

Current Affairs 7 February 2019 with PDF

Banking and Finance

RBI cuts repo rate in its maiden policy review under Shaktikanta Das

- In a major policy shift, the six-member **monetary policy committee (MPC)** headed by Governor **Shaktikanta Das on Thursday lower the repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.25 per cent in 4-2 vote**. RBI has thus cut rate for the first time in 17 months. The last rate cut happened in August, 2017.
- **The MPC also changed the policy stance to 'neutral' from 'calibrated tightening'**. This was first money policy review for former economic affairs secretary Shaktikanta Das, who took over as RBI Governor in the second week of December, 2018.

RBI MONEY POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

- RBI Governor Das voted in favour of rate cut
- MPC unanimously voted to change stance to neutral
- FY20 GDP seen at 7.4 per cent
- CPI seen at 2.4% in Jan-March 2019 and 3.2-3.4% in April-Sept
- RBI to withdraw rule on FPI exposure to single corporate entity
- To raise limit for collateral free farm loan to Rs 1.6 lakh
- FY20 Budget proposals likely to boost aggregate demand
- Risk weight on bank exposure to NBFCs linked to ratings

The central bank sees consumer price inflation at 2.4 in January-March period and 3.2-3.4 per cent from April to September.

April-September GDP growth is seen at 7.2-7.4 per cent.

Kerala becomes first state to set up Price Monitoring and Research Unit

- **Kerala became the first State to set up a Price Monitoring and Research Unit (PMRU)** to track violation of prices of essential drugs and medical devices under the Drugs Price Control Order (DPCO).
- The move comes more than five years after the **National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) proposed such a system for the States and the Union Territories**.
- It would provide technical help to the state drug controllers.
- It will help the NPPA to monitor notified prices of medicines, detect violation of the provisions of the DPCO, look at price compliance, collect test samples of drugs, and collect and compile market-based data of scheduled as well as non-scheduled formulations.

Cabinet approves amendments to Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill

- **The Cabinet has approved a proposal for Official Amendments to Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018.**
- Briefing media after the Cabinet meeting in New Delhi last night, Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said, the amendments will further strengthen the bill to effectively tackle illicit deposit-taking activities, and prevent such schemes from duping the poor.

- Mr Prasad said the Bill provides for severe punishment and heavy pecuniary fines to act as the deterrent. **The bill creates three different types of offences, namely, running of Unregulated Deposit Schemes, fraudulent default in Regulated Deposit Schemes, and wrongful inducement in relation to Unregulated Deposit Schemes.**
- The bill provides for attachment of properties or assets by the Competent Authority and subsequent realization of assets for repayment to depositors. The Cabinet also cleared establishment of a unified authority for regulating all financial services in International Financial Services Centres in India through International Financial services Centres Authority Bill, 2019.

Government allows export of bio-fuels from special economic zones, EoUs

- **The government allowed export of bio-fuels from Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and export-oriented units (EoUs) with certain conditions.**
- In August 2018, the government imposed **restrictions on export of bio-fuels for non-fuel purposes.**
- After this restriction, exporters operating from SEZs and EoUs made representations to remove this prohibition stating they only use imported material for export of final product.
- They also informed government authorities that SEZ units have been granted letter of approval for export of bio-fuels and EoU units have obligations to fulfil under an export promotion scheme.
- **SEZs and EoUs are export-oriented units outside the ambit of domestic customs laws.**

Smriti Irani launches India Size project in Mumbai

- **Union Minister of Textiles Smriti Irani launched the India Size project in Mumbai yesterday.**
- **A first-of-its-kind project in the history of the country, India Size aims to arrive at a standard Indian Size for the ready-to-wear clothing industry,** on the lines of the standardized sizes available in countries such as the USA and the UK.
- Addressing the gathering the Minister said that India size project will benefit manufacturers, consumers and generate data which will help tap into the potential of the sector.
- **The Minister also launched a Study of Apparel Consumption in India.** The report of this study would be ready for release by July 2019.

Cabinet approves introduction of National Institutes of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management Bill, 2019

- The Union Cabinet approved the introduction of **National Institutes of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management Bill, 2019 in the Parliament.**
- The objective of the bill is to confer the status of **Institutions to National Importance to National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management (NIFTEM) at Kundli, Haryana, and the Indian Institute of Food Processing Technology (IIFPT) at Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu.**
- The legislation would provide for functional autonomy to the institutes to design and develop courses, undertake research activities and leverage enhanced status in their academic pursuits.
- The institutes would implement the reservation policy of the Government and would also undertake special outreach activities for the benefits of concerned stakeholders.

CCEA approves continuation for the Central Sector Scheme of Exploration of Coal and Lignite

- The Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs approved the proposal for continuation of the **Scheme of "Exploration of Coal and Lignite" with an expected expenditure of Rs.1875 Crore.**

- The approved scheme is for carrying out 24,41,500 meter of drilling and 3575 line km of surface geophysical survey for promotional exploration and detailed drilling in Non CIL Block in Coal & Lignite along with Shale gas studies and associated studies to provide coal resources in 3 years period.
- Under the Scheme, approximately 7 billion tonne of resources will be established and 11 billion tonne of resources will be provided.

CCEA approves proposal for setting up 12,000 MW grid-connected Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Power Projects

- **The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the proposal of Ministry of New & Renewable Energy for implementation of the Central Public Sector Undertaking (CPSU) Scheme Phase-II for setting up 12,000 MW grid-connected Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Power Projects.**
- The project will be set up by the Government Producers with Viability Gap Funding (VGF) support of Rs. 8,580 crore in 4 years period (2019-20 to 2022-23), as per the terms and conditions specified in Government Producer Scheme.

CCEA approves creation of Agri-Market infrastructure fund for development and upgradation of Gramin Agriculture Markets

- **The Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs approved creation of a corpus of Rs. 2000 crore for Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund (AMIF) to be created with NABARD for development and up-gradation of agricultural marketing infrastructure in Gramin Agricultural Markets and Regulated Wholesale Markets.**
- AMIF will provide subsidised loan to state and central governments for their proposal for developing marketing infrastructure in 585 Agriculture Produce Market Committees (APMCs) and 10,000 Grameen Agricultural Markets (GrAMs).
- States may also access AMIF for innovative integrated market infrastructure projects including Hub and Spoke mode and in Public Private Partnership mode.

India and states

Swachh Bharat Mission launches 'Darwaza Band - Part 2' campaign; Amitabh Bachchan stars in campaign films

- **The Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) on February 6, 2019 launched the 'Darwaza Band -Part 2' campaign for sustainability of the Open Defecation Free (ODF) status of villages across the country.**
- The campaign was launched in Mumbai in the presence of actor **Amitabh Bachchan**, Maharashtra's Minister for Water Supply and Sanitation Babanrao Lonikar, Secretary of Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation Parameswaran Iyer and other dignitaries.
- **The 'Darwaza Band- Part 2' campaign is supported by the World Bank and will be rolled out countrywide immediately after the launch.**
- **The campaign was produced by the Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.**

India and Germany join hands on water and waste management

- **India and Germany have joined hands for cooperation on Water and Waste Management.**
- **During the meeting of 3rd Indo-German Working Group for cooperation on water and waste management which concluded in New Delhi today, both sides discussed potential cooperation in this area.**

- According to an official release, both sides decided to work on developing reference documents for the textile sector, Water Governance, Marine Litter, waste to energy landfill sites, water quality management, training and capacity building of local bodies and Circular Economy.

India and New Zealand review bilateral relations & regional cooperation

- **The second foreign office consultations between India and New Zealand was held yesterday in New Delhi.**
- **The consultations between the two sides provided an opportunity to review the entire range of bilateral relations**, including political, trade and economic ties. India reaffirmed its commitment to working closely with New Zealand in these areas.
- The two sides also exchanged views on regional and multilateral issues, including cooperation at **UN and other International Organizations**.

Union Cabinet approves amendments to Cinematograph Act, 1952

- **The Cabinet has approved amendments to the Cinematograph Act, 1952 to tackle film piracy and Copyright infringement.**
- Briefing media, Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said, there are penal provisions for unauthorized camcording and duplication of films.

Cabinet approves establishment of Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog

- **The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for the establishment of Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog for conservation**, protection and development of cows and their progeny.
- It will lead to the development of the cattle population in the country including the development and conservation of indigenous breeds.
- It will result in the growth of the livestock sector which is more inclusive, benefit women, and small and marginal farmers.
- The Aayog will work in collaboration with Veterinary, Animal Sciences or Agriculture University or departments or organizations of the Central or State Government engaged in the task of research in the field of breeding and rearing of the cow, organic manure, biogas etc.
- **Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog was announced in the budget on the 1st of this month.**

Cabinet approves establishment of Circuit Bench of Calcutta High Court at Jalpaiguri

- **The Union Cabinet approved the establishment of Circuit Bench of Calcutta High Court at Jalpaiguri.**
- It will have jurisdiction over four districts namely Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar.
- The decision comes in the backdrop of the decision of the Calcutta High Court full court meeting in 1988.

CCEA approves "Broadcasting Infrastructure and Network Development" scheme of Prasar Bharti

- **The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the Proposal of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting regarding Prasar Bharati's "Broadcasting Infrastructure and Network Development" scheme at a cost of Rs.1054.52 crore** for 3 years (2017-18 to 2019-20).
- Out of Rs. 1054.52 Crore, an amount of Rs. 435.04 Crore was approved for the continuing schemes of All India Radio and an amount of Rs 619.48 Crore was approved for the schemes of Doordarshan.
- The continuing schemes of AIR and Doordarshan are at different stages of implementation and are scheduled to be completed in phases.

Appointment

Praveen Sinha appointed CBI additional director

- The government on Wednesday formally cleared the proposal to promote **Praveen Sinha**, a 1988-batch Gujarat cadre officer working in the **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** as a **joint director, as additional director in the agency**.
- Sinha was already promoted at the centre as an additional director general (ADG), which is an additional director rank post but all appointments and promotions in the CBI from the rank of superintendent of police to special director take place on the recommendation of a committee headed by the central vigilance commissioner (CVC).
- When Sinha was promoted as ADG, he was designated as “in-charge” additional director pending clearance from the CVC. Following clearance, Sinha has been formally promoted.

Air India CMD Pradeep Singh Kharola appointed as Civil Aviation Secretary

- **Air India Chief Pradeep Singh Kharola was appointed as the Civil Aviation Secretary as part of a minor bureaucratic reshuffle.**
- Kharola, a 1985 batch IAS officer of Karnataka cadre, was in November 2017 named as the Chairman and Managing Director of Air India Ltd.
- The post of the Civil Aviation Secretary was vacant due to the superannuation of Rajiv Nayan Choubey on January 31, 2019.

Awards

President Ram Nath Kovind confers Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards for Year 2017

- **The President, Ram Nath Kovind conferred the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards for the year 2017** on February 6, 2019 at Rashtrapati Bhawan during a special investiture ceremony.
- **The General Council of the Sangeet Natak Akademi selected 42 artists from the field of Music, Dance, Theatre, Puppetry and Overall contribution/scholarship in the Performing Arts** for the Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards 2017 at its meeting in Imphal, Manipur that was held on June 8, 2018.
- These 42 artists include one joint award.