Editorial of the Day – 03.02.2026

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1. A full stop- On the top court, the right to menstrual health and hygiene (TH)

General Studies 2- Polity
Topic- Fundamental Rights
Sub Topic- Significant provisions (Article 21), Rights issues.

Introduction

The Supreme Court of India, in a landmark judgment, has expanded the ambit of Article 21 (Right to Life) to include Menstrual Health and Hygiene, terming it an integral part of human dignity and bodily autonomy. This ruling marks a paradigm shift from a welfare-based approach to a rights-based governance model, directly addressing "menstrual poverty" and its adverse impact on girls' education. The Court has issued stringent directives to States and Union Territories to ensure school sanitation and hold authorities accountable for non-compliance.

Key Constitutional Interpretations (The Judgment)

Expansion of Article 21- The Court declared that the Right to Life and Personal Liberty inherently includes the right to menstrual health and hygiene. Menstruation is recognized not just as a biological process but as a matter of dignity, autonomy, and equality.
Rights-Based Approach- The judgment moves beyond viewing menstrual aid as "charity" or "welfare."
Bodily Autonomy- The Court ruled that true autonomy cannot be exercised without access to-

1. Functional and private toilets.
2. Clean water.
3. Affordable menstrual products.
4. Hygienic disposal systems.

Defining "Menstrual Poverty"- The Court explicitly used the term "Menstrual Poverty" to describe the lack of access to these basic facilities.

1. **Impact on Education-** It noted that this poverty restricts girls' Right to Education and violates their Right to Equality (Article 14) compared to male students and economically privileged peers.
2. **State Responsibility-** The State is legally bound to eliminate the stigma, stereotyping, and humiliation often faced by menstruating girls.

Directives Issued to States & UTs

Mandatory Infrastructure- All States and Union Territories must ensure functional, gender-segregated toilets in *every* school (Government and Private). Facilities must include water, sanitation, and disposal mechanisms.
Strict Accountability & Punitive Measures-

1. **Government Schools-** The State Government will be held directly accountable for any lapses or failures in providing these facilities.
2. **Private Schools-** Non-compliance can lead to severe penalties, including derecognition of the school.

Ground Reality & Structural Gaps

Data Insights (NFHS-5)- While there is improvement (77.3% of women aged 15–24 use hygienic methods), nearly one-fourth (25%) still lack access. This highlights a deep gendered inequity in health infrastructure.

Policy Gaps

1. **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan-** While guidelines exist, implementation has been uneven and episodic.
2. **Role of NGOs-** non-governmental organizations have filled critical gaps, but their efforts are **fragmented** and insufficient to tackle the scale of the problem or dismantle entrenched social stigma.

Way Forward (Systemic Action)

Institutionalization- Move from project-based interventions to making menstrual hygiene a core public health and education priority.

Budgetary Support- Ensure dedicated funds for-

1. Free/Affordable Menstrual products.
2. Sanitation infrastructure maintenance.
3. Waste management systems.

Curriculum Integration- Integrate menstrual health education into school curricula to normalize conversations and reduce stigma for both boys and girls.

Inter-Ministerial Coordination- Foster collaboration between the Ministries of Health, Education, Jal Shakti (Sanitation), and Women & Child Development.

Monitoring Mechanism- Strengthen monitoring systems to ensure continuous compliance by both public and private schools.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's judgment is a historic intervention that transforms menstrual health from a "women's issue" to a fundamental human rights issue. By mandating state accountability and linking menstruation to the constitutional guarantees of dignity and education, the verdict aims to ensure that "a period can end a sentence, not a girl's education."

Source- [https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/a-full-stop-on-the-right-to-menstrual-health-and-hygiene/article70583236.ece#google_vignette](https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/a-full-stop-on-the-right-to-menstrual-health-and-hygiene/article70583236.ece#google_vignette)

2. 'Would like infra projects to come up in all sectors, involve more private finance'- MoF Expenditure Secretary Vumlunmang Vualnam (IE)

General Studies 3- Economy & Environment

Topics- Infrastructure- Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc. & Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

Sub Topic- Ports & Shipping (Shipbuilding Mission, Maritime Development Fund).

Introduction

In a strategic move to diversify India's infrastructure portfolio beyond roads and railways, the Government of India has unveiled a massive ₹69,000 crore Shipbuilding Mission and Maritime Development Fund. Announced in the backdrop of the Union Budget 2026, this initiative aims to reduce India's heavy reliance on foreign shipping, cut logistics costs, and catalyze private sector participation through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP). The strategy reflects a shift from pure budgetary funding to a "partnership-driven development" model, emphasizing logistics efficiency and self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat).

Strategic Shift in Infrastructure Spending

Diversification Goal- While roads and railways have historically dominated capital expenditure (Capex), the government is now pivoting towards shipping, coastal logistics, power, and rail station redevelopment.

Financing Model Transformation- Moving away from pure budgetary support to private finance and PPP models. Shift from traditional EPC (Engineering, Procurement, Construction) contracts to risk-sharing models like HAM (Hybrid Annuity Model) and BOT (Build-Operate-Transfer).
Rationale- PPP models incentivize long-term maintenance and better construction quality, preventing premature asset deterioration.

Shipbuilding Mission & Maritime Development Fund

Core Issue- Currently, only 5% of India’s EXIM (Export-Import) cargo is carried by Indian-owned ships, leading to massive foreign exchange outflows in freight and leasing costs.
₹69,000 Crore Mission
Objective- To bolster domestic shipbuilding capacity for large vessels, coastal ships, and auxiliary maritime assets.
Strategic Impact- Reduces dependence on foreign fleets and strengthens national maritime security.
Maritime Development Fund (MDF)

1. **Function-** Designed to provide long-term finance and risk mitigation for private players entering the capital-intensive maritime sector.
2. **Goal-** To create a conducive financial ecosystem that encourages private investment in shipping.

Logistics Efficiency- expanding domestic shipping is projected to substantially lower India's logistics cost, which currently stands at 13–14% of GDP.

Coastal Shipping & Multimodal Logistics

Cost & Green Efficiency- Coastal shipping is identified as a fuel-efficient and low-cost alternative to road and rail for transporting bulk goods.
Environmental Impact- Supports India’s climate commitments by offering a lower carbon footprint compared to land transport.
Integration- Pilot projects are underway to link rail–road–port connectivity, enhancing last-mile efficiency and multimodal integration.
'Make in India' Boost- Indigenous shipbuilding will generate skilled employment and foster technological capabilities, complementing the Atmanirbhar Bharat vision.

Infrastructure Capex- Current Profile & Private Role

Roads & Railways Dominance- These sectors receive the bulk of Capex due to mature project pipelines and the capacity to absorb funds (e.g., constructing ~10,000 km of highways annually).
PPP Success Stories

1. **Highways-** The Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) has effectively mobilized private capital, with renewed interest in BOT projects.
2. **Railways-** Redevelopment of stations (e.g., Bhopal Railway Station) showcases how private participation can enhance service quality and asset monetization.

Land Monetisation- Railways plan to unlock value by redeveloping prime land near major stations (e.g., New Delhi) to ensure financial viability.

Power Sector Dynamics

Reduced Budgetary Reliance- The power sector no longer features in the top five Capex recipients because CPSUs (Central Public Sector Undertakings) now fund projects through internal resources.
Autonomy- Maharatna and Navratna CPSUs utilize their delegated financial powers to invest without direct budget support.
Strategic Exceptions- The government continues to fund specific strategic projects, such as large hydroelectric projects in Arunachal Pradesh.

High-Speed Rail & Future Financing

Cost Challenges- Projects like the Mumbai–Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail are capital-intensive due to elevated corridors and advanced technology.

Indigenization Path- Costs are expected to fall with the development of indigenous coaches (up to 280 kmph) and signaling systems.
Future Funding- Future corridors will rely on innovative financing packages, including multilateral funding and PPP elements, justified by long-term gains in urbanization and productivity.

Fiscal Federalism (16th Finance Commission)

Vertical Devolution- The Commission has retained the 41% tax devolution share to states, ensuring fiscal stability.
Horizontal Reforms-

1. **New Criterion-** Inclusion of "GDP contribution" as a metric to reward state efficiency and economic performance.
2. **Balancing Act-** Aims to balance redistributive justice (equity) with incentives for growth (efficiency).

Resource Pool- States are encouraged to view these recommendations not as zero-sum losses but as expanding opportunities within a growing national revenue pool.

Conclusion

The announcement of the Shipbuilding Mission marks a pivotal evolution in India's infrastructure strategy—from state-led expansion to partnership-driven development. By activating the Maritime Development Fund and leveraging PPP frameworks, the government aims to solve the twin challenges of high logistics costs and external dependency. This diversified approach, supported by fiscal federalism and indigenous manufacturing, sets the stage for a resilient, $5 trillion economy.
Source- **https-//indianexpress.com/article/business/vumlunmang-vualnam-expenditure-secretary-ministry-finance-projects-sectors-involve-private-finance-10510176/**