



PRS Capsule - August 2023

Key Highlights of PRS

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- Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2023
- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023
- Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023
- Bhartiya Sakshya Bill, 2023
- Election Commission Bill Amending Appointment of Chief Election Commissioner Introduced
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- The Mediation Bill 2021 Passed by Parliament
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▪ **Social Justice**

- Cabinet Approves Central Sector Scheme for Artisans and Craftspeople
- Standing Committee Submits Report on Social Security Measures for Textile Workers
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▪ **Economy**

- Industrial Production Grew by 4.5% in first quarter of 2023-24
- Parliament Passes Amendments to Extend GST on Certain Activities
- Cabinet approves PM-eBus Sewa for enhancement of city bus operations
- Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023 passed by Parliament
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- Cabinet Approves the Extension of Development Schemes for North-Eastern Region
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▪ **Internal Security**

- Parliament passed the Inter-services Organisations Bill, 2023
- Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023 Passed by Parliament

Governance

The GNCT of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2023

- The Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2023 was passed by Parliament on August 7, 2023. It amends the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991.
- The Bill replaces the Government of [National Capital Territory of Delhi \(Amendment\) Ordinance, 2023](#) which was promulgated on May 19, 2023. The Bill will retrospectively apply from May 19, 2023.
- **Key Features Include:**
 - **National Capital Civil Services Authority:** The Bill establishes the National Capital Civil Service Authority to recommend to the Lieutenant Governor (LG) of Delhi: (i) **transfers and postings**, (ii) matters related to vigilance, (iii) disciplinary proceedings, and (iv) **prosecution sanctions of Group A officers** of All India Services (except Indian Police

Service), and officers serving the Delhi government.

- Officers serving in connection with the subjects of police, public order, and land will not come under the Authority's purview.
 - The Authority will consist of the Delhi Chief Minister of Delhi, Principal Home Secretary and Chief Secretary of Delhi.
 - All decisions of the Authority will be based on a majority of votes of the members present and voting. The quorum for a meeting will be two members.
- **Powers of the Lieutenant Governor (LG):** Under the Act, matters where the LG shall act on his discretion are:
 - Matters outside the legislative competence of the Delhi legislature but which have been delegated to the LG, or matters where he is required by a law to act in his discretion or exercise any judicial or quasi-judicial functions.
 - The Bill specifies that in these matters, the **LG will act in his sole discretion.**
 - It expands the discretionary role of the LG by giving him powers to approve the recommendations of the Authority, or return them for reconsideration.
 - The LG's decision will be final in the case of a difference of opinion between him and the Authority.
 - It also **provides the LG with the authority to override the Delhi government on certain matters.** These matters include summoning and proroguing the Delhi Legislative Assembly.

Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2023

- The Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2023, was passed by Parliament. It amends the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969.
- The Act provides for the regulation of registration of births and deaths.
- **Key Features of the Bill Include:**
 - **Aadhaar Details Of Parents And Informants Required:** The Act requires certain persons (informants) to report births and deaths to the Registrar. For example, the medical officer in charge of a hospital where a baby is born must report the birth.
 - The Bill adds that, in cases of births, the informant shall also provide the Aadhaar number of the parents and the informant, if available. This provision also applies to:
 - jailor in case of births in a jail, and
 - manager of a hotel or lodge in case of births in such a place.
 - Further, it expands the list of specified persons to include:
 - adoptive parents for non-institutional adoption,
 - biological parent for births through surrogacy, and
 - the parent in case of birth of a child to a single parent or unwed mother.
 - **Database of Births and Deaths:** The Act provides for the appointment of a Registrar-General, India who may issue general directions for registration of births and deaths.
 - The Bill adds that the Registrar General will maintain a national database of registered births and deaths. Chief Registrars (appointed by states) and Registrars (appointed by states for each local area jurisdiction) will be obligated to share data of registered births and deaths to the national database.
 - The Chief Registrar shall maintain a similar database at the state level.
 - **Connecting Database:** The Bill states that the national database may be made available to other authorities preparing or maintaining other databases.
 - Such databases include: (i) population register, (ii) electoral rolls, (iii) ration card, and (iv) any other national databases as notified.
 - The use of the national database must be approved by the central government.
 - Similarly, the state database may be made available to authorities dealing with other state databases, subject to the state government's approval.

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023

- The [Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023](#) was introduced in Lok Sabha.
 - The Bill repeals the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (IPC) and has been referred to the Standing Committee on Home Affairs.

- The IPC is the principal law on criminal offences.
- The Bill retains several parts of the IPC. Certain offences under the IPC that Courts have struck or read down have been omitted. These include offences of adultery and same-sex intercourse.
- **Key Changes Proposed in the Bill:**
 - **Terrorism and Organised Crime to be Offences:** The Bill defines terrorism as an act that intends to threaten the unity, integrity, and security of the country to intimidate the general public.
 - Terrorist acts include using firearms, bombs, or hazardous substances to cause death, or spread fear.
 - Organised crime is defined as a continuing unlawful activity, carried out by use of violence or intimidation, to obtain material or financial benefit.
 - The unlawful activity may include kidnapping, contract killing, financial scams, and cybercrime. These could be carried out by individuals singly or jointly, as members of or on behalf of a crime syndicate.
 - The maximum penalty for terrorism and organised crime includes death, or life imprisonment if the offence has resulted in death of any person.
 - **Sedition:** The Bill removes the offence of sedition, which was punishable with imprisonment between three years and life.
 - It instead penalises: exciting or attempting to excite secession, or subversive activities, or armed rebellion, encouraging feelings of separatist activities, or endangering sovereignty or unity and integrity of India.
 - These may involve electronic communication, or use of financial means. This will be punishable with imprisonment of up to seven years or life, and will attract a fine.
 - **Murder by a Group on Certain Grounds:** The Bill specifies a separate penalty for murder committed by five or more people on specified grounds.
 - These include race, caste, sex, place of birth, language, or personal belief. Penalty for each offender includes imprisonment between seven years and life, or death.
 - **Death Penalty for Gang Rape of Minor:** The IPC allows death penalty for gang rape of women below 12 years of age. The Bill extends the death penalty for gang rape of women below 18 years.

Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023

- The [Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023](#) was introduced in Lok Sabha.
- It repeals the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 but retains most of the provisions of the Code.
 - The Code provides for the procedure for arrest, prosecution, and bail for offences under various Acts including the Indian Penal Code, 1860.
- **Key Changes Proposed under the Bill Include:**
 - **Detention of Undertrials:** Under the Code, if an accused has spent half of the maximum period of imprisonment for an offence under detention, during investigation or trial, he must be released on his personal bond. This does not apply to offences which are punishable by death.
 - The Bill adds that this provision will also not apply to: (i) offences punishable by life imprisonment, and (ii) persons against whom proceedings are pending in more than one offence.
 - It further adds that first time offenders will be released on bail if they have completed detention for one-third of the maximum imprisonment which can be imposed for the offence.
 - The superintendent of the jail where the accused is detained must make the application seeking the release of such undertrials on bail.
 - **Signatures and Finger Impressions:** The Code empowers a Metropolitan/Judicial Magistrate to order any person to provide specimen signatures or handwriting.
 - Such an order can be given for any investigation or proceeding under the Code. However, such specimens cannot be collected from a person who has not been arrested under the investigation.
 - The Bill expands this **to include finger impressions and voice samples**. These samples may also be taken from a person who has not been arrested.
 - **Forensic investigation:** The Bill mandates forensic investigation for offences punishable with at least seven years of imprisonment. In such cases, forensic experts will visit crime scenes to collect

forensic evidence and record the process on a mobile phone or any other electronic device. If a state does not have a forensics facility, it shall utilise such facility in another state.

Bhartiya Sakshya Bill, 2023

- The [Bhartiya Sakshya Bill, 2023](#) repeals the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.
 - The Act provides rules for the admissibility of evidence in legal proceedings.
- The Bill retains several parts of the Act and widens the ambit of electronic records admissible as evidence.
- **Key Changes Proposed in the Bill Include:**
 - **Admissibility of electronic or digital records as evidence:** The Act provides for two kinds of evidence – documentary and oral evidence.
 - Documentary evidence includes information in electronic records that have been printed or stored in optical or magnetic media produced by a computer. Such information may have been stored or processed by a combination of computers or different computers.
 - The Bill provides that electronic or digital records will have the same legal effect as paper records.
 - It expands electronic records to include information stored in semiconductor memory or any communication devices (smartphones, laptops). This will also include records on emails, server logs, smartphones, locational evidence and voice mails.
 - **Oral Evidence:** Under the Act, oral evidence includes statements made before Courts by witnesses in relation to a fact under inquiry.
 - The Bill allows oral evidence to be given electronically. This would permit witnesses, accused persons, and victims to testify through electronic means.

Election Commission Bill Amending Appointment of Chief Election Commissioner Introduced

- The [Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners \(Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office\) Bill, 2023](#), was introduced in Rajya Sabha.
- It repeals the Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991.
- **Election Commission:** As per Article 324 of the Constitution, the Election Commission consists of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and such number of other Election Commissioners (ECs), as the President may decide. The CEC and other ECs are appointed by the President.
 - The Bill specifies the same composition of the Election Commission. It adds that the CEC and other ECs will be appointed **by the President on the recommendation of a Selection Committee.**
- **Selection Committee:** The Selection Committee will consist of:
 - the Prime Minister as Chairperson,
 - the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha as member, and
 - a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister as a member.
 - If the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha has not been recognised, the leader of the single largest opposition party in Lok Sabha will assume the said role.
- **Search Committee:** A Search Committee will prepare a panel of five persons for the consideration of the Selection Committee. The Search Committee will be headed by the Cabinet Secretary.
 - It will have two other members, not below the rank of Secretary to the central government, having knowledge and experience in matters related to elections.
 - The Selection Committee may also consider candidates who have not been included in the panel prepared by the Search Committee.

Standing Committee Report on Election Process and Reforms Submitted

- The Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice submitted its report on **“Specific Aspects of Election Process and their Reform”**.

- The Committee identified issues in the electoral process including: the status of Common Electoral Roll, and the minimum age of voting and contesting elections.
- The Election Commission of India (ECI) proposed establishing a Common Electoral Roll.
 - The Common Electoral Roll would serve as a centralised repository of voter information that can be accessed by all concerned authorities, including the ECI and State Election Commissions.
- **Key Recommendations of the Committee Include:**
 - **Common Electoral Roll:** The Committee noted that the Common Electoral Roll is intended to streamline resources, minimise efforts, and reduce expenses.
 - However, it identified two issues in implementing it:
 - The current legal framework, and
 - The constitutional regulations guiding the creation of electoral rolls by the ECI.
 - The Committee expressed concern about the potential impact on state powers, as panchayat elections and municipal elections are under the authority of State Election Commissions.
 - Delimitation of local wards and panchayats is mandated by the state governments and State Election Commissions before every local election.
 - As per the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, local elections are a state subject.
 - The ECI lacks the authority to direct State Election Commissions. Therefore, the Committee recommended that the ECI should consider the constitutional provisions before preparing the Common Electoral Roll.
 - Further, the Committee noted that implementing the Common Electoral Roll proposed by the central government and the ECI falls outside the scope of Article 325 of the Constitution.
 - Article 325 mandates the use of separate electoral rolls for elections to Parliament and state legislatures. The Committee advised the central government to carefully assess the potential consequences before taking any actions.
 - **Age of Contesting Elections:** The Committee observed that reducing the minimum age requirement for candidacy in elections would give young individuals equal opportunities to engage in democracy.
 - It suggested reducing the minimum age requirement for candidacy in state elections.

CAG Submits its Audit Report on Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY

- The Comptroller Auditor General of India (CAG) submitted its report on the 'Performance Audit of Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana (PMJAY)'.
- The Scheme aims to provide health cover of five lakh rupees per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation.
- Beneficiaries under the scheme are selected on the basis of the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC), 2011.
- **Key Findings Of The Report Include:**
 - **Inclusion of Beneficiaries:** On applying for registration, applicant details are matched to a database containing a list of eligible beneficiaries.
 - A matching score between 0 and 100 is generated and relevant documents are sent for approval. No threshold for a matching score has been prescribed for approval or rejection.
 - The CAG report shows that in 32% of the total approved cases (11 crore) there was no matching score, and in 15%, the matching score was zero.
 - This implies that the details furnished by the applicants did not match the details in the database.
 - The report also observed the inclusion of ineligible beneficiaries, especially families of government employees.
 - **Error in Database:** The report deems the SECC, 2011 database outdated and reveals inconsistencies.
 - These include errors such as: (i) invalid names, (ii) blank name and gender columns, (iii) unrealistic birth dates and household sizes. These add up to

approximately two crore entries.

- The report also reveals inconsistencies in PMJAY data on beneficiaries. These include: (i) duplicate PMJAY IDs, (ii) unrealistic household size, (iii) same/erroneous Aadhar Card numbers, and (iv) invalid mobiles numbers.
- **Claims Management:** 53% of the claims settled till 2022 belonged to states that implemented their own insurance health schemes, such as Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra.
 - In these states claims for all state schemes are fed into their own IT management systems.
 - When this data is transferred into PMJAY's management system, there is a possibility of an overlap of PMJAY with state specific schemes.

The Mediation Bill 2021 Passed by Parliament

- The Mediation Bill, 2021 was passed by Parliament. Mediation is a form of [alternative dispute resolution](#), where parties attempt to settle their dispute (outside courts) with the assistance of an independent third person (mediator).
 - The Bill seeks to promote mediation (including online mediation and community mediation), and provide for enforcement of settlement agreements resulting from mediation.
 - The Bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice.
 - The Committee recommended changes to the Bill such as reducing the mediation process from 180 days with another 180-day extension to 90 days with a 60-day extension.
- **Key Features of the Bill Include:**
 - **Disputes not fit for Mediation:** The Bill will apply to certain mediation proceedings conducted in India (for instance, if the mediation agreement states that mediation will be as per this Bill, or to international mediation related to a commercial dispute).
 - The Bill defines certain disputes as not fit for mediation. These include disputes: (i) relating to claims against minors or persons of unsound mind, (ii) involving prosecution for criminal offences, and (iii) relating to levy or collection of taxes. The central government may amend this list of disputes.
 - **Mediation Process:** In case of civil or commercial disputes, a person must try to settle the dispute by mediation before approaching any court or certain tribunals as notified. Mediation proceedings will be confidential.
 - The mediation process must be completed within 120 days, which may be extended by another 60 days by the parties.
 - **Mediators:** Mediators assist the parties to settle their dispute. Mediators may be appointed by: (i) the parties by agreement, or (ii) a mediation service provider (an institution administering mediation).
 - Mediators must disclose any conflict of interest that may raise doubts on their independence.
 - Parties may then choose to replace the mediator. Further, the Mediation Council of India will register mediators, and recognise mediation service providers.

Multi-State Co-operative Societies (Amendment) Bill, 2022

- The [Multi-State Co-operative Societies \(Amendment\) Bill, 2022](#), was passed by Parliament. It amends the Multi-State Co-operative Societies Act, 2002.
 - Multi state co-operative societies operate in more than one state.
- **Key Provisions of the Bill:**
 - **Election of board members:** Under the Act, elections to the board of a multi-state co-operative society are conducted by its existing board.
 - The Bill amends this to specify that the central government will establish the Co-operative Election Authority to conduct such elections.
 - The Authority will consist of a chairperson, vice chairperson, and up to three members appointed by the central government on the recommendations of a selection committee.
 - **Redressal of complaints:** As per the Bill, the central government will appoint one or

more Cooperative Ombudsman with territorial jurisdiction.

- The Ombudsman shall inquire into complaints made by members of co-operative societies regarding: (i) their deposits, (ii) equitable benefits of the society's functioning, or (iii) issues affecting the individual rights of the members.
- The Ombudsman shall complete the process of inquiry and adjudication within three months from the receipt of the complaint.
- Appeals against the directions of the Ombudsman may be filed with the Central Registrar (appointed by the central government) within a month.
- **Amalgamation of Co-operative Societies:** The Act provides for the amalgamation and division of multi-state co-operative societies.
 - This can be done by passing a resolution at a general assembly with at least two-thirds of the members, present and voting.
 - The Bill allows co-operative societies (registered under state laws) to merge into an existing multi-state co-operative society.
 - At least two-thirds of the members of the co-operative society present and voting at a general meeting must pass a resolution to allow such a merger.

New National Curriculum Framework for Education Released

- The Ministry of Education released the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF), 2023.
- It aims to provide the guiding principles, goals, structure, and elements for the development of school curricula.
 - It replaces the National Curriculum Framework, 2005.
- It has been formulated in pursuance of the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP).
- The NEP envisioned changes in school education, which included: (i) a schooling system divided across four stages, (ii) multidisciplinary education, (iii) multilingualism, and (iv) flexibility in subject selection.
- **Key Features Include:**
 - **5+3+3+4 Stage Design:** The NEP recommended substituting the existing design of the school system (10+2) with a design that is distributed across four stages.
 - The proposed design involved – (i) a foundational stage (ages 3-8), (ii) a preparatory stage (ages 8-11), (iii) a middle stage (ages 11-14), and (iv) a secondary stage (ages 14- 18).
 - The NEP further proposed dividing the secondary stage into two phases — grades 9 and 10, and grades 11 and 12.
 - The NCF, 2023 incorporates this design. It provides each stage with a different combination of disciplines and specific learning objectives.
 - For example, the foundational stage aims to develop physical, cognitive, and language abilities. In this stage, students will learn two languages, and develop foundational numeracy.
 - **Language Education:** The NEP aims to develop a student into an independent speaker, writer, and reader in three languages.
 - The NCF, 2023 incorporates this aim and delineates goals for language proficiency.
 - The first language a student studies would be that of the community in which that student lives.
 - The others could be any languages other than the first.
 - The NCF necessitates that two out of the three languages taught must be Indian.
 - **Multidisciplinary Education:** The NCF, 2023 provides for students in grades 11 and 12 to study six subjects.
 - Two of these would be languages, of which, one must be Indian. Apart from these, the student can choose any four subjects from three groups. Each group contains subjects from similar domains.
 - For instance, science, mathematics and computational thinking are grouped together.

Social Justice

Standing Committee Report on Drug Abuse Among Youth

The Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment submitted its report on 'Drug Abuse Among Young Persons Problems and Solutions'.

▪ Key Recommendations of the Committee include:

- **Reduction of Budgetary Allocation:** The Committee noted that the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR) had a budgetary allocation for 260 crore rupees for both 2020-21 and 2021-22.
 - It was reduced to 150 crore rupees for 2020-21 and 200 crore rupees for 2021- 22 during the revised stage.
 - It also observed that NAPDDR had spent approximately Rs 91 crore in 2021-22 rupees and Rs 98 crore in 2021-22.
 - It suggested that the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment ensure that the number of beneficiaries under NAPDDR increase in 20223- 24. It suggested the budget allocation for 2023-24 to be spent fully as opposed to being cut down at the revised stage.
- **Drug Abuse Among Youth:** The Committee observed that opioids, sedatives, and inhalants are being widely used by 10-17-year-olds with over one crore users in the age group.
 - The worst affected states and UTs include Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Delhi, and Punjab.
 - The Committee also observed that despite a ban on alcohol consumption in some states, approximately 19% of India's population consumes alcohol.
 - The Committee suggested strict vigilance to control illegal sale of liquor in states/UTs.
- **Role of NGOs in Rehabilitation:** The Committee noted that drug usage is widely prevalent in Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra.
 - However, the amount of money given to NGOs operating rehabilitation programmes in these states has gone down in 2022-23 compared to previous years.
 - It observed that the budget reduction was partly due to the non-functioning of some NGOs.
 - The Committee suggested the need for a fast-track alternate mechanism to ensure that rehabilitations programmes do not suffer in critical states.

Standing Committee Report on the Functioning of the National Commission of Women

- The Standing Committee on the Empowerment of Women submitted its report on "Working of National Commission for Women and State Commission for Women".
 - The National Commission for Women (NCW) is mandated to facilitate grievances of women and recommend women specific legislative and policy measures.
- **Key Observations and Recommendations of the Committee Include:**
 - **The National Commission for Women Act, 1990:** The Committee noted that there is an urgent need to review the National Commission for Women Act, 1990 to make the NCW more independent, and effective.
 - It recommended empowering the NCW with a certain degree of accountability over the police to implement their directions and penalise non-compliance.
 - It also recommended the NCW to propose amendments in the 1990 Act and submit them to the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD).
 - **State Commissions for Women:** The Committee noted that many established State Commissions for Women are not fully functional due to nonappointment of Chairpersons or lack of allocation of funds.
 - It observed that many states including Bihar and Madhya Pradesh do not have their own State Commission for Women.
 - The Committee observed that functional State Commissions for Women will help the NCW in disposing of complaints emanating from their respective states.

- It recommended establishing a statutory linkage with State Commissions for Women to ensure smoother coordination.
- It also recommended the MWCD to urge states to strengthen their Commissions by filling up vacancies and allocating adequate funds.
- **Implementation of Recommendations:** The Committee noted that the NCW has reviewed and suggested amendments for about 161 laws.
 - These amendments include laws related to: (i) child marriage, (ii) domestic violence, (iii) women's safety, and (iv) the medical termination of pregnancy.
 - However, the Committee noted that there is no time frame followed for the implementation of NCW's recommendation.
 - It recommended the establishment of a mechanism within the MWCD, Ministry of Law and Justice, and other concerned ministries to adhere to a fixed time frame and ensure the implementation of recommendations made by the NCW.

Cabinet Approves Central Sector Scheme for Artisans and Craftspeople

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved [PM-Vishwakarma](#), a **central sector scheme for artisans and craftspeople**.
- The Scheme seeks to provide credit at a concessional interest rate of 5%, up to one lakh rupees in the first tranche, and up to two lakh rupees in the second tranche.
- Additional support such as skill upgradation, incentives for digital transactions, and marketing support will also be provided.
- The Scheme has a financial outlay of Rs 13,000 crore from 2023-24 to 2027-28. It will cover 18 traditional trades such as carpenters, armourer, blacksmith, potter, mason, barber, doll/toy maker, garland maker, tailor, and sculptor.

Economy

Industrial production grew by 4.5% in first quarter of 2023-24

- The **Index of Industrial Production (IIP) grew by 4.5%** in the first quarter (April-June) of 2023-24.
 - The IIP is an index that shows the growth rates in different industry groups of the economy in a fixed period of time.
 - It is compiled and published **monthly by the Central Statistical Organization (CSO)**, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
 - This was lower than the 12.8% growth witnessed in the first quarter of 2022-23. The weight of manufacturing, mining, and electricity sectors in the IIP is 78%, 14%, and 8% respectively.
- The mining sector grew by 6.4% in the first quarter of 2023-24 as compared to 9.1% in the corresponding quarter of 2022-23.
 - The manufacturing sector grew by 4.7% in the first quarter of 2023-24, significantly lower than 12.8% in the first quarter of 2022-23.
 - The electricity sector grew the slowest by 1.3% in the first quarter of 2023-24 which was lower than 17.1% in the first quarter of 2022-23.

Parliament Passes Amendments to Extend GST on Certain Activities

- The Central Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2023 and the Integrated Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2023 were passed by Parliament.
 - They amend the **Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) Act, 2017** and the Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) Act, 2017, respectively.
- As per the amendments, **CGST will be applicable on casinos, horse racing, gambling, and online money gaming. IGST will apply to online money gaming.**
 - Online money gaming refers to online games where players pay or deposit money (including virtual digital assets) with the expectation of winning money or money's worth.
 - This applies to any game, scheme, competition, or other activity irrespective of its outcome being based on skill, chance, or both.

- It includes online money games which may be allowed or banned under any law.

Cabinet approves PM-eBus Sewa for enhancement of city bus operations

- The Union Cabinet approved the [PM-eBus Sewa](#) to enhance city bus operations and promote sustainable mobility.
- The Scheme will promote e-mobility and support the development of charging infrastructure in cities.
- It has two segments:
 - Segment A will have 10,000 e-buses on a public-private partnership (PPP) model, and
 - Segment B includes green initiatives like multimodal interchange, and automated fare collection systems.
- The total budget outlay for the scheme is Rs 57,613 crore, of which Rs 20,000 crore will be provided by the central government.
- The scheme will run over 10 years and will target cities with over three lakh population. Cities lacking organised bus services will be prioritised.

Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023

- The [Mines and Minerals \(Development and Regulation\) Amendment Bill, 2023](#) was passed by Parliament.
 - The Bill amends the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957.
- **Reconnaissance to Include Sub-Surface Activities:** The Act defines reconnaissance operations as operations undertaken for preliminary prospecting and includes: (i) aerial surveys, (ii) geophysical, and (iii) geochemical surveys.
 - It also includes geological mapping. The Act prohibits pitting, trenching, drilling, and subsurface excavation as part of reconnaissance; the Bill allows these activities.
- **Exploration Licence for Specified Minerals:** The Act provides for the following types of concessions: (i) a reconnaissance permit for reconnaissance, (ii) a prospecting licence for prospecting, (iii) mining lease for undertaking mining, and (iv) a composite licence, for prospecting and mining.
 - The Bill introduces an exploration licence, which will authorise either reconnaissance or prospecting, or both activities for specified minerals.
 - The exploration licence will be issued for 29 minerals specified in the Seventh Schedule.
 - These include **gold, silver, copper, cobalt, nickel, lead, potash, and rock phosphate.**
 - These also include **six minerals classified as atomic minerals** under the Act: **(i) beryl and beryllium, (ii) lithium, (iii) niobium, (iv) titanium, (v) tantalum, and (vi) zirconium.**
 - The Bill declassifies them as atomic minerals. The Act reserves prospecting and mining of atomic minerals for government entities.
- **Auction of Certain Minerals by the Central Government:** Under the Act, auction of concessions is undertaken by the state governments, except in certain specified cases.
 - The Bill adds that **auction for composite licence and mining lease for specified critical and strategic minerals will be conducted by the central government.**
 - These minerals include lithium, cobalt, nickel, phosphate, potash, tin, phosphate, and potash. However, concessions will still be granted by the state government.

Aircraft Security Rules, 2023 Notified

- The Ministry of Civil Aviation notified the Aircraft Security Rules, 2023 under the Aircraft Act, 1934. The 2023 Rules replace the Aircraft Security Rules, 2011.
- **Key features of the Rules are as follows:**
 - **Powers of Commissioner Transferred to DG:** Under the 2023 Rules, the Director General of the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) will be responsible for:
 - developing and maintaining the national civil aviation security programme,
 - coordinating activities between departments, and
 - designating authorities at aerodromes to implement security controls and

- procedures.
- The Aircraft Act, 1934 was amended in 2020 which made the BCAS a statutory body and specified that the DG would head it. The 2023 Rules specify additional functions for the DG, such as arranging for security audits.
- **Use of Private Security Agencies:** Private security personnel, authorised by the Director General will be engaged to ensure security. The number and training standards of the private security personnel will be determined by the central government.
- **Penalties for Certain Violations:** Under the Rules, aircraft operators are required to carry out certain activities. Failure to undertake them will be considered an offence.
 - Such Activities Include:
 - (i) developing a security programme and
 - (ii) commencing aircraft operations with approval from the DG.
 - Additionally, carrying weapons, firearms, ammunition, or explosives to an airport or aircraft is also an offence. Offences are punishable with imprisonment of up to two years, or a fine of up to one crore rupees or both.
 - The Rules also specify amounts for compounding certain offences.
- **Measures Against Cyber Threats:** Entities such as aerodrome and aircraft operators, or a ground handling agency will be required to identify critical information, and develop security measures to detect unauthorised access, modification, and use of such information, and protect against access.

Cabinet Approves the Extension of Development Schemes for North-eastern Region

- The Union Cabinet approved the extension of two schemes: (i) [the North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme \(NESIDS\)](#), and (ii) the North Eastern Council Scheme (NECS).
- The guidelines of these two schemes have also been revised.
- **NESIDS:** This scheme aims to facilitate infrastructure development and connectivity in all northeastern states. It has been extended till 2025- 26 with a total outlay of Rs 8,140 crore. The extended scheme will be restructured into two components:
 - **NESIDS-Roads**, focusing on road, rail, and water connectivity to tourism and economic hubs,
 - **NESIDS-Other than Road Infrastructure**, covering projects related to water bodies, solid waste management, and power.
- **NECS:** NECS aims to fill gaps in the overall development of the north-eastern region. This scheme covers focus areas such as higher education, organic farming, health, and regional tourism. It has been extended till 2026 with a total outlay of Rs 3,200 crore.^{87,90}
- **Oversight of Schemes:** The Empowered InterMinisterial Committee at the central level will continue to monitor and evaluate projects under both schemes.
 - The State-level Empowered Committee will monitor projects under the NESIDS- Other than Road Infrastructure and NEC at the state level.

Standing Committee Submits Report Development of Trade in North Eastern Region

- The Standing Committee on Commerce submitted its report on 'Development of Trade and Industries in North Eastern Region (NER)'.
- **Key Observations and Recommendations of the Committee include:**
 - **Connectivity:** The NER has suffered from poor inter-state and intra-state transport connectivity. This has impeded everyday life and industrial development in the region. In order to improve connectivity, the Committee recommended:
 - Constructing new state highways and minor/district roads,
 - Widening the road network in border areas,
 - Increasing the frequency of freight trains,
 - Creating air cargo handling and cold storage facilities at airports, and
 - Completing feasibility studies of national waterways.
 - **Land for Industrial Use:** In most north eastern states, land cannot be transferred to non-tribals. There is also no database of land for industrial use.

- The Committee suggested the creation of a GIS linked industrial land bank. This can have features such as plot-level information of available industrial land and provisions for land reclassification.
- The Committee also suggested provisions for leasehold rights to be made transferable and mortgageable.
- **Trade with ASEAN:** The geographical advantage of NEER states needs to be utilised to strategically increase India's trade with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). For strengthening export linkages with ASEAN, the Committee recommended:
 - starting direct flights to ASEAN countries under the UDAN (International) Scheme,
 - setting up more land custom stations, and
 - opening consulate offices of ASEAN countries in the NEER.
- The government must identify and promote such industries in the NEER which could cater to markets in ASEAN and other neighbouring countries.

Internal Security

Parliament Passed the Inter-Services Organisations Bill, 2023

- Parliament passed the [Inter-services Organisations \(Command, Control and Discipline\) Bill, 2023](#).
 - It seeks to empower the Commander-in-Chief or Officer-in-Command of Inter-services Organisations to exercise disciplinary or administrative control over the service personnel under their command, irrespective of their service.
 - The Bill was referred to the Joint Parliamentary Committee, which approved the Bill.
- **Key Features of the Bill include:**
 - **Inter-services Organisation:** Existing Interservices Organisations will be deemed to have been constituted under the Bill.
 - These include the Andaman and Nicobar Command, the Defence Space Agency, and the National Defence Academy.
 - The central government may constitute an Inter-services Organisation which has personnel belonging to at least two of the three services: the army, the navy, and the air force.
 - These may be placed under the command of an Officer-in-Command. These organisations may also include a Joint Services Command, which may be placed under the command of a Commander-in-Chief.
 - **Control of Inter-services Organisations:** Presently, the Commander-in-Chief or Officer-in-Command of Inter-services Organisations are not empowered to exercise disciplinary or administrative powers over the personnel belonging to other services.
 - The Bill empowers the Commander-in-Chief or the Officer-in-Command of an Inter-services Organisation to exercise command and control over the personnel serving in or attached to it.
 - He would be responsible for maintaining discipline and ensuring discharge of duties by service personnel.
 - The superintendence of an Inter-services Organisation will be vested in the central government.
 - The government may also issue directions to such organisations on grounds of national security, general administration, or public interest.

Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023 Passed by Parliament

- The [Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023](#) was passed by Parliament. The Bill provides for the protection of personal data and the privacy of individuals.
- **Key Features Include:**
 - **Applicability:** The Bill applies to the processing of digital personal data within India where such data is: (i) collected online, or (ii) collected offline and is digitised. It will also apply to the processing of personal data outside India if it is for offering goods or services in India.
 - Personal data is defined as any data about an individual, who is identifiable by or in relation to such data.
 - Processing has been defined as wholly or partially automated operation or set of

operations performed on digital personal data. It includes collection, use, and sharing.

- **Rights and Duties of Data Principal:** An individual, whose data is being processed (data principal), will have the right to: (i) obtain information about processing, (ii) seek correction and erasure of personal data, (iii) nominate another person to exercise rights in the event of death or incapacity, and (iv) grievance redressal.
 - Data principals will have certain duties. They must not: (i) register a false or frivolous complaint, and (ii) furnish any false particulars or impersonate another person in specified cases.
 - Violation of duties will be punishable with a penalty of up to Rs 10,000.
- **Obligations of Data Fiduciaries:** The entity determining the purpose and means of processing (data fiduciary) must:
 - Make reasonable efforts to ensure the accuracy and completeness of data,
 - **Build reasonable security safeguards to prevent a data breach,**
 - Inform the **Data Protection Board of India** and affected persons in the event of a breach, and
 - **Erase personal data as soon as the purpose has been met** and retention is not necessary for legal purposes (storage limitation).
 - In case of government entities, **storage limitation and the right of the data principal to erasure will not apply.**

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