Editorials - 4th Nov 2026

1. On the Arunachal frontier, silence is not a strategy (GS Paper II International Relations)

This editorial '**On the Arunachal frontier, silence is not a strategy**' was published in **The Hindu** on 4th Nov 2026, highlights how silence over **Chinese border intrusions** risks encouraging territorial encroachment and weakening India's position.

Arunachal frontier: reported intrusions and official responses

- On **October 22, 2026**, the **ITBP** Director General confirmed continuing face-offs at several Arunachal locations; reports placed the Asaphila stand-off near Taksing since late July.
- Near Longju, the **PLA** reportedly pitched tents about **seven kilometres** inside India's perceived LAC; the stand-off persisted despite military, diplomatic and political engagements.
- **Official responses** remained guarded: neither side denied face-offs; India cited disrupted patrolling patterns, China invoked sovereignty, and **Pema Khandu** acknowledged transgressions.
- **Local groups** reported Chinese infrastructure on traditional grazing grounds and restrictions on **Indian patrols**; the Army rejected June infrastructure reports, but subsequent ITBP remarks strengthened local concerns.
- Earlier **adverse possession** was confined to Namkha Chu, Sumdorong Chu and Longju; expanded occupation or blocked patrols elsewhere could reproduce the **Eastern Ladakh** pattern of 2020.

LAC interpretation and bilateral commitments

- India rejects China's **1959 Line**; Beijing's eastern alignment transposes coordinates from **1914 maps** onto present maps while ignoring the highest watershed underlying the original boundary.
- The **1993 Agreement** recognised the LAC as actual ground control, without prejudicing boundary claims; India rejected historical or notional alignments and sought **status quo ante** after transgressions.
- Border agreements prohibit **overstepping the LAC** and unilateral changes; China's sovereignty-based interpretation contradicts these commitments, while the **2005 Agreement** requires considering the actual state of border areas.
- India's repeated invocation of **"different perceptions"** risks legitimising transgressions and weakening its position amid Beijing's renewed **"Zangnan"** narrative concerning Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Article X of the 1996 Agreement** required a common understanding of the entire LAC through exchanged maps; formalising the August 26 consensus's weaker **"improved understanding"** risks diluting this obligation and preserving ambiguity conducive to encroachment.

Transparency and the level of response

- Routine incidents need not always be publicised, but **new intrusion areas**, expanded physical presence or **patrol obstruction** require disclosure; concealment offers no demonstrated resolution and can encourage incremental territorial gains.
- **Wangdung, 1986**, was publicly discussed in Parliament, while **Eastern Ladakh, 2020**, was officially acknowledged; subsequent inadequate transparency illustrates the risks of denial, obfuscation and conflicting signals.
- Direct **political intervention** during the Chumar stand-off in September 2014 helped restore **status quo ante**; Eastern Ladakh's April 2020 position remains unrestored, underscoring the need for forceful diplomatic and political engagement.

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Border communities as strategic stakeholders

- **Sustained habitation:** The Vibrant Villages Programme links better services with reversing outmigration, helping sustain civilian presence along strategically sensitive northern borders.
- **Local intelligence:** Residents' terrain knowledge can support surveillance; VVP-II envisages border communities as the "eyes and ears" of border-guarding forces.
- **Livelihood security:** ITBP procurement of milk, vegetables, eggs and grains from Arunachal's border villages provides local producers an assured market, supporting continued habitation.
- **Participatory planning:** Village Action Plans prepared by district administrations with Gram Panchayats help align border infrastructure with community priorities.
- **Cultural continuity:** Supporting traditional livelihoods sustains indigenous communities; Ladakh transferred ₹1.10 crore to over 1,200 Pashmina herders during the 2026 Changthang Nomadic Festival.
- **Youth participation:** In 2026, over 400 volunteers undertook community service, cultural exchanges and grassroots development across 74 border villages, strengthening engagement with frontier communities.
- **Public trust:** SSB medical camps, veterinary outreach, sports and livelihood initiatives in Sikkim during 2025–26 illustrate how service delivery can strengthen civilian cooperation.

2. Coming of age (GS Paper III Security)

This editorial '**Coming of age**' was published in **The Hindu** on 4th Nov 2026, highlights how **Binance's response** to a major **hack** demonstrates **crypto-sector maturity** and strengthens the case for regulation in India.

Security breach and institutional preparedness

- The **Binance hack** does not establish that crypto is inherently unsafe; **cyberattacks** affect all sectors, making preparedness, response and recurrence prevention the relevant lessons.

- Established in **2018**, the **Secure Asset Fund for Users (SAFU)** used trading-fee revenue to protect customer assets against security breaches and platform incidents.
- The **$6.3 billion theft** exceeded SAFU's resources; Binance supplemented the fund from its own resources, restoring about **95% of users' assets** within four days.
- Large crypto firms increasingly adopt **prudential practices**, safeguard customers and cooperate with **law enforcement**, challenging Indian authorities' perception of an ungoverned industry.

Implications for India's regulatory approach

- If insufficient **asset backing** is the concern, policymakers could permit only **stablecoins** underpinned by real assets.
- Indians face risks from both crypto and **fake stock-market scams**; **awareness** remains the strongest defence.
- **Regulatory inaction** and prohibitive **taxation** push Indians towards black markets where scams proliferate, or towards foreign exchanges.
- India could mandate an **industry-maintained emergency fund**, drawing on Binance's model, while adapting existing **international legislation**.

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Limits of self-regulation in cryptocurrency markets

- **Conflicts of interest:** The FTX–Alameda case exposed customer funds financing an affiliated trading firm, demonstrating risks from common ownership without independent oversight.
- **Asset segregation:** MiCA's Article 70 requires safeguards against proprietary use of customer crypto-assets and protection of ownership rights during insolvency.
- **Independent verification:** The US PCAOB warned that proof-of-reserves reports may omit liabilities, ownership rights or temporarily borrowed assets, making them inadequate substitutes for audits.
- **Enforceable accountability:** Binance's 2023 US guilty plea brought a $4.3 billion resolution and independent monitoring for anti-money-laundering, registration and sanctions violations.
- **Insolvency protection:** Celsius entered bankruptcy in July 2022 with liabilities exceeding assets by over $1 billion, exposing the limits of promised deposit safety.
- **Cross-border supervision:** FATF's Travel Rule requires secure collection and transmission of originator and beneficiary information for covered virtual-asset transfers, extending accountability across jurisdictions.
- **Systemic exposure:** TerraUSD's 2022 collapse caused distress and bankruptcies among exposed crypto firms, demonstrating contagion risks beyond individual platforms' safeguards.

3. Fewer students are borrowing a lot more for education (GS Paper I Society)

This editorial '**Fewer students are borrowing a lot more for education**' was published in **The Hindu** on 4th Nov 2026, highlights declining **education-loan access** alongside rising **borrowing** per account and concerns over educational **affordability**.

CHART 1: While the number of small loan accounts have declined, the large loan accounts have increased

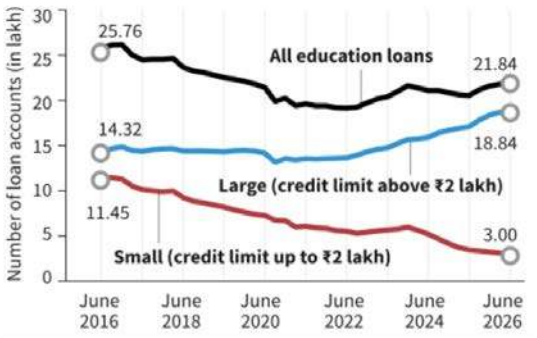
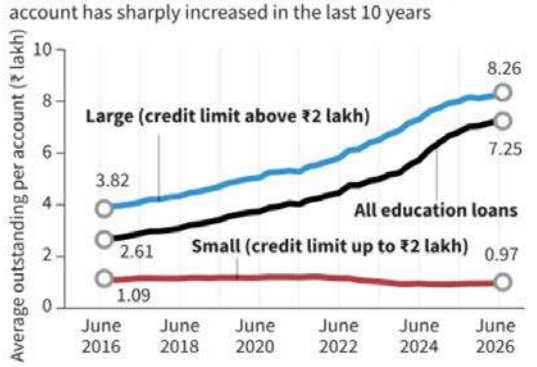


CHART 2: The average amount outstanding per loan account has sharply increased in the last 10 years



Education loans: fewer accounts, larger borrowings

- Between **June 2016 and June 2026**, education-loan accounts declined **15.2%**, from 25.76 lakh to 21.84 lakh, while outstanding credit rose from ₹67,175 crore to ₹1,58,468 crore.
- **Average outstanding per account** increased **178.2%**, from ₹2.6 lakh to ₹7.25 lakh, indicating rising education costs, also noted by the Parliamentary Standing Committee's 372nd report.
- Accounts with credit limits **above ₹2 lakh** increased **31.6%**, from about 14.31 lakh to 18.84 lakh, driving the modest recovery in total accounts over the last three years.
- Accounts with credit limits **up to ₹2 lakh** fell from 11.44 lakh to **3 lakh**; the ₹25,000–₹2 lakh slab's share of all accounts declined from 41.2% to 13.6%.
- Average outstanding in the **above-₹2 lakh category** rose from ₹3.82 lakh to ₹8.25 lakh, while **small-loan balances** remained broadly unchanged.
- Despite rising outstanding amounts, education loans' **share in bank credit** declined from **0.93% to 0.74%**, indicating slower growth relative to overall lending.

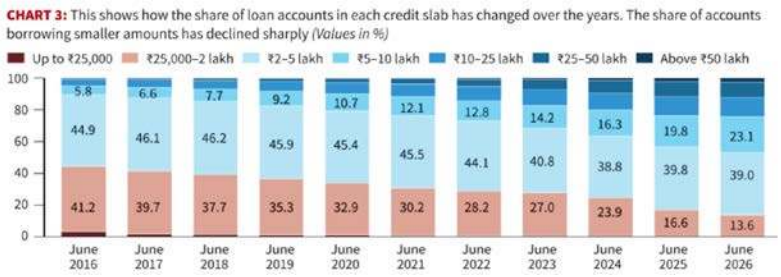


CHART 3: This shows how the share of loan accounts in each credit slab has changed over the years. The share of accounts borrowing smaller amounts has declined sharply *(Values in %)*

Affordability and public education

- **Inflation** contributed only marginally to larger borrowings; declining account numbers alongside rising balances indicate **fewer students borrowing more**, rather than improved affordability.
- Increased reliance on **government colleges** is an unlikely explanation: **AISHE** data show broadly stagnant enrolment, followed by a decline from 103.41 lakh in 2022–23 to 88.86 lakh in 2023–24.
- The **Department of Education's** estimated allocation declined from **1.46% of India's Budget** in 2016–17 to 0.99% in 2025–26.
- **RBI data** cover scheduled commercial banks, including major public and private banks; **rural banks and NBFCs** are excluded, limiting the analysis's coverage.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Educational indebtedness as a barrier to social mobility

- **Unequal borrowing capacity:** PM-Vidyalaxmi addresses collateral barriers through collateral-free, guarantor-free loans for students securing merit-based admission to designated quality higher education institutions.
- **Interest burden:** PM-USP CSIS provides eligible students from families earning up to ₹4.5 lakh full moratorium-period interest subsidy on loans up to ₹10 lakh.
- **Constrained course choices:** A 2026 US study found higher student-loan interest rates shifted students towards higher-earning majors and occupations, illustrating financing costs' influence on educational choices.
- **Employment vulnerability:** The ILO–IHD India Employment Report 2024 recorded 29.1% unemployment among graduate youth in 2022, highlighting uncertain earnings and potential repayment difficulties.
- **Restricted career freedom:** Rothstein and Rouse's US university study found student debt pushed graduates towards higher salaries and away from lower-paid public-interest jobs.
- **Entrepreneurial barriers:** The US Consumer Financial Protection Bureau identifies student debt as a potential obstacle to startup savings and business credit, constraining entrepreneurial opportunities.
- **Delayed asset creation:** Federal Reserve research attributed roughly one-fifth of the 2005–2014 decline in young-adult US homeownership to rising student debt, illustrating slower wealth accumulation.