



# PRS Capsule- September 2023

## Key Highlights of PRS

### ▪ **Governance**

- [Special Session 2023 held; Women's Reservation Bill Passed](#)
- [Central Government Constitutes Committee on Simultaneous Elections](#)
- [Cabinet Approves eCourts Phase-III](#)
- [Law Commission Submits Report on Age of Consent under POCSO Act](#)
- [Law Commission Report on Enabling Online Registration of FIR under CrPC](#)
- [Standing Committee Report on Prison Conditions, Infrastructure, and Reforms](#)
- [Standing Committee Submits Report on Implementation of NEP in Higher Education](#)
- [Bharat New Car Assessment Programme for Assessing Crash Safety of Cars Notified](#)
- [Standing Committee Submits Report on Functioning of Archaeological Survey of India](#)

### ▪ **Economy**

- [Current Account Deficit at 1.1% of GDP in the First Quarter of 2023-24](#)
- [RBI Releases Directions on Investment Portfolio of Commercial Banks](#)
- [RBI Issues Directions on Release of Property Documents on Repayment of Personal Loans](#)
- [RBI Issues Draft Directions for Treatment of Wilful and Large Defaulters](#)
- [Comments Invited on Guidelines for Regulating Dark Patterns in e-commerce](#)
- [Standing Committee Submits its Report on the National Inland Waterways](#)
- [Rules on Captive Power Generators and Users Amended](#)
- [Rules for Auction of Mining Lease and Composite License Amended](#)
- [Standing Committee Submits Report on the Employees State Insurance Corporation](#)

### ▪ **Biodiversity & Environment**

- [Extended Producer Responsibility Rules for used Oil Notified](#)
- [Framework for Promoting Energy Storage Systems Released](#)
- [Rules to Increase the Validity of Fitness Certificates for Transport Vehicles Notified](#)
- [Standing Committee Report on Development of Niche Tourism and Potential Tourist Spots](#)

## **Governance**

### **Special Session 2023 of Parliament Held**

- The [Special Session](#) of Parliament was held from September 18, 2023 to September 21, 2023, with four sittings.
- [The Constitution \(One Hundred and Twenty Eighth Amendment\) Bill, 2023](#) (Women's Reservation Bill), was introduced and passed during this session.
  - The Bill reserves one-third of all seats for women in [Lok Sabha](#), **state legislative assemblies**, and the **Legislative Assembly of Delhi**.
- **Key Features of the Bill:**
  - The reservation will be effective **after the census** conducted after the commencement of this Bill has been published.
  - Based on the census, delimitation will be undertaken to reserve seats for women. **The reservation will be provided for a period of 15 years.**
  - However, it shall continue till such date as determined by a law made by Parliament.
  - Seats reserved for women **will be rotated after each delimitation**, as determined by a law made by Parliament.

▪ **Issues to Consider:**

- The issue of reservation of seats for women in legislatures can be examined from three perspectives:
  - whether the policy of reservation for women **can act as an effective instrument for their empowerment**
  - whether alternate methods of **increasing representation of women** in legislatures are feasible
  - whether **there are any issues with the proposed method** for reservation in the Bill.

▪ **Pros and Cons of Reservation in Political Parties and Dual member Constituencies:**

	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
<b>Political Parties</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide more democratic choice to voters.</li> <li>▪ Allow more flexibility to parties to choose candidates and constituencies depending on local political and social factors.</li> <li>▪ Can nominate women from minority communities in areas where this will be an electoral advantage.</li> <li>▪ Allow flexibility in the number of women in Parliament.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No guarantee that a significant number of women would get elected.</li> <li>▪ Political parties may assign women candidates to constituencies where they are weak.</li> <li>▪ Might lead to resentment if a woman is accommodated to the disadvantage of a stronger male candidate.</li> </ul>
<b>Dual- member Constituencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Does not decrease the democratic choice for voters.</li> <li>▪ Does not discriminate against male candidates.</li> <li>▪ Might make it easier for members to nurture constituencies whose average size is about 2.5 million people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sitting members may have to share their political base.</li> <li>▪ Women may become secondary persons or add-ons.</li> <li>▪ To fulfil the criteria of 33% women, half of the seats need to be dual constituencies. This would increase the total number of <b>Member of Parliaments (MPs)</b> by 50%, which could make deliberation in Parliament more difficult.</li> </ul>

- Bills amending the Constitution to reserve seats for women in Parliament and state legislative assemblies **have been introduced in 1996, 1998, 1999, and 2008.**
  - The **first three Bills** lapsed with dissolution of their respective Lok Sabhas.
  - The **2008 Bill** was introduced in and passed by [Rajya Sabha](#) but it also lapsed with the dissolution of the **15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha.**
- **Key Changes Between 2008 Bill and Bill Introduced in 2023:**

	<b>Bill Introduced in 2008 as Passed by Rajya Sabha</b>	<b>Bill Introduced in 2023</b>
<b>Reservation in Lok Sabha</b>	One-third of Lok Sabha seats in each state/UT to be reserved for women.	One-third seats to be reserved for women.
<b>Rotation of Seats</b>	Reserved seats to be rotated after	Reserved seats to be rotated

every general election to Parliament/legislative assembly.

after every **delimitation** exercise.

▪ **Other Bills Taken Up for Discussion During Special Session:**

- [The Repealing and Amending Bill, 2022](#)
- [The Inter-State River Water Disputes \(Amendment\) Bill, 2019](#)
- **The Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2023**
- **The Press and Registration of Periodicals (Amendment) Bill, 2023**

## Central Government Constitutes Committee on Simultaneous Elections

▪ **About:**

- The central government constituted a **High-Level Committee** to examine and make recommendations on holding [Simultaneous elections](#).
  - **Simultaneous elections** refer to the elections of Lok Sabha, State Legislatures, and local bodies being conducted at the same time.

▪ **Members of the Committee:**

- The Committee shall comprise a former [President](#) as Chairman and **has seven members**. The members of the Committee include:
  - **Minister of Home Affairs**
  - **Former Chairman of the 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission**

▪ **Terms of Reference:**

- The Committee will review and suggest changes to laws and regulations related to holding simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha, State Assemblies, and local bodies.
  - These changes may **include amendments to the Constitution, the [Representation of the People Act, 1950](#), and the [Representation of the People Act, 1951](#).**
- The Committee will also examine whether the Constitutional amendments will require ratification by states.
- The Committee will also:
  - Suggest a **framework for synchronising elections**,
  - **Recommend safeguards** to ensure the continuity of the cycle of simultaneous elections,
  - Examine the logistical and manpower requirements, and
  - Recommend the modalities for the use of a single electoral roll and identity cards for voters in different elections.

## Cabinet Approves eCourts Phase-III

▪ **About:**

- The Union Cabinet approved Phase III of the [eCourts Project](#) as a [central sector scheme](#) from 2023 to 2027.

▪ **eCourts Project :**

- **The eCourts project was initiated in 2007** to digitally enable the Indian judiciary. **Phase-II of the scheme concluded in 2023.**
- **Phase-I** of the scheme led to the computerization of a large number of district courts.
- Further, **Phase-II** of the scheme **aimed to provide service delivery to citizens**, such as accessible websites in local languages.

▪ **Objective of Phase-III:**

- Providing judicial services to citizens without technology access **via [eSewa Kendras](#)**.
- Enabling payment of courts fees and fines from anywhere.
- Minimising reliance on paper-based court filings.
- Approximately **28% of the budgetary outlay is estimated to be spent on scanning, digitisation**, and digital preservation of case records, while about 17% is estimated to be spent on cloud infrastructure.

## Law Commission Submits Report on Age of Consent under POCSO Act

- **About:**
  - Under the [Protection of Children from Sexual Offences \(POCSO\) Act](#), **a child is defined as anyone under 18 years old**. The Act criminalises sexual relations with a child irrespective of his or her consent.
- **Key Observations and Recommendations of the Commission:**
  - **Age of Consent:**
    - The Commission recommended **against reducing the age of consent under the POCSO Act to 16 years**.
  - **Child Above 16 years:**
    - The commission states that a lower sentence may be imposed on the accused **if the child was 16 years or above at the time of the offence**. This would require certain criteria to be satisfied. These include:
      - **Special Court** being satisfied that the relationship between the accused and child was intimate
      - Presence of tacit approval from the child
      - An **age difference of not more than three years** between the accused and the child
      - **No criminal history** of the accused
      - No element of undue influence, force, or violence being present
      - The accused are not in a dominating position to intimidate the child and the parents.
  - **The Indian Penal Code (IPC):**
    - Currently, under the [Indian Penal Code \(IPC\)](#), consensual sex between a husband and his wife (**who is below 18 years**) will amount to rape.
    - The Commission noted that **solely amending the POCSO Act to provide relief for adolescent romantic relationships would be meaningless** without amending the IPC.
    - Therefore, the Commission recommended carrying out suitable amendments to the IPC.

## Law Commission Report on Enabling Online Registration of FIR Under CrPC

- The Law Commission submitted its report on “Amendment in **Section 154 of The Code** of Criminal Procedure, 1973 for Enabling Online Registration of [First Information Report \(FIR\)](#)”.
- The Commission noted that **eight states**, including Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, have implemented the registration of e-FIRs.
- Further, citizens can lodge online complaints regarding cyber-crime.
- The Commission recommended a phased implementation of e-FIRs.
  - It recommended **enabling e-FIRs** for all cognisable offences where the accused is not known and cognisable offences punishable **with imprisonment up to three years**, where the accused is known.
  - The Commission also highlighted that the **data provided while registering e-FIRs should not be compromised**.

## Standing Committee Report on Prison Conditions, Infrastructure, and Reforms

- **Key Observations and Recommendations of the Committee:**
  - **Overcrowding:**
    - The Committee observed that [overcrowded prisons](#) have serious consequences for both prisoners and the criminal justice system. The national average occupancy rate in prisons across India is **130%**.
    - The Committee recommended **transferring prisoners from overcrowded jails to other jails** within the same state or in other states by signing a Memorandum of Understanding.
  - **Young Offenders:**
    - The Committee noted that there is a **lack of clarity on who is a young offender** across states.
    - It recommended that the Ministry of Home Affairs should provide a clear definition of young offenders along with a common guideline to all states/UTs.

- **Women Prisoners:**
  - The Committee recommended **giving special attention to pregnant women**, including the ability to give birth outside prison and proper prenatal and postnatal care.
  - To ensure a nurturing environment for the children, the Committee recommended allowing babies born in prison **to stay with their mothers till the age of 12 years.**

## Standing Committee Submits Report on Implementation of NEP in Higher Education

- **The [National Education Policy \(NEP\), 2020](#)** outlines revisions in the structure and objectives of India's education system. These include **introducing a five-stage design** for the school system and encouraging multidisciplinary education.
- **Observations and Recommendations of the Committee :**
  - **Interdisciplinary and personalised learning:**
    - It noted the '**Design your Degree**' programme launched by Jammu University, which is based on the [Choice-Based Credit System](#) outlined in the NEP.
    - The programme offers students the choice to pursue interdisciplinary and personalized learning. The Committee recommended introducing this programme in other institutions.
  - **Digital libraries:**
    - The Committee observed that **digital libraries** can provide students and educators convenient access to a vast range of learning resources.
    - It recommended the **Department of Higher Education** to ensure the availability of content in regional languages for better reach and learning outcomes.
  - **Marginalised students:**
    - The Committee noted a **gap between the [Gross Enrolment Ratio \(GER\)](#) of students from SC and ST communities** and the overall GER, between 2016- 17 to 2020-21.
    - The Committee recommended specific measures to further improve higher educational access for students hailing from these marginalized communities. **These include:**
      - conducting targeted awareness campaigns
      - developing infrastructure in remote areas and urban slums
      - providing specialized training for teachers working in marginalized communities
      - offering scholarships suited to the needs of marginalized communities.
      - It also recommended putting in place a transparent and efficient hiring process for teachers that prioritizes diversity.

## Bharat New Car Assessment Programme for Assessing Crash Safety of Cars Notified

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highway notified amendments to the [Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989](#). The Rules have been **framed under the provisions of the [Motor Vehicles Act, 1988](#)**.
- The amendments introduce the [Bharat New Car Assessment Program \(BNCAP\)](#) for assessing the safety rating of vehicles under the **M1 category**.
  - The **M1 category** consists of cars weighing **up to 3.5 tonnes** and can carry up to eight passengers (excluding the driver).
- The vehicles will be examined and assessed for star rating in accordance with [Automotive Industry Standard \(AIS\) 197](#).
  - **As per draft AIS 197 (yet to be notified)**, the overall vehicle safety assessment will be based on:
    - **adult** occupant protection
    - **child** occupant protection
    - **safety** assist technologies

- The program will be applicable for vehicles from **October 1, 2023**.

## Standing Committee Submits Report on Functioning of Archaeological Survey of India

- An Inland waterway is a **navigable river and canal system**. The **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)** regulates and develops national waterways for inland shipping and navigation.
- **Key Observations and Recommendations of the Committee include:**
  - The Committee recommended that the **list of these monuments be rationalized** based on national significance, unique architectural value, and specific heritage content.
  - It also observed that **50 centrally protected monuments** remain untraceable or are affected by rapid urbanization.
  - It recommended the [Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#) to ensure the **physical security of all monuments** maintained by it and identified lack of personnel to be a key gap in ensuring security.
  - **Restricted Areas Around Monuments:**
    - Within the radius of **300 metres of archaeological sites**, various activities including construction and mining are restricted under law.
    - The Committee observed that this invites public criticism and inconvenience, as in some cases, an entire village is covered within such radius. It **recommended that these restrictions should be rationalized**.

## Economy

### Current Account Deficit at 1.1% of GDP in the First Quarter of 2023-24

- **Current Account:**
  - The [current account](#) recorded a **deficit of USD 9.2 billion (1.1% of GDP)** in the first quarter (April-June) of 2023-24, significantly lower than the deficit of USD 17.9 billion (2.1% of GDP) in the corresponding quarter of 2022-23.
  - In the same period, merchandise trade deficit narrowed from USD 63.1 billion to USD 56.6 billion.
  - [Current account deficit](#) was USD **1.3 billion (0.2% of GDP)** in the fourth quarter (January-March) of 2022-23.
- **Capital Account:**
  - [Capital Account](#) registered a net inflow of USD 34.4 billion in the first quarter of 2023-24 as compared to a net inflow of USD 22.1 billion in the corresponding quarter of 2022-23.
  - [Foreign portfolio investments](#) registered a net inflow of USD 15.7 billion in the first quarter of 2023-24 as compared to a net outflow of USD 14.6 billion in the first quarter of 2022-23.
  - In the fourth quarter of 2022-23, the **capital account had registered a net inflow of USD 6.5 billion**.
- **Foreign Exchange Reserves**
  - It increased by USD 24.4 billion in the first quarter of 2023-24, **significantly higher than an increase of USD 4.6 billion in the same quarter in 2022**.

### RBI Releases Directions on Investment Portfolio of Commercial Banks

- **About:**
  - The [Reserve Bank of India \(RBI\)](#) released the RBI (Classification, Valuation and Operation of Investment Portfolio of Commercial Banks) Directions, 2023.
    - The framework **will be applicable for all commercial banks, excluding regional rural banks, from April 1, 2024**.
- **Key Features:**
  - **Investment Policy Framework:** Banks must adopt an investment policy approved by their boards. The policy must include:
    - Investment criteria and objectives to be achieved through investment transactions,
    - Securities in which banks can invest.
  - **Categorisation of Investments:** Investment portfolio of banks must be categorized into:

- **Held to maturity** (securities acquired with the intention of holding them to maturity)
- **Available for sale** (securities acquired for collecting cash flows as well as sale)
- **Fair value through profit and loss** (securities that do not fall in the above two categories).
- **Internal control system:** Banks must have a robust internal control mechanism for investment transactions. This includes:
  - Periodic reconciliation of the investment book
  - Valuation of portfolios
  - Monitoring of prudential and risk limits

## RBI Issues Directions on Release of Property Documents on Repayment of Personal Loans

- The **RBI** issued directions for the release of movable/immovable property documents by regulated entities (such as banks) upon the repayment of personal loans.
  - **Personal loans** include education loans, housing loans, and loans for investments in financial assets.
- RBI has **observed divergent practices** in the release of such documents.
  - The directions require regulated entities to release the original property documents **within 30 days after the full repayment/settlement of the loan account.**
  - In case of any delay caused by the regulated entity, a compensation of **Rs 5,000** will be paid for each day of delay to the borrower. These directions will be applicable **from December 1, 2023.**

## RBI Issues Draft Directions for Treatment of Wilful and Large Defaulters

- **About:**
  - The **RBI** issued the [draft RBI \(Treatment of Wilful Defaulters and Large Defaulters\) Directions, 2023](#) for public feedback. The draft directions seek to provide a procedure for classification of a borrower as wilful defaulter by lenders.
- **Key Features:**
  - **Wilful Defaulter:**
    - **It refers to:**
      - A borrower or guarantor who has committed [wilful default](#) of **at least Rs 25 lakh or as notified by RBI**
      - Promoters and Directors associated at the time of default if the defaulter is a company
      - Persons in charge of and responsible for management of the affairs of an entity.
  - **Identification of Wilful Defaulters:**
    - The evidence of wilful default will be examined by an **identification committee** (consisting of a wholetime director as chairperson and two senior officials) set up by the lender.
    - If the committee is satisfied that wilful default has occurred, it will issue a show-cause notice to the borrower.
  - **Measures Against Wilful Defaulters:**
    - Lenders may initiate criminal proceedings against wilful defaulters, if warranted. **Wilful defaulters will not be eligible for restructuring of the credit facility.**

## Comments Invited on Guidelines for Regulating Dark Patterns in E-commerce

- **About:**
  - [Dark patterns](#) refer to practices or deceptive **design patterns in User Interfaces (UI)** of platforms, designed to mislead or trick users into performing unintended actions.
    - These patterns impair consumer autonomy, decision making or choice, and amount to misleading or unfair trade practices.
- **Key Features of the Draft Guidelines:**

- **Engaging in dark patterns prohibited:**
  - **These will apply to** all platforms offering goods or services in India Advertisers, and sellers.
- **The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)**, established under the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019** will be responsible for settling ambiguities or disputes related to the interpretation of dark patterns.
  - Under the Act, failure to comply with the direction of the CCPA **is punishable with imprisonment up to six months, a fine of up to Rs 20 lakh, or both.**

## Standing Committee Submits its Report on the National Inland Waterways

- An Inland waterway is a navigable river and canal system. [The Inland Waterways Authority of India \(IWAI\)](#) regulates and develops national waterways for inland shipping and navigation.
- **Key Observations and Recommendations of the Committee :**
  - **Operationalisation of National Waterways:**
    - There are [111 notified national waterways](#), **out of which 23 have been made operational.**
    - The Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways stated that the development of 63 **national waterways** has not taken up due to financial and staffing constraints.
    - The Committee also recommended **against taking up development of these 63 waterways** at present, as they are unviable.
  - **Intermodal Connectivity for Cargo Movement:**
    - The Committee noted that connectivity of waterways with major ports, rails and roads would lessen the burden on these modes and reduce the logistics costs.
  - **Low Modal Share of Waterways:**
    - The modal share of waterways in India's freight movement is about **2%, whereas the corresponding figure is 4% for USA, 14% for China, 48% for Vietnam, and 49% for Netherlands.**
    - **India aims to increase the modal share to 5% by 2030.**
    - The **Committee recommended** the Ministry to come up with an action plan to harness the potential of waterways as a sustainable transit option and tourism product.

## Rules on Captive Power Generators and Users Amended

- **About:**
  - A **captive generation plant is a power plant set up for one's own use.** The amendments require the verification of certain captive generation plants and alter the definition of captive users.
- **Key Features of the Amended Rules:**
  - **Change in definition of captive users:**
    - The amendment broadens the scope of entities considered to be captive users. Previously, the Rules specified that affiliate companies (in which the captive user **held at least 51% ownership**) **would be considered as captive users.**
    - The amended Rules have replaced the term affiliate company with holding company which is defined in the [Companies Act, 2013.](#)
  - **Verification of certain captive generation plants:**
    - The amendment requires that the captive status of certain generating plants shall be verified by the [Central Electricity Authority.](#)
    - This only applies to generating plants in which the captive user(s) and its captive generating plant are located in more than one state

## Rules for Auction of Mining Lease and Composite License Amended

- **About:**
  - The Ministry of Mines notified amendments to the **Mineral (Auction) Rules, 2015.** The Rules have been framed under the [Mines and Minerals \(Development and Regulation\) Act, 1957.](#)



- The Act regulates the mining sector in India. The **2015 Rules** prescribe the procedure of conducting auction of mines.
- **Key Features of the Amended Rules:**
  - **Concessions for critical and strategic minerals:**
    - The amended Rules introduce certain **requirements for the state government with regard to concessions for critical and strategic minerals**. These minerals are specified in the First Schedule of the Act, and include [lithium](#)- bearing minerals and graphite.
  - **Classification of land:**
    - **Under the 2015 Rules**, the state government may hold an auction for granting a mining lease in an area with established mineral contents.
    - Before the auction, the state government must identify and mark the area using surveying equipment. The area should be categorised as:
      - forest land
      - land owned by the state government
      - land not owned by the state government.
    - The **amended Rules** provide that for this purpose, state governments may use land details available in:
      - **Portal of the [PM Gati Shakti](#)**
      - [Land record](#) portal of the state government
      - Records of any other government authority

## Standing Committee Submits Report on the Employees State Insurance Corporation

- **About:**
  - The [Employees State Insurance Act, 1948](#) mandates employers to contribute towards medical care to employees. It applies to factories **employing at least 10 persons**.
  - The central and state governments have also **included shops, hotels, cinemas, newspaper establishments, and port trusts under their purview**.
  - The Act establishes the [Employees State Insurance Corporation \(ESIC\)](#) and **Employees State Insurance Scheme (ESI Scheme)**.
- **Key Observations and Recommendations of the Committee:**
  - **Revision of wage limit for coverage under the ESI scheme:**
    - Employees **earning up to Rs 176 per day** are exempted from paying contributions. The Committee noted that this ceiling has remained unchanged for about seven years.
    - The Committee recommended that the Ministry of Labour and Employment should revise provisions related to coverage and contribution of wages.
  - **Expansion of Coverage of Scheme:**
    - The **ESI Act, 1948** has been subsumed in the [Code on Social Security, 2020](#). The Committee noted that with the implementation of the Code, ESI will expand to include:
      - Voluntary coverage for establishments **with less than 10 persons**
      - Mandatory coverage for establishments engaged in a hazardous occupation
      - Provisions for formulating special schemes for unorganised workers, gig workers, and platform workers.
      - The Committee noted the lack of readiness of the **Ministry and ESIC** in providing the extended coverage.
      - It **recommended carrying out comprehensive surveys, data collection, and use of [Aadhaar](#)** to identify eligible insured persons.

## Environment

### Extended Producer Responsibility Rules for Used Oil Notified

- **About:**
  - The Rules have been framed under the [Environment Protection Act, 1986](#). The Rules were

enacted to reduce hazardous waste generation and set up measures for recycling such waste.

- The amendment adds [Extended Producer Responsibility \(EPR\)](#) to manage used oil, which requires producers to recycle such used oil.
  - Used oil refers to **oil derived from crude oil or mixtures containing synthetic oil, and oils suitable for reprocessing.**
  - The EPR applies to producers who manufacture and/or sell base oil/ lubrication oil.
- **Key Features of the Amendments:**
  - **Management of used oil:**
    - As per the amended Rules, used oil will be managed through:
      - **producing re-refined base oil/lubrication oil**
      - **energy recovery**, i.e., utilising used oil as fuel.
  - **EPR targets:**
    - It is now the **responsibility of the producer to recycle used oil** through registered recyclers to ensure environmentally sound management of used oil.
    - The Rules specify **targets based on yearly sales/imports** of base oil/lubrication oil to fulfil these obligations.
    - Producers may take help from third-party organisations, such as dealers to meet the targets.
  - **Producer responsibility certificates:**
    - **Producers may fulfil their EPR by purchasing certificates** from registered recyclers of used oil.
      - **Recycling refers to re-refining used oil or energy recovery from used oil.** Certificates can also be purchased based on the producer's current and previous years' liability.
  - **Registration:**
    - The amendments **mandate producers, collection agents, recyclers, and used oil importers** to register themselves with the [Central Pollution Control Board \(CPCB\)](#).
  - **Non-compliance:**
    - In case of non-fulfilment of obligations, environmental compensation can be imposed by CPCB.
    - Entities can be prosecuted for furnishing false information. The Rules also establish a **Steering Committee, headed by the CPCB Chairperson, to oversee implementation.**

## Framework for Promoting Energy Storage Systems Released

- **About:**
  - India targets to have **50% cumulative installed capacity from [non-fossil energy sources by 2030](#)**. Energy storage systems will be crucial for integration of renewable energy capacity at this scale.
- **The Framework Recommends Key Measures:**
  - **Regulatory measures:**
    - It recommends **framing power purchase guidelines** to incentivise energy storage systems.
    - Providing energy storage systems with [carbon credits](#) where they utilise [Renewable Energy \(RE\)](#) for charging.
    - New RE projects **over 5 megawatts** should be required to install energy storage systems **for at least 5%** of their renewable energy capacity.
  - **Technology-agnostic bidding:**
    - The competitive bidding guidelines for projects should not give preferential treatment to certain technologies.
  - **Recycling and sustainability:**
    - All bidding documents should have an end-of-life management plan. These plans should promote repurposing or reusing old batteries.
  - **Financial incentives:**
    - Viability gap funding **up to 40% of the capital cost** for the battery energy storage systems should be provided (provided that the project is commissioned

within 18-24 months).

- [Production linked Incentive \(PLI scheme\)](#) should be formulated for incentivising domestic manufacturing of energy storage systems and ancillary components.

## Rules to Increase the Validity of Fitness Certificates for Transport Vehicles Notified

- The Rules have been framed under the provisions of the [Motor Vehicles Act, 1988](#). The 1988 Act **empowers the central government to prescribe rules for issuing fitness certificates to transport vehicles.**
- A fitness certificate is proof that the vehicle is safe and fit for use on the road.
- **New Rules Notified:**
  - **Under the 1989 Rules**, the validity of the fitness certificate for old transport vehicles was **one year.**
  - The Amendments **increase the validity period to two years** for vehicles up to **eight years old.**
  - Only automated testing stations should issue fitness certificates for
    - heavy goods vehicles
    - heavy passenger motor vehicles
    - medium goods vehicles
    - light motor.
- **The new rules will apply from October 1, 2024.**

## Standing Committee Report on Development of Niche Tourism and Potential Tourist Spots

- **About:**
  - Niche tourism caters to small groups of people sharing similar interests. It includes rural tourism, adventure tourism, eco-tourism, and medical tourism.
- **Rural Tourism:**
  - The Committee observed that no Indian village features in the list of the best tourism villages prepared by the [United Nations World Tourism Organisation](#).
  - It further observed that rural tourism has immense potential for boosting employment and income for villagers.
  - It recommended that the website on **rural tourism must provide details of rural homestays, travel connectivity**, and tourist spots in villages.
- **Adventure Tourism:**
  - The Committee **observed that there has been an increase in the number of accidents in adventure sports.**
  - It noted the **presence of unlicensed adventure** tour operators.
  - The Committee recommended that the Ministry of Tourism should enact a law so that only licensed operators provide adventure tourism services.
- **Medical Tourism:**
  - The Committee observed that **lack of regulations in the medical travel sector** affects monitoring of the quality of services offered.
  - They recommended **all medical tourism facilitators to mandatorily register** with the government.
  - It also recommended the Ministry to encourage hospitals to obtain the Joint Commission International accreditation as it is recognised on an international level.
- **Swadesh Darshan Scheme:**
  - Under [Swadesh Darshan Scheme](#), **15 thematic circuits** have been identified. **76 projects** have been sanctioned in **31 states/UTs** for the development of tourism infrastructure.
  - The Committee noted that several projects are delayed due to lack of approvals from temple or forest authorities.
  - It recommended monitoring the real time progress of the projects.

