



**IN BRIEF**

**Royal Enfield revises prices post GST**

CHENNAI  
Royal Enfield, a division of Enfield Motors Ltd., has revised on-road price for various models, post GST. The prices of 350 cc bikes have seen a small decline in the range of ₹1,600 to ₹2,200, while those of 500 cc bikes have gone up in the range of ₹300 to ₹2,700, according to the company. While the prices of Classic 350 have reduced by ₹2,015, those of Himalayan will go up by ₹2,717.

**Droom raises \$20 million in fifth round of funding**

NEW DELHI  
Droom, an online marketplace for automobiles, on Wednesday said it had raised \$20 million (about ₹130 crore) in its fifth round of funding. The funding, which was led by Hong Kong-based investment firm Integrated Asset Management and Japan's Digital Garage, saw participation from existing institutional investors, including Lightbox, Beenos and Beenext.

**Citibank India net rises 12.15% to ₹3,233 crore**

MUMBAI  
Foreign lender Citibank India has announced a net profit of ₹3,233 crore for the financial year ended March 2017, representing a 12.15% growth over the previous year. Profit before tax for the lender was up 7% to ₹6,185 crore. The growth was driven by a 13.4% increase in loan disbursement in FY17, which includes those booked in offshore locations, to ₹2.34 lakh crore. Its net interest margin swelled 40 bps year-on-year to 5.5% in FY17.

# EPFO adds banks to network

Tie-ups, including with 4 private lenders, to help fund save ₹300 crore annually

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI**  
The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) on Wednesday signed an agreement with four private banks and Bank of Baroda for collection of provident fund dues from employers and payments to its subscribers.

**'Zero transaction charge'**  
This is the first time that the EPFO has tied up with private banks - namely, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank. Earlier, only State Bank of India was authorised to collect contributions from employers and make payment to employees. The move will help the EPFO save about ₹300 crore annually as the five banks have agreed to zero transaction charges.



**More on anvil:** The EPFO is in talks with seven more banks, including Canara Bank, to sign similar agreements.

"With today's agreement, we have tied up with 10 banks now to collect provident fund contribution and pay dues to the workers. EPFO settles around 1.16 crore claims every year and collects ₹75,000 crore annually from establishments under the EPF Act," Labour and Employment Minister Bandaru Dattatreya said here on Wednesday.

In December, the EPFO had tied up with five other banks, Punjab National Bank, Allahabad Bank, Indian Bank and Union Bank of India, for online collection of dues. "The transaction charges for making payments to members in their accounts in different banks used to cost us ₹350 crore a

year. After we tied up with more banks in December, this reduced to ₹175 crore," Central Provident Fund Commissioner (CPFC) V.P. Joy said. These charges are expected to be reduced to ₹50 crore a year, he added.

The EPFO is in talks with seven more banks to sign a similar agreement. These include IDBI Bank, Bank of India, Corporation Bank, Indian Overseas Bank, Canara Bank, Central Bank of India and Bank of Maharashtra.

"We have made an offer to them," said Udit Choudhary, Additional CPFC.

The Minister said the Centre may consider cutting administrative charges paid by firms in lieu of reduced banking transaction charges. Administrative charges were recently reduced to 0.65% from the earlier 0.85%.

# Mercedes India aims for double-digit growth in 2017

Unveils new GLA SUV, banks on E-class for driving sales

**MANOJIT SAHA  
MUMBAI**  
After recording flat growth in sales in 2016, Mercedes-Benz India is targeting double-digit growth in the current year on the back of its flagship E-class model unveiled earlier this year, apart from a slew of new product introductions.

Speaking to *The Hindu* on the sidelines of the introduction of the new GLA - a luxury compact sports utility vehicle (SUV) - Michael Jopp, vice president, sales and marketing, Mercedes-Benz India, said, "This year, we are expecting double-digit growth in our sales figures. It has been very successful."

"The main driver for



**Plush sedan:** The price of the 2-litre petrol model of Class d 200 begins from ₹30.65 lakh. • PTI

growth this year will be the E-class that we launched in March. E-class will be our best selling model, we can say for sure because reception has been extremely well," Mr. Jopp said.

The carmaker unveiled four variants of its GLA compact SUV. Prices were 4-5% lower as a result of GST, Mr. Jopp added.

# Wipro allies with IAI to make aerostructures

Israeli firm to help set up India facility

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU**  
Wipro Infrastructure Engineering (WIN), part of Wipro Enterprises (P) Ltd. and Israel's State-owned Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) announced a strategic alliance for manufacturing composite aerostructure parts and assemblies. The announcement coincides with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel.

"India is a major strategic customer of IAI and the relationship with India is extremely important for us," said Shlomi Karako, EVP and general manager of the Commercial Aircraft Group, IAI, in a statement.

Wipro Infrastructure Engineering said it would set up a manufacturing facility in India in partnership with

IAI to meet the requirements of global aircraft original equipment manufacturers and tier-1 suppliers. The facility will make composite structures in India for global markets. It would also address the compliance requirements of IAI, other OEMs and Tier-1 suppliers to meet defence offset guidelines detailed by the Indian Ministry of Defence.

"This partnership will not only strengthen our presence in the growing aerospace sector but will also help us explore emerging business opportunities in key markets," said Pratik Kumar, CEO, WIN.

In 2016, WIN had acquired H.R Givon, an Israel-based maker of metallic parts and assemblies for the aerospace industry.

# 'Political unrest may adversely hit tea exports from Darjeeling'

Impact on revenue could be about ₹150 crore, says ICRA

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA**  
Analyst firm ICRA has said that the current political unrest in Darjeeling is likely to impact the production and exports of the premium tea.

ICRA believes that the impact of the current situation on revenue is estimated to be about ₹150 crore at present.

But, the impact of the loss of export volumes for Darjeeling tea on the domestic supply-demand situation was expected to be limited given the limited domestic demand, it said.

Moreover, with an annual production of about 9 million kg, Darjeeling accounts for only about 0.8% of the Indian tea crop.

Kaushik Das, vice-president and sector-head, Corpor-



**Missed date:** Lack of plucking activity over the past 20 days is expected to impact production volume and quality. • AFP

ate Sector Ratings, ICRA Limited, said: "For Darjeeling teas, a plucking cycle of five to six days is followed. Timely plucking of fine leaves contributes to the overall quality of the tea produced during this period. Thus, the lack of

# 'Ensure tea auctions are GST-compliant'

Tea Board for uniform billing system

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA**  
The Tea Board has asked industry and trade to take action for smooth transition to GST by making the auction process compliant with the new law. It also asked auction centres across the country to follow a uniform billing system.

**Input tax credit**  
Movement of tea from producer to warehouse may not attract GST, unless it involved inter-State movement, the board said.

However, in this case, the producer would be eligible to claim input tax credit (ITC) on the tax deposited.

The Tea Board advisory said that tax invoice cannot be issued for free trade sample distribution. It also

laid down guidelines for raising invoice to buyers by authorised tea brokers.

Warehousing activities were not exempted from GST and buyers may be required to declare the warehouse as their place of business.

Arriving at these advisories after discussion with officials of the Central Board of Excise and Customs and State tax departments, the industry regulator said that the process followed by Tamil Nadu involving a direct billing system between the seller and buyer could also be adopted as it was GST-compliant.

Officials of the Calcutta Tea Traders Association said that Tuesday's auction was postponed pending the resolution of these issues.

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