

(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.)

Digital panel pill

A committee headed by Andhra Pradesh chief minister Chandrababu Naidu has recommended a tax refund of up to a certain proportion of annual income for consumers using the digital mode to pay. The committee also wants to discourage the use of cash for large transactions. It wants the government to consider levying a banking cash transaction tax on transactions of Rs 50,000 and above. The panel wants all digital transactions to be insured. "If there is any problem, the person should get back his money," Naidu said. The panel submitted its report to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi today. The Modi-government had constituted the panel on November 30 to find a solution to the crisis and to gradually help the nation move towards a cashless economy.

The Telegraph - 25.01.2017

https://www.telegraphindia.com/1170125/jsp/business/story_132186.jsp#.WIwH3PB97IU

Govt may make Aadhaar must for rail concession in Budget 2017

Government is contemplating to make Aadhaar or Unique Identification (UID) card mandatory to avail rail concession, and an announcement is likely to be made by finance minister Arun Jaitley while presenting the first combined general and railway budget on 1 February. The move will help the government in better targeting of benefits and check misuse of the facility, officials said. The Railways provides concession on tickets to more than 50 categories of passengers which include senior citizens, students, research scholars, teacher, doctor, nurse, patients, sports people, unemployed youth, Arjun awardees among others. At present, Railways is running a pilot project for senior citizens who are entitled for rail concessions. The concessional tickets cost the Railways about Rs1,600 crore in 2015-16, with the bulk being accounted for senior citizens. As per the government data, over 100 crore Aadhaar cards have been issued so far covering bulk of India's population. The government has decided to end the 92-year-old practice of presenting a separate railway budget and merged it with the general budget.

Mint - 29.01.2017

FM may have to budget for lower PSU dividends

As Finance Minister Arun Jaitley rises to present the 2017-18 Budget later this week, he might need to temper his expectations of dividend income from central public sector undertakings (PSUs) in the next financial year. The government's aim to achieve its revenue target has put pressure on PSUs to increase their dividend, which has led to a steady depletion of their cash reserves in the past three years. Analysts expect central PSUs to now go slow on dividend pay-out, in the current and next financial years, to conserve cash.

Business Standard - 30.01.2017

http://www.business-standard.com/budget/article/budget-2017-jaitley-may-have-to-account-for-lower-dividends-from-psus-117012900625_1.html

70,000 Tax Men Warn Of Stir Against GST Council Proposals

Opposing some recent decisions taken by GST Council, various indirect tax officials' associations on Wednesday decided to start non-cooperation movement. To start with, the employees associations will not celebrate international customs day on Friday. Besides, they will observe 'black day' by wearing black badges on Martyrs' Day, i.e. January 30, as per minutes of meeting held among their representatives here. The associations said that their members are "highly disappointed" and feel "cheated" over the decisions taken by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley-led GST Council in its meeting on January 16. The Council had agreed to give states the powers to levy tax on economic activity within 12 nautical miles of territorial waters and to administer 90 per cent of the tax payers under Rs 1.5 crore annual turnover. "We feel that the biggest tax reform of the century should have been in conformity with the principles of responsibility and authority going together and also in conformity with the Constitutional design.

Millennium Post - 26.01.2017

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/ehNFOPjgfsS3BmQnAQbQL/Govt-may-make-Aadhaar-must-for-rail-concession-in-Budget-201.html>

PSUs asked to close recruitments early

The IITs have asked PSUs recruiting on the basis on GATE scores to complete their intake process by July 15 this year. This will allow candidates to either opt for jobs or take up post-graduate courses at the IITs, thus reducing the number of MTech and MSc seats going vacant in the premier technology institutes. Last year, several MTech seats fell vacant after students who had already taken admission grabbed job offers from the PSUs. At IIT-Kharagpur, which has 1,539 PG seats, 493 went vacant in 2014-15. The IITs begin their PG classes on August 1 while the PSUs start the recruitment process in September and bring out their list of selected candidates in October. The process sometimes drags on till December. The nudge to the PSUs came during a meeting at IIT Mumbai earlier this month and attended by the directors of all the IITs and officials of at least 14 PSUs. "All colleges are bound by a Supreme Court directive to start classes before August 1.

The Times of India - 28.01.2017

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/p-sus-asked-to-close-recruitments-early/articleshow/56822150.cms>

Budget wish list: Oil & Gas sector hoping for reduction in cess rate, 100% depreciation allowance

The oil and gas sector is hoping for couple of announcements related to reduction in cess rate, 100 per cent depreciation allowance for projects undertaken for upgradation of fuel quality and exemption on 15 per cent service tax on LNG Sea transportation and regasification from the government in the upcoming Union Budget scheduled on February 1. Experts also believe that the industry is further expecting to get infrastructure status from the government. According to ICICIDirect.com, the change in Oil Industry Development (OID) cess duty would be positive for upstream oil companies as it would reduce costs by \$5-6 per barrel at current crude oil prices. The elimination of import duty on LNG will also boost LNG demand and lower costs. It will prove to be positive for gas utility companies. At present, only the power sector is exempted from paying import duty on spot LNG. In the past one year, crude oil prices have surged nearly 64 per cent to \$55.52 per barrel till January 27, from \$33.89 per barrel on January 28, 2016.

The Economic Times - 30.01.2017

<http://www.millenniumpost.in/business/news-180741>

Oil PSUs to invest over Rs 1.4 tn in Andhra Pradesh by FY22: Dharmendra Pradhan

Major oil public sector units are planning to invest over Rs 1.43 lakh crore in Andhra Pradesh in coming years which would create jobs for thousands of people in the state, Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said today. He said that the investment will start from 2017-18 and all the investment will be completed by 2021-22. Andhra Pradesh has immense hydrocarbon potential and it is going to become a major petroleum and petrochemical hub in the coming years, he said here at the CII Partnership Summit. "Our oil PSUs are partnering with Andhra Pradesh to build new synergies in the hydrocarbon sector. The oil PSUs have invested more than Rs 9,400 crore in the last two and a half years and have plans investments of more than Rs 1.43 lakh crore in the state in the coming years," he said.

The Financial Express - 27.01.2017

<http://www.financialexpress.com/market/commodities/oil-psus-to-invest-over-rs-1-4-tn-in-andhra-pradesh-by-fy22-dharmendra-pradhan/525343/>

Renewables to overtake India's oil output in 2035: BP Energy Outlook

India's demand for green energy is expected to grow by seven times in 2035, according to the latest BP Energy Outlook released on Wednesday. Accordingly, the share of renewable energy in the country's fuel mix will increase from the present level of 2% to 8% in 2035. However, the green surge will be inadequate to meet India's growing need for energy with the country's demand growth expected to be more than double the non-OECD countries' average of 52%. OECD countries refer to the 35 nations that are signatories to the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, or OECD, and mostly comprise mature economies. This comes in the backdrop of investors seeing enormous opportunity in India's emerging green economy. India, the world's third largest energy consuming economy after the US and China, plans to achieve 175 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2022 as part of its commitments to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted by 195 countries in Paris in December 2015.

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/markets/stocks/news/budget-wish-list-oil-gas-sector-hoping-for-reduction-in-cess-rate-100-depreciation-allowance/articleshow/56849798.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

Exxon Mobil partners Maruti Suzuki for fourth year in a row

Oil and gas major Exxon Mobil Lubricants Private Limited has announced that it will be the official lubricant partner for all Maruti Suzuki rallies in 2017. This is the fourth year of the partnership and the season kicks off with the 15th edition of the Maruti Suzuki Desert Storm. The rally will be held from January 29- February 4, 2016. This will be followed by the Dakshin Dare and the gruelling Raid de Himalaya. The 2017 Desert Storm will begin from Delhi and culminate in Jaipur via Hanumangarh, Bikaner, Jaisalmer and Jodhpur. The terrain presents unique challenges and it's a test of both man and machine. Speaking about the partnership, Deepankar Banerjee, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Exxonmobil lubricants said that the company is committed to excellence and it's this shared value with Maruti Suzuki that makes this partnership a natural choice. He also added that the company has partnered many leading automakers as well as racing teams across the world and the company is as excited about motorsports as an enthusiast.

Over Drive - 29.01.2017

<http://overdrive.in/news/exxon-mobil-partners-maruti-suzuki-for-fourth-year-in-a-row/>

Pact to store crude

India and the United Arab Emirates today signed a deal that would allow the Gulf nation to hire half of the capacity of the strategic crude storage facility in Mangalore. State oil giant Adnoc will stock 0.75 million tonnes, or 6 million barrels of oil, in a compartment of the Mangalore facility. Of this, 0.5 million tonnes will belong to India, which it can use during crisis, after paying market rates. Adnoc will use the facility as a warehouse to trade its oil, according to officials. The deal between Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves (ISPRL), the company that would build the storage, and Adnoc was announced after a meeting on Wednesday between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Abu Dhabi's crown prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan. "Our energy partnership is an important bridge in our linkages. It contributes to our energy security," Modi said. The two sides had

Mint - 29.01.2017

<http://www.livemint.com/Industry/WtZZpEdwb01T6g9uAF0nsM/Renewables-to-overtake-Indias-oil-output-in-2035-BP-Energy.html>

Demonetisation relief: Petrol pumps disbursed Rs 209 cr to ease post-note ban cash crisis

To ease the cash crunch in the system created after the government's demonetisation drive, retail fuel outlets, between November 9 and December 31, disbursed Rs 209 crore through 2,600 outlets. However, queues at banks and ATMs have shortened now, and according to the Reserve Bank of India, new currency notes worth R9.2 lakh crore have been injected into the system out of the Rs 15.4 lakh crore worth of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 bank notes pulled out. Post November 8, the government took a slew of steps to ease the cash crunch in the country. The petroleum and natural gas ministry too started an initiative and to ease the burden on banks and ATMs, it allowed cash withdrawal of Rs 2,000 per debit card from few fuel retail outlets run by the oil marketing companies. Withdrawals were made through point-of-sale (PoS) machines provided by banks. The petroleum ministry is also offering a 0.75% discount on digital purchase of petroleum products.

The Financial Express - 25.01.2017

<http://www.financialexpress.com/economy/demonetisation-relief-petrol-pumps-disbursed-rs-209-cr-to-ease-post-note-ban-cash-crisis/521244/>

Steel demand revival hinges on PM Modi's roads-to-rail spending push

A revival in India's steel consumption from the weakest estimated growth in at least four years hinges on the government boosting spending on infrastructure, housing and road projects to absorb record output. Finance minister Arun Jaitley will announce 1 February higher outlays for national highways, rural roads, railways and low-cost housing, Goldman Sachs Group Inc. predicted in a 19 January report. Any major budget initiatives in infrastructure and construction would stimulate domestic steel demand, according to Seshagiri Rao, joint managing director at India's second-biggest mill, JSW Steel Ltd. Mills in India such as JSW, Steel Authority of India Ltd. and Tata Steel Ltd. are projected to produce a record amount of the metal this year

discussed ways to advance their energy ties through specific projects, including long-term supply contracts and joint ventures in energy, he said.

The Telegraph - 26.01.2017

https://www.telegraphindia.com/1170126/jsp/business/story_132395.jsp#.WIwIYvB97IU

Steel cos raise product prices by 3-8%, but dealers still hurt

Major steel companies like JSW Steel Ltd, Tata Steel Ltd and Steel Authority of India Ltd have all raised their product prices by 3 percent to 8 percent in January because of higher coking coal prices, according to various trade sources. The hike, effected across both flat and long steel products, adds to the price increases undertaken by the companies post Diwali in 2016, one source said. "The hike in some product categories has been as high as 8 percent each in December and January," another source said. He said the price hikes in long products were less than those in flats and as a result, margins were better in flats right now. Long product prices have seen a hike of 3-5 percent while flat product prices are up by 5-8 percent in January, the second source said. The flats are being traded for around Rs 41,000 in the market with long products going at a discount of Rs 7,000-Rs. 8,000 to prices of flats. "The flat prices are getting supported by government duties. So their prices are ruling higher than those of longs," an analyst with a domestic brokerage said.

Moneycontrol - 25.01.2017

http://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/steel-cos-raise-product-prices-by-3-8dealers-still-hurt_8338781.html

Those fancy airport stores may help lower airfares

The next time you confuse an airport with a mall, don't fret and fume. Because higher "non-aeronautical" earnings will help the airport operator levy lower charges on airlines. This will in turn mean lower fares for flyers. The passenger-friendly move comes as the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA) has decided to determine the future tariffs of major airports under the 'hybrid till' model. Under this, 30% of non-aeronautical revenue will be used to subsidise aviation charges. It will also provide a boost to investment in airport sector by ensuring funding to projects without burdening airlines -and in turn passengers -with sky-high charges. However, the

in anticipation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's infrastructure push. Their plans were disrupted in November when a move to ban some high-denomination currency notes tightened spending and prompted Morgan Stanley to predict flat sales in the 12 months through on 31 March.

Mint - 25.01.2017

<http://www.livemint.com/Industry/6tUIAPGQkmdEpai4n9hbIJ/Steel-demand-revival-hinges-on-PM-Modi-roadstorail-spendin.html>

Minimum import price on steel a short-term measure: SteelMin

The government today said imposition of minimum import price (MIP) on steel is a short-term measure and it is taking permanent measures to counter unfair trade practices as per international norms. "Chaudhary Birender Singh (Steel Minister) had emphasised that MIP is a short-term measure and not of a permanent nature," the steel ministry said in a statement today. The ministry's statement was in response to some media reports. The media reports which quoted the Steel Minister gave an impression that that Minimum Import Price on steel will be discontinued after 4 February 2017, the ministry said. "In this connection, this is to clarify that the Minister was making a point in a wider context of providing level playing field to the Indian steel industry," the statement read. A total of 124 steel products have been covered by provisional anti-dumping duties and final orders on the same are expected in due course, it further said.

The Economic Times - 24.01.2017

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/indl-goods/svs/steel/minimum-import-price-on-steel-a-short-term-measure-steelmin/articleshow/56763849.cms>

Doubling of service tax forces travel industry to seek sops

With the government doubling the service tax on tour operators from 4.5 per cent to 9 per cent, outbound packages will now get more expensive. Leading travel companies claim the service tax component of packages that cost 2 lakh, will now increase from 9,000 to 18,000. Considering overseas holidays are expected to get more expensive, travel companies are seeking tax breaks from the forthcoming Budget, to become more competitive and make the industry attractive for inbound travel. Sriram Rajmohan, CEO and Managing Director, Club 7 Holidays, said: "The service tax has gone up from 1.5 per cent to 9 per cent

tariffs of Delhi and Mumbai airports will not be impacted by this and continue to be determined as per the agreements with the airport operators at these metros. "Single till' may not be appropriate at this juncture when there is high growth and capacity expansion is the need of the hour. The Authority's methodology for tariff determination should be consistent with the government policy," AERA order says.

The Economic Times - 25.01,2017

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/airlines/-aviation/those-fancy-airport-stores-may-help-lower-airfares/articleshow/56773507.cms>

With more Indians taking weekend trips, 2017's a good year for travel industry

Travel agencies are witnessing a spike in bookings for the next weekend — the first long weekend of the year — with Indian travellers shifting gear and taking shorter and more frequent holidays. Travellers are now taking short breaks through the year and not limiting themselves one or two big holidays as in the past, which experts believe will help the travel and tourism industry as it ensures that demand is well spread out. "With this trend on the rise, and 11 long weekends coming up in 2017, we are expecting a great year ahead for the industry," Sharat Dhall, Chief Operating Officer (Business-to-Consumer), Yatra.com, said. Manmeet Ahluwalia, Marketing Head, Expedia in India, said: "With Republic Day (on Thursday and taking a day off on Friday) heralding the first extended weekend of the year, it is getting travel enthusiasts to make the most of it. The number of bookings has risen by about 37 per cent year-on-year."

The Hindustan Times - 24.01.2017

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/travel/with-more-indians-taking-weekend-trips-2017-s-a-good-year-for-travel-industry/story-OqvYdRCKbVFxVnPzMxbNeJ.html>

Loss making Indian Railways to rent out hill trains to private players

The Indian Railways will soon start leasing out its standalone passenger corridors and branch lines to private companies for operations and maintenance, marking the beginning of corporate participation in the running of the world's fourth largest railroad network. Narrow and metre-gauge tracks linking the colonial era hill stations are set to be the first of the 108,000-kilometer rail network to be run privately, a senior railway official told ET. Largely unprofitable routes linking Kalka and Shimla, Siliguri and Darjeeling, the

on pure hotel packages and from 4.5 per cent to 9 per cent for tour packages. This is a preparatory measure for the industry to embrace the GST, which is going to be at a higher percentage. "This increase is going to affect individual travellers at the retail level rather than the corporate MICE (Meetings Incentive Conferences and Events) travellers as corporates can claim input credit on the taxes paid."

The Hindu Business Line - 27.01.2017

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/doubling-of-service-tax-forces-travel-industry-to-look-for-sops/article9505912.ece>

Rise in fuel costs, slide in rupee to hit Indian airlines: report

Aviation in India will be impacted by the rise in fuel costs in the first quarter of 2017. The slide in the value of the rupee will also impact the earnings of all airlines, Martin Consulting said in its 'Review of Indian aviation in 2017' report. The report warns that the increase in global aviation fuel prices could result in "casualties" among Indian airlines. The report points out that the projected rise in global aviation fuel prices is expected to cast a shadow on passenger growth numbers in the near term adding that much of the over 20 per cent growth in domestic passenger carriage is on account of airlines managing to absorb costs to churn out sustainable air fares. "This will be tested in the course of the coming year," the report says. The report which was released on Sunday adds that demonetisation will add to the negative sentiments affecting GDP growth, access to travel is likely to be impacted and airlines may find it a challenge to sustain growth and yields should airfares increase.

The Hindu Business Line - 30.01.2017

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/rise-in-fuel-costs-slide-in-rupee-to-hit-indian-airlines-report/article9508329.ece>

Air traffic grows 23%, railways AC travel under 5%

Domestic air traffic is booming but the travel surge seems to have given the railways a miss, especially in the more profitable air-conditioned classes. While air traffic grew 23% to almost 77 million during April-December, the number of passengers travelling in air-conditioned railway coaches, which touched 108 million, grew at less than 5%. As a proportion of number of passengers travelling in air-conditioned coaches, air traffic was over 71%, which is a record in recent years. Just a

Nilgiri mountains with the plains, Neral and Matheran, and the Kangra Valley railways would be among the first the government will likely choose to bid out to private operators, which may include overseas companies as the existing policy on investment in railways allows 100% foreign ownership. "All these railways are on the international tourism map and Darjeeling Himalayan railways is a Unesco world heritage site. There's a huge opportunity for private sector, and for railways also it will be profitable."

The Economic Times - 28.01.2017

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/loss-making-indian-railways-to-rent-out-hill-trains-to-private-players/articleshow/56820685.cms>

Logistics Survey: GST a hit; demonetisation jarring

India is the market with maximum growth potential in the logistics segment among emerging economies, says Agility Emerging Markets Logistics Survey. Last year, China had the top position in the same survey. Agility is a \$4.3 billion logistics company, with 22,000 employees, and is public traded in Kuwait and Dubai. Based on inputs from 800 executives in the supply chain and logistics sector, the survey refers to goods and services tax as a "darling" in the Indian context. According to the survey, India was the leading pick as an investment destination, an indication of the enthusiasm generated by some of the reforms undertaken by the Modi government. "Looking into 2017, however, there is uncertainty as a result of the government's surprise decision in November to take 500 and 1,000 bank notes out of circulation. That move will undoubtedly be jarring in the immediate term for a society where use of mobile payments, credit cards and other cashless forms of payment is not widespread," Agility said.

The Hindu Business Line - 26.01.2017

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/logistics-survey-gst-a-hit-demonetisation-jarring/article9502417.ece>

year ago, it was a shade over 60%. As a proportion of AC passenger traffic, domestic air traffic used to hover around the 50% mark until 2014-15. For Indian Railways, passenger traffic is subsidised by freight or cargo with fares, on an average, covering 57% of the cost. Air-conditioned coaches are comparatively less loss-making, although AC three-tier was making profit. A NITI Aayog analysis showed that a couple of years ago

The Times of India - 30.01.2017

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/air-traffic-grows-23-railways-ac-travel-under-5/articleshow/56863449.cms>

Green ministry panel gives clearance for building port at Tadadi in Karnataka

Clearing the decks for building a multi-purpose all-weather port at Tadadi in Karnataka, an expert panel of the Union environment ministry has recommended environment and coastal clearance for the project. The Rs3,813-crore project of the Karnataka State Industrial & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd was given the go-ahead by the environment ministry's Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) at a meeting on 26-28 December 2016. The panel recommended environment and coastal regulation zone (CRZ) clearance to the project with 27 specific conditions in addition to the regular conditions to ensure environmental protection. The ministry of environment, forest and climate change (MoEFCC) will now give the final clearance to the project. But past records show it is rare that EAC's recommendations are overturned by the environment ministry. The project was first considered for grant of environment clearance in December 2015 but was deferred for want of additional information.

Mint - 24.01.2017

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/YiJmAprKebqMFG0HLYjwON/Green-ministry-panel-gives-clearance-for-building-port-at-Ta.html>