

(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.)

ADB raises India growth forecast to 7% from 6.7%

The Asian Development Bank raised India's growth forecast for the current year to 7%, from 6.7% earlier, citing strengthening investment and improving consumption demand in the country, and pegged next year's expansion at 7.2%. It also estimated inflation to stay around 4.6% in 2024. ADB had projected the Indian economy to grow 7.6% last year. "The economic outlook for India depends on price and financial market stability, which are crucial for consumer and business confidence. The outlook could thus be affected by negative global shocks, such as a supply shock in crude oil markets that spikes energy costs and raises global inflation, which could lead central banks to tighten financial conditions globally and in India," the agency said in its latest outlook. While weather shocks could impact demand and inflation, due to under-performance in agriculture, ADB said there could be an upside due to faster-than-expected FDI inflow, particularly into manufacturing, where several companies have announced projects. "Besides boosting output, FDI inflow would improve productivity. Better than-expected global growth could boost exports and thus growth," it added.

The Times of India - 12.04.2024

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/adb-raises-india-growth-forecast-to-7-from-6-7/articleshow/109230185.cms>

Q4 report card: India Inc to come out with dull numbers

Headline profit growth is expected to be muted in the March quarter earnings season as good performances from automobile manufacturers, banks, and pharmaceuticals will be offset by modest numbers from the metals & mining pack. A weak discretionary spends environment, together with the spillover of furloughs from the December quarter, will mean unexciting revenues from IT majors. Again, consumer demand remains by and large subdued except for premium products. Auto makers have reported robust growth in volumes and have also managed to earn better prices. Banks will have gained from lower provisioning as asset quality remains good. Tata

Moody's outlook stable for India, sees over 6% growth

Moody's on Friday retained India's rating, maintaining a stable outlook and projecting well over 6% economic growth over the next two fiscal years. The global rating agency kept the country's long-term and short-term ratings unchanged at Baa3 and P-3, respectively, after a periodic review, citing a gradual improvement in fiscal metrics amidst robust growth prospects. "The credit profile of India balances its large and diversified economy with high growth potential, a relatively sound external position, and a stable domestic financing base for government debt against high general government debt, weak debt affordability and low per capita income," Moody's said. It forecast the Indian economy to expand 8% in FY24, higher than 7.6% projected by the government and 6.6% it had predicted earlier in November 2023, noting that the ongoing infrastructure push is likely to help growth. Investment has been one of the primary growth drivers for the country, recording double-digit growth in FY24.

The Economic Times - 13.04.2024

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/moodys-retains-indias-rating-with-stable-outlook-projects-over-6-growth-in-fy25-and-fy26/articleshow/109238722.cms>

IMF sees growth edging higher but still warns of 'Tepid Twenties'

The International Monetary Fund hinted it will nudge its global growth forecasts slightly higher, while warning that the world economy still risks a "Tepid Twenties" this decade if inflation and debt challenges aren't addressed. Global growth will be "marginally stronger" in the IMF's new predictions, to be published April 16, Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said in a prepared speech for delivery Thursday in Washington. The most recent outlook, from January, envisaged an expansion of 3.1% this year and 3.2% in 2025. Robust consumption and investment, as well as easing supply-chain problems, are among the drivers of strong

Consultancy Services (TCS) will kick off the results season on April 12. Net profits for the Nifty 50 set of companies are estimated to rise by 4% year-on-year and 7% quarter-on-quarter, according to Kotak Institutional Equities (KIE). For the BSE 30, net profits in Q4FY24, are expected to go up by 5% y-o-y and 8% q-o-q.

The Financial Express - 09.04.2024

<https://www.financialexpress.com/business/industry-q4-report-card-india-inc-to-come-out-with-dull-numbers-3450427/>

World trade to fall 1.2% in value this year

World trade is expected to grow this calendar year in terms of volumes after a difficult 2023 but in dollar terms it is still expected to decline 1.2% on year, according to a report by trade policy think tank. The World Trade Organisation (WTO), in its Global Trade Update and Statistics, said that after a 1.2% decline in world goods trade volumes last year, there will be a growth of 2.6% this year. The 1.2% drop in trade volumes had resulted in 5% contraction in trade in value terms to \$24.01 trillion. For 2024, while predicting the growth, the report has made no mention of what the value of global merchandise or services trade will be. The Global Trade Research Initiative's (GTRI) report forecasts a 1.2% drop in world merchandise trade values in 2024, over 2023. "This forecast uses historical trends showing how trade volumes relate to trade values. In 2023, there was a 1.2% fall in world trade volume and a 5% decrease in value compared to the year before," the report said.

The Financial Express - 14.04.2024

<https://www.financialexpress.com/business/industry-world-trade-to-fall-1-2-in-value-this-year-3455507/2>

Plan to raise EPFO ceiling to ₹21,000

The government is contemplating enhancing the wage ceiling under the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) to at least ₹21,000 from ₹15,000 now to widen the social security coverage, a step towards achieving universal social security. The proposal, which has been on the backburner for several years now, is being re-looked at. "We are evaluating all options and a decision in this regard could be taken by the new

growth in the US and many emerging-market economies, she said. But the IMF chief said inflation is not yet fully defeated and debt levels in most countries are too high. "Without a course correction, we are indeed heading for 'the Trepid Twenties' - a sluggish and disappointing decade," she said, pointing out that the fund's medium-term outlook for global growth remains "well below its historical average" at just above 3%.

The Hindustan Times - 12.04.2024

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/business/imf-sees-growth-edging-higher-but-still-warns-of-trepid-twenties-101712850249165.html>

Industrial production rises to a four-month high of 5.7% in February

The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) in India rose 5.7 per cent in February as against 3.8 per cent in January, revealed the data provided by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) on Friday. IIP in December 2023 was recorded at 4.2 per cent. The factory output measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) witnessed a growth of 6 per cent in February 2023. The previous high of IIP was recorded at 11.9 per cent in October 2023, which slowed to 2.5 per cent in November, 4.2 per cent in December and 4.1 per cent in January 2024. Meanwhile, power generation grew by 7.5 per cent YoY against a rise in January by 6.9 per cent. In February this year, mining production rose 8 per cent, and power output increased 7.5 per cent. The data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) showed that the manufacturing sector's output grew 5 per cent in February 2024, down from 5.9 per cent in the year-ago month.

The Economic Times - 13.04.2024

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/industrial-production-rises-to-a-four-month-high-of-5-7-in-feb-compared-to-4-2-in-previous-month/articleshow/109250310.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

EPFO to undergo revamp as user base gets bigger

The government is eyeing a revamp of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) in line with the broader vision of universal social security and to significantly improve service delivery. Some of the changes envisioned for the retirement fund body in the short, medium, and long term include restructuring of EPFO offices, business process re-engineering,

government," the official said. The government is of the view that strong balance sheet of India Inc will help cushion the extra financial burden that enterprises will incur due to enhanced wage ceiling, a senior government official told ET. According to the official, raising the wage ceiling has huge financial implications for both the government as well as the private sector. "But the government has to move in that direction if it wants to bring more and more workers under the social security net," the official added.

The Economic Times - 11.04.2024

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/wage-ceiling-under-epfo-may-be-raised-to-21k/articleshow/109205027.cms?from=mdr>

Retail inflation may top forecast

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) would rather "ensure the descent of (consumer price inflation) to the target of 4%" and prolong the monetary pivot towards lowering rates. The wait for a looser policy could become even longer, with supply-side information causing fresh worries about food prices. Heatwaves are the villain. Many economists have already revised their projections for CPI inflation upward for Q1FY25, and expect the headline print to average 5-5.2% during the quarter. This is about 10-30 basis points (bps) higher than the RBI's inflation forecast of 4.9% for the quarter. Food inflation is seen posing a threat to headline CPI inflation in the near-term, and is unlikely to be contained anytime soon, as the predicted "above normal" temperature and heatwaves during April-June may cause prices of pulses, fruits, and vegetables and milk to spike further, say experts. In his latest monetary policy statement, the RBI governor did acknowledge this. "As the uncertainties in food prices continue to pose challenges, the MPC remains vigilant to the upside risks to inflation that might derail the path of disinflation," he said.

The Financial Express - 09.04.2024

<https://www.financialexpress.com/policy/economy-retail-inflation-may-top-forecast-3450542/>

Oil's rise complicates global war on inflation

Oil's on the boil, and India's finances wouldn't look that pretty if fuel-stoked inflation rears its ugly head. A Morgan Stanley study showed if global crude oil prices rise to \$110-120 a barrel in the next 3-4 months due to supply or geopolitical

leveraging IT for automatic settlement of claims and cadre restructuring, a senior government official told ET, requesting anonymity. "The broad objective is to create an innovation driven social security organization with an aim to extend universal coverage and ensure seamless and uninterrupted services in a contactless, paperless and transparent manner to its stakeholders through state-of-the-art technology," the official said. According to the official, the EPFO has commissioned a study to IIT Delhi on reforms needed at EPFO to improve efficiency, the report for which is expected to be submitted later this month.

The Economic Times - 15.04.2024

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/epfo-to-undergo-revamp-as-user-base-gets-bigger/articleshow/109293643.cms?from=mdr>

Inflation slips below 5%; IIP at 4-mth High

Retail inflation eased to a 10-month low of 4.85% in March while industrial output hit a four-month high of 5.7% in February, data released Friday showed. With inflation falling below 5% for the first time in five months, it has moved closer to the Reserve Bank of India's target level of 4%. Experts said the central bank is not likely to cut rates in a hurry and will possibly watch for the June-September monsoon and other external factors amid concerns food inflation may remain volatile. "Monetary easing is likely to be quite backend in 2024, pending clarity on various factors such as the monsoon turnout, the evolution of crude oil prices, and rate action from the US Fed," said Aditi Nayar, chief economist, Icmra. "At best, we foresee 50 bps (basis points) of rate cuts from the MPC in H2 FY2025." A basis point is 0.01 percentage point. In its monetary policy review earlier this month, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) held the policy rate at 6.5% for the seventh consecutive time.

The Economic Times - 13.04.2024

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/inflation-eases-below-5-for-the-first-time-in-five-months-in-march-industrial-production-rises-to-a-4-month-high/articleshow/109252699.cms>

India's fuel demand hits new FY record, up about 5%

India's fuel consumption fell 0.6% year-on-year in March, but demand for the 2024 financial year was up about 5%, primarily driven by higher automotive fuel and naphtha sales. Total consumption, a proxy for oil demand, totalled

concerns, India's inflation fight could stretch. A \$10 increase per barrel could impact consumer prices by 0.2 to 1.4 percentage points on the consumer price gauge across Asian economies. India is somewhere in the middle of the pack, with the CPI rising up to 0.5 percentage points for each \$10 a barrel increase in oil prices. Any rise in inflation could derail rate easing plans of central banks, including those of the RBI. Also, with many Asian economies being net importers of crude, there will be an impact on the current account deficit as well. Ten of the 12 economies in the region are net oil importers and would be affected, but the likes of Thailand, Korea, the Philippines, and India, which have higher CPI sensitivity to oil price increases and run wider oil deficits, would be more exposed, Morgan Stanley said

The Economic Times - 13.04.2024

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/oils-rise-complicates-global-war-on-inflation/articleshow/109226818.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

India's petrol consumption doubles in a decade

India now consumes more than double the petrol it used a decade ago as new and larger vehicles are selling at a scorching pace. Diesel consumption is up by half. "The data show that fossil fuels continue to be in demand despite policy push for EVs (electric vehicles) and renewables. From the trajectory of demand numbers, it appears that oil will continue to be in demand for some time and peak oil demand in India is not likely before 2040," said Mukesh Surana, CEO, Ratnagiri Refinery & Petrochemicals Ltd. "It's a positive trend for Indian refiners, at least for the next 10 years." Between 2013-14 and 2023-24, the annual consumption of petrol increased 117%, diesel 31%, aviation turbine fuel 50% and LPG 82%, according to the petroleum and natural gas ministry data. Kerosene consumption slumped 93% during this period as the government's clean cooking drive increased access to LPG. Preference for petrol-powered vehicles has grown in a decade as deregulation has sharply shrunk the traditional price advantage diesel previously enjoyed.

The Economic Times - 11.04.2024

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/indias-petrol-consumption-doubles-in-a-decade/109188019?utm_source=newslisting&utm_medium=latestNews

21.09 million metric tons (4.99 million barrels per day) in March, down from 21.22 million tons (5.02 mbpd) last year, preliminary data from the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC) of the oil ministry showed on Saturday. However, fuel demand for the 2024 financial year, ending in March, hit a record high of 233.276 million tons (4.67 mbpd) compared to 223.021 million tons (4.48 mbpd) a year earlier. Sales of diesel, mainly used by trucks and commercially run passenger vehicles, rose 3.1% year-on-year to 8.04 million tons in March and was up 4.4% for the previous fiscal year. Sales of gasoline in March rose 6.9% year-on-year to 3.32 million tons and were up 6.4% for the fiscal year. Sales of bitumen, used for making roads, were largely steady in March, but were up 9.9% for the fiscal year.

The Economic Times - 09.04.2024

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/indias-fuel-demand-hits-new-fy-record-up-about-5/articleshow/109126375.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

IEA predicts slower global oil demand growth this year & next

The International Energy Agency cut its oil demand forecast for this year and estimated even slower growth in 2025 due to a lacklustre economic outlook and the rising popularity of electric vehicles. The agency's bearish outlook runs counter to the views of several of the world's top traders, who at a conference this week said oil consumption is surging. Perceived strength in demand has been one of the key factors helping to push Brent crude back above \$90 a barrel, along with heightened geopolitical risks and tighter supplies. In its first forecast for 2025, the Paris-based IEA predicted demand growth of 1.1 million barrels a day in 2025. It also trimmed its estimate for this year's expansion in consumption by 130,000 barrels a day to 1.2 million, citing exceptionally weak deliveries in developed economies in the first quarter. The agency's growth estimate is below the 1.9 million barrels a day predicted by world's largest independent oil trader, Vitol Group, and about 1 million barrels a day less than the increase foreseen by OPEC.

Financial Times - 13.04.2024

<https://www.ft.com/content/91baf0c-cac5-4037-a623-d575132ee7ad>

West Asia conflict may cast shadow on India, global eco

When finance ministers and central bank chiefs had met at the IMFWorld Bank meeting in Marrakech in Oct, they had said that Israel's attack on Gaza was unlikely to leave a major scar on the global economy, unless it spread. As they reassemble in Washington, the escalation in tension over the weekend following Iran's drone offensive is certainly weighing on their minds, amid warnings that the geopolitical situation could take a fresh toll. The first order impact is likely on oil, with the nervousness visible in Friday's trade itself. Global benchmark Brent crude hit \$92.2 a barrel, the highest since Oct. While pressure on Indian pump prices of petrol and diesel is unlikely until mid-June at least, thanks to the general elections, it could certainly have a bearing on the profits of oil retailers, and even increase the subsidy bill for govt in case the increase is too large. "An escalation of the conflict in West Asia can push up oil prices, which can have a detrimental effect on our twin deficits (fiscal deficit and current account deficit) and inflation, if prices stay high," said Dharmakirti Joshi, chief economist at ratings agency Crisil.

The Times of India - 15.04.2024

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/west-asia-conflict-may-cast-shadow-on-india-global-eco/articleshow/109295839.cms>

Domestic air passenger traffic likely touched 154 mn in 2023-24: Icra

Domestic air passenger traffic is likely to have witnessed an annual growth of 13 per cent at around 15.4 crore in 2023-24 and the aviation industry's net loss is expected to have declined to Rs 3,000 to 4,000 crore during the same period, says a report. Credit rating agency Icra on Friday also said the airlines' ability to raise yields proportionate to their input cost increases will be key to expand their profitability margins while supply chain challenges and engine failure issues pose near term headwinds. For FY24, it said domestic air passenger traffic is estimated at around 154 million, a Year-on-Year (YoY) growth of about 13 per cent. "The domestic air passenger traffic in FY2024, thus, surpassed the pre-Covid levels of around 142 million in FY2020. For March 2024, domestic air passenger traffic was estimated at around 135.2 lakh, around 6.9 per cent higher than around 126.4 lakh in February 2024. Further, it grew by around 4.9 per cent on a YoY basis," Icra said in a report.

Business Standard - 13.04.2024

https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/domestic-air-passenger-traffic-likely-touched-154-mn-in-2023-24-icra-124041200573_1.html

India remains net importer of finished steel in FY24; inbound shipment grows 38% to 8.32 MnT

India has reported a 38 per cent surge in steel imports to 8.319 million tonnes, becoming a net importer of the commodity during 2023-24 financial year, according to government data. India had imported 6.022 million tonnes (MnT) of finished steel during the preceding 2022-23 fiscal, the steel ministry's Joint Plant Committee (JPC) said in its latest report. JPC collects data on the Indian iron and steel industry. The outbound shipment of steel rose by 11.50 per cent to 7.48 MnT in the last fiscal from 6.71 MnT a year ago. "India was a net importer of total finished steel," it said. The data comes at a time steel makers have been raising concern over increasing imports from certain countries including China and seeking government's intervention on the issue. Domestic players have also been demanding a curb on imports and review of free trade agreements (FTAs) with several countries.

Zee Biz - 09.04.2024

<https://www.zeebiz.com/economy-infra/news-steel-import-monitoring-system-duty-custom-from-china-india-remains-net-importer-of-finished-steel-in-fy24-283315>

Arvind Kumar is new Director (Refineries) Of Indian Oil Corporation Limited

Arvind Kumar, currently serving as the Managing Director & CEO of Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited (CPCL), has been appointed Director (Refineries) at Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL). The Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB) panel has endorsed Kumar for this position. Kumar emerged as the top recommendation from a pool of 12 candidates, who underwent a rigorous selection process by the PESB selection panel during its meeting on April 10. Notably, the majority of candidates, nine in total, hailed from Indian Oil, while two represented BPCL, and one each from CPCL and Engineers India Limited (EIL). Kumar, a Mechanical Engineering graduate and an MBA in Operations Management, has over three decades of extensive experience in various domains including Engineering, Project Management, Material & Contract Management, and Plant Operations & Maintenance.

Indian Chemical News - 13.04.2024

<https://www.indianchemicalnews.com/people/arvind-kumar-appointed-as-director-refineries-of-indian-oil-21372>

Gurudutta Ray, Director HR takes additional Charge of CMD YIL

Shri Gurudutta Ray, Director HR Yantra India Limited has taken over the additional Charge of CMD YIL after the superannuation of Shri Rajeev Puri CMD YIL with effect from 31-03-2024. Shri Gurudutta Ray is a HAG grade IOFS officer of the 1988 batch having experience of HR and Operations. He was GM of Ordnance Factory Katni before being selected as BOD YIL.

PSU Connect - 13.04.2024

<https://www.psuconnect.in/news/gurudutta-ray-director-hr-takes-additional-charge-of-cmd-yil/42183>