



September 30, 2021 – Thursday

Key Developments

Cabinet approves listing of ECGC, capital infusion of Rs 4,400 cr: Goyal

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved capital infusion of Rs 4,400 crore in the state-owned Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC) and its listing through an initial public offering. The government will inject Rs 4,400 crore in the ECGC over a period of five years beginning 2021-22, said Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal told reporters after the Cabinet meeting. He also said Rs 500 crore infusion will be done immediately. The listing of ECGC is likely to happen next year. The minister also informed that exports have totalled Rs 185 billion till September 21, 2021 in the current fiscal. The Cabinet also approved continuation of the National Export Insurance Account (NEIA) scheme and infusion of Rs 1,650 crore Grant-in-Aid over five years. Capital infusion in NEIA will help tap the huge potential of project exports in focus market.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/cabinet-clears-proposal-to-list-state-owned-ecgc-through-ipo-goyal-121092900750_1.html

Govt widens scope of ECLGS, extends scheme deadline till March

The Finance Ministry on Wednesday expanded the scope of the Rs 4.5 lakh crore Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) to support micro, small and medium enterprises facing liquidity issues due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The validity of the scheme has been extended by another six months till March 31, 2022, the ministry said in a statement. The government has been receiving demands from various industry bodies and other stakeholders to extend the scheme to ensure continued support to eligible sectors/businesses, it added. "With a view to support various businesses impacted by the second wave of COVID 19 pandemic, it has been decided to extend the timeline of ECLGS till March 31, 2022, or till guarantees for an amount of Rs 4.5 lakh crore are issued under the scheme, whichever is earlier, the ministry said. Further, it said, the last date of disbursement under the scheme has also been extended to June 30, 2022. The modifications have been made in the scheme to enable support to businesses impacted by the second wave of COVID, it said, adding existing borrowers under ECLGS 1.0 and 2.0 would be eligible for additional credit support of up to 10 per cent of total credit outstanding as of February 29, 2020, or March 31, 2021, whichever is higher.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-widens-scope-of-eclgs-extends-scheme-deadline-till-march-121092900937_1.html

MSME Minister Narayan Rane launches new portal to boost MSME exports globally

MSME Minister Narayan Rane on Wednesday launched MSME body India SME Forum's portal IndiaXports to further enable exports by small businesses globally. The portal is essentially an information and knowledge platform for exports by Indian MSMEs with the required information related to exports for all the 456 tariff lines along with trends in exports, export procedures, etc. According to the government, 'instructor-led orientation' will also be provided to MSMEs through a series of sessions for specific sectors highlighting the opportunities in specific products in international markets. The India Export initiative launched in line with the portal has targetted to support over 1 lakh MSMEs looking to know more about exports and hand holding over 30,000 MSMEs to start exporting. In his address, Narayan Rane said, "To enhance exports and ensure localization, it is essential to make the country a global manufacturing powerhouse by improving India's manufacturing base. This can be achieved by scaling up India's

competitive advantage or augmenting the competitiveness of MSMEs and make India a preferred destination for manufacturing for the world.”

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/msme-exim-msme-minister-narayan-rane-launches-new-portal-to-boost-msme-exports-globally/2340466/>

Economy

I-T dept asks tax officials to take applications for settlement till Sep 30

The Income Tax department has issued an order asking tax officials to accept till September 30, applications for settlement of pending tax cases. The 2021-22 Budget, through the Finance Act, amended the provisions of the Income-Tax Act, 1961 to provide that the Income-tax Settlement Commission (ITSC) shall cease to operate from February 1, 2021. Further, it has also been provided that no application for settlement can be filed on or after February 1, which was the date on which the Finance Bill, 2021 was laid before the Lok Sabha. In order to dispose off the pending settlement applications as on January 31, 2021, the government had constituted an Interim Board for Settlement. Following this, the Finance Ministry had received representations that a number of taxpayers were in advanced stages of filing their application for settlement before the ITSC as on February 1.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/i-t-dept-asks-taxmen-to-accept-applications-for-settlement-till-sep-30-121092900436_1.html

India is said to seek to narrow budget deficit target to 6.3%

India aims to narrow its budget deficit to 6.3% of gross domestic product this fiscal year, or half a percentage point lower than initially targeted, on the back of improving revenues, according to people familiar with the matter. The target reset is buoyed by expectations of robust tax collections in the coming months and achievement of assets-sale target, said the people, who asked not to be identified as the estimates are being discussed internally. The government will maintain its spending targets, with a focus on capital expenditure, they said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/india-is-said-to-seek-to-narrow-budget-deficit-target-to-6-3/articleshow/86612315.cms>

From questioning our competence, tribunals now seek IBBI's help to address regulatory gaps: MS Sahoo

Speed has been the hallmark of the Insolvency Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) ever since its inception. It hit the ground running five years ago, entrusted with making the insolvency framework operational in just 60 days. Today, banks and creditors have recovered more than INR2 lakh crore in more than 360 resolved cases. As he hangs up his boots today, MS Sahoo, chairperson, IBBI, speaks to ET Prime

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/prime/economy-and-policy/from-questioning-our-competence-tribunals-now-seek-ibbis-help-to-address-regulatory-gaps-ms-sahoo/primearticleshow/86621327.cms>

Economic theories need to be revisited post COVID: Report

Theories like Phillips curve which links inflation to economic activity has gone for a toss in the post-COVID world posing challenge for policy makers, a report by SBI economists said. An econometric analysis of the link between inflation and output gap over 15 year or 60 quarters period the link between inflation and output gap was strong between 2016 to 2018 but started weakening since then. "The link is completely lost during the COVID period implying the irrelevance of output gap in explaining inflation in post COVID world even in India" said the report by SBI's research team. "The results do not change if we use core inflation in place of headline inflation".

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/economic-theories-need-to-be-revisited-post-covid-report/articleshow/86615245.cms>

Cabinet nod to 'PM Poshan' scheme for providing cooked meals to school kids

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the roll-out of the 'PM POSHAN in Schools' scheme that will provide hot cooked meal to students of elementary classes in government and government-aided schools across the country. The decision was taken at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The existing mid-day meal scheme will be subsumed into the PM Poshan Shakti Nirman scheme with the addition of several new components in it, Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur said after the meeting. "The CCEA, chaired by Prime Minister, has approved the continuation of 'National

Scheme for PM POSHAN in Schools' for the five years, from 2021-22 to 2025-26, with a financial outlay of Rs 54061.73 crores from the central government and Rs 31,733.17 crore from the state governments and union territory administrations," the government said in a statement. The central government will also bear the additional cost of about Rs 45,000 crore on food grains.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/cabinet-nod-to-pm-poshan-scheme-for-providing-cooked-meals-to-school-kids-121092900887_1.html

Banking and Finance

Banks disburse Rs 7,500 cr under Credit Guarantee Scheme for microfinancing

Banks have fully utilised Rs 7,500 crore under the Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) to benefit the smallest of the borrowers, the finance ministry said on Wednesday. The scheme was announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in June as part of a Rs 6.29 lakh crore package to provide relief to various sectors affected by the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. "Credit Guarantee for MFIs fully utilised within 75 days. Rs 7500 cr sanctioned to #MFIs under #CGSMFI for onlending to small borrowers. Big boost to consumption and livelihoods," the ministry said in a tweet. Under the scheme, lending of up to Rs 1.25 lakh was provided. "#CGSMFI supported 92 NBFC-MFIs/MFIs through 20 lenders. MFR-2 and below MFIs received around 45% of the sanction amount at reasonable rates.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/banks-disburse-rs-7-500-cr-under-credit-guarantee-scheme-for-microfinancing-121092900932_1.html

Rate of growth has to be much higher to 'repair' cash flow of businesses: SBI's Dinesh Khara

Economic activity in India is beginning to reach levels seen before the pandemic, but further acceleration is needed to fully offset the pandemic's impact on the broader economy, State Bank of India (SBI) chairman Dinesh Khara tells Joel Rebello and MC Govardhana Rangan in an exclusive interaction. Edited excerpts:

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/banking/rate-of-growth-has-to-be-much-higher-to-repair-cash-flow-of-businesses-sbis-dinesh-khara/articleshow/86632230.cms>

Government meets Air India bidders to discuss reserve price issue

The government Wednesday met the two bidders for Air India to discuss, among other things, the minimum reserve price that it has decided on for the national carrier, said people with knowledge of the matter. Others said that the government may have taken a view on the bids. "The winner has most likely been decided and a decision on the announcement is to be taken by the government," said one of them.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/airlines/-aviation/government-meets-air-india-bidders-to-discuss-reserve-price-issue/articleshow/86617114.cms>

Industry

Ratio of women at senior, mid-level management positions higher in rural area than cities: Study

Ratio of women at senior- and middle-level management positions in rural areas stood at 21.5 per cent of the total such workforce in 2019-20, which was higher as against 16.5 per cent in cities, according to a study by the National Statistical Office (NSO). In rural areas, the ratio of female workers to total workers in usual status working in senior and middle management positions estimated from PLFS (periodic labour force survey) 2019-20 is 21.5 per cent, which is higher than 16.5 per cent in urban areas (cities), stated the Annual Bulletin PLFS 2019-20 of the NSO. According to the study, the overall (both rural and urban) ratio of women workers in senior and middle management positions stood at 18.8 per cent in 2019-20. Annual Bulletin on Additional Indicators is based on data collected in PLFS, July 2019-June 2020. In rural areas, the ratio of women of age 15-64 years to persons of age 15-64 years in the labour force in usual status estimated from PLFS 2019-20 was also higher at 30.1 per cent, than 23.6 per cent in cities.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/ratio-of-women-at-senior-mid-level-management-positions-higher-in-rural-area-than-cities-study/2340452/>

National Mineral Index a likely solution to keep steel prices reasonable

Introduction of a National Mineral Index for iron ore, the key raw material used in the making of steel, is a plausible solution to keep domestic steel prices reasonable amid rise in demand as consumption is seen growing given the thrust on government infrastructure projects. Domestic steel prices have been rising relentlessly since Apr-June quarter of 2020.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/national-mineral-index-a-likely-solution-to-keep-steel-prices-reasonable-121092900592_1.html

Festive stocking fires up consumer goods sales in September

Sales of consumer products from pulses and edible oils to refrigerators and smartphones improved sequentially in September, after reporting a drop in August, according to the latest data from market trackers and industry estimates. This has raised corporate expectations of buoyant festive season demand, the peak sales period in India. Sales of daily groceries and essentials expanded 1.1% in September, reversing the trend last month when it fell 14.5%, according to Bizom, which tracks 7.5 million retail stores across the country. The month-on-month growth was driven largely by commodities after kiranas stocked more staples and edible oils in anticipation of strong festive demand.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/retail/festive-stocking-fires-up-consumer-goods-sales-in-september/articleshow/86632145.cms>

All charged up & nowhere to go: Electric vehicle firms rue high PLI qualification level

Indian companies that specialise in the manufacturing of electric two- and three-wheelers believe they will be left out of the government's production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme because the qualification criteria are too steep for them to meet. An automaker must have a group-level revenue of at least ₹10,000 crore and have made a minimum investment of ₹3,000 crore in fixed assets to qualify under the recently announced ₹25,938-crore scheme to promote the manufacturing of battery and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles. While appreciative of the scheme, electric vehicle (EV) makers say they would not qualify if the criteria remains the same for everyone. Most of the specialised EV makers are small and several such as Hero Electric, Ather Energy and Kinetic Green are startups.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/renewables/all-charged-up-nowhere-to-go-electric-vehicle-firms-rue-high-pli-qualification-level/articleshow/86632342.cms>

India server market logs \$289.5 mn revenue in Q2 2021: IDC

The server market in India grew 6.4 per cent year-on-year to touch \$289.5 million in revenue in Q2 2021 (April-June) versus \$272 million in Q2 2020, according to the latest IDC Worldwide Quarterly Server Tracker. As per the Q2 2021 tracker (September 2021 release), the x86 server market accounted for 90.4 per cent of the revenue, which is 4.8 percentage points higher compared with the same quarter last year.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/info-tech/india-server-market-logs-2895-mn-revenue-in-q2-2021-idc/article36733677.ece>

Agriculture

Soyabean Prices crash by 50% in a month

Soyabean prices have crashed by close to 50% within a month in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, the top soyabean producing states of the country leading to farmers' protests across the soyabean growing states. After a historical high of Rs 95/kg, prices have crashed to Rs 60-55/kg, depending upon the quality.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/soyabean-prices-crash-by-50-in-a-month/articleshow/86603781.cms>

Infrastructure

'GST on payments of BOT-HAM projects to have little impact on cash flows'

GST levy on annuity payments of BOT-HAM projects will have limited impact on project cash flows, domestic rating agency Icria on Wednesday. "With NHAI reimbursing additional tax burden on account of GST levy on annuity payments for BOT (build-operate-transfer)-HAM (hybrid annuity model) projects, there would be no impact on the cashflows, project debt coverage and return metrics of the concessionaire," Vinay Kumar G, assistant vice-president

and sector head (corporate ratings) of ICRA, said in a statement. For projects bid between July 1, 2017, and October 13, 2017, NHAI would not reimburse the GST on annuity under the change in law as bids were invited inclusive of GST, it said. During the period, HAM projects with an approved total project cost of Rs 4,329.9 crore were awarded. https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/gst-on-payments-of-bot-ham-projects-to-have-little-impact-on-cash-flows-121092900705_1.html

Top 7 cities see 113% rise in housing sales, new launches jump: Report

In Q3 2021, housing sales surged 113 per cent y-o-y across the top 7 cities -- from approximately 29,520 units in Q3 2020 to nearly 62,800 units in Q3 2021, Anarock has said in its latest report. If this growth in sales, MMR or Mumbai metropolitan region for 33 per cent of the total sales, followed by NCR with a 16 per cent share. As per the report, increased sales also improved new launches as it rose in the top 7 cities by 98 per cent yearly - from approximately 32,530 units in Q3 2020 to approximately 64,560 units in Q3 2021. While MMR continued to see the highest number of new launches (of approximately 16,510 units) in the quarter, Hyderabad was close behind with a new supply infusion of approximately 14,690 units. Interestingly, the mid-segment (homes priced Rs 40-80 lakh) and premium homes (priced b/w Rs 80 lakh to Rs 1.5 Cr) continue to dominate new supply with 41 per cent and 25 per cent shares, respectively.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/top-7-cities-see-113-rise-in-housing-sales-new-launches-jump-report-121092900561_1.html

Delhi greenest city for real estate in India; ranks 63rd globally: Report

Delhi is the greenest city for real estate in India but ranks 63rd globally, according to a study by property consultant Knight Frank. London, Shanghai, New York, Paris and Washington DC are the world's top five green cities for real estate. "Globally ranked 63rd, Delhi is the greenest city for real estate in India. Followed by Chennai with a global rank of 224, Mumbai with a global rank of 240, Hyderabad with a global rank of 245, Bengaluru with a global rank of 259 and Pune with a global rank of 260," Knight Frank said in a statement. In its research, the consultant measured 286 cities on a range of factors, such as well-developed public transport networks, urban green space, and a high number of green-rated buildings.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/delhi-greenest-city-for-real-estate-in-india-ranks-63rd-globally-report-121092900897_1.html

CCEA nod for doubling of Nimach-Ratlam railway line

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Wednesday approved doubling of Nimach-Ratlam railway line. The total estimated cost of the project will be ₹1,095.88 crore and its escalated / completion cost is ₹1,184.67 crore, Anurag Thakur, Minister of Information & Broadcasting, Sports and Youth Affairs, told reporters after a Cabinet meeting.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/ccea-nod-for-doubling-of-nimach-ratlam-railway-line/article36733609.ece>

Telecom

Telecom package a relief for Voda Idea, reworking capital raising plans: Kapania

The government's telecom package such as deferring of statutory dues will provide short-term financial relief to Vodafone Idea, while the structural reforms will strengthen the loss-making telco in the long term, its chairman Himanshu Kapania has said. Speaking at the telco's 26th Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Wednesday, Kapania added that recently announced reforms will help preserve a healthy market structure of three private players - Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea (Vi). He said that there is "a change" in how much capital the operator now needs and the management would make those calculations and apply for board approval afresh.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-news/telecom-package-a-relief-for-voda-idea-reworking-capital-raising-plans-kapania/articleshow/86614057.cms>

Energy

Coal India to ramp up supplies to address utilities' fuel shortage

State-run Coal India said on Wednesday it will ramp up supplies to utilities to address a coal shortage that has left most of the country's power plants close to running out of fuel when electricity demand is increasing. "Despatches to coal-fired plants from October onwards are aimed at 1.5 million tonnes per day and beyond 1.6 million tonnes in due course," the miner, which accounts for over 80% of India's coal output said in a statement. India's federal power ministry over a month ago flagged a coal shortage driven by rising electricity demand, and has convened emergency meetings with stakeholders to address challenges, but the coal deficit has widened not shrunk. India's power demand, over 70% of which is met by coal, rose 13.2% in the first eight months of 2021, after declining for the first time in over three decades in 2020.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/coal-india-to-ramp-up-supplies-to-address-utilities-fuel-shortage-121092900826_1.html

Petrol, diesel prices hiked; more to come as crude nears \$80/barrel

Petrol price on Tuesday was hiked by 20 paise per litre and diesel by 25 paise as international oil prices neared USD 80 per barrel mark for the first time in three years. The price of petrol was hiked to Rs 101.39 a litre in Delhi from Rs 101.19 and to Rs 107.47 per litre in Mumbai, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. Diesel rates went to Rs 89.57 a litre in Delhi and Rs 97.21 in Mumbai. Prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes. This is the first price increase in petrol in more than two months and the fourth in case of diesel. The increase followed international oil prices rising for the fifth consecutive day and global benchmark Brent heading for USD 80 per barrel.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/petrol-diesel-prices-hiked-more-to-come-as-crude-nears-80-barrel-121092800296_1.html

Power ministry redesigns renewable energy certificate mechanism

The power ministry on Wednesday announced redesigning of the renewable energy certificates (REC) mechanism which would pave the way for removal of floor as well as forbearance price limits for these instruments. "Union Minister of Power and New & Renewable Energy, R K Singh has given his assent to amendments in the existing Renewable Energy Certificate (REC) mechanism," the ministry said in a statement. The intent behind this decision is to align the mechanism with the emerging changes in the power scenario and also to promote new renewable technologies, it added. The proposed changes will provide some flexibility to the players, additional avenues, rationalisation and also address the RECs' validity period uncertainty issues, the ministry stated. Extensive stakeholder consultations have been held towards drawing up these changes.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/power-ministry-redesigns-renewable-energy-certificate-mechanism/2340496/>

Power Minister R K Singh approves dispute avoidance mechanism for hydro power contracts

Power Minister R K Singh has approved the formulation of 'Dispute Avoidance Mechanism' for construction contracts of central public sector enterprises executing hydro power projects, the power ministry said on Wednesday. The dispute avoidance mechanism mandates the appointment of independent engineers having domain knowledge of the subject for a specific project can have regular oversight over the project, with open communication with all the key stakeholders that can play an effective role in the avoidance of disputes, the ministry said in a release. A "Dispute Avoidance Mechanism" through 'Independent Engineer' (IE), has been given approval by Union Minister of Power, New and Renewable Energy R K Singh, the ministry said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/power-minister-r-k-singh-approves-dispute-avoidance-mechanism-for-hydro-power-contracts/articleshow/86611019.cms>

Long leaps for discoms before they sign up for new reform scheme

As state-owned power distribution companies (discoms) across the country are being pushed by the Centre to come on board for the new reform scheme, ghosts of the past mis-steps continue to haunt them. Be it mounting financial losses, or worsening technical performance, discoms would need to walk many extra miles to become eligible for the new package.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/long-leap-for-discoms-before-they-sign-up-for-new-reform-scheme-121092900637_1.html

Punjab to waive pending bills of consumers having power connection of up to 2 kW

The Punjab government on Wednesday waived power bills of those having electricity connection of up to 2 kW, a move that will put a burden of Rs 1,200 crore on the exchequer. The decision was taken at a meeting of the state Cabinet chaired by Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi here. The Punjab Cabinet also decided that disconnected electricity connections of consumers who could not pay their bills will also be restored. Addressing the media, Channi, "We today decided that consumers having up to 2 kw load, who constitute 80 per cent of total consumers, their arrears will be waived and the government will bear this."

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/punjab-to-waive-pending-bills-of-consumers-having-power-connection-of-up-to-2-kw/articleshow/86611402.cms>

States

Uttar Pradesh looks to promote wine production, set up dozen units

To promote fruit wines in a big way, the government of Uttar Pradesh has made provisions for the promotion of wine production units in the state's Excise Policy 2021-22, top officials said. Although UP has a wine policy, the state does not have a single wine unit. Additional chief secretary excise Sanjay R. Bhoosreddy told FE that at least a dozen wine-making units should come up soon in the major fruit producing regions of the state. The All-India Wine Producers Association (AIWPA) led by Jagdish Holkar met the additional chief secretary last week with regard to taxation issues faced by wineries across the country and offered to help the state in setting up wine units.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/uttar-pradesh-looks-to-promote-wine-production-set-up-dozen-units/2339961/>

Healthcare

Floundering private sales of vaccine in India deal blow to Russia's Sputnik V

Some of India's private hospitals have cancelled orders for Russia's Sputnik V vaccine as they struggle to sell COVID-19 shots amid surging supplies of free doses of other vaccines offered by the government. Some industry officials said low demand and the extremely cold storage temperatures required have spurred at least three big hospitals to cancel orders for Sputnik V, sold only on the private market in the world's biggest producer of vaccines. "With storage and everything, we have cancelled our order for 2,500 doses," said Jitendra Oswal, a senior medical official at Bharati Vidyapeeth Medical College and Hospital in the western city of Pune.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/floundering-private-sales-of-vaccine-in-india-deal-blow-to-russias-sputnik-v/articleshow/86608746.cms>

Education

Schools for junior classes to reopen in Delhi after festival season: DDMA

The DDMA in its meeting on Wednesday decided to reopen schools for junior classes after the festival season, official sources said. The DDMA maintained that the Covid situation in the city is "good" but precautions must be maintained, sources present in the meeting chaired by Lt Governor Anil Baijal said. It was decided during the meeting that "schools for remaining classes will be reopened after Diwali", they said. All the government and private schools in Delhi for classes nine to 12 were allowed to reopen on September 1 by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/schools-for-junior-classes-to-reopen-in-delhi-after-festival-season-ddma/articleshow/86610466.cms>

External

India's external debt rises 2.1 pc to USD 570 billion

India's external debt rose modestly by 2.1 per cent year-on-year to USD 570 billion as of March-end 2021, notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the finance ministry. External debt to GDP ratio rose marginally to 21.1 per cent from 20.6 per cent as at end-March 2020. Reserves to external debt ratio, however, increased to 101.2 per cent from 85.6 per cent during the same period, thereby consolidating the country's position as a net creditor to the world, as per the status report on India's external debt released by the ministry. The sovereign

debt at USD 107.2 billion rose higher by 6.2 per cent over its level a year ago, mainly because of an increase in external assistance more than compensating the fall in FPI investment in government securities (G-Secs), it said.
<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/indias-external-debt-rises-2-1-pc-to-usd-570-billion/2340473/>

Govt working to ensure balanced trade deals: Piyush Goyal

The government is working to ensure balanced trade deals and is in talks with countries with which India has equitable trade interest, said commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal. In an interview with ET's Deepshikha Sikarwar, Goyal - who also handles the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution - said the government will unveil robust e-commerce guidelines that will strike a fair balance in protecting small shopkeepers, internal trade, retailers, and ensure an orderly growth of the economy. Edited excerpts:

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/govt-working-to-ensure-balanced-trade-deals-piyush-goyal/articleshow/86632180.cms>

India's trade pacts with the UK, EU to have separate chapter on sustainable development

India's trade agreements with the United Kingdom and the European Union could have separate chapters on sustainable development, a first for India. The UK and the EU have requested to include a chapter on Trade and Sustainable Development in the prospective trade agreements which could be frozen soon as India and the UK are in the process of finalising the terms of reference of the pact.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/indias-trade-pacts-with-the-uk-eu-to-have-separate-chapter-on-sustainable-development/articleshow/86609331.cms>

Swedish contingent meets K'taka CM, Indian cos CEOs to boost investment

A Swedish delegation met Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai in Bengaluru and interacted with several major Swedish and Indian companies for fostering investment in the state. The foreign delegation was on a two-day visit to Karnataka from September 27-28, according to a press note released on Wednesday by the Swedish Embassy in New Delhi. The Swedish delegation led by Ambassador Klas Molin, the new Trade Commissioner Cecilia Oskarsson along with new counsellors for science, innovation and trade, among others, met Bommai. They attended an investment facilitation seminar with Karnataka Industries Minister and senior state government officials, as also the 'Invest in Karnataka' programme. On Monday, the delegation along with the heads of several Swedish companies attended an investment facilitation seminar with the Karnataka Industries department where company leaders operating in the state highlighted their presence, and discussed investment and future plans that will help them realise their full potential in the state.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/swedish-contingent-meets-k-taka-cm-indian-cos-ceos-to-boost-investment-121092900621_1.html

Basmati exports slip on high freight rates, container shortage

Higher ocean freight rates and shortage of containers continue to hamper Basmati rice exports from India, while importers, too, have deferred their purchases awaiting the arrival of the crop. According to the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) data, Basmati rice exports from India dropped by about 15 per cent during the April-July period of the current fiscal compared with the same period a year ago. Non-Basmati rice exports increased 70 per cent during the review period, though.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/basmati-exports-slip-on-high-freight-rates-container-shortage/article36732474.ece>

India, US to conclude MoU to safeguard satellites from natural, man-made threats

India and the US have decided to conclude by year end an MoU on Space Situational Awareness (SSA), creating a framework for sharing data and services to ensure long-term sustainability of outer space activities in what can protect each other's satellites from man-made or natural threats. The issue of expanding bilateral space cooperation figured during PM Narendra Modi's meeting with the American leadership in Washington last week. The bilateral space cooperation was discussed when Modi met US vice president Kamala Harris, who heads the National Space Council of America.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/science/india-us-to-conclude-mou-to-safeguard-satellites-from-natural-man-made-threats/articleshow/86632984.cms>

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