

Headlines at a Glance - 31st January 2022

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India, United Kingdom conclude round 1 of FTA talks

India and the UK on Friday announced the conclusion of a “productive” first round of free trade agreement (FTA) talks, held virtually between officials of both governments. The Department for International Trade (DIT) said during the course of the two-week round, which began earlier this month following the visit of UK Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan, technical experts from both sides came together for discussions in 32 separate sessions covering 26 policy areas. The DIT reiterated an end of the year timeline for the negotiations, saying that both teams maintain a “shared ambition” to conclude negotiations by the end of 2022.

SOURCE: *The Hindu*

India-ASEAN Digital Work Plan 2022 approved

India and ASEAN nations have jointly approved a work plan under which they will develop a system to combat use of stolen and counterfeit mobile handsets, among other things, an official statement said on Saturday. The work plan was approved at the 2nd ASEAN Digital Ministers’ (ADGMIN) Meeting with India, held virtually on Friday. ADGMIN is an annual meeting of telecom ministers of 10 ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) countries —Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam—and dialogue partner countries—Australia, Canada, China, EU, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Russia, UK and US.

SOURCE: *The Hindu*

IMF urges El Salvador to scale back Bitcoin push

The International Monetary Fund said Friday that El Salvador should dissolve the USD 150 million trust fund it created when it made the cryptocurrency Bitcoin legal tender and return any of those unused funds to its treasury. The recommendation was part of the international lender's report on El Salvador's economy and went beyond its statement earlier this week urging El Salvador to drop Bitcoin as legal tender. The trust fund was intended to allow the automatic conversion of Bitcoin to US dollars El Salvador's other currency to encourage people wary of adopting the highly-volatile digital currency.

SOURCE: *Business Standard*

India delivers 3 tonnes of medical assistance to Afghanistan

India has supplied three tonnes of essential life-saving medicines to Afghanistan in the fourth batch of medical assistance to the war-torn country and will provide further humanitarian help to the people there in the form of medicines and foodgrains in coming weeks, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Saturday. In a statement, the MEA said India stands committed to continuing its special relationship with the people of Afghanistan and providing humanitarian assistance. Prior to this, India has supplied three shipments of medical assistance, consisting of 500,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine and essential life-saving medicines to Afghanistan that was handed over to the WHO and Kabul's India Gandhi Children Hospital.

SOURCE: *India Today*