

Daily Economic News Summary: 13 December 2017

1. Infra sector to attract USD 12-13 bn investment via NIIF: Finance ministry

Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))

The finance ministry today said it expects investment to the tune of USD 13 billion (about Rs 85,000 crore) in infrastructure through the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF). "We have established NIIF. That is our first experience in trying to use the sovereign wealth. We (government) put out USD 3 billion in NIIF," Economic Affairs Secretary S C Garg said at an event here. "We (would) raise the equal or higher amount from other participants, sovereign wealth funds, pension funds, other private sector participants to raise a corpus of about USD 7-8 billion, and then the co-investment will also come in, so we expect about USD 12-13 billion in investments in infrastructure mobilised through NIIF," he said. The government is also thinking of more such innovative instruments to fund iconic, national level infrastructure, Garg said.

2 Better projects, redressal means must for private players in infra: Amitabh Kant

Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))

Government should offer well-structured and de-risked projects along with a good dispute redressal mechanism if it wants to attract private sector participation in the infra space, NITI Aayog chief executive Amitabh Kant said on 12.12.2017. "Government needs to create a series of projects, which should be put out in the market for the private sector to participate. These projects must be well-structured and totally derisked," he said. Participating at a panel discussion on private-public partnership in the infrastructure sector, at the construction equipment exhibition and conference organised by industry lobby CII here, Kant said there should also be a good dispute

redressal mechanism so that disputes, which are likely to arise, are resolved without much delays and much cost. Kant underlined the private sector is not here for "charity" and the public private partnership projects should be structured from the long-term point of view, so that the private sector gets a good rate of return and creates wealth.

3. India rejects US criticism, says entitled to special WTO treatment

Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))

India has rejected the US criticism on seeking differential treatment at the WTO saying the country was the 'right candidate' and a legitimate demandeur for special dispensation as it has to take care of 600 million poor people. Commerce and Industry Minister Suresh Prabhu told a press conference that the special and differential treatment was an integral part of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and was meant for nations with low per capital income. The minister was responding to issues raised by US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer in his address at the plenary of the 11th ministerial conference of the WTO. Without naming India, China or other emerging economies, Lighthizer had said that five of the six richest countries in the world were seeking concessions on the basis of self- proclaimed development status.

4. India to resist interim ban on fisheries sops

Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))

India will resist any interim prohibition on fisheries subsidies at the World Trade Organization's ongoing eleventh ministerial summit here, as the country feels time is not ripe to suddenly cut support to its fish workers, said an official aware of the development. Instead, the country is likely to push for a solution that can be implemented after two years when the twelfth ministerial conference (MC12) takes place, the person said. "We are resisting any interim solution in fisheries

and would like an outcome after MC12 as the time is not ripe for an outcome now," the official said. As per the first draft of the ministerial declaration on fisheries that has been circulated, countries have been asked to eliminate certain forms of fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, besides those which contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, by 2020.

5. Govt may allow pre-GST stocks to have revised MRP stickers till March

Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))

The government is expected to allow use of stickers to display revised maximum retail price (MRP) on unsold pre-GST stocks for three months until March 31, a senior official said. "The department of consumer affairs will most likely extend it, and will issue a directive next week," the government official told ET. The department had earlier extended the deadline from September 30 to December 31. Recent changes in GST rates again created a problem of goods carrying old prices printed on them. When the goods and service tax (GST) was implemented on July 1, the government had allowed marketers to display details of the revised MRP on pre-GST stocks by way of stamping, putting sticker, or online printing. Also, from April 1 onward, manufacturers will not have to display details of GST on packaged commodities. They will need to display only the revised MRP, the official said.

6. US crushes India's expectations for better food security programmes at WTO

Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))

The US refused to take any decision on the food subsidy issue in the ongoing ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO), crushing India's expectations of securing a better deal for its food security programme and likely wrecking the event. An official accused the US of reneging on its commitments. The US and India also jostled over the latter's developing country status. Assistant United States Trade Representative Sharon Bomer Lauritsen told a closed group

meeting of countries involved in farm negotiations including India on 12.12.2017 that the mandate from the US administration dictates that there be no outcome on agriculture, an official said. Essentially, the US has said it will not offer any more relaxation on food security programmes as demanded by India and China along with others.

7. Government, Asean in talks to take IMT highway up to Vietnam

The Economic Times ([Link](#))

The government is in talks with Asean countries to extend the India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) highway up to Vietnam, a senior official said on 12.12.2017. India and Asean countries are holding consultations on the extension of the 1,360 km IMT highway -- from Moreh in India to Mae-Sot in Thailand -- to Laos, Cambodia and to Vietnam, she said. "Already some level of discussions have started and...we have also announced certain line of credit for the purpose on certain projects," said Dakshita Das, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. She was speaking at the Asean-India Connectivity Summit, organised here by industry body CII. "Once we connect, we have a tremendous potential in terms of incremental GDP. Connectivity can generate annually, an estimated USD 70 billion in incremental GDP and 20 million in incremental aggregate employment by 2025," she said.

8. MHA releases Rs 174 crore to six states for border development

Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))

The Home Ministry has released Rs 174 crore to six states having an international border for development of infrastructure in forward areas, an official said. The states that will be benefited include Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. "An amount of Rs 174.32 crore was released to Assam, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal under the Border

Area Development Programme (BADP)," the official said on 12.12.2017. The fully centrally funded BADP programme covers all villages which are located within the 0-10 km of the international border in 17 states. However, priority is given to those villages which are identified by border guarding forces for speedy development of infrastructure.

9 Explore import of commodities like wheat: India to Nigeria

Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))

Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh today urged his Nigerian counterpart to consider import of agri commodities such as wheat, rice, maize, cotton, pepper and fresh grapes. In a meeting with Nigeria's Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Audu Ogbeh, Singh also called on the African country to take advantage of the line of credit extended to it and training programmes for agriculture and the allied sector. "Nigeria is India's largest trading partner in Africa. There is tremendous potential for further expanding this volume. Nigeria may consider importing fresh grapes, pepper, wheat, maize, rice and cotton," Singh was quoted as saying in the release issued by the agriculture ministry. While appreciating Nigeria for encouraging Indian firms to explore opportunities in its agriculture sector -- both as investors and agri-service providers -- the minister said India is keen to share its rich agricultural experience.

10. India's cotton output likely to rise 9% in 2017-18

Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))

India's cotton production is expected to rise by 9.3 per cent to 37.7 million bales in 2017-18, a top official said on 12.12.2017. The cotton year starts in October and ends in September. Textile Commissioner Dr Kavita Gupta, who is also the Chairperson of the Cotton Advisory Board (CAB), said it has estimated that the country is likely to export 6.7 million bales in the current marketing year that started on October 1, 15.1 per cent up from 5.82 million bales a year ago.

