

## Daily News Monitor: 26 March 2020

### **1. Indian American hoteliers offer free accommodation to stranded Indian students** **Source: Livemint ([Link](#))**

Indian American hoteliers have come forward to the rescue of Indian students stranded in the US following implementation of lockdown measures in the wake of coronavirus outbreak, by offering free accommodation and in some cases food. With the students scrambling for a roof over their heads after being asked to vacate their hostels and India banning international flights for a week from March 22 due to the coronavirus pandemic, more than 6,000 rooms in nearly 700 hotels were offered to them by 26 March following a call from the Indian Embassy. The Indian Embassy have been running a round-the-clock helpline since last week for the students in the US, who number over 2,50,000. Most of these hotels offered are in and around universities and colleges, but hotels owners from across the country have come up in large numbers to the call given by community leaders, who have roped in Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA) for the purpose.

### **2. Coronavirus: Medical research body ICMR floats tender to buy 1 million test kits** **Source: Livemint ([Link](#))**

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) late 26 March invited quotations from manufacturers for supply of 1 million kits to test patients suspected of suffering from COVID-19. These kits have to be supplied to the medical research body's regional facilities at Mumbai, Delhi, Dibrugarh, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bhopal. Any manufacturer with an Indian-based supplier can bid in the tender that closes at 1230pm on 26 March, showing the urgency in the government to tackle coronavirus which has so far claimed 12 lives in the country. There are currently 581 active cases in the country. ICMR has sought details on rates per kit along with the number of tests that can be done in one kit. The qualification criteria is only limited to systems which have received approval from US Food and Drug Administration, the European regulator's CE in-vitro diagnostics (IVD) certification or validation certificate from the institute's National Institute of Virology in Pune.

### **3. Cabinet nod for supply of 2kg extra subsidised foodgrains via ration shop** **Source: Money Control ([Link](#))**

To ensure sufficient supply during the lockdown, the government on 26 March decided to increase monthly quota of subsidized foodgrains by 2 kg to 7kg per person through ration shops for 80 crore beneficiaries. A decision in this regard was taken by the Cabinet Committee on

Economic Affairs (CCEA) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The government has decided to provide 7 kg per person of foodgrains to 80 crore people under the Public Distribution System (PDS), which the world's largest food security system," Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar told media after the meeting. The cost of wheat is Rs 27/kg, which will be provided at a subsidised rate of Rs 2 kg, while the cost of rice is about Rs 32/kg but will be supplied at Rs 3/kg through ration shops, he said.

#### **4. 21-day lockdown: E-commerce firms set to resume work after police assurance** **Source: Business Standard ([Link](#))**

Walmart-owned Flipkart said on 26 March it would resume services and Amazon said it was working with the government to enable its deliveries after state governments reached out to the firms, which had temporarily stopped accepting new orders amid reports of police high-handedness. The Delhi police issued a statement saying they were proactively engaging with e-commerce portals and were issuing passes to ensure agents were able to commute seamlessly and deliver essential goods to residents during the 21-day lockdown. The Bengaluru police, too, came out with guidelines for issuing curfew passes. Following this, Flipkart Chief Executive Officer Kalyan Krishnamurthy said, "We have been assured of the safe and smooth passage of our supply chain and delivery executives by local law enforcement authorities and are resuming our grocery and essentials services later today (26 March)."

#### **5. Covid-19: E-commerce firms in a fix over definition of essential goods** **Source: Business Standard ([Link](#))**

While delivery of essential items by e-commerce firms was exempted from the 21-day coronavirus (COVID-19)-induced lockdown called by the prime minister on 25 March, online retailers are struggling with the distinction between essential and non-essential goods. This caused them to face challenges on 26 March, with many facing forced lockdown of warehouses and restrictions on deliveries, leading to a temporary shutdown of operations. Paytm Mall told Business Standard that it was unclear whether clothing or home items qualified as essentials. Srinivas Mothey, senior vice-president of Paytm Mall, said that they had prioritised items like masks, sanitizers, ayurvedic supplements, immunity boosters, electronics and home items. "It is unclear whether clothing or home items qualify as essential items. A lot of professionals are working from home, and they need electronics for their productivity. Does this qualify as essential?" Amazon has disabled shipments for lower priority products and is using logistics capacity to deliver critical products like household staples, packaged food, healthcare, hygiene, personal safety products.

## **6. Coronavirus: Govt asks car manufacturers to explore ventilator production**

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

The central government has asked all automakers to utilise their manufacturing facilities to produce ventilators and other medical gear required to fight coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). Anand Mahindra-led Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) is believed to be in the final stage of discussions with Bangalore-based ventilator exporter Skanray Technologies. Tata group, through Tata Motors, is also in last-minute negotiations with a Mysuru-based manufacturer to ramp up ventilator manufacturing. In a communication to major automobile manufacturers, the Ministry of Heavy Industries asked them to explore using their manufacturing facilities and manpower to produce ventilators. Sources said that the communication was issued after a joint meeting of the top four companies — Maruti Suzuki, M&M, Tata Motors and Hyundai.

## **7. Modi govt's largest ration subsidy scheme for 80 Cr Indians; check full details of govt plan**

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

Narendra Modi-led government has approved the world's largest food security scheme to benefit 80 crore people across the country. Out of them, every person will get 7 kg ration per month for the next three months, including wheat at a cost of Rs 2 per kg, instead of Rs 27 per kg; and rice at cost of Rs 3 per kg, instead of Rs 37 per kg, Cabinet Minister Prakash Javadekar said in a press conference 25 March. The decision is taken after PM Modi announced a countrywide lockdown yesterday, forcing people to stay inside their houses for the next 21 days to fight the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **8. Fight against COVID-19: G20 countries may consider helping smaller economies**

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

A global G20 fund to help the smaller devastated COVID-19 hit economies as well the possibility inducting World Health Organisation (WHO) as a permanent invitee to all G 20 meetings are among the issues likely to be discussed on 26 March. G20 countries account for 85 per cent of global GDP and since 2008 the world is yet again confronted with the global recession and growth downturn. IMF, World Bank, OECD and others, are inducted as permanent invitees to attend all the meetings. Besides the G20 member countries, there will other countries too who will be represented by their leaders. These include Spain, Jordan, Singapore, and Switzerland.

### **9. Modi Cabinet gives nod for Indian Railways Aligarh-Harduaganj flyover over Delhi-Howrah main line; details**

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

In a major infrastructural boost for the Indian Railways network in the North Central zone, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the construction of the Aligarh-Harduaganj flyover. According to the recent Cabinet decision, the construction of the railway flyover to be taken up by the Ministry of Railways, has been approved. K.S. Dhatwalia, Director and Principal Spokesperson, Press Information Bureau (PIB) shared on Twitter that the construction of the Aligarh-Harduaganj flyover project is expected to be completed in the next five years, i.e., by the year 2024-2025. The railway flyover will be built around 3 km away from the Aligarh railway station and will come under the North Central Railway (NCR) zone.

### **10. Covid-19 pandemic: Finmin writes to RBI on relief measures**

**Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))**

The finance ministry has asked the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to consider implementing a series of emergency measures aimed at helping borrowers cope with the economic havoc wreaked by the Covid-19 pandemic, said a person aware of the development. Department of financial services secretary Debashish Panda wrote to the RBI on 25 March suggesting a moratorium of a few months on the payment of equated monthly installments (EMIs), interest and loan repayments and a relaxation in the classification of nonperforming assets (NPAs), according to the person cited above. Panda also underscored the importance of maintaining liquidity in the system.