EDITORIALS - 17TH NOV 2026

1. OUTLOOK OUTAGE (GS PAPER III SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, GS PAPER III SECURITY)

This editorial '**Outlook outage**' was published in **The Hindu** on 17th Nov 2026, highlights the systemic risks of **centralised digital infrastructure** and the need for resilience.

Outage and Architectural Vulnerability

- A failed **network upgrade** caused a global **Microsoft 365 outage**, disrupting essential organisational services and affecting tens of millions.
- The internet's **network-of-networks architecture** was designed to contain failures; **centralisation** creates dependencies that allow disruptions to cascade across organisations and economies.

Economic Drivers and Systemic Risks

- High **infrastructure costs** make dedicated servers unviable for most businesses, while **shared infrastructure** spreads hardware and maintenance expenses, keeping per-user costs negligible.
- Competition among a few **cloud providers** operating at Microsoft's scale keeps **enterprise software** affordable, reinforcing reliance on centralised services.
- Deeper **digital integration** magnifies the consequences of inevitable vendor mistakes; provider sophistication cannot eliminate **systemic risk**.

Cyber Sovereignty and Resilience

- **Cyber sovereignty** requires addressing architectural centralisation; replacing a global vendor with a **domestic vendor** alone cannot resolve the underlying vulnerability.
- **Digital resilience** must shield **critical operations** from destabilising disruptions, however improbable, rather than assume any vendor is consistently reliable.
- Expanding **AI data centres** could intensify existing **centralisation**, making protection against large-system failures increasingly urgent.

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Regulatory Accountability for Cloud Service Failures

- **Liability allocation:** RBI's 2023 IT Outsourcing Directions retain regulated entities' responsibility for outsourced services, including cloud arrangements.
- **Incident disclosure:** RBI requires prompt provider notification, enabling banks to report cyber incidents within six hours of provider detection.
- **Independent audits:** The EU's Digital Operational Resilience Act (DORA) requires inspection and audit rights for ICT services supporting critical financial functions.
- **Enforceable guarantees:** DORA requires measurable service-performance targets for critical ICT arrangements, making reliability commitments assessable and enforceable.

- **Compensation adequacy:** Amazon EC2's SLA generally limits outage remedies to service credits, highlighting gaps between contractual relief and business losses.
- **Tested exit plans:** EU rules require documented, periodically reviewed and tested exit plans to manage interruptions or failure of critical ICT providers.
- **Switching safeguards:** The UK CMA's 2025 investigation identified egress fees, interoperability barriers and Microsoft licensing practices as constraints on cloud customer choice.

2. THE ROAD TO A DISEASE-FREE WORLD GOES THROUGH WATER (GS PAPER I SOCIETY)

This editorial '**The road to a disease-free world goes through water**' was published in **The Hindu** on 17th Nov 2026, highlights the role of **water, sanitation** and **wastewater surveillance** in disease prevention and polio eradication.

Polio Eradication and Water Deficits

- **Wild poliovirus cases** have fallen by over **99% since 1988** through vaccination, surveillance and community outreach; completing eradication also requires addressing waterborne transmission.
- **WHO and UNICEF** estimate that in **2024**, 2.1 billion people lacked safely managed drinking water and 3.4 billion lacked safely managed sanitation.
- Inadequate **water, sanitation and hygiene** contributed to at least **1.4 million preventable deaths in 2019**, underscoring water infrastructure's public health significance.

Water Infrastructure as Preventive Healthcare

- **Clean water** prevents disease, while **safe sanitation** interrupts transmission; both must function as preventive health infrastructure.
- **Wastewater surveillance** tracks pathogen circulation, enabling anticipation of outbreaks; poliovirus can be detected even without reported **paralysis cases**.
- Abu Dhabi uses **AI-enabled surveillance** for early risk detection and intervention; the **European Commission's** 2025 European Wastewater Surveillance Dashboard tracks disease movements through wastewater analysis.
- Shared **surveillance infrastructure** can detect multiple pathogens, while **sanitation investment** supports disease prevention, sustainable development and improved quality of life.

Last-Mile Access and Partnerships

- The **UAE**, under Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, works with **The Gates Foundation** and global partners to accelerate polio eradication and tackle neglected tropical diseases.
- Their **Reaching the Last Mile Fund** supports disease elimination across dozens of countries, prioritising **marginalised communities**, particularly children with limited healthcare access; water investment requires similar targeting.

Integrated Policy and Investment

- Bridging **health–water policy** gaps requires collaboration and **integrated investment**, recognising that progress in either sector depends on the other.
- The **2026 UN Water Conference** in Abu Dhabi seeks to accelerate **SDG 6**, covering water and sanitation availability and sustainable management for all.
- **Governments**, development institutions and the **private sector** must combine innovation, financing and collaboration to deliver water infrastructure to underserved communities.

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Climate Change as a Multiplier of Waterborne Disease Risk

- **Flood contamination:** Pakistan's 2022 floods damaged an estimated 30% of water systems in affected areas, increasing unsafe-water exposure and outbreak risks.
- **Drought-related exposure:** Restricted safe-water access accompanied 7,796 cholera cases across 25 drought-affected Somali districts during January–July 2022.
- **Temperature effects:** ECDC identifies warming, low-salinity Baltic waters as increasingly favourable for *Vibrio* bacteria, expanding infection risks.
- **Coastal vulnerability:** Approximately 20 million people in coastal Bangladesh face increasing saltwater intrusion into freshwater sources, constraining safe-water availability.
- **Displacement risks:** WHO linked Somalia's post-October 2023 flood-related cholera spread to inadequate safe water and sanitation among displaced riverside communities.
- **Emergency preparedness:** Following Cyclone Idai in 2019, Mozambique launched cholera vaccination after almost 1,500 cases, illustrating the need for rapid outbreak response.
- **Adaptive infrastructure:** UNICEF-supported Managed Aquifer Recharge in Bangladesh stores treated pond water and rainwater underground, strengthening coastal freshwater access.

3. CLEARER PICTURE OF WOMEN AND WORK IS A STEP FORWARD (GS PAPER I SOCIETY)

This editorial '**Clearer picture of women and work is a step forward**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 17th Nov 2026, highlights the need for **granular data** on **women's work**, **unpaid care** responsibilities and employment **choices.**

Women's Employment and Data Reform

- **MoSPI** proposes new questions in the Periodic Labour Force Survey and Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises to capture **women's work** more precisely.
- Raising **female LFPR** from around **35% to over 50%** is widely considered necessary for India's developed-country ambition over the next two decades.

Unpaid Work and Employment Constraints

- The **2024 Time Use Surveys** show women aged **15–59 years** spent 366 minutes daily on unpaid activities, including childcare and elderly care, against men's 62 minutes.
- Granular data can establish the **causal link** between unpaid care and employment constraints, while **cohort-specific analysis** can distinguish rural–urban and young–old experiences.

Policy Relevance and Women's Agency

- Identifying whether **unpaid care work** prevents women from seeking **formal employment** can guide solutions, although such evidence captures only part of a complex problem.
- Greater **formal economic participation** supports growth, but assessing women's **freedom of choice** in life and work requires broader questions beyond employment data.

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Structural Barriers to Decent Employment for Women

- **Unsafe mobility:** A World Bank study found 31% of surveyed Mumbai women cited commuting as a work barrier in 2019.
- **Workplace harassment:** In *Aureliano Fernandes* proceedings, the Supreme Court directed governments to constitute or reconstitute Internal Complaints Committees, addressing redressal gaps.
- **Earnings inequality:** ILO reported India's gender wage gap at 28% in 2018–19; the gap reflects multiple factors, not solely discrimination.
- **Occupational segregation:** ADB identifies unpaid family work and low-earning own-account work as major components of rural women's employment, limiting earnings opportunities.
- **Suitable-job scarcity:** Only around 16% of employed Indian women held regular wage jobs in 2023, highlighting limited access to stable employment.
- **Institutional bias:** *Babita Puniya* (2020) upheld women Army Short Service Commission officers' claims to permanent-commission consideration, challenging unequal career opportunities.
- **Employment insecurity:** UNFPA's PLFS 2023–24 analysis found participation increases concentrated in informal, self-employed and unpaid work, raising job-quality concerns.