



October 15, 2020 - Thursday

Key Developments

Govt plans to implement labour codes on April 1, starts shaping rules

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government has plans to bring into effect new labour laws across the country from April 1. "We intend to implement the new labour codes from April 1. We have begun the process of giving shape to the rules that are to be framed under the codes and we are confident of finalising them in last quarter of this fiscal year," Union Labour and Employment Secretary Apurva Chandra said here on Wednesday.

Industries will have to file single return to the authorities under the new labour law regime. Further, the number of minimum wages that industries have to comply with are set to reduce to 12 from 540 under central labour laws and to 180-200 under the state laws, compared to over 9,000 at present. However, an important task would be that the States also frame their rules by March, 2021. The new codes give powers to the State governments to make rules as they will have jurisdiction over most of the establishments.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-plans-to-implement-labour-codes-on-april-1-starts-shaping-rules-120101400887_1.html

Decision to waive off compound interest must be implemented by Nov 2: SC

The government decision's to waive off compound interest payment for small borrowers during the six-month moratorium period should be implemented by November 2, said the Supreme Court on Wednesday, according to multiple media reports.

The government's decision is welcome, but we need to see concrete results on the ground, said the court as it set November 2 as the next date of hearing in the matter, according to CNBC-TV18. The Centre's decision to fund the compound interest payment will come at a cost of Rs 6,500 crore, a senior government official told Business Standard earlier this week.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/decision-to-waive-off-compound-interest-must-be-implemented-by-nov-2-sc-120101400856_1.html

RBI says farm loans excluded from resolution framework; lists out loan categories eligible for scheme

The Reserve Bank of India today clarified that the farm credit exposures of all lending institutions, including NBFCs, are excluded from the scope of the resolution framework. However, the Reserve Bank added that the loans to allied activities, such as dairy, fishery, animal husbandry, poultry, bee-keeping, and sericulture would be eligible for the resolution scheme. It further said that the loans given to farmer households would be eligible for resolution if they do not meet any other conditions for exclusions listed in the resolution framework. RBI today released FAQs on the resolution framework for Covid-19 related stress.

In further clarifications, the central bank said that loans that have remained standard without any defaults as of 1 March 2020, will be eligible for restructuring. Also, the actual debt that may be considered for resolution will be outstanding as of the date of invocation. The clarification also said the new definition of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) effective June 26, will not impact their eligibility for resolution but will be based on the definition that existed as of March 1, 2020.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/banking-finance/rbi-says-farm-loans-excluded-from-resolution-framework-lists-out-loan-categories-eligible-for-scheme/2105197/>

Corporate insolvency | Default threshold of ₹1 crore to apply only prospectively: NCLAT

The revised default threshold of ₹1 crore for trigger of corporate insolvency applies prospectively from March 24 and not retrospectively, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has ruled.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/corporate-insolvency-default-threshold-of-1-crore-to-apply-only-prospectively-nclat/article32852093.ece>

Tax relief for private company staff too for LTA spends on consumer goods

Private sector employees who opt to spend their leave travel allowance on the purchase of consumer goods, along the lines of the latest scheme unveiled for central government employees, will be eligible for tax exemption. "Tax benefit would be available... Mechanism is being examined and a clarification would be issued shortly," a government official told ET.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/tax-relief-for-private-company-staff-too-for-lta-spends-on-consumer-goods/articleshow/78672041.cms>

Economy

WPI inflation rises to 1.3% in September mainly on costlier food items

The wholesale price-based inflation rose to 1.32 per cent in September mainly on the back of costlier food articles."The annual rate of inflation, based on monthly WPI, stood at 1.32 per cent (provisional) for the month of September, 2020 (over September, 2019) as compared to 0.33 per cent during the corresponding month of the previous year," government data showed on Wednesday.

The wholesale price-based inflation stood at 0.16 per cent in August. The wholesale price index based (WPI) inflation was in the negative territory for four straight months -- April (-) 1.57 per cent, May (-) 3.37 per cent, June (-) 1.81 per cent and July (-) 0.58 per cent.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/wpi-inflation-rises-to-1-3-in-september-mainly-on-costlier-food-items-120101400501_1.html

Indian economy will recover from crisis with right policies: IMF official

The Indian economy, severely hit by the coronavirus pandemic, would be well placed to start recovering from the horrible crisis with the government making efforts on both the fiscal and monetary side in addition to putting in place structural elements, a top IMF official has said. The International Monetary Fund in its annual World Economic Outlook significantly downgrades India's growth for the fiscal year 2020 to minus 10.3 per cent.

At the same time, IMF said that India is likely to bounce back with an impressive 8.8 per cent growth rate in 2021, but for this New Delhi needs to ramp up its efforts in various fields. In terms of what can be done going forward, clearly on the fiscal side, the IMF believes there is more that can be done to provide support to households and firms that have been affected by the pandemic, Malhar Shyam Nabar, Division Chief, Research Department, IMF, told reporters on Tuesday at a news conference here on the eve of the annual meetings of the IMF and the World Bank.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/indian-economy-will-recover-from-crisis-with-right-policies-imf-official-120101400528_1.html

India's public debt ratio to jump to 90 per cent because of Covid-19: IMF

India's public debt ratio, which remarkably remained stable at around 70 per cent of the GDP since 1991, is projected to jump by 17 percentage points to nearly 90 per cent because of increase in public spending due to COVID-19, the IMF said on Wednesday.

"In our projections, the increase in public spending, in response to COVID-19, and the fall in tax revenues and economic activity, will make public debt jump up by 17 percentage points to almost 90 per cent of GDP, Vitor Gaspar, Director of the IMF's Fiscal Affairs Department told PTI.

"Going forward it is projected to stabilise in 2021, before slowly declining up to the end of the projection period, in 2025. Broadly speaking the pattern of public debt in India is close to the norm around the world, he said.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-s-public-debt-ratio-to-jump-to-90-per-cent-because-of-covid-19-imf-120101401005_1.html

RBI launches latest round of quarterly survey of manufacturing sector

The Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday launched the latest round of its quarterly Order Books, Inventories and Capacity Utilisation Survey (OBICUS) of the manufacturing sector which will provide valuable inputs for monetary policy formulation. "The survey (Round 51) is for the reference period July-September 2020 (Q2:2020-21)," the central bank said in a statement. The RBI has been conducting the OBICUS of the manufacturing sector on a quarterly basis since 2008.

The information collected in the survey includes quantitative data on new orders received during the reference quarter, backlog of orders at the beginning of the quarter, pending orders at the end of the quarter, and total inventories with a breakup between work-in-progress and finished goods inventories.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/rbi-launches-latest-round-of-quarterly-survey-of-manufacturing-sector/2105565/>

43% Indian consumers record decline in household income: Experian Global

Credit information company Experian on Wednesday said 43 per cent of Indian consumers witnessed a decline in their household income owing to the impact caused by the pandemic. It added that these households were concerned about their well-being. Though this concern was not only restricted to consumers, 53 per cent Indian businesses highlighted health & safety of customers as the biggest challenge.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/43-indian-consumers-record-decline-in-household-income-experian-global/articleshow/78658994.cms>

Banking and Finance

Gross NPAs of banks may jump to 11.5% by end of FY21: Care Rating

The gross non-performing assets (NPAs) ratio of Indian banks is likely to be 11 to 11.5 per cent by end of current fiscal and they are likely to restructure 4 to 5 per cent of the overall bank credit outstanding, according to Care Rating. Besides, the asset quality data post the COVID-19 lockdown is uncertain due to a developing regulatory scenario. Multiple stakeholder objectives and moratorium computation with various firms have varying ways of computing moratorium, said the rating agency.

The disruptions caused by coronavirus pandemic have further deteriorated the health of banking industry which was already reeling under severe stress for several years. The GNPA ratio of scheduled commercial banks stood at 8.2 per cent in Q1 FY21 against 9.5 per cent in the same period of last year. Care said the end of FY21 GNPA numbers will move significantly ahead from the 8.5 per cent level witnessed at the end of FY20 be moderated by the one-time restructuring scheme and ongoing write-offs.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/gross-npas-of-banks-may-jump-to-11-5-by-end-of-fy21-care-rating-120101400712_1.html

Delinquencies could become a big reason to worry for auto lenders

Delinquencies could go up sharply for lenders to automobile buyers, especially in the commercial vehicles segment as the transport business reels from over-capacity and wafer-thin margins, according to analysts at research and ratings firms ICRA. In March this year, the share of loans with payments pending for over 90 days past the due date (DPD) was highest since 2014 at 3.5 per cent of the industry's retail portfolio, ICRA said in a presentation. Subsequently, retail as well as wholesale financing to the automobile industry was under pressure as lenders get more cautious. Delinquencies could go up to at least 6-8 per cent of the lenders' retail portfolios in the commercial vehicles segment, he said. There were a lot of enquiries by transport operators to surrender their vehicles to the lenders.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/auto-news/delinquencies-could-be-a-big-reason-to-worry-for-auto-lenders/articleshow/78660658.cms>

Industry

15% of start-ups have halted operations due to Covid-19 pandemic: Report

The impact of Covid-19 has been severe on the Indian start-up ecosystem during the lockdown as 15 per cent of start-ups have halted operations. According to a report by TIE Delhi-NCR and Zinnov, 44 per cent of start-ups have cash runway for less than 6 months, 41 per cent of startups have been impacted negatively while 52 per cent are struggling to raise capital. The report witnessed decline in overall pace of investments, especially in April to June 2020, 48 per cent year on year decline in funding and 37 per cent year on year decline in number of deals in the quarter.

As per the report, less than 50 start-ups raised their first round of funds in Q2 2020. There was a sharp dip in percentage share of total funding for B2C start-ups from 65-70 per cent in Q1 2020 to 30-35 per cent in Q2 2020.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/15-of-start-ups-have-halted-operations-due-to-covid-19-pandemic-report-120101400695_1.html

Volumes in automobile industry to decline across segments

Volumes in the automobile industry this year is expected to decline by 22-25 per cent in the passenger vehicle (PV) segment, 16-18 per cent in two-wheelers, 17-20 per cent in light commercial vehicles (CVs) and 35-40 per cent in medium and heavy commercial vehicles, said ICRA on Wednesday. Tractors may buck the trend to grow by 7-8 per cent, it said.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/volumes-in-automobile-industry-to-decline-across-segments/article32855359.ece>

Digital ad spends likely to get a big boost this festive season

With e-commerce driving consumption in Covid times, digital advertising spends are likely to see a significant uptick this festive season. Besides Google and Facebook, which roughly corner around 75% of the digital advertising pie, short video platforms are also gearing up, with some possibly looking at their first monetization opportunities in the coming weeks.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/advertising/digital-ad-spends-likely-to-get-a-big-boost-this-festive-season/articleshow/78664055.cms>

Agriculture

Less sugar and more ethanol, the survival mantra for Maharashtra sugar mills

As Maharashtra sugar mills start crushing season on Thursday they have a target to fulfil — not to produce excess sugar but produce 104 crore litres of ethanol.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/less-sugar-and-more-ethanol-the-survival-mantra-for-maharashtra-sugar-mills/article32852859.ece?homepage=true>

Infrastructure

Govt to offer incentives for affordable rental housing complexes development: Hardeep Singh Puri

The government is extending several incentives including free Floor Space Index (FSI), concessional project finance, free of cost trunk infrastructure facilities amongst others to push the participation in the Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHCs) scheme for urban poor and migrants, said Hardeep Singh Puri, Minister of State, Housing and Urban Affairs.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/property/-/cstruction/govt-to-offer-incentives-for-affordable-rental-housing-complexes-development-hardeep-singh-puri/articleshow/78663825.cms>

Housing sales may increase by 35% in Oct-Dec on festive demand: Report

The coming festive season is likely to witness a surge in demand for residential properties and the housing sales may rise 35 per cent across the top seven cities during the October-December period on a quarter-on-quarter (QoQ) basis, according to Anarock Property Consultants. In the July-September quarter, the major seven markets collectively reported the sale of 29,520 housing units.

"The reason for the rise is the prevailing lowest-ever home loan interest rates, developers' willingness to offer good deals and discounts, coupled with limited-period government incentives such as reduced stamp duty and registration charges in markets like MMR," said Santhosh Kumar, Vice-Chairman, Anarock Property Consultants.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/housing-sales-may-increase-by-35-in-oct-dec-on-festive-demand-report-120101400542_1.html

States must consider cutting stamp duty on property registrations to boost demand: Housing secy

Housing and Urban Affairs Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra on Wednesday asked states to reduce stamp duty on registration of properties as it will help reduce the overall real estate cost and boost housing sales. Addressing a webinar organised by CREDAI in collaboration with Nangia Andersen India, Mishra said the government has taken various measures in the past six years for revival of this sector such as enactment

of realty law RERA. finance ministry as well as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have taken several steps during the lockdown to address the concern of the real estate sector, he added. "Measures taken during the past six years and also during the lockdown have started showing results," Mishra said. The secretary noted that the property registrations in Mumbai, Maharashtra, have improved and are back to pre-COVID-19 level.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/states-must-consider-cutting-stamp-duty-on-property-registrations-to-boost-demand-housing-secy/2105533/>

Govt invites proposals for development of EV charging infrastructure on major highways

The government has invited proposals for installation of charging stations from entities that intend to build and operate charging infrastructure on major highways and expressways in the country. The Department of Heavy Industries has floated an Expression of Interest for inviting proposals from government organisations, PSUs (State/Central), state-owned DISCOM, Oil PSUs and similar other public and private entities to build and operate Public EV charging infrastructure. Proposals have been invited from interested entities to build and operate EV charging infrastructure on the Mumbai - Pune, Ahmedabad-Vadodara, Delhi-Agra Yamuna, Bengaluru-Mysore, Bengaluru-Chennai, Surat - Mumbai, Agra - Lucknow, Eastern Peripheral and Hyderabad-ORR Expressways.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/govt-invites-proposals-for-development-of-ev-charging-infrastructure-on-major-highways/articleshow/78654723.cms>

Gadkari to initiate blasting process for Zojila tunnel construction work tomorrow

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday will initiate the first blasting for construction related work at the 14.15 km Zojila tunnel that will provide all-year connectivity between Srinagar valley and Leh, the government said. The project holds strategic significance as Zojila Pass is situated at an altitude of 11,578 feet on the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh National Highway and remains closed during winters due to heavy snowfall. At present it is one of the most dangerous stretches in the world to drive a vehicle and this project is also geo-strategically sensitive.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/gadkari-to-initiate-blasting-process-for-zojila-tunnel-construction-work-on-oct-15/articleshow/78661180.cms>

39.43 lakh domestic air passengers in Sept, 66% lower than last year: DGCA

A total of 39.43 lakh domestic passengers travelled by air in September this year, 66 per cent lower than the corresponding period last year, the country's aviation regulator DGCA said on Wednesday. As many as 21.07 lakh and 28.32 lakh people travelled by air domestically this July and August, respectively, the regulator had said last month. While IndiGo carried 22.66 lakh passengers in September, a 57.5 per cent share of the total domestic market, SpiceJet flew 5.3 lakh passengers, which is 13.4 per cent share of the total market, according to data shared by the DGCA.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/airlines/-aviation/39-43-lakh-domestic-air-passengers-in-sept-66-lower-than-last-year-dgca/articleshow/78658748.cms>

Telecom

Telecom a force-multiplier for all sectors, is an essential service: COAI

The telecom sector with transformational powers is set to be a force-multiplier for other sectors, and the government needs to view it as an essential service and enabler for industries, not as the lucrative sector for attracting revenues, industry body COAI said on Wednesday.

Speaking at a virtual event organised by industry think-tank BIF, Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) Director General SP Kochhar said the advent of 5G means that artificial intelligence, augmented reality, virtual reality, robotics and other futuristic technologies will "grow and partake telecom and vice versa". "This sector is going to empower as a force multiplier, and all other sectors will build on this foundation of telecom," Kochhar said.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/telecom-a-force-multiplier-for-all-sectors-is-an-essential-service-coai-120101400834_1.html

Energy

Govt allows ADNOC to export crude oil stored in Indian strategic reserves

The Cabinet has permitted Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) to export crude oil it has stored in Indian strategic reserve and lowered the quantity of crude oil it must always keep in the emergency stockpile in a bid to make it commercially more attractive for the foreign investor. ADNOC and Saudi Aramco, the two companies that have shown interest in filling Indian strategic reserves, have been demanding the freedom to re-export crude from Indian strategic reserves with the ambition to make India a regional crude storage hub from where they can serve neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. "The modifications, including increase in commercial quantity for #ADNOC to 50%, re-exporting crude to third countries with the first right of refusal to Indian companies as well as coastal movement of crude from/to strategic petroleum reserve will enhance commercial viability of crude storage by #ADNOC," the oil ministry tweeted after the Cabinet decision to modify the model under which the UAE's Adnoc had stored 0.75 million tonnes of oil at a reserve in Mangalore.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/govt-allows-adnoc-to-export-crude-oil-stored-in-indian-strategic-reserves/articleshow/78665165.cms>

PFC offers funding facility to discoms for timely payments of outstanding dues

State-owned Power Finance Corporation has introduced a facility for electricity distribution companies (discoms) to avail funds for paying their dues to power generation companies (gencos), a move that will help in avoiding late payment charges as well as earn rebates for timely payments. Mounting outstanding dues of discoms has been a perennial issue in the country. The outstanding dues of discoms as of August stood at Rs 1.32 lakh crore compared to nearly Rs 97,000 crore in the same month last year, as per PRAA (Payment Ratification And Analysis in Power procurement for bringing Transparency in Invoicing of generators) portal. PFC's credit facility would be available to discoms under the policy for offering Revolving Bill Payment Facility (RBPF) to discoms/ gedcos for ensuring early payment of dues to gencos/ transcos/ trading companies, an official told.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/pfc-offers-funding-facility-to-discoms-for-timely-payments-of-outstanding-dues/articleshow/78662713.cms>

The green wall that could be disrupting India's economic recovery

In an anti-climax of sorts for India's coal sector, no foreign mining company bid for any of the mining blocks the government had opened for commercial mining. Of the 38 blocks that went under the hammer, only 23 received bids and none from a foreign miner.

This absence is a telling commentary on why Indian companies are turning green, despite the early days of recovery. Indian companies are borrowing abroad hugely—almost 50 per cent of what they borrowed from domestic sources, in 2010-20.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/the-green-wall-that-could-be-disrupting-india-s-economic-recovery-120101400854_1.html

India's green energy sector may get bag full of investments in next 3 years; thanks to these factors

Investments in the renewable energy sector may climb as much as 35 per cent as global investors eye Indian markets with a bag full of investments. Whetted global investor interest and enabling regulations can fuel the addition of as much as 35 GW of renewables capacity, involving Rs 1.5 lakh crore of investments, in the three years through fiscal 2023, showed a CRISIL estimate. The investment may see a 35 per cent growth over the Rs 1.1 lakh crore invested in the past three fiscals, the estimate further showed. On the back of India's drive towards the usage of clean energy, the project tenders are getting oversubscribed amid strong participation by global investors.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/indias-green-energy-sector-may-get-bag-full-of-investments-in-next-3-years-renewables-foreign-investors/2105409/>

Solar manufacturing gap between India, china growing, says report

The gap between solar manufacturing in India and China has been increasing with leading Chinese manufacturers making aggressive investments in capacity expansion and new technology, according to a recent report by renewable energy consultancy firm, Bridge To India. "Long-term viability of the Indian manufacturing sector depends on its capacity to compete with leading Chinese manufacturers on cost of production, scale and technology," the report on solar manufacturing said. It also noted that it would be challenging for Indian manufacturers to bridge the cost disadvantage with the Chinese players. "Indian companies are banking mainly on tariff barriers and incentives in form of capital and/or operating cost subsidies," it said. The biggest risks they face are those of policy uncertainty and lack of in-house technology.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/solar-manufacturing-gap-between-india-china-growing-says-report/articleshow/78663583.cms>

States

Developing ecosystem for setting up 10,000 start-ups: Uttar Pradesh govt

The Uttar Pradesh government on Wednesday said that an enabling ecosystem was being created for setting up 10,000 start-ups across different sectors in the state. Under the new UP Startup Policy 2020, the Adityanath government is targeting to set up 10,000 start-ups and 100 incubators, including the country's largest incubator in Lucknow, spanning all the 75 districts of the state. According to UP Additional Chief Secretary, IT and electronics, Alok Kumar, 18 incubators have already become operational.

"At present, 2,850 start-ups are functional in UP and their number is fast expanding. The incubators are proposed to be developed in all the divisions and districts of the state."

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/developing-ecosystem-for-setting-up-10-000-start-ups-uttar-pradesh-govt-120101401020_1.html

Maharashtra Cabinet decides to withdraw draft pulses Bill

A decision was taken today by Maharashtra cabinet to withdraw the draft of the Maharashtra Pulses (Regulation of Price and Control) Act, 2016, a press statement issued by Chief Minister's office said.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/maharashtra-cabinet-decides-to-withdraw-draft-pulses-bill/article32855928.ece>

Healthcare

A digital medical ID for everyone: India prepares ground for unique healthcare revamp

A \$23-million program offering a digital health ID to every citizen could bolster India's economic growth amid the coronavirus pandemic, according to the head of the country's health authority. The National Digital Health Mission, which aims to create a repository of doctors and health facilities across India — in addition to digitizing citizens' health records — will lead to cost savings and better economic outcomes, Indu Bhushan, chief executive officer of the National Health Authority, said in an interview. Analysis of Big Data on health "will lead to better planning, budgeting and implementation for states and health programs, which should be a big cost optimizer," said Bhushan, who compared the gains produced by the "new digital highway" to those from building physical infrastructure such as roads.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/a-digital-medical-id-for-everyone-india-prepares-ground-for-unique-healthcare-revamp/articleshow/78656653.cms>

Covid fatality rate 1.2% without co-morbidities, 18% with them: Government data

The overall case fatality rate of people with co-morbidities like diabetes, hypertension, renal and heart diseases and cancer is 17.9 per cent, while it is 1.2 per cent for those without co-morbidities, according to health ministry data. Overall deaths due to the infection in India remain at 1.5 per cent of total confirmed cases. Till Monday, India recorded 1,09,856 deaths due to Covid-19, whereas the total confirmed cases of the infection stood at 71,75,880. Over 62.27 lakh patients have recovered from the disease so far.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/covid-fatality-rate-1-2-without-co-morbidities-18-with-them-government-data/articleshow/78653404.cms>

ICMR approaches experts panel to approve testing of cancer drug acalabrutinib for Covid treatment

India's health research body-Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has approached government's panel of experts to approve testing of acalabrutinib, a cancer drug as part of the World Health Organization's global 'Solidarity' trial. The WHO's trial is testing drugs to find an effective treatment for Covid-19. ICMR's National AIDS Research Institute (NARI) had presented a proposal to the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) formed to review Covid related proposals seeking to amend Solidarity's ongoing protocol by adding a trial arm to test acalabrutinib. At present, Remdesivir and Dexamethasone are used as part of treatment in such COVID patients. However, as per the proposal, such patients included in Acalabrutinib arm may not receive these drugs.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/icmr-approaches-experts-panel-to-approve-testing-of-cancer-drug-acalabrutinib-for-covid-treatment/articleshow/78653314.cms>

External

India should resist misleading allure of domestic mkt; boost exports: Study

India should resist the misleading allure of the domestic market and should zealously boost exports, according to a research paper co-authored by former chief economic advisor Arvind Subramanian.

The paper, jointly authored by Subramanian and Pennsylvania State University professor Shoumitro Chatterjee, said India is turning inward, domestic demand is assuming primacy over export orientation and trade restrictions are increasing, reversing a three-decade trend. "Resisting the misleading allure of the domestic market, India should zealously boost export performance and deploy all means to achieve that," said the paper, titled 'India's Inward (Re)Turn: Is it Warranted? Will it Work?'.

It added that abandoning export orientation will amount to killing the goose that lays golden eggs and indeed to killing the only goose laying eggs. "Alas, to embrace *aatmanirbharta* (self-reliance) is to choose to condemn the Indian economy to mediocrity."

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-should-resist-misleading-allure-of-domestic-mkt-boost-exports-study-120101400952_1.html

Bangladesh, Bhutan may beat India on economic front; worst GDP contraction threat looms

The coronavirus pandemic has marked a black swan event for the Indian economy, which is projected to perform worse than weaker countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Maldives in the year 2020. The per capita GDP of Bangladesh is expected to grow at 4 per cent in 2020 to \$1,888 while India's per capita GDP is expected to fall by 10.5 per cent to \$1,877, the lowest in the last four years, according to IMF World Economic Outlook report. With only Pakistan and Nepal performing lower than India, the country may become the third poorest nation in South Asia.

All emerging market and developing economy regions are expected to contract this year, including notably emerging Asia, where large economies such as India and Indonesia continue to try to bring the pandemic under control.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/bangladesh-bhutan-may-beat-india-on-economic-front-worst-gdp-contraction-threat-looms/2105141/>

'India, Arab countries can partner to develop oil, gas reserves'

India and the Arab countries, in the Gulf and West Asia, can explore the forging of partnerships and investments to develop the oil and gas reserves of the country, a top Ministry of External Affairs official has said. Diversification of trade basket beyond hydrocarbons is important, says MEA.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/india-arab-countries-can-partner-to-develop-oil-gas-reserves/article32855776.ece>

Covid dims diamond's sparkle

Diamond exports from India are set to tumble by as much as a quarter this year as the pandemic crushes demand and breaks supply chains. Slump in India's diamond exports much worse than in 2008, says Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/covid-dims-diamonds-sparkle/article32851777.ece>