

EDITORIALS – 25TH SEP 2026

1. The murky world of political party finance (GS Paper II Polity and Governance)

This editorial 'The murky world of political party finance' was published in The Hindu on 25th Sep 2026, highlights opaque political funding and weak scrutiny of party finances.

Legal status and regulatory gaps

- Political parties exist as Article 19 associations with no defined legal form, yet receive income-tax exemptions despite limited financial scrutiny.
- A BBC investigation found extraordinary donations to six registered unrecognised political parties (RUPPs); an ADR report found their declared income rose 223% in 2022–23, while only 739 of 2,764 filed financial records.
- The ECI delisted 334 RUPPs in 2025, but delisting is not deregistration: Section 29B of the RPA still permits them to receive contributions; their tax treatment warrants investigation.
- The Election Symbols Order permits withdrawal of a recognised party's recognition for violating lawful directions, but the ECI has generally been reluctant to use this power.
- Political parties resisted a 2013 CIC order bringing them under the Right to Information Act; submitted accounts also face little substantive scrutiny.

Scale and sources of political finance

- Twenty-two parties had ₹18,742.31 crore available for the 2024 election and retained ₹14,848.46 crore afterwards, despite reporting ₹3,861.57 crore in campaign expenditure.
- Declared donations rose from ₹714 crore in 2015–16 to ₹7,203 crore in 2023–24; donation exemptions cost the exchequer ₹11,813 crore over the preceding decade.
- Only 41.76% of ₹28,287 crore in donations over nine years was claimed as tax-exempt, raising questions about the remaining donations and donor incentives.

- Electoral bonds were struck down in 2024, but disclosed donations left questions unanswered; most RUPPs were ineligible for bonds under the scheme's 1% vote threshold.

Accountability measures proposed

- The Supreme Court should order a monitored probe into electoral bonds and large donations to politically inactive RUPPs.
- Using its Article 324 authority, the ECI should require CAG-audited party accounts, consider party expenditure limits, restrict donation tax exemptions to those limits, and standardise financial disclosures through a digital portal.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Should India Consider Public Funding of Elections?

- Reducing donor dependence: Public support could lessen reliance on large private donors; the Indrajit Gupta Committee (1998) proposed partial state funding of elections.
- Support in kind: Free meeting rooms, postage and printing could lower campaign costs without transferring unrestricted cash to political parties.
- Broadcast access: The Law Commission's 255th Report cited free broadcast time as another way to help parties reach voters without increasing their cash holdings.
- Fiscal limits: The Law Commission found complete public funding and grants matching private donations infeasible given India's election costs and developmental needs.
- Unequal eligibility: Allocating funds by past votes or seats could favour established parties, while independent candidates may receive no comparable support.
- Risk of extra spending: If parties continue to collect private donations, public money could add to campaign resources rather than replace them.
- Necessary safeguards: The Law Commission recommended audits, financial disclosure and internal party democracy before expanding state funding, so public money can be tracked and fairly used.

2. A chance to retreat (GS Paper II International Relations)

This editorial 'A chance to retreat' was published in The Hindu on 25th Sep 2026, highlights how the Greenland agreement lets Donald Trump withdraw his acquisition threat while securing a lasting U.S. strategic presence.

From territorial threat to security agreement

- After returning to office in January 2025, Trump threatened to acquire Greenland, angering Denmark and other European allies; Denmark maintained its sovereignty while offering expanded U.S. military access.
- The 22 September agreement retreats from Trump's acquisition demand but allows Washington to expand facilities at Narsarsuaq and Mestersvig, alongside its existing presence at Pituffik Space Base.
- The 1951 U.S.–Denmark agreement already granted broad basing rights. The U.S. once had over 30 installations in Greenland, most of which closed after the Cold War; about 150 troops remain at Pituffik.

Strategic implications

- Melting ice is opening previously inaccessible parts of the Arctic, increasing Greenland's value as the U.S. seeks to consolidate its position amid concerns about Chinese and Russian activity.
- The deal provides continued U.S. military access even if Greenland becomes independent, while barring non-NATO countries from establishing facilities or investing in sensitive areas, particularly rare earths.
- Denmark had already blocked Chinese investment in Greenland; the agreement effectively formalises that restriction while leaving Greenland a self-governing territory within Denmark.

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Greenlandic Self-Determination

- Popular mandate: In Greenland's 2008 referendum, 75.5% of votes cast supported self-government, showing that changes to its political status require a Greenlandic voice.

- Elected institutions: Greenland's Parliament and Government provide channels for local decisions, even though Denmark retains responsibility for defence and foreign policy.
- Resource authority: Greenland assumed responsibility for mineral resources in 2010; decisions about mining therefore affect powers its own government exercises.
- Cultural protection: The new security agreement says U.S. access should respect hunting and fishing, making local livelihoods relevant to how military facilities operate.
- Economic benefits: The agreement calls for defence-related contracts to go to Greenlandic businesses where feasible, creating a test of whether residents benefit from expansion.
- Independence process: Greenland's Self-Government Act requires parliamentary consent and a referendum to endorse an independence agreement with Denmark.
- Future obligations: The security agreement expects an independent Greenland to assume its terms, raising a question about how its people would assess those long-term defence commitments.

3. What does the IIT-Bombay suicide tell us? (GS Paper I Society)

This editorial 'What does the IIT-Bombay suicide tell us?' was published in The Indian Express on 25th Sep 2026, highlights how unequal campus experiences and performance pressure can contribute to student distress.

Why student distress cannot have one explanation

- A student died at IIT-Bombay after allegedly being caught using a phone during an examination; his parents alleged caste-based mistreatment, which remains under investigation.
- Four recent deaths at NIT Kurukshetra were reportedly linked to debt, family discord and academic strain. These cases call for early detection of personal distress, while the IIT-Bombay case also demands examination of possible campus bias.

- The diathesis-stress model explains how the same incident can affect students differently: prolonged stereotyping and exclusion may make a disciplinary action reinforce an existing sense of not belonging.
- Faculty may see an isolated exam-day infraction without seeing the student's earlier experiences. How a correction is delivered therefore matters, even when academic rules apply equally.

What institutions must examine

- Over 170 students have died by suicide at IITs in the past decade, including many from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities; admission does not itself guarantee an equal campus experience.
- A Supreme Court-appointed task force found that students often view complaint systems as inaccessible, ineffective or tokenistic; fear of disbelief or retaliation can deter reports of discrimination.
- The task force also noted a social mismatch between students and teachers: over 65% of faculty in IITs, NITs and private institutions are from non-SC, ST and OBC communities. Greater faculty diversity could strengthen understanding and belonging.
- Counsellors and helplines are necessary for immediate support, but they cannot substitute for independent accountability where institutional treatment may have contributed to distress.

When achievement becomes a measure of worth

- Universities serve students' career ambitions, including hopes of social mobility, but should also offer friendships, freedom and intellectual discovery.
- Constant attention to grades, rankings and deadlines can make students judge their worth by performance and leave little room to engage deeply with what they study.
- Easy AI shortcuts sharpen a question for institutions: do their assessments reward understanding, or simply the ability to produce the right answer under pressure?

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Student Participation in Campus Governance

- Existing voice: IIT-Bombay's Students' Affairs Council represents undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral students, offering an existing channel for raising campus concerns.
- Academic decisions: IIT-Bombay lists student representatives on academic bodies, showing how students can contribute to discussions beyond extracurricular activities.
- Hostel conditions: Its elected Hostel Councils handle day-to-day hostel matters; regular feedback through them could bring living-condition concerns to administrators earlier.
- Grievance committees: The UGC's 2023 regulations provide for a student special invitee on grievance committees, though that invitee is not counted in the meeting's quorum.
- Broader representation: A single invitee may miss experiences across caste groups, courses or hostels; consultations with varied students could improve grievance procedures.
- Accessible complaints: The UGC's e-Samadhan portal provides an online route for grievances; student representatives could help peers understand when and how to use it.
- Independent appeal: The 2023 regulations allow students to appeal grievance committee decisions to an Ombudsperson, a safeguard students need to know exists.