

Daily News Monitor: 18 August 2020

1. Residential property launches back on track as consumer sentiment improves

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

In signs of green shoots in the real estate sector, several developers have lined up launches in the coming quarters, with consumer sentiment improving and construction activities getting back to normal. Bengaluru-based Prestige Estates, which had put all its launches on hold after the Covid-19 outbreak, plans to start seven residential projects across south India during the second and third quarters. With these projects, the company is targeting to get back to the pre-Covid quarterly level of over Rs 1,000 crore of gross bookings and collections from the second quarter of 2020-21 onwards. “Sales numbers in the second quarter will definitely be more than double of the previous quarter,” said Irfan Razack, chairman and managing director (MD) of Prestige Estates, during an investors’ call..

2. Bengaluru 26th fastest-growing residential market globally in Q2: Report

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

The onset of Covid-19 pandemic brought economic activity to a standstill across the globe, especially in the second quarter of calendar year 2020 (Q2CY20) / April – June 2020 quarter (June 2020 quarter), had an impact on residential property prices across major global cities during this period on year-on-year (YoY basis). Knight Frank's Prime Global Cities index, an unweighted average of the change in prices across 45 cities, hit its lowest rate of annual growth since October – December 2009 quarter (Q4-2009) when the world was in the grip of the global financial crisis (GFC). It expects the index to display muted growth in the second half of 2020 before recovering in 2021. The global real estate consultant defines prime residential property as the most desirable and most expensive property in a given location, generally defined as the top 5 per cent of each market by value. “Prices increased by 0.9 per cent on average in the year to June 2020, down from 2.3 per cent in the March 2020 quarter,” the Knight Frank survey released Monday revealed.

3. India to propose creation of World Solar Bank at ISA's next summit

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

The Indian government will propose a World Solar Bank during the next assembly of International Solar Alliance (ISA) scheduled to be held in October. The proposed financing agency is aimed to pool resources from across the globe and use them to fund solar power projects in ISA member countries. The proposed capital size of the World Solar Bank would

be \$10 billion. ISA officials said the country that would request to host the headquarters of the bank would have to contribute 30 per cent of the proposed capital. “A global competition would be held among the member countries to decide who will have the bank’s headquarters,” said the ISA official. They also said there was no decision on banning Chinese companies from participating in the tender floated by ISA for several renewable energy and energy-efficiency projects.

4. PM Modi chairs meet to review preparations for master plan for multi-modal connectivity to economic zones

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

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 17 August chaired a meeting to review the preparations for the national master plan for providing multi-modal connectivity to various economic zones. The prime minister described it as an important endeavour that will boost productivity, infrastructure, economic progress and opportunities for youngsters. “Chaired a meeting to review the preparations for National Master Plan For Providing Multi Modal Connectivity To Various Economic Zones. This is an important endeavour, that will boost productivity, infrastructure, economic progress and opportunities for our youngsters,” he tweeted. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Railway, and Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri were among those who attended the meeting.

5. Nirmala Sitharaman seeks investment from UAE for Rs 111 lakh crore National Infrastructure Pipeline

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

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on 17 August held a virtual bilateral meeting with United Arab Emirates (UAE) Minister of State for Financial Affairs Obaid Al Tayer and urged the Middle Eastern nation to participate in India’s ambitious Rs 111 lakh crore National Infrastructure Pipeline. About 7,000 projects have been identified under the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) with projected investment of Rs 111 lakh crore during 2020-25. “Finance Minister Smt. @nsitharaman today held a bilateral meeting via VC with H.E. Obaid Al Tayer, MoS Financial Affairs, UAE. “Both leaders expressed respect for the long standing relationship between India & UAE, and the need to take it further in mutually beneficial ways,” the finance ministry said in a series of tweets.

6. One nation, one ration card: Many states yet to come on board but govt committed to roll it out by March 2021

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

The parliamentary standing committee on labour on 17 August was informed that many states such as Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Chhattishgarh, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam are yet to come on board the “one nation, one ration card” mechanism; but the Centre is committed to roll it out pan-India by March 2021. The one nation-one ration card aims to ensure that ration card holders are able to lift their entitled quota of subsidised foodgrains from any ePoS-enabled fair price shop of their choice anywhere in the country by using the existing ration card after Aadhaar authentication on ePoS device. Sources said while 24 states and UTs are already on board, 12 states and UTs are yet to lend support. While some states, not agreeing to so far, want the co-existence of the hybrid system — under which a ration card holder is entitled to lift the share using either the old system or the new system; some other states want internet connectivity to improve before the system is rolled out.

7. India, Nepal review progress of goodwill development projects

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

India and Nepal on 18 August reviewed the status of various development projects supported by New Delhi in the Himalayan nation and decided to speed up their implementation against the backdrop of consistent efforts by China to draw Kathmandu into its sphere of influence with cheap loans and infrastructure projects. The talks between Indian ambassador to Kathmandu Vinay Kwatra and Nepalese foreign secretary Shanker Das Bairagi followed Nepalese Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli telephoning his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi to greet him on India’s 74th Independence Day on Saturday. The conversation between the two prime ministers was the first high-level contact since May when bilateral ties became stressed after Nepal issued a new map showing several Indian territories within Nepal’s boundaries. The discussions between Kwatra and Bairagi were the eighth round of talks under the India-Nepal Oversight Mechanism.

8. Judicial delays make a mockery of India’s ‘ease of business’ rank

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

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is eager to convince global companies and investors that India is a business-friendly alternative to China. A top court ruling this summer told another story, highlighting the infamous judicial delays that threaten to stymie businesses and scuttled deals. The Supreme Court ended the 38-year saga of an alleged turmeric forger, who was arrested in 1982 and, eventually, sentenced to a month in jail and a ₹500 fine. After a decade,

the top court reversed his conviction; the two lower courts took around 14 years each to render verdicts. The lifespan of the turmeric case is extreme, but not unique among the nearly 40 million cases pending across the country's three-tiered judicial system. Among cases in 25 State High Courts, roughly 173,000 have been pending for more than 20 years, and roughly half of those for more than 30, government data showed.

9. Hotel bookings recovery: India ranks third last among top 16 tourism markets

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

Among the top 16 tourism markets in the world, India is at the third last place in hotel bookings recovery for the week ended August 9, 2020, compared to the same week last year. However, in terms of weekly average recovery rate between week 22 and week 32 of 2020, India is at the absolute bottom. This challenging trend is expected to continue as the traveller sentiment remains weak, with Covid-19 spreading in tourist centres such as Goa, Rajasthan, the North-East and Karnataka. Globally, the US (67 per cent), China (66 per cent), Germany (41 per cent) and Canada (41 per cent) have witnessed strong recovery in the same period as restrictions ease in these countries and they move towards normalcy. India registered a 3 per cent recovery in week 22 of 2020 (May 25-31), slowly rising to 12 per cent in week 27 (June 29-July 5) and 20 per cent in week 32 (August 3-9).