EDITORIALS - 7TH AUG 2026

1. Stop the scam (GS Paper III Science and Technology)

This editorial 'Stop the scam' was published in The Hindu on 7th Aug 2026, highlights India's progress, enforcement gaps and transnational challenges in combating digital-arrest scams.

Declining Complaints and Institutional Response

- Cybercrime complaints fell from 1,23,672 in 2024 to 58,249 in 2025 and 16,377 during 2026's first half, showing encouraging progress.
- The Supreme Court directed the RBI to frame standard procedures for temporary debit holds on suspected mule accounts.
- States must establish cybercrime coordination centres and operationalise e-Zero FIRs for quicker registration and investigation.
- An interdepartmental committee will examine victim compensation, while advisories from banks, telecom operators and police have reduced senior citizens' victimisation.
- Advisories remain inadequate for youth and professionals, while low convictions despite investigations expose slow and ineffective law enforcement.

Evolving Methods and Financial Recovery

- Scammers use SIM boxes to display Indian numbers, interstate mule accounts for swift transfers and deepfakes during video calls.
- The Court prioritised financial restitution, completed in 36,290 cases involving ₹18.05 crore, alongside faster disposal of account-freeze cases.
- MuleHunter.AI, deployed across over 20 banks, helps limit financial damage even when overseas perpetrators remain unidentified or unconvicted.

Transnational Scam Networks

- Rare convictions reflect operations from overseas scam compounds across Myanmar, the Golden Triangle and Cambodia, often protected through official patronage.
- Myanmar's raids remained largely ineffective as scam centres shifted into conflict zones, staying ahead of domestic investigators.
- After China's 2023 crackdown, networks targeted other countries and trafficked Indians into committing digital crimes under coercion and torture.

- India must coordinate diplomatic pressure with China, the U.S. and ASEAN to compel Myanmar and Cambodia to dismantle scam networks.

Beyond Editorial

Safeguarding Civil Liberties in Cybercrime Enforcement

- Proportionate freezing: In Dr. Sajeer v. RBI (2024), the Kerala High Court limited account restrictions to the disputed amount rather than the entire balance.
- Procedural safeguards: In Shabeer v. Federal Bank (2026), the Court required police to specify the disputed amount within one month or lift the freeze.
- Innocent-account protection: In Aboobacker Sidhiq (2026), the Court permitted account operations beyond the ₹28,000 placed under lien through three police requisitions.
- Privacy protection: The Puttaswamy judgment (2017) requires legality, necessity and proportionality in state intrusion, including financial and telecom data-sharing.
- Algorithmic accountability: RBIH's MuleHunter.AI, launched in December 2024, should support human verification rather than automatically penalising customers through pattern-based suspicion.
- Time-bound redressal: I4C's January 2026 SOP provides a grievance mechanism for account holders affected by cybercrime-related freezes, liens or payment holds.
- Judicial supervision: Kerala High Court directions place disputed funds before the jurisdictional Magistrate, balancing victim restitution with account holders' property rights.

2. Handloom — weaving India's heritage into global growth (GS Paper III Economy)

This editorial 'Handloom — weaving India's heritage into global growth' was published in The Hindu on 7th Aug 2026, highlights transforming India's handloom heritage through policy, technology and global market integration.

Strategic and Socio-economic Significance

- Handloom advances Viksit Bharat 2047 by combining cultural heritage with self-reliance, sustainability, rural enterprise and global competitiveness.
- India's textile legacy spans Indus Valley cotton, Bengal muslin, Banarasi silk, Kanchipuram weaves and Pochampally Ikat, supporting Brand India.

- Rising demand for authentic, sustainable products offers India an opportunity to export craftsmanship, innovation and trust through handwoven products and resilient supply chains.
- India's largest cottage industry supports over 35 lakh weavers and allied workers, nearly 72% women, strengthening inclusive livelihoods.

Policy and Institutional Support

- The Raw Material Supply Scheme, 797 clusters and over 1.24 lakh upgraded looms have strengthened production infrastructure.
- Skill programmes have trained nearly 97,000 artisans, while Producer Companies and GI-tagged products support organisation and market identity.
- The Handloom Mark, India Handmade certification, Urban Haats and Design Resource Centres promote authenticity, visibility and market access.
- Twenty-nine Weavers' Service Centres provide training, design, materials and market linkages, while 11 institutes expand advanced handloom training.
- The National Handloom and Handicraft Programme will strengthen 1,800 clusters across over 500 districts, benefiting 65 lakh artisans and building the Handmade in India brand.

Technology-led Global Transformation

- Innovations from Gandhi's Ambar Charkha to Assam's Maina Loom and Chitraranjan Handloom have improved productivity and self-reliance.
- The Centre of Excellence is developing lighter, stronger and accessible looms, while Handloom 4.0 pilots AI-based monitoring on 100 looms.
- Technology must empower artisans; VisioNXT can forecast demand, authenticate products, identify trends and connect weavers with global markets.
- Premium silk, natural fibres, sustainable materials and innovative blends can create high-value products and unlock new market segments.
- Better branding, value addition and direct sales can raise weavers' incomes towards ₹50,000 monthly while preserving their entrepreneurial role.

Beyond Editorial

Persistent Structural Challenges in the Handloom Sector

- Income distress: The Fourth Handloom Census found 66.3% of weaver households earned below ₹5,000 monthly, despite handloom's cultural and economic importance.
- Underemployment: Weavers averaged only 208 working days annually, falling to 201 days in rural areas against 262 in urban areas.

- Production fragmentation: About 73.2% of handloom workers operated independently, while only 6.3% worked through cooperatives, weakening collective bargaining and procurement capacity.
- Market exclusion: Nearly 64.1% sold through open markets and 17.6% through master weavers, while e-commerce and export participation remained negligible.
- Powerloom imitation: Despite the Handlooms Reservation Act, 1985, cheaper machine-made versions continue competing with authentic products such as Banarasi sarees.
- Social vulnerability: The census recorded 60.2% of handloom-worker households in kuchha homes, while only about 4% of workers had insurance coverage.
- Generational decline: The share of rural weavers aged 18–35 fell from 50% in 2009–10 to 43% in 2019–20, threatening skill transmission.

3. Ethanol policy must count in water, sustainability costs (GS Paper III Economy, Enviroment)

This editorial 'Ethanol policy must count in water, sustainability costs' was published in The Indian Express on 7th Aug 2026, highlights the need to align ethanol blending with life-cycle emissions, water security, vehicle compatibility and sound economics.

Achievements and Efficiency Variations

- E20 blending rose from 1.5% in 2013–14 to nearly 20% in 2025, consuming 700 crore litres annually while improving energy security and rural incomes.
- Ethanol from molasses, sugarcane juice, maize, damaged grains and surplus rice has varying environmental footprints, making feedstock selection critical.
- Bagasse-powered sugarcane ethanol achieves an EROEI of 2–4 against grain ethanol's 1.2–2, reflecting different fossil-energy inputs.
- Petrol provides 32 MJ per litre against ethanol's 21 MJ; E20 reduces fuel economy by 6–7%, partly offset by ethanol's higher octane.

Environmental and Consumer Costs

- Sugarcane ethanol can reduce life-cycle emissions by 50–70% against petrol, while grain ethanol achieves 20–50% and neither is automatically carbon-neutral.
- Sugarcane requires 1,500–2,500 mm water, while one litre of ethanol may embody 2,000–3,500 litres, intensifying groundwater stress and freshwater dependence.
- Subsidised electricity and urea encourage excessive groundwater extraction and nitrogen use, concealing sugarcane ethanol's true environmental costs and social costs.
- Ethanol absorbs moisture and damages older components; only vehicles manufactured since April 2023 have mandated E20 compatibility, excluding millions of older vehicles.

- The transition requires transparent information, technical support, lower-blend availability and consumer choice, with fuel prices reflecting respective economic costs.

Reforming Ethanol Policy

- Direct income transfers should support farmers while electricity, irrigation and fertiliser prices reflect their actual economic and environmental value.
- Correct pricing can shift production towards regions and feedstocks offering higher net energy gains, lower emissions and improved groundwater sustainability.
- Investment in second-generation ethanol from agricultural residues and non-food biomass can reduce pressure on land and water.
- Blending targets should remain directional; long-term policy requires life-cycle accounting, rigorous water assessment, technology-neutral incentives and accurate market signals.

Beyond Editorial

Food Security Implications of Ethanol Expansion

- Welfare priority: PMGKAY provides free foodgrains to about 81.35 crore beneficiaries, requiring welfare allocations to precede the industrial diversion of public stocks.
- Nutrition dependence: Central foodgrain allocations also support PM-POSHAN and ICDS-linked programmes, making grain availability crucial for child and maternal nutrition.
- Rice diversion: FCI stopped supplying rice to distilleries in July 2023 amid availability concerns, but permitted up to 23 lakh tonnes during August–October 2024.
- Buffer protection: The 2025 OMSS policy capped ethanol-sector rice at 24 lakh tonnes after protecting PDS needs, buffer norms and 30 lakh tonnes for emergencies.
- Sugar safeguard: In December 2023, the Centre restricted sugarcane juice-based ethanol after a weak monsoon threatened domestic sugar availability and price stability.
- Maize pressure: Maize's ethanol share rose from zero in 2021–22 to 36% in 2023–24, increasing competition with poultry, starch and food users.
- Policy flexibility: Temporary restrictions on rice and sugarcane diversion show blending mandates must respond to harvests, inflation, welfare needs and available stocks.