# EDITORIALS - 19TH OCT 2026

## 1. Treacherous waters (GS Paper II Governance)

This editorial '**Treacherous waters**' was published in **The Hindu** on 19th Oct 2026, highlights unsafe **river transport**, inadequate **connectivity,** and preventable **risks** to children in remote communities.

### *Unsafe River Transport*

- Ganga crossings in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar depend on **unregistered boats** with inadequate lighting and lifesaving equipment; overcrowding, untrained or underage operators, and **post-accident enforcement** compound risks.
- On **13 October**, at least 13 children drowned in Bihar's Raghopur when a leaking, dilapidated boat capsized; it departed after sunset despite restrictions, with a young operator and passengers exceeding its **five-person capacity**.
- **Transport scarcity** makes unsafe boats essential for residents, government personnel, teachers, and bank employees, creating **dependence on hazardous crossings**.

### *Connectivity and Regulatory Failures*

- **Sediment deposits**, monsoons, and absent all-weather roads isolate Raghopur; although the Kachchi Dargah-Bidupur bridge's first section opened in **June 2025**, flooded approach roads blocked access.
- A **chaotic regulatory framework**, including Model Rules 2011 under the Bengal Ferries Act 1885 and the Inland Vessels Act 2021, coexists with inadequate **training and inspections**, allowing unsafe practices to proliferate.

### *Children's Safety and Unequal Access*

- The **Bombay High Court** criticised Maharashtra for failing to provide transport to over **200 children** near Chandoli National Park and Sahyadri Tiger Reserve, forcing long walks through wildlife-risk areas.
- Similar transport shortages affect **Hingoli, Palghar, and Nashik**; school reorganisation also compromises **children's safety** when closures disregard safe access to alternative schools.
- Although the Vaishali children were travelling for a memorial feast, their deaths expose **unequal access** to ordinary childhood activities and the need for more sensitive **socio-economic support**.

**BEYOND EDITORIAL**

***Role of Community Participation in Safe River Transport***

- **Local monitoring:** Village committees can flag overcrowding, unsafe boarding points, and missing lifejackets, helping authorities identify violations before accidents occur.

- **Rescue preparedness:** The National Disaster Management Authority's Aapda Mitra pilot trained 6,000 volunteers across 30 flood-prone districts, offering a model for preparing local river-rescue teams.
- **Traditional expertise:** Fishermen's participation in Kerala's 2018 flood rescues illustrates how experienced boat users can support emergency response through knowledge of navigation and water conditions.
- **Participatory planning:** Assam's Inland Water Transport Project adjusted ferry schedules following women users' feedback, demonstrating how consultation can align services with actual travel needs.
- **Public reporting:** Assam's ferry reforms introduced grievance-redress systems; accessible complaint channels can similarly help passengers report unsafe practices and seek corrective action.
- **Inclusive access:** Consultations should include vulnerable passengers; Assam's project incorporated wheelchair-accessible toilets, handrails, and dedicated seating for women into ferry infrastructure.
- **Operator participation:** Assam's voluntary Jibondinga scheme supports safer country-boat operations, illustrating how incentives can involve local operators in upgrading services alongside regulatory enforcement.

## 2. Revamp functioning of Parliament (GS Paper II Polity)

This editorial '**Revamp functioning of Parliament**' was published in **The Hindu** on 19th Oct 2026, highlights the need to **expand** Parliament's working capacity alongside **increased representation** through delimitation.

### *Representation and Institutional Capacity*

- **Parliamentary representation** requires both voter access to MPs and MPs' opportunity to speak; delimitation without adequate **floor time** leaves constituents' concerns unheard.
- The **Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill** and **Delimitation Bill, 2026** propose increasing Lok Sabha's strength from 550 to 850, without corresponding expansion of its working capacity.
- The **Election Commission's 2024 Atlas** records 97.98 crore voters across **543 constituencies**, averaging roughly 18 lakh each; disparities range from Malkajgiri's 37.8 lakh to Lakshadweep's 57,953 voters.

### *Time Constraints and Parliamentary Accountability*

- **Question Hour** permits 20 starred and 230 unstarred questions daily; although each MP may submit 5, selection through a **daily ballot** means expansion to 850 MPs without longer sittings further reduces individual opportunities.
- Question Hour used only **60%** of scheduled time during the 17th Lok Sabha and **1%**, totalling 9 minutes, during the 2026 Monsoon Session; adding MPs cannot overcome these accountability constraints.

- Reduced individual time threatens **Zero Hour**, enabling urgent issues without advance notice, and **Private Member's Business**, allowing MPs outside the Cabinet to introduce legislation.

***Proposed Parliamentary Reforms***

- **Article 85(1)** limits the interval between sessions to 6 months; introduce mandatory minimum working days, adopting the constitutional review commission's recommendation of **120 Lok Sabha sitting days annually**.
- Give **Question Hour** and **Zero Hour** protected, mandatory time allocations that cannot be altered at the Speaker's discretion.

**BEYOND EDITORIAL**

***Strengthening Parliamentary Committees for Effective Legislative Scrutiny***

- **Detailed examination:** The Joint Committee's report on the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 proposed amendments, illustrating committees' capacity to examine legislative provisions beyond floor debates.
- **Expert consultation:** The Standing Committee on Finance consulted experts and stakeholders while examining the Competition (Amendment) Bill, 2022, bringing specialised knowledge into legislative scrutiny.
- **Sustained deliberation:** Department-related standing committees comprise 21 Lok Sabha and 10 Rajya Sabha members, providing smaller forums for detailed examination across both Houses.
- **Budget scrutiny:** Examination of Demands for Grants, such as the Finance Committee's 2022–23 assessment of Finance Ministry departments, enables closer questioning of expenditure priorities.
- **Implementation review:** The parliamentary committee report on the Street Vendors Act, 2014 illustrates how scrutiny can extend beyond passing legislation to examining its implementation.
- **Research capacity:** Dedicated subject specialists and reliable datasets can strengthen members' assessment of complex policies, particularly where technical claims require independent verification.
- **Recommendation follow-up:** The 2024 Action Taken Report on Citizens' Data Security and Privacy illustrates an existing mechanism for examining government responses; systematic follow-up can strengthen accountability.

## 3. In Kolkata tragedy, a difficult reckoning (GS Paper III Disaster Management)

This editorial '**In Kolkata tragedy, a difficult reckoning**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 19th Oct 2026, highlights gaps in **festival crowd management** and the need for preparedness beyond routine safeguards.

***Tragedy and Preparedness Gaps***

- A **crowd surge** at Chorbagan Sarbojanin Durga Puja in north Kolkata killed at least **19 people** and injured at least 25.

- Preliminary accounts cite sudden rain, narrow lanes, inadequate police and volunteers, dim lighting, and a panic-triggering announcement; **causation** requires thorough **investigation**.
- Existing **safety guidelines** prescribed fire-retardant fabrics, firefighting equipment, separate entry-exit gates, and emergency access; preparedness must also address **congestion**, panic, and restricted movement in heritage lanes.

### *Past Lessons and Administrative Response*

- At Deshapriya Park in **2015**, an 88-foot Durga idol attracted overwhelming crowds; **police intervention** halted public access, averting a potential tragedy.
- In **2021**, crowds drawn to Sreebhumi Sporting Club's Burj Khalifa replica similarly required intervention, reinforcing the need for **swift action** when crowd-control arrangements become inadequate.
- Following Chorbagan, authorities made arrests, constituted a **review committee** on crowd management and structural safety, and restricted access to prominent pandals; the Centre announced **compensation** for bereaved families.

## BEYOND EDITORIAL

### *Behavioural Dimensions of Crowd Disasters*

- **Rumour transmission:** Reports linked the 2013 Ratangarh tragedy to rumours of an impending bridge collapse, illustrating why rapid verification and credible announcements matter during crowded gatherings.
- **Route familiarity:** Britain's Health and Safety Executive warns that visitors may persist with familiar routes even when closed, highlighting the need for visible alternatives and active guidance.
- **Group cohesion:** The same regulator identifies people waiting for relatives near entrances and exits as a congestion risk; designated meeting points can help preserve circulation space.
- **Weather-driven movement:** British crowd-safety guidance specifically flags movement towards covered areas during bad weather, supporting advance planning for shelter demand and sudden changes in pedestrian flow.
- **Attraction-driven surges:** Exciting activity can trigger movement towards stages or viewing areas; British guidance recommends anticipating such surges and protecting locations vulnerable to crushing.
- **Communication credibility:** Indian disaster-management guidance advises visitors to learn exit routes and follow instructions; clear announcements from identifiable personnel can make these precautions easier to follow.
- **Behavioural limits:** Excessive density can produce crushing through crowd pressure; guidance therefore emphasises controlled flows and overflow space, since awareness alone cannot ensure safe movement.