



## Public Finance

### **Centre has agreed to discuss Statehood, say Ladakh leaders**

Ladakh civil society groups have put off an indefinite hunger strike scheduled from Tuesday after a meeting with officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Monday. The Centre has agreed to discuss their demands, which include Statehood for Ladakh, granting the region tribal status through inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, and constitution of a Public Service Commission for Ladakh, in a meeting on February 24. (*The Hindu*)

### **Himachal Budget: Losses of public sector firms hit Rs 5,143 cr in FY23**

Cumulative losses of public sector enterprises in Himachal Pradesh stood at Rs 5,143.46 crore as on March 31, 2023 and 14 out of 23 such units were in the red, according to a state government report. The report on public sector units was tabled in the state assembly on Saturday during the presentation of the annual budget for the next financial year (*Business Standard*)

### **Public money and public policy**

Many Indian cities are becoming denser by the day. There is a pressing need for a somewhat ongoing heavy spending on improving the city infrastructure. This includes, inter alia, many new wider roads, flyovers, bypass roads, underpasses, overbridges, elevated roads, sea-link bridges, and metro lines. All these have massive costs. So, the focus and the needed spending on other important causes such as education and health are often compromised. There is indeed a trade-off in the allocation of public money. But public policy can help. (*Business Standard*)

### **Govt raises authorised capital of FCI from Rs 10,000 cr to Rs 21,000 cr.**

The government has increased the authorised capital of state-run Food Corporation of India (FCI) from ₹10,000 crore to ₹21,000 crore to enhance the operational capabilities and fulfill its mandate effectively, the Food Ministry said on February 17. FCI is the central government's nodal agency that undertakes the procurement of foodgrains at a minimum support price (MSP) to protect the interest of farmers. It also maintains strategic stocks and distributes the grains under different welfare schemes. (*The Hindu*)

### **India Inc must get its act together on capex: RBI's state of economy report**

The Indian corporate sector must get its act together to take advantage of the lower borrowing cost to make capital expenditure (capex) and relieve the government of heavy lifting, according to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) state of the economy report released on Tuesday. The report, authored by RBI staff, including Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra, expects the current liquidity conditions to ease with government spending, and inflation expectations to edge down, while observing that unsecured loans continued to grow despite an increase in risk weighting. (*Business Standard*)

### **Expectations of fresh round of private capex to fuel growth: RBI Bulletin**

The Indian economy continues to sustain the momentum achieved in the first half of 2023-24 and expectations of a fresh round of capex by the corporate sector is likely to fuel the next leg of growth, the Reserve Bank Bulletin said on Tuesday. "The likelihood of the global economy exhibiting stronger than expected growth in 2024 has brightened in recent months, with risks broadly balanced," said an article on 'State of the Economy' published in the bulletin. It further said the Indian economy continues to sustain the momentum achieved in the first half of 2023-24, going by high frequency indicators. *(Business Standard)*

### **Farmers' agitation to cause Rs 500 cr economic loss daily to northern states: PHDCCI**

Agrawal stated that the farmers' agitation is severely impacting the businesses of the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and parts of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan as raw materials of such units are procured largely from other states to execute production processes and to meet up demand of the consumers. *(The Economic Times)*

### **Tamil Nadu revenue deficit to spike to Rs 49,279 crore in 2024-25**

"The imposition of stringent conditions on the borrowing ceiling by the Union Government has unduly restricted the ability of the State to raise resources to fund its development initiatives," Finance minister Thangam Thennarasu said. *(The Economic Times)*

### **Liquidity deficit tightening financial conditions: CRISIL**

Financial conditions have tightened the economy with liquidity going into a deeper deficit putting upward pressure on short-term rates, according to a research report by CRISIL Market Intelligence and Analytics. The report released during the month also said that foreign portfolio investors turned net sellers further aggravating the tight liquidity conditions. *(The Economic Times)*

### **Robust tax mopup gives 433% boost to capex, says FM**

Robust tax collections have increased capital expenditure and investment in infrastructure projects. Gross direct tax collections rose 16.77%, with expectations of further increase. Refunds worth ₹2.48 lakh crore were issued, and 1.66 crore income tax returns were processed in a day. Time for assessment reduced, faceless assessment introduced for transparency, and technology used to boost collections. *(The Economic Times)*



## **Taxation**

### **Implementation of budget announcement. Withdrawal of small IT demands not to entail credit, refund, says IT Dept**

Remission and extinguishment of small income-tax demands will not entail any credit or refund, Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has said. It simultaneously said that such a scheme will not result in immunity from prosecution. The scheme aims to benefit over 1 crore assesseees. The remission scheme had been announced in the Interim Budget. Subsequently, CBDT has issued an order to implement the scheme, preferably within two months. *(BusinessLine)*

### **RoDTEP: Centre evaluating feasibility of export benefits to SEZ, EOUs**

The Centre is evaluating the financial feasibility of a proposal to extend export benefits under the popular export promotion scheme, Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP), to units in export-oriented units (EOUs) and special economic zones (SEZs), and would decide based on the funds available, official sources have said. *(BusinessLine)*

### **Personal income tax collection set to exceed corporate income tax for second year in a row**

Personal Income Tax (PIT) collection is set to exceed Corporate Income Tax (CIT) for the second successive year in a row, data from Income Tax department showed. It also showed that fiscal year (FY) 2023-24 is also likely to see the share of direct taxes higher than indirect taxes in overall tax collection. Income tax data for the period starting from FY2000-01 to FY 2022-23 showed that there have only been two instances (FY 2020-21 and FY 2022-23) when PIT collection was higher than CIT. *(BusinessLine)*

### **Karnataka HC ruling may ease service tax burden on venture capital funds**

A recent Karnataka High Court ruling in an appeal filed by ICICI Econet Internet and Technology Fund and others may ease the potential service tax burden of private equity and venture capital funds (VCFs). In 2021, the Customs, Excise and Service Tax Appellate Tribunal, Bangalore (CESTAT) had held that these funds managed the money of investors like a banking or financial institution, making them liable to pay service tax. *(BusinessLine)*



## **National Accounts and State of the Economy**

### **GDP, GVA growth eased to 6% in Q3, estimates ICRA**

India's real GDP growth likely slowed to 6% in the third quarter, from 7.6% in Q2, rating firm ICRA said on Wednesday, citing the uneven monsoon, slowing government capex and flagging momentum in some indicators, including industrial activity. The National Statistical Office, which has estimated GDP growth for 2023-24 at 7.3%, will release its estimates for Q3 at the end of this month. ICRA also expects the Gross Value Added (GVA) to ease to 6%, from 7.4% in Q2, with the expansion in agriculture GVA pegged at 0.5% and industrial GVA growth seen easing to 8.8%, from 13.2% in the preceding quarter. *(The Hindu)*

### **Inflation expectations may stabilise, edge down, say RBI officials**

Inflation expectations may stabilise and edge down although renewed pressures from cereals and proteins cannot be ruled out, Reserve Bank of India officials wrote in an article in the RBI's February bulletin released on Tuesday. Citing the fact that retail inflation slowed to a three-month low of 5.1% in January, from December's 5.69%, the officials noted that overall inflation developments were turning favourable, providing a stable environment for corporates to plan expansion strategies in anticipation of a demand pick-up. *(The Hindu)*

### **DPIs have potential to boost India's GDP growth 3x by 2030: Nasscom study**

India's digital public infrastructure (DPIs) has the potential to drive the gross domestic product (GDP) growth by three times till 2030, according to a study by Nasscom. The

report titled “India’s Digital Public Infrastructure - Accelerating India’s Digital Inclusion” says that the economic value added by DPs could potentially increase to around 4.2 per cent of GDP by 2030, up from 0.9 per cent in 2022. Digital Public Infrastructure (DPIs) is a set of common platforms or networks that is used to deliver citizen-centric services. *(Business Standard)*

### **India's GDP growth to moderate to 6.5% in FY25, projects Morgan Stanley**

Morgan Stanley Research said on Wednesday that it expects India’s GDP growth for FY25 to moderate to 6.5 per cent from 6.9 per cent projected for FY24. ICRA, meanwhile, has projected the year-on-year (Y-o-Y) GDP growth to moderate sequentially to 6 per cent in Q3 FY24 from 7.6 per cent, led by agriculture and industry sectors. MS Research’s report said it maintained a constructive outlook on the Indian economy, while highlighting that risks emanate from global factors and elections in May 2024. *(Business Standard)*

### **India to grow 6.5% in FY25, down from 6.9% this fiscal: Ind-Ra**

India's economy is expected to grow by 6.5% in the fiscal year 2024-25, supported by sustained government capex, soft global commodity prices, and signs of growth in the private corporate capex cycle, according to India Ratings and Research. The forecast aligns with the International Monetary Fund's projection but is below the Reserve Bank of India's estimate of 7%. *(The Economic Times)*

### **GDP growth to moderate sequentially to 6% in Q3 FY2024, projects ICRA**

Rating agency ICRA on Wednesday projected GDP growth to moderate sequentially to 6 per cent in the third quarter of FY24 from 7.6 per cent in the preceding three months mainly due to subdued performance of agriculture and industrial sectors. Further, it said the GVA (Gross Value Added) growth is estimated to ease to 6 per cent in the October-December quarter FY24 from 7.4 per cent in the second quarter of the last fiscal. *(Business Standard)*

### **Iffco ranked 1st among 300 cooperatives in world, 72nd in overall turnover**

The Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) has been ranked again as the No. 1 cooperative among the top 300 cooperatives in the world, sustaining its position from last year. The ranking is based on the ratio of turnover over gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. The ranking affirms that IFFCO is contributing significantly to the GDP and economic growth of the nation. It relates the turnover of the enterprise to the wealth of the country, according to the 2023 edition of the 12th Annual World Cooperative Monitor (WCM) report published by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA). *(Business Standard)*

### **India on track to be \$10 trn economy, set for 3rd largest slot: WEF prez**

India is on track to become a \$10 trillion economy in coming years and grab the third-largest slot soon, World Economic Forum President Borge Brende said on Thursday as he described the country as a place with optimism not seen elsewhere in a very fragmented and polarised world. "The Indian economy is the fastest growing among all large economies of the world. We saw in Davos this year that there was a huge interest in India and I think this will only continue," Brende said. *(Business Standard)*

### **RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das highlights main challenges in inflation fight**

Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das has emphasized the importance of stable and low inflation for sustainable economic growth. He highlighted that India has successfully navigated through multiple challenges and emerged as the fastest-growing large

economy. The RBI currently expects India to grow at 7 per cent in the next financial year, which would make it the fourth consecutive year of the nation's GDP growing at or above 7 per cent. *(The Economic Times)*

### **Inflation expectations may stabilise, edge down, say RBI officials**

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### **India has moved to 5th spot from 10th in world in terms of economy: Sitharaman**

The senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader said this is the first government in the country that listens to people, then makes schemes and works to deliver the benefits of such schemes to people. "The BJP is such a party in which even the smallest worker can reach the highest position by working for the party," she said. Claiming that the INDIA opposition bloc has disintegrated, Sitharaman said nothing is achieved by taking photographs. *(The Economic Times)*



## **Banking and Monetary Policy**

### **Paytm bank RBI Ban: Indian fintech is fast, furious — and fraudulent?**

The Reserve Bank of India has taken regulatory action against Paytm and Visa Inc., and more non-bank intermediaries may be targeted. First, Paytm was asked to freeze its banking business, a crackdown so severe that India's pioneering digital payments firm bled out nearly 60% of its market value in two weeks. Then came the regulatory diktat to Visa Inc. The network was told to halt the use of its business cards for commercial payments where a fintech is in the middle. And now, media reports suggest that more non-bank intermediaries may expect a rap on the knuckles. *(The Economic Times)*

### **Plans afoot to digitalise KYC, curb illegal online lending**

The Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC), headed by union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman decided on Wednesday to firm up a strategy to simplify and digitalise the KYC (know-your-customer) process in the financial sector and take more steps to curb unauthorised lending through online applications. The move comes close on the heels of the RBI imposing restrictions on Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PPBL) reportedly for the entity's failure to comply with KYC norms and money laundering concerns, among others. *(The Economic Times)*

### **For bank's survival, Paytm said to be 'open' to even takeover**

One 97 Communications is resigned to losing its associate, Paytm Payments Bank, the entity at the centre of the crisis surrounding the fintech. However, it feels that if there is even a slight chance of its survival through an acquisition, then it is ready to take it. According to sources, the outlook for the bank looks bleak, but there is still hope to eventually convince the regulator through 'good behaviour' to ease some restrictions. *(The Hindu)*

### **RBI to meet banks to examine grey areas in overseas investment rules**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will meet banks to sort out the grey areas in overseas investment (OI) regulations which have stalled the plans of several wealthy Indians, business families, and startups from taking exposures to foreign securities, funds and companies. The central bank has asked leading authorised dealer banks, who handle the transfer of money for such offshore investments, to identify the issues. Officials of RBI's Overseas Investment Department are scheduled to meet bankers this week. *(The Economic Times)*

### **In-depth report reveals the nature, modus operandi, emerging hotspots of digital banking frauds in India**

Based on new findings on digital banking fraud trends, behavioural biometric intelligence player BioCatch said that account takeover represents more than half of all fraud cases for its customers in India. The findings were made public in a report "2024 Digital Banking Fraud Trends in India" released on February 21. It discusses latest fraud risks and prevention strategies for banks. The report is a result of the analysis of over 350 million sessions in the month of December alone. *(The Economic Times)*

### **Banks set up panel to guard executives from corruption cases**

Banks have set up a panel headed by former Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) special director DC Jain to prepare strategies and a framework to effectively deal with cases against lenders under the Prevention of Corruption Act. When contacted, Indian Banks Association (IBA) chief executive Sunil Mehta confirmed that a committee has been set up but declined to divulge further details. Banks had been pressing for immunity from arbitrary arrest or action by investigating agencies against their top executives for taking commercial decisions such as grant of loans, but there has been little headway on this demand so far. *(The Economic Times)*

### **SBI seeks regulatory dispensation in CRR**

State Bank of India (SBI) has asked the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to allow a reduction in the cash reserve ratio (CRR) on green deposit as an incentive for banks to raise these funds, chairman Dinesh Khara said. He said that though banks have started to offer green deposits it will take 2-3 years to start having an impact on the pricing of these deposits. Banks have to keep aside 4.5% of their deposits without earning any interest with the RBI. A CRR exemption on these deposits will free up more funds for banks to lend to environmentally friendly projects. *(The Economic Times)*

### **Real interest rate of 2% risks impairing growth: MPC's Varma**

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) member Jayanth R. Varma was the sole dissenter at the February 6-8 meeting of the RBI's policy panel, which voted 5-1 to hold the repo rate at 6.5%, arguing that with inflation projected to average 4.5% in 2024-25, a real interest rate of 2% would be way too high and ran the risk of hurting economic growth. *(The Hindu)*

### **RBI MPC minutes: Das says premature move may undermine success; Varma bats for rate cut & stance pivot**

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das, explaining the decision to maintain policy repo rates, stated that premature policy pivots could undermine the progress achieved so far. MPC member Jayanth Varma argued there is room for monetary easing without risking an inflation spiral, suggesting a rate cut and a shift in stance to neutral. *(The Economic Times)*



## External Sector

### **'Global issues to impact exports'**

While India's export numbers are encouraging, caution is warranted due to rising global tensions and unevenness in world growth, according to a report by Crisil Market Intelligence & Analytics (MI&A). For instance, many core exports softened in January — electronic goods (9.3% vs. 14.4% in December 2023), engineering goods (4.2% vs. 10.2%) and drugs and pharmaceuticals (6.8% vs. 9.3%). And some key agricultural exports have been under pressure partly due to the ban on rice exports. *(The Hindu)*

### **Red Sea blues: January's export numbers suggest global shipping woes yet to hit home**

For the second successive month, India's goods exports grew last month, albeit with a mild 3.1% uptick from a 1% rise in December. This marks only the fourth month of growth in outbound shipments in 2023-24, and the overall value of merchandise exports this year is down 4.9% at about \$354 billion. While January's \$36.9 billion exports are above this year's monthly average, they are 4% lower than December's tally. *(The Hindu)*

### **Govt. approves 100% FDI in space sector**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Union Cabinet on Wednesday took a series of key decisions, which included the approval for amendments to the existing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy on space sector. "Under the amended policy, 100% FDI is allowed in space sector. The liberalised entry routes... are aimed to attract potential investors to invest in Indian companies in space," said Union Minister Anurag Thakur. The amended policy extends the facility of up to 74% FDI under the automatic route for satellite manufacturing and operation, satellite data products and ground/user segment. *(The Hindu)*

### **Greece's gateway to Asia, India's gateway to Europe**

The state visit by Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis to New Delhi (February 21-22) will be another important step in building a strategic relationship between India and Greece — a process which began with the historic visit of the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, to Greece in August 2023. Ahead of the visit, Mr. Mitsotakis told this writer that he is determined to deepen bilateral ties and cooperation in many fields, adding that "India will find no better gateway to Europe than my country and for Greece there is no better gateway to Asia than a close strategic relationship with India." *(The Hindu)*

### **Panagariya warns against pitfalls of import substitution**

Trade economist and 16th Finance Commission Chairman Arvind Panagariya (pictured) has cautioned against import substitution policies and batted for export-oriented policies to enable India to tread on the path of high economic growth in line with what China in the past. "And there are hardly any champions of an outward export focussed orientation. I fear that for India, exiting this new phase of import substitution is going to be a challenge," he warned. *(Business Standard)*

### **India amends policy, allows 100% FDI in manufacture of satellite components**

India on Wednesday further liberalised its space sector by amending its foreign direct investment (FDI) policy, which may pave the way for more foreign capital inflow in the fields of satellite development and launch, and creating the ground infrastructure for the same. The policy cleared by the Union Cabinet ensures 100 per cent FDI in the manufacturing of components and systems or sub-systems for satellites, ground segments, and user segments. *(Business Standard)*

### **UP received four times more FDI in 2019-23 than in 2000-17, says CM Yogi**

Uttar Pradesh received four times more foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2019-23 in comparison to 2000-2017, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said while speaking at 'UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated the 'UP: An Emerging Destination for Foreign Investment in India' conference on Tuesday. "From 2019-2023, the amount of FDI that came into UP was four times more than the FDI that came from 2000 to 2017. *(Business Standard)*

### **Govt says 20% export duty on parboiled rice to continue beyond Mar 31**

The government on Wednesday extended the 20 per cent duty on export of parboiled rice beyond March 31. A 20 per cent export duty was levied on parboiled rice on August 25, 2023 till October 16, 2023 to maintain adequate local stock and keep domestic prices under check. It was later extended till March 31, 2024. In a notification, the finance ministry said the 20 per cent export duty will continue beyond March 31 without an end date. Besides, duty-free import of yellow peas, too, has been extended beyond March 31, subject to the condition that the bill of landing is issued on or before April 30, 2024. *(Business Standard)*

### **Refining reality: World expects India to go past China in global oil demand**

India's ambitions for its refining sector haven't quite translated into action on the ground. This has implications for energy security, fuel imports and domestic demand. There was a time when delays by India in planning projects were insulated from the world economy. Not anymore. The International Energy Agency (IEA) expects India to be the biggest driver of growth in global oil demand in the coming decade, displacing China. *(Business Standard)*

### **India's lentil imports from Canada surge despite diplomatic strains**

India's lentil imports from Canada more than doubled in 2023 despite diplomatic strains over the murder of a Sikh separatist leader, as a shortfall in production prompted the South Asian country to boost overseas purchases, government and industry officials told Reuters. Relations soured after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau last year said Canada was "actively pursuing credible allegations" that Indian agents were potentially linked to the June 2023 murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian citizen. *(Business Standard)*

### **US lawmakers and apple growers celebrate export of apples to India**

US lawmakers and apple growers are celebrating the export of apples to India this year, which is 16 times more than last year after New Delhi decided to drop the 20 per cent retaliatory tariff put in 2019 on American products, including this fruit. This moment was celebrated at a Seattle port on Tuesday. Apple growers from Washington State have almost a million boxes of apples this year to India, which is 16 times more than last year. *(Business Standard)*



### **Net FDI into India down 55% to \$9.69 billion in Apr-Dec 2023: RBI Bulletin**

The net foreign direct investment (FDI) into India, inflows minus the outflows, declined sharply by 55.2 per cent to \$9.69 billion in April-December 2023, from \$21.63 billion in the corresponding period in 2022, mainly due to a rise in repatriation of equity capital. According to the Reserve Bank of India's February 2024 bulletin, FDI into India was \$19.23 billion and outflows were \$9.54 billion during the April-December 2023 period. *(Business Standard)*

### **Govt cuts import duty on turkeys; exempts extra long staple cotton from tax**

The government has fully exempted customs duty on import of extra-long staple cotton, and has cut duties on specified varieties of imported blueberries, cranberries and frozen turkeys. In a notification, the Finance Ministry has slashed import duty on certain items of blueberries and cranberries from 30 per cent to 10 per cent in some cases and 5 per cent in other cases. *(Business Standard)*

### **India cuts import duty to 5-10% on some fresh, processed food items**

India has cut import duty to 5-10 per cent on some fresh and processed food items, a move that is set to help the United States (US) get a greater market for products such as fresh, frozen, dried and preserved cranberries and blueberries, as well as frozen turkey. The duty cut came into effect from Tuesday, according to a finance ministry notification. Currently, these items attract import duty of around 30-45 per cent. *(Business Standard)*

### **Onion export ban to continue till Mar 31 to keep prices under check: Govt**

The ban on export of onion will continue till its previously announced deadline of March 31 as the government is keen to keep prices under check and ensure domestic availability, a top official said on Tuesday. On December 8, 2023, the government had banned export of onion till March 31. "Ban on onion exports has not been lifted. It is in force and there is no change in the status," Consumer Affairs Secretary Rohit Kumar Singh told PTI. *(Business Standard)*

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## **Agriculture and Rural Economy**

### **Cotton price rise worries mills**

The recent rise in cotton prices in the international market and of cotton sold by the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) in the domestic market has become a matter of concern to textile mills, especially small-scale units. *(The Hindu)*

### **Tractor sales in India hit a rough patch, reflecting rural economic slowdown**

Tractor sales in India, a proxy for rural economic health, have seen a steep decline in key states in the west and south in the first 9 months of the fiscal year, dragging overall sales down 4% in the world's largest market for the equipment. This follows record growth in

FY23. Maharashtra saw a 33% drop in tractor sales, while they fell 21% in Karnataka and 36% in Telangana. This is the sharpest decline ever in these states. *(The Economic Times)*

### **Govt assisting, encouraging farmers to take agriculture on a new path: PM Modi**

Monday reiterated his government's commitment to support farmers in exploring new avenues in agriculture. Addressing an event in Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, the prime minister emphasized the importance of working towards a common goal of having Indian food products on dining tables across the globe. His remarks came amid a protest by a section of farmers over their various demands such as a legal guarantee for minimum support price for crops. He emphasised the focus on natural farming and millets. *(The Economic Times)*

### **retail inflation for farm, rural workers eases marginally in January**

Retail inflation for farm workers and rural labourers eased marginally to 7.52 per cent and 7.37 per cent in January as compared to the previous month, mainly due to lower prices of certain food items. In December 2023, Consumer Price Index-Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL) and Consumer Price Index-Rural Labourers (CPI-RL) was 7.71 per cent and 7.46 per cent, respectively. Food inflation stood at 9.67 percent and 9.43 per cent last month as compared to 9.95 per cent and 9.80 per cent in December 2023 and 6.61 per cent and 6.47 per cent in the year-ago period. All-India CPI number for AL and RL for January 2024 increased by 1 point each to 1,258 and 1,268 points, respectively. The CPI-AL and CPI-RL were 1,257 and 1,267 points, respectively in December 2023. *(Business Standard)*

### **Rampant corruption in agriculture road maps, CM Nitish directly involved, alleges former Minister Sudhakar Singh**

Last Friday, the Bihar CM had given the order to probe the irregularities in the department headed by RJD leaders; Singh alleges irregularities in implementation of the road maps. Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) MLA and former Agriculture Department Minister Sudhakar Singh on Monday alleged corruption in the Agriculture Department in the implementation of agriculture road maps and demanded a probe. He shared a letter he had written while heading the department on manipulation of funds on a large scale in Bihar Agriculture Road map scheme. *(The Hindu)*

### **Centre giving priority to villages, focusing on improving lives of small farmers: PM Modi**

Ahmedabad, Feb 22 (PTI) Amid farmers' protest on the borders between Punjab and Haryana, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said his government was giving priority to every aspect linked to villages and also focusing on improving the lives of small farmers through various schemes and initiatives. He said strengthening the rural economy was necessary to achieve the goal of a 'Viksit Bharat' (developed India). *(ThePrint)*

### **Farmers to hold 'Mahapanchayat' at Ramlila Maidan on 14 March, plans series of protests. Top 10 developments**

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha on Thursday demanded the registration of a murder case over the death of a protesting farmer on the Punjab-Haryana border and announced a Black Day and a tractor march to condemn the incident. The SKM held a meeting to discuss the situation at Shambhu and Khanauri border points where thousands of farmers are camping as part of the 'Delhi Chalo' call. *(Mint)*

## Tamil Nadu: Agriculture Budget presented

A day after the State Budget was tabled, the Agriculture Budget was presented by M.R.K. Panneerselvam, the Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare. Key announcements included the launch of a new programme, the Chief Minister's Mannuyir Kaathu Mannuyir Kaappom Scheme (CM MK MKS), aimed at improving soil quality, and moving towards sustainable and chemical-free agricultural practices, introduction of the 'One Village One Crop' scheme in 15,280 revenue villages and thrust on cultivation of pulses, oilseeds. (*The Hindu*)



## Industry, Manufacturing, Services and Technology

### Engineering graduates are steering the service industry

In a rapidly evolving global economy, the services sector has emerged as a significant player, contributing 53% of India's Gross Value Added (GVA) versus the 28% of the industry sector. This dominance, of services, is also evident in employment distribution — 31% of employment is generated in the services sector versus 25% in industries. This massive growth is fuelling the demand for entry-level employees across the spectrum of the services sector. (*The Hindu*).

### HVAC industry to grow at 16% CAGR: Daikin India MD Jawa

The Indian heating, ventilation, air-conditioning (HVAC) industry is projected to grow at about 16% year-on-year, reaching \$30 billion in size by 2030, an industry executive said. "The Indian HVAC industry is projected to reach \$30 billion by 2030, with a CAGR growth of 15.8% from 2021, fuelled by progressive policies, infrastructure development, and rising disposable income," said K. J. Jawa, CMD, Daikin India at the ACREX India 2024 exhibition of heating, ventilation, air-conditioning, and intelligent buildings. (*The Hindu*).

### DRDO asks industry to join fifth generation fighter development

The Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA), under the Defence Research and Development Organisation, has invited Indian industry players to join the development and manufacture of the indigenous fifth generation fighter jet, the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA). (*The Hindu*)

### A different shade of green: T.N.'s renewable energy initiatives

Tamil Nadu's prescience led it on the wind energy route long before it became fashionable to talk about it. In 1986, it launched a pilot project, and that enabled the State to become an early prominent player in the generation of green and sustainable energy. While other States have slowly gained ground in the race, with the constitution of the Tamil Nadu Green Energy Corporation Limited (TNGECL), the State is attempting to be a forerunner again in the renewable energy sector. Previously, wind was the only energy source that was termed renewable. (*The Hindu*)

### Bihar achieves just 51.78% of mining revenue collection target till Feb 14

The Mines and Geology department of Bihar government has expressed concern over revenue collections falling short of the target and warned officials of strict disciplinary action if they fail to get their act together before the financial year comes to a close. Officials have managed to achieve just Rs 1,896.43 crore of its revenue target of Rs

3,662.39 crore for 2023-24 from the mining sector till February 14, 2024, according to documents. *(Business Standard)*

### **Gasification projects to help in economic development of coal regions: Govt**

The government on Wednesday said that coal gasification projects will help in socio-economic development of coal bearing regions as well as in boosting the country's energy security. Addressing a road show here to promote coal/lignite gasification projects, additional secretary in the coal ministry M Nagaraju called for investments in technology towards a greener and cleaner future. *(Business Standard)*

### **India's Feb business activity accelerates to 7-month high on solid demand**

Indian business activity expanded at its fastest pace in seven months in February as demand remained strong for both manufacturing and services, according to a business survey released on Thursday, which also showed an easing in price pressures. That supports the findings in a Reuters poll which found India, the fastest growing major economy, is expected to continue to grow at a steady pace over the coming years. *(Business Standard)*

### **Manufacturing firms likely to lead pay hikes in 2024: AON India survey**

AON India, in a survey on Wednesday, projected a 9.5 per cent increase in salary in the Indian market for 2024. The number reflects a slight dip from the actual 9.7 per cent salary hike of 2023. The survey also revealed a decline in attrition rates, dropping from 21.4 per cent in 2022 to 18.7 per cent in 2023. *(Business Standard)*

### **6x rise in demand for women apprentices in manufacturing sector: TeamLease**

Recruitment and human resources services TeamLease has seen a five to six-fold increase in the requirement for women apprentices month-on-month when compared prior to July last year, especially in the automotive and electronics manufacturing sectors, which is helping to correct the skew towards men in machine-based assembly line operations. *(Business Standard)*

### **Tractor sales in India hit a rough patch, reflecting rural economic slowdown**

Tractor sales in India, a proxy for rural economic health, have seen a steep decline in key states in the west and south in the first 9 months of the fiscal year, dragging overall sales down 4% in the world's largest market for the equipment. This follows record growth in FY23. *(The Economic Times)*

### **Several small pharma units told to halt operations over quality**

Several drug manufacturing units are under the scanner for quality with the drug regulatory authority carrying out risk-based inspections. The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), along with state drug authorities, have inspected more than 25 units at Baddi in Himachal Pradesh and in Punjab so far this year. *(The Economic Times)*

### **Paper industry for adopting sustainable growth path**

The paper industry in the country has called for adopting a sustainable growth path as it provides direct employment to five lakh people and indirect jobs to around 15 lakh, an official said on Thursday. Secretary General of Indian Pulp & Paper Technical Association (IPPTA) M K Goyal said that the paper industry plays a significant role in the economy of the country. *(The Economic Times)*

## Indian advertisers to adopt a new consumer classification system

The Market Research Society of India (MRSI) has announced the implementation of its latest socioeconomic classification (SEC) system. Called ISEC, the new system is in line with the changing contours of the Indian household, which is more educated and has greater female participation in the workforce, the MRSI said on Wednesday. *(Mint)*



## News on Kerala

### Talks fail; Supreme Court to hear Kerala's suit against Centre

The Supreme Court on Monday decided to go ahead with hearing a suit filed by the State of Kerala against the Centre for "arbitrarily" interfering in its financial affairs, after talks between the two failed to resolve their differences. Appearing before a Bench headed by Justice Surya Kant, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, for Kerala, informed that the Centre wanted it to withdraw the suit in return for giving ₹11,000 crore. *(The Hindu)*

### Centre's stand disappointing, says Balagopal

The Centre's stand that it will release funds only if Kerala withdraws its petition in the Supreme Court is quite disappointing and a challenge to Keralites, said Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal here on Monday. Talking to the media at the Kollam district panchayat, he added that the Union government's decision to deny the State its due share had affected fiscal federalism. "The next hearing of the case is on March 6 and 7," he said. *(The Hindu)*

### ₹1,543.86 crore pending in water bill arrears to Kerala Water Authority

Even as the Kerala Water Authority (KWA) is struggling to pay its electricity bills, its own consumers, including various State government departments, owe the cash-strapped water utility a whopping ₹1,543.86 crore in water charges, as per the latest available data. Various State government departments owe the KWA ₹112.02 crore, public sector undertakings ₹8.38 crore, and private companies ₹84.9 crore, as of December 31. The KWA is yet to receive ₹949.96 crore for water supplied to public taps and ₹388.60 crore for special connections, Sabarimala supply, and Jalanidhi, show State Assembly records. *(The Hindu)*

### Must ensure pvt sector's involvement for Kerala's educational growth: CM

Private sector's involvement, albeit with "social control", should be ensured for the educational growth of Kerala, said Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. He was responding to questions from students at the 'Face to Face with Chief Minister' programme at Malabar Christian College grounds on Sunday, February 18. *(Onmanorama)*

### Suchitwa Mission issues guidelines for keeping election campaigns plastic-free

The Suchitwa Mission has issued strict guidelines ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha polls for keeping election campaigns free of plastics. Campaign banners, boards, and hoardings manufactured from non-recyclable PVC flex, polyester, nylon, and plastic-coated cloth are prohibited, the Suchitwa Mission said. *(The Hindu)*

### Infra development in 28 more colleges completed under RUSA

Infrastructure development in 28 more colleges in the State has been completed under the Centrally sponsored Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA). Minister for Higher Education R. Bindu, who inaugurated the completed works on Thursday, said children

should be encouraged towards research activities from the outset itself. Research should be able to address serious problems in society and find solutions to them(*The Hindu*).

### **Price revision of subsidized items to sustain Supplyco operations: Minister GR Anil**

The revision in prices of the subsidized commodities in the Supplyco outlets was done to ensure the continued operation of these retail supermarkets, said Kerala Minister for Food and Civil Supplies, G R Anil.(*Onmanorama*)

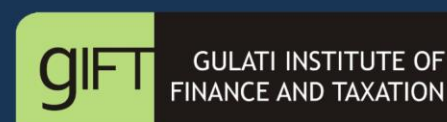
### **Major changes to driving test in Kerala: MVD drops H-Test; restricts automatic, electric vehicles**

The Motor Vehicle Department (MVD) has brought major changes to the driving licence test in Kerala. The circular issued by Transport Commissioner S. Sreejith on Thursday restricts the use of automatic gear and electric vehicles during the tests. Furthermore, MVD also dropped the 'H-test' for the four-wheeler driving test (*Mathrubhumi English*).

### **Chief Wildlife Wardens can declare wild boar vermin; no need to amend wildlife law: Bhupender Yadav**

Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav on Thursday said that Chief Wildlife Wardens (CWW) are empowered under the Wildlife Protection Act to declare wild boars as vermin and therefore the law does not need to be amended. The minister also emphasised that the CWWs have the power under the Act to permit the trapping, capture and killing of problematic animals, but urged the state to use this power "diligently and cautiously. (*Mathrubhumi English*)

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