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1. MSME Ministry launches 'CHAMPIONS 2.0 Portal', 'Mobile App' and 'MSME Idea Hackathon 3.0' (June 28, 2023)

CHAMPIONS-2.0-Portal

The **Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME)** celebrated '**Udyami Bharat-MSME Day**' on **International MSME Day (27th June)**.

An overview of the news

- The event was attended by **Narayan Rane**, the Union Minister for MSME, as the Chief Guest, and **Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma**, the Union Minister of State for MSME, as the Guest of Honor.
- The occasion marked the launch of various initiatives by the Ministry of MSME to support the growth and development of MSMEs.
- These initiatives included the '**CHAMPIONS 2.0 Portal**' and the '**Mobile App for Geo-tagging of Cluster Projects and Technology Centers**', which were launched by the Chief Guest and Guest of Honor.
- The results for the '**MSME Idea Hackathon 2.0**' were announced, and the launch of '**MSME Idea Hackathon 3.0**' specifically for **women entrepreneurs took place**.
- During the event, both Union Ministers presented certificates to **Gold and Silver ZED-certified MSMEs**, motivating and recognizing their achievements.
- Additionally, a digital release of a subsidy worth **400 crore rupees** was made to **10,075 beneficiaries** of the new Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) units.

Significance of MSMEs in India's GDP

- Narayan Rane highlighted the significance of MSMEs in India's GDP and exports.
- He expressed his hope that MSMEs would contribute to **50% of the country's GDP by 2030**.
- He congratulated all stakeholders and encouraged them to work towards making India a **USD 5 trillion economy**.
- Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma acknowledged the role of Indian MSMEs in the growth of the country's economy.
- He mentioned that **since 2014**, India's GDP ranking has significantly improved, moving from the **10th position to the 5th position**.

2. Sarbananda Sonowal launches New CSR guidelines 'Sagar Samajik Sahayog' (June 28, 2023)

Sagar-Samajik-Sahayog

The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and Ayush, **Sarbananda Sonowal**, has introduced a set of **new corporate social responsibility (CSR) guidelines** called '**Sagar Samajik Sahayog**' by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways.

An overview of the news

- The purpose of these guidelines is to enable ports to effectively address local community issues in a collaborative and efficient manner.

CSR funding guidelines

- Under the new CSR guidelines, ports in India will allocate a specific percentage of their net annual profit towards CSR activities.
- The allocation will be based on the turnover of each port for the year.
- Ports with an annual turnover of less than **Rs 100 crores** will allocate **3-5% of their net annual profit** towards CSR initiatives.
- Ports with a turnover between **Rs 100 to 500 crores** will allocate **2-3% of their net annual profit** for CSR activities.
- Ports with a turnover exceeding **Rs 500 crores** will allocate **0.5-2% of their net annual profit** towards CSR initiatives.
- Additionally, **two percent** of the total CSR expenses will be dedicated to project monitoring by the ports.
- This allocation ensures effective implementation and monitoring of the respective CSR projects undertaken by the ports.
- **20% of CSR expenses must be earmarked to Sainik Kalyan Board** at district level, National Maritime Heritage Complex and National Youth Development Fund.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

- Under CSR, companies integrate social and environmental concerns with their business partners with their stakeholders.
- It is regulated under **Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013**.
- India is the first country in the world to make CSR mandatory.
- The provision of CSR is applicable to companies whose net worth is **more than ₹ 500 crores or turnover is more than ₹ 1000 crores** or net profit is **more than ₹ 5 crores**.
- Certain categories of profitable companies are required to spend at least two per cent of their annual average net profit for three years on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities.

CSR Activities

- Promotion of education
- Gender equality and women empowerment
- Eradication of poverty and hunger
- Preparing to fight HIV and other diseases
- Ensuring environmental balance
- Improvement in infant mortality rate and maternal mortality rate in the country.
- Contribution to Prime Minister's National Relief Fund
- Promoting sports, Slum area development etc.

3. CCI approves acquisition of TCNS Clothing by Aditya Birla Fashion (June 28, 2023)

The **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** on 27th June **approved the acquisition of TCNS Clothing Co Limited by Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Limited.**

An overview of the news

- ABFRL is a listed company and a part of the **Aditya Birla group of companies.**
- It operates in the retail industry, specifically in the **apparel, footwear, and accessories segments.**
- The company sells branded products through various channels, including **retail stores, online platforms, and e-commerce marketplaces.**
- TCNS Clothing is another listed company that specializes in the **manufacturing, distribution, and sale of women's apparel, jewelry, footwear, and beauty products.**
- It owns several brands such as **W, Aurelia, Wishful, Elleven, and Folk Song.**
- In May of the current year, ABFRL announced its plan to acquire a **51% stake in TCNS Clothing.**
- The deal involved a combination of cash and equity and valued the promoter stake at approximately Rs 1,650 crore.
- ABFRL reported a loss of **Rs 186.94 crore** in the fiscal fourth quarter of FY 2022-23, compared to a profit of **Rs 43.59 crore** in the same quarter of the previous year.

Competition Commission of India (CCI)

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) is the **chief national competition regulator in India.**
- It was set up under the **Competition Act, 2002**

- It comes under the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs**.
- It promotes healthy market competition and prevents activities that have an adverse effect on competition in India.
- CCI also approves combinations under the act so that two merging entities do not overtake the market.
- Headquarter - **New Delhi**
- Current Chairman - **Ravneet Kaur**

4. Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare signed a MOU with Pixxel Space India Pvt Limited (June 27, 2023)

The **Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Pixxel Space India Pvt Limited**.

An overview of the news

- The MOU aims to develop various **geospatial solutions for the Indian Agriculture Ecosystem** using **Pixxel's hyperspectral dataset**.
- The project focuses on utilizing **Pixxel's pathfinder satellites' hyperspectral data** to develop analytics models for crop mapping, crop stage discrimination, crop health monitoring, and soil organic carbon assessments.
- The collaboration will enable the Government to leverage **hyperspectral data** provided by Pixxel for developing use cases and implementing suitable methodologies.
- The adoption of new technology will reduce dependence on manual surveys and measurements, which are time-consuming and prone to errors.
- The collaboration is expected to benefit millions of farmers by providing improved crop risk management solutions and strengthening the current advisory system of the Government.

Hyperspectral remote sensing technology

- Hyperspectral remote sensing technology, which involves **spectral measurements in narrow wavelength bands by satellites**, offers unique capabilities for monitoring agriculture.
- The application of hyperspectral data includes **crop health monitoring, early detection of crop stress, accurate diagnostics of crop stress** due to pests/diseases or water, and soil nutrient mapping, particularly soil organic carbon assessments.
- The collaboration with a young startup like Pixxel will help in developing innovative geospatial solutions using advanced satellite imaging technology.

5. REC to provide ₹3,045 cr finance to Bangalore Metro (June 26, 2023)

REC-to-provide-₹3,045-cr-finance-to-Bangalore-Metro

REC Limited, a Public Sector Enterprise under the **Union Ministry of Power**, has announced its decision to provide **financial assistance of Rs 3,045 crore** to **Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL)** for the **Phase-II project of Bangalore Metro**.

An overview of the news

- The assistance was approved by the REC Board during a meeting. The Ministry of Power released a statement confirming the extension of financial support to BMRCL.

Phase-II project of Namma Metro

- The Phase-II project of Namma Metro includes the extension of the existing **East-West Corridor and North-South Corridor of Phase-I**, as well as the addition of **two new lines: RV Road to Bommasandra and Kalena Agrahara to Nagawara**.
- These new metro lines will help alleviate traffic congestion in high-traffic areas of Bangalore.
- Upon completion of Phase-II, the Namma Metro network will cover a total distance of **114.39 km and have 101 stations**.

About REC Limited

- REC Limited, as a **non-banking financial company (NBFC)** focused on power sector financing and development, is expanding its involvement in funding infrastructure development by providing financial assistance to BMRCL.
- REC Ltd offers financial support for various types of projects in the power sector, including **generation, transmission, distribution, and renewable energy**.
- In its fiscal fourth quarter results, REC reported a consolidated **net profit of Rs 3,065.37 crore** for the quarter ending March 2023, marking a **33% increase** compared to the same quarter last year.
- The company's total revenue from operations stood at **Rs 10,243.06 crore**, reflecting a **6.3% growth** compared to the previous year's corresponding period.
- Total expenses for the quarter were **Rs 6,353.40 crore**, a decrease of **6.5% compared to the previous year**.

6. Asian Development Bank to provide 400 million US dollars in loans to Bangladesh (June 26, 2023)

Asian-Development-Bank-to-provide-400-million-US-dollars

The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** has signed a **loan agreement** with the government of **Bangladesh** to provide **\$400 million** for the construction of a dual gauge railway between **Chattogram and Cox's Bazar**.

An overview of the news

- The purpose of the railway project is to **promote trade, investment, and tourism in Bangladesh.**
- The new rail link is expected to open this year and aims to transport approximately **2.9 million passengers** annually between Chattogram and Cox's Bazar by 2024.
- The ADB is supporting the government's shift from road to rail transport, as rail is considered a **climate-friendly, safe, affordable, and efficient mode of transportation.**

Chattogram-Cox's Bazar Railway

- The Chattogram-Cox's Bazar Railway is part of the **Trans-Asia Railway (TAR) network**, which is an initiative led by the **United Nations.**
- The TAR network aims to establish seamless rail links between Asia and Europe to enhance **connectivity between people and markets.**
- The TAR network covers a total of **128,000 kilometers** and passes through **28 countries.**
- It was formalized through an Inter-governmental Agreement on **Trans-Asian Railway network in 2009.**
- The assistance provided by ADB for the Chattogram-Cox's Bazar Railway Project is the third part of a \$1.5 billion loan package for the **South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) initiative.**

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

- It is a **regional multilateral financial institution** which focuses on the countries of **Asia and Pacific region.**
- It was set up after a resolution was passed at the first Ministerial Conference on Asian Economic Cooperation held by the United Nations Economic Commission for **Asia and the Far East in 1963.**
- It started functioning from **19 December 1966 with 31 member countries.**
- At present it has **68 members**—of which **49 members are from within Asia and the Pacific and 19 outside.**
- **Japan is the largest shareholder** of the ADB and a Japanese has always been the head of the ADB.
- President of ADB: **Masatsugu Asakawa**
- Headquarters: **Mandaluyong City, Manila, Philippines**

7. US agrees to provide market access to India's steel and aluminum products (June 24, 2023)

US-agrees-to-provide-market-access

The **United States** on 23 June has **agreed to grant market access to India's steel and aluminium products**, according to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

An overview of the news

- As per the agreement, the US Department of Commerce will clear **70 percent of steel and 80 percent of aluminium applications** for products originating in India.
- The decision was made during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the United States.
- The **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** expects this agreement to **boost India's steel and aluminium exports by approximately 35 percent**.
- The **US had restricted market access for Indian steel and aluminium products since June 14, 2018**, under the exclusion process of Section 232 of the **Trade Expansion Act 1962**.
- Under this restriction, additional duties of **25 percent and 10 percent** were imposed on steel and aluminium products, respectively.
- In response, India had implemented retaliatory tariffs on certain products, which it has now agreed to remove.
- However, the **basic import duties applicable** to all imports of steel and aluminium products will continue.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.