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Asserting that the spirit of adventure, enterprise and innovation in India is thriving, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said that his government's resolve to spur investments boost economic growth remains unwavering...

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India's growth to rise to 6.2 percent in 2014: IMF

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has predicted that India's growth will rise to 5.75 percent in 2013 and 6.2 percent in 2014.

IMF's latest World Economic Outlook (WEO) attributes the projected rise in India's growth to improved external demand and recently implemented pro-growth measures.

The new projections however, are 0.2 percentage points lower than those for 2013 and 0.1 percentage points lower than those for 2014 in IMF's January update of the WEO

Significant structural challenges will also likely lower potential output in India over the medium term and also keep inflation elevated by regional standards, it said.

Projecting global growth at 3.3 percent in 2013, up to 4 percent in 2014, the IMF said the global economy is expected to continue mending gradually with developing, emerging economies persisting in leading global growth.

But with old dangers remaining and new risks emerging, policymakers cannot afford to relax their efforts, it warned, noting recovery was uneven in advanced economies with private demand in the United States improving faster than in the Euro area.

In emerging markets and developing economies, fiscal policy is expected to remain close to neutral, the IMF said as elevated growth will push debt ratios farther down to 30 percent of GDP by 2018.

However, some countries continue to face significant fiscal challenges, it said, citing the example of Middle Eastern oil importers with high energy subsidy spending, several emerging European economies and India.

Activity in emerging markets has been strong but less so than projected during the past couple of years, the IMF said.

Source: Indo-Asian News Service



'India committed to 3 percent fiscal deficit by 2016-17'

Overtaking fears of foreign investors about fiscal deficit, Finance Minister P Chidambaram has said that India was committed to reducing its fiscal deficit and would achieve the target of 3 percent in 2016-17.

He said, "India will reduce the fiscal deficit until we reach the target of 3 per cent in 2016-17 or perhaps a little earlier."

Chidambaram said the final reading of last year's fiscal deficit would come to below 5.3 per cent.

"When the actual numbers are out in the next couple of months, I'm confident it will probably be 5.1 percent," he said on April 16.

He pointed to the stimulus measures taken by the government, after the 2008 global economic crisis had driven fiscal deficit and inflation "out of control".

"It appears that while the first stimulus package was necessary, the second stimulus package was doubtful and the third stimulus package was perhaps avoidable," Chidambaram said at a breakfast meeting organised by the Canada-India Business Council.

The Minister said that India was on the path of fiscal consolidation. "I said in the year 2012-13 that I will bring fiscal deficit down to below 5.3 per cent, and going forward, I will reduce the fiscal deficit every year by 0.6 per cent until we have achieved the target of 3 per cent in 2016-17. I said these are red lines. I will not breach these red lines," the Minister added. Source:

Press Trust of India



Raju calls for linkages between academia and India Inc

Human Resource Development Minister M.M. Pallam Raju on April 15 called for strengthening linkages between academia and the industry to create an enabling environment for more research in the country.

"There is a need for industry and the academia to work together for strengthening linkages in creating an enabling environment, so that participants can work together towards more enabling research and for strengthening and making our companies more competitive," Raju told reporters on the sidelines of a Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) event here.



"There is also a need for creating capacity building for research. There is a need for creating capacity for skilling and upgrading the curriculum. This hand-holding has to come from the industry in guiding academic institutions in strengthening curriculum and other facilities," he said. On the expiry of the deadline for implementation of the Right to Education Act (RTE) in schools, Raju asked the states to act tough on non-compliant schools. *Source: Indo-Asian News Service*

RBI will introduce plastic notes on trial basis: Chakrabarty

Reserve Bank of India plans to introduce plastic notes on a trial basis, according to K.C. Chakrabarty, Deputy Governor.

Replying to a question on plastic notes, on the sidelines of a 'Town Hall Meet' organised by the Banking Ombudsman of Karnataka in Mangalore, he said plastic notes of Rs 10 denomination will be introduced on a trial basis, in select cities.

This is part of a move aimed at increasing the life of notes and combating counterfeit currency. Earlier, replying to a query by a bank customer on the soiled and torn notes, Chakrabarty said the average life of a currency note is less than nine months.

When another participant pointed out that even bank officials write on the currency notes though they are not supposed to, Chakrabarty said the bank employees too are part of the society "we live in". Society should take note of this, and stay away from writing on currency notes, he said.

One of the participants said that customers are put to discomfort when the bank officials find fake notes while paying at the counters, though the amount was withdrawn from ATMs. In such a situation, there should be a mechanism for customers to check the genuineness money withdrawn from ATMs.

Chakrabarty said the RBI has already made public the points related to checking the genuineness of currency notes. The basic methods of checking fake notes are made known to the public, he said. *Source: The Hindu*

Plan panel, CII to launch network to remove bottlenecks

To identify and remove bottlenecks in the way of economic expansion, the Planning Commission will launch jointly with India@75 foundation an initiative - India Backbone Implementation Network (IBIN) - on April 19.

"The IBIN, structurally an organisation, is essentially a process that will promote widespread capabilities in the country to systematically convert confusion to coordination, contention to collaboration, and intentions to implementation," a Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) statement said.

IBIN is an initiative of the Planning Commission and India@75, a grassroots initiative of the CII, for realizing the dream of an inclusive, sustainable and developed India by the year 2022. Planning Commission deputy chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia will launch IBIN next week.

IBIN aims to seed new techniques into the service delivery system.

Source: Indo-Asian News Service



Indian envoy seeks more US visas for high-skilled workers

Indian Ambassador Nirupama Rao has sought a generous American visa policy for high-skilled workers from India saying it would help both countries to come out winners.

As US policymakers move forward with efforts to reform the immigration system, "we respectfully urge that they consider the impact of their decisions on

the ability of both US and foreign-based companies to expand now and in the future," she wrote in an opinion piece in the USA Today.

"The inspirational history of economic synergy between our two nations should serve as our guide to the future," Rao wrote adding, "A generous visa policy for highly skilled

workers would help everyone; both nations would come out winners."

Noting that President Barack Obama has described the US-Indian relationship as the "defining partnership of the 21st century," she wrote: "The impressive growth in our trade and economic relations provide a robust foundation for this vision."

Source: Indo-Asian News Service

BRICS combined GDP will surpass US by 2020: UN

The combined output of BRICS countries will surpass the aggregate GDP of the US, Canada and other European nations by 2020, said a UN report. "By 2020, the combined economic output of three leading developing countries alone - Brazil, China and India - will surpass the aggregate production of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States," said the UNDP 2013 Human Development Report, titled "The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World." The report shows the growth phenomenon goes well beyond the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and more than 40 developing countries have made greater human development gains in recent decades than would have been predicted.

Source: Indo-Asian News Service

'New Saudi labour law won't affect genuine workers'

Saudi Arabia's new labour policy will affect only illegal immigrants and not genuine workers employed in the Kingdom, India's External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid has said.

"Genuine workers don't need to worry. It will impact only those who don't have proper work permit," Khurshid told IANS in the course of a brief chat in Berlin where this correspondent who had travelled with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh last week. Khurshid said Indian workers play an important role in Saudi Arabia's economy and the Kingdom's authorities recognise this. "Saudi Arabia needs Indian labour. Removal of illegal immigrants will open the doors for genuine workers," the minister said. Saudi Arabia recently introduced a new policy called Nitaqat (classification) that seeks to remove illegal immigrants and boost employment for locals by reserving 10 percent of jobs for them. Over 300,000 firms in Saudi Arabia reportedly do not employ any locals and the Nitaqat policy seeks to deal firmly with this.

under the new law introduced earlier this year, foreigners are allowed to only work for their legal sponsors and their spouses won't be allowed to take up jobs. Also, the expatriates cannot perform any job other than the one mentioned in their job cards. These provisions have sparked fears of mass deportation of Indian expatriates. There are more than two million Indians in Saudi Arabia and thousands of them do not have proper work permits. Nearly 4,000 Indian expatriates have already informed the Indian embassy in Riyadh that they don't have proper work documents.

Source: Indo-Asian News Service



Rama Prasad Goenka: The business titan and takeover king

Long before takeovers became the norm for the country's industry captains to spread wings, RPG Group founder Rama Prasad Goenka showed India Inc. the inorganic way of business growth through a series of acquisitions.

Regarded as "takeover king", Goenka (popularly known as RP) in 1979 established the RPG Enterprises with four companies - Phillips Carbon Black, Asian Cables, Agarpara Jute and Murphy India - which he inherited when the family assets were divided.



The four constituent units then had an annual turnover of around Rs.105 crore, but by 1990 - even before the opening up of the country's economy - Goenka was presiding over one of the leading business conglomerates in India, as he added brick by brick by acquiring mostly companies once owned by British merchants.

In 2010, when Goenka divided his business empire among his two sons, the total turnover had touched Rs.18,000 crore, with its imprint in several countries of Asia, Europe, North and South America and Africa.

The tycoon - born March 1, 1930 - had business interests spanning a wide range and across diverse sectors like power generation, transmission and distribution, electricity transmission engineering, tyres, carbon black, retail, entertainment, plantations and information technology.

The diversity of the bouquet was unique then in the sense that most of his contemporaries had concentrated on their core areas of operations.

His undivided business empire encompassed - CESC, Noida Power Co. Ltd., RPG Raychem, Spencer, CEAT Tyers, Saregama India (previously Gramophone Co of India), KEC International, Phillips Carbon Black, Fujitsu ICIM (now Zensar Technologies), Harrisons Malayalam, Firstsource Solutions Ltd and RPG Life Sciences.

Goenka was born into one of the oldest business families established in Kolkata by Ramdutt Goenka who moved from Dundlod in Rajasthan in 1820 to do business with the English East India Company. The firm was into banking and later traded in commodities like textiles, jute and tea.

RPG received his training from his grandfather Sir Badridas Goenka who was chairman of Imperial Bank of India and of FICCI. It was his grandfather who had taught him an old Marwari value: word of mouth is much more sacrosanct and important than any legal document.

A few years back, RPG said in an interview that experience taught him the second lesson: "Nothing should be hidden from the three most important persons in your business sphere - your lawyer, banker and your doctor".

The Presidency College and Harvard University alumnus went on an acquisition spree in the 1980s, beginning with tyre company CEAT in 1981, that created a national media buzz.

The group then went on to acquire Searle India - now RPG Life Sciences (1983), the age-old Gramophone Company - now Saregama India (1985), Harrisons Malayalam (1988), and finally CESC and Spencer (1989).

The reclusive and spotlight-shy entrepreneur scripted quite a few chapters in the history of Indian business. His most prized catch was Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation, now CESC Ltd., a more than 100-year-old power firm set up by the British. However, he also had a few setbacks.



Investment pacts can't be subject to foreign jurisdictions: Chidambaram

Finance minister P Chidambaram has made it clear that any bilateral investment protection agreement has to be subject to jurisdiction of domestic legal institutions and India will not allow it to be decided by foreign courts or tribunals.

"We cannot allow highest court of the land to be subjected to any foreign courts or tribunals," Chidambaram said during a question answer session at a breakfast meeting organised by the Canada-India Business Council (C-IBC) in Toronto on April 15.

"Will you allow the Supreme Court of Canada be subject to jurisdiction of any other court or tribunal?" Chidambaram asked the audience.

The minister was answering a question from Peter Sutherland, President and CEO of the Canada-India Business Council, who wanted to know the status of bilateral FIPPA treaty.

The minister said, "We have put Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPPA) on hold not only for Canada but other 83 countries too because of two major legal issues: namely right of a foreign investor to sue a sovereign State in a commercial dispute, and jurisdiction. All agreements are under review."

However, he assured the audience that both the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and FIPPA would become a reality soon.

Referring to Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper's visit to India in November last year, Chidambaram said that India and Canada have longstanding bilateral relations, built upon shared traditions of democracy, pluralism and strong interpersonal connections with an Indian diaspora of more than one million in Canada.

This expanding bilateral relationship received further momentum in the past three to four years and was supported by a wide range of agreements between the two countries.

During Harper's visit to India in November 2012, both countries committed to increase annual bilateral trade to USD 15 billion by 2015.

Referring to bilateral trade and investment between the countries, Chidambaram said that while imports and exports were roughly matched in both directions (with total trade approaching over USD 5 billion in 2012 as against USD 4 billion in 2010), the same was not true for bilateral direct investment.

Over 100 top executives of Canadian companies, Nirmal Verma, Indian High Commissioner to Canada; Stephen Beck, Canadian High Commissioner to India; and top officials of Finance Ministry and banking sector attended the meet.

Source: Press Trust of India





US, India should enhance defence, energy cooperation: Envoy

US Ambassador Nancy J. Powell has stressed the need for enhanced cooperation between the two countries with specific focus on infrastructure, defence, energy and child care among other sectors.

Since both countries have been targeted by terror attacks and security is an area of concern, the defence trade needs to expand, Powell said at an Indo-American Chamber of Commerce (IACC) function in Mumbai.

"Both of us have incredibly complex acquisitions and sales systems. So we've been working on that. We're going to be looking at ways, whether there are things that we could co-produce, and expand that band of our relationship as well," she said.

Another area was recognizing India's growing role in the world and the region and see how the US could help it further enhance it so both could work together on a variety of global problems and issues, she said.

Powell noted that according to a PriceWaterhouseCoopers study, the Indian economy will more than quadruple by 2030, making it the third largest in the world and presenting enormous opportunities for US businesses and cooperation. On infrastructure, Powell said according to current estimates, nearly 80 percent of infrastructure required to sustain and support India for the 2030 goal has yet to be built or designed and its financing arranged. US companies could help in this area, she added.

Source: Indo-Asian News Service



India Inc raises \$7.5bn in foreign debt so far in 2013

As the cost of rupee funds remains too high, 11 companies have raised a record USD 7.5 billion in foreign debt this year via bonds, which is 75 percent of what India Inc had mopped up in the entire 2012.

If the merchant bankers are to be believed, at least USD 2.5 billion-worth bond deals are in the making in the immediate short-term, with Reliance Industries, ONGC Videsh and Union Bank of India working on international bond sale programmes.

Merchant bankers, who did not want to be named, said that this year corporate India is going to mop up at least USD 20 billion in foreign debt, mostly through bond sales.

So far this year 11 corporates in 13 issuances have sold bonds worth USD 7.472 billion to foreign investors, while in the entire 2012 corporate India raised just USD 10 billion in foreign debts. Reliance, the most cash-rich company in the country sitting over a Rs 84,000-crore cash amount, is planning to raise further USD 2 billion to fund its capex plan.

ONGC arm OVL is planning to raise USD 1 billion via bond sale to fund its overseas acquisition. The state-run Union Bank is also working on a USD 500-million issue. The companies that raised foreign debt this year are Exim Bank (January and March), ICICI Bank, PowerGrid, Tata Communications, Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel (twice in March), Bank of India, IDBI Bank, Suzlon Energy and State Bank of India.

Source: Press Trust of India



India, Germany to 'shape the future' with trade and technology

India and Germany have agreed to deepen their strategic partnership and "shape the future", focusing on closer trade and investment, partnering in high technology and cooperating in multilateral fora.

"Both governments will strongly back a further intensification of Indo-German business cooperation. Both sides would encourage cooperation in the field of rare earths on mutually beneficial terms," said a joint statement released at the end of the inter-governmental consultations co-chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin on April 11.

The statement stressed that close trade and investment relations were a core dimension of bilateral partnership and held great importance for the development of the Indian and German economy.

The two countries agreed to facilitate the freedom of movement for business visitors and professionals.

The statement said that new initiatives in the area of energy, environment, culture, education and defence could "catalyse and activate" the great potential of bilateral relations.

Both nations recognised that expanding high technology trade and cooperation was key to deepening the strategic content of their relations.

"Both sides agree to consult regularly on advancing this objective and to this end form a High Technology Partnership Group, including both government and business," the statement, titled "shaping the future together", said.

In a separate statement to the media after the talks, the prime minister said, "We look forward to expanded defence cooperation anchored in technology transfer, co-development and co-production in India. High technology commerce would benefit from further easing of German export controls for India.

"The agreement today on scientific collaboration on technologies for civilian security adds a new dimension to our growing security cooperation. I am very happy that, following our discussion, we have agreed to set up a High Technology Partnership Group."

He said economic ties had been a defining feature of the India-German relationship and sought increased German participation in India's economic growth and its plans to modernize and upgrade our manufacturing and infrastructure sectors. "I also sought continuing openness and support to growing Indian presence in Germany, including in the services sector. We agreed on the importance of an early conclusion of a balanced India-EU Broad Based Trade and Investment Agreement."

The two sides agreed that the persisting weakness in the global economy required concerted global response to stimulate recovery without adding to fiscal and financial risks.

Source: Indo-Asian News Service





India, Germany ink six deals to enhance cooperation

India and Germany signed six agreements to enhance cooperation in the areas of green energy, education, agriculture and science and technology in Berlin on April 11.

The agreements were signed in the presence of visiting Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and German Chancellor Angela Merkel after the second inter-governmental meeting between the two countries.

The prime minister and the chancellor co-chaired the meeting and discussed the areas of cooperation.

Addressing a joint press conference after the meeting, Manmohan Singh said the high level bilateral engagement between the two countries in the recent years had substantially and tangibly raised the quality of cooperation across a broad range of areas.

"We look forward to expand defence cooperation anchored in technology transfer, co-development and co-production in India," he said.

India's Minister for New and Renewable Energy Farooq Abdullah and German parliamentary state secretary Gudrun Kopp signed an agreement for establishment of a "green energy corridor".

Two agreements were signed to enhance cooperation in education and research. Joint declarations of intents were signed for cooperation in agriculture, food security and civil security research. *Source: Indo-Asian News Service*



India inks nuclear commerce pact with Canada

Around 40 years after India used plutonium from a Canadian heavy water reactor to carry out its first nuclear test, Ottawa is set to resume nuclear commerce with New Delhi.

Earlier this week, India and Canada vaulted the final hurdle in dismantling sanctions imposed after the Pokhran I test by signing an Appropriate Arrangement Agreement (AAA) that will allow Canada to ship uranium to India.

The agreement was signed between the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and India's Department of Atomic Energy. Canada is home to the second most significant uranium mining industry in the world after Kazakhstan.

France and Russia have supplied some quantities of uranium, but Canada did not after the nuclear embargo imposed by the developed world on India. An agreement with Australia has been inked, but a safeguards framework is still being negotiated.

Nuclear cooperation with Canada has high symbolic significance for India as it marks a change, as PM Manmohan Singh himself earlier put it, in international realities. Ottawa had stopped all such cooperation after India used plutonium from the Canadian reactor to built its first atomic bomb.

India and Canada had signed a civil nuclear cooperation agreement in 2010 that allowed them to initiate negotiations for supply of uranium, or the AAA. Canada's insistence on having a stringent monitoring mechanism for use of its uranium by India led to a stalemate in the talks. Canada, however, seems to have relented when PM Stephen Harper declared during his highly successful visit to India last November that both countries have concluded negotiations. The AAA still needed to be signed, though. *Source: The Times of India*



Gold meltdown a silver lining for economy

As global investors encouraged by signs of an improving US economy flocked to equity markets, gold prices tumbled to a two-year low on April 15. The possibility of several struggling European countries, including Cyprus, unloading gold



stocks also contributed to the fall in yellow metal, whose price spiralled for a 12th straight year through 2012.

In line with the trend, India's gold imports fell nearly 24 percent in the last quarter through March, and may drop at the same pace in April, market watchers say.

This — along with a decline in crude oil prices — augurs well for the Indian economy struggling to regain growth momentum and reduce the current account deficit (CAD) that hit a record 6.7% of the gross domestic product in the December quarter.

Gold imports are a significant reason behind the widening CAD.

The Indian tendency to invest in gold for its perceived safe-haven status has been a headache for policy-makers, who have rolled out a series of measures

to boost financial savings in recent months. Alarmed by the languishing investments and slow growth in bank credit, the government has given a policy push to promote insurance and capital markets in recent Budget, while also using a newly-formed Cabinet committee to fast-track clearances for large infrastructure projects. *Source: Indian Express*

Inflation at 3-year low; rate cut likely

India's headline inflation fell below six percent for the first time in more than three years on the back of slower rise in the prices of manufactured and primary articles, boosting hopes for a rate cut by the Reserve Bank of India next month, government data showed on April 15.

Inflation based on Wholesale Price Index (WPI) fell to 5.96 percent in March, the lowest level since November 2009.

The headline inflation was recorded at 6.84 percent in the previous month and 7.69 percent during the corresponding month of last year, according to data released by the ministry of commerce and industry.

Reacting on the monthly data, Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia said inflation was slowly coming under control.

"Inflation behaviour is consistent with what the government has been saying that it is slowly coming under control," Ahluwalia told reporters.

Manufactured products inflation that has 64.97 weight in the WPI index eased to 4.07 percent in the last month of fiscal 2012-13 as compared to 5.16 percent recorded during the corresponding month of previous year.

Source: Indo-Asian News Service

'India, Malta have greater business potential'

India and Malta could expand business ties, especially in information and communications technology, pharmaceuticals, finance and research and development, Minister of State for External Affairs Preneet Kaur said on April 11. "Although trade and investment cooperation has seen significant growth, it was felt that there was much greater potential which could be harnessed by businesses of the two countries... given respective strategic locations and inherent advantages of the two countries," the minister said.

Source: Indo-Asian News Service



India won't cut oil imports from Iran

The Indian government does not intend to cut oil imports from Iran due to US-backed sanctions and the recent decline in purchases were due to payments, insurance and logistics problems, Foreign Secretary Ranjan Mathai said on April 11.

"We will continue to buy oil from Iran," Mathai, who was part of a high-level delegation led by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Germany, told reporters in Berlin.

The foreign secretary said import decisions were taken by the oil marketing companies on commercial basis and the government has no role in recent decline in the purchases from Iran.

"There are banking problems. There are insurance problem. It is related to logistics and management of oil," Mathai said.

According to the International Energy Agency, Iran's oil exports have declined sharply in the past two months due to lower imports by its key buyers, including India.

Some analysts feel that the Indian government has cut oil imports from Iran due to increasing pressure from the United States.

The US and the European Union, at the beginning of 2012, imposed new sanctions on Iran, asking to stop its nuclear enrichment programme. Western countries suspect that Iran is developing nuclear weapons with military intent, while Iran denies this, saying its programme was meant for civilian use. Earlier addressing a joint press conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said Iran nuclear issue was complex and should be resolved in a peaceful manner through negotiations.

Source: Indo-Asian News Service



'Made in India' label should inspire confidence in Africa'

People in the African continent need to be made aware of the changes in India and that "Made in India" products can be of high quality, says a senior African diplomat based in New Delhi.

"People in Africa also need to be made aware that 'Made in India' is of high quality because colonialism has given a mentality that India cannot make high quality things.

"Awareness is a big issue in the India-Africa economic relationship," Jonathan Wutawunashe, ambassador of Zimbabwe in India, said. There would be "spontaneous commerce" between Africa and India if conscious effort is made to promote awareness about the two regions, observes Wutawunashe, who is the dean of the large African diplomatic corps in India.

He said lack of adequate information and awareness about Africa in India and vice versa had been hindering two-way trade and investment, which can lead to job and wealth creation in both the regions. "There was a disconnect (earlier), but the good news now is that it is going away," he said.

Wutawunashe, who came to India 10 years ago, said he had been witness to a growing economic relationship that has changed from the time when few Indian businessmen would make "initial, nervous, sceptical enquiries" about doing business in Africa. "The economic relationship between India and Africa is on the upswing, and there would be more spontaneous commerce between both if there was a conscious effort to promote it more," he added.

The envoy said the 9th CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership held last month here had helped to an extent.

Source: Indo-Asian News Service



India looks to Germany for renewable energy technology

India sought German's cooperation in advanced technology in grid integration of renewable energy and rooftop solar panels in urban areas on April 16. Speaking at a workshop in New Delhi, New and Renewable Energy Secretary R.P. Watal said the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17) proposals seek a capacity addition of 30 GW, of which 25 GW is expected to come from wind and solar energy.

"Wind and solar are location-specific and not distributed uniformly. At present, renewable electricity generated is absorbed within the state and grid balancing issues limit the absorption of such electricity to a certain limit," he said.

Alok Srivastava, joint secretary in the new and renewable energy ministry, said that Germany possesses advanced technology in grid integration of renewable energy and rooftop solar in urban areas and India is seeking its cooperation to bring that technology here. The ministry has achieved deployment of 27 GW of grid-connected renewable energy by February 2013, he added.

Source: Indo-Asian News Service



Cairn India finds oil again in Rajasthan's Barmer basin

Vedanta group firm Cairn India on April 9 said it has made the 26th oil discovery in its RJ-ON-90/1 block in Rajasthan's Barmer district.

Technical evaluations indicate nearly 10 metres of gross oil column within Dharvi Dungar sands in Raageshwari-Tukaram area, the company said in a statement.

"We are delighted with the 26th discovery in the block. This reaffirms our belief that an aggressive exploration drilling programme will help harness the full potential of the Barmer Basin in Rajasthan. This is a step closer towards reserve accretion through exploration led growth," said Elango P, board member.

The discovery was made after the government allowed oil firms to conduct exploration activities in development blocks. "The Management Committee approved the exploration work programme for the RJ-ON-90/1 block on 14 February, 2013, post which Cairn India, the Operator of the block, commenced the drilling of its first Exploration well, Raageshwari-South-1, on 25 February, 2013 located in the southern part of the block," said the company.

Source: Indo-Asian News Service



India to be 2nd largest air traffic market in a decade: Ajit Singh

The open air policy of the government has helped achieve higher growth in the aviation sector and the country is going to be the second largest air traffic market in the world, Aviation Minister Ajit Singh said on April 14.

Stating that the domestic carriers flew close to 162 million passengers in 2011-12, up from 143 million in 2010-11, he called for more investments in the aviation infrastructure sector, especially from the private

sector, and hinted that the government might hand over the operations and management of Kolkata and Chennai airports to private parties on a PPP model.

Singh was in Nagpur to unveil a statue of Dr B R Ambedkar at the international airport named after him in the presence of Maharashtra Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan and a host of ministers.

Quoting International Air Transport Association (IATA) data, Singh said the country would be second largest air passenger traffic market in the world within a decade.

Source: Press Trust of India



Nasscom forecasts 12-14 percent growth in IT industry

Despite economic uncertainties, Nasscom has forecast a 12-14 percent growth in the Indian IT industry during 2013-14 against 10.2 percent in dollar terms the previous year.

Som Mittal, president, National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom), said he expects the domestic industry to grow at 15-16 percent and exports to grow at 12-14 percent in dollar terms.

He told reporters in Hyderabad on April 10 that there are signs of 2013-14 proving better than 2012-13.

In the year just ended, IT exports were estimated at \$76 billion while domestic sales were \$32 billion.

Of the \$32 billion, 12 percent were hardware and the remaining were software and services. The total IT revenues during the year were \$108 billion.

"This year we probably added \$13 to \$15 billion new business in both domestic and exports," Mittal said.

During 2012-13, the industry grew by 10.2 percent in dollar terms, 10.9 percent at constant currency and 21-22 percent in rupee terms.

Mittal said the huge transformation across the world with technology at the centre and social media, mobility, analytics and cloud would drive the growth this year.

"In addition, we are expanding in a new territory. While the US and the UK will continue to grow for us, Asean countries, Africa and Latin America are also big markets which will grow," he said.

Stating that the Indian IT industry has a large base, he said that when he joined Nasscom in 2008, it had \$50 billion mark, but has now touched \$100 billion.

Source: Indo-Asian News Service



UPA government's resolve to spur India's growth is unwavering: PM

Asserting that the spirit of adventure, enterprise and innovation in India is thriving, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said that his government's resolve to spur investments, attract foreign investors and boost economic growth remains unwavering, and added that intense debates back home on the policy issues have not stopped it from taking hard decisions.

"In a country of India's size, diversity and complexity, intense debates on the policy choices we make are inevitable. But these debates have not stopped us from taking some hard decisions in the long term interest of our country and our people," Singh said in his

address at the closing ceremony of the 'Days of India in Germany'.

"Looking to the future, we have set ourselves a target of over eight per cent annual growth for the Twelfth Five Year Plan. This is the rate of growth India recorded over the past decade and is, I believe, our potential rate of growth in the near future. We are confident that we can return to that growth path. Our economic fundamentals are strong. The spirit of adventure, enterprise and innovation in India is thriving," he said.

"The opportunities for investment abound. Our government's resolve to spur investments, attract foreign investors and boost economic growth remains unwavering. Towards this end, we have sought to make India more attractive to investors both at home and abroad and German investors have a special place in our hearts," he added.

Singh further pointed out that trials of the global economy have led to repercussions in India as well and India's economic growth has slowed down

"The trials of the global economy have led to repercussions in India as well and our economic growth has slowed down in the past two years. In response, our government has considered several measures to revive the engines of growth," he added.

Emphasising that India's concern is not merely its rate of growth, but also the quality of that growth and living conditions of the people both in health and education, Singh said: "We want our growth to be inclusive and sustainable. This is not just a social and political imperative, but also a sound economic underpinning for sustained long term growth. Therefore, we have placed a special emphasis on livelihoods, food security, healthcare, education, skill development and on clean and renewable energy.

"Our message to the world is clear: India remains open and welcoming to foreign investment. We are aiming to attract an investment of nearly one trillion dollars in infrastructure over the next five years," he said

"I hope German companies and companies from across Europe will make good use of these opportunities and help accelerate our growth process to our mutual advantage," he added.



Government planning to expand visa-on-arrival facility

Indian authorities said consultations were going on about allowing visas-on-arrival (VoAs) to citizens of around 10-16 countries, in addition to the present 11 nations.

"We are in consultation with other authorities in the government over the matter," A.K. Gupta, additional director general in the union tourism ministry, said on the sidelines of the Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB) in Jaipur on April 15.

The tourism, home and external affairs ministries are in consultations.

India has VoA agreements with 11 countries: Japan, New Zealand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Finland, Luxembourg, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos.

According to Gupta, talks are also being held on increasing the number of airports with the facility to issue VoAs.

Currently, only four airports at Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, have such a facility. Bangalore and Hyderabad may be added to that list.

Latest data on VoAs shows that during January to March 2013, 5,744 VoAs were issued, as compared to 3,905 during the corresponding period of 2012, registering a growth of 47.1 percent.

Source: Indo-Asian News Service



India Inc optimistic about economy

Indian businesses are among the most optimistic about their country's economic growth and are likely to hire more new workers than any other nation in the world, says a report.

According to the Grant Thornton International Business Report (IBR), a quarterly survey of more than 3,000 businesses in 44 countries, India is one of the top 10 countries that plan to increase hiring.

About 73 per cent of Indian businesses plan to increase staff numbers, which is more than double the global average of 36 per cent. As many as 83 per cent of Indian businesses are optimistic about their local economy (up from 78 per cent three months earlier), and much higher than the global average of 50 per cent.

Overall, Peru topped the list with 98 per cent businesses optimistic about the economy, followed by Philippines (92 per cent), the United Arab Emirates (92 per cent), Mexico (84 per cent) and India (83 per cent). Besides, about 88 per cent of Indian businesses plan to increase employee wages at or above inflation level. This is well above the global average of 68 per cent, and trailing only Argentina (97 per cent), Botswana (94 per cent), South Africa (94 per cent) and Canada (89 per cent).

"Though the survey shows an increase in optimism and demand, as well as willingness to invest, there's still an issue of uncertainty. For most businesses, while reason says 'hoard cash', their instinct says 'invest now' to get ahead of the competition," Grant Thornton in India National Managing Partner Vishesh Chandiook said. He added: "If businesses think another crash is imminent, they will hoard cash to insulate their operations. However, the signs over the past quarter are that businesses especially in mature markets are going to invest in the future growth of their operations — this suggests they are feeling more confident about the outlook."

Source: Press Trust of India

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