

## Daily News Monitor: 14 August 2020

### **1. India announces \$500 mn for Maldives project to counter China influence**

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

India announced a \$500 million package to fund a project in the Maldives on 13 August to help it connect the capital Male to three nearby islands, stepping up New Delhi's diplomatic efforts in a region China has also been focusing recently. The Indian Ocean island nation, popular with tourists for its beaches and turquoise waters, has become a focal point in China's Belt and Road Initiative aimed at building trade and transport links across the region. On 14 August, India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar told his Maldivian counterpart, Abdulla Shahid, that New Delhi will support the Male connectivity project with a grant of \$100 million and a new line of credit of \$400 million, the Indian foreign ministry said.

### **2. National Health Authority board gives nod to integrate central health schemes with Ayushman Bharat**

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

The governing board of National Health Authority (NHA) on 14 August approved a proposal to integrate existing health schemes of Central Ministries and public sector undertakings with Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY). The move is expected to benefit government employees, including contractual employees, Central Armed Police Force personnel and other beneficiary groups such as building and construction workers, manual scavengers, and road accident victims, a statement said. The governing board also gave a go-ahead to conduct insurance pilots for covering missing middle/non-poor population (comprising varied sections of non-poor population such as informal sector workers, self-employed, professionals, employees in MSMEs etc) spread across occupations, geography and income strata, utilising the PM-JAY framework.

### **3. PM hints at 'fundamental reforms' in tax structure, unveils taxpayers' charter**

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

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 13 August launched a fully digitised system for the government's unobtrusive interface with income taxpayers of all variety and buttressed it with a tax charter that spells out the rights and responsibilities of both the taxpayer and the taxman. He also hinted at a plan to have 'fundamental reforms' in the country's tax structure. Launching a platform for "Transparent Taxation — Honouring the Honest" through video conferencing, he said 'faceless assessment' and the charter had come into immediate effect, while the facility of faceless appeal would be available from September 25. Referring to

Vivaad Se Vishwas sche-me for settling legacy disputes in direct taxes, Modi said nearly 3 lakh cases had been settled un-der the scheme that was launch-ed in the budget this year. Tax experts estimate the scheme, extended up to December 31 with full benefits including interest and penalty waiver, could potentially help the governme-nt mop up close to Rs 1 lakh crore.

#### **4. Amazon enters online pharmacy space in India; to compete with Netmeds, 1mg**

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

E-commerce giant Amazon has forayed into the online medicine segment and launched Amazon Pharmacy. The service has been started in areas with select pin codes in Bengaluru, while the company is learnt to be mulling scaling it up to other cities across India in the near future. The service would allow customers to order prescription-based medication in addition to over-the-counter medicines, basic health devices and Ayurveda medication from certified sellers. "As a part of our commitment to fulfill the needs of customers, we are launching Amazon Pharmacy in Bangalore," said an Amazon India spokesperson confirming the development. "This is particularly relevant in present times as it will help customers meet their essential needs while staying safe at home," the spokesperson said.

#### **5. Hyderabad-based Biological E joins hands with J&J for Covid-19 vaccine**

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

Hyderabad-based pharma company Biological E Limited (BE) has entered into an agreement with Janssen Pharmaceuticals for the development and manufacturing of Covid-19 drugs as well as Johnson & Johnson's (J&J) Covid-19 vaccine candidate. The vaccine candidate is in phase 1/2a clinical trials. Managing Director of Biological E, Mahima Datla said, "We are very pleased indeed to collaborate with an organisation like Johnson & Johnson. Given the magnitude of the Covid-19 pandemic, our ability to mount an effective response will be predicated on the ability to supply the vaccine globally and in significant quantities. This is best achieved through collaboration."

#### **6. In self-reliance push, Rajnath Singh launches weapons system made by Ordnance Factory Board**

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

Union defence minister Rajnath Singh on 14 August launched a number of weapon systems developed by different factories of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) as part of the Atma Nirbhar Week programme. At a programme in Delhi, Singh remotely launched Namica, a missile launching platform for the third generation anti-tank fire and forget missile "Nag", a new 8.6x70mm sniper rifle developed by the Rifle Factory Ishapore, a dual calibre anti-

material rifle developed by the Ordnance Factory Tiruchirappalli and an upgraded commander's thermal imager-cum-daysight for T-90 tanks developed by the Opto Electronic Factory Dehradun. The OFB said in a statement issued from its headquarters in Kolkata that Namica uses an indigenously produced infantry combat vehicle with amphibious capabilities. It has been jointly developed by Ordnance Factory Medak and DRDL. The platform can fire six missiles with a gap of 20 seconds between the shots.

**7. National Highways Authority of India forms SPV to fund Delhi-Mumbai Expressway**  
**Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))**

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has formed a special purpose vehicle (SPV) company for financing, construction and operation of the Rs 1 lakh crore Delhi-Mumbai expressway. The 1,300-km long Delhi-Mumbai greenfield expressways is one of the flagship projects of Bharatamala, India's highways development program. The SPV has been registered under the name of 'DME Development Ltd.' and will be wholly owned by NHAI, a source told ET. "We are moving swiftly on the SPV mode, depending on the success of the model, it will be replicated in other greenfield projects as well," the person said. The SPV shall raise debt on its balance sheet, while NHAI will retain the operational control during construction and operation and maintenance periods. The toll on the projects housed in SPV shall be collected by NHAI and SPV shall get the annuity payments without any construction and tolling risks.