

Daily News Monitor: 27 July 2020

1. Vande Bharat mission: Phase 5 to start from August 1.

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

The fifth phase of Vande Bharat mission is all set to start on August 1. "We will be soon announcing a host of additional flights under Vande Bharat Mission Phase 5 starting from 1st August 2020," Air India said in a statement. During the fifth phase, the flights will go to the USA, Canada, Qatar, Oman, UAE, Australia, Germany, Thailand, Singapore, UK, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, New Zealand, Philippines and several other countries. The Union aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri said, "Like we did earlier, more destinations and flights will be added as this phase progresses."

2. Oxford's COVID-19 vaccine India trial to start next month: Cost, production — what we know so far

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

Serum Institute of India has asked approval from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) to start the phase II and III trial of the COVID-19 vaccine, developed by the University of Oxford, in India. Known as AZD1222, the vaccine candidate has been made by the Jenner Institute, a part of the Nuffield Department of Medicine at the University of Oxford. The formulation is backed by AstraZeneca PLC, a British-Swedish pharmaceutical company. AstraZeneca has joined hands with Serum Institute of India to produce the potential vaccine. According to a report by news agency *Press Trust of India (PTI)*, Adar Poonawalla led drug firm submitted its application to the DCGI on Friday seeking permission for conducting the trials of the vaccine candidate. The company will launch the vaccine under the brand name of Covishield if the trials are successful.

3. India to announce financial assistance package for Maldives' economic recovery

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

India is to announce a "substantial financial assistance package" for Maldives to help it tide over economic woes caused mainly by the loss of tourist revenues due to the spread of the covid-19 pandemic. A statement from the Indian High Commission in Male on the occasion of the Maldivian Independence Day described India-Maldives ties as "an all weather friendship steeped in history and with a glorious future." "India first policy of Maldives and Neighbourhood first policy of India has set the foundation of the growing relationship," the statement said. India has already extended assistance of \$400 million through extended currency swap arrangement to help the nation tide over liquidity problems, it said. New Delhi

had also provided 6.2 tons of medicines under “Operation Sanjeevani” and 600 tons of food items to the country in the midst of the pandemic.

4. In a push to ‘neighbourhood first’ policy, India to send 10 railway locomotives to Bangladesh

Source: The Hindustan Times ([Link](#))

India will hand over 10 railway locomotives to Bangladesh on 27 July, reflecting a renewed focus on the “neighbourhood first” policy to bolster economic ties and connectivity within the region amid the border standoff with China. The handover of the broad gauge diesel locomotives, part of grant assistance from the Indian side, is in line with a commitment by New Delhi during Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s visit last October, people familiar with developments said on condition of anonymity. The locomotives will be handed over during a virtual event to be joined by external affairs minister S Jaishankar and railways minister Piyush Goyal and their Bangladeshi counterparts AK Abdul Momen and Mohammed Nurul Islam Sujon, as well as envoys of the two countries and senior officials. The handover will come close on the heels of the first cross-border container train reaching Bangladesh on Sunday with 50 containers of FMCG goods and fabrics.

5. NCDEX to launch options in goods for 3 agri commodities on July 27

Source: Money Control ([Link](#))

The National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) will launch options in goods for three commodities -- mustard seed, wheat and maize -- on Monday. Contracts expiring in the months of October and November will be available for trading from July 27 onwards in all three commodities, NCDEX said in a webinar on Sunday. NCDEX will become the first exchange in the country to launch options in agriculture goods. In January 2020, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) had allowed exchanges to launch 'Options in Goods' in their commodity derivatives segment. With options in goods, contracts will be completed only through compulsory delivery on the day of the settlement.

6. Govt amends certain Indian Accounting Standards amid Covid-19 pandemic

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

The government has amended certain Indian Accounting Standards (Ind-AS), including the standard relating to leases amid the coronavirus pandemic. Ind-AS 103, 116 and some other standards have been amended by the Corporate Affairs Ministry. While Ind-AS 103 pertains to business combinations, Ind-AS 116 relates to principles for recognition, presentation and disclosure of leases. In the wake of the pandemic, many lessors have extended rent concessions to lessees. However, applying the Ind-AS 116 requirements for changes to lease

payments could have posed practical difficulties in the current situation. Against this backdrop, the ministry has amended the rules whereby entities would get relief from lease modification accounting due to Covid-19 related rent concessions. The amendments can be followed by lessees for annual reporting periods beginning on or after April 1, 2020.

7. GeM to be integrated with Railways' e-procurement system: Commerce Ministry
Source: Business Standard ([Link](#))

Government e-Marketplace (GeM) and Indian Railways' e-procurement system are working on ways to integrate both the platforms in order to further widen the ambit of the Commerce Ministry's portal by enhancing its buying and selling process, a senior official said on Sunday. The official said that a feasibility assessment was being carried out on for integration of government procurement portal GeM with Indian Railway Electronic Procurement System (IRePS) and Integrated Material Management System (iMMS). "This is a technical integration. It will also help in creating a uniform procurement system. We are looking at the possibility of integration. We are doing the assessment first and then we will integrate," the official from Commerce Ministry added. After an assessment of the integration of the platforms, Railways and GeM will decide the further course of action for completion of the process.

8. RBI may go for further 25 bps rate cut in August policy meeting: Experts
Source: Business Standard ([Link](#))

The Reserve Bank is likely to go for a minimum 25 basis points cut in key lending rate in the forthcoming monetary policy review in view of the pressing need to revive the coronavirus-hit economy, feel experts. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), headed by RBI Governor, is scheduled to meet for three days beginning August 4 and will announce its decision on August 6. The central bank has been taking steps proactively to limit the damage to the economy caused by the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns to prevent the spread of the disease. A fast-changing macroeconomic environment and deteriorating outlook for growth necessitated off-cycle meetings of the MPC, first in March and then again in May 2020. The MPC cumulatively cut the policy repo rate by 115 basis points over these two meetings. Higher prices of food items especially meat, fish, cereals and pulses pushed the retail inflation based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) to 6.09 per cent in June. The government has tasked the RBI to keep inflation at 4 per cent (+, - 2 per cent).

9. With renewed focus on US, EU and UK, India looks to reset FTAs, exit fruitless deals
Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))

India is eyeing a major reset of its free trade agreements, including exiting those that have brought few tangible benefits to the country and have instead hurt domestic industry, government officials said. “All options are on the table... There is a view that if any trade agreement has not worked out as expected, we should also look at exiting such a deal,” one official said, adding that a final call on the future strategy for such arrangements would be taken at the highest level. Most trading arrangements have a clause for a review or exit. There is renewed focus on trade deals with the US, the European Union and the UK, which are key markets for Indian exporters and are keen to diversify their sourcing.