

EDITORIALS – 3RD AUG 2026

1. Analysing the SC's judgment on sex work (GS Paper II Polity)

This editorial 'Analysing the SC's judgment on sex work' was published in The Hindu on 3rd Aug 2026, highlights the Supreme Court's rights-based approach to sex work and the institutional barriers to its implementation.

Constitutional significance

- The May 29, 2026 judgment recognises that anti-trafficking measures have enabled forced rescue, indefinite detention, child separation and threats to sex workers' lives.
- The nearly 300-page judgment recognises that agency and vulnerability can coexist and rejects conflating migration with trafficking.
- Sex workers retain constitutional rights despite social disapproval; consenting adults cannot be forcibly rescued, and intervention must begin by establishing consent.
- Directions issued under Article 142 give legal force to this rights-based framework, but the Court overlooks contributions by sex workers and collectives such as the National Network of Sex Workers.

Institutional assumptions and omissions

- The judgment assumes clearer legal standards will overcome institutional prejudice in policing, adjudication, shelters and access to legal aid.
- Caste discrimination and economic marginalisation shape encounters with the state, particularly for Dalit and Adivasi women, even after their rights are judicially recognised.
- One woman wrongly labelled a trafficker spent seven years reporting to the police and attending hearings without her statement being recorded, exposing entrenched bureaucratic injustice.
- The Court recognises caste as a structural driver of sex work but insufficiently examines how it also shapes institutional implementation.
- The anti-trafficking industry, including civil society organisations involved in raids and shelters, can perpetuate carceral rescue through funding incentives, weak accountability and authority over confined women.
- Indefinite shelter confinement can become another form of coercive control, making rescue itself a source of violence rather than protection.

Implementation priorities

- Sex workers' unions should draft guidelines, monitor compliance, shape police training and establish shelter standards.
- The NGO sector requires scrutiny where organisations participate in coercive rescues while enjoying limited community accountability, funding oversight and legal immunity.
- India's existing welfare architecture must become accessible to sex workers as rights-bearing citizens, without creating additional institutions.

Beyond Editorial

Global regulatory models for sex work

- Legalisation model: The Netherlands permits consensual adult sex work under municipal licensing but criminalises forced and underage prostitution.
- Buyer-criminalisation model: Sweden criminalised purchasing, but not selling, sexual services in 1999; Ireland adopted a similar model in 2017.
- Decriminalisation model: New Zealand's Prostitution Reform Act, 2003 decriminalised adult sex work while retaining certification, safety rules and anti-exploitation penalties.
- Partial-criminalisation model: England and Wales permit selling sex but criminalise soliciting, brothel-keeping, controlling prostitution for gain and exploitative purchasing.
- Localised regulation: Nevada permits prostitution only in licensed brothels authorised by eligible counties, combining local regulation with wider restrictions.
- Public-health evidence: WHO estimates that decriminalisation could reduce new HIV infections among sex workers by 46% over ten years.
- Indian relevance: In *Budhadev Karmaskar* (2022), the Supreme Court upheld sex workers' dignity and protected consenting adults from police harassment during raids.

2. Return of terror points to need for constant vigil (GS Paper III Security)

This editorial 'Return of terror points to need for constant vigil' was published in The Indian Express on 3rd Aug 2026, highlights how renewed targeted killings in Jammu and Kashmir demand sustained vigilance, stronger intelligence and an inclusive counterterrorism response.

Renewed security threat

- The targeted killing of two Chhattisgarh migrant workers in Kulgam, soon after a police constable's murder, signals renewed Pakistan-backed terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.
- The first attack on migrant workers since 2024 occurred amid a peaceful Amarnath Yatra and two years after high assembly-election turnout, suggesting attempts to disrupt improving normalcy.
- The attacks may reflect a changing strategy by Lashkar-e-Taiba and its alleged offshoot, the Resistance Front, under handlers in Pakistan.
- Terrorists have killed 25 migrants in six years; targeting vulnerable workers enables low-casualty attacks while avoiding the severe retaliation invited by spectacular terrorism.

Pakistan's strategic calculus

- India raised the cost of cross-border terrorism through the 2016 surgical strikes, Balakot in 2019 and Operation Sindoor, encouraging greater reliance on proxy groups.
- Groups such as the TRF provide plausible deniability for Pakistan's role in cross-border terrorism.
- Renewed violence may reflect Rawalpindi's challenges in Balochistan, along the Durand Line and in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, while appeasing sections of its security establishment.

Required response

- Strengthening human intelligence, especially HUMINT networks, remains the most reliable means of preventing targeted attacks.
- Social cohesion and respect for diversity must serve as safeguards against radicalisation and hostile propaganda.
- The Centre and security forces should involve the elected government and political parties of Jammu and Kashmir in combating terrorism.
- Counterterrorism must ensure accountability without punishing innocent people or creating conditions favourable to cross-border propaganda.

Beyond Editorial

Civilian protection in conflict zones

- Portable registration: Privacy-protected e-Shram data could support migrant-worker threat alerts, welfare delivery and family tracing during emergencies.

- Threat-based relocation: After the October 2021 killings, vulnerable migrant workers in Kashmir were temporarily moved to police and military facilities.
- Workplace security: The 2024 Sonamarg tunnel-site attack killed seven people, highlighting the need for protected housing, transport and evacuation plans.
- Community alerts: UN missions use local alert networks, liaison officers and informed patrols to identify threats before civilians are attacked.
- Emergency response: India's 112 system integrates police, fire and medical assistance and should be publicised in migrant workplaces.
- Victim compensation: The central scheme provides ₹5 lakh for eligible deaths or permanent incapacitation caused by terrorism, cross-border firing or IED attacks.
- Trust-building communication: UN practice combines community engagement with factual communication to counter disinformation, collective blame and extremist propaganda.

3. A new compact between AI & agriculture: An Andhra Pradesh opportunity (GS Paper III Science and Technology, and Economy)

This editorial 'A new compact between AI & agriculture: An Andhra Pradesh opportunity' was published in The Indian Express on 3rd Aug 2026, highlights how agrivoltaics can meet AI data centres' energy needs while making farmers co-owners of clean-energy infrastructure.

Energy challenge and agrivoltaic opportunity

- Google's proposed \$15-billion, one-gigawatt Visakhapatnam AI data centre, expected by 2028, will require 24 GWh of electricity daily.
- Diverting existing power could hurt agriculture and consumers, while additional thermal generation would impose environmental costs.
- Andhra Pradesh's Deemed Distribution Licence permits hyperscale operators to procure and manage their own power, enabling captive renewable-energy solutions.
- Agrivoltaics combines farming and elevated solar panels on the same land, allowing farmers to produce food and electricity while diversifying incomes.
- Farmers should retain land ownership and hold equity in community-based special-purpose vehicles, making them co-owners of the solar enterprise powering Google.

Financing and operational model

- Solar cooperatives modelled on milk cooperatives could aggregate farmers, while panels installed 10–12 feet high would permit cultivation beneath them.
- Google could provide low-interest long-term debt, supplemented by a modified PM-KUSUM subsidy and credit guarantees from the Credit Guarantee Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises.
- Under the DDL framework, Google could use open-access and banking arrangements as a long-term offtaker, giving farmer utilities a creditworthy customer.
- ICRIER pilots suggest solar can become a third crop, raising farm income eight to ten times while supporting irrigation, shade-loving crops, processing and electricity sales.

Scale and wider benefits

- The proposed 5,000 one-megawatt agri-photovoltaic systems, costing about ₹4 crore each, would create 5 GW capacity through an estimated ₹20,000-crore investment.
- Blended finance and guaranteed electricity buyback could mobilise funds with minimal pressure on government budgets.
- Farmers gain crops, electricity income and dividends; Google secures competitive clean power and social licence, while the state avoids conflict over land and electricity.
- Unlike land acquisition that leaves farmers with one-time rent, the co-ownership model retains land as an asset and makes the data centre a dependable customer.

Beyond Editorial

Implementation risks of agrivoltaics

- Crop suitability: ICAR-IARI's 100-kWp pilot is testing crop combinations because shading and productivity effects vary across agro-ecological regions.
- Yield safeguards: Japan requires solar-sharing projects to retain 80% of reference crop yield, while Germany uses a 66% benchmark.
- Capital burden: Elevated horticultural systems generally cost more than interspace designs, increasing dependence on subsidies and concessional finance.
- Inclusive ownership: PM-KUSUM permits participation by farmers, cooperatives, panchayats, FPOs and water-user associations, limiting concentration among large landowners.

- Operational complexity: Panel soiling, corrosion, pesticide exposure and machinery damage require specialised maintenance and compatible farm equipment.
- Revenue security: PM-KUSUM uses 25-year power-purchase agreements, mandatory DISCOM procurement and escrow arrangements to reduce payment and offtake risks.
- End-of-life liability: Odisha requires PM-KUSUM projects to follow e-waste rules after PPA termination, supporting proper decommissioning and land restoration.