EDITORIALS - 16TH OCT 2026

1. A contested UNSC seat poses a test for India (GS Paper II International Relations)

This editorial '**A contested UNSC seat poses a test for India**' was published in **The Hindu** on 16th Oct 2026, highlights India's **diplomatic choices** in a contested Security Council election against Tajikistan and their implications for its Global South leadership.

India's candidature and the electoral challenge

- India seeks its ninth **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** term for 2028–29; the June 2027 election requires at least **129 votes** in the 193-member United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).
- The bid seeks to complete **counter-terrorism** and **UN reform** objectives disrupted during its 2021–22 tenure, while sustaining geopolitical visibility amid stalled permanent-membership aspirations.
- Earlier victories rested on **regional consensus**, securing 187/191 votes in 2010 and 184/192 in 2020; India lost its contested elections against Pakistan in 1975 and Japan in **1996**.
- Tajikistan entered the race earlier and was the expected **Asia-Pacific** consensus candidate; competing bids split regional support, making the wider UNGA's **two-thirds majority** decisive.

Voting dynamics and diplomatic constraints

- India's size, economic strength and Council experience face a **representation** challenge: Tajikistan's first-time candidature appeals to smaller **Global South** states seeking a fairer share of Council membership.
- Tajikistan has **Central Asian** backing and endorsement from the 57-member **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation**; India may secure some dissenting votes but faces substantial organised support for its rival.
- India expects support from the **Global North**, Southeast Asia, Caribbean and Pacific states, making **Africa, South America and South Asia** the principal electoral battlegrounds.
- Recent elections favoured Kyrgyzstan over the Philippines, Portugal and Austria over Germany, and Bangladesh's UNGA presidential candidate over Cyprus's; amid resistance to **major powers** and criticism of Israel, India's **strategic autonomy** may help, while closer Israeli ties invite scrutiny.

Available choices and strategic costs

- A **direct contest** risks defeating a longstanding partner; persuading Tajikistan to withdraw has precedents in Kazakhstan's 2010 and Afghanistan's 2013 withdrawals, but no **negotiated withdrawal** has emerged despite recent bilateral meetings.

- Securing Tajikistan's withdrawal could weaken India's **representative credibility** by prioritising another Indian term over a smaller country's first opportunity; **term-sharing** has historical precedents, generally between evenly matched countries.
- An **Indian withdrawal** could enable a later consensus-backed return and recognise Tajikistan's **strategic partnership**, including its past hosting of Indian facilities at Ayni and Farkhor; the government has shown little inclination to retreat.

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Barriers to India's permanent UNSC membership

- **Amendment hurdle: Article 108** requires Charter amendments to secure two-thirds adoption and ratification, including ratification by all five permanent members, giving existing powers decisive **institutional control**.
- **Regional opposition:** Pakistan's association with **Uniting for Consensus**, which favours elected-seat expansion, complicates India's pursuit of **permanent representation** despite its wider international support.
- **Competing reform models:** The **Group of Four (G4)**—Brazil, Germany, India and Japan—supports expansion in both membership categories, whereas rival proposals prioritise **elected seats**, obstructing agreement.
- **Veto disagreement:** The **Ezulwini Consensus** demands equal privileges for new African permanent members, including veto rights if retained, making **veto expansion** a contentious component of reform.
- **Coalition complexity:** Africa seeks at least **two permanent seats**, requiring India's diplomatic coalition to accommodate broader **regional representation** rather than secure support for its candidature alone.
- **Procedural stagnation:** Repeated continuation of **intergovernmental negotiations**, alongside the G4's 2024 demand for text-based talks, illustrates difficulty converting reform discussions into **concrete negotiations**.
- **Entrenched privilege:** The Council's **five permanent members** remain unchanged despite demands from emerging powers and Africa, illustrating the gap between **representative legitimacy** and institutional power.

2. 'Innovate today, nourish tomorrow' for food security (GS Paper I Society)

This editorial ''**Innovate today, nourish tomorrow**' **for food security**' was published in **The Hindu** on 16th Oct 2026, highlights innovation's role in advancing **resilient agriculture**, **nutritional security** and **equitable food systems**.

Food insecurity and India's transformation

- Globally, **645 million** people face hunger and **one-third** cannot afford healthy diets; climate risks reduce yields, economic shocks erode purchasing power, and conflict destroys harvests, supply chains and protective institutions.

- India's **Green Revolution** combined high-yielding varieties, irrigation and assured prices to expand cereal production, enabling **food surpluses** that underpin public distribution and nutrition schemes.
- The **National Food Security Act, 2013** covers up to 75% of rural and 50% of urban populations—about 81 crore people; free grain provision since January 2024 under **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana** extends until 2028.
- The **Targeted Public Distribution System** uses digitised ration cards, Aadhaar seeding and **One Nation One Ration Card** portability to enable migrant workers to access entitlements nationwide.

Institutional support for innovation

- The **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** supports digital advisory road maps and extension-worker capacity; its **Clean Milk Scorecard** provides actionable feedback on cattle management, hygiene and milk production.
- FAO addresses **food loss** through measurement, environmental assessment and **resource recovery** via composting, bioenergy and recycling, linking reduced losses with nutrition, climate action and farmer incomes.
- The **International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)** uses a **financing-plus approach** combining production, market access, finance and small infrastructure to attract domestic investment where agricultural risks are highest.
- Each IFAD dollar invested in India has mobilised **over three dollars** in total investment; globally, projects with strong **private-sector participation** delivered 64% income gains—four times those without it.
- The **World Food Programme (WFP)** improves distribution through grain-dispensing machines, supply-chain optimisation and the **Public Systems Lab** at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi; it also promotes diverse food baskets and millets, particularly for children and pregnant women.

Priorities for equitable food systems

- India's innovations under **fragmented landholdings**, monsoon dependence, multilingual populations and resource constraints offer adaptable lessons for the **Global South** facing climate, conflict and economic pressures.
- Future innovation must prioritise **nutritional security** through climate-resilient and biofortified crops, diverse diets and rewarding smallholder value chains, while remaining **pro-woman** and integrating traditional knowledge with science.

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Why does food availability alone fail to eliminate malnutrition?

- **Affordability constraints: Dietary diversity** remains inaccessible when purchasing power is weak; the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that 46% of children facing severe food poverty belonged to the **poorest two wealth quintiles**.

- **Unsafe living conditions:** Recurrent infections undermine **nutrient absorption**; World Health Organization (WHO) guidance therefore combines nutrition interventions with **sanitation measures**, including handwashing and hygienic toilets.
- **Maternal disadvantage:** Poor **maternal nutrition** raises risks for children; the National Family Health Survey-5, conducted during 2019–21, recorded **anaemia** among 57% of women aged 15–49.
- **Inadequate feeding practices:** Available food may not meet infants' needs without **age-appropriate feeding**; WHO recommends introducing safe, adequate **complementary foods** from six months alongside continued breastfeeding.
- **Non-income deprivation:** Household prosperity cannot guarantee **child nutrition**; UNICEF's 2024 report placed 54% of children facing severe food poverty in the middle and upper **wealth quintiles**.
- **Healthcare gaps:** Food access cannot replace **antenatal care**; WHO recommends **iron–folic acid supplementation** during pregnancy to reduce maternal anaemia, low birth weight and preterm birth.
- **Care-related constraints:** Employment without adequate support can disrupt **breastfeeding**; UNICEF identifies maternity leave, nursing breaks and childcare facilities as essential **workplace protections** for infant nutrition.

3. Can wildlife thrive in India without active human intervention? (GS Paper III Environment)

This editorial '**Can wildlife thrive in India without active human intervention?**' was published in **The Hindu** on 16th Oct 2026, highlights the need for **context-specific conservation** combining scientific intervention, landscape protection and community participation.

Conservation rationale and species priorities

- Colonial agricultural expansion and technological change accelerated **wildlife loss** and weakened **forest communities' rights**; independent India inherited these pressures alongside continuing dependence on forests.
- Conservation need not await **economic prosperity**: Costa Rica, Brazil, Rwanda and Colombia prioritised biodiversity within development, while **biodiversity tourism** can generate revenue.
- **Flagship species** attract funding and political attention; tiger assessments cover nearly four lakh square kilometres against roughly one lakh occupied, supporting wider **habitat protection**, although less-visible threatened species may remain neglected.
- **Top predators** regulate ecosystems, but tiger protection cannot represent every habitat or species; wolves may better represent grasslands and **human-dominated landscapes**, requiring distinct conservation priorities.

Scope and limits of active intervention

- **Reintroduction** seeks self-sustaining populations, as illustrated by Buxa's tigress release and Project Cheetah in 2022; **captive breeding** may prevent extinction but requires substantial investment and offers uncertain outcomes.
- The Mauritius kestrel demonstrates **reintroduction success**, while vultures present behavioural challenges; the saola's extremely low numbers may already constrain **captive breeding**, underlining intervention's limits.
- Human alteration makes **active management** increasingly necessary, but restoring **natural processes** entails trade-offs: periodic flooding sustains Kaziranga, Dudhwa and Valmiki, whereas flood prevention often remains a human priority.
- **Landscape-level protection** must reflect species ecology: bustard sanctuaries failed where grazing and local needs were overlooked; crop damage from rising blackbuck populations weakened **community support** essential to bird survival.
- India spends about **₹3,500 crore** annually on conservation against a **₹9,500–₹10,000 crore** requirement; funding favours tiger reserves, while staffing and inherited management systems remain uneven across regions.

Institutional priorities

- **Protected areas** cover only about 5% of India and average roughly 200 square kilometres; safeguarding **larger landscapes** provides ecological insurance where species knowledge, including insect-abundance data, remains inadequate.
- The **Wildlife (Protection) Act** treats activities such as scientific sampling similarly to hunting, creating permit barriers that disproportionately exclude less-resourced researchers; reform should enable **diverse research participation**.
- **Context-specific conservation** must accommodate ecological differences and inhabited landscapes, working with communities while avoiding excessive **top-down control** and the conversion of national parks into safari parks.

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Ethical safeguards for wildlife interventions

- **Necessity assessment: Conservation benefits** should justify relocation; International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) orangutan guidance cautions against moving animals merely because they occupy **human-modified habitats**.
- **Animal welfare:** Capture protocols must minimise **stress** and social disruption; IUCN identifies both as significant **welfare risks** when orangutans are removed from familiar landscapes.
- **Disease prevention: Health screening** should precede release to protect recipient populations; Project Cheetah used mandatory **quarantine** before transferring imported animals into larger acclimatisation enclosures.
- **Genetic suitability: Genetic management** should address inbreeding while assessing population compatibility; Florida's 1995 introduction of eight female Texas pumas provides a documented **genetic rescue** example.

- **Behavioural readiness:** Rearing should preserve **species-appropriate behaviour**; whooping-crane programmes have used costumed caregivers to prevent **human imprinting**, improving preparation for life outside captivity.
- **Post-release responsibility:** Release must include **continued monitoring** and rescue capacity; during California's 2023 condor influenza outbreak, teams identified sick birds and transported them for **supportive care**.
- **Transparent accountability: Independent review** should guide corrections rather than release counts alone; following Kuno's cheetah deaths in 2023, experts reviewed monitoring protocols, veterinary facilities and **management practices**.