



Public Finance

Grant-in-aid, tax devolution from Centre to States will moderate at 4.5% from 15.3% last fiscal: NSE

State finances are projected to tighten in FY25 due to a 6.3 per cent decline in central grants. States dependent on these grants, especially in eastern and northeastern regions, will be significantly affected. Devolution growth will also slow, making it harder for states to balance budgets and fund key projects. (*The Economic Times*)

Inter-state disparity in terms of revenue receipt remains huge: Report

Revenue disparity among Indian states remains notable. While some states like Telangana, Karnataka, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh project higher revenue in FY25, others show minimal growth or contraction. India's overall revenue to GDP ratio is lower than other emerging markets, but improvements in revenue collection are observed. (*The Economic Times*)

FinMin seeks expenditure proposals for supplementary demands for grants

The finance ministry has requested expenditure proposals for the first batch of supplementary demands for grants, to be presented in the winter session of Parliament starting in late November. Ministries must submit proposals by early to mid-November, depending on their pre-Budget meeting schedules. (*The Economic Times*)

AP govt to present full Budget in November

The Andhra Pradesh government is likely to present a full Budget for 2024-25 in the middle of November. "The assessment of the financial situation of the State exchequer is almost complete. A comprehensive white paper on it may precede the presentation of the full Budget," a senior official told *businessline*. (*BusinessLine*)

FY26 Budget: Finance Ministry seeks suggestions from trade and industry bodies for changes in taxes

The Finance Ministry has urged trade and industry bodies to give suggestions on changes in direct and indirect taxes for Budget 2025-26. These can be given for personal income tax (PIT), corporate income tax (CIT), and customs duty or central excise duty. "GST-related requests are not examined as part of the annual Budget," said the Ministry. (*BusinessLine*)

PM MITRA, PLI schemes to bring Rs 95,000 cr investment into textiles sector

India's textiles sector is expected to attract investments to the tune of Rs 95,000 crore from the seven PM MITRA mega textile parks and the PLI scheme for man-made fabrics and technical textile products in the next 3-5 years, Textiles Secretary Rachna Shah said on Monday. (*Business Standard*)

'Gujarat is the 8th State to seek a larger share from 16th Finance Commission'

On a two-day visit to Gujarat, the 16th Finance Commission on Monday said it was the eighth State among nine States that the Commission has visited so far to have demanded that States receive 50 per cent from tax devolution instead of the 41 per cent recommended by the 15th Finance Commission. *(BusinessLine)*



Taxation

Ice-cream lovers beware: GST body drops a sugar bomb on softy mix

The GST Authority for Advance Rulings - Rajasthan bench ruled that softy ice-cream mix's primary component is sugar, not milk. Thus, it attracts a GST rate of 18%. The manufacturer argued for a lower GST rate, but the AAR determined the product is not a natural dairy product due to additives and higher sugar content. *(The Economic Times)*

Tax filers earning over Rs 1 cr surge 5X in 10 years; returns double

The number of individuals reporting taxable income over Rs 1 crore in their tax returns has increased fivefold, from 44,078 in the assessment year (AY) 2013-14 (financial year 2012-13) to just under 230,000 in AY2023-24 (FY23). During the same period, the number of individual tax returns filed more than doubled, increasing from 30.3 million to over 75 million, according to recent data released by the tax department. *(Business Standard)*

GoM for freeing health insurance for senior citizens, all policies up to ₹5-lakh from GST burden

States have pitched for exempting GST on the health insurance premium for senior citizens and on term life insurance, sources said on Saturday. This view emerged at a meeting of a Group of Ministers (GoM) convened by Bihar's Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary here. "Every GoM member wants to give relief to people. Special focus must be on senior citizens. We will submit a report to the GST Council, which will take a final decision," Chaudhary said without giving further details. *(BusinessLine)*

Delhi, Maharashtra & Karnataka pay more direct taxes in relation to GDP

Data released by the Central Board of Direct taxes (CBDT) recently revealed that direct tax to GDP ratio of the country has improved considerably to 6.11 per cent in FY23, the highest since 2007-08. A *businessline* analysis of the top 15 States and Union Territories revealed a large variance in this ratio. While Delhi topped the list, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh had the lowest direct tax to GDP ratios. *(BusinessLine)*

With sugar as major ingredient, 'Softy ice-cream mix' not a dairy-product, to attract 18% GST: AAR

With sugar as the major ingredient, 'Softy ice-cream mix' does not qualify as a dairy product, said Rajasthan's Authority for Advance Ruling (RAAR) and ruled that the product will attract 18 per cent GST. *(BusinessLine)*

Not much relevance of windfall tax on crude now: Advisor to PM

Advisor to Prime Minister Tarun Kapoor said on Wednesday that there is not much relevance in imposing windfall tax on crude oil at present. Kapoor, who was earlier the Oil Secretary, said that the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (MoPNG) has approached the

Finance Ministry over the issue. Imposed in 2022, Windfall Tax is to counterbalance the unusually high profits earned by oil and gas companies from high global crude oil prices. *(BusinessLine)*



National Accounts and State of the Economy

PM opens 3 airports in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh under UDAN scheme

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday virtually inaugurated three airports across the country — in Chhattisgarh's Surguja, Madhya Pradesh's Rewa, and Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur. The airports have been developed under the regional connectivity scheme – UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) — of the Central government. Flight operations are expected to begin shortly. *(The Hindu)*

IMF retains India's growth projection at 7% for FY25

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) maintained its June growth rate projects for India in its latest World Economic Outlook (WEO) released on Tuesday, to kick off the World Bank and IMF Annual Meetings in Washington. The multilateral lender expected India to grow at 7% in the current fiscal year ending March 31, 2025 and 6.5% in the next fiscal year (FY2025-26). World output was expected to grow at 3.2% in 2024 as well as 2025. *(The Hindu)*

U.K. to invest ₹205 cr. to help fight plastic pollution in Bengal

British International Investment (BII), the U.K. government's developmental finance institution, has committed an investment of ₹205 crore to help fight plastic pollution in West Bengal. On Wednesday, BII signed a memorandum of understanding with Magpet Polymers in Kolkata confirming a ₹205 crore (\$24 million) debt investment in the form of a long-term loan towards the expansion of Magpet's PET-bottle recycling facility in Kharagpur. *(The Hindu)*

India Inc Q2FY25 revenue growth seen at 5-7%, slowest in 4 yrs: CRISIL

The revenue growth of Indian companies for the July-September quarter is estimated to be 5-7 per cent year-on-year (Y-o-Y), marking the slowest growth in 16 quarters, rating agency CRISIL said on Thursday. The slowdown was attributed to the stagnant performance in the construction sector, which accounts for 20 per cent of the total India Inc's revenue. *(Business Standard)*

India wants to enhance its influence over other countries: FM Sitharaman

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that India wants to enhance its influence in the world as one in every six persons is Indian and the world cannot ignore India's economy. While participating in a panel discussion on the 'Bretton Woods Institutions at 80: Priorities for the Next Decade', organised by the Center for Global Development on the sidelines of the World Bank and International Annual Meetings 2024 in Washington, DC, Sitharaman stated that no country, whether US which is far away or China which is very close cannot ignore India. *(Business Standard)*

India's economic growth an example for many Brics nations, says Putin

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday lauded India's economic growth, saying the country serves as an example for many BRICS nations. Putin made the remarks in his address at the 16th BRICS Summit in the Russian city of Kazan, where he thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his participation in the three-day summit. *(Business Standard)*



Banking and Monetary Policy

Digital payments surge: Cash usage declines post-pandemic in India, says study by RBI economist

As of March 2024, cash still accounts for 60 percent of consumer expenditure but is rapidly declining post-COVID. Digital payments, particularly UPI, have surged, with their share in total transactions doubling and cash usage reducing significantly, indicating a shift towards digital modes. *(The Economic Times)*

Road ready for multilateral banks to meet funding needs: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said a "pathway has been successfully built" to enable multilateral development banks (MDBs) to better address global challenges and financing requirements. Participating in the fourth meeting of G20 finance ministers and central bank governors in Washington, DC on Thursday, Sitharaman indicated that the momentum towards MDB reforms, generated during India's G20 presidency last year, has continued through Brazil's presidency this year. *(The Economic Times)*

RBI cracks down on shadow banks over high-interest loans, rule violations

India is stepping up its crackdown on lenders with errant practices as regulators move to curtail risks in the shadow banking sector. The Reserve Bank of India ordered four shadow banks to stop sanctioning new loans because of high-interest rate charges to customers. The entities include DMI Finance, backed by Japanese lender Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group Inc., and Navi Finserv Ltd., backed by Sachin Bansal, co-founder of Walmart-owned e-commerce company Flipkart Private Ltd. *(Business Standard)*

Day after FinMin rap for 'reckless' lending, MFIs get a RBI rebuke

A top Reserve Bank of India (RBI) official delivered a sharp message to microfinance institutions (MFIs) on Thursday, urging them to realign their lending practices and prioritise affordable credit offerings. MFIs can no longer hide behind the facade of limited access as a rationale for steep interest rates, asserted Jayant Kumar Dash, executive director of the RBI, challenging the very foundation of the sector's traditional defence. *(The Hindu)*

MFI loans decline 2.3 pc in June qtr, NPAs rise: Report

Loan portfolio of microlenders reduced by 2.3 per cent quarter-on-quarter to Rs 4.32 lakh crore in April-June while NPAs surged, a report said. Notably, for the last few months, microfinance institutions, banks and small finance banks which extend MFI loans, have been reporting challenges on this portfolio, and the regulator has also flagged the same.

Over-leveraging among the borrowers is being flagged as a key aspect, impacting asset quality. *(The Economic Times)*

India cannot risk another bout of inflation: RBI Governor Das

Having come so far in the economic cycle, India cannot risk another bout of inflation, Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das said on his rationale to hold interest rates at this month's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meet. The MPC's new external member Nagesh Kumar, was the solitary panelist in the six-member committee to vote for a 0.25% rate cut, stating it could help revive demand and boost private investment, as per the minutes of the MPC released by the RBI on Wednesday. *(The Hindu)*

Banks prepare for higher outflow rates on retail deposits ahead of revised liquidity coverage ratio rules

Commercial banks have started applying higher outflow rates on retail deposits in preparation for the upcoming revisions to the liquidity coverage ratio (LCR) rules, which require them to purchase more high-quality liquid assets. The banking regulator is set to issue revised LCR rules to mitigate the risk emanating from mass withdrawals of deposits—an event that triggered the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank in the US. *(The Economic Times)*



External Sector

India seeks critical mineral agreement with US, hopes for a trade pact, Piyush Goyal says

India's trade minister, Piyush Goyal, announced that the country is seeking a critical mineral partnership agreement with the United States, hoping it could lead to a broader Free Trade Agreement (FTA). This follows an initial pact signed earlier this month to enhance cooperation on lithium, cobalt, and other critical minerals essential for electric vehicles and clean energy. *(The Economic Times)*

Automobile exports from India rise 14% in April-September period

In the first six months of the current fiscal year, India's automobile exports increased by 14 per cent year-on-year. This growth was driven by higher shipments of passenger vehicles and two-wheelers. Key markets like Latin America and Africa have contributed to the rebound. Passenger vehicle exports rose 12 per cent, while two-wheeler exports increased 16 per cent. *(The Economic Times)*

India loses to rivals as US diverts trade from China, study says

India's manufacturing sector growth has not benefited much from the US-China trade war. Other Asian countries like Vietnam, Taiwan, and South Korea have gained more. India's share in US imports increased slightly, but it continues to import many components from China. India's export strengths lie in sectors with limited growth potential. *(The Economic Times)*

Improvement in India, China diplomatic ties unlikely to dramatically alter trade relations: GTRI

Despite a recent diplomatic breakthrough, India's trade imbalance with China is set to persist due to structural issues. India's heavy reliance on Chinese imports, especially in

industrial sectors, necessitates long-term policy efforts to rebalance economic relations. Trade dynamics remain largely unaffected by political developments. *(The Economic Times)*

India imposes anti-dumping duty on 5 Chinese products for 5 years

India imposes anti-dumping duties on five Chinese goods, including glass mirror and cellophane transparent film, to shield domestic industries from underpriced imports. The duties, recommended by DGTR and finalized by the finance ministry, aim to ensure fair competition and protect local producers. *(The Economic Times)*

BRICS nations agree to boost trade, financial settlement in local currencies

BRICS nations have decided to boost trade using local currencies and explore new financial infrastructures. They agreed to study the feasibility of an independent cross-border settlement system and establish a BRICS reinsurance company. The New Development Bank will also be developed further. They emphasized financial cooperation and inclusion in financial transactions. *(The Economic Times)*

3 European export credit agencies reach out to Indian companies, banks

Export Credit Agencies of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, in collaboration with the Swiss Business Hub India, are engaging with Indian companies, banks, and government institutions to promote investment and cooperation, emphasizing the benefits of export credit instruments for leveraging European markets and supporting local partnerships. *(The Economic Times)*

India keeping close watch on IPEF trade pillar talks

India is closely watching the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) trade negotiations and has not yet decided to join the trade pillar. India is also engaged in critical mineral dialogue and negotiating trade pacts with Australia and ASEAN countries. The outcomes will determine India's next steps in these international trade agreements. *(The Economic Times)*

40% expect India's exports to fall amid a stumbling block

High interest rates are a major issue for Indian exporters. Three-fourths borrow at over 12 per cent. A survey shows 40 per cent exporters expect exports to decline this year. The commerce department is exploring solutions to ease credit flow and reduce borrowing costs. Freight rates and logistics also impact competitiveness. *(The Economic Times)*

Piyush Goyal asks for respect in three areas for faster India-EU free trade agreement

Piyush Goyal, speaking at the 18th Asia Pacific Conference of German Business in New Delhi, advocated for a deeper strategic partnership and a Free Trade Agreement between India and the EU, emphasizing mutual respect in negotiations and highlighting the synergies between India's scaling capabilities and Germany's precision engineering. *(The Economic Times)*

India's forex reserves fall by \$2.16 billion to \$688.26 billion as of October 18

India's foreign exchange reserves have experienced a decline for the third consecutive week, dipping by \$2 billion to stand at \$688 billion as of October 18, according to data shared by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday. *(The Economic Times)*



Agriculture and Rural Economy

Assam achieves 85% export growth in agriculture with supportive policies, says Minister Atul Bora

Assam has achieved an 85% export increase over six years, driven by supportive policies and focusing on export-oriented farming. Emphasizing financial resource importance, initiatives enhance rural living and economic empowerment. Infrastructure utilization and diaspora marketing are identified as essential strategies for sustaining this growth. *(The Economic Times)*

40 lakh tonnes of rice on the move in Punjab: What's govt trying to fix?

The Centre plans to move 40 lakh tonnes of rice from Punjab within the next three-four months and create space for 20 lakh tonnes more. This aims to alleviate the current storage crunch and ensure smooth paddy procurement in Punjab. FCI will handle the weekly rice movement to other states to manage storage better. *(The Economic Times)*

Scientists suggest ways to Odisha paddy farmers for minimising loss due to cyclone Dana

Agriculture scientists in Odisha suggest measures to minimise paddy crop damage due to cyclone Dana's heavy rain. Eight coastal districts likely to be affected. Farmers are advised to keep drainage channels open, properly stack and cover harvested rice, dry grains after rain, and use fumigation for storage pests. *(The Economic Times)*

Govt lifts curbs on non-basmati white rice exports, removes floor price

Lifting curbs on rice exports, the government on Wednesday removed the floor price for non-basmati rice shipments and exempted parboiled and husked (brown) rice from export duty. The government has removed the minimum export price (MEP) of \$490 per tonne on overseas shipments of non-basmati white rice and has exempted parboiled rice and husked (brown) rice from export duty. *(Business Standard)*

India lifts all curbs on rice exports, scraps 10% export duty on parboiled rice, \$490 floor price for white rice

The Indian government on Wednesday removed all curbs on rice exports that have been in force since September 2022. However, it has retained the ban on exports of broken rice. Within hours of lowering the Customs duty on parboiled rice to zero from 10 per cent, it scrapped the \$490 per tonne minimum export price (MEP) on white rice. On October 18, businessline reported that the Government had decided to ease export curbs on rice further following a decision at a high-level inter-ministerial meeting. *(BusinessLine)*

Grain-based ethanol makers urgently seek a hike in procurement price

Grain-based distilleries have asked the Centre to direct oil marketing companies (OMCs) to urgently raise the procurement price of ethanol produced from maize and damaged foodgrains to save them from incurring heavy losses in running their plants. *(Business Standard)*



Industry, Manufacturing, Services and Technology

Global carbon black industry likely to grow by 50% to \$42 bn by 2032: APCBC

The global carbon black market is expected to grow by 50 per cent to touch \$ 42 billion by 2032, industry body Asia-Pacific Carbon Black Confederation (APCBC) said on Wednesday. The carbon black industry is currently valued at around \$ 28 billion, Amit Choudhary, Chairman International Advisory Committee, APCBC said in a statement. *(Business Standard)*

Defence Industry and Government to Have Strategic B2G and B2B Meetings to Expand Ecosystem

The Armed Forces have announced the launch of Defence Partnership Days, scheduled for November 28-29, 2024 at the Army-owned Manekshaw Convention Centre in New Delhi. It will be a key platform for fostering collaboration between the armed forces and industry. The event, designed to bridge government and business stakeholders, will facilitate strategic engagements through a series of targeted B2G and B2B meetings. *(Business Standard)*

Odisha to usher in new era of industrial development, says CM Majhi

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Saturday said his government is fully committed to ushering in a new era of industrial development and asked industrialists to invest in the state. Odisha is poised to become a modern hub of industrial and economic activity, Majhi said while addressing industry leaders at a session of "Investment Opportunity in Odisha" in Mumbai. *(Business Standard)*

Manufacturing companies expected to benefit from lower input costs says RBI Governor according to latest policy meeting minutes

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das had noted in the last monetary policy meeting that the global economy continues to grow at a steady pace, with trade remaining resilient. Despite its uneven progress, headline inflation is softening. According to the minutes of the meeting, Das noted that divergent growth-inflation trajectories across countries have led to varying monetary policy responses from central banks. *(Business Standard)*

India seeks binding critical minerals pact with US to boost manufacturing

After signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the United States (US) on critical minerals, India is now seeking a binding pact on such minerals between both nations. Such a pact will pave the way for India to become a manufacturing hub and also boost its exports. *(Business Standard)*

Tamil Nadu projects a potential for 1.4 GW in wind repowering in the near term

The Tamil Nadu Energy Department has received multiple proposals for repowering projects in the wind energy sector and anticipates more submissions in the near future. The Tamil Nadu government has recently introduced its Repowering, Refurbishment, and Life Extension Policy for Wind Power Projects – 2024. *(BusinessLine)*

Balancing labour rights, corporate demands key for manufacturing success, says former labour advisor

The ambitious path of India's \$5 trillion economy hinges on the success of its manufacturing sector and managing the growing aspirations of the work force. As per NITI Aayog, the contribution of high-performing states such as Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Gujarat are key to robust growth of the manufacturing sector. However, the ongoing labour strikes and unrest in the key industrial state of Tamil Nadu present a major challenge. *(BusinessLine)*

India's diesel consumption to rise 3%-4% this fiscal: Indian Oil chairman

India's annual diesel consumption is expected to rise by 3%-4% in the current fiscal year to March 31, said V. Satish Kumar, chairman of Indian Oil Corp (IOC). India's annual diesel demand in April-September, half of this fiscal year, rose 1% to 44.4 million tons, according to government data, even though heavy rains curtailed the movement of trucks. *(The Economic Times)*

Public-private partnerships crucial to create infra for hydrogen powered mobility, say experts

Public-private partnerships would be crucial to create the required infrastructure for hydrogen-powered mobility in India, experts opined at the G-STIC conference here. The 7th G-STIC conference, which saw the participation of experts and stakeholders from around the world to harmonise technological, policy, and business solutions in response to global climate challenges, highlighted the critical role hydrogen can play in transforming India's mobility sector. *(The Economic Times)*

Indian entertainment industry loses Rs 22,400 crore annually due to piracy: EY-IAMAI

A new report by EY and the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) reveals that India's entertainment industry suffers annual losses of Rs 22,400 crore due to piracy, with 51% of consumers accessing pirated content. The report, titled "The Rob Report," highlights the growing threat piracy poses to the media and entertainment sector, calling for immediate action to address the issue. *(The Economic Times)*

Rail infra projects worth Rs 83,000 cr undertaken in SCR: Union Minister Kishan Reddy

Union Minister G Kishan Reddy on Thursday said works for various on-going infrastructure developmental projects and 15 Final location surveys in South Central Railway (SCR) jurisdiction has been undertaken with a cost of around Rs 83,000 crore. The Union Coal and Mines Minister, and 10 Members of Parliament of Telangana and Karnataka belonging to SCR Zone's jurisdiction took part in a meeting conducted by South Central Railway here. *(The Economic Times)*

DoT tweaks procurement policy to promote local 5G gear production

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has incorporated a clause in the latest public procurement policy order to ensure preferential treatment to domestic companies that achieve scale and capacity of such products to boost manufacturing of locally developed 5G technology products. The move will allow local companies to have an edge over their global counterparts in public sector contracts for 5G gear procurement. *(The Economic Times)*

Indian apparel exporters' revenue may grow 9-11% in FY25, says Icra

Indian apparel exporters will witness a revenue growth of 9-11% in FY25, driven by a gradual liquidation of retail inventory in key markets and a shift towards sourcing from India as part of global derisking strategies, as per a report by Icra on Monday. *(Mint)*



News on Kerala

Rebuild Kerala Initiative - Government spent Rs 13.65 cr on expenses so far

The state government has spent Rs 13.65 crore in six years in terms of administrative and other expenses for Rebuild Kerala initiative (RKI) which was launched to upgrade the infrastructure in Kerala following 2018 floods. According to the figures presented in the assembly by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, the Government spent Rs 1.32 crore on rent of the RKI office, maintenance and GST. This amount was spent between 2019 and 2024 September *(Onmanorama)*.

Ernakulam becomes Kerala's first district to achieve complete digital literacy

Ernakulam district has been declared the first in the state to achieve complete digital literacy. The announcement was made by district collector NSK Umesh and district panchayat president Manoj Moothedan on Tuesday. A survey was conducted among 8,36,648 households, identifying 1,92,883 individuals as digitally illiterate. With the help of various voluntary organizations, colleges, Kudumbashree, and the Literacy Mission, these individuals were trained and made digitally literate *(Mathrubhumi English)*.

KSRTC plans major fleet upgrade with 370 diesel buses; focus on fast, superfast services

Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) will soon purchase 370 more diesel buses, which include 220 mini buses and 150 fast and super fast buses. At a press conference, Transport Minister K B Ganesh Kumar announced that the buses would be deployed as soon as funds become available. Mini buses with 40-42 seats will be primarily used on rural routes. Meanwhile, KSRTC has seen strong revenue from its newly introduced AC super-fast buses, prompting plans for more services in this category. *(Mathrubhumi English)*.

Use of term 'Olympics' excluded from Kerala School Sports Meet

The Kerala government has decided to drop the term 'Olympics' from the name of its school sports meet, which aims to become the largest sports festival for students in Asia. Previously called the School Olympics, the event will now be referred to as the Kerala School Sports Meet *(Mathrubhumi English)*.

Relief for Kerala: 1.97 lakh houses approved by Centre under PMAY

The Union Government has approved the construction of 1,97,000 houses in Kerala under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) for the current fiscal year, with 60,000 of these designated for Scheduled Tribes. Currently, PMAY houses are being constructed under the state government's 'LIFE' mission, aimed at providing housing for the homeless. The central government's contribution is Rs 72,000 per house, while the overall cost per house under the LIFE mission is Rs 4 lakh. *(Mathrubhumi English)*.

Railways to run 300 special trains for Sabarimala pilgrimage

Thiruvananthapuram Divisional Railway Manager Manish Thaplyal has said the Railways would operate 300 special trains during this year's Sabarimala pilgrimage season. He made the announcement at a meeting convened by Kodikunnil Suresh, MP, to review preparations for the upcoming Sabarimala season at Chengannur on Monday. The Mavelikara MP, last week, requested Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw to sanction more special trains via the Kottayam and Madurai-Punalur route (*The Hindu*).

Finance department authorises release of social security, welfare fund pensions

The Finance department has authorised the release of social security and welfare fund pensions for October. The money will be paid out this week, Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal said on Monday. The pensions are paid at the rate of ₹1,600 per head to 62 lakh beneficiaries. In the case of 26.62 lakh beneficiaries, the pensions will be paid to their bank accounts. To others, who have opted for direct-to-home distribution, the pension amount will be disbursed through cooperatives (*The Hindu*).

Kerala govt grants DA and DR hike, adding Rs 2,000 cr to annual expenditure

The Kerala government has approved one instalment of DA for state service employees and teachers, as well as DR for pensioners, leading to an annual expenditure increase of around Rs 2,000 crore. These benefits will be disbursed with next month's salary and pension. (*The Economic Times*)

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