

(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

### Balmer Lawrie celebrates 155th Foundation Day

Balmer Lawrie & Co. Ltd. celebrated its 155th Foundation Day on February 1. To mark the occasion, A Ratna Sekhar, (HR&CA) and C&MD (Additional Charge) hoisted the company flag and addressed employees at the corporate office in Kolkata. Week-long celebrations including talent hunt, rangoli, photography and painting competitions were organised for the employees. Foundation Day was celebrated in all the regions across the country.

Mid-day – 18.02.2021

## India to be among fastest growing in '21: S&P

India is likely to be among the fastest-growing emerging markets this year, Standard & Poor's predicted, even as the US rating company said new variants of the Covid-19 virus could lead to a much larger second wave and pose a risk to economic recovery. The steep contraction in the current financial year will be followed by a bounce back to 10% growth in FY22, putting India among the fastest-growing economies in 2021, said Andrew Wood, S&P director of sovereign and international public finance ratings. "We see the Indian economy growing at 6% over the medium term, may be slightly higher, and that compares very well to emerging markets all around," he said at a webinar on S&P's India 2021 Outlook on Wednesday. A much larger second wave that could emanate from the new strains of the Covid-19 virus would be a major risk to India's economy, based on the significant impact similar events have had on the recovery paths of other countries, Wood said. "We are also watching India's vaccination campaign very closely to see how well India can mitigate the lurking risks associated with the pandemic as well as new, more transmissible and potentially resistant strains of the SARS-CoV-2 virus," Wood said.

*The Economic Times - 18.02.2021*

## Oxford Economics ups India growth forecast to 10.2% for 2021

Global forecasting firm Oxford Economics on Wednesday revised India's economic growth projection for 2021 to 10.2 per cent from the earlier 8.8 per cent, citing receding COVID-19 risks and the shift in the monetary policy outlook. It further said the Budget 2021-22 will create positive externalities for the private sector, and forecast slower fiscal consolidation in FY22 than the government projections. "Alongside the planned government spending boost in Q1 and receding Covid-19 risks, the shift in the monetary policy outlook supports our 2021 growth upgrade to 10.2 per cent from 8.8 per cent earlier," Oxford Economics said. The forecasting firm also noted that India's latest Union Budget has raised hopes that fiscal policy will finally pick up the growth baton and ease pressure on the RBI to continue to lead the pandemic policy response. "We think the budget proposals will create positive externalities for the private sector, and forecast slower fiscal consolidation in FY2022 than the government projects. "A proposed increase in capital expenditure should also lower the contractionary impact of the consolidation on GDP," it said.

*Business Standard – 18.02.2021*

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2021%2F02%2F18&entity=Ar00904&sk=038B1C30&mode=text>

### **India's GDP to contract 1% in December quarter: Bank of America**

Against the majority view of a rebound in the growth numbers for the December quarter, the house economists at the Wall Street brokerage Bank of America Securities on Tuesday pencilled in a 1 per cent contraction in India's GDP for the third quarter. On an average, economists at almost all the rating agencies and brokerages have forecast 0.4-0.7 per cent positive growth for the economy that has contracted a record high 23.9 per cent in the first quarter and 7.5 per cent in the second quarter of the current fiscal. The contraction in the first half of the current financial year ending March 31, 2021 is 15.7 per cent. Expecting a rebound in the second half, Bank of America Securities India has pencilled in a contraction of only 7-7.7 per cent for the year, still making it the worst on record and the third since Independence. BofA's negative 1 per cent GDP growth assessment comes despite its activity indicator recording a 1.7 per cent growth in December after declining for nine months on the trot.

*The Hindustan Times - 16.02.2021*

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/business/indias-gdp-to-contract-1-in-december-quarter-bank-of-america-101613494025739.html>

### **Muted demand, high costs likely to weigh on corporate profits in FY22**

The reasonably good results for the December 2020 earnings season and the recovery in the coming quarters notwithstanding, profit estimates for FY22 remain below pre-Covid levels. Indeed, while the economy is recovering fast, large pockets remain fragile. While earnings for FY22 will benefit from the low base of FY21, just as the FY21 numbers have benefitted from the low base of FY20, there are a couple of headwinds. The first is the rising prices of commodities, especially crude oil, and it is not certain all businesses will be able to pass on the higher input costs. The muted sales of two-wheelers are evidence they have become unaffordable for many after the price hikes. The second concern is that the demand for a host of consumer goods could peter out once the demand from the more affluent households has been satiated; analysts point out the lockdowns necessitated purchases of homes and also a range of goods. While the sales of affordable homes

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/oxford-economics-ups-india-growth-forecast-to-10-2-for-2021-121021700967\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/oxford-economics-ups-india-growth-forecast-to-10-2-for-2021-121021700967_1.html)

### **GDP to be in growth territory in December qtr., says report**

After two consecutive quarters of contraction, India's Gross domestic product (GDP) is set to revert to the growth territory in the October-December 2020 period compared to the year-ago period, according to a report. Private consumption and government spending will help the economy post a turnaround during the December quarter and the GDP will grow 0.7 per cent, Icria Ratings said in a report on Tuesday. The economy contracted almost by a fourth in the June quarter and by 7.5 per cent in the September quarter in the current fiscal. Even as a recovery is underway, official estimates peg the FY21 contraction at 7.7 per cent. It can be noted that the economic growth has been on a downward spiral for over three years till it went into a contraction mode. "The forecasted growth in Q3 FY21 while undoubtedly mild and uneven is nevertheless welcome as it signifies that the economy has exited the COVID-19 pandemic-induced recession after two tumultuous quarters," the rating agency said.

*The Economic Times - 17.02.2021*

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/gdp-to-be-in-growth-territory-in-december-qtr-says-report/articleshow/80985696.cms>

### **Exports grow for 2nd straight month in Jan**

India's merchandise exports rose for the second consecutive month in January and at a faster pace than seen in preliminary estimates released earlier this month, official data released Monday showed. In an indicator of the recovery in domestic demand, imports increased and the country's trade deficit narrowed to \$14.54 billion. The trade gap was \$15.3 billion in January 2020 and 15.44 billion in December. Merchandise exports rose 6.16% on year in January to \$27.45 billion while imports grew 2.03% to \$41.99 billion in the month with gold imports rising a sharp 154.7% to \$4.03 billion, data released by the commerce and industry ministry showed. Exports had grown 0.14% year on year in December. "January exports signal that our traditional and labour-intensive sectors of exports except apparels and leather have already passed the most challenging and testing times," said

could well retain momentum, whether this holds for more expensive residential properties remains to be seen.

*The Indian Express - 22.02.2021*

<https://indianexpress.com/article/business/economy/muted-demand-high-costs-likely-to-weigh-on-corporate-profits-in-fy22-7198632/>

## **Jan wholesale inflation up to 2.03%**

India's wholesale inflation firmed to 2.03% in January from 1.22% in December, led by manufactured items, official data released on Monday showed. It was 3.52% in January last year. Inflation in manufactured products was 5.13%, up from 4.24% in December. Food inflation was -2.24% in January. Inflation in vegetables and potatoes was -20.82% and -22.04%, respectively, data released by the commerce and industry ministry showed. "The sharp rise in the WPI inflation in January 2021 was led by manufactured non-food products (core items), fuel and power, and crude petroleum and natural gas, even as the primary food inflation eased," said Aditi Nayar, principal economist at ICRA. Inflation in protein-rich items including milk, eggs, meat and fish reduced last month, according to the data. As per CARE Ratings, the higher price of manufactured products is positive for business and has been increasing gradually from June, when the economy was unlocked. "Quite clearly the recovery in commodity prices can be linked with the unlocking process, as producers have also made up for their inability to produce in the first two months of the year by increasing their prices," said Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at CARE Ratings.

*The Economic Times - 16.02.2021*

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx>

## **Bureaucrats no more in-charge of privatisation? Govt mulls external panel to fast-track disinvestment**

India is considering setting up a body comprising of independent experts that will take over the role of privatizing state-run companies once the government decides to divest, according to people with knowledge of the matter. The panel will replace bureaucrats, who currently manage privatization, as well as minority stake sales, the people said asking not to be identified because the discussions are private. The proposal is at an early stage and a final decision hasn't been taken, they said. An external panel will help accelerate the

Sharad Kumar Saraf, president, Federation of Indian Export Organisations, adding that the trend shows an improvement in the order booking position. Of the 30 major export sectors, growth was seen in 22.

*The Economic Times - 16.02.2021*

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2021%2F02%2F16&entity=Ar01107&sk=BFFA687D&mode=text>

## **New performance related pay criteria for CPSEs: Revised pay matrix for employees seen to aid privatisation**

The staff of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) will lose on their performance related pay (PRP), if the firms fail to meet new goals of market capitalisation, return on capital, asset-turnover ratio as well as production and capex targets. These parameters will be included in the PRP criteria under the customary Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) being signed between administrative ministries and individual CPSEs, effective 2021-22 financial year. The move, while seeking to improve the performance of CPSEs, will also help boost investors' interest in these firms, many of which are to be privatised over the next few years under a new policy. Another new parameter being included is Ebitda (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation) which will replace 'operating profits' to capture a firm's operating profitability more accurately. While goals on market capitalisation, asset-turnover ratio and return on capital employed carry 5 marks each in a total of 100, achieving 75% of annual capex target by the third quarter will fetch 2 marks.

*The Financial Express - 22.02.2021*

<https://www.financialexpress.com/money/new-performance-related-pay-criteria-for-cpses-revised-pay-matrix-for-employees-seen-to-aid-privatisation/2199122/>

## **Bidders for govt's stake in CPSEs to submit beneficial ownership details for security clearance**

Foreign and Indian bidders interested in buying government stake in state-owned firms such as BPCL, Air India and BEML, will have to disclose details of the ultimate beneficial owners to get a security clearance. The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) - the government agency managing the stake sale - has issued a proforma of the application for security clearance of the acquirers. According to the proforma, any interest of more than 10 per cent in the bidding

asset sale process and bypass red tape, according to the people. India still hasn't manage to find a buyer for debt-ridden Air India Ltd. even after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet approved the sale in 2017. A finance ministry spokesman declined to comment. Modi's administration earlier this month said it will keep a "bare minimum presence" by running companies in atomic energy, space and defence; transport and telecommunications; power, oil and coal; banking and financial services, according to a notice on the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management's website.

*The Financial Express - 16.02.2021*

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/bureaucrats-no-more-in-charge-of-privatisation-govt-mulls-external-panel-to-fast-track-disinvestment/2195604/>

### **CPSE strategic sale: Govt makes security clearance mandatory for all bidders**

The government has tweaked the guidelines for strategic disinvestment, making security clearance mandatory for all bidders who put in price bids for buying a central public sector enterprise (CPSE). Now, financial bid would be opened by the evaluation committee on strategic disinvestment only after potential suitors get security clearance, an official told. The government has lined up sale of its majority stake along with management control in BPCL, Air India, Shipping Corporation of India, Container Corporation of India, IDBI Bank, BEML, Pawan Hans, Neelachal Ispat Nigam in the next fiscal. The guidance note framed in 2018 on strategic disinvestment by the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) said that the core group on disinvestment, headed by Cabinet Secretary, would decide on a "case-to-case" basis whether security clearance is required for the "highest bidder" for the sale. If the highest bidder does not get security clearance, the next highest bidder was given the option to match the price offered by the highest bidder.

*The Economic Times - 22.02.2021*

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/cpse-strategic-sale-govt-makes-security-clearance-mandatory-for-all-bidders/81144499>

### **EPFO net new enrolments grows 24 per cent to 12.54 lakh in December**

entity would require disclosures of parentage and beneficial ownership to get a security clearance. In case the acquirer is a sole bidder, it has to share with the government details like nationality, address, parentage, Unique ID number of the country of residence and passport number, of its directors and partners. Also details of the shareholders/ members of QIP (All companies/individuals holding more than 10 per cent share/10 per cent voting right /receiving more than 10 per cent of the distributable dividend/ otherwise exercise significant influence) have to be shared with the government while filling up the application form for security clearance.

*The Economic Times - 16.02.2021*

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/bidders-for-govts-stake-in-cpses-to-submit-beneficial-ownership-details-for-security-clearance/articleshow/80987699.cms?from=mdr>

### **Govt is facilitator, pvt sector driver of growth**

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said the Union Budget 2021-22 is about the role of government as a facilitator and the private sector as a key driver of economic growth, without which the country would be losing a big opportunity. The most important component or input required here is the participation of the private sector. Unless the private sector is energised enough, unless the private sector is facilitated enough, India is just losing a very big opportunity, she said here during an interactive session organised by the Bangalore Chamber of Industry and Commerce. Sitharaman underlined that the nation's growing and aspiring needs and demands across the various sectors cannot be served just by the state government and central governments put together. According to the Finance Minister, the Coronavirus vaccine was a big example of government-private partnership. To be a world leader with that specific India touch, which is more humane, which is more about bringing everybody together, which is peaceful, which actually wishes that the world progresses for everybody's good," she told the gathering.

*Millennium Post - 22.02.2021*

<http://www.millenniumpost.in/business/govt-is-facilitator-pvt-sector-driver-of-growth-432429>

### **FM Sitharaman says Centre, States need to work together to lower fuel prices**

Net new enrolments with retirement fund body EPFO grew by 24 per cent to 12.54 lakh in December compared to the same month in 2019, according to the payroll data released on Saturday, providing a perspective on formal sector employment amid the coronavirus pandemic. The Labour Ministry in a statement said that the provisional payroll data of Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) highlights a positive trend for net subscribers base growth with addition of 12.54 lakh subscribers in December, 2020. It stated that year on year comparison of payroll data shows 24 per cent growth for December 2020, indicating return to the pre-Covid levels of subscriber growth for the EPFO. The data reflects increase of 44 per cent in net subscribers addition over the previous month of November, 2020. Despite Covid-19 pandemic, the EPFO added around 53.70 lakh subscribers during the first three quarters of the current financial year (April to December in 2020), the data showed. The third quarter of the current financial year (October-December) has registered a robust 22 per cent growth over the second quarter (July-September) in terms of net payroll addition, the ministry stated.

*The Hindu Business Line - 20.02.2021*

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/epfo-net-new-enrolments-grows-24-per-cent-to-1254-lakh-in-december/article33889613.ece>

### **Centre committed to bringing natural gas under GST regime; plans to spend Rs 7.5 lakh crore on infrastructure: PM Modi**

Asserting that the central government is committed to bringing natural gas under the Goods and Service Tax (GST) regime, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said that centre plans to spend Rs 7.5 lakh crore on creating oil and gas infrastructure over five years. While dedicating and laying the foundation of key oil and gas projects in Tamil Nadu, Prime Minister in his address through video-conferencing said that Indian oil and gas companies are present in 27 countries with an investment worth about Rs 2.70 lakh crore. "We have plans to spend Rs 7.5 lakh crore in creating oil and gas infrastructure over five years. A strong emphasis has been laid on the expansion of the city gas distribution network by covering 470 districts. About 65.2 million tonnes of petroleum products have been exported. This number is expected to rise even further. Our companies have ventured overseas in the acquisition of quality oil and gas assets," PM Modi said. "We are committed to bringing natural gas under the GST regime. I want to tell the world to come and invest in India's energy sector," he added. Prime Minister said that India will generate

Amid an outcry over record high petrol and diesel prices, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said the Centre and state governments will have to together work out a mechanism to bring retail rates to reasonable levels. As much as 60 per cent of the retail price of petrol, which shot above Rs 100-mark in some places in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh and is at an all-time high elsewhere in the country, is made up of central and state taxes. Taxes make up for about 56 per cent of the record high diesel rates. Sitharaman, who had increased central excise duty on petrol and diesel by a record margin last year to mop up gains arising from international oil prices plunging to two-decade low, remained non-committal on cutting taxes to give relief to consumers. "This is a very vexatious issue. An issue in which no answer except reducing the price (of fuel) will convince anyone. I know I am treading on an area and whatever I may say, to bring in the reality into picture, will only sound like I am obfuscating." "I am avoiding my answer. I am shifting the blame," she said addressing a gathering at an event organised by the Chennai Citizens' Forum here.

*The Economic Times - 21.02.2021*

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/fm-sitharaman-says-centre-states-need-to-work-together-to-lower-fuel-prices/81132821>

### **Petrol, diesel price hike: Centre seen raking in Rs 1.9 lakh crore extra from fuel taxes in FY21**

The Centre will earn Rs 1.87 lakh crore in FY21 from the Rs 13-16/litre additional cess and surcharges imposed on auto fuels in March 2020 and later in the month of May of the same year. Going by the projection of 8% rise in fuel demand in FY22, the Centre's incremental income from the two auto fuels could be over Rs 2 lakh crore, if it chooses not to reduce the tax rates. On Tuesday, retail petrol price in Delhi touched an all-time high of Rs 89.29/litre, rising by Rs 4.69/litre since the same day a month ago, as OMCs gradually increased the base-price of the products amid rising international crude prices. The base price (price to the dealer) comprises 36% of the retail petrol rates in Delhi, while state VAT makes up 23% and central taxes account for 37% of the final fuel price paid by the end user. Freight charges and dealer commission (around 3%) are the other components of the final price. The government estimates petrol and diesel consumption in FY21 to be 101.6 million tonne, down 9.8% from FY20. Despite lower demand, the Union government's income from taxes on

40 per cent of all its energy from renewable sources by 2030.

*The Economic Times - 18.02.2021*

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/centre-committed-to-bringing-natural-gas-under-gst-regime-plans-to-spend-rs-7-5-lakh-crore-on-infrastructure-pm-modi/81081627>

### **Petrol at ₹100: India asks OPEC to ease output cuts**

India, the world's third-biggest oil consumer, on Wednesday urged Saudi Arabia and other global oil producers to ease production cuts, saying rising international oil prices are hurting economic recovery and demand. Demand recovery should take "primacy" over oil prices at least for the next few months, Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said. International oil prices have been on the boil since Saudi Arabia pledged additional voluntary output cuts of 1 million barrels per day in February and March under a deal between the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies including Russia, a group known as OPEC. This has resulted in oil prices rising to USD 63 per barrel, the highest level in more than a year, leading to retail pump rates in India breaching the ₹100 a litre mark. "The rising crude oil prices during the last few weeks is hurting the fragile global economic recovery due to significant demand contraction, which might even mirror the impact of COVID-19 in its initial stages," Pradhan said at the 11th IEA IEF OPEC Symposium on Energy Outlooks.

*Mint - 18.02.2021*

<https://www.livemint.com/industry/energy/petrol-at-rs-100-india-asks-opec-to-ease-output-cuts-11613571767683.html>

### **India's natural gas production down 13% year-on-year in April-August**

India's natural gas production fell 13.2% during April-August compared to a 1% fall registered in the corresponding period last fiscal, said Care Ratings in a note. The cumulative fall in production was primarily a result of restricted or negligible offtake by consumers due to the pandemic and ensuing lockdowns. While domestic production from onshore fields was around 34%, coal-bed methane (CBM) fields contributed around 2% to total natural gas production during April-August. "Major part of the output however was from the offshore gas fields which constituted around 64% of the total domestic natural gas production.

petrol and diesel in set to rise a whopping 82% to Rs 4 lakh crore in the current fiscal.

*The Financial Express - 17.02.2021*

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/petrol-diesel-price-hike-centre-seen-raking-in-rs-1-9-lakh-crore-extra-from-fuel-taxes-in-fy21/2195998/>

### **India's January crude processing scales over 1-yr peak**

India's crude oil processing registered its second straight year-on-year gain in January, while hitting a more than one-year high, as fuel demand improved on the back of a gradual increase in industrial and economic activity. Crude oil throughput in January rose 0.6 per cent year on year to 5.16 million barrels per day (21.81 million tonnes), the highest since November 2019, provisional government data showed on Friday. Throughput was also up 3.8 per cent from the previous month. India's factory activity expanded at its strongest pace in three months in January, fuelled by a continued recovery in demand and output, according to a private survey. However, an uptick in global oil prices posed a roadblock to the gradual recovery in demand. Indian refiners operated at an average rate of 102.8 per cent in January, slightly up from 102.6 per cent in the same month last year and above December's 99.1 per cent, the government data showed. Refineries can operate at more than their usual capacity through technical alterations. The country's largest refiner, Indian Oil Corp (IOC), last month operated its directly owned plants at 106.1 per cent capacity, the data showed.

*The Economic Times - 22.02.2021*

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/indias-january-crude-processing-scales-over-1-yr-peak/81149329>

### **Oil minister gives 'two main reasons' behind rising fuel prices**

Union petroleum and natural gas and steel minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Sunday said that reduced fuel production and oil-rich nations seeking more profits are the primary reasons behind spiralling petrol and diesel prices in the country. "There are two main reasons behind the fuel price rise. The international market has reduced fuel production and manufacturing countries are producing less fuel to gain more profit. This is making the consumer countries suffer," Pradhan told ANI during his visit to inspect the venue where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to address a rally in

NOCs\* have contributed around 88% of the total domestic output whereas PSC\* fields have contributed the remaining around 12%," Care Ratings said. Natural gas is used as a fuel and as a feedstock, with demand largely dependent on fertiliser industry (28%), power (23%), city gas distribution entities (16%), refinery (12%) and petrochemicals (8%) industries.

*Mint - 22.02.2021*

<https://www.livemint.com/industry/energy/india-s-natural-gas-production-down-13-year-on-year-in-april-august-11600777865117.html>

### **Recovering petroleum demand to support OMCs profitability: Fitch**

Recovering demand for petroleum products is supporting the profitability of India's oil marketing companies, Fitch Ratings said. The ratings agency cited the sustained strength of marketing margins (MM) and recovering demand for petroleum products is supporting the profitability of OMCs against weak gross refining margins (GRM). The trend, thereby, lowers the downside risks for OMCs credit metrics, it said. "Petroleum product sales at Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation surged by 22-23 per cent in the third quarter of the financial year ending March 2021 (3QFY21) from the previous quarter, with domestic transportation fuel demand recovering to near normal levels, barring aircraft fuel, and MMs on auto fuel sustained at above pre-pandemic levels." However, reported GRMs dropped due to lower inventory gains and the improvement in underlying GRMs was limited by weakening product cracks and increasing crude oil prices. "IOC reported a 3QFY21 GRM of USD 2.2 per barrel versus USD 8.6 in 2QFY21, BPCL reported USD 2.5 versus USD 5.8 and HPCL reported USD 1.9 versus USD 5.1."

*The Economic Times - 17.02.2021*

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/recovering-petroleum-demand-to-support-omcs-profitability-fitch/81027412>

### **Indian govt to promote use of ethanol as an alternative fuel: Minister**

Defending government on sky rocketing prices of petrol and diesel the Union minister of state for health and family welfare Ashwini Chaubey said that efforts are being made to bring relief for countrymen while works are also in progress to promote ethanol as an alternative fuel. Reacting over continuous rise in price of fuel oil while talking to the reporters here on Saturday Chaubey said, "Rise and fall in the price of petroleum

Assam's Dhemaji on Monday. He further stated, "We have continuously been urging the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and OPEC plus countries that it should not happen. We hope there will be a change." The prices of petrol and diesel are increasing continuously for more than 10 days and in some states, the price of petrol has even crossed the Rs 100-mark.

*The Economic Times - 22.02.2021*

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/oil-minister-gives-two-main-reasons-behind-rising-fuel-prices/81144518>

### **India shifts oil imports from Middle East to Africa, North America due to OPEC cuts**

India's refiners are turning to spot oil from Africa and North America as long-term suppliers in the Middle East cut output and as demand for gasoline jumps amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Spot crude imports into the world's third-largest oil market will rise by 10 per cent to 15 per cent this year from 2020, according to industry consultant FGE. The increased purchases are coming as India's top suppliers, including Saudi Arabia and Iraq, curtail output as part of the OPEC+ pact. The shift underscores how other producers are benefiting from the cuts as consumption returns in markets like India. It's been especially good to exporters like the U.S. and Nigeria, whose crude produces more gasoline that's in high demand as the pandemic pushes people to private cars instead of public transport. "The pullback from traditional term suppliers came when refiners maximized throughput to align with the robust domestic demand recovery," said Senthil Kumaran, FGE's head of South Asia oil. "They were forced to scramble for spot supplies to bridge the shortfall."

*The Economic Times - 16.02.2021*

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/india-shifts-oil-imports-from-middle-east-to-africa-north-america-due-to-opec-cuts/80972786>

### **Oil India, EIL consortium to bid for BPCL's stake in Numaligarh refinery**

Engineers India Ltd (EIL) today announced it has decided to bid for acquiring 61.65 per cent stake held by Bharat Petroleum Corp (BPCL) in Numaligarh refinery as part of a consortium with Oil India Ltd (OIL). EIL will hold a minority share in the consortium while OIL will be the leader, the state-owned engineering consultancy firm said in a statement. "This would enable EIL to diversify its business into

products in international market is not under government's control. Despite this fact we had succeeded in bringing down the price of oil in past and again all possible measures are being initiated to provide relief to the people in current situation." To reduce dependency on the petrol the government has already started working on exploring possibility of utilising ethanol as alternative fuel oil, he said adding, the increased use of ethanol will help ecologically and economically. This will lead to reduction in import of crude oil and adverse impact of price fluctuation in international market, he added.

*The Economic Times - 21.02.2021*

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/indian-govt-to-promote-use-of-ethanol-as-an-alternative-fuel-minister/81132796>

### **India's domestic air passenger traffic down 40% to 7.7 million in Jan**

India's domestic air passenger traffic declined around 40 per cent to 7.7 million in January 2021 over the year-ago period as the pandemic continues to hit air travel demand, as per the monthly traffic data released by the aviation regulator, DGCA on Thursday. The total number of passengers flown by the Indian carriers on domestic routes in January 2020 was 10.2 million. The passenger load factor, a measure to assess how much of an airline's passenger carrying capacity has been utilised, during the previous month has shown a declining trend compared to December primarily due to the tourist season, the DGCA said. The load factor of six major domestic airlines--IndiGo, SpiceJet, Air India, GoAir, Vistara and AirAsia India -- stood between 70 per cent and 64.9 per cent in January, as per data. "Passengers carried by domestic airlines during January 2021 were 7.73 million against 12.7 million during the corresponding period of previous year, thereby registering annual growth of -39.60 per cent," it said. Budget carrier IndiGo flew the most number of passengers at 4.2 million with a market share of 54.30 per cent followed by rival carrier Vistara which carried 992,000 passengers during the month, cornering 12.8 per cent share of the total domestic traffic in the month.

*Business Standard - 19.02.2021*

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/india-s-domestic-air-passenger-traffic-down-40-pc-to-77-34-lakh-in-jan-121021801052\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/india-s-domestic-air-passenger-traffic-down-40-pc-to-77-34-lakh-in-jan-121021801052_1.html)

downstream oil & gas operations," it added. As part of a larger plan for disinvestment of Public Sector Undertakings, the government wants to privatise downstream oil refiner BPCL by the end of the first half of next financial year (2021-22). Before that, BPCL plans to complete its stake sale in Numaligarh Refinery Ltd (NRL). While the Oil India-EIL consortium is likely to pick up 49 per cent, the rest 13.65 per cent stake will be sold to the Assam government.

*The Economic Times - 18.02.2021*

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/oil-india-eil-consortium-to-bid-for-bpcls-stake-in-numaligarh-refinery/81093676>

### **Cargo traffic at 12 major ports falls for 10th month in Jan; down 7% in Apr-Jan**

India's top-12 ports witnessed a considerable decline in cargo traffic for the tenth straight month in January to 542.13 million tonnes (MT), according to ports' apex body IPA. Cargo traffic at 12 major ports that are under the control of the Centre dropped by 7.44% to 542.13 million tonnes (MT) during April-January this fiscal, compared with 585.73 MT in the year-ago period. Recently, Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said the cargo traffic at 12 major ports declined considerably March onwards due to the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. All ports, barring Paradip and Mormugao -- which recorded 0.24% and 28.12% increase in cargo handling to 93.60 MT and 17.19 MT respectively, saw negative growth. Cargo handling at Kamrajar Port (Ennore) nosedived 25.94% during April-January to 19.66 MT, while ports like Mumbai and Chennai saw their cargo volumes dropping by over 12% during the said period. Cochin and V.O. Chidambaranar ports suffered a sharp decline of over 11%. JNPT saw a decline of 9.76% in cargo volumes, while Deendayal Port Trust, New Mangalore and Kolkata ports saw over 6% drop in cargo volume. Cargo handling at Visakhapatnam slipped 4.36%.

*Mint - 18.02.2021*

<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/cargo-traffic-at-12-major-ports-falls-for-10th-month-in-jan-down-7-in-aprjan-11613568579081.html>



## **Arup Sinha takes over as Executive Director - Regional Services, Northern Region, IOC**

Indian Oil Corporation, the country's largest fuel retailer, announced Arup Sinha has taken over as Executive Director (Regional Services) for the company's Northern Region division which comprises Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, J&K, Ladakh and Chandigarh. Sinha would also function as the Regional Level Coordinator for Oil and Gas industry in the region besides being the Regional In-Charge for key areas including Human Resources, Finance, Product Logistics, Contracts, Information Systems, Safety and Security and Quality Control. He is a postgraduate in management from the University of Lucknow, and has over three decades of in-depth experience in the petroleum sector across functions including Operations, Aviation, Retail and Institutional Business and Human Resources. "Sinha has made significant contributions in framing of HR policies and digitalization of the performance management systems of IndianOil. He has also immensely contributed to the Apprentice Training and Skill Development programme of IndianOil through which trade and technical apprentices are upskilled across India enhancing youth employability," the company said in a statement.

*The Economic Times - 18.02.2021*

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/arup-sinha-takes-over-as-executive-director-regional-services-northern-region-ioc/81049056>

## **K Sailendra takes over as ED (regional services), IndianOil Southern region**

IndianOil Corporation on Friday said K Sailendra has taken over as the new executive director (regional services) for the Southern Region. He would represent Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Lakshadweep, a release said. Sailendra would be in charge of key function areas including human resources, finance, LPG and fuel logistics, contracts, safety and security, aviation and quality control. He would also function as the regional level coordinator for oil and gas industry in the five States. Prior to taking up the new role, he was heading the LPG group of IndiaOil in Karnataka.

*The Economic Times - 20.02.2021*

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/k-sailendra-takes-over-as-ed-regional-services-indianoil-southern-region/81120812>