

# Editorials – 9th Jul 2026

## 1. Checkbox caste

(GS Paper I Society)

This editorial 'Checkbox caste' was published in The Hindu on 9th Jul 2026, highlights why open-ended caste enumeration may produce unusable data unless methodologically standardised.

### Caste Enumeration and Data Usability

- Census 2027 allows open caste responses, unlike the 2011 SECC, but risks repeating unusable caste data.
- The 2011 SECC recorded over 46 lakh caste names against 4,147 castes in the 1931 Census.
- Respondents often entered surnames, sub-castes and clan names interchangeably, producing inflated and incoherent caste counts.
- The Centre admitted before the Supreme Court in 2021 that SECC caste data was too error-ridden for reservation.
- The editorial favours a curated caste list on digital handheld devices over open-ended caste entry.

### Social Complexity and Constitutional Tension

- Unlike linguistic, religious or gender identities, caste is a hierarchical identity based on perceived birth status.
- Caste hierarchy is not self-evident, as social status perceptions often vary across communities and regions.
- India's Constitution opposes caste through abolition of untouchability, anti-discrimination norms and equal citizenship.
- Counting caste may ossify identity, but empirical data is necessary to address caste-based injustice.
- Better caste data can sharpen welfare targeting and clarify debates on creamy layer and sub-categorisation.

## Beyond Editorial

### Institutional Architecture for Credible Caste Data

- **Standardisation:** A national caste codebook is essential because SECC 2011 produced about 46 lakh caste, sub-caste, surname and clan entries.
- **Digital design:** Census 2027 is India's first digital Census, so pre-loaded caste lists can reduce spelling errors and duplicate identities.
- **State validation:** Bihar's caste survey used caste codes for listed communities, showing how States can help merge local sub-castes into usable categories.
- **Privacy safeguards:** Bihar's caste survey faced legal questions over privacy and the census-survey distinction, making data protection essential for public trust.
- **Empirical basis:** The Supreme Court's 2024 SC sub-classification ruling stressed empirical evidence, making reliable caste data crucial for defensible reservation policy.
- **Policy linkage:** Indra Sawhney's creamy-layer logic shows caste data must inform targeted benefits, not mechanically expand quota politics.
- **Correction mechanism:** Karnataka's caste-survey app glitches show why post-enumeration verification, offline syncing and grievance correction must accompany digital enumeration.

## 2. Delhi, Jakarta and a rediscovery story

(GS Paper II International Relations)

This editorial 'Delhi, Jakarta and a rediscovery story' was published in The Indian Express on 9th Jul 2026, highlights India-Indonesia cooperation as central to India's Act East and Indo-Pacific strategy.

### Strategic Rediscovery and Regional Context

- India-Indonesia ties, rooted in anti-colonial solidarity and the Bandung Conference, weakened during the Cold War.

- Renewed engagement reflects shared concerns over rising China and uncertain U.S. security reliability.
- Delhi–Jakarta cooperation now carries strategic value as both states rediscover each other as Indo–Pacific partners.

### Defence, Minerals and Maritime Cooperation

- Defence cooperation has expanded through planned supply of BrahMos and Astra missiles to Indonesia.
- Indonesia’s nickel and rare earth reserves require India’s stronger domestic capacity and private–sector participation.
- Joint development of Sabang Port near the Strait of Malacca is the most significant strategic outcome.
- The Strait of Malacca carries around 23 million barrels of oil daily, making it a key global chokepoint.
- China’s dependence is acute, with nearly 80% of its imported oil passing through this maritime route.
- Sabang’s progress remains slow despite the 2018 task force, due to bureaucratic delays and financing constraints.

### Act East Policy and Domestic Imperatives

- Modi’s engagements with Indonesia, South Korea and Japan signal renewed vigour in India’s Act East Policy.
- Planned visits to Australia and New Zealand reflect wider coordination among middle powers in the Indo–Pacific.
- Deeper middle–power cooperation can reduce excessive dependence on Washington or Beijing while creating economic–strategic gains.
- India must match external outreach with faster domestic reforms and a stronger defence industrial base.
- A more competitive economy is essential for shaping the emerging Asian order in line with national interests.

### Beyond Editorial

#### ASEAN Centrality in India’s Indo–Pacific Strategy

- Regional anchor: India officially supports ASEAN Unity, ASEAN Centrality and AOIP, making Indonesia a gateway to wider Southeast Asian engagement.

- Maritime exercise: AIME-2023, held at Changi and the South China Sea, showed India's shift from bilateral naval ties to ASEAN-wide cooperation.
- Defence exports: Indonesia's planned BrahMos and Astra purchase, worth around \$630 million, strengthens India's defence-export profile in Southeast Asia.
- Trade weight: Indonesia is India's second-largest ASEAN trading partner, with bilateral trade reaching \$28.15 billion in 2024-25.
- Critical minerals: ASEAN holds about 46% of global nickel reserves, while Indonesia and the Philippines dominate global nickel production.
- Maritime cooperation: India and ASEAN observing 2026 as the Year of Maritime Cooperation gives institutional backing to deeper naval coordination.
- Strategic balance: Middle-power cooperation through India, Indonesia, Japan and Australia helps sustain a rules-based Indo-Pacific without bloc-style dependence.

### 3. When corruption does not make a political noise

(GS Paper II Governance)

This editorial 'When corruption does not make a political noise' was published in The Indian Express on 9th Jul 2026, highlights why pervasive corruption is no longer producing a credible political mobilisation.

Corruption and Political Paradox

- Institutional corruption now spans exam leaks, road contracts, clearances, temples, land deals and regulatory capture.
- Many UPA-II allegations never reached court, yet pervasive corruption remains publicly acknowledged and politically salient.
- The paradox is that renewed corruption has not produced a credible anti-corruption movement like earlier mobilisations.
- The gap between visible corruption and weak public mobilisation reflects deeper changes in Indian politics.

## Why Earlier Anti-Corruption Politics Worked

- Earlier corruption was seen as less retail, while routine citizen-facing extraction felt comparatively limited.
- Digitised welfare and improved service delivery weakened everyday grievance even as high-level corruption concerns grew.
- The BJP-RSS combine earlier projected itself as an insurgent force against corrupt Congress rule.
- Narendra Modi's image of personal integrity gave corruption discourse a moral anchor beyond institutional reform.

## Collapse of Old Pillars

- Expansive scams, poor urban services and public talk of university corruption have revived anxiety over corrupt governance.
- UPA-era corruption seemed manageable in a broadly competitive economy, where no single group captured the state.
- Current concern is deeper: political power may create quasi-monopolies, selectively rewarding favoured firms and rivals.
- The BJP-RSS has incorporated many former opponents, weakening its earlier claim to moral distinction.
- Alleged temple theft in Ayodhya undermines the idea of organisational virtue within the wider RSS-BJP architecture.

## Why Corruption Still Lacks Political Noise

- The Prime Minister's silence preserves his personal innocence by making him appear distant rather than accountable.
- This strategy weakens the Prime Minister's power image, since silence suggests inability to confront corruption.
- Opposition mobilisation is weak after AAP's decline and Congress's limited moral authority on corruption.
- Unlike Bofors or 2G, today's anti-corruption politics lacks elite and media amplification.
- The BJP's control over political narratives allows it to suppress mobilisation more effectively than earlier regimes.

## Beyond Editorial

### Institutional Accountability Beyond Protest Politics

- **Audit oversight:** CAG's 2G spectrum audit, tabled in 2010, shows how audit institutions can convert corruption concerns into formal scrutiny.
- **Judicial caution:** The 2017 acquittal of all accused in the 2G case shows why corruption trials need stronger evidence, not only political noise.
- **Resource governance:** The Supreme Court's cancellation of 204 coal blocks in 2014 showed how arbitrary allocation can require judicial correction.
- **Lokpal capacity:** The Lokpal Act provides for inquiry and prosecution wings, but credibility depends on visible, timely and independent case disposal.
- **Whistle-blower channel:** PIDPI complaints before CVC rose from 555 in 2020 to 2,630 in 2024, showing growing reliance on protected disclosures.
- **Procurement transparency:** GeM, launched in 2016, was designed as an open public procurement platform to reduce discretion and improve accountability.
- **Social audit:** MGNREGA social audits verify whether official expenditure matches ground realities, making local communities part of anti-corruption oversight.