EDITORIALS - 30TH JUN 2026

1. Reforms 3.0 — towards the Bharat rate of growth (GS Paper III Economy, Science and Technology)

This editorial 'Reforms 3.0 — towards the Bharat rate of growth' was published in The Hindu on 30th Jun 2026, highlights India's need to use AI as the next reform leap by making tokens free, diversifying compute, and building sovereign AI capacity."

AI as the Next Reform Moment

- India moved from the 3% Hindu rate after 1991 reforms to faster growth; AI now offers similar transformational leverage.
- The core issue is not whether India can afford AI investment, but whether it can afford missing an 8% growth opportunity.
- Aadhaar enrolled 1.38 billion people, while UPI handles 250 billion transactions worth $3.4 trillion annually.
- Reliance Jio showed how free data can scale access, making mobile internet affordable after adding 100 million users in months.
- India can replicate its DPI model in AI by treating tokens like data: cheap, abundant, and widely accessible.

Making AI Tokens Free

- India spends only 0.65% of GDP on R&D, far below China, the US, South Korea and Israel.
- Free tokens for top 100 R&D institutions and 5,000 schools would cost about $2 billion, only 0.06% of GDP.
- The proposed AI spend is smaller than major subsidy outlays, including food, fertiliser and LPG under-recovery compensation.
- AI tokens can be funded without cutting welfare beneficiaries, by freezing subsidy growth and redirecting priorities through new frameworks.

- India should forge public-private partnerships with AWS, Google and Microsoft, exchanging land, power support and sovereignty assurances for free inference.
- Like Jio, the state need not directly subsidise AI access, but create rules that make abundance market-driven and affordable.

Sovereign Hosting and Compute Strategy

- India must host and operate large language models, not merely consume APIs from San Francisco or Beijing.
- Open-source models such as Qwen, DeepSeek, Kimi, Llama and Sarvam may be free, but national-scale hosting is costly and strategic.
- AI infrastructure should be treated as a national capability, like space and nuclear programmes, requiring sovereign and open-source models.
- Open-source hosting improves sovereignty by reducing foreign API dependence, lowering licensing costs, and enabling Indian-language customisation.
- National hosting requires 99.99% uptime, low latency across Tier-2/3 cities, data residency, prompt-injection defence and audit trails.
- India should avoid a single-vendor monopoly, as NVIDIA's 80% training-hardware dominance creates high financial and strategic costs.
- A 40:30:30 hardware mix should use AWS Trainium/AMD for inference, Google TPUs for research, and NVIDIA selectively for training.

Implementation Roadmap and Growth Outcome

- A National AI Token Policy should be implemented within 24 months through multi-vendor sovereign compute partnerships.
- The first pilot should provide unlimited research tokens to the top 20 IITs and IISc.
- As capacity expands, India should open an API sandbox for 500 startups, 100 universities and 500 high schools in 10 states.
- The programme should culminate in Indic AI benchmarks, fine-tuned models across sectors, and deployment in all 22 languages.

- Within two years, India could enter the global top five in token consumption, with competitive models and 10,000 AI-native startups.

Beyond Editorial

Embedding Guardrails in India's AI Leap

- Rights protection: AI access must align with the DPDP Act, 2023, so free tokens do not weaken consent, lawful processing and data security.
- Bias control: Algorithmic audits are essential, as NIST's FRVT found demographic effects in face-recognition accuracy across tested systems.
- Human oversight: Public AI must follow UNESCO AI ethics norms, where transparency, fairness and human oversight anchor trustworthy deployment.
- Linguistic inclusion: Bhashini shows inclusive AI needs Indian-language access, enabling real-time translation across 22 Scheduled Languages.
- Compute equity: The IndiaAI Mission can prevent hyperscaler capture by widening affordable compute access for startups, researchers and academia.
- Skill transition: IndiaAI FutureSkills should accompany token access, because compute without talent deepens gaps between elite and smaller institutions.
- Ecological prudence: AI data-centre growth needs green power planning, as IEA projects sharply rising data-centre electricity demand.

2. Preparing India for China's missile challenge (GS Paper III Security)

This editorial 'Preparing India for China's missile challenge' was published in The Hindu on 30th Jun 2026, and highlights India's need to build a credible

rocket force and conventional missile strategy against China's growing missile superiority."

China's Missile Superiority and Strategic Risk

- Missiles are reshaping warfare by making conflicts faster, cheaper and more political, as limited conventional strikes can paralyse infrastructure.
- China sees conventional missiles as tools of coercion and war-fighting, while India still treats them mainly as deterrents.
- China's 200-plus missile launchers opposite India could force New Delhi into simultaneous border conflict and hinterland defence.
- Korla and Kunming bases host DF-series missiles, with DF-26 targeting depth areas and DF-100/CJ-1000 worsening launch-warning gaps.
- China's Tibet-based launch geography reduces India's strategic depth, while DF-26's dual role raises escalation risks.

India's Capability Gaps

- India's missile inventory remains limited in range and diversity, despite Agni, LR-LACM, Nirbhay and BrahMos variants.
- India lacks robust real-time targeting, sufficient stockpiles and mature hypersonic capability, while its rocket force remains conceptual.
- Without a rocket force, India may absorb Chinese strikes passively; credible mutual vulnerability requires damage capacity, not numerical parity.
- India needs conventional missile depth to hold PLA's Western Theatre Command and infrastructure in Tibet and Xinjiang at risk.

Rocket Force Design and Doctrine

- India's rocket force should enable attacks on PLA road-rail networks, airbases, logistics nodes, camps, gun positions and ammunition dumps.
- A single command authority must integrate strategic, operational and tactical missile targets across military and economic domains.

- India must adopt conventional counter-value strikes and rethink counter-force planning through a unified target list.
- Pre-designated launch authority is essential, because delayed approvals in opening conflict hours could cause early operational defeat.
- The rocket force must come under the Chief of Defence Staff, while service-specific control would weaken joint effectiveness.
- India should expand MRBM/IRBM inventories, including Agni variants, to hold Korla and Kunming at reciprocal risk.
- Hypersonic missile development needs fast-tracking, as DF-100 is already part of the PLA Rocket Force order of battle.

Industrial and Interim Measures

- Private-sector participation must complement DRDO, as cost overruns, delays and technology gaps constrain missile self-reliance.
- Critical weaknesses in propulsion, semiconductors and high-grade materials make foreign dependence a strategic vulnerability.
- Until a rocket force matures, India must disperse IAF assets, harden airbases and optimise air-defence deployment.
- Long-range conventional strike capability should create reciprocal vulnerability by holding Tibet and Xinjiang targets at risk.
- Expanded satellite surveillance can detect mobile launchers, especially DF-26 systems, improving chances of early neutralisation.

Beyond Editorial

Missile Modernisation Under Escalation Discipline

- Crisis stability: Conventional missile growth must avoid warhead ambiguity, since DF-26 can rapidly swap conventional and nuclear payloads.
- Nuclear threshold: India's credible minimum deterrence and no-first-use posture require conventional strikes to avoid nuclear misinterpretation.

- Command control: Pre-delegated launch authority needs fail-safe controls, because compressed missile timelines can magnify accidental escalation risks.
- Communication channels: WMCC talks should remain active, as the 35th meeting in May 2026 focused on India-China border coordination.
- Border precedent: Galwan 2020 showed crisis risks, with 20 Indian soldiers killed and disengagement requiring repeated talks.
- Target discrimination: Missile planning must avoid dual-use confusion, because DF-26 makes launch assessment harder during high-pressure crises.
- Political oversight: Rocket-force decisions must remain civilian-led, because missile salvos compress diplomacy and can decide escalation before field adjustment.

3. ISI is not IIT. Its society structure needs no change (GS Paper II Governance)

This editorial 'ISI is not IIT. Its society structure needs no change' was published in The Indian Express on 30th Jun 2026, highlights why changing ISI into a body corporate is unnecessary for academic growth, AI capacity, and institutional reform.

Proposed Reform and Core Objection

- The MoSPI Bill seeks to convert ISI from a registered society into a body corporate aligned with the IIT/IIM model.
- The proposal has drawn dissent from faculty and alumni, while supporters argue it can recover institutional ground.
- The editorial argues that ISI's society structure is not the problem, and legal conversion is neither necessary nor desirable.

AI, Mandate and Academic Capacity

- Claims that ISI is sidelined in AI/ML are contested through its 2021 AI centre, funded projects, courses and workshops.
- Formal inclusion of AI needs no new Bill, as the ISI Act already expanded degree scope in 1995.
- ISI has responded to rising data demand through three undergraduate, eight postgraduate and six diploma/certificate courses.
- Nine courses began in the last 15 years, while graduating students increased almost fourfold over 20 years.
- ISI need not match IITs in intake, because its mandate links statistical theory, methods, research and practical applications.
- Student intake doubled in 10 years, but faculty strength did not rise proportionately due to government constraints on new employment.

Governance, Autonomy and Reform Path

- ISI's slower expansion reflects its Memorandum of Association and employment constraints, not failure of the society model.
- If the ISI Council is too large, reduction can be done through a simple Act amendment, not corporate conversion.
- The four centres already share resources and teaching responsibilities as one institutional family with headquarters.
- MoSPI should hold regular consultations with ISI segments to enable growth without imposing unnecessary structural transformation.

Beyond Editorial

Reform Without Institutional Homogenisation

- Mandate diversity: The ISI Act already covers statistics, mathematics, quantitative economics and computer science, supporting mission-specific reform.
- Autonomy protection: NEP 2020 favours faculty and institutional autonomy, so reform should expand capacity without centralised overreach.

- Legal minimalism: The IIM Act, 2017 made IIMs bodies corporate, but PRS noted autonomy models differ across IITs and AIIMS.
- Capacity priority: Institutional reform should target faculty, research and infrastructure, because legal redesign alone cannot create academic capacity.
- Multi-campus cohesion: ISI's Kolkata headquarters and centres in Bengaluru, Delhi, Chennai and Tezpur show networked growth within existing structures.
- Consultative reform: Draft institutional laws need stakeholder dialogue, as ISI Bill concerns directly affect faculty-led academic governance.
- Institutional specificity: A uniform template can weaken specialised bodies, so ISI, IITs and IIMs need mission-based accountability frameworks.