



Public Finance

Fiscal deficit for FY27 likely to be around 4.2-4.3%, say Economists

Economists expect the fiscal deficit for fiscal year 2026-27 likely to be pegged between 4.2 and 4.3 per cent of GDP (Gross Domestic Products). For the same, net borrowing could be in the range of ₹11.1 lakh crore to ₹11.5 lakh crore with upward bias. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present her ninth successive Union Budget on February 1. (*BusinessLine*)

Unspent funds of up to ₹75,000 crore may help Centre meet FY26 fiscal deficit target

The Centre is likely to save ₹70,000-₹75,000 crore this fiscal year with several key ministries and flagship welfare schemes failing to utilise funds allocated to them in the Union budget. The savings of nearly 1.5% of the total expenditure budget of ₹50.65 lakh crore will give the government enough headroom to absorb the extra burden from additional subsidy outgo and marginal shortfall in tax receipts, helping it to maintain the fiscal deficit target of ₹4.4% of GDP, officials said. (*The Economic Times*)

Central govt capex likely to slow in rest of FY26 as spending front-loaded in first half: Morgan Stanley

The central government's capital expenditure (capex) is expected to slow in the remaining part of FY26 as a large part of the spending was front-loaded in the first half of the fiscal year, highlighted a report by Morgan Stanley. From a cyclical perspective, the report noted that a substantial portion of the annual allocation has already been utilised, which may result in a softer pace of expenditure in the coming months. (*The Economic Times*)

Union Cabinet approves ₹5,000 crore equity infusion into SIDBI to enhance credit to MSMEs

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday (January 21, 2026) approved an equity infusion of ₹5,000 crore into the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) to expand the credit available to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The infusion will be made by the Department of Financial Services (DFS) in three tranches. Of the total amount, ₹3,000 crore will be infused in 2025-26 at a book value of ₹568.65 as on March 31, 2025, and ₹1,000 crore each in 2026-27 and 2027-28 at the book value prevailing at the end of the respective previous financial year. (*The Hindu*)

India to stick to fiscal consolidation path in Budget, say economists: Poll

The Indian government will stick to its path of fiscal consolidation in its February 1 budget, all economists polled by Reuters said, mainly due to slower revenue growth following recent tax cuts. Lower income has left the government little room but to cut back spending and rely on dividend transfers from the Reserve Bank of India, they said. *(Business Standard)*



Taxation

Taxmen seek early resolution on 'irrational and unrealistic' targets

The Income Tax Gazetted Officers' Association and Employees Federation have characterised the government's tax targets as "irrational and unrealistic." They also complained of "severe and persistent shortages of essential infrastructure" and sought an early meeting with the Chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) to sort out these issues. "Even as the world ushers in the New Year with optimism and renewed hope, our members continue to remain deeply disillusioned, arising from the growing uncertainty and anxiety among members about their future career progression and prospects of promotion as well as adverse service conditions. *(BusinessLine)*

MCD records highest-ever property tax collection, crosses ₹2,700 crore

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has recorded its highest-ever property tax collection, crossing ₹2,700 crore by December 31 in the 2025-26 financial year. The figure marks a jump of about 45 percent over collections during the same period last year, officials said on Saturday. Officials said that the increase has been accompanied by a sharp rise in the number of taxpayers. The total count of registered property taxpayers has surged from 10.31 lakh in 2024-25 to 12.43 lakh this year, an increase of nearly 21 percent. *(Business Standard)*

88% of crypto investors know tax rules, 63% call them unfair: CoinSwitch

Nearly 88 percent of crypto investors in India are aware of the country's crypto tax regime, but over 63 percent consider it unfair, according to a nationwide survey by CoinSwitch. The survey, conducted ahead of the 2026 Union Budget, gathered insights from close to 5,000 respondents, highlighting widespread discontent over the current taxation framework and a clear demand for a more predictable, market-aligned tax structure. *(Business Standard)*



National Accounts and State of the Economy

Disinvestment revival will be useful in sustaining capital expenditure

This financial year, the government mobilised ₹8,768.02 crore through disinvestment. There are a number of reasons why the government must accelerate the disinvestment programme. First, as highlighted in this space, the private sector still seems reluctant to invest. Therefore, if India is to sustain the growth momentum in an unfavourable global environment, the government will need to maintain the level of capital expenditure. However, it would also be desirable for the government to reduce its borrowing to keep debt and deficit on a declining path. Low inflation rates, resulting in lower nominal growth, would require more effort in this regard. Against the given backdrop, higher disinvestment receipts will be useful in sustaining the level of capital expenditure. *(Business Standard)*

Tata Capital consolidated net profit rises 16.86% in the December 2025 quarter

Net profit of Tata Capital rose 16.86% to Rs 1256.87 crore in the quarter ended December 2025 as against Rs 1075.57 crore during the previous quarter ended December 2024. Sales rose 12.27% to Rs 7975.44 crore in the quarter ended December 2025 as against Rs 7103.61 crore during the previous quarter ended December 2024. Particulars Quarter Ended Dec. 2025 Dec. 2024. *(Business Standard)*

Government reduces Jute stock limits for jute traders and balers

The stock limits are revised and issued in terms of the provisions of the Jute and Jute Textiles Control Order, 2016. The revision has been necessitated by the sharp rise in Jute prices in the past few months, which are well above the minimum support price (MSP) for 2025-26. Moreover, various stakeholders have also expressed concerns regarding availability of raw jute. *(Business Standard)*

Advance estimates of GDP reflect resilience of Indian economy, demand conditions upbeat

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has stated in its monthly update today that the first advance estimates of gross domestic product (GDP) for 2025-26 reflected the resilience of the Indian economy, driven by domestic factors - private final consumption expenditure (PFCE) and fixed investment - amidst a challenging external environment. *(Business Standard)*

India's FY26 GDP growth of 7.3% to lift household incomes: Moody's

In its report on India's insurance sector, Moody's said the industry looks set to benefit from sustained premium growth on the back of robust economic expansion, increased digitisation, tax changes and a planned reform of the dominant state owned insurance

sector. The increase should improve the industry's currently weak profitability. "We expect India's economy to grow by 7.3 percent in FY 2025 (year to March 2026), up from 6.5 percent the previous year. This will increase average incomes and support demand for insurance," it said. (*Business Standard*)



Banking and Monetary Policy

Simply Put: RBI's dollar-rupee forex swap

After years in the arts, Jay is preparing for a shift. Not just of roles, but of industry itself. The destination this time is public service. As he gears up for the move, he realises that understanding economics is unavoidable. While scanning the headlines, one term stops him in his tracks: RBI's dollar-rupee forex swap. Puzzled, Jay does what most of us would do: Ring his friend Jeet to make sense of it. (*BusinessLine*)

Central Bank of India's Q3FY26 net profit up 32% at ₹1,263 cr

Central Bank of India reported a 32 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) increase in the third quarter (Q3FY26) net profit at ₹1,263 crore, with the bottomline being supported by a healthy growth in other income, write-back in provision on investments, and lower bad loan provisioning and income-tax burden. (*BusinessLine*)

RBI floats linking BRICS' digital currencies to ease cross-border payments

The Reserve Bank of India has proposed that BRICS countries link their official digital currencies to make cross-border trade and tourism payments easier, two sources said. This could reduce reliance on the US dollar as geopolitical tensions rise. The RBI has recommended to the government that a proposal connecting the central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) be included on the agenda for the 2026 BRICS summit, the sources said. They requested anonymity because they were not authorised to speak publicly. (*BusinessLine*)

RBI ombudsman authorised to clear compensation up to ₹30 lakh

There will be no limit on the amount over a dispute that can be brought by a complainant against a regulated entity before an RBI ombudsman, for which the ombudsman or his Deputy can facilitate a settlement or pass an Award, according to the Reserve Bank- Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (RB-IOS), 2026. However, for any consequential loss suffered by the complainant, the RBI ombudsman will have the power to provide a compensation of up to ₹30 lakh. (*BusinessLine*)

Include digital currency link on BRICS agenda: RBI to govt.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recommended to the Centre that a proposal connecting the central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) of BRICS countries be included

on the agenda for the 2026 summit of the grouping, two sources have said. They requested anonymity as they were not authorised to speak publicly. *(The Hindu)*

Indian Bank PAT up 7.3% in Q3FY26

Indian Bank standalone profit after tax rose 7.3% year-on-year to ₹3,061.4 crore in Q3FY26. Net interest income (NII) climbed 7.5% to ₹6,896 crore on an increase in Retail, Agriculture and MSME (RAM) loans in the quarter. The share of all the three put together increased to 66% in the quarter-ended December 2025 from about 64% a year earlier. *(The Hindu)*

Indian Bank Q3FY26 results: Net profit rises 8% to ₹3,146.88 crore

Indian Bank on Thursday posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 3,146.88 crore in the third quarter of the financial year (Q3 FY26), up 8 percent from the same period last year. The Chennai-based lender made Rs 2,909.73 crore in consolidated net profit in Q3 FY25. Total income rose 9.5 percent to Rs 19,894.78 crore during the quarter under review, compared to Rs 18,167.54 crore in Q3 FY25. *(Business Standard)*

RBI Governor highlights continued relevance of Urban Cooperative Banks in credit delivery to underserved areas

As part of the Reserve Bank of India's continued engagement with regulated entities, the RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra held a meeting yesterday in Mumbai with the Chairpersons and Managing Directors & Chief Executive Officers (MDs & CEOs) of select Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs). The previous such meeting was held on March 19, 2025. The participants included representatives from the National Urban Cooperative Finance and Development Corporation Limited and the National Federation of Urban Co-operative Banks & Credit Societies Limited. *(Business Standard)*

RBL Bank slips on higher provisions, credit cost in Q3

RBL Bank declined 7.31% to Rs 301.35 after the company reported a 28% rise in provisions (other than tax) and contingencies to Rs 639 crore in Q3 FY26, compared with Rs 500 crore in Q3 FY25. Credit cost increased to 64 bps in Q3 FY26 from 54 bps in Q2 FY26, although it eased significantly from 139 bps in Q3 FY25. *(Business Standard)*

Rate cuts drive stronger loan growth, boosting profits for India's banks

India's top banks should post better loan growth numbers as the central bank's rate cuts continue to take effect, after largest private sector lender HDFC Bank Ltd. beat analysts' estimate on back of strong loan growth, signaling it's emerging from a period of deliberate slowdown. *(Business Standard)*

RBL Bank Q3 results: PAT jumps multi-fold to ₹214 cr as provisions decline

Private sector lender RBL Bank on Saturday reported a 555 percent jump in the December quarter net profit to Rs 214 crore, helped by a steep decline in provisions. The lender, which is set to receive a \$3 billion fund infusion from Emirates NBD Bank, had

reported a net profit of Rs 33 crore in the year-ago period and Rs 179 crore in the preceding June quarter. *(Business Standard)*

Central Bank of India Q3 profit jumps 32% to ₹1,263 cr as bad loans dip

State-owned Central Bank of India has posted a 32 per cent jump in profit at Rs 1,263 crore in the third quarter ended December 2025, aided by improvement in bad loans. The Mumbai-based bank had earned a net profit of Rs 959 crore in the same quarter a year ago. Total income increased to Rs 10,969 crore during the quarter under review against Rs 9,739 crore in the same period of last year, Central Bank of India said in a regulatory filing. *(Business Standard)*

Central Bank of India consolidated net profit rises 31.23% in the December 2025 quarter

Net profit of Central Bank of India rose 31.23% to Rs 1264.29 crore in the quarter ended December 2025 as against Rs 963.38 crore during the previous quarter ended December 2024. Total Operating Income rose 6.18% to Rs 9069.98 crore in the quarter ended December 2025 as against Rs 8541.83 crore during the previous quarter ended December 2024. *(Business Standard)*



External Sector

IMF upgrades India's 2025-26 growth to 7.3% from earlier estimate of 6.6%

The International Monetary Fund has revised upwards its estimate of India's GDP growth in the current financial year 2025-26 to 7.3% from its earlier prediction of 6.6%. This upward revision, the IMF said in its January 2026 World Economic Outlook update released on Monday (January 19, 2026), was primarily a reflection of stronger-than-expected growth in the third quarter, and "strong momentum" in the fourth quarter. "In India, growth is revised upward by 0.7 percentage point to 7.3% for 2025 [FY 2025-26], reflecting the better-than-expected outturn in the third quarter of the year and strong momentum in the fourth quarter," the report said. "Growth is projected to moderate to 6.4 percent in 2026 and 2027 as cyclical and temporary factors wane. *(The Hindu)*

India, UAE agree to double trade to \$200 billion by 2032

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan agreed to double bilateral trade to over \$200 billion by 2032. The two countries also decided to work together to establish 'Strategic Defence Partnership Framework Agreement and expand defence cooperation across a number of areas, including defence industrial collaboration, defence innovation and advanced technology, training, education and doctrine, special operations and interoperability, cyber space and counter terrorism. *(BusinessLine)*

India delivers 7.3% average return on FDI, ahead of emerging markets: CareEdge

In the last five years, between the Financial Year 2020 to 2025, India's annual gross FDI inflows have hovered between USD 70 and 85 billion, recording a flat Compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 2%. As per the data shared by CareEdge Ratings, the Net FDI flows have fallen from USD 44 billion in FY20 to USD 1 billion in FY25. "While gross inflows have improved, we also observe higher repatriation of profits by investors and FDI outflows from India. This has led to a sharp decline in net FDI inflows," it said. *(BusinessLine)*

India's textile exports rise in December amid market diversification push

India's textile and apparel exports have demonstrated resilience in December, growing for the second straight month on a year-on-year basis, despite a subdued global trade environment and a 50 percent tariff imposed by the US, the country's largest export market for the segment. The 0.40 percent growth in textile and apparel exports in December 2025 over the previous year to USD 3.27 billion, for the second consecutive month following strong growth in November, reflects the sector's "adaptability, diversified market presence, and strength in value-added and labour-intensive segments," the Textile Ministry stated. *(BusinessLine)*

India stopped buying Russian oil after Trump's 25% tariff, claims Bessent

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has claimed that India has stopped buying Russian oil after US President Donald Trump imposed a 25 percent tariff. His remarks come as the US considers much tougher penalties on countries that continue to buy Russian crude. *(Business Standard)*

Americans pay the bulk of tariffs on Indian exports, finds study

Against the backdrop of the tariff imposition of 50 percent on India by the United States (US), exporters in India have not reduced the prices of their shipments to America. Instead, they have cut the volumes of exports by 18-24 percent relative to other destinations. As a result it is the Americans who have to bear the bulk of the increase in tariffs, according to a latest research paper released by the Kiel Institute of World Economy, based in Germany. *(Business Standard)*

India's oil bill plunges 8.5% in December amid falling crude prices

India's crude oil import bill continued to fall in December despite growing fuel appetite of the country due to sliding crude oil prices in the global market. Oil import bill fell 8.5 percent in December, according to fresh data sourced from the oil ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC). India spent \$9.7 billion in December to buy 20.8 million tonnes of crude oil, lower than \$10.6 billion that it spent to buy 20.2 million tonnes in the same period last year. *(Business Standard)*

Early-bird results in Q3 show worst earnings growth in 17 quarters

The results of early-bird companies in October-December 2025 (Q3FY26) have shown just single-digit growth in revenue despite gains from cuts in goods and services tax

(GST) rates. They also clocked a sharp deceleration in earnings growth. Reliance Industries and information-technology (IT) firms led the deceleration in earnings growth, while banks were the biggest laggards when it came to revenue increase. *(Business Standard)*



Agriculture and Rural Economy

Budget 2026: Here's what agriculture sector seeks from FM Nirmala Sitharaman

As Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is set to present the Union Budget 2026-27, stakeholders in agriculture are seeking higher allocations and new schemes to shore up the sector. The Budget comes at a time when the agriculture sector has been experiencing a period of weakness. *(The Economic Times)*

Budget 2026: From PM-KISAN to Seed Law - What's in store for agriculture stocks

The forthcoming Budget 2026 presents a chance to enhance long-term resilience via specific initiatives in the agriculture sector, according to experts. Allocations for agriculture has increased consistently from ₹21,933 crore in FY 2013-14 to more than ₹1.27 lakh crore today, as per reports. Experts believe that key priorities encompass sustainability, digital infrastructure, and shrimp exports, accompanied by demands for subsidy reforms aimed at improving efficiency. *(Mint)*

Pesticide industry urges tighter e-commerce rules to curb fake product sales

The pesticide industry on Wednesday urged the government to tighten the regulation for e-commerce platforms selling crop protection products, warning that basic compliance checks are insufficient and calling for mandatory authorisation certificates to prevent fake products from reaching farmers. *(The Economic Times)*

Union Budget: India Bets On Climate-Ready, Nutrition-led Agriculture

As India approaches the Union Budget 2026, agriculture remains both an economic mainstay and a policy stress test. The sector contributes close to 18 percent of India's Gross Value Added (GVA) and supports nearly half of the country's workforce, even as public investment continues to rise. In Budget 2025-26, the Centre allocated over Rs 1.5 lakh crore to agriculture and allied activities, set an ambitious agricultural credit target of Rs 20 lakh crore, and sustained flagship schemes spanning farmer income support, irrigation, crop insurance and digital agriculture. *(Business World)*

India fertiliser imports on track to hit all-time high of \$18 billion this fiscal year

India's fertiliser imports for the current fiscal year are expected to surge 76% from a year earlier to a record \$18 billion, government and industry officials said on Wednesday as consumption jumped after heavy rains prompted farmers to expand their crop areas. *(The Economic Times)*

Strength Through Innovation: Drones Redefining Indian Agriculture

The name Thanos may evoke a larger-than-life Marvel character, but in the world of agricultural technology, it represents something far more grounded. At Thanos Technologies, the focus is on strength through innovation — using intelligent drone solutions to transform farming practices in India. The company is dedicated to advancing agriculture through cutting-edge drones that combine robust hardware with intelligent software, addressing long-standing challenges from precision spraying to crop monitoring. Designed to improve efficiency, accuracy, and environmental sustainability, Thanos' solutions redefine conventional methods. *(The New Indian Express)*



Industry, Manufacturing, Services and Technology

An ASEAN answer for India's data centre push

The global digital economy is expanding at breakneck speed. Artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and data-intensive services are driving an unprecedented surge in demand for data centres, the backbone of modern economic competitiveness. By every headline metric, India should be leading this race — a billion internet users, one of the world's deepest IT talent pools, and a rapidly digitising economy. Yet one of Asia's fastest-growing data-centre hubs today is not India. It is Malaysia and it is expected to surpass India in data centre capacity by 2029. *(BusinessLine)*

Asset Class: Aircraft acquisition being considered for infrastructure status in Budget FY2

To support the aviation sector's growth, the upcoming Budget for 2026–27 may consider granting infrastructure status to 'aircraft' under the asset category. However, they pointed out that in the previous Budget infrastructure status was granted to commercial shipping vessels, resolving these objections related to assigning infrastructure status to movable assets. As per sources, this development has led to renewed interest in the aviation sector for a similar designation for commercial aircraft. *(BusinessLine)*

Ahead of budget, ISF suggests FM to reduce GST for staffing industry to 5%

The staffing and manpower outsourcing industry, a key driver of formal employment, currently faces a high GST burden that discourages formalisation, particularly in labour-intensive sectors such as manufacturing. According to the Federation, the high tax rate incentivises informal hiring, constrains women's participation in the workforce and weakens retention of migrant workers due to limited support for housing, food and security at worksites. *(BusinessLine)*

Overseas orders gain thrust as Indian space-tech firms build global credibility

Exports are fast emerging as a key growth engine for Indian space-tech start-ups, marking a clear shift from an ecosystem once driven largely by domestic demand. As ISRO-led credibility deepens, cost competitiveness improves and flight heritage builds, Indian start-ups are increasingly winning international customers, signalling the sector's transition from national missions to global markets. *(BusinessLine)*

Fintechs line up for IPOs as profitability, governance take centre stage

India's fintech sector is gearing up for a fresh wave of initial public offerings (IPOs) in 2026, as several late-stage platforms prepare to tap public markets after a prolonged reset phase marked by tighter capital and regulatory scrutiny. Market conditions have also turned favourable. According to industry executives, improved liquidity in the primary markets and the successful performance of listed fintech peers have helped reset investor expectations. *(BusinessLine)*

Textile industry welcomes rollback of quality norms on imported machinery

The textile industry has welcomed the Union Ministry of Heavy Industries' decision to rescind its Quality Control Order issued on August 24, 2024, for machinery and electrical equipment safety. This means that there will be no quality control standards on imported textile machinery. The textile sector is one of the largest importers of machinery, especially from Germany and China, sources said. Textile machinery imports to India rose by 32 percent to \$5 billion in FY23, according to government data. *(BusinessLine)*

Textiles sector driving growth, jobs

India's textile sector has risen from a legacy industry to a powerful job creating, people-centric engine of growth, embodying the true spirit of Atmanirbhar Bharat. India's textile resurgence is rooted in strong domestic demand and rising consumption. With a population of over 140 crore, India is one of the world's most resilient textile markets. The domestic textile market grew from about ₹8.4 lakh crore to an estimated ₹13 lakh crore in just five years. Consumption trends reinforce this momentum: per capita textile consumption has almost doubled over the past decade, from around ₹3,000 in 2014-15 to over ₹6,000 in 2024-25 and is projected to double again to ₹12,000 by 2030. *(BusinessLine)*

Turning recognition into protection for gig workers

The rapid expansion of gig and platform work reflects a broader transformation underway in labour markets across the world. According to a NITI Aayog estimate of 2022, nearly 47 per cent of gig work was in medium-skilled occupations, about 22 per cent in high-skilled roles and 31 per cent in low-skilled work. This composition is changing. The share of both high-skilled and low-skilled gig work was estimated to steadily increase. Seen in this context, the Social Security Code 2020 marks a significant opportunity. By formally recognising gig and platform workers as a distinct category, the Code creates space to design protection that reflects not only the scale of this workforce, but also its diversity in skills, incomes and career trajectories. *(BusinessLine)*

Time to sell India's nuclear power plants

Government-owned Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd (NPCIL) currently operates 24 nuclear power reactors with a total capacity of 8,780 MW; another eight reactors, totalling 6,600 MW, are under construction. Of the operating reactors, 14 are under IAEA safeguards. The remaining 10 are pressurised heavy water reactors (PHWRs) built using indigenous technology. There is merit in putting the 14 safeguarded reactors and the eight under-construction units under the hammer. The unsafeguarded reactors are arguably of strategic and defence relevance and should therefore remain with NPCIL. *(BusinessLine)*



News on Kerala

Round-the-clock AI-enabled call centre on LSGD services

The Local Self-Government department (LSGD) has set up an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enabled call centre which will provide round-the-clock information to the public. The call centre will be available at +914712525100. Minister for Local Self-Governments M.B. Rajesh will launch the call centre at Mascot Hotel here on Tuesday at 2.30 p.m. Through the call centre, information about the services available to the public from the department will be provided, in addition to resolution of various doubts regarding panchayat and municipality building regulations, panchayat licence rules, and civil registration rules like birth, death, marriage. *(The Hindu)*

Government plans art institutions to train students, says Sivankutty

General Education Minister V. Sivankutty believes there is still some room for improvement at the State School Arts Festival. "We will form a commission and get a report on the revisions needed in the rules and regulations of the school festival," he told The Hindu here on Sunday. "We have no intention to reduce the size of the festival even though some things, including 'appeal entries', have to be streamlined. He is glad that this year's festival went off smoothly. *(The Hindu)*

Kerala's milk production surged by 10 lakh litres: Minister

Kerala's milk production has surpassed previous figures by 10 lakh litres, Animal Husbandry and Dairy Development Minister J. Chinchurani said here on Sunday. She was inaugurating the Kerala Dairy Expo organised as part of the State Ksheera Sangamam. "Domestic milk production is on the rise. In many places, farmers supply milk locally first and only deliver the surplus to Milma. To address the lack of precise data and to calculate the actual increase in production, a survey has been initiated. This survey will help determine the exact volume of milk produced by every dairy farmer," said the Minister. *(The Hindu)*

Kerala improves rankings from 19 to 11 in NITI Aayog's export preparedness index

Kerala has improved its ranking to 11 among all States in the NITI Aayog's Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024 rankings published earlier this week. In the previous edition of the Index for 2022, the State was ranked 19. The State achieved a score of 44.03 and found a place in the challenger category, in comparison to Maharashtra, the leading State with a score of 68.01. The index is prepared considering multiple factors, including export policies, business environment, quality of infrastructure, and export outcomes. The report observes that in the financial year, Kerala also experienced a remarkable year-on-year export growth rate of 86.9%, with exports valued at ₹68,375 crore, highlighting the State's increasing competitiveness in global markets. *(The Hindu)*

Government announced subsidy scheme for cardamom farmers under KERA project

In a first-of-its-kind initiative, the Kerala government has announced financial assistance for cardamom replanting. The project will be implemented under the Kerala Climate Resilient Agri-Value Chain Modernisation (KERA) programme, a flagship initiative supported by the World Bank. According to officials, a total allocation of ₹2,365 crore has been made for schemes under KERA – which includes the replanting of cardamom, rubber, and coffee – with funding shared between the World Bank (70%) and the State government (30%). Suresh C. Thampi, procurement officer of the KERA project, said the initiative aims to introduce climate-resilient cardamom varieties in Idukki to enhance productivity and strengthen the local economy. *(The Hindu)*

'Work Near Home' centres set to come up across State

Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal on Friday said that 'Work Near Home' facilities will be established in every panchayat across Kerala, aiming to provide employment for 5 lakh people. This initiative is projected to generate ₹5,000 crore in additional revenue and create 50,000 new job opportunities within the State. Ahead of the inauguration of Kerala's first Work Near Home (WNH) facility in Kottarakara on January 19, Mr. Balagopal said the project aims at curbing the brain drain of talented youth to metropolitan areas and overseas by providing high-quality career opportunities locally. *(The Hindu)*.

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