

EDITORIALS

22nd sep 2026

1. Unsafe space (GS Paper III Science and Technology)

This editorial 'Unsafe space' was published in **The Hindu** on 22nd Sep 2026, highlights the risks of **space weaponisation** and the need for **multilateral governance**.

Space Weaponisation and Strategic Risks

- The United States' September 14 disclosure of deployed **on-orbit weapons** raises concerns, as its **space-control doctrine** covers offensive and defensive operations despite defensive claims.
- **Counter-space capabilities** pursued by the United States, Russia, China and India risk turning orbit into a battlefield, threatening **satellite-dependent networks** supporting communications, energy and finance.
- Military use of **commercial satellites** may endanger their protections under **international humanitarian law**, which inadequately addresses interconnected, dual-use systems.
- Unclear **hostile-action thresholds** and undisclosed weapon capabilities increase miscalculation risks during satellite encounters, particularly with future **artificial intelligence-enabled autonomy**.

Legal Gaps and Multilateral Governance

- The **Outer Space Treaty**, under **Article IV**, prohibits orbital nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, rather than all weapons; conventional weapons' potential for mass disruption complicates this distinction.
- **Article III** requires compliance with international law, but the **Liability Convention** cannot straightforwardly determine accountability when autonomous, commercially operated dual-use assets initiate unintended defensive strikes.
- Existing **space governance** rules inadequately address contemporary technologies amid declining respect for the **rules-based order**; the United Nations Open-Ended Working Group on preventing an outer-space arms race provides a forum to address the disclosure.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Building Resilience into Space Infrastructure

- **Service redundancy:** Alternative satellites can sustain essential services after failures; following Sentinel-1B's loss, Europe used data from missions including Canada's RADARSAT-2 to support sea-ice monitoring.
- **Cybersecurity safeguards:** Controlled security testing can expose vulnerabilities before attackers exploit them, as demonstrated by the European Space Agency's supervised OPS-SAT ethical-hacking exercise in 2023.

- **Orbital surveillance:** Tracking dangerous approaches enables preventive manoeuvres; the Indian Space Research Organisation performed 22 collision-avoidance manoeuvres in 2022, including one in lunar orbit.
- **Protective design:** Shielding sensitive electronics improves spacecraft resilience against radiation, exemplified by the titanium vault protecting electronic systems aboard the American Juno mission to Jupiter.
- **Rapid deployment:** Responsive launches can help restore lost capabilities; the United States' VICTUS NOX mission launched 27 hours after receiving its launch order in September 2023.
- **Terrestrial backups:** Ground-based navigation can preserve aviation services during satellite outages; the United States retains a minimum network of radio navigation stations for Global Positioning System disruptions.
- **Operational coordination:** Sharing orbital information helps prevent collisions; Indian and American space agencies coordinated before Chandrayaan-2 manoeuvred to avoid a close approach with the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter in 2021.

2. A Malacca-Singapore model for resolving Hormuz (GS Paper II International Relations)

This editorial 'A Malacca-Singapore model for resolving Hormuz' was published in **The Hindu** on 22nd Sep 2026, highlights the relevance and limitations of the Malacca-Singapore **cooperative framework** for resolving the Hormuz **impasse**.

Territorial Sovereignty and Navigation Rights

- In **1971**, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore challenged the Straits' treatment as international waters; Indonesia's **1957 declaration** had already claimed waters surrounding and connecting its islands.
- Indonesian and Malaysian claims to **12-nautical-mile territorial seas** left no intervening high-seas corridor at narrow points; prevailing **innocent passage** rules allowed security-related suspension and excluded submerged submarines.
- The proposed **trilateral coordinating body** reflected regional cooperation, although trade-dependent **Singapore** resisted declaring the Straits non-international while supporting navigational safety.
- **Japan** supported cooperation with coastal states through the Malacca Strait Council, while the **United States and Soviet Union** favoured international status to preserve uninterrupted transit.
- The United Kingdom's **transit passage** proposal under the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea** allowed continuous, expeditious passage, including warships; Indonesia accepted with reservations as its archipelagic security concerns received separate recognition.

The Cooperative Mechanism

- The **2007 Cooperative Mechanism** enabled coastal states, user states and industry to support navigation aids, hydrographic surveys and safety projects, building on a **traffic separation scheme**.
- The **Aids to Navigation Fund** receives voluntary contributions from users, industry and non-profit organisations; coastal states and contributors administer it through a **rotating committee**, without tolls or transit fees.

Application to the Hormuz Impasse

- **Hormuz** presents a similar territorial geography because Iranian and Omani waters meet; Iran, which has not ratified the Convention, enacted a **1993 law** requiring authorisation for foreign warship passage.
- Existing **regional cooperation** offers an opening: the United Arab Emirates has been a major Iranian trading partner, while **Qatar** supports Iran-Oman talks and has cited the Malacca-Singapore model.
- The analogy has limits: **navigational safety** and environmental protection drove the Malacca-Singapore settlement, whereas **Iran's security** dominates Hormuz; the earlier settlement also benefited from wider convention negotiations.
- **Regional consensus** alone may prove insufficient: Iran and Oman have apparently agreed on a reopening framework, but the Strait remains closed and **United States acceptance** is absent.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

India's Vulnerability to Maritime Chokepoints

- **Energy exposure:** Concentrated supply routes increase vulnerability; the Petroleum Ministry stated in March 2026 that approximately 45% of India's crude imports traversed Hormuz before the conflict.
- **Freight escalation:** Maritime insecurity raises shipping costs and delays deliveries; India convened an inter-ministerial meeting in September 2024 to address freight increases and container problems associated with the Red Sea crisis.
- **Inflation transmission:** Oil-price shocks can spread into domestic prices; a Reserve Bank of India model estimated that a 10% oil-price increase could raise inflation by 30 basis points at its peak.
- **Export vulnerability:** Higher shipping costs can weaken overseas sales; CRISIL reported in January 2024 that Red Sea disruptions curbed basmati exports, diverting some stocks into India's domestic market.
- **Agricultural exposure:** Fertiliser supply chains also depend on secure passages; four India-bound ships carrying urea, di-ammonium phosphate and sulphur crossed Hormuz in June 2026 to supplement agricultural stocks.
- **Diaspora risks:** Conflicts around maritime corridors can necessitate civilian evacuations; Operation Raahat brought more than 4,700 Indians home from war-torn Yemen in 2015.

- **Security commitments:** Protecting maritime commerce requires sustained naval deployment, illustrated by Operation Sankalp, launched in June 2019 to safeguard Indian-flagged vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz.

3. For student well-being, rethink the campus, not just the student (GS Paper I Society)

This editorial 'For student well-being, rethink the campus, not just the student' was published in **The Indian Express** on 22nd Sep 2026, highlights the need to address institutional conditions shaping **student distress** alongside professional **mental health care**.

Institutional Roots of Student Distress

- Student deaths at the **Indian Institutes of Technology, Delhi and Bombay**, prompted inquiries, renewing scrutiny of institutional responsibility for **student well-being** beyond teaching and evaluation.
- Reliance on **counselling** locates distress within individuals, overlooking how **institutional practices**, including hierarchies, evaluation, hostel conditions and grievance procedures, shape campus experiences.
- **Professional care** remains essential, but cannot remove **structural pressures** such as academic overload, discrimination, inadequate infrastructure, career anxiety and unresponsive administration.
- The **World Health Organization** emphasises social determinants of mental health; India's **National Task Force on Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention**, in its 2026 interim report, links well-being to academic pressure, discrimination, financial hardship and institutional culture.
- Personal **resilience** has limits: time management cannot resolve impossible workloads, nor can mindfulness or positive thinking correct opaque grading and compromised **grievance redressal**.
- **Paternalistic authority** demands adult responsibility while denying student autonomy; public humiliation, arbitrary penalties, hostile communication and retaliatory evaluation undermine **dignity** and make education distressing.

Reforming Campus Governance

- **Classroom practices** must support questioning, mistakes, disagreement and criticism; students should be able to protest or report unfair treatment without **retaliation**.
- Recognise students as **rights-bearing adults** with meaningful decision-making powers; ensure student and alumni **board representation** rather than ornamental participation.
- Provide **role-specific training** to faculty and student affairs teams on recognising distress, respecting dissent, protecting confidentiality, addressing bias and following **crisis protocols**.
- Begin stressful disciplinary encounters with **humane communication**, explain available support and ensure follow-up; conduct an annual **student well-being audit** to examine institutional practices.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Role of Families in Supporting Student Well-being

- **Parental awareness:** Families need guidance to recognise emotional difficulties; the Education Ministry's Manodarpan initiative provides parental advisories, support materials and a directory of school and university counsellors.
- **Career autonomy:** Families can support informed choices using resources such as the Education Ministry's 500 Career Cards, released in 2024 to help students explore varied occupational pathways.
- **Avoiding comparisons:** Recognising individual strengths offers an alternative to competitive parenting; Pariksha Pe Charcha 2025 explicitly urged parents to avoid comparisons and support their children's interests.
- **Open communication:** Non-judgmental listening helps students discuss difficult feelings; the United Nations Children's Fund recommends open-ended questions, emotional validation and avoiding forced conversations in its parenting guidance.
- **Support after results:** Families can seek assistance when examination outcomes cause distress; the Central Board of Secondary Education offered free post-result counselling for students and parents in May 2025.
- **Professional assistance:** Families can facilitate access to care through services such as Tele Mental Health Assistance and Networking Across States, which provides free, round-the-clock support through 14416.
- **Everyday connection:** Emotional support should extend beyond academic discussions; the United Nations Children's Fund's India guidance recommends shared activities, one-to-one time and regular everyday conversations with parents.