

Daily News Monitor: 25 August 2020

1. India, Uzbekistan hold first meeting of the National Coordination Committee

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

India and Uzbekistan held their first meeting of the National Coordination Committee for monitoring implementation of mutually agreed projects between India and Uzbekistan on 24 August. According to an official statement by the Ministry of External Affairs, both countries reviewed the ongoing and planned activities of bilateral economic and trade cooperation. "Both sides comprehensively reviewed the ongoing and planned activities of bilateral economic and trade cooperation, including the status of negotiations for concluding a Bilateral Investment Treaty, Preferential Trade Agreement, mutual market access for agricultural produce of both countries, implementation of identified projects under India's Lines of Credit, cooperation between the state of Gujarat and the Andijan region of Uzbekistan, and the India-Uzbekistan Entrepreneurship Development Centre at Tashkent," read the statement.

2. Govt, RBI need to share cost of maintaining UPI infrastructure: Report

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

The government and the Reserve Bank of India need to share the cost with banks associated with maintaining UPI infrastructure as it reduces the demand for cash and helps in curtailing expenditure on printing and managing currency notes, according to a report prepared by IIT-Bombay. Observing that about Rs 5,000 crore is spent annually on printing cash alone and even more on managing it, the report said, "The expenditure towards maintaining Unified Payment Interface (UPI) may be much lower and could even curtail the expenditure on cash." The report further said UPI as a digital payments platform increases efficiency towards tax compliance, and provides overall convenience for public good. "With the government's vision of no direct or indirect charge on payments using UPI, an appropriate sharing of cost burden by the government and the RBI is called for (with UPI being the simplest alternative to cash in this era of mobile phones)," the report added.

3. Centre issues SOPs for Vande Bharat, Air Transport Bubble Flights

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

The Centre announced Standard Operating Procedures for travel on Vande Bharat and Air Transport Bubble Flights for inbound and outbound travel. As per the Civil Aviation Ministry's guidelines, the cost of travel will have to be borne by the travellers. "At the time of

boarding all travellers to undergo thermal screening. Only asymptomatic travellers to be allowed to board," it added. "Category of persons eligible to travel will be permitted by the Home Ministry from time to time. Civil Aviation Ministry will display on its website the category of persons eligible to travel out of India," it read. The eligible persons would have to apply to the civil aviation agency or their designated agency along with their necessary details. "Travel shall be on non-scheduled commercial flights as allowed by the Civil Aviation Ministry. While onboard, precautions such as wearing masks, hand hygiene etc. to be observed by staff crew and all passengers," it added.

4. Over 35 mn people tested for Covid under 'Test Track Treat' strategy: MoHFW **Source: Business Standard ([Link](#))**

Over 3.5 crore people have been tested for COVID-19 so far, resolutely following the 'Test Track Treat' strategy, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) said on 25 August. "India has tested more than 3.5 crore people for COVID-19 so far, resolutely following its 'Test Track Treat' strategy," the MoHFW tweeted. On Monday, the country's total coronavirus count reached 31,06,349 which include 23,38,036 cured/discharged/migrated cases. The death toll stood at 57,542. The Ministry further pointed out that high testings in the country have helped in controlling the spread of the infection. "As the first step towards timely identification, prompt isolation and effective treatment, higher testing also results in limiting the spread of infection," it said.

5. Serum Institute to begin phase 2 human trial of Oxford Covid-19 vaccine today **Source: Livemint ([Link](#))**

The phase 2 human clinical trial of the Oxford COVID-19 vaccine candidate in India by Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) is set to begin from 25 August. Serum Institute of India has partnered with British-Swedish pharma company AstraZeneca for manufacturing the COVID-19 vaccine candidate, developed by the University of Oxford. Human clinical trial process at the Bharati Vidyapeeth Medical College, Pune. The study to determine the safety and immunogenicity of "Covishield" on healthy Indian adults will begin at Bharati Vidyapeeth Medical College and Hospital in Pune from 25 August. "We have got all approvals from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO). We are going to start the human clinical trial process at the Bharati Vidyapeeth (Deemed to be University) Medical College and Hospital from August 25," Prakash Kumar Singh, Additional Director, Government and Regulatory Affairs, Serum Institute of India (SII) told PTI.

6. Auto companies aim for projects in defence sector as growth slows

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

India's automobile companies and parts makers plan to tap opportunities in the defence sector to offset sluggish demand for automobiles in the domestic market amid the coronavirus crisis. The companies also want to exploit a government push for increased local manufacturing of defence equipment and a deeper presence of private firms in this strategic sector. Companies such as Ashok Leyland Ltd, Force Motors Ltd, BEML Ltd, Bharat Forge Ltd, JCB India Ltd and Automotive Axles Ltd see the government's localization push for the defence sector as a major opportunity. The defence ministry on 9 August issued a list of 101 items on which an imports embargo will be imposed with certain timelines. While 69 items on the list were given the import embargo deadline of December 2020, the timeline for the remaining items stretches until December 2025.

7. Tripura-Bangladesh water route trial run in September, says Chief Minister Deb

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

The inland waterways Sonamura-Daudkandi route connecting Tripura to Bangladesh will have its first trial run in September, Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb said. The 93-km-long Sonamura-Daudkandi waterway route was included in the list of Indo-Bangla protocol (IBP) routes in May this year. The chief minister said the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority has given permission for trial run from Daundkandi in Comilla district of Bangladesh to Sonamura in Tripura's Sepahijala district, 60 km away from Agartala via River Gomati. Tripura launched a floating jetty on River Gomati on July 4 as part of the Indo-Bangla international inland waterways connectivity project.

8. Atmanirbhar Bharat: Sectors that provide good opportunities for private investment and FDI

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

Private investment is sought for airport construction, which has also become synonymous with Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhijan. Earlier six airports viz. Ahmedabad, Mangalore, Lucknow, Guwahati, Thiruvanthapuram, Jaipur were offered to Adani group for development and upgrade. The concessionaire agreement has been signed for Jaipur, Guwahati and Thiruvanthapuram. The plan is to construct and develop 100 airports (major and minor) in the country by 2024. New airports immensely contribute to mobility, networking, and communication and these being mostly on build-operate-transfer (BOT) mode of public-private partnership (PPP), would render support to the construction sector. The government has rightfully identified a number of areas that still necessitate imports. The case in point is

imports of power plant equipment like pressure vessels etc. The Centre has decided to offer productivity-linked incentives and phased manufacturing for certain power plant equipment manufacturers like BHEL, NHPC and Alstom, L&T etc. Apart from a few PSUs, a host of other private entities are involved.

9. Mumbai, Kolkata airports to operate more flights soon, says Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri

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

In a silver lining for the domestic air travel industry in India during the Coronavirus pandemic situation, Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri has said that the bulk of pre-COVID-19 domestic air passenger traffic is likely to be back by Diwali 2020 which is on November 14. The Minister of State for Civil Aviation (Independent Charge) revealed that the central government has plans to allow more flights from Mumbai and Kolkata. These two airports are having restricted operations due to pandemic situations, as per the Indian Express report. Notably, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (BOM) in Mumbai and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport (CCU) in Kolkata feature among the top five busiest airports in the country.