

EDITORIALS – 12TH AUG 2026

1. No path to peace (GS Paper II International Relations)

This editorial 'No path to peace' was published in The Hindu on 12th Aug 2026, highlights Israel's rejection of a phased peace plan, continued subjugation of Gaza, and the need to match Hamas's disarmament with Israeli withdrawal.

Ceasefire failure and Gaza's subjugation

- Since the U.S.-brokered ceasefire, Israeli strikes have killed nearly 1,300 Palestinians, while Israel controls about 65% of Gaza.
- Nearly two million Palestinians remain in tent camps with schools and hospitals closed, while aid restrictions deepen civilian suffering.
- Israel has blocked Gaza's reconstruction until Hamas disarms, making civilians bear the cost of its broader subjugation strategy.
- Hamas accepted phased weapons decommissioning, Palestinian technocratic administration and gradual Israeli withdrawal under the 15-point peace plan.
- Benjamin Netanyahu rejected the framework, demanding surrender of all Hamas weapons before any Israeli withdrawal, effectively precluding reciprocal peace.

Political motivations and American calculations

- Israel faces ICJ genocide proceedings, while Netanyahu confronts an ICC arrest warrant and a domestic corruption trial.
- Promising Hamas's destruction preserves Netanyahu's right-wing coalition, while withdrawal concessions could carry electoral costs in the October elections.
- The February 28 Iran war triggered a regional fuel crisis, disrupted Hormuz and raised American petrol and fertilizer costs, pushing Trump towards a diplomatic breakthrough.
- Declining sympathy for Israel before the U.S. mid-term elections also explains the Trump-led Board of Peace proposal.

Limitations and essential peace conditions

- The proposed “New Gaza” model envisages a free-trade zone and privatised infrastructure without Palestinian representation, raising concerns about post-conflict profiteering.
- Despite these flaws, devastated Gazans may welcome the 15-point proposal, while Hamas’s weakened position makes disarmament imperative.
- Hamas’s disarmament must be matched by genuine Israeli withdrawal, with Washington using its leverage as Israel’s principal arms supplier.

Beyond Editorial

India’s Strategic Stakes in the Gaza Conflict

- Diplomatic balance: India recognised Palestine in 1988 and established full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992, requiring a carefully balanced approach to the conflict.
- Energy security: Escalation affecting the Strait of Hormuz could disrupt India’s Gulf energy supplies, increasing crude oil prices, inflation and fertiliser costs.
- Diaspora protection: Operation Ajay facilitated the return of Indians from Israel in 2023, demonstrating the evacuation risks created by prolonged regional instability.
- Connectivity interests: Conflict threatens the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, launched during the 2023 G20 Summit to connect India with Europe through West Asia.
- Defence cooperation: The jointly developed Barak-8 missile system reflects valuable India-Israel defence cooperation that New Delhi must balance with Palestinian humanitarian concerns.
- Humanitarian credibility: India supplied 65 tonnes of medicines to UNRWA and Palestinian health authorities in 2024, reinforcing its Global South credentials.

- Strategic autonomy: India's support for Palestine's UN membership alongside strong Israeli ties illustrates issue-based diplomacy without joining rigid geopolitical blocs.

2. In the way (GS Paper II Governance)

This editorial 'In the way' was published in The Hindu on 12th Aug 2026, highlights how executive control over the proposed National Tribunals Commission undermines tribunal independence and judicial autonomy.

Tribunal purpose and judicial safeguards

- Tribunals enable specialised adjudication of technical disputes faster than ordinary courts, strengthening judicial efficiency.
- In S.P. Sampath Kumar (1987) and L. Chandra Kumar (1997), the Supreme Court retained High Court review because judicial review forms the basic structure.
- Tribunals remain structurally compromised because they are administered by the same government ministries whose decisions require independent review.
- In Rojer Mathew (2019), the Court recommended a statutory National Tribunals Commission to independently supervise tribunal selection and administration.

Legislative history and proposed reforms

- The Finance Act, 2017 expanded executive control over appointments, while the 2021 Ordinance reinstated service conditions already rejected judicially.
- In Madras Bar Association (2025), the Court struck down re-enacted objectionable provisions and directed establishment of the NTC within four months.
- Parliament passed the Tribunal Reforms Bill, 2026 without Lok Sabha discussion on August 10, followed by Rajya Sabha approval on August 11.

- The Bill restores five-year tenures, standardises service conditions, establishes a National Tribunals Data Grid and protects pending appointments.

Continuing institutional weaknesses

- Section 14 delegates qualifications, selection procedures, salaries and service conditions to executive rules, despite judicial opposition to such legislative delegation.
- Section 3 contains vague language, allowing the executive discretion inconsistent with the Bill's claimed adherence to the 2025 judgment.
- Under Section 16, the concerned Ministry screens complaints before NTC inquiry, preserving executive influence over removal proceedings.
- The Centre appoints all NTC members, merely consulting the CJI for judicial appointments, while retaining substantial financial and administrative control.

Beyond Editorial

Consequences for Access to Justice

- Institutional credibility: The Supreme Court repeatedly struck down executive-dominated tribunal rules in the Madras Bar Association cases, linking independence directly with public confidence.
- Case delays: NCLT vacancies and prolonged insolvency proceedings can defeat the IBC's 330-day resolution framework, delaying recovery for creditors and distressed businesses.
- Litigation costs: After L. Chandra Kumar, CAT decisions became reviewable by High Courts under Articles 226 and 227, adding another litigation stage when tribunal adjudication fails.
- Adjudicatory quality: NGT's combination of judicial and expert members enables informed decisions on technical matters such as pollution, forest conservation and environmental compensation.
- Legal certainty: Successive tribunal rules issued in 2017, 2020 and 2021 faced judicial invalidation, creating instability over appointments, tenure and service conditions.

- Equal justice: CAT permits government employees to file applications for a nominal ₹50 fee, illustrating how accessible tribunals can reduce formal court expenses.
- Public accountability: The National Judicial Data Grid demonstrates how digitised pendency and disposal data can support similar transparent performance monitoring across tribunals.

3. Are regional parties losing relevance in India? (GS Paper II Polity)

This editorial 'Are regional parties losing relevance in India?' was published in The Hindu on 12th Aug 2026, highlights that regional parties retain substantial electoral support despite fewer governments, electoral setbacks and organisational stress.

Electoral setbacks and organisational stress

- The Trinamool Congress's 2026 West Bengal defeat and widespread defections have renewed questions about regional parties' relevance.
- Defections affecting the TMC, AAP and NCP (Sharad Pawar) expose organisational vulnerabilities, not necessarily declining voter support.
- Voters prefer regional parties more strongly in Assembly elections than Lok Sabha polls, reflecting durable State-level identities.

Changing distribution of political power

- The BJP independently governs 11 States, Congress three and regional parties four, their lowest tally in nearly 25 years.
- Regional parties independently governed nine States during 2015–2020, indicating declining governmental control amid sustained electoral support.
- Regional parties dominate four coalition governments with BJP support, while the BJP leads six others involving regional allies.
- Congress remains a junior coalition partner in Jharkhand, Jammu and Kashmir and Tamil Nadu, reflecting reduced national-party dominance there.

- India's first-past-the-post system magnifies victories and defeats; fewer regional governments therefore do not prove vote-share decline.

Vote-share evidence and continuing relevance

- National parties' combined Lok Sabha vote share remained broadly stable, ranging between 60.04% and 68.15% during 2009–2024.
- Their share was 63.59% in 2009 and 62.72% in 2024, despite major shifts in seats and governing coalitions.
- Regional parties consistently secured about one-third of votes: 31.22% in 2009, 35.85% in 2014, 28.1% in 2019 and 33.53% in 2024.
- Regional parties won 190 Lok Sabha seats in 2024, recovering from 142 in 2019 and demonstrating continuing electoral resilience.
- In 2024, their vote shares remained particularly strong in Sikkim, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, despite substantial State-wise variation.
- Tamil Nadu shows that one regional party's setback may benefit another, indicating intra-regional competition rather than declining regional politics.

Beyond Editorial

Regional Parties as Pillars of Federalism

- Regional representation: The DMK's rise through Tamil linguistic mobilisation helped preserve Tamil Nadu's two-language policy and resist perceived Hindi-centric homogenisation.
- Federal bargaining: After the 2024 Lok Sabha election, TDP's coalition leverage contributed to Union support for Amaravati's development and completion of the Polavaram project.
- Coalition moderation: Regional parties shaped the United Front governments during 1996–98 and later UPA and NDA coalitions, compelling negotiation across diverse State interests.
- Policy innovation: Tamil Nadu's 1982 nutritious meal programme under the AIADMK preceded the national school meal programme launched in 1995.

- Constitutional integration: The 1986 Mizo Accord brought the Mizo National Front into democratic politics, followed by Mizoram's statehood and an elected MNF government.
- Competitive federalism: Odisha's cyclone shelters, evacuation planning and disaster-response institutions developed under BJD governments became widely recognised governance practices.
- Fiscal federalism: Regional party-led governments influence taxation through the GST Council, where States collectively possess two-thirds of the weighted voting power.