



October 08, 2020 - Thursday

Key Developments

Interest subvention for MSMEs: Modi govt extends scheme validity to March 2021

In order to further provide interest relief of 2 per cent per annum to MSMEs, Modi government has extended the validity of the Interest Subvention Scheme for MSMEs till March 31, 2021, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in a notification on Wednesday. "The validity of the scheme has been extended till March 31, 2021. Accordingly, fresh or incremental term loan/working capital limit extended by co-operative banks with effect from March 3, 2020, will be eligible for coverage under the scheme," the notification read. The government had announced the scheme on November 2, 2018, to offer interest relief on loans to the extent of Rs 1 crore and implemented for FY19 and FY20 and now up to FY21. The announcement comes nearly 10 months after the government had approved amendments in the scheme in December 2019.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/msme-eodb-interest-subvention-for-msmes-modi-govt-extends-scheme-validity-to-march-2021/2100252/>

Union Cabinet approves ratification of Stockholm Convention, bans 7 hazardous chemicals

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved ratification of the Stockholm Convention by banning seven hazardous chemicals that are harmful for health and environment. The seven banned chemicals are listed as Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) under the Stockholm Convention. Making the announcement, Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar said, "We've done ratification of the Stockholm Convention. Seven chemicals that are hazardous to health and environment have been banned. India is giving out a positive message to the world that we're also active in this area and we don't tolerate health and environmental hazards."

The Cabinet has delegated its powers to ratify chemicals under the Stockholm Convention to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC) in respect of POPs already regulated under the domestic regulations thereby streamlining the procedure.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/lifestyle/science/union-cabinet-approves-ratification-of-stockholm-convention-bans-7-hazardous-chemicals/2100259/>

Govt grants pricing, marketing leeway to gas producers, allows e-bidding

The government on Wednesday came out with a new model of granting marketing and pricing freedom for natural gas producers in India, with the Union Cabinet clearing a standardised e-bidding process for price discovery from new production areas and high-pressure and high-temperature areas.

Through the new platform, market players and consumers will discover the prices for new production areas that obtained clearance under the government's field development plan after February 2019. "Gas produced from high-pressure and high-temperature areas, coal-bed methane blocks, North East region and new discoveries will be getting this marketing freedom. This will be a major step towards ease of doing business measures taken by the government," said Dharmendra Pradhan, minister of petroleum and natural gas.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-grants-pricing-marketing-leeway-to-gas-producers-allows-e-bidding-120100700984_1.html

Trump govt to make US firms pay more for H1-B staff, tighten visa rules

The US government has published a set of rules that will result in US companies shelling out more to hire foreign workers and narrow the criteria for visa applicants. The Department of Labour increased the minimum wages for H-1B, H-1B1, E-3 and I-140s types of visas. The prevailing wage is subdivided into four tiers or wage levels, representing the range of skills from entry-level to experienced.

The rule changes the prevailing wage levels 1-4 from the 17, 34, 50 and 67th percentiles to 45, 62, 78 and 95 percentile of surveyed wages from Bureau of Labour Statistics. The wage hike rule takes into effect immediately. Most H-1Bs are actually paid in the bottom slots which have been hiked the most.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/trump-govt-to-make-us-firms-pay-more-for-h1-b-staff-tighten-visa-rules-120100701063_1.html

India leads world, processes 41 mn real-time transactions a day: Report

India leads the world in real-time payments by handling 41 million transactions per day, said a report by FIS Global on Wednesday. Real-time payments doubled this year and transaction value increased by 80 per cent, said the report, reiterating industry experts' opinion that the coronavirus pandemic has accelerated digital usage in the country.

"India continues to innovate with the launch of extensive business services on the real-time rails including IPO subscription, mandate management and invoice-in-the-box," it said.

India recorded a 213 per cent growth in real-time payments processed year-on-year. Bahrain topped the list with 657 per cent growth, followed by Ghana clipping at 488 per cent, the Philippines growing at 309 per cent, Australia at 214 per cent, and Poland at 208 per cent.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-leads-world-processes-41-mn-real-time-transactions-a-day-report-120100700905_1.html

Economy

States' market borrowings jump 55% to Rs 3.75 trillion so far this fiscal

The states' market borrowings have jumped 55 per cent to Rs 3.75 lakh crore so far this fiscal, or 75 per cent of the budgeted amount, with 17 of them raising an additional Rs 22,350 crore from the latest auction of state development loans held on Tuesday.

Rising expenses and falling revenue, including the Centre's inability to pay the GST dues, have been leading states into a debt trap after the pandemic scuppered their finances since the beginning of the fiscal.

The latest debt raising is Rs 1,200 crore more than the notified amount as Maharashtra and Jharkhand accepted an additional Rs 1,000 crore and Rs 200 crore, respectively.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/states-market-borrowings-jump-55-pc-to-rs-3-75-lakh-crore-so-far-this-fiscal-120100700925_1.html

Stimulus to revive economy should continue for three years : Pronab Sen

The government should continue with the stimulus to revive the economy for three years and it should not be one off, Pranab Sen, the chairman of the Standing Committee on Statistics, ministry of statistics and programme implementation, said on Wednesday.

The improvement in economic activity at the moment is due to the pent up demand, he said at a webinar.

"What is happening at the moment is due to the pent up demand which has come to the market and has led to certain increase in economic activity," Sen, the former chief statistician of India, said. According to him, "The government gameplan should be to continue with the stimulus for three years and not be one off".

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/stimulus-to-revive-economy-should-continue-for-three-years-pronab-sen-120100700870_1.html

Centre's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' campaign shouldn't result in protectionism, says Raghuram Rajan

Former Reserve Bank governor Raghuram Rajan on Wednesday said the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' campaign of the government should not result in protectionism, adding that such policies had not worked in the past. Observing that it is not yet clear to him what the government means by 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', Rajan said if it is about creating an environment for production, then it is a re-branding of the Make in India initiative. "If it is about protectionism, unfortunately India has raised tariffs recently, (then) it does not make any sense to my mind to go that way because we tried that before. "We had a licence permit raj earlier ... that protectionism was problematic, it enriched a few corporations but basically was a source of poverty for many of us," he said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/centres-atmanirbhar-bharat-campaign-shouldnt-result-in-protectionism-says-raghuram-rajn/articleshow/78540286.cms>

Steady rise in COVID-19 cases, spillover effects of lockdown to hit India's economic growth: Report

Resurgence in COVID-19 cases is the main headwind for the global economy, and in India the steady rise in coronavirus caseloads will have an adverse impact on the country's economic growth, says a report.

According to Dun & Bradstreet's Country Risk and the Global Outlook report, the pandemic will induce long-term structural changes in the global economy. "In India the steady rise in caseloads and the spillover effects of the strict lockdown measures will continue to undermine the growth impulses," said Arun Singh, Chief Economist, Dun & Bradstreet.

Singh added that "restrained government finances, probable defaults by firms and the consequent subdued investment demand will continue to be a drag on growth."

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/steady-rise-in-covid-19-cases-spillover-effects-of-lockdown-to-hit-indias-economic-growth-report/2100222/>

Covid layoff: Workers unable to get unemployment allowance under ESIC's 'Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana'

For Pramod Tiwari, a native of Sultanpur in Uttar Pradesh, it has been a tough six months. As soon as the lockdown was declared, Tiwari's Gurgaon-based company which manufactures GPS systems started laying off people. Since April, Tiwari has no job. What has come as a shock to Tiwari is the fact that though he is registered with the Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) and contributing regularly since 2017, he is unable to get the unemployment allowance promised by the government. With the Covid-19 outbreak, the Centre promised an unemployment allowance under the Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana, a scheme run by the ESIC under the labour ministry. The scheme, which provides relief to a registered worker to the extent of 25% of the average per day earning during the previous four contribution periods, to be paid up to maximum 90 days of unemployment, has been extended for a year and terms relaxed to provide allowance during the crucial lockdown period.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/covid-layoff-workers-unable-to-get-unemployment-allowance-under-esics-atal-bimit-vyakti-kalyan-yojana/articleshow/78521827.cms>

Banking and Finance

Govt appoints M Rajeshwar Rao as new deputy governor of RBI

The Centre late Wednesday appointed M Rajeshwar Rao as the new deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India. He is currently an executive director at the banking regulator. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet approved the appointment as the search for the incumbent was on since August. The Financial Sector Regulatory Appointment Search Committee (FSRASC), which had included the cabinet secretary, RBI governor and the financial services secretary, interviewed candidates on August 21. RBI executive directors M Rajeshwar Rao and Lily Vadera were the top contenders to succeed NS Vishwanathan as the central bank's fourth deputy governor, ET reported on August 25.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/govt-appoints-m-rajeshwar-rao-as-new-deputy-governor-of-rbi/articleshow/78539248.cms>

Street vendors may get loans faster as government integrates PM SVANidhi portal's API with SBI

In a move to expedite loan sanctioning and disbursement process under Modi government's PM SVANidhi scheme for nano entrepreneurs, the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs will be looking to integrate application programming interface (API) between SVANidhi portal and various banks. To begin with, the ministry, on Wednesday announced that it has launched the API integration between the SVANidhi portal and SBI's eMudra portal. For integration with other banks, "a consultative meeting will be held shortly," the ministry said in a statement. API is essentially a messenger, which enables the exchange of data (integration) between two or more applications, for connectivity between multiple devices. The government had implemented PM SVANidhi — micro-credit scheme for street vendors on June 1, 2020, to help them recover from the Covid and lockdown impact. The scheme intends to benefit more than 50 lakh street vendors who had been vending on or before 24 March 2020.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/msme-tech-pm-svanidhi-street-vendors-to-get-loans-faster-as-govt-eyes-api-integration-with-banks/2099965/>

SBI's new chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara says loan restructuring manageable; lists out 3 priorities

State bank of India's new chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara today said that the bank is very closely observing the number of loan restructuring requests and concluded that given the numbers and SBI's loan books, restructuring is manageable. Dinesh Kumar Khara added that not too many corporates came for restructuring and it is manageable as well. Addressing the media today, the new SBI Chairman further said that his top priority is to maintain the safety of employees who are serving SBI's customers, the safety of the bank's customers, and maintain the quality of the loan book.

Dinesh Kumar Khara added that his focus is to keep the quality of advances book good and robust and the bank's name should stay protected. He further said that though certain segments have some concerns, the business of SBI has rebounded to somewhere around 70-80 per cent of the pre-Covid levels.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/banking-finance/sbis-new-chairman-dinesh-kumar-khara-says-loan-restructuring-manageable-lists-out-3-priorities/2100242/>

Indian banks say govt interest waiver will add to costs, spark litigation

Indian bankers fear the government's decision to waive some interest payments on loans under a COVID-19 support plan will create unnecessary work for lenders and lead to more litigation, without providing much of a boost for the sagging economy. In an Oct. 2 filing with the Supreme Court, seen by Reuters, the government said it is amending a controversial clause in a relief plan that allowed distressed borrowers to skip repayments for six months but then charged them "interest-on-interest" on the delayed payments, putting them deeper in debt. The change will waive the compounded interest component on small business loans and some personal debts from March to August. The government will bear the cost, which could be as high as \$1 billion, according to analysts.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/indian-banks-say-govt-interest-waiver-will-add-to-costs-spark-litigation-120100700396_1.html

Industry

Non-financial companies' Q1 debt more than 1.6X of India's GDP; firms suffer humongous loss in lockdown

The outstanding debt of India's non-financial companies climbed to 1.6 times of India's GDP, after rising as much as over 9 per cent from the previous year. Indian non-financial are reeling under severe stress due to the disruptions led by the coronavirus pandemic. The firms' outstanding debt stood at Rs 322 lakh crore or 167.3% of GDP in Q1 FY21, compared to Rs 312 lakh crore in the previous quarter and Rs 295 lakh crore in Q1 FY20, according to the EcoScope report of Motilal Oswal Financial Service. Within the non-financial sector, the general government (center + states) debt grew at a 30-quarter high pace of 14.3 per cent on-year.

Non-financial companies suffered humongous losses in the first quarter. While the net profit of all listed companies plunged 38.6 per cent in Q1, the same for non-financial companies fell by 57.1 per cent during the quarter, according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/non-financial-companies-q1-debt-more-than-1-6x-of-indias-gdp-suffer-humongous-loss-in-lockdown-months/2099924/>

Electric two-wheeler sales decline by 26%, fail to cross 10,000-units mark in last 6 months

Electric two-wheeler sales failed to cross even the 10,000-units mark during the April-September period despite the government's Rs 10,000 crore electric vehicle promotion scheme. Sales declined by a quarter compared to last year because of the disruptions from the Covid-19 pandemic even after double-digit growth during August and September. About 7,552 high-speed electric two-wheelers were sold between April and September, according to data from Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicles (SMEV). This does not include the sale of low-speed two-wheelers that do not require registration. In contrast, about 6 million two-wheelers with combustion engines are estimated to be sold during the same period.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/two-wheelers-three-wheelers/electric-two-wheeler-sales-decline-by-26-fail-to-cross-10000-units-mark-in-last-6-months/articleshow/78535863.cms>

States seek inputs for revising clean vehicle policies; EVs may get cheaper

Electric vehicles (EV) may get cheaper in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, as these states consider floating purchase incentives in line with the Centre's flagship EV policy that gives direct subsidies to buyers,

said people in the know. The three state governments have reached out to experts and manufacturers to seek views on how to implement such a policy. The proposed benefits would be on top of the subsidies given by the Centre. This development comes close on the heels of the Delhi Electric Vehicle Policy, 2020 that seeks to subsidise EVs through a feebate structure.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/auto-news/states-look-for-revising-clean-vehicle-policies-evs-may-get-cheaper/articleshow/78536932.cms>

Leading electronic brands to offer big discounts to clear out inventory

India's leading smartphone and electronic brands like Samsung, LG, Xiaomi, Panasonic, TCL, Realme, Thomson, Vivo, BPL and Kodak will offer bigger discount on mid-to-premium range of products, going up to 50%, in the up-coming e-commerce discounting season to clear out inventory with sales growth slowing down in these segments in last two months. For entry-level smartphones, refrigerator, washing machine and television, the discount will be moderated this year due to higher demand. For television, there is scarcity of supplies and hence companies are looking at around 10-20% discount over the usual selling price, five industry executives said. However, brands said consumers can look forward to longer tenure EMI schemes, lower down payment, cashback offers and extended warranty schemes across segments during the online festive discounts.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/durables/leading-electronic-brands-to-offer-big-discounts-to-clear-out-inventory/articleshow/78537747.cms>

9 in 10 Indian workers seek robots to support their mental health: Oracle study

As Covid-19 takes its toll on the mental health of people globally, over 9 in 10 people in India think robots can support their overall well-being much better than humans, a new Oracle study said on Wednesday. A whopping 91 per cent of Indian workforce surveyed said they would prefer to talk to a robot over their manager about stress and anxiety at work, according to the study by Oracle and Workplace Intelligence, an HR research and advisory firm. The study of more than 1,000 employees, managers, HR leaders, and C-level executives across 11 countries found that the Covid-19 pandemic has increased workplace stress, anxiety, and burnout for people all around the world, and they prefer robots instead of other people to help. Nearly 93 per cent people said their mental health issues at work negatively affect their home life while 95 per cent of those surveyed believed companies should be doing more to support the mental health of their workforce.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/company/corporate-trends/9-in-10-indian-workers-seek-robots-to-support-their-mental-health/articleshow/78533074.cms>

Agriculture

Freedom of choice to farmers: Are new farm Acts a watershed moment for Indian agriculture?

Indian agriculture is akin to the huge aeroplane without fuel. Can it fly? At one level, India's agri-strategy has been successful in the sense that the country moved from import-dependence to self-sufficiency and then to a net food exporting country after feeding 1.35 billion people, at another level, farmers' income levels have not augmented commensurately. Implicit in the agri-strategy was that the benefits of increased production and productivity would percolate down to the welfare of farmers. However, the strategy bypassed their income levels, primarily because the requisite 'fuel' has been missing in our agriculture. 'Getting the prices right' and 'getting the markets right' together constitute the requisite 'fuel' which has the potential to take our agriculture to new heights.

Just 'getting the prices right' may be a necessary condition but not sufficient. Imagine a situation when farmers get the most lucrative prices but half of their marketable surplus remains unsold, they would still be left high and dry. We should, therefore, aim at evacuating all the surpluses of all the commodities from all the corners of all geographies of the country to demand centres.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/freedom-of-choice-to-farmers-are-new-farm-acts-a-watershed-moment-for-indian-agriculture/2100216/>

'Cotton Corp to procure 125 lakh bales'

The government, reeling under intense farmer protests particularly in Punjab and Haryana, has announced enhanced procurement targets for rice and cotton during the current kharif marketing season and stated that it has spent over ₹1.90 lakh crore in 2019-20 for procuring rice and wheat on MSP.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/cotton-corp-to-procure-125-lakh-bales/article32796603.ece>

Gujarat begins procuring pulses, soyabean, paddy

The Gujarat government on Wednesday announced procurement of kharif crops such as paddy, maize, millet, moong, urad and soyabean at the MSP rates. The procurement of paddy, maize and millet will happen between October 16 and December 31, whereas that for moong, urad and soybean will take place between November 2 and January 30, the State Cabinet said.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/gujarat-begins-procuring-pulses-soyabean-paddy/article32796599.ece>

Infrastructure

NHAI says may exceed FY21 target of 4,500 km in awarding projects

National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is likely to exceed the 2020-21 target of awarding road projects covering 4,500 km, of which it has already awarded 40 projects covering 1,330 km in the first half of the fiscal 2020-21, the government agency said on Wednesday. NHAI said that despite the disruption caused by Covid-19 pandemic, it has awarded these 40 projects that would entail a capital cost of Rs 47,289 crore. The length of the projects awarded in April-September is 60% higher than the 828 km ordered in the same period a year ago. "For the awarded projects, NHAI has already completed at least 80% to 90% of the land acquisition, actioned utilities shifting and has obtained required clearances from various forest and environment authorities," NHAI said in a press statement. Traditionally, the ordering activity picks up in the second half of the year.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/nhai-says-may-exceed-fy21-target-of-4500-km-in-awarding-projects/articleshow/78538325.cms>

DGCA issues airline ticket refund guidelines after SC verdict

Aviation regulator DGCA issued detailed guidelines on Wednesday regarding a refund of the ticket price for the flights cancelled amid the coronavirus-triggered lockdown. The guidelines came six days after the Supreme Court directed that a full and immediate refund should be given to passengers for the air tickets cancelled between March 25 and May 24. No domestic passenger flights operated in the country in this period. The top court had, on October 1, also passed directions about the refund and credit shell formation for the bookings and cancellations done during the other time periods around the lockdown. Based on the court order, the DGCA categorised passengers in three categories -- those who booked tickets between March 25 and May 24 for travelling within the same period, those who booked tickets prior to March 25 but the travel period was till May 24, those who booked tickets anytime but for a journey post May 24.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/airlines/-aviation/dgca-issues-detailed-refund-guidelines-after-sc-verdict/articleshow/78540273.cms>

Guwahati Airport's new Rs 1232 crore integrated terminal expected to be ready by June 2022

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has undertaken work for the construction of new Integrated Terminal Building at Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport (LGBI)/ Guwahati International Airport at a cost of Rs.1232 crores. Construction is scheduled to be done by June 2022. LGBI airport currently handles over six million passengers, annually. The new terminal is expected to be able to handle 4,300 domestic and 200 international passengers during peak hours and about 10 million passengers, annually. Equipped with 64 checks in counters, 20 self check-in kiosks, six baggage carousels, in-line baggage security screening system and 10 aero bridges, the terminal will be an energy efficient building.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/airlines/-aviation/guwahati-airports-new-rs-1232-crore-integrated-terminal-expected-to-be-ready-by-june-2022/articleshow/78534525.cms>

COVID-19 impact: Homebuyers prefer ready projects; southern cities lead completions

The rising preference for ready and completed projects in the backdrop of concern over deliveries is getting underscored further during the current Covid19 induced uncertainty. Completed projects are emerging as the other segment apart from affordable and mid-segment projects that is clicking with homebuyers. The low proportion of completed projects in total unsold inventory is indicating this preference. Out of total 792,490 completed projects that were launched between 2013 and the recently concluded September

quarter across India, around 90% have already been sold, showed data from ANAROCK Property Consultants.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/property/-construction/covid-19-impact-homebuyers-prefer-ready-projects-southern-cities-lead-completions/articleshow/78539640.cms>

Union Cabinet approves Bengaluru suburban rail project

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday, cleared the 148-km-long Bengaluru suburban rail project, bringing relief to the people of Bengaluru who have been for long demanding the project execution. The formal announcement was not made in the media briefing after the cabinet meeting due to the model code of conduct in force for RR Nagar and Sira bypolls. The South Western Railway officials confirmed the development. With the cabinet approvals, the railways could now call for the tender and start the civil work. A special purpose vehicle The Karnataka - Rail Infrastructure Development Company Ltd (K-RIDE) will execute the work.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/union-cabinet-approves-bengaluru-suburban-rail-project/articleshow/78538839.cms>

15 companies submit applications to operate passenger trains

Cube Highways, GMR Highways, IRCTC, Larsen and Toubro (L&T) are among 15 companies which have submitted applications to qualify for operating passenger trains in the country. In all, 150 applications were received for 12 clusters where private trains will be operated. The ministry of railways had invited request for qualification (RFQ) for private participation in operation of passenger train services over 12 clusters comprising 140 origin destination pairs of routes through introduction of 151 modern Trains to increase high quality trains operated on the network. The project has an estimated investment of Rs 30,000 crore.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/15-companies-submit-applications-to-operate-passenger-trains/articleshow/78537586.cms>

Telecom

Telcos, handset makers oppose proposal to raise transmission power of mobile phones

Telcos and handset makers are likely to seek the government's intervention to block a proposal of a local standards body to the International Telecom Union (ITU) calling for sharply increasing the transmit power of mobile phones to ensure ubiquitous 5G mobile coverage in rural India. The Telecom Standards Development Society, India (TSDSI), which is pushing for a country-specific 5G standard, wants to boost the power transmission level of 5G handsets to 26 dBm from 23 dBm in India to ensure they talk to mobile towers spaced 12 km apart in villages, instead of the standard 6 km.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-news/telcos-handset-makers-oppose-proposal-to-raise-transmission-power-of-mobile-phones/articleshow/78530976.cms>

States

Delhi to allow reopening of cinemas, theatres with 50% seating capacity from October 15

The Delhi government on Wednesday permitted reopening of cinemas, theatres and multiplexes with up to 50 per cent of their seating capacity from October 15. According to an order issued by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), such establishments will remain closed in COVID-19 containment zones in the city. The DDMA also allowed all weekly markets to function with immediate effect. Until now, only two such markets were being allowed in every municipal zone every day. Taking to Twitter, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said that cinema halls will be allowed to reopen from October 15 and they will have to follow all guidelines issued by the central government.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/delhi-to-allow-reopening-of-cinemas-theatres-with-50-seating-capacity-from-october-15/articleshow/78537902.cms>

Healthcare

Government to launch awareness campaign to check spread of coronavirus

The government would launch a campaign from Thursday to spread awareness on the measures people need to follow to check the spread of coronavirus, Union minister Prakash Javadekar said. Addressing a

press conference here on Wednesday on the decisions taken by the Union Cabinet, he said till the time a vaccine is available, people need to wear masks, maintain distance and sanitise hands as part of efforts to check the spread of the virus. He said following the three rules is a major defence against the virus. The government has all along been urging people to follow these measures to prevent the spread of the virus. Posters, banners and stickers would come up at public places and on metros, auto rickshaws and other public transports to spread the message, he said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/government-to-launch-awareness-campaign-to-check-spread-of-coronavirus/articleshow/78533845.cms>

External

Container non-availability a challenge for export sector currently: FIEO

Non-availability of containers for the export sector is causing a concern for meeting delivery commitments of foreign buyers, apex exporters' body FIEO said on Wednesday.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President Sharad Kumar Saraf said that from the past couple of months, in spite of offering space for three to four weeks ahead, shipping lines are shutting out the containers abruptly giving reasons that the vessels are full.

He also said sea freights have started increasing gradually since July and all the shipping lines have increased the freights by 20 per cent to 40 per cent depending on the destinations.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/container-non-availability-a-challenge-for-export-sector-currently-fieo-120100700829_1.html

India's rice exports could jump to record on Thailand drought effects

India's rice exports in 2020 may rise by nearly 42% from a year ago to record highs because of reduced shipments from rival exporters and a depreciating rupee, industry officials said this week. Higher shipments from India, the world's biggest rice exporter, could cap global prices, reduce the country's bulging inventories and limit Indian state stockpiler purchases from farmers.

India's rice exports could jump to 14 million tonnes in 2020, up from last year's 9.9 million tonnes, the lowest in eight years, said B.V. Krishna Rao, president of the Rice Exporters Association. "Thailand's shipments are falling due to the drought. Vietnam is struggling because of lower crop. That share is naturally coming to India," Rao said.

Thailand, the world's second-largest rice exporter, suffered through a drought earlier this year that has affected the rice crop. Shipments in 2020 could fall to 6.5 million tonnes, the lowest in 20 years.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/markets/india-s-rice-exports-could-jump-to-record-on-thailand-drought-effects-120100700482_1.html

Centre rejects raw jute import plea by mills

The Centre has turned down mills' plea to import raw jute from Bangladesh, contending that there is enough stock for the next few months.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/centre-rejects-raw-jute-import-plea-by-mills/article32795027.ece>

India hopeful of working with EU towards FTA, says Goyal

India is hopeful of working with the European Union towards a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), possibly starting with a Preferential Trade Agreement, for an early harvest to get faster outcomes, said Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/india-hopeful-of-working-with-eu-towards-fta-says-goyal/article32796103.ece>

By 2021, as many as 150 million people likely to be in extreme poverty due to COVID-19: World Bank

The World Bank on Wednesday warned that by 2021, as many as 150 million people are likely to be in extreme poverty because of the coronavirus pandemic and countries will have to prepare for a "different economy" post-COVID by allowing capital, labour, skills and innovation to move into new businesses and sectors.

The COVID-19 pandemic is estimated to push an additional 88 million to 115 million people into extreme poverty this year, with the total rising to as many as 150 million by 2021, depending on the severity of the economic contraction, according to the Washington-based global lender.

This would represent a regression to the rate of 9.2 per cent in 2017, according to the biennial Poverty and Shared Prosperity Report. Had the pandemic not convulsed the globe, the poverty rate would have been expected to drop to 7.9 per cent in 2020, it said. "The pandemic and global recession may cause over 1.4 per cent of the world's population to fall into extreme poverty," World Bank Group President David Malpass said.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/by-2021-as-many-as-150-million-people-likely-to-be-in-extreme-poverty-due-to-covid-19-world-bank/2099894/>