

Vande Mataram at Red Fort - 80th Independence Day 2026

Under the Government of India, **India's 80th Independence Day** celebrations on **15 August 2026** will feature **Vande Mataram at the Red Fort** for the **first time as part of the formal ceremony**. The complete **six-stanza** version of the National Song will be played before the National Anthem, at the conclusion of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address. Invitees will stand at attention during the rendition, and the **Ministry of Defence** has **printed all six stanzas** on the official invitation cards so that guests can sing along.

Legal Significance -

The **Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026**, introduced in the Rajya Sabha on 24 July 2026, has now received **Presidential assent** and became the **Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Act, 2026**. It was published in the Gazette of India on **6 August 2026** and came into effect with this date.

Key Provision -

The amendment extends the statutory protection under **Section 3** of the **Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971** to Vande Mataram, bringing it at par with the National Anthem, Jana Gana Mana, for this purpose.

It makes it an offence to intentionally:

- **Prevent** the singing of the National Anthem or National Song; or
- Cause **disturbance** to an assembly engaged in singing either.

Punishment: Imprisonment **up to 3 years, or fine, or both**. A second conviction attracts a minimum imprisonment of 1 year.

Previous Legal Position -

Before the amendment, **Vande Mataram** was recognised as **India's National Song** but **did not have the same statutory penal protection** as the National Anthem under the 1971 Act.

Earlier in 2026, the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** had issued guidelines regarding Vande Mataram, including its authorised lyrics, occasions for rendition, standing at attention during official singing and community singing in schools. These were **executive/advisory guidelines** and did not prescribe criminal punishment.

Important Judicial Decisions -

In *Salman v. State of Kerala (2014)*, the Kerala High Court held that making loud or contemptuous noise during the National Anthem amounts to a disturbance under Section 3 of the

1971 Act. This interpretation may guide courts if the same provision is extended to Vande Mataram.

In *Bijoe Emmanuel v. State of Kerala (1986)*, the Supreme Court ruled that individuals **cannot be compelled to sing the National Anthem if they respectfully stand in silence**. The Court held that such compulsion would violate Article 19(1)(a) (freedom of speech and expression) and Article 25(1) (freedom of religion), establishing that respectful silence is not an act of disrespect. These constitutional principles are likely to remain relevant if challenges arise to the proposed law.

Historical Background -

Vande Mataram was composed by **Bankim Chandra Chatterjee** in **Sanskrit** on 7 November 1875. It was first published in the journal *Bangadarshan* and later included in his novel *Anandamath* (1882). On **24 January 1950**, the Constituent Assembly recognised **Vande Mataram as the National Song**, while **Jana Gana Mana was adopted as the National Anthem**.

Historically, after Independence, the **Jawaharlal Nehru government** limited the official rendition to **only the first two stanzas** to preserve the song's broad secular acceptability, as the later stanzas contain references to Hindu deities and imagery. However, on **6 February 2026**, the **Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** issued an order directing that **all six stanzas of Vande Mataram** be sung or played at official government functions.

150th Anniversary -

The Government has launched a year-long national commemoration marking 150 years of the composition of Vande Mataram, with programmes highlighting its contribution to India's freedom movement and national identity.

Significance -

The **Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Act, 2026** is significant because it gives **Vande Mataram statutory penal protection on par with the National Anthem** under Section 3 of the 1971 Act. It strengthens legal protection for both national symbols against intentional obstruction or disturbance, while **not making it compulsory for individuals to sing**. The complete **six-stanza rendition** at official functions and its inclusion in the **80th Independence Day celebrations, 2026** also mark an important development in the official recognition and presentation of India's National Song.