

# Monthly Policy Review

## April 2022

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### Highlights of this Issue

#### **Budget Session 2022 of Parliament concluded; five Bills passed (p. 2)**

Bills passed include the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill, 2022, and the Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2022. The Chartered Accountants Bill, pending from the previous session was also passed.

#### **Booster dose vaccination for adults starts; PM Garib Kalyan package extended (p. 2)**

All adults who have completed nine months after the administration of second dose will be eligible for the booster dose. The life insurance cover for health workers involved in Covid-19 duties has been extended till October 2022.

#### **Retail inflation at 6.3% in the January-March quarter of 2021-22 (p. 2)**

Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation increased from 6.0% in January 2022 to 7.0% in March 2022. Wholesale Price Index inflation increased from 13.7% in January 2021 to 14.5% in March 2022.

#### **Repo and reverse repo rates unchanged at 4% and 3.35%, respectively (p. 2)**

Repo rate and reverse repo rate remain unchanged at 4% and 3.35%, respectively. The Monetary Policy Committee operationalised Standing Deposit Facility at 3.75%, to absorb liquidity in the economy without collateral.

#### **Parliament passes Bill to collect identifiable details of convicts and arrested persons (p. 3)**

The Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill, 2022 was passed by Parliament on April 6, 2022. It authorises collection of personal information such as fingerprints, retina scans, and blood from convicts and arrested persons.

#### **Standing Committee submits report on Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021 (p. 6)**

The Standing Committee on Environment, Forests and Climate Change presented its report on the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021. The Bill seeks to implement provisions for regulating trade in wildlife.

#### **Standing Committee submits report on Strengthening Credit Flows to the MSME Sector (p. 5)**

The Standing Committee on Finance presented its report on credit flows to the MSME sector. It noted a credit gap and recommended bridging it by adopting a digital framework and undertaking cash-flow based lending.

#### **Stock limits on edible oils and oilseeds extended for all states till December 2022 (p. 11)**

Stock limits have been imposed on edible oils and oilseeds to curb rising edible oil prices, due to supply chain disruptions. States with their own stock limits have been brought under the purview of the centre.

#### **Cabinet approves distribution of fortified rice across government schemes (p. 11)**

Fortified rice, with added micronutrients will be distributed via government schemes such as the public distribution system, mid-day meal, and integrated child development services. Fortified rice is expected to combat malnutrition.

#### **Cabinet approves one time window for surrender of non-operational coal mines (p. 11)**

Government companies are allowed to surrender non-operational coal mines without penalty, in a three-month window. This is expected to release coal mines that government companies are not interested in developing.

#### **Amendments to Central Motor Vehicle Rules notified (p. 9)**

The Central Motor Vehicles Rules amendments revise the validity of the fitness certificate for transport vehicles. Vehicles less than eight years old will be valid for two years, and more than eight will be valid for one year.

#### **TRAI releases recommendations on the auction of spectrum for mobile services (p. 10)**

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) released recommendations on spectrum auction which include 5G networks. It recommends the reserve prices to be set at 70% of the average valuation by TRAI.

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May 2, 2022

## Parliament

Tanvi Vipra ([tanvi@prsindia.org](mailto:tanvi@prsindia.org))

The Budget session of Parliament was held from January 31, 2022 to April 7, 2022, with a recess from February 12 to March 13. Parliament adjourned sine die, ahead of schedule having sat for 27 days.<sup>1</sup> During the session Parliament introduced seven Bills and passed five. Of the Bills passed, one was pending from the previous session (The Chartered Accountants Bill). Bills that were passed include the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill, 2022, and the Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2022. None of the Bills introduced in this session were referred to Parliamentary Committees.

For more details on legislative business taken up during the Budget Session 2022, please see [here](#). For details on the functioning of Parliament during the session, please see [here](#).

## COVID-19

Shashank Srivastava ([shashank@prsindia.org](mailto:shashank@prsindia.org))

### Booster dose for all adults commences at private vaccination centres

Booster doses commenced for all adults aged above 18 years at private vaccination centres.<sup>2</sup> All adults who have completed nine months since the administration of second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine will be eligible for the booster dose.

In March 2022, booster dose commenced for all persons over 60 years of age at government vaccination centres.<sup>3</sup> Until February 2022, precautionary doses were being administered only to healthcare and frontline workers, and persons aged 60 years and above with co-morbidities.<sup>4</sup>

### Insurance cover for health workers extended by 180 days

Insurance cover under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package was extended by 180 days.<sup>5</sup> The Scheme was launched in March 2020 to provide insurance cover of Rs 50 lakh for public health workers (such as doctors, nurses, paramedics and ASHA workers) who treat COVID-19 patients.

The scheme also covers: (i) serving and retired staff of private hospitals, local urban bodies, (ii) daily wage and contract staff requisitioned by government (state and centre) and autonomous hospitals, AIIMS, and Institutes of National Importance, and (iii) hospitals of central ministries specifically drafted for care of COVID-19 patients.

This cover is over and above any other insurance cover being availed by the beneficiary.

## Macroeconomic Development

Tanvi Vipra ([tanvi@prsindia.org](mailto:tanvi@prsindia.org))

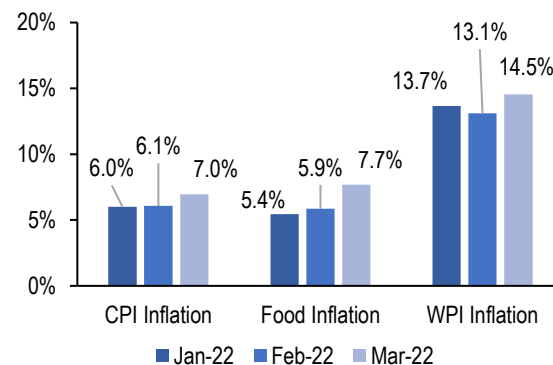
### Retail inflation at 6.3% in the fourth quarter of 2021-22

Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation (base year 2011-12) was 6.3% in the fourth quarter (January-April) of 2021-22 over the corresponding quarter in 2020-21.<sup>6</sup> This was higher than the CPI inflation of 4.9% in the fourth quarter of 2020-21 and 5% in the third quarter (October-December) of 2021-22.

Food inflation increased from 5.4% in January 2022 to 7.7% in March 2022, averaging 6.3% for the fourth quarter of 2021-22. This was higher than food inflation of 3.5% in the corresponding quarter of 2020-21. It was also higher than food inflation of 2.2% in the third quarter of 2021-22.

Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation (base year 2011-12) was 13.8% in the fourth quarter of 2021-22.<sup>7</sup> This was significantly higher than WPI inflation of 5.1% in the fourth quarter of 2020-21. The WPI in the third quarter of 2021-22 was 14.3%.

**Figure 1: Monthly inflation in Q4 of 2021-22 (% change, year-on-year)**



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

### Repo rate and reverse repo rate remain unchanged at 4% and 3.35%; Standing Deposit Facility at 3.75% introduced

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released its first bi-monthly Monetary Policy Statement for 2022-23.<sup>8</sup> Key decisions of the Committee are:

- **Policy rates remain unchanged:** The Committee decided to keep the policy repo rate (the rate at which RBI lends to banks) and reverse repo rate (the rate at which RBI

borrow from banks) unchanged at 4% and 3.35%, respectively. 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 remain unchanged, at 4.25%.

- **Introduction of Standing Deposit Facility:** The Committee decided to introduce the Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) with an interest rate of 3.75%, as a tool for absorbing liquidity in the economy without any collateral. Under this facility, eligible entities can place deposits with RBI on an overnight basis.<sup>9</sup> RBI will retain the flexibility to absorb liquidity for longer tenure under SDF.<sup>9</sup> SDF replaces the reverse repo rate as the floor rate at which banks lend to RBI.<sup>8</sup>
- **Accommodative stance maintained:** The MPC decided to maintain an accommodative stance of monetary policy.<sup>8</sup> The Committee also noted that it will focus on withdrawal of accommodation to meet inflation related targets, while supporting growth.<sup>8</sup>

## Home Affairs

Tanvi Vipra ([tanvi@prsindia.org](mailto:tanvi@prsindia.org))

### Parliament passes Bill to collect identifiable details of convicts and arrested persons

The Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill, 2022 was passed by Parliament on April 6, 2022. The Bill replaces the Identification of Prisoners Act, 1920. The Act authorises the collection of certain identifiable information about specified persons such as convicts for investigation of crime. The Bill expands the ambit of such details, and persons whose details can be taken. It authorises the National Crime Records Bureau to collect, store, and preserve these details.

- **Details about convicts and other persons:** The Act permits collection of photographs and specified details about convicts and other persons including finger impressions and footprint impressions. The Bill expands the list of details that can be collected. It will now include: (i) palm-print impressions, (ii) iris and retina scans, (iii) behavioural attributes such as signatures, and (iv) other physical and biological samples such as blood, semen, hair samples, and swabs, and their analysis.
- **Persons whose details may be taken:** As per the Act, the following persons may be required to give photographs and specified details: (i) persons convicted of certain offences (such as

offences punishable with a minimum of one year of rigorous imprisonment), (ii) persons ordered to give security for good behaviour or maintaining peace under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC), and (iii) persons arrested in connection with an offence punishable with at least one year of rigorous imprisonment. The Bill widens the ambit of such persons to include all convicts, arrested persons, as well as persons detained under any preventive detention law. Arrested persons will not be obliged to give their biological samples unless they have committed an offence against a woman or a child, or an offence punishable with a minimum of seven years of imprisonment.

- **Retention of details:** The Bill requires the details collected to be retained in digital or electronic form for 75 years from the date of collection. The record may be destroyed in case of persons who: (i) have not been previously convicted, and (ii) are released without trial, discharged, or acquitted by the court, after exhausting all legal remedies. A Court or a Magistrate may direct the retention of details in case of such persons after recording reasons in writing.

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

## Urban Affairs

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### Parliament passes Bill to unify Municipal Corporations in Delhi

The Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2022 was passed by Parliament.<sup>10</sup> The Bill seeks to amend the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957 passed by Parliament.<sup>11</sup> The Act was amended in 2011 by Delhi Legislative Assembly to trifurcate the erstwhile Municipal Corporation of Delhi into: (i) North Delhi Municipal Corporation, (ii) South Delhi Municipal Corporation, and (iii) East Delhi Municipal Corporation. The Bill seeks to unify the three corporations.

- **Unification of Municipal Corporations in Delhi:** The Bill replaces the three municipal corporations under the Act with one Corporation named the Municipal Corporation of Delhi.
- **Powers of the Delhi government:** The Act as amended in 2011 empowers the Delhi government to decide various matters under the Act. These include: (i) total number of seats of councillors and number of seats

reserved for members of the Scheduled Castes, (ii) division of the area of corporations into zones and wards, (iii) delimitation of wards, (iv) matters such as salary and allowances, and leave of absence of the Commissioner, (v) sanctioning of consolidation of loans by a corporation, and (vi) sanctioning suits for compensation against the Commissioner for loss or waste or misapplication of Municipal Fund or property. Similarly, the Act mandates that the Commissioner will exercise his powers regarding building regulations under the general superintendence and directions of Delhi government. The Bill instead empowers the central government to decide these matters.

- **Number of councillors:** The Act provides that the number of seats in the three corporations taken together should not be more than 272. The 14<sup>th</sup> Schedule to the Act specifies 272 wards across the three Corporations. The Bill states that the total number of seats in the new Corporation should not be more than 250.

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

### Cabinet approves continuation of PM SVANidhi till December 2024

The Union Cabinet approved the continuation of Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) beyond March 2022 till December 2024.<sup>12</sup> Initially, the Scheme had envisaged to facilitate loans worth a total amount of Rs 5,000 crore. The loan amount has also been increased to Rs 8,100 crore.

PM SVANidhi was launched in June 2020 to provide collateral free working capital loans of up to Rs 10,000 to street vendors. The Scheme was launched to provide financial assistance to street vendors affected due to COVID-19.<sup>12</sup> Vendors availing loan under the Scheme are eligible for an interest subsidy of 7%.<sup>13</sup> Since vendors have not fully recovered from the effect of COVID-19, the Scheme has been extended: (i) to provide a source of credit, (ii) increase digital transactions, and (iii) reduce the impact of non-performing assets on lending institutions.<sup>12</sup>

## Corporate Affairs

*Tushar Chakrabarty (tushar@prsindia.org)*

### The CA, the CWA, and the CS (Amendment) Bill, 2021 passed by Parliament

The Chartered Accountants, the Cost and Works Accountants, and the Company Secretaries

(Amendment) Bill, 2021 was passed by Parliament.<sup>14</sup> The Bill amends the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949, the Cost and Works Accountants Act, 1959, and the Company Secretaries Act, 1980.<sup>15,16,17</sup> The three Acts provide for the regulation of the professions of chartered accountants, cost accountants and company secretaries, respectively. The Bills strengthen the disciplinary mechanism under these Acts, and provide for time bound disposal of cases against members of these professions. Key features of the Bills include the following:

- **Registration of firms:** Under the Acts, members of these professions are required to register with the respective institutes. As per the Bill, firms will also be required to register with the Institutes by making an application to the respective Councils of the Institutes. The Councils must maintain a register of firms containing details such as pendency of any actionable complaint or imposition of penalty against the firms.
- **Disciplinary Directorate:** Under the Acts, the respective Councils of the three Institutes must each constitute a Disciplinary Directorate, headed by Director (Discipline), who is an officer of the Institute. The Bill adds that each of the Directorates must also include at least two Joint Directors.
- **Investigating complaints:** Under the Acts, on receiving a complaint, the Director arrives at a prima facie opinion on the alleged misconduct. Depending on the misconduct, the Director places the matter before the Board of Discipline or the Disciplinary Committee. The Bill amends this to empower the Directorate to independently initiate investigations against members or firms. The Director must decide whether a complaint is actionable within 30 days of receiving such complaint. If the complaint is actionable, the Director must submit a preliminary examination report to the Board or the Committee (as the case may be), within 30 days. Under the Acts, a complaint could be withdrawn if permitted by the Board or Committee. The Bill provides that a complaint filed with the Directorate will not be withdrawn under any circumstances.

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

## Finance

### RBI notifies directions for issuance and conduct of credit cards and debit cards

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The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) notified the Reserve Bank of India (Credit Card and Debit Card - Issuance and Conduct) Directions, 2022.<sup>18</sup> The directions regulate who can issue credit and debit cards, and lay down conditions for issuing cards. These directions will come into force from July 1, 2022. Key features of the directions include:

- **Entities eligible to issue credit cards:** The following entities may issue credit cards: (i) scheduled commercial banks with a minimum net worth of Rs 100 crore, other than Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), (ii) RRBs in collaboration with their sponsor bank or other banks, (iii) non-banking financial companies only after approval from RBI, and (iv) financially sound urban cooperative banks subject to certain restrictions.
- **Unsolicited facilities:** Following activities are strictly prohibited: (i) issue of unsolicited credit cards, (ii) upgradation of card or credit limit enhancement without the explicit consent of customers. Banks will liable to pay a penalty as well as compensation to the affected customer in case of the above activities.
- **Debit cards:** Banks do not require approval from RBI for issuing debit cards. Debit cards may be issued to customers with savings or current accounts, but not to cash credit or loan account holders. Instead of a plastic debit card, the issuer may provide other forms of the facility such as a wearable.
- **Co-branded cards:** Prior approval of RBI will not be required for issuing co-branded credit or debit cards. Co-branded cards are jointly issued by a bank (or NBFC) and a co-branding entity. Both the entities must explicitly indicate that the credit or debit card has been issued under a co-branding arrangement. Additionally, the card issuer's name must be prominently displayed on the card.

### Report on Strengthening Credit Flows to MSMEs submitted

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The Standing Committee on Finance (Chair: Mr Jayant Sinha) presented its report on 'Strengthening Credit Flows to the MSME Sector' on April 8, 2022.<sup>19</sup> The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector contributes around 30% to India's GDP, 45% to its manufacturing output,

and 48% to exports. It provides employment to around 11 crore people. The Committee noted that credit gap in the MSME sector is estimated to be around Rs 20-25 lakh crore. Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:

- **Bridging credit gap by forming a digital ecosystem:** The Committee noted the progress made by the Finance Ministry, the Reserve Bank of India, Goods and Services Tax (GST) Network, and Unique Identification Authority of India in introducing digital building blocks that reduce transaction costs of lending. It also took note of the launch of the Udyam registration portal by the MSME Ministry and the success of public digital infrastructure projects such as BHIM UPI and Aadhaar. The Committee noted that the Udyam portal can act as a central data repository by lenders to extend timely credit. It recommended creating an integrated digital ecosystem for lending to MSMEs. It is expected to help in solving problems such as physical collateral requirements, lengthy verification processes, and paper-based loan applications.
- **Benefits of a digital ecosystem:** The benefits of such a digital ecosystem will include: (i) reduction in transaction costs for making small loans, (ii) increase in the trust and claims made through digital signatures and authentication, (iii) increase in competition and affordability by creating visibility of loan offers and lower interest rates, and (iv) reduction in the need for multiple partnerships for data sharing.
- **Adopting an account aggregator framework:** The Committee noted that an account aggregator framework can benefit the sector by improving access to credit, preventing fraud, and reducing non-performing assets. The framework allows secure sharing of digital financial data. The Committee noted the pilot success of SAHAY GST. SAHAY is a platform which enables instant digital lending to MSMEs and replaces physical collateral with secure access to GST invoices.

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

### RBI notifies compliance framework for certain NBFCs

Tanvi Vipra ([tanvi@prsindia.org](mailto:tanvi@prsindia.org))

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) notified a framework requiring certain Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) to put in place a compliance function and appoint a Chief Compliance Officer by October 1, 2023.<sup>20</sup> This will apply to entities belonging to the upper layer and middle layer of RBI's graded regulatory



framework for NBFCs.<sup>21</sup> The middle layer consists of entities such as deposit-taking NBFCs irrespective of asset size, and non-deposit taking NBFCs with asset size of more than Rs 1,000 crore. The upper layer includes those NBFCs which have been identified by RBI as warranting enhanced regulatory requirements.

### Exposure limit of insurers to financial activities increased from 25% to 30%

Rajat Asthana (rajat@prsindia.org)

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) increased the permitted exposure limit of insurers to financial and investment assets from 25% to 30%.<sup>22</sup> The amendment was notified under the provisions of the IRDAI (Investment) Regulations, 2016.<sup>23</sup> The 2016 Regulations prescribe investment norms for: (i) life insurance, (ii) pension annuity and group business, (iii) general insurance, (iv) re-insurance, and (v) health insurance providers.

### Comments invited on draft guidelines for group health insurance products

Rajat Asthana (rajat@prsindia.org)

IRDAI invited comments on the draft guidelines for group health insurance products.<sup>24</sup> IRDAI noted that if operated prudently, group health insurance offers the advantage of beneficial coverage at moderate cost. The draft guidelines were notified under the IRDAI (Health Insurance) Regulations, 2016.<sup>25</sup> The proposed guidelines will supersede the existing set guidelines (issued in different circulars) regarding group health insurance. Key features of the guidelines are:

- **Group formation:** Every group health insurance product must specify the minimum group size for offering the group health insurance policy. The guidelines specify that a group must not be formed with the main purpose of availing insurance. Further, a group cannot be formed after negotiating prices for group insurance.
- **Restriction on products:** Insurers are prohibited from offering any indemnity/benefit based credit-linked products for group health insurance. However, such policies may be issued for coverage of accidental health and disability, under personal accident insurance policies. Existing credit-linked group health products should be withdrawn before a specified date.
- **Pricing:** Pricing must be on sound actuarial principles, considering aspects like morbidity experience (by gender, age, occupation, group

side), expenses, terminations, and profit margin. Insurers must review the group insurance policies every year.

Comments are invited until May 13, 2022.

## Environment

### Report on the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021 submitted

Rajat Asthana (rajat@prsindia.org)

The Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment, Forests and Climate Change (Chair: Mr. Jairam Ramesh) submitted its report on the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021 on April 21, 2022.<sup>26</sup> The Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha in December 2021.<sup>27</sup> The Bill seeks to amend the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. The Act provides for the protection of wild animals, birds, and plants.<sup>28</sup> The Bill seeks to: (i) implement the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), (ii) protect native Indian species, and (iii) improve enforcement of the law. Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:

- **Implementing CITES:** CITES is an international agreement to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species. The Committee observed that amending the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 would be the most appropriate way of implementing CITES, as the CITES implementation is related to the sustainable use of biodiversity. It also observed that the approach under the Bill will make the principal Act complicated and might introduce contradictions. To address this concern, it recommended: (i) amending the relevant sections of the 1972 Act, without introducing an elaborate Chapter as proposed in the 2021 Bill, (ii) eliminating Schedule IV of the 2021 Bill and replacing the references to Schedule IV with CITES Appendices in the entire Bill. Schedule IV is a list of the specimens listed in the CITES Appendices. Under CITES, plant and animal specimens are classified in Appendices, based on the threat to their extinction.
- **Protection of native Indian gene pool:** The Bill empowers the central government to regulate the import, trade, possession or proliferation of invasive alien species. It defines 'invasive alien species' as plant or animal species which are: (i) not native to India and, (ii) whose introduction may

adversely impact wild life or its habitat. The Committee observed that invasive alien species may exist within the country, with regards to particular ecosystems. It recommended: (i) having a scientific and transparent process for listing and delisting invasive alien species, (ii) enabling provisions for formulating specific management measures, and (iii) bringing clarity that CITES specific provisions don't facilitate breeding and trade of native Indian species.

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

### Amendments to the 2006 Environment Impact Assessment notification

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The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change amended the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006.<sup>29,30,31</sup> Under the 2006 notification, certain categories of projects (such as mining, oil and gas exploration, airports, ports, and highways) require prior environmental clearance (EC).<sup>32</sup> Key amendments to the 2006 notification include:

- **Validity of EC extended:** The notification amends the period of validity of EC.

**Table 1: Changed period of validity of EC**

Projects	Validity of EC	
	2006 notification	Amendment
River valley projects	10 years	13 years
Mining projects	Up to 30 years	Up to 50 years*
Nuclear power projects	Not specified	15 years
Others	7 years	10 years

Note: \*Validity of EC may be extended beyond 30 years, by up to 20 years, subject to periodic review and adequate environmental safeguards. The period of validity of EC will be counted from the date of execution of the mining lease.

Source: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change; PRS.

- **Grant of EC:** The 2006 notification creates two categories of projects (A and B) based on their potential impact. EC will be granted by: (i) central government for Category A projects, and (ii) State EIA Authorities for category B projects. To decentralise the EC process and facilitate clearances at the state level, the amendments alter the threshold limit for categorisation of projects. For instance, river valley projects generating above 50 megawatt (MW) of hydroelectric power earlier fell under category A. The amendments increase this threshold to 100 MW.
- **Strategic projects:** At present, category B projects relating to national defence and of

strategic importance are appraised at the state level. The amendment provides that such projects will be appraised at the central level. Note that the Ministry also proposed amending the 2006 notification to exempt all highway projects up to 100 kilometres from the line of control/ border from prior EC, subject to compliance with the notified Standard Operating Procedure.<sup>33</sup>

- **No prior EC requirement for ropeways:** All aerial ropeways are category B projects under the 2006 notification. The amendments remove ropeways from the list of projects requiring prior EC.

### Civil Aviation

Rajat Asthana ([rajat@prsindia.org](mailto:rajat@prsindia.org))

#### Amendments to Aircraft Rules mandating safety reporting system notified

The Ministry of Civil Aviation notified amendments to the Aircraft Rules, 1937.<sup>34</sup> The amendments have been notified under the provisions of the Aircraft Act, 1934.<sup>35</sup> The 1934 Act regulates the manufacture, possession, use, operation, sale, import and export of aircraft.<sup>35</sup> The 1937 Rules prescribe the general safety conditions for operation of aircraft.<sup>36</sup> Key features of the amendments are:

- **Mandatory safety reporting system:** The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) must establish a mandatory safety reporting system for all entities engaged in aircraft services and operations. The system will be used to collect information on safety gaps for hazard identification and risk management. As per the 1934 Act, the DGCA oversees all aspects related to safety in civil aviation.<sup>35</sup>
- **Voluntary safety reporting system:** The DGCA must also establish a voluntary safety reporting system. The voluntary system will be used to collect information on safety gaps, through agencies other than the DGCA, if considered necessary by the central government. Non-compliance to this system would be non-punitive in nature.

#### Small Aircraft sub-scheme under RCS-UDAN notified

The Ministry of Civil Aviation notified the Small Aircraft Sub-Scheme, 2022.<sup>37</sup> The scheme aims to facilitate regional air connectivity, with a specific focus on operations through small aircraft (including seaplanes). It also aims to promote

affordability of regional air connectivity by: (i) providing concessions by central government, state government and airport operators, and (ii) funding the gap between cost of operating these routes and revenue. The scheme will be operationalised in states and airports/water aerodromes/ helipads which support regional air transport operations by providing concessions and 100% financial support. The scheme will be applicable for a period of ten years. Key features of the scheme are:

- **Support by central government:** Concessions offered by the central government will include: (i) excise duty at the rate of 2% on Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF), until the transition to GST, and (ii) code sharing arrangements. Code sharing is a marketing arrangement in which an airline places its flight code on a flight operated by another airline, and sells tickets for that flight.<sup>38</sup> This helps expand their market presence.
- **Support by state government:** Some of the support offered by the proposing state governments will include: (i) reduction of VAT on ATF to 1% or less for a period of ten years, (ii) coordinating with oil marketing companies for provision of fuelling infrastructure, and (iii) provision of connectivity, utility services, and fire and security services.
- **Support by aerodrome operators:** Support by operators of airports / water aerodromes / helipads will include: (i) no levy of landing, navigation, and parking charges on flights under this sub-scheme, and (ii) allowing select airline operators the rights of ground handling for their flights.

### Guidelines to operate scheduled international air services by Indian operators notified

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) issued guidelines for Indian air carriers for operating scheduled international air transport services (both passengers, and cargo).<sup>39</sup> The guidelines have been framed under the Aircraft Rules, 1937.<sup>36</sup> The 1937 Rules specify that a person must seek permission from the central government, for operating any scheduled air transport service involving Indian airspace.<sup>36</sup> Key features of the guidelines are:

- **Eligibility:** Any Indian air transport undertaking will be eligible for operation of international scheduled air transport services, if it: (i) has a valid Air Operator's Certificate for operation of scheduled air transport services; and (ii) deploys 20 aircraft or 20% of total capacity (in term of average number of

seats on all departures put together), whichever is higher, for domestic operations. The condition for domestic operations is not applicable for all-cargo services.

- **Capacity and Traffic Rights:** All eligible air carriers must apply to the Ministry of Civil Aviation for commencing or increasing their international air transport services. The applications will be examined with regard to eligibility and preparedness. For allocating traffic rights as proposed in the application (by the carrier), all eligible airlines will be consulted. While deciding on the application, the availability of traffic rights under bilateral services agreements will also be considered.

### Guidelines for implementing e-boarding (Digi-Yatra) notified

The DGCA issued guidelines for the implementation of e-boarding process (Digi-Yatra).<sup>40</sup> Digi-Yatra is a digital ecosystem for paperless processing of passengers at various checkpoints (such as entry check, security check, and boarding) at airports.<sup>41</sup> Key features of the guidelines are:

- **Credentials:** The passenger (need not be an Indian citizen) may create a Digi Yatra credential with identity data, travel data, and health data. All these data points will be tagged to the unique biometric signature of the passenger. The credentials will be stored in a secure wallet on the smartphone. There is no centralised storage of the passenger's data, and credentials will be shared with airports, airlines and regulatory agencies (if needed) at the time of travel.
- **Requirements:** The airline must work with the Digi Yatra Central Ecosystem to create and receive the credentials of passengers for domestic travel. This will later be extended to international travel. The passenger must also have the option to submit Health Certificates with Digi Yatra.

### Comments invited on draft Bill to implement Cape Town Convention

The Ministry of Civil Aviation is inviting public feedback on the Draft Protection and Enforcement of Interests in Aircraft Objects Bill, 2022.<sup>42</sup> The draft Bill seeks to implement the provisions of the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment (Cape Town Convention), and Protocol on Matters Specific to Aircraft Equipment (Cape Town Protocol).<sup>42</sup> The Convention/Protocol aim to achieve efficient financing of aircraft objects (such as airframes, helicopters and engines) to improve



the affordability of their operations. India became a party to the Convention/Protocol in July 2008.<sup>42</sup>

As per the Ministry, achieving full implementation of the Convention/Protocol in India requires a separate legislation, to harmonise its provisions with some other laws (such as the Companies Act, 2013 and Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016).<sup>42</sup> The draft Bill seeks to: (i) reduce the risk in asset-based financing and leasing transactions, and (ii) reduce cost of aviation credit, and (iii) reduce lease rentals of aircraft.<sup>42</sup>

The draft Bill will apply to: (i) a debtor situated in India, (ii) a seller situated in India, and (iii) an aircraft object which is located in India or, an aircraft registered in India. The Bill will apply even if the creditor is situated in a country, which is not a party to the Convention/Protocol. Key features of the Bill are:

- **Remedies for creditor:** When a debtor defaults on a contract, the creditor must declare the occurrence of such default to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). The remedies available to the creditor are: (i) take repossession or control of aircraft, (ii) sell or grant a lease of such aircraft, and (iii) collect any income/profits from the management of such aircraft object. Further, if the creditor and debtor agree, the credit may: (i) de-register the aircraft, and (ii) transfer the aircraft from where it is situated. Any remedy must be exercised in a commercially reasonable manner.
- **Relief before final determination:** Before the final adjudication of a claim, a creditor may move a court (with agreement of the debtor) for certain remedies. Some of these remedies are: (i) preserving the aircraft object and its value, (ii) possession, control or custody of the aircraft object, and (iii) lease management of the aircraft object and income from it.

Comments on the draft Bill are invited until May 13, 2022.

## Road Transport and Highways

Rajat Asthana ([rajat@prsindia.org](mailto:rajat@prsindia.org))

### Rules amending validity of renewed fitness certificate for transport vehicles notified

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways notified amendments to the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989.<sup>43,44</sup> The 2022 Rules have been framed under the provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988.<sup>45</sup> The 1988 Act mandates transport vehicles to carry a certificate of fitness.<sup>45</sup> As per the 1989

Rules, the renewed fitness certificates for all transport vehicles are valid for a year.<sup>46</sup> The 2022 Rules amend this to prescribe validity based on age of the transport vehicle.

The renewed fitness certificate will be valid for: (i) two years, for transport vehicles up to eight years old, and (ii) one year, for transport vehicles older than eight years. Further, the 2022 Rules specify that the fitness test for certain vehicles (such as heavy goods vehicles or heavy passenger vehicles) must be done through an Automated Testing Station, from June 1, 2024.

### Criteria for allocation of funds for development of state roads amended

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways amended the criteria for allocation of funds for development of state roads under the Central Road and Infrastructure Fund Act, 2000.<sup>47</sup> The 2000 Act establishes the Central Road and Infrastructure Fund, which may be utilised for development and maintenance of National Highways, state roads, rural roads, and other infrastructure.<sup>48</sup> Under the Act, a committee headed by the Finance Minister formulates the criteria for allocation of funds for development and maintenance of state road projects.<sup>48</sup>

The criteria for fund allocations include: (i) roads which might be declared as new National Highways, (ii) inter-state roads and roads which are economically important, and (iii) roads connecting National Highways with particular focus on safety and traffic decongestion. The amendments introduce additional criteria for fund allocation to states, which include: (i) connectivity to airports, pilgrim and tourist centres, monuments and heritage places, (ii) wayside amenities (rest areas, food courts), and road side utility ducts beside National Highways (for optical fibre cable), and (iii) PM GatiShakti framework for identification, sanction, and implementation of projects.

## Communications

Saket Surya ([saket@prsindia.org](mailto:saket@prsindia.org))

### Project for 4G mobile services at security sites in left-wing extremism areas approved

The Union Cabinet approved a project for upgrading 2G mobile services to 4G services at certain security sites in left-wing extremism areas.<sup>49</sup> Under this project, 2,343 sites in these areas will be upgraded. The total estimated cost of this project is Rs 1,885 crore. This includes the cost for operation and maintenance for five years.

BSNL will execute this project and maintain the sites for another five years at its own cost.

The project will be funded through Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF). USOF has been set up under the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 to provide widespread, non-discriminatory, and affordable access to quality information and communication technology services to people in rural and remote areas.<sup>50,51</sup> Resources for USOF are raised through a levy on the revenue of all the telecom operators under various licenses.

### TRAI releases recommendations on the auction of spectrum for mobile services

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) released its recommendations on the auction of spectrum for mobile broadband services including that for 5G networks.<sup>52</sup> In September 2021, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) had sought recommendations from TRAI on issues such as: (i) applicable reserve price, band plan, block size, the quantum of spectrum to be auctioned, and conditions for the auction, and (ii) earmarking for private captive network, method of allocation, and pricing. Key recommendations of TRAI are:

- **Frequency bands for auction:** Entire available spectrum in following frequency bands should be put to auction in the forthcoming auction: (i) 600 megahertz (MHz), (ii) 700 MHz, (iii) 800 MHz, (iv) 900 MHz, (v) 1800 MHz, (vi) 2100 MHz, (vii) 2300 MHz, (viii) 2500 MHz, (ix) 3300-3670 MHz, and (x) 24.25-28.5 gigahertz (GHz). The spectrum may be allocated for 20-year and 30-year periods. There should be an option to surrender spectrum after a minimum period of 10 years from the date of acquisition.
- **Reserve Price:** A reserve price indicates the minimum amount the bidder must pay to win the object. Reserve price should be: (i) 70% of the average valuation by TRAI, (ii) in service areas, where spectrum was completely sold in March 2021 auction, the reserve price should be 70% of the average valuation, or auction determined price of March 2021 after certain adjustments, whichever is higher. The Reserve price for allocation for the 30-year period should be 1.5 times the reserve price for the 20-year period. For the 3300-3670 MHz band, which will be utilised for 5G services, the recommended reserve price in Delhi and Mumbai service area is Rs 40 crore per MHz, and Rs 35 crore per MHz, respectively, for the 20-year period.
- **Payment options:** Following payment options should be available: (i) part upfront payment

within 10 days, with an option of availing moratorium for the proportionate number of years for which upfront payment has been made; balance amount should be payable in equal annual instalments, (ii) payment in equal annual instalments, (iii) full upfront payment.

- **Captive network:** Permission or license should be required for establishing an indoor or within premise private wireless captive network. Such permission or license may be given for 10 year-period. An entity establishing captive network may obtain spectrum either on lease from telecom service providers or directly from DoT.

## Media and Broadcasting

*Saket Surya (saket@prsindia.org)*

### TRAI seeks views on issues related to media ownership

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) released a consultation paper on 'Issues relating to Media Ownership'.<sup>53</sup> TRAI noted that the core idea of active citizenry in a democracy requires the presence of diverse voices and perspectives in public debates. The concentration of media ownership may adversely impact the above. TRAI received a reference from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to provide recommendations on issues such as cross-media ownership and vertical integration in the broadcasting sector. Vertical integration refers to the same entity controlling the two businesses of content development and distribution to consumers.

TRAI observed that the media industry has expanded in an unprecedented manner. In addition to conventional television and print media, the industry now comprises digital media portals for news and entertainment. The proliferation of digital media increases the opportunities for people to use diverse sources and encounter different perspectives. At the same time, digital media is marked by the dominance of a limited number of very large players who also have the means to consolidate by acquiring small players. This can lead to market concentration risks.

TRAI sought views on the following key issues: (i) the need for monitoring cross-media ownership and control, and the administrative structure for such monitoring, (ii) the need for additional regulatory mechanisms apart from those under agencies like the Competition Commission of India and SEBI in matters of competition in media, (iii) methods of measuring market concentration in the sector, (iv) media segments where viewpoint plurality should

be considered essential, and (v) whether regulators should be empowered to restrain any entity from entering media sector in public interest, and restrict entities from having cross-media ownership.

Comments are invited until May 10, 2022.

## Consumer Affairs

Tanvi Vipra ([tanvi@prsindia.org](mailto:tanvi@prsindia.org))

### Cabinet approves distribution of fortified rice across government schemes

The Union Cabinet approved the supply of fortified rice through the public distribution system across the country by 2024.<sup>54</sup> Rice fortification is a process where micronutrients such as iron, folic acid, and Vitamin B12 are added to rice for overcoming the problem of malnutrition.<sup>55</sup> The scheme will be implemented in three phases as depicted in Table 2.

**Table 2: Phases under the scheme for supply of fortified rice**

Phase	Schemes to be covered	Deadline
I	Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM-POSHAN, earlier Mid-Day Meal Scheme) schemes in all districts	March 2022 (under implementation)
II	Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) and other welfare schemes in all aspirational and high burden districts on stunting	March 2023
III	TPDS and other welfare schemes in remaining districts	March 2024

Source: Press Information Bureau; PRS.

The central government will bear the cost of fortification as part of food subsidy till June 2024 (an estimated Rs 2,700 crore annually).

### Stock limits extended to all states on all edible oils and oilseeds till December 2022

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution extended stock limits on all edible oils and oilseeds from February 3, 2022 till December 31, 2022.<sup>56</sup> The order was issued under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, which empowers the central government to control the production, supply, distribution, storage, and trade of essential commodities. Stock limits are generally imposed to control the price of essential commodities. The stock limits are as follows (see Table 3):

**Table 3: Stock limits on edible oil and oilseeds**

Commodity	Stock limits (in quintal)		Processor
	Retail	Wholesale	
Edible oil*	30	500	90 days of storage capacity
Edible oilseeds	100	2,000	90 days production of edible oil

Note: \*Stock limits also imposed on bulk consumers (30 quintals for retail outlets, and 1,000 quintals for depot).

Source: Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution; PRS.

Six states (Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, Rajasthan and Bihar) had issued their own control orders, which have been brought under the purview of the amending order. The central government has appointed eight teams for ensuring compliance.<sup>57</sup> 56% of edible oil consumption in the country is met through imports. The stock limits have been imposed to curb rising edible oil prices due to supply chain disruptions.

## Mining

Saket Surya ([saket@prsindia.org](mailto:saket@prsindia.org))

### Window to surrender non-operational government coal mines approved

The Union Cabinet approved a one-time window for government companies to surrender non-operational coal mines.<sup>58</sup> No penalty will be applicable for such surrender and no reason needs to be cited. This is aimed at securing the release of several coal mines that government companies are not in a position to develop or are disinterested in developing. This option will be available for a three-month window. The surrendered mines will be made available to other entities through auction.

As per the press note, till December 2021, 45 mines out of 73 coal mines allotted to government companies, remained non-operational.<sup>58</sup> The due date for commencement of mining operations in case of 19 coal mines had already got over.<sup>58</sup> Reasons for delays include issues with land acquisition, mismatch in assessed and actual availability of coal resources, and law and order.

### Policy for use of non-minable land acquired under the Coal Bearing Areas Act approved

The Union Cabinet approved the policy for use of non-minable land acquired under the Coal Bearing Areas (Acquisition and Development) Act, 1957.<sup>59</sup> The Act provides for the acquisition of coal-bearing lands and their vesting in a government company. Under the policy, the following types of land acquired under the Act will be made available

for other uses: (i) land no longer suitable or economical for coal mining activities, (ii) land from which coal has been mined out, and such land has been reclaimed. The government company owning the land will lease these lands for specified activities including: (i) setting up coal or energy-related infrastructure such as coal washeries, coal handling plants, railway sidings, power projects, and coal gasification plants, and (ii) rehabilitation and resettlement of families affected due to acquisition of land under this Act or any other law. The lease will be given through a competitive bidding process.

## Power

Saket Surya ([saket@prsindia.org](mailto:saket@prsindia.org))

### Draft Battery Swapping Policy released for public feedback

NITI Aayog released the draft Battery Swapping Policy for public feedback.<sup>60</sup> It noted that electric vehicles are traditionally purchased with fixed batteries. Battery swapping is an alternative which involves exchanging discharged batteries for charged ones and provides flexibility to charge them separately. This de-links charging and battery usage, and keeps the vehicle in operational mode with negligible downtime. NITI Aayog noted that battery swapping offers the following key advantages: (i) reduction in vehicle downtime, and (ii) reduction in the requirement for space for charging stations. It observed that battery swapping is generally used for smaller vehicles such as two-wheelers and three-wheelers. Although, solutions are emerging for four-wheelers and electric buses too. The draft Policy aims to promote large-scale adoption of battery swapping technology. Key features of the draft Policy are:

- **Incentives:** Incentives available for electric vehicles will be extended to electric vehicles with swappable batteries. A scheme to give subsidies to providers of swappable battery service will be formulated. State governments may give additional capital subsidies to promote battery swapping. Land will be provided at a promotional rate for public battery charging stations. The Policy advocates bringing battery charging stations under time-of-day electricity tariff regimes so that charging of swappable batteries during non-peak periods may be incentivised. Under time-of-day tariff, different rates are applicable at different times of the day.

Comments are invited until June 5, 2022.

### The Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Amendment Rules, 2022 notified

The Ministry of Power notified the Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Amendment Rules, 2022.<sup>61</sup> These Rules amend the Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020 issued under the Electricity Act, 2003.<sup>62</sup> The 2020 Rules specify the rights of consumers and obligations of electricity distribution licensee on various aspects of electricity distribution (such as providing connection, metering, and billing). Key amendments include:

- **Reliability charges:** The 2020 Rules require the state electricity regulatory commissions to specify certain standards for the distribution companies (discoms) to ensure the reliability of the power supply. These standards include the total duration and frequency of power outages per consumer in a year. The 2022 Rules add that the state commissions may consider a separate reliability charge for a distribution company. This charge may be levied if the company needs funds for investment in the infrastructure to ensure the reliability of supply.
- **Curbing the use of diesel generating sets:** The 2022 Rules add that the consumers, who use diesel generating sets as essential backup power, must try to shift to clean technology (such as renewable energy with battery storage) within five years from the date of notification of the Rules. The state commissions may specify a different timeline for the shift to clean energy based on the reliability of supply in the area.
- **Temporary connections:** The 2022 Rules add that the discoms must consider the requests for temporary connections for construction activities or other temporary usages as urgent. Such connections must be given using



a pre-payment meter within 48 hours, or within seven days where distribution system needs to be augmented. This will help in avoiding the use of diesel sets for temporary activities.

## Health

Rajat Asthana (rajat@prsindia.org)

### Consultation paper for provider payments and price setting under PM-JAY released

The National Health Authority invited public feedback on provider payments and price setting under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana Scheme (PM-JAY).<sup>63</sup> PM-JAY provides health insurance (of up to five lakh rupees per year per family) to poor and vulnerable families, for accessing secondary and tertiary healthcare services through empanelled healthcare providers.<sup>64</sup> PM-JAY pays healthcare providers a fixed rate (as defined in the health packages), for a bundled set of services (such as ICU with ventilator, radio oncology, appendectomy).<sup>65</sup> Key aspects regarding payments to healthcare providers are: (i) mode of payment, and (ii) the amount of payment. There are four types of provider payment methods: capitation, fee-for-service, case-based, and global budget (Table 4).

**Table 4: Provider Payment Methods**

Capitation
Providers are paid a fixed payment for a defined population over a defined period of time, for providing a given set of services. The payment is directly related to the total enrolment under the provider.
Fee-for-service
Providers are paid a fixed payment, retrospectively, for each unit of individual services, procedures, tests, medicines delivered or prescribed.
Case-based
Patients are categorised based on factors like diagnosis and treatment procedures. Providers are paid a fixed rate for every admission per category.
Global budget
Providers are paid a fixed amount for a defined period, and a defined set of services. The payment is not linked with the actual number of patients treated or services provided.

Sources: Consultation Paper on Provider Payments, NHA; PRS.

Key issues on which views are invited include: (i) the suitability of diagnosis related groups for patients of different age, gender, and co-morbidity, (ii) suitability of methods selected for medical and surgical packages, and (iii) price for high end drugs, consumables, and implants.

Diagnosis related groups are a form of case-based payment system, in which cases are grouped according to the condition treated and the resources used for treatment. The grouping is based on the

World Health Organisation's international classification of diseases.

### Comments invited on draft Health Data Management Policy

The National Health Authority invited public feedback on the Draft Health Data Management Policy, under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.<sup>66</sup> The Mission was launched by the central government in September 2021.<sup>67</sup> As per the Mission, citizens will be able to create their Ayushman Bharat Health Account numbers (created with KYC using Aadhaar or any other digital system) which can be linked to their digital health records on a voluntary basis. Further, digital health service providers will be able to offer diverse service options on a single digital platform. The Policy lays down minimum standards for data privacy protection to ensure compliance with relevant laws. It also seeks to achieve interoperability amongst all parts of the digital health ecosystem. Key features of the Policy are:

- **Applicability:** The Policy will apply to all entities and individuals who are part of the Mission. These include: (i) all individuals who have an Ayushman Bharat Health Account, (ii) all healthcare professionals, and (iii) any health facility which collects, stores and transmits personal data.
- **Governance structure:** A government officer must be designated as data protection officer for the National Digital Health Ecosystem (NDHE). NDHE refers to the eco-system of data and infrastructure aimed at achieving universal health coverage using data systems, and health infrastructure. The data officer's duties include: (i) communicating with regulators and external stakeholders on matters of data privacy, and (ii) serving as an escalation point for decision making on data governance. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology will provide overall guidance on relevant aspects of the NDHE. There must also be a grievance redressal officer.
- **Consent framework:** The policy prescribes certain principles with regard to processing of personal data by data fiduciaries. As per the policy, individuals should have control and decision-making power over the manner in which their personal data is collected and processed. Further, all entities (such as healthcare providers, companies, and governments) must use appropriate technology to prevent security breaches. The technology must comply with relevant national and international standards.

Comments are invited until May 21, 2022.

## Defence

*Omair Kumar (omir@prsindia.org)*

### Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020 amended

The Defence Acquisition Procedure, 2020 was amended to promote indigenous production of defence equipment.<sup>68</sup> The Defence Acquisition Procedure, 2020 (erstwhile Defence Procurement Procedure) ensures timely acquisition of military equipment required by the armed forces.<sup>69</sup> Further, it seeks to promote 'Make in India' in defence equipment procurement. Key features of the amendments include:

- **Procurement of equipment for Defence Services and Indian Coast Guard:** All modernisation requirements of the Defence Services and Indian Coast Guard will be indigenously sourced irrespective of the nature of procurement. Import of all defence equipment/sourcing from foreign industry of capital acquisitions will be allowed in exceptional cases undertaken with the prior approval of Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)/ Defence Minister. The DAC (Chairman: Defence Minister) approves capital acquisition projects for the services.
- **Wider participation of manufacturing sector:** In order to encourage wider participation from indigenous defence manufacturing sector, the total order quantities in acquisition cases should be split between shortlisted vendors, wherever viable. Further, technically qualified bidders who have not received the contract will be issued a certificate by the Services indicating trial evaluation of the product. This will allow the vendors to explore other markets.
- **Promoting startups:** Projects of startups, and MSMEs are procured under Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) initiative. iDEX is an initiative of the Ministry of Defence through which it procures projects of startups and MSMEs with low capital and high innovation. Currently the process for procurement process under iDEX takes about two years before placing the order. In order to promote defence manufacturing startups, the procurement process from grant of acceptance of necessity to signing of contract under iDEX will be reduced to 22 weeks.

## Rural Development

*Shashank Srivastava (shashank@prsindia.org)*

### Continuation of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan approved

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the continuation of the revamped centrally sponsored Scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) during 2022-26.<sup>70</sup> RGSA aims to strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>71</sup> The scheme will be applicable to all states and UTs.

The revamped scheme aims to enhance the capacities of elected representatives of PRIs to deliver on SDGs at a local level (such as poverty free villages, healthy village, child friendly village). It also aims to: (i) converge capacity building initiatives of other Ministries, (ii) provide evidence-based studies for PRIs, and (iii) undertake activities related awareness generation and dissemination of government policies. No permanent posts will be created under the Scheme. However, need based contractual human resources may be provisioned for overseeing the implementation of the scheme.

The revamped scheme will comprise of central and state components (funding pattern will be in the ratio of 60:40 among centre and state respectively). The estimated cost for the scheme for 2022-26 is estimated to be Rs 5,911 crore. Central share will be Rs 3,700 crore, while the state share will be Rs 2,211 crore.

## Tribal Affairs

*Shubham Dutt (shubham@prsindia.org)*

### Bills to amend lists of SCs and STs in Jharkhand and Tripura passed

The Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Orders (Amendment) Bill, 2022 was passed by Parliament.<sup>72</sup> The Bill includes certain communities in the list of STs in Jharkhand. These are the Deshwari, Ganjhu, Dautalbandi (Dwalbandi), Patbandi, Raut, Maajhia, Khairi, Tamaria, and Puran communities. Further, the Bill omits the Bhogta community from the list of SCs in Jharkhand. The community is instead being included in the list of STs in the state.

The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2022 was also passed.<sup>73</sup> The Bill includes the Darlong community as a sub-tribe of the Kuki tribe in the list of STs in Tripura.

For a PRS summary of the Bills, please see [here](#) and [here](#) respectively.

### Bill to recognise Gond community as an ST in Uttar Pradesh passed by Lok Sabha

The Constitution (Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste) Orders (Second Amendment) Bill, 2022 was passed by Lok Sabha.<sup>74</sup> The Bill amends the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) (Uttar Pradesh) Order, 1967 and the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 in its application to Uttar Pradesh. The Bill transfers the Gond community from the list of SCs to the list of STs in four districts of Uttar Pradesh: (i) Chandauli, (ii) Kushinagar, (iii) Sant Kabir Nagar, and (iv) Sant Ravidas Nagar.

For a PRS Bill Summary, please see [here](#).

<sup>1</sup> Vital Stats, Parliament functioning in Budget Session, 2022, April 7, 2022, [https://prsindia.org/files/parliament/session\\_track/2022/vital\\_stats/Vital%20Stats-Budget%20Session%202022.pdf](https://prsindia.org/files/parliament/session_track/2022/vital_stats/Vital%20Stats-Budget%20Session%202022.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Precaution Dose to be now available to 18+ population group from 10th April, 2022, at Private Vaccination Centres, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Press Information Bureau, April 8, 2022, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1814804>.

<sup>3</sup> “Free-of-Cost vaccination for 12-14 yrs age Group to begin in Govt COVID Vaccination Centers”, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Press Information Bureau, March 15, 2022, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1806104>.

<sup>4</sup> Guidelines for COVID-19 vaccination of children between 15-18 years and precaution dose to HCWs, FLWs & 60+ population with comorbidities, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, December 27, 2021, <https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/GuidelinesforCOVID19VaccinationofChildrenbetween15to18yearsandPrecautionDosestoHCWsFLWs&60populationwithcomorbidities.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> “Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package: Insurance Scheme for Health Workers fighting COVID-19” extended for a further period of 180 days, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Press Information Bureau, April 19, 2022, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1817977>.

<sup>6</sup> “Consumer Price Index Numbers on Base 2012=100 for Rural, Urban and Combined for the Month of March 2022”, Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, April 12, 2022, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1816066>.

<sup>7</sup> Index Numbers of Wholesale Price in India for the month of March, 2022 (Base Year: 2011-12), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, April 18, 2022, [https://eaindustry.nic.in/archive\\_data/wpi\\_press\\_release/summary\\_feb\\_2022.doc](https://eaindustry.nic.in/archive_data/wpi_press_release/summary_feb_2022.doc).

<sup>8</sup> Monetary Policy Statement, 2022-23 Resolution of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) April 6-8, 2022, Reserve Bank of India, April 8, 2022, [https://www.rbi.org.in/Scripts/BS\\_PressReleaseDisplay.aspx?prid=53537](https://www.rbi.org.in/Scripts/BS_PressReleaseDisplay.aspx?prid=53537).

<sup>9</sup> “RBI to operationalise Standing Deposit Facility (SDF)”, Reserve Bank of India, April 8, 2022, <https://rbidocs.rbi.org.in/rdocs/PressRelease/PDFs/PR41EEDB742DE65E4773899D156D2FEAF9DD.PDF>.

<sup>10</sup> The Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2022, [http://164.100.47.4/BillsTexts/LSBillTexts/PassedLoksabha/92C\\_2022\\_LS\\_ENG.pdf](http://164.100.47.4/BillsTexts/LSBillTexts/PassedLoksabha/92C_2022_LS_ENG.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> The Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957, <https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1410/1/a1957-66.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> “Cabinet approves continuation of Prime Minister Street Vendor’s AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) beyond March 2022 till December 2024”, Press Information Bureau, April 27, 2022, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1820509>.

<sup>13</sup> “PM SVANidhi” Scheme Guidelines, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, as accessed on April 29, 2022, <https://pmsvanidhi.mohua.gov.in/Home/Schemes>.

<sup>14</sup> The Chartered Accountants, the Cost and Works Accountants and the Company Secretaries (Amendment) Bill, 2021 [http://164.100.47.4/BillsTexts/LSBillTexts/Asintroduced/161\\_2021\\_LS\\_ENG.pdf](http://164.100.47.4/BillsTexts/LSBillTexts/Asintroduced/161_2021_LS_ENG.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> The Chartered Accountants Act, 1949, India Code, [https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1552/1/AAA1949\\_38.pdf](https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1552/1/AAA1949_38.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> The Cost and Works Accountants Act, 1959, India Code, <https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1385/1/195923.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> The Company Secretaries Act, 1980, India Code, <https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1754/1/198056.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> Master Direction – Credit Card and Debit Card – Issuance and Conduct Directions, 2022, Reserve Bank of India, April 21, 2022, <https://rbidocs.rbi.org.in/rdocs/notification/PDFs/92MDCREDITDEBITCARD423AFFB5E7945149C95CDD2F71E9158.PDF>.

<sup>19</sup> “46<sup>th</sup> Report: Strengthening Credit Flows to the MSME Sector, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, April 8, 2022, [http://164.100.47.193/Isscommittee/Finance/17\\_Finance\\_46.pdf](http://164.100.47.193/Isscommittee/Finance/17_Finance_46.pdf).

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