



NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Brand, influencers hunt for a new way to 'like' Instagram

Amazon, Infosys, 26 others respond to Tea Board's EoI for technology use

Temasek in talks to invest in Cure.fit at \$800 million valuation

Why Indian robots are taking a crash course in Mandarin

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Today's View

AI-enabled Sowing

In farming, the timing and duration of sowing plays a crucial role to ensure a good crop. For centuries, farmers had been using age-old methods to envisage the right sowing date. But the changing weather patterns in the recent years have led to unpredictable monsoons, causing poor crop yields.

This results in significant losses for farmers as a variety of expenditures are incurred for seeds, as well as for the fertilizer applications. As per **Dr. J. S. Bains**, Director, Agriculture, Govt of India, the average per acre loss of yield can touch the mark of 1.5 quintals per week in case of delayed sowing of normal varieties of wheat after November 15.

Here, contemporary technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) are proving to be helpful for farmers in determining the right time and conditions to sow their seeds and methods to reap a healthy crop. It also gives insights on soil health and also recommends the appropriate fertilizers for maximizing the produce.

Leveraging Machine Learning and Power BI, **Microsoft** in collaboration with **ICRISAT** has developed an **AI Sowing App** powered by Microsoft Cortana Intelligence. The app sends sowing advisories to participating farmers on the optimal date to sow even on their feature phone. This facility is made available to farmers without any additional expenditure.

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Volume with low cost is Biocon Biologics' big plan

Biocon Biologics is focusing on innovative business models to reduce the cost of human insulin and cancer drugs, as it looks to build a pipeline of 28 biosimilars across global markets.

\$200 MILLION FIRM'S REVENUE LAST FISCAL

- It looks to tread a path that ensures high volume and lower costs
- Saw commercialisation of its Pegfilgrastim Biosimilar for cancer treatment in the US in FY19
- So far, three biosimilars commercialised globally

Source – The Economic Times

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Date – 2nd December 2019

Subsequently, **ICRISAT** and **Microsoft** have launched a pilot program for 175 farmers in the Andhra Pradesh. The program shares sowing advisories, such as the sowing date, land preparation, soil test based fertilizer application to farmers helping them to get better idea about sowing pattern. Looking at its success, this program has been expanded to more than 3,000 farmers across the states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, resulting in increased yield ranging from 10% to 30%.

Though the use of technology in sowing is in its nascent stage, it has a huge potential to mitigate the food crisis of growing population. If the potential of AI is properly explored in farming activities like sowing, the famous proverb "You reap what you sow" can become "Reap more when sow with AI".

Today's News

Temasek in talks to invest in Cure.fit at \$800 million valuation

Singapore's state investment arm Temasek is in talks to invest up to \$100 million in health and fitness startup Cure.fit, said two people aware of the matter, requesting anonymity, as Temasek looks to diversify its strategy and back more tech startups. Cure.fit is seeking a valuation of about \$800 million post the fundraise, up from the \$575 million it was valued at less than six months ago, the people added. "Temasek is actively scouting for late stage technology investments in India and wants to cut cheques of at least \$75 million. Cure.fit needs the capital to grow its food and diagnostics plays, and the deal is expected to close in 6-8 weeks," said the first of the people cited above. Cure.fit was founded in 2016 by Mukesh Bansal, co-founder of fashion retailer Myntra, and Ankit Nagori ex-chief business officer at Flipkart. Bansal and Nagori worked closely at Flipkart after the company bought Myntra in 2014.

Source – Live Mint

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Amazon, Infosys, 26 others respond to Tea Board's EoI for technology use

Corporate bigwigs Amazon, Infosys and Yes Bank are among the 28 companies which have responded to an expression of interest (EoI), floated by Tea Board, for using blockchain and allied technologies to determine the traceability of tea, an official said. Tea Board deputy chairman Arun Kr Ray said that this exercise is required for long-term sustainability of the industry as costs are rising and prices of tea have been flat at auctions. "We are going to start an exercise for determining the traceability of tea, particularly of the orthodox variety, using blockchain technology", Ray told PTI. He said the use of technologies will also help to determine whether a variety of tea has been grown organically or not. "Amazon, Infosys, Yes Bank and 25 others have responded to the expression of interest. The selected consultant will give advice on the costs for carrying out the exercise on a long-term basis", he said. Ray said India is the second largest producer of the beverage after China.

Source – Business Standard

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This News Letter has been prepared with the assistance of Preeti Patil and Manish Kulkarni

Why Indian robots are taking a crash course in Mandarin

From a corner of the stage, Balaji Viswanathan watched nervously as his startup's robot, Mitra, came out to greet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Ivanka Trump, the US President's daughter, at the opening of the Global Entrepreneurship Summit in Hyderabad. Everything that could go wrong raced through his mind. The 60kg five-foot-tall humanoid had cleared testing by the Indian and US security forces, but it was, after all, a large mechanical object with wires and a huge battery moving autonomously.

Source – Live Mint

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EU antitrust regulators are investigating Google's data collection

European Union (EU) antitrust regulators are seeking details of Google's data collection practices, according to a document seen by Reuters, a move that could signal yet more regulatory woes for the world's most popular internet search engine.

The EU's executive Commission has handed down fines of more than 8 billion euros (£6.9 billion) to Alphabet unit Google in the last two years and ordered it to change its business practices, following an investigation that showed the company abused its dominance. Last week, the EU competition enforcer sent out questionnaires to several companies, asking them about Google's data practices and giving them a month to reply.

Source – Business Standard

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Organisations must allow humans to take over beyond AI's reasoning capabilities, says Suman Reddy of Pegasystems

If we want humans to trust artificial intelligence (AI), then we need to incorporate empathy, which is at the heart of ethics issues related to AI systems, says Suman Reddy, Managing Director, Pegasystems, India. As businesses attempt to improve customer service, many use AI to help make customer decisions faster, cheaper and more intelligently. "They are also using chatbots or intelligent virtual assistants to streamline conversations by taking over routine customer queries. However, in their quest to personalise interactions and reduce interaction times, the human touch is being eliminated," Reddy told Business Line. Eventually, customer service becomes impersonal, inefficient, and does not adapt to the customer context, he points out.

Source – *The Hindu Business Line*

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Brand, influencers hunt for a new way to 'like' Instagram

It has been just over a week since Facebook-owned Instagram removed the "like" feature on the popular photo and video sharing platform, and influencers and advertisers in India are trying to find new ways to collaborate with brands.

Marketing experts said it would bring in more transparency to the influencer ecosystem and enhance content on the platform. However, some have also argued that it may increase the number of fake influencer profiles, an ongoing menace globally.

"In India, anyone can become an influencer now. This change will likely correct that," said a marketing agency head who did not wish to be quoted by name.

Source – *The Economic Times*

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Big benefit for MobiKwik App users! This insurer is giving them insurance cover at an affordable premium

MobiKwik users alert! Aditya Birla Health Insurance Co. Limited (ABHICL), the health insurance subsidiary of Aditya Birla Capital Limited (ABCL) today announced its strategic alliance with MobiKwik to offer simple sachet health insurance products to a Billion Indians. Through this partnership, ABHICL and MobiKwik are looking to expand their markets, creating affordable insurance solutions for mobile-first Middle-class Indian consumers who have previously never had access to insurance. The first product launched under this partnership on the MobiKwik platform is an innovative Cancer Protect Cover. The innovative cancer plan offers the most comprehensive protection from the diagnosis of all major stages of cancer. The policy's unique protection cover allows guaranteed cash value, guaranteed savings benefits to ensure adequate protection as well as value-added services to promote preventive care.

Source – *Zeebiz.com*

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How Uber is driving the welfare of driver-partners

Ride hailing major Uber is now facilitating access to instant micro-loans of up to ₹25,000 for its driver partners in India, linking the terms of their loan to their status in the recently launched 'Uber Plus' driver loyalty programme.

This initiative is part of the ride hailing platform's hyper-focus on welfare of its partner drivers, prompting it to roll out 'Uber Plus'. Uber has partnered with third party SuperMoney — a digital platform — to provide the short term-loan, which are collateral free, Prabhjeet Singh, Head of Cities, Uber India and South Asia, told BusinessLine.

Source – *The Hindu Business Line*

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@VR brings virtual reality to Frederick

Virtual reality has gone from a futuristic idea to, well, a reality within the last few years. And now, it's coming to Frederick.

Shantay DeMar opened his venue @VR on the Golden Mile this past Black Friday. The location has nine stations where customers can experience virtual reality through the Vibe Pro headset. About 50 games are available to play, many of which incorporate handheld controllers and even vests that let the player feel the impacts they would in the actual game. Virtual reality is different from other video games because the player actually feels immersed in the game itself. Instead of simply watching a screen, their entire field of vision becomes the game.

Source – *Fredericknewspost*

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