RegTracker

Second Quarter 2026 (April-June)

We are delighted to present the Second Quarter (April-June 2026) Edition of RegTracker — CIRC's flagship quarterly update on regulatory and policy developments. RegTracker offers crisp insights into key legislative reforms, pending bills, and expert perspectives to help you stay ahead of the curve in a rapidly evolving regulatory landscape.

This quarter, major updates include reforms in electricity market coupling, renewable energy regulations, digital highway enforcement, maritime governance, satellite communications, AI governance, data protection, building standards, waste segregation, and cybersecurity. Several draft consultations also sought stakeholder feedback on emerging technologies and consumer protection. Together, these developments reflect India's continued focus on modernising regulatory frameworks, promoting digital governance, strengthening sustainability and infrastructure, enhancing consumer welfare, and creating a more innovation-friendly and resilient regulatory ecosystem.

About CUTS Institute for Regulation & Competition (CIRC)

CIRC is a leading not-for-profit research and capacity-building organisation dedicated to competition, regulation, and sustainable development. Established by CUTS International in 2008, it aspires to be a leading centre for law and economics in India and actively contributes to research, policy discourse, and capacity building at the intersection of competition law, regulation, public policy, and the digital economy. Through collaborations with global institutions such as UNCTAD, UNICEF, and ADB, CIRC advances evidence-based policymaking and knowledge creation.

In the digital age, emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and big data are transforming markets and posing new regulatory and competition challenges. CIRC addresses these developments through rigorous research, high-quality publications, policy engagement, and expert-led training programmes that strengthen institutional and professional capacity.

About CUTS International

Established in 1983, Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) is a registered, recognised, non-profit, non-partisan, non-government organisation (NGO) pursuing social justice and economic equity both within and across borders. Today, it operates out of programme centres in India located in Jaipur, Chittorgarh and Calcutta, India. The advocacy centre is located in New Delhi, India, and resource centres at Hanoi, Vietnam; Lusaka, Zambia; Nairobi, Kenya; Accra, Ghana; Geneva, Switzerland & Washington DC, USA, with a focus on research, advocacy and networking.

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INDEX

ENERGY

CERC issues draft Power Market (Second Amendment) Regulations, 2026 – introduces market coupling

CERC's draft amendment proposes to replace India's fragmented, exchange-wise price discovery with a single, centralised "market coupling" mechanism for the Day-Ahead and Real-Time electricity markets. Grid Controller of India Limited (Grid-India) is designated as the Market Coupling Operator, aggregating anonymised bids from all power exchanges to determine a uniform market clearing price, with provision for market splitting during transmission congestion. This is one of the most structural reforms to India's electricity market architecture since exchange-based trading began, and directly affects power exchanges (IEX, PXIL, HPX), generators, discoms and open-access consumers, who currently rely on exchange-specific price signals.

Regulators and market participants should track the phased roll-out dates and the forthcoming Power Market Coupling Procedure, which will govern bidding, congestion management and settlement mechanics.

Source: https://cercind.gov.in/2026/draft_reg/DN-PM-2ndAmd.pdf

TRANSPORT & LOGISTICS

National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Amendment Rules, 2026 notified – digital overload-fee and VAHAN-linked enforcement

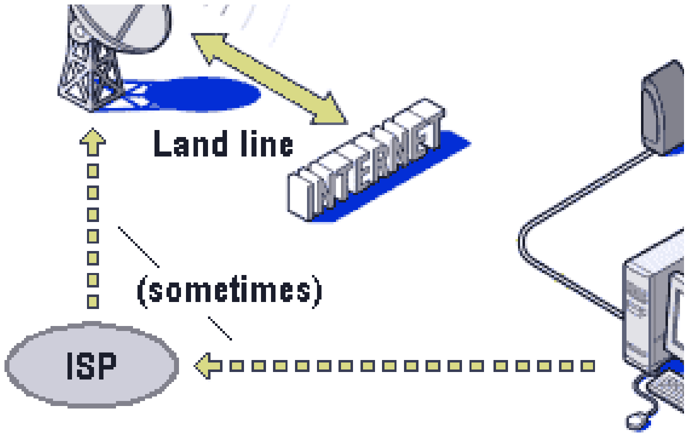
MoRTH's amendment to the National Highways Fee Rules, 2008 replaces manual overload detection with an automated regime: overloaded vehicles are identified through weight-measurement devices at toll plazas, reported to the National Vehicle Register (VAHAN), and charged a graduated overload fee collected via FASTag/UPI rather than cash. The amendment was notified on 14 April 2026 and, apart from poll-bound States under the Model Code of Conduct, took effect on 15 April 2026.

This is a significant enforcement-modernisation measure for freight and logistics operators, since overloading has long been a major source of highway pavement damage and road-safety risk; the digital, VAHAN-linked system removes discretion at toll plazas and creates a traceable compliance record. Trucking companies, logistics aggregators and NHAI concessionaires should recalibrate loading practices and compliance systems, as the rules significantly raise the cost and certainty of enforcement against overloaded commercial vehicles on national highways.

Source:https://mnrehttps://morth.gov.in/backend/documents/uploaded/1776235708_mYnzaE7AbN.pdf.gov.in/en/notice-category/current-notices/

TRAI issues Consultation Paper on Satellite Communication Network (SCN) Authorisation and Spectrum Assignment

TRAI's paper proposes a new authorisation category — Satellite Communication Network (SCN) — under which entities build and operate satellite networks and provide SCN-as-a-Service to downstream service providers, rather than serving end-users directly. The paper reiterates TRAI's earlier recommendation of a 4% Adjusted Gross Revenue spectrum charge (or a minimum of ₹3,500 per MHz, whichever is higher), proposes mandatory roll-out within 12 months of spectrum assignment, and requires a five-year roadmap to at least 20% indigenisation of ground-segment equipment. Comments were due 6 May 2026 and counter-comments 20 May 2026. This consultation is directly relevant as global satcom players — including Starlink and Amazon's Project Kuiper — move closer to launching Indian services, and follows sustained pushback from terrestrial telecom operators (via COAI) against what they view as a regulatory advantage for satellite entrants.



The eventual framework will shape competitive dynamics between satellite and terrestrial broadband providers and India's rural/remote connectivity strategy.

Source:
https://www.trai.gov.in/sites/default/files/2026-04/CP_08042026.pdf

INFRASTRUCTURE

BIS notifies National Building Construction Standards (NBCS) 2026, replacing the National Building Code 2016

BIS has replaced the National Building Code of India 2016 with the National Building Construction Standards (NBCS) 2026 (SP 7: 2026), marking a shift from a prescriptive to a performance-oriented regulatory model. Rather than mandating fixed wall build-ups or insulation thicknesses, NBCS 2026 sets outcome targets — such as a required fire-resistance rating or thermal U-value — that designers can meet through any BIS-listed or internationally recognised tested system.

The mandatory-provisions threshold for high-rise fire-safety requirements has also been raised from 15 metres to 24 metres of building height, with implementation responsibility explicitly assigned to State governments and municipal authorities, reflecting fire safety's status as a constitutional state subject. This is a foundational reform for architects, structural and fire consultants, builders, project management consultants and material specifiers nationwide, since it changes both the compliance methodology and the height threshold triggering mandatory fire-safety packages — with the practical effect varying by how quickly individual States and municipalities align their building bye-laws to the new performance-based framework.

Source:
Bureau of Indian Standards — Official Website

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Bio-Medical Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2026 notified — digital reporting and treatment-facility obligations strengthened

MoEFCC has notified the Bio-Medical Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2026 (G.S.R. 293(E)), amending the Bio-Medical Waste Management Rules, 2016 (as last revised in 2019). The amendment tightens digital-reporting obligations for healthcare facilities — including mandatory upload of annual returns to a national portal by the existing 30 June deadline — and strengthens requirements for common bio-medical waste treatment facility (CBWTF) operators, including backup arrangements (via MoUs with alternate facilities) to ensure treatment continuity during equipment failure or localised emergencies.

This matters directly to India's healthcare sector: every bedded and non-bedded healthcare facility, from large hospitals to small clinics and diagnostic labs, must comply with the four-colour segregation system and the strengthened authorisation and reporting regime, with penalties ranging from monetary fines to imprisonment for serious or repeat violations under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

Source: https://tinyurl.com/4sbre5e8

INFRASTRUCTURE

NMC removes the 150-seat MBBS cap and population-ratio criterion; introduces a 10 km college-hospital distance norm

NMC's amendment (F. No. CDN-19012/2/2025-Coordination-NMC) to the Establishment of New Medical Institutions, Assessment & Rating Regulations, 2023 and the Graduate Medical Education Regulations, 2023 removes the earlier 150-seat cap per medical college as well as the population-to-medical-seat ratio criterion that previously constrained where new colleges or additional seats could be approved. In their place, the amendment introduces a 10-kilometre maximum distance requirement between a medical college and its affiliated teaching hospital, tightening clinical-training-access norms even as capacity constraints are eased. This is a significant capacity-expansion reform for India's medical education ecosystem: State governments, private trusts and existing medical colleges seeking to increase MBBS seats will benefit from the relaxed seat cap, while the new distance norm will require some institutions to reassess hospital-affiliation arrangements. Given the persistent shortfall of MBBS seats relative to NEET-UG applicant numbers, easing the seat-cap and ratio constraints is likely to accelerate capacity addition though implementation will depend on how State Assessment & Rating inspections apply the new distance criterion.

Source:
https://medicaldialogues.in/pdf_upload/2026/04/28/gazette-notificationamendment27426-344265.pdf

MNRE clarifies/amends ALMM Order for RE power projects (other than rooftop solar) ahead of June 2026 cell mandate

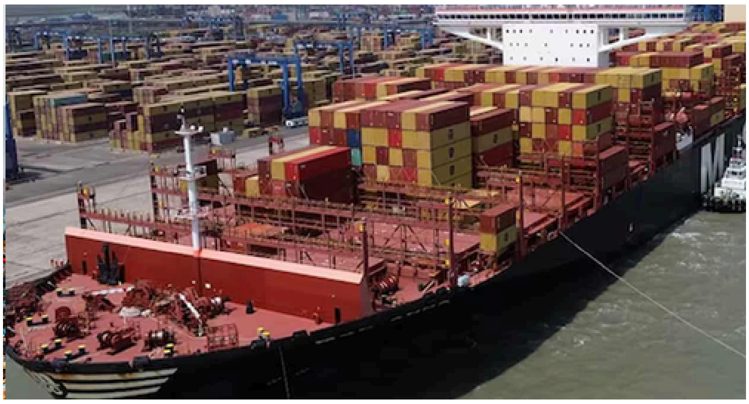
With the mandatory use of domestically-listed solar PV cells (Approved List of Cell Manufacturers, ALCM) set to kick in from 1 June 2026, MNRE's 25 May 2026 clarification/amendment to the Approved List of Models and Manufacturers (ALMM) Order addresses transition issues for non-rooftop renewable energy projects. It refines exemptions for projects bid out before the ALCM list was published and reconciles Domestic Content Requirement obligations under PM-KUSUM and similar schemes with the new cell-level mandate. The notification matters to renewable energy developers, EPC contractors and Renewable Energy Implementing Agencies (SECI, NTPC, NHPC, state agencies) bidding for utility-scale solar capacity, since ambiguity in ALMM/ALCM applicability directly affects project costing, bid compliance and financial closure timelines.

The move reflects the government's dual objective of protecting domestic cell manufacturing capacity while avoiding disruption to the near-term project pipeline as India scales up solar capacity toward its 500 GW non-fossil target.

Source: https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s3716e1b8c6cd17b771da77391355749f3/uploads/2026/05/202605251665091021.pdf

TRANSPORT & LOGISTICS

National Shipping Board Rules, 2026 notified under the Merchant Shipping Act, 2025, superseding the 1960 Rules

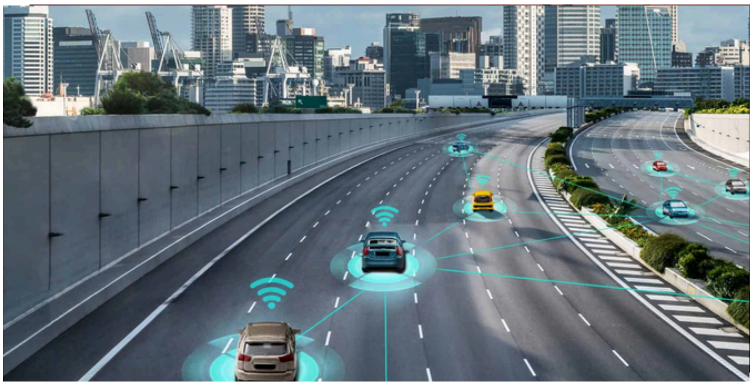


Following the Merchant Shipping Act, 2025 coming into force on 15 March 2026 (replacing the 1958 Act), the government has notified the National Shipping Board Rules, 2026, superseding the six-decade-old National Shipping Board Rules, 1960. The rules reconstitute the National Shipping Board — the statutory advisory body on shipping policy comprising Members of Parliament and government-nominated experts — for renewable two-year terms, with continuity provisions if a new Board is not timely constituted.

This is a foundational institutional step in operationalising the broader overhaul of India's maritime legal architecture (alongside the new Indian Ports Act, 2025 and Coastal Shipping Act, 2025), whose implementing rules are still being finalised. Shipowners, seafarer welfare bodies, port authorities and maritime industry associations should note that the reconstituted Board will shape forthcoming policy recommendations on fleet expansion, seafarer welfare and coastal shipping — an area of renewed government focus under the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047.

Source: https://dgma.gov.in/download/1781181176_6a2aaaf8e85fe_national-shipping-board-rules-2026-notified-on-200526.pdf

TRAI releases Consultation Paper on Regulatory Framework for Vehicle-to-Everything (V2X) Communication



Acting on a DoT reference, TRAI has opened consultation on a regulatory framework for Vehicle-to-Everything (V2X) communication — the wireless technology enabling vehicles to exchange real-time data with other vehicles, road infrastructure, pedestrians and networks. The paper identifies Cellular-V2X (C-V2X), which leverages existing 4G/5G networks, as the preferred technology over Dedicated Short-Range Communication, and seeks stakeholder views on Spectrum allocation, standardisation, liability and data-ownership questions.

Comments were invited by 28 May 2026 and counter-comments by 11 June 2026, placing the entire first round of consultation within this quarter. This is an early but important building block for India's Intelligent Transport Systems and future autonomous-vehicle ecosystem: automakers, telecom operators, road-safety authorities and technology providers all have a stake in how V2X spectrum and liability frameworks are eventually designed. Given India's road-fatality burden, a well-designed V2X framework has significant potential road-safety upside, making this a consultation of interest well beyond the telecom sector alone.

Source: https://www.trai.gov.in/sites/default/files/2026-04/CP_30042026.pdf

WATER

Ministry of Jal Shakti rolls out State Water Reforms Framework (SWRF), a 75-indicator national benchmarking system for State water governance

The Ministry of Jal Shakti has introduced the State Water Reforms Framework (SWRF), a national benchmarking architecture built around 75 indicators across 27 sub-dimensions, using an equal-weight binary scoring system with a composite score of 100. The framework assesses States and UTs on groundwater regulation and enforcement of legal extraction ceilings, digital water-data integration through State Water Informatics Centres. Crucially, SWRF links State performance to central fiscal devolution under flagship schemes such as Jal Jeevan Mission and Namami Gange, with third-party validation required to prevent unverified paper compliance. This matters to State water resource departments, groundwater-dependent industries, and municipal bodies, since it converts previously voluntary water-governance best practices into a scored, funding-linked compliance framework. Given that a significant share of India's agricultural aquifers face over-extraction, embedding groundwater accountability directly into inter-governmental fiscal transfers is a structurally significant lever — one that moves water governance from advisory guidance toward measurable, incentive-backed reform.

Source:https://www.jalshakti-dowr.gov.in/static/uploads/2026/05/85e5c5f01ce444a3bc7947d64b05c14d.pdf

CERC issues draft Connectivity and General Network Access (Fourth Amendment) Regulations, 2026 for stakeholder comment

CERC has floated a fourth amendment to its 2022 Connectivity and General Network Access (GNA) Regulations, which govern how generators and large consumers obtain access to the inter-State transmission system (ISTS). While the specific proposals are under consultation (comments invited until 26 June 2026), the amendment cycle reflects continuing recalibration of ISTS access rules to keep pace with the rapid scale-up of renewable and hybrid generation capacity seeking grid connectivity. Transmission licensees, renewable energy developers, and inter-State open-access consumers are the principal stakeholders, as GNA rules determine congestion allocation, banking arrangements and compensation for delayed commissioning. Given the volume of renewable capacity currently queued for ISTS connectivity, any

recalibration of GNA timelines or compensation mechanisms has a material bearing on project financing and commissioning schedules — making this a development regulators, discoms and developers should track closely through the remainder of the consultation window.

Source:
https://cercind.gov.in/2026/draft_reg/DN-GNA-4Amnd-Regulations.pdf

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

CERT-In issues CISG-2026-03 guidelines on AI-Accelerated Vulnerability Protection for OEMs

CERT-In released new security guidelines in 2026; notably, on 10 June 2026 it issued CISG-2026-03 titled “AI-Accelerated Vulnerability Protection and Response Requirements for OEMs and Technology Providers”. This directive mandates that device manufacturers and software developers use AI-driven methods to detect and mitigate vulnerabilities before products reach customers.

The regulation is significant as it imposes a proactive security framework for Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and IoT providers.

For tech companies, this means updating their development and testing processes to include automated vulnerability scanning and automated patch management. Consumers and enterprises stand to benefit from more secure products (e.g. smartphones, routers) that adhere to these stricter standards. For policymakers, it represents a move towards “secure by design” principles in India’s cybersecurity ecosystem. Overall, the guideline reflects the growing importance of AI in cybersecurity and seeks to ensure Indian tech products meet high security standards.

Source:
https://www.cert-in.org.in/s2cMainServlet?pageid=GUIDLNVIEW01

CERC issues draft Deviation Settlement Mechanism (Third Amendment) Regulations, 2026 for stakeholder comment

CERC has floated a third amendment to its Deviation Settlement Mechanism (DSM) and Related Matters Regulations, which govern how generators and distribution licensees are financially settled for real-time deviations between scheduled and actual power injection/drawal.

The consultation window closed on 26 June 2026, with a public hearing held on 30 June 2026 — placing the substantive conclusion of this consultation cycle squarely within the month. DSM regulations are central to grid discipline: they price the cost of imbalance in real time, incentivising accurate scheduling and penalising over- or under-injection, which becomes increasingly important as variable renewable generation (solar, wind) forms a larger share of the grid mix. Generators, discoms, the Grid Controller of India (Grid-India), and load despatch centres are the principal stakeholders. Given the rapid scale-up of intermittent renewable capacity, any recalibration of deviation pricing bands or settlement periods directly affects the commercial viability of renewable projects and the financial exposure of discoms managing variable supply — making the outcome of this June consultation cycle one to watch closely in the coming quarter.

Source:
https://cercind.gov.in/2026/draft_reg/DN-DSM-3rd_Amend.pdf

ENERGY

Ministry of Coal Notifies Coal Exchange Rules, 2026 and Releases Draft Penalty Framework for Coal Mines

The Ministry of Coal notified the Coal Exchange Rules, 2026, establishing India's first comprehensive regulatory framework for coal trading through a formal exchange mechanism. The Rules aim to improve transparency, efficiency, and price discovery by enabling standardized trading of coal and reducing information asymmetries in the market.

Alongside the Rules, the Ministry released a Draft Penalty Framework for Coal Mines, proposing a structured mechanism for addressing non-compliance with production obligations, operational standards, and regulatory requirements. Together, these initiatives represent an important step towards modernising India's coal market by promoting competitive trading practices while strengthening regulatory oversight. Coal producers, captive mine operators, power generators, industrial consumers, traders, and exchange platforms will need to align their operations with the new regulatory framework.

Source:
https://coal.gov.in/sites/default/files/2026-06/09-06-2026a-wn.pdf