

Editorials – 7th Jul 2026

1. In India, voting cannot remain merely a statutory right (GS Paper II Polity)

This editorial 'In India, voting cannot remain merely a statutory right' was published in The Hindu on 7th Jul 2026, highlights the constitutional anomaly of treating voting as statutory while its essential democratic facets enjoy constitutional protection.

Statutory Doctrine and Judicial Background

- The Supreme Court has long treated voting as a statutory right, despite democracy requiring citizens' power to choose those who govern.
- In *N.P. Ponnuswami (1952)*, the Court held that voting and contesting elections arise from statute, not common law.
- *Jyoti Basu (1982)* reaffirmed that the right to elect is neither fundamental nor common law, but purely statutory.
- *Kuldip Nayar (2006)* held that although democracy is part of the basic structure, individual voting flows mainly from election law.
- This approach reflects that the Constitution does not list voting in Part III, leaving Parliament latitude over qualifications, disqualifications and procedures.

Constitutionalisation of Voting Facets

- In *ADR (2002)*, the Court recognised voters' right to know candidates' antecedents, qualifications and assets under Article 19(1)(a).
- In *PUCL (2003)*, the Court distinguished statutory voting from the fundamental freedom to make an informed choice.
- The *NOTA judgment (2013)* held that rejecting all candidates is political expression and protected ballot secrecy under Article 19(1)(a).
- This creates a constitutional anomaly: right to know, informed choice, secrecy and rejection are protected, but voting remains statutory.

- In Anoop Baranwal (2023), Justice Ajay Rastogi favoured voting as fundamental, while the Bench repeatedly described voting as constitutional.

Democracy, Article 326 and Constitutional Core

- Since Kesavananda Bharati (1973), democracy forms part of the basic structure, making free and fair elections constitutionally central.
- Indira Nehru Gandhi (1975) held that free and fair elections are essential to democracy, strengthening the case for constitutional voting protection.
- The vote is the instrument of popular sovereignty, through which citizens renew democratic legitimacy and hold governments accountable.
- Constitutional recognition need not make all electoral procedures fundamental; Parliament may still regulate rolls, residence, disqualifications and corrupt practices.
- Article 326 gives every citizen above 18 constitutional entitlement to electoral registration, subject only to narrow disqualifications.
- The Representation of the People Acts operationalise voting, but the citizen's entitlement flows from the Constitution, not mere statute.

Beyond Editorial

From Legal Entitlement to Democratic Participation

- Access gap: General Election 2024 turnout was 65.79%, showing that universal adult franchise still requires deeper participation beyond formal legal entitlement.
- Migrant exclusion: The Election Commission of India (ECI) proposed remote voting for domestic migrants because mobility prevents many citizens from voting at their registered place.
- Roll integrity: Voter ID alone does not guarantee voting; Delhi's CEO clarified that the citizen's name must be present in the electoral roll.

- PwD inclusion: Home voting for citizens above 85 and Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) with 40% benchmark disability improves access for vulnerable voters.
- Assistive access: The ECI's Saksham App helps PwDs request facilities such as wheelchairs, making electoral participation more accessible.
- Homeless voters: Delhi's use of night shelters, streetlights and flyovers as temporary addresses shows how documentation barriers can be reduced.
- Urban apathy: The ECI's 2024 conference on low voter turnout flagged metropolitan disengagement, making civic motivation part of democratic deepening.

2. In disruptive times, an arc of trust to hold Indo-Pacific together

(GS Paper II International Relations)

This editorial 'In disruptive times, an arc of trust to hold Indo-Pacific together' was published in The Indian Express on 7th Jul 2026, highlights India's effort to build an Indo-Pacific arc of trust through regional autonomy, trade, security and development partnerships.

India's Indigenous Indo-Pacific Vision

- Modi's visits to Jakarta, Auckland and Melbourne signal India's attempt to redraw Indo-Pacific cooperation around regional autonomy.
- India seeks a maritime order based on inclusive development and local agency, not extractive superpower contestation led by Washington or Beijing.
- The editorial frames the Indo-Pacific as a region whose rules must be written by resident powers, not inherited from external strategic templates.

Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand as Strategic Anchors

- Indonesia is central because its archipelagic geography controls key trade routes and its “free and active” policy aligns with Indian autonomy.
- India-Indonesia trade, at nearly \$30 billion, has surpassed India-UK trade and may deepen through upgraded ASEAN-linked trade architecture.
- India and Indonesia can anchor an indigenous security framework because both have scale, presence and chokepoint relevance across vital sea lanes.
- Australia is India’s breakout partner, with ECTA 2022 building trust for deeper financial, nuclear energy and resource-processing integration.
- India-Australia cooperation should move towards defence co-production, enabling both to support wider regional and global security.
- New Zealand adds innovation capacity through advanced manufacturing, deep technology and agri-processing linked to India’s food-security and farm-income needs.
- New Zealand’s fourth-largest EEZ makes the blue economy a natural partnership area, while Wellington and Canberra connect India to Five Eyes resilience.

Development Financing and Regional Order

- India and ANZAC partners can finance South Pacific and ASEAN development through infrastructure, human capital and credible regional alternatives.
- India’s development experience, paired with ANZAC capital and Pacific standing, can offer smaller states an alternative to debt-heavy dependence.
- The proposed arc runs east through Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand, and west through the UAE, Gulf and eastern Africa.
- The tour’s core message is that the Indo-Pacific centre is shifting towards countries that share the ocean and seek rule-making agency.

Beyond Editorial

Strategic Autonomy in a Polarised Maritime Order

- **Balancing test:** China's coastguard actions against Philippine vessels in the South China Sea show why India needs partnerships without rigid alliance politics.
- **ASEAN centrality:** India's Indo-Pacific outreach must reinforce Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) centrality, a principle also recognised in Quad statements.
- **QUAD utility:** The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) is useful when it delivers practical cooperation on maritime awareness, energy security and regional resilience.
- **AUKUS caution:** Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) gives Australia nuclear-powered submarine capability, but India must cooperate selectively without alliance dependence.
- **Debt sensitivity:** Hambantota's 99-year lease to a Chinese firm shows why Indo-Pacific development finance must avoid strategic dependency for smaller states.
- **Island priorities:** Pacific states treat climate change as their single greatest security threat, so India's outreach must include adaptation and resilience.
- **Delivery credibility:** India's Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) gains value only when capacity-building, health and climate commitments translate into visible outcomes.

3. How to absorb rain: What cities must learn (GS Paper III Disaster Management)

This editorial 'How to absorb rain: What cities must learn' was published in The Indian Express on 7th Jul 2026, highlights why cities must shift from drainage-centric flood control to water-absorbing blue-green infrastructure.

Mumbai's Structural Flood Vulnerability

- Mumbai's recent floods killed at least seven in five days, as relentless rain submerged roads, homes and public services.
- Much of Mumbai is reclaimed, low-lying land, where urban expansion has disrupted creeks, salt pans and wetlands that once absorbed rain.
- Flooding in Hindmata, Kurla, Sion and western suburbs reflects water following older natural channels blocked by dense urbanisation.
- Post-2005 reforms added pumping stations and better forecasting, but drainage remains weak against short, intense rainfall bursts.
- Mumbai's gravity-based storm-water system fails when heavy rain coincides with high tide, forcing seawater back through outfalls.

Limits of Drainage-Only Urban Flood Control

- Mumbai's crisis mirrors global urban risks, where upgrading drainage systems alone cannot secure cities against climate-linked rainfall extremes.
- China's Sponge City policy, adopted after the 2012 Beijing floods, increased urban water retention through permeable pavements, wetlands and artificial lakes.
- Dutch cities use water squares and green roofs, turning flood-control spaces into public amenities during dry seasons.

Blue-Green Planning for Indian Cities

- Mumbai has lake restoration projects, but blue-green infrastructure remains a niche idea in India's financial capital.
- Indian cities need housing, transport and commercial districts, but urban planning must not weaken natural flood absorption.
- Future infrastructure must integrate growth with extreme-weather resilience, instead of leaving cities dependent only on engineered drains.

Beyond Editorial

Climate Resilience Begins with Urban Governance

- **Design mismatch:** The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) notes that old storm-water drains designed for 12–20 mm rainfall are easily overwhelmed.
- **Institutional clarity:** Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) SOPs assign roles to Urban Local Bodies, district administration and states during urban flooding.
- **Planning failure:** Bengaluru’s 2022 floods showed how lake-linking storm-water drains blocked by encroachment and solid waste can magnify rainfall shocks.
- **Wetland loss:** Chennai’s Pallikaranai marsh, once a floodwater absorber, shows how wetland degradation increases flooding in low-lying urban areas.
- **Drainage accountability:** Chennai’s flood-management audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) exposed why disaster response must include planning and maintenance audits.
- **Natural infrastructure:** India’s 2024 plan for seven flood-prone cities links flood mitigation with expansion of water bodies and early-warning systems.
- **Local preparedness:** Ward-level flood maps, desilting schedules and community warnings can shift cities from post-disaster relief to preventive urban resilience.