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Highlights of the year

Macroeconomic Development

In 2024-25, India's real GDP is estimated to grow by 6.5%, lower than 9.2% in 2023-24. Retail inflation averaged 4.6% in 2024-25 which was lower than 5.4% in 2023-24. India recorded a current account deficit of 1.3% of GDP during April-December 2024 as compared to 1.1% of GDP during April-December 2023.

Home Affairs

The Disaster Management Act, 2005 was amended to allow states to establish Urban Disaster Management Authorities. The Immigration and Foreigners Bill was also introduced to consolidate laws regulating immigration, entry, and stay of foreigners.

Law and Justice

A Constitutional Amendment Bill was introduced to implement simultaneous election for Lok Sabha and state assemblies.

Minority Affairs

A Bill to amend the law regulating waqf property was introduced in Lok Sabha, which was examined by a Joint Parliamentary Committee.

Mines

The Environment Ministry notified rules on mineral exploration and production operations in offshore areas. The Supreme Court upheld states' power to tax mineral bearing lands.

Finance

The Income Tax Bill, 2025 was introduced to replace the Income Tax Act, 1961. RBI modified priority sector requirements for cooperative banks. RBI issued directions on treatment of wilful and large defaulters.

Environment

The Public Liability Rules, 1991 were amended to increase the cap on liability of insurers.

Education

The University Grants Commission issued draft regulations for appointment of the Vice Chancellor in Higher Educational Institutions.

Health

The government expanded the health insurance scheme to include all senior citizens aged 70 years and above. Senior citizens already covered under the scheme will get an additional coverage of five lakh rupees.

Housing and Urban Affairs

The government decided to continue Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin for five years. The government also approved PMAY Urban 2.0

Infrastructure

The Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak, 2024 to regulate civil aviation was passed. A set of Bills were introduced to regulate the shipping sector.

During 2024-25, Parliament passed six Bills.

Table 1: Bills passed by Parliament between April 2024 and March 2025

Short Title	Sector	Key Objectives
The Railways (Amendment) Bill, 2024	Railways	Repeals the Railway Board Act, 1905 and incorporates its provisions into the Railways Act, 1989.
The Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill, 2024	Home Affairs	Empowers states to constitute Urban Disaster Management Authorities and a State Disaster Response Force.
The Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill, 2024	Petroleum and Natural Gas	Amends the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Act, 1948. Expands the definition of mineral oils, introduces petroleum lease, and adds penalties to certain offences.
The Boilers Bill, 2024	Commerce and Industry	Replaces the Boilers Act, 1923, while retaining most provisions from the Act.
The Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024	Finance	Allows upto four nominees for bank deposits.
The Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak, 2024	Civil aviation	Replaces the Aircraft Act, 1934, while retaining most provisions from the Act.

Note: This list excludes Finance and Appropriation Bills.
Sources: Relevant Bills; Bulletins of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha; PRS.

Finance and Industry

Macroeconomic Development

State of the economy in 2024-25

In 2024-25, India's real GDP was estimated to grow by 6.5%, as compared to 9.2% in 2023-24.[1] In 2024-25, nominal GDP (at prices without adjusting for inflation) was estimated to be Rs 331 lakh crore. The per capita income in 2024-25 (at current prices) was estimated to be Rs 2,05,579.

Table 2: Gross value added (GVA) across sectors at constant prices (in %, year-on-year)

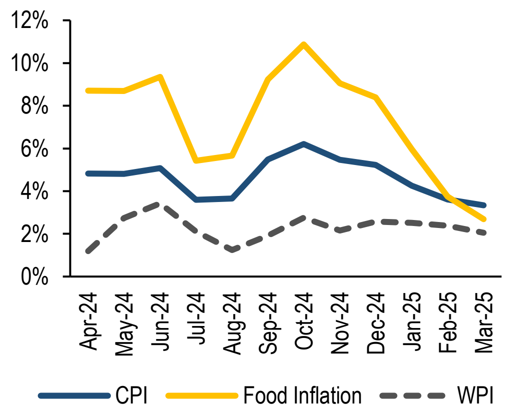
Sector	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Agriculture	6.3%	2.7%	4.6%
Mining	3.4%	3.2%	2.8%
Manufacturing	-1.7%	12.3%	4.3%
Electricity	10.8%	8.6%	6.0%
Construction	9.1%	10.4%	8.6%
Trade	12.3%	7.5%	6.4%
Financial Services	10.8%	10.3%	7.2%
Public Services	6.7%	8.8%	8.8%
GVA	7.2%	8.6%	6.4%
GDP	**7.6%**	**9.2%**	**6.5%**

Sources: MoSPI; PRS.

Inflation trends in 2024-25

Consumer Price Index (CPI) measures the change in prices of items at the retail level. In 2024-25, CPI inflation was 4.6%, lower than 5.4% in 2023-24. Food inflation in 2024-25 was 7.3% which was marginally lower than 7.5% in 2023-24. Wholesale Price Index (WPI) measures the average change in the prices of commodities for bulk sale at the level of early stage of transactions.[2] In 2024-25, WPI inflation was 2.3% compared to -0.7% in 2023-24.

Figure 1: CPI and WPI inflation in 2024-25 (in %, year-on-year)



Sources: MoSPI; Ministry of Commerce and Industry; RBI; PRS.

Balance of Payments in 2024-25

The Balance of Payments account reflects the transactions of a country with the rest of the world. It consists of the current account (exports of goods and services, remittances, and dividend payments) and the capital account (flow of funds through equity investments and borrowings). India recorded a current account deficit of USD 37 billion (1.3% of GDP) in April-December 2024, as compared to USD 30.6 billion (1.1% of GDP) in April-December 2023.[3] During April-December 2024, India's capital account registered a surplus of USD 22.7 billion. Foreign exchange reserves decreased by USD 13.8 billion in April-December 2024 and stood at USD 640 billion at the end of December 2024.[4]

Table 3: Balance of payments in April-December 2024-25 (USD billion)

Heads	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25 (Apr-Dec)
A. Exports	456.1	441.4	325.5
B. Imports	721.4	686.3	552.8
C. Trade Balance (A-B)	-265.3	-244.9	-227.2
D. Net Services	143.3	162.8	135.5
E. Other Transfers	55.0	56.0	54.6
F. Current Account (C+D+E)	-67.1	-26.1	-37.1
G. Capital Account	58.9	89.5	22.7
H. Errors and Omissions	-1.0	0.3	0.6
I. Change in Reserves (F+G+H)	-9.1	63.7	-13.8

Sources: RBI; PRS.

Monetary Policy Decisions

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) took the following decisions in 2024-25:

- In February 2025, the repo rate (the rate at which RBI lends money to banks) was decreased from 6.5% to 6.25%, the first change since February 2023.[5]
- The standing deposit facility rate (the rate at which RBI borrows from banks without giving collateral) was decreased from 6.25% to 6%.
- The marginal standing facility rate (under which banks can borrow additional money) and bank rate (at which RBI buys or rediscounts bills of exchange) was also decreased from 6.75% to 6.5%.
- In October 2024, the stance of monetary policy changed from withdrawal of accommodation to neutral.[6,7] This was to ensure that inflation aligns with the 4% target.

Union Budget 2025-26 presented

The Finance Minister, Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman presented the 2025-26 Union Budget in February 2025.[8] Key highlights of the budget include:

- **Expenditure:** The government has estimated to spend Rs 50,65,345 crore in 2025-26, 7.4% higher than the revised estimate of 2024-25.
- **Receipts:** Receipts (other than borrowings) in 2025-26 have been estimated to be Rs 34,96,409 crore, 11.1% higher than the revised estimate of 2024-25 (Rs 31,46,960 crore).
- **GDP:** The government has estimated a nominal GDP growth rate of 10.1% in 2025-26 (i.e., real growth plus inflation).
- **Deficits:** Revenue deficit in 2025-26 is targeted at 1.5% of GDP, lower than the previous year (1.9% of GDP). Fiscal deficit is targeted at 4.4% of GDP, also lower than the previous year (4.8% of GDP).
- **Tax Proposals:** Tax slabs under the new tax regime have been modified. Annual income of up to Rs 12 lakh will receive 100% rebate on the taxable income. Limits for TDS and TCS have been enhanced. Certain tax exemption to startups and IFSCs have been extended.
- **Policy Proposals:** The FDI limit for the insurance sector will be increased from 74% to 100% for companies which invest their entire premium in India. Guarantee cover for loans to MSMEs and startups will be enhanced. Definition of MSMEs will be revised. Nuclear energy laws will be amended to attract private participation. A mission will be launched for development of small modular reactors. Jan Vishwas 2.0 Bill will be introduced to decriminalise certain offences across laws. A high-level committee will be set up to suggest regulatory reforms. A scheme will be launched to improve crop diversification and agricultural productivity. Kisan Credit Card limit will be enhanced.

Table 4: Union Budget highlights (in Rs crore)

	Actuals 2023-24	2024-25 RE	2025-26 BE	% change from 24-25 RE to 25-26 BE
Total Expenditure	44,43,447	47,16,487	50,65,345	7.4%
Total Receipts*	27,88,804	31,46,960	34,96,409	11.1%
Revenue Deficit	7,65,216	6,10,098	5,23,846	-14.1%
% of GDP	2.6%	1.9%	1.5%	
Fiscal Deficit	16,54,643	15,69,527	15,68,936	0.0%
% of GDP	5.6%	4.8%	4.4%	

Note: *Excluding borrowings.
Source: Union Budget documents 2025-26; PRS.

For a PRS analysis of the Union Budget 2025-26, see here.

Cabinet approved Eighth Central Pay Commission for central government employees

In January 2025, the Union Cabinet approved the constitution of the Eighth Central Pay Commission for central government employees.[9,10] The term of recommendations of the Seventh Pay Commission will conclude in 2026.

Cabinet approved Unified Pension Scheme for government employees

In August 2024, the Union Cabinet approved the implementation of the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) for central government employees.[11] It has become effective from April 1, 2025.[12] Under UPS, central government retirees will be provided assured pension of 50% of average basic pay drawn over last 12 months prior to superannuation. Pension will be indexed to inflation based on Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers. This is similar to the Old Pension Scheme applicable to employees who joined in 2003 or earlier. To avail this, the retiree must have a minimum qualifying service of 25 years. Pension will be proportionately lower for lesser service period. Minimum pension of Rs 10,000 per month will be provided on superannuating after 10 years of service. An assured family pension of 60% of pension of the employee prior to his/her death will be provided.

UPS will be available as an option to employees along with the National Pension System (NPS). Current and future employees will have the option to join either NPS or UPS. This choice can be exercised only once. Provisions for UPS will also apply to current retirees under the NPS.[12] Under NPS, both employer and employee contribute an amount towards the employee's retirement corpus. To fund the additional expenditure under UPS, the central government's contribution will be increased from 14% to 18.5% of salary, while the employees' contribution remains at 10%.[12] Similar framework has also been designed for state governments.

Finance

Income Tax Bill introduced in Lok Sabha

The Income-Tax Bill, 2025 was introduced in Lok Sabha in February 2025.[13] It seeks to replace the Income-Tax Act, 1961.[14] The Bill retains most of the provisions of the 1961 Act. Tax rates and regimes for individuals and corporations remain unchanged. Most definitions have also been retained. There are no changes in offences and penalties. The Bill proposes April 1, 2026 as the date of its commencement. It has been referred to a Select Committee of Lok Sabha.

Key changes include:

- **Undisclosed income:** Under the Act, undisclosed income for assessing search cases is defined to include money, bullion, jewellery, or other valuable articles. The Bill expands this definition to include virtual digital assets. These include any code, number, or token generated cryptographically and provide a digital representation of value exchanged. This change has also been proposed in the Finance Bill, 2025.
- **Virtual digital space:** The Act allows income tax authorities to enter and search buildings and break open locks. This can be done if certain documents or books of accounts are not produced by a person for whom a summons has been issued under the Act. The Act also empowers the authorities to inspect electronic documents. The Bill retains these provisions and also allows authorities to gain access of a virtual digital space during search and seizure. The authorities will have power to gain access by overriding any access code. The Bill defines virtual digital space as an environment, area, or realm that is constructed and experienced through computer technology. It includes email servers, social media accounts, online investment and trading accounts, and websites for storing details of assets.
- **Power to frame schemes:** The Act provides for faceless collection of information and assessment of tax cases. The Bill retains these provisions. It also seeks to empower the central government to frame new schemes for greater transparency and accountability.

For a PRS summary of the Bill, see here.

RBI revised priority sector lending directions

In March 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released the RBI (Priority Sector Lending – Targets and Classification) Directions, 2025.[15,16] These superseded the directions issued in September 2020.[17] The directions seek to ensure adequate credit flow to those sectors which are important for socio-economic development. Key changes include:

- **Co-operative banks:** Under the 2020 directions, the priority sector lending target for urban co-operative banks was set at 40% of their adjusted net bank credit. This was to be increased to 75% by 2025-26. The revised directions specify that the target will be fixed at 60%.
- **Renewable energy:** The 2020 directions allow loans up to Rs 30 crore to be provided as priority sector loans for renewable energy. This can be provided for renewable energy-based power generators and public utilities. The revised directions increase the loan limit to Rs 35 crore.
- **Weaker sections:** Loans to weaker sections can also be qualified as priority sector loans. Weaker sections include: (i) artisans, village, and cottage industries with individual credit limits up to one lakh rupees, (ii) self-help groups, (iii) individual women beneficiaries up to one lakh rupees per borrower. The revised directions increase the credit limits for artisans, village, and cottage industries to two lakh rupees. For individual women beneficiaries, the loan limit has been increased to two lakh rupees per borrower (not applicable to urban co-operative banks). It also adds transgenders and joint liability groups under the definition of weaker sections.

Finance Ministry approved credit guarantee scheme for MSMEs

In January 2025, the Ministry of Finance approved a mutual credit guarantee scheme for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).[18] Under the scheme, the National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited guarantees 60% of loans extended by certain financial institutions to MSMEs. These include scheduled commercial banks, non-banking financial companies, and all India financial institutions. Guarantee is available for a loan of up to Rs 100 crore to an MSME for purchase of equipment/machinery.

For loans up to Rs 50 crore, repayment period will be up to eight years with a moratorium of up to two years on principal repayment. Loans exceeding Rs 50 crore can have longer repayment schedules and moratorium. The scheme covers loans provided up to four years from the notification of scheme guidelines or till cumulative guarantee of seven lakh crore rupees is issued, whichever is earlier.

RBI increased limit for giving collateral free agricultural loans

In December 2024, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) increased the limit for giving collateral free agricultural loans from Rs 1.6 lakh per borrower to two lakh rupees per borrower.[19] This also includes loans for allied agricultural activities. RBI noted that the revision was to adjust for inflation and increase in agriculture input costs. The revised limits are applicable from January 1, 2025.

Parliament amended banking laws

In March 2025, Parliament passed the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024.[20] It amended the: (i) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Act, 1934, (ii) Banking Regulation Act, 1949, (iii) State Bank of

India Act, 1955, (iv) Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1970, and (v) Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1980.[21,22,23,24,25] Key features include:

- **Definition of fortnight for cash reserves:** Scheduled banks must maintain a certain level of average daily balance with the RBI as cash reserves on a fortnightly basis. A fortnight was defined as the period from Saturday to the second following Friday (including both days). The Bill changed the definition of fortnight to the period from: (i) first day to fifteenth day of each month, or (ii) sixteenth day to the last day of each month.
- **Nomination:** The Banking Regulation Act allows single or joint deposit holders to appoint a nominee. The Bill allows the appointment of up to four nominees.
- **Tenure of directors of co-operative banks:** The Banking Regulation Act prohibits the director of a bank (except its chairman or whole-time director) to hold office for more than eight years consecutively. The Bill increased this period to 10 years for co-operative banks.

For a PRS summary of the Bill, see here.

RBI issued directions on treatment of wilful and large defaulters

In July 2024, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued the RBI (Treatment of Wilful Defaulters and Large Defaulters) Directions, 2024.[26] The Directions provide a procedure for the classification of a borrower as wilful defaulter by lenders. Key features include:

- **Wilful defaulter:** A wilful defaulter refers to: (i) a borrower or a guarantor who has committed wilful default of at least Rs 25 lakh or above as notified by RBI, (ii) promoters and directors associated at the time of default if the defaulter is a company, and (iii) persons in charge of and responsible for management of the affairs of an entity other than companies. Large defaulter refers to a defaulter with an outstanding amount of at least one crore rupees and whose account has been categorised as a doubtful or loss account.
- Wilful default by a borrower will be deemed to have occurred when he defaults in meeting repayment obligations to the lender. In addition, at least one of the specified conditions needs to be fulfilled. These include: (i) default despite having the capacity to honour the obligations, (ii) diversion or siphoning off of funds availed from the lender, or (iii) disposal of assets given for securing the credit without the lender's knowledge. Wilful default by a guarantor will be deemed to have occurred if he does not honour the guarantee despite having the ability to do so.

IRDAI released master circular for health insurance products

In May 2024, the Insurance and Regulatory Development Authority of India (IRDAI) released a master circular on health insurance products.[27] The master circular superseded 55 previous circulars.[28] Existing products not in compliance with the circular were to comply by September 30, 2024. Key features of the master circular include:

- **Types of insurance products offered:** Insurers must offer products to provide a wider choice to customers. They must cater to: (i) all ages, (ii) all types of medical conditions, (iii) pre-existing and chronic conditions, (iv) all systems of medicine and treatment, and (v) all types of hospitals and health care providers.
- **Claim settlement:** Insurers must aim towards 100% cashless settlements of claims in a time bound manner. Requests for cashless settlements must be decided within one hour of the request. Final authorisation must be granted within three hours of discharge from the hospital. In case of delays, any additional amount charged must be borne by the insurer from the shareholder's fund.
- **Customer information sheet:** Insurers must provide customers with a Customer Information Sheet (CIS) in a format prescribed by IRDAI. The CIS will explain all the features of a policy in a simple language. These include: (i) type of insurance, (ii) sum insured, (iii) summary of exclusions, (iv) deductibles, and (v) sub-limits.

RBI released directions for asset reconstruction companies

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released the RBI (Asset Reconstruction Companies) Directions, 2024 in April 2024.[29] Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs) take over stressed assets from financial institutions (such as banks) and focus on recovering the dues from such assets. The directions provide for matters such as the registration, asset reconstruction, and governance of ARCs. Key features include:

- **Registration:** ARCs must obtain a certificate of registration from the RBI. Registered ARCs can undertake both securitisation and asset reconstruction activities. Securitisation is the acquisition of financial assets by ARCs from other entities.[30] ARCs must have a minimum net owned fund (NOF) of Rs 300 crore. Existing ARCs with NOF of Rs 100 crore as on October 11, 2022 have been allowed to raise it to Rs 300 crore by March 31, 2026. ARCs acting as resolution applicants under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 must have a minimum NOF of Rs 1,000 crore.

- **Asset reconstruction:** ARCs must frame a board-approved policy for acquiring financial assets. This policy must be framed within 90 days of granting the registration certificate. The policy should specify: (i) the norms and procedure for acquisition, (ii) types and desirable profile of assets, and (iii) valuation procedure of assets acquired. ARCs may formulate a plan for realisation of assets which could provide for: (i) a change in management of the business of the borrower, (ii) rescheduling debts payable by the borrower, or (iii) any debt to equity conversion.
- **Securitisation:** The Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, allows ARCs to issue security receipts (SRs) to raise funds.[30] It may also be issued to entities in exchange for acquisition of financial assets. As per the Directions, ARCs must get their SRs rated within six months of the acquisition. The rating should be based on recovery risk, i.e., how much can be recovered from the acquired financial asset.

RBI amended regulatory framework for housing finance companies

In August 2024, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) amended the regulatory framework for housing finance companies (HFCs).[31] HFCs are non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) with at least 60% of their total assets constituting finance for housing.[32] RBI observed that deposit accepting HFCs are subject to more relaxed parameters compared to deposit accepting NBFCs. As regulatory concerns associated with deposit acceptance are the same across all categories of NBFCs, such HFCs will now be regulated in line with NBFCs.

RBI released circular for transition of small finance banks to universal banks

In April 2024, The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released a circular to provide for the voluntary transition of small finance banks to universal banks.[33] Small finance banks: (i) facilitate savings and (ii) provide credit to small business units, small and marginal farmers, and other low-income groups.[34] For transitioning into a universal bank, small finance banks must meet certain conditions. These include: (i) a satisfactory track record of performance for minimum five years, (ii) their shares listed on a recognised stock exchange, (iii) a minimum net worth of Rs 1,000 crore at the end of the previous quarter, and (iv) a net profit in last two financial years. It is not mandatory for small finance banks to have an identified promoter. Any existing promoters must continue as promoters on transitioning to a universal bank. Addition of new promoters or change in promoters will not be allowed during the transition. Eligible small finance banks with a diversified loan portfolio will be preferred for transitioning to universal banks.

RBI revised directions for peer-to-peer lending platforms

In August 2024, RBI revised the Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) – Peer to Peer Lending Platforms (Reserve Bank) Directions, 2017.[35,36] A peer to peer (P2P) lending platform is an intermediary providing loan facilitation services. NBFC-P2P are engaged in the business of running P2P lending platform. RBI noted that some of these platforms had adopted practices which violate the 2017 Directions. These include violating the prescribed funds transfer mechanism and promoting peer to peer lending as an investment product with assured returns. Key changes include:

- **Credit risk:** The 2017 Directions provide that an NBFC-P2P must not provide or arrange any credit enhancement or guarantee. The amendments added that they must not assume any credit risk for transactions on their platform. Loss of principal or interest must be borne by lenders on the platform. Adequate disclosures must be made to be lenders.
- **Disclosure by platform:** NBFC-P2P platforms must disclose on their website the performance of their portfolio. This should include the performance of non-performing assets. The amendments added that the disclosures must include all the losses borne by lenders on principal and interest.
- **Investment products:** The amended directions prohibit NBFC-P2P platforms from promoting P2P lending as an investment product with features such as tenure linked assured minimum returns.
- **Loan disbursal:** Earlier, loans could not be disbursed unless recipient of the loan was approved by the lender and all participants signed the loan contract. The amendments added that loans need lenders and borrowers to be matched/ mapped as per a policy approved by the board of the NBFC-P2P platform.

SEBI approved changes to mutual fund and asset management framework

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) approved the following changes related to mutual funds:

- **Approval for new mutual fund product:** In September 2024, SEBI approved the introduction of a new investment product under the current mutual fund framework.[37] It seeks to bridge the gap between mutual funds and portfolio management services by offering greater flexibility in portfolio construction. It will have a minimum investment limit of Rs 10 lakh per investor across products offered by a single asset management company.
- **Regulatory framework for passive mutual funds:** SEBI also approved a new regulatory framework for passively managed mutual funds in September 2024.[37] Passive funds follow a rule-based investment strategy and provide negligible discretion regarding asset allocation. The framework provides for relaxed criteria for the sponsors of a mutual fund in terms of net worth, track record, profitability, and disclosures.
- **Mechanism to prevent market abuse by asset management companies (AMCs):** In April 2024, SEBI mandated AMCs (such as mutual funds) to adopt institutional mechanisms to identify and deter potential market abuse.[38] Such abuse could include front-running and fraudulent transactions in securities. Front-running is the practice of trading in securities based on information received ahead of other market participants. The institutional mechanism will consist of enhanced surveillance systems, internal control procedures, and process to identify and address various types of misconduct. AMCs must also provide a mechanism for whistle-blowers who report misconduct.

SEBI amended listing framework for small and medium enterprises

In December 2024, SEBI approved amendments to the listing framework for small and medium enterprises.[39] Such entities can now list their shares only if they have an operating profit of one crore rupees. They must meet the profit threshold in two out of three previous financial years at the time of filing their listing prospectus. Listing will not be permitted where funds are being raised for repayment of loan from promoter, promoter group, or any related party.

SEBI approved various decisions related to FPIs

SEBI took several decisions related to regulation of foreign portfolio investors (FPIs). Key decisions include:

- **Disclosures by FPIs:** In March 2025, SEBI increased the threshold for FPIs to make certain disclosures.[40] Earlier, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) had to make certain disclosures if they held: (i) more than 50% of their Indian equity assets in a single corporate group or (ii) equity assets worth over Rs 25,000 crore in the Indian markets.[41] These disclosures relate to all entities holding any ownership, economic interest, or exercising control in the FPI. SEBI observed that equity market trading volumes have more than doubled from when these limits were set. The Board approved increasing the disclosure threshold for FPIs from Rs 25,000 crore to Rs 50,000 crore.
- **Disclosure by university funds:** In June 2024, university funds and university related endowments that are eligible to be registered as foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) were exempted from providing additional disclosures.[42] To avail this exemption, following conditions must be met: (i) fund must have less than 25% of its global assets as Indian equity assets, (ii) its global assets must be more than Rs 10,000 crore, and (iii) it must have filed appropriate tax returns in their home jurisdiction to prove that it is a non-profit exempt from tax.
- **Flexibility to invest in IFSC-based FPIs:** Earlier, contribution by a single non-resident Indian (NRI), overseas citizen of India (OCI), or resident Indian in foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) could not exceed 25% of the total corpus.[43] Aggregate contribution by such investors were capped at 50% of the corpus. In April 2024, SEBI approved a framework for increasing contribution by NRI, OCI and resident Indians in FPIs based out of International Financial Services Centres (IFSCs) to 100%.[38] IFSCs cater to customers outside domestic jurisdiction.

Cross-border equity swaps permitted

In August 2024, the Ministry of Finance notified amendments to the Foreign Exchange Management (Non-debt Instruments) Rules, 2019.[44,45,46] The 2019 Rules specify the framework for foreign investments in India. The 2024 amendments allowed swap of equity instrument and equity capital of Indian companies between an Indian resident and a person residing outside India. As per the Ministry, this will facilitate global expansion of Indian companies through mergers, acquisitions, and other strategic initiatives.[44] The amendments also allowed 100% foreign investment in white label ATM operations under the automatic route. White label ATMs are set up, owned, and operated by non-banks. A non-bank entity seeking to set up such ATMs must have a minimum net worth of Rs 100 crore at all times.

SEBI issued norms for sharing real time price data with third parties

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) issued a circular regarding norms for sharing real time price data to third parties in May 2024.[47] SEBI noted that certain online gaming platforms provide virtual trading services or fantasy games. Such games are based on movement of real time share prices of listed companies. Some platforms also offer monetary incentives based on the performance of a virtual stock portfolio. As per the circular, market infrastructure institutions (such as stock exchanges) should not share real time price data with third parties. Data can be shared when needed for orderly functioning of the securities market or meeting regulatory requirements. Market institutions or intermediaries must enter into an agreement with entities with whom they want to share real time price data. Such an agreement must specify the activities for which the data is being shared along with the justification of it being needed for orderly functioning of the securities market. Market price data can be shared for investor education and awareness with a lag of one day.

SEBI barred association with unregistered persons

In June 2024, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) barred persons regulated by SEBI and their agents from associating with any unauthorised person providing advice/ recommendation on securities.[42] The Board noted that certain persons and unregulated entities are inducing investors to deal in securities based on inappropriate claims. Association implies any monetary transaction, referral of client, and interaction of information technology systems. These restrictions will not apply to association: (i) with persons who are exclusively engaged in investor education, and (ii) through specified digital platform which does not provide unauthorised advice related to return.

SEBI increased scope of same-day settlement of securities

In September 2024, SEBI increased the scope of the optional same-day settlement cycle for securities. The securities for same day settlement will be increased from 25 to top 500 companies based on market capitalisation in a phased manner. Same-day settlement will co-exist with the current next-day (T+1) settlement cycle.

Cabinet approves incentive scheme for promotion of low-value UPI transactions

In March 2025, the Union Cabinet approved an incentive scheme for promotion of low-value BHIM-UPI transactions for person to merchant.[48] The scheme was approved for 2024-25 with a total expected outlay of Rs 1,500 crore. It provides incentive at the rate of 0.15% per transaction for payments up to Rs 2,000. The incentive is provided to small merchants.

Finance Ministry launched pension scheme for minors

In September 2024, the Ministry of Finance announced the National Pension System (NPS) Vatsalya scheme for minors.[49] It is regulated and administered by the Pension Fund Regulatory Authority of India (PFRDA). All minor citizens up to the age of 18 years can open an account. A minimum contribution of Rs 1,000 will be needed to open the account. Thereafter, a minimum annual contribution of Rs 1,000 can be deposited in the account. The account will be opened in the name of the minor and managed by their guardian till adulthood. On completing 18 years of age, the NPS Vatsalya account will transition to a regular account under NPS.

SEBI approved framework for cybersecurity and AI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) approved frameworks for cybersecurity and use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools.

- **Cybersecurity:** In June 2024, SEBI approved the Cybersecurity and Cyber Resilience Framework for SEBI regulated entities.[42] It classifies regulated entities in categories based on their span of operations, number of clients, trade volume, and assets under management. The framework classifies data into regulatory data, and IT and cybersecurity data. Regulatory data will have to be mandatorily localised while IT and cybersecurity data may be stored outside India. All entities were to adopt the framework by April 1, 2025.
- **Use of AI tools:** In December 2024, SEBI introduced a framework for use of artificial intelligence tools by regulated entities such as stock exchanges and clearing corporations.[39] These entities will be solely responsible for: (i) privacy, security, and integrity of investors' data, (ii) output generated from AI tools, and (iii) compliance with applicable laws.

Corporate Affairs

Guidelines released for pilot of Prime Minister's internship scheme

In October 2024, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs released the guidelines for the Prime Minister's Internship Scheme – Pilot Project.[50] The scheme was announced in the Budget for 2024-25 and aims to provide internships to one crore youth in five years. A pilot project of the scheme was launched for 2024-25 with a target of providing 1.25 lakh internships. Key features of the guidelines include:

- **Criteria for companies:** For offering internships, top 500 companies were selected based on their average expenditure on corporate social responsibility (CSR) over the last three years. Other companies can participate under the scheme with approval from the Ministry.
- **Duration:** The internship duration must be for 12 months. At least half of this must be spent in actual working experience/job environment.
- **Eligibility for internship:** Candidates aged between 21 and 24 years are eligible to get internships. They should not be employed full-time or engaged in full-time education. However, candidates enrolled in online/distance learning programmes are eligible to apply. Other ineligible candidates include: (i) graduates from institutions such as IITs, IIMs, and National Law Universities, (ii) those with professional qualifications or a master's degree, and (iii) those belonging to families with annual income exceeding eight lakh rupees in 2023-24.
- **Benefits to interns:** Interns will be paid monthly assistance of Rs 5,000. The company will release Rs 500 each month from their CSR funds. Following this, the central government will pay the remaining Rs 4,500 to the candidate. Interns will also receive a one-time grant of Rs 6,000 from the central government on joining the internship location.
- **Use of CSR funds:** Companies will bear the cost of training the interns from their CSR funds. Further, up to 5% of CSR expenditure incurred under the scheme may be classified as administrative costs by the company.

Commerce and Industry

Parliament passed Bill to replace the Boilers Act, 1923

In March 2025, the Boilers Bill, 2024 was passed by Parliament.[51] The Bill was introduced in August 2024. It replaced the Boilers Act, 1923. The Act regulated the manufacturing, installation, use, and repair of boilers and boiler components to ensure safe operation. The Bill retained all provisions of the Act. The Statement of Objects and Reasons to the Bill stated that the Bill aimed to enhance clarity of the provisions.

For a PRS analysis of the Bill, see here.

Parliament passed the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill, 2024

In March 2025, the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill, 2024 was passed by Parliament.[52] It was introduced in August 2024. The Bill amends the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Act, 1948. The Act regulates the exploration and extraction of natural gas and petroleum. The Bill expanded the definition of mineral oils to include: (i) any naturally occurring hydrocarbon, (ii) coal bed methane, and (iii) shale gas/oil. It clarified that mineral oils will not include coal, lignite, or helium.

For PRS summary of the Bill, see here.

Financial thresholds for classification of MSMEs revised

In March 2025, the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) amended the investment and turnover thresholds for classifying MSMEs.[53,54] It increased threshold across categories (Table 5).

Table 5: Revision in investment and turnover limits for MSMEs

Size	Original (Rs crore)		Revised (Rs crore)	
	Investment	Turnover	Investment	Turnover
Micro	1	5	2.5	10
Small	10	50	25	100
Medium	50	250	125	500

Source: Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, March 21, 2025; PRS.

The revised criteria came into force from April 1, 2025.

Cabinet approved electronics component manufacturing scheme

In March 2025, the Union Cabinet approved an Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme with a funding of Rs 22,919 crore.[55] This scheme aims to attract both global and domestic investments in manufacturing. It aims to increase domestic value addition and connect Indian companies with global value chains. The scheme provides various incentives for different categories of components.

Cabinet approved new industrial nodes under the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme

In August 2024, the Union Cabinet approved development of new industrial nodes under the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme.[56] Under the programme, 11 industrial corridors are being developed across the country.[57] The newly approved industrial nodes will be located in following areas: (i) Khurpia, Uttarakhand, (ii) Rajpura-Patiala, Punjab, (iii) Dighi, Maharashtra, (iv) Palakkad, Kerala, (v) Agra and Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, (vi) Gaya, Bihar, (vii) Zaheerabad, Telangana, (viii) Orvakal and Kopparthy in Andhra Pradesh, and (ix) Jodhpur-Pali in Rajasthan. These will be developed as new smart industrial cities. The total estimated investment in these new industrial nodes is Rs 28,602 crore.

Commerce Ministry introduced scheme allowing duty free import of diamonds

In January 2025, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry introduced the Diamond Imprest Authorisation Scheme.[58] The scheme allows duty-free import of natural cut and polished diamonds of less than 1/4th carat. To be eligible for the scheme, beneficiaries must have exported at least: (i) USD 15 million worth cut and polished diamonds annually for the last three years, and (ii) USD 25 million worth goods annually.[59] They must also have filled Income Tax and GST returns for the last three years.[60] To avail duty free imports, beneficiaries must add at least 10% value to the imported diamonds before exporting.

The scheme aims to incentivise manufacturers to retain their operations in India. It also intends to enhance export competitiveness of Indian diamond manufacturers. The scheme is being implemented from April 1, 2025.

Modified ethanol interest subvention scheme notified

In March 2025, the Ministry of Food and Public Distribution notified a scheme for cooperative sugar mills to increase production and supply of ethanol.[61] Under the scheme, financial assistance will be extended to cooperative sugar mills for conversion of sugarcane-based feedstock ethanol plants to multi-feedstock based plants.[62] Multi-feedstock based plants use inputs like maize and damaged foodgrains, in addition to sugarcane to produce ethanol.62 Cooperative sugar mills will be offered interest subvention of 6% per annum or 50% of the interest, whichever is lower, with the subsidy being covered by the central government for a period of five years. The scheme will be made available to only those cooperative sugar mills which supply at least 75% of ethanol from the converted plants to Oil Marketing Companies for blending with petrol. For availing benefits, an application must be submitted within six months of notifying the scheme.

Cabinet approved policy to boost high performance biomanufacturing

In August 2024, the Union Cabinet approved the 'BioE3 Policy for Fostering High Performance Biomanufacturing'.[63] Biomanufacturing uses biological systems of living organisms for production. The Policy aims to accelerate green growth by promoting biomanufacturing. High performance biomanufacturing is defined as the ability to produce a wide range of products and address farming and food challenges through advance bio-technology.

The policy provides innovation-driven support for R&D and entrepreneurship across sectors such as: (i) climate resilient agriculture, (ii) high value bio-based chemicals, (iii) marine and space research, and (iv) biopolymers and enzymes. It will facilitate the establishment of Biomanufacturing and Bio-AI hubs and Biofoundry. Biofoundry is a laboratory that uses automation in biomanufacturing.[64]

Cabinet approved Rs 1,000 crore funding for space-based startups

In October 2024, the Union Cabinet approved setting up of Rs 1,000 crore venture capital fund to support space-based startups.[65] This fund is being set up by the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (INSPACe). INSPACe was created by the government in 2020 to promote and oversee private sector participation in space activities. The fund would be deployed over a five-year period starting from 2025 to 2030, with an annual deployment of Rs 150-200 crore. The indicative range of investment in startups is between Rs 10-60 crore. Growth stage companies can expect investment in the Rs 10-30 crore band. Late growth stage companies that have shown significant progress, can attract investments in the Rs 30-60 crore band. This fund is expected to benefit around 40 spaced based startup companies. Key objectives of this fund include: (i) infusion of capital to create a multiplier effect for further investment, (ii) retention of space companies domiciled in India, and (iii) accelerate private sector participation in Indian space sector.

Mines

Supreme Court upheld states' power to tax mines and minerals

The Supreme Court upheld states' power to tax mineral bearing lands.[66] In India, mines and minerals are primarily regulated by the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulations) (MMDR) Act, 1957.[67]

The Court examined whether: (i) royalty collected on mining activities under the MMDR Act qualifies as a tax, (ii) states' power to tax land and building extends to mineral bearing land, and (iii) the Parliament can limit the state legislature's powers to impose taxes on mines and minerals. The Court held that royalty is not a tax. It is a payment that arises out of the contractual obligation to enjoy mineral rights.

The Court also held that the power of states to tax mineral rights cannot be superseded by powers of Parliament to regulate the sector. Under the Constitution, states' powers to tax mineral rights can be limited by an Act of Parliament.[68] The Court noted that the MMDR Act, 1957 does not restrict the state's ability to collect taxes.

The Court also held that states' power to tax land extends to mines and quarries. Such lands can be taxed based on mineral value or produce. It also stated that the Parliament cannot limit states' powers to tax mineral bearing lands.

Environment Ministry notified Rules regarding exploration and production operations in offshore areas

The Ministry released the Offshore Areas Mineral Conservation and Development Rules, 2024 in December, 2024.[69] The Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002 empowers the central government to make Rules on the conditions to be followed during exploration and production operations in offshore areas.[70] Key features of the Rules include:

- **Requirement of plans:** Bidders selected for a composite licence (combination of exploration and production licence), must submit: (i) an exploration plan, and (ii) a production plan before commencing the respective operations. The Controller General or an officer of the Indian Bureau of Mines will evaluate and approve these plans. An exploration plan must include: (i) the licence area in latitudes and longitudes, (ii) details of the exploration programme, (iii) tentative timeline, and (iv) details of vessels and machines used. A production plan must include: (i) the specific area planned for production, (ii) details of the production programme, (iii) tentative five-year schedule, and (iv) estimates of mine waste and their disposal.
- **Safety Measures:** Buffer zones of 15 seconds (distance unit) shall be created between adjacent mining blocks to ensure safety. No mining operations or waste disposal shall be carried out within one nautical mile from the low tide line of the seashore. Licencees must ensure: (i) soundness of machinery, (ii) appropriate qualifications of working individuals, (iii) adequate manpower, and (iv) proper maintenance of vessels.
- **Safety and precautionary measures:** Licencees must conduct mining operations by taking adequate precautions against: (i) sedimentation on the seabed, (ii) air pollution, and (iii) damage to historical or archaeological objects found offshore. Licencees must ensure offshore operations are conducted with the least amount of damage to the marine environment, and to plant and animal life.
- **Penalties:** Contravention of certain Rules are punishable with imprisonment of up to five years, a fine between 50 lakhs to one crore rupees, or both. These include offences such as: (i) commencing exploration or production without approved plans, (ii) failure to comply with inspection of exploration or production operations, (iii) mining in the 15 second barrier zone, (iv) failure to comply with pollution norms, and (v) discharge of untreated waste into sea.
- **Appeals:** Licencees may make appeals against orders of the approving authority to the centre. These must be made within three months from the date of the order. Appeals made after three months may be accepted conditionally.

Rules notified for Offshore Areas Mineral Trust and auction of offshore areas minerals

The Ministry of Mines notified the Offshore Areas Mineral Trust Rules, 2024 and the Offshore Areas Mineral (Auction) Rules, 2024 in August 2024. These have been issued under the Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002.[71,72,73] The Rules provide for: (i) composition and functioning of the Offshore Areas Mineral Trust, and (ii) auction of production and composite leases for minerals in offshore areas. Key features of the Rules include:

- **Auction for leases and bidding parameters:** Production and composite licences will be awarded through auction. Composite licence is a two-stage licence providing for both exploration and production. For both production and composite licences, the preferred bidder will also have to pay a performance security. If the composite licence holder fails to complete exploration within the specified time period, it won't be eligible for carrying out production. Performance security will be revised for composite licence holders eligible for production lease.

- **Rate of contribution to the Offshore Areas Mineral Trust:** Production lease holders must pay an amount equivalent to 10% of the royalty as a contribution to the Offshore Areas Mineral Trust Fund.

Agriculture

Cabinet approved support prices for crops

In June 2024, the Union Cabinet approved the minimum support prices (MSP) for kharif crops for the marketing season 2024-25.[74] Kharif crops are grown and harvested between June-October. MSP for rabi crops for the 2025-26 marketing season (July to June) was approved in October 2024.[75] MSP refers to the assured price at which the central government procures crops from farmers.[76]

MSP for Kharif crops

Table 6: MSP for Kharif crops for 2024-25 marketing season (in Rs per quintal)

Crops	2023-24	2024-25	change
Paddy (common)	2,183	2,300	5%
Jowar (hybrid)	3,180	3,371	6%
Bajra	2,500	2,625	5%
Ragi	3,846	4,290	12%
Maize	2,090	2,225	6%
Tur/Arhar	7,000	7,550	8%
Moong	8,558	8,682	1%
Urad	6,950	7,400	6%
Groundnut	6,377	6,783	6%
Sunflower seed	6,760	7,280	8%
Soybean (yellow)	4,600	4,892	6%
Sesamum	8,635	9,267	7%
Nigerseed	7,734	8,717	13%
Cotton (medium staple)	6,620	7,121	8%

Sources: Press Information Bureau; PRS.

The MSP for paddy was increased by 5% and by 8% for pulses like tur. Crops like Nigerseed (13%) and Ragi (12%) saw the largest increase in MSP over 2023-24.

MSP for Rabi crops

MSP for wheat was increased by 6.6%. The highest increase in MSP was in Barley (7%).

Table 7: MSP for rabi crops for Marketing Season 2025-26 (in Rs per quintal)

Crops	MSP 2024-25	MSP 2025-26	change
Wheat	2,275	2,425	6.6%
Barley	1,850	1,980	7.0%
Gram	5,440	5,650	3.9%
Lentil (Masur)	6,425	6,700	4.3%
Rapeseed and Mustard	5,650	5,950	5.3%
Safflower	5,800	5,940	2.4%

Sources: Press Information Bureau; PRS.

Cabinet approved continuation of schemes to prevent volatility in prices

In September 2024, the Union Cabinet approved continuation of schemes under the Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA).[77] These schemes included: (i) Price Support Scheme, (ii) Price Stabilisation Fund, (iii) Price Deficit Payment Scheme, and (iv) Market Intervention Scheme. The government has estimated total outlay for these schemes till 2025-26 to be Rs 35,000 crore.

Under the Price Support Scheme for notified pulses, oilseeds, and copra, the Centre has decided to procure 25% of national production at minimum support price from 2024-25 onwards. The Centre has also enhanced government guarantee for procurement of these crops to Rs 45,000 crore. To encourage states to implement Price Deficit Payment Scheme for notified oilseeds, the Centre has increased support by enhancing coverage of the scheme from 25% to 40% of state production of oilseeds. Under the Market Intervention Scheme, the support has been increased from 20% to 25% of production for perishable horticulture crops such as onion and tomatoes.

Cabinet approved Nutrient Based Subsidy rates on fertilisers

Rabi Season

In September 2024, the Union Cabinet approved Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) rates for phosphatic and potassic (P&K) fertilisers for the Rabi season 2024 (October 2024 to March 2025).[78] The budgetary requirement for the subsidy was estimated to be around Rs 24,476 crore.

Kharif Season

In March 2025, the Union Cabinet approved the NBS rates for the 2025 Kharif Season (April 1 to September 30) for P&K fertilisers.[79] The subsidy is provided on the approved fertiliser rates. The expenditure on NBS subsidy for the Kharif season 2025 was estimated at Rs 37,216 crore.

Cabinet approved programme for access to high-quality planting material

The Union Cabinet approved the Clean Plant Programme under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture in August 2024.[80, 81] The programme aims to provide high-quality and virus-free planting material to farmers. This is expected to increase crop yields and improve income opportunities. Under the programme, nine Clean Plant Centres will be set up across India focusing on specific fruit types. These centres will be equipped with advanced diagnostic and therapeutic facilities. To ensure accountability in production and sale of planting material, a certification system will be established under the Seeds Act, 1966. To facilitate the multiplication of clean planting materials, infrastructure support will be provided to large-scale nurseries.

The programme aims to address the diverse agro-climatic conditions across regions by developing region-specific clean plant varieties and technologies. The programme has an estimated outlay of Rs 1,766 crore and is being implemented by the National Horticulture Board, in association with Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

Cabinet approved launch of National Mission on Natural Farming

In November 2024, the Union Cabinet approved the National Mission on Natural Farming as a centrally sponsored scheme. It has an outlay of Rs 2,481 crore until 2025-26.[82]

The Mission aims at promoting natural farming methods such as chemical free farming, farming using local livestock methods, and diversified crop systems. In 2024-25 and 2025-26, the scheme will be implemented in 15,000 clusters in gram panchayats. The scheme aims to cover one crore farmers and an area of 7.5 lakh hectares.

Credit guarantee scheme for warehousing receipt-based pledge financing launched

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution launched the Credit Guarantee Scheme for e-NWR based pledge financing (CGS-NPF).[83] An electronic negotiable warehousing receipt (e-NWR) is issued for commodities kept in warehouses accredited by the Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority. Farmers/traders can use the e-NWR to avail loans against the commodities.[84]

The new scheme provides a guarantee cover for the loans availed against e-NWR. It has a total corpus of Rs 1,000 crore and will cover loans up to Rs 75 lakh for agricultural purposes and up to two crore rupees for non-agricultural purposes. Eligible borrowers include: (i) small and marginal farmers, (ii) women/SC/ST/PwD famers, and (iii) farmer cooperatives. The guarantee cover ranges from 75% to 85%, depending on the loan amount and the type of borrower.

Cabinet approved mission for oilseeds production

The Union Cabinet approved the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oilseeds (NMEO-Oilseeds) in October 2024.[85] The Mission will be implemented with a proposed allocation of Rs 10,103 crore between 2024-25 to 2030-31. It aims to increase production of primary oilseed crops from 39 million tonne in 2022-23 to 70 million tonne by 2030-31. These include Rapeseed-Mustard, Groundnut, Soybean, Sunflower, and Sesamum. Domestic edible oil production in 2023-24 is estimated to be 12 million tonne.[86] Along with NMEO – Oil Palm, this mission targets to increase domestic edible oil production to 25 million tonne by 2030-31. This increase in domestic production is expected to cover 72% of India's projected requirement by 2030-31. 65 new seed hubs and 50 seed storage units will be setup in the public sector to improve seed production infrastructure.

Cabinet approved expansion of Agriculture Infrastructure Fund

The Union Cabinet approved the expansion of the financing facility under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) in August 2024.[87] All eligible beneficiaries of the scheme will be allowed to create infrastructure under projects for building community farming assets. Integrated primary secondary processing projects will be included in the list of eligible activities under AIF. AIF credit guarantee coverage of Farmer Produce Organisations will be extended through the NABSanrakshan Trustee Company Pvt. Ltd. The AIF was launched in 2020 and additional storage capacity of 500 lakh tonnes has been created for agricultural produce under the fund.

Cabinet approved rationalisation of schemes for sustainable agriculture and food security

In October 2024, the Union Cabinet approved the rationalisation of all existing centrally sponsored schemes under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare into two umbrella schemes: (i) Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (PM-RKVY), and (i) Krishonnati Yojana.[88]

The PM-RKVY will be implemented with an outlay of Rs 57,075 crore to promote sustainable agriculture. Some of the schemes under PM-RKVY include: (i) Soil Health Management, (ii) Rainfed Area Development, (iii) Agro Forestry, and (iv) Agricultural Mechanisation. State governments will have the flexibility to reallocate funds from one component to another as per their requirements.

The Krishonnati Yojana will be targeted at achieving food security for self-sufficiency with a proposed outlay of Rs 44,247 crore.

Cabinet approved continuation of supply of free fortified rice under PMGKAY

In October 2024, the Union Cabinet approved the continuation of supply of free fortified rice under all welfare schemes including the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana.[89] The free supply has been extended from July 2024 to December 2028. Rice fortification involves adding rice kernels enriched with micronutrients to regular rice. It will be implemented as a central sector scheme funded by the Union government.

Guidelines for National Mission on Natural Farming released

The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare notified the guidelines for the National Mission on Natural Farming in December 2024.[90] The Mission aims to promote sustainable systems of farming and improve soil health. It aims to initiate natural farming in 7.5 lakh hectare of land by 2026. Key features of the guidelines include:

- **Priority Areas:** The Mission will be implemented in areas such as: (i) regions of five kilometre corridor along river Ganga, (ii) districts on the banks of major rivers, (iii) districts with high and low fertiliser input sale in states, and (iv) districts with tribal areas.
- **Training:** The Mission aims to create a support ecosystem for farmers to transition to natural farming. This will include training for farmers. Training will be extended through: (i) Centres of Natural Farming, (ii) Krishi Vigyan Kendras, (iii) State Agricultural Universities, and (iv) Local Natural Farming Institutions. In addition, 2,060 natural farming model demonstration farms will be set up. The Mission will also deploy 30,000 community resource persons (or Krishi Sakhis) for scaling up of natural farming practices.

The National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management will work towards capacity development of scientists and officials.

Media and Broadcasting

TRAI amended regulatory framework for broadcasting and cable services

In July 2024, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India amended the tariff order, interconnection regulations and quality of service regulations for broadcasters.[91,92,93] In August 2023, TRAI had released a consultation paper seeking a review on the regulatory framework for broadcasters.[94] Key features of the amended regulations include:

- **Tariff changes:** Broadcasters charge Network Capacity Fees (NCF) from subscribers, which was capped at Rs 130 for the first 200 channels and at Rs 160 on more than 200 channels. This ceiling has been removed. The new NCF must be published on the broadcaster’s website. Distribution Platform Operators (DPOs) can now offer discounts of up to 45% on bouquets of channels. DPOs bundle and package content from various broadcasters. Such discounts were earlier limited to 15%.
- **Penalties:** The amended regulatory framework also provides for financial penalties for contravention of provisions. Penalties range up to one lakh rupees, and depend on the nature of the violation and the size of the broadcaster. For instance, non-declaration of the MRP of channels can attract a fine of up to Rs 25,000 for the first offence.
- **Change in carriage fees:** The method for calculating carriage fees has been simplified. For instance, there is no longer a distinction between standard and high-definition (HD) channels. Earlier, HD channels attracted higher carriage fees.
- **Quality of Service (QoS) amendments:** The regulatory framework amends various QoS standards. Charges for services such as installation, activation and relocation have been deregulated. DPOs must publish these charges clearly to subscribers. Platform services offered by DPOs must be categorised separately on the electronic programming guide. Platform services are programs transmitted exclusively to subscribers by DPOs. The maximum retail price for each platform service must also be displayed. Certain compliances have also been relaxed for DPOs having less than 30,000 subscribers, including: (i) having a website, (ii) maintaining a manual of practice, and (iii) having a consumer corner.

Infrastructure

Communications and IT

TRAI released recommendations on sharing of telecom infrastructure and spectrum

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) released its recommendations on 'Telecom Infrastructure Sharing, Spectrum Sharing, and Spectrum Leasing' in April 2024.[95] Telecom infrastructure is broadly divided into passive and active infrastructure. Passive infrastructure refers to non-electronic infrastructure (such as towers, buildings and poles), and active infrastructure refers to electronic infrastructure (such as radios and transceivers). Spectrum is a band of radio frequency used for telecommunication. Key recommendations include:

- **Infrastructure sharing:** TRAI has recommended that telecom service licensees should be allowed to share all types of passive and active infrastructure. Passive infrastructure may be shared with all types of licensees, however, active infrastructure may only be shared based on the scope of the services offered. Currently, licensees can share passive infrastructure and certain specified active infrastructure (such as antennas and transmission systems). The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) designates certain equipment as core network elements. Sharing of core network elements will not be allowed if there will be less than two independent core networks after sharing.

  TRAI recommended mandatory sharing of government-funded passive infrastructure. This includes infrastructure built using the Universal Service Obligation Fund (now the Digital Bharat Nidhi). Other types of infrastructure, such as interception systems, may be shared after permission from the DoT.

- **Spectrum sharing and leasing:** TRAI has recommended that access providers should be allowed to share and lease spectrum. Certain restrictions have also been recommended. These include: (i) a two-year lock-in period before spectrum sharing or leasing, and (ii) a limit on the number of entities with which spectrum can be shared or leased (one additional provider per spectrum band). Revenue received from sharing or leasing spectrum will be considered a part of overall revenue for determining various levies by the government. The government will also levy a fee of 0.5% of the value of spectrum shared.

TRAI released recommendations on regulatory sandbox

In April 2024, TRAI released recommendations on regulatory sandboxes for the telecom sector. It also proposed a framework for encouraging innovative technologies and business models through the use of regulatory sandboxes.[96] A regulatory sandbox refers to a test environment that mimics actual scenarios. Companies are exempt from certain compliances and regulations in a sandbox. They may test products or services on a limited set of users. Key recommendations of TRAI include:

- **Scope and eligibility:** New digital communication services or technologies needing live or controlled testing can be tested in a regulatory sandbox. Permissions to utilise the sandbox will be valid up to 12 months and may be extended. All Telecom Service Providers (TSP) will be eligible to provide their network for regulatory sandboxes.

- **Regulation and oversight:** The oversight of regulatory sandboxes will be carried out by a body created in the National Telecommunications Institute for Policy Research, Innovation, and Training. Permission for utilising the sandbox will be granted by the Department of Telecommunications.

- **Funding for projects:** Projects utilising the regulatory sandbox may be funded through the Universal Service Obligation Fund (now the Digital Bharat Nidhi). Applicants must indicate funding sought in their application. However, projects not seeking government funding will have a higher chance of approval.

Amendments to the Aadhaar Authentication for Good Governance Rules, 2020 notified

In January 2025, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology notified amendments to the Aadhaar Authentication for Good Governance (Social Welfare, Innovation, Knowledge) Rules, 2020.[97,98] The Rules have been framed under the Aadhaar Act of 2016.[99] Key features of the amendments are:

- **Purposes for which Aadhaar authentication may be permitted:** Under the Rules, the central government may allow Aadhaar authentication for these purposes: (i) to prevent dissipation of social welfare benefits, (ii) to use digital platforms to ensure good governance, and (iii) to enable innovation and the spread of knowledge. The amendments add that the central government may also allow

Aadhaar authentication for the purpose of 'promoting ease of living of residents and enabling better access to services for them'.

- **Requesting entities:** The Rules provide that a Department/Ministry of the central or state government may submit a proposal to the central government for using Aadhaar authentication. The central government will refer this proposal to the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) for their recommendation. Subsequently, the central government authorises the use of Aadhaar authentication by the entity.

The amendments add that any other entity may also submit a proposal for using Aadhaar authentication. Such a proposal must be for the specified purposes, and in the interest of the State.

Electricity

CERC notified new Regulations for grant of inter-state transmission licences

In June 2024, Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) notified the CERC (Procedure, Terms and Conditions for Grant of Transmission Licence and Other Related Matters) Regulations, 2024.[100] These replace the Regulations issued on this subject in 2009.[101] The 2024 Regulations provide a framework for grant and administration of licences for inter-state transmission of electricity. Key changes under the 2024 Regulations include:

- **Exemption for certain purposes:** Distribution licencees and bulk consumers will not need a licence to develop and operate transmission lines that connect their systems to the inter-state transmission system. Bulk consumers refer to consumers who avail supply at the voltage of 33 kV or above.100[,102] The 2009 Regulations did not grant such exemption to these entities.
- **Authorisation for additional works under existing licences:** Under the 2009 Regulations, for undertaking certain additional transmission works subsequent to the grant of a licence, fresh licences had to be issued. The 2024 Regulations provide for the inclusion of such additional works under an existing licence. A licencee may apply to CERC to amend the existing licence for this purpose.

Cabinet approved viability gap funding for offshore wind energy projects

In June 2024, Union Cabinet has approved a scheme to provide for viability gap funding to offshore wind energy projects.[103] Offshore wind energy refers to generation of electricity through wind turbines installed in the water bodies, usually at sea. Viability gap funding refers to financial support for projects that may be economically justified but fall short of financial viability.[104]

The scheme will support installation of a total of one gigawatt capacity, comprising 500 MW each off the coast of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. These two projects are estimated to generate 3.7 billion units of electricity annually. The total support for these projects is expected to be Rs 6,853 crore. For establishing the wind energy projects, private developers will be selected through a bidding process. In addition, Rs 600 crore will be provided for upgradation of nearby ports. Development of ports will help in meeting logistical requirements for the wind energy projects.

Operational Guidelines for implementation 'Model Solar Village' issued

In August 2024, Ministry of Power notified the scheme guidelines for implementing the 'Model Solar Village' component of the PM-Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana.[105] It aims to solarise one village per district. Each model village will receive assistance of one crore rupees from the centre.

The Model Solar Village will be identified through a competition between villages of each district. Only revenue villages with a population over 5,000 (or 2,000 in special category states) can compete. Eligible villages will be identified by a District Level Committee.

Villages will be evaluated based on the renewable energy capacity installed within six months after all eligible villages for the competition are declared. After a Model Solar Village is selected, states must develop a plan for transitioning it into a solar powered village.

Amendments to guidelines on cross-border trade of electricity notified

In August 2024, Ministry notified guidelines on cross-border trade of electricity. The Ministry of Power amended the 2018 Guidelines on cross border trade of electricity.[106,107,108] These guidelines provide for import and export of electricity between India and its neighbouring countries. Key Features of the amendments are:

- **Source of fuel for export of electricity from coal and gas**: Under the 2018 guidelines, Indian generation and distribution companies may export electricity generated from coal, gas, renewable sources, or hydropower to neighbouring countries. In case of coal and gas, electricity must be generated using imported fuel. Additionally, in case of coal, coal from spot auction or commercial mining (without specified end-use) may also be used.

The amendments empower the central government to permit additional fuel sources for export of coal and gas-based electricity.

- **Domestic sale by export-oriented entities:** The amendments allow the Indian generators that exclusively export electricity to also sell their output domestically under certain conditions. The central government may provide permission for this in case of: (i) sustained non-scheduling of full or part capacity, or (ii) issuance of notice by the generator for default on payment.

Guidelines issued for implementing incentive scheme for Green Hydrogen Production

In July 2024, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy issued guidelines for implementing the "Incentive Scheme for Green Hydrogen Production (under Mode 1)- Tranche-II".[109] This scheme is a component of the Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition Programme (SIGHT). The programme provides financial incentive mechanisms to boost the domestic manufacturing of electrolysers and green hydrogen in India.

The Scheme aims to maximise production and increase cost-competitiveness of Green Hydrogen as a fuel. Under Tranche-I of the scheme, 4,12,000 metric tons of capacity has already been allocated to 10 companies for Green Hydrogen Production.[110] The Guidelines provide a framework for selecting beneficiaries for the second tranche of the incentive scheme. Key features of the Guideline include:[111]

- **Structure of Scheme:** The second tranche allocates production capacity of 4,50,000 MT (Metric tonnes) of Green Hydrogen. This will be achieved in two ways - 40,000 MT will be produced through biomass-based pathway and 4,10,000 MT will be produced though through technology agonistic (using electrolysis) pathway. Production capacity will be distributed through bidding.
- **Incentive for Production:** The minimum bid for production through agnostic pathways is 10,000 MT while maximum bid allowed is 90,000 MT. For production through biomass pathways, the bid should be between 500 MT and 4,000 MT. A bidder can bid for both pathways. The maximum incentive for the first year is Rs 50/Kg, for the second year Rs 40/Kg and for the third year Rs 30/Kg. Bids for three years will be averaged and the bidder with the least incentive demanded will be allotted the production capacity.
- **Eligibility of bidder:** In order to participate in the bidding process, the bidder's net worth must exceed Rs 15 crore per thousand MT per annum of the quoted production capacity under the Technology Agnostic pathway. For the bio-mass based pathway, the bidder's net worth should be greater than Rs 1.5 crore per thousand MT per annum of the quoted production capacity.

Petroleum

Cabinet approves modifications in Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana

In August 2024, Cabinet has approved modifications to the Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana. The scheme supports development of advanced bio-fuel technologies, such as second-generation ethanol. Revisions to the scheme extend its implementation by five years (till 2028-29). The scheme has also been expanded to support projects that use feedstock such as agricultural and forestry residues, industrial waste, and algae.

Railways

The Railways (Amendment) Bill, 2024 passed by Parliament

The Railways (Amendment) Bill, 2024 was passed by Parliament in March 2025. The Bill repeals the Railway Board Act, 1905 and incorporates its provisions into the Railways Act, 1989. [112,113]

For a PRS analysis of the Bill, see here.

Civil Aviation

The Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak, 2024 passed by Parliament

The Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak, 2024 was passed by Parliament in December 2024.[114] The Bill was introduced in July 31, 2024. The Act replaces the Aircraft Act, 1934. The Bill retains the regulatory structure and most of the provisions under the 1934 Act. Key changes include:

- **Authorities:** It sets up three authorities: (i) the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for performing regulatory functions and overseeing safety, (ii) the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) for overseeing security, and (iii) the Aircraft Accidents Investigation Bureau for investigation of aircraft accidents. The centre may issue directions to these authorities and also review their orders, if necessary, in public interest.
- **Regulation of aircraft design:** The Act regulates various activities related to aircrafts

including manufacturing, possession, use, operation, and trade. The Bill retains these, and also provides for the regulation of aircraft design.

- **Appellate mechanism:** The Act empowers the central government to designate an officer to adjudicate penalties. Decisions of the Adjudicating Officer may be appealed before an Appellate Officer. The Bill adds one more level of appeal. The appeal against decisions of the First Appellate Officer will lie before the Second Appellate Officer. An order of DGCA or BCAS can be appealed before the central government.
- **Offences and Penalties:** The Bill specifies several offences and penalties. The following offences will be punishable with imprisonment up to two years, a fine up to one crore rupees, or both: (i) violating rules on carriage of certain prohibited goods in aircrafts such as arms and explosives, (ii) flying aircraft in a manner to cause danger to a person or property, and (iii) failure to comply with the directions of DGCA and BCAS. Violation of Rules prohibiting slaughter and deposit of rubbish near airports will be punishable with imprisonment up to three years, a fine up to one crore rupees, or both.

For a PRS analysis of the Bill, see here.

Amendments to aircraft security rules notified

The Ministry of Civil Aviation notified amendments to the Aircraft (Security) Rules, 2023 in August 2024.[115,116] These Rules specify the framework for security of airports and aircrafts. Key amendments include:

- **Reserved right of admission in aircraft:** The Act establishes the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) for regulating security. The 2023 Rules empower the Director General of BCAS and the airport operator to: (i) refuse any person entry into the airport, and (ii) require any person to leave the airport. They also empower the chief security officer in-charge of the airport, to assist aircraft pilots in removing unruly passengers from an aircraft in the interest of the safety and security of passengers and crew.[117] The Amendments also empower the Director General to: (i) refuse a person or group of persons entry into an aircraft, and (ii) require any person or groups of persons to leave an aircraft. Such an action may be taken if it is necessary or expedient in the interest of security.
- **Prohibition on communicating false information:** The Amendments prohibit a person from communicating false information which: (i) jeopardises safety of an aircraft, an airport, or a civil aviation facility, (ii) causes panic among passengers, crew, ground personnel, or the general public, or (iii) disrupts civil aviation operations.
- **Penalties:** Contravention of above provisions will be punishable with a civil penalty of one lakh rupees for individuals, and between Rs 50 lakh and one crore rupees for organisations.

The Protection of Interests in Aircraft Objects Bill, 2025 passed by the Parliament

The Protection of Interests in Aircraft Objects Bill, 2025 was passed by Parliament in April, 2025.[118] The Bill aimed to give legal effect to the following international agreements: (i) Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment (also known as Cape Town Convention of 2001), and (ii) Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters specific to Aircraft Equipment.[119,120] India had acceded to these in 2008. The Convention and Protocol aim to bring uniformity in securing rights for high-value assets such as aircrafts, helicopters, and engines in case of default. Key features of the Bill include:

- **Obligations of debtors**: Debtors must submit records of dues to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). A debtor is a person who has taken an aviation asset under a lease or, conditional purchase agreement, or pledged an asset under a security agreement.
- **Remedies in case of default:** The Convention gives creditors certain remedies in case of default by a debtor. The remedies include the right to take back possession of the asset within a period of two calendar months or a mutually agreed upon period, whichever is earlier. The Bill states that before exercising any remedy, the creditor must notify DGCA about the occurrence of default.
- **Detention of assets by government agencies:** Entities that will have the right to detain an asset if dues for services related to that asset remain unpaid: (i) central government, (ii) any other entity providing public services in India, or (iii) an inter-governmental organisation of which India is a member.

For a PRS summary of the Bill, see here.

Road Transport and Highways

Voluntary vehicle modernisation programme launched

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways launched the Voluntary Vehicle Modernisation Programme or Vehicle Scrapping Policy in August 2024.[121] It aims to phase out unfit polluting vehicles across the country. This will be done through a network of registered vehicle scrapping facilities and automated testing stations.

Currently, vehicle scrapping is promoted through incentives such as: (i) concessions on Motor Vehicle Tax, (ii) waiver of fee for registration certificate, and (iii) waiver of liabilities on purchase of new vehicles available in many states. Scrapping facilities also provide scrap value to vehicle owners.

To incentivise scrapping, vehicle manufacturers have volunteered to offer discounts on new vehicles against scrappage certificates. Discounts will only be extended for two years for commercial and one year for passenger vehicles.

Shipping

The Merchant Shipping Bill, 2024 introduced in Lok Sabha

The Merchant Shipping Bill, 2024 was introduced in Lok Sabha in December 2024.[122] It seeks to replace the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, which regulates the shipping sector.[123] Key features of the Bill include:

- **Mandatory registration of vessels:** Under the 1958 Act, all sea going Indian vessels must be registered, except certain vessels which are: (i) not mechanically propelled, or (ii) weighing below 15 tons and used only for navigating Indian coasts. The Act defines vessels to include any ships, boats, sailing vessels, or other vessels used in navigation. The Bill instead requires all vessels to be registered regardless of type of propulsion or weight. It also expands the definition of vessels to include types such as mobile offshore drilling units, and submersibles.
- **Ownership of Indian vessels**: The Act specifies criteria for ownership of Indian vessels. Under the Act, an Indian vessel means a vessel wholly owned by a: (i) citizen of India, (ii) company or body established by or under Indian laws with its principal place of business in India, or (iii) registered co-operative society. The Bill relaxes the criteria to also include: (i) vessels which are partly owned by above persons, and (ii) vessels wholly or partly owned by Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs). The thresholds for ownership will be specified by the central government. The Bill also clarifies that it will not be mandatory for vessels wholly owned by OCIs to register in India.
- **Registration of certain foreign vessels**: The Bill adds that a foreign vessel chartered by an Indian person may be registered as an Indian vessel. This will apply where the ownership is intended to be transferred to the charterer after a specified period.
- **Authorities for regulation of shipping:** The Act empowers the central government to appoint the Director-General of Shipping. The government may delegate its powers and functions under the Act to the Director-General. The Bill retains these provisions. It renames the Director-General as the Director-General of Marine Administration. The Act establishes Boards to advise the central government: (i) the National Shipping Board for matters related to shipping, and (ii) the National Welfare Board for Seafarers, to advise on welfare of seafarers. The Bill retains these provisions.

For a PRS summary of the Bill, see here.

The Coastal Shipping Bill, 2024 introduced

The Coastal Shipping Bill, 2024 was introduced in Lok Sabha in December 2024.[124] It seeks to regulate vessels engaged in trade within Indian coastal waters. Under the Bill, coastal waters mean territorial waters of India, along with adjoining maritime zones. Territorial waters extend up to 12 nautical miles from the coast (about 22 km). Adjoining maritime zones extend up to 200 nautical miles (about 370 km).

The Bill seeks to replace Part XIV of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, which regulates mechanically propelled ships over 150 tons (including mobile offshore drilling units) engaged in coastal shipping. Key features of the Bill include:

- **Services to be also covered under coasting trade:** Under the 1958 Act, coasting trade refers to the carriage of goods and passengers from one place or port in India to another. The Bill expands this definition to include provision of services. Services include exploration, research, and any other commercial activity, except fishing.
- **Licence for coasting trade:** The 1958 Act requires licence for all vessels engaging in coasting trade. The Bill states that vessels wholly owned by Indian persons will not need a licence.

- **Revocation of licences**: The 1958 Act empowers the Director General of Shipping to modify or revoke licences. The Bill specifies the grounds for modification, suspension, or revocation of licences: (i) violation of terms of licence or an existing law, or (ii) failure to comply with directions of the Director General.

For a PRS summary of the Bill, see here.

Lok Sabha passed the Bills of Lading Bill, 2024

The Bills of Lading Bill, 2024 was passed in Lok Sabha in March 2025.[125] It replaces the Indian Bills of Lading Act, 1856.[126] The Act provides a legal framework for issuance of bills of lading.

- **Retained provisions:** The Act states that a bill of lading is conclusive evidence of goods on board. It grants following persons all rights of suit and liabilities regarding the goods: (i) the receiver as per the bill of lading, or (ii) any third party to whom the receiver may transfer the ownership of goods. The Bill retains this provision.
- **Power to issue directions:** The Bill adds that the central government may issue directions for carrying out the provisions of the Bill.

For a PRS summary of the Bill, see here.

The Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill, 2024 passed by Lok Sabha

The Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill, 2024 was introduced in Lok Sabha on August 9, 2024. The Bill seeks to replace the Indian Carriage of Goods by Sea Act, 1925. The Act establishes the responsibilities, liabilities, rights, and immunities in case of goods carried from a port in India to another port in India or any other port in the world. The Act is in conformance with the International Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules of Law relating to Bills of Lading of August 1924 (Hague Rules) and subsequent amendments to it. The Bill retains all provisions of the Act.

The Bill empowers the central government to: (i) issue directions for carrying out provisions of the Bill, and (ii) amend the schedule specifying rules applicable to bills of lading. A bill of lading refers to a document issued by a freight carrier to a shipper. It contains details such as the type, quantity, condition, and destination of goods being carried. The rules outline the responsibilities, liabilities, rights, and immunities of goods carriers.

Indian Ports Bill, 2025 introduced in Lok Sabha

The Indian Ports Bill, 2025 was introduced in Lok Sabha in March, 2025.[127] It seeks to replace the Indian Ports Act, 1908.[128] The Act outlines the powers of the central and state governments with respect to: (i) altering port limits, (ii) safety and conservation of ports, and (iii) levy of port-dues, fees, and other charges. The Bill retains certain provisions of the Act. Key changes include:

- **Maritime State Development Council:** The Bill requires the central government to establish the Maritime State Development Council. The Council will issue guidelines in consultation with central and state governments on: (i) data or information to be collected by ports along with the manner of collection, updation, storage and submission to the Council, (ii) dissemination of data or information related to ports, and (iii) ensuring transparency of port tariff. It will also make recommendations on matters related to legislative adequacy, efficiency of ports and connectivity to ports.
- **State Maritime Boards:** The Bill provides statutory recognition to all state maritime boards specified in the third schedule of the Bill. This includes maritime boards established in states such as Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu. Functions of the State Maritime Boards include: (i) exercising licensing functions for port infrastructure, (ii) supervision of all port works, (iii) fixing port tariff, and (iv) regulation of navigation within port limits.
- **Dispute Resolution Committee:** The Bill requires state governments to constitute a dispute resolution committee to adjudicate disputes arising between non-major ports, port concessionaires, port users, and port service providers within the state. Appeals against orders of the Committee shall be made to the High Court within sixty days.
- **Pollution containment and response:** Under the Bill, all ports must prepare a port waste reception and handling plan as prescribed by the central government and in consultation with the state government. Every port must report incidents involving threat of pollution to coastal waters to the central or state governments, in a manner as prescribed by the central government.

For a PRS summary of the Bill, see here.

Development

Education

UGC released curriculum and credit framework for postgraduate programmes

The University Grants Commission (UGC) released the 'Curriculum and Credit Framework for Post Graduate Programmes' in June 2024.[129] The Framework seeks to provide flexibility to: (i) pursue subjects different from those studied in undergraduate programmes (UG), (ii) pursue PG education in different modes of learning, (iii) pursue simultaneous academic or industry engagements and obtain credits for the same, and (iv) exit a PG programme after one year with a PG diploma. Key features of the Framework include:

- **Credit requirement and eligibility for PG programme:** The Framework prescribes criteria for undergraduate students to be eligible for various types of PG programmes. For instance, to be eligible for a one-year MA, MCom or MSc degree, a candidate must have a Bachelor's degree with Honours with minimum 160 credits. However, to be eligible for a two-year MA, MCom, or MSc degree, they need a three year/ six semester Bachelor's degree with 120 credits.
- **Flexibility in switching subjects in PG:** The Framework permits graduate students to: (i) pursue a different subject in post-graduation, if they qualify in the entrance examination, and (ii) apply for a PG programme that was a major or minor in graduate studies. Under the Framework, certain students will be eligible for admission in Master in Engineering or a Master of Technology. These include those having completed: (i) a four-year UG programme, (ii) a three-year UG and a two-year PG programme or (iii) a five-year integrated programme, in STEM subjects.
- **Assessment:** The Framework suggests assessments to be continuous as opposed to summative (this includes unit tests and semester-wise exams). It also suggests for assessments to be driven by learning outcomes. The National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF) delineates learning outcomes for UG and PG programmes.[130] It requires learning outcomes to be measured using criteria such as: (i) knowledge of the field, (ii) applicability of knowledge and skills, and (iii) employability.

Cabinet approved scheme to provide financial support to meritorious students

In November 2024, the Union Cabinet approved the PM Vidyalakshmi scheme to financially support meritorious students in pursuing higher education.[131] The scheme will extend collateral and guarantor free loans covering tuition and other expenses to students who get admission in quality higher education institution. For loans up to Rs 7.5 lakh, 75% of the outstanding amount will be covered by a credit guarantee. The scheme will apply to students in: (i) top 100 institutions in each field, (ii) state government institutions ranked 101-200, and (iii) all central government institutions. Rankings would be based on the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF). The scheme is expected to cover about 22 lakh students across 860 institutions.

Further, the scheme will provide interest subvention of 3% on loans up to Rs 10 lakh to students with a family income of up to eight lakh rupees. Beneficiaries must not be covered under any other government scholarship or interest subvention scheme. Interest subvention will be provided to one lakh students every year.

RTE rules amended to allow holding back students in central government schools

In December 2024, the Ministry of Education notified the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Rules, 2024.[132] These amend the rules issued under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009.[133,134] The Act guarantees free and compulsory elementary education to children aged between six and 14.

The Act requires schools to conduct a regular examination for classes fifth and eighth at the end of an academic year.[133] Students failing this exam can appear for a re-examination within two months.

The 2024 Rules require holding back students in classes five or eight if they fail the re-examination.[132] During the period in which they are held back, schools must guide the student and his parents by identifying learning gaps and providing necessary resources. The head of the school will maintain a list of students who are held back, and will monitor their progress. Annual exams and re-exams must test competency and not memorisation or procedural skills.[132]

UGC issued draft regulations for appointment of faculty and VC in HEIs

In January 2025, the University Grants Commission (UGC) issued the "Draft UGC (Minimum Qualifications for Appointment and Promotion of Teachers and Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education), Regulations, 2025".[135] These provide for the eligibility criteria for appointment of faculty and Vice-Chancellors (VCs) in Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs). The draft seeks to replace the 2018 Regulations on this subject.[136] Key features of the draft regulations include:

- **Appointment of VC:** The Vice Chancellor is the chief executive and academic head of a university.[137] As per the existing regulations, a VC must be appointed from persons with at least 10 years of experience: (i) as a professor, or (ii) at a senior position of a reputed research or academic administrative organisations. The draft Regulations add that he can also be appointed from persons with at least 10 years of experience at a senior level in industry, or public policy or administration, with a proven record of academic or scholarly contributions.
- Under existing regulations, the VC will be appointed from a panel of names prepared by a three to five-member search committee. The Visitor or Chancellor of the university will make this appointment. The search committee must not be connected to that university in any way. One member of the committee must be a nominee of the UGC Chairman. The draft Regulations provide that this committee will be constituted by the Chancellor/Visitor of a university. It will comprise of one nominee each of the: (i) Visitor/Chancellor, (ii) UGC Chairman, and (iii) apex body of a university. In certain states, the Chancellor of a state university is the Governor of that state. [138] The President of India appoints the Chancellor in central universities.[139]
- **Recruitment of Assistant Professors:** Under the 2018 Regulations, Assistant Professors directly recruited into an HEI must: (i) possess a Master's degree and clear the National Eligibility Test (NET), or (ii) hold a Ph.D. The draft allows persons with only a master's degree in engineering to be directly recruited as Assistant Professor.
- **Recruitment on a contract basis:** Existing regulations allow recruiting faculty on a contract basis. However, contract faculty should not exceed 10% of the total faculty positions in an HEI. The draft Regulations do away with this limit. They provide that contract period of such faculty should not exceed six months.

Supreme Court struck down domicile-based reservations in PG medical admissions

In January 2025, the Supreme Court held that residence-based reservation in post-graduate (PG) medical courses violated the fundamental right to equality (Article 14).[140] Currently, seats for PG medical courses are filled by: (i) NEET ranking, (ii) state quotas, and (iii) institutional preferences.

The Court held that the Constitution provides the right to seek admission in educational institutions across India. Differential treatment of students based on residence deters this right. However, domicile reservations are permissible in MBBS courses as they help address shortage of doctors in neglected regions. On the other hand, PG medical courses address the need for specialists and should thus enrol students based on marks and merit.

The Court ruled that all PG medical seats under state quotas should be filled based on students' performance in NEET. However, this will not apply to seats currently filled under state quota. The Court upheld the validity of seats filled through institutional preferences. These are seats granted to UG students of the same college. The Supreme Court stated that the share of such seats should be reasonable.

CBSE issued draft policy to conduct two board exams in a year for Class 10

In February 2025, the Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE) issued the "Draft Scheme for Two Examinations for Class X from 2026".[141] The draft policy was issued in line with the National Education Policy, 2020, which recommended allowing students to take up to two board exams in a year.[142] This intends to reduce exam-related pressure by providing students with an option to improve their scores in the second attempt.

According to the draft, CBSE board exams for class 10 will be held twice a year between: (i) February 17 to March 6 and (ii) May 5 to 20. Results for all students will be released after results of the second exam are out.

Tribhuvan Sahkari University Bill, 2025 passed by Lok Sabha

The Tribhuvan Sahkari University Bill, 2025 was passed in Lok Sabha in March 2025.[143] The Bill seeks to establish the Institute of Rural Management Anand, Gujarat (IRMA) as the "Tribhuvan" Sahkari University. Currently, IRMA is registered as a society. The Bill places IRMA as a school within the university. It also states that its autonomous identity will be preserved within the institutional framework of the University.

For a PRS Summary of the Bill, see here.

Skill Development

Cabinet approved continuation of the Skill India Programme

The Union Cabinet approved the continuation of the Skill India Programme.[144] The programme comprises three schemes: (i) Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, which imparts skill development through short-term and on-the-job training, (ii) Pradhan Mantri National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme, which provides financial support for training and remunerating apprentices engaged with an establishment, and (iii) Jan Shikshan Sansthan Scheme, which aims to make vocational training accessible to disadvantaged groups.

The Skill India Programme will be implemented till 2026, with an outlay of Rs 8,800 crore between 2022-23 and 2025-26.

Youth Affairs & Sports

Sports Ministry released draft Bill on sports governance

In October 2024, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports released the Draft National Sports Governance Bill, 2024.[145] The draft Bill creates a regulatory structure for the recognition and regulation of: (i) the National Olympic Committee (NOC), (ii) the National Paralympic Committee (NPC) and (iii) National Sports Federations (NSFs). Key features of the draft Bill include:

- **Regulator:** The draft Bill provides for creating the Sports Regulatory Board of India. The Board will be responsible for regulating the NOC, NPC, and NSFs of various kinds of sports. It will be empowered to grant, renew, or suspend recognition of these bodies. The Board will protect the rights and ensure the welfare of athletes and support personnel.
- **Suspension:** Recognition of the NOC, NPC, and NSFs is conditional on their affiliation with: (i) the International Olympic or Paralympic Committee (for NOC and NPC) or, (ii) the concerned International Federation (for NSFs). Failure to maintain affiliation can lead to suspension. Other reasons for suspension include: (i) reported irregularities in internal functioning, (ii) failure to publish accounts, and (iii) irregularities in election procedures. If the reason for suspension is rectifiable, the Board can ensure compliance instead.
- **Governance:** The draft Bill provides certain specifications in the governance structure of the NOC, NPC and each NSF. These bodies must each have a General Body and Executive Committee. The Executive Committee, which is a governing body, will be elected by the Athlete Commission. It will consist of office bearers such as President, Vice-Presidents, and Joint Secretaries. It will also comprise of athletes. After serving for more than two consecutive terms, office bearers would be ineligible to contest election for at least four years.
- At least 10% of the General Body and voting members in each body will comprise of Sportspersons of Outstanding Merit (SOM). These are retired athletes who have won at least one medal at the Olympics, Commonwealth or Asian Games.
- **Tribunal:** The draft Bill sets up an Appellate Sports Tribunal. The central government will notify the composition, manner of selection of members, and matters over which the Tribunal can exercise jurisdiction. Selection of the Tribunal will made on recommendations of a committee headed by a retired judge of the Supreme Court or High Court.

Science and Technology

Cabinet approved Vigyan Dhara Scheme

In August 2024, the Union Cabinet approved the Vigyan Dhara Scheme from 2021-22 to 2025-26.[146] It merges three existing schemes implemented by the Ministry of Science and Technology. These relate to research and development, and capacity building of individuals and institutions in science.

The scheme will: (i) support the establishment of research labs, (ii) promote transnational collaborative research and (iii) expand the number of full-time researchers in the country. It will also conduct targeted interventions to increase participation of women in science and encourage innovation at school, industry and startups. The scheme has a total outlay of Rs 10,580 crore over five years.

Health

Cabinet expanded Ayushman Bharat to include all senior citizens

In September 2024, the Union Cabinet approved expansion of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) to all citizens aged 70 years and above.[147] The scheme provides cashless treatment of up to five lakh rupees per family per year, for hospitalisation at an empanelled facility.[148] Currently, 11 crore families (roughly 50 crore persons) are eligible for inclusion in the scheme.[149] Senior citizens already covered under the scheme will individually be covered for an extra five lakh rupees as health insurance.

Expansion of the scheme will extend insurance coverage to 4.5 crore families (six crore senior citizens). This will also include senior citizens who are already availing benefits of other public and private insurance schemes.

Uniform Code for marketing practices in medical devices released

The Department of Pharmaceuticals released the Uniform Code for Marketing Practices in Medical Devices, 2024 in September 2024.[150] The Code regulates the branding and promotion of medical devices in the country.

Key features of the Code include:

- **Claims:** Claims made by medical devices companies regarding the usefulness of a medical device must be based on the latest evidence. Prohibited claims include: (i) using other brand names without prior consent of the respective companies, (ii) calling a medical device safe without qualification, and (iii) claiming it to be without side-effects.
- **Promotion:** Any promotional material must contain details including: (i) generic/brand name of the medical device, (ii) name/address of the manufacturer/importer and the business name/address of the marketeer, (iii) warnings and precautions for use, and (iv) a statement stating that additional information is available on request.
- Only brand reminders (such as books, diaries, dummy models) worth less than Rs 1,000 each can be circulated. Free evaluation samples must not be circulated to anyone except the person qualified to prescribe it or someone authorised to receive it on their behalf. Demonstration products (products that help explain functions of a medical device) should be taken back by companies after the demonstration period is over.
- **Ethics Committee:** An Ethics Committee for marketing practices in medical devices must be established in all Indian medical device associations. It will address grievances regarding compliance with the Code. The Committee should pass an order within 90 days of receiving a complaint. Violation of the Code will result in penalties such as: (i) expulsion from the association, (ii) issuing a corrective statement in the media, or (iii) monetary recovery. The Committee's decision can be appealed before the Apex Committee within 15 days. The Apex Committee will be headed by Secretary of the Department of Pharmaceuticals.

Health Ministry expanded scope of nutrition support for Tuberculosis Patients

The Health Ministry announced the expansion of the Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana in October 2024.[151] This scheme aims to provide nutritional and financial support to TB patients to reduce mortality due to TB.

Financial support for each TB patient was increased from Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 per month. The scheme will also provide energy-dense nutritional supplements to underweight TB patients for the first two months of treatment. Family members of TB patients will also receive nutritional support which will be aimed at improving their immunity.

The scheme will be expanded with a total cost of Rs 1,040 crore. This will be distributed between the Centre and states in a 60:40 ratio.

Environment

The Public Liability Insurance (Amendment) Rules, 2024 notified

In December 2024, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change notified the Public Liability Insurance (Amendment) Rules, 2024.[152] These amend the Public Liability Rules, 1991, issued under the Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991.[153,154] The Act provides a framework for compensation to persons affected by accidents in handling of hazardous substances. Key changes under the Amendment Rules include:

- **Increase in limit on liability of insurers:** Under the Act, an owner of an undertaking handling hazardous substances must take insurance for their liability to provide relief in the event of an accident. Under the 1991 Rules, in case of an accident, the maximum liability of an insurer was five crore rupees. The 2024 Rules increase this to Rs 250 crore. In case of more than one accident within one year or the duration of policy, whichever is less, the maximum liability of the insurer was Rs 15 crore under the 1991 Rules. The 2024 Rules increase this to Rs 500 crore.
- **Reimbursements to be provided by the owner:** The 2024 Rules specify the amount of relief to be provided by the owner to the affected persons in specified cases. For instance, relief of five lakh rupees per person must be provided in the event of death. For damage to private property, relief must cover actual damage, and is subject to a maximum of Rs 50 lakh.

- **Allocation of funds from the Environmental Relief Fund**: The Jan Vishwas Act, 2023 amended the 1991 Act to allow use of the Environmental Relief Fund for restoration of damage in certain cases. This applies where activities related to hazardous substances such as manufacturing and transportation lead to environmental damage. The 2023 Act empowers the Central and State Pollution Control Boards to file an application to the central government in this regard. The Rules give effect to these provisions. The Rules provide that upon the receiving such an application, the central government will scrutinise the extent of damage, and determine the amount to be allocated. The Rules also state that the allocation will not exceed 10% of the amount available in the Fund.
- **Duty to publicise right to claim for relief:** In case of an accident, the Amendment Rules require industrial units to publicise the right to claim relief among the affected persons.

Rules notified for management of waste generated from end-of life vehicles

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change notified the Environment Protection (End-of-Life Vehicles) Rules, 2025.[155] These Rules have been issued under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, and came into force from April 1, 2025.[156] End-of-life vehicles are those which are no longer registered or have been declared unfit.[157] These Rules will apply to producers of vehicles, vehicle owners, bulk consumers, and registered vehicle scrapping facilities. It will cover all vehicles except those used for agriculture. Key features include:

- **Responsibility of Producers:** Producers are required to fulfil the extended producer responsibility (EPR) obligations for the prescribed scrapping targets. Under EPR, the producer will be responsible for scrapping End-of-Life vehicles. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) will issue EPR certificates through an online portal. Starting from 2025-26, at least 8% of steel used in non-transport vehicles in 2005-2006 must be scrapped in an environmentally sound manner. For transport vehicles, the scrapping target is at least 8% of steel used in vehicles in 2010-11.
- **Responsibilities of producers, bulk users, and scrapping facilities:** A registered owner or bulk consumer must deposit end-of-life vehicles within 180 days of them becoming unregistered or declared unfit. Such vehicles must be deposited at the producer's designated sales outlet, collection centre, or registered vehicle scrapping facility. Bulk consumers are those owning over 100 vehicles.
- **Environmental Compensation:** Producers, registered vehicle scrapping facilities, and bulk consumers must pay environmental compensation for damage to environment or public health. The CPCB will impose the compensation for obligations of producers while the State Pollution Control Boards will do the same for registered vehicle scrapping facilities and bulk consumers.

Rural Development

Cabinet approved implementation of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana - IV

The Union Cabinet approved implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana – IV (PMGSY –IV) between 2024-25 and 2028-29 in September 2024.[158] Under this phase, financial assistance will be provided for constructing 62,500 km of all-weather roads that will connect 25,000 unconnected habitations. This will cover habitations with a population exceeding: (i) 500 in plain areas, (ii) 250 in North Eastern and hilly states, and (ii) 100 in districts affected by left-wing extremism. PMGSY-IV will receive a total outlay of Rs 70,125 crore for five years, which will be borne between the centre and states in a 70:30 ratio.

Housing and Urban Affairs

Cabinet approved the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban 2.0 scheme

The Union Cabinet approved the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban 2.0 in August 2024.[159] The scheme seeks to offer financial assistance to one crore poor and middle-class families in urban areas. It will be available for five years. The assistance will be available for constructing, purchasing, or renting. The total expected outlay is Rs 2.3 lakh crore. Key features are as follows:

- **Eligibility:** The assistance will be available to households who do not have a pucca house anywhere in the country and whose annual income is up to nine lakh rupees.
- **Assistance for construction:** Eligible households with an annual income of up to three lakh rupees will receive Rs 2.5 lakh to build a house on their vacant land. Landless beneficiaries may be granted land rights.
- **Interest subsidy for purchase**: Interest subsidy of 4% will be offered on home loans of up to Rs 25 lakh. This will be subject to a maximum subsidy of Rs 1.8 lakh payable in five yearly instalments.

- **Purchase of affordable housing units:** Assistance of Rs 2.5 lakh will be provided for purchasing affordable houses built through state, city, public, or private partnerships (AHP). Households with an annual income of up to three lakh rupees will be eligible. A grant of Rs 1,000 per square metre (sqm), up to 30 sqm per unit, will also be made available for AHP projects using innovative construction methods.
- **Affordable rental housing:** To make affordable rental housing (ARH) available, two models will be implemented: (i) converting existing government-funded vacant houses into ARH units, and (ii) constructing, operating, and maintaining ARH units. For innovative construction technology for ARH units, Rs 5,000 per sqm will be provided.
- **Guarantee for housing loans:** The corpus fund of the Credit Risk Guarantee Trust Fund has been increased from Rs 1,000 crore to Rs 3,000 crore. Under the fund, benefits of credit risk guarantees are provided on affordable housing loans from banks/housing finance companies/primary lending institutions.
- **Funding of the scheme:** The scheme is a centrally sponsored scheme, except the interest subsidy component which will be fully funded by the central government.

Cabinet approved implementation of PMAY– Gramin for five years

In August 2024, the Union Cabinet approved the continuation of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G) between 2024-25 and 2028-29.[160] Under the scheme, government will provide assistance for the construction of additional two crore pucca houses between April 2024 and March 2029. Assistance for each house will remain unchanged at Rs 1.20 lakh in plain areas and Rs 1.30 lakh in north-eastern and hilly states.

The scheme was approved with a total outlay of Rs 3,06,137 crore for five years. This includes central share of Rs 2,05,856 crore and the states' share of Rs 1,00,281 crore. PMAY-G was launched in 2016 with a target of constructing 2.95 crore pucca houses by March 2024. Beneficiaries under the scheme will be selected from an updated Awas+ list and will also include the remaining eligible households from the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) 2011. The government had conducted Awaas+ survey between January, 2018 and March, 2019 to identify beneficiaries previously left out under the SECC 2011.

Tribal Affairs

Cabinet approved Tribal development scheme

In September 2024, the Union Cabinet approved the Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan.[161] The programme aims to uplift tribal communities by addressing gaps in key sectors such as: (i) social infrastructure, (ii) health, (iii) education, and (iv) livelihood. It comprises of 25 interventions that will be implemented by ministries governing relevant sectors. The programme will cover about 63,000 villages, and aims to benefit about five crore tribal people. The programme will receive an outlay of Rs 79,156 crore, to be spent over five years. Key features of the programme include:

- **Goals of the programme:** The goals are to be achieved in coordination with other departments and their schemes. These goals are: (i) building enabling infrastructure, (ii) promoting skill development and self-employment, and (iii) improving access to quality education and affordable healthcare.
- **Targets:** Targets have been set under various existing schemes, including: (i) Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, (ii) Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, (iii) Jal Jeevan Mission, (iv) National Health Mission, (v) Poshan Abhiyan. Some of these targets include: (i) building 20 lakh houses, (ii) 25,000 km road, (iii) water supply to every eligible village, (iv) creating up to 1,000 Mobile Medical Units, (v) establishing 2,000 new Anganwadi centres.
- **Schemes:** Certain initiatives under the programme include: (i) 1000 tribal home stays, (ii) sustainable livelihood for 22 lakh forest rights holders, (iii) improvement of infrastructure in tribal and government residential schools, (iv) affordable management of sickle cell disease, and (v) 100 multipurpose marketing centres for promoting tribal products.

Law and Security

Home Affairs

Parliament passed the Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill, 2024

The Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill, 2024 was passed in both Houses of Parliament in March 2025.[162] It was introduced in Lok Sabha in August 2024. The Bill amended the Disaster Management Act, 2005.[163] The Act establishes the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA), and District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) at national, state, and district levels.

- **Functions of NDMA and SDMA:** The Bill provided that NDMA and SDMA will prepare disaster management plans at their respective levels. The Bill introduced certain functions for these authorities. These include: (i) taking periodic stock of disaster risks, including emerging risks from extreme climate events, (ii) providing technical assistance to authorities below them, (iii) recommending guidelines for minimum standards of relief, and (iv) preparing national and state disaster databases. NDMA will assess disaster preparedness of states, and also undertake post-disaster audit of preparedness and response.
- **Powers to states for disaster response:** The Bill empowered the state government to constitute a separate Urban Disaster Management Authority for state capitals and cities with a municipal corporation. The Urban Authority will prepare and implement the disaster management plan for the area under it. The Act provides for constitution of a National Disaster Response Force for specialist response to disaster situations. The Bill empowered the state government to constitute a State Disaster Response Force.

For a PRS summary of the Bill, see here.

Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025 passed by Lok Sabha

In March 2025, the Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025 was introduced in and passed by Lok Sabha.[164] The Bill seeks to regulate immigration, entry, and stay of foreigners in India. It repeals the following Acts: (i) the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920, (ii) the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939, (iii) the Foreigners Act, 1946, and (iv) the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act, 2000. Key features of the Bill include:

- **Immigration:** The 1920 Act empowers the central government to frame rules requiring persons entering India to possess passports. The Bill provides that persons entering or departing from India must also have a valid visa (for foreigners) along with valid passports or other valid travel documents. The Bill provides for setting up of the Bureau of Immigration for performing immigration functions and other prescribed functions. Immigration functions include: (i) visa issuance and regulation of entry into India, or (ii) transit, stay and movement within and exit from India.
- **Registration of foreigners:** The 1939 Act empowers the central government to make rules for foreigners to report their presence to a prescribed authority. The Bill provides that on arrival in India, foreigners must register with a Registration Officer.
- **Obligations of persons/entities to provide prescribed information:** The 1946 Act requires hotel keepers providing accommodation to foreigners to furnish information. The Bill adds that educational institutions must provide prescribed information to the Registration Officer on admitting foreigners. Further, medical institutions must provide information regarding foreign patients availing indoor treatment or their attendants availing lodging facilities to the Registration Officer.
- **Carriers:** The Bill amends the 2000 Act to prohibit any transporter departing from India until a clearance has been obtained from the Immigration Officer.

For a PRS summary of the Bill, see here.

Union Cabinet approved scheme to enhance forensic infrastructure in India

In June 2024, the Union Cabinet approved the National Forensic Infrastructure Enhancement Scheme with an outlay of Rs 2,254 crore.[165] It will be implemented between 2024-25 to 2028-29. The scheme will: (i) establish campuses of the National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU) in the country, (ii) establish Central Forensic Science Laboratories, and (iii) enhance existing infrastructure of the Delhi campus of NFSU. The scheme seeks to address the shortage of trained forensic manpower in the country and help achieve a conviction rate of over 90%.

Centre constituted committee to monitor situation at the India-Bangladesh border

In August 2024, the central government constituted a five-member committee to monitor the current situation at the India-Bangladesh border.[166] The committee will communicate with counterpart authorities in Bangladesh and ensure safety of Indian citizens and minorities in Bangladesh. The Ministry of External Affairs had highlighted several attacks on minorities and their institutions in Bangladesh amidst the large-scale unrest in the country.[167]

- The committee is headed by the Additional Director General, Border Security Force (BSF), Eastern Command. Other members include Inspector General, BSF Frontier HQ South Bengal and Secretary, Land and Ports Authority of India.

Law and Justice

Constitutional Amendment Bill introduced to implement simultaneous election

In December 2024, the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill, 2024, was introduced in Lok Sabha.[168] The Bill empowers the Election Commission to conduct election for Lok Sabha and all State Assemblies at the same time (referred to as simultaneous election).

- **Commencement of simultaneous election:** The President will issue a notification on the first sitting of Lok Sabha after a general election. The terms of all State Assemblies constituted after the date of the notification will expire with the expiry of the full term of Lok Sabha. Hence, elections to Lok Sabha and all State Assemblies thereafter will be conducted together.
- **Premature dissolution of Lok Sabha or State Assemblies:** If Lok Sabha or a State Assembly is dissolved sooner than its full term of five years, fresh election will be held for a term equal to the remainder of the five-year term. This will synchronise elections for Lok Sabha and all Assemblies every five years.
- **Deferring a state election:** If the Election Commission is of the opinion that the election for a particular State Assembly cannot be held as part of the simultaneous election, it may make a recommendation to the President. Upon this recommendation, the President may issue an order to conduct election for this State Assembly at a later date. Where the election for a State Assembly is deferred to after the simultaneous election, its term will end with the end of Lok Sabha constituted in that simultaneous election.

The Bill was referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (Chairperson: Mr P.P. Chaudhary) consisting of 39 MPs.

For a PRS summary of the Bill, see here.

Bill introduced to implement simultaneous election for Legislative Assemblies of UTs

The Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024 was introduced in Lok Sabha in December 2024.[169] It seeks to implement simultaneous election to UTs with a legislature and amends the following Acts: (i) the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963, (ii) the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991, and (iii) the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019. These Acts provide for the structure and functioning of the Legislative Assemblies of Puducherry, Delhi, and Jammu and Kashmir (UT Assemblies). The Bill is similar to the Constitution (129th) Amendment Bill, 2024.

The Bill has been referred to the JPC along with the Constitution (129th) Amendment Bill, 2024.

For a PRS summary of the Bill, see here.

Bill to reserve seats for STs in Goa Assembly introduced in Lok Sabha

In August 2024, the Readjustment of Representation of Scheduled Tribes in Assembly Constituencies of the State of Goa Bill, 2024, was introduced in Lok Sabha.[170] The Bill seeks to reserve seats in the Goa Legislative Assembly for Scheduled Tribes based on the 2001 census.

For a PRS Summary of the Bill, see here.

Bombay HC struck down IT Rules establishing fact check unit

In September 2024, the Bombay High Court struck down a 2023 amendment to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.[171,172] The Rules require digital intermediaries (such as social media websites) to exercise due diligence in preventing users from intentionally spreading false or misleading information. The amendment expanded this to prohibit any information regarding business of the central government which a fact-check unit (FCU) of the government identifies as false or misleading.[173] The Court held that the amended Rules violated the right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19 of the Constitution. Any restriction placed on this right must be reasonable and conform to the restrictions under provided under the Constitution.

The Court further held that as the FCU will be appointed by the executive, the Centre will become the final arbiter of what constitutes false or misleading. This violates the principle of natural justice. In addition, the Court found the terms 'false or misleading' to be vague and overbroad in the absence of any guidelines to identify such items. The Court also noted that the amendment was beyond the scope of the Information Technology Act, 2000 and therefore could not be a part of the Rules under this Act.[174]

Supreme Court ruled that government entities cannot unilaterally appoint arbitrators

In November 2024, a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court ruled that government entities and PSUs cannot unilaterally appoint arbitrators in public-private arbitration agreements. It held that such clauses violate equality and equal protection before law (Article 14).[175,176]

The Court examined whether: (i) unilateral appointment of arbitrator is legally valid, (ii) such appointment is constitutional, if done by the government in a public-private contract, and (iii) the principle of equal treatment of parties extends to appointment of arbitrators.

The Court held that the principle of equal treatment of parties applies to all stages of arbitration, including appointment of arbitrator. It further held that allowing one party to unilaterally appoint an arbitrator raises questions about impartiality of the arbitrator. This also hinders the other party from equally participating in dispute resolution.

Minority Affairs

Bill to amend law regulating waqf property introduced in Lok Sabha

The Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024 was introduced in Lok Sabha.[177] It seeks to amend the Waqf Act, 1995.[178] The Act regulates waqf property in India. The Act defines waqf as an endowment of movable or immovable property for purposes considered pious, religious, or charitable under Muslim law. The Bill renames the Act to 'United Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency and Development Act, 1995'. The Bill was referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (Chair: Mr. Jagdambika Pal).[179] Key features of the Bill and the amendments recommended by the JPC include:

- **Formation of waqf:** The Act allowed waqf to be formed by: (i) declaration, (ii) recognition based on long-term use (waqf by user), or (iii) endowment when the line of succession ends (waqf-alal-aulad). The Act allowed for waqf creation by any person. The Bill states that only a person showing or demonstrating that he/she has been practising Islam for at least five years may declare a waqf. The Bill removes waqf by user. It also adds that this removal would only apply prospectively.
- **Government property as waqf:** The Bill states that any government property identified as waqf will cease to be so. Any officer above the rank of a Collector and designated by the state government will determine ownership in case of uncertainty, and submit a report to the state government.
- **Composition of the Central Waqf Council:** Under the Act, the Union Minister in-charge of waqf is the ex-officio chairperson of the Council. Members of the Council include Members of Parliament, persons of national eminence, retired Supreme Court or High Court judges, and eminent scholars in Muslim law. The Act requires that all Council members, barring the Minister, must be Muslims, and at least two must be women. The Bill removes the requirement for the MPs, former judges, and eminent persons appointed to the Council to be Muslim. It further mandates that two members in the Council must be non-Muslims.
- **Composition of Waqf Boards:** The Act provides for election of up to two members each from electoral colleges of a state's Muslim: (i) MPs, (ii) MLAs and MLCs, and (iii) Bar Council members, to the Board. The Bill amends this to empower the state government to nominate one person from each of the above groups to the Board. They need not be Muslims. It adds that the Board must have: (i) two non-Muslim members, and (ii) at least one member each from Shias, Sunnis, and Backward classes of Muslims. The Act provides that at least two members must be women. The Bill mandates that two Muslim members be women.

For a PRS analysis of the Bill, see here.

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