



January 08, 2021 – Friday

## Key Developments

### **Covid slump may cause 7.7% GDP contraction in FY21: First Advance Estimate**

The 2020-21 financial year is set to be the worst ever for India's gross domestic product (GDP), with the government's first official advance estimates, released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Thursday, suggesting a real GDP contraction of as much as 7.7 per cent, compared to an 11-year-low growth rate of 4.2 per cent in 2019-20. Agriculture is projected to grow at 3.4 per cent this financial year and manufacturing to contract 9.4 per cent. Trade, hotel, and transport in the services sector are projected to contract 21.4 per cent. The projections, following a contraction of nearly 24 per cent in the April-June quarter and 7.5 per cent in the July-September quarter, reflect the slowdown effected by the coronavirus pandemic and the economic impact of months-long nationwide lockdown. The country's GDP shrank 15.7 per cent in the first half of the year. Against this backdrop, the estimate of a GDP contraction for the full financial year comes as no surprise; it is mostly in line with those by most agencies and differs only in scale.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/covid-slump-may-cause-7-7-gdp-contraction-in-fy21-first-advance-estimate-121010700807\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/covid-slump-may-cause-7-7-gdp-contraction-in-fy21-first-advance-estimate-121010700807_1.html)

### **Private sector willing to partner with govt in Covid vaccine roll-out: Ficci**

The private sector is willing to support and augment government's capacity across the value chain of COVID-19 vaccine distribution and administration, industry body FICCI on Thursday said. In this regard, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has submitted a detailed plan outlining what support private sector, including healthcare, can provide, through the FICCI-EY Strategy paper on 'Protecting India - Public Private Partnership for vaccinating against COVID-19'. The strategy paper was submitted to the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for COVID-19 (NEGVAC) last month. "Given that we are on the verge of launching the largest ever and a complex vaccination programme, effective partnerships and seamless collaborations will be pivotal for its success. We hope that the government has taken note of the intent and commitment from private sector players for accelerating the process of targeted vaccination across the country," FICCI Chair Health Services Committee and Chairman Medica Group of Hospitals Alok Roy said in a statement.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/private-sector-willing-to-partner-with-govt-in-covid-vax-roll-out-ficci-121010700782\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/private-sector-willing-to-partner-with-govt-in-covid-vax-roll-out-ficci-121010700782_1.html)

### **Liberalised economic operator package for MSMEs rolled out**

Recognising their critical contribution in supporting the economy especially during the present difficult times of Covid-19 pandemic, Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC) has taken a new initiative to introduce its flagship "Liberalised MSME AEO Package" for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Through this package, CBIC encourages all eligible MSMEs to avail advantages of faster Customs clearances and other related benefits. To attract MSMEs to become authorised economic operators (AEOs) and avail the various benefits, the CBIC has relaxed the compliance criteria provided the MSMEs have a valid certificate from their line-Ministry. The relaxed requirements allow MSMEs who have filed minimum 10 Customs clearance documents in one year and who have a clean compliance record over two years to apply for the scheme.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/liberalised-authorized-economic-operator-package-for-msmes-rolled-out/article33521233.ece>

#### **India implemented several measures to facilitate trade during 2015-20: WTO**

India has implemented several measures to facilitate trade, such as simplification of procedures and customs clearances for imports and exports, according to WTO. Geneva-based World Trade Organisation (WTO) said that the other trade-facilitation initiatives introduced by India since 2015 include introduction of Indian Customs Electronic Gateway (ICEGATE); Single Window Interface for Facilitation of Trade (SWIFT); the Direct Port Delivery and the Direct Port Entry facilities; and the increased use of the Risk Management System (RMS). These points were part of the report of India's seventh Trade Policy Review (TPR), which began on January 6 at the World Trade Organization. The TPR is an important mechanism under its monitoring function, and involves a comprehensive peer-review of the member's national trade policies.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/india-implemented-several-measures-to-facilitate-trade-during-2015-20-wto/2166094/>

#### **CBDT issues protocols in case of treaty-exchanged data breach**

The Central Board of Direct Taxes has issued protocols to be followed by the income tax department in case of breach of data exchanged under tax treaties. A breach management task force constituted under the Information Security Committee will identify the source, contain the immediate impact by removing the attackers' access to the system.

[https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/cbdt-issues-protocols-in-case-of-treaty-exchanged-data-breach/articleshow/80154133.cms?utm\\_source=ETTopNews&utm\\_medium=HPTN&utm\\_campaign=AL1&utm\\_content=23](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/cbdt-issues-protocols-in-case-of-treaty-exchanged-data-breach/articleshow/80154133.cms?utm_source=ETTopNews&utm_medium=HPTN&utm_campaign=AL1&utm_content=23)

#### **LG Manoj Sinha announces new industrial development scheme worth Rs 28,400 cr for Jammu and Kashmir**

The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Thursday announced a new industrial developmental scheme (IDS) with a total outlay of Rs 28,400 crore to encourage new investment and to take industrial development to the block level. "In a major decision of far-reaching consequence, Government of India has approved a new Industrial Developmental Scheme for Jammu and Kashmir," Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha announced at a press conference here. "The scheme will go a long way in ushering an era of socio-economic development of the region and for catering to the aspirations of people," he said. Sinha said that this scheme is from the period of date of notification up to the year 2037 with a total outlay of Rs 28,400 crore. He said that it is for the first time any industrial incentive scheme is taking development to the block level and added that it will promote far-flung areas of Jammu and Kashmir.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/lg-manoj-sinha-announces-new-industrial-development-scheme-worth-rs-28400-cr-for-jammu-and-kashmir/2166342/>

### **Economy**

#### **India's fiscal deficit likely to be over 7% in 2020/21: Report**

India's fiscal deficit for year ending in March is likely to be over 7% of gross domestic product, three sources told Reuters, as revenue collections suffered from a lockdown and restrictions to rein in the spread of COVID-19. India's government had projected a fiscal deficit of 3.5% of GDP for the current year last February. It estimated government borrowing of 7.8 trillion rupees, later revised to 12 trillion rupees, to provide relief to millions of people and businesses hurt by the pandemic. A fiscal deficit of more than 7% would be higher than some private economists have projected. Many of them forecast an uptick in tax collections in the second half of the fiscal year. But government sources say the uptick won't be enough to compensate for earlier losses.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-s-fiscal-deficit-likely-to-be-over-7-in-2020-21-report-121010700924\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-s-fiscal-deficit-likely-to-be-over-7-in-2020-21-report-121010700924_1.html)

#### **Unemployment rate surges to 9.1% in December: CMIE**

India's unemployment rate shot up sharply in December to 9.1% from 6.5% in November, the highest since the economic recovery started in June. This comes on the back of high unemployment in rural India, raising doubts over the ongoing economic recovery, said the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/unemployment-rate-surges-to-9-1-in-december-cmie/articleshow/80150712.cms>

#### **Toll collection likely to grow 15% in FY22: ICRA**

Toll collections are likely to grow 14-15 per cent in 2021-22, rating agency IcrA said on Thursday maintaining stable outlook for the Indian road sector. Toll collections witnessed a marked improvement on the back of increased movement of both passenger and commercial vehicles, which has picked up significantly over the last three months, thereby surpassing the pre-COVID-19 levels, it said. "In FY2022, the traffic is expected to increase by 5 per cent and toll rates (WPI linked) by 3-4 per cent resulting in an overall increase in toll collections by 14-15 per cent on a low base in FY2021 (given the impact of toll suspension in first 20 days of April 2020)," IcrA said in a statement.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/toll-collection-likely-to-grow-15-in-fy22-icra/articleshow/80154474.cms>

### **Banking and Finance**

#### **SBI raises \$600 million from bonds to fund overseas business expansion**

State Bank of India (SBI) on Thursday said it has concluded the issuance of USD 600 million (about Rs 4,500 crore) from bonds to fund expansion of overseas business. The fund raised through senior unsecured fixed rate notes having maturity of 5.50 years and coupon of 1.80 per cent payable semi-annually under Regulation-S, SBI said in a regulatory filing. "The bonds will be issued through our London branch as of January 13, 2021, and shall be listed on Singapore Stock Exchange and India International Exchange, GIFT City," it said.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/sbi-raises-600-million-from-bonds-to-fund-overseas-business-expansion-121010700576\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/sbi-raises-600-million-from-bonds-to-fund-overseas-business-expansion-121010700576_1.html)

#### **IBC has delivered 95% rescue rate: MS Sahoo**

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) has delivered a 95% rescue rate for financially distressed firms when insolvency proceedings that have been settled or withdrawn midway or cases that have been resolved prior to admission are included, according to MS Sahoo, chairman of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI). Out of the 20,000 applications for initiation of corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP), 16,000 applications were resolved before admission, Sahoo said during a virtual conference hosted by the National Law University Delhi on Thursday.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/ibc-has-delivered-95-rescue-rate-ms-sahoo/articleshow/80154751.cms>

#### **Assam MFI Bill may hit collections in short term**

The Assam Micro Finance Institutions (Regulation of Money Lending) Bill 2020, which was recently passed by the Assam Assembly, is likely to create "some confusion" in the minds of borrowers and could affect collections in the region in the short term. While the Bill is still not available in public domain, however, certain reports indicate that the key provisions of the Bill would include restriction on the deployment of collection agents, coercive collection practices and door-to-door collection; cap on the number of lenders per borrower as well as on the overall loan outstanding; and a minimum three-month loan repayment moratorium in case of natural adverse events.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/money-and-banking/assam-mfi-bill-may-hit-collections-in-short-term/article33521675.ece?homepage=true>

### **Industry**

#### **Indian businesses aim to tap consumers directly in 2021: Report**

As businesses prepare lean and flexible models that operate in an online-offline mix in the post-pandemic world, the focus for digital platforms in India will be on selling directly to the consumers in 2021, a new report said on Thursday.

"Small businesses in India are today evolving themselves as per the consumer and industry requirements. "They are hungry for growth and much more resilient than we could've imagined. Merchants have come to understand the diverse nature of consumers and that innovation is the key differentiator," said Akash Gehani COO & Co-founder, Instamojo. The payment gateway and ecommerce platform has on-boarded more than 2 lakh small businesses from tier II and tier III cities during the lockdown period.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/indian-businesses-aim-to-tap-consumers-directly-in-2021-report-121010700788\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/indian-businesses-aim-to-tap-consumers-directly-in-2021-report-121010700788_1.html)

#### **Traders ask PM to drop 'harsh' norms on sale, promotion of tobacco products**

The Federation of Retailers Association of India (FRAI), an industry body representing 40 million micro and small traders, has appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the proposed norms on sale and promotion of tobacco products. Flagging their concerns over the adverse impact the new norms might have on small traders, the body has sought immediate intervention by the PM. According to FRAI, the proposed amendments by the Ministry of Health in Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (CoTPA) through a CoTPA Bill, 2020, will severely impact the livelihoods of traders already devastated by the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. "We humbly seek Hon'ble Prime Minister's empathy and request him to instruct the designated ministry to immediately roll back the proposed CoTPA amendments as they are extremely harsh.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/traders-ask-pm-to-drop-harsh-norms-on-sale-promotion-of-tobacco-products-121010700953\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/traders-ask-pm-to-drop-harsh-norms-on-sale-promotion-of-tobacco-products-121010700953_1.html)

#### **FMCG cos start increasing prices selectively; the first in a year; say hikes unlikely to impact demand**

After a long phase of relatively easy prices, commodity prices are beginning to affect regular buyers in December with grocery products such as soap, edible oils, tea and packaged rice up 3-5%, the first price increase over the past one year. Palm oil, palm oil derivatives and certain varieties of rice and tea have shot up, adding to inflationary pressures.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/fmcf/fmcf-cos-start-increasing-prices-selectively-the-first-in-a-year-say-hikes-unlikely-to-impact-demand/articleshow/80155631.cms>

#### **India added 1,600 tech start-up, 12 unicorns in 2020: NASSCOM report**

India has added 1,600 new tech start-ups and a record number of 12 unicorns in 2020, according to the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) annual start-up report. This is higher than 2019 when over 1,300 new start-ups and seven unicorns were added. The report, titled 'Indian Tech Start-up Ecosystem – On the March to Trillion Dollar Digital Economy' said that 2020 saw the highest ever new start-up added in a single calendar year.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/info-tech/india-added-1600-tech-start-up-12-unicorns-in-2020-nasscom-report/article33520568.ece?homepage=true>

#### **NALCO to invest Rs 30,000 crore on expansion by 2027-28: Pralhad Joshi**

State-run NALCO will invest nearly Rs 30,000 crore on expansion and diversification plans, union coal and mines minister Pralhad Joshi said on Wednesday. Of the proposed investment, the company will spend over Rs 7,000 crore on the fifth stream refinery, Pottangi bauxite mines, bauxite transportation system from Utkal D & E coal mines.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/indl-goods/svs/metals-mining/nalco-to-invest-rs-30000-crore-on-expansion-by-2027-28-pralhad-joshi/articleshow/80152929.cms>

#### **Hiring activity registers 14 per cent sequential growth in December: Report**

The overall hiring activity in the country has improved by 14 per cent during December 2020, compared to the previous month mainly led by insurance, auto and ancillary sectors, according to a report. The Naukri JobSpeak Index for December 2020, at 1,972, witnessed an increase of 14 per cent in hiring activity as compared to November 2020, when it stood at 1,727. On a year-on-year basis, the overall hiring witnessed a decline of 10 per cent in December 2020, the lowest decline in the post-COVID months. "The year 2020 was full of challenges and hiring across key industries bore the brunt of the pandemic. While hiring in April, May, June of 2020 was down by 56 per cent compared to last year, subsequent quarters showed a steady recovery," Naukri.com Chief Business Officer Pawan Goyal said.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/hiring-activity-registers-14-per-cent-sequential-growth-in-december-report/2166252/>

## Agriculture

### **Govt procures 521.5 lakh tonnes of paddy so far at MSP, costing ₹98,457 cr**

The Centre has procured 521.48 lakh tonnes of paddy so far during this kharif marketing season from nearly 68 lakh farmers at MSP costing ₹ 98,457 crore, amid the ongoing protest by farmers at various Delhi borders seeking repeal of three new farm laws and legal guarantee of MSP. "In the ongoing kharif marketing season (KMS) 2020-21, the government continues to procure kharif 2020-21 crops at MSP from farmers as per existing MSP schemes," according to an official statement. Paddy procurement has reached 521.48 lakh tonnes till January 6, up 27.13 per cent from the year-ago period.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/govt-procures-5215-lakh-tonnes-of-paddy-so-far-at-msp-costing-98457-cr/article33521691.ece>

### **'Pests, climate change and yield key worries'**

Climate change, insects and lower yield have emerged as top three big challenges that global cotton sector would have to battle for in the coming decade. Researchers and experts from International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC) were unanimous in raising concerns about the impact of poor yield, prevalent diseases, climate change and competition with man-made fibres as some of the top challenges for cotton crop during the decade through 2030.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/markets/commodities/pests-climate-change-and-yield-key-worries/article33522071.ece>

### **Untimely rains dent coffee harvest in Karnataka**

The current spell of widespread unseasonal rains have added to the woes of coffee growers in Karnataka, who are in the midst of harvesting 2020-21 crop. The rains have not only triggered the fruit split and droppings in the standing crop, but have also raised the risk of early blossoms, which could dent the next year's crop prospects. The picking of arabicas is in full swing across Kodagu, Hassan and Chikkamagaluru, whereas the robusta has ripened in several areas that received the early blossom showers last year.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/untimely-rains-dent-coffee-harvest-in-karnataka/article33522209.ece>

## Infrastructure

### **PM Modi fixes fresh deadlines for 6 infra projects in metros and Jammu & Kashmir**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has fixed fresh deadlines for six major infrastructure projects in major metros including Delhi and Mumbai as well as the Union Territory of J&K that he reviewed last week, ranging between mid-2021 and 2025. The biggest of the projects is the 272-km long Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla railway line in J&K worth Rs 28,000 crore which will join the Kashmir valley with the rest of the country.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/pm-modi-fixes-fresh-deadlines-for-6-infra-projects-in-metros-and-jammu-kashmir/articleshow/80159007.cms>

### **NHAI readies launch of first government-sponsored InvIT**

India's first government-sponsored Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) could be operationalised by March this year, a senior official said. Around six road assets worth Rs 5,000 crore have been given in-principle approval for transfer to the InvIT, the official said. "We are hoping that the InvIT should be operational by March end," the official told ET, requesting not to be named.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/nhai-readies-launch-of-first-government-sponsored-invite/articleshow/80148468.cms>

### **PM Modi flags off world's first double stack long-haul container train**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday flagged off the world's first double stack long-haul container train on the 306km-long Rewari-Madar section of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC). Speaking at the event,

Modi said that since the launch of the New Bhaupur-New Khurja section of the DFC, average speed of freight trains has tripled in that particular section. He said with the flag off of the first double stacked container freight train from New Ateli in Haryana to New Kishanganj in Rajasthan, India has joined select nations in the world. One train carries 360 Ten Feet Container Equivalent Units (TEU) which is equivalent to 270 high capacity trailer trucks, a rail ministry statement said. Modi said the western freight corridor will make farming and allied businesses in Haryana and Rajasthan easier and also impart new energy into cities like Mahendragarh, Jaipur, Ajmer and Sikar.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/pm-modi-flags-off-country-s-first-double-stack-long-haul-container-train-121010700758\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/pm-modi-flags-off-country-s-first-double-stack-long-haul-container-train-121010700758_1.html)

#### **Domestic aviation to be back to pre-Covid level in 3 months: Aviation secretary**

Domestic Aviation will be back to pre-COVID level in the next three months, aviation secretary Pradeep Singh Kharola said at an event titled 'Making India Self Reliant in Aerospace Manufacturing', organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) today. "In the next 2-3 months, domestic aviation will be back to normal... Big countries like India, which have a huge domestic market, is where the future of aviation lies," Kharola said.

[https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/airlines/-aviation/domestic-aviation-to-be-back-to-pre-covid-19-in-3-months-aviation-secretary/articleshow/80156295.cms?utm\\_source=ETTopNews&utm\\_medium=HPTN&utm\\_campaign=AL1&utm\\_content=23](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/airlines/-aviation/domestic-aviation-to-be-back-to-pre-covid-19-in-3-months-aviation-secretary/articleshow/80156295.cms?utm_source=ETTopNews&utm_medium=HPTN&utm_campaign=AL1&utm_content=23)

#### **Telecom**

#### **Telcos need to pay Rs 50K crore for renewing spectrum permits, but only Jio will renew: Analysts**

Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea would need to shell out nearly Rs 50,000 crore combined to renew their expiring spectrum permits in the upcoming spectrum auction beginning March 1, say analysts. However, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea are unlikely to renew most of their airwaves, given their surplus holdings. The upcoming auction between three telcos is expected to be tepid as analysts say it is a buyer's market and Jio is expected to be the largest contender.

[https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-news/telcos-need-to-pay-rs-50k-for-renewing-spectrum-permits-but-only-jio-will-renew-analysts/articleshow/80151238.cms?utm\\_source=ETTopNews&utm\\_medium=HPTN&utm\\_campaign=AL1&utm\\_content=23](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-news/telcos-need-to-pay-rs-50k-for-renewing-spectrum-permits-but-only-jio-will-renew-analysts/articleshow/80151238.cms?utm_source=ETTopNews&utm_medium=HPTN&utm_campaign=AL1&utm_content=23)

#### **Energy**

#### **Government clears 8 hydropower projects on Indus river in Ladakh**

The government has cleared eight hydropower projects of 144 MW on the Indus river and its tributaries in Ladakh, the highest so far, sources in the Jal Shakti Ministry said on Thursday. At present, there are several small projects, with a collective capacity of 113 MW on Indus in Ladakh, and the new projects will have much more capacity than those constructed so far, a senior official added. The official said the new projects have been cleared by the Central Water Commission as well as the Indus Commissioner after a separate Union Territory of Ladakh was announced last year. These projects will come up in Kargil and Leh districts of Ladakh. Because of its topography, it is not feasible to construct big hydropower projects in the Ladakh region.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/government-clears-8-hydropower-projects-on-indus-river-in-ladakh-121010701043\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/government-clears-8-hydropower-projects-on-indus-river-in-ladakh-121010701043_1.html)

#### **BSES Rajdhani, BSES Yamuna asked to clear Rs 1,864 crore dues**

Two power distribution companies of the Delhi government and Reliance Infrastructure Ltd have been asked to pay Rs 1,864 crore of overdue electricity payments or face corporate insolvency proceedings, according to payment notices. Aravali Power Company (APCPL), a joint venture of state-owned NPTC, Haryana Power Generation Corp Ltd (HPGCL) and Indraprastha Power Generation Co Ltd (IPGCL), have slapped separate payment notices on BSES Rajdhani Power and BSES Yamuna Power for defaulting on payments for the electricity they buy from its Jhajjar plant.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/bses-rajdhani-bses-yamuna-asked-to-clear-rs-1864-crore-dues/articleshow/80153918.cms>

#### **At 5265 MW, Delhi records season's highest power demand**

Delhi's peak power demand clocked 5,265 MW on Thursday, the highest so far this winter, due to the continuing chilly weather, discom officials said. The peak power demand of the city has increased by over four per cent since January 1. It registered an increase of over 50 per cent since December 1 and by 67 per cent since November 1, 2020, they said. "Delhi's peak power demand continues to increase due to the city's chilly weather. Today, the peak power demand clocked 5,265 MW, the season's highest of this winter, pipping this season's previous high of 5,021 MW recorded on January 1," said a spokesperson of BSES. BSES discoms -- BRPL and BYPL -- successfully met the power demand of 2,187 MW and 1,093 MW in their respective areas.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/at-5265-mw-delhi-records-seasons-highest-power-demand/articleshow/80156701.cms>

#### **States**

#### **All Gujarat villages to get daytime agri power supply by 2022-end**

Farmers of all 18,000-odd villages in Gujarat will get power supply during the day time for agriculture purposes by the end of the year 2022, Chief Minister Vijay Rupani announced on Thursday. The BJP government in the state has allocated Rs 3,500 crore to create the necessary infrastructure for this ambitious 'Kisan Suryoday Yojna' (KSY), Rupani said addressing a gathering Tilakwada town in Narmada while launching the project for 39 villages of the district. In October last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the scheme, aimed at providing electricity during the day time to farmers for irrigation and farming purposes, for the entire state, and villages of different districts are being covered in a phase-wise manner, Rupani said.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/all-gujarat-villages-to-get-day-time-agri-power-supply-by-2022-end-121010700893\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/all-gujarat-villages-to-get-day-time-agri-power-supply-by-2022-end-121010700893_1.html)

#### **Maharashtra move to cut construction premiums to lower project costs by 17%**

Maharashtra government's decision to reduce construction premiums is expected to result in 12 to 17 per cent savings in project costs, said analysts tracking the companies. Currently, the various FSI premiums/fungible FSI and payments for other concessions account for between 25-33 per cent of the overall project (including land) and the waiver may result in a 12-17 per cent saving on overall project cost, said Adidev Chattopadhyay, an analyst with ICICI Securities. FSI means permissible construction on a given plot of land.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/maharashtra-move-to-cut-construction-premiums-to-lower-project-costs-by-17-121010700970\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/maharashtra-move-to-cut-construction-premiums-to-lower-project-costs-by-17-121010700970_1.html)

#### **Telangana completes urban local bodies reforms; gets nod for Rs 2,508 cr additional borrowings**

After Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, Telangana has become the third state to complete urban local bodies reforms stipulated by the Union finance ministry. With the completion of the reforms, the ministry has allowed the state to make additional borrowing of Rs 2,508 crore. The permission for mobilising additional financial resources of Rs 2,508 crore through Open Market Borrowings was issued by Department of Expenditure under Ministry of Finance on Thursday. On completion of the urban local body reforms, the three states have been granted additional borrowing permission of Rs 7,406 crore, the ministry said in a statement. Reforms in the urban local bodies and the urban utilities reforms are aimed at financial strengthening of ULBs (Urban Local Bodies) in a state and to enable them to provide better public health and sanitation services.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/telegana-completes-urban-local-bodies-reforms-gets-nod-for-rs-2508-cr-additional-borrowings/2166422/>

#### **COVID-19 impact: 8.7 lakh expats returned to Kerala, over half of them due to job loss: Official Data**

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced a whopping 8.7 lakh expatriates from Kerala to return home, most of them from the Gulf, since last May with a majority of 5.67 lakh citing job loss as the reason for it, according to official data. The data from the Non-Resident Keralites Affairs (NORKA) department as of Thursday also showed that 1,11,151 of the 13,27,330 Keralites who came back from other parts of the country also cited loss of jobs as the reason for their

return. The second biggest reason cited by the returnees (2.08 lakh) was their job visas. The rest include senior citizens, or children, and family members of expats.

[https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/covid-19-impact-8-7-lakh-expats-returned-to-kerala-over-half-of-them-due-to-job-loss-official-data/articleshow/80155866.cms?utm\\_source=ETTopNews&utm\\_medium=HPTN&utm\\_campaign=AL1&utm\\_content=23](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/covid-19-impact-8-7-lakh-expats-returned-to-kerala-over-half-of-them-due-to-job-loss-official-data/articleshow/80155866.cms?utm_source=ETTopNews&utm_medium=HPTN&utm_campaign=AL1&utm_content=23)

## Healthcare

### Central government tell states to be prepared for vaccine roll out

Ahead of the mega Covid-19 vaccination drive, the Central government has directed all states/ Union Territories to ensure that preparations are on the right track for the roll-out process, billed as the largest such drive in the world. According to the union health ministry, 19 states including UTs would receive the Covid vaccine through their suppliers while the remaining 18 states/ UTs will get the vaccine through Government Medical Store Depot (GMSDs). A letter from a senior official of the union health ministry said: "The 19 states and the Union Territories which are likely to receive the first supply of Covid-19 vaccine shortly. The vaccine will be supplied to the identified consignee points of 19 States/UTs: Andhra Pradesh, Assam Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal."

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/central-government-tell-states-to-be-prepared-for-vaccine-roll-out-121010700879\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/central-government-tell-states-to-be-prepared-for-vaccine-roll-out-121010700879_1.html)

## External

### USTR backs action against India's equalisation levy, finds it burdensome

The US has held that India's 2 per cent digital tax on technology majors is unreasonable, burdensome and discriminatory against American companies like Amazon, Google, and Facebook and inconsistent with international tax principles. The US Trade Representative (USTR) office has noted that India's digital services tax (DST) or equalisation levy was 'actionable' under Section 301 of the Trade Act. The report based on a section 301 probe, initiated in June last year, found India's equalisation levy to be inconsistent with international tax principles as it failed to provide tax certainty, targeted revenues unconnected to a physical presence in India and applied to revenue rather than income.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/ustr-backs-action-against-india-s-equalisation-levy-finds-it-burdensome-121010700841\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/ustr-backs-action-against-india-s-equalisation-levy-finds-it-burdensome-121010700841_1.html)

### South Africa to get 1.5 million COVID-19 vaccines from India

South Africa will receive one million COVID-19 vaccines from the Pune-based Serum Institute of India this month, followed by an additional 500,000 doses in February, the health minister told Parliament on Thursday, amid a spike in coronavirus deaths and infections in the country. Drug major AstraZeneca has partnered with the Serum Institute of India (SII), the world's largest vaccine manufacturer, for the supply of the vaccine to the Indian government and also to a large number of low and middle-income countries.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/pharmaceuticals/south-africa-to-get-1-5-million-covid-19-vaccines-from-india/articleshow/80155462.cms>



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