

Daily News Monitor: 30 September 2020

1. Serum Institute to make 100 mn more doses of Covid vaccine for Rs 250 each

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

Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII), the world's largest vaccine maker by volume, will now be producing an additional 100 million Covid-19 vaccine doses for India as well as low- and medium-income countries (LMICs) in 2021. The vaccine will come for \$3 or around Rs 250 per dose. This would take the total volume of vaccines that SII will offer at this price to 200 million. The company has received an additional \$150 million risk funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The announcement practically takes forward the collaboration among SII, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. This comes after the August announcement when SII said it would deliver 100 million doses at Rs 250 a dose. The partnership has now been extended to 200 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines, with AstraZeneca's as well as Novavax's vaccine being the candidates. The Gates Foundation, via its Strategic Investment Fund, will provide at-risk funding of a further \$150 million to Gavi, bringing the total funding provided through this collaboration to \$300 million.

2. Ashok Soota debuts in Hurun India rich list with Happiest Minds bumper IPO

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

As many businesses struggle to keep afloat amid the Covid-19 pandemic, Reliance Industries (RIL) Chairman Mukesh Ambani's wealth is growing at an astounding pace. He has gained Rs 90 crore per hour, or Rs 1.5 crore per minute, since the March lockdown, according to the IIFL Wealth Hurun India Rich List 2020. Ambani's wealth has surged 73 per cent this year to Rs 6.58 trillion and he retains the richest Indian title for the ninth consecutive year. He is also the richest individual in Asia. His wealth is now "bigger than the combined wealth of the next 5 on the list", said Anas Rahman Junaid, MD and chief researcher, Hurun India. In the calendar year 2020, RIL has been among the top wealth creators at the bourses, with a rise of 48 per cent. From the March 2020 low, when it had plunged to Rs 867.82, the stock has gained 158 per cent to over Rs 2,200 now, helping Ambani fortify his position at the top.

3. Amnesty International halts India operations citing govt witch-hunt

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

Amnesty International on 29 September halted its work in India days after its bank accounts were frozen by the government in what the organisation called a witch-hunt of human rights organisations. Amnesty International was compelled to let go of staff and pause all ongoing

campaigns and research work after it came to know about the freezing on September 10. Avinash Kumar, executive director of Amnesty International India, said the government crackdown over the past two years was not accidental and was akin to freezing dissent. “The constant harassment by government agencies, including the ED, is a result of our unequivocal calls for transparency in the government, more recently for accountability of the Delhi police and the Government of India regarding the grave human rights violations in Delhi riots and Jammu & Kashmir,” he said.

4. Abu Dhabi’s Mubadala in advanced talks to invest up to \$1 bln in Reliance Retail-sources

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

Abu Dhabi state fund Mubadala Investment Co is in advanced talks to invest up to \$1 billion in the retail division of India’s Reliance Industries Ltd, two sources told Reuters, as investor interest in the Indian company surges. Reliance Retail is on a fund raising spree and has secured around \$1.8 billion in the past few weeks from KKR & Co and Silver Lake Partners. Reliance, controlled by Asia’s richest man Mukesh Ambani, has approached investors, who collectively pumped more than \$20 billion into its Jio Platforms digital business this year, to take stakes in its retail business, which has nearly 12,000 stores and sells everything from groceries and electronics to fashion and shoes.

5. India may soon store crude oil in US, other foreign nations; invites cos to enhance domestic capacity

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

Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan on 29 September said that the government is exploring overseas crude storage facilities in the US and other commercially viable locations. Speaking at the ‘GCTC Energy Security Conference 2020’, Dharmendra Pradhan added that taking the advantage of low crude oil prices in April and May 2020, India filled the existing strategic petroleum reserves with 16 million barrels of crude oil, resulting in saving Rs 5,000 crore for the government. The minister further invited the participation of companies in the development of 6.5 MMT of crude storage capacities at Chandikol and Padur in the next commercial-cum-strategic reserve programme, according to the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.

6. India’s crackdown on NGOs, in four charts

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

Last week’s amendments to the law that regulates foreign grants to non-government organisations (NGOs) continues the recent trend of the centre making greater administrative

demands on them, increasing their cost of compliance. The centre says the changes are aimed at “strengthening the compliance mechanism, enhancing transparency and accountability” in a key funding source for the NGO sector. Civil society says the new regulations are ill-conceived and only add to the difficulty of their functioning. Three amendments in particular have riled NGOs: opening a pass-through bank account in a specified branch in New Delhi, stopping NGOs from transferring foreign grants to other registered NGOs, and the lower cap on administrative expenses. Each has significant financial and compliance implications for NGOs.

7. Lufthansa cancels all planned India flights

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

German airline Lufthansa has cancelled all flights to India from Wednesday till 20 October due to what it termed an “unexpected rejection” of its planned flight schedule for October by Indian authorities. “Lufthansa had applied for the continuation of special flights it was granted to operate until the end of September. This application process is necessary since India has so far not accepted the invitation by the German government to discuss details regarding a temporary travel agreement between both countries,” the airline said in a statement on Tuesday. “Due to the Indian government’s rejection, Lufthansa will now have to cancel all planned flights between Germany and India between 30 September and 20 October,” it added.

8. Non-China firms fill funding gap in startups

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

As Chinese investors pull the brakes on investing in Indian startups, investors from US, Europe and Singapore are filling the gap by placing fresh bets on unicorns. In the last few months, veteran investors like Singapore’s Temasek Holdings, New York-based hedge fund Tiger Global Management and others like DST Global, Bond and Silver Lake have stepped up investments in startups. China’s tech giant Alibaba Group is unlikely to sign fresh deals in Indian firms in the coming months amid higher scrutiny, Mint reported on 27 August. Other Chinese investors too stalled new funding after changes in foreign direct investment (FDI) rules that made prior government approval mandatory for investments from countries that share a land border with India. With the new investments coming in, large Chinese investors may gradually reduce stake and exit large startups after aggressively investing in recent years, given the uncertainty ahead.

9. RBI gives more time to states to avail additional market borrowing, OD facility

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

With an aim to help state governments tide over the financial problems triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, the RBI on September 29 extended by six months the additional flexibility provided to states to raise funds through market borrowing and overdraft. The Reserve Bank in April provided additional flexibility to states and Union Territories (UTs) to raise funds to deal with the COVID-19 crisis. The flexibility was available till September 30, 2020. On a review, it has been decided to extend the measures announced on April 17, 2020 and April 7, 2020 with regard to increase in WMA Limits of states/UTs and overdraft (OD) regulations, respectively, for a further period of 6 months till March 31, 2021, the central bank said in a press release.