

Daily News Monitor: 30 July 2020

1. Government panel to suggest ways on funding infrastructure plan

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

A government panel set up earlier this year to find resources for India's ₹111 trillion infrastructure plan is expected to recommend the creation of development finance institutions (DFIs) and infrastructure recycling, besides other steps, a government official aware of the matter said. The committee is expected to submit its report this week. The government has already started work on setting up a DFI for infrastructure, the official said on condition of anonymity. The committee, which includes finance ministry officials, private financial entities and pension funds, aims to tap banks, financial markets and global investors for India's planned national infrastructure pipeline. The development assumes significance as focus on infrastructure sector is expected to help restart the economy damaged by the coronavirus disruption. On Monday, Reserve Bank of India governor Shaktikanta Das said there was a need for a big push for mega infrastructure projects to restart the economy, in which private and public sectors will have to play an important role in financing investments.

2. Dr Reddy's to launch Covid drugs remdesivir and favipiravir in August

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

Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL) is gearing up for two major launches next month - injectable drug remdesivir for hospitalised Covid-19 patients, and oral drug favipiravir that is given to mild to moderate patients. While the company admitted that its India revenues were hit due to lower prescription generation and a sluggish growth in the acquired Wockhardt portfolio, it is bullish on its Covid-19 portfolio nonetheless. Apart from favipiravir and remdesivir, its key Covid-19 products, DRL has already launched nutraceutical products and hand sanitisers during the pandemic. Products like azithromycin (common antibiotic used in Covid) have also seen traction, DRL said. Erez Israeli, Chief Executive Officer of DRL felt that these products are launched with a longer horizon in mind, not just targeted for the pandemic. Israeli, however, also felt that the Covid-19 health crisis was here to stay for at least another year or so which meant the Covid targeted products would continue to do well. "Unless a vaccine surprises us, the pandemic is here to stay at least for a year or so. Our data on favipiravir is showing it is a good product," Israeli said.

3. India has more scope for policy support despite limited fiscal space: IMF

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

The stimulus measures taken by India are substantial, but there is more scope for such measures even after considering the limited fiscal space, according to senior officials of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). India's measures are more tilted towards 'below-the-line' support such as food subsidy and other policy measures, rather than direct fiscal spending. In the Rs 20 trillion package announced by the government, roughly about Rs 2 trillion is direct monetary support, while the rest are in the form of policy measures and enhancements of guarantees and liquidity measures. Since then, the government has also increased its food security measures for households till at least November. "The above-the-line spending and revenue measures are slightly below average for an emerging markets, of course, much less than industrial countries, but we are broadly in support of these," said Ranil Salgado, Mission Chief for India at IMF.

4. Education policy 2020: Foreign colleges can now set up campuses in India

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

The Cabinet on 29 July approved the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, paving the way for foreign universities to set up operations in India, among other measures. While experts are unsure about the immediate impact, allowing the top 200 foreign universities to operate in India could raise the standards of their Indian counterparts, many believe. A single regulator for higher education institutions, multiple entry and exit options in degree courses, discontinuation of MPhil programmes, low stakes board exams, and common entrance exams for universities are among the other highlights of the new National Education Policy (NEP) approved by the Union Cabinet on 29 July. The policy, which was framed in 1986 and revised in 1992, had not been revised since then. The Cabinet also approved changing the name of the HRD Ministry to Education Ministry. "NEP 2020 aims to increase the gross enrolment ratio in higher education including vocational education from 26.3 per cent (2018) to 50 per cent by 2035. At least 3.5 crore new seats will be added to higher education institutions," HRD Higher Education Secretary Amit Khare said at a press briefing

5. Finance Ministry extends safeguard duty on import of solar cells, modules

Source: The Hindu Business Line ([Link](#))

The Finance Ministry has extended the safeguard duty on imported solar cells and solar modules by another year as recommended by the Director-General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) earlier this month. A safeguard duty rate of 14.90 per cent will be imposed on solar cells and modules starting for the first six months starting July 30 (minus anti-dumping duty

payable, if any) and 14.50 per cent for the subsequent six months, as per a notification issued by the Finance Ministry on 29 July. The duties will not apply on any developing country with the exception of China, Thailand and Vietnam, the notification added. Safeguard duties can be imposed on items, over and above existing customs duties, if it can be conclusively proved that a steep increase in imports over a period of time resulted in injury and disruption for local businesses.

6. Cabinet gives nod for India-Zimbabwe pact on traditional medicine systems **Source: The Hindu, Business Line ([Link](#))**

The Cabinet on 29 July gave its approval to a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between India and Zimbabwe in the field of traditional systems of medicine and Homeopathy. As per the agreement, both countries will cooperate for promoting these traditional medicine systems through exchange of experts, medicine materials and documents, and mutual recognition of degrees provided in either country, pharmacopoeias and formularies, among other things. The pact between the two countries was signed in November 2018.

7. UP exports strategy: Yogi Adityanath govt ropes in PwC to wrest space vacated by China **Source: Financial Express ([Link](#))**

In a bid to increase its footprint in world exports and execute the “local-vocal-global” call given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Uttar Pradesh government has roped in international consultancy firm PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to form a proper strategy to wrest the space that would be gradually vacated by China due to geo-political disturbances. The products through which the government is seeking to make an imprint in the global market include ceramics, woven fabrics, footwear and electronics. Speaking to FE, Uttar Pradesh’s minister for MSME, Investment and Export Promotion Siddharth Nath Singh said that the government has engaged PwC as consultant and strategic partner and it would prepare a strategy for the short as well as long run. “Uttar Pradesh has the potential to occupy China’s global share in many products. In order to be well prepared to occupy the space that would be vacated by China due to geo-political disturbances, the state government has engaged PwC to prepare a paper for both the short run and the long term,” he said.

8. ADB approves \$3 million grant to India to combat COVID-19

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

The grant, which is financed by the Japanese government, will be used to procure thermal scanners and essential commodities to strengthen the India's COVID-19 response, Asian Development Bank (ADB) said in a statement. Multilateral funding agency ADB on Wednesday said it has approved USD 3 million (about Rs 22 crore) grant to India from its Asia Pacific Disaster Response Fund to further support the government's emergency response to COVID-19 pandemic. The grant, which is financed by the Japanese government, will be used to procure thermal scanners and essential commodities to strengthen the India's COVID-19 response, Asian Development Bank (ADB) said in a statement.