

(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.)

## RBI holds rates, forecasts 10.5% GDP growth for FY22

The RBI on Friday kept interest rates on hold but promised to retain the policy stance as accommodative to support growth as long as it was required to aid recovery. RBI governor Shaktikanta Das also announced that the cash reserve ratio (CRR) — share of deposits that banks must hold with the central bank — would be restored to pre-Covid level by May 22, a move which will drain Rs 1.4 lakh crore from the banking system. "Consumer confidence is reviving, and business expectations of manufacturing, services and infrastructure remain upbeat. The movement of goods and people and domestic trading activity is growing at a robust pace. Electricity and energy demand reflect a broader normalisation of economic activity than in December, even as fears of second wave abate," said Das. He said the Budget 2021-22 has provided a strong impetus for revival of sectors such as health and well-being, infrastructure, innovation and research, among others. This will have a cascading multiplier effect, particularly in improving the investment climate and reinvigorating domestic demand, income and employment.

*The Times of India - 06.02.2021*

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=TOIKM%2F2021%2F02%2F06&entity=Ar01720&sk=CB73B9B2&mode=text>

## Capital expenditure hiked 34.5% to Rs 5.54 lakh cr in FY'22 to push growth

To push growth via infrastructure creation, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday hiked the government's capital expenditure for FY 2021-22 by 34.5 per cent to Rs 5.5 lakh crore. The government's planned capital expenditure for the current fiscal has been increased to Rs 4.39 lakh crore, as against the Budgeted Rs 4.12 lakh crore. "Sharp increase in capital budget in BE 2020-21. We have provided for Rs 4.12 lakh crore for (capital) expenditure. It was our effort that in spite of resource crunch we should spend more on capital expenditure and we are likely to end this year at around Rs 4.39 lakh crore which we have provided in RE (revised estimate) of 2020-21,"

## RBI projects retail inflation in 5-5.2 per cent range for H1 FY22

The Reserve Bank on Friday projected retail inflation to be in 5-5.2 per cent range during the first half of the next fiscal year, expecting further softening of vegetables prices in near term. Also, it has lowered the retail inflation forecast for the current January-March quarter of 2020-21 fiscal at 5.2 per cent. The Reserve Bank (RBI) has kept the key policy rate unchanged at 4 per cent, with an accommodative stance, so as to ensure that inflation remains well within the target, Governor Shaktikanta Das said while announcing the last monetary policy of 2020-21. "The MPC (monetary policy committee) voted unanimously to leave the policy repo rate unchanged at 4 per cent. It also unanimously decided to continue with the accommodative stance of monetary policy as long as necessary while ensuring that inflation remains within the target going forward," Das said. The governor said the outlook on growth has improved significantly and inflation has returned within the tolerance band (of +/-4 per cent).

*The New India Express - 06.02.2021*

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/business/2021/feb/05/rbi-projects-retail-inflation-in-5-52-per-cent-range-for-h1-fy22-2259975.html>

## Exports rise 5.37% in January; trade deficit narrows to \$14.75 billion

India's merchandise exports rose for the second consecutive month in January, while the trade deficit narrowed during the same period, showing signs of revival in the economic activity. India's merchandise exports rose 5.37 per cent on a year-on-year basis to \$27.24 billion in January 2021, from \$25.85 billion in the same period last year. This was driven by growth in pharmaceuticals, iron ore and engineering sectors. However, cumulative exports during April-January 2020-21 exhibited a negative growth of 13.66 per cent. It stood at \$228.04 billion as compared to \$264.13 billion during the same period last year, as per the

Sitharaman said in her 2021-22 Budget speech. For the next fiscal, the minister proposed sharp increase in capital expenditure and provided Rs 5.54 lakh crore. This is 34.5 per cent higher than Budget estimate of Rs 4.12 lakh crore in 2020-21.

*The Hindu Business Line - 02.02.2021*

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/budget/capital-expenditure-hiked-345-to-rs-554-lakh-cr-in-fy22-to-push-growth/article33714499.ece>

### **India's budget shot in the arm for economy, fiscal consolidation takes a back seat: S&P**

S&P Global Ratings on Tuesday said India's budget for the next fiscal is an effort of the government to shore up economic recovery, but fiscal consolidation would pose a stout challenge to policymakers going forward. The rating agency currently does not see any material effect from the budget on India's key credit factors, but the economy's brightening growth prospects will be critical to maintaining the sustainability of public finances. It said general government debt is likely to hover at more than 90 per cent of GDP over the next few years. Stating that fiscal consolidation has taken a back seat in the Budget, S&P said aggressive provisioning to help heal the economy will be costly. The government's 9.5 per cent fiscal deficit projection for current fiscal was bigger than the US-based rating agency's expectation. "The prospect of consolidation from these heights, while maintaining a significant degree of support for the economy, poses a stout challenge to India's policymakers. The government will seek to balance its spending imperative against its limited fiscal headroom by consolidating its finances at a much slower pace than it planned prior to the pandemic," S&P said in a statement.

*The Financial Express - 02.02.2021*

<https://www.financialexpress.com/budget/indias-budget-shot-in-the-arm-for-economy-fiscal-consolidation-takes-a-back-seat-sp/2185925/>

### **Service activity gathers pace in Jan, but jobs decline**

Buoyed by positive sentiment about demand growth and improvements in the wider economy amid the roll out of Covid-19 vaccines, business optimism among India's service providers rose to an 11-month high in January, a private survey showed on Wednesday. The IHS India Services

data released by Ministry of Commerce & Industry on Tuesday. Merchandise imports also remained positive for the second straight month, growing by 2.05 per cent to \$41.99 billion as against \$41.15 billion in January 2020. After a gap of nine months, imports recorded a positive growth of 7.6 per cent at \$42.6 billion in December. For April-January period of the current fiscal, imports fell by 25.92 per cent to \$300.26 billion, as compared to \$405.33 billion during the same period last year.

*Business Today - 03.02.2021*

<https://www.businesstoday.in/current/economy-politics/exports-rise-537-in-january-trade-deficit-narrows-to-1475-billion/story/430031.html>

### **Moody's projects India's fiscal deficit higher than expected**

Rating agency Moody's on Wednesday said India's fiscal deficit projections were higher than expected and slower consolidation would constrain its fiscal strength over the medium term. India has budgeted a fiscal deficit of 9.5 per cent of GDP for the current fiscal ending March. "We believe the final number could be lower, based on stronger revenue generation during the fourth quarter of fiscal 2020 (ending March 31, 2021)," Moody's said in a note. The fiscal deficit for 2021-22 fiscal beginning April 1 has been pegged at 6.8 per cent. Moody's vice-president and senior credit officer William Foster said while the headline deficit projections were larger than the agency expected, they reflected both credible budgetary assumptions and greater transparency than in past budgets. "The budget's focus on higher capital spending, financial sector reform and asset sales will help stimulate growth, but implementation risks remain and slower fiscal consolidation will constrain fiscal strength over the medium term," Foster added.

*The Telegraph - 04.02.2021*

<https://www.telegraphindia.com/business/moodys-projects-india-fiscal-deficit-higher-than-expected/cid/1805639>

### **FM goes big on PSU privatisation, bank recapitalisation**

Stressing on the need for privatisation, Union Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Union Budget 2021 speech on Monday revealed the government's intent to focus more on disinvestment and privatisation. She proposed to divest two PSU banks and one general

Business Activity Index rose to 52.8 in January from 52.3 in December as transport & storage and consumer services grew the most last month with increases in business activity and new orders while sharp falls in sales and output were seen in information & communication. A reading above 50 on the index shows expansion and below it indicates contraction. "The service sector looks set to sustain growth and confidence towards hiring may improve as Covid-19 concerns diminish," said Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at IHS Markit. A sister survey on Monday showed a strong growth in India's manufacturing activity in January as the PMI rose to 57.7 from 56.4 in December. The yearly SBI Composite Index, an indicator for manufacturing activities in the country, also showed a sustained revival in activity. It rose to 53.8 in January from 53.5 in December.

*The Economic Times - 04.02.2021*

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2021%2F02%2F04&entity=Ar01308&sk=A70CC440&mode=text>

### **BPCL, Air India stake sale by Sept; LIC IPO post Oct: DIPAM Secy**

The initial public offering (IPO) of India's largest insurance company LIC is likely after October this year, a top official said on Tuesday laying out the government's divestment calendar that includes completing the sale of flag carrier Air India and oil firm BPCL within the first half of the next fiscal. Targeting to raise ₹1.75 lakh crore from the asset sale to finance projects aimed at reviving the pandemic battered economy, the government is also looking to sell Shipping Corp of India (SCI), IDBI Bank Ltd and two other public sector lenders in the fiscal year beginning April 1. In an interview with PTI, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said the government has introduced the legislative amendments required for disinvestment of a stake in Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and IDBI Bank through the Finance Bill, 2021 presented along with the Budget on Monday. The Modi government is targeting record capital expenditure next fiscal to pull the economy out of the trough. Additional resources required for that are to be raised through divestment and monetisation.

*The Hindu - 02.02.2021*

<https://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/bpcl-air-india-stake-sale-by-sept-lic-ipo-post-oct-dipam-secy/article33731199.ece>

insurance company as well. Sitharaman said all divestments announced so far will be completed in FY22, including that of LIC IPO, BPCL, CONCOR, Pawan Hans and Air India. The government set the FY22 divestment target of Rs 1.75 lakh crore. For the fiscal year 2021-22, out of the total Rs 1.75 lakh crore, Rs 1 lakh crore is to come from selling government stake in public sector banks and financial institutions. Rs 75,000 crore would come as CPSE disinvestment receipts. Unveiling the Disinvestment/Strategic Disinvestment Policy, Sitharaman said four sectors — atomic energy, space and defence; transport and telecommunications; power, petroleum, coal and other minerals; and banking, insurance and financial services — would be strategic sectors.

*Millennium Post - 02.02.2021*

<http://www.millenniumpost.in/big-stories/budget-unveils-scheme-for-setting-up-mega-textile-parks-in-india-430728>

### **GoM to decide bare minimum PSUs in strategic sectors**

The bare minimum presence of public sector enterprises (PSEs) in strategic sectors — announced by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the budget — will be decided by a group of ministers after consulting ministries in each identified sector, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey told ET on Tuesday. "The formulation, which has come after the Cabinet approval, is what the FM stated. A group of ministers — what we call an alternative mechanism — will go into an after analysis, they will then find out what is the bare minimum (sector by sector)," he said in a post-budget interview. Identification of PSEs will result in a potential pipeline of companies to be divested and require Cabinet approval. However, privatisation will depend on timing, sequencing and the response of potential investors. The process will take four to five years, given the large number of PSEs. "In the case of non-strategic sectors, if privatisation does not succeed, it (PSE) could be closed, while in case of strategic, you could also look at consolidation... but the key is privatisation," Pandey said.

*The Economic Times - 03.02.2021*

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2021%2F02%2F03&entity=Ar00303&sk=0AA13D55&mode=text>

## **Only a few PSUs in key sectors to stay: Niti CEO**

The Centre would retain only a few public sector companies and privatise the others, following the decision to stay only in "strategic sectors" such as atomic energy, oil, defence, transport and minerals, Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant told TOI on Wednesday. "Beyond the four sectors, in every other area, the intention is that we should be able to bring in a huge amount of private sector investment, enhance productivity and take India to a high growth trajectory," he said. Talking about the timeframe, he said Niti Aayog would soon do a complete analysis and make its recommendations. "We are doing a lot of homework and based on our consultations with the ministry of finance and other concerned ministries we will take a call on this as early as possible," he said. Separately, Anurag Singh Thakur, junior minister for finance, told TOI that privatisation would not only help the government focus on priority areas — social sector and infrastructure — but also benefit employees who can hope to get ESOPs and other benefits.

*The Times of India - 04.02.2021*

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=TOIKM%2F2021%2F02%2F04&entity=Ar00507&sk=5C4E6C8B&mode=text>

## **300+ PSUs may shrink to barely two dozen**

The government may reduce the number of public sector enterprises to just around two dozen, from over 300 at present, following the new policy that focuses on privatisation in non-core sectors, while shutting down lossmaking state-run enterprises. Top government sources told TOI that the final number would be decided by the Union Cabinet based on recommendations by NITI Aayog, which has been tasked with identifying the next set of companies to be offered for strategic sale. The budget has made it absolutely clear there will be only four key strategic sectors and in these key segments, there will be a maximum of three or four public sector units. All other areas where there are PSUs, the government will move out and there will be less than two dozen PSUs left. This will include banks and insurance companies, especially in the general insurance space. All other areas where there are PSUs, the government will move out and there will be less than two dozen PSUs left. This will include banks and insurance companies, especially in the general insurance space.

*The Times of India - 08.02.2021*

## **New Policy not to impact ongoing PSU stake sales**

The new policy for central public sector enterprises will not impact ongoing negotiations for disinvestment of some PSUs such as Air India and Bharat Petroleum, the government said on Friday. The ongoing transactions for strategic disinvestment "shall continue to be undertaken as per the extant procedure", the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (Dipam) said in a memorandum giving broad contours of the policy approved by the Union cabinet. Strategic disinvestments of Air India, Bharat Petroleum Corp, Shipping Corporation of India and BEML are in various stages of advancement. The government is expected to conclude these transactions in FY22. The new disinvestment policy aims to keep public sector enterprise presence to bare minimum in strategic sectors and, open those in the nonstrategic sectors to privatisation, merger, subsidiarisation with another PSE, or for closure. "Strategic sectors have been delineated based on the criteria of national security, energy security, critical infrastructure, provision of financial services and availability of important minerals," Dipam said.

*The Economic Times - 06.02.2021*

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2021%2F02%2F06&entity=Ar00909&sk=3A4A7144&mode=text>

## **Consolidation in public sector oil firms may be back on table in FY22**

After a gap of more than two years, the government may again revive the 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 move follows the design of the new privatisation policy unveiled in this year's Budget. As per the policy, only a bare minimum presence will be maintained in the strategic sectors, including petroleum, while other entities would be privatised. With the government already proceeding with the privatisation of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), it is felt that the bare minimum principle would allow for consolidation in the sector through mergers and amalgamations. So, after the 2018 merger of PSU oil refiner and retailer Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) with upstream major Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), sources said the government may now look at creating another public sector integrated 'oil behemoth' by considering the merger of



<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=TOIKM%2F2021%2F02%2F08&entity=Ar00507&sk=0DC43FE8&mode=text>

## Centre likely to incentivise stake sale in state PSUs

The Centre could offer funds equivalent to disinvestment receipts raised by states to incentivise them to pursue stake sales in state-owned enterprises. "We are working out the incentives... We could match up the disinvestment receipts raised by them," a senior government official told ET. The official said the incentives would be finalised soon after the passage of the budget by Parliament. Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said in her budget speech the Centre would incentivise disinvestment by states. "To similarly incentivise states to take to disinvestment of their public sector companies, we will work out an incentive package of central funds for states," she had said on February 1. The Centre's approach of linking reforms by states to additional borrowing has yielded good results. As many as 12 states have implemented ease of doing business reforms to avail of the additional borrowing window and the Centre's view is that this could work with disinvestment as well. The government has identified privatisation as a key focus area, with the new public sector policy setting out four areas as strategic where a bare minimum of central public sector enterprises will be maintained and the rest privatised.

*The Economic Times - 08.02.2021*

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2021%2F02%2F08&entity=Ar00710&sk=89BAC3B5&mode=text>

## Crude oil output falls 5 per cent

Domestic crude oil production fell about 5 per cent in November primarily because of a sharp drop in output at the Rajasthan oilfields operated by Cairn Vedanta, government data showed on Tuesday. Also, natural gas production in the country fell 9 per cent to 2.3 billion cubic meters (bcm) in November largely because of a fall in eastern offshore field output. During April-November, India's oil production was 6 per cent lower at 20.42 million tonnes (mt). The output from Rajasthan during this period dropped 16 per cent to 3.91mt. Gas output during April-November was 18.7bcm, down 11.8 per cent over the previous year. The fall in crude production has raised concerns on meeting the Modi government's plans

upstream oil producer Oil India Ltd (OIL) with Indian Oil Corporation (IOC).

*Business Standard - 06.02.2021*

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/consolidation-in-public-sector-oil-firms-may-be-back-on-table-in-fy22-121020600992\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/consolidation-in-public-sector-oil-firms-may-be-back-on-table-in-fy22-121020600992_1.html)

## NITI Aayog's next list of companies for disinvestment in few weeks: Rajiv Kumar

Niti Aayog will prepare the next list of central public sector companies for disinvestment in the next few weeks, its Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar said on Thursday and expressed hope that the proposed asset reconstruction and management companies to address banks' bad loan woes will do a good job like the UTI. Days after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the Union Budget for 2021-22 laying out various measures (including disinvestment proposals) to bolster the pandemic-hit economy, Kumar also emphasised that the Modi government has shown consistent commitment for the welfare of farmers and for the improvement of the agriculture sector. "Now the process has begun... We will complete preparation of the next list in the next few weeks, we have got the marching order," Kumar said about the list of public sector companies for the next round of stake sales. To fast track the disinvestment process, Sitharaman, in her Budget speech on Monday, said Niti Aayog would work out on the next list of central public sector companies that would be taken up for strategic disinvestment.

*Mint - 04.02.2021*

<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/niti-aayog-s-next-list-of-companies-for-disinvestment-in-few-weeks-rajiv-kumar-11612432185435.html>

## GAIL completes Rs 2,433 crore pipeline project in West Bengal

GAIL (India) Ltd, the nation's biggest gas utility, has put West Bengal on the gas map of India after it completed laying a Rs 2,433-crore pipeline that will bring to the state cooking fuel that is cheaper than LPG and CNG that costs less than petrol and diesel, and fuel to produce urea for all its requirement. The 348-kilometer pipeline from Dobhi in Bihar to Durgapur in West Bengal is part of the Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga project to take environment-friendly natural gas to India's eastern parts which hereto was left untouched by the benefits of gas-based economy. "The government's consistent push for a gas-based economy that

to cut crude imports by 10 per cent by 2022. India is dependent on imports for 85 per cent of its needs and the government is pushing domestic explorers to raise output to help cut down imports. Crude oil production in November at 2.48mt was lower than 2.61mt produced in the same month a year back.

*The Telegraph - 05.02.2021*

<https://www.telegraphindia.com/business/crude-oil-output-falls-5-per-cent/cid/1801389>

## **Modi: 1cr people will get LPG connections for free**

Over one crore people in the country will get LPG connections for free under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana. This was revealed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Haldia on Sunday while inaugurating a host of projects in the state. He said in Bengal, over 90 lakh people have got gas under PMUY and, of them, 36 lakh are from the SC/ST category. On Sunday, Modi dedicated to the nation the 347-km Dobhi-Durgapur natural gas pipeline. This pipeline is a part of the ambitious Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga project. The Dobhi-Durgapur pipeline has been built at a cost of Rs 2,433 crore by GAIL. During the project stage, it generated 15 lakh man-days of employment. The project will revive Hindustan Urvarak & Rasayan Limited's Sindri (Jharkhand) fertilizer plant, supply gas to Matix fertilizer plant in Durgapur and supply gas to industrial, commercial and automobile sectors and boost city gas distribution across all major towns in these states, including the cities of Purulia, Asansol and Durgapur in Bengal. Incidentally, Bengal Gas, a JV between GAIL and the state government, will invest Rs 7,000 crore for setting up the city gas grid in Kolkata and adjacent areas in the next few years.

*The Times of India - 08.02.2021*

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=TOIKM%2F2021%2F02%2F08&entity=Ar01200&sk=2CA4A2A2&mode=text>

## **Reliance gets world's first 'carbon-neutral' oil from United States**

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd has sourced the world's first consignment of 'carbon-neutral oil' from the US as it looks to become a net zero-carbon company by 2035. Reliance, which operates the world's largest single location oil refining complex at Jamnagar in Gujarat with capacity of 68.2 million tonnes a year, got 2 million barrels of consignment Permian basin, the US supplier said in a statement. Oxy Low Carbon Ventures (OLCV), a division of US oil

not just reduces carbon emissions but provides reliable and convenient fuel has opened new paradigms and the Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga is one of them," GAIL Chairman and Managing Director Manoj Jain said. The massive project connects the end point of legacy gas pipelines at Jagdishpur in Uttar Pradesh to eastern states of Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Odisha.

*Business Today - 08.02.2021*

<https://www.businesstoday.in/sectors/energy/gail-completes-rs-2433-crore-pipeline-project-in-west-bengal/story/430510.html>

## **Escalating oil prices signal need for more output to halt fall in inventories**

Rapidly rising oil prices are signalling the need for more production in the second half of the year to halt the fall in global inventories and satisfy recovering consumption as epidemic-related travel restrictions ease. Global petroleum stocks have fallen by almost 600 million barrels since May 2020, after rising by over 1.2 billion barrels in the previous five months as a result of the epidemic and lockdowns. Stocks are expected to decline by a further 140 million barrels over the rest of the year, according to estimates prepared last month by the U.S. Energy Information Administration ("Short-term energy outlook", EIA, Jan. 12). Inventories are likely to end 2021 several hundred million barrels above the level at the end of 2019, before coronavirus struck, but that was a relatively tight baseline against which to measure stock levels. The expected production shortfall in the rest of this year, and inventory draw down, has already been reflected in the sharp rise in front-month futures prices and the shift in calendar spreads into a significant backwardation.

*The Economic Times - 07.02.2021*

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/escalating-oil-prices-signal-need-for-more-output-to-halt-fall-in-inventories/80730124>

## **Haldia port to be LPG hub**

Haldia port is going to emerge as one of the largest destinations to import LPG in India after BPCL operationalises a terminal on Sunday. Built at an investment of Rs 1,100 crore, the import terminal has a nameplate capacity to handle 1 million tonnes of LPG a year. This will be the third such facility to come up at Haldia, the other two being operated by the IOC-Petronas JV and Reliance Industries. Arun Kumar Singh, director marketing of BPCL, said Haldia port has a strategic location to import

major Occidental, delivered carbon-neutral oil to Reliance, the firm said. "This transaction, which was arranged in conjunction with Macquarie Group's Commodities and Global Markets group (Macquarie), is the energy industry's first major petroleum shipment for which greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with the entire crude lifecycle, well head through combustion of end products, have been offset," it said. Oxy Low Carbon Ventures and Macquarie will offset carbon dioxide equivalent to that associated with the production, delivery and refining of the crude oil and the use of the resulting product through the retirement of carbon offset credits.

*Business Standard - 04.02.2021*

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/reliance-gets-world-s-first-carbon-neutral-oil-from-united-states-121020301592\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/reliance-gets-world-s-first-carbon-neutral-oil-from-united-states-121020301592_1.html)

### **Opec leaves Asia oil price unchanged**

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) has left the price of oil unchanged for March shipments to Asia, which has four of the world's top five oil consumers, including India, but raised the rates for the US and Europe. Oil prices promptly jumped to a year's high on Friday, closing in on \$60 a barrel-mark. At fuel pumps across the country, petrol prices hurtled towards the Rs 100 a litre-mark and diesel scaled new highs as the impact of higher February price for Asia which Opec had announced in January hit home. India can draw satisfaction over Opec leaving the Asian price unchanged for March since it indicates the group is listening to concerns of consumers. India had reacted sharply to the surprise Saudi offer of an additional production cut on January 5, which sent oil prices soaring. On January 19, oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan publicly accused Opec of "backtracking" on its "commitment". With Opec secretary-general Mohammad Barkindo listening, he told an Atlantic Council meeting that such policy contradictions created confusion for consumers.

*The Times of India - 06.02.2021*

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=TOIM%2F2021%2F02%2F06&entity=Ar01411&sk=A066E014&mode=text>

### **Bifurcation of state-owned GAIL put on hold**

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has decided to put on hold the plans to bifurcate state-owned natural gas company GAIL Ltd. The government's plan was to unbundle GAIL into two

LPG for the entire East and Northeast. "Despite the low river draft which does allow big ships to dock, Haldia is preferred because it is closest to the consumption centres and LPG can be supplied at a lower cost compared with other ports on the east coast," Singh said. As it is industry practice to operate LPG terminals twice the nameplate capacity by working in double shifts, three terminals can handle 6mt import a year, making Haldia one of the busiest ports for LPG. On Sunday, PM Narendra Modi will kick off the construction of a catalytic de waxing unit at IOC's Haldia unit.

*The Telegraph - 05.02.2021*

<https://www.telegraphindia.com/business/haldia-port-to-be-lpg-hub/cid/1805734>

### **RIL Sells Pennsylvania Shale Gas Assets to Northern Oil**

Reliance Industries' arm Reliance Marcellus has signed an agreement with Delaware based Northern Oil and Gas for sale of shale gas assets in south western Pennsylvania for a consideration of \$250 million cash and warrants, the Mukesh Ambani-led company said on Thursday. The deal includes an unadjusted cash purchase price of \$175 million plus equity warrants that will be issued to RIL upon closing of the transaction. The deal is expected to be closed in April 2021, subject to customary purchase conditions, Northern Oil and Gas said. The deal is at a 20% discount rate applied to the proved developed producing reserves and 'work-in progress' wells, said Nicholas O'Grady, chief executive officer, Northern Oil and Gas. He also said that his company is not reimbursing the \$50 million capital investment that RIL has already done on the wells. Talking to investors in a webcast, he said that the valuation makes it an "an extremely compelling deal." "We believe the value of the asset is literally two and a half times what we pay for; greater than \$425 million," O'Grady said.

*The Economic Times - 05.02.2021*

<https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2021%2F02%2F05&entity=Ar00807&sk=28526D82&mode=text>

### **Steel makers may not cut prices anytime soon despite easier imports**

Major steel producers may not resort to price correction immediately, but the reduction in customs duty on a range of products and duty exemption granted on import of steel scrap

companies for gas transmission and marketing business and the state-run company had entrusted Ernst & Young as a consultant for this. The move was seen as a step to bring more transparency into the country's gas market. According to a source aware of the development, the government does not want to hamper GAIL's ability to borrow funds for its massive expansion plans. The company's plan is to double its pipeline network from around 16,000 kilometre to 34,000 kilometre. The source added that the reason for holding the bifurcation was that a separated entity will not be able to raise funds at rates in which a combined balance sheet of GAIL can get. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced in her Budget that pipeline assets of IOC, GAIL, and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) will be monetised. He said that GAIL may monetise some of its pipelines through instruments like Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT).

*Moneycontrol - 04.02.2021*

<https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/companies/exclusive-bifurcation-of-state-owned-gail-put-on-hold-6447761.html>

### **New MD-CEO Akshay Kumar Singh takes charge at Petronet LNG**

Akshay Kumar Singh took charge as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD & CEO) of the Petronet LNG Limited (PLL) on Monday. Before joining PLL, Singh was working with the Indian Oil Corporation Limited as Director (Pipelines). He had also served as an Executive Director in the GAIL India Limited in Projects division. "I am delighted to lead PLL and join in the endeavour to make India a gas based economy," Singh said after assuming the new role. Singh has vast experience in executing challenging, complex and large size Cross Country hydrocarbon pipeline networks of national importance and has made significant contributions in the last 35 years to the Petroleum & Natural gas sector in India.

*New Indian Express - 03.02.2021*

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/business/2021/feb/03/new-md-ceoakshay-kumar-singh-takes-charge-at-petronet-lng-2258859.html>

### **Harish Kumar, appointed as Managing Director of NHDC**

Harish Kumar has assumed the charge of Managing Director of NHDC Ltd. on Monday on superannuation of A.K. Mishra. Harish Kumar holds a degree in Civil Engineering from Thapar Institute of Engineering & Technology, Patiala, Punjab. Harish Kumar joined NHPC Limited on 01 April 1985 as Probationary Executive (Civil) in Chamera H.E. Project, Stage-I (Now Chamera-I Power Station) in Himachal Pradesh. During his

might put pressure on steel firms to hold the current prices in the medium term. Higher demand for steel may, however, may come to their aid. Steelmakers are not perturbed with the possibility of higher imports from China, since most of the imports come from FTA countries Japan and Korea. However, they are worried about the Budget proposal to temporarily revoke anti-dumping duty (ADD) and countervailing duty (CVD) on imports from China and other countries even as the prevailing prices are way above the reference price. "This is because, by doing away with the ADD and CVD with effect from February 2, the government has clearly sent out a message to the steel industry that they cannot raise prices at their free will, inflating the cost of building infrastructure in which it is putting a lot of money," an industry source said.

*The Financial Express - 03.02.2021*

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/steel-makers-may-not-cut-prices-anytime-soon-despite-easier-imports/2186361/>

### **Shri. R.K. Sabharwal assumed the Additional Charge of CMD, EIL**

Shri. R.K. Sabharwal, Director (Commercial) has assumed the Additional Charge of C&MD, EIL on February 1, 2021. Functional Directors, CVO, and senior officials of the Company were present on the occasion.

*PSU Connect - 02.02.2021*

<https://www.psuconnect.in/news/shri-r-k-sabharwal-assumed-the-additional-charge-of-cmd-eil/26506>

### **Siddhartha Mohanty takes charge as MD of LIC**

Siddhartha Mohanty took charge as the new Managing Director of Life Insurance Corporation of India on February 1. "He was appointed as Managing Director vide Government of India notification dated January 20, 2021," LIC said in a statement. Before this, he was Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of LIC Housing Finance. He started his career as a direct recruit officer with LIC of India in 1985.



career spanning over more than 36 years, Harish Kumar contributed to NHPC's development by serving in various Divisions of Corporate Office and Projects.

*Millennium Post - 06.02.2021*

<http://www.millenniumpost.in/business/harish-kumar-appointed-as-managing-director-of-nhdc-431123>

Mohanty replaces TC Suseel Kumar, who retired on January 31, 2021.

*The Hindu Business Line - 05.02.2021*

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/money-and-banking/siddhartha-mohanty-takes-charge-as-md-of-lic/article33724070.ece>