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Economy

India's GDP likely to grow at 6.2% in FY24, says Morgan Stanley

India's gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to grow at 6.2 per cent in FY24 as drivers of domestic demand remain intact amid fears of an impending slowdown, Morgan Stanley said in a research report released on Thursday. The report said that as the economy fully reopened in 2022 leading to a cyclical recovery in consumption, pickup in private capex with healthy balance sheets in the private corporate and financial sector, and acceleration in government capital spending, the world's fifth largest economy will breach the consensus GDP growth figure of 6 per cent. "We believe that the key for sustained domestic demand is a pickup in capex, which will help create more jobs, thus leading to a virtuous cycle of more jobs leading to higher income, which will lead to higher saving, resulting in higher investment", the report notes.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-s-gdp-likely-to-grow-at-6-2-in-fy24-says-morgan-stanley-123021601093_1.html

92% recruiters optimistic about hiring in H1CY23: Naukri.com report

Following a tumultuous layoff period, as many as 92 per cent of recruiters and recruitment consultants have expressed optimism about hiring in the first half of calendar year 2023, according to a report by job portal Naukri.com. Layoffs, the report says, are expected to ease out. Only 4 per cent of recruiters surveyed predicted layoffs/downsizing as the dominant hiring activity in their organizations during the first six months of 2023, with IT emerging as the functional area that is expected to witness the maximum impact of hiring corrections. Other functional areas expected to exhibit similar trends include Business Development, Marketing, HR, and Operations.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/92-recruiters-optimistic-about-hiring-in-h1cy23-says-naukri-com-123021600932_1.html

Banking and Finance

RBI makes changes in NEFT, RTGS for daily reporting of foreign remittances

With the Home Ministry mandating SBI to report all details of overseas donors, including purpose of remittances on daily basis, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday made necessary changes in NEFT and RTGS systems for Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) related transactions. Under the FCRA, foreign contributions must be received only in the "FCRA account" of State Bank of India (SBI), New Delhi Main Branch (NDMB). The contributions to the FCRA account are received directly from foreign banks through SWIFT and from Indian intermediary banks through NEFT and RTGS systems. In a circular, the RBI said in terms of extant requirements of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the donor details such as name, address, country of origin, amount, currency, and purpose of remittance are required to be captured in such transactions and SBI is required to report the same to MHA on daily basis.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/rbi-makes-changes-in-neft-rtgs-for-daily-reporting-of-foreign-remittances-123021601233_1.html

60% private insurers register significant rise in fraud: Deloitte survey

About 60 per cent of Indian private insurers believe there has been a significant rise in insurance-related frauds, and as risks lurk there is an immediate need to consider a proactive fraud risk management framework, a Deloitte survey said on Thursday. Insurance companies in India have experienced a rise in fraud instances in life and health insurance, and increased digitisation, remote working post pandemic and weakened controls are key factors contributing to frauds, according to Deloitte's Insurance Fraud Survey 2023. "About 60 per cent of survey respondents believe that there has been a significant rise in fraud, while further 10 per cent experienced a marginal increase," the survey said.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/60-private-insurers-register-significant-rise-in-fraud-deloitte-survey-123021600816_1.html

Centre aims to mop up Rs 75,000 cr from senior citizen savings scheme

The maximum investable amount of the senior citizen savings scheme (SCSS) — enhanced from Rs 15 lakh to Rs 30 lakh in the Union Budget 2023-24 (FY24) — could mobilise Rs 75,000 crore. This will help the government avoid overshooting the projected net market borrowing of Rs 11.8 trillion for FY24, said a government source.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-aims-to-mop-up-rs-75-000-crore-from-sr-citizen-savings-scheme-123021601062_1.html

Industry

Govt discusses easing adoption of framework to curb fake e-commerce reviews by MSMEs, startups

The consumer affairs ministry on Wednesday organised a meeting chaired by the Department of Consumer Affairs Rohit Kumar Singh to “deliberate ways to ensure easier adoption of Standard IS 19000:2022 by MSMEs and startups to boost the confidence of the industry and consumers.” According to a statement issued by the ministry, Singh said the scheme- Conformity Assessment Scheme on IS 19000:2022 was formulated with the objective of certifying the processes related to the collection, moderation and publication of online customer reviews as per IS 19000:2022 to check the publication of fake or misleading reviews. Importantly, India’s standards body Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) had published the IS 19000:2022 — Online Consumer Reviews – Principles and Requirements for their Collection, Moderation and Publication in December last year applicable to businesses that publish consumer reviews online, including suppliers/sellers of products and services that collect reviews from their own customers, a third-party contracted by the suppliers/sellers or an independent third party.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/msme-eodb-govt-discusses-easing-adoption-of-framework-to-curb-fake-e-commerce-reviews-by-msmes-startups/2983478/>

Agreements with 26 companies signed under PLI scheme for specialty steel, says Jyotiraditya Scindia

Agreements have been signed with 26 companies for 54 applications under the production linked incentive (PLI) for specialty steel, Union Steel Minister Jyotiraditya M Scindia said on Thursday. The minister made the remarks at the Global Zinc Summit 2023 in the national capital where he also urged the stakeholders to explore investment opportunities in India. “We had a PLI for specialty steel and that includes steel products with zinc. I report we have awarded 54 applications submitted from close to 26 companies (which will lead to) an investment of...Rs 30,000 crore, a capacity addition of 26 million tonne and employment generation potential of about 25,000 people,” Scindia said.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/agreements-with-26-companies-signed-under-pli-scheme-for-specialty-steel-says-jyotiraditya-scindia/2983428/>

Indian consumer goods makers bet on rural recovery to lift profits

A nascent revival in rural demand is likely to prop profits at Indian consumer goods companies in the March quarter, as improving income and credit disbursal allow buyers to spend more on branded oils, tea, snacks and soaps. Cinthol soap-maker Godrej Consumer Products Ltd and Parachute oil manufacturer Marico Ltd are set to improve their earnings the most in two years when they report results for the fiscal fourth quarter, according to Refinitiv data. Hajmola-maker Dabur India Ltd's profit is expected to grow 35% - the highest in at least 16 quarters - during the same period, according Refinitiv. Rural consumers - hit especially hard in the aftermath of the pandemic - typically make up about two-thirds of consumer goods companies' sales, according to Bengaluru, Karnataka-based Bizom, which tracks retail industry trends.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/fmkg/indian-consumer-goods-makers-bet-on-rural-recovery-to-lift-profits/articleshow/97980312.cms>

Agriculture

FCI sells 3.85 lakh tonnes wheat in open mkt via e-auction to boost local supply, cool prices

Food Corporation of India (FCI) sold 3.85 lakh tonnes of wheat to bulk consumers in the second round of e-auction, as part of its efforts to boost domestic supplies and control prices of wheat and atta (wheat flour). Last month, the government announced plans to sell 30 lakh tonnes of wheat in the open market from its buffer stock under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS). Out of the 30 lakh tonnes, the Food Corporation of India will sell 25 lakh (2.5 million) tonnes to bulk consumers like flour millers through e-auction and 2 lakh tonnes will be given to states/union territories. As much as 3 lakh tonnes of wheat are being provided to institutions and state PSUs at a concession for converting wheat into wheat flour. More than 1,060 bidders participated and 3.85 LT (lakh tonnes) wheat was sold during the second e-auction organised by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) on February 15," an official statement said. FCI, the government's nodal agency for procurement and distribution of foodgrains, had offered 15.25 lakh tonnes of wheat stock during the auction.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/fci-sells-3-85-lakh-tonnes-wheat-in-open-mkt-via-e-auction-to-boost-local-supply-cool-prices/2983624/>

Heat a concern for wheat crop: Skymet

Higher temperature in the second half of February is a cause for concern for the wheat crop in the country ahead of the harvests starting in March, private weather forecast agency Skymet has said. Temperatures across all major wheat-growing states in the country at present remain 2-3 degrees higher than normal and every degree rise in temperature causes exponential damage to crop, said GP Sharma, president of Skymet. "This has been a peculiar year as there has been a lot of volatility in temperature in the month of February, which is usually considered a stable month," he said. Sharma said if the variation in mercury levels continue, it could touch even 40 degree Celsius in March in some eastern and northern parts of India, causing damage to wheat crop.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/heat-a-concern-for-wheat-crop-skymet/articleshow/97991912.cms>

Infrastructure

NPG identifies projects worth Rs 4.5 lakh crore for Gati Shakti masterplan

India has identified infrastructure projects worth ₹4.53 lakh crore to boost urban connectivity and support manufacturing, which would now be undertaken under the ambit of the PM Gati Shakti masterplan. The Network Planning Group (NPG) has shortlisted several road, rapid rail, metro and railway projects as also petroleum pipelines as key infra developments that need to be expeditiously completed. The move comes on the back of the government announcing a ₹10 lakh crore capex plan in the budget for the next fiscal year. Backing of the NPG, consisting of the heads of the planning divisions of eight ministries and departments, is likely to result in faster approvals and implementation of the projects.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/npg-identifies-projects-worth-rs-4-5-lakh-crore-for-gati-shakti-masterplan/articleshow/97990455.cms>

Vibrant Villages Programme: Govt to focus on infrastructural development of border villages in Himachal, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Arunachal, and Ladakh

In a bid to develop essential infrastructure along the northern border, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Vibrant Villages Programme' (VVP) on Wednesday. The program aims to develop the villages of blocks on the northern border and improve the quality of life of people living in the border villages. This centrally sponsored scheme has been approved for the FY 2022-23 to 2025-26, with a financial allocation of Rs 4,800 crore. Out of the total allocation, a fund of Rs 2,500 crore will be used for the development of roads. The new central scheme will not overlap with the existing Border Area Development Programme. The 'Vibrant Villages Programme' will focus on mobile and internet connectivity, all-weather road, drinking water, and

round-the-clock electricity using renewable sources (Solar and Wind energy). It will also focus on the development of tourist centers, multi-purpose centers, and health and wellness Centers.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/infrastructure/vibrant-villages-programme-govt-to-focus-on-infrastructural-development-of-border-villages-in-himachal-uttarakhand-sikkim-arunachal-and-ladakh/2983094/>

Railways, India Post launch Rail Post Gati Shakti Express Cargo Service

Indian Railways and India Post have formally launched Rail Post Gati Shakti Express Cargo Service, Joint Parcel Product of Railways, and India Post. In consonance with the 'Gati Shakti Master Plan' to provide seamless solutions for the movement of parcels, Indian Railways and the Department of Post have collaborated and evolved a Joint Parcel Product (JPP), the Rail Post Gati Shakti Express Cargo. This is in compliance with the Budget announcement for FY 2022-23. On Thursday, it has been started, on the four sectors -Delhi to Kolkata; Bangalore to Guwahati, Surat to Muzaffarpur, and Hyderabad to Hazrat Nizamuddin. However, a total of 15 sectors have been planned to be covered in the first phase. To implement this idea, initially, 15 OD pairs of time-tabled Express Cargo Service trains have been finalised under this initiative over Indian Railways.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/railways-india-post-launch-rail-post-gati-shakti-express-cargo-service-123021700092_1.html

Warehousing rentals surge in India on robust demand

Sustained rise in demand led by accelerating manufacturing investments, aggressive expansion of e-commerce and the growth of third-party logistics (3PL) companies has helped warehousing rentals upward across India's key logistics property markets. The appreciation in rental values has catapulted Indian cities including Mumbai, Bangalore, and Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR) into the tally of Asia Pacific's top 10 logistics markets based on the performance in 2022 and robust outlook for 2023. Among these cities, Mumbai ranked 6th in the Asia-Pacific region's logistics market in terms of annual rental growth. At Rs 22 per sq ft a month, the city witnessed rental appreciation of 9.3% from a year ago in 2022, showed data from Knight Frank India. The Mumbai region is expected to gain an additional warehousing space supply of 1.1 million sq ft in 2023.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/property/-/cstruction/warehousing-rentals-surge-in-india-on-robust-demand/articleshow/97973481.cms>

Energy

India to blacklist renewable power companies for missing project deadlines

India will exclude renewable power companies from government contracts for between three and five years if they do not meet project completion deadlines, a government order seen by Reuters shows, as the country looks to speed up green power projects. "If any renewable energy project is not completed by the prescribed date of completion, then its bank guarantee should be encashed and the developer blacklisted after asking to show cause," the order issued by the new and renewable energy ministry said.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/india-to-blacklist-renewable-power-companies-for-missing-project-deadlines/2983848/>

India's fuel demand sees significant increase in February

India's fuel demand witnessed the sharpest rebound in February as petrol and diesel consumption rose by double digits after a winter lull in the previous month, preliminary industry data showed on Thursday. Petrol sales jumped almost 18 per cent to 1.22 million tonnes in the first half of February, as compared to 1.04 million tonnes of consumption in the same period of last year. Sales were 18.3 per cent higher than in COVID-marred first half of February 2021 and 15.7 per cent more than in the same period of 2020. Month-on-month, the demand was up 13.6 per cent, reversing the dip in the previous month. Sales had fallen 5.1 per cent month-on-month in January as cold conditions cut vehicular movement.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/indias-fuel-demand-sees-significant-increase-in-february/articleshow/97977222.cms>

Telecom

Mobile user base dips for fourth month in a row, shows Trai data

The number of mobile phone users in India decreased by 0.11 million in December, marking the fourth straight month of decline, the latest data from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) showed. Users have reduced by 0.6 million, 1.82 million and 3.66 million in the three months since September. In recent months, the number of users had increased by 1.08 million in August, 640,000 in July, and 1.89 million in June. The decline has been concentrated in rural areas in September, November and December. The number of users in India's vast rural hinterland fell by 0.56 million in December, lower than the 2 million fall registered in November and 3.7 million fall in September. Meanwhile, the number of users in cities rose by 1.03 million in the latest month, after rising 1.42 million in November.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/mobile-user-base-dips-for-fourth-month-straight-down-0-11-mn-in-dec-123021601026_1.html

Trai asks telecom companies to weed out unverified telemarketers

To curb the ever-growing menace of pesky promotions and unauthorised advertisements by telemarketing firms spamming message inboxes, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) has asked telecommunication service providers (TSPs) to scrub their database clean and block all unverified telemarketer accounts. In a key move, it said entities involved in message transmission should be identifiable and tracked, if required. On Thursday, Trai asked TSPs to re-verify all registered headers and message templates on their distributed ledger technology (DLT) platform within 30 days and block all unverified headers and message templates within 60 days.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/trai-asks-telecom-companies-to-weed-out-unverified-telemarketers-123021600902_1.html

India will have over 150 mn 5G users by 2024, 2G count falling: Report

India will have more than 150 million 5G subscribers by 2024 as the numbers jump in the second half of this year, telecom gear maker Nokia has projected. The country will also have a combined 4G and 5G subscriber base of 990 million by 2024, said Nokia in a report based on research conducted by OMDIA. There will be around 150 million 2G customers by 2024: down from the 350 million users now mainly with Vodafone Idea, Airtel and state-owned BSNL. There are now more than 20 million 5G customers in the country, according to latest estimates since the service was launched in October last year. Reliance Jio, according to sources, is already looking at having 100 million 5G customers by the end of FY 24: if it does that the Nokia number could well be surpassed.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-will-have-over-150-mn-5g-users-by-2024-2g-count-falling-report-123021600480_1.html

States

UP govt gets investment proposals worth crores in Azamgarh, Lakhimpur Kheri

The Uttar Pradesh government has received investment proposals worth crores of rupees in Azamgarh, Rampur, and Lakhimpur Kheri which would benefit thousands of youth by providing employment opportunities. According to an official statement, investment proposals worth Rs 2,214 crores in Azamgarh, Rs 4,757 crores in Rampur, and Rs 42,960 crores in Lakhimpur Kheri were received by the government. "More than 1.29 lakh young people will benefit from these investments in the state in terms of jobs and employment opportunities," the statement said. US firm Imperia Innovation Invest (Austin Consulting Group) has expressed its desire to invest in infrastructure and education in Gola Gokarannath," it added. The statement further said that a total of 78 proposals worth Rs 42,960 crore have been signed for investments in Lakhimpur Khiri, which will provide employment to 1,07,184 youths.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/up-govt-gets-investment-proposals-worth-crores-in-azamgarh-lakhimpur-kheri-123021700097_1.html

Healthcare

Health Ministry working on 'One Nation, One Organ Allocation' policy

The Union Health Ministry is working on a 'One Nation, One Organ Allocation' policy in consultation with states to come up with uniform guidelines for registration, allocation and other aspects of the process, official sources said.

Recently, the Supreme Court asked the Health Ministry to examine and take appropriate action on some states imposing the condition of submission of domicile certificates for patients wishing to register in the cadaver transplant registry for organ transplantation. A uniform policy, an official source said, "will help patients in seeking transplant from deceased donors at any hospital in the country giving them a lot of flexibility". Working towards firming up the policy, the ministry has already recommended states to remove the domicile criterion for registering those seeking organs from deceased donor for transplant procedures.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/health-ministry-working-on-one-nation-one-organ-allocation-policy/articleshow/97988751.cms>

External

India's plan to lift curbs on solar imports to hit local production

India's plan to lift a key trade barrier on solar modules will deliver a blow to the nation's ambition of quickly expanding local production, according to domestic manufacturers. Officials are considering a relaxation of rules for the next two years that restrict imports from China and other foreign producers, because local plants can't keep up with rising demand. The proposal risks stalling efforts by Indian companies to expand local production, a step that's seen as crucial to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi's targets to both raise the use of renewable energy and encourage more manufacturing under his "Make in India" campaign. "Such volatile changes in government policy show that businesses can't be dependent on policy support," said Vinay Rustagi, managing director at Bridge To India, a renewable energy consulting firm. "It's a dampener for domestic manufacturing prospects."

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-s-plan-to-lift-curbs-on-solar-imports-to-hit-local-production-123021600671_1.html

India's exports rise in both value, volume terms in 2022: GTRI report

The country's merchandise exports have recorded a healthy growth in both value and volume terms in 2022, economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said in a report on Thursday. The outbound shipments rose by 14.6 per cent year-on-year to USD 453.3 billion in 2022. "The study found that products where exports increased to cover a value of USD 315.9 billion (69.8 per cent of total merchandise exports). But, products whose export quantities increased over the previous year represent USD 285.6 billion (63 per cent of total exports)," it said.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/markets/india-s-exports-rise-in-both-value-volume-terms-in-2022-gtri-report-123021600850_1.html

India's January gold imports plunge 76% to 32-month low on subdued demand

India's January gold imports plunged 76% from a year earlier to a 32-month low on subdued demand after domestic prices rallied to record highs and as jewellers postponed purchases, hoping for a reduction in import duty, a government source said. Lower imports by the world's second-biggest bullion consumer could weigh on benchmark gold prices, but the fall may help in bringing down India's trade deficit and support the ailing rupee. The country imported 11 tonnes of gold in January, compared with 45 tonnes a year earlier, the source said on condition of anonymity, as he is not authorised to speak to the media. In value terms, January imports dropped to \$697 million from \$2.38 billion a year earlier, he said on Thursday. Local gold futures jumped to a record high of 57,270 rupees per 10 grams in January, stifling retail demand, which had been expected to improve amid the ongoing wedding season, said a Mumbai-based dealer with a private bullion importing bank.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/markets/india-s-january-gold-imports-plunge-76-to-32-month-low-on-subdued-demand-123021600564_1.html