



February 11, 2021 – Thursday

### Key Developments

#### Parliament passes bill to provide greater autonomy to major ports

Allaying fears that the Major Ports Authority Bill, 2020 aims at privatisation of the country's top 12 major ports, Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Wednesday said it seeks to provide autonomy to these ports and boost their decision-making powers in order to compete with private ports. The Major Ports Authority Bill, 2020 was passed through ballot votes in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday with 84 votes in its favour and 44 against it. The Lok Sabha had passed the bill on September 23 last year. Taking a strong objection to some members' remarks that it is intended to benefit big corporate houses and would result in the ruining of the ports and their plunder, Mandaviya, in his reply to the debate on the bill, said rather, it would turn these ports into world-class ports and enable their boards to take decisions on their own.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/parliament-passes-bill-to-provide-greater-autonomy-to-major-ports-121021000976\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/parliament-passes-bill-to-provide-greater-autonomy-to-major-ports-121021000976_1.html)

#### Govt's logistics division to formulate national packaging initiative

The logistics division, under the Commerce Ministry, has started an exercise to formulate a national packaging initiative, which will be part of the proposed logistics policy. The ministry on Wednesday said that a stakeholder consultation was organised to define the scope and the national packaging initiative as part of the national logistics policy that is currently being finalised. According to Pawan Agarwal, Special Secretary (Logistics), packaging deserves greater attention from improving the overall logistical efficiency perspective. "Valuable inputs on packaging came from... participants and more such key players would be involved in the formulation of the National Packaging Initiative," it said in a statement.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-s-logistics-division-to-formulate-national-packaging-initiative-121021000999\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-s-logistics-division-to-formulate-national-packaging-initiative-121021000999_1.html)

#### Revamped Gold Scheme: Minimum deposit cut to 10 gm, jewellers roped in

The government on Wednesday launched a revamped Gold Monetisation Scheme that seeks to unlock an estimated 22,000 tonnes of idle gold lying at Indian households by reducing minimum deposit to 10 grams, involving jewellers, and making all state-run banks participate in it. At least one third of the public sector bank branches in all towns will have to provide the revamped gold deposit scheme on demand with special designated officers, and the minimum deposit under the scheme has now been reduced to 10 grams from earlier 30 grams, finance ministry said in a notification. The government will also request the private sector banks to participate in the revamped Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS) that will incentivise participating jewellers.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/banking/revamped-gold-scheme-minimum-deposit-cut-to-10-gm-jewellers-roped-in/articleshow/80795970.cms>

#### Proposal to make vehicles E20 fuel compliant by 2025

The Centre is "actively considering" a proposal to make vehicles compliant with E20 fuel by 2025, in line with its plan to promote alternate and green fuels. E20 fuel is gasoline blended with 20% ethanol. The road transport and highways ministry is working on the proposal, and a mechanism for such compliance will be put in place gradually,

a senior government official said. "The proposal is under active consideration," a senior government official aware of the developments told ET. "But whether or not we make it mandatory will depend on the availability of ethanol as a fuel, which, again, is under the jurisdiction of the ministry of petroleum," the official added.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/auto-news/proposal-to-make-vehicles-e20-fuel-compliant-by-2025/articleshow/80795678.cms>

## Economy

### **Govt to sell 20% in National Fertilizers, could rake in Rs 410 cr at CMP**

The government plans to sell 20 per cent in National Fertilizers Ltd (NFL) through offer for sale, and has invited merchant bankers, brokers and legal advisors to assist the transaction. The government holds 74.71 per cent stake in the company, which is the second largest producer of urea in the country. The sale could fetch the government around Rs 410 crore as per the market closing price of the company's shares on Wednesday. The government intends to complete its divestment programs for the ongoing fiscal by mopping up Rs 32,000 crore. So far, the government has received Rs.19,499 crore through OFS, IPO and other sales. The government has revised its divestment target downwards from Rs 2.1 lakh crore as its ambitious privatisation program has been deferred to next year.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-to-sell-20-in-national-fertilizers-could-rake-in-rs-410-cr-at-cmp-121021001290\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-to-sell-20-in-national-fertilizers-could-rake-in-rs-410-cr-at-cmp-121021001290_1.html)

### **Govt set to extend Shipping Corporation's EoI to March 1**

The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) is set to extend to March 1 the deadline for filing expressions of interest on privatisation of Shipping Corporation of India Ltd (SCI). On December 22, DIPAM, the government's asset sale department, invited expressions of interest to privatise Shipping Corporation by selling the government's 63.75 per cent stake to a strategic buyer. DIPAM had set a 13 February date for potential bidders to file their interest.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/govt-set-to-extend-shipping-corporations-eoi-to-march-1/article33802479.ece>

### **Migrant workers returning, getting work: Labour and Employment Minister**

Around one crore migrant workers went back to their home states during the COVID-19 pandemic but most of them have now returned and are getting employment, Labour and Employment Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar said on Wednesday in Rajya Sabha. "As per the information gathered, around one crore labourers returned to their home states from their workplace States. But, now most of them have gone back to work and are getting placement," he said during Question Hour. The minister was answering to a supplementary question asked by senior SP leader Ram Gopal Yadav who wanted to know how many labourers in the unorganised sector lost jobs during the coronavirus pandemic following closure of factories.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/migrant-workers-returning-getting-work-labour-and-employment-minister-121021000598\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/migrant-workers-returning-getting-work-labour-and-employment-minister-121021000598_1.html)

### **Hiring continues to remain stable in Jan; agro, media lead the list: Report**

Hiring activity in India Inc continued to remain stable in January with no changes when compared to the previous month, according to a job analysis report by Monster.com. The employment index has been stable since November 2020, as hiring activity remained consistent with a neutral trend in the last quarter. However, there has been a year-on-year decline of 18% as of January 2021 compared to the previous year due to the impact of the pandemic, according to Monster Employment Index. The report indicates that job postings in some industries have improved, with some doing even better than the pre-Covid levels when compared to January 2020.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/hiring-continues-to-remain-stable-in-jan-agro-media-lead-the-list-report-121021000617\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/hiring-continues-to-remain-stable-in-jan-agro-media-lead-the-list-report-121021000617_1.html)

### **Base Effect: India's FY22 GDP expected to grow 10.4%, says Ind-Ra**

India's gross domestic product (GDP) growth will bounce back to 10.4 per cent year-on-year (YoY) in FY22, primarily driven by the base effect, said India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra). Accordingly, the ratings agency's estimates showed that after recording negative growth during 9MFY21, GDP growth will finally turn positive at 0.3 per cent

YoY in 4QFY21. "Although the recovery in FY22 on a YoY basis will be V-shaped, the size of the GDP will barely surpass the level attained in FY20 and will be 10.6 per cent lower than the trend value." "The impact of Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown on the economy, although subsiding, will continue to delay the normalisation of economic activities in the contact-intensive sectors till the mass vaccination or herd immunity becomes a reality."

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/base-effect-india-s-fy22-gdp-expected-to-grow-10-4-says-ind-ra-121021000935\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/base-effect-india-s-fy22-gdp-expected-to-grow-10-4-says-ind-ra-121021000935_1.html)

#### **India's medium-term growth outlook critical in ratings, says Fitch**

Global rating agency Fitch said today that India's medium-term growth outlook will assume a more critical role in sovereign assessment due to higher deficits and a slower consolidation path.

"The Union Budget (for 2021-22) points to a loosening of fiscal policy to support ongoing economic recovery from the pandemic. It will consequently lead to a rise in public debt. The debt as per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) trajectory is core to our sovereign rating assessment, Fitch Ratings said in a statement. The agency had revised the outlook on India's 'BBB-' rating to negative from stable in June 2020, partly owing to assumptions about the impact of the pandemic on its public finance metrics. India entered the pandemic with little fiscal headroom from a rating perspective. Its general government debt-to-GDP ratio stood at 72 per cent in 2019, against a median of 42 per cent for 'BBB' rated peers.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-s-medium-term-growth-outlook-critical-in-ratings-says-fitch-121021000923\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-s-medium-term-growth-outlook-critical-in-ratings-says-fitch-121021000923_1.html)

#### **Indian economy to contract by 7% in current fiscal: SBI Research**

Pencilling in a GDP growth in third and fourth quarters, SBI Research on Wednesday revised its contraction forecast for the current fiscal year to 7 per cent. The agency had earlier forecast a 7.4 per cent contraction in 2020-21 GDP numbers. In April-September, the economy contracted 15.7 per cent but the second half may see a surprise 2.8 per cent growth, if the SBI analysis turns out to be correct. Soumya Kanti Ghosh, group chief economic adviser at State Bank of India (SBI) said of the 41 high frequency leading indicators, 51 per cent are showing acceleration which should help the economy turn around to the green from the third quarter with a 0.3 percentage point growth which is likely to surprise positively when the final numbers are out.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/indian-economy-to-contract-by-7-in-current-fiscal-sbi-research-121021000798\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/indian-economy-to-contract-by-7-in-current-fiscal-sbi-research-121021000798_1.html)

### **Banking and Finance**

#### **NPCI apologises to investors, starts exclusive clearing system for MFs**

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) on Wednesday said it "regret the unwarranted inconvenience" caused to the mutual fund (MF) investors caused by "migration of systems" It further said that it has launched exclusive clearing session for MFs to ensure faster clearing of payments. Last week, several mutual fund investors had faced glitches in payments through the unified payments interface (UPI) route, a real-time payment system developed by NPCI.

"This was a planned migration activity and during which we faced some initial teething issues such as delay in settlement. Unfortunately, our migration coincided with the regulatory rule effected from February 1, 2021, that NAV should be realised only after the funds received by the mutual funds," it said.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/npci-starts-exclusive-clearing-session-for-mfs-to-speed-up-payment-process-121021000995\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/npci-starts-exclusive-clearing-session-for-mfs-to-speed-up-payment-process-121021000995_1.html)

#### **CGTMSE: Nearly 70K women borrowers get credit guarantee under Modi govt's flagship MSME support scheme**

The credit guarantee fund trust for micro and small enterprises (CGTMSE), which operates the credit guarantee scheme for micro and small enterprises (MSEs), has accorded guarantee approval to 67,171 loan accounts of women entrepreneurs for an amount of Rs 3,366.63 crore as of December 12, 2020, in the current financial year, according to the data shared by the MSME Minister Nitin Gadkari in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha. The accounts approved during FY20 for women entrepreneurs under CGTMSE to support their business expansion and growth stood at 1,24,984 involving Rs 5,367.38 crore. Gadkari shared data in reply to the question on the number of women entrepreneurs who benefitted under the government scheme for easy credit availability.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/msme-fin-cgtmse-nearly-70k-women-borrowers-get-credit-guarantee-under-modi-govts-flagship-msme-support-scheme/2192094/>

#### **Insurance industry's underwriting losses increase by 6.2% in FY20, up to Rs 23,720 crore**

India's general insurance industry saw its underwriting losses increase by 6.2% in FY20 largely on the back of losses suffered by public sector insurers in segments such as fire, motor and marine segments. These losses increased to Rs 23,720 crore in FY20 from Rs 22,320 crore in preceding fiscal year, data from the latest annual report of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) showed. Public sector insurers – five in total -- reported a bulk of these losses at Rs 18,741 crore in FY20, up from Rs 18,533 crore a year ago. Private insurers, 29 in all, meanwhile, reported sharp rise in losses albeit a much smaller base. Losses for private players came at Rs 3,647 crore in FY20 up from Rs 2,890 crore, a year before that.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/insure/insurance-industrys-underwriting-losses-increase-by-6-2-in-fy20-up-to-rs-23720-crore/articleshow/80790431.cms>

#### **Industry**

#### **Profits, credit quality of firms in India recovering 6 months faster: S&P**

Profits and credit quality of companies rated by S & P Global Ratings in India, China and Pacific are recovering about six months faster than the agency anticipated with reducing downside risk to ratings. Indonesian companies, on the other hand, are unlikely to recover until the second half of 2022, said the report titled 'Asia Pacific Corporate and Infrastructure Credit Outlook 2021' which covers entities in India, China, Japan, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand. The report discusses the pace at which corporate sector in these countries is likely to recover from Covid-19 pandemic. It also includes a list of credit trends on the radar of S & P Global Ratings analysts in 2021, including demand recovery, funding conditions and financial discipline.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/profits-credit-quality-of-companies-in-india-recovering-about-six-months-faster-s-p-121021000527\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/profits-credit-quality-of-companies-in-india-recovering-about-six-months-faster-s-p-121021000527_1.html)

#### **E-commerce boom post pandemic rubs off on commercial vehicle sales**

Commercial vehicle makers are seeing a significant boost in demand from the e-commerce segment after a bulk of economic activity embraced the digital mode in the wake of the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic and consumers preferring online shopping, a welcome change for the sector that has seen sales come from infrastructure sector. At Tata Motors, as much as 7-10 per cent of M&HCV (medium and heavy commercial vehicles) and I&LCV (intermediate and light commercial vehicles) cargo sales this fiscal have come from e-commerce sector compared to the previous year when the sales salience was less than 5 per cent.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/auto-news/e-commerce-boom-post-pandemic-rubs-off-on-commercial-vehicle-sales/articleshow/80782415.cms>

#### **Online grocery sales grow by 65% in FY20, clock in at over Rs 6,000 crore**

Online grocery sales by five of the largest e-grocers and brick-and-mortar retailers collectively grew by 65% to Rs 6,820 crore in FY20, while their combined losses widened to over Rs 1,175 crore, according to regulatory filings. Big Basket, the country's largest online food and grocery store, accounted for half of the sales. Grofers, DMart, Tata-owned StarQuik and Spencer's Retail were the other retailers that submitted their filings. Innovative Retail Concepts, the owner of Big Basket, posted a 43% growth in net sales to Rs 3,418 crore, while net losses widened to Rs 424 crore, according to the filings made to the Registrar of Companies and accessed from business intelligence platform Tofler.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/retail/online-grocery-sales-grow-by-65-in-fy20-clock-in-at-over-rs-6000-crore/articleshow/80790341.cms>

#### **Hotel industry body flags lack of sector-specific stimulus package, seeks meeting with PM**

Disappointed with the neglect of the hospitality sector in the Budget, the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) on Wednesday said in the absence of sector-specific stimulus package, atleast 30-40 per cent restaurants and 20-30 per cent hotels in the country may shut down resulting in massive job losses. In a letter to the Prime Minister, the apex industry body has also expressed its "disbelief" in the reduction in Budget

allocation to the Ministry of Tourism by 19 per cent. “We are really disheartened to see that tourism and hospitality — the biggest casualty of the pandemic have been continuously ignored by the government. It did not even find a mention in the Budget presented by the Finance Minister. The FHRAI has been vociferously advocating for some real relief measures to help the sector come out of the biggest crisis.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/hotel-industry-body-flags-lack-of-sector-specific-stimulus-package-seeks-meeting-with-pm/article33802534.ece>

## Agriculture

### **NABARD lays emphasis on farmer producer organisation: official**

NABARD has said the strategy of achieving higher growth in agriculture needs to be based on forming new farmer producer organisations (FPOs) and nurturing the existing ones, an official said on Wednesday. As of January 2021, about 8,500 FPOs have been promoted in the country by various agencies with 4,868 of them by NABARD alone, its chairman Dr G R Chintala told reporters at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) here. Keeping in mind that there must also be a concurrent evaluation of whether some course correction was required, NABARD conducted an internal study on FPOs in Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan covering 1,886 farmers having membership in 39 FPOs and 971 farmers without any membership, he said.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/nabard-lays-emphasis-on-farmer-producer-organisation-official-121021000876\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/nabard-lays-emphasis-on-farmer-producer-organisation-official-121021000876_1.html)

### **Centre targets 32-million tonne pulses production by 2030**

The Centre is eyeing to further boost pulse production in the country and is targeting an output of 32 million tonnes by 2030 from the current level of around 24 million tonnes. At the inaugural address of the third National Pulses Seminar organised by the India Pulses and Grains Association on the World Pulses Day on Wednesday, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said: “Between 2017 and 2019, pulse production in India increased by 23 per cent. By 2030, we aspire to increase domestic pulses production to 320 lakh tonnes. We clearly have a demand for pulses, and both the government and farmers are working hard to meet it.”

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/centre-targets-32-million-tonne-pulses-production-by-2030/article33803413.ece>

## Infrastructure

### **Speed up Myanmar projects, PM Modi tells officials**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has directed officials to operationalise the Sittwe Port in Myanmar by July 31 and to complete the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project by the end of 2024. The Kaladan bilateral project, conceived nearly two decades ago, aims to connect India and Myanmar by sea as well as land routes. The long delay in completing the project prompted the prime minister to say at a review meeting on January 27 that all ministries should review international projects, especially in neighbouring countries, on the level of ministers once every month, according to the minutes of the meeting, reviewed by ET.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/speed-up-myanmar-projects-pm-tells-officials/articleshow/80795456.cms>

### **International passenger traffic fell by 90.56% in March-Dec 2020: Govt**

International passenger traffic fell by 90.56 per cent to 18.55 lakh in March-December period of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic as compared to the corresponding period of 2019, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Wednesday. Moreover, domestic passenger traffic fell to 3.77 crore in March-December period of 2020 from 11.99 crore in the corresponding period of 2019, the minister said. Scheduled international passenger traffic continues to remain suspended in India since March 23, 2020, due to the coronavirus pandemic. However, special international flights have been operating since July 2020 under air bubble arrangements formed with various countries.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/international-passenger-traffic-fell-by-90-56-in-march-dec-2020-govt-121021000781\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/international-passenger-traffic-fell-by-90-56-in-march-dec-2020-govt-121021000781_1.html)

### **Price bands in airfares to be discontinued with flight services reaching pre-COVID level: Hardeep Singh Puri**

Emphasising that capping of airfares was an "extraordinary measure", Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Wednesday said the price bands are expected to be done away with once flight services reach pre-COVID-19 levels. Replying to questions in the Rajya Sabha, the minister said the civil aviation sector was completely closed down on March 23, 2020, and was reopened on May 25 in a slow and calibrated manner by putting in place SOPs, provisions for seamless contactless travel and a large number of other measures.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/airlines/-aviation/price-bands-in-airfares-to-be-discontinued-with-flight-services-reaching-pre-covid-level-hardeep-singh-puri/articleshow/80788156.cms>

### **Railways rolls out AC 3-tier economy class coach**

Railways on Wednesday rolled out its first air conditioned three-tier economy class coach which is being touted by the ministry to be "synonymous with the cheapest and best AC travel in the world". These coaches, officials said, will be "economical" and in between the current AC three-tier and non-AC sleeper class. This LHB coach was rolled out from Rail Coach Factory (RCF) Kapurthala to Research Design and Standards Organisation (RDSO) Lucknow for the upcoming trial. It was conceived by RCF and work on its design started on war footing in October 2020. The new coach can carry more passengers as the berths have been increased from 72 to 83.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/railways-rolls-out-ac-3-tier-economy-class-coach/articleshow/80793669.cms>

### **DDA to invest Rs 1,100 crore in under construction housing projects**

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has allocated Rs 1,100 crore for completion of the ongoing housing projects in 2021-22. The authority, on Wednesday, approved the annual budget for 2021-22, with an annual outlay of Rs 6,738 crore and receipts have been projected at Rs 6749 crore. "All ongoing housing projects of DDA are likely to be completed in 2021-22. An allocation of Rs 1100 crore has been provided for completion of the ongoing housing projects in 2021-22," DDA said in a statement. DDA is the nodal agency for execution of 376 JJ clusters for the ambitious mission "Housing for all" under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojna (Urban).

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/property/-cstruction/dda-to-invest-rs-1100-crore-in-under-construction-housing-projects/articleshow/80790357.cms>

### **NHAI removes minimum balance requirement in wallet for FASTags**

NHAI has decided to remove the mandatory, minimum balance amount required for the FASTag account or wallet, which was paid by the user over and above the security deposit for the passenger vehicle segment like car, jeeps and vans, according to an official release. Issuer banks were unilaterally mandating some threshold amount value for the FASTag account or wallet, in addition to the security deposit amount. As a result, many FASTag users were not allowed to pass through a toll plaza, despite having sufficient balance in their FASTag account/wallet. This was resulting in unwanted hassles and avoidable delay at toll plazas, NHAI added.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/nhai-removes-minimum-balance-requirement-in-wallet-for-fastags/article33800742.ece>

## **Telecom**

### **Indian telecom equipment manufacturers want level-playing field in Kochi-Lakshadweep undersea cable project**

Going against the grain of 'Make in India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' campaigns of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, bureaucrats are about to hand out a major undersea cable to foreign vendors. The tender for the ₹1,072-crore Kochi-Lakshadweep Islands undersea optical fibre cable link project, approved by the Cabinet in December last year, is going out to foreign players, say Indian equipment makers. While Indian players have been demanding level-playing field vis-a-vis foreign players from the Department of Telecom (DoT) and Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL), which will execute the project, government sources said certain clauses of the tender document would enable only one or two foreign players to bid for the project meant connect the mainland with 11 islands in Lakshadweep.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/indian-telecom-equipment-manufacturers-want-level-playing-field-in-kochi-lakshadweep-undersea-cable-project/article33802757.ece>

## Energy

### **Petrol, diesel prices at fresh highs as rates up for 2nd straight day**

Petrol and diesel prices on Wednesday scaled new highs in the country as rates were hiked for the second day in a row. Petrol price was hiked by 30 paise per litre and diesel by 25 paise a litre, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. The increase took petrol price to an all-time high of Rs 87.60 a litre in Delhi and to Rs 94.12 in Mumbai. Diesel rates rose to Rs 77.73 per litre in the national capital and to an all-time high of Rs 84.63 in Mumbai. Rates vary from state to state depending on the local incidence of taxation (VAT) and freight. Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in Rajya Sabha said the government is not considering a reduction in excise duty to cool rates from their record highs.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/petrol-diesel-prices-at-fresh-highs-as-rates-up-for-2nd-straight-day-121021000739\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/petrol-diesel-prices-at-fresh-highs-as-rates-up-for-2nd-straight-day-121021000739_1.html)

## States

### **Karnataka to soon unveil policy framework on agriculture start-ups**

Karnataka Agriculture Minister B C Patil said on Wednesday the Government would soon unveil a policy framework on agri start-ups and operational guidelines. Patil said agri start-ups can provide missing links in the agricultural value chain and deliver efficient, innovative products, technologies and services to farmers and consumers. Addressing a virtual session of FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry) summit and awards for agri start-ups, he said the food and agriculture practices and enterprises in India are poised for transformational changes in line with the new government policies. "Agriculture has been rapidly evolving into agri business in terms of approach and structure," he was quoted as saying in a FICCI statement.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/karnataka-to-soon-unveil-policy-framework-on-agri-start-ups-operational-guidelines-121021000967\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/karnataka-to-soon-unveil-policy-framework-on-agri-start-ups-operational-guidelines-121021000967_1.html)

## External

### **India grants UAE investment licence with easier norms on compliance**

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) from United Arab Emirates (UAE) are eligible for taking up Category-I licence that lowers compliance norms, the Indian government has said. UAE is the second non-Financial Action Task Force (FATF) country after Mauritius to get India's exemption to qualify as Category-I FPI. Seventy two of the 113 FPIs from UAE are currently classified as Category-II FPIs. The Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, a sovereign wealth fund, has been a major investor into India.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-grants-uae-investment-licence-with-easier-norms-on-compliance-121021001357\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-grants-uae-investment-licence-with-easier-norms-on-compliance-121021001357_1.html)

### **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce for FTA renegotiation with Japan, Korea, Asean**

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce on Wednesday suggested renegotiation India's Free Trade Agreements with ASEAN, Japan and South Korea to ensure reciprocity in steel sector. Until this is carried out, concessional tariffs with these countries should be suspended, it said. "India's concession to the ASEAN has been far in excess than concessions granted to India," it said and suggested periodic compliance assessment to be carried out for Rules of Origin to arrest market access at concessional tariffs for non-FTA countries besides mandatory domestic content labelling requirement across the value chain.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/parliamentary-standing-committee-on-commerce-for-fta-renegotiation-with-japan-korea-asean/articleshow/80791177.cms>

### **Exports continue to register positive growth, up 10.3% during February 1-8**

Continuing with the positive growth, the country's exports grew by 10.3 per cent to USD 683 million during the first week of February on account of strong performance by key sectors such as engineering and chemicals, an official said on Wednesday. Imports too increased by a marginal 0.7 per cent to USD 72.5 million during the week, the official added. Trade deficit narrowed by 19.4 per cent to USD 610 million. Engineering goods showcased the maximum growth and the outbound shipments witnessed multifold increase to USD 1.6 billion during February 1-8.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/exports-continue-to-register-positive-growth-up-10-3-during-february-1-8-121021000780\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/exports-continue-to-register-positive-growth-up-10-3-during-february-1-8-121021000780_1.html)

### **FIEO asks FinMin to relook at 'harsh' provision in Budget for exporters**

Apex exporters body FIEO on Wednesday asked the finance ministry to relook at a proposed "harsh and draconian" provision in Budget 2021 related to customs as it will hurt the exporting community and the country's image as a reliable supplier of goods. Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President S K Saraf said certain provisions brought through the Finance Bill have "serious" bearing on exports. He said the proposed amendment in Section 113 of the Customs Act (which deals with confiscation of goods attempted to be improperly exported) needs a relook as it is "harsh and draconian".

A sub-section is proposed to be inserted in Section 113, which states that goods would be liable for confiscation if products entered for exportation under claim of remission or refund of any duty or tax or levy make a 'wrongful claim' in contravention of the provisions of this Act.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/fieo-asks-finmin-to-relook-at-harsh-provision-in-budget-for-exporters/2191933/>

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