

EDITORIALS – 27TH JUN 2026

1. Tragic evening (GS Paper III Disaster Management)

This editorial 'Tragic evening' was published in The Hindu on 27th Jun 2026, highlights Venezuela's earthquake as a warning on seismic preparedness and resilient infrastructure.

Venezuela Quake and Seismic Risk

- Two earthquakes, of magnitudes 7.1 and 7.5, devastated Caracas and La Guaira, killing 589 and injuring 2,980.
- Venezuela's seismicity reflects South American and Caribbean plates grinding sideways, creating slow strain accumulation rather than frequent uplift quakes.
- The twin quakes formed a doublet, which the USGS described as complex rupture interaction along the same northern Venezuelan provenance.
- The shallow hypocentre, under 30 km deep, drove violent surface shaking, like the Türkiye-Syria 2023 quakes that killed over 55,000.
- The USGS flagged a possible death toll above 10,000, making Venezuela's disaster a serious warning on underestimated seismic vulnerability.

India's Preparedness Gap

- India's first duty is relief, including search teams, medical supplies and logistics support for a large disaster zone.
- India's larger lesson is preparedness, as BIS withdrew its revised seismic hazard standards after infrastructure-related objections.
- The shelved BIS revision would have doubled design forces in high-risk zones and added a sixth zone beyond the existing five.
- India's current Zone V still assumes 0.36g shaking, while Pakistan and Nepal use nearly 0.75g, and the US and Japan go further.
- Nearly 79% of Indians face seismic threat, while 95% of earthquake deaths occur in one-to-three-storey houses outside formal code compliance.
- The core risk is implementation failure, since predictive science remains uncertain but safer construction can reduce avoidable deaths.

Beyond Editorial

Seismic Safety as Everyday Urban Governance

- Urban planning: Earthquake risk must shape master plans, building permits and zoning, especially as Delhi falls in Zone IV and Guwahati in Zone V.
- Microzonation: Seismic microzonation studies, used in cities like Delhi and Guwahati, can identify vulnerable soils, lifeline risks and unsafe construction zones.
- Retrofitting drive: Schools, hospitals, bridges and public offices need phased retrofitting, as the Bhuj 2001 earthquake showed how weak buildings multiply casualties.
- Local response: Municipal bodies, NDRF and SDRF teams require routine training for debris clearance, search-and-rescue operations and mass-casualty management.
- Public drills: Schools, RWAs, markets and offices should normalise earthquake drills, as Japan's routine preparedness culture reduces panic during major tremors.
- Financial incentives: Insurance, tax rebates and concessional loans can encourage safer construction and retrofitting, especially in informal one-to-three-storey houses.
- Governance accountability: Disaster safety should be measured through NDMA guidelines, municipal audits and risk-sensitive planning indicators, not treated as optional compliance.

2. The cracks beneath the peddled story of India's growth (GS Paper III Economy)

This editorial 'The cracks beneath the peddled story of India's growth' was published in The Hindu on 27th Jun 2026, highlights the gap between India's growth narrative and its external vulnerabilities, rural distress, technological dependence and weak employment transformation.

Growth Narrative and External Fragility

- The Viksit Bharat narrative masks deep structural weaknesses, external shocks and weakening foundations beneath claims of global leadership.

- Political discourse prioritises communal polarisation and manufactured controversies while economic vulnerabilities receive inadequate policy attention.
- India imports nearly 90% crude oil and about half its natural gas, making global price shocks domestically inflationary.
- Rising oil and LNG prices widen the trade deficit, weaken the rupee and raise economy-wide production costs.
- The RBI sold over \$53 billion in FY2025–26 as reserves fell from \$720 billion to \$681 billion.

Rural Stress and Safety-Net Weakening

- Imported LNG and potash dependence exposes fertilisers to global price and supply shocks, threatening farm affordability.
- A weak monsoon reduces yields, rural incomes and consumption while raising food inflation and fiscal relief pressures.
- Fuel, fertiliser and monsoon shocks create a vicious demand cycle, suppressing domestic consumption when growth needs it most.
- The weakening of MGNREGA and abolition of the Planning Commission have reduced rural households' protection against uncertainty.
- Record remittances of \$135 billion supported the current account, but anti-immigration politics and AI threaten skilled-service inflows.

Investment, Technology and Employment Gaps

- FPIs withdrew over ₹2.2 lakh crore as India slipped from sixth to seventh in global market-capitalisation rankings.
- India remains marginal in semiconductors, AI and robotics, while startups focus on digital intermediation rather than technological innovation.
- Taiwan's TSMC, South Korea's Samsung and U.S. chip leadership contrast with India's reliance on imported capital equipment.
- The promised manufacturing revolution has not materialised, leaving the demographic dividend trapped in precarious jobs and stagnant wages.
- Electoral success cannot substitute economic development, especially when public attention shifts from livelihoods to divisive politics.
- A different path needs public investment, social protection, jobs, science spending and reduced external dependence.

Beyond Editorial

Human Capital as Growth Infrastructure

- Education quality: Sustainable growth needs learning outcomes and employable skills, as ASER repeatedly shows gaps in basic reading and arithmetic among children.
- Health investment: A productive workforce requires nutrition, preventive healthcare and affordable public systems, as Poshan Abhiyaan links human development with economic capability.
- Skill alignment: Manufacturing, AI and green sectors need industry-linked skilling and apprenticeships, since PMKVY-style training alone cannot close employability gaps.
- Female workforce: Higher women's labour participation can expand household incomes and productivity, as Bangladesh's garment sector shows through female-led industrial employment.
- Social mobility: Public education, health and skilling prevent growth from becoming elite-centric, as Kerala's social development model shows over decades.
- Migration readiness: Language training, certification portability and global skill standards can improve labour mobility, as Kerala's overseas migration ecosystem indicates.
- Capability approach: Growth becomes durable when citizens gain real capabilities, echoing Amartya Sen's view that development expands substantive freedoms.

3. India-New Zealand FTA, a modern trade partnership (GS Paper III Economy)

This editorial 'India-New Zealand FTA, a modern trade partnership' was published in The Hindu on 27th Jun 2026, highlights how the proposed India-New Zealand FTA can deepen trade through tariff access, services mobility, compliance readiness and facilitation-led gains.

Trade Potential and Modern FTA Design

- India-New Zealand trade remains modest at \$1.3 billion in FY2024-25, despite India's exports growing 32% year-on-year.
- The proposed FTA seeks zero-duty Indian exports, wider services access and a \$20 billion investment commitment over 15 years.

- Modern FTAs extend beyond tariff reduction, as certifications, predictable regulations and compliance effort increasingly shape competitiveness.
- New Zealand's duty-free access across 100% tariff lines benefits labour-intensive Indian sectors like textiles, apparel, leather and handicrafts.
- India retains caution on sensitive sectors such as dairy, balancing new opportunities with protection for vulnerable domestic industries.

Services, Rules of Origin and Compliance Discipline

- Indian services in technology, consulting, engineering, health care and education could gain from market access and mobility provisions.
- The Rules of Origin framework makes preferential access conditional on prescribed origin requirements, documentation and product-specific compliance.
- Detailed RoO safeguards and traceability measures prevent transshipment misuse, protecting agreement integrity and strengthening supply-chain visibility.
- Faster customs, digital certification and simplified procedures can reduce inventory costs, improve cash flow and enhance supply certainty.
- Streamlined approvals can ease non-tariff barriers in pharmaceuticals, food processing, chemicals and agriculture, creating more predictable export gains.

Business Preparedness and Strategic Significance

- The agreement reflects India's shift towards facilitation-led trade, where firms gain through lower transaction costs and faster market access.
- Businesses must integrate sourcing, operations and compliance functions instead of treating preferential duty access as automatic.
- Firms should review HS classifications, RoO eligibility, supply-chain documentation and landed-cost models to capture sector-specific benefits.
- The FTA's real value lies in combining tariff advantages with process discipline, compliance readiness and long-term commercial certainty.

Beyond Editorial

Democratising FTA Gains for MSMEs

- MSME support: Small exporters need RoO, HS classification and documentation support, as many firms underuse India's existing FTAs due to compliance complexity.
- State facilitation: Export-oriented states can create sector-specific FTA cells, drawing on Tamil Nadu and Gujarat's stronger industrial export ecosystems.

- Cluster readiness: Tiruppur apparel, Moradabad handicrafts and agro-processing clusters can convert market access into jobs if compliance support reaches producers.
- Quality infrastructure: Testing labs, packaging centres and BIS-recognised certification facilities can help MSMEs meet destination-market standards without excessive compliance costs.
- Digital literacy: MSMEs need training on ICEGATE, e-SANCHIT and digital certification systems to reduce paperwork delays and dependence on intermediaries.
- Credit access: Export credit, ECGC cover and logistics finance can help smaller firms manage delayed payments, shipment risks and working-capital pressures.
- Inclusive trade: FTAs become developmental only when benefits reach MSMEs, workers and regional clusters, instead of remaining concentrated among large exporters.