CENTER OF POLICY RESEARCH & GOVERNANCE

THIS WEEK IN POLICY

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THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

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UNION GOVERNMENT & NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

At the Centre

01

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

Prime Minister sets out national commitments in the 80th Independence Day address

In the address from the Red Fort on 15 August, the Prime Minister set out five commitments: AI skilling of one crore youth within a year; a free online coaching network for competitive examinations; a nationwide sports talent hunt for children aged five to 15, weighted towards Olympic disciplines India does not currently contest; a rebuilt Civil Defence network covering refineries, banking, data centres and factories; and 100 GW of nuclear capacity by 2047, with five new reactors to start this decade.

CPRG INSIGHT

Several of the government's larger programmes began as Independence Day announcements. Jan Dhan was announced from the Red Fort in 2014, and bank accounts were opened within months. Ayushman Bharat followed the 2018 address, and both the Jal Jeevan Mission and the Chief of Defence Staff post came out of 2019. Of those announced this year, four have an existing programme to work through. Only Civil Defence would have to be built from scratch

02

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING

Government decides to remove the 12-minute advertisement duration cap for television channels

The Government has decided to remove the cap on advertisement duration for television channels, introduced in 2006 under the Cable Television Networks Rules, 1994. The Ministry cited the growth from 62 channels in 2006 to over 900 now, full digitisation of cable, DTH, HITS and IPTV distribution, and the absence of any comparable limit on digital media. The change takes effect only when the amendment to the 1994 Rules is notified in the Gazette.

CPRG INSIGHT

The limit was set in 2006, when cable was analogue and carried few channels, so a viewer stuck with an ad-heavy channel had nowhere else to go. There are now over 900 channels, and every platform is digital, and streaming services never had such a limit at all. Channels can now decide their own ad load, with viewers switching away as the check. The cap stays in force until the Rules are amended in the Gazette.

03

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Defence Production Department notifies the sixth Positive Indigenisation List

The Department of Defence Production notified a list of 405 items with estimated business potential of Rs 3,070 crore, covering line replaceable units, sub-systems, sub-assemblies, spares, components and raw materials. It includes 389 items of defence public sector undertakings and 16 of the Indian Coast Guard, spanning Su-30MKI, Light Combat Aircraft, T-72 and T-90 platforms, warships, missile systems and defence electronics. Each item carries an indicative indigenisation timeline and is listed on the SRIJAN portal.

CPRG INSIGHT

The earlier five lists dealt mainly with platforms and major systems, totalling 5,012 items. This one covers spares, sub-assemblies and raw materials, where imports continue even after a platform is built in India, since an Indian-made aircraft may still run on foreign parts. No money changes hands under the list. Once the indicative timeline passes, the buyer can no longer import the item and must source it from Indian industry, which gives a developer an order to work towards.

04

MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS

Government approves an incentive scheme for domestic piped natural gas connections

Approved on 18 August and effective from 1 September 2026, the scheme allocates city gas distribution entities an additional 200 standard cubic metres of domestically produced APM gas for each incremental billed domestic PNG connection above a threshold set for each geographical area. It runs in two tranches over six months. The cheaper allocation displaces imported LNG these entities buy for their transport CNG segment. There are 1.74 crore domestic PNG connections at present.

CPRG INSIGHT

City gas companies have pipelines running past houses that have never begun drawing gas, and a connection earns the company nothing until the meter is switched on and billed. The scheme pays only against connections billed above a fixed baseline for each area, which makes it worth going back to existing layout. Payment is made in cheaper domestic gas rather than cash, so the company spends less on imported LNG. The Ministry estimates payback on a connection at three years instead of ten.

STATE POLICY & GOVERNANCE

Across the States

05

Delhi Master Plan 2047 unveiled by the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry

The Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs unveiled the Master Plan for Delhi 2047 on 20 August, succeeding MPD-2041, which was never notified. It provides for about 40 lakh affordable homes, including 18 lakh in transit-oriented development zones along metro corridors and 12 lakh through land pooling across nearly 200 sq km. The minimum area for group housing redevelopment falls from 40,000 sq m to 3,000 sq m; use premises are reduced from 133 to 45; and residential buildings in 1,511 unauthorised colonies are regularised as is where is.

CPRG INSIGHT

Delhi has been building under a plan drawn up for 2021 because the 2041 version was cleared by the DDA but never notified by the Centre. Group housing redevelopment has stalled for the same reason throughout: no ordinary colony could assemble 40,000 sq m of land, so ageing DDA blocks have stayed as they were. Lowering that bar puts rebuilding within reach of a single society. Regularising 1,511 colonies without layout plans removes the step that defeated earlier drives.

06

West Bengal launches Ayushman Bharat alongside a new state health insurance scheme

West Bengal launched Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY, becoming the last state to join the central scheme. About 1.5 crore families, nearly six crore people, are covered for cashless treatment up to Rs 5 lakh a year, with 1,930 hospitals empanelled in the state including 1,303 private facilities, and portability to empanelled hospitals elsewhere in India. The Mukhyamantri Swasthya Bima Yojana covers residents who are outside the central eligibility criteria. Swasthya Sathi continues in parallel for two to three months.

CPRG INSIGHT

Swasthya Sathi covered every household in the state but ran on its own network of empanelled hospitals, concentrated within West Bengal, so a patient treated in Vellore or Delhi paid out of pocket. Joining PM-JAY adds that portability. The state scheme is what prevents the switch from narrowing coverage, since PM-JAY operates on a defined eligibility list, whereas Swasthya Sathi was universal. Running all three together gives families time to move without a gap in cover.

07

Maharashtra notifies new Government Rules of Business replacing the 1975 rules

Maharashtra notified the Government Rules of Business, 2026 through the General Administration Department, replacing the 1975 rules. Rule 13(5) allows the Chief Minister to override a decision taken by any minister in the public interest, except in quasi-judicial cases, with reasons recorded in writing. Finance Department concurrence is required for unbudgeted expenditure and specified revenue concessions, and the Law Department must vet legislation and rules.

> ***CPRG INSIGHT***
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> In March 2023, the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court quashed a Chief Minister's intervention in a cooperative bank recruitment, holding that the Rules of Business gave him no power to review or modify a decision of the minister in charge. The 2026 rules expressly supply that power and condition it on written reasons, thereby creating a record that can be examined later. The quasi-judicial exclusion keeps adjudicatory decisions outside it.

08

Andhra Pradesh approves direct election of Mayors and municipal chairpersons

The Cabinet approved amendments to the state's municipal laws providing for Mayors and municipal chairpersons to be elected directly by voters rather than chosen by elected councillors. It also cleared a proposal to raise the number of Zilla Parishads from 13 to 28 to match the reorganised district map, along with revised Backward Classes reservations for rural and urban local bodies.

> ***CPRG INSIGHT***
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> Under indirect election, a Mayor holds office at the pleasure of the council, so urban leadership has turned on shifting numbers among councillors rather than on a fixed term. A direct mandate separates the two, leaving councillors with law-making and oversight while the Mayor answers to the electorate. Raising the number of Zilla Parishads from 13 to 28 also brings rural local-body jurisdictions back in line with the districts created in the 2022 reorganisation.

09 Assam approves a child protection policy and rules for private coaching institutes

The Cabinet approved the draft Assam Child Protection Policy, 2026, the draft Juvenile Justice Rules, and the Private Coaching Institutes Rules. Childcare institutions must appoint safeguarding officers, install CCTV, and adopt codes of conduct; a missing child report will require an immediate FIR with specialised follow-up. Coaching centres with 50 or more students must register annually with the district commissioner, meet fire and building safety norms and provide qualified counsellors.

CPRG INSIGHT

Private coaching has grown outside any licensing regime in most states, so a centre could operate above a shop with one exit and nobody had authority to inspect it. Annual registration with the district commissioner makes safety certification a condition of staying open rather than a one-time clearance. Naming a safeguarding officer fixes responsibility on a person before an incident, and the mandatory FIR removes discretion that has delayed missing child cases.

10 Telangana launches smart ration cards for 1.06 crore households

Telangana launched PVC smart ration cards covering about 1.06 crore households and 3.42 crore beneficiaries. Each card carries an encrypted QR code and nine security features, and gives access to household details and transaction history. Authentication can be done via QR code, biometrics, the T-Ration application, OTP, or M-PIN. Eligible members continue to receive 6 kg of fine rice free each month.

CPRG INSIGHT

A ration card under the National Food Security Act is a printed document and the ePoS machine at the shop authenticates the buyer by Aadhaar fingerprint. Transaction records exist, but accessing them requires the Mera Ration app, which assumes a smartphone and an Aadhaar login. Telangana puts the record on the card, readable at the counter. Authentication is the larger change. Accepting an OTP, M-PIN, or QR code means that a failed fingerprint no longer determines whether a household goes home with its ration.

11

Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu make delayed-service complaints and first appeals automatic

The Union Territory notified amendments to its Right to Public Services Rules. A missed service deadline will now automatically generate a complaint, without removing the option to complain in writing or online. Grievance officers must acknowledge a complaint within three working days and decide it within 30 days. Where no decision is recorded, a first appeal is treated as filed automatically. The government may separately enable automatic second appeals.

> ***CPRG INSIGHT***
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> Right to public services laws across states give a citizen a deadline and a right of appeal, but require the citizen to notice the breach and file. Most do not, which is why appeal numbers stay low even where delays are common. Generating the complaint and the first appeal from the system's own record shifts that work off the applicant. The second appeal still needs a further notification, so the chain is automatic only up to the first stage.

DIPLOMACY & EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

India & the World

12

Joint Ministerial Statement adopted at the 12th BRICS Environment Ministers' Meeting

The meeting in New Delhi, held under India's BRICS Chairship, adopted by consensus a Joint Ministerial Statement carrying four outcome documents: terms of reference for a network of BRICS institutions on sustainable lifestyles; principles for integrated landscape management to combat desertification; a common understanding on forest fire preparedness and response; and principles for community-based climate adaptation drawing on traditional knowledge. Four knowledge compendiums of the Environment Working Group were also released.

> ***CPRG INSIGHT***
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> Of the four documents, the institutional network has the firmest content, since terms of reference name the participating bodies and how they will work together; the other three set principles that bind no one. Forest fire cooperation is the practical addition, as member countries face large fire seasons at different points in the year and can share detection and response capacity accordingly. None of the texts carries funding, targets or a reporting obligation.

13

India and Japan sign a Memorandum of Arrangement on Maritime Security Cooperation

At the Defence Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi, Rajnath Singh and Shinjiro Koizumi signed a Memorandum of Arrangement on Maritime Security Cooperation. It frames information sharing on maritime domain awareness between the Indian Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, as well as search and rescue and disaster relief. The Ministers also agreed to establish a working group at Joint Secretary and Director-General level spanning operations, intelligence, equipment, technology and industry, and to conclude a ship repair arrangement.

CPRG INSIGHT

Defence ties between the two countries have advanced through exercises and separate arrangements, each negotiated on its own terms and reviewed at its own pace. The working group is the substantive change, placing operations, intelligence, equipment, and industry under one coordinating body so that delays in one strand are visible against the others. Reciprocal ship repair, once concluded, would let each navy service vessels in the other's yards, extending deployment range without any new basing.

14

Qatar–India postal remittance service becomes operational through Qatar Post outlets

PosTransfer powered by UPI went live in Qatar on 15 August, allowing customers at Qatar Post outlets to send money to UPI-enabled bank accounts in India by quoting the recipient's UPI ID. It was built by Qatar Post, India Post, the Universal Postal Union's Interconnection Platform and NPCI International Payments Limited. Transfers run from QAR 10 to QAR 4,000, capped at Rs 1,00,000 per transaction, at a flat charge of QAR 15. Recipients must first enable inward foreign remittances.

CPRG INSIGHT

Remittances from the Gulf have moved through exchange houses and bank correspondents, where much of the cost sits in the exchange rate spread rather than the stated fee, and credit takes a day or more. A flat QAR 15 charge makes the cost visible and falls proportionally as the amount rises, with the money reaching the account at once. Routing it through the UPU platform lets any member postal operator connect to UPI without building a separate bilateral link.

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