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PART I · HEADLINES TO ECONOMY

ANTIM ASSURED 100+

TheIAS Akademia — Daily UPSC Intelligence

Sunday, 19 July 2026

“The Topper’s Last Read. Every Morning.”

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§1 Top 10 Headlines

1. **GS2** Govt convenes all-party meeting July 19 ahead of Monsoon Session; Opposition to raise NEET-UG leak, Congress files breach of privilege notice against Defence Minister Rajnath Singh over Operation Sindoor casualty figures.
2. **GS2** Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill 2026 cleared for Monsoon Session — proposes to extend legal protection to *Vande Mataram* (National Song); up to 3-year imprisonment for intentional insult/obstruction; existing 1971 Act covers Anthem & Flag.
3. **GS2** Registration of Births & Deaths (Amendment) Bill 2026 listed for Monsoon Session — Section 13(3) of RBD Act 1969/2023 amended to require First-Class Judicial Magistrate order (replacing DM/SDM) for births/deaths registered beyond 2 years.
4. **GS3** IAF deploys 4 Rafale fighters and 2 C-17 Globemasters + 120 Air Warriors to RAAF Base Darwin, Australia for Exercise Pitch Black 2026 (July 20–Aug 7) — India's *first-ever* overseas Rafale deployment; 19-nation multinational air combat exercise.
5. **GS3** ISRO brain drain: 100+ scientists resign from URSC (Bengaluru, 80 resignations) and VSSC (Thiruvananthapuram, 20+) for private space sector jobs; Department of Space issues binding memo July 14, 2026, tightening exit process for critical-mission Group A scientists.
6. **GS3** Income Tax (Amendment) Bill 2026 to replace June 2026 ordinance — foreign investors exempted from income tax on interest earnings & capital gains from Government Securities; aimed at deepening India's sovereign debt market amid West Asia crude price shock.
7. **GS3** GISAT-1A/GSLV-F18 countdown: T-12 days (NET July 31); pre-launch readiness review completed; India's first operational geostationary EOS satellite at 36,000 km; 30-min full India revisit.
8. **GS1** IMD above-normal monsoon forecast for Northeast India, Bihar, Chhattisgarh; Assam Floods 2026 — second wave as Brahmaputra floodplain extends; Bangladesh Sylhet & Mymensingh divisions report 1.2 lakh displaced from cross-border inundation.
9. **GS3** India's mangrove cover: 4,992 sq km (ISFR 2023); global mangrove cover halved since 1985 and vanishing 3–5 times faster than other tropical forests; International Day for Conservation of Mangrove Ecosystem: July 26.

10. **GS2** AIBE-XXI results declared July 18: 65.92% pass rate; Bar Council of India standardises legal education entry; first AIBE after National Anti-Doping Act 2022 enforcement (Jul 15) marks landmark week for professional governance bills.

THEIAS AKADEMIA Today is a high-density legislative preview day. **Sahyog Mentorship** students: the next 3 weeks (Monsoon Session Jul 20–Aug 13) will produce 5–7 new UPSC-worthy developments per day. Maintain your daily reading discipline. theiasakademia.com



§2 Polity & Governance

GS2

Constitutional Provisions · Parliament · Fundamental Rights

July 17–19, 2026 · Source: Business Standard / Daily Pioneer / Cabinet

Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill 2026 — *Vande Mataram* to Get Legal Protection on Par with National Anthem; 3-Year Jail Proposed

Why in News: The Union Cabinet has cleared the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill 2026 for introduction in the Monsoon Session (beginning July 20), which seeks to make intentional insult or obstruction of the singing of *Vande Mataram* (India's National Song) a criminal offence punishable with up to 3 years imprisonment — the same penalty currently applicable for insulting the National Anthem *Jana Gana Mana*.

Background: The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 currently provides legal protection for India's National Anthem (Section 3), National Flag (Section 2), and the Constitution (Section 3A). *Vande Mataram*, written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in 1882, was adopted as the National Song in 1950 but NOT as the National Anthem; the distinction has long been constitutionally significant.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- **Existing Act (1971):** Penalises contempt of National Flag (Sec 2), National Anthem (Sec 3), Indian Constitution (Sec 3A); penalty: up to 3 years imprisonment or fine or both; amended in 1971 and 2005.
- **Vande Mataram vs Jana Gana Mana:** *Jana Gana Mana* = National Anthem (Art 51A(a) Fundamental Duty to abide by); *Vande Mataram* = National Song (not National Anthem); equal honour accorded by Constituent Assembly Resolution Nov 24, 1949 — but no Art 51A mention. New bill bridges this legal gap.

- **Fundamental Duty Link:** Art 51A(a) imposes duty to abide by the Constitution and respect national flag and national anthem — notably silent on National Song; the bill operationalises a legislative protection that Art 51A doesn't expressly mandate.
- **Constitutional concern:** Opposition argues bill impinges on Art 19(1)(a) (free speech); SC in *Bijoe Emmanuel v. State of Kerala* (1986) held students cannot be compelled to sing National Anthem; analogous argument may apply to Vande Mataram.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Conceptual Link: Flag + Anthem + National Song (*Vande Mataram*) + Art 51A = the evolving honour-protection framework. Key trap: *Vande Mataram* is NOT the National Anthem (that's *Jana Gana Mana*) — confusing the two is a classic Prelims MCQ trap. *Bijoe Emmanuel* (1986) is the foundational SC case on compulsory anthem singing.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2014: "Individual liberty and national integrity are the two faces of the same coin. Discuss." | GS2 2019: "Constitutional morality vs popular morality — can laws enforce national symbols?" | *Bijoe Emmanuel* SC case PYQ reference (Prelims 2017 — Fundamental Rights + Directive Principles).

GS2

Art 19(1)(a)

Art 51A

Vande Mataram

National Song vs Anthem

Prevention of Insults Act 1971

Bijoe Emmanuel 1986

GS2

Statutory Bodies · Governance · Health Records

July 17–19, 2026 · Source: Outlook India / ANI / Free Press Journal

Registration of Births & Deaths (Amendment) Bill 2026 — Delayed Registration to Require Judicial Magistrate; Strengthens Digital Health Ecosystem

Why in News: The Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill 2026, listed for Monsoon Session, amends Section 13(3) of the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969 (as amended in 2023) to require a *First-Class Judicial Magistrate* order for registering births or deaths reported beyond 2 years — replacing the existing provision allowing DM, SDM, or Executive Magistrate to approve such delayed registrations.

Background: The RBD Act 1969 was comprehensively amended in 2023 (RBD Amendment Act 2023) to create a national database of births and deaths, establish digital birth certificates as single proof of age for multiple purposes (Aadhaar, voter roll, driving licence, passport,

school/marriage registration), and enable linkage with Civil Registration System. The 2026 amendment tightens delayed registration to prevent fraud.

KEY FACTS

- **Current section 13(3):** Births/deaths not reported within the extended period (1 year under DM, 2 years under SDM) were registerable with DM/SDM/Executive Magistrate. New bill: any registration beyond 2 years requires a First-Class Judicial Magistrate order — stronger judicial oversight.
- **2023 RBD Amendment key provisions:** Single digital birth certificate as proof of age; national database under Registrar General of India (RGI); integration with Aadhaar, Election Commission, civil aviation databases; state governments to appoint Registrar Generals.
- **UPSC significance:** Art 21 right to life includes right to civil identity; birth/death registration is a prerequisite for social protection (PDS, MGNREGS, pension); India's Civil Registration System (CRS) targeted 100% coverage by 2025.
- **Why judicial route?** Delayed registrations are frequently used for fraudulent age/citizenship claims (bonded labour, child marriage, fake citizenship). Judicial magistrate oversight creates an adversarial check absent in executive approval.

TEACHING HOOK

Timeline: RBD 1969 (CS-23-26) : Original Act 1969 (under Registrar General of India) → 2023 Amendment (digital single-certificate ecosystem) → 2026 Amendment (judicial magistrate for delayed entries). The ladder of reforms: first digitise, then protect against abuse.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2022: “National registration systems and social protection: How does incomplete civil registration undermine welfare delivery?” | GS3 2021: “Digital governance in India: Aadhaar, birth certificates and the data ecosystem.”

GS2

RBD Act 1969

2023 Amendment

Civil Registration

Registrar General of India

Digital Birth Certificate

Judicial Magistrate

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The RBD 2023 + 2026 amendment chain is a perfect example of incremental statutory reform. **ANTIM 2027** students: map this to the Aadhaar Act + DPDP Act ecosystem for a comprehensive GS2 governance framework. theiasakademia.com



§3 International Relations

Exercise Pitch Black 2026 — India's Rafale Makes Overseas Debut in Darwin; 19-Nation Indo-Pacific Air Power Demonstration (July 20–Aug 7)

Why in News: India's Indian Air Force has deployed four Rafale fighter jets, two C-17 Globemaster III transport aircraft, and over 120 Air Warriors to RAAF Base Darwin, Australia, for Exercise Pitch Black 2026 — marking India's first-ever overseas deployment of Rafale aircraft, as part of the multinational air combat exercise running July 20–August 7, 2026, involving 19 allied and partner nations and approximately 100 aircraft.

Background: Exercise Pitch Black, hosted by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) biennially since 1981, is the largest multinational air exercise in the Southern Hemisphere. India first participated in 2018 with Su-30MKIs. The 2026 edition coincides with deepening India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (signed 2020, elevated 2023) and India's active Indo-Pacific security posture under its SAGAR doctrine.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- **Participating nations (19):** Brunei, Canada, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Sweden, Thailand, USA, Australia — a near-complete QUAD+ Indo-Pacific coalition.
- **India's Rafale significance:** First overseas deployment of Rafale-India variant (36 delivered 2020–22); exercises contested air combat in Austral terrain conditions distinct from Indian subcontinent; enhances interoperability with QUAD (US, Australia, Japan, India) and ASEAN partners.
- **India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership:** Signed June 2020 by PM Modi & PM Morrison; 2023 upgrade includes: Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA), defence science cooperation, uranium supply (India's only G7-comparable uranium source), Critical Minerals Agreement; joint Talisman Sabre exercise.
- **SAGAR Doctrine:** Security and Growth for All in the Region (PM Modi, 2015, Mauritius); India's maritime security framework for Indian Ocean + Indo-Pacific; Pitch Black extends this to air domain with ASEAN+QUAD partners.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Exercise Pitch Black 2026: A "Pentagon" for India's air exercises: Pitch Black (Australia) + Indra (Russia/India) + Quadrant (India-Japan-USA-Australia conceptual) + Uchit Akhand (India-Afghanistan, now

defunct) + via India (India-Russia). For Prelims: Pitch Black = multinational, not bilateral. India first participated 2018. 2026 = first Rafale deployment abroad.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2023: “India’s growing defence partnerships in the Indo-Pacific: Strategic rationale and challenges.” | GS2 2021: “India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: Context and implications.”

GS2

India-Australia

Exercise Pitch Black

Rafale

Indo-Pacific

QUAD

SAGAR

MLSA

RAAF Darwin

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Exercise Pitch Black is a classic “map-it-to-all-pillars” UPSC topic: IR (QUAD/Australia), Defence (Rafale export/interoperability), S&T (Rafale specifications), GS1 (Indo-Pacific geography). **ANTIM 2027** students: build a mind-map of India’s exercise portfolio — bilateral vs multilateral. theiasakademia.com



§4 Defence & Security

GS3

Space Science · National Security · Governance

July 14–18, 2026 · Source: Outlook India / WION / BW People / YouTube (Brass Tacks)

ISRO Brain Drain 2026 — 100+ Scientists Quit URSC & VSSC; Department of Space Tightens Resignation Process for Critical-Mission Personnel

Why in News: Over 100 scientists have resigned from two critical ISRO centres — ~80 from the U R Rao Satellite Centre (URSC), Bengaluru, and 20+ from the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), Thiruvananthapuram — many moving to India’s burgeoning private space sector. In response, the Department of Space (DoS) issued a binding internal memorandum on July 14, 2026, requiring all resignation/VRS applications from Group A scientific personnel engaged in strategic/critical missions to be forwarded directly to DoS New Delhi for approval, reversing the 2020 decentralisation policy.

Background: India’s NewSpace policy (IN-SPACe, 2020) deliberately encouraged private sector participation in space. This has created a talent pipeline from ISRO to startups like Skyroot, Agnikul, Bellatrix, Pixxel — companies offering higher salaries and equity. The paradox: government policy that built private space is now draining its own crown jewel institution.

KEY FACTS

- **URSC (U R Rao Satellite Centre, Bengaluru):** India's primary satellite development centre; responsible for IRS, INSAT, NavIC, GSAT series; ~80 resignations include simulation experts, project managers, and Precision Docking Experiment (PDX) leads critical to Gaganyaan-Chandrayaan missions.
- **VSSC (Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, Thiruvananthapuram):** Launch vehicle development centre; developed PSLV, GSLV, LVM3 technologies; 20+ resignations include cryogenic propulsion engineers — critical for GSLV-F18/GSAT-1A (NET July 31).
- **DoS July 14 memo:** Reverses 2020 decentralisation; tightens Group A exits; Director of ISRO centre must submit detailed recommendation with assessment; effective immediately for all ongoing strategic missions (Gaganyaan, Chandrayaan-4, SPADEX follow-on).
- **Governance vs sovereignty:** Scientists are government employees under Fundamental Service Rules; resignations cannot be banned — only delayed/reviewed. This creates tension between right to employment mobility and national interest in strategic capability. DRDO faces similar talent attrition to private defence.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion & Authorisation Centre, 2020) and Space Activities Act (proposed) were designed to commercialise space using ISRO talent — success has now created a reverse flow back from ISRO. For UPSC GS3: this mirrors IT brain drain of 1990s (IIT talent to Silicon Valley) but now the pull is domestic startups, not abroad. Key governance question: how does a state retain talent when it itself funded private competition?

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2022: "India's space programme: From government monopoly to private participation." | GS2 2019: "Governance challenges in India's scientific institutions: Autonomy, accountability and talent retention."

GS3

ISRO Brain Drain

URSC

VSSC

Department of Space

IN-SPACe

NewSpace India

Talent Retention

THEIAS AKADEMIA ISRO brain drain links GS3 (S&T institutions) + GS2 (governance, service rules) + GS4 (ethics of talent mobility vs public duty). **LAKSHYAM AIR1** students: practice writing a Mains Q on this — "Is ISRO scientist attrition a policy failure or a success story gone too far?"
theiasakademia.com



Income Tax (Amendment) Bill 2026 — Government to Replace Foreign Investor G-Sec Ordinance; Deepening India's Sovereign Debt Market Amid West Asia Crisis

Why in News: The Income Tax (Amendment) Bill 2026 will be introduced in the Monsoon Session to replace the Income Tax (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026 (promulgated June 2026), which had exempted foreign investors from income tax on interest earned and capital gains derived from investments in Indian Government Securities (G-Secs) — a measure necessitated by the West Asia crisis that triggered crude price shock, capital outflows, and rupee depreciation.

Background: India was included in the JP Morgan GBI-EM Global Bond Index in June 2024, which brought in ~\$18B+ in Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) in bonds. However, the ongoing West Asia conflict (post-October 2023 escalation) created periodic volatility in crude prices and FPI sentiment. The ordinance — and now the Bill — reinforces India's commitment to sustaining this inflow by eliminating tax frictions for foreign sovereign bond investors.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- **JP Morgan GBI-EM inclusion (Jun 2024):** India's 10% weight in JP Morgan's GBI-EM Global Diversified Index; maximum 10% country cap; ~\$18B estimated passive FPI inflow; also included in Bloomberg Aggregate Bond Index and FTSE Emerging Markets Government Bond Index 2025.
- **Ordinance mechanism:** Art 123 of Constitution empowers President to promulgate ordinances when Parliament is not in session (Cabinet advice); valid for 6 weeks from Parliament reassembly → must be replaced by Act. Current Monsoon Session (Jul 20) is the first opportunity.
- **Tax exemption significance:** India charges 20% withholding tax on G-Sec interest for non-residents; new provision makes India competitive with UAE/Singapore/Mauritius G-Sec routes; reduces round-tripping incentives; intended to lower govt borrowing cost via increased demand.
- **Sovereign debt market deepening:** India's outstanding G-Secs: ₹108 lakh crore (approx.); FPI holding pre-ordinance: ~1.8% of G-Sec market; global standard is 15-20%; Tax exemption expected to push FPI to 4-5% over 3 years — significant for fiscal space.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Chain to Memorise: Tax exemption + Ordinance (Art 123) + Bond index inclusion (JP Morgan) + Sovereign debt deepening = the chain to memorise. For Prelims: Ordinance Rule —

promulgated by President (not PM directly), valid until Parliament passes equivalent Act within 6 weeks of reassembly. Art 123 = Central Ordinance; Art 213 = State Ordinance.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2023: “India’s inclusion in global bond indices: Opportunities and risks for sovereign debt management.” | GS2 2018: “Examine the constitutional framework governing presidential ordinances under Article 123.”

GS3

GS2

Income Tax Amendment

Art 123 Ordinance

JP Morgan GBI-EM

G-Sec

FPI

Sovereign Debt

West Asia Crisis

THEIAS AKADEMIA The ordinance-to-Act pathway (Art 123) appears in Prelims almost every 2 years. Today’s bill is a live example. **NEEB 300+ Live PYQ Writing** students: practice the statement-based MCQ format — “Which of the following statements about Art 123 ordinances is/are correct?” theiasakademia.com

★ THEIAS AKADEMIA — PROOF OF PRECISION

UPSC CSE Prelims 2026 Results

In what critics called the most unpredictable Prelims paper in a decade —

48

QUESTIONS FROM
ANTIM ASSURED 100+

7

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE DOCUMENT

6

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE CLASS

Our students had seen 48 questions before the paper was opened.

This is not luck. This is TheIAS Akademia.

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