ONGC News, 16.12.2020 Print

BPCL may raise stake in Bharat Oman

Ahead of its planned divestment, Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL) on Tuesday said its board would consider a proposal to increase stake in Bharat Oman Refineries. Plans to merge Bharat Gas Resources with the firm will also be considered at the meeting on Thursday.

BPCL on Tuesday informed exchanges that its board would meet on Thursday to consider acquisition of 36.62 per cent of equity shares in Bharat Oman Refineries (BORL).

Bharat Gas Resources was incorporated in June 2018 for handling its natural gas business. BPCL is undergoing a divestment process, where three expressions of interest have reportedly been received.

The transaction advisors started the evaluation process of these bids on Tuesday.

BORL was incorporated in 1994 with equal equity participation of BPCL and Oman Oil Company. The firm became a subsidiary of BPCL in April this year. BORL houses the Bina refinery, located in MP.

At present, BPCL holds 63.38 per cent in BORL. The refiner looks to acquire another 36.62 per cent from OQ S.A.O.C., a national petroleum investment company of Oman(formerly known as Oman Oil Company S.A.O.C).

Further, BPCL said its board would consider a proposal to approach the MP government for acquiring the 269,00,000 warrants it holds in BORL.

In March, BPCL had increased its stake in BORL by conversion of ₹650 crore worth of warrants into shares, raising its stake to 63.38 per cent from 50 per cent. In addition, BPCL had given a loan of ₹1,254.10 crore to BORL and subscribed to its share warrants.

BORL's crude oil intake during FY20 was 7913 thousand metric tonnes (TMT) with average capacity utilisation of 95 per cent at the Bina refinery.

BORL reported revenue from operations of ₹41,941 crore in FY20, compared to ₹31,597 crore recorded in the previous year. AMRITHA PILLAY

Budget for FY22 to be vibrant: FM

FE BUREAU
New Delhi, December 15

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN ON Tuesday asserted that the Budget for FY22 will be "vibrant" enough to sustain economic revival. Public capex will be stepped up and disinvestment will "gain momentum" from now on, she stressed. Emphasis has also been laid on state-run banks raising capital from the market, she added. At an Assocham event, Sitharaman said: "Something which certainly will be a feature is that we shall definitely sustain the public spending pace in infrastructure. That is the one way, we assure the multipliers will work and the economy revival will be sustainable."

Continued on Page 12

Budget for FY22 to be vibrant, says FM

"RECOGNISING THAT THIS is an unusual year, borrowing has been kept absolutely at levels with which we can quickly put the money back in capital expenditure and so on. The emphasis on public expenditure for infrastructure through the public sector undertakings (CPSEs) will be definitely kept up," the minister said.

After lagging behind in the first and second quarter of FY21 due to Covid-19 disruptions, the CPSEs' capex has covered a lot of lost ground in the third quarter, she said. The minister has also noted that the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) is taking steps to mobilize funds from abroad including from sovereign wealth funds.

The Centre, states and central PSEs among them will likely spend ₹7.5 lakh crore on capital investments in the second half of this year, up 80% over such expenditure in the first half, according to an FE analysis, based on official projections and information gathered from different sources. The expected surge in public capex in H2 would mean that a recovery in fixed investment rate that was visible in Q2 will gain further steam in the second half of the fiscal year, giving a strong support to gross capital formation.

On disinvestment , Sitharaman said the slow pace of disinvestment was due to liquidity issues in FY20 and Covid-19 in FY21. "Pace of disinvestment will now gain a lot of momentum, and those which have already given cabinet approval, will be taken up with all earnestness. Also, banks should also be able to base their values in the market and should be able to raise money from the market, even that emphasis has been given." She said corporatisation of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) labs are also being done.

The government had budgeted an ambitious disinvestment target of ₹2.1 lakh crore for FY21, hoping to garner a substantial chunk of non-tax revenue to partly make up for a lower-than-expected rise in tax collection, even before the pandemic spread its tentacles. However, the disinvestment receipts so far have been about ₹10,900 crore or 5% of the FY21 target. While there will be likely a substantial shortfall compared with the disinvestment target, the government is banking on strategic disinvestment of fuel retailer-cum-refiner BPCL, which could fetch about ₹70,000 crore. Recently, the government received expression of interest from potential buyers for its 52.98% stake in BPCL and 100% in Air India.

Domestic cooking gas price increases

Utpal Bhaskar
utpal.b@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

The price of domestic cooking gas for December has been raised following a spike in global energy prices. Effective 15 December, the price of a 14.2 kg non-subsidized Indane liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinder in Delhi has been increased by ₹50 to ₹644.

Fuel retailers revise prices of LPG cylinders, which is primarily dependent on the international benchmark rate of LPG, and the US dollar and rupee exchange rate.

The cost of the Indian basket of crude, which comprises Oman, Dubai and Brent crude, averaged \$56.43 and \$69.88 per barrel in FY18 and FY19, respectively. It was \$69.88 per barrel in FY20. The price fell, following the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic, to \$19.90 a barrel in April, \$30.60 in May, \$40.63 in June, \$43.35 in July, \$44.19 in August, and \$41.35 a barrel in September, according to data from the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell. The price was \$50.39 a barrel on 14 December.

This LPG price hike comes at a time when petrol prices in India are set to touch an all-time high. This has also added pressure on the government to cut taxes on fuel. The high prices come against the backdrop of the demand for petroleum products picking up. Indian Oil Corp. Ltd (IOC), India's largest fuel retailer, said last week that its refineries are operating at 100% capacity.

The bounce back in international crude oil prices followed announcements of positive development about covid-19 vaccines. This volatile price situation has been exacerbated by an attack on an oil tanker docked at Jeddah in Saudi Arabia on Monday, which led to a blast and fire.

Rising energy prices will stoke inflation in India, the third-largest oil importer, even as the government tries to pull the economy out of a recession. Domestic refiners had slashed production during the lockdown, after demand for transportation fuel shrunk. There was, however, higher demand for domestic cooking gas.

COMMODITY CALL

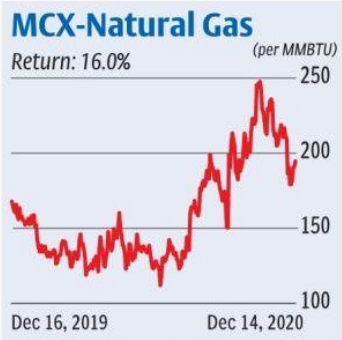
MCX-Natural gas facing major hurdle

AKHIL NALLAMUTHU

BL Research Bureau

Though the price is higher compared to a year ago, the futures price of natural gas on Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) has been facing substantial selling pressure since the beginning of November. During this period, the December futures contract has dropped from about ₹260 to the current level of ₹195, slipping below the ₹200-mark.

However, last week it bounced from its recent low of ₹175.9 and is hovering around ₹195. But the price action since past month is bearish and until the contract lies below ₹200, the rallies can be sold into.



Corroborating bearishness, the relative strength index and the moving average convergence divergence indicators on the daily chart lies in their respective negative territory. Also, the contract is facing a strong hurdle at ₹200. Moreover, the contract has formed a gravestone doji - a reversal candlestick pattern on the daily chart near a resistance level, indicating potential bearish reversal.

A resumption in the downswing can result in the contract retesting its previous low of ₹175.9. A breach of this level can drag the contract to ₹160. Considering these factors, traders can short the contract with stop-loss at ₹218.

Oil rises above $50 as vaccine optimism offsets new lockdowns

ALEX LAWLER
London, December 15

OIL ROSE FURTHER above $50 a barrel on Tuesday as optimism from the roll-out of coronavirus vaccines balanced out tighter lockdowns in Europe and forecasts of a slower demand recovery.

The United States began vaccinating people on Monday as the country's Covid-19 death toll crossed the 300,000 mark.

Britain and Canada have also begun to administer shots.Brent crude was up 14 cents, or 0.3% at $50.43 a barrel at 1435 GMT (2005 IST). US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was up 26 cents at $47.25.Oil prices have recovered in the past few weeks, with Brent reaching $51.06 on December 10, its highest since March, supported by hopes of a recovery in demand. Prices had dropped to historic lows in March as the pandemic took hold."Brent is continuing to defy all the negative news," said Carsten Fritsch, an analyst at Commerzbank."More and more countries in Europe and states in the US are tightening the corona restrictions over Christmas and the new year, which is likely to weigh on demand."

London stepped up pandemic restrictions requiring bars and restaurants to close, Italy is considering more stringent steps over Christmas and Germany is likely to be under lockdown until early 2021. **—REUTERS**

Patrol vessels: Goa Shipyard sails ahead of private peers

AJAI SHUKLA
New Delhi, 15 December

Goa Shipyard (GSL) on Monday launched the fifth and final Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) out of an order of five such vessels that it is constructing for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG). This vessel has been named ICGS Saksham.

Since PM Narendra Modi inaugurated GSL's indigenous shipbuilding project in November 2016, the shipyard has handed over two OPVs to the ICG and launched the other three.

"Launching" is a major construction landmark, in which the completed hull is put into water. It is followed by "outfitting" the vessel with its superstructure, electronics and combat weaponry.

"In spite of Covid and disruptions in supply chains, it is creditable for the shipyard to complete the 100 per cent hull construction and launch the vessel within 18 months from keel-laying, which was in June 2019. The vessel is in advanced stage of outfitting and will be ready for delivery by October 2021 based on the contractual schedule," said the ICG on Monday.

GSL's OPVs are 2,350-tonne vessels, armed with 30-mm guns and equipped with "quick response boats" to handle emergencies along the coast, piracy, and anti-terrorism missions.

GSL on Monday launched the fifth and final Offshore Patrol Vessel out of an order of five such vessels it is constructing for the Indian Coast Guard ICG

Speaking at the launch, Commodore BB Nagpal (Retired), the GSL chief, said above 70 per cent indigenisation had been achieved for these OPVs. He thanked the ministry of defence (MoD) and ICG for their confidence in GSL.

This "confidence" in DPSI shipyards causes heartburn among private shipyards such as Larsen & Toubro (L&T) and Reliance Naval (RNaval), who claim they can build warships faster, cheaper, and better than the public sector yards, he said.

To test this claim, *Business Standard* compared GSL's performance in this five-OPV contract to a similar contract L&T won for designing and constructing seven OPVs. The contracts were awarded roughly at the same time — to L&T on March 30, 2015 and on August 26, 2016 to GSL.

GSL's contract stipulated delivery of the first vessel in 42 months, that is in February 2020 and the second OPV six months later, followed by the remaining three vessels at four-month intervals. As it turned out GSL delivered the first two OPVs — ICGS Sachet and ICGS Sujeet — three months late. It is learnt that the remaining three OPV will breach delivery timelines even more.

Meanwhile, the L&T contract stipulated delivery of the first OPV in 36 months and subsequent vessels at six-month intervals. So far, L&T has delivered five OPVs, all of them ahead of the contracted schedule.

Another striking difference is the cost at which L&T and GSL are building their respective OPVs. L&T, which won its contract in a competitive tender, is charging the ICG ₹185.6 crore for each OPV. In contrast, GSL, which was awarded the contract through "nomination" — the MoD's terminology for handing over contracts to DPSUs without tendering — is charging the ICG ₹334.5 crore per OPV.

Such a cost differential could only be justified were GSL's OPVs to have significantly higher combat specifications, far better performance or a much bigger size than L&T's. In fact, both builders are delivering very similar vessels. The main difference is that GSL supplies OPVs fitted with a 30-millimetre gun, whereas L&T's contract requires it to supply fitting for a gun, but not the gun itself. This, however, is not a major difference, since a 30-millimetre gun costs only about ₹2.5 crore.

More on business-standard.com

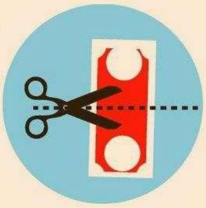
Small firms see sharp decline in staff costs

Salary bill of firms below top 200 in net sales was down 10.3% in H1

KRISHNA KANT & SURAJEET DAS GUPTA
Mumbai/New Delhi, 15 December

The pandemic has dealt a bigger blow to smaller firms and their employees than it has done to bigger companies. The sharp decline in sales and revenue in the first half of 2020-21 has forced smaller companies to cut operating costs, especially employee costs, far more than their bigger peers have done.

The salary and wage bill of small-sized listed companies —those not among the top 200 in net sales — was down 10.3 per cent year-on-year (Y-o-Y) during April-September while their net sales fell 25.3 per cent during the period.



As a result, the salary and wage bill of the smaller firms was at a nine-quarter low in July-September while net sales were the lowest in 12 quarters, except April-June 2020-21 in both cases. In comparison, the salary and wage bill of the top 100 companies was up 0.6 per cent Y-o-Y during H1FY21 (the first half of 2020-21) while their net sales were down just 13 per cent Y-o-Y during the period.

Turn to Page 13

COST-CUTTING DRIVE

Change in net sales and employee cost for listed firms during H1FY21

	YoY chg (%) Net sales	Salary & wages
Top 100 firms	-13.0	0.6
Next 100	-18.4	-2.3
Other firms*	-25.3	-10.3

Note: Companies ranked according to their quarterly net sales (excluding banks, finance & oil & gas)
*2,152 companies; #sorted by net sales
Sources: Capitaline, *Business Standard* calculation
Compiled by *BS* Research Bureau

Trend in salary & wage bill of listed companies#
(Indexed to 100)

Small companies...

The next 100 companies (in terms of net sales) reported a 2.3 per cent Y-o-Y decline in their salary and wage bill during the first half of the financial year while their net sales were down 18.4 per cent during the period. (See the adjoining chart.)

The analysis is based on the quarterly results of 2,353 listed companies in sectors excluding banks, non-banking financial companies including insurance, and oil and gas firms. This suggests that the smaller ones have been more aggressive in rationalising their staff costs either by way of shedding employees, salary cuts, or both.

"The data shows that small firms have cut staff costs much more than large firms," wrote Pranjul Bhandari and Aayushi Chaudhary of HSBC Securities and Capital Markets (India) in their latest report.

Teamlease co-founder and Executive Vice President Rituparna Chakroborty said: "Micro, small, and medium enterprises were the first to cut salaries and then retrench because they were unable to cope with a sudden stoppage in their revenues and cash flows in the first quarter. They do not have deep pockets like bigger companies."

BPCL to mull buying out Oman Oil in Bina project

NEW DELHI

Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (BPCL) said that on Thursday its board would consider buying out Oman Oil Company in the Bina refinery project in Madhya Pradesh. It would also consider merging Bharat Gas Resources with itself, the company said in a filing on Tuesday. BPCL holds 63.68% in Bharat Oman Refineries which operates the 7.8 MT oil refinery at Bina in M.P. PTI

ENTERPRISE CONNECT

A Business Initiative

SJVN signs MoU with IREDA for Green Energy Projects

SJVN Limited has entered an MoU with Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd. (IREDA). IREDA will provide it services to SJVN for Green Energy projects. The MoU was signed by Shri Nand Lal Sharma, CMD, SJVN and Shri Pradip Kumar Das, CMD, IREDA in the presence of Shri Akhileshwar Singh, Director (Finance), SJVN, Shri Surinder Pal Bansal, Director (Civil), SJVN, Shri Chintan Shah, Director (Technical), IREDA, and other senior officials today through virtual mode. On the occasion Sh. Nand Lal Sharma, Chairman & Managing Director told that as per MoU, IREDA will undertake Techno-Financial due diligence of Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency & Conservation Projects for SJVN. Under the MoU, IREDA will also assist SJVN in developing an action plan to create and acquire Renewable Energy projects for the next 5 years. Sh. Sharma said that, SJVN is committed to contribute in realizing the renewable energy target of 175 GW by 2022. The steps in this direction has already been taken and presently SJVN is developing 100 MW Dholera Solar Power Project & 100 MW Raghanseda Solar Power Project in Gujarat. He also emphasised that partnership of SJVN & IREDA will be long lasting and fruitful for both.

Power Grid signs Mou with SGPGIMS for establishing Powergrid-SGPGIMS Tele-ICU in Uttar Pradesh

Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID) signed an MoU with Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGIMS), in the presence of Shri Yogi Adityanath, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh for establishing POWERGRID –SGPGIMS Tele –ICU in the state of Uttar Pradesh on 14th of December 2020.As per the MoU, a Command Centre will be established at Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences, Lucknow and Spoke Centres at Gorakhpur, Kanpur, Prayagraj, Agra, Meerut and Jhansi.The MoU was signed by Shri V.K.Singh, Director (Personnel) on behalf of POWERGRID and Dr.R.K.Dhiman, Director on behalf of Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences.

Minister Of Petroleum & Natural Gas to explore convergences to drive tribal empowerment

As a part of its continuing, ongoing efforts to improve the lives and livelihoods of the tribals and work towards tribal empowerment, TRIFED is exploring convergences and partnerships with government departments and like-minded organisations to create synergies together. In this regard, Shri Arjun Munda, the Hon'ble Minister of Tribal Affairs and Shri Pravir Krishna, Managing Director, TRIFED had a meeting with Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, Hon'ble Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas on December 10, 2020.During this discussion, several aspects of collaboration were discussed with the aim of moving towards tribal livelihood development while harnessing the common strengths and expertise to the maximum benefit. The key initiatives that came up during the discussion included promoting tribal development entrepreneurship programmes through Van Dhan Kendras,

CMD- PSPCL urges pledge to save electricity

Chairman cum Managing Director of Punjab State Power Corporation Limited Shri A. Venu Prasad has called upon the people of Punjab to take pledge to save electrical energy for a brighter and progressive future for the coming generations.In a message to the people of Punjab on national energy conservation day.He said that Punjab State Power Corporation Limited has taken various steps to save electricity, which includes replacement with as many as 42582 LED tubes of 20 watt and 4137 LED lamps of 9 watt in various office buildings of the corporation. PSPCL also had initiated the distribution of 15.73 lakh 9 Watt LED lamps among SC/ BC and BPL consumers at subsidized rates out of which 162000 number of LED lamps have already been distributed.

Exports fall 8.7%; trade deficit shrinks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Declining for the second straight month, India's exports dipped 8.7% in November to $23.52 billion on account of contraction in shipments at key sectors like petroleum, engineering, chemicals and gems and jewellery, even as the trade deficit narrowed to $9.87 billion.

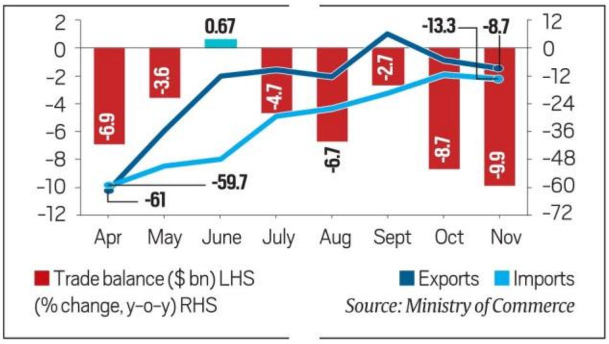
Imports declined for the ninth month in a row, slipping 13.3% to $33.39 billion, government data showed.

Although the trade deficit narrowed from $12.75 billion in November 2019, the deficit widened from $8.78 billion in October.

The Indian Express
Exports slip for second straight month in Nov
Dec 16, 2020 | Delhi | Pg No.: 15 | | Sq Cm:117 | AVE: 913814 | PR Value: 4569072

Exports slip for second straight month in Nov

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 15



Source: Ministry of Commerce

MERCHANDISE EXPORTS fell 8.74 per cent in November, continuing a trend of negative growth after a short positive growth spurt in September. Exports last month were at $23.52 billion, as against $25.77 billion in the same month in 2019, data from the Commerce and Industry Ministry showed.

The drop was mainly on the back of decline in shipments of products like petroleum (-59.73 per cent), leather goods (-29.80 per cent), man made fabrics (-11.06 per cent), engineering goods (-8.12 per cent) and organic and inorganic chemicals (8.06 per cent).

Imports, too, fell 13.32 per cent to $33.39 billion in November from a year ago. The trade deficit narrowed to $9.87 billion against $12.75 billion in November 2019. However, the deficit rose sequentially from $8.78 billion in October.

According to Federation of Indian Export Organisations president Sharad Kumar Saraf, the drop in exports are a result of supply-side disruptions, including restricted container movement and declining petroleum exports due to its crashing prices.

Oil rises above $50 on vaccine optimism

REUTERS
LONDON

Oil rose further above $50 a barrel on Tuesday as optimism from the roll-out of coronavirus vaccines balanced out tighter lockdowns in Europe and forecasts of a slower demand recovery.

The U.S. began vaccinating people on Monday as the country's COVID-19 death toll crossed the 300,000 mark. Britain and Canada have also begun to administer shots.

Brent crude was up 14 cents, or 0.3% at $50.43 a barrel at 1435 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was up 26 cents at $47.25.

Oil prices have recovered in the past few weeks, with Brent reaching $51.06 on December 10, its highest since March, supported by hopes of a recovery in demand.

Vedanta eyes $8 billion to fund its bid for BPCL

The London-based mining company has initiated talks with a clutch of banks to tie up the funds

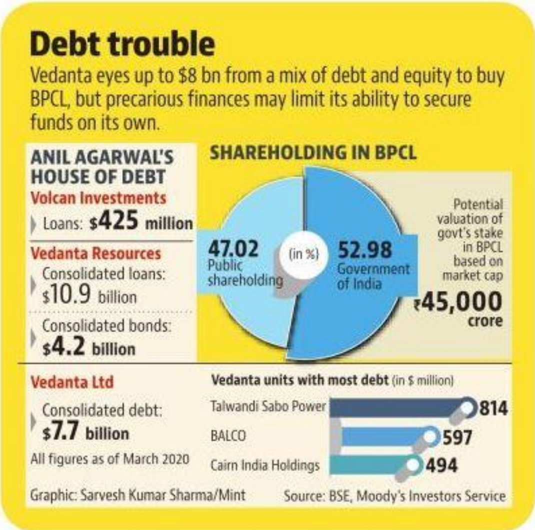
Deborshi Chaki and Tanya Thomas
deborshi.c@livemint.com

MUMBAI: Billionaire Anil Agarwal's Vedanta group plans to raise as much as $8 billion through a mix of debt and equity to secure funds for the acquisition of state-run Bharat Petroleum Corp. Ltd (BPCL), two people directly aware of the talks with investors and banks said.

London-based Vedanta Resources Plc has initiated talks with a clutch of banks to tie up the funds, the people said, seeking anonymity as the discussions are private.

"The talks are currently on to appoint an anchor bank for the purpose and discussions with JP Morgan are at an advanced stage," said one of the two people.

Last month, the mining conglomerate showed preliminary interest in buying the government's 53% stake in BPCL. The sale, part of India's asset-sale programme, is expected to fetch the government about ₹45,000 crore and is aimed at helping it make up for the revenue loss caused by Covid-related disruptions and secure funding for additional spending to boost the economy.



Both Vedanta and JP Morgan declined to comment.

Vedanta group's interest in India's second largest fuel retailer stems from the synergies with its existing oil and gas business (formerly Cairn India), which accounts for around a quarter of India's annual crude oil output.

"Vedanta's EoI (expression of interest) for BPCL is to evaluate potential synergies with our existing oil and gas business. The EoI is at a preliminary stage and exploratory in nature," the company had said.

Analysts, however, questioned the group's ability to raise the entire funding on its own, given its precarious finances. While BPCL's dividend payments could cover the cost of debt of any acquisition, "the question we have is how would Vedanta Ltd (an Indian unit of Vedanta Resources) secure funding, given the worries on leverage at Vedanta and the parent," JP Morgan said in a report in November.

Buying a 75% stake in BPCL (53% from government and 22% through an open offer) would cost Vedanta ₹64,200-97,600 crore depending on the price (₹395 to 600 per share), the report added.

"Vedanta is aware of the challenges it faces in raising funds and is, therefore, keen to on-board equity partner(s) to jointly acquire BPCL," said the second person cited above. "It has also initiated discussions with several global private equity funds to jointly bid," the second person added. The names of the PE funds could not be ascertained immediately.

Vedanta group faces an uphill task in meeting its debt obligation maturing in the coming quarters, and investors have raised concerns about the group's ability to successfully repay bondholders.

The Statesman
BPCL to consider buying Oman Oil stake in Bina refinery
Dec 16, 2020 | Delhi | Pg No.: 8 | | Sq Cm:176 | AVE: 158655 | PR Value: 793276

BPCL to consider buying Oman Oil stake in Bina refinery

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 15 DECEMBER

Privatisation-bound Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) has said its board will on Thursday consider buying out Oman Oil Company in the Bina refinery project in Madhya Pradesh.

BPCL board will also consider merging Bharat Gas Resources Ltd(BGRL) with itself, the company said in a filing to the stock exchanges on Tuesday.

BPCL holds 63.68 per cent stake in Bharat Oman Refineries Ltd (BORL), which built and operates a 7.8 million tonne oil refinery at Bina in Madhya Pradesh.

The company board will on December 17 "consider a proposal for according 'in-principle' approval" for "acquisition of 36.62 per cent of equity shares in BORL from OQ S.A.O.C. (formerly known as Oman Oil Company S.A.O.C.)," it said.

This would amount to the acquisition of 88.8 crore equity shares from OQ.

The board would also consider a proposal to approach the Madhya Pradesh government for acquiring 2.69 crore warrants held by it in BORL.

The meeting would also consider "merger of Bharat Gas Resources Ltd (a wholly-owned subsidiary of BPCL) with BPCL," the filing said.

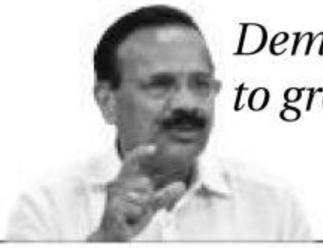
BPCL incorporated BGRL for handling the natural gas business in June 2018. It won the licence to retail CNG to automobiles and piped natural gas to households and industries in 13 Geographical Areas under round 9 and round 10 of City Gas Distribution (CGD).

BGRL is also planning to put up an LNG import terminal along the East Coast of India.

Oman Oil had recently expressed interest to divest its stake in BORL.

BORL became a subsidiary of BPCL in March this year when it converted warrants into shares taking the state-owned refiner's stake in the erstwhile equal joint venture to 63.38 per cent.

In addition to the equity investment in BORL, BPCL had subscribed to zero per cent compulsorily convertible debentures of Rs 1,000 crore and share warrants of Rs 1,585.68 crores which on conversion would turn BORL into a subsidiary of BPCL.



Demand for chemicals, petrochemicals to grow 9 per cent per annum

D V SADANANDA GOWDA
FERTILISER MINISTER

Exports dip 8.74% in Nov; trade deficit at $9.87 bn

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 15

Exports in November fell 8.74% and trade deficit during the month narrowed to $9.87 billion as imports too declined by 13.32% to $33.39 billion.

Exports were recorded at $23.52 billion whereas imports were at $33.39 billion. Exports of petroleum products and engineering goods fell while that of gems and jewellery registered an increase. Imports of electronic goods and gold increased while that of crude oil declined.

"Close to 9% de-growth in exports is a reminder to act fast to reverse deceleration. Exporters need to be empowered by way of faster GST refunds and availability of raw material," said Engineering Exports Promotion Council chairman Mahesh Desai. — TNS

No change in petrol, diesel prices for 8th consecutive day

New Delhi: Oil marketing companies continued to hold back any change in the retail price of petrol and diesel continuing with their wait and watch stance that has kept the prices of two auto fuels static for the past eight days.Accordingly, there was no change in retail price of auto fuels on Tuesday with price of petrol remaining at Rs 83.71 a litre and diesel Rs 73.87 a litre in Delhi. Across the country as well the price of the two petroleum products remained unchanged.OMCs have gone on a pause mode at a time when news of successful coronavirus and expectations of big pick up in demand had kept crude on the boil with prices breaching $ 50 a barrel mark. ***IANS***