


# India Suggests Holding Discussions At WTO On Role Of E-commerce During Covid-19 Pandemic

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**Press Trust of India** 

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India has suggested to convene a meeting under the aegis of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to discuss the role of e-commerce during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to a statement delivered by Ambassador of India to the WTO Brajendra Navnit at the General Council meeting held on February 23 and February 24, many members have spoken about how e-commerce helped their economies during pandemic-led lockdowns.

"India suggests holding a discussion on the role of e-commerce during the time of the pandemic... Within the boundaries of every country, there may have been positive examples. But, did international e-commerce play a big role? It will be good to hear member experiences specifically linked to cross-border trade," he has said.

He has suggested that this agenda item should be adopted by the General Council as a standing agenda item for every meeting.

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The General Council, the highest decision-making body of the WTO after the ministerial conference (MC), should now start the process of convening meetings of the work programme and ensure that the original mandate is adhered to, he has added.

At the Nairobi Ministerial Conference in December 2015, WTO members adopted a decision on the work programme on e-commerce.

Member countries have considered the work programme at nearly all MCs. They have also agreed to continue the practice of not imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions until their next ministerial conference, but India has repeatedly asked to review the issues related to the moratorium on customs duties on e-commerce trade. Since 1998, the moratorium has been extended time and again for two years.

India has also asked that the Council for Trade in Goods, Council for Trade in Services, Council for TRIPS and Committee for Trade and Development should take up discussions on e-commerce as per their respective mandates originally set.

On the proposal for a temporary waiver of certain TRIPS provisions to deal with the pandemic, Navnit has stated that time is definitely "not in our favour and my concern" is that losing further time on taking a decision will render the outcome "ineffective".

Persisting vaccine inequity has resulted in new variants and strains of the virus that has led to a devastating global impact not only on sustainable economic recovery especially for the developing world including the LDCs (less developed countries) but has further eroded the efforts made so far by countries in the form of vaccinations.

"It further reinforces the need for a comprehensive test, treats and prevent strategy thus, availability, accessibility and affordability of not only vaccines but also therapeutics and diagnostics will remain crucial to combat the disease," he has added.

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has been insisting on a comprehensive, balanced and meaningful WTO response to the pandemic, that will both enable members to tackle the ongoing crisis as well as restore the credibility of this institution.

"It's unthinkable that a prominent world organisation like ours, does not deliver in the most extraordinary of circumstances," he has said.

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