EDITORIALS - 18TH NOV 2026

1. TRANSGENDER RIGHTS, HEALTHCARE SHOULD NOT BE COMPROMISED (GS PAPER I SOCIETY)

This editorial '**Transgender rights, healthcare should not be compromised**' was published in **The Hindu** on 18th Nov 2026, highlights how the **2026 amendment** restricts **gender self-identification** and creates barriers to rights and healthcare.

Legal Recognition and Autonomy

- The **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026** increases protection but replaces **self-identification** with a medical board's recommendation, selection from prescribed categories and District Magistrate certification, making medical authorities gatekeepers of identity and welfare eligibility.
- The **2014 NALSA judgment** upheld gender identity as part of autonomy and dignity under **Article 21**, independent of medical intervention. Mandatory medical certification also conflicts with WHO ICD-11 and WPATH Standards of Care Version 8.
- The **narrowed statutory definition** excludes trans men, trans women and genderqueer persons as categories, while retaining specified variations in sex characteristics and socio-cultural identities such as hijra and kinner, whose membership **medical boards** are ill-equipped to assess.
- The absence of an **effective appeal or independent review** compounds certification barriers to documentation, education, employment, social security, insurance and healthcare, contrary to the **NHRC's 2026 advisory** on self-identification, grievance redress and simpler documentation.

Public Health Consequences and Healthcare Reform

- Legal ambiguity has led some providers to delay, suspend or withdraw **gender-affirming care**, risking a shift to **unregulated providers** and increasing self-medication, infections and post-operative complications, while certification adds costs and delays.
- **Helplines and community consultations** report rising distress since the amendment's introduction, including **suicidal ideation**, depression, anxiety and sleep disturbance.

- Prior discrimination, fear of judgement, privacy and cost concerns, and limited staff understanding deter hospital visits. **Mainstream healthcare** should provide routine and emergency care, with **specialised clinics** supporting counselling, hormone therapy and gender-affirming services.
- Despite the Madras High Court's **Sushma (2021)** ruling, proposed **National Medical Commission** curricula omit transgender health training, which is needed across clinical and non-clinical hospital staff.
- Hospital records should capture **preferred names and gender identities** alongside clinically relevant information, and hospitals should appoint **Complaints Officers** as required by the 2019 Act, a mandate most have yet to fulfil.

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Intersectional Barriers to Transgender Inclusion

- **Horizontal reservation**: Karnataka's 2021 rules reserved 1% of direct-recruitment vacancies for transgender candidates within SC, ST, OBC and General Merit categories.
- **Housing insecurity**: Kochi Metro hired 23 transgender workers in 2017, but many left because of low pay and difficulty finding accommodation.
- **Family rejection**: Bhubaneswar's Garima Greh sheltered a transgender person who left home after her family rejected her gender identity.
- **School bullying**: UNDP documented how persistent bullying forced Sonali Khan to leave school in Class XII.
- **Second-chance education**: Kerala's Samanwaya programme helps transgender learners resume interrupted schooling and earn formal qualifications.
- **Livelihood support**: Odisha's Sweekruti scheme offers eligible transgender self-help groups ₹1.25 lakh in start-up assistance.
- **Political representation**: Madhu Kinnar, a Dalit transgender woman, won Raigarh's 2015 mayoral election as an independent.

2. INDIA NEEDS A COMPREHENSIVE DOCTRINE ON SPACE SECURITY (GS PAPER III SECURITY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY)

This editorial '**India needs a comprehensive doctrine on space security**' was published in **The Hindu** on 18th Nov 2026, highlights the need for a **doctrine** that

protects essential **space-enabled services**, guides responses to disruption and preserves the **peaceful use** of **outer space**.

Strategic Dependence and Evolving Threats

- India's reliance on satellites for **civilian services** such as navigation, weather forecasting, disaster management and banking, and for **military operations** such as positioning and surveillance, means a failure in one part of the network can disrupt multiple services on Earth.
- **Jamming and spoofing** disrupt communications and navigation, while **cyber interference** can target satellite networks and ground stations. Electronic warfare can degrade signals without physically damaging spacecraft, complicating attribution and response.

Elements of a Space Security Doctrine

- The **Indian Space Policy 2023** provides the policy framework, while ISRO's **ISSAR-2025** documents efforts in space situational awareness, collision avoidance and debris mitigation.
- India needs clear **attack thresholds** that account for temporary disruptions with serious effects, alongside **attribution standards** that distinguish accidents from deliberate attacks and guide responses without escalating crises.
- Disruption of **commercial satellite systems** can affect public services, businesses and national security, making **government–industry coordination** essential for sharing information, identifying vulnerabilities and maintaining services.
- **System redundancy** should sustain essential functions when individual components fail, while **space-domain awareness** should detect anomalies around Indian assets and strengthen attribution.
- **Rapid recovery** requires restoring essential capabilities through **coordination** among government agencies, the armed forces, ISRO and commercial operators.

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International Norms for Responsible Behaviour in Outer Space

- **Prior consultation**: Article IX of the Outer Space Treaty requires states to consult before planned activities they have reason to believe could harmfully interfere with another party's peaceful space activities.

- **Launch transparency**: India joined the Hague Code of Conduct in 2016, committing to give advance notice of ballistic missile and space-launch vehicle launches.
- **Lunar coordination**: India joined the Artemis Accords in 2023, committing to notify and coordinate activities that could interfere with other lunar operations.
- **Collision avoidance**: In 2021, ISRO and NASA coordinated a Chandrayaan-2 manoeuvre to avoid a close approach to NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter.
- **Test restraint**: Debris from Russia's 2021 anti-satellite test forced ISS crews to shelter, illustrating the risk behind UN Resolution 77/41's call to refrain from destructive direct-ascent tests.
- **Interference reporting**: The International Telecommunication Union lets countries and satellite operators report harmful radio interference and request assistance.
- **Bilateral data sharing**: The 2022 India–US Space Situational Awareness arrangement supports information sharing on orbital objects and spaceflight safety.

3. IN BILKIS BANO CASE, BAIL POINTS TO OPAQUE PROCESS (GS PAPER II POLITY)

This editorial '**In Bilkis Bano case, bail points to opaque process**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 18th Nov 2026, highlights how bail in the Bilkis Bano case raises concerns about **victim participation** and consistency in judicial decisions.

Victim Participation and Case History

- The Supreme Court suspended the **life sentences** of two of the 11 convicts and granted them bail. Bilkis Bano said she was **not heard** in the proceedings.
- **Jagjeet Singh (2022)** affirmed the victim's right to be heard at every stage of a criminal trial, and *Ms X v State of Maharashtra* (2023) reiterated it for sexual assault survivors. The **BNSS** gives these rights statutory backing and includes guardians or legal heirs in the definition of victim.
- During the **2002 Gujarat riots**, Bilkis Bano was sexually assaulted while pregnant and 13 family members were killed. Fears of evidence tampering prompted the Supreme Court to transfer the trial to Maharashtra in 2004, where all 11 accused were **convicted in 2008**.

- Gujarat released all 11 convicts through **remission in 2022**, which the Supreme Court **overturned in 2024** after Bano challenged their release.

Consistency in Bail Decisions

- The Court cited **17 years of imprisonment** and **physical infirmity** in one convict's case as grounds for suspending the sentences, despite the state's opposition to bail.
- The editorial treats those grounds as reasonable on their face but questions their consistent application. Courts have cited the **gravity of charges** to deny bail even to elderly or severely disabled accused, while **NCRB data** show about 9,028 undertrials had spent over five years in prison in 2024.

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Victim Protection Through Bail Conditions

- **Threat assessment**: In *Arnab Goswami* (2020), the Supreme Court identified risks to complainants and witnesses as relevant to bail decisions.
- **No-contact conditions**: In *Aparna Bhat* (2021), the Supreme Court struck down a bail condition requiring the complainant to tie a rakhi on the accused and directed courts to prevent contact.
- **Proportionate restrictions**: In *Frank Vitus* (2024), the Supreme Court recognised targeted area restrictions to protect victims or witnesses and ruled out continuous tracking.
- **Release notification**: Rule 4(15) of the POCSO Rules, 2020 requires informing the child and their parent, guardian or trusted person of the accused's bail, release or detention status.
- **Witness protection**: The Witness Protection Scheme, 2018 provides police escorts, patrols or temporary relocation based on the assessed threat.
- **Time-bound release**: In January 2025, the Supreme Court granted Asaram medical bail until 31 March and barred him from meeting followers in groups.
- **Bail cancellation**: In *Phireram* (2025), the Supreme Court held that courts must assess cancellation pleas alleging witness intimidation on their merits, even when witness protection is available.