

Monthly Policy Review

October 2019

Highlights of this Issue

[Subjects identified by Standing Committees for examination in 2019-20 \(p. 2\)](#)

Some of the identified subjects to be examined include the state of Indian economy, implementation of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayi Yojana, implementation of Ayushman Bharat, and National Register of Citizens in India.

[Policy repo rate reduced to 5.15%; reverse repo rate reduced to 4.9% \(p. 2\)](#)

The Monetary Policy Committee reduced the benchmark repo rate and reverse repo rates by 0.25% each. It also decided to maintain the “accommodative” monetary policy stance.

[Cabinet approves revival plan for BSNL and MTNL \(p. 10\)](#)

4G spectrum will be allotted to both PSUs. The central government will provide funds for spectrum allotment and a voluntary retirement scheme. It has also provided in-principle approval for merger of the two PSUs.

[SC directs telecom companies to pay revenue sharing dues of Rs 92,000 crore \(p. 10\)](#)

Telecom companies are required to pay an annual license fee of 8% of their gross revenue to DoT. The Supreme Court upheld the interpretation of “gross revenue” taken by DoT and directed the payment of all outstanding dues.

[Cabinet approves Minimum Support Prices for Rabi crops for 2019-20 \(p. 7\)](#)

MSP has been approved for wheat, barley, gram, lentil, rapeseed and mustard, and safflower and applies to crops to be sown in 2019-20. MSP for wheat has been increased by 4.6% and approved at Rs 1,925 per quintal.

[Draft Seeds Bill to replace the Seeds Act, 1966 released for public comments \(p. 6\)](#)

The draft Bill seeks to regulate the quality of seeds during their production, distribution, sale, import, and export. It does not apply to seeds produced by farmers, other than those for sale under a brand name.

[Working group report on group insolvency submitted \(p. 4\)](#)

The Working Group recommended that a unified framework for group insolvency be introduced. The report contained included the elements, applicability, and the specified mechanisms of the proposed framework.

[Inter-Ministerial Committee on money laundering constituted \(p. 3\)](#)

The committee has been setup under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002. It will include representation from Ministry of Finance, Corporate Affairs, External Affairs, and financial sector regulators.

[Draft notification to bring all medical devices under regulation released \(p. 6\)](#)

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare released a notification to regulate all medical devices as drugs under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940. Currently, 36 medical devices are regulated in India.

[Revised guidelines approved for authorisation to market transportation fuels \(p. 11\)](#)

The revised guidelines reduce the minimum investment required for grant of authorisation to market transportation fuels (from Rs 2,000 crore to Rs 250 crore). Transportation fuels include petrol, diesel, and aviation turbine fuel.

[Revised guidelines released for charging infrastructure for electric vehicles \(p. 9\)](#)

The revised guidelines require charging stations to install at least one type of specified charger models, instead of all five specified charger models. Further, the ceiling on tariff for supply of electricity has been removed.

[National Counter Rogue Drone guidelines released \(p. 8\)](#)

Rogue drones include civil drones being used illegally and posing a threat to security. The guidelines suggest setting up a Steering Committee to develop a framework to counter rogue drones and advise concerned Ministries.

November 1, 2019

Parliament

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Standing Committees identify subjects for examination during 2019-20

Eighteen Departmentally Related Standing Committees of Parliament have identified subjects for detailed examination in the year 2019-20. The subjects chosen by these Committees are listed in the [Annexure](#).

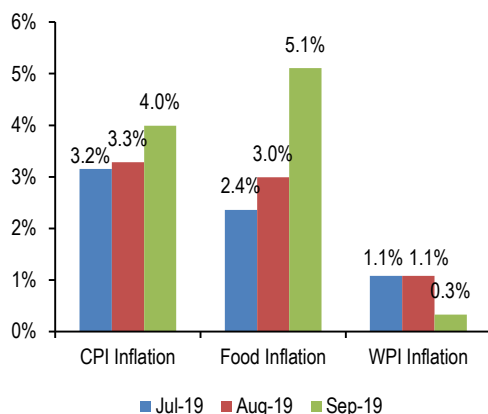
Macroeconomic Development

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Retail inflation at 3.5% in second quarter of 2019-20

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation (base year 2011-12) increased from 3.2% in July 2019 to 4% in September 2019, year-on-year.¹ Food inflation was at 5.1% in September 2019. This is an increase from 2.4% in July 2019. The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation (base year 2011-12) decreased from 1.1% in July 2019 to 0.3% in September 2019, year-on-year.² Trends in inflation during the second quarter of 2019-20 are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Inflation trends in Q2 of 2019-20
(% change, year on year)



Sources: Ministry of Commerce and Industry; Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation; PRS.

Policy repo rate reduced to 5.15%, reverse repo rate decreased to 4.9%

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) released its fourth bi-monthly Monetary Policy Statement of 2019-20.³ The policy repo rate (the rate at which RBI lends money to banks) was decreased from 5.4% to 5.15%. Other decisions of the MPC include:

- The reverse repo rate (the rate at which RBI borrows money from banks) was decreased from 5.15% to 4.9%.
- The marginal standing facility rate (the rate at which banks can borrow additional money) and the bank rate (the rate at which the RBI buys bills of exchange) were reduced from 5.65% to 5.4%.
- The MPC decided to continue with an accommodative stance of monetary policy.

Finance

GST Council constitutes a Committee to suggest measures for increasing revenue

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The GST Council constituted a Committee of Officers to suggest measures for increasing GST revenue.⁴ The Council has suggested the following areas for consideration: (i) systemic changes including checks and balances, (ii) policy measures and relevant changes needed in laws, (iii) expansion of tax base, (iv) improvement in voluntary compliance, (v) improvement in compliance monitoring and anti-evasion measures using better data analytics, and (vi) better administrative coordination. In addition, the Committee has been asked to consider a wide range of reforms and give comprehensive recommendations.

The Committee includes five officers of the central government and five state GST commissioners from the states of Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. Other states can also nominate officers to the Committee or send suggestions in writing.

The Committee was required to submit its first report within 15 days (October 25, 2019).

Cabinet approves revised procedure for strategic disinvestment of CPSEs

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The Union Cabinet approved changes in the procedure for strategic disinvestment of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs).⁵ Earlier, NITI Aayog was responsible for identifying CPSEs for strategic disinvestment and advising on the number of shares to be sold.⁶ As per the revised procedure, these functions will be performed by a Consultative Group, which consists of the Secretaries of: (i) the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management

(DIPAM), (ii) the administrative Ministry, (iii) the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, (iv) the Department of Public Enterprises, and (v) CEO, NITI Aayog.⁷

The Group's recommendations will be examined and executed by an Inter-Ministerial Group which will be co-chaired by the Secretary, DIPAM, and the Secretary of the administrative Ministry. Earlier, only the administrative Ministry was responsible for these functions.

The revised procedure will apply to cases where the financial bids have not been invited or must be invited again due to failure of the previous transaction. Note that DIPAM has invited proposals to engage advisors who would carry out undertaking detailed analysis for restructuring of CPSEs.⁸

Inter-Ministerial Committee on money laundering constituted

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The Ministry of Finance constituted an Inter-Ministerial Co-ordination Committee on money laundering.⁹ The Committee has been setup under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, which allows the central government to constitute an inter-ministerial coordination committee for cooperation and coordination between relevant agencies.¹⁰

The terms of reference of the Committee include: (i) operational co-operation between the government, law enforcement agencies, regulators and the Financial Intelligence Unit - India (under the Ministry of Finance), (ii) consultation among the authorities with the financial sector, (iii) developing and implementing policies on anti-money laundering or countering the financing of terrorism.

The 19-member Committee will be chaired by the Revenue Secretary. Other members of the Committee include the: (i) Secretaries of Department of Economic Affairs, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, and Ministry of External Affairs, (ii) Chairman SEBI, (iii) Deputy Governor RBI, and (iv) Director Intelligence Bureau.

SEBI releases framework for issue of Depository Receipts

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The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) notified the framework for issue of depository receipts.¹¹ Depository receipts are foreign currency denominated instruments listed on an international exchange. These are

instruments issued by a foreign depository and transferred to a domestic custodian (entity holding the securities). Note that, these requirements are in addition to the requirements under the Depository Receipts Scheme, 2014.¹²

Under the framework, only listed companies (companies registered in India and listed on a stock exchange in India) are permitted to issue securities for the purpose of issuing depository receipts. The listed companies will be subject to certain conditions. Any director or promotor of the company should not be a wilful defaulter or a fugitive economic offender, and not be debarred from accessing the capital market by SEBI. Under the framework, existing holders of securities will also be eligible to transfer their securities for issuing depository receipts. The conditions for listed companies will also apply to existing holders.

Listed companies can issue or transfer securities for the purpose of issue of depository receipts only in permissible jurisdictions. The list of permissible jurisdiction is notified by the central government from time to time. As per the Depository Receipts Scheme, 2014, permissible jurisdictions include only members of the Financial Action Task Force (for example: Japan, United States, Germany, and China). Recently, the central government has amended the Depository Receipts Scheme, 2014 to include the International Financial Services Centre in India as a permissible jurisdiction under the scheme.¹³

Overseas citizens of India permitted to enrol in National Pension Service

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The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) has permitted overseas citizens of India (OCIs) to enroll in the National Pension Scheme.¹⁴ The national pension scheme is a voluntary, contribution based pension scheme, which aims to provide old age security to Indian citizens.¹⁵ The annuity or accumulated savings under the scheme may be repatriable (that is, it can be moved outside India) subject to the guidelines under the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999.

A foreign national (except foreign nationals from Bangladesh or Pakistan) can register for OCI if they were: (i) eligible to become a citizen of India at the commencement of the constitution, (ii) were a citizen of India on, or at any time after the commencement of the constitution, (iii) belonged to a territory that became part of India after 15th August, 1947, or (iv) who is a child or grand-child of such a person.¹⁶

RBI permits lending by banks to infrastructure investment trusts

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The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has permitted banks to lend to Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs).¹⁷ InvITs are collective insurance schemes through which individuals and entities can invest in infrastructure projects. So far, banks were only permitted to invest in units of InvITs, but not lend to them.¹⁸

The lending will be subjected to certain conditions. These include: (i) banks should not lend to those InvITs where any underlying special purpose vehicle is facing financial difficulty, (ii) banks should put in place a board approved policy on exposures to InvITs which should cover sanctioning conditions, and monitoring mechanism, among other details, and (iii) banks should undertake assessment of all critical parameters including sufficiency of cash flows to ensure timely debt servicing. Further, the audit committee of the board of the banks should review compliance to the above conditions on a half yearly basis.

SEBI releases cyber security framework for KYC registration agencies

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The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) released a framework on cyber security and cyber resilience for KYC (Know Your Customer) registration agencies.¹⁹ These are entities registered with the SEBI (under the KYC Registration Agency Regulations, 2011) which maintain KYC records of investors.²⁰ SEBI noted that these agencies should have a robust cyber security and resilience framework since they perform an important role of maintaining KYC records of customers in security markets.

Cyber security frameworks include measures and processes intended to prevent cyber-attacks and improve cyber resilience. Cyber-attacks are attempts to compromise access or reliability of computer systems, networks and databases. Cyber resilience is the ability to prepare and respond to such attacks, continue operation during them, and recover from them.

Key features of the framework include:

- **Comprehensive policy:** KYC registration agencies should formulate a comprehensive cyber security and resilience policy which should include processes to: (i) identify critical risks, (ii) protect critical assets, (iii) detect cyber-attacks and, (iv) respond and recover from such incidents.

- **Governance:** KYC registration agencies should designate a senior official as chief information security officer, who will: (i) assess, identify and reduce cyber security risks, (ii) identify appropriate standards and controls, and (iii) direct implementation of processes as per the cyber security policy.
- The board of such KYC agencies should constitute a technology committee comprising of experts. This committee will review the implementation of cyber security policy on a quarterly basis.
- **Access control:** Access to registration agencies' systems, applications, databases should be for a defined purpose and a defined period. Physical access to critical systems should be restricted to the minimum and be monitored through controls such as CCTV cameras and card access systems.
- **Sharing of information:** Quarterly reports containing information on cyber-attacks and threats, and measures taken to mitigate vulnerabilities should be submitted to SEBI.

Law and Justice

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Report of the Working Group on Group Insolvency released

The Working Group on group insolvency (Chair: Mr. U. K. Sinha) submitted its report to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India.²¹ The Working Group was constituted to examine issues arising under The Insolvency and Banking Code, 2016 in Corporate Insolvency Resolution Processes (CIRPs) where a distressed company is linked to other group companies.²² Key observations and recommendations include:

- **Need for a common framework:** The Working Group noted that the Code does not have a common framework for resolving situations in which interlinked companies are going through CIRPs. In these cases, treating the insolvency of each group company in an isolated manner might be expensive, and might result in creditors realising lesser value.
- **Proposed framework:** The Working Group recommended that the definition of 'corporate group' include holding, subsidiary, and associate companies. The adjudicating authority may include other groups not covered in the definition. The Working Group suggested a comprehensive

framework for group insolvency, that would start with a procedural coordination mechanism in the first phase.

- **Elements of the proposed framework:** Elements of the proposed framework may include: (i) a joint application against all corporate debtors who have defaulted and are part of a group, (ii) a single insolvency professional and a single adjudicating authority, and (iii) the creation of a group creditors' committee. These may be voluntary. Exceptions may be allowed in certain cases, including those where stakeholders would get adversely affected. Cooperation, communication and information sharing among insolvency professionals, creditors' committee, and adjudicating authorities must be mandatory.
- **Phased implementation:** The Working Group recommended that the framework for group insolvency may be introduced in a phased manner. In the first phase only domestic companies may be covered, and only procedural consolidation mechanisms may be implemented.

For a PRS report summary, please see [here](#).

Corporate Affairs

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Scope of CSR spending increased

Under the Companies Act, 2013, certain companies are required to spend at least 2% of their average net profits in the last three years on projects which relate to activities specified in Schedule 7 of the Act. This schedule contains eleven entries, which include contributions towards activities related to eradication of poverty, and environmental sustainability. One of the entries allows CSR contributions to technology incubators located in central government approved academic institutions. This entry has been amended.²³

- The amended entry permits CSR contributions to: (i) incubators funded by central or state government, or any agency or public sector undertaking of central or state government, (ii) all Indian Institutes of Technology, and (iii) National Laboratories and certain autonomous bodies (such as those established under the Indian Council of Medical Research) engaged in conducting research in science, technology, engineering and medicine, and aimed at promoting Sustainable Development Goals.

Health and Family Welfare

Draft Bill to prohibit e-cigarettes released

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The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare released the Draft Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes (Production, Manufacture, Import, Export, Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage, and Advertisement) Bill, 2019 for public comments.²⁴ The Bill prohibits the production, manufacture, trade, storage, and advertisement of electronic cigarettes. Note that, an Ordinance to prohibit e-cigarettes was promulgated on September 28, 2019, and is currently in force.²⁵

- **Electronic cigarettes:** The Bill defines electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) as electronic devices that heat a substance (natural or artificial) to create vapour for inhalation. These e-cigarettes may contain nicotine and flavours, and include all forms of electronic nicotine delivery systems, heat-not-burn products, e-hookahs, and other similar devices.
- **Banning of e-cigarettes:** The Bill prohibits the production, manufacture, import, export, transport, sale, distribution and advertisement of e-cigarettes in India. Any person who contravenes these provisions will be punishable with imprisonment of up to one year, or a fine of up to one lakh rupees, or both. For any subsequent offence, the person will be punishable with imprisonment of up to three years, and a fine of up to five lakh rupees.
- **Storage of e-cigarettes:** No person is allowed to use any place for the storage of any stock of e-cigarettes. If any person stores any stock of e-cigarettes, he will be punishable with an imprisonment of up to six months, or a fine of up to Rs 50,000, or both.
- Once the Bill is enacted, the owners of existing stocks of e-cigarettes will have to declare and deposit these stocks at the nearest office of an authorised officer. Such an authorised officer may be a police officer (at least at the level of a sub-inspector), or any other officer as notified by the central or state government.

Comments on the draft Bill are invited till November 8, 2019. For a PRS summary of the Ordinance, see [here](#).

Draft notification to regulate all medical devices as drugs released

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The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare released a draft notification to regulate all medical devices as drugs under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.²⁶ According to the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation, medical devices are devices intended for internal or external use in the diagnosis, treatment, mitigation or prevention of disease or disorder in human beings or animals. They may be specified from time to time by the central government. Currently, there are 36 notified medical devices in India including heart valves, bone cements, and scalp vein sets.

The notification seeks to include all devices including instruments, implants, and appliances which assist in: (i) diagnosis, prevention, or treatment of any disease, injury, or disability; (ii) investigation, replacement, or modification of the anatomy; (iii) supporting life, (iv) disinfection of medical devices, and (v) control of conception, under the definition of drugs.

In this context, the Ministry released draft rules to amend the Medical Devices Rules, 2017.²⁷ The draft rules provide for the registration of all medical devices other than the 36 devices already notified.

Guidelines for evaluation of nanopharmaceuticals released

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The Ministry of Science and Technology has released guidelines for evaluation of nanopharmaceuticals in India.²⁸ The guidelines intend to provide a regulatory pathway for nanopharmaceuticals in India.

Nanotechnology deals with the development and use of techniques to study materials which are in the nanoscale range (a nanometer is one billionth of a meter). Nanopharmaceuticals is an emerging area that combines nanotechnology with biomedical and pharmaceutical science. It has several potential applications in diagnostics and therapeutics as the technology can be used to improve drug delivery by better targeting to disease site and higher efficacy.

These guidelines seek to ensure quality, safety and efficacy of nanopharmaceuticals, along with encouraging commercialisation of nanotechnology based inventions. They do not apply to conventional drugs with products containing microorganisms or proteins, which

are naturally present in the nanoscale range. Key features of the guidelines include:²⁹

- Safety requirements as specified in the Second Schedule of the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019 will be applicable for nanopharmaceuticals.
- A case by-case approach should be adopted for evaluating the quality, safety and efficacy of nanopharmaceuticals as it will depend on various factors such as biological nature, availability of data on pharmaceutical ingredient.
- The rationality for development of a nanopharmaceutical should be clearly stated. Further, the advantages and disadvantages of nanopharmaceuticals in comparison to conventional drugs should be demonstrated through studies.

Agriculture

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Draft Seeds Bill to replace the Seeds Act, 1966 released for public comments

The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has released the draft Seeds Bill, 2019 for public comments.³⁰ The draft Bill seeks to regulate the quality of seeds during their production, distribution, sale, import, and export. The proposed Bill seeks to replace the Seeds Act, 1966. Key features of the draft Bill include:

- **Registration:** All varieties of seeds being sold for the purpose of sowing or planting must be registered, except farmers' varieties. Farmers' varieties are varieties which have been traditionally cultivated and evolved by the farmers in their fields, or are similar to varieties about which farmers have common knowledge. Seeds produced by farmers, other than those for sale under a brand name, are also not required to be registered. Transgenic varieties of seeds (which are developed by modifying the genetic composition of other varieties) can be registered only after applicants obtain a clearance under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- **Standards:** The central government may notify minimum limits of germination, genetic and physical purity, and seed health for any seed variety. Additional standards may be specified for transgenic varieties. These standards will not apply to seeds

produced by farmers, other than those for sale under a brand name.

- **Compensation to farmers:** If a registered variety of seed fails to perform to expected standards (as disclosed by the producer, distributor, or vendor), the farmer can claim compensation from the producer, dealer, distributor or vendor under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.
- **Offences and penalties:** Persons who contravene any provision of the Bill and sell seeds which do not conform to the specified standards will be punished with fine between Rs 25,000 and one lakh rupees. Persons furnishing false information regarding standards, misbrand seeds, or supplying seeds which are spurious or not registered, will be punished with up to one-year imprisonment, or with fine of up to five lakh rupees, or both.

Comments on the draft Bill are invited till November 13, 2019.

Cabinet approves Minimum Support Prices for Rabi crops for 2019-20

The Union Cabinet approved the Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for Rabi crops, which will be sown in 2019-20.³¹ Table 1 shows the change in MSPs for the Rabi crops in 2019-20 as compared to 2018-19.

Table 1: MSP approved for Rabi crops for 2019-20 (in Rs per quintal)

Crop	2018-19	2019-20	Change
Wheat	1,840	1,925	4.6 %
Barley	1,440	1,525	5.9 %
Gram	4,620	4,875	5.5 %
Lentil/Masoor	4,475	4,800	7.3 %
Rapeseed and Mustard	4,200	4,425	5.4 %
Safflower	4,945	5,215	5.5 %

Sources: Press Information Bureau; PRS.

For cereals, the Food Corporation of India and other designated state agencies would continue to undertake procurement. For coarse cereals, state governments will undertake procurement with prior approval of the central government. The entire procured quantity will be distributed by states under the National Food Security Act, 2013. The subsidy will be provided only for the quantity issued under the Act. National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India, Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium, and other designated central agencies would continue procurement of pulses and oilseeds. The losses incurred by the nodal

agencies in such operations may be fully reimbursed by the central government.

Cabinet approves relaxation of Aadhaar seeding criterion for PM-KISAN scheme

The Union Cabinet has approved relaxation of the mandatory requirement of Aadhaar seeding (linking bank accounts with Aadhaar) for release of funds to beneficiaries under the PM-KISAN scheme.³² The PM-KISAN scheme provides an income support of Rs 6,000 per year to eligible farmer families. Earlier, Aadhaar seeding was a mandatory criterion for release of funds after August 1, 2019 (except for Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, and Meghalaya). Since 100% Aadhaar seeding could not be completed by this deadline, the mandatory requirement has been relaxed till November 30, 2019. The relaxation in case of Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, and Meghalaya remains till March 31, 2020.

Home Affairs

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Special Marriage Act extended to Sikkim

The President of India notified the extension of the Special Marriage Act, 1954 to Sikkim.³³ The Act provides for the recognition and registration of marriages between two persons, irrespective of their religions.³⁴ The provisions of the Act will come into force in Sikkim on the date notified by the government.

AFSPA extended to jurisdiction of three police stations in Arunachal Pradesh

The Ministry of Home Affairs has extended the application of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) in three districts of Arunachal Pradesh (i.e., Tirap, Changlang, and Longding). It has also extended the area under the Act to include the area falling under the jurisdiction of four police stations.^{35,36}

These police stations are: (i) Namsai and Mahadevpur stations in Namsai district, (ii) Roing station in Lower Dibang Valley district, and (iii) Sunpura station in Lohit district.

Transport

National Counter Rogue Drone guidelines released

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The Ministry of Civil Aviation released the National Counter Rogue Drone guidelines.³⁷ The guidelines seek to highlight the potential threat from the unregulated use of drones, and the measures to mitigate such threats. Drones (for civil use) are classified by their maximum take-off weight, as follows: (i) nano (less than or equal to 250 gm), (ii) micro (between 250 gm and 2 kg), (iii) small (between 2 kg and 25 kg), (iv) medium (between 25 kg and 150 kg), and (v) large (greater than 150 kg).³⁸

Key features of the guidelines include:

- **Rogue applications:** While the illegal use of micro drones may be limited to photography and surveillance, the small to large drones may be misused for carrying explosives with surveillance capacities. Such misuses may also include: (i) delivering weapons, (ii) airspace interference, (iii) attacks on people or property, (iv) conveying signals and propaganda messages, and (v) delivery systems for weapons of mass destruction.
- **Types of rogue drones:** Drones used for illicit targeting may include: (i) autonomous drones (controlled by on-board computers to navigate to a fixed target), (ii) drone swarms (several drones controlled together as one unit), and (iii) stealth drones (these can reduce their radar signature making it difficult to detect them).
- **Countering rogue drones:** An effective system to counter such drones should be able to detect and continuously track drones with certain peculiarities such as: (i) minimal infrared signatures, (ii) limited radio frequency, and (iii) low acoustic emissions. However, challenges to detecting such drones include difficulty in differentiating regular and rogue drones, and less reaction time.
- **Institutional set up:** Multiple agencies (such as Ministries of Defence, Home Affairs, Civil Aviation) are involved in protection against sub-conventional aerial threats. Therefore, a Steering Committee should be set up at the national level to evolve a counter rogue drone framework, and advise the concerned Ministries. The Committee will also regulate commercial

civil drone applications in the country. It will include members from the: (i) Indian Air Force, (ii) Ministries of Home Affairs and Civil Aviation, and (iii) intelligence agencies. It will be assisted by an Implementation Committee for regular monitoring of threats, and implementation of the counter rogue drone measures.

Draft guidelines on Authorised Vehicle Scrapping released

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The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways released draft guidelines for the setting up, authorisation, and operation of Authorised Vehicle Scrapping Facilities in the country.³⁹ Vehicle scrapping means dismantling vehicles at the end of their legally mandated life, usually for the reuse of certain components. Under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 the centre may make rules prescribing the manner of recycling of motor vehicles and parts which have exceeded their life.⁴⁰

Key features of the draft guidelines include:

- **Eligibility:** Eligibility guidelines for setting up an Authorised Vehicle Scrapping Facility include: (i) possession of a Consent to Establish from the state/union territory (UT) where the facility would be located, and (ii) obtaining a no objection certificate from state pollution board within six months of commencing operations. In addition, the facility should have an authorised scrapping yard to carry out the dismantling and scrapping of vehicles. Such a yard should have: (i) an adequate depollution system that removes all pollutants during the draining of fuels and gases, and (ii) a suitable earmarked area for dealing with waste vehicles, among others.
- **Authorisation and inspections:** The authorisation granted to the facility will be valid for 10 years, and can be renewed for another 10 years. The facility may be inspected by the licensing authority or a designated officer of the state/UT government. The facility will also be audited for occupational health and safety compliance, and business, environmental and labour standards.
- **Criteria for vehicle scrapping:** Vehicles that may be scrapped include: (i) those that have not renewed their registration certificate, or (ii) those that do not have a fitness certificate as per the 1988 Act.

- **Procedure of scrapping:** The vehicles will be scrapped as per the specified guidelines. After the procedure, the vehicle's status will be updated in the national register of vehicles, and the VAHAN database.

Comments on the draft guidelines are invited till November 15, 2019.

Power

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Guidelines for charging infrastructure for electric vehicles revised

The Ministry of Power released revised guidelines and standards for charging infrastructure for electric vehicles.⁴¹ The original guidelines were released in December 2018.⁴² The key changes from the original guidelines are as follows:

- **Safety standards:** The earlier guidelines required private charging stations (at residences and offices) to meet specified performance and technical standards. The revised guidelines require them to also comply with specified safety standards.
- **Public charging stations:** The earlier guidelines required the public charging stations to install all five specified charger models. The revised guidelines require charging stations to install only one or more types of specified charger models. Charging stations for e-two/three-wheelers will be allowed to install any charger model other than the specified ones, subject to standards set by the Central Electricity Authority.
- **Standalone battery swapping facility removed:** The earlier guidelines allowed public charging stations to provide standalone battery swapping facility. This provision has been removed from the revised guidelines.
- **Ceiling on tariff removed:** The Central or State Electricity Regulatory Commissions determine the tariff for supply of electricity to the public charging stations. Earlier guidelines specified that the tariff will not be more than the average cost of supply plus 15%. This ceiling on tariff has been removed under the revised guidelines. Further, a separate metering arrangement will be made for public charging stations.
- **Central nodal agency specified:** Under the revised guidelines, the Bureau of Energy Efficiency has been specified as the central nodal agency for rolling out the public charging infrastructure in the country.

For a summary of the original guidelines, please see [here](#).

Guidelines for the bidding process for procuring power from wind-solar hybrid projects released

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy released guidelines for bidding process for procuring power from wind-solar hybrid projects.⁴³ These guidelines will be applicable for long-term procurement of electricity by distribution companies from such projects through a competitive bidding process. This is in accordance with the National Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy announced in 2018. The Policy seeks to provide a framework for the promotion of large grid-connected wind-solar hybrid system. Key features of the guidelines include:

- **Applicability:** The guidelines will apply for the following types of projects: (i) individual size of 5 MW and above, with minimum bid capacity of 25 MW for intra-state projects, and (ii) individual size of 50 MW and above, with minimum bid capacity of 50 MW for inter-state projects.
- The rated power capacity of one resource should be at least 25% of the rated power capacity of other resource. For example, a 100 MW hybrid project will require the smaller resource (either wind or solar) to be at least 20 MW. Storage capacity may be added to these projects.
- **Bidding process:** The bidding process will involve the submission of a technical and a price bid electronically. The procurer (distribution company) may also opt for e-reverse auction for final selection of bidders.
- The bid will be submitted in terms of total hybrid power capacity to be procured in MW. The bidder will provide either of the following kinds of tariff-based bidding: (i) fixed tariff in Rs/kWh for 25 years or more, (ii) escalating tariff in Rs/KWh with pre-defined annual escalation and, the number of years from which such escalation will be provided. The bidder will also be required to submit documents related to: (i) land acquisition, (ii) environmental and forest clearances, among others.
- **Duration of agreement:** The minimum period for power purchase agreement (PPA) will be 25 years. This may be extended on mutual agreement between parties signing the PPA, subject to certain terms and

conditions. The generator will be required to declare annual capacity utilisation factor at the time of signing the PPA.

Communications

Cabinet approves revival plan for BSNL and MTNL

Saket Surya (saket@prsindia.org)

The Union Cabinet approved a revival plan for BSNL and MTNL.⁴⁴ This plan seeks to address the financial distress of these PSUs, and enable them to provide quality and reliable services. Key features of the revival plan are as follows:

- **Merger of BSNL and MTNL:** The Union Cabinet has given in-principle approval for the merger of BSNL and MTNL.
- **Allotment of 4G spectrum:** 4G spectrum will be allotted to both the PSUs. The central government will fund the cost of spectrum allotment to these PSUs. The central government will provide Rs 23,814 crore for this purpose.
- **Reduction in debt burden:** The central government will provide sovereign guarantee to both PSUs for raising long-term bonds of Rs 15,000 crore. The funds raised by this exercise will be used for restructuring the existing debt and, partly meeting capital as well as operational expenditure requirements.

Both the PSUs will monetise their assets. The funds received from monetisation will be used in meeting capital and operational expenditure requirements.

- **Reduction in salary burden:** To reduce the salary burden of both PSUs, they will offer a Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) to their employees, aged 50 years and above. The cost of the VRS scheme will be provided by the central government. The employees seeking voluntary retirement under the scheme will be eligible for a one-time compensation. The funds required for this purpose is estimated to be Rs 17,169 crore. In addition, the central government will also cover costs towards pension, gratuity and, commutation of benefits.

Supreme Court directs telecom companies to pay outstanding dues of Rs 92,000 crore to DoT

Roshni Sinha (roshni@prsindia.org)

The Supreme Court decided a case in relation to revenue sharing between telecom companies and the Department of Telecommunication (DoT).⁴⁵

Under the National Telecom Policy, 1999, telecom companies are required to pay an annual license fee in the form of a revenue share to the DoT. This license fee forms a part of the terms and conditions of the license agreement signed between the telecom company and the DoT and was set at 8% of the company's gross revenue.

Various telecom companies and the DoT filed a case before the Supreme Court asking it to interpret the definition of "Gross Revenue" under the license agreements. The telecom companies argued that the DoT had illegally included various elements of income in the definition of gross revenue which do not accrue from the operations under the license. These include dividend income, interest income on short term investment, and discounts on calls.

In its judgement, the Court upheld the interpretation of the term "Gross Revenue" taken by the DoT and directed telecom companies to pay all outstanding dues and penalties. This is estimated to be approximately Rs 92,000 crore.⁴⁶

TRAI releases recommendations on registration of Other Service Providers

Saket Surya (saket@prsindia.org)

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) released recommendations on terms and conditions for the registration of Other Service Providers (OSP).⁴⁷

OSPs are companies which provide various application services such as tele-banking, tele-commerce, call centre, and other IT-enabled services.⁴⁸ For example, a Business Process Outsourcing company is an OSP. They avail telecom resources including telephone connectivity, internet bandwidth and, domestic and international leased lines, from authorised Telecom Service Providers. They are required to register with the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) for offering services in the country. Currently, to register, OSPs are required to pay a registration fee, and furnish various information such as certificate of incorporation, information about directors, and a note on nature of the business, among others.

These recommendations aim to address the various issues related to the registration of OSPs. The salient features of the recommendations are as follows:

- **Scope of registration:** In March 2019, TRAI had noted that advancement in technology has led to the widening of the scope of terms such as ‘other IT enabled services’; this has caused the scope of application services defined for OSP registration to become quite broad.⁴⁸ Further, there is no distinction between the service for own use and, the service for a customer/other companies.⁴⁸ This has caused the scope of OSP to cover almost all IT-based services under its definition.⁴⁸

The following recommendations attempt to bring clarity in this regard: (i) only voice-based and, outsourced OSPs will be required to register with DoT for offering services, (ii) data/internet-based OSP and, OSPs with provision of services for only captive purposes, will only be required to furnish intimation, and (iii) Contact Centre Service Provider (CCSP)/Hosted Contact Centre Service Providers (HCCSP) will be required to register with DoT for offering services. CCSP/HCCSP are companies which provide the infrastructure required to set up a call centre, as a service. Further, multiple service centres of a single company can be registered as a single OSP.

- **Waiver of bank guarantee requirement:** Currently, sharing of infrastructure between domestic and international OSPs is permitted with prior approval from DoT. The sharing is allowed only between entities of the same company. The OSPs are required to provide a bank guarantee for this purpose. The OSPs may also employ persons who work from home. OSPs are required to seek permission from DoT and, provide a bank guarantee for extending the Work from Home facility. TRAI has recommended that the requirement of bank guarantee should be waived in both cases.

Petroleum and Natural Gas

Anurag Vaishnav (anurag@prsindia.org)

Cabinet approves revised guidelines for granting authorisation to market transportation fuels

The Union Cabinet approved revised guidelines for granting authorisation to market

transportation fuels.⁴⁹ Transportation fuels include motor spirit (petrol), high speed diesel, and aviation turbine fuel. Currently, authorisation to market these fuels is only available to companies investing a minimum of Rs 2,000 crore in exploration and production, refining, pipelines or terminals.⁵⁰

The revised policy reduces this threshold to Rs 250 crore and does away with the requirement of investment in these areas. Other salient features of the revised policy include:

- Non-oil companies are also permitted to invest in the retail sector. Companies will have flexibility in setting up a joint venture or subsidiary for market authorisation.
- Authorised entities will be required to set up at least 5% of retail outlets in the notified remote areas within five years of the grant of authorisation.
- Authorised entities are required to install facilities for marketing at least one new generation alternate fuel (example: CNG, LNG, biofuels, or electric charging) at the proposed retail outlet within three years of operationalisation of the outlet.

Information and Broadcasting

Saket Surya (saket@prsindia.org)

TRAI invites consultation on reserve price for auction of FM radio channels

TRAI has released a consultation paper on reserve price for auction of FM radio channels.⁵¹

The license for operating an FM radio channel is awarded city-wise through auction. For this purpose, a city-wise reserve price is announced. Reserve price is the minimum price acceptable for sale of an item under auction. This is being done under the latest phase (Phase-III) of the FM radio broadcasting policy announced in 2011.⁵² The phase-III of the policy seeks to enable setting up of private FM Radio channels in all cities with a population of more than one lakh, and certain other specified cities in the border areas.⁵¹ The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting intends to conduct the latest round of auction for FM radio channels in 283 such cities.⁵¹ The Ministry has sought recommendations from TRAI on determining reserve prices for this auction.⁵¹

In earlier auction rounds under phase-III, cities were divided into three categories for determining reserve price:

- **Existing cities:** the cities having FM channels allotted under the erstwhile phase-II of the FM radio broadcasting policy;
- **New cities:** all cities with a population greater than one lakh, and with no FM channels allotted under phase-II; and
- **Other cities:** specified cities in border areas with a population less than one lakh.

Table 2: Methodology for determining reserve price for auction of FM radio channel

Category	Reserve Price
Existing cities	The highest bid price received for auction of FM channel in that city under phase-II
New cities	Estimated price based on factors including population, per capita income, estimated FM radio listeners in the city and, average gross revenue of existing FM channels auctioned under phase-II
Other cities	Fixed at five lakh rupees

Sources: Consultation Paper on reserve price for auction of FM Radio Channels, TRAI; PRS.

TRAI has sought views on following points, among others: (i) relevance of the current methodology for new and existing cities categories for next round of auction, (ii) accounting inflation in deciding reserve price for existing cities under the current methodology, and (iii) permitting use of any technology (analog, digital or both) for radio broadcasting (currently, only analog broadcasting technology is allowed).

The comments on the consultation paper are invited until November 6, 2019.

Annexure

The subjects identified by various Parliamentary Standing Committees for examination in the year 2019-20 are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Subjects identified by the Parliamentary Standing Committees for examination in 2019-20

Agriculture
Department of Agriculture, Co-operation and Farmers Welfare
1. Production and Availability of Certified Seeds in the Country.
2. Implementation of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayi Yojana (PMKSY) - A Review.
3. Functioning of Agricultural Credit System in the Country.
4. Directorate of Plant Protection, Quarantine and Storage - A Performance Review.

5. Multidimensional Contribution of Krishi Vigyan Kendras and Agricultural Technology Management Agency for Training, Extension and Experimentation.
6. Role of Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies (PACS) in Comprehensive Development of Agriculture in the Country - An Evaluation.
7. Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana - An Evaluation.
8. Production and Availability of Oil Seeds and Pulses in the country.
9. Functioning of Co-operative Marketing in India- An analysis.
10. National Horticulture Board - Performance Review.
11. National Bamboo Mission - A Review.
12. Scope for Organic Farming in India - Review of Policy and Schemes.

Department of Agricultural Research and Education

1. ICAR-Central Arid Zone Research Institute, Jodhpur, Rajasthan A Performance Review.
2. ICAR-Central Island Agricultural Research Institute, Port Blair, Andaman Islands - A Performance Review.
3. ICAR-Central Coastal Agricultural Research Institute, Goa - A Performance Review.
4. Contribution of ICAR Institutes in Development of High Yielding Varieties of Rice - A Performance Review.

Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying and Fisheries

1. Role of National Dairy Development Board for Protection and Development of Indigenous Cattle Breeds.
2. Status of Veterinary Services and Availability of Animal Vaccine in the Country.
3. Ensuring Quality of Milk and Consumer Grievance Redressal Mechanism in Dairy Sector.
4. Performance and Evaluation of Livestock Insurance Schemes.

Department of Fisheries

1. Implementation of National Scheme on Welfare of Fishermen - An Evaluation.
2. Safeguarding Deep Sea Fisheries from External Exploitation.
3. Policies for Insurance in Fisheries sector in the Country- A Review.
4. Employment Generation and Revenue Earning Potential of Fisheries Sector.

Ministry of Food Processing Industries

1. Research and Development Initiatives and Achievements in Food Processing Sector.
2. Scheme for Creation/Expansion of Food Processing Preservation Capacities – An Evaluation.

Chemicals and Fertilizers	
Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals	
1.	Demand and Availability of Petrochemicals including imports and exports.
2.	Insecticides - Promotion and development including its safe usage.
Department of Fertilizers	
1.	Import of fertilizers and the issue of self-dependence.
2.	Study of system of fertilizer subsidy.
3.	Administration of Fertilizers (Movement Control) Order, 1973.
Department of Pharmaceuticals	
1.	Promotion of Medical Devices Industry.
2.	Review of Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP).
Coal and Steel	
Ministry of Coal	
1.	Land Acquisition and issues of Rehabilitation & Resettlement in Coal/Lignite Mining Areas.
2.	Coal conservation and development of Infrastructure for Transportation of Coal Across the Country.
3.	R&D in Coal Sector.
4.	Future of Coal in India's Energy Mix.
5.	Review of Coal Mines worker's welfare programme.
6.	Safety in Coal Mines.
7.	Production of Lignite - Projection and Planning.
8.	Skill development in Coal Sector.
9.	Performance of Coal Controller's Office.
10.	Implementation of Information Technology and vigilance activities to curb illegal Coal Mining and theft of coal in the country.
11.	Compliance of Environmental Norms by Coal/Lignite Companies.
12.	Non-utilization of allocated/leased out coal/lignite blocks by Public/Private Sector Companies.
13.	Import of Coal – Trends and Issue of Self Reliance.
14.	Coal Handling Infrastructure at Ports.
Ministry of Mines	
1.	New Auction Mechanism and Self Reliance in Minerals and Mineral based product.
2.	Mineral Exploitation Activities in North Eastern States and its overall impact on development of the region.
3.	Development of Aluminium & Copper Industries in India.
4.	Measures to curb Illegal Mining of Iron Ore, Manganese and Bauxite in the Country.
5.	Organizational Structure and Performance of Geological Survey of India (GSI) – A Review.
6.	Organizational Structure and Performance of Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) – A Review.
Ministry of Steel	
1.	Development of Leased Out Iron Ore Mines and optimum capacity utilization.
2.	Review of Steel Policy and its Impact on Development of Steel Sector.
3.	Major Policy changes assisting Secondary Steel Sector.
4.	Management of Energy efficiency by Steel Plants and Environmental Issues related to Iron Ore Mining.
5.	Safety Management & Practices in Steel PSUs.
6.	Development of Manganese Ore Industry in India.
7.	Skill Development in Steel Sector.
8.	Promotion of Steel Usage.
9.	Status of Greenfield and Brownfield projects of NMDC Ltd.
Commerce	
1.	Impact of Floods on Plantation Sector in Kerala and Karnataka.
2.	Import of Crude Oil: Effect on Trade and Industry.
Defence	
1.	Grievance Redressal Mechanism in Defence Services.
2.	Provision and Monitoring of quality of Ration and Livery items to the Defence Forces, especially in border areas.
3.	Assessment of the major Research & Development initiatives including by way of private participation leading to innovation and Import substitution during the last ten years.
4.	Accidents involving Defence Assets- A Critical Review.
5.	Eco-Task Force System – Measures to strengthen including raising of additional Territorial Army Battalions.
6.	New Unified Structure pertaining to Cyber Space, Space and Special Operations.
7.	Make in India with special reference to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
8.	Critical Review of National Cadet Corps.
9.	Challenges in Defence Manufacturing.
10.	Modernization of Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs).
11.	Coastal Security- A Review.
12.	An assessment of Defence Procurement Policy.
13.	Review of working of Ordnance Factories.
14.	Review of working of Cantonment Boards.
15.	Review of management of Defence Lands.
16.	Review of selection procedure of Officers for induction into Armed Forces.
Energy	
Ministry of Power	
1.	Role of Regulators in Electricity sector – An Evaluation.
2.	Energy Audit – Evaluation.
3.	Integrated Power Development Scheme – An Evaluation.
4.	Functioning of POSOCO in Grid management.
5.	Development of Power Sector.
6.	Evaluation of Power Transmission System - Performance efficiency in matching evacuation demands.

7. Review of Power Tariff Policy – Need for uniformity in tariff structure across the country.
8. Contribution of Central Electricity Authority in the balanced development of Electricity Sector.
9. Operations of Load Dispatch Centres and Power Exchanges.
10. Performance of Power Plants of Thermal and Hydro Sectors.
11. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY).
12. Saubhagya - Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana.
13. Role and Significance of UDAY in financial turnaround of Discoms.
14. Carbon footprints of Power Generation in India.
15. Delay in execution/completion of Power Projects by power sector companies.
16. Development of coal blocks allocated to power sector companies.

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy

1. Role of PSUs/Institutions under MNRE in Development of Renewable Energy Schemes.
2. Grid connectivity – Grid connection for Renewable Energy including Captive Renewable Power Plants.
3. Action Plan for achievement of 175 GW Renewable Energy Target.
4. Measures to make distribution/marketing of Renewable Energy affordable and effective.
5. Need for long terms Renewable Energy Policy and Legal Reforms.
6. Research, Design and Development in Renewable Energy Sector.
7. Tidal Power Development in India.
8. Renewable Energy- Potential and harnessing.
9. Evaluation of the Role of Renewable Energy in Electricity Sector.
10. Reasons for lack of manufacturing base for Renewable Components/Equipment.
11. Financial constraints in Renewable Energy Sector.
12. Evaluation of Wind Energy in India.

External Affairs

1. India-USA Relations – a critical review.
2. Performance of Passport Issuance System including issuance of e-passports.
3. India's Extended Neighbourhood: From Look East to Act East.
4. India and International Law, including its Extradition Treaties with foreign countries, asylum issues, international cyber-security and issues of financial crimes.
5. India's Neighbourhood First Policy.
6. India's position in the ongoing Climate Change Negotiations.
7. India's engagement with the African countries.
8. The European countries and India – India & EU.
9. India's soft power and Cultural Diplomacy: Prospects & Limitations.

10. Potential for developing relations with Latin America.
11. Welfare of Indian Diaspora.
12. India and Bilateral Investment Treaties.
13. Functioning of Missions abroad including Critical Evaluation of Political/Economic/ Commercial/Cultural and Consular Works responsibilities.

Finance

1. State of Indian Economy.
2. Quality of supervision and oversight of Financial Institutions
3. Inflation targeting guidelines and monetary transmission.
4. Strengthening credit flows across the economy-performance appraisal of the banking system.
5. Efficacy of overall taxation framework including direct and indirect taxes.
6. Financing infrastructure requirements including long-term corporate debt.
7. Financing the innovation ecosystem.
8. Financing rural development including appraisal of NABARD's role.
9. Analysis of disinvestment program.
10. Performance and regulation of insurance and pension sectors.
11. Performance and regulation of capital markets.
12. Strengthening the Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) sector.
13. Implementation of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.
14. Role of regulators, auditors, rating agencies and other stakeholders in achieving world class corporate governance.
15. Achieving \$10 Trillion GDP – Long-term prospects for the Indian Economy.

Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution

Department of Food and Public Distribution

1. Procurement, storage and distribution of food grains – Adoption of latest technology and training the manpower.
2. Payment of sugarcane arrears to sugarcane farmers.
3. Functioning of Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA).
4. Quality Control Cells (QCCs).
5. Construction of Godowns by FCI.
6. Food subsidy and its utilization.
7. Development/Promotion of Sugar Industry.
8. Edible Oils.
9. Strengthening of Public Distribution System – Augmenting use of technological means and Implementation of „One Nation, One Ration Card“ Scheme.

Department of Consumer Affairs

1. Programmes for Consumer Protection.
2. Regulation of Packaged Commodities.
3. Problem of supply and distribution of adulterated milk and measure taken to check it.
4. Mechanism of Price Monitoring System.

5. Price rise of Essential Commodities – Causes & Effects.
6. BIS- Hallmarking & Jewellery.
7. Initiatives in the North-East in the field of Consumer Rights Protection.
8. Regulation of Weights and Measures.
9. Awareness of Rights and Ensuring Justice to Consumers with particular reference to consumers in rural areas.

Health and Family Welfare

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

1. Affordability of Cancer treatment.
2. Implementation of Ayushman Bharat.
3. Medical Devices: Regulation & Control.
4. Promotion of Generic Drugs.
5. Status of Immunization/Vaccination in India and prevention and preparedness for dealing with Japanese Encephalitis (JE) infection in JE prone areas in the country.

Ministry of AYUSH

1. Quality Control and Standardisation of Ayurvedic, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy Drugs.

Home Affairs

1. Management of Worsening Traffic Situation in Delhi.
2. National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam.
3. Rising Crime in Delhi and NCR.
4. National Security, Intelligence Coordination and Counter Terrorism.
5. Administration, Development and People's Welfare in the Union Territories of: (i) Andaman & Nicobar Islands; (ii) Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.
6. Role of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) in Mitigating the Recent Floods.
7. Left Wing Extremism.
8. Coastal Security.
9. Security of vital installations.

Information Technology

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

1. Review of functioning of Prasar Bharati Organization.
2. Ethical standards in media coverage.
3. Film Industry: Problems and Challenges.
4. Review of functioning of Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC).

Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology

1. Citizens' data security and privacy.
2. Digital Payment and Online Security measures for data protection.
3. Review of functioning of Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI).
4. Safeguarding citizens' rights and prevention of misuse of social/online news media platforms including special emphasis on women security in the digital space.

5. Promotion of Electronics/IT Hardware Manufacturing Sector and measures for reduction of imports.
6. Policy issues in Information Technology including cross border data flows, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Internet of Things (IoT), etc.

Department of Posts

1. Real Estate Management in the Department of Posts.

Department of Telecommunications

1. Review of functioning of BSNL and MTNL and plan for enhancing their performance.
2. Review of functioning of TRAI.
3. Review of the performance of schemes under Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) with special emphasis on North East and LWE affected areas.
4. India's preparedness for 5G.

Labour

Ministry of Labour and Employment

1. Measures for implementing the ILO Conventions binding on India – An appraisal.
2. Working conditions and welfare of Mine workers, and assessment of working of Directorate General of Mines Safety (DGMS).
3. Deployment of Contract/Casual/Sanitation workers for jobs of perennial nature in Government/PSU offices/Establishments.
4. Status of and Welfare measures for workers deployed by Outsourced Agencies/Companies.
5. Welfare of Plantation Workers.
6. Functioning of the Employees Provident Fund Organisation.
7. The Employees' State Insurance Corporation - Applicability of ESI Scheme, benefits provided under the Scheme, with special emphasis on their improvement, financing and administrative responsibility, including management of Corpus Fund.
8. Functioning of Central Board for Workers Education.
9. Implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes.
10. National Policy on Child Labour – An assessment.
11. Identification and Rehabilitation of Bonded Labour.
12. Assessment of present categories of Scheduled Employment.
13. Effective Implementation of Labour Laws concerning the welfare of contract/casual labour.
14. Status of implementation of Social security measures for workers in IT and Telecommunication Sectors like BPOs/Call Centres.
15. Implementation of prescribed minimum Wages in Scheduled Employment Sector.
16. Implementation of Social Security and Welfare/Protection Schemes for Contract and Casual Workers deployed by CPWD in Various Divisions.

17. Social Security and Welfare measures for workers in unorganized and informal sectors.
18. Safeguards and measures for protecting the interest of overseas workers, particularly in the Middle East Region.

Ministry of Textiles

1. Development and Promotion of Jute Industry.
2. Skill Development vis-à-vis Manufacturing and Upgradation in Textiles Sector.
3. Welfare Schemes of the Ministry of Textiles – An appraisal.
4. Challenges/Opportunities - Indian Textile Industry.
5. Development of Cotton Sector.
6. Schemes/Programmes of Central Silk Board for Development and Promotion of Silk Industry – An appraisal.
7. Status/Performance of Handloom Sector.
8. Status and Reforming of Powerloom Sector.
9. Performance of Marketing Agencies of Handlooms and Handicrafts.
10. Functioning of National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT).

Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

1. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana.
2. National Skills Qualifications Framework – Assessment of impact.
3. Functioning of Directorate General of Training.
4. Functioning of National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).
5. Implementation of National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS).
6. Implementation of Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP) Project.

Petroleum and Natural Gas

1. Allotment of Retail Outlets and LPG Distributorships.
2. Pricing, Marketing and Supply of Petroleum Products including Natural Gas
3. Litigations involving Oil PSUs
4. Contract Management and Transparency in Procurement Procedures in Oil PSUs.
5. Energy Security with specific reference to Hydrocarbon Resources and Electric Vehicles.
6. Oil Refineries - A Review.
7. CSR activities of oil PSUs.
8. A Review of Performance of Petroleum Sector related Installations and Organisations under the jurisdiction of MoPNG.
9. National Gas Grid.
10. Review of performance of Oil PSUs with specific reference to financial performance and investments in other sectors.
11. Human Resource Policy of Oil PSUs.
12. Disinvestment, Mergers and Acquisitions in Petroleum Sector.
13. International Cooperation in Petroleum Sector.
14. Review of Progress in Production of Bio-Fuels.

15. Review of LNG Infrastructure.

Railways

1. Passenger Amenities including Modernisation of Railway Stations.
2. National Projects and Strategic Lines of Indian Railways.
3. Expansion of Rail Network.
4. Last Mile Port Connectivity with Indian Railways.
5. Introduction of High Speed Trains.
6. Dedicated Freight Corridor Projects of Indian Railways.
7. Passenger Reservation System of Indian Railways.
8. Digitalization in Indian Railways.
9. Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) related activities of PSUs of Indian Railways.
10. Sub-urban Train Services of Indian Railways.
11. National Rail Vikas Yojana – A Review.
12. Performance of Production Units of Indian Railways.
13. Protection and Usage of Surplus Railway Land.
14. Safety measures in Railway Operations.
15. Reconstitution and Restructuring of Railway Zones.
16. Modernization and capacity utilization of workshops in Indian Railways.
17. Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh (RRSK).
18. Recruitment in Indian Railways.
19. Requirement, procurement and utilization of wagons by Indian Railways.
20. Staff Welfare measures in Rail PSUs.

Rural Development

Department of Rural Development

1. Critical evaluation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).
2. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).
3. Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (Gramin).
4. Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAYNRLM).
5. Realization of the vision 'Make in India' under Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY).
6. Role of Banks in the financial inclusion of rural population.
7. Impact of National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) on the poor and destitute in the villages.
8. Creation of Adarsh Grams under Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY).
9. Status & utilization of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) fund among PSUs in the area of Rural Development.

Department of Land Resources

1. Implementation of Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP)

Ministry of Panchayati Raj

1. Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA).

Urban Development

1. Solid Waste Management.
2. Smart Cities Mission: An Evaluation.

3. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban (PMAY-U): Housing for All by 2022 and related issues.
4. Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) and Heritage Cities Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY).
5. Role of Municipal Corporations of Delhi, DDA, NDMC, CPWD and NBCC in Reducing Air Pollution in Delhi.
6. Water Supply, Sewerage, Sanitation, Green Space and other Urban amenities in cities across India.
7. Fall in Water Table of Cities: The Solutions.
8. Implementation of various Metro Projects and related issues.
9. Decongestion of cities for Smooth Flow of Traffic especially in metropolitan cities.
10. Need for formulating Master Plan for every city in the country for holistic development.
11. Need for De-concretization of Cities.
12. Removal of Encroachments and related issues.
13. Slums in metropolitan cities: need for improvement and resettlement of slum dwellers.
14. Monitoring of implementation of on-going projects by CPWD and NBCC.
15. Evaluation of the Policy on Acquisition of Land, Land Pooling and Land Use Change along with Redevelopment Norms in tune with current times.
16. People Centric Training and Capacity Building of functionaries of the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)/Municipal Bodies.

Water Resources

Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation

1. Conservation, Development, Management and Abatement of pollution in river Ganga and its tributaries and rejuvenation of river Cauvery.
2. Water Management: Problems and Challenges in India and measures taken with reference to Water Policy in Meghalaya.
3. Groundwater: A Valuable but Diminishing Resource.

4. Flood Management in the Country and evolving a Decision Support System for release of Water from the Dams.
5. Rivers as composite assets of the country – Measures taken/being taken for maintaining their purity and sustainability including the Inter-State Disputes.
6. Review of Inter-Linking of Rivers.
7. Rain Water Harvesting in India.
8. Encroachment of Water Bodies with special reference to various streams in Himalayan Ecosystem.
9. Micro Irrigation – New approach towards conservation and management of Water with special emphasis on Drip Irrigation/Sprinklers.
10. Review of major and medium Irrigation Projects in India.
11. Protection of river banks, flood plains and initiatives for control of soil erosion.
12. Dams and Barrages: their present status, safety and security.
13. Status and Progress of Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) and Water Users Associations (WUAs).
14. Maintenance and Creation of Water Bodies - Role of the (i) Government and Local Bodies; and (ii) Industries under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).
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2. Performance of National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP).
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