

(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.)

Global trade fell 3% in Q1 of 2020 due to Covid-19; may slide further: UN

The coronavirus pandemic has led to a three per cent drop in global trade in the first quarter of 2020 and this downturn is expected to accelerate in the next quarter to project a whopping quarter-on-quarter decline of 27 per cent, the UN trade body has warned. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) said in a report that the drop in global trade was accompanied by marked decreases in commodity prices, which have fallen precipitously since December last year. The report is a product of cooperation between the international statistics community and national statistical offices and systems around the world, coordinated by UNCTAD. "Everywhere governments are pressed to make post-Covid-19 recovery decisions with long-lasting consequences," said UNCTAD Secretary-General Mukhisa Kituyi. The coronavirus pandemic cut global trade values by 3 per cent in the first quarter of this year, according to the latest data published in the joint report by 36 international organisations.

Business Standard - 15.05.2020

https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/global-trade-fell-3-in-q1-of-2020-due-to-covid-19-may-slide-further-un-120051400299_1.html

India Ratings puts April revenue loss for 21 states at ₹97,100 crore

Twenty one major states could be staring at a collective revenue loss of ₹97,100 crore in April alone, according to a report by India Ratings (Ind-Ra) released on Wednesday. The disruption to the economy was so swift and severe that even if the lockdown was lifted in mid-May, economic normalcy would be unlikely until the second quarter of the fiscal, the report added. "Under the current circumstances there is a fair amount of uncertainty regarding the quantum and timings of the state governments' receivables from the union government. Moreover, their own sources of revenue have fallen to abysmally low levels," the report by Anuradha Basumatari, associate director at Ind-Ra, said. According to the paper, states' own revenue mainly comes from seven heads – state goods and services tax (SGST), state VAT

Indian economy may contract by 45% in June quarter: Goldman Sachs

Goldman Sachs on Sunday said India's economy may contract by a whopping 45% in June quarter and that the FY21 projected dip of 5% in GDP would be deeper compared to all "recessions" India has ever experienced. Earlier the investment bank had estimated India's growth to shrink 20% in June quarter and 0.4% in FY21. It is now forecasting global growth to contract 3.6% in 2020 compared with -2.5% estimated earlier, with risks remaining on the downside. "In India, the virus continues to spread, the nationwide lockdown continues till 17th May and the Prime Minister already announced it will be extended, with gradual relaxation of restrictions, while concerns among consumers and businesses continue. The deeper trough in our Q2 (June quarter) forecasts reflects the extremely poor economic data we have received so far for March and April, and the continued lockdown measures, which are among the most stringent across the world," Goldman Sachs said in a report.

Mint - 18.05.2020

<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/indian-economy-may-contract-by-45-in-june-quarter-goldman-sachs-11589728732340.html>

COVID-19 could cost 135 million jobs, push 120 million people into poverty in India: Report

Following the COVID-19-induced economic disruptions, up to 135 million jobs could be lost and 120 million people might be pushed back into poverty in India, all of which will have a hit on consumer income, spending and savings, says a report. According to a new report by international management consulting firm Arthur D Little, the worst of COVID-19's impact will be felt by India's most vulnerable in terms of job loss, poverty increase and reduced per-capita income, which in turn will result in a steep decline in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). "Given the continued rise of COVID-19 cases, we believe that a W-shaped recovery is the most likely scenario for India. This implies a GDP contraction of 10.8 per cent in FY 2020-21

(mainly petroleum products), state excise (mainly liquor), stamps and registration fees, tax on vehicle, tax and duty on electricity and own non-tax revenue. States which have a high share of own revenue in their total revenue, such as Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, TN, Telangana, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Kerala with 65%-76% would be the worst affected, according to Ind-Ra.

The Economic Times - 14.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/india-ratings-puts-april-revenue-loss-for-21-states-at-97100-crore/75731419>

Exports sink 60%

Contracting for the second straight month, India's exports shrank a record 60.28 per cent in April to \$10.36 billion, mainly on account of the coronavirus lockdown. Imports plunged 58.65 per cent to \$17.12 billion in April, leaving a trade deficit of \$6.76 billion against \$15.33 billion in April 2019, according to data by the commerce and industry ministry. This is the lowest trade deficit since May 2016, when it had stood at \$6.27 billion. The country's exports had declined 34.57 per cent in March 2020. "The decline in exports has been mainly because of the ongoing global slowdown, which got aggravated because of the current Covid-19 crisis. The latter resulted in large-scale disruptions in supply chains and demand resulting in cancellation of orders," the ministry said in a statement. Except iron ore and pharmaceuticals, all the remaining 28 key sectors registered a decline in growth during the month under review. Gems and jewellery shipments declined 98.74 per cent, followed by leather (-93.28 per cent), petroleum products (-66.22 per cent), engineering goods (-64.76 per cent), and chemicals (-42 per cent).

The Telegraph - 16.05.2020

<https://www.telegraphindia.com/business/coronavirus-lockdown-india-exports-sink-60/cid/1773284>

Covid lockdown effect: Industrial output shrinks 16.7% in March

In what showed the enormity of the blow the Covid-19 pandemic and resultant lockdown has dealt to the economy, the country's industrial production contracted a steep 16.7% in March, 2020 versus 2.7% growth in the year-ago month, and 4.5% expansion in the previous month. Though most analysts expected a significant contraction of industrial output in March, as the

and GDP growth of 0.8 per cent in FY 2021-22," the report said. India's COVID-19 tally has crossed 90,000 and the nationwide death toll has touched nearly 2,800 so far. The report titled "India: Surmounting the economic challenges posed by COVID-19: A 10-point programme to revive and power India's post-COVID economy" said the 'collateral damage' of the forecasted GDP slowdown, will be felt most acutely in employment, poverty alleviation, per-capita income and overall nominal GDP.

The Economic Times - 17.05.2020

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/covid-19-could-cost-135-million-jobs-push-120-million-people-into-poverty-in-india-report/articleshow/75785601.cms>

Fiscal deficit to balloon to 7.9% in FY21: Report

With the government's Rs 20 lakh crore stimulus package, the country's fiscal deficit is likely to be more than double to 7.9 per cent in the current financial year, according to an SBI research report. The report had earlier estimated the fiscal deficit to be 3.5 per cent of GDP this fiscal. The government has announced a cumulative package of Rs 20 lakh crore, which is nearly 10 per cent of GDP to provide relief to various segments of the coronavirus-hit economy. "After taking into account cash outflow of these measures as well as the previous and the recent excise duty hike and DA freeze (amounting to around 0.8 per cent of GDP), we now revise our baseline fiscal deficit (excluding extra budgetary resources (EBR)) to 7.9 per cent of the revised GDP in FY21 from 3.5 per cent earlier, owing to lower revenues and higher expenditure against the backdrop of COVID-19 pandemic," the SBI's research report Ecowrap. said. Baseline fiscal deficit based on CSO's earlier estimates of GDP is around 7.1 per cent of GDP, it added.

The Economic Times - 14.05.2020

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/fiscal-deficit-to-balloon-to-7-9-in-fy21-report/articleshow/75736233.cms>

Govt releases truncated April WPI inflation data; reports 10.12 per cent deflation in fuel, power basket

The government on Thursday released truncated data for April wholesale price-based inflation saying there was limited transaction of products in the market due to the outbreak of COVID-19. As per the data released by the Commerce and Industry Ministry, wholesale price index (WPI) deflation in primary articles

last week of the month saw imposition of lockdown, the extent of the fall was far more pronounced than the expectations. This is the sharpest monthly contraction since the inception of the 2011-12 index of industrial production (IIP) base series. Obviously, the contraction would likely be far worse in April, the month that witnessed lockdown throughout; May is unlikely to be far better either, even though there are early signs of some 20% of the businesses being recovered. "The contraction in the industrial output is in line with reduction in eight core sector growth (-6.5%) in March 2020. Decline in the industrial output has been broad-based across sectors as well as in the use-based categories," CARE Ratings wrote. Capital goods segment, that has proved to be very volatile but still seen as a proxy of investment momentum, registered a sharp and unprecedented contraction of 35.6% in March, while consumer goods output fell by 33.1%.

The Financial Express - 13.05.2020

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/lockdown-effect-industrial-output-shrinks-16-7-in-march/1956864/>

PSUs playing a key role in saving lives, jobs: IMF blog

The pandemic has highlighted the role of the public sector in saving lives and livelihoods". That might sound like something straight out of a left wing publication, but it's actually the opening of a blog by officials of the biggest champion of privatisation, the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Emblematic of how the world is viewing the public sector through new lenses thanks to the crisis, the blog post concludes that well-governed and financially healthy state-owned enterprises can help combat crises such as the pandemic and promote development goals. Authored by a senior economist and two senior officials in the fiscal affairs department of the IMF, the blog post titled 'State-Owned Enterprises in the Time of Covid-19' adds that state-owned enterprises such as public utilities that provide essential services and public banks that provide loans to small businesses are part of that effort. "Governments create the enterprises to meet specific goals and mandates, such as the provision of water, electricity, or transportation routes that the private sector would not find profitable. However, these mandates are often not appropriately funded, with consequences for people's lives.

The Times of India - 12.05.2020

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=TOIKM%2F2020%2F05%2F12&entity=Ar00521&sk=5C332AC6&mode=text>

was 0.79 per cent in April, as against an inflation of 3.72 per cent in March. The fuel and power basket saw a deflation of 10.12 per cent in April, against 1.76 per cent deflation in the previous month. "In view of the limited transactions of products in the wholesale market in April 2020 due to the spread of COVID-19, it has been decided to release the price movement of selected sub-groups/groups of WPI, following the principles of adequacy," an official statement said. All commodities WPI could not be computed for April-2020 due to non-availability of manufactured product group index, it added. It said the price indices of primary articles have been computed based on mandi prices of agricultural items; ex-mine prices of minerals; prices of crude petroleum and natural gas.

The Economic Times - 14.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/govt-releases-truncated-april-wpi-inflation-data-reports-10-12-per-cent-deflation-in-fuel-power-basket/75734159>

Public sector enterprises in non-strategic sectors to be privatised

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman today said the government will privatise public sector units or public sector enterprises (PSEs) in non-strategic sectors. A list of strategic sectors will also be announced in which only one to four public sector enterprises will remain, the finance minister said, as part of a slew of measures to kickstart the economy. In strategic sectors, at least one enterprise will remain in the public sector but private sector will also be allowed. To minimize wasteful administrative costs, number of PSEs in strategic sectors will be ordinarily be only one to four. Others will be privatised/merged or brought under holding companies. The finance minister said there is a need for coherent policy where all sectors are open to the private sector while public sector enterprises will play an important role in defined areas. Sitharaman also today said no fresh insolvency cases would be initiated for up to a year, in a move to avoid a wave of bankruptcies from companies hit by the coronavirus outbreak.

Mint - 17.05.2020

<https://www.livemint.com/companies/news/public-sector-units-psus-in-non-strategic-sectors-to-be-privatised-11589698010329.html>

Govt signals retreat of PSUs even across 'strategic sector'

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday unveiled the government's plan to limit the role of public sector companies across the economy, while announcing assistance to help migrants, companies and state governments tackle the impact of the Covid-19 crisis, and provided more money for the rural job guarantee programme. Although these steps will impact the focus segments immediately, there were initiatives such as infectious disease blocks in every districts and labs in every block that are expected to take time before they can be implemented. There were also steps to enable children to attend classes from home using a television broadcast with 200 new electronic textbooks to be added to aid learning. The FM said the government will soon announce a new policy for public sector enterprises which will pave the way for the entry of private companies in all sectors where state-run firms are present. Even in the strategic sectors, PSU presence will be limited to 1-4 entities while in the other segments of the economy, the government will privatise state-run companies.

The Times of India - 18.05.2020

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/govt-signals-retreat-of-psus-even-across-strategic-sectors/articleshow/75795778.cms>

12 lakh EPFO members withdraw Rs 3,360 cr retirement savings during lockdown: FM

FM Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said around 12 lakh members of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) withdrew Rs 3,360 crore retirement savings during the coronavirus-induced lockdown. Earlier, on March 28, the EPFO allowed formal sector workers to withdraw a non-refundable advance from their retirement savings to deal with the hardships due to the lockdown. The government on March 25 imposed a nationwide lockdown to fight the Covid-19 pandemic. Unveiling the fifth and final tranche of the Rs 20-lakh crore economic package, FM Sitharaman on Sunday said 12 lakh members of the EPFO have withdrawn as non-refundable advance of Rs 3,360 crore during the past two months. The EPFO, under the Union labour and employment ministry, has settled a total of 12 lakh claims under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) package. The provision for a special withdrawal from the EPF Scheme to fight the coronavirus pandemic is part of the PMGKY scheme announced by the government and an

EPF contribution of private sector employers, employees cut to 10% for 3 months

Government has reduced statutory EPF contribution of private sector employers and employees from the current mandated 12% to 10% for next 3 months, in an attempt to provide relief against coronavirus. The EPF cut will be applicable for the month of June, July and August 2020. However, for government PSUs the employers contribution will remain at 12% but PSU employees can pay 10%. This was one of the covid relief measures announced by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman at a press conference dated May 13, 2020. The move will reduce the total contribution to an employee's EPF corpus. However, reduction in the employee's contribution from 12% to 10% may increase the take home salary or the cash-in-hand of the employee. Puneet Gupta, Director, EY India says, "For all employees covered under the EPF Scheme, the rate of employer's and employee's contribution is 12% of monthly basic pay. Today, the Government has announced that the rate of both employer's and employee's contribution will be reduced to 10% of monthly pay. The reduced rates will be applicable for next 3 months.

The Economic Times - 15.05.2020

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/wealth/invest/epf-contribution-of-private-sector-employers-employees-cut-to-10-for-3-months/articleshow/75717733.cms>

Work from home to be new normal for govt offices after lifting of lockdown

Work from home may become a new normal post-lockdown for government employees to ensure social distancing norms till the coronavirus pandemic is checked. Draft guidelines in this regard have been circulated by the Personnel Ministry to all central government departments asking them to send their comments on it by May 21, failing which, it would be presumed that they are in agreement with the proposed draft. Preparing for life amid Covid-19 pandemic, the ministry said that the steps were being initiated because the virus necessitated many ministries to operate from home to maintain social distancing. According to the draft, the government may provide option for work from home to the eligible officers and staff for 15 days in a year as a matter of policy. There are 4.83 million central government employees. Many of the ministries and departments in government have successfully managed and rendered exemplary results in combat against the ongoing pandemic outbreak during the lockdown period by

urgent notification on the matter was made to introduce a para 68 L (3) of the EPF Scheme on March 28, 2020.

The Economic Times - 18.05.2020

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/12-lakh-epfo-members-withdrawals-3360-cr-retirement-savings-during-lockdown-fm/articleshow/75786135.cms>

No pay cut for central government employees, finance ministry clarifies

Amid reports that the central government might impose pay cuts on some categories of central government employees to ease pressure on government's expenditure during lockdown, the finance ministry today clarified that no such move is being planned. "There is no proposal under consideration of Govt for any cut whatsoever in the existing salary of any category of central government employees. The reports in some section of media are false and have no basis whatsoever," the finance ministry said on Twitter. Last month, the government had frozen dearness allowance (DA) for 50 lakh central government employees and dearness relief (DR) for 61 lakh pensioners till June 2021 due to the COVID-19 crisis. However, central government employees and pensioners will continue to receive DA and DR, respectively, at the current rate of 17% till June 30, 2021. Besides the healthcare cost, the government is also faced with the additional burden of giving booster or stimulus to sectors and industries hit by a nationwide lockdown.

Mint - 17.05.2020

<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/no-pay-cut-for-central-government-employees-finance-ministry-clarifies-11589192058596.html>

India's fuel demand recovers in May

India's fuel demand is recovering fast in May after falling at a record pace in April following the easing of lockdown that has permitted more vehicles on the roads and increased factory activity. The diesel and petrol sales by state oil companies have fallen by 28% and 47.5%, respectively, in the first fortnight of May from a year earlier, according to industry executives. This is a sharp improvement from April, when the sale of diesel and petrol had declined by 56.5% and 61%, respectively. State companies control nearly 90% of domestic fuel sales. A staggered easing of nationwide lockdown has got many factories humming back to life and more goods trucks and passenger cars on the roads, driving up demand for fuel. The first fortnight of April, which overlapped with the first

leveraging e-office and video conferencing facilities of National Informatics Centre (NIC).

Business Standard - 15.05.2020

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/work-from-home-to-be-new-normal-for-govt-offices-after-lifting-of-lockdown-120051500019_1.html

Fuel consumption declines in April, ATF falls over 90 per cent as airlines remain grounded

The nationwide lockdown to contain Covid-19 outbreak is seriously denting fuel demand in world's third biggest consuming nation putting a question mark on sustenance of recent surge in global oil prices. In April, fuel consumption fell more than 65 per cent as over a month of lockdown down curbed economic activity and restricted travel and transportation affecting sale and demand of auto fuels. Petrol consumption in April, 2020 stood at 9,73,000 tonne, a sharp fall of around 60 per cent from consumption of 2.4 million tonnes in April, 2019. Also, diesel, which is consumed extensively by the transportation and agricultural sectors, the demand fell sharply by about 55 per cent to 3.25 million tonnes from 7.3 million tonne in April, 2019. The suspension of passenger flights during lockdown also resulted in a collapse in demand for aviation turbine fuel (ATF). The consumption of ATF in April declined sharply by close to 90 per cent to a mere 56,000 tonne last month from a level of 6,45,000 tonne in April, 2019.

The Economic Times - 12.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/fuel-consumption-declines-in-april-atf-falls-over-90-per-cent-as-airlines-remain-grounded/75674798>

India's gas demand gradually picking up as virus restrictions ease

India's natural gas consumption is recovering slowly as the world's biggest lockdown starts to ease with the gradual resumption of economic and industrial activity, several industry sources said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is starting to pull back from one of the world's tightest lockdowns of 1.3 billion people, which has left millions out of work and stranded in cities far from home while infections keep rising. The government has already allowed some economic activity to resume in areas where there are few cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus. "Gas demand is rising as some industries are back, like chemicals and pharmaceuticals. Every

and the strictest phase of the nationwide lockdown imposed to stem the spread of coronavirus had witnessed the sharpest fall in fuel demand with diesel and petrol sales falling 61% and 64%, respectively, from a year earlier.

The Economic Times - 17.05.2020

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/indias-fuel-demand-recovers-in-may/articleshow/75786632.cms>

OPEC slashes oil demand forecast again, sees biggest hit this quarter

OPEC slashed its forecast on Wednesday for global oil demand this year and predicted this quarter would see the steepest decline even as some countries ease lockdown measures designed to stem the coronavirus outbreak. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries now expects global demand to contract by 9.07 million barrels per day (bpd), or 9.1 per cent, in 2020, it said in a monthly report. Last month, OPEC expected a contraction of 6.85 million bpd. Oil prices have collapsed as government lockdowns curtailed travel and economic activity, tipping countries into recession. While some places in Europe and Asia have eased restrictions, concern of new virus outbreaks has kept a lid on oil prices. To tackle the drop in demand, OPEC and its allies agreed to a record supply cut that started on May 1, while the United States and other nations said they would pump less. OPEC said these curbs were already helping.

The Economic Times - 14.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/opec-slashes-oil-demand-forecast-again-sees-biggest-hit-this-quarter/75728396>

Crude oil prices back at early April highs as demand shows signs of picking up

Oil prices touched a one and a half month high on Friday amid signs demand for crude was picking up, with China reporting increased refinery runs and rounding out a week of bullish news on the supply front. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) oil was up 65 cents, or 2.36 per cent, at \$28.21 a barrel at 0938 GMT, after reaching \$28.75, its highest level since early April. WTI jumped 9 per cent in the previous session. Brent crude was up 81 cents, or 2.6 per cent at \$31.94 a barrel, after touching \$32.50 the highest level since April 13. Brent rose nearly 7 per cent on Thursday. Both contracts are on track for a third consecutive week of gains. "Further signs of demand recovery together with deepening production cuts from OPEC+ as well as shut-ins and natural declines by non-OPEC+ is helping oil prices to recover," Bjarne

industry wants to start operations," a liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry official based in India said. "Some textile, ceramic, and steel (businesses) have started operations, (and) demand from refineries is back to normal."

The Economic Times - 15.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/indias-gas-demand-gradually-picking-up-as-virus-restrictions-ease/75757088>

Petrol, diesel prices may rise again after daily price revision restarts

Amid Covid-19 disruption, fuel consumers could further face the heat from rising fuel prices with public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs) bracing up to restart daily price revision of the retail price of petrol and diesel later this month. Sources in OMCs said the daily price revision of auto fuels may start again once the lockdown is lifted or more relaxations are announced by the government later in the month. However, no decision has been taken on it now. If this happens, petrol and diesel prices can start rising again every day as global oil market has also studied gaining more than 50 per cent over last months prices to around \$30 a barrel now. "Petrol and diesel prices have not been revised since March 16 (it went up in Delhi on May 5 only after state government raised VAT) and that gave cushion to the government to steeply raise excise duty on the two products without impacting their retail prices.

The Hindustan Times - 11.05.2020

<https://auto.hindustantimes.com/auto/news/petrol-diesel-prices-may-rise-again-after-daily-price-revision-restarts-41589180006142.html>

Global oil refining could rebound in June, but margins weak: IEA

Global oil refining production could start rebounding in June, the International Energy Agency said on Thursday, but refiners' margins may be squeezed due to rising crude prices as producers slashed output much faster than expected. Refiners throttled back output globally as the coronavirus pandemic sent billions of people into lockdown and cut fuel demand by 30 per cent. Crude prices crashed, prompting the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies, known as OPEC+, agreed to cut oil output by 9.7 million barrels per day (bpd), while other nations have also reduced output. "If crude supply adjusts more quickly to the oversupply than forecast, this will support crude prices and depress refinery margins, resulting in lower refining

Schioldrop, chief SEB commodities analyst, said. Amid supply cuts by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other major producers, bright spots are also emerging on the demand side. Data released on Friday showed China's daily crude oil use rebounded in April as refineries ramped up operations.

The Economic Times - 16.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/crude-oil-prices-back-at-early-april-highs-as-demand-shows-signs-of-picking-up/75757260>

IEA projects gradual relaxation of restrictions to help oil demand recover in 2020

The gradual relaxation of Covid-related restrictions on movement is expected to help global oil demand recover faster in 2020 as compared to earlier assessments, International Energy Agency (IEA) said as part of its May oil market report. According to IEA, oil demand in 2020 is expected to decline by 8.6 million barrels per day, as compared to an earlier assessment of 9.3 million barrels per day. "In this report, we raised our 2020 oil demand change estimate by 690 kb/d from the previous edition to 91.2 mb/d. Oil consumption will fall this year by the largest amount in history, 8.6 mb/d, although the estimated decline is a bit less than last month's estimate of 9.3 mb/d," IEA said. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) on the other hand has projected oil demand to contract further in 2020, as compared to its earlier assessments. OPEC as part of its May oil market report released yesterday projected global oil demand to contract by 9.07 million barrels per day in 2020, as compared to an earlier assessment of 6.85 million barrels per day.

The Economic Times - 15.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/iea-projects-gradual-relaxation-of-restrictions-to-help-oil-demand-recover-in-2020/75738298>

Crude oil prices to stabilise over next 4-6 quarters: Report

Crude oil crash is creating several headwinds for both upstream and downstream companies, a report said expecting prices to stabilise over the next four-six quarters given the shape of the global economy. While the global economy is projected to contract 3 per cent this year, the domestic economy is forecast to stall completely, though may stave off contraction, according to many analysts. India, the third largest fuel consumer and importer, is under a seven-week

throughput than anticipated," the IEA said in its monthly oil market report. In recent days, several OPEC nations including Saudi Arabia said they will cut output more than originally pledged. Producers in the United States and Canada have cut production by 1.7 million bpd, much faster than expected.

The Economic Times - 16.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/global-oil-refining-could-rebound-in-june-but-margins-weak-iaa/75748806>

OPEC sees oil market already rebalancing

The rebalancing of the oil market is underway and will accelerate, the OPEC cartel said Wednesday, days after some of its members voluntarily increased their production cuts. The world oil market was thrown into disarray earlier this year as lockdown measures imposed by governments to slow the spread of the coronavirus led to plunge in demand just as crude producers had been stepping up output in a war for market share. Prices tumbled, with the price of the benchmark US oil futures contract briefly plunging below zero. But OPEC and its allies have agreed on major cuts in production, by 9.7 million barrels per day, and the cartel believes an improvement is on the horizon. "The speedy supply adjustments in addressing the current acute imbalance in the global oil market has already started showing positive response, with rebalancing expected to pick up faster in the coming quarters," OPEC said in its monthly report. The collapse in oil prices -- the main international benchmark has fallen by half since the start of the year -- is leading some producers to shut down wells and the cartel now expects non-OPEC production to decline by 3.5 million barrels per day this year.

The Economic Times - 14.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/opec-sees-oil-market-already-rebalancing/75728644>

OPEC+ wants to maintain oil output cuts beyond June – sources

OPEC and its allies want to maintain existing oil cuts beyond June when the OPEC+ group is next due to meet to shore up prices and demand, which has been hit by the coronavirus pandemic, four OPEC+ sources said on Tuesday. Global oil demand has slumped by about 30 per cent as the crisis has curtailed travel and economic activity, building up oil inventories globally. Brent crude prices fell 65.6 per cent in the first quarter, before the OPEC+

COVID-19 lockdown ending on May 17, has seen demand almost halving during the national shuttering, while the global demand crimped by 30 per cent in April, when almost the whole world was under lockdowns. The prices fell also because crude has been in substantial oversupply since February. According to an analysis by domestic rating agency Icra, Brent crude is likely to trade in the range of USD 20 to USD 40 a barrel in the medium term or till the COVID-19 infections abate, as the world is fearing a second wave of the pandemic from next winter.

The Economic Times - 13.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/crude-oil-prices-to-stabilise-over-next-4-6-quarters-report/75707244>

State refiners spent more than they had planned in 2019-20

Hindustan Petroleum, Bharat Petroleum, Indian Oil and ONGC Videsh exceeded their capital expenditure targets in 2019-20, more than offsetting slower spending by GAIL, ONGC and Oil India, as India's state-run oil companies together spent 6 per cent more than their annual capex target last fiscal year. Their combined capex of Rs 98,955 crore was also 3.4 per cent higher than what they had spent in 2018-19, according to the oil ministry data. Oil companies have been off to a slow start this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdowns in several countries that have severely restricted movement of men and material across the globe, affecting projects. Companies are, however, now gearing up as India and others begin to reopen their economies and start lifting travel curbs. They also plan to speed up projects to make up for the lost time. ONGC, a heavy spender traditionally, invested Rs 30,100 crore, the highest last year. Indian Oil Corp followed with Rs 28,300 crore.

The Economic Times - 12.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/state-refiners-spent-more-than-they-had-planned-in-2019-20/75692118>

Gas production to remain a loss-making proposition for upstream producers: ICRA

Domestic gas production is expected to remain a loss-making proposition for most Indian upstream producers in financial year 2020-2021 as prices are expected to remain subdued, rating and research firm ICRA said today. "Gas prices at various international gas hubs have declined, which would lead to lower domestic gas prices in FY2021. Accordingly, the domestic gas production

grouping agreed its deepest oil cuts. OPEC and its allies, led by Russia, who are known as OPEC+, agreed in April to cut output by 9.7 million bpd for May and June, a record reduction. While producers will slowly relax curbs after June, supply reductions will remain to April 2022. "The ministers want to keep the same oil production cuts now which are about 10 million bpd, after June. They don't want to reduce the size of the cuts. This is the basic scenario that's being discussed now," one OPEC+ source told Reuters.

The Economic Times - 13.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/opec-wants-to-maintain-oil-output-cuts-beyond-june-sources/75707174>

Fitch Ratings says higher risks to Indian oil marketing firms' standalone profiles

Standalone credit profiles of India's oil marketing companies are at greater risk of downward revision due to the coronavirus-induced drop in demand and refining margins, and their continued investments, Fitch Ratings said on Monday. However, the Issuer Default Ratings (IDRs) of Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL), which are driven by sovereign linkages through the state's direct or indirect ownership, will remain stable. "We expect the net leverage of the three companies to weaken over the financial year ended March 2020 (FY20) and FY21 to levels where we would consider revising their SCPs (standalone credit profile) downwards, before improving to in line with their current SCPs from FY22. The weakened metrics leave minimal headroom for the SCPs of HPCL and BPCL and limited headroom for IOC's," it said.

The Economic Times - 12.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/fitch-ratings-says-higher-risks-to-indian-oil-marketing-firms-standalone-profiles/75676905>

India up at 74th place on WEF's global energy transition index

India has moved up two positions to rank 74th on a global 'Energy Transition Index' with improvements on all key parameters of economic growth, energy security and environmental sustainability, the World Economic Forum (WEF) said on Wednesday. Releasing the annual rankings, the Geneva-based international organisation for public-private cooperation said Covid-19 will

will remain a loss-making proposition for most fields for the upstream producers, notwithstanding some decline in oilfield services/equipment cost," K Ravichandran, senior vice-president at ICRA said. Ravichandran said the recent sharp drop in crude oil prices is a credit negative for the upstream sector as their realisations and cash accruals will decline. According to ICRA, the credit metrics of Indian upstream players will further weaken materially in the near-term unless the government provides some relief on fiscal levies like royalty, cess and profit petroleum, along with changes in domestic gas pricing formula.

The Economic Times - 12.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/production-to-remain-a-loss-making-proposition-for-upstream-producers-icra/75700381>

PM sees India's tourism potential in Post-Covid world

With the world-famous tourist spots in Europe badly-affected due to coronavirus, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday told Chief Ministers that he saw a big potential going ahead for domestic tourism in India and drawing world tourists to India. ET has learnt that Prime Minister said Centre and all states have to seriously think how the "post-Corona tourism" would look like as India had adequate opportunities for the same. PM also said that the contours of such domestic tourism in the days to come need to be examined. PM is said to have remarked that he saw domestic tourism as one area which could benefit most going ahead in the post-Corona world and play a part in revving up the economy. States should work on new protocols for their hotel infrastructure and other tourist facilities to align them with needs of a post-Corona world, CMs were told. "Idea is to attract the world tourists to India," an official said. The Union Tourism Ministry and states could work closely on this idea as the PM said economic activities have to be speeded up. A senior official in the office of one Chief Minister told ET that it was apparent that people in India and abroad could avoid international travel to top tourist-countries like Italy, Spain, France and UK in the months to come given spread of coronavirus there, even though these countries may open up soon.

The Economic Times - 13.05.2020

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2020%2F05%2F13&entity=Ar00205&sk=4F6F38A7&mode=text>

Leather Industry may face \$1.5-billion loss

compromise the transition to clean energy without an urgent stakeholder action as unprecedented disruptions due to the pandemic threaten this transition. In its report, the WEF said its study measuring readiness for clean energy transition in 115 economies showed that 94 have made progress since 2015, but environmental sustainability continues to lag. Sweden has topped the Energy Transition Index (ETI) for the third consecutive year and is followed by Switzerland and Finland in the top three. Surprisingly, France (ranked 8th) and the UK (7th) are the only G20 countries in the top ten.

The Hindustan Times - 13.05.2020

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/business-news/india-up-at-74th-place-on-wef-s-global-energy-transition-index/story-0IoQqmRmjqqNeOc2XxyQBK.html>

Airlines may soon get nod to resume limited operations

India may allow airlines to partially resume operations in the latter half of May or early June, said top government officials. Days after train services were allowed on a limited scale, the government may allow some flights to operate between key cities. "We are discussing restarting of operations," said a senior government official, who requested anonymity. "It may happen during the current month itself, and the plan is not to extend it (the ban on flights) beyond the first week of June." India grounded all commercial flights from March 25 after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus. Details about flight operations are not clear yet and many airlines have not been informed. Meanwhile, discussions are in final stages on finalising standard operating procedures for passengers. Fliers are likely to be allowed to book middle seats, though senior citizens will be advised not to travel. Cabin bags will be banned. Passengers will be tested for fever at airports and will have to wear protective gear such as gloves, face masks and head covers. ET had reported on April 29 that the government will give a 10-day advance notice to passengers and airlines before restarting flights.

The Economic Times - 13.05.2020

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETM%2F2020%2F05%2F13&entity=Ar00410&sk=B693067C&mode=text>

Shri Pradip Kumar Das assumes charge as CMD IREDA

India's leather industry is staring at an export loss of \$1.5 billion due to the Covid-19 pandemic that has gripped the global markets. Most leather clusters in the country are closed barring the leather complexes in Kolkata and Unnao in Uttar Pradesh, which have just received permission to reopen. India exports leather products worth \$5.5 -6 billion annually. Leather exporters said countries like USA, Germany and Italy have started sending enquiries and are negotiating for a lower price. "Importers from USA, UK, France, Italy, Spain and Germany had either cancelled orders or have put them on hold. Some of them are also delaying payments. The loss is around \$1.5 billion and we do not know when we will be able to recover it," Ramesh Juneja, regional chairman of Council of Leather Exports, told ET. "Most leather clusters in the country are closed. Leather units in Kanpur and Tamil Nadu are not working. Unnao has just started operations with 33% workforce.

The Economic Times - 13.05.2020

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2020%2F05%2F13&entity=Ar00410&sk=C44F7541&mode=text>

K Vinayak Rao takes over as finance member at AAI

K Vinayak Rao, Indian Railways Accounts Service (IRAS) officer of 1987 batch has taken over the charge of Member (Finance) from May 13 on the Board of the Airports Authority of India. Prior to this appointment, Rao was serving as Member (Finance) in Delhi Development Authority (DDA). As Member (Finance) of AAI, Rao will be the overall in-charge of finance, accounts and financial operation of the organisation. He will also be responsible for evolving, formulating policies and strategies related to entire gamut of finance operation, including resource mobilisation and statutory compliances. He will also play a leadership role and provide effective support in achieving sustained growth of the organisation's business. During his tenure in Indian Railways, he has served in various capacities in zonal railways, construction projects, and production units. He has worked as Executive Director (Finance Expenditure) in Railway Board (Ministry of Railways) from 2009 to 2014

Daily Pioneer - 15.05.2020

<https://www.dailypioneer.com/2020/vivacity/k-vinayak--rao-takes-over-as-finance-member-at-aa.html>

Shri Pradip Kumar Das assumed charge as new Chairman & Managing Director (CMD) of Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd. (IREDA) on 6th May 2020. Prior to joining IREDA, he was serving Indian Tourism Development Corporation Ltd. (ITDC) as Director (Finance) and Chief Finance Officer (CFO). Shri Pradip Kumar Das is having a vast experience of Finance sector. While working with REC, BHEL, NPCIL, BHFV, KPL etc. in different capacities, he contributed extensively in formulation and implementation of various systems, new and innovative products, policies, business process re-engineering, etc. He is a Fellow Member of the Institute of Cost Accountants of India and Associate Member of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India. He is also possessing Post-Graduate Diploma in Management from Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar.

PSU Connect - 15.05.2020

<https://www.psuconnect.in/news/Shri-Pradip-Kumar-Das-assumes-charge-as-CMD-IREDA/22637/>

Seema Gupta assumes charge as Director of finance at PowerGrid

State-run Power Grid Corporation on Friday said that its Director (operations) Seema Gupta has assumed additional charge of as Director (finance) of the company. "Ministry of Power order on May 14, 2020, has entrusted the additional charge of the post of the Director (finance) to Seema Gupta, Director (operations) for a period of three months from May 6, 2020, or till the appointment of regular incumbent of the post, or until further orders, whichever is the earliest," a company statement said. It said, as per the government order, Seema Gupta has assumed the additional charge of the post of Director (finance) with immediate effect.

Business Standard - 16.05.2020

https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/seema-gupta-assumes-charge-as-director-of-finance-at-powergrid-120051500570_1.html

GAIL chief Manoj Jain appointed CMD of Mahanagar Gas as well

Manoj Jain, the chairman and managing director of national gas major GAIL, has been appointed as the head of the city gas distributor Mahanagar Gas as well. Jain took over as the chairman and managing director of Mahanagar Gas on May 6, the company, which supplies piped natural gas to households and auto and industrial gas in Mumbai and its suburbs, said in a statement on Thursday. Jain, a mechanical engineer and MBA, has vast experience of over 34 years with GAIL in various fields such as business development, projects, O&M, petrochemicals, pipeline integrity management and marketing. As the CMD of GAIL, he is also the chairman of GAIL subsidiaries such as GAIL Global USA Inc, GAIL Global USA LNG, GAIL Gas, Brahmaputra Cracker & Polymer, Konkan LNG and a director of Petronet LNG. Jain spearheaded installation and commissioning of the USD 1.4 billion grassroots petrochemical complex, as chief operating officer of Brahmaputra Cracker.

The Economic Times - 15.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/gail-chief-manoj-jain-appointed-cmd-of-mahanagar-gas-as-well/75748924>