



February 07, 2025 – Friday

Economy

EPFO processes over 50.8 million claims in FY25

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has processed over 50.8 million claims amounting to Rs 2.1 trillion, surpassing the 44.5 million claims worth Rs 1.9 trillion settled in the previous financial year, FY24. Auto claim settlements also doubled to 18.7 million from 8.92 million claims settled in the previous financial year.

https://www.business-standard.com/finance/news/epfo-processes-over-50-8-million-claims-in-fy25-mansukh-mandaviya-125020601604_1.html

Labour ministry plans EPFO pension scheme for platform-based gig workers

The labour ministry is working on a pension scheme under the Employee Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) for platform-based gig workers. If the scheme is launched, all platform aggregators such as Swiggy, Zomato, Uber, and Blinkit among others will have to contribute towards the pension of the gig workers whom they employ, official sources said.

https://www.business-standard.com/finance/news/labour-ministry-plans-epfo-pension-scheme-for-platform-based-gig-workers-125020601468_1.html

India has received \$ 1.16 billion in climate finance so far: Govt

India has so far received \$1.16 billion for climate projects through the financial mechanism of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the government informed Parliament on Thursday. This amount includes \$803.9 million from the Green Climate Fund, \$346.52 million from the Global Environment Facility (for climate change focal area), and \$16.86 million from the Adaptation Fund, according to a written reply in the Rajya Sabha by Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav.

https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/india-has-received-1-16-billion-in-climate-finance-so-far-govt-125020601178_1.html

Budget 2025: India's education Budget grows, but lags behind global trends

Union Budget 2025-26 allocated Rs 1.28 trillion to the education sector, a 6.5 per cent hike compared to the previous year and the lowest in the past four years. However, the overall spending on education remained below the suggested 6 per cent of Gross Domestic Production (GDP) spendings in National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

https://www.business-standard.com/education/news/union-budget-2025-education-allocation-growth-global-comparison-125020600340_1.html

Finance

New I-T bill not to have provisos, explanations; may come up in Cabinet on Friday

The new income tax bill, to be introduced in Parliament next week, will not have long sentences, provisos and explanations, Finance Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said on Thursday. The new bill, which will replace the six-decade-old Income Tax Act, is likely to be discussed at the Cabinet meeting on Friday, sources said. The new bill,

which was announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech, will also incorporate the changes made in income tax rates, slabs and in TDS provisions made in the Budget for 2025-26.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/new-i-t-bill-not-to-have-provisos-explanations-may-come-up-in-cabinet-on-friday/articleshow/117983845.cms>

RBI directs NBFCs to disclose maximum loan charges, seek board approval

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has directed large non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) to disclose the total charges levied on customers for each loan product. Additionally, these NBFCs must obtain board approval for the maximum rates they set on loans. Consequently, finance companies will be required to transparently outline the upper limit of charges — comprising interest rates, insurance, processing fees, and any other applicable costs — across different loan categories, including mortgages, vehicle loans, property loans, gold loans, and education loans, according to a report by The Economic Times.

https://www.business-standard.com/finance/news/rbi-nbfc-loan-charges-disclosure-guidelines-125020600301_1.html

Lower core income, higher slippages dent Indian banks' Q3 profitability

Lower core income, muted margins, and higher slippages weighed on the Indian banking sector's (excluding small finance banks) profitability in the October–December quarter (Q3FY25). According to Capitalline data, the net profit of 32 scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) grew by 21.2 per cent year–on–year (Y-o-Y) but dipped 2.4 per cent sequentially. Excluding State Bank of India (SBI), the banking sector's net profit was up 12 per cent Y-o-Y. SBI, the country's largest lender, on Thursday, reported a net profit of Rs 16,891 crore for Q3FY25, up 84.32 per cent Y-o-Y.

https://www.business-standard.com/finance/news/lower-core-income-higher-slippages-dent-indian-banks-q3-profitability-125020601585_1.html

Experts differ on IBBI's move to permit flat possession during insolvency

Sector experts appear divided over the legal and practical implications of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India's (ibbi) recent amendments to its regulations. These include granting homeowners possession of their properties during the ongoing insolvency process. While welcoming the attempt to address challenges in real estate insolvencies, Raheel Patel, partner at Gandhi Law Associates, said the changes may risk weakening the insolvency framework by introducing legal ambiguities and potential conflicts.

https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/experts-differ-on-ibbi-s-move-to-permit-flat-possession-during-insolvency-125020601531_1.html

Centre rethinks on GST waiver for insurance

The Centre may push back against a proposal to give goods and services tax exemption for certain insurance policies, as it reckons that this would raise the cost of insurers, leading a firming up of premium amounts. However, it will strongly pitch for a major reduction in the GST rates for insurance sector. This view may be conveyed to the GST Council as it meets next. The Council is likely to consider the report of group of ministers (GoM), which reviewed taxation of health and life insurance premiums in its next session.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/policy/economy-centre-rethinks-on-gst-waiver-for-insurance-3740099/>

CGST amendment on credit notes may raise compliance burden for suppliers

Tax experts have raised concern over the proposed amendment in the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017 in the 2025-26 (FY26) Budget in respect of credit note that puts the onus on suppliers to ensure reversal of input tax credit (ITC) availed by the recipient in order to reduce their (suppliers') own tax liability.

https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/cgst-amendment-on-credit-note-experts-fear-higher-compliance-burden-125020601193_1.html

Govt rethinking disinvestment plan? Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman sets the record straight

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman confirms the government's commitment to privatisation and disinvestment, emphasizing their cabinet-backed strategy. The government and LIC plan to sell their 60.7% stake in IDBI Bank, with the process expected to commence soon. Valuations of the targeted companies have significantly improved.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/banking/govt-rethinking-disinvestment-plan-finance-minister-nirmala-sitharaman-sets-the-record-straight/articleshow/117967545.cms>

Indirect tax to rise by 8.3 pc, corporate tax by 10.4 pc in FY26: Report

India's indirect tax collection is set to grow by 8.3% in FY26, driven by increased GST revenue due to strong urban consumption, according to an ICICI Bank report. Corporate tax collections are also expected to rise by 10.4%, while government spending is projected to increase by 7.4%. The fiscal deficit is revised downwards to 4.8% of GDP.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/indirect-tax-to-rise-by-8-3-pc-corporate-tax-by-10-4-pc-in-fy26-report/articleshow/117968986.cms>

Industry

Rural demand, price hikes drive growth in consumer goods sector: NielsenIQ

Solid demand in rural areas, as well as higher prices of staples including edible oil and wheat flour, helped the consumer goods sector report a 10.6 per cent sales growth in the December quarter, market researcher NielsenIQ said on Thursday. India's rural areas - which account for just over a third of consumer goods sales - have proven a bright spot for an industry struggling with an inflation-led spending slowdown in large cities.

https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/rural-demand-price-hikes-drive-growth-in-consumer-goods-sector-nielseni-125020600310_1.html

Rise in digital adoption and sustainability measures across MSMEs: SIDBI MSME Outlook Survey

Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has launched their first ever MSME Outlook Survey, a quarterly analysis of MSME business sentiment for the October-December 2024 period. The MSME-Business Expectations Index predicts continuing optimism for the next year, with improvements anticipated in sales, profitability, skilled labor availability, and overall business conditions, boosting confidence across stakeholders within the MSME sector.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/small-biz/sme-sector/rise-in-digital-adoption-and-sustainability-measures-across-msmes-sidbi-msme-outlook-survey/articleshow/117981032.cms>

Technology upgrade of MSME sector on cards

The government is set to introduce targeted measures to boost technology adoption in the MSME sector and overhaul the office of the development commission to meet global standards. Niti Aayog plans a research study to identify challenges and propose reforms to enhance tech penetration and streamline policy facilitation for MSMEs.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/technology-upgrade-of-msme-sector-on-cards/articleshow/117991899.cms>

Auto retail sales up 7% in Jan as passenger vehicle segment rises 16%

Automobile retail sales in the country grew 6.6 per cent year-on-year (Y-o-Y) in January, marking a "moderately positive" note after business dipped the month before. Passenger vehicles grew almost 16 per cent in January, according to data provided by the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA). As many as 2.29 million automobiles were sold last month and 2.15 million in January 2024.

https://www.business-standard.com/industry/auto/auto-retail-sales-up-7-in-jan-as-passenger-vehicle-segment-rises-16-125020600596_1.html

Gems, jewellery industry urges government to reduce GST to 1.25 pc on bullion, ornaments

The gems and jewellery industry in India has called on the government to reduce the GST on bullion and ornaments from the current 3% to 1.25%. Industry leaders argue that high taxation rates are harming businesses and promoting unregulated trade. Lowering the GST would support domestic production, job creation, and establish India as a global jewellery hub.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/fashion/-/cosmetics/-/jewellery/gems-jewellery-industry-urges-government-to-reduce-gst-to-1-25-pc-on-bullion-ornaments/articleshow/117987660.cms>

Defence ministry to sign Rs 10,200 cr Pinaka rocket deal with Solar, MIL

The Defence Ministry is set to sign the Rs 10,200 crore contract for ammunition for the Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launcher weapon system on Thursday with Solar Industries, Nagpur and public sector firm Munitions India Limited (MIL). The Cabinet Committee on Security had last week cleared the Indian Army proposal to buy the ammunition including the Area Denial Munitions, said Defence officials.

https://www.business-standard.com/external-affairs-defence-security/news/defence-ministry-to-sign-rs-10-200-cr-pinaka-rocket-deal-with-solar-mil-125020600490_1.html

Agriculture

Govt adds 10 additional commodities to e-NAM platform for trading

The Agriculture Ministry has allowed trading of 10 additional commodities on the electronic-National Agriculture Market (e-NAM), taking the total number of tradable items on the platform to 231. The newly added commodities include dried Tulsi leaves, Besant (Chickpea flour), wheat flour, chana sattu (Roasted Chickpea Flour), water Chestnut flour, asafoetida, dried fenugreek leaves, baby corn, dragon fruit and water Chestnut, the ministry said in a statement.

https://www.business-standard.com/industry/agriculture/govt-adds-10-additional-commodities-to-e-nam-platform-for-trading-125020601719_1.html

States take up oilseeds as summer crops

In a bid to boost oilseeds production as summer grown crops (February-June), ten states including Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra have taken up sowing of the groundnut, sunflower and sesame this season, under the national mission on edible oils launched last year. Officials said states such Punjab, Haryana and Chhattisgarh will be sowing oilseeds for the first time this summer season through creation of clusters, states including Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra would step up taking of oilseeds during the next couple of months.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/policy/economy-states-take-up-oilseeds-as-summer-crops-3740196/>

Sunflower, soyabean oils gaining market in India over pricey palm oil

As palm oil has turned expensive over soft oils in the past 4-5 months, domestic consumers in India are shifting to alternatives such as sunflower and soyabean oil. Palm oil imports down 24 per cent in the first two months of oil year 2024-25.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/sunflower-soyabean-oils-gaining-market-in-india-over-pricey-palm-oil/article69188490.ece>

As a major part of India is rain deficient, storage in key reservoirs drops to 61%

With a major part of the country receiving deficient post-monsoon and winter rainfall, the storage in the 155 Indian reservoirs continued to drop. This week, the level was 61 per cent of the 180.852 billion cubic metres (BCM) capacity at 110.204 BCM — higher than a year ago and the past decade (normal level), data from the Central Water Commission (CWC) showed.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/as-a-major-part-of-india-is-rain-deficient-storage-in-key-reservoirs-drops-to-61/article69188462.ece>

Brazil's black matpe output hinges on India's duty-free imports this year

Many Brazilian growers may skip sowing black matpe (urad) crop in February-March if the Indian government does not decide on extending duty-free import of the pulse crop over the next couple of weeks. However, Thailand could fill up a part of any void created as it has come up with better quality produce this year, experts said at a webinar on the crop.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/brazils-black-matpe-output-hinges-on-indias-duty-free-imports-this-year/article69187786.ece>

Infrastructure

India ranks third globally for LEED green building certification in 2024

India ranks third in USGBC's LEED green building certification globally during 2024, according to a report. India retained its third spot on US Green Building Council's (USGBC) annual list of top 10 countries and regions for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) in 2024, according to an statement on Thursday.

https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/india-ranks-third-globally-for-leed-green-building-certification-in-2024-125020600966_1.html

Upward rise in REIT occupancies, rents indicate healthy office demand

Occupancies at the office portfolios under real estate investment trusts (REITs) saw a significant rise in the third quarter aided by the denotification of SEZ spaces, while in-place rent also increased indicating healthy office take up, driven by strong demand from global capacity centres.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/real-estate/upward-rise-in-reit-occupancies-rents-indicate-healthy-office-demand/article69188406.ece>

Energy

Govt doubles down on rare earth elements' extraction to boost clean energy supply chains

The Government is focusing on expanding the extraction and refining capacity of rare earth elements (REEs) as it endeavours to create a robust supply chain for critical minerals and clean energy products including nuclear power.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/markets/commodities/govt-doubles-down-on-rare-earth-elements-extraction-to-boost-clean-energy-supply-chains/article69189147.ece>

India mulling imposition of Customs duty on masur as imported produce sells cheaper

The Indian government is actively considering ending the duty-free import of masur (lentil) even before March 31, which is the deadline of the sop provided to importers to bolster domestic stock. The notification on the duty is likely to be issued next week after an inter-ministerial panel approves the proposal, sources said. However, it is not immediately known if import duty will be levied on chana (gram).

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/india-mulling-imposition-of-customs-duty-on-masur-as-imported-produce-sells-cheaper/article69188926.ece>

Phase three of intra-state Green Energy Corridor in works: Joshi

The government is planning to initiate the third phase of the intra-state Green Energy Corridor for seamless evacuation of green energy, said Pralhad Joshi, minister for new and renewable energy. In an interview, Joshi said the power ministry has set the March 31 deadline for states to submit proposals for the intra-state transmission project. Once the states hand over the proposals, further action will be taken for approval.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/renewables/phase-three-of-intra-state-green-energy-corridor-in-works-joshi/articleshow/117991745.cms>

Telecom

Mobile phone tariff declined 94 pc since 2014: Jyotiraditya Scindia

Mobile phone tariffs in India have decreased by 94% since 2014, with significant drops in call and internet data costs. Union Communication Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia stated that this has been beneficial despite recent increases due to investments in 5G. There are now 116 crore mobile phone subscribers and 97.44 crore internet users.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-news/mobile-phone-tariff-declined-94-pc-since-2014-jyotiraditya-scindia/articleshow/117977688.cms>

Trai recommends new numbering system for landline users

Fixed-line users may need to dial the full 10-digit number for local calls if Trai's recommendation is accepted. This new numbering system aims to eliminate the STD code and free up unused numbers. Trai also suggested specific measures for deactivated numbers to optimize number use efficiently.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-policy/trai-recommends-new-numbering-system-for-landline-users/articleshow/117988903.cms>

States

UP's new excise policy: E-lottery for licences, higher alcohol prices ahead

The Uttar Pradesh government on Thursday approved the Excise Policy for 2025-26 during a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Under the new policy, the management of all liquor shops in the state will be handled via an e-lottery system. Excise Minister Nitin Agarwal said that under the updated policy, liquor shop licences will now be distributed through e-lottery, with no renewals for existing licences. Licence renewals will resume in the 2026-27 financial year.

https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/up-excise-policy-2025-26-liquor-license-e-lottery-price-hike-reforms-125020600628_1.html

Demand for upscale properties is on the rise in Mumbai and Pune

Mumbai and Pune's luxury real estate market is thriving, with growing demand for homes offering long-term value and sustainability. Both cities are witnessing a transformation towards properties that harmoniously combine urban living with extensive amenities, attracting buyers who prioritize comfort and meaningful living, says Vishal Jumani, Joint Managing Director, Supreme Universal.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/money/demand-for-upscale-properties-is-on-the-rise-in-mumbai-and-pune-vishal-jumani-3739758/>

Setting up CBG plants can reduce Delhi's pollution by 30%: Nomura study

Setting up of compressed biogas (CBG) plants, which uses paddy straw as one of the feedstocks, could be used to reduce the winter pollution in Delhi by about 30 per cent, a study done by Nomura Research has stated. Moreover, the study mentioned that one CBG plant helps remove emissions equivalent to 1.5 lakh electric cars. "Vehicles contribute 20-30 per cent to Delhi's PM (particulate matter) emissions...The majority is from older vehicles with the new BS-6 compliant vehicles contributing the least. For example, the BS-6 compliant cars added every year account for 0.2 per cent of Delhi's pollution," it added.

https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/setting-up-cbg-plants-can-reduce-delhi-s-pollution-by-30-nomura-study-125020601202_1.html

External

India, UK join hands to shape green hydrogen standards

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) hosted a two-day workshop with British counterparts in New Delhi, focusing on standardisation of green hydrogen production and regulations. The initiative, organised in partnership with the British Standards Institution (BSI) and the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), marks a crucial step in aligning international standards for the emerging hydrogen economy, an official statement said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/renewables/india-uk-join-hands-to-shape-green-hydrogen-standards/articleshow/117981053.cms>

India to assess US-China trade war impact after inputs from industry

The Indian government is assessing the impact of US tariffs imposed on China and is consulting with industry representatives. India expects to benefit from increased US orders but is cautious about potential negative effects, including the risk of Chinese goods being dumped in the country due to excess capacity.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-to-assess-us-china-trade-war-impact-after-inputs-from-industry/articleshow/117991521.cms>

Japan finds new bright spots for investment in India

Japanese investments in India are diversifying into financial services, electronics, and telecommunications. There is a shift towards new technologies, infrastructure, and defence. Growth prospects are strong with support from national policies and incentives. These trends highlight India's potential as an investment hub amid shifting global dynamics and favourable economic conditions.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/japan-finds-new-bright-spots-for-investment-in-india/articleshow/117992540.cms>

Part shifting of customs duty to AIDC to have marginal impact on state transfers: CBIC Chairman

CBIC Chairman Sanjay Kumar Agarwal on Thursday said the part shifting of the basic customs duty to AIDC will only have a marginal impact on transfers to states as the total sum involved would be about Rs 4,000 crore across 30 states. In the Budget for 2025-26, the government has rationalised basic customs duty rates, slashing the number of levies to just eight, but has kept the effective duty rates on most items the same by adjusting cess to further ease of doing business.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/part-shifting-of-customs-duty-to-aidc-to-have-marginal-impact-on-state-transfers-cbic-chairman/articleshow/117983471.cms>

Budget measures to boost chemical exports; shipments to cross USD 30 bn this fiscal: CHEMEXCIL

The budget proposals, including reductions in import duties on essential raw materials and support measures for MSMEs, will strengthen domestic manufacturing and boost chemical sector exports which are expected to surpass USD 30 billion this fiscal, CHEMEXCIL said on Thursday. During April-December 2024, the chemical exports reached USD 21.20 billion.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/indl-goods/svs/chem-/-fertilisers/budget-measures-to-boost-chemical-exports-shipments-to-cross-usd-30-bn-this-fiscal-chemexcil/articleshow/117979890.cms>

Indian IT firms cut reliance on H-1Bs, focus on local and nearshore talent

As US work visa challenges continue reshaping hiring strategies, Indian IT companies are reducing their reliance on H-1B visas by shifting towards offshoring and nearshoring. As they explore alternative talent hubs in Eastern Europe and Latin America, alongside increased local hiring in the US, the industry is adapting to a new global workforce model, observed analysts.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/info-tech/indian-it-firms-cut-reliance-on-h-1bs-focus-on-local-and-nearshore-talent/article69188534.ece>