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LIC/P/H/2024-25/51/Eng

'Swadeshi is key in a world that won't supply all we need'

STICKS & STONES. FTAs as an example of using uncertainty as a spur to reform: CEA

Shishir Sinha
New Delhi

Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran has advocated *swadeshi* as a means of making India strategically indispensable, while stressing that global headwinds can be turned into a catalyst rather than a constraint.

"*Swadeshi* is necessary. We need to indigenise because the world is not going to supply us everything we need, and supply chains are increasingly being weaponised," Nageswaran said in an interview to *businessline*, a day after the Economic Survey 2025-26 was tabled in Parliament.

"But this has to be done in a way that builds salience so that indigenisation becomes a springboard to strategic indispensability."

He cautioned against open-ended protectionism, saying that trade barriers must be used to strengthen domestic capabilities rather than shield inefficiency. "Protection should be used to enhance our capabilities, not as a blank cheque to dump inferior

“*Swadeshi* has to be achieved in a way that it becomes a springboard to strategic indispensability

V ANANTHA NAGESWARAN
Chief Economic Advisor



goods in the domestic market," he said, adding that any protection from external competition must be time-bound.

SWADESHI TO SHIELD
The Economic Survey, tabled on Thursday, makes a strong case for *swadeshi*, noting that the global strategic environment has shifted decisively. Export controls, technology denial regimes, carbon border mechanisms and industrial policy activism across advanced and emerging economies signal the end of "naïve globalisation".

"We now operate in an environment where access to inputs, technologies and markets cannot be assumed to be frictionless or

permanent," the Survey said. In this context, *swadeshi* becomes both a defensive and an offensive policy tool, ensuring continuity of production amid external shocks, while building long-term national capabilities that reinforce economic sovereignty.

The Central policy challenge, it added, is not whether or not to encourage *swadeshi*, but how to do so without undermining efficiency, innovation or global integration.

FTAS, HOPE & MORE
Nageswaran also said global disruptions could be turned into tailwinds if approached strategically. He pointed to India's recent push to sign free trade

agreements with multiple regions as an example of using uncertainty as a spur to reform.

"If we can use it as an opportunity for each one of us to do what we need to do, for example, in the private sector to invest in quality, R&D, innovation and accepting that in return for protection from external competition, we will get our act together and we will not demand protection for more than X number of years," he said.

In the preface to the Survey, Nageswaran wrote that while India's economic ambitions face powerful global headwinds, these could be converted into tailwinds if the State, private sector and households align to commit to the scale of adjustment required.

On concerns over weak private investment, he said, "FY25 investment numbers will be available in February 2026, but based on corporate data at the granular level, investment growth in 2024-25 has been significant. I think we are overstating the problem."

Interview p3

Trump picks Kevin Warsh to head Fed

Bloomberg

US President Donald Trump said he intends to nominate Kevin Warsh to be the next Chair of the Federal Reserve, according to a post on his *Truth Social* platform.

"I have known Kevin for a long period of time, and have no doubt that he will go down as one of the GREAT Fed Chairmen, maybe the best," Trump wrote. "On top of everything else, he is 'central casting', and he will never let you down."

INFLATION HAWK PIVOTS

Warsh, who served on the US central bank's Board of Governors from 2006 to 2011 and has previously advised Trump on economic policy, will succeed Jerome Powell, whose term ends in May. It marks a comeback for Warsh, 55, who the President passed over for the top job in 2017 when he selected Powell.

Warsh aligned himself with Trump in 2025 by arguing publicly for lower interest rates, going against his longstanding reputa-



Warsh succeeds Jerome Powell, whose term ends in May

tion as an inflation hawk. The dollar gained and US stock futures remained lower after Trump confirmed reports that he would pick Warsh.

During his time at the Fed, Warsh was consistently wary of inflation and often supported higher interest rates. Last year, however, he echoed Trump's view that the rates could be significantly lower. A willingness to cut rates is seen as a litmus test for the next Chair, worrying Fed watchers that this would undermine the central bank's independence.

Warsh's selection doesn't guarantee a change in policy at the Fed. In-

terest rates are set by a majority vote of the 12-member Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC), which is composed of seven Fed Governors and five of the 12 Presidents of regional Fed banks.

FREQUENT FED CRITIC

Trump has been at odds with Powell almost since the current Fed Chair took the helm in 2018. In 2020, Trump lamented selecting Powell over Warsh: "Kevin, I could have used you a little bit here. Why weren't you more forceful when you wanted that job?" he said at the time.

Warsh has advised Trump on economic policy

as far back as his first presidential campaign. Since leaving the Fed, Warsh has frequently criticised the institution, saying recently it needs a regime change and proposing a plan for lower interest rates.

"It's about breaking some heads, because the way they've been doing business is not working," Warsh told Fox News in July. He was appointed to the Fed's Board of Governors by President George W Bush in 2006 after stints in the Bush White House and, before that, on Wall Street. While he wasn't widely known when he joined the Central Bank, his experience and contacts in financial markets and in the banking world proved pivotal during the 2008 financial crisis.

His appointment made him the youngest person to ever serve as a Fed Governor, and among the richest.

Warsh resigned from the Fed in 2011 shortly after it embarked on a second round of bond purchases to shore up a crisis-scarred economy. He has since been critical of the Fed's balance sheet expansion.

Canara Bank leans on higher-yield retail, agri, MSME loans to hedge rate-cut effect

Aishwarya Kumar
Bengaluru

Canara Bank is recalibrating its loan mix to shield profitability from faster repricing triggered by rate cuts, leaning harder on high-margin retail, agriculture and MSME (RAM) loans, even as corporate credit remains selective.

With nearly half its loan book linked to the repo rate, MD, CEO and Executive Director Hardeep Singh Ahluwalia says sharper RAM growth, tighter pricing discipline, and improved asset quality are central to defending margins in a softer rate cycle.

PROFIT SPREE ON
The bank posted a 25.6 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) jump in net profit at ₹5,155 crore for the third quarter of FY26.

Canara Bank's net interest income (NII) rose marginally by 1.1 per cent to ₹9,252 crore, while the net interest margin (NIM) for the quarter stood at 2.5 per cent. Its management indicated that margins are

“

The strength of the balance sheet and improving asset quality provide room to recalibrate growth as the rate cycle turns

HARDEEP SINGH AHLUWALIA
MD & CEO, Canara Bank



ing selective on pricing and returns, prioritising profitability over volume growth in large-ticket lending.

DEPOSITS GROW
The lender also managed to hold its ground on deposits despite intense competition across the banking system.

The CASA ratio stood around 30 per cent during the quarter at ₹4,12,359 crore, with savings deposits growing 8.51 per cent y-o-y and individual savings deposits rising over 10 per cent.

Retail term deposits grew close to 10 per cent, largely driven by granular customers, helping strengthen the stability of the funding profile.

Ahluwalia said the strength of the balance sheet and improving asset quality provide room to recalibrate growth as the rate cycle turns.

With provision coverage above 94 per cent and a sharper focus on mix and pricing, the bank expects to absorb near-term margin pressure while sustaining profitable growth.

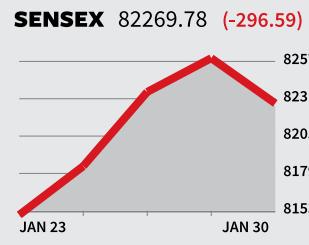
is aimed at cushioning net interest margins at a time when asset-side repricing is faster than adjustments on the liability side.

SELECTIVE ON CORPORATE CREDIT
While RAM lending has emerged as the primary growth engine, the bank stressed that this does not signal a pull-back from corporate credit.

Around ₹20,000 crore of corporate loans have already been sanctioned and are awaiting disbursement, with corporate advances continuing to grow at a measured pace.

However, the bank is be-

thehindu businessline.

**IN FOCUS**

	LATEST	CHANGE
Nifty 50	25320.65	-98.25
P/E Ratio (Sensex)	22.64	-0.09
US Dollar (in ₹)	91.98	+0.03
Gold Std 10 gm (in ₹)	165131.00	-9507
Silver 1 kg (in ₹)	339350.00	-40638

POLICY SHIFT.

Governments worldwide are replacing US tech platforms with sovereign systems to secure data and for digital autonomy **p10**

**AUTO FOCUS.**

Mahindra's XEV 9e edges ahead of Tata Harrier.ev with bolder design, ambition, futuristic appeal **p4**

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QUICKLY.**EYE ON JAPAN MARKET**

Three Adani Group firms look to raise \$2 billion



Mumbai: The Adani Group plans to make an entry into the Japanese debt markets to raise around \$2 billion in yen-denominated issuance, and is looking at long-term funding from insurance and pension funds, said sources. The funds will be raised in the next couple of months by Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone, Adani Green Energy and Adani Energy Solutions. **p2**

AT ₹8.55 LAKH CRORE... April-Dec fiscal deficit hits 54.5% of FY26 target

New Delhi: Ahead of the presentation of the Union Budget, the Controller General of Accounts on Friday reported that the Centre's fiscal deficit at the end of December stood at ₹8.55 lakh crore or 54.5 per cent of the Budget Estimate. It was 56.7 per cent during the corresponding period of the last fiscal. The fiscal deficit has been pegged at ₹15.69 lakh crore or 4.4 per cent of the GDP for FY26, which is likely to be met, as per experts. **p3**

Menstrual health is a fundamental right, rules SC**Krishnadas Rajagopal**

New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday declared that the right to menstrual health and access to menstrual hygiene management (MHM) measures in educational institutions is part of the fundamental right to life and dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution.

"Dignity cannot be reduced to an abstract ideal; it must find expression in conditions that enable individuals to live without humiliation, exclusion or avoidable suffering. For menstruating girl children, the inaccessibility of MHM measures subjects them to stigma, stereotyping and humiliation," a Bench of Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan observed in a judgment.

STRUCTURAL NEGLECT

The absence of safe and hygienic menstrual management measures undermined

Crashing gold, silver drag ETFs down as investors book profits

END OF GOLDEN RUN? Recovery in dollar, naming of new Fed Chair dull precious metals

Suresh P Iyengar
Mumbai

The precious metals complex plunged on Friday with investors booking profits as they saw no more confrontation between US President Donald Trump and the Fed.

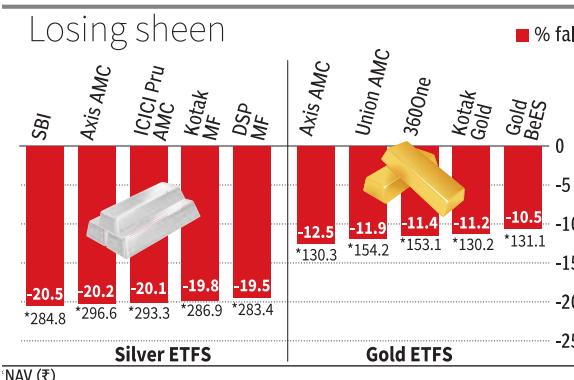
Over the past few weeks, investors switched to gold from currencies and bonds seeing a threat to the Fed. With Trump nominating Kevin Warsh as the next Fed Chair, precious metals began to cool.

All metals nosedived, silver a steep 18 per cent, and as a fallout, exchange-traded funds (ETFs) of gold and silver plunged 9-12 per cent and 18-23 per cent, respectively, on Friday as investors rushed to book profit after months of relentless rally.

SILVER WORST HIT

At 19:30 hours IST, gold fell to ₹5,000 an ounce and gold April futures on COMEX slid to ₹5,027.81, a drop of over 10 per cent at one point.

Silver, which had had a 'golden' run over the past couple of months, got hit badly with prices slipping be-



low ₹100 to ₹98.93 an ounce. March futures on COMEX ruled at ₹98.58. The trend reflected in gold ETFs of Nippon India AMC, HDFC AMC and DSP Mutual Fund declining 10-13 per cent. Leading silver ETFs of Nippon India AMC, Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC and ICICI Prudential AMC fell by 18-20 per cent.

GOLD ETF INVESTMENT

In 2025, Indians invested ₹4.37 billion in gold ETFs, with the holdings in these funds rising 65 per cent, World Gold Council data showed. The overall assets under ETF management is \$14 billion. Earlier this week, gold ran up to a record high of

\$5,600 and silver to ₹118 an ounce.

Renisha Chainani, Head of Research, Augmont, said gold and silver prices fell sharply amid stronger dollar, margin pressures and profit-taking at higher levels.

Prithviraj Kothari, Managing Director at RiddiSiddhi Bullions Ltd and President of India Bullion and Jewellers Association Ltd, said despite the pullback, gold remains up around 25 per cent and silver up 45 per cent year-to-date and still on track for strongest monthly performance since 1999 after multiple record highs.

The volatility was elevated following the US Fed's de-

cision to hold rates, with inflation still above target. Strong speculative positioning, firm US yields and a resilient dollar are near-term headwinds, though structural support for gold and silver remains intact, he said.

Satish Dondapati, Fund Manager, Kotak Mutual Fund, said the strengthening of the dollar was one of the main reasons for the sell-off in gold and silver.

With inputs from Subramani Ra Mancombu in Chennai

SEBI opens door for NSE IPO

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has issued no objection certificate for the National Stock Exchange's proposed initial public offering (IPO), clearing a key regulatory hurdle that had held up the NSE from tapping public markets for nearly a decade.

"We are delighted to receive SEBI approval for our IPO, a milestone in our growth journey. We embark on a new chapter of value creation for our stakeholders," said NSE Chairman Srinivas Injeti.

Read more on p5

Govt finalises PLI 2.0 scheme for 'a self-sustaining drone ecosystem'

Rohit Vaid
New Delhi

The Centre has finalised a Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) 2.0 scheme aimed at developing a self-sustaining drone ecosystem in the country.

The proposed scheme is expected to incentivise the domestic manufacture of drones and their key components.

The basic proposal for the PLI scheme for drones has moved from the Civil Aviation Ministry to the Finance Ministry and the expectation is that it will be announced in the upcoming Union Budget, sources said.

The proposed PLI 2.0 scheme is expected to build on an earlier iteration of the incentive programme notified in 2021, aimed at boosting the manufacture of drones and components.

The scheme will also cover allied services, including leasing and the sale of software used to operate unmanned aircraft systems (UAS). Sources said the scheme seeks to encourage Indian manufacturers to develop and produce critical drone components locally.

Presently, up to 60 per cent of drone parts used in India are imported. How-



FISCAL PUSH. An allocation of over ₹1,000 crore is under consideration for the scheme that may be announced in the Budget

hensive drone ecosystem.

At present, India has around 300 drone manufacturers producing various categories of UAS for defence, agriculture, infrastructure development and surveillance applications.

Industry estimates point to sustained demand growth across multiple sectors, driven by increasing adoption in agriculture, infrastructure monitoring and security-related activities.

The earlier PLI 1.0 scheme provided incentives worth ₹120 crore to Indian manufacturers based on value addition, calculated as annual sales revenue from drones and drone components, net of the Goods and Services Tax, minus the purchase cost of inputs. The incentives were spread over three financial years, beginning 2021-22.

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India's AI moment to bring Big Tech to Delhi

India AI Impact Summit will host who's who of the most influential tech

S Ronendra Singh
New Delhi

India is set to launch its indigenous Artificial Intelligence models at the India AI Impact Summit, a high-profile global gathering that will bring the world's most influential technology leaders, policymakers and researchers to New Delhi, marking the country's most assertive push yet to shape the global AI agenda.

Scheduled from February 16 to 20, the Summit is the largest AI meet to date and the first in an international series to be hosted in the Global South. The centrepiece will be the unveiling of home-grown foundational AI models.

TECH TITANS
The government sees it as critical to technological sovereignty as AI reshapes eco-

nomic, labour markets and governance worldwide.



Union Minister for Electronics and IT Ashwini Vaishnaw PTI

founder Nandan Nilekani, signalling the growing centrality of AI across sectors.

Top global researchers, including Raj Reddy, Professor at Carnegie Mellon University, Yann LeCun of NYU, Fei-Fei Li of Stanford University, Sara Hooker of Adaptation Labs and Anima Anandkumar of Caltech, will lend intellectual heft to the event.

Under the IndiaAI Mission, domestic firms Sarvam AI and Soket AI are developing large and small language

models trained on Indian datasets, while BharatGen is being built as a multilingual, multimodal platform for applications in agriculture, healthcare and governance. Officials say the focus is on scale, inclusion and real-world deployment.

"This will be the fourth and the biggest AI summit anywhere in the world," said Electronics and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, noting the participation of nearly 100 countries, over 15 heads of state and government and more than 100 global CEOs. He said over 200 sector-specific AI models are expected to be launched.

With nearly \$70 billion already flowing into AI infrastructure and plans to expand AI education across 500 universities, the Summit signals India's intent to move from being an AI market to an AI rule-shaper.

QUICKLY.

Meesho reports 26% revenue growth

Mumbai: Meesho Ltd reported net merchandise value of ₹10,995 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2023, representing 26 per cent year-on-year growth. Its annual transacting users grew 34 per cent to 251 million, while placed orders increased 36 per cent to 690 million in Q3. OUR BUREAU

BPCL, Trafigura sign crude oil supply agreement

New Delhi: Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL) has signed a crude oil supply agreement with Trafigura to supply Iraqi Basrah and Oman crude oil to the oil marketing company on a term basis. Under the agreement, which was signed at the India Energy Week 2026 in Goa, the delivery for cargoes will commence in April this year, said Trafigura. OUR BUREAU

3 Adani Group cos plan to raise \$2 b from Japanese debt markets

KEY ATTRACTION. Japanese markets offer longer tenure funding and lower costs

Janaki Krishnan
Mumbai



BUILDING BLOCKS. The funds raised will be for financing the infrastructure portfolio in the group REUTERS

The Adani Group is planning to make an entry into the Japanese debt markets to raise around \$2 billion in yen-denominated issuance, and is looking at long-term funding from insurance and pension funds, said sources.

The funds raised will be for financing the infrastructure portfolio of the group, and sources indicated that the loan tenures will be in the region of 20-30 years.

The funds will be raised in the next couple of months by Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone, Adani Green Energy and Adani Energy Solutions. Recently Tokyo-based Japan Credit Rating initiated rating for

the three major Japanese banks — MUFG, Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group and Mizuho Financial Group.

TOTAL GROUP DEBT

Japan accounts for around 1.5 per cent of the total group debt of \$32 billion. It plans to increase its funding

from Japan to take it to 5 per cent of total debt in the next two years and 10 per cent by 2030, said the sources.

LONGER TENURE

A key reason for approaching the Japanese debt markets is the longer tenure funding sources, lower costs and to de-risk exposure. "We are looking to borrow from markets which offer extremely long tenors... Japan is a big market which offers this," said a source.

Japan is one of the few markets outside the US with appetite for 20-30 year maturities, and this fits well with the extending debt profile of the Adani Group, with average maturity rising from six years to seven years over the past three years across all markets.



showing growth, accounting for 25 per cent of domestic revenues.

Bajaj Auto's Executive Director Rakesh Sharma said the Q3 results build on a very strong second quarter, with company reporting record revenues while navigating supply chain issues. Earnings before interest tax depreciation and amortisation on a standalone basis rose 22 per cent to ₹3161 crore. Stan-

dalone net profit stood at ₹2,503 crore, its highest-ever in any quarter.

GROWTH TRENDS

Sharma expects growth trends to continue, and does not see the increase in tariffs by Mexico as a dampener to growth. Mexico is an important market for the company and it has substantial manufacturing presence there; hence, the increase in levies will not be applicable to Bajaj Auto. "We have ducked the disruption," he said.

Last November, Bajaj Auto completed the acquisition of Austrian motorcycle-maker KTM AG after securing necessary regulatory approvals.

Sharma said the company has now put a turnaround plan in place for KTM, which includes liquidity support, appointment of top management personnel and cost-reduction initiatives.

Ambuja Cements net profit down 86% in Q3 on higher costs, lower realisation

Our Bureau
Mumbai

Ambuja Cements, an Adani Group company, reported that its net profit in the December quarter was down 86 per cent at ₹367 crore against ₹2,663 crore logged in the same period last year, largely due to higher costs and lower realisations.

The profit in the December quarter was supported by a government grant of ₹913 crore and ₹1,352 crore provision for tax liabilities.

Income was up 20 per cent at ₹10,181 crore (₹8,498 crore). EBITDA increased 53

Scorecard (in ₹ cr)		
	Q3FY26	Q3 FY25
Revenue	10,181	8,498
Net profit	367	2,663
EPS (diluted) (in ₹)	0.82	8.86



commissioning of 2.4 MTPA at Marwar grinding unit.

Vinod Bahety, Whole Time Director & CEO, Ambuja Cements, said the company has achieved the highest-ever quarterly volumes and higher premium cement sales, resulting in better realisation and base capacity volume growth. This has helped us to

improve our market, which is part of the blueprint to achieve the targeted cost of ₹3,650 per metric tonne by March 2028, he said.

CAPACITY UTILISATION
The capacity utilisation of acquired assets improved to 58 per cent against 37 per cent logged last year. The share of trade sales and premium cement will continue to grow, which will help in improved realisations compared to the peers, said Bahety.

Revival of demand from Q3 has sustained into Q4, providing a growth of 8 per cent for the industry in FY26.

Nestle India's consolidated net profit soars 45%

Meenakshi Verma Ambwani
New Delhi



strongest volume growth in nearly five years.

MARKET RECOVERY

He said this could be attributed to strategic investments to increase capacity and building brands, supported by a market recovery following positive momentum

from GST rate rationalisation.

"This performance demonstrates our resilience and adaptability in a competitive market. It also reflects our ongoing efforts to be future-ready, innovate and respond to consumer preferences. The year 2025 was a landmark year for Nestle India with the highest absolute and percentage reach gain achieved in a single year, barring the exceptional Covid period. This performance was led by strong expansion in rural markets, while urban performance was also best-in-class compared to the peers," Tiwary added.

The company said all four product groups delivered positive volume-led growth, with three out of four

product groups witnessing robust double-digit growth.

The confectionery, powdered & liquid beverages and prepared dishes & cooking aids businesses each delivered double-digit growth. While confectionery emerged as the fastest-growing product group, the powdered & liquid beverages product registered double-digit sell-out growth for 18 consecutive quarters.

However, milk products and nutrition product group registered mid-single-digit growth. The pet food business reported strong double-digit growth. In the premium segment, Nespresso's growth path continued, driven by strong momentum during the festival season, the company added.

+ Intellect Design Arena reports ₹28 crore profit in Q3 as revenue surges

Our Bureau
Chennai

Financial technology enterprise Intellect Design Arena on Friday reported a net profit of ₹28 crore for the quarter ended December 2025 (Q3FY26), compared to ₹70 crore profit in Q3FY25 on revenue growth. The profit was reported after factoring in an exceptional item of ₹31 crore towards gratuity, pursuant to the new labour codes.

TOTAL INCOME
Total income for Q3FY26 stood at ₹753 crore, a 21 per cent growth from ₹621 crore in Q3FY25. Platform revenue rose to ₹155 crore in Q3FY26 against ₹50 crore in the same quarter last year.

Licence revenue was ₹93 crore against ₹118 crore in Q3 FY25. AMC revenue was ₹143 crore in Q3FY26 against ₹124 crore in Q3 FY25.

"Crossing ₹3,000 crore in last twelve months revenue, expanding EBITDA by 33 per cent year-on-year and cash reserves at ₹1,198 crore are defining moments in Intellect business design algorithm," said Arun Jain, CMD, Intellect Design Arena Ltd.

"We have three sustainable & growth businesses in the form of wholesale banking, consumer banking and IntellectAI to capture three opportunity trends," he said.

Jain added that they are currently deepening investments in AI and capacity-building.

India's quick commerce sector is entering a more decisive phase as market leaders Swiggy Instamart and Zomato-owned Blinkit diverge on scale, profitability and growth strategy.

While demand for deliveries in 10-20 minutes continues to surge across urban centres, the December quarter showed that the race is no longer about expansion alone but about who can turn scale into sustainable economics.

GOV DOUBLES

Swiggy's Instamart posted another quarter of headline growth, with gross order value (GOV) more than doubling year-on-year to

₹7,938 crore in Q3FY26. Average order value climbed to a record ₹746, aided by a deeper push into non-grocery categories such as electronics, home and lifestyle products.

However, the cost of this expansion was evident: Instamart's adjusted EBITDA loss widened to ₹908 crore as Swiggy stepped up marketing spends and consumer-side incentives amid intense

competition. In contrast, Blinkit has moved faster towards profitability. Zomato recently reported that Blinkit achieved adjusted EBITDA break-even, supported by stronger operating leverage, higher store throughput and tighter control over discounts.

Blinkit's earlier bet on inventory ownership, faster dark-store rollouts and aggressive urban densification allowed it to scale volumes while improving unit economics, giving it a head start in the race to profitability.

The contrast highlights two competing philosophies in quick commerce. Swiggy has prioritised building larger baskets and differentiated assortment, consciously avoiding deep discount-led, low-value orders that dilute margins. The

management has acknowledged that the recent fee waivers and pricing interventions did not yield proportional order growth and are now being reviewed.

Blinkit, on the other hand, has leaned into frequency-led growth, using dense store networks and high order velocity to spread fixed costs faster.

The quick commerce sector is showing signs of maturation. While GOV growth remains robust, often exceeding 100 per cent year-on-year, the pace of order growth has moderated as platforms push back against irrational discounting.

Investors are now tracking contribution margins, store-level profitability and return on capital far more closely than topline growth alone.

Exide Industries Q3 net profit rises to ₹258 crore

Our Bureau
Kolkata

Storage battery major Exide Industries on Friday reported a 5.19 per cent year-on-year increase in standalone net profit at ₹257.70 crore for the third quarter of FY26, as it witnessed a 4.7 per cent y-o-y rise in revenue, buoyed by strong growth in replacement and auto OEM markets.

The company's net profit stood at ₹244.99 crore for the third quarter last fiscal.

Revenue from operations in Q3FY26 rose to ₹4,029.71 crore from ₹3,848.63 crore for the corresponding period of FY25, the company said in a stock exchange filing.

Total expenses witnessed a 4.49 per cent y-o-y increase at ₹3695.58 crore during the period under review from ₹3536.47 crore in the year-

ago period. EBITDA grew 4.68 per cent y-o-y at ₹470 crore.

GST 2.0 reforms, which became effective towards the end of second quarter, provided a major boost for the battery industry. The automotive industry production volume growth across segments were in the mid-to-high-teens range on a y-o-y basis. Overall, the domestic business growth (excluding telecom) during the third quarter was 10 per cent. Export business continued to be significantly impacted in certain markets amid tariff linked challenges.

Auto OEM business grew more than 25 per cent y-o-y, leading to increased market share across multiple segments.

Overall, 92 per cent of the business grew over 12 per cent, whereas the rest 8 per cent of the business declined 38 per cent.

Blue Dart posts ₹70 crore profit

Our Bureau
Mumbai

Blue Dart Express Ltd posted a profit after tax of ₹70 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2025, with revenue from operations reaching ₹1,616 crore.

The company attributed its performance to stable domestic demand and disciplined cost management during the quarter. Managing Director Balfour Manuel highlighted meaningful contributions from the tier-2 and tier-3 markets, along with steady SME shipment activity, supported by strong network execution.

businessline.

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'Average ticket size of policies rose 13% in Q3 backed by GST exemption'

bl.interview



Niva Bupa Health Insurance's gross written premium grew 55 per cent year-on-year to ₹2,231 crore in the third quarter this fiscal. What drove this growth?

The reported 55 per cent growth needs to be read with context. From October 1,

Consumers are using the savings to upgrade coverage, rather than just buying cheaper policies

VISHWANATH M
Executive Director and CFO,
Niva Bupa Health Insurance

premium used to get recognised upfront. Post the change, only half is recognised in the year of sale and the rest is deferred for next year.

Because of this, the reported Q3 numbers include premium spillover from last year, while earlier periods had spillover going out. To give clarity, we have disclosed like-to-like numbers as well. On a like-to-like basis, total business grew 31 per cent and retail business grew 43 per cent in Q3.

Retail growth accelerated sharply to 43 per cent in the third quarter from 28 per cent in H1 of this fiscal. Was it because of the GST exemption on individual health insurance premiums?

Yes, the biggest driver has been GST reduction on retail health insurance. Demand picked up sharply across all channels. We saw growth both in the number of lives

covered and average ticket size. The GST benefit clearly translated into stronger affordability, higher conversions and more renewals. This acceleration is visible across agency, bancassurance, brokers and digital channels.

Consumers are using the savings to upgrade coverage, rather than just buying cheaper policies. For example, customers who earlier bought ₹10 lakh cover are now opting for ₹15 lakh or more. Also, we are witnessing higher adoption of comprehensive coverage and richer benefits.

Overall, average ticket size increased by around 13 per cent year-on-year in the third quarter. Normally, 7-8 per cent comes from inflation, so the incremental uplift is directly attributable to GST relief. This trend has continued into January, suggesting it is sustainable.

Claims, however, continue as usual. This optically depresses operating profit under Indian GAAP in the

customers versus existing customers upgrading?

Broadly, 40 per cent of retail business is new business, while 60 per cent comes from renewals and upgrades. If I highlight one clear data point, on our own direct digital channel, new business grew 65-70 per cent y-o-y in Q3, reflecting higher traffic and better conversion driven by the GST relief.

Despite strong growth, the company reported an operating loss of ₹135.53 crore in Q3FY26 versus an operating profit in the same period of FY25. Why?

This again is an accounting timing issue. Because of the multi-year policy accounting change, gross written premium reflects growth immediately, but net earned premiums lags.

Claims, however, continue as usual. This optically depresses operating profit under Indian GAAP in the

short term. To give a clearer picture, we have also published audited IFRS (Ind AS) numbers, which smoothen these timing differences. IFRS numbers showed that for the third quarter this fiscal, the company registered a net profit of ₹77 crore, compared to ₹60 crore for the corresponding period last fiscal. This includes a one-time ₹20 crore impact due to the new labour codes (

QUICKLY.

Forex reserves rise to all-time high of \$709 b



Mumbai: The country's forex reserves jumped by \$8.053 billion to an all-time high of \$709.413 billion during the week ended January 23, the RBI said on Friday. In the previous reporting week, the forex kitty had jumped by \$14.167 billion to \$701.36 billion. The reserves had touched an all-time high of \$704.89 billion in September 2024. During the week ended January 23, foreign currency assets jumped by \$2.367 billion to \$562.885 billion. Value of the gold reserves jumped by \$5.635 billion to \$123.088 billion. PTI

Coromandel Q3 profit falls to ₹488 crore



Hyderabad: Coromandel International, a Murugappa Group company, reported a lower net profit of ₹488 crore in the third quarter ended December 31, 2025 against ₹508 crore in the comparable quarter of the previous year. Total income stood at ₹8,863 crore (₹7,049 crore). The board has approved an interim dividend of ₹9 a share, representing nine times the face value of ₹1. OUR BUREAU

'It may be overstating the case that private sector investment is static'

GROWTH CATALYST. Gross fixed capital formation ratio of GDP at 30-31% shows rise in private capex: CEA

bl.interview

66

Shishir Sinha

New Delhi

Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said that gross fixed capital formation ratio of GDP at 30-31 per cent shows private sector investment is growing. A day after tabling the Economic Survey in Parliament, the CEA spelt out the larger message behind the various observations contained in it.

Edited excerpts:

Can you elaborate on your suggestion in the Economic Survey to turn global headwinds into tailwinds?

Global challenges are a given. They will continue to exert their downward pressure. But we use this as a spur, as a motivator, for instance, for striking free trade agreements with many other regions and nations.

The private sector invests in quality, R&D, innovation and, in return for protection from external competition, gets its act together and does not demand protection for more than X number of years.

We scale up our competitiveness to global standards. At the household level, there is an equally important role. Treating public goods with the same care as private property, investing in physical, mental and emotional well-being, and acquiring



skills relevant both to an AI-driven economy and sectors where human capabilities will continue to matter, are all critical.

If global uncertainty pushes us to act in a more concerted, decisive and accelerated manner on these fronts, many of the challenges posed by external headwinds begin to lose their relevance. The environment does not change, but our preparedness does.

Private investments have not scaled up in consonance with public capital expenditure. To what extent can growth depend solely on public investment?

FY25 numbers will come in February 2026, but whatever numbers I am seeing from corporate data, in FY25, investment did grow significantly. I think we are probably overstating the situation with regard to

private capex. But I would concede geopolitical uncertainties, trade-related uncertainties, the presence of a large manufacturing company with excess capacity operating and exporting its products elsewhere.

All these issues need to be viewed with the need to now locate your production in countries which have high tariff imposed on India. You have to manufacture there to be able to sell there. All this naturally exerts some pressure on domestic investment or domestic capital spending.

But overall, if I look at the gross fixed capital formation ratio of GDP at 30-31 per cent, under the current circumstances, I think these are very respectable numbers.

The Survey has highlighted an interesting aspect of swadeshi by suggesting it should not mean

building import walls but focus on developing export capacities. What are the prerequisites for such a model?

I think *swadeshi* is necessary. We need to indigenise because the world is not going to supply everything that we need, and supply chains are being weaponised. All I'm saying is we should do it in a manner which builds resilience, so that becomes a springboard to become strategically indispensable. We use protection to enhance our capabilities, but not to dump inferior goods in domestic markets.

As pointed out in the Survey, there are just a handful of PLI sectors performing well on the export front. What should be done to improve the performance of the laggard sectors? Will you also advocate including more sectors in the PLI basket?

I don't want to. It's a question that will be answered by DPIIT.

The government is addressing the export issue through multiple FTAs. Whether it is PLI or not, the government has been taking measures to improve the export prospects of our businesses.

And therefore, export performance will improve automatically when these future agreements become operational.

Simultaneously, we con-

tinue to work for the medium-term areas of export competitiveness. And that is why we write about the importance of reducing inversion, removing inversion or cross-subsidisation of electricity and fleet, et cetera.

All these things add to domestic manufacturing cost. They basically allow the cost of capital to go down. Once we build manufacturing and exports and start achieving lower deficits or, at some point in time, they become external surpluses and that's the lower cost of capital.

We also help businesses manage their overall input costs, and this is how we boost exports. PLI is one of the mechanisms, it's not the only mechanism.

What more can be done to support the falling rupee?

It's very difficult to speculate on what needs to be done because we have talked about the important drivers of currency strength and stability over the medium term. And those things are not achieved overnight.

We need to build that currency strength and stability over time with competitive manufacturing and exports. In the short run, sometimes we just have to make sure that it doesn't grow into a macro-stability concern, which is not the case right now. It is an area that the central bank deals with, therefore it is not appropriate on my part to speculate on the actions to be taken.

At ₹8.55 lakh crore, fiscal deficit during April-Dec nears 54.5% of FY26 target

Fiscal health (Amount in ₹ crore/April-December)

Head	2025-26	2024-25	Change in %
Revenue receipts	24,79,109	22,90,710	8.22
Tax revenue (Net)	19,39,254	18,43,053	5.22
Non-tax revenue	5,39,855	4,47,657	20.6
Non-Debt capital receipts	46,047	27,295	68.7
Total receipts	25,25,156	23,18,005	8.94
Revenue expenditure	25,93,063	25,46,757	1.82
Capital expenditure	7,87,935	6,85,337	14.97
Total expenditure	33,80,998	32,32,094	4.61
Fiscal deficit	8,55,842	9,14,089	-6.37

Source: CGA

Shishir Sinha
New Delhi

Ahead of the presentation of the Union Budget, the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) on Friday reported that the Centre's fiscal deficit at the end of December stood at ₹8.55 lakh crore, or 54.5 per cent of the Budget Estimate. "The main shortfall would be the low nominal GDP growth of 8 per cent against the budgeted growth of 10.1 per cent," said Srivastava.

in gross tax revenues implies that the fiscal deficit target can be met without any substantial cuts in revenue expenditure. This would also be helped by the fact that non-tax revenues are already at 92.6 per cent of the Budget Estimates. "The main shortfall would be the low nominal GDP growth of 8 per cent against the budgeted growth of 10.1 per cent," said Srivastava.

TOTAL EXPENDITURE

Total expenditure incurred by the Centre was ₹33.8 lakh crore (66.7 per cent of the corresponding BE 2025-26), of which ₹25.93 lakh crore was on the revenue account and ₹7.87 lakh crore on the capital account. Of the total revenue expenditure, ₹9.11 lakh crore was on account of interest payments and ₹3.17 lakh crore on subsidies.

"We expect the potential miss on the taxes side to be offset by higher-than-budgeted non-tax revenues and sizeable expenditure savings in revenue spending... We do not anticipate the FY2026 RE to indicate a higher fiscal deficit than the FY2026 BE," said Aditi Nayyar, Chief Economist, ICRA.

Engineering exports dip 1.28% in Dec, but US shipments defy trend

Our Bureau

New Delhi

Engineering export growth in December slowed to 1.28 per cent (year-on-year) at \$10.98 billion, but shipments to the US stayed on the positive track despite the punitive tariffs, according to EEPIC India.

Exports to the EU posted a robust growth of 7.5 per cent during the month at \$1.99 billion, despite the growing protectionism in the region. The India-EU free trade agreement will result in higher gains, said Pankaj Chadha, Chairman, EEPIC India.

Although engineering exports in December were the second highest during fiscal 2025-26, behind the November high of \$11.01 billion, the growth was marginal due to the high base of the previous year, an analysis by EEPIC highlighted.

"While the high engineering export growth of November resulted from a lower statistical base, the slower year-on-year growth in December was due to a higher base," it explained.

In December, engineering exports to the US grew by a marginal 1 per cent to \$1.66 billion from \$1.64 billion in



- **The US:** Exports grew marginally to \$1.66 billion
- **EU:** Rose 7.5% to \$1.99 billion
- **China:** Jumped 42% to \$357.9 million

the same month a year ago.

"Despite growing protectionism in the developed countries, India's engineering exports to the US and major EU economies remained positive in December 2025, which is a significantly positive indicator at this difficult time," said Chadha.

CHINA SURGE Interestingly, engineering goods exports to China in December jumped 42 per cent (year-on-year) during the nine-month period of the fiscal.

Engineering shipments to China were higher by 16.4 per cent (year-on-year) during the nine-month period of the fiscal.

Exports to Singapore more than doubled in December. But exports to the

Non-food bank credit grows 14.4% in Dec; spike in lending to MSMEs

Our Bureau

Mumbai

Non-food bank credit grew at a robust clip of 14.4 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) as of December 31, 2025, on the back of increased demand from industry, services and personal loan segments, as per the RBI's data on sectoral deployment of bank credit for December.

Non-food bank credit grew at 11.1 per cent as of December 27, 2024.

Scheduled commercial

banks' (SCBs) credit to industry recorded a 13.3 per cent y-o-y growth, compared with 7.5 per cent in the corresponding fortnight of the previous year.

While credit to 'micro and small' industries showed sharp acceleration in growth, 'medium' industries continued to exhibit robust expansion. Credit to large industries also picked up, as per the RBI's statement.

POSITIVE SIGN Referring to the pick-up in credit to large industries,

Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda, said this could be indicative of a pick-up in private investment in the segment.

Among major industries, outstanding credit to 'infrastructure', 'all engineering', 'basic metal and metal products', 'chemical and chemical products', 'textiles' and 'petroleum, coal products and nuclear fuels' registered resilient y-o-y growth.

Credit to the services sector registered a growth rate of 15.3 per cent y-o-y (11.5

per cent in the corresponding fortnight of the previous year), supported by higher growth in segments such as 'non-banking financial companies', 'trade' and 'commercial real estate'.

Credit to the personal loans segment recorded a 14.4 per cent y-o-y growth, as compared with 12 per cent a year ago.

The RBI said that while segments such as 'vehicle loans' and 'loans against gold jewellery' sustained robust credit growth, 'housing' witnessed steady growth while

'credit card outstanding' growth decreased.

Sabnavis said vehicle loan growth had virtually doubled, thus contributing to overall demand in the personal loans segment.

Unsecured loan growth was also higher compared to the previous year, indicating higher borrowing for consumption backed by the GST cut too also contributing to the same.

NBCF credit has been higher this year, due to the reversal of the higher capital norms imposed in 2024.

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QUICKLY.

MG Majestor to be showcased

JSW MG Motor India has teased its upcoming flagship SUV, the Majestor, ahead of its official unveiling scheduled for February 12.



Positioned as a direct rival to the Toyota Fortuner, the teaser reveals a bold front-end design featuring a three-piece LED lighting setup, sharp right-angled DRLs, a wide blacked-out grille with horizontal slats and a prominent silver skid plate. While interior details are yet to be revealed, the Majestor is expected to offer features such as a panoramic sunroof, a 12.3-inch touchscreen infotainment system and Level 2 ADAS. Under the hood, the SUV is likely to share its powertrain with the MG Gloster, using a 2.0-litre twin-turbo diesel engine producing 213 bhp and 48.8 kg-m, paired with an automatic gearbox and a four-wheel drive. MG's focus on space and comfort could make the Majestor a strong contender in the segment.

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New Renault Duster debuts

Renault India has revealed the India-spec new-generation Duster ahead of its launch, with prices set to be announced in March 2026.



Pre-bookings are now open at ₹21,000, offering benefits such as priority delivery, introductory pricing and exclusive merchandise.

The new Duster features a boxier design with LED headlamps, rugged cladding, connected LED tail-lamps and dual-tone colour options. Inside, it gets a completely revamped cabin with a dual-screen layout, panoramic sunroof, ambient lighting, powered seats, dual-zone climate control, a 360-degree camera, six airbags and Level 2 ADAS. Powertrain options include a 1.8-litre petrol hybrid making 160 bhp and 17.5 kg-m, a 1.3-litre turbo-petrol producing 160 bhp and 28.6 kg-m, and a 1.0-litre turbo-petrol delivering 100 bhp and 16.3 kg-m.

Vespa 946 Horse unveiled

Vespa has unveiled a limited-edition version of its flagship scooter, called the 946 Horse, celebrating the Year of the Horse in the Chinese Zodiac.



Following last year's 946 Snake edition, the new model marks Vespa's fourth lunar-calendar-inspired creation after the Bunny and Dragon editions. The 946 Horse is positioned as a numbered collector's model, with Vespa describing it as an expression of strength, elegance and contemporary craftsmanship. Mechanically, it remains unchanged, powered by a 125cc single-cylinder engine and equipped with dual-channel ABS and a five-position preload-adjustable rear suspension. Alongside the scooter, Vespa has introduced the 2026 In Sella apparel line under its AI Vento collection, featuring navy-blue knitwear and accessories, including a matching helmet finished in the same dark brown shade as the 946 Horse.

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Manaal Mahatme

The Kawasaki Versys-X 300 first made its debut in India in 2017, at a time when the entry-level adventure motorcycle segment was beginning to gain traction. Three years later, Kawasaki discontinued the model, only to reintroduce it some months ago with new colour options and minor updates to meet the latest emission norms. Since its return, the ADV has sold around 200 units, highlighting its rather niche appeal in a segment that has since grown significantly.

Mechanically, the Versys remains largely unchanged from its earlier iteration. That continuity defines both its strengths and its shortcomings today. While newer adventure motorcycles now offer higher outputs, advanced electronics and feature-rich packages, the Versys-X continues with a simpler, more traditional approach.

In terms of design and equipment, the motorcycle now appears dated, though not ineffective. It still uses halogen headlamps, a part-analogue part-digital instrument cluster and wire-spoke wheels with tube-type tyres in a 19-/17-inch configuration. The absence of tubeless tyres is a notable drawback, especially at this price point. However, the halogen headlamp provides effective illumination and the instrument cluster presents all essential information clearly, without unnecessary complexity. The analogue tachometer, in par-

Old Timer

A COMEBACK. Kawasaki's smallest Versys has returned unchanged to a segment that has moved on

ticular, adds a degree of involvement that is increasingly rare.

The Versys-X 300 was never positioned as a hardcore off-road motorcycle. True to the Versys name — a portmanteau for 'versatile system' — it is designed to be manageable in urban conditions, stable on highways and capable of handling poor road surfaces. That positioning remains intact even today, although buyer expectations within the segment have shifted considerably.

Powering the Versys 300 is a 296 cc liquid-cooled parallel-twin engine shared with the Ninja 300. It produces 39.4 bhp at 11,500 rpm, placing it among the more

powerful motorcycles in its class.

Despite its sportbike origins, the engine is tuned for usability rather than aggression. The first four gears are short, allowing for easy progress in traffic, while sixth gear is tractable enough to pull cleanly from as low as 35 kph, extending to highway speeds without hesitation.

EVERYDAY EASE
The engine's flexibility makes the Versys easy to live with in everyday conditions. The clutch is light and can be operated with minimal effort, gearshifts are smooth and the engine remains relaxed when ridden within its comfort zone.

Silent Rivals

FACEOFF. Two electric SUVs: One composed, one charismatic and one unmistakable spark between them



Yash Sunil

Electric SUVs today sit at a fascinating crossroads. Brands are still navigating the 'visual identity' of electrification: Should they embrace a 'full spaceship' aesthetic or simply evolve what already works? Tata and Mahindra stand at opposite ends of that debate, both attempting to define the future of Indian EVs in vastly different ways. The Harrier.ev feels like a familiar friend who has learned a few impressive new tricks, while the XEV 9e is Mahindra's bold statement of intent.

At first glance, the XEV 9e looks like a sleek, futuristic spin on the XUV700. It is lower, wider and features that distinctive coupé-SUV stance that carmakers usually reserve for concept studies. The full-width light bar gives it a clear EV identity, while the main headlamps sit lower, flanking a closed-off grille topped by Mahindra's newer winged logo. In profile, its sheer scale is undeniable. The 19-inch wheels fill the arches convincingly, flush door handles add a premium touch, and the roofline tapers neatly into a clean rear featuring another striking light bar and immense road presence.

Underneath, the XEV 9e rides on Mahindra's INGLO skateboard platform, a born-electric setup rather than an internal combustion engine (ICE) conversion. While it is rear-wheel drive for now, the architecture is designed to easily accommodate a front motor for future AWB iterations.

The Harrier.ev takes a markedly different approach. It does not scream for attention, and that is precisely its charm. The familiar, muscular stance remains, now paired with a new closed-off grille, subtle strokes, a reshaped bumper and a tidier air-intake design. From the side, the 19-inch aero alloys and a discreet EV badge are the primary giveaways. The side steps are a practical addition, aiding ingress while neatly masking the battery pack tucked below the chassis. Around the back, the absence of a

tailpipe and refined EV badging quietly signal the shift to electric power. Unlike the XEV, the Harrier.ev is an evolution of its ICE sibling. Beneath the skin, however, it has been heavily reworked with a new floor, updated suspension and Tata's advanced Actiev electrical architecture.

Step inside the Harrier.ev and Tata's evolutionary philosophy continues. The centerpiece is the massive 14.53-inch Samsung Neo QLED touchscreen, easily one of the sharpest in the segment, paired with a crisp 10.25-inch digital driver's display. The illuminated Tata logo on the four-spoke steering wheel feels properly premium, and the layered dual-tone dashboard adds a sense of richness. It is generously appointed, featuring touch-based HVAC controls, ventilated seats, a panoramic sunroof, a boss mode for the rear passenger and a 10-speaker JBL system enhanced with Dolby Atmos.

The XEV 9e's cabin, meanwhile, feels as though Mahindra raided a European luxury car's boardroom. The doors open nearly 90 degrees, though occupants will need to navigate a wide sill. The triple-screen layout stretching across the dash is pure theatre, the kind of tech one would expect in a high-end luxury SUV. The new two-spoke steering wheel looks futuristic and houses touch controls for regeneration, boost and one-pedal modes. The seats are wide, ventilated and supportive, while the rear bench is

genuinely spacious, comfortably accommodating three adults.

ROAD TEST

On the road, the range-topping Harrier.ev QWD utilises a dual-motor setup. Its 75-kWh battery produces 313 bhp and 51.39 kg-m of torque. In Eco and City modes, the delivery is smooth and relaxed, but

in terms of practicality, the Harrier.ev offers a 502-litre boot and a small trunk for charging cables. The XEV 9e counters with a massive 663-litre boot and a substantial 150-litre trunk. Both suffer from relatively high loading lips, and the choice of light-coloured upholstery paired with gloss-black trim will undoubtedly test an owner's patience in dusty Indian conditions.

BUMPER TO BUMPER. Both make their mark in the EV space — the XEV 9e has character; the Harrier.ev is the professional rival

kg-m from a 79-kWh battery. It feels properly quick; the sprint from 0-100 kph is dispatched in just 6.8 seconds. The power delivery is linear and clean, making the car feel significantly lighter than its dimensions suggest. The drive modes, Range, Everyday and Race, alter throttle and steering response, with Race mode proving to be the most engaging for the enthusiast. Ride quality is well-judged, handling poor surfaces with ease, though sharper bumps do occasionally make themselves felt. While stable at high speeds, the steering lacks some communicative feel, though NVH levels are excellent. In the real world, the XEV 9e managed to offer a range of around 550 km. As for charging, with a 175-kW DC fast charging, the XEV 9e charges from 20 to 80 per cent in around 20 minutes.

Both SUVs showcase the incredible strides Indian carmakers have made in the EV space, but the XEV 9e edges ahead, not through gimmicks, but through character. The Harrier.ev is refined, competent and easy to live with, slotting seamlessly into a sophisticated lifestyle. The XEV 9e, however, feels genuinely new — it is confident, exciting and unapologetically ambitious. If the Harrier.ev is the dependable professional, the XEV 9e is the risk-taker with the talent to back it up. In this silent duel, it is Mahindra that leaves the stronger impression.

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KAIZAD ADIL DARUKHANAWALA



FAN FAVOURITE. A mechanically honest, well-mannered touring motorcycle that prioritises ease of use over outright performance or technology

That said, vibrations begin to creep in as revs rise, and prolonged city riding results in noticeable heat around the engine area. Although the radiator fan attempts to direct hot air away from the rider, the warmth is comparable to that of an air-cooled motorcycle in dense traffic.

Ride quality is well suited to Indian road conditions. The suspension competently handles broken tarmac, uneven surfaces and general urban abuse. However, when pushed hard over rough terrain, its limitations become evident. The Versys is not intended for aggressive off-road use and it communicates this clearly. Braking

performance is adequate, though the front brake lacks initial bite and feedback, resulting in a wooden feel under harder braking.

Kawasaki has priced the Versys-X at ₹3.49 lakh (ex-showroom) and now includes panniers and a main stand as standard equipment. While this improves the overall value proposition, it does little to broaden the motorcycle's appeal. Riders cross-shopping within the segment will find several alternatives offering more performance, features and perceived versatility at similar price points.

As a result, the Versys-X is not

an obvious recommendation for first-time big-bike buyers, nor is it likely to satisfy experienced riders seeking cutting-edge capability. Instead, it caters to a narrower audience — those looking for a mechanically honest, well-mannered touring motorcycle that prioritises ease of use over outright performance or technology.

In that sense, the Versys-X 300 remains unchanged not only in its hardware, but also in its intent. In a segment that has rapidly moved forward, that familiarity is both its defining characteristic and its biggest challenge.



QUICKLY.

US stocks slip after Trump picks Fed critic Warsh



US stocks fell on Friday after President Donald Trump nominated former Fed Governor Kevin Warsh to lead the US central bank, a decision that many investors view as a hawkish pick. Investors expect Warsh to support lower interest rates but stop well short of a more aggressive monetary policy easing associated with some of the other potential nominees. At 9.39 am, the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 13.32 points, or 0.23 per cent, to 48,958.24, the S&P 500 lost 14.11 points, or 0.20 per cent, to 6,954.90 and the Nasdaq lost 61.97 points, or 0.27 per cent, to 23,621.32. His appointment needs Senate confirmation. REUTERS

SEBI clears the path for NSE IPO

BIDDING TIME. After regulator's no-objection, exchange is likely to take eight months to launch public issue

Akhata Gorde
Mumbai



ON MEGA SCREEN. Settlement move on co-location cases and surge in unlisted shares signal listing momentum

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has issued a no objection certificate (NOC) for the National Stock Exchange's proposed initial public offering (IPO), clearing a key regulatory hurdle that had held up the country's largest bourse from tapping public markets for nearly a decade.

"We are delighted to receive SEBI approval for our IPO, a significant milestone in our growth journey. With SEBI's approval, we embark on a new chapter of value creation for all our stakeholders. This approval also reinforces confidence in NSE being an integral part of the Indian economy and a beacon of Indian capital markets," said NSE Chairperson Srinivas Injeti.

With the NOC now in

hand, the exchange is expected to take eight to nine months to launch the offering, which is likely to be structured as an Offer for Sale (OFS) and no fresh capital raised for the company.

ONGOING CASES
The regulatory clearance comes even as SEBI continues to process NSE's settlement application linked to the long-running co-location and dark fibre cases. NSE had

with IPO-related filings," said a SEBI official aware of the matter.

The internal SEBI departments had broadly agreed to the settlement framework, prompting the regulator to issue the NOC without waiting for formal approval from the High Power Advisory Committee (HPAC). The proposal is expected to move to the HPAC and thereafter, to SEBI's whole-time members for final clearance, following which it may seek withdrawal of related cases pending before the Supreme Court.

NSE M-CAP SURGES
The anticipation of the regulatory breakthrough has renewed activity in NSE's unlisted shares, with prices jumping 10-15 per cent over the past few months and some private market platforms quoting around ₹2,050 per share, taking its

market capitalisation to around ₹5 lakh crore.

"NSE can now move toward updating and re-filing its offer documents, completing SEBI's review process, and proceeding to a listing over the coming months. The exchange can officially be represented by merchant bankers, lawyers and accountants in respect of addressing SEBI's observations, finalise pricing, share allocation and regulatory disclosures in the updated draft prospectus," said Sumit Agrawal, Senior Partner, Regrett Law Advisors and former SEBI officer.

Ashish Chauhan, MD and CEO, NSE, had earlier indicated that once the written NOC is received, the exchange would immediately begin work on the offer documents. NSE had first filed for an IPO in 2016, but withdrew it as the regulatory probe gathered pace.

caution ahead of the Budget," said Ajit Mishra, SVP Research at Religare Broking Ltd.

Defensive stocks provided support as Nestle India surged 3.46 per cent, Tata Consumer Products gained 2.24 per cent and Apollo Hospitals rose 2.19 per cent. Mahindra & Mahindra advanced 1.77 per cent, while ITC climbed 1.16 per cent. ICICI Bank fell 1.92 per cent, dragging the Nifty Bank index down 0.58 per cent to 59,610.45.

Market breadth remained positive on the BSE with 2,380 stocks advancing against 1,831 declines. However, 291 stocks hit 52-week lows compared to just 78 touching 52-week highs, indicating underlying weakness.

The Nifty Smallcap 100 bucked the trend, rising 0.32 per cent to 16,879.10, while the Nifty Midcap 100 slipped 0.19 per cent to 58,432.

IPOs of HD Fire Protect, Xtranet Tech and five other companies get nod

Our Bureau
Mumbai

SEBI cleared the initial public offering (IPO) Proposals of seven companies on Friday. The issues cleared were of HD Fire Protect, Xtranet Technologies, Parijat Industries India, Rotomag Energetec, CSM Technologies, Eldec Infrastructure and Properties, and AITMC Ventures.

Associated Power Structures withdrew its IPO offer.

IPO STRUCTURE
Eldec Infrastructure and Properties plans to raise ₹1,000 crore through fresh equity issuance and offer for

sale (OFS). The issue consists of a fresh issue of shares worth ₹800 crore and an OFS of ₹200 crore by promoters. The proceeds will be used for debt repayment, specifically for their subsidiary Eldec Infracon Realtors and for general corporate purposes.

AITMC Ventures, an agri-drone start-up, will raise ₹200 crore via IPO to fund its expansion plans. The issue consists of a fresh issue of equity shares, aimed at funding business expansion, working capital and investments in subsidiaries.

Promoters and investors of HD Fire Protect plan to of-flood 2,63 crore shares. Xtranet Technologies will raise about ₹190 crore

through fresh share issuance. The funds raised will go to investors who are off-loading shares in the IPO.

The agro chemical company Parijat Industries will raise ₹160 crore and an offer for sale of up to 2.04 crore equity shares. Its product portfolio includes plant protection products and plant nutrition products.

CSM Technologies will raise about ₹150 crore through fresh equity issuances. The company will issue 1.29 crore equity shares with no offer-for-sale component. The proceeds will be used to fund growth initiatives, strengthen technological infrastructure and pay off debt.

shares of HD Fire Protect, Xtranet Technologies, Parijat Industries India, Rotomag Energetec, CSM Technologies, Eldec Infrastructure and Properties, and AITMC Ventures.

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BROKER'S CALL.

ICICI Securities

TVS MOTOR (ADD)

Target: ₹4,200
CMP: ₹3,683.00
TVS Motor Company's (TVSL) Q3FY26 operational performance was ahead of our estimate. EBITDA margin (adjusted for PLI benefit) continued to expand (70 bps y-o-y). Domestic 2W industry growth momentum is expected to continue led by the benefit of GST rationalisation and positive rural sentiment.

Demand momentum in international markets also remains strong. Management indicated it will continue to judiciously invest towards brand building and marketing (₹600 million higher spends during Q3).

We expect TVSL's outperformance to continue led by ramp-up in EV volumes (supply constraints easing), new product launches and premiumisation. Recent price hike, richer mix and cost optimisation efforts are expected to mitigate commodity cost inflation.

Channel inventory for E2W/scooter's is currently lower-than-normal level and may normalise by Q4 FY26. We broadly maintain our estimates and expect TVSL's revenue/EBITDA to grow at 19/24 per cent CAGR over FY25-28. Overall, demand momentum in international markets could continue; the company guides for continued outperformance vis-à-vis industry growth. Maintain Add with an unchanged TP of ₹4,200 (35X FY28E EPS).

Downside risks: Impact on profitability due to higher competitive intensity/ramp-up of EV business; Continued losses at subsidiaries could keep dragging overall performance and requiring higher investment from parent TVSL.

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

Nifty 50 Movers

Choice International

PIRAMAL PHARMA (REDUCE)

Target: ₹160
CMP: ₹154.55
Piramal Pharma revenue declined 2.9 per cent y-o-y/grew 4.7 per cent q-o-q to ₹2,139.90 crore (vs Choice International's estimate: ₹2,075.70 crore). EBITDA declined 42 per cent y-o-y/grew 23.3 per cent q-o-q to ₹197.20 crore; margin contracted 618 bps y-o-y/expended 138 bps q-o-q to 9.1 per cent (vs CIE estimate: 9.5 per cent). The company reported a loss of ₹136.2 crore during the quarter (vs profit of ₹3.7 crore in Q3FY25).

Piramal Pharma continues to face pressure on overall financial performance and we expect these challenges to persist through FY26. The weakness is driven by inventory destocking by a key customer and operational constraint at the Lexington facility.

We expect FY26 revenues to remain under pressure, with some recovery only from FY27. In line with the management guidance, we expect EBITDA margin to be around 8.5 per cent, a sharp decline from around 15.8 per cent in FY25. Tax rates remain volatile, reflecting losses in overseas CDMO operations. In light of these headwinds, we have revised our estimate downward by 2/2.9 per cent for FY26/FY27E. Given the uncertainty around the CDMO order book and revenue visibility, we have also cut our valuation multiple by 10 per cent and will continue to closely monitor performance over the next few quarters for signs of margin recovery and revenue stabilisation.

Our revised TP is ₹160 (from ₹195), and we maintain our Reduce rating.

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Nifty Next 50 Movers

ITC swings after Q3 miss, brokerages cautious

Madhu Balaji
Bengaluru

Shares of ITC Ltd were volatile in Friday's session after the diversified conglomerate reported its December-quarter earnings, which missed Street estimates due to a one-time hit linked to new labour codes.

The stock ended at ₹322.15 on the NSE, up 1 per cent, after hitting a 52-week low of ₹316.45 in early trade before recovering.

ITC reported a 6.13 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) decline in standalone net profit for Q3 FY26 at ₹5,088.83 crore. The brokerages struck a cautious tone despite highlighting resilience in the company's core cigarette and FMCG businesses, especially in the face of the recent tax hikes on cigarettes.

Motilal Oswal maintained its 'neutral' rating at a target price of ₹365.

Citi maintained its 'sell' rating at ₹320. It added that cigarette volumes and pricing trends will be closely watched, particularly given the strength in non-cigarette FMCG categories that benefited from GST reforms.

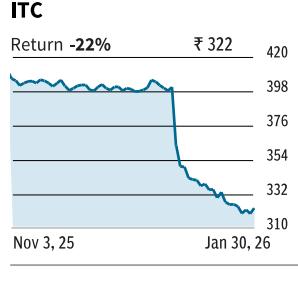
TAX ON CIGARETTES
Motilal Oswal said there were no major changes to its earnings estimates for FY26-28, noting that the cigarette business saw a steady quarter, but flagged the surge in cigarette

taxes after changes in GST and excise duty effective February 1, 2026. It noted that the stock had already corrected about 20 per cent since the tax announcement on January 1, 2026, but warned that pressure on cigarette earnings could remove near-term catalysts such as softer tobacco prices and a recovery in FMCG and paper businesses.

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TACTICAL FLOWS
The brokerage said the pattern underscores tactical foreign flows, with investors rotating toward growth



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FII holdings in mid- and small-caps rise to multi-year high: Elara Capital

Our Bureau
Bengaluru

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) have lifted their exposure to mid- and small-cap stocks to multi-year highs, even as their allocations to large-cap benchmarks have moderated, according to a report by Elara Capital.

Elara's report titled 'Ownership Mosaic', analysing equity ownership trends across investor classes, shows FII participation in the Nifty Midcap 150 rising to 16.4 per cent by December 2025, while exposure to the Nifty Smallcap 250 increased to roughly 14.2 per cent. In contrast, FII holdings in the Nifty 50 eased to around 25.5 per cent from a peak of over 28 per cent in FY21, reflecting a more selective risk appetite amid global volatility.

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TACTICAL FLOWS
The brokerage said the pattern underscores tactical foreign flows, with investors rotating toward growth

opportunities beyond frontline stocks rather than exiting the market altogether.

The rise in mid- and small-cap exposure coincided with sharp sector-level reallocations. FIIs have sharply raised stakes in telecom, media, materials, metals and financials over the past year, while trimming positions in utilities, consumer staples, discretionary stocks, banks and real estate. Telecom emerged as the biggest beneficiary of foreign inflows, while utilities saw the steepest year-on-year reduction.

Domestic institutional investors (DIIs), meanwhile, continued to consolidate

CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED

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Phone number: 044-4090172; Email: investors@chola.murugappa.com; Website: www.cholamandalam.com

EXTRACT OF THE DETAILED FORMAT OF STANDALONE AND CONSOLIDATED UN-AUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND NINE MONTHS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2025

Sl. No	Particulars	Standalone					
		31.12.2025 Un-audited	30.09.2025 Audited	31.12.2024 Un-audited	31.12.2025 Un-audited	31.12.2024 Un-audited	31.03.2025 Audited
1.	Total income from operations						

Golden lessons

Sovereign gold bonds offer some policy lessons

As gold prices head for the stratosphere, this is turning up the heat on an unexpected entity, the Government of India. As rising global prices and a depreciating rupee propel bullion prices to over ₹16,000 per gram, the Government is having to sharply hike its budgetary allocation to redeem maturing Sovereign Gold Bonds (SGBs).

A report in this newspaper estimates that in the upcoming Budget, the ₹700 crore outlay earmarked for the Gold Reserve Fund may need to be revised significantly higher. FY25 outlays for these bonds turned out to be over three times the budgeted number. This may be a recurring issue for the government as long as gold prices remain elevated. The government issued 67 tranches of SGBs between FY16 and FY24. The FY18 and FY19 tranches coming up for redemption now, were issued at a face value of between ₹2,800 and ₹3,300 per gram, while current market prices hover at over ₹16,000 per gram. While the government has been getting a lot of flak for this miscalculation, the criticism is unfair. When they were first introduced in 2015, SGBs were seen as a policy instrument to allow Indian households to park their savings in their favourite asset, without adding to the country's import bill or skewing its current account balance. At that time, gold had delivered a mere 5 per cent return in the previous five years and ruled at ₹2,600 per gram. Initial SGB issues in fact met with tepid response, despite the government sweetening the offer with an annual interest and a capital gains tax exemption. At the time, hardly any market participants anticipated that gold would soar to such astronomical heights. It must also be recognised that while the SGBs have proved a very expensive form of borrowings for the government, they have delivered stellar returns to retail investors who bought them. This is not such a misfortune. Even after recent gold price gains, SGBs account for less than ₹2 lakh crore of outstanding government borrowings, which is quite manageable for the fisc.

Having said this, there are useful policy lessons to be drawn from the SGB experience. One, whenever the government decides to rely on non-Rupee denominated borrowings, it would be prudent to hedge against price risks. In this case, buying physical gold to match outstanding SGBs would have been self-defeating, but hedging against adverse price movements in the currency or commodity derivative markets could have been explored. Two, the government probably went overboard in offering complete capital gains tax exemption on SGB proceeds, at a time when other forms of bullion investments were taxed.

Finally, when issuing market-linked instruments, regular investments that smooth out price risks are better than lumpsum investments that are highly influenced by point-to-point price movements. This holds good both for the buyer and seller. Any future gold deposit scheme to woo retail savers should learn from mutual funds' Systematic Investment Plans.

OTHER VOICES.

The Guardian

Military strikes won't help civilians facing brutality

The brutality of Iran's crackdown on protesters is almost unfathomable. Despite the authorities cutting off communications and destroying evidence, it is clear that a regime never reluctant to shed its citizens' blood has done so with unprecedented zeal, sensing an unprecedented threat from unrest across the country, challenging not only its policies but its very existence. Officials have reported 3,000 deaths, but human rights groups have tallied many more, and a network of medical professionals has estimated that 30,000 could have been killed. Security forces shot people dead as they fled a fire and are arresting doctors for helping the wounded. Alongside the fury at this vengeful regime is anger at another leader: Donald Trump, who urged Iranians to keep protesting and promised them that "help is on its way" – then played down the slaughter. LONDON, JANUARY 29

CHINADAILY

Military adventurism risky Middle East bet

The clamour caused by the United States' unilateral actions against Venezuela and its land-grab attempt of European territory shouldn't mask the fact that tensions in the Middle East have reached a critical point due to its transactional geopolitical calculus. Over three months after the first phase of the ceasefire deal in Gaza was reached, Israeli military strikes have yet to stop. As China's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Fu Cong urged in a UN Security Council meeting on Wednesday, it is incumbent on all parties, Israel in particular, to fully comply with the ceasefire agreement and work toward a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire. The humanitarian situation in Gaza remains grave. BEIJING, JANUARY 29



Quantum deadline: Adapt or be exposed

NATIONAL SECURITY ISSUE. Regulators, governments must respond to impending cyberwarfare threats and prepare post-quantum cryptography plans



AJAI CHOWDHRY

AJAY SINGH

The capture of Nicolas Maduro succeeded not through sheer military might but through digital disruption, sending shockwaves across the world, showing that cyberwarfare can topple regimes without traditional combat. Yet as disruptive as this was, it pales in comparison to the looming quantum threat — "Q-Day" — the moment when quantum computers will be capable of breaking today's encryption standards, unleashing systemic havoc across every sector of society.

Knowing that classical encryption like RSA and ECC is vulnerable to quantum algorithms, adversaries are undertaking "harvest now, decrypt later" attacks through which they are stockpiling encrypted data today to unlock tomorrow. Without migration to post-quantum cryptography, sensitive financial, military, and health records face exposure. This is not just an IT issue; it is a critical boardroom priority and national security challenge demanding urgent action.

Imagine a scenario where global banking systems collapse overnight as transactions are decrypted and manipulated, accounts drained, payment networks disrupted, and stock exchanges thrown into chaos. The ripple effects would trigger market crashes, erode trust in financial institutions, and destabilize economies worldwide.

Also consider the possibility of military communications, satellite controls, and encrypted command

systems being taken over. Adversaries might spoof signals, disable radar, or hijack drones, on a global scale, undermining deterrence and sovereignty.

In another scenario, hospitals could lose access to patient records, with data stolen or altered, endangering lives, while power grids, water systems, and telecom networks are simultaneously disrupted, plunging cities into chaos. The interconnectedness of modern infrastructure means that a quantum-enabled attack could cascade across multiple sectors at once.

The urgency of preparing for Q-Day cannot be overstated. The three-year horizon suggested by IonQ's CEO Niccolo de Masi is already alarmingly short.

Bain's latest study delivers a wake-up call. The study predicts that 70 per cent of executives expect quantum-enabled cyberattacks within five years while the rest believe it could happen in just three. Yet most organizations are still stuck in passive mode—waiting for someone else to lead the response.

Quantum computing research is accelerating, and breakthroughs often arrive earlier than expected. Complacency is dangerous. Moreover, the "harvest now, decrypt later" strategy means that even if Q-Day is years away, the damage is already being prepared.

The threat is not hypothetical; it is active

Regulators should enforce post-quantum cryptography adoption in banks, payment networks, and stock exchanges, with quantum-safe protocols for SWIFT transfers

and ongoing. Regulators across sectors should prepare detailed post-quantum cryptography (PQC) migration plans, replacing vulnerable methods like RSA and ECC with quantum-resistant algorithms even before the more powerful quantum computers arrive may be from China.

Organizations must also generate Cryptographic Bills of Materials (CBOMs) — inventories of cryptographic assets, protocols, and dependencies. CBOMs reveal where weak algorithms are embedded, enabling prioritized migration. Without them, institutions may not even know their risks.

Regulators should launch PQC pilots without waiting for full certification, since real-world testing exposes interoperability and performance issues early and ensures migration is underway before Q-Day. Alongside PQC algorithms, which use mathematics to resist quantum attacks, Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) adds a physics-based layer of protection by making key interception detectable. This defence-in-depth approach is vital for sectors managing sensitive, long-lived data, and organizations can accelerate resilience by partnering with established firms and start-ups offering quantum-safe solutions.

ROADMAPS AND TIMELINES

In finance, regulators should enforce PQC adoption in banks, payment networks, and stock exchanges, with quantum-safe protocols for SWIFT transfers and interbank communications.

In energy and utilities, regulators must require PQC integration into Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition Systems (SCADA) systems and grid controls, with redundancy built into power and water systems to

mitigate disruptions. In healthcare, regulators should ensure PQC for patient data storage and transmission, with hospitals required to maintain quantum-safe backups.

In defence, regulators must accelerate the deployment of quantum-safe communications, satellite encryption, and secure command systems to ensure military readiness. QNu Labs, an Indian start-up in collaboration with the Indian Army and the Department of Science & Technology's National Quantum Mission, has already demonstrated India's first extensive quantum-safe communication backbone through a 500-km quantum key distribution (QKD) network.

TRAINING, A PRIORITY

Regulators should require organizations to educate personnel on quantum risks and quantum-safe practices, ensuring that migration plans are not confined to technical teams but understood across leadership.

Organizations must plan to upgrade data centres, communication systems, and critical infrastructure to withstand quantum attacks. Scenario-based exercises simulating quantum-enabled attacks should be initiated as well, revealing vulnerabilities, testing response protocols, and building resilience.

The quantum threat is real, imminent, and systemic. Migrating to PQC will not only help ward off current threats to data, communications, and infrastructure, but ensure that they remain protected for at least the next 25 years, while safeguarding against the impacts of Q-Day.

Chowdhry is the Co-Founder of HCL; and Singh is the author of *Cyber Storm: Unleashing the Power of Quantum Computing & Artificial Intelligence*. Views expressed are personal

Canada breaks away, India hedges its bets

The US President's belligerence and erratic policymaking is splintering alliances and redrawing new ones

THE WIDER ANGLE.



PARAN BALAKRISHNAN

Will the US recover from the reign of King Donald? The question remains an open one, but the damage to America's standing abroad is already plain. Across capitals from Ottawa to New Delhi to Brussels, the "Trump Effect" has forced allies and rivals alike to reassess a US that now appears erratic, transactional and coercive.

No country has felt the rupture more keenly than Canada, which Trump has repeatedly mused about making the 51st state. When Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney spoke at Davos, he tolled the death knell of the old global order.

While the post-war system of open trade and shared rules had delivered unprecedented prosperity and stability, it was over, Carney said. In its place was a harsher, more fragmented world in which middle powers like Canada would have to diversify its trading partners and build new coalitions rather than rely on any single superpower. The speech infuriated Trump, who mocked Carney

as "Governor Carney".

The fallout from Trump's belligerence has been significant. Canada has been decisively decoupling from its once closest ally. Canadian travel to the US is down 40 per cent. US alcohol has been stripped from Canadian shelves, prompting bourbon maker Jim Beam to shut its main distillery for a year. Canadian supermarkets now carry labels identifying domestically made products.

Then there is Trump's so-called "Board of Peace", his farcical attempt to sideline the UN and replace it with a personal creation. The countries most enthusiastic about joining have been a clutch of authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes.

Membership comes with a \$1-billion price tag, which looks less like diplomacy and more like a cash grab. Notably, India has steered well clear of this project.

So where does India fit into this new world order, with the US acting as the class bully, stomping on allies while conspicuously sparing Russia? Ever since the 2010 Galwan clash with China, India has been grappling with how to stand up to an increasingly aggressive Xi Jinping. The uncomfortable truth is that India's strategic options remain narrow. It still needs US backing to counter a hostile China.



MARK CARNEY. Making a point REUTERS

WHAT NEXT?

One answer lies in deeper engagement with other middle powers, particularly across South-East Asia, from Indonesia and Thailand to Malaysia and the Philippines. Last August, three Indian Navy ships took part in exercises with the Philippine Navy, a country on the front line of maritime confrontations with China. There is also India's new free trade deal with Europe.

Complicating everything is Trump's apparent enthusiasm for dividing the world into spheres of influence. Under this vision, China would dominate Asia, Russia would loom over Europe, and Washington would control the Americas.

For India, the implications are stark. How dependable would US backing really be in the event of another confrontation with China? Relations have already been strained.

Presidents come and go, and Trump will eventually exit the stage. But as Carney warned, the damage to trust is enduring. No country is likely ever again to place the same faith in the US that it did during the eight decades following World War II. A new international order is taking shape, one far more uncertain, fragmented and perilous than the one we knew.

● LETTERS TO EDITOR Send your letters by email to bleditor@thehindu.co.in or by post to 'Letters to the Editor', The Hindu Business Line, Kasturi Buildings, 859-860, Anna Salai, Chennai 600002.

More reforms needed

The Centre and the States both can't be complacent about growth. When there are sizeable unspent amounts even in flagship government schemes, we can well imagine the serious coordination gaps with States in giving impetus to the inclusive upbeat growth sentiment. Reforms can't be an adhoc exercise. Further our manufacturing has to be cost competitive too for export surpluses as services export model always has lesser permanency. SMEs need to be given a clear

growth path by stable policy.

Brij B Goyal

Ludhiana

Growth imperatives

Apropos the Editorial (January 30), with the robust fundamentals, the Economic Survey has projected an optimistic view of growth. All out efforts must be towards building a current account surplus. Though satisfactory food stocks, comfortable forex reserves, low inflation, manageable NPAs and robust corporate balance sheets will help weather the current

geopolitical storms, volatility in the financial markets, unstable trade tariff scenarios and climate change loom as threats on the horizon.

Disinvestment, asset monetization and aggressive investments by private sector must be given the required thrust.

RV Basakar

Pune

Apropos 'Growth strategy' (January 30), the Editorial brings out the Economic Survey's balanced view quite well: robust near-term growth —remains crucial if we are to replicate East Asian models.

the medium-term path hinges on turning the current account deficit into a surplus through manufacturing-led exports.

The caution against over-reliance on services and volatile capital flows is sensible. What deserves attention now is the push towards manufacturing. Alongside this, sustained investment in human capital — through education, vocational training, and health

—remains crucial if we are to replicate East Asian models.

SM Jeeva

Chennai

On businessline.in

Economic Survey 2025-26: Signals and silences

The Survey presents a picture of economic stability but underplays the worries over unemployment and inequality, say **Sankalpa Bhattacharjee**

and **Amarendu Nandy**



<https://tinyurl.com/kk6r4t>

QUICKLY.

SBC closes pre-Series A funding round of ₹100 cr

Hyderabad: SBC LLP — a multi-disciplinary tax, consulting, and advisory firm — closed its pre-Series A funding round at a valuation of ₹100 crore. The investment was led by Raju Menon, Founder and Chairman, Kreston Menon Group (UAE), and Suresh Katamreddy, Founder and COO, Kastech Group (USA). The capital will be deployed to accelerate expansion across the India-UAE-US corridor, develop proprietary AI-enabled technology platforms and strengthen specialised advisory capabilities, as per a release. OUR BUREAU

Manappuram Finance's gold loan AUM up 58%

Kochi: Manappuram Finance Ltd has reported a 58 per cent rise in gold loan AUM on a consolidated basis. In Q3FY26, the company clocked ₹38,754.29 crore gold loan AUM, while in Q3FY25 the gold loan AUM was ₹24,504.30 crore. The total AUM for the quarter under consideration was ₹52,125.31 crore, up 17.88 per cent from ₹44,217.40 crore in Q3FY25. Non-gold loan business accounted for 28.74 per cent of AUM. OUR BUREAU

BoB Q3 net up 4.5% at ₹5,055 cr

MIXED BAG. Net interest income unchanged at ₹11,800 cr; NIM dips to 2.79%

Our Bureau

Mumbai

Bank of Baroda (BoB) reported a modest 4.5 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) growth in the third quarter standalone net profit at ₹5,055 crore, with the bottomline supported by non-interest income, write-back in provisions for non-performing assets (NPAs), and write-off of bad debts.

The public sector bank's profit growth came amid decent growth in total deposits (10.3 per cent y-o-y) and global gross advances (14.7 per cent). It logged a net profit of ₹4,837 crore in the year-ago quarter.

The bank's board on Friday approved raising of long-term bonds for financing infrastructure and affordable housing/long-term green infrastructure up to ₹10,000 crore.

This is in addition to ₹5,000 crore left over from the previous approval, taking the total issue size to ₹15,000 crore in single or multiple tranches during FY26 and beyond, if found feasible.

Net interest income (difference between interest earned and interest expended) was almost unchanged at ₹11,800 crore (₹11,786

Report card

	(in ₹ cr)		
	Q3 FY25	Q3 FY26	% change
Net profit	4,837	5,055	4.5
Net interest income	11,786	11,800	0.1
Other income	3,400	3,600	5.9
Operating profit	7,664	7,377	-3.7
Provision for NPA & bad debts written-off	871	559	-35.8
Provision for standard advances	125	183	46.4
GNPA %	2.43	2.04	
NNPA %	0.59	0.57	
Total deposits	14,02,909	15,46,749	10.3
Domestic deposits	11,76,321	13,07,189	11.1
Domestic CASA %	39.33	38.45	
Global gross advances	11,73,034	13,44,904	14.7
Gross domestic advances	9,64,869	10,96,557	13.6

crore in Q3FY25).

Other income, comprising fee-based income, treasury income and other non-interest income, was up 6 per cent y-o-y at ₹3,600 crore (₹3,400 crore).

NIM DECLINES

Debadatta Chand, MD and CEO, said Q3FY26 was one of the strongest quarters for the bank in terms of business (credit and deposit growth). He emphasised that the quarter was a normalised one, without one-off income.

Net interest margin

(NIM) declined to 2.79 per cent from 3.04 per cent a year ago. Chand said the bank will end FY26 with a NIM of 2.85-3 percent.

Operating profit was down 3.7 per cent y-o-y at ₹7,377 crore (₹7,664 crore). The BoB chief said the bank has a consistent and stable operating model, clocking an operating profit of over ₹7,000 crore over the last nine quarters and a net profit of over ₹4,000 crore over the last 10 quarters.

Fresh slippages were higher at ₹2,676 crore

(₹2,503 crore). However, reduction in NPAs too was higher at ₹3,183 crore (₹2,995 crore).

Global advances increased 14.7 per cent y-o-y at ₹13,44,904 crore as at December-end 2025.

Within this, domestic gross advances and international advances were up 13.6 per cent and 19.3 per cent at ₹10,96,557 crore and ₹2,48,348 crore, respectively.

Agriculture advances clocked the highest growth at of 19 per cent, within domestic advances, followed by retail (17.4 per cent), MSME (16.4 per cent) and corporate 8.1 per cent.

Chand said that while BoB continues with the 11-13 per cent credit growth target for FY26, there could be an upside.

The bank has built a corporate loan sanctions pipeline of ₹75,000 crore, including about ₹45,000 crore to be disbursed and about ₹30,000 crore under process.

Low-cost current account savings account (CASA) deposits declined to 38.45 per cent of domestic deposits (39.33 per cent a year ago). BoB shares closed at ₹299.35 apiece, down 1.04 per cent over the previous close on BSE.

Tata Comm rolls out 3 AI-ready enterprise solutions

Vallari Sanzgiri

Mumbai

Tata Communications on Friday launched three AI-ready suites of platforms and solutions for enterprises. The company told businessline that the solutions will significantly bring down traffic costs and latency periods.

The offerings include multi-cloud network IZO+, Edge Distribution Platform, and ThreadSpan.

The first platform gives organisations control over how data moves, performs and costs; the second platform reduces latency, enabling faster responses and real-time digital experiences. The third platform brings clarity and control to complex digital environments by providing a unified view across hybrid and multi-vendor networks, the company said.

COST LEAKAGES

"The platforms address the problem of complexity. Multi-cloud network is complex and manual today. They leave the cloud connections open, which means there are cost leakages," said AS Lakshminarayanan, MD and CEO, Tata Communications.

Coforge executes share subscription, purchase agreement with Encora



Our Bureau

New Delhi

Noida-based information technology (IT) firm Coforge said it has executed a share subscription and share purchase agreement with Encora US Holdco and Encora Holdings.

The acquisition of the US-based Encora will benefit from a structural shift in global technology services demand, the company said.

The company had previously stated that the transaction is subject to regulatory approvals in various jurisdictions, including the expiration or termination of any applicable waiting period(s) under the Hart-Scott Rodino Antitrust Improvements Act of 1976 (HSR Act) in the US.

"In this regard, we are pleased to inform you about a major development that the company has been granted approval under the HSR Act in the US ahead of the stipulated timeline of thirty days from the date of filing," Coforge said in a filing to stock exchanges.

It said the regulator issued an early termination of the prescribed waiting period, effective January 28. "Further, the company has also filed other applications requiring regulatory approvals and we shall intimate the exchanges and members as and when we receive approvals from respective regulators in each jurisdiction," it said.

DEFINING STEP
Coforge said the acquisition of US-based Encora would be a defining step in building a scaled, AI-led engineering and cloud services businesses.

Earlier this week, public shareholders had rejected the company's decision to give private equity giant Advent International the right to nominate members on the board's audit, nomination, and remuneration panels. This forced the company to remove these privileges, in an effort to woo shareholder approval for its proposed \$2.4 billion buyout of the US analytics firm.

India will need 400 airports, 3,000 commercial aircraft by 2047: Report

Our Bureau

Hyderabad

A super-connected India will require an integrated grid of 400 airports, supported by a commercial fleet of about 3,000 aircraft, by 2047, according to a KPMG-FICCI report.

The report, "Paving the future of aviation in Viksit Bharat @ 2047", released at the ongoing Wings India 2026 here, states that the country is the world's third-largest domestic aviation market and on track to becoming the third-largest globally, enabled by rapid fleet induction and record aircraft orders.

India currently operates 164 airports, with a long-term plan for a balanced network of mega hubs, national gateways and cost-efficient regional airports.

Air cargo throughput stands at about 3.7 million tonnes annually, with nearly 80 per cent routed through the five largest airports. The report calls for fully digit-



ised, multimodal cargo ecosystems to drive competitiveness. The maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) market is set to grow from \$2.5 billion to \$7 billion by 2035.

SAF DREAMS
"India has the potential to build a globally competitive sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) industry, leveraging its diverse feedstocks, substantial refining capacity, bioenergy experience and strong policy momentum," the report said.

The National Aviation Skilling Mission will be essential to meet the projected workforce requirement of 40,000 pilots and 38,000 air-

craft maintenance engineers by 2047. India's civil aviation sector is undergoing a structural shift — from a facilitator of mobility to a strategic engine of economic growth, employment and competitiveness.

"The next two decades offer an unprecedented opportunity to build a future-ready aviation economy, supported by a unified national aviation technology stack, next-generation hub airports, and a deep domestic industrial base across manufacturing, maintenance, talent and finance," the report added.

NEXT GROWTH PHASE
"India's aerospace ecosystem has built strong manufacturing foundations. The next phase is about owning complete systems and their lifecycle — across both defence and civil aviation. Arrobot represents this progression for our group," Vamsi Vikas, Founder and Managing Director, Raghu Vamsi Aerospace Group, said at the unveiling.

Strengthening domestic manufacturing, MRO, leasing, cargo handling and skilling will be essential to building lasting strategic advantage, he added.



crore as of December 31, 2025, as against ₹1,89,141 crore as of December 31, 2024, up by 20 per cent y-o-y.

GOLD LOANS SHINE
The growth was driven by vehicle finance, loans against property, and home loans.

Vehicle finance recorded AUM of ₹1,12,937 crore as of December 2025, up 17 per cent y-o-y. The loans-against-property (LAP) business saw AUM growth of 31 per cent y-o-y, as of December 2025, against 3.07 per cent in the previous quarter.

Aggregate disbursements in Q3FY26 stood at ₹29,962 crore, with AUM of ₹2,27,770 crore, as of December 2025, against 30 per cent as of December 2024.

Home loan business disbursed ₹2,007 crore in

Flamingo Aerospace to buy six 68-seater aircraft from UAC

Our Bureau

Hyderabad



Flamingo Aerospace and United Aircraft Corporation (UAC) signed a purchase agreement for six 68-seater IL-114-300 regional aircraft at the ongoing India Wings 2026 here.

The partnership will eventually lead to the manufacture of the aircraft in India, thereby boosting the local supply chain and employment across the aviation sector.

As part of the agreement, UAC has offered Flamingo Aerospace a cooperation framework, including a detailed roadmap for developing aviation capabilities in India. The pact enables Flamingo Aerospace to undertake, in a phased manner, industrial activities such as aircraft assembly, customisation, maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) services; and preparation for manufacturing and autonomous operations.

EXPANSION PLAN

"While the signed frame-

work agreement covers the delivery of six aircraft starting in 2028, we plan to expand our cooperation with Flamingo Aerospace to include new mutually beneficial collaborations in the future," he added.

The IL-114-300 is designed for short- to medium-haul operations, according to a release.

Heritage Aviation to buy Airbus H130 helicopter

Our Bureau

Hyderabad

Heritage Aviation has signed a purchase agreement for one Airbus H130 helicopter at the Wings India 2026 to expand its heli-pilgrimage and regional connectivity operations under the UDAN scheme.

The helicopter industry in India is witnessing strong tailwinds due to the government's favourable policies and the strong demand environment. The new H130 will be used to expand our regional connectivity footprint in other areas, including north-east India, which largely remains virgin territory for private helicopter operations," Rohit Mathur, Founder and CEO, Heritage Aviation, said in a release on Friday. The helicopter is scheduled for delivery in September this year.

The chopper can accommodate a pilot and up to seven passengers, and is suited for operations in environmentally sensitive regions, the release added.

At ₹1,288 cr, Cholamandalam Investment net rises 19% in Q3

Our Bureau

Chennai

Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Ltd (CIFCL) has reported net profit of ₹1,288 crore in the quarter ended December 2025, up 19 per cent from ₹1,087 crore in the same quarter a year ago. Profitability was aided by growth in disbursements across categories.

The new Labour Code resulted in an increase in employee benefit expense of around ₹49 crore during the

quarter and the nine months ended December 2025, the company said.

For the nine-month period ended December 2025, the non-banking financial company reported a net profit growth of 20 per cent at ₹3,579 crore.

DROP IN ASSET QUALITY
Asset quality, however, deteriorated on a q-o-q basis. Gross NPA, as per RBI norms, was at 4.63 per cent as of December 2025, as against 4.57 per cent in September 2025. NNPA was at 3.13 per cent as of Decem-

ber 2025, against 3.07 per cent in the previous quarter.

Aggregate disbursements in Q3FY26 stood at ₹29,962 crore, with AUM of ₹2,27,770 crore as of December 2025, against 30 per cent as of December 2024.

Home loan business disbursed ₹2,007 crore in

crore as of December 31, 2025, as against ₹1,89,141 crore as of December 31, 2024, up by 20 per cent y-o-y.

GOLD LOANS SHINE

The growth was

QUICKLY.
GG Tronics wins ₹433 cr
Rlys order for Kavach



Chennai: GG Tronics India Pvt Ltd (GGT), a subsidiary of CG Power and Industrial Solutions Ltd, has secured a ₹433 crore order from Chittaranjan Locomotive Works for supply and deployment of Kavach, India's indigenous train collision avoidance system. The order has an execution timeline of one year. OUR BUREAU

Zydus Hospitals acquires VINS Hospital in Vadodara

Ahmedabad: Zydus Multispecialty and Cancer Hospital in Vadodara, has acquired the 50-bed Vadodara Institute of Neurological Sciences (VINS) Hospital. With the acquisition, Zydus Hospitals gains a dedicated centre in neurology and neurosurgery, said a release. Pankaj Patel, Chairman, Zydus Hospitals, said, "With the integration of VINS Hospital, we are strengthening our neuro-specialty capabilities. OUR BUREAU

Nalco Q3 profit rises 2% to ₹1,595 cr

New Delhi: State-owned National Aluminium Company Ltd (Nalco) on Friday reported a 1.8 per cent rise in consolidated profit at ₹1,595.15 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2025, on higher revenues. The company had posted a profit of ₹1,566.32 crore in the year-ago period. Consolidated revenue from operations in the December quarter increased to ₹4,730.95 crore, up from ₹4,662.22 crore in the year-ago period. PTI

MHA blocks Wingo app's Telegram channels, YouTube videos for cyberfraud

MULE SERVICE. App was being used for fraud over Android phones without users' knowledge, say officials

Our Bureau
New Delhi



MHA CAUTIONS. Ministry has urged the public to report suspicious applications or activities through official cybercrime reporting platforms

CONTROL SERVERS

The MHA additionally blocked four more Telegram channels having nearly 1.53 lakh subscribers and over 53 related YouTube videos that were found to be promoting the Wingo Android app, Ministry officials stated.

MHA has "geo-blocked"

Wingo's command and control servers to disrupt its operations here and protect users.

The app, as per the officials, was being used to secretly text fraudulent SMS messages from users' Android phones without their knowledge, misusing tele-

com resources to indulge in cyber fraud.

The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), which functions under the MHA, has also issued a public warning against the use of 'Wingo' app. It cautioned that "Wingo App, which provides earnings based on

Wingo App, which provides earnings based on SMS Task is a 'Telecom Mule as a Service' App, and that citizens are advised to refrain from using the same'

SMS Task, is a 'Telecom Mule as a Service' App, and that citizens are advised to refrain from using the same."

CITIZENS' SAFETY

The Ministry reiterated its commitment to safeguarding citizens from cybercrime and urged the public to report suspicious applications

or activities through official cybercrime reporting platforms. As of last year, the I4C blocked more than 2,800 websites and URLs used for committing cybercrime while over 100 websites indulging in "organised illegal investment" as well as task-based part-time job frauds were barred towards late 2023.

Also, 595 mobile applications promoting suspicious activities, including illegal lending, have been blocked.

The I4C seeks cooperation of telecom service providers, Internet intermediaries, and global technology platforms to block illegal digital content and infrastructure, including phishing domains, fraudulent apps, and command-and-control servers used by cybercriminals.

The State government has assured the delegation its full assistance in providing policy support, infrastructure facilities and coordination to scale up clean energy initiatives.

The development assumes importance as the Yamanashi University has developed an advanced P2G (Power-to-Gas) hydrogen production system at Mt Yoneshiro, which can help scale up India's green hydrogen production efforts.



holders in the green hydrogen value chain. UP also looks forward to continuing collaboration with the Prefecture on global platforms including the Global Green Hydrogen Summit.

PARTNER WITH UP: CM

"Uttar Pradesh invites Japanese partners to view the State not merely as an investment destination, but as a long-term strategic partner in India's green growth journey," UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Wednesday.

The delegation expressed keen interest in the UP Green Hydrogen Policy, which includes avenues to deepen collaboration for pilot projects and enabling infrastructure.

According to a recent article by the Mizuho India Japan Study Centre (MJSC) at IIM Bangalore, Japanese companies lead globally in hydrogen production, delivery, and utilisation technologies.

Japan has committed \$68 billion in investments in India by 2035, with significant portions allocated to clean energy and hydrogen projects.

The electrolyser market opportunity in India is projected to grow from \$4 billion in 2020 to \$78 billion by 2050, representing the highest growth rate among Asian economies, the commentary noted.

Japanese team in UP to explore opportunities in green hydrogen

Our Bureau
New Delhi

A delegation from Japan's Yamanashi Prefecture is visiting Uttar Pradesh to explore opportunities in advanced green hydrogen technologies, along with transfer and technical support.

The delegation includes officials from the Yamanashi Prefectural government, and various companies including Kanadevia Corporation, a clean energy tech major specialising in green hydrogen production.

The State government has assured the delegation its full assistance in providing policy support, infrastructure facilities and coordination to scale up clean energy initiatives.

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NODAL AGENCY

To accelerate adoption of clean energy, the State notified the Uttar Pradesh Green Hydrogen Policy-2024 with the UP New and Renewable Energy Development Agency (UPNEDA) designated as the nodal agency.

UPNEDA will provide single-window coordination, time-bound approvals, and seamless facilitation among industry, academia, and government stakeholders for investors and technology partners from Japan and across the world.

Yamanashi is scheduled to host the International Hydrogen Summit in March 2026, which is expected to bring together global stakeholders.

Confident Group founder CJ Roy dies by suicide reportedly after I-T probe

Our Bureau
Bengaluru



Confident Group founder CJ Roy

Real estate company Confident Group founder CJ Roy, 57, died by suicide at his office on Friday, reportedly following an income tax interrogation. Authorities are investigating the circumstances surrounding his death and the events preceding it.

He was rushed to Narayana Hospital in HSR Layout, where he was declared "brought dead." He is survived by his wife and two children.

The company has been a known name in media spon-

sorships, including several seasons of the Malayalam TV reality show Bigg Boss Malayalam. The Confident Group also sponsored the Sri Lankan cricket team during the 2016 ICC World

Twenty20 and the West Indies team in 2013-14. Roy produced and co-produced over seven feature films in Malayalam and Kannada.

CASES INVOLVED

Roy was in possession of a licensed gun. He was also involved in tax litigation with the Income Tax Department in the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal and Karnataka High Court over assessment and tax issues, including disputes over tax assessments and appellate proceedings.

The company has projects across residential and commercial segments in Kerala and Bengaluru (11 projects), with 13 residential upcoming projects in Bengaluru.

Madhu S Nair to retire as CMD of CSL today

V Sajeet Kumar
Kochi

Madhu S Nair, Chairman and Managing Director of Cochin Shipyard Ltd (CSL), will complete his decade-long tenure on January 31, coinciding with his superannuation after more than 37 years of service with the company.

Nair assumed charge as Chairman and Managing Director on January 1, 2016. He had joined CSL as a management trainee in June 1988. During his tenure, CSL underwent significant organisational and operational transformation, emerging as a globally competitive ship building and ship repair

company. A key early milestone was the successful Initial Public Offer in August 2017, through which CSL raised ₹1,443 crore.

Under his leadership, CSL expanded into the inland waterways vessel segment with a ₹180-crore shipyard in Kolkata through a wholly-owned subsidiary, Hooghly Cochin Shipyard Ltd.

Nair strengthened the national ship repair ecosystem by establishing Ship Repair Units at Mumbai, Kolkata and Sri Vijayapuram (Port Blair), in addition to Kochi.

A defining milestone of his tenure was the construction of India's first indigenously built aircraft carrier, INS Vikrant.

Rosatom showcases nuclear power tech at IEW; welcomes partnerships

Rishi Ranjan Kala
New Delhi

At the India Energy Week, Rosatom showcased its integrated proposal for large nuclear power units and small modular reactors, including Russian technology for a floating power unit.

Rosatom also highlighted the possibility of scientific and technical cooperation based on the multi-loop research reactor (MBIR), which after commissioning scheduled for 2028, will become the most powerful research reactor globally.

"India is a strategic partner, cooperation with which has been building for many years and is aimed at developing nuclear and related industries. Joint nuclear projects form a solid technological and human foundation, designed for

decades to come," said Egor Kvyatkovsky, CEO of Rosatom International Network.

MULTIPLE AREAS

The experience of implementing Rosatom's flagship project, Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant in Tamil Nadu, shows that the company does not just work on individual tasks for the facility, but works with the project throughout its life cycle, contributing to the industry

transformation of India, he added. Small nuclear power plants (SNPP) are one of the promising areas for Rosatom. These are ideal for remote regions with undeveloped power grid infrastructure.

On the sidelines of the IEW, the Engineering and Technology Center GET JSC (part of the Rosatom circuit), engaged in simulator construction and mathematical modelling for Russian and foreign nuclear power

plants) and Royal India Corporation (India) signed a memorandum of understanding, providing for the development of a joint company in the field of education and training, human resources, research activities and the introduction of innovative technologies and best practices.

Rosatom operates the world's only floating co-generation nuclear power plant (FNPP) based on a floating power unit, the Akademik Lomonosov, with two KLT-40 reactors. The plant is hosted by the city of Pevek in the Chukotka Autonomous District (CAD), in Russia's Far East.

Rosatom is a multi-industry holding company with assets in power engineering, machine building and construction, accounting for about 20 per cent of Russia's power generation.

STANDALONE UNIT. SMR Akademik Lomonosov is a floating power unit based in Pevek, Chukotka (Russia's Far East), to provide electricity in remote areas ROSATOM

ignoring that duty, he said.

The AIADMK General Secretary and Leader of Opposition Edappadi K Palaniswami said this had already been clarified by the Union Home Minister Amit Shah. "The NDA is a nationwide alliance, but in Tamil Nadu it is AIADMK with the alliance also yet to be tied up; the same is with the BJP, which is a junior partner to DMK, with the alliance also yet to be tied up," he said.

When queried about who leads the NDA alliance in TN, Palaniswami said this had already been clarified by the Union Home Minister Amit Shah. "The NDA is a nationwide alliance, but in Tamil Nadu it is AIADMK with the alliance also yet to be tied up; the same is with the BJP, which is a junior partner to DMK, with the alliance also yet to be tied up," he said.

DMK CONTRIBUTION

TN Industries minister TRB Rajaa said that the State is helping its textile and sea-

food sectors in all the ways it can due to insulate the sectors from disruptions caused by the US tariffs. The citizens have high expectations from the upcoming Union Budget in the backdrop of unemployment issues and the sliding value of the rupee.

N Ram, Director, The Hindu Publishing Group, highlighted the domination of the regional parties when it comes to Tamil Nadu politics. The national parties stand no chance in the TN where the Dravidian parties are everything. "The Congress is a very junior partner to DMK, with the alliance also yet to be tied up; the same is with the BJP, which is a junior partner to the AIADMK in the alliance," he said.

He anticipates the 2026

State polls to bring out a clear mandate without going the coalition government route.

Chief Minister MK Stalin

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AIADMK'S COUNTER

AIADMK, as a partner in the alliance, has a responsibility to take TN's issues such as NEET to the Centre, but it is

Edappadi K. Palaniswami

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DMK CONTRIBUTION

TN Industries minister TRB Rajaa said that the State is helping its textile and sea-

Northern Arc profit jumps 41% to ₹101.7 crore

Our Bureau
Bengaluru

Northern Arc Capital reported a rise in consolidated net profit for the quarter ended December 2025, with earnings up 41 per cent y-o-y to ₹101.70 crore (₹72.18 crore), driven by robust lending growth, higher interest income and improved placement volumes. Its lending assets under management (AUM) rose 23 per cent year-on-year and 7 per cent quarter-on-quarter to ₹15,121 crore as of December 31, 2025. The share of direct-to-consumer lending in the overall book increased to 56 per cent, reflecting a more diversified and granular portfolio.

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Net interest income increased 39 per cent y-o-y and 15 per cent q-o-q to ₹371 crore.

Fee and other income were up 49 per cent y-o-y and 50 per cent sequentially to ₹32 crore.

Adani Power's Godda plant capacity utilisation up at 68% in third quarter

Avinash Nair
Ahmedabad

Adani Power Ltd's Godda thermal power plant, supplying electricity to Bangladesh under a long-term Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) and meets around 10 per cent of the country's total power requirement. Jha said supply, billing and collections remain on track. "The supply and billing is regular. Payment also we are getting on a regular basis. There is a two month due, which is a regular due," he added.

BALANCE RECEIVABLES

In the context of the turmoil in Bangladesh, Jha said, "We continued our supply. Now this plant is earning \$1 billion forex for the country ... We are mindful of the circumstances and environment over there (in Bangladesh). But our operations and supply are being continued, and we think that this is a temporary period."

Revenue from the Godda power plant in Jharkhand rose to ₹2,210 crore in the third quarter, compared with ₹2,132 crore in the year-ago period. For the first nine months of the current financial year, revenue stood at ₹6,700 crore, up from ₹6,604 crore last year, Dilip Jha, Chief Financial Officer

tract 50 per cent duty.

Apple growers and traders in Kashmir argue that the reduced duty and lower landing prices would make it difficult for domestic produce to compete.

DOMESTIC PRODUCE

"Different varieties of Kashmiri apples sell between ₹125 and ₹135 per kg, and sometimes even higher when market conditions are favourable," said Mohammad Ashraf Wani, an apple trader and President of the Mega Apple Mandi in Shopian. "EU apples are expected to land in Indian markets at around ₹96 per kg. Such cheaper imports will inevitably push down prices of local produce," he

QUICKLY.

Govt places import curbs on 3 pharma ingredients



New Delhi: The government has imposed a minimum import price on three components used in production of penicillin-class antibiotics — penicillin g-potassium, 6-APA and amoxicilline trihydrate, according to a notification. These ingredients had been kept under the restricted category for one year. PTI

Modi in talks to boost Venezuela ties

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke with Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodriguez on Friday. This was the first time the two leaders spoke since the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro by the US. "Spoke with Acting President of Venezuela, Ms. Delcy Rodriguez," Modi said in a post on X. "We agreed to further deepen bilateral partnership, with a shared vision of taking India-Venezuela relations to new heights," he added. PTI

Digital sovereignty drives nations away from US tech platforms

STRATEGIC SHIFT. France to replace Zoom, Microsoft Teams with its own Visio across government departments

Sanjana B

Bengaluru
Governments across major economies are accelerating a shift away from US technology firms, reframing video conferencing and email systems, among others, as critical national infrastructure amid rising security, data sovereignty and geopolitical risks.

On Tuesday, France said it will replace American platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams with its domestic video-conferencing tool Visio across all government departments by 2027, citing security concerns and a broader strategy to reduce reliance on foreign software vendors.

India, meanwhile, is upgrading its legacy government email system to a secure, cloud-based and scalable platform through Zoho to enforce stringent security standards, including end-to-end encryption.

Other countries taking similar steps include the Netherlands, which has ap-



SECURITY FIRST. This shift has prompted governments worldwide to re-evaluate issues of data privacy

proved motions urging the government to reduce reliance on US software firms, including by developing cloud services under Dutch control, and Germany, which is promoting European-built solutions that ensure security, performance and full data sovereignty under European standards.

MOVING AWAY
Germany's Schleswig-Holstein state cut ties with Microsoft, with civil servants, judges and police moving away from tools such as

Teams, Word, Excel and Outlook, citing the need for digital sovereignty and reduced reliance on US tech giants.

"Secure communication has crossed the threshold from productivity tool to critical national infrastructure. Governments now design digital systems assuming long-term surveillance, supply-chain infiltration, and nation-state adversaries as baseline threats. Post-pandemic, video conferencing carries cabinet decisions, defence

AI MODELS
Governments are increasingly factoring in where data resides, how it is processed

coordination, and diplomatic negotiations," said Sudipta Paul Choudhury, CMO, QNu Labs.

Geopolitics is the accelerant, making risks impossible to ignore.

At its core, governments demand certainty over where data resides, who controls encryption keys, and which legal systems govern access.

Alongside video conferencing platforms, among others, are increasingly embedding AI-driven capabilities such as visual, speech, and behavioural analytics. They are processing far more sensitive data than earlier generations of communication tools.

This shift has prompted governments worldwide to re-evaluate issues of data privacy, processing control, and AI governance, according to Akash Karmik, Global COO, 1Point1 Solutions.

EXPORT MARKET
As a sovereign technology export market emerges, nations with advanced indigenous platforms will supply similarly positioned countries seeking alternatives to US-China tech dominance.

This wave is already evident, with countries like Brazil, Indonesia, South Korea and the UAE developing sovereign communication infrastructure. This will only accelerate because data sovereignty is shifting from a policy aspiration to a technical procurement requirement.

6,000 sign up for bl's Cerebration Quiz

Our Bureau

Chennai

The 22nd edition of *The Hindu businessline* Cerebration Quiz has closed its registrations with over 6,000 individuals taking the online test. The Chennai regional final will be held on January 31 (Saturday).

The flagship corporate quiz championship, organised by *The Hindu businessline*, is open to corporate executives, business professionals, and other business enthusiasts.

HYBRID FORMAT

This year, the competition will follow hybrid format beginning with virtual prelims, followed by regional finals across six cities, and culminating in a national finale featuring the regional winners.

The prize money for the winners is substantial, with the first prize being ₹75,000, the second ₹50,000, and the third ₹25,000.

The national finals, a live on-ground event, will take place at the BSE in Mumbai.

On February 21, winners of the regional finals from six cities will compete for the



coveted title. The other city regional finals are set to take place in Hyderabad, Kochi, Bengaluru, Delhi and Mumbai in the period from February 1 to February 21.

KEY SPONSORS

The Cerebration Corporate Quiz 2026 is presented by Title Partner JK Tyre, powered by IndianOil Corporation Ltd, in association with BSE and Central Bank of India, and with MOP Vaishnav College for Women Chennai, Institute of Public Enterprise Hyderabad, ST Teresa's College Ernakulam, Kristu Jayanti Deemed to be University, Bengaluru and Birla Institute of Management Technology, Greater Noida, Delhi, as the Regional Venue Partners. Gift partner for the event is Nexus Gifting Solutions.

Apple leads India market among global Big Tech companies

Vallari Sanzgiri

Mumbai

Apple India reigned in the India market amongst Big Tech giants in fiscal year 2025, reporting highest revenue and profit despite macroeconomic and tariff pressures, topping India's units of Microsoft, Google and Facebook, per Toffer data.

Microsoft and Google were runner-ups in revenue and profit growth respectively, while Facebook India showed muted performance in terms of absolute num-

bers. However, when considering on-year growth, Microsoft and Facebook showed better growth of 20-30 per cent. Microsoft's profit grew 38 per cent in India.

On the other end, Google's performance was sluggish with revenue actually declining 3.2 per cent.

When asked about the differentiated performance among the companies despite common macroeconomic headwinds, one analyst attributed Apple's performance to the rapid growth for devices in India.

People switched to higher-end devices in FY25 while the ad market — an important segment for Google — was under pressure. Its cloud segment also faces formidable competition from Microsoft's Azure and Amazon's AWS services.

MACRO PRESSURE

Greyhound Research pointed out that when macro pressure shows up, Apple is insulated in three ways: localisation as a margin stabiliser, demand composition and the ecosystem and services layer.

How they fared

Profit (₹ cr)	FY24	FY25	YoY change (%)
Apple India	2,745.71	3,195.99	16.3
Google India	1,424.90	1,436.90	0.8
Microsoft India	898.00	1,245.18	38.6
Facebook India	504.93	648.45	28.4
Revenue (₹ cr)	FY24	FY25	YoY change (%)
Apple India	66,727.73	79,060.51	18.4
Google India	5,518.1	5,340.10	-3.2
Microsoft India	22,561.91	28,754.77	27.4
Facebook India	3,034.82	3,792.91	24.9

"Tariffs matter less when more of the device value chain is already inside the country. Apple's India tra-

jectory is increasingly premium and upper mid. In a year where the mass market becomes cautious, the

premium segment does not collapse in the same way," said Sanchit Vir Gogia, Chief Analyst at Greyhound Research.

Services revenue is higher margin and more recurring, keeping the engine going even when hardware growth normalises. That is why Apple can maintain profit leadership even when the market keeps shouting about tariffs and macro uncertainty, he said.

On the other hand, Microsoft grew because it sits inside protected spend. "That is why you see both

revenue growth and profit leverage. Profit growth tells you this was not just selling more, it was selling deeper and operating more efficiently on top of committed consumption," said Gogia, adding that Microsoft is also treating India as an infrastructure and data residency market, not just a sales market.

GROSS AD VALUE

Regarding advertising, Meta's India entity can show a certain revenue number even while the gross ad value on the platform is dramatic-

ally larger, owing to a huge slice going to the parent company as royalties and fees. This makes reported revenue look small relative to the platform's economic footprint.

Greyhound Research said the FY25 slowdown serves as a warning that Google's India model is carrying rising structural costs and facing share pressure in high-growth ad formats if Google tightens execution, improves commercial clarity and builds deeper enterprise confidence, its India market can re-accelerate.

Apple records double-digit revenue growth in India

Vallari Sanzgiri

Mumbai

Apple announced a "quarter for the record books" and a strong double-digit revenue growth in India in the quarter ending December 27, 2025 led by significant surge in iPhone sales.

The company posted quarterly revenue of \$143.8 billion, up 16 per cent year-on-year and 40 per cent sequentially. iPhone grew 23 per cent annually to \$85 billion, driven by iPhone17 products. While Apple did not disclose its quarterly results for the India market, Tim Cook, Apple CEO said, "It was a terrific quarter in

India. We really like what we see there. It's the second largest smartphone market in the world and the fourth largest PC market. Despite a very nice growth history, we have modest share there. So, there's a huge opportunity for us there and we could not be more excited about it."

GLOBAL DEMAND
Cook also described the global demand for iPhone as "simply staggering".

The company set all-time revenue records in the Americas, Europe, Japan, the Asia Pacific regions and across the vast majority markets including India. The company said it will open another store in Mumbai soon.

India's digital challenge is diversity, not scale: JioHotstar CPO

Our Bureau

Bengaluru

India's digital challenge is not serving billions of users but embracing countless micro-markets, said Bharath Ram, Chief Product Officer (CPO) at JioHotstar, at the India Digital Summit 2026, highlighting that platforms built for India must be designed for diversity rather than averages.

Speaking at a fireside chat, Bharath said India cannot be treated as a single market, even at a massive scale. Instead, digital products must account for wide variations in language, devices, cultural context, attention spans and price sensitivity, a reality he

described as building for "many Indias". Using live sports as a reference point, Bharath outlined the extreme demands placed on Indian streaming platforms.

Events such as India-Pakistan cricket matches draw millions of concurrent users within minutes, many of whom switch languages, devices and payment methods in real time.

REAL OPPORTUNITY

"Winning the match stream is table stakes," Bharath said. "The real opportunity lies in winning everything around the match from discovery, cross-sell and experience."

Personalisation, he noted, functions as infrastructure



Bharath Ram, Chief Product Officer, JioHotstar

experience-driven use cases such as automated subtitling, metadata generation, ad relevance and personalised subscription offers.

At the same time, JioHotstar is experimenting with AI-generated content, particularly in Indian epic-led storytelling, where culturally familiar narratives amplify the impact of AI-driven visuals.

Bharath also highlighted evolving consumption patterns, including the rise of second-screen behaviour.

Viewers increasingly engage with parallel content memes, checking related comments and interactive features alongside primary viewing, signifying a shift from passive consumption to

layered engagement. Vertical video formats and conversational discovery are emerging as key frontiers for over-the-top (OTT) platforms, he added.

ATTENTION SPANS

As content libraries expand and attention spans shorten, users will increasingly prefer to interact with platforms for recommendations based on mood or context rather than navigate menus.

Bharath concluded, noting India's complexity as a strategic advantage, adding, "When you build for diversity, you create innovations that do not just work in India, but scale globally."

With inputs from intern Tejaswi S

After Budget exemption, experts push for improved visibility for patient assistance

PT Jyothi Datta

Mumbai

In the last Union Budget, patient assistance programmes (PAP) supporting 13 medicines from 10 multinational drugmakers were listed for exemption from basic customs duty, if the medicines were given free to patients.

A long-standing ask from drugmakers, it was expected to expand such programmes to more patients on the drugs, or for more drugs to be supported by such PAPs. Almost a year on, and a day away from Budget 2026, there is little visibility if that has happened on the ground.

The Budget had listed innovative medicines from MSD Pharmaceuticals, Pfizer, Novartis, AstraZeneca, Johnson and Johnson, Merck Specialities, Takeda, GlaxoSmithKline, Roche and Bristol-Myers Squibb. These medicines are used in treating cancers, multiple sclerosis, severe anaemia and spinal muscular atrophy, among others. While PAPs

are useful, they are complicated, says Dr Kumar Prabhash, Professor and Head, Solid Tumours (adult) Unit, Tata Memorial Hospital (Mumbai). "These PAPs cover patients paying for the medicines, but often leave out those covered by insurance, and that may not be the best way to approach access, he points out.

PAPs are sometimes designed to give a few doses free, alongside a few doses bought by the patient, say public health workers. The process is a good incremental step, but access to newer medicines and cutting-edge technology medicine requires the innovation to be done here, he said.

These medicines are "beyond the reach of our patients... it (PAP) does benefit our patient, but does it substantially increase the ac-

ted out," There is no publicly available information regarding the number of people benefiting from such programmes. In the absence of accountability and transparency, PAPs fail to serve their real purpose of providing access to medicines. It is important that the government, rather than abdicating its responsibility for facilitating medicine access to non-transparent and unaccountable PAPs, take concrete legal and policy measures to ensure the availability of medicines at affordable prices."

The pharmaceutical companies making the listed 13 medicines were contacted by *businessline* for an update on their respective PAPs since the Budget announcement.

Responding to *businessline*, Pfizer said it had been running assistance programmes in India for some of its drugs, "under which patients enrolled in the programmes received certain units of the drug(s) for free".

ENHANCING ACCESS
Delhi retained the top spot while Chennai widened its lead over Kolkata. In April to December 2025, the airports across India handled a total of 31.18 crore passengers as against 30.36 crore in the same period previous year, according to AAI data.

TOP SPOT
Delhi (DEL) retained the top spot in this fiscal but saw a decline in passengers in this period. Chennai re-

tained the 5th position while Kolkata 6th. While Chennai saw a 5 per cent increase in the first nine months of this fiscal, Kolkata saw a 4 per cent decline, says AAI data.

Ankit Hakhu, Director, Crisil Ratings, said the

growth in airport traffic in India is likely to end at a muted 0-1 per cent on year in fiscal 2026 due to weakened demand sentiment following a major aircraft mishap and elongated monsoons in the first half of the fiscal and airline disruptions that occurred in the second half.

In fiscal 2027, however, traffic growth is anticipated to rebound to 6-7 per cent as supply-side constraints recover in the first half, resulting in a passenger volume of 430-440 million for the year, said Hakhu.

CHELNAI WIDENS GAP
In April to December 2

Company	Prev	Close	Open	High	Low	Qty	52 WH	52 WL	PE	BSE CI	Company	Prev	Close	Open	High	Low	Qty	52 WH	52 WL	PE	BSE CI	Company	Prev	Close	Open	High	Low	Qty	52 WH	52 WL	PE	BSE CI
20 Microns [5]	171.75	175.28	175.31	176.50	169.50	73.67	284.10	158.00	11	176.20	CAPLIN POI [2]	1726.80	1733.90	1710.00	1789.70	1702.00	52.16	2396.95	151.00	39 177.75	Godrej prop [5]	1566.50	1576.80	1568.00	1550.10	1294.46	2522.5	1476.76	124	1576.95		
360 One WAM	1135.80	1134.30	1135.20	1157.90	1125.40	959.20	1273.80	795.00	-	-	Carbord [1]	804.25	805.25	804.00	819.90	781.00	136.42	1217.15	77.50	786.55	Gokaldas [5]	541.95	550.05	542.85	535.00	311.44	1060.00	531.60	20	550.60		
31 MicroTech	105.00	104.50	104.50	104.50	104.50	104.50	104.50	104.50	-	-	Carbrite Ind [1]	509.35	523.00	520.85	530.00	520.00	165.00	1605.35	50.00	-	Goldman Int [2]	315.00	311.35	314.05	316.25	308.00	230.50	563.45	252.00	311.30		
35 India [3]	3460.50	3439.00	3425.00	3429.00	3400.00	3470.00	3390.00	344.90	3783.54	352.53	7045.10	Cartrade Tch [2]	2074.70	2649.00	2491.70	2686.50	2490.10	647.83	3290.50	131.90	-	Golds.Tech [46]	46.47	44.96	47.55	44.96	43.75	41.02	80.50	40.10	44.96	
5PAISA	245.00	245.00	245.00	245.00	245.00	245.00	245.00	245.00	-	-	Cartrade Prod [2]	302.40	303.00	301.00	303.00	301.00	303.00	303.00	303.00	-	God Luck [2]	1040.00	1118.70	1027.40	1134.00	1020.20	232.70	135.20	180.80	23 114.25		
63 MoonSt [2]	614.40	648.50	613.90	620.00	503.95	568.11	1130.00	575.05	78	647.15	CASTROL [5]	158.00	184.30	184.60	185.20	183.00	188.89	185.20	184.00	-	Godrej Agro [2]	82.00	82.00	82.00	82.00	82.00	82.00	82.00	82.00	82.00		
A *	* * * * *	* * * * *	* * * * *	* * * * *	* * * * *	* * * * *	* * * * *	* * * * *	* * * * *	* * * * *	CASTROL PROD [2]	302.40	303.00	301.00	303.00	301.00	303.00	303.00	303.00	-	Godrej Ind [2]	115.59	153.53	153.53	153.53	153.53	153.53	153.53	153.53	153.53		
Audhar Hsgp	474.15	491.30	474.15	492.95	476.00	826.63	547.40	346.05	-	-	CDSI PROD [2]	302.40	303.00	301.00	303.00	301.00	303.00	303.00	303.00	-	Godrej Ind [2]	115.59	153.53	153.53	153.53	153.53	153.53	153.53	153.53	153.53		
Audri Drugs	374.85	310.85	374.90	385.90	371.00	65.63	59.74	53.50	18	380.45	CE Info Sys [2]	1306.50	1320.90	1294.60	1332.00	1280.10	49.39	2166.70	121.70	-	Godrej Ind [2]	102.02	104.10	102.50	104.50	102.05	104.15	84.75	14 104.35			
Aarti Drgs	[5]	345.94	371.19	350.00	342.00	349.00	494.00	493.00	320.50	50 371.65	Geigall Ind [2]	273.00	270.15	270.10	275.50	265.35	830.54	323.95	222.61	-	Godrej Ind [2]	102.02	104.10	102.50	104.50	102.05	104.15	84.75	14 104.35			
Aarti Pharm	749.65	753.20	743.00	759.55	740.05	127.59	971.10	568.10	-	-	Geigall Ind [2]	273.00	270.15	270.10	275.50	265.35	830.54	323.95	222.61	-	Godrej Ind [2]	102.02	104.10	102.50	104.50	102.05	104.15	84.75	14 104.35			
Aarvi Encon	132.30	128.48	126.90	131.40	124.85	142.00	142.00	142.00	-	-	Godrej Ind [2]	123.00	122.20	131.70	130.20	130.20	130.32	130.20	130.20	-	Godrej Ind [2]	102.02	104.10	102.50	104.50	102.05	104.15	84.75	14 104.35			
Ab Capital	136.50	146.50	145.75	147.00	145.00	145.00	145.00	145.00	-	-	Godrej Ind [2]	123.00	122.20	131.70	130.20	130.20	130.32	130.20	130.20	-	Godrej Ind [2]	102.02	104.10	102.50	104.50	102.05	104.15	84.75	14 104.35			
Ab Capital F	344.30	341.00	340.00	343.00	340.00	343.00	343.00	343.00	-	-	Godrej Ind [2]	123.00	122.20	131.70	130.20	130.20	130.32	130.20	130.20	-	Godrej Ind [2]	102.02	104.10	102.50	104.50	102.05	104.15	84.75	14 104.35			
Ab Capital Ind	18.53	19.44	18.47	19.45	18.47	447.13	474.30	224.98	-	-	Godrej Ind [2]	123.00	122.20	131.70	130.20	130.20	130.32	130.20	130.20	-	Godrej Ind [2]	102.02	104.10	102.50	104.50	102.05	104.15	84.75	14 104.35			
Ab Capital Ind	18.53	19.44	18.47	19.45	18.47	447.13	474.30	224.98	-	-	Godrej Ind [2]	123.00	122.20	131.70	130.20	130.20	130.32	130.20	130.20	-	Godrej Ind [2]	102.02	104.10	102.50	104.50	102.05	104.15	84.75	14 104.35			
Ab Capital Ind	18.53	19.44	18.47	19.45	18.47	447.13	474.30	224.98	-	-	Godrej Ind [2]	123.00	122.20	131.70	130.20	130.20	130.32	130.20	130.20	-	Godrej Ind [2]	102.02	104.10	102.50	104.50	102.05	104.15	84.75	14 104.35			
Ab Capital Ind	18.53	19.44	18.47	19.45	18.47	447.13	474.30	224.98	-	-	Godrej Ind [2]	123.00	122.20	131.70	130.20	130.20	130.32	130.20	130.20	-	Godrej Ind [2]	102.02	104.10	102.50	104.50	102.05	104.15	84.75	14 104.35			
Ab Capital Ind	18.53	19.44	18.47	19.45	18.47	447.13	474.30	224.98	-	-	Godrej Ind [2]	123.00	122.20	131.70	130.20	130.20	130.32	130.20	130.20	-	Godrej Ind [2]	102.02	104.10	102.50	104.50	102.05	104.15	84.75	14 104.35			
Ab Capital Ind	18.53	19.44	18.47	19.45	18.47	447.13	474.30	224.98	-	-	Godrej Ind [2]	123.00	122.20	131.70	130.20	130.20	130.32	130.20	130.20	-	Godrej Ind [2]	102.02	104.10	102.50	104.50	102.05	104.15	84.75	14 104.35			
Ab Capital Ind	18.53	19.44	18.47	19.45	18.47	447.13	474.30	224.98	-	-	Godrej Ind [2]	123.00	122.20	131.70	130.20	130.20	130.32	130.20	130.20	-	Godrej Ind [2]	102.02	104.10	102.50	104.50	102.05	104.15	84.75	14 104.35			
Ab Capital Ind	18.53	19.44	18.47	19.45	18.47	447.13	474.30	224.98	-	-	God																					

