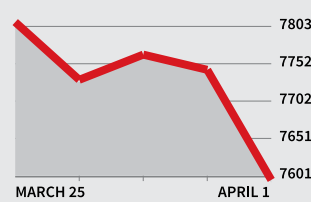


SENSEX 76024.51 (-1390.41)



IN FOCUS

	LATEST	CHANGE
Nifty 50	23165.70	-353.65
P/E Ratio (Sensex)	21.19	-0.39
US Dollar (in ₹)	---	---
Gold Std 10 gm (in ₹)	90750.00	+1943
Silver 1 kg (in ₹)	99641.00	-1251

## GOLDEN RUN.

Gold is seen topping \$3,300-3,400 an ounce before the year-end, driven by global trade tensions **p8**



## DIGITAL PUSH.

UPI sets new record in March, with 18.3 billion transactions worth ₹24.77 lakh crore **p7**

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## QUICKLY.

## IPO PIPELINE

Braving volatility, four corporates file DRHP

**Mumbai:** Braving the volatile market and growing global uncertainty, India Inc is gearing to raise fresh capital from the primary market. Four large corporates — Runwal Enterprises, Jain Resource Recycling, Anand Rathi Share and Stock Brokers, and ESDS Software — filed their Draft Red Herring Prospectus with capital market regulator SEBI on Tuesday to mop-up ₹4,345 crore through IPOs. **p6**

## AUTO SALES

Passenger vehicles see a mixed drive in March

**New Delhi:** Passenger vehicle wholesales witnessed a mixed trend in March in the domestic market with market leaders Maruti Suzuki India and Hyundai Motor India reporting a decline in numbers on a yearly basis. **p2**

## APRIL LIQUIDITY DRIVE

RBI announces ₹80,000-cr OMO purchase auctions

**Mumbai:** The Reserve Bank of India has decided to conduct four open market operation purchase auctions of G-Secs aggregating ₹80,000 crore this month even as the system liquidity has turned into a surplus. On a review of current liquidity conditions, the RBI has decided to conduct OMO purchase auctions in four tranches of ₹20,000 crore each to be held on April 3, 8, 22 and 29. **p7**

## Markets start FY26 on jittery note as US tariff levies loom

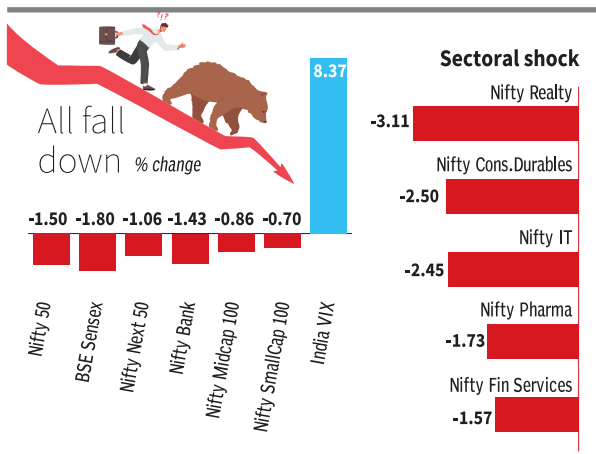
VOLATILE. Sensex down 1.8%, Nifty 1.5% ahead of Trump's 'Liberation Day'

Anupama Ghosh  
Mumbai

Stock markets tumbled sharply on Tuesday, the first day of the new financial year (FY26), as investors remained jittery ahead of US President Donald Trump's "reciprocal tariff" announcement scheduled for Tuesday, which he has termed 'Liberation Day'. The losses were also partly a catch up to the global losses on Friday/Monday as sentiments took a hit ahead of Trump's tariff announcements.

On Tuesday, the BSE Sensex sank 1,390.41 points or 1.80 per cent to close at 76,024.51, while the Nifty 50 plunged 353.65 points or 1.5 per cent to 23,165.70 amid selling by foreign portfolio investors. The market witnessed a gap-down opening, with the Sensex starting at 76,882.58 compared to its previous close of 77,414.92.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Investments Ltd, attributed the market sell-off to multiple factors. "Amid heightened global volatility ahead of the anticipated US reciprocal tariff announcement tomorrow, the domestic market witnessed a significant sell-off today. Investors are eagerly awaiting the specifics of



these tariffs while also keeping a close eye on ongoing negotiations for a potential Indo-US trade agreement."

## BREADTH POSITIVE

The broader market showed relative resilience compared to the benchmarks. The Nifty Midcap 100 fell 442.65 points or 0.86 per cent to 51,229.60 while the Nifty Smallcap 100 declined by 0.70 per cent. Notably, the

market breadth remained positive with 2,708 advances against 1,344 declines on the BSE.

**FPIs ON SELLING SPREE** FPIs sold shares for ₹5,901.63 crore on Day 1 of FY26, provisional data from exchanges showed. Domestic institutions pumped in ₹4,322.58 crore.

Sectorally, realty was the worst performer, shedding

## Retail investors turn net sellers in March

Ashley Coutinho  
Mumbai

Direct retail flows into equities turned negative in March, with investors choosing to book profits or cut their losses after

five straight months of market fall.

Investors sold shares worth nearly ₹10,000 crore during the month, showed provisional data. **p6**

## Kumbh Mela effect? At ₹10,000 cr, UP's March GST mop-up hits 11-month high

Shishir Sinha  
New Delhi

Helped by the massive congregation of devotees for the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh's GST collections rose to a 11-month high of around ₹10,000 crore in March, government data showed on Tuesday.

Collections in March boosted the average mop up in the January-March quarter. Though the record collection in April pushed the average monthly collection to over ₹10,300 crore in the April-June quarter of FY25, it dipped to around ₹8,400 crore and ₹9,000 crore in the July-September quarter (Q2) and October-December quarter (Q3). However, in the last quarter (Q4), it topped ₹9,500 crore.

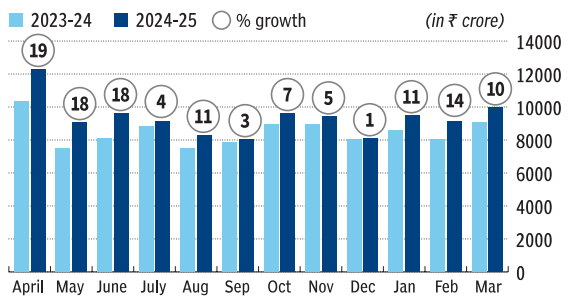
According to Vivek Jalan, Partner at Tax Connect Advisory Services LLP, the UP economy was slumping, with single digit growth from July to December 2025 in five out of six months.

## SOLID COLLECTION

"The Mahakumbh helped the State post double-digit growth of around 12.5 per cent on average in the January-March period," he said, adding, "It remains to be seen whether UP can sustain the growth momentum after the Kumbh." Terming the ₹9,956-crore collection with



## Uttar Pradesh GST collection



Source: GST portal

around 10 per cent growth as "solid", Sivakumar Ramjee, Executive Director, Indirect Tax, Nangia Andersen LLP, felt it was more in line with general GST collection trends than any astronomical rise due to the holy event. He did not see the GST windfall as dramatic.

"A large chunk of Kumbh-related spending happened in sectors that don't exactly 'click' with the taxman. Think small street vendors, food stalls and religious offerings — none of which pay GST. Even the high demand for fuel and alcohol didn't help much, as those are taxed

at the State level, not under GST," he said. "Sure, tourism and hospitality saw a boost, but they didn't quite manage to fill the tax coffers to overflowing. In the grand scheme, the Kumbh's impact on infrastructure and tourism growth might outshine the immediate tax gains," he added.

Overall, FY25 ended with GST collections rising to ₹1.96 lakh crore in March. This is the second-highest collection till date, reflecting showing a growth of around 10 per cent as compared to March of FY24.

Also read **p3**

## Resurgent India: VCs back to launching funds

Jyoti Banthia  
Bengaluru

After a prolonged funding winter, venture capital firms, both global and domestic, are launching funds, buoyed by India's thriving start-up IPO pipeline and a recovering funding landscape.

Early-stage VC firm Accel raised \$650 million for its eighth India-focused fund, while Silicon Valley-based Bessemer Venture Partners launched its second India-focused fund with a corpus of \$350 million.

Domestic firms such as Cornerstone VC and Prime Venture Partners also made significant fundraises, of \$200 million and \$100 million respectively.

Others such as Eximius Ventures and SamVed VC have closed smaller funds of \$30-50 million since the start of this year. "Maturity of Indian markets from a consumption economy and public markets perspective is leading to significant opportunities for investors to back in India," said Abhishek Prasad, Managing Partner, Cornerstone Ventures.

Investors have noticed an uptick in fundraising activities driven by stabilising macroeconomic conditions and renewed confidence in scalable start-ups.

Details **p10**

## Rating agencies see stability despite tariffs

## India less vulnerable to external shocks: Moody's

Shishir Sinha  
New Delhi

A day before the US announcement of reciprocal tariffs, Moody's on Tuesday said that India is relatively less susceptible to external financial shocks and will be the fastest-growing advanced and emerging economy.

"India has a low external vulnerability indicator (EVI) of 61 per cent, indicating its relatively lower susceptibility to external financial shocks," a report by Moody's Ratings said.

Further, this is supported by the country's relatively modest external debt-GDP ratio of 19 per cent and low export dependency on the US (about 2 per cent of GDP).

A Finance Ministry report showed that India's external debt increased 10.7 per cent to \$717.9 billion at the end of December 2024 from \$648.7 billion in December 2023. Quarter-on-quarter, there was a 0.7 per cent increase in external debt from the level of \$712.7 billion at the end of September 2024, according to India's Quarterly External Debt Report.

The external debt-GDP ratio stood at 19.1 per cent at the end of December

2024, against 19 per cent in September 2024, it said.

## CURRENCIES PRESSURE

The global financial market has been roiled post the Trump administration taking charge in January. Emerging economies, especially, have faced a large outflows of foreign investments from their stock markets, impacting their currencies; the rupee, too, got hit.

Data showed that from April 1 to March 18 of FY25, the rupee depreciated by over 3.6 per cent against the dollar.

This is lower than the Korean won's 7.17 per cent drop and Canadian dollar's 5.3 per cent but higher than Indonesian rupiah's 3.5 per cent dip, Filipino peso (1.9 per cent) and Chinese renminbi (0.04 per cent).

However, Moody's believes that India is still attractive. "Large EMs such as India and Brazil are better positioned to attract and retain global capital in risk-averse conditions because of their large and domestically oriented economies, deep domestic capital markets, moderate policy credibility and substantial forex reserves," the report said. Also, these attributes provide buffers against external financial pressures.

## ‘Strong balance-sheet can help India Inc absorb impact’

Our Bureau  
Mumbai

Credit rating agencies Crisil Ratings and CareEdge Ratings see strong India Inc balance sheets to act as a shield against changes in the US trade policy and imposition of reciprocal tariffs without affecting their credit quality materially.

Crisil Ratings noted that the US has announced a raft of tariff moves over the past several months. With back-and-forth on these announcements ongoing, the situation continues to evolve. The rating agency observed that in fiscal 2024, India's merchandise exports were low and constituted 12 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product. Of this, only 2 per cent went to the US and the balance 10 per cent to other geographies.

## KEY SECTORS

In this backdrop, it carried out a study on the impact of the proposals on 11 key sectors (smartphones, solar modules and shrimps, textiles and chemicals, engineering and capital goods, pharmaceutical formulations and diamond polishers) that export to the US or could be exposed to dumping risk. "At a broad level, ex-



cept for smartphones, other sectors are likely to see low to moderate impact on their business risk profiles. Strong corporate balance sheets will provide adequate room to absorb this impact without affecting credit quality materially," per Crisil Ratings assessment.

## EXPORT DISRUPTION

Sachin Gupta, Executive Director and Chief Rating Officer, CareEdge Ratings, observed that the imposition of US tariffs could disrupt momentum for export-driven sectors, particularly those that rely on discretionary spending, while also sparking intense price competition from other affected economies. ICRA observed that given the possibility of the US levying reciprocal tariffs (as has been done on other countries), India's exporters will need to make trade flow adjustments. ICRA, too, said India Inc's strong balance-sheet positions it to navigate global uncertainties.



QUICKLY.

Josyula is Cognizant’s global GCC service head



**Chennai:** The US-based Cognizant has appointed Sailaja Josyula as the new Global Head of its Global Capability Center (GCC) Service Line. Based in Hyderabad, she will lead the definition and execution of Cognizant’s global GCC strategy, working closely with the leadership team to ensure it is future-ready and client-centric, said a release. **OUR BUREAU**

**LTTS signs €50-m deal with European auto OEM**

**Bengaluru:** L&T Technology Services has signed a €50-million deal with a prominent European Automotive OEM. The deal’s scope includes the establishment of a development centre, which will play a critical role in the client’s global right-shoring strategy. **OUR BUREAU**

# Auto sales growth forecast at 1-2% for current fiscal

**ROUGH RIDE.** High base year & macroeconomic factors to limit growth, say auto firms

**S Ronendra Singh**  
New Delhi

Passenger vehicle (PV) wholesales (dispatches to dealers) witnessed a mixed trend in March in the domestic market with both market leaders Maruti Suzuki India (MSIL) and Hyundai Motor India (HMIL) reporting a decline in numbers on a yearly basis.

The companies said that the trend would continue because of the high base last year and macroeconomic factors such as tepid consumption growth, inflation, infrastructure spending and geopolitical headwinds.

With sports utility vehicles (SUVs) still continuing to dominate the market in both urban and rural markets, limited choice would also degrade the market for other forms of vehicles, industry veterans said.

“PV industry growth, as forecast by Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), is between 1 and 2

Company	March 2025	March 2024	% change
<b>Passenger Vehicles</b>			
Maruti Suzuki India	1,50,743	1,52,718	-1.2
Hyundai Motor India	51,820	53,001	-2.2
Tata Motors	51,616	50,110	3.0
M&M	48,048	40,631	18.25
Kia India	25,525	21,400	19.3
Toyota Kirloskar Motor	28,373	25,119	13.0
Honda Cars India	7,228	7,071	2.2
JSW MG Motor India	5,500	5,050	9.0

Source: Companies

per cent because fundamentally, I think, we are not expecting a very high growth in the current year in terms of auto industry. In March, our retail numbers are more than the wholesale numbers,” Partho Banerjee, Senior Executive Officer, Marketing & Sales, MSIL, told reporters on a call.

Banerjee also said that the company will soon start following the Vahan data (under the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways) to share the actual sales numbers (retail numbers) because that gives the actual picture of the industry.

MSIL also recorded the

highest-ever exports in FY25 with more than three-lakh units, the company said.

“During the year, we commenced exports of Fronx and Jimmy 5-door to Japan and it is heartening that both models have received overwhelming response. This is a testament to India’s growing stature as a global manufacturing hub,” Hisashi Takeuchi, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, MSIL, said.

**INDUSTRY VOLUMES**  
In terms of PV industry volumes, domestic wholesales stood at around 3.8-3.9 lakh for March and at around

43-lakh unit mark for FY25. Shailesh Chandra, Managing Director, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles and Tata Passenger Electric Mobility, said, “Overall demand growth will be shaped by macroeconomic factors such as consumption growth, inflation, infrastructure spending and global geopolitics.”

Industry veterans said that there were spikes in demand throughout the last two years, which is now softening and therefore, high-base year effect would now be seen in the coming months. However, there are companies like Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M), which are driving their sales with new launches in both internal combustion engine (ICE) and electric vehicles, and recorded highest-ever growth in its history.

“The year ended on a very positive note with us selling over five-lakh SUVs in the domestic market for the first time ever,” Veejay Nakra, President, Automotive Division, M&M, said.

# March truck sales growth raises market recovery hopes

**G Balachandar**  
Chennai

Commercial vehicle (CV) manufacturers posted growth in truck sales for March 2025 after a phase of subdued performance. This positive growth hints at a revival in the sector, which has faced headwinds and uncertainty in recent months.

Despite reporting a decline in overall truck volumes for FY25 due to a challenging demand scenario, CV makers achieved single-digit growth in sales volumes for March.

**SALES VOLUME**  
Tata Motors, the leading truck manufacturer, recorded 6 per cent year-on-year

growth in sales of intermediate, light and medium CVs at 7,181 units. While passenger carriers posted a 4 per cent increase, reaching 6,088 units, heavy truck sales saw a modest 1 per cent rise to 12,856 units. However, the small CV segment, including mini-trucks and pick-ups, declined 17 per cent. “In Q4 FY25, the sustained year-on-year growth in sales volume over previous periods gained further traction. Both trucks and passenger carriers recorded healthy sales,” said Girish Wagh, Executive Director, Tata Motors.

Ashok Leyland, the second-largest medium and heavy commercial vehicles (M&HCVs) maker, reported a 9 per cent increase in M&HCV truck sales, reach-



**BETTER OFFTAKE.** CV makers achieved single-digit growth in sales volumes for March

ing 12,882 units in March. However, for FY25, its total M&HCV volumes dropped 5 per cent to 93,540 units.

Bus sales, on the other hand, surged 22 per cent to 3,200 units in March, aligning with the broader market trend.

Shenu Agarwal, MD & CEO, Ashok Leyland, said,

“The M&HCV segment has demonstrated strong momentum in March, with both the bus and truck segments doing well. We believe this momentum will continue into the next year.”

VE Commercial Vehicles (VECV) saw a 6.3 per cent increase in domestic sales of the Eicher brand of trucks

and buses, reaching 11,187 units in March 2025. The company’s heavy-duty truck segment experienced a growth of 3.9 per cent, with 3,079 units sold. LMD bus sales also grew supported by demand for school and staff transport.

“The government’s focus on improving logistics efficiency, infrastructure investments, rising rural and consumer demand and fleet modernisation continue to support the development of the CV industry. We expect this to continue going forward,” said Vinod Aggarwal, MD & CEO, VECV.

However, CV players remain cautious about how new regulations mandating truck cabin air-conditioning may affect vehicle prices.

# Coal India’s production growth flat at 781 mt in FY25, misses output target

**Mithun Dasgupta**  
Kolkata

State-run Coal India has posted almost flat year-on-year production growth for the financial year 2024-25, and its total output of 781.1 million tonnes (mt) during the period missed the target by a wide margin.

The world’s largest coal miner’s production in FY25 grew only 1 per cent from 773.6 mt during FY24, according to the company’s stock exchange filing on Tuesday.

For FY25, the production target for CIL was 838 mt. Later, the company reduced it to around 823 mt due to various reasons, including delays in land, environmental and other clearances.

In the last financial year, for two Coal India subsidiaries — South Eastern Coalfields (SECL) and Bharat Coking Coal (BCCL)



**HITTING A ROADBLOCK.** During FY25, production of Coal India subsidiaries was hit due to heavy rainfall, slowdown in coal offtake and delays in different clearances **REUTERS**

— production fell 10.6 per cent and 1.4 per cent y-o-y to 167.5 mt and 40.5 mt respectively during FY25.

Production of Northern Coalfields (NCL) rose 2.1 per cent y-o-y to 139 mt, while for Western Coalfield (WCL) output remained the same at 69.1 mt.

During the last financial year (FY25), production of CIL subsidiaries was hit due

to heavy rainfall, slowdown in coal offtake and delays in different clearances.

**OFFTAKE HIGHER**  
CIL’s coal offtake for FY25 increased 1.3 per cent y-o-y to 763.2 mt from 753.5 mt in FY24, according to the filing. Coal India earlier attributed the slowdown in offtake to a rake shortage at coal mines. Notably, speaking at an

event to celebrate the coal behemoth’s 50th Foundation Day in November last year, Chairman PM Prasad said CIL might end FY25 with a production shortfall of around 15 mt against the production target of 838 mt due to delays in land, environmental and other clearances.

“Our target, though it was 838 mt, we have committed to the Ministry (Coal Ministry) of around 822-823 mt because of various reasons of land, environmental and other clearances,” Prasad had said.

However, in January this year, he said, on the sidelines of the 11th edition of the Asian Mining Congress in Kolkata, that CIL was “still planning to produce 806-810 mt of coal for FY25. We are drilling in some mega mines. But we cannot cover it in the next 75 days.” For FY26, CIL’s production target is around 900 mt.

## Announces ₹10/tonne price hike

Coal India (CIL) on Tuesday announced an increase of ₹10 per tonne in the prices of both coking and non-coking coal for regulated and non-regulated sectors, effective April 16.

“CIL board approved enhancement of notified price of coal by ₹10 per tonne — from existing ₹10 per tonne to ₹20 per tonne for non-coking and ₹10 per tonne for coking coal for regulated and non-regulated sectors towards contribution to the corpus of CMPS-1998,” it said in an exchange filing. In FY25, CIL had increased prices by ₹10 per tonne towards the contribution to the CMPS, 1998.

The impact of this proposed price hike will be on FSA (Fuel Supply Agreement) and linkage consumers. For non-coking coal, average notified price varies between ₹1,100 and ₹1,200 per tonne now. The impact of the proposal on consumers would be less than 1 per cent.

# PepsiCo to put up manufacturing plant at Manapparai in TN

**TE Raja Simhan**  
**Meenakshi Verma Ambwani**  
Chennai/New Delhi

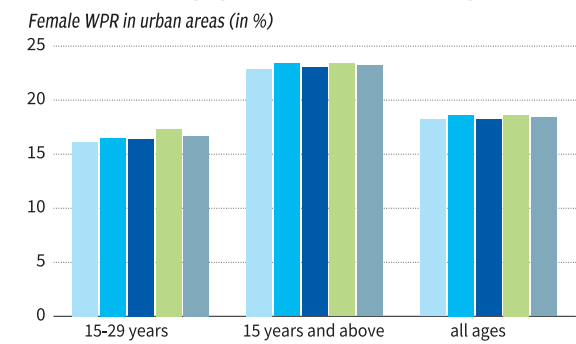
PepsiCo, the US-based multinational snack and beverage company, is putting up a manufacturing plant at Manapparai, near Tiruchirappalli, in southern Tamil Nadu. It has been allotted 28 acres at the Sipcot Industrial park, where it will produce snacks like potato chips, said sources.

Interestingly, Manapparai is famous for ‘murukku’ — a popular and crunchy South Indian snack — and the Tamil Nadu government is trying to promote the place as a major food park.

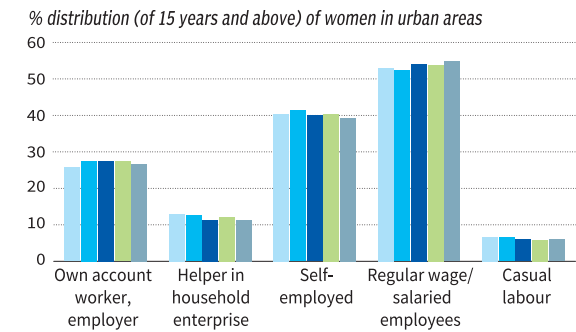
The expansion in Tamil Nadu for PepsiCo India comes in the backdrop of it steadily expanding its snacks manufacturing capacity over the years. In 2023, it announced the setting up of a

## Women power

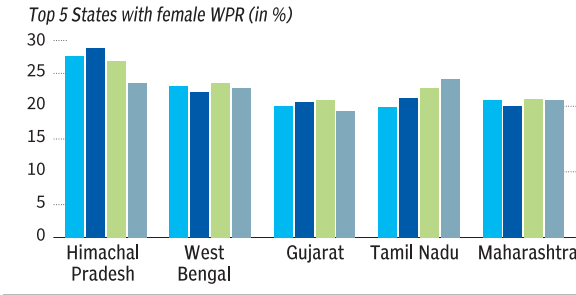
Female worker population ratio (WPR) improves



## Fewer women want to work as household helpers



## TN and Himachal lead in female worker population



“Better education among women, delayed marriage and low fertility are structural shifts that improve women’s ability and willingness to participate in the labour market.”

## TN GAINS MORE

Tamil Nadu’s WPR for women rose sharply from 19.4 per cent in October-December 2023 to 24.1 per cent a year later, the highest gain among the top five States.

In contrast, States like Himachal Pradesh (23.6 per cent) and West Bengal (22.7 per cent), while maintaining higher female WPRs overall, showed either a dip or slower growth in the same period.

Across all age groups, the WPR for urban women remained resilient in 2024, with notable improvement in the 15-29 age group, climbing 16.1 per cent to 16.7 per cent, a potential signal that younger women are entering the workforce earlier and more steadily.

As India’s urban job market evolves, formalisation of female employment could be lasting if backed by gender-sensitive urban planning, accessible care infrastructure and policies promoting equitable domestic responsibilities.

The author is an intern with *businessline*

# Cairn, Parker Wellbore tie up for E&P activities

**Our Bureau**  
Chennai

Cairn Oil & Gas said it has entered into an agreement with Parker Wellbore, recently acquired by Nabors Industries, to expand operations in India using a high-performance 2,000 HP (horse power) drilling rig for E&P activities. Cairn will deploy the rig in Barmer (Rajasthan), its largest onshore producing asset in India, this month.

The advanced rig features a top drive system, automated pipe handling and real-time data monitoring, all designed to enhance operational efficiency, maximise

performance and deliver safer, more consistent drilling operations, Cairn Oil and Gas, part of the Vedanta Group, said.

The deployment aligns with Cairn’s ongoing efforts to increase production and support its exploration initiatives in the region, it added.

**TO ENHANCE OUTPUT**  
Hitesh Vaid, CFO, Cairn Oil & Gas, said: “Cairn is leading large investments to accelerate exploration of unconventional resources in India. This strategic partnership will enable us to start drilling within the next few months, further enhancing our operational performance and contributing to our growth.”

# ACV Auctions ramps up Chennai centre rapidly in last one year

**TE Raja Simhan**  
Chennai

The year-old Chennai technology hub of the US-based ACV Auctions, a \$650-million US-based digital automotive marketplace for car dealers and commercial partners, has become its nerve centre.

The Chennai centre was launched a year ago with seven people, but today it has 125 employees and plans to end the year with around 200, according to the company’s Chief Operating Officer Vikas Mehta.

The 10-year-old company has built a platform leveraging data insights and proprietary technology. This enables dealers and partners in



Vikas Mehta, COO, ACV Auctions Inc **BIJOY GHOSH**

the US to instantly evaluate, buy, sell, finance and arrange transport with confidence and efficiency, he told *businessline*.

Globally, the company has around 400 employees, with Chennai having the maximum of 125, followed by 100 each at the company’s

headquarters in Buffalo (US) and Toronto, and the rest between Paris and Dublin, he said.

The Chennai centre works across all of ACV’s product lines and contributes to all parts of the business.

## HOW IT WORKS

Last year, ACV said there were nearly a million car listings on the company’s platform, which is a combination of hardware, software and data offerings. For selling dealers, the platform offers capabilities to inspect a vehicle, price it and list it on the platform. Buying dealers can search for vehicles, view vehicle condition reports and bid for the vehicles. Last year, ACV sold about 7,43,000 cars in the US

through the platform, which was nearly 10 per cent of the used car market, he said.

There are over 200 data points, including vehicle ID numbers, model mileage and service records for each vehicle provided to dealers. Pictures of the cars are taken, and the images are analysed at the Paris centre by using AI algorithms to understand if there is any dent or damage. The information is used by the pricing engine, he said.

Once the vehicle is sold, the platform also offers buyers capital to purchase the vehicle through ACV Capital offerings.

ACV has partnered with various truck carriers to transport the vehicle from the buyer location to the

seller’s location, provided by the ACV Transportation platform.

ACV also has a SaaS-based vehicle inventory platform, called ACV Max, to help dealers manage their inventory, and a lead generation platform called ClearCar to help generate new vehicle supply from consumers to dealers.

A car is on auction for generally 20 minutes, and some auctions could last longer. During the auction duration, buying dealers start bidding on the car on the ACV platform.

The highest bidder, who has met or gone above the asking price at the end of the auction, wins the car. Sellers and buyers can also negotiate the price through the platform, he said.

# Ex-Federal Bank CEO named TVS Capital Senior Advisor



Shyam Srinivasan

**Our Bureau**  
Chennai

TVS Capital Funds (TCF) has appointed former Federal Bank CEO Shyam Srinivasan as a Senior Advisor and Operating Partner.

With over three decades of experience in banking and financial services, Srinivasan brings strategic expertise in institutional growth, digital transformation and financial governance.

As Senior Advisor and Operating Partner, Srinivasan will provide strategic insights and operational guidance to TCF’s portfolio companies, particularly in financial services and technology-driven businesses.

## SHARPENING FOCUS

Gopal Srinivasan, CMD, TVS Capital Funds, said: “With the launch of our fourth fund, TVS Capital is sharpening its focus on both control investing and partnering in transformational growth. Shyam’s depth of experience in financial services, strategic leadership and industry insight will be invaluable in this journey.”

## businessline.

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QUICKLY.

98.21% of ₹2,000 notes returned, says RBI



**Mumbai:** The Reserve Bank on Tuesday said 98.21 per cent of the ₹2,000 banknotes have been returned to the banking system, leaving ₹6,366 crore worth of such notes still with the public. On May 19, 2023, the RBI had announced the withdrawal of ₹2,000 denomination banknotes from circulation. The total value of ₹2,000 banknotes in circulation was ₹3.56 lakh crore in 2023, RBI said. These banknotes can be deposited/exchanged at 19 issue offices of RBI. **■**

STATE OF THE ECONOMY

Urban dairy consumption is still lower than rural areas, but with increased organised retail and rising spending capacity, the potential is enormous, says **Srideep N Kesavan**, CEO of Heritage Foods Ltd.

<https://rbg.gs38nbtws>

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# India on ‘tight ropewalk’ as Trump targets Russian crude

**VOLATILITY AHEAD.** Secondary tariffs could disrupt Russian crude oil flows to India

**Rishi Ranjan Kala**  
New Delhi

US President Donald Trump’s threat of secondary tariffs on countries buying Russian crude oil has infused “uncertainty”, with Indian government officials pointing to a “tight ropewalk”. Secondary tariffs on countries buying crude oil from Russia mainly impact China and India, which account for around 80 per cent of Russia’s crude exports.

**TRICKY CURVEBALL** Sources said the stand-off between India’s largest seaborne crude oil supplier and one of its largest export markets is a “tricky curveball”. Around late afternoon, Brent prices rose by 0.09 per cent to \$74.84 per barrel, while WTI was higher by 0.15 per cent at \$71.59. An official with a domestic refiner said, “There is too much activity (volatility). India has diversified its sources. Leaving aside Russia and Venezuela, there are 38 countries to procure crude. How the dynamics of



**UNDER THREAT.** Russian supplies on average account for 36-38 per cent of India’s crude oil imports **REUTERS**

securing spot supplies from Middle East or Africa or any other region will work out is a function of cargoes available and prices? Currently, prices are still below \$75 a barrel, which is a breather, but how it reacts going ahead needs to be seen. A top official said: “Currently, there is no clarity on the manner in which these (secondary) tariffs will be imposed and its time period. Hypothetically speaking, secondary tariffs will impact around 4.6-4.8 million barrels per day (mb/d) of supplies. If this happens then there will be a shortage in the

short term till other suppliers move in to fill the gap. How this impacts the market, inflation, recession, etc is another game altogether. There are too many variables here to give you an outlook. It is a tight ropewalk.” “As usual, it is wait and watch. Refiners are adjusting accordingly and will or are exploring spot trades as they seem fit. Russia accounts for no less than 36-37 per cent of our imports and that is a very big number.” **CRUDE FLOWS HOT** Russian supplies on an average account for 36-38 per

cent of India’s crude oil imports, most of which is spot. Traders said crude oil prices have inched up higher following Trump’s warning of potential measures to curb Russian crude exports. Additionally, a decline in global crude inventories stored on tankers further supported bullish sentiment, reinforcing the uptrend in oil prices. However, prices are range bound as there are fears that tariff wars may fuel recession. An analyst with a global market intelligence firm said that there is not much clarity at present on how the tariff mechanism will look. However, Trump’s ultimatum is being viewed as a “threat”. More clarity should emerge after Thursday (April 2). While discussing India’s crude oil imports for March 2025, Sumit Ritolia, Kpler’s Lead Research Analyst for Refining & Modeling, told *businessline* last week: “If secondary sanctions targeting buyers, traders, or insurers are not imposed, we can expect continued strong Russian crude flows to India, especially in a high-demand, high-margin environment.”

## India’s high tariffs, curbs on digital deals are trade barriers: US govt report

**Amiti Sen**  
New Delhi

India maintains high applied tariffs on a wide range of goods, including alcoholic beverages, automobiles, motorcycles, vegetable oils, apples, corn, natural rubber, walnuts, almonds and drug formulations that are significant barriers to trade, according to a US government report. New Delhi also maintains various forms of non-tariff barriers such as import bans, requirement of non-automatic import licences and restricting imports of some items only to government trading monopolies subject to Cabinet approval regarding import timing and quantity, the 2025 National Trade Estimate (NTE) Report released by the US Trade Representative (USTR) on Monday pointed out.

These observations are important ahead of US President Donald Trump’s April 2 reciprocal tariff announcement as the US is trying to push India to lower both its tariff and non-tariff barriers as part of the India-US bilateral trade agreement (BTA), which is under negotiation. Other areas of concern highlighted in the report relate to digital trade & data localisation, alleged favouring of domestic suppliers in electronic payment services, issuance of various quality control orders, mandatory domestic testing and certification requirement for equipment, sanitary & phytosanitary barriers, stringent requirements for dairy imports, government procurement policy, intellectual property rules and limitation on foreign investment in services.

### AREAS OF CONCERN

- The 2025 NTE report released by the USTR points out trade barriers India maintains, including high tariffs on goods like alcohol, automobiles and agricultural products, as well as non-tariff barriers such as import bans.
- The requirement of a Chartered Engineer’s certificate to import both refurbished goods and used manufactured goods was flagged as an irritant.
- The US is also unhappy about the RBI requirement that all payment service suppliers and banks operating in India store all information related to electronic payments by Indian citizens on servers in India.
- The report stressed on the need for creating stronger IP protection and enforcement in India and criticised the country’s lack of an over-arching government procurement policy.



and public health — pose serious risks to India’s ability to protect its small farmers, maintain food safety, uphold deeply rooted social norms, and secure its digital future, Srivastava added. “India’s WTO bound tariff rates on agricultural products are among the highest in the world, averaging 113.1 percent and ranging as high as 300 per cent. Given the large disparity between WTO bound and applied rates, India has considerable flexibility to change tariff rates for both agricultural and non-agricultural products at any time, creating tremendous uncertainty for US workers, farmers, ranchers, and exporters,” the report noted.

### LACK OF GUIDELINES

The requirement of a Chartered Engineer’s certificate to import both refurbished goods and used manufactured goods was flagged as an irritant. “While the US continues to pressure India to amend its trade policies to serve American commercial interests, India must firmly assess each demand through the lens of its own national priorities, development goals, and cultural values,” pointed out Ajay Srivastava from the Global Trade and Research Initiative. Many of the proposed changes — in areas like agriculture, digital governance,

applications for import licenses,” it said. The report also mentioned the import licensing requirement for computers and laptops and said there were concerns over lack of prior stakeholder consultations. On services, the report pointed out that foreign investment in certain major sectors, including financial services and retail, is subject to limitations on foreign equity, and foreign participation in professional services is significantly restricted. “In addition, barriers to digital trade and electronic commerce, such as those imposed on electronic payment providers, have secondary effects on a wide variety of services,” it said. The US is also unhappy about the RBI requirement that all payment service suppliers and banks operating in India store all information related to electronic payments by Indian citizens on servers located in India. “Foreign firms assert that the data storage requirement hampers the ability of service suppliers to detect fraud and ensure the security of their global networks,” the report said. The report stressed on the need for creating stronger IP protection and enforcement in India and criticised the country’s lack of an over-arching government procurement policy.

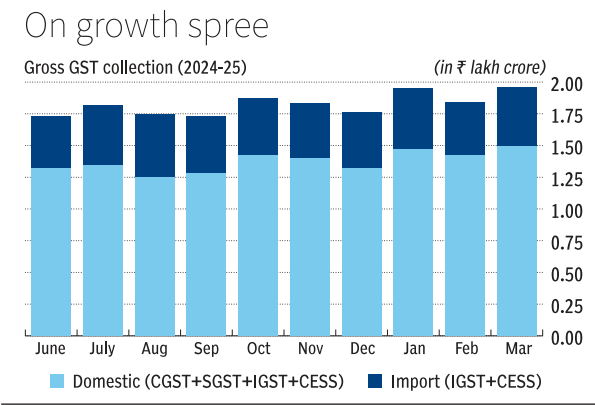
## GST collections soar to ₹1.96 lakh cr in March, the second highest-ever so far

**Shishir Sinha**  
New Delhi

The fiscal year 2024-25 ended with Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections reaching ₹1.96 lakh crore in March, per government data released on Tuesday. This is the second-highest collection to date, reflecting growth of around 10 per cent compared to March of FY23-24.

The collections in March corresponds to goods consumed and services availed in February. According to the data, GST revenue from domestic transactions rose 8.8 per cent to ₹1.49 lakh crore, while revenue from imported goods was higher 13.56 per cent to around ₹47,000 crore. Total refunds during March rose 41 per cent to ₹19,615 crore. After adjusting refunds, net GST revenue stood at over ₹1.76 lakh crore in March 2025, a 7.3 per cent growth over the year-ago period. GST collections had hit a record high of ₹2.10 lakh crore in April 2024.

**GOOD SHOW** Deloitte India Partner MS Mani said the 9.9 per cent increase in gross GST collection for the month reflects the impact of year-end sales



push by businesses. “It is very encouraging to see that this is not an isolated instance as GST collections have shown a steady increase every month reflected by the 9.4 per cent increase in annual Gross GST collections,” he said. Echoing the sentiment, Saurabh Agarwal, Tax Partner at EY India, said that India’s sustained growth in

GST collections suggests a resilient domestic economy, driven by strong consumer spending. However, a 13.5 per cent increase in import GST compared to March 2024 highlights a significant rise in imports compared to the same period last year. “It’s noteworthy that there has been a 25.7 per cent surge in export refunds year-on-year which

indicates that government manufacturing initiatives are showing positive results,” he said. Pratik Jain, Partner at PwC India, was not so optimistic. “Single digit growth in GST revenue for the month would be a bit of a concern for the government, though partly it seems to be because of higher refunds compared to last year,” he said. Further, one can expect more rigour in GST audits and scrutiny to plug the leakages. “The slowdown in consumption is an area which also needs to be addressed,” he said. According to Agarwal, widespread GST collection growth across States like Bihar, Tripura, Meghalaya, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Lakshadweep, and Andaman & Nicobar signifies balanced economic expansion across the nation. “While States like Maharashtra, Haryana, UP, Rajasthan have shown a growth exceeding 10 per cent, other States like Gujarat, Karnataka, Telangana, AP, Tamil Nadu have been in the range of -1 per cent to 7 per cent, which is very unusual for the month of March. There is a need to understand the reasons for the same by evaluating the sectoral growth and compliance rates in these States,” he said.

## EPFO empanels 15 more banks for collection

**Our Bureau**  
New Delhi

The EPFO has expanded its empanelled banking network, adding 15 additional banks for collection of contribution which will allow direct access to employers having accounts in these new banks.

The empanelled 15 banks will enable direct payment of nearly ₹12,000 crore in annual collections. The 15 new banks empanelled are: HSBC Bank, Standard Chartered Bank, Federal Bank, IndusInd Bank, Karur Vysya Bank, RBL Bank, South Indian Bank, City Union Bank, IDFC First Bank, UCO Bank, Karnataka Bank, Development Bank of Singapore, Tamilnad Mercantile Bank, Development Credit Bank and Bandhan Bank. For enabling employers covered under the Act to pay their monthly contributions, the EPFO had already empanelled 17 banks, taking the total to 32.

Union Minister of Labour & Employment and Youth & Sports, Mansukh Mandaviya said the country’s progress towards a “Naya Bharat” is being significantly supported by institutions like the EPFO, which plays a crucial role in shaping the nation’s future.

## ‘SGBs equivalent to 130 tonnes of gold to be redeemed this fiscal’

**Shishir Sinha**  
New Delhi

The Finance Ministry on Tuesday informed the Rajya Sabha that Sovereign Gold Bonds (SGBs) amounting to 130 tonnes of gold are to be redeemed from this fiscal. The Ministry simultaneously indicated that no more tranches of SGBs are to be expected henceforth. In a written response, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said that 67 tranches of SGBs have been issued till FY24-25, amounting to 146.96 tonnes of gold. “The outstanding value as on March 20, 2025 on issue price is ₹67,322 crore for 130 tonnes of gold. Redemption of SGBs is based on prevailing market price,” he said.

**WHAT ARE SGBs?** In order to divert people from physical gold to paper gold without requirement of import, the government had



To divert people from physical gold to paper gold, the government had introduced SGBs in November 2015

introduced SGBs in November 2015. With the maturity of 8 years, the bonds offered annual coupon rate of 2.75 per cent (later revised to 2.5 per cent) till the time of redemption. Gains at the end of 8 years is free from tax. Though pre-maturity redemption is permitted after 5 years, the gain is taxable in that period. The bond is part of government’s open market borrowings. According to Chaudhary, the government has maintained a Gold Reserve Fund

(GRF) in Public Account where price and interest differential amount is credited in time. SGBs, in addition to other borrowing instruments, have been an instrument for raising resources for financing fiscal deficit. However, in addition to these, SGBs also served the purpose of savings/financial instrument as an alternate to physical gold.

**GETTING COSTLY** “Due to the recent gold price volatility and global economic headwinds, this form of borrowings has become relatively expensive. Therefore, based on maturing and deepening of Indian G-Sec market, which helped in mobilising relative low-cost borrowing, resources were not raised through SGBs in FY 2024-25,” he said. The last tranche of SGBs (FY23-24 Series IV) was issued on February 21, 2024 which will mature in February 2032.

**Press Trust of India**  
Beijing

In a message marking the 75th anniversary of bilateral relations, Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday stressed on the partnership between India and China for “mutual achievement” and the need to do the “dragon-elephant tango” to serve their fundamental interests. Apart from President Xi’s message to his counterpart Droupadi Murmu, Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Prime Minister Narendra Modi too exchanged congratulatory messages to mark the occasion, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced here.

**READY FOR RESET** In her message, Murmu said a stable, predictable and friendly bilateral relationship will benefit both countries and the world, State-run *Xinhua* news agency reported. The development comes



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Kazan (file photo) **ANI**

amid the efforts to reset the ties after over four years of freeze due to the eastern Ladakh military standoff. President Xi, in his message to Murmu, said China and India, both ancient civilisations, major developing countries and important members of the Global South, are at a critical stage of their respective modernisation efforts. “The development of China-India relations demonstrates that it is the

right choice for China and India to be partners of mutual achievement and realise the ‘dragon elephant tango,’ which fully serves the fundamental interests of both countries and their peoples,” Xinhua said quoting Xi. Xi called on both sides to view and handle bilateral relations from a strategic height and long-term perspective, seek a way, which features peaceful coexistence, mutual trust, mutual benefit and common devel-

opment, for neighbouring major countries to get along with each other, and jointly promote a multi-polar world and greater democracy in international relations. For her part, Murmu said India and China are two major neighbouring countries that are home to one-third of the world’s population, noting that a stable, predictable and friendly bilateral relationship will benefit both countries and the world. She proposed to take the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties as an opportunity to jointly promote the sound and steady development of India-China relations, Xinhua reported. Earlier, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun while announcing the exchange of greetings by the leaders told media briefing here that under the strategic guidance of the leaders of our two countries, China stands ready to work with India to view and handle bilateral relations with a strategic and long-term perspective and take this occasion as an opportunity to enhance strategic mutual trust and step up exchanges and cooperation in various fields. **SHOWING THE WAY** He was referring to how Modi and Xi provided strategic guidance for the development of bilateral relations at their meeting at Kazan in Russia on the sidelines of the BRICS summit last year. The two sides are implementing the consensus of the two leaders and are promoting co-operation and achieving fruitful outcomes. After last year’s meeting between Modi and Xi, both countries held a series of high level meetings, including that of the Special Representatives of the boundary mechanism followed by the visit of Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri to Beijing for talks to normalise relations after the four-year freeze in relations due to the Ladakh standoff.



## Needless uncertainty

Ad-hoc change in derivative expiry days undesirable

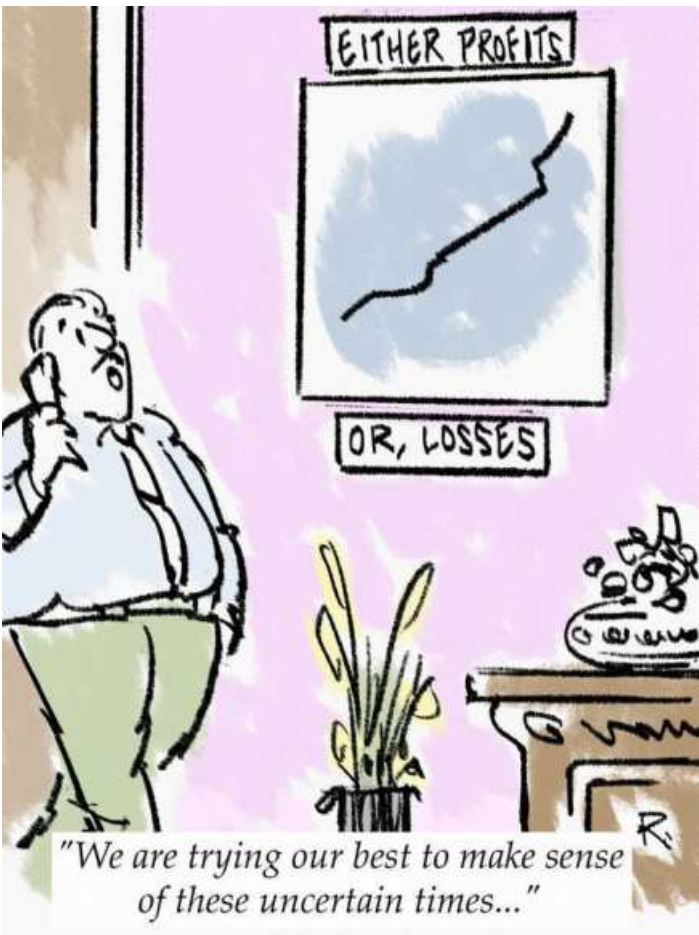
It is just as well that the market regulator, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), has intervened to end the tussle over the expiry days of equity derivative contracts. The intense competition between the two largest exchanges for market share in the fast-growing equity derivative market had led to the exchanges shuffling their expiry days, in a game of one-upmanship.

Regulatory intervention is certainly needed when competition between stock exchanges threatens to disrupt market operations and inconveniences investors. That said, some flexibility should be given to market infrastructure institutions in designing derivative contracts to provide room for product innovation. The equity derivatives segment has been registering an exponential growth in turnover since the pandemic. While individual investors have been making large losses, stock exchanges, brokers and other intermediaries have been profiting through fee, commission and brokerage income. A working group led by G Padmanabhan, former executive director, RBI, had found that speculative activity was concentrated in the weekly index option contracts, particularly on the expiry day. To quell this speculation, SEBI had imposed a series of restrictions last October, including asking each exchange to have only one weekly index option, increasing lot sizes of contracts and asking brokers to collect upfront margins from option buyers.

The BSE and the NSE, had chosen Tuesdays and Thursdays respectively for contract expiry, following these guidelines. While BSE shifted the expiry day to Tuesday since January 2025, NSE had announced in March that it will be shifting its expiry day to Mondays from April. This ad-hoc shifting of expiry day by NSE would have increased the risk for investors and reduced the gap between the expiry days on the two exchanges. The SEBI consultation paper is now proposing that the exchanges should choose either Tuesday or Thursday as the settlement day for all equity derivative contracts. This will end uncertainty for traders and investors. The NSE has said that it is moving the settlement day for equity derivative contracts back to Thursday, following the SEBI consultation paper. Spacing of the expiry days over the week is a good idea as it will allow traders to roll over their positions to the other exchange and reduce concentration risk.

While almost 90 per cent of equity derivatives trading takes place on the NSE currently, such spaced-out expiry may help in future, once activity picks up on the BSE. The regulator is also pre-empting further confusion by stating that future changes in expiry or settlement days should be made only with the regulator's approval. While SEBI's proposals address the ongoing conflict among the exchanges, care should be taken to ensure that regulations are not so stringent that they hamper market development. Stock exchanges should have the flexibility to innovate in product design, based on the demands of the market. SEBI can review these guidelines after a period of one year to gauge their effectiveness and modify them, if necessary.

### POCKET



# The tide could turn for the economy

Growth could pick up as tax cuts and credit revival lift consumption, with an upcoming Pay Commission boost

CIRCUIT BREAKER.  
AARATI KRISHNAN

As the market wallows in pessimism over slowing GDP growth and Trump tariffs, incoming good news seems to be flying under the radar. The Indian economy could however be on the mend, with favourable policy interventions and a few improving macro indicators in recent months. Here are factors that can turn around India's growth, even if global uncertainties linger.

**TAX STIMULUS**  
From 2014 to 2024, the National Democratic Alliance stuck mostly to frugal fiscal management and a take-no-prisoners tax policy. But the February '25 Budget revealed a change of tack, with the Centre proposing generous personal tax cuts.

Starting April 1, 2025, folks with annual income up to ₹12 lakh will get complete rebate from income tax. Folks earning more than this threshold will get to save between ₹10,000 and ₹1.1 lakh on their tax outgo, with lower rates. The Centre expects to forego ₹1 lakh crore on these giveaways, with 5.45 crore taxpayers benefiting.

Economists believe that ₹1 lakh crore of taxes saved can provide a ₹3-3.5 lakh crore lift to consumption, with the help of the multiplier effect. This would add 1.5-2 per cent to the nominal PFCE (Private Final Consumption Expenditure) of about ₹200 lakh crore.

The 5.5 crore taxpayers expected to gain from this, make up a big chunk of creamy layer consumers. This cohort has a high propensity for discretionary purchases. It is also quite willing to take loans to stretch its budget. If these taxpayers leverage their ₹3 lakh crore spends to purchase vehicles, durables or homes, the boost to economic activity could be much higher.

**PAY COMMISSION BOOST**  
If tax cuts can trigger a mini-spending binge, awards from the 8th Pay Commission, which will reset pay for one crore Central government employees, can keep the binge going through FY27.

Past Pay Commissions have handed out significant pay hikes to government employees, along with generous arrears. The 7th Pay Commission more than tripled compensation from ₹7,000-90,000 a month to ₹18,000 to ₹2.5 lakh a month. Central government pay hikes usually set off a chain reaction



GROWTH PUSH. The RBI seems to be keen on unhindered credit flow

at the States and private sector. Apart from vehicle and homes, consumer services such as travel could benefit this time around. The Pay Commission report may be out in early FY27, with awards starting later that fiscal.

**WANING INFLATION**  
In 2024, a big worry for the economy was inflation driven by spiralling food prices. A below-normal monsoon in 2022 and a long-running El Nino saw food inflation hovering between 5.5 per cent and 11.5 per cent between July 2024 and January 2025. Apart from hurting purchasing power, these inflation prints prompted the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to rein in liquidity and hang on to high policy rates. With El Nino fading by mid-2024 and the South-West monsoon showering 8 per cent excess rains, inflation has been abating. The 4-5 per cent increase in agri output has had a salutary effect on food inflation, which has subsided from 10.8 per cent in October 2024 to 3.75 per cent by February 2025. While the coming

Rate cuts may not immediately prompt India Inc to hop off the fence on private capex. But a pickup in consumption on top of cheaper borrowing costs could do the trick

summer months could set off a seasonal climb, the high base effect is likely to see it stay moderate this year.

Going ahead, global tariff wars could elevate prices of some industrial inputs, but energy prices, a big worry for India are likely to remain benign with Trump's "drill baby drill" agenda.

**DEEPER RATE CUTS**  
While inflation has been subsiding, the MPC's views on the growth-inflation trade-off have also shifted, with five of its six members reshuffled in the last six months. Incoming members including the new RBI Governor seem to be more pro-growth and less anti-inflation. This has opened the doors to a deeper rate cut cycle and an accommodative liquidity stance.

In its February 2025 meeting, the MPC cut policy rates by 25 basis points and dropped any mention of the 4 per cent inflation target from its official statement. MPC has also taken a less sanguine view of India's growth and talked of striking a growth-inflation balance in monetary policy. The RBI, under its new Governor, has also proved more ready and willing to open the spigots of liquidity to aid money markets.

The start of a rate-cutting cycle along with easier liquidity has seen the cost of money dip significantly. The yield on the 1-year government bonds is down from over 7 per cent to 6.4 per cent in one year, while that on the 10-year gilt is down from 7.2 to 6.6 per cent.

## Will 'reciprocal tariff' be a concern for agri trade?

US tariffs on Mexican and Canadian farm products can work as a blessing in disguise for India

Indrajit Banerjee  
Kushankur Dey

The United States remains the top destination for India's agricultural exports, and India is an important destination for US exports. Will 'reciprocal tariff' pose a threat to India, or can India turn this challenge into an opportunity? We delve into uncovering bilateral agri-trade dynamics between the two nations.

First, historically, the tariff disparity of 32 percentage points prevailed in agriculture trade between the two nations. India imposes a weighted 37.7 per cent tariff compared to the US's 2.6 per cent.

In view of this long-standing tariff gap, 'reciprocal tariff' imposition raises concerns about the fate of India's major agri-products, namely rice (basmati and non-basmati), marine products (shrimp), wheat, and buffalo meat constituting 46 per cent of India's agricultural exports to the US. On the other hand, India's imports from the US will be impacted as about 82 per cent of the total comprises pulses, vegetable oils, cocoa, raw jute, and fresh fruits.

The total agricultural trade between the US and India was reported at \$6.6 billion. India exported \$5 billion to the

US, and the US exported \$1.5 billion to India, out of the \$129.2 billion total goods traded in 2024. Though India is the tenth exporter of agricultural products to the US, Mexico, China, and Vietnam are ahead of India.

However, India's agri can further unlock export potential in the US market. Rubber and its derivatives, beverages, spirits, vinegar, tobacco, fish, dairy produce, and cotton can increase India's agri-trade export volume with the US.

**IPEF INITIATIVE**  
India must account for the impact of recent trade agreements between the US and other countries. For instance, in May 2022, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) initiative was signed between the US and Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam to strengthen food safety and standards and reduce agri-trade barriers for the US. India's share in the global agricultural export increased from 3.4 per cent in 2010 to 7.8 per cent in 2022 and net agri-export value grew at a 7 per cent CAGR from 2017-18 to 2022-23. The impact of IPEF on India's bilateral trade in agri with the US remains a grey area.



WASTAGE. A major pain point

India might face tough competition in agri-trade as the US will likely strengthen the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement by 2026. However, tariffs on Mexican and Canadian agri products by the US can be a 'blessing in disguise' for India.

A few impediments may slow down India's agri-export momentum to developed countries, including the US. Technology-enabled modern logistics, stringent quality assurance mechanisms, and (cold) storage and cool chain facilities remain pain points.

World Bank's Logistic Performance Index report reveals that though India improved its position from 54th in 2014 to 38th in 2023, logistical performance is

far behind Canada, China, South Africa, and Malaysia.

These influence the US's expectations as an importer, especially for perishable agri and livestock products. FAO estimated India's food waste stood at about 40 per cent, and about 30 per cent of fruits and vegetables perished due to poor storage facilities.

Sanitary and phytosanitary standards and greenhouse gas emissions-embodied agri-trade can affect international trading partners entering a bilateral trade with India or committing them to long-term regional trade agreements. So, India must comply with developed nations' trade and environmental regulations.

India faces structural challenges, namely small and fragmented landholdings, lack of aggregation and value addition, and aggregate measures of support restraining small producers and micro-enterprises from achieving economies of scale and scope.

Addressing these challenges can strengthen India's position in bilateral trade and create a resilient agri-export system amid the topsy-turvy trade policies of developed nations.

Banerjee is an Academic Associate at IIM Ahmedabad. Dey is an Associate Professor at IIM Lucknow. Views expressed are personal

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

**Rise of Indian steel**  
The article 'As the sun sets on Britain's 'steel empire', India on a 'conquering' march' (April 01) leads one to reminiscence the waxing and waning of political powers. Armed with 'Industrial Revolution' age technology, Britain went on building mighty empires upon which the 'sun never set'. Slowly, but steadily, the 'comfort zone' syndrome crept in and it surrendered all its glory and hegemony.

At the same time sheer perseverance and fortitude of the doyens of our industry saw India emerge as a steel powerhouse. . Keeping pace with

advancement in technology, being adaptive and agile to respond to challenges and, above all, being humane and devoted to unchanging human values, the warriors of our industry can attain even greater heights.

**Jose Abraham**  
Vaikom, Kerala

**Giving start-ups a boost**  
With reference to 'Exit route for start-ups' (April 1), a majority of VC investments in the start-up segment happen through equity or convertible instruments, and in case of insolvency or liquidation, the

investee fund may not be qualified as secured creditor and stands in the lower order of settlement. Hence, in order to safeguard the interests of investors, the definitive funding agreements have specific clauses preventing the defaulting entity from taking the insolvency route, leaving arbitration as the only option.

With mounting cash burn and operational issues, a majority of the start-ups are neither able run the business nor get freed from the control of the investors. A properly structured mechanism for providing hassle-free exits is desirable.

However, de-risking investor interest

is equally important, to support the start-up ecosystem in the country. In the absence of suitable remedy, a mechanism like a collateral credit guarantee fund may be put in place, to protect the interests of both investors and the beleaguered companies.

**Sitaram Popuri**  
Bengaluru

**Ties with the US**  
Apropos 'Challenging times for India-US ties' (April 1), the tariffs that are being talked about by the Trump administration would impact India's exports to the US, especially

pharmaceuticals, gems and jewellery, auto-parts, seafood and agricultural products. Significant reduction of tariffs by India will disturb the current demand-supply equilibrium of products like nuts, cheeses, meat, etc.

Also, the implications of such reduction on our budgetary resources could be tricky.

On the foreign policy choices, India has followed the principle of non-alignment with power blocs and this continues to be the best bet even during these turbulent times

**Angara Venkata Girija Kumar**  
Chennai



# Climate change blues

Paris pact: The consequences of US pull out

Vranda Jain  
Badri Narayanan Gopalakrishnan  
Tavishi Tewary

US President Donald Trump has pulled out the US from Paris agreement on global warming for the second time. Will the international climate diplomacy and global momentum to cut emissions get stalled once again, as has happened in the past? Will other countries fill up the void or will we witness reduced contributions?

With 200 countries committing towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and keeping the global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius, the signing of Paris agreement in 2015 showcased the collective accountability and shared responsibility of nations in addressing climate issues.

Former President Biden often supported developing countries for transitioning to renewable energy, building resilient infrastructure and adapting to climate change is essential to mitigate the adverse consequences of phenomenon and pace up the global progress on emission reduction.

Trump has referred it as an unfair and one-sided agreement which on the one side permits South to free ride at the economic burden of North and on the other enable countries like Russia and Iran to generate higher profits by producing and selling more. He has often raised concerns of how this leads to lower profits for the domestic producers and high prices for the US consumers. The US may soon find itself with the other three countries — Iran, Libya and Yemen — of not being a party to the Paris agreement.

Though the principle of “Common but Differentiated Responsibility” has been undermined at all successive CoPs, does it imply that the developed countries can default on their financial commitments and jeopardise the global climate commitment?

With the announcement of US retrenchment from the agreement in 2017 and the beginning of the formal withdrawal process, IEA reported that the global energy related CO2 emissions increased by 1.7 per cent in 2018, after a steady decline over last three years.

In recent times, NDCs of individual countries have not kept pace with the Paris pact goal, which underscores the need for political certainty for long term climate commitments.

Countries like China will take



CLIMATE CHANGE. Taking on the challenge GETTY IMAGES

advantage of this situation by leveraging themselves as reliable and committed partners in global climate leadership. It may also halt the mitigation and adaptation efforts of developing countries due to the disrupted support from developed countries.

The halt in US contribution to Green Climate Fund will hinder the availability of critical resources for developing countries. This tops up the already low pledges announced in COP29 at Baku this year compared to the demand by developing countries. Few others, particularly the countries with strong fossil fuel industries may support US actions for delaying their own emission targets. All of this can disrupt critical alliances, deviate nations to scale down their climate commitments and impact world's ability to fight climate change.

Besides the environmental consequences, Trump's rollback of climate policies can have economic fallout too. In the foreseeable future, “drill, baby, drill” may boost domestic energy production through fossil fuels, leading to lower energy prices at home, reducing the foreign dependence for energy sources and grabbing a larger pie of global market. This may however also put American industries in the growing clean energy market at risk and prevent the state from taking a critical role in the emerging sunrise renewable energy sector. Over the years, the largest emitter — China has been picking up in solar panels, electric vehicles and other green technologies. The withdrawal of US from this space will accelerate China's competitive advantage in renewable energy sector. Let us hope that the world minus the US continue its global fight against climate change.

Jain is a Professor and Chair of Economics, Jaipuria Institute of Management; Gopalakrishnan is Founder, Infinite Sum Modelling LLC, Seattle; Tewary is Associate Professor, Fore School of Management, Delhi. Views are personal

# Central banks at a crossroads



BARENDRA KUMAR BHOI

GDP growth is heading for a slowdown in several countries. Fiscal policy support has been inadequate globally as debt-GDP ratio remains high. Although inflation risks have abated, headline retail inflation remains above the target level in several systemically important countries.

Major central banks such as the US Fed, the Bank of England and the European Central Bank recently preferred to pause amid an easing policy cycle due to prevailing uncertainties.

Public policy should be countercyclical and forward-looking. Data availability on economic cycles is lagged by at least one quarter. Once an economic cycle starts, it gets going for some time. Economic cycles are typically asymmetric as the duration of downswings and upswings are generally not identical.

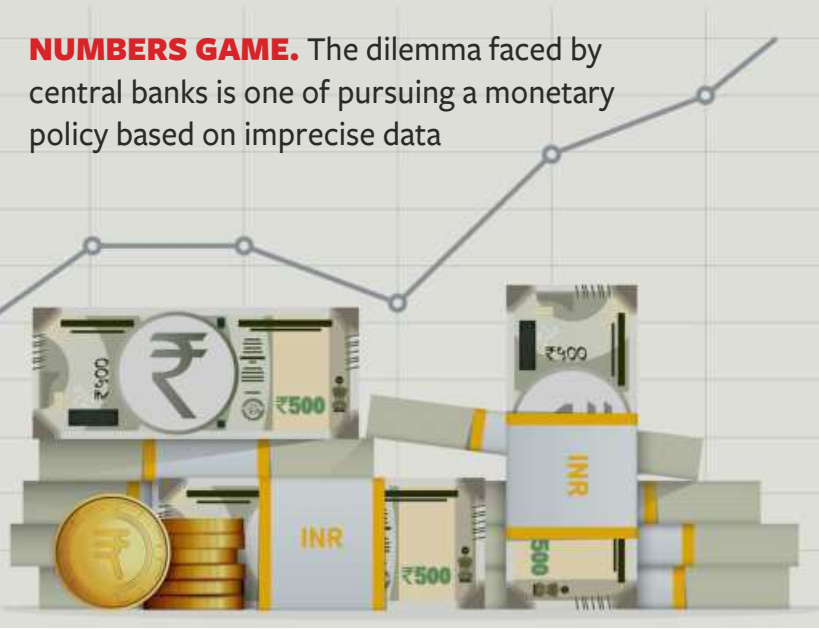
Moreover, turning points are difficult to ascertain in advance. In such a situation, public policies are data-dependent and most unlikely to be forward-looking.

Endowed with several instruments, the government can combine reactive and forward-looking fiscal policy. While pressing data-dependent problems can be addressed through reactive fiscal policy, aspirational goals can be achieved through forward-looking structural reforms.

## FORECAST DILEMMA

As central banks do not have the luxury of having multiple instruments, they are either data-dependent (reactive) based on information available at the time of policy announcement or forward-looking based on growth-inflation forecasts.

As growth-inflation forecasts play a critical role in pursuing forward-looking monetary policy central banks deploy their best brains for this purpose and revisit growth-inflation forecasts before announcing monetary policy at fixed



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

intervals — monthly, bimonthly, or quarterly. Unfortunately, growth-inflation forecasts have been imprecise in recent years with unusually high forecast errors for several reasons.

First, supply shocks are more frequent in the 21st century due to climate-related risks with energy and food prices evolving unpredictably.

Second, anti-globalisation policies lead to artificial supply shocks, the latest being a highly complex tariff war.

Third, geopolitical risks are man-made and contribute heavily to supply chain disruptions with rising prices, at least in the affected regions.

Fourth, the Covid-19 pandemic suddenly disturbed the economic cycle since 2020 with price determination largely abstracting from the wage-price spiral.

It is difficult for central banks to pursue forward-looking monetary policy when their growth-inflation projections go haywire under multiple uncertainties

Fifth, idiosyncratic factors also influence retail prices in several countries.

Is this a one-off situation or will supply-side uncertainties continue to dominate inflation expectations?

It is difficult for central banks to pursue forward-looking monetary policy when their growth-inflation projections go haywire under multiple uncertainties. Are they at the crossroads? Should they pursue a reactive monetary policy based on past data or a forward-looking monetary policy based on highly unreliable growth-inflation forecasts?

The post-Covid recovery based on available excess capacity was short-lived. Unless additional capacity is created through fresh investment — both public and private — supply-side problems cannot be resolved on an enduring basis. Alternatively, there is a need to improve productivity through innovations and structural reforms, which requires coordination between monetary and fiscal policies.

Central banks have expertise in demand management. Hence, they initially ignored the post-Covid spurt in retail inflation as a temporary supply-side problem. When they realised that repeated supply shocks and

## STATISTALK.

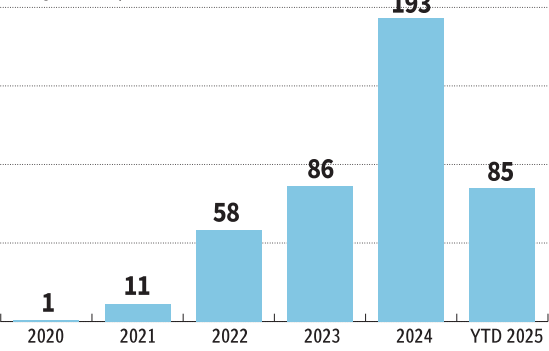
Compiled by Dhuraveil Gunasekaran | Graphic KS Gunasekar

### Retail investor craze for SME IPOs fades

SME IPOs have garnered significant attention in recent years due to their strong subscription numbers and substantial listing gains. Since 2022, many investors have been drawn to this segment, aiming for quick profits, particularly from first-day gains. However, interest has tapered off recently, as sell-offs have intensified alongside broader market trends. While some past issues saw retail subscriptions soar to 2,493 times, the last 32 SME IPOs have experienced a more subdued response, with the highest subscription reaching only 51 times

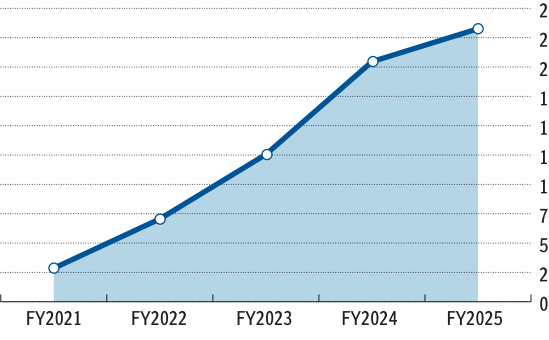
#### Enthusiasm plummets among investors, lately

Average subscription (in no. of times)



#### However, IPO issues show steady growth

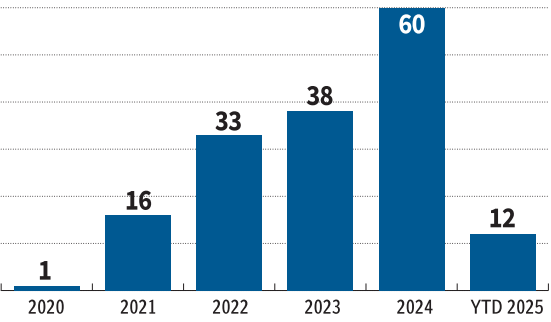
No. of SME IPOs launched each year



Source: Primedatabase

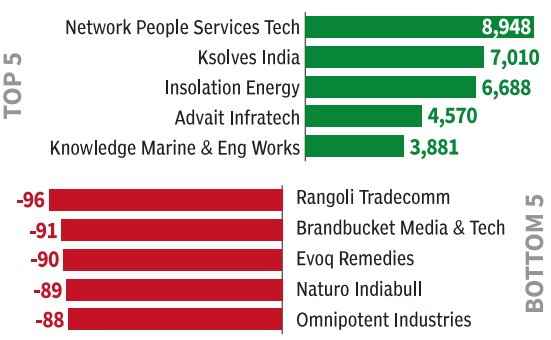
#### Listing-day gains on SME IPOs moderate in recent months

Average listing day performance (percentage gain)



#### Polarized returns – Huge rewards vs Heavy losses

Cumulative performance of SME stocks returns since their launches (in %)



## thehindubusinessline.

### TWENTY YEARS AGO TODAY.

April 2, 2005

#### 20 States migrate to VAT amid traders' protest

Unfazed over the three-day nation-wide agitation against the value added tax (VAT), 20 States and major union territories such as Delhi and Pondicherry migrated to a VAT regime on Friday. Eight States are yet to come on board for implementing the VAT regime. The Empowered Committee of State Finance Ministers on VAT had set April 1 as the appointed date for all States to switch over to the new regime.

#### Shorter calls to cost less as BSNL rejigs PCO biz

Now you can pay less for short duration calls made from a Public Call Office (PCO) even as calls longer than two minutes become dearer. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd has decreased the tariff for local calls made from PCOs even as the company matched it by lowering the pulse rate significantly.

#### Tata Tea transfers control over estates

Tata Tea on Friday divested management and control over 55,529 acres of tea estates in Kerala and transferred 12,770 workers to the newly formed company, Kannan Devan Hills Plantation Company Ltd.

their second-round effects lead to generalised inflation, policy tightening was rapid and large in magnitude.

Although a global recession was averted, the recent slowdown could be partly attributed to tight monetary policy. Major central banks are hesitatingly pursuing a policy easing cycle.

#### INDIAN SCENARIO

India's public policy discourse has been somewhat different. During the pandemic and its aftermath, the monetary authority had to do heavy lifting while fiscal support was need-based. While controlling post-COVID inflation, the RBI paused well before many systemically important central banks. Despite the recent slowdown, India is still the fastest-growing major economy in the world. The headline inflation has fallen below the 4 per cent target in February 2025.

Notwithstanding climate concerns, farm output in FY25 may be at a historic high level. Growth is being supported as we are growing below our potential. The public policy support has been need-based — capex-heavy fiscal consolidation combined with a repo rate cut since February 2025. There is no threat to fiscal profligacy as the government is committed to fiscal consolidation. The stance of monetary policy is still neutral.

Notwithstanding global uncertainties, India's macro parameters are encouraging. GDP growth is expected to be better in the second half of FY25. The pressure on the rupee has abated significantly after mid-March due to FIIs returning to the Indian stock market. The liquidity condition has improved following multi-pronged initiatives by the RBI.

The market is confident that the Monetary Policy Committee will cut the repo rate by another 25 basis points in April 2025 to expedite the monetary policy transmission.

Hopefully, our MPC will not be unduly influenced by global uncertainties as India's medium-term fundamentals are strong.

The writer is the former Head of the Monetary Policy Department of RBI. Views expressed are personal

## On businessline.in

### Extend scope of formalisation in the informal sector

The Employment-Linked Initiatives scheme would be best option as it would encourage hiring of more workers, benefiting informal sector employers and contributing to overall employment generation, Ishwar Chandra Awasthi and Puneet Kumar Shrivastav point out

https://tinyurl.com/bdd3drem

### Making use of satellite data to safeguard water resources

The fusion of satellite technology and ICT offers high-resolution images that allow for precise mapping of rivers, lakes and reservoirs, says Sundar Mahalingam

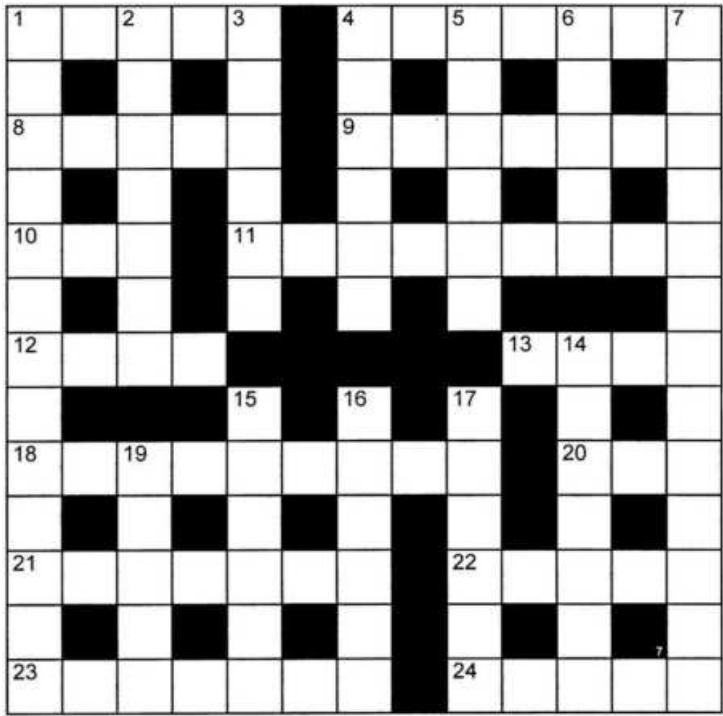
https://tinyurl.com/2x8ue33f

### Liquidity deficit: Banks can't rely only on RBI

Banks have to re-engineer their balance sheet structure and fine tune business model, says K Srinivasa Rao

https://tinyurl.com/6ehju8e9

## BL TWO-WAY CROSSWORD 2665



### EASY

#### ACROSS

1. Sporting engagement (5)
4. In a frenzy (7)
8. Tend horses (5)
9. Feeling of being slighted (7)
10. Ovum (3)
11. Represented in words (9)
12. Indicating dividend in division (4)
13. Mark of cut (4)
18. Bad dream, situation (9)
20. Tree (3)
21. Move backwards (7)
22. Secret store (5)
23. Crop (7)
24. Extended high feature (5)

#### DOWN

1. Compass needle points to this (8,5)
2. Notion (7)
3. Knock home (6)
4. Dowdy women (6)
5. Took a stroll (6)
6. Snares (5)
7. Rinded dairy product (7,6)
14. Risked (7)
15. Force to go without food (6)
16. A progenitor (6)
17. Dealer in textiles (6)
19. Donor (5)

### NOT SO EASY

#### ACROSS

1. Light producer of a sporting fixture (5)
4. Is frenzied, for it has lost heart with a caper (7)
8. Man with the horses to tie up front of gunboat in retreat (5)
9. Slighted person takes it, unfeeling and topless, with fury (7)
10. Lay product, for instance, on 3rd August (3)
11. One sent it as fast as possible as one put it into words (9)
12. One not to change to a position within (4)
13. Without its head, an award has a hurt look (4)
18. Cauchemar is what may get ridden after dark (9)
20. Tree that grows like the beginning of hedgerow (3)
21. Concerned with poet's output, or just the opposite (7)
22. A number will long for a hiding place for arms (5)
23. Gather one will have right to the middle on the street (7)
24. Earth thrown up to dig around in re-positioning it (5)

#### DOWN

1. It's straight up, where compass is concerned (8,5)
2. Was under an impression, despite beginning-of-term (7)
3. London footballer may stop one dealing on Stock Exchange (6)
4. Dowdy people taking fruit without it to the pharmacist (6)
5. I have leeches applied: I wasn't in a hurry (6)
6. Through artifice, one gets personal luggage (5)
7. Gorge on something of excellent quality, a dairy product (7,6)
14. Happened to enter the Diplomatic Corps as he can, anyhow (7)
15. Look hard around five, but deny oneself nourishment (6)
16. Gasp at having re-entered the dam, maybe (6)
17. Cloth dealer will put in an appearance in Summer, certainly (6)
19. He makes one a present of the little Greek I've entered (5)

### SOLUTION: BL TWO-WAY CROSSWORD 2664

ACROSS 1. Grandmother 8. Ambit 9. Engines 10. Patched 11. Tense 12. Strums 14. Canter 18. Swell 19. Visions 21. Medical 23. Regan 24. Exacerbates

DOWN 1. Grampus 2. Arbitr 3. Ditch 4. Overdo 5. High tea 6. Run 7. Baste 13. Malacca 15. Thought 16. Resents 17. Evolve 18. Simon 20. Shrub 22. Due



QUICKLY.

MCXCLL pays ₹2.7 cr to SEBI over breach of norms



**New Delhi:** Multi Commodity Exchange Clearing Corporation Ltdi (MCXCLL) on Tuesday settled a case related to the calculation of the margin shortfall block amount with SEBI after payment of ₹2.7 crore. This settlement pertains to alleged violations of the Securities Contracts (Regulations) (Stock Exchanges and Clearing Corporations) Regulations, 2018 (SECC Regulations). MCXCLL paid the amount and SEBI confirmed the settlement. It was reached after a *suo motu* application filed by the entity, whereby it proposed to settle the alleged violation “by neither admitting nor denying the findings of fact and conclusions of law”. **PM**

Violation case: Link Intime pays ₹14.5 lakh to SEBI

**New Delhi:** Link Intime India on Tuesday settled a case with SEBI for alleged violation of market norms after paying ₹14.5 lakh towards the settlement amount. Link Intime India (now known as MUFG Intime India), a registrar to an issue and share transfer agent, had filed a settlement application on December 20 last year, the regulator said in the order. The order came after the applicant (Link Intime India) proposed to settle the instant proceedings initiated against it. SEBI will not initiate enforcement proceedings against Link Intime India. However, SEBI retained the right to take further action if any misrepresentation is discovered or if the company breaches any terms of the settlement. **PM**

MFs to attract fresh talent post relaxation in skin-in-the-game rules

Suresh P Iyengar

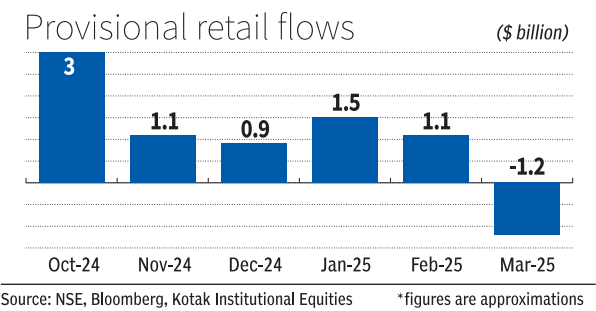
The mutual fund industry can heave a sigh of relief as it will be able to attract better talent with SEBI easing the skin-in-the-game regulations for key managerial persons in the industry. The new eased skin-in-the-game regulations, which came into force on Tuesday, come amid new players entering the MF business and the industry launching Special Investment Funds (SIFs) targeting investors who can take high risk at a minimum investment of ₹10 lakh. A registered mutual fund can establish an SIF if it has been in business for at least three years, with average assets under management of ₹10,000 crore. In an alternate route, the asset management company must appoint a Chief Investment Officer with at least 10 years of experience managing ₹5,000 crore, and a fund manager

Retail investors turn net sellers in March, shed shares worth ₹10,000 cr

**FEAR FACTOR.** Their behaviour is rooted in the realisation that markets will not revive anytime soon: Analysts

Ashley Coutinho

Retail flows in direct equities have turned negative in the month of March, with several investors choosing to book profits or cut their losses after five straight months of market fall. Investors have sold shares worth nearly ₹10,000 crore during the month, showed provisional data. This is in stark contrast to retail flows in mutual funds, which have held up despite market volatility. Inflows into mutual funds through monthly systematic investment plans stood over ₹25,000 crore in February even as the market sell-off intensified.



Source: NSE, Bloomberg, Kotak Institutional Equities \*figures are approximations

“Some sort of fear factor has crept in,” said Deepak Jasani, an analyst. “After a long time, people started giving up hope and felt that the markets would not revive in a hurry. So, they may have tried to book whatever little profit they had on their portfolios or cut their losses,” he said. The Nifty slid over 15 per

cent between September 26 (market peak) and February-end.

TAX CONCERNS

The other factor that may have played on the minds of investors is tax harvesting. Those sitting on losses may have sold those shares to off-set the losses against capital gains on other shares this

Inflows into mutual funds through SIPs stood at over ₹25,000 crore in February even as the market sell-off intensified

fiscal, said Jasani. Long-term capital losses can only be set off against long-term capital gains. Short-term capital losses can be set off against long-term and short-term capital gains. Investors should learn from the recent correction, said G Chokkalingam, Founder and MD of Equinomics Research.

Several investors have been chasing momentum stocks or recently listed stocks with high PEG ratios. For example, if the stock PE is 60 and the profit growth is not even 30, such stocks should be avoided, he said. “Bubbles invariably build up in terms of thematic stories. This time a lot of themes have played out — new age companies, renewables, digital and microfinance,” said Chokkalingam. According to him, there are a lot of small and mid-cap stocks that are still over-valued. Investors need to exercise caution and track the valuation, management and balance sheet quality as well as the durability of the business before investing.

Braving volatility, four corporates file DRHP to raise ₹4,345 crore

Suresh P Iyengar

Braving the volatile market and growing global uncertainty, India Inc is gearing up to raise fresh capital from the primary markets. Four large corporates — Runwal Enterprises, Jain Resource Recycling, Anand Rathi Share and Stock Brokers and ESDS Software — filed their Draft Red Herring Prospectus with capital market regulator SEBI on Tuesday to mop-up ₹4,345 crore through initial public offerings (IPO).

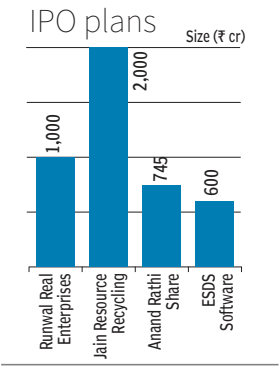
Fund raising through IPO was hit by relentless selling by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), geo-political developments and slowing economic growth. The benchmark Sensex was down 12 per cent to 76,024 points on Tuesday from its all-time high of ₹85,978 points registered last September.

Mumbai-based real estate major Runwal Real Enterprises has filed DRHP to raise ₹1,000 crore through an IPO. The company will issue fresh shares of ₹2 face value to raise ₹1,000 crore. It has no offer-for-sale component from existing promoters.

The company may consider a pre-IPO placement of ₹200 crore, which will not exceed 20 per cent of the fresh issue.

Of the overall proceeds, the company will use ₹650 for repaying outstanding borrowings, besides funding acquisition of future real estate projects and for general corporate purposes.

As of September-end 2024, Runwal Enterprises had an aggregate developable area of about 49 million sq ft of completed, ongoing and upcoming projects.



For the six months ended last September, Runwal's consolidated revenue and net profit was at ₹271 crore and ₹26 crore respectively.

OTHER FIRMS

Jain Resource Recycling, a non-ferrous metal recycling company, plans to raise ₹2,000 crore through a fresh share issuance of ₹500 crore and an offer for sale of ₹1,500 crore.

The offer for sale comprises equity shares of ₹1,430 crore by promoter Kamlesh Jain and equity shares of ₹70 crore by Mayank Pareek, an early investor.

Anand Rathi Share and Stock Brokers plans to raise ₹745 crore through fresh equity issuance of ₹5 each. The company is planning a pre-IPO placement of ₹149 crore.

The broking firm will use ₹550 crore to fund its long-term working capital requirements and for general corporate purposes.

ESDS Software Solution, an AI-enabled cloud and data centre infrastructure company, has refiled DRHP to mop-up ₹600 crore through an IPO. The company had earlier filed papers for an IPO in September 2021. It may consider a pre-IPO placement of ₹120 crore.

Vodafone Idea ends 20% higher on govt fund infusion, but analysts remain divided

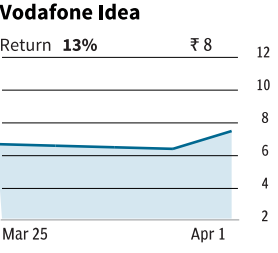
Madhu Balaji

Shares of Vodafone Idea (Vi) rallied 23 per cent on Tuesday as the Government of India decided to convert the outstanding spectrum auction dues into equity. On the NSE, the stock rallied 20.15 per cent to close at ₹8.17 after hitting an intraday high of ₹8.56. However, analysts are divided on the outlook for the company. Vi said the government will increase its stake in the company to 48.99 per cent from the existing 22.60 per

cent with fresh acquisition of shares worth ₹36,950 crore.

BROKERS' VIEWS

The promoters will continue to have operational control of the company. Vi has been directed to issue 3,695 crore shares at ₹10 each within 30 days. Global brokerage Citi has retained 'Buy' rating on Vodafone Idea at a target price of ₹12, citing the move as a significant development. The brokerage expects the move to provide considerable relief to the company's cash flow over the next three years and support the completion of its bank debt fund-



raising. However, Macquarie assigned 'Neutral' rating at a target price of ₹7, emphasising that the underlying free cash flow generation is inadequate to organically pay back obligations per timelines, reiterating significant additional equity dilu-

tion risks for minority shareholders. Nomura, on the other hand, has reiterated 'Buy' at a target price of ₹10, down from ₹12 earlier. It has cut FY25-27 EBITDA by 4 per cent, factoring modestly lower subscribers on revising base assumptions for FY25 and factoring higher network opex. According to Ambit Institutional Equities, Vi remains suited for high-risk investors due to its dependence on binary outcomes like debt funding and potential AGR relief. It came out with a 'Buy' rating at a target price of ₹10.

BROKER'S CALL.

JM Financial

PAYTM (BUY)

Target: ₹1,010 CMP: ₹801.10 With One 97 Communications (Paytm) working its way up post the disruption last year, we anticipate three potential regulatory triggers over the coming fiscal year — MDR (merchant discount rate) on higher ticket/larger merchants' UPI payments; removal of embargo on Paytm Payments Bank; and Grant of PA (payment aggregator)/PG (payment gateway) license. Pre Jan-2020, 0.30 per cent MDR was applicable on UPI P2M transactions that was reduced to zero to promote digital transactions. However, there is a strong business case for MDR on higher ticket payments or on payments made at larger merchants. Since the embargo that came up in January 2024, PPBL has been focused on ramping up compliance with Vijay Shekhar Sharma recently suggesting that PPBL is at an arm's length and hoped to have this sorted soon. With CMP implying 25x FY27E adj. EBITDA multiple, we find limited downside but upside movement could be sharp and substantial, particularly considering our FY27 EBITDA estimate can rise by about 35 per cent if either of trigger 1 or trigger 2 materialise. However, we lower target multiple to 60x FY27E PER, lowered from 70x earlier considering the rising volatility in equity markets.

Bajaj Broking

ZAGGLE PREPAID (BUY)

Target: ₹456 CMP: ₹353.75 Zaggle Prepaid Ocean Services Ltd operates at the intersection of fintech and enterprise financial management, offering spend management solutions that enhance financial efficiency. The company has built a robust business model with diversified revenue streams, including SaaS/Software fees, program fees and propel platform/gift card fees. A key differentiator for Zaggle is its strategic alliances with 16 banks, including major Indian and global institutions like DBS and HSBC. Zaggle is aggressively expanding through strategic acquisitions and new product verticals, including: Acquiring a 26 per cent stake in a UPI switch provider, with plans to increase ownership to 42 per cent; Expanding into fleet management (Zatix) and international payments; and Exploring mergers and acquisitions to enhance its product portfolio. Zaggle is well-positioned in India's rapidly growing fintech sector, supported by strong banking partnerships, diversified revenue streams, and an aggressive expansion strategy. The company targets 58-63 per cent revenue growth, driven by increased corporate adoption, and aims to achieve a 15-16 per cent EBITDA margin within four years, reflecting its focus on profitability. Zaggle presents a compelling investment opportunity. Based on a FY27 PE multiple of 31x and an estimated FY27 EPS of ₹14.72, we initiate a Buy call on the stock with a target price of ₹456.

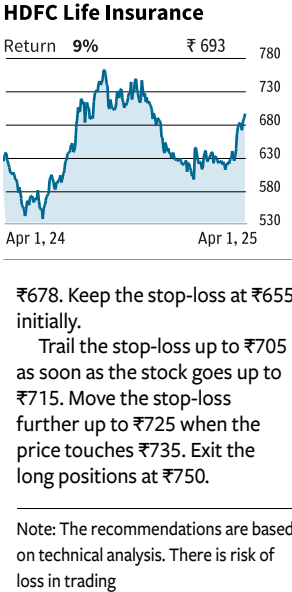
businessline is not responsible for the recommendations sourced from third party brokerages. Reports may be sent to: [blmarketwatch@gmail.com](mailto:blmarketwatch@gmail.com)

TODAY'S PICK.

HDFC Life Insurance (₹693.10): BUY

Gurumurthy K

bl, research bureau The short-term outlook is bullish for HDFC Life Insurance Company. The price action since November last year indicates a rounding bottom pattern formation on the chart. This is a bullish pattern. The rise above ₹665 last month confirms this pattern. The stock has also risen and is holding well above its 200-Day Moving Average, currently at ₹664. Moving Average cross-overs on the daily chart also strengthens the bullish case. The HDFC Life Insurance Company share price can rise to ₹740-760 in the coming weeks. Traders can go long now at ₹693. Accumulate on dips at



Day trading guide

23308      » Nifty 50 Futures

S1	S2	R1	R2	COMMENT
23290	23200	23420	23550	Go short on a break below 23290. Keep the stop-loss at 23310

₹1767      » HDFC Bank

S1	S2	R1	R2	COMMENT
1760	1740	1780	1800	Go short only below 1760. Keep the stop-loss at 1770

₹1527      » Infosys

S1	S2	R1	R2	COMMENT
1520	1480	1535	1550	Take fresh shorts below 1520. Keep the stop-loss at 1530

₹407      » ITC

S1	S2	R1	R2	COMMENT
405	402	409	411	Go short only below 405. Stop-loss can be placed at 406

₹248      » ONGC

S1	S2	R1	R2	COMMENT
247	244	251	254	Go short only below 247. Stop-loss can be kept at 248

₹1252      » Reliance Ind.

S1	S2	R1	R2	COMMENT
1230	1200	1270	1285	Go short now and at 1265. Keep the stop-loss at 1275

₹771      » SBI

S1	S2	R1	R2	COMMENT
765	760	780	790	Immediate outlook is unclear. Avoid trading the stock

₹3550      » TCS

S1	S2	R1	R2	COMMENT
3525	3470	3590	3620	Go short on a rise at 3570 and 3585. Keep the stop-loss at 3605

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

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

Nifty 50 Movers ▼ 353.65 pts.					
	Close(₹)	Pts	PE	WN(%)	
Trent Ltd.	5576.75	12.36	102.46	1.18	
Indusind Bank	682.70	4.78	7.33	0.43	
Bajaj Auto	7993.05	2.80	29.63	0.85	
Jio Financial Services Ltd.	230.42	2.11	31.09	0.72	
HDFC Life	692.90	1.70	85.38	0.71	
ONGC	248.07	1.45	7.53	0.92	
Adani Enter	2335.25	1.12	61.91	0.58	
Hero MotoCorp	3762.05	1.12	18.13	0.47	
Dr Reddys Lab	1152.20	1.08	17.65	0.67	
Grasim Ind	2619.90	0.67	22.46	0.96	
Zomato Ltd.	202.01	0.48	294.04	1.34	
Apollo Hosp	6632.30	0.36	70.69	0.64	
Cipla	1444.25	0.25	23.39	0.78	
Wipro	262.60	0.22	22.02	0.71	
State Bank	771.70	0.17	8.36	2.83	
SBI Life	1545.25	-0.26	64.24	0.66	
Coal India	397.65	-0.28	7.13	0.86	
PowerGrid Corp	289.30	-0.05	17.31	1.25	
Maruti Suzuki	11481.10	-1.19	24.82	1.44	
Tata Motors	671.85	-1.20	8.48	1.34	
Eicher Motors	5307.20	-1.23	32.75	0.70	
NestleIndia	2234.00	-1.33	69.21	0.76	
Adani Ports	1174.15	-1.34	25.24	2.48	
TataConsumerProduct	992.25	-1.39	85.33	0.62	
JSW Steel	1056.25	-1.46	77.99	0.96	
Tata Steel	153.12	-2.05	75.63	1.21	
Asian Paints	2316.00	-2.46	51.85	1.00	
Tech Mahindra	1395.15	-3.24	36.18	0.84	
Ultratech Cement	11378.65	-3.37	53.63	1.26	
Hind Unilever	2233.85	-4.90	48.79	1.89	
M&M	2637.90	-5.47	24.02	2.23	
Bharti Airtel	1724.15	-5.49	36.31	4.41	
NTPC	352.15	-5.71	15.15	1.59	
Shriram Finance Ltd.	637.45	-5.74	12.87	0.85	
Hindalco	463.75	-5.99	10.74	0.92	
ITC	406.35	-6.38	25.32	3.61	
Titan	2986.95	-6.97	83.92	1.18	
Bharat Elec	292.00	-7.38	42.75	1.00	
Kotak Bank	2145.90	-8.22	18.94	3.01	
Bajaj Finance	1937.10	-8.45	18.32	1.01	
Sun Pharma	1698.35	-8.66	35.53	1.75	
Ais Bank	1085.60	-10.36	11.87	2.96	
TCS	3550.00	-12.50	56.22	3.46	
Bajaj Finance	8698.20	-14.30	33.58	2.17	
L&T	3436.80	-14.40	28.59	3.85	
HCL Tech	1530.35	-14.57	24.31	1.55	
Reliance Ind	1252.60	-33.70	21.20	8.10	
Infosys	1526.50	-35.14	22.90	5.24	
KIC Bank	3183.45	-46.34	17.77	0.88	
HDFC Bank	1767.85	-101.49	18.74	12.83	

Pls: Impact on index movement

Nifty Next 50 Movers

▼ 671.10 pts.

	Close(₹)	Pts	PE	WN(%)
Indian Hotels Co .	805.75	45.68	59.93	3.24
Indian Oilcorp	131.24	37.80	16.99	2.25
Bpcl	284.60	35.96	8.99	2.53
Gail (India)	186.32	25.29	9.85	2.30
Hindustaneronautics	4223.70	25.12	32.48	3.68
Tvs Motor Corp.	2440.85	14.10	55.38	2.63
Canara Bank	90.00	9.63	4.93	1.39
I-Prulife	569.05	5.25	84.45	1.02
United Spirits	1406.15	4.09	72.95	1.90
Sanyamdmothersoninternat	131.12	-1.35	20.62	1.77
Swiggy	331.90	1.31	0.00	0.41
Punjab Natl Bank	96.24	1.08	6.54	1.52
Bank Of Baroda	228.58	0.26	5.74	1.94
Indian Railway Finance Corp.	124.38	-0.20	24.86	1.02
icici Lombard Gic	1791.90	-0.65	35.27	1.96
Lic	797.75	-1.05	11.72	0.81
Hyundai Motor India	1703.25	-1.53	25.78	0.95
Tata Power	374.75	-3.12	26.52	2.88
Varun Beverages	538.75	-3.45	69.16	3.31
Bajaj Housing Finance	121.69	-4.25	51.77	0.52
Adani Energy Solutions	866.35	-5.84	176.60	1.44
Zydusliscences	877.50	-6.35	18.90	1.00
Shree Cement	30246.40	-9.81	89.12	1.85
Pidlittind	2826.55	-10.01	72.87	1.99
Adani Power	504.70	-10.35	15.10	1.82
Siemens	5229.95	-11.47	72.07	2.12
Jindal Steel	901.50	-11.73	22.52	1.57
Bosch	27884.10	-11.76	40.60	1.11
Britannia Ind	490.80	-12.17	54.77	2.65
Torrent Pharma	3183.90	-13.17	17.87	1.53
Dabur India	497.50	-15.17	49.85	1.34
Ambuja Cements	529.90	-16.09	24.13	1.62
Ltimindtree	4426.60	-17.09	28.67	1.87
Havells	1501.30	-19.90	67.23	1.74
Godrej Consumer	1143.60	-21.42	0.00	2.51
Abi India	5399.15	-22.04	280.51	1.30
Jsw Energy	522.50	-23.52	47.72	1.28
Adanigreenergy	919.15	-25.84	75.52	1.29
Vedanta	457.40	-29.10	10.02	3.56
Macrotech Developers	1157.20	-30.83	45.97	1.48
Dfl	663.10	-31.90	40.99	1.95
Arcotempur	4083.60	-33.46	95.70	1.78
Power Finance	404.70	-39.74	4.49	2.70
CG Power & Industrial Sol.	615.00	-43.02	100.83	1.80
Aural	416.99	-43.91	7.01	2.39
Integlobavi	5028.00	-46.98	31.93	4.52
Cholamandamam&Fin	1466.25	-62.20	30.35	2.83
Polysar Holdings	1191.145	-69.49	49.97	2.76
Infogate	5549.70	-81.91	71.28	3.23
Info Edge I	6804.90	-83.52	122.48	2.42



QUICKLY.

**Salila Pande is new MD & CEO of SBI Card**

**Mumbai:** SBI Card announced that Salila Pande has taken charge as the company's new Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, effective April 1. Pande, a veteran banker with nearly three decades of experience at SBI, served as Chief General Manager of Mumbai Metro Circle prior to this appointment. **OUR BUREAU**

**Gruhas leads ₹12.5 crore seed funding in Lehlah**

**Mumbai:** Gruhas, co-founded by Zerodha's Nikhil Kamath and Abhijeet Pai, has led a ₹12.5 crore seed funding round in start-up Lehlah. The platform plans to utilise the funds for product development, brand visibility and team expansion. Lehlah is a content commerce platform that connects creators with brands. **OUR BUREAU**

## RBI among most critically important institutions in India: President Murmu

**Piyush Shukla**  
Mumbai

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been at the centre of India's growth story since its inception in 1935 and has emerged as one of the most critically important institutions, President Droupadi Murmu said at the Central bank's 90th anniversary commemoration ceremony on Tuesday.

"I have no hesitation in saying that the RBI has emerged as one of the most critically important institutions in the nation. Is it not less than a miracle that a piece of paper becomes fiat money when it bears the RBI Governor's signature?" she said.

### INCLUSIVE GROWTH

The RBI earned public trust by maintaining its mandate of price stability, growth and financial stability over the years, she said. It has continuously adapted to meet the evolving needs of the growing nation. The RBI's responses to key challenges, from economic liberalisation in the 1990s to the Covid-19 pandemic, highlight its resilience and adaptability.

"In an increasingly globalising world, it has also ensured that India's financial system remains resilient in the face of any adverse international trends," Murmu said. By establishing institutions such as the Nabard, IDBI, SIDBI and National Housing Bank, the RBI provided essential support for agriculture, small businesses and housing. Initiatives like the Lead Bank Scheme laid the foundation for expanding banking reach, ensuring that economic growth is inclusive and widespread.

Further, by introducing UPI, the RBI has enabled instant, low-cost transactions and deepened financial inclusion. Moreover, it has nurtured a vibrant fintech ecosystem. The RBI has already

# UPI transactions hit a high of ₹24.77 lakh crore in March

**DIGITAL PUSH.** Daily average deals were pegged at 590 million, valued at ₹79,910 crore

**Our Bureau**  
Mumbai

India's home-grown payments technology, Unified Payments Interface (UPI), set a new record in March, registering a total of 18.3 billion transactions amounting to ₹24.77 lakh crore, data shared by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) showed.

On a y-o-y basis, UPI transaction volumes were up 36 per cent, while transaction value was up 25 per cent. On average, a total of 590 million daily UPI transactions and ₹79,910 crore average daily transactions took place in March.

In February, 16.11 billion



**STRONG GROWTH.** Volumes were up 36 per cent y-o-y and value was up 25 per cent **BLOOMBERG**

transactions amounting to ₹21.96 lakh crore were registered using UPI.

**POWERFUL INNOVATION**  
"As UPI expands globally and

integrates with credit, insurance and investment platforms, its collaborative development model between regulators, financial institutions and technology com-

panies sets a powerful example of innovation that respects user choice while driving national progress," said Deepak Verma, Managing Director and CEO, Findi.

While UPI transactions rose, IMPS monthly volumes fell by 20 per cent y-o-y to 462 million in March. IMPS transaction value, however, was up 5 per cent y-o-y at ₹6.68 lakh crore in March.

The NPCI on Tuesday said that due to financial year closing, some of the banks were facing intermittent transaction declines and that the UPI system is working fine. "We are working with the concerned banks for necessary redressal," the NPCI said.

## RBI announces ₹80,000 cr OMO purchase auctions

**Our Bureau**  
Mumbai

The Reserve Bank of India has decided to conduct four open market operation (OMO) purchase auctions of Government Securities (G-Secs) aggregating ₹80,000 crore this month even as the system liquidity has turned into a surplus.

On a review of current and evolving liquidity conditions, the Reserve Bank has decided to conduct OMO purchase auctions of G-Secs in four tranches of ₹20,000 crore each to be held on April 3, 2025, April 8, April 22, and April 29.

### LIQUIDITY SURPLUS

Venkatkrishnan Srinivasan, Founder and Managing Partner, Rockfort Fincap LLP, said the liquidity surplus of about ₹90,000 crore as March 30, 2025 may be due to banks bulking up on certificate of deposits and short-term bulk deposits in the run up to the financial year end.

He expects the surplus to turn into deficit in a few days. Hence, the OMO purchase auction announcement.

Madhavi Arora, Chief Economist, Emkay Global Financial Services, said: "The OMO spree doesn't seem to end...We've ended FY25 with a banking liquidity surplus (₹89,400 crore vs deficit of ₹2.4 lakh crore last week/ March average deficit of ₹1.3 lakh crore). Massive RBI liquidity infusion (₹3.2 lakh crore durable addition) + monthly/yr end government spending and recent FPI Inflows have helped too."

## Next decade crucial in shaping India's financial architecture, says RBI

**Our Bureau**  
Mumbai

The Reserve Bank of India stands at the confluence of tradition and transformation, where the imperatives of price stability, financial stability and economic growth intersect with rapid technological advancements, global uncertainties, climate change challenges and increasing public expectations, said Governor Sanjay Malhotra.

"The next decade will be crucial in shaping the financial architecture of our economy. We remain committed to expanding and deepening financial inclusion. We shall strive to foster a culture of continuous improvement in customer services and

strengthening consumer protection. It will be our endeavour to optimise our regulatory frameworks by balancing the interests of financial stability and efficiency," he said at the commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the Reserve Bank.

The Governor emphasised that the RBI will continue to support technology and innovation.

### GUIDING VALUES

Malhotra underscored that the Central bank will do everything that is required to improve the financial system by expanding access, enhancing efficiency and resilience in an evolving economic landscape.

"Even as we embrace new technologies and modern

regulatory approaches, our core values — integrity, transparency and commitment to public service — will continue to guide us. The trust that the people of India repose in the Reserve Bank is our greatest asset."

"We are determined to preserve it and further strengthen it in the years ahead. This institution belongs to the nation. We shall continue to take each and every decision driven by an unwavering resolve to serve the interests of the people, the financial system and the economy," the Governor said.

Malhotra said as the RBI concludes its year-long celebrations and steps into its centenary decade, it does so with confidence, determination and a clear vision.

## PE-VC investments hit \$7.9 b in Q1, up 8%

**Our Bureau**  
Mumbai

Private equity and venture capital (PE-VC) investments in India reached \$7.9 billion across 270 deals during the first quarter of 2025, marking an eight per cent jump compared to the same period last year, according to data from Venture Intelligence.

The investment figure represents a modest one per cent fall from the \$8 billion recorded in the immediate previous quarter.

Deal volumes increased by two per cent year-on-year and three per cent quarter-on-quarter.

Mega deals worth \$100 million or more played a significant role in the quarter's performance, with 18 such investments totalling \$5.1 billion, compared to 10 mega



Deal volumes grew by 2 per cent year-on-year and 3 per cent quarter-on-quarter

deals worth \$4.6 billion in Q1 2024 and 20 deals worth \$4.9 billion in the previous quarter.

### IT & ITES LEADS

The IT & ITES sector led with \$3.8 billion invested across 149 deals, highlighted by Kedaara Capital's \$350 million investment in data

analytics firm Impetus Technologies.

The Healthcare & Life Sciences industry followed with \$1.1 billion across 28 deals, while the FMCG sector attracted \$1 billion across 20 deals.

### LARGEST DEAL

Bain Capital's \$508 million investment in gold loan company Manappuram Finance topped the quarter's largest deals, followed by KKR's \$400 million controlling stake acquisition in oncology hospital chain Healthcare Global.

Impetus Technologies' \$350 million funding from Kedaara Capital ranked third, while healthcare SaaS unicorn Innovaccer secured \$275 million from B Capital Group, M12, and others.

E-commerce platform Meesho emerged as the top

five with a \$270 million investment from several investors including Peak XV Partners, Tiger Global, WestBridge, and Think Investments as part of an ongoing funding round.

In the healthcare sector, significant investments included \$123 million in Delhi-based Tirupati Medicare and \$109 million in Chennai-based diagnostic service provider Neuberg Diagnostics.

The FMCG industry saw notable activity with skincare brand Foxtale receiving \$29 million, cosmetics brand Pilgrim securing \$23 million, and healthy snacks seller The Whole Truth obtaining \$16 million.

These investments, excluding PE investments in real estate, reflect continued investor confidence in the market despite global economic uncertainties.

## Bank loans to grow at 12-13% in FY26, say rating agencies

**Our Bureau**  
Mumbai

Bank loans could grow at 12-13 per cent in FY26 with pick up seen across loan segments, rating agencies said.

"Asset quality should also be stable with gross non-performing assets ratio of 2.4 per cent expected as on March 31, 2026, in line with fiscal 2025," said Crisil Ratings at a webinar.

India Ratings & Research, meanwhile, said the banking system credit growth could be at 13-13.5 per cent in FY26, considering possible impact from the RBI's advisory on risk weight assets in the unsecured retail segment and slowing of credit extended to NBFCs.

### NON-FOOD CREDIT

According to RBI data, banks' non-food credit growth moderated to 12 per cent in February on account of a slowdown in unsecured personal loans and credit card loans.

CareEdge Ratings said the banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) sector saw a sharp moderation in credit ratio, declining from 2.75 in H1FY25 to 1.07 in H2FY25, reflecting emerging



**SORE POINTS.** While the BFSI sector is fundamentally strong, challenges in asset quality and profitability have affected certain areas **REUTERS**

stress in select lending segments. While the sector remains fundamentally strong, challenges in asset quality and profitability have affected certain areas.

Sanjay Agarwal, Senior Director at CareEdge Ratings, said the credit ratio decline is due to pressures in the microfinance and unsecured business loan segments.

"The increase in loan sizes, coupled with rising debt levels per borrower, has heightened the financial strain on MFI borrowers, leading to asset quality concerns for NBFCs in this space. Consequently, NBFCs catering to microfinance and

unsecured business loans are expected to witness elevated credit costs at least until H1FY26," he said.

Despite these headwinds, the overall credit outlook for the BFSI sector remains stable, he said, supported by healthy capitalisation levels among NBFCs and banks.

### NBFC SECTOR

Crisil Ratings said for non-banks, assets under management is expected to grow 15-17 per cent in FY26, in line with FY25.

his remains higher than the decadal average growth rate of 14 per cent seen between Fiscal 2016 and 2025.

The ability to diversify funding profile and revival in bank funding following the rollback of higher risk weights on bank lending to non-banks will be the key.

India Ratings says rating upgrades mainly occurred in NBFC sector, aided by substantial equity infusion or expansion of franchisee while maintaining asset quality.

Consolidation in the industry with stronger player acquiring a relatively weaker credit profile entity operating in the same segment was the other key upgrade driver.

## Credit ratio for Crisil, ICRA falls in H2FY25, but rises for CareEdge

**Our Bureau**  
Mumbai

The credit ratio (the number of rating upgrades to number of downgrades) declined for Crisil Ratings and ICRA in the second half of FY25 *vis-a-vis* first half even as it strengthened for CareEdge Ratings.

Crisil Ratings' credit ratio declined a tad in H2FY25 to 2.64 times against 2.75 times in the first half. There were 423 upgrades and 160 downgrades during the period. The agency's reaffirmation rate rose to 83 per cent from 80 per cent, surpassing the 10-year average of 82.5 per cent for the first time since fiscal 2022. It underscored that the increase indicates greater stability in the credit quality outlook of India Inc.

"The upgrade rate moderated to 12.2 per cent from 14.5 per cent but was still above the 10-year average of 11 per cent. Upgrades were driven by infrastructure and related sectors, such as construction and engineering, capital goods, and secondary steel.

"The downgrade rate fell to 4.6 per cent from 5.3 per

cent, below the 10-year average of 6.4er cent. "Downgrades were seen in the export-linked sectors, such as specialty chemicals, cotton spinning, and home furnishing, due to global headwinds," according to the agency's H2 rating round-up.

### UPGRADES UP

Crisil Ratings' credit quality outlook for India Inc remains positive with upgrades expected to outnumber downgrades in FY26 even as it expects the reaffirmation rate to remain range-bound at current levels. Subodh Rai, Managing Director, Crisil Ratings, said Corporate India would benefit from the urban consumption spur driven by budgetary tax cuts, easing inflation and expected reduction in interest rates. Further, spending on infrastructure will have a positive multiplier effect and support linked sectors.

Also, India Inc's low capex intensity and balance sheet strength (median gearing estimated at 0.5 time at the end of fiscal 2025) offer ample cushion against global shocks, he added. ICRA's credit ratio declined in

H2FY25 to 1.80 times against 2.20 times in the first half. In all, there were 423 upgrades and 160 downgrades during the period. K Ravichandran, Executive Vice-President & Chief Rating Officer, ICRA, said: "India Inc has experienced an extended period of credit profile improvement, much of it due to strengthening balance sheets.

### CAREEDGE RATINGS

CareEdge Ratings' Credit Ratio, however, strengthened to 2.35 times in H2 FY25, with the manufacturing and services sector seeing a notable rebound, up from 1.62 times in H1 FY25. During this period, there were 386 upgrades and 164 downgrades.

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(Board Line: 022-671175323, Mobile: 7208817950) CIN: L28920MH1919PLC000567

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**

The Tata Power Company Limited invites tender from eligible vendors for the following package.  
**OLA for Erection and Dismantling of scaffolding for conveyor trestles, Junctions Towers and Associated structure etc at Trombay for 2 years Chembur-Mahul Mumbai-400074**  
For detail NIT, please visit Tender section on website <https://www.tatapower.com>. Last date for receipt of request for issue of bid document is 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

**TATA POWER**  
(Corporate Contracts Department)  
The Tata Power Company Limited, Smart Center of Procurement Excellence, 2nd Floor, Sahar Receiving Station, Near Hotel Leela, Sahar Airport Road Andheri (E), Mumbai 400 059, Maharashtra, India  
(Board Line: 022-671173917) CIN: L28920MH1919PLC000567

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)**

The Tata Power Company Limited invites tenders from eligible vendors for the following package (Two Part Bidding) in Transmission division, Mumbai.  
• Supply and Services for 33KV GIS along with associated equipment at Parel, Mahalaxmi, Borivali, Versova and Mankhurd Receiving Station in Mumbai (Package Reference no.: CC26NP001).  
For detailed NIT, please visit Tender section on website <https://www.tatapower.com>. Interested bidders to submit Tender Fee and Authorization Letter upto 1500 hrs of 11<sup>th</sup> April 2025 for above tender. Also, all future corrigendum's (if any), to the above tender will be informed on Tender section on website <https://www.tatapower.com> only.

**Industrial Energy Limited**  
(Contracts Department)  
IEL, C/O - The Tata Power Co. Ltd., Inside of Tata Steel Ltd., Kalinganagar, Jagpur, Jagpur Road, Dubu-755026, Odisha, India.

**CORRIGENDUM**

Industrial Energy Limited (JV of TATA POWER & TATA STEEL) invited expression of interest from eligible contractors for the following packages for IEL, CPP-1 plant at Kalinganagar vide advertisement on 07<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2025, 7<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2024 & Corrigendum of CC25AKTKPO-05 on 31st DECEMBER 2024.

S. No.	Tender Description	Ref No	EOI submission dates
1	Supply of CW PUMP MOTOR (720KW, 6.6KV, 741RPM)	CC25AKTKPO-05	15.04.2025
2	Hired Vehicle service for Employee Transportation, Fleet Management of Company owned Vehicles on regular basis and vehicle required on as and when need basis	CC25AKTKPO-08	15.04.2025

Notice is hereby given to interested parties of an amendment to our Notice inviting Expression of Interest for the above-mentioned Packages. Interested parties may visit Tender section of our website (URL: <https://www.tatapower.com/tender>) for downloading the same. Eligible parties willing to participate may submit their expression of interest along with the tender fee for issue of bid document latest by the mentioned dates to following mail id: [urprabhakaran@tatapower.com](mailto:urprabhakaran@tatapower.com); [alok.tripathy@tatapower.com](mailto:alok.tripathy@tatapower.com). Parties who have already submitted their expression of interest need not re-apply.

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**CONTACT**  
Mr. A.R.S. Logesh, 98406 51168  
Mr. A. Anantha Raja, 88979 63630

**Name and Address of the entity seeking Proposal:**  
**BANGALORE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT LIMITED**  
BIAL Project Office, Kempegowda International Airport, Devanahalli, Bengaluru - 560 300  
Web: [www.bengaluruairport.com](http://www.bengaluruairport.com)

**NOTICE TO EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)**

Tender Title	Short description of Scope of Work
K I A T e r m i n a l Upgrade, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning (SITC) of MEPF works	SITC of MEPF works, including re-engineering and design activities for the replacement of existing chillers, cooling towers, AHUs, and ventilation fans. The scope also includes SITC of electrical LT power and lighting, fire sprinklers, and roof rainwater piping at various locations/levels of T1. Additionally, the project covers external underground DI piping for fire services, engineering and SITC works for GRP tanks at T1, and BMS system works for the associated infrastructure area.

Pre Qualification Criteria & other Information: Available on BIAL website [www.bengaluruairport.com](http://www.bengaluruairport.com) under Tenders section.  
Submission Due Date & Time for all the above: **14<sup>th</sup> April 2025 at IST 1500 Hours.**  
Note: Any Further Addendums to this EOI shall be made available in BIAL website. Applicants who are interested shall express their interest through E-Mail: [projecttenders@bialairport.com](mailto:projecttenders@bialairport.com). To submit EOI, register and login to BIAL E-tendering website (<https://www.bialtenders.com>) under event ID: 3308  
Name and address of the entity seeking EOI:  
**Vice President - Procurement & Contracts**  
Bangalore International Airport Ltd.,  
BIAL Project Office,  
Kempegowda International Airport,  
Devanahalli, Bengaluru - 560 300  
Email: [projecttenders@bialairport.com](mailto:projecttenders@bialairport.com)  
Phone No: 080 - 66782622  
[www.bengaluruairport.com](http://www.bengaluruairport.com)



QUICKLY.

Copper recovers from 2-week low on China data



**London:** Copper prices rose on Tuesday after four sessions of losses, buoyed by continued positive data from top metals consumer China but uncertainty around US tariffs capped gains. Benchmark three-month copper on the LME added 0.4 per cent to \$9,745 a tonne. LME tin added 0.3 per cent to \$36,745. REUTERS

Crude oil steadies near \$75 as market eyes tariffs

**London:** Crude oil prices steadied near five-week highs as threats by US President Donald Trump to impose secondary tariffs on Russian crude and attack Iran countered worries about the impact of a trade war on global growth. Brent futures were up 3 cents at \$74.80 a barrel at 1352 GMT. US WTI crude futures rose 4 cents to \$71.52. REUTERS

Coffee rebounds from two-month lows



**London:** Raw coffee futures on the ICE exchange rose after earlier hitting two-month lows amid worries that historically high prices might hurt demand. Arabica coffee was up 1.2 per cent at \$3.8415 per lb. However, there are lingering worries about the upcoming harvest in top producer Brazil. Robusta coffee was up 0.1 per cent at \$5,304 a tonne. REUTERS

# Wheat purchase begins with 6 lt surplus

**EARLY PROCUREMENT.** Centre aims to achieve 313 lt target in 2 months, buys 8 lt in Madhya Pradesh

**Prabhudatta Mishra**  
New Delhi

The wheat procurement season began on Tuesday with the Food Corporation of India (FCI) registering a lead of nearly 6 lakh tonnes (lt) compared with last year due to early purchase starting from March 10 in Rajasthan.

Given the arrival trend and a stronger push in Uttar Pradesh, the Centre may achieve the targeted 313 lt in the next two months, experts said.

Total procurement of wheat had reached about 8.5 lt until March 31 against about 2.5 lt a year ago, sources said, adding that the purchases this year commenced earlier amid a bumper production estimated by the government.

**BONUS OVER MSP**  
In Madhya Pradesh, where the State government has

announced a bonus of ₹175/ quintal over and above the minimum support price of ₹2,425/quintal, the Centre has purchased nearly 8 lt this year after procurement began on March 15; it had bought less than 2.5 lt last year, the sources said.

In Rajasthan, where the government recently relaxed the norms under the fair, average quality (FAQ) standards, the procurement is about 40,000 tonnes (3,500 tonnes). In Uttar Pradesh, the government has bought about 3,000 tonnes and in Gujarat about 250 tonnes, where also the procurement season was advanced to March 15. There was hardly any purchase in these States last year, the sources said. But officials in Uttar Pradesh said the purchases had crossed 100 tonnes as of April 1.

“The Centre has to be more proactive in Uttar Pradesh and should request the



**STEADY INFLOW.** Sources said that about 23 lt of wheat had reached purchase centres so far, whereas *mandi* arrivals are reported to be at 23.71 lt

State government to announce a bonus since MP and Rajasthan are already implementing it. Arm twisting private traders cannot be an answer when farmers are also becoming aware about the market rates and if farmers decide to hold back their produce until the procurement season gets over (which actually gets completed by May 31 on the basis

of arrivals), it will be counter-productive for the government,” a former senior official of the Food Ministry said.

Sources said that about 23 lt of wheat had reached purchase centres so far, whereas *mandi* (agriculture market yard) arrival of the crop is reported to be 23.71 lt, which may not necessarily be all from the fresh crop.

# Sugar output down 18% as most mills shut early

**Our Bureau**  
New Delhi

Sugar production fell by 6 lakh tonnes in the last two weeks compared to the previous fortnight. In the first six months of the current season (starting October 1, 2024), the output reached 248.5 lakh tonnes (lt) — 18 per cent lower than 302.5 lt in the same period last year, per the National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories (NFCSF) data.

As many as 234 mills closed crushing operations in March, taking the total mills that ended the season early to 420, against 331 during October-March of the 2023-24 season. There are



**This year's net sugar production is expected to be 259 lt, which is 19% lower than last season**

113 mills in operation as of March 31 compared with 204 mills in the year-ago period, according to the NFCSF.

“The data for the month of March shows that the number of mills closed in the year-ago period was even higher at 257 compared to 234 now. This shows that the initial setback suffered by the mills, which the government failed to anticipate due to various reasons, could not be offset in the subsequent

period despite some claims by a few industry people of an improvement,” said a sugar industry expert.

He said sugar production, when compared with the year-ago, had seen a fall of 8 per cent until January 31; this widened to 12 per cent until February 15. The drop has been increasing by almost 2 per cent every fortnight — 14 per cent until February 28, 16 per cent until March 15 and now 18 per

cent. This year's net sugar production is expected to be 259 lt, which is 19 per cent lower than 319 lt produced in the entire 2023-24 season (October-September).

Sharing the latest update, the federation said as much as 2,653.26 lt (2,981.04 lt) of sugarcane had been crushed across the country till March 31.

The average sugar recovery (excluding diversion for production of ethanol) in the country is 9.37 per cent, down from 10.15 per cent a year ago.

**TOP CRUSHERS**  
According to NFCSF, Uttar Pradesh reported the crushing of 904.12 lt of sugarcane with a sugar output of 87.70 lt at 9.7 per cent recovery.

So far, Maharashtra has seen closure of crushing in 194 factories, and only six units are in operation as of now. The State has reported crushing of 843.16 lt of sugarcane, with an average recovery of 9.5 per cent and sugar production reaching 80.1 lt.

Out of 79 factories in Karnataka that started operation this year, the crushing season in 75 factories has ended, and 469.41 lt of sugarcane has been crushed, with an average recovery of 8.5 per cent, resulting in net sugar production of 39.90 lt.

Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka are the top three sugar producers, having 84 per cent share in the total sugar produced in the country so far.

# Campco exports 30 tonnes of arecanut to Maldives

**AJ Vinayak**  
Mangaluru

The Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative (Campco) Ltd has exported 30 tonnes of arecanut to Maldives.

A Kishore Kumar Kodgi, President, Campco, said they were making dedicated efforts to expand the arecanut market globally, ensuring a stable future for farmers despite several challenges.

“As part of its ambitious export initiative, Campco has successfully exported 30 tonnes of arecanut to the Maldives. Having already established a strong reputation for quality in the domestic market, Campco aims to introduce Indian arecanut to global markets while strengthening the Campco brand internationally,” he said.

He said the cooperative was exploring opportunities

to export arecanut and value-added products to many countries across the world.

**DIVERSION TO CHINA**  
To a query on the domestic market situation, Kodgi told *businessline* that old stocks of white arecanut are in good demand now as countries such as Indonesia and Myanmar are now exporting a significant portion of the commodity to China. Myanmar is exporting the commodity to India also.

The diversion of a significant portion of arecanut from these countries to China has helped improve the market condition in India.

Referring to the impact of climate change on production of the commodity, Kodgi said it had impacted the average yield in arecanut plantations.

On average, arecanut production had come down by 25-40 per cent in plantations, he said.

# Violent wet weather for Central, South India

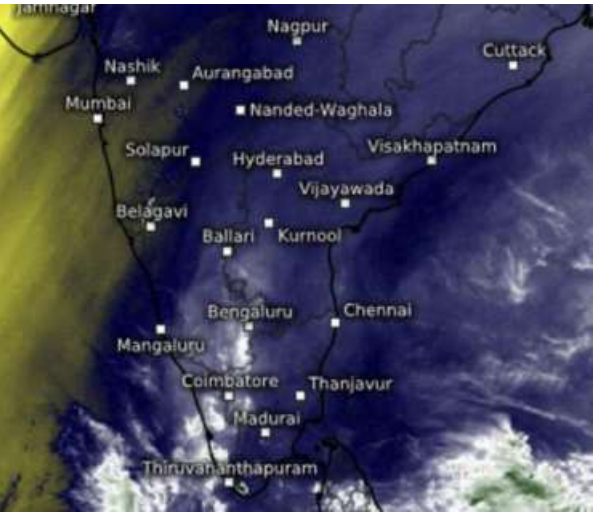
**Vinson Kurian**  
Thiruvananthapuram

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast heavy rainfall over parts of meteorological subdivisions of Kerala, Mahe, south interior Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, coastal and north interior Karnataka and coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next few days as pre-monsoon weather intensifies to set up violent weather.

**HOT OVER NORTH-WEST**  
This phase will likely also see a gradual rise in day temperatures by 3-5°C over North-West India during the next seven days and a fall by 2-4°C over Central India and over Maharashtra for three days.

Day temperatures may moderate by 2-4°C over the South.

Heatwave conditions may prevail over parts of Saurashtra and Kutch on Tuesday and Wednesday and west Rajasthan for three days from



**BAY CHURNS.** Emerging wet weather over Central India and peninsula has forced heat (in golden hue) to confine itself to West India and adjoining North-West India even as thunderstorms (in green and white) brew over the Bay [WWW.METEOLGXIX.COM/IN](http://WWW.METEOLGXIX.COM/IN)

Saturday. It will be hot and humid over parts of Tripura for three days until Thursday, over Assam for three days from Thursday and coastal Karnataka for four days from Thursday.

Kerala and Mahe will re-

ceive heavy rain for five days from Wednesday, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal for three days from Thursday and coastal Karnataka for four days from Thursday. Andaman and Nicobar Is-

lands and coastal Andhra Pradesh will be impacted on Friday.

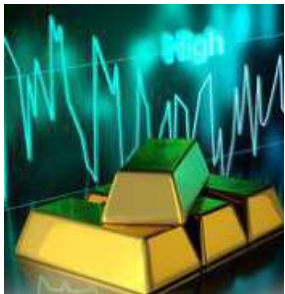
Isolated to scattered light to moderate rainfall thunderstorms, lightning, gusty winds (30-60 km/hr) in Gujarat and Telangana on Tuesday will continue into Wednesday.

A similar weather pattern is predicted to persist for the next four days over Odisha, Madhya Maharashtra and Marathwada, for five days in Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala, Mahe and Karnataka, and for four days from Wednesday over coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam and Rayalaseema.

**HAILSTORM WARNING**  
The IMD has warned of hailstorms over Madhya Maharashtra and Marathwada on Wednesday, over Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh, south interior Karnataka and Telangana on Wednesday and Thursday, and over north interior Karnataka for four days from Wednesday.

# Gold prices may top \$3,300/oz by year-end driven by trade tensions

**Subramani Ra Mancombu**  
Chennai



Gold is seen topping \$3,300-3,400 an ounce before the year-end with the precious metal soaring to new heights almost every day over the past couple of weeks. US-based investment bank Goldman Sachs even sees gold topping \$4,500 in an “extreme tail scenario” over the next 12 months.

Gold has jumped over 3 per cent in the past week as investors are looking for haven assets as US President Donald Trump's tariff roll-out from Wednesday has raised fears of a global trade war. “Trade tensions (especially tariffs) remain a key driver,” said RBC Capital Markets.

“The price rise is primarily due to uncertainty over the US tariff policy. The uncertainty around the latest announcements by the US regarding the trade tariffs is pushing up gold prices,” said Colin Shah, MD of Kama Jewelry.

Prithviraj Kothari, Managing Director of Rid-diSiddhi Bullions Limited (RSBL), said gold is on track for its best quarter since 1986.

The World Gold Council (WGC) said markets focused on trade tensions as a new 25 per cent US auto import tariff and upcoming retaliatory tariffs weighed on investor sentiment.

**UNCERTAIN PERIODS**  
“Stagflation fears abound on higher core PCE (personal consumption expenditures) inflation and lower spending and consumer confidence, pushing stocks down and gold up, as we have seen in the past,” the WGC said. “Investors across the globe are diverting funds to-

wards haven assets like gold to tide them through these uncertain periods,” said Shah.

On Tuesday, gold futures on the COMEX (Commodity Exchange) were quoted at \$3,164.50. Spot gold was up at \$3,135.32.

“The next resistance for gold is \$3,210,” said Renisha Chainani, Head-Research at Augmont. Kothari said \$3,030 is the support level.

Amy Gower, Head of Metals and Mining Commodity Strategy at Morgan Stanley, told *Bloomberg Television* that gold had not peaked yet, with physical demand from central banks and declining interest rates extending its golden run.

“This rally continues to have legs. Gold will be relatively more competitive at \$3,300-3,400,” she said.

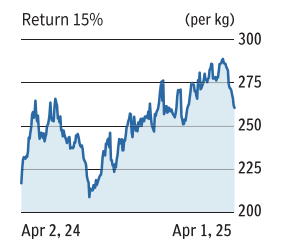
Goldman Sachs expects that by the year end, gold price will reach \$3,300/oz instead of \$3,100 in its earlier forecast. Kama Jewelry's Shah said gold could touch \$3,250 by the year-end.

RBC Capital Markets, however, said the gold rally is being driven less by hard economic data and more by the jittery mood of the market.

Though it upgraded its gold price forecast, it said soft data such as falling business confidence would have to harden into weaker employment, output and investment numbers.

# Aluminium: Go short now, add more at ₹249

**Gurumurthy K**  
bl. research bureau



Aluminium prices have come down sharply over the last couple of weeks. The aluminium futures contract traded on the Multi Commodity Exchange has declined over 6 per cent from around ₹264 per kg in mid-March. It is currently trading at ₹247.

## COMMODITY CALL.

The sharp fall in the last two weeks has dragged the contract below the key support level of ₹252. That has turned the outlook bearish. Key resistance is in the ₹251-253 region. Any intermediate bounce will be capped at this resistance zone. A rise above ₹253 looks less likely now.

There is some support near the current levels at ₹246. If the contract man-

ages to bounce, a corrective rise to ₹250-252 is a possibility. Thereafter, the contract could fall back again. Broadly, we expect the contract to break ₹246 and fall to ₹240-239 in the short term.

**TRADE STRATEGY**  
Traders can go short now at ₹247 and add more shorts at ₹249. Keep the stop-loss at ₹252 initially.

Trail the stop-loss down to ₹246 when the price goes down to ₹243. Move the stop-loss further down to ₹243 when the price touches ₹241. Exit the short positions at ₹240.

# Coffee exports top govt target for third year

**Vishwanath Kulkarni**  
Bengaluru

For the third consecutive year, India's coffee exports have exceeded the government target, driven by rising prices, global demand and growing domestic production.

For FY25, India's coffee shipments crossed \$1.816 billion, registering a 46 per cent increase over the previous year's \$1.286 billion.

In volume terms, coffee exports were up 1.56 per cent at 3.89 lakh tonnes (lt), based on the permits issued by the Board.

In fact, coffee exports have more than doubled over the past five years since 2020-21, when shipments were worth \$735 million.

KG Jagadeesha, CEO and Secretary, Coffee Board, said, “Factors such as increasing global prices due to supply disruption in Brazil

Strong brew			
India's coffee shipments			
Financial Year	Volumes (tonnes)	Exports (\$ million)	Target (\$ million)
2024-25	3,89,967	1,816	1,412
2023-24	3,83,965	1,286	1,249
2022-23	3,96,346	1,146	1,088

Source: Coffee Board



and Vietnam, and the rising consumption post-Covid have helped the growth in shipments.”

“Also, over the past 3-4 years, India's coffee production has consistently been over 3.5 lt — up from 3.2-3.3 lt earlier — which helped the exports,” he said.

**ROBUST DEMAND**  
“We have started exporting more and more value-added coffees. The percentage of premium coffees out of our total green coffees has also increased, which has to record exports,” Jagadeesha said. European countries such

as Italy, Germany, Belgium and Russia are among the major destinations for Indian coffees. Demand for Indian coffees continues to be strong even as global supplies remain tight.

**GROWING INTEREST**  
“Many of the countries which are dependent on Vietnam and Brazil want to diversify their basket. They see India as an important country in terms of diversifying their procurement basket. As a result, there's growing interest in Indian coffees. We need to produce more, if we want to match the demand,” Jagadeesha said.

In rupee terms, the exports during 2024-25 stood at a record ₹15,465 crore — up 49 per cent from the previous year's ₹10,376 crore. The unit value per tonne went up to ₹3.96 lakh per tonne (₹2.70 lakh per tonne).

India is the seventh largest producer and fifth largest exporter of coffee.

**SURGE IN PRICES**  
Ramesh Rajah, President, Coffee Exporters Association, said it had been a good year for coffee exports and attributed the record shipments to the surge in global prices. Plantation grades, which fetch higher value, got shipped more, he said.

While demand continues to be strong, it is the availability of coffee that's a challenge, Rajah said.

Production, which has been stagnant for the past couple of years, has to go up, he added.

# Icrisat eyes AI/ML to revolutionise crop R&D

Launches AI Plant Health Detector and digital soil library for chemical-free soil testing

**KV Kurmanath**  
Hyderabad

After 54 years of existence and delivering 1,200 seed varieties in pulses and millets, the International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (Icrisat) has set its sights on deploying artificial intelligence, machine learning and large language models (LLMs) to improve the quality of the output.

To start with, it has launched an AI-based Plant Health Detector, a tool that helps farmers and other ecosystem players quickly assess the health of a plant and take remedial measures, if necessary.

It has also developed a digital soil library that helps in quickly assessing

the health of the soil.

“This is a very emerging area, not only for CGIAR centres like Icrisat. Even the Indian Council of Agricultural Research has started working on this. These technologies will be really helpful,” Icrisat Director-General Himanshu Pathak has said.

The institute has plans to harness its knowledge bank to benefit from the power of LLMs.

“With over 1,30,000 accessions of the mandated crops, we can start to look for new traits in ways never before possible using machine learning and reinforcement learning. We have terabytes of data, and the goal is to find unique traits and develop them into the varieties we are



Stanford Blade, Deputy Director General - Research and Innovation, Icrisat

looking for,” Stanford Blade, Deputy Director General (Research and Innovation) of Icrisat, told *businessline*.

“We're trying to find these very specific areas where the tools will be beneficial to the farmers here in Telangana and across all of the geographies that we

work,” he said.

**DIGITAL SOIL LIBRARY**  
Pathak said the institute had developed a unique digital soil library with data from over 15,000 samples.

Stating that the current method of testing soils involves using chemicals, he said the unique technology, using hyperspectral tools, helps in testing the samples without any chemicals. “We'll be able to test the soil and know its health in no time. We are going to calibrate and validate this along with our National Agricultural Research Systems partners,” he said.

The institute sees this as transformative as current soil health assessment methods can't reach all farmers.



QUICKLY.

CBIC to start e-processing for exim personal carriage

**New Delhi:** The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) said it will introduce e-processing of import/export through personal carriage by air passengers from May 1. Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Kochi, Coimbatore, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Jaipur airports will allow personal carriage export of gems and jewellery. Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Jaipur airport would allow import of gems and jewellery. Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi and Mumbai airports will allow samples/prototypes of machinery. PTI

IRFC signs ₹5,000 crore loan pact with NTPC REL

**Mumbai:** The Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) has entered into a loan pact with NTPC Renewable Energy Ltd to provide a term loan of ₹5,000 crore, according to a regulatory filing. The loan will help NTPC REL meet capital expenditure for ongoing and new capacity addition projects, including refinancing of existing loans. OUR BUREAU

# Karnataka’s organised MFIs grapple with defaults after new Ordinance

REPAYMENT LAG. Borrowers misunderstand law targeting unorganised sector lenders, delay repayment

Aishwarya Kumar  
Bengaluru

Karnataka’s organised microfinance institutions (MFIs) are grappling with the fallout from alleged borrower suicides, which led to the State government promulgating an ordinance against coercive recovery practices in the unorganised sector.

The cumulative loan books have contracted from ₹42,000 crore in March 2024 to ₹34,000 crore, excluding microfinance loan books reflected in banks’ by December 2024. Industry insiders point to over-borrowing, with nearly 8 per cent of borrowers having loans from five or more institutions, stretching repayment capacities to the brink.

The crisis has been exacerbated by confusion over a recent ordinance passed by the Karnataka government, further fuelling defaults. The law passed by the Karnataka



ZONES IMPACTED. Some regions in South, West, and North Karnataka have been more affected, say industry sources

government in February aims to regulate the microfinance market by penalising unregulated MFIs and lenders for coercive loan recovery practices by imposing a jail term of up to 10 years and a fine of up to ₹5 lakhs for violations. However, insiders have noticed that borrowers have misunderstood the nuances in the law, which only targets unorganised players.

Karnataka’s microfinance sector comprises both organised and unorganised players, including 64 RBI-registered

entities, of which 35 major players operate across five districts.

RECOVERIES SLIDE

“We have observed a dip in the loan repayment rates after the Ordinance. Out of our ₹8,000 crore loan book, ₹2,000 crore is in Karnataka, and repayment rates here have worsened compared to other States,” said a senior official from an RBI-registered MFI on condition of anonymity. The MFI operates in 10–15 other States. He

explained that some customers now believe they are not obligated to repay their loans due to the confusion between organised and unorganised lenders. Before the Ordinance, recovery rates stood at 98 per cent, but they have now dropped to 90 per cent.” Echoing this concern, Venkatesh N, MD, IIFL Samastha Finance Ltd, stated, “There has been a decline in repayment rates since December. In January and February, we noticed a collateral dip. Previously, 99 per cent of our customers paid on time, but over the past few months, this figure has dropped to around 95–96 per cent, meaning an additional 2–3 per cent of borrowers have delayed payments.”

Some regions, particularly pockets in South, West, and North Karnataka, have been more affected than others, according to industry sources. However, there are some exceptions. “Repayments have improved from 85 per cent to 90 per cent,”

noted Vivekanand N Salimat, Chairman of IDF Financial Services Private Limited.

Beyond multiple loans, an official from the Association of Karnataka Microfinance Institutions (AKMI) pointed to additional factors contributing to defaults, including last year’s heat wave, reduced economic activity, inflation, and diminished purchasing power among local borrowers.

“These factors collectively led to financial stress, making loan repayments difficult,” the official explained.

He also noted that a small percentage of borrowers, about 10 per cent have irresponsibly taken loans from three to four different entities. “Some of these borrowers are now protesting in villages, demanding loan waivers,” he added.

Meanwhile, the Karnataka government told *businessline* that it has taken the necessary steps regarding the Ordinance and will continue to monitor its impact.

## Defence exports hit a record high of ₹23,622 crore in FY25

Dalip Singh  
New Delhi

Defence exports have surged to a record high of ₹23,622 crore (\$2.76 billion) in FY25, a growth of 12.04 per cent over the FY24 figure of ₹21,083 crore.

A wide range of items, from ammunition, arms, sub-systems, systems and parts and components, have been exported to around 80 countries in the just-concluded financial year, stated the Ministry.

Among the most significant export deals was the delivery of BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles to the Philippines in April 2024, which was worth \$375 million.



Among the most significant deal was the delivery of BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles to the Philippines, which was worth \$375 m

PRIVATE SECTOR

Though the private sector continued to contribute more to the defence export this financial year too, defence public sector undertakings (DPSUs) have shown a significant increase of 42.85 per cent, the Ministry of Defence said in a statement on Tuesday.

“The private sector and DPSUs have contributed ₹15,233 crore and ₹8,389 crore respectively in the defence exports of 2024-25, whereas the corresponding figures for FY24 were ₹15,209 crore and ₹5,874 crore respectively,” the MoD’s statement read.

This reflected the growing acceptability of Indian products in the global market and the ability of the Indian defence industry to be a part of the global supply chain, the Ministry observed.

PRaise from RAJNATH

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, through a post on X, congratulated all the stakeholders on achieving the feat.

“I congratulate all stakeholders on this significant

achievement. Under PM Shri @narendramodi’s leadership India is marching towards achieving the target of increasing defence exports to ₹50,000 crore by 2029,” Singh wrote.

The Department of Defence Production has a dedicated portal for application and processing of export authorisation requests, and 1,762 export authorisations were issued in FY25 compared to 1,507 in the preceding year, registering a growth of 16.92 per cent.

The total number of exporters also grew by 17.4 per cent in the same period, as per the Ministry.

Many policy reforms have been brought in by the government in the past few years to boost the defence industry, such as simplification of industrial licensing procedure, removal of parts and components from licence regime, and extending the validity period of licence.

In addition, SOPs for grant of export authorisation was further simplified, and more provisions were added in the last financial year to boost exports.

## Major ports see 5% cargo growth in FY25 to 855 mt

Abhishek Law  
New Delhi

The 12 major ports — led by Deendayal Port (Gujarat) — saw a 5 per cent rise in traffic in FY25 to 855 million tonnes (mt) as against the 819.30 mt in the year-ago period, data from the Ports and Shipping Ministry showed.

The Deendayal Port in Kandla saw over 13 per cent increase in traffic to over 150 mt (132.4 mt), up 13.44 per cent.

In volume terms, Paradip reported 150.4 mt of cargo traffic, the highest among



TRADE BOOM. Deendayal Port in Kandla saw an over 13 per cent increase in traffic to over 150 mt REUTERS

major ports, up around 4 per cent. Top cargo items in-

clude iron ore, fertilizers, thermal and coking coal, pet-

roleum, oil and lubricants (POL) among others.

The major ports include the Syama Prasad Mookherjee Port (formerly Kolkata Port) — which consists of Haldia and Kolkata dock complexes in West Bengal, Paradip, Visakhapatnam, Kamarajar (Ennore), Chennai, Cochin, New Mangalore, Mormugao, Mumbai, JNPA and Kandla (Deendayal).

Eight major ports saw cargo traffic increase between 1-7 per cent, indicating steady growth.

The JNPA, Chennai and Ennore ports each reported around 7 per cent increase in

cargo traffic on a y-o-y basis. Among those that saw a decline in cargo traffic, Mormugao reported over 12 per cent drop to 18.1 mt (20.10 mt) this fiscal; Syama Prasad Mookherjee Port saw a 4 per cent decline to 64 mt (66.5 mt). Both Haldia and Kolkata dock complexes saw their cargo traffic fall by around 2 per cent and 4.5 per cent.

MEGA PORT CLUSTER

Responding to a question in the Rajya Sabha, Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said four port clusters, namely Cochin-Vizhinjam Port cluster, Galathea South

Bay Port, Chennai Kamarajar-Cuddalore Port cluster, Paradip and other non-major ports cluster with capacity of more than 300 mtpa and two port clusters, Deendayal and Tuna Tekra Port cluster, Jawaharlal Nehru-Vadhavan Port cluster with capacity of more than 500 mtpa, are to be developed as Mega Ports by the year 2047.

“The works for infrastructure enhancement and capacity augmentation in the major ports are already under progress through the public private partnership (PPP) mode and also through internal resources,” he said.

## ‘CBI should engage with academia and industries to capture AI-induced change’

Our Bureau  
New Delhi

Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw on Tuesday advocated that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) should engage with academia and industry to capture artificial intelligence (AI)-induced challenges brought about on the economic, social and technological fronts.

Delivering the 21<sup>st</sup> DP Kohli memorial lecture on the 62<sup>nd</sup> Foundation Day of the CBI, he posed a futuristic probe query to illustrate his point on the changes likely to be introduced by AI.

“An AI agent can commit a crime. The ethical question that will arise then is who has committed the crime and whom to arrest? Can you arrest an AI agent? Is it the AI



Union Minister for I&B and Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw

creating company that is liable or is it the AI agent that is liable? These are the changes happening in society today. For such changes, which are taking place on the economic, social and technological fronts, I request the CBI and its great team to look at more collaborations,” said Vaishnaw.

FOUR PILLARS

Pitching for more collaborations with start-ups, in-

dustry and academia, he said, “In our AI mission, we are collaborating with academia to create new tools.”

Vaishnaw also stated that the country’s growth story stands on “four pillars.”

“First is public investment in physical, social and digital infrastructure. The second is the large number of inclusive growth programmes. Third is the focus on manufacturing and innovation, and the fourth is simplified legal and compliant structures.”

CBI Director Praveen Sood said that 2024 was a historic year for law enforcement agencies and his investigative agency on many counts.

The procedural changes and timelines in new laws were aimed at accelerating justice delivery, he said, adding, “It will help deliver justice to victims in a time-bound manner.”

## Move to cruelty-free alternatives: PETA founder tells biz

PT Jyothi Datta  
Mumbai

From vegan leather to “taste alike” milk or meat to organ-on-a-chip, there’s a market for cruelty-free alternatives, says Ingrid Newkirk, Founder of the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), on the opportunities for entrepreneurs.

“Even if people don’t care about animals, and they care about corporate financial well-being, then things like vegan leather is a massively growing industry and India is leading the way with everything from sugarcane leather to cactus leather to temple flower leather, and all these innovative materials that are being bought in other parts of the world. And you’re seeing on fashion runways and in retail stores,” Newkirk told *businessline*.

She was in India to mark

Peta’s 25 years in the country. Urging people and businesses to make kind and cruelty-free choices in eating, clothing, entertainment and testing, Newkirk said technology was showing the way.

MEDICAL DILEMMA

“The USDA (United States Department of Agriculture), USEPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and USFDA (Food and Drug Administration) are making great strides; they’re embracing technology, and they’re embracing *in vitro* testing,” said Newkirk.

However, there have been “setbacks,” she said, pointing to Xenotransplantation — where pig organs, in this case, are transplanted into human beings in experimental surgery.

“It’s really a terrible game that plays with two lives, the pig and the human,” she added.



Ingrid Newkirk, Founder of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)

In India, concerns include protection of the rhesus macaque that faces a threat from foreign animal experimenters, Peta had said over a year ago, in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi,

seeking to protect this indigenous species by law. She also pointed to bullock fights and races, bird fights and dog-fights, calling to end such cruel sport.

TECH ALTERNATIVES

Pointing to technology, she said nobody wants to force feed a rabbit for testing. “When you have a high-speed computer programmed with human data, you can get drugs on the market faster.”

The whole human DNA is on the internet and there’s “organ-on-a-chip”; so why spend 10 years feeding monkeys and rats, keeping them in cages, with all the stench, pain and misery every day, “when you can’t even compare the results to what happens when you give the drug to a human being,” she said.

Alternatives are also being developed for snake and spider bite anti-venom, she said, urging companies to

move away from horse serum. In food, there are almond and oat milk alternatives, for example, she said, dismissing objections from the dairy industry (on calling them milk).

Instead, she says, they should call their product “cow milk”.

GREEN GOURMET

Europe’s “taste alike” shrimp, sausages, fish, etc, taste the same but don’t cause “the water use, environmental destruction or any slaughter. It’s 100 per cent environmental and animal-friendly, and it’s good for your arteries,” she explained.

The US, Germany, Denmark and Israel also have *in vitro* meat — real meat that “doesn’t involve slaughterhouses, transport trucks and factory farms. It comes from the cells of a real animal... Vegan is a buzzword now,” she said.

## Samsung India Thozhilalargal Sangam rejects three-year wage increase offer

TE Raja Simhan  
Chennai

Samsung India has offered an increase in salary starting this financial year to its employees working at Sriperumbudur factory. But employees associated with the recently registered Samsung India Thozhilalargal Sangam declined to accept the offer, according to sources.

Samsung offered a three-year wage agreement to all its 1,900 employees starting from April 2025 till March 2028. For example, a person who was earning monthly ₹37,476 will earn ₹47,475 in 2025-26; ₹52,475 in 2026-27 and ₹57,457 in 2027-28. The company also offered various benefits, including marriage leave, paternity leave and bereavement leave, according to the

agreement, which was dated March 1 and valid till March 31.

Nearly 1,500 employees belonging to the Sangam declined to sign the agreement. This was also conveyed at a Sangam meeting held on Sunday, said a worker who is part of the Sangam.

“They want us to be like the internal, administrative-backed committee, which has nearly 400 workers as members and signed the agreement. But we don’t want to be like them,” said a worker, who is part of the Sangam.

Over 1,000 workers were on protest for a month over suspension of 23 workers belonging to the Sangam. It was called off on March 7.

‘SLAVE’ AGREEMENT

E Muthukumar, leader of GITU, which is backing the Sangam, in a social media

post said the union will never allow Samsung workers to be trapped in this ‘slave’ agreement form.

A spokesperson for Samsung India said, “At Samsung, employee well-being is our top priority. We are actively working towards a fair agreement with our workers to further improve wages and benefits, and it is entirely voluntary for each worker. It is noteworthy that even currently, the average monthly salary of our full-time manufacturing workers at the Chennai plant is nearly double that of other similar workers in the region. We treat all workers at our Chennai factory with fairness and respect, and we categorically reject any misleading claims to the contrary. Our commitment to creating a supportive workplace and industrial peace remains unwavering.”

## Vizag Steel Plant: Centre, AP to prepare action plan

Our Bureau  
Hyderabad

A delegation from the Union Ministry of Steel met with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu in Amaravati, on Monday, to discuss plans to strengthen the Vizag steel plant.

The discussions focused on the developments following the NDA government’s approval of a financial package for the Vizag plant and the necessary measures to be taken.

Naidu took up key aspects with the delegation, including the regular review of the steel plant’s progress and the reopening of the third blast furnace.

The Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister emphasised the emotional and economic significance of the steel plant (RINL) to the State and the need to safeguard its future.

## G Square hopes to double revenue to ₹5,000 crore

Our Bureau  
Chennai

G Square Realtors Pvt Ltd, the Chennai-based land aggregator and real estate promoter, hopes to double its revenue to nearly ₹5,000 crore in the current financial year, said National Sales Head Sivakumar Pethaiyan. “We are working towards an IPO in 2028,” he told *businessline*.

At present, the company has 61 projects in Tamil Nadu. The growth will come from expansion to multiple cities across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and in Hyderabad, said Pethaiyan. Established in 2012 by Bala Ramajeyam, who hails from Erode, Tamil Nadu, G Square started as a land aggregation company catering to companies like TVS, Indiabulls, Ceat, Murugappa, JK Tyres, Saravana Stores and Casagrand. In 2021, it for-



Sivakumar Pethaiyan, National Sales Head, G Square Realtors’s BIJOY GHOSH

ayed into B2C and has projects located in 14 cities. The company, on Tuesday, announced the launch of Aranya, a premium residential plot and villa project at Porur in Chennai. This 19.35-acre development is priced between ₹4,290 and ₹6,000 per sq ft, he told media. Villa plots range from 800 to 3,800 sq ft, he said. There will be 464 plots, 125 apartments and villas (as per customer request), he added.

## ED attaches over ₹110 cr of Lakhani India shoe co

Our Bureau  
New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate on Tuesday said that more than ₹110 crore of Lakhani India shoe company has been attached in a loan fraud case registered under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

Lakhani India Ltd and its group companies — Lakhani Rubber Udyog Pvt Ltd and Lakhani Apparel Pvt Ltd — allegedly “jointly defrauded” Indian Overseas Bank, Punjab National Bank and Allahabad Bank by misappropriation and diversion of funds to other group firms, leading to a fraud of ₹162 crore. Their promoters, PD Lakhani and Suman Lakhani, were also allegedly complicit in the case, as per the agency.

“Out of the business/capital loans and credit facilities disbursed by the complainant banks, Lakhani group, on

the directions of the promoters, made sales to related parties at a loss, repaid loans of sister concerns and made unusual interest payments to the directors,” the ED charged in a statement.

The sleuth have provisionally attached five commercial plots measuring more than 20 acres, a two-acre farmhouse, and a commercial flat-cum-office in Delhi-NCR under the PMLA, the agency said.

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thehindu businessline.



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OpenAI secures \$40 b funding, \$300 b valuation



OpenAI, the artificial intelligence company behind ChatGPT, said it has finalised a funding round that will bring in \$40 billion from SoftBank and other investors at \$300 billion valuation, including money raised. The financing round is the largest of all time, data compiled by research firm PitchBook showed. BLOOMBERG

Morepen gets nod for Loratadine API in China

**Bengaluru:** Morepen Labs received approval from Centre for Drug Evaluation of China's National Medical Products Administration for its anti-allergy API, Loratadine. With an 80 per cent market share in the US, Morepen aims to strengthen its position as a leading exporter of the drug. Loratadine is a prescribed 2nd generation antihistamine and anti-allergy medicine. OUR BUREAU

# Venture capital firms in fundraising mode amid resurgent market

FRESH START. 'Uptick driven by stabilising macroeconomic conditions, renewed confidence in scalable start-ups'

Jyoti Banthia  
Bengaluru

After a prolonged funding winter, VCs both global and domestic, are launching new funds, buoyed by India's thriving start-up IPO pipeline and a recovering funding landscape. Early-stage VC firm Accel raised \$650 million for its eighth India-focused fund, while Silicon Valley-based Bessemer Venture Partners launched its second India-focused fund with a corpus of \$350 million.

**DOMESTIC FIRMS** Domestic firms such as Cornerstone VC and Prime Venture Partners also raised large funds, at \$200 million and \$100 million respectively. Meanwhile, others such as Eximius Ventures and Sam-Ved VC closed smaller funds of \$30-50 million since the start of this year. "Maturity of Indian mar-

kets from a consumption economy perspective and public markets perspective is leading to significant opportunities for investors to back in India," said Abhishek Prasad, Managing Partner at Cornerstone Ventures. Investors have noticed an uptick in fundraising activities driven by stabilising macroeconomic conditions and renewed confidence in scalable start-ups. "More firms will enter fundraising mode, influenced by market liquidity, regulatory clarity, and LP sentiment," said Jinesh Shah, Managing Partner, Omnivore. VC fundraising in 2024 dropped to its lowest level since 2019, to \$2.7 billion, largely due to abundant dry powder reserves limiting fresh capital deployment, according to a recent report by Bain & Company and the Indian Venture and Alternate Capital Association (IVCA). In contrast, VCs raised \$4 billion in 2023 and a record

Who gave how much	
VC firm	Fund size
Bessemer Venture Partners (BVP)	\$350 million
Prime Venture Partners	\$100 million
Cornerstone Ventures	\$200 million
Accel	\$650 million
Stellaris Venture Partners	\$300 million
Eximius Ventures	\$30 million
SamVed VC	\$50 million

\$8 billion in 2022.

**CHEQUE SIZES** There is plenty of room for the venture capital industry to find scale as compared to mature markets such as the US, noted industry experts. "There is a long way to go for India in terms of market growth and maturity, and therefore significant room for growth of the industry. Therefore, we expect to see several new players emerge to tap these opportunities," noted Prasad of Cornerstone Ventures. India's strong pipeline of start-up IPOs and the growing quantum of late-stage

and pre-IPO secondary funding rounds have also spurred investors to launch funds specifically focused on secondary transactions. "An emerging trend of secondary funds being set up may also be seen. Pre-IPO funds, investing in unique start-ups hitting scale and being ready for listing are also talked about." "These factors will in turn give better capital in the hands of investors to be ploughed back into the primary market," said Vipul Patel, Partner, Seed Investing, IIMA Ventures. The cheque sizes cut by investors are expected to go

up, amid an improving start-up funding environment. "Companies need more capital to be competitive even in an early growth phase and with more and more capital chasing good opportunities, higher cheques are bound to happen. There is a shift towards going in early by larger funds, to get in early into interesting investment opportunities," said Prasad.

**CAPTURING VALUE** Ticket sizes are shifting, with larger follow-on rounds for resilient start-ups, noted investors. "Investors are going up in the stage chain and entering the seed, pre-seed stage to capture value early on in the start-ups given increased risk appetite and premium pricing around the Series B-rounds," added Patel. High-growth sectors such as manufacturing, artificial intelligence, SaaS, and consumer businesses will attract capital.

# In February, WhatsApp banned more than 9.7 m accounts in India



SAFETY FIRST. Important to use app responsibly, says firm

Our Bureau  
New Delhi

Meta-owned WhatsApp on Tuesday said it banned more than 9.7 million accounts in India during February, of which 1.4 million were proactively banned prior to any user reports. In its monthly Safety Report, the company highlighted the platform's proactive measures in preventing abuse and promoting online safety, and said it has consistently invested in latest technologies and experts to keep users safe.

**ACTIONS TAKEN** "Over the years, WhatsApp has consistently invested in artificial intelligence (AI) and other state-of-the-art technology, data scientists and experts, and in processes, in order to keep our users safe on our platform. In accordance with the IT Rules 2021, our latest published report outlines user complaints received, actions taken, and WhatsApp's proactive approach to preventing abuse, including accounts that were proactively banned, before any reports from users," a WhatsApp spokesperson said. To help users keep their accounts safe and avoid accidental bans, the company said it was important to use

WhatsApp responsibly, and listed out ways to prevent user's account from getting banned. For instance, it said users should get permission from contacts before adding them to a group and if added to a group and a user removes himself/herself from the group, their decision should be honoured. "If a contact asks you to stop messaging them, you should remove the contact from your address book and refrain from contacting them again." "Don't share phone numbers without consent or use data obtained from illicit sources to message users on WhatsApp," it noted. It also discouraged bulk messages, auto-message, or auto-dial using WhatsApp. WhatsApp uses both machine learning technology and reports from users to detect and ban accounts that send unwanted automated messages, it said.

**NO TWEAKS** "Also, don't create accounts or groups in unauthorised or automated ways, or use modified versions of WhatsApp," the company said. It also warned the users to think twice before forwarding messages, using broadcast lists responsibly and not to violate WhatsApp's Terms of Service.

# Ad volumes up 7% during first five matches of IPL: TAM

Meenakshi Verma Ambwani  
New Delhi

Ad volumes for the first five matches of the ongoing season of the Indian Premier League was up 7 per cent compared to the previous season, as per the latest analysis by TAM Sports, a division of TAM Media Research. The number of categories being advertised also saw strong double-digit growth. This is the 18th edition of the T20 tournament. In the first five matches of

IPL 18, there has been a "notable" 12 per cent increase in number of categories being advertised compared to the first five matches of IPL 17, the report stated.

**UPWARD TREND** The number of categories being advertised in the ongoing season was pegged at over 45. Meanwhile, the number of advertisers in the ongoing edition of the T20 tournament has grown by 29 per cent to about 55. The report said this reflected "a strong upward trend in



AD VALUE. Number of advertisers in the ongoing edition of the T20 tournament has grown by 29%

brand participation." During the first five matches of IPL18, mouth fresher category was seen dominating with 11 per cent share of the

total ad volumes. Online gaming, biscuits, smartphones and cars have been among the top five categories being seen advertised during IPL matches. "Collectively, the top five categories accounted for 44 per cent of the total ad volume. Online gaming, mouth fresher and smartphones emerged as recurring leaders among the top five categories in both IPL 18 and IPL 17," the report further noted. Parle Biscuits, Vishnu Packaging (Vimal Elaichi), Apple India, Reliance Consumer Products and Sporta Technologies (Dream11) emerged as the top five advertisers in terms of share of ad volumes.

"The top five advertisers contributed 30 per cent to the total ad volumes in the first five matches of IPL18," the report added. It also pointed out that Sporta Technologies and Vishnu Packaging continued to have strong presence, appearing among the top advertisers in both IPL18 and IPL17. "Twenty new categories and 67 new brands were seen advertising in the first five matches of IPL18 compared to the same number of matches in IPL17," the report added.

# How Aircraft Objects Bill will bring down cost, airfares

bl.explainer

Rohit Vaid  
New Delhi



MORE AIR PLAY. Legislation expected to significantly reduce leasing costs by 8-10 per cent

The soon to be enacted, Protection and Enforcement of Interests in Aircraft Objects Bill is expected to accelerate the growth of India's civil sector by lowering the operating cost of airlines as well as airfares. On Tuesday, the bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha. It will now make its way to the Lok Sabha.

**WHAT'S IN THE BILL?** Emphasising the critical impact of this bill, Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu stated "Upon the enactment of this legislation, we improve India's compliance score in the AWG's (Aviation Working Group) outlook, making Indian airlines eligible for CTC (Cape Town Convention) discounts, which will significantly reduce leasing costs by

approximately 8 to 10 per cent. These are the costs that will trickle down to passengers and airfares as well. That is why this becomes very important for us." The Protection and Enforcement of Interests in Aircraft Objects Bill aims to ease the procedure for global lessors to repossess their leased equipment in case of a payment default by the lessee, thereby boosting their confidence in doing business in India.

The Cape Town Convention is a legal instrument that was adopted at a diplomatic conference held in Cape Town in November 2001 under the auspices of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT). Presently, India is a signatory to the convention, but Parliament has not ratified the same. The unique situation has given precedence to local

courts' judgements over the norms of the convention, giving rise to legal conundrums like the ones faced by lessors during the Go First crisis. The Go First case had made global lessors concerned about leasing aircraft to domestic-based airlines. Consequently, India was deemed as a risky jurisdiction, and high premium charges were applied to cover the leased equipment to the domestic airlines. The proposed Act will resolve this type of conundrum by settling cases between lessors and airlines or operators under the CTC provisions, as it empowers the Centre to make rules to implement the convention and protocol in India. **LOWER RENTALS/FARES** Industry expects that the reduction in risk premium will lead to lower leasing and financing costs of aircraft for airlines, ultimately containing airfares. As per some industry es-

timates, India-based airlines would have had to bear the brunt of nearly ₹10,000 crore due to high-risk premiums if a bill such as the 'Aircraft Objects Bill, 2024' was not considered. Currently, the majority of commercial aircraft in India are leased, with another 1,700 on order. **LEASING HUB** The proposed Act is expected to aid in achieving efficient financing of high-value equipment, thereby making operations cost-effective. Besides, the GIFT City, or Gujarat International Finance Tech City-based International Financial Services Centre, is expected to benefit from the proposed Act. It is expected that the proposed Act will help in establishing GIFT City as an aviation leasing hub, as it presents some variable benefits for lessors to set up their shops there. As of now, airlines in India depend on lessors based out of Ireland or Dubai.

# J&J's 'bankruptcy' bid to end cancer claims rejected by US federal court

Bloomberg



A federal judge rejected Johnson & Johnson's third attempt to use bankruptcy to set up a multibillion-dollar trust fund to pay women who claim they got cancer using baby powder and other products allegedly tainted with a toxic substance. US Bankruptcy Judge Christopher Lopez on Monday dismissed the bankruptcy of a small J&J unit called Red River Talc following a two-week trial in Houston, finding that a vote of cancer victims on the proposal was flawed. J&J was trying for the third time to use a small unit to resolve all talc-related lawsuits involving ovarian cancer and other similar gynecological diseases at once instead of facing trials around the country in different courts. The latest trust proposal would have set aside \$9 bil-

lion for victims. Voting on the settlement included irregularities, among them was "an unreasonably short voting time for thousands of creditors, was all done to get to 75 per cent at any cost," Lopez said. **SHARES FALL** J&J shares fell 2.7 per cent in premarket trading in New York. Erik Haas, the company's worldwide Vice-President of litigation, said in a statement that J&J will return to fighting talc cancer claims in trials. "As we have repeatedly stated, in the absence of plan confirmation, we will vigorously present our case in the tort system," he said. "In view of the learnings from the bankruptcy case, we are more confident than ever in our position in the tort system." Since J&J launched its strategy in 2021, critics have complained that the company, one of the most profitable in the world, is trying to use special federal rules only available to bankrupt businesses to shield itself from the lawsuits. **FIRST TWO ATTEMPTS** The company's first two attempts to pay claims through a bankruptcy trust were dismissed by a federal appeals court in Philadelphia. By moving the case to Texas, the company came under the jurisdiction of the appeals court in New Orleans, which has issued decisions more in line with J&J's legal arguments. J&J could now ask the appeals court to review the case.

# A 'DeepSeek moment' for weight-loss segment

PT Jyothi Datta  
Mumbai

Weightloss and obesity products are in the spotlight globally, thanks to GLP-1 products such as Novo Nordisk's Ozempic/Wegovy and Eli Lilly's Mounjaro. But fledgeling firm The Good Bug, founded by Keshav Biyani and Prabhu Karthikeyan, is looking to address this segment through its natural, probiotic-fibre blended "weight management" product, expected to be rolled out later this week. **'DEEPEEK MOMENT'** Internally, it is being called the "DeepSeek moment", said Biyani, part of the Future Group promoter family, comparing it to the Chinese AI company's product that stirred the AI market. Explaining their excitement on the nutraceutical

product, Biyani told *businessline* that it had been clinically tested and was found to reduce weight by 12 per cent, among other things. Priced ₹2,000 a monthly course, this will be an over-the-counter (OTC) product, involving powders in two sachets that are mixed and consumed with water, he explained. The three-month trial on the nutraceutical did not show adverse effects, he said. Multiple trials were underway to map long-term impact on this proprietary product, on which the company has also filed a patent. A trial is also being planned in the US, he said, to get data from a different geography. This would involve about 300 people, of which half would be placebo (who will not be given the product being tested). The Good Bug was incorporated in 2021, and has rev-



The Good Bug Founders Keshav Biyani (left), and Prabhu Karthikeyan

enue of ₹100 crore, said Biyani. The product will be manufactured at plants in Pudukcherry and Maharashtra, he said, where existing products are also produced. The nutraceutical has FSSAI approvals, he said. The weight-loss and obesity segment is of interest to the global pharma-

ceutical industry, and GLP-1 products such as Novo's oral semaglutide and Lilly's injectable Tirzepatide, for example, are available in India. Used to treat type 2 diabetes, the product was also seen to reduce weight, leading to celebrities endorsing the product. One of the downsides, however, was that people put on weight when they got off the drug. Manohar KN, consultant physician and diabetologist with Manipal Hospital, said the nutraceutical probiotic product had shown promising results when compared to the standard line of treatment. The product had been tested on 106 people (half of them placebo), in two hospitals in Maharashtra. Manohar was the principal investigator for the trial, and more trials are lined up. The Good Bug representatives said.

# India, Chile agree to begin trade pact negotiations

Press Trust of India  
New Delhi



TALKING POINT. PM Narendra Modi with Chilean President Gabriel Boric at Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Tuesday ANI

India and Chile on Tuesday announced starting negotiations on a comprehensive economic partnership pact as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chilean President Gabriel Boric Font held wide-ranging talks focusing on boosting the ties in areas of trade, defence, critical minerals and health. Describing Chile as an important "friend and partner" for India in Latin America, Modi said several new initiatives were identified to enhance overall cooperation in the coming decade. Boric, accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising ministers, members of Parliament, senior officials and business leaders, is on a five-day state visit to India. "India and Chile may be at

different ends of the world map, there may be vast oceans separating us, but nature has linked us with unique similarities," Modi said in his media statement. He further said: "The waves of the Indian Ocean flow with the same energy in India as the waves of the Pa-

cific Ocean touch the shores of Chile." The Prime Minister said India is ready to share its positive experience with Chile in the areas of digital public infrastructure, renewable energy, railways, space and others. "We welcome the growth in mutual trade and invest-

ment. We agree that there is also untapped potential for further cooperation in this," he said. **CRITICAL MINERALS** "Today we have instructed our teams to begin discussions on a mutually beneficial comprehensive economic partnership agreement," Modi further said that the India-Chile partnership will be strengthened in the field of critical minerals and work will be done to establish resilient supply and value chains. In the field of agriculture, cooperation will be done to ensure food security, he said. "The growing cooperation in the field of defence is a symbol of our deep mutual trust. We will move forward to create defence industrial manufacturing and supply chains in this area according to each other's needs," Modi said.







