



March 02, 2022 – Wednesday

Key Developments

India demands 'urgent safe passages' for its nationals in Ukraine

India "strongly and emphatically" asked Ukraine and Russia on Tuesday to create "urgent safe passages" for the Indian nationals stuck in various conflict zones in Ukraine, after a medical student from Karnataka was killed in intense shelling in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla called in the envoys of the two countries and conveyed the demand, while the Indian missions in Russia and Ukraine too passed on similar messages to the diplomatic and military authorities in the two countries. After attending a high-level meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the situation in Ukraine, Shringla said the evacuation of Indians from Kharkiv is now India's top priority. "We have absolutely, strongly and emphatically asked them (the Russian and Ukrainian envoys) to create the safe passage. But there is a war going on and we will have to make the best of the situation so that we can find a way," he said.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-demands-urgent-safe-passages-for-its-nationals-in-ukraine-122030101454_1.html

Niti Aayog developing National Gender Index

Niti Aayog is in the process of developing a National Gender Index to measure the progress and identify the persisting gaps in gender equality to make informed policy decisions. In its latest annual report, Niti Aayog said the index will serve as a tool to map the progress of states and Union Territories (UTs) on defined gender metrics and build the foundation for positive change. The index will support policy action and advocacy around gender and will be aligned to the framework of Sustainable Development Goals. Niti Aayog has also developed a draft State Energy and Climate Index to assess the performance of states on indicators such as discoms' viability and competition; access, affordability and reliability of energy; clean energy initiatives; energy efficiency; generation capacity; and environmental sustainability and new initiatives.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/niti-aayog-developing-national-gender-index/articleshow/89920138.cms>

Economy

GST Collection slides to 1.33 lakh crore in February

Collection from Goods & Services Tax (GST) in February dipped to ₹1.33 lakh crore from ₹1.40 lakh crore in January. However, the good news is that the collection crossed ₹1.30 lakh crore for the 5th time. "February, being a 28-day month, normally witnesses revenues lower than in January," a Finance Ministry statement said. Still, it said that collection has been high in February and it should also be seen in the context of partial lockdowns, weekend and night curfews and various restrictions that were put in place by various States due to the Omicron wave, which peaked around January 20

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/tp-economy/gst-collection-slides-to-133-lakh-crore-in-february/article65143741.ece>

India slips 3 spots to rank 120 on 17 SDG goals adopted as 2030 agenda: Report

India has slipped three spots from last year's 117 to rank 120 on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted as a part of the 2030 agenda by 192 United Nations member states in 2015, a new report said. With the latest rankings, India is now behind all south Asian nations except Pakistan, which stands at 129. The south Asian countries ahead of India are Bhutan ranked 75, Sri Lanka 87, Nepal 96 and Bangladesh 109. According to the Centre for Science and Environment's State of India's Environment Report, 2022, released by Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav on Tuesday, India's rank dropped primarily because of major challenges in 11 SDGs including zero hunger, good health and wellbeing, gender equality and sustainable cities and communities.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/india-slips-3-spots-to-rank-120-on-17-sdg-goals-adopted-as-2030-agenda-report/articleshow/89924013.cms>

Banking and Finance

Value of UPI transactions declined to Rs 8.27 lakh crore in Feb: NPCI data

India's cashless retail transactions on UPI platform were worth Rs 8.27 lakh crore in February, slightly lower than the amount recorded in the previous month, data from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) showed on Tuesday. There were a total of 452 crore (4.52 billion) transactions in February 2022. In January, the value of cashless retail transactions on the BHIM UPI platform stood at Rs 8.32 lakh crore while the total number of transactions was at 461 crore (4.61 billion). However, there was a slight uptick in the value of automatic collection at toll plazas through the NETC FASTag technology, with over 24.36 crore transactions (243.64 million) worth Rs 3,631.22 crore in February, NPCI said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/value-of-upi-transactions-declined-to-rs-8-27-lakh-crore-in-feb-npci-data/articleshow/89924894.cms>

Govt may review timing of LIC IPO after Ukraine invasion

India may take another look at the timing of Life Insurance Corp. of India's initial share sale, the state-owned insurer, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in an interview. "Ideally, I'd like to go ahead with it because we'd planned it for some time based purely on Indian considerations," Sitharaman said in an interview with Businessline "But if global considerations warrant that I need to look at it, I wouldn't mind looking at it again," she said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/markets/ipos/fpos/govt-may-review-timing-of-lic-ipo-after-ukraine-invasion/articleshow/89923954.cms>

Industry

Passenger vehicle sales remain subdued in February due to supply constraints

Passenger vehicle sales continued to remain subdued last month with supply constraints of semi-conductors disrupting production across automakers in February. Industry numbers were dragged down by market leaders Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai Motor India, where volumes slid by 7.5% (to 133,948 units) and 14.6% (to 44,050 units), respectively. Maruti Suzuki Managing Director Kenichi Ayukawa last week had said while demand in the domestic market looks "promising" and the company has "healthy" bookings, limitations in supply are expected to persist for some more time.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/auto-news/passenger-vehicle-sales-remain-subdued-in-february-due-to-supply-constraints/articleshow/89930559.cms>

After a blip in Jan, EV sales get a charge up in February

Boom in electric vehicles (EV) sales resumed in February after a blip in January. The total registered EV sales for the first two months of 2022 have surpassed the one lakh mark with February registering the highest-ever monthly volumes. In the calendar year 2021, the total registered EV volumes stood at 3.13 lakh units (all segments put together).

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/after-a-blip-in-jan-ev-sales-get-a-charge-up-in-feb/article65144300.ece>

Tiruppur Exporters' Association seek infusion of fresh liquidity support to struggling MSMEs

The Tiruppur Exporters' Association, whose members are into knitwear manufacturing, has requested the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to immediately provide fresh infusion of liquidity to the struggling medium, and small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). This will help the units in the 'Dollar Town' — as Tiruppur in western Tamil Nadu is known for — get back to normal functioning, says a representation made by the association's president Raja M Shanmugham to the minister in Chennai on Sunday. Tiruppur knitwear exports clocked ₹26,030 crores from April-January in the current fiscal and is expected to cross ₹32,000 crore by the end of the fiscal year. The association represents around 1,150 exporting units employing over six lakhs workers with 65 per cent of them women. Out of six lakh workers, two lakh are from other states like Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand and Bengal, and from the North East. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/tiruppur-exporters-association-seek-infusion-of-fresh-liquidity-support-to-struggling-msmes/article65143430.ece>

Paint makers hold back on price hikes amidst volatility

Despite the fluctuation in crude prices because of geo-political tensions, Indian paint-makers are holding back on price hike, at least for another quarter till March 31-end. Paint companies say recent price hikes are yet to have full effect and this apart a three-month-long stock position — which include 30-45 days of finished stock; and another 45-60 days of raw material — should be enough to see through short-term price fluctuations. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/companies/paint-makers-hold-back-on-price-hikes-amidst-volatility/article65144313.ece>

Agriculture

Govt assistance to 'natural farming' may see substantial jump in scaled-up mission plan

The Centre is planning to enhance the subsidy on "natural farming" by 50 per cent by re-launching the scheme on a mission mode in select blocks without hampering the food security, a concern many experts have expressed amid its failure in Sri Lanka. Under the plan, now under consideration, one cluster (of 500 hectares), each in 1-2 blocks will be taken up to motivate farmers.

Bhartiya Prakritik Krishi Padhati (BPKP) was introduced as a sub-scheme of Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) in 2020-21 under which the Centre releases about ₹12,200/hectare for a period of three years for cluster formation, capacity building and continuous handholding. In the 2022-23 Budget both the BPKP and PKVY have been subsumed under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY).

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/govt-assistance-to-natural-farming-may-see-substantial-jump-in-scaled-up-mission-plan/article65144537.ece>

Coconut oil makers bet big on global rally in sunflower oil, palm oil prices

Will the surge in sunflower and palm oil prices in the wake of Ukraine-Russia conflict benefit coconut oil? Coconut oil producers are hoping to cash in on the global crisis at a time when there is a gradual shift in consumer preference toward coconut oil in the domestic market encouraged by its lower price compared with other oils.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/coconut-oil-makers-bet-big-on-global-rally-in-sunflower-oil-palm-oil-prices/article65143605.ece>

Infrastructure

ATF prices hiked effective March 1; fifth hike in 2022

Jet fuel or aviation turbine fuel prices were hiked by over three per cent across the country on Tuesday. Prices reportedly shot up to an all time high level. The hikes were expected in view of the surge in international oil prices. This is the fifth hike in ATF prices this year.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/markets/commodities/atf-prices-hiked-effective-march-1-fifth-hike-in-2022/article65143814.ece>

Truck rentals see a consolidation in February

February 2022 brought some positive news for the trucking sector as freight rates on trunk routes saw a marginal rise of 1.5-2 per cent on the back of improved cargo offerings. The rentals have consolidated a little with 1.5-2 per

cent rise on trunk routes as the cargo offerings from the manufacturing sector, including MSMEs, export-import businesses and merchandise transportation stayed upbeat during the month. The Agri cargo, including fruits and vegetables into APMCs improved by 5-10 per cent.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/truck-rentals-see-consolidation-in-february/article65143981.ece>

Railways reports higher loading and freight earnings during February 2022

The Indian railways ferried over 7% more goods in February 2022 compared to the same month last year. According to provisional data compiled by the Railway Ministry, total loading in February 2022 stood at 119.76 million tonnes (MT), up from 112.39 MT during February 2021. Freight earnings accrued during the month rose by more than 10% to Rs 12,254.01 crore, up from Rs 11,120.14 crore in the same month of financial year 2020-21.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/railways-reports-higher-loading-and-freight-earnings-during-february-2022/articleshow/89926109.cms>

Energy

Power consumption grows 2.2 pc to 105.54 billion units in February

India's power consumption growth remained subdued at 2.2 per cent year-on-year in February to 105.54 billion units (BU), showing the impact of local restrictions imposed by the states due to the third wave of COVID-19. Power consumption in February 2021 was 103.25 BU, a tad lower than 103.81 BU in the same month of 2020, as per the power ministry data.

According to the data, peak power demand met or highest supply in a day rose to 193.64 GW in the month under review compared to 187.97 GW in February 2021 and 176.38 GW in February 2020. Experts are of the view that the power consumption growth remained subdued in February due to the impact of local restrictions imposed by states to curb the spread of the deadly coronavirus.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/power-consumption-grows-2-2-pc-to-105-54-billion-units-in-february/2447592/>

LPG Price Hike: Commercial LPG prices hiked by Rs 105

Price of commercial LPG, used by hotels and other commercial establishments, was on Tuesday hiked by Rs 105 to its second-highest level but rates of subsidised gas sold to households remained on freeze. The price of a 19-kg commercial cylinder has been hiked to Rs 2,012 from Rs 1,907, according to price notification from state-owned fuel retailers. This is the second-highest rate, after Rs 2,101 per cylinder in December 2021. LPG rates are revised on the 1st of every month based on the price of benchmark fuel in the previous month. However, the price of domestic cooking gas LPG, sold to households, has not been changed since October when it rose to Rs 899.50 per 14.2-kg cylinder.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/market/commodities/lpg-price-hike-commercial-lpg-prices-hiked-by-rs-105/2448194/>

Healthcare

Sputnik V production in India in a spot due to sanctions against Russia / RDIF

Global sanctions against the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) have cast a long shadow on the production of Sputnik V from India, the second largest base for the Covid19 vaccine outside of Russia. RDIF, the sovereign wealth fund of the Russian Federation and its chief have been named in the United States sanctions list, following Russia's attack on Ukraine. And this has jeopardized plans for increased local production and exports, vaccine industry insiders told Business Line, on conditions of anonymity given the sensitive nature of the issue.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/sputnik-v-production-in-india-in-a-spot-due-to-sanctions-against-russia-rdif/article65152481.ece>

'Covid to enter endemic stage in India by mid-March'

The receding Covid pandemic will enter the endemic stage by mid-March, and there is little likelihood of a fourth wave as some studies have earlier suggested. Talking exclusively to BusinessLine, Samiran Panda, Additional Director

General, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), said on Monday that the receding numbers are in line with the projections made by his team. Endemic stage is the point at which there is less transmission of the virus and it persists for an indefinite period. India reported 6,915 Covid cases on Monday, nearly 14 per cent lower than the previous day's infections of 8,013. The daily positivity rate was at 0.77 per cent.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/covid-to-enter-endemic-stage-in-india-by-mid-march/article65156261.ece>

External

Exporters mull payment options as Moscow comes under sanctions

India's exports to Russia have come under a shadow following economic and banking sanctions imposed by the US, the UK and the EU on the country for invading Ukraine. The Commerce and Industry Ministry is examining suggestions made by exporters, including the possibility of third country payments and allowing deals in rouble, but unavailability of insurance cover and rising freight rates are adding to the list of woes, according to sources.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/russia-ukraine-crisis-exporters-mull-payment-options-as-moscow-comes-under-sanctions/article65144721.ece>

Commerce Ministry recommends anti-dumping duty on melamine from four countries

The commerce ministry's arm DGTR has recommended imposition of anti-dumping duty on imports of melamine, a compound used in laminates, from the European Union, Japan, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, to protect the domestic industry from cheap inbound shipments. The Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) has recommended the duty after conducting an investigation on the dumped imports. It concluded that the volume of dumped imports from these countries has increased in both absolute and relative terms. The material injury suffered by domestic firms has been caused by dumped imports, the DGTR said in a notification.

"The authority recommends imposition of definitive anti-dumping duty," it said.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/commerce-ministry-recommends-anti-dumping-duty-on-melamine-from-four-countries/2447917/>

India signs deals to export 5.5 lakh tonnes of wheat as Asian nations look for supplies

Indian wheat exporters have signed deals to export at least 5.5 lakh tonnes (lt) over the next couple of months as nations in South Asia, South-East Asia and West Asia are looking to New Delhi to meet their requirements for food and feed in view of the Ukraine-Russia crisis. "We have demand for Indian wheat from March-April. Our exporters have committed to ship 5.5 lakh tonnes. Both old and the new crop will be shipped out by exporters under these deals," said Rajnikant Rai, Divisional Chief Executive, ITC Agri-Business.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/india-signs-deals-to-export-55-lakh-tonnes-of-wheat-as-asian-nations-look-to-new-delhi/article65143690.ece>

Relief for moong importers as DGFT relaxes policy to permit shipments

The Director-General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has decided to relax some provisions of foreign trade policy (FTP) to help importers bring in their moong cargoes contracted before February 11, in a move that could provide relief to a section of the pulses trade. Last month, the Centre had amended the moong import policy by moving it from "free" to "restricted", a move that shocked importers.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/relief-for-moong-importers-as-dgft-relaxes-policy-to-permit-shipments/article65144271.ece>