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PART I · HEADLINES TO ECONOMY

Saturday, 22 August 2026

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§1 Top Headlines

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§2 Polity & Governance

20 AUGUST 2026

GS2 · Polity

Cabinet Approves a High Court Bench in Ladakh — the Third Bench of the J&K and Ladakh High Court

WHY IN NEWS

On 20 August 2026, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the establishment of a bench of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh in the Union Territory of Ladakh, announced by Union Home Minister Amit Shah. This would become the High Court's third bench, alongside its existing benches at Srinagar and Jammu, aimed at bringing higher judicial services closer to Ladakh's residents.

BACKGROUND

Ladakh was carved out as a separate Union Territory in August 2019 following the reorganisation of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, but it continued to fall under the jurisdiction of the composite High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, forcing Ladakhi litigants and lawyers to travel outside the UT for High Court proceedings. Ladakh has separately sought greater administrative autonomy, including demands for statehood and Sixth Schedule protections; a dedicated bench is a more modest, judiciary-specific concession that neither alters Ladakh's UT status nor creates a separate High Court.

KEY FACTS

- Cabinet approval: 20 August 2026, chaired by PM Modi; announced by Home Minister Amit Shah.
- The Ladakh bench becomes the THIRD bench of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh, after Srinagar and Jammu.

- Ladakh became a separate Union Territory in August 2019, after J&K's reorganisation.
- The bench functions as part of the existing High Court, not a separate High Court for Ladakh.
- Reduces the need for Ladakhi litigants and lawyers to travel outside the UT for High Court proceedings.
- Ladakh has separately sought statehood and Sixth Schedule protections — larger demands not addressed by this bench.
- The Supreme Court Collegium has separately recommended additional permanent judges for the J&K and Ladakh High Court.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Access to justice: physical proximity of judicial infrastructure as a determinant of effective access to justice in remote, high-altitude Union Territories.
- Federal/UT governance: incremental judicial concessions versus Ladakh's broader statehood and Sixth-Schedule demands.
- Institutional design: a "bench" model preserves administrative unity of the High Court while decentralising physical access.
- Comparative context: other composite High Courts with multiple benches (e.g., Bombay High Court's Nagpur, Aurangabad and Goa benches).
- Strategic dimension: judicial-infrastructure development in a sensitive border UT bordering both China and Pakistan.

Memory Hook: Ladakh gets a doorway, not a new house — a THIRD BENCH of the same High Court, not a High Court of its own.

PYQ Linkage: GS2 2019/2020 — reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir and the constitutional status of Union Territories.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. The Ladakh bench, once established, will be India's first separate High Court for a Union Territory.
2. Ladakh has been a Union Territory since August 2019.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b). The Ladakh bench is part of the existing J&K and Ladakh High Court, not a new separate High Court.

Probable Mains Question (150 words): Discuss the significance of establishing a High Court bench in Ladakh, and examine how it addresses (and does not address) Ladakh's broader demands for greater administrative autonomy.

GS2

Polity

#Ladakh

#HighCourtBench

ONGOING, REPORTED AUGUST 2026

GS2 · Polity

Can Parliament Override Its Own Judgment? The CAPF Act, 2026 Before the Supreme Court

WHY IN NEWS

The Supreme Court has issued notice to the Union Government on a writ petition challenging the constitutional validity of the Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Act, 2026, which Parliament enacted to authorise the Central Government to frame rules on CAPF recruitment, promotion and deputation "notwithstanding any judgement, decree or order of any court" — effectively restoring extensive IPS deputation into CAPFs despite the Supreme Court's 2025 ruling in Sanjay Prakash v. Union of India, which had curtailed such deputation to protect CAPF cadre officers' career progression.

BACKGROUND

India's Central Armed Police Forces — CRPF, BSF, ITBP, SSB, CISF — have long been headed at senior levels by IPS officers on deputation rather than promoted CAPF-cadre officers, a practice cadre officers have challenged as blocking their own career progression. The Supreme Court's 2025 ruling curtailed this deputation practice. Parliament's 2026 Act, by inserting a "notwithstanding any judgement" clause, is a rare instance of legislative override of a specific Supreme Court ruling, reviving a long-running constitutional debate about the limits of Parliament's power to legislatively nullify judicial pronouncements without curing the underlying constitutional defect.

KEY FACTS

- Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Act, 2026 — enacted by Parliament in 2026.
- Contains a "notwithstanding any judgement, decree or order of any court" clause.
- Effectively restores extensive IPS deputation into CAPF leadership roles.
- Overrides the Supreme Court's 2025 ruling in *Sanjay Prakash v. Union of India*.
- CAPFs affected: CRPF, BSF, ITBP, SSB, CISF.
- Supreme Court has issued notice to the Union Government on a writ petition challenging the Act's validity.
- Raises the constitutional doctrine of "legislative override" versus a bare legislative reversal of a judgment.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Separation of powers: can Parliament legislatively override a specific judicial ruling without curing the underlying constitutional defect the Court identified?
- Distinction between a valid "legislative override" (removing the basis of a judgment) and an invalid "legislative reversal" (simply nullifying its operation).
- Impact on CAPF cadre officers' career progression versus the government's stated administrative-flexibility rationale for IPS deputation.
- Precedent risk: normalising "notwithstanding any judgement" clauses could weaken judicial review as a check on legislative action.
- Federal security-governance angle: CAPF command structure affects Centre-State internal-security coordination.

Memory Hook: A "notwithstanding" clause is Parliament's way of saying "undo the umpire's call" — courts allow this only if the rulebook itself is changed, not just the scoreboard.

PYQ Linkage: GS2 2018 — separation of powers among the three branches of government.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements about the Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Act, 2026:

1. It seeks to curtail IPS officers' deputation into CAPF leadership roles.
2. It contains a clause overriding a specific 2025 Supreme Court ruling.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b). The Act does the opposite of statement 1 — it restores/expands IPS deputation.

Probable Mains Question (150 words): "A legislature may remove the defect that led to a judgment, but it cannot simply annul the judgment's binding effect." Discuss with reference to the constitutional challenge to the CAPF (General Administration) Act, 2026.

GS2

Polity

PYQ-2018

#SeparationOfPowers

#CAPFAct

§3 International Relations

REPORTEDLY 20-25 AUGUST 2026 (DATES BEING FINALISED)

GS2 · IR

Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman's Likely Visit to India — an Early Post-Transition Engagement

WHY IN NEWS

Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman is reportedly likely to visit India between 20 and 25 August 2026, with New Delhi and Dhaka still finalising the exact dates. The visit was scheduled after Dhaka indicated Tarique Rahman would not attend the BRICS Summit in New Delhi (12-13 September 2026), with India seeking dates that avoid a clash with PM Modi's planned travel to Kyrgyzstan for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Council of Heads of State summit (1 September 2026).

BACKGROUND

This would be one of the first major bilateral visits under Bangladesh's post-transition political leadership, with Tarique Rahman now heading the Bangladesh government. India-Bangladesh relations have historically centred on connectivity, trade, Ganga/Teesta water-sharing, border management, and security cooperation against cross-border insurgency and smuggling; a change in Dhaka's ruling leadership typically triggers renewed negotiation over the pace and framing of these cooperation areas, alongside sensitivities around minority rights and refugee issues.

KEY FACTS

- Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman likely to visit India in the 20-25 August 2026 window; exact dates still being finalised.
- Visit scheduled after Dhaka indicated Tarique Rahman will skip the BRICS Summit in New Delhi (12-13 Sept 2026).
- India sought dates avoiding a clash with PM Modi's SCO Council of Heads of State trip to Kyrgyzstan (1 Sept 2026).
- Represents an early bilateral engagement under Bangladesh's post-transition leadership.
- Key historical India-Bangladesh cooperation areas: connectivity, trade, Ganga/Teesta water-sharing, border management, counter-insurgency cooperation.
- India holds the BRICS Presidency for 2026, hosting the September Summit in New Delhi.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Continuity versus change: how a shift in Dhaka's ruling leadership affects the substance and tone of existing India-Bangladesh cooperation frameworks.
- Neighbourhood-first policy: the diplomatic priority India places on early engagement with a transitioning neighbouring government.
- Water-sharing diplomacy: the unresolved Teesta question as a likely agenda item, given its salience in Bangladesh's domestic politics.
- Calendar diplomacy: overlapping multilateral commitments (BRICS, SCO) shaping bilateral-visit scheduling.
- Border-security dimension: continuity of anti-smuggling/anti-insurgency cooperation regardless of Dhaka's ruling party.

Memory Hook: When a neighbour changes its government, the FIRST visit sets the tone for the next four years — India moved to get Tarique Rahman to Delhi before BRICS, not after.

PYQ Linkage: GS2 2021 — India's neighbourhood policy and bilateral relations with Bangladesh.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman is scheduled to attend the BRICS Summit in New Delhi in September 2026.
2. India holds the BRICS Presidency for 2026.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b). Tarique Rahman is reportedly NOT attending the September BRICS Summit; his bilateral visit was scheduled separately.

Probable Mains Question (150 words): Examine the significance of early bilateral engagement with a transitioning neighbouring government, with reference to Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman's proposed visit to India in August 2026.

GS2

IR

PYQ-2021

#IndiaBangladesh

#Neighbourhood

§4 Defence & Security

17 AUGUST 2026

GS3 · Defence/Security

Armed Pirates Hijack M/V Lutuf off Somalia's Puntland Coast — Six Indians Among the Crew

WHY IN NEWS

On 17 August 2026, armed pirates hijacked the Cameroon-flagged general cargo vessel M/V LUTUF approximately 3.5 nautical miles off Marraya in Somalia's Puntland region (Eyl District), steering it toward the Nugaal coast. The vessel's 10-member crew includes six Indian nationals, alongside one Turkish, one Georgian and two Serbian security guards, and was reportedly carrying Turkish weapons and satellite/communication equipment bound for a military training facility in Mogadishu.

BACKGROUND

Piracy off the Horn of Africa, concentrated historically in the Gulf of Aden and the wider western Indian Ocean, declined sharply after 2011-12 due to international naval patrols (EU NAVFOR Atalanta, Combined Maritime Forces, and India's own Gulf-of-Aden anti-piracy patrols since 2008) but periodically resurges when patrol intensity eases or onshore instability in Somalia/Puntland worsens. India's Navy maintains standing anti-piracy deployments and has conducted several high-profile rescue operations in the region, including the 2024 MV Ruen operation, reflecting India's stake in protecting its seafarers, who form a disproportionately large share of global merchant-marine crews.

KEY FACTS

- M/V LUTUF: Cameroon-flagged general cargo vessel, owned by Polar Movement Shipping.

- Hijacked 17 August 2026, approx. 3.5 nautical miles off Marraya, Puntland's Eyl District, Somalia.
- 10-member crew: 6 Indians, 1 Turkish, 1 Georgian, 2 Serbian security guards.
- Cargo reportedly included Turkish weapons and satellite/communication equipment, destined for a Mogadishu military training facility.
- Eight pirates involved; some reportedly linked to the earlier hijacking of M/V Sward (April 2026).
- Vessel steered toward Garmaal in Puntland's Dangoroyo district.
- India's Navy has conducted anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden/western Indian Ocean since 2008.
- Precedent: Indian Navy's 40-hour operation rescuing MV Ruen's crew and capturing 35 pirates (2024).

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Resurgence of Somali piracy as a symptom of onshore Puntland instability and gaps in international naval patrol coverage.
- India's maritime-security stake in protecting its large seafarer population and shipping-lane interests in the western Indian Ocean.
- Arms-cargo dimension: piracy involving a weapons shipment raises proliferation and regional-conflict-fuelling concerns beyond ordinary hijacking.
- Institutional response options: bilateral/multilateral naval coordination versus reliance on private armed security guards aboard vessels.
- India's broader Indian Ocean Region security posture — the SAGAR doctrine and "net security provider" role.

Memory Hook: Same waters, same script: pirates who hit MV Sward in April are back for MV Lutuf in August — patrol gaps don't just enable one hijacking, they invite a repeat cast.

PYQ Linkage: GS3 2017 — maritime security and piracy in the Indian Ocean Region.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. M/V Lutuf was hijacked off the coast of Somalia's Puntland region.
2. All crew members aboard M/V Lutuf were Indian nationals.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a). Only 6 of the 10 crew members were Indian; the rest were Turkish, Georgian and Serbian.

Probable Mains Question (150 words): Discuss the factors behind the periodic resurgence of piracy off the Horn of Africa, and evaluate India's role as a "net security provider" in the western Indian Ocean.

GS3

Defence

Security

PYQ-2017

#Piracy

#SAGAR

§5 Science & Technology

REPORTED AUGUST 2026

GS3 · S&T/Defence

DRDO-ISRO Partner on Space-Based Himalayan Snow-Cover Monitoring — A Dual-Use Weather Watch

WHY IN NEWS

DRDO and ISRO have joined hands to employ space-based technology to enhance monitoring of Himalayan snow cover and improve mountain-meteorology forecasting, building on their broader institutional collaboration that also includes DRDO's separately reported roadmap to use ISRO's Kulasekharapatnam Spaceport.

BACKGROUND

The Himalayan region's snow and glacier dynamics directly affect river discharge, glacial-lake outburst flood (GLOF) risk, avalanche forecasting and high-altitude military logistics along India's northern borders, making accurate, high-frequency snow-cover data a shared civil-military priority. Ground-based snow gauges and manned observation posts have traditionally been the primary data source in these remote, border-adjacent terrains; satellite-based remote sensing offers persistent, wide-area coverage that reduces both cost and risk for on-ground personnel, benefiting civilian disaster-preparedness agencies and defence forces simultaneously.

KEY FACTS

- DRDO and ISRO have partnered on space-based Himalayan snow-cover monitoring and mountain-meteorology forecasting.
- Builds on wider DRDO-ISRO cooperation, alongside the separately reported Kulasekharapatnam Spaceport roadmap.
- Snow-cover data feeds river-discharge forecasting, glacial-lake outburst flood (GLOF) risk assessment and avalanche warnings.
- High-altitude military logistics along India's northern borders also depend on accurate weather/snow forecasting.
- Satellite remote sensing reduces dependence on manned high-altitude observation posts.
- A dual-use (civil-military) application of India's space assets, distinct from purely tactical/surveillance uses.
- Complements ISRO's existing Earth-observation satellite constellation (e.g., ResourceSat, Cartosat series).

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Dual-use space applications: the same satellite data serving disaster-preparedness and defence-logistics needs simultaneously.
- Climate-change adaptation: improved snow-cover monitoring supports early warning for climate-driven glacial hazards in the Himalayas.
- Institutional synergy: DRDO-ISRO cooperation as a model for civil-military technology-sharing without duplicating satellite infrastructure.
- Border-security dimension: reliable weather/terrain data materially affects operational readiness in high-altitude sectors.
- Data-governance question: coordinating access/sharing protocols between civilian disaster-management agencies and defence users.

Memory Hook: One satellite, two uses: the same snow-cover picture that warns a Himalayan village of a flood also tells a soldier what the pass looks like tomorrow.

PYQ Linkage: GS3 2020 — disaster management in the Himalayan region and technology-based mitigation.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) are a risk relevant to Himalayan snow-cover and glacier monitoring.
2. DRDO-ISRO cooperation on Himalayan meteorology is intended solely for defence applications, with no civilian disaster-management use.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a). The cooperation is explicitly dual-use, serving both civilian and defence purposes.

Probable Mains Question (150 words): Discuss the significance of satellite-based Himalayan snow-cover monitoring for disaster preparedness and high-altitude defence logistics, with reference to recent DRDO-ISRO cooperation.

GS3

S&T

Defence

PYQ-2020

#GLOF

NEEB 300+ Dual-use space applications (near-space on 21 Aug, Himalayan meteorology today) are a recurring GS3 pattern — NEEB 300+'s Live PYQ Writing sessions this week are drilling exactly this connective-answer style.

§6 Economy

EFFECTIVE 20 AUGUST 2026

GS3 · Economy

RBI Reconstitutes Its Central Board — Strength Cut from 15 to 11, S. Somanath Joins

WHY IN NEWS

Effective 20 August 2026, the Reserve Bank of India reduced the total strength of its Central Board of Directors from 15 to 11 members, appointing former ISRO Chairman S. Somanath as a part-time, non-official director for a four-year term and reappointing industrialist Anand Mahindra for another four-year term. Other part-time non-official directors on the reconstituted Board include Revathy Iyer, Sachin Chaturvedi, Anuradha Thakur and Sanjay Lohiya.

BACKGROUND

The RBI Central Board, constituted under the RBI Act, 1934, comprises the Governor, Deputy Governors, and government-nominated official and non-official directors, and is responsible for general superintendence and direction of the Bank's affairs — including approving the annual budget and reviewing macroeconomic developments — distinct from the separate Monetary Policy Committee, which sets the policy repo rate. Appointing a scientist-technocrat like S. Somanath alongside established industry figures reflects a broader trend of diversifying central-bank governance boards beyond pure finance/banking backgrounds to include strategic and technology-sector perspectives.

KEY FACTS

- RBI Central Board strength reduced from 15 to 11 members, effective 20 August 2026.
- S. Somanath, former ISRO Chairman, appointed part-time, non-official director for a four-year term.
- Anand Mahindra (Mahindra Group Chairman) reappointed for another four-year term.
- Other part-time non-official directors: Revathy Iyer, Sachin Chaturvedi, Anuradha Thakur, Sanjay Lohiya.
- RBI Central Board is constituted under the RBI Act, 1934.
- The Board's role — general superintendence and direction — is distinct from the Monetary Policy Committee's rate-setting function.
- Reflects a trend of diversifying central-bank governance boards with technocrat and industry perspectives.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Institutional governance: distinguishing the RBI Central Board's general-superintendence role from the Monetary Policy Committee's specific rate-setting mandate.
- Diversification rationale: a space-technology background on a financial regulator's board signals recognition of technology's growing relevance to financial-sector strategy.
- Board-size reduction: a potential efficiency rationale versus reduced sectoral/regional representation — a governance trade-off.
- Comparative central-bank governance: how other major central banks structure their supervisory boards relative to RBI's model.

Memory Hook: The rocket scientist joins the rate-setters' landlord: Somanath doesn't set interest rates (that's the MPC) — he helps govern the RBI itself (that's the Central Board).

PYQ Linkage: GS3 2021 — institutional structure and functions of the Reserve Bank of India.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements about the RBI Central Board:

1. It is responsible for setting the policy repo rate.
2. Its total strength was reduced from 15 to 11 members in August 2026.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b). The policy repo rate is set by the Monetary Policy Committee, not the Central Board.

Probable Mains Question (150 words): Distinguish between the roles of the RBI's Central Board of Directors and its Monetary Policy Committee, and discuss the significance of appointing technocrats from outside the finance sector to the Central Board.

GS3

Economy

PYQ-2021

#RBI

#CentralBoard

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