

## Editorial of the Day – 26.12.2025

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### 1. Doping Menace- On Indian Sport and Dope Positive Cases(TH)

#### General Studies 2- Governance

**Topic-** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.( Sports Governance, Statutory Bodies (NADA), Health and Integrity in Sports.)

Doping Menace- A Credibility Crisis for Indian Sports

Introduction- The Paradox of Indian Sports

India aspires to become a global sporting powerhouse, aiming to host prestigious events like the 2036 Olympics. However, this ambition is severely compromised by a persistent doping crisis. India has repeatedly topped global charts for dope-positive cases, undermining its credibility. This issue is not merely about individual athletes erring but reflects deeper structural weaknesses in incentives, enforcement, and awareness within the country's sports ecosystem.

#### Doping as a Strategic Barrier

**Credibility Crisis-** India has been ranked as the country with the highest number of dope-positive cases for the third consecutive year.

**Threat to Hosting Aspirations-** India is preparing to host the 2029 World Police and Fire Games and the 2030 Centenary Commonwealth Games. High doping rates weaken the geopolitical leverage required for a successful 2036 Olympics bid. **Reputational Damage-** Persistent doping scandals erode international trust and cast doubt on the legitimacy of Indian athletes' achievements.

#### Statistical Reality- What the Data Reveals

**WADA Report (2024)-** The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) data presents a grim picture

**India-** Recorded 260 Adverse Analytical Findings (AAFs) out of 7,113 tests, resulting in a 3.6% positivity rate.

**Global Comparison-** India far exceeded other nations like France (91 cases) and Italy (85 cases).

**Testing Volume-** Despite the high number of positive cases, India ranked only seventh in total testing volume, suggesting the problem might be even more widespread if testing were scaled up further.

**Post-COVID Trends-** The positivity rate has remained stubbornly high 2022- 3.2%, 2023- 3.8%

#### Official Response vs. Ground Realities

**NADA's Stance-** The National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) defends the numbers, arguing that higher positivity is a result of expanded targeted testing. They highlight a dip to 1.5% positivity in 2025 (up to Dec 16) as a sign of improvement.

**Initiatives Taken-** Launch of the 'Know Your Medicine' app to help athletes check banned substances. Increased awareness drives across sporting camps.

**Systemic Failures-** Despite these measures, ground realities indicate a "systemic malaise" Frequent incident of athletes literally evading tests (running away from collection officers). Suspensions of support staff, indicating an organized culture of doping rather than isolated incidents.

#### Structural Incentives & The Root Cause

**Perverse Incentives-** The current reward system encourages "win at all costs"

**Sports Quota Jobs-** Guaranteed government employment for medal winners.

**Cash Rewards-** Massive financial incentives for podium finishes. These benefits often push athletes to take health risks and shortcuts via doping.

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**Legal Framework-** The National Anti-Doping (Amendment) Bill, 2025 aims to strengthen the legal framework. However, laws are ineffective without strict enforcement.

## Way Forward- Necessary Reforms

**Institutional Independence-** India must ensure NADA operates with institutional independence, free from political or administrative interference, a key requirement under International Olympic Committee (IOC) scrutiny.

**Adequate Funding-** Increased budget allocation for NADA to upgrade testing facilities and expand the testing pool.

**Scientific Advancement-** Investment in scientifically advanced controls and forensic intelligence to detect sophisticated doping methods.

**Realigning Incentives-** The sports ecosystem needs to value long-term athlete health and ethics over immediate medal tallies.

## Conclusion

To secure its status as a sporting nation and protect its Olympic aspirations, India must treat doping as a systemic challenge rather than a peripheral lapse. A combination of a truly independent NADA, robust funding, and scientific capacity is non-negotiable. Ultimately, aligning athlete incentives with ethics and health is essential to sustain trust, performance, and legitimacy on the global stage.

**Source-** <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/doping-menace-on-indian-sport-and-dope-positive-cases/article70437025.ece>

## 2. After Year of Successes, ISRO Set for Big Leaps(IE)

### General Studies 3- Internal Security

**Topic-** Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention.

## ISRO Set for Big Leaps- Technological Milestones & Future Outlook

### Introduction- A Year of Strategic Evolution

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has concluded the year with landmark successes that underscore India's transition into a major global space power. Moving beyond isolated successes, ISRO has demonstrated a system engineering approach with incremental yet strategic advancements. From the LVM3-M6 heavy-lift launch to the collaborative NISAR mission, these achievements reflect a long-term vision focused on commercial dominance, international partnership, and the ambitious goal of independent human spaceflight through the Gaganyaan programme.

### Key Technological Achievements

#### Heavy-lift Launch Capability (LVM3)

**Record Payload-** The successful LVM3-M6 mission deployed a 6,100 kg commercial satellite, marking ISRO's highest payload delivery to Low Earth Orbit (LEO).

**Dual-Orbit Mastery-** Consecutive successes (LVM3-M5 and M6) prove ISRO's ability to launch heavy satellites to both LEO and Geosynchronous Orbit (GEO)—a capability previously limited to a few elite space agencies.

**Technological Maturity-** This signifies self-reliance in launching heavy communication and observation satellites, reducing dependence on foreign launch providers like Arianespace.

#### Commercial Space Leadership

**Global Provider-** ISRO has successfully launched 434 foreign satellites from 34 countries, establishing itself as a reliable, cost-effective global launch hub.

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**Policy Synergy-** These milestones align with reforms under IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre) and NSIL (NewSpace India Limited), which aim to commercialise space activities and boost private sector participation.

## Strategic Innovation & Scientific Missions

### SpaDeX (Satellite Docking Experiment)

**Capability-** Tests autonomous docking and undocking of spacecraft.

**Significance-** This technology is the foundational building block for the future Bharatiya Antariksha Station (Indian Space Station), on-orbit satellite servicing, and interplanetary sample return missions.

### NISAR (NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar)

**Collaboration-** A high-end joint mission with NASA using dual-frequency Synthetic Aperture Radar.

**Applications-** Critical for disaster management, monitoring climate change, agriculture, and water resource management.

**Stature-** Elevates India from a "beneficiary" of space data to an equal partner in high-end global space science.

### The Gaganyaan Programme

**Objective-** To demonstrate independent human spaceflight capability.

**Upcoming Focus-** Uncrewed missions will validate the Crew Module safety, Environmental Control and Life Support System (ECLSS), and human-rated launch vehicles.

## Broader Policy & Economic Context

**National Space Policy 2023-** Recent achievements validate the policy's focus on capacity building and global competitiveness.

**Strategic Autonomy-** Enhanced launch capabilities reduce reliance on foreign systems for critical communication, navigation, and security needs.

**Economic Potential-** With the global space economy projected to exceed \$1 trillion by 2040, India aims to capture a larger share through downstream applications (data usage) and space startups.

## Challenges Ahead

**Safety vs. Frequency-** Balancing the high operational tempo of commercial launches with the zero-error tolerance required for human missions (Gaganyaan) is a significant operational challenge.

**Space Debris & Sustainability-** Increased launch frequency exacerbates orbital congestion. India must strictly adhere to UN COPUOS guidelines and debris mitigation policies.

**Private Sector Integration-** While frameworks exist, effectively managing regulatory oversight, intellectual property (IP) rights, and national security concerns within the private sector remains complex.

**Resource Constraints-** Deep-space and heavy-lift missions require continuous massive investment in cryogenic technology and ground infrastructure.

## Way Forward

**Human Spaceflight Readiness-** Prioritize rigorous testing of crew escape systems and life support to ensure astronaut safety for Gaganyaan.

**Reusable Technology-** Accelerate development of reusable launch vehicles (RLV) and high-thrust propulsion to drastically reduce launch costs.

**Space Diplomacy-** Leverage the success of NISAR to forge further high-value partnerships for earth observation and climate monitoring.

**Sustainability-** Formulate national guidelines for active debris removal and end-of-life satellite disposal to ensure long-term orbital sustainability.

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**Talent Pipeline-** Invest in academic collaborations to train the next generation of mission specialists and scientists to sustain this growth.

## Conclusion

ISRO's recent trajectory is not just a series of launches but a calculated rise in technological depth. By mastering heavy-lift capabilities, entering the domain of space docking, and preparing for human spaceflight, India is firmly positioning itself as a dominant space power for the coming decade.

**Source-** <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/after-year-of-successes-isro-set-for-big-leaps-10439210/lite/>

