

Friday, August 9, 2024

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Interest rates on hold as inflation tops RBI's mind ▶ P1



Alpha Wave joins race for minority stake in VLCC ▶ P1

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LICENCE NO. 67 OF 2021 DATED: 13.09.2021
PROMOTER: WHITELAND CORPORATION PRIVATE LIMITED
PROJECT NAME: URBAN CUBES 71

WHITELAND

Global Outlook | Indian Values

DELIVERED HEAD TURNING

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IN RECORD TIME

URBAN CUBES 71

SECTOR-71, GURUGRAM

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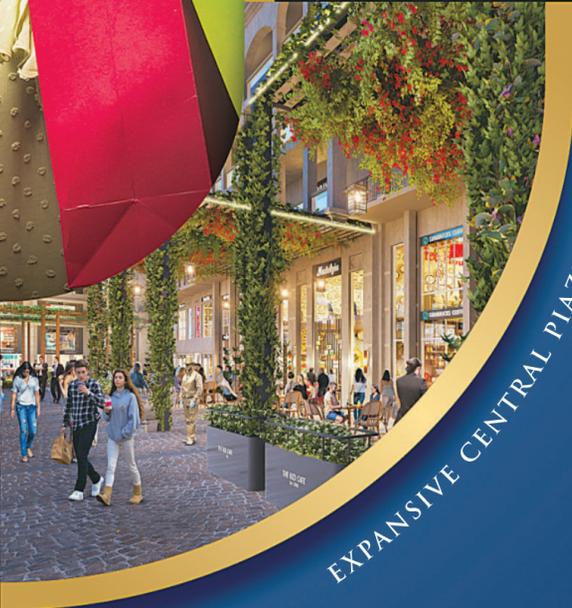
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Think Ahead. Think Growth.

mint primer

5G smartphones at ₹8k: The push for digital India

BY GULVEEN AULAKH

Qualcomm's new Snapdragon chip has brought 5G connectivity to budget smartphones. Mediatek has a similar product. But, in the past two years, the average price of smartphones in India has jumped from ₹10,000 to ₹23,000. Is there a future for cheap smartphones?



1 What's new about cheap smartphones?

Over the past couple of years, most brands have abandoned sub-₹8,000 smartphones, largely due to the existing 4G smartphone user base moving up to more premium 5G devices, and smartphone prices increasing by 30% due to rising input costs. This mix of factors created a gap in the sub-₹100 segment. The chipset makes up nearly half the cost of making phones, and the absence of a cheap 5G chipset prevented brands from offering 5G smartphones below ₹15,000-17,000. With Qualcomm and Mediatek having cracked that problem, the entry-level 5G smartphone segment is getting the limelight.

BLOOMBERG

2 Who are the likely consumers?

India has about 250-300 million users who still rely on feature phones or 2G devices, which provides a huge untapped potential for smartphone adoption. Offering 2G users affordable or entry-level 5G smartphones in these new price ranges can be the catalyst needed for the transition from 2G phones to smartphones. In terms of the addressable market, there's another large chunk of existing 4G smartphone users who will eventually upgrade to 5G. Some of these users may well prefer to opt for an entry-level 5G smartphone instead of one that is higher priced.

3 Can chipset makers alone create the push?

No, but they're already working with leading brands to create smartphones that will cost less than those currently offered in the market. No. 2 player Xiaomi has announced that it will bring out its first low-cost 5G smartphone by the end of this year using Qualcomm's Snapdragon. The US chipset maker will use India as the test bed for global markets.

4 Is there still a need for budget smartphones?

India, a mobile-first market, has more smartphone users than personal computer users, so millions access the internet for the first time on their mobile phones. Their access to welfare schemes, financial inclusion schemes and other digital public infrastructure (DPI)-based facilities happens on the phone. With a low-cost 5G device, their access to digital inclusion will be more reliable. Indian telcos have built 5G networks over the past year, which create the highways needed for users to access these services.

5 How can phone makers benefit?

The entry-level segment is the bulk of the \$38-40 billion Indian smartphone market. Brands can offer attractive features and prices to capture a significant market share, and may even reshape the competitive landscape. For telcos Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio, which have invested over ₹3 trillion in 5G networks, increased 5G adoption can help monetize their investments. For Vodafone Idea, capturing the entry-level 5G customer segment can be a good strategy to gain a foothold among the larger rivals.

QUICK EDIT

Profound medal loss

It's extraordinary for the opposition in the Upper House of the world's largest democracy's Parliament to stage a walk-out over a missed chance to win an Olympic gold medal. The convergence of national attention upon a single sportsperson, wrestler Vinesh Phogat, barred from the final bout in Paris for being 100gm above the limit of her weight category, has been no less remarkable. But then, an air of political intrigue has hung over Phogat's medal prospects ever since her heroic leadership of a wider protest against India's former wrestling federation chief over his alleged record of sexual exploitation. Many wondered if her bravery in taking on a politically networked heavy-weight would end her career. Reports suggest she was competing in a lighter group only to ensure sports officials couldn't get in the way of her Olympic dream. Even if this is so, it isn't evidence of an official conspiracy to ruin her chances, as some critics allege. Still, something profoundly tragic happened. But the real tragedy may have less to do with the rules of sports than the latent fear that women who openly challenge male power often internalize. Phogat should have felt free to compete in any category.

MINT METRIC

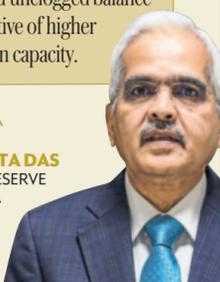
by Bibek Debroy

A court order messed up his life,
His mother's name mentioned as his wife.
Bombay High Court, in a rent dispute,
Has brought our man ill repute.
Surely such errors are not that rife.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Indian financial system remains resilient and is gaining strength from broader macroeconomic stability. Its well-capitalized and unclogged balance sheet is reflective of higher risk absorption capacity.

SHAKTIKANTA DAS
GOVERNOR, RESERVE BANK OF INDIA



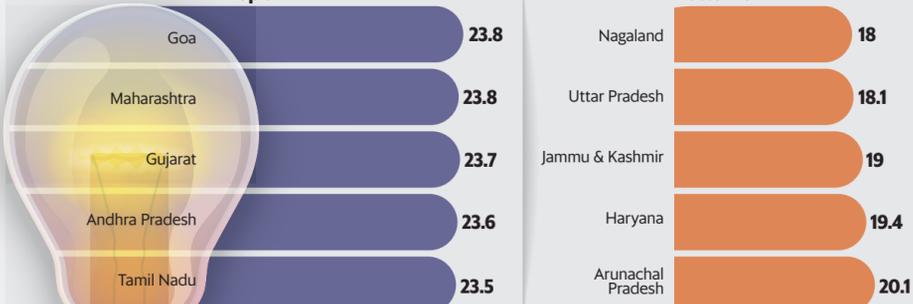
mint Data Bites

HOW LONG DOES POWER SUPPLY LAST IN A DAY IN RURAL INDIA?

Average hours of power supply in a day in rural areas (in hours)

Top 5

Bottom 5



The government did not define which kind of power supply this covers, but such data is typically for the power supplied to 11-KV feeders, which are distribution lines used to feed local transformers.

Data: Shuja Asrar, Design: Sarvesh Kumar Sharma

Source: Ministry of power

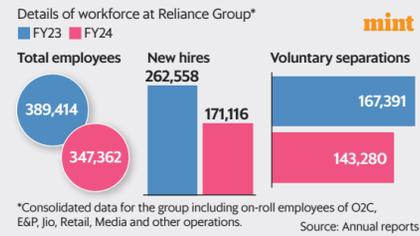


Data recap: RBI worry, US trough, bad loans

CURATED BY NANDITA VENKATESAN

Every Friday, Plain Facts publishes a compilation of data-based insights, complete with easy-to-read charts, to help you delve deeper into the stories reported by *Mint* in the week gone by. Reliance Industries Ltd reduced its workforce by 11% in FY24, while the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is worried about the credit-deposit mismatch at banks. Meanwhile, recession fears in the US spooked markets around the world.

Reliance's Reduction



THE NUMBER of employees at Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries Ltd fell by 42,052 to 347,362 in FY24 as the company has been keeping close tabs on its employee numbers, *Mint* reported. As per the company's annual report, the biggest decline was in Reliance Retail, which saw its headcount fall by 38,029. Overall voluntary separations (resignations) were lower in FY24 than FY23. The conglomerate hired 171,116 staff during FY24—35% less than in the previous year.

RBI's Concern



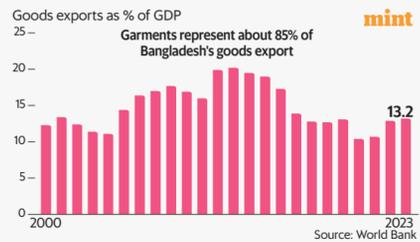
THE SHARP rise in credit coupled with tepid growth in deposits have created a mismatch in funding, forcing banks to look for alternative, non-deposit sources of funds. RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said banks' recourse to short-term non-retail deposits and other instruments to meet the increasing demand for credit may expose the banking system to structural liquidity issues. He suggested that banks instead focus on mobilising household financial savings.

25%

Recession Returns?

THAT'S THE probability of the US slipping into recession next year, as per Goldman Sachs, which increased its estimate from 15% after jobs data showed unemployment rates hit a near three-year high of 4.3%. Recession fear spooked markets worldwide amid questions if the Federal Reserve has been behind the curve on slashing interest rates. Rare interest rate hikes by the Bank of Japan caused the unwinding of the yen carry trade, further roiling markets.

Bangladesh Chaos



BANGLADESH SLIPPED into crisis this week when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was forced to resign and flee the country after massive protests against quotas in government jobs. The nation had scripted a remarkable economic turnaround through exports, particularly of ready-made garments, overtaking India and Pakistan on per-capita income. However, it started seeing the limitations of this export-led growth, with its share in GDP declining in recent years, a *Mint* analysis showed.

Rural Dreams



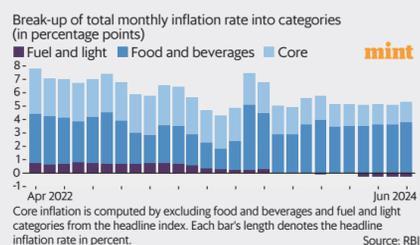
AGRICULTURE REMAINS the biggest employer in rural areas, but an overwhelming majority of young people seek salaried jobs instead, showed a survey by Development Intelligence Unit, Global Development Incubator and Transforming Rural India. More than 60% of the 1,172 respondents said they wanted to leave agriculture because of low productivity and insufficient profits. Limited access to markets and debt traps for small farmers were other factors.

3,000

Medical Management

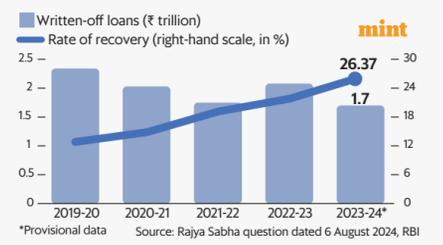
THAT'S THE number of additional undergraduate medical seats planned by the Union government in the wake of criticism it received over the recent medical entrance exam fiasco. This will take the total number seats to 115,000, *Mint* reported. The National Medical Commission approved the setting up of 28 private medical colleges to increase the seat count. The undergraduate session 2024-25 will start in September.

Food Feud



THE ECONOMIC Survey 2024 proposed excluding food inflation from the overall inflation target. A *Mint* analysis said this may not be a practical idea. Large and persistent food price shocks significantly affect non-food prices, and household inflation expectations are closely aligned with what plays out in the food basket. High food prices, therefore, cannot be wished away. The solution lies in a flexible, situation-driven approach to managing inflation, like the one RBI is currently practising.

Chart of the Week: Recovery Lag



INDIAN BANKS have recovered barely a fifth of bad loans over the past five years, government data showed. The average recovery rate was 19% between FY20 and FY24, during which loans worth ₹9.9 trillion were written off. However, the recovery rate has increased from 12.8% in FY20 to 26.4% in FY24. Follow our data stories on the "In Charts" and "Plain Facts" pages on the Mint website.

PARAS JAIN/MINT

TOP FIVE ROMANTIC DRAMAS

- 1 SAPTA SAGARADAACHE ELLO - SIDE B**
Platform: Prime Video
Language: Kannada
- 2 NUOVO OLIMPO**
Platform: Netflix
Language: Italian
- 3 THE IDEA OF YOU**
Platform: Prime Video
Language: English
- 4 DO AUR DO PYAAR**
Platform: Disney+ Hotstar
Language: Hindi
- 5 HIT MAN**
Platform: Netflix
Language: English

TOP FIVE JAPANESE FILMS

- 1 PERFECT DAYS**
Platform: MUBI
Cast: Kōji Yakusho, Tokio Emoto
- 2 GODZILLA MINUS ONE**
Platform: Netflix
Cast: Ryunosuke Kamiki, Minami Hamabe
- 3 MONSTER**
Platform: Prime Video
Cast: Sakura Andō, Eita Nagayama
- 4 DRIVE MY CAR**
Platform: MUBI
Cast: Hidetoshi Nishijima, Tōko Miura
- 5 CITY HUNTER**
Platform: Netflix
Cast: Ryohei Suzuki, Misato Morita



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Can Prestige group conquer Mount 25,000? ▶ P12



Businesses' favorite laptop has barely changed in 30 yrs ▶ P10

SENSEX 78,886.25 ↓ 581.76 NIFTY 24,117 ↓ 180.50 DOLLAR ₹83.96 ↓ 0.01 EURO ₹91.74 ↓ ₹0.13 OIL \$79.36 ↓ \$0.28 POUND ₹106.40 ↑ ₹0.29

Interest rates on hold as inflation tops RBI's mind

MPC votes 4:2 for pause, retains policy stance as disinflation makes slow progress

Shayan Ghosh, Jocelyn Fernandes & Anshika Kayastha

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday kept the policy repo rate unchanged at 6.5% for the ninth time in a row citing slower-than-expected pace of disinflation, while reiterating its vigil over price rise.

Governor Shaktikanta Das also made RBI's position clear on the debate around the monetary policy committee (MPC) giving importance to food inflation. Food is currently assigned a 46% weightage in the headline consumer price index (CPI) basket.

By a four-to-two majority, the rate-setting panel held the repo rate and retained the stance at withdrawal of accommodation. The outcome of the MPC meeting was on expected lines, as inflation remains above RBI's target of 4%.

All 15 economists and treasury heads polled by *Mint* expected the six-member MPC to hold the repo rate, while 12 expected RBI to keep the policy stance unchanged.

"There is a good amount of convergence between market expectations and the RBI's policies. In



Shaktikanta Das, governor, Reserve Bank of India.

STEADY STRIDE

MORE distance to cover to align inflation to target : **INFLATION** is on the decline, but at slower than expected pace : **RBI** confident about domestic economic growth at 7.2%

other words, both market expectations and RBI policies—so far as monetary policy is concerned, are well-aligned," said Das.

Thursday's policy statement showed that while external member Shashanka Bhide, RBI executive director Rajiv Ranjan, deputy governor Michael Patra and Das

voted to keep the policy repo rate and the stance unchanged, external members Ashima Goyal and Jayanth R. Varma voted to lower the repo rate by 25 bps and to review the stance to neutral.

Das summarized the policy in some key points. The domestic economic growth is resilient; infla-

tion is moderating but the pace of disinflation is uneven and slow; there is still distance to cover to align inflation to the 4% target; the financial sector is stable; India has enhanced its resilience against spillovers; and forex reserves have reached a high of \$675 billion.

Experts said RBI has made it amply clear that there is more to go to reach the inflation target. "I think the RBI was a tad more hawkish than in the previous MPC, probably to firmly establish in the minds of the market that it should not expect any rate cuts soon," said Indranil Pan, chief economist at Yes Bank.

Stubborn food inflation remains a cause for concern. Headline inflation measured on the consumer price index (CPI) increased to 5.1% in June on the back of higher-than-expected food inflation. With fuel remaining in deflation for the tenth consecutive month, core inflation—headline inflation stripped off food and fuel—moderated to a "historic low in May and June".

TURN TO PAGE 6

RBI asks lenders to monitor top-up home loans >P6
FAR bonds of 5-10 years most in demand: Michael Patra >P6

Alpha Wave joins race for minority stake in VLCC

Sneha Shah & Ranjani Raghavan

MUMBAI

US-based private equity (PE) investor Alpha Wave Global has entered the race to acquire 25% stake in New Delhi-headquartered wellness company VLCC Healthcare Ltd, which is majority owned by global PE fund Carlyle.

The deal could see VLCC being valued at \$600-700 million, three people with knowledge of the development said.

"Alpha Wave Global has submitted a binding bid to acquire a minority stake from Carlyle," the first person quoted above said, and added that Alpha Wave is also likely to infuse some fresh capital into the company.

"The term sheet from Alpha Wave is conditional and is contingent upon the company meeting several milestones such as FY25 revenue growth, targeted store openings and other clauses," the second person noted above said. "The deal is likely to be closed only next financial year."

The deal comes a year and a half after Carlyle bought a majority stake in the company



Vandana Luthra, founder, VLCC group.

for \$300 million in January 2023. Carlyle currently holds around 63% stake in the company and the remaining is held by one of the founders, Mukesh Luthra.

Private equity (PE) firm TPG was earlier in talks to pick up a stake in VLCC alongside other investors.

Emailed queries to VLCC and to the spokesperson of Alpha Wave were unanswered. Carlyle declined to comment.

The stake sale follows a trend of derisking by global private equity (PE) companies in their portfolio firms where they hold majority stake.

"Given that the business has

TURN TO PAGE 4

DON'T MISS



Teesta project, Ganga treaty to feature in Indo-Bangla talks

India will discuss the demand for a Teesta water agreement, and renewal of the Ganga water agreement with Bangladesh once tensions ease and a new government is formed, Raj Bhushan Choudhary, minister of state in Jal Shakti ministry, said. >P2

Sharp drop in volume growth at FMCG firms in Q1: NielsenIQ

The fast-moving consumer goods industry reported a sharp drop in volume growth in the food and non-food categories in the June quarter, largely due to a slowdown in sales of packaged foods such as salt, flour and oil, NielsenIQ said. >P7

Smartwatch sales fall in first half of year on innovation hiccups

Stagnation in product innovation, coupled with a period where retailers focused on clearing unsold inventories, led to a drop in smartwatch shipments for the first half of the year, according to a report by market researcher International Data Corp. >P3

RCap resolution: NCLT asks IHL to deposit ₹2,750 crore

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on Thursday ordered the Hinduja Group-owned IndusInd International Holdings Ltd (IHL) to deposit ₹2,750 crore in a special escrow account as part of Reliance Capital's resolution plan. >P5

Data privacy rules in limbo, tech cos antsy

Shouvik Das
shouvik.das@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

A year after the parliament passed a new law to guard the digital data of Indian citizens, technology companies at the vanguard of the transformation are getting restless. The reason: The government is yet to issue rules under the new law, preventing them from taking decisive calls on projects involving data localization and cross-border data transfer, and hiring compliance officer.

Companies are now reaching out to the government to expedite rules under the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, three people aware of the matter said.

"It's been confusing—the implementation of the DPDP Act and its rules have played



The rules are expected to set timelines and penalties.

out in India for nearly a decade, in various forms," said an executive from a top multinational technology firm. "Since being notified in Parliament, the expectation was that by end-2024, compliance would be enforced, providing clarity for tech firms. However, this

TURN TO PAGE 4

Chaos at tech co with links to Raju

Samiksha Goel
samiksha.goel@livemint.com
BENGALURU

Fifteen years after Byrraju Ramalinga Raju confessed to a \$1.5 billion accounting fraud at Satyam Computer Services Ltd, a family business he "mentored" into existence is in trouble over unpaid salaries, mass layoffs, and delayed tax dues.

Brane Enterprises Pvt. Ltd, which lists the disgraced entrepreneur's younger son Byrraju Rama Raju as a significant beneficial owner, recently laid off more than 1,500 employees and has delayed paying salaries for the last three months.

The Hyderabad-based technology solutions company also delayed transferring tax deducted at source from employee salaries and money towards their provident fund



Ramalinga Raju, founder, Satyam Computer.

accounts, according to employees and documents that *Mint* has reviewed.

While the company's management has informed employees that it will settle their dues by 12 August, there's a sense of mistrust due to similar assurances that went unfulfilled.

TURN TO PAGE 11

A global recession is not in prospect

The Economist

A weak jobs report in America has raised fears that the world's largest economy is heading for recession. America's stock markets have tumbled, with fear spreading to other countries. Japan's Topix index is 15% off its recent high; Germany's main index is down by 7%. When America sneezes, everywhere catches a cold.

But a look at the latest data suggests that the global economy is not in danger, and that the market panic may be misplaced. Turn first to the labour market. America's unemployment rate has risen from a low of 3.4% in April 2023 to 4.3% in July. Indeed, history suggests that an increase of this size tends to accompany a drop in economic output—leading, in



America's unemployment rate has risen from a low of 3.4% in April 2023 to 4.3% in July.

turn, to a further rise in unemployment, bankruptcies and falling incomes.

This cycle may be different, though, as labour markets in other parts of the rich world suggest. For months unemployment has been slowly rising almost everywhere. Germany's jobless rate has

increased from a recent low of 2.9% to 3.4% today. Britain's has risen from 3.6% to 4.4%, while Australia's has gone from 3.5% to 4.1%. Some of this uptick has a common cause: a loosening of the extraordinarily tight labour market at the end of the covid-19 pandemic. Not long ago employers, strugg-

ling with labour shortages and sky-high demand, would take on practically anybody they could. Now, with everything more settled, they can be discerning.

On top of this, unemployment is rising in part because of changes to the rich world's labour force. The OECD's working-age labour-force participation rate recently hit an all-time high. Those who had once been on the economic sidelines are now actively looking for work—something which, in the short run at least, can raise the unemployment rate. These people have reason to think they will soon find a post. Job growth remains pretty strong. Over the past quarter employment has risen by 0.8% in Australia and by 0.6% in Canada. Although Japanese employment fell by 0.03%, this is the

TURN TO PAGE 6

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RISKOMETER#

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Will wait for new Bangla govt for talks on rivers: Minister

Base effect likely to lower July inflation to 3.6%

It's part of Hudco's projected borrowing of \$4.17 bn this financial year. ISTOCKPHOTO

Hudco is set to raise \$1 billion via ECB route in FY25

Rituraj Baruah & Subhash Narayan

NEW DELHI

State-run Housing & Urban Development Corporation (Hudco) plans to raise as much as \$1 billion through external commercial borrowing (ECB) in the current financial year (FY25), said two people in the know of the developments.

It would be part of its projected overall borrowing of \$35,000 crore (\$4.17 billion) in this financial year. Recently, the company tied up a yen-denominated loan worth around \$400 million, they said.

"Hudco is looking at a borrowing of up to \$1 billion through the ECB route. About \$400 million has been signed up for and the rest about \$600 million may be raised in the third and fourth quarters," said one of the persons mentioned above, adding that the company is looking at reducing the cost of funds through diverse sources, including Foreign Currency Non-Resident Account (FCNR), ECB and bonds.

The increased foreign currency borrowing comes at a time when the government has announced plans to build an additional 30 million affordable homes under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) scheme. It would include the second phase of PMAY (Urban) scheme for 10 million homes.

The government has foresees a spending of ₹10 trillion under PMAY (Urban) 2.0, out of which ₹2.2 trillion would be provided by the Centre and the remaining ₹7.8 trillion by states. A significant part of the ₹7.8 trillion is expected to be financed by Hudco.

In its investor presentation for Q4FY24 (January-March), the company noted that in the last financial year (FY24) it went for a "judicious mix of borrowings through various available modes/sources resulting in reduction of overall cost of borrowings and adding competitive edge in lending operations".

rituraj.baruah@livemint.com

For an extended version of this story, go to livemint.com

Teesta water management was a major topic discussed by Narendra Modi and Sheikh Hasina

Puja Das
puja.das@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

India will discuss a planned Teesta water project and renewal of the Ganga water agreement with Bangladesh once tensions ease and a new government is formed in the troubled eastern neighbour, Raj Bhushan Choudhary, minister of state in Jal Shakti ministry, said in an interview.

His remarks follow Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation and flight into exile on Monday amid violent student protesters. She is currently thought to be in India.

Teesta treaty has been a long-standing demand of Bangladesh, which wants equitable distribution of Teesta water with India—on the lines of the Ganga Water Treaty of 1996. As West Bengal and Sikkim opposed it, the proposal by Bangladesh was turned into a conservation and management of Teesta water project, which is worth of billion of dollars. Teesta has remained an outstanding issue even as relations between the two countries warmed to their best ever in recent years.

The project assumes greater significance as China too has shown interest in it, which brings an entirely new security dimension into the matter. The project envisages building a large reservoir and related infrastructure to manage and conserve Teesta River water.

The 414-km-long Teesta flows through Sikkim and West Bengal,



Teesta treaty has been a long-standing demand of Bangladesh, which wants equitable water sharing with India on the lines of the Ganga Water Treaty.. PTI

before merging into the Meghna in Bangladesh. It is one of the largest trans-boundary rivers shared between India and Bangladesh.

It is also one of the main sources of irrigation for North Bengal and Rangpur

and as far as India is concerned. Considering the current situation, talks cannot take place.

Once the situation eases and a new government is formed, we will discuss this (Teesta water sharing, conserving

The Ganga treaty will complete 30 years in 2026 and calls for a renewal.

Teesta was one of the major topics discussed between Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Sheikh Hasina during her last visit to India on 21-22 June. A major outcome was for India to send a technical team to Bangladesh for a mega project to manage the Teesta.

Modi said the two countries had also decided to start negotiations at the technical level for the renewal of the 1996 Ganga Water Treaty. "A technical team will soon visit Bangladesh for talks to conserve and manage the Teesta River in Bangladesh," the Indian PM said in June, with foreign secretary Vinay Kwatra adding there would be Indian assistance for this.

The demand for equitable sharing of the Teesta water goes back to 1947, but it has always been opposed by West Bengal and Sikkim.

"Till a new government is formed, I don't think the Teesta issue will come back to the table," said Sujit Dutta, distinguished fellow at the Vivekananda International Foundation.

Brahma Chellaney, professor emeritus of strategic studies at the Centre for Policy Research, said, "We don't know what the attitude of the new government will be. The (Teesta) contract was not signed with India before Hasina was over-

thrown."

Manas Pimpalkhare contributed to the story
For an extended version of this story, go to livemint.com

INTERRUPTED TALKS

INDIA will discuss Teesta water project and renewal of Ganga water treaty with Bangladesh.

MOS, Jal Shakti, says talks will be held once India's neighbour gets a new government.

TEESTA project assumes greater significance as China too has shown interest in it.

PROJECT envisages building a large reservoir to manage and conserve Teesta river water.

region of Bangladesh and the main hydroelectric power source for Sikkim. "It would have been better and beneficial for us (India) if she (Sheikh Hasina) remained in power. Her vision was

and managing project) at the diplomatic level and get it sorted," Choudhary told *Mint*. About the Ganga water treaty renewal, the minister said, "We are moving forward positively."

Revamped education loan scheme soon

Subhash Narayan & Rhik Kundu

NEW DELHI

The government is likely to introduce its revamped education loan scheme before the start of the festive season, two people aware of the matter said.

The scheme's details are being finalised by the education department in collaboration with the finance ministry, with an anticipated rollout by October, the people mentioned above said.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the new scheme offering loans of up to ₹10 lakh for 100,000 students to pursue higher education in the annual Budget presented in July.

The new scheme will provide a maximum collateral-free loan of ₹7.5 lakh to each student, who can further secure an additional ₹2.5 lakh through the normal route.

The entire loan repayment will benefit from a 3% annual interest rate subvention, meaning the loan will have a lower interest rate.

At present, anyone availing higher education loans of up to ₹7.5 lakh do not require any col-



Details of the scheme are being finalised, and the rollout is expected by October. HT

lateral, while loans above ₹7.5 lakh till the ₹10 lakh ceiling for such loans need a third-party guarantee. Under the new system, the student will have to give

loan account of the student.

Under interest subsidy, the government pays some of the interest accrued. Under interest subvention the loan will have a lower interest rate for the borrower.

In the new education loan scheme, the benefit of revamped education loans will not be provided to students belonging to fam-

ilies that have availed of any government scheme as the centre wants to target the economically weaker sections and

The scheme, announced in the budget, offers loans of up to ₹10 lakh to 1 lakh students for higher education

first-time beneficiaries with this scheme, the first person mentioned above said.

"Several issues are still being worked on. For instance, earlier, education loans could be taken only by children of households where parental income was under ₹4.5 lakh annually," the first person said.

"A decision on whether to increase the household income limit for availing the loan will be taken soon," the person added.

"Under the revamped scheme, it is yet to be decided whether interest subvention will be applicable for the tenure of the loan, or only during the first few years or for a shorter duration. These things are being worked out," the second person added.

Both people mentioned above spoke under the condition of anonymity. They added that these details would be worked out over the next couple of months.

Meanwhile, the department of financial services has alerted banks to extend collateral-free loans to students after the finalisation of the scheme.

subhash.narayan@livemint.com

For an extended version of this story, go to livemint.com

'Mid-size firms must step up to accelerate India's growth'

Gireesh Chandra Prasad
gireesh.p@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

The Union budget for FY25 shows the government has chosen a longer but more sustainable route for secular economic growth rather than a short-term consumption stimulus that could fizzle out, Sanjay Nayar, senior banker and president of industry chamber told *Mint* in an interview.

Nayar added that the 100 to 200 companies just below the 10 biggest ones must now step up their investments to further accelerate India's economic growth, boost consumption and increase employment.

India should aim for 8-10% economic growth over the next decade, he said. Assocham for its part is studying the cost of doing business to identify specific challenges that hinder the growth of small and medium businesses, and will share these with the commerce ministry, he added.

Nayar said there were signs of green shoots in private capex, adding that when capacity utilization crosses



Assocham's Sanjay Nayar said the Union budget set path for secular growth. MINT

78-80%, companies double down on investments.

He said, "Indian businesses must be enthused, and the animal spirits have to come back, pushing investments across sectors. At the same time, we have to start looking beyond the top 10 groups in the country. An investment push has to also come from the next 100-200 companies.

"We have some large conglomerates, but we also have a large base that needs to be engaged. The final frontier is small and medium enter-

prises, which have to start finding it easy to build capacity and hire more people. Ultimately, they are large job creators."

Official data showed that gross fixed capital formation (GFCF)—investments in factories, plant and machinery by private non-financial corporations—has recovered after contracting in covid-hit FY21. GFCF by private non-financial corporations stood at ₹19.35 trillion in FY23, clocking annual growth of 6.4%, stated data from the ministry of statistics and programme implementation. This was a little more than a third of overall GFCF by the government, private companies and households. The figure for FY24 will be available early next year.

The government's plan to help businesses, especially small and medium ones, through various schemes, providing them cover up to ₹100 crore through the self-financing guarantee fund, and doubling the limit of Mudra loans to ₹20 lakh will encourage job creation, Nayar said.

For an extended version of this story, go to livemint.com

MINT SHORTS

Indo-Bangla trade resumes from Petrapole land port

Kolkata: Trade between India and Bangladesh through Petrapole land port in West Bengal resumed on Thursday amid tight security, officials said. The neighbours' trade came to a halt on Monday following the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government in Bangladesh and it partially resumed on Wednesday through several land ports in West Bengal. PTI

'Bangladesh crisis could boost India's garment exports'

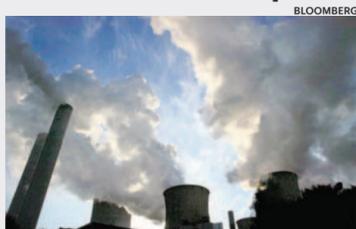
New Delhi: About 10% of Bangladesh's ready-made gar-

ment (RMG) exports could shift elsewhere if political instability and social unrest continue for some time, CareEdge Ratings estimated in its latest report on Thursday. The credit rating agency said this could create export opportunities worth \$200-250 million a month for India's RMG sector, potentially rising to \$300-350 million in the medium term. DHIRENDRA KUMAR

Govt to review design of dams vulnerable to floods

New Delhi: The government on Thursday said it will review the design of all existing and under-construction dams vulnerable to glacial lake outburst floods (GLOF) ensuring these dams have adequate spillway capacity to handle extreme flood scenarios. A GLOF is a type of outburst flood caused by the failure of a dam containing a glacial lake. GLOF studies have been made mandatory for all new dams planned in areas with glacial lakes. PTI

Govt working to provide incentives for CO2 capture



New Delhi: The Centre is working on a national mission that will provide financial incentives to promote carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS) to help India achieve its ambitious net-zero goals. The ministry of power, Niti Aayog and the office of the principal scientific adviser to the Prime Minister's Office are working on the mission, said Niti Aayog's V.K. Saraswat. RITURAJ BARUAH

Foreign minister Jaishankar to visit Maldives this week

New Delhi: Foreign minister S. Jaishankar will visit the Maldives from Friday to Sunday, New Delhi said in a statement on Thursday. His visit comes months after ties between the two nations were strained after Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu, elected last year, pledged to end the country's "India First" policy. REUTERS

India to retain sugar export curbs for smooth local supply

India will retain curbs on sugar exports to ensure adequate supplies for domestic use and to boost ethanol output, said people in the know. The government wants to make sure there is enough sugar for the local market at reasonable prices. Keeping the curbs would be a blow for local sugar mills, who have been asking for relaxations. BLOOMBERG

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Mint's journalistic Code of Conduct that governs our newsroom is available at www.livemint.com



MINT SHORTS

Specialty chemicals startup Scimplify raises \$9.5 million

Gurugram: Specialty chemical manufacturing startup Scimplify, on Thursday, bagged \$9.5 million in series A funding round. The round was led by Omnivore, alongside Bertelsmann India Investments and existing investors 3one4 Capital and Beenext. With this new round, the company plans to double down on R&D capabilities and is eyeing expansion. Scimplify is a specialty chemicals firm that offers contract manufacturing platform for agrochemicals, pharmaceutical APIs, and flavours and fragrances. **NITESH KUMAR**

US court rejects GLAS' Trust Company application: Byju's



New Delhi: A US court has rejected GLAS Trust Co.'s application for a temporary restraining order aimed at blocking the BCCI settlement, edtech firm Byju's said on Thursday. This month, insolvency appellate tribunal NCLAT approved a ₹158.9 crore dues settlement with BCCI and set aside insolvency proceedings against Byju's. GLAS had opposed settlement with BCCI before NCLAT alleging the money paid by Riju Raveendran as tainted. **PTI**

Metadome.ai raises \$6.5 million from Siana Capital, others

Gurugram: Extended reality (XR) startup, Metadome.ai, raised \$6.5 million in series A funding round. It was led by Siana Capital and existing investor Chiratae Ventures, and saw participation from Alteria Capital, 3 to-1 Capital, and Manish Choksi's family office. Founded in 2018, Metadome.ai claims to have doubled the customer base since last year. With the latest infusion, the startup intends to increase its presence in various markets. **NITESH KUMAR**

Talent marketplace startup FlexiBees bags pre-series A funds

Gurugram: Talent marketplace firm FlexiBees bagged undisclosed funding in pre-series A round. It was led by Inflection Point Ventures. The round also saw participation from Shan M.S., COO of Namma Yatri, Reema Mahajan, founder of International Women in Dubai, and other investors. The funds will be used for expanding its tech infrastructure, refining its AI algorithms, and broadening its market presence to better meet the needs of both employers and talent, the firm said in a statement. **NITESH KUMAR**

Nazara's warchest for M&A to expand beyond \$100 mn

Malvika Maloo
malvika.maloo@livemint.com
BENGALURU



Nazara Technologies founder and CEO Nitish Mittersain.

Listed gaming and sports media company Nazara Technologies will spend more on mergers and acquisitions (M&A) than its initial allocation of about \$100 million (₹830 crore), as it gears up to build its global presence in the coming years.

"We will also finance (some acquisitions) partly through debt, so the number will eventually be more than \$100 million," founder and chief executive Nitish Mittersain told VCCircle. "Some of the other acquisitions are done by our subsidiaries, which are using their own cash."

The company on Thursday said it has agreed to acquire a UK-based gaming studio that publishes 'Love Island', a virtual, interactive, story-based game based on the eponymous reality-television show. Nazara Technologies UK, its subsidiary, will buy gaming studio Fusebox Games Ltd for \$27.2 million in a cash deal.

This follows Nazara's announcement to buy out the remaining stake of 48.42% in children's gaming app Kiddopia publisher for ₹300 crore last month.

While these acquisitions were from \$100 million warchest that Nazara had earmarked for its M&A strategy, the recent acquisitions by its subsidiaries Nodwin Gaming, and Absolute Sports, which owns news websites Sports-keeda.com, have been on their own balance sheet.

Nodwin Gaming, Nazara's Singapore-based subsidiary, bought its remaining stake in German gaming and esports agency Freaks 4U through a share swap deal. Earlier this year, it acquired Ninja Global and Comic Con India. Meanwhile, Absolute Sports has

bought stake in DeltiasGaming.com and assets of Soap-Central.com.

Nazara's mobile gaming arm Next Wave Multimedia also acquired the intellectual property rights of Ultimate Teen Patti from Games24x7 for ₹10 crore last month.

The company, founded in 2010, has been going strong on its 'acquire and scale' strategy over the last few years. It operates in a decentralised manner, allowing these businesses to operate autonomously. The company has significantly added multiple offerings across interactive gaming,

e-sports, adtech and gamified early learning ecosystems via inorganic strategy.

"My vision is how Nazara can deploy \$1 billion in capital over the next five years," Mittersain said. "We don't have a fixed mindset. We'll try to do more, as much as we can."

In FY23, the company had consolidated cash reserves of nearly ₹1,500 crore, which included its fundraise from new and existing investors through the year.

"We started with \$100 million. If we do good acquisitions and we deliver good results, hopefully through a mixture of equity, debt and cash, we will be able to take larger bets and grow the business."

Smartwatch sales fall on innovation hiccups

As retailers cleared unsold inventories, sales dropped in H1 2024, IDC said

Shouvik Das
shouvik.das@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

Stagnation in product innovation, coupled with a period where retailers focused on clearing unsold inventories, led to a drop in smartwatch shipments for the first half of the year. A report by market researcher International Data Corp., published Thursday, said that the shipment of smartwatches dropped by over 27% year-on-year (y-o-y) in the June quarter—on top of a 7% y-o-y drop that the category had witnessed in the March quarter.

Overall, a total of 18.9 million smartwatches were shipped in the first half of 2024, 18% less than the 23 million units that were shipped in the first half of 2023. The pressure in the sector came from unsold inventory of smartwatches, as well as stagnant innovation in the sector leading to buyers not being interested in purchasing new devices.

This has further led to a decline in the average selling prices (ASPs) of smartwatches. In the first half of 2024, the smartwatch market in India registered ASPs of ₹1,700—23% less than ₹2,300 in the same period a year ago. This, the IDC report said, occurred "due to price cuts to clear inventory, and discounts and offers by brands."

Vikas Sharma, senior market analyst for wearable devices at IDC India, said that the stagnation in the market partly occurred in anticipation of the festive period. "Several new model launches by incumbent brands are expected during the upcoming festive season, which may help in arresting this decline. However, the annual shipments for smartwatches are expected to decline by 10% in 2024. We will also possibly see refreshed smartwatch portfolios by the smartphone vendors at low to mid-price segments," Sharma said.

Market stakeholders, however, are concerned about the overall stature of the industry. Sameer Mehta, cofounder and chief executive of Imagine Marketing—which operates the brand 'Boat' in India—said that the decline in smartwatch demand is in large part due to a price war in the industry.



The shipment of smartwatches fell by over 27% on-year in the June quarter. **BLOOMBERG**

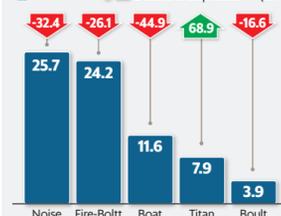
Smartwatches cool down

Lack of innovation and unsold inventories have hurt smartwatch shipments in India in the first half of 2024.

Smartwatch shipments in India (in million) **mint**



Market share Decline in shipments (in %)



Source: IDC India monthly wearable device tracker **PRANAY BHARDWAJ/MINT**

A senior industry consultant told Mint on condition of anonymity that the slowdown was largely expected owing to the way the market evolved in the past three years.

"If you look closely, there was an extreme price war between multiple brands in India, which started pushing the average price of smartwatches down to a near-ridiculous margin. This was never going to be sustainable, and many brands were even selling smartwatches at less than ₹1,000. This was not only leaving India's smartwatch

brands with low margin—it left them with no margin. As a result, brands were left with very little space to innovate, and at a super-inexpensive pricing, there was always a ceiling that the brands would hit," the consultant said.

Read an extended version of this story at [livemint.com](https://www.livemint.com).

NOT SO SMART

A total of 18.9 million smartwatches were shipped in the first half of 2024, 18% less than H1 2023

THE smartwatch market registered ASPs of ₹1,700—23% less than ₹2,300 in the year-ago period

MARKET stakeholders are concerned about the overall stature of the industry

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Satya Pal Talwar
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Public Notice

Notice regarding closure of Dormant / Dormant Account.

Account Holders/Members of the Bank are hereby informed that it has come to the notice of the Bank that as on 30.06.2024 many dormant / inactive accounts have zero balance and such accounts are not being operated by the customer. Bank has decided to close these accounts to prevent misuse of these accounts.

Therefore, all account holders who have not operated the account for more than 3 years as on 30.06.2024 and have zero balance or no balance in their account is hereby advised to activate the account by submitting KYC documents at the concerned branch by 31.08.2024. Otherwise, such account will be closed without further notice.

For any assistance/complaint redressal, you are requested to contact your branch.

Authorized Officer

PRUDENT CORPORATE ADVISORY SERVICES LIMITED.

CIN: L91120GJ2003PLC042458

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Money through wisdom

YoY Revenue*	YoY Operating Profit*	YoY PAT*
50.8% ↑	50.5% ↑	57.5% ↑
YoY AUM Growth^	YoY SIP Gross Flows (June 24)	Run rate of Monthly SIP Book (June 24)
52.7% ↑	40.8% ↑	780 Cr

(*Growth Numbers is for Q1 FY25.) (^Growth in Closing AUM as on June 24)

EXTRACT OF UNAUDITED CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER ENDED ON 30TH JUNE, 2024

(Rs. In Crores except for EPS)

Particulars	Consolidated			
	Quarter ended 30/06/2024	Quarter ended 30/06/2023	Quarter ended 31/03/2024	Year ended 31/03/2024
	Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Audited
Total Income from operations	249.4	165.4	239.7	805.1
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	59.2	37.6	59.8	185.8
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	59.2	37.6	59.8	185.8
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	44.2	28.1	44.6	138.7
Total Comprehensive income for the period [Comprising profit/(loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	43.9	28.1	43.9	138.8
Equity Share Capital	-	-	-	20.7
Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve) as shown in the Audited Balance Sheet of the previous year	-	-	-	460.7 (As on 31 st Mar, 2024)
Earnings Per Share (FV of Rs. 5/- each)				
Basic :	10.67	6.78	10.76	33.51
Diluted :	10.67	6.78	10.76	33.51

* EPS is not annualized for quarter ended periods

Notes: The above is an extract of the detailed quarterly financial results filed with Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the quarterly consolidated financial results and quarterly standalone financial results for the Quarter ended on 30th June, 2024 along with the notes, are available on the websites of Stock Exchanges at www.nseindia.com and www.bseindia.com and also on the Company's website at www.prudentcorporate.com.

EXTRACT OF KEY NUMBERS OF AUDITED STANDALONE FINANCIAL RESULTS

(Rs. In Crores except for EPS)

Particulars	Standalone			
	Quarter ended 30/06/2024	Quarter ended 30/06/2023	Quarter ended 31/03/2024	Year ended 31/03/2024
	Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Audited
Total Income from Operations	223.3	149.1	200.0	693.9
Profit Before Tax	50.1	31.9	45.4	147.8
Profit After Tax	37.5	23.9	33.9	110.5

An Independent Retail Wealth Management Services Group

₹ 96,260 Cr | 17.35 Lacs | 30,349 | 26.58 Lacs | 51.41 Lacs | 135

Mutual Fund AUM | Unique Retail Investors | Mutual Fund Distributors | Live SIPs | Live Folios | Pan India Branches (All data as of June, 2024)

Place: Ahmedabad
Date: 08 August, 2024

For and behalf of the Board of Directors
Sd/-
Kunal Chauhan - Company Secretary

Freo parent MWYN Tech aims to clock profit by end-FY25

Aman Rawat
aman.rawat@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

MWYN Tech Pvt. Ltd, which runs digital banking platform Freo and provides personal loans through its MoneyTap platform, aims to post a profit for the full fiscal year through March 2025 after breaking even in December last year, a co-founder told VCCircle.

The company, which counts venture capital firm Peak XV Partners as an investor, turned "cash profitable" from December 2023 onwards but was not profitable for the full financial year 2023-24, said Anuj Kacker.

Kacker said the company reported gross revenue of ₹350 crore in the financial year 2023-24. "Growth in revenue was a little less than what we expected as we focused on turning profitable," he added.

For FY25, the company expects its top line to grow 50-60%. "We will remain bottom-line positive this financial year. We will be in the 5% to 10% range this year on profit after tax level," said Kacker.

Kacker didn't disclose the company's net revenue or the actual bottomline number for FY24. For FY23, the company recorded a net loss of almost ₹40 crore on net sales of ₹91.60 crore, according to VCCircle, the data research platform of VCCircle.

Freo offers various products for middle-class consumers including credit through the MoneyTap app as well as



Freo co-founder Anuj Kacker. **ANUJ KACKER/LINKEDIN**

savings, insurance and shop-now and pay-later platforms. It says it disburses around ₹400 crore a month.

The startup was founded in 2016. It last raised equity funding in 2020. At the time, it raised ₹500 crore in a mix of equity and debt funding from a clutch of investors, including existing investors Prime Venture Partners and MegaDelta. It raised debt from Vivriti Capital, Credit Saison, and other undisclosed investors.

When asked if the company is planning to raise additional capital, Kacker said, "Right now, we don't need any cash. So, we are not out there in the market. But to accelerate our growth, we might look at it over the next six months to a year."

"For us, the challenge will be that since we've turned profitable, we don't want to not be profitable again. So even if we have extra money, we will only spend as much as allows us to stay in the black," added Kacker.

Kacker said the company reported gross revenue of around ₹350 cr in the financial year 2023-24

S&P BSE Sensex	Nifty 50	Nifty 500	Nifty Next 50	Nifty 100	S&P BSE Mid-cap	S&P BSE Small Cap
CLOSE: 78,886.22 PERCENT CHANGE: -0.73	CLOSE: 24,117.00 PERCENT CHANGE: -0.74	CLOSE: 22,705.70 PERCENT CHANGE: -0.63	CLOSE: 71,825.90 PERCENT CHANGE: -0.79	CLOSE: 25,161.25 PERCENT CHANGE: -0.74	CLOSE: 46,626.09 PERCENT CHANGE: -0.44	CLOSE: 53,192.72 PERCENT CHANGE: -0.16
PREVIOUS CLOSE: 79,468.01 OPEN: 79,420.49	PREVIOUS CLOSE: 24,297.50 OPEN: 24,248.55	PREVIOUS CLOSE: 22,848.90 OPEN: 22,842.00	PREVIOUS CLOSE: 72,401.25 OPEN: 72,465.10	PREVIOUS CLOSE: 25,349.00 OPEN: 25,314.00	PREVIOUS CLOSE: 46,830.57 OPEN: 46,958.34	PREVIOUS CLOSE: 53,278.93 OPEN: 53,529.14
HIGH: 79,626.92 LOW: 78,798.94	HIGH: 24,340.50 LOW: 24,079.70	HIGH: 22,905.60 LOW: 22,676.00	HIGH: 72,495.55 LOW: 71,716.40	HIGH: 25,383.00 LOW: 25,125.75	HIGH: 47,046.96 LOW: 46,577.58	HIGH: 53,712.74 LOW: 53,138.75

MINT SHORTS

Tough summer for US stocks overshadows stellar earnings

A tough summer for US stocks is overshadowing Corporate America's best-received earnings season in years. The median reaction for S&P 500 firms that beat profit estimates outperformed the benchmark by 1.7% on the day of reporting results—the widest margin in *Bloomberg Intelligence's* records going back to 2019 — while the median reaction for stocks missing forecasts trailed the index by just 1.1%, one of the narrowest margins over the same period. So while the S&P 500 is down more than 7% since JPMorgan Chase & Co. reported its results on 12 July, the market is also rewarding individual companies that are delivering on their promises. The trends are in response to the strongest profit growth for US firms in over three years in absolute terms. Already facing a high bar coming into the reporting season, S&P 500 firms have still managed to beat expectations overall with a 13% leap in second-quarter profits.



Sales of NEVs jumped 37% last month from the same period a year earlier, data shows.

China automobile market hits milestone with EVs, hybrids

Half of all vehicles sold in China in July were either new pure electric vehicles or plug-in hybrids, industry data showed, a milestone that underscores how far the world's biggest auto market has leapt ahead of Western counterparts in EV adoption. Sales of so-called new energy vehicles (NEVs) jumped 37% last month from the same period a year earlier, accounting for a record 50.7% of car sales, data from the China Passenger Car Association showed. That pace of growth for NEVs accelerated from a 28.6% surge in June. Sales of pure EVs climbed 14.3% in July, up from 9.9% growth for June. But overall domestic car sales fell 3.1%, extending declines for a fourth straight month with consumer confidence weak as the economy struggles to gain momentum. Weakness in the auto market prompted China's state planning agency to announce in late July that cash subsidies for vehicle purchases would be doubled and would be retroactive to April when the subsidies were first introduced.

REUTERS

Ticking time bomb: Have high valuations triggered cash pile-up?

Dipti Sharma
dipti.sharma@livemint.com
MUMBAI

Indian equity valuations are nearing all-time highs, with the key indices setting new records almost daily. However, recent declines have left investors wondering whether this is the opportune moment to enter the markets.

However, experts said investors should not let the fear of missing out (Fomo) dictate their decisions and must instead focus on valuations, which are no longer as enticingly low as they once were.

While it took 17 years for the Nifty 50 to gain its first 5,000 points, the index has since evolved from a marathon runner to a sprinter. Indian equities have been



Several fund managers, wary of valuations, have taken aggressive cash calls.

resilient, driven by a strong macro-economic environment, deleveraged corporate balance sheets, benign asset quality for banks and a broad-based earnings growth across sectors, said Swarup Anand Mohanty, CEO of Mirae Asset Investment

Managers (India). "These factors, coupled with strong flows from domestic investors, have led to higher valuations, particularly in the mid- and small-cap space, which are trading at premium in both absolute as well as relative terms," he said.

"Markets are significantly above fair value. Do not be hurried in incremental equity allocations," Manish Gupta, founder of Solidarity and a protégé of Rakesh Jhunjhunwala, said in a quarterly update to investors. He said Fomo should not influence decisions if one is under-allocated. "A fair portion of our positions are also at valuations where we will not initiate fresh purchases. However, we would not exit these either as they are not in euphoria. Taking cash off for small gains and attempting re-entry is not a prudent approach," he wrote. What's more is that several fund managers have taken aggressive cash calls. A portfolio manager who preferred to remain unidentified said he is wary of valuations in the mid- and small-cap

Data privacy rules in limbo, leaving the tech industry on edge

FROM PAGE 1

process has been delayed by another year or two, which isn't ideal for a sound regulatory environment."

The DPDP Act was notified last year but rules under the law are yet to be finalized.

Another executive emphasized the importance of releasing the DPDP rules to avoid regulatory ambiguity. "Tech firms catering to global markets already comply with Europe's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). For India to attract investments, a clear legislative structure is needed at the earliest. The lack

of it may impact smaller firms more than larger ones," he noted. A senior official with the ministry of electronics and information technology assured that the rules would be published "within the coming weeks".

The impending rules are expected to outline specific compliance requirements, timelines, and penalties for non-compliance. However, the delay in their publication has forced companies to adopt a wait-and-watch approach, hindering their ability to adopt data protection measures fully.

"The final draft will be pub-



Delay in publication of rules has hindered the ability of firms to adopt data protection measures fully.

lished for public consultation, followed by any necessary alterations. Once finalized, there will be clearly defined compliance periods for com-

panies," the government official explained. Consequently, most stakeholders, including the three executives cited above, expect the on-ground

impact of the DPDP Act, 2023, to manifest only from 2026.

The delay has caused issues within tech firms in India.

Supratim Chakraborty, partner at law firm Khaitan & Co., highlighted the challenge of doubling key roles in anticipation of compliance.

"Many personnel within companies have been put on double roles, with a projection to become a data privacy officer (DPO) when the law gets enforced. With this delay, many such employees are looking to grasp other roles within the company while essentially being on the sidelines, while others are in a

limbo with their job profile," Chakraborty said.

Lalit Kalra, partner for cyber security at EY India, said, "For companies with a global market, compliance with EU's GDPR already gives them stable ground. Most firms are already going ahead with preliminary compliance based on the DPDP Act... However, there is a lack of intensity and urgency due to the delay in notification of the rules, which can slow down the process of enforcing the privacy regulation on-ground," he added.

Queries sent to Microsoft, Meta, and HCL Technologies remained unanswered.

Trying times for Shree Cement

Harshajethmalani
harshaj@htlive.com

Shree Cement Ltd is a casualty of rising competition in a weak demand environment. In the June quarter, its standalone Ebitda of ₹9,164 crore was 22% below consensus estimates. This was due to a 6.3% year-on-year (y-o-y) drop in its cement realization, a measure of pricing, as the hunger for sales volumes continued to keep the sector's prices muted.

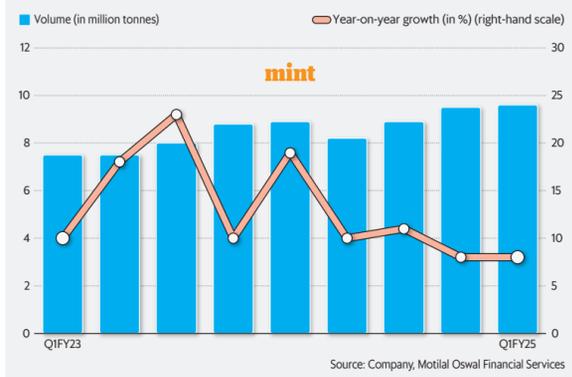
But the fall in Shree's realizations was higher than analysts had estimated and sharper than that of some peers.

In its first-quarter earnings call, Shree's management acknowledged that the company was facing tough competition in the northern markets from UltraTech Cement Ltd and Ambuja Cements Ltd. This prompted Shree to sell more cement in the eastern markets, where prices are lower.

Consequently, the share of the eastern markets in Shree's overall volume mix in the June quarter was 35%, while the northern regions contributed 55%. The balance came from Maharashtra and the south. The shift in regional mix meant a spike in freight costs and high-

Strong hold

Shree Cement saw decent volume growth in Q1FY25 aided by sales push in North and East India



Source: Company, Motilal Oswal Financial Services

her lead distance for the Kolkata-headquartered Shree Cement.

First-quarter cement volumes at 9.6 million tonnes rose 8% y-o-y, higher than the industry average of 5-6%. But, Shree's market share gains came at the cost of realizations, leading to steep earnings downgrades by some broker-

ages. Factoring in lower realization, Emkay Global Financial Services in a 7 August report cut Ebitda estimates by 19% for FY25 and 13% for FY26.

True, petroleum coke and coal prices have stabilized and inventory lag could lead to some cost savings, acting as a lever for Shree's profit margin, but

the good news ends there.

Muted pricing trends are a negative for the entire sector. But investors worry that this tussle between choosing market share gains and margins may hurt Shree more than others.

"Shree Cement appears confused, with no clear strategy on whether it wants to gain market share or improve pricing gap. In Q1FY25 it tried to grow market share, but now it plans to grow in-line with market," said Ambit Capital analysts. Shree targets volume growth to be in-line with the industry growth in 2024-25 versus its earlier guidance of 8-10% growth.

The company management said cement demand until end-2024 is expected to stay weak due to the monsoon, slow government spending, and upcoming festival season, which results in labour shortages, impacting construction activities.

Shree's management expects volumes to drop in second quarter. Full recovery is expected in January-March.

Meanwhile, Shree's expansion plans are on schedule across geographies.

Between April and June, Shree commissioned a unit in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, with cement production capacity of about 3 million tonnes per annum (mtpa). The company targets reaching 80 mtpa by FY28. It maintained its capital expenditure guidance at ₹4,000 crore each year over FY25-27, which will be funded mainly via internally generated funds.

Sure, timely expansion is a positive given capacity additions by Shree's peers. But there are profitability concerns. In reaction to the company's Q1 earnings, Shree's shares have fallen 7.5% in the last three trading sessions, taking its losses so far in 2024 to 15%.

In comparison, Ultra-Tech, ACC Ltd and Ambuja stocks gained this year. Shree's trading at an enterprise multiple (enterprise value/Ebitda) of about 15 times, showed *Bloomberg* data. Ultra-Tech trades at a multiple of nearly 18 times.

The gap is attributed to Shree losing its cost leadership advantage. Though Shree's valuation has moderated, in the current time, it is not too comforting.

TOUGH ROAD

SHREE'S realizations fell more than analysts estimated and sharper than some peers

A worry is that Shree Cement may have to choose between volumes and margin

Devyani International sails through Q1, but recovery to be slow

Pallavi Pengonda
pallavi.pengonda@livemint.com

Devyani International Ltd's India business continues to bear the brunt of weak consumer sentiment in the broader industry and stiff competition in the pizza category.

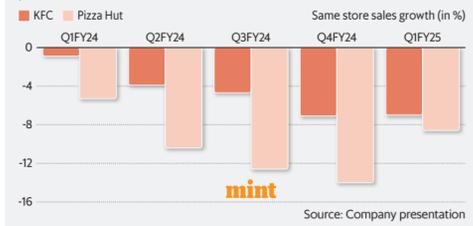
The quick service restaurant operator's consolidated revenue increased by as much as 44% year-on-year to ₹1,222 crore in the June quarter (Q1FY25). However, this robust growth was mainly due to the consolidation of the Thailand business. The acquisition was completed in January, leading

to an addition of 283 Thailand KFC stores back then.

Amid dull demand, the company's India revenue increased at a much slower rate of 6% to ₹840 crore in Q1FY25. KFC India's revenue grew 7.4%, while Pizza Hut's fell 1%. Comparable sales performance was subdued, with same-store sales of KFC and Pizza Hut in India falling yet again, by 7% and 8.6%, respectively. This was a tad better than in Q4FY24, when KFC's and Pizza Hut's same-store sales were down 7.1% and 14%. The sequential improvement could be attributed to seasonality, marketing initiatives and new launches.

In pain

Devyani International's same store growth has been under pressure for some time now



Source: Company presentation

Motilal Oswal Financial Services said about the Q1 performance, "Growth metrics saw sustained weakness; a similar trend

was witnessed across its QSR peers." Overall, Devyani's Q1 gross margin was flat sequentially at 69.2% and 160 basis

points lower year-on-year, bogged down by the Thailand business consolidation. KFC in Thailand has a lower gross margin than in India, management said in the earnings call. The company will be slightly cautious about increasing the number of Pizza Hut outlets until metrics improve. Devyani opened three new Pizza Hut outlets in Q1, after adding two in Q4FY24. In total, it added 54 net new stores in Q1FY25, including 10 overseas.

The total store count was 1,836 at the end of June, and 1,738 of these were its core brands—KFC, Pizza Hut and Costa Coffee. The company will

need a run rate of about 55 new stores in each of the next three quarters to meet its target of 2,000 stores in FY25. Management is optimistic that the industry will rebound during the upcoming festival season.

Devyani's shares are up 14.5% in the past six months, although they are still down 8.7% so far in 2024. "While the worst is behind, the pace of the recovery is critical for stock performance," said analysts at Jefferies India. "We cut FY25-27 India Ebitda to factor in a slower recovery, which is largely offset by an increase in international (Ebitda) on account of strong Thailand margins," they added.

Alpha Wave in race for stake in VLCC

FROM PAGE 1

performed well and the valuations are likely to go up, the PEs are looking to take some money off the table and derisk their larger bets," the third person cited above said. All three persons spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Carlyle has amped up its deal activity in the country in recent times, with investments in companies such as VLCC, Varma Tiles and Yes Bank in the past two years. Over the past six months, it partly exited Yes Bank through block deals in the open market.

As per a May 2024 ratings release by Icria Ratings, the VLCC Group reported a 22% year-on-year (y-o-y) growth in revenues in FY23 and a further -19% y-o-y increase in FY24 (as per the provisional estimates shared by the company) to ₹958 crore, led by 19 net centre additions, and increase in same-store sales by -20% on y-o-y basis in FY24.

"Resumption in discretionary spending with inclination towards health-based slimming and other activities resulted in increased revenue per centre for the Group. The OPM (operating margins) in FY24, although declined marginally by 40 bps to 23.3%, due to increase in marketing spends, remains healthy," the release said.

Founded in 1996, VLCC Healthcare provides beauty, slimming, fitness and health services across domestic and international geographies. The company sells beauty/personal



Rick Gerson, co-founder, Alpha Wave Global.

care products. VLCC's operations, at a group level, can be broadly divided into three categories: wellness (slimming and beauty), education, and personal care products (product-sales).

While the domestic wellness and education (vocational training courses) businesses are housed under VLCC Healthcare, the international wellness operations are under its subsidiary, VLCC International Inc. The personal care products business (manufacturing and sales) is mainly carried out under another subsidiary, VLCC Personal Care Ltd.

As per a report by Statista, the beauty and personal care market in India is projected to generate a revenue of \$31.5 billion in 2024. The largest segment within this market is the personal care segment, which is estimated to have a market volume of \$14.31 billion in 2024.

sheha.shah@livemint.com



Inflation at the top of RBI's mind; repo rate kept on hold

FROM PAGE 1

"Food inflation, with a weight of about 46% in the CPI basket, contributed to more than 75% of headline inflation in May and June," Das said, and added that vegetable prices increased sharply and contributed about 35% to inflation in June. "The high food price momentum is likely to have continued in July."

According to Barclays, Das' rhetoric remained unchanged, with an unambiguous focus on inflation and few details in terms of any forward guidance, in line with expectations. "The governor continued to note resilience in growth, amid stubborn food inflation. There was also a continued emphasis on maintaining vigilance and a disinflationary policy to bring down inflation closer to target," the Barclays note on Thursday said.

The MPC on Thursday raised the inflation expectation for the September quarter by 60 basis points to 4.4%, December quarter by 10 bps to 4.7%, but lowered the March quarter projection by 20 bps, while retaining the full-year expectation at 4.9%. For the first quarter of the next financial year, the MPC projected inflation at 4.4%.

Das also spelt out RBI's stance on giving weightage to food inflation. The FY24 economic survey said last month that India's inflation targeting framework should consider excluding food inflation. As part of its inflation-targeting mechanism, the government had in March 2021 retained RBI's flexible inflation target in



Stubborn food inflation stays a cause for concern. BLOOMBERG

the 2-6% band for the five years through March 2026.

Under the framework that was first introduced in 2016, RBI targets headline inflation as measured by CPI. July's MPC meeting was the 50th meeting of the rate-setting committee, Das said at the outset.

"With this high share of food in the consumption basket, food inflation pressures cannot be ignored," said Das.

He added that the public at large understands inflation more in terms of food inflation than the other components of headline inflation. "Therefore, we cannot and should not become complacent merely

because core inflation has fallen considerably," Das said high food inflation adversely affects household inflation expectations, which impacts future trajectory of inflation.

"The MPC may look through high food inflation if it is transitory; but in an environment of persisting high food inflation, as we are experiencing now, the MPC cannot afford to do so," said Das.

shayan.g@livemint.com

Monitor top-up home loans, RBI tells lenders

Borrowers seen using such loans in unproductive segments, speculation

Gopika Gopakumar
gopika.g@htlive.com
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India has asked banks and non-banks to monitor home equity loans and top-up loans to ensure borrowers don't spend the money on speculative trading or other purposes that could make repayment difficult.

Governor Shaktikanta Das, in a statement issued after the announcement of RBI's June monetary policy on Thursday, observed that borrowers were using top-up loans in unproductive segments or for speculative purposes.

"Home equity loans, or top-up housing loans as they are called in India... have been growing at a brisk pace. Banks and NBFCs have also been offering top-up loans on other collateralised loans like gold loans. It is noticed that the regulatory prescriptions relating to loan to value (LTV) ratio, risk weights and monitoring of end use of funds are not being strictly adhered to by certain entities," said Das.

Home equity loans or top-up loans are additional loans taken on existing home or personal borrowings.

For instance, if you took a home loan worth ₹40 lakh for buying a house worth ₹60 lakh, and assuming that as the years passed, your house's value increased to ₹70 lakh and you have repaid ₹25 lakh of the outstanding loan amount, banks can consider giving you a top-up loan.

Typically, these loans are intended for home-improvement purposes.

Banks have been giving these loans also for meeting other expenses such as weddings, vacations and repaying existing loans, prompting the warning from the central bank.

While the proportion of top-up loan to the overall loan book is small, analysts expressed concerns on the growth in such



According to RBI data, growth in 'credit card outstanding', despite falling, remained high at 23.3% in June. It was 34.2% in November.

advances.

In the case of Shriram Finance Lts, top-up loans add up to ₹7,073.7 crore out of its total assets under management of ₹1.43 trillion.

"This is not the first time that top-up loans have come under RBI scrutiny. Earlier in March this year, too, such loans

ment difficult," he added. Das in his statement also reiterated concerns around the high growth in certain segments of personal loans like credit card outstanding.

According to RBI data, growth in 'credit card outstanding', despite falling, remained high at 23.3% in June. It was 34.2% in November.

RBI had been cautioning banks on increased lending to the unsecured segment since March 2023. Personal loans grew as demand for credit increased in the post-covid era, led by segments such as small-ticket loans, gold loan

and credit cards. These segments had seen a growth of 33% on average for the past couple of years, more than double the 12-14% growth in credit, according to data from RBI.

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ment difficult," he added. Das in his statement also reiterated concerns around the high growth in certain segments of personal loans like credit card outstanding.

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and credit cards. These segments had seen a growth of 33% on average for the past couple of years, more than double the 12-14% growth in credit, according to data from RBI.

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EXPERT VIEW

DHAWAL DALAL

Respond to this column at feedback@livemint.com

RBI STAYS ON TRACK IN PRAGMATIC MONETARY POLICY

The latest meeting of the monetary policy committee (MPC) was held in the background of a sudden spurt in volatility in global financial markets. Weaker-than-expected US employment data right after the July Fed meeting, unwinding of the massive yen carry trade followed by a quick appreciation of the dollar-yen pair and sharp correction in the world equity markets raised fears of a US recession, and raised the clamour for a faster-than-expected interest rate easing in the US.

As result, global bond yields have plunged since the Fed's July meeting, with 10-year US treasury yield falling by approximately 37 bps to touch a low of 3.78% on 5 August, before recouping to 3.90%. The futures market is pricing more than 110 basis points of cumulative rate cuts by the Fed by December 2024.

In light of these developments, bond market participants who were hoping for some positive signals from the RBI on potential rate cuts, were thoroughly disappointed as the RBI governor not only sounded a bit hawkish, but also gave no indication on the timeline of a potential rate cut.

This was similar to the June meeting outcome in more than one way. Both times, the MPC voted 4-2 to keep the policy rate unchanged at 6.5%, with two independent members demanding a rate cut.

Both times, the MPC voted 4-2 to keep the policy stance unchanged with the same two independent members calling for a change to neutral. The FY25 real GDP growth projection was maintained at 7.2%, while FY25 average inflation forecast was marginally revised up to 4.58% from the earliest estimate of 4.5% in June MPC.

But this is where the similarities between the two MPC meetings probably ended, in our view. In August, the RBI governor took the opportunity to deliver some important messages to the bond market on food inflation, core inflation and stability in financial markets.

On Thursday, the governor spent considerable time on food inflation. He emphasized that while the RBI targeted the headline inflation, food inflation, with its 46% weight, was an important part of the overall inflation management due to its direct link with the household inflation expectations.

In June, food inflation rose to 9.36%, while average food inflation in the 12 months to June 2024 was at 8.75%. Further, food inflation was responsible for almost 3/4th of total inflation. This is significantly higher and sticky. No wonder the RBI must remain vigilant on food inflation.

More importantly, he sought to create a distinction between sticky headline inflation and falling core inflation by reiterating that RBI can't and shouldn't be complacent on falling core inflation. He feared that unanchored food inflation may have potential to spill over to core inflation leading to a reversal in core inflation and sticky headline inflation down the road.

It is noteworthy that while the June 2024 headline inflation unexpectedly jumped to 5.08%, Q1 headline inflation averaged 4.9% and Q2 was revised up to 4.4% in August MPC, from 3.8% in June MPC. This is a significant upward revision, in our view.

The governor acknowledged the ongoing progress of monsoon so far, but prefers to wait for a tangible decline in food inflation on durable basis before feeling comfortable. This conservative approach is totally understood and appreciated amid the ongoing weather-induced volatility in the global food supply and vagaries in different categories of food prices.

On the importance of financial stability, the RBI governor highlighted that while the overall financial sector remained healthy and stable in India, there were pockets of concerns that warranted higher vigilance. He highlighted four such areas of concerns and focused on resolving them. He reiterated that financial market stability was prerequisite to higher investment and stronger economic growth.

Overall, it was a pragmatic and steady-as-she-goes policy outcome, with an acknowledgement of some harsh reality that the RBI is facing and preparing the market to handle them one by one. In June, it was about creating a distinction between the potential rate cut cycle in the developed markets and our approach to the same.

August MPC was more about a crash course on food inflation and the need to vanquish it before considering policy normalization at a later date subject to the growth inflation dynamic. It is a turning wicket. Thank goodness we have the experienced batting line-up.

The author is the president and chief investment officer-fixed income, Edelweiss Asset Management Limited (EAML). Views expressed above are his own.

Foreign carriers eye Indian talent for cabin crew

Anu Sharma
anu.sharma@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

Foreign airlines spreading their wings in India are dipping into the local talent pool for cabin crew, at a time of abundant skilled professionals and growing outbound travel sentiment among Indian travellers.

While upcoming airline Riyadh Air has started hiring from India, Turkish Airlines is set to induct Indian talent under its first recruitment drive in the country for cabin crew. Saudia has also stated its intent to have more Indian employees in its aircraft, as it plans to expand in the world's fastest growing aviation market.

"We have started the process of recruiting cabin crew in India. This is our maiden recruitment drive here and we are hopeful of conducting more such drives in the future as we see India as an important market for us. While cabin crew are rotated across flights, a set of Indian talent will help us in facilitating a better customer engagement on the aircraft which are carrying a large number of Indian travellers," Erkan Erdogan, general manager for northern & eastern India at Turkish Airlines said.

As per official data, Turkish Airlines carried 130,732 passengers to and from India in the March quarter of 2024, or more than 1.3% share of the total traffic carried by the foreign carriers operating in the country.

Saudi Arabia's upcoming airline Riyadh Air, which expects to launch commercial flight operations next year, expects to utilize the Indian talent pool as it sees Indian aviation market as an important segment for its international expansion. The



Closure of two big airlines has also resulted in availability of skilled aviation talent. MINT

airline aims to launch operations to India within the first 12 months of its launch.

"India will be a significant opportunity for us and it will be important for us to partner with a large Indian carrier as well. We look for the right people with the right experience. For aviation workforce, we are looking at both gender diversity as well as nationality. We have firming up plans to conduct a recruitment drive for cabin crew in India. We will

conduct more such drives here as we launch operations," Adam Boukadida, chief financial officer at Riyadh Air said.

Industry executives said the closure of Jet Air India and Go Air in less than five years has also resulted in availability of skilled aviation talent in India, who can be attracted with better remuneration packages.

Pragya Priyadarshini, vice-president at Primus Partners, said: "This trend also responds to India's expanding outbound travel market... Hiring Indian cabin crew creates a culturally resonant environment for these passengers."

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'FAR bonds of 5-10 years most in demand'

Anshika Kayastha
anshika.kayastha@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

The majority of the foreign portfolio investor (FPI) demand for Indian securities under the fully accessible route (FAR) is for bonds with a tenure of up to 10 years, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) deputy governor Michael Patra said.

"We have observed that the major part of the interest of FAR investors is in the 5-10 years segment; actually, it accounts for 90% of the total investment. The interest in the 30-year paper is just 2% of the total stock of 30-year (bonds) that has been issued," Patra said in a post-policy press conference.

In turn, total FPI holding under various routes, as a share of total outstanding papers, is only 4.8%, Patra said, adding that the security-wise, category-wise and concentration limits under the medium-term framework (MTF) act as "natural barriers to any volatility" in the seg-



Michael Patra, deputy governor, RBI. PTI

ments.

FAR allows non-residents to invest in some Indian government bonds without any limits. Introduced in 2020, the framework was designed to encourage foreign investment through lower restrictions and quicken inclusion of Indian bonds in global bond indices. On 29 July, the RBI excluded all new securities with a 14-year and 30-year tenor from the FAR.

This implies that while non-residents can continue to access existing 14-year and 30-year government securi-

ties in the secondary market, fresh investments by FPIs in 14-year and 30-year tenor bonds will be as per prescribed regulatory limits. Existing foreign investment limits in regular bonds cap overseas investment at 6% of outstanding stock.

The restriction followed a surge in foreign inflows into Indian securities following the inclusion of some domestic bonds in key global indices.

Indian sovereign bonds were included in JP Morgan's Global Government Bond Index - Emerging Markets (GBI-EM) on 28 June. Later, Bloomberg Index Services too announced including the bonds in its Emerging Market Local Currency Government Index effective January 31, 2025.

However, so far, demand has been concentrated in bonds with tenures of up to 10 years.

"It's like giving time to people to adjust their portfolios because we know that the weight of India in the bond index will slowly rise over a 10-month period, so they will have time to adjust their portfolios," Patra said.

Including all existing securities issued, the total stock of available investments under FAR is around ₹41 trillion, of which the current foreign investment is only ₹2 trillion, he said, adding that this reflects that there is "ample amount of space to go".

"Our assessment is that in the categories that are now allowed, there is going to be ₹4 trillion of new issuances which are open to FAR.

"Apart from that, there is the MTF (medium term framework), where while the limit is ₹6 trillion, only 2% (is utilised) today, so it's not as terrible as it is made out to be," Patra.

A global recession is not in prospect

FROM PAGE 1

exception in the rich world. It is also hard to square supposed labour-market weakness with wage growth that, across advanced economies, easily exceeds the rate of inflation.

If the story about jobs is reasonably subtle, the story about output is less so. Our judgment, from looking at a range of data, is that there is not much evidence of a slowdown. In a typical recession company profits plunge, but for now firms across the rich world are doing well.

Research by Deutsche Bank suggests that in the first quarter of this year global corporate-earnings growth reached its highest level in seven quarters. The strong performance appears to have continued in

the second quarter. American companies' earnings look set to have grown by more than 10% year on year. On August 6th Uber, a ride-hailing app, reported good results. A healthy share of European companies are beating analysts' expectations for profits. In South Korea second-quarter earnings were better than expected.

The economy at large offers a similar story. A weekly tracker of American economic activity, produced by the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, shows little sign of weakness. A global composite "purchasing managers' index" that tracks economic conditions remains strong. Although the rate of expansion slowed in July, it remained among the best registered over the past



American companies' earnings look set to have grown by more than 10% year on year. BLOOMBERG

year. A "current-activity indicator" produced by Goldman Sachs, a bank, gives another reason for optimism. Published at a high frequency and compiled from a range of

sources, it provides a hint of where GDP across the rich world is going. The indicator, if anything, looks slightly stronger than it did for most of last year. Some economies are

struggling with weak growth, including Austria and France. But they have looked sickly for at least a year—and the situation is a lot better than it was a few months ago.

The inflation picture is improving as well. After peaking at 10% in late 2022, inflation in the median OECD country has steadily fallen. In June median prices across the bloc rose by 2.6% year on year—close to central banks' targets of 2%. About a quarter of OECD countries have now reduced inflation to that level or below. Annual inflation in Italy is less than 1%, while consumer-price growth in France and Germany is pretty much bang on target. It is ironic that concerns about recession have spread just as the rich world appears set to pull off a "soft

landing", in which central banks bring down inflation to target without causing much economic damage.

Worries about the economy can, in time, become self-fulfilling. As stock markets tumble, households might start to fret about the future or feel poorer, leading them to pull back on spending. Skittish companies might also cancel their investment plans. Inflation is not yet defeated, even if it has come down, and with commodity prices volatile it could increase once again. High interest rates continue to bite. And yet, for now, the global economy remains in decent health.



Mercedes-Benz aims to deliver luxury beyond cars

The carmaker's dealer partners in India will invest ₹150 crore this year to overhaul 25 outlets

Alisha Sachdev
alisha.sachdev@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

Mercedes-Benz India's dealer partners will invest ₹150 crore this year to overhaul 25 outlets, enhancing customer experience and transforming showrooms into luxury lounges for clients to make car purchases leisurely. This is no surprise. The German luxury carmaker derives a significant chunk of its revenue and a quarter of its sales volumes from its most expensive cars, all with a price tag upwards of ₹1 crore.



The German carmaker derives a quarter of its sales volumes from its most expensive cars, all priced upwards of ₹1 crore.

"We are transforming our showrooms to more luxury boutique outlets because of our focus on customer experience. We have private consulting areas in the showrooms, because customers prefer that over being in a space with other customers at the same time," Santosh Iyer, managing director and CEO, Mercedes-Benz India, told *Mint*, emphasizing the company's global strategy - one that echoes in India too - to capture more customers at the top of the pyramid.

"Globally, this is our philosophy - our diamond should bulge at the top and be sharper at the bottom," Iyer said. While German luxury rivals BMW and Audi are expanding their offerings to attract core as well as entry-segment luxury buyers, Mercedes-Benz says its products in the segments, accounting for just 15% of its sales, are pricier than

the competition because of the features they offer. "It becomes a question of affordability in that segment then", Iyer said, adding, "We are in fact quietly adding more features to our entry-level cars, which makes them pricier. We don't want to de-content our cars".

ELEVATING EXPERIENCE

THE German carmaker derives a significant chunk of its revenue from its most expensive cars

CUSTOMERS can expect key handover machines imported from Stuttgart

THE company will transform its showrooms into exclusive boutique outlets

THE firm will also expand its merchandise to create an immersive experience

"Taking delivery of their car is the highest point in a customer's life. They come with family and friends and the entire delivery experience we are curating, along with our German key station, these are wow moments that we want to

chandise offerings to create a more immersive luxury experience. "We are diversifying in terms of product range, so from perfumes to dash cams to many other offerings, we are expanding our range. On the other side, we are also

diversifying on brands. Along with Mercedes accessories, we now have Maybach, AMG, and the G-Series accessories," Iyer said.

The Stuttgart-based luxury carmaker derives 80% of its entire sales volume from its top tier-1 and tier-2 markets. While 48% of India's total car sales come from 500 cities classified as tier-II and tier-III cities, the share of luxury sales in these markets is only 0.4%, compared to over 2% in the tier-1 metros.

Mercedes-Benz is also expanding its service footprint to regions where it doesn't have a sales infrastructure, but has significant or a growing customer base. The company plans to establish service infrastructure in markets like Karnal, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Mangalore, Coimbatore, Surat, and Indore.

Q1 volume slows: Can FMCG cos take it with a pinch of salt?

Suneera Tandon
suneera.t@htlive.com
NEW DELHI

India's fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry reported a sharp drop in volume growth in the food and non-food categories in the June quarter, largely due to a slowdown in sales of packaged foods such as salt, flour and oil, consumer intelligence company NielsenIQ (NIQ) said.

FMCG volumes grew 3.8% year-on-year in the June quarter, slowing both sequentially and from a year earlier, NIQ said in its quarterly update on the sector released Thursday. Volumes had increased 7.5% in the June quarter last year.

Rural growth outpaced urban demand for the second consecutive quarter, according to NIQ. The numbers, however, reflected weakening consumer demand due to broader macro-economic headwinds, NIQ said.

"The Indian FMCG industry growth has been steady, reflecting its resilience and adaptability. The sector experienced a 4% value growth in Q2 2024, attributed to relaxed consumption patterns. This deceleration in volumes is largely due to macroeconomic headwinds. While rural volume growth at 5.2% continues to outpace the 2.8% growth in urban areas, both regions experienced softer consumption this quarter," said Roosevelt Dsouza, head of customer success-India, at NIQ.

Overall, the sector reported a 4% jump in value growth and a 0.2% rise in price-led growth. The data suggests that companies did not rely on excessive price hikes to derive growth in the June quarter.

However, the numbers are a drag in comparison to the year-ago period.

In the June quarter of 2023,

Losing flavour

Quarterly growth (y-o-y) in India's FMCG sector (in %)

	Value	mint	Volume
Q1 2023		10.2	3.1
Q2 2023		12.2	7.5
Q3 2023		9	8.6
Q4 2023		6	6.4
Q1 2024		7	6.5
Q2 2024		4	3.8

Source: NielsenIQ India snapshot- Q4 2023 (OND'23)

PARAS JAIN/MINT

the industry saw a 12.2% jump in value growth; volumes grew 7.5% while price-led growth stood at 4.4%. Last year, firms had raised prices to counter accelerating inflation. However, the price hikes have since eased. NIQ follows a calendar year.

Rural volumes grew at a faster clip in the June quarter, broadly reflected in the trends reported by several large consumer goods makers in their quarterly earnings. Urban volume growth eased from 10.5% reported a year ago.

In the June quarter, most firms were encouraged by the rebound in rural demand but cautioned against tepid consumer sentiment overall.

"I think overall the rural is coming back. If you ask me, it's a large long-term impact happening. Inflation going down, elasticity of demand working very well. As inflation goes down, price premium goes down, more traction happens in discretionary & staples... that's what is given and that is getting built up by good harvest, normal monsoon, government initiative of putting in a

lot of infrastructure, more employment opportunities, MNREGA outlay going up... news schemes being announced by the government. So I think all that is leading to a better sentiment. And this better sentiment generally leads to better consumption," Mohit Malhotra, Dabur India's CEO said during the company's earnings call.

However, he added that not everything is "hunky dory" because the overall FMCG market continues to go down.

The timely arrival of the monsoon coupled with a budget focussed on rural employment and infrastructure and agriculture will help in the gradual recovery of the sector, he said.

Rural growth outpaced urban demand for the second consecutive quarter, according to NIQ

FMCG consumption growth in the June quarter was hurt primarily by a slowdown in the foods category, according to NIQ, with the segment reporting a 2.4% growth in volumes compared with a 4.8% growth in the same three months a year ago. Food accounts for about 60% of FMCG consumption basket.

For an extended version of this story, go to [livemint.com](https://www.livemint.com)

ALEMBIC PHARMACEUTICALS LIMITED
CIN: L24230GJ2010PLC061123
Regd. Office: Alembic Road, Vadodara - 390 003
Tel: 0265-6637000
Email: apl.investors@alembic.co.in
Website: www.alembicpharmaceuticals.com

Extract of statement of Consolidated Unaudited Financial Results for the quarter ended 30th June, 2024

(₹ in Crores except per share data)

Particulars	Quarter Ended		Year Ended
	30.06.2024 (Unaudited)	30.06.2023 (Unaudited)	31.03.2024 (Audited)
Total Income from Operations	1,561.73	1,486.15	6,228.63
Net Profit for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/ or Extraordinary items)	157.03	129.76	631.83
Net Profit for the period before tax (after Exceptional and/ or Extraordinary items)	157.03	129.76	631.83
Net Profit for the period after tax attributable to shareholders of the company (after Exceptional and/ or Extraordinary items)	134.71	120.60	615.82
Total Comprehensive Income for the period	131.21	119.66	604.98
Equity Share Capital	39.31	39.31	39.31
Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve) as shown in the Audited Balance Sheet of previous year	-	-	4,778.89
Earnings Per Share (Face value of ₹ 2/- each) Basic & Diluted	6.84	6.14	31.33

Notes:

- Standalone details

Particulars	Quarter Ended		Year Ended
	30.06.2024 (Unaudited)	30.06.2023 (Unaudited)	31.03.2024 (Audited)
Income from Operations	1,475.56	1,332.27	5,874.06
Profit Before Tax	213.20	97.53	704.23
Profit After Tax	176.19	97.53	666.48
- The above is an extract of the detailed format of the unaudited financial results filed with the Stock Exchanges. The detailed Financial Results are available on the Company's website at www.alembicpharmaceuticals.com and the Stock Exchange's website at www.nseindia.com and www.bseindia.com

For Alembic Pharmaceuticals Limited
Sd/-
Chirayu Amin
Chairman and CEO
Place: Mumbai
Date: 8th August, 2024

THINK LOGISTICS, THINK CONCOR

Time table Double stack train on DFC
ESG Sustainable Green Logistics LNG-Truck
Warehouse & Distribution Logistics
e-Booking of Container
Digitalisation in Logistics
66 Terminals including 16MMLP's setup across the country
Infrastructure in the Service of Nation
First Mile Last Mile (FMLM) Service through Mobile App

EXTRACT OF THE UN-AUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER ENDED 30TH JUNE, 2024 (₹ in Crore)

S. No.	Particulars	STANDALONE RESULTS		CONSOLIDATED RESULTS			
		FOR THREE MONTHS ENDED		FOR THREE MONTHS ENDED		FOR TWELVE MONTHS ENDED	
		30-JUNE-2024 (Un-Audited)	30-JUNE-2023 (Un-Audited)	31-MARCH-2024 (Audited)	30-JUNE-2024 (Un-Audited)	30-JUNE-2023 (Un-Audited)	31-MARCH-2024 (Audited)
1	Total Income from Operations	2,097.07	1,919.34	8,632.49	2,103.13	1,922.84	8,653.41
2	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/ or Extraordinary items and Share of net profit/(loss) of joint ventures)	341.28	321.19	1,641.62	347.11	318.95	1,638.49
3	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax, Share of net profit/(loss) of joint ventures (after Exceptional and/ or Extraordinary items)	341.28	321.19	1,634.48	347.11	318.95	1,638.49
4	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/ or Extraordinary items)	255.35	244.12	1,230.79	259.42	245.19	1,262.09
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	257.03	251.51	1,237.57	260.85	252.55	1,268.64
6	Equity Share Capital	304.65	304.65	304.65	304.65	304.65	304.65
7	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve) as shown in the Audited Balance Sheet of the previous year	-	-	11,507.69	-	-	11,518.56
8	Earnings Per Share (of ₹ 5/- each) (for continuing and discontinued operations) -						
	1. Basic (₹)	4.19	4.01	20.20	4.26	4.02	20.71
	2. Diluted (₹)	4.19	4.01	20.20	4.26	4.02	20.71

The Standalone and Consolidated Financial Results of the Company for the quarter ended June 30, 2024 have been reviewed by Audit Committee and approved by the Board of Directors in its meeting held on August 8th, 2024. The statutory auditors of the Company have carried out limited review of the above results for Quarter ended June 30, 2024.

Note:- The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarter ended Financial Results for June 30, 2024 filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarter ended Financial Results are available on the Stock Exchanges Websites www.nseindia.com and www.bseindia.com and on company's website www.concorindia.co.in

For & on behalf of the Board of Directors
Sd/-
(Manoj Kumar Dubey)
Director (Finance) & CFO
DIN:07518387

CONTAINER CORPORATION OF INDIA LTD.
(A Navratna Undertaking of Government of India)
Regd. Office: C-3, CONCOR Bhawan, Mathura Road, Opp. Apollo Hospital, New Delhi - 110 078
CIN: L2311DL1980G0003915 | Ph: 911-4167393, 491215500 | Website: www.concorindia.co.in | E-mail: investorrelations@concorindia.com
Place: New Delhi
Date: 08th August, 2024

नगर पालिक निगम, इन्दौर
कार्यालय कार्यपालन यंत्रो (जलप्रदाय)
संघारण खंड क्रमांक-2, नर्मदा परियोजना मुसाखंडी, इन्दौर
E-mail: ee2_narmada@rediffmail.com, Phone: 0731-2712846

निविदा सूचना क्रमांक: 14/2024-25/नर्मदा/परि/न.पा.नि. **ऑनलाइन निविदा द्वितीय आमंत्रण सूचना** दिनांक: 06.08.2024

निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु केन्द्रीकृत प्रणाली में पंजीकृत उम्मेदवारों से ऑनलाइन निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती हैं। निविदा का विस्तृत विवरण वेबसाइट <https://mptenders.gov.in> पर देखा जा सकता है।

क्र.	टेण्डर क्रमांक	कार्य का नाम	कार्य की समयावधि एवं लागत	निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य एवं EMD
01	2024_UAD_362212_1	Design, construction, testing & commissioning of 3 nos. overhead Tank (2.5 MLD capacity) and laying feeder mains for 3 nos. tanks at various location in Vidhansabha no.5 (as per schedule)	1) 18 माह 2) ₹12,62,86,585/-	1) ₹6,31,433/- 2) ₹30,000/-

1. निविदा प्रपत्र ऑनलाइन जमा करने की अंतिम दिनांक: 20.08.2024 सायं 17:30 बजे तक
2. निविदा ऑनलाइन खोलने की दिनांक (ENVELOPE A/B): 22.08.2024

नोट: निविदा से संबंधित किसी भी प्रकार के संशोधन का प्रकाशन ऑनलाइन <https://mptenders.gov.in> की वेबसाइट पर ही किया जायेगा, पृथक से समाचार पत्र में प्रकाशन नहीं किया जायेगा।

कार्यपालन यंत्रो (जलप्रदाय)
नगर पालिक निगम, इन्दौर

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER, MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, GWALIOR (M.P.)
Narayankrishan Shejwalkar Bhawan, Near Taran Pushkar, City Centre, Gwalior
Tel No. : 0751-2438300, 4080352, Fax No. : 0751-2434249

NIT No. 2024-UAD-361579-1/MPGMC/19/24X9/1/PHE/2024 Gwalior, Date : 02.08.2024

जलसंधर्भ RO क्रमांक 369 **Notice Inviting Tender** दिनांक 07-08-2024

On behalf of Gwalior Municipal Corporation, M.P. online percentage rate bids for the following work are invited on portal <http://www.mptenders.gov.in> from registered Contractors and competent firms.

Description of Works	Probable Amount (in Rs.)	Completion Period (in Days)
Survey and Design of Distribution network for water supply from RCC Overhead tanks/Ground Level Service Reservoirs/Sump-wells including Providing, Laying, Testing and Commissioning of pipelines to be laid under this contract in different DMAs (District Metering Areas) of Nagar Nigam workshop within RCC Overhead tanks/ Ground Level Service Reservoirs/Sump-wells in different Dakshin Vidhansabha.	2,83,73,399.00	180 days continuousley (24 Hours Day & Night) i/o Rainy Season

Interested bidders can view the NIT of portal <http://mptenders.gov.in>. The bid document can be purchased only on online from dated 02.08.2024 to 30.08.2024 and can be submitted 30.08.2024 up to 5.30 PM.

Executive Engineer,
Water Supply, Gwalior Municipal Corporation, Gwalior

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Kalyani group plans to sue Hiremaths

Anirudh Laskar
anirudh.l@htlive.com
MUMBAI

The dispute over the family assets of the Kalyani group is set to get worse after the group sent a legal notice to the Hiremath family on Thursday, a fact that was confirmed by a group spokesperson.

The spokesperson said that the Kalyani group is contemplating legal action against members of the Hiremath family, including Sameer Hiremath and Pallavi Swadi—children of Sugandha Hiremath, Kalyani family patriarch and Bharat Forge Ltd chairman Baba Kalyani's sister—on grounds of defamation and for allegedly interfering in the process of justice.

In the notice, the Kalyani

family has accused the Hiremaths of making statements that are "false, offensive, defamatory".

"Both plaintiffs (Sameer and Pallavi) have been indulging in making malicious attempts to defame certain named family members," said the Kalyani group spokesperson in response to *Mint's* queries. "A legal notice to this effect has been issued to the relevant parties."

The group is mulling legal action on grounds of defamation and alleged interference in the process of justice

Queries sent to the Hiremaths remained unanswered till press time.

The latest notice from the Kalyani Group comes on the back of the Hiremaths making a court filing on 22 July, where they called the family asset dealings of Baba Kalyani "authoritarian and opaque".

For an extended version of this story, go to [livemint.com](https://www.livemint.com)

Vedanta steel biz sale on hold

Vedanta's billion-dollar fundraising last month has eased some of its debt pressure, reduced the need to sell

Bloomberg
feedback@livemint.com

Vedanta Ltd has put a plan to sell its steel business on hold after a \$1 billion share sale gave the company more breathing room with its finances, and as environmental and regulatory concerns deter potential bidders, according to people familiar with the matter.

Mumbai-headquartered Vedanta, controlled by Anil Agarwal, had been working with advisers on a sale of the business, which includes iron-ore and manganese mines, to raise about \$2.5 billion to help reduce the group's debt load, the people said, asking not to be identified discussing private information.

Vedanta's billion-dollar fundraising through a share placement last month has eased some of the debt pressure and reduced the need to sell, the people said. The company may



Vedanta entered the steel business in 2018 with a 90% stake in ESL Steel REUTERS

revisit a sale later, they added, without disclosing any specific environmental or regulatory concerns surrounding the steel business.

Industrial projects in India are often dogged by issues such as over-

pollution and protests over human displacement, rights abuses and wildlife habitat destruction. Last year, the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project published an investigation that said Vedanta lob-

bied the government to weaken key environmental regulations during the Covid pandemic.

A representative for Vedanta said the company would still consider selling its steel operations at the right price.

Vedanta entered the steel business in 2018 when it bought a 90% stake in ESL Steel Ltd, which has operations in Bokaro, in eastern India's Jharkhand state. Its products include pig iron, billets, TMT bars, wire rods and ductile iron pipes, the firm's website shows.

Considerations for a sale followed Vedanta's board approving a plan last year to split the conglomerate into six different companies. Vedanta said at the time the demerger should be completed this financial year through March 2025. On 31 July, it announced that 75% of secured creditors had

approved the proposal. Vedanta only mandated advisers for the possible sale of the steel business, the people said. The company has previously said it would prioritize areas such as electronics and semiconductors.

Vedanta said Tuesday that its net debt was ₹6,132 crore (\$7.3 billion) as of the end of June, up 8.8% from the previous quarter.

For its steel business, saleable production was up 10% from a year earlier at 356 kilotonnes thanks to improved efficiency, the company said. Overall net profit easily beat estimates.

In the earnings statement, chief financial officer Ajay Goel said the response to the \$1 billion qualified institutional placement was "overwhelming" and that the proceeds will help deleverage the balance sheet and reduce finance costs.

\$7.3 bn
Vedanta's net debt as of the end of June



Jubilant Pharmova Limited (CIN: L24116UP1978PLC004624)

Registered Office: Bhartiagram, Gajraula, District Amroha - 244 223, Uttar Pradesh, India
E-mail: investors@jubl.com; Website: www.jubilantpharmova.com
Phone: +91-5924-267437

NOTICE OF 46TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, E-VOTING INFORMATION, RECORD DATE AND FINAL DIVIDEND

Notice is hereby given that the 46th Annual General Meeting ('AGM') of the Company is scheduled to be held on **Friday, August 30, 2024 at 11:00 a.m. (IST)** through Video Conferencing ('VC')/ Other Audio Visual Means ('OAVM'), without the physical presence of the Members at the AGM, to transact the business(es) as set out in the Notice convening the 46th AGM ('AGM Notice') in compliance with the circulars issued by MCA and SEBI ('Circulars'), from time to time. Members attending the AGM through VC/OAVM shall be reckoned for the purpose of quorum under Sec 103 of the Companies Act, 2013 ('Act').

The AGM Notice alongwith the Annual Report for the Financial Year 2023-24 has been sent through electronic mode only to those members whose e-mail address(es) are registered with the Company or Depository Participants or Registrar and Transfer Agent ('RTA'). The AGM Notice has been sent to all members via e-mail on Thursday, August 08, 2024.

The aforesaid documents are also available on the Company's website at <https://www.jubilantpharmova.com/investors/financials/annual-reports> and websites of the Stock Exchanges i.e. BSE Limited at www.bseindia.com and National Stock Exchange of India Limited at www.nseindia.com and on the website of National Securities Depository Limited ('NSDL') at www.evoting.nsdl.com.

In compliance with provisions of Sec 108 of the Act read with Rule 20 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014 (the 'Rules'), Secretarial Standards on General Meetings issued by the Institute of Company Secretaries of India and Regulation 44 of SEBI Listing Regulations, as amended, read with Circulars, the Members will be provided with the facility to cast their vote electronically, through the remote e-Voting facility (prior AGM) and e-Voting facility (at the AGM), on all the resolutions set forth in AGM Notice.

The facility of casting votes will be provided by NSDL. Facility for e-Voting at the AGM will be made available to those Members who are present in the AGM through VC/OAVM facility and have not cast their vote on the resolutions through remote e-Voting. The Members who have voted through remote e-Voting will be eligible to attend the AGM.

The Board of Directors of the Company have recommended a final dividend of ₹5 per equity share of Re. 1 each for approval by the Members at the AGM. The Record date for the purpose of payment of final dividend is August 02, 2024. Members may note that pursuant to the Finance Act, 2020, dividend income is taxable in the hands of the members effective April 1, 2020 and the Company is required to deduct tax at source ('TDS') from dividend paid to members at the prescribed rates as per the Income-tax Act, 1961. To enable compliance with TDS requirements, members are requested to send their duly executed documents through email at investors@jubl.com on or before Tuesday, August 20, 2024. Please refer AGM notice for detailed reference. To avoid delay in receiving the dividend, shareholders are requested to update their complete bank account details with their depositories (where shares are held in Demat mode) and update with Company's RTA - Alankit Assignments Limited (where shares are held in physical form) by providing signed request letter with folio no., self-attested cancelled cheque and a copy of Permanent Account No. (PAN) to receive the dividend directly into their bank account.

Members are further informed that (a) Remote e-Voting shall commence at 9:00 a.m. (IST) on Tuesday, August 27, 2024 and end at 5:00 p.m. (IST) on Thursday, August 29, 2024; (b) Remote e-Voting shall not be allowed after 5:00 p.m. (IST) on Thursday, August 29, 2024 and remote e-Voting module shall be disabled by NSDL upon expiry of the aforesaid period. Once the member casts the vote on a resolution, the member shall not be allowed to change it subsequently; (c) The Cut-off date for the purpose of e-voting has been fixed as Friday, August 23, 2024. Voting rights shall be reckoned on the paid up value of the shares registered in the name of the members of the Company as on the Cut-off date; (d) Any person who acquires shares of the Company and becomes a member of the Company after dispatch of the Notice of the AGM and holding shares as of the Cut-off date i.e. Friday, August 23, 2024, may obtain the User ID and Password by sending a request at evoting@nsdl.co.in or Issuer/ RTA. However, if any person is already registered with NSDL for remote e-Voting, he/she can use his existing User ID and Password for casting his/her vote. If a person has forgotten his Password, he can reset his Password by using "Forgot User Details/Password" or "Physical User Reset Password" option available on www.evoting.nsdl.com or contact NSDL on Toll free no.: 1800 1020 990 and 1800 224 430; (e) The e-voting facility will also be made available during the AGM to enable the members who have not exercised their vote through remote e-voting, to cast their voting rights; (f) members who have cast their vote by remote e-voting prior to the AGM may also attend and participate in the AGM through VC/ OAVM means, but shall not be entitled to cast their e-vote again.

Process for registration of E-mail IDs is given below for those shareholders whose E-mail IDs are not registered and/or other KYC details:

a) With effect from April 1, 2024, the shareholders who are holding shares in physical mode and have not registered or updated their e-mail IDs and/or other KYC details will be eligible for dividend only upon completion of KYC with RTA. To update KYC including the e-mail IDs, the shareholders are requested to provide Folio No., Name of shareholder, scanned copy of the share certificate (front and back), self-attested scanned copy of PAN card, self-attested scanned copy of Aadhaar Card by email to investors@jubl.com or rt@alankit.com. The shareholders are requested to submit requisite request forms alongwith the supporting documents to the Company's RTA i.e. Alankit Assignments Limited, either at its office located at 205-208, Anarkali Complex, Jhandewalan Extension, New Delhi-110055, India or by email at rt@alankit.com. The format of various request forms are available on the website of the Company at <https://www.jubilantpharmova.com/investors/investor-information/updates-of-kyc-details>.

b) In case shares are held in demat mode, please provide DPID - Client ID, Name, client master or copy of Consolidated Account statement, self-attested scanned copy of PAN card and self-attested scanned copy of Aadhaar Card to investors@jubl.com or rt@alankit.com.

For e-Voting instructions, members are requested to go through the instructions given in the Notice of the AGM. In case of any queries/grievances connected with electronic voting, members may refer the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Shareholders and e-Voting user manual for Shareholders available at the Downloads section of www.evoting.nsdl.com or contact Mr. Amit Vishal, Deputy Vice President, NSDL, Trade World, 4th Floor, Kamala Mills Compound, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai - 400013, India through e-mail at evoting@nsdl.com or on Toll Free No.: 1800 1020 990 and 1800 224 430 or Mr. J.K. Singla, Deputy General Manager, M/s. Alankit Assignments Limited, 205-208, Anarkali Complex, Jhandewalan Extension, New Delhi-110055, India through email at rt@alankit.com or on Telephone No.: 011-42541234.

The results of voting on the resolutions set out in the Notice of the AGM shall be declared within two (2) working days of conclusion of the AGM. The results declared alongwith the report of the Scrutinizer shall be placed on the website of the Company www.jubilantpharmova.com and on the website of NSDL immediately after the declaration of result by the Chairman or a person authorised by him and the results shall also be communicated to the Stock Exchanges.

For Jubilant Pharmova Limited
Sd/-
Naresh Kapoor
Company Secretary
Membership No.: 11782

Date: August 8, 2024
Place: Noida

Bharti Hexacom Limited (CIN: L74899DL1995PLC067527)

Registered Office : Bharti Crescent, 1, Nelson Mandela Road, Vasant Kunj, Phase II, New Delhi - 110 070, India
Tel.: + 91-11-4666 6100, Fax.: + 91-11-4166 6137
email id: bhartihexacom@bharti.in; Website: www.bhartihexacom.in

NOTICE OF 29TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF BHARTI HEXACOM LIMITED AND E-VOTING INFORMATION

Notice is hereby given that:

- The 29th Annual General Meeting ('AGM') of Bharti Hexacom Limited ('the Company') will be held on Friday, August 30, 2024 at 03:30 P.M. (IST) through Video Conferencing ('VC')/ Other Audio-Visual Means ('OAVM') to transact the businesses as set forth in the Notice of the 29th AGM ('Notice'). The venue of AGM shall be deemed to be the Registered Office of the Company i.e. Bharti Crescent, 1, Nelson Mandela Road, Vasant Kunj, Phase II, New Delhi - 110 070, India. The Company has engaged KFin Technologies Limited ('KFin') to provide VC/ OAVM facility along with facility of remote e-voting and e-voting at the AGM to its members (together referred to as 'e-voting').
- In accordance with the General Circular No(s) 09/2023 dated September 25, 2023 issued by Ministry of Corporate Affairs ('MCA'), Circular No. SEBI/HO/CFD/CFD-PoD-2/P/CI/R/2023/167 dated October 07, 2023 issued by Securities and Exchange Board of India ('SEBI') and other related circulars issued by MCA and SEBI from time to time (collectively referred to as 'Circulars'), the Notice and Annual Report & audited financial statements for the financial year 2023-24 ('Annual Report') have been sent in electronic mode only to all those members whose e-mail addresses are registered with the Company/Depository Participants ('DPs'). The electronic dispatch of the Notice and Annual Report to the members through e-mail has been completed on Thursday, August 08, 2024. The Notice and the Annual Report are also available on the website of the Company (www.bhartihexacom.in), on the website of KFin (<https://evoting.kfintech.com/public/Downloads.aspx>) and on the website of National Stock Exchange of India Limited (www.nseindia.com) and BSE Limited (www.bseindia.com).
- Pursuant to the provisions of Section 108 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with Rule 20 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014 and Regulation 44 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, the Company is pleased to provide e-voting facility to the members to cast their vote electronically on all resolutions as set forth in the Notice. Members may cast their votes electronically through e-Voting. The Ordinary and Special Businesses, as set out in the Notice will be transacted only through voting by electronic means.
- The remote e-voting period will commence at 9:00 A.M. (IST) on Monday, August 26, 2024 and ends at 5:00 P.M. (IST) on Thursday, August 29, 2024. The remote e-voting module shall be disabled for voting at 5:00 P.M. (IST) on Thursday, August 29, 2024. Once the vote on a resolution is cast by the member, the member cannot modify it subsequently. A member may participate in the AGM even after exercising his right to vote through remote e-voting but shall not be allowed to vote again in the AGM.
- The Members attending the AGM who have not cast their vote by remote e-voting, shall be entitled to vote at AGM through e-voting at the AGM.
- The cut-off date for the purpose of ascertaining the eligibility of members to avail e-voting facility will be Friday, August 23, 2024 ('cut-off date'). The voting rights of members shall be in proportion to their share in the paid-up equity share capital of the Company as on the cut-off date. Members are eligible to cast vote only if they are holding equity shares as on the cut-off date.
- If a person who acquires the equity shares after the sending of the Annual Report through electronic means and holds equity shares as on the cut-off date, may obtain the login ID and password for e-voting by sending a request at inward.ris@kfintech.com. However, if a member is already registered with KFin for e-voting then such member may use existing user ID and password to cast the vote.
- Members are requested to register/update their e-mail addresses with their relevant DPs.
- The Record Date for determining the entitlement of members to final dividend for the financial year ended March 31, 2024 is Friday, August 16, 2024. The dividend, subject to the approval of the members at the AGM, will be paid within 30 days from the date of approval of members at the AGM.
- As per the Income-tax Act, 1961, as amended by the Finance Act 2020, dividend paid or distributed by the Company as on or after April 01, 2020 shall be taxable in the hands of the members. The Company shall therefore be required to deduct tax at source (TDS) at the time of making payment of the said dividend. The members are requested to refer to separate e-mail communication sent by the Company in this regard.
- Procedure for joining the AGM and e-voting process have been provided in detail in the Notice and is also available on the website of the Company www.bhartihexacom.in and website of KFin at <https://evoting.kfintech.com/public/Faq.aspx>.
- In case of any query and/ or grievance pertaining to e-voting, members may refer to the Help & Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) at <https://evoting.kfintech.com/public/Faq.aspx> or contact Mr. Raj Kumar Kale (Assistant Vice President, KFin) of KFin Technologies Limited at Selenium, Tower B, Plot No - 31 & 32, Financial District, Nanakramguda, Serilingampally, Hyderabad - 500 032 at evoting@kfintech.com or call KFin's toll free No. 1800 309 4001 or may write to Company Secretary at bhartihexacom@bharti.in.

For Bharti Hexacom Limited
Sd/-

Richa Gupta Rohatgi
Company Secretary
& Compliance Officer

Place : New Delhi
Date : August 08, 2024



Jubilant Ingrevia Limited (CIN: L24299UP2019PLC122657)

Registered Office: Bhartiagram, Gajraula, District Amroha-244 223, Uttar Pradesh, India
E-mail: investors.ingrevia@jubl.com; Website: www.jubilantingrevia.com
Phone: +91-5924-267437

NOTICE OF 5TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, E-VOTING, RECORD DATE AND FINAL DIVIDEND INFORMATION

Notice is hereby given that the 5th Annual General Meeting ('AGM') of the Company is scheduled to be held on **Friday, August 30, 2024 at 03:00 p.m. (IST)** through Video Conferencing ('VC')/ Other Audio Visual Means ('OAVM'), without the physical presence of the Members at the AGM, to transact the business(es) as set out in the Notice convening the 5th AGM ('AGM Notice') in compliance with the circulars issued by MCA and SEBI ('Circulars'), from time to time. Members attending the AGM through VC/OAVM shall be reckoned for the purpose of quorum under Sec 103 of the Companies Act, 2013 ('Act').

The AGM Notice alongwith the Annual Report for the Financial Year 2023-24 has been sent through electronic mode only to those members whose e-mail address(es) are registered with the Company or Depository Participants or Registrar and Transfer Agent ('RTA'). The AGM Notice has been sent to all members via e-mail on Thursday, August 08, 2024.

The aforesaid documents are also available on the Company's website at <https://www.jubilantingrevia.com/investors/financials/annual-reports> and websites of the Stock Exchanges i.e. BSE Limited at www.bseindia.com and National Stock Exchange of India Limited at www.nseindia.com and on the website of National Securities Depository Limited ('NSDL') at www.evoting.nsdl.com.

In compliance with provisions of Sec 108 of the Act read with Rule 20 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014 (the 'Rules'), Secretarial Standards on General Meetings issued by the Institute of Company Secretaries of India and Regulation 44 of SEBI Listing Regulations, as amended, read with Circulars, the Members will be provided with the facility to cast their vote electronically, through the remote e-Voting facility (prior AGM) and e-Voting facility (at the AGM), on all the resolutions set forth in AGM Notice.

The facility of casting votes will be provided by NSDL. Facility for e-Voting at the AGM will be made available to those Members who are present in the AGM through VC/OAVM facility and have not cast their vote on the resolutions through remote e-Voting. The Members who have voted through remote e-Voting will be eligible to attend the AGM.

The Board of Directors of the Company have recommended a final dividend of ₹2.50 per equity share of ₹1 each for approval by the Members at the AGM. The Record date for the purpose of payment of final dividend is August 02, 2024. Members may note that pursuant to the Finance Act, 2020, dividend income is taxable in the hands of the members effective April 1, 2020 and the Company is required to deduct tax at source ('TDS') from dividend paid to members at the prescribed rates as per the Income-tax Act, 1961. To enable compliance with TDS requirements, members are requested to send their duly executed documents through email at ingrevia.dividend@jubl.com on or before Tuesday, August 20, 2024. Please refer AGM notice for detailed reference. To avoid delay in receiving the dividend, shareholders are requested to update their complete bank account details with their depositories (where shares are held in Demat mode) and update with Company's RTA - Alankit Assignments Limited (where shares are held in physical form) by providing signed request letter with folio no., self-attested cancelled cheque and a copy of Permanent Account No. (PAN) to receive the dividend directly into their bank account.

Members are further informed that (a) Remote e-Voting shall commence at 9:00 a.m. (IST) on Tuesday, August 27, 2024 and end at 5:00 p.m. (IST) on Thursday, August 29, 2024; (b) Remote e-Voting shall not be allowed after 5:00 p.m. (IST) on Thursday, August 29, 2024 and remote e-Voting module shall be disabled by NSDL upon expiry of the aforesaid period. Once the member casts the vote on a resolution, the member shall not be allowed to change it subsequently; (c) The Cut-off date for the purpose of e-voting has been fixed as Friday, August 23, 2024. Voting rights shall be reckoned on the paid up value of the shares registered in the name of the members of the Company as on the Cut-off date; (d) Any person who acquires shares of the Company and becomes a member of the Company after dispatch of the Notice of the AGM and holding shares as of the Cut-off date i.e. Friday, August 23, 2024, may obtain the User ID and Password by sending a request at evoting@nsdl.com or Issuer/ RTA. However, if any person is already registered with NSDL for remote e-Voting, he/she can use his existing User ID and Password for casting his/her vote. If a person has forgotten his Password, he can reset his Password by using "Forgot User Details/Password" or "Physical User Reset Password" option available on www.evoting.nsdl.com or contact NSDL on Toll free no.: 022 - 4886 7000; (e) The e-voting facility will also be made available during the AGM to enable the members who have not exercised their vote through remote e-voting, to cast their voting rights; (f) members who have cast their vote by remote e-voting prior to the AGM may also attend and participate in the AGM through VC/ OAVM means, but shall not be entitled to cast their e-vote again.

Process for registration of E-mail IDs is given below for those shareholders whose E-mail IDs are not registered and/or other KYC details:

a) With effect from April 1, 2024, the shareholders who are holding shares in physical mode and have not registered or updated their e-mail IDs and/or other KYC details will be eligible for dividend only upon completion of KYC with RTA. To update KYC including the e-mail IDs, the shareholders are requested to provide Folio No., Name of shareholder, scanned copy of the share certificate (front and back), self-attested scanned copy of PAN card, self-attested scanned copy of Aadhaar Card by email to investors.ingrevia@jubl.com or rt@alankit.com. The shareholders are requested to submit requisite request forms alongwith the supporting documents to the Company's RTA i.e. Alankit Assignments Limited, either at its office located at 205-208, Anarkali Complex, Jhandewalan Extension, New Delhi-110055, India or by email at rt@alankit.com. The format of various request forms are available on the website of the Company at <https://www.jubilantingrevia.com/investors/investor-information/updates-of-kyc-details>.

b) In case shares are held in demat mode, please provide DPID - Client ID, Name, client master or copy of Consolidated Account statement, self-attested scanned copy of PAN card and self-attested scanned copy of Aadhaar Card to investors.ingrevia@jubl.com or rt@alankit.com.

For e-Voting instructions, members are requested to go through the instructions given in the Notice of the AGM. In case of any queries/grievances connected with electronic voting, members may refer the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Shareholders and e-Voting user manual for Shareholders available at the Downloads section of www.evoting.nsdl.com or contact Ms. Pallavi Mhatre, Senior Manager, National Securities Depository Limited, Trade World, 'A' Wing, 4th Floor, Kamala Mills Compound, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai - 400013, at the designated email address: evoting@nsdl.com or pallavid@nsdl.com or on Toll Free No.: 022 - 4886 7000 or Mr. J.K. Singla, Deputy General Manager, M/s. Alankit Assignments Limited, 205-208, Anarkali Complex, Jhandewalan Extension, New Delhi-110055, India through email at rt@alankit.com or on Telephone No.: 011-42541234.

The results of voting on the resolutions set out in the Notice of the AGM shall be declared within two (2) working days of conclusion of the AGM. The results declared alongwith the report of the Scrutinizer shall be placed on the website of the Company www.jubilantingrevia.com and on the website of NSDL immediately after the declaration of result by the Chairman or a person authorised by him and the results shall also be communicated to the Stock Exchanges.

For Jubilant Ingrevia Limited
Sd/-
Deepanjali Gulati
(Company Secretary)

Date: August 08, 2024
Place: Noida

The business world's favorite laptop has barely changed in 30 years

Lenovo's ThinkPad laptop has been dominating the enterprise market for years. The secret? Staying the same.

Isabelle Bousquette
feedback@livemint.com

Lenovo's widely used ThinkPad laptop hasn't changed much over the years. Corporate technology leaders say that's why they love it.

"There's a lot to be said for familiarity and that consistent experience," said Ace Hardware Chief Information Officer Rick Williams, whose company uses about 4,000 ThinkPads.

The ThinkPad brand of personal computers, originally created by International Business Machines, hit the market in 1992 before Lenovo acquired it, along with IBM's PC division, in 2005. Since then, the boxy design—originally inspired by the Japanese bento box—has gotten thinner and lighter, but not much else has changed from a design perspective, Lenovo said.

The logo is the same, although in 2005 Lenovo did add the red dot over the "i" in "Think" that remains today. That logo has remained angled at 37 degrees on the device. And on the keyboard the small, red, old-timey trackpoint remains nestled between the "B," "G" and "H" keys (which Lenovo says some users swear by and some CIOs say they never use). Ports and camera placement have also been relatively consistent. And despite some experimentation with colors, the laptop itself primarily remains its

original black.

"You're going to recognize the iconic ThinkPad," said Tom Butler, executive director for worldwide commercial portfolio and product management at Hong Kong-based Lenovo.

Its strategy might seem counterintuitive in an industry where winners and losers are often determined based on their pace of innovation, and where to stay the same often means to become obsolete. Big consumer tech companies that dominated the early 2000s, like BlackBerry, Nokia and Motorola, ultimately couldn't keep pace with competitors and struggled.

But for Lenovo, which plays in the enterprise space, it's paying off. Lenovo has been leading in market share in the worldwide

personal computer vendor market, based on unit shipments, on and off for more than 10 years, according to research firm Gartner. Its leading market share for this year's second quarter was 24.4%, trailed by HP with 22.6% and Dell with 16.7%, based on preliminary findings.

A Dell representative said that many rivals have high unit share in the lower-price bands of the market and in emerging regions, but Dell continues to focus on high-value segments. HP didn't respond to a request for comment.

An IBM brand from the 1910s
Early on, Lenovo banked on the cachet of IBM's "Think" slogan, which was introduced by former



Lenovo has been leading in market share in the worldwide personal computer vendor market, based on unit shipments, on and off for more than 10 years.

IBM CEO Thomas J. Watson in the 1910s and became synonymous with trusted products, said Rob Enderle, president and principal analyst of the Enderle Group. "No one ever gets tired of buying IBM," was a common refrain through the 2000s.

Even as other hot technology brands of the early 2000s lost cachet, the ThinkPad brand retained it, thanks to a loyal user base that rose up the ranks of com-

panies and ultimately landed in C-suite decision-maker roles, Enderle said.

But unlike consumer-focused tech companies, which gain followings through captivating innovations, the ThinkPad's cachet is in large part thanks to the consistency of its design, which resonates with large, change-resistant legacy companies that simply want an offering that's familiar and dependable, said Enderle. For cor-

porate tech leaders, too much change in a go-to product like a PC simply equals cost and aggravation, he said.

Enderle said that HP, Dell and others have played around with curvier designs and different keyboard types, and have been more aggressive about updating ports.

Reliable and resilient
"It operates without most of our users having to think about it," said Ace Hardware's Williams, who

added that the company has been using Lenovo as its primary PC vendor for nearly two decades. "It's reliable. People assign a lot of weight to having technology that's reliable."

Lenovo's ThinkPad is known for its resiliency. Butler said the company regularly puts the laptop through "torture tests" that includes falls and extreme temperatures.

"The Lenovo devices physically just are not sexy. They look a little bit dated compared to what Dell and HP have to offer these days," said John Wei, CTO of technology provider Integreon. "But IT guys—we like Lenovo." He added: "People put coffee over it. It doesn't die. People drop it when they travel. It doesn't die."

Some CIOs also say the timeless design helps reduce conflict among workers with older or newer devices.

"Because they don't radically change designs, people that might have a laptop model from two to three years ago—they're not feeling like they're left in the dust," said David Vidoni, CIO of software company Pegasystems.

Another factor propelling Lenovo is that it has more of a global footprint than its competitors, meaning companies with global operations can find consistent device support around the world, said Enderle.

Lenovo reported \$57 billion in revenue in its fiscal year ended in March, and has about 70,000 employees worldwide. Its primary remit is in devices and personal computers, but it also has a growing software arm.

Modest changes
The laptop you find at Best Buy today isn't exactly the same as the one IBM brought to market in 1992. Lenovo has quietly made small improvements over the years, focusing on the types of changes that won't be disruptive to the user.

Butler said, for example, today's generation of laptops has slightly raised marks on more areas of the keyboard for the visually impaired. Butler said he sometimes challenges users to see if they even notice the tweaks.

And of course, the processing capabilities of the computers have grown significantly, culminating in the AI PCs that hit the market this year that can run artificial intelligence algorithms directly on the device. CIOs remain mixed on when and how they plan to use these.

As far as future improvements, Butler said he has his ear to the ground and is constantly speaking with CIOs to understand what they want to get out of the device. But, he added, it's important to remember: "One thing that the enterprise wants is predictable and consistent."

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NASA says Starliner astronauts could return with SpaceX—next year

Micah Maidenberg
feedback@livemint.com

The astronauts who flew to orbit on Boeing's Starliner spacecraft could remain at the International Space Station until 2025, before hitching a ride home with Elon Musk.

NASA officials and Boeing have been debating whether Starliner is safe enough to return the astronauts to Earth. While Boeing has vouched for the craft, NASA officials Wednesday said that they are working on backup plans that depend on SpaceX.

The possibility that NASA would call on Musk's space company to close out a mission Boeing has been working on for years increased in recent weeks.

NASA managers are considering having SpaceX launch one of its crew vehicles to the International Space Station in September with two open seats, leaders from the agency said.

That would leave room for Barry Wilmore and Sunita Williams, the astronauts Boeing flew to the ISS about two months ago, to potentially return with SpaceX—meaning they would remain on the station until SpaceX's vehicle departs early next year.

"We don't just have to bring a crew back on Starliner," Ken Bowersox, a top space operations administrator at NASA, said at a briefing.

Bowersox, a former astronaut, said Starliner's chances of returning without the astronauts had increased over the past couple of weeks. Results from some recent tests raised concerns at NASA, officials said.

NASA is looking to make a call about next steps by the middle of this month, and no final decisions about whether to go with Boeing or SpaceX have been made. SpaceX didn't respond to a request for comment.

Boeing said Wednesday that it still believed in Starliner. "If NASA decides to change the mission, we will take the



Nasa astronauts Butch Wilmore (right) and Sunita Williams have been aboard the space station since 6 June.

actions necessary to configure Starliner for an uncrewed return," the company said.

Wilmore and Williams have been aboard the space station since June 6, when they became the first astronauts to fly in Boeing's Starliner vehicle.

The temporary failure of several thrusters and discovery of helium leaks in the ship's propulsion system turned the planned weeklong visit to the ISS into an extended stay.

Tensions between Boeing and some NASA leaders surfaced last week when officials couldn't agree on using Starliner, and a detailed review of Starliner's readiness for the flight back was postponed, according to people familiar with the situation.

"The real disagreements are how much uncertainty they view in the data" and potential risks tied to Starliner, Steve Stich, a NASA manager, said at the briefing.

Backup plans
NASA has been buying time as it deals with internal dissent over Starliner. The agency on Tuesday pushed back a planned SpaceX launch of a new ISS astronaut crew, delaying it from mid-August to Sept. 24, allowing more time to finalize return plans for Wilmore and Williams.

Should NASA ask SpaceX to fly Wilmore and Williams back to Earth, both would stay on the ISS until February 2025, when SpaceX's vehicle is scheduled to make its return trip with four

crew members on board. NASA astronauts typically spend about six months on the facility before rotating off.

Starliner's inaugural flight has led to a summer of scrutiny on a craft that Boeing has been developing for years. NASA wants both Boeing and SpaceX vehicles available to ferry crew to the space station, which officials have said would help ensure continuous access.

The mission originally was planned to last eight days. It has dragged out as NASA and Boeing officials assess problems with the thrusters and leaks, and what kinds of risks they might pose.

The thrusters are needed to position Starliner in space after it undocks, to prepare for deorbiting. Helium is needed to provide pressure in the propulsion system, including for a different set of thrusters Starliner needs for its return trip.

Boeing believes that Starliner is ready to fly. The company issued a statement Friday describing the in-orbit and on-the-ground testing that it and NASA have conducted.

Data from the testing supported "flight rationale"—NASA's term for a space operation that is safe enough to pursue—for using the vehicle to return Wilmore and Williams, Boeing said.

A long road to orbit
Starliner is among the problems being inherited by Rob-

ert "Kelly" Ortberg, the aerospace giant's incoming chief executive, who starts his new job on Thursday. Should NASA provide a final certification to Starliner, which Boeing is trying to secure with the current flight, the company is under contract to conduct another half-dozen flights with the vehicle.

NASA turning to SpaceX to complete the mission would be a tough outcome for Boeing, which has deep ties to NASA that date to the Apollo moon landings.

Since starting development of Starliner more than a decade ago, Boeing has struggled with costly technical hurdles that put the spacecraft behind schedule and behind SpaceX. Musk's space company has been NASA's sole U.S.-based option for launching crewed missions to low-Earth orbit. SpaceX successfully completed its first crewed flight to the space station more than four years ago.

Wilmore and Williams have been following NASA and Boeing's work on the challenges with Starliner, conducting scientific research and servicing equipment during their unexpected longer stay on ISS. Wilmore recently worked on assembling a centrifuge that will support future experiments, while Williams participated in a study looking into making optical fibers in microgravity.

The space station has plenty of food and supplies, officials have said. On operational missions, astronauts stay at the station for about six months.

The astronauts, both experienced former military pilots who have traveled to the space station before, last month expressed confidence in Starliner.

"Failure is not an option. That's why we are staying here," Wilmore told reporters during a July press conference from the ISS. "We're going to get the data that we need."

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Amazon's \$4 bn investment in AI startup Anthropic comes under U.K. scrutiny

Mauro Orru
feedback@livemint.com

U.K. antitrust officials are probing whether Amazon.com's multi-billion-dollar investment in artificial-intelligence company Anthropic poses a threat to competition, the latest foray by European regulators into ties between U.S. tech giants and AI startups.

Amazon had poured about \$4 billion into Anthropic by the end of March, gaining a minority ownership position in the startup as it jockeyed for position in the AI arms race with the likes of Alphabet's Google, Microsoft and ChatGPT maker OpenAI. Google last year agreed to invest up to \$2 billion in Anthropic.

For Amazon, the funding marked its largest investment in another company since the e-commerce giant was founded three decades ago. Big Tech firms have been splurging on AI startups for years to get their hands on what they see as promising AI features that they hope to cash in on further down the line. However, those investments are increasingly the focus of regulators on both sides of the Atlantic.

The U.K.'s Competition and



The funding marks Amazon's largest investment in a company since its inception three decades ago.

Markets Authority said it was seeking to establish whether Amazon's ties with Anthropic should be considered a de facto merger that might stifle competition in the U.K. An initial decision is due by Oct. 4.

An Amazon spokesperson said the company's ties to Anthropic didn't raise any competition concerns or meet the CMA's own threshold for a review. Amazon doesn't hold a board seat or decision-making powers at the startup, meaning Anthropic is free to work with any other partner of its choosing, the spokesperson said.

"Building models is expen-

sive, and companies like Anthropic need access to a substantial amount of capital to train these models," the Amazon spokesperson said. "By investing in Anthropic, Amazon, along with other companies, is helping Anthropic

expand choice and competition in this important technology."

A spokesperson for Anthropic said the startup remained an independent company since Amazon doesn't have a seat on Anthropic's board or any board observer rights. "Our strategic partnerships and investor relationships do not

diminish our corporate governance independence or our freedom to partner with others," the Anthropic spokesperson said.

The U.K. probe comes weeks after British officials launched a separate inquiry into Microsoft's ties with and hiring of former employees from Inflection AI, underscoring growing pressure that tech giants face to justify their arrangements with AI startups.

British antitrust officials are also looking into whether Microsoft's partnership with OpenAI should be considered a de facto merger. Closer scrutiny has already forced Microsoft to loosen the strings on some arrangements. Last month, the group relinquished its seat as an observer on OpenAI's board after Microsoft realized its position had unsettled some antitrust officials.

In the U.S., the Federal Trade Commission launched an inquiry into generative AI partnerships earlier this year, ordering companies to provide information regarding recent investments into startups.

News Corp, owner of Dow Jones Newswires and the Journal, has a content-licensing partnership with OpenAI.

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Yunus in emotional Bangladesh return

Reuters
feedback@livemint.com
DHAKA

Nobel Peace laureate Muhammad Yunus made an emotional return home to Bangladesh on Thursday to lead a new interim government after weeks of student protests forced Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to resign and flee to neighbouring India.

A harsh critic of Hasina, Yunus, 84, arrived in Dhaka following medical treatment in Paris after protesters backed him for the role in a caretaker government tasked with holding elections for a new leader.

"The country has the possibility of becoming a very beautiful nation," Yunus told reporters at the airport, where he was greeted by senior military officers and student leaders.

The student protesters had saved the country, he said, adding: "Whatever path our students show us, we will move ahead with that."

Yunus became emotional, choked and seemed to hold his tears back as he referred to a student he said had been shot during the protests and that

sacrifice could not be forgotten.

"Now again we have to rise up. To the government officials here and defence chiefs—we are a family, we should move ahead together," he said.

The economist, known as the "banker to the poor", received the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for founding a bank that pioneered the fight against poverty through small loans to needy borrowers.

Yunus was set to be sworn in as chief of a team of advisers at

1430 GMT at the official residence of President Mohammed Shahabuddin.

Nahid Islam and Asif Mahmud, two student leaders who are both in their mid-20s and led the protests, will join the caretaker government, local media reported.

Hasina's Awami League party does not figure in the interim government after she resigned on Monday following weeks of violence that killed about 300 people and injured thousands.

Hasina is sheltering in the New Delhi area, a development that Yunus said caused anger at India among some Bangladeshis.



NEWS NUMBERS

₹109 cr

THE NET profit reported by Indiawin Sports, which runs Mumbai Indians, in FY24, against a loss of ₹49.5 cr in FY23. Revenues more than doubled to ₹737 cr

99,000

THE AVERAGE number of abortions per month in US in the first quarter of 2024, compared to 82,270 in Q2 2022, before its Supreme Court struck down Roe vs Wade

₹2,750 cr

THE AMOUNT Hinduja-owned IndusInd International Holdings has to deposit in a special escrow account as part of Reliance Capital's resolution plan, as per NCLT

474

THE NUMBER of CXOs hired by Indian businesses in the first six months of 2024, up 15% year-on-year, amid demand for senior sales and marketing leaders

7

THE NUMBER of Zika Virus cases recorded in Pune on Wednesday following the flooding caused by heavy rains, taking the overall tally to 73

HOWINDIALIVES.COM

'Sebi's derivatives rules to hit volumes'

Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) proposals to tighten regulation on the equity index derivatives segment could have a "very significant impact" on exchange volumes if they are implemented in totality, said Ashishkumar Chauhan, chief executive officer (CEO) of India's largest stock exchange National Stock Exchange.

"It's a very important question for the future of at least the profitability of market infrastructure institutions, specifically stock exchanges," Chauhan said, during a concall on Thursday, after its June quarter earnings.

"Sebi's purpose of this consultative paper seems to be to bring down the volumes and if the proposals as given in the consultative paper are implemented in their totality there will be a very significant impact on the exchange volumes across India," he said in response to a query on how Sebi's proposals could impact volumes.

RAM SAHGAL



The demand for IT talent is growing after a slow period late last year and early this year. BLOOMBERG

'IT hiring to expand 8.5% by next year'

With IT companies gradually coming out of the slump and actively ramping up their hiring efforts, a report on Thursday said that recruitment is set to surge with an estimated 8.5% increase in job roles within the industry by next year.

The demand for skilled IT talent is growing after a slow period late last year and early this year.

Hiring is set to surge, with an estimated 8.5% increase in job roles within the industry by next year, according to a report by Indeed, a global job matching and hiring platform and a subsidiary of Recruit Holdings. This data from Indeed has been compiled from Indeed Hiring Tracker and Indeed's platform data.

Indeed Hiring Tracker is a quarterly report that explores the employment landscape and job market. The report revealed that almost 70% of all tech jobs currently on the Indeed platform are for software roles.

The thriving tech startup ecosystem also plays a significant role, as new ventures prioritize hiring developers to build and scale their products, it said.

PTI

HOCKEY HIGH



India's goalkeeper Parattu Reveendran Sreejesh, in yellow jersey, sits on the goal cross-bars as India's players celebrate after winning the men's bronze medal field hockey match against Spain at the Yves-du-Manoir Stadium during the 2024 Summer Olympics in Colombes, France, on Thursday. PTI

Radico targets 20% revenue growth

Rampur whisky-maker Radico Khaitan is expecting a 20% revenue growth this fiscal year, an executive said on Thursday, as India's growing middle class splurges on expensive liquor. Several consumer labels including Reliance, Tata Group and Arvind Fashions, which sells Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfger, are targeting the booming Indian middle-class that is increasingly spending on higher-quality branded products.

Radico Khaitan reported 14.3% sales volume growth for the June quarter on Wednesday in its high-end category, which makes up roughly half its revenue. Its Rampur brand sells bottles for as high as ₹500,000 in India where the per capita income is about \$2,485.

In the reported quarter, the company launched three new products, starting at ₹4,000 and going beyond ₹10,000, under its Rampur, Sangam and Jaisalmer brands. REUTERS



Prices of rubber, a key raw material for tyre makers, rose more than 10% in the April-June quarter. MINT

MRF Q1 profit falls 3.1% to ₹563 crore

Indian tyre maker MRF reported first-quarter profit above analysts' estimates on Thursday, as stronger volume growth outweighed a rise in rubber prices.

Profit fell 3.1% to ₹563 crore in the April-June period, but was above analysts' expectation of ₹425 crore, according to LSEG data.

Revenue rose about 12% to ₹7,078 crore. Prices of rubber, a key raw material for tyre makers, rose more than 10% in the April-June quarter, according to analysts.

A healthy demand in the tyre replacement market ahead of the monsoon season was expected to soften the blow of higher rubber prices for tyre makers, analysts said.

Rival Ceat also beat first-quarter profit estimates, helped by price hikes coupled with healthy demand in the replacement market. REUTERS

LIC Q1 profit rises 10% to ₹10,461 crore

Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) on Thursday reported a 10% rise in its net profit to ₹10,461 crore in the June 2024 quarter.

The state-owned life insurance behemoth had a net profit of ₹9,544 crore in the year-ago period.

The total income increased to ₹210,910 crore during the latest June quarter as against ₹188,749 crore in the year-ago period, LIC said in a regulatory filing.

The managing director and chief executive Siddhartha Mohanty said the Assets Under Management increased to ₹53,58,781 crore as on 30 June as compared to ₹46,11,067 crore at the end of same quarter previous year, registering an increase of 16.22%.

The total premium income for the quarter increased by 16% to ₹13,770 crore as compared to ₹98,363 crore in the same quarter a year ago. PTI

Arbitration Act needs 'more insight', says attorney general

The out-of-court dispute resolution laws are vital in increasing ease of doing business

Manas Pimpalkhare
manas.pimpalkhare@hindustantimes.com
NEW DELHI

The Arbitration and Conciliation Act, one of the country's key out-of-court dispute resolution laws, needs "more insight", attorney general R. Venkataramani said on Thursday, indicating possible amendments in the near future.

When asked on the sidelines of an event organized by the Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS International), about whether the Arbitration Act, which has been amended by the Union government at least thrice till date, needs an overhaul, Venkataramani said, "I will not call it an overhaul, but it needs an insight."

India's out-of-court dispute resolution laws, including the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, the Mediation Act and Commercial Courts Act, among others, are instrumental in increasing ease of doing

business by reducing pendency of lawsuits.

The attorney general's statement follows a controversial finance ministry advisory asking central, state governments and public sector enterprises to avoid arbitration if the disputed amount was over ₹10 crore. The 3 July advisory asked government litigants to try mediation instead, due to the high costs and long disposal times in arbitration.

Currently, pendency of lawsuits is a major issue in Indian courts, thus creating a conducive atmosphere for alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms like arbitration and mediation to become a panacea.

"There are over 50 million pending cases in Indian courts, and the government is a litigant in 70% of these cases," said Lalit Bhasin, president,

Society of Indian Law Firms on Thursday. Bhasin's statements are in consonance with data from the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG), a government website indicating the pendency of lawsuits in various courts in the country.

The union government kicked off a new national litigation policy earlier this year to assess the status of pending lawsuits where the central government was a party, and create a road map to reduce costs.

The attorney general's views align with the law minister's vision to make India an arbitration hub. Parties who want to resolve disputes using arbitration and mediation prefer going to London and Singapore, law minister Arjun Ram Meghwal had explained in his inaugural address after taking office in June this year.

The statement follows a government advisory asking state governments and PSEs to avoid arbitration if disputed amount was over ₹10 crore

Former West Bengal CM Bhattacharjee passes away at 80

Former West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, known for his efforts to bring industry to the state, died on Thursday at his Kolkata home following old age-related ailments.

The former chief minister was 80 and is survived by his wife Mira and daughter Suchetana who underwent gender change surgery.

The veteran CPI(M) leader who had pledged his body for medical research, will be taken to a hospital after people pay their last respects to him on Friday, the party's state secretary Mohd Salim said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the death of Bhattacharjee. "He was a political stalwart who served the state with commitment. My heartfelt condolences to his family and supporters. Om Shanti," Modi said on X.

Bhattacharjee died at 8:30am in his two-room apartment where he kept himself confined, rarely making public appearances, after losing the 2011 assembly elections that also brought an end to the 34-year-long Left Front government in the state. PTI



Late former CM Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee is known for his efforts to bring industry to West Bengal. PTI

FirstCry IPO raises \$3.36 billion in bids

FirstCry's \$501 million IPO overcame a sluggish start to garner bids worth \$3.36 billion at close of the share sale on Thursday, as investors bet on growth for baby and child products in India.

FirstCry, backed by Japan's SoftBank, TPG and India's Mahindra & Mahindra, received bids for 606.4 million shares, about 12 times the shares on offer, exchange data showed.

The issue was under-subscribed till noon on Thursday. FirstCry, which sells baby products including clothes, diapers and toys, is the first pure-play baby products and childcare retailer to go public in India. REUTERS

Chaos at technology firm Brane with link to Ramalinga Raju

FROM PAGE 1

"We were told there would be no layoffs and then they went for mass layoff and removed us from the systems," said an employee recently laid off, requesting anonymity.

Adetya Agarwal, chief executive of Brane Enterprises, confirmed the layoffs and salary delays.

"Due to significant delays in certain customer realizations coupled with the delays in incoming investments, Brane had deferred certain salary payments over the last two months," Agarwal said in an emailed response.

"As a conscious decision to prevent widespread disruption and ensure the financial well-

being of all the employees, Brane had no choice but to make the difficult decision of closing down certain new initiatives. Consequently, garden leave was provided to employees involved in those initiatives, allowing them to seek suitable opportunities elsewhere," Agarwal added.

"While Brane is taking all steps to clear their dues this month as already communicated to them over email, Brane has already cleared all dues pertaining to their income taxes and provided computation statements to them to file their tax returns in July 2024."

Ramalinga Raju did not respond to queries sent to his official email address and on WhatsApp. Agarwal did not

comment on Ramalinga Raju's association with the company despite multiple follow-ups over email.

Brane Enterprises was incorporated seven years ago as Fractal Enterprises. According to the company, it had more than 3,000 employees globally before the recent layoffs.

Data sourced from research platform ToFlers show the company's revenue surged to ₹15 crore in 2022-23 from ₹1.2 crore in the previous year, while its loss doubled to ₹60 crore from ₹30 crore.

Ramalinga Raju's association with Brane Enterprises is intriguing. While he is not overtly identified with the company, internal documents reveal he was associated with it



Adetya Agarwal, chief executive, Brane Enterprises.

as a "mentor". According to half a dozen employees *Mint* spoke with, Raju is referred to as "mentor" within the company. "It's eerie but he was always treated as someone who should not be named and all employ-

ees went along with it," said another employee who was also laid off.

"On behalf of the investors, Mr Ramalinga Raju is mentoring the organization for the launch of NSL runtime," states an internal company policy document that *Mint* has reviewed.

NSL Runtime, according to the document, is a product owned by Brane Cognitives Pte Ltd, Singapore, a subsidiary of Brane Enterprises Pvt. Ltd, India.

"The inventor [of NSL Runtime], Mr Ramalinga Raju, is the mentor for the organization and its leaders and shall guide the process of building Brane," states the document. "Managing Partners Adetya Agarwal

and Bhavani Shankar, under the guidance of Mentor, form the Operations Task Force."

Ramalinga Raju's email address associated with Brane Enterprises does not include his name but has the term "mentor".

The Satyam Computer founder would be in the office once a month or a quarter for "mentoring sessions" that were mandatory for all employees to attend, according to the two employees quoted earlier.

Company filings sourced from the ministry of corporate affairs mention Ramalinga Raju as the father of Brane Enterprises's significant beneficial owner, Byrraju Rama Raju. The document also mentions Deepthi Byrraju and

Rahul Raju Byrraju, Ramalinga Raju's family members, as shareholders.

The company's website does not mention any of these individuals.

The Satyam Computer Services scandal of 2009, also known as India's Enron, remains one of the largest corporate frauds in India. Founder B. Ramalinga Raju, until then an iconic figure in India's tech industry, stepped down as chairman confessing to manipulating the Hyderabad-based company's finances over several years.

The fraud involved inflating revenue and profit over several years in an accounting fraud to the tune of ₹7,136 crore, or about \$1.5 billion at the time.

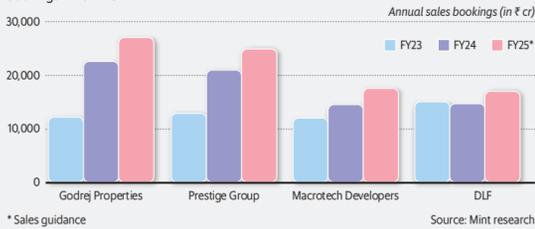
Ramalinga Raju was sentenced to prison for seven years but later granted bail. Satyam Computer was eventually acquired in a government-orchestrated auction by Tech Mahindra Ltd.

In December, the Securities and Exchange Board of India ordered Ramalinga Raju and four other former executives of Satyam Computer to pay ₹1,747.5 crore, which included ₹624 crore of unlawful gains and ₹1,123 crore of interest accrued on it for about 15 years.

Manendra Singh, partner at Economic Laws Practice, indicated that given Ramalinga Raju's implication in the Satyam scam, it was prudent to not have him directly associated with Brane Enterprises.


SALES SCORE

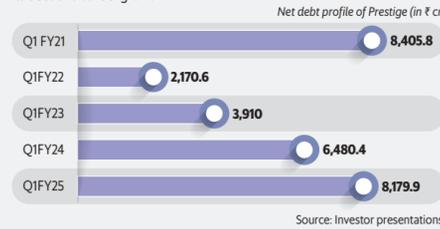
In the elite club of listed developers, Godrej Properties is expected to top residential sales bookings in 2024-25.


MIXED BAG

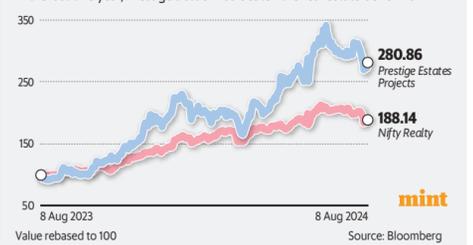
Prestige's profit jumped 53% in 2023-24 even as revenue shrunk.


WHAT IS OWED

Prestige is planning a ₹5,000 crore qualified institutional placement to retire its debt and to fuel growth.


HIGH RISE

In the last one year, Prestige's stock has beaten the real estate benchmark.



CAN PRESTIGE GROUP CONQUER MOUNT 25,000?

Prestige Group has set itself an ambitious sales target. But to succeed it needs to ramp up project launches

Madhurima Nandy
madhurima.n@htlive.com
BENGALURU

Irfan Razack, 70, has never been a man in a hurry. For decades, real estate developer Prestige Group's chairman and managing director was content operating in Bengaluru. Later, he slowly expanded to other parts of Karnataka, and other cities in the South, such as Kochi, Chennai and Hyderabad. Landowners in Mumbai would reach out to him but he steered well clear of the Maximum City. And he had no plans to cross the Vindhyas and go north. But all that changed when a friend, who was also a customer, told him about a project in Pali Hill, an upscale locality in Bandra, which piqued Razack's interest.

The Prestige boss flew to Mumbai with his nephew to take a look for himself. It was just a modest 300,000 sq. ft society redevelopment project, but Razack liked it—he knew the value would more than compensate for the size, given that Mumbai was India's most expensive real estate market. Even if the project backfired, there wasn't much to lose.

Thereafter, one opportunity after another opened up for Prestige in Mumbai. In May 2022, it launched three projects in the city and today, Mumbai accounts for 15% of its sales (as of 2023-24). That share is set to become bigger this year with more launches on the anvil.

It may have taken him a while to get there but Razack has made a mark on India's most competitive real estate market, home to industry giants such as Godrej Properties, Macrotech Developers (Lodha group), Hiranandani Group, and a slew of smaller outfits jostling for a piece of the lucrative pie.

Now, after testing the waters with a mixed-use project, the Prestige boss is looking to conquer the Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR) with a set of housing projects. There Prestige will take on the might of DLF, India's biggest developer by market capitalization, on its home turf. It's not an arena for the faint-hearted; rather, it is a region where real estate developers are viewed with a high level of distrust after stalled projects left thousands of homebuyers in the lurch over the last decade. It is a market that has laid many aspirants low, such as the Jaypee Group and the erstwhile Amrapali Developers, and one that is synonymous with the demolition of Supertech's twin towers in Noida. Heading north isn't the only thing on the agenda for Razack. Prestige Group has set itself an ambitious sales target of ₹25,000 crore for this fiscal year. It will launch a ₹5,000 crore qualified institutional placement (QIP). The group is rebuilding its office and shopping mall portfolio. And it will aim to monetize its hospitality assets, possibly through a public listing.

While achieving all of these goals may look like a tall order, the company has shown in the past that it can meet its targets. But is Prestige ready for this great leap forward?

ON STEROIDS

Prestige Group is part of an elite club of four publicly listed developers, with DLF, Godrej Properties and Macrotech. After clocking around ₹73,000 crore of residential sales bookings in 2023-24, a milestone for India's real estate sector, the four companies are collectively targeting ₹88,000 crore of sales this year, with Prestige and Godrej together aiming for more than ₹50,000 crore of that figure.

The developers have good reason for this bullishness. After bouncing back during the covid pandemic, the housing market has shown no signs of fatigue. Indeed, in an 7 August note, rating agency Ica said that residential real estate players will continue to enjoy their dream run. Razack concurs. "Today, as soon as you launch a project, it gets sold. The appetite of homebuyers has continued. So, we just need to bring the projects to the market," he said,



Irfan Razack, chairman and managing director, Prestige Group. While it went public in 2010, the company is still very much a family-owned business.

in an interview with *Mint*. In Bengaluru, for instance, the developer has just around ₹400 crore of unsold inventory.

While they have set themselves ambitious targets, Prestige and its rivals did not have a first quarter to write home about because of the general election. The company's sales bookings in the April-June quarter dropped to ₹3,030 crore from ₹3,914.7 crore in the first quarter last fiscal year due to delays in project approvals, which impacted launches. In order to scale Mt 25,000, it will need to increase the pace of its launches. During the first quarter, Prestige launched only a residential project and a plotted project in Bengaluru.

Over the course of the year, the developer plans to launch 28 residential projects, covering 73 million sq. ft, across Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Delhi-NCR, Chennai and Goa. "We need to make sure we get the approvals for the new projects. Fortunately, we have a good launch pipeline. Once we launch, we are confident of selling," said Razack. Indeed, notwithstanding the sluggish first quarter, home sales in India's top seven cities are expected to witness double digit growth in 2024-25, said the Ica note.

BESPOKE APPROACH

Razack credits the company's success in the housing market to its innovative product and pricing strategy. At a time when most developers are focused on high-end projects, Prestige has taken a tailored approach to buyers' needs, understanding what an individual can afford and pricing property accordingly.

For instance, the company's 'Prestige City' project in Hyderabad has a mix of one- and two-bedroom homes, small and large-format 3BHKs, and some 4 BHKs.

"Post-covid, everyone said people want bigger homes, and started making larger-sized apartments. At the Hyderabad airport, I see advertisements for projects with 7,000 sq. ft homes. That may create stress—how many people can buy a 7,000 sq. ft home?," Razack wondered.

Anuj Puri, chairman of property advisory Anarock Group, said the company's ability to deliver on its promise has instilled confidence among customers. "If we look at Prestige's projects, the quality of facilities, infrastructure, compliance, timely delivery—all these have played a role in their continued growth. What they show on the project brochure is what they deliver," he said.

While the residential segment remains the company's biggest revenue earner today, each business vertical has been performing well. Prestige's diversification strategy has also reduced its dependence on the Bengaluru market, but it could take time to yield results in the new markets it has entered because of stiff competition.

CRACKING NCR HOUSING

The Delhi-NCR property market is not entirely new for the Prestige Group. It is currently developing a mixed-use project at Delhi's Aerocity. The project will have two hotels under the 'St Regis' and 'Marriott Marquis' brands, 225,000 sq. ft of convention space, and 600,000 sq. ft of office space.

Prestige now wants to make it big as a residential developer in the market, which has bounced back since the pandemic ebbed. DLF dominates the Gurugram housing market in the premium and luxury segments, while Godrej Properties, which has launched a few projects in Gurugram, has a strong presence in Noida and Greater Noida.

Prestige has three upcoming launches: a niche, luxury project in Delhi's KG Marg, a housing project in Noida, and a 62.5-acre township in Indirapuram Extension,

mint SHORT STORY
WHAT

Prestige Group has set itself an aggressive sales target for 2024-25—₹25,000 crore. However, the company's sales bookings in the June quarter dropped because of delay in approvals.

SO

In order to achieve the target, Prestige will need to increase the pace of its launches. Over the course of the year, the developer plans to launch 28 residential projects.

NOW

Funding will be critical. The developer has also waded into the NCR market where homebuyers have a trust deficit. Prestige will need to win customers over.

Ghaziabad. While the Ghaziabad property has a projected gross development value of over ₹10,000 crore, the one on KG Marg could attract a price tag of ₹100,000 per sq. ft, as per broker estimates.

"We want to launch these projects first and get a feel of the market. We are fairly confident the projects will do well," Razack told *Mint*. Beyond that, as is his wont, Razack is proceeding slowly. "Whenever I am looking at land in Gurugram, I tell people I have no compulsion to do a deal. I will only do it when it makes sense to me.

So, we are conservative when we tie up properties. We will do a mix of outright buying and joint developments," he said.

But given the major trust deficit among NCR homebuyers towards builders in the wake of past failures, Prestige will need to win customers over when it launches projects. Razack knows a thing or two about how to do that. When Prestige launched in Mumbai, it had flown a large number of brokers down to Bengaluru to show them the company's projects. For a stuck project it had taken over in suburban Mulund, the company held a full-day session with customers to gain their trust.

"The speed and quality of construction, the way they harnessed brokers and generated sales, and positioned themselves in a new market, are commendable," said Anarock's Puri.

The company may rely on similar channel partner activation methods and buyer engagement in the NCR too. Prestige is also sending a few teams from Bengaluru to set up a base in the region.

ANNUITY PUSH

Among the top four developers, Prestige and DLF are the only ones with a portfolio across real estate asset classes. Prestige is now making efforts to boost its annuity portfolio, which comprises commercial office, retail and hotel assets. After selling a large chunk of its office and retail assets to global asset manager Blackstone Group in 2021 for \$1.6 billion, Prestige is rebuilding both portfolios.

The developer is building 12 new commercial office projects and has 10 malls coming up. In addition, Prestige, which has nine operational hotels and three ongoing hotel projects, plans to scale this up with 10 hotel properties across multiple cities.

In June, the company said its board has

approved a plan to monetize the assets of its hospitality subsidiary, Prestige Hospitality Ventures Ltd, by issuing shares through the primary or secondary route, or both.

FUNDING IS KEY

Funding will be critical for the top four developers as they pursue their massive growth plans. Prestige may launch a ₹5,000 crore qualified institutional placement (QIP), its largest, in August or September, said two people familiar with the plans. A QIP allows a listed company to raise capital from the domestic markets by issuing securities. It is also a barometer of investor confidence in a company's prospects.

"The funds will be used for the retirement of debt, payments for land buys, and general corporate purposes," said one of the persons cited above, who did not want to be named. "Once the QIP is done, they will move on to the monetization of the hospitality business assets, including a possible IPO (initial public offering)," said the person.

Prestige's net debt had risen to ₹8,179 crore as of 30 June, from ₹7,780 crore at the end of the preceding quarter, on account of land acquisitions, said brokerage firm HDFC Securities said. The QIP will help it shore up its balance sheet.

Parikshit Kandpal, vice president of research at HDFC Securities, said the Prestige QIP would be one of the largest in recent times. "They want to buy land and grow further. In the current scenario, whoever raises money will gain market share in land buying, which will give them an edge in sales," he said.

Despite Prestige's debt inching up, with a number of projects getting launched during the second half of 2024-25, collection and surplus cash flows will aid in its reduc-



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EPFO alert! How to navigate rejections, deal with delays

Employees grapple with a lack of clarity, cumbersome processes and administrative errors

Aprajita Sharma
aprajita.sharma@livemint.com

Mumbai resident Deepa Desai's attempt to transfer her provident fund (PF) turned into a nearly three-year ordeal, highlighting the bureaucratic challenges faced by employees navigating India's retirement fund system.

From incorrect pension enrolments to delays in withdrawals, Desai's experience sheds light on complexities and frustrations of managing PF accounts. Despite following procedures, she was left battling a maze of errors, rejections, and costly delays—all while her hard-earned savings remained out of reach.

And, this is not an isolated incident. Many employees grapple with similar issues, as a lack of clarity and transparency, cumbersome processes, and administrative errors complicate what should be straightforward transactions.

Desai's story began when her first employer mistakenly enrolled her in the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS), despite her being ineligible. This error set off a chain of events that made her attempts to transfer or withdraw the PF a nightmare when she switched jobs.

Desai first tried to withdraw the PF amount when she joined her second job, but her application was rejected. It was then that she realised the error.

After working for four months with her second employer, Desai switched to freelancing as an independent financial consultant with an insurance company. But unfortunately, the firm she was freelancing with, enrolled her as a full-time employee. She discovered it only when she approached the EPFO again to withdraw her PF from her first employer. Though she was allowed by the EPFO to withdraw her PF from the second organization, her PF from the first employer was still stuck.

She was told that she could transfer her PF to the third employer but can't withdraw the amount till the EPS issue was resolved. "I was appalled. First, I got the EPS balance transferred to my PF account. The EPFO required an undertaking that I would forego interest on EPS contributions when the transfer happens. Once the EPS issue was settled, the funds were transferred to the so-called third employer's PF account."

But her troubles did not end there. The EPFO did not allow her to withdraw funds from the third organization as the employer had not made any contributions to the new PF account. "How could there be any contributions when I wasn't drawing a salary? I pestered the third employer to send a letter to EPFO about the mistake. Despite sending it multiple times, the EPFO kept rejecting my withdrawal requests. Lakhs of money was involved, and I was losing interest on it. In the end, I paid an agent to get it done. It took me 2.5 years."

Experts said the system's rigid structure also leaves workers in a frustrating limbo. "Even physical visits don't provide relief given the nature of the organization," said Vishwanath B.G., associate director at tech-driven HR solutions firm Mercer.

The EPS dilemma
Two issues are linked to EPS. First, EPFO manages contributions to EPS for exempt and unexempt employers. While EPS funds can be transferred, the amount cannot be withdrawn. "Many employees withdraw or trans-

EPF transfer or withdrawal issues? What you need to know

Being persistent with follow-ups and raising the matter with the higher authorities are your only options; others must consolidate their records to avoid future troubles.



DEEPA DESAI (47)
Issue: Not eligible for EPS contributions, but employer did it anyway

"It took me more than two years to reallocate EPS contributions to my PF account that too without interest."

Trouble 1

EPS service not consolidated

What employees do
Withdrawing only PF not pension from previous employer

The impact
▶ Rejection of PF withdrawal from new employer
▶ Pension alone cannot be transferred from old to new employer
▶ A dead end

Trouble 2
Name mismatches, overlapping of service period

What employees do
Not verifying KYC/service details on EPFO website

The impact
▶ Rejection of transfer/withdrawal

fer PF but do not consolidate the EPS. In the exempted scenario, if the pension is not consolidated, the EPF transfer or withdrawal is still possible, provided all credentials are correct. For the unexempted, however, if PF has been withdrawn without transferring EPS amount, EPS contribution alone can't be transferred, leading to a dead-end situation," Vishwanath said.

However, the second issue is more complex. From 1 September 2014, any new employee joining a firm and drawing a basic wage of over ₹15,000 per month is eligible only for EPF. It means the full 24% (12% each by the employee and employer) contribution is retained in the PF account. In case of continuous service, the EPS contributions continue even if your basic pay goes above ₹15,000. However, if you withdraw your PF from the previous employer, you will be considered a new employee, irrespective of the previous EPS contributions. If EPS contribution is made in this situation, EPFO will ask questions when you try to withdraw it. Besides, to withdraw EPS contributions, one must first transfer the amount to a current PF account. However, the EPFO might also ask you to forgo the interest on it.

"We recommend employers ensure the completion of Form-II for PF/EPS enrolment and inform staff about its significance for EPFO deliverables. It is crucial to verify accuracy of the Universal Account Number and KYC details before hiring. It will ensure employees enjoy continuous service benefits and face no difficulty in transferring past PF accumulations. It will help avoid im-

position of interest and penalties for late deposit of PF/EPS dues with EPFO," said Anurag Jain, co-founder and partner, ByTheBook Consulting.

UAN challenges
Mumbai-based Abhishek Kulkarni, faced a seemingly simple task—transferring his PF online. He assumed an active UAN would suffice but found he had to manually input all details of his previous and current employers. "If my UAN is active and contributions were made under it, why doesn't it reflect in my records?" he asked.

Here's what happened: Exempted organizations, records don't appear on EPFO's website. "Both my employers were exempted. It's hard to confirm if the transfer actually happened since the PF deposit statements don't show up online," Kulkarni said.

Vishwanath acknowledged the issue. "EPFO made provisions where transfer can be initiated online whether it is an exempted or an unexempted establishment, but employees need to contact his previous employer to find out if it has happened or not." Besides, EPFO has stopped entertaining offline transfer and withdrawal requests, challenging those unable to sign in online.

Additionally, name mismatches are also common. "EPFO relies on accuracy of basic data that employees must enter themselves. Employers play a key role in verifying this information in the EPFO portal via Form II and by uploading KYC documents like PAN, Aadhaar and bank account details linked to the UAN," said Adarsh Vir Singh, founder



ABHISHEK KULKARNI (39)
Issue: Transfer of PF from exempt employer to another

"Still waiting for the transfer, PF deposits do not show up on EPFO website in case of exempt employer"



How to resolve EPF issues

- ▶ Submit a joint declaration form with EPFO
- ▶ Lodge a complaint with CPGRAMS or DPG

CPGRAMS: Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System
DPG: Directorate of Public Grievance

Prevention better than cure

- ▶ Activate UAN everytime you join a new organization
- ▶ Get UAN linked with Aadhaar number
- ▶ Be careful about EPS contribution*
- ▶ Consolidate PF/EPS accounts as soon as possible

* (i) Don't contribute in EPS if basic salary > ₹15K unless already an EPS member
(ii) Withdrawing funds from previous employer makes you a new employee in EPFO records

EPFO - Employee Provident Fund Organization
UAN - Universal Account Number
EPS - Employee Pension Scheme

WHAT'S THE FOREX RATE?

Whether you are planning overseas travel or want to send money abroad, it is always a good idea to shop around for the best forex exchange rate. From banks, travel aggregators to money changers, various small and big players sell foreign exchange. To simplify your work, here is a list of INR to USD forex rates offered by some of the major banks and travel aggregators. We recommend that you also check the commission being charged by these players to ensure that you are getting the best deal.



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FOREX RATES (₹/\$)

Bank/travel aggregator	Wire transfer*		Buy forex	
	inward	Outward	Forex/travel card	Cash
SBI	83.48	84.33	84.50	84.80
Bank of Baroda	83.46	84.29	84.70	85.10
Canara Bank	83.57	84.29	84.50	NA
IndusInd Bank^	82.35	85.35	86.14	86.44
Kotak Bank	82.47	85.38	85.78	86.35
HDFC	82.59	85.23	85.48	86.06
ICICI	82.04	85.49	85.50	87.10
Axis Bank	82.25	85.80	NA	86.06
Yes Bank	82.45	85.37	86.29	86.29
Thomas Cook	82.12	85.58	84.41	85.80

Note: Data collected from website of respective entities as on 07 Aug 2024. Rate mentioned in the table denotes INR/USD. The rate is as mentioned on the website of the Bank/FI and it may vary according to different amount slab. *Wire Transfer/TT Buying is Inward Rem to receive Forex & Wire Transfer/TT Selling is Outward Rem to send forex; effective as on 6 Aug 2024
Compiled by BankBazaar.com

Can Prestige Group conquer Mount 25,000 this year?

FROM PAGE 12

tion, the HDFC report noted.

Over the years, Prestige has attracted many large institutional investors. In a recent deal, Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) and Kotak AIF will invest ₹2,000 crore in entire process at the EPFO," he added.

Resolving EPF issues
To address legacy-related corrections, EPFO has strengthened its procedures by issuing SOPs for the online submission of joint declaration forms. The forms, which must be filled out by both the employer and the employee, may however still require employees to meet with regional PF commissioners. "The corrections are crucial as they can significantly impact claim settlement timeline, reduce rejections and streamline service delivery," said Singh.

EPFO is supposed to resolve queries within 20 days, and if it takes longer an employee can lodge a complaint on the Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System, linked to central and state ministries. Complaints can also be escalated to the Directorate of Public Grievances. "This will move your complaint to the Prime Minister's Office, and the inquiry would go to the respective EPFO officer ensuring faster resolution," Vishwanath said. "There is little accountability to resolve common issues like name mismatches or overlapping service periods, and can take more than a year to resolve," he added.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

On 1 August, during Prestige Group's post-earnings call, Razack told analysts that the opening remarks would be made by Zayd Noaman, executive director at the CMD's office. Zayd will play a bigger role in the company from here on. He is the son of Noaman Razack, a whole-time director and the CMD's brother.

While it went public in 2010, Prestige is still very much a family-owned business, with the promoters holding over 65%. The company traces its origins to the late



DLF dominates the Gurugram housing market in the premium and luxury segments.

1950s, to a time when it had nothing to do with real estate. Razack's father had an apparel shop in Bengaluru's Commercial Street and the focus back then was on men's clothing. But by the 1980s, the family had entered the real estate business with Razack leading the charge along with his siblings Rezwan and Noaman.

Prestige started out with commercial office projects in Bengaluru, and got into the residential side a few years later. Its first housing project, 'Prestige Oakwood', in the posh Koramangala locality, had apartments selling at ₹450-500 per sq. ft in 1988—the going rate in the locality is now between ₹14,000-19,000 per sq. ft.

Today, Zayd and a new crop of family members are getting ready to succeed their elders. The company has reorganized its senior management after the resignation of chief executive Venkat K. Narayana in May. Narayana had worked at Prestige for nearly two decades, most prominently as its

chief financial officer, and later, as CEO.

Post the reorganisation, the team is a mix of experienced executives and fresh members, with new business heads being appointed for each vertical and geography that Prestige operates in.

HDFC's Kandpal said that as of now, the company's ambition sales target for 2024-25 looks achievable. There are big launches planned this year, and Prestige has a record of selling out when it launches, he pointed out.

"They do a lot of market research before launching, and customize home sizes and prices for different locations. They are more flexible in their product mix which is why they get high sales numbers," he said. Razack is more measured in his expectations. "We would be foolish not to ride this wave, but we will do it cautiously. I do believe that the best is yet to come. Real estate sounds very glamorous, but it's a tough job. We have to sweat it out," he said.

BALANCED ADVANTAGE FUNDS: A MUST-HAVE FOR YOUR INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO



We welcome your views and comments at
mintmoney@livemint.com

The financial markets experienced significant volatility in the past quarter. Fluctuations were notable during the national elections in June, and now with the recent declines, driven by factors such as concerns of recession in the US, fallout of the Japanese Yen carry trade, and geopolitical tensions. The Indian stock market has a history of significant peaks and subsequent corrections; be it the Dot-Com Bubble and the subsequent crash, or the global financial crisis of 2008. Market trends are clearly influenced by both domestic and international events, and investor sentiment and behaviour are critical components of these market cycles.

Market volatility: Indian equity market valuations reached high levels, with Nifty 50 and the Sensex surpassing 25,000 and 82,000 benchmarks, respectively. Despite the elevated status, heightened volatility underscores the importance of diversification and strategic fund allocation to mitigate uncertainties. Risks may not have materialized yet, but they exist; hence,

understanding the underlying dynamics is crucial, as it underscores the importance of maintaining the right asset allocation.

Financial ratios, such as price-to-earnings and price-to-book, can reveal if a company's stock price is inflated compared to its earnings, book value, or revenue, potentially indicating a market bubble. Investor sentiments, too, play a crucial role, and periods of low volatility in markets can lead to overconfidence among investors.

Asset allocation: Asset allocation, diversification and portfolio suitability will always be the go-to principles for maintaining sanity in most markets. Maintaining long-term objectives while limiting exposure to market swings depends on this risk-reward balance. An improperly balanced portfolio can be impacted by downturns, leading to financial setbacks. For instance, if you have a significant liquidity event, such as a child's wedding or education expenses within the next 6-12 months, staying invested in a heavily equity-oriented portfolio can be extremely risky. If market volatility impacts your portfolio, it could delay meeting these goals until the portfolio recovers. A portfolio lacking diversification can experience heightened volatility, making it susceptible to market fluctuations, which in turn can erode investor trust and possibly lead to impulsive or less rational investment decisions.

A dynamic approach: What draws investors to balanced advantage funds (BAFs)? The answer lies in their ability to mitigate risks associated with market volatility and potential for significant losses. BAFs' dynamic asset allocation between debt and equities makes them appropriate for investors with moderate to low-risk profiles. Unlike traditional hybrid funds, BAFs offer an



adaptive strategy aiming to harness the growth potential of equities while incorporating the stability of debt securities.

BAFs use pre-defined algorithms or models to continuously assess and adjust the allocation between equity and debt based on the market conditions. These models consider various factors such as market valuations, volatility, economic indicators, and sometimes even investor sentiment to determine the optimal asset mix. When equity valuations correct, the model might increase the

equity exposure to capitalize on attractive valuations. Conversely, when valuations surge, the model would shift towards debt to provide stability and reduce risk. Sometimes the model could be pro-cyclical.

Uncorrelated asset strategy: BAFs operate with degree of flexibility compared to other fund categories. Unlike their counterparts with predefined asset allocation boundaries, BAFs are unbound by restrictions on equity or debt composition. This unrestricted mandate empowers fund managers to dynamically steer the portfolio, resulting in a diverse range of investment strategies and outcomes. In essence, each BAF offering possesses a distinct character, shaped by its unique management approach. Moreover, BAFs often qualify for tax benefits as equity-oriented funds, potentially leading to favourable capital gains taxation compared to traditional hybrid funds. This tax-efficiency can enhance overall returns for investors.

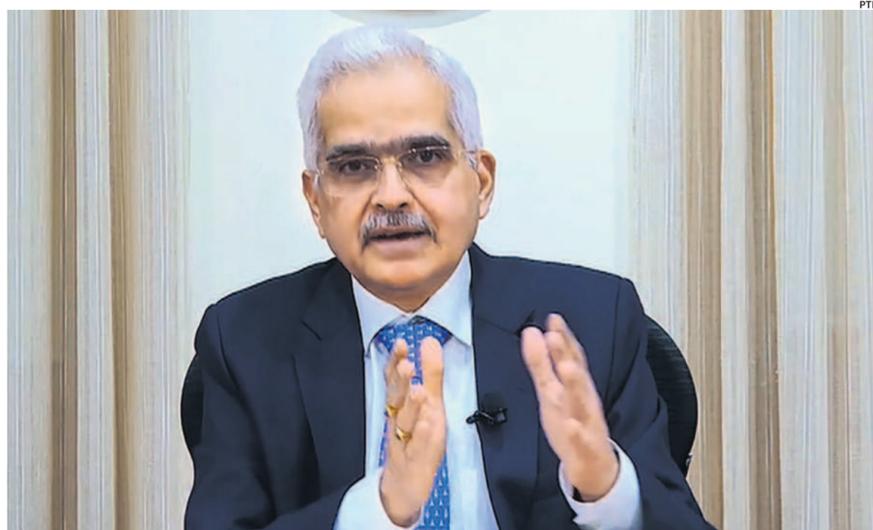
BAFs aim to harness growth potential of equities and the stability of debt securities

If you seek to confidently navigate the current market complexities, while ensuring sustained growth and reducing potential losses, BAFs could be an ideal choice. Their balanced approach, dynamic strategy, and ability to adapt to volatile conditions by leveraging both equities and debt make them well-suited for investors with moderate to low-risk profiles. Tarun Birani is founder and CEO of TBNG Capital Advisors



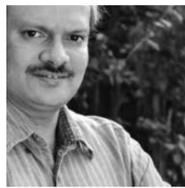
OUR VIEW

MY VIEW | FARM TRUTHS



The government's job creation plans reveal a flawed approach

Public expenditure should aim to lift incomes more directly instead of relying on private employers



HIMANSHU
is associate professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University and visiting fellow at the Centre de Sciences Humaines, New Delhi

How come RBI's policy stance has not budged?

Its focus on price stability even as exchange rate volatility risks loom is fine, but it still hasn't shifted its policy stance to 'neutral.' Has the economy's savings-investment fulcrum changed?

Even as the US central bank seems set to pivot to monetary easing soon, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) appears in no hurry to do likewise. Its Monetary Policy Committee's (MPC) decision on Thursday showed no sign of softening its inflation focus. Not only did it leave the central bank's repo rate—through which it modulates short-term lending to regular banks—unchanged for the ninth successive time at 6.5%, it hasn't budged on its long-held “withdrawal of accommodation” stance. The anxiety revealed stems from high food inflation, which puts its headline inflation outlook at risk. According to official data, the rate of food inflation climbed to 8.4% from a year earlier in June, compared with 7.9% in May, mainly due to a sharp increase in the prices of vegetables and edible oils, and it has now averaged 8% since November. With nearly half of India's retail inflation basket made up of food items, this meant that the overall consumer-price reading took a U-turn. Its year-on-year incline was 5.1% in June after averaging 4.8% over the previous two months. So far, so clear.

“The MPC may look through high food inflation if it is transitory; but in an environment of persisting high food inflation, as we are experiencing now, the MPC cannot afford to do so,” Governor Shaktikanta Das said. Various factors suggest that food-price pressures might be here to stay. Were RBI to ignore these and seek price stability without taking food and fuel into account (core inflation is just above 3%), it would risk spillovers and second-round effects, only to achieve a Pyrrhic victory against our rising cost of living, a battle it has waged since 2022. Therefore, RBI is likely to stay hawkish until retail inflation is durably squashed to its

4% target. How soon that happens may hinge on the rest of the monsoon season's rains and farm supplies. Thankfully, the economy's growth is not a worry, which means RBI is under no pressure to take its eyes off inflation. The central bank sees economic expansion at 7.2% in 2024-25 amid steady urban consumption and improving rural demand, even as investment is strong. The latter two have been concerns, but its broad optimism is backed by a spiffy services-sector performance, high GST collections and other supportive data. That said, global conditions could yet turn adverse.

While RBI's domestic focus is justified, its course could soon diverge from that of the US Federal Reserve, which is widely expected to ease rates next month. That could shake the external stability of the Indian rupee, should it impact capital flows. A wider rate gap with the US may draw more debt money into our assets, while equity zest in the West sparked by a Fed rate cut could see stock-market outflows, unless US recession fears dampen it. Though these drivers might balance out evenly, RBI could find the rupee's “managed float” being tested and its liquidity control stretched. What seems odd in all this is RBI's stance. Since it's not yet neutral, despite its 4.5% inflation forecast for 2024-25, it signals a negligible chance of a quick pivot. Could RBI's sticky stance imply credence being given to a post-pandemic upward shift in the real rate of interest (adjusted for inflation) that optimizes growth and price stability? A recent RBI research report lays out such a possibility. In theory, broad neutrality is achieved by a rate that balances investments with savings in an economy. The actual picture is usually more complex. Whatever RBI's view, a pivot in line with America's looks unlikely.

The budget presented last month rightly seeks to address the issue of job creation, given the crisis on hand. Its grand announcements are the first sign of the government recognizing its severity. But the approach and measures proposed fail to address the issue.

The budget announced a ₹2 trillion package for employment and skilling, with the aim of creating 41 million jobs in the next five years. Under it, there are three schemes for job creation and one each for internship and upgradation of ITIs. The employment-linked scheme for first-timers promises to pay ₹15,000 to every new employee in three instalments. The second scheme is primarily for the manufacturing sector and proposes incentives for employees and employers with graded payments for four years. The third scheme is a subsidy to the employer, with the government contributing ₹3,000 per month as part of the employer's provident fund contribution.

While all three schemes are for enterprises registered with the Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO), thus catering only to the organized sector, the conditions for availing the scheme are onerous and likely to work as a disincentive. The first scheme makes it conditional on the employee to attend an online financial literacy programme to get the subsidy for the second month. There is no rationale for

such a requirement. It also stipulates that the employer must return the subsidy if the employee leaves the job within a year. Similarly, for the second scheme, the enterprise has to hire a minimum of 50 workers or 25% of its existing workforce to get the benefit. Further, this scheme is not for new enterprises, but only those with a three-year track record of EPFO contributions. Similar criteria are imposed on the third scheme. Some of these may have been designed for monitoring purposes, but they look set to place a financial and administrative burden on employers and thus defeat the purpose.

The scheme for internship in India's top 500 companies is no better. It is applicable to youth in the age group of 21-24 years currently unemployed and not pursuing education. It excludes meritorious students from premier institutions (or with professional qualifications). It also bars any youth whose family member is a taxpayer or working with the government at any level. Except for very low-skill roles, it is hard to imagine too many youth who would meet this stiff checklist.

While the overall budgetary allocation for the package is ₹2 trillion over five years, the pro-rata estimate of expenditure for the first year is only ₹28,000 crore. The actual budget esti-

mate is only ₹12,000 crore for creating 16 million jobs in the first year.

The real problem, however, is not the implementation design or meagre allocation, but the budget's over-reliance on the private sector for employment. Faced with a slowdown in the economy after 2016-17, the budget in 2019 had announced a massive tax subsidy to the private sector. As the *Economic Survey* points out, much of this was utilized by the corporate sector to increase profits and clean up balance sheets without any significant increase in their wage bill or employment creation.

The second problem is in the belief that employment creation is a standalone objective, independent of growth. In any economy, jobs are created in the process of growth as national output increases and/or investment takes place. At a time when the economy is going through a period of deficient demand amid income stagnation, it is unfair to blame private businesses for not generating employment or investing enough. Incentives for job creation are unlikely to be useful in the absence of economic stimulus to produce more.

The primary responsibility of greater employment has to rest with the government. The jobs crisis in India is not just about providing employment, but also decent employment with a basic living wage. These require the government to use public expenditure to raise the incomes of workers.

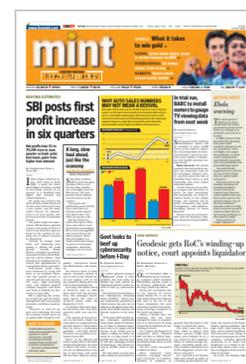
This process is faster when the income multiplier effect of such public expenditure is higher. An increase in spending in rural areas and the informal sector not only raises incomes, but also creates jobs, as these are labour-intensive fields. Also, given India's large deficiencies in education, health and other public services, creating public employment in these sectors would help bridge these gaps and improve worker productivity. It would also aid a large proportion of the marginalized and vulnerable population who may not benefit from schemes announced in the budget.

QUICK READ

The budget's employment-linked and other job creation proposals acknowledge a severe crisis but are too onerous to work and err by looking at job creation in isolation of economic growth.

India needs public expenditure in rural areas and the informal sector to boost incomes and thus demand. Outsourcing the task to the private sector with unrealistic schemes won't help.

10 YEARS AGO



JUST A THOUGHT

A leader's lasting value is measured by succession.

JOHN C. MAXWELL

MY VIEW | THE CORPORATE OUTSIDER

Shared leadership casts a shadow over conglomerates

SUNDEEP KHANNA



is a columnist and author of 'Cryptostorm: How India Became Ground Zero of a Financial Revolution'.

India's three largest conglomerates have a question mark hanging over them, one that dominates private conversations but is pointedly ignored in public utterances. Simply put, who will succeed Mukesh Ambani, Ratan Tata and Gautam Adani at the Reliance, Tata and Adani groups, respectively? None of the three has a clearly designated successor, with Adani being the latest to talk about shared leadership of the group going forward.

Over the last few years, the issue of succession has been brushed under the carpet of family councils, executive committees and other such formations. This lack of a central authority assumes a coalitional co-leadership that presupposes a perfectly rational collective mind, which is a denial of basic human nature. With family businesses in India extending their sway over the country's economy, any number of consultants and gurus can be found to dish out such seemingly pat solutions.

But evidence—anecdotal as well as

empirical—suggests that while ownership can be shared, when it comes to running multibillion-dollar groups with multiple businesses of high complexity, leadership-by-committee rarely works.

At the Hinduja group, the four brothers, Srichand, Gopichand, Prakash and Ashok Hinduja, signed a perfectly cordial agreement—that any asset belonging to any one of them belongs to them all. The fragility of the sentiment was tested soon enough, as the brothers' successors questioned its validity, leading to a bitter family feud. In November 2022, the family decided to smoke the peace pipe and settle its affairs out of court, but this came only after a lengthy and wasteful legal battle.

Similarly, at the erstwhile Ranbaxy group, Parvinder Singh's two sons, who were running the business jointly after their father's death, ended up engaged in a bitter and highly public blame-game once the unravelling of their fortunes started. The late Parvinder Singh himself had a running battle with his brothers, besides of course his infamous boardroom clash with his father Bhai Mohan Singh.

As Leo Tolstoy wrote in his novel *Anna Karenina*: “All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”

Joint leadership is somewhat like that: when things are going well, no one has a problem. But the moment there's a bone of contention, rifts surface. Strangely, two of the three large Indian groups in question have had first-hand experience of the perils of contested leadership.

At Reliance, Dhirubhai Ambani would have thought the house he was leaving behind was in order, with his two sons running the business together. After all, there had never been any sign of discord between the brothers during his lifetime. It was only after his death that differences surfaced.

At Tata, it was even worse. While J.R.D. Tata clearly named Ratan Tata, a family member, as his successor, the various satraps of the group refused to accept his decision and Tata had to fight an attritional battle to assert his supremacy.

Both Reliance and Tata hit stable paths only after an undisputed leader took charge and stamped his singular

authority over the entire business group. That the problem runs deep can be seen from how a similar dilemma dogs other successful groups like Bharti Airtel, where again it isn't clear who among Sunil Mittal's two sons Shrawin and Kavin and daughter Eiesha will succeed him.

Some experts have floated the idea of a Walmart-like structure for Indian family groups. The Walton family plays no operating role in the company and exercises its rights merely as a shareholder, while retaining only board-level oversight of the business.

While it is possible for India's business families to emulate that model, given the outsized roles of incumbents, it will be a tall order for their inheritors to detach themselves completely.

Tata, for instance, had already stepped aside as chairman of his group when he led the decision to oust his handpicked successor Cyrus Mistry. Even the latest development at Tata Trusts,

which owns 66% of Tata Sons and through it controls the various group companies, leaves scope for confusion. A high-powered four-member executive committee set up to oversee the Trusts includes Venu Srinivasan of the TVS group, Vijay Singh and Cyrus Mistry's first cousin Mehli Mistry, who is close to Ratan Tata. But with Tata as its chair, the key question still remains: Who will be his successor as the head of the all-powerful trusts?

At Reliance Industries, Mukesh Ambani's three children—Anant, Akash and Isha—have been given clear operating roles in the different businesses of the group, which would be fine if the three businesses they manage were independently listed companies with no cross-holdings. That's unlikely to happen, which means that there will always be the question of who takes the final decision when a group-level issue comes up.

Family businesses by their very nature need a clearly identified successor. The alternative is to fully professionalize such groups, leaving even the topmost roles to professional managers, with no intervention in how they run them. But that calls for the kind of distancing from the business that most Indian owners find difficult to achieve.

QUICK READ

The question of succession at the very top of family controlled business groups like Reliance, Tata and Adani is salient in private conversations but is ignored in public discussions.

Coalitional ideas of collective control have been floated by some observers but these seem rather unrealistic and going fully professional is an option that seldom suits family owners.



THEIR VIEW

MINT CURATOR

RBI has wisely charted a course that's unique to India's economy

Amid divergent action from major central banks around the world, the Monetary Policy Committee wisely kept rates steady



MYTHILI BHUSHURMATHA
is a senior journalist and a former central banker.

A week is a long time in politics," said former British prime minister Harold Wilson, briefing journalists at the time of a sterling crisis. It was in the mid-1960s and Wilson was referring to the far-reaching fallout of the crisis.

Close to 60 years later, I could perhaps be pardoned for tweaking Wilson's quote to suit the world of macroeconomics. Going by the events of the past few days, a week could have been a long time in monetary policy. Except that, to its credit, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) chose to stay the course. Contrary to what many, especially market aficionados, were hoping.

Consider. Till just about a week ago, it was a given that RBI's rate-setting Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) would settle for a relatively pedestrian monetary policy statement. Sure, the six-member MPC already had two dissenters, Jayanth Varma and Ashima Goyal, both of who had argued (at the last meeting in June) for a reduction in the policy (repo) rate and a change in stance from 'focused on withdrawal of accommodation' to 'neutral.'

But the composition of the Committee—three members from RBI and three external members, combined with a casting vote given to RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das in the event of a tie—means the Governor's word usually prevails. And with Governor Das already on record that "it is too early to talk about an interest rate cut," given an "uncertain global economic environment and persistently high home consumer inflation," and reiterating that monetary policy has to be "clearly and unambiguously" focused on inflation, it was taken for granted that RBI would stay put.

But that was before US employment data came in last Friday showing significantly slower hiring and unemployment at its highest in nearly three years. When markets opened the following Monday, stocks fell not only in the US, but around the world, as investors zeroed in on signs of a slowing American economy, fuelling fears that the US Fed might have waited too long to cut rates.

Talk of the US heading into recession gained currency soon after. As did talk of a new Sahm rule, wherein a 3-month moving average of unemployment of 50 basis points higher than the lowest in the previous 12 months is taken as signalling the onset of a recession. That a Fed rate cut would come sooner than anticipated was the general view.

With that, market expectations of a *status quo* policy from our own MPC were suddenly upended. Market expectations (hopes?), as distinct from those of economists, shifted to a change in stance, or, at the very least, more dovish commentary.

In the event, the governor showed that RBI would not be held hostage by market expectations. On the contrary, he walked his oft-repeated talk that RBI's policy decisions are driven by domestic



considerations. Sure, no central bank, least of all an emerging economy's, can ignore the ramifications of Fed action. But apart from a passing mention of "global financial markets exhibiting volatility," Governor Das chose to focus on domestic factors: the strength of our macro-economic fundamentals that gives RBI the necessary policy space to focus on its primary responsibility: getting headline inflation to India's 4% target.

When pressed to comment on the conspicuous silence about last week's market turmoil in the Monetary Policy Resolution at the press conference later in the day, Governor Das was candid. "It would be premature to talk about a recession in the US," he said, refusing to be drawn any further, other than reiterating that RBI is "watchful of all incoming data from domestic and external sources."

He made it clear that RBI was not going to be deflected either by the fact that core (CPI excluding food and fuel) inflation at 3.1% in May-June touched a new low. Or by the debate triggered by the recent *Economic Survey's* suggestion that monetary policy should consider targeting inflation excluding food.

His caution is not misplaced. Apart from the fact that RBI's target is 'headline' and not 'core' inflation, there has been a pick-up in retail inflation to

5.1% in June, with the likelihood of a reversal in the expected moderation in the pace of disinflation (the second-quarter projection was revised upward from 3.8% in the June MPC note to 4.4%). Inflation is moderating, but, as Governor Das put it, the pace of disinflation is uneven and slow and there is still some distance before it aligns with the 4% target.

Second, high food inflation (food has a weight of 46% in the consumption basket) holds

the possibility that it could spill over—economists call this 'second-order effects'—to other commodities and ultimately impact core inflation. Third, the public at large identifies with food rather than headline inflation. Fourth, high food inflation affects household inflation expectations, impacting not only the future trajectory of inflation, but also resulting in inflation getting entrenched or sticky.

The Governor was emphatic. The MPC can look through high food inflation if it is 'transitory,' but in an environment of persist-

ent high food inflation, as at present, it cannot afford to do so. We paid the price (in common with other central banks, including the mighty Fed) for believing high inflation was 'transitory' in the aftermath of monetary policy easing during covid. We cannot afford to repeat that mistake.

QUICK READ

Markets shaken by fears of a US recession may have expected a more dovish approach by RBI but Governor Das made it clear that domestic considerations would drive Indian policy.

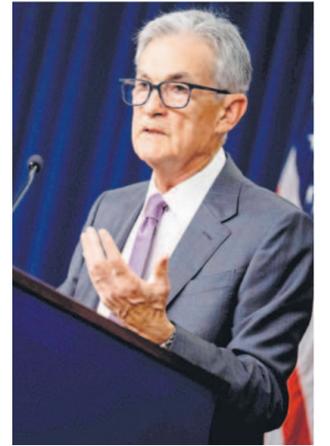
A price was paid for treating high inflation as 'transitory' in the aftermath of monetary policy easing during the covid pandemic and we cannot afford to repeat that mistake.

The US Fed must act to reduce rates swiftly—recession or not

The case for policy easing is clear even if the US economy holds up



CONOR SEN
is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist.



Fed chair Jerome Powell's Jackson Hole speech is awaited keenly

America's weaker-than-expected jobs report last week has sparked a debate about whether its economy is sliding into recession or whether the rise in the unemployment rate in July was due to a continuing post-pandemic normalization of the labour market. Whichever camp you're in, the right move for the US Federal Reserve is to act with urgency, cutting its policy rate by a percentage point to 4.25%-4.5% by the end of 2024 in the name of risk management.

It's a level of easing that the Fed is likely to undertake even if the rise in unemployment ends up being somewhat benign, since we no longer need such restrictive rates to tame inflation. It makes sense to front-load those rate cuts rather than run the risk of being too slow to act to forestall worse economic outcomes.

If we really are heading into recession, there's not much disagreement on what the Fed should do: Cut interest rates a lot and fast. That's where market pricing has shifted after a rocky week of economic data. Interest rate futures suggest the Fed will cut its policy rate by over 200 basis points by the end of 2025, taking the Fed funds rate down near 3%. This seems reasonable, based on what we've seen in prior recessions.

It's the second scenario that is more challenging. The US joblessness rate has climbed this year from 3.7% to 4.3%, but the percentage of people between the ages of 25 and 54 who are employed has also risen, from 80.4% to 80.9%. That's an unusual dynamic with the unemployment rate reflecting, in part, rising labour force participation.

It's possible that the explanation of a gradual normalization is the correct one, that there's little risk of a rapid increase in unemployment, and that the Fed has time to be patient. But putting all of one's eggs in that basket is risky. The rate of layoffs is currently low, but waiting for job cuts to increase means waiting until it's too late to avoid a recession. During the financial crisis, for instance, layoffs didn't start to spike until the middle of 2008 once a recession was well underway. The hiring rate has already slumped to levels that suggest employers feel no compulsion to add to their payrolls.

In general, it's best not to overthink the unemployment rate. Inflection points in the economy are messy and uncertain by nature, and leaning too much into optimistic scenarios can cause severe policy errors. Former Fed Chair Ben Bernanke gave his "subprime is contained" speech in May

2007 when the housing market was already in the process of collapsing.

The central bank's job is risk management. It's why policymakers continued to increase interest rates in the first half of 2023 well over a year after their preferred measure of inflation had peaked and begun to decline. In June, the Fed's 'dot plot'—an anonymous collection of policymakers' rate expectations—showed a median projection for a 25-basis-point cut in 2024, followed by four more reductions in 2025, or 1.25 percentage points of easing overall. Both American labour market and inflation data have weakened since then. A revised dot-plot today would likely show more aggressive cuts, and we know from Chair Jerome Powell's comments on Wednesday that policymakers are prepared to lower rates in September.

So why wait? Inflation risks have moderated sufficiently, so the main argument against cutting more aggressively than they've previously signalled would be the risk that markets are alarmed by what that says about the economic outlook.

Fortunately, Jerome Powell can use his upcoming speech at the Kansas City Fed's conference in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, to shape the narrative.

Swift rate cuts would relieve pressure for Americans struggling to make payments on floating-rate credit card debt or to get financing for a new car. It would help the millions of homeowners who bought when mortgage rates were high, with refinancing at lower rates freeing up household budgets for other types of consumption. The main headwind for the economy right now is high borrowing costs.

Foot dragging among policymakers harkens back to the economic situation and Fed debate from early 2022. At the time, the dispute was over whether inflation was transitory, and whether raising interest rates by 25 basis points once a quarter would be too fast. Ultimately, inflation got worse and the Fed had to respond aggressively. Many economists now believe that delay in raising rates was a mistake. Now, we're in the opposite situation with a cooling labour market. The Fed has already signalled a likelihood of cutting rates at the September meeting. Policymakers lose little and have much to gain by moving quickly.

MY VIEW | PEN DRIVE

Altman's \$7 trillion AI ask: How else to save the world?

SAMIRAN GHOSH



is a technology advisor and podcast host.

In a world where billionaires launch into space for fun, Sam Altman of OpenAI fame has upped the game of one-upmanship by throwing a number into the universe that has made economists and mathematicians do a collective face-palm: \$7 trillion. That is not a typo. It is seven trillion US dollars, a number so large that it's practically a black hole in the world of finance that makes most tech-startup pitches look like lemonade-stand business plans.

Sam Altman has said he needs \$7 trillion. Why? According to reports, he is on a mission to build a global network of AI chip factories, data centres and power plants. Apparently, training the next generation of AI models requires more computing power because they may need to solve a Rubik's cube while juggling flaming torches, riding a unicycle and translating Tolstoy's *War and Peace* into Klingon. These models will attempt to understand the nuances of human language in all its glory, including why we say

"parkway" when we drive on it and "drive-way" when we park on it. Hence, all the costs.

Is it needed? Some experts argue that this level of investment is key to keeping up with the exponential growth of AI capabilities. Others suggest Altman accidentally added a few extra zeros to his funding estimate.

So, how much is \$7 trillion? It's enough to do plenty else. I could suggest a few ideas. *Cost: \$1.5 billion per skyscraper.*

Or we could build around 4,600 Burj Khalifa skyscrapers like the one in Dubai. *Cost: \$1.8 trillion by 2030; Faist-group: \$1.81 trillion by 2030; and MarketsandMarkets: \$1.4 trillion by 2030.* Altman's request is about 3.8 times this entire projected market.

Now, I do not want to be a 'frivolous Sam' (my call name used to be Sam when I was at IBM—no idea why). So, I took it upon myself to figure out some 'more worthy causes' that might deserve this money.

Global hunger and malnutrition: \$2.65 tril-

lion (for 10 years at \$265 billion annually). This figure comes from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's estimate of funds needed to end hunger by 2030. I have allocated funding for ten years, as this would create a sustainable impact.

Climate-change mitigation: \$2.4 trillion based on the IPCC's estimate of annual investments needed in the energy sector until 2035 to limit global warming to 1.5° Celsius. I have allocated one year's worth of this estimate, though the challenge requires ongoing investment.

Universal access to clean water and sanitation: \$570 billion (five years at \$114 billion per year). The World Bank estimates that \$114 billion annually is needed to achieve universal access to safely managed water and sanitation services by 2030. I provided five years of funding to make significant progress.

Universal healthcare: \$1.11 trillion (three years at \$370 billion per year)

based on a rough global estimate of \$371 billion annually for basic universal health coverage. Three years of funding could help establish systems in many countries.

Clean energy transition: \$270 billion. The balance amount. IRENA suggests a complete energy transition will require \$131 trillion by 2050. So this amount, while significant, is only a fraction of what's needed.

Is this adequate? In most cases, far greater allocations are needed to solve these issues. However, experts believe these estimates would help us make significant progress, or, in some cases, achieve specific goals (like ending hunger by 2030).

While a \$7 trillion AI chip manufacturing ecosystem sounds impressive and may even be an urgent need for Planet Earth, it's worth considering whether we might get more bang for our buck elsewhere.

But who knows? Maybe this super-AI will solve all these problems for us. Remember that we once thought 640KB of RAM was more than anyone would ever need. Perhaps in the future, we'll look back at Altman's request and chuckle. "Only \$7 trillion? How quaint!"—right before our AI overlords ask us to solve another CAPTCHA to prove we're human.

QUICK READ

Sam Altman's \$7 trillion plan for an AI support ecosystem of chip factories, data centres, power plants and more makes most tech-startup pitches look like lemonade-stand business plans.

This sort of money could fund Nasa for 250 years or build 4,600 Burj Khalifas, but we could also wipe out hunger, mitigate climate adversities, invest in clean energy and go for universal healthcare.



Camp out in a yurt for luxury with a view



ISTOCKPHOTO

The circular design and spacious interiors of yurts make them an attractive alternative to tents and cabins on glamping holidays

Teja Lele

Raised wooden floors covered in woollen Moroccan-style rugs, twinkling fairy lights, comfy futon-style beds with fresh linen, a wood-burning stove with a small integrated oven, and stunning views of Lake Windermere when you step out. You wouldn't imagine that you'd just spent a night in a yurt, a round tent that traces its roots to central Asia.

One of the earliest travel companies to offer yurt holidays, the UK-based Long Valley Yurts was set up in 2008 with two 18ft yurts at a campsite in the Great Langdale valley, the heart of the Lake District National Park. "The yurt allowed us to do it all: we could go for a dip, enjoy a picnic, relax in the sun, or go for long walks, all while enjoying the luxuries that now seem necessities," says London's Catrin Roberts, who went glamping in a yurt with her partner and pet earlier this year. "I particularly liked the large central skylight; it was the perfect place to stargaze at night."

Yurts have come to India as well, and are being set up across the country, in campsites at national parks as well as weekend homes. "Their ability to provide all essential comforts coupled with their aesthetic appeal has made yurts a favourite among those seeking an extraordinary and sustainable living experience," says Praveen Krishnaiah, co-founder of The Out Factory, who has installed yurts in resorts in Nagarhole, Kanha National Park, Jim Corbett National Park as well as in farms and hotels.

With airconditioning and en-suite bathrooms, yurts can serve as luxury retreats, farm-



house offices and spas at hotels. Most are kitted out with beds, furniture, showers, heating or cooling systems and kitchenettes, which means city slickers can enjoy the outdoors without sacrificing the conveniences of modern life.

Yurts offer a unique combination of comfort, durability, and adaptability to any climatic conditions, explains Krishnaiah. "Their circular design and spacious interiors create a cozy and inviting living space, making them an attractive alternative to traditional tents and cabins," he says.

Yurts are an offshoot of glamping, a trend that was born in the UK in the late 1990s after a financial crisis hindered foreign travel. In 1997, when the UK government revoked the right of all driving licence holders to tow a caravan, the need for value-for-money holidays that "catered to those more used to hotels and with little to no experience of camp-

ing" led to the emergence of glamping, according to the UK Glamping Association.

"Glamping has really evolved since it emerged in the early 2000s, and yurts stand out from other options like treehouses and cabins. They can be dismantled and moved from location to location and have a more permanent feel when you include insulation and other comforts," says Mike Pointing, owner of Hidden Valley Yurts, which offers yurt holidays in Wales, UK. He adds that the covid-19 pandemic led to a "slow but steady resurgence" in their popularity.

The portable, circular dwelling, made of a lattice of flexible wood and typically covered in felt, has been used as a home for thousands of years in Central Asia, particularly Mongolia. "The yurt is culturally significant in Mongolia—it symbolises the people's connection to nature, community, and

their heritage," says Krishnaiah.

Compared to traditional tents, yurt camping offers a number of advantages, especially since they are much sturdier, more weather-resistant than typical tents (allowing use even in inclement weather).

Krishnaiah says the ease of setup and minimal environmental impact make them a sustainable choice. Yurts are typically used for glamping, but they have been adapted easily to various environments, including vacation rentals, community spaces and permanent residences. The ease in setting up and dismantling—between 30 minutes to 5 hours—and the fact that they can house two to 15 people makes them handy.

Krishnaiah says their yurts are crafted from high-quality, durable materials designed to withstand diverse weather conditions. The framework consists of strong, lightweight wooden lattice walls and rafters, providing structural integrity and flexibility. The outer covering is made of heavy-duty, weather-resistant fabric, typically a combination of polyester and cotton canvas, treated for water resistance and UV protection.

Apart from scenic glamping sites and adventure resorts, The Out Factory has provided yurts for private properties, including backyards and gardens, and community spaces such as yoga centres and wellness retreats.

"Whether nestled in the mountains, or in a forest, yurts offer a unique and immersive experience in nature," Krishnaiah says.

In fact, Alaska-based Nomad Shelter designs yurts specifically for extreme Alaskan conditions, using robust materials to engineer structures that can be built over the weekend and can withstand winds up to 100 mph, apart from having plumbing and electricals.

Paul Vela, business manager of Nomad Shelter, recently listed the many advantages of opting for a yurt home on the Homesteady podcast: "They're cheaper, quicker to build, low maintenance, portable, have a great resale value, and offer a connection to nature."

Teja Lele writes on lifestyle and travel.

Write to us at businessoflife@livemint.com



Marta Pereira da Costa

For the weekend Of Portuguese music and art

A Mint guide to what's happening in and around your city

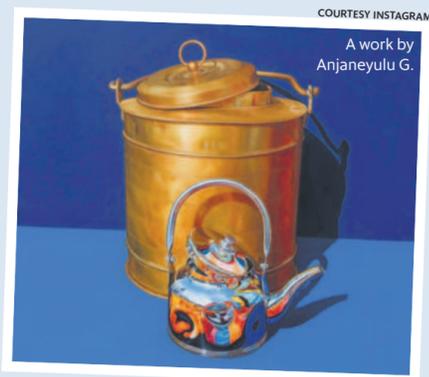
BENGALURU

MUSIC BY MARTA PEREIRA DA COSTA

9-10 August

Experience the magic of Fado and Portuguese music as Marta Pereira da Costa, the Portuguese guitar virtuoso, takes the stage and performs for two evenings. She will be accompanied by artistes João Jose Pita on the seven-string guitar, and Andre Sousa Machado who will be on percussions and drums.

9:30pm, Windmills Craftworks, Whitefield. For tickets and details, visit in.bookmyshow.com



COURTESY INSTAGRAM

A work by Anjaneyulu G.

DELHI

A SHOW OF RECENT WORKS BY ANJANEYULU G

10 August-7 September

Art Alive Gallery will present a solo exhibition of recent works by Hyderabad-based artist Anjaneyulu G. He explores remnants of the past, "propelling them forward into the present to examine the impact of history on contemporary times. Vessels and objects of the past and present dominate his canvases rendered in a hyper realistic approach. Through the juxtaposition of objects, he aims to capture a dialogue between heritage and contemporary culture," says the collection note. Anjaneyulu has been part of the India Art Fair from 2021 to 2023.

11am-5pm, Art Alive Gallery, Panchsheel Park. For details, visit artalivegallery.com.

MUMBAI

A STAGE MUSICAL: RAJADHIRAAJ-LOVE LIFE LEELA

15 August-1 September

Conceptualised and created by Dhanraj Nathwani, this 120-minute musical delves into the untold stories of Krishna, offering a glimpse of his journeys from Vraj to Mewar and Mathura to Dwarka. The performance, choreographed by Bertwin D'Souza and Shampa Gopikrishna, will be presented by over 100 artistes. Twenty original songs have been composed by Sachin-Jigar.

7:30pm, Grand Theatre, Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre, Jio World Centre, Bandra (East). For details, visit in.bookmyshow.com

HANDWOUND

Wear a wristwatch, because it's a badass thing to do

This month we discuss finding value in a mechanical watch, plus all the fun things you can do with a chronograph

Bibek Bhattacharya
bibek.b@htlve.com

Nearly two years ago, I wrote a lament in this column regarding a number of excellent watch brands not being available in India. Among these, I counted such great favourites of watch enthusiasts like Tudor and Hamilton. I'd also mentioned some other such bugbears, like the lack of fantastic quartz Timex timepieces such as the Q chronograph and the Q GMT, as well as the mechanical Timex Marlin.

One of my criticisms of this dearth had to do with finding value. Good watches do not come cheap, especially when they are mechanical watches with either manually wound or automatic movements. The cheapest "good" watch comes in roughly the ₹20,000-40,000 bracket. This is a band dominated by the two Japanese heavyweights: Seiko and Citizen.

For Swiss watches, that band begins somewhere closer to ₹70,000, and there is no upper ceiling to the prices of those manufactures. If you are able to shell out over ₹10 lakh for a luxury timepiece, in India, you can. But spending such amounts of money, even if you can, hardly constitutes commensurate value for every rupee spent. A mechanical watch is a mechanical watch, and at higher prices, you will be getting more accurate and luxuriously finished movements, alongside more luxurious materials like yellow or white gold. But does that really constitute value, especially if you also count the price of maintaining such a watch?

This dilemma is true for watch enthusiasts everywhere, even in more wealthy markets like the US and Europe. In fact, if you go through popular watch publications or YouTube, you will regularly find stories on the "best watches for \$1,000", whether one is looking for a discreet dress watch or a robust sports watch. To serve this sizable niche are big brands like Hamilton, as well as great micro-brands, none of which are available in India. On the "affordable luxury" end are brands like Tudor.

Well, since I wrote about it, the scene has gotten better somewhat. Tudor is available here, though not all models—



The Q Timex chronograph.

and you can access Hamilton watches at eye-wateringly marked up prices on Amazon. As far as the people's champion of enthusiast brands, Timex, is concerned, most of their best lines are still not available in the country. One line that is, as I was surprised to find out a few months ago, is the excellent Q chronograph.

The Q chronograph was launched two years ago, expanding the hugely popular line from Timex, alongside the Q GMT. As the "Q" suggests, these are actually

quartz watches, offering an affordable way to enjoy 70's era watch designs, and adding heaps of functionality in the process. The Q chronograph is a clear throwback, with its three-sub-register design referencing famous models from brands like Rolex, Zenith and Heuer. While Swiss-made mechanical chronographs begin from about ₹3 lakh, this quartz beauty can be had for as little as ₹11,000, when factoring in discounts.

A chronograph is probably the most

popular watch complication there is, especially sports chronographs in stainless steel. Chronograph movements in wristwatches have a long and interesting history. Since watches were once actual tools for professionals, chronographs—beyond their basic function of measuring elapsed time—were also adapted for specific needs, and you can tell what those needs were by looking at the chronograph scales. These scales are usually either marked on the outer edge of the dial, or on the bezel. There are five popular scales, with the most pervasive one being the tachymeter scale. This is the one you find on most famous chronographs, be it the Rolex Daytona, the Omega Speedmaster or the Zenith El Primero.

Such chronographs are called racing chronographs, because they were developed initially to time races and were tools of choice for both race officials and drivers. The tachymeter bezel effectively helps you determine the speed of an object (in either miles per hour or km per hour) over a given distance. Back when mechanical speedometers on vehicles weren't the most accurate things (as late as the early 1960s), a chronograph with a tachymeter scale would give a better measurement of average speeds.

Some of the other popular uses of the

chronograph were as a pulsometer (featuring a scale that doctors could use to measure heart rate), as a decimeter (used by scientists for accurate timing of specific calculations), as a telemeter (soldiers used this to gauge how far away an explosion was by juxtaposing the speed of sound with that of light) or as a regatta timer (used by yacht racers to accurately build up to top speed and dash off at the beginning of a race).

So why all this information about chronographs? Well, I bought the Q chronograph last month, and I'm thoroughly enjoying it. For about ₹11,000, I have a beautiful looking watch with a black dial with three cream sub-registers (what is called the reverse panda chrono dial configuration), a glossy tachymeter scale on the aluminium bezel and two vintage-style pushers on either side of the crown to start and stop the chronograph seconds hand. I use the chrono to time pointless things, because I can, and I wear it because it looks badass.

Let's be honest, that's the only reason one wears watches these days, because they possess more personality than a soulless "smart" rectangle on your wrist.

Handwound is a monthly column on watches and watchmaking.