



December 30, 2024 – Monday

## Economy

### Road map in works to speed up EPFO claim settlements

The Ministry of Labour and Employment has set up a five-member committee to suggest a roadmap to fast-track auto claim settlement process at the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) and do away with manual intervention. "The idea is to make the automatic claim settlement process more technically savvy and seamless while substantially reducing rejections," a senior government official told ET. The move will benefit over 75 million EPFO subscribers. The committee, headed by the ministry's financial advisor G Madhumita Das, is expected to submit its report by the middle of next month, the official said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/road-map-in-works-to-speed-up-epfo-claim-settlements/articleshow/116774672.cms>

### Indian economy to grow at 6.5-6.8% in FY25 on high consumption: Deloitte

Indian economy is likely to grow at 6.5-6.8 per cent this fiscal and slightly higher between 6.7-7.3 per cent in FY2026, boosted by domestic consumption, Deloitte said on Sunday. Deloitte India Economist Rumki Majumdar said the growth in the first half of the fiscal year 2025 turned out to be slower than estimated as election uncertainties followed by disruptions in activity due to heavy rainfall and geopolitical events weighed on domestic demand and exports. However, India continues to show resilience in certain pockets that are worth noting -- be it in consumption trends, services growth, the rising share of high-value manufacturing in exports, or the capital market.

[https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/indian-economy-to-grow-at-6-5-6-8-in-fy25-on-high-consumption-deloitte-124122900142\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/indian-economy-to-grow-at-6-5-6-8-in-fy25-on-high-consumption-deloitte-124122900142_1.html)

## Finance

### RBI Innovation Hub pilots digital unsecured loans for gig workers

The Reserve Bank of India Innovation Hub (RBIH) has onboarded digital lender Vivifi Finance to run a pilot project to offer unsecured loans to gig workers, two people with the knowledge said. The pilot that was launched a fortnight ago is aimed at creating a digital platform that offers loans to drivers of cab-hailing apps like Ola and Uber drivers, food delivery drivers employed with Swiggy and Zomato, and other temporary jobs. "The RBI innovation hub is running a pilot with Vivifi Finance and three other gig platforms, where alternate data is being used to underwrite these gig workers," said a source aware of the matter. "The idea is to bring them into formal banking channels and offer them credit based on that data."

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/banking/rbi-innovation-hub-pilots-digital-unsecured-loans-for-gig-workers/articleshow/116775810.cms>

### Higher FCNR rates fail to bring in the moolah

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) move to draw capital flows by allowing banks to offer higher interest rates for foreign currency deposits for a specific period appears to have had few takers in the three weeks since the plan's announcement. Bankers said the rupee's recent sharp fall and a narrowing in the interest rate gap between the US and India will make it even more difficult to attract depositors.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/banking/higher-fcfr-rates-fail-to-bring-in-the-moolah/articleshow/116775496.cms>

#### **Private banks outrun public sector peers in priority lending benchmarks**

For the first time, private sector banks as a group met priority sector lending targets, including sub-targets for major heads in 2023-24, particularly in agriculture, according to central bank data. Although all bank groups managed to achieve their stipulated overall targets and sub-targets, private sector banks did better than their public sector peers. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/banking/private-banks-outrun-public-sector-peers-in-priority-lending-benchmarks/articleshow/116775926.cms>

#### **If FPIs outflows remain constant, India's Balance of Payments will be neutral for FY25: Report**

India's current account deficit (CAD) widened slightly to USD 11.2bn (1.2 per cent of GDP) in Q2 from USD 10.2bn (1.1 per cent of GDP) in the previous quarter, a report by ICICI Bank Global Markets anticipated. However, there was a Balance of Payments (BoP) surplus of USD 23.8 billion was there in the first half (H1). If a similar outflow happens in the second half (H2), it will result in a neutral BoP for the financial year (FY25), says a report by ICICI Bank Global Markets.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/if-fpis-outflows-remain-constant-indias-balance-of-payments-will-be-neutral-for-fy25-report/articleshow/116763467.cms>

### **Industry**

#### **ESC calls for incentives to promote R&D, innovation in electronics**

Electronics and Computer Software Export Promotion Council (ESC) has batted for further calibration of Design Linked Incentive (DLI) scheme to make it more broad-based and impact-oriented. The industry body has made a strong pitch for incentives to promote R&D and innovation in capital-intensive electronics hardware sector during a recent interaction with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, a release said on Sunday. ESC has also sought additional income tax reduction for Indian corporates spending over 3 per cent of their turnover to advance R&D and filing patents/designs in India.

[https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/esc-bats-for-incentives-to-promote-r-d-innovation-in-electronics-hardware-sector-124122900375\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/esc-bats-for-incentives-to-promote-r-d-innovation-in-electronics-hardware-sector-124122900375_1.html)

#### **CAIT writes to Piyush Goyal, seeks action against quick commerce firms**

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) representing 70 million traders has written to Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, drawing his attention to the alleged violations of laws and regulations by quick commerce (qcom) companies. In its letter, the CAIT alleged how these firms are misusing foreign investments to distort the country's retail market, creating major threats to small shopkeepers. The CAIT had earlier released a white paper on this issue, a copy of which has also been sent to the minister. The organisation is now sending the white paper along with a letter to the chief ministers of all states.

[https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/cait-urges-piyush-goyal-to-address-violations-by-quick-commerce-cos-124122900418\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/cait-urges-piyush-goyal-to-address-violations-by-quick-commerce-cos-124122900418_1.html)

### **Agriculture**

#### **Foodgrain output set to scale new peak in 2025 as farm sector eyes 4 pc growth**

India is poised to achieve new heights in foodgrain production in 2025, driven by favourable monsoon, though significant challenges persist in pulses and oilseeds production as the country's agricultural sector shows signs of robust recovery. The Agriculture Ministry's initial projections paint an optimistic picture, with kharif (summer) foodgrain production estimated at a record 164.7 million tonnes for the 2024-25 crop year ending June 2025. Winter crop planting has maintained steady progress, with wheat sown across 29.31 million hectares as of mid-December 2024, while total rabi (winter) crops cover 55.88 million hectares. "We had a good kharif crop because of normal rainfall," Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi told PTI.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/foodgrain-output-set-to-scale-new-peak-in-2025-as-farm-sector-eyes-4-pc-growth/articleshow/116761745.cms>

## Infrastructure

### Indian Railways gears up to equip Kavach 4.0 across its key routes

Indian Railways is taking significant steps towards enhancing the safety and efficiency of its operations by accelerating the deployment of the advanced Kavach 4.0 automatic train protection system. It is speeding up to deploy an advanced Kavach 4.0 - automatic train protection system across its key routes. According to a press release issued, all the locomotives where a lower version of Kavach was installed will be replaced with the upgraded Kavach 4.0. Over NF Railway approximately 1966 RKM of length from Malda Town to Dibrugarh have been identified for implementation of Kavach.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/indian-railways-gears-up-to-equip-kavach-4-0-across-its-key-routes/articleshow/116771059.cms>

### Housing supply up 44% in Delhi-NCR this year to 53,000 units: Anarock

The Delhi-NCR housing market witnessed a 44 per cent growth in new supply this year to 53,000 units, of which nearly 60 per cent were ultra-luxury homes priced above Rs 2.5 crore each, according to Anarock. The number of new launches of residential properties stood at 36,735 units during 2023. Real estate consultant Anarock has released the data of primary (first sale) housing market for 2024 of India's seven major cities -- Delhi-NCR, Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Pune, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, and Kolkata. As per the Anarock data, Delhi-NCR launched 53,000 new housing units in 2024 -- a significant 44 per cent rise over 2023.

[https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/housing-supply-up-44-in-delhi-ncr-this-year-to-53-000-units-anarock-124122900247\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/housing-supply-up-44-in-delhi-ncr-this-year-to-53-000-units-anarock-124122900247_1.html)

## Energy

### Government cancels auction of 11 critical mineral blocks

The government has cancelled the auction of 11 critical mineral blocks in the fourth round due to poor response. While no bids were received for four blocks, the remaining seven mines got less than three technically qualified bidders, according to the annulment notice. The four blocks which include tungsten and glauconite, are located in the states of Chhattisgarh and Arunachal Pradesh.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/indl-goods/svs/metals-mining/government-cancels-auction-of-11-critical-mineral-blocks/articleshow/116760438.cms>

### Outlook 2025: India's renewable sector strides unabated, industry leaders optimistic on future

In recent years, India has made a considerable gain in renewable energy and the year 2024 is not an outlier as the sector leaders are of the view that the country is on the right track to meet its green energy goals. The remarkable progress witnessed in recent times is a product of collaboration between the public and private sectors, they said. India's total electricity generation capacity has reached 452.69 GW, with renewable energy contributing a significant portion of the overall power mix. This marks a major shift in India's energy landscape, reflecting the country's growing reliance on cleaner, non-fossil fuel-based energy sources, they said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/renewables/outlook-2025-indias-renewable-sector-strides-unabated-industry-leaders-optimistic-on-future/articleshow/116770737.cms>

### India's increasing oil demand attracting global players: S&P Global Commodity Insights

India is ending 2024 with its oil demand growth rate surpassing neighbouring China's, a trend expected to spill over to the next year, according to S&P Global Commodity Insights. India has become one of the fastest-growing fuel consumption centres. As per the global commodities information services provider, the increasing fuel consumption is prompting India's refiners to accelerate expansion plans and widen crude sourcing. Oil players are increasingly turning their focus to India amid expectations of its peak demand scenario coming much later than that of China's, according to the latest commentary on India's oil sector by S&P Global Commodity Insights.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/indias-increasing-oil-demand-attracting-global-players-sp-global-commodity-insights/articleshow/116764934.cms>

### **Private mines, CIL drive record coal output of 988 mt in 2024: Govt**

Coal production during the calendar year (CY) reached 988.32 million tonne (mt), compared to 918.02 mt during the same period last year, registering a growth of about 7.66 per cent, the coal ministry said in its year-end report, citing it as a new record. It is expected that coal production will exceed the last financial year's mark of 997 mt by the end of 2024-25 (FY25), driven by higher output from privately owned mines and enhanced supply from Coal India (CIL) mines. Coal production from captive and commercial mines was 162 mt between January and November 2024, the ministry reported. Since 2015, 113 coal mines with a peak rated capacity of 257 mt per annum have been auctioned. The ministry said that opening the sector to private participation aligns with efforts to reduce coal imports and promote domestic production.

[https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/coal-production-supply-made-new-records-in-2024-touched-988-32-mt-govt-124122900452\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/coal-production-supply-made-new-records-in-2024-touched-988-32-mt-govt-124122900452_1.html)

## **Healthcare**

### **Indian pharma improves compliance with USFDA; fewer OAI cases in 2024**

Indian pharmaceutical companies have made major strides in adhering to stringent US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) norms in 2024, with data suggesting a decline in the number of adverse classification outcomes of inspections across biologics, drugs, and devices. In 2023, the USFDA conducted 225 inspections, which led to 18 cases of Official Action Indicated (OAI) and 117 cases of Voluntary Action Indicated (VAI). By 2024, despite a tightening of regulatory standards, the number of inspections dropped to 206, while OAI cases fell to 14 and VAI cases reduced to 115. This highlights that the sector is increasingly aligning with global benchmarks to ensure high-quality manufacturing practices.

[https://www.business-standard.com/health/indian-pharma-improves-compliance-with-usfda-fewer-oai-cases-in-2024-124122900413\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/health/indian-pharma-improves-compliance-with-usfda-fewer-oai-cases-in-2024-124122900413_1.html)

## **External**

### **Free trade deal may get delayed as Australia approaches 2025 elections**

The proposed comprehensive trade agreement talks between India and Australia may get delayed despite making substantial progress as Canberra moves closer to the federal election scheduled for May next year, people aware of the matter said. India and Australia began negotiations on the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) in February 2023. As many as 10 rounds of talks have taken place, and both sides have made "significant progress" on various aspects of the proposed comprehensive trade deal.

[https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/free-trade-deal-may-get-delayed-as-australia-approaches-2025-elections-124122900299\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/free-trade-deal-may-get-delayed-as-australia-approaches-2025-elections-124122900299_1.html)

### **DGTR for anti-dumping duty on PVC paste resin from China, 5 others**

The commerce ministry has recommended imposition of an anti-dumping duty of up to \$707 per tonne on imports of PVC paste resin, used to make artificial leather and other technical textiles' products, from six countries, including China, for five years, with an aim to guard domestic producers. In its findings, the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), a wing of the ministry, has concluded that 'Poly Vinyl Chloride Paste Resin' has been exported to India at a price below the normal value from certain players of the six nations -- China, Korea, Malaysia, Norway, Taiwan, and Thailand.

[https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/dgtr-for-anti-dumping-duty-on-pvc-paste-resin-from-china-5-others-124122900258\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/dgtr-for-anti-dumping-duty-on-pvc-paste-resin-from-china-5-others-124122900258_1.html)

### **Digital infra investment, policies help exports touch historic high in Oct**

Continuous investment in digital infrastructure, including data centres and high-speed internet, along with policy support, has propelled India's services exports to a "historic" milestone of \$34.31 billion in October, a commerce ministry official said. The official said India has established itself as a global leader in digitally delivered services exports, leveraging its robust IT sector and skilled workforce. Services traded through computer networks, such as the internet, apps, emails, and digital intermediation platforms, have grown exponentially. "India's services sector

reached a historic milestone in October 2024, recording an all-time high in monthly exports of \$34.31 billion, a 22.3 per cent increase compared to October 2023," the official added.

[https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/digital-infra-investment-policies-help-exports-touch-historic-high-in-oct-124122900175\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/digital-infra-investment-policies-help-exports-touch-historic-high-in-oct-124122900175_1.html)

#### **Cheap imports, declining FDI challenge India's textile export ambitions**

India has set an ambitious target of textile exports worth \$100 billion by 2030, but the recent data released by the Ministry of Textiles pertaining to India's textile and apparel trade puts achievement of the goal in jeopardy. Textile and apparel exports increased 19.26 per cent from the financial year 2022 - 2024 (FY22 -24). Furthermore, the exports of ready-made garments, man-made textiles, jute products, and handlooms (mentioned in the 'others' category) fell below the pre-pandemic level.

[https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/cheap-imports-declining-fdi-challenge-india-s-textile-export-ambitions-124122900716\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/cheap-imports-declining-fdi-challenge-india-s-textile-export-ambitions-124122900716_1.html)