

MFs receive first tranche of Essel dues

JASH KRIPLANI
Mumbai, 10 September

Mutual funds (MFs) and non-banking financial companies have received a part of their dues from Essel Group. Among fund houses, ICICI MF, Aditya Birla Sun Life MF, HDFC MF, and Kotak MF have received payments from funds raised by the promoters' stake sale in Zee Entertainment, said people in the know.

Industry sources added ICICI MF received ₹435 crore, or 60 per cent, of its outstanding dues. Aditya Birla Sun Life MF received ₹760 crore, or half of its dues. HDFC MF received ₹580 crore of its dues, which brought its debt exposure to group firms down by half. In addition, Kotak MF also received ₹208 crore of dues or 52 per cent of its outstanding dues.

"The group wishes to confirm that the first tranche of the transaction comprising sale of 8.7 per cent stake in Zee Entertainment has been successfully concluded today (Tuesday). The group is confident of completing the balance sale of 2.3 per cent stake over the next few days," Essel Group said in a press note.

In July, the promoters had reached an agree-

WHO GETS WHAT?

- ICICI Mutual Fund (MF) received ₹435 crore; 60 per cent of its dues
- Birla Sun Life MF received ₹760 crore, half of its dues
- HDFC MF received ₹580 crore; close to half of its dues
- Kotak MF received ₹207 crore; 52 per cent of its dues



ment with Invesco Oppenheimer to sell up to 11 per cent stake in the company for a consideration of ₹4,224 crore.

The statement added that the group was in the midst of completing the operational formalities to conclude the entire transaction at the earliest. The group is also working on further divestments, including in its non-media assets.

As part of the 'standstill' agreement with MFs

and other creditors, Essel promoters have time till September-end to clear the remaining dues related to loans against shares.

"We expect promoters to meet their payment obligations before September-end. They can sell more stake in Zee Entertainment. Alternatively, this payment will reduce debt burden on the promoters. So, they can also look at possible avenues for refinancing," said senior executive of a fund

house. Industry sources said that the payments being rolled out to MFs and other lenders pertained to exposures where shares of Zee Entertainment were placed as collateral.

People in the know added there were a few schemes in which shares of other listed group firms were also part of the collateral mix.

"While most fund houses had lent against Zee shares, few schemes had lent against a combination of Dish TV and Zee shares," said a fund manager. Industry insiders added that the fall in exposures would also improve equity cover of some fund houses on the remaining exposures.

For instance, the new equity cover of ICICI MF improved to 1.58x from close to 1.2x.

Overall, the MF industry had debt exposure of ₹5,000-6,000 crore to Essel Group firms. Franklin Templeton MF, SBI MF, and UTI MF were others exposed to the group. Earlier, MFs and other lenders had entered into a 'standstill' agreement with promoters of Essel Group, where they agreed not to sell the pledged shares and give promoters time till September.

The move, however, did not go down well with the Securities and Exchange Board of India, which stated it did not acknowledge such arrangements between fund houses and their promoters.

Chinese stocks drag Asian indices lower

REUTERS
Tokyo, 10 September

Most Asian stocks swung lower on Tuesday, weighed by the Chinese markets, after mainland factory-gate prices shrank at their fastest pace in three years. At the same time, reports of German stimulus plans pushed global bond prices down.

China's producer price index fell 0.8 per cent in August year-on-year, official data showed on Tuesday — its sharpest decline since August 2016 as flagging demand at home and abroad forced businesses to slash prices.

The data pushed blue chip shares in China down 0.41 per cent, which, in turn, drove an index of Asian stocks outside of Japan 0.23 per cent lower, having traded flat earlier in the session.

"Globally, inflationary pressure remains subdued, so in that

sense China is not an outlier," said Sean Darby, global equity strategist at Jefferies.

"People are positioned very bearish, but I don't think the market wants to be too bearish. Bond yields are reversing. Markets are a little more unsure about their expectations for central banks, because a lot of easing is already priced in."

Investor focus shifts to the European Central Bank, which is widely expected to introduce a package of monetary easing and stimulus measures on Thursday to offset the effects of an ongoing US-Sino trade war and a global economic slowdown. The Federal Reserve is also widely expected to cut interest rates next week as policymakers race to shield the global economy from risks, which also include Britain's planned exit from the European Union.

Wealth managers set sight on smaller cities

SACHIN P MAMPATTA
Mumbai, 10 September

Prateek Pant, head of product and solutions at Sanctum Wealth Management, had his team visiting Gujarat for a couple of years to service clients located in the state, and earlier this year decided to create a more permanent base. "We went into Ahmedabad and opened a branch there earlier in the year," he said.

He added that he was evaluating options in places such as Jaipur and Raipur. Other wealth management companies, too, are in the expansion mode, notwithstanding the slowdown in the economy.

Deepak Chellani, head of third-party products in the distribution arm of broking house Prabhudas Lilladher, said his firm had hired around 200 people across the southern belt in cities including Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Chennai a few months ago. Hiring has also strengthened the team in the east in Kolkata.

It has also opened up



SPREADING OUT

- Wealth managers in expansion mode despite slowdown
- Targeting cities such as Jaipur and Raipur
- Using the downturn to establish new, long-term relationships
- Higher margins, cash-rich clients on the horizon

branches in Chandigarh, Mangaluru, and Kochi. A new team can effectively use a downturn to establish relations, according to him.

"In times when it is actually sluggish or it's a bit slow, it is better to (hire) a team. They would probably take six-eight months," he said of the time taken to build new client relations.

According to a wealth manager, people in smaller cities are more cash-rich, while people in metros like Mumbai are more asset-rich.

They are also more willing to pay higher commissions. The wealthy in places

such as Mumbai negotiate harder because of multiple players competing, leading to thinner margins.

This means that there is often more money to be made in smaller towns and cities.

For their part, clients often find it useful to turn to wealth managers who can offer access to products that are difficult to come by in smaller markets.

One source said that a couple of private sector banks had also been looking to tap the wealthy in smaller places even as they expanded their branch network.

IIFL Wealth Management announced acquiring L&T Finance Holdings' wealth arm L&T Capital Markets on August 28.

The L&T arm had a presence in nine locations of the country.

An official said that tier-2 and tier-3 towns, too, were important markets for IIFL.

"...[O]ne must recognise that India is growing at a fast clip and along with that, a small fraction of society is witnessing exponential growth in their wealth. This means that there is a small but growing community of the wealthy in tier 2 and 3 cities who can hugely benefit

from professional wealth management services," said Anirudha Taparia, executive director at IIFL Wealth Management, in an emailed response to a query from *Business Standard*.

The October 2018 *Global Wealth Report* published by Credit Suisse Research Institute noted that while wealth was concentrated in India, the wealthy still accounted for a significant number.

"...a small fraction of the population (0.6 per cent of adults) has a net worth over \$100,000. However, owing to India's large population, this translates into 4.8 million people. The country has 404,000 adults in the top 1 per cent of global wealth holders, which is a 0.8 per cent share. By our estimates, 3,400 adults have wealth over \$50 million, and 1,500 have more than \$100 million," it said.

Ultimately, expansion should be a strategic decision based on the long-term opportunity rather than a tactical call to hold back because of cyclical factors, said Pant.

Reliance Capital inches closer to exiting MF biz

SAMIE MODAK
Mumbai, 10 September

Anil Ambani-led Reliance Capital will sell up to 6.3 per cent stake in Reliance Nippon Life Asset Management — commonly referred to as Reliance Mutual Fund — through the offer for sale (OFS) route, on Wednesday.

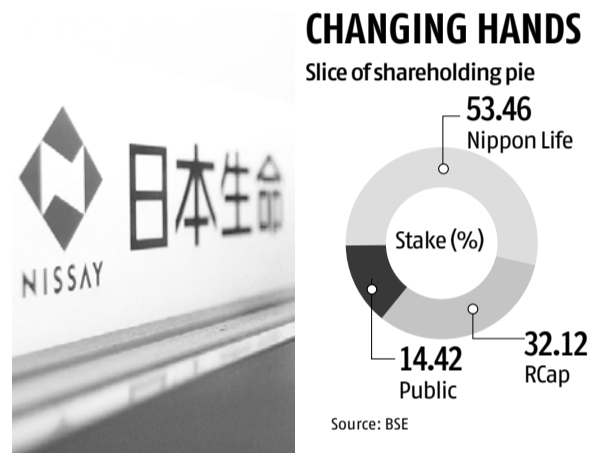
The share sale is part of Reliance Capital's deleveraging programme, which involves exiting the asset management operations, among other businesses. At present, Reliance Capital holds 32.12 per cent stake in Reliance MF.

Close to 21.5 per cent of this will be sold to Japan's Nippon Life, which will then become the sole promoter of the fund house.

If the OFS is fully subscribed, Reliance Capital will be left with a residual stake of 4.4 per cent, which will then be sold to public investors on a later date.

The floor price for the OFS has been fixed at ₹262, which is a discount of 8.4 per cent to Reliance MF's last close of ₹286, on the BSE.

A total of 38.6 million shares will be sold in the OFS, of which a tenth is reserved for retail investors and will be



auctioned on Thursday.

At the floor price, Reliance Capital will mop up an estimated ₹1,012 crore. Market players say that demand for the OFS could be strong, given the attractive discount and huge traction in share prices of asset management companies. Shares of Reliance MF have rallied 80 per cent so far this year. Bigger rival HDFC MF, too, has seen a similar spurt in its share price. Last month, Nippon Life announced the conclusion of an open offer, which was triggered by the change in ownership of Reliance MF.

In the open offer, Nippon Life had acquired 10.6 per cent stake, taking its shareholding from 42.9 per cent to 53.5 per cent, as a result. The Japanese company intends to take its total stake to 75 per cent, the maximum a promoter is allowed to hold. People with knowledge of the matter say the remaining 21.54 per cent stake will be acquired by Nippon Life from Reliance Capital soon. Analysts say that the stock of Reliance MF has witnessed a re-rating, following the change in ownership from joint control between Reliance Capital and Nippon Life, to sole control by the latter.

THE COMPASS

No heat on Voltas despite slowdown blues

Strong Q1, steps to clear inventory are positives for room AC business

UJJVAL JAUHARI

Voltas has gained more than 12 per cent from its lows seen during the end of July, in spite of the downward bias as well as volatility in the broader markets.

Analysts say that the company remains well-placed for growth with its worst behind, and this is one factor driving up sentiment.

The company's Electro Mechanical Projects and Services (EMPS) business — which continues to report improvement in profitability — has a strong order book.

Recently, it bagged 'tunnel ventilation system' orders for the Mumbai Metro, worth ₹233 crore. The division's order book stood at ₹4,750 crore (up 3 per cent year-on-year or YoY)

at the end of the June quarter, during which it saw fresh order inflow of ₹450 crore.

Analysts expect the government's focus on water conservation and purification (Namami Gange), rural electrification, and building and urban infrastructure to continue driving EMPS' prospects.

While this bodes well for the company, what adds to the positive sentiment is that the worst is behind for Voltas' Unitary Cooling Products (UCP) division.

Unfavourable weather conditions during FY19 had led to a significant jump in inventory of air conditioners (ACs) at the dealer level, thus impacting growth and profitability.

Rising inventories restricted Voltas from taking any

price hikes. Voltas' strong Q1 show came on the back of good summer demand, despite the slowdown in economic growth.

The UCP segment's sales grew 47 per cent YoY (industry growth of 36 per cent), leading to market share gains in room ACs. Inverter ACs — more efficient and priced higher — saw revenue share rise to over 50 per cent of overall AC sales, which is good for profitability.

Analysts say the good cash flow generated by distributors during the summer season, on the back of clearance in inventory, augurs well for the UCP division's revenue visibility. This is because channel refilling can itself drive sales.

Motilal Oswal has, thus, modelled in UCP revenue growth of 26 per cent and 15

per cent during FY20 and FY21, respectively. Some analysts feel actual growth could surprise, given the favourable base of FY19.

Voltas' newly launched home appliances range, in the joint venture with Arçelik, should also drive top line growth. Although it is currently seeing losses given higher promotional and other costs, profitability should improve once growth picks up and the Tirupati plant starts production.

While there could be near-term hiccups given the slowdown, analysts are positive on Voltas considering the growth in projects and AC segments. Emkay Global, for instance, estimates net profit to grow 19 per cent annually over FY19-21.

PFC & REC: Wired to tackle near-term obstacles

Stock prone to asset-quality shocks even as analysts turn positive

HAMSINI KARTHIK

After underperforming the broader markets, the stocks of power financiers Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and REC (formerly known as Rural Electrification Corporation) are figuring in the return charts. The two have gained 24-30 per cent each over the past year, though the Street was not too positive after their merger was announced in November last year.

While there hasn't been a material change in financials, asset quality issues and state utilities, including state electricity boards (SEBs) making fresh investments, are leading to the Street's optimism.

CLSA, which recently turned optimistic on PFC changing its recommendation from 'sell' to 'buy', says that with the risk-reward turning positive, earnings rebound will begin in 2020-21 once PFC and REC provide for 50-60 per cent of the non-performing

assets. The brokerage also feels that both companies should benefit from the resolution process underway for some of the stressed names, such as GMR Chhattisgarh Energy and Lanco Infratech.

However, investors should be aware of the risks that the stock could be vulnerable to, even as sentiment is turning for the companies' stocks. To start with, one of the key advantages that PFC and REC enjoyed was of the net interest margin (NIM) being upwards of 4 per cent. Over the years, both have slipped on this parameter.

In the April-June quarter (first quarter, or Q1), PFC recorded NIM of 3.1 per cent, which is the weakest in five years.

While costlier funding has hurt PFC, with marginal cost of borrowing at an all-time high of 9.57 per cent in Q1, analysts at CLSA say they do not see upside to margins, as the decline in funding costs will be offset by lower

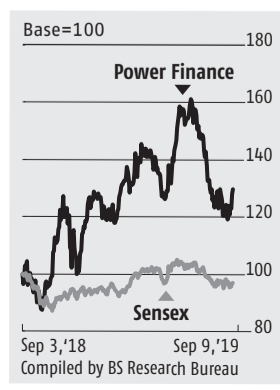
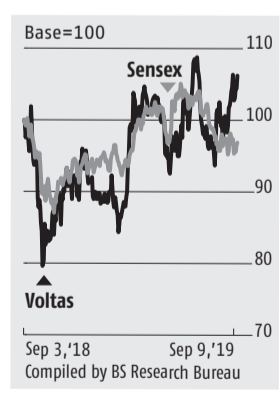
yields and spreads on loans to state electricity boards (SEBs).

Second, while a large part of the stress (30 projects totalling to ₹34,000 crore) has been provided for (35-60 per cent) and resolution is anticipated in some of the projects, vulnerability to further asset quality shocks does exist and provisioning costs may remain elevated over the next three-six quarters.

Therefore, much of the earnings uptick hinges on recovery and PFC's ability to cash in on selective capital expenditure visible in SEB and state utilities. Analysts expect loan growth to marginally revive in 2019-20 (FY20) and peg it about 13-15 per cent led by state orders.

Amid these concerns, benign valuations at 0.6 times their FY20 book and PFC's positioning as a dividend-yielding stock could appeal to investors.

However, with concerns not entirely fading away, investors need to be cautious on the stock.



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POSTAL BALLOT NOTICE TO THE SHAREHOLDERS

Members of the Company are hereby informed that pursuant to Section 110 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with Rule 22 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014 as amended, the Company has on September 10, 2019 completed the dispatch of Postal Ballot Notice to all the Members whose names appeared on the Register of Members/List of Beneficial Owners maintained by the Depositories as on August 30, 2019. The Notices are sent through electronic mode to the Members who have registered their e-mail ids and through physical mode, along with Postal Ballot form and a self-addressed postage prepaid business reply envelopes to the Members who do not have registered their e-mail ids.

The Notices are sent for seeking approval of the Members of the Company by way of special resolution through Postal Ballot including voting by electronic means for the following:

| Item No. | Description of the Resolution |
|----------|--|
| 1. | Approval for creation of charges / mortgage etc., on company's movable or immovable properties in terms of Section 180 (1) (a) of the Companies Act, 2013 (Special Resolution) |
| 2. | Amendment to the existing MCSL Employee Stock Option Scheme 2018 - "Scheme-II" to the employees of the Company (Special Resolution) |
| 3. | Amendment to the existing MCSL Employee Stock Option Scheme 2018 - "Scheme-III" to the employees of the Company (Special Resolution) |

The Company is pleased to offer remote e-voting facility to all its Members whose names appeared on the Register of Members/List of Beneficial Owners as on August 30, 2019 (cut-off date) and a person who is not a Member as on the cut-off date should treat this Notice for information purpose only. The Company has engaged Central Depository Services (India) Limited (CDSL) for providing remote e-voting facility.

The Company has appointed Mr. Sivakumar P., Practising Company Secretary (C.P.No. 2210) as the Scrutinizer for conducting the postal ballot / e-voting process in fair and transparent manner. The voting through Postal Ballot and electronic mode shall commence at 9.00 a.m. on Wednesday, September 11, 2019 and ends at 5.00 p.m. Thursday, October 10, 2019 (both days inclusive). Members are requested to note that the duly completed and signed Postal Ballot Forms should reach the Scrutinizer at Mr. Sivakumar P., FCS, Partner, M/s. SEP & Associates, Company Secretaries, Scrutinizer, C/o. Muthoot Capital Services Limited, 43/2695-A, Kariparambil Lane, SRM Road, Kaloor, Ernakulam - 682 018 not later than 5.00 p.m. on Thursday, October 10, 2019. Any Postal Ballot Form received after this date will not be considered as valid and voting by electronic means shall not be allowed beyond the said date.

The Notice along with instruction for voting is available on the website of the Company at www.muthootcap.com and also on the website of CDSL at www.cdslindia.com. In case of non-receipt of the Notice or Postal Ballot Form, the Members may apply to the Company on mail@muthootcap.com or contact Integrated Registry Management Services Private Limited, the Registrar & Share Transfer Agents of the Company at cdsstd@integratedindia.in and obtain a duplicate thereof.

The results of the Postal Ballot will be declared by the Chairman or Managing Director on or before 5.00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 16, 2019 at the Registered Office of the Company at Kochi. The results along with the Scrutinizer's Report will be posted on the website of the Company, i.e., www.muthootcap.com and will be intimated to the Stock Exchanges where the shares of the Company are listed.

For any queries/grievances relating to voting by Postal Ballot, Members are requested to contact Mr. K. Balasubramanian, Deputy General Manager, Integrated Registry Management Services Private Limited, Unit: Muthoot Capital Services Limited, II Floor, "Kences Towers", No.1 Ramakrishna Street, North Usman Road, T. Nagar, Chennai - 600 017, Ph: 044 - 28140801 - 803, Fax : 044 - 28142479, email: cdsstd@integratedindia.in. Any queries/grievances in respect of e-voting may be addressed to Mr. Rakesh Dalvi, Manager and can be contacted at email: helpdesk.evoting@cdslindia.com or Ph: 18002005533. The Members may also write to the Company Secretary at mail@muthootcap.com or contact at Ph: 0484 - 6619689 for queries/grievances relating to Postal Ballot or e-voting.

September 10, 2019
Kochi - 35

For Muthoot Capital Services Limited
Sd/-
ABHIJITH JAYAN
Company Secretary & Compliance Officer