



March 21, 2022 – Monday

Economy

Working to improve tax literacy for widening taxpayer net: CBDT chairman

The Income Tax department is working to improve the "abysmally poor" tax literacy in the country so that the number of tax paying people and entities can be increased leading to enhanced collections, CBDT Chairman J B Mohapatra has said. He said the direct tax establishment -- the government authority that primarily collects personal income tax and corporation tax among others -- will do "everything possible" to see that the effective number of taxpayers who can add to the revenue kitty are enhanced. "There are a few things to be done here. One is expanding the tax literacy which is abysmally poor across the country," he told PTI.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/working-to-improve-tax-literacy-for-widening-taxpayer-net-cbdt-chairman-122032000304_1.html

Govt working to classify cryptocurrency under GST law, 'remove doubt'

The government is working on classification of cryptocurrency as goods or services under the GST law, so that tax can be levied on the entire value of transactions. Currently, 18 per cent Goods and Services Tax (GST) is levied only on service provided by crypto exchanges and is categorised as financial services. GST officers are of the view that cryptos, by nature, are similar to lottery, casinos, betting, gambling, horse racing, which have 28 per cent of GST on the entire value. Besides, GST at 3 per cent is levied on the entire transaction value in case of gold. "There is a clarity needed in regard to levy of GST on cryptocurrencies and whether it has to be levied on the entire value, We are seeing whether cryptocurrencies can be classified as goods or services and also removing any doubt on whether it can be called an actionable claim," an official said.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/indian-govt-working-on-classification-of-cryptocurrency-under-gst-law-122032000357_1.html

EPFO adds 1.53 mn subscribers in January, up by 21% from Dec 21

Retirement fund body EPFO added 15.29 lakh subscribers on a net basis in January 2022, an increase of over 21 per cent compared to 12.60 lakh in December 2021, according to the latest payroll data. "The provisional payroll data of EPFO has been released today, i.e., 20th March 2022, which highlights that EPFO has added 15.29 lakh net subscribers during January 2022. Month-on-month comparison of payroll data also indicates an increase of 2.69 lakh net subscribers addition in January 2022, as compared to the net additions during the previous month of December 2021," a labour ministry statement said on Sunday. As per the data, 12.60 lakh net new members were added in December 2021.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/epfo-adds-1-53-mn-subscribers-in-january-up-by-21-from-dec-21-122032000698_1.html

Banking and Finance

PM SVANidhi: Beneficiary count under microcredit scheme crosses 30 lakh; over Rs 3k crore loans disbursed

Loans disbursed under the Prime Minister SVANidhi microcredit scheme for nano entrepreneurs such as street vendors has crossed the 30-lakh mark, government data showed. Launched in June 2020 to offer collateral-free working capital loans up to Rs 10,000 for one-year tenure, the scheme had received over 45 lakh applications as of March 20, 2022, of which 33.38 lakh involving Rs 3,492 crore were sanctioned and 30.28 lakh applications amounting to Rs 3,137 crore were disbursed, according to the latest data from the scheme's portal. The credit was disbursed via 1.54 lakh branches of various scheduled commercial banks, regional rural banks, small finance banks, cooperative banks, non-banking financial companies, micro-finance institutions and Self-Help Group (SHG) banks.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/msme-fin-pm-svanidhi-beneficiary-count-under-microcredit-scheme-crosses-30-lakh-over-rs-3k-crore-loans-disbursed/2465902/>

Stamp duty, registration fee mop-up crosses Rs 1 lakh cr in 8 months of FY22: Report

Gold exchange traded funds (ETFs) witnessed a net outflow of Rs 248 crore in February, making it the second consecutive month of withdrawals as investors preferred equities over other segments on record SIP flows. Net outflows from the gold ETFs were at Rs 452 crore in the month of January. Prior to that, the asset class had seen a net investment of Rs 313 crore, according to the data of Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi). Despite the outflows, the category witnessed an increase in net assets under management (AUM) of gold ETFs to Rs 18,727 crore at the end of February from Rs 17,839 crore in January-end. Also, the segment saw a surge in the number of folios by 3.09 lakh to 37.74 lakh during the period under review.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/money/gold-etfs-log-rs-248-cr-outflow-in-feb-as-investors-prefer-equity-funds/2465677/>

India Inc raises \$31.18 billion in overseas borrowing in the first 10 months of FY22

Overseas fundraising of domestic corporates in the first 10 months of the current fiscal is already at 90 per cent of the full year's borrowing level in FY21. Indian companies continued to tap low-cost overseas funding before the interest rate hike by the US Fed Reserve, supported by a stable currency. According to the latest RBI data, monthly external commercial borrowings (ECBs) of India Inc touched a nine-month high of \$8 billion in January, taking the total overseas borrowing to \$31.18 billion between April 2021 and January 2022. Indian companies raised \$35.06 billion in ECBs for the whole of FY21. The borrowing in the first 10 months of the current fiscal was 75 per cent higher than \$23.26 billion worth of ECBs raised in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/india-inc-raises-3118-billion-in-overseas-borrowing-in-the-first-10-months-of-fy22/article65243307.ece>

Industry

Small M&A deals exempted from CCI merger control compliance for 5 more years

Small sized M&A deals — where target had an asset size of less than ₹350 crore or turnover of less than ₹1,000 crore — have been exempted from the Competition Commission of India's (CCI) merger control norms for five more years. Such M&A and amalgamation deals — commonly referred as combinations — need not be prior notified or reported to the competition regulator till March 2027, the Corporate Affairs Ministry (MCA) has said. MCA has now extended by five more years the 'de minimis' exemption that was provided by the Central government in March 2017 for five years.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/small-ma-deals-exempted-from-cci-merger-control-compliance-for-5-more-years/article65243100.ece>

FMCG makers to go for around 10% price hike to ease inflationary pressures

Consumers may have to pay more for their daily essential items with FMCG companies mulling another round of price hike to offset the impact of an unprecedented level of inflation in commodity prices such as wheat, palm oil and packaging materials. Besides, the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine has also added another blow to FMCG makers as they expect a rise in the prices of wheat, edible oil and crude. Companies such as Dabur and Parle are watching the situation and will undertake calibrated price increases to mitigate the inflationary pressures. According to some media reports, makers such as HUL and Nestle have increased the prices of food products last week.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/fmcg-makers-to-go-for-around-10-pc-price-hike-to-mitigate-inflationary-pressures-122032000230_1.html

Steel firms to weigh in input costs in talks for auto industry contracts

Steel companies are weighing the spiraling cost of raw material as they head for discussions with automobile companies for contracts starting April. Usually, the average price of steel for six months is set as a benchmark for negotiations. This time the spike in raw material prices due to the Russia-Ukraine war is likely to shape discussions with auto companies.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/markets/steel-firms-to-weigh-in-input-costs-in-talks-with-auto-industry-contracts-122032000384_1.html

Cement prices in Southern markets going North by ₹80-100

Cement prices have gone up by about ₹80-Rs 100 in Southern markets in the last four weeks. As per our enquiries with cement sellers, the price per a bag of 50kgs of cement, both PPC and OPC categories of different brands, now ranges from ₹360-450 in Chennai, ₹380-450 in Hyderabad , ₹360-430 in Vijayawada/Tirupati. This was about ₹80-100 higher than the prices prevailed in February. "Our supplies are attributing that hike in prices to the increase in crude and coal prices in the wake of Russian-Ukraine crisis and uptake in demand for cement," Managing Director of a Hyderabad-based real-estate construction company told BusinessLine. There has been an increase in steel prices too from about ₹60,000 per tonne to about ₹80,000 per tonne, he added.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/cement-prices-in-southern-markets-up-by-80-100/article65243196.ece>

Traders, retailers clock Rs 20,000 crore in Holi sales this year: CAIT

Traders, retailers across the country registered around a 30 per cent jump in Holi sales this year from the year-ago period, according to CAIT. The traders' body said business worth around Rs 20,000 crore, according to an estimate, was recorded without any sale of Chinese goods. "After a gap of two years (due to Covid) and witnessing the worst days ever in the business, this year Holi sales proved to be a tremendous boon for which the retail sector of the country was eagerly waiting. Earlier, Chinese export of goods primarily colours, toys, balloons etc., during Holi season used to be worth around Rs 10,000 crore," CAIT said in a statement.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/msme-eodb-traders-retailers-clock-rs-20000-crore-in-holi-sales-this-year-cait/2465717/>

Agriculture

Hurt by 'Red Rot', UP's revolutionary sugarcane variety Co-0238 may soon retire

Even as there is no better or even equivalent alternative available, Co-0238 sugarcane variety, which increased the average yield by 33 per cent during the past decade and helped in doubling of production in Uttar Pradesh, is likely to be phased out as sugar mills do not want to take a chance similar to the bitter experience in Punjab around 2000 when CoJ 64 variety succumbed to red rot disease. A new strain of red rot has been the cause of worry this time in Uttar Pradesh and a letter from the State cane commissioner two years back requesting mills to phase out Co-0238 has now gained momentum with some mills able to achieve as much as 40 per cent replacement of the variety with Co-0118 by persuading farmers in current sowing season.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/hurt-by-red-rot-ups-revolutionary-sugarcane-variety-co-0238-may-soon-retire/article65243232.ece>

Infrastructure

31% of total offices in top 6 cities certified as green buildings: Report

Nearly one-third of total office spaces in six major cities have been certified as green buildings, as real estate developers are focusing more on sustainability aspects in their projects, according to CBRE. In its report 'Indian Real Estate's ESG (environmental, social and governance) Landscape and its Progress to a Sustainable Future', property consultant CBRE has analysed office stock for the top six cities (Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, Bangalore

and Chennai) to ascertain the status of green-certified stock in these cities. "Certified green office stock grew by 177 per cent to 212 million square feet in Q3, 2021 (July-September) from under 80 million square feet in 2011," the report said.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/31-of-total-offices-in-top-6-cities-certified-as-green-buildings-report-122032000372_1.html

Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata begins ship-to-ship operation for LPG cargo bound for Bangladesh

Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata (SMPK - erstwhile Kolkata Port Trust) commences ship-to-ship (STS) operation for LPG cargo bound to Bangladesh. Apart from ushering a new beginning in the Indo Bangladesh relation, it will also open connectivity between Kolkata Port and Mongla port of Bangladesh where the LPG cargo is bound for, said a press statement issued by SMPK.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/syama-prasad-mookerjee-port-kolkata-begins-ship-to-shipoperation-for-lpg-cargo-bound-for-bangladesh/article65243347.ece>

Telecom

Govt plans to merge BBNL with BSNL this month, says telecom's CMD

The government is planning to merge Bharat Broadband Nigam Limited (BBNL) with the loss-making state-run telecom operator Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) this month, a senior official has said. BSNL chairman and managing director PK Purwar at a recent event organised by the All India Graduate Engineers and Telecom officers Association (AIGETOA) said that the government is giving the telecom firm an opportunity for a turnaround. "The government has taken a policy decision that BBNL is going to be merged into BSNL. This means all work of BBNL at the pan-India level is going to come to BSNL," Purwar said at the All India Conference of AIGETOA on March 13.

Referring to his meeting with the union telecom minister, Purwar said he had an hour-long meeting to this effect.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/govt-plans-to-merge-bbnl-with-bsnl-this-month-says-bsnl-cmd-122032000517_1.html

Energy

Power Ministry asks States to adhere to Make in India norms on public procurement

The Power Ministry has directed the state governments to comply with provisions of the 'Make In India' initiative under public private participation (PPP) for boosting indigenous manufacturing and procurement of local goods and services. The response from the Centre comes after some industry associations approached the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) complaining that state power utilities are not following the requisite norms on local procurement of goods and services. CEA is the nodal agency under the Power Ministry for issues concerning the Make in India initiative.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/power-ministry-asks-states-to-adhere-to-make-in-india-norms-on-public-procurement/article65243151.ece>

Diesel price for bulk users hiked Rs 25/litre; pvt retailers fear closure

The price of diesel sold to bulk users has been hiked by about Rs 25 per litre in line with a near 40 per cent rise in international oil prices, but retail rates at petrol pumps remain unchanged, sources said. Petrol pump sales have jumped by a fifth this month after bulk users like bus fleet operators and malls queued up at petrol bunks to buy fuel rather than the usual practice of ordering directly from oil companies, widening the losses of retailers. Worst hit are private retailers like Nayara Energy, Jio-bp and Shell, who have so far refused to curtail any volume despite a surge in sales. But now closure of pumps is a more viable solution than continuing to sell more fuel at rates that have been on freeze for a record 136 days, three sources with direct knowledge of the development said.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/diesel-price-for-bulk-users-hiked-rs-25-ltr-pvt-retailers-stare-closure-122032000305_1.html

Domestic solar equipment makers running plants at 30% capacity; reforms, tariff safeguards needed

Industry body All India Solar Industries Association (AISIA) has urged Power and New & Renewable Energy Minister R K Singh that structural safeguards and tariff-based barriers are needed for domestic manufacturing to gain a

foothold and establish itself. The body highlighted that the (solar equipment) "domestic manufacturers run their plants at 30 per cent capacities and incur huge unbearable losses." In the letter shot off to Singh earlier this week, the body stated that "having been hopeful of a revival in the last decade and after surviving strong headwinds, we are passing through even more difficult times where our survival is at stake and without a robust local 'Make in India' Solar manufacturing, the security of India's energy sector is in peril."

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/renewables/domestic-solar-equipment-makers-running-plants-at-30-capacity-reforms-tariff-safeguards-needed/articleshow/90332204.cms>

Healthcare

Second Covishield dose can be given between 8-16 weeks: NTAGI

India's apex body on immunisation NTAGI has recommended administering the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine Covishield between eight and 16 weeks after the first dose, official sources said on Sunday. Presently, the second dose of Covishield is given between 12-16 weeks after the first dose under the National COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy. The National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) has not yet suggested any change in the schedule of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin, whose second dose is administered 28 days after the first dose. The recommendation for Covishield is yet to be implemented in the national COVID-19 vaccination programme. "The latest recommendation of NTAGI is based on recent global scientific evidence derived from programmatic data," said an official source.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/second-covishield-dose-can-be-given-btwn-8-16-weeks-after-first-dose-ntagi-122032000476_1.html

India's cumulative Covid vaccination coverage exceeds 1.81 bn

India's COVID-19 vaccination coverage has exceeded 181.21 crores (1,81,21,11,675) as per provisional reports till 7 am today, informed the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Sunday. According to the ministry, this has been achieved through over 2 crore sessions. COVID-19 vaccination for the age group 12-14 years was started on March 16, 2022. So far, more than 17 lakh adolescents have been administered the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, said the ministry. It further stated that following a continuous downward trend, India's active caseload has declined to 26,240 today, constituting 0.06 per cent of the country's total positive cases.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-s-cumulative-covid-vaccination-coverage-exceeds-1-81-bn-122032000681_1.html

External

India, Australia to conclude early harvest deal by end of month: Sources

India and Australia will conclude an early harvest agreement by the end of this month, said sources on Sunday. An early harvest agreement is aimed at liberalising tariffs on the trade of certain goods between two countries or trading blocs before a comprehensive agreement. The development comes as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Australian counterpart Scott Morrison will hold the second India-Australia Virtual Summit on Monday to lay the way forward on new initiatives and enhance cooperation in a diverse range of sectors between the two countries.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-australia-to-conclude-early-harvest-deal-by-end-of-month-sources-122032000584_1.html

India's maize exports up 22% YoY, hit all-time high of \$816.31 mn in FY22

The export of maize has touched USD 816.31 million in the first ten months of the current fiscal 2021-22 (April-January), already exceeding the USD 634.85 million achieved during the last financial year, Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry informed on Sunday. "From an exports realization of USD 142.8 million in 2019-20, the export of maize increased nearly six-fold, taking the total value of shipment to USD 1593.73 million in the last three years despite logistical challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak," the Ministry said in a press release. Neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Nepal are the major importers of maize from India.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-s-maize-exports-at-all-time-high-of-816-31-mn-in-fy-22-122032000467_1.html

US frowns upon India's rice exports at WTO, demands notification of all public stock-holding programmes

The US has questioned India's "sky-rocketing" rice exports in 2021 and accused it at the WTO of using the 'Bali interim peace clause' for over-shooting subsidy limits without meeting the requirement of separately notifying its public stock holding (PSH) programmes. At the recent Committee on Agriculture meet, New Delhi assured WTO members, that its rice export, pegged at 21.4 million tonnes in 2021, was not sourced from its rice stocks from PSH programmes procured at MSP (minimum support price).

[https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/us-frowns-upon-indias-rice-exports-at-wto-demands-notification-of-all-public-stock-holding-programmes/article65243384.ece'](https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/us-frowns-upon-indias-rice-exports-at-wto-demands-notification-of-all-public-stock-holding-programmes/article65243384.ece)