

## Daily News Monitor: 20 April 2021

### **1. Everyone above 18 can get Covid vaccine from May**

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

The government on 19 April announced a 'liberalised and accelerated' Covid-19 vaccination programme beginning May 1, where all above 18 years of age will be eligible to be vaccinated. Also, vaccine manufacturers have been empowered to release up to 50% of supplies directly to state governments and in the open market at pre-declared prices, a move that would boost availability of the prophylactics to the people. The move comes amid a rapid surge of the Covid-19 cases, which has stretched the capacity of many states and cities, including the national capital, in dealing with the crisis.

### **2. India to waive import duty on coronavirus vaccines, says government source**

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

India will waive its 10% customs duty on imported COVID-19 vaccines, a senior government official told Reuters on 19 April, as it tries to boost supplies to counter a dramatic surge in coronavirus cases. Imports of Russia's Sputnik V vaccine are due to arrive soon and the government has also urged Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson to sell their products to India. The official, who declined to be named, also said the government was considering allowing private entities to import approved vaccines for sale on the open market without government intervention. They could also be given the freedom to set pricing, he added. The Indian government currently regulates the sale and purchase of all COVID-19 shots in the country. A finance ministry spokesman did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment outside business hours. Other South Asian countries, including Nepal and Pakistan, as well as Latin American nations such as Argentina and Brazil levy vaccine import tariffs ranging between 10% and 20%.

### **3. Unemployment in urban India surges to 10.72%: CMIE**

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

Unemployment rate in urban India has been on the upswing since the beginning of the current month. From 7.21% on April 4, it jumped to 9.81% for the week ended April 11 and further to 10.72% for the week ended April 18, CMIE's latest data showed. This reflects a shift in the burden of job losses to urban India, reversing the trend of rural India largely bearing the brunt of Covid-induced strain on employment. The overall unemployment rate was marginally

down to 8.4% for the week ended April 18 compared with 8.58% a week ago. The rural unemployment rate, which had been on the upswing for the entire month of March — from 5.86% on March 7, it rose to 6.17% on March 14, 6.41% on March 21 and to 8.58% on April 4 — fell to 8% on April 11 and further to 7.31% on April 18.

#### **4. Centre working to save lives, livelihoods, FM Sitharaman tells India Inc**

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

Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on 19 April said the Centre is working with state governments to save lives and livelihoods. She said this during an interaction with industry chambers on concerns of India Inc with respect to the second wave of the pandemic. She is learnt to have also sought feedback on the impact on businesses and the Indian economy. Some heads of industry chambers with whom she interacted include Kotak Mahindra Bank managing director (MD) and chief executive officer (CEO) Uday Kotak, who is also president of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Uday Shankar of Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), Deb Mukherjee of Bengal Chamber of Commerce and TR Parasuraman of Bangalore Chamber of Commerce.

#### **5. Startup India Seed Fund scheme will back domestic biz ideas: Piyush Goyal**

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

Commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal said on 19 April that the government's recently announced Seed Fund Scheme for new age firms will ensure adequate availability of funds, especially for startups with good ideas across various fields. The minister also said that often good ideas are bought out by international venture capitalists at throwaway prices. "I hope good ideas don't get sold very cheap, particularly to foreign investors, who are able to identify a good idea...I hope this scheme supports our domestic entrepreneurs and their business ideas who often cannot take off due to the absence of critical funding at an early stage," he added. The Startup India Seed Fund scheme was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January. It aims to offer financial assistance to startups for proof of concept, prototype development, product trials, market entry and commercialization. Over the next four years, Rs 945 crore corpus will provide seed funding to eligible startups through incubators. The scheme has been approved for a period of four years, starting 2021-22 and is expected to support about 3,600 startups.

**6. Joe Biden to act on India's request on vaccine raw materials 'at the earliest': Report**  
**Source: Livemint ([Link](#))**

India is hopeful the United States will soon lift a ban on vaccine raw materials that has threatened to slow output of shots in the country, two Indian government sources told Reuters on Monday, after the foreign ministers of the two nations spoke. One of the officials said the administration of President Joe Biden had told India that its request was being considered and would be acted upon "at the earliest". India is currently facing the world's worst surge in coronavirus infections, which has led to a clamour for vaccines. India, with the world's biggest vaccine-making capacity, has also stopped major vaccine exports to meet local demand. The potential movement on raw materials comes days after the SII chief executive tweeted directly to Biden to end the supply curb.

**7. Johnson & Johnson files application for single-shot covid vaccine in India: Report**  
**Source: Livemint ([Link](#))**

Multinational pharma giant Johnson & Johnson has applied to India's drug regulator seeking permission to conduct phase-3 clinical trial of its single-dose COVID-19 vaccine in India as well as import licence, sources said. They said the company has sought an early meeting of the subject expert committee on COVID-19 of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) to take a decision on its application. This comes close to the heels of the central government last week deciding to fast-track emergency approvals for all foreign produced coronavirus jabs that have been given a similar nod by the World Health Organization or regulators in the United States, Europe, Britain or Japan. Such vaccines will be given emergency use approval mandating the requirement of post-approval parallel bridging clinical trial in place of conduct of local clinical trial under the provisions of the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules 2019, the health ministry had said.