

(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.)

Balmer Lawrie in News

How industry status could provide impetus to West Bengal's Logistics Ecosystem

Read the story on Logistics Insider on page 47 by following the link below.

<https://logisticsinsider.in/LogisticsInsiderMagazineOctoberIssue.html>

GDP may Fall by Only 6-7% in Q2

Motilal Oswal Financial Services expects India's gross domestic product (GDP) to contract 6-7% in the second quarter ended September, lower than the 11% fall expected by the wider market. In its 'Ecoscope' report on Monday, Motilal said economic indicators show that the fall will be lower than what is expected. "We continue to believe that the fall could be lower at 6-7% vis-à-vis 23.9% YoY contraction in 1QFY21. Some indicators for Sep'20 such as e-way registrations, power generation, mobility indices and auto sales also suggest that economic activity has continued to pick up. An important factor to ponder over now is whether economic activity will start growing from Oct-Nov'20 and continue after the festive season. Since the Covid-19 pandemic is still not contained in India and partial lockdowns continue, the progress needs to be closely watched," Motilal said. According to the recent Bloomberg consensus, the market expects another double-digit decline (of 11%) in India's real GDP growth in the second quarter after a 23.9% contraction in the first quarter ended June 2020.

The Economic Times - 06.10.2020

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2020%2F10%2F06&entity=Ar00507&sk=CBF02CC&mode=text>

India's FY21 GDP to shrink by a sharper 9.6%, says WB

India's GDP is forecast to plunge by 9.6% in 2020-21, reflecting the impact of the national lockdown and the income shock experienced by households and small urban service firms, the World Bank said in its latest assessment. This is sharply lower than

RBI holds rates, says GDP may contract 9.5% in FY21

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das presented the most optimistic picture of the economy since the outbreak of the pandemic despite forecasting a contraction this fiscal, and launched a quantitative easing exercise to soften bond yields amid potentially transient inflation. As expected, rates were kept unchanged in the latest monetary policy review, balancing the need to shore up the economy against inflation. The 10-year yield dropped seven basis points as the bond market reacted positively to the governor's signal for lower yields. The central bank expects the economy to shrink 9.5% in the current fiscal year with a downside risk, and inflation to moderate to 4.3% in the first quarter of the next fiscal year. From the piecemeal approach of Operation Twist to cool bond yields, the RBI said it would go for outright purchase of government securities and doubled the amount of bonds it will buy to ₹20,000 crore at a time. It's extending bond purchases to those of state governments for the first time as they have to pay steep borrowing costs to make up for falling revenue, owing to the Covid crisis.

The Economic Times - 10.10.2020

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2020%2F10%2F10&entity=Ar00113&sk=F502FD93&mode=text>

GDP to shrink 9.5%, 'risks tilted to downside'

The Monetary Policy Committee of the RBI on Friday shed its reticence over making a precise estimate of the country's real GDP for FY21 by predicting a 9.5% contraction in the pandemic-ravaged year, with "risks tilted to the

the 3.2% contraction forecast in June by the multilateral agency and indicates the pain that the pandemic has inflicted on Asia's third largest economy as the lockdown stalled activity and shuttered businesses. Growth is forecast to return to 5.4% in FY22, assuming Covid-related restrictions are completely lifted by 2022, but mostly reflecting base effects, said the report on South Asia unveiled by the bank on Thursday. The latest forecast from the World Bank is in line with the assessment of other economists, multilateral agencies and investment banks, which have estimated the economy to shrink between 5% to 15% in the current fiscal year due to the impact of the strict lockdown imposed to ward off the spread of the pandemic. India's GDP contracted 23.4% in the June quarter, the sharpest fall among global economies.

The Economic Time - 09.10.2020

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=TOIKM%2F2020%2F10%2F09&entity=Ar01506&sk=2560BEC3&mode=text>

Combined FY21 fiscal deficit of Centre, states may reach 14%: Rangarajan

The combined fiscal deficit of states and the centre during the current year may go up to 14 per cent against the mandated level of six per cent, former Reserve Bank Governor C Rangarajan said on Thursday. Speaking at a programme organised by the ICAFI Business School here, the former Chairman of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister said banks should neither be timid nor adventurous while lending as the loans of today should not become NPAs of tomorrow. "So therefore, we are essentially talking about 13.8 per cent or 14 per cent of the GDP (gross domestic product) as the overall fiscal deficit of the states and the Centre. It is obvious this is twice the mandated level. The mandated level for both the Centre and state is 6 per cent of the GDP. It is twice or even more than twice of the estimated figure," he said. According to him, the fiscal deficit may further go if the government decides to go in for additional borrowings to meet GST compensation part.

Business Standard - 10.10.2020

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/combined-fy21-fiscal-deficit-of-centre-states-may-reach-14-rangarajan-120100800611_1.html

Business Revival Sustained in Oct: Nomura

downside". Among prominent global agencies, only S&P (-9%) has forecast a narrower contraction for the Indian economy. The central bank, however, has less certitude to offer on its retail inflation estimate for now. The headline inflation had remained above the MPC's tolerance band of 4 (+/-2)% for eight out of the past nine months, but eased marginally to 6.69% y-o-y in August, against 6.73% in July. The MPC would just say the inflation "will remain elevated in the September print, but ease gradually towards the target over Q3 and Q4". Of course, the committee chose "to look through the current inflation hump as transient and address the more urgent need to revive growth". Short of cutting the interest rates, the RBI unveiled a clutch of steps to spur growth, including boosting of liquidity support for financial markets and measures to speed up credit flows to specific sectors like SMEs and high net worth consumers and revive exports.

The Financial Express - 10.10.2020

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/gdp-to-shrink-9-5-risks-tilted-to-downside/2102183/>

Global economy facing long climb to recover: IMF head Kristalina Georgieva

The head of the International Monetary Fund says that the global economy has started on a long climb to stronger growth with prospects looking a little better than four months ago. IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said Tuesday that global economic activity suffered an unprecedented fall in the spring when 85 per cent of the global economy was in lockdown for several weeks. The situation currently is less dire with many countries experiencing a better-than-expected rebound in recent weeks. We continue to project a partial and uneven recovery in 2021, Georgieva said in a speech previewing next week's fall meetings of the 189-nation IMF and its sister lending agency the World Bank where the IMF will release its updated economic outlook. While there has been some improvement, downside risks remain high, Georgieva said in a video-conference speech to the London School of Economics.

Business Standard - 07.10.2020

https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/global-economy-facing-long-climb-to-recover-imf-head-kristalina-georgieva-120100601231_1.html

CPSEs keep normal capex pace in Covid-19 times, but daunting task ahead

In an indication that business resumption have sustained at the beginning of the third quarter, the Nomura India Business Resumption Index (NIBRI) picked up to 82.1 for the week ended October 4 as against 81.6 in the previous week. The financial services company on Monday said that the government's decision to ease lockdown restrictions from October 15 should further support business activity. Ahead of the festive season, India has allowed cinemas, theatres, multiplexes, Business to Business Exhibitions and entertainment parks, among others to reopen but with conditions, after remaining closed for nearly seven months. However, it noted that the unemployment rate escalated sharply to 8% from 5.8% in the previous week led by the rural sector. "A moderation in daily new infection cases and the government's decision to ease lockdown restrictions from October 15 should further support activity in October," Nomura said but cautioned that with the festive season and the Bihar elections approaching, the risk of virus cases resurging remains a risk to sequential growth momentum.

The Economic Times - 06.10.2020

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2020%2F10%2F06&entity=Ar00705&sk=64180706&mode=text>

Govt to leverage public offers, buybacks for divestment plan

Encouraged by the response to the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders IPO, the government will prioritise public offers — at an "attractive price" — and buybacks as it seeks to mop up resources from disinvestment during the second half of the fiscal. While suspending the use of exchange-traded funds (ETFs) for disinvestment, sources said the government will also reduce the reliance on public sector banks and financial institutions such as Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) as an attractive price will not just generate investor appetite but also leave room for an upside at the time of listing. "Post-listing gains also show that we care for investors. In the past, there have been instances where public sector stocks have lost value after listing. We are engaging with investors and bankers on this issue," said a senior government official. RailTel IPO, along with follow-on issues of IRCTC, Kudremukh Iron Ore Company and TCIL, are among those in the pipeline that will be pursued by the department of investment and public asset management (Dipam). Sources said that the growing view in the government was that ETFs have a serious impact on stock prices and have resulted in value erosion in case of future IPOs and follow-on issues.

The Times of India - 12.10.2020

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=TOIKM%2>

Large central public-sector entities — companies and undertakings — achieved 30% of their capital expenditure (capex) target for FY21 in the first half of the financial year, by spending almost Rs 1.5 lakh crore, according to official sources. This is a creditable achievement, as it reflects that these companies have managed to hold on to the capex pace shown in recent years in the first half, despite the Covid-19 shock. In the last few years, CPSE capex has remained robust; the ratio of capex deployment between the first and second halves of a financial year has been 3:7. Of course, the Centre is putting extra pressure on these entities to speed up capital investments in the current year as it hopes that the slippages on the other investors, including the central and state governments will be offset to a certain extent by the CPSEs/undertakings. The Union finance ministry has already told CPSEs/undertakings that they must achieve 150% of the initial capex target of Rs 4.9 lakh crore in FY21.

The Financial Express - 12.10.2020

<https://www.financialexpress.com/market/cps-es-keep-normal-capex-pace-in-covid-19-times-but-daunting-task-ahead/2103226/>

ONGC to look at HPCL, MRPL merger post-June 2021

State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) is likely to look at merging its two oil refining subsidiaries, Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL) and Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL), post-June 2021, its chairman Shashi Shanker said on Friday. ONGC, India's biggest oil and gas producer, in 2018 completed the acquisition of HPCL for Rs 36,915 crore. After this takeover, it has two refining subsidiaries -- HPCL and MRPL. At a news conference post company's annual general meeting, Shanker said HPCL sells more fuel than it actually produces at its refineries. On the other hand, MRPL is a pure oil refining company. "There are a lot of synergies in the merger of MRPL with HPCL. For one, it will balance the fuel marketed by HPCL with the refining capacity, eliminating the need to buy fuel from other companies," he said. But before this merger happens, ONGC is looking at merging ONGC Mangalore Petrochemicals Ltd (OMPL) with MRPL, he said. MRPL holds 51 per cent stake in OMPL, while ONGC has 48.9 per cent. MRPL is to acquire ONGC's shareholding in the company.

The Economic Times - 09.10.2020

<https://energy.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/ongc-to-look-at-hpcl-mrpl-merger-post-june-2021/78575935>

[F2020%2F10%2F12&entity=Ar01300&sk=4EAA4A22&mode=text](https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/opec-in-major-shift-says-oil-demand-to-plateau-in-late-2030s/78565183)

OPEC, in major shift, says oil demand to plateau in late 2030s

World oil demand will plateau in the late 2030s and could by then have begun to decline, OPEC said on Thursday, in a major shift for the producer group that reflects the lasting impact of the coronavirus crisis on the economy and consumer habits. The prediction from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, made in its 2020 World Oil Outlook, comes amid a growing number of other forecasts that the pandemic may prove the tipping point for peak oil demand. Oil use will rise to 107.2 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2030 from 90.7 million bpd in 2020, OPEC said, 1.1 million bpd below its 2030 forecast last year and over 10 million bpd below its 2007 prediction of 2030 demand. "Global oil demand will grow at relatively healthy rates during the first part of the forecast period before demand plateaus during the second half," said the report, which looks at the 2019-2045 timespan. "Future demand will likely remain persistently below past projections due to the lingering effects of the COVID-19-related shutdowns and their impact on the global economy and consumer behaviour."

The Economic Times - 09.10.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/opec-in-major-shift-says-oil-demand-to-plateau-in-late-2030s/78565183>

ONGC sees Rs 6,000-7,000 crore loss on gas business

India's top oil and gas producer ONGC on Friday said it is losing Rs 6,000-7,000 crore on natural gas business after the government-mandated rates for the fuel dropped to a decade low. The government-mandated rates are way below the cost of production of USD 3.5-3.7 per million British thermal unit, Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) Director (Finance) Subhash Kumar said. Every dollar reduction in gas price leads to a revenue loss of about Rs 5,200 crore and a Rs 3,500 crore on profit. "Our losses will be in the order of Rs 6,000-7,000 crore in current fiscal," he said. ONGC has been incurring losses on the 65 million standard cubic meters per day of gas it produces from domestic fields after the government in November 2014 introduced a new gas pricing formula that had "inherent limitations" as it was based on pricing hubs of gas surplus countries such as the US, Canada, and Russia. The price, according to this formula, is revised twice a

India's September fuel demand posts first monthly gain since June

India's fuel demand in September rose for the first time since June as easing coronavirus restrictions supported economic activity and travel, but consumption remained weaker than a year earlier, government data showed on Friday. Consumption of refined fuels, a proxy for oil demand, rose 7.2% in September from the prior month to 15.47 million tonnes, the first monthly increase since June when demand rose to 16.09 million tonnes. However, demand fell 4.4% from the same period a year earlier, posting its seventh consecutive year-on-year slide, data from the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC) of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas showed. India's Sept fuel sales rise for the first time since June. India's daily number of coronavirus infections has slowed since hitting a single-day high of 97,894 new cases on Sept. 17, a sign that infections were peaking for now. The country's factory activity also expanded at its fastest pace in more than eight years in September, even as layoffs continued. Demand in August was the weakest since April, hurt by a throttling of economic activity and transport due to restrictions.

Business Standard - 11.10.2020

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-s-september-fuel-demand-posts-first-monthly-gain-since-june-120101000093_1.html

Government allows complete marketing freedom for natural gas

The government on Wednesday allowed complete marketing freedom for natural gas produced from non-regulated fields, including sale to affiliate companies. The Union Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved a standard e-bidding procedure to discover price of gas. While producers will continue to be barred from participating in such auctions, affiliates would be allowed to bid, Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan told reporters here. However, the existing pricing mechanism for gas produced by state-owned ONGC and Oil India Ltd from fields given to them on a nomination basis would continue. The marketing reform would help add 40 metric million standard cubic metres per day (mmscmd) of production to the existing output of 84 mmscmd, he said.

The Economic Times - 07.10.2020

year and the rate for the period beginning October 1 has been cut by 25 per cent to USD 1.79 per mmBtu.

The Financial Express - 10.10.2020

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/ongc-sees-rs-6000-7000-crore-loss-on-gas-business/2101978/>

Standard e-bidding route for gas credit positive : Moody's

India's decision to adopt a standard price discovery mechanism for natural gas through a e-bidding platform has been welcomed by investors across the globe as a positive reform initiative that would encourage investment and propel growth. Rating agency Moody's has also put the new dispensation a credit positive move for India's oil and gas sector that will help to boost production in one the largest energy consuming nation. "The reform is credit positive for India's oil & gas sector, as it allows affiliates of gas producing companies to offtake gas and overall should help boost production," said Vikas Halan, Associate Managing Director, Corporate Finance Group, Moody's Investors Service. "However, we do not expect the pricing reform to provide immediate relief to domestic gas producers, as large players such as ONGC and OIL produce most gas on nomination blocks which are for now exempt from the revised policy," he added. The cabinet on Wednesday approved a standard e-bidding procedure for market based price discovery of gas across various contractual regimes. This will allow producers to choose bidding platform for price discovery under a transparent mechanism.

The Economic Times - 08.10.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/standard-e-bidding-route-for-gas-credit-positive-moodys/78552679>

Cess reduction to benefit upstream oil and gas companies: India Ratings

Ratings agency India Ratings and Research has opined that a cess reduction on oil and gas sector is likely to benefit upstream firms such as Oil and Natural Gas Corporation and Oil India. "Together, these developments (likely cess reduction and change in the gas price regime), if implemented, will be a big positive for their cash flows from operations; however, this may not necessarily translate to higher free cash flows as the dividend payouts could increase," the agency said in a statement. "These discussions come at the back of the current lower crude and gas price environment, continued higher taxation (cess,

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/government-allows-complete-marketing-freedom-for-natural-gas/articleshow/78534747.cms?from=mdr>

Libya to resume oil production at largest field amid talks

Libya's national oil company announced Sunday it is resuming production at the country's largest oil field as rival officials from eastern and western Libya began peace talks, part of preliminary negotiations ahead of a UN-brokered dialogue set to take place next month. The National Oil Corporation said it has lifted the force majeure that was imposed at the southwestern Sharara oil field after it reached "an honor agreement" with forces loyal to military commander Khalifa Hifter to end "all obstructions" at the field. The corporation's announcement comes three weeks after Hifter, who was behind a year-long military attempt to capture the capital, Tripoli, announced an end to a blockade of the nation's vital oil fields. The September 18 breakthrough was the result of a so-called "Libyan-Libyan dialogue" led by Ahmed Matiq, the rival Tripoli government's deputy prime minister, seeking to create a new mechanism to distribute the country's petrodollars more equitably. Libya's prized, light crude has long featured in the North African country's civil war with rival militias and foreign powers jostling for control of Africa's largest oil reserves.

The Economic Times - 12.10.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/libya-to-resume-oil-production-at-largest-field-amid-talks/78613829>

India to overtake China as world's largest LPG residential market by 2030

India is expected to overtake China as the world's largest cooking gas LPG residential sector market by 2030, Wood Mackenzie said on Tuesday. "Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) demand in the residential sector will continue to see sustainable growth at a cumulative annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3.3 per cent, reaching 34 million tonnes (MT) in 2030 as households' dependence on solid biomass diminishes in the long run supported by rising average household incomes and urban population," it said in a report. Driven by environmental and health concerns, the government has also been

royalty) and dividend distribution by these companies, which results in lower risk capital available with them, thus lowering the potential exploration, hampering increase in the output of domestic crude and natural gas." According to the agency, the cess is calculated as a per cent of the crude price realised by the upstream companies on their nominated blocks.

The Economic Times - 11.10.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/cess-reduction-to-benefit-upstream-oil-and-gas-companies-india-ratings/78603150>

Govt shelves a proposed revival scheme for the country's 24,000 MW gas-based projects

The government has shelved a proposed revival scheme for the country's 24,000 MW gas-based projects due to low global gas prices and unwillingness of states to forego taxes, but will allow the stressed plants to put in pooled bids with renewable energy projects. Power and renewable energy minister R K Singh told ET that the government will allow all conventional sources in the next tender to support renewable plants supply round-the-clock electricity. "One bid for 5,000 MW round-the-clock supply is out where 49% is coal-based and 51% is renewable energy. We had thought of allowing gas-fired power plants in this, but it was pointed out that we import natural gas. This time, we have not done it, but in the next bid, we may open it up. We can make it source-neutral," he said. Sources said the power ministry has decided to shelve an earlier plan to procure power from gas-based plants to revive them. "I don't feel it is reasonable to ask states to accept renewable energy, which is intermittent, because in that case, discoms have to spend twice the amount.

The Economic Times - 09.10.2020

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/revival-scheme-for-gas-projects-shelved/articleshow/78561542.cms?from=mdr>

Air Passenger Traffic Sees 39% Sequential Growth in Sept: Ica

Recovery in domestic air passenger traffic continued in September with a sequential growth about 37-39% in passenger volume in the previous month over August, ratings agency Ica said on Monday. The passenger volumes, however, plunged around 60% in September over the same month year-ago, it said in a release.

implementing schemes to help lower-income families cope with the cost of switching from dirtier biomass to LPG. The Direct Benefit Transfer of LPG (DBTL) gives out subsidies to the vulnerable population, while the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) provides families living below the poverty line access to free LPG stoves. Wood Mackenzie research analyst Qiaoling Chen said: "Although nationwide LPG coverage has reached 98 per cent, up 42 per cent from 2014, usage is still low.

The Economic Times - 06.10.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/india-to-overtake-china-as-worlds-largest-lpg-residential-market-by-2030/78513089>

Oil ministry wants PSUs to build 50,000 houses for renting to migrant workers

The petroleum ministry has asked oil PSUs such as Indian Oil Corp (IOC) to build 50,000 houses for renting to migrant workers as part of government plan to develop affordable rental housing after millions of labourers fled cities for villages amidst coronavirus lockdown. The ministry wants IOC and other public sector undertakings (PSUs) under its administrative control such as Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL), Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL), GAIL India Ltd and Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) to build the housing units on the land they have, three officials who attended a meeting on the subject said. The meeting, they said, was chaired by Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan who asked the PSUs to come up with plans to build the housing units at the earliest. The ministry had on October 5 tweeted about the meeting saying Pradhan "held a meeting with officials of MoPNG and PSUs to review the efforts made by PSUs in providing houses on rent to migrants and urban poor working on oil & gas projects under the affordable rental housing scheme of @MoHUA_India."

The Economic Times - 12.10.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/oil-ministry-wants-psus-to-build-50000-houses-for-renting-to-migrant-workers/78603218>

DGCA issues detailed ticket refund guidelines after Supreme Court verdict

Aviation regulator DGCA issued detailed guidelines on Wednesday regarding a refund of the ticket price for the flights cancelled amid the coronavirus-triggered lockdown. The guidelines came six days after the Supreme Court directed that a full and immediate refund should be given to passengers for the air tickets cancelled

Besides, the domestic carriers also increased capacity deployment significantly to around 46% in September as compared to 33% in the month ago, according to Icra. The Civil Aviation Ministry in June had permitted increasing the capacity to 45% with effect from June 27 from a maximum of one-third at the time of resumption of domestic flights from May 25, which was further scaled up to 60% from September 2. This apart, the ministry in late August announced other relaxations also such as allowing airlines to provide meals on board, serve pre-packed snacks/meals/ pre-packaged beverages, and allowing in-flight entertainment, however with certain riders. "The number of flights departing has also gradually increased from 416 on Day 1 (May 25) to 1,488 on Day 128 (September 28,)," said Kinjal Shah, Vice President, Icra.

The Economic Times - 06.10.2020

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2020%2F10%2F06&entity=Ar00410&sk=41B2A7D9&mode=text>

Govt Likely to Permit 75% of Flights Ahead of Festivals

With demand for flying set to rise during the upcoming festive season, the government is likely to increase the number of flights allowed to up to 75% of pre-Covid-19 levels, aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri said. "The increase in the number of passengers taking domestic flights is encouraging and the need is to further increase the number of flights allowed. We are currently in discussions and may increase it to up to 75% in a week to ten days," Puri told reporters on Thursday. Airlines, which were grounded due to the lockdown during April and May, restarted operations from May 25. The carriers were initially allowed to operate 33% of their pre-Covid-19 flights and this was later increased to 45% and then to 60% in first week of September. Domestic airlines operated about 2,500 flights a day before the pandemic and currently have permission to operate 1,500 flights daily. Airline executives said September was one of the best months post-Covid-19 and flight loads – the percentage of seats filled per flight – across routes have increased. October, which started with a long weekend on account of Gandhi Jayanti, is also looking good for airlines.

The Economic Times - 09.10.2020

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2020%2F10%2F09&entity=Ar00500&sk=560B3648&mode=text>

Centre to introduce new logistics policy

between March 25 and May 24. No domestic passenger flights operated in the country in this period. The top court had, on October 1, also passed directions about the refund and credit shell formation for the bookings and cancellations done during the other time periods around the lockdown. Based on the court order, the DGCA categorised passengers in three categories -- those who booked tickets between March 25 and May 24 for travelling within the same period, those who booked tickets prior to March 25 but the travel period was till May 24, those who booked tickets anytime but for a journey post May 24.

Business Standard - 07.10.2020

https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/dgca-issues-detailed-ticket-refund-guidelines-after-supreme-court-verdict-120100701579_1.html

Exporters seek freight rate relief

Exporters have flagged concerns over the spike in shipping freight rates by about 40 per cent to destinations in the US and Europe because of shortage of containers and have sought the intervention of the government. Sharad Kumar, president of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), said sea freights have started increasing gradually since July and all the shipping lines have increased the freights by 20-40 per cent depending on the destinations. The exporters also expressed the need to set up a regulator for the sector. "We expect the proposed National Logistics Efficiency Advancement Predictability and Safety Act would be formulated and implemented soon to protect the exim (export-import) sector from such sudden and abrupt changes," the FIEO president said. "The availability of containers has become a big issue. Almost all shipping lines are giving reasons of container shortage and have jacked up the freights for October by a massive \$300 to \$800 per 40 feet full container load, particularly for the European and North and South American ports," he said.

The Telegraph - 08.10.2020

<https://www.telegraphindia.com/business/exporters-seek-freight-rate-relief/cid/1794179>

Container Shortage, Sea Freight Rise Hurting Exports

A new logistics policy is being drafted which will follow a well-balanced approach for addressing the concerns of the industry regarding transportation, said Pawan Kumar Agarwal, special secretary (logistics), Union ministry of commerce and industry, at the CII Digital Seminar on Trade Facilitation on Friday. According to Agarwal, significant efforts have been made for digitisation of trade procedures during the unprecedented Covid-19 times. "Some segments of logistics such as CFS, ICDs, cold chains and warehouses have been given infrastructure status, which is a testimony to the government's commitment to improve trade facilitation," he added. Sanjay Budhia, CII EXIM national chairman and Patton Group MD, pointed out that India can be a robust, reliable, risk-free and long-term manufacturing partner and this is the perfect time to integrate into global value chains (GVC). "But currently, exporters are facing challenges starting from freight rates, availability of containers, booking of space in the vessels and timely sailing. At every stage, exporters have to struggle and this leads to commitments getting compromised in the global markets.

The Economic Times - 10.10.2020

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=TOIKM%2F2020%2F10%2F10&entity=Ar01016&sk=867A4872&mode=text>

'Focussed but not flamboyant' — SBI bets on new chief Dinesh Khara to stop losing market share

Dinesh Kumar Khara, who has been appointed as the new State Bank of India (SBI) Chairman, is seen as a focussed and methodical administrator. These attributes will be more than put to test as he faces the challenge to regain market share, which the country's largest lender has been losing to new-generation lenders. The bank's market share in advances has fallen in the last three years, while it has barely held on to its share of deposits despite a flight to safety towards state-run banks after the Yes Bank crisis earlier this year. The fall came despite the fact that the bank merged five of its associate banks and the Bhartiya Mahila Bank with itself in April 2017. This daunting task comes at a time when private sector lenders have upped the ante with superior services, powered with technology, to wrest market share from public sector banks. The 59-year-old, who was one of the managing directors of SBI handling global banking and subsidiaries, is set to begin his three-year term at the helm Wednesday.

The Print - 07.10.2020

Exporters said non-availability of containers and a gradual increase in sea freights pose big challenges to the country's outbound shipments, which grew year-on-year after a gap of six months in September. The Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) said on Wednesday that a 20-40% increase in sea freights since July and shipping lines shutting out containers abruptly are making deliveries difficult. "Non-availability of containers for the export sector is posing a serious concern for meeting delivery commitments to foreign buyers," said Sharad Kumar Saraf, president, FIEO. He said for the past couple of months, despite offering space three to four weeks in advance, shipping lines have been shutting out containers abruptly saying the vessels are full. "Sea freights have also started increasing gradually since July and all the shipping lines have increased the freights by 20-40% depending on the destinations," said Saraf. Merchandise exports grew 5.27% year-on-year to \$27.40 billion in September while imports declined 19.6% to \$30.31 billion. The handicraft sector is worst hit by the shortage of containers for exports at craft clusters such as Moradabad, Jodhpur, Jaipur and Firozabad.

The Economic Times - 08.10.2020

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2020%2F10%2F08&entity=Ar00703&sk=EBE341ED&mode=text>

Govt appoints M Rajeshwar Rao as new deputy governor of RBI

The Centre late Wednesday appointed M Rajeshwar Rao as the new deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India. He is currently an executive director at the banking regulator. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet approved the appointment as the search for the incumbent was on since August. The Financial Sector Regulatory Appointment Search Committee (FSRASC), which had included the cabinet secretary, RBI governor and the financial services secretary, interviewed candidates on August 21. RBI executive directors M Rajeshwar Rao and Lily Vadera were the top contenders to succeed NS Vishwanathan as the central bank's fourth deputy governor, ET reported on August 25. Rao, a career central banker, has spent 36 years at the RBI across various departments including regulation and supervision and different regional offices of the regulator. He is in charge of the internal debt management, financial markets operations, international and secretarial departments at the central bank.

The Economic Times - 08.10.2020

<https://theprint.in/economy/focussed-but-not-flamboyant-sbi-bets-on-new-chief-dinesh-khara-to-stop-losing-market-share/518480/>

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/govt-appoints-m-rajeshwar-rao-as-new-deputy-governor-of-rbi/articleshow/78539248.cms>