

Daily News Monitor: 8 April 2020

1. PM Modi to discuss Covid-19 shutdown with Parliament floor leaders today

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

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold a meeting with Parliamentary floor leaders of different parties on 8 April morning at 11 am through video conference, to decide the future course of action as far as coronavirus outbreak in India is concerned, among other key issues. The primary point on the agenda will be whether to end the shutdown or extend it and if the government wishes to withdraw it, what should be the approach. The current shutdown is slated to end on April 14. Another point of discussion will be the economic impact of the shutdown on India and how to deal with it. Money released to states, future of daily wage workers who are the worst hit due to total shutdown and scope if any possible economic package will be discussed in the meeting, according to reports.

2. Covid-19 crisis may drag 400 mn Indian workers further into poverty: ILO

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

About 400 million workers in India, working in the informal economy, are at risk of falling deeper into poverty during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) said in a report on 8 April that the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting 2.7 billion workers globally due to lockdowns. COVID-19 is already affecting tens of millions of informal workers. In India, Nigeria and Brazil, the number of workers in the informal economy affected by the lockdown and other containment measures is substantial. In India, nearly 90 per cent of the people work in the informal economy and about 400 million of these are at risk. ILO said that particularly in low- and middle-income countries, hard-hit sectors have a high proportion of workers in informal employment and workers with limited access to health services and social protection. Without appropriate policy measures, workers face a high risk of falling into poverty and will experience greater challenges in regaining their livelihoods during the recovery period.

3. E-commerce firms ask govt to provide curfew passes valid for 6 months

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

E-commerce companies such as Amazon, Flipkart, Bigbasket, Grofers and the sellers are in talks with the government to help them provide curfew passes and approval of the list of the essential items, including IT products, during the lockdown period, sources said. The time period of 4-6 months would give enough visibility and time for the sellers to keep stock ready,

as these firms and sellers were of the view that the curfew passes provided to them would expire once the lockdown is lifted (after April 14). The companies have asked for digital curfew passes as e-retailers feel if more lockdowns are ordered after April 14, it is extremely difficult and time-consuming process to acquire the passes from local authorities. "All these passes and approvals that they are giving are valid until April 14. So, if the lockdown is extended by two more weeks, then again you have to run to collect the passes," said an executive at an e-commerce company.

4. India takes US to WTO's safeguard committee for hiking duties on steel, aluminium derivatives

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

India has sought consultations with the US, under the WTO's safeguard agreement, against American authorities' decision to increase import duties on derivatives of steel and aluminium products. In January this year, the US issued a presidential proclamation stating that steel and aluminium derivatives would be subject to tariff increase. According to a communication of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), India considers this measure of the US to be a safeguard measure within a provision of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994, and the Agreement on Safeguards. "India considers tariff increase through Presidential Proclamation on 24 January 2020 as an extension of earlier safeguard measures (announced in March 2018).

5. Commerce ministry terminates anti-dumping duty probe against chemical from Saudi Arabia

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

The commerce ministry has terminated an anti-dumping investigation against a chemical, used in polyester fibres and films, imported from Saudi Arabia following a request from Reliance Industries Ltd. In December last year, the ministry's investigation arm - Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) - initiated the probe into an alleged dumping of "Mono Ethylene Glycol" originating in or exported from Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Singapore, following a complaint by the company. "In view of the request made by the domestic industry, Reliance Industries Ltd...the designated authority hereby terminates the investigation initiated on 9th December 2019 against the imports of 'Mono Ethylene Glycol (or Ethylene Glycol)' originating in or exported from Saudi Arabia," the DGTR has said in a notification.

6. Coronavirus in India: Centre mulls longer COVID-19 lockdown

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

With the number of COVID-19 cases in India nearing the 5,000-mark, the Centre is considering suggestions from a number of states that the restrictions in place during the 21-day national lockdown should be extended beyond the deadline of April 14, government sources said. On 7 April, an informal Group of Ministers meeting on Covid-19 discussed the steps and protocols to be adopted after the lockdown, but sources said most states have suggested to Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) that they prefer continuing the lockdown to contain the outbreak. "The central government is thinking on the same line, but the Prime Minister will take a final call after considering all aspects and discussing with experts. We are sure that every state will follow the decisions he takes," said sources.

7. UAE assures additional LPG supplies to meet free LPG demand of India

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

United Arab Emirates (UAE) on 7 April promised additional supplies of LPG to help meet the government's three free cooking gas cylinders to poor during April-June. Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said he spoke to UAE Minister and Abu Dhabi National Oil Co (Adnoc) chief executive Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber. "At my request, Dr Jaber assured me of additional LPG supplies from @AdnocGroup to meet the free supply of three LPG refills during April-June period to over 8 crore Ujjwala (PMUY) beneficiaries as part of the economic package announced by the Government," Pradhan tweeted. Indian refineries have cut run-rates in view of slump in fuel demand resulting from an unprecedented nationwide lockdown that has shut businesses, suspended flights, stopped trains and driven most vehicles off-road. But the reduced run-rates of refineries also means the lower output of LPG. Cooking gas demand has, however, seen a surge and India is relying on imports to keep supply lines going.

8. Gujarat companies to export hydroxychloroquine to US: Vijay Rupani

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

With the Covid-19 outbreak creating additional demand for anti-malaria drug hydroxychloroquine, Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani on 7 April said three companies from the state will export it to the United States. In an interview to a private radio station, Rupani said his government has kept aside 1 crore hydroxychloroquine tablets to deal with any eventuality. "Gujarat is shining the world over. US President Trump has been vigorously demanding that drug from India. Now, when the Centre has given permission for its export, Gujarat is all set to send it to the United States," said Rupani. "Three Gujarat-based companies

have already started production of that drug to be supplied to the US. To be on the safer side, we have kept aside 1 crore tablet for our own use," the CM said.

9. Commerce ministry creates online platform for issuance of 'certificate of origin' for exporter

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

The commerce ministry has designed an online platform for issuance of a key document required for exports to those countries with which India has trade agreements, with a view to facilitate shipments during the COVID-19 crisis. An exporter has to submit a 'certificate of origin' at the landing port of the importing country. The document is important to claim duty concessions under free-trade agreements (FTAs). This certificate is essential to prove where their goods come from. The Directorate has asked all concerned agencies to issue the certificate under the trade agreements through this platform. Under these trade agreement, two or more trading partners significantly reduce or eliminate import duties on maximum number of goods traded between them. India has implemented such agreements with regions including ASEAN, Singapore, South Korea, Japan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, South Asian Free Trade Area, and Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement. The DGFT said that in view of the he movement restrictions in place due to the coronavirus pandemic in India, the designated agencies will issue digitally signed electronic certificates of origin only and no hard copy will be provided.

10. SAARC Development Fund allocates \$5 million for Covid-19 projects

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

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Development Fund (SDF) has allocated \$5 million for Covid-19 related projects in its member states, said a press release from the organisation on 7 April. "The objective of the US\$ 5 million allocation is to provide fund support to the Member States in their efforts and to protect the people of the SAARC Member States by mitigating the financial losses and severe socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic," said SDF CEO, Sunil Motiwal. To be eligible for the funding, the project would have to involve at least three member nations, the SDF said. The Bhutan-based body was mandated to build regional integration and economic cooperation through project funding among its member states.