

(This document comprises news clips from various media in which Balmer Lawrie is mentioned, news related to GOI and PSEs, and news from the verticals that we do business in. This will be uploaded on intranet and website every Monday.)

IMF sees Indian economic growth rebounding to 7% next fiscal

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) sees Indian economic growth rebounding to around 7 per cent in the next financial year, supported by measures like monetary policy stimulus and corporate income tax cuts. We see the Indian economy rebounding from our projected 6.1 per cent growth this fiscal year to something like 7 per cent in the next fiscal year (2020). We see the factors that will support growth, including monetary policy stimulus, working their way through the pipeline, Jonathan Ostry, Deputy Director, Asia Pacific Department at the IMF, told reporters. The recent tax cuts, government's progress in addressing lingering weaknesses in the financial sector and measures to support growth sectors as seen as factors underpinning growth in the near term, Ostry said. Talking about the slowdown in Indian economy in recent quarters, he said: indeed (it) took many of us by surprise, including the IMF. "There wasn't a single cause for the slowdown there were many different causes at work including corporate and regulatory environmental uncertainties, the stresses in the non-bank financial sector, (and) stresses in the rural sector, among others," he said.

Millennium Post - 24.10.2019

<http://www.millenniumpost.in/business/imf-sees-indian-economic-growth-rebounding-to-7-next-fiscal-381126>

India jumps to 63rd position in World Bank's Ease of Doing Business 2020 report

India has moved 14 places to be 63rd among 190 nations in the World Bank's ease of doing business ranking released on Thursday on the back of multiple economic reforms by the Narendra Modi government. However, it failed to achieve government's target of being at 50th place. The country was 77th among 190 countries in the previous ranking last year, an improvement by 23 places. The report assess improvement in ease of doing business environment in Delhi and Mumbai. "Sustained business reforms over the past several years has helped India jump 14 places to move to

Fitch cuts India's FY20 GDP growth forecast to 5.5%

Fitch Ratings on Thursday slashed India's GDP growth forecast in the current fiscal to 5.5 per cent saying a large credit squeeze emanating from shadow banks has pushed economic growth to a six-year low. Fitch, which had in June this year put India's GDP growth at 6.6 per cent for the fiscal year that began in April 2019, said the recent government measures to boost economy including a cut in corporate tax rates will gradually nudge growth. The projection is lower than 6.1 per cent that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had forecast in early October. GDP expansion will pick up to 6.2 per cent in the next financial year (2020-21) and to 6.7 per cent in the year after, Fitch said. The Indian economy decelerated for the fifth consecutive quarter in April-June, with GDP expanding by a meagre 5 per cent, down from 8 per cent recorded a year earlier. This is the lowest growth outturn since 2013. "Weakness has been fairly broad-based, with both domestic spending and external demand losing momentum," Fitch said. "The Indian economy is being held back by a large squeeze in credit availability emanating from non-bank financial companies (NBFCs)."

The Economic Times - 25.10.2019

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/fitch-cuts-indias-fy20-gdp-growth-forecast-to-5-5/articleshow/71737537.cms>

Strategic sale of 11 biggies likely

The Narendra Modi government has finalised 11 "ailing" public sector units (PSUs) for strategic sale as part of its disinvestment plan. It is aimed at meeting the fiscal deficit target and bringing the country's economy back on track. The ambitious target was set by the finance ministry in a meeting with the Prime Minister Office (PMO). The 11 PSUs include Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL), Andrew Yule & Co, ITDC's Ashok Hotel, Balmer Lawrie Investments and Balmer Lawrie & Co., Mahanagar telephone Nigam (MTNL), Telecommunications Consultant India, National Textile Corporation, FCI Aravalli Gypsum and Minerals India, Hindustan Copper,

63rd position in this year's global ease of Doing Business rankings. India put in place four new business reforms during the past year and earned a place in among the world's top ten improvers for the third consecutive year," the World Bank Group's Doing Business 2020 study said. While there has been substantial progress, India still lags in areas such as enforcing contracts (163rd) and registering property (154th). It takes 58 days and costs on average 7.8% of a property's value to register it, longer and at greater cost than among OECD high-income economies.

The Economic Times - 24.10.2019

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/india-jumps-to-63rd-position-in-world-banks-doing-business-2020-report/articleshow/71731589.cms>

Niti Aayog Kick-Starts Work on 2035 Vision Document

The NITI Aayog has kick-started the exercise for drafting the Vision Document 2035, a 15-year vision for India starting from 2020, with a mandate for a paradigm shift in policy thinking and formulation. The Prime Minister's Office has directed the Aayog to engage the best Indian and overseas subject experts for consultation while preparing the document, saying business as usual approach will not work, a senior government official told ET. "The directive from above is to think globally and act locally, whereby we are identifying best experts and practices worldwide across a dozen sectors to draft an outcome oriented document with policy prescriptions that can bring about a shift in approach to addressing India's key problems of unemployment, lower exports and stagnation in the agricultural sector," said the official, requesting not to be identified.

The Economic Times - 22.10.2019

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2019%2F10%2F22&entity=Ar01514&sk=42661630&mode=text>

Indo-US energy trade to touch \$10 billion in FY20: Dharmendra Pradhan

India's energy trade with the US is likely to touch \$10 billion in financial year 2019-20, with the country having increased its import of crude oil, LNG and coking coal, said Union Petroleum

MECON, Braithwaite & Co. The list was prepared by the Niti Aayog and the department of Investment and Public Asset Management. "The government is all set for a series of blockbuster divestments — lining up strategic sales as many as 11 PSUs. Once the Cabinet gives its nod, the strategic sale will take place whenever market conditions are suitable," a top finance ministry source told DC on Tuesday.

Deccan Chronicle - 23.10.2019

<https://www.deccanchronicle.com/business/in-other-news/231019/strategic-sale-of-11-biggies-likely.html>

Government eases rules for setting up petrol pumps, allows non-oil companies in business

In the biggest reform in fuel retailing sector in almost two decades, the government on Wednesday relaxed norms for setting up petrol pumps, allowing non-oil companies to venture into the business -- a move that could help private and foreign firms to enter the world's fastest-growing market. At present, to obtain a fuel retailing license in India, a company needs to invest Rs 2,000 crore in either hydrocarbon exploration and production, refining, pipelines or liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals. Companies with a net worth of Rs 250 crore will be allowed to sell petrol and diesel subject to condition that they install facilities for marketing of at least one new generation alternate fuel such as CNG, LNG, biofuels or electric vehicle charging within three years of start of operations, information and broadcasting minister Prakash Javadekar said here. The retailers will necessarily have to set up 5 per cent of the total outlets in rural areas within five years, he said while briefing reporters on the decision taken by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Economic Times -28.10.2019

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/government-eases-rules-for-setting-up-petrol-pumps-allows-non-oil-companies-in-business/71731620>

I see great partnership in energy sector between India, Russia: Oil minister Pradhan

Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Wednesday said he sees a great partnership in the energy sector

Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Monday. Last year, the bilateral energy trade valuation stood at \$7 billion. "In 2018-19, our energy trade size is \$7 billion with the US. It is increasing this year, as we are importing crude oil, LNG, coal, especially the special category of coal. Our energy bridge is very robust with the world community and America is an important destination," Pradhan told reporters on the sidelines of the India-US Strategic Partnership Summit. The Minister said supplies from the US had helped control a likely price rise in India after supply shortage concerns gripped the market in the aftermath of the attacks on a Saudi Aramco's facility.

The Economic Times - 22.10.2019

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/indo-us-energy-trade-to-touch-10-billion-in-fy20-dharmendra-pradhan/articleshow/71688189.cms>

India's ailing economy is bleeding Diesel as demand dries up

India's sputtering economy is turning the energy-hungry nation into an unlikely source of diesel exports. The industrial fuel is the lifeblood of Indian manufacturing, transport and agriculture, making it the country's most-consumed petroleum product. But five straight quarters of slowing growth is taking an increasing toll on demand, resulting in diesel consumption slumping to the lowest since the start of 2017. The sharp slowdown - economic growth has almost halved since the middle of 2016 -- was compounded by a heavier-than-normal monsoon in some areas, taking refiners by surprise. That forced them to cut operating rates and spurred a 47% jump in exports of diesel, also known as gasoil, to a record 3.5 million tons last month. Weakening economy is hurting diesel demand in India "We do see India's gasoil demand dipping in the near term in line with the weak macroeconomic environment," said Rachel Yew, an analyst at industry consultant FGE in Singapore. The weakness will continue "at least through the rest of 2019," she said.

The Economic Times - 25.10.2019

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/indias-ailing-economy-is-bleeding-diesel-as-demand-dries-up/71752771>

HPCL accorded 'Maharatna' status

Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) has been accorded the status of a 'Maharatna', said a statement from the Ministry of Heavy Industries

between India and Russia. "I see a great partnership in future, especially in the energy sector between the two countries (India and Russia). Russia is the most favoured overseas investment destination for India," he told reporters here. Earlier in the day, Pradhan held a "productive meeting" with First Deputy Minister for Development of the Russian Far East and Arctic Sergey Tyrtsev. "Had a productive meeting with H.E. Sergey Tyrtsev, First Deputy Minister for Development of the Russian Far East and Arctic. We discussed about furthering energy cooperation between India and Far East Russia particularly on sourcing coking coal and other minerals," the minister tweeted. Representatives of Indian steel and coal companies held separate meetings with their Russian counterparts.

The Economic Times - 23.10.2019

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/i-see-great-partnership-in-energy-sector-between-india-russia-oil-minister-pradhan/71723129>

India's September oil imports at three-year low, Saudi regains top spot

India's oil imports fell to their lowest in more than three years in September to 3.82 million barrels per day (bpd), data obtained from industry and shipping sources showed, as some refiners cut purchases due to shutdowns for maintenance and fuel upgrades. Last month, Saudi Arabia replaced Iraq as top oil supplier to India after a gap of about 13 months, the data showed. September oil imports, which dropped below 4 million bpd for the first time since June 2016, were about 18.7% lower than in August and down 8.4% from a year ago, the data showed. The fall in oil imports limited India's fiscal deficit for September, but it also potentially points to a general economic and industrial slowdown. "Lower imports were largely due to refinery turnarounds as refiners have to supply Euro VI fuels in the country from an April 1 deadline. Heavy rains and slower industrial and construction work drain down the demand for refined fuels," said Ehsan Ul Haq, an analyst with Refinitiv.

The Economic Times - 24.10.2019

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/indias-september-oil-imports-at-three-year-low-saudi-regains-top-spot/71714460>

Logistics Set to Receive a Policy Push

Back in June 2016, India jumped 19 places from rank 54 to 35 on the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index. Experts credited it to

and Public Enterprises. As a 'Maharatna', the HPCL Board can now incur capital expenditure on purchase of new items or for replacement without any monetary ceiling. The company is also free to enter into joint ventures or strategic alliances. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas had proposed granting HPCL this status on June 13, 2019.

The Hindu Business Line - 24.10.2019

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/companies/hpcl-gets-maharatna-status/article29787857.ece>

improvement in infrastructure, emergence of a pool of skilled professionals and adoption of tech-enabled services such as tracking of shipments. The cheer was short-lived, though. Two years later, India was at 44, slipping on all parameters. This time, the fall was attributed to infrastructure not being in accordance with the growing volume of freight traffic. Here's one number that represents why the government should be concerned: India's logistics cost — around 14% of gross domestic product — is way too high. The corresponding figure for the US and Europe is around 10%, while in Japan, it is 11%. In neighbouring China, it's 8%.

The Economic Times - 28.10.2019

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2019%2F10%2F28&entity=Ar01106&sk=0225DD3C&mode=text>

Manoj Jain selected to head GAIL

Manoj Jain, currently the Director (Business Development) at GAIL (India) Ltd, was on Friday selected by government head-hunter PESB to helm India's biggest natural gas company. The Public Enterprise Selection Board (PESB) picked Jain for the post of Chairman and Managing Director of GAIL, a maharatna PSU, after interviewing eight short-listed candidates, a notification from the head-hunter said. Jain, 57, will have term till August 2022 once his appointment is ratified by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The PESB notice said Jain was selected after interviewing eight shortlisted candidates, including Anjani Kumar Tiwari, Director (Finance), GAIL (India) Ltd and E S Ranganathan, Managing Director, IGL. Others interviewed by PESB on Friday included two IAS officers, Manoj Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary of Tripura, and Jyoti Kalash, Additional Chief Secretary of Nagaland. He will replace Bhuwan Chandra Tripathi, who was in July this year denied a third extension of service that would have taken him to his superannuation age.

The Economic Times - 26.10.2019

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/manoj-jain-selected-to-head-gail/71769443>