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August 12, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. The Central Government is considering referring the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) Amendment Bill to a Joint Parliamentary Committee for scrutiny, informed sources said.
 - i. The Central Government is considering sending the Bill to a Joint Parliamentary Committee amid strong opposition from the Congress and the Trinamool Congress, which have demanded that the Bill be withdrawn.
 - ii. Introduced in the Lok Sabha on March 25, the FCRA Bill contains provisions imposing stringent restrictions on Non-Governmental Organisations and foreign funding.
 - iii. Informed sources said, "The Congress, Trinamool Congress and DMK strongly opposed the FCRA Bill at the meeting of the Business Advisory Committee, arguing that it was against minorities receiving financial assistance. Following this, the Central Government is considering referring the FCRA Bill to a Joint Parliamentary Committee for scrutiny. A resolution to this effect is expected to be moved in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday (August 12)."
2. The death penalty has been officially abolished in Lebanon.
 - i. In the voting held in the Lebanese Parliament on the resolution, a majority of the 128 members voted in favour, except for members of Hezbollah.
 - ii. With this, Lebanon has achieved the distinction of becoming the first Arab country to abolish the death penalty and replace it with life imprisonment with hard labour. Although executions had been unofficially suspended in Lebanon since 2004, the death penalty had remained legally in place.
3. The forest fire that broke out last week in the famous Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park on Indonesia's Java island has now been brought largely under control.

- i. However, firefighters are continuing intensive efforts to extinguish fires that are still burning in some areas. As of Tuesday, around 900 hectares (2,224 acres) of land had been destroyed by the wildfire.
- ii. As Indonesia is currently experiencing its dry season, the spread of forest fires has emerged as a major crisis across the country.

4. The death toll from the rapidly spreading Ebola outbreak in the Republic of the Congo has crossed 2,000.

- i. According to data released by the Government, a total of 4,381 people have been confirmed to have contracted the disease, while 2,011 have died.
- ii. The outbreak was declared on May 15. Since there are no approved treatments for the “Bundibugyo” strain of the Ebola virus responsible for the outbreak, an unprecedented number of deaths have occurred within a very short period.
- iii. In addition, clashes involving rebels and a strike by healthcare workers over salary-related issues have created serious difficulties in delivering medical assistance to remote areas.

5. A court on Tuesday sentenced former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his brother to death for crimes against humanity and war crimes allegedly committed during Syria’s 14-year civil war.

- i. In December 2024, Bashar al-Assad’s regime was overthrown by rebels, bringing an end to nearly 50 years of rule by the Assad family. Assad has since fled the country and taken refuge in Russia. The death sentence was imposed in his absence.
- ii. Along with Bashar al-Assad, his brother Maher al-Assad and his relative and former security official Atef Najib were also sentenced to death. The verdict was read out in the presence of Najib, who was brought into the courtroom under heavy security.
- iii. The incident in 2011 in which students who had written anti-Government slogans on a school wall in Daraa province were arrested and tortured triggered a major uprising against Bashar al-Assad’s Government.
- iv. The severe repression carried out by Assad’s brother Maher al-Assad, who was then a

military commander, and security official Atef Najib eventually developed into a 14-year civil war. Around 500,000 people were brutally killed in the conflict.

6. The Central Government has approved the printing and issuance of ₹10 and ₹20 currency notes on polymer (polypropylene plastic), Parliament was informed. A total of 100 crore polymer banknotes will be issued.

- i. This will help prevent problems such as tearing, soiling and damage caused by water. It will also save time involved in printing replacement currency notes. The polymer notes are expected to enter circulation early next year.
- ii. The Central Government approved the issuance of polymer banknotes based on a recommendation from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

7. World Elephant Day is observed every year on August 12.

8. The US space agency NASA has invited the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to join its ambitious project to establish the first human habitat near the Moon's south pole.

- i. Under the project, called the "Moon Base Mission," NASA plans to establish a permanent habitat near the Moon's south pole where astronauts can stay for extended periods to conduct research and other activities. NASA has said that the objectives include making new discoveries in space and laying the groundwork for future deep-space exploration.
- ii. Against this backdrop, a recent meeting of the India-US Joint Working Group on Space (CSJWG) held in Bengaluru decided to expand space research cooperation between the two countries. At the meeting, NASA invited ISRO to join its Moon Base Mission. A joint statement issued after the meeting said:
 - Under the Artemis Accords, which were established to promote peaceful exploration of outer space, NASA invited ISRO to jointly implement the Moon Base Mission.
 - Both sides agreed to take forward discussions on cooperation in transparent scientific data sharing under the Artemis Accords.
 - The two countries also decided to strengthen cooperation in space research under

the “Transforming the Relationship Utilizing Strategic Technologies” (TRUST) initiative launched in February last year to enhance India-US cooperation in emerging critical technologies in areas such as defence, artificial intelligence, semiconductors, quantum technology, biotechnology, energy and space.

9. The Tribunals Reforms Bill, 2026, which provides for the establishment of a National Tribunals Commission (NTC) to oversee the appointment of chairpersons and members of various tribunals across the country, was passed by the Rajya Sabha.

- i. The Bill had been passed by the Lok Sabha on Monday and has now received the approval of both Houses of Parliament.
- ii. Union Law and Justice Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said that the objective of the Bill was to ensure a modern, independent and uniform tribunal system in the country. Accordingly, the establishment of the National Tribunals Commission is at the core of the Bill. The Bill was subsequently passed by a voice vote.

10. President Droupadi Murmu has given her assent to a Bill making the disrespect of the national song “Vande Mataram” a punishable offence.

- i. The Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026, was passed by the Rajya Sabha on July 29 and by the Lok Sabha on July 30. With the President’s assent, the Bill has now become law. It will come into force once it is notified in the Gazette.
- ii. The law provides “Vande Mataram,” the national song, with the same legal protection as the national anthem “Jana Gana Mana.” It provides for imprisonment of up to three years and a fine for any act of disrespect towards the song.
- iii. The Union Home Ministry recently announced that “Vande Mataram” will be sung for the first time at the Independence Day celebrations at the Red Fort in Delhi on August 15.
- iv. Earlier, in an order issued on January 28, the Union Home Ministry had laid down preliminary protocols for singing the national song “Vande Mataram.” At official events such as the President’s arrival, the hoisting of the national flag and addresses by Governors, all six stanzas of the national song, which lasts 3 minutes and 10 seconds, are to be sung in full. The order stated that when both the national song and the national

anthem are performed, “Vande Mataram” should be sung or played first.

11. India became the world’s sixth-largest economy, with a \$3.92 trillion economy in the financial year 2025–26, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said.

- i. He made the statement citing the World Economic Outlook released by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in April 2026.
- ii. In a written reply to a question raised in the Lok Sabha, he said that India was the world’s sixth-largest economy in FY 2025–26, with a nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$3.92 trillion.
- iii. The IMF has published the ranking based on GDP measured at US dollar exchange rates.
- iv. The ranking may change due to economic growth, fluctuations in foreign-exchange rates and prices, revisions to national accounts, and economic growth in other countries.
- v. Nevertheless, India is implementing comprehensive strategic policies to accelerate economic growth.
- vi. He said India has undertaken several measures, including increasing agricultural production; promoting manufacturing through initiatives such as the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme; strengthening Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs); simplifying the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy; and implementing reforms in direct taxation and the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

12. Recent tripartite defense agreement between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey against the backdrop of rising tensions in West Asia.

(i) The Tripartite Defense Agreement

- A historic tripartite defense cooperation agreement was recently signed at the Al-Safa Palace in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.
- The agreement was finalized in the presence of Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.
- Under the terms of this pact, an attack on any one of these three nations will be considered an attack on all three, necessitating a collective response.

- The agreement aims to strengthen joint defense capabilities against aggression, enhance defense cooperation, and establish regional peace and stability.

(ii) Context and Motivating Factors

- This pact follows a bilateral defense agreement signed between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan on September 17, 2025.
- Gulf nations began losing confidence in long-term US protection following an Israeli airstrike in Doha, Qatar, on September 9, 2025.
- The escalation of the US–Iran conflict since February 2026—which saw Iran launch airstrikes against US military bases in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia—is identified as the central catalyst for this pact.

(iii) Comparison with NATO and Previous Alliances

- Unlike NATO, which has an integrated military command, permanent joint forces, and established infrastructure built over decades, this new tripartite pact currently lacks such unified operational systems.
- Despite existing agreements, Pakistan has previously refused to engage in military action against Iran or Houthi rebels in Yemen when they attacked Saudi Arabia, as it seeks to avoid direct conflict with Iran.
- A similar joint defense council established for Gulf Arab countries in 2000 has seen 26 years of operation without a single country engaging in military intervention against a third party under its provisions.

(iv) Strategic Interests and Regional Power Dynamics

- Saudi Arabia, though economically powerful, seeks to bolster its physical security by partnering with Turkey (known for its drone and military manufacturing technology) and Pakistan (valued for its nuclear arsenal and large standing army).
- While Pakistan previously sought Turkish help against India during "Operation Sindoor," India successfully thwarted those efforts.
- India's relationship with Saudi Arabia is strong, not just economically but also on an emotional level, suggesting the pact may not be inherently anti-India.

(v) Geopolitical Implications

- The pact is described as a clear indicator of diminishing trust in the United States among its traditional regional allies.

- India will remain indifferent to the pact, Iran will not be intimidated by it, and US President Donald Trump is unlikely to be concerned.