

Daily News Monitor: 16 October 2020

1. Slight improvement in Delhi's air quality as wind helps in dispersion of pollutants

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

India Meteorological Department (IMD) on 16 October has said that pollution levels reduced slightly in the national capital with favourable wind speed helping in dispersion of pollutants. The city recorded an air quality index (AQI) of 251 at 10 am. The 24-hour average AQI was 315 on 15 October, the worst since February 12 (AQI 320). An AQI between 0 and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'. A senior scientist at IMD said the dip in pollution levels was likely because of an improvement in the wind speed (up to 10 kilometres per hour). The Ministry of Earth Sciences' Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi said the wind direction was northwesterly on Friday, which is favourable for transport of pollutants from farm fires.

2. Nitin Gadkari launches work on strategic Zojila tunnel, initiates first ceremonial blasting

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

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on 15 October launched the construction work on Zojila tunnel and exuded confidence that the strategic project which will provide all-year connectivity between Srinagar valley and Leh will be completed ahead of schedule. "It is a moment of pride for India. I am confident that it will be completed in four years and the Prime Minister will inaugurate it before the code of conduct for the next Lok Sabha elections," the Road Transport, Highways and MSMEs Minister said. The project has a completion schedule of six years. Gadkari was addressing an event after the virtual launch of construction work of the 14.15-km Zojila tunnel project through ceremonial first blast.

3. Govt plans to implement labour codes on April 1, starts shaping rules

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

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government plans to bring into effect new labour laws across the country from April 1. "We intend to implement the new labour codes from April 1. We have begun the process of giving shape to the rules that are to be framed under the codes and we are confident of finalising them in the last quarter of this fiscal year," Union Labour and Employment Secretary Apurva Chandra said on 14 October. Industries will have to file a single return to the authorities under the new labour law regime. Further, the number

of minimum wages that industries have to comply with is set to reduce to 12, from 540 under central labour laws and to 180-200 under state laws, from 9,000 at present.

4. Natco Pharma eyes launch of 8-10 new drugs yearly in Indian market

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

Natco Pharma aims to launch around 10 new products every year in the Indian market, the city-based drug maker said on 15 October. "Our strategy remains intact as we invest prudently in our research, manufacturing plants and enriching of skill sets. We are on track on our goal to launch 8-10 new products every year across our pharma business segments in India. We also have some interesting filings and high-value launches in our international markets in the coming years," VC Nannapaneni, chairman of the company said in his speech at the Annual General Meeting. During the year, Natco spent Rs 349 crore on capital expenditure, a majority of which was used to enhance capabilities of their manufacturing facilities.

5. Rapido forays into rickshaw booking, eyes expanding to 50 cities by yr-end

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

Ride hailing app Rapido on 15 October launched auto rickshaw booking service across 14 cities. The company plans to expand the 'Rapido Auto' service to 50 cities by the end of the year and onboard around 5 lakh driver partners in the next six months. Rapido co-founder Aravind Sanka said auto rickshaws have emerged as a preferred way of commuting post COVID-19 pandemic after bike taxis. "While the auto service industry is highly penetrated, it has only 5 per cent of its existing market online. Through Rapido Auto, we aim to offer commuters another safe and affordable option for their everyday commute, apart from our bike taxi service, that is standardized in pricing and operation," Sanka was quoted as saying in a statement.

6. Centre to borrow on behalf of states to meet GST shortfall

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

The Central government will borrow up to Rs 1.1 lakh crore on behalf of the states to bridge the shortfall in GST collections, the Finance Ministry said on 15 October. A slowdown in the economy since last fiscal has resulted in a drop in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections, upsetting the budgets of states which had given up their right to levy local taxes such as sales tax or VAT when GST was introduced in July 2017. In a statement, the Union Finance Ministry said states were offered a special window to borrow Rs 1.1 lakh crore over and above their existing limits, to bridge the shortfall. "Under the Special Window, the estimated shortfall of Rs 1.1 lakh crore (assuming all States join) will be borrowed by

Government of India in appropriate tranches,” the statement said. “The amount so borrowed will be passed on to the States as a back-to-back loan in lieu of GST Compensation Cess releases.”

7. Focusing on protecting people, health of population remain a priority for India: IMF
Source: Financial Express ([Link](#))

India’s priorities should be to protect the most vulnerable people, well targeted support and protecting small and medium sized enterprises so that they do not collapse as the country battles the COVID-19 pandemic, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund Kristalina Georgieva has said. Speaking at a news conference here during the ongoing annual meeting of the IMF and the World Bank, Georgieva said on 14 October that focusing on protecting people and on the health of the population remain a priority for India. “What needs to be done? — Well, clearly protecting the most vulnerable people, well-targeted support, protecting small and medium sized enterprises/firms so they do not collapse, and using what the government is now aiming to do, a further injection of support in a way that gives a better chance to turn a corner,” Georgieva said.

8. Apollo Hospitals gears up to administer 1 million covid-19 vaccine
Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Ltd on 15 October said it is preparing to administer 1 million covid-19 vaccines daily when a successful shot is made available, through its network of 70 hospitals as well as clinics, corporate health centres and pharmacies. The healthcare chain is also training its staff at 4,000 pharmacies on inoculation through a certification course which is scheduled next month, Apollo Hospitals executive vice-chairperson Shobana Kamineni said. Every pharmacy will also be staffed with a nurse as government regulations stipulate that only doctors and nurses can administer a vaccine injection.

9. Indian Railways invites private firms to develop goods sheds
Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

Railway ministry has issued a policy to develop goods sheds at small, road side stations via private sector investment, it said 14 October. The move is expected to enhance its terminal capacity through private sector participation by revamping existing goods-sheds as well as setting up of new facilities that the national transporter has not been able to execute due to lack of resources. Indian Railways has been trying to increase the modal share of its freight business, which also requires augmentation of line and terminal capacity. “The policy shall be applicable for setting up of new (green-field) goods-shed, and can also be applied for development of

existing (brown-field) goods-sheds as decided by zonal railway," according to a railway ministry circular.