

## EDITORIALS - 9TH SEP 2026

### 1. FALLING EDIFICE

(GS Paper II Governance)

This editorial '**Falling edifice**' was published in **The Hindu** on 9th Sep 2026, highlights how Delhi's **student-housing shortage** and **weak civic regulation** undermine its ambition to become an **education hub**.

#### *Student-Housing and Safety Crisis*

- A **five-storey hostel** collapse killed seven and injured five, exposing Delhi's unsafe, haphazard urban development.
- Over **70,000 students** enter Delhi University annually; nearly half require housing despite severe campus accommodation shortages.
- Delhi University's withdrawal from **housing responsibility** and limited land have enabled largely unregulated private operators.
- Students face high rents, **cramped rooms**, poor ventilation and buildings violating fire-safety and construction regulations.
- Delhi's **education-hub ambition** remains untenable without affordable, safe housing protecting students' security, sanitation and well-being.

#### *Institutional Response and Required Reforms*

- Delhi suspended five civic officials, ordered an inquiry and proposed mandatory **structural audits** and safety certification.
- Such **reactive measures** remain inadequate; the 2024 coaching-centre flooding similarly produced probes without systemic reform.
- The **Centre, Delhi government** and educational institutions must jointly expand residential, transport and learning infrastructure.
- Four-year undergraduate programmes extend student stays, intensifying pressure on already inadequate **campus accommodation** and private housing.

- Private hostels remain necessary, but unsafe buildings, **illegal construction** and absent audits require stringent policy enforcement.

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### *Rights-Based Framework for Student Tenancies*

- **Contractual certainty:** The Model Tenancy Act, 2021 requires written agreements specifying rent, tenure, maintenance duties, entry conditions and rent revision.
- **Deposit protection:** The Model Tenancy Act caps security deposits for residential premises at two months' rent, limiting excessive upfront financial burdens.
- **Service security:** Rent Authorities can restore essential services withheld by landlords, protecting tenants against coercive disconnection of water or electricity.
- **Gender equality:** UGC regulations clarify that women's safety cannot justify discriminatory hostel rules compared with those imposed on male students.
- **Verified accommodation:** Delhi's proposed GovPG portal would display registered properties, rents, occupancy, amenities, inspection dates and compliance records.
- **Participatory oversight:** Delhi's draft policy proposes Accommodation Committees comprising students, faculty, municipal officials and police representatives.
- **Enforcement model:** Bengaluru inspected 321 PG facilities in January 2026, sealing two and penalising operators for safety and hygiene violations.

## 2. PERILOUS RETREAT

### (GS Paper II Governance)

This editorial '**Perilous retreat**' was published in **The Hindu** on 9th Sep 2026, highlights how weakening **gram sabha consent** threatens tribal land rights, autonomy and livelihoods.

### *Dilution of Gram Sabha Consent*

- Lowering **Forest Rights Act** safeguards poses an existential threat to forest-dependent communities and their land rights.
- The **Committee on Public Undertakings** proposes majority approval instead of consent from every project-affected gram sabha.
- Accepting **70–75% consent** reduces gram sabhas from constitutional rights-bearing bodies to ordinary corporate shareholders.
- Developers could bypass directly affected villages while securing **no-objection certificates** from larger, less-affected settlements.
- Altering community classification through **demographic composition** could divide village assemblies and facilitate engineered consent.

### *Legal, Institutional and Developmental Concerns*

- The **Tribal Affairs Ministry's** jurisdictional refusal creates a regulatory vacuum enabling unchecked alteration of forest-diversion rules.
- Although the **FRA** lacks an explicit universal consent clause, claiming no legal requirement exists is misleading.
- The government is expanding **energy infrastructure**, including Teesta-IV, despite the FRA's commitment to correcting historical injustices.
- Any dilution must occur through **open lawmaking**, while the Tribal Affairs Ministry must defend community protections.
- Bureaucratic manoeuvres threaten land-based **livelihoods and identity**, alongside tribal communities' cultural and political autonomy.
- Recognising tribal environmental contributions requires strengthening gram sabha powers under **LARR** and **PESA** in Scheduled Areas.

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### *Judicial Doctrine on Community Consent*

- **Constitutional protection:** Article 244 and the Fifth Schedule provide specialised governance safeguards against land alienation and exploitation in Scheduled Areas.
- **Samatha precedent:** In *Samatha v. State of Andhra Pradesh* (1997), the Supreme Court invalidated private mining leases in Andhra Pradesh's Scheduled Areas.
- **Niyamgiri ruling:** In *Orissa Mining Corporation v. MoEF* (2013), gram sabhas were empowered to assess mining's impact on community and religious rights.
- **Democratic veto:** Following the Niyamgiri judgment, all 12 consulted gram sabhas unanimously rejected Vedanta's proposed bauxite-mining project.
- **Prior settlement:** Section 4(5) of the Forest Rights Act prohibits eviction until recognition and verification of forest-right claims are completed.
- **Statutory consultation:** PESA requires consultation before land acquisition and prior recommendations for minor-mineral licences or leases in Scheduled Areas.
- **Consent safeguard:** Section 41 of the LARR Act, 2013 requires prior gram sabha consent before land acquisition in Scheduled Areas.

### 3. INDIA-JAPAN DEFENCE COOPERATION BREAKS NEW GROUND

#### *(GS Paper II International Relations)*

s editorial '**India-Japan defence cooperation breaks new ground**' was published in **The Hindu** on 9th Sep 2026, highlights India and Japan's shift from **institutional convergence** towards operational, industrial and wider Indo-Pacific **security cooperation**.

#### *From Strategic Convergence to Operational Capability*

- Japan's Defence Minister's **August 2026 visit** sought to convert extensive institutional engagement into an operational security partnership.

- Annual dialogues, exercises and the **2+2 mechanism** established convergence but delivered limited operational and industrial outcomes.
- Shared concerns include coercive status-quo changes, **maritime commons** security and growing Indo-Pacific militarisation.
- The new maritime framework prioritises **information-sharing** and Maritime Domain Awareness across Japan's Pacific and India's Indian Ocean theatres.
- Closer coordination can improve **strategic awareness**, interoperability and operational familiarity between both maritime powers.

### *Defence-Industrial and Military Cooperation*

- Joint **naval shipbuilding** combines Japanese technology with Indian production, alongside reciprocal ship-repair arrangements.
- Japan may use Indian manufacturing under **Make in India**, addressing prolonged defence-industrial underperformance.
- The proposed **UNICORN system** transfer builds upon Bharat Electronics Limited's November 2024 co-development memorandum.
- Cooperation between **DRDO and ATLA** signals growing emphasis on implementing concrete defence-technology projects.
- Japan's first Indian participation in **Veer Guardian 2026** accompanies plans for complex, short-notice and unmanned-system exercises.
- Cooperation among **special forces** and integrated theatre commands further shifts bilateral ties towards operational preparedness.

### *Wider Indo-Pacific Partnership*

- Koizumi's visit to the Western Naval Command and **INS Chennai** reflects Japan's engagement with India's western maritime interests.
- Cooperation covers critical sea lanes, energy flows and India's growing **western Indian Ocean** responsibilities.
- Both oppose coercion and threats to **freedom of navigation** without explicitly naming China.

- Maritime security, resilient supply chains, defence manufacturing and **third-country cooperation** broaden ties beyond a China-centric agenda.
- Defence cooperation links India's industrial capacity with Japanese technology, reinforcing the **July 2026 Summit's** economic-security commitments.

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### *Structural Constraints on Defence Cooperation*

- **Export safeguards:** Japan's April 2026 reforms eased defence exports, but transfers still require strict scrutiny, end-use controls and compliance with international obligations.
- **Cost barrier:** India's proposed purchase of ShinMaywa US-2 amphibious aircraft stalled over pricing, offsets, domestic production and technology-transfer conditions.
- **Tender reluctance:** Mitsubishi and Kawasaki earlier avoided India's Project 75(I) submarine tender, reflecting Japanese caution regarding competitive procurement and technology-sharing.
- **Industrial limitation:** Japan's defence industry historically depended on domestic procurement, restricting production scale and weakening cost competitiveness in India.
- **Technology friction:** Despite the 2015 classified-information agreement, intellectual-property protection and technology absorption remain difficult during advanced co-development negotiations.
- **Geopolitical divergence:** India retained close Russian defence ties after the Ukraine war, while Japan aligned with G7 sanctions and supported Kyiv.
- **Commitment ceiling:** The 2020 Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement enables reciprocal logistics, but creates neither a military alliance nor collective-defence obligation.