

(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

Container freight station operators face job loss as revenue volumes drop

With the direct port delivery (DPD) service at Jawaharlal Nehru Port gaining traction, container freight station (CFS) operators near the port are cutting jobs as revenue volumes drop amid high capital costs. "Earlier, we were handling 4,500-5,000 containers per month. But since the DPD service, this has halved to 2,000 containers (per month). We have had to shrink operations," Jude Fernandes, vice-president of KerryIndev Logistics, told Business Standard. "We have reduced nearly 40 per cent of our sub-contracts. This has led to job cuts in the industry," he added. Surveyors, drivers, security, house-keeping and labour contracts among others are part of the sub-contract segment in the CFS industry. KerryIndev Logistics with CFS facilities at JNPT, Chennai, Tuticorin and Puducherry is a leading logistics service provider holding 20 acre space in Navi Mumbai, including 12 acres of container paved stock yard and 6 acres of empty container yard. The company has over 2,000 employees and owns more than 200 fleets of transportation of containerised, break bulk and Over Dimensional Cargo (ODC). Currently, JNPT has 1,249 registered members to avail the DPD facility, up from 700 members when it was introduced in 2016. Companies such as Allcargo Logistics, Gateway Distriparks, Navkar Corporation, APM Terminals India and Balmer Lawrie are part of the domestic CFS industry.

Business Standard - 13.01.2018

http://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/container-freight-station-operators-face-job-loss-as-revenue-volumes-drop-118011200968_1.html

World Bank bullish on India growth

India 's growth rate will hit 7.3 per cent in 2018 and 7.5 per cent in the next two years, according to the World Bank, which said the country has "enormous growth potential" compared with other emerging economies because of the reforms undertaken by the government. India is estimated to have grown at 6.7 per cent in 2017 despite initial setbacks from demonetisation and the goods and services tax (GST), the 2018 Global Economics Prospect released by the World Bank on Tuesday said. "In all likelihood India is going to register higher growth rate than other major emerging market economies in the next decade. So, I wouldn't focus on the short-term numbers. I would look at the big picture for India and the big picture is telling us that it has enormous potential," Ayhan Kose, director of the Development Prospects Group at the World Bank said. He said in comparison with China, which is slowing, the World Bank is expecting India to gradually accelerate. "The growth numbers of the past three years were very healthy," Kose, author of the report, said.

The Telegraph - 11.01.2018

<https://epaper.telegraphindia.com/detail/159692-153541713.html>

Economists Stress on Fiscal Discipline, Quick Divestment

Leading economists have battled for maintaining fiscal discipline and aggressive disinvestment with a focus on development and sale of assets like ports to increase revenue. They also suggested steps to boost farm income, manufacturing and exports which can lead to employment generation. At an over four-hour meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, ministers and bureaucrats on Wednesday, the 42-odd experts suggested short-term and long-term measures, including need for labour reforms, to the government to put the economy on high growth trajectory, a senior government official told ET. The meeting on 'Economic Policy - The Road Ahead' comes days before the last budget of the BJP-led NDA government and is significant on the back of lower growth estimate for 2017-18. The government is seeking ideas on the PM's policy vision for New India 2022 and some of these suggestions could find a mention in the budget.

The Economic Times - 11.01.2018

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/Th/eEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc>

Modi taps experts for growth inputs

Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with a team of ministers and secretaries on Wednesday brainstormed with some of the country's top economists and sectoral experts to get inputs both for the budget and future steps to revive the economy. The experts recommended making the GST more transparent and simple, relaxing the Mandi Act, spending more in the agriculture and the rural sectors, further rounds of disinvestment, taxing long-term capital gains and sticking to fiscal deficit targets. Among the economists and experts to attend the meeting were M. Govinda Rao, a former member of the Prime Minister's economic advisory council, Ravindra Dholakia from IIM Ahmedabad, Crisil chief economist D.K. Joshi, big data expert from IIM Bangalore Pulak Ghosh and infrastructure expert Vinayak Chatterjee. The meeting decided to reconvene after two months to take stock of the developments. Before meeting the Prime Minister, six groups, comprising the experts, met separately for two hours to brainstorm on subjects such as the economy, agriculture, infrastructure, health and education, employment, exports and manufacturing.

The Telegraph - 11.01.2018

<https://www.telegriphindia.com/business/modi-taps-experts-for-growth-inputs-200228>

Rising Food Prices Push Dec CPI to 17-Month High

Rising food prices pushed India's retail inflation to a 17-month high in December, breaching the central bank's medium-term target for the second straight month, which could intensify pressure for it to raise policy rates in the next few months. India's measure of consumer price inflation, the CPI index, rose 5.21% in December from a year earlier, the Ministry of Statistics said on Friday. Analysts polled by Reuters had predicted December's consumer inflation rate would climb to 5.10 %, the highest since July 2016, from 4.88 % in November. Annual retail food inflation rose 4.96 % in December from 4.35 % in the previous month. The Reserve Bank of India held its policy rate steady at 6.0 % last month and said all possibilities were on the table, depending on how price pressures and growth panned out. The RBI, which has a medium-term inflation target of 4%, has raised its inflation estimate to 4.3% to 4.7% for the six months through March. But some analysts feel inflation could overshoot its estimates. The RBI holds its next policy review on February 7.

Industry delivers a scorcher

Industrial output grew 8.4 per cent in November from a year earlier, government data showed on Friday. Economists had forecast a 4.4 per cent growth in output compared with a downwardly revised 2 per cent year-on-year increase in October. They attribute the November rise to a favourable base effect as the note ban in November 2016 had hit factory production hard. The manufacturing sector, which accounts for more than three-fourths of the entire index, grew 10.2 per cent in November 2017 compared with a 2.5 per cent growth in October, and 4.8 per cent in November 2016. Aditi Nayar, principal economist with Icria, said: "The extent of the uptick in IIP growth in November 2017 was far sharper than our expectation, reflecting a favourable base effect as well as inventory rebuilding after the festive season, raising some concerns regarding its sustainability beyond the third quarter of this fiscal." Mining production grew 1.1 per cent in November from a subdued growth of 0.2 per cent a month ago. Electricity production grew 3.9 per cent in November compared with 3.2 per cent in October.

The Telegraph - 15.01.2018

<https://epaper.telegriphindia.com/detail/160097-15505414.html>

WEF ranks India 30th on global manufacturing index; Japan tops

The World Economic Forum (WEF) has ranked India at 30th position on a global manufacturing index - below China's 5th place but above other BRICS peers, Brazil, Russia and South Africa. Japan has been found to have the best structure of production in the Geneva-based WEF's first 'Readiness for the future of production report' and is followed by South Korea, Germany, Switzerland, China, Czech Republic, the US, Sweden, Austria and Ireland in the top 10. Among BRICS nations, Russia is ranked 35th, Brazil 41st and South Africa at 45th place. The report, which analyses development of modern industrial strategies and urges collaborative action, has categorised 100 countries into four groups - Leading (strong current base, high level of readiness for future); High Potential (limited current base, high potential for future); Legacy (strong current base, at risk for future); or Nascent (limited current base, low level of readiness for future). India has been placed in the 'Legacy' group along with Hungary, Mexico,

The Economic Times - 13.01.2018
<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2018%2F01%2F13&entity=Ar01106&sk=4E47A1A2&mode=text>

Considering incentives for states promoting exports: Suresh Prabhu

The commerce and industry ministry is mulling incentives for states which play a proactive role in promoting exports as it will help boost economic growth, Union Minister Suresh Prabhu said today. He said he has sought the views of states on the issue, which was raised during the third meeting of Council for Trade Development and Promotion. "We are thinking of ideas whereby we can incentivise the states which promote exports. I have mooted this idea before the states and asked them to give their ideas on this," Prabhu told reporters here. Trade contributes significantly in boosting the country's economic growth, the commerce and industry minister said. If the GDP of states rises, it would push the country's growth, he said, adding that the focus should also be on the districts' GDP, which in turn would fuel the nation's economy. Prabhu said the ministry is in the process of preparing a strategy to promote overall exports and push the country's industrial growth

The Economic Times - 09.01.2018
<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/considering-incentives-for-states-promoting-exports-suresh-prabhu/articleshow/62415653.cms>

Govt plans to set up database of directors

The government is looking to set up a database of independent directors, who form the fulcrum of a corporate governance framework, Union minister P. P. Chaudhary said on Thursday. He also emphasised that independent directors should exercise special care on issues of conflicts of interest in related-party transactions as well as those related to managerial remuneration as they are the watchdogs of companies. "In the best interest of the company, the issue of conflict of interest in related-party transactions needs to be looked at judiciously. Independent directors have to exercise special care while looking into such related party transactions," the minister of state for corporate affairs said. He noted that caution must be exercised by independent directors while evaluating issues related to the remuneration of the management. Chaudhary was speaking at the inaugural function of the two-day orientation

Philippines, Russia, Thailand and Turkey, among others.

The Times of India - 15.01.2018
<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/wef-ranks-india-30th-on-global-manufacturing-index-japan-tops/articleshow/62498057.cms>

Govt Throws Big New Year Party for Foreign Investors

India announced sweeping relaxations in foreign direct investment (FDI) rules in single brand retail and other areas besides allowing overseas carriers to acquire as much as 49% of Air India to help speed up its divestment. The moves came ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's trip to the World Economic Forum in Davos, where he is expected to showcase the country's investment potential. Overseas retailers can now delay having to meet the 30% local sourcing norm by five years, removing a significant stumbling block. Approvals for such investments have also been made automatic. Single-brand retailers can set off "incremental sourcing of goods from India for global operations during initial five years, beginning April 1 of the year of the opening of first store against the mandatory sourcing requirement of 30% of purchases from India". After five years, the company will have to meet the sourcing norm every year.

The Economic Times - 11.01.2018
<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2018%2F01%2F11&entity=Ar00101&sk=06228258&mode=text>

India's oil demand growth weakest since 2013 as economy slows

India's oil consumption in 2017 expanded at the slowest pace in four years as a surprise ban on high-value currency notes and a new national sales tax weakened the economy. The nation's consumption of petroleum products rose 2% to about 200 million tonnes, the oil ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell said Wednesday. That's the slowest since 2013, when demand grew 1.7% while global oil prices averaged about \$109 a barrel, almost double last year's level. "The cash ban had a bigger impact on oil demand in the first half, while the goods and services tax impacted the second half," Nevyin Nah, an oil products analyst at Energy Aspects, said by phone from Singapore, adding that good rainfall during the monsoon season also lowered diesel demand. Growth slowed down in the world's second-most populous nation after Prime Minister Narendra

programme for newly appointed independent directors of public sector banks and undertakings organised by the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA) at its campus at Manesar, Gurgaon.

The Telegraph - 12.01.2018

<https://epaper.telegraphindia.com/detail/159887-155658775.html>

India's fuel product sales jump 7.6% in December 2017

Fuel product sales rise 3.9% in April-December 2017. India's fuel product consumption or sales galloped 7.6% to 17.41 mt in December 2017 over a year ago. Diesel jumped 10.4% to 7.26 mt, petcoke 15.7% to 1.91 mt, others 35.3% to 0.62 mt, petrol 8.1% to 2.12 mt and LPG 3.1% to 2.00 mt. The consumption of bitumen also improved 7.7% to 0.62 mt, light diesel oil (LDO) 32.8% to 0.05 mt and lubes/greases 2.1% to 0.30 mt. The consumption of ATF was flat at 0.64 mt, while that of kerosene declined 21.3% to 0.31 mt, and fuel oil 7.5% to 0.57 mt and naphtha 2.6% to 1.01 mt in December 2017. Consumption or sales of fuel products increased 3.9% to 152.01 mt in April-December 2017 over April-December 2016. Sales of diesel increased 5.9%, petrol 8.6%, LPG 8.1%, and petcoke 6.9%. Consumption of others moved up 11.9%, ATF 7.8%, lubes/greases 2.1% and LDO 4.6%. However, the consumption of kerosene declined 31.1%, naphtha 9.8%, fuel oil 8.4% and bitumen 2.2% in April-December 2017.

Business Standard - 10.01.2018

http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-cm/india-s-fuel-product-sales-jump-7-6-in-december-2017-118011000316_1.html

GST call on natural gas

The GST Council at its meeting on Thursday is likely to discuss the entry of natural gas in the indirect tax regime and rationalise the rates on a few items such as farm equipment and electric vehicles. Bringing the real estate sector under the GST is also on the agenda. The council may cut the rate on farm and irrigation equipment to 12 per cent from 18 per cent and on bio- diesel and electric vehicles to 18 per cent from 28 per cent. It could also reduce the rate on digital cameras to 18 per cent from 28 per cent following representations by companies such as Nikon, Canon and Sony, which are facing stiff competition from smartphones. The fitment committee of the council has finalised the rate reduction and the matter will be taken up for discussion by the

Modi's unprecedented cash ban in 2016 and the chaotic rollout of a goods and services tax (GST) last year. India forecast its economy will expand 6.5% in the year through March, the slowest pace since Modi came to power in 2014.

Mint - 10.01.2018

<http://www.livemint.com/Industry/MqVBoSmgA7twPFTHTd3i3J/Indias-oil-demand-growth-weakest-since-2013-as-economy-slow.html>

Task force to study feasibility of making methanol from coal gas

The government has constituted a task force to study the feasibility of producing methanol from coal, and using coal gas as a replacement of natural gas in steel production. The development assumes significance as the country is aiming to achieve crude steel capacity of 300 million tonnes (MT), which will require extensive mobilisation of natural resources, among others. The 15-member task force under the chairmanship of Niti Aayog member V K Saraswat has secretaries of coal and steel ministries. Coal India Chairman Gopal Singh, BHEL CMD Atul Sobti, SAIL Chairman P K Singh, JSW Steel Chairman and Managing Director Sajjan Jindal, Essar Steel Chairman Shashi Ruia and NMDC CMD Bajendra Kumar, among others are also members of the task force. "A task force is constituted...to explore the feasibility of producing methanol from coal at Mozambique and India, replacement of natural gas by coal gas through gasification process in steel plants, and carbon dioxide capturing from steel plants into methanol liquid fuel," according to a steel ministry notification.

Millennium Post - 09.01.2018

<http://www.millenniumpost.in/business/task-force-to-study-feasibility-of-making-methanol-from-coal-gas-278719>

Dharmendra Pradhan puts onus of relief on states as fuel prices, crude flare up

On a day diesel price flared up to an all-time high in Delhi and international benchmark crude topped \$68 a barrel on Tuesday -- the highest since May 2015 -- oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan said the onus of providing relief to fuel consumers lay with state governments. "It is not just the Centre that taxes fuels. States also benefit from tax on petrol and diesel. The Centre has reduced excise by Rs 2 a litre. State governments should show their concern by reducing VAT (value added tax)," Pradhan said. Crude's relentless rise has pushed pump prices to record levels in many cities, with diesel hitting it's highest-ever at Rs 60.66 in Delhi.

council at its meeting on January 18, the last before the budget. The GST Council on November 10 reduced the rates on more than 175 items, thereby taking them out of the highest slab of 28 per cent. The council is also expected to take up the issue of bringing in natural gas within the GST. Alternative fuels to natural gas such as naphtha, fuel oil and LPG were already included in the GST.

The Telegraph -15.01.2018

<https://epaper.telegraphindia.com/detail/160646-154227353.html>

Oil minister rules out upstream oil gas regulator

Oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan today virtually ruled out giving statutory powers to upstream oil and gas regulator DGH, saying the sector has not fully developed and needs government support. There are two regulatory bodies in the oil and gas sector - the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board, which is a regulator for the downstream activities like laying of pipelines and fuel marketing but without powers to review pricing. The Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH) is a technical arm of the oil ministry which oversees upstream oil and gas exploration and production activities. Various committees have suggested creation of an independent, statutory regulator for the upstream oil sector. At a seminar organised by FICCI, PwC in a presentation reiterated the demand, calling for DGH to be made a statutory body like market regulator Sebi. Responding to this, Pradhan said the sector has not developed fully and still looks at the government for reforms. "Does a sector which has not developed fully, a sector which expects government to do reforms, should be talk of that," he said.

The Economic Times - 11.01.2018

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/oil-minister-rules-out-upstream-oil-gas-regulator/articleshow/62458866.cms>

Minister favours higher steel exports

The central government wants to raise steel exports to 6- 7 per cent of total production in the coming years from the present 1.5 per cent. "There is no reason to be happy with 1.5 per cent of exports. In the next few years, Indian steel exports should increase to 6- 7 per cent of total production, " steel minister Chaudhary Birender Singh said on Thursday while addressing a seminar at the Bharat Chamber of Commerce. Singh was speaking on the improving fortunes of steel makers, following protective measures by

Petrol price too shot up to Rs 70.53 a litre. Pump prices have hit record levels in several other cities. The main reason is relentless rise in global oil prices. Brent crude, the international benchmark, was up 35 cents at \$68.13 a barrel after touching \$68.29. US benchmark WTI also rose 47 cents to \$62.20 to reach its highest since May 2015.

The Times of India - 10.01.2018

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/dharmendra-pradhan-puts-onus-of-relief-on-states-as-fuel-prices-crude-flare-up/articleshow/62433977.cms>

U.S. crude hits three-year high as prices climb in tight market

Oil prices edged higher on Tuesday, with U.S. crude touching its highest since December 2014, supported by OPEC-led production cuts and expectations that U.S. crude inventories have dropped for an eighth week in a row. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies including Russia are keeping supply limits in place in 2018, a second year of restraint, to reduce a price-denting glut of oil held in inventories. U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude CLc1 rose \$1.23, or 2 percent, to settle at \$62.96 a barrel after touching its highest since December 2014 at \$63.24. Brent crude LCOc1 ended the session up \$1.04, or 1.5 percent, at \$68.82 per barrel after hitting a session high of \$69.08, its highest since May 2015. Both contracts had their strongest close since December 2014. Prices extended gains in post-settlement trade after industry group the American Petroleum Institute said crude inventories fell by 11.2 million barrels in the week to Jan. 5 to 416.6 million, compared with analysts' expectations for a decrease of 3.9 million barrels.

Reuters - 09.01.2018

<https://in.reuters.com/article/global-oil/u-s-crude-hits-three-year-high-as-prices-climb-in-tight-market-idINKBN1EY054>

India' crude steel output hits record 100 mn tonnes in 2017

The country's crude steel production rose nearly 6 per cent to hit an all-time high of 101.28 million tonnes (MT) last year, according to official data. During April-December of the fiscal 2017-18, the output stood at 75.50 MT as against 72.20 MT during the same period a year ago, an expansion of 4.6 per cent, the Joint Plant Committee (JPC) -- which is empowered by the steel ministry to collect data on the Indian iron and steel industry -- said in its latest

the government such as the minimum import price and anti-dumping duty. The minister said these steps have turned India into a net exporter of steel. According to official data, the export of total finished steel was up 52.9 per cent in April-December 2017 (7.606 million tonnes) over the same period of last year. The total crude steel production during April-December 2017 was 75.498 million tonnes, a growth of 4.6 per cent over the same period of last year. Leading steel makers SAIL, RINL, Tata Steel, Essar, JSWL & JSPL together produced 43.39 mt during April-December 2017, which was a growth of 6.5 per cent over the same period of last year.

The Telegraph - 12.01.2018

<https://epaper.telegraphindia.com/detail/159887-155632564.html>

Finished steel exports surge 29% in Dec; imports fall 26%

India's total export of finished steel in December last year jumped 28.9 per cent to 0.964 million tonnes (MT), official data showed. The country had shipped 0.748 MT finished steel in the same month in 2016. During April-December of 2017-18, the export of finished steel increased 52.9 per cent to 7.606 MT, from 4.975 MT in the year-ago period, the Joint Plant Committee (JPC) has said in its latest report. On the other hand, imports were down per cent at 0.561 MT in December 2017 compared to 0.762 MT during the same month a year ago. The import of finished steel during April-December last year surged 10.9 per cent to 6.096 MT, as against 5.495 MT in the same period previous year. "India was a net exporter of total finished steel in December 2017 as also during April-December 2017," the report said. India's consumption of finished steel in December 2017 rose 6.2 per cent to 7.621 MT compared to 7.175 MT in the year-ago period. In April-August 2017, the consumption of finished steel witnessed a growth of 5.2 per cent to 64.867 MT as against 61.662 MT during the same period a year ago "under the influence of rising production for sale and imports," it said.

The Economic Times - 15.01.2018

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/indl-goods/svs/steel/finished-steel-exports-surge-29-in-dec-imports-fall-26/articleshow/62496576.cms>

Vedanta leads Electrosteel race with highest offer

Anil Agarwal's Vedanta submitted the highest bid for bankrupt Electrosteel Steels, ahead of a Tata Group bid, said two people aware of the matter.

report. "For the first time..., India's crude steel production crossed the 100 million tonnes mark in 2017, reaching 101.227 MT, a growth of 5.87 per cent over 2016," it said. In December alone, the country produced 8.65 MT as against 8.38 MT in the same month a year ago. SAIL, RINL, TSL, Essar, JSWL and JSPL together produced 43.39 MT during April-December 2017, which was a growth of 6.5 per cent over the same period of the preceding year, it said.

The Economic Times - 12.01.2018

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/indl-goods/svs/steel/india-crude-steel-output-hits-record-100-mn-tonnes-in-2017/articleshow/62459196.cms>

After 6% rise in Jan, steel mills see room for more price hikes next month

After raising prices by five to six per cent in January, steel mills plan to do so by another Rs 2,500-3,000 a tonne in February, to bridge the gap between domestically produced and landed cost of imported steel, besides other cost pressures. Government-owned NMDC raised iron ore prices this month by 19-22 per cent, one of the steepest ever. This followed similar price hikes by private miners in Odisha due to the suspension of production at five major mines in the state, by Supreme Court order. NMDC had also raised ore prices in December, by 10-13 per cent. In calendar year 2017, the country's largest iron ore miner has raised prices 48 per cent, to match those in international markets. This has prompted steel makers to pass it on to consumers. They raised product prices by up to Rs 2,500 a tonne for January to maintain their profit margin. "Recent increase in iron ore price by NMDC and Odisha's private miners are forcing steel companies to pass on the increased cost of production. The increased cost of other raw materials like coal, refractory and electrodes are further fuelling this," said Sajjan Jindal, chairman of the JSW Group, in a twitter post.

Business Standard - 11.01.2018

http://www.business-standard.com/article/markets/after-6-rise-in-jan-steel-mills-see-room-for-more-price-hikes-next-month-118011100023_1.html

In reforms push, foreign airlines allowed 49% in AI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday unveiled a fresh round of liberalisation of the foreign direct investment (FDI) policy, allowing foreign

The other bidders were Renaissance Group promoted by Abhishek Dalmia and an overseas fund backed by Edelweiss, they said. The Vedanta bid was said to be worth about Rs 4,500 crore, although one person said it may include an additional "sweetener", without providing further details. The Tata bid was said to be worth about Rs 3,500 crore. ET was unable to ascertain the offers made by the other two parties. The process is being run in accordance with the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), PwC said in an email without elaborating. Dhavit Anjaria of PwC is the resolution professional in charge of the Electrosteel insolvency process. Vedanta and Tata didn't respond to queries. The Vedanta and Tata bids are all-cash offers, said the people cited above. Electrosteel faces claims of around Rs 10,000 crore from financial creditors, rising to Rs 13,000 crore if interest and penalties are added.

The Economic Times - 09.01.2018

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/indl-goods/svs/steel/vedanta-leads-electrosteel-race-with-highest-offer/articleshow/62422590.cms>

Air India stake sale: Government mulls absorbing employees in PSUs

The government is exploring options of absorbing Air India employees in public sector enterprises and voluntary retirement package as it moves ahead with the airline's disinvestment amid stiff opposition from worker unions, sources said. While foreign direct investment of up to 49 per cent has been allowed in the debt-laden carrier, efforts are on to ensure a smooth strategic disinvestment and a group of ministers are weighing various options. Air India, estimated to have a debt burden of more than Rs 50,000 crore, is staying afloat on taxpayers' money and the divestment plan is aimed at reviving the airline's fortunes. Sources in the know said the government is mulling providing airline employees the option of joining public sector companies. The possibility of having a VRS package is also under consideration, sources said while adding that a final decision is yet to be made. "Various options are under consideration to protect the interests of the employees," Civil Aviation Secretary R N Choubey told PTI.

The Economic Times - 15.01.2018

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/airlines/-aviation/air-india-stake-sale-government-mulls-absorbing-employees-in-psus/articleshow/62494897.cms>

airlines to invest up to 49% in Air India, and opening up 100% FDI in single brand retail under the automatic route. Similarly, 100% FDI has been allowed via the automatic route in real estate broking services. Under the existing rules, foreign airlines can invest, with government approval, in Indian companies operating scheduled and non-scheduled air transport services, up to 49% of their paid-up capital. However, this provision was not applicable to Air India, implying that foreign airlines could not invest in the national carrier. It has now been decided to... allow foreign airlines to invest up to 49% under approval route in Air India subject to the condition that foreign investment (s) in Air India including foreign airlines shall not exceed 49% either directly or indirectly," the government said. But it said that substantial ownership and effective control of Air India shall continue to be Indian.

The Economic Times - 11.01.2018

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=TOIKM%2F2018%2F01%2F11&entity=Ar00126&sk=3A074621&mode=text>

Air Traffic Growth Fastest in India: IATA

Domestic aviation traffic in India was the fastest-growing globally, increasing 16.4% in November and marking the 39th consecutive month of double-digit expansion, the International Air Transport Association said. "All markets showed growth, led again by India and China. Domestic capacity climbed 5.9%, and load factor improved 1.4 percentage points to 83.6%," IATA said in a release on Thursday. IATA said the large markets in India, China and Japan mean that domestic travel accounts for 45% of the region's operations. "It is less important for Europe and most of Africa, where domestic travel represents just 11% and 14% of operations, respectively. And it is negligible for Middle Eastern carriers for whom domestic travel represents just 4% of operations," it said. According to IATA, industry-wide revenue passenger kilometres in November rose 8% from a year earlier, the fastest growth rate in five months and up from a 7.3% year-on-year increase in October. Capacity increased by 6.3% and load factor rose 1.2 percentage points to 80.2

The Economic Times - 12.01.2018

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2018%2F01%2F12&entity=Ar00704&sk=96956092&mode=text>

Gujarat tops new logistics index that flags inefficiency of states

The logistics performance of Indian states and Union territories is "sub-par" owing to a host of inefficiencies, according to a study which also suggests measures for improvement. The Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) index, a composite indicator to assess international trade logistics across states and Union territories, is based on a stakeholders' survey conducted by Deloitte for the ministry of commerce and industry. While Gujarat topped the first-of-its-kind index, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh took the second and third positions, respectively. Logistics, or the management of the flow of resources such as cargo, documents, information and funds through a range of activities and services between points of origin and destination, is a key parameter in deciding the trade competitiveness of a state or country. In a major push to developing an integrated logistics framework in the country, including industrial parks, cold chains and warehousing facilities, the government in November granted infrastructure status to the logistics sector, enabling the industry to access cheaper finances.

Mint - 09.01.2018

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/2sUbjqUZsYj8S25lqGoYYyO/Gujarat-tops-new-logistics-index-that-flags-inefficiency-of.html>

Government plans to overhaul 300 dry ports

The government plans to overhaul 300-odd dry ports in the country to resolve infrastructural constraints faced by exporters and importers to give a fillip to India's foreign trade. The commerce ministry has set the ball rolling to assess the laws governing dry ports, their subsidies and funding patterns, and streamline them with other ports in accordance with global practices. "We are planning a comparative assessment of regulatory mechanism for dry ports including laws governing their functioning," an official said on condition of anonymity. The assessment will compare inland container depots (ICDs), which are considered dry ports, and their functioning in nearly 10 countries. The study comes in the wake of high interest in developing ICDs, container freight stations and air freight stations following the Rs 8 lakh crore Sagarmala project aimed at port-led development of the country. The study comes in the wake of high interest in developing ICDs, container freight stations and air freight stations following the Rs 8 lakh crore Sagarmala project aimed at port-led development of the country.

The Economic Times - 10.01.2018

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/shipping/-/transport/government->

Mega Logistics Plan Kicks Off for Freight Movement

India has kicked off an ambitious national logistics plan to allow seamless movement of inputs and finished goods across the country. Through the plan, the government aims to come out with the most cost-effective method to transport goods till 2035 to provide a competitive edge to the Indian industry. In a first-of-its-kind move, the newly setup logistics division in the commerce department is in talks with logistics providing ministries of railways, roadways, shipping, inland waterways and civil aviation besides the logistics using ministries including food processing, coal and mines to chalk out the plan. "We are making the plan without intruding in others' territory. The idea is to have various means of transport to complement each other and not compete," said a commerce department official. Various industry estimates have put the size of the Indian logistics market at \$100-125 billion and growing at 5% per annum. However, Indian logistics costs are said to be one of the highest in the world at almost 13% of the gross domestic product.

The Economic Times - 10.01.2018

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

Tajpur financially viable: Crisil report

Financial research firm Crisil has given a thumbs up to the proposed deep sea port at Tajpur in an infrastructure advisory it has prepared. The research major has suggested that annual revenue earned from this port by 2047 would be nearly Rs 10,000 crore while noting that the project is financially viable and likely to attract potential bidders. Of this, interest income alone will be nearly Rs 3,672 crore. In comparison, the capital expenditure to develop the port (in two phases) will be about Rs 5,808 crore. During the report's preparation, Crisil has studied two sites in East Midnapore. One of these is at Shankarpur-Tajpur and the other at Rasulpur. It was ascertained during the study that to accommodate vessels of 60,000 tonne 62 million cubic metres of silt will have to be dredged for the port at Tajpur while 175 million cubic metres will have to be removed for Phase-I of the project at Rasulpur. For Phase-II, another 142.3 million cubic metres of silt will have to be dredged at Rasulpur.

The Times of India - 11.01.2017

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

Delhi cargo takes Kol route

In a first of its kind move, Delhi airport's cargo handling department will use Kolkata airport's cargo facility and get shipments custom-cleared from the city, adding to revenue. Kolkata airport has the capacity to accommodate around 273 tonnes of shipment but with few international airlines, barely 150 tonnes are shipped daily. This is around one-third of what Delhi or Mumbai handles. Celebi Delhi Cargo Terminal Management India Pvt Ltd, which handles cargo in the privatised Delhi airport, was in the city last week to tap into this vacuum and take shipments to Delhi in bonded trucks, paying a fee to the airport. At present, Kolkata airport earns 90 paise plus GST for 1 kg of shipment as custom clearance fee. "We have studied the market and have realised that there is a large chunk of market in Kolkata and north-eastern part of India, where from perishable items like fruits and vegetables can be shipped to other parts of the world. We are here to inspire exporters to take their products out of the country using our platform," said Ramesh Mamidala, CEO of the company. He added that the company had shipped 10 tonnes of pineapple from Guwahati to Dubai via Delhi using the custom facilities at Kolkata two weeks ago.

The Times of India - 15.01.2018

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=TOIKM%2F2018%2F01%2F15&entity=Ar00805&sk=0605C248&mode=text>

Need integrated digital platform for trade logistics, says Bibek Debroy

The government needs to move fast on creating an integrated digital platform that links all trade stakeholders and helps in significantly cutting down crucial time and expense for trade logistics, a research paper by economist Bibek Debroy and NITI Aayog official Kishore Desai has suggested. Debroy, who is the Chief of the newly set-up "Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) has also called for trade facilitation to be prioritised and an integrated logistics policy to be put forward by the government. At present, different stakeholders in trade use different digital platforms systems. While an exporter will need to register and operate through the ICEGATE or SWIFT platforms for customs purposes, he will also often be using digital platforms such as Visual Impex, the paper points out. On the other hand, the trade and taxation authorities themselves use a variety of software at loggerheads with the

E-commerce boom boosts airport fin with light cargo

A dramatic shift in the nature of air cargo in the past couple of years has forced Kolkata airport to augment the handling area by converting a section of the old international terminal into a cargo facility. On Monday, around 3,000 sq. metre was added to the existing 39,150 sq. metre facility in the air-cargo terminal when private courier firm Blue Dart commenced operations in the arrival area of the terminal that was decommissioned in 2013 when the integrated terminal came into being. An airport official said e-commerce had redefined the concept of air cargo. "Earlier, weight was the most important criteria. That is not so in domestic cargo. With e-commerce, the average package weighs considerably less. But the number of packages that are being shipped has exploded. Thus in revenue terms, there is a healthy growth though it may stagnate or even dip if one goes by the conventional calculation of weight," he said. Blue Dart managing director Tulsi Nowlakra Mirchandaney said the company's operations also reflected this metamorphosis in air cargo. "The average weight of packages that we ship has reduced to a fifth while we are carrying five times more packages.

The Times of India - 09.01.2018

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/e-commerce-boom-boosts-airport-fin-with-light-cargo/articleshow/62422652.cms>

Rail cargo volume set to grow 5% this fiscal

After a gap of three years, the Railways may post nearly 5 per cent growth in cargo volume this fiscal, with coal contributing a little less than half of the total volume. During the first nine months of this fiscal, the Railways carried about 849 million tonnes cargo, registering a 4.8 per cent growth. According to sources, January-March being the peak period, the trend may gain momentum and the Railways will finish close to the targeted volume of 1,167 mt, against last year's total of 1,108 mt. The volume of coal, which contributes 48-49 per cent of the total, increased 2.7 per cent; raw materials for steel plant, except iron ore, increased 6 per cent, and volume of steel cargo had shot up by a staggering 15 per cent. Revenue grew faster than cargo volume at 8.11 per cent, presumably due to adjustments in tariff. And coal consumers were the biggest

other. Most of these platforms do not have interfaces and data exchange protocols with each other. As a result, each stakeholder continues to use its own platform forcing trade to not only access multiple windows but also multiple exchanges of documents.

Business Standard - 12.01.2018

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/need-integrated-digital-platform-for-trade-logistics-says-bibek-debroy-118011100612_1.html

casualty as revenues from coal freight increased 10.18 per cent against less than 3 per cent volume growth. In comparison, steel consumers are less affected. Revenue from steel raw materials, except iron ore, moved up 10.7 per cent faster than the volume growth.

The Hindu Business Line - 11.01.2018

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/rail-cargo-volume-set-to-grow-5-this-fiscal/article10024693.ece>

K Sivan to take over as Isro chief

Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) director, Dr K Sivan, is set to take charge as the new chairman of Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) on January 12. "It's a huge responsibility; I'll be occupying a position that so many eminent people have held," Sivan told TOI. During his career at Isro, he has held many responsibilities, including group director of mission stimulation and synthesis group and project director of reusable launch vehicle — technology demonstrator.

A graduate in aeronautical engineering from Madras Institute of Technology in 1980, Sivan took his ME in aerospace engineering from IISc, Bengaluru, in 1982. He completed his PhD in aerospace engineering from IIT-Bombay in 2006.

The Times of India - 11.01.2018

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/k-sivan-to-take-over-as-isro-chief/articleshow/62451313.cms>