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Today's View

Tackling Water Scarcity

"Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink."
— Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the Rime of the Ancient Mariner

A mere 0.024% of all water on Earth is both fresh and easily accessible. Of the remaining water, 97% is saline and a little less than 3% is hard to access.

Water scarcity affects every continent and was listed in 2015 by the **World Economic Forum** as the largest global risk in terms of potential impact over the next decade. One-third of the global population (2 billion people) live under conditions of severe water scarcity for at least 1 month of the year. A recent report by **WaterAid** states that India has very low access to clean drinking water and close to 163 million Indians are said to be suffering from this scarcity.

Luckily, not only governments all around the world but even social impact businesses and start-ups are working towards improving the situation. Let's talk about start-ups in India that are making drinking water more accessible to Indians.

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Amazon plans wholesale makeover to become ecommerce FDI compliant

Amazon is looking at converting Cloudtail and Appario — two of the most prominent sellers on the platform — into wholesale entities undertaking business-to-business (B2B) transactions in order to be compliant with ecommerce FDI rules that came into effect on February 1.

Source – The Economic Times

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Date – 4th Feb 19

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Developed in 2013, **AMRIT** (Arsenic and Metal Removal by Indian Technology) is a nanoparticle-based water technology that is making arsenic-free water a reality in India. Bengaluru-based **OCEO** is an IoT-enabled smart water purifier that works on a pay-as-you-use (per litre) model.

Then there is, **Swajal Water ATM** which is a nine-stage solar purification system, with IoT-based cloud monitoring platform for maintenance. The solar-powered system provides clean water in areas where there is a problem of grid electricity supply.

Uravu's prototype collects water vapour using hygroscopic material, which readily attracts water in the night and then uses sunlight to heat it up during the day. The condenser then cools down the water and sends it to users through pipes. This process acts as a natural filter.

Israel is another country with scarce water resources and start-ups working aggressively towards the use of technology to find solutions. **Water-Gen** has developed technology that extracts water from air through a series of filters, with the original goal to provide easily accessible water to militaries around the world. Another start-up making waves is **Lishtot**, Hebrew for "to drink," which develops products able to effectively and rapidly detect contaminants in drinking water – without ever touching it.

We believe, that these 'water-tech' start-ups are solving some real issues that could actually change the world around us. It wouldn't be long till the industry is pushed to the forefront.

Today's News

Swiggy acquires Bengaluru-based AI startup Kint.io

Online food ordering and delivery service Swiggy has acqui-hired Kint.io, a start-up which specialises in applying deep learning and computer vision for object recognition in videos, for an undisclosed amount. The Bengaluru-based AI start-up will augment the work Swiggy has been doing in AI, machine learning and big data as it looks to improve discovery for consumers and enable faster more efficient deliveries. "The team at Kint.io comes with an exceptional understanding and expertise in AI, machine learning and data sciences.

Source – The Economic Times

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Google wants the government to make some AI rules

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the next-big-thing, which is partly useful and partly creepy. Having machines learn human behaviour to predict the needs is something that has potential implications on the notions of privacy and security. Addressing these concerns, Google recently released a white paper, outlining five areas where the government can work with civil society and Artificial Intelligence (AI) practitioners to provide guidance on responsible AI development and use.

Source – The Economic Times

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This News Letter has been prepared with the assistance of G Balakrishna and Aparna Anand

Budding tech start-ups that are utilizing the VR and AR space

The tech start-ups that are using advanced technologies like AR and VR to provide solutions in diverse areas. Holosuit is a start-up focused on changing the way people learn and interact in the real and virtual world. It has developed a bidirectional, wireless and full-body motion capture suit and comes with a SDK (software development kit) that provides developers with possibilities of creating real and virtual applications.

Source – Mint

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Mahindra and Uber line up emission-free connectivity plan

Mahindra Electric, the country's leading electric vehicle maker, is close to finalizing partnerships with multiple city municipal corporations in alliance with Uber, and a pilot project will be announced this month, Mahindra and Mahindra managing director Pawan Goenka said. M & M and Uber had signed a MoU in 2017 to provide last mile zero emission connectivity in Indian cities.

Source – The Economic Times

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Sales slump after Paytm Mall puts paid to cashbacks

Paytm Mall has slashed cashbacks by more than 80% across categories including grocery, electronics and fashion, for the strategic shift away from a warehouse-based delivery plan, leading to steep sales declines on the platform for consumer goods makers.

Source – The Economic Times

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Electric Vehicle 2030 challenge: Manufacturers seek immediate action plan

Electric vehicle manufacturers said the government should come up with a concrete action plan and its time-bound implementation if the country aspires to become a leader in transport revolution through electric vehicles (EVs). "We hope the government would soon announce a concrete plan of action with its time-bound implementation in order to fulfil its stated vision," Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicles (SMEV) Director General Sohinder Gill said in a statement.

SMEV strongly feels that an initial high dose of incentives and actions must be taken in the next 1 or 2 years to re-launch the electric mobility mission that has run out of steam in recent years due to flip flop of policies, he added. SMEV's reaction comes after Finance Minister Piyush Goyal Friday said India would lead the world in transportation sector, with EVs and energy storage devices set to play a leading role in the segment.

Source – The Economic Times

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National AI programme will create mass reach for emerging tech: Experts

Technology services industry said the government's proposal for a national programme on artificial intelligence (AI) could democratise the technology and help a wider mass benefit using AI-based solutions. Finance Minister Piyush Goyal said in the interim Budget today that it has envisaged a National Programme on AI to take the benefits of this technology and as part of this initiative a National Centre on Artificial Intelligence would also be set up.

This centre will work as a hub and will be part of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and collaborate with other government-run boldies academic institutions. "AI is set to revolutionize key sectors like healthcare, agriculture, education, smart cities and infrastructure," said Nishikant Nigam, executive vice president and chief delivery officer, CSS Corp.

Source – The Economic Times

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Engineer.ai to double its India headcount in three months

Engineer.ai, an artificial intelligence-based platform that allows people to build software without knowing how to code, has said it will double its India headcount over the next three months. Sachin Dev Duggal, its chief executive, told that the company will increase its India employee count to 250-300 from 150 now. It will also be increasing headcount in its UK and US operations. "Half the additions will be deep engineering talent, while the rest would be customer and product experts," said Duggal. In November 2018, the company had raised $29.5 million in Series-A funding from Lakestar and Jungle Ventures, with participation from SoftBank's DeepCore. Duggal said the venture is cashflow positive, having generated $24 million in revenue last year.

Source – The Economic times

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InstaReM, Visa partner to make international money transfers easier

Singapore-headquartered digital cross-border payments company InstaReM has joined Visa's Fintech fast-track programme in the Asia Pacific region. Under the alliance, the two partners will jointly work to develop new solutions to make it easier to enable digital payments and move money swiftly internationally.

Source – Verdict

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UOB and Grab announce series of digital initiatives

United Overseas Bank (UOB) announced that ride-hailing app Grab will now offer UOB Cards solutions and privileges directly on its mobile app as part of a digital strategic alliance they first announced in November 2018. To start with, consumers can now apply for UOB One Card directly from the Grab app or by scanning QR codes found in Grab cars in Singapore.

Source – Verdict

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Traditional databases like Oracle now history: Amazon CTO

Amazon that rode on its growing Cloud business to log $72.4 bn sales in the December quarter, strongly believes that traditional databases that companies like Oracle provide are gone and customers are now seeking data compute and storage solutions to solve specific problems. The new generation of applications has created a new set of requirements for databases which Amazon Web Services, Amazon's Cloud arm, is ready to meet.

Source – The Economic Times

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