EDITORIALS – 13TH AUG 2026

1. A TIMELY RESET FOR THE FOOD SECURITY ACT
(GS Paper II Governance)

This editorial 'A timely reset for the Food Security Act' was published in The Hindu on 13th Aug 2026, highlights reforming food entitlements without weakening access while enabling healthier and more diverse diets.

Gaps in the Food-Security Architecture

- Households unable to afford the ICMR-NIN diet fell from 52% in 2011-12 to 25% in 2023-24, but the affordability gap still affects 25% of rural and 21% of urban households.
- Priority Households receive 5 kg per person monthly, whereas the flat 35 kg AAY entitlement progressively reduces per-person support as family size increases.
- The proposed 7 kg per-person formula, capped at 35 kg, would cut allocations for one-to-four-member families by 20%-80% without providing additional grain to larger households.
- In Tamil Nadu, where 84.5% of AAY households have fewer than five members, the proposal could reduce monthly allocation by 35.6%, disproportionately affecting vulnerable small families.
- The NFSA coverage ceiling of 81.35 crore remains based on Census 2011 and covered only 55.6% of the estimated 2025 population; it requires revision after Census 2027.

Transition towards Nutrition Security

- NFHS-6 recorded stunting at 29.3%, wasting at 19%, underweight prevalence at 31.8% and adequate diets among only 15% of young children, reflecting persistent child malnutrition.

- With 101 million people having diabetes and 136 million prediabetes in 2021, India faces a double burden of undernutrition and rising non-communicable diseases.
- Grain entitlement itself does not cause diabetes, but a cereal-heavy basket combined with carbohydrate-rich, protein-poor diets can worsen imbalance; dietary diversification must be financed separately.
- A 2025 ICMR-INDIAB study found carbohydrates supplied 62.3% of energy and protein only 12%, while the highest carbohydrate intake carried 30% higher diabetes odds.
- Since observational evidence cannot establish causation, altering the PDS basket alone cannot prevent diabetes; ICMR-NIN guidelines limit cereals and millets to 45% of energy intake.
- The PDS should supply affordable grains, pulses and healthy oils, while Anganwadi services and PM POSHAN provide eggs, milk or locally suitable alternatives.
- The ₹2,27,629 crore food-subsidy allocation requires transparent costing and phased State pilots assessing dietary diversity, anaemia, glycaemic risk, exclusion, wastage and fiscal feasibility.

Nutrition-Sensitive Delivery

- Nearly all fair price shops use electronic point-of-sale devices, while One Nation One Ration Card enables portability; offline, assisted and doorstep alternatives must prevent denial from authentication failure.
- Fair price shops can provide multilingual nutrition information and referrals through India's 1.86 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, which had recorded 41.3 crore diabetes screenings by June 2026.
- Reform requires three safeguards: preserve the 35 kg AAY entitlement, periodically reassess larger households and separately finance dietary diversification without reducing cereal support.

Beyond Editorial

Building Climate-Resilient Food Systems

- Climate-risk mapping: NICRA assessed 651 agricultural districts, identifying 109 as very highly and 201 as highly vulnerable to climate-related agricultural losses.
- Resilient crop varieties: India released 2,996 climate-resilient varieties during 2014-25, including crops tolerant to drought, flooding, heat, salinity, pests and diseases.
- Local adaptation: Climate-resilient technologies are demonstrated in 448 villages across 151 vulnerable districts, creating field-tested models for wider adoption by farmers.
- Millet-based resilience: Odisha Millet Mission revived climate-resilient ragi cultivation in tribal districts such as Koraput, Rayagada and Kandhamal while strengthening local nutrition.
- Efficient irrigation: Per Drop More Crop promotes drip and sprinkler systems, while M-CADWM pilots across 23 States and UTs modernise water delivery to farms.
- Weather intelligence: The Meghdoot application provides vernacular advisories; in 2026, Pantnagar's Agromet unit warned Uttarakhand wheat farmers about hailstorms through SMS and WhatsApp.
- Crop-risk protection: By October 2025, PMFBY had disbursed about ₹1.90 lakh crore in claims, benefiting more than 23 crore farmer applications against production losses.

2. MILITARY TRANSFORMATION, INTELLECTUAL LEADERSHIP (GS Paper III Security)

This editorial 'Military transformation, intellectual leadership' was published in The Hindu on 13th Aug 2026, highlights the need to drive military transformation through institutional reform, integration and deeper intellectual engagement."

Obstacles to Military Transformation

- At the Combined Commanders' Conference (2014), Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for faster reforms, greater operational synergy and reduced organisational flab.
- Reform remains skewed towards the Higher Defence Organisation, placing responsibility mainly on the armed forces without restructuring the wider national-security architecture.
- Lack of service-level consensus has impeded tri-service integration, while slow intellectual advancement among senior military leadership limits political understanding of complex reforms.
- The post-colonial military legacy fostered an anti-intellectual culture that prioritised tradition, ethos and tactical competence over strategic reflection.
- General K. Sundarji, Air Commodore Jasjit Singh and Rear Admiral Raja Menon advanced nuclear, air-power and maritime thinking alongside K. Subrahmanyam, demonstrating the value of strategic scholarship.

Causes of the Intellectual Deficit

- Despite rising PhD qualifications among senior officers, the top military leadership still faces an intellectual vacuum that weakens strategic innovation.
- The upward-mobility trap confines senior officers to operational orthodoxy, penalises professional dissent and rewards politically correct conformity.
- Weak personal development reflects insufficient serious reading and writing alongside demanding assignments, producing gaps in whole-of-government knowledge.
- In a complex multidimensional security environment, sustained intellectual reflection helps military leaders influence the wider security ecosystem and speak truth to power.

Unlocking Existing Potential

- The Professional Military Education system has a strong foundation but requires greater academic rigour and attention to the complexities of a whole-of-government approach.
- India's war colleges generate strong writing and ideas, but mechanisms are needed to translate this potential into senior-level strategic thinking.
- The Ministry of Defence and political establishment must foster professional debate, innovation and reform; the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence could examine the enabling framework.
- Greater intellectual freedom poses little institutional risk because the armed forces remain professional and constitutionally bound; senior leadership must raise intellectual productivity within a conservative hierarchy.

Beyond Editorial

Adapting to Technology-Driven Warfare

- Operational evidence: During Operation Sindoor in May 2025, integrated counter-UAS and air-defence systems intercepted hostile drones and missiles, demonstrating the importance of networked warfare.
- Specialised structures: The Defence Space Agency and Defence Cyber Agency, established in 2018-19, provide institutional capacity for operations in emerging strategic domains.
- Joint cyber doctrine: The 2025 Joint Doctrine for Cyberspace Operations integrates offensive capabilities, defensive resilience and real-time intelligence across the three Services.
- Sovereign military AI: Project EKAM provides secure indigenous AI models customised for military terminology, operational doctrines and sensitive datasets, reducing dependence on external platforms.
- Drone self-reliance: The National Defence Industries Conclave 2026 emphasised domestic production of drone software, engines, batteries and components to secure the entire supply chain.

- Innovation pipeline: By March 2026, iDEX involved 676 start-ups and innovators, with 58 prototypes cleared for procurement and 45 contracts worth ₹2,326 crore.
- Future-ready personnel: Exercises and institutions such as North Tech Symposium 2026 must complement new platforms with operator training, cyber awareness, realistic wargaming and human accountability.

3. HIGHER EDUCATION FACES THREE CHALLENGES (GS Paper II Governance)

This editorial 'Higher education faces three challenges' was published in The Indian Express on 13th Aug 2026, highlights how weaknesses of intention, concept and execution constrain Indian higher education despite conventional policy interventions.

Challenge of Intention

- Poor global rankings and graduate employability are commonly attributed to inadequate funding, regulation, infrastructure and policy, but India's proven talent suggests deeper institutional barriers.
- Appointments, promotions and admissions must prioritise merit and integrity over favouritism, protecting the fairness and long-term interests of institutions.
- Students recognise favouritism and dishonesty and learn from institutional behaviour as much as classroom teaching, making ethical governance central to educational credibility.

Challenge of Concept

- Universities are neither government departments nor corporate offices but distinctive learning communities requiring context-sensitive governance models.

- Applying a one-year probation to public-university faculty reflects conceptual misunderstanding because this period is inadequate for assessing long-term academic suitability.
- Universities cannot develop responsible adults by treating students as children or achieve excellence when denied institutional autonomy while remaining accountable for academic outcomes.
- Uniform recruitment and promotion rules ignore institutional diversity across size, teaching or research orientation, geography and discipline; assessment frameworks must reflect these differences.

Challenge of Execution

- Academic excellence requires capable leaders, robust processes, continuous learning and the humility to correct mistakes during policy implementation.
- A fear-of-failure culture suppresses initiative, whereas learning from failure encourages innovation and experimentation.
- Systematic coaching and mentoring must equip academic leaders with the knowledge, confidence and institutional support needed to translate sound ideas into effective practices.
- Isolated islands of excellence cannot transform higher education because uniform policies and system-wide movement of faculty, staff and students allow weak institutions to undermine stronger ones.

Beyond Editorial

Advancing the Internationalisation of Indian Universities

- Academic collaboration: UGC Regulations, 2022 allow Indian institutions to offer twinning, joint and dual degrees with eligible foreign universities, enabling mobility and collaborative research.
- Foreign campuses: Deakin and Wollongong established campuses at GIFT City, while the University of Liverpool received approval for its Bengaluru campus in June 2026.

- Overseas expansion: IIT Madras opened a campus in Zanzibar and IIT Delhi expanded to Abu Dhabi, extending India's academic presence into Africa and West Asia.
- Student attraction: The Study in India platform offers more than 24,000 courses across over 1,200 institutions with integrated admission, identification and student-visa support.
- Educational diplomacy: ICCR offers over 3,000 scholarships through 21 schemes for students from more than 180 countries, strengthening India's cultural and academic influence.
- Global visibility: Seventy-nine Indian institutions appeared in the 2025 QS World University Subject Rankings, an increase from 69 in the preceding edition.
- Quality safeguards: Internationalisation must ensure accreditation, affordability, reciprocal mobility and substantive research collaboration so that partnerships do not become commercially driven elite enclaves.