

Monthly Policy Review

October 2021

Highlights of this Issue

Parliamentary Standing Committees identify subjects for examination in 2021-22 (p. 2)

Some of the subjects for this year include promotion and regulation of e-commerce in India, issues related to safety in the civil aviation sector, various central government schemes, and policy on import of crude oil.

Repo and reverse repo rates remain unchanged at 4% and 3.35% respectively (p. 3)

The Monetary Policy Committee left the repo rate and reverse repo rate unchanged in its bi-monthly meeting. The Committee also decided to retain the accommodative stance to revive and sustain growth.

Consumer Price Index inflation was 5.1% in the second quarter of 2021-22 (p. 4)

CPI inflation decreased from 5.6% in July 2021 to 4.4% in September 2021. Food inflation decreased from 4.0% to 0.7% from July to September. WPI inflation decreased from 11.6% to 10.7% in the same period.

Supreme Court constitutes committee to investigate alleged use of Pegasus (p. 7)

The Supreme Court constituted a committee to investigate allegations that the central government spied on citizens using the Pegasus spyware. It did not permit the central government to appoint its own committee.

Complete sale of equity shareholding of government in Air India approved (p. 7)

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the bid placed by Tata Sons for the sale of 100% equity shareholding of Government of India in Air India.

Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission launched (p. 9)

The mission will focus on developing infrastructure and facilities for early detection of diseases, strengthening the diagnostic networks, and expanding existing research institutes.

Changes to jurisdiction of Border Security Force (BSF) in some states notified (p. 10)

The Ministry of Home Affairs notified changes in the jurisdiction of the BSF in some states. The areas specified within which BSF may exercise powers (such as search and arrest) under certain laws were changed.

Comments invited on amendments to the Registration of Births and Deaths Act (p. 10)

The proposed amendments include establishing national and state level databases for registering births and deaths, and mandating all medical institutions to certify the cause of death occurring in such institutions.

Implementation of PM GatiShakti National Master Plan (NMP) approved (p. 11)

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the PM GatiShakti NMP including the institutional framework for implementation, monitoring, and support mechanism for providing multi-modal connectivity.

Government transfers operations of the Ordnance Factory Board to seven PSUs (p. 12)

The central government dissolved the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) with effect from October 1, 2021 and transferred its operations to seven new public sector units.

Department of Fisheries released the draft Indian Marine Fisheries Bill, 2021 (p. 13)

As per the draft Bill, motorised Indian fishing vessels must obtain a license to engage in fishing or fishing related activities. Foreign vessels must not engage in fishing or related activities in India's maritime zones.

Standing Committee on External Affairs submits two reports (p. 11)

The Standing Committee on External Affairs submitted two reports on India and Bilateral Investment Treaties, and India and International Law.

November 1, 2021

Parliament

Shashank Srivastava (shashank@prsindia.org)

Standing Committees identify subjects for examination during 2021-22

Ten of the 24 Departmentally Related Standing Committees of Parliament have identified subjects for detailed examination during the year 2021-22. The subjects chosen by these Committees are listed in the [Annexure](#).

COVID-19

As of October 31, 2021, there were 3.4 crore confirmed cases of COVID-19 in India.¹ Of these, 3.3 crore (98%) had been cured/discharged and 4.6 lakh (1.3%) persons had died. As of October 31, 2021, 73 crore people have received the first dose of a vaccine, of which 33 crore people have been fully vaccinated.² For details on the number of daily cases in the country and across states, see [here](#).

With the spread of COVID-19, the central government has announced several policy decisions to contain the spread, and financial measures to support citizens and businesses who would get affected. For details on the major notifications released by centre and the states, please see [here](#). Key announcements made in this regard in September 2021 are as follows.

Government to resume granting tourist visas to foreigners coming to India

Shubham Dutt (shubham@prsindia.org)

The Ministry of Home Affairs has resumed issuing fresh tourist visas for foreigners coming to India.³ For foreigners coming to India by chartered flights, tourist visas were made available from October 15. For foreigners entering India by flights other than chartered aircraft, fresh tourist visas will be available starting November 15, 2021.

Last year, on account of the COVID-19 pandemic, all visas granted to foreigners were suspended. Later, in October 2020, foreigners were allowed to avail all categories of Indian visa (such as business visa or medical visa), except tourist visa for entry and stay in India.⁴

Guidelines for international passengers arriving in India revised

Aditya Kumar (aditya@prsindia.org)

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare released revised guidelines for international passengers arriving in India.⁵ From October 25, 2021, all international passengers, on arrival, must take the COVID-19 test before leaving the airport. Further, they will have to be under home quarantine for at least seven days.⁵

These conditions will not apply to fully vaccinated passengers arriving from certain countries (15 days must have passed from the date of last dose).⁵ These countries are those which provide quarantine free entry to fully vaccinated Indians or have an agreement for mutual recognition of nationally recognised or WHO recognised vaccines. However, such passengers will have to self-monitor their health for 14 days after arrival. These countries include: (i) United Kingdom, (ii) Germany, (iii) France, (iv) Belgium, and (v) Ukraine.⁶

The earlier guidelines required international passengers arriving in India to submit a self-declaration form with a negative RT-PCR test (conducted within 72 hours before boarding).⁷

COVID-19 guidelines issued to states/UTs for festive season extended till November end

Omir Kumar (omir@prsindia.org)

The Ministry of Home Affairs extended the order issued for containment of COVID-19 during the festive season, till November 30, 2021.^{8,9} The order was earlier applicable till October 31, 2021. It requires states and union territories (UTs) to implement the containment measures prescribed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in its guidelines. Key features of the guidelines are:

- **Restrictions on mass gatherings:** The guidelines prohibit mass gatherings in containment zones and districts with a case positivity rate of more than 5%. In all other districts, gatherings will: (i) require advance permissions and (ii) consist of a limited number of persons (to be defined as per the local context). Further, all such gatherings will be monitored, including through closed circuit cameras, if required. If mask usage and physical distancing norms are violated, penal action should be taken.
- **Monitoring:** States and UTs must monitor case trajectories across all districts on a daily basis to identify any early warning signals.

Further, states need to send the required number of positive test samples for genome sequencing, to monitor mutation of the virus. Genome sequencing (i.e., the study of genetics) helps in understanding the status of new variants of the virus and establishing a surveillance mechanism for early detection of new variants.

- **Ongoing containment measures:** States and UTs must continue adherence to various strategies to contain the spread of COVID-19. These include: (i) adequate testing, particularly of vulnerable populations and in rural and semi-urban areas, (ii) effective contact tracing, (iii) accelerating vaccination of adults and prioritising the coverage of eligible second dose beneficiaries, and (iv) upgrading health infrastructure based on the case trajectory in the districts.

Guidelines for the PM CARES for Children Scheme released

Payoja Ahluwalia (payoja@prsindia.org)

The Ministry of Women and Child development notified guidelines for the PM CARES for Children Scheme.¹⁰ The scheme seeks to ensure comprehensive care of children who have lost their parents to the COVID-19 pandemic. The scheme provides assistance to the child until he reaches 23 years of age. Key features of the scheme are:

- **Eligibility:** Children who lost both parents, surviving parent, or legal guardian due to the COVID-19 pandemic will be eligible to enrol in the scheme. Such children must be below 18 years of age on the date of death of parents during the pandemic. The period of the pandemic that is being considered for this purpose is from March 11, 2020 till December 31, 2021.
- **Support to children:** The scheme supports the child in four ways - education, financial support, health insurance, and boarding. This includes: (i) rehabilitating the child with their next of kin or placed in foster care or a Child Care Institution, (ii) creating a corpus of rupees ten lakh on attaining the age of 18, to give a monthly stipend to the children for the next five years, (iii) enrolling all children as beneficiaries under Ayushman Bharat scheme, and (iv) providing Anganwadi services for pre-school education, admission to the nearest middle school or support for obtaining education loan for higher studies.¹¹
- **Implementation Mechanism:** The Ministry of Women and Child Development will

implement the scheme in coordination with the state and district nodal agencies. The state government departments dealing with the Child Protection Services scheme of their respective state will be the nodal agency at the state level. The District Magistrates will be the nodal authority at district level to execute the scheme.

Credit guarantee scheme for subordinate debt extended till March 2022

Shashank Srivastava (shashank@prsindia.org)

In June 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) had launched the Credit Guarantee scheme for subordinate debt.¹² Under this scheme, the central government aims to provide guarantee cover worth Rs 20,000 crore on loans to promoters of stressed MSMEs for investment as equity. As per original norms, the scheme was to remain in operation till March 2021, which was further extended till September, 2021.¹³ The scheme has been further extended till March 2022.¹⁴

Under this scheme, promoters of stressed MSMEs (which have become non-performing assets as on April 30, 2020) are given credit equal to 15% of their stake (equity plus debt) or Rs 75 lakh, whichever is lower. Promoters will infuse this amount in the MSME as equity to enhance the liquidity and maintain the debt-equity ratio. There will be a moratorium of seven years on repayment of principal. The maximum tenure for repayment will be 10 years. The scheme is being operationalised through the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises.

Macroeconomic Development

Tushar Chakrabarty (tushar@prsindia.org)

Repo and reverse repo rates remain unchanged at 4% and 3.35% respectively

The Monetary Policy Committee released its bi-monthly Monetary Policy Statement.¹⁵ The Committee decided to keep policy repo rate (the rate at which RBI lends money to banks) unchanged at 4%. Other decisions of the Committee include the following:

- The reverse repo rate (the rate at which RBI borrows money from banks) remains unchanged at 3.35%.

- The marginal standing facility rate (the rate at which banks can borrow additional money) and the bank rate (the rate at which RBI buys bills of exchange) also remains unchanged at 4.25%.
- The Committee decided to continue with the accommodative stance to revive and sustain growth on a durable basis.

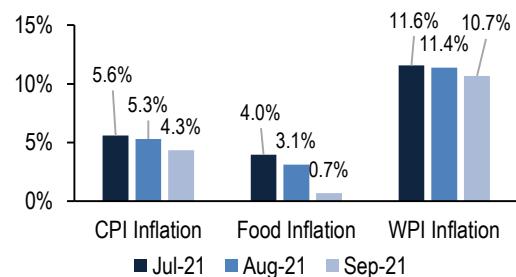
Consumer Price Index inflation was 5.1% in the second quarter of 2021-22

Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation (base year 2012) was 5.1% in the second quarter (July-September) of 2021-22 over the corresponding period in 2020-21.¹⁶ This was lower than CPI inflation of 6.9% in the second quarter of 2020-21 and 5.6% in the first quarter (April-June) of 2021-22.

Food inflation decreased from 4.0% in July 2021 to 0.7% in September 2021, averaging 2.6% in the second quarter of 2021-22. This was lower than food inflation of 9.7% in the corresponding quarter of 2020-21 and 4.0% in the first quarter of 2021-22.

Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation (base year 2011-12) was 11.2% in the second quarter of 2021-22.¹⁷ This was significantly higher than WPI inflation of 0.5% in the second quarter of 2020-21 but lower than 12% in the first quarter of 2021-22.

Figure 1: Monthly inflation in Q2 of 2021-22 (% change, year-on-year)



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

Finance

Tushar Chakrabarty (tushar@prsindia.org)

100% foreign investment permitted in disinvestment-bound PSUs in the petroleum sector

The Ministry of Finance notified amendments to the Foreign Exchange Management (Non-debt Instruments) Rules, 2019.¹⁸ The 2019 Rules allowed up to 49% foreign investment under the

automatic route for public sector undertakings (PSUs) involved in petroleum refining.¹⁹ The amendments permit 100% foreign investment under automatic route for those PSUs which have received an in-principle approval for strategic disinvestment from the central government. Under the automatic route, investment by a person resident outside India does not need prior approval of the Reserve Bank of India or the central government.

RBI releases scale-based regulatory framework for NBFCs

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released a scale-based regulatory framework for non-banking financial companies (NBFCs).²⁰ RBI noted that over the years, many NBFCs have become important in the financial system. Hence, there is a need to align the regulatory framework with changing risk profile of NBFCs. The framework covers different aspects of regulations of NBFCs including capital requirements and governance standards. The guidelines will be effective from October 1, 2022. Key features of the framework include:

- **Scale-based classification:** NBFCs have been divided into four layers based on their size, activity and perceived risks.

Table 1: Classification of NBFCs

Layer	NBFCs
Base layer	Non-deposit taking NBFCs with asset size less than Rs 1,000 crore
Middle layer	All deposit taking NBFCs; non-deposit taking NBFCs with asset size of at least Rs 1,000 crore
Upper layer	NBFCs identified by RBI as warranting enhanced regulatory requirement
Top layer	NBFCs contributing to substantial increase in the potential systemic risk

Sources: RBI; PRS.

- Government-owned NBFCs will be placed in the base or middle layer. NBFCs in the middle and upper layers have to comply with stricter regulations for various parameters such as capital and provisioning for assets.
- **Regulatory norms:** NBFCs have to maintain minimum net owned funds (NOF) (includes equity capital, reserves) as prescribed by RBI. NBFCs registered as investment and credit companies have to maintain this limit at two crore rupees while those registered as micro finance institutions, and factors (engaged in bill discounting) have to maintain NOF at five crore rupees. The revised framework increases the regulatory minimum NOF of NBFCs registered as investment and credit

companies, micro finance institutions, and factors (engaged in bill discounting) to Rs 10 crore. This revised limit will be implemented in phases.

- Currently, certain non-deposit taking NBFCs classify loans which have been overdue for more than 180 days as non-performing assets (NPAs). The revised framework provides that all NBFCs have to classify loans which are overdue for more than 90 days as NPAs. This reduced timeline will be implemented in phases and has to be fully implemented by March 31, 2026. The framework introduces a ceiling of one crore rupees per borrower for financing initial public offer, with NBFCs free to fix more conservative limits. This ceiling will be effective from April 1, 2022.

IFSC Authority notifies various regulations regarding insurance, capital market intermediaries

The International Financial Services Centres (IFSC) Authority released regulations regarding registration of insurance business, insurance intermediary, and capital market intermediaries. Key features of the regulations include:

- Capital market intermediaries:** The IFSC Authority (Capital Market Intermediaries) Regulations, 2021 provide for registration and regulation of capital market intermediaries.²¹ Intermediaries which will need a registration to operate in an IFSC include: (i) broker dealers (person with trading rights in any recognised stock exchange), (ii) investment bankers, and (iii) clearing members (person having clearing and settlement rights in any recognised clearing corporation). The regulations specify the criteria for registration (such as net worth requirements) and responsibilities of various classes of intermediaries.
- Insurance business:** The IFSC Authority (Registration of Insurance Business) Regulations, 2021 specifies the process of registration and operations of insurers and reinsurers in an IFSC.²² The regulations allow for carrying out the following class of insurance businesses in IFSCs: (i) life insurance, (ii) general insurance, (iii) health insurance, and (iv) re-insurance.
- Insurance intermediary:** The IFSC Authority (Insurance Intermediary) Regulations, 2021, provide for the registration and operations of insurance intermediaries in IFSCs.²³ Application for registration to act as an insurance

intermediary may be made under two categories: (i) insurance distributor and (ii) insurance claim service provider. The regulations specify that not more than 50% of the remuneration in the business of an insurance intermediary should come from a single client in a financial year.

Draft capital framework directions for all India financial institutions released

The Reserve Bank of India released draft directions for all India financial institutions covering various aspects including prudential regulations on Basel III capital framework and resource raising norms.²⁴ These directions will apply to EXIM Bank, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, National Housing Bank, and Small Industries Development Bank of India. Basel III capital standards seek to raise the quality and level of capital so that financial institutions can better absorb losses.

The draft framework requires these financial institutions to maintain a minimum total capital of 9% of total risk weighted assets (RWAs) from April 1, 2022. RWAs classify the assets held by banks according to their risk profiles to determine the minimum capital that banks need to hold. In addition, these financial institutions need to maintain a capital conservation buffer of 2.5% of RWAs. This buffer is an extra layer of capital that can be used in cases of losses.

Comments on the draft directions can be submitted by November 30, 2021.

Ministry of Finance releases instructions on procurement and project management

The Ministry of Finance released instructions seeking to reform public procurement and project management.^{25,26} Key features of the instructions include the following:

- Selection of contractor:** Alternative methods for selection of contractors have been permitted for improving speed and efficiency in project execution. In certain cases, quality parameters can be given weightage during evaluation of the proposal under a quality cum cost-based selection. This has been provided as an alternative to traditional L1 (lowest bidder) system.
- Accepting single bids:** It noted that some procuring entities assume that tenders which attract a single bid are not acceptable. This leads to re-tendering which has costs and leads to execution delays. In cases when only a single bid is submitted, the process should be considered valid if: (i) the

procurement was satisfactorily advertised and sufficient time was given for submitting bids, (ii) the qualification criteria were not unduly restrictive, and (iii) prices (of items being procured) are reasonable in comparison to market values.

- **Stalled contracts:** When a contractor abandons/stops work mid-way, engaging a new contractor takes considerable time. Procuring entities should devise methods to deal with such contracts. However, for issuing single/limited tender (open to a single or limited suppliers), at least 20% of the work should have been billed by the contractor who has abandoned the work.
- **Payment to contractors:** Delay in payments to contractors leads to delay in project execution, cost overruns, and disputes. To avoid this, 75% of the eligible due payment must be made within 10 working days of the submission of the bill. The remaining payment is to be made within 28 working days of the bill submission.

Model tender documents for public procurement released

The Ministry of Finance released model tender documents for procurement of goods and non-consultancy services.^{27,28,29} These documents aim to rationalise and simplify the structure of government tenders. Key features of the documents include:

- **Preference to certain suppliers:** The procuring entity will give preference to the following categories of eligible bidders in government tenders: (i) local suppliers whose goods or services have at least 50% local content (amount of value added in India), (ii) micro and small enterprises, and (iii) start-ups. Entities from countries that do not allow Indian companies to participate in their government tenders may be barred from bidding on reciprocal basis.
- **Restricted countries:** Any bidder from a country that shares a land border with India will be eligible to bid for tenders only if the bidder is registered with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade. This will not apply to countries where India has extended lines of credit or in which it is engaged in development projects.

SEBI invites comments on disclosure norms for ESG mutual funds schemes

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has released a consultation paper on disclosure norms for environment, social and

governance based (ESG) mutual fund schemes.³⁰ Mutual funds pool funds from investors to invest in financial assets like stocks and bonds. ESG based mutual fund schemes invest in companies focussing on environmental and social impact. SEBI noted that while all mutual fund schemes are subject to disclosure norms, disclosures in case of ESG schemes gain further significance so that they maintain their focus on the ESG theme. Following are some key aspects on which SEBI has invited comments:

- **Asset allocation:** SEBI noted that as per existing norms, ESG based mutual fund schemes need to invest a minimum of 80% of their total assets in securities following the ESG theme. It has been proposed that the residual assets should be invested in a manner which is not starkly in contrast to the ESG theme.
- **Disclosures:** SEBI has sought to require additional disclosures regarding: (i) the nature and extent of ESG focus, (ii) investment strategy, (iii) decision making process for investing, (iv) unique risks that may arise from scheme's focus on sustainability, and (v) engagements undertaken by AMCs for ESG schemes such as those for monitoring and evaluation, and portfolio disclosures. SEBI has invited comments on whether these disclosures are adequate, or if any additional disclosures should be mandated.
- **Investment policy:** SEBI has proposed that responsible investment policy of AMCs should require that: (i) from October 1, 2022, AMCs will invest in only those securities which have Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR) disclosures, (ii) existing investments in schemes where there are no BRSR disclosures will be exempt from this requirement till September 30, 2023. BRSR disclosures provide information about a company's focus on ESG parameters.

Comments are invited until November 16, 2021.

SEBI issues consultation paper on book building method of IPO

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) issued a consultation paper on book building method of initial public offering (IPO).³¹ Under this method, bids are collected from investors at various prices when an IPO is open. The bids are placed between the range of a floor price and a ceiling price. This price band is given by the company undergoing IPO. The offer price is determined once the bids are

closed. SEBI has invited comments (by October 30, 2021) on the following aspects:

- **Price band:** SEBI observed that the price bands given by the issuer company are often very narrow. This dilutes fair and transparent price discovery mechanism. The Primary Market Advisory Committee (PMAC) under SEBI has recommended a minimum price band of 5% for all public issues adopting the book building process. Comments have been invited on: (i) whether there should be a minimum price band in public issues, and (ii) what should be the minimum price band.
- **Non-institutional investors (NIIs):** Investors in a public issue are categorised into: (i) qualified institutional buyers (mutual funds, banks, financial institutions), (ii) NIIs (high net-worth individuals), and (iii) retail individual investors. SEBI noted that a few large NIIs are crowding out smaller NIIs in IPO allotments. PMAC recommended reserving one-third of the allocation in IPO earmarked for NIIs to application sizes between two lakh rupees and Rs 10 lakh. The remaining allocation will be for applications above Rs 10 lakh. Comments have been invited on: (i) whether NII category should be subdivided into two, and (ii) the portion that should be earmarked for such categories.

Law and Justice

Shubham Dutt (shubham@prsindia.org)

Supreme Court constitutes technical committee to investigate alleged use of Pegasus spyware

A three-judge bench of the Supreme Court constituted a technical committee to undertake an independent investigation into the allegations that the central government used the Pegasus spyware to spy on its citizens in an unauthorised manner.³² Spyware is a kind of malicious software installed on a computing device without the user's consent. Such a software secretly gathers information about the user and relays it to third parties. Writ petitions filed before the Court alleged that the central government had misused a spyware named Pegasus produced by an Israeli technology firm. The petitioners alleged that their devices had been infected with Pegasus, amounting to a violation of their fundamental right to privacy, and inhibiting their freedom of speech.

The terms of reference of the technical committee include investigating: (i) whether Pegasus spyware was used on the devices of Indian citizens, and if so, the details of the persons affected by its usage, (ii) the steps taken by the central government after the first reports of use of Pegasus against Indian citizens were reported in 2019, and (iii) whether such spyware was acquired or used by the central or state governments or any of their agencies against Indian citizens, and if so, which law, rule, or guideline authorised such use. Further, the committee has been asked to recommend: (i) amendments to existing laws or enactment of a new legal framework for surveillance to prevent invasion of privacy and improve the cyber security of the nation, (ii) establishing a mechanism for citizens to raise grievances if they suspect illegal surveillance of their devices, and (iii) setting up an independent agency to assess cyber security vulnerabilities and investigate cyber attacks.

The technical committee constituted by the Supreme Court comprises of three members who are experts in cyber security, digital forensics, networks, and hardware. The functioning of the technical committee will be overseen by Justice R.V. Raveendran, a former Supreme Court judge, who will be assisted by two experts.

Civil Aviation

Complete sale of equity shareholding of Government in Air India approved

Shashank Srivastava (shashank@prsindia.org)

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the bid placed by Talace Pvt Ltd (subsidiary of Tata Sons Pvt Ltd) for the sale of 100% equity shareholding of Government of India in Air India.³³ The winning bid (Rs. 18,000 crore) is for 100% shares of Air India along with its shareholdings in Air India Express (AIXL) and Air India SATS Airport Services Pvt Ltd. The transaction does not include non-core assets such as land and building (valued at Rs 14,718 crore), which will be transferred to the government's Air India Asset Holding Limited (AIAHL). The reserve price (minimum price) of the bid was Rs 12,906 crore. The transaction is expected to be completed by December 2021.

Air India had accumulated debt of around Rs 60,000 crore up to January 2020.³⁴ Out of this, Tata Sons will take over a portion of the debt of Air India, while the rest will be transferred to

AIAHL.³⁴ Since 2012, the government has infused Rs 30,500 crore in the airline.³⁴

Table 2: Timeline of complete sale of equity shareholding of government in Air India

Time Period	Developments
June 2017	Process for sale commenced with in principle approval from CCEA ³⁵
March 2018	Expression of interest for sale of 76% of shareholding in Air India was released ³⁶ ; no bids were received
January 2020	The process was reinitiated; transfer of management control and sale of 100% shares of Air India was proposed ³⁷ ; seven expressions of intent were received
March 2021	Request for proposal and share purchase agreement were issued
October 2021	CCEA approved bid submitted by subsidiary of Tata Sons Pvt Ltd

Sources: Press Information Bureau; PRS.

Krishi UDAN 2.0 scheme launched

Shashank Srivastava (shashank@prsindia.org)

Ministry of Civil Aviation released Krishi UDAN 2.0 scheme.³⁸ The original scheme was announced in February 2020 to provide assistance to farmers in transporting agricultural products on national and international routes.³⁹

The revised scheme, which was formulated with the support of AAI Cargo Logistics and Allied Services Company Limited (subsidiary of Airports Authority of India), aims to facilitate and incentivise movement of agri-produce. It will be implemented at 53 airports across the country focussing on north east and tribal regions. The ministry aims to pilot the scheme for six months and introduce amendments based on the results. Key features of the revised scheme include:

- **Incentivising air transport:** Full waiver of landing, parking, navigational charges for Indian freighters at select airports.
- **Concessions:** States will be encouraged to reduce sales tax on airline terminal fee (fee charged for handling cargo) to 1%, as extended in UDAN flights.
- **Development of E-KUSHAL:** E-KUSHAL (Krishi Udan for Sustainable Holistic Agri-Logistics) platform will be developed to facilitate information dissemination to all the stakeholders. This will be a single platform which will provide relevant information and will also assist in coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the scheme.

Guidelines for states to support civil helicopter operations released

Rajat Asthana (rajat@prsindia.org)

The Ministry of Civil Aviation released 'Heli Disha', consisting of guidelines for states to effectively support civil helicopter operations.⁴⁰ Issues related to operation, maintenance and navigation of helicopters are regulated by the Civil Aviation Requirements, which are issued by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).⁴¹ The Heli Disha guidelines are general good practices, compliant with the Civil Aviation Requirements. Note that outside aerodromes, the civil administration is responsible for providing safety and security requirements for helicopter operations. An aerodrome is any limited ground or water area intended to be used for the landing or departure of aircraft.⁴¹ Key features of the guidelines are as follows:⁴⁰

- **Helipad operations:** Helicopter operators need to submit an advance request for operations at a particular helicopter landing site to the owner of the helipad. The district administration only needs to be intimated about the planned helicopter operation, with no need for approval. In case the landing area is in a public area or establishment, a No Objection Certificate of the custodian of that establishment would be required.
- **Safety considerations:** In general, the helipad of a size of 35m × 35m is adequate for all small and medium sized helicopters. The helipad must have the following navigational aids: (i) an 'H' painted in white of specified dimensions for easy identification from the air, and (ii) a windsock or flag indicating the direction of the prevailing winds for safe landing. It must be ensured that all loosely secured articles within a space of 50m × 50m are removed, and that the helipad is clear of all natural and physical obstructions like trees, buildings, and power lines. In addition to the above, measures to control crowds, firefighting services and medical aid are essential for safe helipad operations.

Draft guidelines for ensuring ease of air travel for disabled persons released

Shashank Srivastava (shashank@prsindia.org)

The Ministry of Civil Aviation released 'Draft Accessibility Standards and Provision of facilities for Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) in Civil Aviation Sector', consisting of guidelines to ensure disabled

people can travel at ease.⁴² The guidelines shall be applicable to: (i) all Indian airlines/carriers, (ii) all foreign airlines/carriers, (iii) all airport operators, and (iv) aviation security group. Key features of the guidelines are:

- **Airport operator:** The guidelines require the airport operator to provide pathways with tactile guiding and warning tiles to aid visually impaired travellers. Guiding tiles should be placed along the proposed accessible route. Warning tiles are used to indicate a change in direction of the walkway, and avoid obstacles. Other features to be provided by airport operator include: (i) reserved parking with specified signage near terminal building and pick up/drop off zones, (ii) helpdesks of specified heights near departure and baggage claim area, (iii) at least three designated seating spaces near each boarding gate, and (iv) tactile and audio maps of the airport in multiple languages.
- **Airlines:** The accessibility features to be provided by the airlines include: (i) options of prior notice and special service on their website for travellers needing assistance, (ii) wheelchairs and wheelchair friendly access to the aircraft, and (iii) trainings to all employees for assisting customers with special needs.
- **Security and evacuation:** The guidelines specify the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the security agencies. The SOPs provide for: (i) screening of passengers who use mobility equipment (such as wheelchair), (ii) screening of passengers with prosthetics, and (iii) screening of passengers with medical equipment (such as hearing aids). Further, the airport operators will be responsible for facilitating the screening of persons with special needs. The guidelines also specify the SOPs for evacuation of people with visual, hearing, mobility, and speech impairments.

Comments to the draft guidelines can be submitted by November 9, 2021.

Health

Aditya Kumar (aditya@prsindia.org)

Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission launched

The Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission was launched.⁴³ It seeks to strengthen

the healthcare network across India within the next four to five years. Three major aspects of the Mission are:⁴³

- **Facilities for diagnostics and treatment:** The Mission aims to enable early detection of diseases through health and wellness centres. Such centres will also provide medical consultation, test facilities and medicine free of cost. Further, 35,000 new critical care beds will be added in 600 districts, and referral facilities (transferring patients from one health care facility to other) will be provided in 125 districts.
- **Development of diagnostic network:** Integrated public health laboratories will be created in 730 districts. Block level public health units will be created in 3,000 blocks. The network for diagnostic facilities will be strengthened by using five regional national centres for disease control, 20 metropolitan units, and 15 bio-safety level labs.
- **Expansion of existing research institutes:** Under this: (i) existing 80 viral diagnostic and research labs will be strengthened, (ii) 15 bio-safety level labs will be operationalised, and (iii) four new National Institutes of Virology and one National Institute for One Health will be established.

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Rules, 2021 notified

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare notified the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Rules, 2021.⁴⁴ The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 was amended in 2021.⁴⁵ The 2021 Rules provide for details to certain aspect of the 2021 Amendment Act (such as functions of a Medical Board to diagnose foetal abnormalities). Key features of the 2021 Rules are:

- **Functions of the Medical Board:** The 2021 Amendment Act increased the period of the pregnancies eligible for termination from 20 weeks to 24 weeks.⁴⁵ This upper limit will not apply to terminations due to foetal abnormalities.⁴⁵ A state level Medical Board will diagnose such abnormalities for approving the termination of pregnancies.⁴⁵

The 2021 Rules provide for the functions of the Board including: (i) examining reports of women requesting termination of pregnancy due to foetal abnormalities, (ii) deciding on requests for such termination of pregnancies within three days from the date of the request, and (iii) ensuring that the termination procedure is conducted safely within five days of the request.

- Eligibility of women for termination of pregnancy between 20-24 weeks:** The 2021 Amendment Act provides for certain conditions (such as risk to life or physical or mental health of the pregnant woman) for allowing termination of pregnancies. Further, it empowers the central government to notify rules on the eligibility of women for termination of pregnancy between 20-24 weeks. The 2021 Rules specify that such women include: (i) survivors of sexual assault or rape or incest, (ii) minors, (iii) mentally ill women, and (iv) women widowed or divorced during pregnancy.⁴⁴

For a PRS Bill Summary of the 2021 Amendment Bill, please see [here](#).

Home Affairs

Shubham Dutt (shubham@prsindia.org)

Ministry notifies changes in jurisdiction of Border Security Force in some states

The Ministry of Home Affairs notified changes in the jurisdiction of the Border Security Force (BSF) in some states.⁴⁶ Under the Border Security Force Act, 1968, the central government may permit BSF officers to exercise certain powers within specified areas adjoining the borders of India. Such powers include the power to search, seize, or arrest to prevent an offence or apprehend an offender under certain laws.⁴⁷

The notified changes relate to the powers given to BSF officers under the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920, the Passports Act, 1967, and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.^{48,49,50} Table 3 and 4 below show the notified changes.

Table 3: Changes in other states where BSF may exercise powers over specified areas only

States	Specified Areas	
	Previous	Amended
Gujarat	80 km from the border	50 km from the border
Assam, Punjab, and West Bengal	15 km from the border	50 km from the border

Sources: Ministry of Home Affairs; PRS.

Table 4: Changes in states/ UTs where BSF may exercise powers in the whole state/ UT

Powers conferred under notification ⁺	States/ UTs	
	Previous	Amended
Arrest of persons entering India without passports	Manipur, Tripura, Jammu and Kashmir*	
Arrest, search and seizure against persons suspected to have: (i) left India without a valid passport, or (ii) used another person's passport	Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Jammu and Kashmir#	Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Jammu and Kashmir
Arrest without warrant of persons committing cognizable offences in the presence of a police officer; seizure of weapons	Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Nagaland, Meghalaya	Manipur, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh

Note: *Examples of the powers given to BSF officers; not an exhaustive list. ^{*}In 1969, UTs of Manipur and Tripura and the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). [#]State of J&K.

Sources: Respective Acts; Ministry of Home Affairs; PRS.

Comments invited on amendments to the Registration of Births and Deaths Act

The Ministry of Home Affairs (through the Office of the Registrar General, India) proposed amendments to the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969.⁵¹ The Act mandates the registration of births and deaths in India, at the place of occurrence of the event. Key amendments proposed are:

- Databases of registered births and deaths:** The proposed amendments require the Registrar General (appointed by the central government) to maintain a database of registered births and deaths at the national level. The database may be used, with the approval of the central government, to update the population register, electoral rolls, and other national-level databases (such as those for ration cards, passports, Aadhaar, and driving licenses). Similarly, the Chief Registrars (appointed by the state governments) are required to maintain a unified database of civil registration records at the state level, to be integrated with the national database.
- Medical institutions must certify cause of death:** The Act allows the state government to require a certificate providing the cause of death from persons in any area, having regard to the facilities available there. The proposed amendments mandate all medical institutions to certify the cause of death in

case of deaths occurring there and provide a copy of it to the nearest relative.

- **Extract from register of births and deaths as proof of date and place of birth:** Under the Act, any person may obtain an extract of any entry in a register of births and deaths. Such an extract will be admissible in evidence for proving birth or death. The proposed amendments allow the use of such extracts to prove the date and place of birth of a person born on or after the amendment. Such proof may be used for various purposes including admission into educational institutions, issue of passport, and registration of marriage.

Comments on the proposed amendments are invited till November 27, 2021.

Commerce

Shashank Srivastava (shashank@prsindia.org)

Implementation of PM GatiShakti National Master Plan (NMP) approved

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the PM GatiShakti NMP including the institutional framework for implementation, monitoring, and support mechanism for providing multi-modal connectivity (involving multiple modes of transport like roads, railways, waterways).⁵² The scheme is intended to address the issues of multimodal connectivity, through integrated planning and execution of projects. This will help in reducing logistics cost.

The implementation framework consists of: (i) Empowered Group of Secretaries (headed by the Cabinet secretary), to review and monitor implementation of the scheme along with ensuring logistical efficiency, (ii) Network Planning Group (consisting of heads of network planning wings of infrastructure ministries), to assist the empowered group of secretaries, and (iii) Technical Support Unit (consisting of domain experts from infrastructure sectors), responsible for overall integration of networks and enhancing optimisation.

External Affairs

Standing Committee submitted report on India and bilateral investment treaties

Shubham Dutt (shubham@prsindia.org)

The Standing Committee on External Affairs (Chair: Mr. P.P. Chaudhary) submitted its report on 'India and Bilateral Investment Treaties'.⁵³ Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) are reciprocal agreements between two countries that establish minimum guarantees regarding the treatment of foreign private investments, such as national treatment (treating foreign investors at par with domestic companies), and protection from expropriation (limiting each country's ability to take over foreign investments). Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:

- **Status of BITs:** The Committee noted that till 2015, India had signed BITs with 83 countries, negotiated on the basis of its Model BIT of 1993. India revised its Model BIT text in 2015. The Committee observed that since then, India has: (i) signed new BITs/Investment Agreements with only four countries and is negotiating with 37 countries/blocks, and (ii) terminated its older BITs with 77 countries (i.e., older BITs with only six countries are in force).
- The Committee observed that the number of BITs/Investment Agreements signed and being negotiated is inadequate. It recommended: (i) signing new BITs with countries with which India had such treaties in the past, (ii) signing BITs selectively in identified priority sectors, and (iii) early completion of treaty negotiations. It also recommended regularly reviewing and suitably amending the Model BIT.
- **Arbitration under BITs:** BITs generally provide a mechanism for settling disputes between investors and the country of investment. The most preferred mode of settling such disputes is arbitration, where parties agree to have their dispute decided by a neutral person (the arbitrator) instead of going to court. The Committee noted that so far, although only one case of a dispute under a BIT has resulted in India paying an arbitral award, the said award resulted in a significant cost to the exchequer. To avoid such losses in the future, the Committee recommended settlement of investment disputes through pre-arbitration consultation or negotiations.
- **Developing local expertise:** The Committee

recommended developing panels of domestic lawyers (and law firms) with: (i) the requisite expertise to represent India in investment arbitration, and (ii) experience in investment treaty law to ensure good drafting of BITs.

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

Standing Committee submitted report on India and International Law

Shashank Srivastava (shubham@prsindia.org)

The Standing Committee on External Affairs (Chair: Mr. P.P. Chaudhary) presented its report on 'India and International Law including extradition treaties with foreign countries, asylum issues, international cyber-security and issues of financial crimes'.⁵⁴ Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:

- **Applying International Law:** The Committee noted that India follows the principle of dualism (that is, international law is not directly applicable domestically, and must be implemented through a law by Parliament). It observed that on certain occasions, the Supreme Court has digressed from this principle. To ensure coordination between different institutions of the State, the Committee recommended the Ministry of External Affairs to coordinate with the concerned Ministries regarding matters where there is a vacuum in domestic law. Further, it recommended setting up a Working Group in close coordination with concerned ministries to strengthen India's capacity and expertise in International Law.
- **Extradition treaties:** Extradition is a process for surrender, upon request, of a person who is alleged to have committed an offence, is wanted for trial in one country, and is found residing in another. India has signed extradition treaties with 50 countries and extradition arrangements with 11 countries. The Committee took note of the delays in extraditing offenders who take refuge in countries with which India already has an extradition treaty or arrangement. Further, it observed that offenders take advantage of the absence of such treaties with certain countries where they can get citizenship or residency through investment. The Committee recommended identifying such countries and signing extradition treaties with them on a priority basis.
- The Committee noted that India has signed Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs) with 40 countries. Under MLATs, requests

can be made for assistance in matters such as identifying and locating persons, taking evidence, and obtaining statements. The Committee observed that 845 such requests are pending with various countries. It recommended: (i) instituting a task force to identify the reasons and suggest solutions for the issue of pendency of such requests, and (ii) entering into more MLATs with other countries on a priority basis.

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

Defence

Tushar Chakrabarty (tushar@prsindia.org)

Government transfers operations of the Ordnance Factory Board to seven PSUs

The central government dissolved the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) with effect from October 1, 2021 and transferred its operations to seven new public sector units (PSUs).⁵⁵ This has been done to enhance functional autonomy, efficiency and improve growth potential and innovation.⁵⁶ OFB was engaged in the production of arms, ammunitions, weapons, and defence equipment. It operated under the administrative control of Department of Defence Production in the Ministry of Defence.

Table 5: List of new PSUs and their functions

PSU	Function
Munitions India Limited	Manufacturing ammunition and explosives
Armoured Vehicles Nigam Limited	Manufacturing vehicles
Advanced Weapons and Equipment India Limited	Manufacturing weapons and equipment
Troop Comforts Limited	Manufacturing troop comfort items
Yantra India Limited	Manufacturing military grade components and ancillary products
India Optel Limited	Manufacturing opto-electronic items (such as equipment for tanks)
Gliders India Limited	Manufacturing parachutes

Sources: Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence; PRS.

All assets and liabilities of the Ordnance Factory Board have been transferred to the seven PSUs and the Directorate of Ordnance (Coordination and Services) under the Ministry of Defence. Surplus land of the Ordnance Factory Board along with management and control of certain

non-production units, such as hospitals, have been transferred to the Directorate of Ordnance.

Agriculture

Department of Fisheries released the draft Indian Marine Fisheries Bill, 2021

Suyash Tiwari (suyash@prsindia.org)

The Department of Fisheries released the draft Indian Marine Fisheries Bill, 2021.⁵⁷ The draft Bill provides for the sustainable development of fisheries resources. It also seeks to promote the livelihood and socio-economic well-being of traditional and small-scale fishers. Key features of the draft Bill include:

- **Licensing:** Indian fishing vessels must not engage in fishing or fishing related activities without a valid licence under the Bill. This will also be applicable to fishing in the high seas, i.e., international waters outside the exclusive economic zone of any country (beyond 200 nautical miles of the Indian coastline). Non-motorised fishing vessels are exempted from the requirement to have a license. The license will be issued by the licensing authority of the state governments.
- **Applicability:** The Bill will apply to Indian fishing vessels. Indian fishing vessel is defined as a fishing vessel owned by an Indian citizen and registered under the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 or any other law. All other fishing vessels will fall under the definition of foreign fishing vessels.
- **Fishing related activities:** Under the draft Bill, fishing related activities include landing, packaging, or marketing of fish.
- **Restrictions on foreign fishing vessels:** Foreign fishing vessels must not engage in fishing or fishing related activities in India's maritime zones (i.e., any area within 200 nautical miles from the coastline). Foreign fishing vessels transiting through such areas must follow the prescribed procedure.
- **Consultative Committee on Marine Fisheries:** The central government will constitute a Consultative Committee on Marine Fisheries to advise it on: (i) marine fisheries development and management, (ii) welfare of fishers, and (iii) implementation of the Bill.
- **National Policy on Marine Fisheries:** The central government will, after consultation with state governments, prepare and notify

the National Policy on Marine Fisheries. The Policy will lay down broad guidelines for the development of marine fisheries.

Stock limits to be imposed on all edible oils and oilseeds till March 31, 2022

Shashank Srivastava (shashank@prsindia.org)

The Department of Food and Public Distribution issued an order under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 to impose stock limits on all edible oils and oilseeds till March 31, 2022.⁵⁸

However, the stock limit will not apply to: (i) any stock of edible oils and oilseeds that is meant for export, and (ii) importers, if a part of their stock of edible oils and oilseeds has been sourced from imports.

If the total stock of edible oils and oilseeds held by any entity exceeds the prescribed limit, it must declare the same on the portal of the Department of Food and Public Distribution. Such stock must be brought within the prescribed stock limit within 30 days of its notification by the state government.

Cabinet approves the subsidy rates for P&K fertilisers for Oct 2021-March 2022

Suyash Tiwari (suyash@prsindia.org)

The Union Cabinet approved the nutrient-based subsidy rates for Phosphatic and Potassic (P&K) fertilisers for the period October 2021-March 2022.⁵⁹ Under the Nutrient Based Subsidy scheme, the subsidy is provided to fertiliser manufacturers and importers for the sale of P&K fertilisers based on their nutrient content. The existing subsidy rates for 2021-22, that were initially approved for the period May-October 2021, have been extended till March 2022.⁶⁰

Note that the subsidy rate approved for 2021-22 is significantly higher than the 2020-21 subsidy rate for Phosphate (Table 6).⁶¹ It was increased in light of the sharp increase in international prices of raw materials of the Di-ammonium Phosphate (DAP) and other P&K fertilisers.⁶²

Table 6: Nutrient-based subsidy rates for P&K fertilisers for 2021-22 (in Rs per kg)

Nutrient	2020-21*	2021-22	Change (%)
Nitrogen (N)	18.789	18.789	-
Phosphate (P)	14.888	45.323	204%
Potash (K)	10.116	10.116	-
Sulphur (S)	2.374	2.374	-

Note: *The 2020-21 rates were extended up to May 20, 2021. Sources: Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers; PRS.

Transport

Rajat Asthana (rajat@prsindia.org)

Amendments to motor vehicles rules regarding vehicle scrapping, registration and safety notified

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways notified various changes and draft amendments to the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, framed under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988.^{63,64} The 1988 Act regulates registration, licensing, construction and safety of motor vehicles in India.⁶⁵ The 1989 Rules provide specific details regarding these aspects.⁶⁶ Key features of the changes and draft amendments include:

- Promoting vehicle scrapping:** For new vehicle registrations, which are done against submission of a deposit certificate, the 2021 Rules introduce: (i) waiver of vehicle registration fee, and (ii) concessions in motor vehicle tax from April 1, 2022. The concessions in motor vehicle tax vary with the vehicle category. A certificate of deposit recognises the transfer of ownership of the vehicle from the owner to the Registered Scrapper for vehicle scrapping.⁶⁷
- Discouraging old vehicles:** The 1988 Act requires all motor vehicles to have a valid fitness certificate and registration certificate, before operation.⁶⁵ The 1989 Rules prescribed a common fee for issue and renewal of such certificates.⁶⁶ The 2021 Rules introduce separate registration charges (new registration or renewal of registration) for some categories of vehicles, and increase existing registration charges. Some of these changes are shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Vehicle registration fee

Vehicle Category	1989 Rules	2021 Rules (New)	2021 Rules (Renewal)
Motor cycle	60	300	1,000
Light motor vehicle	200	600	5,000
Heavy goods/pa ssenger vehicle	600	1,000	1,000

Source: Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989; PRS.

- Further, the 2021 Rules specify fee requirements for conducting fitness tests, and, grant and renewal of fitness certificate for vehicles older than 15 years (see Table 8). Vehicle testing may be of two types – manual or automated.

Table 8: Fees for fitness test and fitness certificate for vehicles older than 15 years (Rs.)

Vehicle Category	Man ual Test ing	Automa ted Testing	Fitness certific ation (Transp ort Vehicle s)
Motorcycle	400	500	1,000
Three wheeled or quadricycle	800	1,000	3,500
Light motor vehicle	800	1,000	7,500
Medium goods/passenger vehicle	800	1,000	10,000
Heavy goods/passenger vehicle	1,000	1,500	12,500

*Note: Fee for grant and renewal of fitness certificate is same.

Source: Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989; PRS.

- Encouraging Good Samaritans:** The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways issued guidelines for a scheme to grant award to Good Samaritan.⁶⁸ A Good Samaritan refers to a person who provides immediate assistance to victims of road accidents, without expectation of reward.⁶³ The 1988 Act provides immunity to good Samaritans from civil or criminal action in case of any injury or death of an accident of a road victim that occurs while rendering emergency assistance.⁶⁸
- The scheme will cover any road accident involving a motor vehicle, leading to the specified conditions during treatment to victim, and certified by the hospital. For every incident, each Good Samaritan will be given a cash award of five thousand rupees, subject to certain conditions, and a certificate of appreciation. Other than the incident-based incentive, selected ten Good Samaritans of the year shall be awarded with one lakh rupees each.⁶⁸ The scheme would be operational from October 15, 2021 to March 31, 2026.
- Safety measures for child pillion rider:** The 1988 Act empowers the central government to prescribe standards of protective headgear and measures for the safety of children below the age of four years.⁶⁵ The 2021 Draft Rules seek to specify certain safety measures that need to be followed while carrying a child (aged below four) on a motorcycle as a pillion.⁶⁹

These include: (i) fixing a speed limit of 40 kmph, (ii) requiring a safety harness and crash helmet of prescribed standards for child. Comments on the draft rules are invited till November 20, 2021.

Model contract for establishing and operating logistics parks approved

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has approved a Model concessionaire Agreement for Public Private Partnership in Setting up and Operating Multi-modal Logistics Parks (MMLPs) being developed under the Bharatmala Pariyojana.⁷⁰ MMLPs are hubs of freight aggregation and distribution, having multi-modal connectivity (road, rail, sea, or air).⁷¹ The Bharatmala Pariyojana is an umbrella program for the Indian highways sector, focussing on optimising the movement of goods and people.⁷²

In the first phase, the scheme targets developing 35 MMLPs.⁷³ There are two parties in this agreement – the concessionaire and the government authority. The concessionaire will undertake the design, engineering, procurement, construction, operation and maintenance of the project. The government authority will be responsible for providing assistance in obtaining clearances, resettling and rehabilitating people affected by the project, and ensuring that no competing facility is constructed within a radius of 100 km of the MMLP until ten years. Key features of the model agreement are:

- **Change in law:** The agreement requires the parties to protect the pre-agreement financial position of the concessionaire. In case a change in law changes costs for the concessionaire (more than a specified amount), the agreement provides a mechanism to restore the financial position of the concessionaire.
- **Change in specifications and technological upgradation:** The government authority may, from time to time, introduce technical improvements or new specifications for the MMLP. However, if this changes the operating and maintenance costs of the concessionaire, the fee levied by the concessionaire will be modified to protect the financial position of the concessionaire.
- **Dispute Resolution:** The model agreement provides for multiple dispute resolution mechanisms. After failure to resolve the dispute on a best effort basis, the following mechanisms will be followed sequentially: (i) mediation by an independent expert, (ii) a Dispute Settlement Board, (iii) conciliation

committee, and (iv) arbitration by Society for Affordable Resolution of Disputes. If a statutory tribunal or commission with powers to adjudicate disputes between the concessionaire and the government authority is established, all disputes arising after such establishment shall lie before the tribunal or commission, instead of arbitration.

Environment

Aditya Kumar (aditya@prsindia.org)

Environment (Protection) Rules, 1986 amended to regulate use of water purification systems

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change amended the Environment (Protection) Rules, 1986 to regulate the use of RO based water purification systems.^{74,75} The amendments will come into effect after 18 months from the date of publication. Key amendments are as follows:⁷⁴

- **Domestic water purification systems:** Water purification systems with a capacity of up to 25 litres per hour are defined as domestic water purification systems. All manufacturers intending to sell such systems must obtain a certification from the Bureau of Indian Standards.
- **Other than domestic water purification systems:** All users of such purification systems must apply for registration to the concerned SPCB or PCC. All existing users of such systems must apply for the consent to operate within six months.

All entities involved in water supply must inform their consumers about the sources and quality of water. This must be done through billing instruments (such as water bills) and mass media (such as newspaper advertisements).

For domestic water purification systems, implementation of the amendments will be monitored by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). For other systems, the concerned SPCB or PCC will monitor implementation of the amendments and a compliance report must be submitted to CPCB.⁷⁴

Comments invited on proposed amendments to the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change invited comments on proposed amendments to the Forest (Conservation) Act,

1980.⁷⁶ The Act provides for the conservation of forests and related matters.⁷⁷ Currently, the Act applies to: (i) areas declared as forest under any law irrespective of ownership, (ii) all areas which conform to dictionary meaning of forest, and (iii) areas identified as forest by the expert committee.^{76,77}

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change observed that several concerns regarding the applicability of the 1980 Act have been raised over the years. For example, certain ministries (such as Ministry of Railways) claim that they had acquired lands before the enforcement of the Act specifically for non-forestry activities (such as construction of rail lines and roads). Over the years, some of these lands were planted with trees under several schemes. Thus, these Ministries are now required to take approval under the Act for conducting non-forestry activities. The amendments seek to revise the scope of applicability of the 1980 Act to resolve such concerns. Key proposed amendments are:

- **Exemption of certain lands from purview of the 1980 Act:** The amendments seek to exempt certain lands from the purview of the 1980 Act including: (i) lands acquired for non-forestry activities before October 25, 1980, (ii) any non-forest land with plantation activities after December 12, 1996, (iii) 0.05 hectare for enabling access through forest along roads or rail lines, and (iv) one-time relaxation to private individuals for certain construction up to 250 square meters (such as residential unit).
- **No approvals required from the central government in border areas:** Currently, states must not permit use of forest lands for any non-forestry purpose (such as cultivation of tea and medicinal plants) without prior approval from the central government.^{77,78} The amendments propose that development projects in the international border areas will not need such prior approvals.
- **Penalties:** Currently, any use of forest land for non-forestry purposes without prior approval is punishable with imprisonment up to 15 days.⁷⁷ The amendments seek to increase the term of the imprisonment up to a year. Such offences will be non-bailable and will attract penal compensation for damages already made.⁷⁶

Women and Child Development

Omir Kumar (omir@prsindia.org)

Comments invited on draft amendments to Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Model Rules, 2016

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has invited comments on draft amendments to Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Model Rules, 2016.^{79,80} The 2016 Rules have been notified under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015. A child below the age of 18 years, in conflict with the law, is said to be a juvenile.⁸¹ The 2015 Act provides protection for juveniles by addressing basic needs through a child-friendly approach.⁸¹

In 2021, the 2015 Act was amended to entrust the responsibility of (i) overseeing child care institutions, and (ii) issuing child adoption orders from courts, to District Magistrates (DMs) and Additional District Magistrates (ADMs).⁸² The draft amendments give effect to these changes in the 2015 Act.⁸³ Key features of the draft amendments are as follows:

- **Child care institutions:** The 2016 Rules prescribe the manner of registration of child care institutions. Any agency wanting to establish a child care institution must apply to the state government. The state government will then refer the application to the concerned DM. The draft amendments seek to mandate the DMs (including ADMs) to examine the need of a child care institution in the district, within thirty days of receiving a request from the state government. After verifying the credibility and background, of the agency, the DM is required to make recommendations to the state government regarding the need of a child care institution in the district.
- **Functions of DM:** The draft amendments transfer existing child care related functions from state government to the DM. These functions include: (i) preparation of employment and reintegration program for children leaving childcare institutions after 18 years of age, and (ii) closing the child care institutions which are found to have committed offences. Additionally, the amendments seek to empower the DM to: (i) seek funds from the State Juvenile Justice Fund, and (ii) create a district level fund for implementing outcome-oriented projects.

Comments on the draft amendments are invited until November 11, 2021.

Power

Aditya Kumar (aditya@prsindia.org)

Guidelines to ensure cyber security in the power sector released

The Ministry of Power released the Central Electricity Authority (Cyber Security in Power Sector) Guidelines, 2021.⁸⁴ The objectives of the guidelines include: (i) creating secure cyber ecosystem, (ii) strengthening the regulatory framework, and (iii) securing remote operations and services, in the power sector. Key features of the guidelines are:

- **Cyber security policy:** All responsible entities must formulate a cyber security policy. The responsible entities include power utilities (generation, transmission and distribution), load despatch centres, power trade exchanges, regional power committees, and regulatory commissions. The policy must be reviewed annually by subject matter experts. The fundamental principles to be used for formulating the policy include: (i) strict isolation of operational technology system (hardware and software for managing, monitoring and controlling industrial operations) from information technology (IT) systems, which are connected to the internet, (ii) secure channel for communication between operational technology systems, and (iii) scanning for vulnerability of devices involved in downloading or uploading data from internet connected IT systems.
- **Cyber security requirements:** All responsible entities must set up an information security division. The security division will be headed by a Chief Information Security Officer (CISO). All security divisions must deploy detection and prevention systems to identify behavioural anomalies in operations and IT systems. Further, the security divisions must ensure timely actions on guidelines issued by certain authorities (such as Indian Computer Emergency Response Team).
- **Phasing out of legacy systems:** All responsible entities must ensure that the IT technologies in the power system are upgradable. All equipment nearing the end of life or which are without support from original equipment manufacturer must be identified. A replacement plan must be proposed to the Board of Directors of the concerned responsible entity for phasing out of such equipment.

Regulations on manner and intervals for conducting energy audits in distribution companies notified

The Bureau of Energy Efficiency notified regulations to specify the manner and intervals for conducting energy audits in distribution companies (discoms).⁸⁵ Energy audit refers to the analysis of energy consumption in a building to ensure energy conservation. Key features of the Regulations include:

- **Manner of energy audit and energy accounting:** For conducting an energy audit and energy accounting, there must be verification of: (i) existing pattern of energy distribution across discoms, and (ii) accounted energy flow at applicable voltage levels in the network. Energy accounting refers to accounting of all energy flows at various voltage in a distribution network. An accredited energy auditor, in consultation with the concerned discom, must develop a scope of work for conducting the energy audit. The auditor must collect data on energy received and distributed within the scope of the audit. The data must be analysed and processed for: (i) consistency of data monitored compared to the collected data, and (ii) recommendations to facilitate energy accounting and improve efficiency.
- **Interval for energy audits:** Discoms must conduct an energy audit every financial year. In addition, all discoms must conduct an energy audit within six months from the date of the commencement of the regulations. For discoms established after the commencement of the Regulations, the audit must be conducted after the first financial year from the date of being notified as a designated consumer.
- **Nodal officer:** All discoms must designate a full-time employee of the rank of Chief Engineer or above as the nodal officer, who will be responsible for reporting the energy audit and energy accounting to the Bureau.

Ministry of Power proposes amendments to the Energy Conservation Act, 2001 to promote clean energy

The Ministry of Power has proposed amendments to the Energy Conservation Act, 2001.^{86,87} The Act provides for efficient use of energy in India. The proposed amendments seek to: (i) enhance demand of renewable energy at the end-use sectors (such as industries, buildings, and transport), (ii) reduce fossil fuel-based

energy consumption, and (iii) reduce carbon emission in the atmosphere. All establishments will be required to consume a certain share of energy from renewable sources. They will be incentivised for using clean energy (in form of carbon saving certificate).

Rules for developing the transmission system and recovering inter-state transmission charges notified

The Ministry of Power notified Rules for developing the transmission system and recovering inter-state transmission charges.⁸⁸ Key features of the Rules are:

- **Planning the development:** The Central Electricity Authority (CEA) must prepare annual short-term plans for next five years on a rolling basis for the development of the electricity system. In addition, CEA must prepare perspective plans for the electricity system as well as the transmission system. The perspective plans for the electricity system must be prepared every alternate year on rolling basis for next ten years.
- Based on the plans prepared by CEA and the status of generation capacity as well as demand across India, the Central Transmission Utility must prepare annual plans for inter-state transmission system for next five years.
- **General network access:** General network access refers to the non-discriminatory access to the inter-state transmission system as requested by a designated inter-state customer. A designated inter-state customer refers to a user of the inter-state transmission system. The Rules specify that the general network access will be provided for a specific capacity and period.
- The Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) will regulate the procedure of the general network access.
- **Inter-state transmission charges:** Any entity seeking the general network access will have to pay a one-time charge as specified by CERC. In addition, all designated inter-state customers must pay the applicable tariff as monthly transmission charges. One-time charge will not be applicable for the existing inter-state customers with long-term access.
- The monthly charges must be paid for the sanctioned general network capacity or drawal of electricity or injection of electricity, whichever is higher. Any excess drawal or injection of electricity over the

sanctioned capacity will be charged at a rate, which is at least 25% higher than the normal rate. The Central Transmission Utility will be responsible for the billing, collection, and disbursement of the transmission charges.

Rules for timely recovery of costs due to change in law notified

The Ministry of Power notified rules for timely recovery of costs due to change in law.⁸⁹ The Rules apply to all generators and transmission companies. Change in law refers to the enactment or amendment or repeal of any law, which leads to changes in electricity tariffs. Key features of the Rules are:

- **Notice of impact:** The Rules specify that in case of any change in law, the affected party (a generator or a transmission company) must give three weeks' advance notice to other party (such as distribution companies) about the impact of the change on tariffs. The affected party must provide the other party with the computation of the impact of on tariffs (such as charges to be adjusted or recovered). This must be done either within 30 days from the date of the change in law or on the date of expiry of the notice period, whichever is later.
- **Timeline for approval of impact:** The affected party must share all the relevant documents with the Central or State Electricity Regulatory Commission (as applicable) within 30 days of the impact of change in law. The concerned Commission must verify the calculation and adjust the impact within 60 days from the date of receipt of the documents.

The impact on tariff must be adjusted or recovered in the monthly bill as part of the tariff. This may be done as a one-time charge or monthly charges or per unit basis or a combination of such charges.⁸⁹

Rules to promote generation of electricity from must-run power plants notified

The Ministry of Power notified rules to promote generation of electricity from must-run power plants.⁹⁰ Key features of the rules are:

- **Must-run power plants:** The Rules specify that certain power plants (such as wind, solar, and hydro) which has entered into an agreement to sell electricity to any person will be treated as a must-run power plant. Such a plant will not be subjected to curtailment or regulation for any commercial reasons (such as priority to procurement of cheap electricity). However, the curtailment

and regulation of power from such plants may be done to ensure grid security.

- **Compensation for curtailment:** For any curtailment of power from a plant due to technical constraint or grid security, the procurer (entities buying electricity for consumption) must inform the plant in advance. In case of any curtailment of power, the procurer must pay compensation to the plant. The rate of compensation must be as per the power purchase agreement.

The plant must sell the unscheduled electricity in the power exchange. The amount generated from the sale of electricity in the exchange must be adjusted against the compensation to be paid by the procurer after deducting applicable expenses. Any excess amount realised must be adjusted in subsequent months.

- **Intermediary procurers:** The intermediary procurer refers to a recognised entity which procures power from generators and sells it to distribution companies. The Rules specify that all such procurers will be considered as traders. Such procurers may procure electricity through a transparent bidding process. In case the intermediary procurer procures power from multiple generators, the weighted average of the bids of these generators will be the resultant bid rate for sale of electricity to the distribution companies. The intermediary procurer is allowed to retain only the trading margin.

Regional power committees for transmission planning dissolved

The Ministry of Power dissolved the Regional Power Committees (Transmission Planning) for five regions (North, South, East, West, and North-East).⁹¹ The Transmission Planning Committees were constituted in 2019 for the development of inter-state transmission system.

The Regional Power Committees will be consulted for matters related inter-state transmission system now.⁹¹ Currently, there are five Regional Power Committees, which were constituted in 2005 to ensure integrated and secure operation of the electricity grid in the respective region.⁹²

Textiles

Rajat Asthana (rajat@prsindia.org)

Seven PM Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel Parks launched

The Ministry of Textiles has approved the establishment of seven PM Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (PM MITRA) Parks.⁹³ The parks aim to develop integrated, large-scale, and modern industrial infrastructure facility for entire value-chain of the textile industry.⁹³ The parks will have dedicated area for manufacturing, utilities, logistics and commercial development.⁹⁴ The scheme has a budgetary outlay of Rs 4,445 crore from 2021-22 to 2027-28.⁹³ Key features of the scheme are:

- **Development capital support:** The scheme provides for 30% of the project cost for development of greenfield and brownfield PM MITRA Parks. Each greenfield park is eligible for a maximum support of Rs 500 crore, while each brownfield park is eligible for a maximum support of Rs 200 crore. This support is for creation of core infrastructure like developed factory sites, incubation centres, roads, power, water, workers' hostels, warehousing, and medical facilities.
- **Competitive incentive support:** The scheme makes a provision of Rs 300 crore per park to incentivise manufacturing units to get setup early. The incentive that can be provided to manufacturing units is up to 3% of the total sales turnover on first come first serve basis. The scheme benefits will be available till the funds provided are not exhausted for the PM MITRA Park. This support is only available to those manufacturing companies which are not availing benefits of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Textiles. The PLI Scheme aims to promote, through incentives, the production of certain man-made fibre apparel and fabrics, and ten segments of technical textiles products.⁹⁵
- **Location of parks:** State governments will be requested to submit their proposals for setting up of PM MITRA Park. To be eligible, state governments must have contiguous and encumbrance free land of at least one thousand acres. The sites will be ranked based on parameters like connectivity, power and water infrastructure, waste water disposal system, labour laws, and single window clearances.

Mining

Aditya Kumar (aditya@prsindia.org)

Comments invited on amendments in mining rules to enable persons to propose blocks for grant of composite license

The Ministry of Mines invited comments on the proposed amendments to the Minerals (Evidence of Mineral Contents) Rules, 2015 and the Mineral (Auction) Rules, 2015.^{96,97,98} These rules provide for manner of exploration of minerals and grant of mining license, respectively. The amendments are aimed at enabling interested persons to propose blocks for granting prospecting license-cum-mining lease (composite license). Key details are as follows:

- **Proposals for composite license:** As per the Evidence of Mineral Contents Rules, an area may be notified for grant of prospecting license-cum-mining lease (composite license) through auction if: (i) a specified reconnaissance survey (identification of mineral areas worthy of further exploration) has been completed, or (ii) mineral potentiality has been identified based on available geoscience data but resources are yet to be established.^{97,99} The proposed amendments add that a person intending to obtain a composite license may propose suitable blocks for auction where mineral potentiality has been established based on the available geoscience data. The person will submit a proposal to the state government along with available geoscience data of the area.
- **Committee to assess mineral potentiality:** A committee will be set up to assess mineral potentiality of areas proposed by interested persons, as well as those identified by state government. The committee will consist of: (i) the Principal Secretary or Secretary, Mining and Geological Department of the state (as Chairman), (ii) the Deputy Director General of Geological Survey of India (as Member), and (iii) the Director, Mining and Geological Department of the state (as Member Secretary).
- **Relaxation in bid security amount:** If an area proposed by a person is put up for auction, that person will be required to submit 50% of the bid security amount.⁹⁶ Currently, the bid security amount is 0.25% of the value of the estimated resource or fifty crore rupees, whichever is lower.⁹⁹ For certain minerals (such as topaz and emerald), whose mining potentiality has been identified but the resource value

estimation is not possible, the bid security amount is fifty lakh rupees.⁹⁹

Education

Payoja Ahluwalia (payoja@prsindia.org)

Committee set up for implementation of NIPUN Bharat Mission

The Department of School Education and Literacy has set up a National Steering Committee (NSC) for implementation of the National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN) Bharat Mission.¹⁰⁰ NIPUN Bharat Mission aims to achieve universal proficiency in basic literacy and numeracy for every child by grade three.¹⁰⁰ The NSC will be responsible to guide the Mission on policy issues and ensure the targets set for the Mission are achieved by 2026-27.¹⁰⁰ The Committee will be chaired by the Union Education Minister.

Four-year integrated teacher education programme notified

Ministry of Education has notified a four-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) under the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020.¹⁰¹ According to the NEP, teacher engagement from 2030 will happen only through ITEP. It will be initially offered in pilot mode in 50 multidisciplinary institutions across India. ITEP will commence from the academic year 2022-23.

The curriculum of ITEP has been designed in such a manner that will allow a student to get a degree in education along with a specialised discipline such as history and science. Admission for the ITEP will be carried out by the National Testing Agency through the National Common Entrance Test.

Enforcement of Ph.D. degree requirement for recruitment postponed

The UGC (Minimum Qualifications for Appointment of Teachers and other Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and other Measures for the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education) Regulations, 2018 required a Ph.D. degree as a mandatory qualification for direct recruitment to the post of an Assistant Professor in Universities.¹⁰² This regulation was to be effective from July 1, 2021. This deadline has been extended to July 1, 2023.¹⁰³

Communications

Omir Kumar (omirt@prsindia.org)

Indian Telegraph Right of Way (Amendment) Rules, 2021 notified

The Ministry of Communications notified the Indian Telegraph Right of Way (Amendment) Rules, 2021.^{104,105} The 2021 Rules amend the Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules, 2016 issued under the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885.¹⁰⁶ The Act regulates the telecommunication sector. The 2016 Rules regulate laying of underground and overground telegraph infrastructure including optical fibre and mobile towers. Key features of the 2021 Rules are:

- **Fees for establishing underground infrastructure:** The 2016 Rules provided that no fee will be charged to a licensee for establishing underground infrastructure other than those for: (i) meeting administrative expenses for examination of application, and (ii) payment of certain restoration charges. The 2021 Rules extend this provision to activities of maintaining, working, repairing, transferring, or shifting the infrastructure.
- **Compensation:** The 2021 Rules add that in cases where the overground telegraph line is established over an immovable property managed by a government authority, a one-time compensation shall be payable by the licensee for the value of the immovable property, not exceeding Rs 1,000 per km of the telegraph line established.

TRAI invites comments on competition issues in cable TV services

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) released a consultation paper on “market structure/competition in cable TV services”.¹⁰⁷ In February 2021, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting requested TRAI to revisit its recommendations on this subject issued in 2013.¹⁰⁷ The Ministry noted that: (i) considerable time has passed since the last set of recommendations were made, and (ii) the cable tv sector has changed drastically with the advent of new technology.

TRAI noted that in today’s market, multiple distribution platforms are available to consumers for availing television services. These include: (i) cable TV services through Multi System Operators (MSO) and Local Cable Operators (LCO) associated to them, (ii) direct to home services (DTH), and (iii) IPTV services (television services over internet). Number of

registered MSOs has increased from 160 in January 2015 to 1,733 in September 2021.¹⁰⁷ Further, four DTH operators are also operating at the national level.¹⁰⁷ Hence, potential monopoly of a single service provider is unlikely.¹⁰⁷ However, it also noted that level of competition among MSOs is not uniform across the country. In certain states, cable TV market is dominated by one or two MSOs.

It is observed that while DTH services offer an alternative, they are not perfectly substitutable. Cable TV operators can also provide broadband and voice services which DTH operators cannot. It is further observed that the competition within cable TV is essential as they operate on a state/regional basis whereas DTH services operate on a national basis. Cable TV operators can choose specific channels to be supplied to the demand in a particular area, whereas DTH services operate on a national basis and transmit the same channels throughout the country.

In this backdrop, TRAI has sought views on following key matters: (i) need to regulate market dominance in cable TV services, (ii) definition of the relevant market for measuring market power of operators, (iii) regulatory interventions for bringing down market share of a dominant MSO, (iv) need for regulating LCOs, and (v) norms for infrastructure sharing and mergers and acquisition to promote competition in the sector.

Comments are invited till November 22, 2021.

Annexure

The subjects identified by various Parliamentary Standing Committees for examination during the year 2021-22 are given in Table 9.

Table 9: Subjects identified by the Standing Committees for examination during 2021-22

Coal and Steel
Ministry of Coal
1. Land Acquisition and Issues of Rehabilitation and Resettlement in Coal/ Lignite Mining Areas.
2. R&D in Coal Sector.
3. Future of Coal in India's Energy Mix.
4. Review of Coal Mines Workers Welfare Programme.
5. Safety in Coal Mines.
6. Production of Coal and Lignite – Projection and Planning.
7. Skill Development in Coal Sector.
8. Performance of Coal Controller's Office.
9. Implementation of Information Technology and Vigilance Activities to Curb Illegal Coal Mining and Theft of Coal in the Country.
10. Compliance of Environmental Norms by Coal/ Lignite Companies.
11. Import of Coal – Trends and Issue of Self Reliance.
12. Coal Handling Infrastructure at Ports.
Ministry of Mines
1. Mineral Exploration Activities in North Eastern States and its Overall Impact on Development of the Region.
2. Development of Aluminium and Copper Industries in India.
3. Measures to Curb Illegal Mining of Iron Ore, Manganese and Bauxite in the Country.
4. Organisational Structure and Performance of Geological Survey of India (GSI) – A Review.
5. Organisational Structure and Performance of Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) – A Review.
6. Expediting and Simplifying the Environment and Forest Clearance Process for Mining Projects.
7. Measures for Abatement of Pollution due to Mining Activities and Environmental Protection.
8. Self-reliance in Minerals and Metals.
Ministry of Steel
1. Review of Steel Policy and its Impact on Development of Steel Sector.
2. Major Policy Changes Assisting Secondary Steel Sector.
3. Management of Energy Efficiency by Steel Plants and Environmental Issues related to Iron Ore Mining.
4. Development of Manganese Ore Industry in India.
5. Skill Development in Steel Sector.
6. Promotion of Steel Usage.
7. Status of Greenfield and Brownfield Projects of Steel PSUs.
8. Iron Ore Handling Infrastructure at Ports

Commerce
1. Implementation of One District One Product (ODOP) Scheme.
2. Industrialization of North Eastern Region.
3. Promotion and Regulation of E-commerce in India.
4. Performance of Indian Tea Industry.
5. Performance of Export Promotion Councils.
Health and Family Welfare
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
1. Vaccine Development, Distribution Management and Ministry of Pandemic Covid-19.
2. Implementation of Ayushman Bharat.
3. Mental Health in contemporary times.
4. Medical Devices: Regulation & Control.
5. Affordability of Cancer treatment.
Ministry of Ayush
1. Ayurveda System of Medicine: Challenges and Prospects.
2. Review of National AYUSH Mission.
Home Affairs
1. Police – Training, Modernisation and Reforms.
2. Prison – Conditions, Infrastructure and Reforms.
3. National Security, Intelligence Coordination and Counter Terrorism.
4. Administration, Development and People's Welfare in the Union Territories of: (i) Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, and (ii) Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
5. Border Management - Coastal Security.
6. Disaster Management
7. Rising Crime in Delhi and NCR.
Information Technology
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
1. Review of Functioning of Prasar Bharati Organisation.
2. Ethical Standards in Media Coverage.
3. Film Industry – Problems and Challenges.
4. Review of Functioning of Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC).
5. Review of Functioning and Outreach of Doordarshan Channels.
6. Review of functioning of Bureau of Outreach and Communication (BOC).
7. Community Radio Station - Growth, Opportunities and Challenges.
Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
1. Citizens' Data Security and Privacy.
2. Digital Payment and Online Security Measures for Data Protection.
3. Review of Functioning of Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI).
4. Safeguarding Citizens' Rights and Prevention of Misuse of Social/ Online News Media Platforms including Special Emphasis on Women Security in the Digital Space.
5. Promotion of Electronics/ IT Hardware Manufacturing Sector and Measures for Reduction of Imports.

6. Technology Initiatives taken by MEITY in the wake of COVID-19 Pandemic.
7. Review of Cyber Security Scenario in India.
8. Review of functioning of CSC-SPV.
9. Review of functioning of Information Technology Act, 2000.

Department of Posts

1. Real Estate Management in the Department of Posts.
2. Department of Posts – Initiatives and Challenges.
3. Review of postal services in North Eastern Region.

Department of Telecommunications

1. Review of Functioning of BSNL and MTNL and Plan for Enhancing their Performance.
2. Review of Functioning of TRAI.
3. Review of the Performance of Schemes under Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) with Special Emphasis on North East and LWE Affected Areas.
4. Suspension of Telecom Services/ Internet and its Impact.
5. Issues Confronting Telecom Sector including Telecom Service Providers (TSPs).
6. Inter-Sectoral Review of Challenges of Emerging and Converging Technologies, Entities and Practices.
7. Review of functioning of Indian Telegraph Act, 1885.

Labour

Ministry of Labour and Employment

1. Working Conditions and Welfare of Mine Workers, and Assessment of Working of Directorate General of Mines Safety (DGMS).
2. Deployment of Contract/ Casual/ Sanitation Workers for Jobs of Perennial Nature in Government/ PSU Offices/ Establishments.
3. Welfare of Plantation Workers.
4. Functioning of the Employees Provident Fund Organisation with Special Reference to EPF Pension Scheme.
5. The Employees' State Insurance Corporation – Applicability and Benefits under ESI Scheme and Management of Corpus Fund.
6. Functioning of Central Board for Workers Education.
7. Implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes.
8. National Policy on Child Labour – An Assessment.
9. Identification and Rehabilitation of Bonded Labour.
10. Implementation of Prescribed Minimum Wages in Scheduled Employment Sector.
11. Social Security and Welfare Measures for Unorganised/ Informal Sector Workers including Scheme Workers, Street Vendors, Fishermen and workers in IT and telecommunication sectors like BPOs/Call centres.
12. Safeguards and Measures for Protecting the Interest of Overseas Contract Workers and the Returnees, Particularly in the Middle East Region.

Ministry of Textiles

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

Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

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

Petroleum and Natural Gas

1. Pricing, Marketing and Supply of Petroleum Products including Natural Gas.
2. Litigations involving Oil PSUs.
3. Contract Management and Transparency in Procurement Procedures in Oil PSUs.
4. Energy Security with Specific Reference to Hydrocarbon Resources and Electric Vehicles.
5. Oil Refineries – A Review.
6. CSR Activities of Oil PSUs.
7. National Gas Grid including PNG and CNG.
8. Review of Performance of Oil PSUs with Specific Reference to Financial Performance and Investments in Other Sectors.
9. Human Resource Policy of Oil PSUs.
10. Safety and Security of Oil Installations of Public Sector Oil Companies.
11. International Cooperation in Petroleum Sector.
12. Review of LNG Infrastructure.
13. Alternate Sources of Energy.
14. Role of OMCs in setting up of Battery/Charging Infrastructure for Electric Vehicles.
15. Review of implementation of CBG (SATAT).
16. Policy on Import of Crude Oil.
17. Initiatives undertaken by oil PSUs in Petroleum Sector under 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

Rural Development

Department of Rural Development

1. Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rural Mission.
2. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).

3. Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM).
4. Realisation of the Vision 'Make in India' under Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY).
5. Monitoring of various rural development schemes through effective utilization of the provision of audits - a holistic review.
6. Impact of National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) on the Poor and Destitute in the Villages.
7. Critical evaluation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).
8. Review of the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G).
9. Creation of Adarsh Grams under Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY).
10. Role of Banks in the financial inclusion of rural population.
11. Status and Utilisation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Fund among PSUs in the Area of Rural Development.

Department of Land Resources

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

Ministry of Panchayati Raj

1. Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA).
2. Digitization of Gram Panchayats.
3. SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages Abadi and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Areas) Scheme.

Transport, Tourism and Culture

1. Issues related to Safety in Civil Aviation Sector.
2. Issues related to Security in Civil Aviation Sector.
3. Functioning of Central Libraries in the country.
4. Creation of Regulatory Framework for protection of Historical Sites and Monuments.
5. Progress made in implementation of Sagarmala Projects.
6. Review of Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF) Works.
7. Development of Tourism Infrastructure in the country.

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8. Promotion of Indian Tourism in Overseas Markets - Role of Overseas Tourist Offices and Indian Embassies.

Water resources

Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation

1. Conservation, Development, Management and Abatement of pollution in river Ganga and its Tributaries under Namami Gange programme with particular reference to project deliverables and timelines as well as performance of State Governments.
2. Groundwater: A Valuable but Diminishing Resource.
3. Review of Upper Yamuna River Cleaning Project upto Delhi and River bed management in Delhi.
4. Review of functioning of North-East Water Management Authority – review of the mandate, plan of action and project activities under the authority.
5. Conservation and Abatement of Pollution in river Cauvery and other major rivers of South India.
6. Review of the role and working of WAPCOS Ltd.
7. Glacier Management in the country – Monitoring of glaciers/glacial lakes including Glacial Lake outbursts leading to flash floods in the Himalayan region.
8. Flood Management in the country with special reference to States of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.
9. Water Use efficiency in India.

Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation

1. 'Review of performance of Swachh Bharat Mission - Quality and sustainability of sanitation infrastructure created under Swachh Bharat Mission and Preparedness for ODF 2.0'.
2. Review of performance of 'Jal Jeevan Mission'.
3. Quality of Drinking Water in rural areas with special reference to hilly areas.
4. Drinking Water Supply in Coastal Areas - Setting up of Desalination Plants.

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