

## Daily News Monitor: 14 December 2020

### **1. Budget 2021-22: Nirmala Sitharaman to meet industrialists on Monday; begins pre-budget consultations**

**Source: Financial Express ([Link](#))**

Budget 2021-22: As a common pre-budget exercise for the Finance Minister every year, Nirmala Sitharaman will begin e-meeting various stakeholders ahead of the General Budget FY22. The virtual consultations will start 14 December onwards, according to the Ministry of Finance. Sitharaman will be meeting “different stakeholder Groups from tomorrow, 14th Dec 2020 in New Delhi in connection with the forthcoming General Budget 2021-22. The meetings will be held virtually,” the ministry said in a Twitter thread on Sunday. The first pre-Budget meeting spread over morning and afternoon sessions will be with the top industrialists, the ministry added.

### **2. Gig economy takes centre stage as tech boosts opportunities for workers**

**Source: Business Standard ([Link](#))**

The pandemic has seen technology play the role of a great leveler as location and time zones become less relevant. This has boosted opportunities for gig workers, and for providers of platforms enabling a gig workforce marketplace. A gig economy is a free and global market in which firms set short-term gigs that are flexible and skill-based tasks or projects. As organisational performance continues to be under stress considering ongoing macro-level uncertainty, companies are now steering towards the gig workforce as an alternative, asset-light talent pool, fundamentally geared to meet variable, and dynamically shifting, demand.

### **3. Protest to intensify as farmer leaders set to observe hunger strike today**

**Source: Business Standard ([Link](#))**

The ongoing farmers' protest is set to intensify as the heads of all farmer unions agitating against the Centre's new farm laws will observe a one-day hunger strike on 14 December. A protester from Lakhimpur Kheri at the Ghazipur (Delhi-UP border) said, "When we take our sugarcane trolleys to mills, it happens that we skip meals for 24 hours. We are prepared for fast." The number of farmers at the Ghazipur border is increasing while the protesters continue to stay in the cold weather conditions in these regions. The fast will be observed from 8:00 am today till 5:00 pm. The farmers here told that they have a habit of fasting this way. Some farmers also asserted that when they go to sell crops, they have to stay hungry for one or two days. Gradually, the population of farmers is increasing at the Ghazipur border,

where earlier there used to be only two to three tents of ration, today it has increased to at least eight to ten tents at the protest site without the lack of food supply.

#### **4. Centre may not procure Pfizer-BioNTech Covid vaccine over high cost**

**Source: Business Standard ([Link](#))**

As the Centre starts provisioning for one of the largest Covid-19 immunisation drives in the world, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine candidate seems to be an outlier, at least for now. Senior government officials have indicated that India may not procure the mRNA vaccine, which American major Pfizer and Germany's BioNTech have developed, for the immunisation drive. The higher cost of the Pfizer vaccine, already approved by the UK and the US regulators, is among the primary reasons why other options may be preferred by India. At \$37 per dose, the Pfizer vaccine is much more expensive compared to \$3 per dose for the Covishield, a vaccine developed by Oxford-AstraZeneca and manufactured by the Serum Institute of India, an official told Business Standard. Even the Russian vaccine Sputnik V is cheaper than Pfizer at \$10 per dose. Indigenous vaccines from Bharat Biotech and Zydus Cadila are expected to be in the range of \$3-6 per dose. The cost of cold-chain infrastructure to maintain the stringent temperature requirement for the Pfizer vaccine would add to the overall expenditure.

#### **5. UK PM Boris Johnson praises India's 'incredible' solar power strides at climate summit**

**Source: Financial Express ([Link](#))**

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has hailed the 'incredible things' being done by India in the solar energy sector as he warned that the emergency facing the world from climate change was far more destructive than even the coronavirus pandemic. Johnson said this in his address to the Climate Ambition Summit this weekend, co-hosted by the UK to mark the fifth anniversary of the Paris climate agreement. In his speech to the virtual summit, which was earlier addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi among around 70 heads of state and government, the British prime minister reiterated the UK's pledge to radically cut dependence on fossil fuels. "We're going ahead with a massive solar programme, even though we can't hope to emulate the incredible things being done by India, Australia or Morocco for instance," he said.

#### **6. India to train athletes for bio-bubble and quarantine rules before Olympics**

**Source: Livemint ([Link](#))**

The sports ministry and different sports associations are working on a plan to train the Indian Olympics contingent about bio-bubble and quarantine rules during the games in Tokyo,

which are set to start in a few months. The Union government, in association with sports authorities, has decided to set up at least four bio-bubbles both in the country and outside for the athletes. The Indian Olympics contingent is expected to comprise 60-100 athletes, and the training camps of different sports associations have already started preparations. Senior representatives of the sports ministry and sports associations have informed a parliamentary committee that athletes will have to be trained because the concepts of both quarantine and bio-bubble are new to athletes who are to represent the country in the Olympics.

### **7. 60 crore COVID-19 vaccine shots, 100 people per session: India ready for coronavirus vaccination drive**

**Source: Livemint ([Link](#))**

As India gears up for the coronavirus vaccination drive with three vaccine candidates under regulatory review, the Union Ministry of Health has sent its operational guidelines to states and Union territories for the distribution of the vaccine as and when it becomes available. The document, which has been shared with all states, says that only 100 people per "session" at each site per day are likely to be vaccinated against Covid-19. However, the number of people per "session" might go up to 200 if logistics allow, the Centre noted. "If in any case, more than 200 people are being vaccinated within a session then a whole team of 5 people will have to be deployed separately (one vaccine officer and four vaccination officers)," the draft SOP read.