Crop diversification: Millets under IYM 2023, pulses and oilseeds can reduce dependence on water-intensive staples.
- Water security: PMKSY micro-irrigation, watershed works and MGNREGA ponds can protect kharif output during uneven rainfall.
- Agro-advisories: Farmers need KVK, mKisan and IMD–DAMU guidance on sowing windows, crop choice and inputs.
- Buffer policy: Buffers should extend through NAFED pulses, edible oils and fodder banks for wider price stability.
- Nutrition security: Food inflation hurts NFSA, PM–POSHAN and ICDS beneficiaries by reducing calorie and dietary quality.
- Farmer protection: PMFBY, e-crop surveys and prevented-sowing claims can reduce distress during El Niño crop shocks.

3. Economy is growing, but that isn't translating to well-being

(GS Paper III Economy)

This editorial 'Economy is growing, but that isn't translating to well-being' was published in The Indian Express on 23rd Jun 2026, highlights why high growth is not improving living standards due to weak consumption, unemployment and costly food.

Growth and Living Standards Gap

- The West Asia war triggered economic debate, but the deeper issue is growth not translating into well-being.
- Government discussions around the Economic Advisory Council focus on sustaining growth and reforms, but overlook uneven lived outcomes.
- NSS surveys show slower consumption growth after 2011-12, making consumption a key measure of actual living standards.
- The 2023-24 survey indicates food consumption cannot buy two thali meals at ₹30 each for 50% rural and 20% urban populations.
- Despite food subsidy, nearly 30% of Indians consume less than two thalis daily, reflecting persistent food deprivation.
- The UN-FAO healthy diet affordability estimate reinforces that around 50% of Indians cannot afford adequate nutrition.

Employment, Wages and Inequality

- Although unemployment has declined recently, the 2025 rate remains higher than 2011-12 despite faster growth.
- Youth unemployment also remains near 10%, indicating growth has not generated enough broad-based labour absorption.
- Low food consumption and high joblessness show rising relative growth is not trickling down to a large population section.
- Rising inequality is reflected in declining real wages, especially when food-led living costs increase.
- Costlier food prices reduce non-food consumption, weakening demand for goods and services produced by workers.
- Rising profits may increase capital-goods demand, but such demand has relatively weaker employment-generation effects.

Policy Focus and Food Price Constraint

- Reform proposals centred on FDI may support foreign exchange, but do not directly solve unemployment or living standards.
- The main constraint is the food price, whose relative price has risen by over 30% since 2011-12.
- Ease of doing business targets non-agriculture, but that segment faces demand shortage, while reforms remain supply-side.
- Food-price stability requires raising agricultural yield, because production-led easing can steady or lower real food costs.

Beyond Editorial

Well-being Deficit in a High-Growth Economy

- GDP limits: Output growth must be read with NSS-HCES consumption, NFHS nutrition, PLFS jobs and real wages.
- Inclusive growth: Labour-intensive textiles, MSMEs and construction matter because capital-heavy growth creates fewer broad jobs.
- Wage stress: Declining real wages weaken purchasing power, especially as CPI-food absorbs poorer households' budgets.
- Demand weakness: Low mass consumption reduces FMCG, services and MSME demand, limiting employment creation across sectors.
- Human development: NFHS-5, ASER and PM-POSHAN outcomes reveal welfare gaps that aggregate GDP growth conceals.
- Regional inequality: Aspirational Districts show national averages hide uneven outcomes across States, classes and rural-urban groups.
- Policy shift: Reforms must combine investment with MGNREGA, food affordability, job creation and household welfare.