

## Daily Current Affairs 31 January 2018

### Finance and Banking

#### ***FinMin notifies Rs. 80,000-cr recap bonds for PSBs***

- The Finance Ministry has notified the recapitalisation bonds that will allocate Rs. 80,000 crore to 20 public sector lenders.
- The bonds, which are split into six instalments, will bear interest rates between 7.35 per cent and 7.68 per cent and will mature between 2028 and 2033.
- “The special securities will be issued in the form of “stock” to be held at credit of the investing bank’s Subsidiary General Ledger Account maintained with the Public Debt Office, Reserve Bank of India, Mumbai,” said the notification.
- State Bank of India will receive the largest chunk of capital from the bonds, estimated at Rs. 8,800 crore, followed by IDBI Bank at Rs. 7,881 crore and Bank of Baroda, Rs. 6,975 crore. Last year, the Finance Ministry had unveiled plans to infuse Rs. 2.11 lakh crore capital in public sector banks that have been staring at mounting bad loans pegged at Rs. 6.9 lakh crore at the end of September 2017.
- Following this, it had, on January 24, announced a more detailed plan for recapitalisation of public sector lenders for the fiscal that includes over Rs. 1 lakh crore in capital through recapitalisation bonds, Budgetary support and fund raising from the market.
- According to the notification, only the notified 20 lenders will be eligible to subscribe to the special securities and their subscription to the securities will be limited to the extent of the amount notified.

#### ***ONGC buys government's entire 51.11 per cent stake in HPCL for Rs 36,915 crore***

- State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) today said it has bought government's entire 51.11 per cent stake in oil refiner HPCL for Rs 36,915 crore.
- In a regulatory filing, ONGC said it bought 77.88 crore shares in Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL) for Rs 473.97 per share.
- The acquisition was done in an off-market deal, it said.
- The price paid is higher than Rs 396.50 closing price of HPCL on the BSE.
- The transaction will help the government cross its annual sell-off (disinvestment) target for the first ever time.
- ONGC has borrowed money from a clutch of banks to fund the deal.
- Through this acquisition, ONGC will become India's first vertically integrated 'oil major' company, having presence across the entire value chain. The integrated entity will have advantage of having enhanced capacity to bear higher risks and take higher investment decisions etc.

### ***POORTI launches FarmCart, DealerBandhu apps with SBI***

- POORTI Agri Services, a Mumbai-headquartered start-up, dedicated to farmer's welfare, launched its mobile shopping app "FarmCart" and delivery management app "Dealer Bandhu" nationally here on Tuesday in presence of Guest of Honour Chairman, of their partner bank SBI, Rajneesh Kumar.
- POORTI is led by N Balasubramanian, ex-chairman of SIDBI, R G Rajan, ex-Chairman of RCF & NFL, and some senior professionals from banking and other industries.
- POORTI stands for Platform for Online Ordering & Rural Transformation of India.
- POORTI provides a mobile-enabled e-commerce platform in vernacular to farmers. Using FarmCart app, farmers can buy quality-assured product from authorized sellers at the right price at the right time using their android mobile.
- The transaction is Cashless through bank transfer. They can also log and track post-sales complaints (if any) for all orders placed on the platform.
- With SBI partnership, registered farmers and sellers of POORTI platform will get the benefit of doing cashless transactions through its payment gateway. Farmers with accounts in SBI and its associate banks, and 40+ public sector banks and private banks, can use net-banking, rupay card etc on POORTI platform.

### ***SBI to offer credit cards to farmers***

- State Bank of India is exploring the possibility of issuing credit cards to farmers.
- The bank, through its credit card arm SBI Card, a joint venture company between SBI and GE Capital, currently issues credit cards to farmers on pilot basis in the states of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.
- According to Rajnish Kumar, Chairman, SBI, farmers currently have access only to Kisan Credit Card (KCC) which is more like a debit or RuPay card linked to a loan account.
- The pilot, if successful, will be rolled out across other states and will give farmers access to interest-free credit for a period of 40-45 days.
- The success of the pilot would be assessed based on how well farmers adjust to the usage of the cards and the repayment or credit culture.
- According to Kumar, 75-80 per cent of the spend on these cards will have to be mandatorily used for purchasing agricultural inputs.

### ***India, World Bank sign USD 100 million loan agreement to boost rural economy of Tamil Nadu***

- India and the World Bank on 30 January 2018 signed a USD 100 million loan agreement for Tamil Nadu Rural Transformation Project, aimed at boosting up the rural economy of Tamil Nadu.
- The Agreement was signed by Sameer Kumar Khare, Joint Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Union Ministry of Finance; Praveen P Nair, Project Director, Tamil Nadu; and Junaid Ahmad, Country Director of World Bank India.

- The Tamil Nadu Rural Transformation Project will create an enabling environment for producer organizations and enterprises to promote businesses across select value chains.
- The project aims to promote rural enterprises, facilitate their access to finance and create employment opportunities for youth particularly women in selected blocks of Tamil Nadu across 26 districts, benefitting over 400000 people.
- The Project will be operational in 120 blocks across 3994 villages in 26 Districts of Tamil Nadu with 411620 direct beneficiaries.
- It will work with targeted households that are already part of Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

#### ***Centre launches GeM 3.0 with enhanced features***

- The third version of the Government e-Marketplace, GEM 3.0, envisaged by the Union Government as the National Procurement Portal of India has been launched.
- The GeM 2.0 was launched as a pilot project in August 2016 and its success led to the conceptualisation of GeM 3.0. The portal strives to keep pace with the ever-evolving technological challenges and stake holder aspirations.
- It would offer standardised and enriched catalogue management, powerful search engine, real-time price comparison, template-based Bid and RA creation, online vendor assessment, multi-cart functionality, demand aggregation, e-EMD, e-PBG, user rating, advanced MIS and analytics.

#### ***India and ADB sign USD 250 million loan to improve rural connectivity in five states***

- India and Asian Development Bank (ADB) on 30 January 2018 signed USD 250 million loan to finance the construction of 6254 kilometres all-weather rural roads in five states- Assam, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal.
- The loan agreement was signed by Sameer Kumar, Joint Secretary (Multilateral Institutions), Department of Economic Affairs in the Union Ministry of Finance and by Kenichi Yokoyama, Country Director of ADB's India Resident Mission.
- Under the project, about 2000 technical personnel would be imparted training on road safety and maintenance.
- It will support the government's drive for innovative approaches to reduce costs, conserve non-renewable natural resources, and promote the use of waste materials in rural road construction.
- The road maintenance will be ensured through the provision of a 5-year post-construction maintenance in each civil works contract.
- The road designs will take into account the climate risks with measures such as greater elevation of road embankments, slope protection, and better drainage in flood-prone areas.
- These five states will be provided with the rural connectivity under the Prime Minister's Rural Roads Program (PMGSY).
- This loan is part of the USD 500 million Second Rural Connectivity Investment Program for India approved by the ADB Board in December 2017.

### ***IREDA, RUMSL sign agreement to finance two large-scale solar parks in Madhya Pradesh***

- The Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA) and Rewa Ultra Mega Solar Limited (RUMSL) signed an agreement on January 31, 2018 for financing the shared infrastructure of two large Solar Parks in Madhya Pradesh.
- The agreement was signed by S K Bhargava, Director (Finance), IREDA and Avaneesh Shukla, Executive Engineer, RUMSL in the presence of Upendra Tripathy, Interim Director General, International Solar Alliance (ISA).
- The development is a part of an effort by the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE), World Bank & IREDA to channelize US\$ 100 Million for creating a common infrastructure for ultra-mega solar parks in India to achieve the 100 GW solar capacity addition target by 2022, set by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- Under the World Bank Line of Credit, IREDA has sanctioned its first loan of Rs 210.62 Cr to RUMSL to finance two such solar parks in the state of Madhya Pradesh.

## **Appointments**

### ***Wolfgang Prock-Schauer named COO of IndiGo***

- Wolfgang Prock-Schauer is to join IndiGo airlines as its Chief Operating Officer (COO).
- This is the first time that the Delhi-based low-cost airline has created the post of COO since the airline took to the skies in 2006.
- His appointment was cleared by the airline board today. Prock-Schauer is currently GoAir's Chief Executive Officer. Wolfgang will be reporting to Aditya Ghosh, the current President of IndiGo.
- Prock-Schauer was the Chief Executive Officer, Jet Airways from 2003 to 2009 before he joined British Midland International.

### ***Dinesh Srivastava takes over as NFC chief executive***

- Dinesh Srivastava, distinguished scientist, took over as the Chief Executive of Nuclear Fuel Complex (NFC) here on Wednesday. He has succeeded G Kalyanakrishnan who retired on superannuation.
- Srivastava will also be the Chairman of the NFC board. Prior to this assignment, he was holding the position of Deputy Chief Executive. In a long career, Srivastava has worked for three decades at Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), Mumbai, and was a senior Professor at Homi Bhabha National Institute (HBNI), Mumbai.
- Srivastava has contributed for the development of advanced structural materials of extreme strategic value for the nuclear energy programme. The focus of his work has been on self-reliant development of critical nuclear components with a target on Zirconium, Titanium and low alloy steels.

### ***UK appoints first woman as chief economist to finance ministry***

- Britain's finance ministry appointed a woman for the first time as its next chief economist at a time when lawmakers want to increase the number of women appointed to senior economic policy roles.
- Clare Lombardelli is currently in charge of helping finance minister Philip Hammond draw up his annual budget. She joined the finance ministry in 2005 after beginning her career at the Bank of England, the finance ministry said.
- She previously served as an economic advisor to David Cameron when he was prime minister and was then-finance minister George Osborne's principal private secretary.
- Before that, she was seconded to the International Monetary Fund where she was part of a team based in the Greek finance ministry to monitor bailout terms during 2010 and 2011.

### ***Vijay Subramaniam to lead Bacardi's Asia Pacific, Mid-East and Africa operations***

- Global spirits company Bacardi on Wednesday announced Vijay S. Subramaniam as its new Managing Director for Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa.
- Subramaniam has served the company for 13 years as Managing Director for its operations in India, and recently also started leading the operations in the Middle East, it said.
- The company also announced that Sanjit Randhawa would be the Managing Director for India along with the operations in Southeast Asian region, which he took over recently.

## **India**

### ***Indian Navy launches third Scorpene Class Submarine INS Karanj***

- INS Karanj, the third Scorpene class submarine constructed by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, was launched by the Indian Navy on January 31, 2018.
- The submarine was launched by Reena Lanba, President of Navy Wives Welfare Association following the recitation of Sanskrit shlokas from the Atharva Veda and traditional ceremonies associated with the launch of naval platforms.
- Following the launch, the submarine was towed to Mumbai Port Trust for separation from the pontoon. INS Karanj will now undergo rigorous trials and tests, both in harbour and at sea before it is commissioned into the Navy.

### ***Rural women in Maharashtra to get sanitary pads for just Rs 5***

- The state government of Maharashtra on January 30, 2017 approved a proposal to provide sanitary napkins at a subsidised rate of Rs 5 to women living in rural areas.
- The decision was taken during the state Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. It is aimed at promoting menstrual hygiene among young girls and women.

- According to the state's Women and Child Development Minister Pankaja Munde, the decision would be effectively implemented from the International Women's Day on March 8, 2018.
- The use of sanitary pads among girls and women stands at around 17 per cent in the rural areas of the state due to high costs. Besides this, it had also been noticed that girls remain absent for 50-60 days a year during their menstrual cycles.
- Hence, along with health, absenteeism was also an issue that prompted the decision. The WCD Minister stated that the subsidised sanitary napkin scheme would be implemented through Women Self Help Groups (SHGs).

#### ***President Ram Nath Kovind approves Bill to hike salary of judges***

- President Ram Nath Kovind on January 31, 2018 approved The High Court and Supreme Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Amendment Act, 2018, a Bill that seeks to hike the salaries of Supreme Court and High Court judges.
- The Bill was passed in the Winter Session of Parliament. Following the approval of the President, the Chief Justice of India will draw a monthly salary of Rs 2.80 lakh, up from the current Rs 1 lakh.
- Other judges of the Supreme Court and Chief Justices of High Courts will draw a monthly salary of Rs 2.50 lakh, a jump from the current Rs 90000.

#### ***UP government announces jobs to dependants of martyred jawans***

- Uttar Pradesh state government on January 30, 2018 announced that it will provide employment on compassionate grounds to the dependants of the martyred Jawans of armed forces and Central Para Military forces who had a domicile of origin in Uttar Pradesh.
- The decision was taken at a cabinet meeting headed by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.
- The cabinet minister Shrikant Sharma said that it has been decided that dependants of jawans of armed forces and central para military forces, who attain martyrdom while discharging their duties, will be given jobs on compassionate grounds. It will be a tribute to the martyrs from the state government.

## **Indexes and Lists**

#### ***India ranked as 6th wealthiest country in the world: Report***

- A report by New World Wealth has ranked India in the sixth position in the list of wealthiest countries. It noted that India was the best-performing wealth market globally in 2017, as its total wealth increased from USD 6,584 billion in 2016 to USD 8,230 billion in 2017, registering a 25 per cent growth.
- The United States is the wealthiest country in the world with a total wealth of USD 64,584 billion.

- The report ranked China in the second place, as its total wealth in 2017 amounted to USD 24,803 billion.
- Japan follows at the third position with a total wealth of USD 19,522 billion.
- The top 5 also includes the United Kingdom at the 4th position with wealth amounting to USD 9,919 billion and Germany at the 5th position with USD 9,660 billion.
- India is ranked at the 6th position with USD 8,230 billion, followed by France at 7th with USD 6,649 billion, Canada at 8th with USD 6,393 billion, Australia at 9th with USD 6,142 billion and Italy at 10th with USD 4,276 billion.

### ***India slips to 42nd place on EIU Democracy Index 2018; US at 21st***

- India on January 31, 2018 slipped to 42nd rank on an annual Global Democracy Index, compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). India moved down from 32nd rank in 2017 and remains classified among "flawed democracies". While Norway has again topped the list, followed by Iceland and Sweden.
- The United States (ranked 21), Japan, Italy, France, Israel, Singapore, and Hong Kong have also been named among 'flawed democracies'.
- The index ranks 165 independent states and two territories on the basis of five categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation and political culture.
- The list ranks the countries into four broad categories -- full democracy, flawed democracy, hybrid regime and authoritarian regime.

## **Awards**

### ***Shesh Anand Madhukar awarded with Sahitya Akademi's Bhasha Samman 2018***

- Magahi writer Shesh Anand Madhukar was on January 31, 2018 honoured with the Sahitya Akademi Bhasha Samman Award 2018. With this, he became the second writer of Magahi language to be given the award.
- Madhurkar was conferred the award by Sahitya Akademi President Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari.
- Some of his important works in Hindi are "Magahi Kavita Ke Bimb", "Eklavya", and "Bhagwan Birsa".
- In Magahi, his well-acclaimed works are "Eklavya" and "Magahi Bhulachal Hey".
- His books have been included in the graduate and post-graduate syllabus of Vinoba Bhave University, Hazaribagh.

## **World**

***Facebook bans cryptocurrency ads on its platforms***

- Facebook has banned ads that promote initial coin offerings (ICOs), cryptocurrency like Bitcoin and binary options trading from its platforms, including Instagram, Audience Network and Messenger.
- The new policy prohibits ads that promote financial products and services that are frequently associated with misleading or deceptive promotional practices, Facebook said in a statement late on Tuesday.

**Sports*****Sharath Kamal lifts National Men's singles title for the eighth time***

- Sharath Kamal on January 30, 2018 lifted the National men's singles title for the eighth time, equalling the feat of Kamlesh Mehta.
- In the finals at the Senior Table Tennis Nationals in Ranchi, Kamal defeated top-seed Anthony Amalraj 4-1. The winner received two lakh rupees as prize money.
- Suthirta Mukherjee from West Bengal emerged as the champion of the women team, beating Hyderabad Nationals winner Manika Batra 4-3. Her maiden effort fetched 1.5 lakh rupees, while Manika received 50 percent less in prize money.