



January 03, 2022 – Monday

## Key Developments

### Centre asks states to re-focus efforts against Omicron, ramp up vaccination

As India faces the third wave of coronavirus amid rising Omicron cases, Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya asked to refocus efforts against the new variant and vaccination of the 15-18 age group. He said no stone can be left unturned in ramping up infrastructure to manage a high surge. He cautioned that globally countries are experiencing 3-4 times the surge in Covid-19 cases in comparison to their earlier peaks. "The Omicron variant being highly transmissible, a high surge in case can overwhelm the medical system," the health minister said.

In a meeting with the state health ministers and senior officials, a day before the vaccination for the age group 15-18 years is launched, Mandviya said, "We have put up a strong fight against Covid earlier and this learning must be used to re-focus on efforts against the Omicron variant."

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/centre-asks-states-to-re-focus-efforts-against-omicron-ramp-up-vaccination-122010200486\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/centre-asks-states-to-re-focus-efforts-against-omicron-ramp-up-vaccination-122010200486_1.html)

### Govt plans tax incentives to make India 'safe, affordable' air sports hub

The civil aviation ministry aims to make India a global hub for air sports by proposing tax incentives and dedicated airspace for aerobatics, hand gliding, sky diving and paragliding, said a policy paper. "The government of India plans to promote the country's air sports sector by way of making it safe, affordable, accessible, enjoyable and sustainable," said joint secretary Amber Dubey in the draft policy released on Saturday. The policy backs promoting design and development of air sports equipment in the country.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-plans-tax-incentives-to-make-india-safe-affordable-air-sports-hub-122010200308\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-plans-tax-incentives-to-make-india-safe-affordable-air-sports-hub-122010200308_1.html)

## Economy

### India's Covid vaccination programme one of world's most successful: Govt

India's vaccination programme against COVID-19 has been one of the most successful and largest in the world, the Union health ministry said on Sunday and termed as misleading some media reports that claimed the country has missed its COVID-19 inoculation targets. Since the start of the national COVID-19 vaccination drive on January 16 last year, India has administered to over 90 per cent of its eligible citizens first doses and 65 per cent second doses. "In a recently published news article by a reputed international news agency, it has been claimed that India has missed its vaccination target. This is misleading and does not represent the complete picture," the ministry said in a statement. In the fight against the global pandemic, India's national vaccination programme has been one of the most successful and largest vaccination programmes when compared to many developed western nations with significantly low population base to vaccinate, it said.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-s-covid-vaccination-programme-one-of-world-s-most-successful-govt-122010200558\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-s-covid-vaccination-programme-one-of-world-s-most-successful-govt-122010200558_1.html)

### Centre tells SC that it has decided to retain Rs 8 lakh income criteria for determining EWS

The Centre has told the Supreme Court that it has decided to accept the recommendation of a three-member panel to retain the current gross annual family income limit for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) of Rs 8 lakh or less. The government said that the panel has recommended that family income is a "feasible criterion" for defining EWS and in the current situation, a threshold of Rs 8 lakh of annual family income seems reasonable for determining EWS. In its affidavit filed in a matter related to admissions for NEET-PG, the Centre said the panel has recommended that "only those families whose annual income is up to Rs 8 lakh would be eligible to get the benefit of EWS reservation". "I respectfully submit that the central government has decided to accept the recommendations of the committee, including the recommendation of applying the new criteria prospectively," Secretary, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, R Subrahmanyam, who filed the affidavit on behalf of the Centre told the top court.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/education-2/centre-tells-sc-that-it-has-decided-to-retain-rs-8-lakh-income-criteria-for-determining-ews/2396257/>

### **India to log 'one of highest growth rates' with support to vulnerable sectors, says economist Ashima Goyal**

Eminent economist Ashima Goyal on Sunday said India is likely to have one of the highest rates of growth in the world as there are gradual moves towards normalisation, even as stimulus and support for vulnerable sectors continue. Goyal further said sticking to the announced consolidation path by the government in the upcoming budget will give a good signal of control and predictability. "India has come out of a very difficult time with good macroeconomic parameters. It is likely to have one of the highest rates of growth in the world, while inflation remains within the tolerance band," she said. Goyal, who is also a member of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the RBI, in an interview to said monetary-fiscal coordination has worked well and stimulus has been adequate but not excessive.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/india-to-log-one-of-highest-growth-rates-with-support-to-vulnerable-sectors-says-economist-ashima-goyal/articleshow/88645733.cms>

## **Banking and Finance**

### **NBFCs to witness revival in growth this year; may see slight uptick in NPAs**

Non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) showed resilience in 2021 despite the coronavirus pandemic woes and are expected to witness continued momentum in growth this year. This year, the growth will be driven by the uptick in the economy, stronger balance sheet, higher provisions and improved capital positions of NBFCs. On the other hand, gross non-performing assets (NPAs) of NBFCs are likely to rise, following the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) move to tighten the NPA norms in November 2021.

"Our baseline assumption is that the worst is behind them (NBFCs) and things will start improving here on. We expect NBFCs to show higher growth and they will benefit from the economy moving up," Crisil Ratings Ltd Senior Director and Deputy Chief Ratings Officer Krishnan Sitaraman said.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/nbfc-to-witness-revival-in-growth-this-year-may-see-slight-uptick-in-npas-122010200236\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/nbfc-to-witness-revival-in-growth-this-year-may-see-slight-uptick-in-npas-122010200236_1.html)

### **Govt may hike agri credit target to about Rs 18 trillion in upcoming Budget**

With a view to give a boost to the agriculture sector, the government is likely to raise farm credit target to about Rs 18 lakh crore in the Budget 2022-23 to be presented on February 1, according to sources. For the current financial year, the government has set a credit target of Rs 16.5 lakh crore. The government has been increasing the credit target for the farm sector every year and this time also, the target is likely to be increased to Rs 18-18.5 lakh crore for 2022-23, the sources said. The number will be frozen at the time of giving final touches to the Budget figure in the last week of the month, the sources said.

The government fixes annual agriculture credit, including crop loan targets for the banking sector. The agricultural credit flow have increased consistently over the years, exceeding the target set for each fiscal. For instance, credit worth Rs 11.68 lakh crore was given to farmers in 2017-18, much higher than the Rs 10 lakh crore target set for that year.

[https://www.business-standard.com/budget/article/govt-may-hike-agri-credit-target-to-about-rs-18-trillion-in-upcoming-budget-122010200289\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/budget/article/govt-may-hike-agri-credit-target-to-about-rs-18-trillion-in-upcoming-budget-122010200289_1.html)

## **YoY growth in credit to MSEs remained negative for third straight month in November: RBI data**

The year-on-year (YoY) growth in gross bank credit deployed to micro and small enterprises continued to be negative for the third straight month in November. The deployment in November 2021 stood at Rs 10.99 lakh crore, down minus 2.2 per cent from Rs 11.23 lakh crore in November 2020, showed latest data by the Reserve Bank of India on bank credit to major sectors. The YoY credit growth to MSEs was minus 0.5 per cent in October and minus 2.6 per cent in September vis-a-vis a positive 1.1 per cent growth in August and 0.2 per cent in July.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/msme-fin-yoy-growth-in-credit-to-mses-remained-negative-for-third-straight-month-in-november/2396231/>

#### **SIP inflows set to soar; cross ₹1-lakh crore till November**

Buoyed by bullish market sentiment, inflows through systematic investment plan into mutual fund schemes is all set to scale a new high with investment through this route already crossing the magical ₹1 lakh crore mark in the first 11 months of 2021. Investment through SIPs has increased 17 per cent to ₹1.05 lakh crore till November last year against ₹90,572 crore logged in same period previous year. The same was up 14 per cent when compared to the pre-Covid level of ₹92,113 crore logged in the first eleven months of 2019.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/money-and-banking/sip-inflows-set-to-soar-cross-1-lakh-crore-till-november/article38094109.ece?homepage=true>

### **Industry**

#### **Domestic cement industry poised for demand recovery in construction season**

With the onset of a busy construction season, brokerages are optimistic of a demand and price recovery in the domestic cement sector in the coming months."Though input prices have seen some moderation recently, a sustainable improvement in demand/price is critical for the industry's profitability going ahead. We remain hopeful of demand/price recovery in the coming months with the onset of a busy construction season," said Emkay Research report. In Q2FY22, higher variable costs affected the profitability of the domestic cement players, leading to an 11 percent year-on-year drop and 17 percent sequential fall in earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation (EBITDA) per tonne. In the third quarter of the current fiscal, cement volumes are likely to have declined in mid-single-digit year-on-year during Oct-Nov'21 due to extended monsoon in many parts of the country and sharp decline in East volumes (on an elevated base and sand mining issues).

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/domestic-cement-industry-poised-for-demand-recovery-in-construction-season-122010200610\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/domestic-cement-industry-poised-for-demand-recovery-in-construction-season-122010200610_1.html)

#### **M-cap of nine of top-10 most-valued firms jumps over Rs 1.11 trillion**

Nine of the top-10 most-valued firms together added Rs 1,11,012.63 crore in market valuation last week, with Tata Consultancy Services and HDFC Bank emerging as the biggest gainers. Reliance Industries Ltd was the only laggard from the top-10 list. The valuation of Tata Consultancy Services jumped Rs 24,635.68 crore to reach Rs 13,82,280.01 crore. HDFC Bank's market valuation gained Rs 22,554.33 crore to Rs 8,20,164.27 crore. The valuation of Hindustan Unilever Ltd zoomed Rs 14,391.25 crore to Rs 5,54,444.80 crore and that of Infosys went up by Rs 10,934.61 crore to Rs 7,94,714.60 crore.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/markets/m-cap-of-nine-of-top-10-most-valued-firms-jumps-over-rs-1-11-trillion-122010200242\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/markets/m-cap-of-nine-of-top-10-most-valued-firms-jumps-over-rs-1-11-trillion-122010200242_1.html)

### **Infrastructure**

#### **Housing sales up 71pc in 2021 in top 7 cities; sales down 10 pc from 2019 pre-COVID level**

Housing sales across top seven cities rose 71 per cent year-on-year in 2021 to 2,36,530 units, but demand fell short of pre-Covid levels by 10 per cent, according to Anarock. Housing sales stood at 1,38,350 units in 2020 and 2,61,358 units in the 2019 calendar year.

Mumbai-based Anarock attributed the rise in housing sales to very low interest rates on home loans, pent-up demand, surge in aspiration for home ownership, cut in stamp duty by a few states including Maharashtra and discounts offered by builders. The fourth quarter contributed nearly 39 per cent to overall sales during the last year, on festive demand and other positive factors.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/housing-sales-up-71pc-in-2021-in-top-7-cities-sales-down-10-pc-from-2019-pre-covid-level/2396215/>

### **In pandemic-hit 2020-21, Railways earned over Rs 500 crore from Tatkal, premium Tatkal tickets**

The Railways earned Rs 403 crore from tatkal ticket charges, an additional Rs 119 crore from premium tatkal tickets, and Rs 511 crore from dynamic fares during 2020-21, even as much of its operations remained suspended through most of the year due to the Covid pandemic, revealed an RTI reply. Passengers in these three categories are usually last minute travellers who avail these services mostly for emergency travel by paying premium charges. In a reply to a RTI filed by Madhya Pradesh-based Chandra Shekhar Gaur, the Railways said that it earned Rs 240 crore from dynamic fares, Rs 353 crore from tatkal tickets and Rs 89 crore from premium tatkal charges in the financial year 2021-22 till September.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/in-pandemic-hit-2020-21-railways-earned-over-rs-500-crore-from-tatkal-premium-tatkal-tickets/articleshow/88647262.cms>

## **Energy**

### **Govt notifies norms for fly ash utilisation by coal-fired power plants**

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has notified the latest amendments to the Environment (Protection) Act for better monitoring and utilisation of fly ash by coal-based thermal power plants (TPPs) in the country. "To reduce the requirement of land for disposal of fly ash in ash ponds and to address the problem of pollution caused by fly ash, MoEFCC has issued various notifications on fly ash utilisation," the ministry said in a notification on December 31, 2021. The ministry has been amending the Environment (Protection) Act from time to time for checking the fly ash problem. The first notification came in September 1999.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/govt-notifies-norms-for-fly-ash-utilisation-by-coal-fired-power-plants/article38093814.ece>

### **ATF price hiked by 2.75%, LPG cut by Rs 102.5**

Halting a declining trend of last month, jet fuel or ATF price has been hiked by 2.75 per cent on firming international oil prices, while cooking gas LPG rate has seen the first decline since October. Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price has been hiked by Rs 2,039.63 per kilolitre, or 2.75 per cent, to Rs 76,062.04 per kl in the national capital, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. The increase in rates comes on back of two rounds of price cuts seen in December that reflected a drop in international oil prices during the second half of November and mid-December. Thereafter, international rates have firmed up, leading to the hike in ATF price.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/atf-price-hiked-by-2-75-lpg-cut-by-rs-102-5/articleshow/88647096.cms>

### **Delhi witnesses rise in power demand in 2021 after a dip in 2020**

Delhi's peak power demand surged to 7,323 MW in 2021, only a shade lower than the all-time high of 7,409 MW in 2019 but considerably higher than the corresponding demand of 6,341 MW in 2020, official statistics on power demand in the national capital reveal. Power distribution companies officials attribute this demand for power in the capital to a devastating second wave of COVID-19 and adverse weather conditions for a prolonged period here.

On a day-to-day basis, Delhi saw a rise in power demand on 227 days of 2021 compared to similar days of 2020, implying that on 61 per cent days of 2021, Delhi needed higher power than what was needed in 2020. The national capital did not experience only cold waves at the beginning and end of the year but also witnessed an intense monsoon that persisted till late October. The city recorded 1,512.4 mm of rainfall till December 29, the second-highest ever.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/delhi-witnesses-rise-in-power-demand-in-2021-after-a-dip-in-2020-122010200495\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/delhi-witnesses-rise-in-power-demand-in-2021-after-a-dip-in-2020-122010200495_1.html)

## **States**

### **UP govt hikes excise revenue target for FY23 to Rs 41,000 crore**

The Uttar Pradesh government is targetting to mop up about Rs 41,000 crore in excise revenue in the next 2022-23 financial year. Compared to the target of Rs 34,500 crore for the current fiscal year 2021-22, the target for the coming year is almost 19 percent higher. The new excise policy announced on Saturday is aimed at augmenting the financial resources of the state by regulating and controlling the manufacture, transport, import, export, sale, and possession of quality liquor. Besides, the new policy aims at providing liquor at reasonable prices, attracting investment, and transforming UP into a self-sustainable producing state. According to UP Additional Chief Secretary, Excise, Sanjay Bhoosreddy, the policy also had the objective of increasing the income of farmers by protecting crops from being destroyed and creating employment opportunities.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/up-govt-hikes-excise-revenue-target-for-fy23-to-rs-41-000-crore-122010200543\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/up-govt-hikes-excise-revenue-target-for-fy23-to-rs-41-000-crore-122010200543_1.html)

### **West Bengal announces fresh curbs, restricts flights from Mumbai, Delhi**

Amid surging Covid-19 cases, the West Bengal government announced fresh curbs effective Monday. The decision came after the State Executive Committee of West Bengal State Disaster Management Authority recommended a review of the current restrictions and relaxations in view of the Covid situation and concerns due to the “high rate of infectivity” and multiple cases of the Omicron variant. The restrictions were announced by Chief Secretary, H K Dwivedi, who said that direct flights from the UK were being temporarily suspended from tomorrow. The Civil Aviation Ministry had already been informed, the Chief Secretary said. He also said that flights from Mumbai and Delhi were being restricted to twice a week from January 5. Rising Covid cases prompted a fresh set of curbs from the West Bengal government. The number of new Covid cases was surging in the state and stood at 4,512 on January 1; it was at 1,089 on December 29, 2,128 on December 30, and 3,451 on December 31. Till January 1, 19 had tested positive for Omicron, and 15 were active.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/west-bengal-announces-fresh-curbs-restricts-flights-from-mumbai-delhi-122010200596\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/west-bengal-announces-fresh-curbs-restricts-flights-from-mumbai-delhi-122010200596_1.html)

### **J&K will become first Union Territory to have district-level good governance index, says Jitendra Singh**

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Sunday said that Jammu and Kashmir will soon become the first Union Territory in the country to have a district level good governance index. The framework of the proposed index has been finalised with the technical support from the Centre for Good Governance (CGG) of Hyderabad, he said here. Singh announced this after receiving an update from newly appointed secretary of the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), V Srinivas. Singh, who is the minister of state for personnel, said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is keen that “we should replicate in Jammu and Kashmir, the same best practices of governance which are followed in other states and UTs (union territories) of the country”. He said that for a long time, as a result of certain constitutional and administrative constraints, many central rules were not applicable in Jammu and Kashmir, but in the last over two years, there has been a fast-track attempt to change the work culture and to follow the mantra of “Maximum Governance, Minimum Government”.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/jk-will-become-first-union-territory-to-have-district-level-good-governance-index-says-jitendra-singh/2396402/>

### **PM Modi to launch multiple projects in Manipur, Tripura on January 4**

Prime minister Narendra Modi will visit Manipur and Tripura on January 4. Modi will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of 22 projects worth over Rs 4800 crore. Manipur is going to assembly polls early this year. PM Modi will inaugurate the New Integrated Terminal Building at Maharaja Bir Bikram Airport and will also launch two key development initiatives.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/pm-modi-to-launch-multiple-projects-in-manipur-tripura-on-january-4/articleshow/88652350.cms>

## **Healthcare**

### **New COVID-19 cases in India rise sharply for fifth consecutive day**

India reported more than 27,000 new COVID-19 cases on Sunday, with infections sharply rising for a fifth consecutive day, but the chief minister of the capital New Delhi said there was no need to panic, citing low hospitalisation rates. The country's largest cities, including Delhi and the financial capital Mumbai, have seen a recent spike in COVID-19

cases, including those of the Omicron variant, which has triggered a fresh wave of infections in other parts of the world.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/india-reports-27553-new-covid-19-cases-in-past-24hrs/articleshow/88644049.cms>

### **Healthcare in India: Miles to go ahead to realise the dream**

After the Covid-led unprecedented crisis, the Indian healthcare industry is undergoing a major transformation. The Covid pandemic has brought the inadequacies and pitfalls of India's healthcare system to the light. At the same time, the pandemic has also opened up the way for the digital intervention in the healthcare systems which are supposed to alter the healthcare landscape in 2022.

The Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced the health sector's importance and the need to strengthen efforts. The oxygen-crisis led devastation which India witnessed during the second Covid surge has shown that the nation needs to be better prepared for the health emergencies.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/healthcare-in-india-miles-to-go-ahead-to-realise-the-dream-122010200116\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/healthcare-in-india-miles-to-go-ahead-to-realise-the-dream-122010200116_1.html)

### **Goa aims to vaccinate all 72,000 children in 15-18 age group with first dose in next 4 days: minister**

The Goa government is aiming to inoculate all 72,000 children in the 15-18 age group against COVID-19 with the first dose in the next four days after vaccination opens for them on Monday, state Health Minister Vishwajit Rane said on Sunday. Rane attended a meeting of Health Ministers of states chaired by Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya. He said Mandaviya reviewed preparations for rolling out the vaccination drive.

"Goa has already received 72,000 doses to vaccinate the children between the age group of 15 to 18 years, which would be administered within 3-4 days from January 3 onwards," Rane told reporters. He said teams of medical professionals will visit schools if needed. Rane said the Goa government was taking all measures as per protocols to flatten the COVID-19 curve.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/lifestyle/health/goa-aims-to-vaccinate-all-72000-children-in-15-18-age-group-with-first-dose-in-next-4-days-minister/2396315/>

### **Covid cases on the rise, experts call for newer drugs, faster approvals**

The government should speed up approvals to, and ensure the availability of, new antiviral drugs and monoclonal antibodies that appear to work against Omicron and other variants of Covid-19, say doctors and hospitals as the number of new cases escalates. The Drug Controller General of India had last week approved Merck and Ridgeback's antiviral molnupiravir for the treatment of mild-to-moderate Covid-19 at high risk of developing into severe disease.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/covid-cases-on-the-rise-experts-call-for-newer-drugs-faster-approvals/articleshow/88652157.cms>

### **Omicron pushing up cases, but no need to panic, says NTAGI chief**

The rapid surge in Covid-19 cases in the last 10 days has been largely due to Omicron, according to NK Arora, Chairperson of the Covid-19 Working Group of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation in India (NTAGI). "There is no need to panic though as natural immunity due to Delta infection and vaccination are providing double protection against the new variant," Arora told *BusinessLine*. Chances of severe disease and deaths are low with Omicron, though it can escape the immune system, he added.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/omicron-pushing-up-cases-but-no-need-to-panic-says-ntagi-chief/article38094399.ece?homepage=true>

## **External**

### **India appeals against WTO dispute panel ruling on sugar export subsidies**

India has appealed against a ruling of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) trade dispute settlement panel which ruled that the country's domestic support measures for sugar and sugarcane are inconsistent with global trade norms, an official said. The appeal was filed by India in the WTO's Appellate Body, which is the final authority on such trade disputes. India has stated that the WTO's dispute panel ruling has made certain "erroneous" findings about

domestic schemes to support sugarcane producers and exports and the findings of the panel are completely "unacceptable" to it.

The panel in its ruling on December 14, 2021 recommended India to withdraw its alleged prohibited subsidies under the Production Assistance, the Buffer Stock, and the Marketing and Transportation Schemes within 120 days from the adoption of this report.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/india-appeals-against-wto-dispute-panel-ruling-on-sugar-export-subsidies-at-appellate-body-122010200195\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/india-appeals-against-wto-dispute-panel-ruling-on-sugar-export-subsidies-at-appellate-body-122010200195_1.html)

#### **UK keen to ease immigration rules for Indians in exchange for trade access**

UK Ministers are keen to ease immigration restrictions in a bid to make it easier for thousands of Indian citizens to live and work in the country as part of the forthcoming trade talks, the Guardian reported. The potential offer will be under discussion when International Trade Secretary, Anne-Marie Trevelyan travels to Delhi this month, reports the Times UK.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/nri/migrate/uk-keen-to-ease-immigration-rules-for-indians-in-exchange-for-trade-access/articleshow/88645976.cms>