

Current Affairs related to Banking and Finance

FundsIndia, YES BANK partner to launch UPI on mobile for faster, easier payments

FundsIndia.com, India's premier investment platform for mutual funds and equities, has partnered with YES BANK to launch Unified Payments Interface (UPI) on their Android app for mutual fund payments. Powered by YES BANK, FundsIndia becomes the first online mutual fund distributor to support UPI for client payments.

UPI offers the benefit of instant processing of payments and is currently the fastest way to complete mutual fund transactions, compared to Net Banking, NEFT and other payment methods.

As FundsIndia's UPI integration supports 58 banks, a wider customer base can now take advantage of technology for smoother, quicker payments. Investors will now be able to complete payments for their transactions in less than a minute. The UPI platform is powered by YES BANK's state-of-the-art UPI SDK and API Banking solutions.

To start using UPI as a payment option, one needs a Virtual Payment Address (VPA). Backed by YES BANK's engine, FundsIndia investors can create their own VPA on the FundsIndia Android app. This VPA can be linked to a bank account held by the customer from any of the 58 supported banks.

Rubique ties up with CIBIL to allow easier access to credit score checks

Rubique has announced its partnership with CIBIL today, India's premier Credit Information Company (CIC) to provide credit scores and valuable insights on its platform, thereby increasing the transparency in the conventionally-opaque credit-seeking process for its users.

This is the first ever tie-up for CIBIL with a fintech company like Rubique. It is part of the Rubique's vision to educate the population of India about the significance of credit scores in determining their credit-worthiness, and to enable them to better understand their eligibility for loans, cards, and other financial services.

By rating individuals and their credit scores across six criteria which include utilization of credit limits, credit mix, repayment history, credit application, recent enquiries, and loan settlements and rating the user for each criterion, the analysis will help them understand their credit score and take remedial steps to improve it.

This data will also be used by Rubique to provide customized offers to individuals based on their credit scores and the credit score cutoffs for financial institution, thus ensuring improved chances for approvals for Rubique users.

In a first in India, Kerala unveils GST enabled e-ticketing for movie houses

For the first time in the country, Kerala has readied a centrally-run, server-based e-ticketing mechanism for movie houses. The state government will also roll out its e-booking app to reserve movie tickets within two months. The online e-ticketing facility for movies, enabled with GST (goods and services tax) norms, is open through the Kerala government website from Tuesday.

However, in the initial phase, this facility is operative only for movie houses run by state-owned Kerala State Film Development Corporation (KSFDC). In the second phase, this facility will be available to all movie houses in the state.

Movie tickets will incorporate a 28% GST. Information Kerala Mission (IKM) and Local Self Government Department (LSGD) had teamed up to develop software and put systems in place to run e-ticketing in the movie houses throughout the State.

The movie-goer will have to pay, in addition to the ticket cost, only a service charge for using the bill-desk payment gateway. This will be calculated based on the total ticket bill amount instead of the number of tickets.

OBOPAY gets a pre-paid instrument license from RBI

OBOPAY has secured a license for Prepaid Payment Instrument (PPI) from the Reserve Bank of India to operate a semi-closed loop wallet in the country, the global mobile payments company said.

Using the PPI license, OBOPAY will solve various payment related problems for their partner clients bringing efficiency and transparency to the payments process, improving reporting, and reducing turnaround times for funds transfers.

The company will also be using the license in propelling the business in its Business to Business (B2B) operations by co-branding the prepaid instrument with a partner brand.

The PPI license can be implemented in a variety of industry segments. The license will enable the customers to do everything a prepaid payment instrument does including P2P, cash-in, bill payments, mobile recharge, and shopping.

Pantera Capital invests in India's first cryptocurrency trading exchange Koinex

In a major development, Koinex, India's first multi-cryptocurrency exchange and trading platform has received funding from global investment firms, Pantera Capital and Beenext Pte. Ltd.

Koinex plans to channel the capital infusion towards scaling its technology infrastructure, further enhancing the product, and expanding the team over subsequent quarters.

Pantera Capital is the world's first investment firm to launch funds focused exclusively on bitcoin, tokens, and other digital currencies, making its maiden investment in the Indian cryptocurrency domain with Koinex a massive shot in the arm for the platform.

AIIB approves \$335 mn loan for Bangalore metro project

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) today said it has approved a \$335 million loan to finance a 100-per cent electric metro rail project in Bangalore.

The multilateral development bank said in a statement that investment in the Bangalore Metro Rail Project—Reach 6 (R6) is AIIB's first metro project and its first joint financing partnership with the European Investment Bank (EIB).

“By expanding the city's metro system, the project will provide high-capacity north-south connectivity through the centre of Bangalore—India's third most populated city with a population of 9.6 million,” it said in a statement.

“Travel times for some journeys impacted by the lack of a metro system are expected to drop from two hours today to 15 minutes when the R6 line is completed,” it added. In May 2016, AIIB and EIB had signed a memorandum of understanding establishing a framework of cooperation to conduct regular dialogues and explore joint infrastructure project financing.

The Bangalore Metro Rail Project—R6 is the first project resulting from that framework.

Centre inks \$250 mn deal with World Bank for SANKALP project

The Finance Ministry on Wednesday said that the government has signed a \$250 million loan agreement with the World Bank for Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP) Project.

“A Financing Agreement for IBRD loan of USD 250 million (equivalent) for the ‘Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP) Project’ was today signed with the World Bank,” the Finance Ministry said in a statement.

The objective of the project is to enhance institutional mechanisms for skills development and increase access to quality and market-relevant training for the workforce, the ministry said. Finance Minister

Arun Jaitley the Union Budget 2017-2018 announced SANKALP project aimed at providing market relevant training to 3.5 crore youth across the country.

Arun Jaitley described the project as “energising youth through education, skills and jobs” as one of the government’s top ten important focus areas. The Finance Minister said that in 2017-18, a programme SANKALP will be launched at a cost of Rs 4,000 crore.

RBI hikes FPI caps in G-secs by Rs 11,200 cr to Rs 3,01,500 cr

The Reserve Bank today revised upwards the foreign portfolio investors' (FPIs) holdings limits in government securities by an aggregate of Rs 11,200 crore to Rs 3,01,500 crore for this financial year.

Under the revised norms, which are applicable for the March quarter, FPIs will be able to invest up to Rs 2,56,400 crore in Central government securities, up from Rs 2,50,000 crore earlier, the RBI said.

They will also be able to invest Rs 45,100 crore in state development loans (SDLs) as against Rs 39,300 crore earlier, the central bank said.

In Central government securities, the limits under the general category have been increased to Rs 1,91,300 crore from the earlier Rs 1,89,700 crore, while the same under the long-term category have been raised to Rs 65,100 crore from the earlier Rs 60,300 crore, it said.

In SDLs, the general category limits for FPIs now stand revised at Rs 31,500 crore from Rs 30,000 crore earlier, while the long-term ones have been set at Rs 13,600 crore from the earlier Rs 9,300 crore, it said.

The central bank said operational guidelines relating to allocation and monitoring of limits will be issued by the Securities and Exchange Board.

MP approves Rs 7,546 crore Narmada, Parvati linking project

The Madhya Pradesh government has approved the Rs 7,546-crore Narmada - Parvati river linking project that seeks to create irrigation facilities on two lakh hectares of agriculture land in Malwa region of the state.

Narmada Control Board (NCB), in a meeting held yesterday, approved the project for linking the two rivers- Narmada and Parvati- in Malwa region, a public relations department official said. He added that chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan chaired the meeting.

The official said, "The construction of Narmada- Parvati river linking project will be completed in four phases. Each phase will create the capacity to irrigate at least 50,000-hectares."

The official added that the river-linking project would benefit farmers of 369 villages of Sehore and Shajapur districts.

"For this project, nearly 1.08-million-acre-feet water will be lifted from Indira Sagar Reservoir. The water for irrigation will be supplied through underground pipelines. The project would need acquisition of about eight hectares of land," the official said.

The official informed that the implementation of Narmada - Kshipra river linking project has been completed. It has sorted out the water crisis of Ujjain and Dewas districts, he said.

The Board also approved a Rs 41.41 crore proposal for the construction of 92 Narmada Yatri Nivas (passenger lodges) on the 1100-km long "Narmada Parikrama" (circumambulation) route passing through 16 districts," said the official.

RBI fines IndusInd Bank Rs 3 crore over compliance issues

After Yes Bank and IDFC Bank, the banking regulator has penalised private sector lender IndusInd Bank with Rs 3 crore for non-compliance with central bank's directions on income recognition and asset classification norms.

"The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed on December 12, 2017, a monetary penalty of Rs 30 million on IndusInd Bank Limited (the bank) for non-compliance with the directions issued by RBI on Income Recognition and Asset Classification (IRAC) norms and contravention of regulatory restrictions pertaining to non-fund based (NFB) facilities," RBI said in a statement on its website.

This penalty has been imposed in the exercise of powers vested in RBI under the provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, taking into account failure of the bank to adhere to certain directions/guidelines issued by RBI, it said.

In October, for similar and additional reasons of not disclosing an ATM security breach on time, the RBI had also imposed Rs 6 crore penalty on its peer Yes Bank. Further IDFC Bank was also charged a penalty of Rs 2 crore for contravention of regulatory restrictions pertaining to loans and advances after deficiencies in regulatory compliance were found.

Income Tax department conducts surveys at Bitcoin exchanges country-wide

The Income Tax Department today conducted survey operations at major Bitcoin exchanges across the country on suspicion of alleged tax evasion, official sources said.

They said various teams of the sleuths of the department, under the command of the Bengaluru investigation wing, today visited the premises of nine such exchanges in the country including in Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kochi and Gurugram, since early morning.

The survey, under section 133A of the Income Tax Act, is being conducted for "gathering evidence for establishing the identity of investors and traders, transaction undertaken by them, identity of counterparties, related bank accounts used, among others," they said.

The survey teams, sources said, are armed with various financial data and inputs about the working of these exchanges and this is the first big action against them in the country.

Railway Board forms panel to review Flexi-fare system

The Railway Board has initiated the process of reviewing the Flexi-fare system in premium trains by evaluating the prices with that of other modes of transport in the same sectors. The move came after months of negotiations and deliberations.

To initiate this process, the Railway Board has formed a 6-member committee to review the system and submit a report in one month.

The panel consists of railway board officials along with Ravinder Goyal, Adviser, NITI Ayog, S Sriram, Professor of transport economics and Iti Mani, Director, Revenue, Le Meridien, Delhi and Meenakshi Malik, Executive Director, Revenue Management, Air India.

The terms and reference of the panel shall be to inspect all options and suggest the best option keeping in mind railways' and passengers interest.

The panel would measure the effect of flexi-fare implementation in its present form with respect to revenue generated for the railways, impact on passengers psychology in terms of their choice of the railways as a means of transport with the increased fare.

The panel would also look at ways to offer adds-on to passengers like deferred benefits or loyalty benefits for the better patronage of the scheme.

Reports

Bengaluru 4th most popular destination for innovation centres globally

India's Silicon City was ranked the fourth most-popular innovation centre destination following Silicon Valley, Singapore and London said a report by Capgemini's Digital Transformation Institute.

Organisations are increasingly establishing innovation centres across the globe to boost research within their ranks. India now accounts for 25 per cent of innovation centres in Asia while Asian cities comprise of 29 per cent of the innovation centre count globally.

The report also noted that while firms are heavily investing in innovation centres in an attempt to keep up with market changes, they are failing to become more innovative. 80 per cent of the new innovation centres are exploring artificial intelligence and big data analytics.

The top destination in the US, Silicon Valley's share has gone down 20 per cent in the past 2 years.

The report also said that companies are struggling with a lack of innovation-focused culture, absence of robust internal processes and leaders who promote this kind of success internally.

The research also found innovative firms are 13 per cent more likely to take part in internal and external collaborations with start-ups, academia and other industry partners. While the US remains the market leader, innovation centres are rapidly opening in India and Singapore.

Current Affairs related to India

Haryana to set up organ, tissue transplant organisation

The state government of Haryana announced on 14 December 2017 that it would establish an organ and tissue transplant organisation (SOTTO) at the Bhagwat Dayal Sharma Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (PGIMS) in Rohtak.

The proposal was approved by the state's Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, who directed the officers concerned to establish the organisation by 31 January 2018. Through this effort, the government aims to promote organ donation in the state.

Besides this, Khattar also approved an annual outlay of Rs 88.90 lakh, including recurring and non-recurring expenditure, for the organisation.

The PGIMS, which is a tertiary care health institute, has designated a nodal officer for the project.

INS Kalvari, first Scorpene-class submarine commissioned into Indian Navy

INS Kalvari, the first of the Scorpene-class submarines, was commissioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 14 December 2017.

The commissioning ceremony was held at the Naval Dockyard in Mumbai, which was attended by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Navy chief Admiral Sunil Lanba and top defence officials.

Key Highlights

- The war ship is the first of six such submarines that will be inducted into the Indian Navy. It represents a significant success for the Make in India initiative.
- The submarines are being indigenously built by the Mazagaon Dockyard Ltd in Mumbai under Project 75 in collaboration with French industrial group DCNS.
- Kalvari, a diesel-electric attack submarine, is touted as India's deadliest submarine and is expected to bolster India's maritime prowess.
- The vessel had undergone around 120 days of extensive sea trials and tests for various equipments.

Uttar Pradesh Cabinet approves UPCOCA Bill to fight organised crime

The Uttar Pradesh Government on 13 December 2017 approved the draft of Uttar Pradesh Control of Organised Crime Act (UPCOCA) to fight land mafia, mining mafia and organised crime in the state.

The UPCOCA Bill was approved in a meeting of the state cabinet chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The bill is expected to be introduced in the winter session of the state legislature.

The Bill has been framed on the lines of the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) by the committee which was set up to examine the draft bill.

The draft was prepared in consultation with the State law department to check organised and white-collar crime and mafias. There are 28 provisions in the draft bill which are not present in the existing state Gangsters Act.

NGT declares Amarnath Cave shrine a 'Silent Zone'

In order to protect the eco-sensitive Amarnath cave shrine, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) declared it a "silence zone" and prohibited religious offerings like chanting of hymns, and ringing bells beyond the entry point.

The Amarnath cave temple is situated in the Himalayas in the state of Jammu & Kashmir.

The NGT bench led by chairperson Justice Swatanter Kumar directed that Amarnath Shrine Board should make sure that proper infrastructural facilities are given to the pilgrims so that they are not deprived of a clear and comfortable darshan, and the ecosystem of the area is maintained.

As per NGT, declaring the area around the Amarnath cave shrine a "silence zone" would be useful in averting the avalanches and help in maintaining its pristine nature.

It also said that declaring it as 'Silent zone' would help in reducing the noise pollution near the sacred structure.

This would shield the shrine from degradation and it would make sure that it is protected for the future generations.

India, Morocco sign MoU for enhanced cooperation in healthcare

India on 14 December 2017 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Morocco to enable enhanced cooperation in the health sector.

The agreement was signed by Union Health and Family Welfare Minister J P Nadda and Morocco's Health Minister, Abdelkader Amara in the presence of senior officials from the Union Health Ministry and the visiting high-level delegation from the North African nation.

Speaking on the occasion, J P Nadda stated that both the nations share a strong and rich traditional relationship. He highlighted that India is the producer of quality generic medicines and drugs that are exported to more than 200 nations and has a strong public health system monitored through National Health Mission.

The MoU will help both the nations work together in identified areas of cooperation as there is a lot that each can offer to the other in the field of health.

Current Affairs around the World

Sri Lanka hands over Hambantota port to China on 99-year lease

Sri Lanka on 9 December 2017 formally handed over the strategic southern port of Hambantota to China on a 99-year lease and received USD 292 million out of USD 1.12 billion deal signed between both the countries in July 2017.

Two Chinese firms Hambantota International Port Group (HIPG) and Hambantota International Port Services (HIPS) managed by the China Merchants Port Holdings Company (CMPort) and the Sri Lanka Ports Authority will own the port and the investment zone around it.

Hambantota as a major port in the Indian Ocean

- Hambantota will now be converted to a major port in the Indian Ocean. There will be an economic zone and industrialisation in the area will lead to economic development and will promote tourism.
- The port is expected to play a key role in China's One Belt and One Road initiative, which will link ports and roads between China and Europe.
- However, Sri Lanka clarified that the port will not be used as a military base by any foreign country. This comes as a relief for India's security concerns over the Chinese navy's presence in Sri Lanka.

Days observed today

27th National Energy Conservation Day observed

The 27th National Energy Conservation Day was celebrated on 14 December 2017 in New Delhi. The day's celebrations were presided over by Indian President Ram Nath Kovind, who was the chief guest at the event.

The event was organised by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), under Ministry of Power, with the aim of demonstrating India's achievements in energy efficiency and conservation, while working for its ambition of holistic development as part of the nation's overall effort towards climate change mitigation.

On the occasion, the President gave away National Energy Conservation Awards to industries that have demonstrated measurable reductions in their energy use as a part of the National Energy Conservation Awards Programme. The President also conferred the National Painting Competition Prizes to the respective winners

The event also witnessed the screening of a short film on the Energy Efficiency achievements in the Industry Sector.

This year, over 1.22 crore children, between 4th and 9th standards from across India, participated in the National Painting Competition and around 322 industrial units and establishments from key sectors participated in the National Energy Conservation Awards 2017.