

Daily News Monitor: 16 March 2021

1. US becomes India's second biggest oil supplier, Saudi falls to fourth spot

Source: Business Standard ([Link](#))

The United States overtook Saudi Arabia as India's second biggest oil supplier last month, as refiners boosted cheaper U.S. crude purchases to record levels and to offset supply cuts from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies (OPEC+), data from trade sources showed. India's imports from the world's top producer rose 48% to a record 545,300 barrels per day (bpd) in February from the prior month, accounting for 14% of India's overall imports last month, the data obtained by Reuters showed. In contrast, February imports from Saudi Arabia fell by 42% from the previous month to a decade-low of 445,200 bpd, the data showed. Saudi Arabia, which has consistently been one of India's top two suppliers, slipped to No. 4 for the first time since at least January 2006.

2. FM Sitharaman introduces Bill in Rajya Sabha to allow 74% FDI in insurance

Source: Business Standard ([Link](#))

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on 15 March introduced a Bill in Rajya Sabha that seek to amend the Insurance Act to pave the way for 74 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) in the sector. The Union Cabinet on Wednesday had gave its nod for amendments in the Insurance Amendment Bill 2021. Finance Minister Sitharaman introduced the Bill for amendments in the Insurance Act, 1938. Currently, the permissible FDI limit in the life and general insurance stands at 49 per cent with ownership and management control with Indian. Sitharaman presenting the Union Budget for 2021-22 had said, "I propose to amend the Insurance Act, 1938 to increase the permissible FDI limit from 49 per cent to 74 per cent in insurance companies and allow foreign ownership and control with safeguards." Under the new structure, the majority of directors on the board and key management persons would be resident Indians, with at least 50 per cent of directors being independent directors, and specified percentage of profits being retained as a general reserve.

3. Adani Ports to develop container terminal in Sri Lanka

Source: Business Standard ([Link](#))

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zones Ltd (APSEZ), an Adani group firm, on 15 March received the Letter of Intent (LOI) from the Sri Lankan government to develop and operate West Container Terminal (WCT) in Colombo. APSEZ will partner with John Keells

Holdings PLC, Sri Lanka's largest diversified conglomerate, and with the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) as a part of the consortium. The WCT will be developed on a build, operate and transfer basis for a period of 35 years as a public-private partnership (PPP). WCT will have a quay length of 1,400 meters and alongside depth of 20 meters, thereby making it a prime transshipment cargo destination to handle Ultra Large Container Carriers.

4. Income Tax Rules: 5 new rules set to come in force from April 1; know all about them **Source: Money Control ([Link](#))**

A slew of changes in the income tax rules, announced by the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1 while presenting the Union Budget will come into effect from April 1. People of and over the age of 75 with income from pension and interest from fixed deposit in the same bank would be exempted from filing the annual ITR from April 1, according to the new rules. The Finance Minister proposed higher TDS (tax deducted at source) for those who are not filing their ITR and announced to tax people contributing above Rs 2.5 lakh annually to the EPF account.

5. India to propose cryptocurrency ban, penalising miners, traders: Source **Source: Business Standard ([Link](#))**

India will propose a law banning cryptocurrencies, fining anyone trading in the country or even holding such digital assets, a senior government official told Reuters in a potential blow to millions of investors piling into the red-hot asset class. The bill, one of the world's strictest policies against cryptocurrencies, would criminalise possession, issuance, mining, trading and transferring crypto-assets, said the official, who has direct knowledge of the plan. The measure is in line with a January government agenda that called for banning private virtual currencies such as bitcoin while building a framework for an official digital currency. But recent government comments had raised investors' hopes that the authorities might go easier on the booming market.

6. IT firms recruit more flexi-staff for projects **Source: Livemint ([Link](#))**

Flexi-staffing is gaining traction among technology firms as they rush to meet the growing need for people with digital skills for short-term projects. The pace has intensified during the pandemic as a rapid shift towards digitalization and automation has brought down the average tenure of projects. The information technology (IT) and IT-enabled services (ITeS) sector is leading the option of flexi-staff adoption, with around a dozen out of every 100

employees being contractual or flexi-staff, according to the Indian Staffing Federation (ISF), the apex body of the flexi-staffing industry.

7. Kotak Investment, Allianz Group tie-up for India's private credit market

Source: Business Standard ([Link](#))

Kotak Investment Advisors (KIAL), the fund manager of Kotak Mahindra Group and Allianz Investment Management — the investment management arm of Germany's Allianz Group — said on Monday that they have tied up to invest in India's private credit market. In February 2021, Allianz made its maiden investment of \$150 million in KIAL's 11th real estate debt fund that achieved a closure of \$380 million. KIAL's real estate fund primarily focuses on financing early- and late-stage projects across India. Allianz's total private credit investments in the country is worth about \$650 million and it is looking to increase it to \$1 billion in 2021, KIAL said. A number of global investors such as Canada's CPPIB, Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan and Baring Private Equity are betting big on private credit in the country. Allianz had tied up with Shapoorji Pallonji's PE arm to invest in commercial properties earlier. KIAL has raised and managed funds worth \$4.66 billion so far.

8. India home to 4.12-lakh millionaire households: Hurun India

Source: The Hindu, Business Line ([Link](#))

India is home to 4.12-lakh dollar-millionaire households and Mumbai tops the chart followed by New Delhi, while real estate and stock markets continue to be their preferred choice of investments. There are 16,933 millionaire households in Mumbai, which contributes about 6.16 per cent to the country's GDP, with New Delhi in close pursuit with 16,000 (4.94 per cent contribution to GDP), followed by Kolkata 10,000, according to Hurun India Wealth Report. Bengaluru, seen as India's Silicon Valley and the country hub for the \$150-billion technology sector, has about 7,582 millionaire households, followed by Chennai with 4,685 rich homes. Maharashtra (56,000), Uttar Pradesh (36,000), Tamil Nadu (35,000), Karnataka (33,000) and Gujarat (29,000) account for 46 per cent of the total millionaire households, the report, a macro research on India's wealth landscape, said.