

Daily News Monitor: 31 March 2020

1. RBI opens up specified G-Secs fully for foreign investors

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

In line with the Budget announcement, the Reserve Bank on 30 March opened certain specified categories of government securities (g-secs) for non-resident investors as part of an initiative to deepen the bond market. Accordingly, a separate route namely, Fully Accessible Route (FAR) for investment by non-residents in securities issued by the Government of India has been notified, the RBI said in a notification. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Budget for 2020-21 had announced that "certain specified categories of Government securities would be opened fully for non-resident investors, apart from being available to domestic investors as well."

2. No change in fiscal year; govt extends applicability of stamp duty by 3 months

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

The government has not extended the current 2019-20 fiscal year and it will end as scheduled on March 31, the finance ministry said on 31 March. PTI erroneously reported that the new financial year will start from July 1. The news alert and the related story have been withdrawn. "There is no extension of the financial year," the finance ministry said. Officials said a gazette notification issued late on 30 March evening pertained to date of applicability of stamp duty which has been changed from April 1 to July 1. Industry has been demanding extension of fiscal year by three months in view of the economic impact caused by outbreak of Covid-19.

3. Finance Ministry issues guidelines for relaxation of procurement, expenditure and transportation norms of medical and other essential supplies

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

The ministry of finance has issued guidelines for relaxations of procurement, expenditure and transportation norms of medical and other essential supplies for Covid-19 containment and relief operations on 30 March. Aimed at expediting the process as delays could result in loss of lives, the relaxations apply to the health, textiles and civil aviation ministries and the departments of pharmaceuticals and consumer affairs. "Being a national health emergency of unprecedented and historic scale, delays of procurement will result in loss of lives of citizens. Hence there is a paramount public interest in ensuring that the necessary supplies are procured in the fastest possible manner and financial procedures have to adapt accordingly," the guidelines said.

4. Covid-19: India asks FTA partners to temporarily allow imports without certificate of origin

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

India has asked the countries, with which it has free trade agreements (FTAs), to allow imports of goods without certificate of origin for the time being as the domestic authorities are currently not issuing the document on account of lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic. The government has allowed issuing certificates of origin-retrospectively to eligible exports under various India's trade agreements with other countries as offices temporarily closed and unable to issue the certificate of origin. Certificate of origin is an instrument which establishes evidence on origin of goods imported into any country. These certificates are essential for exporters to prove where their goods come from and therefore stake their claim to whatever benefits goods of Indian origin may be eligible for in the country of exports. Exporters have to submit a certificate of origin at the landing port of the importing country.

5. ADB to invest \$100 million in NIIF fund of funds

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

Asian Development Bank (ADB) will invest \$100 million into the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) of India Fund of Funds. With ADB's investment into the NIIF platform, the FoF has now secured \$700 million in commitments. ADB will now join the Government of India (GOI) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) as an investor in the Fund, said a press statement on 30 March. NIIF is India's first sovereign wealth fund that was set up by the Government of India in February 2015. It manages over \$ 4 billion of capital commitment across these funds.

6. No plan to extend 21-day coronavirus lockdown: Govt quashes rumours

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

The government on 30 March said there was no plan to extend the 21-day lockdown which came into force on 25 March midnight. The Press Information Bureau (PIB) of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting tweeted, saying Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba has denied media reports claiming that the government will extend the lockdown. "There are rumours & media reports, claiming that the Government will extend the #Lockdown21 when it expires. The Cabinet Secretary has denied these reports, and stated that they are baseless," it said

7. Kirana stores beat e-commerce giants during coronavirus crisis: Study

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

Despite significant growth in e-commerce's reach and sales during the Covid-19 crisis, the local kirana stores have emerged winners. The traditional trade channel that serves over 1.3

billion people, compared to some 120 million by e-commerce, has fared significantly better when it comes to availability of essential goods like rice, wheat, pulses, milk, sugar and salt. Obstacles faced by delivery personnels during the initial days of the lockdown might have played a key role in its poor service and a sudden dip in availability of essential items on online channels also impacted many. The situation, however, is improving fast, with over 40 per cent of consumers now able to purchase essential items online, compared to only 21 per cent a week ago.

8. Corporates join hands in fight against Covid-19, make quarantine centers

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

Quarantine facilities are rapidly becoming important as Covid-19 cases steadily mount in India. The issue acquires significance given the acute shortage of beds and rooms to handle confirmed and suspect Covid-19 patients. Integrated healthcare major Apollo Hospitals on 30 March said it was launching an initiative called 'Project Stay I' to create quarantine and isolation facilities for coronavirus patients. Part of its 'Project Kavach' programme launched on Thursday, the initiative has been supported by a number of corporate, financial and hospitality majors, making it the first of its kind in the country. Under the initiative, Oyo, Lemon Tree and Ginger Hotels will provide 500 rooms in the first phase of the programme involving five cities for patients to stay in isolation.

9. India sees highest single-day jump in coronavirus cases on Monday

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

The number of confirmed coronavirus cases in India saw their highest single-day surge on 30 March as the tally went past 1,250 with 227 new cases being reported. On 29 March evening, the number of positive cases stood at 1,024. According to the numbers released by the Health Ministry on 30 March at 9:30 pm, the tally stands at 1,251. 49 of these cases are foreigners while 46 of them are being assigned to states to initiate contact tracing. Kerala has the highest number of cases at 202, followed by Maharashtra at 198. There are currently 1,117 cases in the country. Meanwhile, the Health Ministry on 30 March said it took 12 days for cases of infection to rise from 100 to 1,000 in the country and the rate of increase has been slower than some of the developed nations.

10. Government mulls fresh sops for MSMEs, export units

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

After offering a relief package to the poor and the vulnerable, the government is gearing up for the next round of economic measures that will likely focus on the needs of specific sectors —

including MSMEs, exports, tourism, civil aviation and animal husbandry — that have been battered by the Covid-19 outbreak. Sources told FE that some of the proposals being considered are interest subsidy on loans to MSMEs and collateral-free advances to eligible small businesses with a good repayment history. The government might also impress upon the central bank to consider extending beyond December 2020 a loan restructuring scheme for MSMEs, if the crisis stretches deep into the next fiscal. The government has already asked state-run banks to ensure adequate credit flow to MSMEs.

11. Big-4 firms defer promotions, appraisals, bonuses and salaries amid virus crisis

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

Leading consultancy and audit firms have taken definitive steps relating to human capital even as India Inc. tries to gauge the impact of the Covid-19-related slowdown and works to save jobs. PwC India, Deloitte India, Ernst and Young or EY India have all decided to defer their employee appraisal cycles, which includes deferring promotions and bonuses, because of the virus outbreak, said officials working with these firms. KPMG India will take a decision next week but the senior partners may decide to forgo some of their incentives and bonuses. The appraisal cycle could also be deferred, said a person aware of the matter, who declined to be named. “We will be in a better position to comment on this next week as we are still evaluating our options,” said a KPMG spokesperson in an email.