Editorials - 26th Oct 2026

1. NEW AVENUES (GS PAPER II INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)

This editorial '**New avenues**' was published in **The Hindu** on 26th Oct 2026, highlights opportunities for **India–Poland cooperation** amid geopolitical differences and implementation challenges.

Economic and Strategic Opportunities

- Donald Tusk's visit preceded the planned **India–EU Free Trade Agreement** signing in Brussels; both sides targeted doubling **bilateral trade** from $6 billion by 2030.
- Poland's **technological expertise** and India's **capacity for scale** offer complementarities in AI, defence hardware, critical minerals, renewable and nuclear energy.
- Poland, the **EU's sixth-largest economy**, has crossed $1 trillion in nominal GDP; its **$120-billion technology economy** is attracting global interest.
- Polish machinery reaches India through Germany, creating scope for **trilateral collaboration** in manufacturing and **mining technology**.
- Both sides agreed to establish a **Defence Industry Dialogue** and explore **counter-terrorism cooperation**, widening engagement beyond commerce.

Geopolitical Constraints and Implementation

- Concern over the Ukraine war's **Global South** impact prompted discussion of India's four-pronged initiative on grain exports and **seafarers' safety**, acceptable to Kyiv and Moscow; Tusk supported the plan announced in Warsaw in September.
- **Trust deficits** arise from India's defence partnership with Russia and Poland's defence ties with Pakistan, including early air-force training and a **2018 defence cooperation agreement**.
- India is unlikely to accept Polish objections to its **military engagement with Russia**; earlier controversy underscores the need for cooperation grounded in **strategic realities**.
- Converting talks and MoUs into **business joint ventures** remains essential; concluding the agreement protecting **classified information** would strengthen future cooperation.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Role of People-to-People Diplomacy

- **Educational exchanges:** Over 3,700 Indian students studied in Poland in 2024, providing a foundation for alumni networks and lasting professional connections.
- **Academic collaboration:** Sanskrit studies at Jagiellonian University date to the nineteenth century, supporting scholarly exchanges and understanding of Indian civilisation.
- **Cultural outreach:** Poland's longstanding yoga community and International Day of Yoga celebrations extend bilateral engagement beyond official and business circles.

- **Tourism promotion:** The 2009 tourism agreement and 2024–28 Action Plan support tourism missions, travel-agency visits and joint participation in tourism fairs.
- **Diaspora engagement:** Indian community assistance during Operation Ganga demonstrated diaspora networks' role in humanitarian operations and strengthening bilateral connections.
- **Youth participation:** Announced in 2024, the Jamsaheb Memorial Youth Exchange Programme envisages annual visits by 20 Polish youths to India.
- **Historical goodwill:** Warsaw's Good Maharaja memorial honours Jam Saheb Digvijaysinhji's sheltering of Polish refugees during World War II, sustaining shared humanitarian ties.

2. THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL MEDIA COUNCIL (GS PAPER II GOVERNANCE)

This editorial '**The need for a national media council**' was published in **The Hindu** on 26th Oct 2026, highlights the need for inclusive **recognition of journalists** through a national professional body.

Journalistic Recognition and Protection

- During the Cockroach Janta Party's **October 10 protests** demanding CEC Gyanesh Kumar's resignation, police detained freelancers and independent journalists while permitting coverage only by **PIB/DIP-accredited journalists**.
- Hearing a PIL seeking protection of freelancers' and content creators' **freedom of expression**, the **Supreme Court** questioned whether this right entitled every citizen to claim journalist status.
- Indira Jaising sought a **national police protocol** protecting journalists holding employer-issued identity cards; the Solicitor General raised concerns about **self-proclaimed journalists** producing one-sided or sensational content for popularity and income.

Existing Framework and Recognition Gaps

- The **Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020** defines working journalists by their principal journalistic occupation and employment in print, electronic or digital media, excluding **managerial and administrative personnel**.
- Central and State governments provide **accreditation** to eligible journalists, freelancers, camerapersons and technicians, enabling access to **official information sources**; PIB covers Central government access, while DIP covers Delhi government access.
- **Accreditation quotas**, linked to circulation, subscribers, broadcasting licences or digital visitors, exclude some journalists even within recognised organisations, exposing a gap between **professional employment and official recognition**.

Proposed National Media Council

- A **national media council or commission**, modelled on the Bar Council of India and ICAI, could provide **professional recognition** to working journalists, freelancers, camerapersons and technicians.

- The proposed council could require a journalism or mass communication **degree or diploma** for a **professional licence**, establishing formal entry qualifications.
- The Press Club of India's draft **Media Transparency (and Accountability) Bill** proposed such a council; other journalists' bodies have reinforced this demand through a **memorandum to the government**.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Safeguards Against Regulatory Overreach

- **Institutional independence:** The Australian Press Council's selection of its independent chair through the council offers a reference for limiting executive influence over appointments.
- **Inclusive representation:** Khabar Lahariya's women-led rural reporting illustrates why professional bodies should represent community journalists and marginalised voices.
- **Entry safeguards:** In OC-5/85, the Inter-American Court rejected compulsory professional membership that prevented non-members from practising journalism, cautioning against exclusionary entry requirements.
- **Citizen journalism:** UN Human Rights Committee General Comment No. 34 includes bloggers and self-publishers within journalism, supporting protection beyond formally employed reporters.
- **Accreditation limits:** General Comment No. 34 permits limited accreditation for necessary privileged access to places or events, rather than as general permission to practise journalism.
- **Procedural fairness:** The Supreme Court's 2023 MediaOne judgment challenged sealed-cover reliance in denying security clearance, underscoring meaningful hearings and reasoned decisions.
- **Proportionate sanctions:** Section 14 of the Press Council Act, 1978 provides for warnings, admonition and censure after a hearing, offering a model of corrective accountability.

3. WE NEED TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF SOIL HEALTH. FOUR STEPS CAN IMPROVE THE SITUATION (GS PAPER III AGRICULTURE)

This editorial '**We need to address the issue of soil health. Four steps can improve the situation**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 26th Oct 2026, highlights how distorted **fertiliser subsidies** undermine soil health and require coordinated **pricing, incentive** and **farming reforms**.

Nutrient Imbalance and Policy Distortions

- The October 22 launch of Khet Bachao Abhiyan in Karnal urged **balanced fertilisation**, but **distorted input prices** undermine farmers' incentives to follow recommended doses.
- ICRIER's policy brief comparing 20 states during 2009–10 to 2024–25 found **nitrogen use** shifted from 7% below requirement to 6% above; phosphorus deficiency narrowed from 29% to 22%, while **potassium deficiency** widened from 48% to 72%.

- Farmers apply **9 kg potash/hectare** against a 32 kg requirement; the **N:P:K ratio** is 10.5:4.1:1 against 2.8:1.5:1. Eleven states overuse nitrogen, led by Jharkhand (72%) and Punjab (65%); Haryana and Jharkhand apply barely one-tenth of required potash.
- **Nutrient-based subsidy**, introduced in 2010, allowed phosphatic and potassic prices to follow markets while keeping **urea prices** controlled; during 2010–11 to 2024–25, DAP nearly tripled to ₹54/kg, MOP rose sixfold to ₹52/kg, but urea nitrogen rose just 1%.
- Immediate crop greening encourages nitrogen use, while potassium deficiency causes delayed damage; consequently, **nitrogen's share** in **NPK consumption** has returned to about 67%, its 1970–71 level.

Soil, Environmental and Fiscal Costs

- Of 96 lakh **Soil Health Card** samples tested in 2025–26, 72% lacked nitrogen, 52% organic carbon, 42% boron and 37% zinc; **carbon-starved soils** retain nutrients poorly, leaving crops absorbing only 30–40% of applied nitrogen.
- Nitrogen losses generate **nitrous oxide**, 273 times as potent as CO_2; Punjab's fertiliser emissions approach twice the national average, while excessive **groundwater nitrate**, detected in parts of 502 districts, risks infant "blue baby syndrome" and adult chronic illness.
- **Potassium deficiency** weakens drought and disease resistance and grain quality; phosphorus shortages delay flowering, while zinc and other micronutrient deficiencies reduce grain nutrition, worsening **hidden hunger**.
- The **2026–27 fertiliser subsidy** of ₹1.71 lakh crore could reach ₹2.5–3 lakh crore amid Strait of Hormuz disruption, with urea absorbing two-thirds; Punjab receives ₹25,700/hectare in nitrogen subsidy—10 times Kerala's—while **MSP procurement and subsidised power** entrench rice–wheat cultivation and aquifer depletion.

Four Reform Priorities

- Replace input subsidies with **per-hectare DBT**, neutral across nutrients and crops; AgriStack-linked identities and fertiliser-sale records can support delivery, though tenants remain difficult to identify. Alternatively, bring **urea under NBS**, lower DAP/MOP prices and retain an approximately ₹2 lakh crore subsidy envelope.
- Repair and expedite **PM-PRANAM**, under which nothing has been disbursed, to reward states for **balanced fertiliser use** where cultivation decisions occur.
- Redirect subsidy savings towards **drip irrigation and fertigation** and **product innovation**: customised/coated fertilisers, triple superphosphate replacing DAP, biofertilisers, nano fertilisers and nitrogen-efficient gene-edited seeds.
- Apply the **4Rs**—right source, rate, time and place—through plot-specific soil-test advice; cereal–pulse rotation can reduce subsequent nitrogen needs by 20–30%, but lasting adoption in Punjab and Haryana requires **power-pricing and procurement reforms**.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Non-Chemical Drivers of Soil Degradation

- **Soil erosion:** Chambal's ravines illustrate how water erosion dissects productive land, constrains cultivation and necessitates site-specific restoration.
- **Soil compaction:** Machinery and livestock trampling restrict aeration and infiltration; England's Environment Agency identifies almost four million hectares at risk of compaction.
- **Waterlogging:** Excessive irrigation without adequate drainage saturates root zones, as illustrated by environmental damage in the Indira Gandhi Canal command area.
- **Secondary salinisation:** Irrigation-induced salt accumulation reduces productivity; Aral Sea Basin research examines raised beds and alternative furrow irrigation to manage salt-affected soils.
- **Topsoil extraction:** Brick-making removes fertile surface soil; an Indian study recorded substantially lower rice, mustard and potato production on abandoned kiln land than control plots.
- **Soil sealing:** Paving obstructs soil functions; sealing expanded by 1,467 km^2 across EU–UK urban areas during 2012–18, largely affecting croplands and pastures.
- **Biological degradation:** FAO documents how intensive tillage breaks fungal hyphae and soil aggregates, disrupting organisms and processes essential for soil stability.