EDITORIALS - 16TH NOV 2026

1. PM IN MANILA: GIVING NEW MOMENTUM TO ACT EAST POLICY (GS PAPER II INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)

This editorial '**PM in Manila: Giving new momentum to Act East Policy**' was published in The Hindu on 16th Nov 2026, highlights **India–ASEAN cooperation** in advancing the **Act East Policy** and an inclusive **Indo-Pacific**.

Strategic Context and Regional Engagement

- The November 16–17 Manila summits offer opportunities to reaffirm **ASEAN centrality**, consolidate maritime cooperation and advance **Act East Policy** amid strategic rivalries and economic disruption.
- From trade and cultural exchanges in 1992, relations became multidimensional; **2027** marks 35 years of dialogue partnership and five years of the **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**.
- India respects ASEAN's **strategic autonomy**; participation in the Quad alongside engagement with Russia, China, Japan, Australia, Europe and the US enables dialogue across divides and supports a **rules-based Indo-Pacific**.
- South China Sea tensions, Taiwan uncertainty and conflicts in West Asia and Europe reinforce the need for **inclusive regional dialogue**; a possible Manila **Quad summit** could strengthen India's regional perspective.
- The Philippines' chairmanship complements wider bilateral engagement; **BRICS** provides another platform, with Indonesia participating as a member and Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam as **partners** at the New Delhi summit.

Maritime, Trade and Digital Cooperation

- The second ASEAN–India Maritime Exercise, MILAN 2026, International Fleet Review and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium strengthened **operational familiarity**; Visakhapatnam and Kochi conferences supported **maritime dialogue**.
- Priorities include **maritime domain awareness**, information-sharing, search and rescue, submarine-cable protection and disaster relief; six ASEAN countries associate with the **Information Fusion Centre–Indian Ocean Region**, supporting regional capabilities and confidence-building.

- Bilateral trade reached approximately **$128 billion** last year, but the **AITIGA review** remains incomplete over market access, rules of origin and non-tariff barriers; Manila could provide political direction for its conclusion.
- Indian exports to ASEAN rose **56%** in the current year, mainly through **petroleum products**, strengthening the case for early completion of the trade review.
- India's **digital public infrastructure** and fintech experience complement ASEAN's digital integration; **Project Nexus** seeks to link national instant-payment systems, potentially facilitating cross-border transactions.
- Enhanced **submarine-cable connectivity** supports digital services, cloud computing and AI; the July 2026 **ASEAN–India Scale Hub** in Bali demonstrated opportunities for start-up, investor and technology collaboration.

Societal Links and Implementation

- University, business, research and youth exchanges deepen **people-to-people ties**; direct flights support tourism, Nalanda University attracts ASEAN students, and cooperation in healthcare, renewable energy and **skills development** is expanding.
- The **ASEAN–India Plan of Action 2026–2030** provides the implementation framework; success depends on converting 2026 achievements into **tangible benefits** through maritime cooperation, trade facilitation, digital connectivity and societal exchanges.

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Northeast India as the Gateway to ASEAN

- **Connectivity backbone:** The India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway seeks to connect the Northeast with Southeast Asian markets; completion and smooth border movement remain crucial.
- **Alternative access:** The Kaladan project envisages connecting Kolkata with Mizoram through Myanmar's Sittwe port, diversifying northeastern trade routes.
- **Local enterprise:** The ₹10,037-crore UNNATI scheme supports northeastern industrial investment; linking incentives with regional markets can strengthen local businesses.
- **Agricultural exports:** MOVCDNER supports organic production, certification, processing and marketing, helping northeastern farmers access higher-value markets.
- **Border livelihoods:** India–Bangladesh border haats demonstrate how regulated local trade can generate opportunities for border communities and small traders.
- **Logistics support:** Krishi UDAN facilitates air transport of northeastern perishables, highlighting the importance of storage and transport facilities alongside trade corridors.

- **Inclusive development:** PM-DevINE supports infrastructure and livelihoods for youth and women, offering a framework to convert connectivity into local employment.

2. WHAT AQI ISN'T TELLING YOU ABOUT THE AIR WE BREATHE, THE TOLL IT TAKES (GS PAPER III ENVIRONMENT)

This editorial '**What AQI isn't telling you about the air we breathe, the toll it takes**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 16th Nov 2026, highlights how **AQI limitations** obscure air pollution's **health burden** and the need for sustained collective action.

Pollution Scale and Measurement Gaps

- India accounts for **83 of the world's 100 most polluted cities**; pollution persists nationwide, while temperature inversions and prevailing winds trap emissions over the **Indo-Gangetic Plain** during autumn and winter.
- India's **AQI** measures eight pollutants but reports the worst individual sub-index, obscuring **combined exposure** and excluding carcinogens such as benzene, arsenic and nickel.
- The **500-point ceiling** masks extreme pollution: hourly PM2.5 above 380 produces the maximum sub-index, making Diwali's Mundka peak of 3,744 indistinguishable from 380; **averaging** further dilutes peaks.
- **Missing data** can exclude the worst hours: on November 9, 36 of Delhi's 59 stations lacked PM2.5 readings at 1 a.m.; 1,125 missing station-hours exceeded 1,000 on DPCC's site, while stations recording under **16 hours** receive no sub-index.

Health Burden and Evidence

- Air pollution accounted for **1.67 million deaths**, or 18% of Indian deaths, in 2019; **State of Global Air 2025** estimated about two million in 2023, including two-thirds of COPD deaths, 36% of stroke deaths and over one-fourth of heart-disease deaths.
- Pollution-linked **lower respiratory infections** caused four times the disease burden of tobacco-linked infections in 2017, mainly affecting children and older adults; an **ICMR study** of 33,213 patients across five cities linked higher-pollution days with more respiratory emergencies.
- A Delhi cohort associated greater annual **PM2.5 exposure** with over 50% higher COPD risk; **biomass smoke** is a major risk factor among non-smokers, whose COPD occurs younger and affects both sexes equally.

- Evidence links pollution with **diabetes**, childhood anaemia and dementia risk; the **2024 Lancet Commission** recognised air pollution among 14 modifiable dementia risk factors, while soot has been detected in cord blood and fetal organs.
- Meeting **WHO guidelines** could add roughly 8–10 years to Delhi residents' lives; pollution-attributable deaths are estimates rather than individual case counts, with uncertainty concerning **effect size** at high exposure rather than whether harm occurs.

Policy Effectiveness and Collective Action

- **Cleaner fuels and vehicle standards** have strong supporting evidence; construction stoppages and Diwali restrictions offer temporary relief, while evidence for **odd–even restrictions** is weak and sprinklers and smog towers have negligible impact.
- Reducing **vehicle numbers** requires higher purchase, usage and parking costs alongside affordable, accessible **public transport**, electric mobility and improved metro–bus connectivity.
- Switching from **biomass burning**, as envisaged under PM Ujjwala Yojana, must accompany stronger **enforcement** against industrial emissions and waste-burning.
- A **shared airshed** spanning Pakistan, Nepal, the Indo-Gangetic Plain and Bangladesh requires interstate and international cooperation; public apathy and political incentives favouring **short-term action** obstruct sustained responses.

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Environmental Justice in Clean-Air Governance

- **Unequal exposure:** WHO identifies disadvantaged communities near busy roads and industries as disproportionately exposed, supporting neighbourhood-level pollution interventions.
- **Gender vulnerability:** WHO highlights rural women and children's exposure to household smoke, making affordable clean cooking an equity priority.
- **Livelihood protection:** The Supreme Court's November 2021 direction required labour-cess-funded subsistence during construction bans, integrating worker protection into pollution control.
- **Occupational safeguards:** India's climate-health programme includes pollution training for traffic police and municipal workers, supporting targeted protection against repeated exposure.
- **Health surveillance:** NCDC's 2022 pollution-related illness surveillance guidelines provide a framework whose coverage should include underserved populations.

- **Accessible information:** CPCB's SAMEER provides hourly AQI updates; multilingual, offline warnings should complement digital information for people without smartphone access.
- **Community accountability:** SAMEER enables pollution complaints in Delhi-NCR; timely resolution can translate community reporting into effective protection.

3. HUANG EXIT TOUCHES OFF ECHOES, SPARKS QUESTIONS (GS PAPER III ECONOMY)

This editorial '**Huang exit touches off echoes, sparks questions**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 16th Nov 2026, highlights corporate accountability, **US–China** technology tensions and their implications for India's economic security.

Corporate Accountability

- Demands for Jensen Huang's return to Nvidia expose **leadership dependence** as a corporate governance failure; technological achievement and shareholder wealth cannot override **accountability** or confer permanent leadership entitlement.
- Alleged links to Chinese intelligence require thorough **investigation** without presuming guilt, balancing accountability with **due process**.

Technology, Commerce and National Security

- Singapore-based Megaspeed allegedly diverted advanced Nvidia chips to China, violating **US export controls**; the controversy questions whether administration–technology industry proximity allowed commercial interests to override **national security**.
- Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent questioned Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick's failure to restrict Megaspeed's technology access; forthcoming **Congressional scrutiny** will test **executive accountability**.
- Silicon Valley's pursuit of **Chinese market access** conflicts with concerns over strengthening China's military, intelligence and technological capabilities; bipartisan pressure could constrain Trump's **transactional engagement** with Beijing.

Institutional Resilience and India's Priorities

- American **civil society** has demonstrated capacity to challenge wealthy technology leaders despite their political influence, contrasting with persistent **elite impunity** in democracies including India.

- India's technological ambitions require recognising advanced-technology competition as inseparable from **national security**, with close attention to China's growing **industrial espionage** capabilities.
- **Institutional modernisation** and technological upgrading of intelligence and counter-intelligence capabilities are essential to protecting India's **economic security**.

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Building Resilient Semiconductor Supply Chains

- **Supplier diversification:** The semiconductor shortage beginning in 2020 disrupted multiple US industries, highlighting the need for alternative suppliers.
- **Domestic fabrication:** Tata Electronics' Dholera project with Taiwan's PSMC combines domestic fabrication capacity with international technological expertise.
- **Packaging capacity:** Micron's Sanand assembly-and-testing project illustrates why semiconductor resilience requires capabilities beyond wafer fabrication.
- **Design capability:** India's Design Linked Incentive scheme provides financial and infrastructure support, strengthening domestic capabilities beyond manufacturing and assembly.
- **Shared infrastructure:** C-DAC's ChipIN Centre offers design tools, fabrication services and testing support, lowering entry barriers for institutions and start-ups.
- **Technology partnerships:** The July 2023 India–Japan semiconductor partnership promotes supply-chain cooperation, demonstrating resilience through complementary international capabilities.
- **Workforce development:** Chips to Startup training and AICTE's VLSI and integrated-circuit curricula seek to align technical education with semiconductor industry requirements.