WEEKLY MEDIA UPDATE

01 April 2024 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

Balmer Lawrie to set up FTWZ

Kolkata: Balmer Lawrie & Co Ltd is setting up a Free Trade Warehousing Zone at Mumbai's JNPA SEZ in Mumbai. The company has taken 15 acres and would invest Rs 230 crore for the project.

"This is a step towards enhancing our logistics portfolio to realise our vision of being an integrated logistics player," the company stated.

Backed by state-of-the-art infrastructure, Balmer Lawrie is an end-to-end logistics solutions provider with a vision to become a market leader in the sector. TNN

The Times of India – 30.03.2024

S&P Global raises India's FY25 GDP growth forecast by 40 bps to 6.8%

S&P Global on Tuesday raised India's gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast for Financial Year 2024-25 (FY25) by 40 basis points to 6.8 per cent or lower than the central bank and government's projection of 7 per cent. It expects India to grow at 7.6 per cent in FY24, making the projection in a report called "Economic Outlook Asia-Pacific Q2 2024: APAC Bides Its Time On Monetary Policy Easing". The New York-based agency retained India's GDP growth prediction for FY26 and FY27 at 7 per cent. "For Asian emerging market (EM) economies, we generally project robust growth, with India, Indonesia, the

India can grow at close to 9% by undertaking pending reforms: Arvind Panagariya

India can lift its economic growth to close to 9%, from the current 7% or so, in the next five years by undertaking pending reforms in agriculture, urbanisation and education, Arvind Panagariya, chairman of the 16th Finance Commission, said on Wednesday. He said states must be persuaded to take up these reforms as India cannot grow faster if all states are not performing well. "Next reforms have to be done at the level of the states and we have to persuade half a dozen states to adopt some of these reforms," Panagariya said at the Times

Philippines, and Vietnam in the lead," said Louis Kuijs, Asia-Pacific chief economist at S&P Global Ratings. S&P said that in domestic demand-led economies such as India, Japan, and Australia, the impact of high interest rates and inflation on household spending had reduced sequential GDP growth in the second half of FY24.

https://www.business-

<u>standard.com/economy/news/s-p-global-raises-india-s-fy25-gdp-growth-forecast-by-40-bps-to-6-8-124032600229</u> 1.html

Business Standard - 27.03.2024
usinesseconomy/news/s-p-global-raisesp-growth-forecast-by-40-bps-to-

Q4 growth set to push FY24 GDP up by 8% or more: FM

The country's economic growth in the March quarter is likely to be 8% or more, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said. If this is how inflation management is happening, macroeconomic stability being what it is, you had threequarters of growth above 8%, and hopefully, the fourth quarter, which ends tomorrow, will also be 8% or over 8%, resulting in 2023-24 having a GDP growth of 8% or over 8%," FM said at an event organised by Mint Saturday. GDP growth in the Oct-Dec quarter was a scorching 8.4% led by robust manufacturing sector expansion. Data for the March-quarter GDP will be released on May 31. "Three-quarters of growth over 8% is good news, and I thank the people of India for being very energetic and ensuring that India remains the fastest-growing economy," said Sitharaman. She said the commentary on consumption was sequential of a comparison consumption numbers. "Do you think we would have had 8% growth without consumption?" she asked.

The Times of India - 31.03.2024

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/q4-growth-set-to-push-fy24-gdp-up-by-8-or-more-fm/articleshow/108907769.cms

Current account deficit narrows to 1.2% of GDP at \$10.5 billion in Oct-Dec: RBI

India's current account deficit (CAD) narrowed to \$10.5 billion, or 1.2 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), in the third quarter (October-December) of FY2024 from \$16.8 billion, or 2 per cent of GDP, in the year-ago quarter. In the second quarter of FY2024, the country CAD stood at \$11.4 billion, or 1.3 per cent GDP. Current account deficit is the difference between exports and imports of goods and services. It is a key

Now Summit themed 'India Unstoppable'. India's economy grew at 8.4% in the third quarter of 2023-24, exceeding the expectations of analysts and economists. "Certainly, with a few more reforms in the next five years, we can realistically push it to close to 9%, certainly somewhere at 8-9%. And that can be sustained easily for a couple of decades," Panagariya said.

The Economic Times - 28.03.2024

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/india-can-grow-at-close-to-9-by-undertaking-pending-reforms-arvind-panagariya/articleshow/108829624.cms?utmsource=contentofinterest&utmmedium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

Indian economy can grow at 8% till 2047, reforms are key: IMF's Subramanian

Indian economy can grow at 8 per cent till 2047, if the country can redouble the good policies that it has implemented over the last 10 years and accelerate reforms, India's executive director at International Monetary Fund (IMF) Krishnamurthy Venkata Subramanian said on Thursday. Subramanian further said that clearly 8 per cent growth target is ambitious, because India has not grown consistently at 8 per cent before, but it is achievable. "So, the basic idea is that with the kind of growth that India has registered in the last 10 years, if we can redouble the good policies that we have implemented over the last 10 years and accelerate the reforms, then India can grow at 8 per cent from here on till 2047," he said at the Times Now Summit. India's economy grew at better-than-expected 8.4 per cent in the final three months of 2023, logging the fastest pace in the past one-and-a-half years. The growth rate in October-December helped take the estimate for the current fiscal to 7.6 per cent.

Business Standard - 29.03.2024

https://www.business-

standard.com/economy/news/indian-economy-can-grow-at-8-till-2047-reforms-are-key-subramanian-124032800397 1.html

Economy shows resilience despite external headwinds

At a time when the global economy is still facing uncertainties, with growth decelerating in some of the most advanced economies, India's economy has exhibited resilience and has been able to grow at a rate much higher than market expectations. Key macro-indicators such as consumer price index (CPI) inflation, wholesale price index (WPI) inflation, trade and current account deficit (CAD) are benign and are

indicator of the country's external sector. During April-December 2023, the country's current account deficit moderated to 1.2 per cent of GDP from 2.6 per cent of GDP in the corresponding period a year ago on the back of a lower merchandise trade deficit, the RBI data showed. The merchandise trade deficit at \$71.6 billion (in Q3 FY2024) was marginally higher than \$71.3 billion during Q3 FY2023. In the October-December quarter of the current fiscal, services exports grew by 5.2 per cent on a y-o-y basis on the back of rising exports of software, business and travel services.

The Indian Express - 27.03.2024 https://indianexpress.com/article/business/economy/current-account-deficit-narrows-in-october-december-rbi-9234717/

expected to remain range-bound in the nearterm as well. In the first three quarters of FY24, the country's gross domestic product (GDP) expanded sharply by 8.2%, with the growth in Q3 coming in at a six-quarter high of 8.4%. This is way higher than the market consensus of 6.7%. Of course, the base effect helped, but largely the push to growth came from investments. "The breakdown (of Q3 GDP data) revealed robust manufacturing а compared to farm output, urban spending outpacing rural demand, and investment growth spurred by frontloading of central and state capital spending, along with households' capital expenditure," said Radhika Rao, senior economist, DBS Group Research.

The Financial Express - 01.04.2024 https://www.financialexpress.com/policy/econ omy-economy-shows-resilience-despiteexternal-headwinds-3442232/

RBI likely to hold rates steady until at least July on strong growth: Poll

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will keep interest rates unchanged until at least July, a bit longer than the U.S. central bank is expected to do so, on strong growth and still-elevated inflation, according to a firm majority of economists polled by Reuters. India's economy grew a stellar 8.4 per cent in the fourth guarter of 2023, the fastest among major economies. Inflation, which is still close to the upper band of the central bank's 2 per cent-6 per cent target, does not hint at an imminent rate cut. All 56 economists in the March 15-22 Reuters poll expected the RBI to hold the repo rate at 6.50 per cent at the conclusion of its April 3-5 meeting. They were, however, divided on when the first cut would come, with nine of 52 saying next quarter, 24 picking the third quarter, 17 saying the fourth quarter and the rest expecting it at a later time. Median forecasts put the rate at 6.25 per cent by the end of September and 6.00 per cent at the end of this year.

Business Standard - 27.03.2024

https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/rbi-likely-to-hold-

rates-steady-until-at-least-july-on-stronggrowth-124032600077 1.html

Govt to borrow Rs 7.5 lakh crore in H1FY25: Finance Ministry

The Finance Ministry revealed that the government plans to borrow Rs 7.50 lakh crore in the first half of FY25, constituting 53 per cent of its annual target. This gross market borrowing will be completed through 26 weekly auctions. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed a

Services inflation to stay muted for now; but a pickup is not far away

India's services inflation may remain muted for next few months and will witness a pickup in second half only, economists said, thus helping curb core inflation. "There may be some more downside to services inflation, but a mean reversion or normalisation will happen in the second half of the year," said Rahul Bajoria, MD & head EM (ex-Asia), Barclays. "However, rates are unlikely to rise to higher levels witnessed post pandemic," he added. India's services inflation declined to 3.1% in February, its lowest level in the series since 2016. Services inflation averaged 5.2% in FY23. Services account for 23.4% of the total inflation basket and over half of the core inflation categories, which also include goods like household items. Experts indicate that some of this rise in services inflation may be evident from now on. "Services inflation will pick up as prices adjust. Airfares are up, as are health costs. Once the holiday season starts, recreation will rise.

The Economic Times - 28.03.2024 https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/e conomy/indicators/services-inflation-to-staymuted-fornow/articleshow/108771908.cms?from=mdr

Core sector growth hits 3-month high of 6.7% in Feb

Growth in the country's core sector rose to a three-month high in Feb, led by double-digit expansion in three of eight segments but the fertiliser sector contracted for second consecutive month. Data released by the commerce and industry ministry on Thursday

borrowing of Rs 14.13 lakh crore in the interim Budget to address revenue shortfalls. " Out of Gross Market borrowing of Rs 14.13 lakh crore projected for FY 2024-25 in the Union budget, Rs 7.50 lakh crore (53.08%) is planned to be borrowed in the first half (H1) through dated securities," the finance ministry said in a release. The first half borrowing will include Rs 12,000 crore through Sovereign Green Bonds and introduce a new 15-year tenor security. The government aims to manage borrowing and debt effectively by continuing to switch securities for smoother redemption and retaining the greenshoe option for additional subscription.

The Economic Times - 28.04.2024 https://cfo.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/ economy/govt-to-borrow-rs-7-5-lakh-crore-inh1fy25-finance-ministry/108836411

At \$445 billion, FY24 goods exports a tad below FY23 level

see India's The last-quarter spurt would merchandise exports to be around \$445 billion in the financial year 2023-24, about 1.3% lower than previous year's level of \$451 billion. The new year is challenging and growth from hereon will depend on inflation-interest rate dynamics in the key markets of the US and Europe, trade experts said. "The merchandise exports in March are expected to be around \$ 40 billion, as \$ 5-6 billion will be added to the monthly shipments number. This should take the overall exports for this year to \$440-445 billion," director general and chief executive officer of Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) Ajay Sahai said. Before exports started looking up from October 2023 onwards, there was a 9% year-on-year decline in April-September. Services exports are up 6.7% on year till February to \$314.8 billion. They are expected to end the year at around \$345 billion. For 2023-24 overall exports are expected to touch \$ 790 billion, up from \$ 777.6 billion last year.

The Financial Express - 01.04.2024 https://www.financialexpress.com/policy/econom y-at-445-billion-fy24-goods-exports-a-tad-belowfy23-level-3442286/

To gauge PSE valuation before listing them: FM

The Government is closely monitoring the valuation of state-run companies and working on improving their valuation before listing them, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said at an

showed the infrastructure sector, spanning coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement and electricity rose an annual 6.7%, higher than the 4.1% in Jan but below the 7.4% in Feb last year. The core sector accounts for 40% of the index of industrial production and has an important impact on the factory output numbers, which will be released later next month. Separate data showed fiscal deficit reached 86.5% of the full year target at Feb-end. In the corresponding period last year, the fiscal deficit or gap between expenditure and revenue was 82.8% of the revised estimates (RE) of the Union budget for 2022-23. The govt estimates fiscal deficit at Rs 17.4 lakh crore or 5.8% of GDP.

The Times of India - 29.03.2024 https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/core-sector-growth-hits-3-month-high-of-6-7-in-feb/articleshow/108861739.cms

Procurement through govt's GeM portal crosses Rs 4 trn so far this fiscal

The procurement of goods and services through government's portal GeM has crossed Rs 4 trillion so far this fiscal due to higher buying activities by various ministries departments, a senior government official said on Friday. The Government e-Market (GeM) portal was launched on August 9, 2016, for online purchases of goods and services by all central government ministries departments. "As of March 28, the procurement has crossed Rs 4 trillion. It is historic," GeM CEO P K Singh told reporters here. In 2021-22 the procurement value stood at Rs 1.06 trillion and it crossed Rs 2 trillion last financial year. He said that procurement of services from the portal has jumped from Rs 66,000 crore in 2022-23 to Rs 2.05 trillion so far this fiscal. Similarly, goods worth Rs 1.95 trillion have been bought from the platform till March 28 this fiscal. GeM has over 63,000 government buyer organisations and over 6.2 million sellers and service providers offering a wide range of products and services.

Business Standard - 29.03.2024

https://www.business-standard.com/indianews/procurement-through-govt-s-gemportal-crosses-rs-4-trn-so-far-this-fiscal-124032900201 1.html

Petroleum products export decrease by 15%

India's exports of refined oil products that have started to stabilize last month after a drastic decline in the beginning of 2024 have once again witnessed a downfall in March on the back

event on Wednesday. The minister's comments come in the backdrop of disinvestment receipts falling short of target for the last five years. There has also been no noticeable progress and urgency on the implementation of public sector enterprise (PSE) Policy which was announced. The idea of the policy was unveiled as a part of the reform package that accompanies Covid relief measures in 2020. The policy says that PSEs i non-strategic sectors will either be privatised or closed down. The policy delineates four broad strategic sectors, in which except for bare minimum presence of the existing public sector commercial enterprise at holding company level to be retained under government control, other remaining enterprises will be considered for privatisation or merge with another PSE or for closure.

The Financial Express - 28.03.2024 https://www.magzter.com/stories/newspaper/Financial-Express-Mumbai/TO-GAUGE-PSE-VALUATION-BEFORE-LISTING-THEM-FM of weakening export margins, as per latest shiptracking data. The country exported a total of 1.28 million barrels per day of refined oil products in March, down 12.5% from the previous month, data from intelligence firm Vortexa showed. The exports were down by 15% on year. "India's diesel exports have seen the largest month-on-month decline in March, which could be a result of weakening export margins," said Serena Huang, analyst at Vortexa. Moreover, ample supplies from the US and Middle East to Asia and Europe resulted in weaker demand for these products from India. The inclination of European countries towards US and the Middle East for purchases can be attributed to the fact that voyages from India are opting for the longer route around Africa to reach Europe due to the Red Sea crisis which has also resulted in increased freight costs.

The Financial Express - 29.03.2024 https://www.financialexpress.com/market/com modities-petroleum-products-exports-drop-15in-march-on-weak-margins-3439773/

Diesel exports plunge 25% to \$20 billion as global prices soften

India's diesel exports fell 25% year-on-year in the first 11 months of this financial year to \$20 billion as prices in the international markets softened. The export volume increased marginally to 26 million metric tonnes (mmt) from 25.8 mmt during the April 2023-February 2024 period, according to the petroleum and natural gas ministry data. Petrol exports fetched \$10 billion during this period, about 13% less than a year earlier. In volume terms, however, petrol exports increased 4% to 12.1 mmt. Diesel and petrol exporters had an extraordinary run in the previous fiscal as the start of the Russia-Ukraine war in February 2022 and the consequent Western sanctions on Russia dislocated the energy market. Diesel and petrol prices surged in the international markets before easing towards the end of 2022-23. On average, diesel and petrol prices are down about 20% and 15%, respectively, year-on-year in this fiscal in the international market.

The Economic Times - 29.03.2024 https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/eco nomy/foreign-trade/diesel-exports-plunge-25-to-20-billion-as-global-pricessoften/articleshow/108860163.cms?from=mdr

Import dependence for oil rises further to 88%

For the country's energy sector, the justconcluded fiscal year 2023-24 was marked by several challenges – rising crude oil prices amid geopolitical tensions, demand and supply disruptions, and stagnant domestic production. As the year was about to draw to a close, the upcoming general elections, impelled the government to take a few steps that aren't market-friendly. First came the cut in prices of LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) cylinders and then the reduction prices of auto fuels. Starting from the Israel-Hamas conflict and then the tensions over the Red Sea that resulted in spiralling crude prices, Indian refiners found themselves in a tough spot on several occasions. Added to this have been the output cuts announced by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies. Global crude prices have remained volatile, hitting the marketing margins of the country's marketing companies. moderation in oil prices which allowed the OMCs to earn healthy profits in the first three quarters of FY24, offsetting the losses made previous fiscal when prices skyrocketed, a recent spurt in prices (touching \$87 per barrel on Thursday) coupled with the retail fuel price cut can again pose concerns on profitability of these OMCs.

The Financial Express - 01.04.2024 https://www.financialexpress.com/policy/econ omy-import-dependence-for-oil-rises-furtherto-88-3442212/

Crude oil imports rise to 4-year high in March

India's crude oil imports rose to 5.2 million barrels per day in March, the highest level since early 2020 amid increased refinery runs by the Indian refiners, an analysis of the data provided by intelligence firm Kpler showed. Imports were 11% higher than February volumes and up 4.5% from 4.9 million barrels a day in March 2023. Additionally, the country's crude oil imports from Russia rose to 1.8 million barrels per day in March, highest after the July of last year primarily on the back of higher discharge of Urals, according to the data. Imports were, however, slightly down from 1.87 million barrels per day in the same period a year ago. "India's strong crude imports is partly a signal of refiners ramping up runs, although we have also seen a slight uptick in the country's onshore crude inventories this month," said Serena Huang, analyst at Vortexa. "India's imports of Russian crude will likely remain robust in the near-term," she said.

The Financial Express - 28.03.2024 https://www.financialexpress.com/market/comm odities-crude-oil-imports-rise-to-4-year-high-inmarch-3438474/

India cuts back on Venezuelan oil amid imminent US sanctions

Indian refiners have stopped purchases of Venezuelan crude oil amid the looming US sanctions on the tankers from the south American nation and may not revive the trade with it at least until they see signs of full snapback, according to analysts. However, this is unlikely to impact India's import of crude oil as the Venezuelan crude output to the world supply had remained limited since it was relieved of the sanctions in December last year. "Cargo from Venezuela to India takes 25-30 days to deliver so by this point no Indian refiner wants to get stuck with a potentially sanctions-susceptible cargo on their hands just as a potential sanction snapback is looming," Viktor Katona, lead crude analyst at data intelligence firm Kpler. During January to March, India imported only 100,000 barrels a day of crude oil from Venezuela, accounting for only 2% of the country's total crude imports, according to data from another intelligence firm Vortexa. In March, only 80,000 barrels per day of Venezuelan crude was discharged in India.

The Financial Express - 27.03.2024 https://www.financialexpress.com/market/commodities-india-cuts-back-on-venezuelan-oil-amid-imminent-us-sanctions-3437410/

LNG importers rush to buy spot cargoes as price hits 3-year low

Power companies and refineries are doubling down on spot liquefied natural gas (LNG) as prices have hit a three-year low, according to industry officials aware of the development. LNG importers Gail, Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation (GSPC), Torrent Gas, Bharat Petroleum Corp (BPCL) and Indian Oil Corp (IOC), among others, are buying spot cargoes as the Asia spot LNG price has declined between \$8.3 and \$9 per million British thermal units (mmBtu) due to weak demand and high inventory in both Asia and Europe, giving these companies room to expand sourcing and sales to the power, fertiliser, refining and other sectors. During the same period last year, spot LNG prices averaged \$18.75 per mmBtu. In 2022, spot LNG prices touched a record \$70 per mmBtu on the back of the Russia-Ukraine war. LNG is mostly traded through long-term contracts of 20-25 years and in the spot market. The price of spot LNG is higher than long-term LNG.

The Economic Times - 27.03.2024 https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/lng-importers-rush-to-buy-spot-cargoes-as-price-hits-3-year-low/articleshow/108771718.cms

More than 20% of global oil refining capacity is at risk of closure

More than a fifth of global oil refining capacity is at risk of closure, energy consultancy Wood Mackenzie found in analysis published on Thursday, as gasoline margins weaken and the pressure to reduce carbon emissions mounts. Of 465 refining assets analysed, the consultancy ranked about 21 per cent of 2023 global refining capacity at some risk of closure. Europe and China house the greatest number of high-risk sites, putting about 3.9 million barrels per day (bpd) of refining capacity in jeopardy, Wood Mac found, based on its estimate of net cash margins, cost of carbon emissions, ownership, environmental investment and strategic value of refineries. There are 11 European sites that account for 45 per cent of all high-risk plants, the report found. About 30 European refineries have already shut down since 2009, data from industry body Concawe shows, with nearly 90 still in operation. This spate of closures has been brought on by competition from newer and more complex plants in the Middle East and Asia as well as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Business Standard - 29.03.2024

https://www.businessstandard.com/industry/news/more-than-20-of-

US oil suppliers muscling into OPEC+ markets all over the world

US oil exports have set five new monthly records since Western nations began imposing sanctions on Russia in 2022. And with trade restrictions on Venezuela set to renew in April, American barrels are beginning to displace sanctioned crude in India, one of the biggest buyers of illicit oil. The shift underscores the extent to which sanctions have helped American crude capture market share around the world. While US oil has long been the world's go-to flex barrel, the disruption of energy flows after Russia's invasion of Ukraine created new pull for American barrels. Shipments to Europe and Asia surged in the aftermath, transforming the US into one of the world's largest exporters. Record production from the US coming just as OPEC and its allies curb their own supply — has also helped American producers gain a bigger foothold in overseas markets. Physical oil prices are reflecting that, with WTI in Houston trading near the highest levels since October and sour benchmark Mars not far behind.

The Business Standard - 01.04.2024 https://www.tbsnews.net/world/global-economy/us-oil-suppliers-muscling-opec-markets-all-over-world-820041

Shri. Bikram Ghosh takes charge as Director (Finance) in WCL

Shri. Bikram Ghosh took charge as the new Director (Finance) at Western Coalfields Limited (WCL). Previously, Shri. Ghosh served as General Manager (Finance) at BCCL, a subsidiary company of Coal India Limited. He has over 28 years of experience in Financial Management in Coal Industry.

PSU Connect - 28.03.2024

https://www.psuconnect.in/news/bikram-ghosh-takes-charge-as-director-finance-in-wcl/41957

Anil Kumar Jadli set to be next Director (HR) of NTPC

Anil Kumar Jadli is set to be next Director (Human Resource) of NTPC Limited. He has been recommended for the by the Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB) panel on Wednesday. Presently, he is serving as Chief General Manager (HR) in the same organisation.

PSU Watch - 28.03.2024

https://psuwatch.com/psu-appointments/anil-kumar-jadli-set-to-be-next-director-hr-of-ntpc