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Restructuring of Indian Statistical System

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The government has decided to merge the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) with the Central Statistics Office (CSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). The order dated 23rd May 2019 has cleared **formation of an overarching body - National Statistical Office (NSO)** through the merger of the NSSO and the CSO.

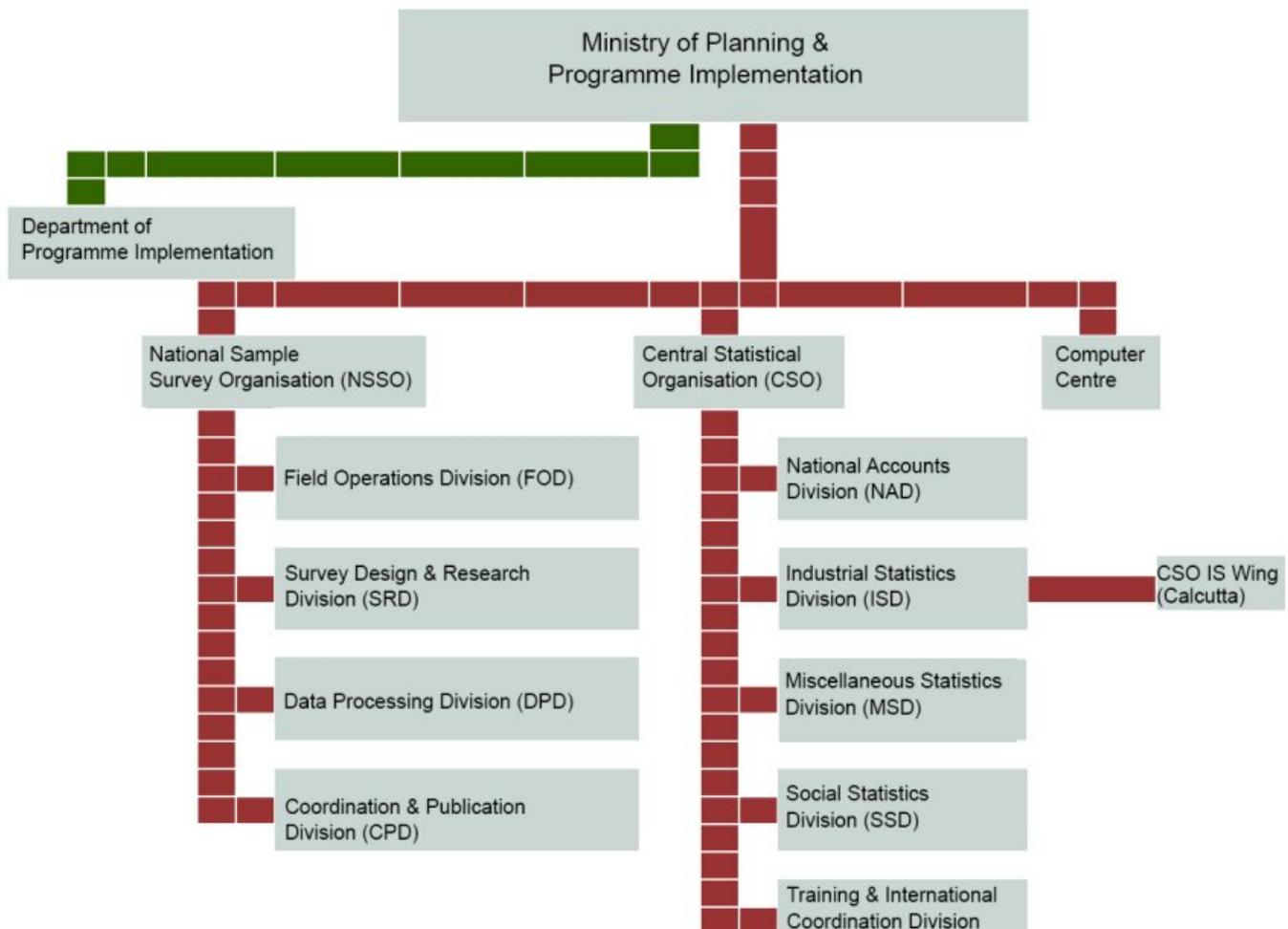
- The order states that the proposed NSO would be headed by Secretary (Statistics and Programme Implementation), but **skips any mention of National Statistical Commission (NSC)**, which has been the overseeing body for all the statistical work done in the country.
- The order also does not equate the Secretary (Statistics and Programme Implementation) with the Chief Statistician of India as was done in the earlier resolution notified by the MoSPI on 1st June, 2005.
- There is a **concern** that with the merger of NSSO and CSO, **the autonomy of NSSO will go away and the NSC's control over NSSO will not be there**. NSC oversees all technical aspects of the statistical work—which survey needs to be done, when and how it needs to be done.
- The order for restructuring the Indian official statistics system has been **issued in order to streamline and strengthen the present nodal functions of the ministry** and to bring in more synergy by integrating its administrative functions within the ministry.

2019 Order vs 2005 Resolution

- The 2005 resolution notified initiation of the **setting up of the NSC along with proposing the single entity, National Statistical Organisation**, as the executive wing of the government for statistics which would act according to the policies and priorities as laid down by the NSC.
- The **resolution** proposed **NSO with two wings, CSO and NSSO** while **2019 order** states that the statistics wing, comprising the NSO, with constituents as CSO and NSSO, to be an integral part of the main Ministry, with **CSO and NSSO to be merged into NSO**.

Present Structure

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has **two wings**, one relating to Statistics and the other- Programme Implementation.
- The Statistics Wing called the **National Statistical Office (NSO)** consists of the **Central Statistical Office (CSO)**, the **Computer Center** and the **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO)**.
 - CSO coordinates the statistical activities in the country and also evolves statistical standards.
 - NSSO is responsible for conduct of large scale sample surveys in diverse fields on an all India basis.
- **The Programme Implementation Wing has three Divisions**, namely, (i) Twenty Point Programme (ii) Infrastructure Monitoring and Project Monitoring and (iii) Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme.
- Besides these two wings, there is **National Statistical Commission** created through a resolution of the Government of India (MOSPI) and one autonomous Institute, viz., **Indian Statistical Institute** declared as an institute of national importance by an act of the Parliament.
 - NSC has a mandate to evolve policies, priorities and standards in statistical matters.



Issues in the present structure

- **The NSC and the office of the chief statistician of India (CSI)** -who apart from being the secretary to the MoSPI is also the secretary to the NSC - have been **at loggerheads for most of the period, fighting battles over turf and resources.**
- **The use of the untested database in national accounts,** the lack of transparency about it, and the lack of any effective audit of the GDP database all point to the **lack of effective oversight of the CSO.**