

DAILY NEWS MONITOR: 4 MAY 2021

1. Covid-19: Pfizer seeks speedy nod for Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine supply in India

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

Pfizer chairman and CEO Albert Bourla on 3 May said the company was in discussions with the Indian government to expedite the approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for use in India. He said the application had been submitted months ago. “Pfizer is aware that access to vaccines is critical to ending this pandemic. Unfortunately, our vaccine is not registered in India,” Bourla said. Bourla also announced Pfizer was rushing shipments of its medicines valued at more than \$70 million which have been identified by the Indian government as part of its Covid treatment protocol and includes steroid medication to reduce inflammation, anti-coagulants to prevent blood clotting and antibiotics to treat secondary bacterial infections.

2. Govt waives IGST on import of COVID-relief material received as donation for free distribution

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

The government on 3 May waived Integrated GST (IGST) till June 30 on import of COVID-relief material received as a donation, a move that will speed up customs clearances for such imports, including those by charitable organisations. The Finance Ministry in a statement said the government had received several representations from charitable organisations, corporate entities, and other associations outside India seeking exemption from IGST on the import of COVID-19 relief material donated/received free of cost from outside India for free distribution.

3. India, UK to unveil road map for stronger trade ties on May 4 virtual summit

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

India and the United Kingdom will launch a ‘Comprehensive Roadmap 2030’ to pave the way for further expanding and deepening India-UK cooperation over the next decade in a virtual summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and British counterpart Boris Johnson on May 4, 2021. The MEA said in a statement on Monday that the road map will cover five key areas, namely people-to-people relationship, trade and prosperity, defence and security, climate action and healthcare. India and UK have been discussing a proposed bilateral free trade agreement and enhanced trade partnership programme for a while now.

4. Koo launches 'Talk to Type' feature for Indian languages

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

Homegrown alternative to Twitter, Koo on 4 May announced the launch of 'Talk to Type' feature through which users can leverage voice assistant to share their thoughts without having to type. This will be available in all Indian languages that Koo currently supports. "For those who found it difficult to type in local languages, this feature removes all that pain. We will keep adding value to Indians by enabling the easiest localized forms of expression and present their thoughts to India in a seamless way," said Aprameya Radhakrishna, co-founder, Koo.

5. Practo aims to vaccinate over 10 million as India fights coronavirus

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

As India battles a deadly second wave of coronavirus and the need for immunisation intensifies, healthcare tech firm Practo is aiming to vaccinate over 10 million Indians. It has announced 'Corporate Suraksha', a vaccination programme for companies across the country. The registrations are now open for corporates to enlist their employees and their family members for the inoculation. Additionally, corporates can use the same link to register for Practo's wellness plans. As part of this, employees can get access to online doctor consultations across over 22 specialities, among other health benefits. "The country is battling a deadly second phase of the viral outbreak, and immunising as many people as possible is the only way out of it. Blanket vaccination is critical," said Dr Alexander Kuruvilla, chief healthcare strategy officer, Practo.

6. Diplomats from India, S Africa work together in US on TRIPS waiver to COVID-19 vaccines

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

Diplomats from India and South Africa are working together to convince American lawmakers and policymakers on the need to support their proposal before the WTO to temporarily waive some of the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) during the COVID-19 emergency. Running against time, because of the gravity of the situation in various countries across the world, including India, the diplomats from the two countries have been making daily rounds of the US Capitol and the corridors of power in Washington DC, mostly virtually, underscoring the point that this is one of the key elements of saving lives. In addition to the senior diplomats from the two countries, the two ambassadors Taranjt Singh Sandhu from India and Nomaindiya Cathleen Mfeketo from South Africa have been making coordinated efforts to reach out to both lawmakers at the

Capitol Hill and policy makers in the Biden administration. On Monday, Sandhu had a virtual meeting with Kenyan Ambassador to the US Lazarus O Amayo.