

Daily News Monitor: 20 January 2021

1. India to start supply of Covid vaccines to neighbouring countries from Jan 20

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

India will start the supply of Covid-19 vaccines under grant assistance to neighbouring countries — Bhutan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and Seychelles — from 20 January 2021. In respect of Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Mauritius, confirmation of their necessary regulatory clearances is awaited. This is in keeping with India's stated commitment to using indigenous vaccine production and delivery capacity to help humanity fight the Covid-19 pandemic. The immunisation programme is being implemented in India, as in other countries, in a phased manner to cover the healthcare providers, frontline workers and the most vulnerable. Keeping in view the domestic requirements of the phased rollout, India will continue to supply Covid-19 vaccines to partner countries over the coming weeks and months in a phased manner. It will be ensured that domestic manufacturers will have adequate stocks to meet domestic requirements while supplying abroad.

2. India Subcontracting Expo 2021 to highlight trade opportunities in India for US businesses

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

Taking a clue from Central Asian country Uzbekistan, Gujarat government on 19 January invited high net-worth individuals, institutions and corporate for horticulture farming on lease agreement on barren wasteland owned by the state government. For the purpose, the state government has initially identified 50,000 acres of barren land in five districts including Surendranagar, Sabarkantha, Patan, Kutch and Banaskantha and allowed farming on lease contract under 'Chief Minister Horticulture Development Mission'. Already the state government has put a list of land blocks for land allotment through I-Khetdud portal of the state agriculture department. Under the mission, an applicant, not necessarily a farmer, can apply for a piece of barren land ranging from minimum 50-hectare (125 acres) to maximum 1000-hectare (400 acres) land on 30 years lease.

3. India plans foreign investment rule changes that could hit Amazon

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

India is considering revising its foreign investment rules for e-commerce, three sources and a government spokesman told Reuters, a move that could compel players, including Amazon.com Inc, to restructure their ties with some major sellers. The government

discussions coincide with a growing number of complaints from India's brick-and-mortar retailers, which have for years accused Amazon and Walmart Inc-controlled Flipkart of creating complex structures to bypass federal rules, allegations the U.S. companies deny. India only allows foreign e-commerce players to operate as a marketplace to connect buyers and sellers. It prohibits them from holding inventories of goods and directly selling them on their platforms.

4. India seen contributing 15% of global growth by FY26

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

The ongoing key reforms such as sops for manufacturing, easier labour laws, wooing FDI inflows and privatisation will help improve productivity and support long-term growth at 7.5-8 per cent levels, which if played out well, can help India contribute 15 per cent of global GDP growth by FY2026, says a report. According to a report pencilled by the India economist at UBS Securities, Tanvee Gupta Jain, the country has the lowest manufacturing costs among peers, even though China retains significant ecosystem advantages and despite that India and Vietnam appear most likely to benefit from a shift out of China.

5. India asks WhatsApp to withdraw new privacy policy, answer 14 questions

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

India has asked WhatsApp to withdraw its new privacy policy, saying the Facebook-owned messaging platform's proposed changes "make invasive and precise inferences about users". The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) asked WhatsApp to clarify issues related to its "privacy and data transfer and sharing policies, and general business practices" within seven days. In an email addressed to WhatsApp's global head Will Cathcart on Monday, the ministry said the proposed policy changes "will have a disproportionate impact on the Indian citizens", given that India was WhatsApp's largest user base with over 400 million of them. The ministry has asked WhatsApp to answer 14 questions related to the proposed update within seven days of the email. WhatsApp had earlier said that its proposed policy update "does not affect the privacy of your messages with friends or family in any way. The changes are related to optional business features on WhatsApp, and provide further transparency about how we collect and use data".

6. Google, Lightbox, others invest \$40 mn in e-comm, delivery startup Dunzo

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

Google-backed delivery and e-commerce firm Dunzo has attracted a fresh round of \$40 million in capital from new and existing investors. Investors including Google, Lightbox,

Evolve, Hana Financial Investment, LGT Lightstone Aspada, and Alteria participated in this Series E Round. The funding would help it compete with players such as Swiggy, Zomato, Amazon and Flipkart. This capital comes after a year of robust growth amidst the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. In the coming year, the local commerce platform will focus on deploying its playbook for sustainable growth across its fastest-growing cities such as Mumbai, Chennai, and Pune. With a gross merchandise value (GMV) growth of 2X over the past year, Dunzo is now an about \$100 million annualized GMV business. The growth in 2020 comes on the back of strong, organic user demand while maintaining gross margin profitability for the overall business.

7. Expert panel recommends permission for phase 1 clinical trial of Bharat Biotech's nasal COVID-19 vaccine

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

An expert panel of India's drug regulator CDSCO on January 19 recommended granting permission for conducting phase 1 clinical trial of an intranasal vaccine against COVID-19 developed by Bharat Biotech, official sources said. A top government official said that if this vaccine works it can be a game-changer in the fight against COVID-19. Bharat Biotech applied to the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) seeking permission for conducting phase 1 and phase 2 clinical trials of the intranasal vaccine following which the subject expert committee of the CDSCO on January 19 deliberated on the application and recommended granting permission for phase 1 trial. "Based on the safety and immunogenicity data of the phase 1 clinical trial, the company would be given permission for conducting phase 2 clinical trial," an official said on the condition of anonymity.