

# India Governance Watch

*Viksit Bharat's Policy And  
Administrative Developments*



**1<sup>st</sup> February - 15<sup>th</sup> February**

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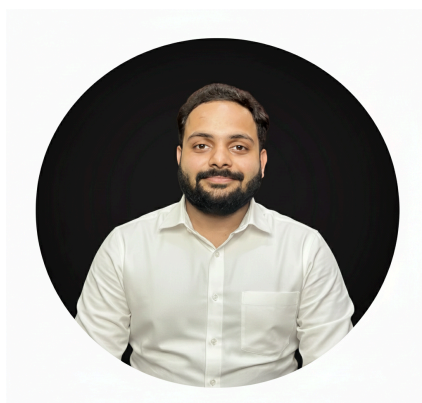
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## India Governance Watch

### Viksit Bharat's Policy And Administrative Developments

(1<sup>st</sup> February, 2026 - 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2026)

#### Executive Summary

This document tracks the various key economic and policy decisions made by the Central Government between **1<sup>st</sup> February 2026 and 15<sup>th</sup> February 2026**. Some of the important announcements and policy updates are as follows:

#### I. Economic Growth And Structural Reforms

- A. India-US Interim Trade Framework Announced:** India and the United States have released a joint statement for an Interim Trade Agreement framework ahead of a full Bilateral Trade Agreement. India will **lower tariffs on select US goods**, while the US has proposed **calibrated reciprocal 18% tariffs** with rollbacks on key Indian exports. The framework will improve market access and strengthen supply chain cooperation.
- B. Government Retains 41% Vertical Devolution to States:** The Ministry of Finance has accepted the 16<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission's recommendation to **retain the vertical devolution share at 41%**. The Union Budget 2026-27 provides ₹ 1.4 lakh crore as Finance Commission Grants to states.
- C. India and GCC Sign Terms of Reference for FTA:** India and the Gulf Cooperation Council have signed the Terms of Reference **to begin negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement**. With bilateral trade at around \$ 170 billion, the FTA is expected to enhance energy security and expand export opportunities.
- D. MPC Keeps Repo Rate Unchanged at 5.25% with Neutral Stance:** The Monetary Policy Committee has kept the **policy repo rate unchanged at 5.25% and has maintained a neutral stance**. The RBI projects steady growth and a calibrated inflation path while noting strong external sector fundamentals.
- E. RBI Issues Draft Directions on Advertising and Sales of Financial Products:** The Reserve Bank of India has issued draft directions tightening **norms on advertising, marketing and sale of financial products** by regulated entities. It seeks to curb mis-selling, prohibit misleading digital practices and strengthen customer suitability and disclosure standards.

#### II. Infrastructure, Technology And Sustainability

- A. Government Tightens AI Content Rules, Slashes Takedown Timeline to Three Hours:** The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has amended the IT Rules, 2021, to regulate AI-generated and synthetic content, effective from 20<sup>th</sup> February 2026. Platforms must label AI content clearly and **remove unlawful material within three hours of notice**.
- B. Government Extends Startup Recognition for Deeptech Firms to 20 Years:** The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade has extended Startup India

## Executive Summary

**recognition for deeptech firms to 20 years and raised the turnover cap to ₹ 300 crore.** The move supports high R&D, long-gestation sectors such as AI and biotechnology with longer access to incentives and regulatory benefits.

- C. Urban Challenge Fund Approved by Cabinet:** The Union Cabinet has **approved a ₹ 1 lakh crore Urban Challenge Fund** to catalyse up to ₹ 4 lakh crore in market-linked urban infrastructure investment, with **at least 50% financing to be raised from market sources.** The scheme includes a ₹ 5,000 crore Credit Repayment Guarantee to support smaller and northeastern cities in accessing loans and strengthening ULB creditworthiness.

### III. Human Development and Social Welfare

- A. Civil Services Examination Rules, 2026:** The Department of Personnel and Training has amended the rules governing UPSC recruitment to 23 services, **restricting re-application by serving IAS and IFS officers**, and barring IPS officers from reapplying to the IPS cadre. The amendments also introduce enhanced digital application processes and stricter verification norms to strengthen transparency and administrative discipline in recruitment.
- B. Industrial Relations Code (Amendment) Bill, 2026:** The Industrial Relations Code (Amendment) Bill, 2026, has been passed in both Houses of Parliament. The bill amends the Industrial Relations Code, 2020 and aims to **simplify compliance requirements, strengthen dispute resolution mechanisms**, and clarify provisions related to wages, standing orders and trade union recognition.
- C. Draft New Drugs and Clinical Trials (Amendment) Rules, 2026 Issued:** The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has released draft amendments to **remove provisional registration of ethics committees** and mandate streamlined online approvals within defined timelines.

### IV. National Security and Foreign Policy

- A. Ex-Servicemen Re-employment (Amendment) Rules, 2026 Notified:** The Ministry of Defence has amended the 1979 Rules to formally include **Military Nursing Service personnel within the definition of ex-servicemen** for re-employment in Central Civil Services and posts. The change ensures parity in eligibility, appointment and seniority benefits.
- B. DAC Clears Capital Acquisition Proposals Including 114 Rafale Aircraft:** The Defence Acquisition Council has approved capital acquisition proposals **worth approximately ₹ 3.60 lakh crore, including procurement of 114 Rafale** multirole fighter aircraft along with missiles, surveillance platforms and upgrades of armoured systems. This will strengthen India's defence industrial ecosystem while addressing squadron strength gaps in the Indian Air Force.

## Executive Summary

### **C. Draft Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2026 Released for Public Consultation:**

The Ministry of Defence has placed the Draft DAP 2026 in the public domain to replace DAP-2020 and align procurement with modernisation and Aatmanirbhar Bharat goals. The draft **prioritises Buy (Indian-IDDM), simplifies eligibility norms, promotes digitisation** and innovation, and seeks to speed up acquisition timelines.

## Table of Contents

<b>I. Economic Growth And Structural Reforms</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>A. Policy Updates</b>	<b>9</b>
1. India–US Announce Interim Trade Framework Ahead Of Full Bilateral Deal - Ministry Of Commerce and Industry	9
2. RBI Notifies Risk-Based Deposit Insurance Premium Framework – Reserve Bank of India	9
3. Exemption Of Small NBFCs From Mandatory RBI Registration – Reserve Bank Of India	9
4. RBI Tightens Credit Norms For Capital Market Intermediaries - Reserve Bank of India	10
5. SEBI Revises Margin Benefit For Calendar Spreads In Single Stock Derivatives - Security Exchange Board of India	10
<b>B. Announcements</b>	<b>10</b>
1. Government Retains 41% Vertical Devolution As Recommended By The Sixteenth Finance Commission - Ministry of Finance	10
2. India And GCC Sign Terms Of Reference For a Free Trade Agreement - Ministry of Commerce And Industry	11
3. RBI Keeps Repo Rate Unchanged At 5.25% – Reserve Bank of India	11
4. RBI Issues Draft Amendment Directions On Advertising, Marketing And Sales Of Financial Products - Reserve Bank of India	11
5. Draft Income-Tax Rules Propose Revised Valuation Of Employee Perquisites - Ministry of Finance	12
6. Constitution Of a High-Level Committee On Banking For Viksit Bharat - Ministry of Finance	12
7. MoSPI Revises Base Year For GDP, IIP And CPI Series - Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation	12
8. Government Notifies Rules For Easing Baggage And Customs Rules - Ministry of Finance	13
<b>II. Infrastructure, Technology And Sustainability</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>A. Policy Updates</b>	<b>13</b>
1. Government Tightens AI Content Rules, Slashes Takedown Timeline To Three Hours - Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology	13
2. PLI 1.2 Scheme Launched To Boost India’s Speciality Steel Capacity - Ministry of Steel	13
3. The Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services Interconnection (Addressable Systems) (Seventh Amendment) Regulations, 2026 - Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)	14
4. Government Extends Startup Recognition For Deeptech Firms To 20 Years - Ministry of Commerce and Industry	14

5. Offshore Areas Mineral (Prevention Of Illegal Mining And Transportation) Rules, 2026 - Ministry of Mines	15
6. Furniture (Quality Control) Amendment Order, 2026 – Ministry of Commerce and Industry	15
<b>B. Announcements</b>	<b>15</b>
1. Cabinet Approves ₹ 1 Lakh Crore Urban Challenge Fund For Market-Linked Urban Infrastructure – Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs	15
2. Cabinet Approves ₹ 10,000 Crore Startup India Fund Of Funds 2.0 – Ministry of Commerce and Industry	16
3. PM RAHAT Scheme For Cashless Treatment Of Road Accident Victims Launched – Ministry of Road Transport and Highways	16
4. Draft Digital Trade Facilitation Bill 2026 Issued for Comments – Ministry of Commerce and Industry	16
5. MeitY Signs Administrative Arrangement On Advanced Electronic Signatures And Seals With The European Commission- Ministry of Electronics and IT	17
6. DGCA Begins Special Safety Audit Of Non-Scheduled Aircraft And Helicopter Operators - Ministry of Civil Aviation	17
7. TDB-DST Support Indigenous High-Pressure Hydrogen Storage Systems - Ministry of Science and Technology	17
<b>III. Human Development and Social Welfare</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>A. Policy Updates</b>	<b>18</b>
1. DoPT Notifies Civil Services Examination Rules, 2026, Restricting Serving IAS And IFS Officers From Appearing In CSE 2026 - Ministry Of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions	18
2. Industrial Relations Code Amendment Bill Passed In Lok Sabha - Ministry of Labour and Employment	18
3. Occupational Safety, Health And Working Conditions (Metalliferous Mines) Regulations, 2026 - Ministry of Labour and Employment	18
<b>B. Announcements</b>	<b>19</b>
1. Draft New Drugs And Clinical Trials (Amendment) Rules, 2026 - Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	19
2. Draft Rules Introduce A Tiered Framework For Post-approval Changes In Drug Manufacturing And Quality Control - Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	19
3. Nationwide Audit Of Blood Banks Launched To Strengthen Safety Standards - Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	20
4. Draft OSH Regulations Notified For Dock Workers At Major Ports - Ministry of Labour and Employment	20
5. Authority Approves Draft IFSCA (Pension Fund) Regulations, 2026 – International Financial Services Centres Authority	20
6. Indian Forest Service Examination Rules, 2026 Notified – Ministry Of Environment, Forest And Climate Change	21

<b>IV. National Security and Foreign Policy</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>A. Policy Updates</b>	<b>21</b>
1. Government Notifies Ex-Servicemen Re-employment (Amendment) Rules 2026 - Ministry of Defence	21
<b>B. Announcements</b>	<b>21</b>
1. Defence Acquisition Council Clears Proposal For Buying 114 Dassault Rafale Multirole Aircraft - Ministry of Defence	21
2. MoD Invites Comments On Notified Draft Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2026 - Ministry of Defence	22
3. Defence Ministry Approves Miniratna Category-I Status For Yantra India Limited - Ministry of Defence	22
4. MoD Signs ₹ 2,312 crore HAL Contract For Eight Dornier 228 Aircraft For Coast Guard - Ministry of Defence	23
<b>V. Rural And Agricultural Transformation</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>A. Announcements</b>	<b>23</b>
1. India Strengthens Drone Certification Ecosystem Through National Test House-Standardisation Testing And Quality Certification Partnership - Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution	23
<b>Annexure - I: Miscellaneous Policy Updates</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>A. Policy Updates</b>	<b>24</b>
1. PNGRB Approves Guidelines For CBG Injection Into Gas And City Gas Networks - Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas	24
2. Expansion Of Credit Delivery Measures For MSMEs - Reserve Bank of India	24
3. Centre Withdraws Wheat Stock Limit Order As Supplies Remain Comfortable - Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution	24
4. ₹ 100 MIP Imposed for Finished Umbrellas Imports - Ministry of Commerce and Industry	25
5. BIS Issues Corrigendum Adding Indian Standard To Aluminium Products Notification - Bureau of Indian Standards	25
<b>B. Announcements</b>	<b>25</b>
1. Cabinet Approves Transition To 'Seva Teerth' And 'Kartavya Bhavans'; North And South Blocks To Become 'Yuge Yugeen Bharat' National Museum - Union Cabinet	25
2. RBI To Permit Bank Lending To Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) - Reserve Bank of India	25
3. RBI Proposes Customer Protection Framework Including Compensation For Small Value Digital Frauds - Reserve Bank of India	26
4. NSO Launches MCP Server To Enable AI-Ready Access To Official Statistics - Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation	26
5. CBDC-Based Digital Food Coupon Pilot Launched In Gujarat - Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution	26
6. Central Motor Vehicles (Fourth Amendment) Rules, 2026 Notified - Ministry Of Road Transport and Highways	27

7. India Post And NSE Sign MoU To Expand Mutual Fund Access Through Postal Network - Ministry Of Communications	27
8. Draft Ammonium Nitrate (Amendment) Rules, 2026 Issued For Public Comments - Ministry of Commerce and Industry	27
9. Launch Of India's First Cooperative, Driver-Owned Ride-Hailing Platform - Ministry of Cooperation	28
10. Digital Portal Launched For Certificates Of Origin Of Cultivated Medicinal Plants - Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change	28
11. OALP-X Oil Block Bidding Deadline Extended Again - Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas	28
12. NITI Aayog Releases Study Reports On Scenarios Towards Viksit Bharat And Net Zero - NITI Aayog	29
13. CBSE Introduces Digital Evaluation For Class 12 Board Papers - Ministry of Education	29
14. Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Amendment Rules, 2026 Notified - Ministry of Consumer Affairs	29

## I. Economic Growth And Structural Reforms

### A. Policy Updates

#### 1. India-US Announce Interim Trade Framework Ahead Of Full Bilateral Deal - Ministry of Commerce and Industry

**Status:** Announced | **Impact Level:** High | **Source:** [PIB](#), [The White House](#)

The Governments of India and the United States have released a Joint Statement **outlining a framework for a US-India Interim Trade Agreement** as a precursor to a full Bilateral Trade Agreement. India will reduce or eliminate tariffs on all US industrial and a wide range of food and agricultural products, while the United States will **apply a calibrated 18% reciprocal tariff** on specified Indian goods, with scope for rollback on key items. The framework expands India's access to advanced technologies such as **semiconductor equipment, medical devices** and clean-energy components. It opens export opportunities for Indian pharmaceuticals, gems and jewellery, textiles, auto components, engineering goods, speciality chemicals and IT-enabled services through lower tariffs and reduced regulatory barriers in the US market.

#### 2. RBI Notifies Risk-Based Deposit Insurance Premium Framework - Reserve Bank of India

**Status:** Announced | **Impact Level:** Medium | **Source:** [DICGC Notification](#)

Reserve Bank of India's Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation has introduced a **new Risk-Based Premium (RBP) system for deposit insurance**, replacing the flat premium that all banks have paid since 1962. Under the new system, banks will no longer pay the same rate. Instead, **they will be placed in four risk categories (A to D)** based on their financial health and supervisory assessment. Safer and **better-managed banks will pay a lower premium** (8 paise per ₹ 100 of insured deposits), while riskier banks will pay a higher premium (up to 12 paise). The framework will take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026 and aims to encourage stronger risk management and financial discipline in the banking sector.

#### 3. Exemption Of Small NBFCs From Mandatory RBI Registration - Reserve Bank Of India

**Status:** Announced | **Impact Level:** Medium | **Source:** [Reserve Bank of India](#)

The Reserve Bank of India has introduced regulatory **relaxations for smaller non-banking financial companies (NBFCs)** as part of a calibrated, risk-based supervision framework. NBFCs with asset size below ₹ 1,000 crore, no access to public funds, and no customer interface **will now be exempt from mandatory RBI registration**, reducing compliance requirements for low-risk entities. Additionally, RBI has proposed to remove the requirement for certain NBFCs to obtain prior approval before opening more than 1,000 branches. These measures aim to **ease regulatory burden and improve operational flexibility** for smaller NBFCs, while

ensuring that oversight remains focused on institutions with greater systemic importance.

#### 4. RBI Tightens Credit Norms For Capital Market Intermediaries - Reserve Bank of India

**Status:** Announced | **Impact Level:** Medium | **Source:** [Reserve Bank of India](#)

The Reserve Bank of India has amended its Commercial Banks Credit Facilities Directions to **tighten bank lending norms for brokers and capital market intermediaries**, effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026. Banks will now be required to extend only fully secured, 100% collateralised credit with no unsecured guarantees. This means that brokers will be required to give 100% collateral for loans. The funding for proprietary trading activities will also not be permitted. The move is **aimed at strengthening risk management in bank exposures** to capital market entities and reducing leverage-linked vulnerabilities in the financial system.

#### 5. SEBI Revises Margin Benefit For Calendar Spreads In Single Stock Derivatives - Security Exchange Board of India

**Status:** Announced | **Impact Level:** Medium | **Source:** [SEBI Notification](#)

The SEBI has revised the margin framework for calendar spread positions in single stock derivatives. Under the new rule, **the reduced margin benefit available for calendar spreads will not apply on the expiry day** if one leg of the spread expires that day. The benefit will continue for spreads where neither contract is expiring. The move **aligns the treatment of single stock derivatives with index derivatives and aims to reduce expiry day risk** and sudden margin spikes. The revised framework will come into effect three months from the date of the circular.

### B. Announcements

#### 1. Government Retains 41% Vertical Devolution As Recommended By The Sixteenth Finance Commission - Ministry of Finance

**Status:** Completed | **Source:** [Sixteenth Finance Commission Report](#), [PIB](#)

The Ministry of Finance has accepted the 16<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission's recommendation to retain the **vertical share of devolution at 41%**. In the Union Budget 2026-27, **₹ 1.4 lakh crore** has been provided to states as Finance Commission Grants, including allocations for rural and urban local bodies and disaster management. The Government tabled the Commission's report along with its Action Taken Report in Parliament, as required under Article 281 of the Constitution. The criteria for horizontal devaluation of funds will be based on population, demographic performance, area, forest, per-capita-income-distance and **contribution of the State to Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** as criteria.

Read NFPRC's Summary of Sixteenth Finance Commission Report [here](#).

## 2. India And GCC Sign Terms Of Reference For a Free Trade Agreement - Ministry of Commerce And Industry

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

India and the Gulf Cooperation Council have signed the Terms of Reference for a proposed Free Trade Agreement, marking the formal start of negotiations with the six GCC countries. **Bilateral trade currently stands at \$ 170 billion**, and nearly **10 million Indians** live and work in the GCC region. The proposed FTA is expected to deepen economic integration, support diversification of India's energy supplies, and strengthen long-term trade ties, while also providing new opportunities for India's food processing, infrastructure, petrochemicals and ICT sectors. This will **help in further enhancing India's energy security** and give India more barrier free high value market access.

## 3. RBI Keeps Repo Rate Unchanged At 5.25% – Reserve Bank of India

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

The Monetary Policy Committee of the Reserve Bank of India has kept the policy repo rate **unchanged at 5.25% and maintained a neutral stance**. RBI has projected GDP growth of around 6.9–7.0% in early FY 2026–27 and expects inflation to remain within the target range. The decision reflects stable domestic demand, steady investment activity and comfort on the external front, while remaining cautious about global uncertainties.

## 4. RBI Issues Draft Amendment Directions On Advertising, Marketing And Sales Of Financial Products - Reserve Bank of India

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

The Reserve Bank of India has issued **draft amendment directions** on advertising, marketing and sales of financial products and services by regulated entities, inviting public comments by 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026. The draft proposes comprehensive guidelines for banks and NBFCs **covering the conduct of Direct Sales Agents and Direct Marketing Agents**, clearer rules on customer suitability and consent, and measures to prevent mis-selling. It also seeks to **prohibit practices such as “dark patterns” in digital interfaces**, compulsory bundling of third-party products with financial offerings, and misleading marketing of third-party products as one's own, while requiring full disclosure of fees and robust customer feedback mechanisms. These proposed directions are **intended to strengthen customer protection, curb deceptive sales practices** and ensure that financial products and services are advertised and sold transparently and fairly across regulated entities in India.

## 5. Draft Income-Tax Rules Propose Revised Valuation Of Employee Perquisites - Ministry of Finance

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [Draft Income Tax Rules, 2026](#), [The Hindu Business Line](#)

The Income Tax Department has issued Draft Income Tax Rules, 2026, inviting suggestions till 22<sup>nd</sup> February, ahead of implementation from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026. Under Rule 15, the valuation of **employer-provided motor cars is increased to ₹ 8,000 per month** from ₹ 2,700, and to ₹ 10,000 per month from ₹ 3,300. The tax-free value of meals is raised to ₹ 200 per meal from ₹ 50, gifts from employers to ₹ 15,000 annually from ₹ 5,000, and the **loan exemption limit to ₹ 2 lakh from ₹ 20,000**. Key compliance changes include Rule 46 (mandatory electronic books with India-based server backup), Rule 159 (₹ 5 lakh PAN limit for vehicle transactions), Rule 237 (property reporting threshold raised to ₹ 45 lakh) and Rule 48 (expanded electronic payment modes including CBDC). This will **provide tax relief to salaried middle-class taxpayers** by raising exemption thresholds on common perquisites, potentially improving disposable income and supporting higher household consumption.

## 6. Constitution Of a High-Level Committee On Banking For Viksit Bharat - Ministry of Finance

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

The Government of India has announced a proposal to constitute a High-Level Committee on Banking for Viksit Bharat to develop a comprehensive blueprint for strengthening India's banking system in line with the country's long-term development goals. The committee will examine measures required to **create large, efficient banking institutions capable of meeting the financing and credit needs of a developed India**, while ensuring financial stability, inclusion and consumer protection. The Finance Minister clarified that the exercise should not be narrowly viewed as bank mergers alone, but as a broader effort to scale up banking capacity. The committee is expected to be constituted as soon as possible.

## 7. MoSPI Revises Base Year For GDP, IIP And CPI Series - Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

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

The Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation is revising the base years for key economic indicators like GDP, IIP and CPI to improve accuracy, reflect current consumption patterns and align with global standards. As part of this exercise, MoSPI has released the **revised Consumer Price Index with base year 2024**. Under the new series, **CPI inflation for January 2026 has been recorded at 2.75%**, making it the first inflation print based on the updated basket. The revised CPI incorporates updated weights and methodology. Notably, the weight of food and beverages in the index has been reduced (from about 46% earlier to around 37%),

**reflecting changing spending patterns.** This may moderate food-driven volatility in headline inflation going forward. The updated GDP series will be released on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2026, while the revised IIP series is expected in May 2026.

## 8. Government Notifies Rules For Easing Baggage And Customs Rules - Ministry of Finance

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

The Ministry of Finance has **notified the Baggage Rules, 2026 and related Customs Baggage Regulations, replacing the 2016 framework.** This measure was announced by the Finance Minister in the Union Budget 2026-27. The rules **raise the general duty-free allowance to ₹ 75,000** (with lower limits for foreign tourists and crew), revise transfer-of-residence slabs up to ₹ 7.5 lakh, and **introduce weight-based jewellery limits for eligible returning Indians.** The reform **consolidates 35 earlier circulars** to simplify procedures, reduce detentions and improve passenger experience while strengthening customs compliance.

## II. Infrastructure, Technology And Sustainability

### A. Policy Updates

#### 1. Government Tightens AI Content Rules, Slashes Takedown Timeline To Three Hours - Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology

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

The Government has amended the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, to bring AI-generated and synthetic content formally under regulation, with the changes taking effect from 20<sup>th</sup> February 2026. The amendments **mandate clear labelling of AI-generated content** and stronger verification of user declarations. It requires platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube to **remove unlawful or harmful content within three hours of notification** instead of the earlier 36-hour window, alongside tighter grievance redressal timelines. This will **help curb the spread of deepfakes and misinformation**, ensure faster content takedown, improve transparency through consistent labelling and metadata requirements, and strengthen platform accountability for online safety.

#### 2. PLI 1.2 Scheme Launched To Boost India's Speciality Steel Capacity - Ministry of Steel

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

The Ministry of Steel has launched **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme 1.2 for the speciality steel sector to strengthen high-value manufacturing** and reduce import dependence in critical steel grades. The scheme was launched in New Delhi, accompanied by **85 MoUs signed with 55 companies, representing ₹ 11,887 crore in committed investments** and expected to add 8.7 million tonnes of speciality steel capacity by **FY 2031.** PLI 1.2 targets advanced segments including electrical steel,

alloy and stainless steels, coated products, and grades needed for strategic sectors such as automobiles, railways, defence, electrical equipment and aerospace. **Incentives under the scheme will range from 4 to 15% over five years**, encouraging technology upgradation, value addition and integration of Indian producers into global value chains. This initiative builds on earlier PLI rounds that attracted substantial investment and capacity creation in the steel ecosystem.

### 3. **The Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services Interconnection (Addressable Systems) (Seventh Amendment) Regulations, 2026 - Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)**

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

TRAI has notified the **Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services Interconnection (Addressable Systems) (Seventh Amendment) Regulations, 2026**, to make audits more predictable, credible and less burdensome for Distribution Platform Operators. The new rules fix clear annual timelines (audit to be completed by 30<sup>th</sup> September on a financial-year basis), allow broadcasters to **observe audits, strengthen auditor accountability**, and reduce repetitive audits, with annual audits made optional for small DPOs (under 30,000 subscribers). Specific standards for shared infrastructure, watermarking and system reconciliation have also been clarified. This would help **lower compliance costs for smaller operators**, reduce operational disruption from repeated audits, and improve transparency in revenue reporting between broadcasters and distributors without weakening regulatory oversight.

### 4. **Government Extends Startup Recognition For Deeptech Firms To 20 Years - Ministry of Commerce and Industry**

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

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry's DPIIT has formally recognised **deeptech startups** under Startup India by extending their eligibility period to **20 years from incorporation** (from 10 years earlier) and raising the annual turnover cap to **₹ 300 crore (from ₹ 200 crore)**. Deeptech firms are defined as companies with high R&D intensity, long gestation cycles, significant technical risk, and creation of novel intellectual property in areas such as AI, biotech and climate technology. This **gives deeptech companies longer access to tax benefits**, grants and regulatory support at the critical stage when they move from lab-scale research to early commercialisation, making it easier for them to attract patient capital and scale.

## 5. Offshore Areas Mineral (Prevention Of Illegal Mining And Transportation) Rules, 2026 - Ministry of Mines

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

The Ministry of Mines has notified the Offshore Areas Mineral (Prevention of Illegal Mining and Transportation) Rules, 2026 under the Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002. The rules **apply to all offshore minerals other than mineral oils and hydrocarbons** and aim to prevent unauthorised extraction, storage and transportation of minerals in offshore areas. The framework **mandates electronic monitoring systems on vessels** and machinery of operating rights holders, real-time tracking of cargo and video surveillance, and compulsory online registration of vessels. The notification **strengthens surveillance and enforcement in offshore mineral operations**, ensures traceability through digital records, reduces revenue loss from illegal mining and promotes transparent and sustainable exploitation of offshore mineral resources.

## 6. Furniture (Quality Control) Amendment Order, 2026 – Ministry of Commerce and Industry

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

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade has notified the Furniture (Quality Control) Amendment Order, 2026, under the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016, amending the 2025 Order. The amendment **permits import of up to 200 units per financial year for research and development** by BIS-certified manufacturers or applicants, subject to non-commercial use and record maintenance. It also allows the **sale of pre-implementation stock for up to 12 months with self-declaration**, and exempts non-BIS-marked components imported for export-oriented furniture manufacturing, provided they are not diverted to the domestic market.

### B. Announcements

#### 1. Cabinet Approves ₹ 1 Lakh Crore Urban Challenge Fund For Market-Linked Urban Infrastructure – Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs

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

The Union Cabinet has approved the ₹ 1 lakh crore Urban Challenge Fund (UCF) to **catalyse ₹ 4 lakh crore in urban infrastructure investment over five years** through market-linked financing. Central assistance will cover 25% of the project cost, with at least 50% to be mobilised from market sources such as municipal bonds, bank loans and PPPs. Projects will be selected through a competitive challenge mode and linked to governance, financial and planning reforms, with outcome-based funding and digital monitoring. A ₹ 5,000 crore Credit Repayment Guarantee Scheme has also been approved to support smaller and northeastern cities in accessing market loans. The Fund aims to position **Urban Local Bodies as bankable entities, crowd in**

**private capital**, and accelerate reform-driven, climate-resilient and economically productive urban development.

## 2. Cabinet Approves ₹ 10,000 Crore Startup India Fund Of Funds 2.0 – Ministry of Commerce and Industry

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

The Union Cabinet has approved the **Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 with a ₹ 10,000 crore** corpus to mobilise domestic venture capital for deep tech, innovative manufacturing and early-growth startups. Building on the earlier Fund of Funds, the scheme will invest through SEBI-registered AIFs with a targeted approach to address high-risk capital gaps, expand funding beyond metros and strengthen India's domestic VC ecosystem. The **fund is targeted for tier 2 and tier 3 cities** and innovating beyond the major cities of the country.

## 3. PM RAHAT Scheme For Cashless Treatment Of Road Accident Victims Launched – Ministry of Road Transport and Highways

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

The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has launched the PM RAHAT (Road Accident Victim Hospitalisation and Assured Treatment) Scheme to **provide cashless treatment up to ₹ 1.5 lakh per road accident victim** for seven days from the date of the accident. Integrated with the 112 Emergency Response Support System and a digital platform linking police, hospitals and insurers, the scheme ensures treatment during the Golden Hour, with **stabilisation care for up to 24-48 hours** based on severity. Reimbursements will be routed through the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund, with insured cases funded by general insurance companies and uninsured or hit-and-run cases supported by Government allocation. The scheme aims to **reduce preventable fatalities by removing upfront financial barriers** to emergency care and creating time-bound, accountable claim settlement for hospitals.

## 4. Draft Digital Trade Facilitation Bill 2026 Issued for Comments – Ministry of Commerce and Industry

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [DGFT Notification](#)

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry's Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has floated the **Draft Digital Trade Facilitation Bill, 2026** and invited stakeholder feedback. The Bill seeks to provide legal recognition, validity and enforceability to electronic trade documents and digital trust services, addressing gaps in current law that limit paperless trade. It **proposes a statutory framework for digital identity, e-signatures, timestamps** and secure digital records, and enables cross-border recognition of electronic documents, aligning India's trade ecosystem with global digital standards. By legally empowering electronic trade documentation and trust services, the Bill is **expected to reduce paperwork, lower compliance costs, expedite customs and logistics processes**, and enhance interoperability with

international digital trade systems. This will improve the ease of doing business for exporters and importers

#### 5. MeitY Signs Administrative Arrangement On Advanced Electronic Signatures And Seals With The European Commission- Ministry of Electronics and IT

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

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the European Commission's DG CONNECT on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2026 signed an Administrative Arrangement on Advanced Electronic Signatures and Seals. Signed by the Secretary, MeitY, and the Director-General, DG CONNECT, the deal **links trusted lists of service providers from both sides so electronic signatures and seals issued in India and the EU can be easily validated** across borders. Implemented under India's IT Act 2000 through the Controller of Certifying Authorities, it boosts secure digital trade by letting exporters and buyers sign contracts, invoices and compliance documents digitally. This **cuts time, costs and paperwork**, especially for MSMEs, and builds stronger trust in India-EU digital transactions.

#### 6. DGCA Begins Special Safety Audit Of Non-Scheduled Aircraft And Helicopter Operators - Ministry of Civil Aviation

**Status:** Initiated | **Source:** [News on AIR](#)

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has launched a phased **special safety audit** of non-scheduled aircraft and helicopter operators following the recent charter aircraft crash near Baramati. The audit exercise, which began on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2026 and will run until at least 25<sup>th</sup> February 2026, covers **14 charter and non-scheduled flight operators** to assess compliance with operational, airworthiness and safety standards, with a separate inspection of the operator involved in the Baramati incident. **Dedicated audit teams have been deployed to carry out field inspections** and submit reports to DGCA headquarters, enabling the regulator to identify lapses, strengthen oversight and ensure that safety regulations are being adhered to in the expanding non-scheduled aviation segment.

#### 7. TDB-DST Support Indigenous High-Pressure Hydrogen Storage Systems - Ministry of Science and Technology

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

The Ministry of Science & Technology has signed an agreement through the Technology Development Board (TDB) with Gudlyf Mobility Private Limited, Madurai, to provide financial assistance for the development and commercialisation of **indigenous 700 bar high-pressure hydrogen storage systems**. The startup's advanced composite pressure vessels, built on proprietary technology, are intended for strategic and commercial applications, including **hydrogen mobility, UAVs, CNG/CBG storage, and defence and aerospace sectors**. The project will establish an advanced manufacturing facility in Tamil Nadu, reduce reliance on imports for

critical high-pressure storage systems, and strengthen domestic capabilities in hydrogen infrastructure and advanced composites, supporting India's clean energy transition and energy security objectives.

### III. Human Development and Social Welfare

#### A. Policy Updates

##### 1. DoPT Notifies Civil Services Examination Rules, 2026, Restricting Serving IAS And IFS Officers From Appearing In CSE 2026 - Ministry Of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions

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

The Department of Personnel and Training has notified the Civil Services Examination Rules, 2026, governing the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) recruitment to 23 services. The rules **restrict serving Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officers selected through earlier Civil Service Examination (CSE) from re-applying for the examination.** Similarly, Indian Police Service (IPS) officers already appointed through a prior CSE are prohibited from being allocated to the IPS cadre again through the 2026 examination, although they may compete for other services subject to eligibility conditions. The rules effectively close the earlier practice of serving IAS and IFS officers using the exam to improve rank or switch services without resigning, reducing churn within top services and reinforcing cadre stability.

##### 2. Industrial Relations Code Amendment Bill Passed In Lok Sabha - Ministry of Labour and Employment

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

The Industrial Relations Code (Amendment) Bill, 2026, has been passed by both Houses of Parliament, providing legal clarity on India's labour law framework. The amendment **explicitly affirms the repeal of three legacy labour statutes**, the Trade Unions Act, 1926, the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946, and the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, which were subsumed under the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, to avoid future legal ambiguity. The legislation **complements the four Labour Codes** implemented recently, reinforces minimum wage guarantees, compulsory appointment letters and equal pay provisions, and seeks to ensure smooth continuity and transparent industrial relations governance.

##### 3. Occupational Safety, Health And Working Conditions (Metalliferous Mines) Regulations, 2026 - Ministry of Labour and Employment

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

The Ministry of Labour and Employment has issued a draft notification proposing the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (Metalliferous Mines) Regulations, 2026 under Section 136 of the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020. The draft rules have been **published for public consultation**,

with stakeholders invited to submit objections and suggestions within 45 days from the date of publication. The proposed regulations aim to **strengthen occupational safety, health standards and working conditions** in metalliferous mines through updated compliance requirements and regulatory provisions. The final rules will be notified after consideration of stakeholder feedback and are intended to improve safety governance and enforcement in the mining sector.

## B. Announcements

### 1. Draft New Drugs And Clinical Trials (Amendment) Rules, 2026 - Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

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

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has released draft rules to expedite clinical research by **doing away with the provisional registration of ethics committees**, which is currently required before trials can begin. Under the proposed change, **only final registration of ethics committees will be necessary**, and applications will be processed through an online portal within prescribed timelines, reducing procedural delays. The draft also strengthens criteria for committee composition, accountability, training and record-keeping, and proposes clearer timelines for review of research proposals while retaining safeguards on participant safety and ethical standards. The reform **aims to make the clinical research environment more efficient and predictable**, encouraging greater participation in trials and strengthening the country's role in global biomedical research.

### 2. Draft Rules Introduce A Tiered Framework For Post-approval Changes In Drug Manufacturing And Quality Control - Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

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

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has released the New Drugs and Clinical Trials (Amendment) Rules, 2026, to amend the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019, by introducing a **tiered framework for post-approval changes in drug manufacturing**. Manufacturers must inform licensing authorities in writing of any change in process, excipients, packaging, shelf life, specifications, testing, or documentation, classified as **Level I (major), Level II (moderate), or Level III (minor) based on potential impact on identity, strength, quality, purity, or potency**. Level I and II changes require prior approval, while Level III changes can be implemented without prior approval (except for shelf-life changes, which still need approval). The reform aims to improve transparency and align regulatory practice with global standards while safeguarding product quality and patient safety.

### 3. Nationwide Audit Of Blood Banks Launched To Strengthen Safety Standards - Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

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

The Union Health Ministry has ordered a **risk-based nationwide audit of all 4,153 licensed blood banks**, to be led by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO). States and Union Territories have been asked to prioritise inspections, shut non-compliant facilities, and ensure all centres are integrated with the **e-Raktkosh** digital tracking system. The Government is also directing a shift from rapid card tests to **4<sup>th</sup> generation ELISA (Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay) and CLIA (Chemiluminescence Immunoassay) testing** for mandatory transfusion-transmitted infections, alongside stricter donor screening and a move towards a fully voluntary, non-remunerated blood donation system. This will be helpful in ensuring safer blood transfers and containing the spread of infections.

### 4. Draft OSH Regulations Notified For Dock Workers At Major Ports - Ministry of Labour and Employment

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

The Ministry of Labour and Employment has notified the draft Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (Dock Work) Central Regulations, 2026, under the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020. The draft regulations, **open for public comments for 45 days, will apply to all major ports** and lay down comprehensive safety, operational and compliance standards for dock work. The proposed framework covers construction and maintenance of docks and working areas, lighting, ventilation, fire prevention, safe access to ships and holds, handling of hatch covers, use and inspection of lifting appliances, and protection against man overboard risks. It also **specifies qualifications for Inspector-cum-Facilitators and mandates annual returns** by establishments. The draft seeks to **modernise port safety standards**, align them with national and international norms such as the IMDG Code, and strengthen accountability of port authorities, ship masters and employers in ensuring safe working conditions for dock workers.

### 5. Authority Approves Draft IFSCA (Pension Fund) Regulations, 2026 - International Financial Services Centres Authority

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

The International Financial Services Centres Authority has approved the draft IFSCA (Pension Fund) Regulations, 2026, to **establish a structured framework for voluntary retirement savings within the International Financial Services Centre**. The draft allows Pension Fund Managers to offer flexible pension products to individuals above 18 years, with active and auto investment options, partial withdrawals, portability, and a dedicated healthcare sub-account. The framework

prescribes registration, governance and risk management norms for fund managers, along with defined prudential limits for global investments across asset classes. It aims to **create a transparent and secure long-term savings ecosystem**, positioning IFSC as a competitive global hub for retirement and pension solutions.

#### 6. Indian Forest Service Examination Rules, 2026 Notified - Ministry Of Environment, Forest And Climate Change

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

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has notified the Indian Forest Service (IFS) Examination Rules, 2026, governing Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) recruitment to the Indian Forest Service (Group A). The rules **retain the two-stage structure** (Civil Services Preliminary as screening, followed by IFS Mains and Interview), prescribe age limits of 21–32 years with relaxations, six attempts for General/EWS candidates, **specified science-based educational qualifications**, defined PwBD eligibility categories, and mandatory digital application updates and verification norms.

## IV. National Security and Foreign Policy

### A. Policy Updates

#### 1. Government Notifies Ex-Servicemen Re-employment (Amendment) Rules 2026 - Ministry of Defence

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

The Ministry of Defence has notified the **Ex-Servicemen (Re-employment in Central Civil Services and Posts) Amendment Rules, 2026**, amending the 1979 Rules to formally include personnel of the Military Nursing Service (MNS) within the definition of “ex-servicemen”. Under the revised rules, **MNS personnel who complete the prescribed service conditions** will now be treated at par with other armed forces veterans for re-employment in Central Government civil posts. This **makes them eligible for the same re-employment benefits**, including consideration for reserved vacancies, age relaxation and seniority-related provisions. The amendment brings MNS officers formally within the ex-servicemen framework, ensuring uniform treatment across defence services in Central Government recruitment.

### B. Announcements

#### 1. Defence Acquisition Council Clears Proposal For Buying 114 Dassault Rafale Multirole Aircraft - Ministry of Defence

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

The Ministry of Defence’s DAC has cleared the proposal to acquire 114 Dassault Rafale multirole fighter jets. This is **part of a larger approval worth ₹ 3.60 lakh crore**. The **114 jets will cost approximately ₹ 3.25 lakh crore**. Additionally, the

purchase of combat missiles, Air-Ship Based High Altitude Pseudo Satellite, overhaul of tanks and infantry fighting vehicles, marine gas turbines and recon aircrafts was also approved. These acquisitions will help in the modernisation of the Indian armed forces and make them combat-ready. The Rafale will help in enhancing defence production in India with **critical Transfer of Technology** and development of ecosystem services. They will also help in **increasing India's depleting fighter jet squadrons** and increasing the Indian Air Force's multirole fleet.

## 2. MoD Invites Comments On Notified Draft Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2026 - Ministry of Defence

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [Draft DAP 2026](#)

The Ministry of Defence has published the **Draft Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2026** on its website and is inviting comments from stakeholders by **3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026**. The draft is designed to replace the **DAP-2020** and align defence procurement with evolving strategic priorities, force modernisation, domestic industry scaling, and technological imperatives of modern warfare. The proposed procedure emphasises **institutional preference for Buy (Indian-IDDMM)** categories to boost indigenous design, development and manufacturing, reduce dependence on imports, simplify financial and experience criteria for wider participation, speed up decision-making and introduce more digitisation, automation, and innovation incentives. It also aims to **refine procurement strategies based on technological readiness** and to strengthen quality assurance, trial processes and export potential of India's defence industry.

## 3. Defence Ministry Approves Miniratna Category-I Status For Yantra India Limited - Ministry of Defence

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

The Ministry of Defence has approved **Miniratna Category-I status for Yantra India Limited (YIL)**. YIL transformed from a Government organisation into a profit-making company in just four years, with **strong growth in sales from ₹ 956 crore in 2021-22 (second half) to ₹ 3,109 crore** in 2024-25, and exports rising from zero to ₹ 322 crore in the same period. The **new status lets YIL's Board approve capital spending up to ₹ 500 crore** on new projects, modernisation and equipment purchases without needing Government clearance. This **gives the company more freedom to grow faster in defence production** and exports. It fits with the Government's 2021 move to corporatise the Ordnance Factory Board into seven DPSUs for better efficiency and innovation, and supports stronger home-grown defence capabilities.

#### 4. MoD Signs ₹ 2,312 crore HAL Contract For Eight Dornier 228 Aircraft For Coast Guard - Ministry of Defence

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

The Ministry of Defence has signed a ₹ 2,312 crore contract with **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited** for the procurement of eight Dornier 228 aircraft with operational role equipment for the Indian Coast Guard under the Buy (Indian) category. The aircraft will be manufactured at HAL's Transport Aircraft Division in Kanpur. The acquisition will **strengthen the maritime surveillance and coastal security capabilities** of the Indian Coast Guard.

## V. Rural And Agricultural Transformation

### A. Announcements

#### 1. India Strengthens Drone Certification Ecosystem Through National Test House-Standardisation Testing And Quality Certification Partnership - Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution

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

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, through the National Test House, has partnered with Electronics Regional Test Laboratory (North) under MeitY to **enable Electromagnetic Interference and Electromagnetic Compatibility testing** of drones. This collaboration aligns India's drone certification process with the requirements of the Drone Rules, 2021 and the CSUAS framework, with testing to be conducted in line with recognised IEC and Indian standards and integrated directly into the type certification process. This will help **reduce dependence on expensive private labs**, avoid duplication of testing infrastructure, and lower compliance costs for drone startups and MSMEs. It will expedite certification timelines while **enhancing global acceptance of India-certified drones**, thereby facilitating easier scaling and export for domestic manufacturers.

## Annexure - I: Miscellaneous Policy Updates

### A. Policy Updates

#### 1. PNGRB Approves Guidelines For CBG Injection Into Gas And City Gas Networks - Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas

**Status:** Approved | **Impact Level:** High | **Source:** [PNGRB](#), [Business Standard](#)

The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) has approved a set of **guidelines for the injection of Compressed Biogas (CBG)** into the natural gas pipeline network and city gas distribution (CGD) systems. The framework **outlines technical specifications for CBG quality**, safety requirements, including odourisation and control systems, and procedures for establishing CBG injection facilities, providing a standardised approach for developers, CGD entities, and investors. The guidelines are **expected to improve project viability through assured market access**, facilitate financing and infrastructure planning, and accelerate the scale-up of domestic CBG production, enhancing the availability of green gas, reducing dependence on imported LNG, and supporting energy security and climate goals.

#### 2. Expansion Of Credit Delivery Measures For MSMEs – Reserve Bank of India

**Status:** Announced | **Impact Level:** Medium | **Source:** [Reserve Bank of India](#)

The Reserve Bank of India has announced measures to **strengthen credit access for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)**. RBI has **doubled the limit for collateral-free loans to MSMEs** from ₹ 10 lakh to ₹ 20 lakh, significantly improving access to formal finance and easing working capital constraints. The move is expected to support small business expansion, enhance employment generation and strengthen credit flow to the MSME sector.

#### 3. Centre Withdraws Wheat Stock Limit Order As Supplies Remain Comfortable - Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution

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

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution has **withdrawn the wheat stock limit order of 27<sup>th</sup> May 2025** after assessing improved availability ahead of the festive season, though all private entities must continue to declare stocks weekly on the foodstock portal. Private stocks are **currently about 81 lakh metric tonnes, roughly 30 LMT higher** than last year, while wholesale prices have softened from ₹ 2,970 to around ₹ 2,852 per quintal. With wheat acreage rising to 334.17 lakh hectares and Minimum Support Price-backed procurement likely to remain strong, the decision signals confidence that adequate supplies exist for Public Distribution System, welfare schemes and market stability without restrictive controls.

#### 4. ₹ 100 MIP Imposed for Finished Umbrellas Imports – Ministry of Commerce and Industry

**Status:** Initiated | **Impact Level:** Medium | **Source:** [Gazette of India](#), [Economic Times](#)

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade has amended the import policy for finished umbrellas, **shifting their status from “Free” to “Restricted”**. However, imports will remain free where the CIF (cost, insurance, freight) value is ₹ 100 or above per piece, effectively imposing a Minimum Import Price (MIP) of ₹ 100 per unit. The MIP condition will not apply to Advance Authorisation holders, export-oriented units (EOUs) and special economic zones (SEZ) units, provided the goods are not sold in the Domestic Tariff Area. The move will **curb low-priced imports, protect domestic umbrella manufacturers** from under-invoiced shipments and dumping.

#### 5. BIS Issues Corrigendum Adding Indian Standard To Aluminium Products Notification – Bureau of Indian Standards

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

The Bureau of Indian Standards has issued a corrigendum to its January 2026 notification, adding an **Indian Standard on wrought aluminium and aluminium alloy extruded round tubes and hollow sections for general engineering purposes to the product schedule**. This update strengthens the quality-standards framework for aluminium extruded tubes and hollow sections and improves standardisation and quality assurance for manufacturers and downstream users.

### B. Announcements

#### 1. Cabinet Approves Transition To ‘Seva Teerth’ And ‘Kartavya Bhavans’; North And South Blocks To Become ‘Yuge Yugeen Bharat’ National Museum – Union Cabinet

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

The Union Cabinet has approved the relocation of Central Government offices from the historic North and South Blocks to the **newly inaugurated ‘Seva Teerth’ and ‘Kartavya Bhavans’**. It marks a shift to a modern administrative complex. The Cabinet has also resolved to convert North and South Blocks into the **‘Yuge Yugeen Bharat’ National Museum**, repurposing the colonial-era buildings into a national cultural and civilisational showcase.

#### 2. RBI To Permit Bank Lending To Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) – Reserve Bank of India

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

The Reserve Bank of India has **proposed to permit commercial banks** to extend finance to Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), subject to appropriate prudential safeguards. REITs were originally designed to refinance completed and operational real estate projects through pooled investor funds, and banks were not allowed to lend to them. **While lending to Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) was**

**permitted earlier, REITs had remained excluded.** Following a review and considering the strong regulatory and governance framework applicable to listed REITs, RBI has decided to allow such lending and will harmonise existing InvIT lending norms to ensure parity. This will lower REIT borrowing costs and ease the refinancing of completed commercial real estate assets.

### 3. RBI Proposes Customer Protection Framework Including Compensation For Small Value Digital Frauds – Reserve Bank of India

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

The Reserve Bank of India has proposed a framework to compensate victims of small-value digital frauds and tighter norms to curb the mis-selling of financial products. RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra stated that customers affected by unauthorised digital transactions will be **eligible for compensation of up to ₹ 25,000, limited to 85% of the fraud amount, available once per customer.** The measure aims to balance customer relief with accountability and awareness. Additionally, RBI will issue three draft guidelines covering (i) mis-selling of financial products, (ii) recovery of loans and conduct of recovery agents, and (iii) limitation of customer liability for unauthorised electronic banking transactions, as mis-selling has significant adverse consequences and underlined the need for suitability-based sales aligned with customer risk profiles.

### 4. NSO Launches MCP Server To Enable AI-Ready Access To Official Statistics - Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

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

The Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, through the National Statistics Office, has launched a beta **Model Context Protocol (MCP) server for the eSankhyiki portal** to allow direct, real-time access to Government datasets via AI tools and applications. The initial release integrates seven major datasets, including PLFS, CPI, WPI, IIP, National Accounts and Environmental Statistics. This will **enable users to query data without downloading large files** and to automate analysis across multiple datasets through a single connection. This will make official data far easier to use for researchers, businesses and policymakers, reducing friction in data access while strengthening data-driven decision-making and faster analytical workflows across Government and the wider ecosystem.

### 5. CBDC-Based Digital Food Coupon Pilot Launched In Gujarat – Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution

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

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution has launched a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)-based Digital Food Coupon pilot in Gujarat, **integrating the digital rupee (₹) into the Public Distribution System (PDS)** in collaboration with the Reserve Bank of India and the Government of Gujarat. Under

the pilot, beneficiaries receive programmable digital coupons directly in their wallets, which can be redeemed at Fair Price Shops through QR or voucher codes, reducing dependence on biometric authentication and e-POS constraints. The initiative **aims to create a secure, real-time digital trail of transactions, improve transparency** and accountability in foodgrain distribution, and ensure timely settlement of dealer margins. It will mark a further step in digitising welfare delivery under India's food security framework.

#### 6. **Central Motor Vehicles (Fourth Amendment) Rules, 2026 Notified – Ministry Of Road Transport and Highways**

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

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has notified the Central Motor Vehicles (Fourth Amendment) Rules, 2026, introducing **Bharat Stage VI emission standards aligned with the Worldwide Harmonised Light Vehicles** Test Procedure (WLTP) for M1 and certain M2 vehicles from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2027. The amendment mandates **compliance with AIS-175 standards, tighter real-world driving emission norms**, enhanced on-board diagnostics requirements, and certification for E20 fuel compatibility, strengthening India's emission and fuel standards framework. This will help in reducing vehicular pollution and meet India's net-zero target by 2070.

#### 7. **India Post And NSE Sign MoU To Expand Mutual Fund Access Through Postal Network – Ministry Of Communications**

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

The Ministry of Communications has announced that the **Department of Posts** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the **National Stock Exchange of India Limited**. This will enable the distribution of mutual fund products through India Post's extensive network of over **1.64 lakh post offices**. Under the three-year partnership, selected postal employees will be trained and certified to offer mutual fund products and related services through NSE's online platform, subject to regulatory compliance. The collaboration will **enhance last-mile access to mutual funds**, especially in rural and semi-urban areas, and strengthen investor awareness and confidence. It will deepen financial inclusion by combining India Post's physical outreach with NSE's market infrastructure and technology.

#### 8. **Draft Ammonium Nitrate (Amendment) Rules, 2026 Issued For Public Comments – Ministry of Commerce and Industry**

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

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (DPIIT) has published the draft Ammonium Nitrate (Amendment) Rules, 2026, to amend the Ammonium Nitrate Rules, 2012, under the Explosives Act, 1884. The **draft clarifies transportation responsibilities between consignors and consignees** by linking transport to the licence holder providing the vehicle, and expands compliance accountability to include consignees

and occupiers. The amendments aim to **strengthen regulatory clarity, plug compliance gaps in transport and handling**, and enhance oversight of ammonium nitrate movement.

#### 9. Launch Of India's First Cooperative, Driver-Owned Ride-Hailing Platform - Ministry of Cooperation

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

On 5<sup>th</sup> February 2026, the Ministry of Cooperation launched **Bharat Taxi, India's first cooperative-based ride-hailing platform**. It **runs on a zero-commission, surge-free pricing model**, with profits distributed directly to drivers. It has already onboarded over three lakh drivers while completing more than 10,000 rides daily in Delhi-NCR and Gujarat since its soft launch in June 2025. This creates a **state-backed alternative to private ride-hailing aggregators**, reducing drivers' dependence on commission-based platforms and improving income stability. If the planned national expansion within two years is successful, it will materially alter the gig mobility market by pushing existing platforms towards better payouts and worker protections.

#### 10. Digital Portal Launched For Certificates Of Origin Of Cultivated Medicinal Plants - Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

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

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change's National Biodiversity Authority has launched an online portal for the electronic issuance of **Certificates of Origin** for cultivated medicinal plants, in line with the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Act, 2023 and subsequent Rules notified in 2024-25. The portal **provides a single-window, end-to-end system for applications** from stakeholders, including AYUSH institutions, seed companies, and research bodies, seeking Access and Benefit Sharing exemptions. The move is expected to **cut approval timelines for medicinal plant consignments, ease export documentation** for AYUSH manufacturers, and provide authenticated traceability records that can help Indian herbal and phytopharmaceutical products meet international regulatory requirements.

#### 11. OALP-X Oil Block Bidding Deadline Extended Again - Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas

**Status:** Announced | **Source:** [The Hindu](#)

The Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas has **extended the bid submission deadline** for the 10<sup>th</sup> round of the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP-X) by three months to 29<sup>th</sup> May 2026, marking the fourth such extension. The extra time is meant to allow investors to study liberalised rules under the amended Oilfields Act. OALP-X is India's largest-ever acreage offering, covering 25 blocks across 1.92 lakh sq km, including ultra-deepwater areas such as the Andaman basin.

## 12. NITI Aayog Releases Study Reports On Scenarios Towards Viksit Bharat And Net Zero - NITI Aayog

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

The NITI Aayog has released a suite of eleven analytical reports that map possible pathways for India to achieve a *Viksit Bharat* by 2047, alongside its Net Zero target for 2070. The **papers examine multiple scenarios covering energy transition, industrial decarbonisation**, electrification, efficiency, circular economy and financing needs, using cross-sector modelling across power, transport, industry and agriculture. Together, the reports provide a common policy and analytical framework for long-term planning, helping Governments align growth with climate action, anticipate investment requirements, and design strategies that simultaneously support development, energy security and emissions reduction.

## 13. CBSE Introduces Digital Evaluation For Class 12 Board Papers - Ministry of Education

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

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has announced that **Class 12 board exam answer papers will be evaluated digitally** using an **On-Screen Marking** system from **17<sup>th</sup> February 2026**, while the evaluation of Class 10 answer books will continue in the traditional physical mode. The board has informed affiliated schools to ensure technical readiness, including computer labs, internet connectivity and adequate hardware, and will support the transition through dry runs, training sessions and a call centre for issue resolution. This system is expected to **reduce transit delays and risks associated with physical answer scripts**, minimise chances of tampering or loss, enable real-time tracking and moderation of marking, and shorten the overall evaluation cycle, thereby allowing earlier declaration of results and improving accountability in the assessment process.

## 14. Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Amendment Rules, 2026 Notified - Ministry of Consumer Affairs

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

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs has notified the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Amendment Rules, 2026, **mandating that all e-commerce platforms provide a searchable and sortable filter** specifying the country of origin for imported products. The amendment, effective from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2026, aims to enhance transparency and enable informed consumer choice in online marketplaces.



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