



January 14, 2022 - Friday

Key Developments

Centre warns Omicron is not common cold, can cause breakdown of health infrastructure

Flagging the concern posed by Omicron variant of Coronavirus, the central government on Wednesday said that the tally of Coronavirus cases is surging rapidly even as the hospitalisation rate may be low. The government flagged that the number of districts with more than 5 percent positivity rate increased from 78 to 300 in a single week, the Indian Express reported. The government highlighted two major concerns at the moment- rapid surge in cases and increase in the number of Coronavirus active cases.

Dr V K Paul, who is the head of India's Covid-19 task force, said that the positivity rate reported in certain districts was phenomenally high and there is no doubt that the intensity of the pandemic has increased. Dr Paul further said that the Omicron variant is rapidly replacing or has already replaced the Delta variant in India. Warning that the infection caused by the Omicron variant cannot be equated with common cold, Dr Paul said that the variant has the potential to overwhelm the health infrastructure in the country.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/lifestyle/health/centre-warns-omicron-is-not-common-cold-can-cause-breakdown-of-health-infrastructure/2405805/>

RBI Governor-headed FSDC sub-committee reviews economic situation

The FSDC sub-committee headed by Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday reviewed the economic situation in the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and resolved to keep a close watch on the unfolding developments with a view to ensure financial stability. The meeting of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) Sub-Committee (FSDC-SC) was held via video conferencing and attended by all financial sector regulators including SEBI, IRDAI, PFRDA and IBBI.

"The members resolved to maintain a close watch on the unfolding developments and act proactively to ensure that financial institutions and financial markets remain resilient amidst the challenges posed by the resurgence of the pandemic," the RBI said in a release.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/rbi-governor-headed-fsdc-sub-committee-reviews-economic-situation-122011301150_1.html

MCA hikes additional fees for delayed filing

Delay in compliance could turn expensive for Corporates with the Corporate Affairs Ministry (MCA), increasing substantially the additional fees they would have to pay for filing certain forms. This could prompt companies that habitually delay their form filings to set their house in order and focus on regulatory compliance, said company law experts. The MCA has increased the additional fees from up to 12 times normal fees to as high as 18 times for companies that regularly default in meeting reporting requirements. The higher additional fees would apply to such defaulting companies on all forms except an increase in authorised capital, submission of financials/annual returns and charges. This latest MCA move would be applicable from July 1 this year.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/mca-hikes-additional-fees-for-delayed-filing-of-certain-forms-by-corporates/article64822146.ece>

Guidelines for telcos' dues conversion into equity likely in a month: Official

The government is expected to come out with detailed guidelines for conversion of interest payment liabilities of telecom players into equity within a month, a senior official said on Thursday. Under the telecom reforms package announced last year, three debt-ridden telcos — Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL), Tata Teleservices Ltd (TTSL) and Tata Teleservices (Maharashtra) Ltd (TTML) — have proposed to convert their respective interest liabilities payable to the government into equity. Post conversion of the liabilities, the government is projected to have a 35.8 per cent stake in VIL and around 9.5 per cent shareholding each in TTML and TTSL.

“The details of conversion of dues into equity has to come from the finance ministry. DIPAM (Department of Investment and Public Asset Management) is likely to work on the details and then send it to the Department of Telecom (DoT). The process should not take more than a month,” the senior government official told PTI.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/guidelines-for-telcos-dues-conversion-into-equity-likely-in-a-month-official/2406002/>

Economy

India logs 264,202 new Covid cases, 6.7% higher than yesterday

India recorded 264,202 new cases of Covid-19 overnight, said the health ministry on Friday, marking a 6.7 per cent increase in daily cases since Thursday.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/live-news-updates-14-january-2022-coronavirus-updates-omicron-cases-bengal-train-crash-modi-warns-against-new-covid-variants-122011400076_1.html

PM Modi chairs meeting with chief ministers on pandemic situation

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday interacted with chief ministers over the COVID-19 situation in the country amid a surge in coronavirus cases due to its Omicron variant. The interaction has been held via video-conferencing. The meeting came on a day India logged 247,417 new infections, the highest in 236 days, taking the total tally of COVID-19 cases to 3,63,17,927, which included 5,488 cases of the Omicron variant, according to the Union Health Ministry data. Home Minister Amit Shah and Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya also attended the meeting. Fresh curbs have been imposed in various parts of the country to check the spread of the highly transmissible virus.

Reviewing the Covid situation at a high-level meeting on Sunday, Modi had called for ensuring adequate health infrastructure at the district level and accelerating the vaccination drive for adolescents in mission mode.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/pm-modi-chairs-meeting-with-chief-ministers-on-pandemic-situation-122011301008_1.html

Arbitration can be set aside only if award is against public policy: SC

An arbitration award can be set aside only if the award is against the public policy of India, the Supreme Court has said. A bench of Justices M R Shah and B V Nagarathna said the award can be set aside under the Arbitration Act, if it is found to be contrary to the fundamental policy of Indian Law, interest of country, justice or morality or if it is patently illegal. The top court was hearing an appeal filed by Haryana Tourism Ltd against an order of the Punjab and Haryana High Court which set aside a 2005 award passed by the arbitrator as well as the order passed by the Additional District Judge, Chandigarh. Haryana Tourism Limited (HTL) had invited tenders/quotations for the supply of Aerated Cold Drinks at its Tourist Complexes and the tender submitted by Kandhari Beverages was accepted.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/arbitration-can-be-set-aside-only-if-award-is-against-public-policy-sc-122011300666_1.html

Tax sops likely for InvITs to woo FII and retail investors

The government is mulling tax incentives for investments in infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs) to make them more attractive for both retail and foreign institutional investors, and to give a leg up to funding of big-ticket infra projects in line with the 'Gatishakti' plan. One of the proposals is to tweak the capital gains regime including the rates.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/tax-sops-likely-for-invits-to-woo-fii-and-retail-investors/articleshow/88865719.cms>

Over Rs 1.54 trillion income tax refunds issued this fiscal so far

The income tax department on Thursday said it has issued refunds of over Rs 1.54 lakh crore to more than 1.59 crore taxpayers so far this fiscal. This includes 1.20 crore refunds of Assessment Year 2021-22 (fiscal ended March 31, 2021), amounting to Rs 23,406.28 crore. "CBDT issues refunds of over Rs 1,54,302 crore to more than 1.59 crore taxpayers from 1st Apr 2021 to 10th January 2022," the I-T department tweeted. This includes personal income tax refunds of Rs 53,689 crore to over 1.56 crore entities and corporate tax refunds of over Rs 1 lakh crore to more than 2.21 lakh businesses.

The deadline for filing tax returns for the 2020-21 fiscal ended March 31, 2021, by individual taxpayers ended on December 31, 2021. For corporate taxpayers, the last date is March 15, 2022.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/over-rs-1-54-trillion-income-tax-refunds-issued-this-fiscal-so-far-122011300574_1.html

India's forest, tree cover rose by 2,261 sq km in last 2 years: ISFR report

India's forest and tree cover has risen by 2,261 square kilometers in the last two years with Andhra Pradesh growing the maximum forest cover of 647 square kilometers, according to the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2021 released on Thursday. The biennial report by the Forest Survey of India (FSI), an assessment of the country's forest resources, was released by Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav. He revealed that the total tree-and-forest cover in the country includes an increase of 1,540 square kilometres of forest cover and 721 sq km of tree cover compared to the 2019 report. It is very satisfying to know that the tree and forest cover has increased in India. The report also touches aspects which are important in terms of climate change.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-s-forest-tree-cover-rose-by-2-261-sq-km-in-last-2-years-isfr-report-122011300906_1.html

Banking and Finance

Credit offtake from scheduled commercial banks to MSME sectors surge: CMIE

Offtake of credit from scheduled commercial banks to medium, micro and small industrial enterprises has zoomed in recent months on the back of the government's emergency credit line guarantee scheme (ECLGS), the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy said. "The take-off is sudden and it is relatively big and the only set of enterprises to see an increase in bank loans are medium, micro and small enterprises," CMIE said in its weekly analysis.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/credit-offtake-from-scheduled-commercial-banks-to-msme-sectors-surge-cmie/articleshow/88875070.cms>

Housing finance companies, 8 NBFCs surrender certificates of registration to RBI

Eight Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) and one housing finance company have surrendered their certificates of registration to RBI. The Mumbai-based Indie Homefin Pvt Ltd has surrendered the Certificate of Registration (CoR) granted by the National Housing Bank and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has therefore cancelled the CoR, the central bank said in a statement on Thursday. The NBFCs that have surrendered the CoRs are Morgan Stanley India Securities Pvt Ltd, Sankalp Granites Pvt Ltd, Yardley Investment and Trading Company Pvt Ltd, Shirdi Credit and Finance Pvt Ltd, Mangalam Softwares Pvt Ltd, Dholadhar Investments Pvt Ltd, Goodwill Financial Services Pvt Ltd and West Bengal Industrial Development Corpn Ltd.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/housing-finance-companies-8-nbfc-surrender-certificates-of-registration-to-rbi/articleshow/88882973.cms>

SEBI cracks the whip on stock manipulators

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has started cracking down on those giving stock tips via apps like Telegram, WhatsApp and other social media handles. The market regulator has formed a special team of officials to tackle the menace of frontrunning in the stock markets after receiving complaints from investors about groups manipulating the stock market through apps like Telegram, WhatsApp and platforms like Reddit, Instagram and Facebook.

According to sources, the crackdown on 'Bull Run 2017' a secret Telegram channel that gave intra-day stock tips to around 52,000 subscribers, mainly retail investors, was only the beginning as scores of other such 'closed groups' on social media platforms are under the scanner of market regulator SEBI.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/markets/sebi-cracks-down-on-bullrun-2017an-illegal-telegram-channel-for-stock-tips/article64822101.ece>

Govt expects to open LIC IPO issue by mid-March: Report

Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), India's largest insurer, could publish key details of its mammoth initial public offering (IPO) this month and begin issuing public shares by mid-March, government and banking officials told Reuters on Thursday. LIC's listing is set to be India's biggest ever IPO, with the government aiming to raise up to 900 billion rupees (\$12.2 billion) from selling a stake. Officials are working on the valuation of the company which manages more than \$450 billion of assets, and once that is done they will issue a draft IPO prospectus for investors, a government and two banking sources with direct knowledge of the matter said.

"We will be ready to file the draft prospectus as soon as the final embedded value is communicated and we are working with a timeline of doing that by month end," one of the banking sources said.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-expects-to-open-lic-ipo-issue-by-mid-march-report-122011300887_1.html

Cooperative forum set up by RBI board member weighs in for PMC depositors

Sahakar Bharati – a forum of cooperative societies founded by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) board member Satish Marathe - has stepped in to offer a better deal to the depositors of the troubled Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative (PMC) Bank. The draft scheme of amalgamation of PMC Bank with Unity Small Finance Bank, which was announced by Reserve Bank of India, proposed a sharp haircut for depositors. The draft scheme which was announced in November last year proposed that depositors of more than Rs 5 lakh have to wait for upto 10 years to get all their money back.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/sahakar-bharati-steps-in-to-offer-better-deal-to-depositors-of-pmc-bank-122011300317_1.html

Budget unlikely to allocate any fund for bank recapitalisation: Report

The upcoming budget is unlikely to make any provision for recapitalisation of state-owned lenders, as over Rs 3.36 lakh crore has been spent on the banks in the last six years, a domestic rating agency said on Thursday. The banks will raise capital through internal accruals and fundraising from the market, Icra said in a note, adding that the lenders have the ability to manage. Courtesy of the over Rs 3.36 lakh crore of fund infusions from the taxpayers, the state-owned banks' stock of net non-performing assets has reduced to 2.8 per cent as of September 2021 from the 8 per cent level of March 2018, the Icra note said.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/budget/budget-unlikely-to-allocate-any-fund-for-bank-recapitalisation-report/2405825/>

Industry

Gold demand drops as coronavirus shrinks big, fat Indian weddings

Gold demand in the second-biggest buyer is taking another hit as a resurgence in virus cases is scaling down the size of traditionally large Indian weddings. Marriages are a key source of gold demand in India and cases are spiking just as the country resumes a busy wedding season that begins from the second half of January and runs through April or May. From less than 10,000 new daily infections through most of last month, India reported more than 200,000 new cases on Thursday. That's leading to increasing restrictions on mobility and the size of large gatherings as regional governments rush to contain infections.

"At the retail level, we are seeing lower footfalls because people are a little worried," said Ashish Pethe, chairman of the All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council. Demand will slow in the quarter through March, but jewelers are "cautiously optimistic" because the current virus wave seems relatively mild, he said.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/gold-demand-drops-as-coronavirus-shrinks-big-fat-indian-weddings-122011300452_1.html

India's diabetes care market to reach \$60 bn in next 10 yrs: Report

The diabetes care market in India is expected to reach about \$60 billion in the next 10 years, from approximately \$17 billion in FY2021, a new report showed on Thursday. With 75 million diabetic patients, and another 200 million

pre-diabetics, India is known as the diabetes capital of the world. Poor lifestyle is the prime reason for the rapid increase in diabetes cases growth of the market, revealed the study done by Redcore, the research arm of Bengaluru-based research firm Redseer consulting.

According to the report, an average Indian spends Rs 11,000 annually on Type-2 diabetes care and Rs 3.5 lakh in a lifetime. From Rs 6,000 annually in the early thirties, the cost increases exponentially to Rs 17,000 by the time they reach 60 years of age.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-s-diabetes-care-market-to-reach-60-bn-in-next-10-yrs-report-122011300250_1.html

Icra revises downwards revenue growth forecast for auto component industry this fiscal

Rating agency Icra NSE 0.27 % on Thursday revised downwards the revenue growth forecast for the auto components industry in the current fiscal to 15-17 per cent, citing the impact of the Omicron wave, delayed recovery in semiconductors shortage and muted two-wheelers demand. It, however, said despite the potential Omicron impact, the domestic aftermarket demand is expected to grow 8-10 per cent in FY22 while exports remain a bright spot in the Indian auto component story with an estimated growth of over 20 per cent this fiscal. "The (revenue) growth forecast for FY2022 has been revised downward by 200 bps to 15-17 per cent from the earlier estimates due to the ongoing Omicron wave, delayed recovery in semi-conductors and muted two-wheelers and bus demand," Icra Assistant Vice President and Sector Head Vinutaa S said in a statement.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/auto-components/icra-revises-downwards-revenue-growth-forecast-for-auto-component-industry-this-fiscal/articleshow/88874413.cms>

Agriculture

'Bharath auctions' for tea set to expand, officials discount fears

The Tea Board of India has come up with a new auction format - Bharath auctions - from the start of this year that is expected to result in better price discovery, lower transaction costs and ensuring the quality of tea sold through the system is good. Though a section of the trade has expressed unhappiness over the new system, officials and auctioneers say "Bharath Auctions" are good for the industry and all the hue and cry raised are because "people have not understood" the format properly.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/bharath-auctions-for-tea-set-to-expand-officials-discount-fears/article64822102.ece>

CPCB revises norms for poultry farms

Smaller poultry farms with over 5,000 birds at a single location will have to obtain a consent to establish and operate under the Water Act, 1974 and Air Act, 1981 from the State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) or Pollution Control Committee (PCC) from January next year. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), following the recent direction from the National Green Tribunal last month, has revised the guidelines that are applicable for all category of poultry farms. Presently, such consent norms are applicable for large farms with over 1 lakh birds, as per the guidelines developed by CPCB in 2015.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/cpcb-revises-norms-for-poultry-sector/article64822637.ece>

Centre's paddy procurement rises, 53% up in Telangana

Paddy procurement in the on-going season has increased marginally (0.6 per cent) to 55.7 million tonnes (mt) as on January 12 from the year-ago period as pace of purchase has increased in Uttar Pradesh and some other states this month. About 67.45 lakh farmers have already been benefitted in the ongoing season and received ₹1.09-lakh crore (at MSP rate of ₹1,960 per quintal), an official said.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/centres-paddy-procurement-rises-53-up-in-telangana/article64822711.ece>

Infrastructure

Scindia holds meet with airlines chiefs on increasing wide-body planes

Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Thursday held a meeting with the chiefs of Indian carriers on various issues, including increasing the number of wide-body planes and resolving regulatory concerns. Wide-body planes like A350 have bigger fuel tanks, larger seating capacity and they can travel to longer distances as compared to narrow-body aircraft like A320. Scindia said on Twitter, "Held a detailed discussion with the airlines advisory group on issues ranging from increasing wide-body aircraft fleet and making India an international hub to aircraft leasing, alongside regulatory issues.

"We're committed towards nursing the sector back to health and re-injecting growth," he added.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/scindia-holds-meet-with-airlines-chiefs-on-increasing-wide-body-planes-122011300937_1.html

Developers report increase in sale in projects around the upcoming Noida airport

Real estate developers have started planning additional launches in 2022 around Noida International Airport in Jewar after the foundation stone laying ceremony by PM Narendra Modi has provided a fresh impetus to the local realty market. Despite the setback of the new variation of Covid-19, brokerage firms claim that residential demand in the micro-markets surrounding the planned airport has accelerated, approaching 2020 levels.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/property/-/cstruction/developers-report-increase-in-sale-in-projects-around-the-upcoming-noida-airport/articleshow/88876701.cms>

Energy

Higher input costs push up PNG prices 20% this fiscal, 50 paise hike in NCR

The price of domestic piped natural gas (PNG) in the national capital has been hiked by 50 paise to Rs 35.61 per unit (measured in standard cubic metres or scm) by Indraprastha Gas (IGL). The new price effective from Wednesday means more expensive cooking fuel for the nearly 1.69 million domestic households that use IGL's PNG across the country. This is the fifth hike in PNG prices by IGL during the current financial year, raising the price by over 20 per cent or Rs 5.95 per unit in this period.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/higher-input-costs-push-up-png-prices-20-this-fiscal-50-paise-hike-in-ncr-122011300923_1.html

States

Amid Covid surge, Delhi govt cuts budgets for various PWD projects

The Delhi government has curtailed budget allocations for various PWD construction projects for 2021-22 to strengthen medical and healthcare facilities amid the ongoing Covid pandemic, according to officials. The Public Works Department's director (works) also issued instructions in this regard after receiving a communication from the joint secretary (budget) on January 10. Due to the ongoing third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Delhi government's primary focus is to strengthen medical and healthcare facilities. Hence, the funding for a number of construction projects has been cut, the officials said on Thursday. The revised budget allocation order issued by the PWD also asked officials to "strictly observe" economy instructions issued by the Finance Department of the Delhi government.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/budget/amid-covid-surge-delhi-govt-cuts-budgets-for-various-pwd-projects/2405914/>

Penalty for not wearing face mask increased to Rs 500 in Tamil Nadu

The Tamil Nadu government on Thursday enhanced the fine collected for not wearing face mask at public places to Rs 500 in view of surge in Covid-19 cases in the state. According to a G.O issued on January 12, certain offences declared as compoundable-rule under Tamil Nadu Public Health Act, 1939, non-compliance of wearing face masks, covering mouth and nose would attract a fine of Rs 500 as against Rs 200.

"According to the order issued by health department principal secretary J Radhakrishnan, in exercise of the powers conferred by section 138 A of Tamil Nadu Public Health Act, 1939, the Governor of Tamil Nadu hereby makes the following amendment to the Rule published with the health and family welfare department. In the said Rule, for the entry Rs 200 non wearing of mask covering mouth and nose as ordered by the appropriate authority from time to time, the entry of Rs 500 shall be substituted", the GO said.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/lifestyle/health/penalty-for-not-wearing-face-mask-increased-to-rs-500-in-tamil-nadu/2405902/>

Healthcare

Cannabis compounds can stop Covid virus from entering human cells: Study

US researchers have found that cannabis compounds have the ability to prevent the virus that causes Covid-19 from entering human cells. A team from Oregon State University identified Hemp, known scientifically as Cannabis sativa, compounds via a chemical screening technique. Hemp is a source of fibre, food and animal feed, and multiple hemp extracts and compounds are added to cosmetics, body lotions, dietary supplements and food, said Richard van Breemen, a researcher at varsity. The team found that a pair of cannabinoid acids bind to the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein, blocking a critical step in the process the virus uses to infect people. The findings were published in the Journal of Natural Products. The compounds are cannabigerolic acid, or CBGA, and cannabidiolic acid, CBDA, and the spike protein is the same drug target used in Covid-19 vaccines and antibody therapy. A drug target is any molecule critical to the process a disease follows, meaning its disruption can thwart infection or disease progression.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/cannabis-compounds-can-stop-covid-virus-from-entering-human-cells-study-122011300785_1.html

Covid-19 third wave hits India – The growing case for home healthcare

The COVID-19 pandemic proved the inadequacy of India's healthcare system in meeting the needs of a billion-plus population. With hospitals full and struggling to accommodate even COVID-19 patients, those needing care for other ailments had no choice but to be treated remotely at home. While far from an ideal situation, it did have a silver lining – it accelerated the growth of the home healthcare sector. Pre-pandemic, care at home was limited to either geriatric patients or patients suffering easily treatable illnesses.

But the lack of hospital beds during the peak of the pandemic, as well as reluctance on the part of patients themselves to visit hospitals for fear of contracting COVID-19, the government's strict stay-at-home orders and the boom in virtual technology and telemedicine, have shifted the home healthcare sector into a higher gear, making it capable of offering more complex treatment from the comfort of the patient's home.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/healthcare/covid-19/covid-19-third-wave-hits-india-the-growing-case-for-home-healthcare/2405888/>

Bharat Biotech seeks full marketing approval from DCGI for its Covid vaccine Covaxin

Bharat Biotech has sought from the Drugs Controller General of India regular market approval for its COVID-19 vaccine 'Covaxin', which is currently only authorised for emergency use in the country, official sources said on Thursday. In an application sent to the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) this week, V Krishna Mohan, Whole-Time Director at the Hyderabad-based company submitted complete information regarding chemistry, manufacturing and controls, along with pre-clinical and clinical data while seeking regular market authorisation for Covaxin. The company, however, is yet to submit the full follow up data of clinical trials of Covaxin to DCGI, a source said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/pharmaceuticals/bharat-biotech-seeks-full-marketing-approval-from-dcgi-for-its-covid-vaccine-covaxin/articleshow/88881303.cms>

External

India, UK FTA to boost cooperation in tourism, tech, startups: Piyush Goyal

After India and the UK launched formal negotiations for the free trade agreement on Thursday, Union Minister of Commerce and Trade Piyush Goyal said that the agreement will expand cooperation in tourism, technology, startups, education, climate change, etc. "The terms of reference of the free trade agreement have been finalised and formally endorsed by both countries and therefore, we are launching formal negotiations for the free trade agreement," said Goyal while addressing a press conference with UK Secretary of State for International Trade Anne-Marie Trevelyan. Both countries "will be proactively and regularly engaging with each other deliberating on different aspects of our relationship and fast-tracking the interim agreement or an early-harvest agreement where we hope to capture the

low hanging fruits, which will provide opportunities for businesses on both sides and UK and India and help us substantially, enhancing the volume of trade in goods and services," he added.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-uk-fta-to-boost-cooperation-in-tourism-tech-startups-piyush-goyal-122011300779_1.html

Rather than getting focussed on visas, we are broad-basing service requests in FTAs: Commerce secy

India has recalibrated its demands for relaxation of norms for the services sector under a free-trade agreement (FTA), making it more broad-based while negotiating such trade deals, instead of focusing only on easy visa for its professionals, Commerce Secretary BVR Subrahmanyam on Thursday said. Earlier, he said India was getting completely focussed on easy visa norms for its professionals in a free trade pact. "On visas for individuals, I think there has also been a change and a re-calibration in our own asks as far as services are concerned. We were getting completely focussed on what in services is called Mode 4 (movement of professionals). Mode 4 meant, we need visas, visas, and visas. What we are actually seeing globally is that Mode -4 is something you (India) are getting autonomously, whether or not there is FTA," he told reporters here.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/rather-than-getting-focussed-on-visas-we-are-broad-basing-service-requests-in-ftas-commerce-secy/articleshow/88882274.cms>

India's forex reserves to face \$256 billion overseas debt challenge in next 12 months

India's enormous foreign exchange reserves faces its biggest test in the next 12 months as a record \$256 billion of total overseas debt comes up for repayment amid a possible flight of capital due to monetary tightening by the Federal Reserve. External debt worth \$256 billion matures over the next 12 months, according to the September data released by the finance ministry. This is about 43 per cent of the September external debt outstanding at \$596 billion.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/indias-forex-reserves-to-face-256-billion-overseas-debt-challenge-in-next-12-months/articleshow/88880502.cms>

US discourages India from acquiring Russian S-400 missiles: Biden's nominee

The US has made clear to India that it is "discouraging" it from proceeding with its acquisition of S-400 missile defence systems from Russia but Washington will have to weigh "important geostrategic considerations" while taking a decision on growing calls for a presidential CAATSA waiver to New Delhi, President Joe Biden's nominee for Coordinator for Sanctions Policy has told lawmakers.

In October 2018, India signed a USD 5 billion deal with Russia to buy five units of the S-400 air defence missile systems, despite a warning from the then Trump administration that going ahead with the contract may invite US sanctions. The Biden administration has not yet clarified whether it will impose sanctions on India under the provisions of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) for procuring the S-400 missile systems.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/us-discourages-india-from-acquiring-russian-s-400-missiles-biden-s-nominee-122011300529_1.html

Textile exports registered 41% growth during April-December 2021

During the period between April and December, 2021, total textiles and apparels exports, including handicrafts, stood at \$29.8 billion as compared to \$21.2 billion recorded for the corresponding period of the previous year. This implies a robust growth of approximately 41 per cent as compared to the year ago period, the Ministry of Textiles said in a statement on Wednesday. In FY 2020-21, there was a deceleration in textile exports due to the Covid-19 pandemic that disrupted the supply chain and demand. However, signs of recovery are visible in FY 2021-22 and this growth signals an economic rebound, the statement said.

The government has set a target of \$44 billion for textiles and apparel exports, including handicrafts, and approximately 68 per cent of the annual target has already been achieved.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/textile-exports-registered-41-growth-during-april-december-2021-122011201724_1.html

SEA wants Centre to restrict import of refined palm oils to save local refining industry

Stating that narrowing of import duty difference between refined and crude palm oils has the potential to kill the domestic refining industry, industry body SEA on Thursday demanded that the Centre again curb the import of refined palm oil and reinstate the earlier duty differential of 11 per cent between the two oils. In December 2021, the government reduced import duty on RBD palmolein and RBD palm oils by 5.5 per cent to check prices of edible oils in the domestic market. With this reduction, the import duty difference between refined palm oils and crude palm oil (CPO) was reduced to 5.5 per cent.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/food/sea-wants-centre-to-restrict-import-of-refined-palm-oils-to-save-local-refining-industry/articleshow/88875938.cms?utm_source=ETTopNews&utm_medium=HPTN&utm_campaign=AL1&utm_content=23

Barter trade agreement between Sri Lanka and Iran to hit India's tea exports to West Asian nation

India's tea exports to Iran, which have halved compared to the pre-pandemic period in 2019 due to payment problems, are set to take a further hit this year as Sri Lanka has entered into a barter trade agreement with Iran to pay off its earlier debts against oil purchases. Sri Lanka will send orthodox tea or whole leaf teas to Iran to pay off its oil purchase dues. Iran buys orthodox teas only for its domestic consumption and India has been one of the biggest suppliers of orthodox teas to the West Asian nation.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/barter-trade-agreement-between-sri-lanka-and-iran-to-hit-indias-tea-exports-to-west-asian-nation/articleshow/88873317.cms>