

# Monthly Policy Review

## September 2015

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### Highlights of this Issue

#### [RBI reduces repo rate to 6.75%; CAD in Q1 2015-16 at USD 6.2 billion \(p. 2\)](#)

The policy repo rate was reduced by 50 basis points from 7.25% to 6.75%. The current account deficit in the first quarter of 2015-16 was USD 6.2 billion, compared to USD 7.8 billion in the first quarter of 2014-15.

#### [Parliamentary Standing Committees identify subjects for examination in 2015-16 \(p. 2\)](#)

Parliament's Departmentally Related Standing Committees have identified various subjects for detailed examination in the year 2015-16.

#### [One Rank One Pension scheme to be implemented \(p. 3\)](#)

The Minister of Defence announced that the scheme will be effective from July 1, 2014. It will cost the exchequer Rs 8,000-10,000 crore this year, and Rs 10,000-12,000 crore in arrears.

#### [Cash Transfer of Food Subsidy Rules, 2015 notified \(p. 6\)](#)

The Rules provide for state governments to implement the direct cash transfer scheme for food subsidy beneficiaries. The central government will transfer funds to states/UTs on a monthly basis for this purpose.

#### [Govt accepts recommendations of Committee on the applicability of MAT on FIIs \(p. 3\)](#)

The Committee was constituted to determine the applicability of MAT for the years prior to April 1, 2015. It has recommended that the Income Tax Act be amended to clarify the inapplicability of MAT to FIIs.

#### [Centre proposes independent commission for recommending salaries of MPs \(p. 2\)](#)

The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs has proposed a three-member independent 'Emoluments Commission' to recommend salaries and other allowances for Members of Parliament.

#### [Negotiable Instruments \(Amendment\) Second Ordinance promulgated \(p. 4\)](#)

The Ordinance states that cases of cheque bouncing may be filed in areas where either the payee or the drawer maintains a bank account. This area will be determined depending on the mode of collection of the cheque.

#### [Law Commission of India submits report on death penalty \(p. 7\)](#)

The Commission recommended that the death penalty be abolished for all crimes other than the offences of terrorism and 'waging war' against the state.

#### [Cabinet approves Rurban Mission in rural areas \(p. 8\)](#)

The mission aims at development of rural growth clusters by provisioning of economic activities, developing skills and local entrepreneurship and providing infrastructure amenities in the rural clusters.

#### [Ministry of Finance invites comments on report on Indian Financial Sector \(p. 4\)](#)

The report makes short-term, medium-term and long-term recommendations to reform the currency, equity and commodity derivatives market in India.

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October 1, 2015

## Parliament

### Standing Committees identify subjects for examination for 2015-16

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

Parliament's Departmentally Related Standing Committees have identified various subjects for detailed examination in the year 2015-16. The subjects chosen by various Committees are listed in the [Annexure](#).

### Centre proposes independent commission for recommending MP salaries

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

The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs adopted a proposal to set up a three-member independent 'Emoluments Commission' to recommend salaries and other allowances for Members of Parliament (MPs).<sup>1</sup> The proposal was part of the All India Whips' Conference that was held during September 29-30, 2015. It was also suggested that there be uniformity in salaries of MLAs. Flexibility could be maintained in their other allowances to accommodate variations in different states.<sup>2</sup>

Some general principles suggested by the Ministry, for determination of salaries, include:

- (i) Salaries should reflect the level of responsibility of the MPs;
- (ii) Salaries should not be so low that candidates are deterred, or so high that it becomes the primary factor for the job;
- (iii) Those from different backgrounds should not be deterred from entering Parliament.

The Constitution enables Parliament to enact a law for the determination of salaries and allowances of MPs. Therefore, the Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament Act, 1954 was enacted, and has been amended periodically since. The last revision in MP salaries was made in 2010.

## Macroeconomic Developments

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

### Reserve Bank of India reduces policy repo rate by 50 basis points, to 6.75%

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released its fourth Bi-Monthly Monetary Policy Statement of 2015-16 on September 29, 2015. It reduced the policy repo rate (rate at which RBI lends short term money to commercial banks) from 7.25% to 6.75%.<sup>3</sup> The repo rate was last reduced in June 2015, from 7.5% to 7.25%.

Other decisions taken by the RBI include:

- The reverse repo rate (rate at which RBI borrows money from commercial banks) under Liquidity Adjustment Facility (consisting of overnight and term repo auctions) has been adjusted to 5.75%, and the marginal standing facility and bank rate to 7.75%.
- The Cash Reserve Ratio has been kept unchanged at 4% of the Net Demand and Time Liabilities (which roughly consist of all current, savings and time deposits).

### Balance of Payments for the first quarter (April to June) of 2015-16

India's Balance of Payments in the first quarter of 2015-16 indicate that the current account deficit (CAD) declined from USD 7.8 billion in the first quarter of 2014-15, to USD 6.2 billion in the first quarter of 2015-16.<sup>4</sup> CAD in the previous quarter, i.e. the last quarter of 2014-15 was USD 1.3 billion.

**Table 1: Balance of Payments in Q1 of 2015-16 (in USD billion)**

	Apr-Jun 2014	Jan-Mar 2015	Apr-Jun 2015*
A. Current Account	-7.8	-1.3	-6.2
B. Capital Account	19.2	30.4	18.0
C. Errors and Omissions	-0.1	1	-0.5
Net increase in reserves	11.3	30.1	11.3

\*Preliminary estimate.

Sources: Reserve Bank of India; PRS.

## Defence

*Anviti Chaturvedi (anviti@prsindia.org)*

### Government announces implementation of One Rank One Pension scheme

The Defence Minister, Mr Manohar Parrikar, announced the implementation of the One Rank One Pension (OROP) scheme on September 5, 2015.<sup>5</sup> OROP is a scheme for ex-servicemen under military pension. It guarantees that uniform pension will be paid to armed forces personnel retiring at the same rank with the same length of service, irrespective of their date of retirement. Future increase in the rates of pension will be automatically passed on to existing pensioners. Military pensions are currently linked to the last drawn salary of the ex-servicemen.

Key features of the OROP scheme include:<sup>6</sup>

- The scheme will be given effect from July 1, 2014. It will not cover servicemen who voluntarily retire. Later, the Prime Minister stated that anyone who was discharged from the armed forces due to injury would be covered under OROP.<sup>7</sup>
- Pension amounts will be fixed on the basis of the pension rates in 2013. Thereafter, pension rates will be re-fixed every five years to bridge the gap between existing and new pensioners.

The estimated cost of implementing OROP will be Rs 8,000 to Rs 10,000 crore in the current year, with increments in the future. In addition, arrears of Rs 10,000 to Rs 12,000 crore will have to be paid for pensions provided since July 2014.

The government will also constitute a one member judicial committee to examine issues related to implementation of OROP. The committee will also look into matters related to interests of retirees, and inter-service issues of the three armed forces. It will submit its report in six months.

## Finance

### Government accepts recommendations of Committee on the applicability of Minimum Alternate Tax on FIIs

*Aravind Gayam(aravind@prsindia.org)*

The Committee on Application of Minimum Alternate Tax on Foreign Institutional Investors prior to April 2015 (Chair: Justice AP Shah) submitted its report to the Finance Ministry in August 2015.<sup>8</sup> The government accepted the recommendations of the Committee on September 1, 2015.

The Income Tax Act, 1961 provides for various concessions and incentives, using which companies may reduce their tax liability. Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) is a minimum tax imposed on companies which reduce their tax liability by using these concessions. Over the years, FIIs have contested their liability to pay MAT.<sup>9,10</sup> In separate cases, The Authority for Advanced Rulings (AAR, a quasi-judicial body of the Finance Ministry) ruled differently on the applicability of MAT to FIIs.

As the latest ruling of AAR in 2012 required FIIs to pay MAT, the Income Tax Department served notices to levy MAT on them.<sup>11</sup> Further, The Finance Bill 2015-16 exempted the levy of MAT on FIIs starting April 1, 2015. FIIs expressed their difficulty in paying MAT for the years prior to April 2015.<sup>12</sup> In this context, The Finance Ministry set up the Committee to examine the applicability of MAT on FIIs for the years prior to April 1, 2015.<sup>13</sup>

The Committee recommended that MAT should not be levied on FIIs for the years prior to April 1, 2015. It reviewed FIIs argument that FIIs do not have a place of business in India and hence are not subject to MAT. It noted that FIIs operate in India through independent agencies and carry their decision making outside India. For this reason, the Committee noted that the sections of the Income Tax Act 1961, which define the applicability of MAT, are not applicable to FIIs.

The Committee recommended clarifying the inapplicability of MAT on FIIs by either amending the Income Tax Act 1961 or by issuing a circular by the Income Tax Department clarifying the inapplicability.<sup>14</sup> The government has accepted the recommendation to amend to the Income Tax Act 1961.<sup>8</sup>

## Negotiable Instruments (Amendment) Second Ordinance, 2015 promulgated

Vatsal Khullar ([vatsal@prsindia.org](mailto:vatsal@prsindia.org))

The Negotiable Instruments (Amendment) Second Ordinance, 2015 was promulgated on September 22, 2015.<sup>15</sup> It will be deemed to have been in force from June 15, 2015. The Ordinance amends the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881, to clarify the area of courts where cases of cheque dishonour can be filed.

A similar Ordinance to amend the Act had been promulgated in June, 2015. It lapsed on August 31, 2015.<sup>16</sup> A Bill to replace the earlier Ordinance was passed by the Lok Sabha and is currently pending in Rajya Sabha.<sup>17</sup> The new Ordinance has the same provisions as the Bill, and the Ordinance promulgated in June.

Key provisions of the Ordinance are:

- The Act does not specify the jurisdiction of courts over which cases of cheque bouncing can be filed. The Ordinance amends the Act to provide that cases of cheque bouncing may be filed in courts in areas where either the payee or the drawer maintains an account. This area will depend on the mode of presentation of the cheque.
- All cases of cheque bouncing which were pending in any court, before the Ordinance came into force, will be transferred to a court with the appropriate jurisdiction.
- If a complaint against the person issuing a cheque has been filed in the court having appropriate jurisdiction, all subsequent complaints against the person, under the same section of the Act, will be filed in the same court, irrespective of whether it is in the relevant jurisdiction area.
- If more than one case is filed against the same person before different courts, the court will transfer that case to the court with appropriate jurisdiction.
- The Ordinance also amends the definition of 'cheque in electronic form'. Under the Act, it was defined as a cheque containing the exact mirror image of a paper cheque and generated in a secure system using digital signature. This definition has been amended to mean a cheque drawn in electronic medium using any computer source and signed in a secure system using digital signature, or electronic system.

For a PRS Ordinance summary, please see [here](#).

## Finance Ministry invites comments on report on Indian Financial Sector

Vatsal Khullar ([vatsal@prsindia.org](mailto:vatsal@prsindia.org))

The Finance Ministry released the report of the Standing Council of Experts on Indian Financial Sector on September 7, 2015.<sup>18</sup> Comments have been invited on the report by October 6, 2015.<sup>19</sup>

The Council was constituted in June 2013 to make recommendations regarding the international competitiveness of the Indian Financial Sector. It identifies eight critical factors like capital controls, tax policy, regulatory risks, etc. to compare the Indian Financial Sector with other countries. The report gives suggestions on reforming the currency, equity and commodity markets in India.

The report recommends a move towards a residence-based taxation regime and the implementation of the Handbook released by the Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission in 2013. Other recommendations of the Council include the following.<sup>20</sup>

### Currency Market

- Consideration of a plan to internationalise the Indian Rupee, in order to safeguard domestic firms from currency fluctuations.
- Decisions regarding trading time and product innovation should be left to the commodity exchanges.

### Equity Market

- Removal of Securities Transaction Tax in order to reduce transaction costs.
- Removal of regulatory restrictions on the participation of domestic financial institutions, in the equity market.

### Commodity Market

- Reduction in regulatory constraints on Banks and Mutual Funds to participate in the commodities market.
- Removal of contradictions between various legislations governing the market.

### Comments invited on the Committee report on recommendations to curb mis-selling of financial products

Aravind Gayam(aravind@prsindia.org)

The Committee set up under the Ministry of Finance (Chair: Mr. Sumit Bose) to give recommendations on measures to curb mis-selling of financial products submitted its report in August 2015. Comments have been invited on the report by October 5, 2015.

The Committee was setup in November 2014 on recommendations of the Financial Stability and Development Council Sub-committee.<sup>21</sup>

Mis-selling is the practice of a salesperson misrepresenting or misleading an investor about the characteristics of a financial product.

To curb the mis-selling of financial products, the Committee: (i) studied the current structure of commissions and costs in the sale of financial products, (ii) studied the gaps in disclosure of financial products, and (iii) identified differences in regulations across financial products.<sup>22</sup>

Based on their study, the Committee recommended the following measures:

- Regulatory institutions should achieve uniformity and completeness in their regulatory oversight. This may be done by regulating financial products based on their function (vehicles of investment, risk coverage, etc.) rather than their form (security, insurance, pension fund).
- Regulatory institutions should impose stiff penalties on manufacturers of financial products, for hiding the costs paid to distributors for marketing and business promotion, etc.
- Costs and benefits of every product should be clearly disclosed so that customers clearly understand their purchase. Returns on products should be disclosed as a function of investment amount and rate of return, and not any third numbers.
- Upfront commission in investment products and investment portion of bundled products should be phased-out.
- Similar to the financial advisers, distributors of financial products must be brought under a regulatory framework.

### RBI grants ‘in-principle’ approval to 10 applicants for Small Finance Banks

Vatsal Khullar (vatsal@prsindia.org)

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) granted ‘in-principle’ approval to 10 applicants to set up Small Finance Banks, on September 16, 2015.<sup>23</sup>

Small Finance Banks aim to address financial inclusion by providing: i) banking services, ii) instruments to promote savings, and iii) credit to small business units, marginal farmers, micro and small industries among other entities.

The validity of the in-principle approval will be 18 months. Once the applicants fulfil the conditions laid down as part of the approval, the RBI will consider granting them a license to commence operations.

Key features of Small Finance Banks are:

- The minimum paid-up capital requirement for these banks would be Rs 100 crore.
- Regulations and prudential norms of the RBI will be applicable to all small finance banks, including requirements to maintain the Cash Reserve Ratio and Statutory Liquidity Ratio.
- The banks will be required to extend 75% of the Adjusted Net Bank Credit to priority lending sectors, as classified by the RBI.
- At least 50% of the loans should constitute loans and advances of up to Rs 25 lakh.
- The banks will not be eligible for automatic conversion into universal banks (banks which offer commercial and investment banking services). Such a transition will be subject to fulfilment of the capital requirements and the banks having a sound track record of performance.

### RBI releases draft framework on External Commercial Borrowings

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The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released a draft framework on External Commercial Borrowings (ECB) on September 23, 2015.<sup>24</sup> Comments have been invited on the draft by October 11, 2015.<sup>25</sup> External Commercial Borrowings are commercial loans, taken from non-resident lenders, with a minimum maturity of three years.

The ECB framework is aimed at supplementing domestic capital formation, and creating capital assets in the country. The draft retains the existing structure of the ECB framework. It makes additions and changes to some of the parameters, such as eligible borrowers, recognised lenders and refinancing of ECBs, among others.

Key changes proposed by the framework are:

- Addition of Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) and Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) as eligible borrowers for rupee denominated borrowings.
- The existing framework lists down six recognised lenders or investors for ECBs. The framework proposes to add overseas regulated financial entities, pension funds, insurance funds, etc. to the list.
- Presently, the framework allows for two end-uses for ECBs. The draft proposes to expand the list with the addition of six new categories. These additions include: i) payment towards capital goods shipped or imported, ii) purchase of second hand domestic goods, plant or machinery, and iii) repayment of trade credit taken for capital expenditure, among others.
- Refinancing of existing ECB with fresh ECB, with higher all-in-cost should be permitted. All-in-costs include all costs incurred in a financial transaction.
- The present framework does not allow banks to raise ECB. The draft framework seeks to allow Indian banks to participate as ECB lenders, subject to RBI norms.

### **Cabinet approves introduction of Gold Monetisation and Sovereign Gold Bonds Schemes**

*Tanvi Deshpande (tanvi@prsindia.org)*

The Union Cabinet approved the introduction of the Gold Monetization Schemes and Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme on September 15, 2015.<sup>26,27</sup> The Finance Minister had announced both the schemes during the Union Budget speech of 2015-16.<sup>28</sup>

The Gold Monetisation Schemes will replace the current Gold Deposit and Gold Metal Loan schemes. The objective of the schemes is to reduce the country's dependence on gold imports and increase domestic supply. The schemes will

allow gold depositors to earn interest on their metal accounts, and for jewellers to obtain loans on their metal accounts.

The Sovereign Gold Bonds Scheme will create sovereign gold bonds, which will be alternatives to purchasing gold. The Bonds will have a fixed rate of interest, and be redeemable in cash depending on the value of gold at the time.

## **Public Distribution System**

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### **Cash Transfer of Food Subsidy Rules, 2015 notified**

The Cash Transfer of Food Subsidy Rules, 2015 were notified by the Department of Food and Public Distribution on September 3, 2015.<sup>29</sup> Section 12 of the National Food Security Act, 2013 stated that reforms under the Public Distribution System (PDS) be undertaken from time to time, and that the central government may make rules in this regard. These reforms include the introduction of cash transfer schemes to targeted beneficiaries over time.

The Cash Transfer of Food Subsidy Rules, 2015 provide for direct cash transfers to beneficiaries in certain identified areas in states and union territories. For states and union territories which are not identified under this scheme, food grains will continue to be transferred under the existing PDS scheme.

Key features of the Rules include:

- State governments may implement cash transfer of food subsidy in areas which have fulfilled the following conditions: (i) completed digitisation and de-duplication of the beneficiary database, (ii) merged bank account details with the Aadhaar numbers, (iii) ensured adequate availability of food grains in the open market, and (iv) identified a state agency which will receive funds from the central government and transfer them to accounts of beneficiaries.
- State governments will prepare summary proposals for funds required as food subsidy. The central government will transfer the food subsidy funds to state accounts. State governments will then transfer these funds to individual bank

accounts of entitled households which are on the digital beneficiaries' database.

- State governments will submit utilization certificates to the central government, for the funds transferred by it to states.
- Under the PDS, each beneficiary household is entitled to 5 kilograms of food grains per person per month. The food subsidy payable to each entitled household will be calculated as: the entitled quantity of food grains per household, multiplied by (1.25 \* MSP) – CIP.
- Minimum support price (MSP) is the price at which the government purchases grains from farmers and central issue price (CIP) is the price at which the state government sells grains to beneficiaries.
- State governments will evaluate the effectiveness of the scheme and submit reports to the central government after six months and one year of its implementation.

that of an overburdened police force, poor investigation, ineffective prosecution, and rights of victims of crime.

- It recommended that the government and the courts must provide compensation to victims of crime. Further, a witness protection scheme to protect witnesses of crimes must be established.
- It recommended that police reforms for effective investigation of crimes and prosecution must be prioritized.

**Separate notes by Members:** Three members of the Commission submitted separate notes on the issue. They stated that they were against the abolition of death penalty for heinous crimes. Further, the grounds for awarding death penalty may be examined in greater detail.

### Law Commission of India to be reconstituted

The Union Cabinet approved the constitution of the 21<sup>st</sup> Law Commission of India for a period of three years, from September 2015 to August 2018.<sup>31</sup>

The Law Commission is to consist of up to 12 members including: (i) a full time Chairperson; (ii) four full time members (including a member-secretary); (iii) Secretaries of the Departments of Legal Affairs and Legislative Department each; and (iv) up to five part-time members.

The mandate of the Law Commission is to undertake research in law, and review existing laws in India. It is to conduct research in relation to identification of obsolete laws, reforms in the justice delivery system and other matters. The Commission may conduct such research either on a reference by the central government, or of its own accord.

## Law and Justice

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

### Law Commission submits its report on death penalty

The Law Commission submitted its 262<sup>nd</sup> Report on Death Penalty on August 31, 2015.<sup>30</sup>

#### Salient observations and recommendations of the Law Commission include:

- The Commission felt that time has come for India to move towards abolition of the death penalty. However, concerns had been raised that abolition of death penalty for terrorism related offences and waging war would affect national security. Therefore, it recommended that the death penalty be abolished for all crimes other than the offences of terrorism and 'waging war' against the state. It also hoped that the report would contribute to an informed debate on abolition of death penalty for all cases, and the movement towards absolute abolition would be swift and irreversible.
- It noted that by relying on the death penalty alone to secure justice to victims, other challenges of the criminal justice system were ignored. These challenges related to

## Industry

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### Standing Committee submits report on MSME (Amendment) Bill, 2015

The Standing Committee on Industry submitted its report on the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) (Amendment) Bill, 2015 on August 5, 2015.<sup>32</sup> The Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha on April 20, 2015 and is currently pending in that House.<sup>33</sup>

The Bill amends the MSME Act, 2006. It seeks to: (i) increase the allowance for investments in MSMEs, and (ii) allow the central government to classify micro, tiny or village enterprises as small or medium enterprises based on their turnover and employment. More information on the Bill may be found [here](#).

The Committee adopted the amendment Bill without any change. However, it recommended that the definition of village industries, as provided in the Khadi Village Industries Commission Act, 1956 be included in the Act. This will avoid conflicts in the interpretation of their definition.

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

## Agriculture

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### First advance estimates of production of major Kharif crops in 2015-16

The first advance estimates of production of Kharif crops in 2015-16 were released by the Ministry of Agriculture on September 16, 2015.<sup>34</sup> The production of total food grains is estimated to be 1.8% lower than the fourth advance estimates of Kharif crops in 2014-15. While the estimates of production of oilseeds are 8.5% higher than the fourth advance estimates of 2014-15, those of cereals, pulses, cotton and sugarcane are lower.

**Table 2: First Advance Estimates of Kharif crops in 2015-16 (in million tonnes)**

Crop	4th advance estimates of 2014-15	1st advance estimates of 2015-16	% change
Food grains	126.3	124.1	-1.8
Rice	90.9	90.6	-0.3
Coarse cereals	29.8	27.9	-6.5
Maize	16.4	15.5	-5.4
Pulses	5.6	5.6	-1.2
Tur	2.8	2.6	-6.1
Oilseeds	183.3	198.9	8.5
Soyabean	105.3	118.3	12.4
Groundnut	50.8	51.1	0.6
Cotton*	354.8	335.1	-5.5
Sugarcane	359.3	341.4	-5.0

\* millions of bales of 170 kgs each.

Sources: Directorate of Economics and Statistics; PRS.

## Rural Development

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### Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission in rural areas approved

The Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM) was approved by the Union Cabinet on September 16, 2015. It aims to transform rural areas into economically, and socially sustainable spaces.<sup>35</sup> It will do so by selecting and developing rural growth clusters.

The key features of the Mission include:

- The Ministry of Rural Development will adopt a scientific process of cluster selection that will involve an objective analysis of parameters like demography, economy, tourism, etc. at the District, Sub District and Village level.
- The clusters will be identified by the state governments in accordance with guidelines prepared by the Ministry of Rural Development. These clusters will be geographically contiguous Gram Panchayats with a different population threshold for plain and tribal areas.
- The development of clusters will be undertaken through provisioning of economic activities, developing skills and local entrepreneurship and providing infrastructure amenities.
- Fourteen characteristics have been identified with regard to a cluster's optimal level of development. These include skill development training linked to economic activities, sanitation, and higher education, among others.
- The mission has been approved with an outlay of Rs 5,142 crore. The funding for these clusters will be provided by combining funding from various government schemes. The Mission will provide an additional funding support of up to 30 % of the project cost per cluster as critical gap funding.

### Additional employment of 50 days under MGNREGA in drought or natural calamities affected areas

The Union Cabinet has given approval to provide an additional 50 days of un-skilled manual work above the 100 days per household

to job card holders in rural under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).<sup>36</sup> This will enable states to provide additional wage employment to the rural poor. It will also help in the immediate employment absorption of seasonally unemployed persons in rural areas.

## Telecom

*Apoorva Shankar (apoorva@prsindia.org)*

### TRAI notifies Tariff Amendment Orders relating to commercial subscribers

The Telecom and Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) notified the Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services (Second) Tariff (15<sup>th</sup> Amendment) Order, 2015, and the Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services (Fourth) (Addressable Systems) Tariff (Fifth Amendment) Order, 2015 on September 8, 2015.<sup>37,38,39</sup> The former Order is applicable for television services being provided through analogue cable television systems. The latter relates to services being provided through digital addressable cable TV systems. TRAI had issued a consultation paper in this regard in July 2015.<sup>40</sup>

These Orders have been notified in accordance with the Telecom Dispute Settlement and Appellate Tribunal's Order on March 9, 2015. The Tribunal had struck down the earlier amendments notified by TRAI on grounds of being arbitrary and unreasonable. The amendments prohibited broadcasters from providing channels directly to subscribers and also provided for uniform cable television rates for commercial as well as ordinary subscribers.

Key features of the notified Orders include:

- Subscriber, ordinary subscriber and commercial subscriber have been defined.
- Broadcasters have the option of entering into tripartite agreements with Distribution Platform Operators (DPOs) and commercial subscribers. DPOs are authorised agents distributing channels for broadcasters. If such an agreement is done with commercial subscribers, the broadcasters have to file their tripartite agreements with TRAI within a period of 30 days.
- Broadcasters have been mandated to offer their channels or bouquet of channels for

commercial subscribers, on the condition of no discrimination.

- DPOs must provide television signals to commercial subscribers in accordance with existing policy guidelines.

For more details on the Orders, please see [here](#).

### TRAI issues a consultation paper on compensation for dropped calls

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) released a consultation paper on compensation to the consumers for dropped calls, on September 4, 2015.<sup>41</sup>

Call drops represent the service provider's inability to maintain a call once it has been correctly established. Therefore, these are calls dropped or interrupted prior to their normal completion by the user, the cause of the early termination being in the service provider's network. As per the Standards of Quality of Service of Basic Telephone Service (Wireline) and Cellular Mobile Telephone Regulations, 2009, the call drop rate (averaged over a calendar month) of any service provider should not exceed two per cent.<sup>42</sup> However, on conducting certain tests in Delhi and Mumbai, TRAI found none except one service provider in each city was within this prescribed benchmark.

The main issues for consultation included:

- **Not charging for dropped calls:** (i) whether consumers should not be charged for a call dropped within five seconds, and (ii) if the call does get dropped any time after five seconds, whether the last pulse of the call (minute/second) which got dropped should not be charged.
- **Providing credit to the consumers for dropped calls:** If calling consumers are compensated for call drops by service providers, should such compensation be (i) in the form of credit of talk-time in minutes/seconds, or (ii) credit of talk-time in monetary terms.

According to the paper, some of the reasons for dropped calls may include: (i) lack of radio coverage, (ii) capacity constraints, (iii) antenna related problems, etc. The paper also highlights that service providers touting spectrum crunch and resident welfare associations resisting against installation of towers in residential colonies, could be reasons for an increase in call drop rates.

## E-Auction of the first batch of private FM radio Phase III channels completed

E-Auction of the first batch of private FM radio channels, comprising 135 channels in 69 existing cities of Phase II, ended on September 9, 2015. Frequency allocation has been completed.<sup>43</sup>

The auction commenced on July 27, 2015 and included 125 rounds of bidding over 32 days. 97 channels in 56 cities were provisionally allotted. The auction fetched Rs 1,157 crore against the aggregate reserve value of Rs 460 crore.

For more details on the auction, please see [here](#).

## Housing

*Prachee Mishra (prachee@prsindia.org)*

### Amendments to guidelines on Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana approved

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation approved amendments to the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) Mission guidelines on September 10, 2015.<sup>44</sup> The Mission was announced on June 25, 2015.<sup>45</sup> It seeks to address the housing requirement of the urban poor including slum dwellers.

The Mission is implemented through four components to give options to beneficiaries. These options are: (i) in situ slum redevelopment, (ii) affordable housing through credit linked subsidy, (iii) affordable housing in partnership, and (iv) subsidy for beneficiary-led individual house construction. Under the Mission, beneficiaries can take advantage of only one option. Key amendments proposed to the Mission include:

- The central nodal agencies will send a list of the beneficiaries to the concerned states. This would be applicable till December 31, 2015 or until states/UTs sign a Memorandum of Agreement under the Mission, whichever is later. States/UTs will review this list to ensure that no beneficiary is granted benefits twice under the Mission.
- Currently, each city has to prepare detailed project reports (DPRs) under each component of the Mission. As per the amendments, cities have to prepare DPRs for each component except the credit linked subsidy scheme.

- Under the subsidy for beneficiary-led individual house construction component, a central assistance of Rs 1.5 lakh is available for the construction of new houses. This is being amended to allow the assistance to be used for enhancement of existing houses as well. The carpet area of such houses should be up to 30 sq. mt.
- The amendments also provide for additional data to be collected by the central nodal agencies from the primary lending institutions. These include: (i) category of household, (ii) annual household income of the borrower, and (iii) type of house (new/existing/re-purchased).

## Drinking Water and Sanitation

*Roopal Suhag (roopal@prsindia.org)*

### Government of India frames guidelines for Open Defecation Free villages

The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation issued guidelines for open defecation free villages under the Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBM-G) on September 3, 2015. The guidelines are to guide states to evolve their own mechanism for the Mission.<sup>46</sup>

The SBM-G focuses on the achievement of complete ODF villages. In order to have uniform parameters for open defecation free villages, the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation has defined it as the termination of faecal-oral transmission, which includes an absence of visible faeces found in the village environment and use of safe technology option for disposal of faeces.

The guidelines issued include:

- The process of verification of open defecation free villages will start with a Gram Sabha resolution declaring open defecation free status. The resolution may be for the entire Gram Panchayat or a village/habitation.
- The states can choose their agencies for verification or through a third party. If they use their own teams, there will be a cross verification of the villages/blocks/districts.
- The indicators for verification will be as per the definition of ODF. The states are free to verify any more indicators.

- At least two verifications should be carried out to establish ODF villages. The first within three months of the declaration to verify the status and the second after six months to ensure the sustainability.

## Petroleum and Natural Gas

*Dipesh Suvarna (dipesh@prsindia.org)*

### Standing Committee submits report on the Ethanol Blended Petrol and Bio Diesel Policy

The Standing Committee on Petroleum and Natural Gas (Chair: Mr. Pralhad Joshi) submitted its report on Ethanol Blended Petrol and Bio Diesel policy on August 13, 2015.<sup>47</sup> The Policy enables the blending of ethanol with petrol. Ethanol blended petrol acts as fuel which leads to lower emissions in the environment.

Key observations and recommendations of the Standing Committee include:

- **Production and pricing:** In October 2007, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs had mandated five percent of blending of ethanol with petrol. Presently, Oil Marketing Companies are unable to meet the requirement as production of ethanol is solely dependent on molasses of sugarcane. An industry working group must be set up to study the feasibility of producing ethanol from different sources. Further, in order to achieve the stipulated target of five percent the procurement price of ethanol must be revised as per international crude prices.
- **Implementation:** Implementation of the program has been carried out only in few states. Instead of implementing the program across the country, the Ministry must undertake state wise implementation based on the availability of ethanol in states. In addition, a state level mechanism must be set up to monitor procurement and blending.
- **Priority in allocation:** Ethanol is mainly consumed by three sectors including potable liquor sector, chemical industry and petroleum sector. As states receive high revenues from potable ethanol, they do not give priority to ethanol for blending. Owing to the inadequate supply of ethanol for blending, the Ministry and state governments must address this issue.
- **Bio Diesel Policy:** In 2005, the Ministry the released the Bio Diesel Policy which is based on the production of Bio Diesel from non-edible seeds. As production of Bio Diesel producing seeds is commercially insignificant, no quantity of bio diesel is offered by the producer. Ground work needs to be carried out before the implementation of the policy. In addition, as the Policy is in its preliminary stage, a long term plan for step-wise implementation and monitoring must be established.

### Cabinet approves Marginal Fields Policy

The Union Cabinet approved the Marginal Field Policy on September 2, 2015.<sup>48</sup> The Policy aims to develop the marginal hydrocarbon fields discovered by the national oil companies such as Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd. (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL).

These fields could not be developed due to reasons including isolated location, small reserve size and high development cost. The Policy enables the development of these marginal fields. 69 oil fields of ONGC and OIL are now to be opened up for competitive bidding.

Earlier, the contracts entered into were based on a profit sharing model. Under this model, the central government was required to scrutinize cost details of private companies. It was observed that the use of this model led to delays and disputes. Under the new Policy, the central government will not evaluate the costs incurred, but will receive a share of gross revenue from the sale of oil and gas.

Initially, the companies were required to sell gas at an administered price. Under this Policy, the successful bidder for the marginal fields will be able to sell gas at the prevailing market price.

Earlier, licenses were issued for individual hydrocarbons and a separate license was required for any other hydrocarbon found in the field. Under the new Policy, the licenses will cover all hydrocarbons found in that field (eg. oil, gas etc).

## Energy

*Dipesh Suvarna (dipesh@prsindia.org)*

### Cabinet approves National Offshore Wind Energy Policy

The Union Cabinet approved the National Offshore Wind Energy Policy on September 9, 2015.<sup>49</sup> The Policy enables the development of offshore wind energy capacity through setting up of offshore wind energy projects and research and development activities.

The Policy would be implemented within Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) that includes areas in or adjacent to the country up to seaward distance of 200 nautical miles from the coastal base line. EEZs are areas where countries enjoy certain rights including rights to carry out economic explorations for the production of energy.<sup>50</sup> The scheme would be applicable across the country depending on the availability of offshore wind potential.

The Ministry of New & Renewable Energy is authorised to be the nodal Ministry for the use of offshore areas within the designated EEZ. Further, the National Institute of Wind Energy would be the authorised as the nodal agency. It will be responsible for the development of offshore wind energy, the allocation of wind energy blocks and coordination with the related ministries and the respective agencies.

## Mines

*Dipesh Suvarna (dipesh@prsindia.org)*

### Rules regarding contribution to District Mineral Foundation notified

The Mines and Minerals (Contribution to District Mineral Foundation) Rules, 2015 were notified on September 17, 2015.<sup>51</sup>

The Rules were notified under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957.<sup>52</sup> The Act regulates the mining sector and specifies the requirement to obtain mining leases to carry out operations. It also requires lease holders to pay royalty for the extraction of mineral reserves.

The Rules provide that in addition to the existing royalty, miners have to pay to the District Mineral Foundation a contribution of:

- 30% of the royalty paid in case of leases executed before January 12, 2015.
- 10% of the royalty paid, in case leases executed after January 12, 2015

The District Mineral Foundation is responsible for carrying out functions, including implementation of schemes for the development of mining affected areas. The Rules will be applicable from January 12, 2015.

The Fund will be utilised for the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana.<sup>53</sup> The scheme was launched on September 16 2015. It seeks to develop drinking water, health care and education facilities in mining affected areas.

## Environment

*Anviti Chaturvedi (anviti@prsindia.org)*

### Draft guidelines on sustainable sand mining published

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change published the Draft Guidelines on Sustainable Mining in September 2015.<sup>54</sup>

Sand and gravel are used for construction of roads and buildings. In India, the main sources of sand and gravel include rivers (riverbeds and flood plains), lakes, agricultural fields and coastal sands. Mining in these areas can damage aquatic habitats, cause river bank erosion, degradation of site of extraction, pollution of ground water, etc. In this context, the draft guidelines aim to ensure that while sand is available in adequate quantity, it is mined in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Key aspects of the draft guidelines include:

- Parts of a river that experience deposition of sedimentation must be identified, so that sand and gravel mining may be done in these parts.
- Sand must not be mined (i) where erosion may occur (including at concave banks), (ii) within 200 to 500 metres of any important hydraulic structure (such as pumping stations), (iii) beyond three metres of river depth or river width or 10% of river width whichever is less, etc.

- Demarcation of mining area with geo-referencing and pillars must be done prior to start of mining.
- Distance between the sites for sand mining and the layers of sand which may be removed must depend on the replenishment rate of the river.
- All sand and gravel mining projects will require environmental clearances from District Environment Impact Assessment Authority (for projects up to five hectares), or the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (for projects between five and 50 hectares), or the Environment Ministry (above 50 hectares).
- All sand and gravel mining projects (except those up to five hectares) will require environmental impact assessment and environment management plans.

(v) logistics parks, warehousing, maritime zones/services.

- **Funding:** All efforts would be made to implement the projects through the private sector, and through public private participation. Initial funding requirement for the project is estimated at Rs. 692 crore for 2015-16.

### Central Sector Scheme for providing support to ports revised

The Ministry of Shipping approved a revised Central Sector Scheme for providing support to major and non-major ports and state governments.<sup>57</sup> This would provide for the creation of infrastructure to promote movement of cargo and passengers by sea and national waterways. Key features of the assistance provided under the scheme include:

- Financial assistance under the scheme would be given only for: (i) construction and up-gradation of berths in major and non-major ports, (ii) construction of platforms and jetties in port waters, and (iii) construction of berths and jetties in national waterways by state governments.
- Assistance under the scheme would be up to 50% of the total cost of the project relating to: (i) construction or up-gradation of berths, subject to a maximum of Rs 25 crore, and (ii) construction of platforms or jetties, subject to a maximum of Rs 10 crore. The balance expenditure will be incurred by the respective ports or concerned state governments from their own resources.
- 50% of the central government's share will be disbursed upon approval of the proposal with the condition that 40% of total work has been completed. The remaining half of the funds will be released upon completion of the work. This would be subject to submission of: (i) the utilisation certificate of the amount released earlier, and (ii) the completion certificate which must be countersigned by third party monitor.
- No assistance will be provided for deployment of manpower.
- Assets created under the scheme will be maintained by respective ports. No assistance will be provided for maintenance of capital assets created under the scheme.

## Transport

Prachee Mishra ([prachee@prsindia.org](mailto:prachee@prsindia.org))

### Ministry of Shipping releases details of the Sagarmala project

The Ministry of Shipping released details of the Sagarmala project in September 2015.<sup>55</sup> The Ministry had put up a [working draft note](#), seeking comments on the project in October 2014.<sup>56</sup> The project seeks to improve economic development through port led development. Key features of the project include:

- **Objectives:** (i) support and enable port-led development through appropriate policy and institutional interventions, (ii) provide for an institutional framework, (iii) enhance port infrastructure, including modernization and setting up of new ports, and (iv) enable efficient evacuation.
- **Projects:** A National Perspective Plan will be prepared for the entire country's coastline within six months. This Plan will identify potential Coastal Economic Zones (CEZs). Projects that can be undertaken through this initiative may include: (i) port-led industrialization, (ii) port based and coastal tourism and recreational activities, (iii) short-sea shipping, coastal shipping, and inland waterways transportation, (iv) ship building, ship repair and ship recycling, and

## Annexure

The following Parliamentary Standing Committees have identified subjects for examination in the year 2015-16.

**Table 3: Subjects identified by Parliamentary Standing Committees for examination in 2015-16**

Agriculture
<p><b>Department of Agriculture, Co-operation and Farmers Welfare</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evolving a Farmer Friendly Crop Insurance Regime.</li> <li>2. National Food Security Mission – An Evaluation.</li> <li>3. Augmenting Rural Storage Infrastructure through Scheme of Rural Godowns.</li> <li>4. National Horticulture Mission.</li> <li>5. Availability of Agricultural Land - A Review.</li> <li>6. Deteriorating Soil Health and steps taken for its Improvement.</li> <li>7. Working of National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE).</li> </ol> <p><b>Department of Agricultural Research and Education</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Minimising Post-Harvest Crop Losses.</li> <li>2. Impact of Chemical Fertilisers and Pesticides on Agriculture and Allied Sectors in the Country.</li> <li>3. Central Tuber Crops Research Institute (CTCRI) - A Performance Review</li> <li>4. Comprehensive Agriculture Research based on Geographical Conditions and Impact of Climatic Changes to ensure Food Security in the Country.</li> </ol> <p><b>Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Role of National Dairy Development Board for Protection and Development of Indigenous Cattle Breeds.</li> <li>2. Steps taken to bridge the gap between the demand and availability of fodder through Sub-Mission on Fodder and Feed Development</li> <li>3. Need for Comprehensive Research and Development in Fisheries Sector.</li> <li>4. Research and Development in Food Processing Sector and its Impact on Human and Animal Health.</li> </ol>
Chemicals and fertilizers
<p><b>Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Functioning of autonomous institutions - Central Institute of Plastics Engineering Technology (CIPET) and Institute of Pesticides Formulation and Technology (IPFT).</li> <li>2. Petroleum, Chemicals and Petrochemicals Investment Regions (PCPIRs).</li> <li>3. Demand and Availability of Petrochemicals including imports and exports.</li> </ol> <p><b>Department of Fertilizers</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. New Urea Policy - 2015.</li> <li>2. Evaluation of Performance of Fertilizers Industry.</li> </ol> <p><b>Department of Pharmaceuticals</b></p>

1. Cluster Development Programme for Pharma Sector" (CDP-PS).
2. Pricing of Drugs with special reference to Drug (Prices Control) Order 2013.

### Coal and Steel

#### Ministry of Coal

1. Land Acquisition and issues of rehabilitation & resettlement in Coal/Lignite Mining Areas
2. Performance of Coal Controller's office.
3. Production of Lignite – Projections and Planning.
4. Production, Marketing and Distribution of Coal
5. Illegal Coal Mining and Theft of Coal.
6. Compliance of Environment Norms by Coal Companies
7. Research and Development in Coal Sector.
8. CSR activities of Coal/Lignite Companies.
9. Skill Development in Coal Sector.

#### Ministry of Mines

1. Self Reliance in Minerals and Mineral based products. (ii) Mineral Exploration Activities in the Country
2. Mineral Exploration Activities in the Country
3. Development of Aluminum & Copper Industries in India.
4. Organizational Structure and Performance of Geological Survey of India (GSI) – A Review.
5. Organizational Structure and Performance of Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) – A Review
6. CSR Activities by PSUs under Ministry of Mines.
7. Science and Technology/Research and Development in Mining Sector
8. Skill Development in Mining Sector.

#### Ministry of Steel

1. Safety Management & Practices in Steel PSUs.
2. The Indian Steel Sector: Development and Potential.
3. Development of Manganese Ore Industry in India.
4. Research and Development in Iron and Steel Sector
5. CSR Activities in Steel PSUs.
6. Modernization and Expansion Plans of Steel Sector.
7. Skill Development in Steel Sector.

### Energy

#### Ministry of Power

1. Measures to check commercial losses (of AT&C).
2. Role of power sector PSUs in ensuring 24X7 power supply.
3. Role of Regulators in Electricity sector–An Appraisal.
4. Energy Audit – Evaluation.
5. Integrated Power Development Scheme – An Evaluation.
6. Action plan to connect remaining 18,000 villages by electricity.
7. Evaluation of role, performance and functioning of power exchanges.
8. Functioning of POSOCO in Grid management.

9. Evaluation of the functioning of load dispatch centres.
10. Hydro-power, a sustainable, clean and green alternative.
11. Under-utilization of capacity of Major Power Plants vis-à-vis PLF.
12. New Thermal Power Plants – Installation & Bottlenecks.

#### **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy**

1. Role of PSUs/Institutions under MNRE in Development of Renewable Energy Schemes.
2. Energy Access in India : Review of current status and role of Renewable Energy.
3. Grid connectivity – Grid connection for Renewable Energy including Captive Renewable Power Plants.
4. Evaluation of various Subsidy Schemes in Renewable Energy Sector.
5. Action Plan for achievement of 175 GW Renewable Energy Target.
6. Measures to make distribution/marketing of Renewable Energy affordable and effective.
7. Need for long terms Renewable Energy Policy and Legal Reforms
8. Research, Design and Development in Renewable Energy Sector.
9. Encouraging Renewable Energy Hardware Manufacturing Base in India.
10. Development and Status of Small Hydro Sector.
11. Tidal Power Development in India.
12. Power Generation from "Solid Waste".

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#### **External Affairs**

##### **Ministry of External Affairs**

1. Recruitment, structure and capacity - building of IFS Cadre, including need for a separate UPSC examination for cadre, mid - career entry and in-service training and orientation.
2. India's Soft Power Diplomacy including role of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and Indian Diaspora.
3. Performance of Passport issuance system and implementation of e-Passport Project for Indian citizens.

##### **Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA)**

1. Problems of Indian Migrant Workers, Professionals and Students abroad.
2. Voting Rights to NRIs.

##### **Ministry of External Affairs, of Overseas Indian Affairs**

1. Implications of evolving situation in West Asia and India's response thereto.
2. India's role and engagement with Afghanistan post 2014.
3. Recent developments in Indian Ocean with particular reference to Maldives, Seychelles and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)
4. International crisis of Migrants and its impact on India.
5. Functioning of Policy Planning and Research Division of the Ministry of External Affairs.
6. Recent developments in India - China relations and their implications.
7. Indo - Pakistan relations under the current political situation in Pakistan.

8. India's Policy on UN Sustainable Development Goals.

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#### **Finance**

1. Role of Reserve Bank of India - Emerging Challenges.
2. Banking Sector in India - Challenges and the Way Forward.
3. Financial Inclusion - Schemes & Achievements.
4. Growth and Regulation of Micro Finance Sector in India.
5. Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) of Financial Institutions.
6. Review of Performance of Select Regulatory Bodies- RBI, SEBI, CCI, IRDA, PFRDA.
7. State of Rural / Agricultural Banking including Crop Insurance.
8. Tax Reforms including simplification, rationalisation, prevention of tax evasion, widening / deepening of tax base, augmenting Tax-GDP ratio etc.
9. Review of performance of LIC of India.
10. Insurance Sector in India - A Review.
11. Corporate Governance in India including CSR initiatives.
12. Review of NSSO and CSO and streamlining of statistics collection machinery in the country including Management Information System for project monitoring / appraisal.
13. Sustainable Millennium Development Goals.
14. Issues concerning Private Public Partnership (PPP) Projects.
15. Food inflation and Regulation thereof.
16. Resilience of Economy to external shocks.

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#### **Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution**

##### **Department of Food and Public Distribution**

1. Procurement, storage and distribution of foodgrains
2. Computerization of Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)
3. Payment of sugarcane arrears to sugarcane farmers
4. WTO and Food Security
5. Functioning of Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA)

##### **Department of Consumer Affairs**

1. Programmes for Consumer Protection
2. Regulation of Packaged Commodities
3. Problem of supply and distribution of adulterated milk and measures taken to check it
4. Mechanism of Price Monitoring System

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#### **Health and Family Welfare**

##### **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**

1. Functioning of Medical Council of India (MCI), Indian Nursing Council (INC) and Dental Council of India
2. Review of National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP)
3. Functioning of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)
4. Functioning of AIIMS-like Institutions
5. Functioning of Central Government Hospitals and Need for Regulation of Private Hospitals / Nursing Homes.

6. Quality Control of Drugs and Evaluation of Combination Drugs
7. Review of National Health Mission (NHM)
8. Manufacturing and availability of vaccines for Universal Immunisation Programme
9. Regulation of Clinical Establishments under the Clinical Establishment Act, 2010.
10. Population Stabilization Policy

#### **Ministry of AYUSH**

1. Quality Control and Standardization of Ayurvedic, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy Drugs
2. Working of National Institutes and Central Councils under Ministry of AYUSH.

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#### **Home Affairs**

1. Internal Security:
  - (i) Infiltration
  - (ii) Terrorism in the Country
  - (iii) Cross Border Terrorism
  - (iv) Naxalism
  - (v) Security Situation in North Eastern Region
2. Border Management: Indo-Bangladesh and Indo-Pakistan Borders-Issues and concerns
3. Administration and development of UTs:
  - (i) Andaman & Nicobar Islands
  - (ii) Puducherry
  - (iii) Lakshadweep
4. Road Map for Implementation of Police Reforms
5. Central Armed Police Forces/Organisations
6. Atrocities on Weaker Sections (Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes, Women etc.)
7. Social and Communal Harmony
8. Disaster Management:
  - (i) Functioning of National Disaster Management Authority
  - (ii) Working of National Institute of Disaster Management
  - (iii) Strategy to Combat Recurrent Disasters
9. Development of North Eastern Region

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#### **Information Technology**

##### **Information and broadcasting**

1. Review of functioning of Prasar Bharati Organization
2. Progress of Cable TV Digitization and its impact
3. Activities and Schemes under the Films Sector
4. Progress of Information and Broadcasting Services in North East
5. Norms and Guidelines for Media Coverage

##### **Department of Electronics and Information Technology**

1. Digital India Programme
2. Digital/Online Privacy: Problems and Challenges
3. Expansion of Rural BPOs and Challenges faced by them
4. Challenges relating to internet and e-fraud and measures to counter them

5. Promotion of Electronics/IT Hardware Manufacturing Sector
6. Start-up Companies in the IT Sector - Problems and Challenges

##### **Department of Posts**

1. Real Estate Management in the Department of Posts
2. Setting up of Post Bank of India as a payments bank – scope, objectives and framework

##### **Department of Telecommunications**

1. Net Neutrality
2. Progress of implementation of National Optical Fiber Network (NOFN)
3. Issues related to quality of services and reported Call Drops

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#### **Labour**

##### **Ministry of Labour and Employment**

1. Review/functioning of Central Board for Workers Education.
2. Ratification of core conventions of ILO particularly No.87 & 98 on 'Right to organise' and 'Right to Freedom of Association' and 'Right to collective bargaining'
3. Working conditions of Mine workers, welfare of mine workers and review of the working of Directorate General of Mines Safety (DGMS).
4. Deployment of Contract/Casual/Sanitation workers for perennial nature of jobs in Government/PSU offices/establishments including at Railway Stations.
5. The Employees' State Insurance Corporation – coverage of establishments, recovery of arrears and functioning of the hospitals and dispensaries under the Scheme.
6. Welfare of Tea Plantation Workers.
7. Employees Provident Fund Organisation - Coverage of establishments, recovery of arrears and functioning.
8. Welfare of workers of un-organised Sector.
9. Review/functioning of Central Board for Workers Education.

##### **Ministry of Textiles**

1. Development and promotion of Jute Industry.
2. Skill Development vis-à-vis manufacturing and upgradation in Textiles Sector.
3. Review of various welfare schemes of the M/o Textiles.
4. Various Developmental Schemes for Handloom Weavers and Handicraft Artisans.
5. Review of Schemes/Programmes of Central Silk Board in Development and Promotion of Silk Industry.

##### **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship**

1. ITIs and Skill Development Initiative Scheme.
2. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana.
3. National Skills Qualifications Framework.

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#### **Petroleum and Natural Gas**

1. Energy Security.
2. Ethanol Blended Petrol & Bio Diesel Policy.
3. Review of Pricing of Gas.

4. Review of Procedure for Allotment of Retail outlets and LPG Distributorships.
5. Pricing and Supply of Petroleum Products.
6. New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP).
7. National Auto Fuel Policy.
8. Exploration of Unconventional sources like Shale Gas, Coal Bed Methane, Gas Hydrates etc.
9. Oil Refineries- A Review.
10. Functioning and Purview of Directorate General of Hydrocarbon (DGH).
11. Exploration Activities in North East.
12. Human Resource Policy of Oil PSUs.
13. Corporate Social Responsibility of Oil PSUs.
14. Production Sharing Contracts.
15. Safety, Security & Environmental Aspects in Petroleum Sector

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#### **Railways**

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1. Safety and Security in Railways
2. Pending Projects
3. Passenger Amenities including Modernisation of Railway Stations, and Catering Services
4. Gauge Conversion and Doubling in Indian Railways
5. Land Utilization of Indian Railways
6. Tourism Promotion and Pilgrimage Circuit
7. Social Service Obligations of Indian Railways
8. Human Resource Management in Indian Railways
9. Last Mile Port Connectivity with Indian Railways
10. Scrap Disposal in Indian Railways
11. Outstanding Dues for Indian Railways
12. Purchase and Procurement Policy of Indian Railways
13. Planning Process and Constraints involved in Preparation of Railway Budget
14. Implementation of Dedicated Freight Corridor Projects
15. Introduction of High Speed Trains
16. Review of Railway Accounting System and Financial Scenario of Indian Railways

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#### **Rural Development**

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##### **Ministry of Rural Development**

1. BPL Survey.
2. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).
3. Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY).
4. National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD).
5. Capacity building of Self Help Groups (SHGs) in various States/UTs.
6. Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana.

##### **Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation**

1. Drinking Water Scenario in Rural Areas.
2. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in States/UTs.

##### **Ministry of Panchayati Raj**

1. Improvements in the functioning of Panchayats.

##### **M/o Rural Development, M/o Drinking Water and Sanitation and M/o Panchayati Raj**

1. Implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes in Andaman and Nicobar Islands and other UTs.

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#### **Social Justice and Empowerment**

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##### **Department of Social Justice and Empowerment**

1. Impact analysis of the micro-credit finance scheme of the National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC).
2. Persons affected by Alcoholism and substance (drug) abuse, their treatment/rehabilitation and role of voluntary organizations.
3. Review of the functioning of the National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation (NBCFDC).

##### **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities**

1. Review of the functioning of the National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (NHDFC).
2. Implementation of scheme of Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids/Appliances (ADIP).

##### **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**

1. Review of the functioning of the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED).
2. Implementation of Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 vis - à - vis displacement of tribals.
3. Educational schemes for tribals

##### **Ministry of Minority Affairs**

1. Review of the functioning of the National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC).
2. Implementation of scheme of Multi - sectoral Development Programme (MsDP)

##### **Ministries of Social Justice and Empowerment, Tribal Affairs, Minority Affairs and Ministry of Finance**

1. Priority Sector lending by Banks to SCs, STs, OBCs, differently abled persons and the Minorities.

##### **Ministries of Social Justice and Empowerment, Tribal Affairs and Minority Affairs**

1. Grants - in - aid to NGOs working for social welfare and evaluation of their functioning.

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#### **Urban Development**

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1. Timely & Effective Implementation of Various Schemes of the Ministry of Urban Development by Govt. Agencies - An Evaluation.
2. Solid Waste Management.
3. Modernization of Directorate of Printing, Govt. of India's Stationery Office & Dept. of Publications.
4. Functioning of Directorate of Estates, Construction and maintenance of Government residential buildings by CPWD and NBCC.
5. Development of Smart Cities.
6. Development of Public Spaces and Public Conveniences in Cities

7. Management of Urban Transport for Smooth Flow of Traffic.
8. Urban Water Supply and Sanitation.
9. Rainwater Harvesting in Metropolitan Cities.
10. National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM).
11. Reviewing of Financing for Low Cost Housing.
12. Monitoring of the Implementation of Ongoing Projects by CPWD & NBCC.
13. Review of Town Planning and Country Planning.
14. Policy for Removal and Prevention of Encroachments Leading to Slum - Free Cities.
15. Migration to Urban Cities and Growing Urbanization - supporting Infrastructure.
16. An Evaluation of the Policy on Land Use Change.

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#### Water Resources

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1. Review of Ground Water Scenario, need for a comprehensive policy and measures to address problems in the country with particular reference to (i) 'Dark Blocks'; and (ii) Contamination of underground water by certain industries.
2. Repair, Renovation and Restoration of Water Bodies.
3. National Water Policy, 2012 and its Implementation.
4. Conservation, Development, Management and Abatement of pollution in river Ganga and its tributaries.
5. Indigenous and Modern forms of Water Conservation – Techniques and Practices.
6. Rivers of the country: their present health, status, purity and maintenance.
7. Issues relating to sharing of river waters in the country.
8. Review of Inter - Linking of Rivers (ILR).
9. Dams and Barrages: their present status, safety and security.
10. National Projects – concept and achievements.
11. River Valley Projects: their present status including issues of submergence, resettlement and rehabilitation.
12. Review of the Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP).
13. Review of subordinate offices/attached offices/authorities under Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation.
14. Issues concerning Flood Management, Compensation and Status of ownership of submerged and eroded land in the country, including compensation to farmers for loss of their crops destroyed by floods and right to disposal of the sand left in the fields of farmers.
15. National Water Mission.
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