

(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 e-mailed on every Monday.)

Balmer Lawrie in News

Central govt asks staff to share insights and photos of holidays

All central government employees will soon be sharing their photos and interesting details of holidays. Besides, they will be exempted from informing their controlling officers before going on holiday and a self-certification from them would suffice. These are some of the changes the Centre has decided to make in the relevant rules for availing Leave Travel Concession (LTC). LTC allows grant of leave and ticket reimbursement to eligible central government employees to travel to their home towns and to other places. All LTC claims will be settled in a maximum of one-month' time, as per the new rules. An additional ten days will be given to settle dues related to LTC travels by an employee in case he is posted away from the headquarters. In all cases whenever a government servant travels by air, he or she is required to book the air tickets either directly through the airlines or through the approved travel agencies - M/s Balmer Lawrie & Co Ltd, M/s Ashok Tours and Travels Ltd, IRCTC. Booking of tickets through any other agency is not permissible, the DoPT said.

The Hindustan Times - 11.01.2016

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/central-govt-asks-staff-to-share-insights-and-photos-of-holidays/story-xuyonWcAHzT7OT2S0pM4M.html>

Moody's bullish on strength of Indian economy

Moody's Investors Service expects India's sovereign ratings to go a notch higher with the country being in a better position to pare its foreign debt, apart from having a stronger handle on inflation and young demographic profile compared to other countries. Though there is a strong domestic demand, the fragile external environment will be a dampener to the country's growth, with exports likely to be impacted. The slow progress of reforms and lower corporate profitability are the other impediments. India is rated Baa3 positive in 2016, up from Baa3 stable in 2015, which is only an outlook change, with the ratings remaining same. India is rated higher than Indonesia, Turkey and Romania, but below Philippines. "India's sovereign rating carries a positive outlook bucking the trend among similarly rated emerging market sovereigns. Since 2013, India's growth inflation and external balances have improved. India enters 2016 on the cusp of a cyclical growth recovery with inflation under control and the economy benefiting from lower commodity prices," said Atsi Sheth, associate director, Moody's, in a press conference.

DNA - 14.01.2016

<http://www.dnaindia.com/money/report-moody-s-raises-hope-for-india-s-ratings-2165486>

Economic growth pace to pick momentum soon: Jaitley

Asserting that economic growth was moving in the right direction, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on Wednesday said the pace of growth would gather momentum in the coming quarters. "We have achieved macro stability but growth moderation in the global economy and policy uncertainties among advanced countries pose risk to this outlook," Jaitley said at the 14th financial stability and development council meeting with financial sector regulators here as part of the pre-budget consultations.

The growth momentum will, however, gather pace after economic and structural reforms take root. Noting that the council had achieved its twin objectives of ensuring financial stability and financial sector development, Jaitley lauded efforts of its members in pushing the reforms agenda and policies. Earlier, chief economic adviser Arvind Subramanian presented the state of Indian economy to the council members, who reviewed issues and challenges faced by the economy.

Business Standard - 13.01.2016

http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/economic-growth-pace-to-pick-momentum-soon-jaitley-116011301228_1.html

Global slowdown to continue in 2016 too: Joseph Stiglitz, professor, Columbia University

The tumultuous start to 2016 supports the belief that there is no reason to expect the global economy to be any stronger this year than in 2015, said Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Laureate and professor, Columbia University. In a conference call with analysts organised by UBS, he spoke on a range of issues confronting the world economy and identified lack of demand as the major problem coupled with the slow deceleration in China. The global economy is currently not doing very well. 2015 was one of the worst years in the century. The only time the economy was worse was during the previous two recessions — one at the beginning of the 21st century and the other during the global financial crisis. 2016 is likely to be as bad as there is a global slowdown, with countries like Brazil and Russia in recession. Though there are no structural problems, there are problems of global demand. Europe is stagnating, while the US is growing slowly.

The Economic Times - 12.01.2016

http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2016-01-12/news/69704992_1_what-china-global-economy-euro-zone

Factory output growth dips in Sept as manufacturing slows

In worrying trends for the government, factory output growth slowed in September while retail inflation jumped up in October. Official data released on Thursday showed the Index of Industrial Production grew 3.6 per cent in September against a near-three-year high of 6.2 per cent in August; low growth in mining and manufacturing sectors pulled down the IIP. But it was better than the 2.6 per cent recorded in September 2014. The manufacturing sector, which has a 75 per cent weight in the IIP, posted 2.6 per cent growth in September 2015 (versus 6.6 per cent in August), while mining grew 3 per cent (3.8 per cent). The sharpest growth was in electricity production at 11.4 per cent (5.6 per cent). For 2015-16 first half, the IIP grew a robust 4 per cent against 2.9 per cent in April-September 2014. The Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation continued to rise for the third month and hit 5 per cent in October.

The Hindu Business Line - 12.01.2016

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/iip-grew-36-in-september-oct-cpi-grew-5/article7869598.ece>

Centre pushes states to form export policy

UN downgrades India GDP forecast for 2016 to 7.5% from 8.2%

United Nations has downgraded its GDP growth forecast for India for 2016 to 7.5 per cent from 8.2 per cent estimated earlier, largely due to slow progress in implementing reform policies. In 2015, India is expected to see better growth compared to China, but the higher rate is due to a change in the methodology of computing GDP in recent years rather than an increase in the growth rate. According to a report by United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the potential for even higher economic growth in some other major economies in the region has been held back due to slow progress in implementing reform policies. ESCAP economists believe, China is expected to grow at 6.5 per cent in 2016, lower from 6.8 per cent estimated earlier. In case of India, the 2016 GDP is likely to be around 7.5 per cent lower from 8.2 per cent earlier.

Business Today - 15.01.2016

<http://www.businesstoday.in/magazine/current/economy-politics/un-downgrades-india-gdp-forecast-for-2016-to-7.5-per-cent/story/228161.html>

Govt to come out with alternative disinvestment plan soon: Arun Jaitley

The government will come out with an alternative strategy in two to four weeks to push public sector unit (PSU) disinvestment in volatile markets, finance minister Arun Jaitley said on Friday. "We have to find out an alternative method for this (disinvestment). Wait for two to four weeks, the government will come out with an alternative strategy as to what to do in such volatile markets," he said. As against the target of Rs.69,500 crore, the government has in the current fiscal garnered Rs.12,700 crore. Due to volatile market conditions, the government has been able to sell stakes in only four PSUs— Indian Oil Corp. Ltd, Power Finance Corp. Ltd, Rural Electrification Corp. Ltd and Dredging Corp. of India Ltd. On whether divesting PSU stake amounts to selling family silver, Jaitley said it is an "old socialist thinking".

Mint - 16.01.2016

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/vDsu10z3Pk0o8NOIYYJ25K/Govt-to-come-out-with-alternative-disinvestment-plan-soon-A.html>

Procurement by PSUs, govt units from MSMEs dismal: Mishra

With a view to giving a concerted push to India's declining exports, the Narendra Modi government has asked states to formulate respective export promotion policies focusing on products or services of interest to supplement the Centre's efforts at boosting the country's outbound shipments. "We have asked every state to come out with an export policy identifying product and services of interest that have significant potential in the global arena. Ultimately, it is the states who deal with land, electricity, water and value-added tax (VAT)," said a senior commerce department official. The move was discussed with the states in the first meeting of the Council for Trade Development and Promotion chaired by Commerce and Industry Minister Nirmala Sitharaman earlier this month. The Centre and states would have to work together to improve export performance, added the official cited above.

Business Standard - 17.01.2016

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/centre-pushes-states-to-form-export-policy-116011700685_1.html

Oil PSUs plan to set up country's biggest refinery

Indian Oil Corp, HPCL and BPCL are planning to jointly build India's biggest refinery on the west coast, IOC Director (Refineries) Sanjiv Singh said. "We (at IOC) have been looking at west coast for a refinery as catering to customers in west and south was difficult with our refineries mostly in the north. HPCL has also been looking at a bigger refinery because of constraints it faces at the Mumbai unit," he said. IOC recently started its 15 million tonnes unit at Paradip in Odisha. Reliance Industries holds the distinction of building the biggest refinery in India till now. It built its first refinery at Jamnagar in Gujarat with a capacity of 27 million tonnes, which was subsequently expanded to 33 million tonnes. The refinery being planned by the state-owned firms will be "bigger than that," he said, adding that the refinery will cost Rs 2,500 crore per million tonnes.

Free Press Journal - 14.01.2016

<http://www.freepressjournal.in/oil-psus-plan-to-set-up-countrys-biggest-refinery/757255>

Crude oil stops fall at \$32 as investors book profits

Crude oil steadied near \$32 per barrel on Tuesday, recovering slightly as investors booked profits after it fell to a near-12-year low on concerns over oversupply and low demand from China. Prices are down around 15 per cent since the start of the year, dragged lower by a glut, China's weakening

Procurement by public sector undertakings (PSUs) and government departments from MSMEs is "dismal" and should be increased, Union Minister Kalraj Mishra said today. "The government has made mandatory for the PSUs and government units that they should make at least 20 per cent of their purchases from micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) only," Mishra said after inaugurating the three-day VenDex-2016 and MSME Manthan-2016 here. According to the MSME Minister, it has been observed that not all PSUs and government departments are honouring this directive, which is a serious issue. "They should make every effort to increase their purchases from MSMEs," he added. Mishra further said that he was aware about the problems faced by small and micro industries and the government has initiated several steps for them, one of which is the directive given to PSUs and government departments.

Business Standard - 15.01.2016

http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/procurement-by-psus-govt-units-from-msmes-dismal-mishra-116011501250_1.html

BofA cuts forecasts for crude oil price in 2016, 2017

Bank of America Merrill Lynch on Monday lowered its forecasts for crude oil prices for this year and next, amid a global glut in supply that looked poised to continue and a likely swift yuan depreciation in China. The investment bank cut its 2016 Brent price forecast to \$46 per barrel from \$50, and lowered its price view for West Texas Intermediate (WTI) to \$45 per barrel from \$48. BofA said impending Iranian supplies that are about to hit the market, coupled with yuan depreciation, could push oil prices down to the mid-\$20s, given the extremely high inventories already. A depreciated yuan will make the import of several commodities more expensive, including crude oil, and raises worries about the strength of China, the world's No. 2 economy and its biggest consumer of commodities.

The Economic Times - 11.01.2016

http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2016-01-11/news/69679033_1_crude-oil-prices-production-curbs-barrel

India's fuel demand rose 8.3 per cent in December

India's demand for fuel rose 8.3 percent in December compared with the same month last year, driven by higher gasoline consumption as passenger vehicle sales rose on the back of year-end deals and discounts. Asia's third largest economy consumed 15.8 million tonnes

economy and stock market turmoil, as well as the strong dollar, which makes it more expensive for those using other currencies to buy oil. Benchmark Brent crude fell to a low of \$30.43 per barrel, a level last seen in April 2004, before recovering to \$31.75, up 20 cents or 0.5 per cent. "Every time you hit new lows there's the potential for profit taking, and as people try to pick the bottom of the market," said Richard Mallinson, geopolitical analyst at Energy Aspects. US crude West Texas Intermediate (WTI) fell to a low of \$30.41 per barrel, a level last seen in December 2003, before crawling back to \$31.06, down 35 cents or 1.11 per cent.

The Economic Times - 13.01.2016

http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2016-01-13/news/69735057_1_investors-book-profits-energy-aspects-low-demand

Morgan Stanley: Oil may hit US\$20 but not for the reasons you think

Most analysts cite oversupply as the main reason crude prices are sinking. But Morgan Stanley says a rising U.S. dollar, not a glut of oil, could see crude sink as low as US\$20 a barrel. "Given the continued U.S. dollar appreciation, \$20 - \$25 oil price scenarios are possible simply due to currency," Morgan Stanley analysts said in a research note to clients Monday. That's not to say oversupply hasn't made an impact at all. Morgan Stanley says a glut has driven crude to ranges low enough to slow investment, but it does not set the price. "Oversupply may have pushed oil prices under \$60, but the difference between \$35 oil and \$55 oil is primarily the USD, in our view," the analysts said. A brutal New Year selloff in oil markets deepened on Monday, with prices plunging as much as five per cent to new 12-year lows as further ructions in the Chinese stock market threatened to knock crude into the US\$20s. On Monday, China's blue-chip stocks fell by another five per cent and overnight interest rates for the yuan outside of China soared to nearly 40 per cent, their highest since the launch of the offshore market.

Business News Network - 12.01.2015

<http://www.bnn.ca/News/2016/1/11/Morgan-Stanley-says-oil-will-hit-US20-but-not-for-the-reasons-you-think.aspx>

E-visas a hit, online issuances increase 1,040%

Over 4.45 lakh tourists arrived in India last year through the online visa scheme registering a growth of 1040.4%. The highest number of tourists came from the UK followed by the United States and Russia. Though the growth figures are high, tourists using online facilities are still a small

of fuel last month, data from the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC) of the oil ministry showed. Fuel consumption figures are a proxy for oil demand in India. The rise in India's fuel consumption contrasts with a moderation in China's oil demand in 2015. "India is set to contribute more than any other country to the projected rise in global energy demand, around one-quarter of the total...," the International Energy Agency said in a report last year. Consumption of gasoil or diesel, which comprises about 40 percent of refined fuels used in India, rose 5.4 percent to 6.48 million tonnes.

The Economic Times - 14.01.2016

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/indias-fuel-demand-rose-8-3-per-cent-in-december/articleshow/50581159.cms>

Foreigners to be allowed to book train tickets online

Foreigners will soon be allowed to book train tickets online from abroad using their credit/debit cards as the IRCTC is strengthening its ticketing site to meet the demand. We are incorporating certain checks and balances in our website to provide booking facility for foreigners, IRCTC Chairman and Managing Director A K Manocha told PTI. Currently, foreigners book their tickets online through tour operators. Buddhist circuit trains, Palace on Wheel, Maharaja and other tourist specials are popular with foreigners and tickets are booked in the trains generally through tour operators. Earlier, the facility was existing but it was withdrawn after a few cases of misuse of credit cards came to light, Manocha said, adding the issues have been addressed to prevent misuse making the system a safe booking exercise. IRCTC, a railways PSU, has taken a series of steps to strengthen its website in the recent past including multilayers security measures against hacking.

The Economic Times - 13.01.2016

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/foreigners-to-be-allowed-to-book-train-tickets-online/articleshow/50562720.cms>

Tourism Inc. seeks changes in e-tourist visa system

On the second day of the campaign, 'one message a day', launched by the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), the Tourism Promoters Guild here highlighted the issue of weak and incomplete implementation of e-tourist visa system and urged the government

fraction of the total foreign tourist arrivals. India attracted about 70 lakh tourists in 2015 at a growth of 4.5%. During December, 2015, a total of 1,03,617 tourists arrived on e-tourist visa as compared to 14,083 during December, 2014, registering a growth of 635.8%. Between January-December, 2015 a total of 4,45,300 tourist arrived as compared to 39,046 during January-December, 2014 registering a growth of 1040.4%, according to tourism ministry data. The facility for applying for visas online was started in November 2014. "This high growth may be attributed to introduction of e-tourist visa for 113 countries..." the ministry said in a statement.

The Times of India - 15.01.2016

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/E-visas-a-hit-online-issuances-increase-1040/articleshow/50583923.cms>

New airlines take off, but yet to soar

Indian aviation went from strength to strength in 2015, attracting many new players. Three new airlines — Vistara, Air Pegasus and Trujet — took off last year. With this, five new players now compete for passenger patronage in the domestic skies. These players have taken off, but they have a long way to reach cruising altitude and challenge the well-entrenched larger carriers. Buoyed by low fuel costs, which enabled fare cuts, air passenger traffic in the country grew at over 20 per cent last year, amongst the fastest in the world. A rapidly growing market translated into gains for almost all airlines, including the new ones. For regional player Air Costa, which started flying in late 2013, traffic grew a robust 30 per cent plus year-on-year in the January-November 2015 period. AirAsia India, which began operations in June 2014, flew nearly thrice the number of passengers between June and November 2015 than it did a year ago. From just 15,000 passengers in January 2015 when it was launched, Vistara — the Tata-Singapore Airlines joint venture — increased traffic nearly nine-fold to 1.36 lakh in November.

The Hindu Business Line - 18.01.2016

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/new-airlines-take-off-but-yet-to-soar/article8116902.ece>

Indians willing to splurge on travel: Yatra survey

Indians are willing to spend more on travel, looking more at international destinations, and are increasingly booking via mobile apps, says a recent survey by travel portal Yatra. "The propensity of Indians to spend on travel has increased, with more than 30 per cent people willing to spend above ₹50,000 a person, as

to make amendments to the system and provide open window for e-tourist visa application 180 days in advance instead of 30 days. Expressing concern over the past year witnessing alarming slowdown in tourism arrivals, the IATO has launched a five-day campaign from Monday and urged its members to send a message to the Prime Minister each day, highlighting the issues faced by the tourism industry. "The e-tourist visa system should allow multiple entries instead of single entry and the duration of stay under the e-tourist visa scheme should be increased from 30 days to 60 days," said Jaswant Singh, president of the Tourism Promoters Guild.

The Times of India - 14.01.2016

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/aurangabad/Tourism-Inc-seeks-changes-in-e-tourist-visa-system/articleshow/50571216.cms>

Indians can't travel without mobile devices

Indicating a growing dependency on smartphones and gadgets and an urge to remain connected all the time, a survey has revealed 80 per cent Indians use mobile devices to keep up with their work even when they are on vacations. The Egencia/Expedia Mobile Behaviour Mobile Index, a global study of mobile-device-related behaviour and preferences among travellers conducted across multiple countries and continents, found that India (80 per cent) leads in checking in with work at least once a day followed by Thailand (74 per cent) and Mexico (65 per cent). "In India, constant connectivity is a priority when mobile devices are carried in hand from work to home and now on vacation too. When we're more efficient and productive using mobile devices and apps that provide a seamless experience, the quality of our vacation improves and the work-life balance can be prioritised," Egencia India Country Director Amit Arora said.

India Today - 15.01.2016

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/technology/story/indians-cant-do-without-mobile-devices-while-travelling-study/1/571411.html>

More bad news for ocean trade

A fresh plunge on the main global index of the cost of moving major raw materials by sea has potential implications for trade. The Baltic Dry Index (BDI) slid to a level of 402 on Wednesday, a new low, and this might stop much of trade across the Indian Ocean and Asia-Pacific market, say observers. There could be a strong aversion, for instance, to long-term deals. The

against 25 per cent last year," the Winter Survey 2015 by the company said. While a majority (70 per cent) looked at domestic travel, people are increasingly getting more inclined toward international travel, too. "Over 30 per cent people are willing to opt for an international destination this winter," it said. Last year's survey showed that over 22 per cent were opting for international travel. Mobile apps are becoming more popular, as the survey found that 30.4 per cent people were using apps for their travel bookings, compared with 19 per cent last year. While 59.3 per cent travellers booked via desktop, 10.3 per cent opted for a travel agent.

The Hindu Business Line - 12.01.2016

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/indians-keen-to-splurge-more-on-travel-says-yatra-survey/article8092866.ece>

Shipping ministry to seek cabinet backing to wind down port rate regulator

The shipping ministry will seek the cabinet's approval to amend a key law to wind up the tariff regulator for 11 of the 12 state-owned ports, days after an expert panel questioned the need for such a body. The panel headed by former finance secretary Vijay Kelkar, formed to review and revive public-private partnerships in infrastructure, in its report made public on 28 December called for scrapping of the Tariff Authority for Major Ports (Tamp). Such a move, the report said, will allow these ports to usher in a market-driven pricing regime and put them on par with private ports that are free to set rates. The unpredictable rate regime has dampened investor interest in these ports

Mint - 12.01.2016

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/FUdhdxhOiv8Cc8XZQARe4K/Shipping-ministry-to-seek-cabinet-backing-to-wind-down-port.html>

BDI is an economic indicator issued daily by the London-based Baltic Exchange. "The trade climate is full of insecurity, as charterers are not sure if the price at which they have negotiated is the right low price," Kiran Kamat, owner of Link Shipping & Management Systems, a leading chartering and shipping company, told Business Standard. "Charterers are unable to take a call, leading to last-minute back out (from deals), even if ship-owners are being flexible." The index began falling from early August last year, when China initiated a devaluing of its currency.

Business Standard - 14.01.2016

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/more-bad-news-for-ocean-trade-116011300352_1.html

Kalgaonkar takes over as Executive Director NHPC

S Kalgaonkar today took over the charge of Executive Director NHPC Limited, Region Jammu. He shall be responsible for all operating NHPC Power Stations in the State of J&K. Mr Kalgaonkar is a competent professional with over three decades of extensive experience in Hydro Power sector and was very instrumental in completion of 45MW Nimmo Bazgo Project in Leh, 44MW Chutak Project in Kargil and 240MW Uri-II Project in Baramulla during his earlier stint in the State. Prior to joining as Executive Director Region Jammu, Mr Kalgaonkar was functioning as Executive Director, T&RE at NHPC Corporate Office in Faridabad.

Daily Excelsior.com - 12.01.2016

<http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/>