

Daily Economic News Summary: 21 December 2016

1. Government launches portal for accessing various services on single platform

Source: Live Mint ([Link](#))

With the aim to provide seamless access to government services under various ministries and government entities, a government services portal (services.india.gov.in/) was launched by the information technology (IT) ministry. Citizens will now be able to avail different services such as application for PAN card, scholarship, jobs, digital certificates, voter IDs, passports and visa, through a single window. It will also serve as a directory where users can enter the pin code or state name to get the post office name along with the district corresponding to that pin code. As of now, a total of 1,955 services related to education, health, electricity, water and local services, justice and law, pensions and benefits have already been listed on the website. The website which has been designed and developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) was launched by P.P. Chaudhary, minister of state for law and IT, at 'Digital India Awards 2016'. Speaking at the event, law and IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, said, "The government is working towards the concept of digital villages. To start with, we would like to enable 100 such villages with virtual world facilities in the field of infrastructure, education and healthcare."

2. R-Com signs binding agreement with Brookfield for sale of tower business

Source: Live Mint ([Link](#))

Reliance Communications Ltd (R-Com) on Wednesday announced it has signed a binding agreement with Brookfield Infrastructure for selling its tower business for an upfront payment of Rs11,000 crore in cash on completion of the transaction. "Reliance Communications Ltd. (RCOM) today announced the signing of binding agreements with Brookfield Infrastructure in relation to the acquisition of RCOM's nationwide tower assets by affiliates of Brookfield Infrastructure Partners LP and its institutional partners. RCOM will receive an upfront cash payment of Rs11,000 crore (\$1.6 billion) on completion of the transaction," the company said in a statement. The company claims the deal to be the largest investment by a foreign investor in infrastructure business as R-Com's telecom towers will be demerged into a separate new company that will be 100% owned and managed by Brookfield infrastructure. "RCOM will enjoy certain information and other rights, but will not be involved directly or indirectly in the

management and operations of the new Company. RCOM and Reliance Jio will continue as major long term tenants of the new Tower Company, along with other existing third party telecom operators,” RCom further said.

3. J&J's largest India plant to be operational by 2018

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

Consumer healthcare and pharmaceutical major Johnson & Johnson (J&J)'s largest India plant entailing an investment of \$85 million (Rs 550 crore) will be operational by 2018, a top official told *Business Standard*. J&J was to get the plant coming up in Kothur near Hyderabad in Telangana operational this year, but procedural delays have prevented the company from completing the project on time, the official said. According to the official, the firm is working to get all approvals in place and is confident of getting the plant going in 2018. The plant, which will produce 18,000 tonnes of baby care, personal hygiene and skincare products, will be J&J's third unit in India, after Mumbai and Baddi. According to the official, the Telangana region was selected because J&J wanted to service the southern market, which contributes 30% of its revenue. J&J has earmarked an additional \$100 million (Rs 650 crore) for future expansion of the plant. The move, said the official, was in line with J&J's objective of converting India into a regional hub for neighboring markets.

4. B2B start-ups raise \$98 million across 30 deals so far this year

Source: Live Mint ([Link](#))

Earlier this year, three former executives from Flipkart Ltd, India's most valuable e-commerce firm, launched Udaan, an online marketplace connecting manufacturers, wholesalers, traders and retailers. In November, Udaan.com raised \$10 million in Series A funding from Lightspeed Venture Partners India and Lightspeed US. The three largest funding rounds in B2B e-commerce – \$22 million by India mart, \$20 million by Power2SME, and \$20 million by Just Buy Live – also took place in 2016. In 2015, the B2B commerce space saw the founding of 198 startups, and attracted \$16 million in 14 deals, according to data from start-up tracker Tracxn. This year, although only 67 companies were founded, the funding jumped to \$98 million across 30 deals. The sector has seen \$122 million funding since 2014. The biggest round of funding went to Ecom Express Pvt. Ltd in 2015 when it raised \$133 million from Warburg Pincus. Delhivery (SSN Logistics Pvt. Ltd), which raised \$85 million in a series D round, last year, has raised about \$135 million in funding so far. Rivigo (TrucksFirst Services Pvt. Ltd) also raised \$75 million from Warburg Pincus in 2015.

5. Kishore Biyani's Brand Factory shifts focus to north India for expansion

Source: Live Mint ([Link](#))

After attaining a strong foothold in the southern India, fashion discount chain Brand Factory, part of the Kishore Biyani-led Future Lifestyle and Fashion Ltd, is looking to strengthen its presence in the north, including the national capital region, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Punjab. As part of the move, Brand Factory organized a three-day sale—"The Free Shopping Weekend"—that ended Sunday. Outdoing its sales targets, Brand Factory recorded Rs110 crore in sales—Rs10 crore more than its expectations. "We're very strong in south, with 12 stores in Hyderabad and eight stores in Bengaluru. For the past two-three years, we have started moving out of the south and expanding our presence in the other zones. Hence, now the focus is northern India," said Suresh Sadhwani, chief executive officer at Brand Factory. Brand Factory closed the financial year 2016 with Rs950 crore in revenue and is expecting to end 2016-17 with a revenue of Rs1, 500 crore.

By Shreya Chopra

