WEEKLY MEDIA UPDATE

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Monday

(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.)

Growth to pick up next year: OECD

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on Thursday marginally cut India's economic growth forecast for 2019 to 5.8%, but said it would pick up to 6.2% in 2020 and further to 6.4% in 2021. The forecast came ahead of the release the GDP numbers for the July-September quarter by the government's statistics office, scheduled for November 29. India's economy grew 6.8% in FY19. "Economic growth is projected to recover to just under 6.5% in FY21 as election-related uncertainties fade and monetary and fiscal policies have become accommodative," the OECD said in its economic outlook, even as it trimmed the projected global economic growth forecast to 2.9% next year, a decline of 0.1 percentage point from its September forecast. In September, it had forecast India's growth at 5.9%. The Reserve Bank of India has slashed its projection on economic growth for this fiscal year to 6.1% from 6.8% estimated earlier, its sharpest cut in at least five years, while the World Bank has last month lowered its forecast to 6% from 7.5%. Moody's last week cut its estimate for India's growth this year to 5.6% from 5.8%.

The Economic Times - 22.11.2019

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/growth-to-pick-up-next-year-oecd/articleshow/72176908.cms?from=mdr

Slowdown Blues: ICRA predicts India's GDP growth rate to fall to 4.7% in Q2 of FY20

Leading ratings firm ICRA expects further deterioration in the growth of India's GDP to 4.7 per cent in Q2 of FY2020, due to weakening momentum in the industry. ICRA also forecast the country's gross value added (GVA) at basic prices in year-on-year (YoY) basis to 4.5 per cent respectively in the quarter ending September of FY2020. The GDP and GVA were 5.0 per cent and 4.9 per cent respectively in Q1 and agriculture and services may maintain the growth rate recorded in the first quarter, an ICRA statement said on Thursday. Aditi Nayar, principal economist, ICRA said, "ICRA expects the GVA growth to decline to 4.5 per cent in Q2 of FY2020 from 4.9 per cent in Q1 of FY2020, primarily led by industry." With subdued domestic demand, investment activity, and non-oil merchandise exports weighing upon volume expansion, manufacturing growth is expected to decelerate further from the marginal 0.6 per cent in Q1 of FY2020, the statement said.

Business Today - 22.11.2019

https://www.businesstoday.in/current/economy-politics/icra-predicts-gdp-growth-rate-fall-to-47-per-cent-in-q2-of-fy20-indian-economy-slowdown-blues/story/390819.html

India's PSUs should bid for international projects as consortium: Report

To enhance their geo-strategic reach, India's public sector enterprises should bid for international projects as a consortium, work with the government to design WTO-smart subsidies and enhance exports, according to a report. The CII report, titled 'Can the Indian PSEs enhance their Geo-strategic reach', presents a roadmap to expand exports and geo-strategic reach of public sector enterprises (PSEs) by 2022. It also points out several domestic and external barriers which are inhibiting the PSEs' ability to enhance exports. Lack of autonomy, multiple procedures and management gaps, among others, lead to loss of potential business opportunities, it pointed out. "Setting up a High-Level Export Strategy Committee will implement the five-point agenda

Govt sets the ball rolling on biggest privatisation drive

In the biggest privatisation drive ever, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved sale of government's stake in blue-chip oil firm BPCL, shipping firm SCI and on land cargo mover Concor, as well as decided to cut shareholding in select public sector firms below 51%to boost revenue collections that have been hit by slowing economy. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved sale of government's entire 53.29% stake along with transfer of management control in the country's second biggest state owned refiner Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) after removing Numaligarh refinery from its fold, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told reporters here. It also approved sale of 53.75% out of the set out by the Prime Minister for enhancing the competitiveness of Indian PSEs by 2022. "A short-term (5 years) and long-term (10 years) roadmap for the PSEs, clearly laying down exports and growth targets, is the order of the day to enhance their geo-strategic reach," said Chandrajit Banerjee, Director-General, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

Business Standard - 25.11.2019

https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/india-s-psus-should-bid-for-international-projects-as-consortium-report-119112400397_1.html

Cabinet likely to consider proposal to bring down its stake below 51 pc in CPSEs soon

The Union Cabinet will soon consider a proposal to bring down government stake in central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) to below 51 per cent even while retaining the state control, sources said. Besides, the Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to take a call on the merger of public sector general insurance companies. The Budget for 2018-19 had proposed the merger of three public sector general insurance companies and subsequent listing of the merged entity on stock exchanges. Last week, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government would move forward on the merger of the three state-owned general insurance companies -- National Insurance Company, United India Insurance and Oriental Insurance Company -- as announced in the previous Budget. In her Budget Speech of 2019-20, Sitharaman had announced the government has been following the policy of disinvestment in non-financial public sector undertakings maintaining the government's stake not to go below 51 per cent.

The Economic Times - 19.11.2019

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/cabinet-likely-to-consider-proposal-to-bring-down-its-stake-below-51-pc-in-cpses-soon/articleshow/72127705.cms?from=mdr

EIL, PGCIL, NMDC, BHEL, NHPC may be in list where govt stake to fall below 51%

Dozens of non-financial and non-strategic CPSEs that include Engineers India Ltd, PowerGrid, National Mineral Development Corporation, SAIL, BHEL, Hindustan Copper, NHPC , Hindustan Organics Chemicals Ltd are likely to be considered for reduction of government stake below 51 per cent but with the Centre retaining the management control. Official sources said no decision has been taken on this but the names are being considered on the basis of the current government stake in them and also the nature of government holding of 63.75% stake in Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) and 30.9%stake in Container Corp of India (Concor). The government currently holds 54.80% in Concor. Besides, the government will sell its entire holding in THDC India and North Eastern Electric Power Corp Ltd (NEEPCO) to state power generator NTPC Ltd, the minister said.

The Economic Times - 21.11.2019

https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2019%2F11%2F21&entity=Ar00201&sk=F3BC18A6&mode=text

Strategic sale in 5 PSUs: Government has no place in business, says Pradhan

A day after the Cabinet decided to shed the Centre's holding in five public sector undertakings, Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, and Steel, Dharmendra Pradhan reiterated his stand that the government should not be operating businesses in sectors that are self-sustaining. The five PSUs in which the Centre will sell stake are Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL); Shipping Corporation of India; Container Corporation of India; Tehri Hydro Power Development Corporation (THDCIL), and North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Ltd (NEEPCO). Speaking to presspersons on the sidelines of the Second Indian Steel Association-Steel Conclave, Pradhan said, "We have been clear since 2014 that sectors where businesses can sustain themselves should be allowed to continue. Government has no business to be in the business. The rights of consumers in India are supreme." He said the move to sell stake in CPSEs is in line with the aim to bring more professionalism in some sectors.

The Hindu Business Line - 22.11.2019

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/strategic-sale-in-5-psus-government-has-no-business-to-be-in-business-says-pradhan/article30035634.ece

Privatisation plan may end complex cross-holding in oil PSUs

The government may end the cross-holding structure existing in the oil sector as it looks to further consolidate operations of public sector enterprises and go ahead with its privatisation plan by getting a fair valuation of assets. Official sources said that that all oil sector PSUs would be asked to exit from their investments made in equity shares of other state-owned entities. This could be done in phases, depending on the market conditions, so that the shares get maximum valuation. The cross-holding their operation where the private sector is already present and is largely non-strategic. Defence and financial sector is excluded and the selection will be not en mass and will be on a case-to-case basis. In BHEL , current government stake is 63.17 per cent and in NMDC, government holds 72.28 per cent. PowerGrid has 55.37 per cent government holding and Engineers India has 55 per cent GoI stake, Hindustan Copper has 76.05 per cent and in Steel Authority of India, government stake is 75 per cent and NHPC has 73.33 per cent stake and HOCL has 58.78 per cent stake of government.

The Economic Times - 25.11.2019

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/power/eil-pgcil-nmdc-bhel-nhpc-may-be-in-list-where-govt-stake-to-fall-below-51/72215938

structure among oil PSUs was built in the late 1990s as the government sold its shares in Oil India Ltd (OIL), Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), Gas Authority of India Ltd (GAIL) and Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) in a bid to raise funds. Consequently, while GAIL and IOC hold 7.84 and 2.45 per cent stake, respectively, in ONGC, ONGC and OIL hold 14.20 and 5.16 per cent stake, respectively, in IOC. Also, IOC and ONGC hold 2.44 and 4.87 per cent stake, respectively, in GAIL India, and BPCL (2.42 per cent), HPCL (2.47 per cent) and IOC (4.93 per cent) together own equity partial equity in OIL.

The Economic Times - 25.11.2019

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/privatisation-plan-may-end-complex-cross-holding-in-oil-psus/72205805

PSU oil biggies to stay out of BPCL divestment

State-run entities will stay off when the government puts India's second-largest public sector oil refiner and fuel retailer Bharat Petroleum (BPCL) on the block, a move that is expected to make the offering attractive for foreign majors. "Since 2014, we have a clear vision that the government has no business to be in business ... Nitty gritty and details of the disinvestment process will have to be worked out but when I say the government has no business to be in business, it is indicative of possible future course of action," oil and steel minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on the sidelines of an industry function on Thursday. "Since 2014, we have a clear vision that the government has no business to be in business ... Nitty gritty and details of the disinvestment process will have to be worked out but when I say the government has no business to be in business, it is indicative of possible future course of action," oil and steel minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on the sidelines of an industry function on Thursday.

The Economic Times - 22.11.2019

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/psu-oil-biggies-to-stay-out-of-bpcl-divestment/72180821

Going for more professionalism in PSUs via equity dilution: Dharmendra Pradhan

State-run companies need to be more accountable to the people of the country and the government has taken the decision to dilute equity stake for making them more professional, Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Thursday The Union Cabinet on Wednesday decided to sell its entire stake in three enterprises and bring down stake below 51 per cent in select PSUs. The opposition Congress on Thursday staged protests in Parliament against privatisation of oil PSU BPCL and Shipping Corp. "We need to be accountable...that is why we took these decisions. The Prime Minister took these decisions in Cabinet meeting yesterday. We are going for equity dilution that means going for more professionalism. and I believe you (PSUs) must...promote it," the steel minister said in his address at the ISA Steel Conclave event here. Pradhan also urged steel PSUs SAIL and RINL to be more competitive.

The Economic Times - 22.11.2019

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/going-for-more-professionalism-in-psus-via-equity-dilution-dharmendra-pradhan/72177284

OPEC share of desi oil imports lowest since '11

OPEC's share in oil imports by India fell to 73% in October, its lowest monthly share since at least 2011, tanker data from sources showed, as refiners shipped in fuel from the US and other suppliers. India, which usually imports about 80% of its needs from members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), has been diversifying its sources of oil as local refiners

OPEC's flaring political crises add new risk for oil supplies

OPEC may have no appetite to cut oil production deeper when it meets next month, but flaring political crises across the group are once again threatening supply. Unrest erupted in Iraq and Iran this month — two of the Middle East's biggest producers — as people took to the streets protesting financial hardship and bad governance. That's adding to the range of have upgraded plants to process cheaper crude grades. India, the world's third biggest oil importer, shipped in 4.6 million barrels per day (bpd) of oil in October, about 3.3% less compared with a year ago, data showed. Of that, it bought 3.4 million bpd oil from OPEC. OPEC's share of India's imports in September was about 81% although total volumes were lower, as the South Asian nation cut imports to a three-year low due to maintenance at some refineries. OPEC oil output dipped to an eight-year low in September after attacks on Saudi oil plants led to production cuts, a Reuters survey showed. The kingdom's output has since recovered.

The Economic Times - 19.11.2019

https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=TOIM%2F2019%2F11%2F19&entity=Ar01708&sk=4FFC9733&mode=text

supply threats already afflicting the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, from economic collapse in Venezuela and simmering discontent in Algeria to the recent missile attack on Saudi Arabia. "We kind of had a second Arab spring, but it's been under the radar," said Helima Croft, chief commodities strategist at RBC Capital Markets. "The real question is what is going to happen in Iraq." Iraq, OPEC's second-biggest member, has violently cracked down on demonstrations against corruption in recent weeks that have spread to the southern oil hub of Basra. Iran has seen its oil exports slashed by US sanctions and is brutally suppressing protests spurred by the resulting economic stagnation.

The Economic Times - 21.11.2019

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/markets/stocks/news/opecs-flaring-political-crises-add-new-risk-for-oil-supplies/articleshow/72156684.cms?from=mdr

Saudi Aramco still undecided on BPCL stake purchase

The world's largest oil company Aramco is yet to make up its mind to participate in disinvestment of Indian fuel refiner and retailer Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) where government intends to sell its entire 53.29 per cent stake to a strategic investor. Sources privy to the development said that Aramco, which kicked off the final phase of its $25 billion IPO on Sunday, is focused on Indian investment primarily to conclude the purchase of 20 per cent stake in Reliance Industries' oil to chemical division and expansion of its upstream business in high growth markets including India. Entering India with a large scale investment in a public sector oil refiner and retailer is not on the horizon as on now, sources said. When asked specifically on its plan to acquire majority stake in BPCL whether solely or in a consortium, Saudi Aramco declined to comment. Aramco's lesser focus on BPCL disinvestment may be a cause of worry for the Indian government that is betting big on the oil giant to take over its entire equity in BPCL.

The Economic Times - 20.11.2019

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/saudi-aramco-still-undecided-on-bpcl-stake-purchase/72124790

BPCL sale: Workers to go on strike; Firm says output won't be affected

Thousands of workers of Bharat Petroleum will go on strike on November 28 to protest the government's decision to privatise the company, workers union leaders said. The strike, however, will not affect production or availability of fuel, according to the state-owned oil refining and marketing company. The move to sell the government's entire majority stake in Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) has stoked fears that a change of ownership could lead to job losses and a sharply different working climate unsuitable for many current employees, prompting protests from company workers and executives. "We need to strongly protest as privatisation is not in our interest," said Praveen Kumar P, general secretary of Cochin Refineries Employees Association, an affiliate of Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC). "It's going to be a daylong strike on November 28. But if the government refuses to withdraw its decision on privatisation, we would be forced to undertake longer strikes, which can spread to several days."

The Economic Times - 25.11.2019

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/bpcl-sale-workers-to-go-on-strike-firm-says-output-wont-be-affected/72216296

Oil PSU officers, Maharatna cos' association oppose privatisation

The Federation of Oil PSU Officers (FOPO) and Confederation of Maharatna Companies (COMCO) have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi

BPCL asset valuer asked to submit valuation of company in 50 days

In part indication of timelines for privatisation of India's second biggest state oil refiner, the government has set a 50-day deadline for an opposing the Centre's move to shed the stake in central government PSUs. This letter is in light of the Centre's move to sell its entire stake in Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), Tehri Hydro Development Corp of India (THDCIL), North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO), Shipping Corporation of India and Container Corporation of India. While NEEPCO and THDCIL are being sold to fellow PSU — NTPC — the rest are expected to be sold to private players. Raising concerns, a joint statement from the associations said, "It was further observed that the decision is ill thought, regressive & anti-people and other avenues for raising finances without sale of stake or without transfer of management has not been examined." A resolution to oppose the moves and write to the PM was taken at a meeting of the associations held in Delhi on Friday.

The Hindu Business Line - 22.11.2019

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/oil-psu-officers-maharatna-cos-association-oppose-privatisation/article30053020.ece

outside 'asset valuer' to carry out the valuation of all assets of Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL), a process once completed will trigger invitation of price bids from potential acquirers. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) had on November 20 given a go-ahead for sale of government's entire stake in BPCL, Shipping Corporation of India Ltd (SCI), power generator THDC India Ltd (THDCIL) and North Eastern Electric Power Corp Ltd (NEEPCO) to a strategic investor along with management control. It had also approved sale of 30.8 per cent out of its 54.8 per cent interest in Container Corp of India Ltd (Concor). The stake sale will follow a two-stage process of first inviting expression of interest (EoI) from potential bidders who will after due diligence will be asked to submit price bids in the second part, officials said.

The Economic Times - 25.11.2019

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/bpcl-asset-valuer-asked-to-submit-valuation-of-company-in-50-days/72215822

ONGC may pare HPCL stake

State-owned exploration giant ONGC is considering a plan to dilute its stake in refiner HPCL, which it had acquired for Rs 36,915 crore, to reduce debt and fund exploration projects. Sources said the company has debt of more than Rs 20,000 crore after buying out HPCL, while investments in exploration, its principal activity, have fallen rapidly. "The call on selling stake in HPCL has to be taken by ONGC," oil ministry officials said. Oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan had said last week that "we have a clear vision that the government has no business to be in business". Sources said the buyout of HPCL had not resulted in the integration of the two companies, which had different lines of business and corporate cultures. It only helped the Modi government to meet the disinvestment target set for the last fiscal, they said. HPCL, in fact, had refused to recognise ONGC its majority shareholder for 15 months. In regulatory filings for five consecutive quarters, HPCL listed "President of India" as its promoter with "zero" per cent shareholding.

The Telegraph - 25.11.2019

https://www.telegraphindia.com/business/ongc-may-pare-hpcl-stake/cid/1721783

ETFs funds account for 82% of selloff proceeds: DIPAM

The government has so far garnered ₹17,364.26 crore from disinvestment, but around 82% (₹14,369.03 crore) of it has been accrued from the index funds and not from stake sales, showing the reliance on funds have worked out well for selloff as a strategy. The Bharat 22 ETF under its FFO 2 mopped up ₹4,368.80 crore and CPSE ETF under FFO sixth tranche collected ₹10,000.32 crore in this financial year, as per the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) data. The money came from initial public offering of Rail Vikas Nigam (₹475.89 crore, IRCTC's IPO (₹637.97 crore) and sale of enemy property (₹1,882.21 crore), as per DIPAM figures on the proceeds. The Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), the Container Corporation (Concor), the Shipping Corporation (SCI) privatisation are due for FY20. So is Air India. Bharat 22 ETF's fourth tranche was subscribed 12 times.

Mint - 24.11.2019

https://www.livemint.com/market/stock-market-news/etfs-funds-account-for-82-of-selloff-proceeds-dipam-11574583138193.html

India's hunger for natural gas being fed by costly imports amid dismal local production

India's hunger for natural gas to feed key industries in the power and fertilizer sectors is

Fuel shortages push India to build strategic natural gas reserve

After oil, India is set to build strategic reserve of natural gas, to further strengthen country's energy security and shield itself from supply continuing to grow unabated but that demand is increasingly being met by costly imports on the back of dismal domestic production. The country consumed 174 million standard cubic metre per day (mmscmd) of natural gas in September 2019, a 6 per cent increase over the consumption of 164 mmscmd in the same month last year. The over demand growth stood at 3 per cent in the April-September 2019 period, according to latest data shared by research firm India Ratings. However, the 6 per cent growth in consumption in September fuelled a massive 18 per cent jump in costly imports of Regasified-Liquefied Natural Gas (R-LNG). “Domestic natural gas production decreased 4.3 per cent year-on-year. During the month, gas volume production in Oil and Natural Gas Corp and private or joint venture fields recorded a fall of 4.6 per cent and 6 per cent, respectively, while Oil India Ltd recorded an increase of 1.5 per cent year-on-year,” the agency said in a report.

The Economic Times - 20.11.2019

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/indias-hunger-for-natural-gas-being-fed-by-costly-imports-amid-dismal-local-production/72139192

disruptions coming from perennial political risk in the prime energy supplying countries in the Middle East and Africa. The reserve will also help the country cope with demand spike and price rise in the event of border skirmishes and war like situation that played out with Pakistan recently. For building strategic gas reserve, the plan is to inject depleted gas fields with the fuel or develop storage in large salt caverns. The plan for strategic gas reserves emerges from an official study that suggests that consumption of natural gas would grow two-folds by 2030 resulting in large gap between demand and domestic production. This would increase imports of gas and take it closer to levels of oil imports, where the country has depended on overseas supplies to meet over 80 per cent of domestic consumption. At present, almost of half of domestic consumption of natural gas is met from imports.

The Economic Times - 21.11.2019

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/fuel-shortages-push-india-to-build-strategic-natural-gas-reserve/72168653

India’s April-October petroleum consumption growth slips to 1 per cent, lowest in 5 yrs

A slowdown in the economy coupled with floods and an extended rainfall pulled India’s petroleum consumption growth down to 1 per cent during the April-October period of the current financial year (2019-20) -- lowest for the seven months' period since 2013-2014, an ETEnergyworld analysis of historical data showed. The country's petroleum product consumption in October declined 1.44 per cent to 17,406 Thousand Tonne (TMT) as compared to the corresponding month a year ago. All the fuels recorded a decline in consumption during the month except petrol, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) and pet coke. Cumulative consumption during the April-October period grew at 1 per cent to 123,177 Thousand Tonne (TMT) as compared to the corresponding period a year ago. Industrial fuels excluding pet coke in aggregate fared even worse with demand falling 9.5 per cent, the sharpest fall in 15 years, according to a report by Jefferies. The country’s diesel demand during the month declined 7.36 per cent to 6,507 TMT as compared to the corresponding month a year ago.

The Economic Times - 19.11.2019

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/indias-april-october-petroleum-consumption-growth-slips-to-1-per-cent-lowest-in-5-yrs/72119072

Oil demand in India set to outpace China by next year

India’s oil demand is projected to grow at a pace that will outstrip China's volume growth in oil demand by next year, setting alarm bells in India’s petroleum ministry to urgently draw up action plan for oil conservation across the country. Oil demand in India is projected to rise by 3.21 percent this year to 4.88 million barrels per day (mb/d), and further by 3.36 percent to 5.05 mb/d by next year, exceeding the 2.37 percent oil demand growth by China, according to the latest Oil Market Report by OPEC. India’s petroleum and natural gas minister Dharmendra Pradhan told the Rajya Sabha - the country’s Upper House - that his ministry proposes to set in motion a massive multi-media campaign and action plan for oil conservation measures in the country. The proposed oil conservation measures will include energy audits, and undertaking large-scale training of drivers and education programme for housewives on efficient use of domestic LPG.

Arabian Business - 21.11.2019

https://www.arabianbusiness.com/energy/433885-revealed-oil-demand-in-india-set-to-outpace-that-in-china-by-next-year

OPEC's share of Indian oil imports in Oct hits lowest since 2011

OPEC'S share of India's oil imports fell to 73% in October, its lowest monthly share since at least 2011, tanker data from sources showed, as refiners shipped in fuel from the United States and other suppliers. India, which usually imports about 80% of its needs from members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), has been diversifying its sources of oil as local refiners have upgraded plants to process cheaper crude grades. India, the world's third-biggest oil importer, shipped in 4.56 million barrels per day (bpd) of oil in October, about 3.3% less compared with a year ago, data showed. Of that, it bought 3.43 million bpd from OPEC. OPEC's share of India's imports in September was about 81% although total volumes were lower, as the South Asian nation cut imports to a three-year low due to maintenance at some refineries. OPEC oil output dipped to an eight-year low in September after attacks on Saudi oil plants led to production cuts, a Reuters survey showed. The kingdom's output has since recovered.

The Economic Times - 19.11.2019

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/opecs-share-of-indian-oil-imports-in-oct-hits-lowest-since-2011/72118751

Reliance surpasses BP to join elite oil supermajor club

Reliance Industries Ltd., run by Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani, has eclipsed BP Plc to break into an elite club of energy supermajors. The Indian conglomerate is now valued at $138 billion, compared with the British energy giant's $132 billion value at the close of trading on Tuesday. Reliance's shares have increased at three times the pace of India's benchmark index this year after its billionaire owner in August announced plans to cut the company's net debt to zero in 18 months through measures including a stake sale in the oil-to-chemicals business to Saudi Aramco. The surge in shares gives Ambani a net worth of $56 billion, making him Asia's richest person, above Alibaba Group's Jack Ma, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. Reliance's market value briefly surpassed BP for the first time at the end of last month, and it has now regained the lead over the British company after its shares hit a fresh high in Mumbai on Wednesday.

The Economic Times - 20.11.2019

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/reliance-surpasses-bp-to-join-elite-oil-supermajor-club/72138474

PSUs underspent their CSR funds by 43% in FY18

It seems state-run companies are either sitting over-ambitious targets for corporate social responsibility (CSR) or it's their financial compulsions that they end up spending less towards CSR. Central public sector enterprises (CPSE) have significantly underutilised their CSR funds, with government data showing that nearly 43 per cent of the funds allocated by these PSUs in the financial year 2018 remained unspent. According to data furnished by the Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, a total of 152 central public sector units (PSUs) spent only Rs 3,442.38 crore out of the allocated funds of Rs 6,024.81 for CSR in FY 2017-18, leaving rest of Rs 2,582.43 crore untouched. On a year-on-year basis, the CSR funding by CPSEs increased by a mere 3.17 per cent, although the funds allocated increased by 18.17 per cent. In the financial year 2016-17 PSUs spent Rs 3,336.50 crore, against the allocated amount of Rs 4,929.70 crore.

Outlook - 20.11.2019

https://www.outlookindia.com/newsscroll/psus-underspent-their-csr-funds-by-43-in-fy18/1666555

Domestic air passenger traffic grows by 3.98 per cent in October

Indicating some recovery in the aviation sector due to the tourist season, the domestic air passenger traffic this October increased by 3.98 per cent compared to the same month last year, according to data released by the DGCA on Monday. In September this year, the domestic passenger growth was just 1.18 per cent compared to the same month last year. The domestic air traffic last month consisted of 12.31 million passengers compared to 11.84 million passengers in the same month last year, a jump of 3.98 per cent, as per data. On the date for October, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said, "The passenger load factor in the month of October 2019 has shown increasing trend compared to previous months primarily due to the onset of tourist season." However, the passenger load factor of all major airlines -- Air India, SpiceJet, GoAir, IndiGo, AirAsia and Vistara -- declined in October as compared to September this year, as per DGCA data. The passenger load factor measures the seat capacity utilisation of the airline.

The Economic Times - 19.11.2019

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/airlines-/-aviation/domestic-air-passenger-traffic-grows-by-3-98-per-cent-in-october/articleshow/72114378.cms

Slowdown catches up with Logistics firms, trims growth by 10%

The slowdown in India's economy is beginning to manifest in the logistics industry, with top companies such as DHL Express, Allcargo Logistics, the logistics arms of Mahindra & Mahindra and retail behemoth Future Group, and the Warburg Pincus-backed Stellar Value chain witnessing the impact of tepid business on the pace of growth. Some of the companies have also deferred planned expansions, and are setting relatively modest revenue targets. "There is a little bit of slowdown. We are expanding 5%-10% slower this year than the last. The slowdown has been the most visible in the August-September period," RS Subramanian, senior vice president and managing director, DHL Express India, part of Deutsche Post DHL Group, told ET in a recent interview. DHL operates the largest courier service in the world. "The slowdown in the automotive sector is the most talked about. Having said that, there are some industries, such as pharma and life sciences, which are still healthy," he said. Revenue has not declined for the company and there is no change in its medium-to-long-term expansion plan at DHL Express.

The Economic Times - 25.11.2019

https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2019%2F11%2F25&entity=Ar00703&sk=0C110112&mode=text

More flexibility in labour laws signalled

The Narendra Modi government on Wednesday signalled easing of labour laws through the introduction of the Industrial Relations Code Bill, which has proposed to retain the provision to allow companies with over 100 workers to seek prior approval for lay-offs but seeks to introduce a provision to let the government decide the number instead of seeking Parliament approval. The amendment to allow for an increase in threshold beyond 100 workers to allow larger companies to easily retrench workers was proposed during NDA-1 and has been pending for close to 15 years. While the government had earlier suggested an increase to 300, the move was red flagged by labour unions, prompting the government to maintain a status quo, at least for the time being. The government has also sought to make Fixed Term Employment more attractive for companies in sectors such as textiles, which typically hire workers for a fixed term. Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said all workers on fixed term will be treated at par with regular workers as far as benefits are concerned.

The Times of India - 21.11.2019

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/more-flexibility-in-labour-laws-signalled/articleshow/72152281.cms

New ED East at IOC

Rabindranath Ghosh, executive director regional services of IndianOil Corporation (IOCL) recently took over as the head of IndianOil (marketing division) eastern region. A mechanical engineer from Regional Engineering College, Durgapur, Ghosh has 36 years of experience during which he spearheaded critical functions, including the LPG operations of IndianOil.

The Times of India - 20.11.2019

https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=TOIKM%2F2019%2F11%2F20&entity=Ar02220&sk=EBEF4D56&mode=text