

# EDITORIALS – 26TH JUN 2026

## 1. Onerous rules

(GS Paper II Governance, GS Paper III Economy)

This editorial ‘Onerous rules’ was published in The Hindu on 26th Jun 2026, and highlights how the amended FCRA Rules tighten compliance burdens, expand state discretion, and risk stifling NGO work.

### Regulatory Burden on NGOs

- Civil society organisations work in health, education, disaster relief and rights, but the state has used FCRA and suspicion-based regulation to constrain them.
- The FCRA Amendment Rules, 2026 confine NGOs to approved activity categories and declared States or Union Territories, reducing operational flexibility.
- Mandatory disclosure of social media handles, websites and publications expands state scrutiny, while the bar on “political content” widens disqualification grounds.
- Separate fees for each activity category and territory replace single registration, raising compliance costs and paperwork for NGOs.

### Opacity and Chilling Effect

- The government cites transparency, even-handedness and national security, but the rules appear designed for regulatory control over civil society.
- FCRA functioning remains opaque, as parliamentary questions on cancellations were reportedly treated as secret despite over 20,000 revoked registrations.
- Instead of improving transparency, the rules create barriers and commitments that may produce a chilling effect on foreign-funded NGO work.

## Judicial and Policy Context

- In Noel Harper, 2022, the Supreme Court upheld stringent 2020 FCRA amendments by accepting sovereignty and national security concerns.
- The Court had earlier held that rights activism, protests and demonstrations cannot automatically be classified as political activity.
- The new rules blur party politics and social-economic activism, treating political content as a broad ground for NGO disqualification.
- The March 2026 asset-takeover proposal was paused after institutional protests, but the notified rules continue pressure on NGOs.

## Beyond Editorial

### Civil Society Regulation Without Democratic Overreach

- Proportionality test: FCRA restrictions should target proven misuse, not disable NGOs running clinics, schools, relief camps or disability services.
- Reasoned orders: Cancellation must record clear grounds, because cases like CPR and Oxfam India show serious reputational costs.
- Appeal safeguards: NGOs need time-bound review, so regulatory action does not become punishment before adjudication in long FCRA disputes.
- Risk-based oversight: Foreign-fund diversion should face strict scrutiny, while filing errors should invite corrective compliance, not automatic cancellation.
- Rights advocacy: Regulation must separate party politics from legitimate work like MGNREGA social audits, RTI campaigns and community mobilisation.
- Transparency balance: National security secrecy may apply in terror-financing cases, but routine cancellation data needs public accountability.
- Democratic space: Fair FCRA rules can ensure accountability while enabling NGOs during COVID-19, Kerala floods and local relief work.

## 2. A Nalanda model for the 21st century (GS Paper I Society)

This editorial 'A Nalanda model for the 21st century' was published in The Indian Express on 26th Jun 2026, highlights how knowledge, research and education are becoming decisive sources of national power.

### Knowledge as Strategic Power

- The 21st century contest is shifting from territory, factories and markets to intellectual advantage, including ideas, talent, narratives and technology governance.
- History shows strategic advantage moving from territorial conquest to industrial capacity, then computing and communications, and now cognitive power.
- Cognitive power extends beyond AI to research, climate knowledge, disaster management, biotechnology, cyber capability, diplomacy and international norms.

### Lessons from Innovation Ecosystems

- The U.S. gained advantage by linking academia, industry, government funding, military research and immigration into one innovation ecosystem.
- Institutions such as MIT, Stanford and Harvard became strategic assets through aerospace, semiconductors, biotechnology and digital innovation.
- Universities need autonomy, experimentation, dissent and global talent because academic freedom is essential for innovation.
- India adapted well to the Information Revolution, but its role remained concentrated in services rather than foundational research.

## India's Knowledge Transition

- India must move from being a digital economy to a knowledge civilisation, where technological progress is guided by ethics, law and strategic thought.
- Knowledge power strengthens national security by anticipating crises, shaping narratives, building resilience and creating geopolitical advantage, as seen in India's CDRI.
- Future competitiveness will depend not only on infrastructure and industrial expansion, but equally on research ecosystems, innovation and higher education.

## Nalanda and Civilisational Opportunity

- Nalanda's historical model of pluralism, interdisciplinary learning and openness makes it relevant for India's renewed knowledge leadership.
- A modern Nalanda can become a centre for Asian cooperation, sustainability, strategic studies and global governance.
- Nations unable to generate original knowledge will depend on others for technology, strategic narratives and policy frameworks.

## Beyond Editorial

### From Knowledge Consumption to Knowledge Creation

- Original research: India must move beyond imported technologies by producing patents, standards and missions like Chandrayaan and low-cost launches.
- Basic science: Long-term funding for IISc, IITs and TIFR is vital because breakthrough innovation rarely follows short commercial cycles.
- University autonomy: Academic freedom enables experimentation and peer review, helping institutions like IISc and IITs become innovation hubs.
- Interdisciplinary learning: Knowledge leadership needs AI ethics, climate science, biosecurity and strategic studies to work across silos.

- Talent retention: Strong labs, fellowships and global collaborations can retain researchers across IISERs, IITs and national laboratories.
- Institutional ecosystem: ISRO, DRDO, academia and industry must collaborate, because isolated excellence cannot build durable knowledge power.
- Civilisational confidence: India's rise should combine Nalanda-like openness with modern rigour, producing ideas beyond skilled global manpower.

### 3. Global South is becoming another India-China arena (GS Paper II International Relations)

This editorial 'Global South is becoming another India-China arena' was published in The Indian Express on 26th Jun 2026, highlights how India and China are competing to shape the meaning, leadership and strategic direction of the Global South.

#### Global South as India-China Contest

- The Doval-Wang Yi meeting exposed divergent worldviews, with India stressing constructive bilateral relations and China framing ties through the "Global South" moment.
- China's White Paper presents the Global South as revitalised, but excludes itself from any pseudo-proposition that would leave China outside it.
- Beijing uses "win-win" and "harmonious" language to contrast its approach with India's role as a bridge between the Global North and Global South.

#### China's Narrative Strategy

- China presents India and the West as promoters of exclusive blocs, while positioning itself as defender of multilateralism and Global South unity.

- The White Paper rejects monopoly over international affairs by a few countries and projects China as an advocate of inclusivity.
- Beijing was irked by India's Voice of Global South Summits without Chinese participation, since India convened three summits as a platform for developing countries.

### India's Strategic Position

- Chinese analysts now argue that India and China should function as Global South anchors, not power competitors.
- Retired PLA officer Zhou Bo suggested India could ban Chinese ships near Sri Lanka ports while welcoming Chinese entry into BRICS and SCO.
- India views Chinese naval access near Sri Lanka and support for Colombo as strategic realities, not acceptable forms of neighbourhood engagement.

### Limits of China's Claims

- China's claim of speaking for the Global South is weakened by cases such as Sri Lanka's debt crisis, Hambantota restructuring and BRI-linked CPEC stress.
- The editorial argues India should not mirror Beijing's rhetoric, but expose the gap between China's empirical record and its Global South narrative.

## Beyond Editorial

### Competing Development Models in the Global South

- People-centric model: India can contrast China's infrastructure-heavy approach through Vaccine Maitri, food security support and digital governance.
- Transparent finance: India should avoid debt-dependency concerns seen around Hambantota and some BRI-linked projects in South Asia.

- Digital public goods: UPI, Aadhaar and CoWIN offer scalable governance tools for developing countries with limited fiscal capacity.
- Local ownership: ITEC training and capacity-building projects strengthen partner institutions instead of creating dependence on external contractors.
- Issue-based leadership: India can build credibility through G20 African Union inclusion, ISA, CDRI and climate-finance advocacy.
- Strategic restraint: India should avoid copying Chinese rhetoric and instead highlight gaps between BRI claims and regional outcomes.
- Credibility advantage: India's democracy, diaspora, generic medicines and low-cost technologies make it a partner, not just a China-counterweight.