

(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.)

Moody's sees economy contracting this fiscal

The Indian economy will contract in the current fiscal year, Moody's Investors Service has projected, in a downgrade from its May 8 update which estimated no growth. Moody's said the steps unveiled as part of the Covid-19 relief package will be unlikely to shore up growth in the short term. The fiscal measures announced by the government were unlikely to offset lower consumption and sluggish business activity resulting from the extended lockdown, it said in a report released on Friday. "We expect the economic fallout from the coronavirus outbreak to weigh on already fragile household consumption which, coupled with sluggish business activity, will result in a sharp decline in India's economic growth in fiscal 2020-21," said Deborah Tan, Assistant Vice President, Moody's. "While the impact of the policy reforms will likely materialize over the medium term, they are unlikely to shore up short-term growth," with its direct fiscal impact at 1%-2% of GDP, Moody's said. Moody's has, however, not taken into account additional monetary measures announced by the Reserve Bank of India on Friday.

The Economic Times - 23.05.2020

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2020%2F05%2F23&entity=Ar00710&sk=4C7313B7&mode=text>

India's GDP growth in 2020-21 to remain in negative territory: RBI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) today trimmed India's growth forecast for FY21 as the coronavirus pandemic has disrupted economic activities. "The GDP growth in 2020-21 is expected to remain in the negative territory with some pick up in second half," RBI governor Shaktikanta Das told a press conference today. He said economic activity in India was severely impacted by the nationwide lockdown in the last two months. The biggest blow to the economy has come from the slump in private consumption. Consumer durables production has reduced 33% in the March. Electricity consumption has also plunged. Service sector has contracted — passenger and commercial vehicle sales, domestic air passenger

India's GDP to see 5% contraction in FY21, says Icra

Ratings agency ICRA sharply revised its growth expectation for India to a 5% contraction in the current fiscal from 1%-2% growth earlier, according to a report released on Wednesday. The report estimated sharper de-growth in the first and second quarters of FY21 at -25% and -2.1% respectively, down from a range of 16%-20% contraction in Q1 and 2.1% growth in Q2 before. With two consecutive quarters of contraction, it implied the economy was in recession. The report cited the extended lockdown and labour mismatches causing further delays in supply chain resumption as the reason for the downgrade. More importantly, the update came after finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the final tranche of the Rs 21 lakh crore Atma nirbhar Bharat Package last Sunday. The ICRA report pegged the direct fiscal impact of the package at 10% of the headline figure, or 1% of gross domestic product (GDP), while stating that it "will not be able to counter the demand destruction caused by the Covid-19 outbreak, or address the prevailing supply chain infirmities."

The Economic Times - 21.05.2020

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/indias-gdp-to-see-5-contraction-in-fy21-says-icra/articleshow/75847028.cms>

Covid crisis: Govt hopeful about growth revival by year-end

The government is "cautiously optimistic" about the revival of growth later in this fiscal, despite the pandemic-induced lockdown, and the country's current account may witness a small surplus in the June quarter, the finance ministry has said in its monthly report on the macro economy. Although some agencies have forecast zero to negative growth for FY21 following the lockdown, chief economic advisor Krishnamurthy V Subramanian has pegged it at 1.5-2%. As for the country's current account, the deficit declined to just 0.2% of the GDP in the December quarter of FY20, compared with 2.7% a year earlier and 0.9% in the September quarter. The report said inflation outlook

traffic and foreign tourist arrivals have slumped in March. However, agri sector remained the ray of hope, Das said. The governor added that growth forecasting has become complicated due to difficulty in data collection. "The end-May 2020 release of NSO on national income would provide greater clarity, enabling more specific projections of GDP growth in terms of both magnitude and direction," RBI governor said.

The Economic Times - 23.05.2020

<https://www.livemint.com/industry/banking/india-s-gdp-growth-in-2020-21-to-remain-in-negative-category-rbi-11590122207688.html>

India slipping into recession soon? Here's what will hit economy hard in the next few quarters

The Indian economy is likely to slip into recession in the third quarter of this fiscal as loss in income and jobs and cautiousness among consumers will delay recovery in consumer demand even after the pandemic, says a report. According to Dun & Bradstreet's latest Economic Observer, the country's economic recovery will depend on the efficacy and duration of implementation of the government's stimulus package. "The multiplier effect of the stimulus measures on the economy will depend on three key aspects i.e. the time taken for effecting the withdrawal of the lockdown, the efficacy of implementation and duration of execution of the measures announced," Dun & Bradstreet India Chief Economist Arun Singh said. The report noted that the government's larger-than-expected stimulus package is likely to re-start economic activities. Besides, measures taken by the Reserve Bank of India like reducing the repo rate by a further 40 basis points to 4 per cent, extending the moratorium period by three months and facilitating working capital financing will also help stimulate the momentum.

The Financial Express - 24.05.2020

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/india-likely-to-see-recession-in-q3-fy21-due-to-delay-in-demand-recovery/1968873/>

Govt notifies cut in EPF contribution to 10% for May, June, July

Labour ministry has notified lower rates of provident fund (PF) contribution at 10%, thus increasing the take home salary of 4.3 crore provident fund subscribers and giving relief to 6.5 lakh establishments. The existing rate of contribution by both employee and employer is 12%. The move, which comes days after finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the

remains benign with economic inactivity leading to a broad-based deceleration in price pressures, particularly energy. Even though supply chains were disrupted by the Covid-19 outbreak, harvesting and procurement operations gathered momentum, with an active FCI and supportive railways increasing volumes of transferred grains. The government refrained from releasing the retail inflation data for April on ground of disruptions caused by the lockdown.

The Financial Express - 22.05.2020

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/covid-crisis-govt-hopeful-about-growth-revival-by-year-end/1965540/>

India's current account may turn surplus in FY21: SBI

State Bank of India has forecast the economy to grow a meagre 1.1% for the fiscal year as businesses are thrown into disarray due to the lockdown which has been extended till May 3. But a positive fallout could be India's mostly fragile external balance could turn stronger with a current account surplus due to a plunge in oil prices. "The lockdown is going to have a significant impact on our macro parameters," said State Bank of India economist SK Ghosh, in a research note. "With the lockdown now being extended till May 3 and simultaneously government providing some relaxations...we estimate the overall loss for FY21 around ₹12.1 lakh crore." With Covid-19 crippling economic activities across the globe leading to a collapse in crude prices, India could benefit on the current account. India always had this in deficit, where it imported more than it exported. That could change this year. "Taking oil and non-oil imports together, we can also see 25% dip in merchandise imports," said Ghosh who forecasts a current account surplus of 0.7% of the gross domestic product at \$19 billion this fiscal.

The Economic Times - 22.05.2020

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/indias-current-account-may-turn-surplus-in-fy21-sbi/articleshow/75188065.cms?from=mdr>

Boost to employees provident fund: 79 lakh new PF accounts opened in FY20

An estimated 79 lakh new members, around 29% more compared with 2018-19, got registered with the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) in 2019-20, as per the net payroll data of the retirement fund body. The data of net new subscribers is based on the Universal Account Number (UAN) generated in the system and where the first non-zero

reduction in PF rates for three months as part of the government's Rs 20 lakh crore stimulus package, will infuse Rs 6,750 crore liquidity into the system. This would be applicable on May-June-July salary period. This would be applicable to all establishments covered under the Employees Provident Fund Organisation including the exempted establishments. However, government which is the employer in the case of the central public sector enterprises and state public sector will continue to pay 12% as its share. Even establishments covered under the earlier announced Rs 1.7 lakh crore Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana will not be covered under the said notification.

The Economic Times - 22.05.2020

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/wealth/invest/govt-notifies-cut-in-epf-contribution-to-10-for-may-june-july/articleshow/75811802.cms>

Second tranche of Bharat Bond ETF coming, aims to raise Rs 14,000 crore

Edelweiss Asset Management on Friday said it would launch the second tranche of Bharat Bond ETF in July with two new series to raise up to Rs 14,000 crore from the market. The two new series will have maturities of April 2025 and April 2031. Through these issues, Edelweiss Mutual Fund proposes to raise an initial amount of Rs 3,000 crore with a green shoe option to raise an additional Rs 11,000 crore based on market demand. 'The launch is in line with our vision to create a ladder of Bharat Bond ETFs across various maturities on the yield curve. This will provide more options for investors to match their investment needs with different time horizons,' said Radhika Gupta, CEO, Edelweiss Mutual Fund. Bharat Bond Funds of Funds (FOF) with similar maturities will also be launched for investors, who do not have demat accounts, the fund house said. Bharat Bond Funds of Funds (FOF) with similar maturities will also be launched for investors, who do not have demat accounts, the fund house said.

The Economic Times - 23.05.2020

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/markets/bonds/second-tranche-of-bharat-bond-etf-coming-aims-to-raise-rs-14000-crore/articleshow/75886430.cms>

subscription was received, the EPFO said. In 2018-19, an estimated 61.12 lakh new subscribers joined the retirement scheme. The estimates are net of the members newly enrolled, exited and re-joined during the period. The EPFO said its data is provisional as updation of employees records is a continuous process. The estimates may include temporary employees whose contributions may not be continuous, it said. A total of 5.72 lakh net new members were registered with the retirement fund body in March, its fourth-lowest during the year. In February, the number was 10.34 lakh, its highest. The lowest enrolment was in May when only 3.10 lakh net new subscribers joined in.

The Financial Express - 22.05.2020

<https://www.financialexpress.com/money/79-lakh-new-epf-members-in-fy20-up-29/1965705/>

Aatma Nirbhar Bharat: Delhi govt to disallow global tenders up to Rs 200 crore

In a bid to promote domestic business, the Delhi government has asked all its departments to desist from issuing global tenders of contract value up to Rs 200 crore, an official said on Sunday. The Delhi government's move comes days after the Centre announced the 'Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan' or 'Self-reliant India Mission' under which global tenders up to Rs 200 crore were recently disallowed. According to an official, the finance department of the Delhi government has asked all heads of departments, commissioners of municipal corporations and autonomous bodies to adopt the Centre's amended General Financial Rules (GFR). The move will benefit micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). "The Delhi government has endorsed the amendment in GFR made by the Department of Expenditure under Union Ministry of Finance, and forwarded it to HODs for necessary action," the official said. Earlier this month, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced an economic support package for MSMEs, which includes disallowing global tender for government procurement up to Rs 200 crore.

Business Standard - 25.05.2020

https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/aatma-nirbhar-bharat-delhi-govt-to-disallow-global-tenders-up-to-rs-200-crore-120052400891_1.html

Consolidation in public sector oil firms back on table

Government may revive plan for further consolidation in the public sector oil companies by allowing mergers between producing, marketing gas transportation and consultancy companies leaving just few large integrated entities in operation. The expected move is in line with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcement on Sunday to privatise most non-core public sector enterprises while leaving just one or maximum of four in core strategic sectors and allow private investments in all areas. So, after 2018 merger of PSU oil refiner and retailer HPCL with upstream major ONGC, sources said, the government may now look at creating another public sector integrated 'oil behemoth' by considering merger upstream oil producer Oil India Ltd (OIL) with Indian Oil Corporation (IOC). Moreover, after proposed split of gas transportation company GAIL into two, one of the entities in gas marketing may also be considered for merger with IOC. Public sector oil refiner IOC has also in the past shown its interest to buyout government equity in Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) but PSUs are not allowed to bid for BPCL that is currently tried for strategic sale to the private sector global companies.

The Economic Times - 19.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/consolidation-in-public-sector-oil-firms-back-on-table/75801936>

Unlike China, India's oil demand stays weak as economy falters

It's going to take months for oil demand in the world's third biggest market to get back to pre-virus levels as India faces its deepest recession ever in the wake of its near two-month lockdown. Once the engine of global oil demand growth, India's fuel consumption collapsed by as much as 70 per cent at one stage last month as it embarked on one of the world's most stringent nationwide quarantines. As the lockdown eases, it's now running at about 40 per cent below last year's levels and could take until the end of 2020 to get close to full recovery, according to executives at the country's state-owned fuel retailers. The stuttering rebound in India's oil use stands in contrast to China's, where demand is all but back at levels last seen before Beijing imposed a lockdown to fight the coronavirus outbreak. That'll temper some optimism around a faster-than-expected tightening of the oil market that's helped push prices back to \$35 a barrel. "Demand is reaching 60 per cent to 70 per cent of normal, but it will take some time to get to pre-Covid sales," said Mukesh Kumar Surana, chairman of Hindustan Petroleum Corp. "Over a period of two

India's fuel demand recovery gathers pace as lockdown eases

A recovery in fuel demand in India gathered momentum in the first half of May versus April as curbs on transport and industrial activity were partly lifted in areas that have contained the spread of coronavirus, data from industry sources showed. Demand for refined fuel is expected to get another boost from Monday as India has lifted more restrictions under its extended lockdown that runs until May 31. Fuel demand growth in India, the world's third-biggest oil importer and consumer, plunged to historic lows in April. State-refiners' petrol sales in the first half of May declined by 47.5 per cent to 570,000 tonnes from a year ago but were up from 334,000 tonnes sold in first half of April. In April, petrol sales declined 61 per cent. State companies - Indian Oil Corp, Hindustan Petroleum Corp and Bharat Petroleum - own about 90 per cent of India's retail fuel outlets. State companies' sale of gasoil fell about 38 per cent to about 1.93 million tonnes in first half of May from a year earlier. In April, they had fallen by an average of 57 per cent. In the first half of April, the refiners sold 1.1 million tonnes of gasoil.

The Economic Times - 19.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/indias-fuel-demand-recovery-gathers-pace-as-lockdown-eases/75804671>

Pradhan sees fuel demand reaching pre-Corona level next month as India gets back to work

India has regained 65% of its appetite for fuel and demand will reach nearly pre-pandemic levels next month as economic activities pick up pace after the government's announcement of a stimulus package and staggered easing of Corona restrictions, oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan told TOI on Saturday. "The world has seen an unprecedented erosion in fuel demand. Many countries saw refineries being shut down, plans being rescheduled. India has fared better in comparison. After the lockdown began (from March 25), fuel demand had dropped to 30-35% of the level seen in April 2019. Yet, major production capacities remained operational. Demand is back at 65% of the May 2019 level and will reach pre-Corona level in June," Pradhan said. This compares well with fuel consumption in China, the world's second-largest oil consumer and the pandemic's epicentre, reaching 90% of the pre-Corona level after losing 40% of the demand in February, as per an IHS Markit report.

The Times of India - 23.05.2020

to three months, we should get back to 80 per cent of normal sales. Beyond that, it will be slow."

The Economic Times - 21.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/unlike-china-indias-oil-demand-stays-weak-as-economy-falters/75863590>

Oil prices will bounce back in the near future: Dharmendra Pradhan

Petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan said oil prices will "bounce back" sometime in the near future. "People will not be affected," Pradhan said, adding that the government will have to save some money. Speaking to News18, Pradhan said the government has not hiked retail prices during the COVID-19 outbreak. On May 5, excise duty on petrol was hiked by Rs 10 per litre on petrol and Rs 13 per litre on diesel, amid a plunge in crude oil prices. Pradhan added that 70 percent of fuel demand had vanished in April 2020 due to the lockdown, as against April 2019. Demand for petrol in April 2020 was 25 percent, while for diesel it was 30-35 percent. He added that overproduction and low demand had led to a "low price regime" in crude oil. "Prior to COVID-19, there was a conflict between petroleum-producing states to capture as much of the global market as possible which led to an over-production," the Union Minister said.

Energy Infra Post - 22.05.2020

<https://www.energyinfrapost.com/oil-prices-will-bounce-back-in-the-near-future-dharmendra-pradhan/>

India's crude oil imports fall, product exports surge in April

India's crude oil imports in April recorded their biggest year-on-year fall in 10 months as coronavirus-induced lockdown restrictions halted economic activity and sapped demand. Crude oil imports in April fell 12.4 per cent to 17.28 million tonnes from a year earlier, its steepest decline since June 2019, data on the website of Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell said. Oil product imports also dropped 6.5 per cent to 3.35 million tonnes, their first year-on-year decline in 16 months. But exports of refined products had their biggest rise year-on-year since October 2016 because of a slowdown in domestic demand. Fuel demand in April plunged more than 45 per cent as coronavirus lockdown restrictions hit industrial activity. This prompted Indian refiners to continue prompt exports of refined fuels to avoid a complete shutdown. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has extended the country's coronavirus lockdowns to May 31, but relaxed rules in areas with lower

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/pradhan-sees-fuel-demand-reaching-pre-corona-level-next-month-as-india-gets-back-to-work/articleshow/75927527.cms>

No one can predict where oil prices will stabilise: Dharmendra Pradhan

Lockdown is a global issue. It was needed to break the chain and there was consensus on it. Globally, the demand for oil products came down significantly. In April, nearly 70% of the demand went away. By May, 60-65% of the demand has been regained. With trains and civil aviation traffic returning, demand will improve. By June, we expect demand to be back at pre-lockdown levels. Also, before the lockdown, three large oil producers were trying to capture the oil market, which resulted in a glut. Coupled with low demand, prices crashed, which no one anticipated. While prices have started rising due to improved demand, no one can predict where prices will stabilize. The uncertainty in the oil market will remain for some time. In steel too, industrial and construction activity had come to a stop. India has managed to use its natural advantage of manpower and raw material and step up exports during this period.

The Economic Times - 25.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/no-one-can-predict-where-oil-prices-will-stabilise-dharmendra-pradhan/75941434>

India's petroleum product demand to fall 8 per cent in 2020: IEA

India's petroleum product demand is expected to fall by eight per cent to 4,597 thousand barrels per day in 2020, International Energy Agency (IEA) said as part of its May oil market report. "We expect oil demand to fall by 180 kb/d y-o-y in 1Q20 and 1.3 mb/d in 2Q20. Consumption should return to year-ago levels by 4Q20. Overall, Indian demand is expected to drop by 415 kb/d in 2020. Gasoil/diesel and gasoline will be the most affected," IEA said. The country's petrol demand is projected to fall by 350 thousand barrels per day in the second quarter of 2020, primarily due to mobility restrictions. The agency has projected petrol demand to fall 60 per cent year-on-year in April as well as May, as compared to the year ago period. Diesel demand is projected to contract by 690 thousand barrels per day in the second quarter of 2020 and demand for aviation turbine fuel (ATF) and kerosene is projected to decline by almost 40 per cent in April-May, as roughly

numbers of cases, raising hopes fuel demand will recover.

The Economic Times - 23.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/indias-crude-oil-imports-fall-product-exports-surge-in-april/75908826>

Govt working on relief measures for oil producers

The government is stitching together a package of measures to help domestic oil producers pull through the price crash and the uncertainty in the global oil market as heavy losses on each barrel they pump threaten the commercial viability of projects. "The pandemic and lockdowns (in countries around the world) have created very challenging times for exploration & production sector. The disruptive impact of the pandemic and developments in the global oil market will continue for some time. So, we have suggested some measures for the finance ministry's consideration so that companies such as ONGC and other stakeholders can stay in business," oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan told TOI. "Lockdowns erased major demand. Before that, three big global producers -- Saudi Arabia, Russia and the US -- were locked in a competition for market share and producing more. This resulted in a glut. Commodity has become cheap but there is no demand. Now price is slowly rising as demand revives; in India and elsewhere. We are working in a changed scenario. No one knows where prices will stabilise," he said explaining the need for relief to producers.

The Economic Times - 25.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/govt-working-on-relief-measures-for-oil-producers/75961513>

OPEC chief says oil market responding well to record OPEC+ cut

OPEC is encouraged by a rally in oil prices and strong adherence to its latest output cut, its secretary general said, although sources say the group has not ruled out further steps to support the market. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, Russia and other allies, a group known as OPEC+, are cutting supply by a record 9.7 million barrels per day (bpd) from May 1 to offset a slump in prices and demand caused by the coronavirus outbreak. Oil prices have more than doubled since hitting a 21-year low below \$16 in April. So far in May, OPEC+ has cut oil exports by about 6 million bpd, according to two companies that track the flows, suggesting a strong start in complying with the deal. "The oil

half of the kerosene demand is used as jet fuel and will be severely impacted by airline restrictions, IEA said.

The Economic Times - 23.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/indias-petroleum-product-demand-to-fall-8-per-cent-in-2020-iea/75890943>

OPEC+ cuts oil exports sharply so far in May – trackers

OPEC+ has cut its oil exports sharply in the first half of May, companies that track the shipments said, suggesting a strong start in complying with a new production cut agreement. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, Russia and other allies, a group known as OPEC+, are cutting supply by a record 9.7 million barrels per day from May 1 to offset a slump in prices and demand caused by the coronavirus outbreak. Kpler, a company that tracks oil flows, said OPEC+ seaborne oil exports have declined by 6.3 million bpd over the past month towards 27 million bpd, calling the decline a "stunning reversal" from April when producers pumped at will. Petro-Logistics, another tanker tracker, estimated the producers cut exports by 5.96 million bpd for the first 13 days of May compared to April averages - a "massive" decline, the company posted in a tweet. Of that, OPEC's exports dropped by 4.85 million bpd in the first two weeks of the month, Petro-Logistics Chief Executive Daniel Gerber told Reuters. According to Kpler, Saudi Arabia is showing the largest cutback.

The Economic Times - 19.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/opec-cuts-oil-exports-sharply-so-far-in-may-trackers/75817213>

Are oil prices over the worst of the crisis?

World crude prices have staged a modest recovery from last month's dizzying collapse, prompting analysts to wonder whether the worst of the 2020 oil crisis is over. The commodity tanked for the first time into negative territory in April, plagued by demand-destroying coronavirus, chronic oversupply and a Saudi-Russian price war. West Texas Intermediate crude hit a historic low of minus \$40.32 per barrel on April 20 as sellers were forced to pay to offload the May contract amid scarce storage capacity. Brent North Sea oil then dived as low as \$15.98 on April 22 but did not turn negative. Fast forward one month, however, and both oil prices are currently

markets have responded positively to the historic agreement, as well as its robust implementation by participating countries," Mohammad Barkindo, OPEC's secretary general, told Reuters. "All in all, there is a gradual but steady convergence of the fundamentals of supply and demand."

The Economic Times - 21.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/opec-chief-says-oil-market-responding-well-to-record-opec-cut/75858046>

Natural gas demand rises by a third

Natural gas demand has risen by a third from its recent lows as factory activity expands and more gas-driven vehicles fill the roads following the easing of lockdown curbs, according to an executive at GAIL, the country's largest marketer and transporter of gas. Natural gas sales by GAIL has risen to 74 million metric standard cubic meters a day (mmscmd) from 56 mmscmd in the last week of March when the nationwide lockdown started, severely restricting mobility and shutting most industries. The volumes are still much lower than the 86 mmscmd GAIL supplied before the lockdown began. Besides its own gas, GAIL also transmits about 24 mmscmd of gas marketed by other companies through its pipeline network. This volume had dropped to about 8 mmscmd at the beginning of lockdown but has now risen to about 12 mmscmd, signalling refiners and other gas players are also witnessing a consumption recovery. Rising demand could act as a signal for ONGC, which had to shut some wells as demand weakened during the lockdown, to raise local output and for other gas players to increase import.

The Economic Times - 19.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/natural-gas-demand-rises-by-a-third/75804543>

Global gas demand to shrink by 2 per cent this year amid pandemic: Research

Global demand for natural gas is expected to fall by almost 2 per cent this year as commercial and industrial activity is reduced amid coronavirus lockdowns, consultancy Rystad Energy said on Monday. Global gas demand could total 3,878 billion cubic metres (bcm) in 2020, down from 3,951 bcm last year, the consultancy forecast. Before the coronavirus outbreak, demand was expected to grow to 4,038 bcm. "2020 will be the first year since 2009 where there will be no growth in consumption. This will be a hard blow for an industry accustomed to yearly growth rates of

trading at around \$35 per barrel. - Phoenix from ashes? - "Like a phoenix from the ashes... oil prices have recovered significantly from their lows in April," said Commerzbank analyst Eugen Weinberg. Behind the recovery is an easing global supply glut, and nations beginning to relax lockdown restrictions that have crippled oil-intensive sectors like transport and manufacturing.

The Economic Times - 22.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/are-oil-prices-over-the-worst-of-the-crisis/75881163>

India's natural gas output falls by one-fifth in April due to lockdown

India's natural gas production dropped by almost one-fifth in April due to lower offtake by industries during the nationwide coronavirus lockdown, according to official data released on Saturday. Gas output at 2.16 billion cubic metres in April was 18.6 per cent lower than 2.65 bcm production in the same month a year back, data released by the oil ministry showed. Lower production was due to a 15.3 per cent drop in output by the country's top producer ONGC. "The shortfall in gas production (by ONGC) is primarily due to less gas offtake by consumers due to COVID-19 lockdown," it said. State-owned Oil India Ltd also produced 10 per cent less natural gas at 202.05 million cubic metres due to "loss of potential in Deohal area (in Assam) due to presence of CO2 in production stream (and) less gas offtake by consumers due to COVID-19 lockdown," it said. India's crude oil production fell 6.35 per cent to 2.5 million tonnes April for the same reason.

The Economic Times - 24.05.2020

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/indias-natural-gas-output-falls-by-one-fifth-in-april-due-to-lockdown/articleshow/75917041.cms>

Spot LNG price crash set to make life harder for Indian suppliers of long-term gas

Spot prices of liquefied natural gas (LNG) have fallen sharply to \$1.3 per unit, which has serious implications for India because it will be difficult to sell the fuel to factories as supplies under long-term contracts have a much higher rate of \$5-7. Industry fears a flood of disputes and litigation as factories are already struggling with very weak demand because of the lockdown. LNG rates have been under pressure for more than a year due to a supply glut but the extraordinary demand destruction by the

more than 3 per cent," said Rystad Energy's head of gas and power markets Carlos Torres-Diaz. However, gas remains competitive to other sources of energy, especially in the power sector where gas use has remained relatively stable in most countries, he added. Although gas demand in Europe has slumped, demand in the United States remains resilient, mostly as a result of increasing demand from the power sector which has compensated for a drop in other sectors.

The Economic Times - 19.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/global-gas-demand-to-shrink-by-2-per-cent-this-year-amid-pandemic-research/75817259>

Coronavirus creates repair headache for oil and gas industry

The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted maintenance at oil and gas projects and refineries from Russia's Far East to the coast of Canada, storing up problems for an industry already reeling from slumping prices, analysts say. Lockdowns to stop the spread of COVID-19, the flu-like infection caused by the virus, have snarled the supply of spare parts and have prevented maintenance workers from doing their job. Regular repairs are needed to keep wells pumping, pipelines and refineries functioning and ships moving. Without maintenance, the risk of glitches or unplanned outages increases and delays risk driving up the cost of work later - partly because there will be a rush to do maintenance when lockdowns ease, and partly because plants have lost the optimal timing and weather for work during the northern hemisphere spring. "When the virus and the quarantine measures have been eased and it is safe to get back to work, it doesn't mean the same work can be done with the same intensity because the weather windows could be missed and that can push maintenance even to the next year," said Matthew Fitzsimmons, Vice President of the Oilfield Service team at research firm Rystad.

The Economic Times - 19.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/coronavirus-creates-repair-headache-for-oil-and-gas-industry/75820934>

India's crude steel output slips 65% to 3.13 MT in Apr: World Steel report

India's crude steel output declined over 65 per cent to 3.13 million tonnes (MT) during April, according to the World Steel Association. The government imposed a nationwide lockdown on March 25 to prevent the spread of the coronavirus pandemic which has impacted production, demand

coronavirus pandemic and the difficulty in storing the super-cooled liquid has hammered global gas prices like never before. International gas prices, a variable in the domestic price, have also been falling. Domestic prices fell 26 per cent in the last six-monthly revision on April 1 to \$2.39 based on the government-set formula. This triggered demands by local producers to lift all price controls. The formula price is derived from average rates at international gas hubs.

The Economic Times - 23.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/spot-Ing-price-crash-set-to-make-life-harder-for-indian-suppliers-of-long-term-gas/75908849>

Dharmendra Pradhan pushes PSUs to double sourcing of domestic steel pipes

Oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Thursday asked state-run companies under his ministry to double sourcing of domestic steel pipes to about four lakh tonne, worth an estimated Rs 4,000 crore, for their pipeline projects by the end of current financial year. According to Pradhan, gas utility GAIL is processing line pipe tenders worth over Rs 1,000 crore requiring one lakh tonne of steel by September for manufacturing 800 km of pipes by domestic bidders. This quantity is expected to be doubled by the end of the current financial year to boost 'Make in India' initiative and boost the move towards self-reliance. Indradhanush Gas Grid Ltd, which is expanding city gas networks in the north-east, is processing tenders of more than Rs 950 crore for 73,000 tonne steel by July for manufacturing 550 Km pipes by domestic bidders. This quantity is expected to be doubled by March 2021. Indian Oil is implementing a 1,450-km-long natural gas pipeline project in the southern region at an estimated cost of Rs 6,025 crore.

The Economic Times - 22.05.2020

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/dharmendra-pradhan-pushes-psus-to-double-sourcing-of-domestic-steel-pipes/75881358>

Healthy elderly can fly; Aarogya not must: Puri

The Centre iterated on Friday that domestic flights to all places would resume from Monday, despite resistance from Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, and termed as "impractical" calls for quarantining domestic flyers after they disembark. Aviation minister Hardeep Singh

and supply of steel in India. The country had produced 9.02 MT of crude steel during the same month a year ago, the World Steel Association (worldsteel) said in a report. India had posted a 14 per cent decline in steel output at 8.65 MT in March as compared with 10.04 MT in March 2019. Global steel output also declined 13 per cent to 137.09 MT as compared with 157.67 MT in April 2019. "Due to the ongoing difficulties presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, many of this month's (April) figures are estimates that may be revised with next month's production update," the global industry body said. China, which had for the first time in many months reported a 1.7 per cent fall in its output in March at 78.97 MT, has started showing growth in production, the data showed.

Business Standard - 24.05.2020

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-s-crude-steel-output-slips-65-to-3-13-mt-in-apr-world-steel-report-120052400587_1.html

Govt sets fare range for flights, 40% tickets to be sold below mid-point

The government has fixed minimum and maximum fares, effective till 11.59pm on August 24, for domestic flights that will resume from Monday. Airlines will need to sell 40% seats below midpoint of the fare band on each flight. Based on flying time, there are seven categories: starting at flights below 40 minutes having a range of Rs 2,000-6,000 and going upto those with flying time of 3-3.5 hours with a range of Rs 6,500-18,600 (see graphic). With air services set to resume from May 25, most airlines have started taking bookings. Aviation minister H S Puri said there may not be any requirement to quarantine domestic passengers. "The rules of different states will need to be followed. It does not seem domestic flyers will need to be quarantined," Puri said. The new protocol for flying has also been finalised that, among other things, prohibits eating on board (except on health ground), advises pregnant women, aged and people with health issues not to fly for now and check-in bag tags that passengers used to get being replaced by SMSs.

The Times of India - 22.05.2020

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/govt-sets-fare-range-for-flights-40-tickets-to-be-sold-below-mid-point/articleshow/75880329.cms>

Puri said the healthy elderly wouldn't be stopped from flying and the use of Aarogya Setu App was preferable, and not mandatory, for air travel. Airlines started opening bookings from Thursday night after DGCA approved a schedule of 8,216 weekly domestic flights from Monday, a third of the original summer schedule of 24,643. While all airlines are taking bookings for travel from May 25, GoAir is doing so from its originally announced date of June 1. Till 5pm on Friday, over 1 lakh tickets are learnt to have been sold, with almost 60,000 of them by market leader IndiGo alone. "Domestic passengers are pre-cleared. Some of the anxiety which is being shown would have been there at any time. Now we have been under lockdown for 57 days and are opening after three days. Between March 25 and June 1, what's going to change? We are going ahead with this.

The Times of India - 23.05.2020

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=TOIKM%2F2020%2F05%2F23&entity=Ar00504&sk=28E5C0E1&mode=text>

63% willing to travel in 3 months, 70% rule out overseas travel: CII survey

The Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) has found that 63 per cent of people it surveyed in northern India are gearing to travel within three months of relaxation of the coronavirus lockdown, but most of them have ruled out any international travel. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey was conducted online among a limited sample of 250 respondents across Chandigarh, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. The survey has also found that post the coronavirus lockdown, hygiene standards maintained by hotels would be the single most important deciding factor for tourists while selecting the place of stay. Around 68 per cent of the respondents said hygiene standards would determine their choice of hotels. Around 59 per cent of the respondents said use of protective gear was the most important precaution they would take during travel, with Aarogya Setu App being the preferred choice of around one fifth of the respondents. Close to two thirds of the respondents would like to travel within three months of relaxation of the lockdown.

Deccan Herald - 25.05.2020

<https://www.deccanherald.com/business/business-news/63-willing-to-travel-in-3-months-70-rule-out-overseas-travel-cii-survey-841366.html>

Major ports see 21% volume contraction in April due to COVID-19; sector outlook negative: Icra

Impacted by COVID-19, major ports in India witnessed a steep 21 per cent volume contraction in April and bulk cargo throughput may shrink up to 8 per cent in the current fiscal, ratings agency Icra said on Friday. It said the container segment may witness a decline of 12-15 per cent during the current financial year. "The Indian port sector has been adversely impacted due to the COVID-19 outbreak and the subsequent lockdown introduced by India and other major economies. "Although, the sector has been classified under essential services and has remained operational during the lockdown, the impact on domestic economic activity as well as slowdown in global trade has resulted in steep contraction in cargo volumes at the major ports in April 2020, with throughput decline of 21 per cent," Icra said in a statement. While the decline was across major cargo categories, petroleum, oil and lubricant (POL), thermal coal and container segment witnessed significant contraction.

Deccan Herald - 23.05.2020

<https://www.deccanherald.com/business/business-news/major-ports-see-21-volume-contraction-in-april-due-to-covid-19-sector-outlook-negative-icra-840656.html>

Vedanta's oil and gas head Ajay Dixit quits

Cairn Oil & Gas, Vedanta Ltd. CEO Ajay Kumar Dixit is superannuating from the company at the end of his five year term, this month. Dixit, who was appointed CEO of Cairn Oil and Gas in middle of April last year, is the fifth CEO to leave the company since it was acquired by the Vedanta group in 2011. Following his exit, Cairn's Management Committee will continue to drive the oil & gas business under the overall leadership of Sunil Duggal, Group CEO, Vedanta Ltd, an official statement said on Monday. Commenting on the development, Duggal said, I: "Ajay has been leading the oil and gas business and digital transformation, driving production to serve the energy needs of the nation, including through recent oil price volatility and the Covid-19 pandemic. The management wishes him the very best." Besides his contributions in the oil and gas business, Ajay has earlier contributed to growing Vedanta's Power, Alumina & Bauxite, and Aluminium businesses, the statement added.

The Economic Times - 19.05.2020

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/vedantas-oil-and-gas-head-ajay-dixit-quits/articleshow/75804553.cms>