

TOP STORIES

India, UK to hold early harvest talks on trade pact

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Minister of state for commerce Hardeep Singh Puri will hold talks with the UK's minister for international trade Ranil Jayawardena with the aim of arriving at an 'early harvest' post-Brexit, a person familiar with the development said on Friday.

The talks on Tuesday follow discussions between commerce minister Piyush Goyal and his UK counterpart Liz Truss in November. Tuesday's round will be the fourth between Puri and Jayawardena.

'The November ministerial demonstrated the strength of the long-standing UK-India relationship, with both parties agreeing to continue to drive forward progress through the Enhanced Trade Partnership, which could lead to a free trade agreement in the future,' reports quoted a spokesperson of the UK's department for international trade (DIT) as saying after the November talks.

It was then agreed that 'an MoS (minister of state) level meeting will take place in January 2021 to review the progress and work on potential deliverables,' the person mentioned above said.

The two ministers would aim to identify issues that could go into an 'early harvest' package, a second person familiar with the matter said. Market access was one of the issues on the table, this person said.

PM flags off first phase of vaccination drive today

Lessons learnt from Co-Win platform may be included in universal immunization plan

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India's Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) may incorporate software modifications and lessons learnt from the covid-19 Vaccine Intelligence Network (Co-WIN) platform.

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagging off the first phase of the vaccine rollout on Saturday morning via video conferencing, the Co-WIN platform will play a critical role in the inoculation programme by providing realtime information of vaccine stocks, storage temperature and tracking of beneficiaries.

The digital platform will help programme managers across national, state and district-levels conduct vaccination sessions. It will help them track beneficiary coverage, dropouts, sessions planned versus sessions held and vaccine utilization.

The Co-WIN platform enables administrators to view and sort data of beneficiaries based on their gender, age and co-morbidity status. They can also view the metadata of vaccinations and Adverse Event Following Immunization (AEFI) reported across states and Union territories. District administrators can create session sites at any location by entering a PIN code, followed by specifying the locality or villages and then assign a vaccinator.

The government has set up a Covid Control Room in the health ministry. Minister Harsh Vardhan on Friday reviewed preparations for the launch of the nationwide



Prime Minister Narendra Modi will flag off the first phase of the vaccine rollout on Saturday. PTI

covid-19 vaccination drive and the working of Co-WIN.

'In the beneficiary registration page for all non-prioritized groups on Co-WIN, the software can be pre-populated with beneficiaries

The vaccination programme will cover the entire country, with more than 3,000 session sites connected virtually throughout the exercise. According to the government, around 100 beneficiaries will

will receive the vaccine during this phase.

As the country gears up for the vaccination drive, the virus continues to sicken people and claim lives. The number of new cases in the last 24 hours was 15,590. Over 77.56% of the new cases are from seven states and UTs.

Kerala continues to report the highest daily new cases at 5,490. It is followed by Maharashtra with 3,579, while West Bengal reported 680 new cases. A total of 191 case fatalities have been reported in the past 24 hours. Maharashtra saw the most casualties (70). Kerala and West Bengal follow with 19 and 17 deaths.

The total number of covid-19 cases climbed to 10.53 million, and the death toll mounted to 153,157.

INNOCULATION DRIVE

THE Co-WIN platform will play a critical role in the immunization programme

IT will help track beneficiary coverage, dropouts and vaccination sessions

HEALTH workers, both in government and private sector, will receive the vaccine in phase 1

100 beneficiaries will be vaccinated on Saturday at each of the 3,000 session sites across India



Bitcoin poised for biggest weekly loss since November 2020
bit.ly/2XLVBo

HC judge recuses from hearing plea against WhatsApp

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Messaging app WhatsApp on Friday apologized and withdrew an email it sent to Delhi High Court seeking the removal of the judge hearing its privacy policy case, after the judge took strong objection to it on the grounds that she was going to recuse herself anyway.

Counsel for WhatsApp had written to the court that Justice Prathiba M. Singh should not hear the petition challenging its privacy policy change because she had appeared as senior counsel against the company in the Supreme Court in 2016, also in a case about WhatsApp's privacy policy.

Singh said the e-mail was completely unwarranted because she was anyway going to recuse herself from hearing the case filed by lawyer Chaitanya Rohilla, who argues WhatsApp's updated policy 'virtually gives a 360-degree profile into a person's online activity', thus violating the individual's right to privacy.

The petition also said that WhatsApp has put a 'Damocles sword on its users' to accept its new privacy policy by 8 February.

When the matter was listed on Friday, Singh mentioned the e-mail in open court. 'The court has received an e-mail. I take strong objection to that. There was no need to send this e-mail. I was myself not going to hear this matter,' she said.

Senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for WhatsApp, conceded that the email should not have been sent. Advocate Tejas Karia, who sent the e-mail on behalf of WhatsApp, apologized to the court and said he would withdraw it.

Justice Prathiba M. Singh said the e-mail sent to her was unwarranted as she was going to anyway recuse herself from case



WhatsApp apologized for the email it sent to Delhi HC saying Justice Prathiba M. Singh should not hear the plea. ALAMY

and the court posted the matter for Monday, when it will be heard by a different bench, subject to the orders of the chief justice of the high court.

Rohilla's plea said Facebook-owned WhatsApp's new norms jeopardize the security of the nation by allowing user data to be shared, transmitted, and stored in another country.

It alleged that WhatsApp was integrating people into Facebook so that Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram (another subsidiary of Facebook) all become part of one package.

The new privacy policy, which was rolled out by WhatsApp on 4 January, includes mandatory sharing of data with the parent company.

US targets Xiaomi, Cnoco in fresh anti-China push

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The Trump administration blacklisted Chinese smartphone manufacturer Xiaomi Corp. for alleged military links along with the country's third-biggest oil company over its drilling in the South China Sea, part of a final push to ratchet up pressure on Beijing before president-elect Joe Biden takes office.

Xiaomi was one of nine firms added to the defence department's list of Chinese military companies, a move that will restrict US investments in its securities. Other firms included state-owned planemaker Commercial Aircraft Corp. of China Ltd. or Comac, which is central to China's goal of creating a narrow-body plane that can compete with Boeing Co. and Airbus SE.



Xiaomi's inclusion in the US defence department's list of Chinese military companies will restrict US investments in its securities.

Meanwhile, the commerce department's move against China National Offshore Oil Corp., the nation's main deep-water explorer, denies it access to US technologies without specific permission. It follows a December decision to blacklist

more than 60 other Chinese companies.

'This measure by the Trump administration once again demonstrates to the public, to the international community, what is unilateralism, double standards and bullying,' China

foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a briefing in Beijing on Friday. 'The Chinese side will take necessary measures to ensure the legitimate and lawful rights and interests of Chinese companies, and we will stand by our companies, to protect, to uphold their rights and interests in accordance with law.'

Spokespeople for Xiaomi, Cnoco and Comac had no immediate comment. China National Aviation, named on the Pentagon list, didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

The new raft of curbs mark a late push by President Donald Trump to ensure his pressure campaign against China stays in place long after he leaves office next week. While Biden and many Democrats say they oppose Trump's tactics on China, the restrictions will give

the new president increased leverage over Beijing when his team negotiates on trade with leaders of the world's second-largest economy.

Biden has pledged to work with allies to develop a more coherent strategy against China, though it's not clear whether there'll be any immediate shifts in policy. Under an executive order signed by Trump last year targeting what it calls China's abusive business practices, US investors will need to unwind stakes in designated companies by November.

Xiaomi surpassed Apple Inc. in smartphone sales in the third quarter, according to the International Data Corporation. It joined Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index in September after grabbing market share from Huawei Technologies Co. as US sanctions on Huawei deepened.

Sebamed cleans up soap ads, offers free pH kits

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German personal care company Sebamed has tweaked its ads that alleged high acidic content in Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) soaps Dove and Lux, following a restraining order by the Bombay high court.

In their place, it has launched an ad campaign without naming HUL. As before, these ads are on the optimal pH levels for sensitive skins, but they now offer free pH testing kits to consumer.

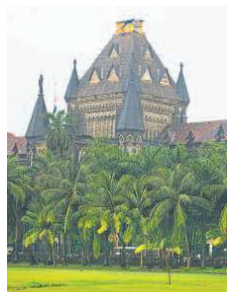
The high court is expected to pass its judgement on 19 January.

Without naming HUL, the tweaked ads said high pH levels in soaps can lead to dehydration, irritability and acne. pH is a measure of acidic content in a product—in general, the lower the pH value, the better it is for

the skin. Besides print ads, Sebamed rolled out its new ads across television, digital, outdoor and radio, with a cheeky tagline 'filmstars kee nahi, science kee suno' (listen to science, not movie stars).

When Sebamed first released its ad on 8 January on mainstream and social media, it raised a Twitter storm. HUL hit back on 10 January with ads saying dermatologists trust its soap bar Dove, and took its complaint to the high court on 11 January.

'We feel that it is our duty to provide the right information to consumers so that they can make informed choices when it comes to personal care through our advertising. Digital platforms have already helped consumers to look deeper into the products they use,' Shashi Ranjan, India head, Sebamed, said in an interview. 'Moreover, since the onset of



The Bombay high court is expected to pass its verdict in the matter on 19 January. MINT

the pandemic, consumers have started re-evaluating their product choices looking at hygiene, ingredients and efficacy. We feel the timing is right to empower and educate customers so that they can make purchases with their eyes wide open.'

A relatively small player with premium priced products com-

pared to other beauty soap brands in India, Sebamed said it was looking to expand its reach by launching smaller stock-keeping units and improving its distribution network in India. Currently, it sells its skin, hair and baby care products via 40,000 outlets, besides e-commerce platforms.

Advertising and brand specialists said Sebamed will definitely benefit from the aggressive advertising at least in the short-to-medium term, but it would take more than just ads to gain consumer loyalty.

'Their comparative advertising naming rival brands has managed to grab the consumer's mind space and attention. The objective behind this campaign is to get a fraction (around 5%) of their collective

sales from rival brands, which will still be a huge number for a relatively smaller player like Sebamed,' Karthik Srinivasan, a communications strategy consultant, said. However, he said the real challenge will be to hold on to consumers and convince them to buy its product regularly.

Naresh Gupta, co-founder and chief strategy officer, Bang In The Middle, said comparative advertising does not help in brand building in the long term.

'Toothpaste brand Sensodyne, for instance, has never pointed out what their competition lacks. They have always highlighted their own core strengths and built a strong brand. People who can sell out more than ₹100 for a soap will anyway be using a face wash or body wash.'

Experts said Sebamed will benefit from the aggressive advertising at least in the short-to-medium term

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Extract of Consolidated Financial Results of HCL Technologies Limited as per Ind AS:
Particulars 3 months ended 31 December 2020 (Unaudited) 9 months ended 31 December 2020 (Unaudited) 3 months ended 31 December 2019 (Unaudited)
Total income from operations 19,302 55,738 18,135
Net profit for the period before tax, exceptional and/or extraordinary items 4,479 12,486 3,686
Net profit for the period before tax 4,479 12,486 3,686
Net profit for the period after tax 3,977 10,058 2,944
Net profit for the period after tax and non-controlling interest 3,969 10,043 2,944
Total comprehensive income for the period (comprising profit for the period after tax and non-controlling interest and other comprehensive income after tax) 4,370 10,806 3,298
Equity share capital (par value ₹ 2 each) 543 543 543
Other equity as at 31 March 2020 50,724
Earnings per equity share (of ₹ 2/- each) (for continuing and discontinued operations) (₹) 14.63 37.01 10.85
Basic (in ₹) 14.63 37.01 10.85
Diluted (in ₹)