

November 15, 2021 – Monday

Key Developments

Govt plans progressive steps for digital currencies in India: Report

India is planning progressive and forward-looking measures on issues related to cryptocurrencies, a move that could be a departure from its earlier attempts to restrict the use of virtual coins, according to people familiar with the matter.Prime Minister Narendra Modi led a review meeting on the digital currency on Saturday, and it was decided that the government will continue to proactively engage with experts and other stakeholders on the evolving technology, the people said, asking not to be identified.A spokesperson at the prime minister's office declined to comment.

There have been calls in India to impose stricter rules for transactions in virtual coins as an unregulated environment may push more domestic savings toward the asset class and could endanger household savings. India has had a hot-and-cold relationship with digital currencies in the past few years. In 2018, it effectively banned crypto transactions after a string of frauds following Modi's sudden decision to eliminate 80% of the nation's currencies, but the Supreme Court struck down the restriction in March 2020.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-plans-progressive-steps-for-digital-currenciesin-india-report-121111400314 1.html

Taxpayers can access new annual IT info statement on e-filing portal

The Income Tax department on Sunday said taxpayers can now access the new Annual Information Statement (AIS), which includes additional categories of information like interest, dividends, securities and MF transactions, and remittances from abroad, on the e-filing portal. The I-T department had last month expanded the list of high-value financial transactions, which would be available to taxpayers in their Form 26AS by including details of mutual fund (MF) purchases, foreign remittances, as well as information in ITRs of other taxpayers. Form 26AS is an annual consolidated tax statement that can be accessed from the income-tax website by taxpayers using their Permanent Account Number (PAN). "AIS provides ease of access! It can be accessed now on the e-filing portal & downloaded easily in downloadable formats of PDF, CSV & JSON (machine-readable format). Click on link 'AIS' under 'Services' tab on http://incometax.gov.in," the I-T department tweeted.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/taxpayers-can-access-new-annual-it-info-statementon-e-filing-portal-121111400351 1.html

Expert panel pitches for national dashboard for insolvency data

An expert panel has suggested designing a national dashboard for insolvency data, saying "reliable real-time data" is essential to assess the performance of the insolvency process under the IBC. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), which provides for a time-bound and market-linked resolution of stressed assets, has been in force for more than five years now. The working group on tracking outcomes under the Code has suggested a framework based on 'Effectiveness, Efficiency and Efficacy' with respect to Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP).

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/expert-panel-pitches-for-national-dashboard-forinsolvency-data/articleshow/87696731.cms

Economy

Govt may restructure role, responsibilities of Niti Aayog in line with expert panel suggestions

The government is reviewing the performance of its think tank Niti Aayog to ascertain whether the agency is meeting its objectives for which it was created six year ago replacing the Planning Commission. Sources said that the review is being undertaken at the behest of the prime minister's office (on by a team of external experts under a set up called Niti Evolutionary Committee. This committee is headed by Quality Council of India chairman Adil Zainulbhai, with Bain Capital MD Amit Chandra, Avaana Capital founder Anjali Bansal, former telecom secretary Aruna Sundararajan, founder of Global Alliance for Mass Entrepreneurship Ravi Venkatesan, and the environment PMO) that as there is a feeling that the body is not delivering as per stated objectives and may need a reset in terms of its role and responsibilities so that it could play a more proactive role on policy matters in the country. Sources said that the review of its functioning is already secretary as its members.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/govt-may-restructure-role-responsibilities-of-nitiaayog-in-line-with-expert-panel-suggestions/articleshow/87698110.cms

GST officers unearth Rs 34 crore input tax credit fraud

GST officers have unearthed Rs 34 crore input tax credit fraud, involving seven firms, the Finance Ministry said on Sunday. The seven firms were created to generate bogus GST invoices, with an intent to pass on fraudulent ITC without actual movement of goods and without paying goods and Services Tax (GST) to the government. "Based upon specific intelligence, the officers of the Anti Evasion branch of Central Goods and Service Tax (CGST) Commissionerate, Delhi (East) have unearthed a case of availment /utilisation and passing on of inadmissible input tax credit (ITC) through bogus GST invoices without actual movement of goods of Rs 34 crore (approx)," the ministry said in a statement. These entities have generated fake GST invoices of value Rs 220 crore (approx) and passed inadmissible ITC amounting to Rs. 34 crore (approx). "Rishabh Jain was the mastermind behind running this racket of creating bogus firms and generating/selling bogus GST invoices," the statement added.

https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/gst-officers-unearth-rs-34-crore-input-tax-credit-fraud/2368997/

Hybrid work model to stay with tweaks even as pandemic eases: Experts

With companies bringing in digital transformation and innovations to ensure work continuity amid the Covid-19, a successful hybrid work environment would find its relevance in 2022 too even as pandemic concerns have eased, industry experts have said. The hybrid model means employees work partly on-site or in the office and partly remotely depending upon work requirement and productivity.

Certain industries are thriving on the back of the hybrid model amid the pandemic challenges and the companies are expected to tweak the model to get the best out of it in the next year, experts opined. According to a survey by Nasscom and job portal Indeed, around 70 per cent of IT companies are trying to make the hybrid model work effectively. The survey found that 66 per cent of the respondents reported higher employee satisfaction working remotely.

https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/hybrid-work-model-to-stay-in-2022-with-fine-tweaks-sayexperts/2369033/

India needs collaboration, continuity to solve air pollution: Experts

With Delhi's air quality index fluctuating between severe and very poor category, environment activists and health experts expressed concern over the situation and said that unless there is collaboration and continuity, the country would not be able to solve the crisis. The experts also stated that there should be a plan to decrease pollution from all sources on a long-term basis rather than just taking emergency measures. Vimlendu Jha, an environmental activist told ANI, "In the last 10 days, Delhi has seen extreme severe air quality. The average was 500."The worsening air quality in Delhi-NCR forced the apex court of the country to step in and take cognizance of the national capital's Air Quality Index (AQI) on Saturday.

"Situation has improved not because of Supreme Court's judgement, but because of the wind. Air pollution needs concerted efforts; every stakeholder needs to come together to solve the crisis because it's not a crisis of 2021, but the one that has been there for the last 10 years," Jha added.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-needs-collaboration-continuity-to-solve-air-pollution-experts-121111400539_1.html

Data Protection Authority may have Constitutional status

Ensuring Constitutional status to the proposed Data Protection Authority is among the three main issues to be thrashed out at the November 22 meeting of the Joint Select Committee of Parliament on Data Protection Bill. Most members of the panel are veering towards the view that since it is the government that collects and processes citizens' data, the authority that protects this fundamental right in the digital space should have a more autonomous, Constitutional status rather than a statutory one.

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/data-protection-authority-may-have-constitutionalstatus/article37491618.ece?homepage=true

Banking and Finance

RBI's integrated ombudsman scheme aims for seamless redress of grievances

The integrated ombudsman scheme launched by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which, essentially, amalgamates three existing ombudsman schemes into one, creating a 'one nation, one ombudsman' mechanism, will go a long way in boosting customer confidence in the banking system and make the grievance redressal process seamless by providing a single platform to customers for getting speedy resolutions.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/rbi-s-integrated-ombudsman-scheme-aims-for-seamlessredress-of-grievances-121111400415_1.html

Insurance products preferred financial tools to meet future goals: Survey

Insurance products emerged as the preferred choice of savings and investments for parents after the pandemic, as they consider these as low-risk and reliable financial tools to meet future goals, according to a survey. The #FutureFearless survey -- conducted by Ageas Federal Life Insurance and YouGov India to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the financial preparedness of Indian parents in planning for their children's education -- revealed that saving for academics has taken precedence over other life goals. The survey was based on an online self-administered quantitative method carried out in 11 cities. The responses were collected from 1,333 parents with kids under the age of 10 years.

The increasing cost of education, right from the pre-primary till post-graduation, alongside parents' desire to give the best to their children, has accorded precedence to savings for education over other life goals such as marriage or career, the survey said.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/insurance-products-preferred-financial-tools-to-meet-futuregoals-survey-121111400328 1.html

Govt to soon clear list of independent directors for various banks

The government is expected soon to clear a list of independent directors to be appointed on various public sector banks and financial institutions to meet regulatory norms of corporate governance. There have been vacancies at the independent director level across the public sector space, leading to regulatory non-compliance, sources said. A list of eligible persons to be appointed as independent directors has gone to the Prime Minister's Office and it will take a final call soon, the sources said.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/banking/govt-to-soon-clear-list-of-independentdirectors-for-various-banks/articleshow/87697695.cms

Industry

Buyers must use price variation clauses to absorb impact of commodity price rise: Electrical industry body

The abnormal and unprecedented price rise of all major raw materials, which are critical inputs in the manufacturing of electrical equipment, has made it almost impossible (for manufacturers many of which are MSMEs) to execute contracts that are with fixed price stipulation or have restrictions in price variation (PV) said industry body Indian Electrical & Electronics Manufacturers' Association (IEEMA). Hence, to mitigate the impact, the electrical industry representative body IEEMA has now called for incorporating price variation clauses (PVC) in all contracts consistently to safeguard the interests of both buyers and suppliers.

The prices of raw materials have jumped by 25 per cent to 90 per cent in the past one-and-a-half years. For instance, Aluminium has increased 85 per cent, while Copper has jumped 80 per cent. Steel also has grown in prices by 50-80

per cent while Polymers has witnessed a rise by 50-90 per cent. Transformer Oil has also increased 25 per cent, according to IEEMA.

https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/msme-eodb-buyers-must-use-price-variation-clauses-to-absorbimpact-of-commodity-price-rise-electrical-industry-body/2369005/

Food, grocery, restaurant sectors help India's retail market finally cross pre-Covid sales level

MSME-dominated food and grocery retail market in India has led the retail sales recovery beyond the pre-pandemic levels in October. The sales growth for the food and grocery segment stood at an impressive 31 per cent from October 2019. Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) segment also achieved 29 per cent growth from October 2019 levels. Among the nine sub-sectors in the overall retail sector in India, food & grocery and restaurants segments recorded the highest growth levels in comparison to the pre-pandemic levels. The data was shared by retailers' body Retailers Association of India (RAI) in its latest market survey. Sports good and jewellery markets also achieved scale with 26 per cent and 24 per cent growth respectively in October from 2019 levels.

https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/msme-eodb-food-grocery-restaurants-segments-help-indiasretail-sector-finally-cross-pre-covid-sales-level/2368926/

Eating out in plush restaurants may not pinch you more, just yet

Restaurateurs said they are under pressure due to fluctuating input costs, but will not increase prices in the immediate term and are in a wait-and-watch mode. "Input costs are fluctuating based on fuel prices and other onground supply restrictions. Obviously, weather-related issues in certain geographies of India are also impacting us. We are seeing prices increasing in raw materials and other utilities such as gases and cylinders. It has all happened fairly quickly in the last two months," said Kabir Suri, president of the National Restaurant Association of India and co-founder of Azure Hospitality that operates brands such as Mamagoto and Sly Granny.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/hotels-/-restaurants/eating-out-in-plush-restaurantsmay-not-pinch-you-more-just-yet/articleshow/87689260.cms

Agriculture

FRP: No permission to defaulter mills in Maharashtra to start crushing season

Maharashtra Sugar Commissioner Shekhar Gaikwad reiterated that sugar mills that have failed to pay FRP to farmers will not get permission to start the sugarcane crushing season. The decision might affect overall sugarcane crushing in the State.

Speaking at a recent meeting organised by the State Cooperative Minister Balasaheb Patil in Mumbai Gaikwad said, "Permissions to start sugar mills will not be given till the FRP amount is cleared. This has a positive impact as sugarcane producers are getting their dues. In the next few days, more mills are readying to pay FRP." <u>https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/frp-no-permission-to-defaulter-mills-in-</u> <u>maharashtra-to-start-crushing-season/article37458425.ece</u>

Infrastructure

Let foreign firms fetch hyperloop technology for India: Niti Aayog member

Stating that India has the capacity to come up with its own design of hyperloop technology for ultra-high-speed travel, Niti Aayog Member VK Saraswat on Sunday said since it is going to take time, the country should permit foreign companies to set up a line to demonstrate the technology. Saraswat, who is heading a committee to explore the technological and commercial viability of the Virgin hyperloop technology, further said India should also constitute a regulatory mechanism because safety is a major issue in hyperloop technology.

"Hyperloop is a high-speed train, running in vacuum in a tube. We (expert committee members) have found that there are two ways of doing it, he told PTI in an interview. Hyperloop is a technology proposed by inventor and businessman Elon Musk, who is behind the electric car company Tesla and the commercial space transport company SpaceX. "One is, allowing foreign companies to show demonstrations. Another way is, in parallel, do serious R&D in this particular area, and our studies show that we have a capacity to do R&D and come up with our own designs," Saraswat, former chief of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), noted.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/allow-foreign-firms-to-demonstrate-hyperloop-tech-forultra-high-speed-travel-niti-member-saraswat-121111400187 1.html

Supreme Court's RERA jurisdiction verdict may compel states to amend rules

The Supreme Court's verdict, upholding the jurisdiction of the Real Estate (Regulation & Development) Act, 2016 on all realty projects that were ongoing and had not received Completion Certificate until the law came into effect, is now expected to trigger a major change in state-specific rules modelled on this Act. On Thursday, the apex court affirmed the purview of the RERA Act on all projects that were incomplete and had not received completion certificate until the commencement of the Act.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/property-/-cstruction/supreme-courts-rera-jurisdictionverdict-may-compel-states-to-amend-rules/articleshow/87704107.cms

India, Japan researchers developing tech to map road potholes on smartphone

Researchers from India and Japan are working on smartphone-based mapping of road health in both the countries to reduce the accidents caused due to damaged roads. The joint project by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Roorkee and the University of Tokyo is aimed at developing an affordable and deployable solution for automating the monitoring of road conditions and ultimately enhancing road safety. The team also has inputs from Alexander Mraz, a data scientist from Luxembourg in Europe.

According to road safety experts, the key to road surface condition monitoring is to detect road surface anomalies, such as potholes, cracks and bumps, which affect driving comfort and on-road safety.IIT-Roorkee professor Durga Toshniwal, who is supervising the Indian team in the ongoing research, said the road infrastructure holds critical socio-economic importance for providing vital transportation services to people and commodities worldwide. https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-japan-researchers-working-on-smartphone-based-mapping-of-road-health-121111400359 1.html

New rate policy for major ports

The ministry of ports, shipping and waterways has issued the tariff policy to be followed by major port authorities while setting rates for the services rendered by them. A tariff policy has become necessary after the 11 major ports were converted into 'authorities' under a new law which gave them freedom to fix rates without the approval of a rate regulator.

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/new-rate-policy-for-major-ports/article37490356.ece

Government draws flak on retaining minimum cargo guarantee clause in model pact for private terminal deals

Private investors have decried the Government's decision to retain the minimum guaranteed cargo (MGC) clause in the revised model concession agreement for private participation in cargo handling projects at major ports, despite calls to dispense with it. "The first concern we have as a bidder is there should be no minimum guaranteed cargo. The ministry of ports, shipping and waterways has retained this condition in the revised model concession pact. This is a draconian clause," said the chief executive of a port company, operating terminals at major ports.

<u>https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/government-draws-flak-on-retaining-minimum-cargo-guarantee-clause-in-model-pact-for-private-terminal-deals/article37485293.ece</u>

Energy

PLI funding for solar manufacturing to be raised to Rs 24,000 cr: Minister

The government will soon enhance the funding under the production linked incentive (PLI) scheme for the domestic solar cells and module manufacturing to Rs 24,000 crore from the existing Rs 4,500 crore to make India an exporting nation.

"We brought the PLI scheme (for solar cells and modules) worth Rs 4,500 crore. We invited bids and we got 54,500 MW manufacturing capacity of solar equipment. We asked the government to sanction Rs 19,000 crore more under the PLI, which was approved (in-principle). Now we would have a PLI of Rs 24,000 crore. We would be exporting solar equipment," Power and New & Renewable Energy Minister R K Singh told PTI.The minister also informed that at present solar module manufacturing capacity in the country is 8,800 MW while the solar cell manufacturing capacity is 2,500 MW.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/pli-funding-for-solar-manufacturing-to-be-raised-tors-24-000-cr-minister-121111400203 1.html

States

Putting Delhi's high tension overhead cables underground may cost 3 times more than insulating

The government said in a statement that about 2,264km of bare conductor network will be converted into an insulated network by the three discoms – Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (TPDDL), BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL) and BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL) in Delhi.

The discoms in the city estimate that putting the entire high tension overhead power network in the city underground will cost Rs 2,400 crore or three times more than the cost of insulating it, discom sources said. The majority of high tension wire in the city is already underground or insulated, they added. Delhi is a very old city, much of it is unplanned. Despite this, a large part of the critical electricity network is insulated or underground. In fact, areas which are planned with a high density of population have a higher percentage of underground network, the sources said.

<u>https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/putting-delhis-high-tension-overhead-cables-underground-may-cost-</u> <u>3-times-more-than-insulating/2369012/</u>

Zonal Councils resolving issues between states: Amit Shah

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said the Zonal Councils were able to successfully resolve many contentious issues among states despite being only advisory in nature. "The ancient culture, traditions and languages of southern states enrich India's culture and ancient legacy. India's development cannot be imagined without the very important contribution of these states," the Home Minister remarked.

Shah chaired the 29th meeting of the Southern Zonal Council at the Taj Tirupati here, held after a gap of three years. He said the Zonal Councils provided an opportunity for interaction at the highest level among members for resolution of contentious issues.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/zonal-councils-resolving-issues-between-states-amit-shah/articleshow/87701946.cms

Healthcare

IMA urges Covid vax, including booster dose if needed, for all diabetics

Noticing their vulnerabilities, IMA on Sunday demanded Covid-19 vaccination for all diabetes patients, including a third dose, if needed. The IMA on Sunday launched a campaign for early detection and mitigation of diabetes complications with organising of walkathon, marathon, screening camps, and a social media drive. The campaign also included research paper promotion among young doctors and an "intense" personal intervention at hospitals.

The campaign, launched on the occasion of world Diabetes Day, will run for 10 days and will aim to reach one billion people, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) said in a statement. As part of the campaign, the IMA has joined hands with the association of Physicians of India, RSSDI, Endocrine Society, and many other niche organisations.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/ima-pushes-for-covid-vax-for-all-diabetics-includingbooster-dose-if-needed-121111400491_1.html

External

India on track to achieve historic highs in exports: Union min Piyush Goyal

Union Minister Piyush Goyal on Sunday said India's economy was witnessing a bounce back in every sphere, and the country is well on track to achieve historical highs in goods and services exports. Goyal said India is on course to achieve USD 400 billion of merchandise exports in the current financial year ending March.

"Also, on the services (exports) side, we are well on track to go up to a USD 150 billion. So, collectively we are on track for historic goods and services exports," he said.Inaugurating the India International Trade Fair (IITF) here, the commerce and industry minister said the country witnessed the "highest ever" FDI inflow of USD 27 billion in the first four months this fiscal, a 62 per cent jump over the same period last year. Asserting that the world takes India as a trusted global partner in maintaining global supply chains, Goyal said despite the lockdown, India did not default

on any service support to the global community. The minister also highlighted that the government is implementing the largest vaccination drive in the world, having administered more

https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/india-is-on-track-to-achieve-historic-highs-in-exports-says-unionminister-piyush-goyal/2368984/

India's coal import rises by 12.6% to 107.34 MT in first half of FY22

India's coal import rose by 12.6 per cent to 107.34 million tonnes in the first six months of 2021-22. The country had imported 95.30 million tonnes (MT) of the coal in April-September 2020-21, according to provisional data compiled by mjunction services, based on monitoring of vessels' positions and data received from shipping companies. mjunction--a joint venture between Tata Steel and SAIL--is a B2B e-commerce company and also publishes research reports on coal and steel verticals. However, the country's coal import dropped to 14.85 MT in September, against 19.04 MT in the corresponding month of previous fiscal, it said.

"Coal imports in September 2021 were also down by 21.97 per cent over September 2020 when imports stood at 19.04 MT," it said."The substantial drop in import volumes in September as compared to the same month last year was in line with expectation, given the steady rise in thermal and coking coal prices in the global market. This trend is likely to continue till there is a significant correction and stability in seaborne prices," Vinaya Varma, MD and CEO, mjunction said.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/india-s-coal-import-rises-13-to-107-mt-in-apr-sept-121111400210 1.html

USTR to visit India this month; countries to discuss trade, investment issues

India and the US will discuss ways to promote trade and investments besides increasing cooperation in agriculture sector and intellectual property rights during a meeting this month between US Trade Representative Katherine Tai and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, an official said. The two-day meeting will begin from November 22. The meeting is also important as the 12th ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) is scheduled from November 30 to December 3 in Geneva. Both India and the US are members of the 164-member multilateral organisation which deals with global exports and imports.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/ustr-to-visit-india-this-month-countries-todiscuss-trade-investment-issues/articleshow/87697935.cms

Global investors placing emphasis on companies' ESG performance: Survey

A significant percentage of investors around the world are paying more attention to companies' environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance when making investment decisions and may divest from firms with poor environmental track records, says a survey. According to the 2021 EY Global Institutional Investor Survey, 74 per cent of institutional investors now more likely to "divest" based on poor ESG performance, than before the COVID-19 pandemic. The report, now in its sixth year, canvasses the views of 320 institutional investors across 19 countries, including 15 respondents from India.

According to the report, 92 per cent of investors said they have made decisions over the past 12 months based on the potential benefits of a "green recovery".

https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/global-investors-placing-emphasis-on-companies-esg-performance-survey-121111400442_1.html

