Stock markets decline amid renewed tensions in West Asia, higher crude oil prices

MUMBAI, AUG 31: Stock markets closed lower on Monday due to selling in IT and FMCG shares as renewed tensions in West Asia triggered a rally in crude oil prices.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 307.24 points, or 0.40 per cent, to settle at 76,957.27 with 20 of its constituents ending lower and 10 with gains. During the day, it tanked 513.19 points, or 0.66 per cent, to 76,751.32.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 95.25 points, or 0.39 per cent, to end at 24,080.40.

Weak trends in global markets and foreign fund outflows dented investor sentiment, analysts said.

Among the 30 Sensex firms, Adani Ports, ITC, Bharti Airtel, HDFC Bank, Infosys and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the major laggards.

Sun Pharma, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank and State Bank of India were among the gainers.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 3.63 per cent to USD 91.30 per barrel.

"Escalating tensions between the US and Iran have kept investors on edge, as fading prospects of a diplomatic breakthrough pushed crude oil prices and global bond yields higher. Rising crude oil prices and bond yields have renewed concerns over energy-led inflation and a higher interest rate environment, which could weigh on the earnings cycle," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Meanwhile, the Fed chair's recent comments after the Jackson Hole address have increased expectations of a potential September rate hike, keeping global yields elevated and contributing to near-term volatility in emerging markets, he added.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi and Shanghai's SSE Composite ended higher, while Japan's Nikkei 225 index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index settled lower.

Markets in Europe were trading mostly lower. US markets ended in negative territory on Friday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 5,039.80 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

On Friday, the Sensex climbed 330.92 points, or 0.43 per cent, to settle at 77,264.51. The Nifty settled 84.80 points, or 0.35 per cent, higher at 24,175.65.

Ex-mill sugar prices fall 30 pc but retail rates yet to reflect the cut

MUMBAI, AUG 31: Ex-mill sugar prices fell nearly 30 per cent to Rs 47 per kg on Monday, from a peak of Rs 67 per kg on August 18, following a series of government interventions, but the drop has yet to filter down to retail shelves, industry sources said.

While the decline in ex-mill rates gets reflected almost immediately in wholesale markets, retail prices tend to lag.

Retailers who bought stock at the earlier, higher rates are unwilling to sell at a loss and will continue pricing their existing inventory at the older rate until it is exhausted, the sources explained.

A retailer typically holds 10-15 bags of sugar, each weighing 50 kg. Only once fresh stock is procured at the lower rate will retail prices adjust accordingly.

"It takes at least ten days to reflect changes in the retail price," an industry source said.

On Sunday, retail sugar was selling at Rs 64.23 per kg, against a wholesale rate of Rs 59.72 per kg.

The decline follows the government's decision to allow mills that had refined sugar for export to sell it in the domestic market instead. An estimated 3-3.5 lakh tonnes of this refined sugar is expected to enter the domestic market over the next two months.

Additionally, bulk consumers who had been holding stock for more than 15 days have trimmed their inventories to comply with new government norms. From September 1, bulk users consuming more than 10 tonnes of sugar a month will not be permitted to hold stock for more than 15 days at a stretch.

The monthly quantity sold by each mill to bulk consumers - whether directly or through dealers - will now be verified.

Industry sources noted that a gap of Rs 2-3 per kg between ex-mill and wholesale prices, and Rs 7-8 per kg between ex-mill and retail prices, is fairly typical.

Besides opening up imports, the government has tightened stockholding norms for bulk users and dealers, and had earlier banned sugar exports.

The Centre has blamed mills for "jacking up" prices, insisting the country has ample sugar stocks - even as production estimates for the 2025-26 marketing year (October-September) have been revised down to 306 lakh tonnes, from an earlier projection of 343 lakh tonnes.

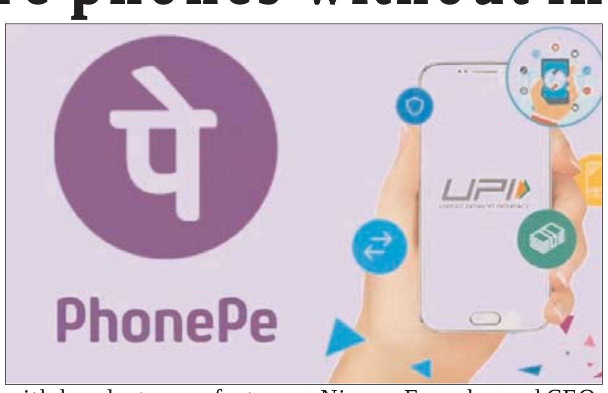
Annual domestic demand is pegged at around

PhonePe launches UPI payment for feature phones without internet

MUMBAI, AUG 31: Fintech major PhonePe on Monday announced the launch of 'PhonePe UPI 123Pay', a service that enables UPI transactions for feature phone users without the requirement of an internet connection.

With this launch, PhonePe claims to have become the first major third-party application provider (TPAP) to extend UPI payment capabilities to an estimated more than 200 million feature phone users across the country.

The service, built on a proprietary technology stack, utilises an SMS-based architecture to ensure transaction reliability even in regions with limited 2G connectivity. The company has partnered



with handset manufacturers like Nokia, HMD, Lava International, and Itel Mobile (Transsion Holdings) to provide the service pre-bundled on their devices.

"Bringing UPI to feature phones through PhonePe UPI 123Pay extends the benefits of digital payments beyond smartphones to every corner of the country," said Sameer Nigam, Founder and CEO, PhonePe.

He added that the initiative aims to drive financial inclusion by onboarding the "next 300 million users" into the digital fold.

The platform allows users to perform peer-to-peer (P2P) transfers and peer-to-merchant (P2M) payments. For feature phones equipped with cameras, the service also supports QR code scanning. Additionally, users can manage accounts, check balances and view transaction histories.

To assist first-time users, the company has introduced a voice-first, AI-powered helpline. The assistant provides step-by-step activation guidance in English and 12 Indian languages.

PhonePe stated that future updates will introduce additional capabilities, such as utility bill payments, recharges and Aadhaar-based onboarding.

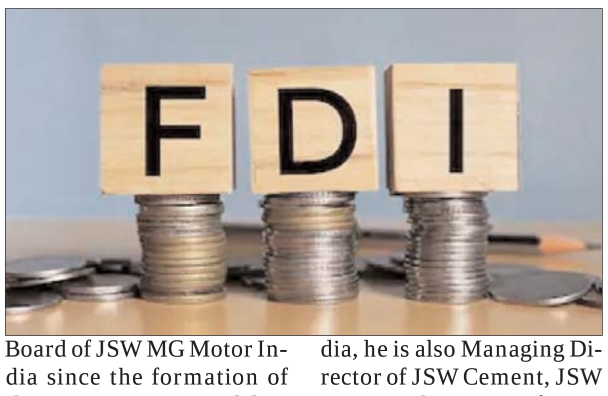
As of July 2026, PhonePe reported a user base of over 71.5 crore registered users and a merchant network of over five crore partners.

JSW MG Motor India appoints Parth Jindal as Chairman

MUMBAI, AUG 31: Automaker JSW MG Motor India on Monday said its board has appointed Parth Jindal as Chairman of the company, with immediate effect. Prior to this, Parth was the Director of the company.

JSW MG Motor India Pvt Ltd is a joint venture between JSW Group and Chinese state-owned automaker SAIC Motor, in which JSW holds 35 per cent stake, while SAIC Motor holds 49 per cent. The remaining 16 per cent stake in the company is held by Indian financial institutions, dealers and employees.

Parth has served on the



Board of JSW MG Motor India since the formation of the joint venture and has been closely involved in shaping the company's product strategy, manufacturing expansion, and localisation programme.

Besides serving as Chairman of JSW MG Motor India, he is also Managing Director of JSW Cement, JSW Paints, Chairman of JSW Dulux Limited, and a Director on the Board of JSW Energy, as per a company statement.

His appointment comes amid reports that the JSW Group is in talks with German auto major Skoda Volkswagen for a potential partnership.

Last week during a launch event in Mumbai, responding to a media query on the issue, Parth said, "As of now, we have only two brands – the MG brand and JSW. So nothing else has happened."

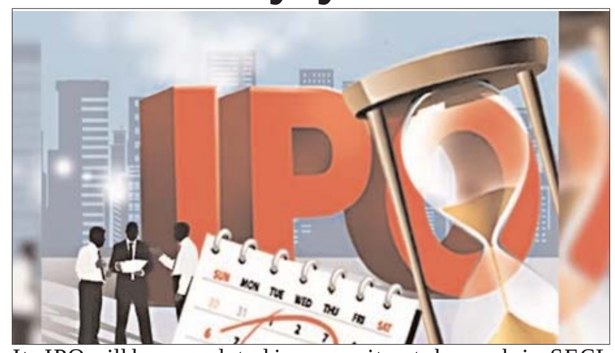
"Nothing has happened. It is still premature for me to say anything about that," he said.Apart from JSW MG Motor India, the group has also set up JSW Motor Ltd under its automotive division, focussed on designing and manufacturing electric and hybrid passenger cars in the country.

South Eastern Coalfields, Mahanadi Coalfields IPO by year-end: Official

MUMBAI, AUG 31: Coal India chairman and managing director B Sairam on Monday said the IPOs of two of its largest subsidiaries, SECL and MCL, will be completed within the current financial year.

Responding to questions by shareholders at the AGM, Sairam said the exact timeline would depend on market conditions and government directives.

"Regarding initial public offerings (IPOs) of South Eastern Coalfields Ltd (SECL) and Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL), we plan to complete them by the year-end positively.



Its IPO will be completed in this current financial year only. The date will depend upon market conditions and government directives, etc," Sairam said.

CIL's board had, in March, accorded in-principle approval for the divestment of up to a 25 per cent equity stake each in SECL and MCL through an offer for sale (OFS), along with the issuance of up to 10 per cent of SECL's post-issue paid-up capital as fresh equity shares through the IPO route.

MCL's proposed public issue is expected to be worth around Rs 10,000 crore, though the offer size and structure will be finalised closer to the launch, he said.

SECL IPO is also expected to be worth Rs 8,000-Rs 10,000 crore, according to market expectations, he added.

The listing of the two subsidiaries, among the largest coal producers under CIL, accounting for about half of the company's total output, follows the completed public listings of two other CIL arms -- Central Mine Planning and Design Institute Ltd (CMPDI) and Bharat Coking Coal Ltd (BCCL) -- earlier this year.

Maruti Suzuki raises capex to Rs 77,500 cr for five years till FY31

MUMBAI, AUG 31: Car market leader Maruti Suzuki India has increased its capex outlay to Rs 77,500 crore for five years till FY31 for capacity expansion, new models and R&D among others, its Managing Director and CEO Hisashi Takeuchi said on Monday.

Responding to a query from shareholders at the company's annual general meeting, he also assured that Maruti Suzuki cars starting from production year 2008 are compatible with E20 fuel.

"Regarding the capex side for FY26-27, we have planned a 40 per cent jump in capex expenditure in a single year, from around Rs 10,000 crore last year to Rs 14,000 crore this year. Cumulatively, during FY26-27 to FY30-31, we have planned a capex of Rs 77,500 crore," he said in response to a shareholder query.

Last year, Toshihiro Suzuki, Representative Director and President of Suzuki Motor Corporation -- the parent of Maruti Suzuki India -- had stated that the company would invest Rs 70,000 crore in the next five to six years in India to strengthen its operations.

Elaborating where the investments would be utilised, Takeuchi said,"Capex is planned for capacity expansion, new model development, R&D activities, plant measures, marketing and sales infrastructure, carbon neutral measures, and logistics, and so on."

To another question about E20 fuel compatibility, Takeuchi said,"I would like to assure that all of our current ongoing products are E20 compatible products. Actually, we have improved our compatibility to ethanol from the production year 2008. So after 2008, all of our products are E20 compatible."

On sustainability efforts in manufacturing, he said the company is taking many steps to achieve carbon neutral manufacturing, including increasing in-house solar capacity from 79.1 megawatt in FY25-26 to 211.3 megawatt by 2030-31, "which will cover almost 35 percent of our total electricity requirements".

He further said,"The remaining portion we are going to buy green electricity mainly by solar and wind power for our plant operations."

The company will also put up biomass plants at its Manesar and Kharkhoda factories and also at the new plant at Sanand in Gujarat.

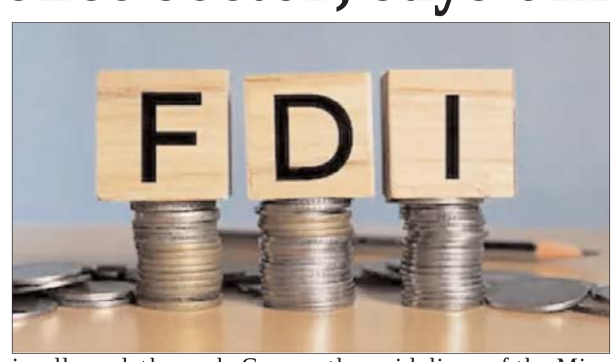
Govt considering easing FDI norms in defence sector, says official

MUMBAI, AUG 31: The Government is considering liberalisation of foreign direct investment (FDI) norms in the defence sector to further attract overseas investors, an official said on Monday.

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade is holding stakeholder consultations on the subject.

"Some easing in norms is under consideration," the official said.

Currently, FDI up to 74 per cent is permitted through the automatic route, while beyond that foreign direct investment



is allowed through Government approval route wherever it is likely to result in access to modern technology.

As per the policy, foreign investment in the sector is subject to security clearance by the Ministry of Home Affairs and as per the guidelines of the Ministry of Defence.

India has attracted USD 32.29 million FDI in defence industries between April 2000 and March 2026.

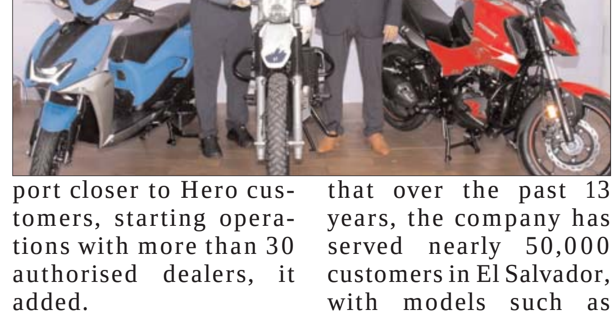
The Government has taken a series of measures to boost manufacturing in the sector. India's defence budget has increased from Rs 2.53 lakh crore in 2013-14 to Rs 7.85 lakh crore in 2026-Â“27. Exports from the sector grew from Rs 686 crore in 2013-14 to Rs 38,424 crore in 2025-Â“26.

The private sector contributed Rs 17,353 crore or 45.16 per cent of defence exports in 2025-26, while defence public sector undertakings contributed Rs 21,071 crore or 54.84 per cent.

The Government is targeting Rs 3 lakh crore in annual defence production and Rs 50,000 crore in exports by 2029.

Hero MotoCorp expands sales network in Central America in collaboration with VELOSA

MUMBAI, AUG 31: Two-wheeler maker Hero MotoCorp has expanded its presence in Central America with the launch of the company's flagship store at Calle El Progreso in collaboration with San Salvador-based automotive distributor VELOSA (Oriental Motors, S.A).



Besides, the collaboration also expanded its retail network with two additional outlets at Metrocentro San Salvador and Plaza Mundo Soyapango in El Salvador, Hero MotoCorp said in a statement.

With extensive regional automotive experience, proven distribution expertise and strong operational capabilities, VELOSA will play a key role in expanding Hero MotoCorp's presence and strengthening customer reach across the country, it said.

VELOSA has also initiated strategic partnerships with dealers across the country, bringing authorised service and support closer to Hero customers, starting operations with more than 30 authorised dealers, it added.

Through its new alliance with VELOSA, Hero is entering its next phase of growth, with a focus on enhancing the customer experience, expanding service coverage and strengthening end-to-end customer support," said Sanjay Bhan, Executive Vice President for Global Business, Global Product Planning and global market insights.

El Salvador is a strategic market for Hero MotoCorp in Central America, Bhan said and added that over the past 13 years, the company has served nearly 50,000 customers in El Salvador, with models such as Hunk and Xpulse playing a key role in building the brand's presence.

Currently, integrated sales, after-sales and genuine-parts services are available at the Calle El Progreso flagship store, Hero Merliot and Santa Ana, while the Metrocentro San Salvador and Plaza Mundo Soyapango outlets focus on motorcycle sales, the company said.

Hero MotoCorp also said it will offer a five-year or 60,000-km warranty, along with four free check-ups on all its portfolio available in the market.

"We are beginning this new chapter with Hero MotoCorp in El Salvador. VELOSA brings a strong regional automotive track record and a clear commitment to service, support and customer proximity. Our objective is to build on the trust Hero has earned over the years and provide a superior experience for existing and future Hero customers," said Carlos Landaverde, Commercial Manager, VELOSA.

Hero MotoCorp's global footprint spans 53 countries across Asia, Africa, Europe, Central and Latin America with a customer base of over 130 million.

The company operates eight manufacturing facilities - six in India and one each in Colombia and Bangladesh - along with two research and development centres with one each in India and Germany.