



March 24, 2021 – Wednesday

Key Developments

MHA extends Covid guidelines to April 30; states can impose local curbs

Amid fresh coronavirus surge in many states, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Tuesday issued new guidelines for effective control of infections. The new guidelines will be effective from April 1 and will remain in force till April 30. The main focus of the guidelines is to consolidate the substantial gains achieved in containing the spread of Covid-19, which was visible in the sustained decline in the number of active cases, continuously for about 5 months, said MHA.

The guidelines mandate the states and union territories to strictly enforce the "Test-Track-Treat" protocol in all parts of the country, ensure observance of Covid appropriate behaviour by everyone; and to scale up the vaccination drive, to cover all the target groups.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/mha-extends-covid-norms-to-april-30-states-can-impose-local-restrictions-121032300970_1.html

Covid: Cabinet approves vaccination for people above 45 years from April 1

Government on Tuesday allowed people above 45 years to get vaccinated against coronavirus from April 1. "It has been decided that from 1st April, the vaccine will open for everybody above 45 years of age. We request that all eligible should immediately register and get vaccinated," said Union Minister Prakash Javadekar about the Cabinet decision taken on Tuesday.

He said the Cabinet also decided that the second dose of the vaccine can be taken between four and eight weeks, on the advice of doctors. It was allowed to be taken between four to six weeks earlier, but scientists have now said that taking the second dose between four and eight weeks gives improved results.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/covid-cabinet-approves-vaccination-for-people-above-45-years-from-april-1-121032300764_1.html

No compound, penal interest be charged during loan moratorium period: SC

The Supreme Court Tuesday directed that no compound or penal interest shall be charged from borrowers for the six-month loan moratorium period, which was announced last year amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and the amount already charged shall be refunded, credited or adjusted. The apex court refused to interfere with the Centre's and Reserve Bank of India (RBI's) decision to not extend the loan moratorium beyond August 31 last year, saying it is a policy decision.

A bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan said the top court cannot do judicial review of the Centre's financial policy decision unless it is malafide and arbitrary.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/no-compound-penal-interest-be-charged-during-loan-moratorium-period-sc-121032300377_1.html

Govt reintroduces clause on 5% withholding tax for FPIs

The Finance Ministry has reintroduced the clause in the Income tax act that provided for preferential 5% withholding tax applicable to foreign portfolio investors (FPIs). As a part of amendments to the Finance Bill 2021 introduced in Lok Sabha on 22 March, the government has put back the deleted clause of Section 151 which referred to the five

per cent withholding tax rate for FPIs in case of interest earned from debt securities. ET reported last week that the potential withholding tax on offshore funds could shoot up to as much as 20% after a provision in Section 151 of the Income Tax Act was deleted while government was making changes to the Income Tax Act. However, last week the government clarified that there was no change in the policy and FPIs could avail the beneficial withholding tax rate through another section of the Income tax act (Section 194LD).

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/govt-reintroduces-clause-on-5-withholding-tax-for-fpis/articleshow/81653861.cms>

Oil sector PSUs to set up InvITs as part of asset monetisation drive

After power, the country's oil sector PSUs would now float an infrastructure investment trust (InvIT) as part of the asset monetisation exercise announced by the government and mobilise resources for fresh capital investment. As part of the exercise, gas transportation utility Gail India is expected to set up the first InvIT in the oil sector in the next financial year. The proposed InvIT will house some of the gas pipeline infrastructure created by the company. Oil ministry officials said that this will help Gail to mobilise over Rs 20,000 crore through this route that could be helpful in developing new pipeline infrastructure that would help the country in developing a gas based economy.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/oil-sector-psus-to-set-up-invits-as-part-of-asset-monetisation-drive-121032300737_1.html

DGCA extends international flight ban till April-end

The government today extended the ban on international flights further by a month till April 30, 2021. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) today announced a ban on international flights will continue till the end of April. The order, however, clarified that cargo flights and limited international flights under bubble arrangement will continue to operate. The DGCA order for extending it by a month came after the home ministry announced new guidelines Tuesday on managing rising Covid-19 cases. This extension of ban is an indication that regular international flights would not begin by April-end but the government was discussing a possibility of starting regular international flights by summer of 2021, which may not happen now as COVID infections are increasing across the world.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/airlines/-aviation/dgca-extends-international-flight-ban-till-april-end/articleshow/81653593.cms>

Govt raises PF threshold limit to Rs 5 lakh for earning tax-free interest

The government on Tuesday raised the deposit threshold limit to Rs 5 lakh per annum in provident fund for which interest would continue to be tax exempt. This would be applicable to those cases where no contribution is made by employers to the retirement fund. In her Budget presented to Parliament on February 1, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had provided that interest on employee contributions to provident fund over Rs 2.5 lakh per annum would be taxed from April 1, 2021. Replying to the debate on the Finance Bill 2021 in the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman made the announcement regarding raising the limit to Rs 5 lakh in cases where employers do not make contributions to the provident fund.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/govt-raises-pf-threshold-limit-to-rs-5-lakh-for-earning-tax-free-interest/articleshow/81654130.cms>

Economy

NITI Aayog invites bid from advisors for govt's asset monetisation programme

NITI Aayog has invited bids from transaction advisors for rolling out the government's core asset monetisation and disinvestment programme. The idea is to empanel transaction advisors for the smooth implementation of the programme. The Aayog has already identified about 100 assets, valued at about Rs 5 lakh crore, that will be put up for monetisation over the next three years. This includes around 31 broad asset classes, across 10 ministries or central public sector enterprises. Nearly half of it is expected to come from railways and the telecom sector which have huge land parcels available for monetisation among other assets including telecom towers. Further, it has also asked administrative ministries to create a pipeline of assets that can be monetised in the next four years.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/niti-aayog-invites-bid-from-advisors-for-govts-asset-monetisation-programme/articleshow/81650094.cms>

Govt garners Rs 30,369 crore as dividend from PSUs so far this fiscal

The government has collected Rs 30,369 crore as dividend from Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) so far in the current fiscal, according to a senior official. In the revised budget estimate, the government significantly lowered the dividend receipt from the CPSEs to Rs 34,717.25 crore from Rs 65,746.96 crore estimated earlier for this financial year. "Dividend receipts of GoI (Government of India) from CPSEs stand at about Rs 30,369 crore in the current financial year (as of 22.3.2021)," DIPAM Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said in a tweet. The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) also said that it has received multiple applications for BEML. "Multiple Expressions of Interest received for the privatisation of BEML. The transaction will now move to the second stage," he said in another tweet.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-garners-rs-30-369-crore-as-dividend-from-psus-so-far-this-fiscal-121032301007_1.html

Increased economic activities led to higher GST collection: MoS Finance

Increased economic activities have resulted in higher GST collection which stood above Rs 1 lakh crore for five months in a row since October 2020, Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs Anurag Thakur said in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. Thakur, during Question Hour, said this could be possible on the back of the measures taken by the government to boost economic activities over the last year to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. "GST collection has increased. If you see e-way bill data, numbers... activities have increased," the minister said. "GST collection has witnessed above Rs 1 lakh crore for a stretch of five months since October 2020... The GST collection during the period has been higher than the collection in the same period last year," he said.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/increased-economic-activities-led-to-higher-gst-collection-mos-finance-121032300816_1.html

Expert panel set up to examine industry views on govt's plan to ban 27 pesticides: Narendra Singh Tomar

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Tuesday told Parliament that the government has constituted an experts' panel to examine objections and suggestions received in response to the draft notification regarding imposing ban on 27 pesticides. Tomar, in his written reply to the Lok Sabha, said the government had in May 2020 published a draft inviting objections and suggestions from stakeholders with regard to prohibition of 27 pesticides. Further, the government in June 2020 on the request of stakeholders had increased the timeline for submission of objections and suggestions on the draft order from 45 five days to 90 days, he said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/expert-panel-set-up-to-examine-industry-views-on-govts-plan-to-ban-27-pesticides-narendra-singh-tomar/articleshow/81653347.cms>

Govt mulls launching 'Poshan Abhiyan' to tackle malnutrition among elderly population

The government is planning to launch 'Poshan Abhiyan' to provide nutrition support to the indigent elderly population not staying in old age homes and victims of severe malnutrition, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment said on Tuesday.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/govt-mulls-launching-poshan-abhiyan-to-tackle-malnutrition-among-elderly-population/article34140623.ece>

Centre seeks early Supreme Court ruling on Hindustan Zinc stake sale

The Union government on Monday requested the Supreme Court for an early decision in a five-year-old writ petition challenging the offloading of government equity in Hindustan Zinc (HZL) and said pendency of the petition had stalled the Centre's plan to disinvest in the erstwhile public sector company. Solicitor general Tushar Mehta's request for early hearing on the writ petition filed by National Confederation of Officers' Association of Central Public Sector Undertakings evoked a sharp response from a bench headed by CJI S A Bobde, who asked, "What is the hurry?"

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/indl-goods/svs/metals-mining/centre-seeks-early-supreme-court-ruling-on-hindustan-zinc-stake-sale/articleshow/81645765.cms>

India's rising coronavirus cases risk denting recovery out of recession

A surge in coronavirus cases in India could hurt the economy's recovery from a rare recession, as curbs to avoid a new wave creates delays in putting back to work millions who lost their jobs due to the pandemic. In recent weeks,

new coronavirus cases have shot up across India despite a rollout of a nationwide vaccination drive. Confirmed infections have risen to more than 40,000 daily from a low of about 9,800 in February, pushing the overall tally past the 11.5 million mark.

Unlike other Covid-19 hit regions such as Europe, India has so far been reluctant to reimpose any more harsh restrictions. Around this time last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi ordered a strict national lockdown with just a few hours notice, inadvertently causing an exodus of millions of city-dwelling laborers back to their villages rather than starve without work -- spreading the virus across the breadth of the country and inflicting deep economic damage.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-s-rising-coronavirus-cases-risk-denting-recovery-out-of-recession-121032300354_1.html

Banking and Finance

Bank NPAs declined to Rs 5.70 trillion at December-end: Anurag Thakur

Non-performing assets of banks declined to Rs 5.70 lakh crore in December 2020 and the recovered amount stood at Rs 2.74 lakh crore following a slew of measures taken by the government, Union Minister Anurag Singh Thakur told Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. During Question Hour, the Minister of State for Finance also said the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) has helped in the recovery of NPA (Non-Performing Assets).

"There has been a reduction in gross NPAs. The NPAs - which stood at Rs 8.96 lakh crore in 2018 - have reduced to Rs 5.70 lakh crore in December 2020. Recovery of Rs 2.74 lakh crore was also made," Thakur said while replying to a supplementary question in the Upper House.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/bank-npas-declined-to-rs-5-70-trillion-at-december-end-anurag-thakur-121032300954_1.html

PSB privatisation: UFBU warns of more strikes

The United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) has decided to undertake further preparatory programmes to go for intermittent strikes, prolonged strikes, and also indefinite strike to protest against the government's proposal to privatise public sector banks (PSBs).

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/money-and-banking/psb-privatisation-ufbu-warns-of-more-strikes/article34141179.ece>

Easing of valuation rule for perpetual bonds to help in avoiding panic redemption, feel experts

Easing of valuation rule for perpetual bonds by Sebi will provide a breather to the mutual fund industry, which has an exposure of over ₹35,000 crore to such instruments, as they get time to redeem their positions, industry experts said on Tuesday.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/money-and-banking/easing-of-valuation-rule-for-perpetual-bonds-to-help-in-avoiding-panic-redemption-feel-experts/article34141393.ece>

Digital lenders on fund raising spree

Concerns about the sector notwithstanding, the digital lending segment is seeing a boom with increased demand for easy credit from customers and fund raise by many of these firms.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/money-and-banking/digital-lenders-on-fund-raising-sprees/article34139555.ece>

Industry

Surging Covid-19 cases a cause for concern for Surat's diamond workers

Increasing Covid-19 cases have become a cause for concern among Surat's diamond workers as well as exporters at a time when there is robust demand for cut and polished diamonds from the United States and China. The industry fears another lockdown would impact production and about 20 million migrants who had returned to the diamond hub after restrictions were withdrawn following easing of restrictions last year may leave again. About a million people are employed in Surat, where 14 out of 15 diamonds in the world are cut and polished. "Before the lockdown there were 400,000 migrant workers at Surat. But after the lockdown was withdrawn (in May last year), only 200,000

migrant workers returned and the rest stayed back in their hometowns," said Ramesh Zilriya, president, Diamond Workers Union.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/fashion/-/cosmetics/-/jewellery/surging-covid-19-cases-become-a-cause-for-concern-for-surats-diamond-workers/articleshow/81652294.cms>

India's carbon neutral aim hinges on top emitters using hydrogen

India's steel mills, the second-largest producers globally, expect hydrogen-based production to be key to cutting pollution as the nation comes under pressure to zero out greenhouse gas emissions. As the world's third-biggest emitter, India is expected to boost its commitment to slow global warming ahead of climate talks in Scotland this year. Officials close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi are working with senior bureaucrats and foreign advisers to consider ways to meet the 2050 deadline, according to people familiar with the matter.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/indl-goods/svs/steel/indias-carbon-neutral-aim-hinges-on-top-emitters-using-hydrogen/articleshow/81647398.cms>

Most Indian CEOs to wait till half population vaccinated before ensuring pre-COVID normal: Survey

A majority of the chief executives (over three-fourths of the total respondents) in India are willing to wait to see that at least half the population is vaccinated before opening their offices to the pre-pandemic levels, while only 45 per cent of their global peers will do so, according to a survey. The survey, among the top-500 chief executives, by global consultancy KPMG said global executives do not expect to see a return to the normal course of business until sometime in 2022, as opposed to nearly one-third (31 per cent) who anticipate this will happen later this year. While 45 per cent of CEOs globally will wait for over 50 per cent of population to get vaccinated before returning to the office, as much as 76 per cent here want to do so before opening up, according to the survey. The survey also said these CEOs are planning what the new reality will look like after the pandemic. Nearly a quarter (24 per cent) of them admit that their business model has been changed forever by the pandemic.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/most-indian-ceos-to-wait-till-half-population-vaccinated-before-ensuring-pre-covid-normal-survey/2218698/>

SC stays proceedings pending in HCs on pleas to regulate OTT platforms

The Supreme Court Tuesday stayed proceedings pending before several high courts across the country on pleas related to regulation of over-the-top (OTT) platforms. A bench headed by Justice D Y Chandrachud was told by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that despite the apex court's earlier order issuing notice on the transfer plea filed by the Centre to club all such petitions filed in various high courts, the Punjab and Haryana High Court is proceeding in the matter pending there.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/media/entertainment/sc-stays-proceedings-pending-in-hcs-on-pleas-to-regulate-ott-platforms/articleshow/81647110.cms>

Surge in cybercrime amidst Covid pandemic; 86% involved in phishing: Study

A new study has found that there has been a momentous surge in cyber-security crime during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly related to governmental policy announcements and cybercrime campaigns.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/info-tech/surge-in-cybercrime-amidst-covid-pandemic-86-involved-in-phishing-study/article34140656.ece>

Manufacturing corridors better prepared for second wave of Covid

As the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic spreads to many States outside Maharashtra, industries appear better prepared for any likely disruption of operations.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/manufacturing-corridors-better-prepared-for-second-wave-of-covid/article34134044.ece>

Agriculture

Govt invites stakeholders' comments on National Fisheries Policy

A 'National Fisheries Policy 2020' has been formulated and placed in the public domain, inviting suggestions from stakeholders, the government informed Parliament on Tuesday. Minister of State for Fisheries Pratab Chandra

Sarangi, in his written reply to the Lok Sabha, said the draft policy provides vision and strategies of the government towards overall and sustainable development of the fisheries sector in the country for the next ten years. The government has already received comments on the draft policy from about 14 states and Union territories, including West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka and Odisha, he said. The minister said that the draft policy has been translated into 11 vernacular languages and states have been asked to circulate it among stakeholders, including fishermen associations in order to obtain their comments.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-invites-stakeholders-comments-on-national-fisheries-policy-121032300995_1.html

No final call taken on cash transfer of fertiliser subsidy to farmers: Govt

The government has not yet taken a final decision on implementation of direct cash transfer of fertiliser subsidy to farmers, Fertiliser Minister D V Sadananda Gowda informed Parliament on Tuesday. However, the government has implemented Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system in fertiliser sector under which subsidy is released to the fertiliser companies on weekly basis, on the basis of actual sales made by the retailers to the beneficiaries through Point of Sale (PoS) devices installed at each retailer shop, he said.

About 2.26 lakh PoS devices/ desktop software have been installed at retail outlets across the country. Beneficiaries are identified through Aadhaar Card, Voter Identity Card, etc, he added.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/no-final-call-taken-on-cash-transfer-of-fertiliser-subsidy-to-farmers-govt-121032300998_1.html

Tea output in the Nilgiris down 22% in two months

February was a low cropping month for tea in the South, especially in The Nilgiris, the largest tea growing district in the peninsula.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/markets/commodities/tea-output-in-the-nilgiris-down-22-in-two-months/article34141362.ece>

Infrastructure

National highways construction pace touches record 34 km/day

The pace of construction of national highways has touched a record 34 km a day, the government said on Monday. This is almost three times the rate of highways construction at about 12 km per day in 2014-15. "The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH) has achieved another milestone by constructing 12,205.25 km of National Highways in the current financial year 2020-21 (till 22nd March, 2021), i.e., with construction of 34 kilometres per day," the ministry said in a statement.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/national-highways-construction-pace-touches-record-34-km/day/articleshow/81637261.cms>

Railways announces initiatives against smoking, carrying inflammable items

The Railways announced on Tuesday a slew of initiatives against smoking and carrying inflammable items, which were apparently the cause behind some of the recent fires on board trains. The national transporter has instructed zonal railways to initiate intensive awareness drive of seven days to educate all the stakeholders, including railway users and employees, about precautions to be taken against fire incidents. Carrying inflammable objects in trains is a punishable offence under Section 164 of the Railways Act and the offender may get imprisonment of up to three years or a fine of Rs 1,000 or both, and a fine of Rs 500 is applicable under Section 165.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/railways-announces-initiatives-against-smoking-carrying-inflammable-items/articleshow/81653959.cms>

Telecom

Telcos push DoT to seek base prices for mmWave bands from Trai

India's Big 3 telcos have urged telecom secretary Anshu Prakash to push the sector regulator to quickly start a fresh consultation on including the coveted millimeter wave bands – 26 Ghz, 28 Ghz and 37 Ghz -- for the upcoming 5G spectrum sale, with recommendations around their quantum and reserve prices. "We request the Department of

Telecommunications (DoT) for an early referral to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) for earmarking and including millimeter wave (mmWave) bands for auction along with other 5G bands like 3.5 Ghz, as this is an imperative requirement," S.P Kochhar, director general of Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), said in a letter, dated March 15, to Prakash.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-news/telcos-push-dot-to-seek-base-prices-for-mmwave-bands-from-trai/articleshow/81650143.cms>

Consolidation 2.0 in telecom sector on: India Ratings

The telecom sector is on its path to recovery and a business model consolidation phase is on the anvil where telcos will offer a whole gamut of services beyond voice and become digital services providers. The stiff competition between the telcos may force the sector to become a 2.5+1 player market than the current 3+1 sector. "India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) has maintained a stable outlook on the Indian telecom sector for FY22 as the agency believes that the sector will continue to show signs of recovery and in view of a conducive regulatory environment," said the ratings firm. Ind-Ra has also maintained a stable outlook on its rated universe for FY22.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-news/consolidation-2-0-in-telecom-sector-on-india-ratings/articleshow/81652568.cms>

Energy

Discoms have been sanctioned Rs 1.35 trillion in loans, get Rs 46,000 cr

Power distribution utilities or discoms in the country have been sanctioned loans of Rs 1.35 lakh crore and disbursed Rs 46,321 crore so far under the liquidity infusion scheme, Parliament was informed on Tuesday."So far, loans of Rs 1,35,497 crore have been sanctioned and Rs 46,321 crore have been released to states/DISCOMs by REC and PFC (Power Finance Corporation)," Power Minister R K Singh said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. The central government had announced a liquidity infusion scheme as part of AatmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyan on May 13, 2020, in the backdrop of the outbreak of global pandemic COVID-19 in the country.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/discoms-have-been-sanctioned-rs-1-35-trillion-in-loans-get-rs-46-000-cr-121032300909_1.html

Domestic fuel prices set to reduce as international crude oil rates plunge 10 per cent

State-run oil companies will now have some room to cut domestic fuel prices as international crude oil rates have slumped 10% in about a fortnight. Crude oil has fallen to \$64 a barrel from \$71 a barrel earlier this month on weakening demand recovery prospects as European cities planned mobility restrictions amid rising Covid cases. Oil prices had risen on producing countries' decision to extend the supply cut pact into April. The anticipation of quicker demand recovery due to wider vaccine roll out and the big US stimulus also helped boost prices.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/domestic-fuel-prices-set-to-reduce-as-international-crude-oil-rates-plunge-10/articleshow/81643992.cms>

Net zero emission energy transition achievable by 2050: Niti Aayog CEO

Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant reiterated the government's commitment to achieving 'Net Zero Emission' targets in energy by 2050, even though it calls for a concerted strategy and massive investments.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/net-zero-emission-energy-transition-achievable-by-2050-niti-aayog-ceo/article34141852.ece>

States

Notify health policy for rare diseases by March 31: Delhi HC to Centre

The Delhi High Court Tuesday asked the Centre to finalise and notify the National Health Policy for Rare Diseases by March 31, and directed it to set up a National Consortium for Research, Development and Therapeutics (NCRDT) for such ailments. It also asked the government to consider increasing the budget for rare diseases for the upcoming financial year 2021-22 and said the policy should deal with giving financial incentives for manufacturing drugs and contributing towards treatment of rare diseases.

Justice Prathiba M Singh, in an interim order on a batch of petitions concerning children suffering from rare diseases, said that as part of the policy, besides the NCRDT, a committee at AIIMS as well as a fund be set up for such ailments. https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/notify-health-policy-for-rare-diseases-by-mar-31-hc-asks-centre-directs-setting-up-of-r-d-body-121032300742_1.html

Healthcare

Union govt reviews progress under National Health Mission

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was apprised on the progress made under the National Health Mission (NHM), including accelerated decline in Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR), Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Under Five Mortality Rate (U5MR) and Total Fertility Rate (TFR). The Cabinet also took note of the progress made in respect of various disease programmes like tuberculosis, malaria, kala-azar, dengue, leprosy, viral hepatitis, etc. The NHM targets include reducing MMR to 1/1,000 live births, reducing IMR to 25/1,000 live births, reducing TFR to 2.1, bringing down prevalence of leprosy to less than 1 /10,000 population and incidence to zero in all districts.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/union-govt-reviews-progress-under-national-health-mission/articleshow/81651490.cms>

India's total cases of mutant coronavirus strains reach 795

The total number of cases with the UK, South Africa and Brazil variants of SARS-CoV-2 in the country has reached 795, the Union Health Ministry said on Tuesday as India is witnessing a surge in COVID-19 cases. From 400 cases reported on March 18, the infections by mutant strains have increased to 795 in the country. Minister of State for Health Ashwini Choubey told Rajya Sabha on March 16 that no case of reinfection by mutant variants of SARS-CoV-2 virus has been reported from India so far.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/indias-total-cases-of-mutant-covid-19-strains-reach-795/articleshow/81652789.cms>

Over 3.25 million vaccine doses administered on March 22, highest so far

More than 32.53 lakh COVID-19 vaccine doses were administered on Monday, the highest single-day vaccination so far, taking the total number of people inoculated to over 4.8 crore, the Union Health Ministry said on Tuesday. As on day 66 of the vaccination drive (March 22), more than 32 lakh (32,53,095) vaccine doses were administered. Out of these, 29,03,030 beneficiaries were vaccinated across 48,345 sessions for the first dose and 3,50,065 healthcare workers (HCWs) and frontline workers (FLWs) received second dose of vaccine. The 29,03,030 beneficiaries, include 21,31,012 people aged above 60 and 5,59,930 aged 45-60 with comorbidities who have received the first dose, according to the ministry.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/over-3-25-million-vaccine-doses-administered-on-march-22-highest-so-far-121032300943_1.html

Govt sets up panel to find ways to boost Covid vaccine output

The government has constituted an inter-ministerial group to look at ways to augment Covid-19 vaccine manufacturing capacities in the country as the second wave of infection intensifies and authorities gear up to expand the eligibility criteria to include the 50-years-plus age group. In a related development, the government on Monday also extended the interval for administering doses of Covishield to up to eight weeks from the current four to six weeks. This will allow the two doses to be spaced out and enable more people to receive the first jab. The gap for the two Covaxin shots will continue to be four weeks. The decision has been taken in view of emerging scientific evidence that the protection is enhanced if the second dose of Covishield is administered between 6 and 8 weeks.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/pharmaceuticals/govt-sets-up-panel-to-find-ways-to-boost-vax-output/articleshow/81641040.cms>

22 AIIMS in different phases of development across country: Government

Twenty-two AIIMS are in different phases of development across the country, the government informed Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. Replying to supplementaries during the Question Hour, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said in 2003, there was only one All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in the country in Delhi. But under the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, a policy to add five new AIIMS was framed and in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi

evolved a policy to develop AIIMS in every state, he said in a written reply. "So, from six AIIMS, today there are 22 AIIMS in different phases of development," Vardhan told the House.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/22-aiims-in-different-phases-of-development-across-country-government/articleshow/81653438.cms?utm_source=ETTopNews&utm_medium=HPTN&utm_campaign=AL1&utm_content=23

COVID-19 long-haulers experience chest pain, blood clot complications, weeks after recovery: Study

Some long-haul COVID-19 patients experience stroke, chest pain, and blood clot-related complications weeks after recovery, according to a review of studies by an interdisciplinary team of more than 30 experts. The research, published in the journal Nature Medicine, summarised what experts from a wide range of fields, including neurology, cardiology, and nephrology have seen in their own long-haul COVID-19 patients, and also in existing literature. According to the review authors, including those from Columbia University in the US, chest pain has been reported in up to 20 per cent of COVID-19 survivors two months after recovery from the infection. They said COVID-19 can also unveil previously undetected cases of diabetes, with a fraction of patients also experiencing strokes, blood clots in the lungs, and other complications.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/covid-19-long-haulers-experience-chest-pain-blood-clot-complications-weeks-after-recovery-study/articleshow/81648827.cms>

Ayurveda market saw 50-90% growth in last quarter due to Covid-19 pandemic: Studies

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic has pushed the demand for Ayurveda products in India. The interest in these products has mostly been fuelled by the recommendations from the Ministry of AYUSH to fight the Coronavirus.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/ayurveda-market-saw-50-90-growth-in-last-quarter-due-to-covid-19-pandemic-studies/article34140043.ece>

External

Textile exporters asks buyers to increase prices as raw material costs rise

Knitwear exporters from Tirupur have asked buyers to increase prices against the backdrop of rising raw material costs. Raja M Shanmugham, president, Tirupur Exporters Association, said that there was an urgent need to hike the prices of knitwear products for Tirupur's exports to sustain and face the challenging business environment prevailing for the past four months. The textile town in Tamil Nadu exports products worth about Rs 27,000 crore.

After the central government increased the minimum support price for cotton (kappas) procured from farmers, lint (ginned cotton) prices have risen from Rs 36,016/candy (355.54 kgs) in August 2020 to Rs 46,720/candy in March 2021 and the association has asked the Ministry of Textiles to intervene in the matter.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/textile-exporters-asks-buyers-to-increase-prices-as-raw-material-costs-rise-121032300442_1.html

Cabinet apprised of MoC signed between India, Japan in water sector

The Cabinet on Tuesday was apprised of a Memorandum of Cooperation signed between India and Japan, aimed at achieving water security, improved irrigation facility and sustainability in water resources development.

"The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was apprised of the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) signed between Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India and Water and Disaster Management Bureau, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism of Japan in the field of Water Resources," a statement said. This MoC was signed for development of a long-term cooperation in the field of water and delta management, and water technology in order to increase the exchange of information, knowledge, technology and scientific allied experience, as well as implementation of joint projects between the two countries, it said.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/cabinet-apprised-of-moc-signed-between-india-japan-in-water-sector-121032300945_1.html

Adopting protectionist measures to counter China threat a 'self-defeating' strategy: Report

Adopting protectionist measures to counter an aggressive China is a "self-defeating" strategy which will only "harm India more", a think tank said in a report on Tuesday. The country's economic policy should rather be focussed on turning India into an advanced economy, the Pune International Centre (PIC) said in a special report on measures to counter the Chinese challenge. It can be recalled that in the aftermath of the aggressive Chinese posturing in Ladakh, which also resulted in the killing of 20 Indian soldiers, India had resorted to measures, including banning over 100 Chinese websites and apps and avoiding Chinese equipment in telecom and highways.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/adopting-protectionist-measures-to-counter-china-threat-a-self-defeating-strategy-report/articleshow/81653233.cms>

Rice, black tea exports to China set to rise in 2021-22, say industry executives

China's interest in Indian rice and black tea is on the rise. It has started importing basmati rice from India and though the volumes are not huge in this financial year, the business is expected to grow in 2021-22, said industry executives. China had started importing non-basmati rice from December-end and the industry expects to close the financial year at month-end with total exports of about 400,000 metric tonnes to the country. Black tea is another commodity that China, a green tea drinking nation, is buying from India. In 2020, it bought 11.44 million kg tea from India. Since the beginning of 2021, China has not placed any orders, but tea exporters expect orders to come in from April with increased arrival of new season teas.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/rice-black-tea-exports-to-china-set-to-rise-in-2021-22-say-industry-executives/articleshow/81644312.cms>



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