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THE TIMES OF ISLAND

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KTM 2026 crosses 3,000 buyer registrations, sets new record

India's largest tourism and trade fair begins on September 24

Set to witness its biggest-ever business participation, the Kerala Travel Mart (KTM) 2026 has recorded more than 3,000 buyer registrations for the country's major tourism trade event, signalling strong global interest in the state's tourism offerings.The registrations include 790 international buyers and 2,210 domestic buyers.

The formal inauguration of the three-day event will be held on September 24, while the business meetings will take place from September 25 to 27. The inaugural ceremony will be held at the Lulu International Convention Centre, Bolgatty. The exhibition and business meetings will be hosted at the Sagara and Samudrika Convention Centres on Willingdon Island.

The mart has also recorded a significant increase in participation from tourism enterprises and organizations. As many as 382 sellers have completed stall bookings, while around 30 stalls representing various government institutions will also be part of the event.

A total of 40000 business meetings has already been scheduled, highlighting the scale of business engagement and the investment and market opportunities available in Kerala's tourism sector.

Business meets, meetings of tourism policymakers and seminars featuring national and international experts will be held as part of the three-day mart. Post-mart tours have been scheduled from September 28 to October 3, covering 12 different sectors. A separate pre-mart tour will be organized for invited international and domestic media representatives.

KERALA TRAVEL MART

Govt to Sell 6% in Hindustan Copper, Eyes Rs. 3k

Government of India is selling up to 6% in Hindustan Copper at a floor price of Rs 514 per share through an offer for sale (OFS) to mobilise about Rs 3,000 crore. The floor price for the OFS is at an 11.6% discount to the stock's closing price of Rs 573.6 on BSE on August 24. This is the 10th divestment offer in the current fiscal.

According to the company's disclosures on BSE, govt is offering to sell a little over 2.9 crore shares (3% of the company's equity capital) through the OFS, which will open on August 25. Depending on the demand, govt may offer another 2.9 crore shares to investors, it said.Retail investors will be able to bid on the second day of the offer, that is, Aug 26. "10% of the offer is reserved for retail investors, with an additional 25,000 shares reserved for eligible employees," secretary, DIPAM, govt's divestment department, said through a post on X (formerly Twitter).

Currently, govt holds 66.1% in the copper miner and producer, shareholding data on BSE showed. Post the successful divestment in the company, govt's stake would come down to a little over 60%. DAM Capital Advisors, Emkay Global Financial Services and IDBI Capital Markets & Securities are managing the offer for govt, the OFS notice on BSE showed. This divestment comes within three weeks of the most successful OFS in India.

Till date in FY27, govt has mobilised Rs 52,716 crore from nine disinvestments and some receipts from SUUTI. The budget had set Rs.80,000 crore disinvestment target for the current year.

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Managing Editor
K.N. Mukunda Panicker

Resident Editor
K.N. Lathika

Associate Editor
N.M. Prabhakaran

Consultant Editor
Rajeev Aravind

Layout & Design
S. Krishnakumar
Prism Print Media, Mob : 9495127911

Circulation and Space Marketing
Vijay Vihar, Vennala, Kochi-682 028

Head Office
The Times of Island, Vijay Vihar, Vennala,
Kochi-682 028. Phone: 94470 90036
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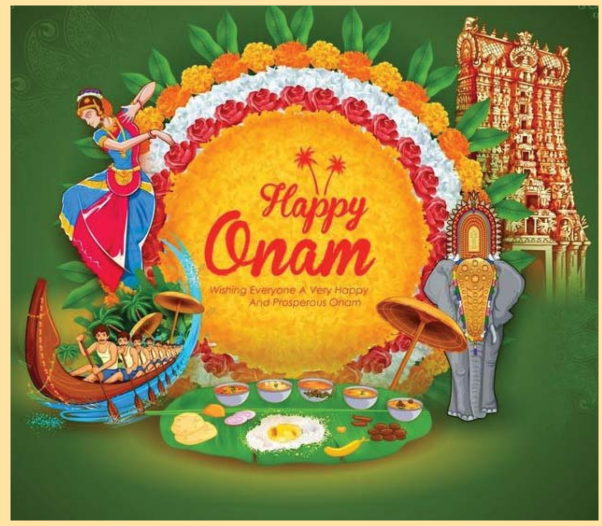
Cover photo: Padmakumar, a native of Tripunithura, as Maveli in Athachamayam procession.

EDITORIAL

ONAM, THE FESTIVAL OF ONENESS

Malayalis all over the world await ONAM with unbridled enthusiasm, happiness and excitement which are manifested in the form of various games, Pookkalam, Onakkodi, sumptuous feast and family get-together. No other festival can claim this universality as people come forward to celebrate ONAM irrespective of any caste or religious segregations. We get reports of ONAM celebrations in the US, Canada, U K, New Zealand, Australia and various other counties where the Malayali families enbloc participate in ONAM celebrations. As people altogether visit textile showrooms, jewellery outlets and shops of household items, ONAM season provides maximum sales for merchants of all sorts.



It is a time when the entire state is decked up with Athapookkalam and lights. Visitors to Kerala during the festive season have the opportunity to experience the hospitality and culture of the state on a first-hand basis. With the boat races, Onasadhya, Athachamayam, Pulikali, Kummattikali, ThumbiThullal and Onam Sadya, the festival also showcases artistic and cultural diversity.

Onam is a nostalgia that brings back memories from childhood and the simple ways of life that prevailed in the villages during bygone days. It is the celebration of the myth of Mahabali – the demon king who once ruled the land and is believed to visit his subjects every year around this time. Onam is also an agricultural festival that celebrates the rich harvest of the land, thus symbolising joy and prosperity.

As the world is witnessing animosity among states with bombs and projectiles killing hundreds every day, our ONAM spreads the message of peace, unity and brotherhood. Let's hope that better sense will prevail in the middle east and also between Russia and Ukraine so that the bloodshed is brought to an end at the earliest. May the message of unity and brotherhood as enunciated by ONAM be an eye-opener for one andall.

Preserving Ancient Palm-Leaf Manuscripts Through Robotics : Malayali Girls to Represent India at WRO Internationals

Two young Malayali girls have commanded national attention by developing a cutting-edge robotic system designed to preserve and digitize centuries-old palm-leaf manuscripts. Fourteen-year-olds Cathlin Marie Jeesan and Navika D. Nair secured first place at the World Robot Olympiad (WRO) India Nationals held in Hyderabad from August 26 to 28, earning their qualification for the international championship. Competing under the team name UWR Synergy, the duo emerged as national champions in the Future Innovators - Senior category and will represent India at the WRO Internationals in Puerto Rico this December.

Team UWR Synergy competed under the theme "When Ancient Wisdom Meets Future Technology." For centuries, the profound knowledge bequeathed by India's ancient scholars of mathematics and astronomy has been preserved on delicate palm leaves. As ageing and natural disasters threaten these invaluable documents, centuries of heritage and wisdom risk being lost forever. Recognizing the urgent need to retrieve and safeguard this ancient knowledge, Cathlin and Navika embarked on this project.

Palm-leaf manuscript preservation is traditionally a meticulous process that takes months to complete. The duo solved this challenge by leveraging the potential of robotics and artificial intelligence. Their automated system, titled Smriti 1.0, executes the entire preservation process safely in just a few minutes.

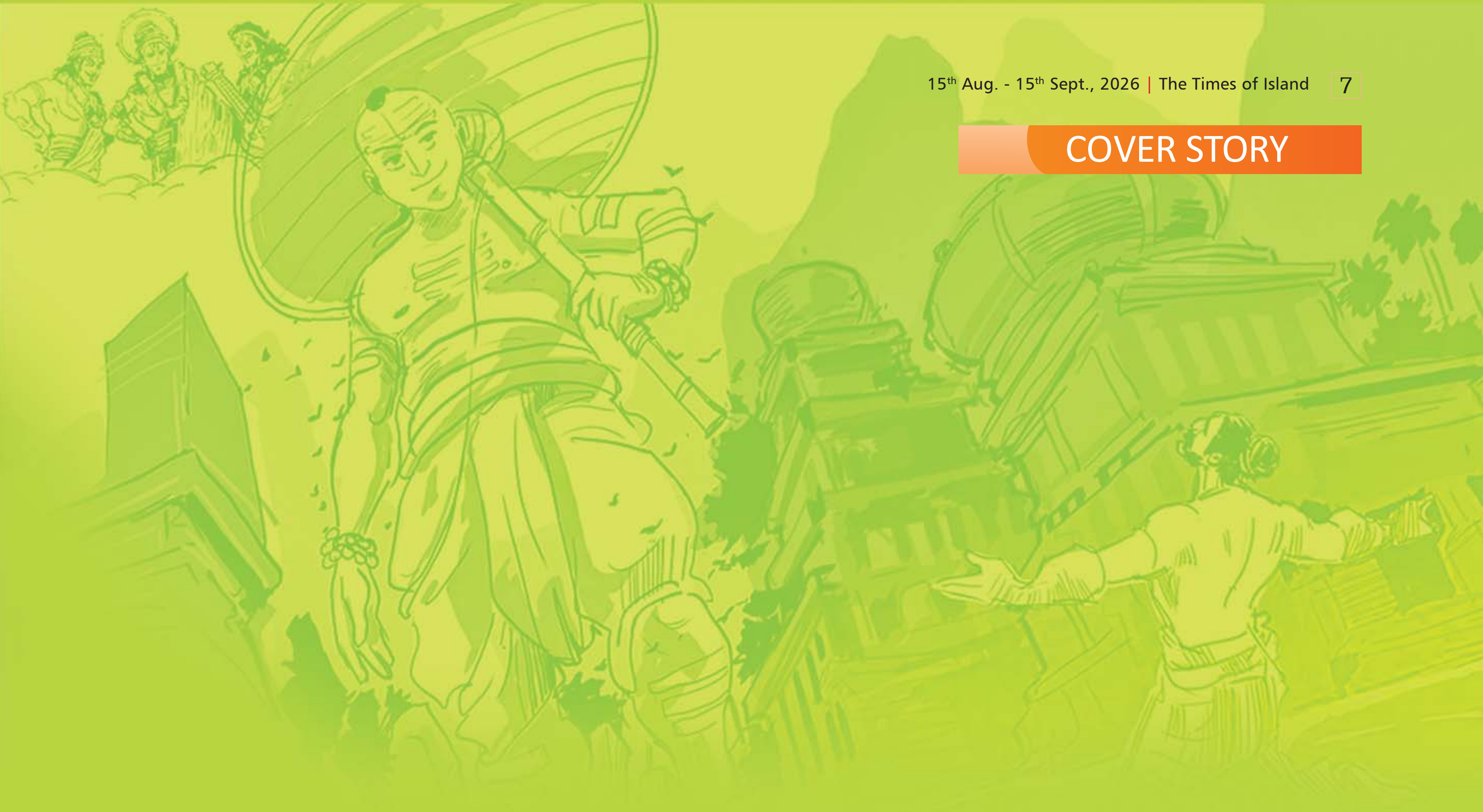
Cathlin, a ninth-grade student at Holy Grace Academy in Mala, excels in innovation, robotics, and book writing. Navika, a ninth-grade student at Naipunnya Public School in Kochi, specializes in design, hardware architecture, and research. The project drew inspiration from information shared by Litty Chacko, Director of the Manuscript Research and Presentation Centre in Iringalakkuda, regarding her research on the ancient mathematician Sangamagrama Madhava.

COVER STORY

N M PRABHAKARAN

Onam is a nostalgia that brings back memories from childhood and the simple ways of life that prevailed in the villages during the bygone era

ONAM SPREADS UNITY AND FRATERNITY



Onam, the festival of unbridled joy, celebration and fraternity has once again embraced Malayalis world over who have been eagerly awaiting this festival of festivals just like the mythological king Mahabali who makes an annual visit to Kerala to see his subjects and bless them with abundance of all sorts. The whole of Kerala is decked up with festoons, flower carpets, decorations etc to the extent that joy and happiness are palpable on every face. Onam is the season when people irrespective of financial disparities purchase new clothes to wear on Onam day.

Another feature of Onam is the sumptuous feast arranged in every family which will be served on plantain leaves and eaten together. People enjoy Onam special sports and games of various sorts played in the afternoon. People joyfully engage in various local games which are played with vigour and competitive spirits.

Onam is a nostalgia that brings back memories from childhood and the simple ways of life that prevailed in the villages during bygone days. It is the celebration of the myth of Mahabali – the demon king who once ruled the land and is believed to visit his old subjects every year around this time. Onam is also an agricultural festival that celebrates the rich harvest of the land, thus symbolising joy and prosperity.

Kerala immerses in joy

The festival of Onam is celebrated throughout the state of Kerala. Kerala during Onam is marked by happiness, excitement and enjoyment among all sections of people. Onam is celebrated as an outcome of reasons that have to do with mythology as well as old agrarian practices. If one is to go by the myth, then King Mahabali or Maveli was a generous and virtuous ruler, who had once ruled Kerala. During his rule, the kingdom became so prosperous that devas felt jealous about this and also for the reason that King Mahabali was an asura – a member of the demon clan – who were the enemies of devas. So, they sent Lord Vishnu in the guise of Vamana (a dwarf) to King Mahabali. As an offering from the generous king, Vamanarequested Mahabali for three feet of land. And at the time of measuring the three feet of land,Vamana grew so huge that he measured all the worlds in two steps. Since he had nowhere else to place his third step, Mahabali asked Vamana to place it on his head. Pleased by his benevolence, Vamana blessed Mahabali before he was sent to the nether world and granted him permission to visit his dear subjects once in a year. This occasion is celebrated by all Keralites as Onam.

And the other cause for celebrating Onam is because it is the time of the year when a good harvest has been gathered all over Kerala, resulting in plenitude and happiness.

The celebrations for Onam are held for ten days, beginning with the Atham in the month of Chingam (August / September) as per the local calendar.

It is a time when the entire state is decked up with Athapookkalam and lights. Visitors to Kerala during the festive season have the opportunity to experience the hospitality and culture of the state on a first-hand basis. With the boat races, Onasadhya, Athachamayam, Pulikali, Kummattikali, Thumbi Thullal and Onam Sadya, the festival also showcases artistic and cultural diversity.

Harvest Season

Apart from folktales, Onam is also a celebration of the harvest season. After the rainy season of Karkidakam, Chingam comes with the hope of a good harvest and prosperity. Chingam arrives with all the essential ingredients to make it a season of celebration. Medam and Chingam are two transitional seasons in our farming cycle. New saplings are sown on the tenth day of Medam. This is followed by harvest of grains and long-term crops during Chingam.

The significance of Chingam lies in the fact that it serves as a harvest month and a period for the planning of the distribution and preservation of the entire produce so that it can last through the year. The crops are divided for consumption and storage for the remaining months and the seeds must be carefully stored for the next sapling season. The water reservoirs are replenished and the lands are conditioned for cultivation by the rainy season of *Karkidakam* that precedes the month of *Chingam*.

BANKING

Anoop Balakrishnan

How to buy health insurance after the age of 60 ?

Today, most insurers offer dedicated health insurance plans designed specifically for senior citizens. Although premiums are generally higher because of age-related health risks, policyholders can still make coverage more affordable by choosing the right policy structure.

Medical expenses tend to rise sharply after retirement, and so do health insurance premiums. Many people assume buying health insurance after the age of 60 is either impossible or too expensive. Although premiums tend to be pricey for senior citizens, there are plenty of options to get solid health coverage without shelling out for a costly standalone policy.

Here's how seniors can get higher coverage while keeping premiums under control.

Can senior citizens buy health insurance after the age of 60?

Today, most insurers offer dedicated health insurance plans designed specifically for senior citizens. Although premiums are generally higher because of age-related health risks, policyholders can still make coverage more affordable by choosing the right policy structure.

To make health insurance more affordable, senior citizens may consider plans that offer cost-sharing features such as co-payments and deductibles. By agreeing to bear a predefined portion of the claim amount or an initial amount before coverage applies, policyholders can substantially reduce their premium costs

Another way to reduce premiums is by combining a regular health insurance policy with a super top-up plan instead of buying a very high-value standalone policy.

There is also some regulatory relief for senior citizens. Since January 2025, IRDAI has capped annual renewal hikes for senior citizens at 10% without prior regulatory approval, providing much-needed predictability.

This makes it easier to predict renewal costs, allowing policyholders to manage their healthcare expenses more effectively.

How a base policy plus super top-up can reduce premium costs

One of the most cost-effective ways to increase health insurance coverage is to combine a modest base policy with a super top-up plan. A super top-up health insurance plan works on a deductible basis. It starts paying only after your total medical expenses cross a fixed amount (called the deductible) in one policy year. This initial amount can be covered through your lower base insurance policy.

Children's employer health insurance can supplement parents' coverage

If an employer allows dependent parents to be covered under its group health insurance policy, it can be an effective way to reduce healthcare costs.

Many corporate group policies offer parental coverage either as a standard benefit or through an additional premium paid by the employee.

However, there are important limitations. Since employer group insurance is linked to employment, the cover may end if the employee changes jobs or retires. Employers can also modify benefits or discontinue parental coverage.

For this reason, experts recommend that senior citizens continue maintaining an individual retail health insurance policy even if they are covered under a child's employer policy.

Family floater or separate policy: Which is better for senior citizens?

In most cases, senior citizens are better served by purchasing an individual health insurance policy rather than remaining on a family floater.

> In India, lenders typically refer to scores from agencies like TransUnion CIBIL. As a rough guide, once your score crosses 750, lenders tend to treat you as a low-risk borrower. That's when you're more likely to get the best interest rates without much negotiation, and approvals are usually smoother.

Family floater premiums are generally determined based on the age of the oldest insured member. As a result, adding a senior citizen parent to a floater covering younger family members can significantly increase the premium for the entire family.

Separate policies also ensure that each insured person has an independent sum insured.Since all members share a family floater policy, claims made by one member can affect the benefits available to everyone covered under the policy.

In addition, many health insurance policies reward claim-free years through benefits such as no-claim bonuses, higher sum insured or renewal premium discounts.

Under a family floater, a claim by one member may affect these benefits for the entire family, whereas separate policies allow each insured person's claim history and benefits to remain independent.

Ayushman Bharat should complement, not replace, private health insurance

The Ayushman Vay Vandana Card provides health insurance coverage of Rs 5 lakh per year to all citizens aged 70 years and above, irrespective of income, with no waiting period for pre-existing diseases.

While it offers an important financial safety net, experts believe it should not be viewed as a complete replacement for private health insurance.

The policy has a limit on the sum insured. If someone requires higher coverage, they should consider purchasing a regular health insurance policy or a top-up health insurance plan to enhance their overall protection.

According to Singhal, eligible senior citizens should ideally use Ayushman Bharat as the first layer of protection and supplement it with private health insurance that offers.

Anoop Balakrishnan

MUTUAL FUND

How to manage SIP in a volatile market ?

For SIP investors, particularly those who started investing a few years ago expecting double-digit equity returns, a prolonged period of modest returns can raise an uncomfortable question: if my SIP is still delivering single-digit returns after several years, should I continue investing or stop?

A Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) is a facility provided by mutual funds that allows investors to invest a predetermined amount in a chosen scheme at regular intervals such as monthly instead of investing a lump sum. This method promotes disciplined investing and enables gradual participation in the financial markets over time. By investing consistently, SIPs help average the purchase cost of units across different market levels a concept known as rupee cost averaging. While this may reduce the impact of market volatility, it does not assure profits or eliminate the risk of loss. Over longer investment horizons, SIPs may also benefit from the effect of compounding where any gains earned can be reinvested to potentially enhance overall growth.

Indian equity investors have had to temper their return expectations lately. The Nifty 50 TRI is down 4.25% over the past six months and 2.78% over nine months. Even over three years, the index has delivered an annualised return of around 9.1%, as of August 7, 2026.

For SIP investors, particularly those who started investing a few years ago expecting double-digit equity returns, a prolonged period of modest returns can raise an uncomfortable question: if my SIP is still delivering single-digit returns after several years, should I continue investing or stop?

Historical data, however, shows why judging an equity SIP solely by a disappointing five-year return can be misleading.

What happened when five-year SIP returns fell below 8%?A study looked at monthly SIP returns for the BSE Sensex TRI between August 1996 and June 2026 and divided the periods based on how SIPs performed during their first five years.

Periods where SIP returns were 8% or lower during the first five years subsequently recorded an average 10-year SIP return of 18.3%. In comparison, periods where the initial five-year SIP return was already above 8% recorded an average 10-year return of 14.7%.

This does not mean an SIP returning less than 8% after five years will necessarily deliver higher returns later. The numbers reflect a historical pattern, not a guarantee of future performance. But they do show why a weak five-year return alone may not be enough reason to abandon a long-term equity SIP.

Why can weak markets actually help an SIP investor?

The answer lies partly in the way SIPs work.When markets fall or remain subdued, your fixed monthly investment buys more mutual fund units because prices are lower. If this phase continues, an investor gradually accumulates more units at relatively lower prices.

When markets eventually recover, these accumulated units participate in the recovery too. This is the basic principle of rupee-cost averaging.

For an investor who is still building wealth, therefore, a period of weak markets is not necessarily a wasted period. It can also be an opportunity to accumulate more units.

Is five years enough to judge your SIP ?

Five years can feel like a long investment period, but equity returns rarely arrive in a straight line.The analysis shows multiple periods over the past three decades when five-year SIP returns slipped to 8% or below. Such phases can coincide with market corrections, crashes or extended periods of subdued returns.

When markets eventually recover, these accumulated units participate in the recovery too. This is the basic principle of rupee-cost averaging. For an investor who is still building wealth, therefore, a period of weak markets is not necessarily a wasted period. It can also be an opportunity to accumulate more units.

An investor looking only at the return visible at the end of five years could therefore end up exiting before the investment gets an opportunity to participate in the next market cycle.

So, should you stop an SIP returning less than 8%? Not necessarily. But that doesn't mean investors should continue with an underperforming investment blindly either.

Instead of looking only at the return number, check whether the fund has consistently underperformed its benchmark and category peers, whether there has been a significant change in its investment strategy or fund manager, and whether the investment still fits your financial goal, time horizon and risk appetite.

If the broader market itself has been weak and the investment continues to suit your financial plan, disappointing returns may call for a review and patience rather than an automatic exit.

Planning to withdraw ? Don't forget the tax

If you ultimately decide to redeem your equity mutual fund investment, remember that any gains may also attract capital gains tax.

For equity-oriented mutual funds, gains on units held for 12 months or less are taxed at 20% as short-term capital gains. For units held for more than 12 months, long-term capital gains exceeding Rs 1.25 lakh in a financial year are taxed at 12.5%, without indexation. Applicable surcharge and cess may also apply.

So, before stopping or redeeming an SIP purely because returns have disappointed, it is worth looking beyond the number on your portfolio today—at the investment itself, your remaining time horizon and the potential tax impact of exiting.

BANKING

Anoop Balakrishnan

How to reduce your credit card debt ?

If you have balances on multiple high-interest credit cards, consolidating these balances onto a single card with a lower interest rate can make managing your debt simpler.

Credit card defaults in India have gone up with a rise in card usage. If you are also running a high credit card debt, one alternative to reducing your debt is the balance transfer method. Here's how it works and whether you should opt for it.

What is a credit card balance transfer?

A credit card balance transfer means that you transfer your outstanding credit card debt to another credit card where the interest rate is lower. Balance transfers can be done between different banks, not within the same bank. The balance transfer method to reduce your credit card debt can come in handy since interest rates on outstanding card debt can go up to 42 percent.

The banks now offer variant plans in the balance transfer. You can choose the plan that suits you the most.For instance, banks offer plans where the payment is due within 30-45 days and interest costs are zero. Then, there are plans with EMI balance transfer, where dues are repaid as 3-6 months EMI as opted while applying for the transfer.

Usually, the existing bank would offer "EMI on credit cards" to its good customers, allow them to pay a large expense over a period and would want to retain the customers. Whereas, the other bank (in balance transfer) would want to attract more balance towards it and may offer an attractive proposition such as a low-cost transfer, and also give an EMI option.

While transferring the balance to a new card, the existing card issuer will try to retain you, usually by offering you alternative repayment terms. It may be a better option as it allows you to retain an old line of credit, which is a good thing for your credit score.

Check your APR and then decide

If you have credit card debt on a card with a high annual percentage rate (APR), then transferring the balance to a card with a lower or zero introductory APR can help you save on interest payments.

The interest rate that reflects the yearly cost of the interest on your outstanding balance is called the annual percentage rate. This rate is charged to the cardholder on the amounts carried forward beyond the due date for the payment of balances.

If you have balances on multiple high-interest credit cards, consolidating these balances onto a single card with a lower interest rate can make managing your debt simpler. Many credit cards offer promotional periods with zero or low APR on balance transfers for a certain period, often ranging from 6 to 18 months.

You should have a plan in place to pay off the transferred balance before the promotional period ends or be prepared to handle the debt at the regular interest rate. If you can pay off the balance within the promotional period, you can save significantly on interest.

How to transfer a balance from one credit card to another?

Transfer of credit card balance makes sense only when the bank that you are transferring your balance offers rates that are more lucrative than the original credit card on which you have pending dues.

The most important point to note about credit card balance transfer is that you can transfer only that amount to your new credit card, which is within its credit limit. For instance, if your second credit card has a limit of Rs 1.5 lakh and your pending dues from your previous credit card are Rs 2 lakh, then only Rs 1.5 lakh can be transferred to the new credit card under the balance transfer scheme.

You will need to agree to the terms and furnish the following information and documents while applying for credit card balance transfer, i.e., your credit limit, expiry date of the credit card, outstanding credit amount and a credit card number, last 3-6 credit card bill statements, address proof, photocopy of credit card, etc.

The disbursement of funds for balance transfer is through the National Electronic Fund Transfer (NEFT) or a Demand Draft to the customer's other bank credit card. The interest that you will pay now will be decided by your new credit card. It is crucial to pay off your credit to the new credit card issuer within the stipulated time in order to avoid hefty interest rates.

The disbursement of funds for balance transfer is through the National Electronic Fund Transfer (NEFT) or a Demand Draft to the customer's other bank credit card. The interest that you will pay now will be decided by your new credit card. It is crucial to pay off your credit to the new credit card issuer within the stipulated time in order to avoid hefty interest rates.

Key points to remember while using a balance transfer

Make sure to compare offers from different credit card issuers, calculate potential savings, and determine if the move aligns with your financial goals and ability to manage the debt responsibly, he added. If you're unsure, consider seeking advice from a credit counsellor.

Should you opt for a balance transfer?

You should avoid frequent balance transfers. By frequently leveraging credit card balance transfers, credit scores may drop, and balance transfer costs may accumulate over time, diminishing savings from interest rate reduction.

Transferring a balance from one credit card to another can be a strategic move if you are looking to manage your credit card debt more effectively and potentially to save on interest payments. Put in another way, a credit card balance transfer should be part of an overall debt management strategy.

Credit card holders need to have a good track record regarding their credit card spends, transaction patterns and payment history in the credit report to become eligible for a balance transfer on the credit card. The terms and policies vary depending on the internal policies of a bank.

Subhash Manoharan FINANCIAL PLANNING

EPF vs NPS: Which is the ideal retirement vehicle?

In case of premature exits, you can withdraw up to 20 percent of the corpus in the account as lump-sum. A whopping 80 percent of the corpus has to be mandatorily used to purchase annuity plan from empanelled life insurance companies. This annuity plan will be used to pay you pension post retirement, that is, after you turn 60. If the total corpus in the account is less than Rs 2.5 lakh, however, NPS will pay out the entire amount as lump-sum to you.

Despite its shortcomings, the National Pension System is a beautiful product. Although people are quite keen to use the extra Rs 50,000 NPS tax benefit, beyond that amount, people tend to avoid it. And the reason is that some of its features like illiquidity until a very late age (55-60 years), mandatory purchase of annuity and taxability of annuity income.

No doubt NPS is a long-term commitment and takes decades to deliver. But it is still an excellent instrument that rightly focuses on putting in place a pension income for the retirement years.

For years, many higher-earners contributed amounts beyond the statutory requirement of 12 percent of the basic pay voluntarily, to their employees' provident fund (EPF) accounts.

This is primarily because of the high tax-free interest that the instrument offers. However, two developments related to EPF have resulted in some high networth individuals (HNIs) rethinking their approach. That is, tax on interest earned on EPF contributions of over Rs 2.5 lakh a year, and 40-year-low interest rate of 8.1 percent.

It is not surprising, therefore, that some employees who invest voluntarily in EPF (or VPF) are evaluating alternatives such as the other popular retirement instrument — the National Pension System (NPS), say financial advisors. In terms of flexibility, tax benefits and, more importantly, returns, NPS is an attractive product now. We have been advising our clients to rejig their salary structures to include NPS, if possible, and also invest in NPS instead of VPF.

However, there are others who feel that VPF and NPS cannot strictly be compared; both VPF and NPS deserve a place in your portfolio. It should be one plus the other. Despite the tax on interest on EPF contribution over Rs 2.5 lakh, it remains attractive. Since the tax is only on the excess amount, the effective rate (post tax rate) will still be good.

Moreover, EPF continues to hold charm for risk-averse investors. For a conservative investor, EPF continues to be attractive. NPS is a market-linked product, with returns subject to market fluctuations, but in case of EPF, the government will have to pay the interest at the declared rate, whatever be the vagaries of the market.

Yet, if you are planning to move a part of your VPF investments to NPS this year, you need to understand the key features, particularly the restrictions on withdrawals from your NPS retirement corpus.

Here's a guide to understanding the flexibilities and restrictions.

Under NPS, you can open two accounts – Tier-I and Tier-II. The latter is a savings account that is to be opened voluntarily and there are no restrictions on withdrawal. It's Tier-I (main, retirement account) withdrawal rules that you need to be aware of. You can make partial withdrawals from this account before retirement, subject to some restrictions.

You can withdraw 25 percent of your own contributions to the account after completing five years. Moreover, you can do so only for specific reasons – treatment of illness, disability, to fund education or marriage of children and finance property purchase. Interestingly, NPS also allows you to make this withdrawal if you plan to start a new venture. You are allowed to withdraw a maximum of three times during the entire period of investment.

What if I want to completely exit NPS prematurely?

This is also allowed, but again, subject to conditions. For one, you cannot make such withdrawals before completing ten years. If you have started investing in NPS after turning 60, this period is much shorter; just 3 years.

In case of premature exits, you can withdraw up to 20 percent of the corpus in the account as lump-sum. A whopping 80 percent of the corpus has to be mandatorily used to purchase annuity plan from empanelled life insurance companies. This annuity plan will be used to pay you pension post retirement, that is, after you turn 60. If the total corpus in the account is less than Rs 2.5 lakh, however, NPS will pay out the entire amount as lump-sum to you.

Can I withdraw my entire corpus at retirement ?

The regular, final withdrawal can be made once you turn 60.

You can withdraw up to 60 percent of the corpus as lump-sum. However, you have to compulsorily convert the balance 40 percent into annuities. If your accumulated corpus is less than Rs 5 lakh, the entire lump-sum will be handed out to you.

The requirement to compulsorily buy an annuity plan is the key hurdle in the path of NPS gaining greater popularity. This is because annuities do not yield attractive returns (5-6 percent), and this pension income is also taxable as per the slab rate applicable to you. Over time, NPS has become a flexible product. The long lock-in and mandatory annuitisation can be looked at positively too — this can actually help you save for your retirement years and get monthly pension post retirement.

In case of the NPS subscriber's death, the nominees can withdraw the entire accumulated corpus, though they have the option of converting a part of it into annuities.

The requirement to compulsorily buy an annuity plan is the key hurdle in the path of NPS gaining greater popularity. This is because annuities do not yield attractive returns (5-6 percent), and this pension income is also taxable as per the slab rate applicable to you.

BUSINESS NEWS

Incheon Kia Delivers 500 Cars on Chingam 1

150 Kia Syros EVs Handed Over at a Single Venue as Dealership Marks Malayalam New Year

Incheon Kia, one of Kerala's largest Kia dealership networks, has created history onChingam 1, the first day of the Malayalam New Year, by delivering 500 Kia vehicles across Kerala in a single day. The milestone includes the handover of 150 Kia Syros EVs at a single venue, earning Incheon Motors Private Limited an India Book of Records recognition for the "Maximum Single-Model Electric Car Sold by a Dealer in a Day."

Mr. Gwanggu Lee, Managing Director & CEO, Kia India, joined the celebrations as Chief Guest, along with Mr. Atul Sood, Senior Vice President, Sales and Marketing, Kia India, Mr. M.A.M Babu Moopan, Chairman, Incheon Kia, and Mr. Naeem Shahul, Managing Director, Incheon Kia. The occasion combined traditional Onam celebrations, including pookalam, chendamelam and Onasadya, with the flag-off of the 150 Syros EVs in convoy.

The milestone comes in a significant year for Incheon Kia, with the dealership on track to cross 10,000 vehicle sales in a single year for the first time, taking its cumulative sales beyond 50,000 vehicles since inception. Its workshops are also expected to cross four lakh repair orders in 2026. Demand for the Syros EV has been strong, with bookings crossing 650 units and continuing to grow, with the first 150 vehicles being delivered today to early customers.

Gwanggu Lee, Managing Director & CEO, Kia India and M.A.M Babu Moopan, Chairman, Incheon Kia presenting a symbolic Kia car key to a customer during the event. Atul Sood, Senior Vice President, Sales and Marketing, Kia India nearby.

Mr. Naeem Shahul, Managing Director, Incheon Kia, said, "Delivering 500 cars across Kerala on Chingam 1, with 150 Syros EVs handed over at one venue, is a significant milestone for our entire team. More importantly, it reflects the direction in which we see mobility evolving in Kerala. Our move towards 100% solar energy and the introduction of ultra-fast charging infrastructure are part of our commitment to making cleaner mobility more accessible. For us, delivering a car is not the end of the relationship with a customer; it is only the beginning." Incheon Kia currently operates 25 touchpoints across Central and South Kerala and will expand to 35 by the end of September 2026, with 10 new Kia Studio outlets being added at Ottapalam, Perumbavoor, Kakkanad, Kattappana, Pala, Pathanamthitta, Adoor, Kottarakkara, Kattakada and Venjaramoodu. The network is supported by more than 2,000 employees across sales, service and customer care.

TATA Sons infuses 10 k cr into AI

Tata Sons' board has cleared a fresh capital infusion of over Rs 10,000 crore (about $1.1 billion) into Air India, one of its largest commitments to the airline since the Rs 18,000-crore acquisition in 2021, though the approval comes with conditions, people familiar with the matter said.

The decision was taken at a June board meeting chaired by N Chandrasekaran and attended by Tata Trusts chairman Noel Tata and vice-chairman Venu Srinivasan. Under Article 121A of Tata Sons' articles of association, investments above Rs 100 crore require majority backing from Tata Trusts' nominee directors. The board granted in-principle approval for fresh investment in Air India and other group ventures, subject to conditions.

BUSINESS NEWS

TATA POWER TO INSTALL NEW 120 KW EV FAST CHARGER STATIONS IN KERALAM

Tata Power's first high-capacity 120 kW public EV charger in Keralam strengthens charging connectivity along NH 544 between Kochi, Thrissur and key destinations across the state

Tata Power and Vivanta Aluva, have strengthened Kerala's EV charging infrastructure with the launch of a 120-kW DC Fast Charger at the hotel.This marks Tata Power's first high-capacity 120 kW public EV charger deployed in Kerala, representing a significant step in strengthening the state's fast-charging infrastructure and supporting its rapidly growing electric mobility ecosystem.

The new charging facility is designed to support the growing number of EV users travelling across Kerala, offering a convenient and efficient charging solution for intercity travellers. The dual-gun, dual-parking charger enables two vehicles to charge simultaneously, helping make EV travel more seamless along one of Kerala's key road corridors.Kerala has consistently demonstrated strong EV adoption and increasing EV penetration, making the expansion of high-capacity charging infrastructure particularly important. The deployment of Tata Power EZ Charge's first 120 kW public charger in the state reflects the company's commitment to providing EV users with access to faster, reliable and conveniently located charging infrastructure.

The Tata Power EZ Charge App further enhances the customer experience through features such as Auto Charge, which enables users to start a charging session in a single step, and Trip Planner, which allows customers to plan their journeys in advance and conveniently locate charging stations along their route.As Kerala continues to witness growing adoption of electric mobility, the collaboration between Tata Power and Vivanta, Kochi reflects a shared commitment to building an accessible and connected clean mobility ecosystem. By integrating high-speed EV charging infrastructure at a hospitality destination, the initiative brings together sustainable travel, convenient mobility and responsible tourism, while supporting EV users travelling across Kochi, Thrissur and other destinations in the state. With 6,700+ public and captive EV charging points, more than 2 lakh+ home chargers and 1,200+ bus charging points across 700+ cities and towns, Tata Power has built one of India's largest integrated EV charging networks. Its charging infrastructure spans highways, airports, tourist destinations, malls, residential societies and commercial locations, catering to diverse EV users.

The company aims to further scale its network to 7.5 lakh home chargers and 10,000 public charging points by 2030, supporting the development of a robust and connected green mobility ecosystem across India.

Fresh investments by pvt cos jump 97% in Q1

Defying expectations, India's private sector announced fresh investment projects worth Rs 15.4 lakh core in April-June quarter (Q1), a 97% jump compared to corresponding quarter of the previous financial year, latest CMIE data showed. This improvement in confidence was led by fresh investments in the electricity and services sectors, particularly in the IT segment.

Overall, the fresh capex (govt and private) in the economy touched a five-quarter high of Rs 17.8 lakh crore, even as fresh govt capex during Q1 FY27 declined 36% to Rs 2.4 lakh crore from Rs 3.9 lakh crore in Q1 FY26.CMIE data showed new investments in the electricity and services sector in Q1 FY27 more than doubled to Rs 7.6 lakh crore from Rs 3.6 lakh crore and Rs 7.8 lakh crore from Rs 3.8 lakh crore respectively. In the services sector, new investments in IT sector alone rose nearly four times to Rs 6.5 lakh crore from Rs 1.6 lakh crore.

Bank of Baroda chief economist Madan Sabnavis said share of capital formation in Q1 rose to 34.3% in nominal terms from 31.4% last year, with private capex "being driven by data centres and power."IDFC First Bank chief economist Gaura Sengupta said nascent signs of a pick-up in private capex are visible, with a "rise in bank lending to the infrastructure sector, capital goods imports and capital goods production."

BUSINESS NEWS

HiLITE Group Launches 'Mandara Women's Wellness'

India's First AI-Integrated Wellness Retreat for Women

HiLITE Group, leading real estate and infrastructure developer, has officially launched 'Mandara Women's Wellness, India's first AI-integrated holistic wellness retreat created exclusively for women. Building on over three decades of innovative developments across commercial, retail, and residential sectors, including India's largest World Trade Center development, WTC Kozhikode, HiLITE Group first expanded into healthcare with Elanine Women's Hospital. Mandara represents the next evolutionary phase of this vision, establishing a dedicated nurturing destination designed to complement traditional clinical care with hyper-personalized wellness solutions tailored for optimal vitality.

Speaking on the launch, P. Sulaiman, Chairman, HiLITE Group, said "Mandara represents a meaningful step for HiLITE Group as we extend our commitment into healthcare and wellness. This launch strengthens our long-term vision of scaling women-centric healthcare infrastructure in India, and Mandara is just the beginning of that journey."

"Mandara is a reflection of our belief that true progress must include the health and well-being of women at every stage of life. Mandara, more than an expansion of our portfolio, it is an extension of our purpose. We are taking a meaningful step into women's health," said Ajil Muhammed, CEO of HiLITE Group.

Situated near Calicut University, the property features 20 independent, IoT-enabled private cottages categorized into Signature Private, Executive, and Wellness options. These serene living spaces incorporate integrated environmental and health sensors designed to support focused, unhurried recovery in complete privacy and complete comfort. Under the leadership of Dr. Azhar Mubarak, CEO of the Healthcare Wing at HiLITE Group, Mandara is structured to transform post-natal recovery and long-term restorative health for women across every stage of life.

Wizzmoni Partners with Oman Air to Launch Multi-Currency Travel Card

Wizzmoni Financial Services Ltd and Oman Air have partnered to launch the co-branded Wizz Voyager Multi-Currency Card, an AI-powered travel card supporting multiple global currencies. Bringing together Wizzmoni's fintech

capabilities with Oman Air's international network, the partnership delivers a more seamless travel experience by integrating payments, rewards, and travel benefits into a single platform.

Designed for frequent travellers, students, and professionals, the card supports multiple global currencies while delivering a seamless digital forex experience with real-time tracking and smart financial controls. The partnership supports Oman Air's broader strategy of extending the customer experience beyond the flight through integrated travel services and value-added retail solutions.

Surya Kuchibotla, Vice President - Retailing, Ancillary & Commerce, Oman Air, explains, "As customer expectations continue to evolve, partnerships such as this allow us to extend the Oman Air experience beyond the airport, creating greater value throughout the entire travel journey. Our partner-ship with Wizzmoni reflects that vision by combining travel and payments into one seamless experience, giving guests greater flexibility while unlocking meaningful rewards every time they travel."

The card transforms everyday spending into travel opportunities, offering customers access to Oman Air flight vouchers, upgrades, and exclusive travel benefits through milestone-based rewards. Customers can also explore Oman Air holidays and ancillary services directly through Wizz Voyager's digital platforms, creating a unified journey from planning to payments.

"Wizz Voyager Card is built for the new-age global traveller where every swipe unlocks value, and every journey becomes more rewarding. This is a bold step towards creating a truly connected travel and payment ecosystem," said Amir Nagammy, Founder & Group CEO, Wizz Financial.

HiLITE Hands Over Olympus Tower 1 at HiLITE City, Calicut

HiLITE Group has handed over Olympus 1, the first tower of HiLITE Olympus, an ultra-modern residential development that brings together luxury, expansive amenities and nature at HiLITE City, Kozhikode. Set across 7.07 acres, Olympus features more than 100 amenities and India's largest terrace recreation space, spanning over 40,000 sq ft, alongside 526 apartments across 33 floors. With a built-up area of 12,70,039 sq ft and apartments ranging from 919 sq ft to 3,150 sq ft, Olympus is designed to offer a distinctive, future-ready living experience. Sustainability and urban forestry are woven into the development, creating a balance between modern comforts and green spaces. The second tower, Olympus 2, comprises 412 apartments across 32 floors and is currently under construction.

Unlike conventional designs where multiple towers accommodate numerous apartments, all 938 apartments across the project are designed within just two towers. Each tower features a single straight passage connecting the apartments, a distinctive architectural choice that enhances connectivity and togetherness among residents. Beyond its architectural brilliance, Olympus is built on the idea of community living.

"This project is the culmination of meticulous planning and architectural innovation to redefine what urban living truly means. Every detail, from its architecture to its amenities, has been thoughtfully designed to give our residents an unmatched quality of life," said Mohamed Fazeem, CEO - HiLITE Builders.

Located within HiLITE City, one of India's largest mixed-use developments, HiLITE Olympus offers residents a host of added advantages, all within reach at HiLITE City. This includes the HiLITE Mall and HiLITE Business Park, along with everyday conveniences such as Hug a Mug, a 24x7 coffee shop, and Palaxi Cinemas, an 8-screen world-class theatre. Residents can also unwind at Compass, a dedicated center for rejuvenation, or spend time at Club 6T6. Adding to the everyday convenience is a 65,000 sq. ft. hypermarket within HiLITE Mall, while HiLITE City is home to over 2,000 apartments.

BUSINESS NEWS

Kerala Feeds provides free cattle feed to flood-affected areas of Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta

Kerala Feeds, the public sector cattle feed manufacturer, has supplied free cattle feed to dairy farmers in flood-affected areas of Alappuzha and Pathanamthitta districts, following the special direction of Animal Husbandry and Dairy Development Minister Bindu Krishna.

The initiative was taken in line with the minister's direction to ensure that Kerala Feeds is prepared to provide immediate assistance, including cattle feed, to farmers affected by natural disasters.

As part of the initiative, 150 bags of Kerala Feeds Elite cattle feed, valued at Rs 2.31 lakh, were supplied to the affected areas. Kerala Feeds Managing Director Dr B. Sreekumar flagged off the vehicle carrying the cattle feed.

"Supporting farmers during times of crisis is part of the social responsibility of public sector institutions," Dr Sreekumar said, adding that the initiative would help farmers, whose livelihoods were disrupted by the floods, return to normalcy at the earliest.

Kerala Feeds has a history of supporting the dairy sector during natural disasters. During the devastating floods of 2018, the company supplied free cattle feed and mineral mixture worth several crores of rupees to farmers in flood-affected areas under its 'Snehsparsham' initiative.

N M PRABHAKARAN

CHANDRASEKARAN STEPS DOWN AS TATA SONS CHAIRMAN

TATA IMBROGLIO

Tata Sons, the principal holding company of the Tata group, is majority-owned by Tata Trusts and controls more than 30 group companies, including Tata Consultancy Services, Tata Motors and Air India

TATA group, the foremost and highly reputed business conglomerate in the country has plunged intoanother controversy as its present chairman Natarajan Chandrasekaran will not seek another stint as Tata Sons chairman when his current term ends in February 2027. It was widely believed in the industrial circles that he would continue in the present position to lead the holding company to still higher heights. But his decision not to accept a third term has generated various interpretations about the underlying reason for his withdrawal. His nine-year run at the helm of the country's biggest business conglomerate that has an all-pervading presence in the lives of Indians and one that he helped stabilise after a bruising boardroom coup, witnessed rapid expansion of the company. Takeover of Air India, the premier airlines of the country by TATA is considered as a bold step by Chandra, even though the airlines is incurring huge loss year after year.

In a statement where he announced that he had informed the Tata Sons board that he would not offer himself for reappointment when his term ends on February 20, 2027, Chandra said the unanimous resolution and proposal of the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and Sir Ratan Tata Trust six months ago to give him a third five-year extension was "not carried through" because "one of the Board Members" of Tata Sons "did not support it".

Chandra, 63, who has been associated with the $170-billion Tata group for 40 years after joining as a trainee and is the first non-Parsi to become chairman of the century-old conglomerate founded by JamsetjiNusserwanji Tata, did not name this board member.

He has had disagreements with Tata Trusts chairman Noel Tata over some critical issues. Noel became chairman of Tata Trusts in 2024 following the death of Ratan Tata, his half-brother.

Chandra, who will remain in office until his current term ends in February 2027, said the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT) and the Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT) "had unanimously resolved and recommended the extension of my next term for a period of five years, which was recorded and recommended by the Tata Sons Nomination and Remuneration Committee and the Board. Subsequently, the resolution was tabled in the Tata Sons Board on February 24, 2026."

"However, the proposal was not carried through because one of the Board Members did not support it, and in the absence of unanimous support, I chose to defer the decision. It has been 6 months since that Board meeting, and no resolution has been reached till date," Chandra added.

The SDTT and the SRTT are two principal constituents of Tata Trusts, a group of charitable institutions that collectively hold 66 per cent shares in Tata Sons and act as the controlling shareholder block. Noel is a nominee of Tata Trusts on the Tata Sons board.

"I have completed 40 years of professional life at the Tata Group. I am grateful for the immensely satisfying opportunity to contribute to this venerable institution," Chandra, who was the boss of the Tata group's most valuable firm — Tata Consultancy Services — before taking up the bigger role in 2017, said in the statement.

Tata Sons, Chandra said, is a very large institution and there are many strategic projects under critical stages of execution.

"It is not only necessary to have a leader in place to lead the Group beyond February 2027, but also clarity on leadership is important for employees, investors, partners and other stakeholders.

"Under these circumstances, earlier today, I have communicated to the Tata Sons Board that I have decided not to offer myself for reappointment when my term ends on February 20, 2027. I have asked the Board to decide on the succession soon to ensure a proper transition," the statement added.

Tata Sons, the principal holding company of the Tata group, is majority-owned by Tata Trusts and controls more than 30 group companies, including Tata Consultancy Services, Tata Motors and Air India.

Noel's grudge

It had been widely reported that Noel had raised three key issues during a board meeting in February. He was said to have expressed concern about cash burns in new-age businesses (such as chips and electronics), Air India and Tata Digital, under which BigBasket operates.

Noel also sought a written commitment that Tata Sons would not be taken to the public — through an initial public offer — and that Chandra should settle the long-standing dispute with the Shapoorji Pallonji Group, the second-largest shareholder of Tata Sons, without an IPO.

"All the concerns are linked to one aspect, keeping Tata Sons private and not to float an IPO. Heavy cash burns could lead to Tata Sons borrowing, which will make it unworthy of remaining an unlisted entity from a regulatory standpoint," said a source with direct knowledge of developments at Tata.

Chandra had explained in February the challenges of making a firm commitment to the listing, since the Reserve Bank of India will have the final say in the matter.

Last Thursday, the RBI retained Tata Sons as an upper-layer non-banking financial institution, but observed that the holding company's inclusion in the list would not affect its pending application to surrender NBFC registration. Tata Sons aggressively paid off debts to reach that stage.

Funding requirements in new businesses, such as aviation, semiconductor chips and batteries, are systemically important to India's journey to self-reliance in critical sectors. There is apprehension about how these ventures can be funded without tapping resources either through loans or an IPO.

In a townhall with employees at Bombay House, the Tata Sons headquarters, on Wednesday afternoon, Chandra asked employees not to pay "much attention" to gossip, theories and conspiracies.

Corporate observers recalled the circumstances that led to Chandra's appointment. Cyrus Mistry, who took over as chairman of Tata Sons in 2012, was forced out in 2016 following differences with Ratan Tata, who was then the chairman of Tata Trusts.

In many ways, Chandra's appointment had restored stakeholder confidence in the Tata group post the ugly Tata-Mistry spat.

Under Chandra, the Tata group expanded aggressively across technology, auto, aviation, electronics and manufacturing, while pursuing large investments in semiconductors and other strategic sectors. The group now comprises 31 companies operating across more than 100 countries, according to Tata's website.

Chandra's tenure has also faced mounting challenges. The Tata group has had to contend with the June 2025 Air India crash in Ahmedabad that killed 260 people, pressure on its technology business from the global shift toward artificial intelligence and a cyberattack affecting the Jaguar Land Rover.

AGM put off

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Tata Sons Private Limited, the holding company of the Tata Group, which was scheduled on August 18, 2026, was for the first time in the company's history adjourned due to lack of quorum.

The 108th annual general meeting was scheduled to take place on August 18, instead, the meeting was adjourned after the required quorum was not present.

BANKING

Anoop Balakrishnan

Should you take a loan to buy a used car?

One should skip auto loans as far as possible as the value of the asset starts depreciating from the moment it comes on to the road. In the case of used vehicles, the interest rate charged by private banks is more than 1.5 times higher than on new vehicles. So buying it on a loan is more disadvantageous.

Owning a personal vehicle has become a necessity for many. While several people may prefer buying only a new car, there are a good number of buyers who go for a second-hand car due to their value-conscious approach. Cost-effectiveness is, of course, a major factor. A used car with significantly depreciated value in initial years also helps you greater affordability to own a higher-category vehicle later.

A two-year-old vehicle can be 20-30 per cent cheaper than a new one. Further, most car companies have their pre-owned divisions, and several banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) offer lucrative rates and deals, like zero down payment, on second-hand cars. So should you opt for an auto loan to buy a pre-owned car?

You have to pay higher interest rate on used-car loans

You can get a loan for a second-hand car from banks, NBFCs or even fintech platforms. The first thing that you need to check is the interest rate of the loan. The interest rate on loans for used cars is usually higher than that on loans for new cars.

Second-hand car loan: How much loan can you take?

Further, in the case of used-car loans, you get a relatively lesser loan amount — typically up to 85 per cent of the value of the car — depending on the lender. Now most lenders give around 60 per cent to 85 per cent of the value of the used vehicle as loan, whereas in case of new vehicles, it is 85 per cent to 100 per cent.

The tenure for a used-car loan could be lower. In most such loans, the maximum repayment tenure is between one and five years. However, some banks do allow a repayment tenure of up to seven years.

Why banks charge high interest rate on pre-owned car loans

There are two reasons why banks charge more interest rates for used cars than for new ones. A car loan is a secured loan because the loan is secured by the car itself. Do remember that the car is a depreciating asset, hence with time, the value of the security goes down along with the loan outstanding. Banks typically only disburse 80-90 per cent of the car's value to counter this problem. The second problem is that the resale value of the car is affected by the number of owners, which means that a new car will have better resale value compared to a used car of the same vintage.

Should you take an auto loan for a second-hand car?

Car loans come with various restrictions such as high-interest rates, reduced loan amount, and shorter tenure. Considering these factors, is it a wise decision to take an auto loan for a pre-owned car?

One should skip auto loans as far as possible as the value of the asset starts depreciating from the moment it comes on to the road. In the case of used vehicles, the interest rate charged by private banks is more than 1.5 times higher than on new vehicles. So buying it on a loan is more disadvantageous.

> Car buyers should consider taking a personal loan, a top-up home loan, or any other credit facility against mutual fund units or fixed deposits if the rate quoted for a second-owned car loan is way higher than expected. The interest rate for a new car nearly remains on a par with the rate quoted for a top-up home loan, or a loan against fixed deposits.

What are the other options than auto loans?

So, if you are not taking an auto loan to buy a second-hand car, how should you finance it? Car buyers should consider taking a personal loan, a top-up home loan, or any other credit facility against mutual fund units or fixed deposits if the rate quoted for a second-owned car loan is way higher than expected. The interest rate for a new car nearly remains on a par with the rate quoted for a top-up home loan, or a loan against fixed deposits.

You can opt for a personal loan to buy a car as these are often comparatively cheaper than used-car loans. You can also check personal loan offers available based on your credit profile — such as pre-approved loans or zero-processing free on personal loans. If you have a good credit score and the interest rate of the personal loan is at least 1 per cent lower than the interest rate charged on used vehicles, you should try a personal loan.

Depending on your credit history, you can get a bigger loan amount, longer tenure and lower interest if you apply for a personal loan instead of an auto loan for used cars.

Home loan top-up: Those who have a home loan can opt for a top-up on their home loans to finance their pre-owned car purchase. Depending on the loan tenure and outstanding loan amount, availing a top-up on a home loan could help you get a bigger loan amount with a lower interest rate and longer tenure.

Loan against your investments: You can also take a loan against your investments such as a fixed deposit or mutual funds to finance your second-hand car. Loans against FDs are cheaper than personal loans or most secured and unsecured loans.

Gold loan: You can also consider taking a loan against the yellow metal you have to finance your second-hand car purchase. Several lenders offer an attractive interest rate on gold loans.

Subhash Manoharan FINANCIAL PLANNING

Personal loan: Mistakes you should avoid

One of the most common mistakes borrowers make with Personal Loans is using them for discretionary spending such as casual unplanned shopping sprees or dining out at exorbitantly priced places.

These are just a few examples of what you can do with a Personal Loan. However, it is important to note that loans should be used responsibly and always within your means. Before applying for a Personal Loan with us or any other institution, you should consider your present financial situation and estimate future repayment capability to ensure you can afford the loan. Furthermore, it's doubly important to choose a loan with favourable terms such as a low-interest rate, flexible repayment options and minimal processing fees.

It is imperative that every borrower should use the loan responsibly and avoid certain practices that could lead to financial duress. This post discusses five things you should not do with your Personal Loan. We will also explain why going for the lowest interest rate is not always the ideal option for these loans, despite it being the most commonly sought-after feature.

One of the most common mistakes borrowers make with Personal Loans is using them for discretionary spending such as casual unplanned shopping sprees or dining out at exorbitantly priced places. While it can be quite tempting to use the loan to splurge on things you do not necessarily need, you must not forget that your Personal Loan has come with interest charges and other fees that add to the overall cost of what you have borrowed. Using a loan for discretionary spending can result in an unnecessarily larger debt burden that may be difficult to repay conveniently.

A missed EMI isn't always a sign of financial trouble. Sometimes a salary gets delayed, a business payment doesn't arrive on time or an auto-debit fails because there wasn't enough money in the account that morning. Whatever the reason, the first reaction is usually the same: "It's just one EMI. I'll pay it next month."

That assumption can prove costly. Banks and NBFCs continue to charge penal interest or late payment fees for delayed personal loan repayments, depending on the loan agreement. More importantly, if the overdue payment isn't resolved quickly, it can start affecting your borrowing record. One missed EMI isn't a financial disaster, but it is something worth fixing as early as possible. The first impact is usually on your wallet.

A delayed EMI often comes with an extra cost.

A majority of financial institutions impose a late fee or penalty rate upon maturity of the agreed repayment period. The fee will vary depending on the institution's policy and your agreement at the time of borrowing. It may not look significant at first, but delaying the payment further can make the outstanding amount steadily grow. It could affect your credit profile.

Many borrowers don't think beyond the penalty.

Loan repayment information is reported to credit information companies on a regular basis. If the overdue payment remains unresolved and is reported accordingly, it may influence your credit history. That can become important later when you apply for another loan or even a new credit card. Paying on time consistently is what gradually builds a strong credit profile. Your lender will probably contact you.

Don't be surprised if you receive reminder calls or messages.

This is standard practice and doesn't necessarily mean serious recovery action has begun. If the delay happened because of a genuine financial problem, responding honestly is usually far better than avoiding the lender altogether. Open communication often makes resolving the issue easier. Ignoring repeated reminders rarely improves the situation.

> A missed EMI isn't always a sign of financial trouble. Sometimes a salary gets delayed, a business payment doesn't arrive on time or an auto-debit fails because there wasn't enough money in the account that morning.

Don't let one missed EMI become a habit

This is where borrowers sometimes run into trouble. If one overdue instalment is pushed into the next month, another EMI soon becomes due. Before long, two repayments need to be managed together. Even people with otherwise stable finances can find themselves under pressure if they allow the backlog to grow. Clearing the overdue amount quickly usually prevents that cycle from starting.

Check why the payment didn't happen

Sometimes the problem isn't a lack of money. An expired e-mandate, a technical failure or insufficient balance at the time of auto-debit can all result in a missed EMI. Before assuming the worst, check your bank account and speak to the lender if necessary. A small issue can often be resolved before it turns into a bigger one.

Keep a cushion for loan repayments

Financial surprises are part of life. Medical expenses, job changes or delayed business income can upset even a carefully planned budget. Keeping enough emergency savings to cover a few EMIs can help you avoid missing repayments during temporary setbacks. It's one of the simplest ways to protect both your finances and your credit history.

Defaulting on your personal loan EMI for one month does not mean that you are a risk-prone borrower. More important is the response to this missed payment. You can overcome the situation by making the required payment and staying in touch with the bank.

UPI PAYMENTS

N M PRABHAKARAN

Fee on UPI Payments: Confusion Continues

Government of India has been encouraging digital payments to the extent that Unified Payments Interface (UPI)payments have become very common even amongst ordinary villagers and small -scale vendors. Ease of UPI payments using a mobile phone avoids the need for carrying cash and enables people to make payments using the pocket phone. But, will UPI payments become costly as the government has brought in a law enabling it to levy a fee on digital payments which will certainly lake away the sheen of UPI payments. The new law introduced by the government seeks to allow banks and UPI companies to charge merchants for certain UPI payments.

Amid growing speculation over the possibility of charges on UPI transactions, the Payments Council of India (PCI) has issued a clarification, stating that consumers and small merchants will continue to use UPI without paying any transaction fees.

In a post on X, the industry body sought to address what it described as misconceptions surrounding merchant discount rate (MDR) and UPI charges, emphasising that no proposal seeks to impose fees on individual users or small shopkeepers.

Consumers will continue to use UPI for free

The PCI said UPI has remained free for consumers since its launch in 2016 and there is no change in that position. It reiterated that every Indian can continue making instant digital payments without paying transaction charges.

No MDR for small merchants

The council also clarified that small merchants, including small stores, are not required to pay Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) for accepting UPI payments. It said the platform was designed to make digital payments accessible even for the smallest busine-sses, and protecting small merchants remains central to the ecosystem.

Why the discussion over UPI charges?

According to the PCI, the ongoing debate is not about charging consumers but about ensuring the financial sustainability of the country's rapidly expanding digital payments.

Infrastructure

UPI has evolved into the world's largest real-time payment system, processing billions of transactions every month. The council said discussions are centred on how to support continued investments in technology, cybersecurity, fraud preve-ntion and infrastructure while keeping consumers and small businesses protected.

Who bears the cost?

The PCI noted that banks, payment companies, fintech firms, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have collectively invested in building and maintaining the UPI ecosystem over the past decade.

It said the operational costs of running the payment network—

including technology, cyber-security, compliance, customer support and innovation—are currently borne by ecosystem participants such as banks and payment service providers.

Will consumers pay if large merchants are charged?

The council clarified that even if merchant service charges apply to certain large merchants, they are commercial arrangements between merchants and payment service providers and do not translate into transaction charges for consumers.

It added that merchant service charges are a common feature of digital payment ecosystems globally, while consumers continue to enjoy free and convenient digital payment services.

Subhash Manoharan FINANCIAL PLANNING

Don't sabotage your own financial plan

Making a financial plan is not difficult. It's the execution that is critical. This is where many individuals slip up. While many clients follow the suggestions in earnest, there is a tendency among many to deviate from the path. Due to inertia or their circumstances, some clients don't fully execute the suggested plan.

Have you finally decided to hire an adviser to sort out your finances? Or, are you, perhaps, already working with one? While you can be reasonably assured that your money will be in good hands after taking this decision, you will still need to play your part in getting the best out of this relationship. Are you engaging with your adviser to the extent and in the spirit that this relationship warrants? Or could you be undermining your planner unconsciously or otherwise?

Not involving the family in discussions and selective implementation of advice by clients are among the biggest concerns for financial planners. Incomplete information will lead to a flawed plan, causing problems later.

Financial planners point out that clients often suppress certain aspects of their finances. So, for instance, they may not reveal the existence of certain assets, such as a residential flat or a plot of land, to the adviser. This may be out of fear that the adviser will ask them to dispose of the asset. At times, individuals are not entirely forthcoming about personal circumstances, say, a special needs child at home, fractious relationship between husband and wife, or the need for home care for aged parents.

By not disclosing all financial aspects, you are essentially leaving your adviser with a blind spot. For the planner to offer you the right antidote for your specific problems, he needs to have a complete picture of your current finances and personal circumstances. Make sure you put all your cards on the table. Don't hesitate to divulge any relevant information during initial discussions with the adviser.

Don't force your biases on the adviser

Impulsive decisions and emotional moves can derail the financial plan.Tackling the inherent biases and perceptions of clients is part of the job description for any financial adviser. Some individuals come with unrealistic expectations. Often, financial planners are questioned about not targeting higher return on investments. Managing return expectations in a runaway bull market is particularly tricky, say advisers. Some investors have only seen a one-way uptick in the stock market without the reality check of a long, painful correction. Their return expectations are very high.

Many of us also have set notions about spending on vacations, buying property or even kids' foreign studies and destination weddings. Advisers make sure to give a realistic assessment of the situation. The onus is on the adviser to check the worst impulses of the client. However, planners concede that it is ultimately the client's money. Some accommodation for the client's suggestions and expectations cannot be avoided. As long as the financial calculations are not being blown apart, advisers relent on certain deviations. Typically, an adviser makes several iterations of the financial plan before delivering the final version. Subsequently, if any deviations are taken by the client that are not in his interest, these are recorded, along with the specific objections raised by the adviser.

Implement the planner's advice fully, not partially

Making a financial plan is not difficult. It's the execution that is critical. This is where many individuals slip up. While many clients follow the suggestions in earnest, there is a tendency among many to deviate from the path. Due to inertia or their circumstances, some clients don't fully execute the suggested plan. For instance, some individuals are recalcitrant about scaling up the investment outlay as suggested. Others will selectively invest along the suggested lines, but dither in other areas. This is akin to a patient using his own discretion to decide which of the doctor's prescribed medicines he will take.

Many of us also have set notions about spending on vacations, buying property or even kids' foreign studies and destination weddings. Advisers make sure to give a realistic assessment of the situation. The onus is on the adviser to check the worst impulses of the client.

It is even more problematic when the individual disregards the pre-discussed, goal-based plan midway through the journey. This disrupts the entire goal math and forces the adviser to rework the plan. Finally, however, it is the client's responsibility to pay heed to the advice that has been given by the financial planner. He needs to understand that any delay in the execution or partial implementation of the recommendations is bound to compromise his own financial health and impact his family.

Do not take financial advice from multiple sources

Finfluencers and media don't understand your specific situation to offer advice.Another bone of contention for advisers is the injection of opinions from multiple sources when it comes to financial planning. Close relatives and friends are known to wield a heavy influence on financial decisions of individuals and this often feeds into the process.

Besides family and friends, media has always played a big role in the decision-making process of investors, be it for stock-picking or fund selection. To add to the merry mix of free advisers, nowadays, finfluencers have taken on this role, doling out financial advice with impunity. Given the extensive following they enjoy, these 'experts' also hold credibility and a huge sway over the masses. A financial planner remarks, Many look at fancy investments that are peddled through various social media channels and want us to review them.

BUSINESS NEWS

Star Health marks 20 years, settles 17 lakh+ claims worth nearly ₹ 5,800 crore in Kerala

Star Health and Allied Insurance Company Limited (NSE: STAR HEALTH, BSE: 543412), India's leading standalone health insurer, has completed 20 years of its foundation and reinforced its commitment to improving health insurance access and delivering faster, more transparent and customer-focused claims support across Kerala. The company has settled 17 Lakh+ claims worth nearly ₹ 5,800 crores since inception in the state.

With the completion of 20 years, Star Health is strengthening access to healthcare through its newly launched service, Talk to Star. The service enables customers to access virtual doctor consultations and receive guidance on healthcare options, including Home Healthcare and planned hospitalisation.

With Kerala as a strong market and an important centre for its operations, Star Health continues to strengthen healthcare access across the state through its on-ground presence, advisor network, hospital partnerships and technology-enabled claims support. In Q1FY27, the company recorded GWP of ₹ 518 crores in Kerala and covered 5.3 lakh+ lives, with over 99% of its portfolio comprising retail health. Its presence in the state is supported by 59 branches, 65,500+ advisors and 550+ network hospitals.

Himanshu Walia, Whole Time Director & CMO, Star Health Insurance, said, "Completing 20 years is an important milestone for Star Health, and Kerala has been an important market in this journey. Having settled over 17 lakh claims worth nearly ₹ 5,800 crore in Kerala since inception, we have seen first-hand the difference timely access and financial protection can make to families. With more than 10,000 claims processed every day, 92% of cashless claims processed in less than three hours and AI now supporting 20% of routine cashless claims, our focus remains on making health insurance more responsive and useful for customers when they need it most."

Talk to Star and Home Healthcare

Customers can access Talk to Star through the Star Health app for medical advice and guidance on the appropriate next course of treatment or call 7200 222 333 between 8 am and 8 pm for assistance

At a national level, Star Health has settled claims worth over ₹ 71,100 crores since inception. The company processes more than 10,000 claims every day, with 92% of cashless claims processed in less than three hours. Star Health continues to hold a leadership position in retail health insurance, with ~29% market share nationally in Q1FY27.

Suresh R S, Business Head – Kerala, Star Health Insurance, said, "Kerala is one of Star Health's most important markets, and our leadership in this market reflects the depth of trust we have earned across the state. That leadership has been built on a simple philosophy - being present when customers need us the most. From settling over 17 lakh claims worth nearly ₹ 5,800 crore in Kerala to strengthening access through our advisor and hospital networks, our focus has been to make health insurance meaningful at the moment of need."

IndianOil Co-hosts MC²+ IGNITE, India's Flagship Energy Innovation Accelerator

Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IndianOil), together with the Venture Center and CSIR–National Chemical Laboratory (CSIR-NCL), co-hosted the Pune outreach of MC²+ IGNITE - India's flagship energy innovation accelerator - at the NCL Main Auditorium. The programme, "Advancing Energy Innovations," held under the aegis of the MC² Foundation with guidance fromthe Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, broughttogether the country's energy majors, research institutions, deep-tech founders and the scientific community.

Delivering the keynote, Padma Vibhushan Dr. R. A. Mashelkar, FRS, termed the initiative "timely and truly path-breaking." Invoking Einstein's equation, he described how the country's energy majors are pooling laboratories, assets, mentoring, capital and market access behind India's innovators, and called on founders to bring complete solutions- carrying India from "Make in India" to "Innovate in India" and, ultimately, "Own in India."

Addressing the gathering, Shri A. S. Sahney, Chairman, IndianOil, said: "Global energy demand is set to rise sharply in the coming years, and India's growth may well outpace the world's. Yet only a small share of India's start-up capital has so far reached the energy sector. Through MC²+ IGNITE, we are opening IndianOil's infrastructure to founders — a place to test, to fail safely, and to validate solutions beyond bench scale — so that promising technologies do not stall in the valley of death."IndianOil's collaboration with CSIR-NCL will focus on hydrogen and mobility.

Dr. Premnath Venugopalan, Director, Venture Center, welcomed the gathering. The programme also featured expert talks by Dr. Ashish Lele, Director, CSIR-NCL, and Dr. Madhukar Garg, Advisor, MC² Foundation; sessions on the capabilities and problem statements of India's oil & gas companies by Dr. Umish Srivastava, Executive Director I/c (R&D), IndianOil, and on the green-hydrogen ecosystem by Shri Radhey Shyam, National Green Hydrogen Mission (MNRE); and a Showcase of Energy Innovators. The event concluded with the exchange of a Memorandum of Understanding between the MC² Foundation and the Venture Center, formalising Venture Center as an on-ground MC² node.

Dr. Moopen family picks up additional stake in Aster DM Quality Care worth ₹ 350 crore

Union (Mauritius) Holdings Ltd., owned and promoted by Dr. Azad Moopen and family, has acquired 46.09 lakh equity shares of Aster DM Quality Care Limited, representing approximately ~0.57% of the company's paid-up equity share capital, from TPG-backed Centella Mauritius Holdings Limited. With the recent purchase of additional stake, the Moopen family now has increased shareholding in Aster DM Quality Care Ltd to ~24.58%.

The shares were acquired on September 2, 2026, at a price of ₹ 760 per share, for an aggregate consideration of approximately ₹ 350.34 crore.

The acquisition further strengthens the promoter family's ownership interest in Dr. Moopen-led Aster DM Quality Care and underscores the Moopen family's commitment to the company's long-term growth. It also reflects the family's confidence in the potential of the larger, integrated healthcare platform, Aster DM Quality Care Ltd., and its ability to deliver sustainable long-term value for shareholders.

BUSINESS NEWS

Federal Bank Conducts 95th Annual General Meeting

Ninety Fifth Annual General Meeting of the shareholders of Federal Bank was conducted over video conferencing and Other Audio Visual Means. The meeting was presided over by Bank's Chairman Elias George and joined by MD & CEO K V S Manian, other Directors, Shareholders, Senior Executives, representatives of Statutory and Secretarial Auditors of the Bank.

In the meeting, all the resolutions were approved by the shareholders including Adoption of Audited Financial Statements for the Financial Year ended March 31, 2026, along with the declaration of a final dividend of ₹ 1.20 per equity share for FY 2025-26, and other resolutions as stated in the 95th AGM Notice.

While addressing the shareholders, the Bank's Chairman Elias George said, "Your Bank has demonstrated a stellar performance in FY 26, attaining robust increase in growth and profitability, without sacrificing financial prudence."

In his address to shareholders, KVS Manian highlighted the Bank's theme for the year, "Disciplined Growth. Sustained Momentum.", noting that sustainable progress comes from balancing ambition with prudence and agility with sound judgement. He pointed to key milestones including crossing ₹ 1 lakh crore in CASA deposits and in non-resident deposits, improved profitability metrics, and Blackstone's investment in the Bank, as signs of the trust placed in the Bank by customers and investors alike.

IGBC Green Kochi Conclave 2026 Drives Vision for Healthier, Greener and Climate-Resilient Kerala

The Indian Green Building Council (IGBC), part of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), has organized the 2nd Edition of the IGBC Green Kochi Conclave 2026 in Kochi, bringing together policymakers, healthcare leaders, architects, developers, sustainability experts and industry stakeholders to deliberate on advancing healthier, greener, and climate-resilient infrastructure.

Held under the theme "Sustainable Well-being | Green Healthcare | Climate Resilient Infrastructure", the conclave explored how sustainability can extend beyond environmental performance to improve occupant well-being strengthen healthcare infrastructure and enhance resilience into Kerala's rapidly evolving built environment.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri APM Mohammed Hanish, Additional Chief Secretary, Department of Industries and Commerce, Government of Kerala, said, "Achieving the milestone of 600 IGBC-certified projects is a testament to Kerala's unwavering leadership in sustainable urban development. To further accelerate our vision of a climate-resilient, net-zero future, the Government of Kerala is committed to enhancing policy and financial incentives for green building projects across all residential, commercial, and industrial sectors."

The inaugural session featured perspectives from government, healthcare and industry leaders, followed by panel discussions on future-ready healthcare infrastructure, sustainable design and construction, green technologies, climate resilience resource efficiency. Experts shared practical insights into improving patient comfort, operational efficiency, reducing environmental impact and strengthening resilience across healthcare facilities and urban infrastructure.

Dr. Lallu Joseph, President, Consortium of Accredited Healthcare Organizations, said, "Healthcare infrastructure today must deliver far more than clinical excellence. Hospitals of the future must be designed to promote patient wellbeing, enhance caregiver productivity, reduce environmental impact and remain operational during climate-related disruptions."

BUSINESS NEWS

GLOBAL TECH MAJORS BACK KERALA CYBER SURAKSHA SUMMIT 2026

Oracle, AWS, Google, Microsoft, Cisco and Zscaler join forces to support major cybersecurity leadership summit in Kochi

Kerala is set to make a significant mark on India's cybersecurity landscape as some of the world's biggest technology companies come together to support the Kerala Cyber Suraksha Summit (KCSS) 2026, to be held on September 5 at Le Méridien, Kochi.Global technology leaders Oracle, Amazon Web Services (AWS), Google and Microsoft, along with Cisco and Zscaler, will support KCSS 2026, joining several leading national and international technology organisations at what is emerging as one of South India's most significant cybersecurity leadership gatherings.

The participation of these global technology majors marks a major milestone for Kerala's rapidly expanding digital and cybersecurity ecosystem and reflects the growing national importance of cyber resilience, AI security and digital trust.

KCSS 2026 is expected to bring together more than 1,000 delegates, 40+ distinguished speakers, 20+ expert-led sessions and 15+ leading technology partners, creating a high-impact platform for conversations around cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, digital trust, cyber resilience and the rapidly evolving threat landscape.

Organised by F9 Infotech in collaboration with the Government of Kerala and Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM), the summit is supported by a distinguished ecosystem that includes the Data Security Council of India (DSCI), TiE Kerala and the Cochin Chamber of Commerce & Industry (CCCI), alongside leading strategic, industry, community, academic and technology partners.

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL LEADERS TO CONVERGE IN KOCHI

Shri Manoj Abraham, IPS, Director General of Police & Director, Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau, Government of Kerala, will attend KCSS 2026 as Guest of Honour and Keynote Speaker. The summit is also expected to welcome Ministers from the Government of Kerala, senior government dignitaries, policy-makers and diplomats.

KCSS 2026 will feature an influential crosssection of leaders from government, law enforcement, industry, academia, startups and the global technology ecosystem.

BUSINESS NEWS

EPSRR AND AXTON CAPITAL PARTNER TO DEVELOP F&B CONCEPTS IN SRI LANKA, OMAN

EPSRR Holdings Private Limited ("EPSRR") has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Axton Capital, UK ("Axton"), to develop and expand food and beverage concepts in Sri Lanka and the Sultanate of Oman.

Under the MOU, the two companies intend to collaborate through J M Robertson & Company Limited ("JMR"), a subsidiary of Axton, to establish and scale F&B concepts across both markets. JMR — which traces its history to 1845 and is one of the oldest coffee trading companies in the Indian subcontinent — already owns and operates cafés under the Department of Coffee brand in Sri Lanka and Oman, giving the partnership an established operating base in both target markets from the outset.

The collaboration will focus initially on Colombo and Muscat, with further opportunities across Sri Lanka, Oman, and other selected markets to be evaluated as the partnership develops.

Speaking at the event to mark the MOU signing, Mr. Riyas Kalliyath, Chairman of EPSRR and Club Sulaimani said:"EPSRR today has taken the first major step to launch series of outlets internationally starting with Oman followed by Sri Lanka and other GCC, European and American markets. We are looking to grow as an international brand offering multi cuisine delicacies serving patrons across continents. Our association with Axton isour first internationally which we look to grow rapidly".

KTM Society, Kochi City Police hold meeting on drug-free Kochi and responsible tourism

The Kerala Travel Mart (KTM) Society, Kochi City Police and various organisations in the tourism sector jointly organised a meeting to ensure a safe city, a drug-free Kochi and responsible nightlife.Kochi City Police Commissioner S. Kaliraj Mahesh Kumar inaugurated the meeting.

A safe environment is essential for the sustainable growth of the tourism sector, the Commissioner said.

"The police and stakeholders in the tourism sector need to work together to make Kochi drug-free and ensure a safe nightlife for tourists and the public alike. The full cooperation of all stakeholders would be ensured in the fight against drug abuse while promoting responsible tourism," he added.He also lauded the KTM Society for taking the initiative on the issue.

The meeting was organised at the initiative of KTM President Jose Pradeep. KTM President Jose Pradeep, FKHA Secretary Ajith C. Nair, Deputy Commissioners of Police Arun K. Pavithran and Aswathy Jiji and AACHK President K. J. Joseph were present on the dais.

Representatives and members of various associations also attended the meeting.

Auto companies worry about high-value tech imports

India's auto industry is warning that its next big vulnerability may not be vehicle production, but dependence on imported high-value technologies, with the chiefs of Hyundai Motor India and Maruti Suzuki calling for deeper localisation across semiconductors, battery cells, power electronics and other critical components.

At ACMA's annual session, Hyundai Motor India MD & CEO Tarun Garg said India exported about $24 billion worth of auto components in 2025-26, but imported around $25.4 billion, resulting in a $1.4-billion trade deficit.

"The concern goes beyond the deficit. Our exports remain concentrated in relatively mature technologies, while our imports are led by advanced, higher-value technologies, which may well define the future," he said.Garg said the industry needs to build domestic capability in semiconductor chips, rare-earth magnets, power electronics and battery cells, while stepping up investments in R&D and intellectual property. "Technology ownership is essential for strategic independence," he said, adding that India must progress from exporting conventional components to advanced technologies and engineering capability.

BUSINESS NEWS

Aster Medcity Introduces Advanced Genetic Study that Detects Disease Risk Before Symptoms Appear

Aster Medcity has launched the Aster Genetic Study, an advanced DNA screening programme, that analyses an individual's genetic blueprint to flag hereditary risks for cancer, heart disease and thousands of other conditions years before they surface. While conventional health check-ups only evaluate current health status, this innovative genetic test, developed in partnership with SugarStrings.ai, analyses an individual's unique genetic blueprint to reveal inherited risk factors, enabling personalized healthcare strategies, earlier surveillance, and informed medical decisions often years before clinical symptoms appear.

The Study Package delivers a 360-degree evaluation of genetic health by analyzing every gene across multiple key health areas. The comprehensive test screens for 188 types of hereditary cancer risks, provides actionable insights into 302 hereditary cardiovascular conditions, and analyzes 6,952 other genetic diseases. The programme offers precision medicine insights by evaluating how an individual responds to more than 300 different medications, allowing clinicians to tailor treatment plans with higher accuracy.

"This genetic study is about giving patients a clear, actionable roadmap for their health. Supported by expert guidance, it shows a real shift toward meaningful, preventive care," said Aster Medcity COO Dr Shuhaib Kader.

"The study helps to uncover the root causes of unresolved health conditions, identify optimal medications, and protect future generations." Mr Tony Jose, Founder and CEO, Sugarstrings.ai said.

The programme is especially valuable for individuals with a family history of chronic illness like cancer and couples planning a pregnancy. Medical Genetics Consultant Dr Devi Saranya S and Aster Wellness Senior Consultant Dr Bijan John Zachariah also attended the press conference held at Ernakulam Press Club.

JioBlackRock Asset Management Offers Regular Plans

JioBlackRock Asset Management Private Limited (JioBlack Rock Asset Management), a 50:50 JV between Jio Financial Services Limited (JFSL) and BlackRock, has announced that it will introduce Regular Plans across its eligible mutual fund schemes, effective August 17, 2026, marking an important milestone in its mission to make investing more accessible, inclusive and convenient for investors across India.

Since the launch of its mutual fund business, JioBlack Rock Asset Management has focused on creating a seamless, digital investing experience for investors. With the introduction of Regular Plans, investors will also be able to invest through registered mutual fund distributors, giving them greater choice in how they engage with and access JioBlackRock's investment offerings.

The move expands the firm's distribution reach while reinforcing its commitment to serving investors through multiple channels and partnering with India's growing financial advice ecosystem.

Sid Swaminathan, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, JioBlackRock Asset Management, said:

"At JioBlackRock Asset Management, our ambition is to help investors participate in the growth opportunities offered by financial markets through simple, accessible and investor-centric solutions. The strong interest we have seen in our recently launched Prism Hybrid Long-Short Fund under the SIF platform reflects growing investor appetite for differentiated investment solutions. As we continue to expand our offering, we are strengthening our partnerships with distributors, complementing our existing channels and helping more investors access our solutions.

The introduction of Regular Plans is an important step in broadening access to our solutions, giving investors greater choice in how they invest while enabling us to partner more closely with India's vibrant distribution ecosystem."

Regular Plans will be available across eligible JioBlackRock mutual fund schemes from August 17, 2026, in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements. Investors will be able to access these plans through empanelled mutual fund distributors.

BUSINESS NEWS

'Mangrol' Delivered to Indian Navy

'Mangrol', the third of eight Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW SWCs) indigenously designed and constructed by Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL), was delivered to the Indian Navy on at CSL, marking another significant milestone in India's journey towards self-reliance in defence manufacturing and advancing the Government's vision of 'Aatma Nirbhar Bharat'. The Delivery Protocol was signed by Dr. Harikrishnan S, Director (Operations), CSL, and Commander U Sharan Kumar, Commanding Officer (Designate), 'Mangrol', in the presence of Shri Jose VJ, Chairman & Managing Director, CSL, Commodore Anup Menon, Warship Production Superintendent, Kochi, Commodore Piyush Badoni, Command Refit Officer, Western Naval Command, Dr. C Pandi Selva Durai, IOFS, Chief Vigilance Officer, Shri Shiraz V P, Executive Director (Ship Building), CSL, along with senior officials from the Indian Navy and CSL.

Designed and constructed in accordance with the classification rules of Det Norske Veritas (DNV), the warship is equipped to undertake a range of critical maritime missions, including underwater surveillance, Search and Rescue (SAR) operations and Low Intensity Maritime Operations (LIMO). 'Mangrol' is specifically designed to undertake Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) operations in coastal waters and is also equipped with advanced mine-laying capabilities. The vessel derives its name from the historic maritime and strategically significant coastal township of Mangrol in Gujarat's Surat district.

CSL DELIVERS SECOND MULTI-PURPOSE VESSEL 'MS MARIA' TO HS SCHIFFAHRTS

Cochin Shipyard Limited has delivered 'MS Maria, the second of the eight HS EcoFreighter series of multi-Purpose Vessels (MPVs), to HS Schiffahrts UG (haftungsbeschränkt) & Co. KG, Germany. The Delivery and Acceptance Protocol was signed between Dr. S. Hari-krishnan, Director (Ope-rations), Cochin Shipyard Limited and Mr. Heinz Josef Schepers, Director, HS Schiffahrts UG (haftungsbeschränkt) & Co. KG, in the presence of senior officials from the Owner and CSL.

The vessel has been designed by Groot Ship Design, Netherlands, and constructed at CSL in accordance with the Classification Rules of DNV. The 7,000 DWT HS Eco Freighter, Multi-Purpose Vessel is an ice-class vessel capable of carrying project cargo, heavy cargo, steel coils, containers, timber, paper, dry bulk cargoes such as coal and grain, as well as dangerous goods, for worldwide trading.

The vessel features a raked stem with the "Groot Cross-Bow" design, optimized for enhanced speed performance and fuel efficiency, along with a transom stern. The vessel is provided with a single large cargo hold fitted with six movable panels, enabling flexible cargo configurations including grain bulkheads at multiple positions and a tween deck arrangement. Propulsion is provided by a medium-speed four-stroke diesel engine driving a controllable pitch propeller (CPP) through a reduction gearbox.

SIB inaugurates new premises of High Road Branch in Thrissur

South Indian Bank has inaugurated the new premises of its High Road Branch at Damien Building, AnchuVilakku, High Road, Thrissur. Jose Joseph Kattoor, Chairman, South Indian Bank, inaugurated the premises in the presence of P R Seshadri, Managing Director & CEO; Dolphy Jose, Executive Director; Anto George T, Executive Vice President & COO and Radha Krishnan E, Assistant General Manager & Regional Head, South Indian Bank. The inauguration was also attended by the Bank's customers and well-wishers.

BUSINESS NEWS

Vizhinjam port commences full EXIM operations

The event also marks the formal transition of the port from a transhipment hub into what is being positioned as India's most important commercial gateway

The Vizhinjam International Seaport has commenced full export-import (EXIM) operations in what is being described as a significant milestone in Kerala's economic growth. Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan flagged off the first export container at a function held at the port premises. The event also marks the formal transition of the port from a transhipment hub into what is being positioned as India's most important commercial gateway.

The mission is backed by a 1 400-crore catalytic fund split across three verticals — Ports and Connectivity, Logistics Development, and Clusters and Cities — along with a horizontal component for programme management and capacity building, spread over 14 sub-schemes in all. The move to full operations follows the successful completion of a trial run involving the port's first export container, which was shipped to Valencia, Spain.

Mission Samudra seeks to integrate Kerala's 600-km coastline, two international seaports and 17 minor ports into a unified maritime zone, with the aim of turning the state into a global logistics and manufacturing hub. The move puts Kerala on the global maritime logistics map and opens a new gateway between India and the world.

Calling Vizhinjam the country's first automated, algorithm-driven port using artificial intelligence, the chief minister said Kerala should leverage its strengths, including academics, through Mission Samudra. "With EXIM operations now a reality, we can export our products to hundreds of ports across several countries on six continents," he said.

Govt plans to set up cruise terminal in Kochi, position Kerala as 'port city'

Satheesan said preliminary work had begun on the International Maritime Museum, which will showcase Kerala's maritime heritage. As part of Mission Samudra, the state also plans to set up a cruise terminal at Cochin Seaport. "Beyond establishing Kerala as a key player on the global maritime map, we will be able to export value-added products carrying the Kerala brand, some of which are in the containers I flagged off today. There is much more to be done to achieve this," he said.

Mission Samudra

- Covers Kerala's 600-km coastline, 2 int'l seaports and 17 non-major ports
- Announced in V D Satheesan's maiden Budget with an allocation of I400 crore

- Aims to position Kerala as a "Port City" on the global maritime map
- Integrates road, rail, sea and inland-waterway connectivity
- Manufacturing zones, stuffing centres and dry ports to be developed near Vizhinjam and Kochi ports
- Vizhinjam to become the country's first port to offer green bunkering services
- Plans a shipbuilding hub for construction and maintenance of mother ships
- Kerala Maritime Policy to be drafted to promote maritime tourism and logistics

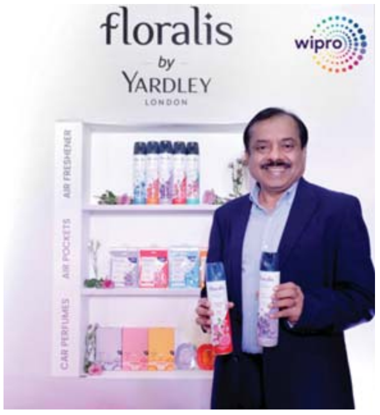
BUSINESS NEWS

Yardley London enters India's premium air care market with Floralis

250-year-old fragrance brand brings its expertise to homes and cars with perfume-inspired air care solutions

Yardley London, the iconic English fragrance brand with over 250 years of heritage, has made its entry into India's premium air care market with the launch of Floralis, a new sub-brand dedicated to home care. A key brand within the Wipro Consumer Care & Lighting portfolio, Yardley London is extending its fragrance expertise beyond personal care into home and car care solutions, addressing the growing consumer demand for premium fragrance experiences in everyday living spaces.

The launch marks a strategic milestone in Yardley's evolution under Wipro Consumer Care, reinforcing its vision of becoming a fragrance-led lifestyle brand. Building on the trust earned across generations of Indian consumers, Floralis brings perfume-inspired



fragrances to homes and cars through Air Freshener Sprays and Air Pockets designed for long-lasting freshness. Inspired by iconic Yardley fragrances such as English Lavender and English Rose, the range complements Yardley's existing personal care portfolio for women and Yardley Gentleman for men, extending the brand's fragrance expertise across both personal and home care segments.

Commenting on the launch, **Mr Manish Vyas**, Business Head - Yardley &Enchanteur (India), said, "Yardley's enduring appeal lies in its ability to blend heritage with a modern sensibility while remaining synonymous with fine fragrances. Kerala has been one of our strongest markets, with consumers consistently embracing premium fragrance-led products and experiences. Consumers today are looking for products that go beyond functionality and enhance their lifestyle through meaningful experiences. Floralis is a natural extension of that journey, reflecting our commitment to bringing sophisticated fragrance experiences into homes and cars. This is how heritage brands continue to evolve, balancing tradition with the needs of a new generation."

Kerala remains one of Yardley's strongest markets, reflecting the state's affinity for premium fragrance and personal care products. Wipro Consumer Care has built a strong leadership position in the state, as the No. 1 player in talc, deos and handwash and the No. 2 player in soaps.

Today, Yardley offers a comprehensive portfolio across women's personal care, men's grooming and home fragrance, spanning categories such as perfumes, deodorants, body mists, roll-ons, talcum powders, soaps, shower gels, fragrance handwash, body lotions, and air fresheners.

New rides Inaugurated at Silver Storm

Chief Minister V. D. Satheesan inaugurated the newly launched 'Sky Storm' cable car ride at Silver Storm Park in Athirappilly, Thrissur. Speaking at the event, the Chief Minister emphasized that tourists must stay in Kerala for at least seven days to drive meaningful growth in the state's tourism sector. He highlighted that private enterprises and large-scale projects are essential for Kerala's compre-hensive development, noting that the government has several initiatives lined up to encourage longer stays, including an Oceana-rium in Kochi, an International Maritime Museum tracing history from the Portuguese era, a Film City, and a Cultural Park in Kozhikode dedicated to M. T. Vasudevan Nair.

The Chief Minister assured that innovative entrepreneurs like Silver Storm will receive full government support, commending Managing Director A. I. Shalimar for consistently introducing fresh concepts to attract visitors. Minister for Industries P. K. Kunhalikutty inaugurated the 'Jungle Storm Forest Village.' Ministers Roji M. John and O. J. Janeesh, MLA Saneesh Kumar Joseph, District Collector Shikha Surendran, Silver Storm Chairman P. K. Abdul Jaleel, and other prominent officials attended the event. Mementos were also presented by the Chief Minister to honour those who led the park's IPO and long-serving employees.

BUSINESS NEWS

CSL begins construction of Svitzer's advanced battery-electric tugs

Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL) and Svitzer, a leading global towage and marine services provider, has begun construction of four advanced battery-electric tugs at a formal steel-cutting ceremony held at Cochin Shipyard. The vessels are among the most advanced green tugs being built anywhere in the world.

The ceremony follows the shipbuilding agreement signed last year between CSL and Svitzer for a series of four next-generation, battery-electric TRAnsverse 2600e tugs. The agreement, signed in December 2025, covers a minimum of four vessels and reflects Svitzer's increasing investment in the Indian maritime supply chain.

The ceremony was attended by Shri Jose V. J., Chairman and Managing Director, Cochin Shipyard Limited, Senior leadership from Svitzer, including Kasper Karlsen, Chief Operating Officer, and Deniz Kirdar True, Managing Director – Asia, Middle East and Africa (AMEA), along with other key stakeholders, were also present.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Jose V. J., Chairman and Managing Director, Cochin Shipyard Limited, said, "It is a proud moment for CSL to partner with Svitzer for the construction of four fully electric TRAnsverse 2600e harbour tugs, and we look forward to strengthening this association further through our shipbuilding capabilities and expertise. CSL will thus be playing a crucial role in advancing the sector's decarbonisation goals."

Kasper Karlsen, Chief Operating Officer, Svitzer, who delivered a keynote address at the ceremony, said, "The TRAnsverse is designed to remove constraints in our customers' operations. It delivers faster and more predictable vessel movements, which protects berth productivity and turnaround times, and it allows a port to get more from the berths, channels and pilots it already has without a proportional increase in fleet size or new infrastructure. This is proven technology, with over 3,000 commercial towage jobs been completed with the class, and Svitzer has 18 TRAnsverse vessels under construction worldwide."

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