



November 10, 2020 - Tuesday

Key Developments

FM for 'consensus solution' on taxation of digital economy

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday called for consensus solution on taxation of digital economy. Taxation of digital economy, known as equalisation levy in India, has been a contentious issue globally. In fact, the US Trade Representative's office has announced that it will start Section 301 investigations against India and nine others, such as Australia, Brazil, Italy, the UK and Czech Republic, for imposing or considering digital services taxes that may affect American companies like Google, Amazon, Apple and Facebook. The Section 301, adopted by the US in 1974, allows the US President to unilaterally impose tariffs or other trade restrictions on foreign countries. Attending the First BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (FMCBG), Sitharaman talked about ongoing international efforts to find a solution to the issue of taxation of digital economy. "A consensus solution will play an important role in ensuring fairness, equity and sustainability of tax systems," a statement issued by Finance Ministry quoting Sitharaman said.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/fm-for-consensus-solution-on-taxation-of-digital-economy/article33059859.ece>

IRDAI sets up panel to revisit retail business of engineering tariff

Insurance sector regulator IRDAI has set up a working group to revisit product structures of engineering tariffs relevant for the retail category in the wake of continuous advancement in technology. The nine-member panel has been asked to revisit the product structures of the erstwhile engineering tariffs relevant for the retail category and make suitable recommendations for revising them. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) noted that with continuous advancement in technology, engineering insurance requirements are constantly evolving. Customer expectations regarding insurance are changing significantly.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/insure/irdai-sets-up-panel-to-revisit-retail-business-of-engineering-tariff/articleshow/79132468.cms>

All discoms to come under Energy Conservation Act: Power ministry

The power ministry on Monday said it has mandated all electricity distribution utilities or discoms to comply with the Energy Conservation (EC) Act, 2001, which would reduce energy losses and bring in more transparency in the sector. Earlier, only discoms with annual energy losses equal to or above 1,000 MU (million units), notified as designated consumers, used to come under the purview of the EC Act. The ministry had issued a notification on September 28, 2020 to cover all electricity distribution companies (discoms) under the preview of the EC Act, it said in a statement. As per the notification, which was formulated in consultation with the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), "All entities having issued distribution license by State/Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission under the Electricity Act, 2003..." are notified as designated consumers (DCs).

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/all-discoms-to-come-under-energy-conservation-act-power-ministry/articleshow/79132383.cms>

Centre gives green signal to 21 cold chain infrastructure projects

The government has approved 29 projects under schemes for integrated cold chain and value addition and creation of backward and forward linkages (BFL). According to the official statement, Inter-Ministerial Approval Committee (IMAC) meeting chaired by Union Minister for Food Processing Narendra Singh Tomar has approved 21 projects, leveraging investments worth ₹443 crore supported with a grant of ₹189 crore under the Scheme for Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition have been approved.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/centre-gives-green-signal-to-21-cold-chain-infrastructure-projects/article33060120.ece>

Economy

Weekly economic indicators: Rail rebound, retail footfalls on the rise

The economy showed renewed signs of improvement as large parts of the country geared up for Diwali. Many weekly indicators of economic activity saw a rise with trains carrying more goods and retail visits rising.

Analysts globally have been tracking high frequency proxies for economic activity to get a sense of the fast-changing situation on the ground amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Business Standard tracks traffic congestion, pollution levels, power generation; besides railway numbers and mobility data from search engine Google.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/weekly-economic-indicators-rail-rebound-retail-footfalls-on-the-rise-120110900979_1.html

Delayed MSME payments: Applications disposed jump 187% in around 12 months; involved this much amount

The number of micro and small enterprises' (MSEs) delayed payment applications disposed by the micro and small enterprise facilitation councils (MSEFC) has jumped 187 per cent in around past 12 months. From 1,528 applications disposed as of October 16, 2019, the number increased to 4,389 as of November 9, 2020, according to the data sourced from the MSME Samadhaan portal. The jump has also been visible in terms of the total number of applications filed by MSEs during the period. From 27,380 applications, the number has increased by 117 per cent to 59,456 applications.

"Whatever problems MSMEs are sharing on the portal, are getting solved increasingly day by day. The portal has been well received by MSMEs. We have received a positive response from MSMEs regarding the portal," Sudhir Garg, Joint Secretary, Ministry of MSME had told Financial Express Online last year.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/msme-fin-delayed-msme-payments-applications-disposed-jump-187-in-around-12-months-involved-this-much-amount/2124569/>

Commerce and industry minister reviews 'Vivad Se Vishwas' scheme

Commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal recently interacted with large corporates and top tax professionals on ways to make the 'Vivad Se Vishwas' scheme a success. Officials of Indian businesses houses, MNCs and Big Four consultants suggested an extension of the cut-off date of the scheme, the need to clarify the stand on settling tax disputes of merged companies, and transfer pricing matters. They also told the commerce and industry minister that the scheme would evoke a better response if it is structured 'issue wise' — where a taxpayer is allowed to choose and settle some disputes, under the scheme — instead of the 'year wise' requirement where the scheme, once availed, must include settling all disputes.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/commerce-and-industry-minister-reviews-vivad-se-vishwas-scheme/articleshow/79140642.cms>

SCI sale faces delay as management goes for corporate recast

Privatisation-bound Shipping Corporation of India Ltd (SCI) has sought bids for a consultant to undertake de-merger/disposal of its non-core assets (real estate) ahead of its stake-sale and to carry out corporate restructuring for better operational performance of the Navratna company. SCI's surprise move will delay the strategic disinvestment of the company, approved by the Union Cabinet in November last year. It is also seen by shipping industry officials as an indication that the government may break up SCI for sale in parts, and those left unsold will continue as a state-run firm.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/sci-sale-faces-delay-as-management-goes-for-corporate-recast/article33058197.ece>

Economy picks up momentum, COVID handled much better: SBI Research

A number of green shoots are visible in the economy five months after easing restrictions, a research note by SBI economists said. They also say that assuming that India escapes a second wave, the pandemic will subside by February 2021, the report said. Corporate results for July-September quarter shows that the companies producing essential goods have mostly witnessed strong results while those producing non-essential goods and services have mostly shown weaker results. Moreover, rating upgrades to downgrade ratio, though much below one- implying downgrades are still higher than upgrades - has shown signs of improvement from the April-June quarter, the report said adding that the SBI Business Activity Index as well SBI Index continues to improve in October.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/economy-picks-up-momentum-covid-handled-much-better-sbi-research/articleshow/79130192.cms>

November starts on a positive note as pick up in business activity continues: Nomura

Business activity picked up further in the first week of November, carrying over the improvements seen across economic indicators in October, according to brokerage firm Nomura. The Nomura India Business Resumption Index (NIBRI) rose to yet another post-lockdown high of 85.8 for the week ended November 8, from 84.7 posted a week earlier, which was revised upwards from 84.4. The weekly tracker of indicators from mobility to labour participation had recorded 82.9 in the pre-lockdown week ended March 25. The improvements in the latest figures were led by a sharp pick up in power demand by 7.5% after posting a 2.3% contraction a week earlier, Nomura said in a note on Monday.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/november-starts-on-a-positive-note-as-october-pick-up-in-activity-continues-nomura/articleshow/79130024.cms>

Banking and Finance

Loan growth continues to remain tepid: RBI data

Indian banking system loan growth continues to be tepid even as some pockets like loans to retail and medium sized firms picked up in September. Bank loans rose 5.1 per cent (year-on-year) to Rs 102.2 lakh crore as of October 23, according to the latest RBI data. Overall loan growth has remained below the 6 per cent mark ever since the economy went into a lockdown following the COVID-19 pandemic. Several regulatory and policy measures, easing liquidity conditions, lowering of policy rates and the easing of lockdown conditions have helped revive credit demand in certain sectors. Loans to medium enterprises rose 14 per cent, loans against shares and securities rose around 20 per cent, according to the latest data on sectoral deployment of bank credit until September. Besides, housing loans and other retail loans are also picking up, data indicated.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/loan-growth-continues-to-remain-tepid-rbi-data/articleshow/79128030.cms>

Banks await clarity from RBI on current account opening norms

Banks are awaiting more clarity from the Reserve Bank of India on its current account circular but domestic lenders believe it is a good move that will ensure a comprehensive relationship with customers. "There are a lot of issues on which banks have sought clarity from the RBI regarding the issue of current accounts. The Indian Banks' Association is working on the issue," said two persons familiar with the development.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/money-and-banking/banks-await-clarity-from-rbi-on-current-account-opening-norms/article33057425.ece?homepage=true>

SBI to raise share of financial inclusion to 20% by Mar '22

State Bank of India (SBI) expects to raise the share of the newly created business vertical - financial inclusion and micro-markets (FI&MM) - from the current 12 per cent to 20 per cent by March 2022.

The emphasis will be on enhancing income-generation work (deposits and loans) at around 8,000 branches under the FI&MM vertical. This will be completed once customer servicing - currently handled by the branches - is shifted to the business correspondents (BC) network to bring down the cost-to-income (C/I) ratio. SBI had recently created a separate FI&MM vertical within the bank with an exclusive focus on rural and semi-urban areas to improve customer experience in the hinterland. Under this newly launched vertical, the bank will offer loans predominantly for agriculture and allied activities and micro/small enterprises.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/sbi-to-raise-share-of-financial-inclusion-to-20-by-mar-22-120110901178_1.html

Bank of Maharashtra cuts repo-linked lending rate by 15 bps

State-owned Bank of Maharashtra has reduced its repo linked lending rate (RLLR) by 15 basis points to 6.90 per cent. The lender's retail and MSME loans are linked to RLLR. The new rates are effective from November 7. Reduction in RLLR makes our home loan, car loan, gold loan, education loan, personal loan along with MSME loans more attractive and affordable, bank's executive director Hemant Tamta said in a release.

Earlier ahead of the festive season, the bank had also announced processing fee waiver on home, car and gold loans. With this downward revision in RLLR, home loan rates start at 6.95 per cent (0.05 per cent concession to woman and defence personal), car loan rates start at 7.55 per cent and gold loan rates at 7.35 per cent, the bank said.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/banking-finance/bank-of-maharashtra-cuts-repo-linked-lending-rate-by-15-bps/2124456/>

PE deals score over REITs as realtors eye fast money, avoid listing hassles

While the REIT route has gained prominence, the promoters opted for private deals to get the cash fast and, at the same time, avoid the hassle of listing an REIT that would have taken more than a year, said promoters and capital market experts.

RMZ sold 12.5 million square feet in assets to Canada-based Brookfield Asset Management for over Rs 14,000 crore, while Prestige Estates has signed an initial agreement to sell its office and malls to US-based Blackstone.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/pe-deals-score-over-reits-as-realtors-eye-fast-money-avoid-listing-hassles-120110900791_1.html

Banking sector stress expected to drop following collection boost, income improves in Q2

The domestic banking sector continued to show improvement in the net interest income (NII) in the September quarter helped by falling interest expenses, according to ETIG's analysis of the quarterly financials of a sample of 27 listed banks. The sample's NII rose sequentially for the second consecutive quarter to Rs 1.3 lakh crore compared with Rs 1.2 lakh crore in the previous quarter. NII had fallen sequentially by 2% to Rs 1 lakh crore in the March quarter following a nationwide lockdown in the last week of March to curtail the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. The improvement in NII was largely on account of a 4.9% sequential drop in the aggregate interest expenses during the September quarter even as the interest income remained more or less flat.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/banking/banking-sector-stress-expected-to-drop-following-collection-boost-income-improves-in-q2/articleshow/79120566.cms>

Non-life insurers report marginal decline in October premium collections

Non-life insurers have reported a marginal decline in premiums earned in October this year, over the same period last year, despite good growth in premiums witnessed by standalone health insurers, aided by the rise in demand for health insurance in the country. Non-life insurers saw their premium collection slipping 4.41 per cent in September.

According to the data released by Insurance Regulatory Development Authority of India (Irdai), non-life insurers' premium in October shrunk 0.41 per cent to Rs 15,855 crore, from Rs 15,921.92 crore in the same period last year.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/non-life-insurers-report-marginal-decline-in-october-premium-collections-120110901301_1.html

India, global m-cap hit record new highs amid polling in the US

The market capitalisation of India, along with that of the globe, has hit a historical high of \$2.23 trillion and \$94.5 trillion, respectively. Global markets have added \$7 trillion in market capitalisation this month amid polling in the US, the world's biggest economy. Meanwhile, India has added \$177 billion (Rs 13 trillion) in market cap in just eight trading sessions. India surpassed its previous high of \$2.22 trillion made on January 15, Bloomberg data shows. The combined global market cap had hit a high of \$92.8 trillion on October 13.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-global-m-cap-hit-record-new-highs-amid-polling-in-the-us-120110901310_1.html

Industry

India sits on extra \$320 billion growth potential in 11 key manufacturing areas: McKinsey

Eleven manufacturing value chains in India have strong potential to operate in international markets, boosting India's power and providing long-term employment and skill pathways to several Indians. With relevant reforms and complementary actions by manufacturing companies, it is estimated that these 11 manufacturing value chains can generate about \$320 billion more in gross value added within the next seven years, said a McKinsey report. About 80 percent of that GVA potential resides in six value chains which are chemical products and petrochemicals; agriculture and food processing; electronics and semiconductors; capital goods and machine tools; iron ore and steel; and automotive components and vehicles.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/india-sits-on-extra-320-billion-growth-potential-in-11-manufacturing-areas-mckinsey-gdp-gva-economic-growth/2124330/>

Auto industry body expresses discontent over reservation for local workers in Haryana

Automotive companies in the state of Haryana expressed discontent over the government's move to reserve 75% of the factory jobs within the state for local candidates as it would disrupt the automotive supply chain at a time when demand has outstripped supply and companies are working overtime. The Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India (ACMA), a lobby of automotive suppliers in a statement requested the Haryana state government to reconsider its move. "Hiring in our sector is done on the basis of talent and skills needed by the industry rather than on domicile of the candidates," said Deepak Jain, president of ACMA. "Such a move would not only adversely impact the 'ease of doing business' in the state, but also be detrimental to Haryana's image of an industry friendly state and in attracting future investments," he said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/auto-components/acma-urges-haryana-govt-to-reconsider-75-reservation-policy-for-locals-in-private-enterprises/articleshow/79126040.cms>

Passenger vehicle retail sales dip 9 per cent in October on supply woes: FADA

Automobile retail registered a 5 per cent growth over the preceding month in October but declined 24 per cent year-on-year as the festivals of Navratri and Diwali, when demand usually peaks in the Indian market, were split between October and November this year unlike last year when both the festivals were in October. As many as 1.41 million vehicles were registered with regional transport offices (RTOs), showed data from the road transport and highways ministry's VAHAN portal. The data were compiled by the Federation of Automobile Dealers' Associations (FADA), a lobby of vehicle retailers. To be sure, the data represent only 1,257 out of 1,464 RTOs in the country as a few states are yet to migrate on to the VAHAN portal.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/auto-news/passenger-vehicle-retail-sales-dip-9-per-cent-in-october-on-supply-woes-fada/articleshow/79125137.cms>

Construction equipment sales grow in Q2 due to increase in govt spends on infrastructure

Sales of construction equipment — a key indicator of economic activity — increased last quarter, after more than halving in the preceding three months, on the back of increased government spending on infrastructure projects, especially road construction, the Indian Construction Equipment Manufacturers' Association said. Fast resumption and recovery of the road building programme of the government led to a surge in demand for compactors and hydraulic excavators last quarter, in spite of labour shortages at construction sites, association president Sandeep Singh told ET. Sales of construction equipment had dropped 60% in the fiscal first quarter. The recovery, both sequentially and year-over-year, in the July-September period has helped reduce the fall for the first half of the fiscal year to 35%, the association said without separately specifying the growth in the second quarter. For the ongoing fiscal 2021, it had predicted sales to decline 8-10% compared with the more than 75,000 units sold in the last fiscal year.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/indl-goods/svs/construction/construction-equipment-sales-grow-in-q2-due-to-increase-in-govt-spends-on-infrastructure/articleshow/79131930.cms>

Realty developers urge govt to set up regulatory body for cement sector

In the backdrop of frequent allegations of cartelisation and undue profiteering in the cement manufacturing industry, realty developers have urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to set up a regulatory authority for the sector. Builders Association of India (BAI), the apex body of the construction industry with over 20,000 business entities, has stated in its letter that such regulatory authority will prevent manufactures from indulging in unethical trade practices. In May, developers had sought government's intervention alleging cartelization among cement and steel manufacturers following a sudden increase in prices.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/indl-goods/svs/cement/realty-developers-urge-govt-to-set-up-regulatory-body-for-cement-sector/articleshow/79125490.cms>

Outlook for hotels and restaurants appear grim for at least a year: FHRAI

Hotels and restaurants in India are going through their worst phase in the history of Indian tourism, hospitality industry body Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Association of India (FHRAI) said on Monday. FHRAI said the months starting from October until December, under normal conditions, are usually the golden season for the hospitality sector. "Normally there is significant inflow in FTAs and even domestic tourism is at its peak during these months. However currently, with no international tourists flying in and apprehension about travelling amongst domestic tourists, Hospitality industry is staring a lack-luster Diwali this year," FHRAI said in a statement.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/hotels-/restaurants/outlook-for-hotels-and-restaurants-appear-grim-for-at-least-a-year-fhrai/articleshow/79131535.cms>

Agriculture

Agri reforms will link farmers directly to market, send middlemen out: PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the agriculture reforms introduced by the government will connect farmers directly to the market and "send middlemen out of the system".

"The agriculture reforms will give direct benefit to farmers. They will be directly connected to the market and the middleman will be out of the system. The farmers of Purvanchal (eastern Uttar Pradesh) will also be benefitted from this," the prime minister said while launching various projects for his Lok Sabha constituency Varanasi via video-conferencing.

Highlighting various schemes launched by the government, Modi said under the Swamitva scheme, farmers will be issued property cards, which will not only help them get loans, but the "game of grabbing their properties will also end".

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/agri-reforms-will-link-farmers-directly-to-market-send-middlemen-out-pm-120110900539_1.html

New farm laws showing results for farmers: Agriculture minister

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said on Monday that the new agriculture law, Farmer's Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, has started helping farmers soon after the implementation, contrary to allegations by rival parties. In a recent case, this law helped a poor farmer from Maharashtra to get rightful remuneration for his crops from a trader in Barwani district in Madhya Pradesh in an inter-state trade. "A farmer from Dhule district in Maharashtra sold 270.95 quintal maize to a trader from Barwani district in Madhya Pradesh. Later on, the trader refused to pay the farmer his dues after a dispute. The farmer moved Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) court in Barwani which intervened and facilitated in the payment of Rs 3.32 lakh to the farmer as per the new law," Tomar said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/new-farm-laws-showing-results-for-farmers-agriculture-minister/articleshow/79132174.cms>

Cotton crop at 356 lakh bales for 2020-21, as per CAI's first estimate

India's cotton crop for the current year 2020-21 is expected to be lower by about 4 lakh bales (each of 170 kg) at 356 lakh bales as against 360 lakh bales last year. The Cotton Association of India (CAI) on Monday released its first estimate of cotton crop for the new season starting from October 1, 2020 and ending on September 30, 2021. "The reduction in cotton crop for the season is on account of damage reported to the crop in some pockets due to the excess rains and pink bollworm infestation," Atul Ganatra, President, CAI, informed in a statement.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/cotton-crop-at-356-lakh-bales-for-2020-21-as-per-cais-first-estimate/article33057261.ece>

Infrastructure

Flexible offices spaces to cross 50 million sq ft in India by 2023, report

Irrespective of several short-term disruptions and challenges, increased demand from large enterprises is expected to support the growth of the flexible office space market to more than 50 million sq ft by 2023 from current 29.5 million sq ft, said JLL India. It expects the flexible space segment to grow by an average of around 15-20% per annum over the next three-to-four years, although this trajectory will not be linear. However, previously expected levels of new investments in this segment are unlikely to be seen, as operators look to solidify their existing operations and it is likely that certain operators will not be able to weather the storm.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/property/-construction/flexible-offices-spaces-to-cross-50-million-sq-ft-in-india-by-2023-report/articleshow/79124711.cms>

Indian Railways' Freight loading till October inches closer to FY20 level in the same period

Freight loading for the Indian Railways till October this year is inching close to loading for the same period last year, official data has revealed. Loading between April to October stands at 641.94 million tonne, which is over 94% of last year's loading, according to the latest data released by the ministry of railways. Loading between April-October 2019 was 680.78 million tonne. The development is significant as loading has bounced back amid a slowdown caused by the nationwide lockdown announced in March to curb the spread of Covid-19. Freight loading in April this year dropped 35% compared to the corresponding month last year.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/indian-railways-freight-loading-till-october-inches-closer-to-fy20-level-in-the-same-period/articleshow/79125378.cms>

Telecom

Voda Idea drag industry AGR in Q1: Trai data

The telecom sector recorded a near 2% sequential dip in adjusted gross revenue (AGR) in the fiscal first quarter FY21, dragged down by a sharp sequential fall in Vodafone Idea's revenue as its critical 2G business was dealt a blow by the Covid crisis. Latest data put out by the telecom regulator showed that while market leader Reliance Jio and No 2 telco Bharti Airtel notched up sequential AGR gains in the June quarter, loss-making Vi's AGR fell over 25% sequentially as the telco continued to lose revenue and customers, a scenario further exacerbated by the Covid lockdowns during which droves of Vi's 2G users couldn't recharge.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-news/voda-idea-drag-industry-agr-in-q1-trai-data/articleshow/79133539.cms>

Commercial SMS traffic grows by up to 20% despite recent price hike by telcos

The daily commercial SMS traffic in India has grown by up to 20% currently, owing to increased digital adoption post pandemic, even as the overall text messaging continues to decline, according to industry estimates. According to industry estimates, currently, around 1.3 billion commercial SMSes are being sent every day – even after absorbing a 30% hike in SMS tariffs taken by telecom operators in September -compared to nearly 1.1 billion sent in March. The rise comes after a marginal drop during the lockdown period due to shut down in retail, aviation, travel, tourism and other sectors.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-news/commercial-sms-traffic-grows-by-up-to-20-despite-recent-price-hike-by-telcos/articleshow/79124637.cms>

Trai to seek all details of segmented offers from Airtel, Voda Idea

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) will shortly ask Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea (Vi) to comply with a Supreme Court order requiring the two incumbent telcos to share details of all their segmented offers with the sector regulator. Last Friday, the nation's top court upheld Trai's appeal against an almost two-year-old telecom tribunal order that had junked a regulation requiring telcos to report all tariffs in the interests of transparency and

non-discrimination. It, in fact, had ordered Airtel and Vi to disclose details of their segmented offers to the regulator.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-news/trai-to-see-all-details-of-segmented-offers-from-airtel-voda-idea/articleshow/79127105.cms>

India Mobile Congress to be held from December 8-10

The government-supported telecom sector event India Mobile Congress (IMC) will be held through virtual mode between December 8-10. Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) Director General Lt Gen SP Kochhar, while announcing the dates at a curtain raiser for IMC, said the event is likely to see huge participation. Telecom Secretary Anshu Prakash said there was a question mark on if the event should be skipped in 2020, but along with challenges it offers huge opportunity. He said the Department of Telecom (DoT) will extend all support to make IMC 2020 a success. "We have to rise to the occasion. I am told that this (is the) largest technology event in South Asia. We should build upon it. DoT is funding at least 30 SMEs (small and medium enterprises) and start-ups to participate in this event," Prakash said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-news/india-mobile-congress-to-be-held-from-december-8-10/articleshow/79129850.cms>

Energy

Power demand rises on-year but falls from September level; green energy generation takes severe hit

Electricity generation in October 2020 was higher than a year ago level but remained lower than that in the previous month. Catering to the higher power demand, electricity generation registered an on-year growth for the second consecutive month in October, said a report by Care Ratings. Electricity generation was 3 per cent higher on-year during the month but was 3 per cent lower than that in September 2020. The monthly fall was sharper in the case of renewable energy at 12 per cent contraction, against the 2 per cent fall in the case of conventional energy. However, coal power pushed up overall electricity generation during the month and helped offset the sharp fall in renewable energy generation. While the seasonal factors are attributed to a significant fall in power consumption in the northern regions, higher demand in industries picked up the consumption in the western and southern regions, which rose to a 7 months high in October.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/power-demand-rises-on-year-but-falls-from-september-level-green-energy-generation-takes-severe-hit/2124353/>

Peak power demand expected to touch record 5,400 MW this winter in Delhi

As winter has set in early in Delhi, the peak power demand of the city in the season is expected to touch a record high of 5,400 MW, discom officials said on Monday. The peak power demand of Delhi in the last winter season was 5,343 MW on January 1, 2020, they said.

Discom Tata Power Delhi Distribution Ltd (TPDDL), that supplies electricity to consumers in north and northwest Delhi, has expected a peak demand of 1,700 MW this winter season, a company spokesperson said. "With the capital city experiencing winters ahead of the schedule, and the minimum temperature being equivalent to several hill stations, Tata Power Delhi Distribution (Tata Power-DDL) is fully prepared to ensure adequate power availability during this winter season to 70 lakh residents in its area," he said.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/peak-power-demand-expected-to-touch-record-5-400-mw-this-winter-in-delhi-120110900687_1.html

Oil regulator gives up to 251 days more to IOC, Adani Gas, others to complete work

Oil sector regulator PNGRB has given up to eight-and-a-half months of extra time to companies such as Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), GAIL and Adani Gas to fulfil their city gas project rollout commitments that had been impacted by COVID-19 lockdowns. On November 5, the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) issued an order granting more time to 41 city gas entities to complete their rollout commitment. The time granted varies from 129 days to 251 days across different geographical areas depending on the duration of the COVID-19 lockdown, the order said. The extra time is to make up for 69 days of the national lockdown imposed to curb the spread of the pandemic and additional restrictions imposed in states. A 60-day restoration period is given on top of the lockdown period.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/oil-regulator-gives-up-to-251-days-more-to-ioc-adani-gas-others-to-complete-work/articleshow/79127841.cms>

Voltage fluctuations, damage to appliances concern for 28% power consumers: Study

India may have achieved 100% household electrification but 28% of consumers remain “dissatisfied” over the quality of electricity, namely voltage fluctuations and power surges, and the resultant damage to appliances, according to a survey of utilities by government think-tank Niti Ayog, The Rockefeller Foundation and Smart Power India. “Such fluctuations can damage electrical appliances, which means either a higher additional cost for customers in terms of installing voltage stabilizers or decisions not to invest in electrical appliances that can be potentially damaged. Decisions to avoid certain appliances also reduce customers’ electricity consumption, which causes utilities to lose opportunities for revenue that could be charged at the same overhead expenses,” says the survey.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/voltage-fluctuations-damage-to-appliances-concern-for-28-power-consumers-study/articleshow/79122906.cms>

Commercial coal mining: 19 auctioned blocks to generate Rs 7000 crore annual revenue

The auction of coal mines for commercial mining witnessed “fierce competition” and the 19 blocks that went under the hammer can generate total revenues of around Rs 7,000 crore per annum and create more than 69,000 jobs once they are operationalised, Coal Minister Pralhad Joshi said on Monday. The auction of blocks for commercial mining has opened the coal sector to the private players.

“With a combined peak-rated capacity reaching 51 MT per annum, it is expected that these 19 mines will generate a total revenue of nearly about Rs 7,000 crore,” the minister said while briefing the media here. The auction of these mines witnessed fierce competition and companies have offered great premiums, he said. “Out of 38 mines put on auction, 19 mines were successfully auctioned. The success of the auction is 50 per cent,” he said.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/commercial-coal-mining-19-auctioned-blocks-to-generate-rs-7000-crore-annual-revenue/2124661/>

Land, grid issues slow down commissioning of central wind projects

Less than one quarter of the wind projects awarded by the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) through its auctions since have been commissioned so far, industry sources said. Of the 10,330 MW awarded since auctions began in 2017, only 2,307 MW is in operation. SECI is the nodal agency through which the ministry of new and renewable energy conducts wind and solar auctions. It has allotted 10,330MW of capacity in 9 tranches, according to data from renewable energy consultancy firm Bridge To India. Of the 1049 MW auctioned in the first tranche of auctions held by SECI in February 2017, 1000 MW has been commissioned. In the second tranche, of 1,000 MW auctioned (this too was in 2017), 712MW has been commissioned. The commissioning deadline for tranche 2 was May 2019.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/land-grid-issues-slow-down-commissioning-of-central-wind-projects/articleshow/79128989.cms>

MNRE scales up PM-KUSUM scheme goal to 30.8 GW of solar capacity by 2022

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has issued an order for the scale-up and expansion of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM) Scheme. The target now is to achieve enhanced solar capacity of 30.8 gigawatt (GW) by 2022 with revised Central financial support of ₹34,035 crore. In February 2019, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs had approved the launch of the PM-KUSUM scheme. The scheme aims providing financial and water security to farmers. The scheme had aimed to add a solar capacity of 25,750 MW by 2022. The total Central financial support then supposed to be provided under the scheme was ₹34,422 crore.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/mnre-scales-up-pm-kusum-scheme-goal-to-308-gw-of-solar-capacity-by-2022/article33059976.ece>

Healthcare

Demand for Covid-19 drug Remdesivir rising sharply in India, says Cipla

Demand for COVID-19 antiviral drug remdesivir is rising sharply in India, a top executive at drugmaker Cipla Ltd said on Monday, even as experts remain divided over its effectiveness.

Remdesivir was developed by U.S. drugmaker Gilead Sciences Inc, which cut its 2020 revenue forecast last month, citing lower-than-expected demand and difficulty in predicting sales of the treatment. Cipla is among several firms licensed to make and sell generic versions in developing nations.

Cipla's version, Cipremi, was commercially launched in July and costs just above \$50 per 100 mg vial."From October onwards, (the company is) seeing very sharp increase in (remdesivir) monthly volumes ... there are no constraints on supplies now," Cipla's global chief financial officer, Kedar Upadhye, told Reuters.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/demand-for-covid-19-drug-remdesivir-rising-sharply-in-india-says-cipla-120110900767_1.html

Covid-19: India performed better than other developed nations, says govt

Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan held a virtual meeting with Health Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, Telangana, and West Bengal to review the COVID-19 situation.

"The whole country worked together by following the same strategy together. We have seen a lot of phases in this journey of 10 months. The first case was reported in Kerala followed by various other developments," said Dr Harsh Vardhan while interacting with the Health Ministers.

"The entire country followed the bold manner in which the lockdown was imposed under the leadership of PM Modi. Later, the unlock process was also implemented effectively. When we analyse the performance of our country, it seems India has performed better than any of the big developed countries in the world," he added.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/covid-19-india-performed-better-than-other-developed-nations-says-govt-120110900878_1.html

COVID-19 "will not vanish" with vaccination; commoners may get vaccine in 2022: AIIMS Director

Dr Randeep Guleria, Director of All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS) and a member of the national Covid-19 task force, said in an interview to CNN News 18 that commoners may have to wait till 2022 to get inoculated against Covid-19. The AIIMS director also added that it will take "more than a year" for the vaccine to be easily available in the Indian markets. Guleria said: "In our country the population is large; we need time to see how the vaccine can be bought from the market like a flu vaccine and take it. That will actually be the ideal situation." AIIMS doctor believes that India's main focus should be on the mass distribution of the vaccine so that it is made available to each and every corner of the country.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/covid-19-will-not-vanish-with-vaccination-commoners-may-get-vaccine-in-2022-aiims-director/article33056540.ece>

Third Covid-19 wave: 50% rise in Delhi's home isolation cases in two weeks

As the national capital reels under the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of patients under home isolation in Delhi has mounted to 24,723, a rise of 50 per cent in the last two weeks, while the containment zones count has expanded by over 32 per cent in the same period.

Coronavirus cases have spiralled since October 28 when 5673 fresh cases were recorded and on November 8, the daily infection tally was 7745, the highest single-day spike here till date. In this period, a staggering over 74,000 new cases have been reported.

The number of home isolation cases on October 26 stood at 16,396 and the containment zones count that day was 2930, according to official data. On October 28, the number of fresh cases breached the 5000-mark for the first time and the home quarantined cases rose to 16,822.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/third-covid-19-wave-50-rise-in-delhi-s-home-isolation-cases-in-two-weeks-120110900854_1.html

External

FM Nirmala Sitharaman backs expansion of the membership of New Development Bank at BRICS FMCGB

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday backed expansion of the membership of the New Development Bank at the first BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (FMCGB). The meeting also involved

discussions on the outcomes of G20 Saudi Presidency in 2020 and a digital platform to encourage infrastructure investments, a finance ministry statement said. Sitharaman supported the expansion of the membership of NDB and emphasised the importance of regional balance. The finance minister observed that the G20, of which all BRICS countries are members, has delivered some very significant initiatives this year including the G20 Action Plan in response to COVID-19 which has provided broad guidance to navigate a collective global response to the crisis.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/fm-nirmala-sitharaman-backs-expansion-of-the-membership-of-new-development-bank-at-brics-fmcgb/articleshow/79141027.cms>

India extends anti-dumping duty on carbon black imports from China, Russia till Dec 31, 2020

India extended the anti-dumping duty on imports of carbon black used in rubber applications from China and Russia till December 31, 2020, the department of revenue said in a notification on Monday. The duty was first imposed in November 2015 after the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) had found that the imports were impairing local industry. “Notwithstanding anything contained in paragraph 2, the anti-dumping duty imposed under this notification shall remain in force up to and inclusive of the 31st December, 2020, unless revoked, superseded or amended earlier,” the revenue department’s notification said, citing the November 2015 order it had issued at that time.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-extends-anti-dumping-duty-on-carbon-black-imports-from-china-russia-till-dec-31-2020/articleshow/79134166.cms>

Bidenomics: Sanity in post-Covid world, but expect no instant big changes

Donald Trump’s international economic policy was a populist mix of harking back to splendid isolation, muscular ‘my way or the highway’ approach, and his ‘art of the deal’. At its heart, though, it had a domestic focus. It was left to the bureaucracy to keep trade discussions going — distinct from Trump’s tweets.

As Joe Biden shapes his trade policy, he faces a vastly changed world from what he left in 2016. The four things that will need immediate attention are:

Covid: Rebuilding the US economy and not just capital markets alone will drive policy. A challenge bigger than the ‘Great Depression’ and the global financial crisis is exacerbated by accelerating technological changes making whole industries obsolete.

China: It has become an adversary for global dominance, not an opportunity. The China story gets even more complex now with the developing Russia-China axis in play.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/bidenomics-sanity-in-post-covid-world-but-expect-no-instant-big-changes-120110900376_1.html

India, Japan, Australia are planning to widen the ambit of proposed supply-chain pact to counter China

India, Japan and Australia are planning to widen the ambit of their proposed supply-chain partnership to include more like-minded countries in the Indo-Pacific region — a move seen as countering China’s dominance in world trade. ASEAN countries would be good candidates to reach out to next for bolstering this partnership, an official source told FE. In September, trade ministers of India, Japan and Australia decided to launch an initiative later this year to achieve supply-chain resilience in the Indo-Pacific region. The decision came at a time when China’s expansionist agenda across the South China sea and its borders with India had rattled several countries in the region. The idea is also to reduce the reliance on China for supply of goods and services.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/india-japan-australia-are-planning-to-widen-the-ambit-of-their-proposed-supply-chain-pact-to-counter-china/2124008/>

Goyal, Truss discuss ways to boost India-UK economic ties

Commerce & Industry Minister Piyush Goyal interacted with UK Secretary of State for International Trade Elizabeth Truss on Monday and discussed ways to boost bilateral trade and investments. “Held a fruitful interaction with UK Secretary of State for International Trade, Elizabeth Truss. Reinforced our shared commitment towards boosting trade relations and deepening economic ties for the mutual benefit of the people of both nations,” Goyal tweeted after the meeting.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/goyal-truss-discuss-ways-to-boost-india-uk-economic-ties/article33059510.ece>

US, Australia, Brazil question India's proposal for mandatory GM-free certification for food imports

India's proposal to make it mandatory for certain imported food crops to have certificates for non-genetically modified (GM) origin and GM-free status from January 1, 2021 has been objected to by the US, Australia, Brazil and some others at the World Trade Organization on the ground that it would create an "undue burden" on exporting countries. "The countries opposing India's proposal argued that the proposal might be indicating that genetically engineered foods were less safe than non-genetically engineered foods but they had received no information on any risk assessment tests that India may have conducted on the matter," a Geneva-based official told BusinessLine.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/us-australia-brazil-question-indias-proposal-for-mandatory-gm-free-certification-for-food-imports/article33059148.ece>