



December 22, 2020 – Tuesday

## Key Developments

### **FICCI wants abolition of anti-profiteering provisions in GST law**

Industry body FICCI has called for abolition of anti-profiteering provisions in the GST law to allow market forces to determine prices of goods and service. The plea has been made in a set of pre-Budget recommendations submitted by the federation to the Finance Ministry for implementation in FY22 Budget.

The recommendations come at a time when the National Anti-profiteering Authority (NAA) has become active and is actively awarding penalties to companies for breach of anti-profiteering regulations that prohibit an entity to keep prices of their goods and services higher even if GST rates have fallen. The NAA had charged companies such as Samsung, P&G, McDonalds and others for not bringing down the prices of their products even though GST rates have fallen. FICCI had said that the tenure of NAA was initially prescribed for a two-year period and with GST law largely settled, it is recommended that the determination of prices should be left to the market forces and the provision of anti-profiteering in the GST law should be discontinued with prospective effect.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/ficci-wants-abolition-of-anti-profiteering-provisions-in-gst-law-120122100436\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/ficci-wants-abolition-of-anti-profiteering-provisions-in-gst-law-120122100436_1.html)

### **India suspends UK flights to prevent the spread of new Covid-19 strain**

India has suspended all flights from UK starting Tuesday midnight till December 31 to prevent the spread of a new strain of Covid-19 from entering the country. With the travel ban, India joins the 20 other countries in Europe, Asia and South America which have restricted travel from UK. "Considering the prevailing situation in UK, the govt of India has decided that all flights originating from UK to India are to be suspended till December 31, 2020 (23.59 hours)," the civil aviation ministry said in a tweet.

"This suspension to start with effect from 23.59 hours, December 22, 2020. Consequently, flights from India to UK shall stand temporarily suspended during above said period," it added. Passengers already on their way and arriving before Tuesday midnight would be subject to mandatory RT-PCR test on arrival in India.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-suspends-uk-flights-to-prevent-the-spread-of-new-covid-19-strain-120122100645\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-suspends-uk-flights-to-prevent-the-spread-of-new-covid-19-strain-120122100645_1.html)

### **New electricity rules give consumers across India the right to 24x7 supply**

Consumers across the country will now have the right to a minimum standard of service for supply of electricity. This will also include the right to round-the-clock electricity supplies, unless stated otherwise for a specific category, such as an agricultural connection.

Announcing the notification of the Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Power and New and Renewable Energy, R K Singh said, "Distribution Companies across the country are monopolies – whether government or private – and the consumer has no alternative – therefore it was necessary that the consumers rights be laid down in Rules and a system for enforcement of these rights be put in place." These rules provide for Rights of consumers and Obligations of Distribution licensees, release of new connection and modification in existing connection, metering arrangement, Billing and Payment among others.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/new-electricity-rules-give-consumers-across-india-the-right-to-24x7-supply-120122100530\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/new-electricity-rules-give-consumers-across-india-the-right-to-24x7-supply-120122100530_1.html)

### **Govt plans tough annual targets for state firms to boost valuations: Report**

India plans to set tough financial targets for state-run firms to try to improve their valuations ahead of a push by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to privatize some companies, according to a draft government document and sources. The government, which is trying to rein in its fiscal deficit, wants state-run firms to focus on improving market capitalisation and dividend payouts from the 2021/22 fiscal year, starting April, as well as ramping up the sale of non-core assets, the sources said.

State-run companies have traditionally largely targeted raising output and increasing revenues, rather than improving efficiency and valuations, contributing to years of share price underperformance versus the broader market. "The companies need to raise their valuation and profitability in a changing business environment. Then only we will be able to get a better price (from stake sales). Shareholders and investors should be rewarded," said a government source with knowledge of the plan.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-plans-tough-annual-targets-for-state-firms-to-boost-valuations-report-120122100392\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-plans-tough-annual-targets-for-state-firms-to-boost-valuations-report-120122100392_1.html)

### **Centralised investment clearance cell by April 15**

The Centralised 'Investment Clearance Cell', under the proposed single window system, aimed at facilitating businesses through a one-stop digital platform, is planned to be launched with relevant Ministries and Departments and select States by April 15, 2021, a senior government official has said. "Care is being taken to ensure that the national portal will integrate the existing clearance systems of the various Central Ministries/Departments and State governments without disruption to their existing IT portals," the official told BusinessLine.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/centralised-investment-clearance-cell-by-april-15/article33386888.ece>

### **President Trump presents Legion of Merit to Prime Minister Narendra Modi**

US President Donald Trump on Monday presented the prestigious Legion of Merit to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his leadership in elevating strategic partnership of the two countries and emergence of India as a global power. India's Ambassador to the US, Taranjit Singh Sandhu, accepted the award on behalf of the prime minister from the US National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien at the White House.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/president-trump-presents-legion-of-merit-to-prime-minister-narendra-modi/articleshow/79849468.cms>

## **Economy**

### **Recovery tracker: Traffic, workplace visits and emissions on the rise**

Traffic has picked up in major cities with more and more people going to offices ahead of the year-end. Other weekly indicators of economic activity also showed gains. Business Standard tracks power generation, pollution data, and goods that the Indian Railways carries on a weekly basis; apart from traffic and location data. They provide a more current picture of the post-Covid recovery ahead of the official data which is often released with a lag. Analysts globally have been tracking similar indicators to get a sense of the economy as different nations went through lockdowns to control the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. Search engine Google releases the location data with a lag. The latest data is as of December 15. All other data is as of Sunday, December 20. Traffic congestion is inching closer to 80 per cent of normalcy in both Mumbai and New Delhi. Mumbai's traffic congestion has been relatively higher than New Delhi lately, shows data from global location technology firm TomTom International (see chart 1). The latter had been grappling with a fresh surge in Covid-19 cases.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/recovery-tracker-traffic-workplace-visits-and-emissions-on-the-rise-120122100747\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/recovery-tracker-traffic-workplace-visits-and-emissions-on-the-rise-120122100747_1.html)

### **8th instalment of Rs 6,000 cr released to states to meet GST shortfall**

The Ministry of Finance has released eighth weekly installment of Rs 6,000 crore to states to meet the Goods and Services Tax (GST) compensation shortfall. Of this, Rs 5,516.6 crore has been released to 23 states and an amount of Rs 483.4 crore has been released to the three union territories with legislative assembly (Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir and Puducherry) which are members of the GST Council. The remaining five states -- Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur,

Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim -- do not have a gap in revenue on account of GST implementation, according to an official statement released on Monday. The government had set up a special borrowing window in October to meet the estimated shortfall of Rs 1.1 lakh crore in revenue arising on account of implementation of GST.

The borrowings have been done in seven rounds. The amount has been borrowed this week at an interest rate of 4.1902 per cent. So far, an amount of Rs 48,000 crore has been borrowed by the Central government through the special borrowing window at an average interest rate of 4.6986 per cent.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/8th-installment-of-rs-6-000-cr-released-to-states-to-meet-gst-compensation-shortfall-120122100576\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/8th-installment-of-rs-6-000-cr-released-to-states-to-meet-gst-compensation-shortfall-120122100576_1.html)

### **India's quarterly GDP contraction to end in December quarter: NCAER**

The quarterly contraction in India's growth in the ongoing fiscal is set to end in the third quarter with a marginally positive 0.1% growth, according to the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER). The think tank pared its forecast of gross domestic product (GDP) growth during the ongoing fiscal to -7.3% compared to -12.6% in September to account for the "welcome surprise" of a sharp moderation in contraction in the second quarter at -7.5%, according to its mid-year review of the economy, presented virtually on Monday.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/indias-quarterly-gdp-contraction-to-end-in-december-quarter-ncaer/articleshow/79843856.cms>

## **Banking and Finance**

### **Sebi comes out with norms to strengthen risk management system in clearing corporations**

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has come out with norms on core settlement guarantee fund (SGF), stress testing and default waterfall procedure for limited purpose clearing corporation (LPCC). The move is aimed to enhance robustness of the risk management system in the clearing corporations. In October, the regulator allowed setting up of a limited purpose clearing corporation for clearing and settlement of repo transactions in debt securities. Sebi said, LPCC would have the flexibility to collect clearing member primary contribution, including flexibility to either collect the contribution upfront or staggered over a period of time.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/markets/stocks/news/sebi-comes-out-with-norms-to-strengthen-risk-management-system-in-clearing-corporations/articleshow/79843823.cms>

### **SC stay on loan accounts: FinMin says tough to assess recap of banks**

The Finance Ministry has said it is finding it difficult to finalise the recapitalisation programme for public sector banks due to the Supreme Court stay on classification of loan accounts as non-performing assets. "Any amount can be thought of, if there is estimation of NPA. On account of the Supreme Court's interim order, it is not possible as of now," a senior government official told BusinessLine. In its order dated September 3, the apex court had said that the accounts that were not declared NPA till August 31, 2020 shall not be declared NPA till further orders. The six months loan moratorium period ended on August 31, under which borrowers were given the option to defer their EMI (equated monthly instalment).

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/money-and-banking/sc-stay-on-loan-accounts-finmin-says-tough-to-assess-recap-of-banks/article33387795.ece?homepage=true>

### **NIIF completes fund raise for \$2.3 bn Master Fund in fifth and final round**

National Investment and Infrastructure Fund Ltd (NIIF) has completed fund raising for its NIIF Master Fund, achieving a rupee equivalent size \$2.34 billion. The NIIF Master fund primarily invests in operating assets in core infrastructure sectors, primarily transportation and energy. The Public Sector Pension Investment Board (PSP Investments) of Canada, US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), and Axis Bank have inked pact for investments of about \$107 million cumulatively with the NIIF Master Fund. International investors have rights to co-invest an additional \$3 billion alongside the Fund.

These investments mark the fifth and Final Close of the NIIF Master Fund, NIIF said in a statement. DFC and PSP will join the other investors of the Master Fund as shareholders of NIIF Ltd, the investment manager. DFC and PSP Investments join the Government of India (GoI), Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA), AustralianSuper, CPP Investments, Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, Temasek, HDFC Group, ICICI Bank, among others.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/niif-completes-fund-raise-for-2-3-bn-master-fund-in-fifth-and-final-round-120122100539\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/niif-completes-fund-raise-for-2-3-bn-master-fund-in-fifth-and-final-round-120122100539_1.html)

#### **At \$8.1 billion in November, FPI inflows highest in 12 years: Report**

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), which own more than 24 per cent of the domestic market, pumped in a record USD 8.1 billion last month, highest in 12 years, and at USD 5 billion to date, December also looks to get record inflows, says a foreign brokerage report. At USD 8.1 billion, India has received the highest FPI inflows among the emerging market peers in November, as Brazil got only USD 6.2 billion, South Korea (USD 5.2 billion), Taiwan (USD 4.5 billion) and Thailand at USD 1.1 billion.

This inflow had the valuation premium of India to other emerging markets in the MSCI Index shooting up by 5 percentage point to 46 per cent and is 5 per cent above the long-term average, says Bank of America Securities in a report on Monday. Meanwhile, with over USD 2 billion pullout, the domestic funds turned negative on the market in November.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/markets/at-8-1-billion-in-november-fpi-inflows-highest-in-12-years-report-120122100696\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/markets/at-8-1-billion-in-november-fpi-inflows-highest-in-12-years-report-120122100696_1.html)

#### **Covid claims: Insurers paying 100-150% more than the premium collected**

Insurance companies have already paid claims that are 100-150 per cent more than the premium they received on corona-specific policies, according to industry experts. As mandated by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), there are two corona-specific policies — Corona Kavach and Corona Rakshak. These policies have been brought in as standard covers, while the pandemic was at its fastest spread early this year. "Most of the companies have paid much more than what they had received. For Corona Kavach, we have paid 150 per cent than what we have received," S Prakash, Managing Director, Star Health & Allied Insurance told BusinessLine.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/money-and-banking/covid-claims-insurers-paying-100-150-more-than-the-premium-collected/article33387703.ece?homepage=true>

### **Industry**

#### **Corporate profits touch all-time high in the September quarter: Crisil**

Corporate profits rose 15 per cent to touch an all-time high in the September quarter as margins widened on softer input costs and better utilisation levels, the research arm of leading rating agency Crisil said on Monday. From an absolute perspective, the earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (Ebitda) touched an all-time high Rs 1.60 lakh crore in the September quarter, as against Rs 1.02 lakh crore in the preceding June quarter, it said. It can be noted that the trend of companies' profits growing even as the economy contracts as a result of the pandemic has led some watchers to express concern claiming this is illustrative of widening inequalities. Crisil, which analysed a sample of 800 listed entities comprising 85 per cent of NSE's market cap in sectors excluding banking and finance and oil and gas, said improving utilisation levels, along with better management of power, fuel and raw material cost by large companies contributed to the handsome profit growth. Aggregate operating profit margins improved by over 1 per cent despite a rise in raw material cost during the quarter, it said.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/corporate-profits-touch-all-time-high-in-the-september-qtr-crisil-120122100802\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/corporate-profits-touch-all-time-high-in-the-september-qtr-crisil-120122100802_1.html)

#### **CAIT says Amazon's arbitrary policies to dominate India's retail trade should end**

Trader's body CAIT on Monday said Amazon's "manipulative, coercive, arbitrary and dictatorial policies" to dominate India's retail trade should come to an end, hours after the Delhi High Court passed an order related to Future Group's proposed asset sale to Reliance Retail, a deal that is being opposed by Amazon. The court rejected Future Retail Ltd's (FRL) plea for an interim injunction to restrain Amazon from writing to Sebi, the Competition Commission and other authorities about the SIAC arbitral order against the proposed Rs 24,713 crore deal with Reliance Retail.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/retail/cait-says-amazons-arbitrary-policies-to-dominate-indias-retail-trade-should-end/articleshow/79843206.cms>

#### **30,000 power looms fall silent as rayon yarn price goes up**

Thirty-thousand power looms used for the production of rayon cloth here have been closed for seven days from Monday, December 21, due to rayon yarn price hike. Erode is noted for textile production and more than 50,000 power looms function in the district, of which at Kalingarayanpalayam, Veerappanchatram, Asokapuram and some other places, 30,000 power looms produce 24,000 metres of rayon cloth a day. President of Erode Powerloom Cloth Producers Association Suresh said, "The cost of 120-gram and 150-gram rayon yarn used for the production of the rayon cloth has been increased by Rs 26 for a cone as a result of which the cost of production has been increased by more than 20 per cent."

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/garments/-/textiles/30000-power-looms-fall-silent-as-rayon-yarn-price-goes-up/articleshow/79841782.cms>

#### **Auto companies need to map vulnerabilities, realign supply chains to meet challenges: Report**

Automobile companies in India will need to map vulnerabilities and realign their supply chains to meet current challenges in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, according to a report by consultancy firm EY. With the supplier base of a majority of components in the Indian auto industry not diversified, the report -- Non-linear automotive supply chain - COVID-19 and Beyond -- said the impact of the global health crisis on the industry has been deep-rooted.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/auto-news/auto-companies-need-to-map-vulnerabilities-realign-supply-chains-to-meet-challenges-report/articleshow/79839656.cms>

#### **Electric two-wheeler domestic sales expected to decline 15-17% in FY21: Icra**

Electric two-wheeler domestic sales are expected to shrink 15-17 per cent year-on-year this fiscal amid an evolving pandemic situation, persisting health concerns coupled with economic uncertainties, ratings agency Icra has said. The FAME-II scheme aimed to push faster electric vehicle (EV) adoption crossed the halfway mark of its three-year tenure (FY2020-FY2022), on September 30, 2020. However, it has managed to achieve only 2 per cent of its target (out of covering 10 lakh e-2Ws) sales during the period.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/two-wheelers-three-wheelers/electric-two-wheeler-domestic-sales-expected-to-decline-15-17-in-fy21-icra/articleshow/79841062.cms>

### **Agriculture**

#### **Convert MSP into floor price, set up contract farming body to resolve new farm laws impasse: Report**

Converting the minimum support price regime to a floor price of auction on the national agri market (eNAM) portal and creating a contract farming institute can help solve the current impasse over the three new farm laws which are being opposed by farmers, says a report by SBI Research. The report also suggests that instead of MSP as a price guarantee that farmers are demanding, the government could insert a quantity guarantee clause for a minimum of five years that procurement to production percentage of crops will be at least equal to last year's percentage with safeguards in exceptional events like droughts and floods. This, the report said, can allay the concerns of farmers to a great extent.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/convert-msp-into-floor-price-set-up-contract-farming-body-to-resolve-new-farm-laws-impasse-report/articleshow/79844183.cms>

#### **Rice exporters seek government help to deal with high freight rate, container shortage**

Rice exporters are seeking government intervention to protect their margins and remain competitive as high freight rates and a scarcity of containers have impacted the trade. Exporters have sought government assistance in transportation and marketing along with benefits of export-promotion schemes, VK Kaul, executive director of All India Rice Exporters Association, said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/rice-exporters-seek-government-help-to-deal-with-high-freight-rate-container-shortage/articleshow/79836288.cms>

### **Infrastructure**

#### **Nitin Gadkari inaugurates, lays foundation stone for over Rs 13,000 cr highway projects in Telangana**

Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Monday inaugurated and laid foundation stone of projects worth over Rs 13,000 crore in Telangana. These projects are for a total length of 765.66 km of highways. "Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari inaugurated and laid the foundation of 14 NH projects in Telangana today through virtual mode. These projects include 765.663 km long roads worth Rs 13,169 crore," Ministry of Road Transport and Highways said in a statement. The virtual event was attended by Union Ministers G Kishan Reddy and VK Singh besides Telangana Minister for Roads & Buildings, Legislative Affairs and Housing Vemula Prashanth Reddy, Speaker of Telangana Assembly Pocharam Srinivas Reddy, MPS and MLAs, in addition to senior officers from the Centre and the State.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/nitin-gadkari-inaugurates-lays-foundation-stone-for-over-rs-13000-cr-highway-projects-in-telangana/articleshow/79839265.cms>

#### **Tide turns in November for traffic at major ports**

After eight months of contraction, cargo traffic at the major ports grew by 3% y-o-y in November 2020. For the April-November period, the traffic has fallen by 10.5% y-o-y — only Mormugao port has seen a higher volume of cargo in the current financial year than a year ago. The cargo volumes for POL, coal, and containers have declined while that for fertiliser and iron ore have increased from a year ago.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/tide-turns-in-november-for-traffic-at-major-ports/2153948/>

#### **Home sales in top 7 cities halve in 2020 as Bengaluru, NCR lead decline**

Residential sales in top seven cities fell almost 50 per cent in 2020 on a yearly basis, says a new study. The top 7 cities saw housing sales of around 138,350 units in all of 2020 as against 261,370 units in 2019, down 47 per cent on a yearly basis, a report from Anarock Property Consultants says. Top residential markets such as NCR and Bengaluru saw over 50 per cent drop in home sales in 2020, the report said. Housing sales in Mumbai Metropolitan Region dropped 45 per cent YoY to about 44,320 units in 2020. Last year, the city's total sales were nearly 80,870 units. In Bengaluru, housing sales touched 24,910 units in 2020 against 50,450 units in 2019, a decline of over 51 per cent. The NCR witnessed housing sales of 23,210 units in 2020 over 46,920 units a year ago. The region saw its sales plummet 51 per cent. New housing supply in 2020 declined by 46 per cent against the preceding year — from about 237,000 units in 2019 to around 128,000 units in 2020. MMR and Pune were the showstoppers in overall residential activity in 2020.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/home-sales-in-top-7-cities-halve-in-2020-as-bengaluru-ncr-lead-decline-120122100671\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/home-sales-in-top-7-cities-halve-in-2020-as-bengaluru-ncr-lead-decline-120122100671_1.html)

#### **India's growth as R&D hub to drive demand for commercial real estate: Report**

India is expected to become a hub of global Engineering Research & Development centres and contribute significantly to the digital strategies of global multinational corporations resulting in higher demand for commercial real estate and data centres. By financial year 2022, engineering R&D revenues are estimated to register a compound annual growth of around 8% with multinationals driving growth across products and services, said property consultant Cushman & Wakefield. Going forward, Engineering R&D revenues are expected to surpass revenues from business process management (BPM) services, thereby consolidating the former's position as the second-highest contributor to software revenues, after information technology.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/indl-goods/svs/engineering/indias-growth-as-rd-hub-to-drive-demand-for-commercial-real-estate-report/articleshow/79842529.cms>

#### **Telecom**

#### **Ensuing tariff hikes to fuel revenue growth, better debt metrics for telcos in FY2022: ICRA**

Telecom service providers could undertake the next round of tariff hikes over the next one or two quarters, which is expected to fuel revenue growth in fiscal 2022, ICRA said on Monday. The industry topline is expected to grow by 11-13 per cent over the next two years, with operating margins improving to about 38 per cent for the financial year 2022 on the back of improved cash flows, moderate capex and limited borrowings, it said.

"Next round of tariff hikes are expected soon as the industry debt continues to remain elevated, likely to be at Rs 4.7 lakh crore as on March 31, 2022," ICRA said in a release. Given the higher funding needs arising from sizeable payouts towards statutory liabilities, spectrum purchase, regular revenue share with the government and auction

instalments (that start from FY2023), it is imperative for the players to embark on sustainable and sizeable expansion in the average revenue per user (ARPU).

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/ensuing-tariff-hikes-to-fuel-revenue-growth-better-debt-metrics-for-telcos-in-fy2022-icra/2154479/>

## Energy

### **Solar power tariff dips to all-time low of Rs 1.99 per unit: Report**

Solar power tariff has dropped to an all-time low of Rs 1.99 per unit in an auction of projects of 500 MW capacity by Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam Ltd (GUVNL) last week. "Now the solar power tariff has dropped to a new low of Rs 1.99 per unit in an auction for 500MW projects by GUVNL last week," a source told PTI. State-run power giant NTPC (200MW), Torrent Power (100MW), Saudi Arabian firm Al Jomaih Energy and Water Co. (80MW) and Aditya Birla Renewable (120) have emerged as the lowest bidders by quoting Rs 1.99 per unit tariff under the auction, the source added. Solar power tariff had dropped to record low of Rs 2 per unit in an auction for 1,070 MW projects conducted by the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) last month.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/solar-power-tariff-dips-to-all-time-low-of-rs-1-99/unit/articleshow/79839682.cms>

### **APP asks power ministry to reintroduce gas subsidy scheme to revive power plants**

The Association of Power Producers (APP) has urged the government to reintroduce gas subsidy scheme for revival of gas-based electricity generation projects in the country. The body has also sought dedicated allocation or auction of gas for power sector and inclusion of natural gas under goods and services tax (GST) regime to maintain 5 per cent tax across the country.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/app-asks-power-ministry-to-reintroduce-gas-subsidy-scheme-to-revive-power-plants/articleshow/79837440.cms>

### **Coal India's fuel allocation under spot e-auction rises 59 pc during Apr-Nov**

State-owned CIL allocated 25.78 million tonnes (MT) of coal in the first eight months of this fiscal under spot e-auction scheme, registering a year-on-year increase of 59.4 per cent. Coal India Ltd (CIL) had allocated 16.17 MT of coal in the April-November period of the previous fiscal, according to government data. Fuel allocation by CIL under the scheme also increased to 4.09 MT in November, from over 3.58 MT in the corresponding month of 2019.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/indl-goods/svs/metals-mining/coal-indias-fuel-allocation-under-spot-e-auction-rises-59-pc-during-apr-nov/articleshow/79843213.cms>

## States

### **Hoteliers, restaurateurs expect washed out New Year's eve, drop in business following Maha's night curfew move**

Hoteliers and restaurateurs in Maharashtra are expecting a 'washed out' new year's eve and a massive drop in business after the state government decided to impose a night curfew for 15 days starting from Tuesday. The Maharashtra government announced a night curfew for municipal corporation areas of the state from December 22 till January 5

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/hotels-/restaurants/hoteliers-restaurateurs-expect-washed-out-new-years-eve-drop-in-business-following-mahas-night-curfew-move/articleshow/79843333.cms>

### **Karnataka clears investment proposals worth Rs 26,659 crore and potential to generate 13,341 jobs**

The State High Level Clearance Committee (SHLCC) meeting chaired by Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Monday cleared five projects with an total investment potential of Rs 26,659 crore and can generate employment to 13,341 people. Investments cleared in the 55th SHLCC meeting include two proposals by Elest Pvt Ltd in Hubli/Dharwad - one worth Rs 14,255 crore on 85 acres of land for electric vehicle manufacturing, with a potential to generate employment for 867 people.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/karnataka-clears-investment-proposals-worth-rs-26659-crore-and-potential-to-generate-13341-jobs/articleshow/79843241.cms>

## Healthcare

### **Parliamentary panel seeks public health Act to keep check on private hospitals**

A parliamentary panel has recommended framing of a 'National Public Health Act' that has provisions to keep a "check over private hospitals", and directed the National Disaster Management Authority to "set up a separate wing to handle pandemic-like situations" in the future. The suggestions are part of a report on 'Management of Covid-19 pandemic and related issues' by a standing committee headed by senior Congress leader Anand Sharma.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/parliamentary-panel-seeks-public-health-act-to-keep-check-on-private-hospitals/articleshow/79844552.cms>

### **India can inoculate priority groups by June 2021: Fitch Solutions**

A vaccine against COVID-19 can cover priority groups in India by June next year if inoculation is quickly ramped up to roughly the same level as the 1 million coronavirus tests conducted each day in the country, Fitch Solutions said on Monday. "India's role in the global COVID-19 vaccine rollout will be significant both as a recipient of the medicine as well as a producer," Fitch said in a report. India, it said, has one of the largest vaccine manufacturing capacities in the world (including the largest vaccine producer Serum Institute India, SII) and has secured authorisation to mass-produce the AstraZeneca, Novavax and Gamaleya Research Institute vaccines. With a population of 130 crore (and 9.4 crore over 65-year-olds), the domestic vaccination drive will be the largest in the world.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-can-inoculate-priority-groups-by-june-2021-fitch-solutions-120122100807\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-can-inoculate-priority-groups-by-june-2021-fitch-solutions-120122100807_1.html)

### **Russia working with India to jointly produce Sputnik V vax: Russian envoy**

Russia is working with India to jointly produce Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine at Dr Reddy's Laboratories for use in India, Russia and other countries, said Nikolay Kudashev, Russian Ambassador to India, on Monday.

Speaking at the press briefing, the Ambassador said, "We are working very hard to fight COVID-19 together with India, and now advancing to jointly produce Sputnik V vaccine at the capacities of Dr Reddy's Laboratories to be used in India, Russia and other countries."

"A lot of efforts are aimed at coordination in the international arena, including World Health Organization and BRICS, where we have got an advanced healthcare mechanisms and initiatives, including Tuberculosis Network, Vaccine Research Center, Early Warning System to prevent the spread of infectious diseases," he said.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/russia-working-with-india-to-jointly-produce-sputnik-v-vax-russian-envoy-120122100811\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/russia-working-with-india-to-jointly-produce-sputnik-v-vax-russian-envoy-120122100811_1.html)

### **India to scale up gene surveillance of SARS Cov2 in light of UK mutation**

India will expand surveillance of gene sequencing for new lineages of SARS-CoV-2 from across the country as it looks to tackle a more infectious strain of the virus found in several countries including the United Kingdom, South Africa, Denmark and Brazil. "We have been maintaining some surveillance at viral genome level already," Anurag Agrawal, director of CSIR Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/india-to-scale-up-gene-surveillance-of-sars-cov2-in-light-of-uk-mutation/articleshow/79844716.cms>

## External

### **India may ease rules for non-Chinese investments from Hong Kong: Report**

India may reduce scrutiny of deals by Hong Kong-based investors as long as Chinese firms aren't involved in the transactions, people with knowledge of the matter said.

The proposals under consideration include making it mandatory for beneficial owners from nations sharing a land border with India to seek the government's permission to acquire more than 10% stake in any local firm, the people said, asking not to be identified citing rules. The discussions are at a preliminary stage, they said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration is formalizing investment rules for neighboring countries amid a bloody border standoff with China earlier this year. That's led to over 140 proposals worth more than \$1.75 billion, including proposals from China and Hong Kong, getting delayed and complicating deal-making for investors.



[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-may-ease-rules-for-non-chinese-investments-from-hong-kong-report-120122100575\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-may-ease-rules-for-non-chinese-investments-from-hong-kong-report-120122100575_1.html)

### **Indo-Japan Samwad Conference: PM Modi says discussions on global growth cannot happen among few, table must be bigger**

Asserting that growth patterns must follow a human-centric approach, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said discussions on global growth cannot happen only among a few as the “table must be bigger” and the agenda broader. Addressing the 6th Indo-Japan Samwad Conference via video conferencing, Modi said in the past, humanity often took the path of confrontation instead of collaboration.

“From Imperialism to the world wars. From the arms race to the space race. We had dialogues but they were aimed at pulling others down. Now, let us rise together,” Modi said. “Discussions on global growth cannot happen only between a few. The table must be bigger. The agenda must be broader. Growth patterns must follow a human-centric approach. And, be in harmony with our surroundings,” he said.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/indo-japan-samwad-conference-pm-modi-says-discussions-on-global-growth-cannot-happen-among-few-table-must-be-bigger/2154195/>

### **Vietnam important partner in India's Indo-Pacific vision: PM Modi**

Describing Vietnam as an important partner in India's Indo-Pacific vision, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said cooperation between the two countries can contribute to maintaining peace and stability in the region. At a virtual summit with Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Modi said India looks at its ties with Vietnam with a long-term and strategic perspective. “Vietnam is an important pillar of India's Act East policy,” Modi said in his opening remarks, adding the scope of the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries has expanded significantly. “Peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region is our common aim. Our cooperation can make an important contribution in maintaining peace and stability in the region,” said Modi.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/vietnam-important-partner-in-indias-indo-pacific-vision-pm-modi/articleshow/79840868.cms>

### **Diamond traders expect new virus strain to cause minor bumps**

India's diamond traders expect minor bumps in exports due to the new strain of coronavirus in the UK and the travel restrictions imposed by several European nations to contain its spread. They, however, expect exports to pick up ahead of the Chinese New Year festival in February when consumers are likely to loosen their purse strings after the pandemic-induced lockdown and restrictions.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/fashion/-/cosmetics/-/jewellery/diamond-traders-expect-new-virus-strain-to-cause-minor-bumps/articleshow/79839471.cms>

### **EU-UK trade talks slog on past another Brexit deadline**

Problems increased Monday in the bid to put a trade deal between the European Union and the United Kingdom on the rails before a Brexit transition period ends on New Year's Day, with the EU legislature insisting ever more it will not have time to vet and approve an agreement. British and EU negotiators were still deadlocked over fishing rights on Monday with only 10 days to go before a chaotic, costly economic break between both sides is to become official. Barring a late breakthrough, it would impose tariffs on trade between the sides, on top of the customs and other administrative red tape imposed by Britain's decision to leave the 27-nation bloc. Hundreds of thousands of jobs are at stake throughout the economies of both sides if no deal is found but Britain is still insisting its sovereignty trumps concessions granting EU vessels rights in U.K. waters, while the EU is refusing to open its lucrative single market to the U.K. unless it commits to play by EU rules.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/eu-uk-trade-talks-slog-on-past-another-brexit-deadline/2154516/>