



December 23, 2020 – Wednesday

Key Developments

Govt plans to set up a development finance institution: DFS Secy

The government plans to set up a Development Finance Institution (DFI) in the next three to four months with a view to mobilise Rs 111 lakh crore required for funding of the ambitious national infrastructure pipeline, according to Financial Services Secretary Debasish Panda. "We need a development financial institution as infra financing needs patient capital, and banks are currently not suited for lending for long term projects which do not generate any cash for years," he told PTI in an interview. Even deepening the bond market with regard to infrastructure financing is a matter which is receiving attention of the government and there is a need to do something more in order to have a robust bond market for infrastructure financing, he said.

"To provide funding, to enhance credit rating of projects, a DFI is needed, and we are actively working on it, and soon such an institution will be in place. We are in the process of finalising details such as shareholding of the government and whether such a body will be formed through a statute.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/govt-plans-to-set-up-a-development-finance-institution-dfs-secy-120122201055_1.html

New mutation not affecting severity of coronavirus: Niti Aayog's V K Paul

The new strain of coronavirus can be called a 'superspreader' of sorts since it has increased its transmissibility potential, but hasn't affected the severity or fatality of the disease, V K Paul, member-health, Niti Aayog said on Tuesday. Referring to the new mutation in the coronavirus found in the UK, Paul said while it does not affect hospitalisation or seriousness of the disease, its tendency to affect more people is a concern in itself. "We have not detected this mutation. Our own deep assessment is that we do not need to panic... We have to be more vigilant but that is also because we still are fighting the pandemic," he said. He said that the new strain will not have any impact on the potential vaccine or the treatment protocol.

Health ministry has also issued detailed protocols for passengers who arrived from or transited through the UK in the past for weeks from November 25 to December 23, 2020.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/new-mutation-not-affecting-severity-of-coronavirus-niti-aayog-s-v-k-paul-120122201146_1.html

Parliamentary panel suggests Franchise Protection Act for auto dealers: FADA

A parliamentary panel headed by Rajya Sabha MP K Keshava Rao has recommended that the government should enact the Franchise Protection Act for automobile dealers in the country, industry body FADA said on Friday. It said that a "fair competition Franchise Act" will not only be a win-win for both the auto original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and dealers, but will also be beneficial to customers in the long run, it said. First introduced by the US in the 1980s, many developed countries such as Mexico, Brazil, Russia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, Italy and Sweden have such rules in place to protect the franchisees, it said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/auto-news/parliamentary-panel-suggests-franchise-protection-act-for-auto-dealers-fada/articleshow/79856653.cms>

FSSAI notifies standards for fortification of processed food products

The packet of noodles, pasta or rusk that you pick up may soon come with added vitamins and minerals. After setting fortification standards for staples, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has notified norms for permissible levels of micronutrients for fortifying processed food products such as breakfast cereals, biscuits, breads, rusks, pasta, noodles, buns and fruit juices. Companies that make such products can fortify them with micronutrients voluntarily. Also, products that are high in fat, salt and sugar will be “excluded” from the fortified processed foods category.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/fssai-notifies-standards-for-fortification-of-processed-food-products/article33394247.ece>

Economy

Govt invites bids for sale of its 63.75% stake in Shipping Corporation

The government has invited bids for its entire stake in the Shipping Corporation of India, paving the way for yet another privatisation of a state-owned company after BPCL. The interested buyers will have to submit an expression of interest to acquire the government’s 63.75 per cent stake in the shipping company by February 13, 2021. Buyers can submit their queries to transaction adviser by January 23, said the preliminary information memorandum released by the government.

Shipping Corporation owns and operates a third of Indian tonnage, and has operating interests in all areas of the shipping business. The company has 6 joint venture entities, and four will be a part of the sale. These are India LNG Transport Co. (No.1) Ltd, India LNG Transport Co. (No.2) Ltd., India LNG Transport Co. (No.3) Ltd., and India LNG Transport Co. (No.4) Ltd. Of the other two joint ventures, Irano Hind Shipping Company is being dissolved, while SAIL SCIL Shipping Pvt. Ltd is in the process of winding off. One subsidiary, Inland & Coastal Shipping Ltd, will also be a part of the transaction.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/govt-invites-bids-for-sale-of-its-63-75-stake-in-shipping-corporation-120122200547_1.html

India’s economy recovers better than expected but it is still this far from comeback

India’s economy is recovering at a better-than-expected pace; however, there is a long wait before it makes the comeback. On the basis of three broad aspects of the economy – production, consumption, and investment, it is found out that the economy is on a comeback path as select parameters have seen a gradual but sustained improvement, but, it is still far from a comeback, according to Care Ratings’ Economic Comeback Meter. While an index of -2 to 0 shows deterioration; 0 to 5 shows ‘on comeback path’; 5 to 8 represents comeback; and 8 to 10 indicates growth path; the country’s economic indicators fell in the ‘on comeback path category in the four months to November 2020. CECM stood at 0.58 in August, 1.1 in September, 1.79 in October, and 2.62 in November. In the comeback tracker, production is represented by power generation, e-way bills, and non-oil-gold imports.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/indias-economy-recovers-better-than-expected-but-it-is-still-far-from-comeback-production-investment-consumption/2155025/>

Banking and Finance

Distress funds are betting on rise in NPAs in India in the coming months due to Covid pandemic

Non performing assets (NPA) in the banking system is set to see a jump in the coming months and some of the distress funds or special purpose funds are betting big on that. Most banks have managed to keep their NPA under control as companies availed moratoriums or were allowed to delay repaying loans for some months due to Covid pandemic. Industry trackers now expect that this number will jump in the coming months.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/banking/distress-funds-are-betting-on-rise-in-npas-in-india-in-the-coming-months-due-to-covid-pandemic/articleshow/79859243.cms?utm_source=ETTopNews&utm_medium=HPTN&utm_campaign=AL1&utm_content=23

Securitisation volumes to get back on growth track in FY22: Icra

The securitisation volumes especially in retail loans of finance companies and mortgage lenders will see healthy growth in 2021-22 (FY22), after experiencing contraction in Fy21 so far, according to Icra. Also, the credit quality of

the rated pass-through certificates (PTCs) should remain 'Stable' during FY2022. Even though collections may not have reached pre-Covid levels, the credit enhancement available in the transactions has further built-up on amortisation of the pools supporting their credit quality.

The rating agency said increase in securitisation volumes for the rest of FY21 and in FY2022 would be supported mainly by growing investor confidence in asset quality due to improving collections. Higher funding requirement of originators on account of rising disbursements and improving business activity post end of lockdown and moratorium period would give a push to activity.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/securitisation-volumes-to-get-back-on-growth-track-in-fy22-icra-120122200665_1.html

Sebi orders attachment of bank, demat accounts of 19 entities to recover penalty amount

Markets regulator Sebi has ordered attachment of bank accounts as well as share and mutual fund holding of 19 entities to recover a fine totalling Rs 1.2 crore. The recovery proceedings have been initiated against the entities after they failed to pay a fine imposed on them for violating securities market norms in different matters. The fines were imposed by the capital markets watchdog during March 2012 to June 2020 for violating provisions of securities law.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/markets/stocks/news/sebi-orders-attachment-of-bank-demat-accounts-of-19-entities-to-recover-penalty-amount/articleshow/79872695.cms>

Mutual fund industry in a bind over Sebi's new rules for executing trades

The Securities and Exchange Board of India's (Sebi) diktat prescribing standards for executing trades might open a Pandora's box for the mutual fund industry. The regulations, which were notified in late October and lay down a code of conduct, have raised privacy concerns and may lead to longer working hours for fund managers. A similar set of guidelines pertaining to trade execution and allocation were released on September 21 and become applicable from January 1. The notification states that all communication from dealers as well as fund managers during market hours should be through recorded modes and channels only. Currently, all dealers' conversations during market hours are recorded as they operate from dealing rooms without mobile phones. Similarly, fund managers' conversation on landlines are also recorded.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/markets/mutual-fund-industry-in-a-bind-over-sebi-s-new-rules-for-executing-trades-120122200796_1.html

MUFG Bank achieves green certification for solar farm in India

MUFG Bank on Tuesday said that it has acted as sole green structuring advisor for a USD 333 million financing deal for SoftBank's latest and largest solar project in India. This marks the first green certification of a solar project loan for both the client and the country, and underscores both MUFG's sustainable financing capabilities as well as commitment towards partnering clients in their environmental, social and governance (ESG) objectives, said the company in a statement released in Singapore.

The 900 megawatt-DC solar farm in the Phalodi-Pokhran Solar Park in Rajasthan is the seventh project in line to be commissioned by SB Energy Holdings Limited (SB Energy), a majority-owned subsidiary of SoftBank Group.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/mufg-bank-achieves-green-certification-for-solar-farm-in-india-120122201069_1.html

Industry

No benefits if tax haven route not justified: Madras HC

In a judgement that could impact several foreign companies investing in India through subsidiaries or investment arms registered in other countries, the Madras High Court has ruled that tax benefits can be withdrawn if the investment is merely done to circumvent domestic tax laws. The order would support the tax department's claim that any investment coming from outside could be investigated based on its intent. And if the intent was to escape tax, benefits can be denied under tax treaties.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/no-benefits-if-tax-haven-route-not-justified-madras-hc/articleshow/79850062.cms>

Manufacturing units paid Rs 35,634 crore GST under previous electronics manufacturing incentive scheme

Manufacturing units paid Goods and Services Tax (GST) worth Rs 35,634 crore under a previous electronics manufacturing incentive scheme where the subsidy provided was just Rs 1,021 crore, indicating substantial cost benefit for the government and expectations that GST will only increase under the new Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/manufacturing-units-paid-rs-35634-crore-gst-under-previous-electronics-manufacturing-incentive-scheme/articleshow/79872080.cms>

Social commerce in India could touch \$7 billion by 2025: Report

Social commerce in the country is poised to touch up to USD 7 billion (around Rs 51,703 cr) in GMV by 2025 as the number of online shoppers - especially from tier II cities and beyond - continues to rise, a report by RedSeer Consulting said on Tuesday. Social commerce refers to e-commerce transactions where buyers and sellers have more direct connection with each other before concluding a purchase, compared to a traditional e-commerce where buyers are choosing by searching or browsing from a digital catalogue.

This report on social commerce included platforms like Meesho but excluded peer-to-peer transactions through social media and online messengers.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/social-commerce-in-india-could-touch-7-billion-by-2025-report-120122201091_1.html

Local two-wheeler sales are expected to grow in the new year

Local two-wheeler sales are expected to grow in the new year, although on a low base, with demand reviving in urban centres. According to industry estimates, sales of two-wheelers are set to decline by 20-22% in this financial year from 17.42 million units sold in FY20.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/two-wheelers-three-wheelers/local-two-wheeler-sales-are-expected-to-grow-in-the-new-year/articleshow/79874585.cms>

Electric vehicle market in India expected to hit 63 lakh units per annum mark by 2027: IESA

The electric vehicle (EV) market in India is expected to hit over 63 lakh unit mark per annum by 2027, according to a report by India Energy Storage Alliance (IESA). As per the findings of the report, which covers the present scenario and forecast of electric vehicle (EV), EV batteries and the public charging infrastructure market in the country, demand for the batteries is also going to rise substantially over the same period. "In the base case scenario, the EV market is expected to grow at CAGR of 44 per cent between 2020-2027 and is expected to hit 6.34-million-unit annual sales by 2027," the IESA report said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/auto-news/electric-vehicle-market-in-india-expected-to-hit-63-lakh-units-per-annum-mark-by-2027-iesa/articleshow/79865522.cms>

Agriculture

Govt procures paddy worth Rs 79,675 cr at MSP so far; purchase in volume terms up 22 pc

Paddy procurement has increased 22 per cent so far in the ongoing kharif marketing season to 422.01 lakh tonnes, valued at Rs 79,675 crore. The kharif marketing season (KMS) starts from October. Paddy procurement for kharif 2020-21 is continuing smoothly in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu, Chandigarh, Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Bihar, an official statement said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/govt-procures-paddy-worth-rs-79675-cr-at-msp-so-far-purchase-in-volume-terms-up-22-pc/articleshow/79874867.cms>

Climate change ravages Kashmir's 'red gold' saffron crop

On sweeping fields once blanketed in lush purple, a thin and bedraggled crop of flowers is all farmers in Indian-administered Kashmir's saffron-growing region Pampore have to show for this year's harvest. Dry conditions blamed on climate change have seen yields of the world's most expensive spice halved in the past two decades, threatening the future of a cash crop that has brought wealth to the region for 2,500 years. "These fields used to be like goldmines," said Abdul Ahad Mir in Pampore, just south of Indian-administered Kashmir's main city Srinagar.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/climate-change-ravages-kashmirs-red-gold-saffron-crop/articleshow/79851375.cms>

Record minimum support price distributed to tribals during coronavirus outbreak

For the first time since the introduction of minimum support price (MSP) for minor forest produce (MFP), about 10 lakh tribal households have received MSP worth Rs 4,000 crore across 21 states. The Centre's MSP for MFP initiative, which was introduced by Congress-led UPA in 2013-14 and had remained a non-starter, has got a sudden fillip in the current fiscal during successive lockdowns.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/record-minimum-support-price-distributed-to-tribals-during-coronavirus-outbreak/articleshow/79849743.cms>

Infrastructure

World Bank, Govt ink pact for USD 500-mn project to develop green, safe highway corridors

The World Bank and the Government of India on Tuesday inked a pact for a USD 500-million project to build safe and green national highway corridors, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways said. The highway corridors will be developed in Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. "The Government of India and the World Bank today (on Tuesday) signed a USD 500-million project to build safe and green national highway corridors in the states of Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh," the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) said in a statement.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/world-bank-goi-ink-pact-for-usd-500-mn-project-to-develop-green-safe-highway-corridors/articleshow/79879375.cms>

Addition, absorption of warehousing space rises steeply on quarterly basis

The addition and absorption of warehousing spaces has grown on a quarterly basis. About 3.45 million square feet of warehousing stock was added in tier-1 cities in Q3CY2020, indicating a growth of 88 per cent compared to the previous quarter and down 34 per cent compared to Q3CY2019. Around 3.81 mn sq ft was absorbed in tier 1 cities in Q3CY2020, indicating an increase of 93 per cent compared to the previous quarter and decline of 33 per cent compared to Q3CY19, according to data analytics firm CRE MATRIX.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/addition-absorption-of-warehousing-space-rises-steeply-on-quarterly-basis-120122200890_1.html

New Delhi airport aims to start distributing Covid vaccine in January

India's largest airport plans to start distributing COVID-19 vaccines in January with up to 5.4 million vials a day, its CEO said on Tuesday, underscoring the logistical challenge of reaching everyone in the country of 1.3 billion. The Indian government is considering emergency use authorization for three vaccine candidates - one from AstraZeneca (AZN.L), another from Pfizer (PFE.N), and a separate one developed by the Indian firm Bharat Biotech.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/airlines/-aviation/new-delhi-airport-aims-to-start-distributing-covid-vaccine-in-january/articleshow/79872396.cms>

Air India waives penalties for rescheduling bookings for UK, Oman, Saudi Arabia between December 22 and 31

The decision came after flights to the United Kingdom, Oman and Saudi Arabia were suspended as a precautionary measure to check the spread of a new COVID-19 strain discovered in the UK. "In view of government of India directive on the suspension of flights to UK, from 22nd-31st Dec '20, Oman & Saudi Arabia both from 22nd-29th Dec '20, Air India is offering passengers booked to travel during the period one-time free reschedule for travel completed within 31st Dec," Air India wrote in a tweet.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/airlines/-aviation/air-india-waives-penalties-for-rescheduling-bookings-for-uk-oman-saudi-arabia-between-december-22-and-31/articleshow/79871249.cms>

Focus on growth of parcel business, production of LHB parcel vans, railway minister tells officials

Railway minister Piyush Goyal has directed officials to focus on growth of parcel business of the National transporter, and increasing production of (Linke Hofmann Busch) LHB parcel vans to this effect. Goyal reviewed the parcel business of the Indian Railways on Tuesday, the railway ministry said in a statement.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/focus-on-growth-of-parcel-business-production-of-lhb-parcel-vans-railway-minister-tells-officials/articleshow/79872446.cms>

Telecom

Telcos call on disaster relief bodies to upgrade to advanced tools

India's telecom operators have called on public protection and disaster relief (PPDR) agencies to replace old and inefficient communication technologies with 4G LTE for better coordination with digital tools such as images, videos, location and mapping.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-news/telcos-call-on-disaster-relief-bodies-to-upgrade-to-advanced-tools/articleshow/79873115.cms>

2021 to ring in spectrum auctions, potential tariff hikes for telecom sector

Having narrowly escaped a financial collapse, the telecom sector is now headed for an auction of airwaves in the next quarter, which combined with telcos' network investment compulsions and AGR liabilities could hasten tariff hikes in 2021. The Indian telecom market, which once had nearly a dozen operators, has in recent years seen exit of some prominent names due to cut-throat competition and legal cases.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-policy/2021-to-ring-in-spectrum-auctions-potential-tariff-hikes-for-telecom-sector/articleshow/79855602.cms>

Energy

Dharmendra Pradhan dedicates Bengal basin to nation, says discovery would aid India's energy security

Union Minister for Petroleum, Natural Gas and Steel Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday dedicated the Bengal Basin, the eighth producing basin of India, to the nation at Asokenagar, West Bengal and said that the discovery would play a role for India's energy security. While dedicating the Asokenagar discovery to the nation, Pradhan said that the discovery would play a role for India's energy security. He stated that the discovery would definitely add to the commitment towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi's clarion call for reducing oil import dependence.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/dharmendra-pradhan-dedicates-bengal-basin-to-nation-says-discovery-would-aid-indias-energy-security/articleshow/79863256.cms>

Electricity overcharging: Cross-subsidies cost businesses Rs 75k crore in FY19

Since the National Tariff Policy 2016 prescribed the tolerable extents of cross-subsidy among various segments of electricity consumers, the market-distorting system that jacks up the costs of industries and businesses, hasn't seen even a smidgen of correction. In fact, in absolute term, the cross subsidies have marginally increased in the four years to FY19 (see chart).

Among them, industrial and commercial consumers have borne a cross-subsidy burden of Rs 75,027 crore in FY19 against Rs 67,785 crore in FY16. Of course, a larger part of the subsidies – largely cornered by the domestic and agriculture consumers – is borne by state governments and these were to the tune of Rs 1.1 lakh crore in FY19, against Rs 75,608 crore in FY16.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/electricity-overcharging-stubborn-cross-subsidies-cost-businesses-rs-75k-crore-in-fy19/2154541/>

Private thermal power cos get Rs 40,000 cr liquidity boost: Report

Private sector thermal power plants are in for better times with a likely Rs 40,000-crore liquidity boost coming in from government initiatives along with Coal India decision to offer longer term credit to them, says a report. While the government has decided to liquidate the overdue receivables from state discoms under a rescue package, national miner Coal India has decided to allow private thermal power plants to get coal on 90-180 days credit.

These two measures can help them with a liquidity support of Rs 40,000 crore, improving their overall credit profiles, Crisil said in a report on Tuesday. The government support is by way of a Rs 1.2-lakh-crore loan scheme to enable discoms to pay outstanding dues to gencos. The scheme requires the first tranche, accounting for half the package, to be disbursed immediately and the balance upon discoms committing to operational improvements.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/private-thermal-power-cos-get-rs-40-000-cr-liquidity-boost-report-120122200876_1.html

India's crude oil production slips 5% in November: Government data

India's crude oil production fell by 5 per cent in November primarily due to a sharp drop in output at Rajasthan oilfields operated by private sector Cairn Vedanta, government data showed on Tuesday. India is dependent on imports for 85 per cent of its needs and the government is pushing domestic explorers to raise output to help cut down imports. Crude oil production in November at 2.48 million tonnes was lower than 2.61 million tonnes produced in the same month a year back. Rajasthan fields produced 9.6 per cent less crude oil at 476,990 tonnes as Mangala, Aishwarya and other fields in the Cairn block flowed less oil for a variety of reasons, according to data released by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-s-crude-oil-production-slips-5-in-november-government-data-120122200952_1.html

India's natural gas consumption rises 2% in November from a year earlier

Natural gas consumption in the country has risen 2% in November from a year earlier, signalling a rebound in the industrial activity. The consumption rose to 5.2 billion cubic meters (BCM) from 5.1 BCM last November, as per the official data. The demand for the April-November period is down nearly 5% from last year.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/indias-natural-gas-consumption-rises-2-in-november-from-a-year-earlier/articleshow/79870890.cms?utm_source=ETTopNews&utm_medium=HPTN&utm_campaign=AL1&utm_content=23

States

Goa Mining halt led to sense of all-round gloom in state economy: Study

The stoppage of mining in Goa dealt a devastating blow to the livelihoods of people and has resulted in all-round gloom in the state economy and social life, according to a recent study. The mining in Goa came to a halt in 2018 after the Supreme Court quashed the renewal of 88 mining leases. A recent study on impacts of stoppage of mining in Goa on socio-economics carried out by Indian Institute of Technology-Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad, said that "the survey results clearly demonstrated a sense of all-round gloom in the state economy and social life."

The closure of mining has dealt a devastating blow to the livelihoods of people which includes both in mining and non-mining areas.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/goa-mining-halt-led-to-sense-of-all-round-gloom-in-state-economy-study-120122200818_1.html

ADB to give Rs 2100-cr loan to Tripura for urban, tourism development

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is likely to provide a Rs 2,100 crore loan to the Tripura government for the development of urban areas and tourism in the northeastern state that borders Bangladesh, officials said here on Tuesday. According to Tripura's Urban Development and Tourism Department Secretary Gitte Kirankumar Dinkarrao, of the Rs 2,100 crore expected to be provided by the ADB as loan, Rs 1600 crore will be for urban development and Rs 500 crore for the tourism sector.

"Under the loan arrangement, initially ADB would provide Rs 40 crore for engagement of project design and management consultants for urban and tourism sectors. Once the projects are prepared, ADB would provide Rs 1,600 crore for development works in urban areas and Rs 500 crore in tourism sector over the next three years," Dinkarrao told IANS.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/adb-to-give-rs-2100-cr-loan-to-tripura-for-urban-tourism-development-120122200817_1.html

No need to impose night curfew in K'taka for now: Chief Minister

Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Tuesday said there was no need for imposing night curfew in the state for now, after neighbouring Maharashtra announced such a move amid growing concerns over a new coronavirus variant spreading in Britain.

"This (new coronavirus variant) is something that has worried the people of the state and the country, we have come to know that a person who has arrived in Chennai has been found infected. We have to be extra cautious. Whoever comes from outside they will be checked at the airports itself before allowing them," Yediyurappa said. Speaking to reporters here, he said, all the necessary precautions have been taken and the government was watchful to control the spread of the virus in Karnataka.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/no-need-to-impose-night-curfew-in-k-taka-for-now-chief-minister-120122201052_1.html

Healthcare

Covid vaccine-maker submits more data to expert panel

One of the vaccine manufacturers that had applied for accelerated approval for Covid vaccine candidates has submitted more data as demanded by the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) attached to the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI). Disclosing this, Vinod K Paul, Member (Health) NITI Aayog, on Tuesday said that experts are studying the data.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/covid-vaccine-maker-submits-more-data-to-expert-panel/article33395228.ece?homepage=true>

BioNTech says can make mutation-beating vaccine in six weeks

The co-founder of BioNTech said Tuesday it was "highly likely" that its vaccine against the coronavirus works against the mutated strain detected in Britain, but it could also adapt the vaccine if necessary in six weeks. "Scientifically, it is highly likely that the immune response by this vaccine also can deal with the new virus variant," said Ugur Sahin.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/pharmaceuticals/biontech-says-can-make-mutation-beating-vaccine-in-six-weeks/articleshow/79855311.cms>

External

Iron ore may stay elevated with robust Chinese demand, supply disruptions

The red-hot rally in iron ore prices may continue into the new year with Chinese demand going strong and disruptions in supply – globally and in the domestic market. Since February 2020 when the Covid-19 was at its peak in China, prices of international iron ore – a key input material for steel – skyrocketed by over 75 per cent to a seven-year high of over \$150 a tonne with a surprising resurgence in the economy there. The rebound in China has been better than expected.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/iron-ore-may-stay-elevated-with-robust-chinese-demand-supply-disruptions-120122200747_1.html

Larger crop, lack of rupees curb Iran's record Indian sugar appetite

India will be unable to count on Iran, one of its most important sugar customers, for its upcoming export drive as an increase in Iranian production and Tehran's shortage of rupees limit buying. New Delhi agreed last week to subsidise up to 6 million tonnes of sugar exports this season to try to cut surplus stocks and support local prices. In the 2019/20 season, ended Sept. 30, Iran imported a record 1.14 million tonnes of sugar from India, accounting for some 20% of the country's sugar exports, Indian customs data shows.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/larger-crop-lack-of-rupees-curb-irans-record-indian-sugar-appetite/articleshow/79871928.cms?utm_source=ETTopNews&utm_medium=HPTN&utm_campaign=AL1&utm_content=23

Bangladesh asks India to reconsider anti-dumping duties on jute

Bangladesh has asked India to reconsider anti-dumping and anti-circumvention duties imposed on jute and jute cloth imports from the country and also said that New Delhi should inform before imposing an export ban or restrictions on essential commodities.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/bangladesh-asks-india-to-reconsider-anti-dumping-duties-on-jute/article33396025.ece>

Spices exports increase 19% to 7 lt in H1; chilli tops charts

India's spices exports grew 19 per cent in quantity in the first half of the current fiscal, touching 7,00,150 tonnes thereby, surpassing the 5.86 lakh tonnes mark. The export value was penned at ₹12,274 crore.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/spices-exports-increase-19-to-7-lt-in-h1-chilli-tops-charts/article33396101.ece>

Govt has received 120-130 FDI proposals from China since April: Sources

The government has received over 120 foreign direct investment (FDI) proposals worth about Rs 12,000 crore from China since April, when it was made mandatory for a company from countries sharing land border with India to invest in any sector only after getting government approval, sources said. As per that decision, FDI proposals from China need government approval for investments in India in any sector. An inter-ministerial committee has been formed by the government to scrutinise these proposals, they said adding most of the investments are for brownfield projects (means in existing Indian companies). In April this year, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) came out with a press note stating that a company or an individual from a country that shares land border with India can invest in any sector here only after getting government approval.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/govt-has-received-120-130-fdi-proposals-from-china-since-april-sources/2155123/>