NEWSLETTER *Weekly*

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MINISTRY OF FINANCE

1. **Ease of doing business - mechanism for lock-in of pledged shares under SEBI (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2018.**

   The Securities and Exchange Board of India issued a circular dated April 8, 2026 to streamline the lock-in mechanism for pledged shares under the SEBI (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2018. The amendment allows specified securities, where lock-in cannot be created in the traditional manner, to be marked as "non-transferable" by depositories during the lock-in period. To operationalize this framework, depositories have prescribed requirements such as incorporating relevant provisions in the Articles of Association, issuing necessary intimations to lenders or pledgees, and ensuring appropriate disclosures in offer documents. Depositories have also updated their systems and processes to facilitate implementation. The circular mandates that stock exchanges, depositories, merchant bankers, and issuers ensure compliance with this mechanism. It has been issued under statutory powers to protect investor interests and promote efficient regulation and development of the securities market.

   For more information, you can access the SEBI circular here:
   https://www.sebi.gov.in/legal/circulars/apr-2026/ease-of-doing-business-mechanism-for-lock-in-of-pledged-shares-under-sebi-issue-of-capital-and-disclosure-requirements-regulations-2018_100826.html

2. **Relaxation from the applicability of SEBI Master Circular for compliance with the provisions of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 on non-compliance with the Minimum Public Shareholding (MPS) requirements.**

   The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), through its circular dated April 7, 2026, granted a one-time relaxation from penal provisions under the SEBI Master Circular dated July 11, 2023, relating to non-compliance with Minimum Public Shareholding (MPS) requirements. This decision was taken in response to representations from industry bodies citing difficulties in achieving MPS compliance due to capital market volatility arising from geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. SEBI directed recognised stock exchanges and depositories not to initiate or continue penal actions, such as fines or freezing of promoter shareholding, for listed entities whose compliance deadlines fall between April 1, 2026 and September 30, 2026. Additionally, any penal actions already initiated during this period are to be withdrawn. The circular is effective immediately, and stock exchanges are instructed to inform listed entities, update relevant regulations if necessary, and ensure dissemination. The circular is issued under Sections 11 and 11A of the SEBI Act, 1992.

   For more information, you can access the SEBI circular here:
   https://www.sebi.gov.in/legal/circulars/apr-2026/relaxation-from-the-applicability-of-sebi-master-circular-for-compliance-with-the-provisions-of-the-sebi-listing-obligations-and-disclosure-requirements-regulations-2015-on-non-compliance-with-the-_100787.html

3. **One-time relaxation with respect to validity of SEBI Observations.**

   The Securities and Exchange Board of India issued a circular granting a one-time relaxation regarding the validity of its observation letters under the SEBI (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2018. Normally, public issues must be opened within 12 or 18 months from the date of such observations. However, due to difficulties faced by issuers in accessing capital markets amid ongoing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and subdued investor participation, several issuers have deferred or withdrawn issuance plans, risking expiry of observation letters and duplication of regulatory processes. Considering these challenges, SEBI has extended the validity of observation letters expiring between April 1, 2026 and September 30, 2026, up to September 30, 2026. This extension is subject to submission of an undertaking by the Lead Manager confirming compliance with Schedule XVI while filing updated offer documents. The circular is effective immediately.

For more information, you can access the SEBI circular here:
https://www.sebi.gov.in/legal/circulars/apr-2026/one-time-relaxation-with-respect-to-validity-of-sebi-observations_100786.html

MINISTRY OF FINANCE

1. **'bob SAMVAD', an AI-powered multilingual conversational platform of Bank of Baroda to transform in-branch customer interactions launched in Mumbai.**

   Bank of Baroda (Bank) unveiled its bob SAMVAD, which was formally launched by Shri M. Nagaraju, Secretary, Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance in Mumbai on March 28th 2026. The platform is an industry-first AI-powered multilingual conversational platform aimed at transforming customer interactions at its branches. Designed to eliminate language barriers, the platform enables customers and branch staff to communicate seamlessly with each other in their preferred language. Shri M. Nagaraju, Secretary, Department of Financial Services, congratulated Bank of Baroda on the launch. Secretary, DFS commended Bank of Baroda for the innovative use of technology to bridge the language barrier in banking and enhance customer experience. Sh. Nagaraju said that bob SAMVAD will promote more inclusive & accessible service delivery and help improve customer service at branches. Th initiative has set a new benchmark for the sector, he added. Shri Nagaraju also visited bob Forest, another green initiative by the Bank after bob Earth, Green Deposits and Green Bonds, reflecting the Bank's commitment towards sustainability and overall ESG goals. bob Forest is a 6,000 sq. ft. green oasis built at Bank of Baroda's BKC office in Mumbai that promotes biodiversity and cleaner air. Commenting on the launch, Dr. Debadatta Chand, Managing Director & CEO, Bank of Baroda said, "With bob SAMVAD, Bank of Baroda is leveraging AI to make our branches more inclusive and customer-friendly by enabling seamless real-time conversations in local languages. This initiative reflects our commitment to operational excellence by combining technology with customer-centric design." Developed entirely in-house, bob SAMVAD leverages AI-driven speech and language technologies to enable real-time, low-latency, two-way communication across 22 languages, ensuring contextual accuracy and natural fluency, while embracing India's linguistic diversity. At the service counter, the application enables seamless communication between customers and branch staff, even if they speak different languages. Customers can speak or input their queries in their preferred language, which are instantly translated into the staff member's chosen language, and vice versa, facilitating smooth, real-time conversations, ensuring accurate understanding and efficient service delivery. The interaction is displayed as text on the screen, with an optional voice mode that converts text into speech, for customers who prefer audio over reading - making it fully accessible for everyone. In the first phase, bob SAMVAD will be rolled out across 250 branches in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. This will be followed by a phased, large-scale deployment across the Bank's branch network.

   For more information, you can access the GOI press release here:
   https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2249636&reg=3&lang=1

2. **Financial Intelligence Unit-India and Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre sign landmark MOU to combat cyber fraud and financial crimes.**

   In a significant step towards strengthening India's fight against cyber-frauds and financial crimes, the Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND) and the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) signed a comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance information sharing and coordination. The MoU was signed by Shri Amit Mohan Govil, Director, FIU-IND, and Shri Rajesh Kumar, Chief

Executive Officer, the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), marking a new era of collaborative intelligence sharing between the two agencies at the forefront of India's fight against cyber fraud and financial crimes. The collaboration comes at a juncture where India's digital payment ecosystem has undergone a tremendous transformation requiring guardrails that safeguard citizens from cybercrime and fraud. The MoU shall assist both agencies in developing operational information and support investigative agencies to prevent financial crimes, protect digital transactions and undertake asset recovery. The MoU aims to enable both agencies to establish robust feedback mechanisms for enhancing fraud detection protocols at the national level, while also facilitating the development and dissemination of guidelines and red flag indicators to financial institutions to strengthen cyber fraud prevention efforts. This is a milestone in adopting a "whole of Government" in approach toward the fight against cyber-crime.

FIU-IND is the central national agency responsible for receiving, processing, analysing, and disseminating information relating to suspect financial transactions and coordinating efforts against money laundering and financing of terrorism.

I4C is an attached office of MHA responsible for providing a framework and ecosystem for Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) for dealing with Cyber Crime in coordinated and comprehensive manner. I4C has developed various platforms such as National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP), Cyber-Police, Suspect Registry etc. which are secure platforms for real time intelligence sharing and coordination among various stakeholders including Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), Banks and Financial Institutions to combat cybercrimes including online financial crimes by enabling proactive action against the misuse of telecom, banking and other related resources.

For more information, you can access the GOI press release here:
https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2250459&reg=3&lang=1

3. **Shri Anand Kumar Pal assumes charge as Chief Adviser (Cost) in the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, w.e.f. 10th April, 2026.**

Consequent upon the approval of the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC), Shri Anand Kumar Pal, Indian Cost Accounts Service (ICoAS), has assumed the charge of Chief Adviser (Cost) in the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, on 10th April, 2026. A 1997-batch officer of the ICoAS, Shri Anand Kumar Pal was serving as Additional Chief Adviser (Cost) in the Ministry of Defence.

He is a qualified Cost Accountant and holds a bachelor's degree in Commerce and a bachelor's degree in Law. He has vast experience of over 30 years in the fields of financial analysis, public policy and its implementation, WTO trade policy, and costing and pricing methodologies in both strategic and non-strategic sectors. He has previously worked in the Department of Economic Affairs, Department of Public Enterprises, Fertilizer Industries Coordination Committee (FICC), Directorate General of Trade Remedies, Ministry of Defence, National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA), and the Department of Revenue. During his tenure in the Ministry of Defence, he played a significant role in achieving substantial cost savings in the procurement of defence armaments, equipment, and platforms.

For more information, you can access the GOI press release here:
https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2250919&reg=3&lang=1

INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY BOARD OF INDIA

1. **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India panel recommends project-wise insolvency resolution for real estate cases.**

IBBI Committee Recommends Project-Wise CIRP for Real Estate Insolvencies. The Committee on Framing Guidelines for Insolvency Proceedings in the Real Estate Sector submitted its report to IBBI Chairperson Ravi Mital on April 7, 2026, and it was released on April 8. The key proposal shifts India's insolvency framework from an entity-centric, recovery-focused model to a project-centric, completion-driven approach tailored for real estate.

Core Recommendations

i. Project-Wise CIRP Admission: Treat each real estate project as an independent economic unit for insolvency admission and resolution. CIRP should ordinarily apply only to the defaulting project, shielding solvent or unrelated projects of the same developer.

ii. Inter-Agency Coordination: Strengthen links between the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 (RERA), Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), and Department of Financial Services (DFS).

iii. Enabling Measures:

- MCA to enable project-wise CIRP admissions.

- DFS and RERA to develop frameworks for project-specific lending, separate current deposit (CD) accounts, and monitoring.

This reform aims to prioritize project completion, protect homebuyers, and minimize disruption to viable assets amid ongoing real estate distress cases under IBC. Stakeholders await government action on implementation.

For more information, you can access the article here:
https://www.hindustantimes.com/real-estate/stressed-real-estate-projects-insolvency-and-bankruptcy-board-of-india-panel-calls-for-project-wise-insolvency-approach-101775671373535.html

2. Insolvency And Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Act, 2026

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Act, 2026 (enacted April 2026) implements a series of extensive reforms to India's corporate insolvency regime. Building on the IBC 2016 framework and prior amendments, the new Act introduces creditor-driven mechanisms (notably a Creditor-Initiated Insolvency Resolution Process, CIIRP), strengthens creditor and Committee of Creditors (CoC) powers, tightens timelines, and broadens scope (e.g. for group and cross-border insolvency). Key changes include mandatory admission of petitions when default is proved, expansion of the “look-back” period for avoidance transactions to two years, removal of fast-track insolvency for small firms, and penalties for frivolous cases. These reforms aim to accelerate resolution, maximize asset value and enhance transparency. The Act consolidates stakeholder input (via a Select Committee report) and global best practices.

Implementation will reshape legal and business strategies. Creditors gain faster, out-of-court tools (CIIRP) and greater say in liquidation; debtors must adapt to fewer procedural delays and potential loss of shielding tactics; insolvency professionals face stricter supervision and new duties; tribunals will enforce tighter deadlines. Each stakeholder – creditors, debtors, resolution professionals, and courts – must revise procedures and policies. We outline below the pre-amendment IBC framework, detail each amendment with statutory excerpts and plain summaries, compare old vs. new provisions (in Table 1), and analyze legal, commercial and procedural implications for all parties.

For more information, you can access the article here:
https://www.livelaw.in/articles/insolvency-bankruptcy-code-amendment-act2026-comprehensive-analysis-529563

RESERVE BANK OF INDIA

1. Guidelines to facilitate faster cross-border inward payments.

The Reserve Bank’s Payments Vision 2025 aims to bring efficiency in the cross- border payments aligning with the G20 roadmap for cross-border payments that has set targets for achieving cheaper, faster, more transparent, and more accessible cross-border payments. The speed of the cross-border payments is affected by several factors. One of the challenges with speed of payments is experienced at the beneficiary leg i.e., the time taken from receipt of the payment at the beneficiary bank till credit to the beneficiary account. Review of the extant process for inward cross-border payments indicated the need for streamlining the processes at the beneficiary bank for ensuring timely intimation of payment information and credit to the beneficiary's account. Accordingly, banks are advised as under:

a. Banks shall inform their customer of the receipt of cross-border inward transactions immediately on receipt of inward message. Messages received after close of operating hours of banks shall be informed to customer immediately at the start of the next business day.

b. It is observed that several banks rely upon end-of-day statements of the nostro account for confirming and reconciling receipts in nostro accounts, resulting in delay in crediting funds to the beneficiary's account. To expedite this process, banks are advised to undertake reconciliation and confirmation of credit in the nostro account frequently either on near real time basis or at periodic intervals. The reconciliation interval should normally not exceed one hour.

c. Banks shall endeavour to credit the inward payments received during the foreign exchange market hours within the same business day to the beneficiary's account, and credit the inward payments received after market hours on the next business day, subject to compliance with the extant FEMA and other regulatory requirements.

d. Banks may, based on their risk assessment and subject to compliance with extant FEMA guidelines, put in place straight through process for crediting the inward payments to the account of individual residents.

e. Banks may, within a reasonable time frame, endeavour to provide digital interface to their customers to facilitate foreign exchange transactions, including submission of documents or information, and monitoring of transactions.

The directions at para 3 above shall be effective six months from the date of this circular. The directive is issued under Section 10(2) read with Section 18 of Payment and Settlement Systems Act 2007, (Act 51 of 2007).

For more information, you can access the RBI notification here:
https://www.rbi.org.in/Scripts/NotificationUser.aspx?Id=13367&Mode=0

2. Formation of new districts in the State of Andhra Pradesh – Assignment of Lead Bank Responsibility.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh has notified formation of two new districts, viz., Polavaram, and Markapuram in the state of Andhra Pradesh vide Gazette Notification No. G.O. MS. No. 517 Revenue (Lands-IV) Department and G.O. MS. No. 524 Revenue (Lands-IV) Department, respectively, both dated December 30, 2025. Accordingly, it has been decided to designate the Lead Bank of the new districts as below:

Sr No	Newly Created District	Lead Bank Responsibility assigned to	District Working Code allotted to new district
1	Polavaram	Union Bank of India	02X (to be read as 'Numeral Zero, Numeral Two and Alphabet X')
2	Markapuram	Union Bank of India	02Y (to be read as 'Numeral Zero, Numeral Two and Alphabet Y')

There is no change in the Lead Banks of the other districts in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

For more information, you can access the RBI notification here:
https://www.rbi.org.in/Scripts/NotificationUser.aspx?Id=13368&Mode=0

3. **Master Direction - Reserve Bank of India (Non-resident Investment in Debt Instruments) Directions, 2025 – amendment.**

   Attention of Authorised Dealer Category-I (AD Category-I) banks is invited to the Foreign Exchange Management (Debt Instruments) Regulations, 2019 notified, vide Notification No. FEMA. 396/2019-RB dated October 17, 2019 (hereinafter "FEMA 396") and the Master Direction - Reserve Bank of India (Non-resident Investment in Debt Instruments) Directions, 2025 dated January 07, 2025 (hereinafter "Master Direction"), as amended from time to time. Over the years, the Reserve Bank has issued directions relating to, inter alia, investments in debt instruments by Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and offering of debt instruments acquired in terms of FEMA 396 as collateral to recognized Stock Exchanges in India for transactions in exchange traded derivative contracts. These instructions have now been consolidated in the aforesaid Master Direction. The updated Master Direction is enclosed. AD Category–I banks may bring the contents of this circular to the notice of their constituents and customers concerned. The Directions contained in this circular have been issued under sections 10(4) and 11(1) of the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (42 of 1999) and are without prejudice to permissions/approval, if any, required under any other law.

   For more information, you can access the RBI notification here:
   https://www.rbi.org.in/Scripts/NotificationUser.aspx?Id=13369&Mode=0

4. **Monetary Policy Statement, 2026-27 Resolution of the Monetary Policy Committee April 6 to 8, 2026.**

   The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), chaired by Governor Shri Sanjay Malhotra, unanimously decided in its 60th meeting (April 6-8, 2026) to maintain the policy repo rate at 5.25%, with SDF at 5.00% and MSF/Bank Rate at 5.50%, while continuing the neutral stance. This reflects a cautious approach amid heightened geopolitical risks from the West Asia conflict, which has disrupted global supply chains, elevated energy prices, and hardened sovereign yields. India's economy showed resilience with 7.6% GDP growth in 2025-26, but 2026-27 projections are tempered at 6.9% due to supply shocks and export pressures, offset by strong services, manufacturing, and government initiatives like GST rationalisation. CPI inflation rose to 3.2% in February 2026 but remains below target, projected at 4.6% for 2026-27 with upside risks from energy volatility and potential El Niño effects; core inflation stays muted, justifying the MPC's wait-and-watch strategy. Minutes release on April 22; next meeting June 3-5.

   For more information, you can access the RBI press release here:
   https://www.rbi.org.in/Scripts/BS_PressReleaseDisplay.aspx?prid=62514

5. **RBI Issues Draft Directions for 'Trade Receivables Discounting System'.**

   Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play an important role in the economic fabric of the country. MSMEs face constraints in obtaining adequate finance, particularly in terms of their ability to convert their trade receivables into liquid funds. In order to address this issue the Reserve Bank of India has, over time, issued guidelines regarding setting up of Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) platforms in the country for facilitating financing of trade receivables of MSME sellers. As announced in Statement on Developmental and Regulatory Policies dated April 08, 2026, with a view to rationalise and harmonise the applicable guidelines, a comprehensive review has been undertaken. Accordingly, RBI today released the draft Reserve Bank of India (Trade Receivables Discounting System) Directions. The comments / feedback on the draft Directions may be submitted by the regulated entities and members of public / other stakeholders on or before May 01, 2026 through the 'Connect 2 Regulate' section on the website by following the corresponding hyperlink provided against each document in the page where they are hosted.

   For more information, you can access the RBI press release here:
   https://www.rbi.org.in/Scripts/BS_PressReleaseDisplay.aspx?prid=62526

6. **RBI releases Circular on Guidelines to facilitate faster cross-border inward payments.**

   The Reserve Bank of India today issued the circular on Guidelines to facilitate faster cross-border inward payments. The RBI had issued a draft circular on the subject on October 29, 2025, seeking feedback from stakeholders. Feedback received on the draft circular has been examined and consequent modifications have been suitably incorporated in the final circular. Statement on the major feedback received on the draft circular is provided in the Annex. This circular is intended to address certain frictions identified in inward cross-border payments to facilitate the timely intimation of payment information and crediting of funds to the beneficiary's account.

For more information, you can access the RBI press release here:
https://www.rbi.org.in/Scripts/BS_PressReleaseDisplay.aspx?prid=62532

7. **Utkarsh 2029 – Reserve Bank of India's Medium-term Strategy Framework for 2026-29.**

The Reserve Bank of India had adopted the Medium-term Strategy Framework (Utkarsh 2.0) covering the period 2023-2025 in December 2022 which guided the Bank's progress towards realisation of the identified milestones. In continuation of the above and building upon the progress made thereunder, the Bank has now prepared its Medium-term Strategy Framework Utkarsh 2029 for the period April 2026 to March 2029. The framework encompasses six strategy pillars guided by a succinct vision statement and values. The six strategy pillars highlighting the broad strategic priorities of the Bank are:

a. Robust Regulations
b. Customer Centricity and Inclusive Finance
c. Competitive Markets
d. Effective Technology
e. Future-ready Organization
f. Global India

Each pillar encompasses overarching, forward-looking and medium-term deliverables. The regular functions of RBI will continue under the Annual Action Plan of the respective Departments. The Reserve Bank of India attaches high importance to its medium-term strategy and monitors its implementation and progress through a Sub-committee of its Central Board.

For more information, you can access the RBI press release here:
https://www.rbi.org.in/Scripts/BS_PressReleaseDisplay.aspx?prid=62542

You may send your suggestions at niyati@asalegal.in

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