



April 11, 2022 – Monday

Key Developments

Precaution dose of Covid-19 vaccine rolled out at private centres

India on Sunday began administering precaution dose of Covid-19 vaccines to all aged above 18 years, who have completed nine months since the administration of their second dose, at private vaccination centres. The Centre has told all states and UTs that the precaution dose will be of the same Covid-19 vaccine which has been used for administration of the first and second dose and that private vaccination centres can charge up to a maximum of Rs 150 per dose as service charge over and above the cost of the vaccine. Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan, who held an orientation meeting of all health secretaries of states and UTs on Saturday, also informed that no fresh registrations would be required for precaution dose as all due beneficiaries are already registered on CoWIN.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/precaution-dose-of-covid-19-vaccine-rolled-out-at-private-centres/articleshow/90760496.cms>

Economy

For 3rd quarter in row, Indian startup funding crosses \$10 bn in Q1: Report

The startup ecosystem has created as many as 14 unicorns in the first three months of 2022, and for the third consecutive quarter, they have received over USD 10 billion across 334 funding deals, says an industry report. Creation of 14 more unicorns takes the overall tally of startups with over USD 1 billion valuation in the country to 84 now, according to a PwC India report.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/for-3rd-quarter-in-row-indian-startup-funding-crosses-10-bn-in-q1-report-122041000519_1.html

Inflation, expensive fuel may eat into household budget: Economists

India's households may cut purchases of a range of goods - including biscuits, breakfast cereals, automobiles, hair oils, shampoos, detergents and white goods - this year because of the rise in prices and costlier fuel, economists say. Household spending on fuel and transport could rise by almost 2.5 percentage points in FY23 because of higher prices, HDFC Bank estimates, which may force spending cuts on other items as home budgets are adjusted.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/inflation-expensive-fuel-may-eat-into-household-budget-economists/articleshow/90755108.cms>

Banking and Finance

Level of optimism about loan demand slightly lower in Q1 FY23: Bank Lending Survey

Bankers' were very positive about loan demand from all major sectors during Q1 (April-June) 2022-23, according to the Reserve Bank of India's latest Bank Lending Survey (BLS). However, the level of optimism was somewhat lower than in the previous survey round. Going by net responses (computed as the difference of percentage of banks

reporting increase/optimism and those reporting decrease/pessimism in respective parameters), expectation for “loan demand” for all sectors was lower at 46.6 per cent for Q1 FY23 against 51.7 per cent in Q4 (January-March) FY22.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/money-and-banking/level-of-optimism-about-loan-demand-slightly-lower-in-q1-fy23-bank-lending-survey/article65308593.ece>

Interoperable cardless cash withdrawal at ATMs likely to see takers in millennials, rural population

Contactless payments are set to get another boost with the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) plan to enable cardless cash withdrawals at ATMs. While the facility had gained some traction during the pandemic, players believe that it will now see more usage and adoption, especially from the younger population and in rural areas. “It's another channel or platform for customers to access cash. In the new approach, cash is still withdrawn from ATM machines; the change is — instead of physical debit cards, customers can use UPI-based QR code to withdraw cash,” Ashish Ahuja, Chief Operating Officer, Fino Payments Bank, said, adding that it will further simplify banking.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/money-and-banking/interoperable-cardless-cash-withdrawal-at-atms-likely-to-see-takers-in-millennials-rural-population/article65305990.ece>

FAQ on taxation of cryptocurrencies, virtual digital assets in works

The government is working on an FAQ on taxation of cryptocurrencies, which will give a nuanced clarification on the applicability of income tax and GST on virtual digital assets, an official said. The set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), which is being drafted by the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), RBI and Revenue Department, would also be vetted by the law ministry, the official added. "FAQ on taxation of cryptocurrency and virtual digital assets is in works. Although FAQs are for information purposes and do not have legal sanctity, law ministry's opinion is being sought to ensure that there is no loophole," the official told PTI.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/markets/faq-on-taxation-of-cryptocurrencies-virtual-digital-assets-in-works-122041000194_1.html

FM to meet PSBs' heads on Apr 23 to nudge them for credit expansion

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to meet heads of public sector banks (PSBs) on April 23 to review performance of the lenders and progress made by them on various schemes launched by the government for revival of the economy battered by the pandemic. This is the first full review meeting after presentation of Budget 2022-23. Banks would be urged to sanction loans for productive sectors to accelerate revival of the economy, sources said. According to sources, there would be a comprehensive review of various segments and progress in government schemes including Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS).

https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/fm-to-meet-psbs-heads-on-apr-23-to-nudge-them-for-credit-expansion-122041000357_1.html

Equity MFs see Rs 1.64-trn net inflow in FY22 on strong SIP book

Strong SIP book and lower returns from traditional investments made equity mutual funds an attractive investment destination for investors with equity-oriented funds receiving a staggering net inflow of Rs 1.64 lakh crore in 2021-22. This comes following a net outflow of Rs 25,966 crore during 2020-21, data with Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) showed.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/equity-mfs-see-rs-1-64-lakh-cr-net-inflow-in-fy22-on-strong-sip-book-122041000311_1.html

Industry

Companies likely to face stiff queries from GST authorities

Businesses need to gear up for some stiff queries from goods and services tax authorities, as they begin scrutiny of returns for the first time since the new indirect tax regime was launched in 2017. The Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC) on Sunday rolled out computer-assisted automated selection of returns under GST, which will be based on certain risk-based parameters including claims of input tax credit.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/companies-likely-to-face-stiff-queries-from-gst-authorities/articleshow/90766712.cms>

Electric vehicle retail sales zoom over three-fold in fiscal year 2022

Electric vehicle retail sales in the country witnessed over three-fold jump last fiscal with two-wheeler offtake leading the segment, according to data compiled by automobile dealers' body FADA. Total electric vehicle (EV) retails reached 4,29,217 units in 2021-22, a rise of three-fold from 1,34,821 units in the financial year 2020-21, the industry body said. Total EV sales had stood at 1,68,300 units in the 2019-20 fiscal, it noted. According to the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA), electric passenger vehicle retail sales stood at 17,802 during the last fiscal, up over three-fold from 4,984 units in FY21.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/electric-vehicle-retail-sales-zoom-over-three-fold-in-fiscal-year-2022-122041000207_1.html

GeM: Govt's public procurement marketplace crosses 40-lakh seller base

The public procurement portal Government eMarketplace has crossed the 40-lakh-seller mark, just around five months after it crossed 30 lakh sellers on the back of growing MSME registrations on the Udyam portal that is integrated with the marketplace. The portal, launched in August 2016, had registered its first 10 lakh sellers in four years and around five months (till January 2021) while the rest 30 lakh sellers were onboarded in the following 15 months. Importantly, the Udyam portal was launched in July 2020.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/msme-eodb-gem-govts-public-procurement-marketplace-crosses-40-lakh-seller-base/2487170/>

SFURTI clusters commissioned in FY22 highest in seven years even as number of artisans employed dropped

The number of MSME clusters inaugurated or commissioned during the financial year 2021-22 under the government's Scheme of Funds for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI) was the highest in the past seven years. According to the data from the MSME Ministry's dashboard, 107 clusters were commissioned with a grant of Rs 302 crore in the last financial year under the SFURTI programme that organises traditional industries and artisans into clusters to boost competitiveness and provide employment. Since FY16, total 251 clusters have been commissioned, 95 in FY21 and 19 in FY20, out of 498 approved with a Rs 1,296 crore grant.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/msme-eodb-sfurti-clusters-commissioned-in-fy22-highest-in-seven-years-even-as-number-of-artisans-employed-dropped/2487077/>

Steel companies betting on India-Australia ECTA to source coking coal cheaper

The free trade agreement (FTA) signed between India and Australia last week will bring down the import cost of coking coal for steelmakers and boost their financials as coal costs account for over 50 per cent of production expenses. After negotiating for about 11 years, both countries signed a historic trade deal — the Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA). This agreement will provide, among other benefits, duty-free access to India for about 96.4 per cent of exports. Both governments expect this deal to boost bilateral trade to \$45-50 billion over the next five years.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/steel-companies-betting-on-india-australia-ecta-to-source-coking-coal-cheaper/article65306042.ece>

Agriculture

Centre reduces raw jute stock limit to facilitate supply to mills

The Centre has further reduced raw jute stock limit for balers and traders in a bid to increase supply of the raw material to mills at a time when major foodgrain producing states are facing a shortage for the environment-friendly packaging material, industry stakeholders said on Sunday. In a recent notification issued by the Office of the Jute Commissioner, the maximum stock limit has been brought down to 500 quintals for jute balers from 750 quintals and 50 quintals for traders from 150 quintals, they said.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/market/commodities/centre-reduces-raw-jute-stock-limit-to-facilitate-supply-to-mills/2487218/>

Maharashtra sugar production at an all-time high this year

Maharashtra has recorded an all-time high sugar production of 132 lakh tonnes this year, state sugar commissioner Shekhar Gaikwad has claimed. But, despite the high production, there is less possibility of the sugar prices coming down, said the official on Saturday while speaking about issues related to excess sugarcane production and steps being initiated to tackle the situation. He said 1,187 lakh tonnes of sugarcane has been crushed in the state till date this year, while about 90 lakh tonnes of the crop is still lying uncut in fields, mostly in the Marathwada region, he said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/maharashtra-sugar-production-at-an-all-time-high-this-year/articleshow/90758510.cms>

Agri reforms important; repeal of 3 farm laws a setback for doubling farmers' income: Niti member Ramesh Chand

Stressing that reforms are necessary for the agriculture sector, Niti Aayog member Ramesh Chand on Sunday said the repeal of three farm laws has come as a 'setback' to higher price realisation by cultivators and could be a factor in achieving the goal of doubling farmers' income by 2022. He also suggested starting fresh consultations with the states for resuming the agriculture reform process, adding some people have already approached Niti Aayog with a call for effecting the reforms. "You see, reforms are important for the agriculture sector. Some farmers were opposing it (three farm laws)...I think immediately what needs to be done is restarting fresh consultations with the states," the Niti Aayog member, who oversees farm policies at the government think tank, told PTI in an interview.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/agri-reforms-important-repeal-of-3-farm-laws-a-setback-for-doubling-farmers-income-niti-member-ramesh-chand/articleshow/90760766.cms>

Infrastructure

MoPSW to expedite Rs 1,913-cr 'high-impact' projects under Gati Shakti

With the Centre aiming for a rapid ramp-up of India's infrastructure and logistics sector, the ministry of ports, shipping, and waterways (MoPSW) has identified 9 high-impact infrastructure projects worth Rs 1,913 crore as part of PM Gati Shakti - National Master Plan (NMP). The high-impact projects will be closely monitored through the financial year 2022-23. "In totality, we have identified 101 projects estimated to cost around Rs 62,627 crore under Gati-Shakti. We aim to complete these by 2024, while the target for the nine high-impact projects is by the end of this fiscal year," a senior official said.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/mopsw-to-expedite-rs-1-913-cr-high-impact-projects-under-gati-shakti-122041000700_1.html

Telecom

High 5G spectrum prices may push players up against the wall: COAI DG

Apex telecom industry body COAI has asserted that spectrum pricing should be kept conducive to market conditions as 5G entails upfront capital investments with monetisation spread over a long-haul, and pricing radiowaves high will only push the players up against the wall. The stage is set for Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) to come out with its recommendations on 5G spectrum pricing and other modalities for upcoming auctions, and the announcement from the sector watchdog is expected anytime now. Norms will also be worked out for new frequencies such as 526-698 MHz and millimetre band, that is 24.25 - 28.5 GHz, in addition to bands such as 700 MHz, 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz, 2500 MHz, 3300-3670 MHz.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-news/high-5g-spectrum-prices-may-push-players-up-against-the-wall-coai-dg/articleshow/90760271.cms>

Energy

Discoms' outstanding dues to gencos rise 17.3% to Rs 123,244 cr in April

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/discoms-outstanding-dues-to-gencos-rise-17-3-to-rs-123-244-cr-in-april-122041000275_1.html

States

J'hkhand govt utilises 86% of total revised budget allocation for 2021-22

Jharkhand government has claimed to have utilised 86 per cent of the total revised budget allocation for fiscal 2021-22. The state government has spent 83 per cent of the revised budget on scheme (plan) head and 91 per cent on establishment (non-plan) head, an official said. Hemant Soren government, on March 3, 2021, had tabled a budget of Rs 91,277 crore including Rs 53,333.66 crore on scheme head and Rs 37,943.34 crore on establishment head for 2021-22 in the state assembly. After revisions, the total budget stood at Rs 89,211.54 crore including Rs 50,489.31 crore on scheme head and Rs 38,722.23 crore on establishment head.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/jkhand-govt-utilises-86-of-total-revised-budget-allocation-for-2021-22/articleshow/90756613.cms>

Govt preparing for redevelopment of 25 non-confirming industrial pockets in Delhi

Moving to create six lakh jobs, the Delhi government will soon start preparation of layout plans for the redevelopment of 25 non-confirming industrial pockets in the city, officials said on Saturday. Government agency Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (DSIIDC) has been tasked to prepare the layouts of these unorganised industrial pockets to redevelop them through creation of infrastructure and improved facilities, a senior government official said. "Normally civic bodies prepare such layouts but keeping various factors in mind DSIIDC will do this job that is likely to be completed in next 2-3 months," he said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/govt-preparing-for-redevelopment-of-25-non-confirming-industrial-pockets-in-delhi/articleshow/90758606.cms>

Healthcare

SII to give free Covishield vials to private vaccination centres to compensate for price difference

A day after slashing the price of the precaution dose of Covishield to Rs 225 per shot for private hospitals, the Serum Institute of India (SII) told the Centre on Sunday that it will compensate for the price difference for the unexpired stocks lying with private centres in the form of free vials of fresh stocks, official sources said. Vaccine majors SII and Bharat Biotech on Saturday said they have decided to cut the prices of the precaution dose of their respective COVID-19 vaccines to Rs 225 per shot for private hospitals after discussions with the government. Bharat Biotech had also announced that the price differential with any existing stocks of Covaxin in private hospitals shall be compensated in the form of additional doses.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/sii-to-give-free-covishield-vials-to-private-vaccination-centres-to-compensate-for-price-difference/articleshow/90759981.cms>

External

US President Biden, PM Modi to have virtual meeting on Monday: White House

US President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Narendra Modi would meet virtually on Monday, the first of its kind between the two leaders that would coincide with the maiden India-US 2+2 dialogue under the Biden Administration, the White House said on Sunday. During the virtual meet, Biden and Modi will discuss cooperation on a range of issues, including ending the COVID-19 pandemic, countering the climate crisis, strengthening the global economy, and upholding a free, open, rules-based international order to bolster security, democracy, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific, she said.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/us-president-biden-pm-modi-to-have-virtual-meeting-on-monday-white-house-122041000714_1.html

India's gold imports surge to \$46.14 bn in FY22 on higher demand

India's gold imports, which have a bearing on the country's current account deficit (CAD), rose by 33.34 per cent to USD 46.14 billion during the 2021-22 fiscal on account of higher demand, according to official data. Gold imports were worth USD 34.62 billion in 2020-21. The surge in gold imports during the last financial year contributed to the widening of the trade deficit to USD 192.41 billion, against USD 102.62 billion in 2020-21. India is the world's second-biggest gold consumer after China. The imports are largely driven by the jewellery industry. The gems and jewellery exports during 2021-22 grew by about 50 per cent to about USD 39 billion.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/markets/india-s-gold-imports-surge-to-46-14-bn-in-fy22-on-higher-demand-122041000428_1.html

India gets market access for exporting banana, baby corn to Canada

The government on Saturday said that the country has got the market access for exporting fresh banana and baby corn to Canada. The move is expected to benefit Indian farmers growing these crops and enhance the country's export earnings. Canada has given approval for export of fresh bananas with immediate effect, while outbound shipment of baby corn will begin from this month after technical update, the government said in a statement. The decision was taken after negotiations between Agriculture Secretary Manoj Ahuja and Canadian High Commissioner H E Cameron MacKay on April 7.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/small-biz/trade/exports/insights/india-gets-market-access-for-exporting-banana-baby-corn-to-canada/articleshow/90756783.cms>