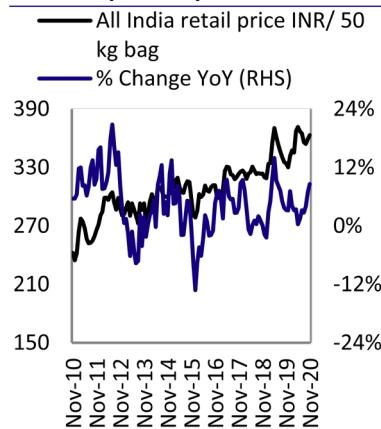
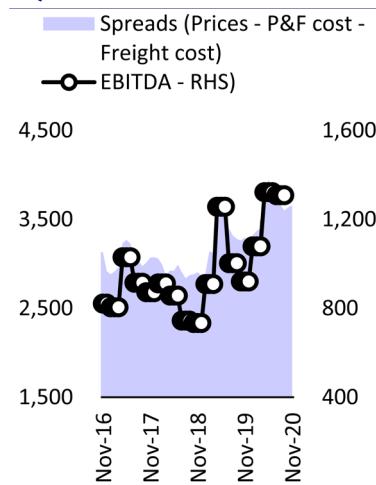


All-India prices up 7% YoY

Cement spreads remain strong in 3QFY21

Busy season demand kicking in
Expect price hikes to follow

Our channel checks indicate the seasonal uptick in demand is playing out as expected, with volumes bouncing back in the last few weeks from the weakness seen in November (due to festive holidays). While prices weakened in December (falling 3% MoM), we expect recovery in the next few weeks as peak season demand sets in. Cost inflation from higher fossil fuel prices (petcoke, coal, and diesel) should be offset, in our view, by price hikes, keeping margins in 4QFY21 at elevated levels. We remain constructive on the sector and expect our Coverage Universe EBITDA to grow 37% YoY in 2HFY21 – as demand and margins remain above consensus estimates. UltraTech is our top large-cap pick and Dalmia Bharat our top mid-cap pick.

- In 3QFY21, we estimate volumes for our Coverage Universe to grow 7% YoY, with higher growth for North and East based companies (JK Cement, Shree). We expect unitary EBITDA to rise 33% YoY to INR1,225/t (-6% QoQ) on higher cement price (+7% YoY).
- As per our channel checks, volumes are growing >10% YoY in the North, East, and Central regions of India. While demand has remained weak in South and Maharashtra, it has recovered strongly from the 15–20% YoY decline seen in 2QFY21.
- In 3QFY21, all-India average price rose 7% YoY to INR350/bag, led by a 17% increase in South and 6–7% in North, Central, and West, even as East was flat.
- All-India price, however, has been flat QoQ on 3% MoM decline in December across regions. On a QoQ basis, price was +3%/+2%/0%/-1%/-5% in North/Central/West/South/East in 3QFY21. East posted sharp decline – 6%/7%/8%/5% QoQ decline was seen in Bihar/Jharkhand/Odisha/West Bengal due to new capacities and higher inter-regional flow of material from South.
- Variable cost has risen in 3QFY21 on account of higher costs of petcoke (+16% YoY), diesel (+14% YoY), and raw material (slag). Despite this, we estimate total costs/t to have declined ~2% YoY due to lower fixed costs as well as operating leverage benefits.

Volumes expected to be up 7% YoY in 3QFY21

- Cement industry volumes have remained strong on the back of rural housing and a pickup in government spending (particularly in East and North). November demand growth, however, tapered due to festive holidays (Diwali, Chhath) and workers returning to their villages for the same. Our channel checks indicate demand has picked up once again from the second half of December as seasonal improvement in construction activity kicks in.
- Demand in East has been particularly strong, supported by pre-election spending by the state governments in West Bengal and Assam. Odisha, on the other hand, has seen an uptick in industrial infra demand.
- In 3QFY21, we estimate volumes for our Coverage Universe to have grown 7% YoY, with higher growth for North and East based companies – 23% for JK Cement and 14% for Shree. South-based companies India Cement and Ramco are expected to continue to see volume decline of 10% and 5%, respectively.

South – production discipline going strong

- The Cement industry in South has exhibited a strong production discipline in the past year in the face of weak volumes.
- Prices in South were up ~INR58/bag, or 17% YoY, to INR383/bag in 3QFY21. Prices were up 39%/11%/14%/11% YoY in Andhra Pradesh / Tamil Nadu / Karnataka / Kerala.
- On a QoQ basis, prices were down 1% QoQ as hikes in Nov were offset by decline of 6% MoM in Dec in Kerala and 1–2% in other states.

North and Central – only regions with QoQ price hikes in 3QFY21

- Demand in North and Central was strong, particularly in October, when some states saw >20% YoY volume growth. While the ongoing farmer agitation in North caused some logistical issues in November, this has now been resolved.
- Prices in North have risen by 3%/7% QoQ/YoY to INR383/bag, led by sharp hikes seen in October (as demand was strong).
- Prices in Central have also risen by 2%/6% QoQ/YoY to INR351/bag, led by hikes in both Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

West – mixed demand trends; prices remain flat QoQ

- Cement demand in Maharashtra has been among the most impacted in the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The state has continued to see some decline in demand, although lower than the ~20% YoY decline in 2QFY21. Demand in Gujarat has been good, with volume growth of 5–10% YoY.
- Price was up 1%/11% QoQ/YoY to INR351/bag in Maharashtra in 3QFY21, but declined 1% QoQ (+3% YoY) to INR348/bag in Gujarat. As a result, prices in West were flat QoQ at INR350/bag (+7% YoY).

East – weakest pricing among the regions

- Demand in East has been the strongest among the regions at >10% YoY, supported by government spending (particularly in West Bengal, Assam, and Odisha) as well as improved labor availability.
- However, due to aggressive expansions undertaken by various players, East has seen the weakest pricing among the regions in the past three years – current prices are the lowest in the last three years. The rest of the country, meanwhile, has seen an over 10% increase in prices in the past three years.
- Price in East has declined ~INR45/bag since May'20. It declined ~5% QoQ in 3QFY21 due to a sharp INR20–25/bag MoM decline across states in Dec.
- In 3QFY21, price in Bihar / Jharkhand / Odisha / West Bengal declined 6%/7%/8%/5% QoQ.

Costs – increase in power and fuel to be offset by lower fixed cost

- Lower petcoke price has been a tailwind for the Cement sector. It aided decline in power and fuel cost for the fifth successive quarter in 2QFY21 (by 18% YoY). However, this is now set to reverse as petcoke price has risen substantially.
- Petcoke price was up 46% YoY to USD98/t in December (up 63% v/s Apr'20). To mitigate the impact of higher petcoke price, cement producers increased the use of imported coal, but even this firmed up by 31% MoM (13% YoY) in December. We estimate an INR60–70/t, or ~7% QoQ, increase in power and fuel

cost in 3QFY21. It would rise further in 4QFY21 as low-cost inventory gets diluted in 3QFY21.

- Diesel price was up 14% YoY in 3QFY21 due to an increase in duties levied by the government. Lower rail freight and steps undertaken by the industry to optimize logistic cost have, however, neutralized the impact of higher diesel price.
- 1HFY21 saw ~10% decline in other expenses due to savings on fixed costs (such as travel, administration, repairs, and advertising and promotions). While these spends should gradually normalize, we expect them to remain low even in 2HFY21. Lower fixed costs and higher operating leverage (from strong volumes) should largely neutralize the increase in power and fuel cost and lead to marginally lower total costs YoY even in 3QFY21.

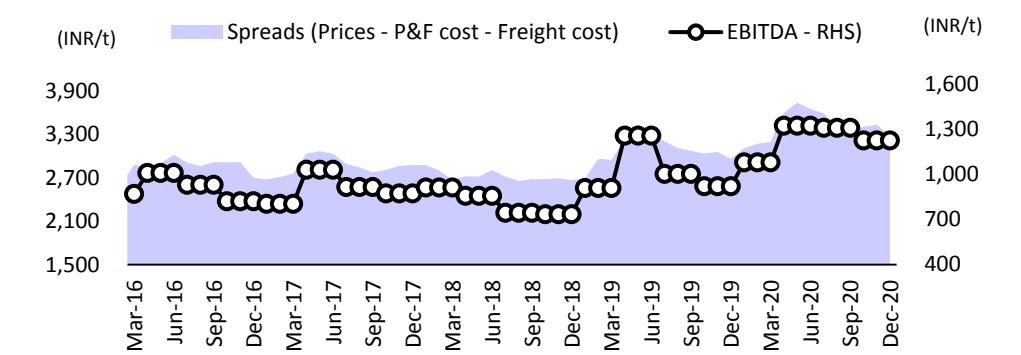
Top picks – UltraTech and Dalmia Bharat

- While we are structurally positive on the industry outlook, we prefer North and Central as these markets have a higher clinker utilization of over 80%.
- We adopt a bottom-up stock-picking approach and prefer companies that: a) are moving down the cost curve, b) have the potential to gain market share, and c) provide valuation comfort.
- UltraTech is our top large-cap pick, while Dalmia Bharat is the top mid-cap pick. We also like ACC as a value pick, but do not see much upside in Shree, Ramco, and Ambuja, whose potential market share gains are already priced in.

Cement: Valuation summary

	Mcap (USD b)	CMP (INR)	TP (INR)	Rating	P/E (x)		EV/EBITDA (x)		EV/t (x)		P/BV	
					FY21E	FY22E	FY21E	FY22E	FY21E	FY22E	FY21E	FY22E
UTCEM	21.0	5,343	6,240	Buy	29.6	24.7	14.9	13.1	201	187	3.3	3.0
SRCM	11.8	23,894	24,900	Neutral	34.5	34.8	19.5	16.5	234	218	5.7	4.9
ACEM	6.9	254	250	Neutral	19.3	20.1	11.3	11.4	141	138	1.7	1.6
ACC	4.2	1,645	1,980	Buy	22.0	19.5	9.5	8.2	102	93	2.5	2.2
TRCL	2.6	793	805	Neutral	21.4	22.7	12.5	12.6	133	131	3.3	2.9
DALBHARA	2.9	1,116	1,310	Buy	25.9	25.6	9.0	8.3	107	88	1.9	1.8
JKCE	2.2	2,093	2,250	Buy	25.8	20.3	11.4	9.8	139	135	4.6	3.9
BCORP	0.8	732	935	Buy	9.1	8.9	5.1	6.0	65	67	1.1	1.0
ICEM	0.7	175	168	Neutral	24.9	31.8	10.1	10.9	72	71	1.0	0.9
JKLC	0.5	342	445	Buy	13.1	13.0	6.2	5.8	47	45	2.0	1.7

Exhibit 1: Cement spreads remain strong in 3QFY21



Source: MOFSL; EBITDA/t is actual reported for our coverage

Estimate 13% EBITDA CAGR for our Coverage Universe over FY20–22E

We expect EBITDA to rise by 18%/8% YoY in FY21E/FY22E, implying a 13% CAGR in EBITDA over FY20–22E. We expect a 19%/22% CAGR in JKCE/TRCL on capacity-led volume growth and higher prices in South. PAT for our Coverage Universe should also grow at 22% CAGR over FY20–22E. While EBITDA growth in FY21 is led by higher margins, growth in FY22E is expected to be driven largely by volumes. After edging down 1% YoY in FY21E, we expect volumes to grow 13% (on a low base) in FY22E, implying a 6% volume CAGR.

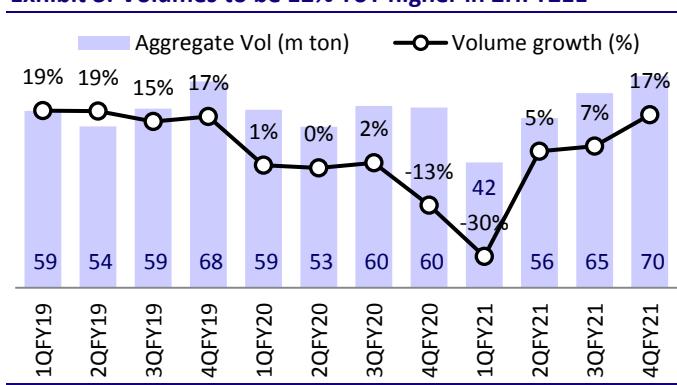
Focus on cost reduction after the easing of COVID-led restrictions as well as price hikes have resulted in margin expansion in the sector. 1HFY21 saw ~10% decline in other expenses owing to savings on fixed costs (such as travel, administration, repairs, and advertising and promotions). While these spends should gradually normalize, we expect them to remain low even in 2HFY21. Lower fixed costs and higher operating leverage (from strong volumes) should largely neutralize the increase in power and fuel cost from higher petcoke cost, leading to marginally lower total costs YoY even in 2HFY21. We expect EBITDA for our Coverage Universe to be 37% higher YoY in 2HFY21 on better realizations (+4% YoY) and higher volumes (+12% YoY).

Exhibit 2: Expect 13% EBITDA CAGR over FY20–22E, driven by 6% volume CAGR

	EBITDA (INR b)			FY20–22E CAGR (%)	Volume (mt)			FY20–22E CAGR (%)	EBITDA/t (INR)		
	FY20	FY21E	FY22E		FY20	FY21E	FY22E		FY20	FY21E	FY22E
UTCEM	94.1	109.6	121.5	14	82.3	82.7	91.8	6	1,143	1,325	1,323
SRCM	36.7	40.8	45.1	11	24.9	26.9	29.8	9	1,448	1,519	1,503
ACEM	21.5	27.0	27.8	14	24.1	22.5	25.4	3	891	1,199	1,094
ACC	24.1	26.0	28.4	8	28.9	25.6	29.5	1	834	1,016	962
TRCL	11.1	16.3	16.6	22	11.2	10.2	12.2	5	992	1,598	1,356
DALBHARA	21.1	26.4	27.6	14	19.3	20.3	23.6	11	1,092	1,304	1,166
JKCE	12.1	15.2	17.2	19	10.1	11.5	13.1	14	1,199	1,318	1,309
BCORP	13.4	14.3	15.6	8	13.4	13.0	15.0	6	997	1,104	1,042
ICEM	5.9	8.4	7.6	14	11	8.8	10.6	(2)	531	948	719
JKLC	6.7	7.4	7.5	6	9.2	9.7	10.4	6	732	757	723
Sum/average	246.7	291.5	314.8	13	234.4	231.3	261.5	6	1,052	1,260	1,203
YoY growth (%)	24	18	8		-2	(1)	13		27	20	(5)

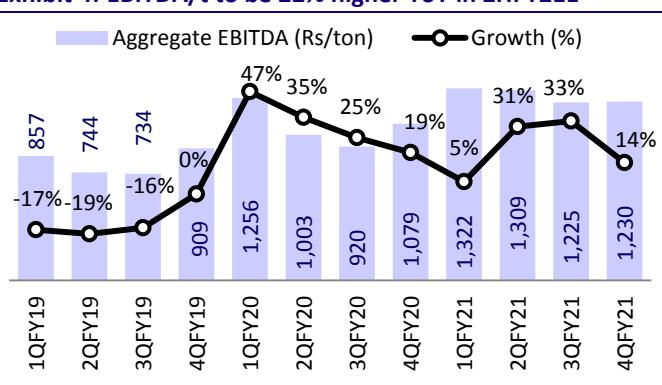
Source: MOFSL, Company

Exhibit 3: Volumes to be 12% YoY higher in 2HFY21E



Source: Company, MOFSL

Exhibit 4: EBITDA/t to be 22% higher YoY in 2HFY21E



Source: Company, MOFSL

Top picks – UltraTech, Dalmia Bharat, ACC, JK Cement

UltraTech (Buy, TP: INR6,240)

UTCEM has a strong pan-India distribution network and preferred supplier status for key infrastructure projects. As a result, it is well-positioned to tap into expected growth in both retail and institutional (non-trade) cement demand in India. The company is ramping up its under-utilized acquired capacities (Binani, Century Cement). It also has a strong pipeline of projects and brownfield expansion potential, which offer visibility on long-term growth. We estimate a 14%/28% CAGR in consolidated EBITDA/PAT over FY20–22E, driven by a 6% CAGR in volumes and lower operating/interest costs. Its valuation is reasonable at 13.1x FY22E EV/EBITDA and USD187/t capacity – a ~17% discount to its past five-year average. The stock is also trading 20% cheaper v/s peer SRCM and against its historical average of 10%. We value UTCEM at 14x Sep'22 EV/EBITDA to arrive at our TP of INR6,240.

Dalmia Bharat (Buy, TP: INR1,310)

With its recent clinker expansion in East, DALBHARA is well-placed to gain market share in this region. We estimate a 10% volume CAGR over FY20–22E, far higher than the industry growth rate. We forecast a ~15% EBITDA CAGR over FY20–22E, aided by lower cost. The company should continue to generate strong FCF and reduce its net debt further from ~INR20b currently. It trades at a reasonable valuation of 8.3x FY22E EV/EBITDA and USD88/t EV/capacity. We value the stock at 8.5x Sep'22 EV/EBITDA to arrive at our TP of INR1,310.

ACC (Buy, TP: INR1,980)

ACC trades at a 30–50% discount to peers SRCM, UTCEM, and TRCL. Such a large valuation discount is excessive as: a) ACC has arrested its market share losses since CY17, b) the proportion of inefficient assets would decline and profitability would improve with planned capacity expansions in CY22/CY23, and c) the company has a strong net-cash balance sheet (16% of mcap), allowing room for a special dividend (similar to parent ACEM). We value ACC at 9x CY22E EV/EBITDA (~20% discount to its past five-year average of 11x) to arrive at our TP of INR1,980. This implies target EV/t of USD115 and target P/E of 21x on CY22E earnings. Reiterate **Buy**.

JKCE (Buy, TP: INR2,250)

We expect JKCE to deliver a higher-than-industry EBITDA CAGR of 20% over FY20–22E, driven by a 16% volume CAGR, on account of its new capacity in North. The expansion further improves its regional mix in favor of North and Central. Furthermore, the company moves down the cost curve by increasing its share of newer cost-efficient capacities. We arrive at our TP of INR2,250, valuing the White Cement business at 12x Sep'22 EV/EBITDA and Grey Cement business at 9x Sep'22 EV/EBITDA. Maintain **Buy**.

Story in charts

Exhibit 5: All-India prices flat QoQ / up 7% YoY

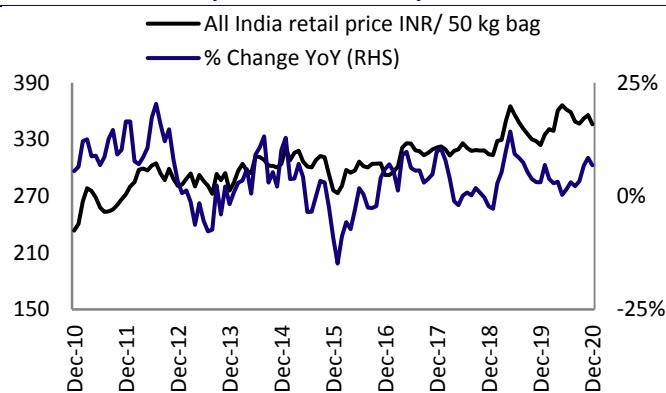


Exhibit 6: Prices in North up 3% QoQ / 7% YoY

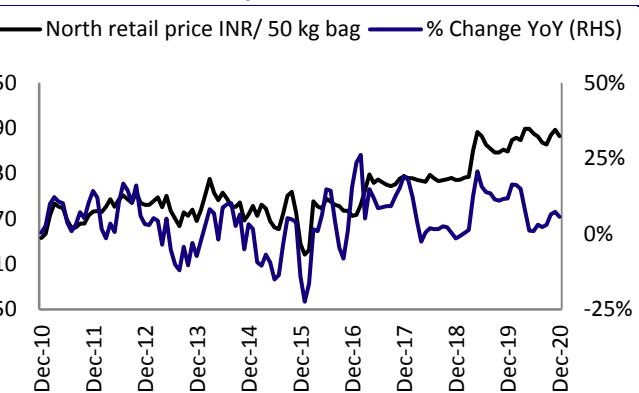


Exhibit 7: Prices in Central up 2% QoQ / 6% YoY

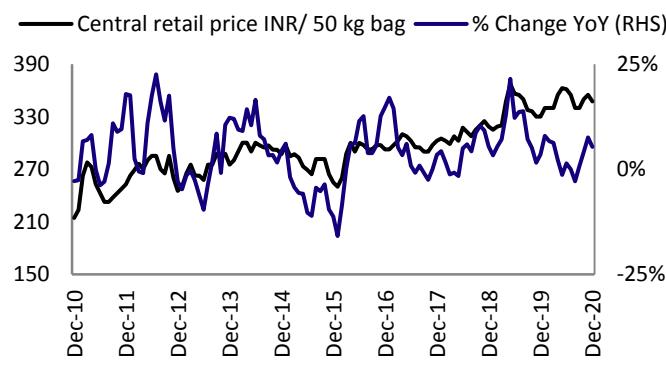


Exhibit 8: Prices in West flat QoQ / up 7% YoY

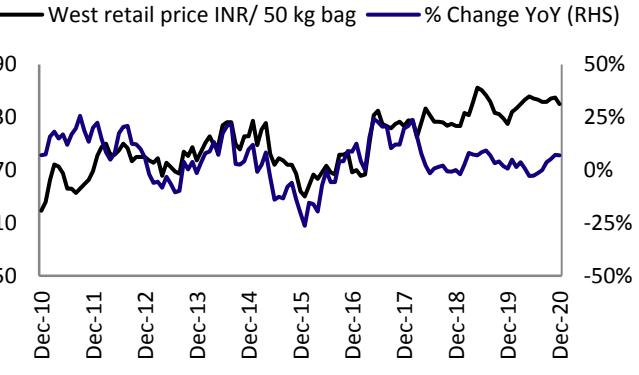


Exhibit 9: Prices in South down 1% QoQ / up 17% YoY

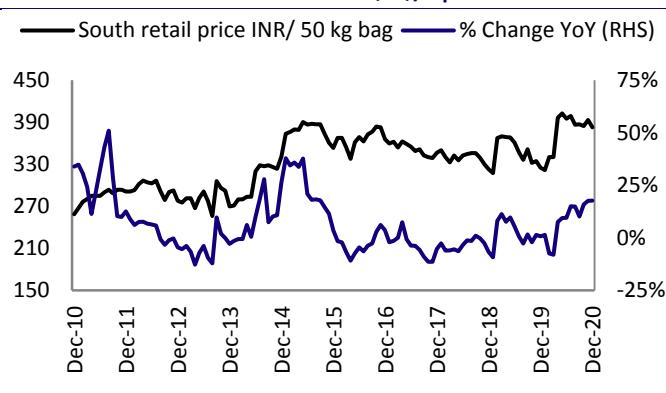


Exhibit 10: Prices in East down 5% QoQ / flat YoY

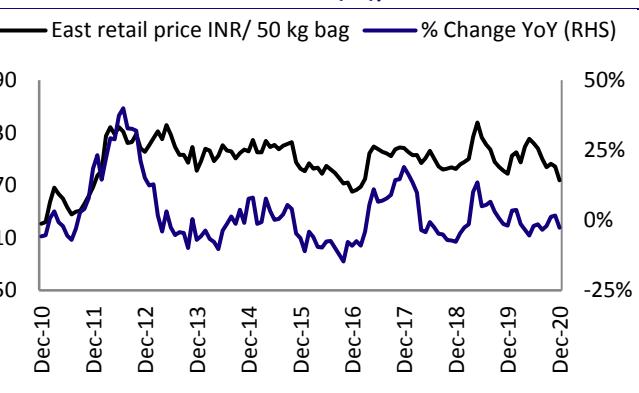
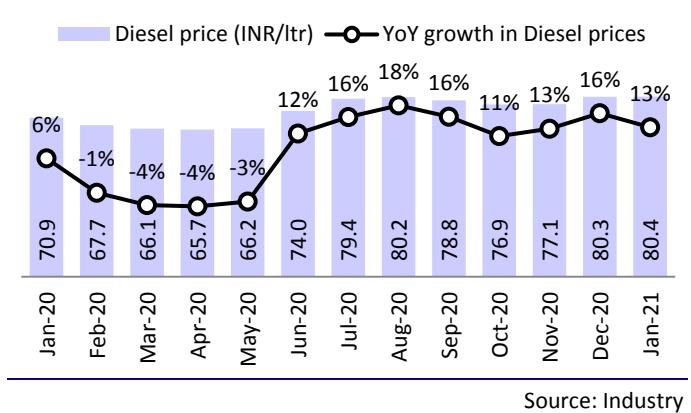
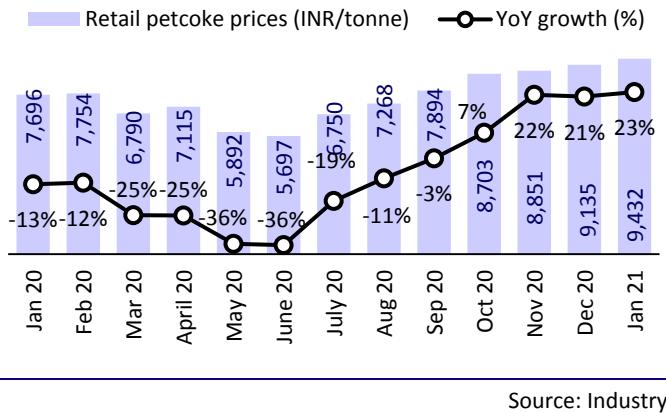


Exhibit 11: Diesel prices up 13% YoY in Jan'21



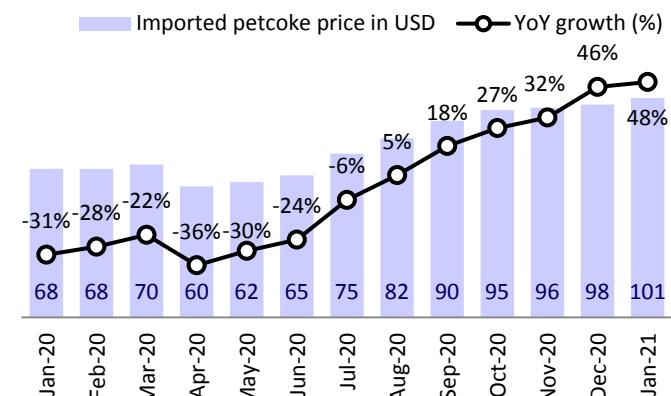
Source: Industry

Exhibit 12: Domestic petcoke prices up 23% YoY in Jan'21



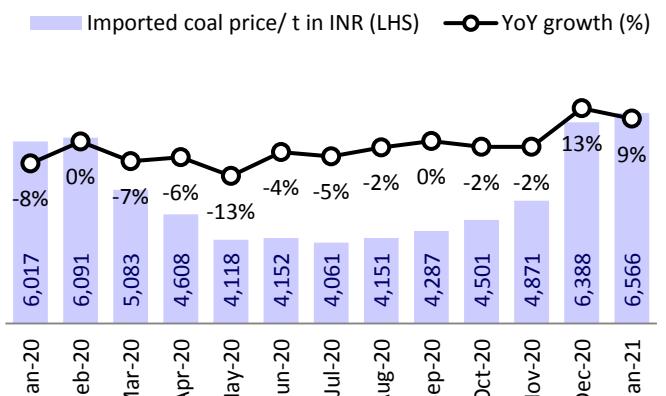
Source: Industry

Exhibit 13: Imported petcoke prices up 48% YoY in Jan'21



Source: Industry

Exhibit 14: Imported coal prices up 9% YoY in Jan'21



Source: Industry

NOTES

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Investment Rating	Expected return (over 12-month)
BUY	>=15%
SELL	< - 10%
NEUTRAL	< - 10 % to 15%
UNDER REVIEW	Rating may undergo a change
NOT RATED	We have forward looking estimates for the stock but we refrain from assigning recommendation

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