EDITORIALS - 30TH JUL 2026

1. FCRA BILL 2026, A THREAT TO CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

(GS Paper II Polity)

This editorial 'FCRA Bill 2026, a threat to civil society organisations' was published in The Hindu on 30th Jul 2026, highlights how the proposed law expands state control over foreign-funded civil society organisations through sweeping cancellation, asset-vesting and exemption powers.

Background and Regulatory Evolution

- The FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026, relisted for the monsoon session after earlier protests by Christian groups and NGOs, confirms the government's intent to enact it.
- The FCRA, 1976 introduced statutory regulation amid fears that foreign funds could enable external forces to destabilise India's democratic system.
- The FCRA, 2010 tightened regulation but allowed registered organisations to use foreign funds for health, education, environmental protection and other humanitarian work.
- Foreign contributions were prohibited for candidates, media personnel, judges, public servants, legislators, political parties and political organisations, while programme-based organisations required registration certificates.

Expanded Asset-Vesting and Cancellation Powers

- Under the 2026 Bill, cancellation of registration transfers unutilised foreign contributions and all assets created from them to a designated authority.
- Proposed Section 16A(2) vests an entire asset in the authority even when foreign contributions financed only part of its creation.

- Vesting initially remains provisional but becomes permanent if registration is not renewed, restored or freshly obtained within the prescribed period.
- The designated authority may transfer vested assets to government bodies or sell them, crediting proceeds and unused funds to the Consolidated Fund of India.
- Section 14(1)(c) permits cancellation whenever the Central government considers it necessary in the vaguely defined “public interest,” potentially halting organisations and vesting even places of worship.
- Registration may be cancelled upon prosecution for alleged forced or induced religious conversion, creating misuse risks because complaints can be filed easily against minority groups.
- Voluntary surrender of registration also transfers all remaining funds and related assets to the designated authority, even when an organisation merely stops seeking future foreign contributions.

Constitutional and Civil Society Concerns

- Clause 16L allows the government to exempt any person or organisational class in the public interest without defining an intelligible differentia or rational nexus, inviting an Article 14 challenge.
- Sweeping cancellation and vesting powers could disable NGOs working in educational, cultural, environmental and charitable sectors, particularly those dependent on foreign contributions.

Beyond Editorial

Principles for Proportionate FCRA Regulation

- Regulatory balance: In *Noel Harper v. Union of India* (2022), the Supreme Court upheld stricter FCRA controls while recognising the State’s duty to protect national interests.
- Procedural fairness: *Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative v. Union of India* (2022) highlighted the need for notices, reasoned orders and time-bound hearings during prolonged suspension.

- Graded penalties: Section 41 permits compounding of eligible offences, allowing fines and corrective compliance for technical violations instead of immediate cancellation.
- Clear grounds: Over 19,000 FCRA permissions were cancelled during 2010–19, strengthening the case for specific reasons and separation of misconduct from procedural defaults.
- Asset attribution: Section 17 requires designated FCRA and utilisation accounts, enabling auditors to separate foreign-funded assets from domestically financed property.
- Proportionate vesting: If an NGO hospital uses both domestic and foreign donations, only the audited foreign-funded share should vest after cancellation.
- Digital transparency: The FCRA 2.0 Portal, launched in June 2026, should support efficient services alongside disclosure of enforcement decisions and appeal outcomes.

2. AN 850-SEAT LOK SABHA MEANS MORE MPS, LESS PARLIAMENT

(GS Paper II Polity)

This editorial 'An 850-seat Lok Sabha means more MPs, less Parliament' was published in The Indian Express on 30th Jul 2026, highlights how an oversized Lok Sabha could weaken legislative deliberation, scrutiny and executive accountability.

Risks of Enlargement

- The proposed delimitation may expand the Lok Sabha from 543 seats, fixed in 1972, to 824–850, but numerical representation could worsen federal tensions and institutional efficiency.
- Large legislatures become unwieldy beyond a threshold; the U.S. House has remained capped at 435 seats since 1929 despite population rising from 120 million to over 335 million.

Deliberative Consequences

- With only limited Question Hour or debate time, merely 15–20 members among 850 may participate, further silencing backbenchers and smaller parties.
- Most MPs could complete five-year terms without asking questions, introducing Private Members' Bills or joining substantive debates, becoming silent placeholders governed by party commands.
- Declining parliamentary sittings, rapid voice-vote passage of Bills, weak committee scrutiny and Opposition marginalisation already erode Parliament; additional members would deepen this institutional decline.
- An oversized House would weaken individual legislators and strengthen executive dominance, resembling performative legislatures incapable of genuine negotiation; resources should instead support MPs through better offices, staff and committee systems.

Institutional Alternative

- MPs are national lawmakers responsible for legislation, foreign policy, macroeconomic governance and Union accountability, while local grievances belong to MLAs and institutions created under the 73rd and 74th Amendments.
- Population growth should be addressed by expanding State legislatures and empowering local governments, while retaining a compact Lok Sabha focused on national governance and effective legislative scrutiny.

Beyond Editorial

Constitutional Roadmap for Delimitation

- Constitutional trigger: The 84th Amendment froze interstate seat allocation until figures from the first census after 2026 are published.

- Historical precedent: The 87th Amendment enabled the 2008 redrawing of constituency boundaries using the 2001 Census without changing State-wise Lok Sabha seats.
- Demographic divergence: NFHS-5 found above-replacement fertility only in five States, explaining lower-fertility States' concerns over population-based seat allocation.
- Legislative scrutiny: The Delimitation Bill, 2026, introduced on April 16, requires parliamentary examination and structured consultation with States.
- Inclusive representation: The 2022 Jammu and Kashmir delimitation created a 90-member Assembly and reserved nine seats for Scheduled Tribes.
- Women's reservation: The 106th Amendment links one-third reservation for women with delimitation following publication of post-amendment census figures.
- Public consultation: Assam's 2023 delimitation used draft publication and public hearings, offering a model for transparent objections and regional participation.

3. FROM RAVIDAS AND BEGUMPURA, A PHILOSOPHY OF GOVERNANCE

(GS Paper I Society, GS Paper II Governance)

This editorial 'From Ravidas and Begumpura, a philosophy of governance' was published in The Indian Express on 30th Jul 2026, highlights how Sant Ravidas's ideals of equality, labour, welfare and fraternity inform the ruling party's governance philosophy.

Ravidas and Indian Modernity

- BJP president Nitin Nabin launched a Sant Ravidas campaign from Varanasi, running from Guru Purnima on July 29 to his 650th jayanti on February 20.

- Ravidas's teachings locate Indian modernity within the Bhakti movement, which expressed social and spiritual thought through lok bhasha rather than elite philosophical discourse.
- His philosophy rests on four pillars: equality and human dignity, the primacy of karma, dignity of labour, and welfare-oriented governance.
- By challenging jati and varna, affirming worldly action and elevating physical work, Ravidas linked spiritual democracy with social equality.

Begumpura as a Governance Model

- Ravidas's Begumpura envisioned a state without sorrow, hierarchy or deprivation, providing a standard for governance based on Antyodaya and equal citizenship.
- The author links PM-KISAN, Ayushman Bharat, Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana and Jal Jeevan Mission with welfare security against illness, hunger and failed harvests.
- GST, direct-tax reforms, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and SVAMITVA are presented as responses to Begumpura's vision of freedom from unfair burdens, wrongdoing and property insecurity.
- Equal access to government schemes and the abrogation of Article 370 are portrayed as advancing Begumpura's principle that no citizen should possess a lower constitutional status.

Democratic Culture and Fraternity

- Renaming symbols of elite power and expanding Direct Benefit Transfer are described as dismantling the *durbar* culture and reducing intermediaries between the citizen and state.
- Ravidas's assertion of caste identity and universal friendship expresses fraternity, connecting Begumpura with Prem Nagar, Pandharpur, Prabuddha Bharat and the contemporary vision of Viksit Bharat.

Beyond Editorial

Constitutional Lens on Begumpura

- Constitutional fraternity: *Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India* (2018) linked dignity with constitutional inclusion, reflecting Begumpura's rejection of exclusionary hierarchies.
- Equal access: *Appa Balu Ingale* upheld convictions for preventing Dalits from using a public borewell, enforcing Articles 15 and 17.
- Ending untouchability: *Safai Karamchari Andolan* (2014) ordered rehabilitation of manual scavengers and compensation for sewer deaths.
- Right to livelihood: *Olga Tellis* (1985) recognised livelihood under Article 21, supporting Ravidas's emphasis on meaningful work and material dignity.
- Food security: The NFSA, 2013 legally covers up to 75% of rural and 50% of urban populations under subsidised food entitlements.
- Dignity of labour: MGNREGA guarantees up to 100 days of rural wage employment, reflecting Articles 39 and 41.
- Health protection: Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY provides annual hospitalisation cover of ₹5 lakh per eligible family, advancing Article 47.