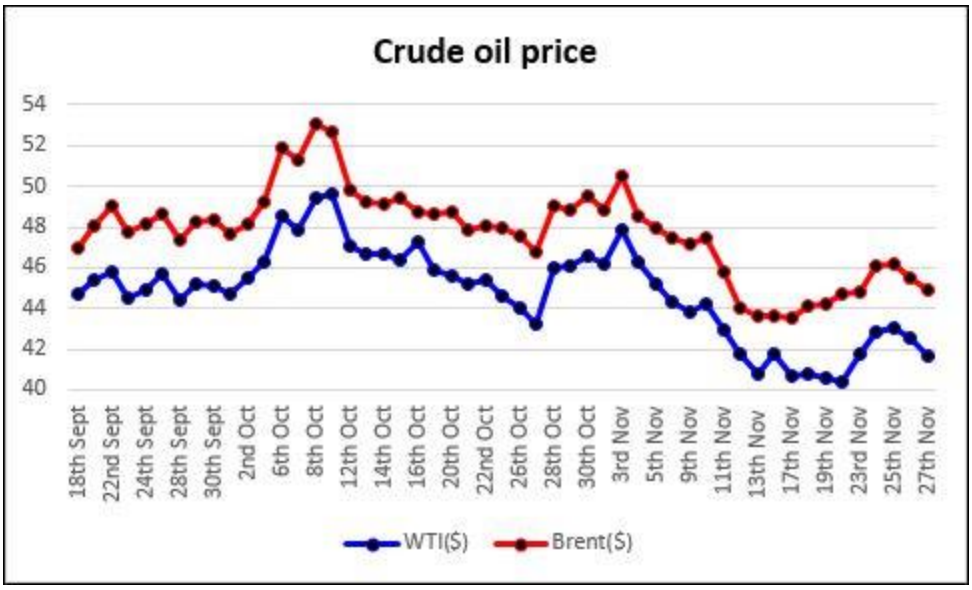
Post 28th November, 2015

Some of the news items for this week are as follows:



The price of oil fluctuated a bit this week but in a small range. On Monday, the news about downing of a Russian jet by Turkey raised concerns about the risk of rising tension, which could create problems for the Middle East supplies. But soon these concerns were dispelled by the high levels of global production that are showing no signs of curtailment.

Amongst other news, not much is expected to change at OPEC's meeting at Vienna on December 4th in terms of its policy. Since last year OPEC has indicated that it would curtail output so as to remove surplus, only if non-OPEC countries also agree to do so. Not much cooperation was seen on the ground, and going by that record, low prices may continue in 2016 and into the first half of 2017. The prospect of Iran's exports as a result of the expected lifting of sanctions may or may not come up for discussion. Indonesia is expected to rejoin OPEC, which as I have mentioned in an earlier post, is strange as it is still a net importer of oil, unless being an OPEC member is a matter of pride.

For the lighter side this week:

Have you ever wondered about what is Murphy's law?

Murphy's law is a popular adage that states:

If anything can go wrong, it will go wrong.

What it really means is that if there are different ways of doing a particular thing, and if one of those ways can result in failure, then sooner or later, someone will do it that way.

There are many variants of Murphy's law, considering its universality.

It is so-called after Captain Edward A. Murphy Jr., who was a pilot and an aerospace engineer. Back in 1949, the scientists and engineers at the Edwards Air Force Base in California were conducting tests to understand how much force (in terms of Gs, where G is the force of gravity) a human body can survive. The test entailed a rocket sled that would travel at 200 mile per hour and then suddenly brought to a halt in less than a second. Many tests were conducted with dummies but the results were not considered satisfactory. In one of the tests, a new kind of sensors were to be installed on the rocket, and Captain Murphy was called upon for his supervision over the task. After the test, it was found that the strain-gauges used on the rocket did not show any readings. Murphy blamed it on the technician who had installed the sensors saying '*If there is any way they can do it wrong, they will'*.

With this problem fixed, one Colonel John Paul Stapp volunteered to go through with the test. The test was successful in that it was found that Stapp could endure over 46Gs.

Later at a press conference, when Stapp was asked how such a dangerous test did not result in fatality, Stapp, known for his sense of humour and quick wit said, 'the team had kept Murphy's law in mind and considered how the mistakes could be prevented.

This is how the story goes.

But Murphy's law has been found to be applicable to many different fields and cultures and you will hear some variations of this law as well.

We know some expensive failures have taken place in space agency missions around the world. Awareness of Murphy's law helps designers to consider all possibilities of failures and make the installations/devices free of those possibilities.

If after doing all that, Murphy's law still strikes, then the failure can be attributed to something we do not understand, but at least we as humans have put our best foot forward.

Did you know that there are 9 million species that exist on the Earth?

Tomorrow, I head to India to attend the SPG Conference at Jaipur. Apparently, the preparations have been in full swing for quite some time and it is going to be a well-attended show. Am looking forward to it.

So much for this week!

Till the next post, stay safe and happy!