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1. Apple to launch its credit card in India (June 23, 2023)

Apple-to-launch-its-credit-card-in-India

Apple Inc is planning to introduce its credit card, known as **Apple Card**, in India to take advantage of the growing opportunities in the country's financial sector.

An overview of the news

- Apple intends to collaborate with **HDFC Bank** to offer Apple Card to Indian customers.
- Apple CEO **Tim Cook** met HDFC Bank CEO and MD **Shashidhar Jagadishan** during the launch of the Apple Store in India in April.
- RBI has directed Apple to follow the standard procedures set up for other co-branded credit cards.

Features of Apple Card

- Physical Apple Card users can earn up to **1% cashback** for regular purchases, which increases to **2%** when paying with **Apple Pay**.
- The cashback percentage has increased to 3% for payments made at Apple Stores and select partners.
- Apple does not charge Apple Card holders **late fees, foreign transaction fees, returned payment fees, or annual credit card fees**. However, the users are responsible for paying the interest charges levied for maintaining the balance.
- Apple Card owners have the option of opening a savings account with an **interest rate of 4.15%**, with no minimum balance requirement, to deposit their daily cash.
- Each Apple Card user receives a unique card number for each device.
- These numbers are securely stored in the device, used by Apple Pay for transactions and on-device cryptographic functions.

2. Minister of Steel inaugurates Silica Reduction Plant Project at SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant's Dalli Mines (June 23, 2023)

Minister-of-Steel

Union Minister of Steel and Civil Aviation, **Jyotiraditya M. Scindia** virtually inaugurated the **Silica Reduction Plant at Dalli Mines of Bhilai Steel Plant of Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL)** from New Delhi on 23 June.

An overview of the news

- SAIL's silica reduction plant was inaugurated virtually and is located at the company's **Dalli iron ore mine**.
- This enables SAIL to utilize **low-grade ore** from Dalli mines through beneficiation process.

- About **80 per cent** of the iron ore reserves present in the mine have already been utilised.
- The newly inaugurated plant will improve the **iron (Fe) content by 62-64 per cent** and reduce the silica content by **2-3 per cent**.
- SAIL Chairman **Amarendu Prakash** emphasized the need to refine iron ore of size less than 1 mm to obtain the desired grade for effective use in blast furnaces at SAIL's Bhilai Steel Plant (BSP).
- The Silica Reduction Plant has been set up with an investment of about **Rs 149 crore** and is equipped with state-of-the-art beneficiation equipment.
- Its operation will increase iron ore supply to BSP, which will lead to higher annual production from blast furnace, reduce coke consumption and reduce carbon emissions.
- SAIL, functioning under the Ministry of Steel, is one of the leading steel producers in India with an annual capacity of about **20 million tonnes**.

Bhilai Steel Plant

- It is located in **Bhilai of Chhattisgarh state**.
- A ten-time winner of the **Prime Minister's Trophy for Best Integrated Steel Plant in the country**, Bhilai Steel Plant (BSP) is a flagship unit of **Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL)**, a Government of India undertaking.
- It produces high strength rails, heavy structures, broad and heavy steel plates of various grades, commercial products, wire rods etc. Bhilai became the first integrated steel plant in the country to cross the **5 MT mark** in crude oil production in the year 2005-06.
- Bhilai has the unique distinction of having the cleanest rail network in the world.

3. Fitch raises India's GDP forecast to 6.3% from 6% for FY24 (June 22, 2023)

Fitch-raises-India's-GDP-forecast-to-6.3%-from-6%-for-FY24

Fitch Ratings has recently revised its **forecast for Indian economic growth** in the **fiscal year 2023-24**, increasing it from **6% to 6.3%**.

An overview of the news

- The revision is based on a stronger first-quarter performance and positive momentum in the near term.

Comparison with previous years

- In FY23, the growth forecast compares with a **7.2% GDP expansion**. The economy had a growth of **9.1% in FY22**.

Factors contributing to the growth forecast change

- Fitch Ratings attributes the revised forecast to the overall strength of India's economy.

- It highlights a **6.1% year-on-year GDP growth** in Q1 2023, robust performance in auto sales, PMI surveys, and credit growth in recent months.

Upgraded forecast and global trade impact

- Fitch Ratings considers the stronger first-quarter performance and positive momentum as reasons to upgrade the growth forecast to **6.3%**, which it states is one of the highest growth rates globally.
- However, it acknowledges that India's economy may be affected by the slowdown in global trade.

Impact of interest rate increase and inflation

- Fitch Ratings mentions that the full impact of a **250 basis points increase** in interest rates by the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** since May 2022 is yet to be felt.
- It also highlights that consumers have experienced a decline in purchasing power due to increased inflation in 2022.

Supportive factors for investment

- The rating agency notes that the government's emphasis on increased capital expenditure, moderation in commodity prices, and robust credit growth are expected to support investment.
- It anticipates that slowing inflation will gradually benefit consumers, and households are showing increased optimism about future earnings and employment.

RBI's policy rates and inflation

- The RBI has maintained policy rates at 6.5% throughout the year, while headline inflation has eased from a peak of **7.8% to 4.3% in May**, falling within the RBI's tolerance band of 2-6%.

Growth forecast for future fiscal years

- Fitch Ratings estimates a growth rate of 6.5% for both the 2024-25 and 2025-26 fiscal years.

4. UK launches new landmark trading scheme for developing countries (June 20, 2023)

UK-launches-new-landmark-trading

The UK launched the Developing Countries Trade Scheme (DCTS) on 19 June.

An overview of the news

- This trade scheme provides a significant opportunity for India and 65 other poor and developing countries.

- The scheme simplifies trading rules and cuts tariffs on products entering the UK from 65 developing countries, including Bangladesh.

About Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS)

- This is a preferential trading program that has been introduced by the United Kingdom.
- The DCTS replaces similar arrangements that were previously in place during the UK's membership in the European Union.
- The primary objective of the scheme is to support trade and promote economic growth for 65 poor and developing countries.
- Through the DCTS, these countries are granted preferential treatment in terms of trade, with reduced or eliminated tariffs on certain products imported into the United Kingdom.
- By providing favorable trading conditions, the DCTS aims to enhance market access for these countries, stimulate economic activity, and foster mutually beneficial trade relationships.

Benefits of the scheme

- It creates opportunities for businesses and supports **livelihoods** by facilitating trade between participating countries and the United Kingdom.
- By lowering trade barriers and providing preferential treatment, the scheme aims to **create employment opportunities** for individuals in participating countries.
- It plays a role in diversifying **local and international supply chains**, which contributes to **job creation and economic growth** in these countries.
- Through increased market access and favorable trading conditions, the scheme helps participating countries to access the UK market and expand their export capabilities.
- By increasing exports, countries can diversify their economies and reduce their dependence on limited products or markets.

5. Bureau of Indian Standards makes license mandatory for 24 footwear products (June 20, 2023)

Bureau-of-Indian-Standards-makes-license-mandatory

Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) license will be mandatory for 24 footwear products from July 1, 2023.

An overview of the news

- Small-scale footwear manufacturers will have to comply by January 1, 2024, while micro-footwear industries will be subject to mandatory quality standards from July 1, 2024.
- It aims to reduce sub-standard imports, especially from countries like China.
- According to the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), this Quality Control Order (QCO) will ensure production of high quality footwear domestically and curb substandard imports.

QCO for footwear and related products

- The QCO for **24 footwear** and related products was initially notified in **October 2020**.
- The 24 footwear products covered by the quality standards include **rubber gum boots, PVC sandals, rubber thongs, chappals, molded plastic footwear, footwear** used for municipal cleaning work, sports footwear, derby shoes, riot-proof shoes and molded Includes solid rubber sole.
- At present, **27 out of 54 footwear products** are covered by QCO, and the **remaining 27** more footwear products will be covered within the next six months.
- BIS has revised five footwear specification standards, giving the industry an additional time of **six months till January 1, 2024**, to comply with the QCOs.
- To support the implementation and testing of footwear products, testing facilities have been set up at two BIS laboratories, two **Footwear Design and Development Institute (FDDI)** laboratories, Central Leather Research Institute and eleven private laboratories.
- In addition, mandatory compliance of quality standards for "protective clothing for fire fighting" and "19 products related to geotextiles" will come into effect from October this year.
- At present, **470 products** are covered under mandatory quality standards, and BIS has shared additional 600 products with ministries to bring them under QCO.

'Manak Rath' Online Exchange Forum

- Additionally, BIS has launched an online exchange forum called '**Manak Rath**' on its website, which provides a platform for users to connect and share their views.
- Student members of Standard Clubs can participate in various activities and competitions, with the opportunity to win exciting prizes.

About Bureau of Indian Standards

- Bureau of Indian Standards is the national standards body of India under the Department of Consumer Affairs, **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution**, Government of India.
- Headquarter- **Manak Bhawan, Old Delhi**
- Director General- **Pramod Kumar Tiwari**
- Established- **23 December 1986**

6. Centre discontinues sale of rice, wheat under OMSS Scheme (June 19, 2023)

Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS)

The **central government has discontinued the sale of rice and wheat** from the central pool under the **Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS)** to state governments.

An overview of the news

- This decision will affect some states, including **Karnataka**, that provide free grains to the poor through their own schemes.
- The **Food Corporation of India (FCI)** has issued an order stating that the sale of **wheat and rice** under the OMSS for state governments is discontinued.
- However, the sale of rice under the OMSS will continue for **northeastern states, hilly states, and states facing law and order** situations or natural calamities at the existing rate of **Rs 3,400 per quintal**.
- FCI may sell rice under the OMSS to private parties from the **central pool stock to moderate market prices**.
- The central government had previously allowed states to buy rice and wheat from the FCI for their own schemes without participating in e-auctions as part of the **OMSS policy for 2023**.

Rice prices

- Rice prices have been increasing due to the slow progress of the monsoon and have risen by up to **10% in the last year** at the mandi level.
- The monsoon rains are crucial for rice production as about **80% of the country's total rice production** is grown during the kharif season.

Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS)

- **Nodal Agency-** Food Corporation of India (FCI)
- **Purpose-** To sell foodgrains, especially wheat and rice, at predetermined prices in the open market.
- **Mode of Selling-** Weekly auctions by FCI on the platform of the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Limited.
- **Quantity allowed in a bidding** - A bidder can purchase in a single bid range from 10-100 tonne.
- OMSS comprises **2 schemes**
- -Sale of wheat to bulk consumers/private traders through e-auction.
- -Sale of Raw Rice Grade 'A' to bulk consumers/private traders through e-auction.

About Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS)

- It is a government initiative launched with the aim of **reducing the excess stock of food grains**.
- **Nodal Agency**- Food Corporation of India (FCI)
- Its objective is to sell food grains, especially **wheat and rice**, in the open market at pre-determined prices.
- The sales are carried out through weekly auctions by FCI on the platform of **National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Limited**.
- Under this a bidder can buy in a single bid range of **10-100 tonnes**.
- Schemes for sale of wheat to bulk consumers/private traders through e-auction and sale of grade 'A' raw rice to bulk consumers/private traders through e-auction are included under OMSS.

About Food Corporation of India (FCI)

- It is a prominent **Public Sector Undertaking (PSU)** under the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution in India**.
- It was **established in 1965** to ensure food security and support the **nation's public distribution system**.
- FCI's primary mandate is to **procure, store, and distribute food grains** across the country.
- It aims to maintain an adequate buffer stock of essential commodities and provide timely and affordable food grains to the vulnerable sections of society.
- FCI undertakes the procurement of food grains from farmers at **Minimum Support Prices (MSPs)** declared by the government.
- It procures crops such as wheat, rice, and coarse grains directly from farmers through designated procurement centers.

7. RBI chief Shaktikanta Das named 'Governor of the Year' at Central Banking Awards in London (June 15, 2023)

Governor-of-the-Year

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor **Shaktikanta Das** was named '**Governor of the Year**' at the **Central Banking Awards in London**.

An Overview of the News

- The award is presented by Central Banking, a leading organisation that covers matters related to central banks and financial regulators globally.
- The Central Banking Awards 2023 announced the winners at the end of March, the National Bank of Ukraine received the title of **Central Bank of the Year**.

- Shaktikanta Das, representing the Reserve Bank of India, was honoured with the Governor of the Year award at the event.

About Reserve Bank of India

- The RBI was established on **April 1, 1935**, as per the provisions of the **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934**.
- The central office of the Reserve Bank was established in **Kolkata** which was permanently shifted to **Mumbai in the year 1937**.
- It was **nationalised in 1949** and now the Government of India owns the RBI.
- It has the power to regulate banks under the **Banking Regulation Act 1949**.
- It has the power to regulate Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) under the RBI Act 1934.
- RBI is also the regulator of digital payment systems under the **Payment and Settlement Act 2007**.

Headquarters of RBI: **Mumbai**

RBI Governor: **Shaktikanta Das**

8. SIDBI launches EVOLVE mission with NITI Aayog (June 14, 2023)

SIDBI-launches-EVOLVE-mission-with-NITI-Aayog
Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) launched the **Electric Vehicle Operations and Lending for Vibrant Ecosystem (EVOLVE) mission**.

An Overview of the News

- The mission has been launched in **collaboration with NITI Aayog, World Bank, Korean-World Bank and Korean Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF)**.
- Its main objective is to provide financial assistance to **micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs)** in the electric vehicle sector.
- The collaboration between **SIDBI, NITI Aayog, World Bank, Korea-World Bank and Korean Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF)** highlights the importance of public-private partnership.
- The EVOLVE mission contributes to the promotion of sustainable transportation solutions in India.
- By supporting MSMEs in the electric vehicle industry, the initiative aims to foster a vibrant ecosystem for electric vehicles.

EVOLVE Mission Aim:

- Its primary objective is to provide funds for the purchase of **50,000 Electric Vehicles (EVs)**.
- Sanction letters have been sent to companies such as **Aristo Securities and Muffin Green Finance** to achieve this goal.
- These companies have been tasked with facilitating the introduction of around 5,000 two-wheeler and three-wheeler electric vehicles on the roads in the near future.

Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI):

- Apex regulatory body for micro, small and medium enterprise finance companies in India.
- Responsible for licensing and regulation in this sector.

Jurisdiction:

- Under the **Ministry of Finance**, Government of India.
- The headquarters is located in **Lucknow**.

Establishment:

- Established on **2nd April, 1990** by the Government of India.
- Initially a wholly owned **subsidiary of IDBI Bank**.
- Delinked from IDBI Bank on **March 27, 2000**.

9. Centre announces four important initiatives to strengthen Urban Co-operative Banks in country (June 10, 2023)

-Urban-Co-operative-Banks-in-country

To realise Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of '**Sahakar se Samridhi**', four important initiatives have been taken to strengthen **1,514 Urban Co-operative Banks** (UCBs) in the country.

An overview of the news

- After detailed discussions with Union Home and Cooperation Minister **Amit Shah**, Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** and Governor, Reserve Bank of India, RBI has notified these important measures to strengthen Urban Cooperative Banks.

Four initiative

1. **In order to expand their business, Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs) can now open new branches**

- UCBs can now open new branches up to **10%** (maximum 5 branches) of the number of branches in the previous financial year without prior approval of RBI in their approved area of operation.
- In order to avail this facility, UCBs have to get the policy approved by their board and comply with the Financially Sound and Well Managed (FSWM) Norms.

1. **UCBs can also do One Time Settlement at par with Commercial Banks**

- RBI has notified a framework governing this aspect for all regulated entities including Urban Co-operative Banks.
- Now co-operative banks through board-approved policies may provide a process for technical write-off as well as settlement with borrowers.
- This has brought cooperative banks at par with other commercial banks now.

1. **Revised timelines for PSL targets given to UCBs**

- The Reserve Bank of India has decided to extend the timeline for UCBs to achieve Priority Sector Lending (PSL) targets by two years i.e. up to March 31,2026.

1. **Designating a Nodal Officer in RBI**

- In order to meet the long pending demand of the cooperative sector for closer coordination and focused interaction, RBI has recently notified a nodal officer as well.

What are Urban Cooperative banks (UCB)?

- It refers to **primary cooperative banks** located in **urban and semi-urban areas**.
- These are registered as cooperative societies under the provisions of, either the **State Cooperative Societies Act** of the State concerned under the provisions of the or the **Multi State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002**.
- It is regulated by the **Registrar of Cooperatives** and also by the RBI.
- The Reserve Bank regulates and supervises the banking functions of UCBs under the provisions of **Banking Regulation Act, 1949**.

10. Federal Bank launches 'I am Adyar, Adyar is me' campaign (June 9, 2023)

Federal-Bank-launches-'I-am-Adyar,-Adyar-is-me'-campaign

The campaign '**I am Adyar, Adyar is me**' was launched by the **Federal Bank in Chennai** on 6th June.

An Overview of the News

- The campaign aims to honour and celebrate the local **community of Adyar**.
- The Adyar branch of Federal Bank has been converted into a living museum for the campaign.
- Vibrant paintings depicting the vibrant spirit of Adyar now adorn the walls of the branch.
- The campaign features a special exhibition showcasing 40 compelling stories of the individuals who made Adyar special.
- The campaign aims to capture the essence of Adyar and promote its rich culture and heritage.
- It fosters a sense of pride and belonging among local residents.
- The 'I am Adyar, Adyar is me' campaign is an innovative initiative by Federal Bank to honour and recognize the Adyar community.

Federal Bank Limited:

- It is an **Indian private sector bank** headquartered in **Aluva, Kochi, Kerala**.
- The bank operates **1,370 branches** in various states of India.
- Federal Bank has representative offices in **Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and Dubai**.
- The bank provides a wide range of financial services to its customers including retail banking, corporate banking, treasury operations and wealth management.
- It emphasises a customer-centric approach and strives to provide efficient and convenient banking solutions.

Founder - **K.P Hormis**

Establishment - **23 April 1931, Nedumpuram**

CEO - **Shyam Srinivasan**

About Tamil Nadu

- The state was formed on **26 January 1950** but its boundaries were redrawn on **14 January 1969**.
- It is situated at the mouth of the **Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal** and the **Indian Ocean**.

Capital - **Chennai**

Governor - **Ravindra Narayan Ravi**

Chief Minister - **MK Stalin**

Assembly seats - **235 seats**

Rajya Sabha seats - **18**

Lok Sabha seats - **39**