

Wednesday, January 17, 2024

# mint

*Think Ahead. Think Growth.***mint primer**

## Stranded: Why our airports fail to conquer fog

BY LESLIE D'MONTE

Once again, dense fog has grounded flights in northern India, leaving thousands stranded, frustrated and angry. *Mint* explains why poor visibility hobbles most flights from taking off or landing, even at airports that have anti-fog CAT IIIB Instrument Landing System (ILS).

**1 What's the latest trigger?**

On 14 January, visibility dipped to near zero, leading to more than 300 flights being delayed and over 80 being cancelled as a dense fog engulfed New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport for nearly 11 hours. The disruption, coupled with lack of proper communication from airline staff and food falling short, incensed thousands of stranded passengers, and even resulted in an IndiGo pilot being assaulted by a passenger when announcing the delay on board. With such dense fogs likely to persist, the delays will have a cascading effect on airline networks in other parts of the country, too.

**2 But we have hi-tech airports, don't we?**

Most airports use the instrument landing system (ILS) radio navigation. Costing a little over ₹10 crore, it has two radio signals—a Localizer that offers left or right guidance, and a Glide Slope for up or down signals. Airports typically apply the Category II (CAT-II) procedure for flights and pilots when visibility is 275-550 metres, and CAT-III below 275 metres, down to 50 metres. Only CAT-III B certified pilots can land when the visibility is about 50 metres. CAT-III C can land on auto-pilot even in zero visibility and is currently used at airports like New York's JFK International Airport and London's Heathrow airport.

**3 Why does fog create such disruption?**

Delhi airport has four runways but only two are compliant with ILS CAT-III B standards. Of the two compliant runways, one has been non-operational for weeks and the other was reportedly downgraded to CAT-I due to nearby building work but was made operational again on 16 January. Plus, flights cannot depart unless visibility is at least 125 metres, so planes pile up on bays.

**4 What are the other hurdles?**

Claiming airports were shut as flights can't operate in zero-visibility, the government has asked the Delhi Airport authorities to "immediately expedite the operationalization of the CAT III-enabled 4th runway (in addition to the existing CAT III-enabled runway)". This, however, will be subject to clearance from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). Yet, the fact is that airlines will have to train more pilots to be CAT-III B compliant, and the cost is estimated to be around ₹7 lakh per pilot.

**5 What's the way forward?**

Some airlines are experimenting with the global position system (GPS) as alternatives to ILS. Airbus has integrated these new technologies with an ILS look-alike interface, which can help pilots to perform "straight-in" approaches using satellite positioning, even in low-visibility conditions. But GPS signals can be affected by atmospheric conditions, interference or jamming. The Microwave Landing System, which uses microwave frequencies, is very precise but has higher costs.

**QUICK EDIT**

## The IMF's rate view

Given how excitable financial markets can get at any hint of a policy rate cut, it may seem cheaper credit is all there is to material progress. Monetary policy is a lot more complex than that, though, which is why economists constantly need to explain why over-cheap, free or negatively priced loans are not sustainable, even if they're extended in crisis times. Gita Gopinath spoke in similar spirit at the World Economic Forum in Davos. "Markets are expecting central banks to cut rates pretty aggressively... I think it's a bit premature to make that conclusion," said the International Monetary Fund's first deputy managing director. "We should expect rates to come down some time this year, but based on the data we see right now, we expect this to be more likely in the second half." The data restraining what Western and other markets are looking for relates to realities like inflation, which is yet to be quelled, and labour markets that remain tight and could cause upward wage-cost pressure. What adds complexity is a weakened trade-off in the West between joblessness and price instability; so, it's hard to identify what level of unemployment is consistent with an inflation target.

**BUDGET EXPECTATIONS**

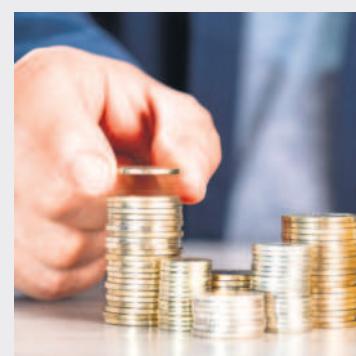
It is an interim budget. So, no huge expectations. The real idea is continuation of policies set in the past and focus towards capital expenditure and infrastructure. Also, continuing to work on reforms that aid manufacturing, like PLI (production-linked incentive). I would love to see more reforms on labour and employment. And hopefully, there are no adverse changes in taxation. For the mutual fund industry, even if debt fund taxation benefits are not restored, fund of funds, international funds, gold funds, etc. were the unintended casualty of tax changes. At least that should be restored.

**RADHIKA GUPTA**  
MD & CEO, EDELWEISS  
MUTUAL FUND

**MINT NEWSLETTERS****TICKER**

BY VIJAY L. BHAMBWANI

A newsletter that delves into the markets, providing insightful and forward-looking analysis from one of India's leading capital market gurus. 'Ticker' is recommended reading for a weekly guide to investing, whether you are an active investor or a passive one.

**EASYNOMICS**

BY VIVEK KAUL

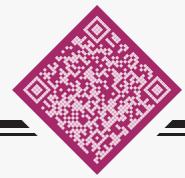
Understand how the economy impacts your everyday life with 'Easynomics'. This weekly newsletter sits at the intersection of macroeconomic trends and popular culture, with Vivek Kaul, the author of *Bad Money*, providing his own sharp social commentary.

**COMPANY OUTSIDER**

BY SUNDEEP KHANNA

Track the business of companies with Sundeep Khanna, who brings with him over three decades of reporting on India Inc. With crisp insights on the goings-on in the corporate world, 'Company Outsider' is essential reading for CEOs and all those who aspire to the C-suite.





# Are India's inflationary woes finally waning?

BY PRAGYA SRIVASTAVA

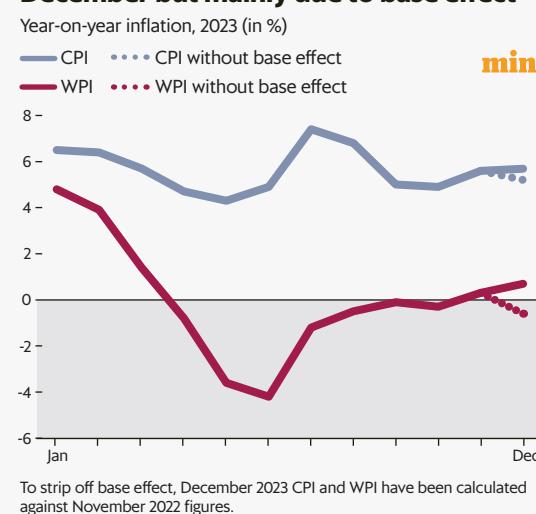
Inflation in India has seen many twists and turns in the past four years, but the signs of relief are strengthening. Both retail and wholesale inflation inched up in December 2023—to 5.69% and 0.73%, respectively—but the uptick was mainly on account of base effect. Strip that off, and retail inflation would have slid to 5.2% and wholesale prices would have recorded a 0.6% deflation, back-of-the-envelope calculations show. (They were 5.55% and 0.26%, respectively, in November.)

On a month-on-month (m-o-m) basis, the consumer price index (CPI) declined 0.3%, with even food items seeing a 0.9% decline. The wholesale price index also fell 0.9%, driven by a 2.3% fall in prices of food articles.

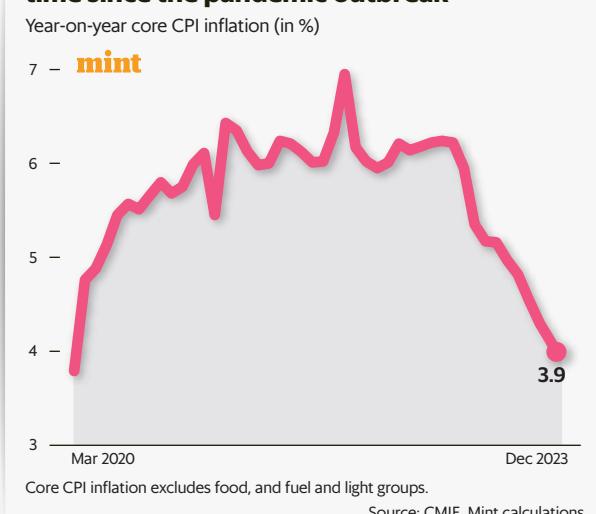
For much of 2023, food prices proved sticky, but the m-o-m decline in December offers hope, despite the 9.5% year-on-year increase. This, along with a continued dip in core inflation, which is now below the 4% mark for the first time since the outbreak of covid-19, could help calm some worries. (Core inflation excludes prices of volatile items such as food and fuel.)

"With the latest inflation print, particularly considering core inflation, we have more evidence that resilient economic growth amid reasonably tight monetary conditions has not added to inflation risks," said Barclays in a report last week. Moreover, going forward, a favourable base effect and fresh arrival of crops in the market could absorb price pressures, keeping inflation in check.

## Both retail and wholesale inflation rose in December but mainly due to base effect



## Core inflation falls below 4% for the first time since the pandemic outbreak



## What Changed?

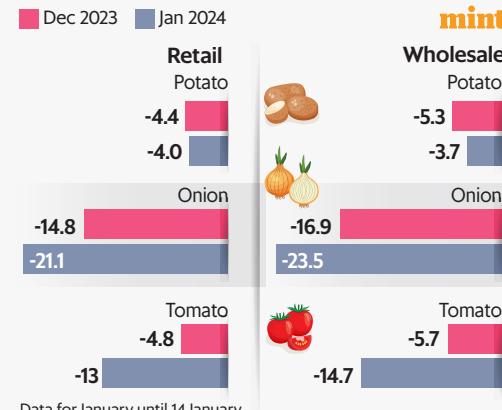
**COMPARED** with 12 months ago, prices are still significantly higher: cereal and products by 9.9%, fruits 11.1%, vegetables 27.6%, pulses and products 20.7%, spices 19.7%. However, compared with November 2023, the increase in cereals and related products was at its weakest in three months, and for pulses, it was at a nine-month low. Fruits and vegetables declined 1.6% and 5.3%, respectively. Even spices, which have been running hot, recorded their first decline since July 2021.

Despite the signs of easing, economists are still wary of vulnerabilities emerging from a likely decline in kharif crop production and a lag in rabi sowing due to the El Niño. Timely supply-side interventions by the government would be pivotal to ensure that such inflationary pressures are effectively contained, said CareEdge in a report last week.

Nevertheless, expectations of interest rate cuts by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have started gathering steam, even though the views on their timing are divided. Barclays expects three interest rate cuts in 2024, starting from June, while Emkay Global Financial Services does not see the central bank preceding the US Fed in any policy reversal. Nomura and Icra expect the rate easing cycle to begin in August.

## Continued correction in vegetable prices offers more hope

Month-on-month change in prices (in %)



## Surprise Softening

**THE DAILY** data released by the department of consumer affairs shows that food prices have continued to soften in January so far, beyond the seasonal correction in vegetable prices. (This will reflect in the data due next month.) Prices of onion, tomato, and potato were 21.1%, 13% and 4% lower in January so far compared with December.

Out of the 22 food items for which the department releases data, only three—rice, tea (loose), and salt—recorded a moderate sequential increase. "Tomato, onion, and potato prices generally contract in January, so it is not surprising... Interestingly, we are also witnessing an ebbing of price pressures in pulses, cereals, sugar, milk, and edible oils, suggesting that the January inflation reading is likely to register a broad-based decline in food inflation," said Nomura in a report last week. While food prices currently look supportive of the CPI's trajectory towards 4% by mid-2024, their volatile nature could keep scepticism alive.

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## DATA REWIND

Data Rewind is an occasional Plain Facts feature that brings you interesting statistics and charts from the yesteryear.

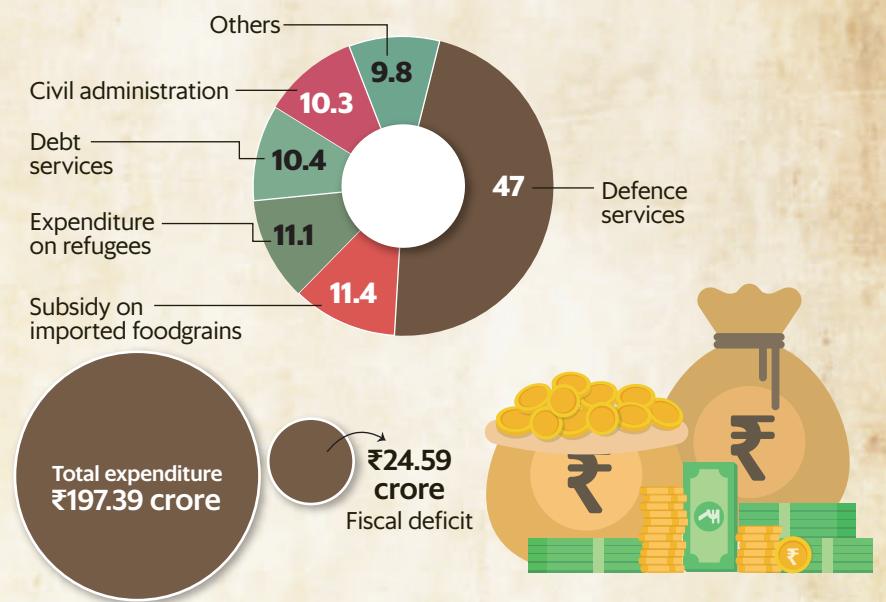
The economic burden of the massive humanitarian crisis created by the partition was evident in the first budget of independent India presented by R.K. Shanmukham Chetty in November 1947. The defence forces played a pivotal role in the rehabilitation of refugees. The country was also in the middle of a military conflict with Pakistan. As a result, a staggering 47% of the total expenditure was earmarked for defence. The fiscal deficit was as much as 21% of the expenditure.

mint

Source: Budget documents

Compiled by Shuja Asrar

## Share (%) of various expenditure heads in 1947-48 budget



## PEANUTS by Charles M. Schulz



Wednesday, January 17, 2024

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Inside the world of  
human-animal conflict

►P12

Govt slaps molasses export  
duty on cane shortage

►P2

SENSEX 73,128.75 ↓ 199.19

NIFTY 22,032.3 ↓ 65.15

DOLLAR ₹83.08 ↓ ₹0.19

EURO ₹90.44 ↑ ₹0.29

OIL \$79.76 ↑ \$1.70

POUND ₹105.01 ↑ ₹0.47

## HDFC on retail trip; net profit up 33.6%

Next fiscal, it will go 'granular' in search of higher margins

Shayan Ghosh  
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**F**or India's biggest private sector bank, the road to the future is paved with small loans and deposits.

For the coming fiscal year, HDFC Bank Ltd is building a plan to further raise the share of retail loans in its loanbook, and tap individuals to park more deposits. At present, 54% of its loans are to retail borrowers, including mortgage and non-mortgage categories, while wholesale loans account for the remaining 46%.

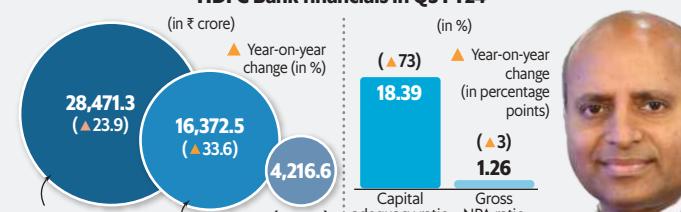
"We will need granular deposit funding, and to the extent that we get good funding, there is good credit demand for us to take. We will be able to pick and choose what we want," the bank's chief financial officer (CFO) Srinivasan Vaidyanathan said in a post-earnings call.

On Tuesday, HDFC Bank reported a 33.6% year-on-year (y-o-y) rise in standalone net profit to ₹16,372.5 crore in the December quarter as net interest income showed a healthy increase. This figure handsomely beat estimates by 19 analysts polled by Bloomberg, who expected it to post a net profit of ₹15,762 crore in the quarter. The

### RETAIL ROLL

Margins in retail loans are typically higher than for corporate loans; so, a further tilt towards retail loans may help lift margins for HDFC Bank.

#### HDFC Bank financials in Q3 FY24



The non-retail book is price sensitive and to the extent that we do not participate at that price, we focus on the retail granular book.

Srinivasan Vaidyanathan, CFO, HDFC Bank

#### CHEQUE POINT

NET profit at ₹16,372 crore beat estimates of ₹15,762 crore

bank's net interest income—the difference between interest earned and interest expended—grew 23.9% y-o-y to ₹28,471.3 crore.

Vaidyanathan said that while the current rate of growth is robust, the lender could look at readjusting the mix between retail and corporate loans to target more profitable seg-

54% of HDFC Bank's loans are retail loans; wholesale pie is 46%

PROVISIONS rose 50.2% y-o-y to cover investments in AIFs

SARVESH KUMAR SHARMA/MINT

ments that could in turn lead to better margins.

In December, HDFC Bank's core net interest margin (NIM) stood at 3.4%, unchanged from the previous quarter. Comparatively, the NIM of ICICI Bank Ltd and State Bank of

## Million e-bus plan to ride on local mfg; final call by PMO

Nehal Chaliawala &  
Mihir Mishra

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) will take the final decision on a plan to replace a million diesel-run buses on Indian roads with electric options over the next decade through subsidies and other regulatory interventions, people aware of the matter said.

The 10-year scheme may also include provisions to encourage local e-bus manufacturing, bring down goods and services tax (GST) rate on components and support the creation of charging infrastructure.

The move has the potential to crack open the electric vehicle (EV) ecosystem beyond buses as well, cut down India's oil import bill and contribute significantly to a reduction in vehicular emissions.

The plan is a widened version of an earlier proposal by the heavy industries ministry to replace 800,000 combustion-engine buses with electric options. That has now been scaled up following inputs from other ministries.

Three ministries—heavy



Only around 6,500 electric buses ply on Indian roads.

industries, commerce and industry, and housing and urban poverty alleviation—are in the process of submitting a formal proposal to the PMO,

the people cited above said, requesting anonymity.

Queries sent to the ministries remained unanswered.

For context, there are about 2.3 million diesel and CNG-run buses on Indian roads today, according to industry estimates.

Comparatively, only around 6,500 electric buses ply, as per vehicle registration data, a bulk of which were sold between 2019 and 2023. In the same period,

152,173 diesel and 15,163 CNG

## Six airports told to build war rooms as fog hits flights

Anu Sharma  
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NEW DELHI

Fog hung heavy over Indian skies for a third day on Tuesday, disrupting air travel and prompting the government to step in.

The civil aviation ministry directed six metro airports to set up war rooms and report incidents three times a day.

The directive to airports in Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Kolkata and Chennai comes after flight delays, diversions and cancellations botched travel plans and frayed tempers.

We have sought incidence reporting thrice daily for all the six metro airports.

The implementation of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation's directives, standard operating procedures and civil aviation requirements will be monitored and reported regularly," Union civil aviation minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said.

The six airports and the airlines there must set up war rooms to quickly address issues regarding passenger inconvenience, the minister said. "Sufficient Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) manpower

### DON'T MISS



Jio Fin tweaks strategy after RBI move on unsecured lending

Jio Financial Services Limited (JFSL) is tweaking its lending strategy, following the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) recent restrictions on unsecured consumer loans, the company said in its post-earnings call with analysts on Monday evening.

>P6

### National Test House to test all EV batteries for safety

All electric vehicle batteries will be tested for safety by the National Test House (NTH), two officials said, outlining government plans in the aftermath of several fires. Green mobility is a big part of the Centre's energy transition plan.

>P2

### Govt may open its electronic marketplace for individual users

The list of buyers on the government e-Marketplace (GeM) is likely to be broadened to open it up for individual buyers. To start with, unique products under the 'one district one product' (ODOP) category would be offered for individual buyers.

>P2

### Acme aims to raise \$300 mn equity in push for green H2

Gurugram-based renewable energy firm Acme Group is looking to raise \$300 million in fresh equity, as it aims to secure funds to bid for new power projects, three people with knowledge of the development have said.

>P5

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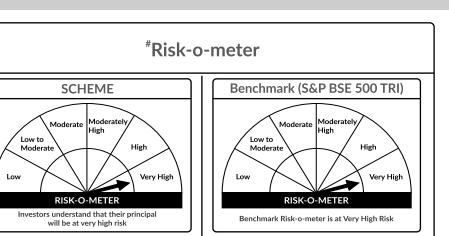
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## Centre may open e-marketplace for individual buyers

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NEW DELHI

The list of buyers on the government e-Marketplace (GeM) is likely to be broadened to open it up for individual buyers.

To start with, unique products under the 'one district one product' (ODOP) category would be offered for individual buyers, a move that is aimed at tapping the e-commerce market potential, two officials said.

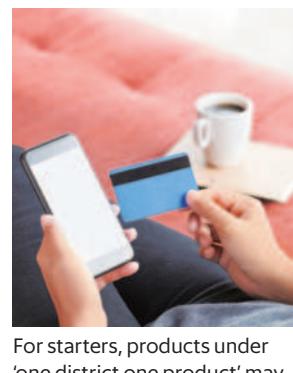
In the current set-up, only government departments, public sector undertakings (PSUs), state governments, panchayats and cooperatives are allowed to procure goods and services from GeM.

"The GeM has developed robust and transparent procurement mechanisms, and we are ready to roll out the services for individuals too," one of the officials cited above said.

The proposal is in the consideration stage and likely to be approved soon, both officials said.

The first official said the basket of goods and services for individual buying would be expanded in a phased manner. Apart from ODOP, the GeM is also looking to allow individual buying for a huge range of handmade products, the second official said.

Under the ODOP initiative, a total of 1,02 products from 761 districts across the country have been identified for sale.



For starters, products under 'one district one product' may be offered.

ISTOCKPHOTO

The products have been selected by states/UTs by taking into consideration the existing ecosystem on the ground, those identified under districts as export hubs (DEH), and GI-tagged products.

Currently, 11,861 product categories are available at GeM and 14,422 buyers are registered with the government portal.

Queried sent to commerce ministry spokesperson and GeM remained unanswered till press time.

"We have a robust system in place and the GeM is ready to take any number of orders. We ensure timely delivery of the product," the second official said.

There are several unique products identified from every district such as Agra's leather products, musical instruments and readymade garments of Amroha, turmeric of Lower Siang in Arunachal Pradesh that can be purchased by individuals through GeM.

## 'Budget must spur private sector spending on infra'

Experts want to see incentives extended to the sector in the form of sops and tax breaks

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In the last seven years, between 2016-17 and 2023-24, the allocation for infrastructure in the Union budget has quadrupled from ₹2.47 trillion to ₹10 trillion. As a proportion of GDP, it more than doubled from 1.6% to 3.4%.

Now, with all eyes on the 1 February interim budget, experts say the government must renew its focus on infrastructure spending, but with a twist this time around: the budget, they say, should include proposals that will boost private sector investment.

They want to see incentives by way of sops and tax breaks.

The focus on infrastructure spending began post-pandemic. With the engines of economic growth—private investment, public consumption and exports—having ground to a halt, the government opted to revive growth through a large dose of public capital expenditure.

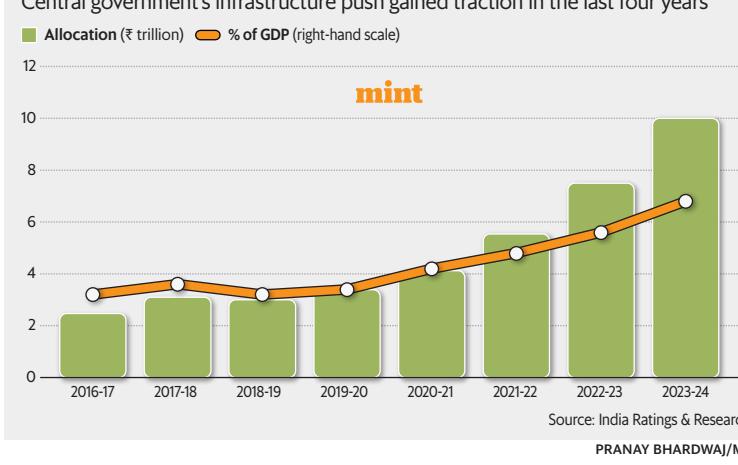
The government also hoped public spending will, in turn, catalyze dormant private investment. It has achieved the first objective, but had less success with the second.

Economic growth has revived and has gathered pace. In the first quarter of 2023-24, GDP growth was 7.8% and in the second quarter 7.6%. The government has estimated 2023-24 growth at 7.3% after hitting 7.2% in 2022-23.

Experts, including former Reserve

### The Rising Spend

Central government's infrastructure push gained traction in the last four years



Bank of India (RBI) governor Raghuram Rajan, have credited the government's enormous infrastructure investment for the faster pace of economic growth.

The Centre also ensured that states did their bit in terms of capital expenditure. It offered them a 50-year interest free loan to fund infrastructure projects and front-loaded

devolution of funds so that states could spend on infrastructure. In the eight months from April to November last year, 26 states spent ₹3.18 trillion on capex—45% of what they plan to spend in 2023-24.

"The government's focus on capex and infrastructure spending has many

benefits. It has a higher multiplier effect on the economy. As infrastructure improves, logistics costs reduce and this makes private sector competitive globally," said Vishal Kotecha, director and head, global infrastructure group, India Ratings & Research.

"A capex push will also kick-start private investment and feed growth," he added.

Private investment has seen some revival, but corporate India is yet to unleash its animal spirits.

Experts say there's a need for the private sector to play a bigger role in infrastructure development. "India needs to invest heavily in infrastructure for the next couple of decades if it has to post consistently high economic growth,"

said C Rangarajan, former RBI governor.

Despite a recent spurt in the infrastructure development, India fares poorly in most parameters. According to India Ratings & Research, India's per capita infrastructure investment at \$91 is far lower than the US' \$938, China's \$622 and Brazil's \$256.

The task assumes importance in the context of the government's ambitious target of making the country a developed economy by 2047, by when finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman expects India's GDP to scale \$30 trillion (it is \$3.4 trillion now). To achieve that India will need an annual economic growth of 7.5% to 8% and such growth needs capacity creation.

Consistent policy focus on capacity creation is justified as the marginal returns of public investments are high and the asset creation will prepare the economy well for non-inflationary growth when there is a more structural pick-up in demand," Madhavi Arora, lead economist at Emkay Global said.

But governments alone cannot make such large investments.

"Eventually, the government will have to ensure that the fiscal deficit comes down to 3% of GDP as mandated by Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act and it will be forced to cut back on the spending. The private sector will have to take over," Arora added.

That will be the challenge for the next government that comes to power, experts said.



Minister for road transport & highways Nitin Gadkari. PTI

## Gadkari blames engineers for road accidents

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NEW DELHI

Nitin Gadkari, minister for road transport and highways, has blamed increasing road accidents and fatalities on poor engineering and substandard detailed project reports (DPRs).

In an address at the CII National Conclave on Road Safety on Tuesday, Gadkari highlighted the urgent need for improved road safety measures and called upon the industry to develop strategies to enhance road safety, including campaigns for behaviour change and creating a pool of trained drivers and technical experts.

According to the ministry's 2022 report, India saw 460,000 road accidents, 168,000 deaths, and 400,000 serious injuries.

These accidents, occurring at a rate of 53 per hour and resulting in 19 deaths per hour, contribute to an economic loss of 3.18% of GDP. The number of road accidents and road deaths have risen 12% and 10%, respectively, over the previous year, Gadkari said.

Gadkari emphasized the four crucial E's of road safety: engineering, education, enforcement and emergency medical services. He pointed to the dire quality of DPRs, holding engineers largely responsible for the rise in road accidents due to poor planning and design.

"This gives me a feeling that basically the engineers are responsible for road accidents. So, the main problem is road engineering and defective planning, and defective DPRs," he said.

The minister said 16% of road accident victims are aged 18-35, and while national and state highways comprise only 5.5% of India's road network, they account for 36% of road accident deaths.

C-heavy molasses production is estimated to be approximately 4.5% of the total cane crushed, yielding around 225 crore litres of ethanol. It is the last by-product in the sugar refining process, and has no sugar content left in it, unlike B-type and sugarcane juice. The measure has potential to yield around 30-35 crore litres of ethanol from C-heavy molasses.

Gadkari urged the industry and government to collaborate on solutions to prevent road accidents, emphasizing the importance of education in building safer infrastructure and promoting safer driving habits.

## Central lab to test EV batteries for safety

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The state-run lab will be entrusted with this task as green mobility is a big part of the Centre's ambitious energy transition plan. MINT

All electric vehicle (EV) batteries—domestic and imported—will be tested for safety by the National Test House (NTH), two officials said, outlining government plans in the aftermath of several spontaneous fires.

The state-run lab that reports to the consumer affairs ministry will be entrusted with this task as green mobility is a big part of the Centre's ambitious energy transition plan. This government recently laid down battery safety and performance standards.

Although the exact number of spontaneous combustion of EV batteries is not known, minister of state for heavy industries Krishan Pal Gurjar told Parliament last month, "Incidents of fire accidents have been reported in electric two-wheelers, manufactured by Okinawa Autotech, Pure EV, Jitendra Electric Vehicles, Ola Electric and Boom Motors."

He did not give a number despite being asked in a written query.

Mandatory safety certification for EV batteries is slated to start with a pilot project in Bengaluru

galur, the officials said.

"In accordance with the outlined plan, there will be no exemptions, even for the prominent US-based electric vehicle major, Tesla. Its EV batteries are mandated to undergo the rigorous testing procedures at the NTH," the first official said.

He emphasized that this requirement extends to all imported EV batteries, primarily from South-east Asia, as well as domestically manufactured ones, all of which must

secure a conformity certificate from NTH labs.

The proposal to establish EV battery and charger testing facilities in Bengaluru, dedicated to testing EV batteries for two, three, and four-wheelers, including those of Tesla, in adherence to both national and international standards, has received approval from the ministry," the second official added.

It will ensure the quality testing of EV batteries,

addressing a current scenario where the majority of testing facilities are operated by the private entities. With the commencement of NTH labs, users will also have the opportunity to get their electric vehicle batteries tested," the second official said.

Divi Rajagopal Rao, who heads science and technology cell at NTH, told Mint, "The procurement of equipment for establishing the testing facility is under process, and it is tentatively scheduled to commence operations by July 2024."

After the roll-out of Bengaluru testing centre, similar facilities will be set up in Mumbai, Kolkata, Ghaziabad and Chennai, the first official said.

"NTH is a trusted and third-party technical service provider in the field of testing and calibration. These electric vehicle battery test facilities will definitely provide a fillip towards developing the ecosystem of electric vehicles and related technologies in India and aid in boosting local manufacturing sector in the country," Rao added.

Queries sent to the consumer affairs ministry, road transport and heavy industries and Tesla remained unanswered at press time.

The government aims to

## Govt slaps 50% duty on exports of molasses amid cane shortage

Puja Das  
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NEW DELHI

The government has imposed a 50% export duty on molasses, a by-product of sugarcane, with effect from Thursday, a government order said on Monday, after erratic monsoon rains caused a shortage of sugarcane supplies.

The export duty is a strategic measure to regulate the supply and demand of commodities, ensuring domestic availability.

Various sugar industry associations, such as the National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories Ltd (NFCSF), the West Indian Sugar Mills Association and the South Indian Sugar Mills Association, had sought export restrictions on molasses.

Quoting government officials, Mint on 29 December reported that the union government was considering a 50% duty on the export of molasses to augment supplies for meeting India's target for cleaner and more efficient ethanol-blended petrol.

The government aims to

achieve its E20 (20% ethanol blended petrol) target by 2025-26 from its present 12%.

India is the world's largest molasses exporter and contributes about 25% to global trade. Key buyers include the Netherlands, Philippines, Vietnam, South Korea and Italy, with major exporting states being Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka.

"Imposition of 50% export duty may succeed only in partially stopping molasses exports to boost domestic ethanol production as importers use the commodity as cattle feed ingredient, which is a rela-

tively inelastic use," said G.K. Sood, an industry veteran.

Efforts to boost domestic availability of molasses for ethanol production follow recent curbs on sugar exports and directions to mills to cease using cane juice for the biofuel, which was reversed later. An expected shortage in sugar supplies for domestic consumption has already spiked the prices of the sweetener to a 14-year high.

In September, a proposal was made to impose a 30% export duty to discourage the export of molasses, but no decision was taken then.

The 50% duty proposal by the food department is in response to limited sugar-based feedstock availability for ethanol production and international market price trends.

C-heavy molasses production is estimated to be approximately 4.5% of the total cane crushed, yielding around 225 crore litres of ethanol. It is the last by-product in the sugar refining process, and has no sugar content left in it, unlike B-type and sugarcane juice. The measure has potential to yield around 30-35 crore litres of ethanol from C-heavy molasses.

Gadkari urged the industry and government to collaborate on solutions to prevent road accidents, emphasizing the importance of education in building safer infrastructure and promoting safer driving habits.

## Difficult to attend Ram temple consecration: Rahul Gandhi

New Delhi: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged that the Ram temple consecration event has been made into a "Narendra Modi and RSS-BJP function" with an "election flavour", as he strongly defended the decision of his party's top leaders to decline an invite to the ceremony. PTI



## 'Govt to notify new IT rules for intermediaries on deepfakes'

New Delhi: The government is set to notify rules to tackle deepfakes on social media platforms which will mandate compliance from platforms that are at present unable to curb the recurrences of deepfakes despite advisories issued by the ministry of information technology over the past weeks, minister of state for information technology Rajeev Chandrasekhar said. GULVEEN AULAKH

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## MINT SHORTS

### Windfall tax on domestic crude oil cut to ₹1,700/tonne

New Delhi: The union ministry of finance has lowered the windfall tax on the sale of locally produced crude oil to ₹1,700 per tonne with effect from Tuesday. For the past two weeks, the levy—Special Additional Excise Duty—was ₹2,300 per tonne. The levy on the export of aviation turbine fuel, diesel and petrol continues to be zero.

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**UNAUDITED (REVIEWED) FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023 (₹ In Crore)**

P.C.R 98.40%	Particulars	Quarter Ended 31/12/2023 (Reviewed)	Quarter Ended 31/12/2022 (Reviewed)	Year Ended 31/03/2023 (Audited)
Total Income from Operations (Net)	5851.34	4769.78	18178.73	
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	1069.42	998.39	3444.88	
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before Tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	1069.42	998.39	3444.88	
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after Tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	1035.51	775.03	2602.03	
Paid up Equity Share Capital	7081.37	6730.50	6730.50	
Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve) - as on date	10915.55	7416.27	7406.94	
Securities Premium Account	977.44	328.31	328.31	
Net Worth	16902.42	12698.80	12765.19	
Paid up Debt Capital / Outstanding Debt*	76.59	26.43	44.90	
Debt** Equity Ratio	0.40	0.47	0.49	
Earnings Per Share (of ₹ 10/- each) (for continuing and discontinued operations) - not Annualized	1.46	1.15	3.87	
Capital Redemption Reserve	----	----	----	

\*Total Debts & Outstanding Debt represents total borrowings of the Bank.  
\*\*Debt represents borrowings with residual maturity of more than one year.

Place: Pune Date: 16/01/2024 Rohit Rishi Executive Director A. S. Rajeev Managing Director & CEO

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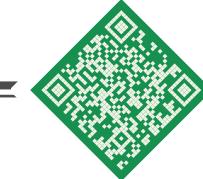
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CLOSE 73,128.77	CLOSE 22,032.30	CLOSE 19,827.55	CLOSE 54,816.90	CLOSE 22,274.60	CLOSE 38,009.80	CLOSE 44,361.39
PERCENT CHANGE -0.27	PERCENT CHANGE -0.29	PERCENT CHANGE -0.29	PERCENT CHANGE -0.22	PERCENT CHANGE -0.29	PERCENT CHANGE -0.31	PERCENT CHANGE -0.43
PREVIOUS CLOSE 73,327.94	OPEN 73,331.95	OPEN 22,097.45	OPEN 19,885.55	OPEN 55,013.00	OPEN 38,129.88	OPEN 44,552.34
HIGH 73,427.59	LOW 72,960.29	HIGH 22,124.15	LOW 21,969.80	HIGH 19,923.30	LOW 19,736.20	HIGH 44,755.22

**m MINT SHORTS****ECB says consumer inflation expectations drop 'noticeably'**

Consumer expectations for euro-zone inflation fell to the lowest in more than one-and-a-half years in November—supporting markets' view that interest-rate cuts by the European Central Bank could soon be in the offing. Expectations for the next year "declined noticeably" to 3.2% from 4%, according to the ECB's monthly survey. For three years ahead, they eased to 2.2% from 2.5%. Despite an uptick in December, inflation is in retreat across Europe, with its rapid slowdown prompting investors to speculate on rate cuts as soon as the spring. Consumer prices rose by 2.9% from a year ago last month, still in sight of the 2% goal. Money markets held interest-rate cut wagers broadly steady after the ECB data, pricing the first quarter-point reduction by April followed by almost five more by year-end. In recent days, ECB policymakers have sought to push back against any talk of imminent reductions in borrowing costs.

BLOOMBERG



India's equity markets have hosted more listings than regional peers.

**Asia home to most 2024 IPO debuts; India taking the lead**

Most IPO debuts so far this year have been on exchanges in Asia Pacific, with India's equity market hosting more listings than other regional peers. Of 38 global listings in the past two weeks, 34 were in Asia Pacific. The Americas followed with three newcomers, while the Middle East saw one and Europe had none, as per data. India has been the most active, extending last year's record for debuts, as companies take advantage of valuations boosted by an equities frenzy and earnings prospects. China, where average size-per-listing is typically larger, is seeing a gradual pick up in offerings after last year's decline when the country faced economic woes and tighter regulatory scrutiny. While listings across Asia could see a boost from fewer economic constraints in 2024, India has "lots of interesting companies, big companies that could bring billion-dollar IPOs to the market" this year, said Uday Furtado, co-head of ECM Asia Pacific at Citigroup, in an interview with Bloomberg Television.

BLOOMBERG

**Why delays are not the only challenges for Indian airlines**

Vineetha Sampath  
vineetha.s@livemint.com

The Indian aviation industry is currently navigating through several challenges, seeing not only significant flight delays due to adverse weather but also grappling with broader industry issues.

Airlines are facing the wrath of passengers because of long delays in flights, sometimes by as much as 13 hours, owing to adverse weather but also grappling with broader industry issues.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has issued new guidelines asking airlines to cancel flights that are expected to be

delayed by over three hours, well in advance. Also, the regulator has instructed airlines to publish accurate real-time information on flight delays.

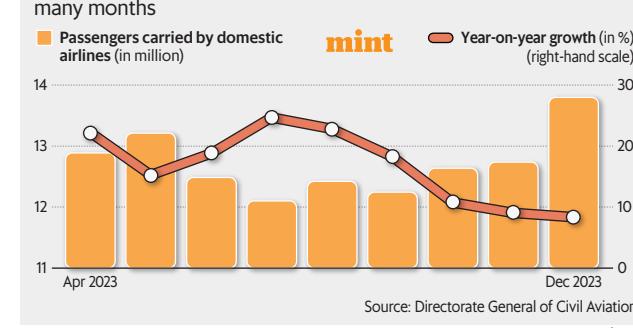
Whether this hurts passenger count remains to be seen. However, this situation is short-lived as the weather will normalize soon.

The bigger worry for the Indian aviation industry is on the supply side. A combination of supply challenges and rising airfares is weighing on passenger growth. In December, passengers carried by domestic airlines grew at about 8% year-on-year, the slowest pace in 22 months. Moreover, the ongoing March

quarter (Q4FY24) may see a rise in grounded aircraft. India's largest airline by market share, InterGlobe Aviation Ltd, which

**Clouded skies**

The domestic air traffic in December grew at the slowest pace in many months



runs IndiGo, expects its grounded aircraft count to be in the mid-30s in Q4. This is over and above its already grounded

aircraft, which means the total count will be around 75 by FY24 end.

Given these factors, the trajectory of airfares is crucial. Notably, the longer an aircraft remains idle, it would mean a rise in expenses without incremental revenue. Therefore, comments by IndiGo on the capacity growth in FY25 need to be tracked.

In FY24, IndiGo's capacity is expected to grow by more than 15%. For investors in shares of IndiGo, its strong market position is a plus point. The airline's market share continued to be above 60% for the eighth consecutive month in December. IndiGo's shares have risen by

45% in the past year. Having said that, intensifying competition is a concern. The market share of the Air India group hit a recent high of 27% in December.

Falling aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price, which forms a significant portion of an airline's operating expense, offers some relief. ATF prices in January are over 8% lower than the Q3 average. "Spot jet fuel suggests ATF may slip further month-on-month," said analysts at Jefferies India in a report dated 3 January. No wonder IndiGo scrapped fuel surcharges from 4 January. All said the future of Indian airlines hinges on easing of supply chain constraints.

**India MSCI trades at premium over China**

Bloomberg  
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Gopika Gopakumar  
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MUMBAI

Kerala-based Federal Bank will consider external names as well for the post of managing director and chief executive officer, said the current MD & CEO Shyam Srinivasan at the earnings call on Tuesday. He clarified that the bank will give the names of the candidates by the end of April.

"The regulator is not inclined to give a one-year extension. A formal search process is currently underway. We have two executive directors with exemplary capabilities. The board will also look outside. We will send in the names by April end or early May," he said.

Such optimism over India and continued wariness toward China seem to be entrenched in investors' mindset.

Goldman analysts said in a separate report that according to hundreds of clients at the bank's global strategy conference, there was a "clear consensus" that India is the best long-term investment opportunity while China has fallen out of favour.

That chimes with the latest Bank of America survey of fund managers, which showed India as the top emerging Asia bet, while they pared China allocations by 12 percentage points to a net 20% underweight, the lowest in more than a year.

PTI  
feedback@livemint.com

Stock markets snapped their five-day winning run on Tuesday with the benchmark Sensex declining by 199 points due to profit-taking in IT and oil shares and weak global trends.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped by 199.17 points or 0.27% to settle at 73,128.77. As many as 20 Sensex shares declined while 10 advanced. The key index opened lower but staged a recovery in late-morning deals to touch its all-time intra-day high of 73,427.59. But the barometer

On 5 January, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) asked the private sector lender to submit a fresh proposal containing at least two names for the position of managing director and chief executive officer.

Srinivasan's three-year term will end on 22 September, when he will complete 14 years as the bank's MD and CEO, during which he's credited to have transformed the bank's operations.

Federal Bank reported a 25% year-on-year jump in net profit to ₹1,007 crore for the December quarter of fiscal year 2024 from ₹803.6 crore during the corresponding period a year

ago. Net interest income or core income grew 8.53% year-on-year to ₹2,123.36 crore at the end of December quarter. Net interest margin slipped marginally to 3.19% as on 31 December from 3.22% in the previous quarter. The bank's advances and deposits book grew 18% each.

The bank's gross non-performing assets (NPA) as a percentage of total assets increased marginally to 2.29% at the end of the December quarter from 2.26% in the previous quarter.

Net NPA as a percentage of total assets stood flat at 0.64% at the end of the December quarter.

**Rupee may be winner only if India's central bank eases hold**

Bloomberg  
feedback@livemint.com

A heady year of capital inflows for India may only result in mild gains for the rupee as the nation's central bank will likely continue to grip the currency tightly.

On its own, the stars are aligned for the rupee—prospects of large bond and stocks inflows on the back of JPMorgan Chase & Co's inclusion of Indian debt in its emerging market index as well as a global risk-on sentiment.

Yet analysts are reluctant to call a sizeable stronger rupee, which has traded within a very narrow range over the last year

despite large inflows into India's equity and debt markets. While the central bank seems to have eased a bit on its intervention lately—the rupee has turned into Asia's top performer so far this month—lim-

iting the swings in the currency may continue to be a prime focus.

"The Reserve Bank of India will let the rupee appreciate only gradually," said Dhiraj Nirmal, economist and forex strategist at Australia & New Zealand Banking Group. "The RBI of late is allowing for a wider band, but volatility may remain contained at least relative to other currency pairs in the region." ANZ expects the rupee at 82.50 to a dollar by December, while Credit Agricole CIB is more bullish at 81. The projected gain, while modest from 2023's close of 83.21, would still be the first appreciation versus the greenback in seven years.

**Markets end 5-day winning run on profit-taking in IT stocks**

PTI  
feedback@livemint.com

Failed to hold onto gains in the second half due to profit-taking in the broader market and retreated by 367.65 points or 0.50% to a low of 72,960.29.

The Nifty touched its all-time intra-day high of 22,124.15 before closing lower by 65.15 points or 0.29% at 22,032.30. As many as 33 Nifty shares closed in the red while 17 advanced.

In the last five days, the BSE

benchmark rallied 1,972.72 points or 2.76%, and the Nifty jumped 584.45 points or 2.71%. Both Sensex and Nifty closed at record high levels on Monday.

"The broad market exhib-

ited profit-taking following a good performance by the IT sector amid weak global cues. Investors are contemplating whether the current euphoria

in markets has gone far-fetched, especially with elevated domestic valuations in mid & small caps," said Vinod Nair, head of research, Geojit

Financial Services. "FII flows are mixed due to a lack of fresh triggers. Oil prices stayed firm amid undeterred geopolitical tensions," he added.

Among the Sensex firms, HCL Tech fell the most by 2.05%. Wipro dropped by 1.93%, NTPC by 1.84%, Reliance Industries by 1.43%, Infosys by 1.27%, Tech Mahindra by 1.17% and TCS by 1.06%. IndusInd Bank, Sun Pharma, M&M, Power Grid, Bharti AirTel, and SBI were also among the losers.

Tata Steel, Titan, Maruti, Larsen & Toubro, ITC and JSW Steel were among the

gainers. HDFC Bank gained 0.42% ahead of its financial results which were announced after market hours. The largest private sector lender reported a 34% jump in its standalone net profit to ₹16,373 crore for the October-December period of 2023-24.

"The profit taking in the IT, realty and energy majors were weighing on the sentiment while metal and FMCG showed resilience. The broader indices too inched lower and lost nearly half a percent each," Ajit Mishra, SVP, technical research, Religare Broking Ltd said.



# Acme aims to raise \$300 mn equity in push for green H<sub>2</sub>

The company is likely to use fresh funding for the new power projects it is looking to bid for

Sneha Shah & Ritaj Baruah

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

**G**urugram-based renewable energy firm Acme Group is looking to raise \$300 million in fresh equity, as it aims to secure funds to bid for new power projects, three people with knowledge of the development said.

The company that recently sold 450-550 MW of power assets for \$180-200 million to BluPine, an Actis PE-backed renewable energy platform, is in the process of appointing investment bankers for its equity funding, said one of the persons cited above on the condition of anonymity, as the discussions are private.

"It is fairly early stage, and the company is looking at a PE (private equity) fund-raise opportunistically. They are likely to reach out to global PE funds, sovereign wealth funds and infrastructure funds," the second person cited above said. According to him, the company is looking at long-term partners.

"This capital will be raised at the holding company level," the person added. "It will help the firm bid for incremental projects under the green hydrogen push."

A company spokesperson did not respond to emailed queries.

In November, Mint reported the group's plans to sell up to 51% in its proposed infrastructure investment trust (InvIT) for around \$1.3 billion (around ₹10,800 crore). The firm, which is betting big on green hydrogen, has appointed global consulting firm EY to look for buyers.

There is a huge interest in green hydrogen in the country, with 5.8 million tonnes (mt) of green ammonia capacity coming up. Green hydrogen is



Manoj Kumar Upadhyay, founder, ACME Group.

produced by splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen using an electrolyzer that may be powered by electricity from renewable energy sources such as wind and solar. As part of its green hydrogen playbook, India wants to encourage green hydrogen exports to Japan, South Korea and Europe, and has allowed concessional green electricity, an inter-state transmission charges waiver, land in renewable energy parks and mega manufacturing zones for promoting green hydrogen and green ammonia, Mint reported.

Investments in companies focusing on the green hydrogen space are likely to gain momentum, with the government setting a target of 5mt of annual green hydrogen production by 2030

with a focus on exports under the National Green Hydrogen Mission.

The Acme Group has also been selected for setting up green hydrogen plant under the incentive scheme "Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition" (SIGHT)—with an allocated capacity of 90,000 tonne per annum. The company would get an incentive of ₹30 per kg on average, for three years.

Founded in 2003 by Manoj Kumar Upadhyay,

Acme Group aims to become a leading green energy provider in the world by 2030, and produce 10 mtpa of green ammonia and hydrogen. The company started working with various governments, partners and stakeholders to develop projects in various geo-

graphics such as Oman, India, Egypt, Australia, and Chile, its website shows. The group has lined up ambitious plans for India and has inked an agreement with the Karnataka government to invest ₹52,000 crore to set up a green hydrogen and green ammonia project. The firm is also setting up a large green hydrogen and green ammonia project at a special economic zone at Dugm in Oman, which will require an investment of about \$6 billion. Acme Solar

has formed a 50:50 joint venture with Norwegian energy firm Equinor-backed Scatec ASA to design, develop, build and operate the facility. The plant will supply emission-free fuel to Europe and Asia. sneha.shah@livemint.com

**10 mt**  
Annual output of  
green ammonia, H<sub>2</sub>  
Acme is targeting

**5mt**  
Annual production of green hydrogen  
govt aims by 2030

## TV remains preferred device to view content

Latajha

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NEW DELHI

India's affluent consumers prefer watching entertainment content on TV, typically the largest screen available at home, than on hand-held devices, despite it being a mobile-first nation insofar as digital adoption goes, a recent study has found.

More than three-fourths (78%) of the audiences said they prefer streaming online content on their TVs, either through streaming sticks, smart TVs, or set-top boxes, than on other available options such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops.

The study, conducted in December 2023 by consumer intelligence company NielsenIQ and commissioned by Amazon for TV streaming trends, is based on responses from viewers across 12 major cities, including Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad. The sample size included 800 respondents aged 25 to 45.

Besides the availability of an active broadband connection at home, people like streaming on TV also due to better video and sound quality, and the convenience of accessing a variety of content across OTT providers and online sources, the study, released on Tuesday, said.

"Online video streaming has come along way since its inception, and so has the streaming habits of consumers. What has remained a constant is our preference to view content on the biggest screen in our homes—the television," said Parag Gupta, director and country manager, Amazon Devices India.

Gupta's portfolio includes Fire TV devices, which allow users to connect their non-smart TVs to the internet.

## Govt wants to certify all auto PLI applicants by July

Alisha Sachdev  
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NEW DELHI

The Union ministry of heavy industries, which implements the government's production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for advanced automotive technologies, is aiming for all the 85 applicants to receive the approval certification against the scheme's domestic value-addition (DVA) criteria by July 2024, its secretary Kamran Rizvi said.

"We are confident our PLI scheme will clear any audit in terms of how properly we are implementing it. Our target is that all 85 applicants should have the certification by July 2024," Rizvi said at a gathering of automotive industry stakeholders on Tuesday.

Further, a meeting of component applicants to facilitate domestic value-addition



A meeting of auto parts applicants to facilitate DVA applications for automotive suppliers is also likely to be called soon.

(DVA) applications for automotive suppliers that have yet to secure any DVA certifications, is likely to be called soon by the ministry's additional secretary Hanif Qureshi.

Qureshi said eight original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) have applied for the DVA certification so far for 39 products, of which approvals

have been given for 22 products by three OEMs, while 11 certifications are still in process. Similarly, 25 product approvals are under process for DVA certification by automotive component suppliers, though no approval has been granted so far.

The ministry of heavy industries (MHI) has stated

that it will begin the disbursal of incentives under the scheme in FY25. It is yet to determine a process for incentive claims for approved applicants.

Suman Mishra, chief executive of Mahindra Last Mile Mobility, said that while the company has 10 approvals for its vehicles in place, the company urges the government to quickly finalize the standard operating procedure (SOP) for claiming incentives.

All participants in the automotive PLI scheme are required to prove a minimum of 50% domestic value addition in their product and supply chain to be eligible for incentives under the scheme, a stringent assessment that is made by government-affiliated testing agencies such as Automotive Research Association of India (Arai), which are also monitored by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India to ensure strict adherence to the rules and requirements laid down under the provisions of the scheme.

Eight OEMs have applied for the DVA certification so far for 39 products, of which 22 have been approved

of the 67 automotive parts makers and 18 OEMs that have been selected as beneficiaries of the scheme, only Tata Motors and M&M have received localization certifications from the government-run testing agency Arai for a range of products with electric powertrains.

The incentives will be awarded against evidence of actual sales and audits of the investment made in advanced automotive technologies.

## In-cinema ads surge as post-Covid effects wear off

Latajha  
lataj@htlive.com

NEW DELHI

Cinemas have started seeing a surge in advertising after a long lull following the pandemic, when not many big Hindi movies were releasing, and those that did hit the theatres failed to excite the audiences.

A 15% jump was seen in the second and third quarters of FY24, compared with the same period last year, and theatre owners say they are inching closer to pre-Covid levels of in-cinema advertising. While southern markets were quicker to recover from the impact of pandemic, advertisers are now signing up long-term campaigns with theatre owners even in the north, with FMCG, consumer durables and financial services categories leading the surge.

"In-cinema ads have increased significantly in the

last few months. This happens every year around the holiday period, from October to December, and it's like a tradition for companies to advertise more during the festive season. Some really big Hindi movies came out in the second half of the year, like Gadar 2, Jawan, Tiger 3, Animal, and Dunki," Devang Sampat, CEO, Cinepolis India, said. "More people in the theatres mean more chances for ads to be seen, and that makes sense for advertisers because they get more value for the money spent."

In 2023, about 31% of the money the company made from advertising came during this holiday period, Sampat added. In the past few months, theatre owners have seen a notable surge in in-cinema advertising, overcoming challenges posed by the OTT boom. The unique cinematic experience and different movie formats with focus on enhanced guest experiences continue to

draw audiences, Rahul Puri, managing director, Mukta Arts and Mukta A2 Cinemas, said. That said, things were looking up for cinema advertising even beyond the enthusiasm induced by the festive period. Led by good content and more footfalls in theatres, advertisers who were reluctant to do cinema campaigns or were only cherry-picking movies, started to do more consistent cam-

paigns and signed up long-term deals, resulting in a rise in brand count and revenue, said Yogesh Kapil - national sales head, Qube Cinema Network, a digital cinema technology provider.

"FMCG, consumer durables and BFSI categories were the most active and a lot of new clients came on board in the second half of the year. Also, thanks to social media, there is

now a general awareness of the box office numbers that earlier used to be restricted to the trade domain. This helps clients understand the power of cinema as a media vehicle," Kapil said. Other than the recent successes thrown up by Bollywood, a steady line-up of southern films, apart from other big-ticket releases, kept advertisers interested, Kapil added. Advertisers like those in the lifestyle (jewellery) space, FMCG and organised retail contributed to a significant jump in revenues.

Still, challenges abound for cinema advertising. Theatre owners say the overall revenues are still 10-15% below pre-pandemic levels. "The southern market that is completely retail-driven has bounced back. The issue lies with the north, which is dominated by corporates," said Amit Sharma, managing director of Miraj Entertainment, a company that operates multiplex theatres.



While southern markets were quicker to recover, advertisers are now signing up for long-term campaigns even in the north.

From the posts indicated from Sl. No 1 to 25 in the table above, 04 posts are reserved for Category a), 04 posts are reserved for Category b) and 01 post is reserved for Category c) and 03 posts are reserved for Category d) and e) of PwBD.

**Legend:** UR: Unreserved; OBC-NCL: Other Backward Classes- Non-Creamy Layer; SC: Scheduled Caste; ST: Scheduled Tribe; EWS: Economically Weaker Section.

Those interested should visit 'Careers tab' on [www.recindia.nic.in](http://www.recindia.nic.in) for further details regarding age, qualification, experience etc. and for submitting online application. Last date for receipt of online application is 9th February 2024 by 06:00 pm.

## I&B ministry to pilot D2M broadcast technology

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NEW DELHI

## Delhi HC permits SpiceJet's lessor to inspect its engine

Krishna Yadav

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NEW DELHI



Ajay Singh, CMD, SpiceJet.

The Delhi high court on Tuesday allowed Engine Lease Finance BV, a lessor to SpiceJet, to inspect an engine it has leased to the low-cost carrier.

The court specified that the inspection should be carried out once at the time of the engine's grounding, and again at the time of its redelivery.

The court directed SpiceJet to maintain status quo after grounding the engine, and limit its use only to purposes such as refurbishment. The case has been deferred till the last week of January.

SpiceJet broadcasting, as defined in a paper by Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur in 2022, proposes a mechanism for multimedia broadcasting without relying on data connectivity. The mechanism is already in use for emergency broadcasts of government notifications, but the latest proposal showcases its use in bringing television and multimedia content broadcasting directly to smartphones.

In

formation

and

broadcasting

secretary Apurva Chandra said that talks of a pilot D2M broadcasting project have commenced "across 19 cities using the digital terrestrial transmission network of Prasar Bharati."

The move means that in order to support the technology, smartphones will require either a specialized chip, or an add-on dongle. Bengaluru-headquartered Saankhya Labs on Tuesday unveiled one such chip, claiming to hold the potential to tap millions of users for D2M broadcasting.

"We are already in talks with original design manufacturers (ODMs), but we won't need to partner with chipmakers for this. Our objective is to reach a scale of 10 million odd users..." said Parag Naik, chief executive of Saankhya Labs.

SpiceJet is currently entangled in various legal disputes with creditors over outstanding dues. On 10 January, the Delhi high court summoned SpiceJet chairman and managing director Ajay Singh in the ongoing legal battle with Sun Group chairman Kalanithi Maran over payment of dues from an arbitral award.

On 19 December, the Delhi high court directed SpiceJet to pay \$450,000 by 3 January to engine lessors FAM France 01 SAS and Sunbird France 02 SAS.

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REC limited is a Maharatna Public Sector Enterprise and a well-acclaimed Non-Banking Financial Company endowed with 'Infrastructure Finance' Company status. To meet its human resource requirements, REC invites applications for the following posts:

Sl. No.	Name of the post/ Grade & IDA	Number of posts (Reserved for)*
<b>Engineering Discipline</b>		
1.	Deputy General Manager (Engineering)/ E-7 ₹ 1,00,000-2,60,000	01 (ST)
2.	Chief Manager (Engineering)/ E-6 ₹ 90,000-2,40,000	02 (UR)
3.	Manager (Engineering)/ E-5 ₹ 80,000-2,20,000	01 (EWS)
4.	Deputy Manager (Engineering)/ E-4 ₹ 70,000-2,00,000	04 (UR: 02, ST: 01, EWS: 01)
5.	Assistant Manager (Engineering)/ E-3 ₹ 60,000-1,80,000	20 (UR: 08, OBC-NCL: 06, SC: 03, ST: 01, EWS: 02)
6.	Officer (Engineering)/ E-2 ₹ 50,000-1,60,000	39 (UR: 14, OBC-NCL: 09, SC: 05, ST: 02, EWS: 09)
<b>Finance &amp; Accounts (F&amp;A) Discipline</b>		
7.	Manager (F&A)/ E-5 ₹ 80,000-2,20,000	01 (UR)
8.	Deputy Manager (F&A)/ E-4 ₹ 70,000-2,00,000	10 (UR: 06, OBC-NCL: 02, SC: 01, EWS: 01)
9.	Assistant Manager (F&A)/ E-3 ₹ 60,000-1,80,000	20 (UR: 09, OBC-NCL: 05, SC: 03, ST: 01, EWS: 02)
10.	Officer (F&A)/ E-2 ₹ 50,000-1,60,000	02 (ST) **
<b>Information Technology (IT) Discipline</b>		
11.	Assistant Manager (IT)/ E-3 ₹ 60,000-1,80,000	02 (UR: 01, EWS: 01)
<b>Company Secretary (CS) Discipline&lt;/b</b>		

**Goldman Sachs sees 26% jump in revenue**

Bloomberg  
feedback@livemint.com

**G**oldman Sachs Group Inc. topped profit estimates as its equities trading unit posted a jump in revenue that was triple what analysts expected, capping off what it's pitching as a year of transition.

The asset and wealth division helped drive the gains, posting its highest quarterly revenue in two years on a gain tied to the sale of a financial management business. That helped counter fixed income trading results and investment banking fees that fell short of expectations.

"This was a year of execution for Goldman Sachs," CEO David Solomon said on Tuesday. "With everything we achieved in 2023, coupled with our clear and simplified strategy, we have a much stronger platform for 2024."

The firm is trying to put behind it a year in which deal-making remained depressed and losses on real estate investments and the consumer business dragged down profit.

The equities unit generated \$2.61 billion in revenue, a 26% jump compared to expectations for an increase of just about 8%. That left the bank more than \$1.5 billion ahead of its closest rival, Morgan Stanley, for the full year, helping to once again cement its standing as the leader in that business.

Net income was \$2.01 billion on \$11.3 billion in revenue in the fourth quarter. Earnings were 51% higher than last year.

Goldman's asset and wealth management business posted revenue of \$4.39 billion, up 23% from a year earlier.

# Jio Fin tweaks plans after RBI move on unsecured lending

The company will focus more on secured lending; including home loans and device leasing

Gopika Gopakumar  
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MUMBAI

**J**io Financial Services Ltd (JFSL) is tweaking its lending strategy, following the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) recent restrictions on unsecured consumer loans, the company said in its post-earnings call with analysts on Monday evening.

The Mukesh Ambani-promoted non-banking finance company (NBFC), which had earlier planned to concentrate on unsecured lending, has now decided to shift its focus to secured loans, including leasing. According to analysts, the company said in its earnings call that it has set up a 100% leasing subsidiary to undertake lease operations.

"Large opportunity in the secured lending space. Noticeable market reaction vis-à-vis unsecured lending leading to calibrated approach towards unsecured products," the company said in its investor presentation.

"Jio FS will focus on secured products with the launch of DaaS (device-as-a-service), which involves leasing of airfiber, phones and laptops along with supply chain financing, loan against shares, and home loans," investment banking and capital markets firm Jeffries said in a report on Monday. "Furthermore, in unsecured PL (personal loans) and consumer durable loans, capability building is largely done, with developed models of risk and underwriting."

According to Jio's investor presentation, the NBFC believes that the DaaS model has lower risk due to asset ownership and also helps increase cross-sell opportunities. The company also plans to launch supply chain financing solu-



Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries is seeking to challenge established financiers such as Bajaj Finance by launching Jio Financial Services. AP

tions to address the working capital needs of suppliers.

Jio Financial Services has, however, completed a sandbox (testing) for consumer durable loans and personal

an application for conversion from an NBFC to a core investment company (CIC), according to the company presentation. A CIC is more like a holding company.

## CHANGE OF PLAN

**JFSL** has set up a 100% leasing subsidiary to undertake lease operations

**THE NBFC** believes that the DaaS model has lower risk due to asset ownership

**JFSL** has completed a sandbox (testing) for consumer durable loans and personal loans

**THE firm** has filed an application for conversion from an NBFC to a core investment company

loans. Loans against shares or mutual funds, and home loans are in the pipeline, while the capability for unsecured and consumer durables products is already built up.

Jio Financial Services has also filed

Billionaire Ambani's Reliance Industries is seeking to challenge established financiers such as Bajaj Finance by launching Jio Financial Services, with the venture resulting from the demerger of Reliance's financial services

business.

It has already launched personal loans for the salaried and self-employed in Mumbai, besides consumer durable loans across 300 stores in India. The services are also available on the MyJio app.

Banks and NBFCs are going slow on unsecured consumer lending after RBI increased risk weights on unsecured loans last year. Analysts expect growth in unsecured loans, which constitute 12-13% of NBFC credit, to moderate in 2024 due to rising risks, higher risk weights, and the central bank's nudge to lenders to exercise caution towards this segment.

For NBFCs, unsecured personal loans grew 41% year-on-year in the September quarter and accounted for 22% of incremental growth on a bottom-up basis.

"We expect loans growth at NBFCs/HFCs to moderate to 16-17% over FY25-26E vs. 18-19% in FY24e as growth in unsecured loans moderate," Jeffries said in another report dated 2 January.

Jio Financial Services reported a 56% sequential drop in net profit to ₹294 crore in the October-December quarter owing to the absence of dividend income on shares held in Reliance Industries and an increase in operational expenses on employee addition, capacity building and corporate social responsibility expenses.

In the previous July-September quarter, the NBFC saw net profits of ₹668 crore on account of dividend income worth ₹371 crore.

The company's net interest income grew 44.6% sequentially to ₹269 crore at the end of the December quarter compared with ₹186 crore at the end of the September quarter. Other income, however, fell by 65.6% to ₹145 crore at the end of the December quarter.



Civil aviation minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said sufficient CISF manpower availability will also be ensured at the six airports. PTI

# Six airports told to build war rooms as fog hits flights

FROM PAGE 1

availability will be ensured round-the-clock," he added.

Tuesday's government action came after a passenger in Delhi on Sunday assaulted a pilot over a 13-hour delay, and others at the Mumbai airport dined on the tarmac close to a plane. The passenger who assaulted the IndiGo pilot was arrested and let off on bail, while the airline took steps to put him on a no-fly list.

Separately, the civil aviation ministry issued a show-cause notice to IndiGo and the Mumbai airport after a video of passengers eating on the tarmac surfaced. The notice cited violation of Rule 51 of the Aircraft (Security) Rules, 2023, regarding failure to observe security procedures.

"Both IndiGo and the Mumbai International Airport were not proactive in anticipating the situation and in making appropriate facilitation arrangements for passengers at the airport," an official aware of the development said. "In the case of both notices, the ministry

has asked for replies by 16 January. If replies are not received in the given time, then enforcement action including financial penalty will be initiated," the official added. IndiGo said it has initiated an internal enquiry and will also respond to the notice.

The proposal is intended to cut emissions and India's oil import bill, while also fostering a local EV manufacturing ecosystem. If approved, this will be the government's fourth EV-focused scheme for the automotive sector. Other existing schemes include FAME-India and two production-linked incentives (PLI) schemes for advanced automotive technologies and advanced chemistry cells.

Based on the experience of these schemes, a consensus is developing in the government that the most effective way of taking the Indian automotive industry electric is to crack public transportation. This will transfer the benefits of modern transportation to a larger number of people rather than focusing the benefits on a few affluent buyers of personal vehicles.

## The directive comes after flight delays, diversions and cancellations botched travel plans and frayed tempers

on social media platforms.

Meanwhile, the Delhi airport, India's largest and busiest with 1,400-1,500 daily flights, on Tuesday made its 29L runway fully operational for CAT III flight operations. In aviation, Category III, or CAT III, refers to a type of automated system that facilitates landing in very low visibility conditions.

While a runway can be approached from two ends, only one end of the 29L runway was CAT III-compliant so far, allowing planes to land with a runway visual range less than 200m but not less than 50m. On Tuesday, this runway was made fully CAT III-compliant. The airport's main CAT III-compliant runway 28/10 is yet to return to service.

"Operationalization of RWY 28/10 as CAT III at Delhi Airport after re-carpeting will also be undertaken," Scindia said.

On Tuesday, the government's weather office warned that fog may affect some airports, highways and railway routes in Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, north Rajasthan and north Madhya Pradesh.

Broadly, fog-induced disruptions eased on Tuesday, and the Delhi airport reported no flight diversions. However, more than 100-120 flights still faced delays at the airport. On an average, an aircraft completes around four flights a day. Hence, a delay at any point causes a domino effect, and impacts departures and arrivals for other destinations over the day.

"Air India regrets the disruption to operations arising from the last few days' dense fog in North India, including at our main Delhi hub, which resulted in some diversions and desynchronization of aircraft and crew rotations. We are working hard to restore schedules, and sincerely regret the inconvenience caused to our passengers," the Tata group-owned airline said in a statement.

Latest data for 15 January showed dismal levels of punctuality. IndiGo reported on-time performance of 22.1% (against 21% on 14 January), Air India 18.6% (against 46.8%), SpiceJet 42.7% (against 51.8%), VistaJet 54.3% (against 29.6%), AIX Connect 31.3% (against 30.2%) and Akasa Air 66.2% (against 41.8%).

With inputs from PTI.

# HDFC Bank on retail trip; Q3 net profit jumps 33.6%

FROM PAGE 1

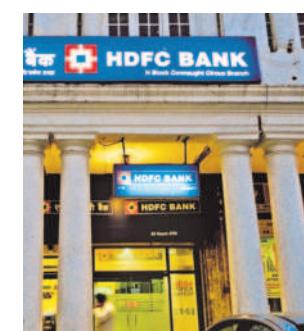
India for Q2—results for Q3 are awaited—stood at 4.53% and 3.43%, respectively.

Usually for banks, margins in retail loans—especially in unsecured loans—are higher than for loans given to corporates; so, a further tilt towards retail loans may help lift margins for the bank.

A key aspect was that margins were flat quarter-on-quarter (q-o-q) at 3.4%. Improvement in NIM is critical for re-rating of the stock," Suresh Ganapathy, managing director and head of financial services research at Macquarie Capital, said in a note.

Analysts are closely watching the bank's strategy in the coming quarter as it tries to garner more deposits to match its burgeoning loanbook.

"HDFC Bank has shown operational improvement, but there is a question mark on how it will manage the deposit growth that is still lagging credit growth," said Autosh Mishra, head of research, institutional equities, Ashika Stock Broking. "This will be the primary focus at the moment and might disappoint market expectations."



HDFC Bank's net interest income grew 23.9% y-o-y to ₹28,471.3 crore in Q3. MINT

q-o-q, outstanding wholesale deposits shrank by ₹11,800 crore. "The non-retail book is price-sensitive and to the extent that we do not participate at that price, we focus on the retail granular book," he said. He's referring to the fact that companies and other large depositors tend to pull out deposits if interest rates fall, unlike retail depositors.

The bank has been quite conscious about pricing of deposits as well as loans, and has said in the past that it had to let go of lending opportunities owing to stringent pricing (interest rates on loans in this case).

"As part of the macro cycle, we see opportunities for various mid-corporates to tap the capital markets directly. They are price-sensitive, too, and while we want to participate (in lending to them), we will be circumspect on pricing to get the appropriate kind of return," said Vaideyanathan.

Meanwhile, HDFC Bank's provisions rose 50.2% y-o-y to ₹4,216.6 crore, and it set aside contingent provisions of ₹1,220 crore to cover investments in alternative investment funds (AIFs). Last month, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) clamped down on lenders allegedly evergreening loans through AIFs.

# One million e-bus plan to ride on local mfg

FROM PAGE 1

buses were sold.

The government estimates that it will take at least the first two years of the scheme's 10-year tenure to develop local capacity to manufacture these buses.

The proposal also looks at allowing foreign companies to set up a manufacturing base in India



There are about 2.3 million diesel and CNG-run buses on Indian roads today. MINT

Electro Mobility, a maker of electric buses. "Higher adoption of electric buses will drive forward the local economy and the entire bus manufacturing ecosystem with larger players investing in capacities, higher indigenization of bus and bus parts and, in the process, more new jobs will be created."

The proposal to the PMO may also include a suggestion to lower the GST rate on components for electric buses, especially battery cells, to 5% from 18% today. The EV industry has an inverted duty structure, where

the GST rate on key inputs like battery cells and other components ranges at 18-28%, but when they sell a bus, they can only charge 5% GST. This often leads to unutilized input tax credit with manufacturers.

To create enough charging stations for the buses, the proposal looks to rope in NTPC Ltd and Power Grid Corp. of India Ltd to develop

the infrastructure.

The proposal is intended to cut emissions and India's oil import bill, while also fostering a local EV manufacturing ecosystem. If approved, this will be the government's fourth EV-focused scheme for the automotive sector.

Other existing schemes include FAME-India and two production-linked

incentives (PLI) schemes for advanced automotive technologies and advanced chemistry cells.

Based on the experience of these schemes, a consensus is developing in the government that the most effective way of taking the Indian automotive industry electric is to crack public transportation. This will transfer the benefits of modern transportation to a larger number of people rather than focusing the benefits on a few affluent buyers of personal vehicles.

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"The FAME scheme has been very helpful in the faster adoption of electric buses and promoting e-mobility across the country," said Aanchal Jain, chief executive officer of PMI.

The scheme is likely to have an operating expense (opex) model, where intermediaries buy the buses from manufacturers like FAME-India and lease them on a per-kilometre basis to state units. This ensures that the burden of buying these buses, which cost around ₹1.5 crore each after subsidies, does not strain state coffers. "Since states may not be able to fund the expense of replacing these buses, there will be a lease model available for states," said one of the persons cited above.

The scheme is likely to have an operating expense (opex) model, where intermediaries buy the buses from manufacturers like FAME-India and lease them on a per-kilometre basis to state units. This ensures that the burden of buying these buses, which cost around ₹1.5 crore each after subsidies, does not strain state coffers. "Since states may not be able to fund the expense of replacing these buses, there will be a lease model available for states," said one of the persons cited above.

For instance, Manika Juneja, managing partner, digital experience, Dentsu Creative, pointed out that AI facilitates scriptwriting by analysing story structures that resonate with audiences, helps the casting process by analysing actor performance data, audience reac-

events. Juneja added.

Kavita Shenoy, chief executive officer of media technology company Voir, said stand-alone apps could even replace dubbing artists, increase the speed of language releases and drive larger audiences to regional stories.

In post-production, AI tools could speed up video editing. AI engines can now annotate each frame with great accuracy at pace, so typical tasks like removing, enhancing and replacing any frame will become a matter of a few minutes as compared to weeks and months," Naresh Khanduri, executive vice-president and global head, generative AI for customer experience at global IT company Capgemini.

Other than automating labour-intensive tasks, AI addresses major language barriers. Advances in AI allow seamless rendering of sound in different languages, eliminating the "dubbed" feeling, according to media industry experts. "This process is already underway and expected to scale up, providing a cost-effective solution for expanding content in diverse language categories," Vikram Bhalla, founder and director of Vivify Asia, an integrated marketing agency, said.

# OTTs look to harness AI for next-level viewing, production

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NEW DELHI

**V**ideo streaming platforms are increasingly looking to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools to personalize recommendations better for users, and make content discovery easier and more relevant to individual viewers.

Industry experts say such tools will soon be used for scripting and dubbing as well, which will help improve the quality of multilingual releases, and provide casting options and promotional material as well. The future could even see users participating directly in content streaming.

"OTT (over-the-top) platforms are actively leveraging AI tools across different aspects of their operations. Some key areas include content recom-

mandation, personalization, cross-device compatibility, viewing exposures, audience analytics and so on," Manish Kalra, chief business officer, ZEE5 India, said.

Moreover, AI is making an impact in social media marketing through meaningful creatives, memes and short-form content, Kalra added.

By integrating AI, OTT platforms can also streamline their content production and distribution strategies, said Neeraj Sharma, managing director, communications, media and technology, Accenture Growth Markets.

Of course, major OTT platforms such as Netflix, Prime Video and others are already using AI algorithms to recommend content backed by user data. However, its impact can kick in much earlier, too.

For instance,



Ministry of Commerce & Industry  
Government of India



Electronics and Computer Software  
Export Promotion Council



Skilling India in Electronics  
Electronics Sector Skills  
Council of India

**“India's economic growth is linked  
to the progress of the entire world  
and its vision of ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’  
brings new opportunities.”**

– Shri Narendra Modi

## ESC NATIONAL EXPORT EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2024 & ESSCI NATIONAL SKILL EMINENCE AWARDS

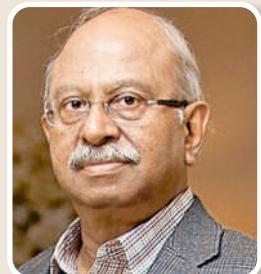
to recognize outstanding performance of Electronics & IT/ITeS exporters during FY 2022-23  
and contribution to Skills Enhancement in Electronics sector. To be presented by

**SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL**

Hon'ble Minister for Commerce & Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution & Textiles  
Government of India

on 17 January 2024 at Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi at 5:30 PM

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### SHOW HIGHLIGHTS



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[feedback@livemint.com](mailto:feedback@livemint.com)NAVIGATING GLOBAL  
ISSUES IN DAVOS

**A**s leading global policymakers and thought leaders gather in Davos for the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2024, there is heightened anticipation about the scheduled discussions on critical issues dealing with the economic, technological and environmental trajectory for the coming years. WEF's recent report on the '10 Global Risks' is a guide for the conversations that will take place at Davos. I can see a few key themes that will take centre stage. The rising dominance of artificial intelligence (AI) is of course on the top of the mind of all participants. The economic outlook and strategies for global growth and sustainability will also be in the limelight. Increased private sector engagement may be, too. I anticipate more nuanced discussions of geopolitical, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issues.

**AI takes centre stage:** The past six months has seen the rise of AI dominating headlines globally. It is therefore fitting that Davos is hosting an 'AI House' to recognize its increasing role in shaping the global agenda. Multiple sessions on the WEF programme have been set aside to have discussions on understanding and managing

AI's impact on various sectors and also the dangers of misinformation. AI also dominates several of the private sessions by companies that have a stake in the disruptive technology.

**Economic outlook:** Fears of a global slowdown have not receded. I expect extensive discussions at Davos on the headwinds and tailwinds affecting the economic outlook for 2024.

**Sustainability at the forefront:** Sustainability remains a steadfast agenda item at Davos and the global business community has acknowledged the urgency of addressing environmental issues. Europe has been the leader in environmental commitments, with the US following suit. India and China, despite their economic development goals, are at the forefront of clean and renewable energy generation.

**Surge in private sector engagement:** Over the past few years, many big businesses had chosen to have a muted presence in Davos. This year, a surge in registrations, surpassing pre-covid levels, shows a heightened level of engagement. This clearly signals the desire among businesses to help address global challenges.

**Shift in agenda—geopolitics and DEI:** Geopolitics seem to have been pushed to the background compared to previous years. There are fewer discussions around conflicts in Ukraine and Israel/Gaza as compared to the debates in early 2022, immediately after the Ukraine-Russia conflict began. Similarly, there are fewer sessions around DEI though there are several private events on these, showing how organizations are prioritizing the agenda.

Rajiv Memani is EY India chairman and regional managing partner



## Juniper eyes more luxe hotels

Firm has key metros like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru in its sights; focus on asset ownership, development

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NEW DELHI

**J**uniper Hotels, gearing up for a late January or early February IPO, is setting its sights on developing more large-scale luxury hotels in key metro cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru. This strategy is in line with its departure from the mid-market segment, which it has deemed less profitable and increasingly crowded.

The company's CMD Arun K. Saraf, in conversation with *Mint*, said that in the upper-upscales and luxury hotel categories, the industry has seen a steady average increase in demand of about 10% year-on-year since the early 2000s. But because of a negligible projected increase in supply of new hotels in the luxury category over the next five years, the company is positive that there will be strong growth prospects for it. IPO-bound Juniper Hotels will also look at developing more assets in Goa and Hyderabad with large convention facilities.



Juniper Hotels CMD Arun K. Saraf.

This move reflects the company's focus on maximising returns in a market that is seeing a rise in competition. "Starting 2014, we pivoted away from mid market inventory hotels. Our focus remains solely on asset ownership and development. There is a lot of opportunity right now and we would like access to fresh capital

of ₹1,800 crore (through the IPO) to grow rapidly. Of this, ₹1,500 crore will be a capital raise to deleverage and future growth. We will use the remaining ₹300 crore for general corporate purposes and will deploy that later. The hospitality opportunity in India is staring us right in our faces," said Saraf. He referred to the

company selling off a mid-market hotel opportunity it had earlier begun to develop in Ahmedabad. Following this, it invested in a larger scale development in the same city.

Juniper's business model extends into developing commercial areas within its hotels, venturing into serviced apartments and even office spaces when feasible. This strategy leverages land holdings and maximises potential revenue streams. The company has about 1,950-keys across its hotels. Saraf will transfer about 1,000-keys from his other businesses into this portfolio.

The company, co-owned by Saraf Hotels and Hyatt affiliate Two Seas Holdings, plans to bring in fresh capital via the IPO without altering ownership structures. This marks a continuation of a long-standing partnership dating back to 1998, when the two entities collaborated on the Grand Hyatt Mumbai hotel project.

Juniper is directly linked to the global hospitality company Hyatt Hotels which had direct investments from its founding family in the US—the Pritzkers. The same family has also invested in Juniper. When Hyatt Hotels Corp. became a listed entity in the US in 2009, Juniper also moved into the Hyatt Hotels Corp. as a part of the business.

Since then, Juniper moved on from owning one hotel in Mumbai to having six other hotels, either directly or through its subsidiary. This company, he clarified, will also be brand agnostic and will look to tie up with any Indian or international hotel management firms and not just Hyatt.

"The goal of the company is looking at owning profitable 'big-box' or large hotel assets in every market that we operate in and focus on Ebitda and capital appreciation. That is how our strategy has worked so far with each of our seven assets," he added.

₹1,800 cr  
capital to be  
accessed through  
the IPO

## Hyundai expects sales of its diesel vehicles to fall to 30-35% in '24

Alisha Sachdev  
[alisha.sachdev@livemint.com](mailto:alisha.sachdev@livemint.com)  
NEW DELHI

**S**outh Korean carmaker Hyundai Motor Co.'s India arm expects sales of its diesel engine-powered vehicles to reduce to nearly 30-35% in 2024, down from 40% at present, a top company official told *Mint*.

Hyundai Motor India will derive 65% of its sales from sport utility vehicles (SUVs) in 2024, a segment in which customers prefer the higher fuel efficiency and power of a die-

sel engine in the larger segments, and petrol and CNG for better fuel economy at the lower end.

"Diesel used to account for 60% of our sales at its peak, with petrol accounting for 40%, but now the trend has reversed with diesel accounting for 40%, which is good and in line with the industry direction. This year, it seems that 38-40% will be diesel, but because of four new turbo-petrol engine, some diesel volumes may shift to that and diesel may account for 30-35% of our sales," Tarun Garg, COO,

Hyundai Motor India, said.

"We will need to be much more flexible because there are so many variables at play which makes it difficult to project a powertrain mix. We are not a major player in EVs but a leading EV player is saying it's difficult to have a target, so we are making our production lines very agile to quickly adapt to customer demand," he said.

He expects SUV sales not to exceed 70%.

"My saturation point will be less than 70% because we're still a full range manufacturer 70%. Our SUV penetration will be around 65% in 2024 and then I think we'll fall in the range of 65-70%, but not cross it. For the industry, SUV sales were at 49% last year, and this year is likely to be close to 52%. I don't see industry SUV

penetration levels also crossing 55%."

Hyundai on Tuesday launched a significant upgrade of its best-selling mid-SUV Creta at a starting price of ₹11 lakh, going up to ₹20 lakh ex-showroom

980,000 units so far, making it the first SUV in its segment to touch the 1-million unit mark. The SUV has been a very successful product for Hyundai in India, accounting for more than a quarter of its sales.

"One thing which has been consistent is the segment leadership all across with the Creta. Today, the Creta is contributing 26.1% to my volumes in 2023 when it was at the end of its lifecycle. In 2015 it contributed 8.6% to my volume.

Every year the Creta's contribution to my sales have increased," Garg said.

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## CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE No.  
NGP-TDC-ELECT-2023-24/06R  
Date : 15.01.2024

Description : Design, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 25kV OHE for 3rd & 4th line in Selco Road (Excl.) to Sewagram (Incl) up to WR Yard and Ajni Yard (Phase II work only) including associated OHE modification work in WR-NGP section of C. Rly. NGP Division, Estimated Cost of the work : Rs. 16,35,58,413.99/-, Cost of Tender Form : NIL, Earnest Money Deposit : Rs. 9,67,800.00/-, Completion Period : 18 Months. Closing of Tender : On 12.02.2024 15:30 Hrs. Details on Railway website : [www.irps.gov.in](http://www.irps.gov.in)

Deputy Chief Electrical Engineer  
SUN 401

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## CHHATRAPATI SAMBAHJINAGAR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

NIT No. : OC/CSMC/SWM/39/2024 Date 15/01/2024

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT NOTICE INVITING TENDER for "Disposal Of Legacy Waste By Bio-Remediation And Bio-Mining At Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar Municipal Corporation" invites online bids through <https://mahatenders.gov.in> for following works from the bidders fulfilling eligibility criteria's

S. N.	Name of Work	Cost of Tender	Earnest Money Deposit is Rs.
1	"Disposal Of Legacy Waste By Bio- Remediation Bio-Mining And At Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar Municipal Corporation"	11800/-	33,00,000/-

EMD shall be payable online on the portal <https://mahatenders.gov.in>. Online Tender Purchase start date : 16/01/2024 till 15:00 Hrs. Online Tender Purchase end date : 09/02/2024 till 15:00 Hrs. Online Bid Submission end date : 09/02/2024 till 15:30 Hrs. Pre-bid Meeting : 29/01/2024 at 15:00 Hrs. Technical Bid Opening date : 12/02/2024 at 15:30 Hrs. PLACE OF OPENING BIDS : OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, E-TENDER CELL PHASE-3 BUILDING, CHHATRAPATI SAMBAHJINAGAR-431001 OFFICER INVITING BIDS : MUNICIPAL COMMISSIONER CHHATRAPATI SAMBAHJINAGAR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION 431001. Amendment to NIT, if any would be published on website <https://mahatenders.gov.in>

Sd/-  
Deputy Commissioner - 5  
For Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar Municipal Corporation

## TORRENT POWER LIMITED INVITES BIDS FOR PROCUREMENT UPTO 300 MW RE HYBRID POWER WITH GREENSHOE OPTION UPTO 150 MW ON LONG TERM BASIS

Torrent Power Limited (TPL), one of the distribution licensees in Gujarat intends to procure upto 300 MW RE Hybrid Power with Greenshoe option of upto 150 MW through tariff based competitive bidding process on e-bidding portal <https://www.bharat-electronic-tender.com> for fulfilling its Renewable Power Purchase Obligation (RPPo).

For more details please refer to the tender documents (RfS No.: TPL/Hybrid/01/2024) which can be downloaded from e-bidding portal or from Torrent Power Limited's website ([www.torrentpower.com](http://www.torrentpower.com)).

For any assistance on e-tendering, please contact e-bidding portal helpdesk on +91-124-4229071, 4229072. TPL reserves the right to reject all or any Bids or cancel the tender process without assigning any reason whatsoever and without any liability.

Last date for submission of bid is 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Further details may be obtained from:

Vice President  
Torrent Power Limited  
Naranpura Zonal Office, Sola Road,  
Naranpura, Ahmedabad – 380013, Gujarat.  
Phone: 07927492222 Ext: 5730  
Email: [powerpurchase@torrentpower.com](mailto:powerpurchase@torrentpower.com)

Date: 17-01-2024  
[www.torrentpower.com](http://www.torrentpower.com)

भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक  
RESERVE BANK OF INDIA  
[www.rbi.org.in](http://www.rbi.org.in)

Auction of Government of India Dated Securities for ₹35,000 crore on January 19, 2024

Government of India (GOI) has announced the sale (issue/re-issue) of four dated securities:

Sr. No.	Nomenclature	Notified amount Nominal (in ₹ Crore)	Earmarked for Retail Investors* (in ₹ Crore)
1	7.33% GS 2026	8,000	400
2	7.18% GS 2037	10,000	500
3	7.25% GS 2063	12,000	600
4	New GOI SGrB 2054	5,000	250

Gol will have the option to retain additional subscription up to ₹2,000 crore against each security mentioned above. The will be subject to the terms and conditions spelt out in this notification (called 'Specific Notification'). The stocks will be sold through Reserve Bank of India Mumbai Office, Fort, Mumbai - 400001, as per the terms and conditions specified in the General Notification F.No.4(2)-W&M/2018, dated March 27, 2018.

The auction will be conducted using uniform price method for 7.33% GS 2026, 7.18% GS 2037 and multiple price method for 7.25% GS 2063, New GOI SGrB 2054. The auction will be conducted by RBI, Mumbai Office, Fort, Mumbai on January 19, 2024 (Friday). The result will be announced on the same day and payment by successful bidders will have to be made on January 22, 2024 (Monday).

For further details, please see RBI press release dated January 15, 2024 on the RBI website – ([www.rbi.org.in](http://www.rbi.org.in)).

Attention Retail Investors\* (\*PFs, Trusts, RRBS, Cooperative Banks, NBFCs, Corporates, HUFs and Individuals)

Retail investors can participate in the auctions for the amounts earmarked for them on a non-competitive basis through a bank or a primary dealer. Individual investors can also place bids as per the non-competitive scheme through the Retail Direct portal (<https://rbiretaildirect.org.in>). For more information, detailed list and telephone numbers of primary dealers ([www.rbi.org.in](http://www.rbi.org.in)) or FIMMDA website ([www.fimmda.org](http://www.fimmda.org)).

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## MINT SHORTS

### **Xi wants strong yuan in push to make China a 'financial power'**

Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasized the need for a strong currency as he seeks to make his country a "financial power," highlighting Beijing's desire to boost the global status of the yuan. A financial power should have a robust economic foundation, strong currency, central bank, financial institutions, regulation and talents, Xi said at a study session on Tuesday, according to the official *Xinhua News Agency*.

BLOOMBERG

### **North Korea's Kim calls for South to be seen as 'primary foe'**



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Monday called for the constitution to be changed to ensure that South Korea is seen as the "primary foe" and warned his country did not intend to avoid war should it happen, state media KCNA reported on Tuesday. In a speech to the Supreme People's Assembly, North Korea's rubber-stamp parliament, Kim said he had concluded that unification with the South was no longer possible, and accused Seoul of seeking regime collapse and unification by absorption.

REUTERS

### **Shell halts Red Sea shipments over attack fears, says report**

British oil giant Shell has paused transit through the key Red Sea shipping route indefinitely, over fears of escalating tensions involving Yemen's Houthi rebels, according to a media report on Tuesday. The worries of escalation grew after the US and the UK strike on scores of sites in rebel-held Yemen Friday, the *Wall Street Journal* reported, in retaliation over Houthi attacks in the Red Sea which have disrupted shipping.

AFP

### **Global health spending key to halting climate change: Bill Gates**



Bill Gates believes a key way to combat climate change is improving access to health care in developing countries, an area the billionaire philanthropist worries that governments are neglecting. "Global health is a little bit off the radar right now," he said on Tuesday in an interview. "For the next ten years, where money is going to be so limited, if you want to care about climate impact, the health spending should go up, not down."

BLOOMBERG

### **IMF's Georgieva sees global growth aided by 2023 tailwinds**

The global economy is set to receive a boost in 2024 from a slightly stronger-than-anticipated performance last year, according to the head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). While managing director Kristalina Georgieva refused to be drawn on how the Washington-based lender will revise its forecasts later in January, she pointed out that the US was "poised for a soft landing" as interest rates start to decline.

BLOOMBERG

### **Evacuation underway in China for avalanche-stranded tourists**

Rescuers evacuated tourists on Tuesday from a remote skiing area in northwestern China where dozens of avalanches triggered by heavy snow have trapped more than 1,000 people for a week, state media said. The avalanches have blocked roads, stranding both tourists and residents in a village in Altay prefecture in the Xinjiang region, close to China's border with Mongolia, Russia and Kazakhstan.

AP

## Divisions emerge in Israel's war cabinet as conflict enters pivotal stage

Rory Jones  
feedback@livemint.com

**R**ifts among Israel's war cabinet are spilling into public view, threatening to undermine the country's military strategy in Gaza at a crucial stage in the conflict.

The small collection of wartime decision makers—Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and

former head of the Israeli military, Benny Gantz—is diverging publicly on the two biggest dilemmas they face: whether Israel should negotiate to end the conflict and free the hostages, and who should govern the bombed-out strip once the war is over.

The divisions in Israel's cabinet reflect longstanding personal and professional disagreements between the lawmakers, who

came together after the Hamas attack on Oct. 7 that killed 1,200 Israelis to form a national unity government to prosecute the war and reassure Israelis.

They were united by a common enemy in Hamas. But as pressure has mounted from the Biden administration to limit Palestinian civilian deaths in Gaza, and the government has failed to return all the hostages, divisions between the leaders have re-emerged.

Gallant

on Monday said that "political indecision" about who would take responsibility for postwar Gaza would hurt the military campaign.

In a plan he articulated this month, Gallant has called for Palestinian self-governance and a multinational task force led by the U.S., with European and Middle Eastern partners, to oversee the rehabilitation of the strip. The U.S. wants a revitalized

Palestinian Authority to take over with help from Arab states.

Netanyahu, under pressure from his far-right coalition partners to block the Palestinian Authority from governing in Gaza, hasn't so far articulated a vision for postwar governance there.

"The end of the military campaign must be based on a political act," Gallant said Monday.

Spokespeople for Gallant and the prime minister's office didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

Under pressure from the families of hostages held by Hamas and other militants in Gaza, Gantz, the head of the National Unity Party, and his deputy, Gadi Eisenkot, are pushing to enter talks with Hamas to bring home the roughly 130 captives still held in the enclave, according to Israeli media reports widely discussed among political analysts.

Netanyahu and Gallant,

meanwhile, say that maintaining military pressure on Hamas will force the group to make concessions, according to the reports.

"There's clearly a distinction here between the two sides," said Reuven Hazan, part of the political-science department at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. "If it was up to Gantz and

Eisenkot, and tomorrow

Hamas made an offer of ending the conflict in exchange for releasing all of the hostages, they would go for it. Netanyahu would say no."

While the prime minister and his defense minister are in agreement on continuing the war, they are increasingly at odds over who should govern Gaza after it—a question

becoming more urgent as Israel moves to a lower-intensity phase of its war and seeks to prevent a vacuum emerging in the enclave.

Hamas appears to be seeking to exploit the war cabinet's divisions. It released a video Monday of what it said were dead bodies of two of the hostages held in Gaza. A third hostage, Noa Argaman, 26, was shown alive in the video, saying that the two dead hostages had been killed in Israeli airstrikes and calling on the Israeli government to end the war.

Gallant on Monday said the most intensive phase of fighting is complete in northern Gaza, adding that the Israeli military is close to completing intense fighting in the south, around the city of Khan Younis.

It isn't clear that the entire Israeli security establishment agrees with that assessment. When asked later Monday about Gallant's comments, Isra-

eli military spokesman Daniel Hagari pushed back, saying that fighting in the south "will take time." The military had more work to do both above ground and below ground in the vast tunnel network built by Hamas, Hagari said.

Mairav Zonszein, the senior Israel analyst for the International Crisis Group, said that the divisions in the country's war cabinet are creating a kind of paralysis that is preventing the government from executing an effective strategy.

That, she said, could end with Israel reoccupying the Gaza Strip, much as it occupied southern Lebanon for 15 years from the 1980s. "There is no exit strategy," she said.

Now in its fourth month, the Israeli campaign has destroyed swaths of the enclave, displaced nearly two million people and resulted in widespread shortages of food and medicine. More than 24,000 Palestinians have

been killed since the war began, the majority of them women and children, according to Palestinian authorities whose numbers don't distinguish between combatants and civilians.

Israel says it has killed thousands of Hamas fighters and disrupted the group's ability to launch attacks against Israel. But Israel hasn't achieved its initial war aim of destroying Hamas completely. The Israeli military is still seeking to find and destroy tunnels where Hamas's leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, and others are believed to be hiding.

Gallant is likely driven by a mix of political and military calculations when he publicly challenges Netanyahu for refusing to discuss plans for a day after, Zonszein said. "I think he feels a responsibility toward sending 20-year-olds on a mission that is clearly failing," she said. ©2024 DOW JONES & CO. INC.

## Post-Iowa win, Trump sets sight on New Hampshire

Opponents Nikki Haley and Ron DeSantis hope to stall Donald Trump's winning momentum

Alex Leary  
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MANCHESTER, N.H.

**F**resh off a record-setting victory in Iowa, Donald Trump shifted attention to his next target in the GOP nomination hunt: a New Hampshire primary that Nikki Haley hopes will stall the frontrunner's momentum.

Haley was edged out for second place in Iowa by Ron DeSantis, who once predicted he would win there. She is seen as stronger in New Hampshire and will seek to tap in to this state's more centrist electorate in the Jan. 23 primary. Her argument: Trump did a good job as president, but the controversies that surround him hurt the GOP's chances of defeating President Biden in November.

The challenge for Haley—and DeSantis—is that in Iowa, Trump ran up the score with nearly every GOP demographic and in every type of community with a record margin of victory for a competitive Republican Iowa caucuses. Trump allies quickly argued the race should be over so he can focus on Biden, who has minor primary opposition and is building a massive war chest. Democrats are eager to see Trump back on the ballot, convinced voters again will reject him.

Haley congratulated Trump, but quickly touted her prospects in New Hampshire. "I can safely say tonight Iowa made this Republican primary a two-person race," she said. "The question before Americans is now very clear: Do you want more of the same, or do you want a new generation of conservative leadership?" The country, she said, is dreading a Trump-Biden rematch.

"If Haley doesn't win New Hampshire, it's all over. Trump has the nomination," said Andy Smith, a nonpartisan pollster in the state.

DeSantis has faced questions about how long he would continue his campaign, given how intent he focused on Iowa. Still, he spun his distant-second finish Monday as a victory and insisted he would continue, with events sched-



Former US President Donald Trump.

der identity, Trump won substantial majorities among all those voters, leaving DeSantis with little support.

The Iowa caucuses punctuated a yearlong battle to wrest the party away from Trump, one that consumed tens of millions of dollars in advertising and other campaign expenditures and transfixed voters on both sides of the aisle. More than a dozen challengers at one point competed for the Republican nomination.

The former president looked beatable when he announced his candidacy shortly after the 2022 midterm elections, when he was blamed for party losses after endorsing candidates in some key races. As calls grew for him to step aside, attention focused on DeSantis, who won re-election as governor in a landslide.

But Trump's supporters remained steadfast, and his candidacy grew stronger amid a cascade of criminal prosecutions. He faces 91 criminal charges for matters including his handling of classified documents and efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election.

One reason Haley's prospects look better in New Hampshire is that large numbers of independents typically vote in that state's GOP primary, widening her base of support. Some Democrats in Iowa said they planned to caucus for her, viewing her as the strongest candidate to block Trump from winning the nomination. Some voters may also cross the aisle in New Hampshire, where this year's Democratic primary isn't sanctioned by the national party.

Haley has touted her endorsement by popular New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu. She was also boosted by last week's sudden departure of former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, who was staking his campaign on New Hampshire. Sununu said on Sunday that Haley had a chance "of kind of shattering the presumptions that Donald Trump's gonna run away with this."

Eliza Collins and Aaron Zitner contributed to this article.

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## Musk pressures Tesla's board for another massive payday

Bloomberg  
feedback@livemint.com

**E**lon Musk leaned on Tesla Inc.'s board to arrange another massive performance award for him after he sold a significant chunk of his stake in the company to acquire Twitter.

In one of several posts on the topic, Musk wrote that unless he has roughly 25% voting control at Tesla, he would prefer to build artificial intelligence and robotics products elsewhere.

While he remains the carmaker's biggest shareholder with an almost 13% stake, he cashed in almost \$40 billion worth of shares in 2022 to help fund the Twitter deal. Musk, 52, praised Tesla's board in



With 13% stake, Musk is Tesla's biggest shareholder.

other posts and said directors were waiting for a Delaware Chancery Court ruling before preparing another compensation plan. Judge Kathleen St. J. McCormick—who also presided over Musk's ill-fated attempt to get out of the Twi-

ter deal—will decide a case brought by a Tesla shareholder who alleges Tesla's board failed to exercise independence from Musk as it drew up his \$55 billion performance award in 2018. "This is primarily about ensuring the right amount of voting influence at Tesla," Musk wrote in one of his posts on X. Musk is pressuring Tesla's board at an awkward time. The carmaker is off to its worst start to any year as a public company, losing \$94 billion in market value as growth slows and profit margins shrink. The CEO also has had to answer to a *Wall Street Journal* report on his drug use and concerns this has elicited among executives and directors at his companies, including at Tesla.

## Want stability at OpenAI, not control, says Nadella

Bloomberg  
feedback@livemint.com

**M**icrosoft Corp. chief executive officer Satya Nadella said he doesn't want greater control over OpenAI as European and UK regulators consider probes of the deep ties between the two companies.

"What we just want is good stability," he said in an interview at Bloomberg House at the World Economic Forum in Davos. "We invested, we participated when they were whatever they were and whatever they are today—a capped-profit, nonprofit, what have you. So I'm comfortable. I have no issues with any structure."

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman's



Microsoft chief executive Satya Nadella.

ouster in November laid bare how inextricably linked Microsoft and his company have become. Nadella personally advocated for Altman's return and, at one point, offered him a job. Those ties, together with Microsoft's some \$13 billion

investment in the startup, have spurred antitrust reviews in both the UK and the European Union.

*Bloomberg News* reported in December that the US Federal Trade Commission has also made queries into the relationship between the companies.

"It's inevitable that regulators everywhere are going to look at what a company of our size and scale does," Nadella said of the EU probe. "At the end of the day you want new entrants. That's the core of making sure you have vibrant competition."

Nadella said his company, which received a non-voting board observer role following Altman's return, isn't pushing for a seat on the board.

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10

**CHEETAHS** translocated from Africa that have died at Kuno National Park since March '23, including Namibian cheetah Shaurya, which died on Tuesday.

1.59 mn

**NUMBER** of new employees who joined India's workforce in Nov '23, down 7.5% from Oct, according to provisional payroll data from ESIC.

\$248.4 bn

**AMOUNT** raised by startups from venture capital funds in 2023, down 42% from a year before, and the lowest since 2017, according to CB Insights.

\$139 bn

**SIZE** of a sovereign bond sale that China is considering, the fourth such sale in the past 26 years, as it aims to stimulate the economy.

\$1.5 bn

**THE INVESTMENT** that Vodafone and Microsoft will make over the decade, as they signed a deal covering AI, digital payments and the Internet of Things.

HOWINDIALIVES.COM

## Adani group to start mapping Dharavi

**A**dani Group is set to begin mapping Dharavi, one of Asia's largest slums in the heart of Mumbai, within weeks as part of a controversial and extensive face-lift of India's financial capital.

The conglomerate owned by tycoon Gautam Adani won a government contract to redevelop Dharavi in late 2022 and will begin surveying the roughly 600-acre densely packed neighbourhood in March, according to people familiar with the matter, who asked not to be identified because they aren't authorized to speak publicly.

*The Times of India* reported Tuesday that the survey will kick off in two weeks.

Adani, one of India's richest and most powerful businessmen who is seen to enjoy strong ties to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is expected to complete the estimated \$3 billion project over the next seven years, the people said.

BLOOMBERG



Analysts expect passenger vehicle sales to grow around mid-single digits this fiscal.

MINT

## Maruti hikes prices across models

**M**aruti Suzuki India, the country's top car maker, on Tuesday hiked prices of its models by 0.45%, far lower than its hike in January last year, signalling a slowdown in the demand for its cars.

Maruti and its peers had said towards the end of 2023 that they planned to hike prices from January due to increased commodity costs.

The company, majority owned by Japan's Suzuki Motor has struggled with sluggish sales in the small car segment, as the income levels of its traditional customers failed to keep pace with the escalating prices of goods ranging from cars to consumer products. Analysts expect passenger vehicle sales to grow around mid-single digits this fiscal and slow down further in the next, following a surge in sales in the last fiscal driven by pent-up demand due to covid.

The maker of Swift hatchback had increased prices averaging 1.1% across its entire car lineup in January last year, more than double the latest hike. Automakers in India increase prices of their vehicles in January every year after attempting to woo customers with seasonal discounts.

REUTERS

## AYODHYA BECKONS



A mural being installed ahead of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya on Tuesday.

PTI

## Govt, cooperatives move to set up world's largest granary

It is aimed at ensuring storage facilities for food grains and other agricultural goods

Puja Das

Puja.das@livemint.com  
NEW DELHI

**T**he ministry of cooperation plans to sign agreements with the key stakeholders involved in attempts to set up what the government calls the world's largest grain storage.

The pacts are planned to be signed with the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA), National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard), National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) and National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India Ltd (NCCF), a senior official told *Mint*.

The move aims to integrate godowns built at the Primary Agricultural Credit Society (PACS) level with the national food grain supply chain, providing essential market linkages for PACS.

DoCA will permit NCCF to utilize its ware-

houses for storing various commodities like pulses, oilseeds, onions, and grains under various government schemes like the Price Support Scheme and Price Stabilisation Fund.

The move is aimed at ensuring adequate storage facilities for food grains and other agricultural commodities, the official said.

However, specifics regarding the amount of storage or the number of warehouses to be used remain unclear.

This initiative is part of the government's strategy to address the shortage of food grain storage capacity in the country. Launched in May last year as a pilot project in various states and union territories, this plan is touted as the largest in the world in the cooperative sector.

DHIRENDRA KUMAR

At present, India has a grain storage capacity of about 145 million tonnes, with annual food grain output over 300 million tonnes. Every year, the country loses 74 million tonnes of food grains, or 22% of its grain output, due to inadequate storage.

Over the next five years, India is expected to expand storage capacity to 215 million tonnes.

Queries sent to the cooperation ministry, DoCA, Nabard, NCDC and NCCF remained unanswered.

To oversee this extensive plan, a National Level Coordination Committee comprising members from relevant ministries, departments and central government agencies has been established. The NLCC will guide the overall implementation and periodically review the progress.



"Succession" cast members pose with awards, at the 75th Prime-time Emmy Awards.

REUTERS

## 'Succession' sweeps 6 Emmy Awards

**S**uccession' swept the top prizes at the strike-delayed Emmy Awards Monday night in Los Angeles, capturing best drama for the third time in four years and allowing HBO to once again claim the crown as the premier programmer in TV.

A darkly comic show about warring members of a family media dynasty, 'Succession' earned six prime-time Emmys in its final season, including best directing, writing and three acting prizes. The series beat seven other nominees for best drama, including three rival HBO titles, 'The Last of Us', 'The White Lotus' and 'House of the Dragon'. Hulu and FX's 'The Bear', about a young chef who is forced to take over his family's sandwich shop, claimed six prizes for its first season, including best comedy series. Netflix's 'Beef', about a minor traffic dispute that escalates into violence, won the Emmy for best limited series, along with acting awards for the show's stars, Ali Wong and Steven Yeun. It won five in total. Though Hollywood produces hundreds of programmes each year, those three shows together took home 17 of the 27 awards handed out during the Fox network broadcast.

BLOOMBERG

REUTERS

## Vibhor Steel Tubes, others get IPO nod

**T**hree entities—Capital Small Finance Bank, Krystal Integrated Services and Vibhor Steel Tubes—have received Sebi's go-ahead to raise funds through initial public offerings (IPOs).

All three firms, which filed their preliminary IPO papers with the capital markets regulator in October 2023, obtained their observation letters during 8-12 January, an update with the Securities and Exchange Board of India showed on Tuesday.

In Securities and Exchange Board of India's parlance, obtaining its observation letter means its approval to float the public issue.

According to the draft papers, Capital Small Finance Bank's IPO comprises a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to ₹450 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of up to 2,412 million equity shares by existing investors. Those selling shares in the offer for sale include Oman India Joint Investment Fund II, PI Ventures LLP, Amicus Capital Private Equity I LLP and Amicus Capital Partners India Fund I.



Union minister Piyush Goyal chairs second meeting of the reconstituted BOT.

The platform will be available for traders in the next three to four months, the minister said. According to a senior official, Trade Connect ePlatform is an intermediary platform providing the facility to connect Indian exporters and entrepreneurs with various stakeholders in international trade.

The portal will help new exporters access key information and opportunities for MSME traders, which is not easily accessible for small traders due to restricted knowledge about the mechanism, the official added.

Trade Connect ePlatform will be designed in a such a way that anyone can get all the information for export promotion activities, including contact details of all resource persons, the official cited above said. The announcement was made by the minister during the second meeting of the reconstituted Board of Trade (BOT) held at the Bharat Mandapam on Tuesday.

DHIRENDRA KUMAR



The average wedding guest lists have grown close to 14.8% compared to 2022, reaching a new high of 310 guests.

ISTOCKPHOTO

## Wedding business growing 7-8% y-o-y, valued at \$75 bn: Report

**T**he Indian wedding industry is booming again, shaking off any pandemic blues, growing 7-8% y-o-y. According to a new report by wedtech platform WedMeGood, the industry could have touched \$75 billion in this 2023-24 wedding season. The company, in its annual survey, which polled about 2,900 couples and 500 wedding-related vendors, said the Indian wedding industry has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past three years, navigating challenges posed by the pandemic, and is now showing promising signs of returning to normalcy.

The average wedding guest lists have grown close to 14.8% compared to 2022, reaching a new high of 310 guests.

Its data said there is a 59% preference for equal financial contributions between the bride and groom's families, further highlighting a changing social dynamic.

VARUNI KHOSLA

## Mahindra calls for level playing field

**A**utomaker Mahindra & Mahindra has told the government there must be a level playing field between domestic and foreign players and local manufacturing must be promoted, a top executive said, as New Delhi seeks to lure carmakers such as Tesla.

Mahindra and Tata Motors have pressed Indian officials privately not to lower import taxes of 100% on electric vehicles and protect domestic firms and their foreign investors as the government reviews Tesla's plans to enter the market, *Reuters* reported last month.

Asked about Tesla's entry and New Delhi's planned policy to lower import taxes, Mahindra managing director Anish Shah said his company had made representations to Indian officials saying global EV makers must be nudged to invest in India. "It should be a level playing field and investing in India is important," Shah told *Reuters* in an interview at the World Economic Forum annual meeting, without referring to Tesla by name.

REUTERS

# INTO THE WILD: WHEN ANIMALS COME CALLING

In India, people share land with wild animals, millions of cattle and stray dogs. The relationship is complicated



Tiger T24, popularly known as Ustad, at the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan, in May 2012. Allegedly a man-eating tiger, he was captured and moved to Sajjangarh Biological Park at Udaipur in 2015.

WARREN PEREIRA

Rahul Chandran  
feedback@livemint.com  
OMAHA, NEBRASKA

In May 2018, 11-year-old Shavani was attacked and mauled—allegedly by a stray dog—when she stepped outside her house in Uttar Pradesh's Tikriya village.

Three years earlier, in May 2015, Rampal Saini, a forest guard in Rajasthan's Ranthambore National Park, was preyed upon, allegedly by a male tiger—locally known as *Ustad* or the master—whose territory included the area where Saini was killed.

And in Tamil Nadu's Kanchipuram district, a farmer was bitten by a snake when he was gathering hay for his cattle. For a while, said Gnaneswar Ch, a herpetologist with the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust who questioned the man's companion, the victim thought he had scratched his hand against a nail. But after about 10 minutes, his companion saw a spectated cobra nearby. By then, the man had begun to show snakebite symptoms. He was taken to a local faith healer and, when that didn't

work, rushed to a local hospital where he was administered 20 vials of antivenin. The farmer succumbed just a couple of hours after being admitted.

The three incidents, despite the different species of animals involved (India in 2022 had an estimated 3,682

tigers, about 60-80 million stray dogs and nobody has counted the number of snakes), share one commonality: the reality of human-animal conflict in India.

Apart from tigers, dogs and snakes, 1.4 billion Indians share this land with an estimated 307 million cattle, the only surviving population of Asiatic lions, growing numbers of the Asian elephant and leopards, among other animals.

The US, the world's third most populous country, has 336 million in an area that is seven times larger.

**CONFLICT COUNTRY**

Maharashtra already had 27 leopard attacks by April last year and has since then reported several more, including a leopard that wandered into a film set, one that was seen roaming the streets of Nashik and several attacks on young children. A research paper on leopard-human conflict in the journal *People and Nature* shows that in Himachal Pradesh's Hamir-

pur district, there were 74 instances of attacks on humans between 2004 and 2015. Three of them were fatal. Citing compensation records of the state forest department, it notes there were 239 attacks on livestock between 2010 and 2016. And all of this in a district that has no reserve forests. The leopards of Hamirpur were living in "mixed-use landscapes."

It isn't just leopards, although the big cats do feature prominently in any narrative of human-animal conflict in India. They appear in environments as diverse as big cities (Mumbai, Bengaluru) and the villages of Hamirpur.

On 26 December, a tiger walked into a village in Pilibhit, Uttar Pradesh, and rested casually atop a wall, surrounded by hundreds of curious humans who recorded the animal. The resultant video went viral. The cat was captured.

There have also been tiger attacks. Even the herbivorous elephant and gaur have attacked humans. In Shimla, the Himachal Pradesh High Court has asked the state government to do something about the city's monkey menace.

But it is not just wild animals that are on the rampage. Like in Sitapur district, free-ranging packs of dogs have been implicated in multiple killings. In Kerala, 1,631 dog bites were recorded in one three-day period in July last year. This included a three-year-old who was so badly mauled

that her face needed plastic surgery.

That kind of thing is happening elsewhere too. In February, again last year, stray dogs dragged down a four-year-old outside his house in Hyderabad. Visuals of that attack, caught on a neighbourhood CCTV camera, flooded news shows on television.

And then, there are the snakes. A research paper in the journal *ELife* estimates that roughly 58,000 people die annually of snakebites. Globally, they account for more than 130,000 deaths annually while crocodiles, hippopotamuses, elephants, lions, wolves and sharks put together cause around 2,500 deaths a year.

**GOD AND MAN**

Nowhere in the world is man, his gods

and animals as intertwined as in India. The rooftop macaques of Jaipur who live near temples (made famous by documentaries like *Monkey Thieves*) and Rajasthan's famous Karni Mata temple, known for its rats, are examples.

But, perhaps the most popular is Bon Bibi, the forest goddess of the Sunderbans. A landscape where mangrove forests cover the mouths of a mosaic of rivers flowing into the Bay of Bengal, the Sunderbans is famous as an area where wild Bengal tigers prey on humans who venture into the mangroves to collect honey, beeswax or cut firewood.

Locals who share that landscape with tigers and who enter its territory first pray at shrines dedicated to Bon Bibi. The belief is that the goddess protects those who enter the forest from tigers. The legend of the forest goddess even forms a plot in writer Amitav Ghosh's 2004 novel *The Hungry Tide*.

In an article in *Scientific American*, Vidya Athreya, director of the India chapter of the Wildlife Conservation Society, cites the case of Junnar, a geography in Maharashtra that is home to leopards and people and cattle. Athreya, who was in Junnar in the 2000s for her PhD research, wrote that the region had always had leopards, but the attacks nearly tripled after the government introduced a programme to capture and release the felines in protected national forests.

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The tribals also recounted stories of how the crop-raiding elephants would drop grain at the door of poor people as a sort of gift. Another story involved elephants breaking branches noisily in the forest to signal their presence in that area and indicate to people that they did not want to be disturbed.

At the time, this writer took it to be attempts at casual explanation by people who had to share the landscape with wild elephants. But Athreya's work, and that of other biologists, make these stories more nuanced. These stories may be helping

to explain why we have so much wildlife," Athreya told *Mint*.

The research paper on Hamirpur's leopards cited earlier shows the nuances of human reactions to potentially dangerous predators in their landscape.

"Interviews revealed that our participants had numerous experiences with leopards and these rarely resulted in human injury or human death, indicating that non-aggressive human-leopard interactions are more a norm than a rarity in this landscape," the paper stated.

**TRESPASSING IS DANGEROUS**

B ut why are the animals attacking?

"Our long-term studies clearly

show that natural habitats are still critical for survival of leopards and human-leopard co-existence," said Sanjay Gubbi, wildlife biologist and author of *Leopard Diaries: The Rosette In India*.

## mint SHORT STORY

### WHAT

Human-animal conflict is a reality in India. Wild animals, including leopards, tigers and elephants, have attacked humans. Stray dogs and snakes, too. In some cases, humans have retaliated.

### WHY

Natural habitats are critical for the survival of wild animals and human-animal co-existence.

Habitat loss and people encroaching territory meant for animals have led to attacks.

### NOW

People in India have shown the willingness and ability to accommodate wildlife, experts say. The state and people have a responsibility to sustain the country's biodiversity.

the tribals deal with the fact that they share their landscape with the animals who they might run into in the course of ordinary jobs.

"India has had a cultural history of shared spaces and we are unique which is why we have so much wildlife," Athreya told *Mint*.

The research paper on Hamirpur's leopards cited earlier shows the nuances of human reactions to potentially dangerous predators in their landscape.

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### TRESPASSING IS DANGEROUS

B ut why are the animals attacking?

"Our long-term studies clearly

Gubbi uses the example of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park on the outskirts of Mumbai where in 2017, leopards from the national park attacked many people in Aarey Colony.

"Even in the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, leopards live inside the park and visit the fringes of Mumbai city for foraging. I wonder if leopards would survive if Sanjay Gandhi National Park is converted to high-rise buildings?" Gubbi asked.

Gubbi is most famous for the role he played in the capture drama of a leopard that was filmed in 2017 by closed circuit cameras walking along a school's corridors. When the leopard was cornered and trapped the next day, Gubbi found himself in the path of the cornered animal, which attacked. The attack left him with gashes and bites.

"Importantly, this is not unique for Mumbai as projected in the media. Leopards and many other large carnivores live on the fringes of many other cities in India and elsewhere—Bengaluru, Bhopal, Jaipur, Mysuru, New Delhi, Nairobi, Windhoek, and others," he added.

After Rampal Saini, the forest guard in

Many large carnivores live on

the edges of many cities in

India and elsewhere—Bengaluru, Bhopal, Jaipur, Mysuru,

Delhi, Nairobi and Windhoek

among others.

The story of India's complicated relationship with its animals can perhaps best be described by the travails of a wild elephant locally known as Arikomban (a portmanteau of the Malayalam words *ari*, meaning rice and *komban*, meaning tusker).

In April 2023, news crews cut into regular programming with visuals from Kerala's Idukki district, where, according to Malayalam TV channels, an operation was being mounted to catch the elephant.

Television cameras showed foresters preparing for the "operation" as they called it. Yet others tracked the veterinarian mixing the tranquiliser. There were shots of tranquiliser guns being loaded.

Four *kumkis*, as the specially trained domesticated elephants are called in Malayalam, were deployed to manoeuvre the darted and drowsy Arikomban to a truck.

The animal was eventually caught, moved away from the area. For some days after, it was tracked by local news channels, which followed its slow return to the forests of its birth. But on the way, it again raided a village in an adjoining state, was captured again and relocated.

Rahul Chandran is working on a book about human-animal and other types of conflict set in Kerala's Attappadi.





# Why many NRIs are missing out on India's market rally

A complex documentation process for opening demat accounts is hindering their participation

Sashind Ningthoukhongjam  
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The markets have been on a roll since the beginning of the new year, spreading cheer among Indian investors. That, though, offers no solace for many non-resident Indians (NRIs) who have been wanting to dab in the Indian equities markets. A host of rules have made it nearly impossible for them to invest in Indian companies that are household names like the Reliance or Tatas.

Take the case of Tanvi Tayal, a 31-year-old NRI based in the US. She first thought of investing in the Indian stock market four years ago but dropped the idea midway after being asked to produce a number of documents to open an NRI demat account.

To be sure, an NRI demat account is mandatory for transacting in equities—for Indians who reside outside the country and meet eligibility conditions that classify them as NRIs. They can, however, invest in funds that have an exposure to the Indian markets.

"I am already exposed to the US market through the stock options we get but I still feel connected to my roots and want to participate in India's growth story," said Tayal, a senior HR business partner, Amazon Devices. "Opening a demat account requires me to be physically present in India or courier the documents. And that has not been possible."

Most NRIs visit India on short holidays and would rather spend that time with friends and family than running around to open a demat account.

Ahbinav Mitala, a Dubai-based NRI, said a broker asked him to fetch notarized documents for opening the demat account. "How can I get my documents notarized when I'm in Dubai," said Mitala. "It is a lengthy process and I don't want to go to the embassy just for this," he added.

Another UAE-based NRI, Malay Zota, 33, a finance and tax manager with automobile group Mena, managed to open a demat account but that came with a rider barring transfer of funds outside India. The process of opening these so-called non-repatriable demat accounts are slightly less cumbersome and the charges lower than opening an account with repatriation facility. The latter allows money to be transferred from India to a foreign country. Both Tayal and Mitala wanted to open a repatriable demat account.

**Two ways to invest**

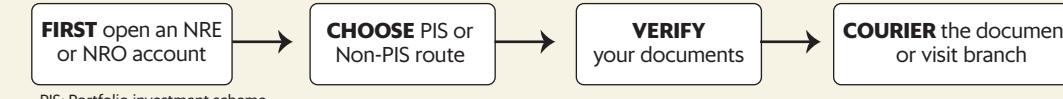
Before initiating the process of opening an NRI demat account, applicants need to change their regular savings account to a non-resident external (NRE) or a non-resident ordinary (NRO) status. In adherence to the guidelines outlined by the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), it is not permissible for an NRI to maintain a savings account in India.

People opt for an NRE account when they want to have the flexibility to repatriate their funds to a foreign country where they are staying. The NRO account is less flexible when it comes to repatriation. In an NRE account, both the principal and interest earned can be repatriated abroad. The NRO account allows only the interest amount to be repatriated. To be sure, up to \$1 million can be repatriated in a financial year from the NRO account under the liberalised remittance scheme but this requires permission from the banking regulator,

## It's a nightmare: Opening an NRI demat account

The cumbersome process of opening an NRI demat account means that many NRIs are not investing in Indian stocks

### How it works?



PIS: Portfolio investment scheme

### What NRIs can't do?

- F&O trading (allowed in non-PIS)
- Intraday trading
- Currency & commodities trading
- Buying of sovereign gold bonds
- Other ways to invest**
- Use platforms that offer MFs with RIAs or MFD licence
- Invest directly with AMCs
- Go with India-focused funds in foreign countries

MFs: mutual funds; RIAs: registered investment advisers; MFD: mutual fund distribution; AMCs: asset management companies

### First, you need an NRE or an NRO account

NRIs need to change their regular savings account to a non-resident external (NRE) or a non-resident ordinary (NRO) status

#### NRE

- CAN repatriate both interest and principal.
- DEPOSITS in foreign currency and withdrawals in Indian currency.
- FUNDS cannot be transferred from an NRO account to an NRE account.
- INTEREST income is tax free.

#### NRO

- CAN repatriate only interest income.
- CAN deposit in foreign as well as Indian currency and withdraw in Indian currency.
- FUNDS can be transferred from an NRE account to an NRO account.
- TAXED at 30% plus cess.



Source: Zerodha

### Then, choose the PIS or non-PIS route

NRIs need to open either a PIS or a non-PIS account before opening a brokerage account

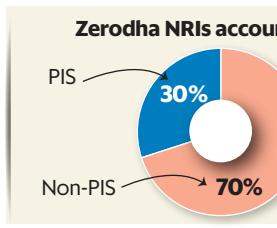
#### PIS

- Can be made from NRE or NRO account
- Only a few banks offer PIS
- Permission from RBI required
- Banks deducts taxes\*
- Banks charge up to ₹300 for contract note
- RBI limits on foreign stock holdings apply

#### Non-PIS

- Only NRO account
- All banks allow
- No permission required
- Banks don't deduct taxes\*
- No contract charges
- No restrictions

\*Either brokers pay taxes or holder pays directly; \*\*Capital gains tax through TDS



### PIS account costs more than non-PIS

Charges are much lower for residents

Brokers	PIS delivery	Non-PIS delivery	Options	AMC
Zerodha	0.5% or ₹200 (lower)	0.5% or ₹100 (lower)	₹100 per order	₹500+ GST
Fyers	₹50/order	₹50/order	₹50/order	Nil
HDFC Bank	0.75% or min ₹25#	0.75% or min ₹25#	₹100/lot or 1% of premium (higher)	₹1,000^

Note: Taxes and other charges may apply; #or ceiling 2.5% on transaction value; ^for PIS

Source: Zerodha

PARAS JAIN/MINT

the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

No tax is levied on the interest earned in the NRE account but that accrued in the NRO account incurs a 30% tax rate. For NRE accounts, deposits are allowed only in foreign currency and withdrawal in Indian rupee. In the NRO account, deposits can be in foreign as well as Indian currency whereas withdrawals have to be in Indian rupee.

After opening an NRE or an NRO account, an NRI has to decide whether to open a demat account using the portfolio investment scheme (PIS) or the non-portfolio investment scheme (non-PIS). The decision to go with a PIS or a non-PIS account will have implications on how they can invest and dabble in Indian stocks.

**Transaction charges are also higher with PIS as the funds cannot be transferred to the brokerage account directly**

account is that the funds cannot be repatriated to the foreign country.

There are other limitations too. In PIS, future and options (F&O) trade is not permitted. Some brokers like Zerodha do not yet support MF investments in PIS accounts. F&O trading is allowed in the non-PIS route. Note that both PIS and non-PIS demat accounts don't allow intraday trades, trading in currency and commodity segments, and buying sovereign gold bonds.

Also, there are restrictions put in place by RBI that specify how much amount can be invested in each stock or sector. If this limit is breached, PIS account holders cannot invest further in those stocks. No such restrictions exist in the non-PIS route.

Transaction charges are also higher in the PIS route. This is mainly because, unlike in the normal demat account where the funds can be transferred directly to your brokerage account to buy stocks, the PIS account funds cannot be transferred to the brokerage account. The funds need to be transferred first from the savings account to the PIS account and when this happens, the banks intimidate the brokers about this information. After the broker gets this information, the account holders can buy stocks, the

value of which cannot exceed the amount thus transferred. Thereafter, the broker executes the trade and sends a copy of it to the banks for trade settlement. All this back and forth incurs an extra cost which the PIS account holder has to bear.

In certain cases, we make an exception by permitting individuals to submit evidence of the fund transfer to the PIS account. We promptly facilitate margin provision through this manual process. But this process is manual and we cannot extend this facility all to all if we get too many requests," said Kazi Rehman, head of NRI investments at Zerodha.

#### Documentation

Opening an NRI demat account is mostly a semi-online process. The NRI has to be physically present either at a bank branch or at a broker's office or will need to courier the signed documents to the broker's office after which the verification of documents is done.

As of now, a number of documents are required to open an NRI demat account, be it PIS or non-PIS. Zerodha's website lists out the documents needed and these include the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) declaration and Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) declaration, notarized copies of supporting documents such as passport and PAN card.

(For an extended version of this story, go to [livemint.com](#))

The PIS status allows repatriation of money to the foreign country but the privilege comes with caveats. Firstly, only a handful of big banks have the licence to issue the PIS status and the applicant needs to get permission from RBI to open a PIS account. This involves a cumbersome documentation process.

Opening a non-PIS account is a relatively straightforward process. RBI approval is not required and all regulated banks offer non-PIS status. However, the downside of a non-PIS

transaction charges are also higher with PIS as the funds cannot be transferred to the brokerage account directly

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This first step is perhaps also the most difficult to execute. In a rising market, such narrative-driven stocks gain the most with the FOMO (fear of missing out) factor kicking in hard. You don't want to sell out and miss out on 'potentially' large gains that are 'just around the corner'. Perhaps, one way of working through this is to ask yourself – Is it better to lose 20% upside, or avoid an 80% downside?

Second, the time to take more risk for more return is perhaps over. Such investments are made in times when few are excited about the prospects of high returns from stocks. Today, everyone is excited about earning super high returns, and this has driven up stock prices to levels that have conversely limited the potential for future returns. How do you counter this? Well, you take some risk off the table. You do this by moving money from the 'high-risk' bucket to the old, boring, and far cheaper large cap blue-chip stocks (the 'low-risk' bucket). When I say high risk, I am generally referring to investments where valuations are factoring in irrational expectations. This is where the chance of taking a big hit is the highest. I would include small-cap stocks in this category. Moving some

money from high-risk to the relatively low-risk bucket could give you far better downside protection, without giving up the potential for earning solid, but realistic, returns going forward. Old is gold could once again hold true in time to come.

Third is a counter-intuitive idea. To avoid notional wealth destruction in the 'long term', you should avoid selling stocks of well-managed companies with strong businesses that have stood

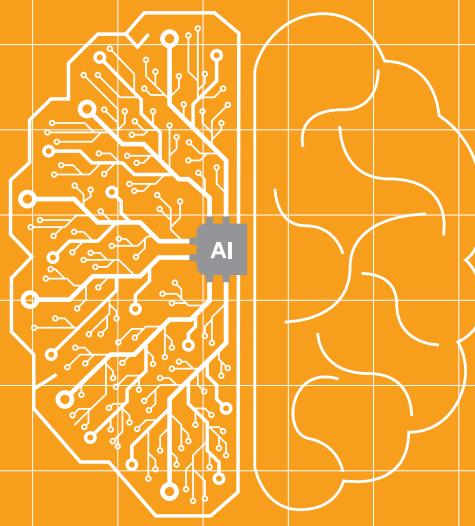
## Compare your bank FD rates

Bank fixed deposits (FDs) continue to be popular investment products not just among senior citizens, who are looking for guaranteed income, but also among investors who can't stomach risk. But overexposure to FDs is not good, and you need to assess your asset allocation and goals to decide how much money you should park in them. For instance, saving for your child's higher education that's 15 years away through FDs may not be effective as the post-tax interest rate of an FD may not give you a real return (return that's above the rate of inflation). But if you plan to take a holiday in two years, an FD can help. Before choosing an FD, you should compare the interest rates on offer. Here is a list of banks that offer the highest FD rates for deposits up to ₹1 crore over various tenures.



	6 months to < 1 year	1 to < 2 years	2 to < 3 years	3 to < 5 years	5 years and above
DCB Bank	6.25-7.25	<b>7.15-7.85</b>	7.55-8.00	<b>7.40-7.90</b>	7.25-7.65
Axis Bank	5.75-6.00	<b>6.70-7.10</b>	7.10	<b>7.10</b>	7.00
HDFC Bank	4.50-6.00	<b>6.6-7.10</b>	7.00-7.15	<b>7.00-7.20</b>	7.00
IndusInd Bank	5.00-6.35	<b>7.50</b>	7.25-7.50	<b>7.25</b>	7.00-7.25
IDFC First Bank	4.50-5.75	<b>6.50-7.75</b>	7.25-7.75	<b>7.00-7.25</b>	7.00
RBL Bank	5.50-6.05	<b>7.50-8.00</b>	7.50-8.00	<b>7.10-7.50</b>	7.00-7.10
YES Bank	5.00-6.35	<b>7.25-7.75</b>	7.25	<b>7.25</b>	7.00-7.25
ICICI Bank	4.75-6.00	<b>6.70-7.10</b>	7.00-7.10	<b>7.00</b>	6.90-7.00
Canara Bank	6.15-6.25	<b>6.85-7.25</b>	6.85	<b>6.80</b>	6.70
Dhanlaxmi Bank	6.50	<b>6.75-7.25</b>	6.50-6.75	<b>6.50-6.60</b>	6.60
Federal Bank	5.00-6.00	<b>6.80-7.50</b>	7.05	<b>7.00</b>	6.60
Bank of Baroda	5.60-6.25	<b>6.85-7.15</b>	7.25	<b>6.50-7.25</b>	6.50
Indian Overseas Bank	4.95-5.35	<b>6.80-7.10</b>	6.80	<b>6.50</b>	6.50
Punjab National Bank	6.00-7.05	<b>6.75-7.25</b>	6.80-7.00	<b>6.50-7.00</b>	6.50
State Bank of India	5.75-6.00	<b>6.80-7.10</b>			

Evolve from  
'Can AI take my job?'



to  
'How can AI work for me?'

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### REQUIRES

#### PGTs (Informatics Practices, Commerce, English, Science)

#### TGT (All Subjects)

The candidate should have good academic record with the relevant qualifications and minimum 3 yrs of experience.

Please submit your Resume at the School Reception or via Email to info@aadharshilavidyaapeeth.org

with all supporting documents, experience certificate and a recent passport-size photograph with in 10 days addressed to the

### Head of The School,

Aadharshila Vidyapeeth, CD-Block, Pitampura, Delhi

### PGT, TGT, PRT, PTI for RSSIS Sadarpur Colony, Noida, Sec-44, Em:

rsisnoida@yahoo.com W/App: 8447698203, 7986601764, 9650963861

### REQUIRES

#### PRIMARY IN-CHARGE

The candidate must be Post Graduate with B.Ed/ B.El.Ed from a recognised institution with minimum 8 years of teaching experience, including 3 years as Primary in-charge in a reputed school.

Salary is not a constraint for the deserving candidates.

Applications with detailed resume & a recent passport size photograph may be sent within 7 days, from the date of this advertisement, at

careers.skool.saket@teams.apeejay.edu

– Principal

APPEJAY SCHOOL  
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17<sup>th</sup> January, 2024 | 12:00 PM



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- Narendra Modi

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Union Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs

**Sarbananda Sonowal**

Union Minister, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways & AYUSH

**Shantanu Thakur**

Minister of State for Ports, Shipping and Waterways



## OUR VIEW



ISTOCKPHOTO

## Multiple-count poverty: Let's try to eliminate it

A Niti Aayog report suggests India's deprived will soon drop below a tenth of its population. As welfare schemes play a role in this progress, we must track single-dimension poverty too

**G**oing by Niti Aayog's latest assessment, India has made substantial gains in its fight against deprivation. Nearly 250 million people are found to have escaped multiple-count poverty in the nine years starting 2013-14, just before today's administration took charge. On Monday, the government think-tank put out a paper on its multidimensional poverty index (MPI) showing a projected drop from 29.2% of our population that year to 11.3% in 2022-23, with data taken from National Family Health Surveys for its calculations. By Niti Aayog estimates, this ratio was 55.3% in 2005-06, but is now expected to go below 10% in 2024. Prime Minister Narendra Modi called the data "very encouraging" on X and said it reflected the government's commitment to inclusive growth. Indeed, the Centre's welfare measures have played a significant role in the drop. The index tracks a dozen indicators of deprivation clubbed under health, education and living standards, all of which are directly addressable. The government's aim is to bring this metric of poverty down to 1%, although no target date has been set. That it finally looks achievable, however, is remarkable in itself.

Expanded welfare budgets afforded by economic expansion have combined with digital enablers—notably the 'JAM' trio of Jan Dhan accounts, Aadhaar identities and mobile phones—to allow alleviation at a vast scale with high efficiency. While food handouts and other measures require physical outreach, direct cash transfers have eased the coverage of various benefit schemes. Notably, leakages have fallen. As for recent times, while signs of a K-shaped recovery have been a worry, it's a relief to note that acute deprivations have not worsened. The

Niti Aayog's index has a formula that echoes what the United Nations Development Programme uses for multidimensional poverty, with parameters that differ slightly. Since the central think-tank's 12 counts include several that targeted programmes can move the needle on—like nutrition, child mortality, sanitation, housing and access to cooking fuel and bank accounts—an end to such poverty looks within reach because it's mostly a matter of reaching out to those who are left behind.

In the past, India's poverty measurement relied on consumption patterns, but that method was abruptly dropped some years ago after leaked national survey data pointed to a worsening. That weakly explained move exposed official data to charges of serving optical ends. To be sure, measuring poverty is a complex task and various statistical lenses are valid for what they aim to reveal. A multi-count index clearly captures a broader snapshot of how our have-nots live than, say, the World Bank's global poverty-line mark, by which anyone living on less than \$2.15 daily counts as poor. As this is barely ₹180, its bar seems too low to reveal Indian indigence. Yet, a sharp cut-off of a single count can offer clarity on the most basic aspect of subsistence. According to World Bank data, India's poverty ratio fell from about 19% in 2015 to 11.9% in 2021. Since this tells us something vital about the means people have under their own agency, as distinct from state provisions, it makes sense for India to use both kinds of poverty trackers in conjunction. As for what we subsist on, consumption is even more elementary than income, so a revival of the old metric could give us a fuller view of a problem we should aim to end within a decade—even if the last haul is sure to prove the hardest.

RAHUL MATTHAN



is a partner at Trilegal and the author of 'The Third Way: India's Revolutionary Approach to Data Governance'. His X (formerly Twitter) handle is @matthan.

I have long been a proponent of 'techno-legal' governance—a hybrid system of laws and code where laws and regulations are embedded directly into the technology system. It has become increasingly possible for us to encode legal requirements directly into the ecosystems upon which we depend. Given that neither the *laissez-faire* approach to governance that the US pioneered nor the regulation-heavy approach taken by Europe has proven successful at regulating digital spaces, I am hopeful that this hybrid approach will offer us new ways in which we can extract the benefits of technology while safeguarding ourselves against its harms.

As I thought more about this approach, it struck me that technology systems are inherently precise. Which means that laws hard-coded into them will be strictly enforced. When laws are embedded in the code, there is no way that a transaction will be allowed to proceed if it is not legally permitted—even if every single participant

indicates a willingness to go ahead with it. Why, one might ask, is this a problem? After all, laws are written to be obeyed and any system designed to ensure that they cannot be violated can only be good for society.

This, as we well know, is not how society functions today. Even though laws are carefully drafted to describe the boundaries of what is permissible, given the imprecision inherent in some of the words used to frame them, we have come to expect latitude in enforcement. We know we must stop at a red light, but if we have to drive through one in order to get to the hospital in a hurry, we know the policeman manning the intersection will likely forgive our transgression. And that in order to get pulled over for speeding, we will need to clock much more than just a few kilometres per hour over the speed limit. It is thanks to this flexibility that we stay within bounds of the law most of the time, aware that we will probably be forgiven if we cross the line under certain explainable circumstances.

It is already possible for us to encode legal limitations into the technologies we use. Take speed limits, for example. It is already feasible to design a car that never exceeds the legally permissible limit, no matter how hard the driver pushes the accelerator.

Commercial fleet managers routinely use speed limiters in the long-distance transport vehicles they manage, so that they never exceed the speed limit no matter where they may be. I see no reason why this technology cannot be deployed more broadly across all vehicles if we really want to programmatically ensure compliance with the law.

Not only is such manufacturing obligation legally imposed on cars, most of the vehicles you can buy are designed to move at speeds much faster than the limit. Even though car manufacturers know that it is illegal to drive cars at their top speed, and even though the technology exists to ensure strict compliance with the law, cars that are produced today are designed so they can operate in violation of the law.

Why is this the case? Why do we design technology that can break the law when it is relatively trivial for us to ensure that it does not? All technologies incorporate within them a zone of mischief—an area between

what is legally permissible and what a given technology enables. While it is technically possible to operate within the zone of mischief, we know that doing so would be a violation of the law. While the technology we operate can function in the zone of mischief, we need to decide for ourselves whether we are willing to suffer the legal consequences we will likely be subject to if we are caught.

Why do regulators permit manufacturers to enable such a zone of mischief when they know full well that it is possible to embed regulations into code? If the intention is to ensure compliance with the law, why not impose strict obligations on manufacturers to ensure that the technology they sell operates strictly within the bounds of what is legally permitted?

Not only would we no longer have to monitor vehicles to ensure they are operating within prescribed speed limits, we could programmatically ensure compliance with other legally mandated behaviours as well—such as ensuring that all passengers

The reason we do not do this—or why we permit the existence of a zone of mischief—is that it serves an important role in the innovation economy. By making it possible for users to push the boundaries of what is possible, it is possible for us to continuously test the limits of existing legal restraints to see whether they are still relevant.

Speed limits were designed with safety in mind and if it can be demonstrated that other improvements in technology have made it possible for vehicles to safely function within the zone of mischief, this might serve as a reason for regulators to revisit the restrictions they had previously imposed.

This gives innovators a much-needed zone of operation within which they can experiment. It offers them a space within which 'creative destruction,' as described by Joseph Schumpeter, can take place—where they can play with new ways of working that could eventually be scaled up.

As we look to adopt techno-legal governance systems, it is important that we remain alive to the need for a zone of mischief. And as we design binary regulatory systems, we should make enough space in these for us to breathe.

## MY VIEW | ON THE OTHER HAND

## Make lasting moves against the mis-selling of financial products

*Supervision of sales pitches won't tackle this problem quite as well as focused consumer courts can*



VIVEK KAUL  
is the author of 'Bad Money'.

Further, as Wolf suggests, "Top executives are unlikely to be held personally liable for anything." He offers the example of the global financial crisis—where the financial services industry primarily mis-sold home loans—and its aftermath: "The executives who drove their banks (and the world economy) into the ground, before the global financial crisis, mostly walked off with large fortunes, while tens of millions of innocent people's lives were ruined and governments were forced to provide huge bailouts." For these shenanigans, only one banker went to prison in the US and none in the UK. Higher-ups in financial service firms rarely bear punitive costs for the mis-selling they incentivize.

There is another side to this. Many would-be investors and consumers of financial products are financially illiterate. Quite a few do not understand the basic math required to make sense of any financial investment or product. So, this leads to information asymmetry, where the side selling the product is far better informed than most buyers.

While some record of the sales pitch is perhaps better than no record, the move isn't going to help India curb mis-selling much. Even though the actual mis-selling of insurance and other investment and financial products is done by insurance agents, wealth managers at banks, etc, the push for it comes from the top management. And this is not just an Indian phenomenon.

Martin Wolf has an explanation in *The Crisis of Democratic Capitalism*: "It is not hard to see corporations as amoral—that is, institutionally incapable of recognizing the distinction between right and wrong or feeling remorse or empathy. This is not just because, being institutions, they are incapable of feeling anything." It's also because of how incentives are set up.

Commissions are made on getting sign-ups for investment deals lower down the hierarchy, while employee-linked stock options incentivize their growth at higher levels. This institutionalizes product mis-selling.

At the same time, age-old human greed is at work, with prospective investors in a hurry to get rich. This makes mis-selling easy. For a few years before the financial crisis of 2008 broke out, bankers and others working for home loan companies in the US and parts of Europe sold floating-rate home loans with very low interest rates and EMIs in the first few years to the poorest of the poor. Many people who took on such loans did not know that EMIs would go up. Further, some of these loans were 'negative amortization loans,' where the difference between the very low EMI that had to be paid for the first few years and the actual higher EMI was added to the loan's outstanding, and so the loan amount kept increasing instead of shrinking with every EMI.

On the flip side, even people who knew that EMIs would increase were hoping to flip the house they bought on a loan and make a quick buck before higher EMIs kicked in.

In India, during the 2000s, many insurance agents mis-sold unit-linked insurance plans (ULIPs) to investors promising them that the investment would double in three years. As a personal finance editor of a daily newspaper, this writer received several such proposals. ULIPs are basically structured like mutual funds and come with a dash of life insurance.

So, yes, those working for the financial services industry do mis-sell, but they are able to do that because there are many people out there waiting for something to be mis-sold to them. There is a market for it and those who run financial firms cater to it.

In fact, a lot of mis-selling stems from the fact that many people do not understand basic high-school math, and they end up buying investment products that they shouldn't. The irony is that they never even realize this and continue to buy such products. Some investment-oriented insurance plans like endowment plans and money-back policies, which are fairly opaque in their structure, are excellent examples. The agents selling such policies are often so well-connected in the localities they live in, that it can be very difficult for people to say 'no' to them when they come selling their wares.

So, just recording the sales pitch isn't really going to do much. This needs to be followed by the setting up of more consumer courts to deal specifically with the mis-selling of financial products. Of course, judges in these courts will need to understand these products to start with. They will need training. Also, along with financial fines, heavier punishments need to be considered.

Further, the basics of personal finance need to be taught at the high-school level, so that by the time individuals start working, they have some idea of what to do and what not to do with the money they are earning.

If all this and more is thought through and implemented, we might see results a few decades down the line.

## 10 YEARS AGO



## MINT METRIC

by Bibek Debroy

In Haryana, an 80-year old  
Was dead, so all were told.  
The ambulance hit a pothole,  
He woke up, hearty and whole.  
State of roads makes this tale unfold.

## MY VIEW | EX MACHINA

## Hard-coded law enforcement needs some latitude too

RAHUL MATTHAN



is a partner at Trilegal and the author of 'The Third Way: India's Revolutionary Approach to Data Governance'. His X (formerly Twitter) handle is @matthan.

I have long been a proponent of 'techno-legal' governance—a hybrid system of laws and code where laws and regulations are embedded directly into the technology system. It has become increasingly possible for us to encode legal requirements directly into the ecosystems upon which we depend. Given that neither the *laissez-faire* approach to governance that the US pioneered nor the regulation-heavy approach taken by Europe has proven successful at regulating digital spaces, I am hopeful that this hybrid approach will offer us new ways in which we can extract the benefits of technology while safeguarding ourselves against its harms.

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## THEIR VIEW

# In memory of Robert Solow as a great economist and fine person

The Solow growth model was the result of his scholarship but we'll also remember him for being an exemplary human being



**KAUSHIK BASU**  
is a professor of economics at Cornell University and a former chief economic adviser to the Government of India.

The recent passing of legendary MIT economist and Nobel laureate Robert Solow at the age of 99 has triggered a wave of tributes honouring his pioneering research, which deepened our understanding of the relationship between investment, technology and economic growth. His monumental contributions to the field are widely acknowledged, but for me his passing creates a profound and unexpected sense of personal loss.

During the 2001-02 academic year, I was a visiting professor at MIT, where I taught microeconomics and was expected to give a few other lectures. Olivier Blanchard, then-chair of the economics department, explained that due to limited space, I would have to share a cluster of three offices, the other occupants being Solow and Paul Samuelson. Although the thought of being in a cluster with two Nobel laureates was somewhat disconcerting, my trepidation was unwarranted; my neighbours turned out to be lovely people. I got to know both Samuelson (who died in 2009), and Solow well during that academic year.

By then, Solow had established himself as a towering figure in the discipline of economics, renowned for his extensive contributions to the field, particularly his ground-breaking research on the drivers of economic growth. Over his illustrious career, he received every major economics award, culminating in the Nobel in 1987.

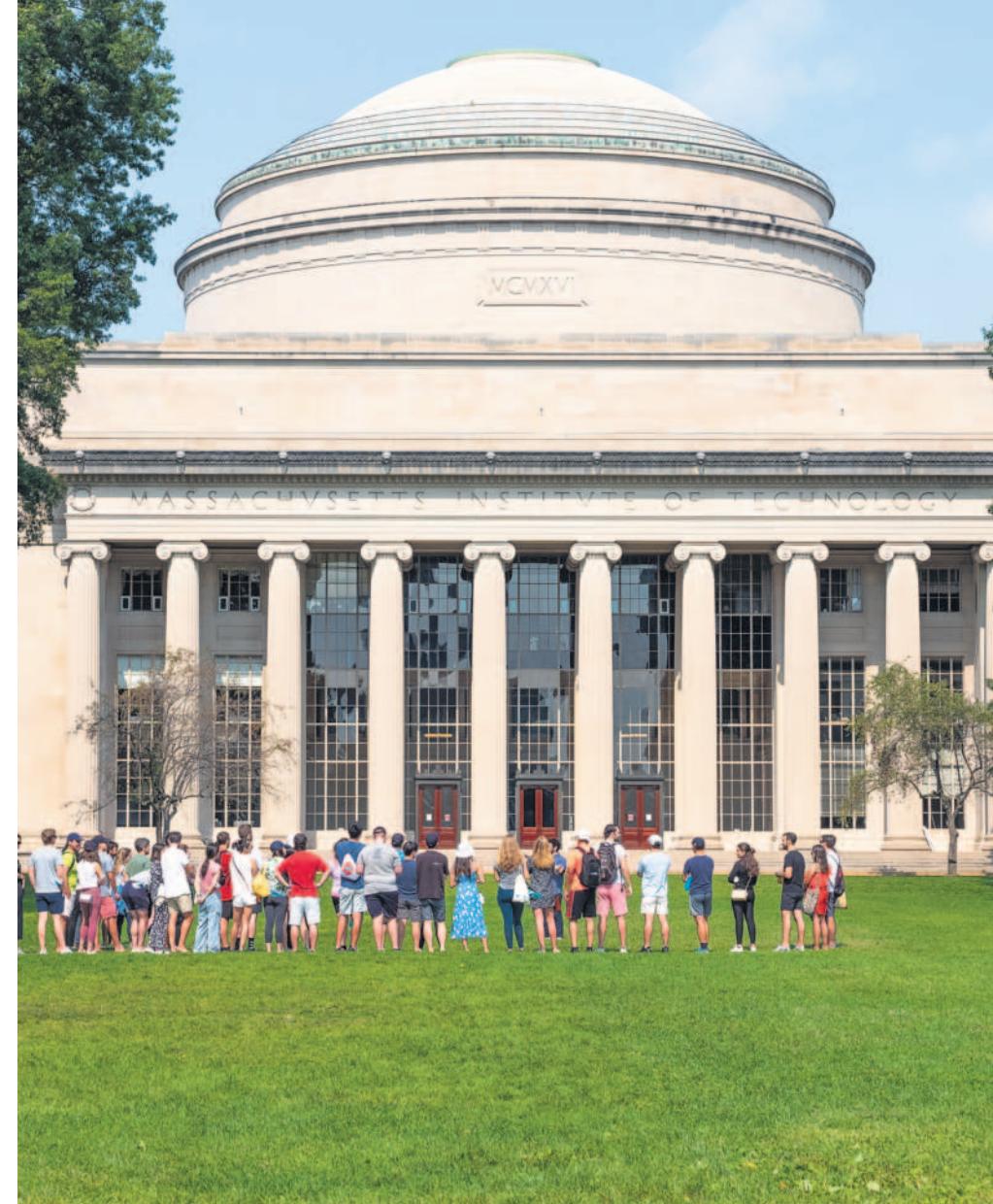
Solow's work has had a profound impact on global policymaking, especially on East Asia's so-called 'tiger' economies during their take-off. As the Nobel Committee noted, Solow's growth model, which he developed in the 1950s, illustrated how "continuous technological progress" could increase economic output, encouraging governments around the world to invest in research and development (R&D).

Unlike many other economists of his generation, Solow did not begin his academic journey in mathematics, physics, or economics. Instead, he initially studied anthropology and sociology, with Harvard sociologist Talcott Parsons as his mentor.

Interestingly, Parsons himself had made the opposite decision, starting his career in economics before moving to sociology. Solow's studies were interrupted when, at the age of 18, he joined the United States Army, serving in North Africa and Sicily until the end of World War II in 1945.

Upon returning to Harvard, Solow studied under the famous Russian economist (and future Nobel laureate) Wassily Leontief. He also married Barbara Lewis, beginning a lifelong partnership that lasted until her death in 2014.

While Solow was already a seminal figure by the time I met him, it was his extraordinary character that struck me the most. What truly set him apart



was not just his modesty but his total lack of pretence, and his natural human warmth.

During our first meeting, Solow asked about the Indian students he had supervised at MIT, wondering if I was familiar with any of them. Remarkably, his interest was not limited to those who had achieved professional success. He was equally interested in those who, though brilliant, had not reached their full potential due to personal circumstances or misfortune, asking thoughtful questions about their lives and families. During the year, my wife and I developed a friendship with Bob and Barbara, inviting them to our home for dinner and meeting them at various Cambridge establishments to talk about economics, sociology, and life.

Solow was a person of remarkable integrity. The model of economic growth he is most known for, the Solow-Swan model, is a case in point. While Solow first published his model in the prestigious *Quarterly Journal of Economics* in 1956, a similar model was developed independently by the Australian economist Trevor Swan, who published his work in the lesser-known *Economic Record* that same year.

Swan, being an economist from a less renowned institution, did not receive the same recognition as Solow for his contributions. I was deeply impressed by Solow's consistent acknowledgment

of Swan's work on the many occasions when we discussed his ground-breaking research.

One of my last interactions with Solow occurred shortly after I became the Chief Economic Adviser to the Indian government. During my first few months in the role, as I struggled to deal with politicians and business leaders, I found myself longing for the intellectual environment of academia. While corresponding with Solow on some policy issues, I told him that I was not enjoying my current job and that I missed the world of research and writing. In his typically avuncular manner, he responded with a handwritten letter, emphasizing the importance of effective policymaking and urging me to dig in my heels and do my best, despite the personal sacrifices this might involve.

Solow was speaking from personal experience, having been a member of US President John F. Kennedy's Council of Economic Advisers from 1961 to 1962. He was right: Over time, I grew to enjoy my policymaking work, particularly my discussions with then-Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on some of the minutiae of policy design. I am deeply grateful to Robert Solow (1924-2023) for offering much-needed encouragement when I needed it most and for his enduring friendship. He was not just an exemplary scholar; first and foremost, he was an exemplary human being.

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## VIDYA MAHAMBARE & AKASH GUPTA



are, respectively, professor of economics and director (research) at Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai; and an independent researcher.

India's first woman finance minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, will deliver her 6th Budget speech on 1 February 2024. She is the fifth finance minister (FM) since the 1980s to have delivered five consecutive budget speeches (for 2019-20 to 2023-24) and now she will present an interim budget ahead of national elections later this year. Other FMs who delivered five consecutive speeches were Manmohan Singh (1991-92 to 1995-96), Yashwant Sinha (1998-99 to 2002-03), P. Chidambaram (2004-05 to 2008-09), and Arun Jaitley (2014-15 to 2018-19). Here, the years refer to the fiscal year for which the budget was prepared for. For example, the 2019-20 speech is a budget speech delivered in February 2019 for the next fiscal year.

How do the current FM's speeches compare on length, complexity and sentiment tones with those of her predecessors? And what can be expected this year?

First, the last two budget speeches by Sitharaman were the shortest. The length of

her speeches has now fallen for three consecutive years, after peaking in 2020-21. It was this lengthy speech in February 2020 that the FM had to cut short on account of exhaustion. On average, Yashwant Sinha's speeches were longer than those of others.

Second, while the speeches of the current FM have become shorter, they are not easier to understand. Four of her five speeches have the highest speech complexity in the sample. We calculate the complexity metric for each speech using the Flesch readability ease test. This test's score ranges from 0 to 100, with a higher score suggesting a lower level of reading difficulty.

Third, according to our text sentiment analysis, India's incumbent FM has delivered the sample's top three speeches with the highest share of positive-sentiment sentences. These include the last two speeches and her first speech as a FM in 2019-20. In last year's budget speech, 39% of sentences had a positive sentiment, while the year before, it was 37%.

While the share of positive sentences fell to 27% during the two fiscal years afflicted by the covid pandemic, 2020-21 and 2022-23, these speeches still had a higher share of positive sentences compared to any of the speeches by Manmohan Singh, Yashwant

Sinha or P. Chidambaram. The least share of positive-sentiment sentences (21%) appear in two speeches: the 1991-92 speech by Manmohan Singh in the backdrop of a balance-of-payments crisis and the 2004-05 speech by P. Chidambaram.

Fourth, Chidambaram narrowly beats Sitharaman for the lowest share of negative sentences over the five speeches. On average, 6% of her sentences were negative in sentiment, compared to 5% for her Congress party counterpart. While both experienced a global crisis during their tenure, it was limited to about one year for Chidambaram, who was India's FM when the global financial crisis of 2008-09 broke out. In contrast, Sitharaman managed to avoid an excessively negative tone in her speeches despite two years of the pandemic that swept economies everywhere during her tenure.

To derive sentence-level sentiment, we extract the tone of each sentence—negative, positive or neutral—using the modified Loughran sentiment lexicon that is suitable for public-finance speeches. We then divide the number of sentences for each sentiment by the total sentences in each speech to determine the proportion of each sentiment.

Which topics does the current FM emphasize in her budget speeches and has this pattern changed after the pandemic?

We find that 'simplifying the tax regime' has been a constant focus in the five budget speeches of Sitharaman. 'Manufacturing' and 'affordable housing' have also found regular mention in contexts related to tax benefits.

'Growth,' 'infrastructure,' and 'tax' are among the most commonly occurring words in all her speeches, which is unsurprising. Words related to health increased during the FM's covid-year speeches and then fell. Similarly, occurrences of words related to education have fallen over the years. In the latest speech of 2023-24, words related to agriculture and MSMEs saw a significant increase from previous years.

What can we expect of the interim Budget speech due in a little over a fortnight?

With India's general election due in the first quarter of 2024-25, we can expect the mention of words related to agriculture and farmers to rise. Similarly, job creation and related schemes may find increased mention. References to employment-related words peaked in the February 2021 budget and declined to five sentences in the last speech. This trend may reverse.

Given the ongoing debate in the country over growth led by services versus manufacturing, references in the budget to manufacturing may also increase. If the government believes manufacturing is the way forward, then the budget speech is an opportunity for it to communicate its expectations of new factory jobs. Government policies such as its production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme are aimed at output growth as well as job generation, and incentives may divert jobs from non-beneficiaries towards firms and sectors receiving PLI benefits.

Irrespective of the latest Budget's thrust, we can expect its sentiment tone to maintain high positivity. However, it is unlikely for the upcoming speech to be shorter than the last couple of budget addresses, as its length has already been reduced.

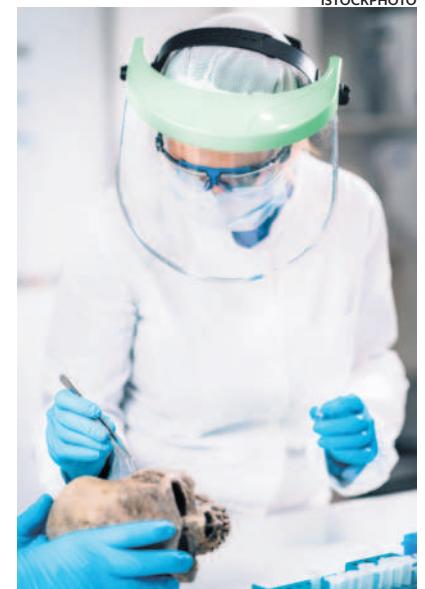
## MINT CURATOR

## Let us widen the research net for ancient DNA to be of help

Human remains can reveal much but these studies are too narrow



**LISA JARVIS**  
is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering biotech, health care and the pharmaceutical industry.



Elevated genetic risk of multiple sclerosis has been traced to ancient farming

empirical evidence to support the hypothesis," Raghavan says. MS drug researchers now have a better idea of what they're up against. As explained by Lars Fugger, a neurologist at the University of Oxford, scientists are trying to undo 5,000 years of evolutionary honing.

The study doesn't offer a roadmap to new and better drugs, but Luggen suggests that the work might at least point to a better way. Current MS therapies generally work by damping down the immune system, but given that these mutations arose to protect us, perhaps the better approach would be to recalibrate immune activity rather than shutting them down.

Indeed, the new data will let us explore other health conditions too, as there are plenty of diseases where this type of data can help. As that work evolves, the field must do better a job of expanding the study of ancient (and modern) DNA beyond Europe and North America. Although all humans are genetically very similar, our evolutionary paths might differ—and, as this MS paper nicely highlights, those histories can affect our understanding of current health issues. Some of the focus on European ancestors is practical. Ancient DNA is better preserved in colder, drier climates, making it harder to extract useful genetic information from samples in, say, the tropics. But researchers say funding for projects in less-represented populations has lagged significantly. The problem is not limited to ancient DNA. Much of the work in modern genetics has been devoted to studying people outside of North America and Europe. Asgari points out that 80% of large genetic studies focus on populations of European ancestry, yet that group makes up just 18% of the global population.

While the field has become far better at acknowledging these knowledge and resource gaps, more needs to be done to close them. Each region has diseases that might be better understood by comparing ancient and modern DNA. Asgari points to sickle cell disease, which is believed to have arisen as a protection against malaria, or the high prevalence of diabetes in the Middle East, as areas that deserve the same kind of study.

There is still so much to learn about the human genome. We'll learn more, faster, if we cast a wider net.

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## THEIR VIEW

## The FM's budget speeches: Mostly positive despite covid

### VIDYA MAHAMBARE & AKASH GUPTA



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# T20 World Cup: Change of guard?

India's T20 cupboard is overflowing with talent. Unless Kohli and Sharma have an excellent IPL, it may be time to move on

Sumit Chakraberty

**A**fter a hiatus of a year and two months since the 2022 T20 World Cup, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma returned to India's T20 side for the ongoing series against Afghanistan. Clearly, the coach and selectors want them in the squad for the upcoming T20 World Cup in June, scheduled to be co-hosted by the West Indies and the US.

The question is whether that gives India the best chance to win the title that has eluded them since the inaugural one in 2007. It may seem preposterous to think of dropping the two icons, but it wouldn't be the first time that seniors have made way for the young guns in this slam-bang format of cricket.

Come to think of it, none of India's "Fab Four" of Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, Sourav Ganguly, and VVS Laxman featured in India's World Cup-winning T20 side in 2007. They opted out, ostensibly to conserve their energies for the longer formats of the game, little knowing that T20s would storm the world of cricket.

Fortunately, it opened the door for 26-year-old MS Dhoni to lead the side and 20-year-old Rohit Sharma to show his strike power. That they brought home the trophy was proof of the pudding.

While it was a shot in the dark in 2007, with the seniors staying away, now in 2024 it can be a move informed by evidence

tation and past glories, the young guns could challenge Kohli and Sharma for their places in the T20 World Cup squad.

India's facile win over Afghanistan in Mohali and Indore, to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the current series, came from two blistering unbeaten fifties from Shivam Dube at strike rates of 150 and 198. Dube is a 30-year-old late bloomer who found his mojo after moving to Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in IPL 2022. Under Dhoni's tutelage, the tall left-hander has become a dangerously consistent hitter, especially against spinners.

He joins three other left-handers who have demonstrated their hitting prowess in the middle order since the last T20 World Cup: Ishan Kishan, Tilak Varma and Rinku Singh. Given the advantage of a left-right combination to throw spinners off their rhythm, one or two of them should be strong contenders for the middle order.

If the selectors want to combine one or two of the upcoming left-handers with established T20 power-hitters like Suryakumar Yadav, KL Rahul and Hardik Pandya, where does that leave Kohli?

He came out of a prolonged slump to again showcase his classy batting in Tests and ODIs over the past year. But when it comes to T20s, what matters most is the strike rate. A 30-plus average is good

enough when it is combined with a 150-plus strike rate.

Kohli's struggle to step up his strike rate against spin in the middle overs

has been an issue for a few years now. His 50 in 40 balls in the 2022 T20 World Cup semi-final on a belter of a wicket in Adelaide was too slow. Pandya's 63 in 33 balls took India to 168 but it was way below par on that wicket. England reached the target with four overs to spare without losing a single wicket.

Risk-aversion in the middle order gets accentuated when India have to bat first and set a target. This was painfully evident in the ODI World Cup final last year when Kohli and Rahul had a 67-run partnership in 18 overs at a strike rate below 4 runs an over.

At this stage of his career, Kohli appears



suitably to play an anchor role, turning over the strike to his batting partner. But it puts too big an onus on others in the team to keep taking risks without a respite when they face a good spell of bowling. Besides, the anchor role has become antediluvian in T20 cricket where a team rarely gets bowled out.

Kohli himself seems to be looking for a new avatar. He came out all guns blazing in the second match against Afghanistan on Sunday. It didn't last long, but his 29 in 16 balls showed his intention to do what's

required in today's T20 cricket. The upcoming IPL season starting on 23 March will give Kohli a chance to show that he's still up for it.

Although he was amongst the top run-getters in IPL 2023, his strike rate of 140 was sub-optimal for a top order batter. He will want to take that above 150, along with a healthy average, to justify his No.3 position in the Indian T20 World Cup squad.

Rohit Sharma's problem of late is the opposite of that of Kohli. He has been



Virat Kohli (left) and Rohit Sharma (right) with Axar Patel during the recent T20 matches against Afghanistan.

giving India dynamic starts in ODIs but has failed too often to convert those into big scores. The latest instance was the ODI World Cup final when he went for one shot too many in the last over of the powerplay and fell to Glenn Maxwell for 47.

His pedigree as a hitman in white ball cricket is without question. But we haven't seen much evidence of that in T20s of late.

He got out for ducks in the two games against Afghanistan on Thursday and Sunday. Before that, his last T20 game for India was the World Cup semi-final against England in November 2022 where he scored 27 at a run a ball. With the likes of Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill outperforming him in the IPL, Sharma can't take the opener's slot for granted.

He has underperformed as a batter for several years in the IPL. Sharma made up for that as a captain by winning five titles for Mumbai Indians—as many as Dhoni has won for CSK. But with the last of those

titles coming in 2020, and MI's decline since then, the management replaced him with Hardik Pandya for this season's IPL.

Perhaps that's the way to go for India too if Sharma has another below par performance with the bat in IPL 2024. Pandya showed he's ready for the mantle of India's T20 captain by winning the IPL title for Gujarat Titans in his very first outing at the helm in 2022. He almost repeated that feat in 2023.

Suryakumar Yadav showed in the T20 series against Australia and South Africa after last year's ODI World Cup that he's more than ready to take over in the absence of the injury-prone Pandya.

India's T20 cupboard is overflowing with talent. Unless Kohli and Sharma have an outstanding IPL, it may be time to move on and let loose the young guns to bring home the T20 World Cup title that has eluded India since 2007.

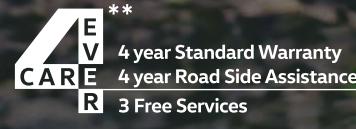
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