

Daily News Monitor: 17 December 2020

1. India slips a spot in UN's human development index, ranks at 131 now

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

India dropped one spot to 131 among 189 countries in the 2020 human development index, according to a report released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Human Development Index is the measure of a nation's health, education, and standards of living. Life expectancy of Indians at birth in 2019 was 69.7 years while Bangladesh has a life expectancy of 72.6 years and Pakistan 67.3 years, the 2020 Human Development Report said. India, Bhutan (129), Bangladesh (133), Nepal (142), and Pakistan (154) were ranked among countries with medium human development, the report said. India's HDI value for 2019 is 0.645 which put it in the medium human development category. India has been positioned at 131 out of 189 countries and territories, according to the report. India had ranked 130 in 2018 in the index. Norway topped the index, followed by Ireland, Switzerland, Hong Kong and Iceland, the report showed.

2. Govt's check on telco gear makers to hit Chinese equipment companies

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

Under a new directive from the government, telecom service providers (TSPs) have been mandated to purchase equipment only from “trusted sources”. The government will also create a list of sources from whom no procurement can be done. The Cabinet Committee on Security accorded approval to the National Security Directive on Telecommunication Sector on 16 December. The move to create a secured national network, many experts said, would extend the restrictions on the use of Chinese gear by private sector TSPs in future 5G networks. Till now, the government has neither rejected nor approved Chinese gear maker's applications for 5G trials with Indian TSPs. Chinese telecom firms have said they have always been “open” for scrutiny.

3. India signs \$1 billion loan with NDB to support MGNREGS and rural infrastructure

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

The government signed a loan agreement worth \$1 billion with the New Development Bank (NDB) to support the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and India's rural infrastructure, on 16 December. The loan will aid India's economic recovery from the pandemic “by supporting expenditures on rural infrastructure related to natural resource management (NRM) and rural employment generation under

Government of India's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme," a finance ministry statement said.

4. India signs \$400 million loan agreement with World Bank for social protection programme assistance

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

India has signed a loan agreement with the World Bank (WB) worth \$400 million to support the country's social assistance programmes for poor and vulnerable households impacted by the pandemic, on 16 December. The funds will strengthen social protection efforts at both the central and state government level to enable a more coordinated approach by the two and was the second tranche of such funding from the WB, a finance ministry statement said. The first such programme funding saw India receive a \$750 million loan from the International Development Association, the WB's concessionary lending arm, in May.

5. With 29,000 cold chains, India readying for Covid vaccination: Health Secretary

Source: The Hindu, Business Line ([Link](#))

The Centre has chalked out a detailed cold chain infrastructure plan to prepare the country for immediate rollout of a Covid-19 vaccine, whenever one is ready. No vaccine has as yet received emergency use approval. The Centre plans to set up at least one centre in every block for managing any Adverse Event Following Immunisation (AEFI), Health Ministry officials said on 15 December. The infrastructure would consist of 29,000 cold chain points, 240 walk-in coolers, 70 walk-in freezers, 45,000 ice-lined refrigerators, 41,000 deep-freezers, and 300 solar-freezers. The States that do not have adequate cold chain infrastructure have already been provided with the equipment, said Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan during a briefing.

6. MPEDA launches multilingual call centre for aqua farmers

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

Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) has launched a multilingual call centre for aqua farmers at Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh, which will address their technical issues and impart knowledge about efficient farming methods by domain experts round the clock. India produced 7, 47,111 tonnes of shrimps last year, of which more than 6% had come from Andhra Pradesh alone from its over 52,000 shrimp farms covering a water spread area of 75,000 Ha. The call centre would help the farmers in Andhra Pradesh to seek advice by experienced experts for addressing their concerns and following Best Management Practices (BMPs) to boost production and ensure quality of the produce.

7. RBI relaxes eligibility norms for its regulatory sandbox initiative

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

The Reserve Bank of India on 16 December relaxed eligibility norms for applicants under its regulatory sandbox (RS) initiative and announced "cross-border payments" as the theme of the second cohort under this scheme. A regulatory sandbox usually refers to a system of live-testing new products or services in a controlled environment, for which regulators may or may not permit relaxations for the limited purpose of the testing. To encourage innovation and broad-base eligibility criteria, RBI said it has modified the enabling framework, reducing the net worth requirement to ₹10 lakh from ₹25 lakh earlier. That apart, partnership firms and limited liability partnerships have been allowed to participate in the regulatory sandbox.

8. Centre tightens its norms for sourcing telecom gear

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

The government will identify "trusted" sources of telecom equipment that can be used by India's cellular operators on their networks as part of the national security directive for the sector approved by the Cabinet Committee on Security. A list of manufacturers, to be certified as 'Indian trusted sources', will be created and the names of the firms whose equipment cannot be used will also be shared, minister for communications, electronics and information technology (IT) Ravi Shankar Prasad said on 16 December. Globally, there are five major telecom equipment makers, of which two are Chinese. "Considering the need to ensure India's national security, the cabinet has accorded approval for the national security directive on the telecom sector. Under the provisions of this directive, to maintain integrity of the supply chain security, the government will declare a list of trusted sources," Prasad said.