

Editorial of the Day – 08.10.2025

Index

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Atmanirbharata – Self Reliance (The Hindu) | - 1 |
| 2. India's New Railway Links with Bhutan Matter (The Indian Express) | - 2 |

1. Atmanirbharata – Self Reliance

Atmanirbharta, central to India's philosophy and progress, has historically transformed crises into capabilities. Amid global volatility, self-reliance in finance, technology, and defence is vital to mobilise domestic resources and ensure sustainable, resilient national growth.

Background

Atmanirbharta as a Philosophy – Self-reliance has been central to India's journey, not only as an economic plan but as a way of existence. India has embraced Atmanirbharta with renewed focus, turning ambitious ideas into tangible achievements across sectors.

Historical Milestones of Self-Reliance –

1. **Green Revolution (1960s)** – Ensured food security during droughts.
2. **Digital Transformation (1990s)** – Leveraged talent for national strength.
3. **COVID-19 Pandemic** – Rapid development of indigenous vaccines showcased scientific and manufacturing self-reliance.
4. **Defence Sector** – India advancing towards self-reliance in defence systems.

Need for Financial Self-Reliance

Global Investment Volatility – FDI over \$1 trillion since 2000, but 2024 saw 11% drop in flows and 27% fall in project finance deals.

Risks of External Dependence – Foreign portfolio investments remain volatile, highlighting the need to mobilise domestic resources.

Principle – Unlocking Bharat's wealth is essential to fuel national growth.

Gold as a Strategic Asset

Current Status – Indian households collectively hold close to 25,000 tonnes of gold, the largest private reserve globally, valued at about \$2.4 trillion (over 55% of India's GDP in FY26 terms).

Paradox – Despite this, India imports around 87% of its gold demand, contributing 8% to the total import bill. Between 2010–2013, gold imports accounted for nearly a third of the trade deficit.

Opportunity – This paradox presents a unique chance to mobilise domestic gold for economic growth. Cultural and civilisational attachment to gold requires trust-based, non-coercive mobilisation strategies rather than restrictions.

Revitalising Gold Monetisation – Successful models include investing in assaying facilities, creating innovative gold savings products, and digitising gold flows via mobile apps to bring private gold into formal financial channels.

About Gold Monetisation Scheme – The Gold Monetization Scheme allows individuals to deposit gold in banks and earn interest. The previous attempts failed due to lack of trust and facilities.

Roadmap for Gold Monetisation

Infrastructure – Expand hallmarking and purity testing centres for reliable valuation.

Logistics – Banks to manage funds, while secure centres handle gold movement.

Building Bureaucrats Since 2006

Digitalisation - Enable households to track gold deposits like bank balances.

Trust - Simplify procedures, remove GST and customs friction, ensure direct returns to depositors.

Impact of Revived Gold Monetisation

Lower Borrowing - Funds raised through gold monetisation could cost 4.5%–6.5%, lower than international borrowing.

Ease Pressure - Mobilising even a fraction of household gold could ease import pressures, strengthen the current account, and create a vast pool of domestic capital for infrastructure, manufacturing, and innovation. There will be an overall shift in mindset toward "Bharat Can Fund Bharat"

Way Forward

Infrastructure - Expand hallmarking and purity testing centres to ensure trusted valuation nationwide.

Logistics - Banks can manage funds, while secure collection and testing centres handle gold movement.

Digitalisation - Household depositors should be able to track their gold balances as easily as bank accounts.

Trust - Simplify processes by reducing GST and customs scrutiny, ensuring direct returns to depositors without hidden costs.

Conclusion

Bharat can fuel its own growth by harnessing domestic wealth, ingenuity, and resilience. Trust, foresight, and determination will make India truly self-reliant, defining its development on its own terms.

Source - <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-path-to-progress-that-is-paved-with-gold/article70136341.ece>

2. India's New Railway Links With Bhutan Matter

TOPIC - GS3/ Economy and International relation

Recently, India announced plans to build two cross-border rail lines to Bhutan.

About the New Rail Lines

Strategic Significance - Bhutan is a landlocked country, and the rail line will connect it to India's vast rail network and to Indian ports.

Routes - The total length is about 89 km.

1. Kokrajhar (Assam, India) to Gelephu (Bhutan) - A 69 km line.
2. Banarhat (West Bengal, India) to Samtse (Bhutan) - A 20 km line.

Timeline - The rail lines are expected to be completed within three to four years.

Advantages of the New Rail Lines

Trade and Logistics - It will boost trade by allowing goods to be transported more easily and in larger quantities by trains, compared to existing road routes.

Connectivity - It will give landlocked Bhutan direct access to Indian ports.

Tourism and Jobs - The lines will increase tourism to Bhutan, generating employment for Bhutanese citizens.

India's Policy - The project is a major example of India's Neighbourhood First Policy.

Security - The rail line provides India with an alternative route to connect with its North East Region. This is vital for security, as the Siliguri Corridor (or Chicken Neck), which currently links mainland India to the North East, is extremely narrow (22 km wide at one point) and is a significant security threat.

Building Bureaucrats Since 2006

Indian Infrastructure Strategy – India is developing railways, roads, bridges, and tunnels along borders with China, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Bhutan. Key projects include the Sela Tunnel and the Darbuk–Shyok–Daulat Beg Oldie (DS–DBO) road, aimed at bridging the infrastructure gap with China

The China Factor

Bhutan–China Diplomatic Status – Bhutan is the only country with which China currently does not have diplomatic relations.

China’s Attempts to Influence Bhutan – China has been actively attempting to gain influence in Bhutan, particularly after the 2017 Doklam standoff. China is also expanding infrastructure along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and in South Asia under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), including a railway connecting Xinjiang to Tibet near Ladakh.

India’s Strategic Response – India’s rail line project is a proactive effort to counter China’s influence in the region.

Challenges In Implementation of Rail Line To Bhutan

Topographical and Engineering Hurdles – The rail line must pass through the difficult, mountainous terrain of Bhutan, which requires high engineering standards, especially since the region is a seismic zone prone to earthquakes.

Land Acquisition – Securing land for the project, particularly in India, presents difficulties.

Bureaucratic Delays – Despite the estimated ₹4,000 crore cost, bureaucratic red tape could stall the project.

System Standardization – Issues related to standardizing complex systems, such as the differing signalling systems used by Indian and Bhutanese rail networks, will need to be managed.

Political Risk – Bhutan’s domestic politics or shifts in public sentiment could potentially lead to the government deciding against continuing the rail link.

Funding and Execution – India is providing the entire funding for the project (even aid provided to Bhutan will be used to fund their share). India must ensure timely implementation within the 3–4 year timeframe, as India is often criticised for delays in infrastructure projects compared to China’s rapid execution

Conclusion

The India–Bhutan cross-border railways strengthen economic development, trade, and tourism, enhance connectivity with the Northeast, and bolster strategic preparedness, demonstrating India’s proactive approach to regional integration while countering geopolitical challenges posed by China.

Source – <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/china-south-asia-india-railway-bhutan-jinping-modi-10293099/>