# WEEKLY MEDIA UPDATE

**Issue 489**

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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.)*

**Balmer Lawrie in News**

Interview of D[HR & CA] and C&MD (Addl. charge) with CNBC TV 18 on February 11, 2021
https://youtu.be/G_T1Cc85OFo

TCW Hyderabad has been featured in the February issue of Logistics Insider's cover story 'Tracing the Path of The World's Largest Inoculation Drive'
https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/embed_code/key/ub5UYokptxriiG

**BALMER LAWRIE CELEBRATES 155TH FOUNDATION DAY WITH WEEK LONG CELEBRATIONS**

Balmer Lawrie & Co Ltd celebrated its 155th Foundation Day on February 1. To mark this occasion A Ratna Sekhar, D[HR&CA] and C&MD [Additional Charge] hoisted the company flag and addressed the employees at the Corporate Office in Kolkata. Week long celebrations have been planned, during which events like talent hunt, rangoli, photography and painting competitions are being organised for the employees. Foundation Day was celebrated in all the regions across the country.

Mint - 12.02.2021

## Indian economy to shrink by 7% in FY21

Pencilling in a GDP growth in third and fourth quarters, SBI Research on Wednesday revised its contraction forecast for the current fiscal year to 7 per cent. The agency had earlier forecast a 7.4 per cent contraction in 2020-21 GDP numbers. In April-September, the economy contracted 15.7 per cent but the second half may see a surprise 2.8 per cent growth, if the SBI analysis turns out to be correct. Soumya Kanti Ghosh, group chief economic adviser at State Bank of India (SBI) said of the 41 high frequency leading indicators, 51 per cent are showing acceleration which should help the economy turn around to the green from the third quarter with a 0.3 percentage point growth which is likely to surprise positively when the final numbers are out. In April-June, the Indian

## India may have turned recession corner in Q3

The Indian economy is likely to post modest growth in the December quarter, reversing the technical recession caused by Covid-19, following a strong recovery towards the end of calendar 2020. An ET survey of economists estimated a median of 0.32% growth in the third quarter of FY21, marking a bounce back from the previous two quarters of contraction in gross domestic product (GDP). The National Statistical Office will release official GDP estimates for the third quarter of FY21 at the end of the month. India's GDP contracted 23.9% in the June quarter following what was regarded as the strictest lockdown in the world that was imposed on March 25 to contain the economy contracted by a record 23.9 per cent, but dramatically improved to -7.5 per cent in the second quarter. In 2019-20, the economy had grown 4 per cent and in the current fiscal year, it is on course to tank by 7 per cent. The consensus is -7.5-8 per cent with the NSO pegging it at -7 per cent and RBI at -7.5 per cent.

*Millennium Post - 11.02.2021*

http://www.millenniumpost.in/business/indian-economy-to-shrink-by-7-in-fy21-431514

coronavirus spread. In the September quarter, GDP shrank 7.5%. "In our view, the recession has ended in the last quarter," said Aditi Nayar, principal economist at ICRA, pegging December quarter growth at 0.5-0.8%.

*The Economic Times - 15.02.2021*

https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2021%2F02%2F15&entity=Ar01011&sk=B7CCFCD6&mode=text

## Business activity almost back to normal in February: Nomura

Business activity was nearly back to normal levels by the first week of February in India as it seemed like a 'vaccine pivot' in activity was underway without actually waiting for the vaccine, said global brokerage Nomura. "Overall, ebbing pandemic risk suggests that the 'vaccine pivot' in activity might be underway without waiting on the vaccine, leading to faster normalization," the firm said in a note on Tuesday. The Nomura India Business Resumption Index (NIBRI) sharply picked up to 96.5 for the week ending February 7, from 94.4 in the previous week, indicating a faster pace of normalisation over January. The improvements in the index, which covers high frequency indicators like mobility indices, power demand and labour participation, came on the back of sobre growth in the previous month when the NIBRI dropped to 92.7 for the week ended January 24. "Also, the recent Union Budget suggests the government aims to significantly dial up spending in Q1 (Q4FY21), which may prove to be a growth booster," it added.

*The Economic Times - 10.02.2021*

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

## High fiscal deficit to pose challenge in lowering India's debt/GDP ratio: Fitch

Fitch Ratings on Wednesday said India's high fiscal deficit would pose a challenge in lowering the debt to GDP ratio, which is expected to rise above 90 per cent in the next five years. It said India entered the pandemic with little fiscal headroom from a rating perspective. Its general government debt/GDP ratio stood at 72 per cent in 2019, against a median of 42 per cent for 'BBB' rated peers. Fitch said the budget points to a loosening of fiscal policy to support the country's ongoing economic recovery from the pandemic and will consequently lead to a rise in public debt. The debt/GDP trajectory is core to our sovereign rating assessment, meaning higher deficits and a slower consolidation path will make India's medium-term growth outlook take on a more critical role in our analysis, Fitch Ratings said in a statement. It now expects public debt/GDP to rise above 90 per cent of GDP over the next five years, based on the revised budget targets. However, recent reforms and policy measures, including those announced in the budget, could also influence the rating agency's growth expectations and its debt trajectory forecasts.

*The Financial Express - 10.02.2021*

https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/high-fiscal-deficit-to-pose-challenge-in-lowering-indias-debt-gdp-ratio-fitch/2192000/

## Retail inflation at 16-mth low, factory output up 1%

Retail inflation slowed to a16-month low in January on the back of cooling of some food items, while industrial output growth clawed back into positive territory in December, bringing some cheer for an economy battling a record slump due to the impact of the deadly pandemic. Data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Friday showed retail inflation, as measured by the consumer price index, eased to 4.1% in January, slower than the 4.6% recorded in the previous month. It has moderated sharply from the 7.6% posted in the year-ago period. Rural inflation was at 3.2% in January, while in urban

## India Inc shows stronger profit growth in Q3

India Inc registered a strong double-digit, year-on-year growth in aggregate net profit for the second straight quarter, primarily helped by cost optimisation and partly by festive demand as the economy revived. A majority of the companies continued to beat street expectations in the December quarter. In addition, management commentaries reflected the upbeat growth scenario. India Inc registered a strong double-digit, year-on-year growth in aggregate net profit for the second straight quarter, primarily helped by cost optimisation and partly by festive demand as areas it was higher at 5.1%. Inflation in the food and beverages segment slowed to almost one-and-a-half year low of 2.7%, while vegetable prices fell15.8% year-on-year during the month. But prices of some protein items continued to be in double digits. Meat and fish prices rose an annual 12.5% in January, while egg prices were up 12.9% and oils and fats at 19.7%. Core inflation (excluding food and fuel) remained at 6.5%, while inflation in health, personal care and transport also remained high during the month.

*The Times of India - 12.02.2021*

https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=TOIKM%2F2021%2F02%2F13&entity=Ar01905&sk=FC79DB79&mode=text

## Exports up 10.3% during Feb 1-8: Official

Continuing with the positive growth, the country's exports grew by 10.3 per cent to USD 7.3 billion during the first week of February on account of strong performance by key sectors such as engineering and chemicals, an official said on Wednesday. Imports too increased by a marginal 0.7 per cent to USD 9.84 billion during the week, the official added. The trade deficit narrowed to USD 2.54 billion. Engineering goods showcased the maximum growth and the outbound shipments witnessed a multifold increase to USD 1.6 billion during February 1-8. Exports of organic and inorganic chemicals stood at USD 617 million during the period. However, some sectors which recorded negative growth include meat, dairy and poultry products; oil meals; and fruits and vegetables. Further, gold imports increased by 70.7 per cent to USD 391.9 million during the week. Imports of petroleum products dipped 29.5 per cent to USD 951.7 million. Exports in December 2020 and January had recorded positive growth.

*The Economic Times - 11.02.2021*

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/exports-up-10-3-pc-during-feb-1-8-official/articleshow/80785441.cms?from=mdr

## Govt's PSU push puts the shine on Bharat 22 ETF

Investor appetite for Bharat 22 Exchange Traded Fund, a product that invests in 19 public sector and three private sector companies, has shot up in the past month as the government looks to step up its disinvestment programme. With valuations of PSUs still below market averages, wealth managers are asking rich investors to accumulate

the economy revived. A majority of the companies continued to beat street expectations in the December quarter. In addition, management commentaries reflected the upbeat growth scenario. "The ebitda margins were largely ahead of expectations driven by cost savings, including lower ad spends, improving operating leverage and product mix in some cases. However, there were clear signs of rising input costs," said Vinod Karki, strategy head, ICICI Securities.

*The Economic Times - 15.02.2021*

https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2021%2F02%2F15&entity=Ar00801&sk=80D8E5FA&mode=text

## 247 CPSEs earned ₹1.78 lakh cr profit in 2018-19: CAG

India's national auditor has said that 247 central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) earned profit of ₹1.78 lakh crore during 2018-19, of which 73% was contributed by 63 companies in sectors of petroleum, coal and lignite and power. However, the Comptroller Auditor General (CAG) flagged that 189 CPSEs had accumulated losses of Rs 1.4 lakh crore as on March 31, 2019, of which net worth of 77 companies had been completely eroded due to the accumulated losses. "As a result, the aggregate net worth of these companies had become negative to the extent of Rs 83,394 crore," the agency said in the General Purpose Financial Report of CPSEs laid in Parliament on Tuesday. It added that 100 CPSEs declared a dividend of Rs 71,857 crore during the year 2018-19. Out of this, the dividend received or receivable by central government amounted to Rs 36,709 crore which represented 9.16% return on the total investment of over Rs 4 lakh crore by the Centre in all 434 CPSEs that were reviewed by the CAG. The agency further said that return on equity for government from the 247 CPSEs was 18.58% in 2018-19, lower than 19.03% in 225 CPSEs in 2017-18.

*The Economic Times - 10.02.2021*

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

## 'Can babus do everything?' PM pitches for privatisation

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday made a strong pitch for a bigger role for the private sector in the economy, saying that slandering private enterprise was tantamount to distrusting the potential of youth and suspecting their intent. "Wealth creators are also important for the country, only then wealth units of the ETF. Average trading volumes of Bharat 22 ETF on the NSE have doubled to 19.5 lakh units daily compared to 9.09 lakh units a month ago. Its performance also has picked up in recent times with the fund being one of the best performers, returning 14% so far this year. But it remains a laggard in terms of long-term returns. Over the past three years, the fund is down about 0.98%. "Going by the renewed thrust of the government on PSUs, there is a possibility this ETF doing well from now on," said Deepak Jasani, head of retail research, HDFC Securities. Jasani warns that the continued outperformance depends on the government's plans to 'unlock value' in PSUs soon. The government in the recent Budget announcements sent the right signals to investors. It budgeted ₹1.75 lakh crore from stake sale in PSUs, including privatisation of two state-owned banks in FY22.

*The Economic Times - 15.02.2021*

https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2021%2F02%2F15&entity=Ar00702&sk=BB66E702&mode=text

can be distributed. How can wealth reach the poor, how can jobs be created," the PM asked. "If the public sector is important, so is the participation of private enterprise. Should members of the IAS alone be tasked with everything? Have we entrusted the IAS with running fertiliser factories and chemical enterprises? Then they are supposed to fly planes as well. What type of capability have we acquired by handing over the country to babus. Babus belong to us and so do the youth. The more opportunity we give to our youth, the more he will benefit," he said. The remark came against the backdrop of the bold push for privatisation of PSUs in the Budget and the allegations that the government planned to hand over PSUs to private players of its choice.

*The Times of India - 11.02.2021*

https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=TOIKM%2F2021%2F02%2F11&entity=Ar00511&sk=6DFC34ED&mode=text

## Targeting to conclude BPCL strategic sale by June: DIPAM Secy

The government has already invited bids for strategic sale of BPCL, Air India, Pawan Hans, BEML, Shipping Corp and Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd. Also, the process of sale of Vizag Steel or RINL has received Cabinet nod. The government is targeting to conclude the strategic sale of BPCL in the June quarter, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said on Thursday. "I think we are targeting the first quarter (of 2021-22 fiscal). The engagement is intense now, it is at the due diligence stage. Our process is of value maximisation, and we have to take all precautions to see the value is maximised," Pandey said at an event organised by Aditya Birla Sun Life Mutual Fund. The government has received three preliminary bids for buying of controlling stake in India's second-largest fuel retailer Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL).Mining-to-oil conglomerate Vedanta had in November confirmed putting in an expression of interest (EoI) for buying the government's 52.98 per cent stake in BPCL.

*The Financial Express - 11.02.2021*

https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/targeting-to-conclude-bpcl-strategic-sale-by-june-dipam-secy/2192910/

## BPCL to sell 61.65% stake in Numaligarh refinery by March-end

Ahead of privatisation of Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL), the oil marketing major plans to complete its stake sale in Numaligarh Refinery (NRL) to Oil India (OIL) and the government of Assam by the end of March, director (Finance) N Vijayagopal told on Tuesday. According to the plan, "The consortium of OIL and Engineers India Ltd will acquire 49% and the rest 13.65% will be sold to the government of Assam," Vijayagopal said adding the company board at its meeting on Monday approved the share purchase agreement. "NRL stake sale is happening at a rapid pace," he mentioned. "Valuation is being done by valuers and if things go as planned, the transaction will be completed by 31 March," he further added. The completion of the transaction is subject to the deal getting requisite government approvals, he noted. The sale of NRL is considered to be the first step towards disinvestment of BPCL. In the nation's biggest privatisation till date, the central government will sell its entire 52.98% stake in BPCL. The government earlier indicated that it expects to complete BPCL privatisation by the first half of the fiscal beginning April (2021-22).

*Mint - 09.02.2021*

https://www.livemint.com/companies/news/bpcl-to-buy-oman-oil-stake-buy-in-bina-refinery-in-10-days-nrl-stake-sale-by-marchend-11612873178138.html

## India will soon be a powerhouse: IEA

India will dislodge the European Union as the world's third-largest energy consumer by 2030 as urbanised population expands and rapid economic growth pulls more people out of poverty, says the International Energy Agency's second 'India Energy Outlook' released on Tuesday. By 2040, India's electricity system will be larger than the EU in terms of generation capacity and the country will have more renewable capacity than the US. India will contribute 25% of the global growth in energy demand through 2040, posting the largest increase for any country, "underpinned by a rate of GDP growth that adds the equivalent of another Japan by 2040," the report says. This will also pose twin challenges of securing energy supplies and meeting the "swelling demand without exacerbating issues like costly energy imports, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions". "More than that of any other major economy, India's energy future depends on buildings and factories that are yet to be built and vehicles and appliances that are yet to be bought. Based on India's current policy settings, nearly 60% of its $CO_2$ emissions in the late 2030s will be coming from infrastructure and machines that don't exist today," it says.

*The Times of India - 10.02.2021*

https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TimesOfIndia/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=TOIKM%2F2021%2F02%2F10&entity=Ar01522&sk=5D904C11&mode=text

## Oil majors suffer massive losses in 2020

Already under pressure due to climate change, the world's top listed oil firms suffered historic losses in 2020 as the Covid-19 pandemic sent demand and prices tumbling. The oil majors -- BP, Chevron, ExxonMobil, Shell and Total -- suffered $77 billion in losses for the year. Shell CEO Ben van Beurden called 2020 an extraordinary year. Total's Patrick Pouyanne said: "All of us will remember 2020 as a landmark year that brought unexpected challenges and led to significant changes." While much of the losses were accounting charges to record the drop in the value of their assets, the drop crude oil prices -- which briefly turned negative in 2020 for the first time ever -- caused real pain. The spread of the coronavirus and the lockdowns meant to slow it caused massive slowdowns in economic activity, with international air travel coming to a near standstill. This dampened demand and as oil producing nations didn't immediately cut production, crude prices plummeted. The crisis called further into question the financial model of the oil majors, which already face a longer-term threat from a shift away from fossil fuels to combat climate change.

*The Economic Times - 11.02.2021*

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/oil-majors-suffer-massive-losses-in-2020/80821862

## Oil's losses deepen as OPEC, IEA caution ends rally

Oil prices fell a second day on Friday, extending losses after OPEC cut its demand forecast and the International Energy Agency said the market was still over-supplied. Brent crude was down 47 cents, or 0.8 per cent at $60.67 a barrel by 0309 GMT, having dropped half a percent the previous session. U.S. oil was down 53 cents, or 0.9 per cent at $57.71 a barrel, after falling by 0.8 per cent on Thursday. Both benchmarks closed on Wednesday at their highest levels since January 2020 after a nearly record-setting run of consecutive daily gains. Oil prices have risen over the last few weeks as OPEC and other producers in the group known as OPEC+ cut production, while Saudi Arabia also promised unilateral reductions in output that started this month. "OPEC production is likely to fall this month led by declines in Saudi Arabia and Libya. This should deepen the global market deficit and support prices," said Capital Economics. Before the declines, U.S. crude's relative strength index was at the most overbought level since the second Iraq war, said Bob Yawger, director of energy futures at Mizuho Securities.

## Oil market rebalancing will soon set stage for more OPEC+ supply – IEA

Global oil supply still outstrips demand due to persistent COVID-19 lockdowns and the spread of variants, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Thursday, but vaccines should help demand recover and soon enable producers to pump more. "With demand forecast to rise strongly and still modest growth in non-OPEC supply expected, a rapid stock draw is anticipated during the second half of the year." "That sets the stage for OPEC+ to start unwinding cuts." The Paris-based energy watchdog kept its outlook for oil demand growth in 2021 largely steady, saying a decline in the first quarter of this year from already low levels in the last quarter of 2020 would soon reverse. "The forecasts for economic and oil demand growth are highly dependent on progress in distributing and administering vaccines, and the easing of travel restrictions in the world's major economies," it said.

*The Economic Times - 11.02.2021*

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/oil-market-rebalancing-will-

*The Economic Times - 12.02.2021*
https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/oils-losses-deepen-as-opec-iea-caution-ends-rally/80875579

## No plans to cut taxes on fuel: Oil Min Pradhan

Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Wednesday ruled out any cut in excise duty, for now, to give relief to consumers from the spiralling retail prices of petrol and diesel which have touched all-time highs. "There is no such proposal at present," he said in the Rajya Sabha when asked if the government was looking at cutting taxes to cool off prices. Petrol price crossed the Rs 94-mark in Mumbai and diesel soared to Rs 84.63 per litre on Wednesday. Retail pump rates have not seen a reduction in almost 11 months. International benchmark rates had plunged to decade lows in April. The government had hiked excise duty on petrol by a record Rs 13 per litre and on diesel by Rs 16 a litre to mop up gains arising from the fall in rates but did not cut taxes when oil prices bounced back. Retail petrol price have risen by Rs 18.01 per litre since mid-March 2020 and diesel rates have gone up by Rs 15.44. Replying to questions on rising fuel prices, Pradhan said retail pump rates are governed by international prices as India is 85 per cent dependent on imports for meeting its need.

*Millennium Post - 11.02.2021*
http://www.millenniumpost.in/business/no-plans-to-cut-taxes-on-fuel-oil-min-pradhan-431526

## India's January fuel demand falls as oil prices tick up

India's fuel consumption in January registered its first month-on-month decline in five months, as an uptick in global oil prices posed a roadblock to a gradual recovery in demand from the world's third-largest oil consumer. Consumption of fuel, a proxy for oil demand, fell to 18.01 million tonnes in January, which was 3.2 per cent below last month, and 3.9 per cent lower than a year earlier, data from the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC) of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas showed on Tuesday. "High oil prices are not good for all developing countries and recent increase in oil prices could have a negative impact on refined product sales in India," said Refinitiv analyst Ehsan Ul Haq. But India's coronavirus vaccine programme could boost travel and bode well for oil consumption for the rest of 2021, Refinitiv's Ul Haq said. Benchmark Brent crude oil prices registered a third straight months of gains in January and climbed above $60 a barrel for the first time in a year this month. The rally in global

soon-set-stage-for-more-opec-supply-iea/80843424

## Dharmendra Pradhan blames artificial price mechanism by oil producing nations for fuel price hike

Facing flak from opposition parties over rising fuel prices, Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Saturday blamed the artificial price mechanism created by the Oil producing nations for spiralling retail prices of petrol and diesel which have touched an all-time high. Noting that India meets 80 per cent of its fuel requirement from oil producing nations, the minister said "we are facing challenges on the price" as the crude oil price was again on a rising trend. Pradhan, who is here to attend the inauguration of the Petrochemical Park at BPCL Kochi Refinery by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday, said there was a total collapse in demand for petroleum across the world due to the COVID-19 lockdown and petroleum producers had to reduce production. "Now the economy has revived and India has returned almost to the pre-COVID position. However, the oil producers have not increased production."

*The Economic Times - 13.02.2021*
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/dharmendra-pradhan-blames-artificial-price-mechanism-by-oil-producing-nations-for-fuel-price-hike/articleshow/80899736.cms

## GAIL acquires 5 per cent stake in IGX

Indian Energy Exchange (IEX), the country's largest electricity exchange, today announced further divestment of 5 per cent equity stake in its natural gas focused venture Indian Gas Exchange (IGX) to GAIL (India) Limited. With this, GAIL becomes the third strategic investor to onboard IGX. Adani Total Gas & Torrent Gas had last month acquired 5 per cent stake each in the country's first authorized and regulated Gas Exchange. The partnership between IGX and GAIL is a significant development which will help add value in development of the gas markets in the country, IEX said in a statement. "IGX is pro-actively working in collaboration with the stakeholders to build gas markets ecosystem in the country. We are delighted to welcome GAIL onboard as our partner and unite our strengths to realize India's vision of a gas-based economy," S N Goel, Chairman, IEX and Director-IGX, said. He added that gas markets in India are on the cusp of major growth with prices also propelled gasoline prices to record levels in India, Reuters reported last week.

*The Economic Times - 11.02.2021*

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/indias-january-fuel-demand-falls-as-oil-prices-tick-up/80778710

### India's gas output rises above pre-Covid level: DGH

India's natural gas production has risen above the pre-Covid level following the start of output from a KG-D6 field operated by Reliance Industries Ltd and its partner BP Plc, upstream regulator DGH said on Thursday. Natural gas production in the country in February 2020 was 80 million standard cubic meters per day and in January this year it reached 82 mmscmd, said Anand Gupta, Additional Director General (Development), Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH). "Yesterday the production was 84 mmscmd," he said at the 'Upstream Ahead' conference. "By end of the month, production is expected to reach 85 mmscmd," he said. The rise in output, he said, was a result of Reliance Industries and its partner BP Plc of UK starting production from a field in their KG-D6 block. "BP along with Reliance has made it possible," he said. DGH, the government custodian of upstream oil and gas production in the country, said production levels are likely to be higher in the 2021 calendar year. This will be the first year to see an increase in output since 2019-20. "Outlook for gas production is much better this year," he said.

*Millennium Post - 12.02.2021*

http://www.millenniumpost.in/business/indias-gas-output-rises-above-pre-covid-level-dgh-431654

### ONGC takes leaf out of Reliance's book, floats subsidiary to buy own gas

Taking a leaf out of Reliance Industries Ltd.’s playbook, state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) is forming a new subsidiary for gas business that could be used to bid and buy gas from the firm's own fields. The board of ONGC at its meeting on February 13 approved creation of a new wholly-owned subsidiary company for gas and liquefied natural gas (LNG) business value chain subject to necessary approvals, according to the firm's third quarter earnings announcement. "The company is being formed with the objective of sourcing, marketing and trading of natural gas, LNG business, Hydrogen enriched CNG (HCNG), gas to power business, bio-energy/ bio-gas/ bio methane/ other biofuels business, etc," it said. ONGC may use the new subsidiary to buy any new

strong impetus from the government to create a conducive policy and regulatory framework.

*The Economic Times - 09.02.2021*

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/gail-acquires-5-per-cent-stake-in-igx/80767573

### PM Modi inaugurates BPCL's Rs 6000 crore petrochemical project

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday inaugurated a slew of projects including the Rs 6000 crore Propylene Derivative Petrochemical Project at BPCL Kochi Refinery. The propylene derivatives petrochemical complex project will help generate 5,00,000 Metric Tonnes Per Annum (MTPA) of Propylene. Propylene is one of the main feed-stocks of petrochemicals. Using this capacity, BPCL is strategically entering the petrochemical sector to reduce the dependence of the country on imports of petrochemicals which is used to produce a wide range of articles as paints, printing inks, automotive parts, diapers, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, etc. This is expected to save Rs 4000 crore foreign exchange. These products find use in the industry segments of automotive seats, mattresses, shoe soles, refrigeration, coatings and sealants, pharmaceutical, food additives, fibres etc. Various industries that use the raw materials generated at Kochi Refinery such as automobiles, plastic manufacturing units, costumes manufacturing factories, textiles, etc will be coming to the Petrochemical Park.

*The Economic Times - 15.02.2021*

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/pm-modi-inaugurates-bpcls-rs-6000-crore-petrochemical-project/80916264

### Domestic air travel demand falls 41% to 76 lakh in Jan

Domestic air travel demand contracted by 41 per cent year-on-year to around 76 lakh passengers in January with sequential growth also slowing down to 3.5 per cent during the month over December 2020, a report said on Monday. Indian carriers had flown a total of 1.27 crore passengers on domestic routes in January 2020. Indian aviation industry has witnessed a continued recovery in domestic passenger traffic in January 2021. However, the pace of growth slowed down in the reporting month, with a sequential growth (over December 2020) of around 3.5 per cent to around 76 lakh passengers, rating agency Icra said in a release. On a y-o-y basis, however, domestic passenger traffic declined by around gas that the firm produces from fields such as KG-D5 in the Krishna Godavari basin, people with direct knowledge of the matter said. The government had in October 2020 allowed affiliates of gas producers to buy the fuel in open auction. This policy change allowed Reliance to buy two-thirds out of the additional 7.5 million standard cubic metres per day of gas it along with partner BP plc of UK plans to produce this year from the new fields in KG-D6 block.

*The Economic Times - 15.02.2021*

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/ongc-takes-leaf-out-of-reliances-book-floats-subsidiary-to-buy-own-gas/80916279

41 per cent in January over the same month of 2020, it added. The capacity deployment in the previous month at around 71 per cent is a significant increase over the 59 per cent capacity deployed in November last year and around 67 per cent in December, Icra said. The number of flights departing has also gradually increased from 416 on May 25, 2020, when commercial air passenger services resumed, to 2,294 till January 18, 2021, said Kinjal Shah, Vice President at Icra.

*Millennium Post - 09.02.2021*

http://www.millenniumpost.in/business/domestic-air-travel-demand-falls-41-to-76-lakh-in-jan-431341

## Domestic flights to cost more as Govt raises cap on fares

Domestic passengers will have to pay more as the government on Thursday raised the caps on fares by up to 30% across sectors. While the lower cap has been raised by 10% and above, the upper cap has been raised by up to 30%. The new fare norms will come to effect immediately. The government had kept domestic fares regulated since the time domestic flights restarted in May-end after a two-month lockdown and plans to regulate it till March 31, 2021, unless the government decides to extend it further. While the earlier fare band ranged between ₹2,000 and ₹18,600 depending on the duration of the flight, the new fare band ranges between ₹2,200 and ₹24,200. These are economy one-way fares that do not include user development fee of airports, passenger security fees and GST. Airlines are currently required to sell at least 20% seats at fares below the median of the minimum and maximum fares. The fare bands are likely to be in force till domestic flights return to pre-Covid level.

*The Economic Times - 12.02.2021*

https://epaper.timesgroup.com/Olive/ODN/TheEconomicTimes/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=ETKM%2F2021%2F02%2F12&entity=Ar00507&sk=9A391FD2&mode=text

## International passenger traffic fell by 90.56% in March-Dec 2020: Govt

International passenger traffic fell by 90.56 per cent to 18.55 lakh in March-December period of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic as compared to the corresponding period of 2019, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Wednesday. Moreover, domestic passenger traffic fell to 3.77 crore in March-December period of 2020 from 11.99 crore in the corresponding period of 2019, the minister said. Scheduled international passenger traffic continues to remain suspended in India since March 23, 2020, due to the coronavirus pandemic. However, special international flights have been operating since July 2020 under air bubble arrangements formed with various countries. "Revenues of major Indian scheduled carriers fell from Rs. 46,711 crore during April-September 2019 to about Rs. 11,810 crore during April-September 2020. Their full time and contractual employment which was 74,887 as on 31 March 2020 fell to 67,906 as on 30 September 2020," Puri told Rajya Sabha in a written reply to a question.

*Business Standard - 11.02.2021*

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/international-passenger-traffic-fell-by-90-56-in-march-dec-2020-govt-121021000781_1.html

## Bill passed: Major ports get more powers; pvt investors to get a leg-up

State-run ports in the country, termed ‘major ports’, will get to determine the tariffs for various port-related services as well as the terms for private developers who team up with them, with Parliament on Wednesday passing the Major Ports Authority Bill, 2020. The new law will supersede a 1963 Act governing the country’s 12 major ports. It will be curtains down for the Tariff Authority for

## Employee compensations likely to be tweaked as govt eyes new labour codes

The labour ministry has finalised rules under the four labour codes, or laws, and is likely to notify them to take effect from April. The country’s most wide-ranging labour reforms in decades will have an impact on both employers’ outgo and employees’ take-home salaries. Once implemented, the codes will prompt companies

Major Ports (TAMP); every port will now be governed by a Port Authority (board) which will have the powers to fix reference tariffs for various port services. Shipping and waterways minister Mansukh Mandaviya said the new Act was not intended to privatise major ports but aimed at boosting their decision-making powers in order to compete with private ports. The major-port sector hasn't seen the required level of fixed assets creation to pare the country's high logistic costs owing to legacy issues, including the TAMP's archaic regulatory grip. In January 2018, the Cabinet took a slew of steps to spur private investments via the PPP route in state-run ports.

*The Financial Express - 11.02.2021*

https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/bill-passed-major-ports-get-more-powers-pvt-investors-to-get-a-leg-up/2192270/

to restructure employee compensation packages or "cost to company" (CTC). Firms have will have to restructure salaries because, under the new rules, all allowances, such as leave travel, house rent, overtime and conveyance, have to be capped at 50% of the CTC. The Code on Wages 2019 has revised the definition of 'wages' which will now include three components: basic pay, (inflation-linked) dearness allowance and retention payment. According to the new definition, "wage" will exclude statutory bonus, pension and PF contribution, conveyance allowance, HRA, overtime and gratuity. If any of these exclusions, in aggregate, are in excess of 50% of an employee's CTC , barring special allowance, the excess amount will be added back to the wage for calculation of social security benefits.

*The Hindustan Times - 15.02.2021*

https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/ctcs-likely-to-be-tweaked-as-govt-eyes-new-labour-codes-101613332289666.html