

# India Governance Watch

*Viksit Bharat's Policy And  
Administrative Developments*



**16<sup>th</sup> February - 28<sup>th</sup> February**

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## India Governance Watch

### Viksit Bharat's Policy And Administrative Developments

(16<sup>th</sup> February, 2026 - 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2026)

#### Executive Summary

This document tracks the various key economic and policy decisions made by the Central Government between **16<sup>th</sup> February 2026 and 28<sup>th</sup> February 2026**. Some of the important announcements and policy updates are as follows:

#### I. Economic Growth And Structural Reforms

- A. **National Monetisation Pipeline 2.0 Launched to Unlock ₹ 16.72 Lakh Crore:** The Government has launched NMP 2.0 for FY 2026–2030 to monetise brownfield public infrastructure and **mobilise ₹ 16.72 lakh crore**, including ₹ 5.8 lakh crore in private investment. The initiative will recycle capital from existing assets across key sectors such as highways, power, ports, railways, and coal to finance new infrastructure development.
- B. **Mining Rules Amended to Regulate Co-Mining and High-Value Mineral Discoveries:** The Government has amended the Mineral Concession Rules **to allow leaseholders to add newly discovered minerals to existing leases**. If a major mineral like coal or lignite exceeds 25% of the site's value, the lease will be reallocated with mandatory compensation to the original holder, smaller discoveries can be mined upon payment of applicable royalties.

#### II. Infrastructure, Technology And Sustainability

- A. **Cabinet Approval for Enhanced Equity Delegation to Power Grid Corporation of India Limited:** The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has **increased POWERGRID's equity investment** limit from ₹ 5,000 crore to ₹ 7,500 crore per subsidiary, while retaining the 15% net worth cap. This strengthens its capacity to undertake large renewable energy evacuation and high-capacity transmission projects under tariff-based competitive bidding.
- B. **Aircraft (Carriage of Dangerous Goods) Rules, 2026:** The Ministry of Civil Aviation has notified the Aircraft (Carriage of Dangerous Goods) Rules, 2026, **to strengthen the regulation of hazardous materials transported by air**. The new rules mandate DGCA approvals, prescribe compliance standards and training requirements, and establish enforcement mechanisms to enhance aviation safety and regulatory oversight.
- C. **Draft Aircraft Accident Investigation Amendment Rules, 2026 Issued:** The Ministry of Civil Aviation has released draft amendment rules inserting a supersession clause to formally replace the 2017 investigation framework, ensuring statutory continuity while safeguarding actions taken under the earlier regime. The amendment establishes a **single legal authority** for accident probes, strengthening procedural clarity, timeliness, transparency, and aviation safety oversight once notified.

## Executive Summary

### III. Human Development And Social Welfare

- A. **Proposal To Rename “Kerala” As “Keralam” Approved by Union Cabinet:** The Union Cabinet has cleared the proposal to **rename “Kerala” as “Keralam”** by initiating the constitutional amendment process through Parliament after seeking the State Legislature’s views, marking a significant step toward aligning the state’s official name with its linguistic and cultural identity.
- B. **Drugs Rules, 1945 Amended To Strengthen Endotoxin Testing And Licensing Compliance:** The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has notified the Drugs (Amendment) Rules, 2026, **mandating stricter endotoxin testing for injectables** and compulsory qualified supervision of drug sales with timely reporting to licensing authorities to enhance patient safety and regulatory compliance, reinforcing quality assurance standards nationwide.
- C. **Government Pauses Rice Fortification Under PMGKAY Following IIT Kharagpur Study:** The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution has temporarily **halted rice fortification under PMGKAY** and other welfare schemes after an IIT Kharagpur study found significant micronutrient loss in stored fortified rice, while maintaining full foodgrain entitlements and allowing States flexibility for Kharif 2025–26 supplies.

### IV. National Security And Foreign Policy

- A. **Vibrant Villages Programme–II:** The Central Government has launched **VVP–II** with an allocation of ₹ 6,839 crore to develop **1,954 strategic border villages** through improved infrastructure, connectivity, and livelihood support. The initiative aims to enhance border security, promote sustainable local development, and curb out-migration from remote frontier regions.
- B. **Empowered Committee Formed for Citizenship Applications in West Bengal:** The Ministry of Home Affairs has constituted a multi-agency, technology-enabled Empowered Committee in West Bengal to process citizenship applications with **enhanced digital verification, inter-agency coordination, and strengthened security scrutiny**, ensuring a faster yet standardised and legally compliant decision-making process.

### V. Rural And Agricultural Transformation

- A. **Fertiliser (Control) Amendment Order, 2026:** The Government has revised the Fertiliser (Control) Order, 1985, to update specifications, composition standards, crop-wise recommendations, and dosage norms for biostimulants. It also introduces new categories, including **humic and fulvic acids, seaweed extracts, botanical extracts, and mixed formulations**, strengthening quality control, regulatory oversight, and standardisation across the sector.

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## I. Economic Growth And Structural Reforms

### A. Policy Updates

#### 1. National Monetisation Pipeline 2.0 Launched Targeting ₹ 16.72 Lakh Crore For Infrastructure Financing - Ministry of Finance

**Status:** Initiated | **Impact Level:** High | **Source:** [PIB](#), [ET Infra](#)

The Ministry of Finance has launched the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP 2.0), developed by NITI Aayog, for the period FY 2026 to FY 2030 with an aggregate monetisation target of ₹ 16.72 lakh crore, including ₹ 5.8 lakh crore in direct private sector investment. The programme focuses on asset recycling, where rights to brownfield public infrastructure are transferred to private players to unlock capital for new projects. Key sectors involved include **Highways (26%), Power (17%), Ports (16%), Railways (16%), and Coal (13%)**. The first phase of NMP, which achieved nearly 90% of its ₹ 6 lakh crore target, also incurred pipeline unpredictability that constrained participation, prompting NMP 2.0 to adopt a whole-of-government, medium-term roadmap that gives private investors advance visibility over upcoming monetisation opportunities.

#### 2. Government Notifies Mineral Concession (Amendment) Rules, 2026 To Regulate Co-Mining - Ministry of Coal

**Status:** Initiated | **Impact Level:** High | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#)

The Ministry of Coal has notified the Mineral Concession (Amendment) Rules, 2026, allowing **leaseholders to include co-occurring minerals in existing leases**, subject to mandatory reporting of newly discovered minerals and a ban on extraction until inclusion is approved. State Governments must decide on an inclusion application within 60 days. If a minor mineral leaseholder finds a major mineral (like coal or lignite) that makes up more than 25% of the total deposit's value, the lease will be taken back and reallocated to a specialised operator. The original leaseholder will receive fair compensation. However, if the major mineral's value is 25% or less, the leaseholder can include it in production after paying the required royalty. The amendment closes a gap where incidental mineral discoveries went unreported and led to revenue leakage, and helps to ensure high-value energy minerals are channelled to specialist operators.

### B. Announcements

#### 1. Government Launches Seven New Interventions Under Export Promotion Mission To Empower MSMEs - Ministry of Commerce and Industry

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [PIB](#)

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has significantly expanded the Export Promotion Mission (EPM) by launching **seven additional interventions, bringing the total to ten operational measures** aimed at strengthening the export ecosystem. With a total outlay of ₹ 25,060 crore for FY 2025–26 to FY 2030–31, the

mission is implemented through two sub-schemes: Niryat Protsahan (financial enablers) and Niryat Disha (non-financial/market access enablers). Key new additions include support for Export Factoring with a 2.75% interest subvention, credit assistance for E-commerce exporters via EXIM Bank, and risk-sharing instruments for emerging markets. By converging financial support with technical standards and market linkages, the EPM facilitates a more inclusive and decentralised export growth strategy, helping small businesses scale up and sustain their participation in international trade.

## 2. **New Series Of GDP Estimates With Revised Base Year 2022-23 - Ministry Of Statistics & Programme Implementation**

**Status:** Completed | **Source:** [PIB](#)

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has officially released a new series of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) estimates, **revising the base year from 2011-12 to 2022-23**. For FY 2025-26, Real GDP is estimated to reach ₹ 322.58 lakh crore, reflecting a growth rate of 7.6%, up from 7.1% in the previous year. The revision introduces significant methodological changes, including the use of the Proportional Denton method for benchmarking and the adoption of a Double Deflation method for the manufacturing sector to ensure higher accuracy. These updates align national accounts with international best practices and provide a more representative benchmark for macroeconomic analysis.

## 3. **Industrial Relations Code (Amendment) Act, 2026 Notified - Ministry Of Labour And Employment**

**Status:** Completed | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#)

The Ministry of Labour and Employment has enacted the Industrial Relations Code (Amendment) Act, 2026, with **retrospective effect from 21<sup>st</sup> November 2025**, to amend the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, and repeal the Trade Unions Act, 1926, Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946, and Industrial Disputes Act, 1947. The amendment ensures a unified and streamlined framework for labour governance, while existing tribunals and authorities under the repealed laws will continue to function until the new system becomes fully operational, ensuring continuity and smoother industrial relations.

## 4. **IFSCA Proposes Draft Electronic Trading Platforms (ETP) Regulations 2026 - International Financial Services Centres Authority**

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [IFSCA](#)

The International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) has released the draft **Electronic Trading Platforms (ETP) Regulations, 2026**, to establish a formal regulatory framework for specialised trading venues in the IFSCA. Unlike traditional exchanges, these ETPs are designed for institutional participants to match buy and sell orders for financial instruments such as money market tools, debt securities,

and foreign exchange products with bilateral settlement. The regulations mandate that operators incorporate as a company in the IFSCA and adhere to strict net worth, governance, and technology risk standards. This policy significantly impacts the financial ecosystem by attracting global liquidity and offshore operators to the GIFT-IFSCA, providing a transparent and non-discriminatory environment for sophisticated trading.

#### 5. **RoDTEP Rates Rationalised For Exporters – Ministry Of Commerce And Industry**

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#), [The Economic Times](#)

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has amended the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) Scheme with immediate effect. The notification **limits all RoDTEP rates for HS (Harmonised System) Lines to 50% of existing rates**, and where applicable, reduces the notified value caps by 50%. As a result, exporters will now receive RoDTEP benefits at only half of the previously notified rates and value caps, effective immediately, a move aimed at fiscal rationalisation that increases the effective cost of compliance and reduces the global price competitiveness for Indian goods.

#### 6. **Tariff Values Updated For Palm Oil, Soybean Oil, Brass, Gold, Silver, And Areca Nuts – Ministry Of Finance**

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#)

The Ministry of Finance, through the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), has revised the benchmark tariff values for critical imported commodities, including **crude and refined edible oils, brass scrap, gold, silver, and areca nuts**. This statutory revision adjusts base valuations to reflect current international market prices, ensuring accurate duty assessment and preventing revenue leakage from under-invoicing.

#### 7. **Draft Explosives Amendment Rules 2026 - Ministry of Commerce and Industry**

**Status:** Initiated | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#)

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has issued the draft Explosives (Amendment) Rules, 2026, to modernise safety protocols and support the domestic defence industry. A major highlight is the formal inclusion of "Defence Explosives," which allows private manufacturers to produce specialised military explosives in accordance with STEC (Storage and Transport of Explosives Committee) safety standards. To accelerate innovation, a new permission category allows research labs, Startups, and MSMEs to manufacture and store up to **5 kg of explosives for R&D without the licensing process**. These changes significantly boost **Defence Indigenisation** by providing a clear legal framework, speeding up the R&D cycle for new materials, and replacing generic safety rules with mission-specific standards.

## 8. Master Guidelines on Anti Money Laundering, Counter-Terrorist Financing and Know Your Customer Compliance - International Financial Services Centres Authority

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [IFSCA](#)

The International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) has released the Master Guidelines on Anti-Money Laundering (AML), Countering the Financing of Terrorism (CFT), and Know Your Customer (KYC). These guidelines consolidate and update existing compliance standards for all Regulated Entities (REs) operating within the IFSCA. The framework mandates a risk-based approach to customer due diligence, requiring entities to implement robust monitoring systems to identify and report suspicious transactions. By **aligning local regulations with global FATF (Financial Action Task Force) standards**, this update significantly enhances the financial integrity of the GIFT-IFSCA ecosystem.

## II. Infrastructure, Technology And Sustainability

### A. Policy Updates

#### 1. Cabinet Approves Enhanced Equity Investment Delegation For POWERGRID - Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs

**Status:** Announced | **Impact Level:** High | **Source:** [PIB](#)

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved an enhanced delegation of powers to POWERGRID, increasing its **equity investment threshold from ₹ 5,000 crore per subsidiary to ₹ 7,500 crore per subsidiary**, while retaining the existing cap of 15% of the company's net worth. This revision enables participation in capital-intensive projects like Ultra High Voltage Alternating Current (UHVAC) and High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) networks, fostering greater competition in Tariff-Based Competitive Bidding (TBCB) to ensure better price discovery and affordable clean energy for consumers.

#### 2. Mandatory Sale Of Ethanol Blended Motor Spirit Notified - Ministry Of Petroleum And Natural Gas

**Status:** Completed | **Impact Level:** High | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#), [TOI](#)

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has mandated the sale of Ethanol Blended Motor Spirit (E20) with up to **20% ethanol and a minimum Research Octane Number (RON) of 95** across all States and Union Territories, superseding the 2021 notification under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. India achieved the 20% blending target in 2025, five years ahead of the original 2030 deadline, and this notification formalises E20 as the national fuel standard, with flexibility for the Centre to permit exemptions for specific regions and limited periods under exceptional circumstances. Ethanol blending since 2014-15 is estimated to have saved over ₹ 1.4 lakh crore in foreign exchange, reduced greenhouse gas emissions by up to 30% with E20 compared to E10, and boosted rural incomes by creating

demand for sugarcane and grain-based ethanol, though owners of older vehicles may experience a slight decline in fuel efficiency.

### 3. Aircraft (Carriage Of Dangerous Goods) Rules, 2026 Notified – Ministry of Civil Aviation

**Status:** Completed | **Impact Level:** High | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#), [ET Infra](#)

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has notified the Aircraft (Carriage of Dangerous Goods) Rules, 2026 replacing the 2003 rules, to regulate the air transport of dangerous goods to and from India. Indian operators now require **mandatory Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) certification** (valid for up to five years, renewable) to carry dangerous goods, while foreign carriers must obtain prior DGCA approval, with a six-month transitional window for existing operators. They also require training programs, inspections, accident/incident reporting, prescribed fees, DGCA directions, and provisions for appeals and penalties, ensuring safe and standardised handling of dangerous goods. This shifts the framework from a compliance-oriented model to a DGCA-led oversight regime with defined approval cycles and enforcement powers, aligning domestic dangerous goods regulation with International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) standards.

## B. Announcements

### 1. MeitY Constitutes High-Level Committee To Harmonise DigiLocker Regulatory Framework - Ministry of Electronics & IT

**Status:** Initiated | **Source:** [PIB](#)

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has constituted a high-level committee, chaired by former Secretary Shri Ajay Sawhney, to **harmonise the regulatory framework for DigiLocker**. The committee's mandate includes a legislative review of existing Digital Locker rules to align them with the current technical and legal landscape. Furthermore, the panel is tasked with charting a future roadmap for Entity Locker, ecosystem expansion, and the **potential commercialisation of the Digital Locker system**. This initiative aims to enhance the Digital India ecosystem by promoting "Ease of Living" for citizens and "Ease of Doing Business" for organisations through a more robust and scalable digital document framework.

### 2. Draft Aircraft (Investigation Of Accidents And Incidents) (First Amendment) Rules, 2026 Issued – Ministry Of Civil Aviation

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#)

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has issued the draft Aircraft (Investigation of Accidents and Incidents) (First Amendment) Rules, 2026, to clarify the legal transition to the updated framework by inserting a supersession clause, explicitly replacing the 2017 Rules while safeguarding actions taken under the earlier regime. The amendment provides statutory continuity and eliminates regulatory overlap, ensuring that the

Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau **functions under a single, updated legal authority**, thereby strengthening procedural clarity, investigative efficiency, and legal certainty in air accident probes. This will result in faster, legally robust investigations with reduced regulatory ambiguity and improved institutional accountability.

### 3. Signatories To New Delhi Declaration On AI Impact Rise To 91 Following AI Impact Summit 2026 - Ministry of Electronics & IT

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [PIB](#)

The Ministry of Electronics & IT has announced that the total number of signatories to the **New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact** has reached 91 countries and international organisations. Following the conclusion of the AI Impact Summit 2026 held on 18–19 February, three additional nations, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, and Guatemala, have officially endorsed the declaration. This international accord serves as a significant milestone in global cooperation, establishing a shared framework for the ethical development, deployment, and regulation of artificial intelligence.

## III. Human Development and Social Welfare

### A. Policy Updates

#### 1. Proposal To Rename “Kerala” As “Keralam” Approved by Union Cabinet - Union Cabinet

**Status:** Completed | **Impact Level:** High | **Source:** [PIB](#), [Hindustan Times](#)

The Union Cabinet of India has approved a proposal to **rename the State of “Kerala”** as **“Keralam”**, advancing the process under Article 3 of the Constitution to amend the First Schedule of the Constitution. Following the Cabinet’s decision, the President will refer the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026, to the Kerala Legislative Assembly to seek its views. Once received, the Centre will seek a Presidential recommendation and introduce the Bill in Parliament for final approval. The move, reflecting a longstanding demand to align the official name with the state’s Malayalam linguistic and cultural identity, comes ahead of the scheduled Assembly elections and signifies a major step in recognising local nomenclature.

#### 2. Drugs Rules, 1945 Amended To Strengthen Endotoxin Testing And Licensing Compliance - Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

**Status:** Initiated | **Impact Level:** High | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#)

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has introduced the Drugs (Amendment) Rules, 2026, to streamline and strengthen the regulatory framework governing the testing, approval, and distribution of medicines across the country. A major safety update requires **all injectable medicines to undergo stricter testing** for bacteria and impurities to meet the latest national quality standards. Furthermore, the rules now mandate that any business selling drugs must operate under the direct, personal supervision of a qualified expert, and any change in this supervising staff

must be reported to the licensing authority within 30 days. These changes impact the healthcare sector by reducing the risk of contaminated injectables reaching patients and ensuring that medicine sales are always managed by competent professionals.

### 3. SAHI And BODH Initiatives Launched To Strengthen Responsible AI Ecosystem In Healthcare – Ministry Of Health And Family Welfare

**Status:** Initiated | **Impact Level:** High | **Source:** [PIB](#), [The Economic Times](#)

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched two digital initiatives, SAHI and BODH, to ensure the ethical and responsible integration of AI in healthcare. SAHI serves as the national governance framework, setting standards for transparency and accountability, while BODH, developed by IIT Kanpur and the National Health Authority, functions as a sandbox to test AI models on anonymised real-world health data. Together, they create **a secure validation ecosystem to ensure AI tools are clinically reliable** and free from bias before large scale deployment, thereby accelerating safe and trustworthy adoption across diagnostics, personalised treatment, and pharmaceutical research.

## B. Announcements

### 1. Government Temporarily Discontinues Rice Fortification Under PMGKAY – Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution

**Status:** Initiated | **Source:** [PIB](#)

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution has temporarily discontinued rice fortification under PMGKAY and other welfare schemes following an IIT Kharagpur study that found significant micronutrient loss and reduced shelf life of Fortified Rice Kernels due to prolonged storage and climatic variations. The pause aims to **recalibrate the nutrient delivery mechanism** to ensure effectiveness at the point of consumption, while maintaining full foodgrain entitlements under the PDS, ICDS, and Mid-Day Meal Scheme, with States and UTs given flexibility for the 2025–26 Kharif crop to prevent any disruption to food security.

### 2. Draft Regulations To Define Food Contact Materials And Advanced Packaging Standards – Food Safety and Standards Authority of India

**Status:** Initiated | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#)

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has issued the Food Safety and Standards (Packaging) Amendment Regulations, 2026, **introducing six new technical definitions** into the 2018 Packaging Regulations. The draft expands the 2018 regulations by defining Food Contact Materials (FCM) and Food Grade Contact Materials, which must meet specific safety standards to prevent undesirable effects on food composition or human health. The notification also institutionalises

definitions for Modified Atmosphere Packaging (MAP), Aseptic Packaging, and Non-Intentionally Added Substances (NIAS).

### 3. **Cashless Treatment Of Road Accident Victims (Amendment) Scheme 2026 - Ministry of Road Transport and Highways**

**Status:** Initiated | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#), [PIB](#)

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has notified the Cashless Treatment of Road Accident Victims (Amendment) Scheme, 2026, officially renaming the 2025 initiative to the Prime Minister Road Accident Victims' Hospitalisation and Assured Treatment (PM-RAHAT) Scheme. Under the scheme, every eligible road accident victim is entitled to cashless treatment up to **₹ 1.5 lakh per victim for seven days** from the date of accident, with stabilisation care guaranteed for up to 24 hours in non-life-threatening cases and 48 hours in life-threatening cases. It is integrated with the 112 Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) for Golden Hour coordination. It removes the upfront financial barrier that often leads hospitals to turn away accident victims during the critical first hour of care.

## IV. **National Security and Foreign Policy**

### A. **Policy Updates**

#### 1. **Vibrant Villages Programme-II Launched To Strengthen Security And Development Along International Land Borders - Ministry of Home Affairs**

**Status:** Initiated | **Impact Level:** High | **Source:** [PIB](#), [The Hindu](#)

The Vibrant Villages Programme-II (VVP-II) has been launched by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) as a Central Sector Scheme with a total outlay of ₹ 6,839 crore sanctioned through FY 2028-29. It targets the **comprehensive development of 1,954 strategic villages** across 334 blocks in 15 States and 2 Union Territories through a saturation-based and convergence-driven approach to ensure all-weather road connectivity, 24x7 electrification, and high-speed telecom services. The programme repositions border settlements from "last villages" to "first villages of India," aiming to reverse out-migration from border areas and integrate local populations as a strategic support base for Border Guarding Forces (BGFs), thereby enhancing surveillance, preventing trans-border crimes, and reinforcing internal security.

#### 2. **Empowered Committee Constituted For Citizenship Applications In West Bengal - Ministry of Home Affairs**

**Status:** Initiated | **Impact Level:** High | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#), [Tribune](#)

The Ministry of Home Affairs has established a specialised Empowered Committee for West Bengal **to handle citizenship applications** under the updated national framework. Led by the Directorate of Census Operations, the committee brings together senior officials from the Intelligence Bureau, the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO), and the Department of Posts. The group also utilises the National Informatics Centre (NIC) to ensure all applications are verified digitally.

This initiative impacts the region by creating a clear, technology-driven path for citizenship that is strictly checked for security. By involving multiple agencies, the Government is ensuring that the process is both faster and more transparent, providing a standardised way to manage applications while maintaining thorough background checks.

## B. Announcements

### 1. India Removes MFN Clause And Revises Dividend Tax Under France DTAA - Ministry of Finance

**Status:** Completed | **Source:** [PIB](#), [Business Standard](#)

The Ministry of Finance, in consultation with France, has amended the 1992 **Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA)** to remove the **Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN)** clause and revise dividend taxation provisions. The updated treaty provides that capital gains on the sale of shares are taxed in the country of the company's residence, while dividend withholding tax is reduced to 5% for French investors holding at least 10% equity and to 15% for others. The amendments also modernise provisions on technical fees and permanent establishments, providing clarity, certainty, and alignment with international tax standards. These changes aim to promote bilateral investment and simplify cross-border tax compliance and will come into effect after ratification by both Governments.

### 2. India And Israel Commit To Expediting Free Trade Area Agreement Negotiations - Ministry of Commerce and Industry

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [PIB](#)

During the February 2026 state visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Israel, India and Israel **formally signed the Terms of Reference (ToR)** for the proposed Free Trade Area (FTA), thereby initiating the negotiation process, with the first round held in New Delhi. The respective negotiating teams have been mandated to advance discussions expeditiously to facilitate the early conclusion of the agreement and to unlock the full potential of bilateral trade and investment. Building on the September 2025 Bilateral Investment Agreement, the FTA aims to enhance investor protection and deepen economic cooperation under the **Special Strategic Partnership**.

### 3. India and Israel Ink Historic MoU In Fisheries And Aquaculture Sector - Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [PIB](#)

India and Israel signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to deploy advanced Israeli technologies, such as Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS), automation-based farming, and water-reuse technologies, to boost India's Blue Economy. A key highlight is the establishment of new **Indo-Israel Centres of Excellence (CoEs)** and the technical cooperation to set up an oceanarium in India.

The partnership also targets climate-resilient farming, seaweed-based mariculture, and scientific aquatic disease management to improve the livelihoods of coastal communities. By combining Israel's technical expertise in water-scarce farming with India's vast marine resources, this MoU significantly accelerates sustainable fish production and strengthens the startup ecosystem in innovative aquaculture and product development.

#### 4. **India And Gulf Cooperation Council Formally Launch Negotiations For Free Trade Agreement - Ministry of Commerce and Industry**

**Status:** Initiated | **Source:** [PIB](#)

India and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have officially **launched negotiations** for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) following the signing of a Joint Statement in New Delhi. This milestone follows the approval of the Terms of Reference (ToR) on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2026 and aims to create a robust, legally certain trading arrangement between India and the six GCC member nations. The FTA is being designed to harness mutual synergies, as India's trade with the region has grown at an annual average rate of 15.3% over the last five years.

## V. **Rural And Agricultural Transformation**

### A. **Policy Updates**

#### 1. **Fertiliser (Inorganic, Organic or Mixed) (Control) Amendment Order, 2026 Notified - Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**

**Status:** Initiated | **Impact Level:** High | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#)

The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has notified the Fertiliser (Control) Amendment Order, 2026, under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. The amendment updates **product specifications, composition standards, crop-wise recommendations, and dosage norms**, while adding new entries across Humic and Fulvic acids, Seaweed extracts, Botanical extracts, and Mixed formulations. The move strengthens quality standardisation, regulatory clarity, and input compliance, aiming to improve product efficacy and streamline oversight in the biostimulant market.

#### 2. **Insecticides Amendment Rules 2026 - Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**

**Status:** Initiated | **Impact Level:** High | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#)

The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has introduced a two-year extension for **pesticide retailers and dealers to meet new educational and technical standards**. Originally set for mid-2024, the deadline has been moved to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2026, preventing thousands of small-scale businesses from facing immediate legal shutdowns. This move allows shopkeepers more time to qualify under updated safety regulations without disrupting the supply of essential farm inputs. Additionally, the update modernises consumer safety by allowing companies

to replace bulky paper leaflets on household bug sprays with QR codes on the packaging, giving users instant digital access to safety info while cutting down on waste.

### 3. MSP For Raw Jute Increased For 2026–27 Season – Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs

**Status:** Announced | **Impact Level:** Medium | **Source:** [PIB](#), [Business Standard](#)

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved the **Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Raw Jute (TD-3 grade) at ₹ 5,925 per quintal** for the 2026–27 marketing season, an increase of ₹ 275, ensuring a return of 61.8 % over the cost of production and maintaining MSP at not less than 1.5 times the cost. The Jute Corporation of India (JCI) will continue as the nodal procurement agency with losses reimbursed. The increase is expected to improve income security for jute farmers, encourage sustained cultivation, ensure remunerative prices during market fluctuations, and strengthen the stability of the domestic jute supply chain and rural livelihoods.

## B. Announcements

### 1. Access Pass Framework Launched For Regulated Fishing In India's Exclusive Economic Zone – Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying

**Status:** Initiated | **Source:** [PIB](#), [The Economic Times](#)

The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying has implemented the Access Pass system to **facilitate sustainable deep-sea fishing** within India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The framework utilises the Registration and Licensing of Fishing Craft (ReALCRaft) digital portal to issue passes free of cost, providing a single-window interface integrated with the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) for export certification and traceability. While mandatory for approximately sixty-four thousand mechanised vessels, the policy explicitly exempts traditional non-motorised crafts to protect artisanal livelihoods. This initiative aims to align marine harvesting with global eco-labelling standards and to increase the export value of high-value oceanic species such as tuna.

## Annexure - I: Miscellaneous Policy Updates

### A. Policy Updates

#### 1. Lakshadweep (Registration Amendment) Regulation, 2026 Notified – Ministry of Law and Justice

**Status:** Completed | **Impact Level:** Medium | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#)

The **Lakshadweep (Registration Amendment) Regulation, 2026**, notified by the Ministry of Law and Justice, aims to modernise and digitise the registration framework in the Union Territory. By amending the Registration Act, 1908, it mandates that all documents must be accompanied by self-attested true copies and enables secure electronic registration and authentication. It also introduces a formal licensing system for document-writers and clear grounds for refusing registration to curb fraud, streamlines fee refunds and the mandatory registration of court decrees. By aligning Lakshadweep's administrative systems with national digital standards, these changes create a more efficient and accountable environment for property and civil transactions across the islands.

#### 2. New Fishing Rules Introduced in Lakshadweep 2026 – Ministry of Law and Justice

**Status:** Completed | **Impact Level:** Medium | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#)

The Lakshadweep Marine Fisheries Regulation, 2026, notified by the Ministry of Law and Justice, replaces the 2000 framework to strengthen sustainable fisheries governance by mandating vessel licensing, regulating fishing practices and restricted zones, and establishing enforcement and appellate mechanisms. The impact is the creation of a science-based and legally enforceable management regime that prevents overexploitation, strengthens oversight, promotes regulated mariculture, and secures the long term ecological and economic sustainability of Lakshadweep's marine resources.

#### 3. Transplantation Of Human Organs And Tissues Rules, 2014 Amended – Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

**Status:** Completed | **Impact Level:** Medium | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#)

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has notified the **Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Rules, 2026**, amending the 2014 framework under the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act. The amendment removes the requirement of involvement of a National Networking Organisation in the case of Delhi, thereby streamlining procedural oversight within the organ allocation and regulatory mechanism. The change reflects administrative rationalisation to reduce redundancy in transplant governance while retaining the core regulatory safeguards of the existing statutory framework.

## B. Announcements

### 1. Seva Sankalp Resolution Adopted by Union Cabinet - Union Cabinet

**Status:** Completed | **Source:** [PIB](#)

During the historic first meeting at the newly inaugurated '**Seva Teerth**' Prime Minister's Office, the Union Cabinet passed the 'Seva Sankalp' resolution, formally dedicating the new workspace to the service of India's 1.4 billion citizens. The resolution defines the new office not as a centre of power, but as a shrine of service guided by the spirit of '**Nagrik Devo Bhava**' (The Citizen is God). It explicitly commits the Government to a governance model rooted in Constitutional values, transparency, and the pursuit of a 'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India). Under this resolution, every decision made is pledged to prioritise the empowerment of the common man and the nation's collective progress.

### 2. Draft Gas Cylinders (Amendment) Rules, 2026 - Ministry of Commerce and Industry

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#)

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has proposed the Gas Cylinders (Amendment) Rules, 2026, amending the Gas Cylinders Rules, 2016 under the Explosives Act, 1884. The draft expressly **extends import exemptions to cylinders and valves imported by the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Space**, and their public sector undertakings for their own use. It allows licensing authorities to permit higher stacking and narrower gangways for industrial gas cylinders, provided they are secured in certified structured packing, optimising storage and transportation efficiency while maintaining safety standards. These changes reduce the compliance burden for defence and space sector imports, streamline licensing processes, and modernise industrial gas handling norms for the expanding manufacturing and clean energy sectors.

### 3. India-UK Offshore Wind Taskforce Established To Accelerate Strategic Clean Energy Cooperation - Ministry of New and Renewable Energy

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [PIB](#), [The Economic Times](#)

India and the United Kingdom have established the Offshore Wind Taskforce to coordinate the development of India's **offshore wind ecosystem under the Vision 2035 framework**, focusing on standardised seabed leasing, port infrastructure modernisation, and mobilisation of institutional capital. A ₹ 7,453 crore Viability Gap Funding (VGF) scheme has been allocated for projects in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu's offshore zones. The initiative is expected to accelerate commercial offshore wind deployment, port-led industrialisation, attract long-term investment, and ensure reliable renewable power for green hydrogen production, thereby strengthening grid stability and industrial energy security.

#### 4. CBDC-Based Food Subsidy Distribution Pilot Under PMGKAY Launched In Puducherry - Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution

**Status:** Initiated | **Source:** [PIB](#)

The Government of India has initiated a pilot program in Puducherry to transform the delivery of food subsidies under the PMGKAY using Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC). Under this system, food subsidies are credited directly to beneficiaries' CBDC wallets in the form of programmable digital tokens issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). These tokens are specifically designed to be redeemable only for entitled foodgrains at authorised Fair Price Shops (FPS) and merchants. By integrating the **Digital Rupee into the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** framework, the Government aims to create a more transparent, traceable, and frictionless Public Distribution System (PDS).

#### 5. Base Year Of Merchandise Trade Indices Revised To FY 2022-23 - Ministry Of Commerce And Industry

**Status:** Completed | **Source:** [PIB](#), [The Hindu](#)

The Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has **revised the base year for India's Merchandise Trade Indices from FY 2012-13 to FY 2022-23** to reflect structural transformations in the economy, shifts in commodity composition, and evolving global trade dynamics over the past decade. The revised series incorporates an updated commodity basket at the Principal Commodity level and a re-aligned weighting structure based on recent trade values, improving representativeness and accuracy. These indices are used by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) in GDP estimation and by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for external sector analysis, thereby ensuring consistency with current macroeconomic realities and alignment with international statistical best practices.

#### 6. CGA Mandates Real-Time Sharing Of Transaction Status For Centrally Sponsored Schemes - Ministry of Finance

**Status:** Completed | **Source:** [CGA](#)

The Controller General of Accounts (CGA) has issued an office memorandum requiring all State Governments to mandatorily share transaction success or failure responses with external portals for Centrally Sponsored Schemes under the SNA SPARSH framework. Currently, while payments are processed through State IFMIS via RBI or NPCI, the final transaction status is often not communicated back to Central or State portals, leaving the transaction lifecycle incomplete. Under these new directives, **States must share these responses on a daily basis and automate system-level integrations** to ensure accurate reporting and smooth reconciliation. This update impacts the fiscal monitoring of major schemes by preventing reporting

gaps and reconciliation issues, ensuring that the "just-in-time" fund release mechanism remains transparent and digitally closed from end to end.

#### 7. **Psychotropic Substances Control Schedule Expanded – Ministry of Finance**

**Status:** Completed | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#)

The Ministry of Finance has amended the Schedule to the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, adding substances including **Hexahydrocannabinol (HHC), Carisoprodol, N-Pyrrolidino protonitazene**, and related compounds in alignment with modifications under the United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971. These measures aim to strengthen the regulation of psychotropic substances, curb abuse, and support national security and public health objectives, with clearly defined small and commercial quantity limits for enforcement and compliance purposes.

#### 8. **TRAI Releases Consultation Paper On Review Of The Rating Of Properties For Digital Connectivity Regulations - Ministry of Communications**

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [PIB](#)

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has released a consultation paper to review the "Rating of Properties for Digital Connectivity Regulations, 2024". This review aims to address signal attenuation challenges posed by advanced 4G and 5G technologies, which are susceptible to interference from building materials and construction designs. A primary proposal is to refine the existing five-star rating system into a **nine-level scale by introducing half-star increments** to better differentiate property performance. Additionally, the paper suggests a design-stage certification for under-construction properties to ensure digital infrastructure is integrated early, rather than waiting for post-completion assessments.

#### 9. **Nationwide Campaign Launched To Accelerate Digital Skilling Via Skill India Digital Hub – Ministry Of Skill Development And Entrepreneurship**

**Status:** Initiated | **Source:** [PIB](#), [NDTV](#)

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has launched the **Badhna Hai Toh Yahan Judna Hai** campaign to expand the reach of the **Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH)**. This initiative aims to deepen the digital skilling ecosystem by offering AI-enabled, industry-aligned courses in over 21 Indian languages. The platform provides a unified interface for upskilling and reskilling, featuring Aadhaar-based eKYC, digitally verified credentials, and personalised career recommendations. By integrating fragmented resources into a mobile-first learning hub, the campaign aims to democratise access to future-ready skills and lifelong learning opportunities for students, professionals, and entrepreneurs nationwide.

## 10. Bee Corridor Initiative For Ecological Plantation Along National Highways Announced – Ministry Of Road Transport And Highways

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [PIB](#), [The Economic Times](#)

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has launched the Bee Corridor initiative, marking a shift from ornamental to ecological plantations along National Highways. This first-of-its-kind project involves developing continuous linear stretches of bee-friendly vegetation, **using native species like Neem, Karanj, and Mahua** to ensure year-round nectar and pollen availability. For the year 2026–27, NHAI plans to plant approximately 40 lakh trees, with 60% dedicated to this initiative, including the development of at least three specific pollinator corridors. The move aims to mitigate ecological stress on pollinators, thereby boosting biodiversity and improving agricultural productivity in areas adjacent to the highway network.

## 11. VoicERA Open-Source Voice AI Stack Integrated Into National BHASHINI Infrastructure – Ministry Of Electronics And Information Technology

**Status:** Initiated | **Source:** [PIB](#)

The Digital India BHASHINI Division under the Digital India Corporation (DIC), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), has launched VoicERA, an open-source, **end-to-end Voice AI stack integrated into the national BHASHINI infrastructure**. This establishes a sovereign execution layer for multilingual voice systems, designed to be interoperable, cloud-deployable, and secure. The policy aims to democratise digital access, allowing citizens to interact with state services, such as agriculture advisories and grievance redressal, in their native languages via voice. By modularising the voice stack, the initiative enables Government departments and private innovators to deploy real-time speech systems and conversational AI at a population scale without vendor lock-in.

## 12. TRAI Releases Recommendations On Auction Of Radio Frequency Spectrum For IMT Services - Ministry of Communications

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [PIB](#)

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has released comprehensive recommendations for the upcoming auction of radio frequency spectrum in bands identified for International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT). To encourage new market entrants, the **net-worth requirement has been significantly reduced from ₹ 100 crore to ₹ 50 crore per Licensed Service Area (LSA)**. The recommendations span multiple frequency bands, including the 600 MHz band, which is proposed to be auctioned with a 24-year validity period (20 years plus a 4-year extension) and a four-year payment moratorium for buyers. Additionally, TRAI has advised that spectrum held by providers undergoing insolvency proceedings under the

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016, be reclaimed by the Government and included in the forthcoming auction.

**13. CAQM Issues Statutory Mandate for Enhanced Particulate Matter Emission Standards in Delhi-NCR - Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [PIB](#)

The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has issued Statutory Direction establishing a **uniform Particulate Matter (PM) emission standard of 50 mg/Nm<sup>3</sup> for industrial operations** within the Delhi-NCR region. This transition, based on technical assessments by IIT Kanpur and the Central Pollution Control Board, targets seventeen categories of highly polluting industries, including red-category units, food processing, textiles, and metal furnaces. Compliance is mandated under a phased timeline, large and medium-scale industries must meet the revised standard by 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2026, followed by all remaining identified units by 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2026. This directive aims to mitigate industrial stack emissions and secondary particulate formation to improve regional air quality and public health outcomes.

**14. Central Armed Police Forces Assistant Commandants Examination Rules 2026 - Ministry of Home Affairs**

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#)

The Ministry of Home Affairs has notified the official rules for the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) Assistant Commandants (AC) Examination, 2026, to be conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). The examination will fill vacancies for Assistant Commandants in the BSF, CRPF, CISF, ITBP, and SSB. Key updates include a **10% reservation for Ex-Servicemen** and eligibility for both male and female candidates. Candidates must be between 20 and 25 years of age as of 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2026, with prescribed age relaxations for SC/ST, OBC, and civilian central Government servants.

**15. Strategic Partnership Between IFSCA And IICA To Strengthen Corporate Governance At GIFT-IFSC - Ministry of Finance**

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [PIB](#)

IFSCA and the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA) have formalised a MoU to establish a **standardised corporate governance ecosystem within the GIFT-IFSC jurisdiction**. This collaborative framework focuses on enhancing regulatory effectiveness through targeted capacity building, policy research, and technical advisory services. Under the agreement, the IICA will provide institutional support to registered entities to ensure compliance with global governance benchmarks and evolving regulatory standards. The partnership includes the development of specialised training modules covering critical areas such as Environmental, Social, and Governance protocols, cross-border restructuring, and allied corporate laws to bolster the global competitiveness of the financial centre.



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