



May 07, 2021 – Friday

Key Developments

COVID-19: Government website will now help find hospital beds, plasma, medical oxygen and more

As the second wave of COVID-19 has been wreaking havoc in India, many people are left helpless with no bed availability, oxygen or plasma for treatment. Many have taken to social media, seeking help from people around for any update as they struggle to find medical resources for their family members and other loved ones. After almost a month of people looking for various information on finding hospital beds, oxygen cylinders as well as medicines, the government has come up with a platform that will allow users to find important leads. The process will be done via crowdsourced information. According to a tweet by the Indian government, the services can be availed through the covid resource dashboard of MyGov India website. The website- <https://self4society.mygov.in/covid-resources> has been developed in partnership with Sprinklr.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/technology/covid-19-government-website-will-now-help-find-hospital-beds-plasma-medical-oxygen-and-more/2247360/>

Be prepared for third Covid wave, have buffer stock of oxygen: SC to Centre

The Supreme Court Thursday said the country needs to be prepared for the third wave of COVID-19 which experts say could be more harmful, especially for children, and emphasised upon the need to create buffer stock of oxygen. It asked the Centre not to reduce oxygen supply to Delhi from 700MT till further orders and ensure that rationalisation exercise is completed while taking into account the pan-India perspective. The top court said that people in Delhi are dying despite efforts being made to treat COVID-19 patients and there is also no denying that many have lost their lives due to shortage of oxygen supply. It made clear to the Centre and Delhi government that it will not allow the top court of the country to be a ground of recrimination between the two as both indulged in a blame game on the issue of allocation and supply of oxygen.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/be-prepared-for-third-covid-wave-have-buffer-stock-of-oxygen-sc-to-centre-121050601048_1.html

Pace of vaccination should not come down despite lockdowns: PM Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday that the speed of vaccination should not come down and the drive should be facilitated despite lockdowns. Modi was taking a review meeting of the public health response to Covid-19. Ministers including Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nirmala Sitharaman, Dr Harsh Vardhan, Piyush Goyal, Mansukh Mandaviya along with top officials were present at the meeting. Around 31 per cent of the eligible population over the age of 45 has been given at least one dose, according to the government data. Modi while taking note of vaccination progress and the roadmap for scaling up production on vaccines in the next few months said, "Healthcare workers involved in vaccination must not be diverted for other duties." He also called for the need to sensitise states for keeping up the momentum of vaccination. The government has said that 177 million vaccines have been supplied to the states. More than 900,000 beneficiaries of the age group 18-44 years received their first dose of COVID vaccine across 12 States.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/pace-of-vaccination-should-not-come-down-despite-lockdowns-pm-modi-121050600971_1.html

Govt issues guidelines for expeditious COVID-19 vaccination of aviation personnel

The Centre on Thursday issued guidelines to facilitate expeditious COVID-19 vaccination of aviation personnel working in government as well as private entities. A dedicated vaccination facility will be established by the airport operators in their respective airports to facilitate expeditious vaccination of staff, the guidelines issued by the Civil Aviation Ministry stated. Priority during vaccination should be given to the air traffic controllers (ATCs), cockpit and cabin crews of the airlines as well as mission-critical and passenger-facing staff, it said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/govt-issues-guidelines-for-expeditious-covid-19-vaccination-of-aviation-personnel/articleshow/82430206.cms>

Economy

FinMin releases Rs 9,871 cr as revenue deficit grant to 17 states

The Finance Ministry on Thursday released the second monthly instalment of revenue deficit grant of Rs 9,871 crore to 17 states. With the release of the second instalment, a total amount of Rs 19,742 crore has been released in the first two months of the current financial year as Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant to the states, the ministry said in a statement. The Centre provides the Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant to the states under Article 275 of the Constitution. The grants are released as per the recommendations of the Finance Commission in monthly instalments to meet the gap in revenue accounts of the states post-devolution. The Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance today released the 2nd monthly instalment of Post Devolution Revenue Deficit (PDRD) Grant of Rs 9,871 crore for the year 2021-22 to 17 States, the statement said. The 15th Finance Commission has recommended Post Devolution Release Deficit grants to 17 states based on the gap between the assessment of revenue and expenditure of the state.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/finmin-releases-rs-9-871-cr-as-revenue-deficit-grant-to-17-states-121050600961_1.html

230 million Indians pushed into poverty amid Covid-19 pandemic: Report

As the pandemic and the eventual lockdowns wreaked havoc on the economy and livelihoods, around 23 crore Indians have been pushed into poverty during the past one year, showed a report by Azim Premji University. It said that the rural poverty rate increased by 15 percentage points and the urban poverty rate was up nearly 20 points.

"The number of individuals who lie below the national minimum wage threshold (Rs 375 per day as recommended by the Anoop Satpathy committee) increased by 230 million during the pandemic," said the report titled 'State of Working India 2021: One Year of Covid-19'. It noted that though incomes fell across the board, the pandemic has taken a far heavier toll on poorer households. In April and May, the poorest 20 per cent of households lost their entire incomes.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/230-million-indians-pushed-into-poverty-amid-covid-19-pandemic-report-121050600751_1.html

Consumer sentiment index falls 3.8% in April, sharpest drop since May 2020: CMIE

The raging second wave of Covid-19 has resulted in a 3.8% dip in the index of consumer sentiment in April, the sharpest fall since May 2020, said the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy. Week-on-week the decline in the consumer sentiment index has been steeper with the index falling by 5.4% in the week ended May 2, bringing the weekly index to its lowest since November 2020. The index of consumer sentiments fell by 4.3% in the week ended April 18 and by 4.5% in the week ended April 25 ..

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/consumer-sentiment-index-falls-3-8-in-april-sharpest-drop-since-may-2020-cmie/articleshow/82428386.cms>

Centre makes it mandatory for disability certificates to be issued online

In a relief for people with disabilities, the Central government has now made it mandatory for disability certificates to be issued online. The Ministry of Social justice and empowerment has issued a gazette notification for this on Monday. "Mandatory for all states/UTs to grant certificate of disability through online mode only using UDID portal with effect from June 1. States/UTs have been advised for compliance," the ministry's disability affairs department tweeted.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/centre-makes-it-mandatory-for-disability-certificates-to-be-issued-online/articleshow/82429186.cms>

Amid Covid resurgence, Fitch slashes India's FY22 GDP growth to 9.5%

The spiralling crisis from resurgence of COVID-19 cases in India has dented support for the ruling BJP but voter support for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his party will remain strong over the coming quarters and through this humanitarian crisis, Fitch Solutions said Thursday. The sudden and steep surge in the number of coronavirus cases the highest-ever 4,12,262 new infections and a record 3,980 daily death toll in a day has swamped the health system, which seemed to have collapsed. While containment measures will weigh on India's ongoing economic recovery, the localised nature of restrictions means that the actual impact is likely to be much less severe relative to April-June 2020 when a strict nationwide lockdown was imposed, Fitch Solutions said. It forecasted real GDP to grow 9.5 per cent in 2021-22 (April 2021 to March 2022).

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/covid-bringing-renewed-challenges-for-india-gdp-growth-seen-at-9-5-fitch-121050600627_1.html

Universalising PDS won't work here: UN World Food Programme India Head

Amid a raging debate over whether more people should be included into the list of PDS beneficiaries or the coverage should be pruned, the Centre recently announced the re-starting of a scheme to provide free extra foodgrains to all Food Act beneficiaries as part of Covid relief. In an interview with Business Standard, United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) Country Director in India, Bishow Parajuli said that universalisation of PDS as being demanded by many civil society activists might not be feasible as not everyone in India needs social protection.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/universalising-pds-won-t-work-here-un-world-food-programme-india-head-121050600769_1.html

Centre can't shirk responsibility of universal COVID-19 vaccination: C Rangarajan

The Centre needs to take the responsibility of vaccinating all the people in the country as part of the measures to control the COVID-19 pandemic and it cannot shirk its responsibility, former Governor of RBI C Rangarajan said on Thursday. Speaking at the inaugural session of a virtual conference organised by ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education here, he said it involves a lot of expenditure, the Centre has to take up universal vaccination while states need to spend on other medical infrastructure such as improving hospitals, recruiting more medical staff.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/centre-cant-shirk-responsibility-of-universal-covid-19-vaccination-c-rangarajan/articleshow/82429796.cms>

Banking and Finance

Crisil says half of its rated mid-sized cos eligible for loan recast under new guidelines

A day after the RBI allowed another round of restructuring, largest domestic ratings agency Crisil on Thursday said half of the mid-size companies in its portfolio will be eligible for the recast. Companies with relatively weaker credit profiles, and part of low-resilience sectors are expected to benefit more from the scheme, Crisil said, specifying that mid-sized companies are those having aggregate exposures of less than Rs 500 crore. Crisil said it rates 6,800 mid-sized entities and more than half of them are small and medium enterprises (SMEs) having a bank loan exposure of up to Rs 25 crore. Over 3,400 of the mid-sized companies were classified as standard accounts, making them eligible to avail restructuring.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/crisil-says-half-of-its-rated-mid-sized-cos-eligible-for-loan-recast-under-new-guidelines/articleshow/82431883.cms?utm_source=ETTopNews&utm_medium=HPTN&utm_campaign=AL1&utm_content=23

LIC to have five working days starting from May 10

State-owned LIC will have five working days starting from May 10 since Saturdays have been declared as a holiday for the insurer. Pursuant to a notification on April 15, 2021, wherein the central government has declared every Saturday as a public holiday for Life Insurance Corporation of India, all policy holders and other stakeholders are informed that w.e.f May 10, all offices of LIC will work from Monday to Friday, it said in a public notice.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/company/corporate-trends/lic-to-have-five-working-days-starting-from-may-10/articleshow/82428791.cms>

Industry

Company incorporations dip 27% sequentially in April as business sentiment sours amid second wave

The number of companies incorporated in April dipped 27% from a record level in the previous month as the second wave of Covid-19 infections across India dampened business sentiment. However, at 12,554, the figure was a four-fold increase from the 3,209 incorporations in April last year, the first full month under the nationwide lockdown, according to data from the ministry of corporate affairs.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/company/corporate-trends/company-incorporations-dip-27-sequentially-in-april-as-business-sentiment-sours-amid-second-wave/articleshow/82424871.cms>

Manufacturing employment nearly half of what it was five years ago

With the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic battering India at present, the Indian economic outlook looks bleak for the second year in a row. In 2020-21, India's real GDP growth is estimated to be minus 8 per cent. This would also put pressure on India's employment numbers. In previous bulletins, we have analysed the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on employment, individual and household incomes and expenditures in 2020.

In this CEDA-CMIE Bulletin, we try to take a longer-term view of sector-wise employment in India. We base this on CMIE's monthly time-series of employment by industry going back to the year 2016. For this bulletin, we have focused on seven sectors – agriculture, mines, manufacturing, real estate and construction, financial services, non-financial services, and public administrative services. These sectors make up for 99 per cent of total employment in the country.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/ceda-cmie-bulletin-manufacturing-employment-halves-in-five-years-121050601086_1.html

Govt buying from MSEs declines for second consecutive year even as share in overall procurement jumps

Procurement of goods and services by central ministries, departments, and public sector units (PSUs) from micro and small enterprises (MSEs) has witnessed a marginal decline during the Covid year 2020-21. The fall in procurement value has been for the second consecutive year to Rs 39,538 crore from Rs 39,632 crore in FY20 and Rs 40,399 in FY19, according to the available government data on public procurement. The government had earmarked a 25 per cent yearly procurement target by MSEs for CPSEs from April 1, 2015, onwards up from 20 per cent earlier. A sub-target of 4 per cent from SC/ST-owned MSEs and 3 per cent from women-owned MSEs were earmarked out of the 25 per cent target. Since FY16 (procurement worth Rs 18,246 crore), the government buying from MSEs has recorded 116 per cent growth.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/govt-buying-from-mses-declines-for-second-consecutive-year-even-as-share-in-overall-procurement-jumps/2247301/>

Covid Impact: Smartphone offline channel stares at 50,000 job losses; experts cut growth estimates

Market trackers have cut their annual growth estimates of the smartphone offline channel, as the raging pandemic has forced bricks-and-mortar stores including organised retail outlets to either shut shop or curtail operations. Offline retailers said they are staring at about 50,000 job losses as a result. The development may also force top brands to delay their offline expansion plans, according to experts.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/retail/covid-impact-smartphone-offline-channel-stares-at-50000-job-losses-experts-cut-growth-estimates/articleshow/82430762.cms?utm_source=ETTopNews&utm_medium=HPTN&utm_campaign=AL1&utm_content=23

Agriculture

Tractor sales set to hit speed bumps as pandemic reaches the hinterland

Tractor sales, a proxy for the health of the rural economy, are set to be disrupted as Covid-19 spreads into the hinterland. So far, the segment has remained relatively insulated from the adverse impact of the pandemic. But that

is changing now as sentiments have turned negative due to the persistent increase in cases and with farmers saving cash for health-related exigencies. Tractor makers fear if the situation persists and the pandemic doesn't recede in two to three weeks, it will mark a dry spell for them as tractor purchase, unlike cars, is linked to a season.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/tractor-sales-set-to-hit-speed-bumps-as-pandemic-reaches-the-hinterland-121050601006_1.html

Monsoon likely to arrive over Kerala on June 1, says Earth Sciences Secy

India's southwest monsoon is expected to arrive over the Kerala coast on June 1, its normal onset date, secretary ministry of Earth Sciences, M Rajeevan said today. Though the India Meteorological Department (IMD) will officially announce the 2021 monsoon onset date on May 15, Rajeevan in a tweet today said that early indications suggest that monsoon will arrive over Kerala on time, around June 1. A timely onset of monsoon over Kerala augurs well for its subsequent progress and movement over the mainland, which in turn should aid in timely plantation of kharif crops. The IMD last month in its first forecast for the 2021 monsoon said that the southwest monsoon that will start from June is expected to be 'normal' at 98 per cent of the Long Period Average (LPA).

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/monsoon-likely-to-arrive-over-kerala-on-june-1-says-earth-sciences-secy-121050600891_1.html

India's wheat production outlook cut to 105 mt on lower yield in central, eastern regions

India's wheat production estimates have been lowered to 105 million tonnes (mt) in view of the yield being affected in central and eastern regions of the country such as Madhya Pradesh, east and central Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/indias-wheat-production-outlook-cut-to-105-mt-on-lower-yield-in-central-eastern-regions/article34498010.ece>

Covid induced weekend lockdowns hit poultry industry

The Covid induced weekend lockdowns have impacted the poultry industry as Saturdays and Sundays are the two days of the week when chicken sales pick up. Sales of chicken have fallen 25%-30% since beginning of April with prices falling more than 40% in southern, western and northern India.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/covid-induced-weekend-lockdowns-hit-poultry-industry/articleshow/82431164.cms>

Maharashtra sugar mills pay 92% of fair remunerative price to farmers

The data published by the Sugar Commissioner of Maharashtra on Wednesday shows that by April 30, sugar mills in the State have paid a net FRP of ₹20,599.73 crore, i.e., 92.40 per cent of the total payable FRP of ₹22,293.34 crore.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/maharashtra-sugar-mills-pay-92-of-fair-remunerative-price-to-farmers/article34497895.ece>

NDDB, EESL to develop innovative energy-efficient solutions for dairy sector

The National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) and Energy Efficiency Services Ltd (EESL) have decided to work together to design and develop innovative energy efficient business solutions for dairy cooperative institutions.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/nddb-eesl-to-develop-innovative-energy-efficient-solutions-for-dairy-sector/article34492468.ece>

Infrastructure

After containers, dry bulk shipping is red hot now

The Baltic Dry Index or BDI, London-based Baltic Exchange's main sea freight index that tracks rates to ship dry bulk commodities, rose the most in over ten years on Wednesday lifting the spirits of dry bulk ship owners who have been envious of the spectacular ride of container ship owners over the last couple of months.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/after-containers-dry-bulk-shipping-is-red-hot-now/article34498648.ece>

VOC Port Trust calls bids to privatise bulk cargo berth into container terminal

Central government-owned V O Chidambaranar Port Trust (VOCPT) located in Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi district has invited bids to convert one of its bulk cargo handling berths into a container terminal through the public-private partnership (PPP) route.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/voc-port-trust-calls-bids-to-privatise-bulk-cargo-berth-into-container-terminal/article34495558.ece>

India's top property markets see marginal decline in prime residential prices in Q1, report

India's top three property markets of Mumbai, New Delhi and Bangalore have witnessed marginal on-year decline in prices of prime residential properties in the quarter ended March, showed Knight Frank Prime Global Cities Index. Of these, Bengaluru has moved down four spots in the latest index at 40th rank in the first quarter of 2021 Against 36th rank in Q4 2020 with an on-year decline of 2.7% in prime residential prices.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/property/-cstruction/indias-top-property-markets-see-marginal-decline-in-prime-residential-prices-in-q1-report/articleshow/82428547.cms>

Northern Rlys to cancel 28 pairs of trains from May 9 onwards

Northern Zone of Indian Railways has decided to cancel 28 pairs of trains citing surge in Covid-19 cases, according to official note.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/northern-rlys-to-cancel-28-pairs-of-trains-from-may-9-onwards/article34499887.ece>

Telecom

Telecom skills body releases explainer on installation, operation of oxygen concentrators

The Telecom Sector Skill Council (TSSC) has released a video explainer on installation and operation of oxygen concentrators to educate healthcare workers, technicians, volunteers and layperson about the maintenance and basic operations of the equipment. "In view of this fast-developing scenario, the Telecom Sector Skill Council (TSSC) has launched a detailed O2 Concentrator Training Module on its website, tailored for the understanding of all the individuals on the successful installation and operation of the O2 concentrators. This will be available at Free of Cost for the visitors," it said in a statement on Thursday.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-news/telecom-skills-body-releases-explainer-on-installation-operation-of-oxygen-concentrators/articleshow/82431420.cms>

Energy

Covid-19 second wave can hit energy demand in April-June quarter: Ind-Ra

Restrictions following the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic could impact energy demand growth recovery in the first quarter of this financial year, India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) said. The ratings agency has published the April 2021 edition of its credit news digest on India's power sector. The report highlights the trends in the power sector, with a focus on capacity addition, generation, transmission, merchant power, deficit, regulatory changes and the recent rating actions by Ind-Ra. Ind-Ra said the lockdowns on account of an increase in COVID-19 cases in various states could impact energy demand growth recovery in Q1 FY22 (April-June 2022), although all-India energy demand is expected to be higher on a year-on-year basis due to the low base effect as the country was under a stricter lockdown during the same period in 2020.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/covid-19-second-wave-can-hit-energy-demand-in-april-june-quarter-ind-ra-121050600969_1.html

COVID to shave-off 20-25% of auto fuel demand in April

India's second wave of coronavirus infections and the resultant city and state-specific restrictions may shave-off about 20-25 per cent of auto fuel demand in April, consultancy Wood Mackenzie said on Thursday and estimated a modest impact on oil demand in the absence of a full nationwide lockdown.

India's COVID crisis shows no sign of slowing. The country has reported new cases above 3 lakh per day for two weeks straight, though experts think the true number is likely to be far higher, it said. "Yet despite increasing calls

for the government to impose a nationwide lockdown to reduce the rate of infection, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has so far resisted, citing the economic impact on an already suffering population."

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/auto-news/covid-to-shave-off-20-25-of-auto-fuel-demand-in-april/articleshow/82428358.cms>

States

Madhya Pradesh extends Covid-19 lockdown till May 15; Delhi govt caps maximum price for private ambulance service

India, the epicentre of the world's worst coronavirus outbreak, will witness the third wave of Covid-19 infections, the Centre has said. This warning comes at a time when states have seen some noticeable dip in the daily caseload of fresh Covid-19 infections. So, has India already seen the peak of the second wave of the coronavirus? Experts have still not arrived at any conclusion despite the latest drop in the daily cases. While there is a debate over the official data provided by the Union Health Ministry with many alleging India of massive underreporting, the WHO says that even the official data shows how grim the situation is. The World Health Organization says that every fourth person dying due to Covid is from India. With an average caseload of more than 3.5 lakh cases for more than 10 days in running, India accounts for nearly 50% of the global caseload. On numerous occasions, the health ministry has reiterated that there is no shortage of the vaccine. However, the daily inoculation data shows that there has been a massive decline in jabs administered per day since April 1st last month.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/lifestyle/health/coronavirus-statistics-india-live-covid19-india-lockdown-may-6-live-updates-cowin-coronavirus-vaccine-delhi-punjab-maharashtra-up-mp-karnataka-gujarat-telangana-kerala-noida-ghaziabad-lucknow-bengaluru/2246795/>

HC: Imperative for private hospitals in Maha to have oxygen plants

The Bombay High Court on Thursday said it was "imperative" for all private hospitals in Maharashtra to have their own oxygen plants to deal with the increasing cases of COVID-19. A bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G S Kulkarni said as the third wave is likely, private hospitals must have their own oxygen plants to meet their own demands. "Now that the third wave is likely, why must private hospitals not be made to have their own oxygen plants? At least to meet their own demands for active consumption? After all, they charge all patients," the bench said. The court referred to a newspaper report from Thursday morning, according to which, a private hospital in Sangli had set up its own oxygen supply to tackle the increasing cases of COVID-19.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/hc-imperative-for-private-hospitals-in-maha-to-have-oxygen-plants/articleshow/82431538.cms>

COVID-19 treatment now covered under Goa government's health scheme

The Goa government on Thursday brought COVID-19 treatment under its flagship medical insurance scheme, which covers the entire population of the state. The move will allow patients to avail benefits under the Deen Dayal Swasthya Seva Yojana (DDSSY) while undergoing treatment for COVID-19 in private hospitals, according to a notification issued by Additional Secretary (Health) Vikas Gaunekar. Patients can avail benefits for a maximum 10 days from the date of admission and they will be applicable only to DDSSY-empanelled hospitals with ICU facility, said the order.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/covid-19-treatment-now-covered-under-go-a-governments-health-scheme/articleshow/82431468.cms>

COVID-19: Kerala announces complete lockdown from May 8 to May 16

The Kerala government on Thursday announced a complete lockdown in the state from May 8 morning in view of the severe COVID-19 surge in the second wave of the pandemic. The 9-day-lockdown would come into force on May 8 morning and extend up to May 16, according to official sources. Strict lockdown-like restrictions are already in place in the southern state and the Pinarayi Vijayan government decided to clamp the complete shutdown in the wake of severe spike in the positive cases.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/covid-19-kerala-announces-complete-lockdown-from-may-8/articleshow/82426495.cms>

Healthcare

3,000 oxygen concentrators received as foreign aid dispatched, no pendency with Customs: Centre

The Union Health Ministry on Thursday said no oxygen concentrator, received as aid from abroad, is lying with the customs authorities at any port of import as these consignments are being cleared swiftly, the Union health ministry said on Thursday. In all, 3,000 oxygen concentrators have been received as global aid to support the Central government's efforts and that of the states and Union Territories in their collective fight against the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, it said in a statement. Some news reports have claimed that oxygen concentrators are lying at Customs warehouses awaiting clearance. "The news is totally incorrect, not based on facts and without any basis. The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs has clarified that there is no such pendency with Indian Customs. The Indian Customs is swiftly clearing all consignments and no such figure of pendency exists across any port of import," the health ministry said in the statement.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/3000-oxygen-concentrators-received-as-foreign-aid-dispatched-no-pendency-with-customs-centre/articleshow/82427316.cms>

COVID: UK variant dominates North India, double mutant Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka

The UK strain of coronavirus is currently dominating parts of north India while double mutant could be found mostly in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat, Sujeet Singh, Director of National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), has said. He, however, added that the B1.1.7 lineage of SARS CoV-2 (UK variant) is declining in proportion across the country in the last month and a half. Addressing a press briefing on Wednesday, Singh said the UK strain is dominating parts of north India including Punjab (482 samples) and Delhi (516), followed by Telangana (192), Maharashtra (83) and Karnataka (82).

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/covid-uk-variant-dominates-north-india-double-mutant-maharashtra-gujarat-karnataka/articleshow/82429011.cms>

India logs over 410000 cases for 2nd day in a row

India has recorded over 410,000 fresh Covid-19 cases for the second consecutive day, taking its cumulative caseload to 21,485,285. On Friday, the country recorded 414,433 cases and 3,920 deaths, Worldometer showed this morning. India now has 3.65 million active cases. The Supreme Court Thursday said the country needs to be prepared for the third wave of COVID-19 which experts say could be more harmful, especially for children, and emphasised upon the need to create buffer stock of oxygen. It asked the Centre not to reduce oxygen supply to Delhi from 700MT till further orders. Maharashtra reported 62,194 new coronavirus disease (Covid-19) cases and 920 deaths, followed by Karnataka (49,058), Kerala (42,464), Uttar Pradesh (26,780), Tamil Nadu (24,898), Delhi (20,000) in the past 24 hours.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/coronavirus-live-updates-india-cases-delhi-maharashtra-karnataka-nationwide-lockdown-oxygen-mutations-death-toll-world-covid-highlights-121050700092_1.html

External

Covid-19: Refiners curtail palm oil imports as lockdowns dent demand

Indian edible oil refiners are curtailing palm oil imports for May and June as most states have imposed curbs on hotels and restaurants to arrest rising coronavirus infections, denting institutional demand, industry officials said. Lower imports by India, the world's biggest buyer of the edible oil, could limit a rally in benchmark Malaysian palm oil futures, which hit their highest level since 2008 on Thursday. "Palm oil demand from hotels, restaurants and other institutional buyers has been falling rapidly due to lockdowns," said Govindbhai Patel, chief of trading firm G.G. Patel & Nikhil Research Co. Almost all states have closed hotels and restaurants for in-dinning as India reported a record 412,262 new COVID-19 cases on Thursday and a record 3,980 daily death toll, with the second wave of infections swamping the health system and spreading from cities into the vast countryside. Indians, known for their penchant for calorie-laden curry and deep-fried food, consume about 1.9 million tonnes of edible oil a month, with restaurants mainly using palm oil, which accounts for two-thirds of the country's vegetable oil imports.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/covid-19-refiners-curtail-palm-oil-imports-as-lockdowns-dent-demand-121050600744_1.html

If India is in dire straits, then so is the world, says USIBC president

If India is in dire straits, then the world is in dire straits, the head of a top business advocacy group has said, as the US corporate sector mounted an unprecedented effort to help India successfully fight the COVID-19 pandemic. The speed with which the COVID crisis in India has escalated and ravaged the entire country, it has created a sense of urgency in the corporate community, Nisha Desai Biswal, president of US India Business Council told PTI in an interview. She said that the US companies were probably the first to realise that things were moving in a perilous direction, as they were hearing about it from their workforce in India. As a result, they started mobilising early on. It was about two weeks ago that the American business community started mobilising their resources.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/if-india-is-in-dire-straits-then-so-is-the-world-says-usibc-president-121050600388_1.html

India, Israel and UAE sign maiden trilateral deal to push W Asian partnership

India, Israel and the UAE have signed their first ever trilateral pact, first such arrangement since Israel and UAE established diplomatic ties. A trilateral partnership has been initiated by the International Federation of Indo-Israel Chambers of Commerce (IFIICC) through which an Israel-based company, Ecoppia, is producing an innovative robotic solar cleaning technology in India for a landmark project in the UAE, according to an Israel Embassy statement.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/india-israel-and-uae-sign-maiden-trilateral-deal-to-push-w-asian-partnership/articleshow/82432369.cms>

India exports organic millets grown in Himalayas to Denmark

In a major boost to exports of organic products from the country, the first consignment of millets grown in Himalayas would be exported to Denmark.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/india-exports-organic-millets-grown-in-himalayas-to-denmark/article34492407.ece>



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