# Editorial of the Day – 12.03.2026

## Index


**1. Reforming choice-based education (TH) -01**

**2. Era of gentle trade is over. Global village is being replaced by law of jungle (IE)-03**

**3. A tilted balance (BS) -05**

**4. West Asia- India's strategic clarity amid selective outrage (TP) -06**


## 1. Reforming choice-based education (TH)

**General Studies Paper-** GS II (Governance & Social Justice)

**Topic-** Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education, Human Resources.

**Sub-Topic-** Higher Education Reforms, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, and Institutional Governance.

### 1. Introduction

The Indian higher education landscape is undergoing a paradigm shift from a rigid, "one-size-fits-all" model to a flexible, learner-centric system. The introduction of the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP) under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a historic move to institutionalize multidisciplinary learning. However, the gap between policy ideals—such as personalized academic pathways—and the ground reality of classroom constraints remains a significant challenge for systemic reform.

### 2. The Shift Toward Student-Centric Education

**Personalization-** Moving away from standardized curricula to focus on individual student abilities, needs, and career aspirations.

**Inclusivity-** Recognizing diverse talents by allowing students to define their own academic journey.

**Learner-Centred Pedagogy-** A fundamental transition where the student, rather than the teacher or the institution, becomes the focal point of the educational process.

### 3. Emergence of Multidisciplinary Learning

**Academic Pathways-** Students are no longer confined to "streams." They can now pursue diverse combinations, such as majoring in Physics while minoring in Music.

**Holistic Understanding-** Cross-disciplinary exposure is designed to provide a broader worldview, breaking the "silos" of traditional academic departments.

**Transdisciplinary Approach-** Encouraging the application of knowledge across different fields to solve complex, real-world problems.

### 4. The "Illusion of Choice"- Gaps in Implementation

Despite the promises of the Choice-Based Credit and Semester System (CBCSS) introduced in 2009, several limitations emerged-

**Inconsistent Credits-** Disparities in credit allocation and teaching hours across different departments.

**Departmental Control-** Electives were often pre-determined by departments based on faculty availability rather than student preference.

**Core Dominance-** The majority of courses remained compulsory, leaving very little room for genuine "open courses" or external electives.

### 5. Structural and Institutional Challenges

The successful implementation of FYUGP faces deep-seated structural hurdles-

**Resource Constraints-** Poor student-teacher ratios and large class sizes make personalized mentoring nearly impossible.

**Faculty Burden-** Heavy workloads for teachers limit their ability to innovate or support multidisciplinary pathways.
**Outdated Evaluation-** Traditional, rote-learning-based examination systems are incompatible with flexible, skill-based multidisciplinary learning.
**Infrastructure Gaps-** Many institutions lack the digital and physical infrastructure required to support inter-college or inter-departmental mobility.

## 6. Conclusion

Reforming choice-based education is an essential step toward making India a global knowledge superpower. However, flexibility must be more than a symbolic policy promise. For FYUGP to succeed, it requires a systemic transformation—including teacher training, pedagogical innovation, and massive infrastructure investment—to translate "choice" from an abstract concept into a meaningful classroom reality.

Source- [https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/reforming-choice-based-education/article70732453.ece](https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/reforming-choice-based-education/article70732453.ece)

**Question**

**"The transition from a rigid academic structure to a flexible, multidisciplinary Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP) is a cornerstone of NEP 2020. Discuss the structural challenges that hinder the effective realization of 'student choice' in Indian higher education." (250 Words, 15 Marks)**

## 1. Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to revolutionize Indian higher education through the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP). By introducing multiple entry/exit points and multidisciplinary pathways, it seeks to replace the rigid 20th-century model with a student-centric system. However, the path from policy to practice is obstructed by significant structural and institutional bottlenecks.

## 2. Structural Challenges to 'Student Choice'

**Institutional Rigidity-** Most Indian universities operate in silos. Administrative hurdles in credit transfers and the lack of "Academic Bank of Credits" (ABC) implementation at the grassroots level limit student mobility.
**Faculty and Pedagogy-** Multidisciplinary teaching requires specialized training. Currently, a high teacher-student ratio and excessive administrative workloads prevent faculty from adopting the innovative teaching methods required for flexible learning.
**The "Core" vs. "Elective" Conflict-** Due to faculty shortages, colleges often force students to pick from a narrow list of electives that the college can provide, rather than what the student desires, rendering the "choice" symbolic.
**Evaluation Mismatch-** While the curriculum is changing to be choice-based, the evaluation system remains largely centralized and standardized, focusing on summative assessments rather than continuous, skill-based evaluation.

## 3. The Way Forward

To realize the potential of FYUGP, the focus must shift to Institutional Restructuring. This includes-

1. Investing in teacher sensitization and training.
2. Upgrading infrastructure to allow for inter-disciplinary labs and classrooms.
3. Granting greater administrative and financial autonomy to colleges to design their own elective baskets based on local industry needs.

## 4. Conclusion

The success of choice-based education in India depends on bridging the gap between "Policy Vision" and "Institutional Capacity." Without deep-seated reforms in faculty recruitment and evaluation

systems, the FYUGP risks becoming a "new label on an old bottle." True student-centricity requires a flexible mindset at the administrative level as much as it does in the curriculum.
Source- [https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/reforming-choice-based-education/article70732453.ece](https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/reforming-choice-based-education/article70732453.ece)

## 2. Era of gentle trade is over. Global village is being replaced by law of jungle (IE)

**General Studies Paper-** GS II (International Relations) & GS III (Indian Economy)
**Topic-** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.
**Sub-Topic-** Geopolitics, De-globalization, Supply Chain Resilience (Friend-shoring/Near-shoring), and India's Trade Strategy.

### 1. Introduction

In 2026, the global economic order is undergoing a structural shift. The traditional model of cooperative globalization—characterized by borderless trade and "just-in-time" efficiency—is being replaced by geoeconomic competition. Rising protectionism, tariff wars, and the weaponization of trade tools have signaled the decline of the post-Cold War era of liberalization. Nations now view economic interdependence not as a stabilizer, but as a potential strategic vulnerability.

### 2. The Concept of "Gentle Trade" (Doux Commerce)

**Philosophical Roots-** Proposed by Enlightenment thinker Montesquieu, the doctrine of *doux commerce* suggested that trade "softens" manners and promotes peace by creating mutual dependence.
**Trade as a Civilizing Force-** For decades, the liberal world order operated on the belief that countries that trade together are less likely to go to war, as conflict would lead to mutual economic destruction.
**Institutional Anchor-** The World Trade Organization (WTO), established in 1995, institutionalized this philosophy by promoting a rules-based, non-discriminatory multilateral trading system.

### 3. The Era of Hyper-Globalization (1990s–2010s)

**Unprecedented Integration-** The period following the Cold War saw the rapid expansion of global value chains (GVCs), particularly after China's entry into the WTO in 2001.
**Efficiency at All Costs-** Corporations prioritized comparative advantage and offshoring, creating highly efficient but brittle supply chains concentrated in a few manufacturing hubs.
**Growth and Poverty Reduction-** This era contributed significantly to global GDP growth and lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty, particularly in emerging economies like India and China.

### 4. The Rise of Geoeconomic Competition

In 2026, geoeconomic confrontation has emerged as a top global risk.
**Weaponization of Trade-** Trade is now used as a tool of foreign policy through export controls, sanctions, and technology restrictions (e.g., semiconductors and AI).
**Technology Rivalry-** Strategic sectors like telecommunications, quantum computing, and green tech are at the heart of global power struggles between major blocs.
**Tariff Proliferation-** The resurgence of broad-based tariffs, particularly between the US and China, has led to Geoeconomic Fragmentation, where trade is increasingly restricted to politically aligned "blocs."

### 5. From Efficiency to Resilience- Supply Chain Reconfiguration

**The Lessons of Disruption-** The COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia–Ukraine War exposed the "fragility of hyper-efficiency," where a single bottleneck could paralyze global industries.
**Near-shoring and Friend-shoring-** Countries are relocating production to geographically closer nations (near-shoring) or politically trusted allies (friend-shoring) to ensure economic security.

**Strategic Autonomy-** Nations are adopting industrial policies—like the US Inflation Reduction Act or the EU's Green Deal—to promote domestic manufacturing of critical components.

## 6. Implications for India in 2026

India is positioning itself as a pivotal "alternative hub" in this new fragmented order.

**Alternative Supply Chain Hub-** Through the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) 2.0 and the India Semiconductor Mission, India aims to capture the "China Plus One" manufacturing shift.

**Strategic Trade Pacts-** India is diversifying its trade by concluding multiple Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with the UK, EU, and EFTA, moving away from over-reliance on single markets.

**Digital Governance Benchmark-** With the implementation of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act and GST 2.0, India is building a resilient internal "fortress market" that also serves as an incubator for global exports.

**Defense and Energy Sovereignty-** India's target of ₹50,000 crore in defense exports by 2029 and its lead in green hydrogen reflect its pursuit of geoeconomic sovereignty.

## 7. Conclusion

The decline of traditional globalization is not the end of trade, but its "rewiring." While the quest for resilience is necessary, an over-correction toward extreme protectionism risks secular stagnation and increased global inflation. For India, the challenge lies in balancing its "Atmanirbhar" (self-reliant) objectives with its role as a shaper of the new global

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/shashi-tharoor-writes-era-of-gentle-trade-is-over-global-village-is-being-replaced-by-law-of-jungle-10577259/?ref=todays-paper

**Question**

**"The global shift from 'Efficiency-driven Globalization' to 'Resilience-driven Geoeconomics' represents a fundamental change in the world order. Analyse the factors behind this transition and evaluate India's readiness to emerge as a reliable alternative in the global supply chain." (250 Words, 15 Marks)**

## 1. Introduction

In 2026, the world is witnessing "multipolarity without multilateralism." The decline of the WTO-led cooperative trade era has given way to geoeconomic fragmentation, where nations prioritize supply-chain sovereignty and "friend-shoring" over traditional comparative advantages.

## 2. Factors Behind the Transition

**Strategic Vulnerability-** The pandemic and geopolitical shocks (Russia-Ukraine, Red Sea crises) proved that hyper-efficient supply chains are brittle.

**Weaponization of Interdependence-** Trade tools like export controls on critical minerals and semiconductors are now used to achieve geopolitical leverage.

**Rise of Economic Nationalism-** Major economies have pivoted to Offensive Industrial Policies (e.g., PLI in India, CHIPS Act in the US) to protect national security interests.

**Technological Decoupling-** The "Data and AI race" has forced nations to treat technology as a sovereign asset rather than a global commodity.

## 3. India's Readiness as an Alternative Hub

India has significantly improved its geoeconomic standing-

**Policy Execution-** Realized investments in PLI schemes (over $22 billion) have converted policy intent into measurable manufacturing scale, especially in electronics and biopharma.

**Infrastructure and DPI-** The "Digital Public Infrastructure" (DPI) and improved logistics have reduced the cost of doing business, making India a "trusted" digital partner.

**Strategic Partnerships-** By signing nine FTAs in three years, India has secured preferential access to ~70% of global GDP, reducing market-specific risks.

**Endogenous Strengths-** A vast, increasingly high-skilled human capital base and a continental-scale domestic market provide an "insulator" against global shocks.

## 4. Conclusion

While India is well-poised to be a "shaper" of the new order, challenges remain in regulatory consistency and land-labour reforms. To truly emerge as a global hub, India must continue its transition from a market participant to a "Systemic Resilience Architect" in the 21st-century global economy.

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/shashi-tharoor-writes-era-of-gentle-trade-is-over-global-village-is-being-replaced-by-law-of-jungle-10577259/?ref=todays-paper

# 3. A tilted balance (BS)

**General Studies Paper-** General Studies Paper III – Indian Economy

**Topic-** Fiscal federalism and Centre–State financial relations.

**Sub-Topic-** Public finance and fiscal responsibility

## Introduction

Fiscal federalism in India governs the distribution of financial resources between the Union and the States. The Finance Commission plays a central role in recommending tax devolution and grants to maintain fiscal balance. However, debates continue regarding the fairness of resource distribution and the relative fiscal responsibilities of the Centre and States.

## 1. Nature of Fiscal Imbalance in India

1. India's federal structure exhibits vertical fiscal imbalance, where the Union collects a larger share of revenues while states bear significant expenditure responsibilities.
2. States are responsible for major sectors such as health, education, agriculture, and infrastructure development.
3. Finance Commission transfers aim to correct this imbalance through tax devolution and grants-in-aid.

## 2. Concerns Regarding Fiscal Discipline

1. The Union government often emphasises fiscal discipline and responsible spending by states.
2. However, critics argue that the Centre's own fiscal policies, including off-budget borrowing and expanded welfare schemes, also contribute to fiscal pressures.
3. This raises questions about equitable accountability in fiscal management.

## 3. Role of Cesses and Surcharges

1. A growing share of central tax revenue is collected through cesses and surcharges, which are not part of the divisible pool shared with states.
2. This reduces the effective share of states in central tax revenues.
3. States argue that this practice weakens the spirit of fiscal federalism.

## 4. Conditional Transfers and Central Schemes

1. Many central transfers to states occur through centrally sponsored schemes with specific conditions.
2. Such schemes may limit the financial autonomy and policy flexibility of states.
3. States sometimes face difficulties in meeting the matching fund requirements for these schemes.

## 5. Implications for Cooperative Federalism

1. Imbalances in fiscal relations can lead to tensions between the Centre and the States.
2. Strengthening transparency and ensuring fair resource distribution are essential for cooperative federalism.
3. Effective coordination is necessary to ensure efficient public service delivery and balanced development.

## Conclusion

A balanced fiscal federal framework requires equitable sharing of resources and mutual fiscal responsibility between the Union and the States. Strengthening transparency in revenue sharing and reducing fiscal distortions can enhance cooperative federalism and sustainable economic governance in India.

Source- https-//www.business-standard.com/amp/opinion/columns/a-finance-commission-that-questions-states-but-spares-the-union-government-126031101376_1.html

**UPSC Mains Practice Question**

**Q. Fiscal federalism in India faces challenges due to imbalances in revenue sharing and fiscal responsibilities between the Union and the States. Examine these challenges and suggest measures to strengthen cooperative fiscal federalism. (250 words)**

**Model Answer**

## Introduction

Fiscal federalism refers to the distribution of financial powers and resources between different levels of government. In India, the Finance Commission recommends the sharing of taxes and grants between the Union and the States to maintain fiscal balance and support development.

## Challenges in Fiscal Federalism

**1. Vertical Fiscal Imbalance**

1. The Union collects a larger share of revenues, while states undertake major expenditure responsibilities.

**2. Increasing Use of Cesses and Surcharges**

1. Revenues from cesses and surcharges are not shared with states, reducing their effective fiscal share.

**3. Conditional Transfers**

1. Centrally sponsored schemes often require matching contributions from states, limiting fiscal flexibility.

**4. Fiscal Accountability Issues**

1. Both Union and state governments face challenges in maintaining fiscal discipline and transparent budgeting.

## Measures to Strengthen Fiscal Federalism

**1. Expanding the Divisible Pool**

1. Reducing excessive reliance on cesses and surcharges.

**2. Strengthening Finance Commission Mechanisms**

1. Ensuring transparent and equitable resource distribution.

**3. Greater Fiscal Autonomy for States**

1. Allowing states more flexibility in designing development programs.

## Conclusion

Strengthening fiscal federalism requires balancing equity, efficiency, and accountability in resource distribution. Cooperative financial relations between the Union and States are essential for ensuring sustainable development and effective governance.

Source- https-//www.business-standard.com/amp/opinion/columns/a-finance-commission-that-questions-states-but-spares-the-union-government-126031101376_1.html

# 4. West Asia- India's strategic clarity amid selective outrage (TP)

**General Studies Paper-** General Studies Paper II – International Relations

**Topic-** India and West Asia relations.

**Sub-Topic-** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

## Introduction

West Asia remains one of the most strategically significant regions for India due to its importance for energy security, trade, and the presence of a large Indian diaspora. In the context of ongoing conflicts and geopolitical rivalries in the region, India faces the challenge of maintaining a balanced diplomatic approach while safeguarding its national interests.

## 1. Strategic Importance of West Asia for India

1. The region supplies a large share of India's crude oil and natural gas imports.
2. West Asia hosts millions of Indian expatriates, whose remittances contribute significantly to the Indian economy.
3. The region is also important for maritime trade routes and regional stability.

## 2. Complex Geopolitical Landscape

1. West Asia is characterised by multiple rivalries and shifting alliances, including tensions involving Iran, Israel, and several Gulf countries.
2. Regional conflicts often involve major global powers, increasing geopolitical complexity.
3. These dynamics require careful diplomatic engagement from external factors such as India.

## 3. India's Balanced Diplomatic Strategy

1. India maintains strong relations with Israel, Iran, and Arab Gulf states simultaneously.
2. Cooperation with Israel focuses on defence technology, agriculture, and innovation.
3. Engagement with Gulf countries emphasises energy partnerships, trade, and diaspora welfare.
4. Relations with Iran remain important for connectivity projects and regional stability.

## 4. Importance of Strategic Autonomy

1. India follows a policy of strategic autonomy, allowing it to avoid taking sides in regional conflicts.
2. This approach enables India to maintain constructive relations with multiple partners.
3. Strategic neutrality also helps protect economic and security interests.

## 5. Challenges in Maintaining Balance

Escalating regional conflicts may create pressure on countries to align with particular blocs.

1. Domestic political narratives and international expectations may complicate foreign policy decisions.
2. Ensuring the safety of Indian citizens in conflict zones is another critical challenge.

## Conclusion

India's foreign policy in West Asia requires a pragmatic and balanced approach that prioritises national interests over geopolitical alignments. By maintaining strategic autonomy and engaging constructively with all regional actors, India can safeguard its economic and security interests while contributing to regional stability.

**UPSC Mains Practice Question**

**Q. India's approach to West Asia reflects a strategy of balancing diverse partnerships while maintaining strategic autonomy. Discuss the challenges and significance of this approach in the context of regional conflicts. (250 words)**

**Model Answer**

## Introduction

West Asia holds immense strategic importance for India due to its role in energy supply, trade routes, and the presence of a large Indian diaspora. The region's complex geopolitical landscape requires India to pursue a balanced and pragmatic diplomatic strategy.

## Significance of India's Balanced Approach

**1. Energy Security**

1. West Asia remains a major source of India's oil and gas imports, making stable relations essential.

**2. Diaspora and Economic Interests**

1. Millions of Indians working in Gulf countries contribute through remittances and economic engagement.

**3. Strategic Partnerships**

1. India maintains strong relations with Israel for defence cooperation and with Gulf countries for economic and energy ties.

## Challenges

**1. Regional Conflicts**

1. Ongoing tensions between regional actors complicate diplomatic balancing.

**2. External Pressures**

1. Global powers may expect India to align with their geopolitical positions.

## Conclusion

India's strategy of maintaining balanced relations and strategic autonomy allows it to protect national interests while navigating the complexities of West Asian geopolitics. This approach strengthens India's role as a pragmatic and independent global actor.

Source- https-//dailypioneer.com/news/west-asia-india-s-strategic-clarity-amid-selective-outrage