Graphite Woes: China's Sharp Shock

Rupee Trade: Challenges Galore

India Business Journal

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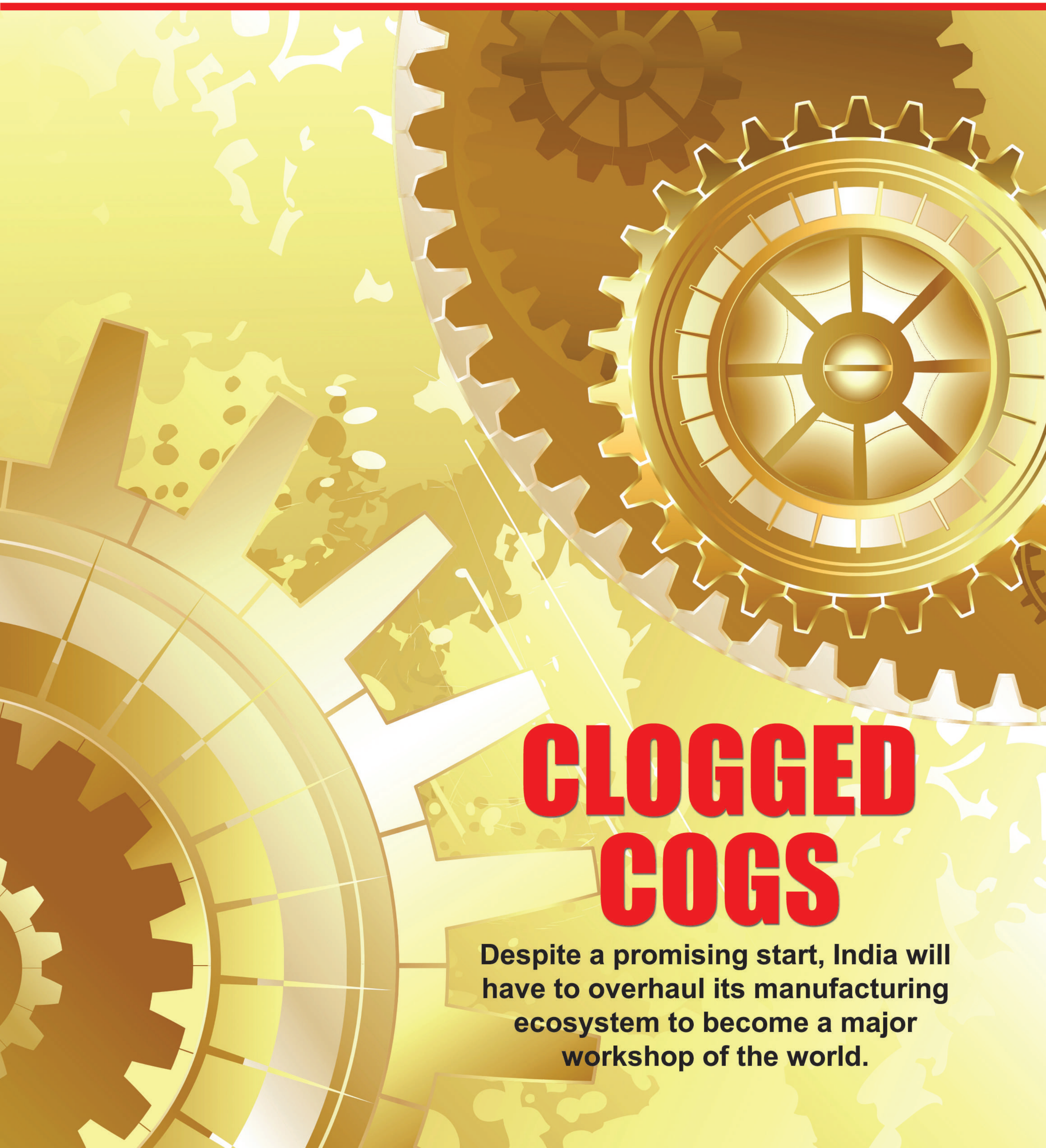

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Since last July, 106 special vostro accounts have been opened in Indian banks to facilitate rupee trade.

Few Takers For Rupee Trade

It is over a year since India seriously began looking at settling global trade transactions in rupees. In July 2022, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) unveiled a framework for Indian banks and traders to deal in rupees with their foreign counterparts.

The immediate cause for the RBI's framework was US and Western sanctions on Russia, following its attack on Ukraine last February. India could not resist tempting discounts offered by Russia on its oil exports, and settling Russian oil imports in rupees was a viable option for India. The bigger goal, of course, was to push the rupee as a major global currency for trade settlements.

Since last July, 106 special rupee vostro accounts have been opened by banks from 22 countries in Indian banks to facilitate trade settlement in rupees. But 15 months after rupee trade plans were rolled out, the result is relatively modest with trade worth only $2.5 billion settled in rupees. That number is a pale shadow of India's total goods trade of $1.2 trillion in FY23.

First of all, the rupee trade plan has failed to take off with Russia, which after all was the trigger for globalising the Indian rupee. In fact, after months of negotiations, India and Russia have suspended efforts to settle bilateral trade in rupees since May. Right now, India is settling its Russian imports by paying in dirham and a few other currencies. Besides, settlement is also happening through third-party countries, which route India's payments to Russia or offset Indian payment against their own trade settlement with Russia.

The huge trade deficit of India with Russia is the stumbling block for the bilateral rupee trade to pick up. India's imports from Russia rose by almost 14-fold from $2.2 billion in FY22 to $31.02 billion in FY23, and the bulk of Indian imports were cheaper oil. During the same period, India's exports to Russia were more or less unchanged from $3.61 billion in FY22 to $3.43 billion in FY23.

Russia is refusing to accept the payment in rupees as it points out that its insignificant imports from India make little sense to deal in the Indian currency. Russia notes quite rightly that the rupee trade will leave it with huge accumulation of the Indian currency, for which it will find no use at all. This is because the rupee is not accepted in global trade. The only use of the rupee for Russia can be in paying for its Indian imports, which are minuscule.

India's first steps towards globalising the rupee are welcome. But those first steps should be matched by other equally significant steps. Indian economy should grow manifold, and its 2 per cent share of global exports must expand multifold. Besides, it has to loosen its vice-like grip on capital controls and make the rupee fully convertible. Only then will the world look to deal with the rupee.

India's rupee trade woes go beyond Russia and extend well across India's trade with the rest of the world. India is betting on internationalising the rupee to reduce dollar demand and make its economy less vulnerable to global currency shocks. Besides, the rupee trade plan fits well within India's ambitions to position itself as a major global player alternative to China. But India's global ambitions get crushed under the stark ground realities. The Chinese yuan has the fifth-biggest share as a global payment currency at 2.5 per cent, while the rupee does not even fare among the top-20 currencies.

India's first steps towards globalising the rupee are welcome, and they will definitely help the country in a big way. But those first steps should be matched by other equally significant steps. Indian economy should grow manifold, and its 2 per cent share of global exports must expand multifold. Besides, it has to loosen its vice-like grip on capital controls – too many restrictions on Indians buying assets abroad and foreigners purchasing assets in India – and make the rupee fully convertible. Only then will the world look to deal with the rupee.

Servotech Power Systems declares a 20 per cent dividend after recording stellar financial results for FY23 and Q1 of FY24

Servotech Power Systems Ltd, a manufacturer of electric vehicle (EV) chargers and solar products, has announced that it has approved declaration of dividend at the rate of 20 per cent (Rs 0.20 per share) for the financial year ended March 31, 2023. Earlier, in the company's board meeting in August, the board had approved the declaration of this dividend, which was subject to approval of shareholders. The shareholders approved the same in the company's AGM held on September 30, 2023.

Earlier in August, the company had announced stellar earnings for Q1 of FY24. Total revenue witnessed stellar growth of 148.9 per cent in Q1of FY24 to Rs 79.8 crore from Rs 32.1 crore in Q1 of FY23 on a YoY basis respectively. EBITDA increased by 415.3 per cent from Rs 1.4 crore in Q1 of FY23 to Rs 7.1 crore in Q1 of FY24, while margins improved from 4.3 per cent in Q1 of FY23 to 8.9 per cent in Q1 of FY24 on account of increasing scale of operations and higher value of products. Net PAT stood at Rs 4.1 crore in Q1 of FY24 compared to Rs 0.4 crore in Q1 of FY23, while margins improved from 1.1 per cent in Q1 of FY23 to 5.1 per cent in Q1 of FY24.

Commenting on the results, Servotech Power Systems Ltd Managing Director Raman Bhatia stated: "We experienced remarkable expansion, primarily driven by the introduction of cutting-edge, technology-driven solutions in the EV and solar sectors. We are delighted to announce that we maintain a strong position as a key player in the sustainable energy industry, boasting of a 25 per cent market share in the EV charging solutions segment. Moreover, our solar solutions, known for their easy installation, cost-effectiveness and dependability, have gained significant momentum in the market, largely due to enthusiastic adoption by our targeted customer base. We are immensely proud of our role in advancing the EV charging infrastructure and solar industry, and our dedication to continuous innovation and enhancement."

Mr Bhatia added: "Further, in order to remain ahead of the competition, we implemented SAP S/4 HANA in the record-breaking time of two-and-a-half months. This achievement is a testimony to our dedication to drive digital innovation. We steadfastly uphold our vision of delivering customer-centric solutions in the realm of sustainable, clean and green energy. To accomplish this, we have expanded our product portfolio and streamlined our processes for greater efficiency. As we venture into the future, we acknowledge the substantial potential within the markets we serve and find ourselves in an advantageous position to seize growth opportunities, as evidenced by our strong order pipeline."

Providing cutting-edge, technology-driven solutions in EV and solar sectors

Earlier, Servotech Power Systems had entered into a partnership with Dubai-based Al Ansari Motors to provide EV charging solutions to the Middle Eastern and African markets. The two entities have signed a sole distributorship agreement, which will see Al Ansari bringing Servotech's EV charging capabilities to the potential EV-adopting segment in the earlier-mentioned markets, Servotech Power has said. Al Ansari Motors LLC is involved in motor vehicles and accessories trading, it has added.

MISCELLANEOUS

Rs 1-l cr green energy units in UP soon Projects worth Rs 1 lakh crore in the renewable energy sector will soon go off the ground in Uttar Pradesh, Mahesh Gupta, the State's additional chief secretary for renewable energy has said. The senior bureaucrat has said that the State has received investment proposals worth about Rs 7.50 lakh crore during the UP Global Investors' Summit in Lucknow earlier this year. "Very soon, we are going to have groundbreaking of renewable energy projects worth around Rs 1 lakh crore. We are working towards it and are handholding the projects," Mr Gupta has added. Biofuel and solar energy projects are prominent verticals in the State's renewable energy sector.

Government rolls back laptop import curbs The government is rolling back its plan to restrict laptop imports, months after suddenly announcing the move to introduce a licence system. The restrictions which were aimed at boosting domestic production had drawn flak from industry as an interference with free trade. "India will not impose restrictions on laptop imports," Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said at a press conference last month. He added that the government "only wants importers to be on close watch". The government said that the import licensing regime, announced on August 3, was meant to "ensure trusted hardware and systems" entered India, an oblique reference to Chinese goods.

Cases resolved under IBC set to hit 300 Number of resolutions of stressed assets under the insolvency law is likely to touch 300 this year, IBBI Chairperson Ravi Mittal has said and urged resolution professionals to speed up the cases. Creditors have recovered around Rs 3 lakh crore through the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), and the recoveries are more than Rs 51,000 crore last year, when the number of resolutions rose by 80 per cent to 180, Mr Mittal has added. Mr Mittal has noted that IBC is a factor in reduction of non-performing assets and emphasised that the law is not a recovery mechanism but a resolution mechanism.

3 ports to be green hydrogen export hubs
The Ministry of Shipping and Ports has identified three key ports – Kandla, Paradip and Tuticorin – as focal points for the export of green hydrogen, green ammonia and green methanol within the next seven years. The measure is likely to expedite India's goal of becoming a significant player in the global hydrogen market. The primary objective now is to establish the essential infrastructure at these ports, facilitating the storage, handling and bunkering of these eco-friendly fuels and their derivatives. India's ambitious target is to create a capacity for exporting approximately 5 mt of green hydrogen and its derivatives annually by the year 2030.

New cable TV rules decriminalise violations
In a bid to boost investors' confidence, the government has notified amendments to the Cable Television Networks Rules that provide the operational mechanism for implementation of the decriminalised provisions of the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act. Section 16 of the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995, had dealt with punishment for contraventions under any of its provisions. This section had provision for imprisonment, which might extend up to two years in case of the first instance and five years for every subsequent offence. The imprisonment provisions have been now replaced with a monetary penalty and other non-monetary measures like advisory, warning and censure.

Rich Indians set to boost festive spending Indian consumer spending may rise this year, reveals a report on a post-COVID consumer survey on consumption outlook by UBS. The survey, which was conducted with 1,500 Indian consumers online, reveals that high income and upper- to mid-income sections of the country's income pyramid using a socio-economic classification is not representative of the larger population. The survey corresponds to the upper income households who will have largely seen income and employment continuity during the pandemic. Top 20 per cent of Indian population accounts for 59 and 66 per cent of discretionary consumption in rural and urban areas respectively.

Big GST relief for millets and molasses The GST Council has reduced taxes on molasses from 28 to 5 per cent. The move will benefit sugarcane farmers and lower cattle feed cost as well. The council has also decided to exempt alcohol for human consumption from the levy. The GST on flour containing 70 per cent millets will have zero per cent tax if sold loose and 5 per cent if sold pre-packaged and labelled. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has noted that despite the Allahabad High Court's 2021 verdict that States had lost their legislation right to impose tax on extra-neutral alcohol, the GST Council had "ceded that right" to the States.

70% of two-wheelers to be electric by 2030

Heavy Industries Secretary Kamran Rizvi has said that around 70 per cent of the total two-wheelers on the road would be electric. He has added that the numbers reflect that the public is actively adopting electric vehicles (EVs). "Over 12 lakh scooters are expected to be sold this year...and we have a long road ahead," he said, adding: "By 2030, we anticipate having 60-70 per cent of electric two-wheelers and in a few years, 70-75 per cent of electric three-wheelers." The aim is also to sell 1 lakh cars and double that number in coming months, the secretary has said.

86 thermal plants with "critical" coal stock As many as 86 thermal power plants in the country, including six imported dry fuel-based, have critical coal stock levels as of October 18, according to a Central Electricity Authority (CEA) report. The power plants are labelled as having a critical coal stock situation, where the dry fuel is less than 25 per cent of the normative level. According to the CEA 86 thermal power plants have critical coal stock situations out of the monitored 181 in the country.

APPOINTMENTS

National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO) has elected **G Hari Babu** as its president for 2023-25. Hiranandani Group MD Niranjan Hiranandani has taken over as chairman, while erstwhile NAREDCO President Rajan Bandelkar has been elected vice-chairman of the real estate body.

Amardeep Singh Bhatia, an additional secretary in the Union Commerce and Industry Ministry, has been appointed the chairman of the Tea Board.

MISCELLANEOUS

Verbatim...

"There is one investment adviser with one registration, running a 500-people call centre, a full-fledged business. I don't know how many people they drove to suicide."
Madhabi Puri Buch
CHAIRPERSON, SEBI

"Almost every single product that we ship in Siemens has some software inside, and most likely, this software has been touched by Indian software engineers. We can proudly say that the Indian spirit is running through all the offerings that we have at Siemens."
Peter Koerte
CTO, SIEMENS

"Rating agencies are going through a credibility crisis globally. If I were into capital markets, I would have looked at the rating that these agencies give and the actual flow of money."
Shamika Ravi
MEMBER, PMEAC

"At present, forecasts are for inflation to moderate and reach 4 per cent by H1FY25. But shocks have interrupted such forecasts in the past."
Ashima Goyal
EXTERNAL MEMBER, RBI'S MPC

FINANCE

Slice becomes SFB with NESFB merger Unicorn fintech Slice is merging with North East Small Finance Bank (NESFB) after receiving approval from the RBI. The merger of a fintech start-up with a small finance bank (SFB) is seen as an extremely rare one in Indian financial circles. Slice has said that the merger with the Guwahati-headquartered SFB will allow the combined entity to better serve their shared mission and reach more consumers who currently lack access to basic banking services. The merger, which follows Slice earlier acquiring a 10 per cent stake in the lender, would enable the new entity to supercharge its product offerings.

NPCI arm to build UAE payments system NPCI International Payments (NIPL), the global subsidiary of National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), will assist in developing the first national domestic card scheme (DCS) for the United Arab Emirates (UAE). NIPL has signed a partnership agreement with Al Etihad Payments (AEP), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Central Bank of the UAE. Scheduled to launch in early 2024, the DCS will help the UAE in improving financial inclusion, strengthening e-commerce and digital transactions and enhancing the country's position as a global digital payments leader. AEP aims to implement an innovative, interoperable and enabling payments infrastructure through the tie-up with NIPL.

RBI keeps Repo Rate unchanged at 6.5% The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) last month unanimously opted to maintain the key Repo Rate at 6.5 per cent, aligning with the expectations of economists. This decision was the fourth occasion on which the six-member MPC had chosen to leave the key interest rates unchanged. "After a detailed assessment of the evolving macroeconomic and financial developments and the outlook, the MPC decided unanimously to keep the policy Repo Rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent.

Ashok Vaswani Kotak Bank's new MD & CEO Kotak Mahindra Bank has received the RBI's approval for appointment of veteran banker Ashok Vaswani as managing director and CEO of the bank. The appointment of Mr Vaswani is for a period of three years, with effect from the date of taking charge, which will not be later than January 1, 2024, the bank has said in a press release. Currently, Mr Vaswani is president of Pagaya Technologies, a US-Israeli AI fintech. Earlier, he was chief executive officer of the UK's Barclays Bank and subsequently CEO of its global consumer business. Mr Vaswani succeeds Uday Kotak, who had stepped down as MD and CEO of the bank in September.

MCX gets nod for new trading platform Multi Commodity Exchange of India (MCX) has received approval from the SEBI tech panel to launch its new Web-based commodity derivatives platform (CDP). "Subsequently, SEBI technical advisory committee has recommended that MCX and MCXCCL may go live with the CDP and to intimate SEBI regarding the proposed date of going live," MCX has said. The SEBI tech panel approval comes days after the capital markets regulator had urged MCX to put on hold its proposed new commodity derivatives platform going live in the first week of October. The capital markets regulator had cited technical issues for postponing the new platform.

APPOINTMENTS

Navneet Munot, the MD and CEO of HDFC Asset Management, has been elected the chairman of Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI).

Bharti to buy out AXA stake in JV The Bharti Group will acquire French insurer AXA's 49 per cent stake in Bharti AXA Life Insurance Company, Bharti has said. This will enable Bharti to take full control of a venture that was jointly run for nearly two decades. Bharti has added that it is in talks with other investors to scale up the business by partnering or combining with their entities. The insurance sector has seen a spate of deals this year as a booming stock market is helping insurers lock in profits from their investments and consolidate their operations in market.

Asirvad Micro files for Rs 1,500-cr IPO Manappuram Finance subsidiary Asirvad Micro Finance will launch an initial public offer (IPO) to raise Rs 1,500 crore. The microfinance lender has filed its Draft Red Herring Prospectus with the SEBI. The company is looking to raise the entire Rs 1,500 crore through fresh issue of shares, according to the prospectus. Manappuram Finance currently owns a 97.59 per cent stake in Asirvad Micro Finance. Managers of the issue include JM Financial, Kotak Investment Banking, Nomura Financial Advisory and Securities and SBI Capital Markets. Asirvad, which has capital adequacy ratio was 23.12 per cent, is looking to augment its capital base through the public offer.

Partners with 10% stake beneficial owners Capital markets regulator SEBI has tweaked guidelines pertaining to anti-money laundering standards. Accordingly, partners holding a 10 per cent stake in a company will come under the definition of beneficial owners. Earlier, the requirement was 15 per cent. The development comes after the government amended the Prevention of Money Laundering (Maintenance of Records) Rules or PMLA rules in September. In case the client is a partnership firm, the beneficial owner would be the one who has "ownership of or entitlement to more than 10 per cent of capital or profits of the partnership.

IOCL's Rs 2,600-cr projects in North-East Indian Oil Corporation (IOCL) has firmed up plans to pump in over Rs 2,600 crore in setting up greenfield units and expanding its facilities across the North-East. Some of the major projects include a greenfield depot in the petroleum, oil and lubricants (POL) segment in Sekerkote in Tripura at an investment of Rs 656 crore and expansion of Betkuchi POL depot in Guwahati at a cost of Rs 277 crore. A new 30-tmpta LPG bottling plant is being set up in Umiam, Meghalaya, for Rs 75.54 crore. Another 30-tmtpa bottling plant in Mualkhang, Mizoram, is coming up at an estimated cost of Rs 193 crore.

ONGC Videsh keen on Sri Lankan blocks Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) is interested in the exploration of oil and gas blocks in Sri Lanka, a company executive has said. The country's largest oil and gas explorer is awaiting an announcement of the oil and gas roadmap of the island nation, Rajarshi Gupta, the managing director of ONGC Videsh – the overseas investment subsidiary of State-run ONGC – has revealed. ONGC Videsh is open to having deals through government-to-government negotiations as well as through competitive bidding depending on Sri Lanka's yet-to-be-announced exploration policy, Mr Gupta has said.

SAIL to start trial production of special rails Steel Authority of India (SAIL) is gearing up to commence trial production of head-hardened (HH) rails, primarily used in metro rail and freight corridor projects. Initially, SAIL had aimed to initiate the trial production of HH rails in August. However, this timeline was deferred due to increased demand for standard rails, specifically the 880 grade, by the Indian Railways. HH rails are advanced rails designed for use in high-speed freight corridors and metro rail initiatives. These specialised rails are produced using head-hardening technology, allowing them to withstand approximately 50 per cent higher pressure compared to that of conventional rails.

REC to fund Rs 40,538 cr for green projects REC has signed initial pacts to finance two green hydrogen plants and a thermal power project in Odisha. REC has signed an MoU with Odisha Power Generation Corporation to finance Rs 9,538 crore for development of two units of a thermal power project in Jharsuguda, Odisha. Under a partnership with the Acme Group, REC will provide a funding of Rs 16,000 crore for a green hydrogen and ammonia facility proposed in Gopalpur in the State. It has also entered into an MoU with Avaada Group, pledging Rs 15,000 crore for a green hydrogen and ammonia facility in Gopalpur. The total worth of all MoUs is Rs 40,538 crore.

NLC arm eyes 5 gw green energy capacity NLC India has announced establishment of its wholly-owned subsidiary, NLC India Green Energy (NIGEL), dedicated to commissioning of green projects. NIGEL will oversee the planning, participation in upcoming renewable energy tenders as well as execution and commissioning of green energy projects. The subsidiary aims to achieve a capacity of 5 gw by 2030, contributing significantly to carbon emission reduction, according to NLC Chairman and Managing Director Prasanna Kumar Motupalli. NIGEL will take charge of 2 gw of renewable energy projects currently under implementation, including a 600-mw solar power project in Gujarat and an 810-mw solar photovoltaic power project in Rajasthan.

Govt may infuse capital in PSU insurers The Finance Ministry may consider injecting capital into three loss-making public sector undertaking (PSU) general insurance companies, namely National Insurance Company, Oriental Insurance Company and United India Insurance Company during the fourth quarter of the current financial year. The prospective capital infusion will hinge on the nine-month financial performance of the general insurers. In the previous year, the Finance Ministry had directed these three insurers to prioritise their profitability rather than focusing solely on their revenue, emphasising the importance of approving only sound insurance proposals. Last year, the government had allocated Rs 5,000 crore in capital to the three insurance companies,

SIDBI, GAME begin NBFC plan phase-I Global Alliance for Mass Entrepreneurship (GAME) has said that it has received in-principal approval from SIDBI for designing and structuring a sustainable and scalable NBFC Growth Accelerator Programme (NGAP). In the first phase, the programme involves design of a comprehensive and actionable report with the programme structure, piloting strategy and implementation plan for NGAP by GAME. The programme will also include criteria for evaluation and selection of around 20 NBFCs that are small in size but focused on the MSE segment to be a part of the pilot cohort. The goal of NGAP is to have a structured model on the lines of global accelerators.

SBI MF gets RBI nod to buy 9.99% in IndusInd The RBI has allowed SBI Mutual Fund to acquire up to 9.99 per cent stake in IndusInd Bank. The RBI has asked the fund house to acquire the shareholding by October 10, 2024. The fund house must ensure that the aggregate holding in the bank does not exceed 9.99 per cent of the paid-up share capital, or voting rights, of the bank at all times. The approval granted by the RBI is subject to the conditions mentioned therein, including compliance with the relevant provisions of Banking Regulation Act, 1949, and the RBI's guidelines on acquisition of shares in banks.

CORPORATE

TCS to buy back Rs 17,000 crore of shares Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has announced a share buyback for Rs 17,000 crore at a price of Rs 4,150 a share. The company will be buying up to 4,09,63,855 shares, representing 1.12 per cent of the total equity. The buyback size does not include transaction costs, applicable taxes and other incidental and related expenses, TCS has said in a stock exchange filing. This is the fifth share buyback by India's largest information technology services company in the last six years. The company had bought Rs 66,000 crore worth of shares in four such exercises, TCS' filings has added.

Vedanta to exit steel by March 2024 Vedanta will complete the sale of its steel assets by the end of this financial year, its Chairman Anil Agarwal has said in an interview. The company began the review of its steel and steel raw material business – formed through the acquisition of ESL Steel in 2018 for Rs 5,230 crore – in June, looking to sell the company to focus on its core mining businesses. Last month, Vedanta had announced that its board had approved a pure-play, asset-owner business model that would ultimately result in six separate listed companies. The restructuring is expected to be completed in about 15 months.

Paramount mulls junking streaming service Paramount Global is considering scrapping plans to launch its Paramount+ streaming service in India in favour of a deal with existing partners. Parmount – the New York-based parent of CBS and MTV networks – is shifting its focus to selling more programming to JioCinema, a leading streaming service owned by Reliance Industries. Paramount owns a 13 per cent stake in JioCinema's parent company Viacom18, an operator of major TV channels in India. The delay is a part of a larger trend of big media companies dialling back their spending as they look to wring profits from streaming businesses that have delivered mostly losses so far.

Air India sets up mega warehouse in Delhi Air India has commissioned a mega warehouse facility in Delhi to facilitate storage of over 10,00,000 engineering spares that are integral to maintenance, checks and repairs of its aircraft and ground support equipment. The airline has said that the new warehouse will further enhance Air India's fleet and operational efficiency and strengthen India's expanding aviation ecosystem. Located in the proximity of Terminal 3, at the cargo complex of Delhi Airport's Air Cargo Logistics division, the centralised warehouse, sprawling 54,000 sq ft, is aimed to improve the quick turnaround of the airline's flights operating out of Delhi.

APPOINTMENTS

Prosus-owned fintech company PayU India's Chief Executive Officer **Anirban Mukherjee** has been promoted to the role of global CEO of PayU.

Roche Diagnostics India has appointed **Rishubh Gupta** as its new managing director, overseeing the company's operations, strategy and growth initiatives in India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

IT salary drives up India Inc's wage bill India Inc's total salary bill went up by a good 14.3 per cent to about Rs 9.4 lakh crore in FY23, the fastest increase in ten years. Moreover, the average salary in the organised sector rose by nearly 10 per cent, much above the rate of retail inflation in the country. A study of 75 lakh employees across 1,800 listed entities by Jefferies revealed that the increase had happened on the back of substantial pay hikes by the IT sector. Excluding for salaries in the IT sector, the rise in pay packets drops to 6.8 per cent, which is in line with the 10-year average.

Reliance close to buying Disney India ops Reliance Industries, controlled by Asia's richest tycoon Mukesh Ambani, is nearing a cash-and-stock deal to buy Walt Disney Co's India operations, according to people familiar with the matter. The US entertainment giant may sell a controlling stake in the Disney Star business, which it values at around $10 billion, as opposed to piecemeal transactions weighed earlier, the people have said, asking not to be named because the discussions are private. Reliance views the assets at between $7 billion and $8 billion, some of the people add. The acquisition could be announced soon, with some of Reliance's media units getting merged into Disney Star.

Daewoo to re-enter India via Kelwon tie-up Daewoo has set its sights on India as a part of a strategic move to tap into the nation's burgeoning economy. South Korea's Daewoo is poised to make its mark in India through a brand-licensing partnership. Daewoo has joined forces with Kelwon Electronics and Appliances, headquartered in Gurgaon, to bring its innovative global technology-led products to Indian consumers and support local manufacturing efforts. Daewoo had made its initial entry into the Indian market in 1995 with models such as the Cielo, Nexia and Matiz. However, in 2001, General Motors acquired a significant portion of the company's assets, leading to Daewoo exiting India in 2004.

No Akasa Air IPO before 2027: Vinay Dube Akasa Air, the latest entrant in the domestic aviation space, will not be launching an initial public offer (IPO) and listing on stock exchanges by 2027, the carrier's Chief Executive Officer Vinay Dube was reported as saying last month. Mr Dube, while speaking to news agency PTI, had said that listing by the end of this decade would be a "much more realistic goal". "I don't think 2027 will be possible for a listing, but the listing is something that we definitely want to do. We may have to gather a little more history before we can list," he had added.

ED arrests Lava chief, 3 more in Vivo case The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested four persons, including Chairman and Managing Director of Lava International Hari Om Rai; a Chinese national; and two chartered accountants. The arrests have been made in connection with ED's money laundering probe against Chinese phone-maker Vivo, ED officials have said. The ED has added that Mr Rai and the others arrested had assisted in cheating the Indian government and helping Vivo set up an elaborate Chinese-controlled network throughout the country. The ED has revealed that the Chinese phone manufacturer, after its entry in India in 2014, had incorporated 19 more companies in various cities.

IT hiring to slow down amid global woes Weak global cues and a cut in discretionary spending by clients are expected to sharply reduce campus intake by the Indian IT industry this year. Market watchers opine that Infosys' and HCL Technologies' subdued take on hiring signals a tough road ahead for fresh graduates in the near term. In the opening week of Q2 earnings season last month, IT companies TCS, Infosys and HCL Technologies had reported a sequential drop in employee tally – a staggering 15,800 on a cumulative basis. The Q2 scorecard of tech heavyweights fell short of expectations as global growth skid on elevated levels of inflation and interest rates.

Grasim eyes Rs 4,000 crore via rights issue Grasim Industries has said that its board of directors at its meeting last month has approved to raise Rs 4,000 crore via rights issue. The record date for the rights issue will be announced later. The board "inter-alia approved the raising of funds by way of issue of equity shares of face value of Rs 2 each through rights issue for an amount not exceeding Rs 4,000 crore to the eligible equity shareholders of the company as on the record date (to be determined in due course), subject to receipt of regulatory/statutory approvals", Grasim Industries has said in a regulatory filing.

NCLT's nod for Himadri's plan for Birla Tyres Birla Tyres has announced that the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has approved a resolution plan for the company in a regulatory filing with BSE. Shortly after Birla Tyres' filing, Himadri Speciality Chemical also released a notice, stating that it had received "verbal" approval of a joint resolution plan from the tribunal. Birla Tyres was demerged in 2018 from Kesoram Industries. In May 2022, the company began insolvency proceedings with the Kolkata bench of the NCLT after a case was filed by chemical company SRF, an operational creditor of the BK Birla group company.

Ericsson sets up 6G R&D centre in Chennai Swedish telecom gear-maker Ericsson has announced setting up a 6G research and development (R&D) centre in Chennai. Ericsson is also looking to partner with other premier engineering institutes in India for 6G-related research. "This R&D centre in India is a small unit which will become bigger. We only have three in the world – one in Sweden, second in the US and the third one in India. They are all cooperating in 6G-based research," Ericsson's Head of Market Area Southeast Asia, Oceania, and India Nunzio Mirtillo said at India Mobile Congress last month. Ericsson's rival Nokia has already set up a 6G lab in Bengaluru. ■

Post-Wistron deal, Tatas to make iPhones The Tata Group has acquired Wistron's operations in India, paving the way for it to manufacture and assemble Apple iPhones in India for both domestic and global markets. The announcement was made by Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar on social media platform X. He said, "Within just two-and-a-half years, Tata Group will now start making iPhones from India for domestic and global markets from India." Wistron had earlier granted approval to its subsidiaries, SMS InfoComm (Singapore) and Wistron Hong Kong, to sign a share purchase agreement with Tata Electronics for sale of its 100 per cent indirect stake in Wistron InfoComm Manufacturing (India).

OBITUARY

Parag Desai (1974-2023)

Wagh Bakri Tea Group Executive Director Parag Desai died last month in Ahmedebad after a brain heemorrhage caused by a fall while he was trying to evade stray dogs. Mr Desai was 49. Mr Desai was the son of Wagh Bakhri Tea Managing Director Rasesh Desai. He had done his MBA from Long Island University in the US. He had spearheaded sales, marketing and export departments for the group and was an expert tea tester and evaluator. The over Rs 2,000-crore Wagh Bakri Tea Group is one of the country's leading packaged tea companies, founded in 1892 by Narandas Desai.

A Cultural Melange

The PM Vishwakarma scheme will play an important role in bringing diverse crafts on one platform and help the Indian crafts and craftsmen shine brighter than ever.

IBJ BUREAU

India is a country of diversity. The PM Vishwakarma Yojana, launched recently, acts as a national integration programme that brings diverse crafts and craftsmen together. With over 18 trades in focus across the nation, it provides a platform for people and skills from every corner of the country to engage, blend and curate a mosaic of crafts. The scheme focuses on providing the traditional workers, craftsmen and artisans from around the country with socio-economic support so as to strengthen these artists and their art forms. However, it is not only the tangible support, the symbolic features of the scheme also help the Indian crafts and craftsmen shine brighter than ever!

The scheme helps to revive these traditional art forms through skill upgradation and the use of modern technology. The scheme allows its recipients a collateral-free development loan of up to Rs 3 lakh (Rs 1 lakh in the first tranche and Rs 2 lakh in the second tranche). It aims to support these craftsmen with better and more modern tools as well as to make their work more efficient. The training and financial aid provided to these workers will help bridge the gap between conventional arts and modern technology.

The inclusion of such a wide variety of arts and crafts in the scheme aligns with the Indian ethos of unity in diversity. The scheme brings together a wide variety of different art forms under the same umbrella. This feature of the scheme was reflected in a three-day Vishwakarma exhibition, held last month on the occasion of Vishwakarma Jayanti, as it cradled a wide spectrum of arts and crafts like filigree, clay modelling, toy making, sculpting, chettinad jewellery, hair dressing etc. 54 artisans and craftsmen from different parts of India, following the 'guru-shishya parampara', participated in the exhibition. The presence of so many skills under one roof allowed the exchange of skills and unique processes of each craft allowing the artisans to learn from each other and forge a fusion of arts and culture.

The scheme acts as a cultural thread that links the people at two levels. On one level, several skill sets are brought together under the scheme that connects people culturally. At the second level, the scheme also bridges the region-based differences between workers. This aspect of the Yojana was exemplified at the Vishwakarma exhibition. For each craft, there are artisans coming from different regions of the country who get connected to each other due to this Yojana. The clay modelling stall had skilled workers from Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala moulded together like the clay they were working with to create a melting pot of diversity. The hair-dressing stall had both male and female barbers from parts of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand working together and exchanging notes on their craft.

The scheme is weaving the artisans engaged in a multitude of crafts across geographical and cultural spaces into national recognition. Vishwakarma Yojana empowers the artisans and nurtures their art along with a cultural cauldron for these artisans to grow and prosper. ■

Parveen Luxury, a dynamic; new-generation; fully-integrated travel company, offers comprehensive solutions for all business and leisure travel across the world.

Tourism and hospitality, one of India's largest service industries, plays an extraordinary role in driving the nation's growth and prosperity. On the one hand, India proudly boasts of a tapestry of geographical diversity, encompassing awe-inspiring world heritage sites and niche tourism offerings, leading to increased domestic tourism. On the other hand, with increased income levels and spending power, more and more people are exploring tourism attractions across the world.

This has helped growth of domestic travel firms, like Parveen Luxury, in a big way. Based in Chennai, the company has been in the travel industry for over a decade, providing exceptional travel services to its clients.

"Our mission is not just to be a travel agency, which helps you book a holiday; we want to be your travel partner who would go an extra mile to help you choose an ideal destination and learn more about the place you have been dreaming to visit," explains Dr Shama Parveen Ameen, the founder of Parveen Luxury.

Shama Ameen: Always going an extra mile to help customers

Noticing that no major companies prioritised female travellers, especially when it came to safety, Dr Shama began building options to give women opportunities to experience exciting destinations while validating their concerns. Today, the company's services and products empower women to travel confidently, tap into the local culture, and have more genuine experiences.

Advantage Parveen Luxury

- Focus on Women Vs World
- Customised Senior Citizen Travel
- Stay in style at our villas

Since holidays are more about personal choices and interests, Parveen Luxury offers custom- is able tour packages as well. "Travel is the only thing you buy that makes you richer," adds Dr Shama Ameen. The travel company has been selling beautiful experiences for years through its state-of-the-art designed holiday pack- ages and other essential travel services.

Parveen Luxury Only Women Travel - A women-only trip has a totally different experience from regular group & Solo trips. Whether you're looking to meet new friends, new culture, gain access to female-only spaces, or learn from women entrepreneur, these trips can offer a save safe space for women travelers.

"As any intrepid traveller knows, travel is an unpredictable business. Planning is important, but things fluctuate and change as you step foot in a new land. Spending time in 30+ countries has prepared me well for becoming an entrepreneur," says Mr Ameen, co-founder of Parveen Luxury.

Parveen Luxury also promotes Senior Citizen Travel where they cater to the needs of senior adults. These packages are designed to provide a comfortable and enjoyable experience for seniors who wants to explore new places, learns about new culture, and engage in various activities.

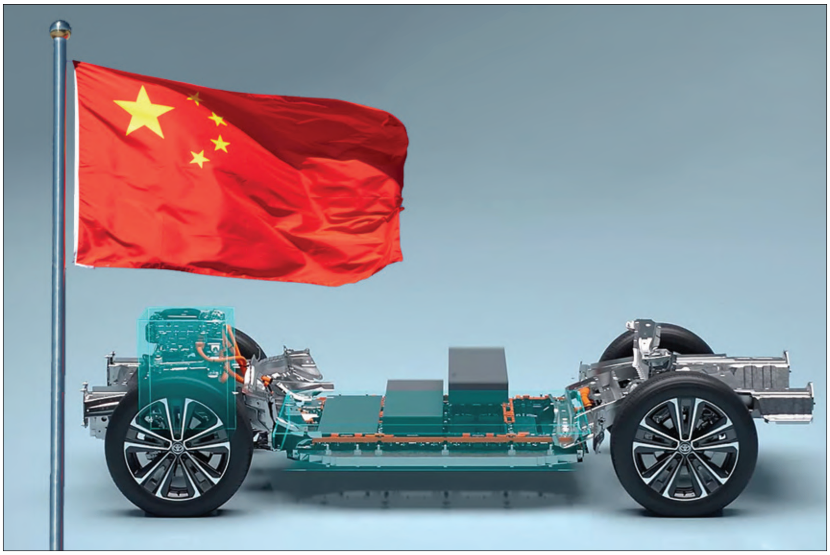
Parveen Luxury Villas – The villas are furnished with premium furniture and equipment that rings synonymous with quality. The villas & studios is the perfect and relaxation.

Besides ticketing, the company also offers value-enhanced visa and insurance assistance for individual and group visa-related services to help its travellers with truly-enriching travel experience. There are safe and reliable forex services all over the world. The company facilitates its customers to buy forex at the lowest currency exchange rates in India. It also helps trans-act from anywhere and makes travel smooth and stress-free.

As India's tourism industry stands as a beacon of boundless possibilities, Parveen Luxury is poised to encash this potential in a big way.

Sharp Shock

China's new curbs on export of graphite products are set to push up battery prices and hurt the EV industry worldwide.



IBJ BUREAU

China has decided to clamp down on export of graphite. It will be restricting shipment of some graphite products, which can be exported only after obtaining permits. The curbs, purportedly set to be imposed to protect national security, have sprung a surprise across the world.

Analysts opine that this action is yet another attempt by China to control critical mineral supply in response to challenges over its global manufacturing dominance. The restrictions are likely to impact top importers of graphite from China, like Japan, the US, India and South Korea.

Under the new restrictions, set to come into effect from December 1, China will require that exporters apply for permits to ship two types of graphite. The restrictions will cover high-purity, high-hardness and high intensity synthetic graphite material; and natural flake graphite and its products.

China is the world's top graphite producer and exporter. It also refines more than 90 per cent of the world's graphite into the material that is used in virtually all electric vehicle (EV) battery anodes, which are the negatively-charged portion of a battery.

"This bold and unexpected move by China in graphite has taken us by surprise, arriving far sooner than anyone could have predicted," notes Kien Huynh, the chief commercial officer of Alkemy Capital Investments, which is focused on developing projects in the energy transition metals sector.

Chinese Clampdown

- Curbs on export of synthetic graphite material and natural flake graphite
- New restrictions to come into effect from December 1
- Permits needed for Chinese exporters two ship graphite products
- China world's top producer, exporter and refiner of graphite
- Move to hurt major graphite importers like Japan, the US, India and South Korea

Tit-for-tat

Beijing requires the export permits at a time when many foreign governments are ratcheting up pressure on Chinese companies over their industrial practices. The European Union is weighing levying tariffs on Chinese-made EVs, arguing that they unfairly benefit from subsidies. The US government has widened curbs on Chinese companies' access to semiconductors, including stopping sales of more advanced artificial intelligence chips made by Nvidia.

The graphite curbs announcement comes just days after the United States imposed additional limits on the kinds of semiconductors that American companies can sell to Chinese companies. "At the moment, both China and Western countries are engaged in a tit for tat, highlighting how protectionist measures often spread. Newton's third law that every action causes a reaction applies here too," notes Stefan Legge, head of tax and trade policy research at the University of St Gallen in Switzerland. "At the same time, both sides of the dispute also realise how costly it is if geopolitics trumps economics," he adds.

China's graphite curbs are similar to those imposed since August 1 for two chip-making metals, gallium and germanium. The restrictions have slashed exports of those metals recently and pushed up prices outside of the country. The action is intensifying efforts among miners outside China to bring graphite projects to fruition, while efforts to find alternatives will also be ramped up.

"What China is saying to the West with this decision is that we are not going to help you make electric cars, you have to find your own way to do that," Northern Graphite CEO Hugues Jacquemin notes.

Exploring alternatives

China's Commerce Ministry has said that the move on graphite is "conducive to ensuring the security and stability of the global supply chain and industrial chain and conducive to better safeguarding national security and interests". It adds that it is not targeting any specific country.

The Commerce Ministry further points out that three types of "highly-sensitive" graphite items have already been under temporary controls and are included in the new list. The ministry has, in the meanwhile, dropped temporary controls on five less-sensitive graphite items used in basic industries such as steel, metallurgy and chemicals.

With rising sales of electric vehicles, automakers are racing to lock in supplies from outside China, but shortages are looming. "With this new graphite export curb, South Korean companies which heavily rely on China for graphite imports would need to seek alternatives, such as mines from the United States or Australia, but it would likely increase the cost burden for many," stresses Kang Dong-jin, an analyst of Hyundai Motor Securities.

South Korea's Trade Ministry has said in a statement that it has held a meeting with battery and material makers recently on how to respond to the export curbs. "The South Korean government will closely communicate... to avoid production disruptions in the lithium-ion battery sector," reveals South Korea's Industry Minister Ahn Duk-geun.

Japan's top government spokesperson Hirokazu Matsuno notes that the country plans to ask China about the "operational policies" of the new measures and will "take appropriate steps" if they violate World Trading Organization (WTO) rules.

"At the moment, both China and Western countries are engaged in a tit for tat, highlighting how protectionist measures often spread. Newton's third law that every action causes a reaction applies here too."

STEFAN LEGGE
Economist,
University of St Gallen

"This action could set them (graphite products) on an upward trajectory internationally, while keeping domestic prices low for Chinese battery producers."

TOM KAVANAGH,
Battery Metals Head, Argus

Stinging impact

Some analysts are of the opinion that it is not clear how much impact the new measures on graphite will have in the short term. "This control is not a complete ban, and there has been no significant impact on any industry during the previous temporary control," notes Ivan Lam, a senior analyst of Counterpoint Research.

"This action could set them (graphite products) on an upward trajectory internationally, while keeping domestic prices low for Chinese battery producers," analyses Tom Kavanagh, the head of battery metals of commodity and energy pricing agency Argus.

Exports are likely to rise ahead of December 1, notes Echo Ma, an analyst of Rystad Energy, especially to countries with established battery industries like Japan, South Korea and the United States.

Following China's curbs, carmakers across the world are trying to lock in supplies of graphite from sources outside of China, as demand for EV batteries outpaces other uses for the material. Global sales of EVs, including purely battery-powered vehicles and hybrids, are soaring, according to the International Energy Agency. Sales exceeded by 10 million (1 crore) units last year, up by 55 per cent from 2021, and are expected to rise to nearly 14 million (1.4 crore) vehicles this year, it projects.

According to the US Geological Survey, the market for graphite used in batteries has grown by 250 per cent globally since 2018. China was the world's leading graphite producer last year, accounting for an estimated 65 per cent of global production, it adds.

Chinese recent restrictions on shipments of graphite products are most likely to have an undesirable effect on the global EV industry. EV battery prices are set to skyrocket sooner than later, and that is bad news for EV manufacturers and buyers worldwide.

Electrifying Pact

Servotech Power Systems and EMCOR Power Solutions join hands to set up 1,000 EV charging points across the country.

(L to R) Servotech MD Raman Bhatia with EMCOR Power Solutions and EMCOR International GTC, Kuwait, MD Byju Kuniyil and EMCOR Director (Operations) Vijeesh Vasu at the MoU signing ceremony in New Delhi

IBJ BUREAU

In a landmark development aimed at advancing well-equipped and cutting-edge electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, Servotech Power Systems Ltd – a distinguished NSE-listed manufacturer of EV chargers in India – and EMCOR Power Solutions – a prominent name in providing remarkable and technologically-advanced EV charging charge point operator (CPO) solutions and advanced battery have signed an MOU to revolutionise EV charging infrastructure in India. EMCOR Power Solutions is the Indian business start-up of EMCOR International, a renowned, Kuwait-based general trading company with a strong focus on the oil and gas sector, along with various ministerial departments.

Under the terms of this MOU, EMCOR Power Solutions commits to providing Servotech Power Systems with 1,000 CPO sites in India. These sites will serve as foundation for installation of EV chargers, as outlined by the agreement. Servotech Power Systems will take on the role of manufacturer and installer of 30-kw, 60-kw and even higher capacity DC fast EV chargers, strategically distributed across India to cater to varying power requirements of different locations. The project will be executed in phases, with the initial phase encompassing the installation of 100 DC fast EV chargers in South India, followed by further expansion across India. This tie-up will mark a significant development in the quest for efficient and well-equipped EV charging infrastructure in India.

Raman Bhatia, the MD of Servotech Power Systems Ltd, has expressed his enthusiasm about this partnership, stating: "The signed MOU aims to accelerate nationwide adoption of EVs by developing a well-equipped and technologically-advanced EV charging infrastructure. We understand that the widespread adoption of EVs requires more than just cutting-edge EV chargers; it demands a comprehensive and robust charging infrastructure that is accessible to all. Our goal, as the leading EV charger manufacturer in India, having a substantial market share, is to transform this vision into reality. We are confident that our deep industry knowledge and expertise in manufacturing high-quality, reliable and affordable charging solutions will make this partnership a resounding success."

"As the leading sustainable energy and power protection solutions provider, we, EMCOR Power Solutions, understand that the path to sustainability is paved through innovation, dedication and strategic alliances. In the pursuit of fulfilling our vision of accelerating the transition to sustainable mobility, we have forged strategic partnerships. The partnerships signify our dedication to bringing world-class expertise and cutting-edge technology to the forefront of sustainable mobility solutions. We are fully committed to leveraging our vast experience and resources to drive transformative change in the sustainable mobility landscape. Through this partnership, we aim to enter the realm of EV charging and are excited about the possibilities this partnership holds and the positive impact it will bring to our nation's mobility landscape" said Byju Kuniyil, the MD of EMCOR Power solutions and EMCOR International GTC, Kuwait.

Servotech Power Systems is an NSE-listed organisation that develops technology-enabled EV charging solutions, leveraging their over two decades of experience and expertise in the electronics space. With its comprehensive engineering capabilities, the company plans to play a pivotal role in developing India's EV tech infrastructure. ■

The Q2 Push

GG Engineering Ltd reports robust growth in earnings for Q2FY24, facilitating the company's future plans.

Since 2006, GG Engineering has been at the forefront of meeting rising demand for superior steel and engineering products.

IBJ BUREAU

GG Engineering Ltd.(BSE: 540614), a leading player in infrastructural and structural steel and engineering products industry, in its board meeting held on October 30, 2023, has approved the unaudited financial results of the company for the quarter and half year ended September 30, 2023.

For quarter ended September 30, 2023, revenue from operations grew by 98.39 per cent from Rs 3,691.74 lakh in Q2FY23 to Rs 7,324.12 lakh in Q2FY24. The company's EBITDA increased by 139.67 per cent from Rs 52.81 lakh in Q2FY23 to Rs.126.57 lakh in Q2FY24. Its EBITDA margins increased by 29 basis points (bps) from 1.44 per cent in Q2FY23 to 1.73 per cent in Q2FY24. The company's PAT rose by 52.98 per cent from Rs.49.23 lakh in Q2FY23 to Rs.75.31 lakh in Q2FY24.

The company's revenue from operations grew by 98.39 per cent to Rs 7,324.12 lakh in Q2FY24.

For the half year ended 30 September 2023, revenue from operations grew by106.23 per cent from Rs 4,470.09 lakh in H1FY23 to Rs 9,218.79 lakh in H1FY24. EBITDA jumped by 160.18 per cent from Rs 69.03 lakh in H1FY23 to Rs.179.60 lakh in H1FY24. EBITDA margins also increased by 42 basis points from 1.54 per cent in H1FY23 to 1.96 per cent in H1FY24. The company's PAT rose by 73.14 per cent from Rs.63.07 lakh in H1FY23 to Rs.109.20 lakh H1FY24.

Established in 2006, GG Engineering Limited has been at the forefront of meeting the rising demand for superior infrastructure infrastructural and structural steel and engineering products. With a strong focus on quality and precision, the company has carved a niche for itself in the industry. The company's products are used for diverse applications in various industries, like infrastructure, construction, mega projects, modern buildings, high-rise residential and commercial projects and engineering set-ups, among other.

Earlier, the company had announced that it had bagged fresh orders for infrastructural steel valued at about Rs 32 crore. GG Engineering is targeting an over 20 per cent growth in revenue from infrastructural steel business during the current financial year as compared to the business in the preceding year. The company is also in advanced stages of exploring to add new products, including steel pipes and hollow sections, to the infrastructure business, which will add further to the targets set for the business.

The company's vision remains anchored in creating a more resilient and environmentally-responsible future through its products and practices. With a reputation built on trust, reliability and unwavering dedication to excellence, GG Engineering Limited continues to forge ahead. It shapes a better future for both its stakeholders and the global community. ■

Processing For Prosperity

World Food India event yet again showcases the push for sustainability, innovation and entrepreneurship.

IBJ BUREAU

In celebration of the International Year of Millets in 2023 and with the goal of fostering collaboration within the global food processing industry, the government recently hosted the second edition of the World Food India 2023 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. With the dual aim of showcasing India's rich culinary traditions and encouraging investments in the country's diverse food processing sector the government of India had initiated the inaugural World Food India event in 2017.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the second edition of the mega food event. Addressing the gathering, Prime Minister emphasised India's three key growth pillars within the food processing sector: small farmers, small industries, and women. He stressed the significance of Farmer Produce Organizations (FPOs) in empowering small farmers and revealed that 7,000 out of 10,000 planned FPOs have already been established, providing enhanced market access and processing facilities.

The Food Street was curated by celebrity chef and restaurateur Ranveer Brar.

Additionally, the Prime Minister mentioned the organisation of 2 lakh micro-enterprises in the food processing industry to boost the participation of Small Scale Industries, with schemes like 'One District One Produce' (ODOP) creating new opportunities for small farmers and industries. He highlighted the increasing role of women in India's economy, especially the natural leadership abilities of Indian women in the food processing industry and reaffirmed the government's sup-

port for cottage industries and self-help groups for women at all levels.

Several new products were showcased at the World Food India exhibition, keeping in line with the demand from the urban population. Skyrrup is a company that caters to the urban population and its desire to eat healthy. Teaming up with an Icelandic company, Skyrrup has introduced an innovative product. Falling under the category of fermented cheese, the product resembles yogurt and contains 12 per cent protein in every 100 grams. The product is a rich source of calcium, is low in fat, is lactose free and has no added sugars. Similarly, innovation was the key element at the Aadvik stall. The brand sells non-bovine dairy products including goat and camel milk varieties. The company is also trying to break into the beauty industry by introducing soaps and face washes made from donkey milk and camel milk.

With rapid urbanisation, the demand for packaged foods has gone up. Several companies catering to this particular demand displayed their products at World Food India, 2023. One such company was The High-Life Cuisine, which, under its brand names ‘Meatington’ and ‘Grab a green’ offers frozen food items. Ms Rachna Malik, the MD of the company, said their company also prioritises the importance of reducing food waste and designs their packages in such a way that they can be reused and recycled.

Further underscoring the themes of sustainability and innovation, one company present at the exhibition was advertising its accomplishment as being India’s first Api Tourism centre. Api Tourism or bee tourism marries the traditional bee-keeping and honey sector with tourism. The company, Baswant, is in the honey business, but at the same times it also reinforces the commitment towards the environment by highlighting the plight of bees at its campus through movies, interactive activities, apiary visits and Q&A sessions.

Food Street

A unique Food Street was also set up at the exhibition which displayed India’s diverse culinary culture. The Food Street was curated by celebrity chef and restaurateur Ranveer Brar and featured stalls serving regional delicacies of India, the culinary heritage of India’s royal families and an all-millet pop-up restaurant. Speaking on the opening day of the event, Chef Brar said his vision for the Food Street centred around the core concepts of sustainability, revival and preservation of India’s food culture, and the use of millets to create a unique and enriching food experience for the visitors. Several street vendors from across India who have benefited from the PM SVANidhi scheme are also invited to the Food Street to serve their specialities.

World Food India is a singular experience that brings together every aspect of the food processing industry, welcoming investors, introducing consumers to new products in the market as well as displaying innovative technologies. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi noted, there is no sector in the food processing industry where India has not shown unprecedented growth. The food processing industry truly has become India’s sunrise sector. ■

“Mitigating food wastage is a significant endeavour in realising the objective of sustainable lifestyle. Our products should be designed to minimise wastage.”

NARENDRA MODI, Prime Minister

CLOGGED COGS

Despite a promising start, India will have to overhaul its manufacturing ecosystem to become a major workshop of the world.

IBJ RESEARCH BUREAU

Smartphones are ringing aloud the big India story across the country. Early this year, India became the world's second-largest mobile phone producer, next only to China, by registering an impressive output of 31 crore handsets worth around Rs 2,75,000 crore in FY23.

The growth in production is phenomenal when compared to the numbers in 2014. Back then, there were only two mobile phone plants, and they churned out 5.8 crore handsets valued at Rs 18,900 crore in FY15. Moreover, mobiles manufactured in India had a market share of 19 per cent in 2014. In other words, a whopping majority of the phones sold in India then were imported into the country.

The situation has dramatically changed in the past nine years with over 200 mobile phone plants currently operating in the country. The handsets coming out of these plants account for a mind-boggling 98 per cent of domestic sales, a giant leap from minuscule 19 per cent domestic sales of made-in-India phones. The huge domestic production has drastically slashed imports of mobile phones. Besides mobiles worth jaw-dropping Rs 90,000 crore were exported from India in FY23 – something that would be dismissed as a pipedream just a decade ago.

A big change in the country's mobile phone manufacturing landscape occurred in 2018. In July of that year, Samsung inaugurated its renovated old factory – set up in 1996 in Noida, Uttar Pradesh – after expanding it on a massive scale. Spread over 1,29,000 sq m, Samsung's plant became the world's largest mobile phone factory.

Soon, India became a preferred destination for global mobile phone manufacturers. Rapid growth in smartphone sales, driven by cheaper handsets and dirt-cheap data tariffs – India is the world's second-largest smartphone market, again next only to China – drew the who's who of global mobile phone industry to set up their bases in the country.

Top Chinese handset-makers like Oppo, Vivo and Xiaomi set up their manufacturing facilities in India subsequently. Leading Indian brands, like Micromax and Lava, too expanded their facilities and set up many more plants in the country.

The entry of Apple – the iconic US technology company that makes iPhones – into India changed the dynamics of the country's mobile phone manufacturing industry. In fact, Apple accounts for almost half of India's total mobile phone exports in FY23. US' ongoing trade war with China and the viral pandemic prompted Apple to consider India as a viable manufacturing base. Like many global manufacturers, Apple too adopted the China-Plus-One strategy, aimed at diversifying their supply chains, overly dependent on China, into other countries.

Today, Apple has six plants in India through its contract manufacturers – Foxconn (two facilities in Karnataka

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Make In India and PLI Scheme set the narrative for India's manufacturing growth.

– Wistron's India operation is being acquired by the Tata Group, making it the first Indian company to make iPhones). Besides, Foxconn is setting up two more big factories – one in Karnataka and another in Telengana.

Apple, which began its India operations way back in 2015 with lower versions of iPhone, is now set to make the latest iPhone 15 in India too. Besides, Google too has announced that it will be manufacturing its Pixel phones – including the latest Pixel 8 and Pixel 8 Pro – in India. These developments – with many path-breaking ones happening since 2021 – have placed India in the forefront of global mobile manufacturing industry.

The fascinating growth is not just limited to mobiles. The country's electronics manufacturing segment is equally upbeat. India's produc-

PLI's Inherent Flaws

PLI has an uphill task of reversing high dependence on China, making up a huge 43% of India's total pharmaceutical imports.

- Only three – electronics, including mobiles; pharmaceutical; and food processing – of the 14 sectors star performers, with the rest lagging behind
- A very short window making it tough to firm up investment decisions which take time
- Ever-expanding sectors rendering the scheme to lose focus and spreading resources thin
- More stress on finished product rather than components likely to leave India stuck in assembly line with little value addition

India is making a fascinating journey from traditional industries, like textile, steel and automobile, into many new-age industries.

tion of electronic goods more than doubled from Rs 3.88 lakh crore in 2017-18 to Rs 8.25 lakh crore in 2022-23. The country's exports of electronic goods also expanded by a whopping 58 per cent from Rs 1,16,936 crore in FY22 to a record Rs 1,85,000 crore in FY23. India's share in global electronics manufacturing also grew from 1.3 per cent in FY12 to over 3.75 per cent in FY23.

Mobiles, of course, made up around half of the country's total electronics production and exports. At the same time, production and exports of other electronic products – such as laptops, tablets, television and audio gadgets, LED lighting products, printed circuit boards (PCBs), wearable and hearable products and telecom equipment – were equally robust.

A refreshing vibrancy is palpable in the country's IT hardware segment – the second-largest growth centre in the electronics sector after mobile phones – with production of laptops, tablets, servers and related products showing promising growth. In fact, many global IT hardware manufacturers like HP, Dell, Lenovo, Thompson, Acer, Asus, Foxconn and Flextronics have already set up bases or are in the process of setting up their production facilities in India.

India is now taking baby steps

"India has been able to increase the value addition in mobile manufacturing to 20 per cent within a period of three years, whereas countries like Vietnam achieved 18 per cent value addition over 15 years, and China 49 per cent in over 25 years."

RAJESH KUMAR SINGH
Secretary, DPIIT

into the world of semiconductors or chips, rightly considered the nerve centre of modern electronics. Last year, Vedanta had teamed up with Foxconn to set up a chip manufacturing plant in Gujarat. However, the two partners have parted ways and are separately setting up their respective plants with new joint ventures. Vedanta is in talks with three companies to have separate tie-ups for foundry, chips and packaging and testing for its semiconductor unit. Foxconn, in the meanwhile, has teamed up with Franco-Italian company STMicroelectronics for a 40-nanometer chip plant. US-based Micron Technology is putting up a semiconductor unit in Sanand, Gujarat, while another US company Applied Materials has lined up $400 million each for an R&D centre and an engineering centre in Bengaluru.

When these semiconductor plants fructify, which will take some time, of course, India can look forward to leapfrogging to an advanced stage of electronics manufacturing. Meanwhile, India Stack – the digital public infrastructure behind the country's booming online payments, e-commerce and e-tail – is being seen worldwide as an ideal model to develop a digital economy.

Make In India magic

The past nine years have changed India in unimaginable ways. The transformational growth across new-age electronics segments, such as mobile phones and IT hardware, and promising developments in semiconductor sector place India as a major global hub for high-end manufacturing industries. India is making a fascinating journey from its core strengths in traditional industries – like textile, steel, automobile and pharmaceutical – into many new-age industries.

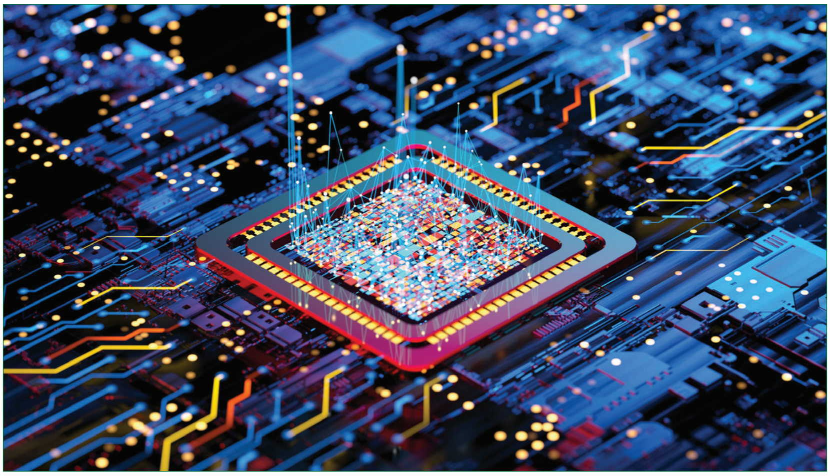
The viral pandemic and many geopolitical factors, such as the US-China trade war and the China-Plus-One strategy, undoubtedly played a vital role in changing the face of Indian manufacturing sector. However, a very strong internal factor, the Make In India programme, set the stage for the directional shift in the Indian industry.

Three months after taking over as the prime minister for the first time in 2014, Narendra Modi had launched the Make In India programme in September 2014. A month earlier, Mr Modi had announced his ambitious programme from the ramparts of the Red Fort in his first Independence Day speech on August 15, 2014. He had invited Indian and global companies to manufacture in India for both Indian and global markets and stressed on products with "zero defect" (high-quality, world-class products) and "zero effect" (not polluting the environment).

The programme aims to transform India's services-led economy by providing substantial stress to manufacturing. It aims to increase the share of manufacturing sector in the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 17 to 25 per cent.

Six years after the launch of Make In India, the world was infected by COVID-19. The viral pandemic exposed a fundamental flaw in global manufacturing: an overdependence on China, with supply chains and manufacturing facilities highly concentrated in the Asian country. National lockdowns to fight virus severely began affecting movement of vital goods and raw materials across the world. India's case was worse, with huge dependence on China for most of the raw materials and intermediate products. The tension in the Galwan Valley at the height of COVID crisis in mid-2020 further strengthened India's stance to develop industries indigenously. The prime minister's call for Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan (Self-Reliant India Campaign) subsequently set the tone for restructuring the country's industrial landscape.

In 2019, months before the deadly Coronavirus struck the world, India had to face a setback at the World Trade Organization (WTO). The WTO had ruled that India's export subsidy schemes – such as Merchandise Exports from India Scheme and Export Promotion Capital Goods Scheme, among others – violated the norms and had to be stopped. This subsequently led to the government launching the WTO-compliant Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme in 2021.



Promising developments in semiconductor sector may make India a major global hub for high-end manufacturing industries.

PLI: A game-changer

The PLI Scheme finally set the narrative for India's manufacturing growth. Under the overarching principle of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan, the Make In India programme and the PLI Scheme were designed to boost manufacturing sector and build a self-reliant India. Besides, the Make In India initiative and the PLI Scheme turned out to be a godsend for global manufacturers who were looking to diversify their China-centric supply chains.

By subsiding production, the government's flagship PLI Scheme aims to scale up domestic production, generate jobs, boost exports and curb cheap imports, achieving all these goals well within the WTO's subsidy norms. The scheme provides an average incentive of around 5 per cent – the incentive rates vary across different products – of the sales value of products covered under it.

The PLI Scheme, approved in March 2020, initially covered three sectors – mobile manufacturing and specified electronic components; bulk drugs and intermediaries; and medical devices. Over the past three years, the scheme has been expanded to 11 more sectors with the Central government's total incentive outlay of Rs 1.97 lakh crore for the 14 sectors.

Under the scheme, the 14 sec-

India's electronic goods production more than doubled to Rs 8.25 lakh crore in the five years to FY23.

tors have attracted investments of Rs 62,500 crore from various manufacturers as of March 2023. These sectors have registered domestic sales of over Rs 6.75 lakh crore and exports worth Rs 2.56 lakh crore during the period. The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) claims that these 14 sectors have generated new employment of around 3,25,000 as in March 2023.

According to official data, incentives of Rs 2,900 crore have been disbursed up to FY23 for eight sectors – large-scale electronics manufacturing, including mobile phones; IT hardware; bulk drugs; medical devices; pharmaceutical; telecom and networking products; food processing; and drones and drone components. The data adds that 176 SMEs are among the PLI beneficiaries in sectors such as bulk drugs, medical devices, telecom, white goods, food processing, textiles and drones. The highest disbursement of incentives of Rs 1,649 crore has been made to large-scale electronics manufacturing, followed by pharmaceutical at Rs 652 crore and food products at Rs 486 crore.

The PLI Scheme has indeed played a crucial role in transforming India into a major manufacturer of high-end products. "The PLI Scheme is a game-changer for electronics manufacturing. The scheme has turned India into the second-largest manufacturer of mobile handsets in the world and made it one of the fastest-growing mobile phone manufacturers in the world," stresses India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA) Chairman Pankaj Mohindroo.

The government and industry leaders acknowledge that the flagship scheme has led to increased value addition in domestic electronics sector and domestic smartphone segment at about 23 and 20 per cent respectively. The increased domestic value addition is quite significant, given that it was almost negligible

"One key deficiency of the PLI Scheme is that the subsidy is paid only for finishing the phone in India, not on how much value is added by manufacturing in India. It turns out that very little apart from assembly is done in India."

RAGHURAM RAJAN
Ex-RBI Governor

"Mr Rajan's argument is built on the false premise that all key electronics imports are only for the purposes of mobile production. Mobile production utilises only a part of the total key imports. Besides, assembly is the first step towards greater value addition."

RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR
MoS For Electronics & IT

in 2014. Mobile and laptop batteries, cables and chargers made in India are of world-class standards and are locally sourced by mobile handset and laptop manufacturers in India.

"India has been able to increase the value addition in mobile manufacturing to 20 per cent within a period of three years, whereas countries like Vietnam achieved 18 per cent value addition over 15 years, and China achieved 49 per cent value addition in over 25 years. Seen in this perspective, it is a big achievement," points out DPIIT Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh.

After recording initial success, the government is in advanced stages of rolling out the PLI Scheme for three more sectors – toys, footwear and new-age bikes. However, a PLI for semiconductors, which has been on the industry wishlist, is not in the pipeline. The semiconductor sector has already been covered by the Semicon India Programme with a total outlay of Rs 76,000 crore for the development of semiconductor and display manufacturing ecosystem in the country. Under the programme, the Central government offers a 50 per cent subsidy on semiconductor units, while State governments offer between 10 and 25 per cent subsidy over and above the Central subsidy.

The government, in the meanwhile, has reworked the PLI Scheme for IT hardware, launched in 2021, and has received overwhelming response for IT hardware 2.0. The incentive outlay has accordingly been increased from Rs 7,350 crore for IT hardware 1.0 to Rs 17,000 crore for IT hardware 2.0.

The first version of the scheme had failed to take off as expected, with only Dell and Bhagwati (Micromax) of the 14 approved companies meeting the first year's (FY22) sales targets. Companies had cited inadequate incentives as the main reason for the failure of PLI for IT hardware 1.0. Big players such as Samsung and Apple had given the scheme a miss altogether.

The reworked PLI for IT hardware 2.0 has received whopping 40 proposals worth over Rs 5,000 crore.

PLI: The Big Spread

Sector	Investment	Sales	Employment++	Govt's Incentive Outlay+++
Large-Scale Electronics Manufacturing+	6,600	3,00,000	60,000	38,645
Pharmaceutical	16,199	36,000	23,000	15,000
Bulk Drugs	2,019	NA	1,900	6,940
Medical Devices	714	NA	2,900	3,420
Food Processing	7,500	2,50,000	1,24,000	10,900
Telecom	1,800	22,000	17,000	12,195
White Goods	2,000	4,200	38,000	6,238
Automobile & Auto Components	8,900	22,500	19,000	25,938

Source: DPIIT

All figures – except those for employment – are in Rs crore for FY23.

+Includes mobile phones

++The figures for employment are number of jobs created.

+++The government's incentive outlay is for the entire period of the scheme of five or six years for the sectors concerned.

- No detailed official information is available on six other sectors – IT hardware 1.0; speciality steel; textile; solar PV modules; ACC battery; and drones and drone components.
- IT hardware 1.0 put up a dismal show, with only Dell and Bhagwati (Micromax) of the 14 approved companies meeting the first year's (FY22) sales targets.
- The reworked IT hardware 2.0 promises to be a grand success, receiving whopping 40 proposals worth over Rs 5,000 crore. The government is yet to approve IT hardware 2.0.
- The government's total incentive outlay of for the 14 sectors is Rs 1.97 lakh crore.
- Under the scheme, the 14 sectors have attracted total investments of Rs 62,500 crore from various manufacturers as of March 2023.
- These sectors have registered domestic sales of over Rs 6.75 lakh crore, exports worth Rs 2.56 lakh crore and generated employment of around 3,25,000 as of March 2023.
- The scheme provides an average incentive of around 5 per cent of the sales value of products covered under it.
- The incentive rates vary for different products across the 14 sectors.
- Many parameters are used to select global and Indian manufacturers, including SMEs, for the scheme that runs into five years for most sectors. The duration of the scheme is six or seven years for a few sectors.
- The selected manufacturers will have to achieve certain amount of incremental investments and incremental sales of goods manufactured in the country for each year over the base year (the year when the scheme becomes operational) during the entire duration of the scheme.

Global players – like HP, Dell, Lenovo, Acer and Asus – and domestic manufacturers – such as Padget (Dixon), VVDN, Netweb, Sahasra, and Sojo (Lava) – are among the applicants. The government is set to select the companies for the scheme soon.

Problems aplenty

Despite the seemingly-overwhelming success of the PLI Scheme, a closer look lays bare some inconsistencies. In fact, the flagship scheme presents mixed results, with some sectors attracting huge investments, while a few others are left in the lurch. The star performers are the PLI for large-scale electronics manufacturing – which includes mobile phones – pharmaceutical and food processing that have drawn a large number of companies with big investments.

The success of five other sectors – telecom; white goods; auto and auto components; bulk drugs; and medical devices – is rather lacklustre. IT hardware 1.0 put up a dismal show, but the reworked IT hardware

2.0 promises to be a grand success with many companies queuing up with big plans and big money. Meanwhile, high-efficiency solar PV modules; advanced chemistry cell (ACC) batteries; textile products; speciality steel; and drone and drone components have been the laggards with few investors ready to bet on them.

One reason for the PLI Scheme not resulting in desired level of investment in many sectors is a very short window. Investment decisions take time to firm up, and a brief period of five years would be too short for some critical industries, opine analysts tracking the flagship scheme. There are other glitches that seem to have held back a lot of these sectors from faring well in the scheme. Top bureaucrats reveal that the government is looking to redesign the PLI Scheme for a few laggard sectors after the reworked IT Hardware 2.0 scheme bounced back with a bang.

The ever-expanding sectors in the PLI Scheme are a cause for worry. Beginning with three, the scheme now covers 14 sectors, and there is strong possibility of three more sectors – new-age bicycles, leather and footwear and toys – being included. The PLI Scheme is very widely disbursed. "There are 14 sectors and more than 30 to 40 products under the PLI Scheme. So, it is not focused. This will make it very difficult to monitor the scheme across sectors. Besides, the targets may not be achieved if the scheme is so thinly spread," notes Subhash Chandra Garg, the former Union finance secretary.

"There are 14 sectors and more than 30 to 40 products under the PLI Scheme. This will make it very difficult to monitor the scheme across sectors. Besides, the targets may not be achieved if the scheme is so thinly spread."

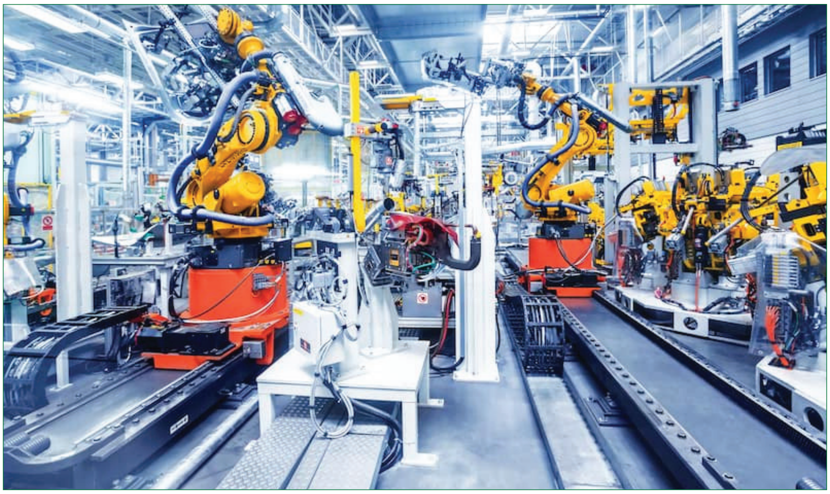
SUBHASH CHANDRA GARG
Ex-Union Finance Secretary

A major controversy and an ensuing debate kicked off by it point towards various unresolved issues around the PLI Scheme and Indian manufacturing industry. Former RBI Governor and economist Raghuram Rajan's co-authored article with two other economists appeared to show various flaws in the PLI Scheme, especially related to mobile phones. "One key deficiency of the PLI Scheme is that the subsidy is paid only for finishing the phone in India, not on how much value is added by manufacturing in India. It turns out that very little apart from assembly is done in India, though manufacturers claim they intend to do more in future. So India still imports much of what goes into the mobile phone, and when we correct for that, it is very hard to maintain that net exports have gone up," Mr Rajan had contended.

In his strong rebuttal to Mr Rajan's contention, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar had argued: "Mr Rajan's article is built on the false premise that all key electronics imports are only for the purposes of mobile production. Mobile production utilises only a part of the total key imports. Mr Rajan exaggerated the foreign exchange outflow purely to mislead readers, sensationalise the trade deficit and put down the PLI Scheme as a failure." Mr Chandrasekhar had further added that assembly was the first step towards greater value addition and stressed that India's performance was far better than what China was able to do in its first four to six years of mobile manufacturing.

It would be very difficult to decide emphatically whether Mr Rajan or Mr Chandrasekhar is right. In fact, both are partially right, and that, in essence, is the current status of the Make-In-India story. The recent developments in India's manufacturing industry can neither be simply dismissed as inconsequential nor can it be needlessly hyped up.

Rajesh Agarwal, the co-founder of Micromax Informatics – one of the few successful Indian mobile phone brands challenging their Chinese counterparts – will certainly be a better person to talk about the ground realities of Indian manufacturing



PLI fits perfectly into global manufacturers' China-Plus-One strategy of diversifying their China-centric supply chains.

industry. "It is hard to compete with Chinese smartphone-makers. They have huge strength in terms of production and can source almost all of their components locally. India does make some parts – including chargers, cables and batteries. But the more sophisticated parts, like screens and computer chips, are almost always made abroad," stressed Mr Agarwal.

A nuanced view put forth by Yuqing Xing – a professor of economics at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (NGIPS), Tokyo, and expert in modern manufacturing and supply chains – would provide better insights into the Indian manufacturing sector. Mr Xing points out that a smartphone has around 2,000 parts and only very skilful human hands and not robots can put them together.

A global mobile phone manufacturing hub requires millions of cheap labourers to assemble billions of mobile phones for the world market. Millions of cheap labourers are the comparative advantage of India to compete with global mobile phone-makers for the assembling task, notes Mr Xing. He further adds: "India has the potential to be a global mobile phone manufacturing hub. Being an assembly centre of mobile phones is the first step for India to be a global mobile manufacturing hub. But India still has a lot of homework to do in order to compete with China in the mobile phone industry."

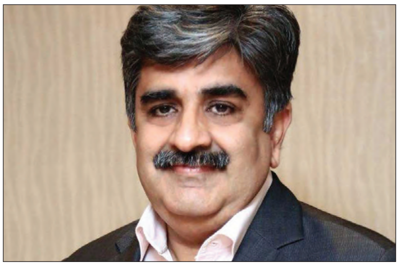
India may have done well by starting with assembly of mobiles on a massive scale. However, it cannot continue to be stuck at the assembly line for too long. A quick progress to the next stages of production and reasonably-good amount of value addition can help the country emerge as a major global manufacturing hub. And for this to happen, more mobile phone component-makers other than mobile phone manufacturers should set up shops in the country. Government policies must, in fact, encourage production of components. The reworked PLI Scheme for IT hardware 2.0 has good amount of products that are components, and this is a refreshing, welcome development.

Meanwhile, the pharmaceutical industry, which is the next star performer after mobile phones in the PLI Scheme, has a rather disconcerting tale to tell. India's pharmaceutical industry has been a star performer even before the PLI Schemes was conceptualised. It is the world's third largest by production volume and often considered the pharmacy of the world for its robust exports of affordable medicines across the globe.

What's Holding Up Manufacturing?

Actual share of manufacturing in GDP of 17% and the target of raising it to 25% are both stagnant for more than a decade now.

- Low share of employment in manufacturing sector at 11.40% a cause for worry
- Lack of skills stark with only 4.7% of India's workforce formally trained in skills as against 75% in Germany and 96% in South Korea
- Overall youth employability stagnant at around 46% over the past four years
- Nearly 83% of the country's workforce of about 40.80 crore relegated to the informal sector
- Skill development policies of past and present governments of little impact with industry demands not met
- Absence of robust manufacturing ecosystem with easier business terms, lower logistical costs and world-class infrastructure



"The PLI Scheme is a game-changer for electronics manufacturing. The scheme has turned India into the second-largest manufacturer of mobile handsets in the world."

PANKAJ MOHINDROO
Chairman, ICEA

India became the world's second-largest mobile phone producer by rolling out 31 crore handsets in FY23.

But the seemingly strong and healthy domestic pharmaceutical industry has a serious disease. And that disease was ironically exposed by the Coronavirus! At the height of COVID-19, India realised the extent of its dependence on China for active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) or bulk drugs – the main ingredients required to make any medicine.

India continues to be heavily dependent on imports of APIs and medical devices at alarming rates of 85 and 80 per cent respectively, with most imports shipped out of China. According to a recent report of CareEdge Ratings, formerly CARE Ratings, China accounts for about 43 per cent of India's total pharmaceutical imports.

"India has lost the advantage of bulk drug manufacturing over the years. China has built its presence because of the support received in multiple areas, from plant prices, interest rates and power subsidies, among others. Regaining the advantage and achieving self-reliance will be a long process," explains Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA) Secretary General Sudarshan Jain.

The PLI Scheme for three segments of the pharmaceutical industry – bulk drugs; medical devices; and pharmaceutical – has been designed

"It is hard to compete with Chinese smartphone-makers. They have huge strength in terms of production and can source almost all of their components locally."

RAJESH AGARWAL
Co-Founder, Micromax

particularly to treat this alarming disease. Under the scheme, production of 22 of the selected 34 APIs has begun, while high-end medical devices like CT scan and MRI machines are also being manufactured in the country now. However, the treatment for this long-lasting disease will also take a longer time to really start showing some improvement.

"India currently needs an entire ecosystem, beginning with dedicated universities, R&D driven by cutting-edge technology, large bulk drug parks with common infrastructure and substantial support from the government," points out CareEdge Ratings Associate Director Naveen Kumar.

An arduous journey

Meanwhile, turning India into a vibrant, global manufacturing hub is easier said than done. A catchy, slogan-like Make In India programme and the popular PLI Scheme alone cannot achieve this lofty goal. A quick glance at the policies unveiled by the Union government, run by different political parties at different times, reveals a curious permanent fixture – the targeted share of manufacturing sector in the GDP of 25 per cent.

This elusive 25 per cent target and the actual share of manufacturing in the GDP of 17 per cent have both been stuck for more than a decade now. The National Manufacturing Policy of 2011, unveiled by the Manmohan Singh-led UPA government, had targeted to raise the share of manufacturing in the GDP from 17 per cent in 2011 to 25 per cent in 2022. The Make In India programme of the Modi-led NDA government has the same set of numbers. Moreover, the Modi government has postponed the deadline to achieve this target thrice – from 2020 to 2022 to 2025. These numbers aptly tell the tragic tale of Indian manufacturing industry.

Another poignant matter is declining share of employment in the manufacturing sector. The government's annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) shows that the share of employment in the manufacturing sector fell from 12.10 per cent in 2017-18 to 10.90 per cent in 2020-21. A silver lining is that the latest PLFS of 2022-23 shows an improvement of 11.40 per cent, which is welcome but not enough.

A lot more is needed than mere incentives to push growth in manufacturing sector to a respectable level. One of the biggest impediments to the expansion of manufacturing sector is a severe lack of skilled workforce. According to many estimates, only an average 4.7 per cent per cent of the country's workforce has undergone some kind of formal skill training. In Germany and South Korea, for instance, their respective workforce is skilled to the extent of 75 and 96 per cent respectively.

In 2023, employability among Indian engineering graduates was about 57 per cent. However, overall employability among the youth has been stagnant at around 46 per cent over the past four years. So, even as engineering graduates have a comparatively better chance to secure decent employment, a vast number of non-engineering youngsters are doomed to be unemployed or stuck in low-paid jobs. No wonder then that nearly 83 per cent of the country's workforce of about 40.80 crore is relegated to the informal sector, with a disproportionately high number of people engaged in agriculture.

The National Skill Development Policy of the UPA government in 2009 and the NDA government's Skill India programme in 2015 have unfortunately yielded very little results. Both the policies mandate nodal agency National Skill Development Corporation to stimulate private sector involvement in skill development. This is happening in only very cases. Sadly, most of what passes for skill development training is still designed and imparted in the old-fashioned way without actually involving the industry. The end result is that most of the youth that have undergone skill training are still considered unskilled and hence unemployable by the industry.

Skill development apart, there is the absence of a robust ecosystem that can support and promote the manufacturing sector. Despite the end of the Licence Raj – the discredited pre-Liberalisation era when almost everything that had to be manufactured in India needed the government's licence – over three decades ago, remnants of the old system continue to haunt the Indian

Upcoming dedicated freight corridors and industrial centres along the corridors may help boost manufacturing by slashing logistical cost.

"Being an assembly centre of mobile phones is the first step for India to be a global mobile manufacturing hub. But India still has a lot of homework to do in order to compete with China in the mobile phone industry."

YUQING XING
Economics Professor, NGIPS

"India has lost the advantage of bulk drug manufacturing over the years. China has built its presence because of the support received in multiple areas, from plant prices, interest rates and power subsidies, among others."

SUDARSHAN JAIN
Secretary General, IPA

industry and business. There is still too much government in every sector and the resultant bureaucracy is a millstone around the industry's neck.

Moreover, ease of doing business – the discredited World Bank's global ranking that India and many other countries had vaulted rather surprisingly was scrapped in 2021 for allegedly being fixed – is still quite tough in India in spite of many reforms. Logistical hurdles too persist even after huge improvements in infrastructure, like road, rail, port and air transport. The cost of logistics, power and other inputs that go into manufacturing is still quite high in India when compared with that of China or other developed Western countries. In short, there are too many chinks in the country's manufacturing ecosystem that need to be urgently fixed.

Make In India and the PLI Scheme have undoubtedly boosted India's morale to make it big in the world of manufacturing. However, the two programmes have their limitations. A greater push for the country's manufacturing ambitions can only come from overhauling its ecosystem. India will have to seriously move towards integrating itself within the global supply chains. India definitely has made a promising beginning. But it still has a very long and arduous journey ahead before becoming a major workshop of the world. ■

"Think Beyond Imagination!"

"Strategic risk-taking is often required for achieving significant success. Such calculated risks can lead to growth and provide solutions to financial challenges, a hallmark of many successful business ventures."

Nikhil Goyal, a serial entrepreneur, conservationist, investor and speaker, is versatile with diverse interests and accomplishments. Mr Goyal, the founder and CEO of Beyond Imagination Technologies, strives to tap into the boundless possibilities of blockchain and make a meaningful impact for clients, colleagues, partners, government bodies and communities. His Delhi-based blockchain-powered enterprise empowers businesses across various sectors to address real-world issues and remain relevant in the future by offering exciting and creative solutions.

With a wealth of entrepreneurial experience and a strong affinity for technology, Mr Goyal is dedicated to delivering innovative concepts and narratives through technological advancements and sustainability. His sharp business acumen has led to successful implementation of several notable projects, including manufacturing ventures in Bhutan and development of tech-enabled water solutions through E-Jal.

Mr Goyal holds a master's degree in corporate communication from St Xavier's College. Before embarking on his current venture, he spent years exploring various corporate roles and independent business ventures, including projects focused on water conservation.

In this new world of blockchain technology, Mr Goyal believes in creating impactful, realistic, viable and profitable change. One of the flagship products of Beyond Imagination is the BIT Web3 Application, an exceptional suite for record management that represents a significant leap in digital transformation of businesses.

Aside from his entrepreneurial endeavors, he is committed to giving back to the community. He has demonstrated this through his previous venture, E-Jal and continues to do so with the Web3 Club initiative. Through this initiative, he helps schools and colleges establish Web3 Clubs run by students. Leveraging the resources of BIT, these clubs offer opportunities for learning, professional growth, internships, employment, grants for promising ideas, hackathons, interactive sessions and more.

Mr Goyal's contributions extend beyond his ventures as he also serves as an investor and mentor for numerous startups. Additionally, he has been invited to speak at national and international summits, sharing his insights and experiences.

He is also an avid golfer, and his fondness for hilly retreats stems from his upbringing in the picturesque surroundings of Darjeeling.

Sharmila Chand meets up with Mr Goyal to understand his management principles and practices that have helped him build many successful ventures and inspire startups.

Your five management *mantras*

- **Clear communication:** Effective communication is the bedrock of any thriving organisation. Transparency, active listening and clarity are paramount for building robust relationships and preventing misunderstandings.
- **Collaborative culture:** Collaboration among team members leads to synergy and increased productivity. Encouraging cooperation, teamwork and knowledge sharing is crucial.
- **Well-being of the team:** It is very important to value contributions of team members for development of an organisation.
- **Saying 'no':** A leader has to learn to say 'no' when necessary, and this helps in maintaining focus and efficiency of an organisation.
- **Thinking big:** The key to success is to think big and break down ambitious goals into smaller, manageable milestones.

A game that helps your career

During my leisure time, I enjoy playing golf, which has imparted several valuable lessons applicable to my role as a CEO in the blockchain industry. Golf has honed my strategic thinking, emphasising the importance of considering various factors before making a decision. It has also taught me risk management, helping me evaluate and navigate potential risks in my industry. Time management on the golf course has translated into effective time management in my work life, aiding in task prioritisation and organisation.

to the ever-changing business landscape.

Your philosophy of work

My work philosophy revolves around having the right team, the right partners, transparent communication and an unwavering commitment to never compromise on quality.

A person you admire

I draw inspiration from the calm and composed nature of my father, who, despite humble beginnings, continues to smile at the age of 70, believing in doing his part and letting the world work its magic.

Best advice you got

The best advice I have received is: Never compromise on quality, and learn to say no.

Your sounding board

My sounding board is my employees who help me navigate the complexities of being a CEO and make well-informed decisions for the company.

Your favourite books

One of my favourite books is *Ikigai* (by Hector Garcia and Francesc Miralles) as it delves into life, health and companionship, emphasising the importance of every aspect of life.

NIKHIL GOYAL

Founder & CEO, Beyond Imagination Technologies

> "The key to success is to think big and break down ambitious goals into smaller, manageable milestones."

Turning point in your career

The turning point in my career arrived when I embraced collaboration and mentorship. Shifting from a focus on individual success to building a strong team and seeking guidance from experienced mentors propelled my career forward and led to the establishment of a successful company. This transition underlined the significance of collective wisdom and a supportive network in achieving greatness.

Secret of your success

The secret to our success lies in an unwavering commitment to innovation, prioritising customers' satisfaction and maintaining an exceptional team. We foster a culture of creativity and continuous improvement, meeting evolving market demands while exceeding clients' needs. Our dedicated, passionate and highly-skilled workforce drives our growth, adapting

Your fitness regime

To stay fit, I engage in activities like swimming and walking with a preference for early-morning routines that also contribute to my mental well-being.

Your message on management to youngsters

Don't stop thinking; think beyond imagination! Convert your passion into work.

How would you define yourself in one sentence?

I am a person who is a firm believer in energy, emphasising the importance of collaboration, quality and innovation in business, with a passion for continuous improvement.

Write to us at chand.sharmila@gmail.com


Data Protection: Shortfalls Aplenty
Rupee Goes Global
Startups: Thriving Growth
India Business Journal
VOL. XIX No. 2 Rs 100
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AI
THE BIG QUESTION
There are no easy answers for the future of rapidly-changing artificial intelligence and its regulation amid its immense gains and equally dire threats.

Belgium accuses Alibaba of spying

Belgian officials are looking into risks around the presence of China's Alibaba Group Holding at a cargo airport in the city of Liege, the country's intelligence service VSSE has said in a statement. Referring to the company's main European logistics centre at Liege Airport, the security service has said that it is working to "detect and fight against possible spying and/or interference activities carried out by Chinese entities, including Alibaba". Belgian authorities are looking into Alibaba's operations at the airport based on an analysis of China's legal framework, the statement has added. "We strongly deny the allegations based on prior conjecture," Alibaba's logistics arm Cainiao has said.

Exxon Mobil to buy Pioneer for $59.5 bn

Exxon Mobil has agreed to buy US rival Pioneer Natural Resources in an all-stock deal valued at $59.5 billion. The acquisition will make Exxon Mobil the biggest producer in the largest US oilfield and secure a decade of low-cost production. The deal, valued at $253 a share, combines the largest US oil company with one of the most successful names to emerge from the shale revolution that turned the US into the world's largest oil producer in little more than a decade. Exxon Chief Executive Darren Woods has said in a media briefing that the combination provides a big opportunity for synergies between the companies.

Nokia to axe 14,000 jobs to cut costs

Finnish telecoms company Nokia will be axing between 9,000 and 14,000 jobs by the end of 2026 to cut costs. The announcement was made as the company reported a 20 per cent drop in sales between July and September. The company has blamed slowing demand for 5G equipment in markets such as North America. It currently has 86,000 employees around the world and has axed thousands of jobs since 2015. Nokia wants to cut costs by between 800 million euros and 1.2 billion euros by 2026. Its customers have been cutting spending amid high inflation and interest rates, Nokia has said.

OpenAI mulls making own AI chips

OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT, is exploring making its own artificial intelligence (AI) chips and has gone as far as evaluating a potential acquisition target. The company has not yet decided to move ahead, according to recent internal discussions. However, since at least last year, it has discussed various options to solve the shortage of expensive AI chips that OpenAI relies on. These options have included building its own AI chip, working more closely with other chip-makers, including Nvidia, and also diversifying its suppliers beyond Nvidia. CEO Sam Altman has made acquisition of more AI chips a top priority for the company.

'MDBs must route funds via country systems'

Multilateral development banks (MDBs) shift away from individual projects towards programmes where national governments take a strong lead. They should scale up and engage with the private sector to triple MDB financing by 2030, suggests a report the Independent Expert Group (IEG) on strengthening MDBs. This approach can make MDBs better, bolder and bigger. The IEG report has called for MDBs to streamline and simplify business processes by halving processing time from concept note to first disbursement. They must harmonise and mutually recognise safeguards and fiduciary requirements and channel operations through country systems in at least 50 per cent of country clients, the report has added.

David Tolley is WeWork CEO

WeWork has named interim Chief Executive David Tolley as its CEO, with the former Blackstone executive given the charge of turning around the flexible workspace provider's ailing business. Mr Tolley, who was CFO of satellite operator Intelsat from 2019 to 2022, has been a WeWork board member since February 2023 and is interim CEO since May 2023. WeWork has been in turmoil ever since its plans to go public in 2019 imploded as investors worried over its hefty losses and began to doubt its business model of taking long-term leases and renting them for the short term. It finally went public in 2021 at a much-reduced valuation.

Citi to sell China retail assets to HSBC

Citigroup has agreed to sell its Chinese consumer wealth portfolio – including clients, assets under management (AUM) and deposits, to Asia-focused HSBC Holdings. The deal covers total deposits and investment AUMs of about $3.6 billion and is expected to close in the first half of 2024. Financial details of the transaction have not been disclosed. "Today's announcement progresses the wind-down of Citi's consumer banking business in China, which was announced in December 2022," the US-headquartered bank has said in a statement. Citi had first announced its plan to exit Chinese consumer banking in April 2021 as a part of a global strategy revamp.

Oil traders cautious as Israel war rages

Crude oil traders the world over do not expect a massive price surge in oil prices following the Israel-Hamas war as there is no immediate threat to supply. But all eyes are on Iran, a major oil producer and key backer of the Hamas group that had launched last month's offensive on Israel. A retaliatory strike against the Islamic Republic of Iran will inflame fears over the Strait of Hormuz, the vital shipping artery which Tehran has previously threatened to shutter. There is also the prospect of the US cracking down again on a resurgent flow of Iranian oil exports.

Qatar Airways' Al Baker to step down

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Akbar Al Baker is stepping down after leading the company for 27 years. Mr Al Baker's retirement will go into effect November 5, Qatar Airways has said. He will be succeeded by Badr Mohammed Al-Meer, who currently serves as chief operating officer of Hamad International Airport in Doha, the hub of Qatar's national carrier. Qatar Airways has grown to become one of the most recognisable and trusted brands globally under Mr Al Baker's leadership. During his tenure at Qatar Airways, Mr Al Baker became known for being one of the most outspoken leaders in the airline industry.

Goldin gets Nobel for gender pay studies

This year's Nobel Prize for Economics has been awarded to Claudia Goldin, an American economic historian, for her work on women's employment and pay. Prof Goldin's research uncovered key drivers behind the gender pay gap, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences has said. She is only the third woman to receive the prize and the first to not share the award with male colleagues. The 77-year-old academic currently teaches labour market history at Harvard University in the US. Ms Goldin's work examines 200 years of data on the US workforce, showing how and why gender differences in earnings and employment rates have changed over time.

Deflation looms as prices sluggish in China

China's consumer prices have remained in the past few months. The numbers show weak consumer demand as the world's second-largest economy continues to stumble out of the COVID pandemic. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) has dropped below the 0.2 per cent increase that analysts had expected. "CPI inflation at zero indicates the deflationary pressure in China is still a real risk to the economy. The recovery of domestic demand is not strong, without a significant boost from fiscal support," Zhiwei Zhang, the chief economist of Pinpoint Asset Management, has said. China's deflation difficulties are in stark contrast to the rest of the world's inflation crisis over the last two years.

Ten-fold rise in electric cars by 2030

The energy world is set to change significantly by 2030, based on the current policy settings, which includes almost 10 times as many electric cars on the road worldwide, the International Energy Agency (IEA) has said. According to the IEA's new World Energy Outlook 2023, the share of renewable energy in the global electricity mix will reach 50 per cent by 2030 from the current 30 per cent. ■

J&J gets relief in talc powder case

A New Jersey appeals court has thrown out a $223.8-million verdict against Johnson & Johnson (J&J) that a jury had awarded to four plaintiffs. These plaintiffs had claimed that they had developed cancer from being exposed to asbestos in the company's talc powder products. The Superior Court of New Jersey, Appellate Division found that a lower court judge should not have allowed some of the scientific expert testimony that the plaintiffs had presented to jurors at the trial. J&J General Counsel Erik Haas has said that the decision "resoundingly rejects ... the 'junk science' advanced by purported 'experts' paid by the mass tort asbestos bar".

Chevron to buy Hess for $53 billion

Chevron Corp has agreed to buy Hess Corp in a deal worth $53 billion, the latest major consolidation in the US oil industry. In an all-stock transaction, Chevron will pay $171 per share for Hess. Hess' shareholders will receive 1.025 shares of Chevron for each Hess share, giving the company a total enterprise value of $60 billion, including debt. "This combination positions Chevron to strengthen our long-term performance and further enhance our advantaged portfolio by adding world-class assets," Chevron Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Mike Wirth has said. This is the second major deal in the US oil industry, weeks after Exxon bought Pioneer.

UAW's strike at GM hits new plant

The United Auto Workers (UAW) has expanded its strike against General Motors (GM) to include its Spring Hill, Tennessee, engine plant, a move that could stall GM's large pickup production and increase its financial pain. The expansion of the seven-week strike leaves GM, the only Detroit automaker, without a contract deal. Chrysler-owner Stellantis and Ford had reached agreement with the UAW earlier. Those deals won workers a record 25 per cent jump in wages over the four-and-a-half-year contract and allow the companies to restart their profitable truck assembly lines. Sticking points in the UAW's negotiations with GM include retirement benefits and issues related to temporary workers.

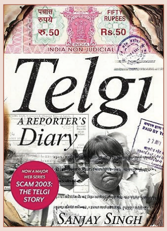
Anatomy Of A Scam

On an evening in the late 1990s, when Abdul Karim Telgi spent more than Rs 80 lakh, an amount enough to buy 20 kg of gold at that time, on a dancer in a Mumbai dance bar, the police, politicians and the underworld immediately took notice. Who was this person? What business did he own? How had a man who was selling peanuts on a railway station a few years ago become so rich?

In 2001, when Telgi was arrested by Mumbai police, his fake stamp paper scam was arguably the biggest in Indian history at an estimated Rs 30,000 crore. As Sanjay Singh, then a young reporter with the NDTV –who eventually exposed the scam in 2003 – discovered, there was more to it than just the mindboggling numbers. The quality of the stamp papers, which were printed on 'obsolete' machines reportedly obtained from the government's closely-guarded security press in Nashik, was so good that it was difficult to tell them apart from the real ones. Crafty and resourceful, Telgi kept the racket flourishing for more than a decade.

A result of deep investigative work, in-person interviews and confidential case documents, this book is the thrilling account of a man who built an extensive counterfeit empire worth thousands of crores and masterminded a scam of unimaginable proportions.

TELGI



Author:
Sanjay Singh

Publisher:
HarperCollins India

Pages:
282

Price:
Rs 310

About the author

With over two-and-a-half decades of experience in investigative journalism, Sanjay Singh's career graph features prominent news channels, such as the Zee News, Times Now, NDTV, News18 *and* News-X. *He has exposed numerous scams and conspiracies.*

RBI Vs Government

Beyond the headline-grabbing issues, the Indian economy is struggling to solve a critical problem: How to restore and maintain financial stability on a durable basis. In this book, author Viral V Acharya, the former deputy Governor of the RBI, talks about his quest for restoring financial stability in India and offers a concrete plan for sustained improvement.

Mr Acharya shares a feasible plan to address the recapitalisation needs of public sector banks, offering solutions on how to improve credit allocation by credit intermediaries and establish viable and efficient capital markets. Elucidating the need-of-the-hour reforms, this book also raises several stark and unanswered questions related to the re-emergence of fiscal dominance in India, not just of monetary policy tools but also of banking regulations.

Mr Acharya had a short stint as deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) before he resigned prematurely. His resignation followed the exits of Raghuram Rajan and his successor, Urjit Patel, as RBI governors. The last five years have seen the emergence of a strained relationship between the North Block and the Mint Street. This book is a definitive account of the clash of ideas that continues between the RBI and the finance ministry.

Mr Acharya's book is technical and will be appreciated more by bankers than lay readers. However, he has tried to make the book accessible to readers with an elementary knowledge of finance. The crux of his message is not about the technicalities of bank management and regulatory oversight. It is essentially about the differences in perception on economic policies, chiefly the monetary policy of the RBI and the fiscal policy of the Union government.

The book is a collection of very thoughtful speeches that Mr Acharya gave in his two-year tenure as the deputy governor and some of his other writings. In the US, the speeches of the governors are followed very closely if they are identified as the "whisperer behind the throne". These speeches are typically prosaic but helpful when looking for nuggets on the future direction of monetary policy. Mr Acharya's speeches do not deal with this juicy day-to-day aspect of central banking, as the title of the book indicates. But his speeches are much more thoughtful and exposited with the help of data and charts on policy issues related to banking and financial stability. These are all very well laid out in six parts.

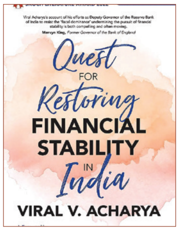
The book lays out the state of the Indian banking system's non-performing asset situation and on the urgency

Viral Acharya's book is a definitive account of the clash of ideas that continues between the Mint Street and the North Block.

and challenges of recapitalising banks. It examines the dire need for a digitalised registry to capture and store financial information of borrowers in India under the umbrella of the central bank: Public Credit Registry. This type of information exists in the developed world between various government agencies that oversee different facets of the credit market but is usually missing in the emerging markets. The chapters here deal with its role and how to create it in India. An intriguing chapter talks about what lessons the Indian banking system can learn from the shampoo sachet marketing technique, namely that big problems have small solutions.

This book makes a persuasive case for striking the right balance between the government, the central bank, the private sector and markets in order to improve long-run growth prospects for the real economy.

QUEST FOR RESTORING FINANCIAL STABILITY IN INDIA



Author: Viral Acharya

Publisher: Sage Publications India

Pages: 396

Price: Rs 695

About the author

Viral V Acharya is the CV Starr Professor of Economics in the Department of Finance at New York University Stern School of Business. He was a deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) from January 23, 2017, to July 23, 2019, in charge of monetary policy, financial markets, financial stability and research.

Inside Musk's Mind

From the author of Steve Jobs and other bestselling biographies, this is an astonishingly-intimate story of the most fascinating and controversial innovator of our era – a rule-breaking visionary who helped to lead the world into the era of electric vehicles, private space exploration and artificial intelligence. Oh, and took over Twitter.

When Elon Musk was a kid in South Africa, he was regularly beaten by bullies. One day, a group pushed him down some concrete steps and kicked him until his face was a swollen ball of flesh. He was in the hospital for a week. But the physical scars were minor compared to the emotional ones inflicted by his father, an engineer, rogue and charismatic fantasist.

His father's impact on his psyche would linger. He developed into a tough yet vulnerable man-child, prone to abrupt Jekyll-and-Hyde mood swings, with an exceedingly high tolerance for risk, a craving for drama, an epic sense of mission and a maniacal intensity that was callous and at times destructive.

At the beginning of 2022, after a year marked by SpaceX launching 31 rockets into orbit, Tesla selling a million cars, and he becoming the richest man on earth, Mr Musk spoke ruefully about his compulsion to stir up dramas. "I need to shift my mindset away from being in crisis mode, which it has been for about 14 years now, or arguably most of my life," he had said. It was a wistful comment, not a New Year's resolution.

For two years, author Walter Isaacson shadowed Mr Musk, result is the revealing inside story, filled with amazing tales of triumphs and turmoil that address the question: Are the demons that drive Mr Musk also what it takes to drive innovation and progress?

ELON MUSK

Author: Walter Isaacson

Publisher: Simon & Schuster

Pages: 688

Price: Rs 2,599

About the author

Walter Isaacson is a professor of history at Tulane University. He has been CEO of the Aspen Institute, chairman of the CNN, *and editor of the* Time *magazine. He has authored several books and bestsellers.*

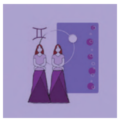
Aries

Transit of planets gives a clue that you need to be cautious while making major investments. Try to get suggestions from experts. It is not a good time to enter into a new agreement with a family business. It is not a good time to be working in fashion or creative industries. Be cautious while making a major investment in these businesses. Don't get into legal matters related to property. This can lead to unplanned expenditure for you.

Taurus

Some families may spend money on celebrations or marriages in the family. There will be travel-related expenditure. Childbirth and small get-togethers will bring happiness and minor expenditure too. There can be expenses related to vehicle repair. The middle of November may bring some health- and loan-related expenses. Movement of Mars and Ketu in the last quarter of this year suggests that you avoid any aggressive or quick decisions related to investment.

Gemini



Ketu and Venus advise you to avoid any major investment in the stock market. Movements of Sun and Mars can help you overcome debt-related issues. Those of you who are in legal work or a firm can get financial gain from your clients, and your businesses will benefit from expansion. Movement of Rahu suggests that you avoid giving money to others because its return will be difficult or even impossible. Mars can provide financial gain from projects related to your business and help from your business partner.

Cancer

Venus and Ketu advise you to take care of your health, which can lead to unplanned expenditure. Those of you who are in business should be attentive to major investments and have proper verification. Your company may have to spend money on advertising and other related activities. This can have good returns. Chances are that you may find success in a legal career, which can result in financial gain. According to Jupiter and Sun, there will be new job opportunities, resulting in expected financial gain. This month will bring you expected financial success, but you must be cautious with property-related matters.

Leo

Short trips and travel related to work can provide financial gain. There may be expenditure on electronic devices. You should not make a large investment in the stock market without seeking professional advice. New courses related to writing can be expensive for students. This month, your legal career will bring you a lot of money. You will learn about various options for making and investing money. There can be sudden financial expenditure in foreign-related business. There can be health-related expenditure for this month. Home-related investments can result in financial gain.

Virgo

You may have more expenditure than income. A lack of understanding and stress among the family may also lead to financial losses or unplanned expenses. It is time to have patience and make decisions after a proper analysis of the situation you are in. There will be health-related expenditure. Financial planning will be needed. Expenses on gifts will also be there. You are going to learn how to make small savings for the long term. There will be a recovery of money if you have given it to others. It is not a favourable time to take a loan during this period. There will be sudden expenditure in your business.

Libra

This is a good period to consolidate your financial position, recover pending payments and also make extra money. Jupiter in transit will broaden your horizon, leading to better earning opportunities. Your financial status will improve gradually. However, Saturn will demand that you make systematic investments to derive desired financial growth. It will increase your cash flow, income and earning power. There will be some good earning opportunities around the middle of this month. Your cash flow will increase.

Scorpio

As the month begins, you can expect a good inflow of money. However, Venus indicates that as the month progresses, your extravagant side will come to the fore. This may put some commitment pressure on you. There may be some good opportunities for financial gains around the middle of this month. It will also be a good time for buying a home and an investment in land or a vehicle. There will be improvement in your financial position during the latter half of the month. You may even buy a bigger vehicle or home, predicts Ganesha.

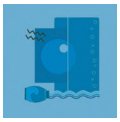
Sagittarius

The month may begin on a very average note for your financial matters. Stability should reign. If you have overshot your budget lately, you may be hard pressed to make it through. As the month advances, planets will be helping you to use your talents for financial gain. Those out-of-the-box ideas that you may have about making life more expedient will come in handy now. And they can wind up being lucrative for you as well. Impact of planets around the middle of this month wants you to pay special attention to your reputation and how it influences your finances. Stay positive, even when things seem a little rocky.

Capricorn

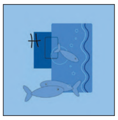
As the month begins, Saturn may demand strict discipline, efficient planning and balanced decisions. Your progress may be slow in the beginning, but gradually, some new opportunities seem to be in the offing for you. Stars may remain positive for your financial status, but you must act with patience as the South Node may bring some challenges around the middle of this month. The period will encourage you to implement some corrective measures. Stars foretell that you will have some pressure in money matters despite having good income during the latter part of this month. Around the month-end, you may face some complex situations and experience a roller-coaster ride.

Aquarius



During this month, you will have a good income flow. But you will not be able to save much. As Saturn indicates, your family may incur some expenses, and you may experience some constraints. However, this will be a good phase for discussion of important matters related to any pending financial issues, as the talks would prove to be beneficial. Mars will make you very ambitious to find quick gains as the month advances. You must avoid any unnecessary risky steps. Otherwise, it will be difficult for you to cover your acquired commitments. You may have good income flow during this month and also have enough spare funds.

Pisces



In the beginning of this month, Venus may bring more expenses, and that may put pressure on your financial planning. List your priorities, and spend money wisely. Refrain from trying your luck in speculative ventures to boost your earnings. Do not lend, borrow or invest money till the middle of this month, unless they are absolutely unavoidable. You are likely to come across good times for your financial matters around the middle of this month. Here you need to implement your plan in a stepwise manner to strengthen your financial status. During the latter half of the month, your financial progress is likely to start picking up positive momentum.

RIL Stock Seems To Be On A Roll

It seems that businesses in the private sector are now shifting their focus towards customer-facing industries. Reliance Industries (RIL), the oil and gas, telecom and retail behemoth, is also making this shift quite rapidly. You may consider RIL's NMP at 7 per cent, and its price-to-earnings ratio trading between 17.3 and 17.4. If you execute your entry and exit trades correctly, you may make between Rs 250 and Rs 300 during the year, according to both sum-of-the-parts approach and astrology. The RIL stock could reach Rs 1,700 apiece.

Astrological Observations

It may turn out that the Visha Yoga of the Moon-Saturn in the natal chart is nectar or amrit for Reliance. This is because the Moon symbolises liquid products, while Saturn signifies dark products.

***Visha Yoga* of the Moon-Saturn in RIL's natal chart may turn out to be nectar or *amrit* for the company.**

Important Timeframes

- You may refer to this as the trading stock of the year.
- You may also receive a higher margin profit for the more delivery- based trading you conduct.
- Compared to earlier, the following two slots will stay open: 01-11-2023 to 24-11-2023 and 03-02-2024 to 27-02-2024.

It seems that the remaining time would be of no use.

AT THE HELM

S N SUBRAHMANYAN

The man who sowed the seeds of a new Larsen & Toubro (L&T) is now in charge of the engineering and construction behemoth. Sekharipuram Narayanan Subrahmanyan – better known as SNS – stepped into the big shoes of Anil Manibhai Naik as the new chairman and managing director of L&T last month.

Yet Mr Subrahmanyan's new L&T is unique in the sense that it is still true to its core strengths of construction and engineering. Mr Subrahmanyan's commitment to L&T's roots is but natural, given that the 63-year old new L&T chief cut his teeth under Mr Naik, who was at the helm of the engineering conglomerate for over two decades.

In fact, SNS' new L&T began taking shape way back since 2017. The changes coincided with Mr Subrahmanyan assuming the role of the CEO and MD in July 2017. For the past six years as CEO, Mr Subrahmanyan oversaw many changes. There has been massive expansion of services segment – including information technology (IT) and financial services – accounting for about 28 per cent of the company's consolidated revenue of more than Rs 1,84,000 crore.

A fine blend of the old and the new has facilitated L&T's core strength of engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) model to move seamlessly into new businesses, like solar energy and data centres, among others. For instance, the scale of the Mumbai-headquartered company's solar EPC projects has grown manifold in the past six years from mere 25-50 mw to a massive over 1.5 gw.

The courage and conviction behind Mr Subrahmanyan's adoption of novelty stem from his four-decade-long association with the company since 1984. Born in Chennai, young Subrahmanyan completed his civil engineering from Regional Engineering College Kurukshetra – currently National Institute of Technology, Kurukshetra, in Haryana. He later pursued an MBA from Symbiosis Institute of Business Management, Pune, and followed it up with an Executive Management Programme from the London Business School.

Joining as a project planning engineer of L&T's construction

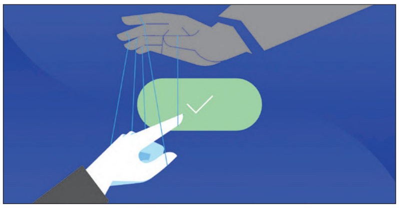
FACTS FOR YOU

DARK PATTERNS

The Union government recently issues guidelines to curb dark patterns used by online platforms. The guidelines, released by the Department of Consumer Affairs in a draft document, have warned social media and online commerce websites and apps indulging in dark patterns of strict action under Section 18 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

The guidelines have listed out some of the most prevalent types of dark patterns, such as sneaking items into online shopping carts; making cancellation of a paid online subscription impossible; and creating a sense of false urgency; among others. The objective of enlisting such anti-consumer practices is to clearly identify and define the dark patterns.

Governments across the US, the EU and other countries have also issued regulations and brought out laws to act against these dark patterns. They have brought out guidelines on use of dark patterns and fined a couple of violating websites and apps.



Governments across the world are issuing guidelines and bringing out laws to act against dark patterns.

So, what are these dark patterns, and why are they harmful. Harry Brignull, a user experience researcher in the UK, had introduced the phrase dark pattern in 2010 to characterise deceptive strategies used by online and social media websites and apps to trick clients. For instance, when users want to unsubscribe from a mailing list, the 'Unsubscribe' button is tiny, of low contrast and buried in paragraphs of text at the bottom of an email. This is a strong sign that such websites and apps are putting up subtle roadblocks against users looking to unsubscribe the business in 1984, Mr Subrahmanyan rose through the ranks of the company. Soon, he began successfully helming L&T's largest infrastructure business, including construction of new airports in major cities, metros, freight corridors, other major projects across India and expansion of operations across the world. Besides, SNS was also involved in the successful setting up of ready-mix business in India for the first time.

For all his achievements, his colleagues point out that Mr Subrahmanyan is a down-to-earth, simple man, with an eye for detail. They add that he has a deep understanding of technology, while also always concerned with the well-being of his employees. With around four decades at L&T, Mr Subrahmanyan certainly knows the engineering conglomerate like the back of his hand. And now in charge of L&T, SNS is further set to change the face of the engineering conglomerate in tune with the present times.

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services or terms of transactions.

A dark pattern refers to a design or user interface technique that is intentionally crafted to manipulate or deceive users into making certain choices or taking specific actions that may not be in their best interest. However, not all dark patterns are designed maliciously. Websites and apps rely on design language to direct users on how to accomplish the tasks they want to do. These designs are specifically used to provide the best experience for users. It is only when the intention is to trick the users to act in a way that benefits companies that the trouble with dark patterns begins. With governments across the world now legislating against dark patterns, the menace may hopefully fade away.

SPIRITUAL CORNER

Purusharth

Illusory Purusharth _and_ Prarabdha Karma

Dadashri: *In the worldly life, that which people believe is* purusharth*, is not* purusharth *at all. What do people consider* purusharth*? They consider getting up early in the morning is* purusharth*. A person will say: "Yesterday, I got up late, but I got up early today. Then I had tea, went to the toilet, had a shower and then immediately went to my work, where I stayed the entire day." He calls this* purusharth*. But that is destiny (*prarabdha*; ordained). Activities, such as running around, meeting people, going to the bank, etc, are all* prarabdha*. Now, tell me, what do you think people understand is* prarabdha*? That which is* prarabdha*, they call* purusharth*. So, then tell me when does* purusharth *happen? Is this not worth understanding? If you understand the difference between* prarabdha *and* purusharth *from the* Gnani Purush*, then your problems will be solved.*

What Purusharth _Should One Do?_

Dadashri: *If you had decided the night before that you wanted to wake up early the next morning, but you oversleep, you should not say to others: "Why did you not wake me up when you knew I had to catch a train?" You do not need to make such a fuss. Is there a need for you to make a fuss, when your waking up late is* prarabdha *itself? Now, what is the* purusharth *that you need to do? Your decision that you must get up early is the* purusharth*. And if in case, your tea comes without any sugar, decide to yourself that it is because of your* prarabdha *that you got sugarless tea. No one should be blamed. So, request for some sugar, or else decide to yourself that you do not want to ask for it at all. Do one of the two.*

The bhaav *(inner intent) that you do is the* purusharth*; however, it is considered a relative* purusharth*. What can one call 'real'* purusharth*? It is the* paarinamic bhaav *(intent as or of the Self) that arises that is called 'real'* purusharth*.*

The differentiation between prarabdha *and* purusharth *that people have formerly made is correct up to the point, where there is unity of mind, speech and body. And that is that they would speak what was on their minds, and they would act that way too. But in this era of the current time cycle, that unity of the mind, body and speech is broken, and that is why the differences between* purusharth *and* prarabdha *prove wrong. It is not completely wrong, but it is 'relative' truth.*

Circumstances coming together is prarabdha*, and to maintain equanimity when that circumstance is negative or painful is called* purusharth*. Whatever circumstance arises is all* prarabdha*. Any circumstance that you encounter is all* prarabdha*. Waking up in the morning is also a circumstance. If you wake up at 7:30, then it is considered a circumstance of 7:30. That is called* prarabdha*.*

When a person encounters a negative circumstance, like an insult, he does not do purusharth *there, but he instead returns the insults and displays expressions of disgust and all that. If someone insults you, and you perceive it as being the fruit of your own* karma*; the other person is just an instrument (*nimit*) and that he is faultless, then it can be considered the* purusharth *that follows the Lord's* agna *(special directive). Maintaining equanimity at that time is* purusharth*.*

To be Continued…

For more information on Dadashri's spiritual science, visit dadabhagwan.org

Nurturing Talent

Vaidehi Desai comes across as a very contented person, committed professional and a loving family person. The dynamic chief human resources officer of SHOTT India – a company engaged in talent acquisition, strategic hiring and employee engagement within the entertainment industry – finely balances her professional and personal lives with a certain degree of maturity. A postgraduate in human resource development, Ms Desai is also quite adept in number-crunching and skilfully navigates the world of key financial metrics, such as RoI, EBITDA and the bottom line. In a lively chat with ***Sharmila Chand****, Ms Desai opens up about her personal and professional lives.*

VAIDEHI DESAI
Chief Human Resources Officer, SHOTT India

How do you define yourself?
Composed in the midst of chaos

What is your philosophy of life?
In the grand tapestry of the universe, our existence is a mere fleeting moment – a blink of an eyelid. Embrace positivity, and share smiles, as we traverse this cosmic journey.

What is your passion in life?
Cooking is my forte! I take pride in my culinary skills.

What is your management *mantra*?
Embrace failure without fear or shame; instead, embody the courage to rise and begin anew.

What is your work philosophy?
Every new day is a new opportunity, and invest your 100 per cent in seizing it.

A business leader you admire the most…
Ratan Tata

Your source of inspiration…
My parents and family

What do you enjoy the most in life, generally?
Being with my family and close friends

You are a tough, serious boss or …
Surprisingly, I'm my harshest critic. But when it comes to my colleagues, I am much more integrated with key managerial skills, like active listening and motivating the team.

How do you de-stress?
A good cup of coffee

What is your fitness regime?
I'm a mindfulness practitioner and enjoy taking a walk amidst nature.

Your *mantra* for success
Have the best team. Have a healthy and vibrant working environment, and success shall follow.

Ten years from now, where do we see you?
Being on top of my game, both personally and professionally

Write to us at chand.sharmila@gmail.com

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VISION

Generating adequate power for Maharashtra on a sustainable basis at competitive rates in a socially responsible manner

MAHAGENCO
Maharashtra State Power Generation Co. Ltd.

Generating for Generations

- MAHAGENCO is the Second Largest Power Generation Company after NTPC in India, along with highest thermal strength amongst all State utilities. MAHAGENCO having mix generation capacity of 13,170.02 MW comprising 9,540 MW Thermal, 2580 MW Hydel, 672 MW Gas Turbine & 378.02 MW Solar.
- The country's first sewage treatment plant at Bhandewadi, Nagpur with a capacity of 130 million litres per day for Koradi 3x660 MW units. An additional 190 million litres per day sewage water treatment plant has been commissioned for Koradi and Khaparkheda Thermal Power Plants.
- Efficient deployment of pollution control FGD (Flue Gas Desulfurization) systems for MAHAGENCO's Thermal Power Plants.
- Transportation of Fly Ash by rail for 100% efficient utilization.
- Govt. of Maharashtra have given clearance for construction of 2x660 MW capacity Super Critical replacement units at Koradi.
- MAHAGENCO proposed to set up a pilot Green Hydrogen Project of 20 Nm^3/Hr. capacity at Bhusawal Thermal Power Station.
- MAHAGENCO have successfully introduced eco-friendly and innovative technology of Coal Pipe Conveyor System for Coal Transportation at Chandrapur and the same for Koradi & Khaperkheda Plants are in progress.
- MAHAGENCO have now framed out "Vision 2030 Strategic Roadmap to face any type of challenges in coming years and find out opportunities in power sector.
- MAHAGENCO has set target of approx. 10,000 MW Renewable Energy Projects by year 2030.
- To provide electricity supply to the farmers, MAHAGENCO is implementing "Chief Minister Solar Agriculture Feeder" scheme. A solar project of total 148.02 MegaWatt were synchronized & commissioned with grid.
- MAHAGENCO has established a subsidiary company named Mahagenco Renewable Energy Ltd. (MAHAREL) to build Green Maharashtra through non-conventional sources.

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