MONTHLY NEWSLETTER SERIES
SEPTEMBER, 2025 | VOL. XXVIII

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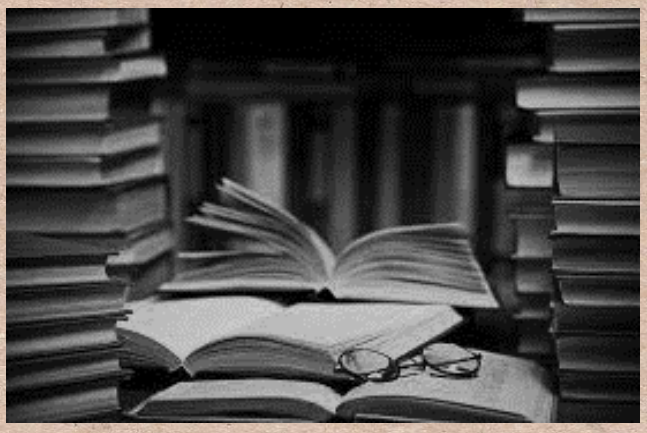

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INDEX

SEBI UPDATES

SEBI REVISES FRAMEWORK FOR CONVERSION OF PRIVATE LISTED INVIT INTO PUBLIC INVIT

Securities and Exchange Board of India ("**SEBI**"), *vide* its circular dated August 8, 2025, has revised certain norms for conversion of private listed Infrastructure Investment Trust ("**InvIT**") into public InvIT by introducing changes to the Master Circular for InvITs dated May 15, 2024 ("**InvIT Master Circular**"). The key changes include:

(a) Sponsor Contribution and lock-in requirements: Sponsors of private listed InvITs were required to contribute at least 15% of the units issued through the public issue or to the extent of 15% of the post-issue capital. Units offered towards minimum sponsor(s) contribution were locked-in for a period of 18 months from the date of listing of units allotted in such public issue. SEBI has removed the minimum sponsor contribution requirement at the time of conversion and eliminated the associated lock-in period.

(b) Lock-in for units held by the sponsor(s) in excess of minimum sponsor(s) contribution: Such units were subject to a lock-in period of 1 year from the date of listing of units allotted in the public issue. This restriction has been removed by SEBI.

(c) Procedure and disclosure norms: Previously, when a private InvIT converted into a public InvIT, the units issued during the conversion were treated as an initial offer through public issue and had to follow the detailed disclosure requirements under Chapter 2 of the InvIT Master Circular, which cater to first-time public investors. Under this circular, such conversion-related issuances are now subject to the disclosure norms applicable to follow-on public offers prescribed under SEBI (InvIT) Regulations, 2014, instead of being classified as initial public offerings.

To read the circular click here

RBI & IFSC UPDATES

IFSCA NOTIFIES THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR GLOBAL ACCESS IN IFSC

International Financial Services Centres Authority ("**IFSCA**"), *vide* its notification dated August 12, 2025, has notified the framework for global access ("**Regulatory Framework for Global Access**"), which aims to provide a regulatory framework for global access in the International Financial Services Centres ("**IFSC**") which applies to all the Global Access Providers ("**GAP**"), broker dealers and clients accessing global markets directly or indirectly through a GAP. The Regulatory Framework for Global Access supersedes the previously issued IFSCA circulars on 'Global Access to Broker Dealers' and 'Global Access - Clarifications'.

The key highlights of the Regulatory Framework for Global Access are as follows:

(a) Obligation to seek authorisation for GAPs: Any broker dealer or a subsidiary of a recognised stock exchange intending to operate as a GAP in the IFSC must first obtain formal authorisation from IFSCA (*as specified in Annexure 2 along with applicable fee as specified in Annexure 1 of the Regulatory Framework for Global Access*) before commencing operations. However, those already carrying out such activities as of August 12, 2025, must seek authorisation on or before October 31, 2025. A subsidiary of a recognised stock exchange authorised as a GAP will be considered a 'Broker Dealer' under the IFSCA (Capital Market Intermediaries) Regulations, 2025 ("**CMI Regulations**") and the relevant norms thereunder, and the IFSCA (Anti Money Laundering, Counter-Terrorist Financing and Know Your Customer) Guidelines, 2022 ("**AML-CFT-KYC Guidelines**") shall apply *mutatis mutandis* on such GAP. However, such a subsidiary is not required to obtain trading membership of a recognised stock exchange.

(b) Net worth requirements: GAP category entities are supposed to maintain a minimum net worth of USD 500,000 at all times (*applicable to GAPs providing global market access to clients*). For GAP accessing global markets only on proprietary basis, the minimum net worth requirement is USD 200,000 and for other broker dealers (*which is not a GAP*) and accessing global markets on a proprietary basis through a GAP, it is USD 100,000. This net worth is separate and in addition to the net worth requirements applicable for other permitted activities that these entities may engage in. The timeline for net worth compliance for GAP, which are already accessing global markets as on the date of the circular, is October 31, 2025.

(c) Fit and proper requirements and code of conduct: A GAP shall ensure that the entity and its directors, key managerial personnel and controlling shareholders are 'fit and proper' persons in accordance with the criteria specified under Regulation 8 of the CMI Regulations. Further, GAP or introducing broker engaged in global access shall comply with the code of conduct specified under the CMI Regulations.

(d) Clients: The clients who are allowed to access global markets under the Regulatory Framework for Global Access include persons resident in India and persons resident outside India, as permitted under the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 ("**FEMA**") and the rules,

regulations made thereunder. A GAP or an introducing broker may onboard clients directly or through a referral arrangement with an entity based in India, IFSC or a foreign jurisdiction, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Regulatory Framework for Global Access. Referral arrangements must be disclosed to clients with written agreements detailing fees, responsibilities and compliance obligations. If a GAP partners with an introducing broker in the IFSC for global access, either party may fulfil the compliance obligations, but their agreement must clearly outline all material details of their relationship and allocation of responsibilities for compliance with the Regulatory Framework for Global Access.

(e) Permitted products through global access: A GAP shall provide access to financial products listed on recognised stock exchanges in foreign jurisdictions. When providing access to persons resident in India, the GAP must have adequate systems in place to ensure that only those financial products permitted under FEMA and the rules, regulations made thereunder, are accessible. Additionally, a GAP that is a subsidiary of a recognised stock exchange may enter into agreements with brokers, platforms, distributors, investment advisors or asset management companies in foreign jurisdictions to offer access to capital market products and services. Further, a GAP shall not provide access to global markets for dealing in index derivatives, single stock derivatives, bond derivatives or USD-INR/ INR-USD derivatives that are available on recognised stock exchanges in the IFSC.

(f) Responsibilities of GAPs: A GAP is required to maintain adequate infrastructure, systems, manpower, and financial resources suitable to the size, scale and complexity of its global access operations. It must have agreement(s) with foreign broker(s) and ensure robust risk management and internal controls to safeguard client interests. GAPs must also ensure that client funds are routed through a bank account in the IFSC and put in place proper complaint handling mechanisms. Additionally, they must, *inter alia*, monitor trading activities, enter into required agreements and comply with any additional requirements in relation to global access specified by IFSCA, etc.

(g) KYC, AML and CFT norms: A GAP and an introducing broker onboarding clients are responsible for complying with the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, the Prevention of Money-laundering (Maintenance of Records) Rules, 2005, the AML-CFT-KYC Guidelines and other applicable circulars and guidelines.

(h) Periodic reporting: A GAP must submit quarterly reports to IFSCA as per the prescribed reporting norms and the broker dealers accessing global markets shall follow specific reporting and compliance requirements. GAPs and introducing brokers must conduct an annual audit of their global access activities through an independent professional, which is to be completed within 6 months of the financial year-end. Other reporting requirements as specified in the Regulatory Framework for Global Access shall be complied with.

(i) Miscellaneous: GAPs and introducing brokers must maintain a dedicated webpage on its website or that of its group entity with information on global access arrangements and operate separate bank accounts for global access and IFSC activities, held with an International Banking Unit in the IFSC. Further, the clients' funds shall be segregated from the proprietary trading fund. Furthermore, the GAP or introducing broker shall ensure that true, correct and adequate disclosures are made to the investors in writing. Additionally, they must

maintain all user, transaction and trade data within the IFSC and provide it to IFSCA upon request. Any kind of advertisement must be clear, fair, accurate, and not misleading or exaggerated in any form.

To read the Regulatory Framework for Global Access click here

RBI TRANSITIONS CHEQUE TRUNCATION SYSTEM TO "CONTINUOUS CLEARING AND SETTLEMENT ON REALISATION"

Reserve Bank of India ("**RBI**"), *vide* its notification dated August 13, 2025, has announced the transition of cheque truncation system ("**CTS**") from its current approach of batch processing to continuous clearing with settlement on realisation, to be implemented in 2 phases – with Phase 1 to be implemented on October 4, 2025 and Phase 2 on January 3, 2026.

The key modalities for continuous clearing with settlement on realisation in CTS are as follows:

(a) There shall be a single, continuous presentation session from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, during which banks will send scanned cheque images to the clearing house, which will in turn release the cheque images to drawee banks on a continuous basis with continuous delivery.

(b) Drawee banks have a continuous confirmation session from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm, during which the drawee bank shall generate either positive confirmation (*for honoured cheques*) or negative confirmation (*for dishonoured cheques*) in respect of every cheque presented to it. Processing by drawee banks is to be done continuously throughout the day and on a real time basis as soon as cheque images are received and information of positive/ negative confirmation shall be sent by drawee banks to the clearing house immediately after processing.

(c) Each cheque shall contain an "Item Expiry Time". In the event confirmation is not provided by the drawee bank within such time, the cheque will be considered approved.

(d) During phase 1 (*from October 4, 2025 to January 2, 2026*), drawee banks shall be required to confirm (*positively/ negatively*) cheques presented on them latest by end of confirmation session, else those will be deemed to have been approved and included for settlement. In phase 1, the item expiry time for all cheques shall be set as 7:00 pm, whereas in Phase 2 (*from January 3, 2026*), the item expiry time of cheques shall be changed to T+3 clear hours.

(e) Settlements, based only on positive or deemed approvals, will occur hourly from 11:00 am, with presenting banks required to credit customers within an hour from successful settlement, subject to usual safeguards.

To read the notification click here

RBI NOTIFIES KNOW YOUR CUSTOMER (KYC) AMENDMENT DIRECTIONS, 2025

RBI, *vide* its notification dated August 14, 2025, has notified the RBI (Know Your Customer (KYC)) (2nd Amendment) Directions, 2025 ("**KYC Amendment Directions**"), thereby amending the RBI (KYC) Directions, 2016 ("**KYC Directions**").

The key amendments to the KYC Directions are as follows:

(a) The 'Customer Acceptance Policy' shall not result in denial of banking/ financial facility to members of the general public, especially those, who are financially or socially disadvantaged, including the persons with disabilities. No application for onboarding or periodic updation of KYC shall be rejected without application of mind. Reason(s) of rejection shall be duly recorded by the officer concerned.

(b) For the purpose of verifying the identity of customers at the time of commencement of an account-based relationship, Regulated Entities ("**RE**"), shall at their option, rely on customer due diligence done by a third party, subject to the conditions mentioned in the KYC Directions. The KYC Amendment Directions now additionally provides that such verification shall also be done while carrying out occasional transaction of an amount equal to or exceeding INR 50,000, whether conducted as a single transaction or several transactions that appear to be connected, or any international money transfer operations.

(c) For the purpose of Customer Due Diligence (CDD) in case of individuals, biometric based e-KYC authentication, including Aadhaar Face Authentication can be done by bank official/ business correspondents/ business facilitators.

(d) The KYC Directions state that the Video based Customer Identification Process (V-CIP) (*an alternate method of customer identification with facial recognition and customer due diligence by an authorised official of the RE*) shall be operated only by officials of the RE specially trained for this purpose. The official should be capable to carry out liveness check and detect any other fraudulent manipulation or suspicious conduct of the customer and act upon it. The KYC Amendment Directions have inserted that the liveness check shall not result in exclusion of person with special needs.

To read the KYC Amendment Directions click here

RBI ISSUES NON-FUND BASED CREDIT FACILITIES DIRECTIONS, 2025

RBI, *vide* its notification dated August 6, 2025, has issued the RBI (Non-Fund Based Credit Facilities) Directions, 2025 ("**NFB Credit Directions**"), effective from April 1, 2026, or from an earlier date as determined by a RE in accordance with its internal policy ("**Effective Date**").

Extension of any new Non-Fund Based ("**NFB**") facility or renewal of existing NFB facility after the Effective Date shall be governed by the NFB Credit Directions, and all NFB facilities extended/ renewed till the Effective Date shall continue to be regulated by the existing instructions as applicable to REs. The NFB Credit Directions will repeal the instructions/ guidelines set out in Annex 2 thereof. However, actions already taken, directions issued, proceedings started, or penalties imposed under such repealed enactments will still be considered valid as long as they do not conflict with the NFB Credit Directions.

(a) Applicability: NFB Credit Directions apply to the following REs (*for all their NFB exposures such as guarantee, letter of credit, etc.*): (i) commercial banks (*including regional rural and local area banks*), (ii) urban, state and central co-operative banks, (iii) All India Financial Institutions (AIFIs), and (iv) non-banking financial companies, including housing finance companies in the middle layer and above, but only for issuing Partial Credit Enhancements ("**PCE**"). However, the NFB Credit Directions do not apply to derivative exposures of REs, except for the general conditions mentioned in Chapter II of the NFB Credit Directions.

(b) General conditions: RE's credit policy shall include detailed provisions for issuing NFB facilities, covering aspects like facility types, limits, credit appraisal, security, fraud prevention, monitoring and controls. Generally, NFB facilities can only be issued to customers with funded credit facility from the RE, except in specific cases such as derivative contracts, PCE facility, facilities backed by another RE's counter-guarantee, etc.

(c) Guarantees and co-acceptances: REs shall issue irrevocable, unconditional and incontrovertible guarantees with a clear invocation mechanism. REs shall set internal ceilings, particularly for unsecured guarantees, with specific caps. Electronic guarantees shall follow robust standard operating procedure to ensure system integration and control in line with Annex 1 of the NFB Credit Directions. Guarantees shall be honoured unless legally restrained. For overseas transactions, authorized dealer banks may issue guarantees as per FEMA guidelines, including for step-down foreign subsidiaries with proper collateral.

(d) PCE: Scheduled commercial banks (*excluding regional rural banks*), AIFIs, and non-banking financial companies are permitted to provide PCE to bonds issued by corporates/ special purpose vehicles for project funding, and non-deposit taking NBFCs with asset size of INR 1,000 crores or more. PCE can also be extended to bonds issued by Municipal Corporations, subject to RBI guidelines. The primary aim of allowing PCE is to improve the credit rating of such bonds, enabling issuers to raise funds from the bond market on more favourable terms. REs credit policies shall address provisions for issuing PCE, including risk assessment, quantum, pricing and limits. PCE shall be subordinated, irrevocable contingent line of credit provided at bond issuance to cover shortfalls in cash flows and enhance bond ratings. Aggregate PCE exposure of an RE shall not exceed 20% of its Tier 1 capital.

(e) Other regulatory aspects of PCE: REs shall ensure that the impact of PCE on bond ratings is clearly disclosed in the offer document, showing both pre and post-enhancement ratings, and PCE commitments honoured in full, regardless of the borrower's asset classification.

To read the NFB Credit Directions click here

CORPORATE UPDATES

MCA SUBSTITUTES WEB FORM RD-1

Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), *vide* its notification dated August 26, 2025, has introduced the Companies (Incorporation) Second Amendment Rules, 2025 (*which shall come into force on September 15, 2025*), thereby substituting the existing Web Form No. RD-1 under the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014 with a new Web Form No. RD-1.

This amendment impacts filing applications to the Regional Director under Section 2(41) (*change in financial year*), Section 16 (*rectification of name*), Section 18 (*conversion of public company into private company*), and Section 233(2) (*approval of scheme of merger or amalgamation*) of the Companies Act, 2013. The revised Web Form RD-1 introduces enhanced fields requiring detailed disclosures regarding creditors and debenture holders, and now integrates references to the advertisement dates under Form CAA-11 and Rule 41 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014 for better procedural tracking. The updated format also structures attachments more clearly for supporting documents such as board resolutions, special resolutions, and scheme approvals, aimed at streamlining the application process and ensuring greater procedural clarity.

To read the notification click here

ENVIRONMENTAL UPDATES

MOEFCC'S REVISED METHODOLOGY FOR CALCULATING GREEN CREDITS UNDER THE GREEN CREDIT RULES, 2023

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change ("**MoEFCC**"), *vide* its notification dated August 29, 2025, has notified revised methodology ("**New Methodology**") for calculating green credits in respect of tree plantation activity under the Green Credit Rules, 2023. This New Methodology supersedes the earlier notification dated February 22, 2024 ("**Old Methodology**"), except in respect of actions already taken or obligations incurred prior to the New Methodology.

Key provisions of the New Methodology are as follows:

(a) Eligibility: To qualify for green credits under the New Methodology:

(i) the applicant shall engage in restoration of degraded forest land parcels for a minimum of 5 years; and
(ii) achieve at least 40% canopy density on the restored land.

After fulfilling these two essential criteria, an applicant can submit a claim report to the administrator by paying a verification fee specified by the administrator in consultation with the Central Government.

(b) Verification and issuance of credits: Once the claim report is submitted, the administrator initiates an evaluation and verification process through designated third-party agencies. Based on the assessment of the forest restoration efforts and compliance with eligibility criteria, green credits are generated and issued to the applicant.

(c) Calculation methodology: The calculation of green credit is based on two measurable parameters:

(i) change in vegetation and canopy density;
(ii) number of surviving trees that are older than 5 years.

One green credit is awarded for each new tree that survives beyond 5 years, provided that the minimum canopy density of 40% has to be achieved.

(d) Transferability and limitations: Green credits generated through compensatory afforestation or tree plantation under the green credit programme activity are non-tradable and non-transferable, with an exception for transfers between a holding company and its subsidiary companies.

(e) Continuity for previous projects: For applicants who already made payments and whose project details were recorded under the Old Methodology, the implementation modalities will continue to be governed by the Old Methodology. However, the calculation and usage

of the green credits shall now be aligned with the criteria and processes established under the New Methodology.

(f) Permissible uses of green credit: Green credits generated can be exchanged once for the following purposes:

(i) to comply with compensatory afforestation requirements for diversion of forest land under the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 ("**Sanrakshan Adhiniyam**");
(ii) to fulfil corporate social responsibility obligations, based on costs incurred for forest restoration;
(iii) to meet the tree plantation requirements linked to legal or project approval conditions under applicable laws.

Once a green credit has been exchanged for any of the above purposes, it is considered extinguished to the extent used, and cannot be used again.

(g) ESG reporting and disclosures: Green credits generated may also be reported under environmental, social and governance leadership indicators, in accordance with extant legal provisions. The implementation procedures of the green credit programme shall be determined and updated by MoEFCC from time to time.

To read the New Methodology click here

MOEFCC NOTIFIES ENVIRONMENT AUDIT RULES, 2025

MoEFCC, *vide* its notification dated August 29, 2025, has notified the Environment Audit Rules, 2025 ("**Environment Audit Rules**"), thereby establishing a comprehensive framework for environmental audits of projects, activities or processes to ensure rigorous compliance with environmental laws and to strengthen accountability mechanisms among stakeholders.

The key provisions of the Environment Audit Rules are as follows:

(a) Roles and responsibilities of Registered Environment Auditors ("**REA**"): REA shall be responsible for conducting environmental audits, covering compliance with applicable environmental regulations, sample collection, analysing emissions and waste, assessing pollution control systems, and reporting of violations and non-compliance. REA shall prepare and submit timely environmental audit reports aligned with statutory requirements and they may compute environmental compensation, verify green credit registry activities, and carry out audits assigned by regulatory authorities under various environmental frameworks, including extended producer responsibility, eco-mark, environment impact assessment and coastal regulation zone. They shall also verify self-compliance reports and perform additional functions as prescribed by the central government.

(b) Powers of REA: REA shall have the authority to visit sites of assigned projects, collect samples, gather audit evidence, and access relevant information or documents from the project proponent to effectively carry out their duties.

(c) Roles and responsibilities of the Environment Audit Designated Agency ("**EADA**"): EADA shall be responsible for setting eligibility criteria and certification processes for certified environment auditors, including registration, renewal, suspension, and cancellation. It monitors auditor performance, issues necessary directions, and takes disciplinary actions when required. EADA also facilitates capacity building through training and workshops, establishes guidelines and standards for auditors, maintaining a publicly accessible online register of auditors, and publishes an annual report of its activities for submission to the Central Government.

(d) Mechanism for certification and registration: The certification of environment auditors will be conducted by the EADA through two modes:

(i) Recognition of prior learning (*based on experience/expertise*), which acknowledges prior experience and will be available for a limited period as specified by the Central Government; and
(ii) National certification examination, a formal examination to assess eligibility.

(e) Registration and validity of the Certified Environment Auditors ("**CEA**"): The registration of CEA shall follow a detailed procedure prescribed by the Central Government, considering factors such as technical capacity, qualifications, and track record. This registration shall be valid for 5 years and may be renewed upon meeting the prescribed criteria (*compliance with government-set standards*), unless revoked earlier as per relevant rules.

(f) Code of conduct of REA and CEA: The Central Government shall issue guidelines outlining the code of conduct for REA and CEA, emphasizing integrity, ethics, confidentiality and avoidance of conflicts of interest. The Environment Audit Rules specify grounds and procedures for suspension, cancellation or disciplinary action against auditors for misconduct or violation of rules.

(g) Conflict of interest: REA shall not have personal, financial or professional relationships with the project or its proponents, including prior involvement in the project's development or associated reports. They are prohibited from accepting gifts or benefits from auditees and shall not audit projects where they have a direct or indirect interest. Before undertaking any audit, auditors shall submit an undertaking confirming compliance with these conflict-of-interest provisions, in the prescribed format.

To read the Environment Audit Rules click here

VAN (SANRAKSHAN EVAM SAMVARDHAN) AMENDMENT RULES, 2025 – NOTIFIED

MoEFCC, *vide* its notification dated August 31, 2025, has notified the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Amendment Rules, 2025 ("**Amended Sanrakshan Rules**"), by amending the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Rules, 2023 ("**Sanrakshan Rules**").

Key highlights of the Amended Sanrakshan Rules are as follows:

(a) Clear definitions for Stage I (*in-principle*) and Stage-II (*final*) approvals: Stage-I approval means the preliminary approval from the Central Government, allowing forest land use for the given purpose subject to specific conditions under Sanrakshan Adhiniyam. Stage-II approval means the prior approval of the Central Government granted after a satisfactory compliance report for the Stage-I conditions is received from the State Government.

(b) Streamlined Approval Process: In-principle approval validity has been extended from 2 years to 5 years. The Central Government may revoke the Stage-I approval, if a compliance report is not submitted within this timeframe.

(c) Projects of strategic, defence or exceptional cases related to public interest or emergent nature may submit prior approval applications through offline mode.

(d) Compensatory Afforestation: State Governments have been permitted to create land banks of degraded forest lands for compensatory afforestation purposes. For renewal of mining leases, compensatory afforestation will apply if it was not provided earlier. However, no compensatory afforestation will be charged for underground mining or associated works that do not involve surface rights.

(e) Officers of the rank of Divisional Forest Officer or Deputy Conservator of Forests or above are authorized to initiate legal proceedings and file complaints for offenses committed under the Sanrakshan Adhiniyam.

To read the Amended Sanrakshan Rules click here

OTHER UPDATES

THE ONLINE GAMING ACT, 2025: REGULATION, RECOGNITION AND THE BLANKET BAN ON MONEY GAMING

Ministry of Law and Justice ("**MLJ**"), *vide* its notification dated August 22, 2025, has enacted the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025 ("**Online Gaming Act**") to promote and regulate the online gaming sector including e-sports, educational games and social gaming. The Online Gaming Act shall come into force on the date notified by the Central Government, and extends to the whole of India and also applies to online money gaming services offered within the territory or operated from outside the territory of India.

The salient features of the Online Gaming Act are as follows:

(a) Key definitions:

(i) Online game: any game, which is played on an electronic or a digital device and is managed and operated as a software through the internet or any other kind of technology facilitating electronic communication;

(ii) Online money game: an online game, irrespective of whether such game is based on skill, chance, or both, played by a user by paying fees, depositing money or other stakes in expectation of winning which entails monetary and other enrichment in return of money or other stakes; but shall not include any e-sports;

(iii) E-sports: Multiplayer competitive games played as part of multi-sport events, duly recognised and registered under the National Sports Governance Act 2025 ("**Sports Governance Act**"). It is skill-based, and may include registration/ participation fees and performance-based prize money, but does not include bets, wagers or any other stakes;

(iv) Online social game: Games for entertainment, recreation, or skill development, with no bets, wagers or monetary stakes. It may include participation fees which are not considered as stake or wager.

(b) Prohibition of Online Money Games:

The Online Gaming Act prohibits: (i) offering, aiding, abetment, inducing or engaging in an online money game and online money gaming service, (ii) making or causing to be made any advertisement (*in any media including electronic means of communication*) that directly or indirectly promotes or induces a person to play online money games, (iii) facilitation of financial transactions or authorisation of funds towards payment for any online money gaming service.

(c) Offences and penalties include:

(i) Offering online money gaming service in contravention of Section 5 (*prohibition of online money game and online money gaming service*) of the Online Gaming Act – imprisonment up to 3 years, or fine up to INR 1 crore, or both.

(ii) Making or causing to make advertisement in any media or in contravention of Section 6 (*prohibition of advertisement related to online money game*) of the Online Gaming Act – imprisonment up to 2 years, or fine up to INR 50 lakhs, or both.

(iii) Engaging in transaction or authorisation of funds in contravention of Section 7 (*prohibition of transfer of fund*) – imprisonment up to 3 years, or fine up to INR 1 crore, or both.

(d) Creation of an authority: The Central Government is empowered to constitute an authority consisting of a chairperson and members or to designate an existing authority/ agency to perform functions under the Online Gaming Act. The Government may vest the authority/ agency with powers to: (i) determine, on application or suo motu, whether an online game is an online money game, after necessary inquiry, (ii) recognise, categorise, and register online games as prescribed, and (iii) exercise such other powers and functions as may be prescribed.

(e) Recognition and promotion of e-sports: The Central Government shall take necessary steps to recognise and register e-sports as a legitimate competitive sport in India and promote its development by framing guidelines and standards for events, establishing training academies and research centres, introducing incentive schemes and awareness programmes, encouraging innovation and new enterprises in e-sport technology, coordinating with State Governments and sporting federations for policy integration, and undertaking any other measures required to promote the sector.

(f) Recognition and development of online social game: The Central Government shall take steps to recognise, categorise, and register online social games with the authority or agency, and facilitate their development and availability for recreational and educational purposes.

To read the Online Gaming Act click here

NATIONAL SPORTS GOVERNANCE ACT, 2025: INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN SPORTS

MLJ, *vide* its notification dated August 18, 2025, has enacted the Sports Governance Act, in order to provide a comprehensive framework for the development and promotion of sports, resolution of sports grievances and disputes, welfare measures for sportspersons, and establish ethical governance practices aligned with universal principles of good governance and fair play, including the Olympic Charter and the Paralympic Charter. The Sports Governance Act shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may notify in the official gazette and different provisions may come into force on different dates.

The features of the Sports Governance Act include:

(a) Establishment of national sports governing bodies including the National Olympic Committee, National Paralympic Committee and National and Regional Sports Federations, for each designated sport. The National Olympic Committee, National Paralympic Committee

and the National Sports Federation shall have international recognition from relevant international sports governing bodies.

(b) Constitution of a National Sports Board responsible for granting recognition to sports organisations and registration of affiliate units and to suspend/ cancel such registration, maintaining registers, conducting inquiries, issuing ethics guidelines, framing Safe Sports Policy, and taking measures for athletes' rights and welfare.

(c) Requires National Sports Bodies to have general bodies, executive committees consisting of members representing athletes and minimum women members, ethics committees, and dispute resolution committees.

(d) Provision for the National Sports Election Panel and protocols to ensure free and fair elections for National Sports Bodies.

(e) Creation of the National Sports Tribunal for speedy and cost-effective resolution of sports disputes, with the Supreme Court as the appellate authority.

(f) Protocols for the use of national insignia and names, including restrictions on unauthorised representation in national or state teams or events.

(g) Constitution of the National Sports Board Fund to manage administration expenses and grants received by the National Sports Board.

(h) Empowers the Central Government and the National Sports Board to make rules and regulations, respectively, with the aim of ensuring transparency, accountability, and alignment with international standards.

(i) Specific safeguards and provisions to protect the autonomy and integrity of sports governing bodies while promoting good governance and public interest.

To read the Sports Governance Act click here

INDIA UPDATES MARITIME FRAMEWORK – 4 CRITICAL LEGISLATIONS ENACTED

MLJ, *vide* its notifications dated August 8, 2025, August 9, 2025, August 18, 2025 and August 21, 2025, has enacted the Carriage of Goods by Sea Act, 2025 ("**Carriage of Goods Act**"), the Coastal Shipping Act, 2025 ("**Coastal Shipping Act**"), the Merchant Shipping Act, 2025 ("**Merchant Shipping Act**"), and the Indian Ports Act, 2025 ("**Ports Act**"), respectively, paving the way for a modern, efficient and self-reliant maritime ecosystem in line with the vision of Viksit Bharat and Atmanirbhar Bharat. The provisions of the Carriage of Goods Act have come into force. The Coastal Shipping Act, the Merchant Shipping Act and the Ports Act shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may, by notification in the official gazette, appoint.

The key highlights of these legislations are as follows:

(a) Carriage of Goods Act:

(i) repeals the century-old Indian Carriage of Goods by Sea Act, 1925, and applies to the carriage of goods by sea in ships carrying goods from any port in India to any other port, whether in or outside India. However, the repeal does not affect the provisions

laid down in Section 331 (*carriage of dangerous goods*) and Part X-A (*limitation of liability*) under the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958;

(ii) provides that there shall be no implied absolute undertaking in any contract for the carriage of goods by sea to provide a seaworthy ship;

(iii) the Schedule to the Carriage of Goods Act sets out the applicable rules relating to bills of lading;

(iv) every carrier is (*before and at the beginning of the voyage*) bound to exercise due diligence to make the ship seaworthy, properly man, equip, and supply the ship, and make the holds, refrigerating and cool chambers, and other parts in which goods are carried, fit and safe for their reception/ carriage/ preservation;

(v) neither the carrier nor the ship is responsible for loss or damage arising from act of god, act of war, neglect or default of the master, pilot or servants in the navigation or management of the ship, strikes or lock-outs, etc.;

(vi) any clause, covenant, or agreement in a contract of carriage relieving the carrier or the ship from liability for loss or damage in connection with goods arising from negligence, fault or failure in the duties and obligations provided in Article III of the Schedule or lessening such liability otherwise shall be null and void and of no effect.

(b) Coastal Shipping Act:

(i) amends the law relating to regulation of coastal shipping, promoting coastal trade and encourages domestic participation therein, to ensure that India is equipped with a coastal fleet, owned and operated by the citizens of India for its national security and commercial needs;

(ii) no vessel, other than an Indian vessel, is permitted to engage in coasting trade in the coastal waters, except vessels that have obtained a licence by the Director-General ("**DG**"). The DG may, by way of a written order, permit vessels registered under the Inland Vessels Act, 2021, to engage in coasting trade;

(iii) prior to issuance of a license for coasting trade, the DG would consider several factors such as whether the applicant has held license previously, citizenship of crew, build requirements of the vessel, cost efficiency of transport, and validity of certificate of insurance, amongst other things;

(iv) the Central Government shall publish a National Coastal and Inland Shipping Strategic Plan within a period of 2 years from the commencement of the Coastal Shipping Act, which shall be updated every 2 years;

(v) Chapter IV of the Coastal Shipping Act contains provisions on licensing of chartered vessels other than for costal trade;

(vi) the DG shall maintain a web portal of a database to be called the National Database of Coastal Shipping, which shall be made available in electronic form for access to the public and shall be updated every month;

(vii) through this legislation, Part XIV (*control of Indian ships and ships engaged in coasting trade*) of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, except Section 411A (*powers of the central government to protect interests of Indian shipping from undue foreign intervention*) stands repealed.

(c) Merchant Shipping Act:

(i) aimed at streamlining maritime governance and aligned with internationally compliant framework, this legislation replaces the outdated Merchant Shipping Act, 1958;

(ii) while it applies to any vessel registered in India or any vessel required to be so registered under the Merchant Shipping Act, it does not apply to Indian controlled tonnage vessels;

(iii) mandates Central Government to establish a National Shipping Board containing members of the Parliament and members representing the Central Government, ship owners, seafarers;

(iv) Central Government is empowered to appoint the DG of Maritime Administration (*for overseeing the implementation of the Merchant Shipping Act*) and such other officers including; the Additional, Deputy and Assistant DG, Surveyors, shipping master, seafarer's welfare officer, etc.;

(v) requires the establishment of an office of the Mercantile Marine Department at each of the ports of Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Kochi, Kandla, and such other ports or places in India, as may be considered necessary, for the administration of the Marchant Shipping Act;

(vi) Part III of the Merchant Shipping Act stipulates for registration of Indian vessels, and outlines detailed provisions regarding provisional, temporary, and foreign chartered vessel registration. An Indian vessel proceeding to sea without a valid certificate of registration shall be detained until such registration certificate is produced to the proper office;

(vii) maritime labour standards contained in the Maritime Labour Convention have been made applicable to all seafarers and registered vessels. Persons under the age of 16 years are restricted from being engaged or employed onboard any vessel. Seafarers are entitled to paid leave, repatriation, compensation for vessel loss, health protection, medical care, and social security;

(viii) mandates compliance with international conventions such as the Safety Convention, International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979, and the International Convention for Safe Containers, 1972;

(ix) vessels not holding valid safety and security certificates are barred from proceeding to sea;

(x) mandates compliance with the MARPOL Convention, Anti-Fouling Systems Convention, Ballast Water Management Convention, etc., towards the prevention and containment of pollution;

(xi) requires vessels to obtain pollution prevention certificates, without which it cannot proceed to sea;

(xii) establishes fault-based liability for collisions and maritime accidents, incorporating the Limitation of Liability for Maritime Claims Convention, and mandates insurance coverage for oil and bunker pollution;

(xiii) Part XIV prescribes offences and penalties for contravening or failing to comply with the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act.

(d) Ports Act:

(i) promotes integrated port development, ensures the optimum utilisation of India's coastline, takes measures for the conservation of ports, and provides for adjudicatory mechanisms for the redressal of port-related disputes;

(ii) applies to all existing and newly notified ports, navigable rivers and channels leading to such ports, all aircrafts (*making use of any part of the port, while on water, as they apply in relation to vessels*), and vessels within port limits, etc.;

(iii) mandates the establishment of Maritime State Development Council chaired by the Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways, for formulation of the national perspective plan, to facilitate growth of the port sector, etc.;

(iv) mandates every State to establish a State Maritime Board, which will be responsible for the effective administration, control, and management of ports within that State;

(v) requires the States to constitute a dispute resolution committee for adjudicating any dispute arising between ports (*other than major ports*), concessionaires, port users and port service providers, except where parties have agreed to arbitration or any other dispute resolution mechanism as part of the concession agreement, licence, permit, or authorisation. Such disputes are required to be resolved within 6 months;

(vi) ensures advanced security frameworks, and implements strict environmental safeguards aligned with key international frameworks.

To read the Carriage of Goods by Sea Act click here, to read the Coastal Shipping Act click here, to read the Merchant Shipping Act click here, & to read the Ports Act click here

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