

# Monthly Policy Review

## February 2014

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### Highlights of this Issue

#### [Gross Domestic Product growth rate at 4.7% for third quarter of 2013-14 \(p. 4\)](#)

Manufacturing output declines 1.9%, service output increases 7.6% in the period between October-December 2013.

#### [68 Bills lapse with dissolution of the 15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha \(p. 2\)](#)

68 Bills will lapse and 60 Bills will carry forward to the next Lok Sabha.

#### [Bill on bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh passed by Parliament \(p. 2\)](#)

The Bill provides for the reorganisation of Andhra Pradesh and creates two states, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Hyderabad will be the common capital for 10 years.

#### [Whistle blowers protection Bill passed by Parliament \(p. 5\)](#)

The Bill seeks to establish a mechanism to register complaints on allegations of corruption against public servants.

#### [Street Vendors Bill passed by Parliament \(p. 7\)](#)

The Bill seeks to protect livelihood rights of street vendors and regulate street vending.

#### [Interim Budget 2014-15 presented in Parliament \(p. 4\)](#)

The Interim Budget increases government's revenues and expenditures by 6%; keeps plan expenditure constant.

#### [The HIV and AIDS \(Prevention and Control\) Bill, 2014 introduced in Rajya Sabha \(p. 10\)](#)

The Bill proposes to prohibit discrimination against persons with HIV or AIDS, provides for informed consent and confidentiality with regard to their treatment, and creates mechanisms for redressing their complaints.

#### [The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill, 2014 introduced in Rajya Sabha \(p. 8\)](#)

The Bill specifies 19 types of disabilities, specifies rights and entitlements of disabled persons and provides reservations for them in government jobs and higher education institutions.

#### [Coal Regulatory Authority to be established through an executive order \(p. 15\)](#)

The CCEA has approved the constitution of the Coal Regulatory Authority of India through an executive order.

#### [Corporate Social Responsibility rules under the Companies Act, 2013 notified \(p. 13\)](#)

The government has notified the rules regarding Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) provisions and amended the list of permissible CSR activities under the Companies Act, 2013.

#### [Standing Committees submit reports on various Bills \(p. 5, 6, 8, 11, 13\)](#)

These include the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, Assam Legislative Council Bill, Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Bill, Micro Finance Institutions Bill, and Competition Amendment Bill.

#### [Standing Committees submit reports on key issues \(p. 7, 10, 15, 16, 23, 23\)](#)

These include the development of subordinate courts, welfare of senior citizens, coal pricing, the National Social Assistance Programme, performance of the civil aviation industry, and norms for the setting up of telecom towers.

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**March 3, 2014**

## Dissolution of 15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha

### 68 Bills lapse with dissolution of the 15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha

The last session of the 15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha has ended. With this 68 Bills will lapse and 60 Bills, introduced and pending in Rajya Sabha, will carry forward to the next Lok Sabha. For a full list, see [here](#).

## Home Affairs

Prianka Rao ([prianka@prsindia.org](mailto:prianka@prsindia.org))

### Bill on bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh passed by Parliament

The Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Bill, 2014 was introduced in Lok Sabha on February 13, 2014 by the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr. Sushil Kumar Shinde.<sup>1</sup> It was passed in Lok Sabha on February 18, 2014, with several amendments. Rajya Sabha passed the Bill on February 20, 2014. Further, according to reports, the Bill received Presidential assent on February 28, 2014.<sup>2</sup>

The Bill provides for the reorganisation of the state of Andhra Pradesh. It creates two states, namely Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Salient features of the Bill include:

- **Formation of Telangana:** The newly formed state of Telangana will comprise of the following districts of Andhra Pradesh: Adilabad, Karminagar, Medak, Nizamabad, Warangal, Rangareddi, Nalgonda, Mahbubnagar, Khammam (excluding certain revenue villages) and Hyderabad.
- **Capital city:** Andhra Pradesh and Telangana will have a common capital, Hyderabad, for 10 years. After this period, Hyderabad shall be the capital of Telangana only. The central government will constitute an expert committee to recommend a new capital for Andhra Pradesh within six months of this Bill's enactment.
- **Role of Governor:** The Governor of the existing state of Andhra Pradesh shall be the common Governor for both states for a period to be determined by the President. As part of the administration of the common capital area of Hyderabad, he shall be responsible for: (i) security of life, liberty

and property, (ii) law and order, (iii) internal security, and (iv) management and allocation of government buildings.

- **Representation in the Legislative Assembly and Lok Sabha:** Currently, the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly has 294 seats. After the bifurcation, Andhra Pradesh will have 175 seats (29 Scheduled Castes and 7 Scheduled Tribes), and Telangana 119 seats (19 Scheduled Castes and 12 Scheduled Tribes). In Lok Sabha, Andhra Pradesh will have 25 and Telangana 17 seats.
- **Revenue Distribution:** The resources allocated by the 13<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission to the existing state of Andhra Pradesh will be apportioned between the two successor states on the basis of population ratio and other parameters. The President shall make a reference to the 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission to make separate allocations for each of the successor states, after taking into account their current resources.
- **Special Development Package:** The central government shall ensure that adequate benefits in the form of special development package are given to the backward areas of Andhra Pradesh. This shall include special incentives for Rayalaseema and north coastal regions of the state.

For more information, please see [here](#).

### Committee to look into concerns of persons hailing from the NE constituted

The central government has constituted a committee to look into various concerns of persons hailing from the north eastern states.<sup>3</sup> The Committee will be chaired by Mr. M.P. Bezbaruah, Member, North Eastern Council, and comprise retired senior civil servants. The Committee is to submit its report in two months.

With regards to the safety and concerns of persons from the north eastern states, the terms of reference of the Committee are:<sup>4</sup>

- To examine their concerns, including that of security,
- To examine causes behind the violence and discrimination against them,
- To suggest measures to be taken by the government in this regard, and
- To suggest suitable legal remedies to address these concerns.

### Amendment Bill related to allowances and privileges passed by Parliament

The Governors (Emoluments, Allowances and Privileges) Amendment Bill, 2012 was passed in Parliament on February 19, 2014.

The Bill amends the Governors (Emoluments, Allowances and Privileges) Act, 1982. It seeks to provide certain other pension and post-retirement benefits to ex-Governors. Salient features of the Bill include:

- Under the Act, ex-Governors were entitled only to medical benefits. The Bill provides that an ex-Governor shall be entitled to one personal assistant for the rest of his life.
- However, under the Bill, the personal assistant shall not be provided for the period the ex-Governor has been: (a) re-appointed; (b) elected to either Parliament or state legislature; or (c) appointed to any office of profit under the state or centre.

More information on the Bill is available [here](#).

### Standing Committee submits Report on the functioning of Delhi Police

The Standing Committee on Home Affairs presented its report on the functioning of the Delhi police on February 19, 2014.<sup>5</sup> Highlights of its recommendations are:

- **Vulnerable groups:** The Senior citizens cell must be revamped. A security audit of all senior citizens residing alone should be completed. Cases related to people from the north east must be investigated without delay.
- **Women's safety post December 2012:** Noting an increase of 129% in reported rape cases in 2013, recommendations made in the Standing Committee report on the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, 2012 regarding safety of women, should be addressed.
- **Safety of tourists:** The state government must clear the pending proposals for creation of 266 posts for tourist police.
- **Register of FIRs and conviction:** Police officers who refuse to register FIRs must be punished. In addition, reasons for low conviction rates should be examined.
- **Corruption:** It must be made mandatory for police officers to file immovable property returns annually.

- **Administrative issues:** Issues of police to population ratio, recruitment rules, working hours, separation of investigation and VVIP security from law and order, and modern facilities for training need to be reviewed. Construction of staff quarters must be completed immediately.
- **Infrastructure:** The Home Ministry should ensure sufficient funds for the procurement of PCR vans. Staff manning the call centre must be trained to respond effectively.

### Standing Committee submits Report on Disaster Management

The Standing Committee on Home Affairs presented its report on disaster management in the country on February 19, 2014.<sup>6</sup> Highlights of its recommendations are:

- The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) should finalise its national plan at the earliest. It must also frame its own rules. Further, the National Disaster Mitigation Fund should be created without any delay.
- An Advisory Committee, comprising experts in the field of disaster management, which was disbanded in 2010, must be reconstituted.
- A provision for a High Level Committee (HLC) should be introduced in the Disaster Management Act, 2005. The HLC helps determine the assistance to be given to states from the National Disaster Relief Fund. The Relief Commissioner's role should also be defined in the Act.
- The government should strengthen the disaster management set up at the district level, including implementation of the Disaster Risk Reduction Programme.
- States must formulate a State Disaster Management Policy, strengthen the State Disaster Response Force and integrate the Disaster Response System.
- NDMA must adopt a proactive approach towards management of disasters. This includes recommending funds for relief in repayment of loans or for grant of fresh loans to persons affected by disasters.

## Standing Committee submits report on Coastal Security scheme

The Standing Committee on Home Affairs presented its report on the coastal security scheme on February 19, 2014.<sup>7</sup> Highlights of its recommendations are:

- Gaps in the infrastructure of the coastal security apparatus of Gujarat should be addressed, especially in light of its proximity to the International Maritime Border Line.
- The Ministries of Home, Shipping, Steel and Petroleum and Natural Gas should address the concerns of Gujarat regarding the security of offshore oil installations.
- The National Maritime Domain Awareness Project, which envisages development of a common operational picture of all maritime activities in the seas around India, should be finalized at the earliest.
- The Home Ministry should address the issue of deliberate oil spills by insurgents, by procuring equipment to combat oil spills.
- Radioactive material scanners must be installed at entry/exit points of all major ports.
- The Ministry of Agriculture should formulate a scheme to bring about awareness among the fishermen of coastal states.

## Macroeconomic Developments

Saumya Vaishnav (saumya@prsindia.org)

### Gross Domestic Product grows by 4.7%

India's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the third quarter (October to December) of 2013-14 grew at 4.7%, over the corresponding quarter in 2012-13.<sup>8</sup> This is a decline from the 4.8% growth last quarter. Mining production continued its decline for a second quarter, while manufacturing output declined by 1.9%. As can be seen from Table 1, services and agriculture recorded the strongest growth at 7.6% and 3.6% respectively.

**Table 1: GDP for 2014-15:Q3 (in Rs crore)**

Industry	2013-14:Q3	Q3 growth rate	% share of GDP
Agriculture	2,50,316	3.6%	17%
Mining	26,960	-1.6%	2%
Manufacturing	2,11,540	-1.9%	14%
Electricity	27,090	5.0%	2%
Construction	1,06,726	0.6%	7%
Services	8,55,520	7.6%	58%
<b>GDP</b>	<b>14,78,152</b>	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Sources: MOSPI; PRS.

## Interim Budget 2014-15 passed in Parliament

The Finance Minister presented the Interim Budget 2014-15 to Parliament on February 17, 2014.<sup>9</sup> This interim budget is a vote on account to allow the government to meet its expenditures till June 30, 2014. The newly elected government will have its own regular budget in July 2014. The main features of the interim budget are:

- **Deficit:** Revenue deficit is targeted at 3% of GDP, and fiscal deficit at 4.1% of GDP in 2014-15.
- **Funds for centrally sponsored schemes:** Funds will now flow directly to state budgets and not to the ministries under the central plan. This has resulted in a decrease in central plan expenditure and an equivalent increase in central assistance to state plans.
- **Changes in indirect tax rates:** Packing and storage of rice, and services provided by cord blood banks have been exempt from service tax. The rates of excise duty and customs duty were reduced for certain manufacturing sectors. Table 2 provides details.

**Table 2: Changes in some key excise duties**

Item	Old	New
Capital goods (chapter 84 and 85 of Central Excise Tariff Act)	12%	10%
Small cars, motor cycles, scooters and commercial vehicles	12%	8%
SUVs	30%	24%
Large and mini-segment cars	24-27%	20-24 %

Sources: Budget documents 2014-15; PRS.

- **Policy initiatives:** A moratorium on educational loans was announced, and the principle of one rank-one pension for army pensions has been accepted and will be implemented from 2014-15.

## Industrial productivity declines for third consecutive month

The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) declined for the third consecutive month, falling 0.6% below its December 2012 level in December 2013. This was driven by consumer durables' production which has been declining since December 2012, due to falling demand.<sup>10</sup>

## WPI and CPI decline for second month

Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation declined to 5.1% in January 2014 from 6.2% in December 2013.<sup>11</sup> Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation for January 2014 declined to 8.8%, its lowest value in 24 months.<sup>12</sup>

## Final report of the Committee on Financial Benchmarks

The expert committee constituted by the RBI on June 28, 2013 to study various issues relating to financial benchmarks submitted its final report on February 7, 2014.<sup>13</sup> The Committee had submitted its draft report in December 2013. For a summary of these recommendations, please see the [PRS January 2014 Monthly Policy Review](#).

The key recommendations of the Committee are:

- **Regarding Governance Framework:** The Committee recommended the responsibilities for Benchmark Administrators (like Fixed Income Money Market and Derivatives Association of India or FIMMDA), Benchmark Calculation Agents, and Benchmark Data Submitter in the process of benchmark calculation.
- **Regarding Regulatory Oversight:** While currently a broader interpretation of the relevant section in the RBI Act 1934 confers requisite power on RBI to regulate financial benchmarks, the Committee felt that suitable amendments should be made to the Act to provide explicit provisions for the same. Pending legislative measure, it suggested that RBI entrust responsibility of benchmark administration of Rupee interest rate benchmarks and foreign exchange benchmarks with FIMMDA and Foreign Exchange Dealers' Association of India respectively.

## Law and Justice

*Prianka Rao (prianka@prsindia.org)*

### The Whistle Blowers Protection Bill, 2011 passed by Parliament

The Whistle Blowers Protection Bill, 2011 was passed in Rajya Sabha on February 21, 2014.

Salient features of the Bill include:<sup>14</sup>

- The Bill seeks to protect whistleblowers, i.e. persons making a public interest disclosure related to an act of corruption, misuse of power, or criminal offence by a public servant.
- Any public servant or any other person including a non-governmental organisation may make such a disclosure to the Central or State Vigilance Commission.
- Every complaint has to include the identity of the complainant.
- The Competent Authority may disclose the identity of the complainant to the head of the department only after the prior written consent of the complainant.
- The Bill prescribes penalties for knowingly making false complaints.

More information about the Bill is available [here](#).

### Standing Committee report on Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2013

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice submitted its report on the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2013 on February 6, 2014.<sup>15</sup> As this Bill is pending in the Rajya Sabha, it will not lapse upon the dissolution of the 15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha.

The Bill amends the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. The Bill makes the giving of a bribe an offence, enlarges the definition of taking a bribe and covers commercial organisations.

Key recommendations of the Committee are:

- **Definitions:** The definitions of 'corruption' and 'corrupt practices' should be included in the Bill. The definition of 'public servant' should include retired officials, in line with a provision that extends protection of sanction for prosecution to retired public servants.

- **Coercive bribery:** The government must formulate laws and regulations to ensure that chances of coercive bribery are reduced.
- **Related laws:** The Right of Citizens for Time Bound Delivery of Goods and Services and Redressal of their Grievances Bill, 2011, and the Whistle Blowers Protection Bill, 2011, should be enacted. This would address concerns of persons forced to give bribes to access services from the state, and encourage them to report acts of corruption.
- **Disproportionate assets:** The inclusion of proving the intention of a public servant, in a disproportionate assets case against him should be removed. His inability to explain the source of his disproportionate asset should be sufficient for prosecution.
- **Parity with Lokpal Act:** Minimum punishment for habitual offenders should be enhanced from three to five years to ensure parity with the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013. Further, the timeline for trial of corruption cases should be prescribed as provided for in Lokpal and Lokayukta referred cases.

For a PRS summary of the Standing Committee Report, see [here](#).

### Committee of Secretaries approves policy related to pre-legislative consultation

The Committee of Secretaries, under the chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary, took certain decisions related to pre-legislative consultations, in a meeting held on January 10, 2014.<sup>16</sup> Salient decisions of the Committee are:

- Every Ministry or Department shall publish proposed legislations online and through other means.
- The draft legislation and accompanying information must be placed in the public domain for a minimum period of 30 days. It must cover the following aspects related to the proposed legislation: (i) brief justification for its introduction, (ii) essential elements, (iii) broad financial implications, and (iv) estimated impact assessment on environment, fundamental rights and livelihood of persons concerned.
- When such legislation affects a specific group of people, it must be widely publicised to ensure it reaches the people concerned.
- A summary of feedback received from the public should be published online.
- The Ministry may also hold consultations with all stakeholders.
- Following the pre-legislative and inter-ministerial consultations, the Bill should then be referred to the Law Ministry for vetting.
- The Cabinet note prepared by the Ministry should include a brief summary of feedback received. When the Bill is referred to the Standing Committee, a summary of the pre-legislative process should also be included.

### Cabinet approves increase in election expenditure limits

Cabinet has approved amendments to the Conduct of Election Rules 1961.<sup>17</sup> It has revised the ceiling for expenditure for elections, owing to the increase in the number of electors, polling stations and increase in the cost inflation index.

The limit for election expenditure incurred by a candidate for Parliamentary constituencies has been set at Rs 70 lakh. However, for certain states and union territories like Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Sikkim, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Lakshadweep and Puducherry the limit has been set at Rs 54 lakh.

For assembly constituencies, the limit has been increased to Rs 28 lakh in all states except Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura and Puducherry where it will be Rs 20 lakh.

### Standing Committee submits report on Assam Legislative Council Bill, 2013

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice presented its report on the Assam Legislative Council Bill, 2013 on February 17, 2014.<sup>18</sup> The Bill provides for the creation of a Legislative Council for the state of Assam.

The Committee endorsed the creation of a legislative council for the state of Assam. However, it reiterated its recommendations made in relation to the Rajasthan Legislative Council Bill, 2013, that the central government should evolve a national policy for the upper chamber of state legislatures so that once created, it is not abolished by the incumbent government.

For a PRS summary of the Standing Committee Report, see [here](#).

### Standing Committee submits report on to development of subordinate courts

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice presented its report on infrastructure development and strengthening of subordinate courts on February 6, 2014.<sup>19</sup>

Key highlights of its recommendations include:

- **Land and funding availability:** State governments must undertake vertical construction to lessen the problem of shortage of land. The centre must attempt to increase its contribution to infrastructure, and ensure timely release of funds to states.
- **Implementation of centrally sponsored scheme:** The Department of Justice must conduct an audit of the centrally sponsored scheme related to infrastructure of subordinate courts.
- **E-Court scheme:** The Ministry must ensure that the e-court scheme is implemented across states. The scheme intends to link case filing, case work flow, judgements, cause lists, case status etc. to information technology.
- **Gram Nyayalayas:** Setting-up of Gram Nyayalayas would provide access to justice to citizens at their door steps, reach out to marginalised groups and play a role in the overall reduction in the pendency of cases.
- **Fast track and family courts:** In the wake of the gang rape in Delhi and scams related to fraudulent investment schemes, the establishment of fast track courts have become more important. Similarly, more family courts must be set up in every state.
- **All India Judicial Service:** This would benefit the subordinate judiciary by increasing quality of judges.

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

### Bill related to conditions of service for tribunals introduced in Rajya Sabha

The Tribunals, Appellate Tribunals and Other Authorities (Conditions of Service) Bill, 2014 was introduced in Rajya Sabha on February 17, 2014 by the Minister of Law and Justice, Mr.

Kapil Sibal. The Bill seeks to provide for uniform service conditions with regard to retirement age, tenure of appointment, accommodation for tribunals, appellate tribunals and authorities performing quasi-judicial functions.<sup>20</sup>

Salient features of the Bill include:

- **Scope of the Bill:** The tribunals that fall within the ambit of this Bill include the Company Law Board, central, state and joint administrative tribunals, Income-Tax Appellate Tribunal, National Green Tribunal, Armed Forces Tribunal etc.
- **Term of office:** Every member shall hold office for five years and be eligible for reappointment. The age limit for members who are former Supreme Court judges is 70 years, former chief justices or judges of high courts, is 67 years, and for other members is 65 years.
- **Allowances and medical benefits:** Every member will be entitled to personal allowances, including for travel. He shall also be entitled to benefits under the central government health scheme.

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

### The Delhi High Court (Amendment) Bill, 2014 introduced in Rajya Sabha

The Delhi High Court (Amendment) Bill, 2014 was introduced in Rajya Sabha on February 17, 2014 by the Minister of Law and Justice, Mr. Kapil Sibal. The Bill amends the Delhi High Court Act, 1966.<sup>21</sup>

The Bill increases pecuniary jurisdiction of the high court of Delhi. Pecuniary jurisdiction refers to the jurisdiction of a court over a suit based on the amount or value of its subject matter. Thus, the Delhi high court will now have jurisdiction over suits which are above the value of Rs 2 crore. The Act placed the value at Rs 20 lakh.

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

## Urban Development

*Joyita Ghose (joyita@prsindia.org)*

### Street Vendors Bill passed by Parliament

The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Vending) Bill, 2014 was

passed by Parliament on February 20, 2014.<sup>22</sup> The Bill seeks to protect livelihood rights of street vendors and regulate street vending.

The Bill was passed by Lok Sabha with certain amendments on September 6, 2013. The Rajya Sabha passed the Bill on February 19, 2014 without any additional changes. For key features of the Bill as passed, please refer to the [PRS September 2013 Monthly Policy Review](#).

For more information on the Bill, see [here](#).

### Standing Committee submits report on the Real Estate Bill, 2013

The Standing Committee on Urban Development (Chairperson: Mr Sharad Yadav) submitted its report on the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Bill, 2013 on February 17, 2014.<sup>23</sup>

The Bill seeks to establish Real Estate Regulatory Authorities (RERAs) at the state level for the regulation and development of the real estate sector. It aims to: (a) ensure consumer protection, and (b) standardise business practices and transactions in the real estate sector.

Major recommendations of the Committee are:

- **Commercial and industrial real estate:** The Bill seeks to regulate only residential real estate. The Committee recommended that the Bill regulate commercial and industrial real estate as well.
- **Size of excluded projects:** The Bill excludes projects that are less than 1,000 square meters or 12 apartments, from its purview. The Committee recommended reducing this lower limit to 100 square meters and three apartments.
- **Regulation of real estate agents:** The Bill requires only the real estate agents facilitating the sale of a project covered by the Bill, to register with RERA. The Committee recommended that all real estate agents be required to register with RERA.
- **Single window system for clearances:** The Committee recommended inserting a new provision to allow RERA to give directions to the state government to establish a single window system for clearances for real estate projects.

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

### Bill to repeal Delhi Control of Hotels Act introduced in Rajya Sabha

The Delhi Hotel (Control of Accommodation) Repeal Bill, 2014 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on February 18, 2014 by the Minister of Urban Development, Mr. Kamal Nath.<sup>24</sup>

The Bill seeks to repeal the Delhi Hotels (Control of Accommodation) Act, 1949. The Act empowers the Director of Estates, attached to the Ministry of Urban Development, to reserve up to 25% of accommodation in hotels in Delhi for government officials and others.

For more information, please see the PRS Bill Summary, [here](#).

### Central government gives in principle approval to the Pune Metro Rail Project

The Ministry of Urban Development has given 'in principle' approval to the Pune Metro Rail Project, covering a length of 31.5 km.<sup>25</sup> The project will have two corridors, one from Pimpri-Chinchwad to Swargate and the other from Vanaz to Ramwadi. The government of Maharashtra has proposed to implement the project through a Special Purpose Vehicle, equally and jointly owned by the central and state government.

## Social Justice

### The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill, 2014 introduced in Rajya Sabha

*Mandira Kala (mandira@prsindia.org)*

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill, 2014 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on February 7, 2014 by the Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Mr. Mallikarjun Kharge.<sup>26</sup> As this Bill is still pending in Rajya Sabha, it will not lapse when the new Lok Sabha is formed after the general elections.

The Bill repeals the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunity Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995.

The key features of the Bill are:

- **Definition of disability:** The definition is expanded to include 19 conditions including autism, blindness, intellectual disability, mental illness, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, and learning disability. Persons

with benchmark disabilities are defined as those with at least 40% of any disability.

- **Rights of persons with disabilities:** The Bill states that persons with disabilities shall have the right to equality and shall not be discriminated on grounds of their disability. Rights of disabled persons include protection from inhuman treatment and equal protection and safety in situations of risk, conflict, and natural disasters.
- **Education, skill development and employment:** The Bill provides for access to inclusive education, vocational training and self-employment of disabled persons. All government institutions of higher education and those getting aid from the government shall reserve at least 5% of seats for persons with benchmark disabilities.
- At least 5% of the vacancies in posts of the central and state governments are to be filled by persons or class of persons with benchmark disabilities. Of this, 1% shall be reserved for persons with: (i) blindness and low vision, (ii) hearing and speech impairment, (iii) locomotor disability, (iv) autism, intellectual disability and mental illness, and (v) multiple disabilities.
- **Bodies set up under the Act:** The central and state governments are required to establish a National and State Commissions for Persons with Disabilities. The Commissions shall inquire into matters relating to the deprivation of rights of disabled persons, and monitor the implementation of the Act. The Bill also sets up Central and State Advisory Boards to advise governments on policies and programmes on disability.

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

### Report on functioning of national institutes working in the field of disability

Mandira Kala ([mandira@prsindia.org](mailto:mandira@prsindia.org))

The Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment (Chairperson: Mr. Hemanand Biswal) submitted its report on the functioning of National Institutes working in the field of disability on February 21, 2014.<sup>27</sup> The Committee made the following recommendations:

- The Committee noted that as per the Census of 2011, disabled persons are 2.2% of the

population with 69% residing in rural areas and 31% in urban areas. The Committee was of the view that there is a tendency to under-report disability and therefore the Census numbers may not be accurate. It recommended that sustained efforts be made to build public awareness so that correct numbers are reported. Panchayats and local bodies should also be sensitised to ensure that disabled persons get access to schemes.

- The Committee lauded the work being done by the Rehabilitation Council of India, and other National Institutes and recommended that the government provide optimum allocations and necessary professionals for the welfare of disabled persons. It was also recommended that the government consider a disability budget similar to the gender budget, Special Component Plan and Tribal Sub Plan to address problems confronted by disabled persons.
- The Committee recommended that issues related to training manpower, capacity building and research should be addressed by increasing allocations made to the National Institutes, including other requirements recommended by the Baswan Committee in 2010. The Committee also noted that as per the recommendations of the Baswan Committee, a central Act should be passed to declare the National Institutes as institutes of national importance.
- The Committee recommended that the Department of Disability Affairs encourage state governments who had not drawn up comprehensive action plans for the welfare of disabled persons to do so at the earliest and update the Committee on the state-wise status of the plans.

### Bill to amend list of Scheduled Castes in certain states introduced in Rajya Sabha

Joyita Ghose ([joyita@prsindia.org](mailto:joyita@prsindia.org))

The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Orders (Amendment) Bill, 2014 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha by the Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Mr. Mallikarjun Kharge on February 11, 2014.<sup>28</sup> The Bill adds the following communities to the list of Scheduled Castes:

- (i) Haryana: Kabirpanthi Julaha
- (ii) Karnataka: Od, Odde, Vaddar, Waddar, Voddar, Woddar, Bovi (Non Besta), Kalluvaddar, and Mannuvaddar

- (iii) Odisha: Rajak, Rajaka, Adhuria Dom, Adhuria Domb, Khatia, Sapua Kela, Nalua Kela, Sabakhia Kela, Matia Kela, Gaudia Kela, Khadal, Khodal and Betra
- (iv) Dadra and Nagar Haveli: Rohit

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

### Standing Committee submits report on welfare schemes for senior citizens

Joyita Ghose ([joyita@prsindia.org](mailto:joyita@prsindia.org))

The Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment (Chairperson: Mr. Hemanand Biswal) submitted its report on the implementation of schemes for the welfare of senior citizens on February 7, 2014.<sup>29</sup>

The Committee made recommendations regarding the welfare of senior citizens, especially given the projected shift in demographic patterns. It pointed out that between 2000 and 2050, while the overall population of India will grow by 55%, the population above 60 years and 80 years will grow by 326% and 700% respectively.

Key observations and recommendations of the Committee are:

- **Implementation of existing policies:** Several schemes for senior citizens were formulated under the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan, including setting up a helpline for senior citizens, establishing a National Commission for Senior Citizens, and creating a National Trust for the Aged. The Committee recommended expediting the implementation of these schemes, which have not been implemented even two years after the start of the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan.
- **New policies and laws:** The Committee recommended the following new policies:
  - (i) A comprehensive law for the social security of senior citizens.
  - (ii) An integrated action plan involving various stakeholders and departments of the government.
  - (iii) A new National Policy on Older Persons: While a National Policy on Older Persons was launched in 1999, the policy has not been implemented effectively. A draft National Policy on Senior Citizens was published in 2011 but has not been finalised.

- (iv) An expert committee to formulate specialised health care policies for the population over 80 years of age.

For more details, please see the PRS summary of the Standing Committee, [here](#).

## Health

Mandira Kala ([mandira@prsindia.org](mailto:mandira@prsindia.org))

### HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Control) Bill, 2014 introduced in Rajya Sabha

On February 11, 2014, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (Prevention and Control) Bill, 2014 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha by the Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad.<sup>30</sup> The Bill proposes to prohibit discrimination against persons with HIV or AIDS, provides for informed consent and confidentiality with regard to their status and treatment, places obligations on establishments to safeguard their rights, and creates mechanisms for redressing their complaints.

The key features of the Bill are:

- **Prohibition of discrimination against HIV positive persons:** The Bill lists the grounds on which discrimination against HIV positive persons and those living with them is prohibited. These include the denial, termination, discontinuation or unfair treatment with regard to employment, education, health care, renting property and provision of insurance.
- **Informed consent and disclosure of HIV status:** The Bill requires that no HIV test, medical treatment, or research will be conducted on a person without his informed consent. No person shall be compelled to disclose his HIV status except with his informed consent, and if required by a court order.
- **Role of the ombudsman:** An ombudsman shall be appointed by each state government to inquire into complaints related to the violation of the Act and the provision of health care services.
- **Court proceedings:** Cases relating to HIV positive persons shall be disposed of by the court on a priority basis. In any legal proceeding, if a HIV infected or affected

person is a party, the court may pass orders that the proceedings be conducted (a) by suppressing the identity of the person, (b) in camera, and (c) to restrain any person from publishing information that discloses the identity of the applicant.

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

### **The Food Safety and Standards (Amendment) Bill, 2014 introduced in Parliament**

The Food Safety and Standards (Amendment) Bill, 2014 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on February 19, 2014 by the Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad.<sup>31</sup> The Bill amends the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

The Act establishes the Food Safety and Standards Authority (FSSAI) to regulate the manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import of food items. The key changes proposed in the Bill are the following:

- Under the Act, FSSAI consists of a chairperson and 22 members. The Bill proposes to add the Chief Executive Officer as a member of FSSAI.
- The Act provides that one-third of the members of FSSAI shall be women. The Bill changes this provision to state that of the 10 members of FSSAI, representing the farmers, retailers, consumers, food scientists and technologists, one-third shall be women.

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

## **Finance**

### **Standing Committee submits report on micro-finance Bill**

Saumya Vaishnava ([saumya@prsindia.org](mailto:saumya@prsindia.org))

The Standing Committee on Finance (Chairperson: Mr. Yashwant Sinha) submitted its report on the Micro Finance Institutions (Development and Regulation) Bill, 2012 on February 13, 2014.<sup>32</sup>

The Bill was introduced by the Ministry of Finance in the Lok Sabha on May 22, 2012, and seeks to establish the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as the regulator for all entities providing

micro finance services. A PRS Legislative Brief of the Bill can be found [here](#). The Bill was referred to the Committee on May 28, 2012, and the Committee was due to submit its report in August 2012. This Bill will lapse, when the new Lok Sabha is formed after the general elections.

The Committee stated that the Bill was *unacceptable* in its present form, and urged the Ministry to hold wider consultations and review its fundamental proposals.

- Since the Bill seeks to bring unincorporated Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs), which are few in number, under RBI's ambit, the Committee suggested that the Bill be reconsidered and instead states be allowed to bring unincorporated MFIs under the ambit of state money lending laws.
- Given the lack of concurrence of RBI, the proposed regulator, with the Bill, the Committee suggested the formation of an independent regulator, which will have representatives of all concerned agencies, like RBI, NABARD, etc.
- The Committee felt that the government should persist with pursuing the bank-led model as the prime vehicle for financial inclusion. The government should consider statutory rights to bank accounts.

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

### **RBI revises interest rate ceiling for micro finance institutions**

Alok Rawat ([alok@prsindia.org](mailto:alok@prsindia.org))

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has revised the ceiling on interest rates that micro finance institutions can charge to their borrowers, with effect from April 1, 2014.<sup>33</sup> The ceiling on interest rates will now be the lower of: (i) cost of funds plus an applicable margin (10% for institutions with a loan book larger than Rs 100 crore and 12% for others), and (ii) 2.75 times of the average base rate of the five largest commercial banks.<sup>34</sup>

The average base rates of the five largest banks, as determined by RBI on the last working day of the quarter, shall determine interest rates for the next quarter. The current ceiling on interest rate (applicable till March 31, 2014) is cost of funds plus 12% margin for all institutions.<sup>34</sup>

## **PAC report on contravention of constitutional provisions by Ministry of Finance**

*Saumya Vaishnava (saumya@prsindia.org)*

The Public Accounts Committee (Chairperson: Mr. Murli Manohar Joshi) submitted its report on the contravention of constitutional provisions by the Ministry of Finance, relating to expenditure incurred on interest on refunds without parliamentary approval on February 6, 2014.<sup>35</sup>

Under the Income Tax Act, 1961, if the amount of tax *paid* by a person is higher than the tax *payable* by him, then the person is entitled to a tax refund. This tax refund will also bear an interest which is paid to the person along with the refund. Currently, this expenditure incurred on interest on refund of taxes is deducted from the gross tax collection by the Ministry of Finance, and is not shown as a separate expenditure item.

The Committee, in its 66<sup>th</sup> report on the subject from January 2013, had declared this current practice in contravention of the Constitutional provisions. Any expenditure charged on the Consolidated Fund of India needs an Appropriation Bill, which has to be approved by Parliament. It had recommended that the Ministry of Finance show the interest on refunds as expenditure and follow Constitutional provisions.

The Attorney General, in his earlier deposition for the 66<sup>th</sup> report, said that Parliamentary approval was required. On a reference made by the Ministry of Finance, the Attorney General gave a revised opinion, which was contradictory to his original opinion. Thus, the Committee decided to review this matter.

The Committee, in the present report, re-iterated its earlier recommendation that the Ministry of Finance has to get parliamentary approval for the expenditure and asked to be apprised on the action taken within six months.

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

## **SEBI amends corporate governance norms in listing agreements**

*Alok Rawat (alok@prsindia.org)*

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has approved amendments to listing agreements to bring them in-line with the

provisions of the Companies Act, 2013.<sup>36</sup> These amendments seek to improve corporate governance norms for listed companies and will come in effect from October 1, 2014.

Key amendments are:

- A Director nominated by any financial institution will not be considered as an independent Director.
- An independent Director cannot serve on the board of more than three listed companies (versus seven earlier) nor can they be given stock options. The total tenure of an independent Director has been restricted to two terms of five years.
- There should be at least one woman director on the board of each listed company.
- All significant related-party transactions will require approval from the Audit Committee as well as minority shareholders.
- Establishment of a whistle blower mechanism shall be compulsory for all listed companies.

## **RBI releases report of the Technical Committee on Mobile Banking**

*Alok Rawat (alok@prsindia.org)*

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released the Report of the Technical Committee on Mobile Banking (Chairperson: Mr. B. Sambamurthy).<sup>37</sup> The Committee was constituted by RBI to study the challenges faced in mobile banking, the adoption of particular technologies to meet the requirements of banks and their customers and to suggest a road-map for implementation.

Key recommendations of the Committee are:

- Banks should explore alternate means of user registration for mobile banking which does not require a visit to the bank branch.
- There is a need for standardisation in user registration, authentication and interface.
- Mobile network operators should see mobile banking as an attractive business model.
- There is a need for building common mobile banking applications and technological platforms.
- The government could offer fiscal incentives to encourage participation by stakeholders. This may include pre-installing the common

mobile banking application on handsets or SIM cards or installing it through the network provider.

### Prime Minister approves the composition of the seventh Central Pay Commission

Saumya Vaishnava ([saumya@prsindia.org](mailto:saumya@prsindia.org))

The Prime Minister approved the composition of the seventh Central Pay Commission (CPC) on February 2, 2014. It will be headed by Justice Ashok Kumar Mathur, retired judge of the Supreme Court and retired chairman, Armed Force Tribunal. The secretary of the Ministry of Petroleum and Gas, Mr. Vivek Rae, will be the full time member, and Dr. Rathin Roy of NIPFP will be the part time member.<sup>38</sup>

The Terms of Reference (ToR) of the seventh CPC were approved on February 28, 2013.<sup>39</sup> The CPC will examine, review, evolve and recommend changes regarding the principles governing emolument of central government employees, including officers and employees of the Supreme Court. The ToR requires the CPC to work out a framework keeping in mind, among other things, the need to attract the most suitable talent to government services. The seventh Central Pay Commission was setup on September 25, 2013, and its recommendations are expected to be implemented from January 1, 2016.<sup>40</sup>

## Corporate Affairs

Alok Rawat ([alok@prsindia.org](mailto:alok@prsindia.org))

### Standing Committee submits report on the Competition (Amendment) Bill, 2012

The Standing Committee on Finance (Chairman: Mr. Yashwant Sinha) presented its report on the Competition (Amendment) Bill, 2012.<sup>41</sup> The Bill, introduced in Lok Sabha on December 10, 2012, seeks to amend the Competition Act, 2002. The Bill will lapse upon the dissolution of the 15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha.

Key recommendations of the Committee are:

- **Manpower:** Noting the shortage of manpower in the Competition Commission of India (CCI), the Committee urged the government to undertake a comprehensive review of CCI's recruitment rules and

engage experts and professionals on a contractual basis.

- **Mergers and acquisitions:** The Act mandates CCI's approval for mergers or acquisitions above specified thresholds of turnover or assets. The Bill proposes to empower the government to specify thresholds specific to an industry. The Committee suggested that this clause also mandate unambiguous criteria for identification of such a sector and consultation with stakeholders before specifying such a threshold.
- **Consultation with sectoral regulators:** The Bill seeks to make it mandatory (instead of voluntary) for CCI and other sectoral regulators to consult each other if any of their decisions contravenes any law related to the other regulator. The Committee recommended that CCI and sectoral regulators be required to explain the reasons behind any disagreement during such a consultation.
- **Penalty:** The government and CCI should frame guidelines detailing the criteria for determination of penalties imposed for anti-competitive practices.
- **Search and seizure:** The Bill empowers the CCI Chairman to authorise search and seizure operations on a suspected violator's premises. Noting the fact that CCI has never conducted such operations, the Committee recommended that current provisions requiring a First Class Magistrate's approval for search and seizure operations be continued.

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

### Corporate Social Responsibility rules under the Companies Act, 2013 notified

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has notified the Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Rules, 2014 under the Companies Act, 2013.<sup>42</sup> The list of permissible Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities in Schedule VII of the Act has also been amended.<sup>43</sup> The Rules, Section 135 and the amended Schedule VII shall come into force from April 1, 2014.<sup>44</sup>

Section 135 of the Act mandates every company whose: (i) net worth is above Rs 500 crore, or (ii) turnover is above Rs 1,000 crore, or (iii) net profit is above Rs 5 crore, to spend at least 2% of

its average net profits for the last three financial years towards CSR activities.

Key highlights of the Rules and the amendments to Schedule VII are:

- **Applicability:** CSR provisions of the Act shall be applicable to every Indian company and every foreign company with a branch or project office in India. It shall not be applicable to a company that does not meet the net worth, turnover or net profit criteria for three consecutive financial years.
- **CSR activities:** The CSR activities now permissible under Schedule VII include: (i) promoting women's empowerment and gender equality, (ii) protecting environment, (iii) welfare of weaker sections and former soldiers, (iv) promotion of arts, culture and sports, (v) rural development and technology incubation projects, and (vi) contributions to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund or any other fund set up by the central government towards development, relief works and welfare of the weaker sections.
- **CSR committee:** The Rules provide some exemptions regarding the composition of the CSR committee to private, unlisted and foreign companies.
- **CSR Policy:** A company's CSR Policy should include the details of projects or programmes to be undertaken and the monitoring mechanism. The annual report of the company should include a report on CSR in the prescribed format.
- **Excluded activities:** Activities for the exclusive benefit of company's employees, contribution to political parties and normal business activities shall not be considered as CSR activities.

## Railways

Alok Rawat ([alok@prsindia.org](mailto:alok@prsindia.org))

### Interim Railway Budget for 2014-15 passed by Parliament

The Minister of Railways, Mr. Mallikarjun Kharge, presented the Interim Railway Budget 2014-15 to Parliament on February 12, 2014.<sup>45</sup> This Budget provides authorisation for expenditures till June 30, 2014. The Budget for the entire year will be presented by the next

government after the general elections. The Budget was passed on February 18, 2014.<sup>46</sup>

### Railways' performance in 2013-14: Revised vs. budget estimates

As per the revised estimates for 2013-14, Railways' total revenue is likely to be 2% lower while total expenses are likely to be 1% higher than 2013-14 budget estimates. The operating ratio is likely to be 90.8% against 87.8% projected in 2013-14 budget estimates. The operating ratio is the percent of revenue that is used up as operating expenditure. A higher operating ratio implies a decrease in surplus available for capital investments.

**Table 3: Railways' performance in 2013-14**

Rs crore	2013-14		% change
	BE	RE	
Total Revenue	1,46,626	1,44,168	(1.7%)
Total Expenditure	1,27,230	1,28,385	0.9%
Operating Ratio	87.8%	90.8%	3.0 percentage points

Sources: Ministry of Railways; PRS.

## Information Technology

Apoorva Shankar ([apoorva@prsindia.org](mailto:apoorva@prsindia.org))

### Standing Committee submits report on Cyber Security

The Standing Committee on Information Technology (Chairperson: Mr. Rao Inderjit Singh) presented its report on Cyber Crime, Cyber Security and Right to Privacy on February 12, 2014.<sup>47</sup>

Key recommendations of the Committee are:

- **Institutions to deal with cyber crime:** The Committee recommended the installation of a single, centralised body to deal with cyber crime. The current setup involves overlapping responsibilities of many departments, agencies and banks. Cyber crime cells should be constituted in each state, district and block, connected to a centralised system.
- **Shortage of manpower:** It suggested conducting extensive training programmes to overcome the shortage of security experts and auditors, and skilled IT personnel in the country.

- **Funding for research and development:** It expressed concern over budgetary cuts in the sector as large funds are needed for the development of strategic technologies.
- **Internal hosting:** Internet servers for critical sectors should be hosted within the country to ensure security.

For the PRS summary of the Standing Committee Report, please see [here](#).

## Coal

*Alok Rawat (alok@prsindia.org)*

### Standing Committee submits report on coal pricing and royalty

The Standing Committee on Coal and Steel (Chairman: Mr. Kalyan Banerjee) presented its report on coal pricing and royalty on February 6, 2014.<sup>48</sup> Major recommendations of the Committee are:

- **Price hikes:** Coal price hikes should not be driven only by the motive of profit maximisation. Coal India Ltd. and its subsidiaries should try to ensure that increases in coal prices are only to the extent of increases in costs.
- **Need for regulator:** The central government should constitute a coal pricing regulatory committee with representation from all stakeholders.
- **Imported coal:** The government should review its decision to allow power producers to pass on the burden of costlier imported coal to consumers since it only helps private sector power producers.
- **Royalty:** The Ministry should devise a simpler formula for calculating the rates of royalty on coal. The rates of royalty should be uniform across all states.
- **Coal theft:** The Ministry and Coal India Ltd. should set-up sophisticated and integrated technology-enabled systems in all coal fields to prevent the theft of coal.

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

### Coal Regulatory Authority to be established through an executive order

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved the constitution of the Coal Regulatory Authority of India (CRAI) through an executive order.<sup>49</sup>

The Coal Regulatory Authority Bill, 2013 which seeks to establish CRAI was introduced in the Lok Sabha on December 13, 2013. This Bill will lapse once the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha is constituted after the general elections. Therefore, CRAI which has been constituted will not have a statutory status.

The key functions of CRAI under the Bill were to: (i) ensure conservation of coal resources and compliance with the mining and mine closure plan, (ii) specify methods for testing the quality of coal, (iii) collect information and publish statistics regarding the coal sector, (iv) specify principles and methodologies for determination of the price of coal and by-products, (v) specify the standards of performance and operational efficiency, and (vi) adjudicate disputes.

## Land

*Joyita Ghose (joyita@prsindia.org)*

### Bill to acquire land for B.R. Ambedkar memorial introduced in Lok Sabha

The Acquisition of Certain Area in Mumbai for Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar Memorial Bill, 2014 was introduced in the Lok Sabha by the Minister of Textiles, Dr. Kavuru Sambasiva Rao on February 11, 2014.<sup>50</sup> As this Bill was not passed by Parliament, it will lapse when the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha is formed after the general elections.

The Bill empowers the central government to acquire land in Mumbai from the National Textile Corporation Limited (NTCL) for the construction of a memorial for Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar.

The central government will pay NTCL Rs 45.7 crore. The construction and management of the memorial will be done by the government of Maharashtra, or a trust or society appointed by it. However, the ownership of the property will remain with the central government.

For more details, please see the PRS Bill Summary, [here](#).

## Rural Development

Joyita Ghose ([joyita@prsindia.org](mailto:joyita@prsindia.org))

### Estimates Committee submits report on National Social Assistance Programme

The Committee on Estimates (Chairperson: Mr. Francisco Sardinha) submitted its report on the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) on February 5, 2014.<sup>51</sup>

The NSAP was launched in 1995 to provide social assistance to families below the poverty line, especially the aged, disabled and widows. It consists of the following five schemes at present: (a) Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS), (b) Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS), (c) Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS), (d) National Family Benefit Scheme, and (e) Annapurna Scheme. In 2012-13, it covered 3.06 crore beneficiaries at a cost of Rs 8,447 crore.

Key recommendations of the Committee include:

- **Pension:** The contribution of the central government to the pension amount under various schemes should be increased. The amount should be indexed to inflation and raised regularly in a phased manner. In addition, the pension offered under IGNOAPS should be increased from Rs 200/person/month to Rs 300/person/month.
- **Assistance to women:** At present, widows over 40 years are covered by the IGNWPS. The Committee recommended that IGNWPS cover all widows and that the pension amount be increased from Rs 300 to Rs 1,000 per month. It also recommended that single women above 40 years and divorced women (unemployed, without alimony) be covered under the NSAP.
- **Assistance to disabled:** The IGNDPS defines a person with disability as anyone with more than 80% disability. However, the Persons with Disability (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 defines a person with disability as anyone with more than 40% disability. The Committee recommended that the definition under the IGNDPS be changed in consonance with the Act.

Please see [here](#) for a PRS summary of the Standing Committee report.

## Education

Apoorva Shankar ([apoorva@prsindia.org](mailto:apoorva@prsindia.org))

### Rani Lakshmi Bai Central Agricultural University Bill, passed by Parliament

The Rani Lakshmi Bai Central Agricultural University Bill, 2012 was passed by Parliament on February 20, 2014.<sup>52</sup>

The Bill proposes the setting up of a central agricultural university at Jhansi, in the Bundelkhand region. The purpose of this university is to develop the region through research and education in agriculture and to enhance employment opportunities.

The Bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resource Development, which submitted its report on March 14, 2013. Key recommendations of the Standing Committee pertained to:

- **Parliament's jurisdiction to enact the Bill:** The Committee recommended establishing the Bill under Entry 25 of the concurrent list (education, including technical and medical education) or Entry 64 of the union list (institutions for scientific or technical education), as opposed to Entry 63 of the union list (institution of national importance). The Imphal Central Agricultural University was established under Entry 25 of the concurrent list.
- **Need for university:** The Committee pointed out that other agricultural universities already exist in the region.
- **Location and feasibility:** The Committee recommended Chhatarpur as the ideal location, instead of Jhansi. They suggested that the Bill should also be clear in specifying other logistics.

The Rajya Sabha, before passing the Bill, made a few amendments to it. It amended the Bill to include at least one woman member, representing farmers, in the Board of Management. The Standing Committee's recommendations were not incorporated into the Bill as passed.

For the PRS summary of the Standing Committee report, please see [here](#). For other documents related to the Bill, see [here](#).

## NITSER (Amendment) Bill passed by Parliament

The National Institutes of Technology, Science Education and Research (Amendment) Bill, 2013 was passed by Parliament on February 20, 2014.<sup>53</sup> The Bill seeks to amend the National Institutes of Technology, Science Education and Research (Amendment) Act, 2007. The amendments relate to the following:

- **Incorporation of the Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology, Shibpur:** The Bill incorporates the Bengal Engineering and Science University, Shibpur, West Bengal under NITSER Act. It also changes the name of the university to the Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology, Shibpur.
- **Transitional provisions:** Old authorities will continue to function until a smooth transition is made from a state university to a national one.
- **Establishment of a common Council:** A common Council should be established for all institutes under Bill

The Standing Committee, in its report submitted on December 9, 2013, supported the decision to upgrade the Bengal University from a state to national one and recommended facilitating a smooth transition. Among other recommendations, the Committee also suggested that seats be reserved in the university for students from the state (refer to the [PRS December 2013 Monthly Policy Review](#)).

For other documents related to the Bill, see [here](#).

## New scheme to propel literacy among Muslim adults

The Ministry of Human Resource Development launched the Maulana Azad Taleem-e-Balighan scheme on February 18, 2014.<sup>54</sup> The scheme seeks to achieve the task of educating around one crore, non-literate, Muslim adults.

The scheme comprises imparting functional literacy, implementing HUNAR and continuing education opportunities.<sup>55</sup>

HUNAR is a project aimed at providing free, skill or vocation based training to young Muslim girls. The scheme was initially a collaboration between the central government of India, National Institute of Open Schooling and the

government of Bihar. It was subsequently launched on a national scale.

**Table 4: Literacy rates in India**

	Muslim males	All males	Muslim females	All females
<b>Percentage</b>	67.6%	82.1%	50.1%	65.5%

Sources: 2011 Census; PRS.

The 2011 Census indicates the literacy rate of Muslims in the country to be at 59.1%, below the national average of 74.04%. Under this scheme, the National Literacy Mission Authority, established by the Ministry, has set down certain targets including:

- Scaling up of basic education for 2.5 lakh adults,
- Providing livelihood skill training to three lakh beneficiaries, and
- Providing opportunities of continuing educating the community.

Under the scheme, 410 Saakshar Bharat Districts will be covered with a financial outlay of Rs 600 crore. Saakshar Bharat was initially a mission launched to attain 80% literacy on a national level by 2012.<sup>56</sup>

## Ministry approves revisions in scheme for Vocational Education

The Ministry of Human Resource Development approved the continuation of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) on Vocationalisation of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education. The approval for its revision and continuation was given on February 12, 2014.<sup>57</sup>

The objectives of the scheme are to: (a) provide varied employment opportunities, (b) equate supply with demand, and (c) provide an alternative for those pursuing higher education.<sup>58</sup>

According to the revisions, financial assistance will be given to all states/union territories, and incentives provided to recognised and aided private schools, for implementing the scheme. Besides vocational education, the scheme also involves: (a) capacity building of vocational education teachers/skill trainers, and (b) management information systems.

The budgetary allocation approved by the Planning Commission for the scheme in the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan is Rs 500 crore per annum. So far, 1,119 schools have been covered across 21 states and union territories and 1.19 lakh students have been covered in 2013-14.<sup>59</sup>

### UGC task force releases report on gender sensitisation and women's safety on campuses

The University Grants Commission set up a task force that reviewed the measures for ensuring safety of women on campuses and programmes for gender sensitisation. The report of the task force was released on February 12, 2014.<sup>60</sup>

Key recommendations of the task force included:

- Establishment of a gender sensitisation unit and the development of a handbook on gender sensitization and sexual harassment.
- Mandatory requirement for all members of higher educational institutions to undergo processes of gender sensitisation.
- Formulation of guidelines for dealing with cases of sexual harassment.
- Development of modules on gender sensitisation for students in higher education institutions.
- Provision of counselling services on a full time basis.
- Provision of adequate infrastructure, such as lighting in and around campuses, reliable public transport, toilet facilities and hostel accommodation for girls in the higher education institutions.

### Cabinet approves Nalanda University (Amendment) Bill, 2013

The Cabinet gave its approval for amendments made to the Nalanda University (Amendment) Bill, 2013.<sup>61</sup>

The university is an institution of national importance, partly foreign-funded and partly by the Indian government. It has been allocated around Rs 2,727 crore in the union budget.

The key amendments relate to:

- The university will function as a non-state, non-profit, self-governing international institution.
- Vice-Chancellor to perform the role of Member Secretary of the governing board.
- Governing board will have seven members representing East Asia Summit countries.

### CCEA approves modifications for setting up of model schools

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved certain modifications to the existing

scheme for setting up of 6,000 senior secondary, model schools at block level, on February 28, 2014. The scheme was originally launched in November, 2008.<sup>62</sup>

A total of 3,500 of these schools (senior secondary) were envisaged to be set up through their respective states, in economically backward blocks. The remaining 2,500 schools were to be established under the public-private partnership mode, in non-educationally backward blocks. Main modifications include financial sharing patterns between the centre and states and grants for salaries of teaching and non-teaching staff. The financial sharing pattern shall remain 75:25 except for special category states/upgraded ashram schools for which it will now be 90:10.

### 54 new Kendriya Vidyalayas to be opened

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the opening of 54 new Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) during the 12<sup>th</sup> five year plan, on February 28, 2014.<sup>63</sup>

KVs were set up to cater to the educational needs of children of central government employees. The new KVs will be spread over 53 districts in 17 states. The total cost of opening them is projected at approximately Rs 927 crore. The new KVs are estimated to benefit an additional 54,000 students.

## Environment

Joyita Ghose ([joyita@prsindia.org](mailto:joyita@prsindia.org))

### National Mission for Green India launched as centrally sponsored scheme

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the National Mission for Green India as a centrally sponsored scheme, with an allocation of Rs 13,000 crore over the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan.<sup>64</sup>

**Objectives:** The objectives of the scheme are to: (a) increase forest and tree cover and improve the quality of forest cover spanning two to eight million hectares, and (b) improve ecosystem services including biodiversity and forest based livelihoods.

**Implementation:** Gram Sabhas, along with restructured Joint Forest Management Committees, will oversee implementation of the scheme at the local level. At the state level, the Forest Development Agency and State Forest Development Agency, both restructured, will

oversee implementation. A Governing Council, chaired by the Minister of Environment and Forests, and an Executive Committee will facilitate the implementation of the programme at the national level.

## Tribal Affairs

Joyita Ghose ([joyita@prsindia.org](mailto:joyita@prsindia.org))

### Standing Committee submits report on working of ashram schools in tribal areas

The Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment (Chairperson: Mr Hemanand Biswal) submitted its report on the working of ashram schools in tribal areas on February 18, 2014.<sup>65</sup> Ashram schools are residential schools which impart education up to the secondary level to children belonging to Scheduled Tribes (STs).

Major recommendations of the Committee are:

- **Integrated action plan:** While the literacy gap between other groups and STs has decreased to 14%, there is significant inter-state variation and the literacy gap is 28% in some states. The Committee recommended collaborative effort by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Ministry of Human Resource Development, state governments and non-governmental organisations to improve the literacy rate of STs.
- **Central scheme on ashram schools:** The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has been implementing a central scheme to establish ashram schools in tribal sub plan areas since 1990-91. Under the Tribal Sub Plan approach, a sub plan specifically related to tribal welfare is formulated for areas with a high concentration of tribal population.

The Committee pointed out that only 862 ashram schools have been established till date. There has also been significant delay in the construction of these schools.

- **Umbrella scheme for the education of ST Children:** The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has proposed a scheme for the education of tribal children for the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan, through which more funds will be made available to state governments to upgrade ashram schools. The Committee recommended expediting the approval process for the scheme so that it may be implemented during the current fiscal year.

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

## Housing

Joyita Ghose ([joyita@prsindia.org](mailto:joyita@prsindia.org))

### Housing Ministry and RBI release results of pilot Housing Start Up Index

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA) and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released the results of the pilot Housing Start Up Index on February 3, 2014.<sup>66</sup> It was developed jointly by the National Buildings Organisation (under the MoHUPA), and RBI.

The Index measures new construction in the residential housing sector in 27 cities between 2009 and 2011. It measures construction of both single and multiple housing units. As a measure of construction in a given period, the Index is expected to be an indicator of economic activity in the housing sector.

Data from the following 27 cities was collected: Agra, Ahmedabad, Allahabad, Bangalore, Bhilai, Bhopal, Chandigarh, Chennai, Coimbatore, Dehradun, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, Guwahati, Hubli, Indore, Jaipur, Jamnagar, Jodhpur, Kharagpur, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mysore, Nagpur, Pondicherry, Sangli, Surat, and Vizag.

The Index reveals that the number of housing units that were started, grew at a rate of 34% per year from 1.2 lakh in 2009 to 2.1 lakh in 2011. Of the 27 selected cities, the rate of construction of new houses rose most in Ahmedabad (138%), Bhopal (85%), and Indore (75%) and declined in Jamnagar (-19%), Bangalore (-6%).

## Agriculture

Sakshi Balani ([sakshi@prsindia.org](mailto:sakshi@prsindia.org))

### Second Advance Estimates of crop production in 2013-14 released

India is likely to produce 263.2 million tonnes of foodgrains in 2013-14, including Kharif and Rabi production.<sup>67</sup> This is six million tonnes higher than the production last year and the highest production ever. Rice production is expected to reach nearly 106.2 million tonnes

while wheat production is anticipated to reach 95.6 million tonnes. Table 5 compares the production estimates for major crops for 2013-14 to production of the previous three years.

**Table 5: Foodgrains production (2010-2014)**

Crop	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14***	2010-11 to 2013-14 CAGR
Rice	96.0	105.3	105.2	106.2	3.4%
Wheat	86.9	94.9	93.5	95.6	3.2%
Coarse Cereals	43.4	42.0	40.0	41.6	-1.4%
Total Pulses	18.2	17.1	18.3	19.8	2.7%
<b>Total Foodgrains</b>	<b>244.5</b>	<b>259.3</b>	<b>257.1</b>	<b>263.2</b>	<b>2.5%</b>
Total oilseeds	32.5	29.8	30.9	33.0	0.5%
Cotton*	33.0	35.2	34.2	35.6	2.6%
Jute, Mesta**	10.6	11.4	10.9	11.3	2.1%
Sugarcane	342.4	361.0	341.2	345.9	0.3%

Sources: Press Information Bureau; PRS.

Notes: \*million bales of 170 kg each

\*\*million bales of 180 kg each

\*\*\*2<sup>nd</sup> Advance Estimate of 2013-14

### Fair and Remunerative Price of sugarcane increased by 5% for 2014-15

The central government has announced the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane for the 2014-15 sugarcane season.<sup>68</sup> The FRP has been increased to Rs 220 per quintal from Rs 210 in 2013-14, a 5% increase over last year's FRP. The FRP recommended by the central government has nearly tripled from Rs 74.50 per quintal in the 2004-05 season. States are empowered to recommend a higher price than the central FRP that sugar mills must pay to sugarcane farmers in the state, referred to as the State Advised Price. The SAP in several states is significantly higher than the FRP: for example, the SAP for 2013-14 is Rs 280 per quintal in Uttar Pradesh<sup>69</sup> while that for Haryana is Rs 301 per quintal<sup>70</sup>.

### PAC submits report on the implementation of the Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) submitted a report on the implementation of the Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief

Scheme, 2008 on February 6, 2014.<sup>71</sup> The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) had also audited the scheme and presented its report in May 2013.<sup>72</sup>

The scheme was launched in May 2008 to address the financial indebtedness of farmers. Farmers were provided debt waiver and relief packages for their loans and be issued fresh loans. Under the scheme, the central government has released nearly Rs 68,000 crore to clear part of the dues of farmers.

The CAG found that the scheme did not achieve its objectives due to: (i) errors of inclusion and exclusion at the beneficiary level, (ii) poor and inadequate documentation, and (iii) ineffective monitoring of the scheme. Please see [here](#) for a PRS summary of the CAG performance audit of the scheme.

The PAC recommended that the Ministry of Finance rectify the irregularities in the scheme and take stringent penal action against responsible individuals. Some of its key findings include:

- **Errors in identification of beneficiaries:** The CAG audit revealed errors in the beneficiary lists prepared by banks, indicating high errors of inclusion and exclusion. The PAC noted that the one month time-frame for implementing the scheme was unrealistic and the reason for these errors. It recommended that the government expedite the recovery of funds from ineligible beneficiaries and extend benefits to eligible beneficiaries within six months of the report.
- **Inadequate monitoring of the scheme:** The PAC disapproved of the casual monitoring approach of the Department of Financial Services, the apex body responsible for the scheme, and the nodal agencies responsible for monitoring, the Reserve Bank of India and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development. The agencies did not independently scrutinise the list of beneficiaries prepared by the lending banks for their accuracy. In addition, they did not devise a mechanism for ensuring strict compliance with the guidelines, evidenced by glaring instances of violations of guidelines by the lending institutions.

## Labour

Joyita Ghose ([joyita@prsindia.org](mailto:joyita@prsindia.org))

### Standing Committee submits report on employment exchanges Bill

The Standing Committee on Labour (Chairperson: Mr. Dara Singh Chauhan) submitted its report on the Employment Exchanges (Compulsory Notification of Vacancies) Amendment Bill, 2013 on February 7, 2014.<sup>73</sup> The Bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on April 22, 2013.

The Bill amends the Employment Exchanges (Compulsory Notifications of Vacancies) Act, 1959. The Act makes the notification of certain vacancies to employment exchanges compulsory.

The key recommendations of the Committee are:

- **Need for a comprehensive Bill:** The Committee recommended revamping employment exchanges to provide one stop placement solutions to the unemployed. Short courses and vocational guidance should be provided to all registered candidates by qualified career counsellors. The Committee recommended that the Bill be returned to the Ministry so that a more comprehensive Bill may be drafted.
- **Definition of employee:** The Bill defines an employee as any person who is employed on a contractual basis for a period 240 days or more. The Committee recommended that this definition be made more inclusive. It pointed out that employment may be offered on a contract basis for less than 240 days, and employers could give a break after less than 240 days and re-employ the person.
- **Regulation of private placement agencies:** The Committee recommended that provisions for regulating placement agencies in the private sector be included in the Bill. The Bill should aim to make the process of recruitment by private and public sector institutions more transparent.

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

## External Affairs/Tourism

Prianka Rao ([prianka@prsindia.org](mailto:prianka@prsindia.org))

### Relaxation of visa norms for tourists

On February 5, 2014, the Planning Commission took certain decisions related to the relaxation of visa norms to promote tourism.<sup>74</sup>

The Tourist Visa on Arrival and Electronic Travel Authorisation facilities will be extended to all countries barring Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nigeria. The new systems are to be put into place by October 2014.

## Minority Affairs

Prianka Rao ([prianka@prsindia.org](mailto:prianka@prsindia.org))

### Bill related to Waqf Properties introduced in Rajya Sabha

The Waqf Properties (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Bill, 2014 was introduced in Rajya Sabha on February 18, 2014 by the Minister of Minority Affairs, Mr. K. Rahman Khan.<sup>75</sup>

- The Bill provides for a mechanism for eviction of unauthorised occupants from waqf properties. Consequently, it bars the jurisdiction of civil courts in entertaining any suit in this regard.<sup>76</sup>
- This Bill will be applicable to Waqf Properties administered under the Durgah Khwaja Saheb Act, 1955. It shall not apply to ancient monuments, and archaeological sites protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.

## Information and broadcasting

Sakshi Balani ([sakshi@prsindia.org](mailto:sakshi@prsindia.org))

### Committee on Estimates submits report on the National Film Archive of India

The Parliamentary Committee on Estimates submitted its report on the National Film Archive of India (NFAI) on February 5, 2014.<sup>77</sup> The NFAI was established to preserve the heritage of national cinema. It classifies and documents data related to films, undertakes and encourages

research on cinema, and acts as a centre for the dissemination of film culture in the country.

The Committee's examination of NFAI revealed that its efforts at conservation of films did not match the volume of production. Its key findings were:

- **Need for comprehensive national policy on films:** The Committee observed that there is no legal compulsion on the part of filmmakers to contribute and preserve their films for posterity, resulting in the loss of films and related material. It recommended modifying the existing film acquisition policy, 1981 to ensure that filmmakers share a copy of their film with NFAI for preservation. It also recommended the formulation of a comprehensive national policy that incorporates the existing film acquisition policy with restoration, digitisation and preservation of film material.
- **National Film Heritage Mission:** The government had conceived of the Mission with an outlay of Rs 597 crore with an aim to synergise the conservation, preservation, studies and research of films. However, digitisation and restoration work in NFAI under the Mission has been pending implementation for the last two years. The Committee recommended launching the Mission immediately to prevent the loss of film and filming material due to the humid weather in the country.
- **Infrastructural constraints:** The Committee noted that NFAI is facing infrastructural constraints, which include: (i) a shortage of vaults to store films, (ii) poor air conditioning systems inside vaults leading to sub-optimal conservation of films, and (iii) poor fire-fighting systems. The Committee recommended addressing these constraints at the earliest.

## Trade

*Saumya Vaishnav (saumya@prsindia.org)*

### Standing Committee submits report on India Trade Promotion Organisation

The Standing Committee on Commerce (Chairperson: Mr. Shanta Kumar) submitted its report on the Activities and Functioning of India

Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO) on February 13, 2014.<sup>78</sup>

The Committee observed that the efforts made towards trade promotion by ITPO are too general in nature and fail to provide exporters with an edge. It recommended that ITPO:

- (i) Be proactive in finding new markets for Indian exports, and hold consultative meetings with industry for trade promotion.
- (ii) Rationalise its rental charges for Pragati Maidan, Delhi and redress the grievances of the exhibition industry.

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

## Telecom

*Alok Rawat (alok@prsindia.org)*

### Auction of spectrum in 1800 MHz and 900 MHz bands concluded

The auction of 2G telecom spectrum in 1800 MHz and 900 MHz bands concluded after 68 rounds on February 13, 2014.<sup>79</sup> Bids were received for all 22 circles in 1800 MHz band and 3 circles in 900 MHz band. The government expects the auction to result in revenues of Rs 61,162 crore, against a valuation of Rs 49,143 crore based on the reserve price.<sup>80, 81, 82</sup>

A successful bidder has the option of paying in instalments. The upfront payment will be 33% of the final price for the 1800 MHz band and 25% for the 900 MHz band. Assuming all successful bidders choose to pay in instalments, the upfront receipts by government are expected to be Rs 18,350 crore.<sup>79</sup>

### Cabinet approves spectrum charges for 1800 MHz and 900 MHz bands

The Cabinet has approved revised Spectrum Usage Charges (SUC) for GSM cellular services in 1800 MHz and 900 MHz bands.<sup>83</sup> The spectrum acquired in the recently concluded auction will be charged at flat 5% of the Adjusted Gross Revenue. The SUC for operators who have not acquired spectrum in the recent auction shall remain unchanged as per the existing slab rates. Operators with existing spectrum, who also acquired spectrum in the recent auction, will have to pay SUC at the weighted average of revised and current rates.

Decision on SUC rates for CDMA services has been deferred. SUC rates for Broadband Wireless Access spectrum acquired in 2010 auction shall remain unchanged. The Cabinet expects the adoption of a weighted average approach to lead to a transition towards a flat rate SUC from a slab-based system.

### Guidelines for transfer and merger of licences in case of Merger and Acquisition

The Department of Telecommunications has notified the guidelines for the transfer and merger of telecom service licences in case of Merger and Acquisition (M&A) between two licensees.<sup>84</sup> Key features of the guidelines are:

- **Notifying the government:** The licensee(s) should notify the government for any M&A proposal. The government may send its comments and objections to the transaction within 30 days.
- **Time limit:** Licenses in different circles can be merged or transferred within one year of approval of the transaction by the concerned tribunal or court.
- **Lock-in:** If the license stipulates a lock-in condition, the lock-in will continue to apply to the resultant entity.
- **Validity:** The validity period of license of the resultant entity shall be higher of validity period of the two licenses. The validity of spectrum will remain unchanged.
- **Price of spectrum:** If the transferor holds the spectrum assigned against payment of entry fees, the difference of market-determined spectrum price and entry fee will have to be paid to the government.

### Standing committee submits report on norms for the setting up of telecom towers

The Standing Committee on Information Technology (Chairman: Mr. Rao Inderjit Singh) presented its report on the norms for the setting up of telecom towers, their adverse health effects and setting up of security standards on February 12, 2014.<sup>85</sup> Key observations and recommendations are:

- **Uniform policy:** The Committee recommended that the central government re-examine the issue of the jurisdiction of Department of Telecommunications versus local civic authorities for setting up telecom

towers. A national policy should be evolved to streamline procedural issues.

- **DoT guidelines:** The Committee noted that Department's guidelines on grant of clearances for installation of telecom towers were merely advisory in nature. It recommended that the guidelines be made mandatory by giving them statutory backing.
- **Tower sharing:** The Committee felt that tower sharing can help in restricting the number of towers required, reducing service costs and expanding telecom coverage.
- **Radiation:** The Committee recommended that the government conduct a scientific study on the concerns regarding health effect of radiations from telecom towers through a reputed government organisation. It asked the Department to explore utilisation of low power radiating technologies in urban areas.
- **General public:** The Committee stressed the need for addressing the concerns of general public while setting up telecom towers. It recommended that the Department's existing grievance redressal mechanism, currently available in Mumbai, be extended to other cities.

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

## Civil Aviation

*Alok Rawat (alok@prsindia.org)*

### PAC report on performance of civil aviation industry

The Public Accounts Committee (Chairman: Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi) presented its report on the performance of civil aviation industry on February 6, 2014.<sup>86</sup>

Key recommendations of the Committee are:

- **Aircraft purchase:** The Committee was perturbed with the manner of Air India's decision to purchase 68 aircrafts in 2005, despite several concerns and recommendations to the contrary. It was disappointed that no cost benchmarks were set before initiating purchase negotiations.
- **Aircraft delivery:** Noting the delay in delivery of aircrafts purchased by Air India in 2005, the Committee recommended

urgent steps to initiate the claims for liquidated damages from the manufacturer.

- **Human resource:** The Committee asked for the implementation status of the recommendations of the Dharmadhikari Committee set up to study the human resource issues arising from the merger of Air India and Indian Airlines.
- **Bilateral agreements:** The Committee opined that the entitlements granted to Dubai's airlines under the bilateral agreement were vastly in excess of end-to-end flying requirements between the two countries, implicitly allowing them to capture the traffic between India and USA/UK/Europe. It recommended that corrective steps to protect the interests of Indian airlines be taken immediately.
- **Air India's performance:** The Committee remarked that Air India's operational performance has deteriorated significantly. It suggested that the Rs 30,231 crore equity infusion, as demanded by Air India in its financial restructuring plan, be expedited.

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

### FAA downgrades safety rating for DGCA

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has downgraded India's civil aviation safety rating to Category 2 (from Category 1).<sup>87</sup> A Category 2 rating implies that India's safety oversight regime does not meet international standards.

The rating is based on FAA's recent audit of India's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). An audit conducted by the International Civil Aviation Organisation in December 2012 had also identified concerns in the functioning of DGCA. Consequent to the downgrade, India's airlines cannot launch new services to the U.S. They may also be subject to additional safety inspections at US airports.

## Culture

*Joyita Ghose (joyita@prsindia.org)*

### Launch of National Mission on Libraries

The Ministry of Culture launched the National Mission on Libraries (NML) on February 3,

2014.<sup>88</sup> The Mission aims to modernise and digitally link public libraries across the country. It will focus on four core areas: (a) creation of a National Virtual Library of India to share digitised reading material in various languages, (b) setting up NML Model Libraries, (c) quantitative and qualitative survey of libraries, and (d) capacity building.

The central government has allocated Rs 400 crore over the next three years for the Mission.<sup>89</sup> The Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation, Kolkata is the nodal agency for the implementation of the Mission.

<sup>1</sup> The Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Bill, 2014, Ministry of Home Affairs, February 13, 2014, <http://www.prsindia.org/uploads/media/Telangana/AP%20Reorganisation%20Bill.%202014.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> "President rule in Andhra Pradesh, assent to Telangana bill", The Times of India, February 28, 2014; "Telangana Bill, Central rule receives Presidential nod", The Hindu, March 1, 2014; "Pranab clears Telangana, imposes President's rule in Andhra", Firstpost India, March 1, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> "Committee to Look into Concerns of Persons Hailing from North Eastern States Constituted", Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, February 6, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> "A Committee Constituted to Look into Concerns of Persons Hailing from the North Eastern States Living in Different Parts of the Country", Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, February 21, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> "176<sup>th</sup> Report: Functioning of Delhi Police", Standing Committee on Home Affairs, February 19, 2014, <http://164.100.47.5/newcommittee/reports/EnglishCommittee/s/Committee%20on%20Home%20Affairs/176.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> "178<sup>th</sup> Report: Disaster Management in the Country", Standing Committee on Home Affairs, February 19, 2014, <http://164.100.47.5/newcommittee/reports/EnglishCommittee/s/Committee%20on%20Home%20Affairs/178.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> "177<sup>th</sup> Report: Coastal Security Scheme", Standing Committee on Home Affairs, February 19, 2014, <http://164.100.47.5/newcommittee/reports/EnglishCommittee/s/Committee%20on%20Home%20Affairs/177.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> "Estimates of Gross Domestic Product for the Third Quarter (October-December) of 2013-14", PIB Release, February 28, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Union government budget documents, <http://indiabudget.nic.in/>, accessed on February 17, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> "Quick Estimates of Index of Industrial Production and Use-Based Index for the Month of December, 2013 (BASE 2004-05=100)", Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, February 12, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> "Index Numbers of Wholesale Price in India (BASE: 2004-05=100), Review for the Month of January, 2014", Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, February 14, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> "Consumer Price Index Numbers on Base 2010=100 for Rural, Urban and Combined for the Month of January, 2014", Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, February 12, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> “Report of the Committee on Financial Benchmarks” Reserve Bank of India, February 2014, <http://rbidocs.rbi.org.in/rdocs/PublicationReport/Pdfs/FRCFB070214.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Statement of Objects and Reason, Whistle Blowers Protection Bill, 2011, <http://www.prsindia.org/uploads/media/Public%20Disclosure/Public%20Interest%20Disclosure%20Bill.%202010.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> “69<sup>th</sup> Report: The Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2013”, Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice, February 6, 2014, <http://164.100.47.5/newcommittee/reports/EnglishCommittee/Committee%20on%20Personnel.%20PublicGrievances.%20Law%20and%20Justice/69.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Committee of Secretaries, Law Department, Ministry of Law and Justice, <http://lawmin.nic.in/ld/plcp.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> “Revision of ceiling on election expenditure- Amendment to Rule 90 of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961”, Press Information Bureau, Cabinet, February 28, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> “70<sup>th</sup> Report: The Assam Legislative Council Bill, 2013”, Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice, February 17, 2014, <http://164.100.47.5/newcommittee/reports/EnglishCommittee/Committee%20on%20Personnel.%20PublicGrievances.%20Law%20and%20Justice/69.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> “67<sup>th</sup> Report: Infrastructure Development and Strengthening of Subordinate Courts”, Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice, February 6, 2014, <http://164.100.47.5/newcommittee/reports/EnglishCommittee/Committee%20on%20Personnel.%20PublicGrievances.%20Law%20and%20Justice/67.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Statement of Objects and Reason, Tribunals, Appellate Tribunals and Other Authorities (Conditions of Service) Act, 2014, <http://www.prsindia.org/uploads/media/Tribunal%20Authorities/Tribunal%20authorities%20bill.%202014.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> Statement of Objects and Reason, Delhi High Court (Amendment) Bill, 2014, <http://www.prsindia.org/uploads/media/Delhi%20high%20court/Delhi%20high%20court%20%28A%29%20Bill.%202014.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.prsindia.org/billtrack/the-street-vendors-protection-of-livelihood-and-regulation-of-street-vending-act-2012-2464/>

<sup>23</sup> “30<sup>th</sup> Report: The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Bill, 2013” Standing Committee on Urban Development, February 17, 2014, [http://164.100.47.134/Isscommittee/Urban%20Development/15\\_Urban\\_Development\\_30.pdf](http://164.100.47.134/Isscommittee/Urban%20Development/15_Urban_Development_30.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> The Delhi (Control of Accommodation) Repeal Bill, 2014, Ministry of Urban Development, February 18, 2014, [http://www.prsindia.org/uploads/media/Delhi%20Hotels/Delhi%20Hotels%20\(Control%20of%20Accommodation\)%20Repeal%20Bill.pdf](http://www.prsindia.org/uploads/media/Delhi%20Hotels/Delhi%20Hotels%20(Control%20of%20Accommodation)%20Repeal%20Bill.pdf).

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<sup>26</sup> Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill, 2014, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Rajya Sabha, February 11, 2014, <http://www.prsindia.org/uploads/media/Person%20with%20Disabilities/The%20Right%20of%20Persons%20with%20Disabilities%20Bill.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> “45<sup>th</sup> Report: Functioning of National Institutes Working in the Field of Disability”, Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment, February 21, 2014, [http://164.100.47.134/Isscommittee/Social%20Justice%20%20Empowerment/15\\_Social\\_Justice\\_And\\_Empowerment\\_45.pdf](http://164.100.47.134/Isscommittee/Social%20Justice%20%20Empowerment/15_Social_Justice_And_Empowerment_45.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Orders (Amendment) Bill, 2014, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, February 11, 2014, <http://www.prsindia.org/uploads/media/SC%20order.%202014/SC%20order%20Bill.%202014.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> “39<sup>th</sup> Report: Implementation of Schemes for Welfare of Senior Citizens”, Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment, February 7, 2014, [http://164.100.47.134/Isscommittee/Social%20Justice%20%20Empowerment/15\\_Social\\_Justice\\_And\\_Empowerment\\_39.pdf](http://164.100.47.134/Isscommittee/Social%20Justice%20%20Empowerment/15_Social_Justice_And_Empowerment_39.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> The Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (Prevention and Control) Bill, 2014, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Rajya Sabha, February 11, 2014, <http://www.prsindia.org/uploads/media/HIV/HIV-AIDS%20Bill.%202014.pdf>.

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<sup>36</sup> “PR - SEBI Board Meeting”, Securities and Exchange Board of India, February 13, 2014, [http://www.sebi.gov.in/cms/sebi\\_data/pdf/files/27383\\_t.pdf](http://www.sebi.gov.in/cms/sebi_data/pdf/files/27383_t.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> “Report of the Technical Committee on Mobile Banking”, Reserve Bank of India, February 7, 2014, <http://www.rbi.org.in/scripts/PublicationReportDetails.aspx?UrlPage=&ID=760#3>.

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<sup>39</sup> “7<sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission”, PIB Release, February 28, 2014.

<sup>40</sup> “FM: Prime Minister approves the constitution of the Seventh Central Pay Commission; Recommendations are likely to be implemented with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016”, PIB Release, September 25, 2013.

<sup>41</sup> “83<sup>rd</sup> Report: The Competition (Amendment) Bill, 2012”, Standing Committee on Finance, February 13, 2014, [http://164.100.47.134/lssccommittee/Finance/15\\_Finance\\_83.pdf](http://164.100.47.134/lssccommittee/Finance/15_Finance_83.pdf).

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