

INDIA NEWSLETTER



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Focus Sector

E-COMMERCE

Find Inside:



Incredible India in Vienna



Virtual Conference



State Economic Profile



Movie Evening

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)- Virtual Business Platform

The screenshot displays the CII Virtual Business Platform interface, organized into several service categories:

- BUSINESS SERVICES:** Includes B2B Zone (Business leads, Buyers, Sellers and Partnership requests at one place), CII (Global B2B e-Commerce Marketplace of CII, Your gateway to Global Supply Chain), Global Tender Services (Access 5,000 Business opportunities daily from 130 countries), and Finance Facilitation Center (Credit facility by 18+ partnering banks and NBFCs).
- NETWORKING SERVICES:** Includes CII Directory of members (Get direct access to over 1800+ members of CII), Communities (Sectoral groups and communities for networking and relevant discussions), and e-Events (Fast event networking with the delegates of CII events. Also watch recordings of complete event).
- KNOWLEDGE SERVICES:** Includes Master Classes (Learn new business skills with CII. Online Master Classes conducted by industry experts), Publication (Access CII publications, research reports and case studies released by CII from time to time), Presentations (Exclusive access to the presentations delivered by Industrial leaders), and CII e-Events (View recordings of the CII conferences and seminars and get latest industry developments and insights).
- INFO TRACKER SERVICES:** Includes Investment Tracker (Get regular alerts on the investments announced by the companies in India), Government Notifications (Never miss any notifications issued by state and central government), Schemes for SMEs (View all the schemes launched by state and central governments for SMEs), and Policy Updates (Up to date coverage on latest policy announcements by the state and central governments).

more information on: www.mycii.in

Invest India-Business Immunity Platform

The logo for the Invest India Business Immunity Platform features the Invest India logo (a colorful wheel) and the text "INVEST INDIA .GOV.IN" in blue. Below this, the words "BUSINESS IMMUNITY PLATFORM" are written in large, bold letters, with "BUSINESS" in blue, "IMMUNITY" in white, and "PLATFORM" in blue. A small version of the Invest India logo is placed between the 'O' and 'R' of "PLATFORM". At the bottom, the tagline "United against COVID-19" is written in a smaller font.

Invest India Business Immunity Platform is 100% operational and actively keeping corporates across the world informed of the daily developments on all fronts in matters relating to the management of COVID-19.

more information on:
www.investindia.gov.in/bip

NEWS FLASH

- 1** Over 85000 water conservation structures and more than 2.63 lakh rural houses among the structures created so far under the Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan; About 24 crore mandays employment has been provided and Rs 18,862 crore spent by the 9th week of the Abhiyaan.
- 2** Digital payments in India is expected to grow over three-folds to Rs 7,092 trillion (US\$ 100.61 trillion) by 2025 on account of Government policies around financial inclusion and growing digitisation of merchants.
- 3** 78 new routes under the 4th round of Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS)- Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) have been approved following the three successful rounds of bidding by the Ministry of Civil Aviation.
- 4** Exports of agricultural commodities during March to June 2020 increased by 23.24 per cent compared to corresponding period in 2019.
- 5** During the COVID-19 period, since March 2020, a total of about nearly 60.70 lakh new beneficiaries have been added under the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA) by States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, etc. within the respective available ceiling limits.
- 6** 1.22 crore Kisan Credit Cards sanctioned with credit limit of Rs 1,02,065 crore under the special saturation drive.
- 7** About 158 lakh metric tonne (MT) steel and 692 lakh MT cement is likely to be consumed in construction of all the houses sanctioned under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban).
- 8** Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), NITI Aayog and Business Sweden on behalf of India Sweden Healthcare Innovation Centre are collaborating to promote the disruptive potential of Indian entrepreneurs and boost the vibrant start-up ecosystem across the country.
- 9** India ranks first in number of organic farmers and ninth in terms of area under organic farming; Major organic exports from India are flax seeds, sesame, soybean, tea, medicinal plants, rice and pulses. Sikkim became the first State in the world to become fully organic.
- 10** India's export of non-basmati rice in the first two months of FY21 has jumped 52.5 per cent to 11.13 lakh tonnes from 7.3 lakh tonnes in the same period of FY20.
- 11** Electronics manufacturing is expected to increase at an annual rate of 30 per cent over the next five years and clock Rs 11.5 lakh crore (US\$ 163.14 billion) additional production during this period.
- 12** An EY-IPA study reported that the domestic telemedicine market is expected to reach US\$ 5.5 billion by 2025 and with advancement in technologies, Indian healthcare industry would probably shift from traditional method of doctor-patient interaction to digitally enabled remote consultations.
- 13** Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd. (RRVL) plans to acquire Future Group's retail, wholesale, logistics and warehousing businesses. Under the agreement, Future Group will first merge certain companies carrying on the aforesaid businesses into Future Enterprises Limited (FEL).



SDGs represent the aspirations of the global community and also a valiant effort to push the frontiers of development. It is now universally acknowledged that the SDGs represent an elaborate agenda for the Governments, that necessitates achieving progress simultaneously across social, economic and environmental pillars. The inter-connectedness among these goals renders SDGs as planning, implementation and a monitoring challenge. Specifically, SDGs impose an extraordinary demand on the national statistical systems to generate and analyse an unprecedented amount of data and more so on issues that are complex and evolving. India, with the world's 17 per cent of the population, holds the key to global SDG achievement. To access the report and for more information kindly visit:

[SDG INDIA](#)

NEWS ARTICLES

India and Japan sign agreement on Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services between Forces of both countries: PIB

India and Japan signed an Agreement between the two countries concerning Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services between the Armed Forces of India and The Self-Defense Forces of Japan. The agreement was signed here yesterday by Defence Secretary Dr Ajay Kumar and Ambassador of Japan Mr Suzuki Satoshi.

This agreement establishes the enabling framework for closer cooperation between the Armed Forces of India and Japan in reciprocal provision of supplies and services while engaged in bilateral

training activities, United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, Humanitarian International Relief and other mutually agreed activities.

The agreement will also enhance the interoperability between the Armed Force of India and Japan thereby further increasing the bilateral defence engagements under the Special Strategic & Global Partnership between the two countries.

NASSCOM FutureSkills and Microsoft launch AI Classroom Series: IBEF

As part of its ongoing efforts to promote skilling as a national priority, NASSCOM FutureSkills and Microsoft have joined hands

to launch a nation-wide AI skilling initiative that aims to skill 1 million students in AI by 2021.

The collaboration will provide Microsoft's AI, machine learning and data science expertise to students through easy to consume modules including live demos, hands-on workshops and assignments. These introductory sessions on AI will be available for undergraduate students at no cost and will cover the basics of data science, machine learning models on Azure, and understanding of cognitive services to build intelligent solutions.

The partnership with NASSCOM FutureSkills is an extension of Microsoft's global skilling initiative to help 25 million people worldwide acquire new digital

skills, needed to thrive in a digital economy.

Commencing from September 21, 2020, the AI Classroom Series will be paced in three modules. The online classes will include live demos, hands-on workshops, and assignments through self-learning, virtual instructor-led training, and mentoring. The teaching sessions will be conducted by various experts, including experts from Microsoft and NASSCOM. Students will have the option to choose from multiple time slots and plan their own learning pace. Registered students will also have access to content and developer tools from Microsoft and GitHub. A participation certificate from NASSCOM and Microsoft will be awarded to students at the end of the series.

Speaking about the partnership, Dr. Rohini Srivathsa, National Technology Officer, Microsoft India, said, as economies start to recover from the pandemic, expanded access to digital skills will be one of the key drivers of inclusive economic growth. Microsoft is deeply invested in creating a digital skills ecosystem to equip India's youth with AI-ready skills for evolving job-roles and our partnership with NASSCOM FutureSkills is a strong step in that direction.

Speaking on the launch, Amit Aggarwal, VP & CEO, IT-ITeS Sector Skills Council, NASSCOM said, "With disruptions and shifting customer preferences changing technology and skillsets in demand there is a rise in new job roles and occupations; skillsets are rapidly emerging as must-haves for current and prospective tech employees. The joint initiative with Microsoft aims to not only build future AI skilled talent but also nurture job creation through constant reskilling and upskilling for the years to come. We should look at this as a golden opportunity for students to imbibe AI and enhance their current skills sets to be future-ready."

The management strategy of COVID-19 also focuses on early detection and isolation of cases with seamless patient management and prioritising care of the high-risk population using field health care workers leading to increase in recoveries across the country. India has seen more than 40,574 patients recovered in the last 24 hours. This takes the total recoveries to 11,86,203 and Recovery Rate to 65.77 per cent amongst COVID-19 patients.

Wipro to provide engineering services support for Intel's solution: ET Bureau

Wipro said it would provide engineering services support for commercialization of solutions built on Intel's OpenNESS toolkit.

The Open Network Edge Services Software (OpenNESS) is a multi-access edge computing (MEC) software toolkit that was developed by Intel and allows developers to create and deploy applications at the network edge or on-premise locations.

This open source distribution fosters application innovation, and developer engagement with the ecosystem to create 5G and edge solutions.

The engineering services for OpenNESS builds upon an ongoing collaboration between Wipro and Intel on innovative 5G and edge solutions that use Intel's FlexRAN software reference architecture and OpenNESS.

Wipro would leverage its long legacy of engineering services to ensure successful

deployment of commercial solutions based on the OpenNESS platform, said the company.

"Our collaboration with Intel will help build 5G solutions enabled by edge computing that will power industry applications, deliver superior experiences and drive business efficiencies," K R Sanjiv, chief technology officer, Wipro, was quoted saying. Renu Navale, General Manager, Edge Computing and Ecosystem Enabling, Intel said successful commercialization of open source innovations requires partners who can expertly integrate technology components as well as provide engineering services and Wipro's collaboration with Intel on OpenNESS and several other Intel technologies makes them a valuable partner.

Ratan Tata backed CashKaro raises US\$ 10 mn from investors in Series B funding: Business Standard

In a Series B funding round, CashKaro, a Cashback and Coupons site, received US\$ 10 million by Korea Investment Partners and Kalaari Capital, its existing investor. In total, this Gurugram-based start-up raised its funds to US\$15 million.

In Series A, the company had received funding from Kalaari Capital, Ratan Tata and a group of London-based angel investors. CashKaro will use this amount to boost product development, hire new talent, try new brand building avenues, marketing and user-acquisition.

Rohan Bhargava, Co-Founder, CashKaro, said, "Our social cashback app EarnKaro was launched about a year ago and

seeing its fast growth we are all very excited to deploy more funds towards its expansion.”

CashKaro was founded by Rohan and Swati Bhargava in 2012. It is a marketing channel for >1,500 branded e-commerce websites such as Amazon, Flipkart, Myntra and Ajio. These channels pay the company a commission for every transaction, and then a portion of this commission is given to its users as a cashback. This ‘Cashback’ can be redeemed as cash or as gift vouchers.

Edtech leads investments in education sector; \$1.1 bn poured in 2020: ED Tech

Amidst lockdown, the education sector continues to be one of the big bets for investors, education, especially edtech, has recorded investments worth \$1.1 billion in 2020, its highest-ever annual tally and four times compared to last year. Investors say they will continue to see the maximum investment in 2020.

The pandemic has confined students across all ages to home and digital education is the only way to continue learning. High penetration of low-cost internet (4G) has made accessibility possible. With parents confined to home, even students without personal mobiles now have access to learning material through parents's phones.

According to Venture Intelligence data, during January to August 2020, venture capital (VC) investors pumped in \$1.19 billion spread across 36 deals as against \$409 million across 43 deals during the same period last year. VC is defined as investments in companies less than ten years old.

Byju Classes leads the table which raised nearly \$1.12 billion in four tranches from January 2020 to September 2020 from various investors including Silver Lake, Tiger Global, General Atlantic, Owl Ventures and DST Global.

Vaibhav Tamrakar, VP of PGA Labs, said that low digital penetration of online education at 1 per cent ceiling is very high (\$100 billion market size). Large untapped opportunity. With nearly 260 million student enrolments (from 345 million relevant population), spending on education as a percentage of family income is high in India.

Education is often seen as the most important solution by families to alleviate poverty. India has a large English speaking population with technology architecture and means, Indians can become global tutors not just for Indian students but also for the US, UK, Australia, etc. This can be akin to the IT industry outsourcing for doubt-solving and low-cost course delivery for the global population.

He added, government is gradually allowing schools to be reopened for students of classes 9-12 to help with doubt clearing and interaction on rotational basis. But since full-scale return to schools doesn't look plausible in this academic year, it will continue to push online as a primary medium of instruction especially for primary and secondary levels.

EdTech may also leapfrog from chalkboard to whiteboard directly, especially for professional courses and higher education. With parents

working from home and constraints on travel and other expenses, their involvement in student education will increase. Thus, home-schooling as a concept also has potential for growth.

Sandeep Singhal, MD and co-founder, Nexus Venture Partners added, private education is a large sector as it forms the backbone of aspirational India. The next generation online education platforms have increased access to cutting edge content, new learning methodologies and more cost effective delivery. At the same time, online education solutions have struggled with high costs of customer acquisition.

"The large players in the space - Byjus, Unacademy, Jio Embibe, Vedantu, Toppr have become household brands and have thereby lowered the CAC, and they will continue to see the maximum investment in 2020. There has been a big surge during Covid-19 period which has also helped convert customers faster, and investors expect that the trend will continue as users get comfortable with digital learning.

Silver Lake to invest Rs 7,500 crore in Reliance Retail: IBEF

US private equity firm Silver Lake will invest Rs 7,500 crore in Reliance Retail which marks the second billion-dollar investment by Silver Lake in a Reliance Industries subsidiary after the \$1.35 billion investment in Jio Platforms announced earlier this year. Shares of RIL traded 1.07 per cent higher at Rs 2129.60 after the announcement, while the benchmark BSE Sensex was down 0.49 per cent at 38,179. "Reliance Industries and Reliance Retail Ventures (RRVL)

announced that Silver Lake will invest Rs 7,500 crore into RRVL, a subsidiary of Reliance Industries. This investment values RRVL at a pre-money equity value of Rs 4.21 lakh crore. Silver Lake's investment will translate into a 1.75 per cent equity stake in RRVL on a fully diluted basis," RIL said in a release. "We believe technology will be key to bringing the much-needed transformation in this sector so that various constituents of the retail ecosystem can collaborate to build inclusive growth platforms. Silver Lake will be an invaluable partner in implementing our vision for Indian Retail," said Mukesh Ambani, Chairman and Managing Director of Reliance Industries.

Egon Durban, Co-CEO and Managing Partner of Silver Lake, said, "Reliance's New Commerce strategy could become the disruptor of this decade. We are thrilled to have been invited to partner with Reliance in their mission for Indian Retail." Silver Lake is the global leader in technology investing, with over \$40 billion in combined assets under management. The company has a terrific track record of investing in some of the largest and successful tech companies globally such as Twitter, Airbnb, Alibaba, Dell Technologies, ANT Financials, Twitter, Alphabet's Waymo and Verily amongst others.

Telemedicine market in India to reach USD 5.5 bn by 2025: EY-IPA study: Livemint

The Indian healthcare industry needs to shift from traditional in-person doctor-patient interaction to digitally-enabled remote consultations, according to an EY-IPA study.

The Indian healthcare industry needs to shift from traditional in-person doctor-patient interaction to digitally-enabled remote consultations, according to an EY-IPA study which said the domestic telemedicine market will reach USD 5.5 billion by 2025.

"15-20% of the healthcare ecosystem is expected to shift to virtual care, across triaging, consults, remote monitoring, home health, etc, the study, 'healthcare goes mobile: Evolution of teleconsultation and e-pharmacy in new Normal', said.

However, the rapid growth driven by increased digitisation will raise challenges related to patient's data privacy and prescription substitution. Thus, there is an immediate need for a strong regulatory framework in the interest of patients and consumers, it added.

"The telemedicine market in India is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 31% for the period 2020-25 and reach USD 5.5 billion", the study said.

Virtual care consists of tele-consult, telepathology, teleradiology and e-pharmacy and is experiencing an encouraging stimulus in India due to the pandemic, it added.

This stimulus has the potential to make teleconsultation and e-pharmacy account for around 95% of the telemedicine market by 2025 which amounts to USD 5.2 billion, the study said.

As per the study, India's e-pharmacy market is projected to reach 10-12% of the overall pharmaceutical sales in the next five years driven by strong regulations, increased funding and creation of digital

infrastructure, it added.

"As the COVID-19 pandemic throws unprecedented challenges, consumer behaviour and patterns are changing dramatically. With the new norms of 'social distancing', traditional ways of in-person doctor-patient interaction are being digitally enabled by remote consultations," Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA) Secretary-General Sudarshan Jain said.

While the technology will be a great enabler, evolving regulation should guard areas of patient privacy which is fundamental in relation to healthcare, he added.

EY India Life Sciences - Partner & Leader Sriram Shrinivasan said: "With the current levels of adoption by the patients and doctors along with emerging technologies and ecosystem, India is well poised to grow the digital health ecosystem."



For wider acceptance and usage, there is a need for a robust regulatory and governance framework that provides the right support for growth, he added.

FOCUS SECTOR

E-commerce

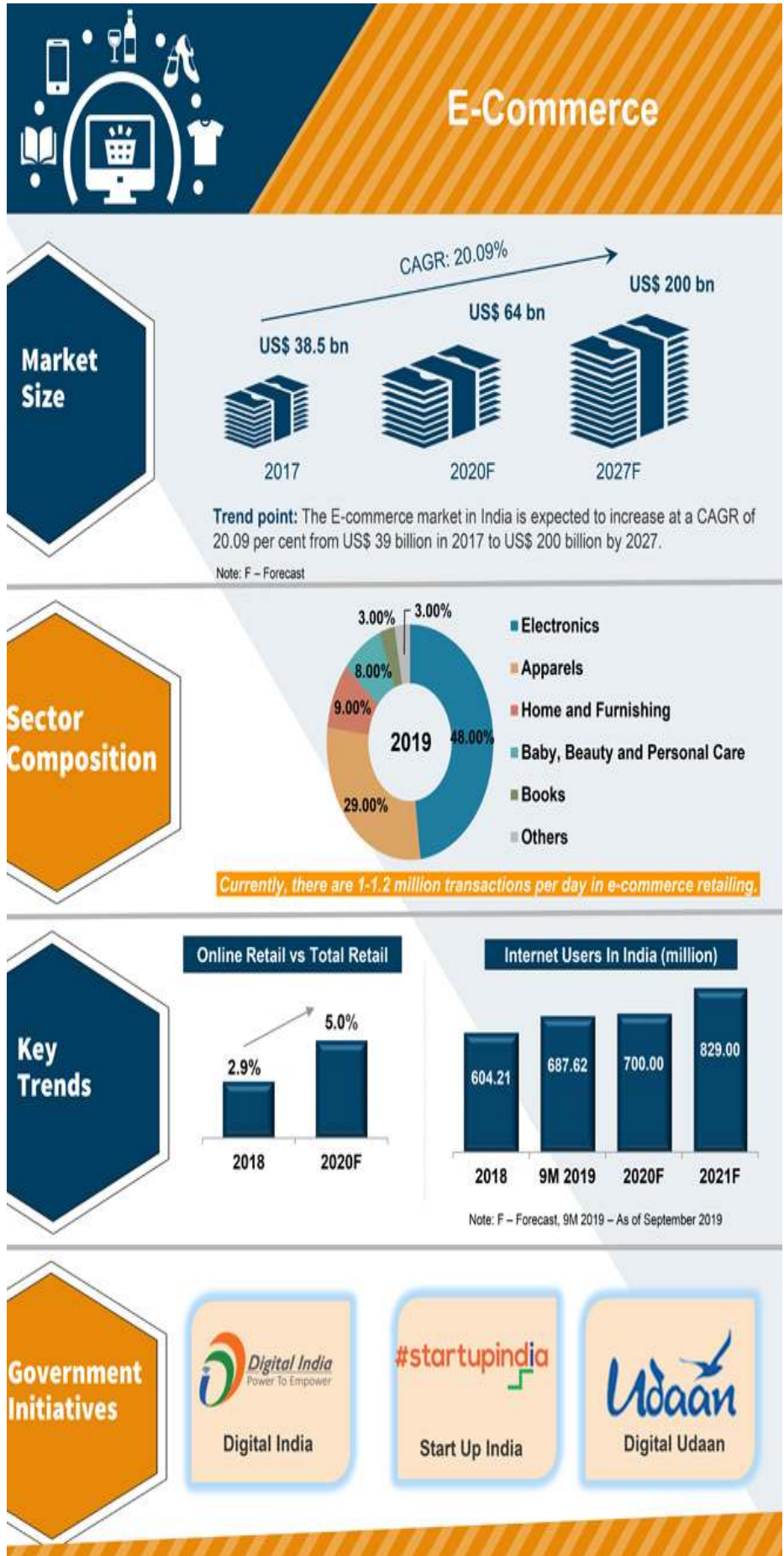
The Indian E-commerce industry has been on an upward growth trajectory and is expected to surpass the US to become the second largest E-commerce market in the world by 2034. India e-commerce will reach US\$ 99 billion by 2024, growing at a 27 per cent CAGR over 2019-24, with grocery and fashion/apparel likely to be the key drivers of incremental growth.

Online penetration of retail is expected to reach 10.7 per cent by 2024, versus 4.7 per cent in 2019. Online shoppers in India reached 120 million in 2018 and are expected to reach 220 million by 2025. Online retailers deliver to 15,000-20,000 pin codes out of nearly 100,000 pin codes in the country. In 2019, it was estimated that one in every three Indian shopped via a smartphone.

The Indian online grocery market is estimated to exceed sales of about Rs 22,500 crore (US\$ 3.19 billion) in 2020, a significant jump of 76 per cent jump over the previous year.

Much of the growth in the industry has been triggered by increasing internet and smartphone penetration. By 2022, smartphone users are expected to reach 859 million, whereas, E-commerce sector is expected to grow 1,200 per cent by 2026. Smartphone shipments in India increased 8 per cent y-o-y to reach 152.5 million units in 2019, thereby making it the fastest growing market among the top 20 smartphone markets in the world.

Internet penetration in India grew from 4 per cent in 2007 to 54.29 per cent in 2019, registering a CAGR of 24 per cent. The



number of internet users in India is expected to increase from 718.74 million in December 2019 to 829 million by 2021.

A young demographic profile, rising internet penetration and relative better economic performance are the key drivers of this sector. The Government of India's policies and regulatory frameworks such as 100 per cent Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in B2B E-commerce and 100 per cent FDI under automatic route under the marketplace model of B2C E-commerce are expected to further propel growth in the sector. As per the new FDI policy, online entities through foreign investment cannot offer the products which are sold by retailers in which they hold equity stake.

In February 2019, the Government released the Draft National E-Commerce Policy, which encourages FDI in the marketplace model of E-commerce. Further, it states that the FDI policy for E-commerce sector has been developed to ensure a level playing field for all participants. According to the draft, a registered entity is needed for E-commerce sites and apps to operate in India. Government also proposed the National E-commerce Policy to set up the lawful agenda on cross-border

data flow – no data will be shared with foreign Governments without any prior authorisation from the Indian Government.

Through its Digital India campaign, the Government of India is aiming to create a trillion-dollar online economy by 2025.

Market Size

Propelled by rising smartphone penetration, launch of 4G network and increasing consumer wealth, the Indian E-commerce market is expected to grow to US\$ 200 billion by 2026 from US\$ 38.5 billion in 2017. Online retail sales in India is expected to grow 31 per cent to touch US\$ 32.70 billion in 2018, led by Flipkart, Amazon India and Paytm Mall.

Smartphone shipments in India increased eight per cent y-o-y to reach 152.5 million units in 2019, thereby making it the fastest among the top 20 smartphone markets in the world.

Internet penetration in India grew from just 4 per cent in 2007 to 52.08 per cent in 2019, registering a CAGR of 24 per cent between 2007 and 2019. The number of internet users in India is expected to increase from 687.62 million as of September 2019 to 829 million by 2021.

Investments/ Developments

- In January 2020, Divine Solitaires launched its E-commerce platform.

- In February 2020, Flipkart set up a 'Furniture Experience Center' in Kolkata, its first offline presence in eastern India. In April 2020, Reliance Industries (RIL) started home delivery of essentials in partnership with local kirana stores in Navi Mumbai, Thane and Kalyan.

- In April 2020, Swiggy received an additional US\$ 43 million funding as part of its ongoing Series I round.

- In May 2020, PepsiCo India partnered with Dunzo for its snack food brands that include Lay's, Kurkure, Doritos and Quaker.

- In May 2020, chocolate maker Hershey India partnered with Swiggy and Dunzo to launch their flagship online store in order to increase reach.

- In Union Budget 2020-21, Government has allocated Rs 8,000 crore (US\$ 1.24 billion) to BharatNet Project to provide broadband services to 150,000-gram panchayats.

- In August 2019, Amazon acquired 49 per cent stake in a unit of Future Group.





INDIAN STATE ECONOMIC PROFILE

ODISHA

Odisha is located in the eastern region of India. The state shares its borders with West Bengal on the north-east, Jharkhand on the north, Andhra Pradesh on the south, Chhattisgarh on the west, and the Bay of Bengal on the east.

The state's economy witnessed high growth rates between 2015-16 and 2019-20, with Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) expanding at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 12.70 per cent.

Odisha has emerged as a key state with regards to the mineral and metal-based industries. At 40.7 per cent in 2018, Odisha contributed the largest share of mineral production India in terms of value. Value* of minerals produced in the state reached Rs 30,170.22 US\$ 4.28 billion) in 2018-19.

The state's economy witnessed high growth rates between 2015-16 and 2019-20, with Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) expanding at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 12.70 per cent.

It is the first state in India to have undertaken reform and restructuring initiatives in the power sector. As of March 2020, Odisha accounted for a total installed power generation capacity of 8,566.59 megawatt (MW), comprising 3,828.22 MW under state utilities, 2,771.39 MW under private sector, 1,996.68 MW under central utilities.

The state attracted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow worth US\$ 605 million during April 2000 and March 2020 according to the data released by Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

Odisha has a well-developed social, physical, and industrial infrastructure, and the state government has undertaken several infrastructural projects to further promote overall development. The state's infrastructure includes well-connected road and rail networks, airports, ports, power, and telecom.

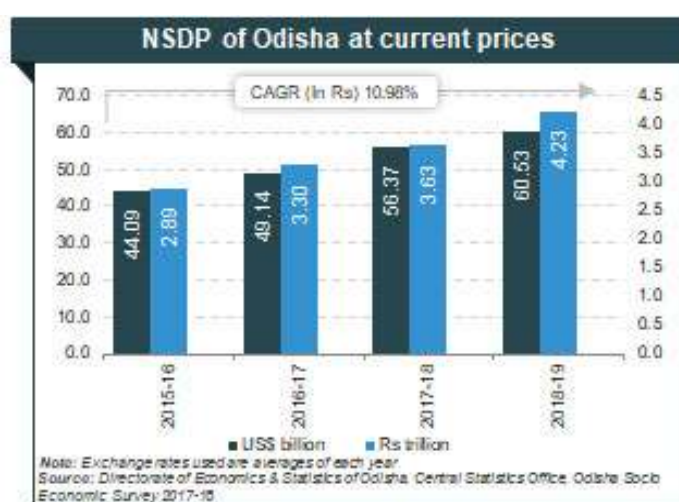
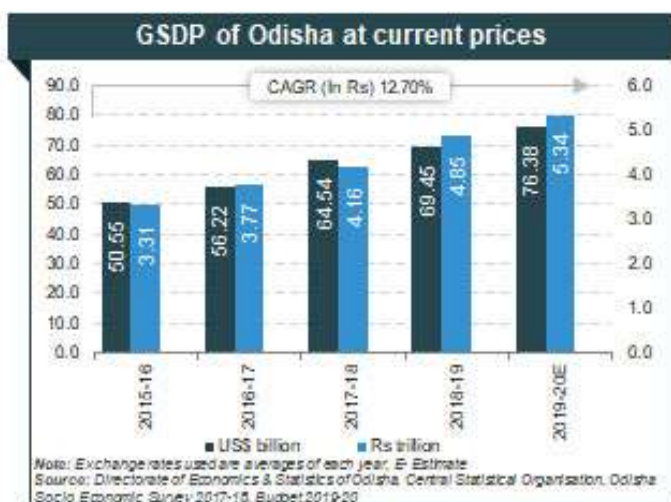
Odisha accounts for over 55 per cent of India's bauxite reserves, making it an ideal location for setting up aluminium and aluminium-based companies.

Key Sectors

- Total merchandise export from Odisha stood at US\$ 6.303 billion in FY19 and reached US\$ 3.26 billion during April-September 2019.
- According to State Budget 2018-19, an outlay of Rs 114 crore (US\$ 17.69 million) was proposed for the mining sector.
- About 155.10 lakh domestic tourists and 1.14 lakh foreign tourists visited Odisha during 2018-19.

Government Initiatives

- By 2022, Odisha plans to reach generation of 2,200 MW of solar power, 200 MW of wind power, 180 MW of bio-mass power, 150 MW of small hydro power and 20 MW of Waste-to-Energy (WTE) power.
- In December 2019, the State Government announced increasing bed capacity in major hospitals including Mother and Child Healthcare Center (MCH).
- Total merchandise export from Odisha were US\$ 6.303 billion in FY19 and US\$ 3.26 billion during April-September 2019.



INDIAN TRADE FAIRS/ WEBINARS

INTERESTED IN VISITING A TRADE SHOW IN INDIA?

In case your company is interested in visiting a tradeshow/B2B event in India, be it one listed here or another one that came to your attention, get in contact with us via comm1.vienna@mea.gov.in to get more information about possible assistance/subsidies.



TOURISM

Kerala



Kerala is blessed with a unique set of geographical features that have made it one of the most sought after tourist destinations in Asia. A long shoreline with serene beaches, tranquil stretches of emerald backwaters, lush hill stations and exotic wildlife, are just a few of the wonders. Most of the state is engulfed in rich greenery which ensures a very calming experience at all times. Bestowed with a pleasant and equable climate throughout the year, Kerala is a tropical land where one can relax and be at ease.

Kerala is a tropical paradise where you can paddle in tranquil backwaters, trek the rocky Western Ghats, chase the mists in the hill stations, rejuvenate with pristine Nature and Ayurvedic treatments, hug the unspoiled beaches and so much more. Kerala isn't just a destination; it's a saga of experiences!

Golden beaches, emerald backwaters, lofty mountain ranges, powerful art forms the choices are many and so are the wonders that await you in Kerala. Come and take home what they call 'memories', the kind that makes life worth living.

Kerala is teeming with events and festivals round the year so be sure to keep track of what happens when and where so as to be able to enjoy your trip to the fullest. From Cultural fairs like the Kochi Muziris Biennale to the legendary

boat races of Kerala and other ritualistic festivals and celebrations, the list is endless.

Places to Visit:

Munnar

A lush carpet of rolling green, interrupted by low rises of mountains of the gorgeous Western Ghats, Munnar, in Kerala, is dotted with huge emerald plantations and pristine waterfalls. No matter where you go in Munnar, a mixed scent of tea, coffee and cardamom will follow you everywhere. With a bountiful of natural treasures, Munnar leaves one rapt with its spectacular and awe-inspiring views. Such is the beauty of the myriad shades of green of the landscape that Munnar is often called the Kashmir of South India.

Thiruvananthapuram

Snuggled between the Arabian Sea and the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Western Ghats, Thiruvananthapuram, the capital of the beautiful state of Kerala, almost touches the southern tip of India. Skirted by backwaters, beaches and dotted with a number of scenic waterfalls and lakes, the city entralls one with its natural charms. The city finds mention in Roman and Greek literature as well. Legend has it that sage Parasurama took away Kerala from the sea god, Varuna, to create 'God's Own Land' (Kerala).

It is said that in the 8th century, a local chief, Suraj Sen, fell ill and was in a critical condition when Gwalipa, a hermit cured him. In return, as a gesture of gratitude, Suraj Sen built a city and named it after the saint.

Thrissur

Often referred to as the cultural capital of Kerala, Thrissur is a centre point of energetic festivities. This city hosts its own film festival, the Thrissur International Film Festival, among many other cultural events throughout the year. It invites tourists for its rich culture and heritage as it carries a strong influence of Indian, European and Arab sources from medieval and colonial times.

Kollam

An ancient port city, skirting the stunning backwaters of Kerala, Kollam is ensconced in the southern fringes of the state. A unique blend of serenity and natural splendour, Kollam is dotted with scenic waterfalls, tranquil lakes and pristine beaches that make for a splendid retreat. It is dotted with bustling markets that teem with farmers selling cashewnuts and spices. At its heart is the picturesque Ashtamudi Lake lined with cashew plantations, palm trees and quaint villages. Kollam is fondly called the

cashew capital of the world as it is home to over 600 cashew processing units. The city also acts as the southern gateway to the tranquil backwaters of Alappuzha. One of the most exhilarating and enchanting experiences on the Kerala backwaters is the boat trip spanning eight hours between Kollam and Alappuzha.

Alappuzha

Snuggled in the heart of Kerala's backwaters, Alappuzha is criss-crossed by palm-fringed waterways and dotted with over a thousand houseboats. Known for its glorious beaches, calm backwaters, enthusiastic boat races and sumptuous sea food, this green and graceful pocket-sized tropical paradise is a popular tourist destination. Adding to its charm are the Ayurvedic spas and wellness centres strewn across the city, attracting those looking to ease their tired bodies and minds.

Kumarakom

Sprawled along the shores of the picturesque Vembanad Lake, the largest in Kerala, Kumarakom is noted for its tranquil backwaters. Cruising in houseboats along the lake while breathing in the splendid beauty of the surroundings and absorbing the local culture of the quaint hamlets lying on the fringes, is an unforgettable experience. Kumarakom is renowned for an eponymous bird sanctuary, which is a popular for migratory birds.

INDIA PERSPECTIVES MAGAZINE ONLINE www.indiaperspectives.in

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The Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) has launched mobile app "Indian Customs- Guide to Travellers" for dissemination of information about Customs Baggage Rules, 2016. The application has been launched to inform traders, exporters and importers about Customs Baggage Rules, 2016. It has been developed by Bengaluru Customs and is available on Android Play store, Apple Store and Windows Store.



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- Mrs. Neerupma S. Kararha, Second Secretary/ HOC in this Embassy has been designated as Officer to look after welfare of Indian Students in Austria and Montenegro.
- Her contact details are: 0043 1 505 866 and hoc.vienna@mea.gov.in

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