

Daily News Monitor: 22 September 2020

1. Lok Sabha passes epidemic diseases bill to protect healthcare workers

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

Lok Sabha on 21 September passed the Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Bill, 2020 to protect healthcare professionals against violence during crises such as the covid-19 pandemic. The bill, which had been cleared by Rajya Sabha on 19 September and passed by voice vote in Lok Sabha, moots up to five years' imprisonment for those attacking doctors and healthcare workers during a health crisis. The amendment bill states that any commission or abetment to acts of violence shall be punished with imprisonment of three months to five years and a fine of ₹50,000 to ₹2 lakh. If the attackers cause grievous hurt, they can be imprisoned for six months to seven years with fine of ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh. The offender will also be liable to pay compensation to the victim and twice the fair market value for damage of property. The bill covers public and clinical healthcare service providers, such as doctors, nurses, paramedical workers, community health workers, and persons empowered under the Epidemic Diseases Act.

2. First direct cargo ferry service between India, Maldives flagged off

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

In line with New Delhi's commitment to Male since June 2019, a direct cargo ferry service between India and Maldives commenced on 21 September. This is the first time that a direct cargo shipping line is connecting the two neighbouring countries. The ferry service, which was announced by PM Narendra Modi in June 2019 during his visit to Maldives, was launched in an e-flag-off ceremony jointly by MoS (Independent Charge) Shipping Mansukh Mandaviya and Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation of Maldives Aishath Nahula. Commencement of the service was announced by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during his virtual meeting with the Foreign Minister of Maldives Abdulla Shahid on August 13.

3. India's imports from China dip 27.63% during April-August: Piyush Goyal

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

India's imports from China declined by 27.63 per cent during April-August this fiscal to \$21.58 billion over the same period previous year, Parliament was informed on 21 September. Value of imports from China stood at \$4.98 billion in August and \$5.58 in July, according to the data provided by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal in his written reply to the Lok Sabha. "India's imports from China have declined by 27.63 per cent during April-August,

2020-21 over the corresponding period of the previous year,” he said. In a separate reply, the minister said there is no proposal under consideration on withdrawal of Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to China. “No such proposal is under consideration at this time,” he said while replying to a question whether the government is planning for the withdrawal of MFN status to China to reduce the export-import business with that country.

4. Skoda committed to India market, relooking at diesel for bigger vehicles

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

Skoda Auto India’s latest launch of the Rapid TSI (petrol), which is an automatic mid-size sedan with a petrol engine, reinforces the company's commitment towards growing its footprint in the country and is the extended part of the launch of three cars that were rolled out in May. The Skoda Superb, Skoda Rapid, and Skoda Karoq were rolled out earlier as part of the company's Rs 8,000 crore investment in India which Zac Hollis, Skoda Auto’s director of sales and marketing, said remained unchanged despite the Covid pandemic. The Czech-origin brand -- which is owned by the Volkswagen Group worldwide and runs under the newly formed company Skoda Auto Volkswagen India here -- is also on track to launch three more vehicles next year. These are the brand new Skoda Octavia, a mid-size SUV, and a mid-size sedan -- both of which will be heavily localised, Hollis said.

5. Aviation Ministry sanctions ₹108 crore for up-gradation of 3 airports

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

Ministry of Civil Aviation identified and approved 78 new routes under the first phase of UDAN 4.0 (UdeDeshkaAamNagrik) on 21 September. "78 new routes have been identified and approved under the first phase of UDAN 4.0. Airports Authority of India, the Implementing Agency is in the process of awarding these routes to the Selected Airline Operators (SAOs)," said the Ministry in an official release. As per another release issued by the Ministry, the Government of India has sanctioned ₹108 crore under UDAN for up-gradation of 3 Chhattisgarh Airports. The release said that Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri made the announcements at the inaugural event of flight operations by Alliance Air from Jagdalpur in Chhattisgarh to Raipur in Chhattisgarh, and Hyderabad in Telangana under the UDAN scheme on 22 September.

6. CII survey finds business sentiment bounce-back between July and September as restrictions eased

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

Business sentiment has bounced back between July and September as India gradually lifted restrictions imposed due to the outbreak of Covid-19, a confederation of Indian industry (CII)

survey has pointed out. Even though capacity utilisation has been improving, weak domestic demand still remains a concern, the industry body said in its recent Business Outlook Survey. “While a recovery is underway, it could be tremendously expedited through continued government support and handholding of businesses during this crisis,” CII director general Chandrajit Banerjee said in a statement. The latest CII Business Confidence Index surged to 50.3 in July-September 2020, bouncing back from its lowest reading of 41.0 recorded in April-Jun 2020.

7. PM lays foundation for 9 highway projects in Bihar, inaugurates optical fibre connectivity

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

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for nine national highway projects worth over Rs 14,258 crore in poll-bound Bihar on 21 September and launched optical fibre Internet services to connect the state's all 45,945 villages. Asserting that the pace of highway construction has doubled since his party came to power in 2014 and expenditure on it rose by five times since then, Modi said at a virtual event that Rs 110 lakh crore will be spent on infrastructure in the coming four- five years, with Rs 19 lakh crore allocated for highway development alone. The nine highway projects in Bihar involve a road length of about 350 kilometres. Launching Internet services through optical fibres, he said the day is historic for not only Bihar but the country as well because the government is taking major steps to make villages the mainstay of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'.