

US dollar rises as coronavirus fears ease

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NEW YORK: The US dollar rose as investors expressed confidence that the novel coronavirus outbreak will be contained soon.

In late New York trading on Wednesday, the euro was down to \$1.0868 from \$1.0920 in the previous session, and the British pound was down to \$1.2958 from \$1.2961 in the previous session. The Australian dollar rose to \$0.6735 from \$0.6713, Xinhua reported.

The US dollar bought 110.08 Japanese yen, higher than 109.75 Japanese yen of the previous session. The US dollar was up to 0.9783 Swiss franc from 0.9754 Swiss franc, and it fell to 1.3259 Canadian dollars from 1.3290 Canadian dollars.

The number of novel coronavirus cases dropped for the second consecutive days on Tuesday in China, according to China's National Health Commission on Wednesday.

Traditional safe-haven currencies Japanese yen and Swiss franc weakened against the greenback.

The dollar index, which measures the greenback against six major peers, rose 0.32 per cent at 99.0435 in late trading.



First 5G enabled smartphone in India from house of iQOO



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NEW DELHI: iQOO, the premium high-performance smartphone brand, on Thursday announced that its first product, iQOO 3, will be available in India on Flipkart and iqoo.com in February.

The high-performance smartphone will be India's first device with the latest Snapdragon 865 chipset providing 5G capabilities.

iQOO is committed to fulfilling the needs of performance-focused Indian consumers with outstanding products. The soon to be launched iQOO 3, intends to offer a distinct proposition in the premium smartphone segment with industry-first features.

The iQOO 3 will be the perfect combination of smartphone performance, offering future-ready 5G capabilities. Apart from being India's first smartphone offering the latest Snapdragon 865 SoC, the iQOO 3 will also feature best-in-class performance, an enhanced camera, long-lasting battery life, and unmatched gaming experience. Commenting on the partnership, Gagan Arora, Director-Marketing ? iQOO said, "iQOO has been created to deliver a unique experience to young, technology-savvy consumers. iQOO is born to be a challenger just like its users, and the entire design process is guided by the evolving needs of these consumers, who desire for best-in-class performance. iQOO phones are built for those consumers who are naturally skeptical of the status quo and are constantly seeking to improve themselves."

Sharing his views on the much-awaited launch, Aditya Soni - Senior Director, Mobiles at Flipkart said, "At Flipkart, we are committed to bringing high-performance products to our consumers across the country,



Diesel Prices Today Cut To 7-Month Low, Petrol Rates Remain Cheapest In 5 Months

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NEW DELHI: Petrol prices today remained at a five-month low as oil marketing companies kept the price of the fuel steady for third day in a row. However, diesel prices were cut today by 5 paise. In Delhi, petrol today cost 71.94 a litre - the lowest in about 5 months. In Kolkata, the fuel retailed at 74.58 a litre, in Mumbai at 77.6 a litre and in Chennai at 74.73 a litre respectively.

In Delhi, diesel today cost 64.82 a litre, 5 paise cheaper than yesterday's price. This is the lowest price of the fuel in seven months.

Petrol and diesel prices are revised by oil marketing companies on a daily basis. The retail prices of petrol and diesel in India depend on the international crude prices and the rupee-US dollar exchange rate.

India imports about three-fourth of its crude requirements. Brent crude prices today fell to \$55.73 per barrel. Oil demand in China, the world's second-largest crude consumer, has plunged because of travel restrictions to and from the

country and quarantines within it. Chinese oil refiner China National Chemical Corp said on Thursday it would close a 100,000 barrel-per-day plant and cut processing at two other amid falling fuel demand.

On Wednesday, oil marketing companies sharply hiked the price of non-subsidised liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders, the sixth hike in as many months. A 14.2 kg non-subsidised Indane LPG cylinder is now priced at 858.5 in New Delhi, a sharp hike of 144.5 from its last revision on 1st January.

Is hiking LPG cylinder prices revenge for crushing defeat in Delhi polls, Cong jabs BJP

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The Congress on Thursday demanded that the government should roll back the LPG cylinder price hike and wondered if the increase in prices of cooking gas was "revenge" for the saffron party's crushing defeat in the Delhi polls.

The Mahila Congress held a protest against the steep LPG price hike and submitted a memorandum to the government demanding a rollback of the increased prices.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi also took a dig at the BJP over the price hike by tweeting a UPA-era picture of the saffron party's leaders protesting an increase in prices of cooking gas at the time.

"I agree with these members of the BJP as they protest the astronomical 150 Rs price hike in LPG cylinders," Gandhi tweeted along with the picture of the protesting BJP leaders, including Smriti Irani.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi takes great pride in the fact that crores of people gave up their LPG cylinder subsidy for the poor and now affording non-subsidised cylinders



has become extremely difficult for the citizens, Mahila Congress chief Sushmita Dev said in a statement.

"It is more shocking that within 24 hours of the Delhi election results (December 11), the BJP government increased prices of gas (LPG). Is this revenge for their crushing defeat?" she asked.

All state units of the Mahila Congress held a protest against the price hike and submitted a memorandum addressed to prime minister with a demand to roll back the hike in price of LPG cylinder.

It comes as a surprise that the BJP leaders who held shrill press meets

when they were in opposition to protest against the rising prices during the UPA government are today silent, Dev said.

It is also shocking that when the entire country is reeling under the shock of economic crisis and unemployment, the price of a basic commodity like LPG cylinders has been hiked, she said.

The Congress is against this steep hike and the Mahila Congress has put forth the demand of rolling back the price rise to give relief to the common citizens, the Mahila Congress chief said.

A delegation of women leaders including Dev, Alka Lamba, Priyanka

Singh, Amarlata Sangwan and Radhika Khara, went to meet Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan to submit a memorandum demanding the rollback of the hike in the price of LPG gas cylinder by almost Rs 150, the Congress said.

The delegation was stopped at the gate of the Shastri Bhawan by security personnel and its members staged a protest to demand a meeting with Pradhan on this issue, it claimed.

After two hours of protest, the delegation was allowed to submit their memorandum to the office of the minister, the party said.

LPG under PAHAL is subsidised by Centre

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NEW DELHI: A day after sharp hike in LPG price, Petroleum ministry in an official release on Thursday stated that LPG price for cooking for consumers under PAHAL (DBTL) is subsidised by the Government.

It further said that the LPG price is derived based on international market price for the previous month.

"LPG price for cooking for

On account of a sharp increase in the international price of LPG during January, 2020 from \$ 448/MT to \$ 567/MT, there has been a hike of Rs. 144.50 for a 14.2 kg. LPG cylinder in the market-determined price of domestic non-subsidised LPG at Delhi.

While the price of domestic non-subsidised LPG cylinder has increased from Rs. 714 per cylinder to Rs. 858.50 per cylinder, the subsidy amount to subsidised consumers in



consumers under PAHAL (DBTL) is subsidised by the Government of India. The subsidy quantum given to the PAHAL consumers by way of Direct Benefit Transfer is the difference between the market-determined price and the subsidized price.

"Today, the national LPG coverage is about 97%, with more than 27.76 crore connections. Therefore, out of the about 27.76 crore consumers, in respect of about 26.12 crore consumers the increase in price is borne by the Government by enhancing the subsidy component," the release added further.

Delhi has increased from Rs. 153.86 per cylinder to Rs. 291.48 per cylinder.

In view of the subsidized price determined by the Government, the subsidized LPG consumers are insulated from the volatility of LPG prices in the international market.

For a 14.2 kg cylinder, the subsidy borne by Government to domestic users is increased from Rs. 153.86 per cylinder to Rs. 291.48 per cylinder.

For the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) consumers, the subsidy borne by Government has increased from Rs. 174.86 per cylinder to Rs. 312.48 per cylinder.

Rupee rises 7 paise to 71.21 against US dollar in early trade

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MUMBAI: The rupee appreciated by 7 paise to 71.21 against the US dollar in opening trade on Wednesday, driven by positive opening in domestic equities.

Forex traders said positive opening in domestic equities supported the local unit, while rising crude prices, foreign fund outflows and strengthening of the American currency weighed on rupee and restricted its up-

move against the greenback. On Tuesday, the rupee had settled at 71.28 against the US dollar.

The benchmark BSE Sensex was trading with gains of 370.21 points, or 0.90 per cent to quote at 41,586.35 while the NSE Nifty was trading at 12,205.30, up 97.40 points, or 0.08 per cent.

Foreign institutional investors sold equities worth Rs 209.39 crore on a net basis on Tuesday, according to provisional exchange data.



Moreover, rupee continued to consolidate in a narrow range ahead of inflation and industrial production figures scheduled to be released later in the day, they added.

The rupee opened strong at 71.24 at the interbank forex market then gained further ground to touch 71.21 per dollar, displaying gains of 7

Meanwhile, Brent crude, the global benchmark, was trading at USD 54.97 per barrel higher by 1.78 per cent.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose by 0.04 per cent to 98.75.

The 10-year government bond yield was at 6.48 per cent in morning trade.

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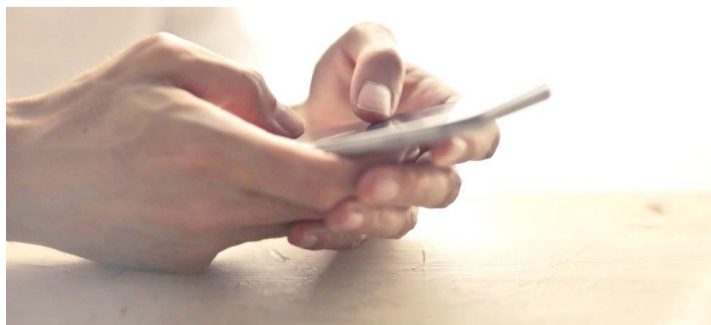
China smartphone sales may decline 20% in Q1: Counterpoint

MUMBAI: In the wake of the novel coronavirus outbreak, sales of smartphones in China may decline 20 per cent in the first quarter of this year, according to an estimate by Counterpoint Research on Thursday.

While companies like Huawei, OPPO and Vivo could suffer the most due to this decline, the impact may be limited on smartphone makers like Xiaomi, OnePlus and Realme "as they are more online-centric and overseas-focused".

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19), which originated in China's Wuhan area in December 2019 has impacted social and production activities in the country.

To curb the spread of the coronavirus epidemic, the Chinese government issued a strict travel ban on January 24 following which retail and commerce activities slowed sharply. Counterpoint



said.

"Demand-wise, we see the market getting impacted severely. We estimate more than a 50 per cent YoY (year-on-year) decline in offline smartphone sales during the lock-down period. Therefore, we have lowered our sales forecast 20 per cent for Q1," Brady Wang, Associate Director at Counterpoint Research, said in a statement.

"The situation may worsen and we may lower our forecast even

more depending on the February sales. The plummet in Q1 is likely to generate a surge in channel inventories and further influence shipments and new products launches through Q2," Wang said.

The coronavirus outbreak has led to the death of over 1,300 people in China. "Huawei group is likely to suffer as China has accounted for over 60 per cent of its total smartphones sales. OPPO and Vivo will also be

impacted because of their greater reliance on offline sales channels. The influence on sales of Xiaomi, OnePlus and Realme will likely be less severe as they are more online-centric and overseas-focused," Flora Tang, Research Analyst at Counterpoint Research, said.

As Apple announced a shut-down of its offline stores across China until February 15, the company could face a sales loss of about one million units of iPhones.

"Apple's new product development plans will also be affected as engineers from the USA and Taiwan cannot travel to China. The iPhone SE2 set for a late March launch is likely to have troubles in ramping up volume due to the insufficient labour force in Foxconn's Zhengzhou factory," Mengmeng Zhang, Research Analyst at Counterpoint Research, added.

Rupee slips marginally to 71.31 as weak macro data, fall in equities weigh

MUMBAI: The rupee on Thursday slipped marginally to close at 71.31 against the US dollar as weak macro-economic data disappointed market participants.

Forex traders said disappointing macro economic numbers and weak domestic equities weighed on the local unit, while easing crude oil prices and weakening of the American currency in the overseas market restricted the fall to some extent.

Government data on Wednesday showed that industrial output contracted by 0.3 per cent in December, while retail inflation jumped to a 68-month high of 7.59 per cent in January on high food prices.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 71.35, then lost further ground to touch a low of 71.49.

The domestic unit finally settled at 71.31 against the US dollar, showing a loss of 2 paise over the last close.

"Rupee continued to consolidate in

a narrow range but came under pressure after data released on the domestic front was weaker-than-expectation," said Gaurang Somaiyaa, Forex & Bullion Analyst, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

Somaiyaa further said, "from the US, market participants will be keeping an eye on inflation number and better-than-expected number could extend gains for the greenback. We expect the USDINR(Spot) to quote in the range of 71.20 and 71.80."

Meanwhile, global crude oil benchmark Brent Futures fell 0.81 per cent to trade at USD 55.34 per barrel.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.08 per cent to 98.97.

Broadly, crude prices have seen some moderation in the past few sessions over demand slump amid rising coronavirus cases in China and other regions.