

WEEKLY MEDIA UPDATE

(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.)

Economy might have grown by 6% during October-December quarter, says ICRA

Slower growth in industry and agriculture may have pushed down the growth of the Indian economy to 6 per cent during the three-month period of October-December (Q3) in Fiscal Year 2023-24 (FY24), research agency ICRA said on Wednesday. This aligns with the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) projection of 6 per cent. On a sequential basis, the Q3 growth projection is lower, while on a year-on-year (y-o-y) basis, the projection is higher. The National Statistical Organisation (NSO) will release growth data for Q3 on Thursday, February 29. "Lower volume growth for the industrial sector, flagging momentum in certain indicators of investment activity, a slowdown in government expenditure, and an uneven monsoon are expected to dampen the GDP growth to 6 per cent in Q3 FY2024 from 7.6 per cent in Q2 FY2024," said Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist with ICRA. It may be noted that Q3 of FY23 recorded a growth of 4.4 per cent. The agency estimated the GVA (gross value added) growth is expected to ease to 6 per cent in Q3 from 7.4 per cent in Q2. During this period, industrial growth is estimated to slow down to 8.8 per cent from 13.2 per cent.

The Hindu Business Line - 22.02.2024

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/economy-might-have-grown-by-6-during-october-december-quarter-says-icra/article67870259.ece>

India's economic growth may slow to 6.5% in FY25: India Ratings & Research

India's economic growth is likely to slow to 6.5 per cent in 2024-25 from the projected expansion of 7.3 per cent in the current financial year dragged by slowdown in industrial sector growth amid muted consumption demand, India Ratings & Research (Ind-Ra) said on Thursday. Industry sector growth is estimated to decline to 6.5 per cent in the financial year beginning April as against 7.9 per cent projected growth for the current fiscal. Growth in the services sector, which constitutes over 50 per cent of India's GDP, is likely to ease to 7.3 per cent in 2024-25 from 7.7

India will grow to become the world's third-largest economy by 2027

Projections indicate that India is poised to surpass Japan and Germany, positioning itself as the world's third-largest economy by 2027, according to a note published by analysts at the investment banking firm Jefferies yesterday. One decade ago, India ranked as the ninth-largest economy globally, but recent data indicates it has climbed to the fifth position, with a nominal GDP of \$3.4 trillion. A forecast reported on by Business Insider is based on India's current economic growth trajectory and a series of structural reforms that have significantly improved its macroeconomic landscape. Jefferies forecasts India's GDP to reach \$5 trillion within the next four years, aiming for nearly \$10 trillion by 2030. This fiscal expansion, according to Bloomberg, is supported by an anticipated annual GDP growth rate of 6% over the next five years, surpassing the growth rates of most large economies. The investment firm also predicts significant growth in the Indian equity markets, expecting dollar-term returns of up to 10% over the next five to seven years.

The Forbes - 23.02.2024

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/benjaminlaker/2024/02/23/india-to-become-third-largest-economy-by-2027-implications-for-leaders/?sh=1053f41b4fd5>

India on track to become \$10 trillion economy, set for 3rd largest slot: WEF President

In an exclusive video interview with PTI, Brende also said that the World Economic Forum (WEF) hopes to come back to the country with the WEF India Summit in collaboration with Government of India when the time is ripe. "The Indian economy is the fastest growing among all large economies of the world. We saw in Davos this year that there was a huge interest in India and I think this will only continue," Brende said. Geneva-based WEF, which describes itself as an international organisation for public-private

per cent projected for the current fiscal. However, agriculture sector growth is estimated to accelerate to 3 per cent in 2024-25 from 1.8 per cent in the current fiscal. Ind-Ra's growth projections for 2024-25 is 50 basis points lower than the Reserve Bank of India's estimate. In its monetary policy review earlier this month the RBI pegged FY25 GDP growth at 7 per cent.

Deccan Herald - 23.02.2024

<https://www.deccanherald.com/business/economy/indias-economic-growth-may-slow-to-65-in-fy25-india-ratings-research-2906998>

Asset monetisation seen to surpass Rs 1.67 trillion target in FY25

Proceeds from the Centre's asset monetisation drive is expected to reach an all-time high in FY25. With three years of experience behind them and the build-up of pipelines, the state-run agencies will likely exceed the FY25 target of Rs 1.67 trillion by a substantial margin, a senior official said. That would help achievements reach close to the Rs 6 trillion target by way of revenues accrued to various central/state government agencies and private investments during the four years through FY25. Railways, which has been lagging in asset monetisation, will likely see an accelerated action to redevelop some key railway stations in the public-private partnership model in FY25, adding heft to the programme, the official said. Road asset monetisation by the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) and private investment in mining including coal would continue to shine in FY25 as well, the official added.

The Financial Express - 26.02.2024

<https://www.financialexpress.com/policy/economy-asset-monetisation-seen-to-surpass-rs-1-67-trillion-target-in-fy25-3404668/>

New enrolments in EPF, ESIC at 3-mth high, NPS declines

New enrolments in the government's two big social security schemes hit the highest level in over three months in December, as formal job additions picked up after the festive season in October and November, which had depressed activity. The Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) Scheme, catering to establishments with more than 20 workers, witnessed new subscriptions rise

cooperation, holds its annual meeting in the Swiss ski resort town Davos every year in January. Brende said Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is "always very, very welcome to Davos". "When you come to India, you feel some optimism which is not the case all over the world. We are facing a geopolitical recession, a very fragmented and polarised world, but still there are areas where we can collaborate and it is important to find those areas," he said.

Business Today - 23.02.2024

<https://www.businesstoday.in/latest/economy/story/india-on-track-to-become-10-trillion-economy-set-for-3rd-largest-slot-wef-president-418535-2024-02-22>

EPFO adds a net 15.62 lakh members in December, 8.41 lakh new subscribers

An increase of 11.97 per cent has been registered in net member addition during December 2023 compared to the previous month, a labour ministry statement said. Retirement fund body EPFO recorded a net addition of 15.62 lakh members in December 2023, according to payroll data released on Tuesday. An increase of 11.97 per cent has been registered in net member addition during December 2023 compared to the previous month, a labour ministry statement said. Employees' Provident Fund Organisation's provisional payroll data highlighted that the net addition of 15.62 lakh members was up by 4.62 per cent compared to December 2022, it stated. This surge in membership can be attributed to various factors, including increased employment opportunities, a growing awareness of employee benefits, and the effectiveness of EPFO's outreach programmes, it explained.

The Economic Times - 21.02.2024

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/epfo-adds-a-net-15-62-lakh-members-in-dec-8-41-lakh-new-subscribers-join-workforce/articleshow/107854846.cms?from=mdr>

Crude imports hit 20-month high in January due to demand surge in domestic, export markets

Driven by domestic consumption and demand for refined products in the export market, the country's crude oil imports in January hit a 20-month high of 21.4 million tonnes (mt), latest government data showed. According to the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC), imports last month were the highest since April

to a three-month high in December. In contrast, new subscriptions to less remunerative Employees' State Insurance Corporation were highest in four months, according to government data released Friday. The average new additions in the third quarter of the fiscal were still lower than in the first half of the year, given the easing of economic activity. Experts estimate that growth likely eased below 7% in Q3FY24, compared with 7.7% average for the first half of the year. The government will release growth estimates for the third quarter on February 29. While EPF and ESIC witnessed a rise in new subscriptions to social security schemes to 0.84 million and 1.42 million from 0.76 million and 1.18 million, respectively, additions to the National Pension Scheme declined in December.

The Economic Times - 24.02.2024

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/new-enrollment-in-epf-and-esic-hit-over-three-month-high-nps-declines/articleshow/107948356.cms?from=mdr>

Petroleum minister hints at possible reduction in domestic fuel prices

Petroleum minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Friday hinted at a possible reduction in fuel prices in the country if the oil marketing companies (OMCs) turned out to be in profit in the fourth quarter. The minister, speaking on the sidelines of UN Global Compact Network India's (UNGCNI's) 18th National Convention, also mentioned that OMCs have recovered from the past losses and could see profits in the upcoming quarter. "If you ask them (oil companies), they would say their profit has come down... but they have recovered. I am hoping that if the fourth quarter is good, then we can (cut price)," said Puri. The OMCs like Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) have consistently reported profits over the last three quarters. In the third quarter of FY24 alone, these companies collectively reported a profit of Rs 11,773.83 crore. Their combined profits over the past three quarters have surpassed Rs 69,000 crore, exceeding their annual earnings from pre-oil crisis years.

The New Indian Express - 24.02.2024

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/business/2024/Feb/24/petroleum-minister-hints-at-possible-reduction-in-domestic-fuel-prices>

2022, when the world's third largest crude oil importer bought 21.6mt of the critical commodity, which accounts for more than 85 per cent of its domestic requirement. Imports grew 8 per cent month-on-month from 19.8 mt, while on an annual basis the in-bound shipments grew roughly 6 per cent from 20.4mt, PPAC data showed. Exports of refined petroleum products rose 7.5 per cent and 3.1 per cent on an annual basis during January 2024 and the April-January period of FY24, respectively. The increase in exports during April-January was mainly due to an increase in outbound shipment of aviation turbine fuel, vacuum gas oil and petrol.

The Telegraph - 20.02.2024

<https://www.telegraphindia.com/business/crude-imports-hit-20-month-high-in-january-due-to-demand-surge-in-domestic-export-markets/cid/2001707>

India's expanding economy, urbanization to propel oil demand growth by 6.6 mb/d by 2045

India's oil demand is projected to rise by 6.6 million barrels per day (mb/d) from 2022 to 2045, significantly contributing to a global demand increase of 16.4 mb/d during the same period, according to the PPAC Journal's analysis of the 2023 World Oil Outlook by OPEC. The global oil demand is set to reach 116 mb/d by 2045, up from 99.6 mb/d in 2022, with non-OECD countries, led by India, driving much of this growth. While OECD countries are expected to see a decline in oil demand, dropping below 37 mb/d by 2045, non-OECD regions, spearheaded by India, will witness a surge of 25.7 mb/d due to factors such as population growth, urbanization, and economic expansion. India's demand growth is primarily fuelled by the transportation sector, with a significant increase in the number of passenger vehicles and commercial vehicles expected to boost gasoline and diesel consumption. OPEC's report also highlights a less pronounced shift towards electric vehicles (EVs) in India compared to China and OECD Europe, resulting in sustained demand for internal combustion engine vehicles.

The Economic Times - 20.02.2024

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/indias-expanding-economy-urbanization-to-propel-oil-demand-growth-by-6-6-mb/d-by-2045/107835942?utm_source=newslisting&utm_medium=latestNew

India purchased Russian oil worth \$37 bn, claims European thinktank

India has put \$37 billion into Moscow's coffers with unprecedented purchase of Russian oil at a time it is locked in a war with Ukraine, a European thinktank has said, suggesting that New Delhi's largesse is undermining western sanctions. According to an analysis by Finland-based Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA), India has increased its purchase of Russian crude by over 13 times its pre-war amounts. The CREA report, first cited by CNN, acknowledges that India's purchases "amounts to US strategic partner New Delhi stepping in to replace crude purchases by Western buyers", and are "entirely legitimate". In fact, it reveals that India refined some of the crude and exported it to US as oil products worth more than \$1 billion. But while Russian crude sales to India are not subject to sanctions, the report says an examination of shipping routes by experts suggests this huge volume of shipments might involve a so-called "shadow fleet" of crude tankers, specially created by Moscow to try to disguise who it is trading with and how and maximise the Kremlin's profits.

The Times of India - 20.02.2024

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/india-as-increased-purchase-of-russian-oil-is-helping-fuel-ukraine-war-european-think-tank/articleshow/107829601.cms>

Russia's disrupted oil trade crimps margins for Indian refiners

India's state-run refiners are facing a shift in fortunes as once cheap Russian oil becomes more expensive and less accessible, squeezing profits for companies that had been benefiting from Moscow's war in Ukraine. Attacks in the Red Sea have driven up freight rates, while tougher US sanctions have stranded some Russian cargoes destined for India, adding to costs. That may force some processors to buy more pricey barrels from suppliers in the Middle East, eroding profit margins even more, say traders and analysts. India has to import 88% of its crude needs and the nation took advantage of cheaper Russian oil following the war in Ukraine as others shunned Moscow's barrels. But the trade, which has helped put the state-owned refiners on track for a rebound in net income this year, is under pressure. Gross refining margins for processors including Indian Oil Corp. dropped in the previous quarter due to higher freight rates, said Hardik Shah, director at credit ratings and analytics firm CareEdge Group

The Economic Times - 23.02.2024

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/russias-disrupted-oil-trade-crimps-margins-for-indian-refiners/articleshow/107904419.cms?utm_source

Fall in energy prices brings down India's oil, gas import bill despite growth in volumes

India's net oil and gas imports in value terms for April-January of fiscal year 2023-24 (FY24) declined by nearly a fifth on a year-on-year (YoY) basis to \$101.3 billion due to relatively lower prices of crude oil, natural gas, and petroleum products in the international market, as per latest data from India's Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas. This decline in the value of oil and gas imports came despite a rise in import volumes, suggesting that the fall in prices was significant enough to offset the volume growth. In the first 10 months of the previous financial year, 2022-23 (FY23), India's net oil and gas import bill was \$124.8 billion. Oil, natural gas, and refined petroleum products had seen extreme price volatility in the last financial year following Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. In the initial few months of FY23, international prices of these commodities were overheated. Their prices in the current financial year have been relatively softer and far less volatile.

The Indian Express - 20.02.2024

<https://indianexpress.com/article/business/commodities/india-oil-gas-import-bill-volume-growth-brent-wti-crude-oil-price-9169123/>

India's steel exports at 18-month high in January, says SteelMint

India's monthly steel exports hit a 18-month high to 1.1 million tonne in January 2024 on increased demand from the European Union and supportive global prices, SteelMint said. Besides, competitive domestic prices of steel contributed to rise in export, the research firm said in its latest report. The outbound shipment of steel in January 2023 was 0.67 million tonne, as per SteelMint data. On reasons behind the surge in exports, SteelMint said, "good restocking demand from the European Union (EU) contributed 67 per cent of the 1.11 MT (export) in January. It was highest in last 18 months." While the price of hot rolled coil (HRC) in India's trade segment was at Rs 54,300/a tonne, the global rate was USD 710 per tonne (about Rs 58,000). This factor also contributed to the demand for Indian steel in the global markets. Overall, Indian steel exports may remain largely range-bound or fall slightly in the near term because of the "global trade lull induced by the Chinese lunar holidays and Tet festival in Vietnam," SteelMint said.

Zee Business - 26.02.2024

[=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst](#)

<https://www.zeebiz.com/economy-infra/news-indias-steel-exports-at-18-month-high-in-january-says-steelmint-277874>

Ex-LIC chief, former SBI MD among 3 new PSB chairmen

Govt has appointed former LIC chairman M R Kumar, former SBI MD A Krishna Kumar and Bank of Baroda director Srinivasan Sridhar, as chairmen of public sector banks. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet approved these postings, subject to certain conditions. Kumar will serve as the part-time non-official director and non-executive chairman of the Board of Bank of India, while Sridhar will take on the same roles at Indian Overseas Bank. Additionally, Aravamudan Krishna Kumar will undertake these responsibilities at UCO Bank. These appointments come with certain relaxations to Appointments Committee of the Cabinet guidelines. The terms of appointment specify that these individuals will serve for three years, from the date of notification, or until further orders, whichever is earlier. Moreover, the appointments are subject to specific conditions, including the resignation of Sridhar from the board of Bank of Baroda and Kumar from the board of Suraksha Asset Reconstruction.

The Times of India - 22.02.2024

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/ex-lic-chief-former-sbi-md-among-3-new-psb-chairmen/articleshow/107893326.cms>