Daily news summary

UPSC daily news summary - 25 August 2026

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Parliamentary legislation on tribunal governance, mineral rights, and election synchronization share focus with key developments in space technology and digital payments.

COMBINED SUMMARY

- Parliament passed the Tribunal Reforms Bill, 2026, establishing a National Tribunal Commission to regulate member appointments and judicial independence.
- The Union Government notified amendments to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, provoking fiscal jurisdiction disputes with mineral-rich States.
- The Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy submitted constitutional risk assessments to the Joint Parliamentary Committee regarding the proposed One Nation, One Election framework.
- ISRO detailed the operational mechanism of the Gaganyaan mission's Crew Escape System, utilizing a high-thrust puller rocket design.
- The Unified Payments Interface completed ten years of operations under the management of the National Payments Corporation of India.
- The Employees' State Insurance Corporation initiated recovery proceedings under Section 45C of the ESI Act, 1948, to collect pending statutory contributions.

1. TRIBUNAL REFORMS BILL 2026 AND NATIONAL TRIBUNAL COMMISSION

WHY IN NEWS

- Parliament passed the Tribunal Reforms Bill, 2026, formalizing the establishment of the National Tribunal Commission.

WHAT IS THE TRIBUNAL REFORMS ACT, 2021?

- Statute governing the appointment, tenure, and service conditions of members across various quasi-judicial tribunals in India.
- Provisions fixing four-year tenures and minimum age requirements were struck down by the Supreme Court in 2021 for compromising judicial independence.

KEY CHANGES IN THE 2026 BILL

- Establishes the National Tribunal Commission (NTC) as an independent apex statutory regulator for quasi-judicial bodies.
- Transfers member search and selection oversight to the NTC to eliminate executive dominance in tribunal appointments.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Enforces separation of powers under Article 50 by insulating administrative tribunals from executive bias.
- Addresses persistent structural vacancies and excessive writ litigation directly reaching High Courts.

KEY TERMS

- **National Tribunal Commission:** An apex statutory body designed to independently oversee member appointments, infrastructure, and administration of quasi-judicial tribunals.
- **Quasi-Judicial Body:** An entity other than a court, such as a tribunal, given powers resembling those of a court to adjudicate specific statutory disputes.

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PRELIMS FACTS

- Tribunals were incorporated into the Constitution via Articles 323A and 323B by the 42nd Amendment in 1976.

MAINS DISCUSSION

- Assess whether an independent **National Tribunal Commission** effectively restores judicial independence under Article 50.

KEY DATA

- **Parent Statute:** Tribunal Reforms Act, 2021 - The parent law replaced by the new statutory framework following Supreme Court directives on judicial independence.
- **Constitutional Provision:** Article 323A and 323B - Articles added by the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1976, enabling Parliament to establish administrative and subject-matter tribunals.

Official source

2. MINES AND MINERALS DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATION ACT NOTIFICATION

WHY IN NEWS

- The Union Government formally notified provisions under the amended MMDR framework amid fiscal objections raised by mineral-rich States.

WHAT IS THE MMDR ACT, 1957?

- Principal central legislation governing the grant of mining leases, prospecting licenses, and development of major and minor minerals in India.
- Empowers the Union Government to regulate mineral development while States retain land ownership and collect royalties.

KEY CHANGES NOTIFIED

- Centralizes auction processes and terms for critical and strategic minerals to streamline supply chain security.
- Restricts unilateral state-level levy modifications on mineral-bearing land beyond statutory royalty caps.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Highlights ongoing federal conflicts regarding State powers to levy taxes on mineral rights following recent Constitution Bench interpretations.
- Impacts revenue autonomy of resource-rich States and private investment certainty in critical mineral exploration.

KEY TERMS

- **Royalty:** A statutory payment made by a mining lease holder to the state resource owner based on the volume or value of mineral extracted.
- **Critical Minerals:** Minerals essential for high-technology, clean energy, and defense applications whose supply chains face severe disruption risks.

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PRELIMS FACTS

- State legislative powers over mineral development under Entry 23 of the State List are subject to Union regulation under Entry 54 of the Union List.

MAINS DISCUSSION

- Examine the fiscal federalism implications of central regulatory control over **critical minerals** versus State taxation rights.

KEY DATA

- **Parent Act:** Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 - The primary statutory framework governing mineral regulation and leasing rights across India.
- **Seventh Schedule Entry:** List I Entry 54 / List II Entry 23 - Defines the constitutional boundary between Union regulation and State control over mines and mineral development.

Official source

3. CONSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT OF ONE NATION ONE ELECTION

WHY IN NEWS

- Legal policy groups submitted risk assessments to the Joint Parliamentary Committee examining simultaneous elections across Parliament and State Assemblies.

WHAT IS THE PROPOSAL?

- A structural reform seeking to synchronize elections for the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and local bodies across India.
- Recommends amending constitutional provisions governing the tenure of legislative assemblies to establish a synchronized cycle.

KEY CONSTITUTIONAL RISKS IDENTIFIED

- Truncating or extending elected State Assembly terms requires amending Article 83 and Article 172, impacting the democratic mandate.
- Delegating Parliament's constitutional amending authority to secondary legislation risks violating the **Basic Structure doctrine**.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Simultaneous elections require widespread constitutional amendments and ratification by at least half of the State Legislatures under Article 368(2).
- Balances national electoral cost reduction against regional political representation and federal governance principles.

KEY TERMS

- **Basic Structure Doctrine:** A judicial principle establishing that Parliament cannot alter foundational features of the Constitution through amendments.

- **Article 368(2)**: Constitutional clause requiring ratification by state legislatures for amendments affecting federal structures.

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PRELIMS FACTS

- Constitutional amendments affecting federal representation under Article 368 require ratification by not less than half of the State Legislatures.

MAINS DISCUSSION

- Analyze the impact of premature Assembly dissolution mechanisms on the feasibility of simultaneous elections in a federal democracy.

KEY DATA

- **Key Article:** Article 172 - Defines the five-year duration of State Legislative Assemblies, central to any tenure synchronization plan.
- **High-Level Committee**: Ram Nath Kovind Committee - The panel tasked with examining legal and structural frameworks for simultaneous elections in India.

Official source

4. GAGANYAAN MISSION CREW ESCAPE SYSTEM

WHY IN NEWS

- ISRO detailed the architectural mechanisms of the Crew Escape System designed to protect crew members during launch phase emergencies.

WHAT IS THE GAGANYAAN CREW ESCAPE SYSTEM?

- An emergency safety mechanism integrated into the Human Rated LVM3 (HLVM3) launch vehicle.
- Designed to quickly separate the Crew Module from the rocket in case of catastrophic malfunction during ascent.

KEY STRUCTURAL FEATURES

- Employs a high-thrust puller rocket design mounted above the Crew Module rather than a pusher mechanism.

- Utilizes automated detection systems capable of identifying off-nominal flight parameters within milliseconds to trigger autonomous ejection.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Establishes human-rating standards required for domestic human spaceflight safety protocols.
- Validated through low-altitude and high-altitude flight abort demonstration tests (TV-D1) prior to crewed orbital missions.

KEY TERMS

- **Human Rating:** The certification process ensuring a launch vehicle's systems meet strict reliability and safety redundant standards for carrying human crew.
- **Puller Design:** A escape mechanism where emergency motors located ahead of the module pull it away from a malfunctioning launch vehicle.

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PRELIMS FACTS

- The Gaganyaan mission uses a puller motor configuration on its launch escape tower to separate the Crew Module during ascent aborts.

MAINS DISCUSSION

- Discuss the significance of human-rating technologies and safety redundancies in establishing India's indigenous spaceflight capabilities.

KEY DATA

- **Launch Vehicle:** HLVM3 - The modified, human-rated variant of ISRO's LVM3 (GSLV Mk III) rocket for the Gaganyaan mission.
- **Managing Agency:** ISRO - India's premier space agency executing the national human spaceflight program.

Official source

5. UNIFIED PAYMENTS INTERFACE TEN YEAR OPERATIONS

WHY IN NEWS

- The Unified Payments Interface marked ten years of operation since its launch on August 25, 2016.

WHAT IS UPI?

- A real-time payment system developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) for inter-bank peer-to-peer and person-to-merchant transactions.
- Operates on top of the Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) infrastructure under RBI oversight.

ARCHITECTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL REACH

- Consolidates multiple bank accounts into a single mobile application, enabling instant money transfers without sharing sensitive account details.
- Expanded internationally to enable cross-border remittances and merchant payments across multiple partner nations.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Forms the core transaction layer of the **India Stack**, facilitating financial inclusion and reducing cash velocity in the economy.
- Serves as a global public infrastructure model for real-time retail digital payments.

KEY TERMS

- **NPCI:** An umbrella organization for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India, set up by RBI and IBA under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.
- **India Stack:** A set of open APIs and digital public infrastructure enabling identity, payment, and data governance solutions.

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PRELIMS FACTS

- NPCI was established under the provisions of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, as an initiative of RBI and IBA.

MAINS DISCUSSION

- Evaluate the role of open-architecture Digital Public Infrastructure like UPI in accelerating financial inclusion in India.

KEY DATA

- **Developer Body:** National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) - The specialized entity responsible for creating and maintaining domestic retail payment rails.

Official source

6. EMPLOYEES STATE INSURANCE ACT RECOVERY ENFORCEMENT

WHY IN NEWS

- The Employees' State Insurance Corporation launched recovery proceedings to clear statutory default certificates pending under the ESI Act.

WHAT IS THE ESI ACT, 1948?

- A social security law providing medical care and cash benefits to wage earners in organized factories and commercial establishments.
- Financed through mandatory joint statutory contributions from covered employers and employees.

ENFORCEMENT MECHANISMS UNDER THE ACT

- Section 45C empowers designated ESIC Recovery Officers to issue attachment and sale orders against defaulters' properties.
- Authorizes direct arrest and detention of non-compliant employers in cases of persistent contribution evasions.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Ensures structural liquidity for social safety nets protecting formal low-income sector workers.
- Reflects administrative compliance challenges in transitioning informal units into formal social security frameworks.

KEY TERMS

- **Recovery Certificate:** A legal instrument issued by an authorized officer specifying unpaid statutory dues to initiate property attachment or recovery.
- **Social Security Code:** The consolidated labor reform code intended to integrate the ESI Act and other welfare statutes.

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PRELIMS FACTS

- The ESI Act of 1948 is administered by a statutory body comprising representatives from central/state governments, employers, and employees.

MAINS DISCUSSION

- Examine the statutory enforcement powers of ESIC and the challenges in implementing social security coverage across micro enterprises.

KEY DATA

- **Parent Statute:** Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948 - The statutory authority establishing ESIC and detailing employer compliance mandates.
- **Enforcement Clause:** Section 45C - Empowers ESIC officers to attach property and enforce recovery of unpaid statutory social security contributions.

Official source