

Banking & Economy

Airtel Payments Bank Launches Two-Wheeler Insurance with Bharti AXA

- **Airtel Payments Bank** on Friday **launched a two-wheeler insurance product in association with Bharti AXA General Insurance.**
- This two-wheeler insurance product offers up to **70 per cent savings on annual premium**, personal accident cover, protection against third-party liabilities and inspection free renewal through a fast, simple and paperless process, a company statement said here.
- Customers can also avail towing services at no extra cost on claim intimation, in the event the insured vehicle breaks down.
- The insurance is currently available on MyAirtel app and at over 40,000 Airtel Payments Bank - banking points, with presence even in rural India.

HCL, Google tie up for new cloud platform

- IT major **HCL Technologies (HCL)** has announced a partnership with global IT giant **Google to become a Google Cloud Platform (GCP) premier partner.**
- The new partnership will help the company accelerate the adoption of GCP at scale for its clients and further strengthens HCL's portfolio of cloud services.
- According to a statement, HCL's early adoption of Google Cloud's new open cloud platform — Anthos — has helped its clients build and manage hybrid cloud services and modernise applications with containers and microservices architectures.
- As part of the partnership, HCL will create a GCP Center of Excellence, to be embedded in its Cloud Native Labs in London, New York and Noida, to help its customers experience the speed, scalability and innovation that GCP offers.

India and states

Mental illness ground to spare death row convicts from gallows: SC

- **The Supreme Court of India on April 18, 2019 directed that mental illness of people on death row, if developed post-conviction**, would now be a mitigating factor for appellate courts for sparing them from the gallows.
- The ruling was passed by a three-judge bench comprising Justices M M Shantanagoudar and Indira Banerjee, headed by Justice NV Ramana.

Awards & Honors

Gagandeep Kang becoms 1st Indian woman scientist in Fellow of Royal Society in 358 years

- **Gagandeep Kang has become first Indian woman scientists selected for Fellow of Royal Society (FRS), London.** She is the first Indian woman scientist getting selected as FRS in 358 years of history of this prestigious scientific academy.
- She is known for her interdisciplinary research, development and prevention of enteric infections in children in India.
- In her achievements, Kang has built national rotavirus and typhoid surveillance networks, established laboratories to support vaccine trials and conducted phase 1-3 clinical trials of vaccines.
- Among the 2019 announcements apart from **Dr Gagandeep Kang**, Mumbai-born Padma Bhushan awardee **Dr Yusuf Hamied has also elected as Honorary Fellow.**

Indian peacekeepers awarded UN Medal of Honour for their service in South Sudan

- **The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) on April 15, 2019 honoured 150 Indian peacekeepers, serving the mission, with Medals of Honour** for their supreme dedication and sacrifices in **Malakal, South Sudan.**
- The award ceremony consisted of parades and performances by a piped band.
- Colonel Amit Gupta was among the recipients of the medal of honour. Gupta commands a battalion of 850 soldiers in the Upper Nile region of South Sudan.
- Under his command, Indian peacekeepers conducted highly desired veterinary camps and run a veterinary hospital in Malakal.

Indexes

India's rank slips to 140 in World Press Freedom Index 2019

- The **Reporters Without Borders (RSF) on April 18, 2019 released the World Press Freedom Index 2019, reflecting growing animosity towards journalists.**
- India's rank in the **World Press Freedom Index 2019 dropped down to 140th from 138th in 2018, two points below the previous year.**
- As per the Index, one of the most striking features of the current state of press freedom in India is violence against journalists including police violence, attacks by Maoist fighters, criminal groups and corrupt politicians. At least six Indian journalists were killed on duty in 2018.
- The year 2018 witnessed a surge in attacks against journalists by supporters of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the run-up to Indian General Elections 2019.
- **This year, the index has been topped by Norway again for the third year, followed by Finland and Sweden** at second and third positions, respectively.
- At the bottom of the Index, Vietnam (176th) and China (177th) fell one place; Eritrea that moved up 1 place from last year ranked at 178th; North Korea fetched 179th position; and Turkmenistan moved two positions down to 180th rank.

World

Amazon to shutdown online operations in China

- **Amazon plans to close down online retail operations in China,** admitting defeat to local e-commerce rivals such as **Alibaba and JD.com.**
- However, it will continue other operations in China such as Amazon Web Services (AWS), Kindle e-books and teams that help ship goods from Chinese merchants to customers abroad.

- Amazon entered China in 2004, when it acquired a local online book seller for USD 75 million.

Christina Koch to set record for longest spaceflight by a woman

- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced that astronaut **Christina Koch is going to have her mission on the International Space Station (ISS) extended to 328 days**. She would **set a record for the longest single spaceflight by a woman**.
- Michigan resident and forty years old Christina Koch is already on ISS; she reached there on March 14, 2019. She will remain in space until February 2020 that will complete her 328 days stay in ISS.
- As per the records, If Koch completes her 328 days on ISS; she will break the record for the single longest spaceflight by a woman of 288 days set by retired astronaut Peggy Whitson in 2016-17.

HBO asks Donald Trump to avoid using 'Game of Thrones' inspired meme

- American premium television network, **HBO asked the US President Donald Trump to avoid using memes inspired by its hit series, 'Game of Thrones' (GOT) for political purpose**.
- This came after President Trump put out a tweet with a GOT-inspired meme after US Attorney General Bill Barr reiterated that there was no conspiracy between the Trump's 2016 election campaign and Russia.
- Trump tweeted, **“NO COLLUSION, NO OBSTRUCTION. For the haters and the radical left Democrats -- GAME OVER.”**

Pakistan's Finance Minister Asad Umar resigns

- **Pakistan's Finance Minister Asad Umar resigned from the cabinet** before securing a multi-billion dollar International Monetary Fund bailout package for the cash-strapped country.
- Umar recently returned after visiting the US in which the details of Pakistan's next IMF bailout were discussed.

Mali's Prime Minister resigns along with his entire government

- **Mali's Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubeye Maiga resigned along with his entire government on April 18, 2019** following criticism over their handling of an upsurge of violence in the centre of the country and a massacre last month that left 160 people dead.
- **Maiga's government came under mounting pressure over handling the violence in the restive Mopti region**.
- The rage was rising especially after a massacre on March 23 in which 160 people were killed in the village of Ogossagou near the border with Burkina Faso.

Books

Book on Jallianwala Bagh poem 'Khooni Vaisakhi' released in UAE

- A book containing English translation of the 100-year-old Punjabi poem about **Jallianwala Bagh massacre, 'Khooni Vaisakhi' released in UAE**.
- The poem was translated by India's Ambassador to the UAE Navdeep Singh Suri whose grandfather, revolutionary poet and novelist Nanak Singh wrote it after witnessing first-hand the events of massacre on April 13, 1919.
- The book was also released in New Delhi on April 13, 2019, marking 100 years since the Jallianwala Bagh massacre that took place in Amritsar.

Obituaries

First female astronaut candidate of USA Jerrie Cobb dies

- **NASA's first female astronaut candidate, pilot Jerrie Cobb, has recently died. Cobb died in Florida at age 88 last month.** News of her death came on April 18, 2019 from journalist Miles O'Brien, serving as a family spokesman.
- In year 1961, Cobb became the first woman to pass astronaut testing. Altogether, 13 women passed the arduous physical testing and became known as the Mercury 13.
- But NASA already had its Mercury 7 astronauts, all jet test pilots and all military men. None of the Mercury 13 ever reached space, despite Cobb's testimony in 1962 before a Congressional panel.