

Daily News Monitor: 5 October 2020

1. India exceeds WHO advisory on Covid-19 testing by almost six times

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

India has exceeded the 140 tests per day for per million population, as advised by the World Health Organization (WHO) for comprehensive surveillance, of COVID-19 by nearly six times, said the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) on 5 October. "WHO in its Guidance Note on "Public Health Criteria to Adjust Public Health and Social Measures in the Context of COVID-19" has advised that a country needs 140 tests/day/million population for comprehensive surveillance of suspected cases," the MoHFW's tweet read. "India has exceeded 140 tests/day/million population as advised by WHO by nearly 6 times. Several States/UTs have demonstrated better performance than the national average," it added. The MoHFW further said that many Indian states and Union Territories (UTs) are performing significantly better than even the national average in conducting tests.

2. Nirmala Sitharaman to chair stormy 42nd GST Council meeting today

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

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will chair the 42nd Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council meeting at 11 am on 5 October. Minister of State (MoS) for Finance Anurag Thakur and Finance Ministers of States and Union Territories (UT) will also be present at the meeting. "Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will chair the 42nd GST Council meeting via video conferencing at 11 AM in New Delhi 5 October. The meeting will be attended by MOS Anurag Thakur besides Finance Ministers of States and UTs and Senior officers from the Union Government and States," the Ministry of Finance wrote on Twitter. In the last meeting held on August 27, the GST Council presented two options to states regarding GST compensation including a special window in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to provide Rs 97,000 crores at a reasonable interest rate and that the entire GST compensation gap of Rs 2,35,000 crores this year can be met by them in consultation with RBI.

3. Over 100,000 Amazon-enabled local shops, kiranas gear up for festive season

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

Ahead of the festive season, over 100,000 Amazon-enabled local shops, kiranas and neighbourhood stores from across India are geared up to serve customers. More than 20,000 offline retailers and kiranas from 'Local Shops on Amazon' programme will be participating

in their first 'Great Indian Festival' sale event, which would be hosted by the e-commerce giant this month. They will be catering to customers in their cities and across India, selling everything from daily essentials to large appliances as well as gifts and fresh flowers. Amazon said the programme has scaled rapidly in just 5 months; with more than 40 per cent of the sellers coming from outside the top 10 cities. "This festive season we are focused on helping our sellers and other MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) partners grow their business and bounce back from the recent challenges," said Manish Tiwary, vice president, Amazon India. "In the last few months, we have seen businesses of all sizes increasingly adopting the technology. We hope that this Great Indian Festival will bring them growth and success as they get ready to serve millions of across India," he said.

4. Paytm launches its own mini app store

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

Digital payments firm Paytm has launched a mini-app store to support Indian developers, in a direct challenge to Google's dominance in the space. The launch of the store follows the payment app being temporarily removed from Google's Play Store on 18 September for violating developer guidelines on real-money gaming. While the removal of the app may be a trigger, Paytm's move is perhaps a direct fallout of Google mandating that developers listed on its Play Store use its billing service. Google levies a 30% commission on any transaction made for a digital product or service through its in-app billing system. Paytm said the mini-app store will help developers take their products to the masses and is providing listing and distribution of these mini-apps within its app. Rival PhonePe launched its in-app platform in June 2018 and rebranded it to PhonePe Switch in October 2019.

5. Centre offers marketing support to states to push 'One District One Product' agri plan

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

The Centre plans to extend marketing support to states that implement the 'one district one product' plan in the ensuing rabi season to help farmers cultivate identified products on a bigger scale and get better prices, officials said. "Food products rich in nutritious ragi can be developed in Karnataka, sunflower in Tamil Nadu, and mustard in Rajasthan. Similarly, there are many districts which have GI crops like Chilli in Guntur and Alphonso mangoes from Ratnagiri," a government official said. "These districts can be developed as niche markets for particular crops resulting in improvement in varieties." There are 540 districts in the country and more than 100 out of them have GI tag crops, which can gain from the plan, officials said. "One agriculture or horticulture crop already grown in a district or having potential in

all parameters like suitable climate and capacity to raise income of farmers will be identified),” an agriculture ministry official said.

6. Waive property rights from vaccines, India, South Africa urge WTO. All you need to know

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

India and South Africa have urged World Trade Organisation to waive certain Intellectual Property rights of Covid-19 medicines and vaccines. Both the countries have expressed concerns over the shortage of medical products owing to intellectual property rights (IPR), will lengthen the ongoing pandemic. IPR are the rights given to people over the creations of their minds, which in case of vaccine distribution can become a hindrance. India has already said its vaccine production capacity will be used to help all countries. Addressing the United Nations General Assembly, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, “India’s vaccine production and delivery capacity will be used to help all humanity in fighting this crisis. From January 2021, as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, India will be committed to its responsibilities.”

7. Resumption of air bubble: India to hold talks with Germany

Source: The Indian Express ([Link](#))

India and Germany, which recently had a fallout over international flight operations leading to suspension of the air bubble arrangement between the two countries, are expected to hold discussions this week in an effort iron out their differences, The Indian Express has learnt. On October 2, Air India announced cancellation of its flights to Frankfurt till October 14 after Germany withdrew its approval granted to the airline to operate under the air bubble arrangement. This was preceded by the Indian side asking Lufthansa to curtail its schedule, which led to the German airline cancelling its flights to India till October 20.

8. Government decides to waive interest on loans up to Rs 2 crore

Source: The Indian Express ([Link](#))

Stating that a complete waiver of interest for loan repayments during the moratorium period would affect the very survival of banks and create problems for depositors, the Centre has told the Supreme Court that it has decided to waive compound interest on MSME and personal loans up to Rs 2 crore for the six-month period. In an affidavit filed in the top court, the Union Finance Ministry said that “after careful consideration and weighing all possible options, the... Government... has decided that the relief on waiver of compound interest during the six-month moratorium period shall be limited to the most vulnerable category of borrowers”.