



February 10, 2021 – Wednesday

### Key Developments

#### **DGFT introduces online system for importers to seek tariff rate quota**

The commerce ministry's arm DGFT has introduced an online system for traders who seek tariff rate quota (TRQ) for imports, a move aimed at promoting ease of doing business in the country. The TRQ is a mechanism that allows import of a set quantity of specific products. Tariff quotas are used on a wide range of products but most are in the agriculture sector. Cereals, meat, fruit and vegetables, and dairy products are the most common, and sugar is also protected in most producing countries. The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) in a trade notice has said that it has prepared a new online module, e-TRQ System, for processing applications. Now, all applications seeking TRQ for imports are required to submit their application online.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/dgft-introduces-online-system-for-importers-to-seek-tariff-rate-quota-121020901039\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/dgft-introduces-online-system-for-importers-to-seek-tariff-rate-quota-121020901039_1.html)

#### **Bad bank to deepen IBC use; special insolvency framework for MSMEs in the works: IBBI chairman Sahoo**

MS Sahoo, the chief of the insolvency regulator IBBI, explains why the Budget proposals for a special insolvency framework for MSMEs as well as a 'bad bank' led by lenders are important. In an interview to FE's Banikinkar Pattanayak, Sahoo also asserts that the number of insolvency cases is unlikely to jump substantially after the one-year suspension of bankruptcy proceedings against Covid-related default is lifted from March 25. A pre-pack insolvency scheme, suggested by a panel under him, will yield faster resolution and help maximise the value of a stressed firm, he says, refuting the notion that a shorter time-frame for the submission of a resolution plan under the proposed scheme may not draw the best bidder.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/bad-bank-to-deepen-ibc-use-special-insolvency-framework-for-msmes-in-the-works-ibbi-chairman-sahoo/2191058/>

#### **Government may issue clarification on e-commerce sector: Piyush Goyal**

Commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday said the government is considering some clarifications to ensure that the e-commerce companies work in the true spirit of the rules and consumers have a free choice but said that there is no change in the foreign direct investment (FDI) rules per se. Separately, the minister also said that India is waiting for the confirmation of the new United States Trade Representative before starting a dialogue to expand trade relationship. The minister also said that India's minimum support price (MSP) operations are completely compliant with the global trade rules and the country has a peace clause in case the permitted procurement amount gets exceeded. On the e-commerce sector, Goyal said the current FDI policy is robust and well-designed. However, there are certain complaints from consumers and small retailers about certain practices of the e-commerce companies, which are under investigation.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/govt-considering-certain-clarifications-on-fdi-in-e-commerce-sector-piyush-goyal/articleshow/80771632.cms>

#### **Soon, you'll be able to get your driving licence without appearing for a test**

Worried that you'll flunk your driving test and won't get your licence? In a landmark move, the Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways has come up with draft notification according to which the requirement of driving tests for

a licence would be done away with. The new mechanism proposes to provide accreditation certificates to certain driving institutes/training centres and those who successfully clear their training programme from these institutes won't be required to undergo a driving test for licence. The move has been proposed in order to impart quality driving training to citizens and minimise road accidents in the country.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/shipping/-/transport/soon-youll-be-able-to-get-your-driving-licence-without-appearing-for-a-test/articleshow/80763420.cms>

## Economy

### Govt seeks cybercrime volunteers to vet online content: Report

In a bid to keep an eye on the cyber world in a "coordinated and comprehensive manner", the government has asked common people to register as cyber crime volunteers to help check posts against the sovereignty of the nation, on child and women abuse and attempts to disturb the law and order situation. The project known as Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) is an initiative of the Union Ministry. It was started in militancy-hit Jammu and Kashmir last week where the police issued a circular asking citizens to register themselves as volunteers.

The volunteers are asked to keep an eye on posts which are against the sovereignty and integrity of India, against the defence of India, against the security of the State, against friendly relations with foreign States, content aimed at disturbing public order, disturbing communal harmony and child sex abuse material.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/govt-asks-people-to-sign-up-as-cybercrime-volunteers-to-vet-online-content-121020900985\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/govt-asks-people-to-sign-up-as-cybercrime-volunteers-to-vet-online-content-121020900985_1.html)

### MeitY, other departments turn to microblogging site Koo as Twitter fails to follow government diktat

The Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) and some other government departments have set up accounts on native micro-blogging site Koo after Twitter did not comply with the government's directive to block some tweets and accounts, the homegrown firm said. Koo said it has so far verified handles of MeitY, MyGov, Digital India, India Post, National Informatics Centre (NIC), National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT), Common Services Centre, UMANG app, Digi Locker, National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI), Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), among others, on its platform. "Key organisations from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) have set up accounts on Koo, India's own micro-blogging platform. This move comes as a strategic response as an action against Twitter for not complying with the order for blocking around 257 Tweets and Twitter accounts which were tweeting about farmer genocide," Koo said in a statement.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/meity-other-departments-turn-to-microblogging-site-koo-as-twitter-fails-to-follow-government-diktat/articleshow/80770918.cms>

### Rural development ministry offers help to identify idle assets or land parcels for monetisation

The rural development ministry, on Tuesday, said it can assist the government in identifying the idle assets or land parcels lying with ministries while fixing a base price for monetisation of such assets. This comes following a budget announcement by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on monetising the surplus land with government ministries, departments and other public sector enterprises. "The rural development ministry can play a vital role in identification of surplus government land, ascertaining the market value of land and transfer of ownership of land," the ministry said in a statement. Para 89 of the budget speech had said the main focus will be to identify the non-core assets that largely consist of surplus land with the government ministries, departments, public sector undertakings and thereafter adopt the procedure of monetizing the land with the use of special purpose vehicle (SPV).

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/rural-development-ministry-offers-help-to-identify-idle-assets-or-land-parcels-for-monetisation/articleshow/80768705.cms>

### Business activity almost back to normal in India: Nomura

Business activity was nearly back to normal levels by the first week of February in India as it seemed like a 'vaccine pivot' in activity was underway without actually waiting for the vaccine, said global brokerage Nomura. "Overall, ebbing pandemic risk suggests that the 'vaccine pivot' in activity might be underway without waiting on the vaccine, leading to faster normalization," the firm said in a note on Tuesday. The Nomura India Business Resumption Index

(NIBRI) sharply picked up to 96.5 for the week ending February 7, from 94.4 in the previous week, indicating a faster pace of normalisation over January.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/business-activity-almost-back-to-normal-in-india-nomura/articleshow/80767213.cms>

## Banking and Finance

### Non-life insurers record 6.7% growth in gross premiums in January

Gross premium underwritten by non-life insurers in January grew 6.7 per cent year on year (YoY) to Rs 18,488 crore compared to Rs 17,333.7 crore in the year ago period. This comes after a double digit growth in premiums in December and low single-digit growth witnessed in November, which was preceded by contraction in September and October. General insurers, 25 in total, collected Rs 16,247.34 crore premium in January, up 10.8 per cent compared to the same period a year ago. The standalone health insurers, surprisingly, saw a marginal contraction of 1.33 per cent in premiums collected in January at Rs 1,510.20 crore compared to Rs 1,530.70 crore in the year ago period. This could be indicative of the fact that growth in health insurance segment might be tapering off as the fear of Covid subsidies among consumers.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/non-life-insurers-record-6-7-growth-in-gross-premiums-in-january-121020901474\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/non-life-insurers-record-6-7-growth-in-gross-premiums-in-january-121020901474_1.html)

### Budget new rules on holding firms queer pitch for sovereign, pension funds

The Union Budget made it easier for sovereign wealth funds and pension funds to invest in Indian infrastructure projects but some new rules may need clarity. The proposed regime requiring investments through holding companies may have tax implications; create an arbitrage between new and old projects; besides requiring clarity on the ownership structure of holding companies through which the investments are to be made, according to experts.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/budget-new-rules-on-holding-firms-queer-pitch-for-sovereign-pension-funds-121020901395\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/budget-new-rules-on-holding-firms-queer-pitch-for-sovereign-pension-funds-121020901395_1.html)

### Almost 86% of 417 million PMJDY accounts operative: MoS Finance

As many as 86 per cent of the accounts opened under the central government's Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) are functional. In absolute terms, as of January 27, 2021, as many as 417.5 million accounts have been opened under PMJDY, of which 359.6 million accounts are functioning, according to a written statement given by Anurag Singh Thakur, Minister of State (MoS) in Ministry of Finance, to the Lok Sabha. Data shows, while the public sector banks have opened 404.8 million bank accounts under the PMJDY scheme, only 12.7 million bank accounts were opened by 14 private sector banks. The deposit balance in all these accounts totaled to Rs 1.37 trillion. Also, around 307 million RuPay cards have been issued to these accounts so far, indicating a widening of gap between the number of accounts opened under the scheme and the number of cards issued to these accounts.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/almost-86-of-417-million-pmjdya-accounts-operative-mos-finance-121020901234\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/almost-86-of-417-million-pmjdya-accounts-operative-mos-finance-121020901234_1.html)

### RBI seeks details of Punjab National Bank's capital raising plans

The Reserve Bank of India wanted to know about Punjab National Bank's (PNB) future capital projection as the regulator examines the lender's proposal to infuse Rs 600 crore in PNB Housing Finance. PNB, the promoter of the mortgage lender, had sought the regulator's approval about seven months' back. RBI's decision is still awaited, delaying PNB Housing Finance's capital raising plan. PNB's chief executive SS Mallikarjuna Rao is expecting a positive note from RBI soon. "It's not that the issue is stalled or there is no communication. The regulator was seeking details on the bank's capital position and capital raising plans," he said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/banking/rbi-seeks-details-of-punjab-national-banks-capital-raising-plans/articleshow/80771168.cms>

### Bank Unions plan to go on strike against privatisation on March 15-16

Bank Unions have threatened to go on strike on March 15 and 16 against the government's plan to privatise Banks. C H Venkatachalam, General Secretary, All India Bank Employees' Association (AIBEA) said that a meeting of United

Forum of Bank Unions was held at Hyderabad today. The meeting adopted a Resolution urging upon the Government to reconsider their standpoint and find amicable solutions to the demands of the farmers. The meeting discussed the various announcements made in the Budget regarding measures such as privatisation of IDBI Bank, two public sector banks and one general insurer, setting up of a bad bank, disinvestment in LIC, allowing FDI in Insurance Sector up to 74 per cent, aggressive disinvestment and sale of public sector undertakings, etc.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/bank-unions-plan-to-go-on-strike-against-privatisation-on-march-15-16-121020901100\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/bank-unions-plan-to-go-on-strike-against-privatisation-on-march-15-16-121020901100_1.html)

## Industry

### **FSSAI notifies regulations to limit trans fat in food items**

Food regulator FSSAI on Tuesday said regulations to limit the content of trans fat in all food items have been notified. "With gazette of recent regulation to limit the content of trans fats in all food items, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) joins the league of several other nations globally having best practice policies for trans fat elimination," the regulator said in a statement. India joins the club of around 40 countries globally that have already enacted the best practice policies to eliminate trans fats and would be among the first countries in Asia after Thailand in achieving the best-practice policies in trans fat elimination, it said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/food/fssai-notifies-regulations-to-limit-trans-fat-in-food-items/articleshow/80773119.cms>

### **CCI opens probe into 'cartelisation' by steel mills**

After cracking down on cement companies, the Competition Commission of India has launched a probe against steel companies for forming a cartel to increase prices consistently over the last seven months. The anti-trust regulator will scrutinise the business strategies of leading steel companies to check if they have colluded to jack up prices artificially. Though user industries have been complaining about the recent spike in steel prices making them uncompetitive both in global and domestic markets, the CCI has taken up the investigation suo motu, said sources close to the development.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/companies/cci-opens-probe-into-cartelisation-by-steel-mills/article33795361.ece?homepage=true>

### **Construction industry body announces strike on Feb 12 to protest unjustified steel and cement price hike**

The Joint Action Committee (JAC) of Construction Industry, Coimbatore, which represents various bodies of the industry, announced one-day strike on February 12 to protest unreasonable and frequent increase in prices of steel and cement. The JAC has demanded that there should be fair pricing of these two products, and has also called for a regulatory authority to control the increasing prices. "The Centre and State governments have come up with schemes to provide housing for all and various infrastructure projects. All these are now in danger of not getting implemented because of undue increase in steel and cement prices," said D Abhishek, Chairman, JAC.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/construction-industry-body-announces-strike-on-feb-12-to-protest-unjustified-steel-and-cement-price-hike/article33795319.ece>

### **Tourism ministry spent Rs 37 cr in 2019-20 to promote domestic tourism**

The Ministry of Tourism has spent around Rs 37 crore in 2019-2020 to promote domestic tourism in the country, Union minister Prahlaad Patel informed Parliament on Tuesday. Replying to a question in Rajya Sabha, Patel said that while around Rs 63 crore was spent in 2018-2019, around Rs 25 crore was spent in 2017-2018 on promoting sites within the country. These included campaigns through print media, television, online, radio, theatre and text messages, he said. "The Ministry of Tourism obtains media plan and releases campaigns through the Bureau of Outreach Communication (BOC), Doordarshan and the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC). The campaigns are for all states of India and are not state-specific," the minister said.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/tourism-ministry-spent-rs-37-cr-in-2019-20-to-promote-domestic-tourism-121020901229\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/tourism-ministry-spent-rs-37-cr-in-2019-20-to-promote-domestic-tourism-121020901229_1.html)

### **Passenger vehicle retail sales dip 4% in Jan after two months of growth**

Retail sales of passenger vehicles fell 4.5 per cent year-on-year to 281,666 units in January 2021 from 294,817 units, in January 2020, after two consecutive months of growth. Key reasons attributed behind the drop include high base effect and shortage of semiconductors. According to the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) passenger vehicles sales stood at 294,817 units in January 2020. Two-wheeler sales declined 8.78 per cent to 1,163,322 units last month, from 1,275,308 units in January 2020. Commercial vehicle sales slipped 24.99 per cent to 55,835 units, from 74,439 units a year ago. Three-wheeler sales fell 51.31 per cent to 31,059 units last month, from 63,785 units in the year-ago period.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/passenger-vehicle-retail-sales-dip-4-in-jan-after-two-months-of-growth-121020901120\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/passenger-vehicle-retail-sales-dip-4-in-jan-after-two-months-of-growth-121020901120_1.html)

#### **Govt asks automakers to stop selling vehicles with purposefully downgraded safety standards**

The government on Tuesday expressed concern over reports that automobile manufacturers are selling vehicles with purposefully downgraded safety standards in India and asked them to stop the 'unpardonable' practice. Speaking at a seminar on implementation of vehicle location tracking devices in order to enhance the safety on road, organised by auto industry body SIAM, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) Secretary Giridhar Aramane also noted that only a few manufacturers have adopted vehicle safety ratings system and that too used only for their high-end models. "I am deeply perturbed by some news items that Indian models are purposefully downgraded by auto manufacturers' safety standards in India. This practice needs to be stopped...", he said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/auto-news/govt-asks-automakers-to-stop-selling-vehicles-with-purposefully-downgraded-safety-standards/articleshow/80764961.cms>

#### **MSME registration crosses 20-lakh mark on Modi gov't's Udyam portal; nearly doubles in three months**

The Modi government's new paperless portal to ease MSME registration – Udyam Registration, launched on July 1, 2020, has crossed the 20-lakh-registration mark. As of February 1, 2021, the portal had registered 20,29,095 MSMEs, up 84.4 per cent in the past three months. The number of registered MSMEs as of November 7, 2020, stood at more than 11 lakh, according to the data from the MSME Ministry. The latest figure was shared by MSME Minister Nitin Gadkari in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha. Udyam Registration is currently integrated with the Central Board of Direct Taxes and GST networks along with the public procurement portal Government e-Marketplace for end-to-end digital registration by MSMEs. "On 1st July, 2020, after enactment of new definition of MSMEs, a new registration portal 'Udyam Registration' has been launched by M/o MSME and so far 20,29,095 MSMEs are registered on the portal in All India," Gadkari said in his reply in the upper house of the Parliament on Monday.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/msme-tech-msme-registration-crosses-20-lakh-mark-on-modi-govts-udyam-portal-nearly-doubles-in-three-months/2191291/>

#### **Policy recognition of downstream aluminium segment will be a win-win for economy**

If China can manufacture 50% of the world's aluminium, why is India only stuck at less than 5%, asks Pragun Jindal Khaitan, Vice Chairman and Managing Director, Jindal Aluminium Ltd. Talking about the measures to support the downstream aluminium industry, he says, "the government should immediately look at measures like increasing the import duty differential between downstream aluminium and primary aluminium to incentivize downstream manufacturing." In an exclusive interview with Sanjeev Sinha, Mr Khaitan talks about the major issues being faced by the downstream aluminium producers, measures to support them, and shares his business outlook.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/policy-recognition-of-downstream-aluminium-segment-will-be-a-win-win-for-economy/2191078/>

### **Agriculture**

#### **Farm Laws: SC-appointed panel holds consultations with agro-processing industries**

The Supreme Court-appointed committee on farms laws issue on Tuesday said it held consultations with agro-processing industries including ITC and Amul on the legislations. This is the sixth meeting the panel has held so far. The three-member committee is holding consultations with stakeholders both through the online mode and in person. In a statement, the committee said it held interactions with various agro-processing industries, associations and procurement agencies on Tuesday. Amid the agitation by farmers who are camping on Delhi's borders since

November end, the Supreme Court had on January 12 stayed the implementation of the three contentious farm laws for two months and asked the committee to submit a report after consulting the stakeholders during this period.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/food/farm-laws-sc-appointed-panel-holds-consultations-with-agro-processing-industries/articleshow/80769821.cms>

#### **Onion prices likely to soar as arrivals decline**

Onion prices are likely to soar as the season of red onion comes to an end and the arrival of summer onion in the market is slow. Arrivals of the bulb crop to Asia's largest onion market, Lasalgaon, is almost halved. From an average daily inflow of 22,000-25,000 quintals, it has come down to 11,978 quintals on Monday. The modal price is hovering around ₹3,500 per quintal compared to ₹2,651 in January-end. The average retail rate in the major Maharashtra markets is about ₹50-60 per kg.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/onion-prices-likely-to-soar-as-arrivals-decline/article33792073.ece?homepage=true>

#### **India's spices production on a steady rise: Director General, ICAR**

India's spices production along with other horticultural crops is witnessing a steady increase, enabling the country to garner \$3 billion revenue annually, Trilochan Mohapatra, Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education & Director General of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), has said. The country is producing about 9 million tonnes of spices annually and he lauded the R&D activities in the spices sector for driving the growth in production, processing, marketing, value addition and exports.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/indias-spices-production-on-a-steady-rise-director-general-icar/article33795027.ece>

#### **IIT Kharagpur develops solar-powered pest control system for smaller farm fields**

Researchers at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur have developed energy-efficient pest controlling devices for smaller agricultural tracts owned by marginal farmers. The research team has developed a self-propelled boom-type sprayer that can be operated using solar energy while safely guided through the crops in smaller tracts of land, the leading engineering institute said in a press release on Tuesday. The device is aimed to increase field capacity and uniformity in liquid spraying and also to reduce drudgery to the operator and dependency on fossil fuel for carrying out spraying in cropped areas.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/iit-kharagpur-develops-solar-powered-pest-control-system-for-smaller-farm-fields/articleshow/80765558.cms>

### **Infrastructure**

#### **Indian Railways achieves record freight loading in January 2021**

Indian Railways achieved the highest ever freight loading in January 2021 clocking a figure of 119.79 MT and surpassing its previous record of loading 119.74 MT of freight in March 2019, the ministry said on Tuesday. Indian Railways' freight loading figures for the last few months have been crossing the last year's figures for corresponding months and the cumulative freight loading figure this year is expected to surpass the last year's freight loading figure, a statement by the ministry said. As per the statistics till February 8, Indian Railways loading was 30.54 million tonnes which include 13.61 MT of coal, 4.15 MT of iron ore, 1.04 MT of foodgrains, 1.03 MT of fertilizers, 0.96 MT of mineral oil and 1.97 MT of cement (excluding clinker).

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/indian-railways-achieves-record-freight-loading-in-january-2021/articleshow/80770270.cms>

### **Telecom**

#### **Parliamentary Panel pulls up DoT for Bharatnet cabinet note delay, questions BSNL ouster in LWE project**

The Department of Telecom has not prepared a cabinet note for the adoption of PPP mode to expedite implementation of rural broadband project Bharatnet even after over a year of Digital Communication Commission's approval, Standing Committee on Information Technology said in a report. The BharatNet project, meant to cover all 2.5 lakh village panchayats with high-speed broadband, was set to be completed by March 2019. However, it

could only connect 1.18 lakh gram panchayats (GPs). Digital Communications Commission (DCC), the apex decision making body at the Department of Telecom (DoT), in its meeting last year, had given in-principle approval to move to public private partnership (PPP) model for expediting roll out of Bharatnet.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-news/parliamentary-panel-pulls-up-dot-for-bharatnet-cabinet-note-delay-questions-bsnl-ouster-in-lwe-project/articleshow/80762810.cms>

## Energy

### India to overtake EU as world's third largest energy consumer by 2030: IEA

India will overtake the European Union as the world's third-largest energy consumer by 2030, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Tuesday as it forecast India accounting for the biggest share of energy demand growth over the next two decades. In its India Energy Outlook 2021, IEA saw primary energy consumption almost doubling to 1,123 million tonnes of oil equivalent as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) expands to USD 8.6 trillion by 2040. India at present is the fourth-largest global energy consumer behind China, the United States and the European Union. Underpinned by "a rate of GDP growth that adds the equivalent of another Japan to the world economy by 2040", India will overtake the European Union by 2030 to move up to the third position, it said in the report.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-to-overtake-eu-as-world-s-third-largest-energy-consumer-by-2030-iaa-121020900754\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-to-overtake-eu-as-world-s-third-largest-energy-consumer-by-2030-iaa-121020900754_1.html)

### BPCL to close NRL, Bina refinery deal before March

State-run Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL) aims to close the deal to sell stake in its Numaligarh Refinery and acquire the balance stake in Bina refinery by March, ahead of the privatisation of the company. The two transactions are precursor to the privatisation of the oil marketing company. While the Covid-19 pandemic hurt the government's divestment plans in 2020-21, the government is confident of concluding some big ticket divestments in 2021-22, including that of BPCL.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/bpcl-to-close-nrl-bina-refinery-deal-before-march/articleshow/80772033.cms>

### Renewables firms cry foul as state seeks to renege on pact

India's federal government has stepped in to mediate a dispute between the state of Gujarat and solar power developers over the province's plan to backtrack on bids for a 700 megawatt project because of high tariffs and invite fresh ones. "Certainly it is creating some disturbance in the renewable energy market," Amitesh Kumar Sinha, joint secretary at the ministry told reporters in New Delhi about the initial discussion the ministry has had with the coastal state. "We will take up this issue further. We'll handle it."

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/india-renewables-firms-cry-foul-as-state-seeks-to-renege-on-pact/articleshow/80772757.cms>

### National Hydrogen Mission draft likely in the next two months: MNRE

A National Hydrogen Mission is in the works and a draft is expected in the next two months, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) said on Tuesday. MNRE secretary Indu Shekhar Chaturvedi said that the mission will contain details about all aspects of hydrogen technology, including storage, R&D, and pilot projects.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/draft-for-national-hydrogen-mission-likely-in-the-next-two-months-mnre/articleshow/80768670.cms>

## States

### Major thrust to medical infra: TN CM lays foundation stones for Rs 368 crore projects

In a major thrust to medical infrastructure, Tamil Nadu chief minister K Palaniswami has laid the foundation stones for new buildings at various medical college hospitals across the state. He laid the foundation stone for buildings at the Government Kilpauk Medical College Hospital (KMC), Chennai, Government Rajaji Medical College Hospital, Madurai and Coimbatore government medical college hospital at a total cost of Rs 368.2 crore, an official release on Tuesday said. The event was held via video conference from here. As part of the initiative, the respective government

colleges will get various facilities like hybrid operating theatres for neurology, intensive care units, surgical gastroenterology outpatient units, general and burns ward among other facilities.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/major-thrust-to-medical-infra-tn-cm-lays-foundation-stones-for-rs-368-crore-projects/articleshow/80768743.cms>

## Healthcare

### Govt places orders for 14.5 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines

The government has placed orders for 1 crore (10 million) additional doses of Covishield from Serum Institute of India and 45 lakh (4.5 million) more doses of Covaxin from Bharat Biotech, officials of the two vaccine makers said on Tuesday. India's COVID-19 vaccination drive was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 16. Serum Institute has received another order from the government for 10 million doses of Covishield, a company official said in response to a query. The government had earlier placed a purchase order with Serum Institute of India (SII) for 1.1 crore doses of AstraZeneca-Oxford COVID-19 vaccine, Covishield. When asked, a Bharat Biotech spokesperson said, "The company has received a letter of comfort from the Government of India to supply another 4.5 million (or 45 lakh) doses".

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/govt-places-orders-for-14-5-million-doses-of-covid-19-vaccines-121020901429\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/govt-places-orders-for-14-5-million-doses-of-covid-19-vaccines-121020901429_1.html)

### Government has decided to close 2 pharma PSUs, disinvest other 3: Gowda

The government has decided to close two pharma public sector undertakings and disinvest the other three, Parliament was informed on Tuesday. "The Department of Pharmaceuticals has five public sector undertakings (PSUs). Out of the five PSUs, the government has taken a decision to close two pharma PSUs, namely Indian Drugs & Pharmaceuticals Ltd (IDPL) and Rajasthan Drugs & Pharmaceuticals Ltd (RDPL)," Minister of Chemicals and Fertilisers D V Sadananda Gowda said in response to a question in the Lok Sabha.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/pharmaceuticals/government-has-decided-to-close-2-pharma-psus-disinvest-other-3-gowda/articleshow/80772561.cms>

## External

### Basic Customs Duty on mobile phone components to spur localisation

Industry body ESC on Tuesday said imposition of 2.5 per cent Basic Customs Duty (BCD) on mobile phone components, announced in the recent Budget, would promote localisation of the electronic components industry, and drive exports and employment. Electronics and Computer Software Export Promotion Council (ESC) asserted that a strong 'pro-component' policy is the "need of the hour". Coming out in support of imposition of 2.5 per cent Basic Customs Duty (BCD) on mobile phone components, Sandeep Narula, Chairman of ESC said: "The imposition of customs duty is designed to make India a strong assembling hub, and will considerably cut down the component imports, which form a significant percentage of the local manufacturing/ assembly including in the case of mobile phones, thereby enhancing foreign exchange retention."

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/electronics/basic-customs-duty-on-mobile-phone-components-to-spur-localisation/articleshow/80768190.cms>



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