

(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.)

The Telegraph – 28.12.2017

ARMY AND CITY POLICE PLACE ORDERS



Co-founders of RC Hobbytech Solutions Pvt Ltd Biswajit Dey and (right) Ritesh Kanu.
Picture by Smita Kr Saha

Drone duo soar in start-up dream

ANASUYA BASU

Calcutta: A start-up born out of a career setback has started soaring on the rotor blades of drones.

RC Hobbytech Solutions Pvt Ltd, started by two friends, specialises in building unmanned aerial vehicles, commonly known as drones, and has already bagged orders from the Indian Army, the railways and Calcutta police, among others.

Flooded with contracts, the fledgling start-up is servicing these orders with a soft loan from IIM Calcutta, project-based finance from banks and the Rs 1.5 crore it won in a competition launched by Balmer Lawrie under the Startup India scheme in November.

For colonel Biswajit Dey, a graduate in aeronautical engineering from St Peter's University in Chennai, RC Hobbytech was a seed sown by the disappointment of missing out on a chance to join the Army Aviation Corps because of an accident that put him in hospital for three-and-a-half months.

A dejected Biswajit came to Calcutta to meet his school friend Ritesh Kanu, who had just graduated in business management from Techno India Salt Lake and was to appear for an interview at the RBI.

Ritesh didn't go for the interview. Instead, he and Biswajit decided to launch their start-up.

"I liked making drones and fiddling with them while Ritesh was trained to market them. That made us a good team," said Biswajit, who learnt the basics of drone technology in college.

"There is a huge market for unmanned aerial vehicles in agriculture, surveillance and mining," said Ritesh.

From a drone start-up, Biswajit and Ritesh are now a "solutions provider in surveillance industry, leveraging unmanned technology and integrating hardware, software and data analysis".

They had started with a capital of Rs 4 lakh in 2014 and ended up burning the cash in a year. When their families started asking what they were up to, the duo stopped going home. They then floated a company called EduRade to teach drone technology in institutes and raise money. "It was in 2016 that we pitched for incubation at IIM Calcutta. We met Subhrangshu Sanjay, CEO of the IIMC Innovation Park, at an event and he liked our product. We were incubated in October 2016," Biswajit recalled.

Sanjay is impressed with what the duo have done so far. "They are providing real-time solutions to problems that are quite risky for human beings to solve. Their work for the army takes risk away and improves accuracy, which is fantastic," he said.

A pilot run of the system at Udhampur in Kashmir from March to April earned a letter of appreciation from the army, Biswajit said.

He is currently modifying the system to give it an industrial finish along with camouflage.

er is detected. The information includes the exact position of the suspected infiltrator.

"Our system is based on sensors and also sends messages over mobile phone, giving the correct location," said Biswajit.

A drone from RC Hobbytech Solutions Pvt Ltd being tested at the Indian Museum

RC Hobbytech is working on drone technology to replace the army's system of detecting intruders along the country's vast borders. "The army sets up poles with two free-hanging bottles to detect intruders. Whenever an infiltrator tries to cross a border fence, the bottles make a noise and alert the sentries at the forward post. They have electric fences but the wiring can be cut and the alarm system switched off," Ritesh said.

The start-up's Drones Tech Lab division has devised an Intruder Detection System based on GPS for the army. The system sends alerts to the forward post and control room in three seconds whenever an intrud-

India to be 5th largest eco in 2018: report

India is set to emerge as the world's fifth largest economy by overtaking Britain and France, a report by a global forecaster showed on Tuesday. And, India will emerge as the world's third largest economy by 2027, the report by the Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr) said. "The World Economic League Table shows that despite temporary setbacks from demonetisation and the introduction of the new GST, India's economy has caught up with that of France and the UK and in 2018 will overtake them both to become the world's fifth largest economy in dollar terms," Cebr deputy chairman Douglas McWilliams said. "On some cost of living adjusted measures India is already the world's third largest economy, but 2018 is the first time the Indian economy has

Economy Growth Slowed Down in 2016-17: Govt

The Indian economy slowed down in 2016-17, with the gross domestic product declining drastically from 8 per cent in 2015-16 to 7.1 per cent the next year, government said today. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said the slower economic growth reflected lower growth in the industry and the services sectors, due to a number of factors including structural, external, fiscal and monetary factors. The minister said in the Lok Sabha that the lower rate of global economic growth in 2016, along with a reduction in gross fixed investment to GDP ratio, stressed balance sheets of the corporate sector, lower credit growth in industry sector were some of the reasons for the low growth rate in 2016-17. "Slower growth in 2016-17

caught up and will overtake both those of the UK and France in real money dollar terms," said the 9th edition of the World Economic League table, which tracks the size of different economies across the globe and projects changes over the next 15 years.

The Times of India - 27.12.2017

<http://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/#>

Govt breaches fiscal deficit target at Nov-end

The government breached the fiscal deficit target for the current fiscal year ending March as data showed on Friday the deficit was 112% of the 2017-18 Budget estimate at the end of November, posing a challenge for policymakers grappling to stick to fiscal discipline. While the government has front-loaded expenditure this year as the Budget passage and clearance was advanced, what has added to the worries is a mild dip in revenue. Data released by the Controller General of Accounts showed that net revenue dropped from Rs 1,14,396 crore in November 2016 compared to Rs 1,13,890 crore November 2017. The deficit in absolute terms was Rs 6.12 lakh crore during April-November. In the year-ago period, the deficit was 85.8% of the full year estimate, official data showed. The government had signalled a fiscal slippage when it unveiled an additional market borrowing of Rs 50,000 crore for the current financial year on Wednesday. This was sharply higher than market expectations and stoked fiscal worries.

The Times of India - 30.12.2017

<http://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/#>

Biz optimism lowest in four years: Report

Business leaders in India remained largely positive, but their level of optimism has dropped to its lowest level in four years even as it has hit a two-year high in the Asia-Pacific, says a report. According to the latest Grant Thornton's report, Asia Pacific business optimism has hit a two-year high, largely driven by improvements from its two biggest economies, China and Japan, and region-wide positivity on prospects for increased trade. However, not all trajectories are heading upwards, the report titled 'Asia Pacific: Trading and thriving' stated, adding that India's optimism mostly remained positive at 75%, but "has dropped to its lowest level in four years". Australia and New Zealand are on the same boat too, as optimism in Australia dropped to 58% from 75% a year ago

reflects lower growth in industry and services sector. Economic growth of a country depends on a number of factors including structural, external, fiscal and monetary factors," Jaitley told the House during Question Hour.

The Economic Times - 30.12.2017

<http://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/#>

Govt Unlikely to Abandon Fiscal Consolidation Path

India may tread the fiscal consolidation path and show an improvement over the previous financial year as it looks to continue spending while dealing with revenue setbacks due to the implementation of the goods and services tax (GST). Policy makers in the government are of the view that the country doesn't confront a such that it should completely give up on the fiscal consolidation road map, especially as discipline on this front has been viewed in positive light by foreign investors. They favour striking a balance between the twin objectives of keeping on the fiscal glide path without squeezing expenditure. A final call will be taken shortly. "We have to look at all pros and cons... You cannot give up on consolidation," a government official said. The government had proposed to lower the fiscal deficit to 3.2% of GDP in FY18 from 3.5% in FY17. The fiscal deficit for the current year is likely to be better than 3.5% but not quite meet the target of 3.2% laid out in the budget for current financial year, it is expected.

The Economic Times - 01.01.2018

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/government-unlikely-to-abandon-fiscal-consolidation-path/articleshow/62320713.cms>

India's export push to face headwinds

India's efforts to increase exports could face several external and domestic challenges in the coming year. "(In 2018), global trade may not perform as strongly as in 2017," Standard Chartered cautioned in a recent note to clients. "Asia, the region most open to trade, cannot count on the same degree of external support that it received in 2017." Among the many factors, the bank listed multiple political event risks — including in the Middle East and Europe ('possible polls in Germany and the Brexit negotiation process') — which could knock the markets, and global growth, off track in 2018. Earlier this month, the Centre announced incentives to the tune of ₹8,450 crore in its mid-term review of Foreign Trade Policy to help

and New Zealand's is down to 68%, the lowest in two years. "In the last 12 months, businesses in India have had to deal with the impact of radical reforms such as demonetisation, country-wide consolidated indirect tax and a new bankruptcy regime," said Vishesh C Chandio, national managing partner, Grant Thornton India.

The Times of India - 27.12.2017

<http://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/#>

China Dec factory growth seen slowing

Growth in China's sprawling manufacturing sector likely slowed only slightly in December despite tough pollution measures that have forced some factories to curb production and a cooling housing market, a Reuters poll showed. The official manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) on Sunday is expected to dip marginally to 51.6 for December from an unexpectedly solid 51.8 in November, according to a median forecast of 30 economists. While reading is seen softening, it would still suggest the 18th straight month of expansion for China's manufacturers, which are posting strongest profits in years thanks to a building boom and resurgent export demand. The 50-mark divides expansion from contraction on a monthly basis. However, a slowdown has started to take hold in the sector in the last few months due to a combination of government measures, from the crackdown on smog in heavily industrialized northern provinces to continued curbs on the housing market which are weighing on property investment.

The Times of India - 30.12.2017

<http://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/#>

Forecast for rise in fuel demand cut to 4.5%

India has cut its annual fuel demand growth estimate to 4.5% for 2017-18 from 5.8%, government data showed, indicating slower economic activity. The new forecast puts fuel demand growth at its slowest pace in three years. India, the world's third biggest oil consumer, is expected to consume 203.4 million tonnes of refined products in the year to March 2018, data posted on the website of the petroleum ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell showed. Introduction of a new tax regime had dented India's economic growth earlier this year. The

increase exports of goods and services, particularly from labour-intensive segments and small firms as well as to boost job creation and value-addition in the country. The announcement came in the backdrop of India's shipments contracting in October — the first after 14 successive months of positive growth — in the impact of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

The Hindu - 27.12.2017

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Indias-export-push-to-face-headwinds/article22288447.ece>

Diesel, Petrol Prices Soar Across Metros

Diesel prices have soared in the country, peaking in Delhi and touching three-year highs in Kolkata and Chennai as crude oil surges on good demand and production cuts led by OPEC and Russia. On Tuesday, state oil companies sold diesel for a record Rs 59.31 per litre in Delhi. Prices in Kolkata and Chennai were Rs.61.97 and Rs. 62.48 per litre, respectively, highest since September 2014, according to price information available on the website of Indian Oil Corp. The price in Mumbai was Rs.62.75 a litre, highest since October 3. Petrol and diesel are not within the ambit of goods and services tax, so their prices vary from state to state according to local levies. After diesel and petrol prices had risen sharply due to hurricanes-induced shutdown of refineries in the United States, the Central government cut excise duties by Rs. 2 per litre for petrol and diesel each from October 4. The current rise in crude oil prices seems to have erased that gain for consumers in several places in the country.

The Economic Times - 27.12.2017

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/diesel-petrol-prices-soar-across-states-as-crude-oil-surges-on-good-demand/articleshow/62258445.cms>

Oil import bill may swell 15% to \$81 billion in FY18

India's crude oil import bill will likely swell 15% to \$81 billion in the current fiscal year as prices soar amid output cuts led by OPEC and Russia. The volume of crude import would remain little changed at 213.5 million metric tonnes in 2017-18 but the value would jump to \$81 billion from \$70 billion in the previous year, according to an estimate by the Oil Ministry. In rupee terms, the value is estimated to go up to Rs 5.2 lakh crore from Rs 4.7 lakh crore. The import projection includes actual data for April-November and estimates for the balance four months of 2017-

country's central bank estimates the economy to grow at 6.7% in this fiscal year, its slowest pace in four years. Gasoline consumption is seen growing at 9.8%, higher than the previous year, the data showed, reflecting a likely 9% rise in passenger vehicle sales. Diesel demand is estimated to recover and grow by 5.8%, compared to a 1.8% rise in the last fiscal year, mainly due to rising construction activity and local manufacturing. India is promoting use of liquefied petroleum gas, used for cooking, to replace kerosene and that would raise sale of the cleaner fuel.

The Times of India - 27.12.2017

<http://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/#>

House okays petroleum & energy institute Bill

Parliament on Wednesday passed a bill that provides for establishing the Indian Institute of Petroleum and Energy (IIPe) in Andhra Pradesh to impart high quality education and conduct advance research in all aspects relating to the conventional hydrocarbons. The bill was passed by voice-vote in the Rajya Sabha today after a two-hour discussion. The Lok Sabha had cleared the bill in August. In his reply, Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said that the government is fulfilling its commitment made during the bifurcation of unified Andhra Pradesh into two states. The minister said that the institute has already started imparting education and IIT Kharagpur has been made mentor organisation. Expressing gratitude toward Andhra Pradesh for providing 200 acres land free of cost to set up this institute, Pradhan told the House that as much as Rs 1,055 crore would be provided for setting up this institute out of which Rs 655 crore will be through budgetary provision and remaining amount will be funded by oil companies.

Millennium Post - 27.12.2017

<http://www.millenniumpost.in/business/house-okays-petroleum-energy-institute-bill-276963>

LPG Price Hike Order Scrapped after Negative Feedback

The government has scrapped its previous directive to state oil companies to raise the price of subsidised cooking gas cylinders by Rs. 4 every month, according to state oil company executives. The government had directed oil companies in May this year to raise prices by Rs. 4 per cylinder every month until the subsidy was eliminated or March 2018 or till further order, whichever was earlier.

18 assuming crude oil at \$55 per barrel and exchange rate of `65 a dollar. Alteration in the price of crude oil by a dollar changes net import bill by Rs 3,296 crore, or \$0.51 billion. One Rupee variation in exchange rate alters import bill by Rs 2,789 crore, or \$0.43 billion. India basket of crude oil averaged \$52.55 a barrel during April-November, leaping from the 2016-17 average of \$47.56 a barrel. In 2015-16, the average price was \$46.17/barrel.

The Economic Times - 28.12.2017

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/oil-import-bill-may-swell-15-to-81-billion-in-fy18/articleshow/62276002.cms>

Cut sales tax or VAT on petrol and diesel: Pradhan to states

Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Thursday called upon states to cut sales tax or VAT on petrol and diesel to provide relief to consumers. "Several states have reduced VAT, we will appeal again... States, which have high VAT component, they should reduce for consumers interest," the minister told reporters here. He further said that the petroleum sector would be brought under the ambit of the Goods and Services tax (GST) as and when the consensus is reached among the states. In October, the government reduced excise duty on petrol to Rs 19.48 per litre from Rs 21.48 per litre and on diesel to Rs 15.33 a litre from Rs 17.33 previously. When asked to comment on the oil companies integration where IOC has shown interest in GAIL, he said that BPCL too has shown its interest. The minister was speaking on the side-lines of a skill India programme, where he felicitated winners of WorldSkills 2017 competition, held in Abu Dhabi. The skill development ministry disbursed reward money worth Rs 50 lakh to the winners and their respective trainers, in various categories.

Zee News - 28.12.2017

<http://zeenews.india.com/economy/cut-sales-tax-or-vat-on-petrol-and-diesel-pradhan-to-states-2070474.html>

Focus on Cargo and Logistics to Boost Exports: Centre to States

Ahead of a key meeting next month, the commerce department has asked states to address issues such as easier movement of cargo and skill development for logistics and also identify specific services to give a fillip to exports from India. Commerce and industry minister Suresh Prabhu is likely to meet industry ministers of about 14 states on January

The order has been withdrawn from October following negative consumer feedback, especially from poor families who had recently become clean fuel consumers. A previous order by the government had allowed state oil companies to raise cooking gas prices by Rs. 2 per cylinder every month between July 2016 and May 2017. The price of a subsidised gas cylinder has increased by Rs. 74.5 per cylinder since July 2016 in Delhi. Other places have also witnessed similar hikes. The variance in cooking gas prices in the last two months has been due to goods and services tax, and not because of any subsidy-related hikes, company executives said.

The Economic Times - 29.12.2017

<http://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/#>

8 and release a report ranking states based on the perception of their logistics and export infrastructure. "We want states to make cogent export strategies and fine-tune them with specific details," said an official aware of the development. Prabhu met the principal secretaries of states a few days ago to take stock of their export strategies. They were asked to address five components while drawing up the strategies – promotion of services, value addition in goods, promoting organic cultivation, logistics and improved standards, certification and trace backs.

The Economic Times - 01.01.2018

<http://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/#>

Policy framework needed for logistics sector: Bibek Debroy

India needs to institute a framework that facilitates convergence and integration of various initiatives taken to bolster the logistics sector, as our logistics costs account for as much as 15-16 per cent of the consignment value, eroding trade competitiveness, according to a paper by Bibek Debroy, chairman Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM), and Kishore Desai, OSD in the EAC-PM. Despite progress made in the past three years, it takes more than 6 days to export and more than 13 days to import and India's logistics costs are higher than those of around 10 per cent (of consignment value) in developed nations. The sector contributes to more than 13 per cent of India's GDP and employs more than 22 million. The report says while the government is taking all the right reform measures, the involvement of multiple departments and agencies is somewhere limiting the efficacy of these reforms. So it suggests a framework that comprises three broad policy actions: converging multi-departmental actions into an integrated logistics policy; creation of an integrated digital platform to facilitate paperless environment across the logistics value chain; setting up a mechanism for periodic diagnostics and benchmarking of sectoral outputs.

The Indian Express - 28.12.2017

<http://indianexpress.com/article/business/economy/policy-framework-needed-for-logistics-sector-bibek-debroy-5001760/>