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INDIAN RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY LIMITED is proposing, subject to receipt of requisite approvals, market conditions and other considerations, to make an initial public offer of its Equity Shares and has filed a draft red herring prospectus dated September 7, 2023 with SEBI (the "DRHP") and a red herring prospectus dated November 11, 2023 ("RHP") with the RoC. The RHP is made available on the website of the SEBI at [www.sebi.gov.in](http://www.sebi.gov.in) as well as on the website of the BRLMs i.e., IDBI Capital Markets & Securities Limited at [www.idbicapital.com](http://www.idbicapital.com), BOB Capital Markets Limited at [www.bobcaps.in](http://www.bobcaps.in) and SBI Capital Markets Limited at [www.sbicaps.com](http://www.sbicaps.com), the website of the NSE at [www.nseindia.com](http://www.nseindia.com) and the website of the BSE at [www.bseindia.com](http://www.bseindia.com) and the website of the Company at [www.ireda.in](http://www.ireda.in). Any potential investor should note that investment in equity shares involves a high degree of risk and for details relating to such risks, please see the section titled "Risk Factors" beginning on page 35 of the RHP. Potential investors should not rely on the DRHP for making any investment decision, but can only rely on the information included in the RHP. The Equity Shares have not been and will not be registered under the U.S. Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the "U.S. Securities Act") or any U.S. federal, state or other securities laws. The Equity Shares may not be transferred or resold except as permitted under the U.S. Securities Act, the applicable state securities laws and any applicable non-U.S. securities laws, pursuant to registration or exemption therefrom. The Company will not be registered as an investment company under the U.S. Investment Company Act of 1940, as amended (the "Investment Company Act") and accordingly is not subject to the protections of the Investment Company Act. Accordingly, the Equity Shares are being offered and sold (a) to persons in the United States and to U.S. Persons who are both, (i) "qualified institutional buyers" (as defined in Rule 144A under the U.S. Securities Act and referred to in this Red Herring Prospectus as "U.S. QIBs"), and (ii) Qualified Purchasers ("QPs"), as defined in Section 2(a)(51) of the Investment Company Act (persons who are both a U.S. QIB and a QP are referred to as "Entitled QPs"), pursuant to Rule 144A under the U.S. Securities Act and in accordance with Section 3(c)(7) of the Investment Company Act, and (b) to persons who are not U.S. Persons outside the United States, pursuant to Regulation S under the U.S. Securities Act and the applicable laws of the jurisdiction where those offers and sales are made. There will be no public offering of the Equity Shares in the United States.

WHAT'S HOT: **GADGETS.**

Game on!

The new **Dell Alienware Aurora R16** desktop brings in acoustic and thermal improvements alongside a new space-saving design,



optimising its performance from the inside out. It has an upgraded airflow, which leads to a quieter and cooler system. The dedicated gaming desktop is available in both the 13<sup>th</sup> Gen and 14<sup>th</sup> Gen Intel Core CPU configurations and offers up to Nvidia

GeForce RTX 4090 GPU. Without compromising performance or functionality, the entire system has been designed to be way more compact than its predecessor so it fits into a variety of modern living spaces.

Available with a 240mm heat exchanger, gamers can upgrade to liquid cooling to avoid heating issues. It also includes a 12-phase processor voltage regulation which delivers a cleaner power signal to the CPU enabling hours of marathon gameplay at high performance levels. A new Alienware command centre gives you quick access to game-specific profiles, themes, lighting customisation, macros, audio configurations and more. It also lets you choose and customise from a staggering 16.7 million colours, distributed across three lighting zones. The desktop is priced at ₹1,59,990 onwards.

Serious performance

The **ASUS ExpertBook B56 OLED** crafted with magnesium-aluminium alloy and pure aluminium is super-lightweight at 1.4 kg.



The 16-inch 4K OLED display has a 16:10 aspect ratio that provides a large visual workspace. This makes it easier to read articles, view websites, work on spreadsheets — or anything else that

needs just that little extra room. A small, bright LED light on the top cover of ExpertBook B5 OLED offers an at-a-glance indication of your status — automatically glowing when you're busy in a conference call.

The ExpertBook meets exacting industry standards for durability and strength, so it's built to survive environmental extremes and everyday knocks and bumps. Even the keyboard is resilient, engineered to resist everyday spills and splashes.

The ExpertBook B5 is powered by 13<sup>th</sup> Gen Intel Core i7 processor with the Intel vPro platform, and packs up to 40GB of RAM. Robust, multi-layered security features ensure that confidential and private data does not leak out. These include support for the Intel vPro platform for superior business protection, an integrated fingerprint sensor, a physical webcam shield for instant privacy. With two Thunderbolt 4 USB-C and one HDMI 2.1 port available, the ExpertBook B5 is priced at ₹1,88,990 onwards.

Mahananda Bohidar

**A**ddicted to tech, as we are, it's now quite common to get home from a long day of work and spend some time winding down with a smartphone, TV or tablet. And by some time, I mean right until we fall asleep! No wonder then there's been a renewed interest in tablets, especially post-pandemic. OnePlus, that launched its first-ever tablet earlier this year, is already out with a budget version — the OnePlus Pad Go. I've been taking it along to work and on holidays, and here's my experience.

DESIGN

The OnePlus Pad Go, despite being slated as a budget tablet, looks premium. It weighs just over 530 grams and is fairly thin at 6.8 mm. Despite its 11.3-inch display, it's not very hefty. There are only three physical buttons — the power button and the volume rocker — around a smooth corner. The tablet is available only in one colour option, which OnePlus calls 'Twin Mint'. The rear panel has a two-textured finish with the camera panel being reflective green glass and the bigger chunk of panel being a smooth matte surface.

The 11.3-inch LCD display offers ample real estate for endless media consumption. The tablet has a fairly unique 7:5 aspect ratio — just like the OnePlus Pad. This optimises games, apps and websites quite well, in both portrait and landscape modes. The display packs in 2408 x 1720 resolution and offers a refresh rate of 90 Hz. Reading and scrolling through Pinterest is smooth on the tab. What I sometimes had issues with is that media on VLC or YouTube wouldn't play right away when I hit play or pause when I clicked the icon. Brightness indoors and especially in spaces outdoors wasn't an issue, with the unit offering up to 400 nits.

What's truly impressive is the sound quality of the tablet. With both the proprietary Omnibearing Sound Field tech and Dolby Atmos quad speakers, the sound and music from the tablet are both loud and immersive.

I used the 8-MP front camera to attend a couple of briefings and webinars, and the quality is just about good enough. The rear camera is also 8 MP and delivers pretty average photographs. Pics taken indoors, in the absence of natural lighting, turned out a little too grainy.

Like most smartphones, the tab also offers a 'Bedtime Mode', which lets you customise the tablet's features to facilitate a better sleep schedule. It also lets me enable motion detection and light detection to track my sleep patterns. Also, the tablet's screen temperature automatically changes to reduce the blue-light impact on your sleep.

TECH SPECS

The OnePlus Pad Go is powered by

# Big on entertainment, light on the pocket

**ONEPLUS PAD GO.** The first budget tablet by the company leads with its innate strengths



edit copies on. The company hasn't made it compatible with its own folio-cum-keyboard accessory. So, this tab is great if you're specifically looking to buy a device as a bigger alternative to your smartphone, that you can wind down with. A decent display, great speakers, long battery life and a lightweight design are enough to keep you happy if you're looking for a tablet that doesn't hurt your wallet too much.

SNAPSHOT

**Price** - ₹19,999 onwards (Wi-Fi); ₹21,999 onwards (LTE)  
**Pros** - Elegant design, decent display, long battery life, expandable storage  
**Cons** - Sub-par camera, no 5G support for LTE

a MediaTek Helio G99 processor and runs on the upgraded OxygenOS 13.2. With 8 GB of RAM and 256GB ROM, the tablet is snappy enough with multi-tasking.

There's also microSD card support so you can expand the storage by up to 1TB for even more photo, video and content storage. Apart from a Wi-Fi-only model, one can also choose from two different 4G LTE variants (8+128 GB LTE and

8+256 GB LTE). Another huge advantage that the OnePlus Pad Go has is its massive 8,000 mAh battery. With incessant binge-watching over the Diwali weekend, it kept me company for almost two days before shutting down.

It also ships with a 33W SUPERVOOC charger, which takes close to a couple of hours to charge the device fully.

VERDICT

In my experience, the OnePlus Pad Go is a great secondary device for media consumption. I wouldn't mind coming home and catching up on *Jimmy's Kitchen* or trying out new gaming apps on this every day. It was also great to pop up mid-flight to catch up on downloads of *'What's Wrong with Secretary Kim'*. However, this wouldn't be my go-to device to actively write on or even

# Promises of picture perfect

**VIVO V29 PRO.** Is this the perfect camera phone, or does it still have a long way to go to be best-in-class?

Siddharth Mathew Cherian

**V**ivo has been steadily winning over consumers and has come a long way since exclusively targeting the budget segment. Its latest flagship, the Vivo X90 Pro, really won us over and I've been spending time with the Vivo V29 Pro, which promises to be a great mid-ranger.

DESIGN

The Vivo V29 Pro is quite slim at 16.418 cm x 7.437 cm x 0.746 cm. Made of glass, the body did feel slippery to begin with, but does fit well in my hand. The camera module raises the phone ever so slightly when put on a table. The smartphone has a 6.78-inch edge-to-edge AMOLED display which is bright and vivid. The colours are rendered really well on the display while I was checking out *The Marvels'* HD trailer on YouTube and watching *Kaala Paani* on Netflix. Although it has an edge-to-edge display, the edge rejection is quite good. The Himalayan Blue colour variant I used looks youthful and classy. And despite a glossy back panel, it doesn't pick up fingerprint smudges by the dozen.

CAMERA

The Vivo V29 Pro features a main camera setup that includes a 50 MP OIS lens, 12 MP portrait and an 8 MP wide-angle camera. The images clicked on the rear camera were quite sharp, retained a lot of details and offered vivid contrast and colour saturation. The USP of the smartphone is the 'Aura Light' at the back, which helps with night portraits and colour temperature. This does help give some contrast to rear camera portraits that are shot at night. Because, the night



shots aren't too great, as the camera tends to over-process these images. As a result, it smoothen out details in places where they could have been retained. The 50 MP front with autofocus camera was good for clicking selfies, but the beauty mode tended to over-sharpen the details along my face making the image break while zooming in.

PERFORMANCE

The Dimensity 8200 is quite a powerful processor on the Vivo V29 Pro and when paired with 12 GB RAM and 256 GB storage makes it quite a powerhouse configuration. On the AnTuTu benchmarking test, the V29 Pro scored 8,99,077 outperforming the iQOO Neo7 but not able to match up to the

Samsung S22 5G. On *Call of Duty Mobile*, the V29 Pro could breeze through gameplay churning a consistent 60 FPS at max settings without any stutter. Despite having a glass body, the rear didn't get too hot while gaming or charging the device.

BATTERY

The Vivo V29 Pro features a 4,600 mAh battery which was able to last through a 7-hour plus workday that included 2-3 hours of calls, three hours of gaming and another couple of hours of co-ordination on Microsoft Teams. Charging with the supplied 80W charger helped get the phone from 0 to 50 per cent charge in under 20 minutes, and full charge in under an hour.

VERDICT

The Vivo V29 Pro serves well as a camera and feature-rich device, but also has strong competitors in the OnePlus 11R and the Samsung A54 in the same price segment. The V29 Pro with its camera and photography-centric features is likely to be the favourite of most smartphone users looking for a functional phone with a great camera to go along with it.

SNAPSHOT

**Price**: ₹42,999 (12+256 GB)  
**Pros**: Great camera, decent battery life and specs.  
**Cons**: Aggressive photo post-processing, bloatware

HOT & 'APP'ENING!

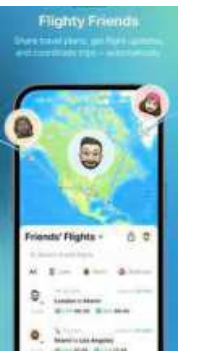
## The best apps handpicked for your pleasure, this week!

Mahananda Bohidar

Apple has released a whole list of App Store Award finalists. The awards are given to apps and games that are available across Apple devices such as the iPhone, iPad, MacBook and more. I decided to check out some of these and here's what I recommend.

### Flighty

If your travel schedule is as packed as mine, then you might want to check this app out. To start with, this seems like a simple enough flight-tracking app. It captures information from you about upcoming flights and streamlines all the information around it till you board the flight. 25 hours before the departure times, the app starts tracking any delay in the inbound aircraft and automatically alerts you. Apart from delays or even cancellations, it also shares information about how old the aircraft is and an estimated taxi time before and after take-off. It also alerts you to weather conditions at your destination. All this for free! There is a Pro paid version which seasoned travellers seem to swear by as well, with many of them saying the paid upgrade is well worth the money!



### Pret-a-Makeup

We know the skincare and makeup industry is booming like never before! And so is the popularity of this app. Designed to offer a virtual canvas for your makeup skills, Prêt-à-Makeup offers a digital face chart with unlimited pages and tools you need to hone your craft. To begin with, it asks the user to select a 2D face chart to start the makeup process. With thousands of virtual make-up products including foundations, concealers, highlighters, powders, blushes, pencils, lipsticks, shadows, eyeliners and eyelashes, it's a ton of fun to customise looks. You can also select styles from ready-made kits such as the "Cat Noir" kit to create the perfect cat eye look or "Essential", for a simple everyday look.

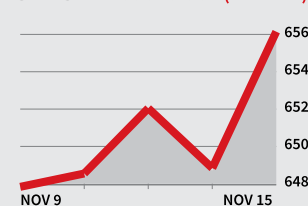


### Portal - Immersive Escapes

One of the most relaxing apps I've come across in recent times, Portal combines the effect of stunning visuals and gentle soundscapes to help you calm down and focus. While most of the options are locked behind the paid version, the ones that are free to use are impressive enough. It makes use of immersive technologies such as dynamic head tracking, spatial audio, smart lighting and high-res visuals to provide instant escapes to some of the world's most peaceful and awe-inspiring locations. Imagine waking up to the gentle sounds of a waterfall in Iceland and falling asleep to the night sky across the Himalayas. The collection is also sorted out by the time of the day and the state of mind that you want to be in.



**SENSEX** 65675.93 (+742.06)



**IN FOCUS**

	LATEST	CHANGE
Nifty 50	19675.45	+231.90
P/E Ratio (Sensex)	23.27	+0.27
US Dollar (in ₹)	83.14	-0.19
Gold Std 10 gm (in ₹)	60375.00	+723
Silver 1 kg (in ₹)	72220.00	+2820

### SEA OF OPPORTUNITIES.

**31 projects have been identified for the national monetisation pipeline with a total capex of ₹14,483 cr: Nirmala Sitharaman**



### NEW SKILLS.

**Wipro and Cognizant plan to invest \$1b each over the next three years to skill staff in AI, GenAI**

**QUICKLY.**

**POSITIVE OUTLOOK**  
**'Direct tax collection will top FY24 BE of ₹18.23-lakh cr'**



New Delhi: The Central Board of Direct Taxes Chairman Nitin Gupta on Wednesday said that direct tax collection will surpass the Budget Estimates of ₹18.23-lakh crore during FY24. He also said that cash seizure in poll-bound States is higher than in the previous election. **p3**

**ERRATIC MONSOON**

**Domestic tractor sales down 4% in October**

Chennai: Domestic tractor sales fell 4 per cent y-o-y in October, but increased 22 per cent month-on-month. In all, 118,232 tractors were sold in October compared with 123,525 in the same month a year ago. However, the October sales were up in double digits from 96,934 in September, according to data from the Tractor and Mechanization Association. **p2**

# TCS transfers 2,000 employees; gives them just 2 weeks to join

**ON NOTICE.** Staff allege those resisting are facing action; downsizing move, says labour assn

**Ayushi Kar**  
Mumbai

Tata Consultancy Services has issued transfer notices to nearly 2,000 associate employees, giving them two weeks to join at the new location.

The transfer notices, reviewed by *businessline*, TCS asks employees to arrange for their travel and accommodation on their own and seek reimbursement. Employees alleged that those who resisted the transfer are facing action from the IT firm, which has presently locked out these employees from the office systems.

**COMPLAINTS TO NITES**

The IT labour association, Nascent Information Technology Employees Senate (NITES), has received complaints from 180 associates. Over 1,500 employees do not wish to comply with the transfer notice, according to NITES.

NITES spokesperson Harpreet Singh Saluja said that this is a clear downsizing tactic. "The employees who agreed to the transfer to new locations are sitting idle with no new projects. TCS argued that the



**REGULAR EXERCISE.** A source at TCS told *businessline* that the transfers are a part of a routine exercise that associates have to undergo during their training period

transfers were needed for project requirements. TCS does not want to lay off employees because they would have to pay a retrenchment fee."

A source at TCS told *businessline* that these transfers are part of a routine exercise that associates have to undergo during their training period. Most of the associates served the transfer notice have only one-two years of work experience, according to NITES.

TCS declined to comment on *businessline's* detailed questionnaire on the matter.

The move comes after TCS ended the work-from-home practise from October. As the

Indian IT sector faces a tough macro environment, freshers are bearing the brunt with IT firms slowing campus recruitment.

*businessline* was the first to report that the tough macroeconomic environment and the rise of AI are going to make working conditions more difficult for employees in IT firms. IT firms have not only reduced recruitment but also mandated work-from-office to increase the efficiency of their bench as projects dry up.

Recently, complaints were filed against TCS for delaying the onboarding of recruits. The Maharashtra Labour Ministry

had summoned TCS officials on November 2, but representatives from the company did not show up for the hearing.

**MANY CHALLENGES**

Commenting on the overall hiring trends, Krishna Vij, Business Head, IT Staffing, Team-lead, said, "Due to the economic slowdown and decrease in demand, companies are grappling with challenges such as evolving deal structures, margin pressures, and uncertainty, limiting strategic options for talent acquisition. The projected year-end headcount is expected to be lower than at the start, prompting consideration of alternative talent strategies such as staffing and gig employment, alongside the adoption of productivity-enhancing technologies."

"Many companies have revised revenue projections downward for upcoming quarters. A rebound in hiring activity by IT services majors is unlikely before FY25, with a cautious outlook persisting. IT majors expect to net hire 60,000-90,000, indicating a 40 per cent dip for the current fiscal year," Vij added.

# Trade deficit soars to \$31.46 b in Oct as gold imports surge

**Shishir Sinha**  
New Delhi

India's trade deficit hit a record high \$31.46 billion in October as gold imports surged on account of festival demand, government data released on Wednesday showed. Merchandise exports rose 6.21 per cent to \$33.57 billion during the month.

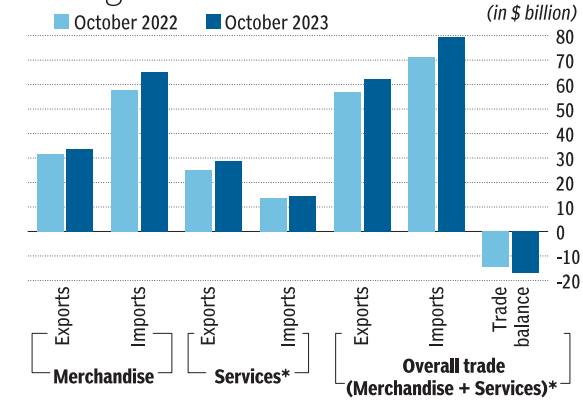
Imports increased 12.3 per cent to \$65.03 billion in October, with gold imports rising to \$7.23 billion, which is almost double compared to the same month last year. Oil imports rose 8 per cent to \$17.66 billion.

**TRADE DEFICIT**

The trade deficit had stood at \$26.31 billion October last year. "The deficit this October is the highest because of the high import figures," Additional Secretary in the Commerce Ministry L Satya Srinivas told media here.

Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said that the trade numbers in October reflect 'green-shoots' of recovery in outbound shipments. "I am hopeful that we will cross last year's figures," he said, adding that positive growth is there despite a fall

Foreign trade numbers (in \$ billion)



\*Services sector data is estimation based on Sept data released by RBI  
Source: Commerce & Industry Ministry

in commodity prices, "but we are waiting and watching" the global situation.

Exports were in the negative zone during February-July. After a revision of the numbers by the Ministry, the shipments showed 3.88 per cent positive growth in August, but in September they contracted by 2.6 per cent. Imports have turned positive after ten months of negative growth between December 2022 and September 2023.

Cumulatively, exports during April-October this fiscal contracted 7 per cent to \$244.89 billion, while im-

ports fell 8.95 per cent to \$391.96 billion. The trade deficit for the seven-month period was \$147.07 billion, (\$167.14 billion). Gold imports in April-October rose 23 per cent to \$29.5 billion, while crude oil imports dipped by 18.72 per cent to about \$100 billion.

As per the data, service exports in October were estimated at \$28.7 billion, compared to \$25.3 billion a year ago. Imports stood at \$14.32 billion (\$13.51 billion). The estimated value of services exported in April-October 2023 was \$192.65 billion (\$181.37 billion).

**KING IS ODI EMPEROR**



**BATTING MASTERCLASS.** Virat Kohli celebrates his 50th one-day international century in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup first semifinal match against New Zealand at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium on Wednesday. Kohli got to the milestone in his 279th ODI inning, watched by Sachin Tendulkar, who held the record with 49 centuries off 452 innings. Kohli's 117 included nine fours and two sixes **AP**

# RBI orders Bajaj Finance to stop lending via eCOM, Insta EMI Card products

**Anshika Kayastha**  
Mumbai

The Reserve Bank of India has asked Bajaj Finance to stop the sanction and disbursement of loans under two of its lending products — eCOM and Insta EMI Card — with immediate effect.

This is due to non-adherence by the NBFC to the RBI's digital lending guidelines, particularly the non-issuance of Key Fact Statements (KFS) to the borrowers under these two lending products and the deficiencies in the KFS issued for other digital loans sanctioned by the company.

The action has been taken under Section 45L(1)(b) of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, which gives the RBI the power to direct regulated entities (REs) pertaining to

their conduct of business as a financial institution if it believes that such an action is necessary to help it regulate the credit system of the country.

"These supervisory restrictions will be reviewed upon the rectification of the said deficiencies to the satisfaction of the RBI," the central bank said.

**DIGITAL LENDING NORMS**

The RBI introduced the Digital Lending norms in September 2022, aimed at curbing the unscrupulous growth in instant digital personal loans and strengthening customer and data protection.

One of the key requirements of the framework was for regulated lenders to issue a KFS to the borrowers before execution of the loan in a standardised format. In addition



Restrictions will be reviewed upon the rectification of the said deficiencies, says the RBI

tion to the necessary information, the statement needs to detail the APR (annual percentage rate), the recovery mechanism, details of a grievance redress officer designated specifically for digital lending, and details of the applicable cooling-off or 'look-up' period.

"Any fees, charges, etc.,

which are not mentioned in the KFS, cannot be charged by the REs to the borrower at any stage during the term of the loan," the norms said.

As of September, Bajaj Finance had over 4.2 crore EMI cards in force, 22 per cent higher year-on-year. It acquired 6.8 lakh EMI cards digitally during Q2 FY24. The Insta EMI card allows users to make purchases of up to ₹2 lakh at zero cost across both online and offline stores, with a repayment tenure of up to 60 months.

Last week, Bajaj Finance raised around ₹8,800 crore through the largest QIP by an NBFC in India. It issued over 1.21 crore shares at ₹7,270 per share to sovereign wealth funds, foreign long-only funds, large domestic mutual funds, and insurance companies.

# Invest \$1 b every year to train teachers: Narayana Murthy

NEP outcomes can get a push by creating 2,500 teacher training colleges, says Infy founder

**Our Bureau**  
Bengaluru



Infosys Founder  
**NR Narayana Murthy**

Infosys founder NR Narayana Murthy has suggested that India should invest at least \$1 billion annually for the next 20 years to train primary and secondary school teachers. This, he said, would promote and accelerate the invention of new processes, products, and services in the country.

Murthy was speaking at the Infosys Prize 2023 event hosted at the Infosys Science Foundation (ISF) in Bengaluru.

He said that one possible way of accelerating the National Education Policy's (NEP) outcome is to invite 10,000 retired highly accomplished teachers from the developed world and from India in STEM areas (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) to create 2,500 'Train the Teacher' col-

leges in 28 States and eight Union Territories, with the training programme lasting a year

"Our nation, targeting a GDP of \$5 trillion soon, will not find it a big financial burden. If you think this is expensive, you may recall the words of Derek Bok, a former President of Harvard University, who said, 'If you think education is expensive, try ignorance,'" Murthy said.

Quoting experts, Murthy explained that each set of four trainers can train 100

primary school teachers and 100 secondary school teachers a year. We will be able to train 250,000 primary school teachers and 250,000 secondary school teachers every year by this method. These trained teachers can themselves become trainers over five years.

"We must show much respect and pay better salaries to our teachers and researchers," he added.

**STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT**

Murthy said that the stages of a nation's development span from not utilising innovations to becoming inventors themselves. India has progressed from adopting innovations (Stage 02) to innovating on existing ideas (Stage 03) in sectors like technology and healthcare. Yet, it lags in key areas like city design and pollution control, which remain in Stage 1.

The path to Stage 4, where India invents new solutions, demands enhanced education, robust research, and swift implementation, he said, as also a culture of high aspirations, curiosity, and a disciplined work ethic.

Shashi Kumar, General Secretary for the Karnataka Association of Management of Primary and Secondary Schools (KAMS), echoed Murthy, noting that teachers should also be given better salaries, and should be better equipped in tandem with evolving technologies not just in urban areas but in rural areas too.

"The government lacks effective implementation of benefits and is still not considering giving basic facilities like health insurance. While training is necessary, increasing the number of teachers is also important, as teaching is never seen as a preferred career option," he added.

**Our Bureau**  
New Delhi

Malaysia's IHH Healthcare has filed a claim against Japan's Daiichi Sankyo, seeking damages in excess of ₹20 billion (\$131.86 million) in relation to its stake-buy in Delhi-NCR's Fortis Healthcare.

In a filing to the BSE, Fortis Healthcare shared details of the litigation.

It said that Northern TK Venture Pte Ltd. (NTK), the promoter shareholder of the company (and a subsidiary of IHH), on October 16 filed a claim against Daiichi Sankyo, the Japanese pharma giant. Pursuant to the claim, NTK is seeking damages in excess of ₹20 billion.

**OPEN OFFERS BLOCKED**

"NTK's position is that Daiichi Sankyo has caused losses to NTK by preventing it from proceeding with the open offers in respect of the company



**HINDRANCE.** The legal hurdle suspended IHH's efforts to expand its shareholding in the Indian healthcare provider

and Fortis Malar Hospitals Ltd," the stock market notification shared by Fortis said.

Open offers for Fortis were made in 2018. Reportedly, IHH Healthcare in December 2018 had to halt its open offer to buy an additional 26 per cent stake in Fortis after a court ordered status quo on Daiichi filing a contempt plea against Fortis' founders. The legal hurdle ef-

fectively suspended IHH's efforts to expand its shareholding in the Indian healthcare provider.

NTK is also seeking an injunction to prevent Daiichi Sankyo from making defamatory remarks against NTK "with respect to the aforesaid open offers", the publication of a statement on Daiichi Sankyo's website, and the delivery of a statement to SEBI to vindicate NTK's reputation.

On November 13, NTK's court filing was delivered to Daiichi Sankyo by the court, as stated in a statement.

**TORT CLAIM**

"The claims filed by NTK against Daiichi Sankyo are tort claims premised on the latter's unlawful interference with NTK's trade or business, conspiracy of Daiichi Sankyo and other persons, malicious falsehood, and defamation under the applicable substantive laws," it further added.

A tort claim is said to occur when someone either intentionally or negligently causes injury or harm to another person or his property.

Fortis, in its notification, said that, as claimed by IHH, as of the date of the announcement, the claim is not expected to have material operational or financial impact."

QUICKLY.

Goodyear's CEO to step down as part of overhaul



Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co said it will seek a new chief executive officer, cut costs and weigh options for several business lines as part of a sweeping overhaul under pressure from activist Elliott Investment Management. Richard Kramer plans to step down as CEO and chairman in 2024, the company said. BLOOMBERG

CFO Anuj Tewari named as Yulu Co-Founder



**Bengaluru:** Bajaj Auto-backed Yulu has named Anuj Tewari, its Chief Financial Officer (CFO), as one of its Co-Founders. He formally joined the current founding team, which consists of President Ecosystem Partnerships RK Misra, CEO Amit Gupta and CTO Naveen Dachuri, after the announcement. Our Bureau

# Domestic tractor sales down 4% in October amid erratic monsoon

**SEQUENTIAL GROWTH.** Tractor sales up 22 per cent month-on-month

**G Balachandrar**  
Chennai

Domestic tractor sales fell 4 per cent y-o-y in October, but increased 22 per cent month-on-month. In all, 118,232 tractors were sold in October this year, compared with 123,525 a year ago. However, the October sales were up by double digits from 96,934 in September 2023, according to data from Tractor and Mechanization Association (TMA).

Industry experts pointed out that subdued sentiments on the back of erratic monsoon and a long festival season (spread across two months) resulted in muted October sales compared with last year. However, November sales would be better, driven by Dhanteras and Diwali buying.

Top tractor maker Mahindra and Mahindra reported a 2 per cent decline at 49,336 units in October 2023, while Escorts Kubota's tractor sales last month fell 9 per cent at 12,642 units.

The North region has been the best performer, followed by the West and East,



**DIP IN EXPORTS.** Mahindra & Mahindra reported a 33 per cent fall in tractor exports during April-October 2023. BJOY GHOSH

whereas the South is under pressure. The West and East regions' performance has been supported by subsidies (especially in States such as Gujarat, Chattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand and Assam). South's performance suffered owing to a deficit rainfall season and lower subsidies by State governments (especially in the Telangana State), according to brokerage house Nuvama.

During the April-October period, domestic tractor sales stood at 5.88 lakh units (6.11 lakh units), falling 4 per cent.

**SLIDE IN EXPORTS**

At 7,186 units in October 2023, monthly exports were at the lowest since June 2020. Tractor production stood at 94,438 units in October, compared with 90,688 in September and 86,856 in October 2022.

Mahindra & Mahindra has reported a 33 per cent year-on-year decline in tractor exports at 7,470 units during the April-October 2023 period. Escorts' management had indicated that the recession in Europe, one of its major markets, was impacting its exports in addition to issues on the product side.

Production and exports were also lower in the first seven-month period of this fiscal at 6.27 lakh units (6.76 lakh units) and 0.57 lakh units (0.79 lakh units), respectively.

**H2 OUTLOOK**

Hemant Sikka, President - Farm Equipment Sector, Mahindra & Mahindra, said H2 of the current fiscal would be better as higher aggregate kharif production, higher MSP for key rabi crops, and the government's support to the agri economy will drive positive sentiments among farmers, supporting tractor demand.

While the tractor industry is likely to end the current fiscal with flat or marginal positive growth, supported by expected strong demand in H2, exports are unlikely to see any improvements and FY24 would see a double-digit decline. For the current fiscal, tractor exports have seen a decline of 28 per cent.

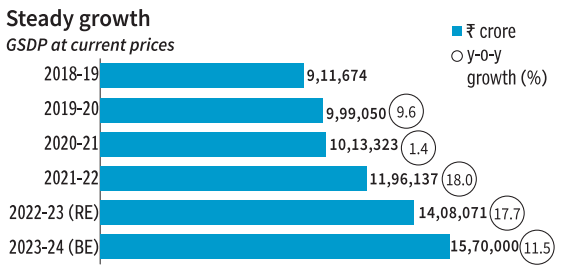
Nuvama projects a flat number for FY24 due to concerns around a sub-normal monsoon and a high base.

# Rajasthan: 'Land of Kings' grapples with financial strain

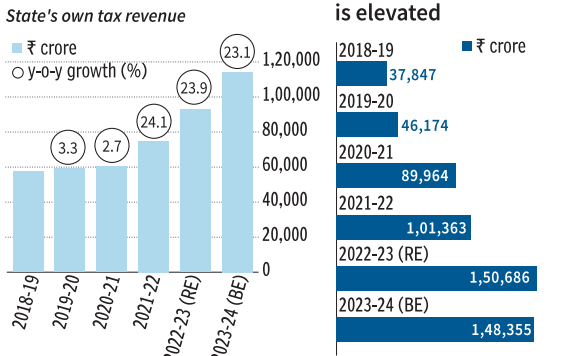
**Radheshyam Jadhav  
Nimisha S Pradeep**  
Pune/Chennai

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has articulated ambitious economic objectives for the State, envisioning a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of ₹30-lakh crore by 2030. Central to his election campaign is the emphasis on the government's role in reshaping Rajasthan from a historically underdeveloped State into one of the 'leading States' over the past five years. The stark contrast between the ambitious figures and aspirations and the actual economic situation has become a point of contention and debate ahead of the elections.

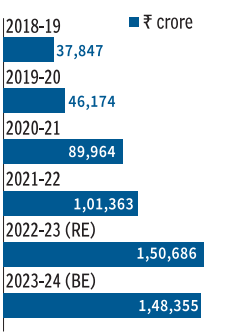
**Fiscal scorecard**



**Over-optimistic projection**



**Gross borrowing is elevated**



**DATA FOCUS.**

**UNDUE FOCUS**

From 2018-19 to 2022-23, Rajasthan's GDP has shown a competitive growth rate to all-India's GDP.

The incumbent government has, however, focused on developing agriculture and allied activities. The contribution of this sector was 28.95 per cent to the State's total Gross State Value Added (GSVA) in 2022-23; increasing from 25.85 per cent in 2018-19.

While the share of industry has also edged up slightly in this period, the share of services has declined to 43.74 per cent in 2022-23 from 47.88 per cent five years ago.

Lack of progress in services is a shortcoming, which impedes faster growth in the State.

**NOT PRUDENT**

The State has not been able to rein its fiscal deficit, which has expanded due to its large revenue expenditure. Fiscal deficit, as a per cent of GDP, expanded to 5.86 per cent in FY21, but it is still high at 4 per cent as per the Budget for FY24.

This is despite the State projecting own tax revenue growth of 23 per cent for FY24, led by growth in State GST collections of 36 per cent. These numbers appear overstretched.

Inability to rein the fiscal deficit is leading to expansion in borrowing. Debt and other liabilities of the State were ₹3,11,374 crore (34 per

cent of GDP) in 2018-19 which rose to Rs 4,62,845 (38% of GDP) in 2021-22. These high borrowings lead to high interest burden with lowers other productive spends.

In 2022, the Reserve Bank of India sounded the alarm, indicating that fiscal conditions among Indian States, including Rajasthan, are displaying concerning signals of increasing strain, particularly evident in the elevated debt burden as measured by the debt-to-GSDP ratio.

**FACTS AND FIGURES**

Dr Rajesh Kothari, a Distinguished Professor at IIMR University, Jaipur, and a former professor at University of Rajasthan, critiques the government's projections, asserting that they lack depth.

According to Dr Kothari, the economic condition in Rajasthan is fundamentally frail, marked by a surge in the cost of living attributed to

unchecked government spending directed towards winning forthcoming State assembly elections by giving freebies. He highlights the burden of government borrowings and the allocation of funds towards popular schemes.

Moreover, Kothari points out the absence of sustainable industrial growth, attributing it to a paralysed industrial policy. In his view, the current economic environment in the State is not conducive to achieving projected GDP growth.

"The mounting deficit of the State electricity boards, the upcoming financial burden on the State exchequer because of Old Pension Scheme, derailing infra growth, especially public transport, absence of clear cut policy mechanism for job creation, self-employment, incomplete allocation etc are further dragged on the economic growth of the State," he said.

# Siemens AG to buy 18% in Indian arm from Siemens Energy for €2.1 b

**Janaki Krishnan**  
Mumbai

**THE WAY FORWARD**

- Transaction will have no effect on the management or control of Siemens Ltd
- Siemens and Siemens Energy will jointly propose to the board of Siemens Ltd to separate the energy business by way of a demerger
- Siemens Energy to hold majority stake in demerged, listed energy business
- Stake sale to accelerate unbundling the business activities of the Indian subsidiary of Siemens

In a bid to strengthen balance sheet, loss-making Siemens Energy will sell 18 per cent stake in Siemens Ltd India to Siemens AG for €2.1 billion.

The transaction will reduce Siemen's Energy's stake in the Indian unit to 6 per cent, while that of Siemens AG will rise to 69 per cent from 51 per cent, Siemens AG and Siemens Energy said in their statements.

As part of the restructuring, Siemens AG and Siemens Energy intend to propose to Siemens Ltd's board the demerger of its energy business into a separate listed entity. Post the demerger, certain procedures will be set in motion for Siemens Energy to acquire a majority stake in the demerged entity. The demerger is expected to complete by 2025.

"This partial sale is a first step in the planned - and now accelerated - unbundling of Siemens Energy and Siemens AG in India," the statement by Siemens Energy said.

**'NO IMPACT'**

It added that the sale will have no impact on Siemens Energy's operations in India. "These will continue to the same extent as before under a supplementary agreement. India remains a strategically

important growth market for Siemens Energy, in which the company continues to invest. Nothing will change for Siemens Energy's customers," the statement added.

The proposed acquisition is expected to simplify the corporate set-up in one of the fastest growing and strategically important markets for the group.

In 2020, when Siemens Energy was established under a restructuring of the Siemens Group, the Indian subsidiary Siemens Ltd was not unbundled for administrative reasons. In FY22 (year-ending September), Siemens India's energy business reported a revenue of ₹5,371 crore, contributing 32.6 per cent to total revenue.

**SIEMENS ENERGY**

"Siemens AG has taken measures to support the stability of Siemens Energy AG and accelerate separation in India - in the best possible

interests of all parties," the statement by the parent said.

Siemens Energy reported a loss of €870 million in the fourth quarter of FY23 against a net income of €354 million a year ago. This was mainly due to losses sustained by its wind turbine unit Siemens Gamesa, which is facing troubled times due to quality issues in the on-shore business, increased product costs and ramp-up challenges in the off-shore business. It is expected that this unit will break even in fiscal 2026.

The disposal of part stake in Siemens Ltd is expected to improve its cash reserves for FY24.

Shares of Siemens India rose 4.4 per cent intraday before settling at 2.3 per cent higher at ₹3,495.50. The stock has risen over 24 per cent in the last one year. The price being paid is a discount of 15 per cent on the 5-trading-days volume-weighted average price before the day of signing of the deal.

# ONGC eyes strategic partner for OPaL turnaround

**Rishi Ranjan Kala**  
New Delhi

Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) will bring in a strategic partner in ONGC Petro additions (OPaL) by FY27, after the state-run company infuses ₹18,365 crore in the Gujarat-based petrochemical venture and make it profitable by FY25.

In an investor call, ONGC Executive Director (Chief Business Development and Joint Ventures portfolio), Deb Adhikari, said, "OPaL is having some distorted capital structure. So, ONGC is trying to correct it. In that regard, the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas had advised an expert committee to be constituted. As per the advice of the expert committee, which is headed by a former secretary of government of India, the (ONGC) board has submitted some recommendations. About ₹18,365-crore additional investment has to be done to correct its capital structure."

**CAPITAL INFUSION**

Responding to an analyst query, Adhikari said that the exploration and production (E&P) giant is approaching the government for allowing it to use gas from new wells.

"So, we are requesting the ministry to consider our request as an exception because this plant is strategically very important for Gujarat as well as the country because it has already generated employment in that area of about two lakh

workers and it has attracted investment in that Dahej PCPIR of about ₹1-lakh crore," he added. Elaborating on the plans for OPaL, he said strategically ONGC "is trying to infuse some capital so that it becomes sustainable. In FY24, the firm is not expected to make any profits. However, once the approval from the Union Cabinet is taken for investments over ₹5,000 crore, the petrochemicals venture will be made profitable by FY25."

"After capital infusion, ONGC's share will be around 96 per cent. By FY27, we will try to infuse a new equity partner. We would like to bring down ONGC's equity by 50 per cent so that it remains a JV of ONGC only and not a subsidiary," Adhikari explained.

**PETROCHEM VENTURES**

ONGC is also exploring two petrochemical ventures in two States, for which the Maharashtra company plans to invest more than ₹1-lakh crore by 2028 or 2030, he added.

# Microsoft introduces its own chips for AI

**Reuters**

Microsoft on Wednesday announced a duo of custom-designed computing chips, joining other big tech firms that — faced with the high cost of delivering artificial intelligence services — are bringing key technologies in-house. The company said it does not plan to sell the chips, but instead will use them to power its own sub-

scription software offerings and as part of its Azure cloud computing service.

At its Ignite developer conference in Seattle, Microsoft introduced a new chip, called Maia, to speed up AI computing tasks and provide a foundation for its \$30-a-month 'Copilot' service for business software users, as well as for developers who want to make custom AI services. The Maia chip was de-

signed to run large language models, a type of AI software that underpins Microsoft's Azure OpenAI service and is a product of Microsoft's collaboration with ChatGPT creator OpenAI. Microsoft and other tech giants such as Alphabet are grappling with the high cost of delivering AI services, which can be 10 times greater than for traditional services such as search engines.

# Puravankara posts loss of ₹11 cr in Q2

**Our Bureau**  
Bengaluru

Bengaluru-based real estate company Puravankara reported a net loss of ₹11 crore for the quarter ending September on account of higher cost of sales and marketing for ongoing and new launches.

However, net loss reduced 45 per cent year-on-year, compared with ₹21 crore for the same quarter last year, with increased delivery leading to improvement in booking revenue. Its revenue from operations grew 53.8 per cent y-o-y to ₹368.33 crore (₹239.48 crore).

**businessline.**

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With a robust pipeline of new launches, we are well-positioned to occupy a higher market share.

**ASHISH PURAVANKARA**  
MD, Puravankara

On a sequential basis, revenue from operations increased 35 per cent. While EBITDA for the quarter stood at ₹98 crore, marking a growth of 69 per cent y-o-y. The company's sales improved 102 per cent y-o-y

to ₹1,600 crore, and sales volume for the quarter grew 89 per cent y-o-y to 2.01 million sq ft, with collection at ₹79 crore.

**PRICE REALISATION**

Further, the average price realisation grew 7 per cent to ₹7,947 per sq ft during the quarter (₹7,396 per sq ft). The company launched a project, Provident Ecolopolitan (Bengaluru), and new phases for Purva Park Hill (Bengaluru) and Purva Windermere (Chennai), totalling 2.09 million sq ft.

Ashish Puravankara, Managing Director, Puravankara, said, "While the residential real estate industry grew 6 per cent on a y-o-y basis, we delivered a strong performance in the second quarter, driven by our strong brand and robust product portfolio. We remain confident in maintaining our growth momentum in the coming quarters. With a robust pipeline of new launches, we are well-positioned to occupy a higher market share."

# Cipla completes sale of Ugandan subsidiary

**Our Bureau**  
Mumbai

Cipla has announced that Cipla Quality Chemical Industries Ltd (CQCIL) ceases to be its subsidiary, following the completion of its stake sale in the Ugandan company.

In a statement to the stock exchanges, Cipla said that its wholly-owned subsidiaries Cipla (EU) Ltd (UK) and Meditab Holdings Ltd (Mauritius) completed the sale of their 51.18 per cent stake in CQCIL (Uganda) for a consideration amount of \$25 million (about ₹200 crore). "Accordingly, CQCIL has now ceased to be a subsidiary of the company with effect from November 14, 2023," it added.

Cipla had undertaken the transaction in 2015 to strengthen its presence in the African market, the company had then said.

# Kellanova India targets double-digit growth, eyes expansion in manufacturing capacity

**Meenakshi Verma Ambwani**  
New Delhi

Packaged food company Kellanova India, formerly known as Kellogg India, is targeting double-digit growth on the back of steady increase in household penetration in the breakfast cereals segment. The company, known for brands such as Kellogg's and Pringles, is also planning to grow its manufacturing capacities in the country.

Prashant Peres, Managing Director - India and South Asia, Kellanova, told *businessline*, "We have been consistently increasing household penetration over the years in the breakfast cereals space. In fact, household penetration grew more than 35 per cent in the recent period (MAT August 2023)."

In the past few quarters, the FMCG sector has witnessed challenges in terms of consumption due to infla-

We have been consistently increasing household penetration over the years in the breakfast cereals space

**PRASHANT PERES**  
Managing Director, Kellanova



tionary pressures. "With inflationary pressures tapering off, we are hopeful of growing both consumption per household as well as household penetration, like we were witnessing in the past and that will augur for a much better 2024 than 2023," he added.

**ROOM FOR GROWTH**

Peres added that the company continues to target double-digit growth rates. "In fact, parts of our portfolio are delivering very high double-

digit growth rates," he said. The company said that penetration of breakfast cereals is still low in urban regions and there is a huge headroom for growth in metros and tier-1 towns. "We are looking at making inroads in rural regions where we can, but our key priority is definitely to grow penetration in urban regions," Peres said.

The company currently operates two manufacturing facilities in India. "We are looking to grow our India

business substantially and our manufacturing capacities along with it. We have the ability to expand our manufacturing footprint at the existing facilities. We could potentially also look at a new location," he added.

**BUSINESS SPLIT**

In October, Kellanova announced the completion of separation of its North American cereal business, WK Kellogg Co, resulting in two independent and public companies. "This split has not changed the India business per se and thus, our strategies remain the same. Potentially, I think, Kellanova becomes a more balanced organisation between breakfast cereals and snacks and therefore one would possibly be looking at getting a similar kind of balance in our business here. Right now, we are represented in snacks only with Pringles and so we could explore other opportunities," Peres explained.

QUICKLY.

**'No deadline for conclusion of India-UK trade pact talks'**



**New Delhi:** India and the UK are not working under any deadline for the conclusion of negotiations for a free trade agreement as both sides are discussing issues that are "slightly" complex in nature, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said on Wednesday.

**STATE OF THE ECONOMY**

What are India's strategic imperatives at WTO's Abu Dhabi Ministerial? **Abhijit Das**, trade expert and former head, Centre for WTO Studies, explains in this podcast hosted by **Amiti Sen**

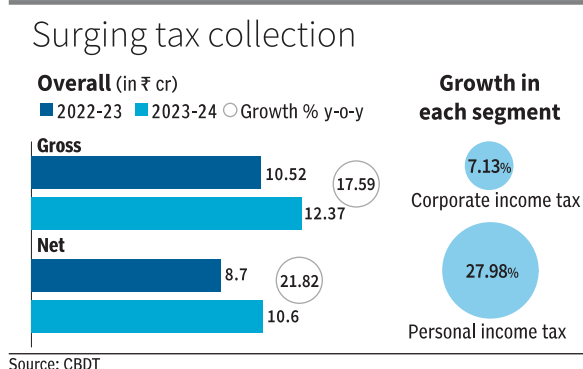


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# 'Direct tax collection will top FY24 BE of ₹18.23-lakh crore'

**ILLEGAL STASH.** Cash seizure in poll-bound States higher than in last election: CBDT chief

**Shishir Sinha**  
New Delhi



Source: CBDT

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) Chairman Nitin Gupta on Wednesday said that direct tax collection will surpass the Budget Estimates of ₹18.23-lakh crore during FY24. He also said that cash seizure in poll-bound States is higher than in the previous election. "We will exceed the Budget target. The economy is doing well and we will get a better picture of full-year tax collection once the third instalment of advance tax numbers come in by December 15," Gupta said, while talking to reporters after inaugurating the taxpayers' lounge of income tax department set up at the India International Trade Fair in the national capital.

₹10.60-lakh crore, which is over 58.15 per cent of the total Budget Estimates of Direct Taxes for FY23-24. Direct taxes include corporate income tax (CPI) and personal income tax (PIT). "On a gross basis, the direct tax collection has been growing at 17-18 per cent, while on a net basis, we are growing at 22 per cent. We are also issuing refunds simultaneously. So, we have no doubt about tax collection exceeding estimates," Gupta

said. Refunds totalling ₹1.77-lakh crore have been issued between April 1 and November 9.

**EXCEEDING TARGETS**  
Last week, CBDT had reported net tax collection of

said. Refunds totalling ₹1.77-lakh crore have been issued between April 1 and November 9.

**CASH SEIZURES**  
Gupta also said that the income tax department has seized more unexplained cash as compared to elections held in those States earlier. He said that prior to both State assembly and Lok Sabha elections, the enforcement agencies, including the I-T department, increased

surveillance and also got information about unexplained cash and jewellery on toll-free numbers created for the purpose.

According to sources, in poll-bound Rajasthan this year, there has been a three-fold increase in the total seizure of illegal cash, liquor, drugs, gold, silver, etc. Such seizures, which were ₹322 crore in 2021 and ₹347 crore in 2022, have risen to ₹1,021 crore till October 2023. Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Mizoram are going to poll in November.

In July, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), issued a Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) for tax officers to implement the directions of the Election Commission with regard to the use of freebies, illicit cash, liquor and drugs to lure voters, and asked them to share information with other enforcement agencies.

# Positioning India as a hub of supply chains in Indo-Pacific: FM

**Dalip Singh**  
New Delhi



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at the 2023 edition of the Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue in New Delhi

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday laid out the government's plans to "position India as a hub in new and diversified supply and value chains across the Indo-Pacific" with the Centre's comprehensive fiscal and policy backing.

Giving an insight into the all-round government support during a special address at the Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD-2023), the Finance Minister said that as many as 31 projects have been identified at nine major ports for the national monetisation pipeline launched in 2022 with a total estimated capex of ₹14,483 crore for 2022-25.

The apex international conference, themed 'Geopolitical Impacts upon Indo-Pacific Maritime Trade and Connectivity', was organised by Indian Navy's knowledge partner National Maritime Foundation.

**SUPPLY CHAIN HUB**

"We are entirely conscious of the fact that, over the foreseeable future, India's comprehensive national power is going to remain inextricably linked to the ocean. We are seized of the pressing need to grow the maritime sector as a whole and our government is determined to provide the requisite support by way of fiscal policy and financial outlay. We seek to position India as a hub in new and diversified supply chains and value chains across the Indo-Pacific and, indeed, across the world," the Finance Minister told the gathering that included the top brass of Indian Navy and other navies, diplomats, and experts on the Indo-Pacific region. Sitharaman, who was previ-

ously Defence Minister before taking up the Finance Ministry portfolio, highlighted several other governmental maritime initiatives. She said that insurance in the shipping area has also become a policy focus for the government, having learnt lessons from the Covid pandemic.

"On the one hand, a marine cargo pool has now been created with the full support of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India, and domestic insurance companies to support maritime trade," Sitharaman said. "On the other, India is improving its shipping arbitration and, in order to reduce India's vulnerability to international sanctions and pressures and to provide greater strategic flexibility in shipping operations, we are setting up a full-fledged Indian-owned and India-based protection and indemnity P&I entity that will additionally provide protection to coastal and Indian shipping," she said.

**'SEA OF OPPORTUNITIES'**

The Minister was of the view that India's 'blue economy', which accounts for roughly 4 per cent of the GDP, represents a sea of opportunities.

India has nine states and four Union Territories situated on the coast, 12 major and 200-plus non-major ports along its 7,500-km coastline, along with a vast network of navigable waterways for international as well as domestic trade, she pointed out.

The industry in India provides over 2 lakh direct and indirect jobs, which is only expected to grow. According to the UNCTAD, India was also the second largest exporter of ocean-based goods and services among developing countries in 2020, the Minister stated in a reference to the country's growing maritime trade capabilities.

Taking a veiled dig at China, she said India believes the country's economic growth should not be at the expense of others. "We truly believe that it is not possible for the Indian economy to ride on some crest while the economies of other countries of our maritime neighbourhood are wallowing in some trough. If we are to grow in an environment of peace, security, and stability, the growth and security of others in our region must also grow," the FM said, echoing the country's maritime policy encapsulated in the acronym 'SAGAR', or Security and Growth for All in the Region.

According to the Minister, the government's effort is being captured in international indices as well. "Our global ranking has risen from 44th place in 2014 to 22nd rank in 2023. Similarly, as per World Bank's 'Logistics Performance Index Report 2023', the turnaround time of Indian ports is now just 0.9 days, which is lower than ports in established maritime centres such as Singapore, UAE, Germany, USA, Australia, Russia and South Africa," the Minister said.

# 'All efforts on to stop coal imports by FY26'

**Our Bureau**  
New Delhi

Coal Minister Pralhad Joshi on Wednesday said that the Ministry is working on all fronts, including increasing production from commercial and captive mines, in a bid to stop imports of the critical commodity by FY26.



Coal Minister Pralhad Joshi

blocks are being offered under 2<sup>nd</sup> attempt of 7<sup>th</sup> round under CMSP/MMDR Act, where single bids were received in the first attempt. Of the 35 coal mines being offered under the 8<sup>th</sup> round, 16 coal mines are new ones and 19 mines are being rolled over from earlier tranches.

The commencement of sale of tender documents for auction shall start from November 15 (Wednesday). The auction shall be held online through a transparent two stage process on the basis of percentage revenue share. SBI Capital Markets is the sole transaction advisor to the Ministry for the commercial coal mine auctions and is assisting in conducting the auction process.

Meena said that captive/commercial coal mines are contributing significantly to the overall production. He emphasised that systematic surveys were carried out before offering the 39 mines for auction.

Additional Secretary and Nominated Authority M Nagaraju emphasised on the need for further enhancing domestic coal production. He highlighted that a series of reforms have been initiated by the Ministry recently. Domestic coal demand will be increasing in the coming decades too. Therefore, investment in the coal sector offers good returns, he added.

**UNDERGROUND MINING**  
Later speaking to the reporters, Meena said the Ministry seeks to enhance production

from underground coal mines to 100 mt by 2030 from the current 26 MR annually.

"Such mines have already been identified. We had constituted a high level committee to suggest policy measures to promote underground mining. The committee has submitted its report, the recommendations of the committee are with the ministry. They are under different discussion stages and we will shortly come out with a suitable policy framework," he added.

The Secretary also emphasised that the environmental impact of underground mining is lower compared to open cast mining as large scale deforestation is not required and displacement of people is significantly lesser too.

# Coking coal shipments down 11% y-o-y in Oct

**Abhishek Law**  
**Rishi Ranjan Kala**  
New Delhi

India's coking coal imports saw an 11 per cent decline to 4.41 million tonnes (mt) in October, primarily on account of a 33 per cent drop in shipments from Australia, over the same period last year. Australian shipments declined following rise in price of coking coal, a key steel-making feedstock material.

However, on a month-on-month basis, shipments coming in rose by 7 per cent, as per Steel Ministry data.

The prime hard coking coal prices peaked to one of the highest in October to \$365 per tonne as against

\$311-odd per tonne in September. Soaring industrial needs and the urgency to secure coking coal supplies, especially with depleting stocks at ports, are seen as the key causes for rising imports.

**LOCAL OUTPUT LESS**

International global trade intelligence platform, Kpler's Lead Major Dry Bulks Analyst, Alexis Ellender, pegged India's metallurgical coal imports were slightly below the September level in October at 5.27 mt, down on the 5.54 mt achieved in the same month last year.

"With India not producing significant quantities of metallurgical coal (coking coal) domestically,

strong growth in crude steel output has a direct impact on import trends. Crude steel output jumped by 18.2 per cent y-o-y in September to 11.63 mt, bringing annual growth in the year-to-date to 11.59 per cent. This was close to the 9.40 per cent increase in metallurgical coal imports over the first ten months of the year," he told *businessline*.

However, Ellender did add that further strong crude steel output is expected in the coming months as industrial activity ramps up post monsoon.

"We anticipate robust metallurgical coal shipments to persist through the remainder of the year and into next," he said. Coal India, the world's largest

coal miner, reported an 8 per cent rise in coking coal production, m-o-m to 4.53 mt. "Due to soaring Australian coking coal prices, end-users are looking at imports from Russia and some other countries. Shipments from Canada and the US are witnessing some increase too on a m-o-m basis," a Steel Ministry official said.

**MAJOR PRODUCERS**

Russian coking coal shipments have been around 0.50 mt in both September and October. While Australia, saw a 33 per cent drop on account of a spurt in prices over the last few months, the country remained the highest seller to India's steel mills at 2.43 mt for October. The US was the

second largest seller at 0.68 mt for the month, with shipments rising 107 per cent y-o-y.

For the April - October period, India's total coking coal imports stood at 33.40 mt, down 2 per cent y-o-y. Imports in the year-to-date period was 34.14 mt. Australia remained the largest supplier with 20.17 mt, down 12 per cent y-o-y; whereas shipments from the US rose 9 per cent y-o-y to 4.97 mt. Russia, the third largest supplier saw a 210 per cent rise y-o-y to 3.46 mt for the seven-month period (vs 1.12 mt in 7MFY23).

Trade sources said, PCI coal imports in October was 0.91 mt in October compared to 1.28 mt in October 2022.

**Press Trust of India**  
New Delhi

The increase of developing economies' quota in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) can play a pivotal role in safeguarding global financial stability by enhancing the multilateral lending agency's permanent resources, Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha

Nageswaran said on Wednesday. Participating in an event organised by the finance ministry, Nageswaran said the reforms of international financial institutions have to go beyond the World Bank and multilateral development banks. "The executive board of the IMF has proposed to the Board of Governors that a 50 per cent quota increase (should be) allocated to members in

proportion to their current quotas," he said.

The 16<sup>th</sup> General Review of Quotas is likely to provide a greater say to developing economies in the IMF. "This quota increase can play a pivotal role in safeguarding global financial stability by enhancing the IMF's permanent resources and reducing its reliance on borrowed resources," he added.

# 'Innovation Handshake' to boost India, US tech ties

**Press Trust of India**  
San Francisco

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal and his US counterpart Gina Raimondo have led an industry roundtable to officially launch the two ambitious "Innovation Handshake" agenda, which was previewed by the US President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June.

At the event, co-hosted by the US-India Business Council and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), CEOs from major ICT companies, executives from venture capital firms and founders of start-ups in the critical and emerging technology space discussed how to enhance US-India technology collaboration. "Through the Innovation Handshake, the US



**LAYING THE ROADMAP.** Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal with US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo at the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity meeting in San Francisco

and India are forging a critical tech partnership that will further strengthen our interconnected innovation ecosystems," said Raimondo. "The Innovation Handshake signals a joint commitment to strengthen the

start-up ecosystem and promote cooperation in critical and emerging technologies between India and the US. Signing an MoU to enhance innovation ecosystems through an innovation handshake is an important step in grow-

ing the India-US partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> century," Goyal said.

**DEEPENING TIES**

The announcement laid the groundwork for two future Innovation Handshake events scheduled to

take place in India and the US in early 2024, which include an investment forum aimed toward helping US and Indian start-up companies take their innovative ideas and products to market and a "hackathon" in Silicon Valley where US and Indian start-ups will pitch ideas and technologies to help address global economic challenges, a release said.

The Innovation Handshake, a concept developed under the US-India Commercial Dialogue, will bring the two governments together with venture capital leaders, entrepreneurs, and other industry and institutional stakeholders in a series of frank discussions designed to open up opportunities and address challenges in the priority sectors identified under the US-India initiative for Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET).

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**EXTRACT OF UNAUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND HALF YEAR ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER 2023 (Rs. IN Million)**

Sl. No.	PARTICULARS	QUARTER ENDED			HALF YEAR ENDED		YEAR ENDED
		30-09-2023 Unaudited	30-06-2023 Audited	30-09-2022 Unaudited	30-09-2023 Unaudited	30-09-2022 Unaudited	31-03-2023 Audited
1	Total income from operations (net)	6,192.22	5,088.96	5,558.66	11,281.18	10,222.98	20,273.44
2	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	297.86	258.45	272.21	556.31	420.72	958.34
3	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before Tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	297.86	258.45	272.21	556.31	420.72	958.34
4	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after Tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	221.62	192.40	204.05	414.02	317.57	715.96
5	Total comprehensive income for the period (comprising profit / (loss) for the period (after tax) and other comprehensive income (after tax))	221.47	191.02	204.21	412.49	318.04	716.91
6	Equity Share Capital	488.47	390.80	390.80	488.47	390.80	390.80
7	Reserves (Excluding Revaluation Reserves)	-	-	-	-	-	3,054.70
8	Earnings Per Share (Not annualised for quarter and Half year) (of Rs. 10/- each) for continuing and discontinued operations	4.54	4.92	5.22	8.48	8.13	18.32
	Basic:	4.54	4.92	5.22	8.48	8.13	18.32
	Diluted:						

**Notes:**  
1. The financial results have been reviewed by the audit committee of the board and approved by the board of directors at its meeting held on 14th November, 2023.  
2. The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly and Half year Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulations 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly Financial Results are available on company's website at [www.vaibhavgemsworld.com](http://www.vaibhavgemsworld.com) and the stock exchanges website [www.bseindia.com](http://www.bseindia.com) and [www.nseindia.com](http://www.nseindia.com)  
3. The Company is engaged in the retail business of Jewellery. As the company's business activity falls within a single business segment, there is no separate reportable segments as per Ind AS 108 "Operating Segments".  
4. The financial results for the quarter ended Sep 30, 2023 are the balancing figures between unaudited figures in respect of half year ended Sep 30, 2023 and audited figures for the three months ended Jun 30, 2023.

**FOR MANOJ VAIBHAV GEMS 'N' JEWELLERS LIMITED**

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DIN: 05211918

THURSDAY - NOVEMBER 16, 2023

## Taking stock

PM Kisan Bhai well intentioned, but complicated

**S**mall and marginal farmers in India rarely manage to secure a fair price for their produce due to two constraints. One, they lack the resources to warehouse produce, so that sales can be timed to favourable demand conditions, and two, they are unable to secure loans by pledging their output and so sell in haste to realise cash. The Agriculture Ministry's new concept paper for PM Kisan Bhai (Bhandaran Incentive) Scheme offers viable solutions to these problems.



It suggests a government-funded Warehouse Rental Subsidy (WRS) to help farmers bear storage costs and a Prompt Repayment Incentive (PRI) to help them raise loans against stored produce at concessional rates. While both ideas can genuinely empower the farmer, the many terms and conditions may restrict their utility. On warehouse rental subsidy, a monthly sum of ₹4 per quintal of produce is proposed to be given to all small and marginal farmers (with less than 2 hectares of land) storing produce in a warehouse and selling it through e-NAM or other licensed electronic platforms. This limits the scope of the scheme to 1.76 crore of the 12.6 crore small and marginal farmers who are on e-NAM. But even assuming the subsidy prompts more farmers to explore e-NAM, they are likely to reap limited monetary benefits.

The scheme proposes to pay subsidies only to farmers who store their produce for a minimum of 15 days and for a maximum period of three months. It will also be paid only for two crops in a year, based on 75 per cent of government estimates of productivity from two hectares of land. Illustrations suggest that a farmer can avail of WRS on a maximum of 53 quintals of wheat, 45 quintals of rice, 38 quintals of other cereals, etc., per year. The maximum annual subsidy per farmer will thus range from ₹420 to ₹1,176. Whether this sum is sufficient to nudge farmers into exploring warehousing or e-NAM trades is moot... The PRI scheme will offer loans to all farmers at 3 per cent lower interest for three months on stocking their produce with registered warehouses. PRI will only be offered to farmers availing finance via Kisan Credit Cards against electronic warehouse receipts and trading on eNAM/ electronic platforms. The lender must be compulsorily empanelled with the Warehouse Development and Regulatory Authority, to receive the subsidy.

To top it off, both schemes can only be implemented in States which have amended their APMC Acts to declare warehouses as deemed market yards and permit electronic trading of farm produce. Given these factors, the government itself seems to expect only a slow take-off in the scheme, as it has budgeted just ₹170 crore towards the pilot in seven States for three years starting FY24. The complex design of the scheme suggests that the Centre may have to spend substantial time and effort in creating awareness about it among individual farmers.

## POCKET

RAVIKANTH



## Common traits in FTX &amp; Byju's

FAST BUCK. Both companies grew at breakneck speed, displayed poor governance and managed to fool PE/VC investors

## POINT BLANK.



LOKESHWARRI SK

**I**n early November this year, Sam Bankman-Fried was found guilty of seven criminal charges including fraud against customers and lenders and money laundering, and now faces 115 years in prison. Until a year ago, 31-year-old Bankman-Fried was flying high, running the second largest crypto trading platform and was perceived as the messiah and spokesperson of the crypto industry.

The way the house of cards came crashing down is well-chronicled — How Binance pulled the rug from under Bankman-Fried's feet, the collapse of FTT (the crypto token issued by FTX), investors in Alameda Research and FTX losing millions of dollars, collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and assets of the entire US banking system coming under a cloud. But the focus of this article will be the appalling lack of basic bookkeeping and controls in the company and how this wasn't questioned by the regulators or its marquee investors.

The investigative report of creditors of FTX is stinging in the way it captures the chaos within FTX, "The FTX Group was tightly controlled by a small group of individuals who showed little interest in instituting an appropriate oversight or control framework. These individuals stifled dissent, commingled, and misused corporate and customer funds, lied to third parties about their business... and thereby caused the FTX Group to collapse as swiftly as it had grown. While the FTX Group's failure is novel in the unprecedented scale of harm it caused in a nascent industry, many of its root causes are familiar: hubris, incompetence, and greed."

The last three words resonate in the saga unfolding in Byju's, the Indian edtech start-up. While the scale of operations and exposure to the banking system may not be as big in Byju's, the attitude of the founders of both companies is similar. Both companies have shown lapses in financial record keeping and lack of proper governance while managing to dupe their investors into believing in their story.

## BASIC BOOKKEEPING ABSENT

When Federal investigators began scrutiny of FTX and its group companies, basic accounts which even the smallest of businesses need to



RISE AND FALL. Sam Bankman-Fried, former FTX Chief, and Byju Raveendran, co-founder of Byju's, have seen their fortunes plummet

maintain were found absent.

The creditors' report states that 56 entities in the FTX Group did not produce financial statements of any kind. Thirty-five of the group companies used QuickBooks (an online accounting software for small businesses) and "relied on a hodgepodge of Google documents, slack communications, shared drives, and excel spreadsheets and other non-enterprise solutions to manage their assets and liabilities." This was far from suitable for a business group dealing in securities, fiat currency, and cryptocurrency worth billions of dollars across continents.

The shocking part is that Bankman-Fried and his close associates found their their incoherent processes funny. In an internal communication, Bankman-Fried described Alameda as "hilariously beyond any threshold of any auditor... we are only able to ballpark what its balances are, let alone something like a comprehensive transaction history. We sometimes find \$50m of assets lying around that we lost track of; such is life."

## THE CHAOS IN BYJU'S

We have not heard such irresponsible statements from Byju Raveendran, but the account keeping at Byju's also leaves a lot to be desired.

The company projected revenue of ₹4,400 crore for 2020-21, but when the audited results were released after an

**"Hubris, incompetence, and greed."** These words used for FTX, resonate in the saga unfolding in Byju's, the Indian edtech start-up, too

inordinate delay in September 2022, the revenue for the year was ₹2,280 crore, with loss of ₹4,588 crore. While this was attributed to changes in the method of revenue recognition, the results of the group for 2021-22 were once again inordinately delayed. In fact, only the results of the parent, Think and Learn, have been declared so far. The audited accounts for 2021-22 should have been filed by September 2022.

There has been a lot of drama around the results for 2021-22 with the auditor, Deloitte Haskins and Sell, resigning in June this year stating that the firm was not allowed to commence audit of the financial statements for 2021-22 despite several letters to the Board. As if that was not enough, the CFO, Ajay Goel, also resigned recently.

This follows a spate of other exits including three of its directors, representing Sequoia Capital, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative and Prosus, and two of its top executives, Ashesh Sharma and Surendra Pandey.

These exits and the delay in finalising the results together show serious governance lapses and unwillingness on the part of professional managers to be associated with the company.

## NOT GOOD SUPERVISORS

One would think that presence of top-notch PE and VC investors in a company would ensure good management and governance. But this appears to be a fallacy. FTX's investors included Tiger Global, Temasek and Ontario Teacher's Pension Plan. But none of them objected to the lack of processes and controls in FTX.

A report in *Financial Times* quoted Alfred Lin, partner at Sequoia Capital, saying, "Immediately after FTX collapsed, we extensively reviewed our

due diligence process and evaluated our 18-month working relationship with Sam Bankman-Fried. We concluded that we had been deliberately misled and lied to."

The investors in Byju's have re-empted such embarrassment by resigning from the Board.

## LESSONS FROM THE SAGA

The FTX episode as well the ongoing problems with Byju's show that the supervision of private companies needs to be much stricter.

In India, these companies are expected to file audited accounting statements six months after the end of the financial year. But delay in doing so is not dealt with in a stringent manner. In Byju's case, the Serious Frauds Investigation Office is reported to have commenced looking at the company. CA Institute's Financial Reporting Review Board is also reviewing the company's FY20 and FY21 accounts. But this is far from enough.

The larger private companies need more supervision to retain credibility in the eyes of foreign investors. MCA needs to formulate rules requiring more frequent (perhaps, half-yearly) disclosures of financial performance, changes in ownership pattern, etc., for two categories of private companies. One, companies with turnover exceeding ₹1,000 crore and, two, companies which have raised PE and VC funding of more than ₹1,000 crore.

The time given for filing audited results for such companies also needs to be reduced to three months from the end of the accounting period. This will ensure that the companies pay attention to basic accounting practices, which is the cornerstone of coherent business development.

## Why foreign policy will matter for Biden in 2024

The Middle East conflict could not have come at a worse time for Biden. His fight is now more with the Democrats

Sridhar Krishnaswami

**T**he traditional saying as far as American Presidential politics is that on election day what matters is the voters' perception on economy, inflation, jobs and price of gas at the pumps. Foreign policy is said to hardly matter except for a rare instance, perhaps in 1980 when President Jimmy Carter was defeated on account of the 1979 Iran Hostage crisis. Even a resounding win in the first Gulf War could not save President George Bush Sr who was shown the door in 1992. Remember the slogan "It's the Economy... Stupid" coined by Bill Clinton's strategists?

Joe Biden has a peculiar problem on his hands and remembering the right lessons of 1980 or 1992 is going to be of little help. Even before the current Israel-Hamas conflict, Biden's real trouble was within the Democratic party. About 80 per cent of Americans believe that Biden is too old to run for re-election. Forget the fact that Donald Trump is only four years younger than

Biden. Nearly 70 per cent of Democrats think that Biden should not be contesting next year. The African-American community which was at one time rock solid behind Democrats does not seem to be backing President Biden now; and the same story is with Hispanics. With support for Biden dropping among white men and women, especially younger voters, the problem for his advisors becomes more vexing. And then there is the widening schism between Biden and the younger Democrats or for that matter within the Independents.

## DIVIDED DEMOCRATS

The last thing that the Biden White House wanted was the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel. Israel's predictable response and the daily killing of largely innocent Palestinians have divided the Democratic party. The pro-Israel elements among the Democrats are frustrated with the Biden White House's inability to fund the Jewish state with its package tied up in knots at Congress.

The Left and the Progressives in the Democratic party are simply outraged that Biden speaks of "humanitarianism"



ELECTIONS. Biden on tenterhooks

but unable to muscle his way for an effective ceasefire excepting for a few "pauses" that are perceived as being inadequate. It is not just dissensions at the White House and State Department; voices of opposition are becoming louder in Congress, looking past the initial Resolution in the House of Representatives that passed in favour of Israel with overwhelming numbers.

Accusing Biden of supporting "genocide" of Palestinian people, Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib warned: "Mr President, the American people are

not with you on this one... We will remember in 2024." The election advisors of Biden are already worried that Trump is ahead in five out of six battleground states; and one poll showing Republican hopeful Nikki Haley leading Biden in all six of the battle ground states. Tlaib is from Michigan that has a large Arab American electorate where Biden's support is said to have dropped more than 40 per cent since the Middle East crisis began.

Biden has been a Washington politician for more than 50 years and is quite aware of the pitfalls of playing the balancing act. Biden won Michigan narrowly in 2020 and he needs that state now; but Jewish voters are also important in swing states like Pennsylvania. Republican candidates are looking at how best to raise the rhetoric on Islamophobia. Biden does not have the luxury of competing with Republicans now; he is more worried of more Democrats and big time donors deserting him.

The writer is a senior journalist who has reported from Washington DC on North America and United Nations

✉ **LETTERS TO EDITOR** Send your letters by email to [bleditor@thehindu.co.in](mailto:bleditor@thehindu.co.in) or by post to 'Letters to the Editor', The Hindu Business Line, Kasturi Buildings, 859-860, Anna Salai, Chennai 600002.

## Efficacy of CAG reports

The article "CAG could have done better" (November 15) widely covers all aspects of the performance of CAG. Regarding the appointment of CAG, the Union Government must follow the appointment system in CBDT and CBIC where the top posts of chairperson and members are selected from the parent cadre of IRS only. Likewise, the civil services have IA&AS cadre whose officers are posted across all government departments concerned with audit and accounts. Therefore, the CAG should also be appointed on seniority basis in the parent cadre of IA&AS. The CAG teams conduct audits in various Central and State government departments and public sector units regularly according to

their annual plans. However, in scam cases, the reports should be submitted to the government on real-time basis so that adequate and appropriate actions are taken within reasonable and statutory time limits. Irrespective of controversies, the CAG is the most efficacious organisation to handle cases of irregularities, misfeasance, mistake and wilful defaults. The organisations executing welfare schemes and DBT must keep their records clean.

**Vinod Johri**  
Delhi

## Women exiting work

The article "Why women drop out of work" (November 15) has endorsed this year's Nobel Prize winner in economics, Claudia Goldin's view that in the Indian labour market

women opt out of work not because of marriage but child birth, which she brands as "motherhood penalty". It must be noted that women coming out of the workforce can be very useful for their family. They can raise the children well, leading to growth of human capital in the future. In fact, home-makers contribute a lot to the economic development of the country.

**S Ramakrishnasayee**  
Chennai

## Supervision of cryptos

This refers to the concern raised by ECB's chief supervisor on 'Loophole in rules letting banks dodge ECB's crypto supervision' (November 15). Unlike other asset classes crypto as an asset class exposes banks to enormous risk in view of its price

being determined purely based on demand and supply. Further the stipulation of MiCAR (Crypto-Asset Regulations) that issuers of stable coins keep 60 per cent of reserves in bank deposits may put banks under severe stress due to the volatile nature of such deposits. Though EU's framework places banks as a 'crypto asset service provider' the fact that other service providers controlled by banks are not treated in a similar way may lead to crypto assets being out of the regulatory ladder of EU.

Other asset classes are assigned risk weights and capital adequacy norms are applied based on their risk exposures. It is essential that all crypto service providers are also brought under ECB's supervision not only for measuring risks crypto assets are exposed to but also to set

aside required capital to guard them from unforeseen losses. This is more so since crypto assets are not backed by any underlying assets for determining their price.

**Srinivasan Velamuri**  
Chennai

## Remembering Oberoi

This refers to PRS Oberoi's passing away. Prithvi Raj Singh Oberoi, fondly known as 'Biki', didn't just build hotels; he built experiences that brought magic into the lives of everyday travellers. Being part of the hospitality industry, he rightly believed people are the most valuable asset. The imprint he left on our hearts, as patrons of the Oberoi Hotels, is indelible.

**Bal Govind**  
Noida

# Grow farm ties with Brazil

Will strengthen India's food, nutrition security

G Chandrashekhar

Both Brazil and India are rapidly developing economies and large food producers.

India may not be food insecure today, but the portends are ominous. Also, the current nutrition status of the population leaves much to be desired.

Indian agriculture faces new challenges in the form of land constraints, water shortage and climate change. At the same time, food demand is set to burgeon.

There are several areas of partnership for India and Brazil that may be placed in four different but interconnected buckets or four pillars of collaboration and cooperation: trade; investment; research; and technology.

**Trade:** From an Indian perspective, the following key crops/commodities deserve attention.

**Oilseeds:** India's production has stagnated, while vegetable oil imports are humongous at 14-15 million tonnes a year valued at \$12-13 billion a year. Vegetable oils are finished or semi-finished goods. India must at least partially replace the import of semi-finished oil with import of raw material — that is, oilseeds.

India imports 3-3.5 million tonnes of soyabean oil annually, equivalent to 20 million tonnes of soyabean. As part of the annual import plan, 4-5 million tonnes of soyabean should be allowed for import in lieu of soya oil.

As the world's largest producer, Brazil can supply soyabean while India can use the customs tariff mechanism to ensure imported soyabean is priced at par with the minimum support price (MSP) for domestic soyabean.

**Feed:** The growing livestock and poultry sector often faces looming threat of feed shortage and volatile prices. The case for liberalising feed import is strong.

Similarly, liberal import of dried distillers' grains (DDG) must be allowed for the poultry sector. In oilseeds and meal, Brazil can become a reliable supplier.

**Cotton:** India has the world's largest area (12.5 million hectares) planted to cotton, but acreage is stagnating. Yields are rather low and possibly plateauing. In the next few years, India's export surplus of raw cotton will dwindle while import volumes will rise. Extra-long staple varieties will be in demand. Brazil can step in to service the Indian cotton market with



SOYABEAN. Room for imports

competitive terms of supply.

**Pulses:** Although India is the world's largest producer and consumer of pulses, it is also a large importer to bridge the domestic production shortfall. Brazil can service the Indian market with its pulses.

**Wheat and corn:** These may also turn out to be opportunities for Brazil in future. Indian wheat is at the limit of heat tolerance even as climate change has begun to take a toll. India needs to boost domestic production with appropriate policy intervention. The risk of India becoming a net importer of wheat and corn over time is real.

**Investment:** The processed foods market (ready-to-cook, ready-to-eat) is set for a big demand surge. Hundred per cent FDI is allowed through the automatic route in the food processing sector. There's big opportunity in fruits and vegetables as India is world's third largest producer. Livestock and poultry too are ready for FDI. Genetic improvement, animal health, milk supply chain, value added dairy products are areas ready for overseas investment.

**Research:** Indian and Brazilian research institutions can collaborate in sectors such as livestock and dairy in the area of genetic improvement, animal health, animal nutrition, enhancing milk yields, and so on. Crops like pulses, oilseeds, corn (maize) and sugarcane too offer collaborative research opportunities including in genomics and agronomy.

**Technology:** Collaboration for technology development and transfer is critical. With fragmented landholding and smallholder cultivation, precision farming is the way forward for India. Employing multiple technologies will help.

Finally, while opportunities present themselves, it is for the policymakers and entrepreneurs of both countries to seize the opportunity.

The writer is a policy commentator and agribusiness specialist.

# IPEF supply chain pact is unfair

**ONEROUS PACT.** Its provisions could enable US to force other less powerful countries to part with critical domestic supplies



ABHIJIT DAS

After having substantially concluded the negotiations on the Supply Chain Resilience under the overall Indo Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) in May, the 14 participant countries have formally signed the agreement on this issue on November 14. What are the objectives, substantial provisions and the implications of this agreement? Why is it important?

The IPEF, a US-led initiative, comprising 13 other countries including India, has the broad objective of negotiating rules for ostensibly tackling 21st century challenges and promoting fair and resilient trade. Based on each country's identification and monitoring of its own critical sectors and key goods, the agreement on Supply Chain Resilience seeks to improve crisis coordination and response to supply chain disruptions.

This would enable the participating countries to work together to support the timely delivery of goods affected during a crisis. Another objective of the agreement is to help better prepare businesses in the economies of the IPEF partners to resolve supply chain bottlenecks. The agreement also seeks to promote labour rights in IPEF partners' supply chains.

Turning to the substantial content of the agreement on Supply Chain Resilience, most of the provisions are worded as "each party intends to" and not "each party shall". Thus, from a narrow legal lens, these provisions are non-mandatory and have to be implemented on a 'best endeavour' basis. However, from India and other developing countries' perspective in the IPEF group, not all such provisions could be considered to be benign.

### LABOUR ISSUES

Consider the following provision: Parties intend that "efforts to improve supply chain resilience pursuant to this Agreement be undertaken in a manner consistent with labour rights". This provides a legal justification to the US to impose restrictions on exports from other countries on the ground that they do not enforce labour rights effectively in their territories.

India's exports of generic medicines are likely to be on the US hit list, as a 2021 report from the White House recommends that the US use pharmaceutical products with



WORRYING SIGNS. Despite the pact's non-binding nature, the US can still impose export curbs on other nations

ingredients manufactured in "countries other than those with the lowest labour costs and least robust environmental frameworks (such as China and India)".

On some key issues, the provisions in the agreement are worded in a language that is more legally binding than the rest of the text. It is important to understand two of these provisions and their implications.

First, even in the absence of supply chain disruptions, each Party has committed to "minimizing unnecessary restrictions or impediments creating barriers to trade" affecting IPEF supply chains. Second, each IPEF country has committed to "supporting another Party's response to a supply chain disruption or an imminent supply chain disruption to the extent possible, in accordance with its domestic law, respect for market principles, and the goal of minimizing market distortions".

These provisions would prevent the IPEF countries from exercising their existing rights under WTO rules for imposing temporary restrictions and taxes on exports of minerals with the objective of nurturing value-added downstream processing industry. Countries rich in minerals, such as cobalt, nickel, lithium, etc, which are required for clean energy systems, are

**Can India utilise these provisions for accessing raw materials and medical supplies from other IPEF countries during an emergency? This is unlikely**

likely to be disadvantaged by this provision. This could hinder India's quest to process its domestic reserves of lithium for transitioning to a low-carbon economy.

### HEALTH 'SCARE'

One particular pernicious impact of these provisions needs to be highlighted. During a global health crisis, such as the recent Covid 19 pandemic, these provisions would provide the legal basis to the US and other powerful countries in IPEF to compel other countries to export medical supplies, even at the expense of their domestic needs. This would considerably jeopardise the health security of the latter countries.

Can India utilise these provisions for accessing raw materials and medical supplies from other IPEF countries during an emergency? This is unlikely as US, Japan and other rich countries in IPEF would be in a position to pay far higher prices than India for the scarce natural resources and medical supplies.

Further, India and other developing countries may not have the clout to use these provisions to their advantage vis-à-vis the developed countries.

An argument made by some experts is that as the agreement on Supply Chain Resilience is not subject to binding dispute settlement, India should not be worried about the implications of its provisions. This approach is problematic from several perspectives. First, absence of dispute settlement provisions does not diminish the right of the US to impose restrictions on exports on grounds of non-compliance with labour requirements.

Second, the US can use its considerable economic and political clout to compel other countries to comply with many of the provisions, while retaining the flexibility with itself not to abide by the commitments. Third, the agreement envisages establishing three new IPEF Supply Chain bodies to facilitate cooperation among the IPEF partners.

These bodies would provide the institutional mechanism for ensuring that India and other countries comply with their obligations under the agreement. These bodies are also likely to become the platform for deepening the commitments, which presently exist merely under a "framework".

In conclusion, the agreement on Supply Chain Resilience will enhance the resilience of the US, while deepening the vulnerability of India and other developing countries. The US world view appears to be that national interests of other countries should be subservient to its interests of sourcing critical materials through imports.

Further, by getting India, Indonesia and other developing countries on its side on contentious issues such as labour and prohibiting export restrictions and taxes, the US has prepared the ground for smoothening the entry of binding provisions on these issues at the WTO. One hopes that the Central government is fully cognisant of the risks inherent for India in this agreement and is ready with suitable strategy to mitigate them.

The writer is an expert on WTO and international trade. Views are personal

## businessline.

### TWENTY YEARS AGO TODAY.

November 16, 2003

#### Panel moots telecom model for FM radio

The loss-making private FM radio companies may just get to see better days. The Expert Committee on FM radio is set to recommend the telecom model for companies migrating from the existing licence-fee regime to a revenue-sharing arrangement with the Government.

#### IBA okays single benchmark PLR

The Indian Banks' Association has agreed to the RBI suggestion of having a single benchmark prime lending rate. Earlier the IBA had suggested that there be separate prime rates, one for working capital loans and another for term loans, but the Reserve Bank was not favourable to that suggestion and the idea was shelved. However, the single prime rate will apply only to floating rate loans in the banking system.

#### More freedom to set up project offices in India

With a view to liberalising and simplifying the procedures for establishment of project offices in India, the Reserve Bank of India today issued general permission to a foreign entity for setting up a project office in India subject to the certain conditions.

## Bringing in gender diversity in arbitration profession

Arun Chawla

Numerous studies have highlighted the failure of appointing women arbitrators and ignoring the vital role of gender diversity in arbitral tribunals. Despite these studies change on the ground remains frustratingly elusive.

Recent data from the 2022 Report for Arbitral Appointments and Proceedings, reveals the proportion of female arbitrators nearly doubling between 2015 and 2022. But this incremental change has not done enough to increase women's representation significantly.

One major hurdle obstructing diversity in arbitration appointments is the scarcity of experienced female arbitrators. Arbitral appointments are guided by a prior experience norm, in which arbitrators appointed more frequently are likelier to attract further

appointments. This disadvantages female arbitrators, who have historically suffered from marginalisation in the legal profession. Further, the shortage of seasoned female arbitrators is frequently attributed to a phenomenon known as the "pipeline leak".

Currently, nearly half of associate in law firms are women, yet less than a third ascend to partnership positions. This lack of female representation creates a daunting landscape for emerging professionals who struggle to envision a future in a profession where female role models are scarce.

Aligning with the government's vision, which places significant emphasis on women-led development, it is believed that women will play a pivotal role in India's Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) framework.

Having a diverse body of decision-makers allows a wider array of



FOSTERING. Gender diversity

such traits to influence the formation and application of laws; thereby, increasing the quality of decisions at a systemic level. So having more female arbitrators and from other marginalised groups is pivotal to increasing the quality of arbitral decision making.

To address this issue, we must first acknowledge the existence of biases, actively seek opportunities to contribute, and collectively redefine the future of arbitration. The proposal for

blind arbitral appointments represents a significant stride in the right direction. Simultaneously, we must acknowledge the influence of implicit gender biases and aim to rectify them.

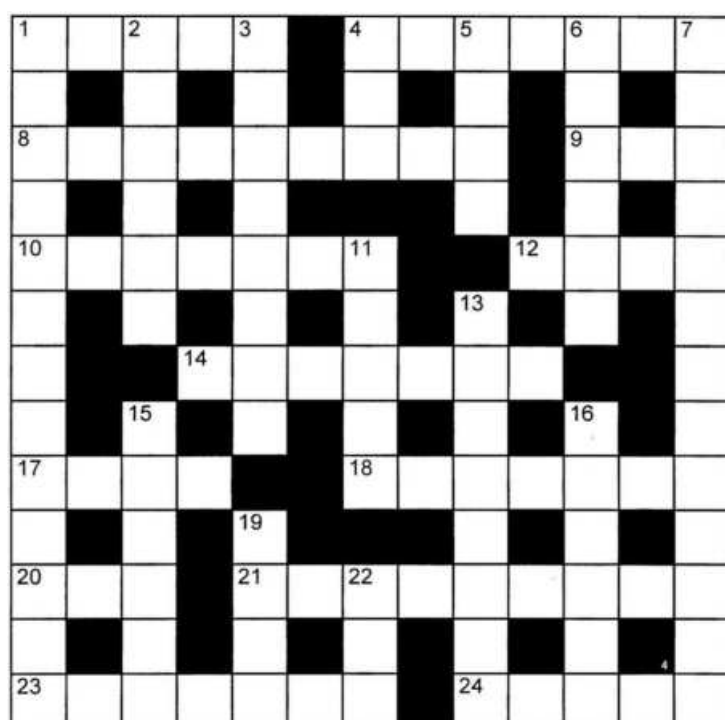
In this context, the Indian Council of Arbitration (ICA) has taken a substantial initiative to create a separate category for women empanelled arbitrators.

Even if women are appointed as arbitrators, they may still encounter obstacles, especially when associated with conservative firms. Finding a simple solution to this concern is elusive, but we must remain open to exploring different approaches and challenging established norms.

All practitioners should boldly defy historical norms and actively participate in reshaping the future.

The writer is Director-General, Indian Council of Arbitration

## BL TWO-WAY CROSSWORD 2313



### EASY

#### ACROSS

1. A European capital (5)
4. Composer of The Barber of Seville (7)
8. List of articles in estate (9)
9. Cretan mount (3)
10. All-ness (7)
12. Imputation of blame (4)
14. Upholder of a contrary belief (7)
17. Call from a distance (4)
18. Longshoremen (7)
20. Drinking-vessel (3)
21. With equal pace, together (L) (4,5)
23. Keeps quiet, out of sight (4,3)
24. Hard mineral used for polishing (5)

#### DOWN

1. Rational, calm (13)
2. Deep, narrow gorge (6)
3. One posted on guard (8)
4. Kangaroo (3)
5. Speaks (4)
6. Frozen water-dripping (6)
7. Having a reverie (2,1,5,5)
11. Crop, harvest (5)
13. A follower (8)
15. Uncomplicated (6)
16. Lease-holder (6)
19. Gem (4)
22. Uncooked (3)

### NOT SO EASY

#### ACROSS

1. Capital, the way he judged in favour of Aphrodite (5)
4. Sin is -- or might be -- the making of a composer (7)
8. Make something up, or start your list (9)
9. Gilbertian Princess would help the first to be last (3)
10. Fact of being all, yet I'm no different (7)
12. A musical tie might damage one's reputation (4)
14. He doesn't believe in the rice being thrown (7)
17. Call a greeting if the comedown is hard (4)
18. Men who are there at the birth, one is told (7)
20. Hollow one's hands for the trophy (3)
21. Ranking equally with 1 Across, as up for revision (4,5)
23. Keeps oneself out of sight, as one does sleeping on a futon (4,3)
24. From Tyre men brought back a hard mineral (5)

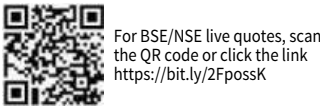
#### DOWN

1. Hip solo caliph composed, having a reconciled outlook (13)
2. Find a deep gulf in entering wild party (6)
3. One posted about ten lines (8)
4. A short marsupial (3)
5. Utters in easy assurance, upside down (4)
6. It will depend on it being freezing outside (6)
7. Try and bow us in, somehow, deep in thought (2,1,5,5)
11. How to give in idly around the East (5)
13. Follower of PC is idle anyhow (8)
15. It is not a complex medicinal herb (6)
16. Little Leslie can interview the man with the tenancy (6)
19. Work a leading lithographer does in stone (4)
22. Is not trained as a recruit (3)

### SOLUTION: BL TWO-WAY CROSSWORD 2312

ACROSS 2. Climb 5. Obey 7. Emit 8. Needless 9. Advanced 11. Wide 12. Schizophrenic 15. Ages 17. Stocking 19. Cultural 21. Bail 22. Clip 23. Elder

DOWN 1. Nomadic 2. Cut 3. Ionic 4. Breadth 5. Owl 6. Eased 10. Amiss Wreak 13. Observe 14. Inn sign 16. Gruel 18. Oiled 20. Tap 21. Bar



For BSE/NSE live quotes, scan the QR code or click the link https://bit.ly/2Fpsksc

MSCI adds IndusInd, Paytm, 7 others; no exit of Indian firms in rejig

Our Bureau Mumbai

MSCI Global Standard Index will add 9 Indian stocks including IndusInd Bank, Tata Motors DVR, Suzlon Energy, and One 97 Communications (Paytm). Tata Communications, APL Apollo Tubes, Macrotech Developers, Persistent Systems, and Polycab India have also been added. No stocks have been taken out from the India index. The Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) indices are widely tracked by passive funds and any inclusion of stocks or increase in weightage of stocks in these global indices are expected to lead to inflows from passive funds tracking these indexes. According to Nuvama Al-

ternative & Quantitative Research, IndusInd Bank could attract \$290 million in inflows, Suzlon should see \$264 million inflow, Persistent Systems could get \$258 million inflow, One97 Communications has been pegged at \$163 million, and APL Apollo at \$227 million worth of inflows. The changes in constituents for the MSCI Global Standard Indexes will take place as of the close of November 30. STOCKS' REACTION Suzlon was the major gainer, at the bourses, as the stock jumped 4.8 per cent while Paytm, Tata Motors DVR, Persistent Systems and Macrotech gained between 0.35 per cent to 2.9 per cent. However, IndusInd Bank, Tata Communications, APL Apollo Tubes and Polycab slipped.

Indices rally 1% on global cues

BULLS CHARGE. Softening US inflation data revive FPIs' interest; all sectors end positive

Ashley Coutinho Mumbai

Equity indices ended higher on Wednesday amid positive global cues on favourable US inflation data. The Sensex ended 742 points or 1.14 per cent higher at 65,675, and the Nifty gained 232 points or 1.19 per cent at 19,675. Eicher Motors (5.5 per cent), Tech Mahindra (3.7 per cent), Hindalco (3.7 per cent), Tata Motors (2.8 per cent) and Infosys (2.7 per cent) were among the top gainers on the Nifty. Major losers included Bajaj Finance, PowerGrid Corp and IndusInd Bank.

ALL-ROUND GAINS Almost all major sectoral indices traded in the positive territory with IT, Realty, Oil & Gas and Auto being the top gainers. Broad market indices rose less than the Nifty even as the ad-



BUY-THE-BUY. FPIs bought shares worth ₹500 crore on Wednesday. They have net-sold \$5 billion since September.

vance-decline ratio stood at 1.65:1. "The market's strong gap-up jump in response to positive global cues on account of the softer than anticipated US and UK's inflation data, highlights the optimism for an end to the interest rate cycle, as evidenced by the ease in bond yields. This is likely to draw FII flows into emerging markets, which is good for India considering the current better earnings season and the festival demand pick-up," said Vinod

Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. FPIs bought shares worth ₹550 crore on Wednesday. They have sold shares worth almost \$5 billion since September.

TRADE DATA A surge in gold imports took the country's trade deficit for October to a record high. The October merchandise exports came at \$33.57 billion, up from \$31.60 billion in October last

year, while the merchandise imports stood at \$65.03 billion, 11 per cent higher than \$57.91 billion last year. Global indices extended gains on Wednesday, as expectations of an end to a global rate hike cycle spurred on investors following benign inflation readings in the US and the UK. Among Asian peers, Hang Seng and Nikkei 225 led the rally, with gains of 3.9 per cent and 2.5 per cent, respectively. European indices were trading firmly in the green. "The short-term trend of the Nifty remains positive. Having moved above the key resistance of around 19,600 levels, there is a possibility of Nifty advancing towards the next set of hurdles of around 19,850 and the next 20,050 levels in the near term. Any dips down to the immediate support of 19,500 could be a buy on dips opportunity," said Nagari Shetti, Technical Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

Veranda Learning surges 20% as Q2 loss narrows

Nabodita Ganguly Chennai

Veranda Learning Solutions Ltd, a Chennai-based ed-tech platform, saw a 20 per cent rise in its share price to ₹258.40 on the BSE on Wednesday. On November 9, the company released its Q2 results where it reported a narrowing in net loss to ₹1.53 crore in the second quarter ended September 30, compared with net loss of ₹2.13 crore for the corresponding quarter in the previous year. The company's various segments delivered strong results, leading to a revenue increase of ₹98 crore, more than double the previous ₹37 crore. In a release, Suresh Kalpathi, Executive Director and Chairman of Veranda Learning Solutions, said following a demanding

phase of integrating assets in the education sector over the last two years, the company is now experiencing positive outcomes. Veranda provides various training programmes for competitive exam preparation, covering the State Public Service Commission, Banking, Insurance, Railways, IAS, and CA. The company delivers these services through its affiliated entities, namely Veranda Race, Veranda IAS, JK Shah Education, and Eduureka, which is the customer-facing brand of Brain4ce Education Solutions. ACQUISITIONS Having acquired nearly a dozen companies in the last two years, the company is still looking for more inorganic opportunities to scale up its business and to further expand its course offerings.

Cube InvIT to pay ₹2 per ordinary unit for Q2

Press Trust of India New Delhi

Cube Highways Trust (Cube InvIT) managed by Cube Highways Fund Advisors Pvt Ltd on Wednesday declared a distribution per unit of ₹2 to ordinary unitholders for the September quarter. Cube InvIT's total consolidated income for the April-September period stood at ₹1,515.16 crore, while the Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation was ₹918.24 crore. "We are pleased that the positive momentum continues and Q2 distribution is on track," Cube InvIT group CFO Pankaj Vasani said.

JUMPS 10%. ON DAY 1



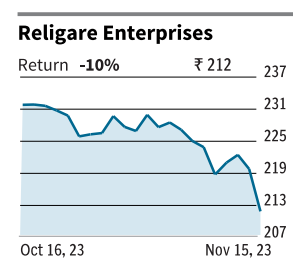
ON FAST TRACK. Kuldip Singh Rahee, Chairman and Managing Director, ASK Automotive, at the listing ceremony of the company's shares on the NSE on Wednesday. The stock, after listing at ₹303.30 against the IPO price of ₹282, closed 10 per cent higher at ₹310.10 on the exchange.

InGovern calls for probe of Religare chief's ESOP deal

Suresh P. Iyengar Mumbai

InGovern Research, a proxy advisory firm, has valued the stock options issued to Rashmi Saluja, Executive Chair of Religare Enterprises and non-executive chairperson of its subsidiary Care Health Insurance (CARE), over last 3-4 years at over ₹480 crore. Calling for detailed investigations by IRDAI and SEBI, it said the ESOPs of CARE were issued to Saluja despite IRDAI's rejection and without REL shareholder approval. HIGH COMPENSATION Moreover, it said REL's annual report lacks disclosure regarding CARE ESOPs being included in Saluja's compensa-

tion. In all, InGovern said 1.05 crore options of REL were granted to Saluja since her appointment as Executive Chairperson of REL in February 2020 and this is valued at over ₹230 crore. Moreover, it said shareholders of REL are bearing the cost of excessive grants of stock options of CARE, valued at over ₹250 crore. InGovern said in the year ended September 2022, her compensation as an employee of REL underwent a material increase through the grant of 22,711,327 CARE options. However, no shareholder approval was sought for such a material change in her remuneration. The resolution of REL approving the remuneration dated September 23, 2022, was



InGovern said 1.05 crore stock options valued at over ₹230 crore were granted to Saluja since her appointment in February 2020

void on grounds of failure to disclose material facts regarding CARE options issued to Saluja and accordingly her remuneration through the allotment of CARE Options ought to be clawed back as per the provisions of the Companies Act, said the InGovern report. ESOPs AT DISCOUNT ESOPs of REL issued to her have been issued at a discount and exercise price (EP) of these ESOPs are much lower than the EP of ESOPs issued to other KMPs and the average stock price of REL. While REL Board consists of 1 executive and 5 Independent Directors, it said there were Related Party Transactions between the company and the entities of the inde-

pendent directors' or have significant influence on thereby raising serious concerns on their true independence. However, REL in a statement on Tuesday said the remuneration, including salary and employee stock options was ₹42.06 crore for FY23. The compensation was approved via special resolution passed by the shareholders, Religare added. The statement was in response to a complaint filed by the Burman family, the promoters of Dabur, with market regulator SEBI. Burmans owned 20.15 per cent stake in Religare and bought an additional 5 per cent stake from the market taking their stake beyond the threshold limit to make the mandatory open offer.

BROKER'S CALL.

JM Financial

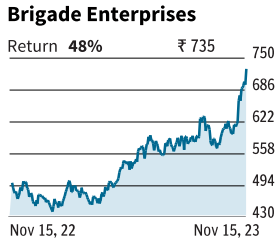
UNIPARTS INDIA (BUY)

Target: ₹750 CMP: ₹523.30 Uniparts India's (Uniparts) revenue declined 18 per cent y-o-y and was 9 per cent below JM Financial expectation. Inventory correction during the quarter had an impact of 8-9% on revenue growth. EBITDA margin at 18.3 per cent was below JMF. Inventory correction is expected to bottom out in Q3 with normalisation in Q4. While US small agri demand remains muted, large Agri and CE demand remains healthy. Demand in EU also remains steady. Uniparts continues to see good traction (increasing wallet share/adding new customers) owing to China-1 de-risking strategy adopted by global OEMs. While near-term volume is expected to remain soft, we expect medium-term growth to be driven by focus on value-added and adjacent products. Profitability is expected to gradually improve to normalised margin level of about 21 per cent by Q4. We expect revenue/EPS CAGR of 9 per cent over FY23-26. Strong positive FCF, over 20 per cent return ratios and net cash position provides comfort. Stock currently trades at -11x FY25 EPS. Slowdown in global OHV demand and inability to gain orders for allied products remains key risks.

TODAY'S PICK.

Brigate Enterprises (₹735.35): BUY

Gurumurthy K bl. research bureau



The short-term outlook is bullish for Brigade Enterprises. The stock surged over 4 per cent on Wednesday. It has also taken the share price well above ₹720 - an intermediate resistance. Strong support is in the ₹700-685 region. The price action over the last few days indicate that the stock is getting good buyers below ₹700. As such a fall below ₹685 looks less likely now. Brigade Enterprise stock price can rise to ₹830 over the next three-four weeks or even earlier than that. Short-term traders can buy the stock now. Accumulate on dips at ₹705.

Keep the stop-loss at ₹670. Trail the stop-loss up to ₹755 as soon as the stock moves up to ₹775. Move the stop-loss further up to ₹790 when Brigade Enterprise share price touches ₹805. Exit the long positions at ₹825.

Note: The recommendations are based on technical analysis. There is risk of loss in trading.

Day trading guide

19724 Nifty 50 Futures

Table with columns S1, S2, R1, R2, COMMENT. Row 1: 19650, 19600, 19800, 19880, Wait for dips. Go long at 19680. Keep the stop-loss at 19620

₹1504 HDFC Bank

Table with columns S1, S2, R1, R2, COMMENT. Row 1: 1490, 1460, 1535, 1560, Go long now and at 1495. Keep the stop-loss at 1480

₹1411 Infosys

Table with columns S1, S2, R1, R2, COMMENT. Row 1: 1390, 1350, 1425, 1455, Go long only above 1425. Keep the stop-loss at 1415

₹442 ITC

Table with columns S1, S2, R1, R2, COMMENT. Row 1: 439, 437, 446, 451, Go long now and at 440. Stop-loss can be kept at 437

₹199 ONGC

Table with columns S1, S2, R1, R2, COMMENT. Row 1: 197, 195, 200, 203, Go long only above 200. Stop-loss can be placed at 199

₹2357 Reliance Ind.

Table with columns S1, S2, R1, R2, COMMENT. Row 1: 2350, 2320, 2385, 2405, Initiate fresh longs now. Keep a tight stop-loss at 2340

₹585 SBI

Table with columns S1, S2, R1, R2, COMMENT. Row 1: 582, 579, 586, 589, Go long only above 586. Stop-loss can be kept at 584

₹3399 TCS

Table with columns S1, S2, R1, R2, COMMENT. Row 1: 3380, 3360, 3435, 3465, Go long now and accumulate at 3385 with a stop-loss at 3370

S1, S2: Support 1 & 2; R1, R2: Resistance 1 & 2.

The top 100

Table with 15 columns: Company, Prev, Close, Open, High, Low, Qty, 52 W High, 52 W Low, PE, BSE Close. Lists top 100 companies including ACC, Adani Ports, Adani Entrepr, etc.

Nifty 50 Movers

Table with 5 columns: Reliance Ind, Infosys, HDFC Bank, TCS, ITC, etc. Shows percentage changes for Nifty 50 movers.

Nifty Next 50 Movers

Table with 5 columns: Shriram Finance, Info Edge I, Indian Oilcorp, ICI Lombard Gic, etc. Shows percentage changes for Nifty Next 50 movers.

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QUICKLY.

Colombo terminal phase 1 to be operational by Dec 2024



**New Delhi:** The first phase of Colombo West International Terminal (CWIT) is likely to be operational by December 2024, Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) Whole Time Director and CEO Karan Adani has said. The US International Development Finance Corporation will provide USD 553 million in financing to CWIT - Adani Ports and SEZ Ltd, John Keells Holdings and the Sri Lanka Ports Authority.

DGTR probe into dumping of four Chinese goods

**New Delhi:** The commerce ministry's investigation arm DGTR has "suo-motu" initiated probes against the alleged dumping of four products, including roller chains, glass mirrors and fasteners, by Chinese companies as the authority seeks to guard MSME units against cheap imports from the neighbouring country, an official said.

Ramkrishna Forgings raises ₹1,000 cr via QIP



**Kolkata:** Ramkrishna Forgings Ltd, announced that it has raised ₹1,000 crore through a qualified institutional placement of its equity shares. The company, said it has approved the allotment of over 1.62 crore equity shares of face value of ₹2 at an issue price of ₹614 apiece.

# Banks see fall in insured deposits, sudden surge in uninsured funds

**ATTRACTIVE RATES.** DICGC data show larger uninsured deposits account for 53.69%

**K Ram Kumar**  
Mumbai



**INSURANCE LIMIT.** Deposit insurance cover is available on deposits up to ₹5 lakh.

The ratio of insured deposits to assessable deposits in the banking system declined to 46.31 per cent in FY23 from 49 per cent in FY22 as customers, lured by attractive deposit rates, placed larger deposits (over and above the ₹5 lakh deposit insurance cover) with banks, going by latest Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) data.

This means that bank customers preferred to place larger quantum (₹5 lakh plus) of deposits (accounting for 53.69 per cent of the deposits by value), which remained uninsured. In the preceding year, 51 per cent of the deposits were uninsured. Deposit insurance cover is available on deposits up to ₹5 lakh.

This development comes even as interest rates on term deposits of over one year tenor rose to 6.00-7.25 per cent range as at March-end 2023 from 5.00-5.60 per cent as at March-end 2022 in

the backdrop of RBI upping its policy repo rate and tight liquidity conditions.

Fully protected and partially protected accounts accounted for 98.1 per cent and 1.9 per cent, respectively, of the total number of accounts (300.10 crore), per DICGC's FY23 annual report.

The Corporation's premium income increased by 9.70 per cent year-on-year (yoy) to ₹21,381 crore in FY23 (₹19,491 crore in the year-ago period). The five-fold increase in the insur-

ance limit to ₹5 lakh since February 2020 has increased the deposit insurance premium to be paid by banks from 10 paise per ₹100 of assessable deposits to 12 paise, effective from April 1, 2020.

**PREMIUM COLLECTION** At present, DICGC collects premiums at a uniform rate. The current maximum limit is 15 paise. However, as per the amendment to Section 15 (1) of the DICGC Act made in August 2021, the Corporation may raise the

limit of 15 paise per annum per ₹100 of deposits on insurance premiums with the prior approval of RBI, considering its financial position and the interests of the banking sector in the country as a whole.

**CLAIMS PAID** Net claims sharply declined to ₹730 crore in FY23 against ₹8,121 crore in FY22. During FY22, DICGC paid ₹3,791.55 crore to the insured depositors of the erstwhile Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative Bank as per the scheme amalgamation with Unity Small Finance Bank.

The Corporation reported a 61 per cent y-o-y jump in revenue surplus after tax at ₹24,559 crore in FY23 against ₹15,239 crore in FY22.

DICGC insures all bank deposits except (i) deposits of foreign governments; (ii) deposits of Central/State Governments; (iii) inter-bank deposits; (iv) deposits received outside India, and (v) deposits specifically exempted by the Corporation with prior approval of RBI.

# Core accountancy tasks still outside PMLA ambit, says ICAI

**Ashley Coutinho**  
Mumbai

**BREATHING EASY**

- Core functions of assurance, audit and taxation remain outside the new PMLA rules
- CAs acting as liquidators, insolvency professionals, trustees and independent directors are excluded
- Project financing, recovery consultants of banks, insurance brokers and CAs holding power of attorney for specified financial activities are covered

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has clarified that only those chartered accountants (CAs) who carry out "financial activities" on behalf of their clients will become reporting entities under the new PMLA rules notified on May 3. The core functions of assurance, audit and taxation remain outside the purview of the notification, allaying fears that routine services and transactions would come under its ambit.

The financial activities include buying and selling of immovable property, managing client monies, bank accounts or other assets and creation, operation or management of companies, LLPs or trusts. This would, for example, cover CAs and company secretaries organising contributions from dummy shareholders or lenders for a company. Or those involved in investing directly into properties or buying businesses.

There are instances where CAs play a role in money laundering, either directly or indirectly, said experts. Such CAs now need to report the movement of funds (exceeding ₹10 lakh in most cases) to the Financial Intelligence Unit of India.

ICAI has reiterated that a professional accountant in public practice should not assume custody of client monies or other assets unless permitted to do so by law.

However, it has clarified that the reporting entities, its directors and employees will not be liable for any civil or criminal prosecution for furnishing information.

**EXCLUSIONS, INCLUSIONS** Auditing, accounting, furnishing due diligence reports and tax returns and CAs

providing services as corporates are not covered under the new rules, according to ICAI. CAs acting as official liquidators, insolvency professionals, trustees and independent or nominee directors are excluded as well. Services under FEMA, MCA and RERA and payment of taxes are not covered if the CA is not managing any funds or bank accounts of the clients.

Project financing, recovery consultants of banks, insurance brokers and CAs holding power of attorney on behalf of clients for carrying out specified financial activities are covered.

CAs acting as executors of wills are covered if a client relationship is established.

"The clarifications are helpful in understanding certain nuances arising from the interpretation of the PMLA notification. It also puts to rest apprehensions about routine services and transactions getting covered under PMLA," said Harshal Bhuta, partner, PR Bhuta & Co.

For instance, there were concerns about the practice of CAs making last-minute payment of tax and government fees on behalf of clients. ICAI has clarified that this, by itself, would not amount to a "financial transaction", said Bhuta.

"The FAQs provide CAs with the necessary do's and don'ts while dealing with clients, as well as tools and processes to be compliant."

"To an extent, however, it is important for CAs to act as whistle blowers if they find

any suspicious financial transactions," added Sandeep Sehgal, partner, AKM Global.

**REPORTING ENTITIES**

Every reporting entity has to verify the identity of its clients along with the beneficial owner, carry out enhanced due diligence and maintain records of suspicious transactions that have no economic rationale or bona fide purpose, including those in cash, for a minimum of five years.

According to Vinod Kothari, director at Vinod Kothari Consultants, it is counter-intuitive to expect a CA involved in unprofessional or illegal activities to report the same to FIU-IND.

"The larger impact of the notification is to put practising professionals on notice and extend the scope of PMLA to professionals and fiduciaries.

"It is less of a compliance burden and more of a deterrent against active participation in money laundering," he said.

"ICAI has given an elaborate guidance on the issue, which may hold good in most cases but may misguide in some. ICAI is a statutory body for chartered accountants but it does not give them the power to interpret the PMLA rules. In the process, the ICAI has ventured into the domain of the judiciary and PMLA regulatory body," said RN Dash, an advocate and former member and acting chairman of the Appellate Tribunal of PMLA.

# Russian imports up 64% in April-Oct, led by oil

**Press Trust of India**  
New Delhi

billion during April-October 2022.

**HIGHER SHARE** From a market share of less than 1 per cent in India's import basket before the start of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Russia's share of India's oil imports rose to over 40 per cent. India, the world's third-largest crude importer after China and the United States, has been buying Russian oil after some countries in the West shunned it as a means of

punishing Moscow for invading Ukraine.

The Ministry's data showed that imports from China dipped marginally to \$60.02 billion during the period against \$60.26 billion in the year-ago period. Similarly, imports from the US declined 16 per cent to \$24.89 billion during the period under review from \$29.56 billion last year.

Imports from the UAE contracted 21 per cent to \$24.91 billion during the period under review. During

the first seven months of this fiscal, imports also dipped from Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Indonesia, Singapore, and Korea.

Among all the top 10 import source nations of India, imports from Switzerland increased to \$13.97 billion against \$10.48 billion in April-October 2022 due to gold imports.

On the export front, India's exports to six of its top-10 destinations have recorded a negative growth rate during the period.

# Dabur's two units get US court relief, 3rd suit continues

**Our Bureau**  
New Delhi

Dabur India on Wednesday said that two of its international subsidiaries, Dabur International and Demoviva Skin Essentials Inc have been dismissed as defendants in federal cases in the US pertaining to the hair relaxer products industry. With this development, only Namaste Laboratories LLC, another international subsidiary of the company, remains a defendant in these cases along with other industry players, it added.

The FMCG major had earlier informed that its

three international subsidiaries — Dabur International Ltd, Demoviva Skin Essentials Inc and Namaste Laboratories are facing lawsuits in the US.

"The company said that Dabur India Ltd is not a party to these lawsuits and it does not concern any Dabur brand or product."

"The sale of hair relaxer products by Namaste forms less than 1 per cent of the total consolidated turnover of Dabur India Ltd," the FMCG major added. The company reiterated that Namaste is confident in the safety of its products and believes that these lawsuits have no legal merits.

# After onions, pulses and cereals can spike inflation

**Shishir Sinha and Prabhudatta Mishra**  
New Delhi

Pulses, along with cereals, are set to join onion in pushing retail and wholesale prints in the coming months.

Pulses and cereals have a 15.30 per cent and 3.46 per cent weightage, respectively, in retail inflation based on the Consumer Price Index and producers' inflation based on the Wholesale Price Index (WPI). Data released on Tuesday showed that WPI inflation for pulses surged to 19.4 per cent in October, as against 17.7 per cent in September.

Another set of data, made public on Monday, revealed that pulses inflation reached nearly 19 per cent in October,

as against 16.3 per cent in September. Retail inflation in cereals remained in double digits.

**TWO REASONS**

The rise in pulses and cereals is attributed to two reasons. One, the lower production estimated for the current fiscal. Second, sowing during Rabi is lower than that in the previous year. Though the government is hopeful that sowing will improve in the coming days, the market is not so hopeful. Experts feel rising prices of pulses, along with sustained higher prices of cereals and onion, are likely to break the downward trend in retail inflation in the coming months.

One positive factor is that out of TOP, the prices of toma-



**PRICE DYNAMICS.** Pulses and cereals have a 15.30% and 3.46% weightage, respectively, in retail inflation

atoes and potatoes are moderating.

In a note, economists at HDFC Bank highlighted that pulses inflation rose to a 41-month high in October, while cereal inflation remained elevated in the same month. "Based on mandi prices, onion and tomato prices have risen

half of October) is expected to be seen in the November print.

Rajni Sinha, Chief Economist with CARE, said the recently released first advance estimate of Kharif foodgrains production showed a dip across categories, compared with last year's final estimate. The fall was sharpest for oilseeds (17.7 per cent), followed by pulses (6.6 per cent) and cereals (4.5 per cent). Though "these estimates are subject to revision (usually higher as suggested by trend), upside risk to the food inflation outlook persists, if production remains close to the current estimates," she said.

**MIXED TREND**

Meanwhile, some experts feel prices are likely to come down.

Dharmakirti Joshi, Chief Economist with Crisil, said that retail food inflation saw a mixed trend — prices of vegetables fell while that of pulses hardened — inching closer to 20 per cent, with and cereals remaining at 11 per cent, which kept the overall food inflation rate unchanged. "For the December quarter, we expect some softening in food inflation with the kharif harvest entering the market, aided by government intervention," he said.

Mohit Rahlan, CEO with TIW Capital, sees some impact in wholesale food prices. "Food inflation remained benign as vegetable and potato prices were markedly lower compared to last year. It offset an increase in onion and pulses prices," he said.

# Microfinance industry added as many as 80 lakh women clients in FY23

**G Balachandhar**  
Chennai



**CONSISTENT TREND.** The average ticket size for microfinance loans disbursed in FY23 were ₹41,391, up 6.3% y-o-y

The microfinance industry (MFI) in the country added 80 lakh new women clients to its fold during 2022-23, taking the total number of low-income women clients to 6.64 crore across 729 districts through 12.96 crore active loans as of March 2023, according to India Microfinance Review FY23 report.

In FY23, the microfinance industry saw growth in portfolio outstanding as well as improvement in portfolio quality when compared with FY22 — an ideal situation with augurs well for the sector.

**GROWTH TRACK**

The total portfolio of the microfinance industry as of March 31, 2023, was ₹3,48,339 crore of all regulated entities (NBFC-MFIs, Banks, SFBS, and NBFCs) under the MFI model.

There has been a consistent trend of growth in the portfolio over the last 5 years barring the Covid

period. Last financial year saw a growth of 22 per cent in the outstanding portfolio of the sector, indicating responsible growth and latent demand for microfinance, it added.

Overall, the sector has grown by more than 20 times to ₹3.48 lakh crore in March 2023 from ₹17,264 crore in March 2012.

As of 31 March 2023, 211 entities were active in the microfinance space. With 82 organisations, NBFC-MFIs were the largest provider of micro-credit.

"With a commanding 39.7 per cent share in the

industry's portfolio, NBFC-MFIs play a pivotal role in driving microfinance. The significant loan outstanding of ₹1,38,310 crore exemplifies their robust contribution to financial inclusion and empowerment," said Vikas Singh, CEO and Co-Founder, Sugmya Finance Pvt Ltd, a Delhi-headquartered NBFC.

**REGION WISE**

On a regional level, the distribution of portfolio continues to show a declining trend of share of East and North-East, while all other regions (North, West, Central, and Southern)

have gained in portfolio share.

The overall share of East and North-East came down from 37.7 per cent as of March 31, 2022, to 34.9 per cent as of March 31, 2023, despite the rise of Bihar as the top state in terms of portfolio outstanding as of December 31, 2022, and also Jharkhand which has shown impressive growth. Growth in these two states was negated by the de-growth of Assam and West Bengal portfolios. Manipur may degrow further in the coming months due to the ongoing strife.

South, which used to be the hub of microfinance before the Andhra Pradesh crisis happened, is fast catching up with East and North-East. South is expected to grow further with the opening up of opportunities in AP and Telangana.

The average ticket size for microfinance loans disbursed during FY23 was ₹41,391, a y-o-y increase of 6.3 per cent when compared with ₹38,929 in FY22.

# China's mixed economic data makes case for more stimulus

Bloomberg

China's consumer spending and industrial activity expanded faster than expected in October, but a worsening property market fuelled expectations the government will have to roll out more stimulus.

Retail sales climbed 7.6 percent in October from a year earlier, the National Bureau of Statistics said, a better-than-forecast result aided in part by comparisons with a contraction during the same month in 2022. October also captured the week-long Golden Week holiday period, during which Chinese travel surged, but tourist spending disappointed.

Industrial production rose 4.6 per cent, almost unchanged from the previous month. These figures helped offset obvious signs of weakness in the housing market: A contraction in property development investment deepened, and home sales dropped more in October than the previous month. The data suggests China's economy has pockets of strength such as manufacturing investment and consumer spending on electric vehicles and smart phones,

**Policy support is still needed in order to address concerns around domestic sentiment and housing demand**

putting the government's full-year growth target of about 5 per cent well within reach. But economists expect Beijing to add support in an attempt to stabilise the property market and improve household sentiment into next year.

**ECONOMIC STIMULUS**

"China's economy seems to have averted fears about a broader sequential slowdown in October," said Carlos Casanova, senior Asia economist at Union Bancaire Privee in Hong Kong.

"With that being said, the devil is in the details," he said, noting the drag in real estate investment and adding that official strategies to restructure debt in the property sector will take several years to achieve. "Policy support is still needed in order to address concerns around domestic sentiment and housing demand."

The CSI 300 Index

trimmed an earlier gain of as much as 1.1 per cent to close 0.7 per cent higher, while the Hang Seng China Enterprises Index extended gains throughout the day for a 4 per cent advance. Chinese government bonds and the yuan were little changed from the previous close.

Policymakers have stepped up stimulus to help the economy, including making an unconventional mid-year budget revision and approving 1 trillion yuan (\$138 billion) worth of sovereign bonds for infrastructure investment last month.

Just before the data was released, the People's Bank of China injected the most cash since 2016 through its medium-term lending facility on Wednesday to support government spending. Bloomberg Economics estimates that the additional policy loans will have an impact on markets equivalent to a reserve requirement ratio cut of more than 25 basis points. Beijing is also planning to provide at least 1 trillion yuan of low-cost financing to renovate inner-city districts and build affordable housing. The plan, part of a new initiative by Vice Premier He Lifeng, would mark a major step-up in au-

thorities' efforts to put a floor under the biggest property downturn in decades.

**EXPERTS TAKE**

"This year's growth target seems to be in the bag already, but it doesn't look like the government is being too complacent about next year," said Adam Wolfe, emerging markets economist at Absolute Strategy Research. "It looks like they're willing to add additional stimulus."

Economists cautioned that consumer sentiment is still not on a sure footing. October retail sales grew at a similar pace as compared to September on a month-on-month basis, according to Zhang Zhiwei, chief economist at Pinpoint Asset Management Ltd., who added that "domestic demand is still weak." Goldman Sachs Group Inc economists led by Lisheng Wang also pointed to the likelihood for more support.

"Given persistent growth headwinds from the property downturn, still-fragile confidence and lingering financial risks, we think 'policy put' has been triggered in China and expect the central government to step up easing materially in the coming months," they said in a note.

**QUICKLY.**

**Gold at 1-week high on hopes of Fed rate cuts**



Gold prices rose to a more than one-week high as US dollar and Treasury yields weakened after cooler inflation data boosted bets that US rate cut might come. Spot gold rose 0.5 per cent at \$1,971.60 per ounce. US gold futures also gained 0.5 per cent to \$1,976.10. Silver rose 1.3 per cent to \$23.37, while platinum firmed 0.6 per cent to \$890.38. Palladium was up 1.7 per cent to \$1,033.84. REUTERS

**Indonesia to raise CPO reference price to \$750.54/t**

Jakarta: Indonesia plans to set its crude palm oil reference price at \$750.54 per tonne for the Nov 16-30 period, up from \$748.93 for the previous 15-day period, a director at trade ministry said. The price would put the export tax and levy for crude palm oil at \$18 and \$75 per tonne, respectively, unchanged from the current period. REUTERS

**China industrial data lift copper to 6-week high**



London: Copper prices touched a near-six week high after positive industrial production data from top consumer China boosted sentiment, but gains were constrained by weakness in the country's property sector and a higher dollar. Benchmark copper on the LME traded 0.4 per cent higher at \$8,265 a tonne. REUTERS

**Tin prices likely to rule firm for rest of 2023**

**STABLE OUTLOOK.** Rising demand, tight supplies owing to mining ban in Myanmar's Wa region may aid the trend

Subramani Ra Mancombu  
Chennai

Tin prices, which topped \$25,000 a tonne at close on the London Metal Exchange on Tuesday, are likely to rule firm for the remainder of the year and in the first quarter of 2024 on increasing demand and tight supplies, say analysts.

"LME tin price rallied somewhat this (last) week, approaching \$24,800 after a sharp drop to a six-month low at the end of October, amid broader bearish sentiment across base metals," said Tom Langston, Senior Market Intelligence Analyst, International Tin Association (ITA).

"...global supplies have tightened over the course of 2023 thus far... TSM (Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing) believes the semiconductor industry is close to a bottom and about



**BRIGHT SPOTS.** While a demand surge in the fourth quarter festival season seems uncertain, the Chinese electronics market and the solar sector continue to shine

to enter the next cyclical upturn," said research agency BMI, a unit of Fitch Solutions.

**SUPPLY FEARS** "Tin prices increased by 2 per cent in Q3 2023 from the previous quarter due to supply disruption concerns. The closure of mines in Myanmar, aimed at preserving

remaining tin resources, is impacting China's raw material supply," said the World Bank in its Commodity Outlook.

Tin mining and processing operations in Myanmar's key-producing region of Wa have remained suspended since August. The region accounts for nearly one-sixth of the global pro-

duction and is the main supplier for manufacturers in China.

"Consequently, the world's top consumer was forced to seek tin from alternative sources, driving imports from the Democratic Republic of Congo to soar by 24 per cent in the first three quarters of the year, raising buying competition in other global benchmarks," said the Trading Economics website.

**MYANMAR BAN**

"Along with rising tin demand from the semiconductor industry, the banning of tin mining in Myanmar's Wa region as well as Indonesia's tin ingot export ban will ensure the global tin market remains tight in the coming months," said BMI.

Langston said though a demand boost in fourth quarter festival season appeared uncertain, the Chinese electronics market

and the solar sector remained bright spots.

"Recent negative updates from Wa State have pushed back mine reopening estimates, bringing supply resilience into sharper focus as we look towards Q1 2024," he said.

BMI said it has raised "slightly" its tin price forecasts for 2023 to \$25,700/tonne from \$25,000 previously as prices remain elevated amid improving demand and tight supplies.

**REACHED A TROUGH**

"Global semiconductor sales data show that the decline in demand for semiconductors since mid-2022 has reached its trough, with sales increasing steadily since July 2023," the research agency said.

The World Bank, however, said prices of tin — which is used in photovoltaic installations, electric vehicles, and electronics —

are expected to decrease by an additional 4 per cent in 2024 from 2023. "Demand for tin, a key component of electronic manufacturers, is expected to remain subdued reflecting weak economic activity in major economies in 2024," it said.

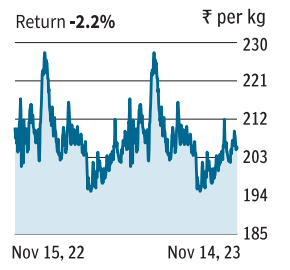
BMI anticipates the soldering metal prices to edge higher in 2024 as the seaborne market will witness a fall in supplies as Myanmar's mining ban extends and Indonesia's ban on tin export comes into force.

The research agency forecast global refined tin production to increase by 1.4 per cent year-on-year in 2023. It expects continued supply growth as new projects in Peru and Malaysia realise a full year of output.

It also revised its forecast higher for global refined tin consumption, which will likely grow by 2.3 per cent y-o-y in 2023 and 2.4 per cent y-o-y in 2024.

**COMMODITY CALL.**

**Aluminium futures: Lower exit target to ₹212**



Akhil Nallamuthu  
bl. research bureau

Aluminium futures (November series) on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) marked a high of ₹209.85 last Monday. But the rally could not lift the contract beyond that, and the price fell. On Tuesday, it closed at ₹205.1.

The contract is trading just above the 200-day moving average (based on the closing price of the continuous contract), which is currently at ₹204.50. As long as aluminium futures stay above this level, the bias will be bullish.

If there is a recovery, aluminium futures could touch ₹212. In our analysis last week, we had mentioned that the contract has the chance to rise to ₹215. But there is a loss of momentum, and the rally is likely to be limited to ₹212.

On the other hand, if aluminium futures slip below ₹204, it will most likely retest ₹200.

**TRADE STRATEGY**

We had suggested long positions at ₹206. The revised stop-loss for this is at ₹204. Since the contract fell after marking a high of ₹209.85, it did not hit our target of ₹215.

Hold this trade but revise the target as there is a loss of traction with the bulls. Bring the exit point down from ₹215 to ₹212. Retain the stop-loss at ₹204.

**Exporters see drop in coffee crop; order book looks slim**

Vishwanath Kulkarni  
Bengaluru

Coffee exporters see the domestic crop for 2023-24 starting October to be marginally lower than last year with erratic weather seen impacting the output of arabica coffee.

"We expect the arabica production to be around 80,000 tonnes and robusta at about 2.7 lakh tonnes," said Ramesh Rajah, President, The Coffee Exporters Association of India.

Per the Coffee Board's final estimates for the previous year 2022-23, the production of arabicas stood at 1 lakh tonnes (1t) and robustas at 2.52 lakh tonnes totalling 3.52 lakh tonnes.

For the current year 2023-24, the Board, in its initial

post blossom estimates, has projected an output of 3.74 lakh tonnes comprising arabica of about 1.13 lakh tonnes and 2.61 lakh tonnes of robustas. The Board's projections may see a downward revision going forward as the erratic weather — untimely and uneven rains coupled with prolonged dry spell during the peak monsoon season this year — is seen impacting the output.

**WEATHER IMPACT**

Hit by the weather vagaries, growers in Karnataka, which produces over 70 per cent of the country's coffee output, see a lower crop this year. "The erratic weather and rainfall patterns have a huge impact on plantation crop yields and quality," Mahesh Shasidhar, former chairman



**MAJOR HIT.** Erratic weather likely to affect arabica production in Karnataka, which accounts for over 70 per cent of domestic coffee production

of Karnataka Planters Association (KPA), said recently. He expects the 2023-24 output to be lower by about 5-10 per cent over the previous year's final estimates of the Coffee Board.

However, Ajay Thipaiiah, Chairman of Upasi Coffee Committee, said the crop may be lower by 25-30 per cent over the Coffee Board's initial estimate of 3.74 lakh tonnes, based on the prevailing crop

conditions and weather.

Most growers say a clearer trend on output would emerge as the ongoing harvest of arabicas, which has been advanced by over a month due to early blossom showers, makes progress.

The picking of early ripened arabicas has started in Karnataka but the current spell of rain is seen affecting the quality as the ripened fruits are splitting on the plant under the rain impact.

**EXPORTS DOWN 6.5%**

Rajah said the outlook for exports is not bullish as the current order books are looking slim as buyers are going slow due to the prevailing economic conditions in consuming countries and also due to the concerns over the pro-

posed regulations on imports of deforestation free products in the European Union.

"Our order books are about 5 per cent lower than the last year. In fact, last year's order books around this time were about 30 per cent lower than the historic normal," Rajah added. The shipments of new arabicas, which are currently being harvested, are likely to begin by the end of December.

Shipments in the current financial year (April 1-November 13) are down by about 6.5 per cent at 2.31 lakh tonnes over same period last year's 2.47 lakh tonnes. In value terms, the exports are up by close to 6 per cent at \$734 million for the period over same period last year's \$694 million.

**Crude oil dips on hopes of peak US production**

Reuters  
London

Crude oil prices dipped on Wednesday amid signs the United States, the world's biggest oil producer, is at peak production, offsetting positive crude demand signals from top consumer China.

Brent futures were down 34 cents to \$82.13 a barrel at 0949 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was down 40 cents to \$77.86.

China's economic activity perked up in October as industrial output increased at a faster pace and retail sales growth beat expectations, an encouraging sign for the world's second-largest economy.

The International Energy Agency joined the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies



(OPEC+) in raising oil demand growth forecasts for this year, despite projections of slower economic growth in many major countries.

Downward pressure on oil prices may come from the supply side, with the United States "likely at peak production for crude," while the delayed release of oil data from the world's biggest producer makes the investment situation more opaque, said John Evans of oil broker PVM in a note.

**FCI sells 2.84 lakh tonnes of wheat at average ₹2,234/quintal in latest e-auction**

Prabhudatta Mishra  
New Delhi

The government, through the Food Corporation of India (FCI), sold 2.84 lakh tonnes (1t) of wheat in the open market sale scheme through e-auction on November 15, which is about 95 per cent of 3 lakh tonnes of total quantity offered for sales to the processors.

After raising the offered quantity in the auction, the government has been able to lower the selling rates of wheat.

Against the reserve price of ₹2,127/quintal in the e-auction, weighted average selling price was ₹2,234, which is lower from ₹2,252 in the previous week, sources said.

The government announced a hike in wheat MSP

for next rabi marketing season (April-March) to ₹2,275/quintal from ₹2,125 and this resulted in some upward moments in retail prices.

However, by announcing that more wheat will be off loaded by it, the government has been able to put a brake on rising prices, the official said.

In Wednesday's results, prices came down to levels seen a month ago. In the auction on October 26, average wheat selling price rose to ₹2,311 from ₹2,260/quintal the previous week, prompting the government to announce measures to rein in prices.

The government has decided that the sale for wheat under the open market sale scheme (OMSS) will continue till March 31, 2024, and 101.5 lakh tonnes will be offloaded by then to keep the prices in



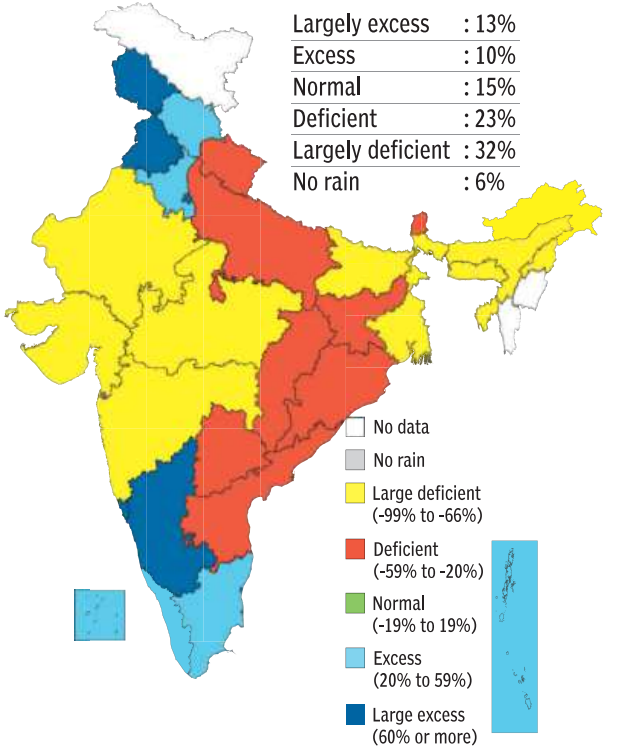
check," the Food Ministry said in October.

**KARNATAKA BIDDING**

Trade sources said despite offloading 1.3 lakh tonnes in northern States, the average selling price was same as national average whereas in South, the average selling price was about ₹2,204, with the exception of Karnataka where rates were higher compared to other neighbouring States.

**Post-monsoon deficiency continues**

Categorywise distribution of districts out of 712 for which data received (Nov 1-15)



Source: IMD

**'One Health' approach, 'key to sustainable growth of man, plants'**

KV Kurmanath  
Hyderabad

Food safety will be the primary goal of agricultural scientists and industry, said M Raghunandan Rao, Secretary, (Dept. of Agriculture and Cooperation, Government of Telangana) and Vice-Chancellor, PJTSAU, said.

Addressing the inaugural session of a four-day International conference on Plant Health Management, here today, he said: "The coming 50 years are crucial from plant health management perspective," he said.

Farmers should be trained in precision agriculture to ensure the targeted use of pesticides and fertilizers.

The conference is being organised by the Plant Protection Association of India at the PJTSAU.



Sarada Jayalakshmi Devi, Vice-Chancellor, Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University, said there was a need to identify resistant genes for various pests and diseases to develop high-yielding varieties.

**INCLUSIVE APPROACH**

"Excessive use of chemicals to control various pests and diseases is leading to minor pests becoming major ones. The focus should be on bio-control agents, natural enemies and eco-friendly ap-

plications towards attaining sustainability," she said.

In their presentations, agriculture experts from India and abroad called for a 'One Health' approach to achieve a well-rounded and sustainable growth of humans, plants, animals, soil and the environment.

P Sarath Babu, Chair of the International Conference on Plant Health Management 2023, said the One Health approach is inclusive, taking care of all the crucial aspects of agriculture, including plant health, soil health, animal health and the environment.

Sasirekha Rajendran and Ravi Khetrapal of APAARI (Asia Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions), said there were certain deficiencies in geographical distribution and partnerships as One Health initiatives were rolled out.

**'Hello Naariyal' call centre to help coconut farmers**

Our Bureau  
Kochi

The Coconut Development Board has officially launched 'Hello Naariyal', FoCT (Friends of Coconut Trees) call centre to cater to the needs of farmers in coconut harvesting and other plant management practices.

The call centre in Kerala functions from the headquarters of the Board in Kochi. The initiative will also extend its service to the traditional coconut-growing States of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka through the respective unit offices of the Board.

A total of 1,924 FoCTs (Friends of Coconut Tree) have registered in the call centre and its services will be available at Block Grama Panchayat level in respective districts for carrying out activities related to coconut cultivation,

including tree climbing, plant protection, harvesting, seed nut procurement, nursery management, etc.

The objective of the call centre is to improvise the activities of coconut sector by linking together the FoCT palm climbers with coconut farmers, farmer producer organisations, coconut entrepreneurs, and officials of various agriculture departments and institutions.

The Board said in a statement that skilled climbers interested in registering can do so through the call centre.

**Hyderabad to host National Spice Conference during Nov 18-19**

Our Bureau  
Kochi

The World Spice Organization (WSO) is set to host the 2nd National Spice Conference (NSC) in Hyderabad on November 18 and 19. As the technical partner of the All-India Spices Exporters Forum (AISEF), WSO aims to provide a crucial platform for discussions within the Indian spice industry, fostering collaboration between farmer producers, spice manufacturers and traders.

WSO is organising the conference in collaboration with GIZ and IDH-the Sustainable Trade Initiative. Rainforest Alliance is the sustainability partner for the event.

This year's NSC will revolve around the theme "Food Safe Spices: The Way



Forward to a Stable & Sustainable Income." The conference will offer a 360-degree perspective on food safety and its positive impacts on income and profit.

The business-focused segment will feature sessions on 'Increasing income through Sustainable & Eco-friendly Practices and Tech-Driven Farming,' 'Food Safety and Compliance,' 'Funding opportunities for farmers/FPOs,' 'Better input management and im-

proving productivity,' and 'Innovative Processes and Market Trends.'

**FOOD SAFETY**

Ramkumar Menon, Chairman, WSO, said, "The future of the food and agriculture sector depends on raising and stabilising farmer income, which fluctuates for many reasons. Farm revenue stability over a range of situations can increase the economic viability and sustainability of farms, ensuring food production for a growing population with rising food demand. The conference will focus on how food safety boosts quality and profitability for spice farmers."

The FPOs and NGOs participating in the event will represent nearly 25,000 farmers associated with the National Sustainable Spice Program - another flagship programme of the WSO.

**QUICKLY.**

**'20,000 exporters certificates to be issued this year'**

**New Delhi:** The Commerce Ministry, which automated the process for issuance of exporter status certificates, is expected to issue about 20,000 such documents by the end of this year, a senior official said on Wednesday. Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) Santosh Kumar Sarangi said this would be a big jump in the issuance of these certificates, and so far, they have issued over 40,200 status-holder certificates. PTI

**18.88 l members added under ESI scheme in Sept**

**New Delhi:** Employees' State Insurance Corporation has added 18.88 lakh new workers under the ESI Scheme in September, as per the latest payroll data. Around 22,544 new establishments have been registered and brought under the social security umbrella of the ESIC in September, a Labour Ministry statement said. PTI

# Modi releases ₹18,000-cr 15<sup>th</sup> instalment of PM Kisan

**DRAWS FLAK.** Congress leader Jairam Ramesh questioned the timing of PM-Kisan payment ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections

**Our Bureau**  
 New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday launched PM PVTG (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups) Development Mission, a ₹24,000-crore scheme to ensure holistic development of an estimated 28 lakh tribal population. Modi also released the 15<sup>th</sup> PM-Kisan instalment of ₹2,000 each to over 9 crore farmers across the country. At a function in Jharkhand on the occasion of Jan Jaatiya Gaurav Divas, Modi released ₹18,610 crore, including ₹16,220 crore towards 8.11 crore farmers, as the 15<sup>th</sup> instalment for the August-November period, which was due since August 1. Sources said that about ₹2,390 crore arrears from previous instalments were also released on Wednesday. "If a farmer applies for inclusion under PM-

Kisan, his first instalment is counted on the date of application even if it is verified late, and there are instances where some farmers have received three instalments at one go," said a source.

**RELEASE TIMING**  
 Congress leader Jairam Ramesh has questioned the timing of the release of PM Kisan instalment, two days before the next phase of polling in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. In a post on social media platform X, Ramesh queried whether the delayed release of payment was deliberate.

He also cited previous release dates for the August-November period, namely August 1 in 2020, August 9 in 2021, and October 17 in 2022. "It is being released two days before polling in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, 10 days before in Rajasthan and 15 days before in Telangana,"



**SLEW OF PROJECTS.** Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Jharkhand Governor CP Radhakrishnan (left), and Chief Minister Hemant Soren inaugurate various development projects during 'Jan Jatiya Guarv Divas' and Jharkhand Foundation Day celebrations, in Khunti, Jharkhand PTI

Ramesh posted. In August 2019, the PM-Kisan instalment of ₹15,310 crore for the August-November period was released to 7,65,48,863 farmers.

After releasing the instalment on Wednesday, Modi said the government has so far released over ₹2.75-lakh crore since the scheme's launch in

February 2019. He said "Modi has made a direct link with farmers without any intermediary" and farmers in agriculture and allied sectors are benefiting from the scheme.

**PM JANMAN**  
 Announcing the PM PVTG Development Mission, the Prime Minister said under the

PM Janati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN), the government would reach out to tribal groups and primitive tribes most of whom still dwell in the forests. He said that 75 such tribal communities and primitive tribes with lakhs of population who reside in more than

**TRIBAL UPLIFTMENT**  
 Prime Minister Narendra Modi also launched PM PVTG (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups) Development Mission, a ₹24,000-crore scheme to ensure holistic development of about 28 lakh tribals

22,000 villages in the country have already been identified. "Earlier governments did the work of connecting the figures, but I want to connect the lives, not the figures. With this goal, PM JANMAN has started today," Modi said. Speaking at the same event, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren said it is unfortunate that historians have not given a place to tribals till

date. "Today, a special announcement has been made for the primitive tribes. The upliftment of primitive tribes is the responsibility of all of us. If primitive tribes do not survive, our existence will be at stake," he said. Soren also appealed to Modi to come up with an action plan for the tribal people who get displaced when projects are undertaken in their habitat.

The Prime Minister also announced that four pillars — women power or Nari Shakti, farmers, youth and neo-middle class and poor are to be strengthened if India is to be made a developed country by 2047.

Launching the 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra', which culminates on January 26 next year, he said the government will go to every village of the country in mission mode and will make every poor person a beneficiary of government schemes.

## To push RuPay card use, NPCI stepping up the 'acceptance infra'

**Anshika Kayastha**  
 Mumbai

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is exploring ways to encourage payments via RuPay credit cards linked to UPI (Unified Payments Interface), which has been facing some roadblocks due to slower-than-expected adoption.

The government introduced UPI payments via RuPay credit cards in September last year. While allowing the linkage of RuPay credit cards on UPI has increased the acceptance infrastructure for such cards multi-fold, the biggest drawback is the inability of merchants and banks to differentiate between card on UPI and regular UPI transactions being made via QR

codes. "It was launched in a hurry and it is still a problem because when you go to a small merchant and pay by credit card, they are used to zero merchant discount rate (MDR). But if a credit card is used, they get less money," a senior payments industry official told *businessline*.

"Even in the case of bigger merchants, banks have tie-ups for fixed retailer rates but these have gone up because of RuPay and UPI. While these merchants have higher margins, they are also now questioning banks," they added.

Even as UPI transactions continue to be free, they are made via linked credit cards that attract the same interchange and merchant discount rate (MDR) as any other credit card transaction. Some sections of the industry also believe that

the effective MDR on card UPI transactions is higher than card PoS (point-of-sale) transactions due to the additional layer of intermediaries such as PineLabs which absorb part of the cost for pure card transactions.

**UPI VS CARD ON UPI**  
 The lack of prior classification between the transaction type has led several merchants, especially large offline merchants, to accept such UPI payments without realising the extra charge they attract. As a result, certain payment gateways and banks, at the behest of the merchants, stopped accepting payments via RuPay on UPI.

In response, the NPCI has now gone live with a mechanism, which once integrated by payment gateways

and intermediaries, will allow merchants and banks to identify and classify the two types of transactions and accordingly assess the charge.

**NPCI MECHANISM**  
 "NPCI has built the system, it is already live. It includes a return parameter, so if it is a credit card on UPI transaction, it alerts the system that it needs to be treated as a credit card transaction and not UPI," a source said adding that the update is received both at the merchant and bank end. NPCI introduced this on an ad hoc basis and the functionality has been live for the past month or so and should be adopted by most payment intermediaries over the next 15-20 days, sources said.

"It was done as an afterthought, so this has left a little sour note. We lost

some money which we could have avoided if we had been able to inform the merchants in advance," said the head of a payments platform that had to pay additional money to banks once credit card on UPI was introduced. He added that it would've been smoother if the NPCI had tested the ecosystem before introducing the feature rather than correcting it after launch.

However, fearing lower adoption of or merchant discrimination against RuPay UPI transactions and to encourage increased adoption, the NPCI is also exploring a fee income-based incentive model where payment gateways may compensate merchants for the higher charges on such transactions compared with the zero charge on regular UPI transactions, a source said.

## TRAGIC MISHAP



**LOOKING FOR THEIR BELOVED.** Rescue operation underway after a bus carrying passengers fell into a gorge in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district. At least 38 people were killed and 20 injured when a bus carrying passengers skidded off the road and rolled down into a 300-ft gorge on Wednesday. PTI

# International Solar Alliance making a huge impact in poor countries: Ajay Mathur

**bl.interview**

**M Ramesh**  
 Chennai

Last month, the Delhi-headquartered ISA held its sixth assembly was held in New Delhi, which was attended by hundreds of delegates—most of them from Africa. What came across during the conference was the immense contribution that ISA has been making to the less-developed world.

*businessline* caught up with Ajay Mathur, the Director General of ISA at the conference. Mathur, a chemical engineer and an energy industry veteran, spoke passionately about how the alliance is helping the world solarise. Excerpts:

**The International Solar Alliance has been in existence for the last seven years. How would you review these seven years?**

There are two notable points. First membership of ISA has increased tremendously. Today 116 already members, another 4 who will join between now and December. That is a huge plus point.

Second is, we have started making impact in the countries we are working. Right now, we are working in 55 countries on a variety of programmes — skill training programmes, helping them with regulatory and policy stuff, getting RE off the ground, helping them projects worth 9.5 GW, helping them pull in finance — by developing the Global Finance Facility, identifying start-ups which could become the Amazons of tomorrow. All of these have started making an impact.

**Can you give an example?**

On October 31, we dedicated four projects which we had completed (to

the countries housing them). One project in Fiji—a health facility was solarised. There is a school on a very remote island; this school was solarised, with battery, so that electricity is available all the time.

Like this, we have completed 11 projects, another 12 will be completed by December and there are four more planned. These are real live actions occurring in the least developed countries.

**How many GW have been installed so far?**

So far 1 GW of projects have been installed and another 9.5 GW are under construction. Each one of them is small, but their impact is huge.

**Tell me about a large project you have done.**

One of the larger projects is a 600 MW solar plant in Cuba. Cuba had never done a bidding process, we helped the country do an auction

for the first time. Previously rates were decided by negotiations. But we helped them come up with regulations for bidding. There was a payment security issue. The government came forward to provide a sovereign guarantee.

**AJAY MATHUR**  
 Director General, ISA

In Malawi, the Parliament used to stop functioning because there was no electricity. We helped them



set up a rooftop solar plant. Now, they are going in for the second phase.

**What happened in the closed door talks in ISA's Sixth Assembly?**

There were 3 or 4 key points. Lot of countries announced voluntary contributions. Many of them were developing countries—they saw the value of it, they saw the value ISA was providing.

Developed countries like Germany, Denmark and the US also contributed.

Roughly about \$ 3 million was pledged yesterday. Developing countries, typically pledged around \$ 10,000. Nigeria said it would set up a mechanism whereby some payment would be made to the ISA automatically every year. That was a huge endorsement of what we are doing.

Second point was—we had earlier done a programme for identifying start-ups in Africa. Now the assembly has approved that we will do a similar programme in Asia next.

**What are your plans for, say, the next five years?**

For 2024, we go ahead with projects we are working on. Now we are setting up Solar Technology Application Resource (STAR) centres in five countries this year and another five the next year.

These will be housed in existing institutions and universities. We will help them in financing and staffing, but capacity building will be done locally. We will be looking at models through which they can become self-sustaining over a period of time. We are helping these countries to develop infrastructure to enable solar to be sustainable.

Another big thing is the Global Solar Facility which we set up last year. The goal is to get (a corpus of) \$50 million; then we hire a private sector investment manager for Africa and then for Asia and Latin America. All these three silos will be managed by a parent company, which would be part of the ISA. We now have \$40 million pledged and we hope by the end of the year we will cross \$50 million. This facility will help set up decentralised solar applications. We hope that \$200 m will be the ultimate

size. This is a guarantee fund, leveraging will be very high, leveraging 14 times, and will be able to pull in investments.

**The ISA is in a unique position to do demand aggregation. You tried it for solar pumps. Are you pursuing it?**

No, unfortunately it did not work out. Yes, we tried it for solar pumps and we found a price that was 52 per cent of the existing market prices. Unfortunately, it did not take up from that auction was zero because each country has its own procedure for procurement.

What is possible, however, is something we are working on —is developing common standards. Common standards for pumps exist, common standards for solar cold storage exist, common standards for mini grids exist. We are working on common standards for solar rooftop systems.

## Fragile situation in South China Sea poses danger to Indo Pacific: Navy Chief

**Dalip Singh**  
 New Delhi

"The fragile security situation in the South China Sea, in addition to the happening of violations of established codes of conduct or confidence building measures, poses a clear and present danger to good order and discipline at sea," Indian Navy chief Admiral R Hari Kumar said on Wednesday at a time when China continues to assert itself in the Indo Pacific Region.

To meet the challenges, Admiral R Hari Kumar, in his inaugural address at the Indo-Pacific Region Dialogue (IPRD) 2023, stated India has prioritised creation of a participative and inclusive ecosystem for all on equal footing, develop interoperability and trust

among engaging partners and focussing on persistent problems in the region.

"The first is to support harnessing of the multitude of competencies that are resident amongst each one of our navies. To this end, we have prioritised creation of a participative and inclusive ecosystem for everyone to participate as an equal partner while tackling common maritime challenges," Indian Navy chief said.

"The second aspect is engaging partner nations to develop interoperability and trust. Trust cannot be surged or built in a day, a week or even a month. We understand that building trust requires sustained and continued engagement between friends. Initiatives such as IPRD are aimed at fostering such trust," he stated.

Similarly, he said, the final element is focusing on the persistent problems faced by regional nations on a day-to-day basis. Addressing these problems together make the multilateral constructs more output oriented.

**MILITARISED REGION**

This region, as per the Indian Navy Chief, is the most militarised in the world, fuelling the probability of ongoing competition becoming a conflict. "More than 50 warships of extra-regional forces remain deployed in the Indian Ocean Region for various missions, including for anti-piracy patrol off the Gulf of Aden, and the wider Indo-Pacific also has significant naval presence. Owing to the increased presence of multi-national forces, and differing interpretations of international laws, there is

this fear that the Region's 'Global Commons' can change to 'Contested Seas'," Indian Navy chief said before a gathering of senior officers of armed forces from other Indo Pacific countries, diplomats, experts, among others," he said.

Admiral Kumar expressed fear that this can have adverse consequences for security — physical, social as well as economical — and cited the past two instances including the disruption of Black Sea shipping lanes during the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. This conflict had disturbed grain exports from Russia and Ukraine, which together provide 30 per cent wheat, 75 per cent sunflower oil and 20 per cent maize of world's supply, he pointed out to highlight about the collateral damage.

## Alloy steel makers write to government to waive off duty on gas-based DRIs

**Abhishek Law**  
 New Delhi

Makers of alloy steel have reached out to the Steel Ministry seeking an import duty waiver on direct reduced iron (DRI) pellets that are made through the gas-based or hydrogen-based route. The waiver is sought as a part of Ministry's push toward green-steel-making.

Currently, the import of direct reduced iron pellets or hot briquette iron — both used towards steel making and emitting lower carbon compared to traditional steel-making raw materials — attract a 5 per cent duty. In most cases, Indian long steel producers and stainless-steel makers either use scrap or DRI pellets sourced



using coal-based technologies. Gas-based ones are generally imported for non-availability of merchant-based DRI gas plants.

The Alloy Steel Producers Association of India, in a letter to the ministry, has called for the waiver of import duty to be considered in the Budget and be looked at as efforts towards decarbonisation. "It is apparent that though Scrapage Policy has

been introduced, a recent Ministry study on scrap has revealed substantial shortage likely both in the short-term and long-term... (The) GoI may consider Nil (zero) import duty on import of DRI/HBI (gas-based)... This is in line with the Nil duty on steel scrap," the letter to the Ministry, reviewed by *businessline*, mentioned.

Use of scrap in steel-making is seen as a low-carbon emitting option. Scrap import here does not attract any import duty. Moreover, steel-makers in India also foresee a shortage of steel scrap in the coming days. India at present uses 25 million tonnes of scrap; majority of which is imported from UAE, the EU, the UK and the USA.

In this backdrop, the In-

dian industry body points out that making the imports free for DRI or HBI pellets made from gas-based or hydrogen-based tech would support the "clean metallic requirement" and enable creation of low CO<sub>2</sub> embedded raw material to reduce carbon footprints.

**TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT**  
**Mr. N SELVA KUMAR**  
 PH: 9820350726  
 selvakumar.n@thehindu.co.in  
**businessline.**

## QUICKLY.

No end in sight to rise in greenhouse gases: WMO



**New Delhi:** The concentration of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere once again hit a new record last year, and there appears to be no halt to this escalating trend, according to a new report by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). The global averaged concentrations of carbon dioxide, considered the most-critical greenhouse gas, were a staggering 50 per cent above the pre-industrial era (1850-1900) in 2022 for the first time. These levels have continued to escalate in 2023, it said. **m**

**Biden, Xi to meet amid economic tensions**

**San Francisco:** US President Joe Biden will meet Chinese leader Xi Jinping for the first time in a year on Wednesday for talks that may ease friction between the adversarial superpowers on military conflicts, drug-trafficking and AI. However, deep progress on the vast differences separating the world's economic superpowers, may have to wait for another day. Officials have set expectations low as Biden and Xi are set to discuss Taiwan, South China Sea, Israel-Hamas war, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and North Korea. **REUTERS**

**'UK plan to send migrants to Rwanda is unlawful'**

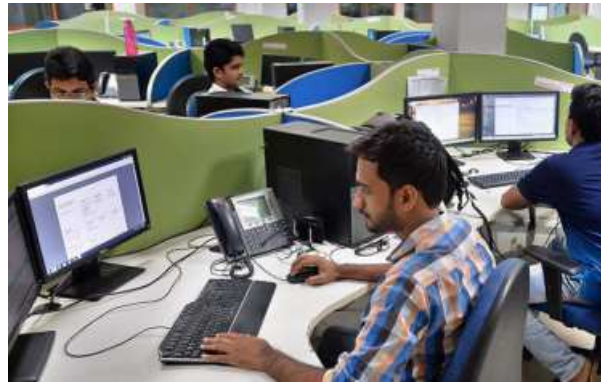


**London:** Britain's Supreme Court ruled on Wednesday that the government's contentious plan to send some migrants on a one-way trip to Rwanda is illegal, striking a major blow to a key policy of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's government that has drawn international attention and criticism. Five justices on the country's top court ruled unanimously that asylum-seekers sent to Rwanda would be "at real risk of ill-treatment" because they could be returned to the home countries they'd fled. **AP**

# As AI, Gen AI take centre stage, IT firms pump in money to get employees skilled

**MAJOR UPDATE UNDERWAY.** Wipro and Cognizant plan to invest \$1 billion each over the next three years

**TE Raja Simhan**  
Chennai



**SIGN OF THE TIMES.** IT companies' global clients are looking to adopt Artificial Intelligence and Gen AI in a big way

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) are ruling the IT industry, top IT vendors are investing huge amounts in the sector and also ensuring that employees are skilled in the domain rather than looking outside for skilled personnel.

Wipro will invest \$1 billion in AI in the next three years, while Cognizant will put in \$1 billion in three years in Gen AI.

IT vendors are also skilling their employees in both AI and Gen AI. TCS has trained over 1 lakh in Gen AI and Wipro nearly 2.80 lakh on Gen AI general principles. Cognizant has trained about 55,000 of its employees in Gen AI this year, and has an additional 40,000

employees from all levels of the company registered in pursuing training in Gen AI.

The companies are making the investment and training employees because clients globally are looking to adopt AI and Gen AI in a big way. Gen AI is part of every conversa-

tion with the clients, Thierry Delaporte, CEO and Managing Director, Wipro, told analysts recently.

In July, Wipro, while launching Wipro ai360, an AI-first innovation ecosystem, committed to make a \$1-billion investment in advancing

AI capabilities over the next three years.

A month later, Cognizant's CEO S Ravi Kumar said the company expects to invest approximately \$1 billion in Gen AI capabilities over the next three years. "With the number of projects we have underway focussed on cognitive and generative AI, we see this technology generating a new wave of opportunities for us," he said.

The main difference between AI and Generative AI lies in their capabilities. While AI is limited to analysing existing data, Gen AI generates new content from the patterns it has learned.

## TRAINING, A MUST

Skilling employees is important. Year to date, Tata Consultancy Services has logged 26.4 million learning hours and acquired 2.6 million com-

petencies, including over 350,000 high-demand competencies.

"We have over 100,000 Gen AI-ready employees today, and we are now investing in deepening their expertise further on this exciting new technology," Milind Lakkad, Chief HR Officer, TCS, told analysts while discussing the company's second quarter financial results.

Salil Parekh, CEO Managing Director, Infosys, said: "We continue to make investments in Generative AI as we look to help our clients navigate the way forward with deep capability. We have trained 57,000 employees in Generative AI."

India, being one of the largest providers of AI talent and a growing market for Gen AI solutions, is expected to generate over 300,000 Gen AI-related jobs by 2025.

## Aequis in deal to supply critical aircraft components to Airbus

**Our Bureau**  
Bengaluru

Aerospace components-maker Aequis has secured a contract from one of the world's largest aircraft-makers, Airbus, for the supply of critical components for models, including the A320, A330neo, and A350, over an extended period.

According to the agreement, it will make detailed parts with bench assembly

for wings, fuselage, and pylons for Airbus' popular aircraft models for over a period of 10 years.

However, information related to the deal value wasn't made public. The contract was signed recently by Gunnar Hansen, Head of Strategic Procurement, Detail Parts, Airbus Aerostructures; Nils Witt, Chief Procurement Officer, Airbus Aerostructures; and Mohamed Bouzidi, President Aerospace, Aequis.

## Flybig halts ATR operations as lessors move to repossess planes on rising dues

**Forum Gandhi**  
New Delhi

The ATR operations of regional airline Flybig have been suspended since November 8, and lessors have started the process of repossession through GIFT city over unpaid dues. The airline has five aircraft, including three ATRs, which operated on UDAN routes to the North East.

With the lessors repossessing the aircraft, operations to

the North-East will be impacted. Flybig's aircraft include three ATR 72-500/600 and De Havilland Canada DHC-6 Twin Otters.

One of the three ATRs was returned to the lessor last month, whereas lessors for the other two ATRs have started the aircraft repossession process. Aircraft leasing company Vman, which leased the ATR aircraft to Flybig, refused to comment.

According to reports, Fly-

Big had won 84 routes under the UDAN scheme, and planned a large base in Lucknow.

Flybig operated flights to at least eight North-Eastern destinations, including Guwahati, Tezu, Rupsi, Itanagar, Silchar, and Pasighat. According to information on flightradar24.com, operations from all these airports have been curtailed for the past few days.

# Israel raids Gaza's largest hospital where hundreds of patients are stranded

**Associated Press**  
Dubai

Israeli forces raided Gaza's largest hospital early on November 15, where hundreds of patients, including newborns, have been stranded with dwindling supplies and no electricity, as the Army extended its control across Gaza City and the north.

Shifa Hospital has become a symbol of the widespread suffering of Palestinian civilians during the war between

Israel and Hamas, which erupted after the militant group killed some 1,200 people and seized around 240 captives in a surprise October 7 attack into southern Israel. Israeli troops said they found weapons and terror infrastructure during an ongoing raid at one specific location within Al Shifa hospital in the Gaza Strip, said a senior military official on Wednesday.

The hospital is also at the heart of clashing narratives over who is to blame for the

thousands of deaths and widespread destruction in the besieged territory. Israel accuses Hamas of using Palestinians as human shields, while Palestinians and rights groups say Israel has recklessly endangered civilians as it seeks to eradicate the group.

Mohammed Zaqout, the director of hospitals in Gaza, said Israeli tanks had entered the medical compound and that soldiers had entered buildings, including the emergency and surgery depart-

ments, which house intensive care units.

"The occupation forces stormed the buildings," he said angrily over the phone. He said the patients, including children, are terrified. "They are screaming. It's a very terrifying situation... we can do nothing for the patients but pray." The Israeli military said it was carrying out a "precise and targeted operation against Hamas in a specified area in the Shifa Hospital". It said it warned "relevant au-

thorities in Gaza" that all military activities within the hospital must cease.

"Unfortunately, it did not." Israel says Hamas has a massive command centre inside and beneath Shifa, but has not provided visual evidence, while Hamas and the hospital staff have repeatedly denied the allegations. Hours before the raid, the US said it had its own intelligence, suggesting Hamas used Shifa and other hospitals and tunnels beneath them, to support mil-

itary operations and hold hostages.

The military said that the forces raiding Shifa have medical teams and are searching for hostages as part of the operation.

Israeli forces also claimed control of several key buildings and a downtown neighbourhood in Gaza City.

Most of the hundreds of thousands of people living in Gaza City and surrounding areas have fled after weeks of Israeli bombardments.

Hardly any aid has been delivered to the north, which has been without power or running water for weeks.

## DEATH TOLL

More than 11,200 people, two-thirds of them women and minors, have been killed in Gaza, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry in Ramallah, and two thirds of the territory's 2.3 million people have fled their homes. About 2,700 people have been reported missing.

## 'Ad volumes surged 19% during the first 39 matches of World Cup'

**Meenakshi Verma Ambwani**  
New Delhi



Average ad volumes in the first 39 matches of the ongoing World Cup were up 19 per cent per match, compared to the same number of matches in the previous edition in 2019, according to the latest report released by TAM Sports. The number of categories advertised and the count of brands advertised were also higher, compared to the first 39 matches of World Cup 2019.

"ICC World Cup'23 witnessed indexed growth of 19 per cent from the first 39 matches, in terms of average ad volumes per match compared to ICC World Cup'19," the TAM Sports report added.

Over 95 categories were seen being advertised in these first 39 matches of the ongoing World Cup, up 32 per cent, compared to the same number of matches in World Cup 2019. The report noted that the number of advertisers were almost similar to the previous edition of the World Cup.

Over 220 brands were advertised during the ongoing World Cup, up 30 per cent, compared to the first 39 matches of the previous edition of the cricket tournament, it added.

## TOP CATEGORIES

The top five categories contributed nearly 32 per cent to ad volumes during the first 39 matches in the ongoing World Cup. The

**Over 220 brands were advertised during the ongoing World Cup, up 30% compared to the previous edition of the cricket tournament**

categories included perfumes/deodorants, e-commerce-wallets, cars, aerated drinks, and pan masala.

Vini Cosmetics, which owns brand Fogg, FX Mart (Phonepe), Mahindra & Mahindra, Coca-Cola India and Hindustan Unilever, emerged as the top five advertisers during these matches in the ongoing edition of the World Cup. These top five advertisers cumulatively contributed 32 per cent to the overall ad volumes during the first 39 matches of World Cup 2023, the report noted.

"Over 50 new categories and over 195 new brands were advertised in 39 matches of the ICC World Cup'23, compared to the same number of matches in the previous edition in 2019," the report added.



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Exchange Traded Funds

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