

# 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.)

## India likely to remain fastest growing major economy in 2024: ASSOCHAM

India is likely to remain the fastest-growing major economy in the world in 2024 on the back of strong consumer demand leading to a pickup in investment across sectors such as construction, hospitality and infrastructure including railways and aviation, Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) said on Thursday. India retained the tag of the world's fastest-growing major economy, with its GDP expanding by a faster-than-expected rate of 7.6 per cent in the July-September quarter on booster shots from government spending and manufacturing. The country's Gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 7.6 per cent beat most estimates, including 6.5 per cent projected by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The growth compares to 6.2 per cent in the same quarter last year and 7.8 per cent expansion in the preceding quarter, official data released on Thursday showed. India's GDP growth beat China's 4.9 per cent rise in July-September, while the Western economies are getting crushed under high-interest rates and energy prices.

*The Indian Express - 29.12.2023*

<https://indianexpress.com/article/business/india-growing-major-economy-2024-assochem-9086468/>

## Economy awaits big policy push: Growth above 6% seems to stoke inflation

The year 2023 has been better on the economic front for India than envisaged at its dawn. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recently raised its forecast of the real GDP expansion for FY24 to 7% from 6.5% (this implies the same rate of year-on-year growth in calendar year 2023). It has also started to worry again about the demand-pull stoking inflation. While there is near consensus about a prospective slowing of growth in 2024, two analytical formulations clash. One view, which has the official backing, is that there may be a plausible "underestimation of the economy's underlying momentum and dynamism". An "unprecedented tax buoyancy" (of nearly 2 for the Centre in the first half of this fiscal) is the main reason for the assumption. High level of capacity

## GDP growth to 'comfortably' cross 6.5% in FY24: Govt

India's economy is expected to "comfortably" achieve a growth rate upwards of 6.5% in FY24 despite risks emanating from external factors, the finance ministry said in its half-yearly economic review 2023-24 report on Friday. The Reserve Bank of India has recently projected India's economic growth at 7% in the current fiscal year, up from 6.5% earlier. The better-than-expected growth in Q2 of FY24 have improved the growth prospects and prompted various domestic and international agencies to upgrade GDP growth projections for FY24, noted the report, while adding that "the momentum gained in Q2 FY24 is likely to be sustained in Q3 as well." In Q2 FY24, India's GDP had grown 7.6%, about 60 bps higher than market expectations. On capital spending, the financial ministry said that the government has "not compromised" on its longer-term objective of strengthening productive capital expenditure, despite slowing it down in the first two months of H2 FY24.

*The Financial Express - 30.12.2023*

<https://www.financialexpress.com/policy/economy-gdp-growth-to-to-comfortably-cross-6-5-in-fy24-govt-3351088/>

## India one of the fastest growing major economies: RBI Guv Das

Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday said India is one of the fastest growing major economies in the world with a rising potential growth profile and stressed that the central bank remains committed to act early and decisively to prevent any build-up of risks. In his foreword to the RBI's 28th issue of the Financial Stability Report (FSR), Das said achieving durable price stability, ensuring medium-term debt sustainability, further strengthening financial sector resilience, creating new growth opportunities and promoting inclusive and green growth remain key policy priorities. The FSR reflects the collective assessment of the Sub-Committee of the Financial Stability and Development Council

utilisation in a section of the industry is seen to trigger a long-awaited investment cycle.

*The Financial Express - 28.12.2023*

<https://www.financialexpress.com/policy/economy-economy-awaits-big-policy-push-growth-above-6-seems-to-stoke-inflation-3349255/>

## **The Year That Was: PSU index rallies 53%, highest in 10 years**

This has been the best year for public sector unit (PSU) indices in a decade. The PSU index, comprising 56 listed firms, rallied over 53% in CY23. The other public sector index, BSE CPSE index with 57 stocks, has done even better, rising 71.7%. This is more than double of the benchmarks' Sensex and Nifty-50, which have risen 17.3% and 18.4%, respectively. In fact, the rally in PSU stocks has been so remarkable that out of 84 listed stocks, almost a fourth of them or 24 gave returns of over 100% while another 25 gave returns between 50% and 100%. And just 4 stocks – Powergrid Infra, Bharat Immunologicals, SBI Cards and Indraprastha Gas – are in the red (till December 26). The combined market cap of all PSUs stocks surged by Rs 16.1 trillion or 49% to Rs 48.7 trillion in 2023. There has been a pleasant turnaround in fortunes for PSU stocks in the last three years, with the index delivering positive returns of between 23% and 53%.

*The Financial Express - 27.12.2023*

<https://www.financialexpress.com/business/industry-the-year-that-was-psu-index-rallies-53-highest-in-10-years-3348183/>

## **Fiscal deficit likely to exceed target due to spending in employment guarantee scheme, subsidies**

The fiscal deficit for 2023-24 may cross the target because of higher spends on employment guarantee scheme and subsidies despite the handsome growth in tax collections. India Ratings and Research, a unit of Fitch Ratings, said the fiscal deficit for 2023-24 will come at 6 per cent of GDP against the budgetary target of 5.9 per cent. "Higher-than-budgeted revenue expenditure triggered through the first and likely second supplementary demand for grants in combination with lower-than-budgeted nominal GDP will push the fiscal deficit," the agency said in a note. In the first supplementary demand for grants, the Centre will spend more on prioritised sectors such as food, fertiliser and LPG subsidies and the Mahatma

(FSDC) on risks to financial stability and the resilience of the Indian financial system. Observing that the global economy is facing multiple challenges, Das said the Indian economy exhibits macroeconomic resilience, with a robust financial system that is supporting its growth dynamics.

*Millennium Post - 29.12.2023*

<https://www.millenniumpost.in/business/india-one-of-the-fastest-growing-major-economies-rbi-guv-das-545987>

## **Narrowing trade gap cuts India's CAD to 1% of GDP in Q2 of FY24**

India's current account deficit declined sharply to 1 per cent of the GDP or USD 8.3 billion in the second quarter of this financial year, mainly due to lower merchandise trade deficit and growth in services exports, according to a RBI data released on Tuesday. The current account deficit (CAD) was 3.8 per cent of GDP or USD 30.9 billion in July-September quarter in 2022-23. CAD was USD 9.2 billion or 1.1 per cent of GDP in the first quarter (April-June) of the current financial year 2023-24. "Underlying the lower current account deficit on a year-on-year (y-o-y) basis in Q2:2023-24 was the narrowing of merchandise trade deficit to USD 61.0 billion from USD 78.3 billion in Q2:2022-23," said the data on Developments in India's Balance of Payments during the second quarter (July-September) of 2023-24.

*Zee Biz - 27.12.2023*

<https://www.zeebiz.com/economy-infra/news-cad-current-account-deficit-declines-sharply-to-1-of-gdp-in-july-september-quarter-269997>

## **Centre expected to maintain fiscal discipline in Interim Budget 2024**

As the central government prepares for the interim budget for the financial year 2024-25 (FY25), insiders familiar with the deliberations suggest that fiscal discipline will take precedence over populist spending or incentives in the run-up to the general elections in the summer, according to The Economic Times (ET). The post-Covid-19 fiscal consolidation plan outlines a target of reducing the fiscal deficit to 4.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) by the next financial year (FY26) from the current year's budgeted 5.9 per cent. While the exact figures are being finalised, indications suggest that the fiscal deficit for FY25 may be maintained at the current fiscal level or potentially reduced, despite expectations of double-digit nominal GDP growth. Finance

Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

*The Telegraph - 27.12.2023*

<https://www.telegraphindia.com/business/fiscal-deficit-likely-to-exceed-target-due-to-spending-in-employment-guarantee-scheme-subsidies/cid/1989590>

## **Run-up to the interim Budget 2024-25: Capex growth to slow; outlay may be up 10%**

The interim Budget 2024-25 may see a largely sustained momentum in budgetary capital expenditure, even though it may come off the peak of the current financial year. As per official sources, capex outlay for the next fiscal year will likely see a 10% increase over the elevated Budget Estimate for the current year, to come in at Rupees 11 trillion. This could ensure the ratio of Budget capex to GDP doesn't fall below 3%, the level the FRBM Act suggests, with zero revenue deficit and 3% fiscal deficit. In recent years, the Centre has accelerated budget capex growth, with BE of Rupees 10 trillion this year being 3.3% of the GDP, much higher than 1.6% in FY19. The BE for capex this year is up 36% over the actual levels in FY23, and it was the steepest annual hike ever. Key infrastructure agencies like National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and Railways have been made to rely much more on Budget funds in recent years.

*The Financial Express - 01.01.2024*

<https://www.financialexpress.com/policy/economy-run-up-to-the-interim-budget-2024-25-capex-growth-to-slow-outlay-may-be-up-10-3352110/>

## **Employers can log in to EPF portal to check on liabilities**

In a move aimed at enhancing the ease of doing business for employers, the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has rolled out automated solutions for damages and interest calculations which will enable employers to check their liability towards the retirement fund body every time they log in to their EPF portal, said a senior government official. Earlier, the EPF dues of employers could be checked only at the time of filing of electronic challan-cum-return (ECR) for a month which is due by the 15th of next month. "The EPFO is focusing on internal processes to simplify procedures which will aid in faster access to EPFO services to both employers and the

Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had earlier stated that there would be no significant announcement in the interim budget, indicating there may be a vote of account. A vote on account is designed to meet expenditure until a new government is sworn in after the upcoming elections.

*Business Standard - 29.12.2023*

[https://www.business-standard.com/budget/news/centre-expected-to-maintain-fiscal-discipline-in-interim-budget-2024-123122900191\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/budget/news/centre-expected-to-maintain-fiscal-discipline-in-interim-budget-2024-123122900191_1.html)

## **Core sector output growth slowed to a six-month low of 7.8% in Nov**

The output of eight key infrastructure industries — known as the core sector — slowed to a six-month low of 7.8 per cent in November on the back of a high base and festival holidays. The October Index of Industrial Production (11.7 per cent), along with the November core sector print, will be factored in the first Advance Estimates of gross domestic product (GDP) data for 2023-24, set to be released on January 5 — ahead of the Interim Budget for FY25 to be presented on February 1. According to data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Friday, growth in the output of refinery products (12.4 per cent) accelerated in September vis-à-vis the preceding month, while output of crude oil (-0.4 per cent) and cement (-3.6 per cent) contracted. Output growth in all other sectors, including coal (10.9 per cent), natural gas (7.6 per cent), fertilisers (3.4 per cent) steel (9.1 per cent), and electricity (5.6 per cent) decelerated.

*Business Standard - 30.12.2023*

[https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/core-sector-output-growth-slowed-to-a-six-month-low-of-7-8-in-nov-123122900896\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/core-sector-output-growth-slowed-to-a-six-month-low-of-7-8-in-nov-123122900896_1.html)

## **Investment Seen Powering Growth in '24**

Both private and government investments are likely to be the primary driver of economic growth in 2024, backed by improving prospects of rural consumption with easing of inflation and increased spending in an election year, economists said. "We expect a pickup in corporate capex when the Union budget is presented after the general elections," said Aditi Nayar, chief economist at ratings firm Icria. Signs of a recovery in investment were visible in the GDP data for the second quarter, released in November. Gross fixed capital formation, a proxy for investment, rose in double digits in July-September, also outpacing consumption

employees," said the official, who did not wish to be identified. Establishments with at least 20 employees have to deposit 12% of the workers' basic wage and 12% of their own contribution with the EPFO every month as provident fund, pension and deposit-linked insurance, wherever applicable, to ensure social security for the employees.

*The Economic Times - 28.12.2023*

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/employers-can-log-in-to-epf-portal-to-check-on-liabilities/articleshow/106330179.cms>

## **Fuel sales drop as winter sets in**

Petrol and diesel sales in India slumped in December as setting in of winter tapered demand, preliminary data of state-owned firms showed on Monday. Petrol sales of the three state-owned firms, which control 90 per cent of the fuel market, fell 1.4 per cent to 2.72 million tonnes in December 2023 when compared to the year-ago period, while diesel demand dropped 7.8 per cent to 6.73 million tonnes. The onset of the winter season in northern India led to the tapering of air-conditioning demand. Month-on-month petrol sales dropped 4.9 per cent when compared to 2.86 million tonnes consumption in November. Diesel demand too was down 0.8 per cent month-on-month when compared to 6.79 million tonnes in November. Diesel is India's most consumed fuel, accounting for almost 40 per cent of all petroleum product consumption. Transport sector accounts for 70 per cent of all diesel sales in the country. Fuel consumption has been on a see-saw over the last couple of months. Demand for both petrol and diesel had risen in October but diesel consumption fell 7.5 per cent in the following month.

*Millennium Post - 02.01.2024*

<https://www.millenniumpost.in/business/fuel-sales-drop-as-winter-sets-in-546460>

## **Risk of oil price spike impacting FY25 growth is low: CEA V Anantha Nageswaran**

The chief economic advisor V Anantha Nageswaran does not see the likely jump in oil prices due to global factors, including global slowdown and geo-political conflicts, impacting the domestic economy in a major manner next fiscal. Addressing the SBI-organised economic conclave here on Thursday, he based his optimism on the assumption that cooling off of economic activity will happen first before a decline in global interest rates. "Therefore, I do not think energy

growth for the fourth straight quarter. According to private surveys, most sectors over the past few months recorded an 80-90% capacity utilisation. According to private surveys by industry bodies, including the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, most sectors over the past few months have recorded an 80-90% capacity utilisation, seen as a trigger point for initiating investments.

*The Economic Times - 01.01.2024*

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/investment-seen-powering-growth-in-2024-amidst-rural-consumption-surge-and-inflation-relief/articleshow/106428801.cms>

## **Government likely to cut petrol, diesel prices ahead of LS polls**

The government is likely to reduce the petrol and diesel prices ahead of the Lok Sabha polls as crude oil prices have also come down in the international market which will enable the oil marketing companies to bear the burden. As per sources, the Ministry for Petroleum and Natural Gas has worked out various combinations and permutations on the price cuts ranging from Rs 4 to Rs 10 per litre in the two fuels and the impact it will have on the oil companies. The government is also looking at reduction in the excise duty on petrol and diesel so that the entire burden of the price cut is not borne by the oil PSUs –Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum. The final decision on the price cut will be taken at the level of the Prime Minister, sources said. The last time the price of petrol and diesel were reduced was in May last year when the Finance Ministry had cut the excise duty on petrol by Rs 8 per litre and that on diesel by Rs 6 a litre.

*Sarkaritel - 30.12.2203*

<https://www.sarkaritel.com/govt-likely-to-cut-petrol-diesel-prices-ahead-of-ls-polls/>

## **Drop in global prices a relief for oil import-dependent Indian economy**

The decline in global oil prices, despite the geopolitical uncertainty in West Asia, has come as a major shot in the arm for the Indian economy as the country imports over 85 per cent of its crude oil requirement. Volatile oil prices pose a downside risk to the economy as costlier imports trigger an increase in domestic inflation and weaken the rupee as more US dollars are required to make import payments. The price of the Indian basket of crude oil imports, which was moderating earlier, trended

demand will necessarily become sufficient enough to see oil prices spike up in 2024. Geopolitical situation and what is happening to cargo movements in the Red Sea are relevant factors, but not serious enough to slow demand massively. My view is that if oil prices rise, they will further cool down economic activities," Nageswaran said. The economy is poised to grow 7 per cent this fiscal, according to the latest RBI forecast, which was upped by 50 bps from its earlier projection, while the government does not have a clear GDP number and believes the economy may clip between 6.5 per cent and 7 per cent.

*The Economic Times - 29.12.2023*

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/risk-of-oil-price-spike-impacting-fy25-growth-is-low-cea-v-anantha-nageswaran/106365130>

### **Import more crude grades to cut basket price: Parliamentary panel**

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Petroleum has flagged the need for importing a wider range of crude oil grades with the objective of reducing the cost of the Indian crude basket. In a recent report tabled in Parliament, it has also exhorted public sector undertakings in the oil sector to modernise their vintage refineries to improve their capabilities to process a wide variety of crude oil. The Indian crude basket represents a derived basket comprising Sour grade (Oman & Dubai average) and Sweet grade (Brent Dated) of crude oil processed (indigenous and imported) in Indian refineries during the previous financial year. The same is presently calculated every month, on the basis of a weighting of 75.62 per cent for the price of sour grades of crude oil (average of Oman & Dubai) and 24.38 per cent for the sweet grade of crude oil (Brent Dated). While about 250 grades of crude oil are traded in the global crude market, Indian refineries buy only about 50 grades of crude oil in a year, the committee noted.

*Business Standard - 01.01.2024*

[https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/import-more-crude-grades-to-cut-basket-price-parliamentary-panel-123123100432\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/import-more-crude-grades-to-cut-basket-price-parliamentary-panel-123123100432_1.html)

### **PNGRB constitutes high-level expert panel to review extant of safety framework**

PNGRB desires to effectively implement the mandate provided as per Section 11(i) of the PNGRB Act, 2006 and ensure compliance to various regulations for safety and integrity of oil and Gas Sector in the country. With a view to obtain guidance from industry and experts, PNGRB

upwards during July-October 2023 after the OPEC+ oil cartel went in for production cuts. However, the economic slowdown worldwide has now led to a decline in demand causing prices to fall again.

*Sarkaritel - 01.01.2024*

<https://www.sarkaritel.com/drop-in-global-prices-a-relief-for-oil-import-dependent-indian-economy/>

### **Fuel price cuts may be moderate, impact on OMC margins minimal**

Shares of the three state-owned oil marketing companies fell by up to 4% on Friday following reports of a likely cut in the retail prices of petrol and diesel ahead of the general elections scheduled next year. However, analysts believe that any price cut won't be sharp enough to seriously impact the profitability of these firms, whose earnings have been robust in the last two quarters. "Currently, the diesel and petrol gross marketing margins of OMCs are high at Rs 6 and Rs 11 per litre respectively, much higher than the normative level of Rs 3 and Rs 4 per litre each, hence a Rs4-6 per litre cut at retail level would essentially bring their margins closer to normative levels, without hitting their profitability as such," said Madhavi Arora, Lead Economist at Emkay Global. Earlier, a business magazine reported that fuel prices, which are deregulated, may be cut in the range of Rs 4-6 per litre, and a proposal under consideration involves government and OMCs to bear equal burden of it.

*The Financial Express - 31.12.2023*

<https://www.financialexpress.com/market/commodities-fuel-price-cuts-may-be-moderate-impact-on-omc-margins-minimal-3351077/>

### **Russia says redirected most oil exports to China, India**

Russia has redirected its oil exports from Europe to China and India, Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said Wednesday, almost two years after Moscow was hit by Western sanctions over the Ukraine conflict. After President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine in February 2022, Western countries hit Russia

has constituted a High-Level Expert Committee vide office order dated November 24, 2023 consisting of the following members: 1. M B Lal (Former CMD-HPCL) Chairman; 2. Mukesh Rohatgi (Former CMD- EIL) Member; 3. K K Jha (Former Member-PNGRB & Former Director (Pipeline)-IOCL) Member; 4. R D Goyal (Former Director (Project)- GAIL) Member; 5. Hirak Dutta (Former ED-OISD) Member; 6. Anil Kumar Garg (Joint Advisor (Technical) -PNGRB) Convener. As mandated to PNGRB i.e. to ensure safety and integrity of downstream petroleum and natural gas sector, the committee will interact and seek the views of various stakeholders during review of the extant of safety framework. The committee will examine the existing regulatory regime and suggest a way forward to strengthen the technical and safety system in the Oil and Gas industry.

*Millennium Post - 29.12.2023*

<https://www.millenniumpost.in/business/pngrb-constitutes-high-level-expert-panel-to-review-extant-of-safety-framework-545981>

### **POL exports jump 32.1%, natural gas production up by 7.1% in November: PPAC**

India's exports of refined petroleum products (POL) jumped 32.1% in November 2023, while its natural gas production rose by 7.1% to 3,041 MMSCM, compared with the same month a year earlier, the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC) reported, signalling a strong uptick in the country's energy sector amidst global demand shifts. The country's POL exports in the April-November 2023 period also went up by 2.7% compared to the previous year. The rise in exports was primarily due to an increase in the export of vacuum gas oil (VGO), motor-spirit (MS), and aviation turbine fuel (ATF), data released by the Oil Ministry showed. Domestic consumption of petroleum products for April-November 2023 was reported at 152.3 MMT, a growth of 4.9% from the same period the previous year. This increase was led by a rise in the consumption of MS by 6.5%, HSD by 5.4%, ATF by 12.9%, and naphtha by 12.4%.

*The Economic Times - 28.12.2023*

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/pol-exports-jump-32-1-natural-gas-production-up-by-7-1-in-november-ppac/106307140>

### **PNGRB, World Bank studying pathways for transmission of Hydrogen via gas pipelines**

with a slew of sanctions including a European Union embargo on its seaborne oil deliveries. "We previously supplied a total of 40 to 45 percent of oil and oil products to Europe," said Novak, who is in charge of energy policy. "This year, we expect the figure not to exceed four to five percent of total exports," Novak said in a televised interview. As it was losing much of its market share in Europe, Moscow pivoted to other buyers including China. "China -- whose share (of oil exports) has grown to 45-50 percent -- and India have become our main partners in the current situation," Novak said.

*The Economic Times - 28.12.2023*

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/russia-says-redirected-most-oil-exports-to-china-india/106320292>

### **India seeks more Middle East crude as attacks delay cargoes**

Refiners in India, the world's third-largest crude oil importer, are seeking to boost supplies from the Middle East and other nearby nations as recent attacks on ships in the Red Sea raise the risk of longer shipping time and higher costs, according to people familiar with the matter. Shippers turned cautious about entering the Red Sea in recent weeks due to multiple attacks by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels. That prompted massive diversions, with many ships taking a longer route around the Cape of Good Hope, adding as much as three weeks to the voyage. Vessels carrying cargoes from the producers in the Mediterranean and North Sea are among those affected, as they travel the Suez Canal and Red Sea en route to Asia. Shipping companies are asking Indian firms to bear the risk premiums for deliveries via the usual route, said the people, who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the issue. The refiners are not willing to bear the additional liability and are scouting for alternative suppliers, they said.

*Deccan herald - 28.12.2023*

<https://www.deccanherald.com/business/india-seeks-more-middle-east-crude-as-attacks-delay-cargoes-2827406>

### **Oil industry in 2024: Varied outcomes expected across value chain**

Come 2024, India's oil requirements are expected to continue to witness a healthy rise.

The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) has joined hands with the World Bank and initiated a study to develop pathways for transmission of Hydrogen in natural gas pipelines both on its own and as Hydrogen blended with Compressed Natural Gas (CNG). "Recognising the potential impact of Hydrogen blending in the Natural Gas sector, PNGRB in collaboration with the World Bank, has initiated a study to develop pathways for Hydrogen transmission in natural gas pipelines and City Gas Distribution networks," PNGRB said in a statement on Friday. The study comprises of mapping demand and supply of Hydrogen, Technical Assessment of the existing pipeline network for its compatibility, commercial assessment of the pipeline sector, identifying bottlenecks in of policy and regulatory framework and framing of roadmap milestones till 2040 for expeditious implementation of Hydrogen-blending in India.

*PSU Watch - 30.12.2023*

<https://psuwatch.com/newsupdates/pngrb-world-bank-studying-pathways-for-transmission-of-hydrogen-via-gas-pipelines>

## **India will continue buying Russian oil, says FM Nirmala Sitharaman**

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman affirmed on Friday that the Indian government intends to persist in procuring oil from Russia. She mentioned, "Considering the decline in global oil prices, we are maintaining our ongoing oil purchases from Russia." The Indian government will continue to make oil purchases from Russia, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in an interaction with students on Friday. "Already I think global oil prices are coming down. We are continuing our purchase with Russia, and that will go on," Sitharaman said.

*The Economic Times - 30.12.2023*

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-will-continue-buying-russian-oil-says-fm-nirmala-sitharaman/articleshow/106380380.cms>

## **India's LNG imports set for robust growth in 2024 amid favourable market conditions**

India is anticipated to experience a notable upswing in liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports in 2024, with projections suggesting a substantial 7

Depending on which part of the value chain a company is, the year could prove a mixed bag. Offshore rig operators, for instance, are expected to command higher rentals owing to a mismatch in supply and demand. According to rating agency Crisil, the supply of offshore rig fleet addition has not kept pace with the higher demand for crude oil exploration and production, leading to a spike in global day rates for such rigs. At the same time, the cost to move oil, however, may taper, with charter rates for crude and product tankers expected to moderate in FY25, after seeing a correction in FY24. According to the rating agency, the correction in tanker rates in owing to easing of Covid-related supply chain constraints, however the recent attacks on cargo ships in the Red Sea remains a monitorable.

*Business Standard - 01.01.2024*

[https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/oil-industry-in-2024-varied-outcomes-expected-across-value-chain-123123100595\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/oil-industry-in-2024-varied-outcomes-expected-across-value-chain-123123100595_1.html)

## **Govt to save costs on pipelines via Gati Shakti**

The PMGS-NMP is a digital platform that maps all infrastructure projects, and contains critical information ranging from rail, port, and road connectivity to gas pipelines and optic fibre in India. It is overseen by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). Currently, the petroleum ministry aims to build about 1,000 km of pipelines using the PM Gati Shakti portal, while several new projects are being planned, two officials aware of the matter said, requesting not to be named. So far, the ministry has been able to save 169 crores by reducing the length of the proposed five pipelines for the North East Gas Grid (NEGG) by 42 km. Besides, it has planned Mumbai-Nagpur-Jharsuguda line project, for which 700 km of land along the road has been mapped with the help of PM Gati Shakti, one of the two officials said.

*The Hindustan Times - 31.12.2023*

<https://www.magzter.com/stories/newspaper/Hindustan-Times/GOVT-TO-SAVE-COSTS-ON-PIPELINES-VIA-GATI-SHAKTI>

## **Centre's dividends from CPSEs exceed FY24 budget target**

The Centre's dividend receipts from the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) stood at Rs 43,843 crore as of January 1, crossing the 2023-24 budget estimate (BE) of Rs 43,000

per cent-8 per cent year-on-year increase. This surge is expected to be driven by heightened demand across key sectors, including power, industrial, and transportation, coupled with infrastructure development in anticipation of national elections, as per S&P Global. Ayush Agarwal, an LNG analyst at S&P Global Commodity Insights, highlighted that while the fertilizer sector remains the largest consumer of LNG, the power and industrial sectors are poised to contribute significantly to the import upswing if spot prices align closely with the levels witnessed in 2023. Agarwal said, "India's LNG imports will continue to increase, with an expected 8 per cent year-on-year growth in 2024. While the fertilizer sector will remain the largest consumer of LNG, the power and industrial sectors could contribute to an increase in imports if spot prices average close to 2023 levels".

*The Economic Times - 31.12.2023*

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/indias-lng-imports-set-for-robust-growth-in-2024-amid-favourable-market-conditions/articleshow/106400442.cms>

## **Rashmi Govil set to be next Director (HR) of Indian Oil**

Rashmi Govil is set to be next Director (HR) of Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), a Maharatna PSU under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (MoPNG). She has been recommended for the post by the Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB) panel on Friday. Presently, she is serving as Executive Director (HRD & ER) in the same organisation. Govil has been recommended for the post of Director (HR) of Indian Oil from a list of 11 candidates who were interviewed by the PESB selection panel in its selection meeting held on December 28. Out of 11 candidates, five candidates were from Indian Oil and one each from HPCL, MRPL, Coal India Limited, CONCOR, Oil India Limited and the Department of Telecommunications. Govil is an HR veteran, having professional experience of over three decades in entire gamut of HR with expertise in HR strategy, L&D, talent management, employee relations, digital adoption and HR operations.

*PSU Watch - 30.12.2023*

<https://psuwatch.com/psu-appointments/rashmi-govil-set-to-be-next-director-hr-of-indian-oil>

## **S. Suresh Kumar assumes charge as DVC Chairman**

Shri S. Suresh Kumar, IAS assumed the charge of Chairman, DVC with effect from 01st January 2024. Before joining the post, Sh. Kumar was working in the capacity of Director General, Netaji Subhash Administrative Training Institute, Kolkata. Shri Kumar joined the Indian Administration Services in the West Bengal Cadre in 1988. He holds a B. Tech degree in Chemical Engineering from IIT Madras. Shri S. Suresh Kumar served as the Additional Chief Secretary to the Govt. of West Bengal, Power Deptt.

crore, giving further comfort on the fiscal front. The dividend receipts of Rs 39,086 crore so far in FY24 were 26% higher than the receipts in the corresponding period in the previous fiscal. Given that the OMCs' profitability has improved substantially due softening of global crude prices, the CPSE dividend receipts will likely exceed Rs 60,000 crore comfortably in FY24 as against the budget target of Rs 43,000 crore. CPSE dividend receipts are an important component of the government's non-tax receipts. Along with dividends from the Reserve Bank of India, banks and financial institutions, the Centre's dividend income might exceed the budget target by at least Rs 60,000 crore-Rs 80,000 crore, boosting its resources to keep the fiscal deficit within targeted 5.9% of GDP.

*The Financial Express - 02.01.2024*

<https://www.financialexpress.com/business/industry-centres-dividends-from-cpses-exceed-fy24-budget-target-3352641/>

## **RK Tyagi assumes charge as new CMD of Power Grid**

Ravindra Kumar Tyagi has assumed charge as Chairman & Managing Director (CMD) of Power Grid Corporation of India (PGCIL) on Monday. Prior to this, he was serving as Director (Operations) of the company. With his, Tyagi has succeeded K Sreekant, who was heading the organisation since August 2019. Tyagi has over 33 years of rich experience in the power sector at various key positions in leading CPSUs. He has handled multi-disciplinary work in various business areas of Power Grid such as asset management, engineering, business development (domestic and overseas), telecom, load despatch & communication, NTAMC, DMS etc. and head of Power Grid's North Eastern Region.

*PSU Watch - 01.01.2024*

<https://psuwatch.com/psu-appointments/rk-tyagi-assumes-charge-as-new-cmd-of-power-grid>

from November 2019 till April 2023 and was also assigned the additional charge of Non-Conventional Energy Resources Deptt., Govt. of West Bengal.

*PSU Connect - 01.01.2024*

<https://www.psuconnect.in/news/s-suresh-kumar-assumes-charge-as-dvc-chairman/40615>