A-I asks Tata, Singapore Air for funds after $2.4 bn loss

BLOOMBERG
15 April

Air India racked up a wider-than expected annual loss of over ₹22,000 crore ($2.4 billion), prompting the company to seek financial aid from its shareholders, according to people familiar with the situation.

The loss for the fiscal year ended March 31 — a period punctuated by the deadly crash of a Boeing Co 787 Dreamliner, the closure of Pakistani airspace to Indian carriers and the West Asia conflict — is larger than $1.6 billion internal company loss estimate reported by *Bloomberg News* in January.

Air India's controlling shareholder, Tata Group, as well as Singapore Airlines Ltd— which owns 25.1 per cent in the carrier — are in talks to inject some much-needed cash, said the people, who asked not to be identified discussing private information. The size of the infusion is still being discussed but may be less than what the carrier needs, meaning Air India would have to look for other financing options, the people said.

FY26 WAS PUNCTUATED BY THE DEADLY CRASH OF A BOEING 787 DREAMLINER, THE CLOSURE OF PAKISTANI AIRSPACE TO INDIAN CARRIERS AND THE WEST ASIA CRISIS

Representatives for Tata Group and Air India didn't respond to an email seeking comments while Singapore Air declined to comment.

The record loss comes at a critical juncture for Air India. Chief Executive Officer Campbell Wilson last week announced his intention to step down later this year. The airline was ranked worst for safety issues in the aviation regulator's latest annual audit, and despite ambitious fleet expansion plans has struggled to lift yields and improve service to desired levels.

Stemming the losses has also been set as one of the key conditions for approving a third term for Tata Group Chairman N Chandrasekaran, *Bloomberg News* reported in February.

The airline had started the fiscal year on a positive note, posting operating profits in the first few weeks of April 2025, the people said. That turned after Pakistan closed its airspace to Indian airlines following a brief conflict in May, forcing them into longer routes to the US and Europe. A deadly crash in June of a Boeing Dreamliner, which killed more than 240 people, sent the carrier reeling, prompting it to reduce international and domestic services.

US President Donald Trump's punitive tariffs on India and a crackdown on foreign worker visas also hit the carrier's bottom line, the people said. The rolling crises have thwarted the airline's target to break even operationally in the fiscal year ended March 31.

Air India has also been one of the foreign carriers most affected by the outbreak of hostilities in the West Asia — a region which accounts for 16 per cent of its total capacity and which is now largely grounded, the people said.

Wheat procurement falls 69% over quality concerns in Punjab and Haryana

SANJEEB MUKHERJEE
New Delhi, 15 April

Wheat procurement for the central pool took a hit in the first fortnight of the 2026-27 season, weighed by low purchases from Punjab and Haryana due to quality issues. The government bought 1.53 million tonnes of wheat during the period, a 69 per cent drop against the same period last year. The quality of grains arriving in mandis has been below parameters due to unseasonal rains.

FARMERS' BODIES CALLED FOR A 4-HOUR RAIL BLOCKADE ACROSS PUNJAB ON FRIDAY TO DEMAND RELAXATION IN PROCUREMENT QUALITY STANDARDS

The slow procurement has left thousands of farmers waiting for days to get their wheat purchased. As a result, farmers organisations, such as Samyukta Kisan Morcha and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM), have called for a four-hour rail blockade across Punjab on Friday from 12-3pm, demanding relaxation in procurement quality standards.

So far, wheat arriving in Punjab mandis is having 20 per cent shrivelled and broken grains, when the Food Corporation of India (FCI) accepts wheat, which only has 6 per cent shrivelled grains, sources said.

In addition, there has also been lustre loss due to unseasonal rain in late March and early April. "The Punjab government is wary of going for large-scale purchases as they fear that if FCI does reject the poor quality grains they would be saddled with huge unsold stocks," Punjab Arthiya Association President Prem Goyal told Business Standard.

A team of officials from the government has been visiting Punjab mandis to collect wheat samples, he said. However, a decision is not likely before the next two-three days.

Sandeep Singh, member of Joint State Coordination Committee of Punjab State Procurement Agencies, said that due to excess shriveled grains in the wheat, natural moisture gain won't be possible. Therefore, the central government will have to relax the quality parameters as they have done for Haryana and Rajasthan.

In Haryana, the government procured wheat with 15 per cent shriveled and broken grains on Wednesday, as against the existing parameters of 6 per cent and decided to accept wheat with 70 per cent luster loss. Wheat, the main rabi (winter) crop, is procured through the April-March period. However, much of the grain is bought in the first few months itself, mainly by the FCI and state agencies.

According to FCI data, the agencies have procured 1.53 million tonnes since the start of the procurement operation from April 1, while the arrival stood at 3.5 million tonnes.

In the same period of the 2025-26 rabi marketing season, the agencies had procured 5.00 million tonnes, where the arrival was 9.3 million tonnes.

(With agency inputs)

In ₹1 trn urban fund, cities to get ₹10K cr for capacity building, credit guarantee

DHRUVAKSH SAHA
New Delhi, 15 April

Cities looking to make use of the Urban Challenge Fund (UCF) will see state support of ₹10,000 crore in capacity building and credit guarantees in order to make projects bankable and leverage private or market finance, the housing and urban affairs ministry said on Wednesday.

The government released the much-awaited guidelines for UCF on Wednesday, and plans to start releasing funds to support projects soon, said Manohar Lal Khattar, housing and urban affairs minister.

According to the guidelines, central assistance for projects under the fund will be ₹90,000 crore, while ₹5,000 crore has been earmarked for Project Preparation and Capacity Building at National, State/UT, and City levels, and a Credit Repayment Guarantee Sub-Scheme (CRGSS) has been allocated ₹5,000 crore.

The policy was ideated specifically for cities to leverage market finance instead of relying on government grants, keeping central assistance for projects limited to 25 percent of the cost of bankable projects provided that at least 50 percent of the project cost is funded from bonds, bank loans, and public private partnerships.

The scheme will cover all cities with a projected 2025 population of 1 million or more, industrial cities with a population more than 100,000 and all urban local bodies.

The ₹90,000 crore project fund will serve as catalytic support to leverage market-based financing, enable structured project implementation, and ensure timely execution of financially viable and reform-linked urban infrastructure investments, the guidelines said.

"States will endeavour to take up projects equivalent to at least 25 per cent of their allocated amount within the six months from the issuance of guidelines," they said.

Most difficult task is to declare belief of millions wrong: SC

The Supreme Court on Wednesday emphasised the inherent limits of judicial intervention in matters of faith, observing that courts must tread cautiously before pronouncing on the validity of religious beliefs followed by large sections of society.

A nine-judge Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Justice Surya Kant, along with Justices BV Nagarathna, MM Sundresh, Ahsanuddin Amanullah, Aravind Kumar, Augustine George Masih, Prasanna B Varale, R Mahadevan and Joymalya Bagchi made the observations while hearing petitions related to discrimination against women at religious places, including the Sabarimala temple in Kerala, and on the ambit and scope of the religious freedom practised by multiple faiths.

The Bench remarked that one of the most complex tasks for a constitutional court is how to declare the beliefs of millions as "wrong or erroneous", underlining the institutional restraint required in such cases. It also cautioned that religion cannot be stripped of its core practices in the name of social reform.

BHAVINI MISHRA

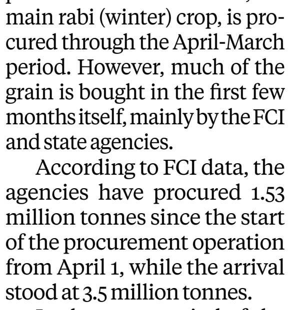
Telecos want property managers to bear cost of digital ratings

GULVEEN AULAKH
New Delhi, 15 April

Telecom service providers have argued that the financial liability of ensuring digital ratings of buildings, including those owned by the government, should reside with the property managers rather than the carriers, as they would stand to benefit from premium rents and higher tenant retention.

"The authority should ensure that there should not be a reverse pressure on telecom or internet service providers (TSPs/ISPs) to absorb the cost of provisioning the digital connectivity infrastructure or digital connectivity or repair or maintenance etc., for government buildings or for buildings of public importance like metro/railway stations, airports etc," private sector carriers said in a representation to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai).

"It has to be explicitly captured that the cost and ownership for this, would have to be borne by the property managers (including government bodies wherever applicable) and a suitable commercial agreement should be executed by them with the respective TSPs/ISPs," noted the representation, issued by the Cellular Operators Association of India, which represents India's leading telcos, including Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea. Trai had recommended in its consultation paper on Review of Rating of Properties for Digital Connectivity Regulations that government buildings should mandatorily come under the rating framework.



Certainty regarding the cost allocation for enabling telecom infrastructure for a property has also been raised by information technology industry body Broadband India Forum, which added that the cost of enabling telecom as well as in-building services (IBS) should be included within expenditures of property developers.

"Since digital connectivity infrastructure is an inherent component of property development costs (at par with utilities such as water and electricity), the cost of enabling telecom infrastructure and IBS must be treated as an integral element of property development expenditure and should be absorbed by the property managers. Thus, no cost recovery to be done from service providers in the form of access fees, revenue share arrangements or IBS linked premiums," the body said in its representation.

While indirectly referring to instances of being asked to pay severely high charges for providing connectivity services at upcoming airports, COAI added that carriers faced significant challenges in implementing IBS, as property owners often treat telecom as a commercial activity.

Govt may roll out mobile PLI 2.0 with outlay of $5 bn by May

The government is likely to roll out production-linked incentives to boost mobile phone exports from the country by May with an outlay of over $5 billion, about ₹46,000 crore, sources aware of the development said.

The Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing (LSEM) was launched in 2020 with the aim to boost domestic manufacturing of mobile phones in the country with an outlay of ₹40,995 crore, or about $5.7 billion based on exchange rate at that time.

LSEM was commonly known as production-linked incentive scheme (PLI) for mobile phones. "The PLI 2.0 for mobile phones is in the works with a focus on boosting exports. It should be in place by May. The outlay is expected to be over $5 billion," a source told *PTI*.

Another source said the Ministry of Electronics and IT is in discussion with the finance minister for the PLI after which it will be placed before cabinet for final approval. PTI