EDITORIALS - 24TH NOV 2026

1. Higher education needs to centre merit (GS Paper II Governance)

This editorial '**Higher education needs to centre merit**' was published in **The Hindu** on 24th Nov 2026, highlights the need for **academic merit** and **institutional safeguards** in the governance of **IITs and IIMs**.

Governance Risks and the Shift in IIM Autonomy

- **Commercialisation**, as Derek Bok warned, can erode academic excellence, while expansion of IIT and IIM courses, faculty and centres can raise short-term revenue but magnify operational and reputational risks under **weak governance**.
- The **Vyapam and NEET-UG scandals** exposed the limits of **technological safeguards** when officials controlling examination systems can circumvent them.
- **U.S. and Chinese universities** apply **merit-based selection** across student admissions, faculty and researcher recruitment, and research grant allocation.
- The **IIM Act, 2017** granted IIMs national importance status and empowered boards to appoint directors, while the **IIM (Amendment) Act, 2023** made the President their Visitor and strengthened central control over board nominations, chairperson selection and director appointments.

Safeguards for Merit and Institutional Autonomy

- IIT and IIM boards should combine **academic standing** with **intellectual diversity**, drawing expertise from academia, industry, administration and finance.
- Governments should heed **board recommendations** and prioritise **teaching experience** in director appointments, as many IIT and IIM directors are chosen solely as administrators, while deans at Harvard, Wharton and Stanford hold tenured professorships.
- **Merit-based faculty recruitment** protects academic quality, research and reputation, as reflected in the **Indian School of Business's** strong rankings.
- **Board-appointed vigilance officers** should report to boards on irregularities involving leadership or senior faculty appointments, with **IIM Rohtak's 2019 High Court challenge** over its director's credentials and conduct illustrating the need for oversight.
- **Boards** should exercise oversight, directors should manage daily operations, and **Academic Councils** should control curricula, academic standards and academic selection.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Barriers to Equal Opportunity in Higher Education

- **Unequal school preparation**: Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas expand school opportunities for rural students, who accounted for 90% of their enrolment in 2024, according to the Ministry of Education.

- **Coaching costs**: The Ministry of Education and IIT Kanpur's SATHEE platform offers free JEE classes and mock tests, giving aspirants an alternative to paid coaching.
- **Language barriers**: JEE Main offered 13 languages in 2025, while JEE Advanced 2026 used only English and Hindi, narrowing language options at the final examination stage.
- **Digital divide**: IIT Bombay supported 1,100 students through a laptop and broadband initiative for online classes, illustrating how device and connectivity costs can restrict participation even after admission.
- **Cost of attendance**: IIT Bombay's alumni financial aid programme covers hostel and mess charges alongside tuition, recognising that living costs can strain household budgets after a student secures admission.
- **Academic transition**: Selected IITs offer eligible SC, ST and PwD candidates one-year preparatory courses against vacant reserved seats to help them transition to undergraduate coursework.
- **Access to mentoring**: IIT Delhi's Alumni–Student Mentorship Programme offers personalised guidance from the first year, widening access to advice for students who lack professional networks.

2. There is a disconnect between climate diplomacy and lived reality (GS Paper III Environment)

This editorial '**There is a disconnect between climate diplomacy and lived reality**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 24th Nov 2026, highlights the gap between **global climate negotiations** and the needs of **vulnerable communities**.

Climate Justice and the Antalya Deadlock

- The **1992 UNFCCC** enshrined **Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)** to allocate climate action by historical emissions and response capacity, yet those least responsible and least able to adapt still bear the heaviest costs.
- At **COP31 in Antalya**, petrostates secured the omission of fossil fuels and the **COP28 transition-away commitment** from the last draft, despite a formal EU objection and opposition from Germany and others.
- The same draft dropped the proposed **$120 billion annual adaptation finance target** for 2035 and called for at least **tripling funding** by then, specifying neither a baseline nor a firm commitment.

Role and Limits of Multilateral Climate Diplomacy

- The **COP process** established the **Paris Agreement** temperature goals, mechanisms for national commitments and transparency, and recognition of loss and damage.
- **Consensus** gives vulnerable states an equal sovereign voice alongside major emitters and helps bring attention to small island nations and Sundarbans communities, but geopolitical rivalry and **fossil fuel interests** repeatedly dilute decisions.

Climate Finance and Vulnerable Economies

- Developing countries need **climate finance** to reduce poverty while protecting communities from climate impacts, but **economic uncertainty**, competing fiscal priorities and geopolitical tensions make funding harder to secure.
- After the **August floods**, Nepal received only a fraction of the **loss and damage finance** it needed to rebuild, illustrating how inadequate funding leaves vulnerable countries to bear recovery costs.
- **Private investment** can support clean energy and infrastructure, while uncertain returns in adaptation and recovery reinforce developed countries' public finance obligations and the case for **grants and concessional finance** to limit debt burdens.

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Who Gets to Set Local Adaptation Priorities?

- **Local risk assessment**: After the 2018 floods, Kerala's local governments assessed past disasters, exposed areas and vulnerable communities to identify where preventive action was needed.
- **Women's participation**: The Mahila Housing Trust helps women in low-income settlements choose feasible cool-roof options and monitor indoor conditions, giving residents a role in designing heat responses.
- **Panchayat-led planning**: Kerala's Moodadi Gram Panchayat prepared a heat action plan in 2025, demonstrating how village governments can set priorities for extreme-heat preparedness.
- **Local adaptation finance**: Bangladesh's LoGIC programme supported 50 locally led adaptation initiatives in 2025, including clean-water access and climate-smart irrigation in vulnerable subdistricts.
- **Community management**: Odisha's village-level committees manage multipurpose cyclone shelters, giving communities responsibility for maintaining facilities they depend on during emergencies.
- **Technical support**: The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority issued guidelines for local heat action plans in 2025, giving local bodies a framework for addressing heat risks.
- **Outcome tracking**: Kerala's Disaster and Climate Action Tracking tool helps local governments assess the effects of their interventions and use the findings to refine priorities.

3. In Bangladesh, new violence, old failings (GS Paper II International Relations)

This editorial '**In Bangladesh, new violence, old failings**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 24th Nov 2026, highlights how renewed violence exposes Bangladesh's recurring **democratic failings** and risks disrupting **cooperation with India**.

Renewed Political Violence

- The calm following **Tarique Rahman's February swearing-in** ended with reported attacks on police stations, BNP workers and Muhammad Yunus's home, leaving **at least four people dead** and around 30 Awami League-linked properties torched in apparent retaliation.

- **Sheikh Hasina's announced December return** appears to have triggered the unrest, with the **banned Awami League** calling nationwide protests over the refusal to issue her a passport and national identity card.

Recurring Political Failings

- **Opposition participation** is a democratic right, and the **continued Awami League ban** repeats Hasina's counterproductive exclusion of political rivals.
- Portraying **political opponents** as agents of foreign powers shuts down **domestic political dialogue**.
- Abrupt shifts in **state orientation** after changes of government undermine **stable external relations** and durable partnerships.

India–Bangladesh Relations

- Under Rahman, **India–Bangladesh ties** appeared to advance on visas, energy and **river-water sharing**, giving both countries a stake in sustaining cooperation.

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India's Stakes in Bangladesh's Political Stability

- **Border coordination**: During Bangladesh's August 2024 unrest, India formed a BSF-led committee to monitor the border and keep communication open with Bangladeshi authorities.
- **Trade disruption**: Bangladesh's July 2024 protests stalled cargo movement at Petrapole and other land ports, exposing exporters' dependence on uninterrupted customs operations.
- **Northeast connectivity**: The agreement allowing Indian cargo to use Chattogram and Mongla ports facilitates transit between the Northeast and the rest of India, making reliable access a strategic interest.
- **Border livelihoods**: The Kalaichar–Baliamari border haat gives small vendors an outlet for local produce and cottage-industry goods, making regular market access important to border communities.
- **Consular preparedness**: During the July 2024 protests, students studying in Bangladesh returned through Akhaura and Srimantapur, demonstrating the importance of functioning land crossings during a crisis.
- **Predictable transit rules**: India's withdrawal of a transshipment facility in April 2025 showed how customs decisions can alter logistics plans for Bangladeshi exporters using Indian ports and airports.
- **Diplomatic continuity**: India held Foreign Office Consultations in Dhaka in December 2024 under Bangladesh's interim government, keeping an official channel open after the change in leadership.