

Finance and Banking

Kotak Mahindra Bank launches new AI powered voice bot Keya

- Private sector lender Kotak Mahindra Bank has launched 'Keya' an AI-powered voice bot integrated with Kotak's phone-banking helpline aimed at augmenting the traditional interactive voice response (IVR) system in both English and Hindi. The platform has been developed by the bank in partnership with Nuance a Nasdaq listed firm based out of Massachusetts, USA.
- Keya uses automatic speech recognition, natural language understanding and text-to-speech technology to help customers navigate smoothly and quickly through the IVR.
- In a statement to the media the Mumbai based bank said that Keya understands the caller's intent, verifies it and then offers relevant solutions resulting in greater call routing accuracy, reduced call duration and improved customer satisfaction. Additionally, customers who at times would get lost in the traditional IVR menu and abort the call, can now give a simple voice command to Keya and reach their destination.

E-way Bill System rolled out in India

- As per the deadline fixed by the GST Council, the e-Way Bill system became mandatory from April 1, 2018 for all inter-state movement of goods in India.
- The e-Way Bill system is being implemented under the GST regime by GST Network (GSTN) in association with the National Informatics Centre (NIC). The system is being handled on the <https://ewaybillgst.gov.in.portal>.
- The Central helpdesk of GST has made special arrangements with 100 agents to answer queries of taxpayers and transporters related to e-way Bills.
- E-way Bill can be generated through various modes like online, Android App, SMS, using Bulk Upload Tool and API based site to site integration, etc.
- The consolidated e-way Bill can be generated by transporters for vehicle carrying multiple consignments.
- Transporters can create multiple sub-users and allocate roles to them, a way-out for large transporters to declare their various offices as sub-users.
- There is also a provision for cancellation of e-way Bill within 24 hours of creation.

Uttar Pradesh clocks highest MSME credit growth at Rs 570 billion

- Uttar Pradesh has clocked highest growth in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) credit with total outstanding of Rs 570 billion at the end of December 2017.

- Between December 2016 and December 2017, UP registered MSME credit growth of 21%, which is double compared to the corresponding figures in highly industrialised states of Gujarat and Maharashtra having growth rates of 10.7% and 10% respectively. UP was followed by Andhra Pradesh 18.6%, Rajasthan 18.3% and Haryana 18%.
- However, in value terms, the total MSME credit flow in Maharashtra during Dec 16-Dec 17 at Rs 1.23 trillion was more than double compared to UP at Rs 570 billion. Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh followed next in line with total MSME credit flow of Rs 820 billion, Rs 672 billion and Rs 671 billion respectively. UP ranks 5th in the domestic MSME credit flow chart, according to a Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) report.
- The five states collectively account for about 45% of the total MSME credit in the country.
- Meanwhile, the Non-Performing Assets (NPA) of the MSME segment in UP stood at 8.3% at the end of December 2017, much lower than the corresponding figures in Maharashtra at 11.5%, West Bengal 12.5 %, Delhi 10.3% and Andhra Pradesh 9.9%.

India

Delhi becomes first city to roll-out BS-VI fuel

- In order to combat the rising levels of air pollution, the Delhi-NCR region on April 1, 2018 began supplying ultra-clean Bharat Stage VI grade fuel, both petrol and diesel.
- With this, Delhi became the first city in the country to switch from BS-IV grade fuels to BS-VI. BS-VI fuel is equivalent to fuel meeting Euro-VI emission norms.
- Other cities like Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurugram, Faridabad, Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Pune will also switch over to cleaner BS-VI grade fuel from January 1, 2019.
- However, BS- VI fuel will be rolled out in rest of the country by April 2020.

West Bengal introduces 'Rupashree scheme' for marriage of poor girls

- The state government of West Bengal on March 28, 2018 introduced a new scheme called 'Rupashree' in order to provide marriage assistance to girls coming from economically weaker families with a budgetary allocation of Rs 1500 crore.
- The scheme's announcement was made earlier by the state's Finance Minister Amit Mitra during the presentation of the state budget for 2018-19.
- The scheme proposes to extend one-time financial assistance worth Rs 25,000 to the family of the girl whose annual income is up to Rs 1.5 lakh.
- The monetary assistance will be provided at the time of marriage after the girl has attained the age of 18 years.
- A woman is required to fill the application form before her marriage and submit it to the office of Block Development Officer or Municipality Office to avail benefits under Rupashree.
- The scheme is expected to benefit around six lakh families annually.

- The state's Finance Minister has proposed to provide Rs 1500 crore for the implementation of the scheme.

114th Permanent Indus Commission meeting held

- The 114th meeting of the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) between India and Pakistan was held in New Delhi.
- Representatives from both sides discussed Indus Water Treaty (IWT) dispute and resolution of outstanding issues.
- The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) was signed in 1960. It covers the water distribution and sharing rights of six rivers of Indus river system viz, Beas, Ravi, Sutlej, Indus, Chenab and Jhelum.

World

UAE suspends 'good conduct certificate' for foreign job seekers

- The United Arab Emirates (UAE) on April 1, 2018 suspended the implementation of the new "good conduct certificate" for foreign job seekers.
- The "good conduct certificate" initiative by the UAE cabinet was raised on February 4, 2018 which stated that an immigrant moving to the UAE for work should present a police document from his country as a proof of non-criminal history or convictions.
- The immigrants will also be required to provide a good conduct certificate, if they change jobs within the Gulf state, but only if the new employer demands it.

Nasa test launches supersonic parachute for future Mars missions

- A supersonic parachute that will help NASA missions to land on Mars, was successfully launched into the sky during a key test designed to mimic the conditions of entering the red planet.
- The Advanced Supersonic Parachute Inflation Research Experiment (ASPIRE) was launched aboard a sounding rocket on March 31 from NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in the US.
- The successful launch came after several days of delays due to rough seas at the parachute's recovery zone in the Atlantic Ocean.
- The test was meant to mimic the conditions that a spacecraft would experience during a red planet entry, descent and landing (EDL), 'Space.com' reported.
- Shortly after liftoff, ASPIRE splashed down into the Atlantic Ocean, from where it will be retrieved by boat.

Sports

Mithali Raj wins 'Sportsperson of the Year' award

- Indian women's cricket team captain Mithali Raj was named 'Sportsperson of the Year' at the Telangana Sports Journalists Association annual awards for 2017 in Hyderabad on March 31, 2018.
- The award was conferred by B V Papa Rao, Advisor to the Telangana government. It was received by Mithali Raj's parents on her behalf, as she was not present on the occasion.
- Best Senior Male athlete: The award was conferred to ace Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth by former BCCI president N Shivlal Yadav.
- Best Senior Female athlete: The award was conferred to ace Indian shuttler P V Sindhu by tennis star Sania Mirza.
- Best Coach of the Year: The award was conferred by former Indian cricketer V V S Laxman to Gopichand, who received the honour for the second time in a row.

Isner beats Zverev to win first Miami Open

- American John Isner triumphed over Germany's Alexander Zverev in the Miami Open title showdown to finally put an end to his ATP Masters final agony.
- Isner came back from a set down to beat world No. 5 Zverev 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-4 in a clash which lasted for two hours and 29 minutes.
- En route to his first ever Masters 1,000 title, The 14th seed defeated in-form Juan Martin del Potro in the semi-finals and put behind his three previous major tour final.
- The 32-year-old had lost his previous three major tour final appearances in 2012, 2013 and 2016.

MS Dhoni, Pankaj Advani conferred with Padma Bhushan

- Former Indian skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni and star cueist Pankaj Advani on Monday received the coveted Padma Bhushan award from President Ram Nath Kovind at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in the national capital.
- Dhoni, who was seen dressed smartly in his official uniform of the Territorial Army for the ceremony, marched to receive the honour while his wife Sakshi proudly cheered for him.
- Incidentally, the 36-year-old received the country's third highest civilian award on the same day (April 2) he led Team India to the World Cup glory at Wankhede Stadium way back in 2011, ending the country's 28-year-old wait for the title.
- Dhoni, who holds the rank of Honorary Lieutenant Colonel, is the second Indian cricketer after Kapil Dev to be conferred with this coveted award.

Appointments

Debjani Ghosh appointed as President of NASSCOM

- Debjani Ghosh, former Managing Director of Intel South Asia, was on April 2, 2018 appointed as the President of NASSCOM.
- Ghosh succeeds R Chandrashekhar, who completed his term recently.
- Ghosh was the first woman to lead Intel India and MAIT (Manufacturers' Association for Information Technology).

Carlos Alvarado Quesada set to be next Costa Rica President

- Costa Rica's ruling-party presidential candidate Carlos Alvarado Quesada is all set to be the country's next leader, according to preliminary poll results posted by electoral officials.
- Alvarado is on the track to win the presidential election, overcoming a challenge by a socially conservative religious singer who ran on his opposition to same-sex marriage, The Washington Post reported.
- With about 90 percent of the votes counted, Alvarado, who had served in cabinet positions for the current president, Luis Guillermo Solis, had captured 60.6 percent, according to the country's Supreme Electoral Tribunal.

Gurpratap Boparai takes charge as MD of Skoda Auto India

- Czech carmaker Skoda on Monday said Gurpratap Boparai has taken charge as the managing director of its Indian arm—Skoda Auto India Private Ltd. (SAIPL).
- In his new role, Boparai will be reporting directly to Skoda Auto CEO Bernhard Maier, the company said in a statement.
- He will be responsible for its development in the domestic market, the statement added.

Days

World Autism Awareness Day 2018 observed across the world

- The World Autism Awareness Day was observed across the world on April 2, 2018 with an aim to encourage the Member States of the United Nations to take measures to raise awareness about autism throughout the world.
- The theme of World Autism Awareness Day 2018 was 'Empowering Women and Girls with Autism'.

Obituaries

Nelson Mandela's ex-wife Winnie Mandela dies at 81

- Winnie Mandela, the ex-wife of South African anti-apartheid fighter and former president Nelson Mandela, died today at the age of 81, her spokesman said.
- She died in a Johannesburg hospital after a long illness, spokesman Victor Dlamini said in a statement.
- Winnie Mandela, who was married to Nelson Mandela for 38 years, played a key part in the campaign to end white-minority rule but her place in history was also stained by controversy.

Steven Bochco, creator of 'Hill Street Blues', dies

- Steven Bochco, a writer and producer known for creating the groundbreaking police drama Hill Street Blues, died on April 1, 2018. He was 74.
- Hill Street Blues won 26 Emmys and launched Bochco on a course that led to dozens of series and earned him four Peabody awards in addition to the 10 Emmys.
- Bochco, who won 10 primetime Emmys, created several hit television shows including L.A. Law, NYPD Blue, and Doogie Howser, M.D.

Former Guatemala dictator Efraim Rios Montt passes away

- Former military dictator Efraim Rios Montt, who ruled Guatemala between 1982 and 1983 and was accused of genocide, passed away on April 1, 2018. He was 91.
- Rios Montt was held responsible for the murders of 1771 indigenous Ixil-Maya people during his short reign in Guatemala, The incident took place in the wake of the 36-year civil war.