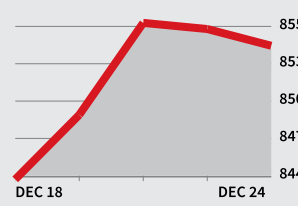


SENSEX 85408.70 (-116.14)



IN FOCUS

	LATEST	CHANGE
Nifty 50	26142.10	-35.05
P/E Ratio (Sensex)	23.57	-0.03
US Dollar (in ₹)	89.78	+0.13
Gold Std 10 gm (in ₹)	136080.00	+343
Silver 1 kg (in ₹)	218983.00	+7983

SCALING NEW HEIGHTS.

ISRO launches LVM3 Bluebird Block II, heaviest yet, to provide space-based cellular broadband connectivity directly p10

UNDER THE LENS.

IndusInd Bank faces probe by Serious Fraud Investigation Office into ₹2,000 cr derivatives fiasco p2

QUICKLY.

RESOLUTION PLANS
IBBI mandates disclosure of final beneficiary

New Delhi: To curb opaque bids, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has made it mandatory for resolution plans to disclose the ultimate beneficial ownership. An IBBI notification added a new provision in the regulation dealing with mandatory contents of a resolution plan. “Every resolution plan shall include a statement of beneficial ownership, covering details of all natural persons who ultimately own or control the resolution applicant, together with the shareholding structure and jurisdiction of each intermediate entity,” the notification said. p10



Bharti & Warburg to buy 49% stake in Haier India

NEW CALL. The deal marks Bharti’s entry into the consumer durables space

Our Bureau
New Delhi

In a strategic move, Bharti Enterprises and Warburg Pincus announced that they will together acquire 49 per cent in Haier India, wholly-owned subsidiary of the Chinese consumer electronics and appliance major Haier Group, for an undisclosed amount.

Post the completion of the transaction, the Haier Group will retain 49 per cent stake in its Indian subsidiary while the balance 2 per cent will be owned by Haier India’s management team.

EXPANSION PUSH

Sources said the transaction is expected to be closed in 3-4 months. The move will enable Bharti Enterprises to diversify into the fast-growing consumer electronics and durables space that is fuelled by higher disposable incomes and enhanced lifestyle preferences.

It will help the Chinese consumer electronics major accelerate investments and

BROADER FOOTPRINT

- Haier India is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Chinese consumer electronics and durables major Haier Group
- Haier Group will retain 49% stake; remaining 2% will be held by India management
- This will enable Haier India to accelerate expansion, strengthen local sourcing and manufacturing footprint



expansion in the country without certain regulatory compliances requiring government approvals.

“The partnership will bolster Haier India’s ‘Made in India, Made for India’ vision by deepening local sourcing, expanding manufacturing capacity, driving product innovation and accelerating market penetration. The new capital infusion will also enhance Haier India’s competitiveness across the entire value chain,” a joint statement added.

In an interaction with *businessline* earlier this month, Haier India said it was gearing up to make fresh investments of ₹3,500 crore

to set up its third manufacturing facility. It is also expanding its existing manufacturing facilities at Greater Noida and Pune. It added that it expected to end 2025 with revenues of ₹11,000 crore and scale it to ₹14,500 crore by 2026-end.

The company said it is among the top three consumer brands in the country and has been growing at a CAGR of 25 per cent over the past seven years.

Bharti Enterprises stated that in collaboration with Warburg Pincus, it looks forward to “playing a significant role in the evolving consumer durables industry and leveraging the collective

strengths of all parties to meet the needs of Indian consumers.” It added that it expects Haier India will further consolidate its standing as a leading brand in India.

STRATEGIC TIE-UP

“This investment reflects Warburg Pincus’ ability to leverage its pan-Asia franchise, deep local insights, global expertise and its expansive network to support and accelerate growth for leading companies across the region,” the private equity major added.

Haier Group said the strategic partnership aligns with its strategy of advancing globalisation through localisation. The Chinese company added that the move will significantly accelerate Haier India’s localised innovation and development.

Faisal Kawoosa, Chief Analyst and Founder, Techarc, said the move will enable Bharti Enterprises to broaden its horizons, offering digital living as a service at a time when consumers are seeking smart home solutions and intelligent devices.

\$6-billion Stonepeak buy of bp stake in Castrol triggers open offer in India arm

Janaki Krishnan
Richa Mishra
Mumbai/Hyderabad

Energy giant bp plc has announced the sale of a 65 per cent stake in Castrol Ltd to alternative investment firm Stonepeak for \$6 billion, triggering an open offer in Castrol India due to an indirect change in control.

Motion JV Co, part of Stonepeak Infrastructure Fund V, entities associated with it, and CPP Investment Board announced on Wednesday an open offer to public shareholders for up to a 26 per cent stake in Castrol India for a little over ₹4,990 crore at ₹194.04 per share.

Stonepeak specialises in infrastructure and real assets with approximately \$80 billion of assets under management.

The open offer is contingent on the underlying transaction going through.

Castrol Ltd, which holds a 51 per cent stake in Castrol India, is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Castrol Group Holdings, in which bp plc holds a 100 per cent stake.

Globally, the transaction will result in the formation of a new joint venture in which Stonepeak will hold a 65 per cent stake and bp 35



per cent. In India, the transaction will result in Stonepeak, through associated entities, getting indirect control over Castrol Ltd’s stake in its Indian subsidiary.

Both Castrol Group Holdings and Castrol Ltd have been identified as persons acting in concert, and according to the exchange filing, the shares tendered in the open offer may also be acquired by the parent company.

DEBT REDUCTION

The proceeds of the stake sale, which values Castrol Ltd at \$10 billion, will be used by bp to reduce net debt, strengthening its balance-sheet while advancing its strategy to focus on its downstream business.

The transaction is part of bp’s previously announced \$20 billion divestment programme. At the end of the

third quarter of 2025, its net debt was at \$26.1 billion.

Its stake in the JV will also provide exposure to Castrol’s growth plans while it retains the option to sell the remaining stake. Apart from Castrol India, the transaction also includes minority interests in other jurisdictions such as Vietnam, Saudi Arabia and Thailand.

“This does not directly affect the listed subsidiaries, share capital, governance arrangements or day to day operations. The subsidiary remains a separate legal entity with its own shareholders, board, and regulatory obligations,” said industry sources.

CASTROL INDIA

Castrol has a fifth of the lubricants market share in India and a high brand recall.

“It is a high dividend-yielding stock, and recent business results have been strong, and the company has been able to sustain them now for multiple quarters, and that focus will continue,” said a source.

The source pointed out that, regardless of the parentage, Castrol will continue to grow and invest in the business to deliver the best value for its shareholders.

US’ new H-1B ‘salary model’ to hit freshers, volume hiring

Sanjana B
Bengaluru

The US proposes to reshape the H-1B visa programme by replacing the long-standing lottery system with a wage-based model to attract highly specialised, high-paid talent while reducing dependence on mass recruitment.

The change is likely to make it harder for entry-level professionals and bulk employers to secure visas.

This final rule will be effective February 27, 2026, and will be in place for the FY 2027 H-1B cap registration season.

‘WAGE RANKING’

Nasscom reacted, stating that by assigning multiple selection entries based on Occupational and Employment Wage Statistics levels, the framework risks moving beyond the statutory focus on “speciality occupation” and towards wage ranking, potentially introducing regional and occupational distortions. It highlighted that wage levels vary by geography and role, and a weighted model could disadvantage small- and mid-size enterprises, start-ups, research institutions and university-linked employers who operate on moderate but market-appropriate wage structures.

“H-1B petitions at Level I and Level II wage bands frequently represent entry-level roles for US universities graduates in science, engineering, and computing disciplines. These positions form a vital part of the STEM talent pipeline, enabling early-career professionals to gain industry experience and progress into mid- and senior-level innovation roles. Under a wage-weighted system, restricting entry level opportunities could weaken the future talent base and discourage international students from



pursuing advanced education in the US,” the industry body added.

A sudden shift to a wage-weighted model would introduce uncertainty, increase compliance complexity and disrupt long-established workforce planning for small- and mid-size firms that align recruitment with academic calendars, client delivery schedules, and product release cycles.

Ankit Mehra, CEO and Founder of GyanDhan, explained that by linking visa allocation to salaries, the US government aims to attract highly specialised talent from sectors like AI, semiconductors and advanced engineering, while reducing reliance on volume-driven

hiring models. Freshers, recent graduates and professionals in lower-paid or generalist roles may face challenges as their compensation may not meet the higher thresholds under the wage-based system. Entry-level roles are particularly vulnerable and could emerge as the most disadvantaged segment.

This policy change could also disadvantage international graduates entering the workforce in non-elite or entry-level roles. Many US graduates begin their careers at salaries that may not qualify under the wage-prioritisation system.

While top graduates from premium universities and specialised programmes may find pathways, the change could narrow options for those relying on smaller employers or regional firms.

WAGE STRUCTURES

“Over time, this policy could push employers to reassess

wage structures for critical roles, especially where H-1B talent is central to business. That said, not all companies will respond by raising wages. Some may reduce hiring volumes, offshore more roles or shift work to other visa categories or geographies. So, the adjustment may be uneven,” Varun Singh, Managing Director, XIPHIAS Immigration, said. Specialist staffing firm Xpheno highlighted that H-1B visas are also leveraged by employers in other sectors like healthcare and financial services. In 2025, the top 103 healthcare institutions in the US received approval for a total of 7,975 H-1B visas, according to Xpheno’s analysis. The US healthcare relies on foreign doctors and nurses who are on H-1B visas. Doctors are, however, well-paid and in the higher salary range.

With inputs from Sindhu Hariharan in Chennai

YULETIDE GLOW



MERRY CHRISTMAS. About 5,750 stars lit up the Kazhakootam CSI Church, near Technopark in Thiruvananthapuram, to welcome Christmas. The church authorities said they had put up more stars this year than previously JAYAMOHAN A

G-Secs rally with yield dipping on RBI’s ₹2.90 lakh crore liquidity infusion plan

Our Bureau
Mumbai

● RBI EFFECT

Yield of the benchmark 10-year G-Sec (6.48% GS2035) closed about 9 bps lower at 6.54% against 6.63%. Price rose about 63 paise

The government securities (G-Sec) market on Wednesday was buoyed by the Reserve Bank of India’s announcement on liquidity injection measures, with the yields declining sharply.

Yield of the benchmark 10-year G-Sec (6.48 per cent GS2035) closed about 9 basis points lower at 6.54 per cent against the previous close of 6.63 per cent. Price of this security rose about 63 paise.

Bond yield and price are inversely co-related and move in opposite directions.

On Tuesday, the RBI had announced liquidity infusion measures for the banking system. It will conduct open market operation (OMO) purchase of G-Secs, aggregating ₹2 lakh crore and a USD/INR three-year buy/sell swap auction for \$10 billion. These measures come in the wake of the liquidity in the

banking system turning into a deficit due to outflows on account of advance tax and GST payments. The liquidity deficit stood at ₹61,636 crore as on December 23.

V Rama Chandra Reddy, Head of Treasury, Karur Vysya Bank, said the RBI’s liquidity infusion provided comfort to the G-Sec market, leading to a rally, with the yields declining sharply. Overall, from Tuesday’s peak of 6.70 per cent, the yield of the benchmark 10-year G-Sec has come down 16 basis points in two days, he added.

Venkatakrishnan Srinivasan, Founder and Managing Partner, Rockfort

Fincap LLP, said the liquidity infusion move triggered a sharp relief rally in the bond market, underscoring how strongly bond yields are responding to credible and large-scale liquidity signals.

“After the previous round of OMOs, yields had moved higher again as liquidity tightened and external pressures resurfaced. The rupee continues to face stress, uncertainty around the US tariff remains unresolved, and bond market participants increasingly believe that the current rate cut cycle has reached its terminal point, with a long pause before any further monetary policy action.

“These factors have kept investors cautious, leading them to price bonds conservatively. In this context, the sheer size of the liquidity injection provides meaningful near-term relief by reassuring the market that liquidity conditions will be actively managed,” he said.

Eggs on the boil on supply squeeze, demand surge

Soaring exports, increased winter consumption and production dip scramble-up the situation

KV Kurmanath
Hyderabad

It’s ‘eggflation’ and how! Cracking under supply shortfall and seasonal demand pressure, especially in the cold North, prices are skyrocketing.

Consumers are paying ₹10 per piece in some pockets of New Delhi, ₹8 in Hyderabad and around ₹7.50 in Chennai.

A protein push by the fitness-conscious has also contributed to higher prices in the major cities. Prices on e-commerce sites have risen significantly, too.

Farm-gate prices have been rising sharply since August, peaking in November-December.

The monthly index crossed the ₹700 per 100 eggs mark in major cities such as Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata, significantly higher than the ₹550 per



COSTLY CRACKS. The monthly index crossed the ₹700 per 100 eggs mark in Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata

100 eggs price three months ago, National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC) data show.

According to Suresh Chitturi, Chairman and Managing Director of Srinivasa Farms, “This (the high price points) should continue till March and with some correction beyond that too.” He said the price of eggs in India is still low compared to other global markets.

Despite the high prices,

farmers are not getting their due. “They are getting less than ₹6.5 an egg (at the farm-gate),” said Vangili Subramanian, President, Tamil Nadu Egg Poultry Farmers Marketing Society.

PRODUCTION DOWN

There is a general shortage in the domestic market because farm production is lower. And due to the current cold spell, consumption is high. Add to that the soaring exports with the

US, which is facing an egg crunch, procuring more, and the Gulf countries buying steadily.

Namakkal, which produces nearly six crore eggs a day, saw procurement prices soar to an all-time high ₹6.40 per egg on December 23, according to the NECC. Home to over 1,600 poultry farms, Namakkal supplies eggs across Tamil Nadu, Kerala, North India, and exports to Oman, Qatar, the UAE and South Africa.

At Namakkal, the benchmark price rise — which crossed ₹6/egg for the first time on November 17 and hit new highs seven times since — has been driven higher by continuous rain that damaged feed, especially maize, sourced from neighbouring States.

“This led to fungal infections and a 7-10 per cent fall in the output. Winter con-

sumption, festival demand and export orders have added 20-30 lakh eggs daily, pushing the prices upward,” said industry sources.

EXPORT DEMAND

Production costs hover at ₹4.50-4.75 per egg, with feed accounting for 60-70 per cent.

Industry sources said export demand holds the key to egg prices, which will most likely stabilise in January.

Divya Kumar Gulati, Chairman, CLFMA of India, apex organisation of the livestock sector, said: “Supply conditions are expected to stabilise gradually in the new year as production normalises, which should help moderate prices and support steadier demand.”

Inputs from Gayathri G in Chennai and Vishwanath Kulkarni, Bengaluru

YEAR IN REVIEW: OIL AND GAS.

KEY EVENTS
2025.

- US sanctions on Rosneft and Lukoil hit India's crude oil trade with Russia
- Centre notifies Petroleum and Natural Gas Rules, 2025, which includes a 180-day time limit for lease approvals and a single licence covering exploration, development and production
- India's total installed refinery capacity touched 258.1 mmtpa in April
- Natural gas consumption declined as rain impacted power demand. High prices of LNG also discouraged Indian buyers
- Petroleum product consumption grew by 1.4 per cent y-o-y in the April-November period, as against 4 per cent in the last 10 years

THINGS TO
WATCH OUT
FOR 2026.

- Indian oil and gas market is estimated at \$23.28 billion in 2025, projected to grow at a CAGR of 5.03 per cent through 2030
- India to achieve 20 per cent ethanol blending in petrol by FY26
- India is close to discovering large amounts of extractable oil and gas reserves in the Andaman basin
- Experts expect crude oil price to stay in \$60-\$70 per barrel range in FY27. This is attributed to rising production from non-OPEC producers like the US and Brazil, rising volume of oil on water, and fears of a further slump in global demand amid tariff wars
- LPG under-recoveries to reduce in FY27 compared to FY26

Balancing barrel, biz and blame

OIL SMOOTH. Indian refiners have adapted to sanctions, compliance needs, which will trickle into 2026

Rishi Ranjan Kala
New Delhi

The year 2025 has been an outlier for the Indian oil and gas sector as refiners deftly navigated geopolitical and trade tensions with the US imposing sanctions on two of Russia's largest oil companies, Rosneft and Lukoil. This turned out to be the first serious attempt that threatened to disrupt energy trade between New Delhi and Moscow.

Despite headwinds like an escalating conflict in West Asia, President Donald Trump's trade feud, and tightening of EU sanctions amid the Russia-Ukraine war, India skillfully managed these black swan events.

This was achieved by forging stronger trade ties with the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Oman; enhancing energy purchases from the US; bolstering business relations with Brazil and Argentina, and courting African suppliers such as Libya and Gabon.

A top government official said, "2025 has not been easy. Geopolitical tensions, sanctions and trade wars recalibrated energy flows. We are adjusting to this evolving scenario, whether it is reducing crude from Moscow or buying more from Washington. Despite this, refiners ensured availability at the right price. They acted as responsible corporate citizens ensuring that the common man is shielded from high prices of diesel, petrol and LPG."

The official emphasised that India will keep up the strategy — source the most economical barrels from non-sanctioned sources, while maintaining strategic autonomy and affordability.

RUSSIAN ROULETTE
Mohan Ramaswamy, CEO of Rubix Data Sciences, succinctly puts it. He noted that sanctions by the US and the EU are reshaping India's oil trade, reducing Russian dependence "slightly" and redirecting crude (oil) and fuel (refined petroleum products) flows toward compliant markets. "Sanctions,



TUG OF WAR. India navigated headwinds like an escalating conflict in West Asia, President Donald Trump's trade feuds, and tightening of EU sanctions amid the Russia-Ukraine war BUSINESSLINE

compliance requirements, and evolving regulatory regimes have also materially altered energy trade flows and export feasibility," he added.

Manas Majumdar, Partner and Leader, Oil & Gas, Fuels & Resources at PwC India, pointed out that the recent US sanctions and restrictions by the EU made Russian oil cheaper due to rising discounts, which helped Indian refiners import an estimated 1.85 million barrels per day (mb/d) by mid-2025. However, the recent sanctions are expected to reduce imports from Russia to around 500,000 b/d, or roughly 10 per cent of India's basket.

Supporting the narrative, ICRA's Vice President & Co-Group Head (Corporate Ratings), Prashant Vasisht noted that Indian entities have refrained from transacting with sanctioned entities in the past. "Accordingly, crude oil purchases from sanctioned Russian entities is expected to decline and increase from non-sanctioned

Russian entities especially considering discounts have increased post sanctions," he added.

DIVERSIFYING SOURCES

Majumdar pointed out that source diversification has happened with the addition of recent entrants like Argentina, energy security and reducing dependence on any single region.

"This broader pool enhances bargaining power, aids access to various crude quality grades, and insulates against sanction-driven disruptions. When Western sanctions constrained Russian supply chains, India pivoted swiftly to alternative suppliers in West Asia, the US, Brazil, and Africa — maintaining energy security and price competitiveness. This flexibility has so far enabled uninterrupted refinery operations," he added.

Plus, a key aspect is that India's significant crude volumes will only grow with its refining hub ambitions of 400 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) capacity. This grow-

ing buying power will only increase and hence, the need to look at multiple sources to get most volumes at best deals, he explained.

Vasisht emphasised that India has many sources for crude, including the geographically close West Asia and regions like Africa, Brazil, US, etc.

Diversification has aided in quickly shifting to other suppliers. India is the third-largest crude consumer and Indian entities command the heft and reach to procure a variety of crudes from all over the world.

To compensate for softer near-term Russian arrivals, refiners are expected to increase intake from a broader mix of suppliers — West Asia (Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the UAE and Kuwait), Brazil and broader Latin America (Argentina, Colombia and Guyana), West Africa and North America (the US and Canada), said Sumit Ritolia, Kpler's Lead Research Analyst for Refining & Modeling, recently.

Q & A.

Petroleum product
consumption growth
slows in 2025: ICRA

Rishi Ranjan Kala
New Delhi

As India pushes for higher consumption of clean energy products and services, consumption growth of diesel and petrol is slowing down, which is expected to continue in 2026 as well. ICRA Vice-President & Co-Group Head (Corporate Ratings) Prashant Vasisht breaks down the key trends re-defining the domestic oil and gas sector.

Edited excerpts:

What challenges were faced by the Indian oil and gas sector in 2025?

First is the slowdown in consumption growth of petroleum products (POL), at 1.4 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) in eight months of FY26, as against the historical 4 per cent in the last 10 years. This is due to more fuel efficient vehicles, expansion of CNG network and electric mobility.

Gas consumption also saw a sluggish growth this year due to shutdowns at some fertilizer plants and weak power sector demand. Additionally, gas production came down in seven months of FY26.

What are some of its achievements?

In April (2025), crude oil prices fell substantially due to unwinding of production cuts by OPEC+ amid slowing demand growth. Accordingly, Brent prices went down from about \$77 a barrel as on March 31 (2025) to \$65 by April 10. It has ranged between \$60 and \$70/barrel since then.

This led to an increase in marketing margins of OMCs on petrol and diesel sales. Further, the government an-



We expect crude oil price to stay between \$60 and \$70 per barrel in FY27 due to muted demand growth and increasing electrification

PRASHANT VASISHT

Vice President & Co-Group Head
(Corporate Ratings), ICRA

nounced a ₹30,000-crore compensation package for the three PSU OMCs in August 2025 to address LPG under-recoveries. Another highlight is the discovery of large deposits in the Andaman Sea.

Your outlook for 2026?

We expect crude oil price to average between \$60 and \$70 per barrel in FY27 due to muted demand growth as well as increasing electrification globally. We do not see a cut in capex plans. Domestic POL consumption is expected to grow at 1-2 per cent, and so is natural gas consumption.

bl.podcast

Scan the QR to listen to the full interview

<https://tinyurl.com/mpapshsm>



Safeguard measures in place to protect farmers' interests under India-New Zealand FTA

Press Trust of India
New Delhi

India has given a balanced and calibrated market access to New Zealand on apple imports under the free trade agreement, while putting in place adequate safeguard measures to protect the interests of domestic farmers, an official statement said on Wednesday.

A concessional customs duty of 25 per cent is available only within the specified quota for apple imports from New Zealand under the pact, for which the negotiations were concluded on Monday.

Both India and New Zealand have finalised the free trade agreement (FTA), and it is expected to be implemented in seven-eight months.

"Any imports beyond the quota will attract the full existing customs duty of 50 per cent, with no concession," the Commerce Ministry



said. In the FTA, it said, a balanced and calibrated market access has been extended for imports of apples from New Zealand to ensure that the interests of domestic farmers are fully protected. "FTA incorporates robust and multi-layered measures, all of which must be simultaneously satisfied for any imports to take place," it said.

The quota is also aligned with India's current import levels from New Zealand (7.3 per cent) in 2024-25, and is phased over six years.

The quota will be increased to 32,500 tonnes

(mt) in the first year, 35,000 mt in year two, 37,500 mt in year three, 40,000 mt in year four, 42,500 mt in year five, and 45,000 mt in year six.

IMPORT PRICE

There is also a provision of a minimum import price (MIP). For apples currently imported from other countries, the prevailing MIP is ₹50/kg, with post-duty prices around ₹75/kg. In contrast, imports from New Zealand under the FTA are subject to a higher MIP of ₹1.25/kg (about ₹112/kg), resulting in a minimum post-duty price of ₹140/kg after the concessional duty.

"This ensures that only premium-priced apples enter the Indian market, fully protecting domestic prices, while imports are diversified," the Commerce Ministry said.

Concessional duty-based access is also restricted to a defined seasonal window from April 1 to August 31, deliberately avoiding peak periods. Further, it said that the market access is explicitly linked to the implementation of the Apple Action Plan under the Agriculture Productivity Partnership.

India is the third-largest importer of apples globally at 557,989 mt in 2024-25.

‘India can boost exports to New Zealand after FTA’

Our Bureau
New Delhi

India has the potential to substantially increase its exports to New Zealand after the bilateral free trade agreement is implemented as it is under-represented in many products where it is a major global exporter and New Zealand is a large importer, per an analysis by research body Global Trade and Research Initiative (GTRI).

The pact, offering zero-duty market access to all goods from India, can benefit sectors such as processed foods, pharmaceuticals, machinery, electronics, vehicles, aerospace components, and furniture, it said.

In FY25, New Zealand imported goods worth \$711 million, which was less than 1.5 per cent of its total imports of \$50 billion. In contrast, China exported goods worth over \$10 billion to the country, the report noted.

For India, the challenge now is to pair the FTA with targeted export promotion, standards cooperation, regulatory facilitation, and logistics support, according to Ajay Srivastava, trade expert and Founder of GTRI. "For New Zealand, diversifying imports away from a single dominant supplier would strengthen supply chain resilience. India could unlock new trade across processed foods, pharma, machinery, electronics, vehicles,



aerospace components and furniture," he said.

TRADE OUTLOOK

Bilateral merchandise trade, at \$1.3 billion in FY25, is expected to grow manifold, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said at a media briefing on Monday.

The pact will be legally vetted by both sides, after which it will await nod from

New Zealand Parliament.

FOOD EXPORTS GAP

"India exported \$602 million of bakery products globally but only \$6.5 million to New Zealand. In food preparations, India's global exports are \$817 million, yet shipments to New Zealand are just \$7.7 million," stated the GTRI report.

In the pharma sector, New Zealand imports \$962 million in medicines, while India supplies only \$75 million.

"Data point to under-penetration rather than weak competitiveness, making processed foods, pharma, machinery, electronics, vehicles, aerospace and furniture prime growth areas," stated the report.

COCHIN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT LIMITED
CIAL/OPS/AMP/101
25.12.2025

TENDER NOTICE

Item rated E-tenders are invited from reputed agencies for the work mentioned below at Cochin International Airport.

Sl. No	Name of Work	Tender Fee	EMD	Completion Period	Etender Publication date and time
1	Appointment of Consultant for Preparation of Master Plan	Rs. 5,000/- + GST	Rs. 10 Lakhs	10 months	30.12.2025 at 17:00 hrs LT

Interested firms / agencies may register themselves on the online E-Tendering portal <https://etenders.kerala.gov.in> and then download the Tender documents. For eligibility criteria and other details, visit our website www.cial.aero.
Sd/- Managing Director

TATA POWER
The Tata Power Company Limited
(Mundra Thermal Power Station - UMPP)
Tunda Vandi Road, Tunda Village, Mundra, Kutch, Gujarat
Reg. Office: Bombay House, 24 Homi Modi Street, Mumbai - 400 001

NOTICE INVITING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

The Tata Power Company Limited hereby invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from eligible bidders for the following requirement for 4150 MW UMPP Mundra Thermal Power Station (MTPS):

1. Contract for structure/route modification of existing cable racks Ref 4100058424

For prequalification requirements, tender fee, bid security etc., please visit Tender section of our website ([URL: https://www.tatapower.com/tender/tenders-listing](https://www.tatapower.com/tender/tenders-listing)) and refer detailed Tender Notice for subject tender. Eligible bidders willing to participate in this tender may submit their Expression of Interest along with the Tender Fee latest by 31/12/2025.

Malabar Regional Co- Operative Milk Producers' Union Ltd.
Wayanad Dairy, Chuzhali, Kalgatta- 673 121
Ph: 04936 207245, 207398

22.12.2025

E-TENDER NOTICE

MRCMPU Ltd, Wayanad Dairy invites competitive tenders for the following.

No	Item Details	Last Date for Bid submission
1	SITC of Ghee Biscuit Machineries E-Tender ID: (2025_KCMMF_823624_1) Estimated Cost: Rs. 20.00 Lakhs (incl.all)	13.01.2026 5:00 PM

E-tenders shall be submitted through www.etenders.kerala.gov.in. For more details, contact Ph: 8281053617, 9656432736
Sd/- Senior Manager

TATA POWER
(Corporate Contracts Department)
The Tata Power Company Limited, 2nd Floor, Sahar Receiving Station
Sahar Airport Road, Andheri East, Mumbai-400059
(Board Line: 022-67173917) CIN: L28920MH1919PLC000567

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

The Tata Power Company Limited invites tenders from eligible vendors for the following project (Two Part Bidding) in Mumbai.

A) Project 1 - Transmission Tower foundation works for Line Division of 110 KV Malad Versova 1 & 2 Bhagat Singh Project.

i. Package 1: Tower Foundations (Inside Malad Creek - 08 Nos Tower Foundations) of 110 KV Malad Versova line No. 1 & 2 for Coastal Road Project (Package Ref No. CC26SVP039)

ii. Package 2: Tower Foundations (Inside Malad Creek - 04 Nos Tower Foundations) of 110 KV Malad Versova line No. 1 & 2 and 110KV Malad Esselworld line No. 1 & 2 for Coastal Road Project (Package Ref No. CC26SVP040)

iii. Package 3: Tower Foundations inside Marshy Land (08 Nos Tower Foundations) of 110 KV Malad Esselworld line No. 1 & 2 Line and 110 KV Malad Versova line No. 1 & 2 for Coastal Road Project (Package Ref No. CC26SVP041)

iv. Package 4: Tower Foundations inside Marshy Land (03 Nos Tower Foundations) for 110 KV Malad Versova line No. 1 & 2 for Bhagat Singh Nagar Cable Bridge (Package Ref No. CC26SVP042)

Interested & eligible vendors for above Project to submit Tender Fee, Authorization Letter before 15:00 Hrs. Tuesday, 6th January 2026. Vendors may participate in one or more than one tender package mentioned above.

For detailed NIT, please visit Tender section on website <https://www.tatapower.com>. For detailed NIT, please visit Tender section on website <https://www.tatapower.com>. Also, all future corrigendum's if any, to the said tender will be published on Tender section of above website (Tata Power → Business Associates → Tender Documents) only.

Invesco Mutual Fund

Invesco Asset Management (India) Pvt. Ltd.
(CIN: U67190MH2005PTC153471), 2101-A, 21st Floor, A Wing, Marathon Futorex, N. M. Joshi Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai - 400 013

Telephone: +91 22 6731 0000, Email: mfservices@invescoindia.com; www.invescomutualfund.com

Cautionary Notice

Recruitment Scam Alert

This is to caution the public that unscrupulous individual(s) are attempting to deceive job seekers by falsely claiming association with Invesco Asset Management (India) Pvt. Ltd. ('**IAMI**') and soliciting payments under the pretext of offering employment with IAMI.

The recruitment process at IAMI is conducted strictly in accordance with internal policies and procedures. At no stage does IAMI, its officials, or representatives demand any money, security deposit, or other payment from candidates. Any such demand is fraudulent and should be treated with utmost caution.

The general public is advised to stay alert and not fall prey to such unscrupulous persons / agencies. These offers are made by unauthorized persons. Neither Invesco Mutual Fund, nor Invesco Asset Management India (IAM), nor any of their executives are associated with such individuals in any manner whatsoever. The company shall not be responsible or liable for any losses incurred by anyone acting on or relying upon such unauthorized communications.

For any information on our products/services, investors can visit our website at <https://invescomutualfund.com/> or contact IAMI officials at mfservices@invescoindia.com

For Invesco Asset Management (India) Private Limited (Investment Manager for Invesco Mutual Fund)

Sd/-
Saurabh Nanavati
Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer

Date: December 24, 2025

Mutual Fund investments are subject to market risks, read all scheme related documents carefully.

Gadgets that made it to Santa’s ‘nice’ list 2025!

DIGITAL ARMOURY. From sleek everyday tools to powerhouse gadgets, this year’s standouts aren’t just about specs — they’re about making life smoother, smarter & a little more fun

Mahananda Bohidar

Looking back at 2025, the devices that left the strongest impression aren’t necessarily the flashiest or the most expensive — they’re the ones that understand how we live, work and create. From gadgets that make everyday tasks effortless to tools that support productivity and creativity, this year has shown how thoughtful engineering and smart design can make technology feel intuitive rather than intimidating. The common thread across all our favourites is practicality meeting style, proving that the most compelling tech isn’t just about pushing boundaries — it’s about enhancing life in meaningful, everyday ways.

SMARTPHONES.

NO-NONSENSE FLAGSHIP SAMSUNG GALAXY S25 ULTRA

The refined design on this powerful, capable fan favourite feels lighter and more comfortable despite the massive 6.9-inch display. Powered by the Snapdragon 8 Gen Elite for Galaxy and paired with a 12 GB RAM, it handles everything from heavy multitasking to gaming without breaking a sweat. Where it truly pulls ahead, though, is productivity — thanks to deep Gemini integration, granular UI customisations, practical AI tools such as Live Translate across calls and Google Meet and more. Add to that a versatile quad-camera setup and a dependable 5,000 mAh all-day battery life, and the S25 Ultra emerges as the most well-rounded Android flagship of the year — powerful, capable and genuinely useful in day-to-day life.

SEXIEST NEW DESIGN APPLE IPHONE AIR

No other smartphone this year has overhauled design aesthetics the way the iPhone Air has. It is super slim at 6.1 mm and weighs under 165 grams — it is featherlight yet unmistakably premium, with a matte aluminium frame and frosted glass back that looks refined, and is unmistakably Apple. The muted colour palette, especially the light gold and cloud white finishes, enhances its minimalist appeal, while the expansive 6.5-inch Super Retina XDR OLED display with 120 Hz ProMotion sits seamlessly within the impossibly slim chassis. In a year crowded with bulky camera bumps and overdesigned frames or rear panels, the iPhone Air stands out by doing less, and better!

FLIP YOU CAN’T SKIP! SAMSUNG GALAXY Z FLIP7



Google Pixel Watch 4



iPhone Air

This one’s always been a head-turner — marrying form, function, and everyday usability really well! The standout 4.1-inch Super AMOLED cover display stretches edge to edge and is no longer just for glances — you can reply using a full keyboard, run apps such as Google Maps and YouTube, and even use Interpreter mode without opening the phone. Inside, the 6.9-inch Dynamic AMOLED display with a 120 Hz refresh rate is bright, fluid and a pleasure to use. Powering it all is the Exynos 2500 chip with 12 GB RAM, which delivers smooth performance without heating issues, while the larger 4,300 mAh battery comfortably lasts a full day. Add to that the dependable 50 MP cameras that benefit from Flex Mode shooting, practical Galaxy AI tools baked into daily workflows, an IP48 rating and Samsung’s promise of seven years of updates, and the Flip 7 emerges as the most complete, confident and genuinely usable flip phone you can buy this year. The only aspect in which our other favourite — the Moto Razr 60 Ultra — has an edge over the Samsung Flip is that we can directly play video games on the cover screen with the Moto, a fea-



Sennheiser HDB 630



Asus ROG Strix Scar 16



Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra

ture that Samsung didn’t have at the time of review.

CREATOR’S FAVOURITE IPHONE 17 PRO

The iPhone 17 Pro (& Pro Max) continues to be the go-to for content creators because it remains one of the most reliable, polished tools for shooting, editing and publishing content straight from a smartphone. The triple 48 MP camera system, including the new tetraprism telephoto, delivers consistent colour science and dependable results across shots, while features such as Dual Capture now make it especially appealing for vloggers who want to stay on camera while filming their surroundings. The 6.3-inch Super Retina XDR display with 120 Hz ProMotion and 3,000 nits peak brightness makes framing, reviewing and editing footage outdoors effortless, and the A19 Pro chip handles 4K video editing smoothly. Add to that the upgraded 18 MP Center Stage front camera, strong battery life even on heavy shooting days, and Apple’s tightly integrated ecosystem for editing and sharing, and the iPhone 17 Pro stands out as a creator-friendly device that also offers

great workflow efficiency.

AUDIO DEVICES.

AUDIOPHILE’S GO-TO SENNHEISER HDB 630

These headphones come closest to delivering a true reference-grade listening experience in a wireless form. Unlike bass-forward rivals, it prioritises a neutral, well-balanced sound signature with excellent separation, a wide soundstage and tonal accuracy that stays faithful to the original mix. The inclusion of the BTD 700 USB-C dongle unlocks high-quality codecs such as aptX Adaptive and aptX HD, making wireless hi-res audio genuinely worthwhile.

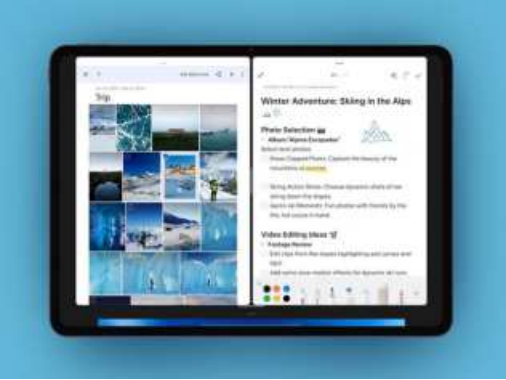
Options for USB-C and analogue wired playback up to 24-bit/96 kHz add versatility to listening options. Features such as customisable EQ, cross-feed, refined ANC and the promise of 60-hour battery life further strengthen its audiophile credentials. In a market dominated by convenience-first flagships, the HDB 630 stands out for putting sound fidelity, control and flexibility first, making it the most compelling choice for discerning



ASUS Zenbook A14



Samsung Galaxy Flip 7



OnePlus Pad 3

listeners in 2025.

BEST BUDS TO PLUG IN APPLE AIRPODS PRO 3

The only thing we didn’t love about the latest AirPods Pro is how similar the audio quality is to that of the previous generation. Which by itself isn’t a downside because the acoustics on the AirPods Pro 2 are stellar! With class-leading Active Noise Cancellation that’s noticeably more effective than the previous generation, richer and more spacious sound powered by Apple’s H2 chip and high-definition Spatial Audio with dynamic head tracking, these deliver an immersive listening experience. Add to that the genuinely innovative upgrades such as heart rate sensing during workouts and Live Translation make it hard to find a competitor to match this in the market. Also, with improved call clarity and a reliable 8-hour battery life with ANC on, this one’s an easy winner.

LAPTOPS & TABLETS

GAMER’S ULTIMATE WINGMAN ASUS ROG STRIX SCAR 16



iPhone 17 Pro



Apple AirPods Pro 3 hero

The ASUS ROG Strix Scar 16 delivers uncompromising, next-gen performance exactly where it matters most — raw power, visual fluidity and sustained stability under pressure.

With Intel’s Core Ultra 9 275HX paired with an NVIDIA GeForce RTX 5080 (175 W), it powers through modern AAA titles and competitive shooters alike, while the 16-inch Nebula HDR mini-LED display with 240 Hz refresh rate, G-Sync and 100 per cent DCI-P3 coverage ensures every frame looks sharp and colour-accurate. Thoughtful touches, such as tool-less RAM and SSD upgrades, advanced cooling with a vapour chamber and liquid metal, and a keyboard tuned for fast and precise inputs, make it a machine built not just to perform, but to endure long gaming sessions. Heavy, expensive and power-hungry though it is, the Strix Scar 16 earns its place in 2025 by being the kind of no-compromise ally serious gamers want at their side.

EVERYDAY LAPTOP PERFECTED ASUS ZENBOOK A14

We chose the ASUS Zenbook A14 as a top contender for an all-

rounder Windows laptop because it nails the balance that most ultraportables struggle to achieve — extreme portability without compromising everyday performance. At just 980 g, it’s effortlessly light, yet the 14-inch Lumina OLED display, excellent keyboard, and Snapdragon X performance make it genuinely capable for real work, not just travel-friendly tasks. Add to that an outstanding two-day battery life, a compact fast charger and thoughtful AI features baked into Windows, and you get a laptop that feels modern, responsive and future-ready. While not flawless, the Zenbook A14 stands out in a crowded field by delivering a rare mix of comfort, efficiency and endurance, making it one of our favourite laptops this year.

THE TABLET FOR ALL TIME! ONEPLUS PAD 3

This one earns its spot as the best all-rounder tablet without burning a hole in your pocket! The OnePlus Pad 3 strikes a satisfying balance between performance, display, battery and value. Its massive 13.2-inch LCD display with 144 Hz refresh rate makes content look seamless, while the Snapdragon 8 Elite processor with up to 16 GB RAM ensures smooth multitasking, gaming, and creative work. The 12,140 mAh battery keeps you powered for over a day of mixed use, and the eight-speaker setup delivers punchy, well-rounded audio for entertainment. Sleek design, solid software optimisations such as OxygenOS 15, and optional accessories such as the Smart Keyboard make it versatile for both work and play, offering a premium tablet experience at a price that’s far more accessible than flagship competitors.

THE SMARTWATCH THAT WON US OVER!

GOOGLE PIXEL WATCH 4

The Google Pixel Watch 4 has quickly become our favourite smartwatch thanks to its perfect mix of style, functionality and battery endurance. Its curved AMOLED display is both elegant and practical, offering crisp visuals and easy readability from any angle. Powered by the Snapdragon W5 Gen 2 processor, the watch handles daily tasks, notifications and fitness tracking with smooth efficiency, while Gemini AI makes interactions with the watch intuitive and responsive. Health and activity monitoring are thorough and reliable, covering heart rate, sleep and a wide range of workouts. What really sets it apart is the long-lasting battery, a key feature that most premium smartwatches still fall short on. The watch easily offers two days of tracking, while connected to the internet, and frequent display-on time throughout the day!

WHAT’S HOT: GADGETS.

Smart snapper

The **motorola edge 70** features a 6.7-inch AMOLED display with a 120 Hz refresh rate and up to 4,500 nits peak brightness. The camera hardware includes a triple



rear setup with a 50 MP OIS main camera, a 50 MP ultra-wide and macro camera, and a 50 MP front camera, with support for 4K 60 fps video recording on both setups. The phone comes with 8 GB RAM and 256 GB storage. It is powered by the Snapdragon 7 Gen 4

processor with a vapour chamber cooling system and runs on Hello UI which is based on Android 16 with three OS upgrades and four years of security updates. The device packs a 5,000 mAh battery with 68 W wired charging, 15 W wireless charging and reverse charging. The motorola edge 70 is priced ₹29,999 and is offered in three Pantone curated colour options — Bronze Green, Lily Pad and Gadget Gray.

Stealth wellness

The **boAt Valour Ring 1** is a lightweight smart ring built with a titanium frame, with a carbon black matte finish. Featuring a minimalist design, the gadget weighs under 6



grams, and comes with multiple size options for the perfect fit. Health and fitness capabilities include round-the-clock heart-rate monitoring, heart rate variability insights, blood oxygen saturation measurement, step and activity tracking, skin-temperature insights and stress monitoring. It also offers advanced sleep tracking with nap detection and supports more than 40 dedicated sports modes, which can be accessed via the boAt Crest app. Battery life is rated at up to 15 days, with under-90-minute charging via a Type-C dock. The boAt Valour Ring 1 is priced ₹12,999.

Clean compute

The **ASUS VM670KA** is an all-in-one desktop designed for everyday work and entertainment, featuring a 27-inch IPS display with 178-degree viewing angles, touch



support, and TÜV Rheinland certification for reduced eye strain. Camera duties are handled by a retractable 5 MP built-in webcam with IR function to support Windows Hello. AI features include two-way AI-powered noise cancellation to reduce background noise during video calls. The system is powered by the AMD Ryzen AI 7 350 processor and comes with 16 GB RAM and a 1 TB storage. Connectivity includes multiple USB ports, HDMI-in support, and Wi-Fi 7 for faster wireless performance. Audio is delivered via dual 5 W stereo speakers with Dolby Atmos support. Running on Windows 11 Home, the desktop is priced ₹1,09,990 onwards.

Power packed

The **OnePlus 15R** features a 6.83-inch 1.5K AMOLED display with a 165 Hz refresh rate and up to 1,800 nits peak brightness. Camera hardware includes a 50MP Sony



IMX906 main camera, an 8 MP ultra-wide camera with a 112-degree field of view, and a 32 MP autofocus front camera, with support for up to 4K 120 fps video recording. AI features include Plus Mind, AI Writer, AI Recorder, AI Portrait Glow and Google Gemini integration. The device is powered by the Snapdragon 8 Gen 5 Mobile Platform and runs on OxygenOS 16. A 7,400 mAh battery supports 80 W SUPERVOOC fast charging and advanced Cryo Velocity cooling. The OnePlus 15R’s price starts at ₹44,999.

TECH DIGEST.

Team Technophile

New generative AI features on Adobe Firefly

Adobe has announced a set of updates to its Firefly generative AI platform, adding new tools for video creation, editing and enhancement.



A key addition is the “prompt to edit” feature for video, which allows users to make targeted changes to an existing AI-generated clip instead of regenerating it entirely. Users can remove objects or people, replace backgrounds, adjust lighting conditions or modify framing using text instructions. These edits are applied directly to the original clip, reducing the need for repeated generations.

Firefly’s video tools also now support camera motion control. Users can upload

a reference video to guide how the camera should move within a generated scene, while anchoring the motion to a chosen starting frame.

Adobe is also expanding Firefly’s video enhancement capabilities through the addition of Topaz Astra, a third-party video upscaling model now available in Firefly Boards. The tool allows users to upscale footage to 1080p or 4K, restore older or low-resolution clips and improve overall clarity. Multiple videos can be queued for upscaling, allowing users to continue working on other tasks at the same time.

Alongside video updates, Firefly now includes access to additional image-generation models. This includes FLUX.2 from Black Forest Labs, which supports photorealistic image generation, improved text rendering and the use of multiple reference images. The

model is available across Firefly’s image tools and in select Adobe applications, with broader availability planned in the coming months.

Adobe has also launched the public beta of Firefly video editor, a browser-based editing environment designed to assemble AI-generated clips with music, visuals and user-uploaded footage. The editor offers a multi-track timeline for traditional video editing as well as text-based editing for spoken content, allowing users to rearrange or trim clips by editing transcripts. Finished videos can be exported in different formats, including vertical and widescreen layouts.

As part of a limited-time promotion, Adobe said users on select Firefly subscription plans will have unlimited image and video generations until January 15.

Google rolls out annual Pixel upgrade programme in India

A new initiative by Google allows customers to purchase select Pixel smartphones on a monthly instalment



plan and upgrade to a newer model annually. The programme starts at ₹3,333 per month and is available from

December 19. Under the scheme, customers can buy eligible Pixel devices on a 24-month no-cost EMI plan. After completing a minimum of nine monthly payments, users can exchange their existing Pixel

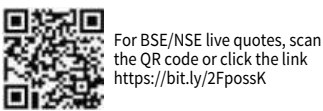
handset for a newer eligible model while continuing to pay the same EMI amount. The exchange includes an assured buyback, provided the device powers on and meets basic functional requirements, regardless of cosmetic condition.

The programme is being offered in partnership with Cashify, Bajaj Finance Ltd and HDFC Bank, and will be available at select retail outlets across India until June 30, 2026. At the time of upgrade, which must take place between the ninth and 15th EMI payments — Cashify credits the remaining loan balance to the customer’s bank account, allowing the existing loan to be closed without pre-closure charges. Customers are then enrolled in a new

24-month EMI plan for the upgraded Pixel device.

Eligible devices under the programme include the Pixel 10, Pixel 10 Pro, Pixel 10 Pro XL and Pixel 10 Pro Fold. Customers must enrol in the upgrade programme through the Cashify website within 30 days of purchasing the phone.

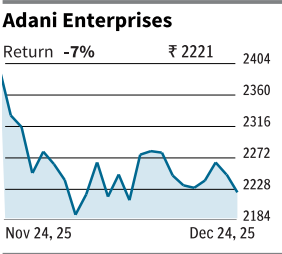
As part of the enrolment, users may also receive an exchange bonus of up to ₹7,000 when trading in an existing device. In addition, new Pixel purchases under the scheme come with limited-period trial subscriptions to select Google services such as Google AI Pro, Google One Premium, Fitbit Premium and YouTube Premium, depending on the model purchased.



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

QUICKLY.

Adani Enterprises board
okays ₹500 cr NCD issue



Bengaluru: The board of Adani Enterprises on Wednesday approved and adopted the draft prospectus with respect to public issuance of non-convertible debentures (NCDs) of face value of ₹1,000 each amounting up to ₹ 500 crore with an option to retain over-subscription up to ₹500 crore, aggregating up to ₹ 1,000 crore. The stock of Adani Enterprises closed 1.17 per cent lower at ₹2,221.55 on the BSE. OUR BUREAU

NHAI gets SEBI nod for
Raajmarg Infra InvIT

New Delhi: State-owned NHAI-sponsored Raajmarg Infra Investment Trust (RIIT) has received approval from SEBI as an Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT), an official statement said. The statement said the Public InvIT aims to unlock the monetisation potential of the National Highway assets while creating a high-quality, long-term investment instrument primarily targeting retail and domestic investors. The initiative marks an important step in broadening public participation in the national highway infrastructure growth story, it added. Earlier, NHAI had incorporated Raajmarg Infra Investment Managers as the Investment Manager for the RIIT. NRVVMK Rajendra Kumar, Member (Finance), NHAI, will be the MD and CEO (Additional Charge) of the investment manager company. **PTI**

BROKER'S CALL.

Ambit Capital

NORTHERN ARC (BUY)

Target: ₹326
CMP: ₹251.90
Market is undermining Northern Arc Capital's NIM/ROE improvement prospects, likely due to legacy wholesale mix and recent high credit costs. But since pivoting to retail (D2C) in FY22, spread/ROE expanded 675 bps/410 bps. Continued transition to high-margin D2C will drive 15.7 per cent ROE by FY28E. Long-vintage experience in finance placement and fund management will aid fee income, strengthening ability to absorb structurally higher credit cost while sustaining ROE>COE. Reducing overleveraging among bottom-of-pyramid would aid credit cost improvement (FY26-28E). Building vehicle/affordable home finance expertise through the intermediate retail route provides an option to add D2C growth levers. Northern Arc is structurally transitioning from wholesale to retail-focused lender, a journey that entails structural ROE of 15 per cent vs about 5 per cent (FY21). While the current business model can aid 41 per cent EPS CAGR (FY26-28E), longer-term growth longevity levers exist in scaling up vehicle/affordable home finance. About 50-60 per cent valuation discount to peers undermines improving prospects. Our fair value factors 20 per cent AUM CAGR/15 per cent average ROE (FY26-36E), implying 1.2x/10x FY27E BVPS/EPSEs.
Risks: Slower asset-quality recovery and slower D2C growth.

ICICI Securities

ORKLA INDIA (BUY)

Target: ₹800
CMP: ₹612
Orkla India, led by its strong legacy brands MTR and Eastern, enjoys a dominant market share in its core States of Karnataka, Kerala, AP and Telangana. Its deep understanding of regional tastes gives it a strong competitive moat. Operating across spices and convenience foods, it is expected to deliver steady domestic growth driven by increasing household penetration in core markets and product portfolio expansion. Exports (21 per cent of revenue) remain a key growth lever with 22 per cent share in branded spice exports and rising demand from the global Indian diaspora. Margin expansion and cash-flow generation are expected from operational efficiencies and a better product mix, driving a meaningful improvement in underlying ROCE. We expect revenue/EBITDA/PAT CAGR of 9/11/10 per cent over FY25-28E, driven by 6 per cent volume growth. Export revenue is expected to grow at 12 per cent CAGR, while domestic revenue should grow at about 8 per cent CAGR over FY25-28E. Better execution and control on overheads to improve EBITDA margin by 100bps over FY25-28E to 17.6 per cent EBITDA margin in FY28E. With room for selective acquisitions and continued focus on execution, we initiate coverage on Orkla India with Buy rating and DCF-based TP of ₹800.
Risks: Commodity volatility and unorganised competition.contributions becoming common

businessline is not responsible for the recommendations sourced from third party brokerages. Reports may be sent to: blmarketwatch@gmail.com

Earnings-led growth expected in 2026

MARKET SENTIMENT. After a volatile 2025, analysts express measured optimism for the new year

Madhu Balaji
Bengaluru

The Indian equity markets are set to enter 2026 on a note of guarded confidence after closing 2025 with resilience despite bouts of volatility. Market participants expect the coming year to be driven less by broad-based re-rating and more by earnings delivery, domestic liquidity support and selective sectoral opportunities, even as global uncertainties linger.

Prateek Nigudkar, Senior Fund Manager, Shriram AMC, said, “In 2025, Indian equity markets staged a choppy but ultimately resilient run. Early part of the year saw a decent-sized correction largely on account of valuation concerns, slowing earnings growth and unexpected tariff-related announcements.” Over time,

benchmarks recovered and touched fresh highs, supported by strong domestic inflows and signs of improving cyclical momentum.

LARGE-CAPS LEAD

According to Nigudkar, large-cap stocks led the recovery, with banks and heavyweight IT companies outperforming initially, followed by consumer-facing names as spending showed early signs of revival after GST-related policy support.

Broader markets were more selective, reflecting investor caution around stretched valuations and the sustainability of earnings growth. FIIs stayed on the sidelines or were net sellers for much of the year, influenced by global rate dynamics and geopolitical risks. Domestic investors, however, continued to provide stability. SIP inflows held firm, ensuring a steady flow of cap-



LOOKING AHEAD. Mid-cap stocks offer relatively better growth potential compared with large-caps, say analysts

ital into equities even during volatile phases. At the same time, the market absorbed significant supply through large IPOs and increased promoter stake-sales.

Multi-asset strategies also found favour in 2025, as gold and silver rallied to multi-year highs. Equity returns were relatively modest, reinforcing the case for diversification.

OPTIMISM FOR 2026

Brokerage houses echo this

measured optimism for 2026.

Equity returns in 2026 will be anchored firmly in earnings growth rather than valuation expansion, said Nilesh Shah, MD, Kotak Mahindra AMC.

Improving credit growth, healthier balance sheets in the financial sector and easing margin pressures are seen as supportive for banks and NBFCs. Consumption-related sectors are also expected to gain traction, aided

by rising incomes, tax reforms and a gradual recovery in rural demand.

Mid-cap stocks are viewed as offering relatively better growth potential compared with large-caps, although brokerages caution that the gap in performance may remain narrow and stock selection will be critical.

“We enter 2026 on a cautiously constructive global macro backdrop that includes expectations of a gradual US Fed easing, benign energy prices, resolution to the Russia-Ukraine war and end of tariff-related uncertainty,” Nigudkar added.

Motilal Oswal remains optimistic on the long-term compounding potential of the domestic markets and advised investors to use market volatility as an opportunity to build their portfolio aligned with India's structural growth themes.

Sensex, Nifty end marginally lower ahead of Christmas

Madhu Balaji
Bengaluru

The equity benchmark indices ended marginally lower on Wednesday, after a flat opening, as investors remained cautious ahead of the Christmas holiday amid mixed global cues. Persistent FII selling continued to limit aggressive upside in the market.

Trading on the BSE, the NSE and the MCX will remain closed on Thursday for Christmas.

Commenting on the market mood, Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments, said Indian equities moved largely sideways in the holiday-shortened week with subdued trading volumes, a trend reflected across broader Asian markets.

After climbing nearly 396 points intraday, Sensex settled with 116.14 points loss at 85,408.70. Nifty 50

dipped 35.05 points to close at 26,142.10.

GAINERS, LOSERS

On the sectoral front, most ended in the red. Nifty Media ended as the top sectoral gainer, followed by Nifty Realty. Nifty oil & gas, chemicals, and IT emerged as the top sectoral losers.

Among the Nifty 50 constituents, Trent, Shriram Finance, Apollo Hospitals, Bajaj Auto and UltraTech Cement emerged as major gainers, while InterGlobe Aviation, Adani Enterprises, Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Wipro and Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles (TMPV) were major laggards. IT stocks underperformed for the second straight session after the US administration announced changes to the H-1B visa framework, said Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst, Lemonn Markets Desk. Coforge, Persistent Systems, Mphasis, Wipro and LTI-Mindtree led the losses.

Embassy REIT sells 2 assets to EAAA Alternatives for ₹530 cr

Our Bureau
Bengaluru

Embassy Office Parks REIT has closed the divestment of approximately 3,76,000 sq ft across two strata-owned blocks at Embassy Manyata Business Park in Bengaluru for ₹530 crore to EAAA Alternatives' first commercial real estate fund – Rental Yield Plus.

Amit Shetty, Chief Executive Officer, Embassy REIT, said, “This divestment aligns with our capital recycling strategy and enhances portfolio efficiency.”

EAAA Alternatives is an alternative asset manager in India, with assets under

management exceeding ₹65,000 crore. EAAA focuses on real assets and private credit business strategies.

Its real assets business, with AUM of more than ₹22,000 crore, invests across infrastructure, energy and commercial real estate. The private credit business, with an AUM of more than ₹45,000 crore, offers customised credit solutions to large corporates, through performing private credit and special situations funds.

Embassy Manyata Business Park, spread across 122 acres, and offers 16 million square feet of leasable area and houses 60 tenants with more than 1,00,000 park users.

Retail investors continue to bet big on passive funds

Anjana C Shriram
Chennai

If 2025 has a significant trend to throw up from the mutual fund industry, it is this: Investors are increasingly looking at exchange traded funds (ETFs – metals and equity) and index funds as a core allocation tool while adopting a holistic approach to portfolio construction. “They are not just a tactical product,” says Bhalachandra Shinde, Associate Fund Manager, Motilal Oswal Asset Management Company, adding that costs, transparency, and the ease of building diversified exposure support continued adoption.

Perhaps, this explains why trading volumes for ETFs in India have surged from ₹51,000 crore in FY20 to ₹3.83 lakh crore in FY25, an increase of over seven times. As of October, the Indian ETF landscape crossed the ₹10-lakh crore assets under management (AUM) milestone. AUM of index funds, too, jumped 16.4 per cent to

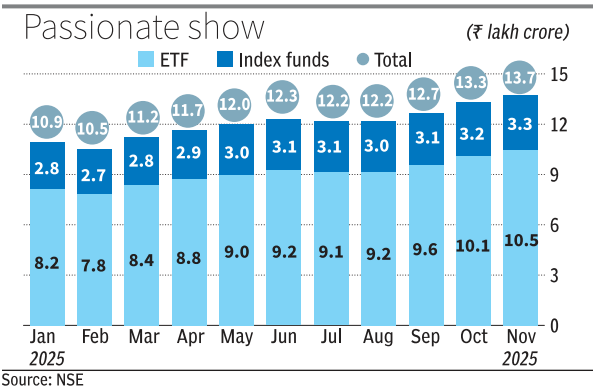
₹3.2 lakh crore in 2025, outpacing the return of Sensex and Nifty that returned about 8-10 per cent YTD.

EQUITY ETFS SIZZLE

A note from Zerodha Fund House says equity ETFs continue to dominate the market, accounting for 25 lakh new folios in the last 12 months. “This shift is characterised by a surge in gold and silver ETFs, which have grown to represent nearly 15 per cent of the total ETF AUM as of November 2025.”

According to Prashant Thakkar, President – Retail Strategy, Operations & Technology at LIC Mutual Fund AMC, Gold ETFs saw a staggering 56 per cent year-on-year folio growth by November, driven by global uncertainty.

This transition may underscore a maturing market where investors are actively balancing equities with the diversification of precious metals, says Vishal Jain, CEO, Zerodha Fund House, in a note. “As the market matures, institutional investors



Source: NSE

and cost-conscious retail investors are moving toward Index ETFs for large-cap exposure,” says Thakkar.

A key driver for this shift is the unprecedented rise in retail engagement, thanks to the increase in education and awareness about ETFs and easier access to digital platforms. As the year winds up, industry participants are hopeful that this trend would continue in 2026 too. “ETFs have structural tailwinds because of low cost, transparency, and convenience of broad market exposure. As awareness and liquid-

ity improve, ETF adoption should continue in 2026 and beyond, especially in index-linked categories,” says Chintan Haria, Principal – Investment Strategy, ICICI Prudential AMC.

Radhika Gupta, MD & CEO, Edelweiss MF, says, “We expect gradual but steady traction for factor-based strategies in 2026. As investor understanding improves, factors such as quality, momentum and low volatility are increasingly seen as structured, rule-based alternatives to traditional active and plain-vanilla passive funds. While adoption will be measured rather than aggressive, these strategies are likely to gain acceptance as satellite allocations, especially among informed and long-term investors seeking transparency and disciplined exposure.”

While the demand for ETFs is expected to remain robust, in 2026 passive funds are likely to be to be a significant portion of core portfolio allocation, says Thakkar.

“Looking ahead to 2026, passive investing is no longer a side bet, it is fast becoming the backbone of

Nifty 50 Movers					▼ 35.05 pts.
	Close(f)	Pts	PE	WN(%)	
Shriram Finance Ltd.	973.70	4.88	18.59	1.14	
Trent Ltd.	4289.60	4.88	94.93	0.80	
Murali Suzuki	16703.00	3.40	35.53	1.84	
M&M	3636.70	2.25	29.18	2.70	
UltraTech Cement	11764.00	2.24	46.80	1.17	
Apollo Hospital	7172.00	2.18	59.65	0.61	
TCS	3319.00	2.02	24.17	2.84	
HDFC Bank	997.20	2.01	20.40	12.78	
Bajaj Auto	9170.00	1.73	30.74	0.85	
PowerGrid Corp	268.05	1.04	16.40	1.02	
Max Healthcare	1081.40	1.01	77.47	0.67	
Coal India	402.35	0.97	7.98	0.77	
Axis Bank	1226.30	0.82	14.56	2.95	
Eternal Ltd.	284.85	0.76	1462.18	1.66	
NestleIndia	1259.70	0.50	82.31	0.76	
Bharti Airtel	2123.70	0.48	27.10	4.86	
Bharat Elec	4000.00	0.47	51.34	1.20	
Kotak Bank	2163.70	0.32	23.16	2.67	
Eicher Motors	7312.50	0.29	39.27	0.84	
Hindalco	864.45	0.19	10.94	1.05	
Bajaj Finance	1011.10	0.27	33.91	2.13	
Jio Financial Services Ltd.	298.90	0.14	116.46	0.82	
Adani Ports	1494.30	0.11	26.96	0.93	
SBI Life	2025.40	0.06	82.76	0.76	
Hindustan Unilever	40.20	0.00	0.00	0.03	
Reliance	1631.50	-0.21	35.82	0.87	
Grasim Ind	2836.90	-0.25	21.18	2.70	
Cipla	1496.30	-0.54	22.24	0.71	
NTPC	322.55	-0.73	12.82	1.28	
TataConsumerProduct	1179.20	-0.91	85.24	0.64	
JSW Steel	1091.30	-1.13	43.93	0.86	
HCL Tech	1674.70	-1.21	26.75	1.49	
L&T	4053.60	-1.34	29.15	3.99	
ONGC	233.77	-1.47	6.87	0.76	
Adani Enter	2222.70	-1.49	29.70	0.49	
Bajaj Finserv	2035.70	-1.49	16.90	0.97	
Titan	3909.30	-1.49	84.05	1.35	
Tata Steel	1707.87	-1.51	31.75	1.88	
ITC	406.60	-1.58	24.85	3.29	
Tata Motors PV	359.20	-1.86	11.24	0.63	
HDFC Life	755.35	-2.02	85.99	0.68	
Wipro	268.06	-2.09	20.73	0.64	
Asian Paints	2785.50	-2.21	67.39	1.06	
Dr Reddy's Lab	1355.80	-2.37	33.58	0.50	
State Bank	968.95	-2.68	10.67	3.37	
Int'lGlobeavi	5081.50	-3.62	38.44	0.93	
Infosys	1663.40	-3.87	24.54	5.03	
Hind Unilever	2282.20	-3.97	49.08	1.70	
Sun Pharma	1737.00	-4.31	39.75	1.54	
ICICI Bank	1359.80	-5.66	7.76	2.19	
Reliance Ind	1558.20	-18.56	21.65	8.85	

Pts: Impact on index movement

Nifty Next 50 Movers					▼ 139.05 pts.
	Close(f)	Pts	PE	WN(%)	
Vedanta	598.15	59.74	13.16	4.41	
Cholamandalam&Fin	1697.80	24.38	30.75	3.11	
Hindus Zinc	524.85	19.55	24.99	1.18	
Shree Cement	26145.00	8.22	54.78	1.52	
Hindustaneronautics	4421.30	7.91	34.91	3.65	
Divis Lab	6496.50	7.61	69.40	3.59	
Mazagon Dock	2540.30	6.17	43.90	0.84	
Indian Hotels Co.	740.10	4.74	57.17	2.83	
Torrent Pharma	3834.30	4.45	60.64	1.74	
Arbujia Cements	548.10	2.25	18.88	1.49	
Rural Elec	354.75	2.06	5.41	1.93	
Adani Energy Solutions	996.55	2.03	49.16	1.50	
Abb India	5215.00	1.73	0.00	11.9	
Info Edge I	1366.80	1.40	53.50	2.31	
DIF	694.90	1.25	40.15	1.94	
Siemens Energy India	2595.50	0.56	79.83	1.00	
Indian Railway Finance Corp	121.49	0.48	23.23	0.94	
Punjab Natl Bank	1209.93	0.31	8.12	1.51	
ICICI Lombard Gic	1959.30	-0.58	34.80	2.06	
Lic	853.90	-1.00	10.57	0.82	
Adanigreenenergy	1015.00	-1.74	70.84	1.35	
Havells	1424.40	-1.81	61.16	1.56	
Bajaj Housing Finance	95.16	-1.93	33.58	0.39	
Jsw Energy	484.35	-2.09	37.93	1.32	
Macrotech Developers	1080.10	-2.27	32.36	1.32	
Hyundai Motor India	2307.90	-2.82	32.80	1.43	
Bosch	36195.00	-2.86	39.79	1.36	
Solar Industries	12485.00	-4.38	80.83	1.32	
Godrej Consumer	1192.20	-5.18	66.94	2.08	
Canara Bank	1449.67	-5.66	7.76	2.19	
Bajaj Holdings	11224.00	-7.14	14.37	2.11	
Zyduslifelices	917.80	-7.49	18.36	1.00	
Gail (India)	171.00	-8.41	10.26	2.00	
Samvardmotheresoninternat	1119.53	-9.45	35.52	2.31	
Siemens	3098.00	-9.59	65.33	1.19	
Bank Of Baroda	139.67	-5.66	7.76	2.19	
Britannia Ind	6930.00	-10.96	62.70	3.09	
Ltimindtree	6163.00	-10.98	97.66	2.48	
Cg Power & Ind Sol	660.90	-11.11	97.86	1.97	
Power Finance	352.30	-11.35	3.53	2.23	
Avenueusuper	3800.20	-12.35	90.52	2.43	
Tata Power	379.70	-12.58	24.26	2.77	
Adani Power	143.16	-13.45	23.80	2.46	
Pidlifint	1446.60	-14.42	65.51	1.95	
Tvs Motor Cmp	3665.20	-14.98	62.82	3.74	
Jindal Steel	999.00	-15.23	36.68	1.62	
Varun Beverages	477.65	-16.65	53.89	2.81	
United Spirits	1422.10	-17.44	63.19	1.83	
Indian Oilcorp	161.17	-23.52	8.92	2.62	
Bpcl	365.90	-23.82	7.48	3.08	

Pts: Impact on index movement

Refurbishing RBI data

A panel can be formed to examine this issue

Manas R Das

In a recent speech, Poonam Gupta, RBI Deputy Governor, hailed the central bank as “not just an important source, but at times the only source for comprehensive data...,” which has been traditionally true. Echoing the global recognition of data as “public good,” she called for “regularly updating and revising the existing data series as well as constructing new ones” in sync with ongoing economic transformations.

Here are some changes that the RBI can look at to expand its banking sector data base.

Banks, being financial intermediaries and the backbone of the payments system, generate humongous data – high frequency to annual. Banks transmit a lot of data to the RBI (besides other regulators) in various formats (“Returns”) including some which are mandatory by various laws.

Nevertheless, the Balance Sheets of banks and ‘Notes on Account’ (‘Notes’), which are prepared or vetted by the RBI-approved auditors, contain considerable quantitative and qualitative data. Over several years, the RBI has been publishing some of these data basically through its annual publication titled ‘Statistical Tables Relating To Banks In India (STRBI),’ released usually in December.

As STRBI provides time series data for individual Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) and bank groups in one place, that too with nil cost and high reliability, it is extremely useful for banking research.

Keeping in view (a) that banks finish their Annual General Meetings (AGMs) by September-end, (b) increasing electronification of data transmission and (c) submission of detailed annual accounts to the RBI by banks much before their AGMs, can RBI advance the STRBI publication to October-end?

Alternatively, the RBI may consider releasing STRBI in three parts: first, for the public sector banks, then for the private banks and finally, for the foreign banks in India.

At present, the ‘Notes’ contains numerous crucial data which is not fully captured in STRBI. These include Liquidity Coverage Ratio, Net Stable Funding Ratio, Transfer to the Depositor Education and Awareness Fund, penalties levied, cross-selling income, deposit insurance coverage and premium paid, and



RESERVE BANK. Revamping data structure GETTY IMAGES

customer complaints.

Some data needs updation, e.g., Unclaimed Deposits (in ‘Other Tables’ of STRBI) which has topical significance.

Similarly, the ambit of ‘Industry-wise Gross Bank Credit of SCBs’ necessitates further disaggregation to accommodate new-age industries.

CO-OP BANK DATA

In respect of the Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs), data presented in ‘Primary (Urban) Co-operative Banks Outlook,’ which is released in December, lags by one year.

This could be due to the large numbers of UCBs with many not be finalising their annual accounts on time. However, since the RBI is in the course of preparing a Discussion Paper on Licensing Framework for new UCBs, this aspect may also be examined therein.

Banking data immensely supports policy-making in the financial and real sectors. As an ‘official’ source, the RBI will continue to remain paramount despite emergence of ‘alternative’ sources.

So the RBI must constitute an internal committee to discuss the expansion and changes in its entire banking database.

This may necessitate cooperation from banks, the data suppliers as well as prominent end-users. Inputs from select institutional and individual researchers on banking may also be invited.

Data is a means to an end; the end is to do practical policy-oriented research by using data for which commercial banks, in particular, should augment their ‘banking’ (as distinguished from ‘economic’) research capacity which will help themselves and the country as well.

The writer is a former Assistant General Manager (Economist), SBI. Views expressed are personal



ADITYA SINHA

India’s long and uneven experience with spatial industrial policy has left policymakers wary of zoning as a development tool. Special Economic Zones (SEZs), launched under the SEZ Act of 2005, promised export-led industrialisation, foreign investment, and regional transformation.

What they largely delivered instead were enclaves. They are/were islands of activity with weak spillovers, high land under-utilisation, and declining credibility once fiscal incentives eroded.

Against this backdrop, Andhra Pradesh’s decision to restructure the State into three large Economic Development Zones — North Coastal (Visakhapatnam), Central Coastal (Amaravati) and Rayalaseema (Tirupati) — marks a meaningful departure. The question is not whether this resembles SEZs. It does not. The real question is whether it corrects the structural reasons zones failed in India in the first place.

Those failures can be analytically grouped into three categories — economic design failure, institutional failure, and political-economy failure.

Indian SEZs were economically fragile because they were designed as incentive-driven enclaves, not productivity-driven ecosystems. Their competitiveness relied disproportionately on tax holidays (100 per cent income tax exemption for five years, followed by partial exemptions), duty-free imports, and regulatory exemptions.

Once WTO disciplines on export subsidies tightened and domestic policy introduced sunset clauses, the core value proposition collapsed. Firms exited, and zones hollowed out.

Critically, SEZs were also too small. Most Indian SEZs resemble industrial estates, hundreds or a few thousand hectares at best.

By contrast, successful international zones functioned at city or metropolitan scale, allowing labour markets, supplier networks, housing, logistics, and services to co-evolve.

Shenzhen Special Economic Zone was competitive, not because of tax exemptions alone. It worked because it operated as an integrated urban-industrial system linked to ports, global markets, and dense domestic supply chains.

Andhra Pradesh’s zoning model implicitly acknowledges this scale problem. These are not fenced estates but sub-state economic regions, each with a differentiated production logic.

Port-led industry in the North Coastal Zone, agro-processing and logistics in the Central Coastal Zone, and resource-linked renewables and horticulture in Rayalaseema.

This matters because agglomeration economies, knowledge spillovers, labour pooling, supplier specialisation, only



AP’s recast of SEZ concept holds promise

POLITICAL ECONOMY. Zones became vehicles for land monetisation rather than industrial upgrading. Andhra Pradesh moots a different governance model

emerge beyond a certain spatial and economic threshold.

FRAGMENTED AUTHORITY

The second failure of Indian SEZs was institutional. Despite the rhetoric of “single-window clearance,” SEZ developers and units faced fragmented authority across central ministries, state departments, and local agencies. Approvals were sequential, not parallel. Powers were dispersed. Accountability was diffused. Empirically, this showed up in long gestation periods, repeated deadline extensions, and a striking fact. By the mid-2010s, less than 40 per cent of notified SEZ land was actually utilised, with utilisation falling over time.

Land governance compounded the problem. SEZ rules imposed rigid contiguity and minimum-area requirements, even for services-oriented zones where vertical development would have been more efficient. Exit and repurposing were difficult. Vacant land became speculative ballast rather than productive capital.

Andhra Pradesh’s proposed architecture directly targets these coordination failures. Each zone will have a dedicated CEO with delegated financial and administrative powers, including land allocation and project

Shenzhen Special Economic Zone was competitive, not because of tax exemptions alone. It worked because it operated as an integrated urban-industrial system

clearances, supported by zonal committees of regional ministers and legislators. A Chief-Minister-chaired state steering committee provides vertical integration.

It is an attempt to collapse fragmented authority into a single decision locus per zone, something SEZs conspicuously lacked. If implemented credibly, it could reduce transaction costs, accelerate project timelines, and, crucially, make land a flexible input rather than a sunk political asset.

Equally important is policy credibility. Indian SEZs suffered from repeated rule changes, tax withdrawals (MAT, DDT), shifting interpretations of domestic tariff area sales, and inconsistencies between trade, tax, and industrial policies. Andhra Pradesh’s collaboration with NITI Aayog and the Government of Singapore on zone-specific vision plans functions as a non-fiscal commitment device.

Perhaps the deepest failure of Indian SEZs was political-economic. Zones became vehicles for land monetisation rather than industrial upgrading. Developers internalised land rents, while the costs of infrastructure and adjustment were socialised. Once land was acquired and incentives captured, there was little pressure to generate spillovers into surrounding regions.

This is why empirical studies consistently find weak or non-existent SEZ spillovers in India, in contrast to East Asian cases where local governments competed on performance and were rewarded for growth outcomes.

AP MODEL

Andhra Pradesh’s model alters this incentive structure in two ways. First,

zones are embedded within the State’s ordinary political geography, not carved out as exceptional jurisdictions. Under-performance cannot be hidden behind a legal fence. Second, zonal outcomes become politically attributable to identifiable authorities: zonal CEOs, regional ministers, and ultimately the Chief Minister.

This raises the reputational and political cost of failure. It does not eliminate rent-seeking risks, but it changes the calculus, i.e., extracting rents without delivering growth becomes electorally and administratively visible.

India has not failed to replicate Shenzhen because it lacks ambition or capital. It has failed because it attempted to copy the instrument (zones) without replicating the underlying governance logic: scale, administrative authority, credible commitment, and performance-linked accountability.

Andhra Pradesh’s experiment is not a Shenzhen replica. It cannot reproduce China’s cadre promotion system or its unitary state capacity. What it does test, however, is whether India can approximate the functional equivalents of those mechanisms within a democratic, federal system.

If this works, then Andhra Pradesh may demonstrate that zoning can work without fiscal exceptionalism. If not, it will confirm that India’s binding constraint lies deeper, in land markets, bureaucratic incentives, and political risk tolerance. Either way, this is a rare case where zoning is being used not as a tax instrument, but as a governance experiment. That alone makes it worth watching closely.

Sinha writes on macroeconomic on geopolitical issues

thehindubusinessline.

TWENTY YEARS AGO TODAY.

December 25, 2005

Govt will address India Inc’s concerns over tax burden: PM

The Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, has promised to address, over the next year, the concerns voiced by corporate India over the high direct tax burden.

SCI consortium lowest bidder for Petronet LNG deal

The consortium comprising state-owned Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) and three Japanese shipping lines Mitsui O.S.K Lines, NYK Line and K Line is set to win the Rs 3,200 crore deal from Petronet LNG Ltd to haul additional quantities of LNG cargo from Ras Gas in Qatar to its expanded terminal at Dahej in Gujarat.

Have licence to play music

If you are planning to celebrate this festive season at one of the hotels or pubs offering customised packages for musical gala nights, it might just be prudent to check if the owners of the venue have paid up a licence fee to play music. For Phonographic Performance Ltd (PPL), which has 127 member music companies, is planning to crack down on those restaurants that do not pay the fee.

US economy expands at fastest pace in years

Molly Smith

The US economy expanded in the third quarter at the fastest pace in two years, bolstered by resilient consumer and business spending and calmer trade policies.

Inflation-adjusted gross domestic product, which measures the value of goods and services produced in the US, increased at a 4.3 per cent annualized pace, a Bureau of Economic Analysis report showed Tuesday. That was higher than all but one estimate in a Bloomberg survey and followed 3.8 per cent growth in the prior period.

The BEA was originally due to publish an advance estimate of GDP on

October 30 but the report was cancelled due to the government shutdown. The agency typically releases three estimates of quarterly growth — fine-tuning its projections as more data comes in — but it will only release two for the period leading up to the longest shutdown on record.

The delayed report card shows the economy maintained momentum through the middle of the year as consumers powered ahead and the most punitive of President Donald Trump’s tariffs were rolled back. While the shutdown is expected to weigh on fourth-quarter growth, economists expect a modest rebound in 2026 when households receive tax refunds and an



US ECONOMY. Spending spike REUTERS

anticipated Supreme Court ruling may strike down Trump’s sweeping global tariffs.

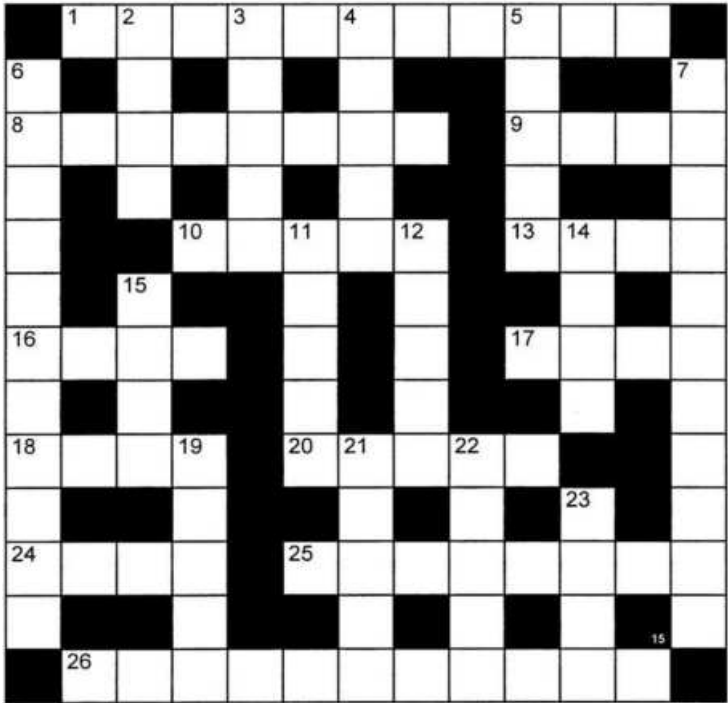
The Federal Reserve’s latest projections echo that sentiment, with Chair Jerome Powell citing supportive

fiscal policy, spending on AI data centers and continued household consumption as reasons for the central bank’s forecast for faster growth next year. Policymakers are projecting just one interest-rate cut in 2026 after three straight reductions to end this year.

Part of the reason for some officials’ hesitation to lower borrowing costs much more is because inflation remains above their 2 per cent target.

Consumer spending — the main growth engine of the economy — advanced at a 3.5 per cent annualised pace. That reflected solid outlays on services, including health care and international travel. Spending on motor vehicles fell. BLOOMBERG

BL TWO-WAY CROSSWORD 2853



EASY

ACROSS

- 01. Bed-cover (11)
- 08. Current pulling below surface (8)
- 09. Opening in the skin (4)
- 10. Put one off (5)
- 13. The orient (4)
- 16. For all time (4)
- 17. At one time (4)
- 18. Final judgment, death (4)
- 20. Lucid, unfogged (5)
- 24. Show boredom, tiredness (4)
- 25. Washing-place (8)
- 26. Lectern (7-4)

DOWN

- 02. Price bookmaker offers (4)
- 03. Look after (5)
- 04. Bring into the mind (5)
- 05. Plenty (5)
- 06. Dates for rent, interest payments (7-4)
- 07. Orchestral timpani (11)
- 11. Pick-me-up, gin mixer (5)
- 12. Awaken (5)
- 14. Female related (4)
- 15. Chief male character (4)
- 19. Food from heaven (5)
- 21. Acquire knowledge (5)
- 22. Was painful (5)
- 23. Chief, governor (4)

NOT SO EASY

ACROSS

- 01. It is put on bed to be an antidote to suffering, one hears (11)
- 08. Current that may give one a hitch below the surface (8)
- 09. Closely study what may exude perspiration (4)
- 10. Stop one doing what one has half made up one's mind to do (5)
- 13. Direction to take seat and make the first third (4)
- 16. Hold it, Steve - right? Any time! (4)
- 17. At some time somebody indefinite holds first of ceremonies (4)
- 18. When the way one feels has returned, pronounce judgment (4)
- 20. Pass one through the bank, it's quite plain (5)
- 24. Move, like a boat, north - what a bore! (4)
- 25. Salon Beau Nash may have known where one can come clean (8)
- 26. Studying a bit of office furniture like a lectern (7-4)

DOWN

- 02. Do up Derby and steeplechase front-runners for this price (4)
- 03. Hold baby up in one's runabout (5)
- 04. Stimulate memory of woman about to give the go-ahead (5)
- 05. A bit to try with the top off is more than enough (5)
- 06. Six-hour periods allotted for paying interest? (7-4)
- 07. They may take a beating, but don't get steamed up (11)
- 11. Before sol-fa is scaled, it should do one good (5)
- 12. It may excite us to be surrounded by fish-eggs (5)
- 14. Old gossip who addressed Mum as Sis? (4)
- 15. Principal man gives the girl a ring (4)
- 19. Girl taken in by Mother finds the food heavenly (5)
- 21. Come to hear of pounds to get by working for it (5)
- 22. At length it proved painful (5)
- 23. Stud raised by the man at the top (4)

SOLUTION: BL TWO-WAY CROSSWORD 2852

ACROSS 1. Confirms 4. Thus 8. Let 9. Balsa 10. Mar 11. Unshorn 12. Those 13. Flight decks 17. Burst 18. Maximum 20. Ewe 21. Units 22. Rat 23. Tote 24. Recently

DOWN 1. Colour 2. Notes 3. Melon 5. Hammock 6. Street 7. Battleaxes 9. Brought out 14. Largest 15. Object 16. Smithy 18. Maize 19. Merit

QUICKLY.

Copper near \$12,300 on US GDP growth, weak \$



Copper advanced for a sixth straight session to an all-time high close of \$12,300 on Wednesday as robust US economic growth boosted demand prospects and a weaker dollar supported prices. Benchmark three-month copper on the LME was up 1.3 per cent at \$12,218 a tonne. **REUTERS**

Palm oil muted by firmer ringgit

Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian palm oil futures traded flat as a firmer ringgit weighed on the market, though the currency pressure was offset by stronger crude oil prices. The benchmark palm oil contract for March delivery on the BMD shed 1 ringgit to 4,035 ringgit (\$998.02) a tonne. **REUTERS**

Crude oil rises for 6th session on US data



London: Crude oil prices rose slightly for a sixth day supported by robust US economic growth and the risk of supply disruptions from Venezuela and Russia, though prices were on course for their steepest annual decline since 2020. Brent crude futures climbed 16 cents to \$62.54 a barrel by 1222 GMT, while US WTI added 23 cents to \$58.61. **REUTERS**

Palladium tops \$2,300/oz, silver \$72 as gold holds near \$4,500/oz

FRESH VOLATILITY. Fears of sanction against Venezuelan oil tankers add to market worries

Subramani Ra Mancombu
Chennai

Silver exceeded \$72 an ounce on Wednesday, even as platinum surged past \$2,350. Palladium shed its gains, while gold hovered near \$4,500 an ounce after topping the mark in early trade. The precious metals complex gained further as escalating tensions over Venezuela added to the market worries, apart from fears of further US Fed rate cuts and lack of confidence in the dollar. US President Donald Trump announced that Washington would impose a blockade on sanctioned oil tankers entering and leaving Venezuela. This puts at risk around 6,00,000 barrels a day of oil exports, the majority of which goes to China.

SILVER STRESSED Trump is also putting pressure on Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro amid a build-up of defence forces. US inflation data, due on Thursday, too, kept the market ticking higher as it could result in a further easing of Fed rates. Traders expect a less than 0.25 per cent Fed rate cut in January. The precious metal market is now seeing silver, platinum and palladium move higher as gold has turned pricey. Traders say silver is also under stress as the physical shortage is being felt more acutely now, particularly concerning delivery from London. This week, platinum, in particular, saw prices rising by about 20 per cent to cross the \$2,350-an-ounce mark from \$1,975 during the weekend. However, it has turned volatile after reaching the milestone. As of 1930 hours IST, gold ruled at \$4,486.70 an ounce. Gold futures on the COMEX, expiring in February, were \$4,516 an ounce. On the MCX, gold February contracts ended the first session at ₹1,38,225 per 10 g. In the Mumbai spot market, gold ended at ₹1,36,627 per 10 g. Gold has gained ₹4,000 in the past week.



BEDAZZLING RETURNS. Platinum has gained over 160% this year, while silver has increased by 150%. Palladium has increased by 123% and gold over 71%

ing the milestone. As of 1930 hours IST, gold ruled at \$4,486.70 an ounce. Gold futures on the COMEX, expiring in February, were \$4,516 an ounce. On the MCX, gold February contracts ended the first session at ₹1,38,225 per 10 g. In the Mumbai spot market, gold ended at ₹1,36,627 per 10 g. Gold has gained ₹4,000 in the past week. Platinum has gained over 160 per cent this year, while silver has increased by 150 per cent. Palladium has increased by 123 per cent and gold over 71 per cent.

SILVER AT \$100/OZ? Silver climbed to \$72.05 an ounce, and futures on the COMEX, due for delivery in March, were quoted at \$72.05. However, in the Shanghai Futures Exchange, silver futures rose to \$78.49 an ounce (17,714 Chinese yuan). On the MCX, silver March contracts ruled at ₹223,667 a kg. In the Mumbai spot market, it closed at ₹218,983 a kg. Silver has gained over ₹18,000 a kg over the past week. On social media, industry

experts said silver could soar to \$100 an ounce. Its market cap exceeded that of Apple Inc at \$4.070 trillion. It will likely top Nvidia soon, whose market cap is \$4.606 trillion. Platinum soared to \$2,377 an ounce before easing to \$2,355 an ounce. Palladium, which rose to a three-year high of \$1,932.7 an ounce on Tuesday, retracted to \$1,835. Platinum has gained over 160 per cent this year, while silver has increased by 150 per cent. Palladium has increased by 123 per cent and gold over 71 per cent.

OUTLOOK POSITIVE Renisha Chainani, Head of Research at Augmont, said, “I think it’s time to book profits in silver as the rally seems overdone. We can see a price retracement up to \$68 (-₹210,000). But, if silver continues its bullish momentum, the next target is \$75 (₹235,000).”

ING Think said it was positive on its gold outlook, with macro tailwinds and fundamentals pointing to further upside next year. “We expect gold prices to reach new record highs in 2026. The downside should be limited as any weakness will likely attract renewed interest from both retail and institutional buyers,” it said. On silver, it said the investor appetite remained strong as silver-backed ETFs continue to attract inflows. “The outlook remains constructive into 2026, supported by robust industrial demand from solar PV installations and battery technologies, alongside sustained investment flows,” said ING Think. Meanwhile, ICICI said it was changing its gold exchange-traded fund benchmark from the London Bullion Market Association (LBMA) AM fixing price to domestic prices.

CCI bought 50 lakh bales of cotton at MSP in 2025-26

Vishwanath Kulkarni
Bengaluru

The state-run Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) has procured about 50 lakh bales (of 170 kg) of the natural fibre crop at minimum support price (MSP) in the current 2025-26 season. The MSP purchases this season are higher by about 60 per cent over the 31 lakh bales purchased till mid-December last year. “We have procured about 50 lakh bales, out of the arrivals of 118 lakh bales. The daily procurement is now more than 2 lakh bales,” said Lalit Kumar Gupta, Chairman and Managing Director, CCI. Per the CCI, the progressive purchase of raw cotton till December 19 was 230.23 lakh quintals, valued at ₹18,238 crore. The bulk of these purchases has been made in Telangana and Maharashtra. In Telangana, about 93.87 lakh quintals of cotton, valued at ₹7,445 crore, have been purchased, while in Maharashtra the CCI purchased

● STRONG BUYING
Purchases are up by about 60% over the corresponding period a year ago

about 47.69 lakh quintals, valued at ₹3,779 crore. **LENDING STABILITY** In Karnataka, 21.49 lakh quintals, valued at ₹1,708 crore, has been procured by the CCI, while in Gujarat the purchased quantity stood at 19.23 lakh quintals, valued at ₹1,546 crore. In Andhra Pradesh, the procured quantity is valued at ₹972 crore, while in Rajasthan it was ₹848 crore so far. In Haryana, the CCI has purchased cotton valued at ₹484 crore, while in Odisha it was ₹315 crore and Punjab ₹103 crore, per the data on the CCI website. The CCI’s market intervention has lent stability to cotton prices, which have firmed up from the levels at the start of the season, but are still below the MSP. The Centre has announced a MSP of ₹7,710 per

quintal for the medium staple cotton and ₹8,110 for the long staple cotton for the 2025-26 season. “Quality raw cotton prices, which were hovering around ₹7,200-7,300 per quintal at the start of the season, are now hovering around ₹7,800 levels in private trade at Raichur, Karnataka,” said Ramanuj Das Boob, a sourcing agent. Similarly, the pressed cotton prices have moved up by ₹2,000-2,500 per candy (of 356 kg) to around ₹54,000. Farmers prefer to sell to CCI as they are offering higher prices compared to the market price, he said. Lower acreage, coupled with adverse weather, has shrunk the cotton crop this year. Also, the excess and unseasonal rain have impacted quality across almost all growing States. Per the Agriculture Ministry’s first advance estimates, cotton crop for 2025-26 is projected slightly lower at 292.15 lakh bales (297.24 lakh bales). Cotton imports are currently duty free till the end of this year.

Wait for copper futures to exceed ₹1,170 before going long

Akhil Nallamuthu
bl. research bureau

Copper futures have gained about 3.5 per cent so far this week. The December contract is now trading at ₹1,152 (per kg) and the January contract is at ₹1,166. **COMMODITY CALL.** Both contracts have gained about 11 per cent

each so far in December. Since the December series is nearing expiry, we shall consider the January contract for analysis and trade recommendation. The contract has a resistance ahead at ₹1,170. If the contract breaks out of the barrier at ₹1,170, it could move further higher to ₹1,245, a potential hurdle. A breakout of this could lift the contract to ₹1,340. On the other hand, if the price declines, it could find

support at ₹1,100. Subsequent support is at ₹1,060. Overall, the uptrend remains strong and the likelihood of the resistance at ₹1,170 being breached is high. **TRADE STRATEGY** Traders can wait for the copper futures (January) to surpass ₹1,170 before buying. Go long after a breakout with a stop-loss at ₹1,100. When the contract rises to ₹1,245, raise the stop-loss to ₹1,220. Book profits at ₹1,340.

‘La Nina persists in tropical Pacific; negative IOD has ended’

Srikrishnan PC
Chennai

The La Nina weather phenomenon continues in the tropical Pacific while the negative Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) has ended, the Australian Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) said on Tuesday. “The latest relative Niño3.4 SST index value for the week ending December 21, 2025, is -0.91 °C. Sustained values below -0.80 °C are consistent with a La Nina pattern. Weekly values of the relative Niño3.4 index have been fluctuating around the La Niña threshold since mid-to-late September,” the BoM said in its latest climate driver update. It said its model currently predicts that tropical Pacific Ocean temperatures are

likely to remain at La Nina levels until early 2026 before returning to neutral, broadly consistent with most international models, but earlier than the typical ENSO event decay. **IOD INDEX NEUTRAL** With the negative Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) event ending, the IOD index was now back to neutral. “The Bureau’s model predicts the IOD is likely to remain neutral until at least the end of autumn 2026. This is consistent with all international models assessed. The IOD is typically inactive during December to April,” the Australian weather agency said. Sea surface temperatures (SSTs) in the Australian region were the second warmest on record for November, with forecasts for December to February sug-

gesting that warmer-than-average SSTs are likely to persist across much of the region, particularly to Australia’s east. Elevated ocean temperatures can supply additional moisture and energy, intensifying the severity of storms, cyclones and rain systems. **ATMOSPHERIC INDICATORS** Atmospheric indicators, including trade winds, pressure and cloud patterns over the equatorial central Pacific, have shown consistent signals of La Nina. As of December 21, 2025, the 30-day Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) has eased to -0.1, below the La Nina threshold of +7, reflecting recent tropical activity near Tahiti over the past few weeks.

Plea to include fisherfolk in policymaking bodies for fishing in EEZ

Our Bureau
Kochi

Fisherfolk have urged the Centre to include their representatives in policymaking bodies so that their practical expertise can be utilised, without which the goal of responsible fishing in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) cannot be achieved, the Federation of Fishing Boats and Fishery Industries of Kerala said in a representation to the Prime Minister. The federation’s president Paul Rajan Mampilly and general secretary Joseph Xavier Kalappurackal pointed out that deep-sea fishing should be controlled and managed by fishermen themselves. Policy and practice do not go hand in hand, they said.

Guatemala crop loss boosts India’s cardamom export prospects for Ramadan

V Sajeew Kumar
Kochi

Failure of Guatemala’s cardamom crop has rekindled the hopes of Indian exporters of dispatching more overseas shipments, especially to the Gulf markets for the coming Ramadan season. The emerging situation leaves India with good scope to export more quantity with a record shipment of 12,000-14,000 tonnes, industry sources said. Guatemala’s production, according to SB Prabhakar, a cardamom planter in Idukki, is expected to be around 17,000 tonnes this season against 14,000 tonnes. In normal years, the usual production is around 40,000-50,000 tonnes. As replanting has not been undertaken in the wake of the drought last



The emerging situation leaves India with good scope to export a record shipment of 12,000-14,000 tonnes

spring showers by March 2026, he said. **SHIFT IN DYNAMICS** Hareesh MV, Director, Wealth Management Service, Harnaz Fin EPSL, said the crop failure in Guatemala had fundamentally shifted the global supply-demand dynamic, which is seen as a rare strategic window for India to reclaim territory in the global market. India is poised to be the primary supplier for the peak Ramadan season, where de-

mand for cardamom for Gahwa coffee is at its highest, he said, adding that exporting 12,000-14,000 tonnes would be a significant jump from the average 6,000-8,000 tonnes. The Middle East market is currently less price-sensitive and more “availability-sensitive” — they need the greenest, largest pods for the festive season and are willing to pay the premium to secure Indian stock over the missing Guatemalan supply. The Indian 8 mm cardamom is currently quoted around \$35/kg. SKM Dhanavanthan, a Bodinayakanur based exporter, said high-volume arrivals in the auctions have not compromised quality and the current crop meets stringent international standards, sustaining robust demand.

FEED report flags gaps in co-operatives, digital access for marginal farmers

Our Bureau
Mangaluru



A report, ‘State of Marginal Farmers in India 2025’, has called for a contemplative pause to acknowledge agrarian struggles from the margins. It also issued a call to modernise governance, integrate value chains and reimagine cooperative structures to make them more inclusive. The report was launched by the Forum of Enterprises for Equitable Development (FEED) to mark *Kisan Diwas* on December 23. It is based on surveys conducted across Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tripura and Uttarakhand. A statement said marginal farmers constitute nearly 60-70 per cent of India’s agricultural households, yet remain

the most vulnerable segment of the agricultural economy. Less than 25 per cent of marginal farmers surveyed in the FEED report are active members of agricultural co-operatives. **ROLE OF PACS** Mentioning that co-operatives work when access exists, the report said around 45 per cent of co-operative-linked marginal farmers reported an increase in household income, and about 42 per cent reported improvements in crop yields. On the evolving role of primary agricultural credit

societies (PACS), the report said they are increasingly functioning as broader rural service hubs, rather than just credit providers. Across States, PACS are supporting input supply, enabling procurement and marketing, distributing essential commodities through the public distribution system, and facilitating access to digital and public services. States where PACS operate as integrated service centres tend to see better outcomes for marginal farmers, it said. **DIGITAL DIVIDE** The report said digital adoption remains limited in Bihar and Tripura, and its impact is informational rather than transformational. Regarding gender and leadership gaps, it said co-operatives remain largely male-dominated, particularly in leadership and decision-making roles.

High density apple farming boosts Uttarakhand farmers’ income

Our Bureau
Mangaluru

High-density apple farming under ‘Project Unnati Apple’ has helped a farmer from Chatra village of Uttarakhand improve his income. This development highlights the role of modern agricultural practices in improving farmers’ livelihoods as the country celebrated National Kisan Day on December 23. Project Unnati is an initiative supported by Anandana-The Coca-Cola India Foundation, in partnership with Indo-Dutch Horticulture Technologies. **FARMER’S JOURNEY** A media statement said that Surendar Singh Rawat from the hill village of Chatra in

Uttarakhand, who runs a small grocery shop in nearby Hanol, tends to an apple orchard that has quietly transformed his family’s future. He learned about Project Unnati Apple in 2021, and the programme introduced him to high-density apple farming, a method that enables fruiting in the first year. The family adopted chemical-free and sustainable farming practices, supported by hands-on training and continuous handholding. Over time, the orchard began to reflect those efforts with healthy plants, uniform growth and strong yields, the statement said. Quoting Rawat, the statement said that this year he expected to earn between ₹2.5 and ₹3 lakh from the orchard.

Mustard area up 4.3% as of Dec 15

Our Bureau
Mangaluru

The all-India mustard acreage has been estimated around 84.67 lakh hectares (1h) till December 15, 2025, against 81.16 1h in the corresponding period a year ago, a growth of around 4.32 per cent. According to the third report of the ‘Mustard Crop Monitoring Study for the Rabi Season 2025-26’, prepared by Agriwatch, States such as Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and West Bengal showed significant expansion during the period. The Solvent Extractors’ Association of India (SEA) has engaged Agriwatch as the official agency for the rape-mustard crop survey for 2025-26. According to the report, the overall condition is nor-

mal across all monitored States, and sucking pest incidences remain below economic threshold levels. It noted that no rainfall was recorded during the first fortnight of December 2025. Favourable temperatures, adequate soil moisture and irrigation support aided crop growth and development. **RE-SOWING IN RAJASTHAN** Mustard sowing in Rajasthan was completed on time, but early-season excess rainfall in September and October affected early-sown crops, necessitating some re-sowing in low-lying areas. The report said clear weather and favourable soil moisture and temperatures over the past 30-35 days supported smooth crop recovery. The crop is now 35-50 days old and mostly at the branching to flowering stage, while early-planted and early-maturing varieties

have reached pod formation and development. Farmers are cultivating long-duration hybrid varieties and applying first irrigation with nitrogen at the flowering stage, supporting crop growth. Though sucking pest incidences have been observed, they remain below the economic threshold, and overall crop condition is normal, though re-sown areas are slightly below timely-sown crops. In Uttar Pradesh, mustard sowing progressed well despite unseasonal rainfall in October that affected germination in some districts. Dry and favourable conditions through November and the first fortnight of December allowed the crop to recover. At present, the crop is 45-60 days old, mostly at flowering to pod formation, with early-sown and short-duration varieties advancing to pod development and seed formation.

QUICKLY.

Sanofi to acquire vaccine maker Dynavax for \$2.2 b



Sanofi will buy US vaccines firm Dynavax Technologies for around \$2.2 billion, the French drugmaker said, a deal that will give it access to an approved hepatitis B vaccine. Sanofi has made a string of acquisitions this year, as it looks to diversify growth beyond its blockbuster asthma drug Dupixent. It bought UK private biotech firm Vicebio for \$1.5 billion in July shortly after finalising an up to \$9.5 billion deal for US-based rare disease drugmaker BluePrint Medicines. Sanofi said it expected to complete the acquisition in Q1 2026. REUTERS

Shankh Air plans to start flights in Q1 2026

New Delhi: Shankh Air, which has received no-objection certificate from the Civil Aviation Ministry, plans to start services in the first quarter of 2026. In a statement on Wednesday, Shankh Aviation said its aircraft are currently undergoing technical reviews and are being readied for delivery to India. m

IBBI cracks down on dubious bids with new norms on ownership

Shishir Sinha
New Delhi

In an effort to curb opaque bids, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has made it mandatory for resolution plans to disclose the ultimate beneficial ownership.

An IBBI notification added a new provision in the regulation dealing with mandatory contents of a resolution plan. “Every resolution plan shall include a statement of beneficial-ownership, covering details of all natural persons who ultimately owns or controls the resolution applicant, together with the shareholding structure and jurisdiction of each intermediate entity,” the notification said.

SEC 32A AFFIDAVIT

Also, an affidavit needs to be given about whether the resolution applicant is eligible/not eligible for the benefit under Section 32A of IBC dealing with ‘liability for prior offences’.

The amendments are critical considering the last year’s ruling by Supreme Court on liquidation of Jet Airways after the Jalan-Kalrock Consortium failed to implement the resolution plan.

The ruling suggested re-

ISRO launches LVM3 Bluebird Block II, heaviest of payloads from India so far

SPACE LEAP. Communications satellite to provide space-based cellular broadband connectivity to smartphones

Rohan Das
Chennai

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Wednesday carried out the successful lift off of the LVM3-M6 mission from the Second Launch Pad at Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC SHAR) in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.

The fully commercial mission carried the US-based AST Space Mobile’s Bluebird Block-2 satellite to the Low Earth Orbit (LEO).

Weighing 6,100 kg, the communication satellite is the heaviest payload to be launched from Indian soil, breaking the short-lived record of the CMS-03 satellite launched last month.

The largest commercial communications satellite, it is designed to provide space-based cellular broadband connectivity directly to standard mobile smartphones.

The LVM3-M6 mission is ISRO’s 9th consecutive successful launch using the highly reliable three-stage heavy launch vehicle and marks the third time an LVM3 mission was carried out in collaboration with in-



ZEROING IN. The LVM3 mission achieved the best accuracy of any Indian launch, deploying the satellite less than 2 km away from the intended target, better than the orbital cut-off of 15 km

ternational partners.

The agency has now carried out 434 satellite launches for 34 countries. “LVM-3 ‘Bahubali’ launch vehicle has successfully and precisely injected the Blue

Bird Block II communication satellite in the intended orbit. The launch vehicle has demonstrated its excellent track record including the Chandrayaan 2, Chandrayaan 3, OneWeb missions,

CMS-3 satellites and now the Bluebird Block II satellite. This was not an easy task and required enormous efforts and close coordination among various teams,” said ISRO Chairman V Naray-

anan after the launch.

GAGANYAAN MISSION

At a press meet after the launch, Narayanan emphasised that the LVM3 rocket now has payload capabilities in the range of 8,000 kg, nearing the 9,500 kg requirement needed for Gaganyaan mission. He added that the repeated successful launches using the LVM3 has given ISRO increased confidence about its viability for the Gaganyaan.

He explained that the LVM3 mission achieved the best accuracy of any Indian launch, deploying the satellite less than 2 km away from the intended target, significantly better than the orbital cut-off of 15 km.

“The new electro-mechanical actuators in the stage one strap on motors also helped improve payload capacity by 100-150 kg,” he said.

UNCREWED FLIGHTS

The successful launch comes at a time when the space agency is looking at a growing pipeline of launches scheduled in the next few months including uncrewed test flights for the Gaganyaan programme.

Air India to connect Delhi & Rome, IndiGo to fly Delhi-London

Our Bureau
New Delhi

India’s airline majors on Wednesday announced plans to expand their respective global networks by adding flights to Rome and London. Accordingly, Air India will commence flights from Delhi to Rome whereas IndiGo will operate a service to London.

The Tata Group-led Air India will resume its non-stop flights between Delhi and Rome (Leonardo da Vinci International Airport-Fiumicino).

The flight marks the airline’s return to the Italian capital after nearly six years. Air India’s services to Rome had remained suspended since the Covid-19 pandemic.

Beginning March 25, 2026, Air India will operate the Delhi-Rome service four times a week.

As per the airline, the flights are scheduled ahead of the spring and summer travel period in Europe.

“This non-stop service not only augments direct connectivity between the two capital cities but also offers travellers from Italy greater choice and seamless onward connections via our Delhi

hub to destinations across the Indian Subcontinent and Southeast Asia,” said Nipun Aggarwal, Chief Commercial Officer, Air India.

Meanwhile, IndiGo will launch new direct flights between Delhi and London (Heathrow) effective February 2, 2026.

FIVE TIMES A WEEK

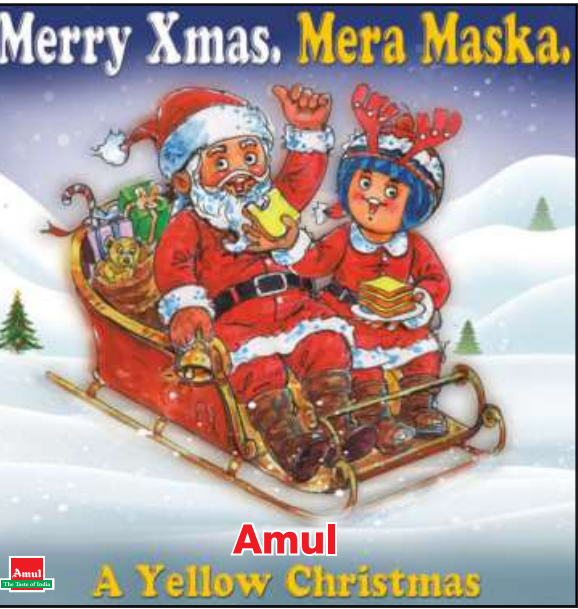
The airline will operate the route five times a week using Boeing 787 aircraft taken on wet or damp lease from Norse Atlantic Airways.

The aircraft will feature a dual-class configuration comprising IndiGoStretch and Economy Class. IndiGo already operates daily direct flights between Mumbai and London Heathrow.

With the launch of the Delhi-London service, the airline will operate a total of 12 weekly flights to London.

It has recently launched flights from Delhi to Denpasar (Bali), Krabi, Hanoi, Guangzhou, and Manchester. Apart from this, IndiGo has also announced the introduction of direct flights to Athens starting January 2026.

IndiGo added 10 new international destinations and over 30 new global routes from various points in India over the past 12 months.



daCmha/AB/1074

Air India eyes over 55% new, refreshed wide-body fleet by 2026-end

Rohit Vaid
New Delhi

Tata Group-led Air India is targeting over 55 per cent of its wide-body fleet to comprise new and refreshed aircraft by the end of 2026, industry sources said.

According to the sources, six new wide-body aircraft, including Boeing 787-9 and Airbus A350-1000 aircraft, are set to join the airline’s fleet, with the first Boeing 787-9 aircraft likely to be inducted in the first half of January 2026.

Besides, the airline aims to completely retrofit at least 12 Boeing 787 aircraft. On the whole, the airline will have close to 60 wide-body aircraft.

“The airline’s aim is to have 60 per cent of its wide-body fleet to be new or retrofitted by the end of 2026,” sources told *businessline*.

The airline had earlier highlighted that in 2026, it plans to induct six new wide-body aircraft, alongside around 20 narrow-body aircraft.

However, the fleet size will remain flat due to the return of some older leased jets. At present, Air India operates six upgraded Boeing 777 aircraft, six Airbus A350 and six Boeing 787-9 aircraft earlier operated by Vistara.

“18 aircraft are either new or with better onboard products than the older generation jets,” sources added.

As per Air India, the Boeing 787 retrofit programme forms part of the airline’s broader cabin upgradation plan under its transformation roadmap.

The retrofit work involves the installation of new seats across cabins, upgraded in-flight entertainment systems, refreshed cabin interiors, and improved lighting and lavatories, the sources pointed out.

“At the moment, two of its Boeing 787-8 aircraft are in Victorville in the US where they are being retrofitted. The first two will come back into service in February 2026



The airline had earlier said that in 2026, it plans to induct 6 new wide-body aircraft & around 20 narrow-body aircraft

and thereafter 2-3 aircraft will be sent for retrofit every month,” sources said.

Presently, the airline has 26 Boeing 787-8 aircraft, and Air India will complete their retrofit by mid-2027.

WI-FI CONNECTIVITY

Apart from this, the retrofit programme also includes the introduction of Wi-Fi connectivity on the Boeing 787 fleet.

The retrofit timeline has been aligned with aircraft availability, given the airline’s network requirements and the ongoing induction of new wide-body aircraft.

The aim is to further improve passenger experience through better on-ground and on-board soft products, which include new international food menu, a new beverage menu, lounges as well as Wi-Fi on board wide-body aircraft, sources said.

Currently, 83 per cent of Air India’s narrow-body aircraft have new or upgraded interiors, as Air India completed the retrofit of 27 of its legacy A320 family aircraft earlier this year.

This will reach 100 per cent by the end of 2026, ensuring passengers on Air India’s domestic and short haul international flights are able to experience an upgraded product.

Telcos, gear makers see promising year ahead

S Ronendra Singh
New Delhi

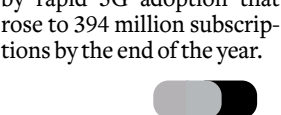
As 2025 closes, the telecom sector’s focus is firmly on strengthening digital trust and ensuring that future networks are secure, reliable and inclusive, SP Kochhar, Director General, Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), said on Wednesday.

He noted 2025 was also a year of important regulatory developments as the sector moved to align with the new Telecommunications Act, 2023, and the evolving framework for service authorisations.

“The industry has consistently emphasised that the new authorisation regime should retain the contractual certainty of the current licensing framework to support long-term investments... With the foundations for 5G scale, spectrum reform and unified safeguards now in place, India’s telecom industry is

moving into a phase where innovation and trust will define competitiveness, setting the stage for a decade of resilient and globally benchmarked digital connectivity,” Kochhar said.

COAI represents telecom service providers (TSPs) such as Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio and Vodafone-Idea, and telecom equipment suppliers such as Ericsson, Nokia, Qualcomm, Indus Towers, among others.



WIRED FUTURE. ‘The outlook looks promising in 2026 because it is witnessing strong momentum across mobile networks, fixed wireless access and fixed broadband’

Network expansion was also equally strong as India crossed 5.15 lakh 5G BTS sites and average mobile data usage touched 36 GB per month, with a forecast of 65 GB by 2031.

Fixed wireless access grew steadily with subscribers rising to 13.18 million in October across both urban and rural markets.

Moreover, telecom exports from India have increased by 72 per cent in the last five years, increasing to ₹18,406 crore in FY25 from

₹10,000 crore in FY21.

According to Tarun Chhabra, Senior Vice-President and Country Head, Nokia India, the outlook for the industry looks promising in 2026 because it is witnessing strong momentum across mobile networks, fixed wireless access, and fixed broadband as data consumption continues to grow nationwide.

“This surging data growth and emerging use cases will drive substantial investment in network expansion and

upgrades. Looking ahead, the industry will be increasingly defined by artificial intelligence (AI)-driven network automation and the expansion of data centres alongside transport infrastructure to support cloud and edge workloads,” Chhabra added.

Anku Jain, Managing Director, MediaTek India, said that generative and agentic AI will soon become central to edge-device experiences, while 5G and satellite (NTN) convergence will ensure seamless connectivity, even in the remotest areas.

“As 2026 approaches, India has emerged as a global engine of digital innovation, with consumers demanding flagship performance and hyper-intelligent experiences. Intelligence is rapidly democratising — we are empowering users with ‘On-Device Generative AI’. At MediaTek, we see India as both a key market and a hub of engineering excellence, shaping the global semiconductor landscape,” he added.

‘Alcohol raises risk of mouth cancer’

PT Jyothi Datta
Mumbai

There is no safe limit for consuming alcohol; even a low daily intake heightened the risk of mouth cancer, says a study by the Centre for Cancer Epidemiology and Advanced Centre for Treatment, Research and Education in Cancer (ACTREC), at Mumbai’s Tata Memorial Centre.

People think drinking wine or a locally brewed alcohol is safe, but the study in fact found greater risk with locally brewed alcohols, explained Pankaj Chaturvedi, Director, ACTREC.

The Centre needs to bring in statutory health warning for alcohol too, as with tobacco, Chaturvedi told *businessline*. Alcohol is the second most preventable cause of non-communicable diseases (after tobacco), he said, adding, “Today 60 per cent of deaths are due to non-communicable diseases... like we have the policy for tobacco control,



we need a policy on alcohol control, which is missing.”

Tobacco products are restricted near schools, they have warnings and so on, he said, adding that consumers need to make an informed choice on alcohol as well.

Calling for the “deglamorisation” of alcohol, Chaturvedi pointed out that it was presently easily accessible and promoted through events, celebrities and surrogate advertising.

The 10-year multi-centre study compared 1,803 people with confirmed buccal mucosa cancer (mouth

cancer) and a control group of 1,903 randomly selected people free of the disease (2010 and 2021). It was funded by the Union Health Ministry’s Department of Health Research, and published in *BMJ Global Health*.

“Each of the participants provided information on the duration, frequency, and type of alcohol they drank from among 11 internationally recognised drinks, including beer, whisky, vodka, rum and breezer (flavoured alcoholic drinks) and 30 locally brewed drinks, including *mahua*, *desi daru* and *tharra*. Compared with those who didn’t drink any alcohol, the risk was 68 per cent higher for those who did... Among locally produced, country liquors use had highest risk,” a note in the study said.

LOCAL BREWS

Rajesh Dikshit, Director, Centre for Cancer Epidemiology, said it was not clear why local brews fared worse, and it could be because of the manufacturing or contamination.

[illegible]

Avalon Tech [2]	870.25	879.95	Data Pattrn [2]	2654.85	2672.15	Garment Ma [1]	1.47	1.50	Integr.Ind [1]	30.43	30.83	Latentview [1]	465.60	464.25	Murac Org [1]	0.29	0.27	POCL Ent [2]	201.45	209.90	Sansera Eng [2]	1728.30	1699.75	Sudeep Pha [1]	648.40	632.30	EMBASSY DEVE	64.64	61.62	NACL Inds [1]	169.57	167.09	United Poly	25.35	26.49
-----------------	--------	--------	-----------------	---------	---------	----------------	------	------	----------------	-------	-------	----------------	--------	--------	---------------	------	------	--------------	--------	--------	-----------------	---------	---------	----------------	--------	--------	--------------	-------	-------	---------------	--------	--------	-------------	-------	-------