

Editorials - 31st Aug 2026

1. State of exception (GS Paper I Society)

This editorial '**State of exception**' was published in **The Hindu** on 31st Aug 2026, highlights the institutional, legal and data **failures** that normalise **discrimination** in India.

CERD's Key Concerns

- In India's first review since 2007, **CERD** expressed grave concern over reported **law-enforcement violence** against minority groups, Dalits and non-citizens, alongside inadequate information on inquiries and sanctions.
- Although India ratified **ICERD** in 1968, it excludes caste bias from Article 1, while CERD considers discrimination based on **inherited status** within its scope.
- CERD flagged **manual sewer cleaning**, hate speech, poor living conditions and refoulement of Rohingya Muslims despite existing legal protections.
- It linked **citizenship deprivation** to the National Register of Citizens and large-scale deletions during **Special Intensive Revisions** of electoral rolls.
- The alleged use of **FCRA, UAPA, AFSPA and PMLA** against civil society, absence of explicit racist-hate-speech provisions in the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita**, and forest exemptions for security projects raised further concerns.

Data and Institutional Deficits

- The delayed **Census**, slow NCRB releases and fragmented remedies impede **disaggregated data** collection and independent scrutiny of discrimination claims.

- Reliance on **2011 Census** data for special measures may conceal socioeconomic regression among **Scheduled Tribes and Adivasis**.
- CERD is filling an accountability vacuum amid **GANHRI's downgrade recommendation** for the **NHRC**, following concerns over police investigators and inadequate pluralism.

Required Response

- The editorial calls for restoring **NHRC independence**, criminalising racist hate speech and strengthening **affirmative action** and enforcement.
- India must publish **disaggregated data** and ensure transparent **electoral-roll revisions** to protect disenfranchised communities.
- As the government treats Dalit discrimination as a **domestic matter** and dismisses CERD's concerns, **civil society** must sustain multilateral, political, legal and administrative resistance.

Beyond Editorial

Constitutional Framework against Discrimination

- **Institutional discrimination:** In *Sukanya Shantha v. Union of India* (2024), the Supreme Court invalidated caste-based prison labour and segregation under Articles 14, 15, 17, 21 and 23.
- **Untouchability enforcement:** In *State of Karnataka v. Appa Balu Ingale*, the Supreme Court treated the denial of public water access to Dalits as a crime against the Constitution.
- **Reservation balance:** *Indra Sawhney v. Union of India* (1992) introduced creamy-layer exclusion and the general 50% reservation ceiling to reconcile affirmative action with equality.
- **Dignity protection:** *Safai Karamchari Andolan* (2014) connected manual scavenging with Articles 14, 17 and 21, while *Balram Singh* (2023) raised sewer-death compensation to ₹30 lakh.

- **Intersectional justice:** In *Patan Jamal Vali* (2021), the Supreme Court explained how caste, gender and disability can combine to create a distinct form of disadvantage.
- **Identity protection:** The *NALSA judgment* (2014) recognised transgender persons as a third gender and upheld self-identified gender under the constitutional guarantees of equality and dignity.
- **Economic affirmative action:** In *Janhit Abhiyan* (2022), the Supreme Court upheld the 103rd Constitutional Amendment providing 10% reservation for Economically Weaker Sections.

2. Adopt policies for reuse of treated water (GS Paper III Environment)

This editorial '**Adopt policies for reuse of treated water**' was published in **The Hindu** on 31st Aug 2026, highlights how contextualised **wastewater-reuse policies** can strengthen India's **water security** and sustainable growth.

Water Stress and State-Level Models

- Recurring **water scarcity**, driven by groundwater extraction and competing sectoral demands, requires greater **recycling of existing supplies**.
- Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand's consultatively developed **treated-water policies** accommodate hill and plain regions instead of imposing a **one-size-fits-all** model.
- Their policies combine **fit-for-purpose reuse** with urban planning, river rejuvenation, community participation, blended finance, **public-private partnerships** and digital monitoring.

Strategic Value of Treated Water

- **Treated wastewater** can provide agriculture, industry, landscaping and ecological restoration with a reliable, **drought-proof supply**.

- Although **AMRUT** expanded sewage-treatment capacity, plants discharging into drains without identified users remain purposeless **reuse infrastructure**.
- Reuse builds **climate resilience**, reduces freshwater dependence and supports industrial expansion and **low-carbon growth**, but its economic value must be credibly demonstrated to policymakers.

From Policy to Implementation

- The **SRTW Framework, 2022** makes reuse a national priority while requiring **State-level policies** suited to local conditions, targets and milestones.
- Implementation needs **institutional coordination**, rational pricing, quality standards, city road maps and **scheme convergence** instead of dependence on fresh allocations.
- Deep safety misconceptions require **public awareness**; naming treated water **Apna Jal** seeks to build psychological acceptance alongside infrastructure.

Beyond Editorial

Risks of Poorly Regulated Water Reuse

- **Pathogen exposure:** WHO guidelines warn that wastewater irrigation can transmit viruses, bacteria and parasites to farmers and consumers, particularly through uncooked vegetables and fruits.
- **Heavy-metal accumulation:** FAO guidance notes that repeated wastewater irrigation can concentrate heavy metals in soil and crops, potentially making farmland or produce unsafe.
- **Soil salinisation:** FAO estimates that even relatively low-salinity wastewater may add two to five tonnes of salt per hectare annually without adequate leaching and drainage.

- **Pollution persistence:** A 2025 Musi River study found most urban sampling locations unsuitable for drinking and, outside the monsoon, frequently unsuitable for irrigation, illustrating inadequate treatment risks.
- **Antimicrobial resistance:** WHO identifies wastewater and sludge as reservoirs of antimicrobial residues, resistant organisms and resistance genes that can facilitate environmental transmission.
- **Occupational exposure:** WHO's Sanitation Safety Planning framework specifically protects agricultural workers, nearby communities and consumers through risk assessment across the entire reuse chain.
- **Public confidence:** Singapore's NEWater gained acceptance through advanced purification, continuous monitoring and over 150,000 scientific tests, demonstrating the importance of credible quality assurance.

3. Meta's US deal redraws line of accountability (GS Paper I Society)

This editorial '**Meta's US deal redraws line of accountability**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 31st Aug 2026, highlights the need to shift responsibility for **children's online safety** from families to **technology platforms**.

Settlement and Its Limits

- The **Meta settlement** with 29 U.S. states over harm to children implicitly recognises **platform responsibility** for attention-capturing products affecting young users.
- Meta will pay up to **\$18 billion** over a decade and introduce **under-18 safeguards**, including two-hour limits, night curfews, age verification, safer defaults and fewer school-hour notifications.

- Despite denying wrongdoing, Meta leaves **personalised recommendations** and its **advertising-driven model** untouched, though the settlement brings product design under regulatory scrutiny.

Engagement Economy and Accountability

- **Infinite scroll**, notifications, likes, streaks and personalised feeds resist disengagement and convert user attention into a monetisable **engagement economy**.
- Technology companies traditionally shifted **safety responsibility** to parents and users, whereas the curbs move **corporate accountability** towards firms designing and profiting from addictive systems.

Relevance for India

- Reliance solely on **parental supervision** produces **unequal protection** because families differ in digital literacy, available time and household resources.
- Regulation should mandate **safety-by-default** feeds instead of engagement-maximising personalisation, placing the burden on **platform creators** rather than children resisting endless content.

Beyond Editorial

Regulatory Trade-offs in Child Online Safety

- **Privacy intrusion:** France's CNIL found many age-verification systems intrusive or circumventable and recommended independent, data-minimising mechanisms such as zero-knowledge proofs.
- **Uniform age threshold:** Australia's restriction prevents under-16 users from holding accounts on major social-media platforms,

providing clarity but treating adolescents with differing maturity levels alike.

- **Free-speech risk:** In *NetChoice v. Bonta*, U.S. appellate rulings kept major provisions of California's child-design law enjoined because mandatory harm assessments raised First Amendment concerns.
- **Child autonomy:** UN General Comment No. 25 requires online protection to preserve children's access to information, participation, expression and privacy instead of encouraging blanket digital exclusion.
- **Essential access:** Australia exempts primarily educational, health, messaging and gaming services from its minimum-age restrictions, recognising their communication and developmental value.
- **Algorithmic scrutiny:** The European Union's Digital Services Act requires annual independent audits of very large platforms while protecting confidential information and legitimate trade secrets.
- **Verification evasion:** A French survey found 44% of users aged 11–18 had lied about their age online, showing why regulation must combine age assurance with safer platform design.