

(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.)

PMI: Manufacturing activity hits three-month high in July

India's manufacturing activity grew at its fastest pace in three months in July, reversing a contraction in June, as states relaxed localised curbs imposed in the wake of the second Covid wave. Output, new orders, exports, quantity of purchases and input stocks expanded in July, while a marginal increase in employment ended a 15-month sequence of job shedding. The Nikkei Manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) rose to 55.3 in July from 48.1 in the previous month. An index reading of 50 or above suggests expansion and below it points at contraction. The PMI for manufacturing had shrunk for the first time in 11 months in June. Factory orders rose amid improved demand and the upturn was sharp and compared with a marked decline in June. "Strengthening international demand contributed to the uptick in total order books. New export orders expanded markedly in July, following a moderate contraction in June," data analytics firm IHS Markit, which releases the PMI data, said in a statement.

The Financial Express - 03.08.2021

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/pmi-manufacturing-activity-hits-three-month-high-in-july/2302872/>

Exports up 47.91% in July to \$35.17B

Led by petroleum products, gems and jewellery, and engineering goods, India's exports rose 47.9% on-year. Preliminary data released by the government showed that India's merchandise exports in July were \$35.17 billion, an increase of 34% over July 2019. Imports, at \$46.4 billion, left a wider trade deficit of \$11.23 billion against \$9.4 billion in June and \$5.33 billion a year ago. "Till July, India's merchandise exports have reached 32.64% of \$400 billion," the commerce and industry ministry said. Geography-wise, the top increases in exports were seen to the US, UAE and Belgium while imports from the UAE, Iraq and Switzerland rose the most. The top import items were crude oil, gold and precious stones, and vegetable oil. Exports of petroleum, engineering, and gems and jewellery in July increased to \$3.82

Services PMI shrinks for third straight month in July

India's services sector activity remained in red for the third consecutive month in July as demand was hit harder in the contact-intensive sectors than manufacturing, a private survey said on Wednesday. According to data released by IHS Markit, purchasing managers' index (PMI) for services was at 45.4 in July compared to 41.2 in June. A reading below 50 indicates contraction in economic activity. "Business activity, new orders and employment declined further, but in all cases rates of contraction moderated from June. Looking ahead, firms were pessimistic about the 12-month outlook for output for the first time in a year. The latest data also pointed to an intensification of inflationary pressures across the sector," IHS Markit said. However, in July, manufacturing PMI posted highest growth in the last three months, after contracting for the first time in 11 months in June, as states eased lockdown restrictions. Even after the first wave of the pandemic the services sector had taken more time to recover.

The Hindustan Times - 05.08.20201

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/business/services-pmi-shrinks-for-third-straightmonthin-july-101628118401024.html>

RBI sees inflation rising but holds rates to fuel growth

The RBI on Friday kept key interest rates unchanged and the monetary policy committee (MPC) vowed to persist with an easy stance as long as necessary to revive and sustain growth and continue to mitigate the impact of Covid on the economy. The decided to keep the policy repo rate (the rate at which the RBI lends money to commercial banks) unchanged at 4%. It also retained the GDP forecast for FY22 at 9.5%, while raising the inflation forecast to 5.7%, stating that it expects the pressure to ease on the prices front with the arrival of the kharif crop and the impact of the supply side measures. This is the seventh consecutive meeting when the RBI has kept rates unchanged. "The outlook for aggregate demand

billion, \$2.82 billion and \$1.95 billion respectively, the data showed. However, exports of oilseeds, rice and meat, dairy and poultry products have recorded negative growth in the month under review. Imports of petroleum, crude, and products rose by 97% to \$6.35 billion.

The Economic Times - 03.08.2021

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2021%2F08%2F03&entity=Ar01202&sk=3519FCA3&mode=text>

Sebi amends rules to empower independent directors

Capital markets regulator Sebi has overhauled the rules pertaining to the appointment, removal and remuneration of independent directors to ensure their independence and effectiveness. The development assumes significance in the backdrop of the role of independent directors coming under scrutiny for their failure in detecting and preventing corporate frauds and promoter mismanagement. The new rules will be applicable from January 1, 2022, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a notification. Under the new rules, appointment, re-appointment and removal of independent directors in a listed company will be done through a special resolution of shareholders. In the special resolution, the number of votes in favour of the resolution should be at least three times those against the resolution. This will ensure that independent directors are not removed or appointed at the whims and fancies of the promoters. The listed entity will have to ensure that approval of shareholders for appointment of a person on the board of directors is taken at the next general meeting or within a time period of three months from the date of appointment, whichever is earlier, Sebi said in a notification dated August 3.

The Financial Express - 09.08.2021

<https://www.financialexpress.com/market/sebi-amends-rules-to-empower-independent-directors/2306651/>

\$300-400 million investment expected in latest oil, gas bid round

India on Friday launched a new oil and gas exploration bid round, hoping to attract USD 300-400 million investment in discovering hydrocarbon

is improving, but the underlying conditions are still weak. Aggregate supply is also lagging below pre-pandemic levels. While several steps have been taken to ease supply constraints, more needs to be done. The recent inflationary pressures are evoking concerns; but the current assessment is that these pressures are transitory and largely driven by adverse supply side factors," RBI governor Shaktikant Das said in his policy statement.

The Times of India - 07.08.2021

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=TOIKM%2F2021%2F08%2F07&entity=Ar02110&sk=861FC4D8&mode=text>

Centre making all efforts to reduce crude oil imports: MoPNG in RS

The Minister of State (MoS) for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Rameswar Teli in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday informed that the Central Government is making all efforts to reduce crude oil imports. The Minister stated that the ministry is working in collaboration with various Central Government Ministries to achieve the goal to reduce the dependency on the import of oil and gas. The five-pronged strategy comprises promoting energy efficiency and conservation measures, giving thrust on demand substitution, promoting biofuels and other alternative fuels and renewables, increasing domestic production of oil and gas, and refinery process improvements. The government has taken several steps to enhance exploration and production of oil and gas in the country among policy for relaxations, extensions, and clarifications under Production Sharing Contract (PSC) regime for early monetization of hydrocarbon discoveries, Policy Framework for Exploration and Exploitation of Unconventional Hydrocarbons under Existing Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) Coal Bed Methane (CBM), Reforms in Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy for enhancing domestic exploration and production of oil and gas, Natural Gas Marketing Reforms, he added.

The Economic Times - 05.08.2021

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/centre-making-all-efforts-to-reduce-crude-oil-imports-mopng-in-rs/85061576>

Indian firms plan to invest \$27 billion to boost refining capacity by 2025

India state refiners are set to invest 2 trillion rupees (\$26.96 billion) to boost oil refining capacity by 20% in Asia's third-largest economy

reserves in the country. As many as 21 blocks or areas are on offer in the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) Bid Round-VI, which will close for bidding on October 6, an official press statement said. India is 85 per cent dependent on imports to meet its oil needs and finding newer reserves through exploration rounds like OALP-VI will help cut that reliance. The 21 blocks are spread over 11 sedimentary basins and 9 states covering 35,346 square kilometres of area. Of these, 15 blocks are onland, 4 lie in shallow waters and two are ultradeep sea. "It is expected that this bid Round-VI would generate immediate exploration work commitment of around USD 300-400 million," the statement said. The government has so far conducted five bid rounds since the Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) was launched in March 2016. The last bid round, where 7 blocks were offered, was launched in August 2019 and closed in January 2017.

The Economic Times - 07.09.2021

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/300-400-million-investment-expected-in-latest-oil-gas-bid-round/85099425>

Low natural gas prices critical to meet India's 15 per cent fuel share ambitions: CEEW

High natural gas prices and continued price controls could significantly slow down India's efforts to improve gas penetration to 15 per cent of its energy mix by 2030, according to an independent study released today by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW). If prices of natural gas remain high or increase further, its fuel share would rise from the current 6.3 per cent to only 6.4 per cent by 2030, and to 12 per cent by 2050, the study projected. The CEEW study 'India's natural gas future amid changing global energy dynamics' also highlighted that a low-price regime could help India increase gas penetration to 13 per cent by 2030 and 21 per cent by 2050. However, the study recommended limiting penetration to an optimal fuel share of 18 per cent by 2050 to maximise economic gains while also meeting India's decarbonisation requirements. Targeting this level of gas adoption would require investments of \$62 billion in pipeline and LNG terminal infrastructure between 2020-50. It could also add 90,000 new jobs across the gas infrastructure value chain and generate import bill savings of around USD 835 billion, it said.

The Economic Times - 04.08.2021

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/low-natural-gas-prices-critical-to->

by 2025, junior oil minister, Rameswar Teli, told lawmakers on Wednesday. India, the world's third-biggest oil importer and consumer has refining capacity of about 249 million tonnes a year, equivalent to about 5 million barrels per day (bpd). Refining capacity is expected to climb to 298 million tonnes a year by 2025, Teli said in a written reply. "The refining industry has been modernized and upgraded continuously with the indigenous and imported technologies for refining cost reduction" and product upgrading, he said. The country's top refiner, Indian Oil Corp, in its latest annual report said it would boost its annual oil refining capacity to 87.55 million tonnes by 2024/25 from the current 70.05 million tonnes to meet growing demand for petroleum products. India will be the main driver of rising demand for energy over the next two decades, accounting for 25% of global growth, and is set to overtake the European Union as the world's third-biggest energy consumer by 2030, the International Energy Agency said in a report earlier this year.

The Economic Times - 05.08.2021

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/indian-firms-plan-to-invest-27-billion-to-boost-refining-capacity-by-2025/85057393>

IOC may sell some petrol pumps to JV with Petronas

Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), the nation's biggest oil firm, may sell some of its over 32,300 petrol pumps to a joint venture with Malaysia's Petronas with a view to monetising the firm's vast fuel marketing network, its Director (Finance) S K Gupta said on Monday. IOC has an over two-decade-old 50:50 joint venture with Petronas for the import of LPG. The scope of this joint venture, IndianOil Petronas Pvt Ltd (IPPL), is now being expanded to include fuel and natural gas marketing. For one, IPPL will not be governed by the tedious petrol pump allotment rules that require public sector oil marketing companies to appoint dealers through a draw of a lottery. The joint venture can choose a site and operator quickly and on commercial terms. "We have all options open - IPPL can set up new retail outlets, it can set up wayside amenities (at petrol pumps on National Highways) and we can also monetise some of our existing retail outlets by selling them to the joint venture," Gupta said at an investor call.

The Economic Times - 03.08.2021

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/ioc-may-sell-some-petrol-pumps-to-jv-with-petronas/84974797>

[meet-indias-15-per-cent-fuel-share-ambitions-ceew/85033849](https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/quiet-decontrol-of-lpg-2021-22-to-bring-the-curtain-down-on-budgetary-fuel-subsidy/2306710/)

Quiet decontrol of LPG: 2021-22 to bring the curtain down on budgetary fuel subsidy

The Centre's Budget will likely be completely freed from the burden of fuel subsidy in the current fiscal year, marking an end to a sticky and politically sensitive item of revenue expenditure it struggled long to get rid of. One of three major explicit subsidies financed out of the Budget, via oil bonds and by state-owned upstream oil companies, the budgetary fuel subsidy peaked at close to Rs 1 lakh crore in 2012-13. The process of ending the fuel subsidy began with the decontrol of retail petrol prices by the UPA-II government in June, 2010; the same government also kick-started the deregulation of diesel prices in January, 2013 via incremental monthly price increases of 50 paise/litre, a process which was completed by the Narendra Modi 1.0 government by October, 2014. While the subsidy on kerosene (used for lighting) was negligible since FY15, the only item that continued under the subsidy regime thereafter was cooking gas. Since June 2020, the government hasn't been depositing the subsidy on LPG or cooking gas in the bank accounts of target beneficiaries.

The Financial Express - 09.08.2021

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/quiet-decontrol-of-lpg-2021-22-to-bring-the-curtain-down-on-budgetary-fuel-subsidy/2306710/>

With global crude fluctuating, OMCs to wait & watch on fuel

Oil marketing companies (OMC) continued to pause fuel price revision for the eighteenth consecutive day on Wednesday as wait and watch continues amidst fluctuating global crude prices. Global crude prices have swung in all directions in July starting with a low of \$70 a barrel to quickly rise to over \$77 a barrel, only to fall soon below \$70 a barrel and crossing \$75 a barrel later in the month. The oil prices have softened again to \$72.5 a barrel. With no price increase by OMCs, in the national capital, petrol continues to be sold for Rs 101.84 per litre, while diesel is also being sold at the unchanged price of Rs 89.87 a litre on Wednesday. The pump price of fuel has been static since July 18. In the city of Mumbai, where petrol prices crossed Rs 100 mark for the first time ever on May 29, the fuel price is at Rs 107.83 per litre. Diesel price in the city is also at Rs 97.45, the highest among metros. Petrol prices in all metros have now crossed Rs 100 per litre mark. In

Reliance BP Mobility planning to open retail outlets at fuel stations

Reliance BP Mobility, the fuel marketing joint venture of Reliance Industries and UK's BP, is planning to open retail outlets including convenience stores and food joints at a number of its fuel stations, mainly along the highways. Reliance Retail will operate these outlets, including its Smart Point convenience stores, digital stores, charging points for electric vehicles, cafés and other food and beverages outlets, people familiar with the matter said. The company is also talking other food and beverage chains to open outlets at its properties, the people said. The move is aimed at tapping into the growing concept of highway retailing in India and to leverage its properties, they said. "Retail development will only happen in petrol pumps where retailing is feasible, and on the highways," said one of the people. Reliance Retail and Reliance BP did not respond to an email seeking comment. Development of world-class highways and the growing number of Indians taking road trips have opened new opportunities for highway retailing in India, market watchers said.

The Economic Times - 04.08.2021

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/reliance-bp-mobility-planning-to-open-retail-outlets-at-fuel-stations/85031270>

Delta outbreak unlikely to derail oil rally this year, UBS says

Investment bank UBS expects oil prices to resume their upward trend despite concerns over a surge in infections of the coronavirus Delta variant and projects Brent crude to trade between \$75 and \$80 per barrel in the second half of 2021. Brent futures were down 0.6% at \$69.99 a barrel on Thursday, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) futures were trading around \$67.84 a barrel. Both benchmarks fell by more than \$2 a barrel on Wednesday. "While regional differences remain significant in terms of reopening and the pace of vaccination, we believe the return to economic normalization will continue globally, lending support to oil prices in the months ahead," the bank said in a note. Coronavirus cases worldwide surpassed 200 million on Wednesday, according to a Reuters tally, as the Delta variant threatens areas with low vaccination rates. UBS expects global oil demand to exceed 99 million barrels a

Chennai Petrol is priced at Rs 102.49 a litre and in Kolkata Rs 101.08 a litre.

The Economic Times - 04.08.2021

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/with-global-crude-fluctuating-omcs-to-wait-watch-on-fuel/85030068>

An oily despair: For first time, Indian consumers are facing full brunt of rise in crude prices

Crude oil prices have been on a tear for a while now. And unlike the surges of the past decade, the consumer this time is bearing almost the entire brunt. Interestingly, the extent of the rebound from on-year lows this time is far stronger than in fiscals 2011 and 2012 (over 2010), when Brent crude prices had pierced past \$100 per barrel. A full pass-on of crude oil price increases to the consumer, because the government has nearly done away with the fuel subsidy it used to bear. Separately, manufacturers, given the pressure on their profit margins because of rising input costs (stemming from higher oil and other commodity prices), have been passing on the incremental burden to consumers. In previous episodes of rising crude oil prices, the government had shared the burden along with the consumer, while the affected industries were slow to do so, which afforded some cushion. For households, where balance sheets are already stretched because of weak income growth, depletion of savings and higher food prices, the surge in fuel prices aggravates the pain.

The Economic Times - 04.08.2021

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/an-oily-despair-for-first-time-indian-consumers-are-facing-full-brunt-of-rise-in-crude-prices/85001753>

Domestic air passenger traffic jumps 57 per cent at around 48-49 lakh in July 2021

Amid falling Covid-19 cases from second wave peak and easing of travel restrictions by state governments, domestic passenger traffic registered a sequential growth of 56-57% at around 48-49 lakh in July 2021, compared to 31.1 lakh in June 2021, data released by ratings agency ICRA showed. On an annual basis, traffic grew by 132% and the airlines' capacity deployment for July 2021 was around 90% higher than July 2020 (47,200 departures in July 2021, against 24,770 departures in July 2020). On a sequential basis, the number of departures in July 2021 was higher by 49%. Kinjal Shah, Vice President & Co-Group Head, ICRA, said: "For July 2021, the average daily departures were at 1,500, significantly higher than the average daily departures of 800 in

day this year, driven by the pace of economic recovery.

The Economic Times - 06.08.2021

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/delta-outbreak-unlikely-to-derail-oil-rally-this-year-ubs-says/85067561>

PLI scheme for specialty steel deliver

Last month India's steel sector got a booster shot when the government announced inclusion of 'specialty steel' under the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme. Bit late in the day, but better late than never it is. What does the government have to say about it? With a budgetary outlay of ₹6,322 crore, the scheme is expected to bring in investment of approximately ₹40,000 crore and generate employment both direct and indirect. The duration of the scheme is for five years from 2023-24 to 2027-28. The benefit of this scheme will accrue to both big players — integrated steel plants — as well as to the smaller players (secondary steel players). India's steel sector is dominated by six big players — four in private sector and two in public sector — and as the Union Minister for Steel, Ram Chandra Prasad Singh, puts it, "Steel is a de-regulated sector, and the role of the Ministry is that of a facilitator to the steel industry. One has to see the contribution of these players in steel production too. If you see the private sector, it is contributing about 86 per cent of steel production and the public sector is contributing about 14 per cent..."

The Hindu Business Line - 08.08.2021

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/will-pli-scheme-for-specialty-steel-deliver/article35802705.ece>

PESB recommends Satish Kumar Vaduguri for post of Director-Marketing, IOCL

Public Enterprises Selection Board on Tuesday recommended the name of MR. SATISH KUMAR VADUGURI for the post of Director (Marketing) of a Maharatna PSU under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. Currently, he is serving as Executive Director in Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. He has been selected from the list of the nine candidates, who were interviewed by the PESB in the selection panel.

PSU Connect - 05.08.2021

<https://www.psuconnect.in/news/pesb-recommends-satish-kumar-vaduguri-for-post-of-director-marketing-iocl/28857>

July 2020, and higher than 1,100 in June 2021, though it remains at lower than 2,000 in April 2021. The average number of passengers per flight during July 2021 was 104, against an average of 98 passengers per flight in June 2021."

The New Indian Express - 06.08.2021

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/business/2021/aug/06/domestic-air-passenger-traffic-jumps-57-per-cent-around-48-49-lakh-in-july-2021-2340882.html>

Bharat Petroleum elevates VRK Gupta as Chief Financial Officer

Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) on Tuesday announced the elevation of VRK Gupta as Chief Financial Officer as N Vijayagopal, Director (Finance) will be superannuated from the service on 31st July 2021. Gupta has been handling various functions of finance at BPCL for more than two decades now. He has experience in the field of Corporate Accounts, Risk Management, Budgeting, Business Plan, Treasury Operations etc, according to a statement. Gupta has played a critical role in strategy formulation and implementation to ensure corporate governance compliance and monitoring key internal controls. Apart from currently heading the Corporate Treasury, he is also a board member of Fino Paytech, Fino Finance and Mumbai Aviation Fuel and Farm Facility.

The Economic Times - 04.08.2021

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/bharat-petroleum-elevates-vrk-gupta-as-chief-financial-officer/85026885>

Mini Ipe takes charge as Managing Director of IPO-bound LIC

Mini Ipe has taken charge as Managing Director of the IPO-bound Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC). She was appointed as managing director vide the Government of India notification dated 5 July 2021. Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced in the Union Budget 2021 speech that the initial public offering (IPO) of Life Insurance Corporation of India will be out in FY22. Ipe is a postgraduate in Commerce from Andhra University and joined LIC in 1986 as a direct recruit officer. "She has rich and diverse experience in LIC having worked in various capacities. Prior to taking charge as Managing Director, she was Executive Director, Legal Department, LIC of India," said LIC in a statement, adding that Ipe was the first woman zonal manager (In-charge) of LIC and headed the Hyderabad zone.

Mint - 03.08.2021

<https://www.livemint.com/companies/news/mini-ipe-takes-charge-as-managing-director-of-ipo-bound-lic-11627895025123.html>

Deepak Maheshwari is new CEO of Essar Oil UK

The Board of Essar Oil (UK) Ltd. (EOUK) has announced the appointment of Deepak Maheshwari as its CEO. "As CEO, Mr. Maheshwari will work closely with the EOUK Board on the delivery of a number of strategic energy transition projects which are aimed at making Stanlow a green refinery to meet the post-carbon needs of a progressive UK," the company said in a statement. EOUK's Stanlow manufacturing complex annually produces over 16% of the U.K.'s road transport fuels.

The Hindu - 03.08.2021

<https://www.thehindu.com/business/deepak-maheshwari-is-new-ceo-of-essar-oil-uk/article35686804.ece>