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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

EU's Barnier says crucial moment in UK trade talks

European Union flags flutter outside the European Commission headquarters, where Brexit talks are taking place, in Brussels, Belgium - REUTERS

The European Union's Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier said on Sunday that talks with Britain over a post-Brexit trade deal were at a "crucial" point and that the negotiations continued.

"In this crucial moment for the negotiations, we continue to work hard with (UK negotiator) David Frost and his team," Barnier said on Twitter. "The EU remains committed to a fair, reciprocal and balanced agreement. We respect the sovereignty of the UK. And we expect the same."

"Both the EU and the UK must have the right to set their own laws and control their own waters. And we should both be able to act when our interests are at stake," he added.

Source: thehindubusinessline.com– Dec 20, 2020

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Vietnam may turn upper-middle-income nation in 2023: JCER

Vietnam may become an upper-middle-income country in 2023 and its gross domestic product (GDP) will surpass that of Taiwan in 2035, the Japan Centre for Economic Research (JCER) predicted recently. In its medium-term forecast of Asian economies, it said only China, Vietnam and Taiwan are on track to maintain positive year-on-year growth rates in 2020 under a standard scenario.

By 2023, Vietnam's per capita income will be headed for $11,000, according to JCER.

In the standard scenario, JCER assumes that the pandemic is a transient event that will not affect economic structures over the medium term.

Titled 'Asia in the coronavirus disaster: Which countries are emerging?', the JCER report addresses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and looks at how Asian economies are faring compared with others around the world.

Vietnam is seen sustaining a growth rate of about 6 per cent in 2035, thanks to strong exports. This would propel the Vietnamese economy past Taiwan's in 2035 in terms of scale, and make it the second-largest economy in Southeast Asia after Indonesia, said JCER.

The report also included a severe scenario that describes an outcome in which the coronavirus not only damages today's economy but also affects urbanisation, trade openness, research and development spending, and a host of other factors, undermining countries' potential growth rates over the medium term.

In this scenario, the growth of the United States, Vietnam, Singapore and others in 2035 would be significantly lower than those under the standard scenario, largely due to trade blockages. Vietnam's economic scale at that time is projected to still be smaller than that of Taiwan, JCER said.

Source: fibre2fashion.com– Dec 21, 2020

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Jordan's RMG sector to recruit 12000 Bangladeshi workers

Jordan's readymade garments (RMG) sector will recruit over 12,000 skilled workers from Bangladesh in a year, according to the latter's foreign minister AK Abdul Momen, who recently said the recruitment will be processed only through the Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited (BOESL). The government will facilitate quick passport processing for the workers.

A number of Bangladeshi workers are already working in Jordan's readymade garment sector.

Earlier this months, Bangladesh ambassador to Jordan Nahida Sobhan visited Classic Fashion Apparels in Jordan and assured Bangladeshi workers there that the Embassy would always stand by them to ensure their rights and welfare, according to Bangla media reports.

Source: fibre2fashion.com– Dec 21, 2020

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JCPenney to close 15 stores by March 2021

American fashion retailer JC Penney, which emerged from bankruptcy earlier this month, plans to close down 15 more stores by the end of March next year.

The retailer was recently acquired by Simon Property Group and Brookfield Asset Management, Inc., after it had filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy earlier this year.

The fresh closure of 15 stores is a part of the store optimization strategy that the retailer had started in June with financial revamping.

Notably, the liquidation sales of these stores will start later in December and will close to the public in March 2021.

JCPenney's store optimization strategy aims to help the retailer achieve growth that's both profitable and sustainable.

The renowned fashion retailer had filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy back in May 2020 and ever since has been the most talked about fashion retailer till it was bought by mall owners earlier this month.

Source: fashionatingworld.com– Dec 19, 2020

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Trade exchange bet. Egypt, Vietnam records $491M in 2019

Trade exchange between Egypt and Vietnam amounted to $491 million in 2019, according to Ambassador of Vietnam to Cairo Tran Thanh Kung.

Kung clarified Sunday that Vietnamese exports to the Egyptian market worth $458 million, while the value of his country's imports from Egypt reached $33 million.

This came during the activities of the Egyptian-Vietnamese Economic Business Forum, organized by the Egyptian Chamber of Commerce in Alexandria under the title "Discussing ways of cooperation and commercial and economic potentials between Egypt and Vietnam.

He added that these numbers are still at a modest level and below both countries capabilities, and that there are many reasons that must be considered, and that there are many reasons that must be considered in this matter.

Kung pointed out that the economic and trade cooperation between the two countries witnessed an advanced step forward and achieved encouraging results following the visit of President Abdel Fatah El-Sisi to Vietnam in 2017 and the late Vietnamese President Tran Dai Quang to Egypt in August 2018, which gave a strong impetus to strengthening our cooperation in all fields later.

He pointed out the need to encourage more activities to promote trade and investment between the two countries, explaining that the Embassy of Vietnam will provide all basic information about the Vietnamese market, which will contribute to learning more about the Vietnamese market, noting that the country's population is currently 95 million, with a growth rate of more than 6 percent for 30 consecutive years, and the existence of security and political stability, which is seen as a good destination for investment activities and a gateway to the Southeast Asian market (ASEAN) that brings together about 650 million people.

So far, Vietnam has received foreign direct investment from 138 countries through 32,658 projects, with a total registered capital of $381.5 billion, and 13 free trade agreements have been signed with all economic powers and major powers in the world, he said.

He added that his country has become one of the countries producing mainly in the world for many products such as electronics, clothes, shoes, furniture, basa fish, shrimp, cashews, coffee, black pepper and rice, and this feature has opened the door for many commercial opportunities for world merchants to get their goods from Vietnam.

The ambassador said that as a member of the World Trade Organization, Vietnam adheres to what has been assigned to the World Trade Organization and welcomes all good supplies of imports from all parts of the world, including Egypt.

For his part, First Vice President of the Egyptian Chamber of Commerce in Alexandria, Ahmed Hassan, said that Egypt has one of the largest markets in the Middle East and North Africa region, and is pursuing steady steps, according to a well-thought-out plan, to diversify its economy and develop its production capabilities in various fields by establishing strong partnerships with the largest number of international partners to accelerate development, investment, and assistance in transferring knowledge and localizing technology.

He added that Egypt is not only a large market with 100 million consumers, but rather a market that can cover more than 1.8 billion consumers through free trade zones that deal without customs with the Arab world, the European Union, the European Free Trade Association, Mercosur and all of Africa, noting that during the past seven years, Egypt has invested in infrastructure and presented mega projects, especially in the fields of energy, to provide the appropriate environment for international investments.

"We welcome Vietnamese investors and industrialists who wish to enter into economic partnerships in the industrial zones currently being established in Egypt. We also invite them to invest in all fields, especially in the productive sectors, the sectors of small and medium enterprises, energy and manufacturing, agriculture, fish farming, and fertilizers, textiles, marine arsenals, communications, and tourism, bearing in mind that Egypt is one of the highest countries in the world to achieve a return on investment," Hassan added.

He stressed the importance of enhancing the exchange of visits at the level of the private sector, to allow wider areas to identify the investment environment, available facilities and target sectors, and to allow exploration of more opportunities to build partnerships that contribute to pushing economic relations between the two countries to broader horizons.

Source: egypttoday.com– Dec 20, 2020

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Pakistan's measures to uplift textile production lauded

The present government of Pakistan has taken special measures to further develop textile industry and recently announced lucrative energy package to help recuperate from the COVID-19 shock was also commendable.

These views were expressed by Cheng Xizhong, visiting professor at Southwest University of Political Science and Law said here on Sunday.

Recently announced lucrative energy package to help textile industry with peak electricity rates, offers reduced tariffs on additional power consumption and fixes power price at $ 0.07 a unit and gas tariff at $ 0.065 per MMBtu, Cheng, also a senior fellow of the Charhar Institute said in his article published by China Economic Net (CEN).

He said the present government of Pakistan has taken special measures to gradually improve the business environment.

In order to improve the sustainability of the development of the textile industry and have clear direction and objectives, All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) is formulating a long-term development strategy for the textile industry.

It plans to attract $ 7 billion of investment in the next five years, so as to increase the export volume of textiles and clothing by 100% to $ 26 billion.

Pakistan is the fourth largest cotton producer, the fourth largest textile producer and the twelfth largest textile exporter in the world. The textile industry is the most important pillar industry and the largest export industry in Pakistan.

In recent years, Pakistan's textile industry has been plagued by insecurity, high operating costs, declining competitiveness and sluggish demand in the international market.

However, with the steady progress of the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Pakistan's textile industry and textile exports have a bright future, he added.

According to his observation, Pakistan's textile production and exports have the following main advantages.

First, the industrial chain is relatively complete. Pakistan is one of the few textile countries in the world with the production capacity of the whole industrial chain.

At present, there are 1,221 cotton ginning mills, 442 spinning mills, 124 large-scale textile and garment factories and 425 small-scale textile and garment factories in Pakistan.

The annual production capacity of cotton yarn is about 11.3 million spindles, with a total of 300,000 textile machines, 350,000 power looms and 18,000 knitting machines.

The annual cotton cloth production capacity is 5.2 billion square meters, with a total of 700,000 industrial sewing machines.

Pakistan's annual cotton production is about 13 million bales, the annual output of man-made fiber is about 600,000 tons, and the annual output of terephthalic acid is 500,000 tons. All these provide a solid foundation for the development of the textile industry.

Second, the distribution of production and research is relatively concentrated. More than 60% of Pakistan's textile enterprises are concentrated in Punjab and 30% in Sindh.

Faisalabad in Punjab Province is a famous textile industrial city. It has a textile enterprise group composed of large, medium and small textile mills and workshops. Its textile exports account for 58% of Pakistan's total textile exports.

Pakistan's main textile technology institutions and facilities are also concentrated in the city, including University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF), National Textile University (NTU), and cotton and agricultural research institutions.

Third, industry organizations have great influence. The main trade organizations of Pakistan textile industry include All Pakistan Textile Mills Association, All Pakistan Textile Processing Mills Association and Pakistan Knitwear Manufacturers Association.

Due to the pillar position of the textile industry in Pakistan's national economy, All Pakistan Textile Mills Association and its local branches play an important role in the development of Pakistan's textile industry.

Cheng observed that both China and Pakistan are major textile producers and exporters, and there is a certain degree of competition between the two countries.

However, the differences at stage of industrial development between the two countries also create a broad space for close cooperation.

He said that official data released on December 18 shows that Pakistan's textile and clothing exports grew by 4.88 per cent year-on-year to $ 6.04 billion between July to November this financial year compared to $ 5.76 billion in the same period last financial year.

This means that Pakistan's textile production and exports have largely recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic shock and are back on growth trajectory both in terms of the quantity and dollar value, he added.

Source: app.com.pk– Dec 20, 2020

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Bangladesh: No bar on raw jute export: Minister

The government is not going to restrict export of raw jute as it aims to increase receipts from such foreign trade and ensure fair prices of the natural fibre, said Textiles and Jute Minister Golam Dastagir Gazi yesterday.

The disclosure came at a time when raw jute is being traded at a record high of around Tk 3,500 per maund, with millers warning that high prices and shortages might affect production and export of goods made out of it.

Jute has been one of the bright items in the export basket that saw just below 1 per cent increase in earnings in the July-November period of fiscal 2020-21.

Export earnings from jute and jute goods soared 37 per cent year-on-year to $553 million in fiscal 2020-21.

Raw jute export edged up nearly 1 per cent to $71 million in the July-November period from that in the same period a year ago, data from the Export Promotion Bureau showed.

Dastagir, at a meeting with representatives of Bangladesh Jute Association (BJA) at Bangladesh Secretariat, said the government was working to increase production, domestic consumption and export of raw jute and jute products.

He said new versatile products such as charcoal, composite jute textile, jute geo-textile were made from jute and the government has declared 282 types of jute products as diversified jute goods.

Abdul Barik Khan, secretary general of Bangladesh Jute Mills Association, said prices of raw jute are now Tk 3,500 per maund.

And because of scarcity and high prices, production and export activities may be affected in the coming months, he added.

Source: thedailystar.net– Dec 21, 2020

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Pakistan: Cotton import: momentum slowing?

It's that time of the month again. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics monthly import report card has been released, and a cursory review shows that the commodity import momentum is slowing down. Is it good news?

Yes, as far as the current account position is concerned. Forecast of shortfall in domestic crop of as much as 5 - 6 million bales meant that the supply gap had to be filled by imports. The incremental imports (over historic average) would have added at least $0.75 billion in import bill, trimming the net exports by textile sector.

Instead, the import momentum is slowing down. Raw cotton imports that were slated to climb to 0.5 million bales per month (of 170 kg) for FY21 have dropped to under 0.3 million bales in November. But is it bad news?

Yes, especially if it is a sign of times to come. In case this becomes a new norm for the remainder 7 months of ongoing fiscal, available stocks of cotton for spinning industry will clock in at just 9 million bales, which is at least a quarter less than average domestic consumption of 12 million bales.

So, why does low consumption necessarily bear ill for the textile sector? One, it comes at a time when sectoral exports have picked up steam, as a result of consistent efforts by MoC and multiple relief measures taken on both fiscal and monetary side.

Two, it also comes at a time when exports of traditional goods such as cotton yarn, cloth, and food items are slowing down. Three, it comes at a time when over all trade balance is set to suffer at the hands of ballooning commodity import bill of wheat, sugar, soybean, and pulses among others.

Will lower cotton necessarily translate into lower exports? With some caveat. Last month, federal government announced removal of tariffs on import of cotton yarn, at the insistence of readymade garment exporters who decried rising prices of domestically produced cotton yarn amid shortage of raw material.

All else held equal, beginning 2HFY21, textile exports can sustain their momentum, provided that imported yarn is only used fro exportable products. But given that more than half of yarn supply is used for production of local made-up garments demand, imported yarn may not after all translate into more exports.

Which only leaves one more possibility: that the spike in demand from international buyers was temporary and is now going to average out going forward. But more on that later.

Source: brecorder.com– Dec 21, 2020

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Removal of 5pc RD on cotton yarn import to up value-added garment exports

Pakistan Readymade Garments Manufacturers & Exporters Association (PRGMEA) has said the government's right decision of removing 5% regulatory duty on import of cotton yarn will accelerate value-added garment exports as the country's exports have started showing recovery from the corona pandemic crisis, reporting a positive growth for the third consecutive month in November to $2.16 billion, up 7.67%.

PRGMEA vice chairman Adeeb Iqbal Sheikh, referring to the recent data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics for the first four months of the current financial year, stated that the textile and clothing export shipments are back on growth path both in terms of quantity and dollar value.

He said that the increase in exports is mainly driven by sizeable growth in proceeds from value-added textile commodities. Exports in the new fiscal year started on a positive note but witnessed a steep decline of 19% in Aug 2020 before rebounding in Sept, Oct and Nov 2020.

PRGMEA regional chairman hailed the efforts of Adviser to PM on Commerce and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood to convince the government for accepting the genuine demand of the value-added garment sector for removal of RD.

He observed the decision to exempt cotton import from RD would, of course, deprive the government of a source of revenue and have certain budgetary implications but is timely and very much needed at this juncture.

He said that the garment sector in country's local market was facing shortage of basic raw material, which might have led to a drastic decline in overall textile exports, hoping the situation will improve now after this decision.

He said that with a view to promote exports of textile products, the Ministry of Commerce released Rs1.78 billion for the textiles sector under Drawback of Local Taxes and Levies (DLTL) scheme, which will resolve the liquidity issues of our exporters and enable them to enhance exports.

He stressed the need for revival of SRO 1125, reintroducing the system of 'No Payment No Refund' of Sales Tax for the five export-oriented sectors.

He said that economic scenario has totally changed due to coronavirus pandemic and its impact on industrial sector is now visible in the country, he said.

So, the revival of zero rated regime was the only remedy for speedy growth in exports of the country, adding that government must announce previous system of zero-rating regime to sustain export sector of the country.

Source: nation.com.pk– Dec 20, 2020

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NATIONAL NEWS

Cotton textile exports likely to reach last year's level

Hopes of 8-10% growth in coming months lend confidence

Cotton textile exports for the year 2020-2021 are expected to match last year's level.

"Overall cotton textile and clothing exports are showing signs of positive growth," said Dr, Siddhartha Rajagopal, Executive Director of the Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council.

"The industry hopes for 8% to 10% growth in the coming months to complete the financial year with exports at the same level as last year," Mr. Rajagopal added.

He pointed out that according to the quick estimates released by the Ministry of Commerce, cotton textile exports grew 8.54% to $869 million in November from a year earlier.

Readymade garment exports stood at $1,043 million compared with $1,056 million last November. Exports of cotton textiles in the April-November period declined 12.7 %. Mr. Rajagopal attributed this to the slump in exports in April and May this year.

Cotton home-made textiles and yarn were doing well, he said.

A. Sakthivel, Chairman, Apparel Export Promotion Council, said garment exports in September and October were good and in November, it was almost equal to the level seen in the year earlier period.

"We are getting orders and hope for growth in exports in the coming months. The orders are good for medical textiles and from the regular markets."

Source: thehindu.com– Dec 20, 2020

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FIEO suggests double tax deduction scheme, export development fund to FM Nirmala Sitharaman

Exporters' body FIEO on Saturday suggested a host of steps such as bringing double tax deduction scheme and setting up of a export development fund to the finance ministry with a view to boosting outbound shipments.

The other recommendations include extending tax deduction on product development, providing deemed export status to Indian industry under the global bidding of procurement, ECGC coverage to the Banks for export finance, and higher budget allocation to the Department of Commerce.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President Sharad Kumar Saraf suggested these steps during the pre-Budget consultation meeting with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. He recommended introducing a "Double Tax Deduction Scheme" which can allow exporters to deduct against their taxable income.

"A ceiling of USD 5,00,000 may be put under the scheme so that the investment and tax deduction are limited," he said in a statement. He added that the marketing support under the Market Access Initiative of the Ministry of Commerce is "very" small and there is a need to create an Export Development Fund with a corpus of 0.5 per cent of the country's exports for helping the MSME.

He also said that Indian companies winning contracts under global tender may be accorded deemed exports status, since they substitute direct import which would have taken place if the contract had been won by a foreign supplier.

"Deemed export status would enhance the competitiveness of Indian industry vis-?-vis foreign suppliers as the former would enjoy certain tax-related benefits," Saraf said.

The government may consider introducing a scheme in line with Sabka Vishwas (Legacy Dispute Resolution) Scheme, 2019 to resolve all disputes relating to customs and DGFT (Directorate General of Foreign Trade).

"There are a large number of cases of exporters pending settlement with customs and DGFT..."The waiver of interest and penalty and may be the duty liability will help the industries which are passing through a rough patch due to lack of demand both domestically and globally," he said.

Source: financialexpress.com– Dec 19, 2020

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Govt moves to address woes of EXIM trade, shipping lines

An acute shortage of containers and a sharp spike in freight rates are expected to ease a bit, with the government moving to resolve three key issues cited by exporters, importers and shipping lines for the hurdles that have roiled trade.

On December 17, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) issued guidelines to smoothen the process of faceless assessment of cargo, including carrying out re-assessment of goods/bill of entry to avoid delays. The export-import (EXIM) trade and container lines had complained that the faceless assessment took as many as seven days, aggravating the shortage of containers for exports.

To speed up the assessment process, the CBIC has raised the monetary limit of assessment of bills of entry only by the appraising officers to ₹5 lakh from the existing ₹1 lakh. This will take effect from Monday.

On December 17, the Directorate General of Shipping lifted the 14-day mandatory quarantine period stipulated for ships arriving from ports of Covid-19 infected countries after maritime trade complained that this was delaying the berthing of vessels with a cascading effect on the container logistics chain.

The quarantine had resulted in a wait of up to four days before berthing at ports. This not only delayed the discharge and destuffing of import loads but also the availability of containers for export shipments.

On a continuous basis, this delayed the whole cycle of several sailings and eventually resulted in a reduction in the number of sailings over a period. The removal of the 14-day restriction will lead to quicker turnaround of ships and enable extra trips in a month.

"Vessel slot is a weak area where you cannot do anything immediately," said TS Ahluwalia, President, Northern India Shippers Association. Sea freight has soared by 100 per cent on an average, he said.

Railway move

On December 16, the Railways decided to waive haulage charges for moving empty containers and flat wagons till December 31, to ease the container shortage and check high logistics costs.

Some exporters say the cost-free movement of empty boxes may not fetch substantial gains as lines prefer to send empties to China and other places. "From there (China, etc) they will be stuffed with cargo and moved to the US, for which they will get more than $6,000 per container," an exporter said.

Ahluwalia said the cost savings arising from the haulage waiver should be passed on to the exporters. The container lines should not levy any charges from the exporters on this, he added.

Second, when empty containers are moved free of cost to inland container depots in the hinterland, priority for stuffing them should be given to readily available cargo and railed out to ports within the least possible time, instead of waiting for days for the cargo of companies with which the line has a commitment, he observed.

Source: thehindubusinessline.com– Dec 20, 2020

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Quality control to curb import growth

A recent decision of the government of India allowed the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) to set quality norms/technical standards for 371 key items, in the first phase, by March 2021. BIS has been accorded the status of the national standards-setting body since October 2017.

Even though the BIS certification scheme is voluntary, from time to time, the central government has made standards mandatory in view of public interest. The department of commerce has identified these 371 items. They include several segments ranging from steel, chemicals, pharmaceutical, electrical machinery to furniture, toys etc. Out of these 371 key items, the technical regulations for 150 products have already been firmed up.

The move by the central government has the potential to open up a significant opportunity for enforcement of mandatory standards within the country in a time-bound manner. This shall compel our domestic manufacturing, irrespective of whether they cater for the domestic demand or the global market, to adhere to BIS-set standards. Further, this can act as a stepping stone to make Indian industry more competitive globally, depending upon th adaptive efficiency of BIS to align itself with global standards. As per the WTO, domestic manufacturing and overseas suppliers must conform to the same standards.

The likely ramifications of the government's recent decision on our merchandise trade are:

1. Reduction in merchandise imports: All sub-standard imports will stop flooding our domestic market, and thereby, the import bill will also fall, though gradually. The gradual fall in imports would be broadly influenced by the scale of enforcement of the quality standards at various ports and the availability of the trained professionals required.

2. Rise in exports of merchandise goods: This is likely to happen with a time-lag of at least 5-15 years, depending upon the gestation period of a product being manufactured in India. The change on the ground is also gradual. Since the technical regulation for 150 products has already been decided by BIS, the only task left for the government would be to enforcement and implementation.

Further, for the balance, 221 key items, technical regulations have to be set by March 2021 in the first phase. Thus, all the products manufactured in India by large industries, MSMEs and SMEs have to now adhere to uniform standards. As we become more closely aligned with global standards, we will become more competitive.

India can become a part of regional trade agreements, as it will have a competitive advantage in at least some of the product lines. Hence, it will also be able to reap the benefits of trade through regional trade agreements. Importing raw materials and intermediate items at zero or very low tariffs would lower the cost of production of industries using these as inputs.

This will also eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers impeding the free movement of goods. It is pertinent to mention here that the basic reason why the FTAs/PTAs signed by India so far have not helped the domestic economy much is that India's quality/standards, compared to what the trading partners expect, are inadequate. So, ultimately the moot point is India has to improve its quality/standard to gain from trade.

The interdependence of countries seems to be the order of the day under the present global dynamics, especially when the country is dealing with uncertainty. This is particularly visible in the RCEP, where despite having serious political and territorial issues with China, many countries, have set aside their differences. To play a worthy role in the global game of interdependence, India has a compelling need to improve quality/standards and align them with the global level.

The decision of the government to fix mandatory standards on a limited number of imported goods, to begin with, and doing this in a time-bound manner can prove to be a game-changer in the long-run, especially if India is to become globally more competitive. Also, this is likely to enhance India's ability to join regional trade agreements without the fear of endangering domestic industry being wiped out by foreign competition.

Source: financialexpress.com– Dec 19, 2020

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Govt plans to slap higher import duties on China-origin items

The government plans to slap higher import duties on a wide range of items that are made in China but are routed into India from countries with whom New Delhi has free trade agreements, meaning they are available cheaply at the expense of local manufacturers.

The items range from soybean to auto-components, electronics to vegetable oil, leather goods to textile products.

New Delhi also plans to tighten its rules of origin to boost domestic production, senior commerce ministry officials said. They said many Chinese products are being rerouted from other countries taking advantage of India's trade agreements with them.

This has resulted in the country's market being flooded with counterfeit goods or cheaper-quality versions of well known brands in segments such as footwear, clothing, leather, watches and electrical equipment such as chargers.

An inter-ministerial committee has said "stringent checking" of identified HS codes items such as footwear, apparel, leather products, clocks and watches, electrical machinery and equipment could limit the import of counterfeit products and potentially save $15 billion.

It also found that between 20 per cent and 30 per cent of products imported into India come under the "other" category, accounting for around $130 billion of imports, and this is primarily done to avoid duties and taxes.

The committee also found a sharp surge in their imports from Singapore and Hong Kong after India imposed an anti-dumping duty on the import of the items from China.

"We have found re-routing of products originating mostly from China through countries with which we have FTAs to take advantage of lower duties. These include electronics, leather products and textiles," officials said. In September, the government had notified customs rules which allow officials to demand proof of significant value addition for goods imported under preferential duty agreements.

The committee pointed that there has been a massive surge in soybean oil imports from Nepal and Bangladesh after the South Asia Free Trade Area agreement or SAFTA.

There was a 23,500 per cent increase in soybean oil imports since 2016-17 despite the fact both countries have limited production of soybean, and limited capacity to crush it.

"Soybean from China was in this case being routed through Nepal or Bangladesh by flouting WTO rules of origin for getting duty exemption provided under SAFTA," it said, stressing the need to review existing preferential trade agreements that have placed Indian manufacturers at a disadvantage position.

The Department of Revenue has notified the "Customs (Administration of Rules of Origin under Trade Agreements) Rules, 2020" which came into force in September. These rules "shall apply to import of goods into India where the importer makes a claim of preferential rate of duty in terms of a trade agreement," it said.

The "rules of origin" provision prescribes for the minimal processing that should happen in the FTA country so that the final manufactured product may be called originating goods in that country.

Under this provision, a country that has inked FTA with India cannot dump goods from some third country in the Indian market by just putting a label on it. It has to undertake a prescribed value addition in that product to export to India. Rules of origin norms help to contain dumping of goods.

India has inked FTAs with several countries, including Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and ASEAN members.

"Despite complaints from importers of red tape, we still find a considerable re-routing as the spike in electronics imports shows," said finance ministry officials. The government is considering bringing in self certification under rules of origin to address genuine importer concerns, while enforcing random checks to see that rules are being adhered.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech had stated that the government would review "rules of origin" requirements, particularly for certain sensitive items,"so as to ensure that FTAs are aligned to the conscious direction of our policy".

She had also said that it has been observed that imports under FTAs are on the rise and undue claims of FTA benefits have posed threat to the domestic industry and such imports require stringent checks.

Source: telegraphindia.com– Dec 21, 2020

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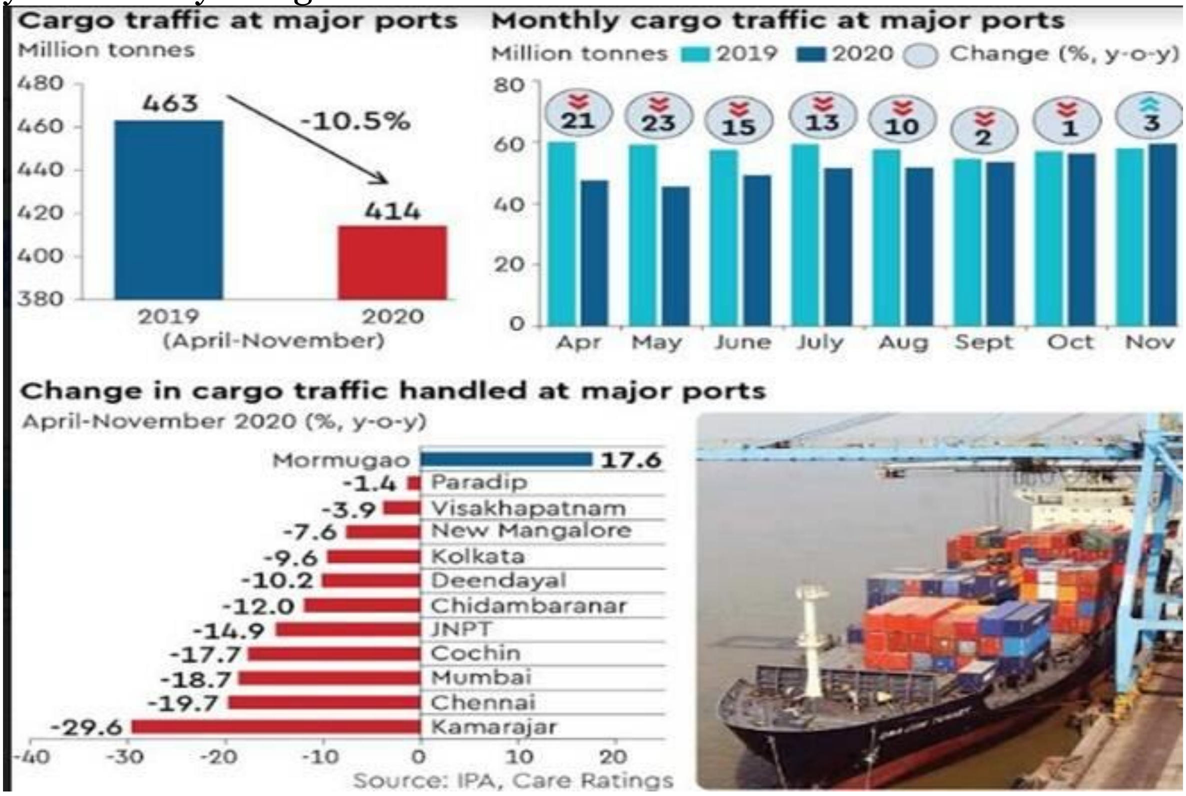
Tide turns in November for traffic at major ports

After eight months of contraction, cargo traffic at the major ports grew by 3% y-o-y in November 2020.

For the April-November period, the traffic has fallen by 10.5% y-o-y — only Mormugao port has seen a higher volume of cargo in the current financial year than a year ago.



The cargo volumes for POL, coal, and containers have declined while that for fertiliser and iron ore have increased from a year ago.

Source: financialexpress.com– Dec 21, 2020

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Railway plan 2030: 30% cut in freight rates, help for subsidie

Railway plan 2030 – 30% cut in freight rates, help for subsidiesRailways needs to decrease freight rates by 30 per cent gradually, seek help from outside to shoulder the subsidy burden to keep passenger fares "affordable", and make more bullet train corridors in passenger-heavy routes, including to Ayodhya.

These are some of the salient features of the draft National Rail Plan 2030, a vision document released by Railways Friday.

The national transporter is hoping to increase its share in freight transportation from the present 28 per cent to 45 per cent by 2030 through better infrastructure and business development plans, Chairman, Railway Board, V K Yadav said in a press conference.

The final National Rail Plan will be unveiled later next month,

The plan, through iteration of various scenarios, says that in order to increase freight share, despite significant upgrade to road infrastructure, like the Bharatmala project etc, Railways needs to decrease its freight tariff by 30 per cent over the years and also double its freight train speed to 50 kmph.

About passenger subsidy, the document says: "IR must actively rationalize and reduce the burden of a much higher operating ratio of its passenger business on freight tariffs – potentially in a phased manner by gradually adopting alternative mechanisms to finance such subsidies."

It says other ministries might be requested to share the burden of subsidies like the Ministry of Education for students' concessions and so on. State governments and local bodies might be asked to foot the bill of operating economically unviable lines. And it also pegs for direct government grants to keep passenger fares "affordable".

"Russian Railway has increasingly phased out cross subsidization of passenger operations by freight services. In FY 2016, Russian Railway received direct grant of Rb 32.5 bn to compensate for losses by Russian Railways associated with the regulation of tariffs for passenger services. In UK, government provided direct grant support of 6.4p for every rail passenger kilometer travelled in Great Britain in 2018-19," the draft document says.

About future bullet train corridors, the draft plan says that considering the heavy investment involved, only passenger-heavy routes should have bullet train corridors over and above what has already been envisaged in the National Infrastructure Pipeline.

In all, a total of 12 high speed corridors are proposed, even by linking extensions to the ones that are already proposed in other plan documents. Like a line up to Jammu by extending the Delhi-Chandigarh-Amritsar to Pathankot and beyond. A bullet train between Nagpur and Varanasi by extending the Mumbai – Nashik – Nagpur corridor. "This shall connect Mumbai with Varanasi which will further connect with Delhi –Varanasi – Patna – Guwahati corridor," it says.

Another important takeaway of the document is that it envisages less dependency on coal, currently the mainstay of railway freight revenue, in the coming years. While the share of coal will continue to be heavy in its freight basket, it projects negative growth in the amount of coal carried every year over the next decade and beyond.

Yadav said that the Railways was transporting only 1210 MT of the 4700 MT of the total freight basket till the end of 2019, but by 2024, it was planning to load 2024 MT of the estimated 6400 MT of total freight, keeping it on track to achieve its target by 2030.

Yadav said that under Vision 2024 of the National Rail Plan, the Railways plans to augment infrastructure to enable loading of 2024 MT by year 2024, multi-tracking of 16,373 km network, complete 58 super critical projects, 68 critical projects, 46 Projects on HDN (high density network) and HUN (highly utilised network) (3262 km) and 32 other essential projects.

"The final draft of the national rail plan is ready and it will be circulated among stakeholders for their views and in a month's time, we should be able to finalise it. Under the plan, we plan to raise our share of freight loading from the current 27 per cent to 45 per cent by 2030," he said.

He said that the national transporter will complete 20 additional coal connectivity projects and by December 2023, complete 146 railway electrification projects. It will also complete North East connectivity projects of 288 km by March 2023 and the remainder of the 111 km of Udhampur Srinagar Baramulla project by December 2022.

The Vision 2024 plans will also include the speed raising of the New Delhi – Howrah and New Delhi – Mumbai routes to 160 Kmph and the speed raising of the Golden Quadrilateral (GQ) and Golden Diagonals (GD) routes to 130 kmph.

All these projects will include a total capital expenditure of Rs 2.9 lakh crore, Yadav said.

Source: indianexpress.com– Dec 19, 2020

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SGCCI submits EOI for setting up EPC for technical textile

The Southern Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SGCCI) has submitted the expression of interest (EOI) for setting up of the Export Promotion Council (EPC) for technical textiles, with a view to promote the exports and manufacturing of technical textile products in the city.

Official sources said that the Ministry of Textiles has issued public notice inviting EOI for setting up EPC for technical textiles. Surat is considered to be the man-made fabric (MMF) hub of India, having nearly 65% of share in the MMF textiles in the country, where technical textile is a sub-group and the investment is increasing in the region.

Industry sources said that the formation of EPC for technical textiles was much-awaited and that it will boost the export and strengthen the domestic manufacturing capacity.

During the lockdown, the textile entrepreneurs forayed into the manufacturing crucial safety essentials like PPE kits, face masks, coveralls, shoe covers, anti-viral fashion masks etc.— all part of the medical textile.

The Man-Made Textile Research Association (MANTRA) is the designated centre of excellence in technical textiles by the government of Gujarat and centre of excellence in Agrotech by the government of India in the sectors namely coating and lamination, non-woven and converter technology.

Vice-president of SGCCI, Ashish Gujarati, told TOI, “SGCCI intends to take a lead role in setting up EPC for technical textiles in Surat. We have all the infrastructure and manpower required to run the EPC. Surat is the biggest centre of MMF with 13,500 million metres of fabric production per annum.”

Officials at MANTRA said that the non-wovens have a significant share in the technical textile sector. “There are many small and medium units in and around Surat which are into the manufacturing of sanitary napkins, underpads, wipes, soft cast padding, wading moulded automotive, luggages etc,” said a senior officer at the MANTRA

“Surat has emerged as the technical textile hub in the country with many SMEs manufacturing various kinds of textile products. The sector is still unorganised and that the EPC will further boost in organising the sector,” Amish Shah, owner of Artline industries told TOI.

Source: timesofindia.com– Dec 21, 2020

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Festive, export demand lift textile prices in Nov: Ind-Ra

Healthy festive and export demand lifted the prices of textile products in November 2020, said India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra).

According to Ind-Ra, cotton prices inched up by 2-4 per cent on a month-on-month (MoM) basis and were even higher on a year-on-year (YoY) basis during November 2020.

“The incremental demand from spinning mills coupled with a higher demand for cotton seeds amid a continued supply deficit led to the rise in cotton prices,” the ratings agency said in a report.

“Cotton Corporation of India continued their support in form of market procurement during the current crop season. The spread of international cotton over domestic cotton remained steady during October-November 2020.”

Besides, it cited that domestic cotton yarn production continued to grow on both MoM and YoY basis at 3.3 per cent and 2 per cent, respectively, on back of a high export demand.

"However, the increase in raw material costs was lesser than yarn prices, resulting in higher gross margins for sector players during 2QFY21-3QFY21," the report said.

"Exports increased substantially YoY in September 2020 and are likely to moderate during 3QFY21 upon the execution of winter season orders by key importers."

Furthermore, it said yarn sector will likely benefit from an improved competitive situation with consolidation in the sector because of the liquidity crunch being faced by several small and mid-players.

Source: dailypioneer.com– Dec 20, 2020

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Cargo container manufacturing hub planned at Bhavnagar

Panel formed to study feasibility; pilot project rolled out

India is moving into the business of manufacturing cargo containers, a segment dominated by China, as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways has formed a committee to examine the feasibility of making containers at Bhavnagar in Gujarat and developing it into a manufacturing hub for the steel boxes that have become the global standard for shipping a variety of goods across ships, rail and road.

As a first step in this direction, freight forwarder Pushpak Logistics has rolled out a pilot project by placing orders for a few containers with manufacturers in Bhavnagar.

According to an official briefed on the development, the demand for shipping containers has been driven by increased manufacturing and exports.

"Indian coastal shipping adds about 10,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of new containers annually, while India's largest container rail operator — Container Corporation of India — may require 2,000- 2,500 TEUs of new containers every year," the official said.

“Almost all the shipping containers used today are imported from China. By the time they reach Indian shores, they cost us around 40 per cent more, which includes ocean freight, Customs duty, other taxes, custom house agent charges and sundry expenses,” the official added.

India’s container needs

China makes about 90 per cent of the global shipping containers. CIMC is the largest container manufacturer with a market share of 40 per cent. Other players include Singamas, COSCO and CXIC.

Currently, India sources its entire container needs from China at prices ranging from ₹2,39,760-4,54,545 depending on the size of the container.

India’s external trade grew to $838.46 billion in FY20 and the increasing trade is translating into higher demand for containerisation due to their efficiencies. The country will require approximately 60,000 new containers between 2021 and 2026, an annual addition of about 10,000 TEUs per year. The global container fleet is handled by container leasing companies and shipping lines, with the latter holding a 49 per cent share.

Triton is the world’s largest container leasing company with a market share of some 14 per cent, owning over six million TEUs.

“India should start manufacturing marine containers within the country,” said Sunil Vaswani, Executive Director, Container Shipping Lines Association (India), a lobby group for global container carriers, referring to the ongoing shortage of containers for exports from India.

“This would assist in the security of supply chain for exports,” he added.

Source: thehindubusinessline.com– Dec 20, 2020

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Exporters seek sector development fund

Exporters' body Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) on Saturday met Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and pitched for a host of measures to boost outbound shipments.

These include the setting up of a development fund; bringing in a double tax deduction scheme; extending tax deductions on product development; providing fiscal support to attract private investment in the shipping industry in order to keep freight rates under check; measures for export promotion amid rising protectionist tendencies; rolling out the proposed Export Credit Insurance Scheme (ECIS); and allocating larger funds to provide aid trade finance.

"Rising NPA s have caused decline in export credit by banks to exporters resulting in liquidity problems. To provide necessary comfort to bankers, the government may roll out the NIRVIK Scheme (also called ECIS) which was announced in September 2019 but remains non-operational so far," said FIEO President Sharad Kumar Saraf.

Under the proposed scheme, interest rates will likely fall to 3.15 per cent for export credit in dollar terms and 7.35 per cent in rupee, according to the proposal moved to the Cabinet.

"If India's GDP has to grow at 8 per cent, exports should grow at 15 per cent. The Department of Commerce should be given enough budget allocation to support exports, including agri exports," the association said.

Source: newindianexpress.com – Dec 20, 2020

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Science plays a major role in textile industry: Experts

A webinar titled 'The science behind traditional fabrics of India and fashion world' was organised by Women Technology Section of Pushpa Gujral Science City on Saturday.

Jaspreet Talwar, principal secretary, Department of Water Supply and Sanitation, was the chief guest. Around 300 students pursuing fashion designing participated in the event. Talwar said, "India's textiles sector is one of the oldest and dates back to several centuries. Archaeological surveys and studies have indicated that people of Harappan civilization were familiar with weaving and spinning of cotton 4,000 years ago."

She said, "Reference to weaving and spinning materials is also found in the Vedic literature and block-printed and resist-dyed fabric have been found at tombs in Misr-Al-Fustat and Egypt. Thus, indicating the export of Indian cotton textiles to Nile civilisation."

Talwar added, "Large quantities of Indian silk were traded through silk route to western countries. At present, Indian fabrics are in high demand and textile exports contribute 5 per cent of India's GDP.

The sector is estimated to have a potential to reach $50 billion and it provides employment to over 45 million people directly and 60 million people indirectly. Science has significantly contributed towards development and use of traditional fabrics and continues to contribute to the development of textile industry."

Dr Neelima Jerath, director general, Science City, said, "Science has played a major role in promotion of handlooms, handicrafts and sericulture, besides technological contributions in weaving, spinning, dyeing and garment production through textile engineering."

She said innovation, science and technology, has helped to develop new types of clothes, 'Sustainable fabrics', including paper cloth (used in high fashion clothing), pinatex from pineapple, micotex from mushroom, orange fibre cloth, ucalyptus yarn and cactus leather. It has also contributed in preservation of traditional fabrics, including vicuna wool, alpaca wool, cashmere wool and shahtoosh.

Harpreet Kaur, head, Department of Fashion Design, KMV College, introduced the participants to the world of textile crafts of India and made them understand finer details of traditional textile crafts and the fashion world. She explained the science behind fabrics, various scientific methods and techniques used in the manufacturing and designing of fabrics.

Harpreet said, "Everyone should adopt and purchase traditional Indian handicrafts as not only are they most suitable as per weather, but also made with fabrics dyed with natural dyes, which are non-allergic. Moreover, we contribute in preserving our heritage and provide sustainable livelihood to artisans. Thus, we do our bit as sustainable consumers by adopting 3Ps (planet, people and profit)."

Source: tribuneindia.com – Dec 20, 2020

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Industries in Gujarat get 'raw' deal as material costs surge

Industries across the state were expected to revive their fortunes after the backbreaking national lockdown and Covid-induced slowdown. And, some sectors did manage to stand up despite the challenges. But the sudden surge in raw material prices due to a variety of domestic and international factors has again cast a pall of gloom on several sectors in Gujarat.

Rocketing costs take colour off chemical industry

With the chemical industry heavily dependent on imports of raw materials, anti-dumping duty on certain items from China has led to a rise in raw material prices.

Dyes and intermediate raw materials such as phthalic anhydride, aniline oil and phosphorous trichloride have doubled.

"The cost of production has gone up 30% following an 85-100% increase in raw material prices. At the same time, certain chemicals imported from China being classified under restricted commodities is also causing supply chain constraints as availability is a problem," said Yogesh Parikh, president, Gujarat Dyestuff Manufacturers' Association (GDMA).

Indian Chemical Council, Gujarat chapter chairman, Ravi Kapoor said that internal demand for raw materials shot up in China. “High demand for the raw material in China led to shortage apart from demand and supply gap internationally,” Kapoor said.

“Increased raw material prices has dealt a big blow to the industries, particularly MSMEs, which do not have huge cash reserves to sustain their business,” said Bhupendra Patel, chairman – Gujarat region, Chemexcil.

Engineering units gasping for survival

A sudden rise of 30-50% in the cost of raw materials like pig iron, steel and copper has become a cause of concern for the engineering firms. Most manufacturers believe that the surge in raw material prices will squeeze their margins as they haven’t been able to renegotiate prices due to stiff competition in the market.

“China has increased prices of some raw materials while the restrictions on imports due to Covid-19 too has led to rise in the costs. Industry players in Gujarat now feel that the raw material prices have to be controlled,” said Nilesh Shukla, president, India SME Forum (Gujarat).

“Our profit margin has shrunk because of the unprecedented price rise of raw material. I can’t even quote appropriate prices to foreign buyers due to the uncertainty in raw material costs,” said Parth Ganatra, vice-president, Rajkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI).

Plastic raw materials price swell by 300%

About 12,000 units in Gujarat are staring at tough times as prices of some raw materials, especially polymers, have shot up by 20-300% in the last five months. A few months ago, the plastic manufacturers were bullish as demand for their products had gone up post lockdown. But the sudden surge in raw material costs seems to have spoilt their plans.

“The plant utilization capacity across the units has declined by 60-70 per cent. Several units, especially the smaller ones, are also facing working capital problems,” said Shailesh Patel, president, Gujarat State Plastic Manufacturers Association (GSPMA). Plastic makers’ margins too have eroded to 3-4% from 8-10% previously.

Rising costs puts non-woven fabric makers under stress

An unexpected surge in polypropylene prices has led to rise in the price of spunbond non-woven fabric that is used for making surgical masks and PPE kits being used extensively amid Covid-19 pandemic.

"We are facing a tough time as the price of our raw material (polypropylene) has increased by 26% to Rs 107 from Rs 85% kilogram in just two months. Also, a premium of Rs 30 per kilogram is being charged in the grey market due to its shortage," said Suresh Patel, president, Non-woven Federation of India (NFWI). As a result, the fabric cost increased by 45%.

Some small units have already suspended their operations as they do not have enough capital to procure raw material at such a high price. Export orders are also affected with some facing cancellations.

High material costs weaving web around textile processors

With cost of caustic, coal as well as reactive dyes going up, the textile processing units across Gujarat are hit by an increase in cost of production. Industry players say the operating cost of textile processors have gone up by 20%, putting the sector under immense pressure.

"The cash flow and working capital cycle has been disturbed. In times of the pandemic, textile is one of the adversely hit sectors and with increased cost of production, we will get lesser realisation for both our domestic as well as export orders," said Nitin Thaker, ex-president, Ahmedabad Textile Processors' Association (ATPA).

Gujarat is home to at least 600 textile processing units, mostly MSMEs. Several units don't have enough capital to meet the increasing cost of raw material that is also affecting their profit margins.

Soaring costs dull shine of brass parts industry

A 15% rise in the cost of brass imported to Gujarat from the US has left brass parts makers in the lurch as their cash flow cycle has disrupted. Jamnagar alone houses 5,000 brass products units.

"In brass parts manufacturing, the amount of value addition is relatively less and as a consequence, our margins get impacted," said Jignesh Shah, director, Material Recycling Association of India (MRAI). Shah also owns a brass parts unit in Jamnagar.

"In a bid to infuse liquidity, the government of India has given calculative and calibrated packages, mostly rolled out in the form of borrowings, which does not help address working capital concerns," Shah added.

Realtors seek govt's intervention

Alleging cartelization by cement and steel makers, real estate developers' body CREDAI has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking the government's immediate intervention to regulate the prices of construction raw materials. According to CREDAI, since January, the cement and steel prices have increased by 23% and 45% respectively. This has adversely affected the real estate industry.

Source: timesofindia.com – Dec 20, 2020

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Solar auction tariff hits new low of Rs 1.99 per unit

The latest solar auction has discovered a tariff of Rs 1.99/unit, a new low. The lowest tariff found previously was Rs 2/unit in the November auction. Power from these solar units will be bought by Gujarat. According to sources, state-run NTPC, Torrent Power, Saudi Arabia-based Al Jomaih Energy and Water Co and Aditya Birla Renewables quoted the lowest tariff for building 200MW,100MW,80 MW and 120MW solar projects, respectively.

NTPC and Al Jomaih were also the winners in the November auction where prices dropped to Rs 2/unit. Industry watchers said that having an assured buyer for power was a key driver to the discovery of record low tariff amid fiercely competitive bidding.

The current environment of lower interest and expectations of further decline in panel prices have also contributed to low rates. Module prices currently stand at $0.17/wp, around 13% lower than last year.

Average cost of debt for NTPC fell 54 bpsy-o-y to 6.37% in the first half of FY21. It will also gain from a lower tax rate since the project will be set up under a new company NTPC Renewable Energy. The FY21 Union budget had extended the concessional corporate tax rate of 15%, earmarked for manufacturing companies, to new domestic electricity generation firms, effectively reducing their tax incidence by ten percentage points.

The country has set a target to raise the capacity of installed renewable energy generation plants from the current level of 89 GW to 175 GW by the end of 2022. About 35 GW is under various stages of implementation and 30 GW under various stages of bidding. If the 45.7 GW of hydro and 6.8GW of nuclear capacities are included, the target under the Paris climate change accord of having 40% of installed power generation capacity from non-fossil fuel sources can be achieved by 2022 itself.

Source: financialexpress.com – Dec 20, 2020

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Amazon India adds 1.5 lakh sellers, 70000 exporters in 2020

E-commerce major Amazon India on Sunday said 1.5 lakh new sellers joined its platform this year, and over 70,000 Indian exporters in its global selling programme have crossed $2 billion in cumulative exports.

Amazon India, in its SMB Impact Report 2020, noted that it works with more than 10 lakh small and mid-size business (SMBs) including sellers, delivery and logistics partners, neighbourhood stores, enterprises, developers, content creators and authors work with the company in the country.

"This year has been unprecedented and has impacted the way we work and live. Yet, we remain inspired by the undying entrepreneurial spirit, creativity, resolve and trust in us of businesses, creators and authors to overcome challenges and grow," Amazon India Senior VP and Country Head Amit Agarwal said.

He added that technology adoption and digitisation will continue to play a crucial role in offering expanded access and opportunities to SMBs, and that the company remains committed to invest and partner in success of SMBs in India.

Earlier this year, Amazon had pledged to invest $1 billion to digitise 10 million SMBs, enable e-commerce exports worth $10 billion and create 1 million incremental jobs by 2025.

The SMB Impact Report 2020 said 1.5 lakh new sellers joined Amazon.in in 2020 with over 50,000 registering in Hindi and Tamil.

"(A total of) 4,152 Indian sellers surpassed ₹1 crore in sales in 2020 and the number of crorepati sellers grew 29% year-on-year," it added.

Amazon has over seven lakh sellers on its platform.

Amazon.in has unveiled the top 10 states and union territories with most number of sellers. With more than 1,10,000 sellers, Delhi has the largest number of Amazon.in sellers in the country, followed by Maharashtra (87,000) and Gujarat (79,000).

Besides, Amazon Business marketplace registered 85% year-on-year (YoY) growth in sales.

"There has been a 64% increase in monthly order volumes in 2020. Over 3.7 lakh sellers on the B2B marketplace offer more than 20 crore goods and services tax (GST)-enabled products," the report said.

Referring to Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) - which enables Indian authors to self-publish in multiple languages and reach millions of readers globally - the report said in the year ending November 30, 2020, Indian authors have cumulatively earned over ₹45 crore through books published on KDP (growing over 2X YoY).

Hundreds of independent authors have earned over ₹1 lakh each in royalties, in the year ending November 30, 2020, it added.

"There are now over 70,000 Indian exporters selling millions of 'Made in India' products worldwide across 15 international Amazon websites.

Indian SMBs and brands on the program have crossed ₹15,000 crore in cumulative exports," it said.

Amazon said there are over 1 lakh developers from India building for Alexa - its digital assistant - globally.

These developers have built over 30,000 skills with the Alexa Skills Kit.

Thousands of smart home devices compatible with Amazon Alexa, and there are over 100 Alexa built-in devices like smart speakers, fitness trackers, and Smart TVs.

Source: livemint.com – Dec 20, 2020

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