

(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.)

India emerges as world's 5th largest economy, overtakes UK and France, says report

India emerged as the world's fifth largest economy by overtaking the UK and France in 2019, says a report. A US-based think tank World Population Review in its report said that India is developing into an open-market economy from its previous autarkic policies. "India's economy is the fifth largest in the world with a GDP of USD 2.94 trillion, overtaking the UK and France in 2019 to take the fifth spot," it said. The size of the UK economy is USD 2.83 trillion and that of France is USD 2.71 trillion. The report further said that in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, India's GDP (PPP) is USD 10.51 trillion, exceeding that of Japan and Germany. Due to India's high population, India's GDP per capita is USD 2,170 (for comparison, the US is USD 62,794). India's real GDP growth, however, it said is expected to weaken for the third straight year from 7.5 per cent to 5 per cent. The report observed that India's economic liberalisation began in the early 1990s and included industrial deregulation, reduced control on foreign trade and investment, and privatisation of state-owned enterprises.

The Economic Times - 18.02.2020

<https://www.businesstoday.in/current/economy-politics/india-emerges-as-world-5th-largest-economy-overtakes-uk-and-france-says-report/story/396372.html>

India to switch to world's cleanest petrol, diesel from April 1

India will switch to the world's cleanest petrol and diesel from April 1 as it leapfrogs straight to Euro-VI emission compliant fuels from Euro-IV grades now - a feat achieved in just three years and not seen in any of the large economies around the globe. India will join the select league of nations using petrol and diesel containing just 10 parts per million of sulphur as it looks to cut vehicular emissions that are said to be one of the reasons for the choking pollution in major cities. Sanjiv Singh, Chairman of Indian Oil Corp (IOC) - the firm that controls roughly half of the country's fuel market, said almost all refineries began producing ultra-low sulphur BS-VI (equivalent to Euro-VI grade) petrol and diesel by the end of 2019 and oil

Think tank NCAER sets growth at 4.9% this fiscal

Think-tank National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) on Friday pegged the economic growth for the current fiscal at 4.9 per cent, a tad down from 5 per cent estimated by the National Statistical Office (NSO). For 2020-21, the NCAER expects the Indian economy to improve its growth rate to 5.6 per cent. The Indian economy grew by 6.1 per cent in 2018-19. "GDP growth is forecast to be 4.9 per cent in Q3 (third quarter) 2019-20, and 5.1 per cent in (fourth quarter) 2019-20. The annual growth rates for 2019-20 and 2020-21 are forecast to be 4.9 per cent and 5.6 per cent, respectively," an NCAER statement said. The NSO as well as the RBI have projected the GDP growth rate at 5 per cent for the current fiscal. The NCAER has indicated some improvement in the fourth quarter of the current financial year. Elaborating further it said, "Due to better rainfall in the monsoon as well as the post-monsoon seasons and considerable improvement in the storage of water in major reservoirs of the country, the prospects for growth in the agricultural sector remain bright."

The Telegraph - 22.02.2020

<https://www.telegraphindia.com/business/think-tank-ncaer-sets-growth-at-4-9-this-fiscal/cid/1747407>

India set to import record LNG volumes as spot prices slump on virus impact

India is set to import record volumes of liquefied natural gas (LNG) this month, data shows, taking advantage of the super-chilled fuel's price hitting all-time lows due to the coronavirus outbreak dampening demand in China. The South Asian nation is estimated to import about 2.36 million tonnes in February, ship tracking data from Refinitiv Eikon showed. That would exceed India's LNG imports in October of about 2.3 million tonnes, the previous highest monthly total. The country's annual LNG imports is expected to rise by 10 per cent-15 per cent this year, said Poorna Rajendran of consultancy firm FGE. "The low spot prices are creating some downstream demand especially

companies have now undertaken the tedious task of replacing every drop of fuel in the country with the new one. "We are absolutely on track for supplying BS-VI fuel from April 1. Almost all refineries have begun supplying BS-VI fuel and the same has reached storage depots across the country," he said.

The Economic Times - 19.02.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/india-to-switch-to-worlds-cleanest-petrol-diesel-from-april-1/74206835>

Global LNG demand expected to double by 2040 to 700 mln tonnes: Shell

Global demand for liquefied natural gas (LNG) is expected to double to 700 million tonnes by 2040, with gas continuing to play a key role in a lower-carbon energy system, Royal Dutch Shell's annual market outlook said on Thursday. Global LNG demand grew by 12.5 per cent to 359 million tonnes last year. Asia is expected to remain the dominant region in the decades to come, with South and South-East Asia generating more than half of the increased demand, the report said. "The global LNG market continued to evolve in 2019, with demand increasing for LNG and natural gas in power and non-power sectors," Maarten Wetselaar, integrated gas and new energies director at Shell, said. "Record supply investments will meet people's growing need for the most flexible and cleanest-burning fossil fuel." Natural gas emits between 45 per cent and 55 per cent fewer greenhouse gas emissions and less than one-tenth of the air pollutants of coal when used to generate electricity. Last year, a record 40 million tonnes of additional supply became available to the market and there was record investment in liquefaction capacity of 71 million tonnes.

The Economic Times - 20.02.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/global-lng-demand-expected-to-double-by-2040-to-700-mln-tonnes-shell/74222079>

India refiners getting rare oil cheap as China demand slows

Refiners in India, the world's third-biggest oil importers, are spoilt for choice to buy new and rare crude grades amid ample supplies after the spread of the coronavirus curtailed crude processing and demand from China. Chinese refiners have slashed output by at least 1.5 million barrels a day in February after the virus outbreak hit China's fuel demand and its crude and fuel inventories swelled up. However, some Chinese refiners are snapping up cheap crude supplies. "Opportunity for Indian markets is more in the

from the city-gas sector," a source familiar with LNG imports into India told Reuters. India regasifies LNG and uses it primarily in the city-gas distribution, fertilizer, power and industrial sectors.

The Economic Times - 21.02.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/india-set-to-import-record-lng-volumes-as-spot-prices-slump-on-virus-impact/74225015>

Natural gas prices in India likely to be cut by steep 25 per cent from April

Natural gas prices in India are likely to be cut by a steep 25 per cent beginning April, in line with the slump in global rates, sources said. The price of most of the natural gas produced by state-owned ONGC and Oil India Ltd, which account for the bulk of India's existing gas output, is likely to be cut to around USD 2.5 per million British thermal unit for the six-month period beginning April 1, from USD 3.23 as of now. This will be the second reduction in six months and will reduce rates to the lowest in two-and-half-years. Sources said the price of gas produced from difficult fields too is likely to be cut to USD 5.50 from USD 8.43 per mmBtu now. Prices of natural gas, which is used to produce fertiliser and generate electricity and is also converted into CNG for use in automobiles as fuel and cooking gas for households, are set every six months -- on April 1 and October 1 each year. The rates, besides dictating the price of urea, electricity and CNG, also decide the revenue of gas producers such as Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC).

The Economic Times - 23.02.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/natural-gas-prices-in-india-likely-to-be-cut-by-steep-25-per-cent-from-april/74264844>

BPCL sale: Govt hopeful of completing stake sale in first half of 2020-21

The disinvestment department is hopeful of completing the sale of government stake in state refiner BPCL by the first half of next fiscal and is working towards that timeline where prospective bidders would be given enough time for due diligence. Officials say as of now there is no major hindrance to that timeline and once the 'Alternative Mechanism' comprising Cabinet ministers from Finance, Road Transport and the administrative ministry under which the PSU comes (oil ministry) approves it, the

context of what is happening in China and in recent times we received crudes which are appearing to be attractive as compared to their value earlier," said R. Ramachandran, head of refineries at Bharat Petroleum Corp.

The Economic Times - 24.02.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/india-refiners-getting-rare-oil-cheap-as-china-demand-slows/74278108>

BPCL management hopes NRL disinvestment happens concurrently

Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL), the country's second-largest fuel retailer, hopes the disinvestment of Government of India's share in BPCL and Numaligarh Refinery (NRL) happen concurrently, senior company executives told analysts during a call. They said the company has already extended the opportunity of right of first refusal to the Assam government for the proposed stake sale of BPCL's 61.65 per cent stake in NRL and expects the Expression of Interest (EoI) for BPCL's stake sale to be floated before the end of the current month. "The board has decided to give an opportunity to the government of Assam first as they have the right of first refusal. The letter has already gone and depending on the response we will take action to ensure that the sale is made to a government company in the oil sector as per the CCEA decision," an executive said. He added the same advisors appointed for BPCL stake sale will be conducting the evaluation including both the asset valuer and the transaction advisor and the process followed will be as guided by DIPAM guidelines.

The Economic Times - 19.02.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/bpcl-management-hopes-nrl-disinvestment-happens-concurrently/74205437>

Deal likely for more US oil, gas to trim trade gap

Though the much-anticipated trade deal with the US is unlikely to be concluded during the February 24-25 visit of President Donald Trump, India is expected to agree to buy additional oil and gas from the US to narrow the trade deficit. US trade deficit with India declined to \$17 billion in 2018-19 from \$22 billion in 2016-17 as India started importing oil and gas from America in 2017. In 2018-19, India's crude oil import from the US stood at \$3.6 billion and LNG import at \$527.14 million. In April-December 2019, India imported crude oil and LNG worth \$3.7 billion and \$576.28 million, respectively, from the US, making it the sixth largest supplier of crude oil and the fifth

Performance Information Memorandum and Expression of Interest will be out. As of now the Cabinet approval is only for keeping Assam-based Numaligarh Refinery Ltd out of the divestment.

The Economic Times - 14.02.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/bpcl-sale-govt-hopeful-of-completing-stake-sale-in-first-half-of-2020-21/74240701>

Regulator approves Total's stake buy in Adani gas

The downstream regulator has approved French energy giant Total's deal to buy stake in Adani Gas, lifting its shares 13% as investors cheered the end of uncertainty over the company's city gas licences since November, when the same authority questioned the transaction and issued a show-cause notice. The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) had objected to restructuring of Adani Gas and the agreed sale of stake in it to Total because there are restrictions on such deals in the first five years after a licence is granted. However, after hearing the Gautam Adani-led company's plea and keeping in mind "the larger public interest", it "condoned" the delay in seeking its clearance and approved both transactions on Wednesday. PNGRB cited the importance of supplying natural gas to various cities where Adani Gas has a licence, and the value of having a reputed foreign company participate in city gas ventures in India. Adani Gas is one of India's biggest city gas licence holders, with permits to operate in 19 areas on its own and another 19 jointly with Indian Oil.

The Economic Times - 21.02.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/regulator-approves-totals-stake-buy-in-adani-gas/74237060>

India in unique position of sourcing energy from US, Russian oil giants

When Petronet consummates the deal for investing in the American company Tellurian's LNG project on the sidelines of US President Donald Trump's visit on Tuesday, India will earn the unique distinction of being an investor in both geopolitical rivals Russia and the US. The continuing purchase of crude from the US is due to the need to lower India's bilateral trade surplus. The expansion of oil investments in Russia suggests India's urgency to capitalise on the opening up of its hitherto closed Far East and Arctic Circle. But energy investments in both countries not only convey proximity to the two foremost military powers, they also signals

largest supplier of LNG to India. Last September, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met the brass of US oil companies in Houston for supply of crude oil and gas at discounted prices. Oil purchases from the US, which started in 2017-18, have already crossed about 6 million tonnes a year. Purchasing hydrocarbon from the US may not be the cheapest option but will help trim the trade imbalance between the two, which has been in India's favour, according to persons familiar with the issue.

The Economic Times - 19.02.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/deal-likely-for-more-us-oil-gas-to-trim-trade-gap/74201108>

Opportunity to widen global market share: Steel minister

Union steel minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Monday urged India's domestic steelmakers to ramp up their production in order to target a larger global market, especially in the context of the ongoing coronavirus outbreak. India is currently the second largest steel producer in the world with an annual output of over 106 million tonne (MT), but it trails a long way behind China which leads the market accounting for 928.3 MT of the alloy in 2018. "When some markets in the globe face pressure, its positive reflection is felt in some other markets. This is an automatic law. India occupies number two slot in steel production," Pradhan pointed out, adding that the government was discussing with stakeholders on how to derive benefits from capital goods to finished products. The global steel industry will struggle with the impact of the outbreak for the next two to three years, he added while speaking on the sidelines of a conference on steel use in railways and defence. The minister also said that the government will be putting in place a strategy paper for developing a production hub for at least 10 MT of special steel at a cost of Rs 50,000 crore by the end of 2019-20.

The New Indian Express - 18.02.2020

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/business/2020/feb/18/opportunity-to-widen-global-market-share-oil-minister-2104969.html>

Government goes after 'intermediaries' to cut logistics costs for EXIM trade

Intermediaries in the supply chain are staring at a bleak future with the government drafting new rules seeking to regulate their pricing in a bid to cut logistics costs for exporters and importers. A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) targeting the non-vessel owning common carriers (NVOCCs), freight forwarders and consolidators is being finalised. The SOP seeks to standardise the

a conscious decision to reduce dependence on oil from the volatile Middle-East where India reckons the tensions will continue to vitiate economic arrangements. Though the first oil deal was discussed between Barack Obama and Manmohan Singh, it is Trump and Modi who have added substantial muscle to energy ties. Senior officials reckon that India has already bought \$7 billion of oil from the US but Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette is aiming higher in order to achieve parity with Russia.

The Tribune - 23.02.2020

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/india-in-unique-position-of-sourcing-energy-from-us-russian-oil-giants-46169>

Dedicated freight corridor to bring down charges by 50 per cent

Dedicated freight corridor is expected to bring down the freight charges by 50 per cent when it will become operational in 2021, a top DFCCIL official has said. Dedicated freight corridor project is part of the Golden Quadrilateral connecting New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata. The haulage charges on Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Ltd network will be 50 per cent lower compared to the freight tariff in the Indian Railways (IRs), DFCCIL MD Anurag Sachan told media during a two-day construction site visit of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) here. "We will be running all the trains at 100 kilometres per hour (kmph) on a fully automated signal system, so the haulage charges compared to the IRs will be very less. It will be 50 per cent. We will be running 120 trains each way a day with total carrying capacity of 13,000 tonne. So, we will not let this capacity to be underutilised," Sachan said. The corporation is in talks with the Ministry of Railways that some part of lower freight charges should be passed on to the customers, he said.

The Economic Times - 24.02.2020

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/dedicated-freight-corridor-to-bring-down-charges-by-50-per-cent/articleshow/74264991.cms>

Domestic air passenger traffic increased by 2.2% in January: DGCA

The domestic air passenger traffic in January increased by 2.2 per cent to 1.27 crore compared to the same month in 2019, according to data released by aviation regulator DGCA on Monday. In comparison, the growth in domestic traffic in December 2019 was 2.56 per cent compared to December 2018. The passenger load factors of Air India, SpiceJet,

plethora of local charges levied by these intermediaries into 10-12 heads and to levy these charges as per cost without adding any margins/profits. The intermediaries will be allowed to earn profit only on the freight head. There is also a thinking to check intermediaries from earning margins/money even on the freight component, a government official briefed on the plan said. To add to the woes, the government is also pushing the Association of Multimodal Transport Operators of India (AMTOI) to undertake an internal audit of all its members for the last three years and to refund the local charges collected from customers.

The Hindu Business Line - 23.02.2020

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/government-goes-after-intermediaries-to-cut-logistics-costs-for-exim-trade/article30894596.ece>

Sravan takes charges as Indian Oil State Head for Telangana, AP

R Shravan S Rao took charge as Indian Oil Corporation executive director and State head for Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. He took charge from Rahul Bharadwaj. Earlier, he served as IOC Secretariat Director (Marketing) in Mumbai. Hyderabad-based Shravan Rao is a chemical engineer from Osmania University.

Telangana Today - 19.02.2020

<https://telanganatoday.com/telangana-new-state-head-for-ioc/amp>

GoAir, IndiGo, AirAsia India declined in January 2020 as compared to December last year, as per the DGCA data. The passenger load factor measures the seat capacity utilisation of the airline. DGCA stated in its report, "The passenger load factor in the month of January 2020 has shown decreasing trend compared to previous month due to end of tourist season." With 75.7 per cent, AirAsia India was number one in on-time performance (OTP) measured at four metro cities -- Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad and Mumbai. IndiGo at 74 per cent and Vistara at 70.2 per cent were number two and number three respectively on OTP performance at these four cities.

Mint - 18.02.2020

<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/domestic-air-passenger-traffic-increased-by-2-2-in-january-dgca-11581942321115.html>

Partha Ghosh is new executive director of Haldia Refinery

Partha Ghosh took over charge as the new executive director and refinery head of Indian Oil's oldest coastal refinery at Haldia. He is also a board member of Indian Oil Petronas Pvt Ltd — a joint venture of Indian Oil and Petroliaam Nasional Berhad (Petronas), an oil major of the Malaysian government). Ghosh, who is a chemical engineer also holds an MBA degree in marketing and is also an expert of supply chain management. He joined erstwhile Bongaigaon Refinery and Petrochemical Ltd in 1984 as a technical engineer and moved to Indian Oil refineries' headquarter later in 2009. He has over 30 years of experience in Petroleum Refineries.

The New Indian Express - 21.02.2020

<https://www.pressreader.com/india/the-new-indian-express/20200221/282428466210256>