

ASHOK GULATI

**Fight vaccine hesitancy to combat Covid's rural spread**

## EDITORIAL

The Centre must procure vaccines from global vaccine-makers and distribute these to the states

## TOUGH CHOICE

**Decision on Class 12 board exams by June 1: Pokhriyal**

## US-STYLE

**UK minister Priti Patel to unveil digital visas to count migrants**

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NEW DELHI, MONDAY, MAY 24, 2021

# FINANCIAL EXPRESS

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## IN THE NEWS

**Discoms' dues to gencos fall 3% to ₹78,379 cr in March**

TOTAL DUES owed by electricity distribution companies to power producers fell 3.4% to ₹78,379 crore in March 2021 as compared to the year-ago period, reports PTI. Outstanding dues of discoms towards electricity producers have been increasing year-on-year as well as month-on-month for years.

**3 dead, 3 wounded in shooting outside Ohio bar**

AT LEAST three people were killed and three others were wounded in a shooting on Sunday outside a bar in Youngstown, Ohio, police said. Chief Carl Davis of the Youngstown police department said gunfire was reported shortly after 2 am on Sunday in the area of the Torch Club Bar & Grille in Youngstown, reports AP.

**Congo volcano's lava flows short of Goma; 5 dead**

CONGO'S MOUNT Nyiragongo unleashed lava that destroyed homes on the outskirts of Goma, but witnesses said on Sunday that the city of 2 million had been mostly spared, reports AP.

## RELOOK

**DoT to seek fresh base price for 5G**

The reserve price given by Trai earlier is seen very high by industry

KIRAN RATHEE  
New Delhi, May 23

## WITH 63% SPECTRUM

remaining unsold in the auctions held in March, the government is not taking any chances and has decided to seek fresh reserve price from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) for the 5G band which is likely to be put up for sale next year.

Though the Trai had in 2018 submitted the reserve price for 5G spectrum in the 3300-3600 MHz—the auction was not held for this band in March—it was seen as too high by the industry.

Since the premium 4G band in the 700 MHz where also the price was seen as too high, did not see any takers, the government wants a review of 5G band

Reserve price recommended for 5G spectrum (3300-3600 MHz) in 2018: ₹492 cr per MHz

■ Amount to be paid for pan-India minimum block of 20 MHz: ₹9,840 cr

■ Reserve price of 700 MHz: ₹6,568 cr per MHz

■ A pan-India 5 MHz will cost ₹32,840 cr

■ Total spectrum put on sale in March auction: 2308.80 MHz worth ₹3.92 lakh cr

■ Total spectrum sold: 855.60 MHz (37% of the available airwaves)

■ No bids for 700 MHz and 2500 MHz

■ Total revenue earned by govt: ₹77,814.80 cr

fearing that otherwise industry may not come forward to buy.

Continued on Page 2

**Jaypee Infra: Suraksha objects to CoC meet on NBCC offer; warns legal action**

REALTY FIRM Suraksha group on Sunday strongly objected to the creditors' panel of bankrupt-Jaypee Infratech to consider fresh submissions by NBCC and warned of appropriate legal action against lenders if voting on the group's offer fails to materialise. ■ Page 4

## SOPS FOR R&amp;D

**New FTP to retain key schemes despite WTO**

**SEZ, EoU schemes won't go; new incentives likely for R&D, market promotion and logistics**

BANI KINKAR PATTANAYAK  
New Delhi, May 23

**THE GOVERNMENT WILL** likely retain certain key export schemes, such as those relating to special economic zones (SEZs) and export-oriented units, in the next foreign trade policy as well, even though these programmes have been challenged at the World Trade Organization (WTO), sources told FE. However, any new scheme within the FTP will be designed in sync with WTO stipulations, one of the sources said.

The new FTP for the next

## POLICY PUSH

New Delhi may choose to await WTO appellate body's verdict before altering some export schemes

New FTP to reflect Aatmanirbhar initiative and ease of doing trade

It will focus on greater integration with global supply chain, post-Covid

It may aim to reduce high logistics costs from 13% of GDP to 8% in 5 years

Incentives, such as duty-free import of equipment, likely for R&D

Aid to widen market coverage may be offered



five years is expected to be rolled out from October 1. Coming as it is in the wake of the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic, the FTP would focus more on ways to ensure India's greater integration with the global supply chain, trimming elevated logistics costs, incentivising the much-needed research & development (R&D) and bolstering certain marketing support, one of the sources said.

Continued on Page 2

**'Yaas' to develop into cyclonic storm today, says IMD**

A LOW-PRESSURE area in the Bay of Bengal has intensified into a depression that will cross the West Bengal and Odisha coasts on May 26 as a "very severe cyclonic storm", the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Sunday. The depression is expected to intensify into a cyclonic storm, "Yaas", by Monday, it added. The state

governments as well as the Centre are preparing for the cyclone that will bring winds with a speed ranging 155-165 kmph and gusting to 185 kmph. ■ Page 3

## DESPITE MARCH SPIKE

**States' capex down annually**

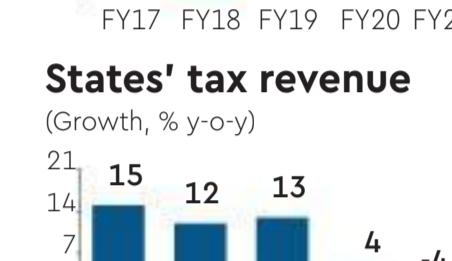
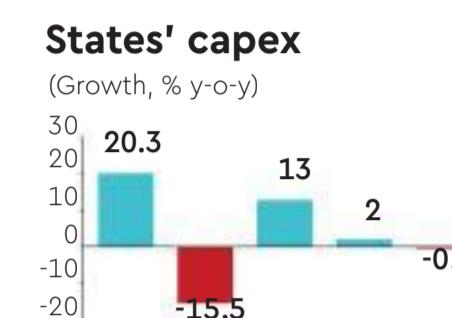
Revenue buoyancy declines; tax transfers by Centre, GST aid help avoid a sharper fall

PRASANTA SAHU  
New Delhi, May 23

**DESPITE THE GUARANTEED** growth in Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue, state governments have seen a dip in overall tax buoyancy in the last couple of years, causing them to curb capital expenditure and under-perform in comparison to central public sector undertakings (CPSEs) and even the Centre, the other two pillars of public capex.

This amounted to bucking the trend of several immediate past years, when states had turned in a better show in fiscal consolidation and capital spending, maintaining a public capex ratio of 5:3.6:3.4 (states, CPSEs and Centre in FY20).

Had the Centre not given the states extra borrowing leeway and largely protected the GST compensation even while being itself hit by the pandemic blues, the states would have had to cut asset-creating expenditure even more sharply. Of course, the Centre



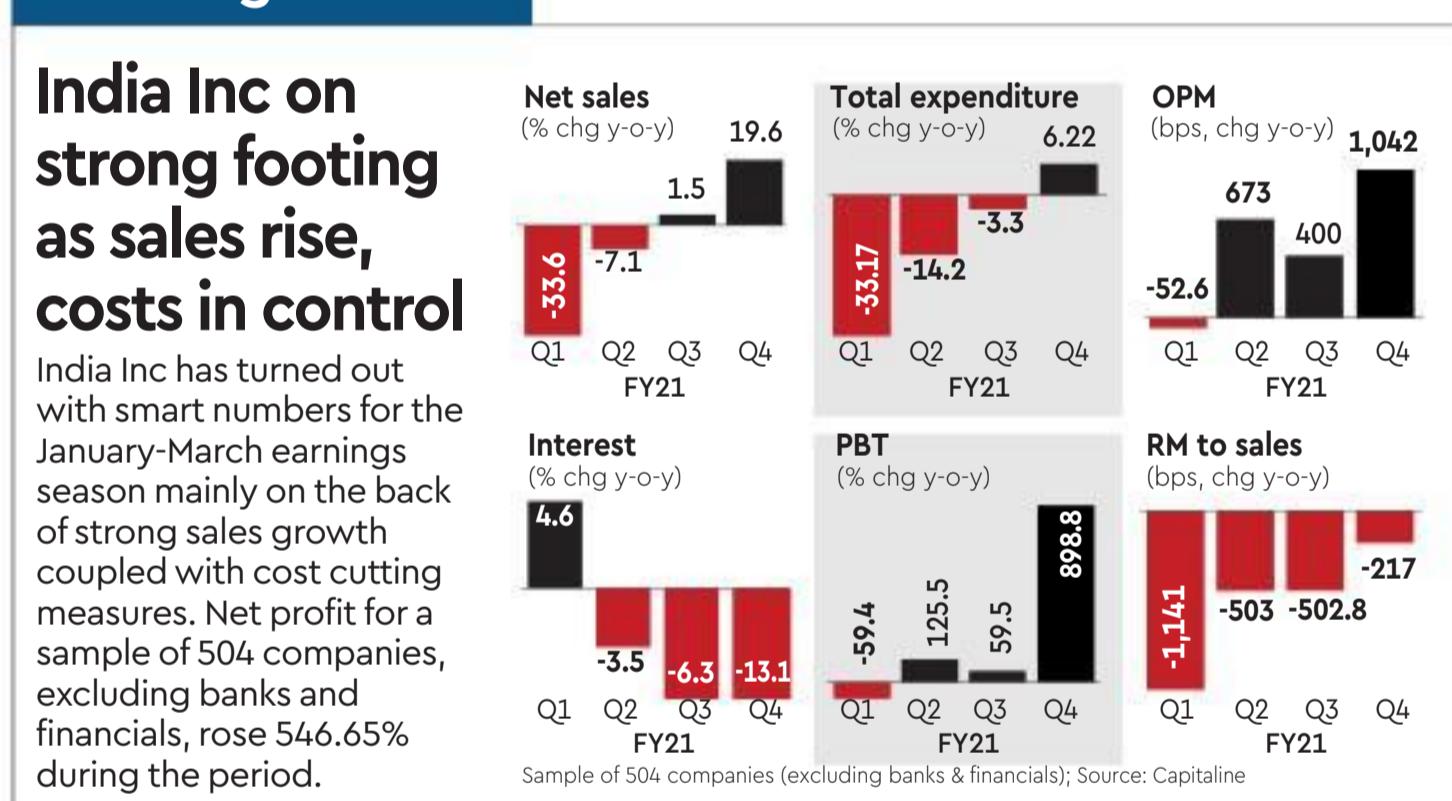
\*For eight big states reviewed by FE

has appropriated a larger part of the available fiscal resources in the last two years by using the cess/surcharge route, especially by hiking such imposts on auto fuels. This has been to the detriment of states' fiscal powers.

According to an FE analysis of the finances of eight major states for FY21, their combined capex at ₹1.44 lakh crore was down 0.4% on-year, compared with a negative growth of 7% in FY20.

Continued on Page 2

## Earnings season



## CAIRN

**PSBs not asked to withdraw funds from A/cs abroad**

FE BUREAU  
New Delhi, May 23

**THE CENTRE ON** Sunday refuted reports that it has reportedly asked state-owned banks to withdraw funds from foreign currency accounts abroad in anticipation of the potential seizure of such accounts by Cairn Energy.

- Centre confirms challenging The Hague tribunal award favouring Cairn on March 22
- It vows to pursue "all legal avenues to defend the dispute worldwide"

"These are totally incorrect reports which were not based on true facts. Certain vested parties appear to have orchestrated such misleading reporting, which often relies upon unnamed sources and presents a lopsided picture of factual and legal developments in the case," finance ministry said in a statement.

Continued on Page 2

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# Economy

MONDAY, MAY 24, 2021

## EXPERT VIEW

The market will continue to focus on Covid numbers to pump in more optimism due to a relatively quiet week for economic data.

— Vinod Nair, head of research, Geojit Financial Services

### Revised VDA notified by Centre

FE BUREAU  
New Delhi, May 23

**THE GOVERNMENT HAS** revised the variable dearness allowance (VDA) for around 1.5 crore workers, including casual and contract working in the central sector establishments such as railways, mines, oil field and major ports. The VDA will be in the range of ₹105-210 per month with effect from April 1, 2021.

The last revision of VDA was made in October 2020.

An unskilled construction worker in a metro city like Delhi or Mumbai will now get ₹16,770 a month, considering he works for 26 days in a month, chief labour commissioner (Central) D P S Negi said.

In a statement, the labour ministry said the revised rate for variable dearness allowance (VDA) has been notified. VDA is revised on the basis of average Consumer Price Index for industrial workers (CPI-IW) compiled by the Labour Bureau.

### COVID CONTROL

## Many states opt to extend lockdown

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi/Chandigarh, May 23

**LOCKDOWN WAS EXTENDED** on Sunday in Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Puducherry with many states already imposing Covid-induced restrictions till May end to rein in infections and deaths during the second wave of the pandemic.

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal announced that the ongoing lockdown in the national capital will continue for another week and said the process of "unlock" will start from May 31 in a phased manner if the number of Covid-19 cases continues to decline.

The Rajasthan government, which extended the coronavirus lockdown by 15 days till June 8, also said the state may allow some relaxations in commercial activities from June 1 in districts where the Covid-19 situation will show significant

improvement.

Extending the lockdown till May 31, the Haryana government said the positivity and fatality rates have to be brought down further, though it did allow some relaxations in the curbs.

In the past 24 hours, Delhi recorded around 1,600 positive cases and the positivity rate went further down to below 2.5%, Kejriwal said in an online briefing.

He said if the lockdown is lifted now, the gains made in the last one month through a

lot of struggles, hard work and sacrifice may be lost.

"If the current downward trend in number of cases sustains in next one week and people follow precautions against Covid with strict discipline as they have done so far, we will start the process of unlock from May 31," he said.

Haryana chief secretary Vijai Vardhan, in an order, said the lockdown, which was earlier imposed till May 24, has been extended till May 31.

However, certain relaxations were given like stand-

alone shops have been allowed to function during the day. The other shops, except in malls, are allowed to open from 7 AM to 12 PM on an odd-even basis.

Over two weeks ago, there were nearly 1.15 lakh active cases in the state, which now stand around 40,000.

"Now, after duly considering the fact that although the Covid positivity has come down, however, Mahamari Alert/Surakshit Haryana needs to continue so as to bring it and the fatality rate down even further," said the order issued on May 23.

Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan too had Saturday announced that the coronavirus-induced restrictions in the state would be gradually relaxed from the next month.

"Our target is to free our state of Covid-19 by May 31.

We will have to unlock the coronavirus-induced curfew gradually from June 1. The

world has to move but we will need to unlock in such a man-

ner that Covid-19 doesn't spread again," he had said at a meeting to review the coronavirus situation on the state.

Lockdown-like restrictions have been extended up to May 31 in most of the districts including Bhopal.

However, Odisha's Covid-19 tally mounted to 6,92,382 on Sunday as the state reported its highest single-day spike of 12,852 new cases, despite undergoing lockdown for more than two weeks, a health department official said.

The state also registered 28 fresh Covid fatalities, the biggest one-day count, which took the toll to 2,484, he said. Odisha is under lockdown till June 1.

The Uttar Pradesh government had also extended partial corona curfew till 7 AM May 31 on Saturday.

Among the southern states, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Telangana have extended their lockdown this month, while Andhra Pradesh will continue to have curfew.

## Over 15,000 MT LMO delivered by rlys so far



freight performance remains robust with the national transporter carrying 73.45 million tonne in the first 21 days of May, which is 44.99% higher than the 50.66 MT of loading for the same period in FY 21. In the first 21 days of May 2021, the rail-

ways earned ₹7,368 crore from freight loading which is 62.20% higher compared to the earnings of ₹4,541.21 crore for the same month last year.

In May 2021, railways carried 35.62 MT of coal, 9.77 MT of iron ore, 3.38 MT of foodgrains, 2.22 MT of fertilisers, 2.02 MT of mineral oil and 3.15 MT of cement (excluding clinker). The coal sector has shown a sustained growth with the railways loading 88.15 MT coal in FY 2021-22 so far compared to 57.23 MT carried in FY 2020-21.

## 12 parties extend support to farmers nationwide protest call on May 26

**TWELVE MAJOR OPPOSITION** parties, including the Congress, TMC, Left parties, SP, NCP and DMK on Sunday extended their support to a countrywide protest call given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha on May 26, marking six months of the farmers protest against the Centre's farm laws.

The 3,741 new fatalities include 682 from Maharashtra, 448 from Tamil Nadu, 451 from Karnataka, 218 from Uttar Pradesh, 201 from Punjab, 182 from Delhi, 176 from Kerala, 154 from West Bengal, 134 from Uttarakhand, 118 from Andhra Pradesh, 115 from Rajasthan, 103 from Chhattisgarh and 98 from Haryana.

A total of 2,99,266 deaths have been reported so far in the country, including 87,300 from Maharashtra, 24,658 from Karnataka, 23,013 from Delhi, 20,046 from Tamil Nadu, 18,978 from Uttar Pradesh, 14,208 from West Bengal, 13,089 from Punjab and 12,494 from Chhattisgarh, the ministry said.

The health ministry stressed that more than 70% of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the ICMR," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Steroids are a double-edged sword

The injudicious use of steroids in the treatment of Covid-19 is found to be the main reason for the rise in the number of mucormycosis infection among the Covid-19 patients. Steroids are a double-edged sword. When used 'wrongly', they cause an aggravation of the condition of Covid-19 patients who otherwise recovered or are on their way to recovery. Steroids are harmful and quickly deteriorate the condition when given in the initial virus replication phase. Steroids are useful and have the potential to save lives when administered in appropriate doses at the right time.

— G David Milton, Tamil Nadu

### Gender disparity

The news regarding the disparity of the pay being given to the female cricketers by the BCCI has once again exposed the reality of not providing equal financial and other benefits to both genders in sports. If the world's richest and wealthiest sports institution has this attitude concerning salaries, then what should be expected from the local institutions?

The BCCI should take the moral responsibility to promote women cricket as it has already enough wealth for the task.

— Dr Navneet Seth, Dhuri

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### New FTP to retain key schemes despite WTO

The government's Aatmanirbhar initiative as well as ease of doing external trade will have a significant bearing on the next FTP, said the sources.

Key elements from a national logistics policy, which has been in the works for months, will likely feature in the FTP. This policy will aim to reduce logistics costs from 13% of GDP to 8% over five years and substantially improve India's trade competitiveness.

To boost innovation, the government could consider extending incentives, including duty-free imports of equipment by an actual user for undertaking R&D. As for marketing support, several countries offer assistance for diversification of markets and better promotion of their products, and India may step us such aid, too. Singapore, for instance, offers a 200% tax deduction on eligible expenses for international market expansion and investment development activities.

As for India's export schemes, the US had successfully challenged these at the dispute settlement panel of the WTO on ground of being inconsistent with global trade rules. Washington had also claimed that "thousands of Indian companies are receiving benefits totalling over \$7 billion annually from these programmes".

India had appealed against the WTO dispute body's ruling in November 2019 and a verdict is still awaited, as the appellate mechanism remains crippled for well over a year, ironically due to the US' blocking of the appointment of judges to it.

New Delhi believes that it has a strong case and the verdict of the appellate body, when it comes, should go in its favour.

The programmes that were challenged included the Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS) and those relating to SEZs, EoUs, electronics hardware technology parks, capital goods and duty-free imports for re-exports.

While India has already replaced the MEIS, the biggest scheme accounting for most of the benefits meant for exporters, with a WTO-compliant tax refund programme from January 1, some others still continue. A restructuring of these schemes would warrant an exhaustive exercise, while any abrupt abolition could stoke fresh uncertainties in trade prospects, exporters have said.

SEZs are entitled to tax-free import/domestic procurement of goods. Among others, SEZ units get a 100% income

## Dot to seek fresh base price for 5G



### Dot to seek fresh base price for 5G

Further, since around 70 MHz spectrum in the band is being added, a reference for new reserve price needs to be sought.

As it is, the government feels embarrassed as the 700 MHz band did not find any takers for the second time in March auctions — earlier in 2016 auctions also it was not touched by the industry. The government is being doubly careful since the spectrum demand-supply scenario has totally changed in the last few years, and especially after the March auctions. There are only three telecom players, of which one is financially weak. The operators have enough spectrum in the 4G band and by optimising it, can start providing 5G services once the ecosystem is more developed. In fact, Bharti Airtel has demonstrated 5G services through such spectrum optimisation. As a result, if the pricing does not suit the industry, it will be in no hurry to buy 5G spectrum.

Official sources said that in addition to the 5G spectrum

in 3300-3600 Mhz band, the department of telecommunications (DoT) will also seek pricing for millimeter wave band (24.25 GHz to 28.5 GHz) and 600 MHz spectrum band, which can be used for 5G services.

"The pricing needs to be relooked for 5G as the earlier price recommendations came in 2018 and the auction will now happen in 2022. Already there have been many developments in the last few years regarding 5G," an official source said. The government is also including more bands for 5G, for which price recommendations are required, the source added.

In 2018, Trai had recom-

mended a reserve price of ₹492 crore per Mhz for 3300-3600 MHz band. The price meant that for a pan India minimum block of 20 Mhz, operators would have to shell out ₹9,840 crore, which was seen as steep. As telcos need about 100 Mhz to offer pan-India 5G services, this price means that they would need to shell out ₹49,200 crore.

Similarly, for 700 MHz band, although Trai had reduced the reserve price by 43% in 2018 compared to 2016 auctions, at ₹6,568 crore per Mhz, for a pan-India 5 Mhz block, still operators would have had to shell out ₹32,840 crore, which was seen as quite high. High reserve price of spectrum acted as a dampener in the March auctions. For instance, of the total 2,308 Mhz of spectrum put on auction which at reserve price was worth ₹3.92 lakh crore, only 37% of airwaves got sold and two bands, 700 Mhz and 2500 Mhz, drew a blank.

get achieved in FY20.

When data for more states flows in, the extent of the drop in state capex will be more evident. The FY21 capex target for all states as per their BEs was ₹6.5 lakh crore, up 30% on-year. State capex is believed to have a greater multiplier effect on the economy, than such spending by the Centre and public sector undertakings.

Despite extra central tax devolution over RE, tax revenues of the eight states were down 26% from the FY21BE. Borrowings by these states were 111% of FY21 target at ₹2.7 lakh crore compared with almost 100% of ₹2.08 lakh crore target achieved in FY20.

While states fell short of target, the Centre is understood to have achieved its FY21 revised capex target of ₹4.39 lakh crore (up 30.8% on-year). In recent months, the Centre has indeed stepped up spending to support the economy and also successfully roped in CPSEs in the venture, but the revenue-starved state governments have been forced to slow their capex.

According to India Ratings, the states' fiscal deficit may come at about 4.6% of GDP in FY21.

### PSBs not asked to withdraw funds from A/cs abroad

The government also confirmed that it filed an application in the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague on March 22, 2021, seeking setting aside of the arbitral award that favoured Cairn Energy.

In December 2020, The Hague tribunal not only invalidated India's \$2.74-billion tax claim on the Edinburgh-headquartered energy major, but also ordered it to return up to \$1.4 billion in funds withheld, plus interest and costs, to the firm. The tribunal ruled that India had breached its obligations to Cairn under the UK-India Bilateral Investment Treaty.

On Sunday, the ministry reiterated that the tribunal had "improperly exercised jurisdiction over a national tax dispute that the Republic of India never offered and/or agreed to arbitrate. The government added that it was committed to "pursuing all legal avenues to defend its case in this dispute worldwide".

According to the Indian

ministry said: "The Government has raised several arguments that warrant setting aside of the award including but not limited to: (i) the arbitral tribunal improperly exercised jurisdiction over a national tax dispute that the Republic of India never offered and/or agreed to arbitrate; (ii) the claims underlying the award are based on an abusive tax avoidance scheme that were a gross violation of Indian tax laws, thereby depriving Cairn's alleged investments of any protection under the India-UK bilateral investment treaty; and (iii) the award improperly ratifies Cairn's scheme to achieve double non-taxation, which was designed to avoid paying taxes anywhere in the world, a significant public policy concern for governments worldwide. This proceeding is pending."

under the scheme, the company will have to pay around half the amount due sans interest and penalties in cases where the tax department has lost a case in a forum and filed an appeal, as the instant one. It is not clear if Cairn has even been open to this formula.

The government also stated that the CEO and other representatives of Cairn have approached the government for discussions to resolve the matter. Constructive discussions have been held and the government remains open for an amicable solution to the dispute within the country's legal framework, it added.

UK's Cairn Energy has reportedly identified \$70 billion of Indian assets overseas for potential seizure to collect \$1.72 billion due from the government — a move if successful will put India in league with Pakistan and Venezuela which faced similar enforcement action over failure to pay arbitration awards. The assets identified reportedly range from Air India's planes to vessels belonging to the Shipping Corporation of India, and properties owned by state-owned banks to oil and gas cargoes of PSUs, reports suggested.

The ministry said: "The Government has raised several arguments that warrant setting aside of the award including but not limited to: (i) the arbitral tribunal improperly exercised jurisdiction over a national tax dispute that the Republic of India never offered and/or agreed to arbitrate; (ii) the claims underlying the award are based on an abusive tax avoidance scheme that were a gross violation of Indian tax laws, thereby depriving Cairn's alleged investments of any protection under the India-UK bilateral investment treaty; and (iii) the award improperly ratifies Cairn's scheme to achieve double non-taxation, which was designed to avoid paying taxes anywhere in the world, a significant public policy concern for governments worldwide. This proceeding is pending."

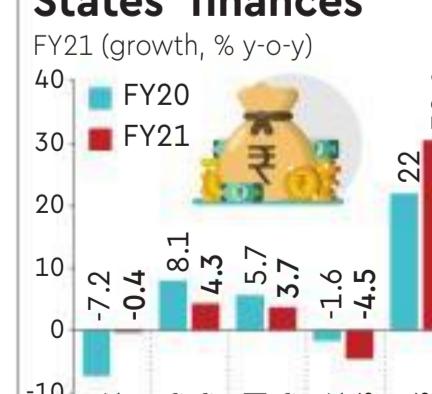
### Fresh cases at 2.40 lakh

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease in the country surged to 2,34,25,467 while the case fatality rate stood at 1.13%, the data stated.

India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20 lakh-mark on August 7 last, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19 last year. India crossed the grim milestone of 2 crore on May 4 this year.

Even as it was challenging the award, the government of India apparently wanted Cairn to settle the dispute using the Vivad se Vishwas scheme;

According to the Indian



## CYCLONE YAAS

## Depression in Bay of Bengal to develop into cyclonic storm by Monday: IMD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi, May 23**A LOW-PRESSURE AREA** in the Bay of Bengal has intensified into a depression that will cross the West Bengal and Odisha coasts on May 26 as a "very severe cyclonic storm", the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Sunday.

A depression in east central Bay of Bengal is very likely to intensify into a very severe cyclonic storm with a possible wind speed of 155 kmph to 165 kmph and make landfall on May 26 evening between Paradip in Odisha and Sagar island in West Bengal, the Met



Indian Coast Guard mobilises its assets in view of Cyclone Yaas which is expected to hit the Eastern Coast on Wednesday PTI

department said on Sunday.

The depression is expected to intensify into a cyclonic storm, "Yaas", by Monday, it added.

"It (the depression) is very

likely to move north-northwestwards and intensify into a cyclonic storm by 24th May morning and further into a very severe cyclonic storm during the

subsequent 24 hours. It would continue to move north-northwestwards, intensify further and reach Northwest Bay of Bengal near West Bengal and north Odisha coasts by 26th May morning," the Cyclone Warning Division of the IMD said. "It is very likely to cross north Odisha-West Bengal between the Paradip and Sagar islands by evening of 26th May as a very severe cyclonic storm," it added.

The state governments as well as the Centre are preparing for the cyclone that will bring winds with a speed ranging 155-165 kmph and gusting to 185 kmph.

Prime Minister Narendra

Modi on Sunday called for a timely evacuation of those involved in offshore activities as he chaired a high-level meeting to review the preparedness of states and central government agencies to deal with the situation arising out of Cyclone Yaas.

He asked officials to work in close coordination with states to ensure safe evacuation of people from high-risk areas, and to ensure that time duration of outages of power supply and communication network are minimum and restored swiftly, a PMO statement said.

Modi also asked officials to ensure proper coordination and planning with state governments to ensure that no disruption is caused to Covid-19 treatment and vaccination in hospitals.

He called for involving various stakeholders like coastal communities and industries and directly reaching out to them and sensitising them, the PMO said.

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He asked officials to work in

close coordination with states to ensure safe evacuation of people from high-risk areas,

and to ensure that time duration of outages of power supply and communication network are minimum and restored swiftly, a PMO statement said.

Modi also asked officials to

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Modi also asked officials to

ensure proper coordination

## Jaypee case: Suraksha objects to CoC meet to discuss NBCC offer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi, May 23

**REALTY FIRM SURAKSHA**

group on Sunday strongly objected to the creditors' panel of bankrupt-Jaypee Infratech to consider fresh submissions by NBCC and warned of appropriate legal action against lenders as well as the interim resolution professional if voting on the group's offer fails to materialise.

The morning meeting of the CoC will be from 10 am to noon on May 24 (Monday), just two hours before the scheduled voting process on the Suraksha Group's offer will commence. The voting process will be on from noon on May 24 till 5 pm on May 27.

On May 20, the CoC approved Suraksha group's bid and rejected NBCC's offer, saying it was not compliant with certain provisions of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) and a Supreme Court decision in March this year.

The Suraksha group has conveyed its objections in a letter addressed to Interim Resolution Professional (IRP) Anuj Jain and the committee of creditors (CoC).

The latest development comes hours after the IRP called for a meeting of the CoC in the morning of May 24 to discuss

state-owned NBCC's addendum to its resolution plan, which was rejected by the panel on May 20. The bid of the Suraksha group was also approved for voting on that day.

However, a meeting of the CoC has been scheduled for Monday morning to discuss NBCC's addendum to its bid, which was submitted late on May 18.

Peeved over the proposed CoC meeting, the Suraksha group has written a strongly-worded letter to Anuj Jain and bankers, seeking fairness and transparency in the insolvency process.

"We wish to put on record strong objections to such actions to ratify and discuss the resolution plan of the other resolution applicant at this late stage..." it said in the letter.

Listing out the reasons for its strong objection, the Suraksha group said it had submitted the resolution plan on May 18 within the stipulated timeline of 4 pm.

Outstanding dues of discoms to gencos fall 3% to ₹78,379 cr in Mar

**TOTAL DUES OWED** by electricity distribution companies to power producers fell 3.4% to ₹78,379 crore in March 2021 as compared to the year-ago period, showing a reversal of discoms' growing outstandings.

Distribution companies (discoms) owed total ₹81,116 crore to power generation firms in March 2020, according to portal RAPTAI.

The dues in March also declined from ₹98,673 crore in February and ₹99,023 crore in January this year.

In March 2021, the total overdue amount, which was not cleared even after 45 days of grace period offered by generators, stood at ₹67,417 crore as against ₹68,587 crore in the same month a year ago. —PTI

### GULSHAN POLYOLS LIMITED

CIN: L24231UP2000PLC034918

Regd. Off.: 9th K.M., Jansat Road, Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh

Corporate Off.: G-81, Preet Vihar, Delhi - 110092 Ph: 011-49999200, Fax: 011-49999202

website: www.gulshanindia.com, cs@gulshanindia.com

#### FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS Q4 FY2020-21

Extract of Statement of Audited Financial Results

for the Quarter & Year ended March 31, 2021

(Rs. in Lakhs)

Sl. No.	Particulars	Quarter ended		Year ended	
		31.03.2021 (Audited)	31.03.2020 (Audited)	31.03.2021 (Audited)	31.03.2020 (Audited)
1	Total income from Operations	22,734.54	13,502.23	76,603.44	62,079.77
2	Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period (Before Tax, Exceptional and / or Extraordinary Items)	3,386.07	336.15	9,349.83	2,742.22
3	Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period Before Tax (After Exceptional and / or Extraordinary Items)	3,386.07	336.15	9,349.83	2,742.22
4	Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period After Tax (After Exceptional and / or Extraordinary Items)	2,154.39	278.20	6,245.55	2,058.40
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (After Tax) and other Comprehensive Income (After Tax)]	2,216.51	259.19	6,307.67	2,039.39
6	Paid-up equity share capital (Face Value of Re 1/- each)	469.17	469.17	469.17	469.17
7	Other Equity			36,086.07	30,059.90
	Earnings Per Share for Continuing and Discontinued Operations (Before & After Extraordinary Items ) (Face Value of Re 1/-each)				
	Basic	4.59	0.59	13.31	4.39
	Diluted	4.59	0.59	13.31	4.39

Notes:

- The above Audited financial results for the quarter and year ended March 31, 2021 have been reviewed and recommended by the Audit Committee and approved by the Board of Directors in their respective meetings held on May 22, 2021. These Results have been subjected to Audit by the Statutory Auditors as required under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulation, 2015 and they have expressed an unmodified opinion on the aforesaid Results.
- The above is an extract of the detailed format of Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the above Financial Results are available on Company's website www.gulshanindia.com and on the Stock Exchanges' website: www.nseindia.com and www.bseindia.com.
- Figures for the previous period have been regrouped/ rearranged wherever necessary to make them comparable with current figure.
- Figures for the quarter ended 31 March, 2021 and the corresponding quarter ended in the previous year as reported above are the balancing figures between audited figures in respect of the full financial year and the published year to date figures upto the end of the third quarter of the relevant financial year.

On behalf of Board of Directors  
For Gulshan Polyoys Limited

Sd/-

(Dr. Chandra Kumar Jain)

Chairman and Managing Director



### NUCLEUS SOFTWARE EXPORTS LTD.

CIN: L74899DL1989PLC034594

Regd. Off.: 33-35, Thyagraj Nagar

Market, New Delhi-110003

Tel.: +91-120-4031400;

Fax: +91-120-4031672

Email: investorsrelations@nucleussoftware.com

Website: www.nucleussoftware.com

### NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that pursuant to Regulation 29 and 47 of the SEBI (LODR) Regulations, 2015 meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company would be held on Thursday, June 3rd, 2021 to consider and approve:

- Audited standalone financial results of the Company for the quarter and financial year ended March 31, 2021;
- Audited consolidated financial results of the Company for the financial year ended March 31, 2021;

The Board would also consider recommendation of Final Dividend for the Financial Year ended 31st March 2021, if any in the above stated Board Meeting.

The financial results duly approved by the Board of Directors shall be declared at the conclusion of the Board Meeting on June 3rd, 2021.

The information contained in this notice is also available on the Company's website i.e. (<http://www.nucleussoftware.com/investors>) and also on Stock Exchanges website at ([www.bseindia.com](http://www.bseindia.com) and [www.nseindia.com](http://www.nseindia.com)) for details of Board Meeting.

For Nucleus Software Exports Ltd.

Sd/-

Date: May 23, 2021 Poonam Bhasin

Place: Noida Company Secretary

Dated: May 22, 2021

Place: Delhi

### भारतीय कंटेनर निगम लिमिटेड

CONTAINER CORPORATION OF INDIA LTD.

(भारत सरकार का उपकरण) (A Govt. of India Undertaking)

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

CONCOR invites E-tender in single Packet System of tendering for the following work:-

CON/EP/Area-I-Zone-2-2021-2022

Tender No.

Name of Work

Day to day repairs and maintenance of civil works in Zone-2 (i.e MMPL /Kathwara, OCT/KHMLI, ICD/KUKU & ICD/BGKT) at Area-I (Northern).

Estimated Cost

Rs.127.53 Lakhs

Completion Period

24 Months

Earliest Money Deposit

Nil. Contractor has to submit 'Bid Security Declaration as per Annexure-E'

Cost of Tender Document

Rs.1000/- (inclusive all taxes & duties) through e-payment.

Tender Processing Fee

Rs. 531/- (inclusive all taxes & duties) through e-payment.

Date of sale of Tender (online) : 24.05.2021 (11:00hrs) to 14.06.2021 (upto 17:00 hrs)

Date & Time of submission of Tender

15.06.2021 upto 17:00 hrs.

Date & Time of opening of Tender

16.06.2021 at 15:30 hrs.

For financial eligibility criteria, experience with respect to similar nature of work, etc, please refer to detailed tender document can be downloaded from website [www.concorindia.com](http://www.concorindia.com), but the complete tender document can be downloaded from website [www.tenderwizard.com](http://www.tenderwizard.com) or Corriendum / Addendum to this Tender, if any, will be published on website [www.concorindia.com](http://www.concorindia.com), www.tenderwizard.com/DCIL and Central Procurement Portal (COP) only. Newspaper press advertisement shall not be issued for the same.

Group General Manager/Engg./Area-I

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Mr. Kiran Pardeshi Mr. Brajesh Shukla Mr. Ashwani Tiwari Mr. Sanjay Dhawale

Be it known to all that on 19/05/2021 Welspun Corp Limited, Anjar, Gujarat ("Company") has terminated the employment of (i) Mr. Kiran Pardeshi, (ii) Mr. Brajesh Shukla (iii) Mr. Ashwani Tiwari & (iv) Mr. Sanjay Dhawale, ("Ex-employees") from its services. It was found that the Ex-employees were involved in fraudulent acts and malpractices including stealing of confidential and proprietary information of the Company for their financial gains.

An F.R.I. has been lodged by Anjar Police and criminal investigation has been initiated against the Ex-employees and their accomplices. Further, the Company has filed a civil suit before the Hon'ble Bombay High Court against the Ex-employees and others. The Company shall take all steps to safeguard its interest.

General public is hereby cautioned that the Ex-employees are not authorized to represent the Company in any manner whatsoever. Any person dealing with them may please take note of the aforesaid and shall do so at his / her own risk, cost and consequence. The Company shall not be responsible for the unauthorized and unlawful actions of the Ex-employees in any manner.

WELSPUN CORP LIMITED

Sd/-

(Authorised Signatory)

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Mr. Kiran Pardeshi Mr. Brajesh Shukla Mr. Ashwani Tiwari Mr. Sanjay Dhawale

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WELSPUN CORP LIMITED

Sd/-

(Authorised Signatory)

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An F.R.I. has been lodged by





# Opinion

MONDAY, MAY 24, 2021

**COVID SHADOW ON EXAMS**

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi

**Students studying for the CBSE 12th grade examinations have been sharing their concerns about these exams being held during the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic. Their health and safety MATTERS**

## After vaccine maitri, get vaccine diplomacy right

The Centre should contract more vaccines from global vaccine-makers and distribute these to the states

**T**IS GOOD NEWS external affairs minister S Jaishankar will be visiting the US this week to try and sort out issues relating to the import of raw materials needed to make Covid-19 vaccines and also to see if India can import vaccines. Media reports suggest that India is hoping to bring home 35% of the 60 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine doses that the US has said it would send overseas and that Jaishankar will also be meeting representatives of Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson. Twenty million doses are neither here nor there for a country that's looking for 1.9 billion doses, but it is a start. New Delhi must try and clinch some contracts with other vaccine-makers, shedding its rigid stance on issues like indemnity conditions.

A Reuters report says the Indian government and Pfizer are "at loggerheads" over the US drug maker's demand for legal protection from any claims arising out of the use of its vaccine in the country. Having badly underestimated the impact of the pandemic and having failed to see the second wave—health minister Harsh Vardhan had said in early March India was in the "end-game" of the pandemic—we can't now afford any more missteps. Harsh Vardhan had said on March 7 that, unlike most other countries, "we have a steady supply of Covid-19 vaccines..." But, sadly, what we're seeing now is not a steady supply, but a slow trickle. The government had planned to inoculate 300 million by August but that looks difficult because the shortage of vaccines has crippled the vaccination drive. So far, close to 192 million doses have been administered and the daily run rate of vaccinations has plummeted; the seven-day moving average is at a near-two-month low.

Meanwhile, the virus is now ravaging rural India where the infections are believed to be soaring, partly because of the inadequate healthcare facilities, but for which we have no reliable tally. Indeed, in the absence of accurate counts—some reports suggest the number of deaths is twice the normal—the health ministry can barely claim infections are trending down; even without the full rural picture, the daily run rate of 2.5 lakh is quite high. One can't lose sight of the fact that, in the first wave, infections had peaked at 97,000-plus and that the intensity of the pandemic was far less severe. That is proven by the larger number of fatalities this time around, especially of younger people.

While the government has promised 2.16 billion doses between August and December, one is not sure whether this is a realistic deliverable or an optimistic assumption. Serum Institute has said it would be able to ramp production to 100 million doses by July while Bharat Biotech will supply 100 million doses per month of Covaxin by September up from 15 million. Production of Sputnik-V will begin in India only in August; ahead of that, the country would have received some 8 million doses of the Russian vaccine, according to Indian envoy to Russia BV Varma.

Given how critical inoculating a sizeable share of the population as soon as possible is, the government must take on the responsibility of procuring vaccines and distributing them to the states. The Centre is in a far better position to negotiate with global vaccine-makers; states, on their own, will find it hard to do. Before the situation worsens, New Delhi must reach out to other nations as well and use its goodwill to try and contract vaccines. We simply cannot afford to deal with a third wave, should it descend on us, in as haphazard and complacent a fashion as we approached the second one.

## In a twist over a tweet

Asking Twitter to drop manipulated media tag problematic

**T**IS WORRYING the government has asked social media platform, Twitter, to remove the 'manipulated media' tag from a tweet by BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra. Patra has tweeted a 'document' labelling it a "Congress ToolKit" and claiming it shows that the Congress's efforts to help the needy were a "PR exercise" and that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi wanted "to use this opportunity of pandemic to destroy the image of PM Modi". The Congress claims the 'toolkit' tweeted by Patra is a forgery and has filed a complaint. The government's view is Twitter cannot be sitting in judgment of such matters until the investigation is complete. The government should realise Patra's post is public—that can be viewed by each of Twitter's 1.8 crore users—and that the platform has a responsibility to flag disputed content based on the facts available at the time. The flagging has not been done at random but is within the scope of a specific policy Twitter has in place to deal with posts containing content which has been "substantially edited" or shared "deceptively".

This is the same policy applied to flag posts from the account of the then US President Donald Trump as "disputed" when he asserted widespread "election fraud". Bear in mind, the US federal government had not asked for the removal of such tags even when election disputes were being looked into at multiple levels. The Republican party and Trump both resisted the tags, politically, which is a more appropriate response. What is worse is the fact that the person in question is not even a government functionary, and at least one fact-checking website which analysed the 'document' tweeted by Patra holds it to have been drafted on a forged letterhead ([bit.ly/2Shy4N4](http://bit.ly/2Shy4N4)).

The need for platforms to take on fake news and abuse of social media, especially by persons wielding significant influence, is something that the government has itself underscored in a February 26 press release on the new Intermediary Rules, while acknowledging that social media platforms "are no longer limited to playing the role of pure intermediary and often they become publishers. The release characterises the Rules as a "fine blend of liberal touch with gentle self-regulatory framework." The government's stance in the present matter—over a specific kind of "self-regulation" by a platform—is surely odd and far from the touted "liberal touch"? The Rules themselves talk of much more drastic voluntary action, such as removal or blocking of access to disputed content, when it comes to due diligence on the part of a social media intermediary. It is therefore hard to see why mere flagging of a tweet should be proscribed in this manner. The very reality of social media, the government seems to have not understood, is the reach (virality) it confers to a piece of information, whether genuine or fake. The need is to err on the side of caution.

**AMARENDRU NANDY & PRASENJIT CHAKRABARTI**

Respectively, assistant professor (economics) and assistant professor (accounting & finance), IIM Ranchi

**IN THE WAR AGAINST** Covid-19, RBI has thrown down the gauntlet by announcing an 'on-tap liquidity' scheme for commercial banks. It has opened a loan window of ₹50,000 crore, with tenors up to three years at the prevailing repo rate (4%). The central bank expects that targeted on-lending of the credit to manufacturers and service providers in the healthcare sector

shall strengthen India's counter-Covid infrastructure. The loans shall be classified as priority sector lending (PSL) till repayment or maturity, whichever is earlier. The scheme has some positive aspects. First, it indicates that RBI sees merit in targeted intervention policy and is cognisant of the emergent financial needs of the healthcare sector that has been at the forefront in combating COVID-related challenges. The ₹50,000-crore boost in liquidity amounts to around 9% of total health expenditure of ₹6 trillion in 2019-20.

Second, the explicit directive on quick liquidity disbursement is commendable. However, one needs to see whether the terms of on-lending ensue real gains to the borrowers vis-a-vis the prevailing market rates. In this regard, the PSL tag is likely to facilitate concessional lending, being exempt from the statutory CRR and SLR requirements.

Third, the scheme creates additional earning incentives for banks, particularly those with surplus liquidity, which can be parked with RBI at 3.75% (repo rate minus 25 bps) up to the extent of disbursed loans under the 'Covid loan book' (that they need to create under the scheme). With the current reverse repo rate at 3.35%, the banks could earn 40 bps more on a part of their excess liquidity.

Some serious concerns however remain. First, the scheme is well-intentioned, but ill-timed. Amid the ongoing crisis, the healthcare sector needs an immediate boost to ramp up medical facilities and emergency services. The

tenor of loans is three years for the banks, but there are no such restrictions for on-lending. This could lead to asset-liability mismatches

intervention will not alleviate the urgent medical infrastructure problems as credit transmission will take time. Even if disbursement timelines (30 days) are strictly adhered to, capacity expansion cannot happen overnight, as manufacturers and service providers could be saddled with political, bureaucratic, and regulatory hurdles at all stages of capacity-planning and implementation. The intervention, being reactive than a proactive one, is unlikely to be effective at this juncture, as precious time has been lost between the first wave and now.

Second, while the tenor of loans is three years for the banks, there are no

such restrictions for on-lending, which could potentially lead to asset-liability mismatches. To avoid the same, if lenders, in turn, offer the loans for a shorter tenor, it might not entice many targeted borrowers to avail credit under the scheme. RBI's implicit assumption appears to be that the demand for loans will be for brownfield projects only. In that case, the impact on health infrastructure, economic activity, and income will be only marginal.

Third, the intervention appears redundant as excess system liquidity already exists. Since April 2020, the average daily net liquidity absorption by RBI under Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) stands at ₹4.09 lakh crore. The year-on-year growth in bank credit and deposit was 5.7% and 10.3%, respectively, till April 23, 2021. The widening credit-deposit gap perhaps indicates that banks are not confident enough

to lend to a large set of borrowers, including those in the healthcare sector, who actually needed the desired liquidity even before RBI's current intervention. Creating incentives for higher interest earnings on surplus liquidity is unlikely to nudge the banks to lend more in the current uncertain and volatile environment, unless the fundamental issues plaguing banks' risk-aversion problem are adequately addressed.

Finally, the scheme does not elucidate the prerequisite credit profile of the borrowers. This may potentially create adverse-selection problems for the lenders if they fail to do due diligence owing to time and resource constraints at this juncture.

Thus, RBI's initiative is ill-timed, but it may facilitate healthcare capacity expansion in the medium to long term, provided associated concerns are addressed in a time-bound manner.

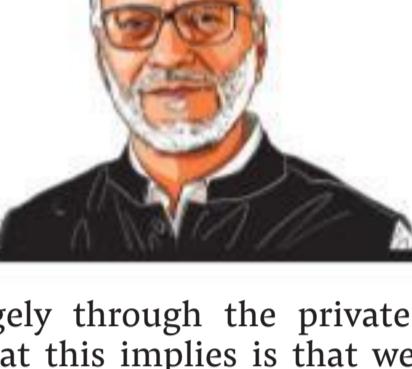
## FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH

WE NEED TO FIRST CONVINCE PEOPLE IN RURAL AREAS ABOUT VACCINATION, AND SIMULTANEOUSLY UPGRADE THE HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE, ESPECIALLY PRIMARY HEALTH CENTRES

# Containing a rural Covid spread

**ASHOK GULATI**

Infosys chair professor for agriculture, ICRER



**T**HE SIGHT OF floating dead bodies in the Ganga has been one of the most painful and distressing scenes of the Covid-19 carnage. The second wave took almost everyone by surprise. While our political leaders were busy in state assembly elections, people were gasping for breath in hospitals due to shortage of oxygen. Black marketing of medical supplies made it worse. Many thought India is a failed state.

But within 2-3 weeks, things improved. Medical experts believe the peak is behind us. India woke up, though a little late. Governments, along with corporate leaders, NGOs, social and religious groups, swung into action arranging medical supplies, setting up temporary hospitals, etc. International aid also came in. India is still not out of woods, but situation has improved.

It is now time for some quick action to contain the spread of virus in villages. The PM has already warned about this. In rural areas, farmers are the key stakeholders. Punjab stands tall amongst farming community, having played a lead role in the Green Revolution. But, do we know that Punjab tops the list of Covid-19 death rates, followed by Uttarakhand, Goa, Delhi, Maharashtra, and so on? (see graphic).

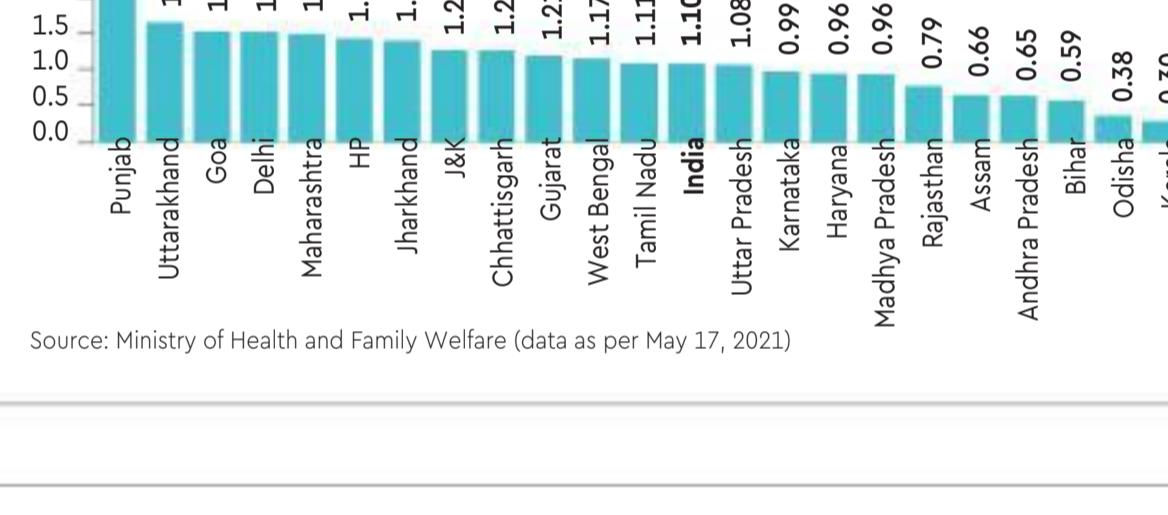
What could be the reasons behind this? What we know about the virus for sure is that it loves crowds. Be it farmers' agitations, religious congregations, or New Year partying in Goa, it spares none. It does not matter how rich or poor you are, or which religious/caste groups you belong to. If one is in a denial mode, it is likely to hit you even harder. Many agitating

farmers in Punjab saying that corona is a conspiracy against their agitation worries me most. Denial, whether due to deficit of trust or lack of education, will make it harder to control the virus. It will be compounded by weak health infrastructure in rural areas, leading to third or even fourth wave. Remember, no one is safe unless all of us are safe. The only solution seems to be vaccination.

How long will it take to vaccinate at least 100 crore Indians to develop herd immunity? We don't have clear cut answers, but Dr VK Paul of NITI tells us that between August and December 2021, there would be about 200 crore doses of vaccines available for Indians. The government is making all out efforts to ramp up vaccine production,

largely through the private sector. What this implies is that we have a lot to do between now and December-end, and may be even beyond that. We can't keep the country under lockdown conditions for long as it hits livelihoods, especially of the poorer sections. Our response has to be a calibrated one balancing lives and livelihoods.

What steps can the government take now? Rajiv Kumar, vice-chairman of NITI Aayog, called a meeting on this issue with many think-tanks last week. ICRER's senior team submitted its note suggesting creation of a war-room at the central level with representatives from relevant states, medical experts, army logistics, corporate sector, civil society, etc. Amitabh Kant of NITI told



us that such a war-room already exists within NITI. If so, it would be good if the supreme leader of the war-room addresses the nation at least twice a week for better communication with its citizens telling how well prepared the government is. Kant also told us that his team is working with more than one lakh NGOs, corporate bodies, and coordinating international aid, for smooth and timely flow of medical supplies. That's a huge and commendable effort. But, it may still be falling short of the needs, especially in rural areas.

We need to first convince rural people about vaccination, and simultaneously upgrade the health infrastructure, especially Primary Health Centres (PHCs). Panchayats, NGOs, and corporate leaders can be roped in this gigantic task. Stocking vaccines in rural areas will require controlled temperatures, and power supplies in PHCs remains an issue. Arunabha Ghosh of CEEW suggested that all PHCs need to be put on solar power on war-footing to create new jobs and give a fillip to health infrastructure with a green footprint. Yamini Aiyar of CPR suggested vaccination camps at panchayat level, and so on. MNREGA workers are likely to be vulnerable due to group activity. They may be incentivised for vaccination, say, with free food for three months or so, and/or some cash rewards. But, if that does not work, some mandatory vaccination for group workers in villages and factories may be needed to save lives of everyone in the group. Big infrastructure push and supporting MSME in rural areas can go a long way in saving their lives and livelihoods.

## Making urea that is not needed

The new urea project at Talcher will worsen the already unsustainable fertiliser subsidy burden as retention price at this project may surpass the current high of \$350/tonne

**UTTAM GUPTA**

Delhi-based policy analyst

etc.

Even as the current MRP is ridiculously low, at ₹5,360 per tonne or \$71 per tonne (at current exchange rate), the RP varies from a low of about ₹200 per tonne to a high of ₹350 per tonne. In the past, when plants were based on different feedstock such as naphtha, fuel oil/LSHS—and when even within the same feedstock category, there were differences in delivered cost—such wide variation was understandable. Now, when all plants are on gas, and gas price is uniform (under the policy introduced in 2015), this is inexplicable.

This has led to multiple maladies, such as protection of high-cost and inefficient plants, excessive use of urea, imbalance in fertiliser use, diversion of urea, and unsustainable increase in subsidy. Even as no credible effort has been made to address policy flaws, approval of a special price for urea to be produced by TFL (given the investment of close to ₹2 billion, its price will be

substantially higher than even the existing highest of ₹350 per tonne) gives a clear signal that this will continue.

The special treatment is being justified on three grounds: (i) in India, coal is available in abundance, (ii) it will increase domestic supply of urea and reduce import, and (iii) reduce dependence on imported LNG. All three grounds are untenable.

As for (i), this fact is known forages, as two coal-based plants were set up at Ramagundum (earlier AP) and Talcher in late 1970s/early 1980s. But, those were babies born sick. A revival plan for Talcher approved by the UPA regime in April 2007, and languished for six years. In September 2013, it was resurrected, and two joint ventures (JVs) were formed involving GAIL/CIL/RCF/FCI to implement it. That plan too languished. Now, the Modi government is at it.

As regards (ii), in the "Mann Baat" of November 26, 2017, Modi called for

reducing urea use by 50% by 2022. In sync with this, the consumption of urea should decline from about 30 million tonnes

in 2016-17 to 15 million tonne by 2021-22. This means, even with current domestic production of about 24 million tonne, there would be a surplus of 9 million tonne. So, India won't really need any increase in supply, be it from TFL or any new/revival project.

As for (iii), this too can't be seen in isolation from 'how we want to see the demand-supply unfolding'. If, the government is really serious about reducing urea use, it can afford a significant reduction even in the current domestic production and yet, fully meet the requirement. This will automatically reduce gas import.

The government pledges to correct policy flaws, yet maintains status quo. This is precisely what it has done while sanctioning urea plant at Talcher and granting it a special price under the subsidy scheme. This is driven by sheer populism, even as pending reforms such as urea decontrol, fertiliser DBT, etc., remain on paper, and may do so eternally.

## Assessing RBI's on-tap liquidity scheme

The tenor of loans is three years for the banks, but there are no such restrictions for on-lending. This could lead to asset-liability mismatches

Third, the scheme creates additional earning incentives for banks, particularly those with surplus liquidity, which can be parked with RBI at 3.75% (repo rate minus 25 bps) up to the extent of disbursed loans under the 'Covid loan book' (that they need to create under the scheme). With the current reverse repo rate at 3.35%, the banks could earn 40 bps more on a part of their excess liquidity.

Some serious concerns however remain. First, the scheme is well-intentioned, but ill-timed. Amid the ongoing crisis, the healthcare sector needs an immediate boost to ramp up medical facilities and emergency services. The

intervention will not alleviate the urgent medical infrastructure problems as credit transmission will take time. Even if disbursement timelines (30 days) are strictly adhered to, capacity expansion cannot happen overnight, as manufacturers and service providers could be

# Education

MONDAY, MAY 24, 2021



## GRAPHIC TRAVELOGUES

Safurat Balogun, Goethe-Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan Delhi

When we launched Graphic Travelogues last year in the middle of a pandemic, we imagined next phase would bring artists together through residencies. We realised it wouldn't happen soon. This is how Graphic Travelogues #Culinary was born. We are bringing finest chefs, travel bloggers & comic artists for a culinary adventure.

● **INTERVIEW:** KRISHNA KUMAR, Founder & CEO, Simplilearn

## Free courses can reduce digital divide

*During the lockdown, Simplilearn launched a new product called Skillup, in which it is offering the most in-demand technical skills for free. Krishna Kumar, the founder & CEO of Simplilearn, says Skillup gives learners an opportunity to identify the upskilling option that works best for their career goals. In an interview with FE's Vikram Chaudhary, he adds that edtech companies can make people job-ready and even help close the digital divide to an extent. Excerpts:*

**Which all courses at Simplilearn saw rising demand during the pandemic year?**

In 2020, when the first lockdown was announced, companies weren't sure how the job market would behave; there were job losses in certain sectors, appraisals were delayed and bonuses were put on hold. But over the months we saw the demand for digital/tech talent going up manifold. A lot of start-ups got funding and a large part of those funds was used for building tech talent. A year later, we know that digital skills are so much in demand.

**The pandemic brought to the forefront the digital divide...**

That's correct. The UNICEF recently noted that schools for more than 168 million children globally have been completely closed for almost an entire year due to Covid-19 lockdowns. In addition, a lot of rural kids (including in India) might not be able to go to the school again because Covid-19 has created poverty for their families; the worry is many of them could

be forced to work as child labourers. In addition, even as the more privileged kids were able to continue learning digitally, millions in India still don't have access to digital devices. While at Simplilearn we are in a good phase in terms of business, I am very concerned in terms of this disparity.

**Did you start any new courses that were a direct result of the lockdown?**

While our courses are linked to the market, during the lockdown we launched a new product called Skillup, in which we offer in-demand skills for free. Skillup doesn't provide live classes, projects, labs, exam vouchers, teaching assistance or course completion certificates like our paid offerings, but learners can take free online courses, and it gives them an opportunity to identify the upskilling option that works best for their specific career goals. The average cost of our courses is ₹35,000, and by

using Skillup learners know the course they want to do to further their career.

**What kind of global reach do you have?**

Over 65% of our business comes from outside India; we have paying customers from 203 countries. We have about 8 million visitors on our website every month, of these 100,000 leave their phone numbers every month, and 20,000 buy our courses.

**Today, soft skills (behavioural skills) are almost as important as hard skills (functional and technical skills). Do you plan to teach soft skills as well?**

So far we have not done so, because we don't want to end up doing everything.

**Do you cater only to working professionals or also to students?**

Currently, 99% of our learners are working professionals—those who already have a job but are looking at a better job, either outside their organisation or within.

**There have been reports that many engineering colleges in India are not producing job-ready graduates. Can companies such as Simplilearn help?**

We have started experimenting in this area; we have started offering our digital and software certification programmes to computer science engineering students of KL University (Vijayawada). Through this, students will be equipped with the relevant skillset required to be job-ready.

**Should a working professional take a full-time course at, say, an IIT or a digital course from an edtech company?**

I would recommend that instead of attending, say, a one-year full-time programme that costs a bomb, a course from Simplilearn will give you much better ROI any day. Our certificates come from credible names.



PORTRAIT: SHYAM KUMAR PRASAD

## PRACTICALLY Yet another entrance exam preparation app

Its target market is students from grades 6th to 12th



VIKRAM CHAUDHARY

**PRACTICALLY, THE** experiential learning app, has been recognised at the TiEcon 2021 as one of the top-50 leading edge start-ups. This decade-old awards competition is an initiative of TiEcon, the world's largest conference for tech entrepreneurs. Practically was recognised for its animated 3D videos, simulations and AR/VR.

"We are honoured to be selected as a TiE50 2021 winner for our focus on bringing learning alive with the help of new-age, immersive technologies, and reshaping the way the world learns. We were chosen from hundreds of applicants in every technology sector globally, which is further validation of our technology and market opportunity," said Charu Noheria, co-founder and COO of Practically, the e-learning app founded in 2018.

Noheria added that while anybody who wants to learn mathematics and science

concepts can benefit from Practically, its target market is students from grades 6 to 12, and those preparing for IIT-JEE/NEET foundation courses, IIT-JEE, NEET, Olympiads and NTSE. "Our learning packages, which include a combination of videos, simulations, augmented reality and assessment questions, are designed to enhance learning in a fun way," she said.

For those preparing for entrance examinations, Noheria said Practically has about 6 lakh questions in its question bank, and offers unlimited standardised testing for almost all competitive exams.

On the app, questions are divided into multiple levels of complexity to assess a student's areas of strength and weaknesses, and there is a testing engine powered by artificial intelligence that auto generates question papers based on the exam pattern. Noheria added that videos on Practically are bite-sized capsules of information, aimed at increasing retention and keeping students engaged. "As of now, more than 3,30,000 students, 200-plus schools and 18,000 teachers across India and the Middle East have accessed the content on Practically."

Practically also offers the School Solution, a B2B2C offering, which gives schools and teachers access to the Practically teacher app for free.

Investors in Practically include Exfinity Venture Partners, Younest Venture Capital and IDFC Parampara.

## Science & tech

### How long do vaccine protections last?

Science can't say for sure. Many predict that Covid boosters will soon join annual flu shots

CAREY GOLDBERG

**PROTECTION FROM CORONAVIRUS** vaccines is expected to wane, but no one knows when. It could be as soon as this fall for the first wave of people vaccinated last winter, and many predict that Covid boosters will soon join annual flu shots.

Ideally, anyone worried about fading vaccine protection could get tested for Covid-fighting antibodies, the primary defense against the virus. But as cancer patients and others with impaired immune systems are learning, it's not that simple. "The good news is, we have an antibody test that can test for whether or not you've made antibodies in response to the vaccine," said Craig Bunnell, chief medical officer at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. "The bad news is that we don't yet know how to interpret the results."

The gap in knowledge and testing raises the prospect of heightened anxiety in the coming months for vaccine recipients wondering if they're still protected—anxiety that could curb willingness to venture out in public. That in turn could put a renewed drag on the global economic recovery. Scientists are racing to figure out the so-called correlates of protection against Covid; in other words, which test results assure immunity. New data coming out almost weekly brings researchers closer to understanding which immune signatures reflect protection, said epidemiologist Michael Mina of the Harvard Chan School of Public Health. But it's likely to be months before the picture is clear.

It's also not yet known how long the vaccines last in general. They're so new that there hasn't been time to follow recipients for very long; mounting evidence suggests the antibody protection lasts at least six months, but beyond that remains unclear.

It's the sort of post-vaccine limbo that those with impaired immune systems already know well.

"Immuno-compromised" people make up an estimated 3% of the population, including people with blood cancers—more than 1 million survivors in the US—as well as those with autoimmune diseases, HIV and transplanted organs requiring anti-rejection drugs.

Michele Nadeem-Baker embodies their dilemma. She's fully vaccinated and chafing to fully return to the world after more than a year as a self-described "bubble woman" who leaves home in Boston's hilly Charlestown neighborhood only to take walks. While new guidance from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lets other Bostonians rip off their masks outdoors and resume almost-normal lives, little changes for her. Her weak immune system means being vaccinated doesn't guarantee protection, and she sees no end to sheltering in place. "I'm being told I can't get back into life," she said. "How can I find out for sure if I can? The only way would be to get some scientific proof."

So last month, Nadeem-Baker, who has

leukemia and is a cancer patient advocate, asked to be tested for coronavirus antibodies. The results: more frustration. Though she did have some of the disease-fighting proteins, she said, her doctors told her she needed to keep acting as if she didn't, because they couldn't confidently interpret her score.

In the body's complex array of defenses against germs, antibodies act like the scouts, identifying and targeting intruders. They have powerful back-up troops, including "memory" B cells and T cells that ramp up to combat enemies they recognize. So antibody tests tell far from the whole story. Say that "John Doe has an antibody level of 14 or 40 or 400 or 4,000," said Harvard's Mina, an authority on testing and antibodies. "Those numbers don't mean anything." Establishing which antibody levels are enough for robust protection will require testing many people over time to determine when the virus can break through, he said. Then again, a patient may have none of the specific antibodies measured but still have protection from other elements of the immune system, like those B and T cells. Or it could turn out that the specific antibodies being measured are not actually key to killing the virus, Mina added—something like hundreds of bits of duct tape that are stuck all over an enemy's body but not over their nose and mouth, and so are not fatal.

Among blood-cancer patients, more than 2,000—including Nadeem-Baker—have signed up for free antibody testing as part of a study by the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, said the national nonprofit's chief scientific officer, Lee Greenberger. "The research is happening as fast as it possibly can, so we understand the magnitude of the problem, and then figure out solutions for how we're going to protect these patients," he said.

Early findings in cancer patients illustrate how dramatically Covid antibody responses vary by individual and by condition, Greenberger said. In one type of cancer, "40 or 50% of patients don't make antibodies," he said. "In another blood cancer, everybody makes antibodies."

Among healthy volunteers, almost all get robust antibody test results, he said, but because other arms of the immune system could offer protection, it's still unclear what even a zero antibody test result means, except that "it's a warning sign."

The upshot remains so murky that the CDC explicitly says "antibody testing is not recommended for assessing immunity" after vaccination in people with immune issues. Dana-Farber similarly cautions cancer patients that "unfortunately, there isn't any way to know with certainty whether the vaccine worked."

"As we gain more understanding of the test results, their meaning, and how to respond to those results, we may find that testing becomes useful," it said. "Until then, we recommend getting vaccinated and continuing to exercise precautions to reduce the risk of exposure."

Also still to be determined: How the general public will react if immunity seems to be fading and testing remains inconclusive, particularly if—or rather, when, epidemiologists say—new outbreaks arise. The economic impact is likely to be limited in countries with high vaccine uptake because any new outbreaks are likely to be localized, said John Ricco from the Penn Wharton Budget Model, which has been analyzing the economic impact of vaccines. But the prospect underscores one consistent finding, he said: "Dollars spent on any sort of vaccine research at this point have a very high return on investment." Research on new tools for measuring immunity is rapidly advancing, said

Mina, whose lab is working on them and runs tens of thousands of antibody tests a week. He envisions mass testing to monitor immunity for Covid and other viruses—both for individual awareness and for public health. But for that, antibody tests would need to be much cheaper than the current \$120 or so, he said. Though there are several tests on the market, "If somebody is telling you that they're giving you an idea of how protected you are, I would say, don't believe them," he said.

Weavr Health, a startup based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is among companies preparing for when that changes. It's applied for emergency use authorization for an at-home, 10-minute antibody test.

Chief Executive Officer Linh Hoang cites recent research that found people who test negative for Covid antibodies have a ten-fold higher risk of catching Covid than people who test positive. He argues that though it's too early to interpret test results, indications are strong that antibodies offer "some level of protection," something like an "internal mask." The question mark is: What is the role of antibodies? "Is it like an N95 internal mask or a surgical mask? And maybe it varies from individual to individual." Once it's clear what antibody test results mean, research must determine how best to treat patients who get scant protection from vaccines, said Greenberger.

Options include giving patients antibody cocktails or possibly additional or different vaccines, he said. He has heard of patients quietly getting a third vaccine shot but cautions that all medical treatments must be tested carefully in clinical trials. In Boston, Michele Nadeem-Baker waits for more certainty about both tests and treatments. "It's not over yet for some of us," she said, "even if we get vaccinated."

—Bloomberg



## The growing relevance of executive education

It enables skill development and can boost career growth



SANGHAMITRA BUDDHAPRIYA

A RECENT SURVEY conducted by industry body NASSCOM found that over 50% of Indian professionals will have to upskill themselves to match changing industry dynamics. Key areas of focus include technical skills such as big data analytics and artificial intelligence, as also qualitative skills such as problem assessment, negotiations and business communications.

Those who demonstrate proven expertise in emerging technologies while keeping up with the rapid evolution in the field will be in demand. Today, organisations are motivating their employees to reskill themselves so that their existing knowledge base doesn't become redundant. While freshers with management education enter the job market possessing updated managerial skills, it is becoming essential for existing employees to bridge this knowledge gap to compete with them.

What is executive education?

Top management schools have recognised the gap in the demands of the industry and the existing workforce. They are curating short but intensive courses that are aimed at helping working professionals to upskill themselves. These courses cover topics ranging from leadership programmes, negotiations, emerging technologies and strategising practices, among others. The rationale behind these programmes is to enrich the existing skillsets of working professionals and prepare them for the evolving market scenarios.

Distinct from regular management degrees, these executive programmes are professional development courses that usually conclude with a certification or a diploma. The focus is around case-solving and building on the core skills with practical industry scenarios.

Why one should pursue these?

The aim of executive education is not only upgrading one's resume, but also upgrading core business skills. A certification in a niche functional area with advanced knowledge garners the attention of top recruiters. It also strengthens the position of the individual in her/his existing organisation and entities her/him to promising opportunities for securing a more advanced role within the organisation. Executive education also broadens the perspectives of an individual and enhances her/his business vision. While pursuing these courses, professionals with diverse corporate experiences get to interact with other. This helps in gaining deeper insights about myriad domains in the market and exploring possibilities of growth in them. Collaborative projects and assignments constitute a significant part of such courses that serve as great team-building and communication exercises.

Compared to full-time management programmes, an executive MBA does not require a professional to take a break from career. These courses are designed as per the convenience of working professionals so that they can establish a convenient balance between their work and education. This also helps a working professional to apply the concepts she/he learns in the classrooms to practical real-life scenarios, enabling her/him to receive prompt feedbacks about the usage of their upgraded skills, which facilitates deep learning.

The bottom line

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to severe disruptions in the business ecosystem. The rates of layoffs and company shutdowns have spiked in certain sectors. While business experts and analysts continue to assess the consequences of these transitions, working professionals must upgrade themselves to stay relevant in a potentially difficult job market. Pursuing an executive MBA programme can equip working managers with the knowledge and advanced skillsets that will prepare them to survive through the toughest challenges they are likely to encounter in the post-pandemic era.

The author is professor in OBHR area and dean (Academics) at FORE School of Management, New Delhi

● **INTERVIEW:** SAJAN PAUL, MD & Country Manager, India & Saarc, Juniper Networks

# Artificial Intelligence is the driving force behind smart enterprises

An Artificial Intelligence (AI) driven network is integral to achieving greater agility and adaptability in the hybrid workplace. "This can assist with mission-critical proximity tracing and physical distancing requirements to safeguard the health of employees," says Sajan Paul, MD and country manager, India and SAARC, Juniper Networks, a US-based tech firm that develops and markets high-performance networking and cybersecurity solutions. "This will strengthen business continuity and better prepare Indian enterprises for the future of work," he tells Sudhir Chowdhary in a recent interview. Excerpts:

The pandemic has brought about the biggest ever cloud migration and transformation at Indian enterprises. How has this impacted Juniper Networks?

We have seen customers accelerating their adoption of modern cloud architectures for the network, which has led to increased investments in transforming network infrastructures. This migration will only continue to grow as more Indian enterprises understand the value of building their network in a modern cloud environment, which will help them pivot in dynamic times, ensuring business continuity and productivity. Juniper's multi-cloud framework allows seamless workload distribution and security on the fly.



What are your thoughts on the evolution of self-driving networks with AI and automation at its core?

AI and automation will continue to fuel the age of self-driving networks. Juniper is working on the future of autonomous networking. Our most recent acquisition of Apstra is testament to our commitment of

providing the most seamless path toward automating the data centre and introducing AI-driven operations.

In March this year, we announced a local partnership with ConnX to drive the adoption of AI-driven WAN across India. Juniper's Paragon Automation framework is an AI-driven intent based engine that solves the

As we move towards a 5G and multi-cloud services landscape, Indian enterprises need to be laser focused on consistently delivering excellent customer experiences

toughest challenges with full lifecycle management at the core of its features.

**How is Juniper supporting its customers to deal with complex security threats?**

The spike in cyber attacks last year has shone a spotlight on the network's role in security and the need for security enforcement at every point of connection. This is where the Juniper Connected Security Strategy comes into play, enabling firms to unify all their network elements into a threat-aware network driven by AI and automation.

In today's open multi-vendor ecosystem, organisations are exploring ways to leverage existing network and security elements to better protect investments while ensuring

business continuity. The Juniper Connected Security portfolio is open, and we have partnered with other security vendors to offer organisations a best-of-breed ecosystem.

**What are the essentials to a successful future of digital-driven enterprise?**

As we move towards a 5G and multi-cloud services landscape, Indian enterprises need to be laser focused on consistently delivering excellent customer experiences from client to cloud. User experience should be the critical priority in building an architecture for a digital driven enterprise.

**Can you elaborate your role in the context of telcos preparing for the 5G era?**

While the ongoing transition from 3G to 4G still remains a major priority in India's telecom sector, 5G is top-of-mind. In every service provider's transformation journey, we can help with several aspects including front haul and back haul, higher-capacity networks, telco edge cloud platforms, structural separations and more. We have a rich history of building out nationwide networking infrastructure alongside some of India's largest service providers. With its solutions and industry expertise, Juniper will be able to help service providers in India transform their businesses, boost customer experience and unlock new revenue streams in the 4G and 5G era and beyond.

● **TALENT SCOUTS**

## AI as recruiter's friend & guide

Recruiters ensure the human interface with the company brand



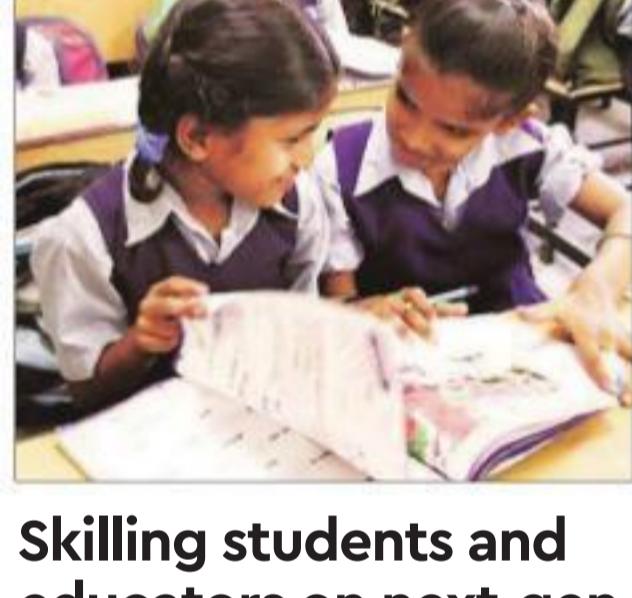
Arundhati Bhattacharya

**RECRUITERS HAVE BEEN** the backbone for IT services companies in their ability to grow at a stupendous pace over the last several years. Whether it's campus recruitments or open hires or specialist hires, recruiters play a key role to support the delivery teams by providing the resources with the right skills at the right time. With the surge in the demand for talent and the availability of talent for emerging or 'in vogue' technologies being limited, companies have been deploying multi-pronged approaches to tap the talent of their choice, amongst which digital and AI driven methods are being increasingly favoured by employers.

Companies are realising the usefulness of adopting a data-driven approach to recruitment supported by digital tools that help in seeing patterns and eliminating bias in the hiring process. With help of AI tools developed by companies such as Light NLP, it is now feasible for companies to reduce time to shortlist high match candidates through intelligent sorting including conversations of bots with candidates regarding ambiguous information, clarifying their areas of expertise or compensation details.



## Tech Bytes



### Skilling students and educators on next-gen technology

THE MINISTRY OF tribal affairs has joined hands with Microsoft to support the digital transformation of schools such as Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) and Ashram Schools, among others under the ministry. This partnership will train students in technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, coding and data science, empowering them to use technology in meaningful ways to build their future. Minister for tribal affairs Arjun Munda said, "This programme will prove beneficial in terms of readiness, preparedness of our students at various international forums. Our students would get the required skill-set through digital transformation and this would begin a new chapter with AI and coding being a part of the curriculum." The initiative will also enable professional development of educators, enabling them to use technology in classrooms. Under this programme in the first phase, 250 EMRS schools have been adopted by Microsoft out of which 50 EMRS schools will be given intensive training and 500 master trainers would be trained in the first phase.

### Payments made simple with PayU & Zoho Books

ONLINE PAYMENT SOLUTIONS provider PayU has announced integration with Zoho Books, the GST-compliant accounting solution from business software maker Zoho, to deliver a seamless payment experience to merchants and increase business efficiencies. PayU's technology and solutions will allow merchants to reconcile payments within Zoho Books and access a full-scale payment infrastructure. The extension will offer Zoho Books' customers a way to connect and set up PayU solutions within Zoho Books' existing platform. Businesses can simply send invoices with payment links or share invoice links with their customers. Once the payment is made, the status of the corresponding invoice will be automatically updated as 'Paid' on the Zoho platform. The reconciliation of transactions with PayU's tech-enabled invoices will help merchants to manage their cash flow intelligently, monitor payments made within Zoho Books itself, channelise their resources effectively, and scale up faster. The PayU integration is available for users of the Indian edition of Zoho Books.

## Gadgets

### SAMSUNG GALAXY M42 5G

## More power and speed at your fingertips

Galaxy M42 5G is a beautifully designed phone that lasts longer and charges faster. It's smart, fast and efficient too, with a power-packed spec sheet

SUDHIR CHOWDHARY

THESE DAYS, A long-lasting battery life has emerged as a key determinant for any mobile phone purchase. Eavesdrop on any conversation among gadget-friendly youngsters and you'll find that the mAh (milliampere-hour) abbreviation mentioned on spec sheets is fiercely discussed, besides other things such as cameras, AI features, etc. A large battery life is preferred by those who game a lot, listen to endless music, watch a lot of movies. That is why handset makers are offering high-capacity battery devices that typically last two days of moderate use; if more than that, even better.

Samsung's Galaxy M Series mobile phones have been hugely popular among youngsters here; they are very discerning buyers and their knowledge, research and assessment of technology and devices is fairly evolved. Galaxy M42 5G is the company's first mid-segment 5G device that was introduced recently and we got one unit for review.

Powered by Qualcomm Snapdragon 750G processor, the Galaxy M42 5G is intended for tech savvy millennials and Gen Z consumers who live fast-paced lives. Galaxy M42 5G is also the first Galaxy M phone to feature Samsung Pay, Samsung's secure and easy-to-use mobile payment

### SPECIFICATIONS

- Display: 6.6-inch HD+ Super AMOLED Infinity-U
- Processor: Snapdragon 750G octa-core
- Operating system: Android 11 (One UI 3.1 interface)
- Camera: (Rear) True 48+8 (ultra-wide) 5MP (macro) +5MP (depth); 20MP (Front)
- Memory & storage: 6/8GB RAM, 128GB internal storage (expandable upto 1TB)
- Battery: 5000mAh, 15W Fast charging
- Estimated street price: ₹21,999 (6GB + 128GB), ₹23,999 (8GB + 128GB)

service. Galaxy M42 5G also comes with Samsung Knox, Samsung's powerful mobile security platform.

First, the phone's battery prowess. Galaxy M42 5G comes with a massive 5000mAh battery and in-box 15W fast charger that lets you conquer day and night without having to worry about frequent charging. The phone delivers 36 hours of talk time, 22 hours of internet browsing and 34 hours of video play on a single charge so that you can do what you love without slowing down.

Galaxy M42 5G sports an attractive 6.6-inch sAMOLED Infinity-U display for immersive viewing experience. Trust me, it is a delight for binge-watchers who enjoy



their favourite content on the go. The phone also has a unique prism dot design with a rich glossy finish. The device is sleek and just 8.6mm thin with the modern 3D design and layered pattern offering a comfortable grip. It is available in Prism Dot Black and Prism Dot Gray colours and is priced at ₹21,999 for 6GB + 128 GB variant (our trial unit) and ₹23,999 for 8GB + 128 GB variant.

Switched on, the Galaxy M42 5G will surprise you with its speed and power.

Powered by the Qualcomm Snapdragon 750G, this M series device ensures high-speed performance. Galaxy M42 5G's powerful and efficient 5G processor results in snappy performance, smooth

multitasking and reduced power consumption while browsing or using multiple apps. For gamers, there's Game Booster and Frame Booster that offer advanced gaming performance and lag-free gaming experience.

Moving on to the cameras, the Galaxy M42 5G sports a Quad Camera set-up. The main 48MP ISOCELL GM2 sensor on the rear camera has an effective resolution of 6000 x 8000 pixels to produce a true 48MP output that is clear and rich in detail. The rear camera set-up includes 8MP ultra-wide lens that allows capturing visually attractive landscapes with 123 degrees field of view while the 5MP macro lens takes close-up shots in very good detail. The 5MP depth camera blurs the background and lets users take good portrait shots. The rear camera also supports HDR and 4K video recording at 30 fps.

Galaxy M42 5G's camera is equipped with plenty of features that include Single Take that gives you multiple photo and video outputs with a single click, Night Mode, Hyperlapse, Super-Slow motion, Scene Optimiser and Flaw Detection. The phone also comes with 20MP front camera with 'selfie focus' for high-resolution selfies.

**Key takeaways:** Galaxy M42 5G is a sleek, lightweight and beautifully designed phone that will instantly appeal to the eye. During my usage, it came across as a nifty device. Its user interface is a breeze, the camera quality is great and the call quality is crisp and clear at both ends. Browsing the internet on this device, watching videos, etc., runs very well on this phone. And, at a time when good battery life is on top of the mind, the Galaxy M42 5G will easily give you enough power for high level multitasking, binge-watching etc. A great value phone, worth considering.

charge and up to 10 hours on a single charge. Its instant pairing technology with Bluetooth 5.1 ensures stable and fast connection. The TWS in-ear earbuds promise high fidelity sound with its 10mm Graphene speakers coupled with AAC Codec Support. It comes with a universal Type-C charging interface and features a rich digital LED display with one touch manoeuvre. These earbuds also have a Quad MEMS Mic ENC enabling crystal clear calls. It has Low Latency Gaming Mode.



### TRUKE BUDS S1 & Q1

## These Buds look and sound great

The snug fit in-ear TWS earbuds are skin-friendly and come in stylish miniature cases

SUDHIR CHOWDHARY

TRUE WIRELESS STEREO (TWS) headphones or earbuds are the current craze in audio technology; when you wear them, you have the complete freedom to move. There are no wires to connect your earbuds to your phone, or even to each other. All this sounds amazing, doesn't it? Audio brand truke has brought out two new ergonomically designed TWS earbuds—Buds S1 and Q1 for music lovers and fitness freaks. Available on Amazon and Flip-

kart, these truke Buds come equipped with the latest Bluetooth 5.1 connectivity.

The snug fit in-ear earbuds are skin-friendly and come in stylish miniature cases, making them perfect for

outdoor endeavours as they refuse to fall off in any kind of head movement.

truke Buds S1 (₹1,499)

Offering a playtime of upto 10 hours on a single charge, truke buds S1 come equipped with a 500mAh premium sliding case, providing a total playtime of upto 72 hours. It offers high fidelity powerful sound with its 10mm Graphene speakers coupled with AAC Codec Support. It comes with a universal Type-C charging interface and features a rich digital LED display with one touch manoeuvre. These earbuds also have a Quad MEMS Mic ENC that allows a rich calling experience.

truke Buds Q1 (₹1,299)

The truke Buds Q1 is backed with a 400mAh charging case that allows up to 60 hours of music play back time on full

AI tools are also enabling organisations to go through unstructured content available through social media, process the information in structured format to determine candidates fit for the role. Crawlers are able to throw up potential candidates for consideration by studying the qualified databases, referrals and auto pointers to the right candidates based on their social media presence. Thus it is observed that the primary responsibilities of recruiters to spread the word around, identify potential candidates, sort out the CVs and shortlist those with the right fit for the role are now being fulfilled by tech tools. Hence the question about the relevance of recruiters for large employers such as IT services providers.

Post Covid-19, several companies are increasingly adopting remote hiring methods and are getting comfortable with AI-powered chatbots for the initial screening of candidates. Further, employee verification and onboarding processes are also being serviced by AI. However, with minimal personal contact in the physical space, recruiters have to recognise the importance of creating a positive digital experience for the candidates. Therefore, they have to provide the human interface to the candidates with the company brand instead of focusing on mechanical activities taken over by AI bots.

With enhanced real time analytics at their disposal, recruiters would have access to better insights into candidates' behaviour profiles and the opportunity to fine-tune their communication strategy for attracting the right candidates for open positions. Although the candidate database has substantially increased, recruiters need to hone their skills in setting up search and information requirements accurately to be able to find the right candidate pool that matches the job criteria. Therefore recruiters should now try to build on their analytical skills and use the insights to enhance their selling skills to be successful in the digital era.

AI driven recruitment engines leave out the bias in hiring. However, caution should be exercised to ensure algorithms do not introduce their own biases in their logic. Amazon had to do away with a recruiting tool when it was found to be biased against women. Hence it is important to validate the data used for building the AI model, the frequency of update of the data used in such models as well as regular audit to ensure recruiters and the AI engine are aligned in terms of how they look at the data and interpret it for decision making. AI tools are here to stay in recruitment—the efficiency of recruiters would be dependent on their adaptability in treating AI tools as their companions and not viewing them as a threat.

The writer is chairperson, Global Talent Track, a corporate training solutions company

# Investor

MONDAY, MAY 24, 2021

## EXPERTVIEW

Recovery in auto fuel marketing margin and GRM is key to an improvement in Indian Oil Corporation's stock performance

—ICICI Securities

## Financials

Year to March	FY20	FY21	FY22E	FY23E
Revenue (₹ mn)	57,51,635	52,02,368	76,41,750	80,64,233
Net Income (₹ mn)	59,661	2,39,203	1,73,362	1,98,877
EPS (₹)	6.3	25.4	18.4	21.1
% chg Y-o-Y	-65.8%	300.9%	-27.5%	14.7%
P/E (x)	16.9	4.2	5.8	5.1
CEPS (₹)	1.6	36.1	27.6	31.2
EV/E (x)	8.4	5.2	5.9	5.3
Dividend Yield	4%	11%	7%	7%
RoCE (%)	3%	13%	9%	10%
RoE (%)	-3%	20%	13%	14%

Source: Company data, I-Sec research

## ● INDIAN OIL RATING: HOLD

## Inventory gain gave earnings a boost

Recovery in auto marketing margin & GRM are key; FY22e EPS up 4% and TP raised to ₹110; downgraded to 'Hold'

**INDIAN OIL CORPORATION'S** (IOC's) Q4FY21 recurring EPS is up 4x y-o-y driven by inventory gain vs loss, petrochemical Ebitda jump and fall in interest cost. FY21 recurring EPS is also up 4x y-o-y driven by same factors as in Q4 besides 37% y-o-y rise in auto fuel net marketing margin. We have raised FY22E EPS by 4% and TP by 5% to ₹110 (3% upside) mainly on upgrade in petrochemical Ebitda to reflect the recent margin strength and outlook.

Net marketing margin is weak in FY22-TD at ₹0.43/l. ₹2.05-2.5/l price hike is

required to boost it to ₹2.5/l, which is our FY22 estimate. We are optimistic about future hikes given the government's track record. IOC's GRM is weak in FY22-TD and recovery in diesel cracks is key to GRM rising to our FY22 estimate of ₹3/bbl. We downgrade IOC to Hold from ADD as we await GRM and marketing margin recovery.

**Q4 EPS surge driven by inventory gain and petrochemical Ebitda jump:** Standalone Q4FY21 recurring EPS is up 4.3x y-o-y driven by (i) estimated crude and product inventory gain of ₹84 bn vs



loss of ₹185 bn in Q4FY20; (ii) 4.7x y-o-y jump in petrochemical Ebitda to ₹22.5 bn; and (iii) 42% y-o-y fall in interest cost (debt is down 12% y-o-y but up 41% q-o-q to ₹1,023 bn in end-Mar'21). Reported GRM was ₹12.5/bbl vs minus ₹9.6/bbl in Q4FY20 while core GRM at ₹4.5/bbl is down 44% y-o-y vs ₹8.2/bbl in Q4FY20.

Net marketing margin was down 61% y-o-y at ₹1.2/l. Excluding inventory gain/loss, Q4 standalone EPS is down 84% y-o-y. Consolidated recurring Q4 profit stood at ₹90.3 bn vs loss of ₹5.5 bn in Q4FY20; share of profit from JV/associates is up 6% y-o-y driven by subsidiary Chennai Petroleum's recurring profit of ₹2.3 bn vs loss of ₹16.4 bn in Q4FY20.

We have cut IOC's FY22E GRM to ₹3/bbl from ₹3.4/bbl earlier but raised petrochem Ebitda estimate by 45% to ₹70 bn. The net impact is an upgrade in FY22E EPS by 4%

**Auto fuel marketing margin weaken in FY22-TD:** Auto fuel net marketing margin was up 37% y-o-y at ₹3.05/l in FY21. It is weak at ₹0.66/l on 19-May'21 and ₹0.43/l in FY22-TD despite petrol and diesel price hikes of ₹2.5-2.8/l in the last two weeks. Net margin is estimated at ₹0.39/l on 1-Jun'21 and ₹0.79/l on 16-Jun'21.

**Core GRM up q-o-q in Q1FY22-TD:** We estimate IOC's Q1FY22-TD GRM at

\$0.79/bbl. Gradual recovery in global demand as vaccines are rolled out may help diesel cracks and GRM recover.

**Raise FY22E EPS and target price:** We have cut IOC's FY22e GRM to 3/bbl from \$3.4/bbl earlier but raised petrochemical Ebitda estimate by 45% to ₹70 bn to reflect

the strength in petrochemical margins due to snowstorm in the US gulf coast in Feb'21; we estimate IOC's petrochemical Ebitda at ₹23 bn in Q1FY22E. The net impact is an upgrade in FY22E EPS by 4% and TP by 5% to ₹110. Recovery in auto fuel marketing margin and GRM is key to improvement in IOC's stock performance.

ICICI SECURITIES



## ● UPL RATING: BUY

## Higher topline growth drove profitability

Debt reduced; commodity cycle to be growth driver; TP up to ₹850; 'Buy' retained

**UPL'S Q4FY21 SALES/EBITDA** growth of 15%/31% y-o-y is ahead of estimate and led to a 70% y-o-y surge in PAT despite several one-offs. For FY21, the company clocked 11% volume growth and pared net debt to ₹19 bn from ₹22 bn, broadly achieving its guidance.

Management shared their vision of maintaining 7-10% growth by FY26 while raising Ebitda margin to 25% (from 22%). We believe the ongoing favourable agri commodity cycle is a key growth driver in the near term. With net debt/Ebitda <2x, the overhang of a leveraged balance sheet has passed; hence, we are moving back to a P/E valuation from EV/Ebitda. Assigning a 15x PE (in line with 5-year average) yields a TP of ₹850 (up from ₹655); reiterate Buy.

**Higher top-line growth drives profitability:** UPL posted 15% y-o-y revenue growth to ₹12.8 bn driven by solid 18% y-o-y volume growth and 1% price growth while FX impact was -4%. An uptick of 40% y-o-y in Latam (40%) and India (23%) boosted overall sales. Europe (17%), ROW (11%) too supported growth; North America witnessed flat growth. Ebitda margin expansion of 270bps y-o-y to 22.2% led by a 200bps increase in gross margin lifted Ebitda 31% y-o-y to ₹28.4 bn. Q4FY21 also reported an extraordinary gain of ₹800 mn related to restructuring cost and other gains. Reported PAT jumped 72% y-o-y to ₹10.6 bn.

**Outlook:** Balance sheet strengthened —Successful debt reduction (net debt/Ebitda <2x by FY22) and strong growth visibility eliminate the risks related to UPL's 'leveraged' balance sheet. We move to a P/E valuation with a ₹850 TP (15x Sep-23E EPS) from an EV/Ebitda-based TP of ₹655 (8.5x FY22). Implied EV/Ebitda works out to 9x at PE-based TP; 'BUY/SO'.

EDELWEISS

Volume traction continued to be strong in Q4FY21



Source: Company, Edelweiss Research

## Personal Finance

## ● MUTUAL FUNDS

### What's making arbitrage funds a hot buy

With volatility in the markets, savvy investors are putting money in hybrid schemes, especially arbitrage funds, as they can give higher returns as compared to liquid funds

SAIKAT NEOGI

**WITH VOLATILITY** in the markets and concerns over the intense second wave of the pandemic and its possible impact on the economy, mutual fund investors are increasingly looking at hybrid schemes. From January to April this calendar year, hybrid schemes reported net inflows of ₹21,696 crore as compared to a net outflow of ₹29,203 crore from July to December 2020. In hybrid schemes, investors are opting for arbitrage funds, balanced advantage funds, multi-asset funds and dynamic asset allocation funds as compared to pure equity funds.

In fact, equity-oriented mutual funds saw a drop in net inflow to ₹3,437 crore in April 2021 as compared to a strong net inflow of ₹9,115 crore in the previous month. Before March 2021, the segment witnessed net outflows for eight consecutive months. Investments through systematic investment plans saw a drop in April at ₹8,590 crore against ₹9,182 crore in March as investors preferred to stay on the sidelines until more clarity emerges around the impact of the second

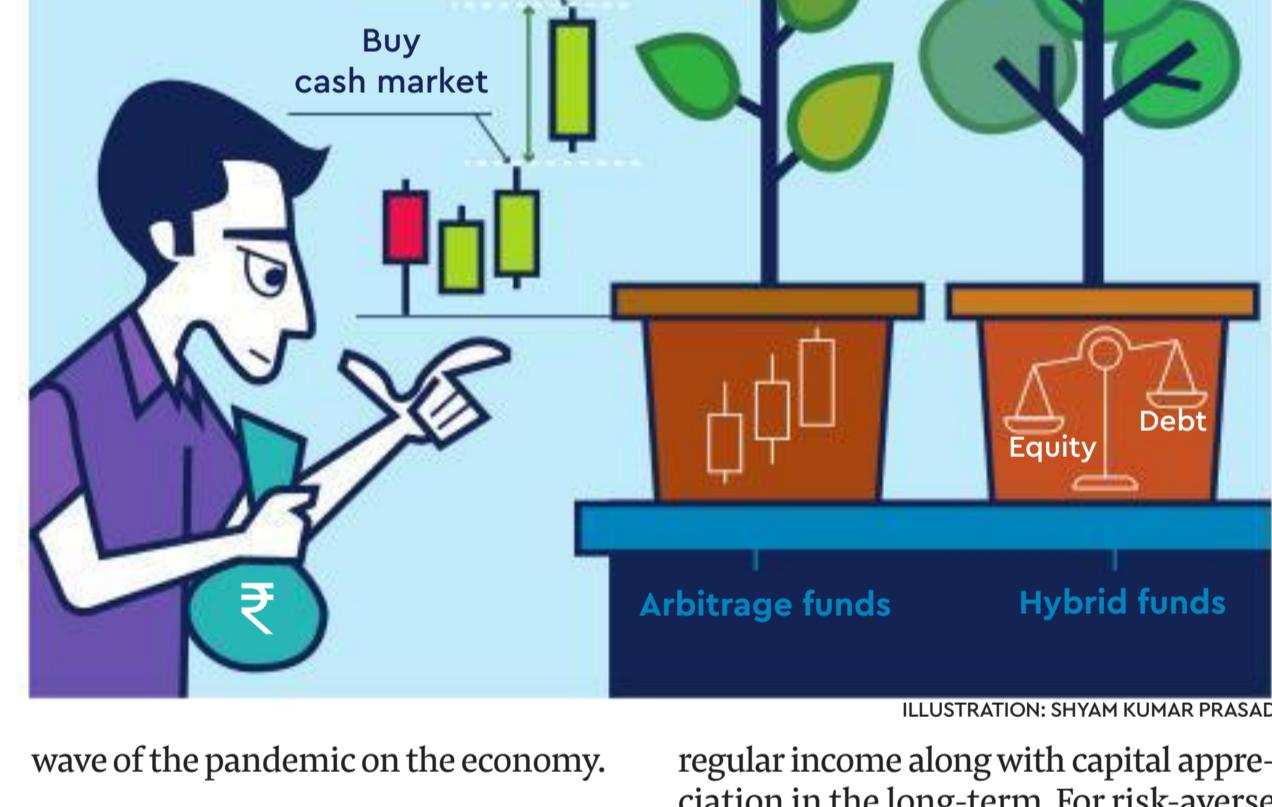


ILLUSTRATION: SHYAM KUMAR PRASAD

wave of the pandemic on the economy.

## Hybrid category gains

In April, the hybrid fund category reported a net inflow of ₹8,441 crore led by arbitrage funds at ₹7,245 crore, followed by balanced advantage fund at ₹1,700 crore, balanced hybrid funds at ₹184 crore and multi-asset allocation funds at ₹26 crore. However, dynamic asset allocation funds reported net outflows of ₹501 crore.

Hybrid funds come with different combinations of equity and debt investments and investors can select funds according to their risk appetite. By investing in hybrid funds, individual investors can create a balanced portfolio and earn

regular income along with capital appreciation in the long-term. For risk-averse investors, hybrid funds are a better choice as they give higher returns than debt funds and are not risky as equity funds. So, in a situation when debt funds are giving lower returns and equity funds turning risky, savvy investors are putting money in various hybrid category funds depending on their risk appetite.

An equity-oriented hybrid fund invests minimum 65% of its total assets in equity-related instruments and the rest in debt-related instruments. On the other hand, a debt-oriented hybrid fund will invest a minimum of 60% of its total assets in fixed-income securities like bonds, debentures, government securities and the rest

in equity. However, balanced funds invest a minimum of 65% of their total assets in equity and equity-related instruments and the rest in debt.

## Arbitrage funds

Most investors expect market volatility due to lockdowns in various states, demand slowdown and wholesale price inflation and manufacturing PMI showing stress. Between January and April, arbitrage funds reported net inflows of ₹20,601 crore, the bulk of the total net inflows of ₹21,696 crore received by hybrid category.

In arbitrage funds, the fund manager simultaneously buys shares in the cash market and sells them in futures or derivatives markets and the difference in the cost price and selling price is the return that the investors earn. The price of stock in the derivatives market quotes at a premium to its price in the cash market. This allows for an arbitrage opportunity which such funds attempt to encash by buying a stock in the cash market and selling it in the futures market, thus earning the differential premium between the two prices.

As arbitrage funds benefit from the difference in price between the cash and futures market and the spread moved up to 70 basis points in April, individuals are investing aggressively in such funds now. Moreover, many are staggering their equity investments by using arbitrage funds as they provide higher post-tax returns as compared with liquid funds. Arbitrage funds can give reasonable returns to those investors who can understand it and then make the most of it.



All three key businesses to deliver earnings growth over FY2022-23E

VEDL has exposure to seven commodities but earnings from zinc, aluminum and oil form ~80% of its attributable Ebitda. We expect Ebitda from these three businesses to increase from ₹174 bn in FY2021 to ₹237 bn in FY2023e (+36%) and the remaining businesses to remain stagnant over FY2021-23e.

(i) The aluminum division reported an Ebitda of ₹692/ton (versus ₹565/ton in Q3FY21) led by higher aluminum prices, partially offset by higher costs;

(ii) the oil & gas division saw 3% y-o-y volume increase while Ebitda increased by 23% y-o-y led by higher crude oil prices; and

(iii) Zinc International reported an Ebitda of ₹2 bn from a loss of ₹610 mn in Q4FY20 led by higher zinc prices and lower costs. Ebitda from the iron ore business increased to ₹8 bn (+127% y-o-y, +39% q-o-q) on record high iron ore prices.

**Zinc and aluminum are both benefiting from strong prices.**

**A strong price environment and higher dividend potential reduce concerns of promoter debt**

## Use Altman Z score to sniff out bankruptcy potential

If the Z score is less than 1.81, the firm is a bankruptcy candidate

## ● YOUR MONEY

N SIVASANKARAN

FOR conservative investors, safety of the invested corpus is the priority over earning higher returns. In this context, Altman's Z-score model can be used to assess the financial performance of a firm.

## Hypothetical illustration

Let us look at Aviral Tarun Ltd's data (amount in ₹crore): Earnings Before Interest & Tax (EBIT) 3,500; total assets 14,000; working capital 5,000; Retained earnings 7,000; sales revenue 10,000; book value of debt 3,000; market capitalisation 50,000.

## Altman Z Score

Altman developed Z score as a tool for predicting the bankruptcy of a firm. Z score is computed as the sum of 1.2 (working

capital/total assets) + 1.4 (retained earnings/total assets) + 3.3 (EBIT/total assets) + 0.6 (market value of equity/book value of debt) + 0.999 (sales/total assets). Higher the score of a firm in these variables, the better is its safety margin for investors. If the Z score is less than 1.81, the firm is a bankruptcy candidate; if Z score is above 2.91, it is out of the bankruptcy risk; if Z score is 1.81-2.91, it is in the gray zone and it is difficult to predict its bankruptcy possibility.

## Working capital/total assets

For AT, it is 0.36 times (₹5,000 crore/₹14,000 crore). If its previous period ratio is 0.30 times, then the firm has improved its performance in the current year. The weighted score is 0.43 (= 1.20 \* 0.36).

## Retained earnings/total assets

For AT, it is 0.50 times (₹7,000 crore/₹14,000 crore). If its previous period ratio is 0.40 times, the firm has improved its performance in the current year. The weighted score is 0.70 (= 1.40 \* 0.50).

## EBIT/total assets

It is computed by dividing the operat-



ILLUSTRATION: SHYAM KUMAR PRASAD

## MV of equity/BV of debt

It is computed by dividing the MV of equity by the book value of debt of a firm. For AT, it is 16.67 times (market cap of ₹50,000 crore/BV of debt of ₹3,000 crore). If its previous period ratio is 14 times, then the firm has improved its solvency position in the current year. The weighted score is 10 (= 0.60 \* 16.67).

## Sales /total assets

For AT, it is 0.71 times (sales revenue of ₹10,000 crore/ total assets of ₹14,000 crore). If its previous period ratio is 0.67 times, then the firm has improved its performance in the current year. The weighted score is 0.71 (= 0.99 \* 0.71).

The Z score of AT is 12.67 which indicates it is a safer firm for investors. Though the coefficients may change if we run the model using current data, the inter and intra comparison of a firm in these five variables may speak volumes about the financial performance of a firm.

The writer is associate professor of Finance at XLRI-Xavier School of Management, Jamshedpur

## KOTAK INSTITUTIONAL EQUITIES

# BrandWagon

MONDAY, MAY 24, 2021

SHEENA SACHDEVA

**AS THE PANDEMIC** rages on, India's travel and tourism sector continues to take a beating. In April 2021, online travel aggregators (OTAs) witnessed an aggregate decline of 41% in monthly online traffic, according to a report by JM Financial. However, this time, as opposed to last year, the sector has braced itself for impact. Expedited hotel-hospital partnerships, and flexibility for travellers through easy cancellations and extensions, low-cost EMIs, and pay-at-the-hotel schemes are among the few initiatives being adopted by hospitality and travel companies.

Last year, several OTAs offered staycations and workations to address the lull in travel, as both international as well as business travel had come to a halt. In 2020, people were cautious but optimistic, say analysts. The travel and tourism sector saw its revenue decline to 10-15% of pre-Covid levels in the April-June quarter of 2020. In July-September 2020, it went up to 25% of pre-Covid levels, and in the January-March 2021 quarter, it rose to 70%.

A Deloitte survey conducted in April 2021 found that 44% Indians felt safe staying at a hotel, while 50% felt safe flying. The industry expects that with the onset of the monsoon season, people would like to venture out with adequate safety protocols, like a compulsory Covid-19 negative report, which could enable safer travel and have lesser impact on business compared to last year.

As per India Brand Equity Foundation, the tourism sector is expected to grow 6.7% to reach ₹35 lakh crore by 2029. In 2019, the tourism and hospitality industry contributed 6.8% of India's GDP, as per World Travel & Tourism Council.

## TOURISM

# An uphill climb for travel sector

How the travel and tourism industry, severely hit by the second wave, is preparing to bounce back



### Mindful travel

During the second wave of the pandemic, mindful of the needs of consumers, airline and hotel players are focussing on offering safety assurance and a convenient booking

experience. A spokesperson from MakeMyTrip says, "Amid rising uncertainty, we are working towards providing more flexibility to our travellers in making modifications or last-minute adjustments to their



Business hotels especially are in a quandary as international travel remains suspended. Many of them have had to resort to deep discounting — slashing rates to almost 50% of pre-Covid prices — in the months of April and May

essential travel bookings." Under its train bookings segment, MakeMyTrip has recently introduced a free cancellation policy that allows a passenger to avail a full refund in case he or she cancels the ticket

before the chart is prepared.

Several players in the industry are seeing queries trickling in for long stays. To fulfil this, SaffronStays has introduced a membership programme, called First Family Membership, that offers a "hassle-free experience for both members and non-members", says Devendra Parulekar, its founder.

A faster and smoother vaccine roll-out, the industry hopes, will boost the travel sentiment going ahead. Aloke Bajpai, CEO & director, Igxio, says, "We are raising awareness on the importance of maintaining hygiene and getting vaccinated; we have recently introduced a vaccine slot finder on our app to help users book slots."

### Good times ahead?

Business hotels especially are in a quandary as international travel remains suspended. Many of them have had to resort to deep discounting — slashing rates to almost 50% of pre-Covid prices — in the months of April and May. "The industry is focussing its energies on portfolios where there is a need," he adds.

Several city hotels have tied up with hospitals in the vicinity, offering their room inventory for patient care as well as for quarantine. Lemon Tree Gurgaon, for instance, has partnered with Medanta Hospital.

Unlike last year, there is better clarity on Covid-related restrictions this time. Besides, the industry is pinning its hopes on a slightly higher consumer confidence index, given that consumers are now largely well-versed with safety and hygiene practices. After a drastic fall in revenue in April 2021, Rajat Mahajan, partner, Deloitte India, notes, "the travel industry is expected to pick up faster in the next quarter, as compared to last year."

## RETAIL

# Celebrity intervention

Incense stick manufacturers strive to stand out in the largely unorganised category



VENKATA SUSMITA BISWAS

**THE INCENSE STICK** retail market, integral to many-a-household's daily religious rituals, is worth about ₹7,000 crore in India, growing at a CAGR of 15% year-on-year; in 2020, however, it remained stagnant.

The incense stick market has a range of players — from ITC's Mangaldeep, the oldest Cycle Pure Agarbatti, and Zed Black to smaller regional players and now even Amazon's Solimo. In a market that is dominated by dealers and retailers, and the products they opt to sell, how can agarbatti makers build brand loyalty?

### Unbranded woes

"Agarbathies have a penetration of 82% in India; this is greater than even soaps," claims Arjun Ranga, CEO, N Ranga Rao & Sons, the company that manufactures and markets Cycle Pure Agarbatti. The company's incense stick business brings in a turnover of about ₹1,000 crore annually. Ranga adds that innovating on fragrances, maintaining consistency in quality, and owning the distribution network has allowed the company to build a strong brand.

Given that this is a market that has an incredibly low entry barrier, there are several local unorganised players who produce the same product at a lower cost and pass on the benefits to the retailer. "The retailer is the king and controls the sale of products like incense sticks. These are typically 'push' products. Only 30% of consumers ask for and buy their preferred choice of incense sticks," says Ankit Agrawal, director and partner, MDPH, the company that makes and markets Zed Black. Agrawal hopes to earn a turnover of ₹800 crore by 2022.

Incense sticks are typically priced at ₹10 for a pack of 14 sticks or ₹50 for a pack of 80 sticks. "A household could spend ₹100-120 on agarbathies in a month, if four sticks a day are consumed," notes Ranga.

### Building recall

Incense stick makers like Zed Black try incentivising retailers to push their products to the consumer. However, that alone is not enough to create brand recall; ergo, celebrity endorsements. Zed Black is endorsed by MS Dhoni, while Hritik Roshan endorses its sub-brand Manthan. Cycle Pure Agarbatti is endorsed by both Saurav Ganguly and south Indian actor Ramesh Aravind. In the past, Amitabh Bachchan, too, has endorsed the brand. The company also owns a Karnataka Premier League team called Mysuru Warriors. Hema Malini is the brand ambassador for Moksh Agarbatti, while Anupam Kher endorses HHIPure, a brand of sambrani.

Incense stick makers try to incentivise retailers to push their products, but that alone is not enough to create brand recall

Shashank Srivastava, executive director (Marketing & Sales), Maruti Suzuki India, told FE that in August last year the company had started digital car finance in partnership with four banks in select cities and for Nexa customers. Now this has been expanded for Nexa and Arena customers across India with 14 financers. "We are doing more than 10,000 sales a month using this scheme," he said.

According to Maruti Suzuki, from the time a customer thinks about buying a car to actually taking the car delivery, there are 26 touchpoints, such as visiting the carmaker's website, researching the car on the internet, asking friends and family, and so on. "Earlier, a lot of these touchpoints were physical, such as physically checking out the same model that maybe your colleague would have been driving. Now, while the number of touchpoints remains the same, the mode of getting information has changed to digital," said Srivastava. "A customer now goes to online forums where thousands of existing users offer their advice on that particular model. Similarly, earlier if a customer used to visit a dealership to check out the car, the same now can be done using AR/VR tools."

The two touchpoints that cannot be currently digitised are test drive and delivery of the car.

However, he added that of these 24 touchpoints that have been digitised, the most complex was finance.

For financing, car-buyers had to go to a bank, produce physical documents, have a face-to-face talk with the banker, and then the bank used to offer loan. The aim to digitise that process was what led to the concept of Maruti Suzuki Smart Finance," said Srivastava. "On this platform, a con-

# Motobahn

## DIGITAL CAR SALES

# Maruti digitises 24 of 26 car-buying steps

Of these 24 touchpoints that have been digitised, most complex was finance

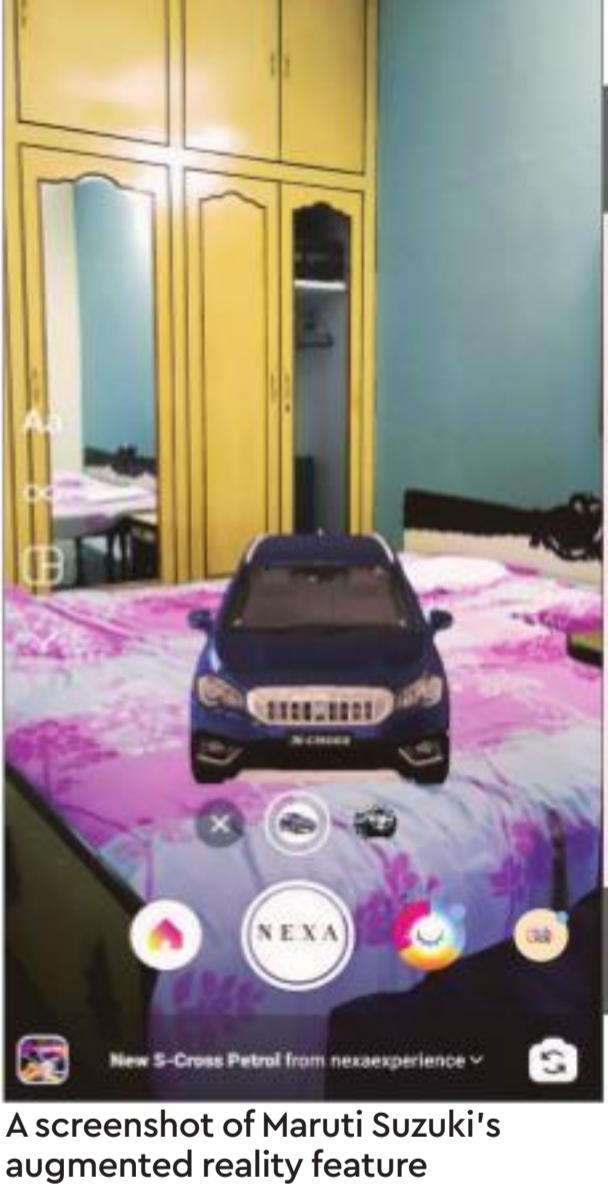
VIKRAM CHAUDHARY

EARLIER THIS YEAR when Maruti Suzuki launched its Smart Finance scheme for Arena customers (in addition to NEXA), the company claimed that it has digitised 24 out of 26 car-buying steps.

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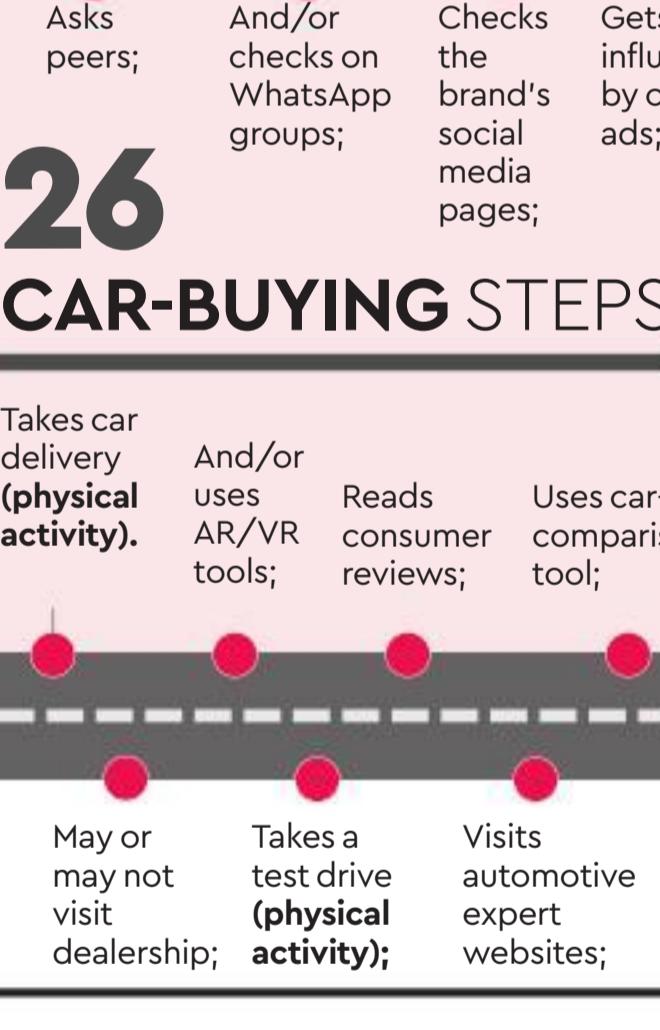
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## 26 CAR-BUYING STEPS



sumer has the choice to study the best offers from financers. The required documents can be uploaded digitally and the loan extended."

Going forward, Srivastava added that during the second wave the primary focus is to build trust with the customers, "so the right communication is very important at this time," he said. "We are committed to safety measures at dealerships and we are communicating to cus-

tomers that it will be safe to visit our showrooms (after the lockdown). We are also observing how consumer behaviour is changing due to the pandemic; for example, we think car subscription will pick up so we are offering such subscription products also. At the same time, different people are affected differently by the pandemic, and so we have multiple EMI schemes, such as step-up EMI and so on," said Srivastava.

With that, though, also comes the challenge of consumers associating the right brand with the right celebrity, say analysts.

Companies are, therefore, adding more product categories like reed diffusers, fragrance pouches, premium incense sticks and incense cones. "At the core of it, there is hardly any product differentiation," says Priti Nair, founder, Curry Nation. "Brands could talk about product attributes like 'does not emit toxic fumes', but spirituality still dominates the messaging."

Phool, a brand that entered the market with the premise of repurposing discarded temple flowers to make incense sticks, has positioned itself as a lifestyle product instead of one meant for use in the prayer room. Targetting millennials, the brand advertises on platforms like Instagram.

Traditional companies consider such things to be a "marketing gimmick". "About 2% of incense stick buyers use the product for non-religious purposes," points out Ranga. However, most brands have hopped on to the 'temple flower' bandwagon. Both Cycle Pure Agarbatti and Zed Black now have sub-brands that use discarded temple flowers to make incense sticks.

## CHARGED-UP BULL

# A few years later, an electric Lamborghini!

VIKRAM CHAUDHARY

WE KNEW THIS was coming, and a lot of petrol heads may be rubbing their eyes in disbelief, but Lamborghini—the maker of some of the world's most powerful petrol engine supercars—is going electric.

Last week Stephan Winkelmann, the president and CEO of Automobili Lamborghini, presented 'Direzione Cor Tauri' (Towards Cor Tauri), a roadmap to decarbonisation of future Lamborghini models. "Lamborghini will focus on identifying technologies that guarantee top performance and driving dynamics in keeping with the marque's tradition. In reference to the logo chosen by company founder Ferruccio Lamborghini in 1963, Cor Tauri is the brightest star in the Taurus constellation, and represents Lamborghini's move towards a future that is



electrified but faithful to the heart and soul of the 'bull' brand," the company said.

This sustainability roadmap will comprise of three phases:

Celebrating the combustion engine

(2021-2022) phase: Characterised by the development of combustion engines for versions that pay homage to the brand's glorious history and iconic products past and present. Two new cars in the V12

model line-up will be announced in 2021.

Hybrid transition (by the end of 2024): In 2023, Lamborghini will launch its first hybrid series production car, and by the end of 2024 the entire range will be electrified. Performance and driving experience will remain the focus of engineers and technicians in developing new technologies. Leading this transition will be the vision of a fourth model in the future.

First fully-electric Lamborghini (second half of the decade): Acceleration in the second part of the decade will be dedicated to full-electric vehicles, with the vision of a fourth model in the future. Tech innovation in this phase will be oriented towards ensuring remarkable performance, and positioning the new product at the top of its segment.

# Infrastructure

MONDAY, MAY 24, 2021

## EXPERTVIEW

Steel prices in India may increase further, in our view, as China HRC prices continue to rise. Furthermore, based on HRC prices in China and Japan, domestic steel prices are still at a discount to global prices  
—Nomura

SATNAM SINGH

**INDIA NEEDS CLEARER** regulatory prescriptions, with better technical and financial systems, to minimise the environmental and safety hazards emanating from abandoned or exhausted mines, and unlock the economic potential of these land parcels.

The mining sector has been one of the prime movers of the economy, contributing ~2.5% to the GDPs of FY20. However, while its benefits are clear, the sector's environmental impact (land degradation, water and air pollution) and socio-economic costs (health hazards, alteration of social structure, etc) have not been addressed adequately.

There have been some reforms, of course. For instance, miners are required to submit progressive mine closure plans for five-year periods from the beginning and a final mine closure plan near the end of the project. A requirement of financial assurances has also been provisioned for both coal and non-coal minerals, as a safeguard against the liabilities. Also, following a Supreme Court directive, the government has made re-grassing of mined-out areas a mandatory condition while giving green clearances to mining projects.

## Limitations of current norms

Currently, a final mine closure plan is required only two years before the final mine closure. This limits the regulators' ability to assess whether the applicant has identified its obligations and is capable of addressing these. The closure requirements have also not been spelt out explicitly, leaving scope for liberal interpretation by the miners. Further, the unit rates are flat and low. The 2019 guidelines provide an inflation-indexed unit

rate for coal projects, which stood at ₹9 lakh per hectare in 2020. For minerals other than coal, the rate is ₹1.5 lakh/hectare. In comparison, the unit rate in Western Australia varies in the range of ₹1-28 lakh per hectare and ₹1-26 lakh per hectare in South Africa, based on the category of land disturbance/associated work.

Also, currently, the assurance amount is

## MINING

## Turn closed mines into assets

**Clear guidelines and their sound implementation will help minimise environmental hazards and unlock the economic potential of closed mines**



2019 was just 42% of this, at ₹9,765 crore. For other minerals, for 3,250 km<sup>2</sup>, the requisite amount of guarantees is ₹4,875 crore, while the amount in the government's hands is ₹2,000 crore. Further, the system of refunds is inappropriate, under which up to 50% of the escrow deposit can be refunded based on expenditure on closure activities.

## Six steps that can help

First, there should be a detailed guiding document for mine closure plans, highlighting the obligations and the content/information to be furnished. Second, the mine closure plan should be sought at the time of licence approval – on a conceptual basis, and reviewed periodically – so that the risks and liabilities are accounted for from the beginning. Third, the unit rates being used for calculation of financial assurance should be reviewed and aligned to true closure costs based on a sample of mines. Fourth, the current system with liabilities extending until the end of the mine's life, should be re-examined. Fifth, the refund system, which is expense-based currently, should be made performance-based and linked to milestones. Also, there should be a self-sustaining funding mechanism to tackle orphaned mines.

To reiterate, with clear guidelines, planning and implementation, and responsible closure, we can minimise environmental damage and unlock the economic potential of closed mines through reclamation and rehabilitation.

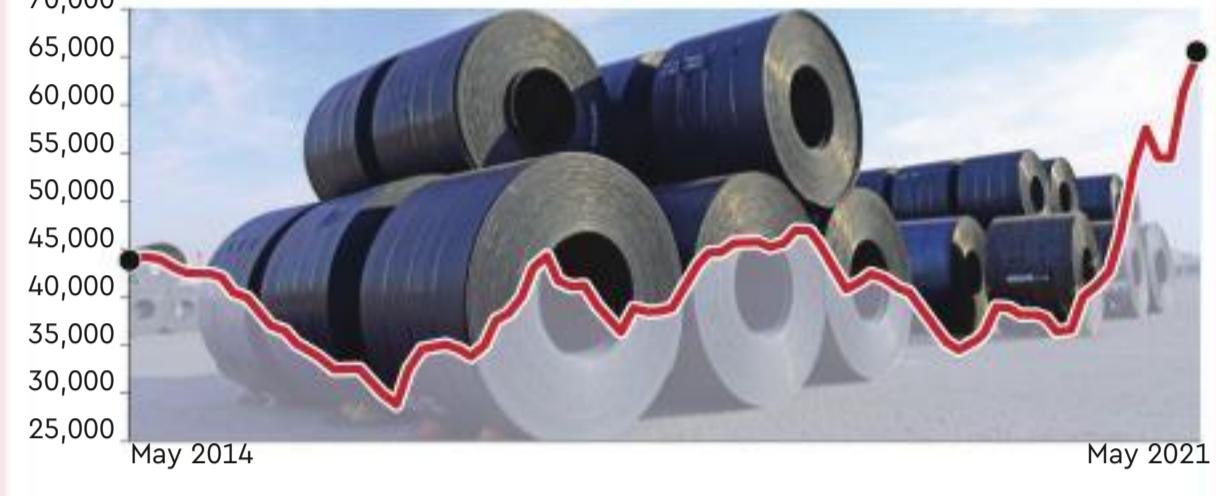
*The writer is Director, CRISIL Infrastructure Advisory. Divanshu, Consultant, CRISIL Infrastructure Advisory, also contributed to the article*

## DATA MONITOR

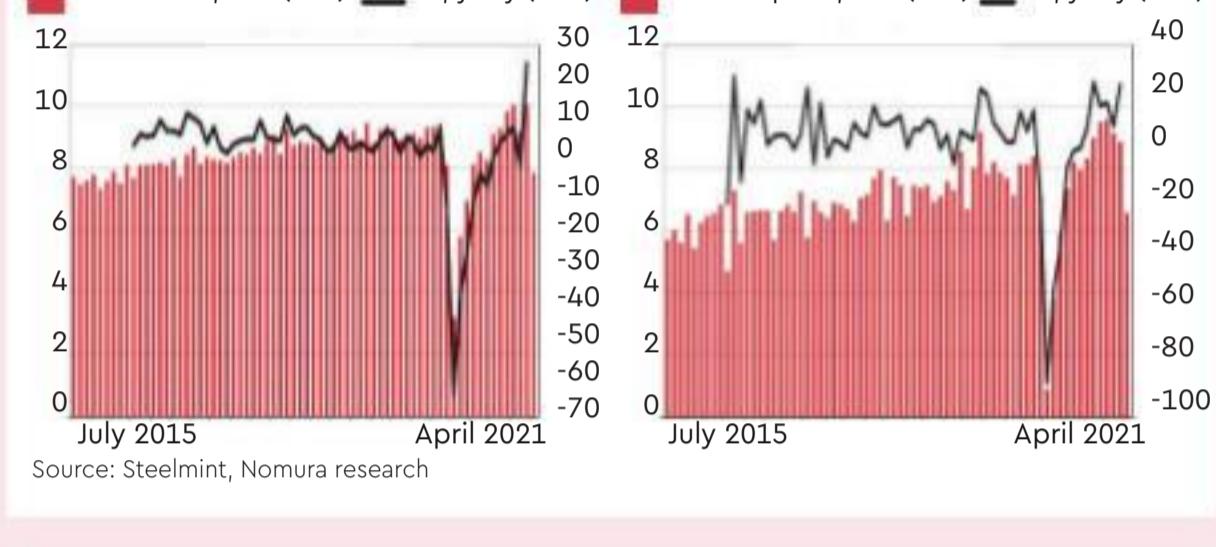
## Steel prices at historical highs despite Covid

Domestic steel prices are at historical highs (HRC at ₹66,000-67,000/t), despite demand being impacted as a result of local lockdowns across several states in view of the COVID-19 surge. Steel consumption at 6.72 mmt in Apr-21 was down 26% m-m (up 516% y-y) due to demand in key segments like auto and consumer durables being hit. Consequently, crude steel production at 7.96 mmt (up 142% y-y) was down 21% m-m in April.

## India HRC prices rise further (₹/t)



## India crude steel production



Source: Steel mint, Nomura research

## Quick View



## Startups

## DEVIC EARTH

### Fighting air pollution with modern tech

**Devic Earth's innovative technology uses pulsed radio frequency energy to clear pollutants**

SUDHIR CHOWDHARY

**BENGALURU-BASED GREEN** tech startup Devic Earth was started in 2018 by cardiologist Srikanth Sola to tackle air pollution, which is often the source of various ailments. Sola's quest for a technological solution for air pollution began when he started his medical practice. He was astounded by the number of heart patients whose condition had been precipitated by breathing polluted air. Later, he was moved to work towards creating technology that would solve the problem of air pollution for the masses. Extensive research was carried out by a team, and the solution was finalised in 2014, inspired by Sola's work with medical ultrasound. "Devic Earth's mission is to help life thrive by using innovative technological solutions to create a pollution-free planet by offering user-friendly products and solutions for the problems caused by air pollution," says Sola, its director, CEO and co-founder.

According to Sola, the increasing demand for commercial spaces leading to rapid urbanisation and development of IT parks and expanding electronics and semiconductor sector add to the deteriorating air quality and stringent industrial air quality regulations. The growing health and pharmaceutical industry is also fueling the country's B2B air filter systems



Srikanth Sola, CEO and Co-founder, Devic Earth

market. Devic Earth's flagship product, 'Pure Skies', serves as an air purifier and uses Wi-Fi-enabled technology to handle airborne gaseous and particle pollutants in industrial complexes, homes, and cities, he informs.

Although Pure Skies has completed a decade in R&D, it was formally launched in 2018. The company is now adapting this for customer requirements. The state-of-the-art air pollution technological solution provider for fugitive emissions or ambient air pollution, Devic Earth's products are designed with end-users and their requirements in mind. Apart from Pure Skies,

every other air cleaning solution in the market today is limited by a small area of coverage. Owing to the very large area of coverage that Pure Skies offers, Devic Earth has had good progress since its inception. So far, it has been installed in over 40 locations across India spanning sectors such as homes, small offices, movie theatres, malls, residential complexes, manufacturing facilities, industrial plants and cities.

According to Sola, Devic Earth has had a robust revenue track record and a sufficiently large pipeline as the only solution for ambient air pollution control. "This is what has led us to successfully raise a pre-

Series A round of funding from the Blue Ashva Sampada Fund in January 2021. Devic Earth is well-positioned to be a frontrunner in the space of ambient air quality management," he says.

Where a single Pure Skies system has the potential to cover over 100 million sq ft, the nearest competitor can cover a meager 3000 sq ft by a long stretch, he says. "Right from being able to cover a complete home to a complete city, Pure Skies is the only practical way to have cleaner air to breathe."

Devic Earth plans to start its international deployments by 2022 and is already in discussions with several multinational companies for the same. "This would, of course, be dependent on the Covid-19 situation across the regions. Key regions for international expansion would include – South East Asia, Middle-East and Americas," he adds.

On the use of modern technology, Sola says, "We use technology to bridge the gap between the human world and the environment. The technology behind Pure Skies is ingenious and path-breaking. Pure Skies spreads pulsed Wi-Fi waves across any given area. It is unique in that it can work in extremely large areas. The waves cause particulate pollutants to conglomerate, become heavier, and sink to the ground as dry deposition." While this is in fact a natural process, Pure Skies accelerates it. "As a result, the air gets cleansed remarkably. Pure Skies is also free from filters, which makes it an ideal sustainable solution since it requires zero maintenance. An immense amount of human effort, time, and money is optimised because of Pure Skies," he adds.

healthcare startups trying to address 'healthcare access and affordability' but accessibility to real-time, comprehensive patient health records at the point-of-care and continuity of patient care yet remained unaddressed, having adverse impact on quality and cost of care. MedSign is a digital ecosystem that aims to improve health outcomes via enhanced patient care by improving health data accessibility and continuity of care."

The MedSign platform offers three product suites, MedSign Pro, MedSign Care and MedSign Connect. MedSign Pro is a comprehensive yet simple EMR-based clinic management software/application that helps doctors access patients' health history easily, generate prescriptions in few clicks and track health parameters on an ongoing basis to provide personalised care. The second product, MedSign Care, is an interface for patients, enabling them to upload, view and share health records, book appointments for in-clinic or tele-consultations and track health parameters on a regular basis.

Lastly, MedSign Connect democratises the patient health records and makes it easily available for clinicians real-time at the point of care, securely, enabling a multi-disciplinary treatment approach.

### Adani Green acquires S B Energy's 5-GW solar portfolio

IN ONE OF THE largest acquisitions in the renewable energy space, Adani Green Energy (AGEL) on Wednesday acquired 100% interest in SB Energy India at an enterprise valuation of \$3.5 billion (approx. ₹26,000 crore). SB Energy is an 80:20 joint venture between Japan's SoftBank Group and India's Bharti Enterprises, and houses 4,954 MW of renewable energy projects. Out of SB India's total portfolio, only 1,400 MW is operational and the balance under construction. The transaction is expected to be complete by August, and will help AGEL achieve total renewable capacity of 24,300 MW. This is the fifth successive deal in the solar space for Adani Green. In FY21, the company had acquired the assets of the Essel Group (205 MW), Sterling and Wilson (75 MW), SkyPower Global (50 MW), and Hindustan Powerprojects (20 MW).

### India loses ONGC-discovered Farzad-B gas field in Iran

INDIA ON MONDAY last lost the ONGC Videsh Ltd-discovered Farzad-B gas field in the Persian Gulf after Iran awarded the contract for developing the giant gas field to a local company. "The National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has signed a contract worth \$1.78 billion with Petropars Group for the development of Farzad B Gas Field in the Persian Gulf," the Iranian oil ministry reported. The field holds 2.3 trillion cubic feet of in-place gas reserves, of which about 60% is recoverable. ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL), the overseas investment arm of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC), had discovered the giant gas field in the Farsi offshore exploration block in 2008.

### Tata Projects wins ₹2,000-cr order from Chennai Metro

TATA PROJECTS HAS won an order from the Chennai Metro Rail to build a nine-km underground stretch with four stations at an estimated cost of ₹1,999 crore. The project is part of the phase 2/corridor 3 of the Chennai Metro, the company said on Wednesday without revealing the order value. A source at the company said the project was worth ₹1,999 crore. The work involves construction of nine-km-long twin bored tunnels, totalling 18 km, from Venugopal Nagar to Kellys Station.

## Your health at your fingertips

This healthtech startup digitises the patient's health journey in real-time such that it is easily accessible to clinicians and patients

SUDHIR CHOWDHARY

**MEDSIGN IS A** healthtech startup working in the field of digitalisation of health records and continuity of care. It was founded in 2018 by healthcare professionals Kamlesh Patel, Shrihari Shidhaye and Vivan Daarole. The MedSign platform aims to improve patient outcomes by addressing two missing pieces of the healthcare ecosystem, that is, improving accessibility of real-time, comprehensive, transferrable and transparent patient health records at the point-of-care and improving continuity of care.



Recently, this Bengaluru-based venture announced that it has raised an undisclosed amount as seed fund from SMSRC, a leading strategic advisor and research catering to the pharmaceutical industry in India and Bangladesh, as a part of its strategic collaboration. Shidhaye, founder-director of MedSign, said, "As we embark on our next level of growth, this seed fund



from SMSRC will help us strengthen our offerings to the market and thereby enhance patient care by digitising patient's health journey to create a comprehensive digital medical database, that is secure, easily accessible and real-time for clinicians and patients."

Daarole, founder-director of MedSign remarked, "Last decade saw a flurry of

healthcare startups trying to address 'healthcare access and affordability' but accessibility to real-time, comprehensive patient health records at the point-of-care and continuity of patient care yet remained unaddressed, having adverse impact on quality and cost of care. MedSign is a digital ecosystem that aims to improve health outcomes via enhanced patient care by improving health data accessibility and continuity of care."

The MedSign platform offers three product suites, MedSign Pro, MedSign Care and MedSign Connect. MedSign Pro is a comprehensive yet simple EMR-based clinic management software/application that helps doctors access patients' health history easily, generate prescriptions in few clicks and track health parameters on an ongoing basis to provide personalised care. The second product, MedSign Care, is an interface for patients, enabling them to upload, view and share health records, book appointments for in-clinic or tele-consultations and track health parameters on a regular basis.

Lastly, MedSign Connect democratises the patient health records and makes it easily available for clinicians real-time at the point of care, securely, enabling a multi-disciplinary treatment approach.

New Delhi

**COVID FIGHT**

# Vaccines highly effective against B1.617.2 variant, finds UK study

ADITI KHANNA  
London, May 23

A NEW STUDY by health officials in England shows for the first time that two doses of Covid-19 vaccines are "highly effective" against the B1.617.2 variant first identified in India.

Public Health England (PHE) said on Saturday that while the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is 88% effective against symptomatic Covid-19 from the B1.617.2 variant of concern (VOC) two weeks after the second dose, the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine was 60% effective against symptomatic disease from the VOC.

However, effectiveness from both types of vaccines was found to be only 33% against the VOC found in India after just one dose of either jab.

The Serum Institute of India has been producing the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines as Covishield for use in India.

"This new evidence is groundbreaking and proves just how valuable our Covid-19 vaccination programme is in protecting the people we love," UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock



The study said that while the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine was 88% effective against the variant after the second dose, the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine was 60% effective. AP

said. "It's clear how important the second dose is to secure the strongest possible protection against Covid-19 and its variants and I urge everyone to book in their jab when offered," he said. "I'm increasingly confident we're on track for the roadmap because this data shows the vaccine after two doses works just as effectively, and we all know that the vaccine is our way out of this," added the minister, raising hopes that the June 21 end to lockdown date remains on track.

The analysis shows that vac-

cine effectiveness against symptomatic disease from the B1.617.2 VOC emerged. It included 1,054 people confirmed as having the B1.617.2 variant through genomic sequencing, including participants of several ethnicities.

PHE noted that the difference in effectiveness between the vaccines after two doses may be explained by the fact that rollout of second doses of AstraZeneca was later than for the Pfizer vaccine, and other data on antibody profiles show it takes longer to reach maximum effectiveness with the AstraZeneca vaccine. — PTI

ness against hospitalisation and death overtime. "This study provides reassurance that two doses of either vaccine offer high levels of protection against symptomatic disease from the B1.617.2 variant," said Dr Mary Ramsay, head of immunisation at PHE. "We expect the vaccines to be even more effective at preventing hospitalisation and death, so it is vital to get both doses to gain maximum protection against all existing and emerging variants," she said.

The analysis included data for all age groups from April 5 to cover the period since the B1.617.2 VOC emerged. It included 1,054 people confirmed as having the B1.617.2 variant through genomic sequencing, including participants of several ethnicities.

PHE noted that the difference in effectiveness between the vaccines after two doses may be explained by the fact that rollout of second doses of AstraZeneca was later than for the Pfizer vaccine, and other data on antibody profiles show it takes longer to reach maximum effectiveness with the AstraZeneca vaccine. — PTI

## Priti Patel to unveil US-style digital visas

ADITI KHANNA  
London, May 23

UK HOME SECRETARY Priti Patel is set to unveil a new US-style digital visa regime at the country's borders to measure immigration levels in and out of the country, according to UK media reports on Sunday.

The senior Indian-origin Cabinet minister is to confirm the "sweeping changes" to the UK's immigration policy on Monday.

The changes will include the border being managed digitally, which the government says will be easier to navigate for businesses and allow for the first time to accurately count people in and out of the UK.

"Our new approach will make it easier to identify potential threats before they reach the border. The British people will have confidence that the strongest controls are in place to keep them safe," Patel was quoted as saying in the 'Observer'.

The Home Office hopes to make entry to the UK fully digital by the end of 2025.

— PTI

## Volcano erupts near in Congo

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
Goma (Congo), May 23

CONGO'S MOUNT NYIRAGONGO erupted for the first time in nearly two decades on Saturday, turning the night sky a fiery red and sending lava onto a highway as panicked residents tried to flee Goma, a city of nearly two million.

No evacuation order was given by authorities, and there was no immediate word on any casualties. Witnesses, though, said lava already had engulfed one highway that connects Goma with the city of Beni in North Kivu province.

Mount Nyiragongo's last eruption, in 2002, left hundreds dead and coated airport runways in lava.

The UN peacekeeping mission MONUSCO tweeted dra-



An aerial view shows lava flowing from the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo near Goma in Congo

REUTERS

matic footage of the city alit, saying it was conducting reconnaissance flights over the city where it has a large base. "The lava doesn't seem to be headed toward the city of Goma. We remain on alert," it said.

But that did not stop thousands from fleeing, many on foot, toward the border with Rwanda just beyond the city. Others fled to Mount Goma, the highest point in the area.

The lack of immediate announcements from authorities and conflicting accounts on social media only added to the sense of chaos in Goma.

DELHI JAL BOARD: GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI, OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (CCR) VARUNALAYA PH-II: KAROL BAGH, NEW DELHI-110005 "STOP CORONA; Wear Mask, Physical Distancing, Hand Hygiene"						
Short Press N.I.T. No. 01 (2021-22)						
S. No.	Name of Work	Estimate Cost (In Rs.)	Tender Fee (In Rs.)	Earnest Money (In Rs.)	Date of release of Tender/Tender ID	Last date/time of receipt of Tender
1.	Establishment and operation of Delhi Jal Board Call Centre (1916) including CRM	Item Rate 1,500.00	1,60,000.00	Dt: 22.05.2021 2021_DJB_203501_1	upto 03:00 PM	07.06.2021
Further details in this regard may be seen at <a href="https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in">https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in</a>						

Advt. No/ JSV/ 61/2021-22

Sd/-

(B.L.KURU)

Executive Engineer (CCR)

## Nepal EC tells PM Oli to hold polls in one phase

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, May 23

NEPAL'S ELECTION COMMISSION has advised the government led by embattled Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli to conduct the mid-term elections slated for November 12 and 19 in a single phase to prevent the further spread of Covid-19.

After a meeting with Oli on Saturday, Chief Election Commissioner Dinesh Kumar Thapaliya said it is the Election Commission's constitutional duty to successfully conduct polls once the date has been announced. "We have abundant time for preparation and have suggested to the government to conduct the election in a single phase," Thapaliya was quoted as saying in a report in My Republica.

President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved the House of Representatives on Saturday for the second time in five months.



Amb Branch (District Una - H.P.) Ph.: 01976-260021,  
Zonal Office Amb, H.O. Dharamshala (Distt. Kangra),  
E-mail: mgr.amb.009@kccb.in

PUBLIC NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF MOBILE/IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES ON 10.06.2021, FROM 11:00 HRS. TO 13:00 HRS.  
LAST DATE & TIME OF SUBMISSION OF EMD & DOCUMENTS ALONG WITH DEMAND DRAFT (HARD COPY) ON 08.06.2021 UPTO 16:00 HRS.

DATE & TIME OF INSPECTION OF PROPERTY BETWEEN 1ST JUNE TO 4TH JUNE 2021 FROM 11:00 A.M. TO 04:00 P.M. AFTER PRE APPOINTMENT SEE PROVISO TO RULE 6(2) AND 8(6) SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF MOBILE/IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Movable / Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 6(2) & 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) in particular, that the below described movable / immovable properties hypothesized / pledged / charged / mortgaged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive / physical / Symbolic (whichever is applicable) possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of THE KANGRA CENTRAL CO-OPERATIVE BANK LTD. Secured Assets, will be sold on "AS IS WHERE IS", "AS IS WHAT IS" BASIS on 10.06.2021 for recovery of amounts due to the Secured Creditor from Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) as mentioned against each account. The Reserve Price, Earnest Money Deposit and Incremental Deposit will be amounts as mentioned against each account.

### NAME OF THE BORROWER(S) / GUARANTORS

Borrower(s)- M/s Crest Steel (Una) Private Limited, V&P.O. Kalru (Registered Office) (Tehsil Amb, Distt. Una, H.P.), through under noted Directors:- (i) Shri Sohan Lal Gupta S/o Shri Man Ram Raj R/o Ward No. 9, Village Adarsh Nagar, Amb (Distt. Una) (ii) Shri Sachin Gupta S/o Shri Sohan Lal Gupta R/o Ward No. 9, Village Adarsh Nagar, Amb (Distt. Una) (iii) Smt. Charu Gupta W/o Shri Sachin Gupta, Flat No. 58, Transit Flats, Sector-12A, Panchkula (Haryana).

Guarantor(s)- (i) Shri Sohan Lal Gupta S/o Shri Man Ram Raj R/o Ward No. 9, Village Adarsh Nagar, Amb (Distt. Una, H.P. - 177203) (ii) Shri Sachin Gupta S/o Shri Sohan Lal Gupta, R/o Ward No. 9, Village Adarsh Nagar, Amb (Distt. Una, H.P. - 177203) (iii) Smt. Veena Gupta W/o Shri Sohan Lal R/o House No. 197, Sector-12, Panchkula (iv) Shri Rajesh Gupta S/o Shri Sohan Lal Gupta, R/o House No. 197, Sector-12, Panchkula (v) Shri Surinder Kumar S/o Shri Man Ram, R/o House No. 197, Sector-12, Panchkula (vi) Smt. Kamlesh Ran W/o Shri Sohan Kumar and D/o Shri Man Ram Raj R/o House No. DB 36, Sector-28, Kalitala (vii) Shri Suresh Kumar Bindlish S/o Shri Hari Chand, House No. 427/18, Railway Gate, Kalitala.

Amount outstanding as on the Date of Notice U/s 13(2) of SARFAESI Act served upon Borrowers and Guarantors on 17.12.2018

Rs. 76,99,27,362/- (Rupees Seventy Six Crore Ninety Nine Lakh Twenty Seven Thousand Three Hundred and Sixty Two only) as on 13.12.2018 inclusive of interest upto 12.12.2018 plus future interest at the contractual rate on the aforesaid amount together with incidental expenses, cost, charges, etc. accrued thereafter.

### DESCRIPTION OF MOBILE/IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

Details of Properties	Reserve Price
	Earnest Money Deposit
	Bid Increment Amount
Plant, Machinery, Furniture & Fixtures, Fixed Assets. Detail of which may be examined during Pre-Examination.	Rs. 12.00 Crore
A List of the items put to auction is appended below however the same is also being displayed on Bank's Website (THE SHED OVER THE BUILDING AND ALL OTHER RELATED CONSTRUCTIONS DOES NOT FORM A PART OF THE PLANT AND MACHINERY). (The Plant and Machinery is under PHYSICAL POSSESSION of the Bank).	Rs. 1.20 Crore
	Rs. 3.00 Lakh

TERMS & CONDITIONS:- The interested bidders shall submit their EMD amount 10% of the Reserve Price (as mentioned above) through NEFT / RTGS in the Account No.: 50056450362, Name of the Beneficiary: RTGS Account KCCB Amb, Name of Bank: The Kangra Central Cooperative Bank Ltd. Branch Office Amb, IFSC Code: KACE0000009. Please note that the Demand Drafts/Banker's Cheques drawn payable at Amb (H.P.) in favour of THE KANGRA CENTRAL CO-OPERATIVE BANK LIMITED shall also be accepted as EMD amount and no cheques shall be accepted. The interested bidders who require assistance in creating Login ID & Password, uploading data, submitting bid, training on e-bidding process etc. may Contact M/s C1 India Pvt. Ltd., Udyog Vihar, Phase-2, Gulf Petrochem Building No. 301, Gurgaon, Ph. 0124-4320000, Mr. Pandeep Singh, M.: 096467-96075 or E-mail ID: support@bankeauctions.com.

For any property related query the prospective bidders may Contact, the Contact Persons - Sh. Rakesh Kumar (M.: 94182-62588), Assistant General Manager, The KCC Bank Limited, Zonal Office Amb or Shri Rakesh Minhas, Branch Manager (M.: 98160-53088), THE KCC BANK LIMITED, BRANCH OFFICE AMB, E-mail: mgr.amb.009@kccb.in, during working days, in office hours.

The prospective qualified bidders may avail online training on e-Auction from M/s C1 India Pvt. Ltd. prior to the date of E-Auction. Neither the Authorised Officer / Bank nor M/s C1 India Pvt. Ltd. shall be liable for any Internet Network problem and the interested bidders to ensure that they are technically well equipped for participating in the e-Auction event. The bidder has to submit self attested photo copy of photo identity proof (Aadhar Card / Passport) with a copy of PAN CARD and Mobile Number to the Authorised Officer, along with hard copy of the documents.

It shall be the responsibility of the interested bidders to inspect and satisfy themselves about the property before submission of the bid. Only buyers holding valid User ID / Password and confirmed payment of EMD shall be eligible for participating in the e-Auction process. The interested bidders who have submitted their bid not below the Reserve Price through ONLINE mode before 4:00 P.M. on 09.06.2021 shall only be eligible for participating in the e-bidding process.

The e-Auction of above assets / property would be conducted exactly on the scheduled Date & Time as mentioned against the said assets / property by way of inter-se bidding amongst the bidders. The bidder shall improve their offer in multiple of the amount mentioned under the column "Bid Increment Amount" against the said assets / property. In case bid is placed in the last 5 minutes of the closing time of the e-Auction, the closing time will automatically get extended for 5 minutes (subject to unlimited extensions of 5 minutes each). The bidder who submits the highest bid amount (not below the Reserve Price as mentioned above) on closure of e-Auction process shall be declared as Successful Bidder and a communication to that effect will be issued through electronic mode which shall be subject to approval by the Authorised Officer / Secured Creditor.

The Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) of the successful bidder shall be retained towards part sale consideration and the EMD of unsuccessful bidders shall be refunded. The Earnest Money Deposit shall not bear any interest. The successful bidder shall have to deposit 25% of the sale price, adjusting the EMD already paid, immediately (within 24 hours) after the acceptance of bid price by the Authorised Officer and the balance 75% of the sale price on or before 15th day of sale or within such extended period as agreed / permitted upon writing by the Authorised Officer / Secured Creditor (Bank). In case of default in payment by the successful bidder, the amount already deposited by the bidder shall be forfeited and assets / property shall be put to re-auction and the defaulting bidder shall have no claim / right in respect of assets / property / amount whatsoever.

The purchaser shall also bear the cost of all encumbrances, if any, the applicable Stamp Duty / Duties / GST / Transfer Charges / Fee etc. and also all the taxes, rate assessment charges, fees etc. owing to any Government Department, Revenue, Electricity, Statutory Body which he / they should assess and enquire before giving the bid. The Bank, however, has no knowledge any encumbrances over the Plant and Machinery being put to Auction.

It is reiterated and clarified that the GST on purchase of machinery is payable extra by the Auction purchaser. It shall also be responsibility of the auction purchaser to lift off the said items within 21 days of issue of the sale certificate.

A copy of this notice is also available at the link provided in THE KANGRA CENTRAL CO-OPERATIVE BANK LTD., the Secured Creditor's website (i) https://www.kccb.in (ii) https://ibapi.in (iii) www.bankeauctions.com.

Statutory 15 Days Sale Notice as per Enforcement of Security Interest and Recovery of Debt Laws. Miscellaneous Provision Amendment Act 2016 No. 44 of Rule 6 Clause B in Sub Rule.

This publication is also 15 Days notice under Rule 8(6) of the security interest (enforcement) rules 2002 to the above Borrowers & Guarantors.

The Borrowers / Guarantors are hereby notified to pay the sum as mentioned above alongwith upto date interest and ancillary expenses before the date of e-Auction, failing which the properties will be auctioned / sold and balance dues, if any, will be recovered with interest and cost.

### THE LIST OF ITEMS PUT ON AUCTION IS:

(A) Main Plant & Machinery - SMS Shop & CCM / Billet:-