

EDITORIALS - 9TH OCT 2026

1. Calibrating India's inbound investment framework (GS Paper III Economy)

This editorial 'Calibrating India's inbound investment framework' was published in **The Hindu** on 9th Oct 2026, highlights the **governance reforms** needed to convert investment commitments into actual projects.

Investment Gains and Deployment Gaps

- **Trade integration** is advancing through structural reforms and a new **FTA strategy**, with agreements expected during December visits to Canada and Brussels following September's New Delhi BRICS Summit.
- **Gross inward FDI** reached a record \$94.8 billion in FY26; **UNCTAD's World Investment Report 2026** ranked India 11th among FDI destinations after a 44% inflow rise.
- **Project finance** globally remains roughly one-quarter below its 2021 peak; India's **greenfield data-centre investment** reached about 7billion in January–September 2025, trailing Thailand, Spain, South Korea (21 billion), the U.S. (29billion) and France (69 billion).
- **Administrative fragmentation** across Centre–State authorities, DPIIT, line ministries and State notifications delays deployment; resolving these **operational bottlenecks** would benefit domestic and foreign enterprises alike.

Domestic Reform and Implementation

- **Commercial dispute resolution** has improved through the Commercial Courts Act, 2015, Mediation Act, 2023 and institutional arbitration; nearly **48 million pending cases**, including six million in High Courts, require better-staffed commercial benches and mediation centres.
- **Labour codes** consolidated 29 central laws into four, with Central Rules notified in May 2026; labour's **Concurrent List** status creates uneven State implementation, complicating national human-resource frameworks despite Gujarat's early notifications.
- **Tax certainty** improved when the Taxation Laws (Amendment) Act, 2021 withdrew retrospective demands against Vodafone and Cairn Energy; the relaunched **Vivad se Vishwas** scheme also reduced direct-tax litigation.
- **Quality Control Orders** expanded from fewer than 70 to nearly 790, according to the Gauba Committee; ₹20 lakh certification costs and six-to-eight-month timelines disrupted **MSME supply chains**, prompting withdrawal of orders covering PVC, aluminium and zinc.

Investment Protection and Reform Lessons

- **EFTA's \$100-billion investment target** accompanies incomplete protection mechanisms: India–EFTA TEPA lacks an independent bilateral dispute mechanism; Switzerland's separate **bilateral investment treaty** negotiations could inform talks with the EU and U.K.

- **Approval coordination** remains uneven because DPIIT facilitates rather than decides approvals; May 2026's revised procedure sets a **12-week deadline**, while Tata Electronics' Dholera semiconductor project demonstrates coordinated capital deployment.
- **Singapore's CECA** offers treaty lessons through non-discrimination and investment protection, alongside over \$195 billion cumulative FDI since 2000, including **\$19.8 billion** last year.
- **Mobile-phone manufacturing** demonstrates coordinated policy: production rose 33-fold from ₹180 billion in FY15 to ₹6.27 trillion; exports reached ₹2.59 trillion, making India the second-largest manufacturer by volume, with **local production** meeting 99.2% of domestic demand.

Beyond Editorial

Evaluating the Developmental Quality of FDI

- **Employment quality:** Foreign direct investment should improve skills alongside jobs; Maruti Suzuki's Japan-India Institutes for Manufacturing illustrate investment-linked training for industrial employment.
- **Technology transfer:** Investment gains deepen through knowledge spillovers; Intel's entry into Costa Rica encouraged technical-education improvements and the development of an electronics-support ecosystem.
- **Domestic value addition:** Export growth can conceal import-dependent assembly; World Bank research on Vietnam identifies weak domestic linkages and limited value addition despite substantial investment-led gains.
- **Local supplier linkages:** Domestic procurement spreads productivity gains; a Costa Rican study found local firms' productivity rose 9% four years after becoming multinational suppliers.
- **Regional inclusion:** Investment can extend industrial activity beyond established centres; Kia's manufacturing plant in Andhra Pradesh's Anantapur illustrates this potential, although wider regional benefits require assessment.
- **Environmental sustainability:** Investment quality includes its carbon footprint; OECD indicators report renewable energy's share of global greenfield investment rose from 1% in 2003 to 26% in 2023.
- **Innovation capability:** Research-oriented investment can build advanced domestic expertise; GE's John F. Welch Technology Centre in Bengaluru, established in 2000, illustrates investment extending beyond manufacturing assembly.

2. Are legal guarantees insufficient in abolishing untouchability? (GS Paper I Society)

This editorial ‘Are legal guarantees insufficient in abolishing untouchability?’ was published in **The Hindu** on 9th Oct 2026, highlights the **achievements and limits** of legal safeguards against untouchability and the need for deeper **social change**.

Legal Achievements and Limits

- A “purification” ritual at Mallikarjun Kharge’s rally venue in Uttarakhand, followed by an **FIR** after political and civil-society pressure, renewed debate over **untouchability**.
- Rodrigues considers **legal guarantees** necessary but inadequate: Ambedkar emphasised abolishing untouchable practices, while Gandhi stressed changing **social conscience**, which remains resistant despite post-Independence laws.
- Wadekar views **formal rule of law** as an emancipatory break from entrenched caste norms; its effectiveness depends on **legal consciousness** shaped by everyday experiences and interactions with caste, patriarchy and Brahmanism.
- Laws have curtailed overt exclusion from wells, public spaces and institutions and reduced violence against Dalit workers; **rights protection** enables resistance, although limited resources and unequal power constrain **legal remedies**.

Changing Discrimination and Social Barriers

- Discrimination includes traditional atrocities and **reactionary atrocities** against Dalit advancement; increased **social mobility** generates dominant-caste resentment, reflected in the Reservation Hatao Andolan and resistance to equal privileges.
- **Social norms** sustain untouchability as internalised “notions in the mind” among Dalits and non-Dalits; weak **inter-caste interaction**, including limited public inter-dining and intermarriage, obstructs change.
- Rodrigues advocates reviving **social reopening** attempted during 1939–1949 through institutions that prevent caste prejudice taking root in children; both the State and **non-state actors** must participate.

Beyond Criminal Punishment

- Wadekar questions reliance on **harsher punishment** because adjudicators also carry social prejudices; criminal law’s **deterrent value** can prevent some atrocities but cannot eliminate caste discrimination.
- **Civil remedies** merit exploration because criminal prosecution requires proof beyond reasonable doubt; the POSH Act offers an alternative model, while **local dispute resolution** through some Sharia adalats and Gram Sabhas illustrates accessible mechanisms.
- Rodrigues proposes strengthening the **common** through textbooks, teacher training and urban planning; normalised **segregation**, including separate Anganwadis, water taps and residential spaces for Dalits, must be challenged.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Economic Foundations of Caste Exclusion

- **Land access:** Limited land access can reinforce livelihood dependence; Punjab's common-land rules reserve one-third of cultivable land offered for lease auction for Scheduled Caste applicants.
- **Occupational segregation:** Caste-linked work restricts livelihood choices; International Labour Organization observations identify manual scavenging imposed on Dalits because of social origin as employment discrimination.
- **Credit access:** Enterprise finance can support productive asset creation; Stand-Up India provided ₹10 lakh–₹1 crore loans for greenfield businesses to eligible Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and women borrowers.
- **Labour dependence:** Employer control can obstruct occupational exit; Human Rights Watch's 2014 investigation documented withheld wages and eviction threats against workers seeking to leave manual scavenging.
- **Market discrimination:** Qualifications alone may not secure equal opportunities; Thorat and Attewell's correspondence research documented caste discrimination against similarly qualified applicants in private-sector recruitment.
- **Economic boycotts:** Denying employment or trade can enforce caste exclusion; the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act expressly criminalises imposing or threatening economic boycotts.
- **Enterprise opportunities:** Assured market access can strengthen economic independence; central public-procurement policy sets a 4% annual procurement target for micro and small enterprises owned by Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe entrepreneurs.

3. To combat pollution, we need to cast a wider net, go beyond the city (GS Paper III Environment)

This editorial '**To combat pollution, we need to cast a wider net, go beyond the city**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 9th Oct 2026, highlights the need for **science-driven, airshed-based** pollution management amid worsening emissions and climatic conditions.

Pollution Sources and Policy Priorities

- **PM2.5** travels farther and poses greater health risks than PM10; findings from the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (**SAFAR**) attributed around 40% of Delhi's PM2.5 emissions to transport.
- The **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)** links funding and performance assessment to **PM10 reduction**, disproportionately prioritising dust over major fine-particle sources despite earlier scientific findings facing resistance.

- Delhi's **Winter Action Plan**, including road sweeping, higher parking charges and work-from-home provisions under the Graded Response Action Plan, requires attention to **regional climatic drivers** beyond city-level measures.

Climate Risks and Seasonal Emissions

- An exceptionally strong "**Super El Niño**" influenced the monsoon, which ended with a 13% national rainfall deficit, the decade's highest, while Delhi recorded a **17% surplus**; it traps existing pollution rather than generating emissions.
- Research at the **National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS)** suggests reduced winds could restrict **PM2.5 dispersion**, prolonging accumulation from stubble burning, vehicles, biofuel and open waste burning.
- Severe El Niño could nearly eliminate **western disturbances**, reducing rain-driven pollutant removal; milder days and nighttime cooling under stagnant conditions may lower the **inversion layer**, restricting vertical mixing.
- Parts of Punjab and Haryana recorded **23–40% rainfall deficits**, while early rains enabled earlier sowing and possible harvesting from early October; effects on rice output and **stubble burning** remain uncertain.
- Stubble burning appears to have shifted from morning to evening; **MODIS-based fire detection** may miss substantial fires, making **undercounting** a risk to effective mitigation.
- Early-November fireworks may coincide with peak **stubble burning** and established winter conditions; historically difficult November 5–10 conditions could intensify under weaker winds, making **additional emission cuts** crucial during this window.

Airshed-Based Management

- **Climate change** compounds emissions through extreme weather and altered natural pollution drivers across Delhi and the Indo-Gangetic region, requiring simultaneous **short-, medium- and long-term action**.
- The National Air Quality Resource Framework of India (**NARFI**), developed by NIAS under the Principal Scientific Adviser's Office, outlines **airshed-based management**; smaller satellite airsheds offer an operational alternative where full airsheds are impractically large.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Environmental Justice in Air Pollution Control

- **Unequal exposure:** Protection must reflect occupational risks; World Health Organization guidance identifies urban poor people and outdoor workers, including street vendors, as groups particularly exposed to air pollution.
- **Health vulnerability:** Children require particular protection because their lungs are developing; the World Health Organization's 2018 report explains how pollution damages lung function and neurological development.

- **Protection gap:** Clean household energy remains unequal; World Health Organization data show urban populations consistently enjoy greater access to clean cooking fuels than rural populations.
- **Livelihood burden:** Pollution restrictions need income protection; a November 2021 Supreme Court order required States to support construction workers during bans using labour-cess funds.
- **Economic hardship:** Illness also reduces earnings and productive capacity; air-pollution-related premature deaths and illness cost India an estimated \$36.8 billion in lost output in 2019.
- **Fair transition:** Cleaner transport should remain affordable; London's vehicle-scrappage support for its Ultra Low Emission Zone expansion included assistance for lower-income residents, small businesses and disabled people.
- **Public participation:** Community monitoring can reveal neglected pollution hotspots; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 2021 grant programme supported monitoring partnerships in underserved and overburdened communities.