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Centre Constitutes Committee to Finalise a Permanent Political Solution for the Gorkhas

25 August 2026 ·

POLITY

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Centre Constitutes Committee to Finalise a Permanent Political Solution for the Gorkhas

25 August 2026 · 6 min read ·

✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

The Centre constituted a committee on **August 22, 2026** to draft an agreement and finalise modalities for a “permanent political solution” to the Gorkha question in the Darjeeling hills and adjoining areas. The panel is headed by **Pankaj Kumar Singh**, former Director General of the Border Security Force and former Deputy National Security Adviser, who had been appointed *interlocutor* for the Gorkha talks in October 2025 and is now re-designated as mediator. It follows a three-tier meeting involving the Centre, the State and hill parties held during Union Home Minister Amit Shah’s visit to Siliguri.

A DEMAND OLDER THAN THE REPUBLIC

The demand for a separate administrative arrangement for the Darjeeling hills is one of India’s longest-running sub-regional claims.

YEAR	DEVELOPMENT
1907	Hillmen’s Association of Darjeeling submits a memorandum seeking a separate administrative unit
1943	All India Gorkha League founded, reviving the demand
1986-88	Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) agitation under Subhash Ghisingh turns violent
August 22, 1988	Tripartite accord creates the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC)
2011	Tripartite agreement creates the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA)
2026	Centre constitutes a mediator-led committee for a permanent solution

The committee was constituted on **August 22, 2026**, the same calendar date as the 1988 accord that created the DGHC, thirty-eight years later.

WHAT THE EXISTING BODIES ARE, AND ARE NOT

This is the single most-tested distinction in this topic.

The **Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA)**, created in 2011, is a **semi-autonomous body established by an Act of the West Bengal legislature**. It is **not** a **Sixth Schedule** Autonomous District Council. This matters constitutionally: a body created by State law can be altered or wound up by State law, whereas a Sixth Schedule council enjoys constitutional entrenchment.

FEATURE	GTA (2011)	SIXTH SCHEDULE ADC
Source of authority	West Bengal State legislation	Constitution, Article 244(2)
Can be amended by	State legislature	Parliament, via constitutional amendment
Applies to	Darjeeling hills	Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram
Legislative powers	Delegated by the State	Enumerated in the Sixth Schedule

THE CONSTITUTIONAL PATHWAYS AVAILABLE

Any “permanent political solution” must take one of three constitutional routes:

1. A New State under Articles 2, 3 and 4

Article 3 empowers Parliament to form a new State by separating territory from an existing State. The procedure is specific and frequently misremembered:

- The Bill can be introduced only on the **recommendation of the President**
- The President must **refer the Bill to the legislature of the affected State** for its views, within a specified period
- **The State legislature’s view is not binding on Parliament**
- The Bill is passed by a **simple majority**, and under **Article 4** it is deemed not to be a constitutional amendment under Article 368

The West Bengal government has consistently opposed **bifurcation**, but as the above makes clear, State opposition delays rather than prevents.

2. A Sixth Schedule Autonomous District Council under Article 244(2)

This would give the hill body constitutional protection and enumerated legislative powers over land, forests, inheritance and social custom. It would require a constitutional amendment extending the Sixth Schedule beyond the four north-eastern States to which it currently applies.

3. An Article 371-Type Special Provision

Articles 371 to 371J contain special provisions for particular States and regions. A tailored clause could provide guarantees on identity, land and employment without creating a new State.

THE PARALLEL DEMAND: SCHEDULED TRIBE STATUS

A long-pending and separate claim is **Scheduled Tribe status for eleven Gorkha sub-communities**. Under **Article 342**, the President specifies Scheduled Tribes in relation to a State by public notification, and any subsequent inclusion or exclusion requires an **Act of Parliament**. This demand runs alongside the territorial question and is often the more immediately actionable of the two.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The demand is about identity as much as territory. The core Gorkha grievance is the persistent conflation of **Indian Gorkhas with Nepali nationals**, a citizenship and belonging question that a purely administrative solution does not address. Any settlement that delivers territory without identity assurance addresses the symptom.

Both previous models failed for the same reason. The DGHC (1988) and the GTA (2011) did not fail because of poor design. They failed because the **departments, funds and functionaries promised to them were never fully devolved**. A third body built on the same pattern, without an enforceable transfer of fiscal authority, would fail identically.

The federal precedent problem. Creating a State on grounds of ethno-linguistic identity strengthens comparable claims elsewhere, including **Bodoland, Vidarbha, Saurashtra and Harit Pradesh**. The Centre needs a principled, criteria-based position on State reorganisation rather than an ad hoc political one, or each settlement becomes an argument for the next demand.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 2 (Polity and Governance): Federal structure; devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein; issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure.

GS Paper 1 (Society): Regionalism; diversity of India.

Prelims focus: Article 3 procedure and the non-binding nature of the State legislature's view; Article 4; Article 244(2) and the four Sixth Schedule States; GTA's statutory rather than constitutional basis; Article 342 for ST notification.

Mains angle: Frame this as the **sub-regional identity versus territorial integrity** problem. The analytically strongest position is that autonomy arrangements fail not from design deficiency but from **incomplete devolution**, and that constitutional entrenchment plus guaranteed fiscal transfers is what

distinguishes a durable settlement from a temporary one.

Way forward: Constitutionally **entrench** the hill body, whether through the Sixth Schedule or an Article 371-type clause; guarantee fiscal transfers with a statutory, sunset-reviewed devolution schedule; and resolve the ST status question for the eleven communities in a time-bound manner.

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPIEDIA

THE COMMITTEE:

Constituted: August 22, 2026

Head and mediator: Pankaj Kumar Singh, former Director General, Border Security Force; former Deputy National Security Adviser

Follows a three-tier Centre-State-hill parties meeting during the Home Minister's Siliguri visit

HISTORICAL TIMELINE:

1907: Hillmen's Association of Darjeeling memorandum, the first formal demand

1943: All India Gorkha League founded

1986-88: GNLF agitation under Subhash Ghisingh

August 22, 1988: Tripartite accord creates the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council

2011: Tripartite agreement creates the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS:

New State formation: Articles 2, 3 and 4; Bill requires the President's recommendation; State legislature's view is NOT binding; passed by simple majority

Sixth Schedule Autonomous District Councils: Article 244(2), applying to Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram

Special provisions for States: Articles 371 to 371J

Scheduled Tribes notification: Article 342; changes require an Act of Parliament

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

GTA is a West Bengal State legislature creation, NOT a Sixth Schedule body

Eleven Gorkha sub-communities have a pending demand for Scheduled Tribe status

Darjeeling is in West Bengal; the State government has consistently opposed bifurcation

Comparable statehood demands: Bodoland, Vidarbha, Saurashtra, Harit Pradesh

Sources: Business Standard, The Week

Source: Centre Constitutes Committee to Finalise a Permanent Political Solution for the Gorkhas — Ujjyari.com |
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