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DATE : **AUGUST 12, 2026**



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1. Referral of FCRA Amendment Bill to JPC Amid Backlash

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Reference to JPC:** Facing widespread opposition across the nation, the Union Government has decided to move a resolution in the Lok Sabha to refer the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC).
- **State Assembly Resolution:** The Tamil Nadu Assembly unanimously passed a resolution urging the Centre to withdraw the Bill in its present form and initiate comprehensive consultations with all stakeholders, including state governments.
- **Protests in Minority-Majority States:** Massive protests erupted in Mizoram, organized by the Council of Churches, over concerns that Christian institutions and minority-run welfare organizations would be disproportionately impacted.

- **Controversial Asset Transfer Provisions:** The Bill proposes transferring the management, sale, and control of assets owned by charitable organizations to a designated authority upon expiry, non-renewal, refusal, or cancellation of their FCRA registration.
- **Autonomy and Judicial Oversight:** Opponents argue that providing sweeping executive powers over land, buildings, and funds without adequate judicial oversight severely compromises the autonomy of educational and social welfare institutions run by minority communities.
- **Need for Stakeholder Dialogue:** Civil society groups and political parties advocate for a consultative legislative approach to balance internal security imperatives with the operational freedom of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Essential Definitions

- **Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC):** An ad-hoc committee set up by Parliament for a specific purpose and duration to examine particular bills, topics, or financial irregularities, comprising members from both Houses and diverse political parties.
- **FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act):** A legislative framework administered by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to regulate the receipt and utilization of foreign funds by individuals, associations, and NGOs in India.



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 26:** Guarantees the fundamental right of religious denominations to manage their own affairs in matters of religion and establish/maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes, subject to public order, morality, and health.
- **Article 30(1):** Protects the rights of religious and linguistic minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
- **Article 300A:** Establishes that no person shall be deprived of their property save by authority of law, ensuring constitutional protection against arbitrary state acquisition.
- **Seventh Schedule (List I, Entry 10):** Places "Foreign Affairs" and foreign contribution oversight under the exclusive legislative domain of the Union Parliament.

Conclusion Referring the FCRA Bill to a JPC highlights the essential parliamentary practice of consensus-building in democratic governance. Balancing national security and financial integrity with fundamental rights and minority institution autonomy remains vital for preserving civic freedom and legal stability.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Indian Constitution (Fundamental Rights, Minority Protections); Government Policies & Interventions; Statutory & Executive Bodies; Role of NGOs and Civil Society.
- **GS Paper III:** Internal Security (Monitoring foreign financial flows and cross-border remittances).

2. Centre Shifts Stand on Consent for Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir Project

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Regulatory Role of CWMA:** The Union Ministry of Jal Shakti clarified in Parliament that the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) acts as the regulator and implementer of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT) award as modified by the Supreme Court in 2018.
- **CWC Appraisal Guidelines:** Central Water Commission (CWC) norms dictate that CWMA must convey its views on whether proposed water utilization aligns with the final SC-modified CWDT award before project clearance.
- **Shift from Previous Stance:** The statement follows a political controversy triggered by the ministry's earlier assertion that the 2018 Supreme Court judgment made "no mention" of requiring lower riparian states' consent for project construction.
- **Inter-State Opposition:** Tamil Nadu vehemently opposes Karnataka's proposed Mekedatu balancing reservoir project, contending that constructing new storage structures upstream will restrict natural river flows and violate allocated water shares.
- **Water Release Directives:** Amid ongoing review meetings, the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) directed Karnataka to release regulated water (3,500 cusecs over 15 days) to fulfill downstream commitments for Tamil Nadu.
- **Pragmatic Dispute Resolution:** The Centre's refined approach reiterates reliance on institutional regulatory mechanisms (CWMA and CWC) rather than unilateral interpretations of judicial mandates.



Essential Definitions

- **Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir Project:** A multipurpose project proposed by Karnataka at Mekedatu across the Cauvery River to supply drinking water to Bengaluru and generate hydroelectric power.
- **Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA):** A statutory body constituted by the Central Government under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956, to implement the final award of the Cauvery tribunal as modified by the Supreme Court.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 262:** Empowers Parliament to adjudicate disputes relating to the use, distribution, or control of waters of any inter-state river or river valley, while barring Supreme Court jurisdiction over such disputes when handled by statutory tribunals.
- **Inter-State River Water Disputes (ISRWD) Act, 1956:** Enacted under Article 262 to set up tribunals for resolving inter-state water conflicts; its awards carry the force of a Supreme Court decree.
- **Seventh Schedule (List II, Entry 17 & List I, Entry 56):** Water supplies and irrigation fall under the State List (Entry 17), subject to the Union List (Entry 56), which empowers Parliament to regulate inter-state rivers in the public interest.

Conclusion Addressing complex inter-state river disputes like the Mekedatu issue demands strict adherence to institutional frameworks established under constitutional provisions. Empowering statutory bodies such as the CWMA and CWRD ensures objective appraisal, balancing upper-riparian development needs with lower-riparian water security.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Indian Constitution (Federalism, Inter-State Relations, Article 262); Statutory Bodies (CWMA, CWRD); Governance and Public Policy Issues.
- **GS Paper I:** Geographical Features (Inter-state river systems, Drainage patterns of Peninsular India, Water resource management).

3. The Mecca Pact and the Rise of Strategic Hedging in West Asia Key

Highlights & Summary

- **Trilateral Security Alignment:** Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Pakistan signed a mutual defence agreement in Mecca, establishing a collective defence commitment where an armed attack on one signatory is treated as an attack on all three.
- **Complementary Capabilities:** The agreement combines unique regional strengths: Saudi Arabia's financial liquidity and energy influence, Türkiye's conventional military might and defense industrial complex, and Pakistan's standing army and nuclear deterrence capability.
- **Shift Towards Strategic Hedging:** The pact reflects regional middle powers moving away from exclusive reliance on Western security guarantees (such as the US) toward self-reliant, autonomous security arrangements.
- **Geopolitical Paradox for Washington:** While the US seeks regional partners to assume greater self-defence burdens, increased strategic autonomy among allies reduces American diplomatic and military leverage in the region.
- **Regional Dynamics:** The pact balances shared border concerns with Iran while creating strategic apprehension for Israel regarding the institutionalized consolidation of military and economic capabilities among key Islamic nations.
- **Strategic Imperatives for India:** New Delhi must secure explicit assurances that the arrangement does not extend to India-Pakistan bilateral conflicts, maintain strong multi-alignment ties with Riyadh, and closely monitor Türkiye's defence transfers to Islamabad.

The Mecca Deal

A trilateral mutual defence pact



SAUDI ARABIA TURKEY PAKISTAN

An armed attack on any one of the three countries will be regarded as an attack on all.

Commits the parties to closer defence cooperation and collective deterrence.

WHAT'S INCLUDED	WHAT IT DOES NOT INCLUDE
Mutual defence guarantee An attack on one is an attack on all.	No explicit nuclear provision No mention of nuclear weapons or a nuclear umbrella.
Legal basis Grounded in Article 51 of the UN Charter – the right to individual and collective self-defence.	No defined scope No clarity on the geographical scope of the guarantee.
Military cooperation Training, exchange of personnel, and joint exercises.	No automatic intervention No specifics on when or how the three countries would be required to intervene.
Intelligence sharing Framework established for deeper intelligence cooperation.	

Essential Definitions

- **Strategic Hedging:** A diplomatic strategy where state actors combine traditional alliance management with alternative security arrangements and military capacity-building to insure against geopolitical uncertainty or abandonment.
- **Collective Defence Clause:** A treaty mechanism specifying that an armed aggression against any member state will be considered an aggression against all signatories, obligating mutual support.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 51 of UN Charter:** Authorizes the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence among sovereign states in the event of an armed attack until the UN Security Council takes necessary measures.
- **Article 51 of Indian Constitution:** Enshrines Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) instructing the State to promote international peace, foster respect for international law, and maintain just relations between nations.
- **Seventh Schedule (List I, Entries 10 & 14):** Equips the Union Parliament with exclusive authority over foreign affairs, international treaties, agreements, and conventions.

Conclusion The Mecca Pact signifies a structural transition in West Asia from externally guaranteed security models toward indigenous regional alliances. India must sustain active diplomatic engagement across West Asia while safeguarding its security interests against shifting regional realignments.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings involving India and affecting India's interests; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.
- **GS Paper II:** Indian Constitution (Directive Principles of State Policy - Article 51; Distribution of Legislative Powers under Seventh Schedule).

4. Resiliency of Regional Parties in the Indian Federal Polity

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Persistence of Electoral Base:** Despite recent electoral setbacks and organizational stress like defection, regional parties continue to retain a resilient and consistent vote share (averaging ~33% over the last four Lok Sabha elections).
- **Voter Bifurcation:** Electorates systematically differentiate between national and state polls, displaying a pronounced preference for regional political formations during Legislative Assembly elections.
- **Organisational Stress vs. Electoral Support:** Recent high-profile defections across regional parties signify institutional vulnerability rather than a decline in underlying voter alignment or constituency support.
- **Shrinking Independent Governance:** Regional parties currently govern only four states independently—the lowest count in two decades—though they remain pivotal partners in ten major state-level governing coalitions.

- **First-Past-The-Post Distortions:** The FPTP electoral model amplifies seat translation outcomes, creating a visual perception of decline during national waves even when core vote shares remain stable.
- **Structural Space in Multi-Party System:** Regional entities remain crucial for accommodating state-specific socio-cultural identities, ensuring democratic contestation against single-party hegemony.

Essential Definitions

- **Regional Political Party:** A political party recognized by the Election Commission of India under the Representation of the People Act, 1951, based on specific electoral performance thresholds within a state.
- **First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) System:** An electoral mechanism where the candidate securing the highest number of votes in a constituency wins, regardless of whether they achieve an absolute majority.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 75 & 164:** Establish executive accountability to the legislature, anchoring parliamentary democracy at central and state levels respectively.
- **Representation of the People Act, 1951 (Section 29A):** Regulates the registration and statutory recognition of political parties by the Election Commission of India.
- **Tenth Schedule (Anti-Defection Law):** Added by the 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act (1985) to prevent political opportunism while balancing floor discipline in legislative houses.
- **Basic Structure Doctrine (Federalism):** Affirmed in *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India (1994)*, identifying federalism and political pluralism as immutable constitutional features.

Conclusion While regional parties face challenges of organizational renewal and defection, their foundational vote base remains intact. Their survival and active participation are indispensably tied to Indian federalism, providing effective representation for regional aspirations alongside national narratives.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Salient features of the Representation of People's Act; Federalism, Center-State relations, and the dynamics of multi-party coalition politics.
- **GS Paper II:** Functions and responsibilities of the Election Commission of India; Impact of proposed reforms like One Nation, One Election on regional political dynamics.

5. India's LPG Import Shifts and Energy Security Imperatives

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Strategic Shift to US Imports:** India has significantly diversified its LPG imports, with approximately 67% coming from the United States to mitigate acute supply disruptions in West Asia and the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Geopolitical Risk Mitigation:** Disruption in the Strait of Hormuz caused West Asian LPG imports to plummet by nearly 85% between February and June 2026, forcing state-run oil marketing companies (OMCs) to secure long-term US contracts.

- **Cost and Transit Disadvantages:** US shipments entail longer transit durations (25-35 days versus 5-10 days from the Persian Gulf) and higher freight expenses, eroding traditional proximity pricing advantages unless Gulf benchmark prices spike.
- **Macroeconomic Vulnerabilities:** Increased reliance on dollar-denominated spot purchases exposes domestic OMCs to currency risks, foreign exchange volatility, and widening under-recoveries, which surpassed Rs 59,000 crore in 2026.
- **Domestic Ramp-up:** To buffer against external supply shocks, Indian OMCs scaled up domestic LPG production by over 35% in Q1 FY27, reaching 55,000 metric tonnes daily.
- **Long-term Strategic Imperatives:** Strengthening local refinery processing, expanding Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPRs), and forging alternative Indo-Pacific partnerships (e.g., Australia) remain essential for comprehensive energy security.

Essential Definitions

- **Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG):** A flammable mixture of hydrocarbon gases, predominantly propane and butane, widely used as domestic cooking fuel and industrial feedstock.
- **Under-Recovery:** The financial gap incurred by state-run Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) when domestic retail selling prices are fixed below international cost-reflective benchmarks.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Petroleum and Minerals Pipelines Act, 1962:** Provides the statutory architecture for the acquisition of right of user for laying pipelines to transport petroleum products across the nation.
- **Seventh Schedule (List I, Entry 53):** Equips the Parliament of India with exclusive legislative competence over petroleum, petroleum products, and other liquids and substances declared dangerous.
- **Energy Conservation Act, 2001:** Framework legislation regulating energy efficiency, consumption standards, and strategic energy conservation initiatives across key economic sectors.



Conclusion While pivoting to US LPG imports safeguards immediate domestic supply continuity amid Middle Eastern conflicts, overdependence on long-haul suppliers introduces freight, currency, and trade policy risks. Achieving resilient energy security requires balancing supplier diversification with enhanced domestic output and robust strategic energy storage.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings and agreements involving India; Effect of policies and politics of developed countries on India's strategic interests.
- **GS Paper III:** Infrastructure (Energy security, supply chain resilience); Indian Economy (Fiscal burden of OMC under-recoveries, import dependency, and external trade balances).

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Prestigious Recognition:** Indian theoretical physicist Deepak Dhar was awarded the prestigious ICTP Dirac Medal for landmark contributions to statistical physics and self-organized criticality, sharing the honor with three international physicists.
- **Second Indian Recipient:** Prof. Dhar becomes only the second Indian scientist to receive the Dirac Medal, following string theorist Ashoke Sen in 2012, highlighting India's growing excellence in fundamental research.
- **Breakthrough Model:** Dhar formulation of the "Abelian sandpile model" established exact mathematical solvability for systems exhibiting self-organized criticality, proving that final steady states remain invariant regardless of cascading sequence.
- **Multidisciplinary Impact:** The mathematical insights behind self-organized criticality allow scientists to model complex non-equilibrium phenomena, including seismic events, forest fire propagation, neural network dynamics, and financial market fluctuations.
- **Distinguished Scientific Career:** Former researcher at TIFR and IISER Pune, Prof. Dhar previously received the Boltzmann Medal in 2022 and the Padma Bhushan in 2023, reflecting a career dedicated to strengthening domestic basic research infrastructure.
- **Role of ICTP:** Founded in 1964 by Nobel laureate Abdus Salam, the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) bridges scientific collaboration between researchers from the Global South and global research hubs.



Essential Definitions

- **Statistical Physics:** A branch of physics utilizing probability theory and statistics to explain macroscopic properties and collective behaviors of large ensembles of microscopic particles.
- **Self-Organized Criticality:** A property of dynamical systems where non-equilibrium complex networks spontaneously evolve toward a critical point where minor perturbations can trigger events of arbitrary scale.
- **Dirac Medal:** An international prize awarded annually by the ICTP to theoretical physicists who have made significant contributions, excluding Nobel Laureates and Fields Medalists at the time of award.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 51A(h):** Enshrines the Fundamental Duty of every Indian citizen to develop scientific temper, humanism, and the spirit of inquiry and reform.
- **Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy (STIP):** National policy framework focused on boosting R&D investments, supporting basic science research, and fostering high-impact technological developments.
- **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) Act, 2023:** Statutory mechanism enacted to seed, grow, and promote research, development, and innovation across India's universities and academic institutions.

Conclusion Prof. Deepak Dhar's Dirac Medal recognition underscores the global value of theoretical science originating from Indian academic institutions. Investing in foundational research through robust funding frameworks is critical for advancing technological self-reliance and cultivating scientific temper across the nation.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology—developments and their applications and effects in everyday life; Achievements of Indians in science & technology; Indigenization of technology and developing new technology.
- **GS Paper II:** Constitutional Provisions (Fundamental Duties under Article 51A); Statutory Frameworks for Research and Higher Education Governance.

7. Panel Recommends Enhanced Relief and Institutional Support under SC/ST Atrocities Rules

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Task Force Recommendations:** An internal task force headed by the Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, recommended comprehensive amendments to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Rules.
- **Inflation-Linked Compensation:** The panel proposed raising mandated financial relief and rehabilitation amounts for atrocity victims to adjust for inflation, replacing current slabs set in 2016 ranging from Rs 85,000 to Rs 8.25 lakh.
- **Institutional Support & Counseling:** Key proposals include setting up specialized Relief and Rehabilitation Cells across States and Union Territories, alongside formal psychological counseling for victims, dependents, and accused individuals.
- **Procedural Fast-Tracking:** Recommendations mandate sending First Information Reports (FIRs) and charge-sheets to designated government officials within 24 hours to prevent procedural delays and ensure immediate administrative intervention.
- **Livelihood & Counter-FIR Safeguards:** The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) separately urged measures to protect livelihoods of tribal communities displaced from land during legal disputes and to check vindictive "counter-FIRs" against atrocity reporters.
- **Background Context:** These administrative review measures follow past statutory revisions made in 2018 that restored strict enforcement provisions following widespread public protests.



Essential Definitions

- **SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989:** A specialized penal statute enacted to prevent crimes, harassment, and structural discrimination against members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

- **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST):** A constitutional body established under Article 338A to safeguard rights, oversee legal guarantees, and evaluate socio-economic development measures for Scheduled Tribes.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 15(4) & 17:** Article 15(4) empowers the State to make special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes or SCs/STs; Article 17 abolishes "Untouchability" and forbids its practice in any form.
- **Articles 338 & 338A:** Establish the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) respectively to investigate statutory violations and monitor constitutional safeguards.
- **SC/ST (PoA) Amendment Act, 2018:** Re-inserted Section 18A to mandate that no preliminary inquiry is required for registering an FIR and no prior approval is necessary for arresting an accused under the Act.

Conclusion Upgrading relief packages to match prevailing inflation and institutionalizing rehabilitation cells strengthens the socio-legal safety net for vulnerable communities. Combining procedural speed with comprehensive psychological support helps fulfill the substantive vision of justice embedded in India's constitutional framework.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Constitutional Provisions & Mechanisms for Vulnerable Sections; Statutory Frameworks, Commissions, and Executive Policies (NCSC, NCST, Ministry of Social Justice).
- **GS Paper II:** Welfare Schemes and Social Sector Interventions; Issues related to administrative implementation and institutional reform.

8. Maintenance of Peace Along the Line of Actual Control and India-China Relations

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Border Peace Linked to Ties:** The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) reaffirmed that maintaining peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is of "utmost importance" and directly determines the broader state of India-China bilateral relations.
- **Alleged Incursions in Arunachal Pradesh:** Fresh reports emerged regarding Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) activity and transgressions in the Upper Subansiri district (Pukar La and Ollo in Taksing circle) of Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Diplomatic Engagements via WMCC:** The issue was highlighted during the 36th meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC), where both nations agreed to utilize existing military and diplomatic channels to prevent miscalculations.
- **Rejection of Territorial Claims:** India firmly rejected Beijing's objections to New Delhi standardizing names of 27 geographical features in Arunachal Pradesh, reiterating that the state remains an inalienable and integral part of India.

- **Operational Readiness:** Indian Armed Forces and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) maintain high operational preparedness and forward dominance to safeguard territorial integrity across the eastern sector.
- **Preventing Miscalculation:** Both nations emphasized using local commander-level meetings and bilateral dialogue to resolve outstanding friction points along the un-demarcated boundary.

Essential Definitions

- **Line of Actual Control (LAC):** The 3,488 km non-demarcated border separating Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory, divided into Western (Ladakh), Middle (Himachal/Uttarakhand), and Eastern (Arunachal/Sikkim) sectors.
- **Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC):** An institutional framework established in 2012 between India and China for dialogue on border affairs, aimed at maintaining peace and ensuring timely communication.



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 1(1) & First Schedule:** Defines India as a Union of States, affirming Arunachal Pradesh as an integral territorial unit of the Republic of India under constitutional law.
- **Seventh Schedule (List I, Entries 1 & 14):** Grants exclusive legislative authority to the Union Parliament over national defence, armed forces, foreign affairs, and treaties with foreign states.
- **Simla Accord (1914):** Historical convention establishing the McMahon Line as the legal boundary between British India and Tibet in the Eastern sector, which China refuses to formally recognize.

Conclusion Sustained peace along the Line of Actual Control is an indispensable precondition for normalizing broader diplomatic and economic relations between India and China. Effectively utilizing bilateral institutional mechanisms like the WMCC while strengthening border infrastructure ensures territorial sovereignty and strategic balance.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** India and its neighborhood-relations; Bilateral groupings and agreements involving India or affecting India's interests; Effect of policies of foreign countries on India.
- **GS Paper III:** Security challenges and their management in border areas; Border management and infrastructure development; Linkages of organized crime with terrorism.

9. Equal Legal Protection Accorded to National Song Vande Mataram

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Presidential Assent:** President Droupadi Murmu gave assent to the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Act, 2026, granting the National Song, *Vande Mataram*, legal protection on par with the National Anthem, *Jana Gana Mana*.

- **Penalization of Disruption:** The amended legislation explicitly criminalizes intentional disruption, prevention, or disrespect during the official singing or playing of *Vande Mataram*.
- **Legislative Trajectory:** The Bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha on July 29, followed by the Lok Sabha on July 30, before receiving Presidential assent to become law.
- **Equal Status Reflected:** The statutory amendment formalizes parity between the National Anthem and National Song, fulfilling long-standing legislative discussions surrounding national symbols.
- **Implementation Debates:** Opposing parliamentary voices raised concerns regarding practical implementation, citing time durations of full renditions (around 3 minutes 10 seconds) during state and official functions.
- **Civic Expectations:** The law underscores fundamental civic duties while sparking discussions on balancing patriotic mandates with voluntary civic participation.

Essential Definitions

- **Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971:** An Act of Parliament enacted to prevent disrespect towards national symbols, including the National Flag, the Constitution of India, and the National Anthem.
- **National Song (*Vande Mataram*):** A patriotic poem composed in Sanskritized Bengali by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in his 1882 novel *Anandamath*, adopted as the National Song of India in 1950.



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 51A(a):** Mandates as a Fundamental Duty that every Indian citizen shall abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals, institutions, the National Flag, and the National Anthem.
- **Constituent Assembly Resolution (Jan 24, 1950):** Dr. Rajendra Prasad declared that *Vande Mataram* shall be honored equally with *Jana Gana Mana* due to its historic role in the Indian independence movement.
- **Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Act, 2026:** Expands statutory safeguards under Section 3 to penalize intentional prevention or disturbance of the National Song.

Conclusion Extending statutory protection to *Vande Mataram* reinforces the constitutional mandate to respect national symbols that catalyzed India's freedom struggle. Balancing legal mandates with voluntary civic awareness remains fundamental to upholding constitutional values and national unity.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, and fundamental duties (Article 51A); Parliament and State Legislatures—structure, functioning, and conduct of business.
- **GS Paper I:** Indian Culture and History—Role of nationalistic literature and symbols in the Indian National Movement.

10. NASA Invites ISRO to Join Lunar Outpost Programme Under Artemis Framework

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Formal Invitation to ISRO:** The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) formally invited the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to join its Moon Base programme aimed at establishing humanity's first lunar outpost near the Moon's South Pole.
- **CSJWG Bilateral Dialogue:** The invitation was extended during the 9th meeting of the India-U.S. Civil Space Joint Working Group (CSJWG) held at the ISRO headquarters in Bengaluru.
- **Artemis Accords Alignment:** The initiative expands upon India's 2023 signing of the Artemis Accords, advancing bilateral commitments toward open scientific data sharing, human spaceflight collaboration, and peaceful space exploration.
- **Strategic Technology Partnership:** The bilateral discussions progressed civil and commercial space cooperation under the U.S.-India Transforming the Relationship Utilizing Strategic Technology (TRUST) Initiative.
- **Post-NISAR Synergy:** The collaboration builds on past joint achievements, including the successful launch of the joint NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) satellite mission, paving the way for future deep-space technology sharing.
- **Global Governance Principles:** Both nations reaffirmed their commitment to the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) guidelines to ensure the long-term sustainability of space activities.



Essential Definitions

- **Artemis Accords:** A non-binding multilateral framework led by the United States establishing principles for cooperation in civil exploration and peaceful use of the Moon, Mars, and celestial bodies.
- **Moon Base Programme:** NASA's long-term lunar architecture designed to construct a sustained infrastructure and operational habitat near the lunar South Pole, serving as a stepping stone for future crewed Mars missions.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Outer Space Treaty, 1967:** The foundational international framework governing space law, mandating that outer space, including the Moon, shall be free for exploration and used exclusively for peaceful purposes.
- **UN COPUOS Guidelines:** International non-binding rules designed to mitigate space debris, ensure safety of operations, and preserve outer space environments for future generations.

- **Seventh Schedule (List I, Entry 6):** Enshrines "Atomic energy and mineral resources necessary for its production" alongside space and strategic technological research under the exclusive legislative domain of the Union Parliament.

Conclusion NASA's invitation to ISRO reflects India's emerging stature as a prominent spacefaring nation. Deepening bilateral space cooperation under the Artemis Accords fosters technological exchange, advances human spaceflight capabilities, and ensures compliance with sustainable global space governance.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology—developments and their applications; Achievements of Indians in science & technology; Indigenization of technology and space research (ISRO, Artemis Accords, NISAR).
- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral agreements involving India; International treaties and guidelines governing outer space (UN COPUOS, Outer Space Treaty).

11. Parliament Passes Tribunals Reforms Bill, 2026 Establishing National Tribunals Commission

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Establishment of NTC:** Parliament passed the Tribunals Reforms Bill, 2026, establishing an independent statutory National Tribunals Commission (NTC) to centralize selection, administration, and performance reviews across major tribunals.
- **Structural Composition:** The NTC will be chaired by a former Supreme Court Judge or former High Court Chief Justice, accompanied by two Judicial Members and two Technical Members with minimum 25 years of domain experience.
- **Selection and Appointments:** Appointments to tribunals will be made through a Search-cum-Selection Committee chaired by NTC leadership, requiring the Central Government to complete appointments within three months of recommendation.
- **Rationalization of Tribunals:** The legislation further streamlines India's tribunal architecture, rationalizing the total count of functional national tribunals down to 16 key bodies.
- **Implementation of Judicial Mandates:** The reform directly aligns tribunal appointment, tenure, and oversight mechanisms with binding directives laid down by the Supreme Court in the *Madras Bar Association* cases.
- **Consequential Legislative Business:** Alongside tribunal reforms, Parliament cleared the National Cooperative Development Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2026 and the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026 to rename the state as Keralam under Article 3.

Essential Definitions

- **National Tribunals Commission (NTC):** An apex statutory oversight body created to conduct transparent selection processes, review judicial performance, and manage administrative affairs across covered tribunals.
- **Tribunal:** A quasi-judicial institution established by law to adjudicate disputes in specialized administrative, tax, financial, or environmental domains outside traditional court structures.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Articles 323A & 323B:** Inserted by the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act (1976), empowering Parliament and State Legislatures to set up administrative and domain-specific dispute tribunals.
- **Article 3:** Authorizes Parliament to alter the name, area, or boundaries of any state, as exercised in renaming Kerala to Keralam in the First Schedule.
- **Doctrine of Separation of Powers:** Constitutional principle requiring tribunal independence from executive influence, affirmed in *L. Chandra Kumar v. Union of India* (1997) and *Madras Bar Association* (2021).

Conclusion The creation of a judiciary-led National Tribunals Commission marks a institutional shift toward strengthening judicial independence and administrative efficiency in tribunal governance. Institutionalizing uniform selection and tenure rules ensures compliance with constitutional principles while accelerating specialized dispute resolution.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Statutory, regulatory, and various quasi-judicial bodies; Structure, organization, and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary; Separation of powers between various organs.
- **GS Paper II:** Indian Constitution—features, amendments, and significant provisions (Articles 3, 323A, and 323B).

12. Surge in Net Direct Tax Mop-Up Reflects Economic Resilience

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Overall Revenue Growth:** Net direct tax collection grew by 23.09% year-on-year to cross Rs 8.11 lakh crore in the current fiscal year up to August 10.
- **Corporate Tax Dynamics:** Net corporate tax collection expanded by 19.83%, reaching approximately Rs 2.70 lakh crore, signaling strong corporate profitability and compliance.
- **Non-Corporate & Income Tax Growth:** Non-corporate direct tax collections, including personal income tax, recorded a robust 23% rise to Rs 5.07 lakh crore.
- **Buoyant Financial Markets:** Securities Transaction Tax (STT) revenue jumped significantly by 51% to Rs 33,824 crore, driven by elevated retail and institutional participation in capital markets.
- **Higher Gross Collections & Tax Refunds:** Gross direct tax collections grew by 19.75% to Rs 9.55 lakh crore, while tax refunds worth Rs 1.43 lakh crore were issued (up 3.8%).
- **Fiscal Consolidation Impact:** Consistent double-digit revenue growth provides essential fiscal headroom to maintain public capital expenditure while adhering to target fiscal deficit trajectories.



Essential Definitions

- **Direct Tax:** A tax levied directly on an individual's or entity's income, wealth, or profit (e.g., Corporate Tax, Personal Income Tax), where the tax burden cannot be shifted to another entity.
- **Securities Transaction Tax (STT):** A direct tax levied on the value of securities (excluding commodities and currency) transacted through a recognized stock exchange in India.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 265:** Mandates that no tax shall be levied or collected except by authority of law enacted by Parliament or State Legislatures.
- **Article 270:** Governs the distribution of net proceeds of Union taxes between the Centre and the States based on Finance Commission recommendations.
- **Income Tax Act, 1961:** The primary statutory framework governing the levy, administration, collection, and recovery of direct income taxes in India.
- **Finance Act (Annual):** Enacts annual tax rate modifications and procedural amendments under the statutory authority of Union Budget proposals.

Conclusion The 23% expansion in net direct tax collections reflects sustained formalization of the economy and improved tax compliance mechanisms. Maintaining this structural momentum is vital for funding socio-economic welfare initiatives while preserving fiscal stability.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment; Fiscal policy, tax administration reforms, and public expenditure management.
- **GS Paper II:** Statutory frameworks (Income Tax Act) and constitutional provisions governing financial federalism and revenue sharing (Articles 265 and 270).