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REVUE DE PRESSE SECTORIELLE NUMERIQUE

UNE PUBLICATION DU SERVICE ÉCONOMIQUE REGIONAL DE NEW DELHI

N° 5 –1 au 15 Mai 2021

G En bref

NUMÉRIQUE :

- Amazon reduit ses frais pour les PME indiennes pendant la Covid, notamment de stockage.
- Le nouvel outil d'agrégateur de compte (AA) pourrait révolutionner le marché des prêts aux PME comme UPI a révolutionné les paiements.
- L'Inde et l'UE vont approfondir leur coopération dans les domaines du numérique, de l'énergie, et des transports.
- La RBI attend des banques et des NBFC qu'elles supervisent les applications de prêts avec lesquelles elles travaillent.
- Le gouvernement indien rend obligatoire l'enregistrement de toutes les importations de puces à partir du 1er août.
- IAMAI et iSPIRT en concurrence pour la création d'un organisme de réglementation des paiements numériques en Inde.

TÉLÉCOMMUNICATIONS:

- L'Inde gèle depuis plusieurs mois les autorisations d'importation de modules wifi chinois conduisant les constructeurs a retarder le lancement de certains produits.
- Nokia devient le leader du marché indien des fibres optiques avec 25 % de parts de marché.

Revue de presse

1. NUMÉRIQUE

Amazon India announces measures to help SMBs amid Covid-19

PTI, 01/05/2021

Amazon India on Saturday announced a slew of measures, including waiver in various fees paid by sellers, to help small and medium businesses amid the deadly second wave of the COVID pandemic.

The e-commerce major said it is waiving 50 per cent of the 'sell-on-amazon' or 'referral fee' from May 1-31 for a section of sellers and will reimburse storage fees and long-term storage fees charged for keeping sellers' products at its warehouses for merchants based out of non-serviceable pin codes.

"We understand this situation is impacting small and medium businesses (SMBs) the most and we are taking a host of measures to help our sellers navigate the economic challenges caused by the pandemic," Amazon India Vice President Manish Tiwary said in a blog post.

Amazon India has over 8.5 lakh sellers on its platform.

It is temporarily relaxing the claim windows for various types of reimbursements that the sellers file for 30 days, the e-commerce firm said.

The company said it is also taking steps across the board to mitigate any negative impact on sellers' performance metrics due to defaults caused by the pandemic and the resulting restrictions, on the sellers' account health.

"We are also working to relax our policies regarding late shipment rate, order cancellation and returns to better support our sellers during this period," the blog said.

The record number of COVID-19 cases daily in the second wave has stretched the healthcare infrastructure of the country.

Many states have announced lockdowns and curfews to tackle the situation, impacting businesses.

Most states have allowed e-commerce companies to operate and allowed delivery of only essential items like grocery and medicines.

In its SMB Impact Report 2020, Amazon India had noted that it works with more than 10 lakh small and mid-size business (SMBs) including sellers, delivery and logistics partners, neighbourhood stores, enterprises, developers, content creators and authors in the country.

AA framework offers UPI-style revolution in MSME financing

ET Bureau, 06/05/2021

Private sector lenders IndusInd Bank, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and Axis Bank are likely to go live with the account aggregator (AA) framework by July, the chief executive of a collective of such aggregators told ET.

The AA framework is intended to improve lending to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME), based on their business transactions.

India’s largest public sector bank, State Bank of India, is also expected to offer services on the platform around the same time, said BG Mahesh, cofounder and chief executive of DigiSahamati Foundation.

Customers of these banks will be able to share their digitised financial data with lenders (same banks act as lenders) after the launch, Mahesh added.

“Initially, these first wave of banks will implement AA framework in select use cases such as personal and SME loans,” Mahesh told ET. The impact of AAs on the cash flow lending product will be seen 3-6 months after the AA framework goes live, he added.

The AA framework allows users to share their financial data in a machine-readable format with their explicit consent. This will replace the existing portable drive format (PDF) and hard copies. The consent is given on client-facing apps provided by account aggregators, which have received licenses from the Reserve Bank of India.

The RBI has issued operating licenses to four AAs -- CAMSFinServ, Cookiejar Technologies, FinSec AA Solutions and NESL Asset Data Ltd.

AAs are expected to revolutionise the field of fintech, like how the Unified Payment Interface changed the payment system. Faster adoption of AAs by banks and non-banks could change the lending landscape and empower micro, small and medium enterprises that struggle with access to formal credit, industry experts have said.

Emails to IndusInd Bank, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank and SBI were not answered till press time.

If unique social security identification Aadhaar is the identity layer of India Stack, UPI the payments layer, then AA is considered the consent layer.

DigiSahamati Foundation is hoping the new system will aid MSMEs that heavily rely on non-formal credit because they have traditionally not been able to provide collateral or complete financial documents to formal lenders.

According to a joint PwC-Ficci report of 2019, of the around 64 million MSMEs in India, only 10% have access to formal credit.

“SMEs are eager to use this framework as they need access to formal credit. The AA framework enables the lender (financial information users) to get access to verified financial data of the customer. Very soon, GST data will also be available through the AA framework, enabling the lender to access digitally signed invoices that were submitted to GST,” Mahesh said.

With this system in place, he said, lenders can use the bank statements and GST data to give loans based on the cash flow of the SMEs, and a decision can be arrived at within minutes. The entire process can be done digitally, avoiding a visit to the bank branch. Once the loan is approved, the lender could disburse the amount using UPI.

“The average invoice size of these MSMEs is Rs 78,000 and they raise about five to six invoices every month. If the MSME wants to take a loan of Rs 35,000, he has to submit a lot of data in paper or PDF form - bank statement and balance sheet. Small loans for a short duration may not be attractive for lenders in view of the high cost of processing a loan. AA drastically reduces the time and effort for both the lender and borrower,” said Mahesh

Banks have evinced interest in coming on board the Account Aggregator Framework.

“Banks are very keen to make use of the platform for multiple reasons. AA removes a lot of friction and pain points when it comes to acquiring data. With AA emerging as a disruptor, banks will eventually embrace digitised financial data sharing,” he said.

India, EU agree to boost ties in digital, energy, transport and people-to-people programmes

TNN, 11/05/2021

To strengthen their relationship, India and the European Union on Saturday agreed to advance the implementation of the actions set out in the EU-India Roadmap 2025 and foster new synergies to jointly contribute to a safer, greener, cleaner, more digital, resilient and stable world.

To boost the partnership, India and the EU have agreed to work together for a transparent, inclusive and rules-based connectivity between them and jointly work on regulation and support for private investments in physical infrastructure across all sectors: digital, transport, energy and people-to-people programmes. They will explore new opportunities via quality infrastructure, socio-economic benefits from sustainable growth, shared norms and values.

In the digital sector, both will aim for strong and secure connections, submarine cables, satellite networks, 5G connectivity, cross-border payments and plan to use their own navigation systems like Galileo and NavIC for emergency warning services. The partnership will include CITIIS (City Investments to Innovate, Integrate and Sustain) support for implementation of India's smart city mission, Varanasi Smart City Project (EFKON), contribution to Indian governmental toolkit (policy, technology, economy) for deployment of advanced digital network technologies in India and collaboration between the EU and Indian Space Research Organisation.

In the energy sector, both are planning for PPPs in EU eco-city projects involving public lighting, waste-to-energy project, rooftop solar facility in Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Mumbai and Pune, Italian private investment in Gujarat wind power, Germany's euro 1.7bn investment for 7700km transmission lines, EIB-SBI euro 25m equity for renewables and energy efficiency and joint research projects on smart grids and storage, and also work with International Solar Alliance.

To boost partnership in the transport sector, EU plans investment of euro 3.5bn in railway or metro projects in Lucknow, Bengaluru, Pune, Bhopal, Kanpur, Nagpur; planned metros in Agra, Surat and Ahmedabad, Italian cooperation with National Infrastructure Investment Fund and possible new air routes for enhanced direct air connectivity among other projects.

In the science and research field, EU and India are aiming at innovation partnership connecting 100 incubators, India-Denmark green partnership, Horizon 2020, promotion of two-way academic mobility among other programmes.

The combined market size of India and the EU is 1.8 billion people and their combined GDP is Euro 16.5 trillion. With Euro 78bn trade in goods in 2019, the EU was India's largest trading partner in 2019 and second largest export destination.

RBI set to put onus on lenders to monitor loan apps

ETPrime, 12/05/2021

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI) working group to regulate unsupervised digital lending through loan apps is all set to put the onus on the banks and non-banking lenders concerned to supervise the entities with which they do business, two people aware of the development told The Economic Times.

The panel is likely to lay out strict governance and regulatory rules like mandatory disclosures on interest rates, rightful usage of android permissions and avoidance of strong-arm tactics for loan recovery.

The draft guidelines that will be open for suggestions from industry stakeholders are unlikely to cap interest rates or set minimum loan duration thresholds. The banking regulator is likely to release these guidelines soon, based on recommendations by a working group set up in January.

“The draft guidelines to regulate loan apps could be out very soon, the committee wants banks and non-banks to take the forefront in supervising such entities so that they follow the best business practices,” said a lender in the know.

The recommendations are likely to cover the challenges faced by the digital lending industry, technology competence and the policy framework needed to regulate such firms. The committee could insist on upfront disclosures on pricing, the sources said.

The current law prohibits anyone from commercially lending money without an RBI licence; the new guidelines will set the rules for those apps that are the front-end interface to licensed banks and NBFCs. These rules will make these licensed lenders formally liable in the event the partner loan app flouts any disclosure or collection rules.

The guidelines also are not expected to put minimum thresholds on loan duration. These could also talk about the rightful usage of permissions including location trackers and misuse of borrowers' phone book.

The committee is also likely to recommend a self-regulatory organisation, or independent monitoring group, for digital lenders. While an SRO could regulate the practices around digital lending, the monitoring group shall act as a reporting body to the RBI. The current draft might be silent on who would be forming such an SRO, according to one of the sources.

RBI did not respond to ET's queries.

"The central bank group has been meeting with several industry associations and stakeholders such as banks, technology platforms and non-bank lenders to study the best possible way to regulate this space," said an industry executive requesting anonymity.

In India, over the course of the pandemic, thousands of such unregulated loan apps had proliferated on the internet promising quick access loans at exorbitant interest rates. These apps then used unlawful intimidation and blackmailing tactics on distressed borrowers unable to pay back on time. While the various regulatory agencies have intensified the crackdown on these unlicensed lenders since late last year, these apps keep surfacing by merely changing their names or IP addresses.

In January, the central bank constituted a working group to come up with regulations for digital lending through mobile apps. The move came amid a growing outcry in the public surrounding reports of unethical collection practices, high interest rates and the fraud and data risks by loan apps that were targeting desperate borrowers.

The six-member group consists of four central bank officials and two external members. It is chaired by Jayant Kumar Dash, executive director at the RBI.

As reported by ET, the working group over the past three months has taken the views of industry stakeholders, including Google, on the supervision of such apps on the Play Store. In January, Google banned hundreds of loan apps from its Play Store for flouting rules on disclosures.

There is no official count of how many such digital lending apps exist. However, industry insiders peg the number at several hundred while the count of licensed NBFC is close to 10,000.

Concerns surrounding digital lending through mobile apps first surfaced in 2020 after the onset of the pandemic triggered mass defaults. ET reported last June that at least 50 loan apps were resorting to intimidation and cyber bullying.

'Govt move to mandate registering chip imports may lead to red tapism, delays'

ETTelecom, 12/05/2021

New Delhi: The government's move to track chip imports to India could be a good data collection exercise for policy making to encourage domestic manufacturing but adds the burden of extra checks on original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) who fear that lax implementation may cause import hurdles in future.

"Government wants to track the data of IC (integrated circuit) chip imports. Thereafter, the government can assess the viability of a semiconductor fab in the country and downstream ecosystem. The idea is good but it may lead to a lot of paperwork for the industry and red tapism could flourish at the lowest level," a top executive at an Indian manufacturer said.

The government has made import registration compulsory for a range of electronic integrated circuits under chip imports monitoring system (CHIMS) from August 1.

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) said that under the import monitoring system, importers would have to submit advance information in an online system for inbound shipments of these products and obtain an automatic registration number by paying the fee.

Although the registration fee is minimal - Re. 1 per thousand, subject to minimum Rs 100 and maximum Rs 500 - importers say the biggest challenge is the integration between CHIMS portal and customs clearance process.

"Large importers can currently bypass their shipments via the green channel where they are given priority customs clearance and speedy checks," one person aware of the matter said. "But if a smooth integration with customs is not ensured, it could create a backlog of shipments on ports beginning August 1."

With the increased focus on encouraging domestic electronics manufacturing, the government has renewed its focus on attracting semiconductor fabless manufacturing units in India.

The Ministry of Electronics and IT has invited expressions of interest for setting up a fab in India and is reportedly planning an incentive support of $1 billion to support such companies.

IAMAI, iSPIRT in fray to set up regulatory body for digital payments in India

ET Tech, 14/05/2021

Mumbai/Bengaluru: India's two most influential technology and internet associations are in the fray to set up an industry body to supervise the country's burgeoning digital payments ecosystem under Reserve Bank of India's Self-Regulatory Organisation (SRO) framework, three sources aware of the matter told ET.

The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), an industry body of all the leading internet and technology companies in the country, is preparing a proposal led by its digital payments arm, the Payments Council of India (PCI). The Indian Banks' Association (IBA) is also considering joining the bid with PCI to form this SRO, the sources said.

Bengaluru-based thinktank, Indian Software Products Industry Round Table (iSPIRT), the architect of several of India's core digital rails like Unified Payments Interface and Aadhaar, is also preparing its bid through a group entity—Digital Collective for Empowerment (DICE), the sources said.

A spokesperson for DICE, however, denied participating in the bid. "To clarify, DICE is not preparing an SRO proposal…," said Saranya Gopinath, founder of DICE and volunteer at iSPIRT.

PCI and iSPIRT have hired consultants and are setting up their respective non-profit entities — under the Companies Act as mandated by the RBI framework — that will front the SRO bid, the sources added. A formal proposal is expected to be presented before the regulator in the next three months, they indicated.

"From the very beginning, we have been clear and transparent about our objective to set up an SRO for the digital payments industry," Navin Surya, chairman-emeritus of PCI, said. The approach has been voluntary, he added.

"We suggested the idea to the regulator even before the framework was released. Our objective is to create an SRO that has the most diverse membership from all relevant stakeholders. The mandate really is to issue appropriate standards in implementation of regulations, while also keeping our lines of communication open with RBI," Surya said.

Though owned by IAMAI, PCI is a separate legal entity comprising a wide range of ecosystem stakeholders in India's payments and settlement system.

The new SRO for payment system operators (PSOs), as envisaged by the central bank, would broadly liaison between the industry, government and regulators for streamlining policy decisions, improving communication, enforcing standards and resolving disputes.

"The purpose of an SRO is also to outsource some of the supervision mandate of RBI to a relevant and competent authority of industry participants. It is also to promote a principle and consultation-based formulation of regulation to foster ecosystem growth," said a senior banking official.

Specific objectives pertaining to compliance among payment gateways (PGs) and payment aggregators (PAs), smoothening of the backend integrations of New Umbrella Entities (NUE) granted licenses by RBI with the parallel systems of National Payments Corporation of India, could also be among the SRO's objectives.

In short, an SRO for payments would work like how the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) is for capital markets and MFIN is for microfinance.

The final proposal has to be submitted to the Department of Payments and Settlement Systems of the banking regulator.

SROs to self govern the payments ecosystem has been a long-stated objective of the central bank. The proposed SRO can only have regulated banks or non-banks as members. It can, however, be a group or an association of payment system operators as well.

“As the payment ecosystem matures and the number of payments systems proliferate, it becomes necessary, in the interest of optimal use of regulatory resources, that the payments industry develops standards in respect of system security, pricing practices, customer protection measures, grievance redressal mechanisms, etc,” RBI’s framework document released in October 2020 stated.

“While self-regulation would release regulatory resources that can be better focused on issues of systemic importance, it would, by virtue of being developed by the industry itself, be more appropriate and encourage better compliance,” it had said.

2. Télécommunications

India holds up wireless approvals for China-made devices, delaying launches

Reuters, 07/05/2021

India has held up approvals for import of wifi modules from China for months, driving companies such as U.S. computer makers Dell and HP and China's Xiaomi, Oppo, Vivo and Lenovo to delay product launches in a key growth market, two industry sources said.
Imports from China of finished electronic devices - like bluetooth speakers, wireless earphones, smartphones, smartwatches and laptops - containing wifi modules are being delayed, the sources said.
The Communications Ministry's Wireless Planning and Coordination (WPC) Wing has withheld approval since at least November, according to the sources, who were familiar with lobbying efforts by firms seeking clearance.

More than 80 such applications by U.S., Chinese and Korean firms have been pending with the WPC since then, one of the sources said. Even applications from some Indian firms, which bring in some finished products from China, are awaiting WPC approval, the sources added.

Dell, HP, Xiaomi, Oppo, Vivo and Lenovo did not respond to requests for comment.

The communications ministry did not respond to a request for comment either. And both sources said the government had still to respond to representations made by industry lobby groups and individual companies.

India's hard stance on Chinese imports comes amid Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for greater economic self-reliance.

His nationalist policies have helped boost the growth of smartphone assembly in the South Asian nation, and the sources believe the government's intention is to persuade companies to locate more of their production of electronic devices in India.

"The government's idea is to push companies to manufacture these products in India," one of the sources said.

"But tech companies are caught in a difficult situation - making in India would mean big-ticket investments and a long wait for returns, on the other hand the government-imposed hurdle on imports means a potential loss of revenues."

India previously allowed companies to self-declare wireless equipment, a move that made imports easier, but new rules in March 2019 mandated firms to seek government approval.

While India's market and export potential have turned it into the world's second-biggest mobile maker, tech analysts and industry insiders say it does not yet have the size or scale for companies to invest big in making IT products and smart wearable devices.

Wary of China Tech

The long delay in WPC approvals also underscores India's strategy to cut China's influence in its tech economy, especially after a border clash with Beijing last year though tensions have eased since.

Modi's government this week omitted Chinese gearmaker Huawei from a list of participants in its 5G trials, though European and Korean rivals were permitted.

And once 5G deployment begins in India, New Delhi will likely block mobile carriers from using Huawei's telecoms gear, Reuters previously reported.

U.S. firms Apple, Cisco and Dell were last year caught up in India's border tensions with China, as Indian ports held up imports of their products from China.

In another example, reported by Reuters late last year, India's tight control of quality clearances for electronic goods from China slowed the import of an Apple iPhone model.

Now that firms have obtained safety clearances from India's quality control agency, getting WPC approval has become the main obstacle to importing electronic devices from China.

Nokia emerges as top vendor in India’s optical network market with over 25% share: Omdia

ET Telecom, 13/05/2021

NEW DELHI: Finnish telecom gear maker Nokia grew by more than 10% in 2020, gaining over 25% market share to secure the top position in India’s optical network market, according to global research firm Omdia.

According to the research firm’s analysis, India’s optical network market is more than $415 million, spread across all aspects of telecom networks, including backhaul, access, aggregation, and National Long Distance (NLD).

This is set to grow in the next few years because of continuous growth in mobile data consumption, Omdia said citing Nokia’s MBiT Index 2021 that says overall average data usage per month registered a CAGR of 76% from 2015-2020, reaching 13.5GB in December 2020.

According to Omdia, the telecom gear maker’s comprehensive product portfolio coupled with its strong presence in the country has enabled it to consistently increase its share in the optical networks.

“We are delighted by Omdia's report ranking Nokia as the leader in the optical networks market in India. It is a testimony to our commitment to introduce products that address the specific pain points of our customers,” said Chandan Kumar, Head of Optics - India at Nokia.

Along with optical network products for all segments of the communications network, Nokia also offers a suite of products for Data Center Interconnect and the enterprise market, while its Digital Signal Processors (DSP)--Photonic Service Engine (PSE)--developed by Nokia Bell Labs helps service providers in achieving better spectral efficiency while delivering higher bandwidth.

“Our optical products enabled with control plane functionality offer one of the fastest network traffic restoration through an alternate path, crucial for India due to a number of simultaneous fiber cuts every day,” Kumar added.

“India’s dynamic optical networks market is on a growth path with an ever-increasing data consumption… Nokia’s focus on product innovation, backward compatibility of its DSPs and solving customer’s challenges has helped the company achieve #1 position in optical networks in India in 2020, increasing its market share by over 10% year on year,” said Ian Redpath, Practice Leader, Transport Networks & Components at Omdia.

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Responsable de la publication : Service économique de New Delhi
Rédacteurs : Feli VISCO

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