



January 28, 2021 – Thursday

Key Developments

Covid-19 unlock: MHA releases new guidelines — swimming pools for all, more can watch films in halls; check details

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Wednesday allowed cinema halls and theatres to operate with more people while swimming pools have been permitted for use by all in fresh COVID-19 reopening guidelines. According to these new guidelines, to be effective for February 1, there shall be no restriction on inter-state and intra-state movement of people and goods including those for cross land-border trade under treaties with neighbouring countries.

No separate permission/ approval/ e-permit will be required for such movements, the MHA said. All activities have been permitted outside containment zones, except a few which will be subject to strict adherence of SOPs.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/lifestyle/health/covid-19-unlock-mha-releases-new-guidelines-swimming-pools-open-for-all-more-can-watch-films-in-halls-check-details/2180095/>

New disinvestment policy cleared by the Cabinet

The new policy for Public Sector Enterprises is understood to have been cleared by the Union Cabinet on Wednesday. A broadsheet for disinvestment is expected to be announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Union Budget to be presented on February 1. A senior government official told BusinessLine that the matter was discussed at the Cabinet meeting. “Finance Minister may make a separate announcement on this issue,” the official said indicating that the policy may be part of the Budget announcement.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/new-disinvestment-policy-cleared-by-the-cabinet/article33678493.ece?homepage=true>

Tighter norms on anvil to appoint directors rejected by shareholders

SEBI on Wednesday proposed stricter norms for re-appointment of managing directors or whole-time directors of listed companies. The regulator has said that the person rejected by a listed company’s shareholders as managing director or whole-time director can be appointed or re-appointed to the posts only after the company fulfils various conditions, including providing detailed justifications. If company shareholders reject the candidature of the persons again, such persons cannot be considered for appointment as director or continue as a director for two years. The proposals are part of a discussion paper floated by SEBI to receive comments from the market participants.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/markets/stock-markets/tighter-norms-on-anvil-to-appoint-directors-rejected-by-shareholders/article33678848.ece>

Economy

Farming share in GDP may rise about 18% in FY21, but will the tiller gain?

Agriculture has been among the few bright spots in an otherwise gloomy Covid-19-affected economic scenario and is expected to clock a positive growth in FY21, as per the first advanced estimate released a few weeks back.

However, the extent to which this has translated into higher incomes for farmers remains to be seen because the same provisional data puts inflation impact in 2020-21 at about 3.9 per cent, down from 7.4 per cent in 2019-20.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/farming-share-in-gdp-may-rise-about-18-in-fy21-but-will-the-tiller-gain-121012701190_1.html

Budget should ensure strong and targeted public expenditure to address K-shaped recovery: Experts

The government needs to ensure strong expenditure growth in the Union Budget with targeted fiscal support to address the K-shaped recovery being witnessed by the Indian economy, according to experts. While public expenditure would boost near-term growth, a credible medium-term fiscal consolidation path would be a positive for investors and rating agencies looking at the Indian economy, felt a panel of experts at a virtual conference hosted by the National Council for Applied Economic Research on Wednesday. "Profits are recovering faster than wages, capital is recovering faster than labour, upper-income groups have fared much better than lower-income groups, this has implications for not just income inequality but for steady state demand, this K-shaped recovery," said Sajjid Chinoy, chief India economist at JP Morgan.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/budget-should-ensure-strong-and-targeted-public-expenditure-to-address-k-shaped-recovery-experts/articleshow/80485420.cms>

Govt should eye better collections than higher taxes for funds: KPMG Survey

A fund-starved government will be better off looking at increased collections fuelled by an economic recovery and improved technology driven enforcement rather than through the introduction of new taxes, a KPMG survey showed on Wednesday. According to the pre-budget survey 2021-22, only 2 per cent of the respondents feel that raising taxes would be the solution to mobilise additional revenue for the government that sees an increase in its expenditure due to the pandemic. A majority (20 per cent) held that the Government's revenue needs can be met through increased collections fuelled by an economic recovery as well as improved technology driven enforcement (49 per cent). The KPMG survey conducted in January 2021 has tried to capture the expectations of all important stakeholders on various tax aspects of the budget. In all, 250 respondents across sectors participated in the survey.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-should-eye-better-collections-than-higher-taxes-for-funds-kpmg-survey-121012701064_1.html

FinMin releases Rs 12,351 cr to 18 states for rural local bodies grant

The Finance Ministry on Wednesday said it has released Rs 12,351 crore to 18 states for providing grants to the rural local bodies. This amount is the second instalment of basic grants released in the financial year 2020-21, the ministry said in a statement.

"The Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance has released an amount of Rs 12,351.5 crore to 18 States for providing grants to the Rural Local Bodies (RLBs)," it said. The grants to RLBs are released as per the recommendations of the 15th Finance Commission to create community assets and improve the financial viability of the rural local bodies. The 15th Finance Commission has recommended two types of grants basic and tied -to the RLBs. Basic grants are untied and can be used by the local bodies for location-specific felt needs except for salary or other establishment expenditure.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/finmin-releases-rs-12-351-cr-to-18-states-for-rural-local-bodies-grant-121012700935_1.html

I-T refunds worth Rs 1.81 lakh cr issued so far in FY21

The Income Tax Department on Wednesday said it has issued over Rs 1.81 lakh crore worth refunds to more than 1.74 crore taxpayers so far this fiscal year. Of this, personal income tax refunds of Rs 62,231 crore have been issued to over 1.71 crore taxpayers and corporate tax refunds of Rs 1.19 lakh crore have been issued in 2.12 lakh cases. CBDT issues refunds of over Rs. 1,81,336 crore to more than 1.74 crore taxpayers between 1st April, 2020 to 25th January, 2021, the department tweeted.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/i-t-refunds-worth-rs-1-81-lakh-cr-issued-so-far-in-fy21/2180076/>

These tax, legal reforms in Budget 2021 may boost Indian economy as tax revenue seen at record low

The pandemic has thrown the global economies into disarray. In addition to serious health implications for the humankind, the unrelenting crisis has left an indelible impact on economies across the world as well. In response, governments worldwide have introduced various fiscal measures. Amidst the high expectation of a pandemic-struck

country, the Indian Government is treading a tightrope with tax revenues at an all-time low and surmounting pressure to kickstart the economy. Several tax and legal reforms are expected to shape up India in 2021.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/budget/these-tax-legal-reforms-in-budget-2021-may-boost-indian-economy-as-tax-revenue-seen-at-record-low/2179836/>

Taxpayers eye Union Budget 2021; PLI scheme, labor tax reforms, others, may aid Atmanirbhar Bharat vision

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and with an objective to build a self-reliant India, the Hon'ble PM gave a clarion call for an AATMARNIRBHAR BHARAT. Subsequently, the government initiated several measures focusing toward this direction. However, the pandemic imposed restrictions have confined the pace of related reforms. Stakeholders have high expectations from the upcoming Union Budget for introducing measures to foster indigenous businesses. Listed below are some tax proposals which could aid the AATMARNIRBHAR BHARAT initiative.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/budget/taxpayers-eye-union-budget-2021-pli-scheme-labor-tax-reforms-others-may-aid-atmanirbhar-bharat-vision/2179777/>

Banking and Finance

No change in CRISIL rating grades for banks: RBI

The central bank said Wednesday that commercial lenders can use CRISIL grades in determining the capital requirement benchmark after the rating company, also engaged in other advisories, formed a dedicated subsidiary to assess creditworthiness. "Banks may, therefore, use the ratings of the CRISIL Ratings Limited for the purpose of risk weighting their claims for capital adequacy purposes," the central bank said. Rating company Crisil underwent an internal restructuring, a process through which it transferred the rating business of CRISIL Ltd to CRISIL Ratings Ltd. "The rating-risk weight mapping for the long term and short-term ratings assigned by CRISIL Ratings Limited will be the same as was in the case of CRISIL Limited and there is no change in the rating symbols earlier assigned by CRISIL Limited," the central bank said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/banking/no-change-in-crisil-rating-grades-for-banks-rbi/articleshow/80484106.cms>

HDFC Bank: Growing dependence on corporate loans isn't a long-term positive

Among those which have announced the December quarter (Q3) results so far, HDFC Bank saw the highest earnings upgradation (8– 11 per cent) for FY22 on the back of strong results. In the near-term though, the stock has been a laggard, down six per cent in a week.

With high foreign portfolio investor concentration and foreign investors lately turning sellers in emerging markets including India, HDFC Bank stock's price correction may just be a technical adjustment.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/hdfc-bank-growing-dependence-on-corporate-loans-isn-t-a-long-term-positive-121012701165_1.html

Bonds in India head for losses on PM Modi's near-record borrowing plan

India is poised to sell a near-record amount of debt in the coming fiscal year, pressuring a sovereign bond market that's increasingly worried about support from the central bank. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government may announce a gross borrowing plan of 10.6 trillion rupees (\$145 billion) for the 12 months starting April in its budget announcement on Feb. 1, according to a median forecast of 15 analysts surveyed by Bloomberg News.

That's less than the record 13.1 trillion rupees estimated for the current year, but 75% above the previous five years' average. As a result, the 10-year sovereign bond yield may rise about 40 basis points from current levels to 6.30% by end-December, its first advance in three years, a separate survey showed.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/bonds-in-india-head-for-losses-on-modi-s-near-record-debt-sales-121012700296_1.html

Insolvency: 'Prior to admission' delays dragging down efficiency of IBC

India would do well to focus on capacity building at the National Company Law Tribunals (NCLT) and address the inordinate delays at the admission stage for insolvency applications if more efficiency is to be brought into the implementation of the nearly five-year-old insolvency and bankruptcy code (IBC). These are among the several

recommendations that consultancy firm Alvarez & Marsal India put together in a new paper, 'The Next Phase of the IBC Must Focus on Efficiency'.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/insolvency-prior-to-admission-delays-dragging-down-efficiency-of-ibc/article33677072.ece>

BoB CEO warns about stress in retail, SME loans; QIP likely this qtr

Bank of Baroda (BoB) CEO Sanjiv Chadha has warned about a build up in stress in the retail and SME book as the disruption caused by the Covid 19 pandemic has changed the matrix for both individual loans as well as small enterprises which were earlier seen as safer lending options. "There may be some know unknowns in the retail and SME books which are not stress tested unlike the corporate book for which we have a fair bit of visibility. We are seeing some unprecedented stress and some of it may not be anticipated," Chadha said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/banking/bob-ceo-warns-about-stress-in-retail-sme-loans-qip-likely-this-qtr/articleshow/80483408.cms>

Industry

Piyush Goyal seeks India Inc's help to ensure startups don't sell out 'cheap' to international investors

Days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a Rs 1,000-crore seed fund for startups, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal has now urged established Indian businesses and entrepreneurs to "dedicate a portion of their wealth, value to support startups particularly for early-stage investing." Speaking at the TiECon event on Wednesday, Goyal noted that Indian startups have not been able to get adequate domestic capital even as the government has tried to provide seed capital and guarantees through banks that lend money to startups. "If all our businesspersons can pool their resources, maybe an initial Rs 10,000-crore fund, which is domestically driven and professionally managed with no role of government in it, but handhold our indigenous startups, I think we will not sell out cheap to international investors. We will be able to get true value by the time they go out in the market for listing or fundraise. This will music to my ears," Goyal added in a discussion with online classifieds company Info Edge's Sanjeev Bikhchandani.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/piyush-goyal-urges-entrepreneurs-to-mentor-startups-dedicate-a-portion-of-wealth-for-initial-rs-10000-cr-startup-fund/2180009/>

Consumer goods companies need to revisit business models post Covid-19 to withstand future disruptions: EY India study

The Covid-19 outbreak requires consumer product companies, that found ways to manage short-term disruptions during the pandemic, to revisit existing business models to maintain relevance and withstand future disruptions, said the latest report by consultancy firm EY India. According to EY Future Consumer Index (FCI) that tracked what the post-Covid-19 consumer could look like, about 80% consumers will be more cautious about their physical and mental health. While 36% are changing their brand preferences to support local businesses, about 75% consumers will pay more attention to the environmental impact of products they purchase.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/fmCG/consumer-goods-companies-need-to-revisit-business-models-post-covid-19-to-withstand-future-disruptions-ey-india-study/articleshow/80476680.cms>

As demand returns, FMCG majors post strong Q3

FMCG companies are seeing demand rising on the back of falling Covid-19 cases, increased mobility, resumption of economic activities led by a strong rural demand, and a pick-up in urban demand. Hindustan Unilever, Marico and Emami on Wednesday reported double-digit growth in their profits for the third quarter. HUL posted a consolidated net profit of ₹1,938 crore in the quarter ended December 31, an increase of 18.82 per cent compared to the year-ago period's ₹1,631 crore.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/companies/as-demand-returns-fmCG-majors-post-strong-q3/article33678600.ece?homepage=true>

Strong order book, healthy execution to cushion revenue blow for road EPC companies: Crisil

Moderation in overall revenue growth for road-building engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) companies will be limited to 5-8 per cent this fiscal despite a 16 per cent de-growth logged in the first half. Various

road EPC companies, whose operations were impacted because of Covid-19-led lockdowns, have seen good revenue recovery since the second quarter, with order booking riding strong on steady awarding by government agencies and operations back to near normal, according to Crisil.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/strong-order-book-healthy-execution-to-cushion-revenue-blow-for-road-epc-companies-crisil/article33674996.ece>

Why green tax may not boost replacement demand for vehicles

The government's proposal to impose "green tax" on old vehicles may not trigger a meaningful surge in the replacement demand given the lower quantum of tax. Therefore, a major upward revision in the automobile demand estimates by analysts pertaining to the latest proposal looks less likely. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has approved a proposal to levy a tax at the rate of 10-25% of the annual road tax paid by commercial fleet owners for vehicles which are older than eight years. The tax will be as high as 50% in cities with high pollution. A heavy truck with a capacity of 16 tonnes or more incurs a road tax of Rs 15,000-40,000 annually.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/auto-news/why-green-tax-may-not-boost-replacement-demand-for-vehicles/articleshow/80483722.cms>

Smartphone market down just 4% in 2020 on higher demand in second half of the year

India's smartphone market declined a meagre 4% to cross 150 million unit shipments in the year 2020, lifted by high consumer demand in the second half of the year which alone accounted for 100 million shipments for the first time ever, according to Counterpoint Research. Xiaomi recaptured the number one spot with 26% share in the October-December quarter, followed by Samsung's 20%, Vivo's 15%, Realme's 11% and Oppo's 10% share.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/electronics/smartphone-market-down-just-4-in-2020-on-higher-demand-in-second-half-of-the-year/articleshow/80477293.cms>

Agriculture

Fertiliser sales up 12% year-on-year in April-December period

Fertiliser sales volume have witnessed a growth of 12% year-on-year in 2020-21, according to rating agency Icria. It expects a strong fertiliser volume growth with rabi sowing reaching 67.5 million hectare after a healthy Kharif season driven by favourable monsoons, healthy reservoir levels and government measures for the sector. The FY 2021 is to be a pivotal year for the fertiliser industry characterised by record sales volume growth, healthy profitability and allocation of additional subsidy which will lead to removal of subsidy backlog and improvement in the credit profile, it said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/indl-goods/svs/chem-/-fertilisers/fertiliser-sales-up-12-year-on-year-in-april-december-period/articleshow/80483634.cms>

Govt hikes MSP of milling copra by Rs 375 per quintal; ball copra up Rs 300/qtl

The government on Wednesday approved an increase in the minimum support price (MSP) of milling copra by Rs 375 per quintal and ball copra by Rs 300 per quintal to boost farmers' income. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has given its approval for the minimum support prices (MSPs) of copra for 2021 season. The MSP for fair average quality (FAQ) of milling copra has been increased to Rs 10,335 per quintal from Rs 9,960 per quintal for 2020 season, while the MSP for ball copra has been increased to Rs 10,600 per quintal from Rs 10,300 per quintal last year.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/govt-hikes-msp-of-milling-copra-by-rs-375-per-quintal-ball-copra-up-rs-300/qtl/articleshow/80478733.cms>

Piyush Goyal asks ICAR to explore possibilities to grow imported fruits

Commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal, on Wednesday, asked Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) to coordinate with commerce ministry to examine data of imported agri produce and explore possibilities of growing these in the country towards becoming self sufficient. "We import flowers worth Rs 230 crore while the import value of fruits is around Rs 5,000 crore. ICAR can get the data from commerce ministry and evaluate the kind of soil used, amount of fertiliser and water required and surrounding markets where these can be sold," Goyal said while addressing 92nd annual general meeting of ICAR.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/piyush-goyal-asks-icar-to-explore-possibilities-to-grow-imported-fruits/articleshow/80482546.cms>

Kerala achieves self-sufficiency in milk production

Kerala Minister for Dairy Development K Raju has declared that the State has achieved self-sufficiency in milk production. This has been achieved in the face of adverse circumstances including inclement weather and the Covid-19 pandemic, he told newsmen here. "During 2019-20, Kerala State Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (Milma) procured an average 12.5 lakh litres of milk per day. The per day sales was at an average of 13.37 lakh litres. To meet excess demand, we had to rely on cooperative institutions in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka," the minister said. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/kerala-achieves-self-sufficiency-in-milk-production/article33674679.ece>

Kenya taking over global markets, Indian tea producers look inward for price recovery

As Kenya is flooding the global black tea consuming markets with the commodity due to higher production in the country, Indian tea producers are relying more on the domestic market this year for better price recovery. Tea prices have already gone up 20% in the past three months and are expected to remain firm owing to scarce supply. Kenyan tea production has gone up to 500 million kg, up 16.2% from 430 million kg last year. High production has pulled down prices of Kenyan tea in the world markets to \$1.8-2 per kg, which is much lower than the price at which India exports its teas. Besides, the lockdown in the UK following the outbreak of a new strain of coronavirus has also impacted Kenyan tea prices as the UK is one of the largest importers of Kenyan teas. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/kenya-taking-over-global-markets-indian-tea-producers-look-inward-for-price-recovery/articleshow/80481831.cms>

Infrastructure

Home sales at pre-Covid level; overall sentiment optimistic: Knight Frank

Sales of residential units across eight major Indian metros – Kolkata, Chennai, Pune, National Capital Region (NCR), Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Ahmadabad – reached pre-Covid levels at 61,593 units in the December 2020 quarter (Q4'CY20) and the sentiment is likely to improve further, according to Knight Frank-FICCI-NAREDCO Real Estate Sentiment Index for the October – December 2020 period. On average, these cities recorded total sales of 61,467 units in 2019, data show.

The residential segment outlook, according to the survey findings, was supported by pent-up demand, multi-decadal low home loan interest rates, attractive residential prices and state government incentives such as reduction of stamp duty in Maharashtra.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/markets/home-sales-at-pre-covid-level-overall-sentiment-optimistic-knight-frank-121012700565_1.html

DDA receives over 50,000 applications for housing scheme

DDA receives over 50,000 applications for housing scheme Delhi Development Authority's Housing Scheme 2021 has received booking amounts from more than 2,200 home seekers in the higher income group and middle income group category, where over 1,000 flats are on offer, according to data provided by a DDA official. The authority received 53,316 applications by Wednesday afternoon, of which 11,157 had submitted full details and 3,620 had paid the booking amount. The cost of the 1,354 flats on offer across Jasola, Dwarka, Vasant Kunj and Rohini range from Rs 40.6 lakh to Rs 2.1 crore.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/property/-cstruction/dda-receives-over-50000-applications-for-housing-scheme/articleshow/80483168.cms>

Auto drivers bridge last-mile gap for e-comm companies, kirana shops in smaller towns

E-rickshaws and autorickshaws drivers – who traditionally ferry people - have now shifted to moving goods for e-commerce companies and kirana shops to residents in smaller cities during the Covid-19 crisis. This has helped them with a new stream of business, at a time when people were avoiding public transport for fear of contracting coronavirus. "This last-mile goods delivery business reflects behavioural change in smaller cities like Sitapur,

Shahjahanpur, Sultanpur, Saharanpur,” according to Sameer Aggarwal, Founder and CEO, RevFin, a company that lends money for the unorganised sector, comprising drivers.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/auto-drivers-bridge-last-mile-gap-for-e-comm-companies-kirana-shops-in-smaller-towns/article33678164.ece>

Bengaluru airport to be partially shut for Aero India

The Kempegowda International Airport will partially close commercial flight operations for almost a week due to the closure of airspace over Bengaluru in the backdrop of Aero India 2021 at Yelahanka Air Force Station from February 3 to 5. The airport will also stand by as the diversionary airport for flying display during the practise days and the main show. “BIAL is working with airlines and the IAS to ensure minimal disruption to the existing schedule during the reduced operation hours. To avoid passenger inconvenience, the respective airlines will share timely communication regarding the change in airport operations and the revised flight timings during the Aero India show,” BIAL said in a press release.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/airlines/-aviation/bengaluru-airport-to-be-partially-shut-for-aero-india/articleshow/80483033.cms>

Hyderabad airport secures funds for expansion

GMR Hyderabad International Airport Limited (GHIAL), a subsidiary of GMR Airports Limited and a step down subsidiary of GMR Infrastructure Limited (GMR Group), today announced that the airport company has secured funds to expand the existing Hyderabad airport. “The company said that it had on January 26, 2021 successfully priced an offering of US\$ 300 million bond in the international bond market. GHIAL has entered into a Purchase Agreement to issue and allot US\$ 300 Mn 4.75% senior secured notes of 5 year tenure (the “Notes”),” the company said in a statement.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/airlines/-aviation/hyderabad-airport-secures-funds-for-expansion/articleshow/80483283.cms>

RLDA invites bid for redevelopment of Ernakulum Railway Station in Kochi

The Rail Land Development Authority has invited online bids to select a developer for the redevelopment of Ernakulum Railway Station in Kochi. The project involves two components -station component and commercial. The cost for the station redevelopment, which is a mandatory component is estimated at Rs 229 crore. The station redevelopment component is scheduled for completion in three years. RLDA conducted the online pre-bid meeting on January 25 where over 15 participants including Kalpataru Group, Anchorage Infrastructure, I Squared Capital, Adani Group, GMR Group, Omaxe Group and others attended.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/rlda-invites-bid-for-redevelopment-of-ernakulum-railway-station-in-kochi/articleshow/80482291.cms>

Energy

India inks MoU with IEA for global energy security, sustainability

India on Wednesday inked a strategic partnership agreement with the International Energy Agency (IEA) to strengthen cooperation in global energy security, stability and sustainability. This partnership will lead to an extensive exchange of knowledge and would be a stepping stone towards India becoming a full member of IEA, a power ministry statement said. “The Framework for Strategic Partnership between the IEA members and the Government of India was signed on 27th January, 2021 to strengthen mutual trust and cooperation & enhance global energy security, stability and sustainability,” it said. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by Power Secretary Sanjiv Nandan Sahai and IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-inks-mou-with-ia-for-global-energy-security-sustainability-121012701185_1.html

Govt plans \$41 bn reform in Budget 2021 to revive ailing power discoms

India plans to spend 3 trillion rupees (\$41 billion) on a new plan to revive regional electricity retailers, people with knowledge of the matter said, after a previous attempt failed to stem losses at the utilities. The spending would be spread over a few years and is likely to be unveiled on Feb. 1 as part of the government’s budget for the year starting

April 1, the people said, asking not to be identified as the proposal isn't public. The plan for carrying out reforms for reducing losses of state distribution utilities was sought by the nation's power ministry and is under discussion. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is focusing on turning around electricity distributors to ensure reliable power supplies, improving the financial health of generators and making the sector more attractive to foreign investors. The combined loss at the nation's power distribution companies, mostly controlled by provincial administrations, jumped 69% to 496.2 billion rupees in the year ended March 2019, the latest available data.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-plans-41-bn-reform-in-budget-2021-to-revive-ailing-power-discoms-121012701041_1.html

Branded petrol crosses Rs 100-mark in Rajasthan; prices at all-time high across the country

Branded or premium petrol price crossed Rs 100-mark in Sriganganagar town of Rajasthan as petrol and diesel prices were hiked on Wednesday for the second consecutive day. Petrol and diesel prices were raised by 25 paise per litre each across the country on Wednesday, according to a price notification from oil marketing companies. This took petrol price in Delhi to Rs 86.30 per litre and to Rs 92.86 in Mumbai. Diesel rate climbed to Rs 76.23 a litre in the national capital and to Rs 83.03 per litre in Mumbai, the price data showed. Fuel prices, which vary from state to state depending on local sales tax or VAT, are now at record high levels in the country.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/branded-petrol-crosses-rs-100-mark-in-rajasthan-prices-at-all-time-high-across-the-country/articleshow/80478483.cms>

Healthcare

Surgeries, other health services at Delhi govt-run hospitals to be resumed

In view of the falling number of COVID-19 cases in the national capital, the Delhi health department has decided to resume surgeries, OPDs and other medical services at all city government-run hospitals, according to an official order issued on Wednesday. Delhi recorded 157 fresh COVID-19 cases on Tuesday, the fifth time the daily incidences' count stood below the 200-mark in January, even as the positivity rate dipped to 0.24 per cent. The infection tally in the city stood at 6.34 lakh and the death toll mounted to 10,820 with seven new fatalities, the authorities said.

On Wednesday, the Delhi Health Department issued an order saying, "In supersession of all previous orders in this regard and in view of the decrease in number of COVID-19 cases in Delhi, it is hereby directed that all kinds of surgeries/ invasive procedures/ IPD/OPDs and other medical services shall be started in all hospitals under the government of Delhi, including the society hospitals".

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/surgeries-other-health-services-at-delhi-govt-run-hospitals-to-be-resumed-121012701050_1.html

India's coronavirus vaccine, COVAXIN, likely effective against new British variant: Study

Bharat Biotech's indigenously developed Covaxin can produce neutralising antibodies –a requirement to study its efficacy-against the UK strain, the early study results posted on preprint repository bioRxiv revealed. A preprint is the draft research paper that is shared publicly before it has been peer reviewed. According to the authors, "It was reassuring from the data generated in our laboratory that the indigenous Covaxin following its roll out in vaccination program, could be expected to work against the new UK-variant. It is unlikely that the mutation would be able to dampen the potential benefits of the vaccine in concern," the authors said. A study conducted by Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) on Covaxin showed a comparable neutralization activity of the vaccinated individuals against UK-variant strain.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/pharmaceuticals/indias-coronavirus-vaccine-covaxin-likely-effective-against-new-british-variant-study/articleshow/80478036.cms?utm_source=ETTopNews&utm_medium=HPTN&utm_campaign=AL1&utm_content=23

External

FDI into India increases 37% to \$43.85 billion during April-Nov 2020

Foreign direct investment (FDI) into India increased by 37 per cent to USD 43.85 billion during April-November 2020, according to data by the commerce and industry ministry. Total FDI inflows (including reinvested earnings) during

the eight-month period of the current fiscal grew by 22 per cent to USD 58.37 billion, the ministry said on Wednesday.

"FDI equity inflow received during 2020-21 (April to November, 2020) is USD 43.85 billion. It is the highest ever for the first 8 months of a financial year and 37 per cent more compared to the first 8 months of 2019-20 (USD 32.11 billion)," it said. It added that FDI is a major driver of economic growth and an important source of non-debt finance for the economic development of India.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/fdi-into-india-increases-37-to-43-85-billion-during-apri-nov-2020-121012701216_1.html

Govt may address inverted duty structure for certain steel products in Budget: Sources

The government is likely to address the issue of inverted duty structure for certain steel products in the Budget next week to boost domestic manufacturing, sources said. Inverted duty structure refers to taxation of inputs at higher rates than finished products that results in build-up of credits and cascading costs. Sources said that the government may consider removing customs duties on raw materials used for manufacturing of certain flat-rolled products of stainless steel.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/indl-goods/svs/steel/govt-may-address-inverted-duty-structure-for-certain-steel-products-in-budget-sources/articleshow/80480406.cms>

China says Indian ban on apps violates WTO fair rules of business

China said on Wednesday that the Indian government's decision to keep a ban on 59 Chinese apps was a violation of the World Trade Organization's fair rules of business and would hurt Chinese firms. The ban dates from last year when political tension between the neighbours rose over their disputed border. This month the Indian government decided to keep the ban on TikTok and other apps.

"We urge the Indian side to immediately correct its discriminatory measures and avoid causing further damage to bilateral cooperation," Chinese embassy spokesperson Ji Rong said in a statement.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/china-says-indian-ban-on-apps-violates-wto-fair-rules-of-business-121012700724_1.html

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