

Daily Editorial Analysis 3 December 2025

December 3, 2025 • vajiramandravi.com

The Dismal State of India's Environment

Context

- From the degrading ridges of the Aravalli range to the hazardous smog of the National Capital Region and the alarming spread of groundwater contamination across northern states, a web of interconnected **ecological emergencies** is unfolding.
- While each of these developments may appear geographically and thematically distinct, together they paint a picture of systematic neglect and exploitation of the nation's ecological foundations.
- Together, these developments reveal a pattern of **regulatory dilution extractive policymaking** that threatens both the environment and public health.

The Aravalli Crisis: A Symbol of Systemic Exploitation

- The Aravalli range, stretching from Gujarat to Haryana, has served for millennia as a natural barrier against desertification, a cradle of biodiversity, and **a foundation of cultural history**.
- Yet illegal mining has already stripped large sections of these ancient hills.
- The recent decision to exclude elevations below 100 metres from mining protections effectively provides **a licence to destroy nearly 90% of the range**, inviting further degradation.
- This move prioritises short-term commercial extraction over long-term ecological stability, threatening to accelerate desertification and undermine regional climate resilience.

Air Pollution and Public Health: A Slow-Motion Emergency

- Northern India continues to face **one of the world's most severe air-quality crises**, with Delhi entering its annual smog season marked by dense clouds of particulate matter, dust, and toxic emissions.
- This recurrent haze has evolved into **a full-scale public health emergency**, with estimates of up to 34,000 pollution-related deaths annually in just ten major cities.
- Despite this, air-quality initiatives remain underfunded, inconsistently implemented, and administratively fragmented, reflecting a failure to treat air pollution as the urgent national crisis that it is.

Groundwater Contamination: An Emerging Catastrophe

- Groundwater assessments have revealed **dangerously high uranium levels** in significant portions of Delhi, Punjab, and Haryana's water supplies.

- Chronic exposure to uranium can cause **serious kidney damage, developmental issues, and long-term cancer risks**.
- The presence of such contaminants signals deep failures in water monitoring, aquifer protection, and environmental oversight.
- This is not an isolated concern but part of a widening pattern of soil degradation, unchecked borewell drilling, and regulatory inertia.

Policy Dilution and Regulatory Weakening

- A decade of legislative and executive decisions has contributed to the erosion of India's environmental safeguards. Key examples include:
 - **The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023**, which created expansive exemptions from forest clearances.
 - **The Draft EIA Notification 2020**, which sought to reduce public scrutiny, expand exemptions, and weaken compliance requirements.
 - **The Coastal Regulation Zone Notification 2018**, which relaxed construction restrictions in sensitive coastal ecosystems.
- These measures collectively represent **a sustained weakening of transparency, accountability, and precaution**, enabling large-scale diversion of natural resources.
- Parallel to this regulatory dilution, political funding patterns have raised concerns about environmental policymaking being influenced by corporate interests, further undermining public trust.

Marginalising Communities: A Counterproductive Approach

- Local and indigenous communities, historically central to ecological stewardship, have increasingly been portrayed as obstacles to conservation.
- Authorities have attributed forest loss to the implementation of community rights, despite evidence that forests managed by indigenous groups are often more resilient.
- Proposals such as the eviction of **65,000 families from tiger reserves** contradict the principle that relocations must be voluntary and mutually beneficial.
- This adversarial approach weakens conservation outcomes while **eroding the rights and knowledge** systems of forest-dependent communities.

The Way Forward: Toward a New Environmental Compact

- A sustainable path forward requires a comprehensive reorientation of environmental governance.
- **First**, India must resolve to **halt ongoing ecological destruction**.
 - This includes stopping large-scale deforestation in Great Nicobar, Hasdeo Aranya, and the Himalayan belt, and launching strong crackdowns on **illegal mining and unregulated development** in eco-sensitive regions.
- **Second**, environmental laws weakened in recent years must be **reviewed and, where necessary, reversed**.

- Post-facto environmental clearances should be discontinued, and institutions like the **National Green Tribunal** must be restored to full capacity and independence.
- **Third**, environmental management must operate through **cooperative federalism**, particularly on issues such as air pollution and groundwater contamination that cross state boundaries.

Conclusion

- India's deepening environmental crises arise not from natural inevitabilities but from policy choices that undervalue ecological security.
- Protecting the nation's future requires an environmental philosophy grounded in the rule of law, partnership with local communities, and **recognition of the inextricable link between ecological health and human development**.
- Only through such a transformative approach can India build a safer, more resilient, and more equitable future.

The Dismal State of India's Environment FAQs

Q1. Why is the Aravalli range considered ecologically important?

Ans. The Aravalli range is ecologically important because it prevents desertification, supports biodiversity, and stabilises the regional climate.

Q2. What makes air pollution in northern India a public health emergency?

Ans. It is a public health emergency because toxic smog causes thousands of premature deaths every year.

Q3. What did recent groundwater studies reveal in Delhi, Punjab, and Haryana?

Ans. Recent studies revealed dangerously high levels of uranium in groundwater across these regions.

Q4. How have environmental regulations been weakened in recent years?

Ans. Environmental regulations have been weakened through amendments and notifications that expand exemptions, reduce oversight, and limit public participation.

Q5. What approach is needed to restore environmental governance in India?

Ans. India needs a cooperative, law-based approach that protects ecosystems, empowers local communities, and reverses harmful policy changes.

Source: **The Hindu**

A Template for Security Cooperation in the Indian Ocean

Context

- The convening of the **7th National Security Advisor-level summit** of the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) on November 20, 2025, marked a pivotal moment in the security landscape of the Indian Ocean.

- **Hosted by India** and chaired by National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, the summit gathered senior representatives from Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Mauritius, Bangladesh, Seychelles, and Malaysia.
- The meeting underscored the **CSC's growing relevance as a regional security forum** committed to cooperative approaches within a strategically vital maritime space.

Origins and Reinvigoration of the CSC

- Formed in 2011 as a trilateral grouping between India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives, the CSC initially struggled to sustain momentum due to political changes and **limited convergence on security priorities**.
- Its revival in 2020 represented a turning point, expanding its scope across **maritime security**, counterterrorism, trafficking and organised crime, and cybersecurity.
- Subsequent membership growth, Mauritius in 2022, Bangladesh in 2024, and Seychelles in 2025, reflected increasing regional confidence in the Conclave's purpose.
- This expansion has gradually transformed the CSC into one of the **most active security-focused mechanisms** in the Indian Ocean.

A Region in Flux: The Geopolitical Backdrop

- The 2025 summit occurred amid significant shifts **in the Indo-Pacific's maritime and security frameworks**, marked by fragmented institutions and intensifying great-power competition.
- In this context, the CSC stands out as a regionally anchored platform capable of addressing shared vulnerabilities.
- For India, the Conclave serves as an essential tool to stabilise its maritime neighbourhood and enhance coordination at a time when **the geopolitical balance** is being reshaped by increased Chinese activity in the Indian Ocean.
- The CSC's focus on **non-traditional security challenges**, including illegal fishing, drug trafficking, and maritime terrorism, positions it as a uniquely adaptive body suited to the region's emerging needs.

The Development-Security Nexus

- For many littoral states, **security concerns are inseparable** from developmental priorities.
- Dependence on the ocean for trade, fisheries, and economic growth means that maritime threats directly affect national resilience.
- Issues such as trafficking networks, **marine environmental degradation, and climate-driven disruptions** carry heavy developmental consequences.
- Strengthening maritime surveillance, enhancing domain awareness, and improving emergency response capabilities allow CSC members to pursue security and development goals simultaneously.
- This dual focus strengthens the rationale for deeper cooperation and helps smaller states **translate security gains** into economic opportunities.

Key Outcomes and Strategic Significance of the 2025 Summit

- First, the accession of Seychelles as a full member signalled **deepening regional commitment** to the CSC's mandate.
- Second, India leveraged the summit to **consolidate ties with maritime neighbours** amid heightened geostrategic uncertainty.
- Third, the meeting demonstrated that **security cooperation is emerging as a central pillar of regional integration**, particularly for addressing transnational maritime challenges.
- Finally, Malaysia's participation as a guest opened possibilities for **future expansion**, suggesting that the CSC may evolve into a broader Indian Ocean security platform.

Enduring Challenges: Divergent Perceptions and Institutional Weakness

- Despite these gains, the CSC faces key challenges. The most prominent relates to **divergent perceptions of China**.
- India views China's expanding presence as a strategic concern, whereas many CSC members rely on Beijing as a vital economic partner and therefore do not frame China as a security threat.
- Managing this divergence will be essential for maintaining a cohesive agenda.
- A second challenge stems from the Conclave's **limited institutional structure**.
- Operating primarily at the National Security Adviser level, the CSC lacks dedicated permanent bodies capable of ensuring continuity, policy alignment, and systematic implementation.
- Institutionalising working groups, standard procedures, and long-term cooperation mechanisms will be critical for sustained effectiveness.
- A third concern arises from **domestic uncertainties in member-states**, particularly Bangladesh. Political volatility could affect policy consistency and weaken the group's resilience.

Conclusion

- The CSC has emerged as a **promising and increasingly influential** forum for enhancing security cooperation in the Indian Ocean.
- Its expanding membership, **focus on non-traditional threats**, and growing strategic relevance highlight its potential to address shared regional challenges.
- Its future success, however, depends on achieving **greater cohesion, institutional resilience**, and balanced threat perceptions.
- With sustained commitment, the CSC can evolve into a foundational pillar of security **cooperation in an Indo-Pacific region** undergoing rapid transformation.

A Template for Security Cooperation in the Indian Ocean FAQs

Q1. Why was the 2025 CSC summit significant for the Indian Ocean region?

Ans. The 2025 CSC summit was significant because it strengthened regional cooperation at a time of major geopolitical shifts in the Indian Ocean.

Q2. Which new country joined the CSC as a full member in 2025?

Ans. Seychelles joined the CSC as a full member in 2025.

Q3. What major concern shapes India's approach within the CSC?

Ans. India's approach is shaped by concerns over China's growing presence in the Indian Ocean.

Q4. Why are maritime security and development linked for CSC member-states?

Ans. They are linked because many member-states depend on the ocean for trade, livelihoods, and economic growth.

Q5. What institutional challenge does the CSC currently face?

Ans. The CSC faces the challenge of lacking permanent institutional structures to ensure long-term policy coordination.

Source: **The Hindu**

Haemophilia and the RPwD Act - Bridging the Gap Between Recognition and Entitlements

Context

- The Supreme Court has issued a notice to the Central Government on a petition demanding explicit **recognition of haemophilia** under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 (RPwD Act).
- Despite being already listed within the Act's 21 recognised disabilities, individuals with haemophilia continue to be **denied reservation**, educational support, and welfare entitlements.
- The case highlights **a deeper structural gap** between legal recognition and actual inclusion in India's disability rights regime.

Evolution of Disability Law in India - From the 1995 Act to the 2016 RPwD Act

• Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995

- It was enacted after India signed the "Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asian and Pacific Region".
- Governed by a **medicalised view** of disability, it recognised only 7 disabilities.

• Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

- It was introduced after India ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (**UNCRPD**) in 2007.
- **Major reforms:**
 - Shift from medical model to **socio-medical model** of disability.
 - Expansion from 7 to **21**
 - Introduction of a rights-based framework ensuring equality, dignity, autonomy, and participation.

Scope of Disabilities under RPwD Act, 2016

- **Sensory and physical disabilities:** Blindness, low vision, hearing impairment, locomotor disability, acid attack victims, dwarfism, cerebral palsy, leprosy-cured persons, speech and language disability.
- **Intellectual and psychosocial disabilities:** Intellectual disability, mental illness, autism spectrum disorder, specific learning disabilities.
- **Neurological and neuromuscular conditions:** Multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, muscular dystrophy, chronic neurological disorders.
- **Blood-related and multiple disabilities:**
 - Thalassaemia, haemophilia, sickle cell disease, multiple disabilities including deafblindness.
 - Despite this explicit statutory recognition, haemophilia patients continue to face exclusion from benefits.

Rights vs. Entitlements – The Core Problem

- **Rights available to all PwDs**
 - Equality and non-discrimination
 - Protection from abuse/violence
 - Right to live in the community
 - Inclusive education
 - Accessible voting
 - Access to justice
- **Entitlements limited only to benchmark disabilities (40% or more of a specified disability)**
 - 5% reservation in higher education
 - 4% reservation in government jobs
 - Free education (6–18 years)
- **But**, the 4% job reservation applies only to **five** specific categories, excluding haemophilia and similar conditions. These categories largely mirror the old 7 disabilities of the 1995 Act.

Structural Issues and Ongoing Exclusion

- **Visible vs invisible disabilities:** Reservation prioritises disabilities that are outwardly visible. Conditions like haemophilia, sickle cell disease, multiple sclerosis, and epilepsy remain excluded despite severe functional limitations.
- **Legacy of the 1995 law:** The reservation matrix still reflects the 1995 Act's narrow categories, undermining the expanded intent of the 2016 law.
- **Double disadvantage in employment:** Persons with omitted disabilities face no reservation benefits, and rejection as “medically unfit” in open competition, resulting in **systemic exclusion** from employment.

Why the Haemophilia Litigation Matters

- The case reveals a **design flaw** in India's disability rights architecture – despite such explicit statutory recognition, persons with rare blood disorders continue to face exclusion.
- The petition challenges the **structural mismatch** between – expanded disability recognition vs. static entitlements and reservation categories.
- A favourable verdict could –
 - Extend employment/education entitlements to blood-disorder patients
 - Realign the RPwD Act with its rights-based intent
 - Strengthen social justice, equality, and non-discrimination principles

Challenges

- **Inadequate implementation of the expanded disability list:** Despite legal recognition, institutional frameworks still follow legacy categories.
- **Lack of awareness among authorities:** Recruiting bodies and education authorities hesitate to classify haemophilia patients as eligible for benefits.
- **Medical fitness norms:** Rigid medical standards often invalidate applications from persons with blood disorders.
- **Absence of updated reservation guidelines:** The reservation matrix has not evolved with the expanded definitions in the 2016 Act.
- **Social barriers and stigma:** Stereotypes about “invisible” conditions limit societal and institutional acceptance.

Way Forward

- **Update reservation categories:** Revise Schedule 1 and job quota notifications to ensure all 21 disabilities, including haemophilia, fall under affirmative action schemes.
- **Alignment with UNCRPD principles:** Policies must foreground accessibility, reasonable accommodation, dignity, and participation.
- **Sensitisation of recruiting agencies (e.g., UPSC, SSC):** Clear instructions on recognising benchmark disabilities across all categories.
- **Standardised medical assessment:** Ensure uniform guidelines to evaluate haemophilia and other rare disorders for benchmark disability certificates.
- **Strengthen monitoring mechanisms:** Empower the Chief Commissioner for PwDs and State Commissioners to ensure compliance.

Conclusion

- The haemophilia case exposes a **critical gap** in India's disability governance: recognition without entitlement undermines true inclusion.
- The RPwD Act's progressive rights-based vision remains incomplete unless all disabilities—visible or invisible—receive equal access to employment, education, and social protection.
- **Addressing** the structural misalignment between the law's intent and its implementation is essential for realising **constitutional guarantees** of equality, dignity, and social justice for persons with disabilities.

Haemophilia and the RPwD Act FAQs

Q1. Why is the petition for including haemophilia under the RPwD Act significant?

Ans. Because haemophilia patients face exclusion from reservation and welfare entitlements.

Q2. How did the RPwD Act, 2016 transform India's disability rights framework compared to the 1995 Act?

Ans. It expanded recognised disabilities from 7 to 21, adopted a socio-medical model, and introduced a rights-based, UNCRPD-aligned approach.

Q3. What structural flaw in the reservation framework does the haemophilia case highlight?

Ans. The reservation categories still mirror the old 1995 Act's narrow disability list, excluding several legally recognised disabilities.

Q4. Why do persons with "invisible disabilities" like haemophilia face systematic exclusion from employment?

Ans. They are excluded from PwBD reservations and simultaneously often deemed "medically unfit," leading to a double disadvantage.

Q5. What core issue does the SC's intervention seek to address in the RPwD framework?

Ans. Ensuring that recognition under the Act is matched by entitlements, thereby translating the rights-based intent of the law into real, enforceable inclusion.

Source: IE

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/daily-editorial-analysis-3-december-2025/>

© Vajiram & Ravi. For personal use only.