



NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

India seeks Aadhaar-like ID for all BRICS nations

NSDL to launch payment bank's operations soon

Facebook shakes up management, launches blockchain division

Walmart's \$16 bn Flipkart buy is biggest deal this year

Today's View

Smart De-weeding

Representing 34% of the whole agriculture pests, weeds are a major impediment to crop production through their ability to compete for resources and their impact on product quality. According to a study by **Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR)**, India loses agricultural produce worth over \$11 billion annually to weeds.

Crop infestation by weeds is one of the biggest threats to agriculture productivity. In a research study conducted by the **Weed Science Society of America** on the impact of uncontrolled weeds on corn and soybean crops, annual losses to farmers are estimated at \$43 billion. Currently, the most efficient method of weed control available is to use a blanket application of herbicides. It results in end up of hundreds of millions of gallons of agricultural chemicals in our water supply which adversely affect our land, environment, and human health.

That's where Artificial Intelligence (AI) and image processing comes in, delivering better solutions to farmers. AI algorithms combined with appropriate imagery tools present the right solution to the weed identification problem which results in an increased productivity, profitability and at the same time decreases the cost of operation.

For instance, California-based start-up **Blue River technology** has created and fielded real-time autonomous agricultural robots. Their "see and spray"

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RBI curbs bring about crypto-to-crypto trade

India's reluctance to allow buying and selling of bitcoins using banking channels has pushed the country's three large cryptocurrency exchanges to offer its customers trading between virtual currencies on their platforms.



Source – The Economic Times

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Date – 10th May 18

robotics platform uses computer vision to recognize plants and sprays herbicide on weeds and fertilizer on crops with similar precision to inkjet printers. This precise targeting ultimately reduces chemical usage by more than 90%, resulting in cost savings to the farmer and fewer harmful chemicals in our soil. Similarly, British Columbia based **Eleos Robotics** designed, engineered and integrated advanced robotics and artificial intelligence technologies to create high-tech solutions **Culture Bot**, a fully automatic and eco-friendly weeding technology for growers.

Several universities are also exploring the technology to develop the solutions that will allow farmers to apply herbicides more selectively and efficiently. For example, **Queensland University of Technology** has developed a fully-autonomous weed-killing robot which has a camera array to identify weeds in real time using artificial intelligence and decide the best way to eradicate them. Likewise, **Edith Cowan University** alongside industry partners at the **Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC)** and **Photonic Detection Systems (PDS)**, are using reflected spectral data from lasers and spatial information from cameras mounted on tractor booms. They are also planning to apply artificial intelligence to differentiate between the crop and weeds and spray herbicide only where it is cost-effective to do so.

The future of weed-free crops depends on the ability to preserve and improve the use of planet's key resources and reduce over-farmed soil by shifting from traditional farming practices to alternative ones. With start-up engagements as well as supportive government policies towards the promotion of emerging technologies like AI & Machine Learning, farmers can look forward to more efficient ways to produce weed-free crops.

Today's News

Government likely to withdraw tax notice on free banking services

The tax department will likely withdraw a show-cause notice issued to several banks asking them to pay the service tax on 'free services' provided to customers, following the finance ministry's intervention. The department of financial services (DFS) has presented the views of the banks that have opposed the tax to the revenue department.

Source – Business Standard

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NSDL to launch payment bank's operations soon

National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) on Wednesday said it expects to launch its payment bank's operations within a month as it is awaiting Reserve Bank's nod. NSDL has already obtained license from the apex bank and filed an application seeking clearance for launching operations, its managing director and CEO GV Nageswar Rao told reporters here.

Source – Business Line

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This News Letter has been prepared with the assistance of Vikas Madaan and Pankaj Tadas

Walmart's \$16 bn Flipkart buy is biggest deal this year

US retailer Walmart's buying 77 per cent stake in Flipkart for USD 16 billion is the biggest acquisition by a company in India this year.

This is also Walmart's biggest acquisition which will help it compete with its US-based rival Amazon.

Source – The Economic Times

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ThoughtSpot raises \$145 mn to strengthen global biz, R&D

Technology firm ThoughtSpot today said it has raised USD 145 million in Series D funding which will be used for expanding global business and strengthening R&D manpower.

The firm, which is player in search and artificial intelligence-driven analytics for enterprises, said it is looking to grow its R&D centers in Palo Alto, Seattle, Dallas and Bengaluru.

Source – Business Standard

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MeitY launches internship scheme for Tech students

In an effort to enhance skills of the youngsters, the Ministry of Electronics and Information technology (MeitY) on Wednesday launched the 'Digital India Internship Scheme' which will offer Rs 10,000 per month as stipend to interns.

Source – Business Line

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India seeks Aadhaar-like ID for all BRICS nations

India has suggested introducing an Aadhaar-like unique identification number for every individual and company across BRICS nations to tackle terrorism financing and strengthen counterterrorism measures.

A seven-member team comprising senior officials of the Union ministries of home and external affairs, National Security Guard and Enforcement Directorate participated in the meeting attended by BRICS nations' joint working group on strategy for counter terrorism and tackling terrorism financing. The two-day meet from April 18 was held in South Africa.

Source – *The Economic Times*

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Government Approves Green License Plates for E-Vehicles

To promote electric vehicles in India, the government has approved green license plates bearing numbers in white fonts for private e-vehicles and yellow for taxis, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said today. The government also plans to allow youth in the age bracket of 16-18 years to drive electric scooters, besides mandating taxi aggregators to have a certain percentage of the e-vehicle fleet.

Source – *News18*

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Uber offers a glimpse of its flying car dream

Karem Aircraft Inc., founded by the inventor of the predator drone, said Tuesday that it's developing a flying vehicle for Uber Technologies Inc.'s envisioned network of electric air taxis. That makes Karem the fifth company working on the project, with its new aircraft called the Butterfly.

While Uber isn't building its own flying cars, the company has released three sets of design ideas as it pushes partners to experiment with new types of vehicles. Even the name for these new machines doesn't seem certain.

Source – *South China Morning Post*

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Google eases tech stress with app controls, table-booking assistant

Google on Tuesday showed how its virtual assistant can now call restaurants and salons to book appointments, navigating complex conversations, as the Alphabet Inc unit acknowledged that a technological onslaught was leaving users frazzled and needing a cure.

The demonstrations at Google I/O, an annual event for creators of Google-compatible products, showed how big technology companies are positioning themselves for a lucrative artificial intelligence revolution while grappling with heightened scrutiny about their societal influence.

Source – *Reuters*

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Facebook shakes up management, launches blockchain division

Facebook Inc Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg on Tuesday ordered one of the biggest management shakeups in the history of the social network, giving more responsibility to his chief product officer and launching a blockchain division.

Source – *The Economic Times*

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NetApp opens Data Visionary Engineering centre

With an eye on more business from the government, BFSI and other sectors, storage management company NetApp unveiled its new Data Visionary Engineering Centre (DVEC).

Located within the NetApp Global Center of Excellence in the Bengaluru campus in Hoodi, Whitefield, the new APAC DVEC offers an interactive experience to its customers and partners which help them to make a decision on buying NetApp's products.

Source – *Business Line*

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Magma Fincorp Q4 net rises to Rs 71 crore on higher disbursements

Riding on the back of higher disbursements and improved collection, Magma Fincorp posted a net profit of Rs 71 crore for the quarter ended March 31, 2018. The company had posted a net loss of ₹122 crore during the corresponding period last year.

Source – *Business Line*

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