



March 28, 2022 – Monday

## Economy

### Free ration for six months more; to cost Rs 80,000 crore

The Union Cabinet on Saturday decided to extend the free ration scheme — Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) — by six months to September-end 2022, at an additional cost of Rs 80,000 crore to the exchequer. The government has so far spent about Rs 2.6 trillion on the scheme, which was launched in April 2020. “Under the extended PM-GKAY each beneficiary will get additional 5 kg free ration per person per month in addition to his normal quota of foodgrain under the National Food Security Act. This means that every poor household would get nearly double the normal quantity of ration,” as per a statement issued by the department of food and public distribution after the Cabinet meeting.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/free-ration-for-six-months-more-to-cost-rs-80000-crore/2472802/>

### Two-day nationwide strike likely to hit essential services

Some of the essential services related to banking, transportation, railways and electricity are likely to be impacted during a two-day nationwide strike called by a joint forum of central trade unions beginning Monday. Talking to PTI, All Indian Trade Union Congress General Secretary Amarjeet Kaur said, “We are expecting participation of over 20 crore formal and informal workers with mass mobilisation of workers across the country during the strike on March 28 and 29 to protest against government policies.” She said that the strike is expected to hit the rural parts also, where informal workers of farming and other sectors will join the protest. The strike notices were given by workers' unions of various sectors such as coal, steel, oil, telecom, postal, income tax, copper, banks and insurance.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/two-day-nationwide-strike-likely-to-hit-essential-services/articleshow/90477535.cms>

### Education and training: Pillars of co-operative development

With 64 per cent of its population in the working-age group, India is on track to become the world’s youngest country. However, a high proportion in the labor force indicates that the problem of youth unemployment and underemployment will remain a serious policy issue for many years to come in India. An International Labour Organization (ILO) studies reveals that roughly 18 million Indians turn 18 every year, of which a large majority enters the workforce. But most of them do not fill the needs for skilled jobs. India will have a severe skills shortage in the years to come and by 2030, with 29 million jobs likely to go unfilled due to lack of right skills.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/education-and-training-pillars-of-co-operative-development/article65264416.ece>

### EPFO may consider more govt bonds and equity investments

A committee at the Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) at its next meeting will likely consider proposals to permit its fund managers to invest more in government bonds that yield higher than top-rated corporate paper and increase the exposure to equity. The proposals are aimed at ensuring high returns for provident fund subscribers and they come after the EPFO cut the interest rate for 2021-22 to 8.10%, the lowest in four decades. “In our upcoming meeting, we will discuss a proposal of fungibility that should allow fund managers to invest more in higher

yielding government bonds instead of the mandatory corporate bonds,” Prabhakar Banasure, a member of EPFO’s central board of trustees, told ET.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/epfo-may-consider-more-govt-bonds-and-equity-investments/articleshow/90481109.cms>

## Banking and Finance

### SIDBI sanctions Rs 1,000 crore to Odisha govt for development of MSME clusters, credit to small businesses

Principal financial institution for MSMEs, Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) on Sunday said it has sanctioned Rs 837 crore under its SIDBI Cluster Development Fund Scheme (SCDF) to the Government of Odisha to support the development of 18 MSME infrastructure projects in the state. The projects, which would be implemented by Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (IDCO), included five new MSME parks, construction of 11 workers’ hostels and two projects for supporting infrastructure to MSMEs.

“The thrust shall be laid on clusters in sectors/subsectors which can directly benefit the MSMEs in the state and to bring them to a level ‘NEXT’ wherein they emerge vibrant by moving higher on the value chain and become sustainable. SIDBI shall complement its offerings in the State with its customized direct lending products being channelized in the supported clusters, thereby setting an example for other institutions to adopt and replicate,” said Sivasubramanian Ramann, CMD SIDBI said in a statement.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/msme-fin-sidbi-sanctions-rs-1000-crore-to-odisha-govt-for-development-of-msme-clusters-credit-to-small-businesses/2472961/>

### Ukraine war unlikely to roil Rs 5 tn refinancing next fiscal: Report

Over 1,400 large companies have to refinance Rs 5 lakh crore next fiscal, but the ongoing global crisis following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in the form rising inflation risks and the resultant likely spike in interest rates, is unlikely to cause any trouble for them given their strong balance-sheets and stable earnings, says a report. According to an analysis by India Ratings, the top 1,423 non-financial, debt-heavy corporates have to refinance as much as Rs 5 lakh crore next fiscal, but the refinancing risk is manageable despite a challenging environment owing to the tightening monetary policy condition, volatile commodity prices and rising geopolitical risks. Total refinancing requirement is estimated at Rs 5 lakh crore in FY23 on a blue-sky scenario, marginally up from Rs 4.98 lakh crore in FY22, the agency said, but added that the quantum will go up 33 per cent to Rs 6.6 lakh crore in FY23, based on a hazy-sky scenario.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/ukraine-war-unlikely-to-roil-rs-5-tn-refinancing-next-fiscal-report/articleshow/90474868.cms>

## Industry

### Govt seeks to change rules related to vehicles' fitness testing

The government on Sunday proposed certain amendments in the eligibility criteria for setting up an automated testing station to check vehicles' fitness, rules to enable vehicle testing outside the state of registration and the norm to declare a vehicle as end-of-life vehicle. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) in a statement said it has issued a draft notification dated March 25, 2022 to bring certain amendments in the rules for "Recognition, Regulation And Control of Automated Testing Stations (ATS), which were earlier published on September 23 2021.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/auto-news/govt-seeks-to-change-rules-related-to-vehicles-fitness-testing/articleshow/90478814.cms>

### Defence ministry brings key changes to speed up private sector project plan

The defence ministry has brought in key changes to accelerate private sector led military design and development projects by drastically reducing procurement timelines and simplifying the contract negotiating process, laying the ground to sign at least 30 significant deals with Indian companies by this year-end. The changes have been made after feedback from industry keen to enter the defence ecosystem and the need for self-dependency that has been highlighted given the crisis arising out of Russian invasion of Ukraine and its possible impact on supplies of spares and services. Officials told ET that a major change incorporated into procurement rules is the five-month deadline for signing of a contract, if a private company led initiative to develop a defence system prototype has been deemed

successful. In the past, the gap between demonstrating a prototype to the armed forces and signing of a contract would exceed two years, leading to major losses for the industry as well as cancellations.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/defence-ministry-brings-key-changes-to-speed-up-private-sector-project-plan/articleshow/90481398.cms>

#### **Nearly 30,000 micro enterprises scaled up to become small businesses: Govt data**

28,684 micro enterprises and 3,679 small businesses registered on the Udyam portal have grown into small and medium-sized businesses respectively since inception till March 22, 2022, according to the government data. The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) through a notification on June 26, 2020, had changed the definition of MSME following which the Udyam portal was launched for registration of MSMEs only on July 1, 2020, said Minister of State for MSME Ministry Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma sharing the data in a written reply to a question in Lok Sabha during the ongoing second part of the Budget session.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/msme-eodb-nearly-30000-micro-enterprises-scaled-up-to-become-small-businesses-govt-data/2473187/>

#### **Engineering, telecom, healthcare to add 12 mn jobs by FY26: Report**

Engineering, telecom and healthcare sectors are likely to add close to 12 million new jobs by FY26, largely due to the focus on recovery along with technology proliferation and digitisation in these segments, according to a report. A report by TeamLease Digital, the staffing division of TeamLease Services, said specialised staff or professional staff with high-skill and expertise will form nearly 17 per cent of the overall jobs created. The report -- titled 'Professional Staffing Digital Employment Trends Report' -- is a qualitative research that has surveyed and interviewed more than 750 employers/ leaders from across engineering, telecom and healthcare sectors. "The Engineering, Telecom & Healthcare sectors are on the verge of an Industry 4.0 transformation. There is a shift from a central industrial control system to one where smart products and processes are at the heart of their operations," said Sunil C, Head- Specialised Staffing, TeamLease Digital.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/engineering-telecom-healthcare-to-add-12-mn-jobs-by-fy26-report-122032700175\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/engineering-telecom-healthcare-to-add-12-mn-jobs-by-fy26-report-122032700175_1.html)

### **Agriculture**

#### **Draft rubber bill proposes one-time registration, removal of some archaic provisions**

To promote ease of doing business and growth of the sector, the draft rubber bill has proposed a series of steps, including replacement of periodic licensing with one-time registration, removal of permission requirement for possession of natural rubber and laying down clear procedures for inspection. The commerce ministry has proposed the repeal of decades-old laws on rubber and introduced new legislation that seeks to address the challenges faced by the sector and remove some of the archaic provisions of present law to create a conducive environment for businesses. The ministry has put the draft Rubber (Promotion and Development) Bill, 2022, on its website for stakeholders' views and suggestions. In an office memorandum, the Department of Commerce has said it is proposing to repeal the Rubber Act 1947 and introduce a new law.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/draft-rubber-bill-proposes-one-time-registration-removal-of-some-archaic-provisions/articleshow/90471414.cms>

### **Infrastructure**

#### **421 infra projects show cost overruns of ₹4.73-lakh cr**

As many as 421 infrastructure projects, each entailing investment of ₹150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns of more than ₹4.73-lakh crore, according to a report. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation monitors infrastructure projects of ₹150 crore and above. Of 1,565 such projects, 421 projects reported cost overruns and 647 projects were delayed.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/real-estate/421-infra-projects-show-cost-overruns-of-473-lakh-cr/article65264464.ece>

#### **Govt accords dual use permission to GIFT City, allows non-SEZ entities to buy properties**

India's first operational smart city and international financial services centre (IFSC), the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City), has secured dual use permission that will allow developers to offer premises to entities that are not operating in the special economic zone (SEZ). GIFT City is the country's first SEZ to get necessary permissions for this from the SEZ Board, government of Gujarat and Board of Approvals (BoA) that falls under the purview of the ministry of commerce.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/property/-/cstruction/govt-accords-dual-use-permission-to-gift-city-allows-non-sez-entities-to-buy-properties/articleshow/90480281.cms>

## Energy

### **Beginning 2023, India to start building nuclear power plants in 'fleet mode'**

With the first pour of concrete for a 700 MW atomic power plant in Karnataka's Kaiga scheduled in 2023, India is set to put in motion construction activities for 10 'fleet mode' nuclear reactors over the next three years.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/beginning-2023-india-to-start-building-nuclear-power-plants-in-fleet-mode/article65264395.ece>

### **India looking at alternatives to coking coal supplies from Russia**

India may look for alternatives to Russian coking coal, "supplies of which are not smooth" because of a war with Ukraine. However, imports from Russia to India will continue. Indian steel companies are a major importer of coking coal - mostly from Australia - while some like SAIL and JSPL have captive mines in Mozambique (Africa). Meanwhile, the Centre has also stepped in and asked primary steel producers to supply offerings (steel) at a ₹2,000-3,000 per tonne discount to secondary steel-makers, mostly the MSMEs. This is being done to ensure that there is no major impact of rising steel prices on the secondary producers' finances.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/india-looking-at-alternative-coking-coal-supplies-to-russia/article65264770.ece>

## States

### **TN seeds nutritional self-sufficiency programme in villages**

The Tamil Nadu government has devised an innovative nutritional self-sufficiency garden programme, among other schemes, as part of its long-term goal to achieve food and nutritional security in the State. It is attempting to get every household in the 12,500-odd villages in the State to grow its requirement of nutritional food in its own backyard. It will be providing a free garden kit to every village home.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/tp-agri-biz-and-commodity/tn-seeds-nutritional-self-sufficiency-programme-in-villages/article65265231.ece>

## Healthcare

### **Serum Institute seeks emergency use authorisation for its rBCG tuberculosis vaccine**

The Serum Institute has applied to the Drugs Controller General of India seeking emergency use authorisation for its recombinant BCG (rBCG) vaccine for the prevention of tuberculosis, official sources said on Sunday. The EUA application was submitted on March 22 by Prakash Kumar Singh, Director of Government and Regulatory Affairs at the Serum Institute of India (SII). India's TB immunisation programme currently offers BCG vaccination at birth or as early as possible till one year of age. SII already supplies life-saving vaccines to the government under the Universal Immunisation Programme, including Pneumococcal, IPV and Rotavirus, Singh mentioned in his letter.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/pharmaceuticals/serum-institute-seeks-emergency-use-authorisation-for-its-rbcg-tuberculosis-vaccine/articleshow/90475754.cms>

## External

### **India, UAE trade pact may come into force from May 1: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal**

The free trade agreement between India and the UAE is likely to come into effect from May 1 this year, under which domestic exporters of as many as 6,090 goods from sectors like textiles, agriculture, dry fruits, gem and jewellery would get duty-free access to the UAE market, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Sunday. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was signed by India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in February which aims to boost bilateral trade to USD 100 billion in the next five years from current USD 60 billion. The free trade agreement between India and the UAE is likely to come into effect from May 1 this year, under which domestic exporters of as many as 6,090 goods from sectors like textiles, agriculture, dry fruits, gem and jewellery would get duty-free access to the UAE market, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Sunday. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was signed by India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in February which aims to boost bilateral trade to USD 100 billion in the next five years from current USD 60 billion.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/india-uae-trade-pact-may-come-into-force-from-may-1-commerce-and-industry-minister-piyush-goyal/2473157/>

#### **Coal imports fell 10% y-o-y in Apr-Jan FY22, as prices surged 67%**

Even as the government is frantically trying to make up for the deficit in coal supplies, especially to thermal power plants ahead of the peak season, import of the key commodity has been declining consistently since the last two years owing largely to the record high international prices. During the first 10 months of the current financial year ending March 2022, the coal import volumes fell 10 per cent on an annual basis. However, the value of the imported commodity rose a whopping 67 per cent during the same time.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/companies/coal-imports-fell-10-y-o-y-in-apr-jan-fy22-as-prices-surged-67/article65265150.ece>

#### **FY23 export target in works, will build on this year's \$400 billion**

The commerce and industry ministry has begun drawing up export strategy for the next financial year, which will build on the milestone achievement of over \$400 billion export turnover in FY22. The ministry is setting up a dedicated 'trade promotion body' to drive overall promotion strategy, export targets, and execution to achieve \$2 trillion in exports by 2027. "The exercise to set the target for the next fiscal is on and should be complete in a month," an official told ET. The ministry has started talks with commodity boards, export promotion councils and Indian embassies abroad for next year's export plan.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/fy23-export-target-in-works-will-build-on-this-years-400-billion/articleshow/90481313.cms>

#### **MEA suggests booster doses for travelers to EU**

The external affairs ministry (MEA) has urged the health ministry to introduce booster Covid-19 doses for travellers to international destinations, particularly Europe, who took their second (final) dose of vaccine more than 270 days before the proposed date of travel. The MEA has highlighted that travel restrictions are being enforced by certain countries, with the European Union (EU) making Covid-19 boosters compulsory for travellers who have exceeded 270 days between the final dose and date of travel, and how that is impacting necessary travel of Indians, people aware of the matter told ET.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/mea-suggests-booster-doses-for-travelers-to-eu/articleshow/90481402.cms>