

NEWS TODAY

SMART METERING INFRASTRUCTURE TO HELP DISTRESSED POWER SECTOR

- Smart meters are suggested as way to address **aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses** amid rising electricity demand which is **expected to nearly double by 2030**.
 - Due to AT&C losses, distribution utilities lose almost **72 paise per unit of electricity** they purchase.
 - India aims to **cut AT&C losses under 12% by 2022 and below 10% by 2027**. The losses are **currently pegged at 20%**.
- Smart meters **measure and record consumers' electricity usage** at different times of the day and **sends this information to energy supplier** through **over-the-air communication technology**.
- Benefits of smart meters:**
 - To DISCOMs:** Reduce AT&C losses, improve financial health, incentivise energy conservation, enhance ease of bill payments and ensure billing accuracy.
 - To consumers:** track their usage and pay their bills easily, enhanced consumer satisfaction, system stability, reliability and transparency.
- Challenges:** High upfront cost, Challenges of cyber-security, software integration with new system etc.
- Smart Meter National Programme** by Energy Efficiency Services Limited aims to replace 25 crore conventional meters with smart meters in India.

INDIA TARGETS 100 MT COAL GASIFICATION BY 2030

- Coal gasification will **happen in three phases and entails investments worth over Rs. 4 lakh crores**. From 2020-2024, 4 million tonnes (MT), from 2020-2026, 6 MT and from 2022-2030, 90 MT of coal will be gasified.
 - A **steering committee has been constituted** in this regard under the chairmanship of V K Saraswat, member, NITI Aayog.
- Coal gasification process **chemically transforms fossil fuel into synthetic natural gas (SNG)**, instead of burning it.
 - SNG produced in the process is a mixture of hydrogen (H₂), carbon monoxide (CO) and carbon dioxide (CO₂).
 - Syngas can be **used to produce a wide range of fertilizers, fuels, solvent and synthetic materials**.
- Benefits:** It will boost production of energy fuel, urea for fertilisers and production of other chemicals; transporting gas is cheaper than transporting coal, reducing energy imports etc.
- Issues:** coal gasification actually produces more CO₂ than a traditional coal plant, more water-intensive forms of energy production, low calorific and high levels of inorganic impurities (35-45%) of Indian coal etc.

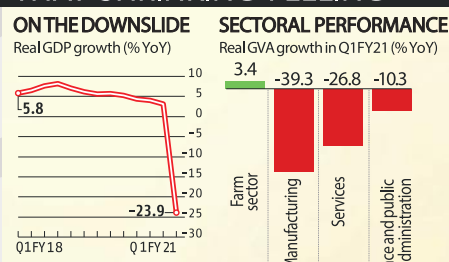
INDIA-ASEAN AGREED TO REVIEW FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (FTA) AT 17TH ASEAN-INDIA ECONOMIC MINISTERS' MEET

- India **signed a FTA in goods-** Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) –India Free Trade Agreement (AIFTA)-in 2009. In 2014, a FTA in services was also included.
 - 10 ASEAN countries** -Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.
- Need for review:**
 - Make AIFTA modern with contemporary trade facilitative practices**, and streamlined customs and regulatory procedures.

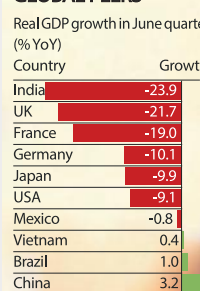
ESTIMATES OF GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP) FOR THE FIRST QUARTER (APRIL-JUNE) OF 2020-21 RELEASED

- National Statistical Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation released these estimates.
- Key findings:**
 - GDP growth contracted 23.9%** in first quarter of 2020-21 as compared to 5.2% growth in Q1 2019-20. In economics, two successive quarters contraction is a recession (refer infographic).
 - Gross Value Added (GVA)** declined 22.8% in Q1 of 2020-21 as against 4.8% growth in Q1 2019-20.
 - GVA= GDP + Subsidies on products - Taxes on products. It represents contribution of labour and capital to production process.
 - Private consumption** expenditure contracted by 26.7% and **investment** by 47.1%. **Government expenditure** grew by 16.4%.
 - Private consumption accounted for 56.4% and Investment for 32% of all GDP before this quarter.
- Impact:** fall in income and Job creation, higher government borrowing etc.
- Measures to be taken:**
 - Fiscal measures** to boost purchasing power through cash support, reduction in direct/ indirect tax rates, higher infrastructure spending. It may increase fiscal deficit.
 - Monetary Measure:** RBI may cut lending rates, but it may increase inflation.

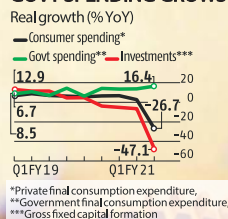
THAT 'SHRINKING' FEELING



WORST FALL AMONG GLOBAL PEERS



INVESTMENTS HALVE, GOVT SPENDING GROWS



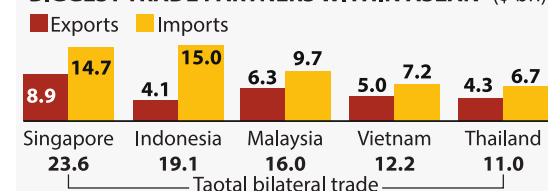
Sources: Reuters, Office for National Statistics (UK); US Bureau of Economic Analysis, National Statistical Office

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- Need for review:**
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 - India has pitched for stronger provisions in **rules of origin (ROO), removal of non-tariff barriers and better market access**.
 - ROO are the criteria needed to determine the national source of a product.
 - As per NITI Aayog study, **utilisation rate of regional trade agreements by Indian exporters is very low** (between 5% and 25%), because of difficulties faced in negotiating the rules.
 - India's **trade deficit with the bloc had increased** over the years.
 - To check **dumping of Chinese products from ASEAN countries** that is hurting domestic industries.
 - To help **India become a manufacturing hub for several products** such as pharmaceuticals and information technology-enabled services.

EXPORTS TO ASEAN CONTINUE TO LAG (\$ bn)

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Exports	31.81	25.13	30.96	34.20	37.40	31.54
Imports	44.71	39.90	40.61	47.13	59.32	55.36
Total trade with bloc	76.52	65.03	71.57	81.33	96.72	86.9

BIGGEST TRADE PARTNERS WITHIN ASEAN (\$ bn)



Source: Commerce department

FIRST EVER UN'S GUIDELINES ON ACCESS TO SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (PwDs)

- Guidelines aim to make it easier for PwDs to access justice systems around the world. Guidelines outline a set of 10 principles and detail the steps for implementation (see infographic).
 - Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) applies right to access to justice in the context of disability. **India is signatory to CRPD.**
- Barriers faced by PwDs.**
 - Normative (Legal or Policy) Barriers:** Where rights are not enshrined in law, or where law, policy or practices are contrary to CRPD provisions.
 - Attitudinal Barriers:** Negative attitudes and false beliefs on part of police, lawyers, judges etc.
 - Information and Communication Barriers:** limited access to information provided in accessible formats, for example educational materials regarding one's rights.
 - Physical Barriers:** Lack of accessible physical environments, including court houses, police stations, and offices of lawyers.
- India's efforts for PwDs**
 - Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016** provides for reservation in higher education (not less than 5%), government jobs (not less than 4 %) for PwDs.
 - Accessible India Campaign** to provide universal accessibility.
 - Recently, Supreme Court ruled that **Disabled are entitled to same benefits of SC/ST quota.**

THE 10 PRINCIPLES ARE:

- No one shall be denied access** to justice on the basis of disability.
- Facilities and **services must be universally accessible** to ensure equal access to justice.
- Right to **appropriate procedural accommodations.**
- Right to **access legal notices and information** in a timely and accessible manner.
- Entitled to all **substantive and procedural safeguards** recognized in international law on an equal basis with others.
- Right to **free or affordable legal assistance.**
- Right to **participate in the administration** of justice.
- Rights to **report complaints and initiate legal proceedings** concerning human rights violations and crimes.
- Effective and robust monitoring mechanisms** for supporting access to justice for persons with disabilities.
- Awareness-raising and training programmes** for all those working in the justice system addressing.

ALSO IN NEWS

Official Development Assistance(ODA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Japan has committed ODA loan of an amount of approx. Rs. 3,500 crore for the COVID-19 Crisis Emergency Response Support for India. ODA is defined as government aid designed to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries. Japan initiated its economic cooperation with India in 1958. The cooperation began by ODA Loan, which was the first ODA Japan had ever provided for any country.
India, France space collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Space agencies of India and France are in an advanced stage of discussions for providing necessary equipment to 'Gaganyaan' astronauts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The equipment would be similar to those to be used by France for Mission Alpha. Gaganyaan mission, planned by ISRO aims to send a three-member crew to space for a period of five to seven days by 2022.
Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICI for Month of July, 2020 was released and its cumulative growth during April to July, 2020-21 was -20.5%. ICI measures performance of production in selected eight core industries: (In the order of weightage from highest to lowest): Refinery Products, Electricity, Steel, Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Cement, Fertilizers. It is a production volume index released monthly. Compiled and released by: Office of the Economic Adviser (OEA), Ministry of Commerce & Industry. Base year: 2011-12
World's Largest Solar Tree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solar tree is made of metal structure and have solar panels at the top instead of branches of real tree. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One solar tree can reduce ten to twelve tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions. Developed by CSIR-CMERI, it is installed in Durgapur. Its installed capacity is above 11.5 kWp.
Pangong Tso Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pangong Tso is a salt water lake that is partly in India's Ladakh region and partly in Tibet. Nearly two-thirds of the lake is controlled by China, with just about 45 km under Indian control. Karakoram Mountain range, which crosses Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and India, ends at the north bank of Pangong Tso.
Rare Renatichol inscription unearthed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inscription was unearthed in Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh. It is written in archaic Telugu language. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It shows record of a gift of six Marttus (a measuring unit) of land gifted to a Brahmin. It was assigned to 8th Century A.D., when region was under the rule of Chola Maharaja of Renadu. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telugu Cholas of Renadu (also called as Renati Cholas) ruled over Renadu region, present day Cuddapah district. They were originally independent, later forced to suzerainty of Eastern Chalukyas.
Armageddon in chess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is the final decisive clincher in chess and is similar to a Super Over in cricket or a penalty shootout in hockey or football. Recently, India and Russia were named joint gold medal winners of the online Chess Olympiad.

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