EDITORIALS - 25TH NOV 2026

1. Who pays for climate change is a federal question (GS Paper III Environment)

This editorial '**Who pays for climate change is a federal question**' was published in **The Hindu** on 25th Nov 2026, highlights the **mismatch** between the Union's control over **climate policy** and the **costs States** bear after climate disasters.

Climate Liability and State-Level Costs

- Inspired by the **1998 Master Settlement Agreement** committing tobacco firms to at least $206 billion over 25 years, Boulder sued oil and gas firms in 2018 under **State law** to recover wildfire, flood and heat costs.
- The Colorado Supreme Court allowed Boulder's suit in May 2025, while the **U.S. Supreme Court** heard arguments over whether federal law, including the **Clean Air Act**, bars State-law claims for harm from global emissions.
- The **2024 Wayanad landslides** left 298 dead and 32 missing. The Union took nearly five months to classify the event as a disaster of severe nature and provided a **₹529.50 crore interest-free loan** repayable over 50 years.
- Against ₹9,042 crore in estimated losses from the **2023 Himachal Pradesh floods**, the Union released ₹633.73 crore for immediate relief and sanctioned ₹2,006.40 crore for reconstruction nearly two years later. After the **2025 Punjab floods**, it announced ₹1,600 crore against a ₹20,000 crore request.

Union Control and Judicial Responses

- **Article 253** lets Parliament legislate even on State List subjects to implement international agreements. The Air Act, 1981 and Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 followed the **1972 Stockholm Conference**, illustrating how international obligations can centralise climate policy.
- With disaster management unlisted in the Seventh Schedule, Parliament drew on the **Concurrent List** to enact the **Disaster Management Act, 2005**, while States have limited input into environmental policymaking.
- **Article 270(1)** excludes cesses from the divisible tax pool, so the Union retained all **Clean Environment Cess** revenue from coal even after the levy rose to ₹400 per tonne in 2016.
- In *M.K. Ranjitsinh* (2024), the Supreme Court recognised a **right against adverse climate effects** under **Articles 14 and 21**, despite the absence of a dedicated climate statute.
- *M.C. Mehta* (1987) established absolute liability, *Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum* (1996) affirmed **polluter pays**, and the **NGT Act, 2010** enabled compensation, yet polluters rarely pay for environmental harm.

- In September 2026, the **Sikkim High Court** initiated a suo motu climate justice PIL and sought risk assessments from State departments and all six districts to advance **anticipatory, participatory climate governance**.

Sharing Authority and Costs

- The **Finance Commission** could use climate vulnerability as a devolution criterion, while States should receive **time-bound relief grants** and a share of fossil-fuel levies.

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Financing Climate Risk Before Disasters Strike

- **Contingency reserves**: The Fifteenth Finance Commission earmarked funding for response, recovery and preparedness within disaster response funds, giving States a budget before emergencies arise.
- **Pre-arranged credit**: The Philippines secured a $500 million World Bank disaster credit line in 2011, illustrating how governments can arrange emergency financing before a crisis.
- **Pooled insurance**: The Caribbean risk pool CCRIF announced payouts exceeding $44 million to Grenada after Hurricane Beryl in 2024, showing how small economies can jointly finance disaster protection.
- **Parametric insurance**: Nagaland's disaster insurance uses weather-station data and pre-agreed rainfall thresholds to trigger payouts without waiting for detailed damage assessments.
- **Public asset insurance**: Indonesia launched a national programme in 2019 to insure government buildings, helping fund repairs and maintain public services after disasters.
- **Premium support**: The Pacific Resilience Project helped finance Tonga's catastrophe insurance premiums, showing how external support can make coverage affordable for vulnerable governments.
- **Risk reduction spending**: Odisha installed alert towers at 122 coastal locations to disseminate cyclone and tsunami warnings, illustrating how upfront investment can reduce disaster losses.

2. Beyond generosity (GS Paper II International Relations)

This editorial '**Beyond generosity**' was published in **The Hindu** on 25th Nov 2026, highlights why India must address **Nepal's grievances** alongside extending development **assistance** to rebuild bilateral ties.

Bilateral Reset and Development Cooperation

- Balendra Shah's **first state visit** to India, eight months after his Gen Z movement came to power, offered a reset after strained ties under **K.P. Sharma Oli**, who visited Beijing without receiving a Delhi invitation.

- Shah's boundary remarks and refusal to confirm talks with **Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri** led to the cancellation of his May visit, but India's **August flood relief** helped rebuild ties and establish rapport between Shah and Modi.
- India announced a **₹15,000 crore Development Cooperation Package** for reconstruction and long-term development and offered landlocked Nepal **port access** in Gujarat and Odisha, a significant step after the 2015 trade blockade.
- The **joint statement** set out concrete cooperation through bridges, roads, rail services, energy and fuel lines, an integrated check post and an agreement on the **third offshore IIT campus**.

Unresolved Bilateral Issues

- The **boundary dispute** and Nepal's pending request for **overflight access** for two debt-ridden airports were covered only by a general commitment to resolve outstanding issues through dialogue.
- Both sides agreed to review bilateral treaties, but India's dismissal of the **Eminent Persons Group report** could strain ties, given Nepal's interest in updating the **1950 Friendship Treaty**.

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India–Nepal Ties Through the Eyes of Border Communities

- **Small-trader livelihoods**: Traders in Nepal's Darchula padlocked a cross-border bridge in 2024 after a customs enforcement dispute, showing how border procedures can directly affect local livelihoods.
- **Migrant worker protection**: An International Organization for Migration study identified gaps in legal and social protection for Nepali migrants in India, strengthening the case for accessible worker grievance channels.
- **Everyday mobility**: A two-hour closure of the Darchula footbridge in June 2025 cut off a key crossing without prior notice to Nepal, showing why residents need predictable access.
- **Cross-border flood alerts**: Communities in Nepal's Mahottari district and Bihar's Sitamarhi district jointly implemented an early-warning system on the Ratu River, giving downstream residents more time to prepare.
- **Last-mile connectivity**: The 2022 agreement for a motorable bridge across the Mahakali River offers a way to improve road access for closely linked communities in Uttarakhand and Nepal's Sudurpaschim province.
- **Targeted border policing**: India's Sashastra Seema Bal and Nepal's Armed Police Force agreed in 2026 to step up joint action against trafficking and smuggling, providing a basis for risk-based checks.
- **District-level coordination**: A 2025 border district meeting in Birgunj discussed Sirsia River pollution and disaster assistance, showing how local officials can address shared problems directly.

3. Revisiting monthly frequency of PLFS (GS Paper III Economy)

This editorial '**Revisiting monthly frequency of PLFS**' was published in **The Hindu** on 25th Nov 2026, highlights the **limited** value of **monthly labour-market estimates** when most changes are statistically indistinguishable.

PLFS Design and Coverage

- **MoSPI** launched the Periodic Labour Force Survey in 2017–18 to provide annual rural and urban estimates using one-year and one-week reference periods, and quarterly urban estimates for 22 major States and India under **Current Weekly Status (CWS)**.
- The **January 2025 redesign** introduced national monthly estimates of the labour force participation rate, worker population ratio and unemployment rate under CWS, while extending **quarterly coverage** to rural areas.
- Under the redesign, **first-visit households** rose from about 1 lakh to 2.7 lakh and sample locations from about 12,700 to 22,594. The **monthly sample** covers about 49,000 rural and 40,000 urban households.

Statistical Value of Monthly Estimates

- For people aged 15 and above across rural and urban India, the January–October 2026 analysis found **no significant month-to-month change** in the unemployment rate across nine comparisons, while the **worker population ratio** changed significantly only in May and July.
- Published **unemployment rates** rose from 5.2% in April to 5.5% in May 2026, but overlapping **95% confidence intervals** of 5.0–5.4% and 5.3–5.7%, respectively, left open the possibility of an actual decline.
- Reliably detecting monthly changes would require a **sampling redesign** and a **larger sample**, increasing survey costs despite the limited variation detected under the expanded design.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

What Would India Lose by Ending Monthly PLFS Releases?

- **Early trend detection**: Estimated unemployment fell from 5.6% in June 2025 to 5.2% in July and 5.1% in August, a sequence that a quarterly average would obscure.
- **Seasonal visibility**: MoSPI linked the June 2025 dip in employment and participation partly to agricultural seasonality and intense heat, illustrating how monthly releases help pinpoint short-term pressures.
- **Rapid shock detection**: U.S. monthly data showed unemployment jumping from 3.5% in February 2020 to 14.8% in April, illustrating the value of frequent estimates during abrupt disruptions.
- **Recovery tracking**: India's estimated rural female labour force participation rose from 36.6% in June 2026 to 38.8% in July and 39.4% in August, showing when the rebound began.

- **Payroll cross-check**: EPFO reported a net addition of 16.10 lakh members in February 2025, illustrating why payroll figures need a broader household-survey benchmark that also captures informal work.
- **Participation context**: In June 2025, MoSPI reported that some rural women who had worked as unpaid helpers shifted to domestic duties, showing why unemployment figures need to be read alongside participation.
- **Same-month comparisons**: Rural female participation was estimated at 39.5% in October 2026 against 38.4% in October 2025, illustrating how monthly releases allow year-on-year comparisons at the same point in the seasonal cycle.