

9<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Department of Corporate Services  
BSE Limited  
1st floor, New Trading Ring  
Rotunda Building, P J Towers  
Dalal Street, Fort  
Mumbai - 400 001  
Scrip Code: 500710

The Listing Department  
National Stock Exchange of India Ltd.  
Exchange Plaza, 5th floor,  
Bandra-Kurla Complex  
Bandra (E)  
Mumbai – 400051  
Symbol: AKZOINDIA

Dear Sir/Ma'am,

**Sub: Group Investor Call Transcript**

Pursuant to Regulation 30 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, please find attached the transcript of the group investor call conducted on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2026 with regard to the financial results of the Company for the quarter and nine months ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025.

This has been uploaded on the Company website also and can be accessed through the link:  
<https://akzonobel.co.in/investors.php#im>

Kindly take the aforesaid information on record.

Thanking you.

Yours truly,  
for **Akzo Nobel India Limited**

Rajiv L Jha  
General Counsel, Company Secretary &  
Compliance Officer

Encl: as above.



“AkzoNobel India Limited Q3 FY26 Earnings  
Conference Call”

**February 03, 2026**



**MANAGEMENT:** **MR. RAJIV RAJGOPAL – JOINT MANAGING DIRECTOR & CEO, AKZONOBEL INDIA LIMITED**  
**MR. KRISHNA R – WHOLE-TIME DIRECTOR & CFO, AKZONOBEL INDIA LIMITED**  
**MR. RAJIV L. JHA – GENERAL COUNSEL, COMPANY SECRETARY, AND COMPLIANCE OFFICER, AKZONOBEL INDIA LIMITED**

**MODERATOR:** **MR. ANIRUDDHA JOSHI – ICICI SECURITIES**

**Moderator:** Ladies and gentlemen, good day and welcome to the Q3 and FY26 Earnings Conference Call of AkzoNobel India Limited hosted by ICICI Securities.

As a reminder, all participant lines will be in the listen-only mode and there will be an opportunity for you to ask questions after the presentation concludes. Please note that this conference is being recorded.

I now hand the conference over to Mr. Aniruddha Joshi from ICICI Securities. Thank you and over to you.

**Aniruddha Joshi:** Thanks, Yashashri. On behalf of ICICI Securities, we welcome you all to Q3 FY26 Results Webinar of AkzoNobel India Limited, a JSW Group Company.

We have with us today Senior Management represented by Mr. Rajiv Rajgopal – Joint Managing Director and CEO, Mr. Krishna R – Whole-Time Director and CFO, and Mr. Rajiv L. Jha – General Counsel, Company Secretary, and Compliance Officer.

Now I hand over the call to Mr. Rajiv Jha to read out the disclaimer and then we will hand it over to Mr. Rajiv Rajgopal for initial comments. Post that, we will do the question-and-answer session.

Thanks, and over to you, Rajiv Jha sir.

**Rajiv Jha:** We welcome you all to this 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter and 9 months ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025 Investor Call.

And as per our process, let me begin with the safe harbour statement that we usually do:

This media release contains statements which address such key issues as the company's growth strategy, future financial results, market positions, product development, products in the pipeline and product approvals. Such statements should be carefully considered, and it should be understood that many factors could cause forecast and actual results or outcomes could differ from these statements. These factors include but are not limited to price fluctuations, currency fluctuations, developments in raw material and personnel costs, pensions, physical and environmental risks, legal issues and legislative, fiscal, and other regulatory measures and approvals, as well as significant market disruptions. Stated competitive positions are based on management estimates supported by information provided by specialized external agencies. For a more comprehensive discussion of the risk factors affecting our business, please see our latest annual report.

And with this, I am handing over to Mr. Rajiv Rajgopal. Thank you.

**Rajiv Rajgopal:** Thank you, Rajiv. Thank you to the ICICI Securities team and everyone on the call, wish all of you a very good afternoon.

As always, every quarter, post our results, I think this has been a ritual for us that we get to speak to you. We have loaded the investor deck onto the website and stock exchanges. So as always we do, we will not run you through a canned presentation because we would like to leave more time for the questions you may have.

I will begin by giving a short summary and will request CFO and Whole-Time Director, Krishna, to also just run you through in terms of any observations on the financials. Suffice to say that last quarter, if you really look at it, our revenue reported was 907.7 crore which was approximately a 1% decline. However, I would quickly like to add that in the revenue, the standalone business, domestic business grew almost by about 2% and the reason for that is while you all understand that there are large parts of AkzoNobel or there is a part of AkzoNobel that got carved out which is specifically in the powder coating entity and the IRC business, our International Research Centre, there are certain other elements of the business which also got retained by the AkzoNobel Powder Coatings India private limited entity which is an unlisted company by the earlier parent, which includes specifically a couple of customers in the coil coating business. And also, we used to export a lot of our Dramatone and now the Acotone, which is the colorant into parts of Southeast Asia and Middle East and as a part of the deal for now, this has ceased since the early part of the quarter. So hence, like to like, the total amount that got netted off was in the range of about approximately 200 crores. So roughly about 25 crore a quarter is the impact that one would need to keep in mind other than the divestitures, which already have been shared with you. So hence, when you look at it, we had a volume growth of 6% blended for both decorative and industrials and a revenue growth of close to 2%.

Decorative alone, I think it was fantastic news to see the volume coming back. We grew at 8%. I think the highlight was the fact that we started growing almost in single digit in the premium segment. Our challenge continues to be what we call the MEP, which is a Mass Economy Primer and certain actions have been put in place starting this quarter to look at really enriching some of our premium primers and also to fight the battle in a more strategic manner with some of the new entrants at reasonable margins. So that's the strategy that we have employed.

I just want to highlight both across the paints and coatings with the new owner and one of the things that we have done is to really say that, look, how do we really play in India? How do we play across segments? How do we make sure that we are winning across our consumer bases, customer bases? And that's really been the mantra of saying, how do we really drive revenue growth? And while doing so, make sure that we don't dilute margins in a huge manner. And we are doing it in a very intelligent, strategic manner. We are not doing it just tactically. We are making sure that we use a lot of science in the way we play. I'll give you an example. When we looked at with the new mandate, I think it's wonderful for people like us because we are quite enthralled to see that now volume growth and revenue growth is the first mantra in the business. Typically, it's not the same in an MNC business as many of you would agree. And one of the things that we looked at was to look at our pricing across our premium brands and some of our other offerings in the market versus some of the lead players. And we did see that we were usually overpriced between 5% and 9% which is what had led to volume erosion. We have

addressed some of those and we have also started looking at how do we really look at the whole franchise of the customer bases and where we need to play. So that's what I mean. We do price elasticity studies to see that if there is a price of what's the volume elasticity we get and till we are certain, we don't take any actions. And it's been very limited, but we are seeing some early actions and also as we start doing a far more disciplined way to sell in order to try and grow the business. So, that's on the revenue side.

Our coatings business, the challenge in the mix was that we grew faster in our coil coating business and in our automotive and speciality coating business. We had a bit of a challenge because of a high base last year because we had done many of the ships for the Indian Navy last year. So that was a one-time base direction which will get restored back in this quarter.

Suffice to say that I am fairly buoyant and confident as we progress into the last lap of this fiscal. And at this point of time, we are looking at various strategies and plans of really seeing now under the aegis of Mr. Parth Jindal, how we can have a larger play.

Let me just hand it over to Krishna to say quick words on the financials and then we will hand it over to Aniruddha for the Q&A.

**Krishna R:**

Thanks, Rajiv. We have uploaded the deck in terms of the details, and we have also given the like-to-like comparison of the results on a comparable basis which excludes the powder coatings and International Research Center business. And Rajiv has completely given a 360-degree view in terms of what's happening in the business and definitely it's an exciting journey for us in terms of how are we rewiring into the growth trajectory back into the business. At the same time, happy to say that we did protect our gross margins largely and there is a sequential improvement of 80 basis points compared to the last quarter. And as Rajiv alluded, we deployed the royalty savings back into the business to support the growth initiatives and to move the revenue trajectory. And at the same time, we also maintain our double-digit profitability and EBITDA stood around 14.9 before the exceptional items. As most of you might have seen the notes to the accounts, there are quite a few exceptional items which has impacted during the last quarter. One among that which is a significant impact in terms of the impact of labor codes, which we clearly called out. Resultant excluding exceptional items, the PAT grew by around 5.9% on a year-on-year basis. With that, Aniruddha, I think I will hand it over back to you to see the question and answers.

**Moderator:**

We will now begin the question-and-answer session. We will take a first question from Abneesh Roy from Nuvama.

**Abneesh Roy:**

My first question is on the demand side. November, December, I guess was much better than October. October, the rain season was there and early Diwali. So very little days to really paint house to capture the festival related kind of a behaviour. So how do you see Q4? Because the other paint companies are saying that Q4 is likely to be better than Q3 in terms of volume in terms of the decor. Would you also share similar thoughts?

**Rajiv Rajgopal:** Yes, Abneesh, very much. Two reasons. One, you are absolutely right. I think in our view, even for us, October was very muted, in fact, it was a decline. But we really bounced back in November, and we had reasonable growth in November, which is where we are. And you take out the like-to-like business of what we don't now operate in. And our volume growth was pretty good because, you know, 8% in Decorative, we are seeing it. And when you look at that, it was fairly secular, actually like by premium. We were pretty happy with what came in. Yes, in my view, this quarter, unless there are again any external events or hopefully no climate change impacts but other than that, it should be a pretty strong quarter from a volume perspective. You are right, in Decoratives.

**Abneesh Roy:** One follow up question on demand side, what is the gap you are seeing between the volume growth and sales growth?

**Rajiv Rajgopal:** See, from an industry perspective, we expect it to be between 5 and 6. And however, what's happening, Abneesh, is that the two reasons why you cannot exactly sort of pinpoint. One, because there is excessive discounting happening in the market, something that particularly in the mid economy sort of segments where we have not had great success and we are reworking our strategy with that. Second is, as far as we are concerned, as I mentioned we did, as I told you, some of the conjoint pricing analysis and we took some actions given that we were at significant premiums to our market, so we will be at about maybe 1% or 2% a little higher in terms of the volume value gap for about a couple of quarters till it cools down.

**Abneesh Roy:** A final question in terms of the new player, Birla Opus, we saw a very minor hike of 1% to 3%. When you see the raw material side and when you see the heightened promotional intensity in industry and the new player has also reversed 10% extra in the four litre pack, would you say that the worst of the promotional intensity, competition intensity is now kind of at the fag end, or do you think that this can continue at least in the next few quarters? This remains as high as to the peak level.

**Rajiv Rajgopal:** Firstly, what I would love to believe is that the worst is behind us, but I think what the reality of the picture is that I think it will still take 2-3 quarters for it to really play out because at this point, let's understand the math. You are talking of a new entrant which has come at prices which are anywhere up to 12% lower than the prices at which we operate in addition to that additional discounts and then there was the 3 litre which while you say it's been called off, it's still there in a few markets, still running pretty much. So, you are talking of a band between 12% and 18% lower pricing which is not a small sort of a negate. And what we are seeing is, you see, pricing is a lever in this industry, it works to a point. The problem is, if repeat demand doesn't come in at that pricing, it will be very difficult for any new player to take up the margins. Sort of cost cutting, etc., that one will have to do is going to be immense. We have seen it. We have seen it being a relatively, I am saying when I joined the company in 2013, you would remember Abneesh, Akzo India profit was less than 80 crores. Look at where we are. It's taken a huge amount of effort, a lot of work on costs, structural costs, procurement, raw material, logistics. We put a new route to market using the distributor which you know we went through a lot of

pangs when we did it. So, I think it will require out of box thinking. It's not just going to be cyclical. I do expect the competitive intensity to continue for a couple of quarters. But hey, I think we are in it and now as a part of the new group, I think the mantra is very simple, Abneesh, you will see us definitely. I mean, now as JSW Group in the paints business, I think we are already number four. I think Parth has given us a very clear intent and signal that we should get to number two in 3 to 4 years when we would want it even faster perhaps. So, we have got a very clear plan. I think what we are doing is focusing on our executional excellence and looking at our innovation basket to see how we can get products which will be slightly different from what we have been able to craft in the back. Dulux, as you know, enjoys a huge quality advantage and that's what we are relying on to take us through.

**Moderator:** We will take our next question from Manoj Menon from ICICI Securities.

**Manoj Menon:** Good performance, I must say, in the context of the market and also maybe rationality in parts of competition, etc., plus the transition. I've got a few things, but the most important thing comes to my mind is the revenue synergies. If you could talk a bit about whatever you can speak in a public domain subject to confidentiality on the revenue synergies, let's say, Dulux brand gaining from the JSW paint distribution or vice versa, or both, or just that you have got a far bigger scale today, your ability to accelerate numeric. So just please talk a bit about revenue synergies would be super helpful. Thank you.

**Rajiv Rajgopal:** Thank you, Manoj, and I think it's a little too early for me to talk, to be very honest, not for any other reason, because everything is in scope right now. And there are obviously certain elements of confidentiality that I am bound by. So, if you permit, I think the appropriate time would be to talk about it but at a very high level, if you were to ask, look, obviously, if you look at Dulux, Dulux has got markets where we have got greater than 10%, 15% market share in different states, whether it's Bengal, parts of Gujarat, we have got multiple states. And in JSW Paints, I think the team has created a very good presence in the southern markets and a few other markets like West, Maharashtra, etc. So, we need to look at in terms of what the combined offering will bring, and we need to create those value propositions which will make sure that the dealers, wherever there is a third brand in the outlets which have a higher shop share for either one of the two, we have a clear strategy for it. So that's broad thinking, Manoj. Also, there is a lot of synergy and in our industrial business there are obviously scopes, maybe on a coil business and a little bit in our protective business. So those are the areas where synergy will really pan out. But too early, I think it's not appropriate because work has just started and maybe at a later stage, Manoj, I think it'll be more apt for me to talk about.

**Manoj Menon:** The second and last one for today is that Rajiv and team, again, if you could talk a bit about the integration aspect beyond the people side of it, the culture side of it, and where are we currently. I know that it's a work-in-progress kind of, but you could talk about the people and the culture side of it. Thank you.

**Rajiv Rajgopal:**

Look, I think for people, I think there is a reality check in terms of the fact that people will be used to working in a particular way of life in an MNC organization when you move to an Indian organization. But bulk of us people around the table, among the leadership have worked in both, we have worked in Indian business houses and in MNCs. So I think the nuances, if you were to ask me, first and foremost, I must say this, Manoj, that we have been given a very warm welcome by Mr. Sajjan Jindal, Mr. Parth Jindal, and I think Parth in particular has been very caring in terms of making sure that right from the word go when the leadership team came to JSW Centre, by the way, we are in JSW Centre Mumbai today taking the call. The team is really welcomed and there is very clear ways of working. Of course, there would be like in any business when a business gets acquired, there'll be some challenges. I think the key for us as leaders is to make sure that our key talent, our key people are retained and value propositions are there on both sides, because I think JSW Paints has also got a very good set of team members. So, I think that's the thing that we will start doing. Again, as I said, Manoj, very early days. I think these are questions, it feels like you just got married and entered and you were asking me how is it going to be two years from now? It's a difficult question to answer, but my answer to that is, look, I think as in Indian customs the first thing you do is to make sure you come in and be a part of the family and that's what we are trying to do.

**Moderator:**

We will take our next question from Lakshminarayanan Ganapathi from Tunga Investments.

**Lakshminarayanan G:**

Rajiv, I think there are two or three number questions, and one is very conceptual question. So, first, I want to understand from a decorative volume growth, 9 months to last 9 months, like-for-like, what has been the volume growth? Second question is what are the cash levels we actually carry right now, approximately? And the third is you talked about royalty. I think royalty was around 140 crores or so. So how does the company intend to use it, whether it will flow into the bottom line or you would actually use it for business expansion? How do you think about it? These are the three questions from a number point of view. Conceptually, I want to understand, looking out three years, what will you call as markers of success for you and the management? It could be market share, it could be revenue growth, or it could be margins or ROCE. When you say that, look, we are successful three years out, what are the two or three markers you like to use and say, okay, we have done well? I think these are the questions, Rajiv.

**Krishna R:**

As far as the royalty is concerned, there are two portions of royalty. One is pertaining to the decorative paints and second is pertaining to the industrial coatings. In the month of June 2025, we acquired the decorative IP, and the Dulux brand is now owned by Akzo Nobel India Limited listed entity. So, the royalty ceased to exist which translates to roughly around 60 crores to 65 crores depending on the revenue trajectory. And that amount, as Rajiv alluded in the initial comments, we are committed to redeploy towards the growth initiatives and to gain the market shares. So that explains. And as far as the industrial coatings is concerned, AkzoNobel will continue to be the technological partner and we continue to pay the royalty as per the previous agreements. Hope this will answer the royalty question. Coming back to the cash position, ballpark is roughly around 200 to 225 crores of free cash is available in the balance sheet, which is earmarked for the growth initiatives and the CAPEX for the near future.

**Lakshminarayanan G:** And volume growth on decorative like-for-like for the 9 months.

**Rajiv Rajgopal:** 9 months would be between 1% and 2%. So clearly, Lakshmi, two parts. First, of course, there's been a huge bounce back. And the reason for that is there were two issues, of course, the July, August, September, as you know, once the announcement happened, there were a few challenges which I mentioned in that quarter in the call, particularly in the project segment in decorative, we face a lot of challenges from repainting societies in terms of continuance of some of the various actions that we had committed to in terms of warranties, etc., all of which has got addressed. So, I think now we are slowly bouncing back. On the decorative retail side we are starting to do well and secular growth across geographies.

**Lakshminarayanan G:** I think that answers all the number questions. Can you move on to the other one which I asked in terms of what you define success and what are the markers you like to use?

**Rajiv Rajgopal:** First and foremost, success for me is, we are now thinking what's good for JSW is good for JSW Dulux. And as all of you know, we have informed the new proposed name of the company with the Stock Exchange. It's gone to all our shareholders, all of you for vote. We hope you like the name. We believe that I think it's the name for the future where it captures, as Parth rightly says, the agility and the nimbleness and the power and the strength of JSW and really the epitome and the entire premiumness, luxury feel of Dulux. So, we are bringing Dulux right up there in the company. So JSW Dulux. Now, I think in terms of goalposts, look, I think the first is obviously how over the next couple of years we start integrating the companies. And while doing that, we make sure that the companies are really growing well and actually gaining from other players in the market. The larger goalpost, as I mentioned to you, is we are clear number four now with the combination. There's no doubt on that. And the quick clarity is to say that how do we quickly move to number three and then beyond. So really, how do you really progressively start moving ahead. I think that's really it. In coatings, I think we have now got all the recipes to start moving towards first being a number two and then a number one player. I think that's again the areas where we are, because I think now the mandates would be really how do you drive growth in India for India and made by India? And as we do that also, we will start looking at attractive opportunities that come our way. Lakshmi, hopefully that addresses all the questions you asked

**Moderator:** Next question is from Pratik Gothi from HSBC.

**Pratik Gothi:** A quick question on the numbers. Employee expenses were down, I think, to 55 million quarter-on-quarter. I think these are the continuing business numbers. So, any clarification on that, please? That's my first question.

**Krishna R:** Thanks for asking this question. As we clearly mentioned in the disclosures, the last year number is not comparable. And last year includes the Powder Coating and IRC. If you roughly see, ballpark number is around 12%.

**Pratik Gothi:** I am sorry, sir. Quarter-on-quarter. Q3 versus Q2.

**Krishna R:** Q3 versus Q2. It's a combination of the attrition and then the refill rate of the company and there is no structural change per se in that Q3 versus Q2.

**Pratik Gothi:** Second question is, are we thinking about changing the business model to becoming a direct distribution play instead of a distributor play as we currently hold?

**Rajiv Rajgopal:** Pratik, I'll look at that. Look, I don't think there's a perfect solution. There will be markets. Let's go back. Why did we move to distributor? We moved to distributor for two reasons, as all of you know. Global companies measure themselves on EBIT percent margin and not on absolute EBITDA or absolute EBIT. That was a bit of a challenge. And when you look at that bottle and look at in terms of service and when you want to have a vision of becoming a larger player in the country, we believe that distributor would have been it. And this journey started in 2013. We are in 2026. We have got 153 distributors and more than 82% of our distributors are more than 10 years old. So, they have grown the business with us. Now, obviously, what we will look at is there are certain markets where we still believe because of the fact that we need to further invest in the brand to drive offtake when you are starting to play the bigger players, we will need to look at being direct. So, there will be a combination, and they will also continue to be our distributors. Our distributors will continue. That we will come back. We will take a couple of quarters to see what is the best model and we will come back to you.

**Pratik Gothi:** On a decorative side, can you elaborate a little bit more on the competitive intensity? You talked about this higher discounting, but do you see competitive intensity in certain segments? Do you see higher competition in the economy segment where you are not especially strong, but say premium segment, for example, is there more competitive intensity there or anything? If you could put some colour on that please.

**Rajiv Rajgopal:** I think where all the new players have been able to really impact is in the mass and the below, mass, primers, economy and then even in some of the new categories, waterproofing and woodcare. I think in premium, I don't think that the order is really reversed. While people have tried. I can just give you examples that one of the fastest growing newer emerging players, when they got into the project business, they started getting consumer complaints and we started getting some of those businesses back. So, I think ultimately, look, I think what will play out is the quality of products because paint there is a lot of engineering in paint. And being a chemical engineer, I can tell you very proudly that there is a lot of engineering in paint. And so it's not that we create recipes and we start putting in the market. That said, to answer your question, yes, the competitive intensity is more in these segments of the market. But I would also suggest that look, in the premium, because everybody knows that that's what gives them better margins, there will be a lot of action in premium too, though a little lesser than the other segments.

**Moderator:** Next question is from Mrunmayee Jogalekar from Asit C Mehta Investment Intermediates.

**Mrunmayee Jogalekar:** My questions are mainly related to the coating segment. I think you did refer to the fact that you expect Q4 to be strong, and you also expect to become the number two player and then gradually

number one player on the coating side. So, first part of the question is, in the near term what will really drive the growth? Is it broadly the industry wide growth or you are seeing some kind of market share or some new products or something like that? And the second part of that is on the medium term what strategy you are thinking about from the coating perspective? The medium term strategy when looking at the coatings business now going ahead.

**Rajiv Rajgopal:** I think in coatings, we have been playing largely in the premium space while we entered the mid-market, in each of the business, I think mid-market is a huge opportunity, again, because of the challenges of being a part of AkzoNobel's looking at margins, we never looked at it. I think that's one area where we are now looking at and we are doing it in a very careful manner. It's not that we are just generally dropping prices. We are looking at are these sustained growths before making those commitments, one. Two, obviously our real focus is around R&D, ensuring technical expertise and really making sure that our products are going to be competitive in the mid segment. So that's where the second leg is. Last but not the least, in all our coatings B2B businesses, I think it's also understanding customer and consumer insights, really understanding how you can get in deeply into the business, understand the customer businesses and that's what the teams are right now engaging into. So hopefully I've answered your question.

**Mrunmayee Jogalekar:** On the near term, like the next couple of quarters, if you can talk about because you did say Q4 you are expecting strong performance in coatings.

**Rajiv Rajgopal:** Yes. Look, I think, again, you have got to keep in mind the fact that coating business has been an outperforming business for us over the last, if I take a three-year CAGR. So, yes, I think the key is we will obviously continue to grow. And in the near term, what we are trying to do is to win customers across different businesses and make sure that while driving growth, we are also able to keep an eye on profitability. Because that's also been a key lever in the coding business and using technology as the tool to drive that.

**Moderator:** We will take our next question from Aniruddha Joshi.

**Aniruddha Joshi:** Two questions, one in terms of now there are royalty savings. Secondly, over a period of time may not be, let's say in H1 FY27, but post that we may see strong synergy benefits. Also, the company in its new avatar wants to invest more in brand building and overall growth of the business. So how should we think about the margins? Means earlier there used to be a band in which we used to look at the margins. There was a minimum kind of a band. So how should we think in terms of the margins? That is question number one. And question number two, in terms of new product launches, how should we again see. Will the brand shift to JSW Dulux or it will remain Dulux because the company name is also getting changed to JSW Dulux. That's it from my side.

**Rajiv Rajgopal:** Aniruddha, the brand work is just about to commence. The company name is JSW Dulux. In terms of brands, obviously, there's a lot of clarity that Parth has made a significant investment to buy the brand of Dulux. So obviously, the endeavour will be to try and use it. But there are

certain areas or segments where Dulux has not been very, to be honest, we have not been able to stretch the brand enough. Obviously we have got a good brand in JSW Paints. So, when we look at it, we are studying it very closely to see, how the combination of the two starts really gaining significantly from the other players in the market. So that's one. Look, the guidance that I've given, my view is, as I said, as we enter the mid-market and some of it, you'd see an initial slight erosion of about a half point, etc. We are operating in the 14 to 15, 14.5, 14.8 EBITDA margins. I am not talking any synergy. I am saying, whatever synergy will come, will come outside this and at an appropriate time. But without synergy, I think our endeavour is to be in that band of more towards the 15. But the range I would give you is between 14.5 to 15. And then to take it up to 15 to 16, but at this point of time, I would say around 15% is where really I want to keep the focus. As I said, the first task is really driving revenue growth. And Aniruddha you will agree, I think really driving growth ahead of competition is most critical for us at this point of time.

**Aniruddha Joshi:**

In terms of some of the pricing actions, if you can indicate which we would have initiated in the market and how has been the trade response, because the transition is also underway. But we have seen India decorative volume growth is pretty strong at 8%. So how is the trade feedback, maybe just initial 1-2 months, but whatever you can share.

**Rajiv Rajgopal:**

This is something that the trade has been asking us for the last couple of years, it is just that our ability to do that with AkzoNobel was very difficult because Akzo runs on global pricing modules. The response has been good. It's a bit across the portfolio, starting from super premium right up to, some of our mass...and the reason for doing that is because we were completely off in terms of market operating prices. As I have told you, we have looked at pricing elasticity studies which we have done, we have done third party and all also done a bit of in-house work to really look at what is the elasticity across different brands, across the segments of dealers, painters and consumers. We have done it across three segments and based on that study; we started taking the decisions. Initial response is good, but we will have to wait and watch, because for me, pricing is something which you need to be in a particular range versus competition and there is a certain price premium. But I think there are a lot of other actions which are happening, just to say, pricing is not the only driver for growth.

**Moderator:**

We will take a last question from Akshay Krishnan from ICICI Securities.

**Akshay Krishnan:**

You clearly mentioned that you wanted to scale up the ladder on the ranking aspect, what will be the guardrails that you will be looking at? And let it be on the brand positioning or the pricing power or the channel economics, which means that you will protect yourself despite having a slower growth, even certain phases of the entire life cycle.

**Rajiv Rajgopal:**

Very good question, Akshay. First and foremost, I think to answer Aniruddha's one point, at least the start in January has been very good, so we are hoping that we continue. Second, I think it's a very good question. What are the guardrails? Ultimately when you want to get into the top zone on growth, but you also need to maintain profitability, it's absolutely essential that your

premium, your luxury brands and premium brands also grow, at least in line with GDP or outperform competitive landscape. So that's one. You know what are the drivers for it. So, I am not going to enumerate that, but suffice to say, hence brand, making sure that we are able to drive productivity on our tinting machines. We are able to make sure that we are engaged appropriately with our painters and our contractors, making sure that we are driving not just the width but also the depth of sharing an outlet is critical with the distribution and depth both. So, the guardrail would be to make sure that we are not dialling in into one area or one vector of growth. We are looking at playing it across the segments. That's one. And the same thing, both in decorative and in coatings, to make sure that we get a fairly secular growth across our businesses and making sure that it's not the lowest margin business that grows the highest and hence a high performing business are there. So that would be one. The second guardrail would be to ensure that while doing this, we continue our focus in terms of innovation. We are entering into a period of integration, etc. I remember an example, when years ago that I was told that it's like making sure that you are still running the F1 Race with a bit of a flat tire. So, you don't have the luxury of getting out of the race and you have got to wait to make sure that you are able to change the wheels at the right appropriate time. Or you are in a house where there's something which has got electrocuted, you don't have the luxury of switching off the mains. So, that's the situation we are in. I think it's a very competitive market, but I also believe it's a very exciting market. For me, I think the beginning of the new journey, the beginning of the family that we went, gives me adequate confidence and backing to say that go for the moon. That's the sort of thought that we are working with. Hopefully I answered your question.

**Akshay Krishnan:** Yes. We have many growth levers in the paint industry; let it be on the pricing or let it be on the adjacencies or the distribution integrities. It looks very attractive in an isolation path. But how do you evaluate the second order effect of these choices when you make on brand equity or the channel distribution or the return of capital on a full life cycle, so what is the trade-off point that you are consciously looking on to accept in today's point in time?

**Rajiv Rajgopal:** I will be very honest, the only reason I love this business is because the business I was in earlier, before I came into paints business was telecom, and the company was Airtel and you know what we have created. I ran the data business from 2G to 4G, I launched a 5G and you have seen what that business did. For me, I think, cash is king. The reason Krishna and I get very excited about this business is because this business delivers cash. And as the number four player, we have been able to do it, imagine the power of what we can do as we scale up. So, that's the most exciting part, that it's a very cash business. The brand commands an equity. I don't think many players in the industry, other than a couple including the market leader and us and maybe, number two player are able to debit dealers, etc., for wrongdoings in the market. We do that. We have consistently done that for 14-15 years of existence. So that tells you the strength of the brand, that tells you the strength of the relationship. We are very transparent in the way we work. I think where we lacked was firepower. In India, to win in India you need firepower, and you need a micro market battle strategy which keeps articulating. Those are some things that we are fine tuning and now really entering and that's what I am most excited about, for me. This is really the

excitement that we are really wanting to win in India. We are really wanting to be a part of the larger story. I think let the performance speak Akshay.

**Akshay Krishnan:** Post the merger what do you think will be the most critical to get in right at an early point in time? Is it more on the impact of the long-term growth valuation or is it more on the distribution aspect that you would?

**Rajiv Rajgopal:** I think a combination of both, because there is no long term without managing the short and medium term. First and foremost, managing all stakeholders, managing employees, our channel partners, our customers, I think those would be the critical part during the integration part. How do we together? Because remember that the two teams have been also in a way, not in a huge way, competing in markets. So how do you really bring the best of both? How do we really integrate into the families, the join in the family now? And how do we really make sure that the two brands...for me, it's today I am very clear in the role that I do, what's good for JSW is what's good for Dulux. I am very clear. Ever since I've moved into the family from July, so I think as long as every employee understands that they are first thinking India, then thinking JSW and then thinking Dulux, I think we will be on the right path.

**Moderator:** That was the last question for today. I now hand the conference call to the management for closing comments. Over to you sir.

**Rajiv Rajgopal:** First and foremost, thank you once again. We are delighted and we know that we have each of your support. If you have any further clarifications, do reach out to Rajiv Jha, our Company Secretary, and we would be happy to engage. One of the things that I am most fascinated about is that engagement with all of you. Over the last couple of years, we have had the opportunity also physically meeting some of you and our Board yesterday in the board meeting also encouraged us to continue that exercise. So, we look forward to not just having these calls but on a structured manner getting an opportunity for you to also meet some of our leaders and at an appropriate time also our Chairman. We are quite excited. Everybody in the Group, Board, would like to thank each one of you for your incredible support. As I always say, this industry is a very exciting industry to be in. That's the reason why people like me have spent so long, I have completed 14 years last week now, time flies. I wish all of you the very best. You can count on us; we are the sort of team that works 24x7. We understand that many of you made significant investments in the company, on the brand and you can be rest assured that's what we will keep in our mind as we progress ahead. Thank you very much. Have a great day.

**Moderator:** Thank you sir. Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of ICICI Securities, that concludes today's session. Thank you for your participation. You may now exit the meeting.