

Quick View



Piramal looks to raise ₹2,750 crore through NCDs

PIRAMAL ENTERPRISES ON Wednesday said it was looking to raise ₹2,750 crore through non-convertible debentures (NCDs). The company's board will arrive at a decision on the same on Saturday. The company said that it would raise the funds in one or more tranches from time to time. It had earlier in October raised ₹5,400 crore through a rights issue and preferential allotment of compulsory convertible shares. "A meeting of the Administrative Committee of the board of directors of the company will be held on Saturday, December 28, 2019, to consider and approve the issue of secured non-convertible debentures on a private placement basis amounting to ₹2,750 crore," the company said in an exchange filing.

TVS launches NTORQ 125 Race Edition in Nepal

CHENNAI-BASED TVS MOTOR Company on Wednesday said it has introduced the NTORQ 125 Race Edition scooter in Nepal. The Race Edition comes with various design elements and features like LED DRLs and headlamp, hazard lamp, among others. "Since its launch, the TVS NTORQ 125 has become a darling of its Gen Z customers in Nepal," TVS Motor executive V-P International Business R Dilip said in a statement.

'Users created 100 m pieces of Hindi content in 2019'

REGIONAL LANGUAGE SOCIAL media company ShareChat on Wednesday said over 100 million pieces of Hindi user-generated content (UGC) have been created on its platform this year, accounting for over 22% of such content. Other top languages in which UGC was created on the platform — which claims to have over 60 million monthly active users — includes content in Tamil, Telegu, Punjabi and Malayalam.

Emami moving closer to becoming debt-free

THE EMAMI GROUP is inching closer to turning debt-free in line with the city-based diversified conglomerate's plans for FY20, sources indicated. The group had earlier this year said it was looking to pare the entire debt of ₹2,600 crore by March 2020. The target is likely to be achieved well within the internal deadlines, Emami Group sources told PTI. The promoters had repaid in excess of ₹2,800 crore since April from resources raised through selling a part of their holdings in the flagship and listed entity — Emami Ltd, they said.

NMDC to make Jharkhand mines operational in a year

STATE-OWNED MINING MAJOR NMDC aims to start commercial operations at the two coal blocks allotted to it in Jharkhand last week by next 12 months, a company official has said. Last week, the ministry of coal allotted Rohne and Tokisud North coal mines in the Hazaribagh district of Jharkhand to the state-owned iron miner. "The company will first develop the mines and begin commercial operations at the mines in one year," the official said.

Affordable housing: MRG World to invest ₹200 crore

REALTY FIRM MRG World on Wednesday said it will invest ₹200 crore to develop its new affordable housing project in Gurgaon in the affordable price category of ₹23-27 lakh. The company, which is into financial services, agro-trading and education, recently made a foray into the real estate sector. This is the third affordable housing project of the company. MRG World has launched a new residential project 'Ultimus' in Gurgaon. The company will construct 720 apartments in this 5-acre project, the company said in a statement.

ENERGY BOOST

NTPC to invest ₹50k cr to add 10 GW solar capacity by 2022

To mainly rely on green bonds, which are offered for pure clean energy projects, for funds

KK SHANKAR
New Delhi, December 25

STATE-OWNED POWER GIANT NTPC is planning to add 10 GW of solar energy generation capacity by 2022, which entails an investment of around ₹50,000 crore, to be funded mainly by green bonds, a source has said.

At present, NTPC has installed renewable energy capacity of 920 MW, which includes mainly solar energy. It has formulated a long-term plan to become a 130 GW company by 2032 with a 30% non-fossil fuel or renewable energy capacity. "The company will complete tendering of 2,300 MW of solar energy capacity by the end of this fiscal. Thereafter, it has planned to add 4GW each in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

"The company is open to any borrowing option in the market, which is economical. However, the company would mainly rely on green bonds which are



offered for pure clean energy projects. The company wants to raise money through domestic as well as overseas green bonds," the source said.

NTPC's plans to add 10 GW solar energy capacity assumes significance in view of India's ambitious target of having 175 GW of clean energy by 2022.

The source said that the company would also set up some of its solar energy projects under scheme where it gets viability gap funding to keep the tariff below ₹3 per unit level.

Besides, the company will also set up solar energy projects without any long term (for 25 years) power purchase agreements (PPAs) as it intends to sell the electricity to industrial as well as commercial



TELECOM TALK

Rajan Mathews, COAL director general

The floor price is certainly needed to bring certain discipline back... We have fundamentally gone from an all-voice network to a hybrid network, to soon an all-data network. In a voice network, the de facto floor was the interconnect charge, question is, in the new world of data what should it be.

Pay dues immediately, allow us to quit sans notice period: AI pilots

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, December 25

FLAGGING CONCERNS OVER unpaid dues, an Air India pilots' union has urged the government to allow their members to quit the debt-laden carrier without serving notice period.

As the government works out the modalities for the sale of the national carrier, the Indian Commercial Pilots' Association (ICPA) has also warned that they are in no position to work amid uncertainty over the airline's future.

The grouping represent nearly 800 Air India pilots who fly narrow body planes. They have written a strongly-worded letter to minister of state for civil aviation Hardeep Singh Puri regarding their dues. "...your statement that if Air India is not privatised by March 31, 2020, then Air India will be shut down, is a matter of concern," the letter said.

Citing the uncertainty over the airline's future, the grouping asked the minister to ensure that they "are not treated like bonded labour and allow us to quit Air India without serving the notice period and clear all our dues immediately".

The notice period is six months. Air India has a debt burden of more than ₹58,000 crore.



The ICPA has also asked for clearing their legitimate dues without any further delay. In a warning, the grouping said, "our patience is running thin and we are in no position to continue working with uncertainty looming large at Air India".

"We do not want to face the same fate as other employees of 21 private carriers that have shut down and further add to the rising unemployment in India," the letter, dated December 23, said.

As per the letter, they are yet to receive the flying allowance for October.

"We have been living with uncertainty for the past 2-3 years, and as a result, many employees have defaulted on their loan and other payments. This has greatly affected our livelihood and our families," it added.

Free Wi-Fi to all villages connected via Bharat Net till March 2020: Prasad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Rewari, December 25

WI-FI SERVICES BEING provided through BharatNet in villages across India will be free of charge till March 2020, telecom and information technology minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said on Wednesday.

"We have already connected 1.3 lakh gram panchayats through BharatNet optical fibre network... Our target is to take this to 2.5 lakh gram panchayats. To promote utilisation of BharatNet services, we will provide Wi-Fi free in all villages connected through BharatNet till March 2020," the minister said.

Currently, 48,000 villages connected under BharatNet have Wi-Fi access.

The minister said all common service centres (CSCs) will offer banking services. As such, CSCs act as access points for delivery of digital services and the number of these centres has increased from about 60,000 in 2014 to 3.60 lakh currently. Haryana itself has 11,000 CSCs offering an array of 650 services.

CSC e-Governance Services India is implementing the Digital Village initiative in rural and remote areas of the country. Overall, one lakh villages are set to be transformed into digital villages.

Guarawara village in the Rewari district of Haryana has been developed as a digital village by CSC. The CSC unit there, operated by village level entrepreneur Sonu Bala, facilitates access to government-to-citizen services through the digital seva portal. CSC e-Governance Services India CEO Dinesh Tyagi said, "The Digital Village scheme has the potential to truly transform the village economy and reduce the digital divide."



RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD, telecom & IT minister

A DigiGaon or digital village was conceptualised as a connected village where citizens can avail various e-services of the central government, state governments and private players. These villages are projected to be change agents, promoting rural entrepreneurship and building rural capacities and livelihoods through community participation and collective action.

The scheme focuses on empowering the entire village community by providing access to education, health or financial services through the digital medium.

In a digital village, residents are encouraged to become digitally literate. Residents can avail quality healthcare through telemedicine consultations under allopathy, homeopathy and ayurvedic systems. The digital village also promotes a financially inclusive society by providing banking, insurance and pension services at the doorstep of citizens. In addition, the entire village is Wi-Fi enabled, so residents are digitally connected.

Such villages are also equipped with an LED assembly unit, a sanitary napkin unit, a paperbag-making unit and a rural BPO to promote employment among the youth.

Expansion mode: Hyatt looks to open 11 new hotels in India by 2020-end

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, December 25

GLOBAL HOSPITALITY FIRM Hyatt Hotels Corporation is looking to open 11 new hotels across India by the end of 2020 as part of its expansion plans in the country, a senior company official has said.

The Chicago-headquartered firm currently has 32 hotels across 20 destinations under its eight brands in India.

The eight brands under the Hyatt portfolio in India are Hyatt, Hyatt Centric, Hyatt Regency, Hyatt Place, Park Hyatt, Grand Hyatt, Allira and Andaz.

"We plan to open 11 new hotels across the country by end of 2020 as India is a very important growth market for us," Sunjae Sharma, vice-president, India operations, Hyatt, told PTI.

Hyatt is one of the first international hotel management brands in India, hav-



ing entered the market over 35 years ago with the first hotel under the Hyatt Regency brand in Delhi in 1982, he added. "The new hotels will be under our three brands — Grand Hyatt, Hyatt Place and Hyatt Regency," Sharma said. While the hotel at Gurgaon will be under the Grand Hyatt brand, the hotels at Vadodara, Jaipur and Bengaluru will be under the Hyatt Place brand, he added. "The hotels at Thirissur, Kochi, Jaipur, Dehradun, Trivandrum and Udaipur will be under the

Hyatt Regency brand," Sharma informed.

When asked if Hyatt is also looking at acquisitions for future growth, he said the company is open to it, if there is a merit in it.

On the business model, it follows in India and about plans in future, Sharma said: "We are mainly into management contract model, but we are also looking at franchise model with select partners in India. We follow the asset light model."

The company is also looking at expanding in tier II and tier III cities with suitable brands, he added. "India is a very important market for us. It is one of the top three global growth markets for the company after the US and China and there is a huge scope of growth here as the demand still exceeds the supply," Sharma said.

Hyatt India's 2020 goal is to reduce water consumption per guest per night by 25% compared to a 2006 baseline, and by 30% in water-stressed areas, the company said.

Housing sales up 6% in Delhi-NCR in 2019

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, December 25

HOUSING SALES in the national capital region went up by 6% to 46,920 units in 2019 on higher demand for affordable homes and completed flats, according to property consultant Anarock. Prices in Delhi-NCR were stagnant at nearly ₹4,600 per sq ft, while unsold inventories fell by 6% to 1,75,079 units from 1,86,714 units.

Across seven major cities, sales rose by 5% to 2,61,370 units in 2019 compared to 2,48,310 units in the previous year. Sales dropped by 22% in the second half of this year to 1,47,120 against 1,14,250 units during the January-June period this year.

Prices in Delhi-NCR remained stagnant at nearly ₹4,600 per sq ft, while unsold inventories fell by 6% to 1,75,079 units from 1,86,714 units

"Unrelenting liquidity crisis, lower-than-expected buyer sentiments and faltering GDP growth eventually put brakes on the overall housing growth in the second half of 2019," said Anuj Puri, chairman - Anarock Property Consultants.

According to the data, housing sales rose maximum by 22% in Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) to 80,870 units this year from 66,440 units in 2018.

Renewable sector to create peak capacities in CY20

VIKAS SRIVASTAVA
Mumbai, December 25

AFTER CLOCKING A sub-par growth in 2019, capacity additions are expected to go up for India's renewable sector — solar and wind — by over 40% in calendar year 2020 with projects allocated in 2018 getting commissioned in 2020. Experts believe policy measures and falling module prices will further assist in creating peak capacities. In calendar year 2020, the renewable sector is expected to add 15 GW of new capacities that will include 11 GW of utility-scale solar installations, and 4 GW of wind capacity additions, said experts.

In year 2019 till September, India added around 4 GW of utility scale solar capacity and 1.9 GW of wind capacity as per data with the ministry of new and renewable energy (MNRE). Industry experts believe another 4 GW of solar and 0.8 GW of wind capacities will get added in the October-December quarter of 2019. The cumulative solar capacity of 8 GW in 2019 will be a 28% y-o-y growth. All put together, the cumulative wind and solar capacity will be 10.7 GW in 2019.

Unlike in 2019, projects awarded in 2018 were oversubscribed by developers. There was around 15 GW of commissioning estimated in 2019, from contracts awarded in 2017 and 2018, of these only 5.5 GW capacity got commissioned till October 31,

according to MNRE, the remaining are expected to be commissioned in 2020.

Vinay Rustagi, managing director of Bridge to India, Delhi-based research and consultancy firm said, they expect 2020 to be a lot better in terms of capacity additions. "Total utility scale solar and wind power capacity addition is expected to be at about 14 GW, about 45% more than 2019 numbers. But these numbers are still way behind the projections and the government's targets."

Jyoti Gulia, founder and partner of JMK Research, a Delhi-based renewable consultancy firm, said, the year 2020 will see peak additions of renewable capacities in both solar and wind as majority of projects that were awarded in 2018 will get commissioned in 2020, even if they are delayed by six to nine months, the commissioning will happen in CY20. "We expect solar to witness a 29% y-o-y growth in CY20 with accession of another 11 GW of capacity. Out of this 11 GW, 50% of the projects would be installed under central tenders (SECI/NTPC). Another 1 GW of the solar capacity would be added under the group captive model (GCM) mainly in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

Raj Prabhu, CEO of Mercom Capital Group, believes the 2020 outlook for renewables in India will depend a lot on the state of the economy and availability of financing to a large extent. "Our forecast



for solar in 2020 is approximately 10 GW, which is a lot better than 7-8 GW expected to be installed this year. The improved estimates for solar is mostly due to a better project development pipeline next year."

However, despite the peak addition expected in 2020, experts are sceptical of the same trend to continue in 2021, as the sector is struggling to cope with the off-take risk and policy uncertainty. In particular, the poor financial condition of discoms is leading to a sense of crisis with increasing payment delays, intense pricing pressure, grid curtailment and renegotiation.

"There is too much policy tinkering on taxes and duties, net metering and grid

access. All these factors are draining investor confidence and the banks are not keen to lend to the sector. Moreover, as the share of variable power output has grown, some states are turning their back completely on renewable," Rustagi said.

Sharad Mahendra, chief operating officer of JSW Energy, said although the company is planning to add 250 MW of solar capacity by the end of 2020, it cannot be denied that the sector is facing problems in acquisition of land and evacuation of power. He said the biggest challenge is the poor financial health of discoms and the long pending dues from them. "The discoms are again moving towards

the pre-Uday phase after the absorption of loss by states got over. The purpose of Uday-2 should be to improve the health of discoms. We have noticed that the aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) and distribution losses have fallen which is a positive sign, now the government should ensure that this continues. The old plants supplying power at higher cost to discoms should also be stopped to reduce the discoms' burden," Mahendra said.

The company said it is prudent to first evaluate and close in on the land and substation and then go for bidding of projects. "The moment I get the order and PPA is signed, I will start the work, the next day itself," Mahendra said.

Puneet Goyal, director and co-founder of SunAlpha Energy, an EPC player in the solar space, said, "Another way to increase the capacity is to look at distributed generation of power. In India, the entire capacity is skewed towards 90% utility scale generation, compared to the global average of 60% which puts excessive pressure on transmission lines as power gets generated in particular location."

"I see the tables turning now and the shift towards distributed in the next 10 years will be a natural progression. It will also bring down the transmission and distribution losses by 20% as the consumption happens at the point of generation itself. We see the distributed generation to reach 20-25% by 2025 in India," said Goyal.