EDITORIALS - 22ND OCT 2026

1. PEACE FOR PROGRESS (GS PAPER III SECURITY)

This editorial '**Peace for progress**' was published in **The Hindu** on 22nd Oct 2026, highlights the need to **address terrorism collectively** and ensure stable security for regional economic cooperation.

Terrorism and Regional Cooperation

- At the **SCO** meeting in Tajikistan, Rajnath Singh raised Pakistan-linked cross-border terrorism, rejecting selective approaches; Ishaq Dar's presence underscored India's **diplomatic challenge** amid divergent member priorities.
- India views **terrorism** as inseparable from regional peace, integration and development, demanding dismantling of its **ecosystem** rather than treating attacks as isolated security incidents.
- India withheld endorsement of the **2025 Qingdao joint statement** because it omitted Pakistan-sponsored terrorism and the Pahalgam attack while mentioning Balochistan militancy, undermining **SCO credibility**.

Security as an Economic Prerequisite

- Cooperation need not await resolution of every dispute, but **economic integration** requires **security stability**: predictable borders, investor confidence in the rule of law and disruption-free transport.
- The **International North-South Transport Corridor** and **Chabahar Port** can connect Central Asia with wider markets; lasting benefits require sovereignty, territorial integrity and secure movement of goods, capital and people.

From Commitment to Action

- SCO commitments require **operational cooperation** through intelligence-sharing, action against **terror financing**, disruption of recruitment networks and denial of terrorist safe havens.
- India should retain its **principled opposition** to terrorism while pursuing a more **unified regional approach**, preventing political disagreements from obstructing collective action.

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Emerging Technological Drivers of Terrorism

- **Drone-enabled attacks:** The 2021 drone attack on Jammu's Air Force Station demonstrated how unmanned systems can threaten military installations, requiring protection beyond conventional perimeter security.

- **Cryptocurrency financing:** US authorities disrupted cryptocurrency fundraising linked to al-Qaeda and other terrorist organisations in 2020, illustrating the need for transaction tracing and cross-border financial intelligence.
- **Messaging-platform exploitation:** Europol's November 2019 operation disrupted Islamic State accounts and channels on Telegram, demonstrating the importance of cooperation between investigators and communication platforms.
- **AI-enabled propaganda:** The UN Office of Counter-Terrorism identifies AI-generated content, deepfakes and algorithmic amplification as emerging extremist tools that increase harmful narratives' speed, scale and reach.
- **Cyber-enabled targeting:** Hacker Ardit Ferizi supplied Islamic State with stolen information concerning approximately 1,300 US military and government personnel in 2015, linking data theft with terrorist targeting.
- **Remote radicalisation:** Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula launched its English-language online magazine *Inspire* in 2010, illustrating how digital publications extend extremist outreach beyond geographical recruitment networks.
- **International adaptation:** The 2022 Delhi Declaration addressed terrorist exploitation of drones, information technologies and new payment systems, providing a framework for coordinated responses to evolving technological threats.

2. BITTER AND SWEET (GS PAPER II GOVERNANCE)

This editorial '**Bitter and sweet**' was published in **The Hindu** on 22nd Oct 2026, highlights the need to restrict all **added sugars** in **infant foods** through 24 months and strengthen food labelling.

Regulatory Gaps in Infant Foods

- The **Food Safety and Standards Regulations 2020** permit sucrose and fructose totalling up to **20% of carbohydrates** in foods for infants aged 0–6 months; the FSSAI proposes removing this allowance.
- **WHO** recommends exclusive breastfeeding for six months, followed by adequate complementary foods without **added sugars until 24 months**; limiting restrictions to six months accommodates manufacturers rather than fully protecting children.
- Manufacturers cite **Codex Alimentarius** compliance, while experts describe added-sugar infant foods as **nutritional dumping**; sugar provides cheap bulk, improves palatability and encourages repeat purchases.
- Restrictions must assess **ingredients** and the finished food's **nutritional profile** to prevent substitution with other sweeteners; WHO's 2022 baby-food model also flags sweet purées and sugars released during fruit processing.

Dietary Preferences and Wider Reform

- Research links sweetened water during infancy to later **sweet preferences**, while formula flavours influence subsequent food choices, including neutral or bitter tastes; early **flavour diversity** therefore matters for individual and public health.

- The **Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles, and Infant Foods Act 1992** restricts aggressive marketing of infant foods for children up to two years; comprehensive composition standards would complement these **marketing restrictions**.
- The **ICMR–National Institute of Nutrition's 2024 guidelines** advise avoiding added sugars below two years; proposed curbs on infant foods and unhealthy foods around schools must accompany mandatory, interpretative **front-of-pack labelling** for all foods.

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Challenges in Enforcing Infant Food Standards

- **Testing requirements:** Government data recorded 45 non-conforming samples among 522 infant-food samples analysed in 2024–25, including five unsafe samples, reinforcing the need for systematic laboratory surveillance.
- **Inspection coverage:** FSSAI initiated an infant-product enforcement drive in April 2024, illustrating the need to translate public concerns into inspections and sampling across manufacturers.
- **Inter-agency coordination:** The Central Consumer Protection Authority referred the 2024 allegations concerning Nestlé baby-food sugar content to FSSAI, illustrating why consumer protection concerns require coordinated technical investigation.
- **Online misclassification:** FSSAI's April 2024 direction to remove inappropriate "health drink" categorisation from e-commerce platforms illustrates how digital merchandising can mislead consumers beyond the product label.
- **Labelling scrutiny:** In 2024–25, 22 infant-food samples fell within the labelling-defects, misleading or miscellaneous category, underscoring that enforcement must examine presentation alongside nutritional composition.
- **Recall preparedness:** Abbott's 2022 US infant-formula recall during a contamination investigation illustrates the importance of batch traceability, prompt corrective action and contingency planning for essential supplies.
- **Consumer participation:** FSSAI's Food Safety Connect mechanism accepts complaints about misleading packaged-food claims, enabling parents to supplement official surveillance with product photographs and seller information.

3. UNLOCKING AGRI-POTENTIAL OF FRA LANDS (GS PAPER III ECONOMY)

This editorial '**Unlocking agri-potential of FRA lands**' was published in **The Hindu** on 22nd Oct 2026, highlights the potential of sustainable **pulse and oilseed cultivation** on recognised forest lands to strengthen tribal **livelihoods** and reduce **import** dependence.

From Land Rights to Livelihood Security

- The **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006** strengthened tribal and forest-dwelling communities' land rights; translating recognition into **livelihood security** requires sustainable cultivation, soil–water management, institutional support and market access.

- **Pulses and oilseeds**, suited to rain-fed marginal lands, can raise productivity and incomes, support climate-resilient agriculture, strengthen domestic supplies and reduce **import dependence**.

Regional Agricultural Potential

- Tribal districts across **33 States and Union Territories** differ in ecology, settlements, resources and agricultural potential; **FAO soil-map analysis** identifies suitability for soybean, groundnut, sunflower, mustard, chickpea and other pulses.
- **Cropping diversity** supports locally suitable diversification: paddy and maize dominate Kharif; wheat, gram, mustard, lentil and other pulses feature in Rabi, alongside regional millets, soybean, cotton, groundnut, sesame, spices and horticulture reflecting **agro-ecological conditions**.
- Among **244 tribal districts**, 60 have major oilseed potential, 31 strong pulse potential and 23 favourable conditions for both; this spatial alignment supports **targeted interventions** benefiting incomes, nutrition and livelihood resilience.

Production and Market Support

- Develop **region-specific production clusters** with timely, adequate certified seeds, improved varieties, irrigation, watershed and soil-moisture management, scientific crop management and stronger **agricultural extension**.
- Local drying, storage, grading and primary processing can reduce **post-harvest losses**; stronger producer organisations, cooperatives, self-help groups and community institutions can enable aggregation, **value addition** and market access.
- **Programme convergence** can broaden institutional support through Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana, National Food Security and Nutrition Mission, National Mission on Edible Oils, Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan and **Van Dhan Yojana**.
- **GIS-based crop planning**, institutional credit, crop insurance and **assured procurement** can strengthen the marketing ecosystem; integration with FRA land development also offers scope for convergence where tribal and aspirational districts overlap.

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Safeguards Against Excessive Commercialisation of FRA Lands

- **Biodiversity protection:** Odisha Millets Mission documented conservation of 163 millet landraces, offering a model for promoting cultivation without replacing locally adapted varieties with a narrow commercial crop base.
- **Subsistence security:** Baiga farmers' Bewar mixed-cropping systems combine millets, maize and legumes, illustrating why commercial diversification should retain crops supporting household food needs and dietary diversity.
- **Input autonomy:** Andhra Pradesh's Community-Managed Natural Farming promotes locally prepared inputs and diversified cultivation, offering lessons for reducing dependence on purchased inputs when developing FRA lands.

- **Corporate bargaining risks:** PepsiCo's subsequently withdrawn 2019 lawsuits against Gujarat potato farmers illustrate potential conflicts over proprietary varieties, reinforcing the need for clear rights and accessible dispute resolution.
- **Community decision-making:** The Supreme Court's 2013 Niyamgiri judgment entrusted Gram Sabhas with determining affected tribal religious rights, providing a relevant precedent for respecting community authority over development choices.
- **Community-controlled commerce:** Mendha-Lekha's recognition of community forest rights and access to bamboo transit passbooks illustrate how commercial activity can retain local control over forest resources.
- **Women's participation:** Women's sanghams supported by the Deccan Development Society in Telangana practise biodiverse rain-fed farming and community-led marketing, offering a model for inclusive commercialisation.