

Financial Market**Prudential buys AIG's Asian facility (Tol-15)**

British insurer Prudential PLC said Monday it will buy the Asian unit of American International Group Inc. in a deal worth \$35.5 billion that will allow AIG to pay back some of the money it owes US taxpayers.

Infra bonds fail to attract investors in 10% slab (Tol-15)

Infrastructure bonds that have come as an additional investment category with a ceiling of Rs 20,000 may not be an attractive choice for those in the lower tax bracket (10% tax category under the revised tax slabs).

Financial inclusion gets a boost but schemes hardly have takers (ET-9)

Financial Inclusion Fund (FIF) and Financial Inclusion Technology Fund (FITF) are perhaps the two most talked about funding vehicles for promoting financial inclusion. In Budget 2010-11, the finance minister has proposed a further boost to the initiative with additional Rs 100 crore each, enhancing the size of corpus Rs 600 crore each.

Banking**HSBC'S Indian ops' post 44% drop in profit (ET-9)**

The Indian operations of HSBC has reported a 44% drop in its net profits for the year ended December 31, 2009, to \$ 374 million from \$666 million a year earlier. The drop comes on the back of a loss of over Rs 1,000 crore in retail banking. The bank has also recorded a loss in commercial banking and lower profits in global markets. However, the group's profits from non-banking sources like brokerage and asset management have improved.

Pvt players back with a bang in vehicle finance market (BL-8)

Private banks, which had virtually exited the vehicle finance portfolio due to the liquidity crunch in the wake of the global meltdown, rising defaults and tighter recovery norms in the domestic market, now seem to be back with a bang.

RBI**RBI data may dash Pranab's hopes on bank reach (BS-1)**

Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee wants to extend the geographic coverage of banks and told the Lok Sabha during his Budget speech that the central bank was considering allowing more private players in banking.

An analysis of Reserve Bank of India data, however, raises doubts on whether the finance minister's hopes of more 'geographic coverage' can be met by allowing more private players.

Economy**Gold eases in dollar, jumps in sterling (ET-9)**

Gold eased on Monday as the euro retreated versus the dollar, but the metal hit record highs in sterling terms as fears the next UK election could result in a hung parliament weighed on the British currency. Spot gold was bid at \$ 1,114.25 an ounce at 1503 GMT, against \$1,116.20 late in New York on Friday.

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