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REVUE DE PRESSE SECTORIELLE NUMÉRIQUE

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En bref

NUMÉRIQUE :

- L'Inde et Singapour relient leurs systèmes de paiements numériques, UPI et PayNow, pour promouvoir les paiements transfrontaliers entre les deux pays qui représentent annuellement environ 1 Md\$
- Amazon rejoint l'initiative de l'État indien, *Open Network for Digital Commerce* (ONDC), une infrastructure numérique publique qui est au stade de projets pilotes et qui vise à démocratiser le e-Commerce, notamment pour les petites et moyennes entreprises.
- Selon un nouveau rapport du groupe de réflexion Australian Strategic Policy, la Chine serait en tête dans la recherche dans 37 des 44 secteurs technologiques critiques et produirait dans ces secteurs généralement cinq fois plus de publications de recherche à fort impact que les États-Unis.
- La secrétaire américaine au commerce, Gina Raimondo, a signé un protocole d'accord sur les semi-conducteurs lors de sa visite en Inde le 10 mars 2023.
- La faillite de la Silicon Valley Bank, banque privilégiée par les startups indiennes pour avoir accès aux investisseurs américains, touche donc particulièrement l'écosystème tech indien.

TÉLÉCOMMUNICATIONS:

- Le gouvernement indien devient le plus grand actionnaire du troisième opérateur de télécom indien Vodafone Idea, en proie à des difficultés financières via une conversion des dettes contractées par Vodafone auprès de l'État en actions.
- Jio Platforms devient l'opérateur télécom sur le contrat d'EDF et d'EESL (*Energy Efficiency Services Limited*) portant sur 1 million de compteurs intelligents déjà déployés au Bihar.

Revue de presse

1. NUMÉRIQUE

India and Singapore link UPI and PayNow in cross-border payments push

TechCrunch, 21/02/2023

India and Singapore have linked their digital payments systems, UPI and PayNow, to enable instant and low-cost fund transfers in a major push to disrupt the cross-border flow of money between the two nations that amounts to more than \$1 billion each year.

The linkage between the two systems went live Tuesday, the two nations' central banks said at a press conference. Eight banks, including DBS, Liquid Group, Axis Bank and State Bank of India from Singapore and India are currently participating in the collaboration, they said. Citizens in each nation can use their local payments systems to send money to those in the foreign land in "real-time."

For now, an Indian user can remit up to 1,000 Singapore dollars a day, the Reserve Bank of India said.

The two nations announced their plan to link their payments systems in 2021 and had originally set a deadline of July 2022 to go live with the collaboration. "The PayNow-UPI linkage is India's first cross-border, real-time system linkage and Singapore's second. It's also the world's first such linkage feature cloud-based infrastructure and participation by non-bank financial institutions," said Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the conference.

"As we progressively add more users and use cases, the PayNow and UPI linkage will grow in

utility and contribute more to facilitating our trade and our people to people links," he added.

UPI, a seven-year-old payments infrastructure developed by a coalition of retail banks, has become the most popular way Indians transact online.

The system, adopted by scores of local and global firms, including Walmart, Google and Facebook, processes over 8 billion transactions a month. Like UPI, Singapore's PayNow also offers interoperability between banks and payments apps in the nation, allowing users from one payment app to make transactions to those on other apps.

Nearly 250 million people across the world send over \$500 billion in cross-border remittances annually, according to Citi. But the space is ripe for disruption. "The fees are extremely high. It is embarrassing that we have not solved this issue so far," Citi analysts wrote. Global average cost for sending money is around 6.5%.

Tuesday's announcement is the latest in an ongoing effort from New Delhi to launch and expand its tech infrastructure such as UPI and DigiLocker to other nations. India plans to use its ongoing presidency of the G20 forum to make presentations to other nations about its digital infrastructure.

Amazon to join ONDC network

Mint, 24/02/2023

New Delhi: E-commerce giant Amazon announced Friday that it will join the Indian government's ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce) platform, and as part of its initial collaboration will integrate its Smart Commerce and logistics services with the ONDC network.

Amazon logistics services include pickup and delivery, while Smart Commerce is a suite of SaaS (software-as-a-service) products hosted on

AWS that can assist MSMEs build and scale their business and integrate it with the ONDC network.

Amazon said it will continue to explore potential opportunities for a stronger integration with the ONDC network.

ONDC is a non-profit organization set up by the commerce ministry's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) to democratise e-commerce services and provide small e-commerce stores and online sellers with a level playing field.

"Amazon's vision and commitment for India are closely aligned with ONDC's objectives of digitally enabling small businesses and providing convenience and choice to customers across the country," said Manish Tiwary, country manager, India Consumer Business, at Amazon India.

Tiwary added that Amazon was excited to provide its infrastructure and technology to help ONDC achieve its goals faster.

ONDC network is currently in beta phase and has conducted pilots in select cities.

"We are happy that Amazon has a definite roadmap to being a part of the ONDC network and is taking its first step in coming in as the logistics partner in the ONDC network," said T Koshy, managing director and chief executive of ONDC.

The ONDC network protocol allows anyone to create an e-commerce marketplace and tap into the ONDC network to get products displayed and delivered without having to worry about logistics. It has also been equated with a unified payment interface (UPI), which has made online payments faster and easier for millions of Indians.

In August 2022, ONDC signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Small Industries and Development Bank of India (SIDBI) to onboard its huge ecosystem of MSMEs on the

network. Several companies including Microsoft, Meesho, Paytm, and Dunzo have already joined the platform. Flipkart, PhonePe, and JioMart are also reportedly planning to join the network.

Last December, at the inauguration of ONDC's first office in New Delhi, Koshy had said that the network has 26 partners, which is expected to grow by another 125 by February. He added that 200 more platforms are working on technical integration with ONDC, while more than 400 buyers, sellers, and logistics partners are at the paperwork stage. ONDC will charge a small fees from platforms for maintenance and development of the network, Koshy had told Mint..

'Wake-Up Call': China Leads in 37 Out of 44 Critical Technology Sectors, Says Report

The Wire, 09/03/2023

New Delhi: China is far ahead of even the United States in conducting cutting-edge research in most critical technologies, especially in defence, space and security, a new report by a top Australian think tank has found.

In the report published on March 2, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute shows that China has "built the foundations to position itself as the world's leading science and technology superpower, by establishing a sometimes stunning lead in high-impact research across the majority of critical and emerging technology domains".

The report was based on analysis of the top 10% of the most highly-cited research publications released between 2018 and 2022 in 44 technologies, ranging from artificial intelligence to advanced robotics and quantum computing.

After China and US, India and UK lead the smaller group, which also includes South Korea, Germany, Australia, Italy and Japan.

Raising alarm signals about Chinese dominance in 37 sectors, the Australian think-tank pointed out that it meant that "only seven of the 44 analysed technologies are currently led by a democratic country, and that country in all instances is the US". It noted that China was often producing more than five times high-impact research than the United States.

In the strategic sectors related to security and defence, the report asserted, China has a "striking lead" in research on advanced aircraft engines, future intelligence capability, Artificial Intelligence and drones.

Over the last five years, China has had a 48% share in the most highly-cited research on Advanced Aircraft Engines, including hypersonics and surveillance balloons.

China's test of a hypersonic missile in 2021 summer, which became public only several months later, led to much breast-beating in certain US strategic circles that Washington had lost the lead.

With cyber espionage and attacks being the norm, China also has the advantage against the west as it accounts for nearly one-third of high-impact research papers in post-quantum cryptography used for securing online communication.

In the area of Advanced radiofrequency communications, including 5G and 6G, there is a high risk of China having a monopoly in research.

As per the ASPI's Critical Technology Tracker, the US has maintained its strength in the design and development of advanced semiconductor devices, high-performance computing, advanced integrated circuit design and fabrication, quantum computing, and vaccines and medical countermeasures.

As mentioned earlier, India has a relatively respectable showing in five critical technology sectors. India comes second after China in publishing the top 10% high-impact research in

the sectors of high-specification machining process, advanced composite materials, smart materials, biofuels and biological manufacturing.

The smallest gap between China and India in research is in biofuels, with the former accounting for 23.2%. The latter came second at 15.5%.

At the same time, India may be second to China on the list but the gulf between the two is yawning. For example, India is second with 8.1% of the top 10% of most-cited research publications on smart materials whose application could include body armour and building materials. However, China was way ahead with 42.6%.

Besides, the ASPI report also looked at the flow of researchers between countries at various levels to identify brain gains and brain drains in each technology area.

"India has a significant brain drain in AI algorithms and hardware accelerators, as many people opt to do their postgraduate training in the US, Singapore and Europe, but the brain drain in machine learning is significantly less, as India retains most of its postgraduate trained talent through employment," said the report.

Stating that the findings should be a "wake-up call for democratic nations", the report recommended a number of policies ranging from technology visas to research and development grants between allies, as well as, revitalising universities and restructuring the taxation system.

U.S. seeks closer India tech ties; no China 'decoupling': U.S. commerce secretary

Reuters, 11/03/2023

NEW DELHI: India could become a key supplier of electronic parts and hardware for the United States, U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo

said on Friday, adding that Washington was not seeking a "technological decoupling" from China.

Raimondo's visit to New Delhi comes amid increasingly tight U.S. export restrictions on chipmaking technology to China which Washington says are aimed at hobbling

Beijing's ability to expand its chip industry and enhance its military capabilities.

Speaking to reporters after meeting India's Trade Minister Shri Piyush Gopal, Raimondo said India was a trusted technology partner that could become a supplier in the "entire electronics supply chain, not just semiconductors".

"We want to deepen our technology relationship with India," she said after both countries signed a memorandum of understanding to cooperate in the semiconductor sector.

"I want to be also clear... this isn't about decoupling, what it is about is keeping eyes wide open to the fact that China is explicitly trying to get access to American technology to use in its military and we need to protect ourselves and our allies and partners from that happening," she added.

China's government has earmarked \$140 billion to boost domestic chip manufacturing to overcome the U.S. export curbs.

India has been seeking to attract more investment in the chipmaking and display sector under a \$10 billion incentive plan. Last year, the government said it would cover 50% of the project cost of new local semiconductor facilities.

Raimondo, who is leading a delegation including executives from 10 U.S. companies, said India's ambitions to expand its tech sector were "totally aligned with the United States' desire and goal to make our supply chain more resilient".

She also said she would announce a number of "substantial investments" by U.S. firms in India, without giving any details.

SVBs collapse is causing chaos in India's tech sector

The Wire, 13/03/2023

AT 3 AM on Friday, March 10, Kesavan Kanchi Kandadai was woken by a phone call from a friend in the US. Within hours, Kandadai, founder and CEO of HR tech startup ishield.ai, was rushing to arrange wire transfers. One hundred percent of his company's funds were held in Silicon Valley Bank, which was collapsing.

"This is a problem that no startup founder will anticipate," Kandadai says. "It's like a black swan event."

When he spoke to WIRED, Kandadai hadn't slept for two days, and had been attending back-to-back webinars with lawyers and accountants. Kandadai thought he'd got all but a fraction of his funds out, but as of Monday, March 13, they still weren't showing in his Indian bank account. Access to his SVB account had been restored, but his wire transfers hadn't gone through. International transfers are still suspended, leaving him in limbo.

The collapse of the California-based bank, sparked by a run on deposits late last week, has reverberated across India's tech sector. SVB provided banking services to more than 2,500 venture capital firms and roughly half of the VC-backed companies in the US. That includes a large number of Indian companies with US venture capital funding, and much of India's \$13 billion software-as-a-service industry, which services American clients. Many founders, like Kandadai, have had to scramble to get their money out or risk being unable to make payroll and pay suppliers.

"This was a global catastrophe. A serious number of jobs were at risk everywhere from small towns in India that you've never heard of to San

Francisco,” says Anand Krishna, founder of fintech startup Inkle. “A lot of startups in India are still remote and those jobs were at serious risk because people were running out.”

The rapid growth of India’s tech sector has attracted billions of dollars of VC funding from the US over the past decade, and brought many Indian companies into incubator programs such as Y Combinator. Heavyweight US investors have typically—and controversially—pressured global companies to set up domiciles and bank accounts in the US.

SVB was popular among Indian founders because the bank allowed them to open accounts remotely, and unlike high street banks like JPMorgan Chase or Wells Fargo, it didn’t require them to have a social security number (SSN).

“They’ve been exceptionally good to tech founders, especially founders like ours, who don’t have an SSN number or a local presence in the US,” said Kandadai. “So they were able to really work with the founder sitting in India, open the account, get them access, and do all the paperwork digitally, and get started.” Kandadai had his SVB bank account set up and running in a couple of days.

It isn’t clear how many Indian founders were banked by SVB, but it’s likely to be in the hundreds. Local media reports suggest that around 60 Indian startups backed by Y Combinator have deposits over \$250,000 each trapped in SVB—the US government typically guarantees deposits up to \$250,000. Among publicly listed Indian technology companies, gaming firm Nazara Tech reported to the bourses that it has \$7.75 million—around 11 percent of its cash—stuck in SVB.

“In case of India, the number of Indian startups [impacted] is definitely very high compared to other nations, except for US, but the capital would not be as much,” says Smriti Tomar, founder and CEO of Stack, a Y Combinator-backed startup, which had some funds in SVB. “What we can safely assume from that is that

most startups have an exposure somewhere between \$250,000 up till \$1.5 million—this was the bracket where the majority of the startups believe that the money is blocked.”

Over the weekend, after SVB went down, hundreds of WhatsApp groups, communities, and support forums emerged to help people figure out how to react.

Many of them are customers of Krishna’s startup Inkle, which offers an accounting and tax filing product to companies registered in the US with an Indian subsidiary. Krishna says that on Thursday, March 9, most of his clients weren’t worried about their funds, but by Friday everyone started taking it more seriously. The biggest problem, he said, was that many of these founders did not have secondary bank accounts and instead relied heavily on SVB. Since then, founders have had to open dollar accounts across several banks, in GIFT City—India’s answer to Delaware—in Gujarat, which provides offshore accounts to non-residents and offshore entities. This means that once they are able to access funds in their SVB accounts, they will have an account to transfer them to.

Many startups feared for their businesses. Krishna says that one of his customers, whose entire funds were in SVB, told him that he was going to run out of money in his India account within weeks—and that if the US didn’t bail the bank out, he’d have to shut down and lay off his 100-person staff. “Founders were very, very anxious about that,” Krishna says.

Tomar says that she, along with other founders, started looking at where they could cut back to survive. “It was not a good situation to be [in]. We were almost going to push that button of extreme cost-cutting,” she says.

She’s now waiting to see what unfolds. The US government has said that depositors at SVB in the US will have their deposits protected and will be able to access their funds again, although it’s not clear when international wire transfers will resume.

However, the bank's collapse means that many startups in India are rethinking how they calculate their risks, and will have to diversify their banking relationships in the US and in India—because nearly no one saw this coming.

"I've been around for 23 years in Silicon Valley and I've seen ups and downs and economic downturns, but for a bank as big and influential to shut down in two days, with no precursor, no signs of faltering, is unprecedented," said Anil Advani, founder and managing partner at Inventus law, a global technology law firm, which also had some money in SVB. "Nobody, including [the] most senior management of SVB, had any idea. In fact, some of my friends told me [because] the stock had gone down, they were looking to buy more shares as recently as Wednesday of last week."

2. Télécommunications

India orders Vodafone Idea to convert government dues into \$2 billion equity

Tech Crunch, 03/02/2023

The Indian government has ordered Vodafone Idea to convert all the interest it owes to the government into equity in the firm, making it by far the largest shareholder in the troubled telecom giant.

Vodafone said it has been ordered to convert capital worth about \$2 billion into equity. The company "will take all necessary actions forthwith to undertake the aforesaid issuance," Vodafone Idea disclosed (PDF) in a regulatory filing.

The move is the latest in the rescue attempts to save Vodafone Idea, a joint venture between the British telecom giant Vodafone Group and local billionaire Kumar Mangalam Birla's conglomerate, which owed the Indian government about \$2 billion for spectrum and other dues.

In 2021, the Indian government approved a rescue package for the debt-ridden telecom firms in the country and reserved rights to convert interest on them into equity at a later date. Last year, Vodafone Idea's board approved a plan to give the Indian government a 36% stake in the company. The company reported later that the Indian government had no desire to take over the operations of the firm.

"They want three private players in the market, they want promoters to run this company," a company executive said at the time.

India is the world's second largest wireless market. Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Jio and Sunil Mittal's Bharti Airtel command the lion's share in the country.

Vodafone Idea spent the least among the top three in the government's auction of 5G spectrum last year. Jio spent over \$11 billion to buy the offered spectrum, followed by Airtel's over \$5.4 billion expense. Vodafone Idea bought spectrum worth \$2.37 billion.

Jio Platforms partners EESL, French utility firm EDF to deploy 1 million smart prepaid meters in Bihar

ET Telecom Desk, 10/03/2023

NEW DELHI: Jio Platforms has partnered with Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) to deploy 1 million smart prepaid meters in Bihar, jointly with French utility firm EDF.

"JioThings Smart Utility Platform, a flagship IoT solution of JioThings has partnered with Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) to deploy 1 million smart prepaid meters in Bihar along with French electric utility firm EDF," JPL said in a statement Friday.

JioThings Smart Utility Platform is an NB-IoT-enabled solution from Jio Platforms and is backed by 4G/LTE technology, which will drive the digital transformation of the power utilities

sector and help achieve Ministry of Power government of India's aim of installing 250 million smart meters.

"We believe that the smart utility platform will bring transformational benefits of latest smart technologies to the power sector. By empowering enterprises with cutting-edge, plug and play, smart solutions, we aim to accelerate the adoption of smart IoT solutions by enterprises and enable their digital transformation," said Kiran Thomas, CEO of Jio Platforms Limited.

"We are extremely pleased to have Jio as our IoT partner. With this success, we are certain that Next Generation Communication technology i.e. 5G will further boost the smart metering deployments as other AMI service providers gain confidence in outsourcing to technology providers," an EESL spokesperson said.

JioThings' IoT-enabled smart utility platform is a flagship solution for enabling automated meter reading/advanced metering infrastructure in India to enable prepaid and postpaid metering.

JPL claims that the "highly secure" IoT powered platform simplifies meter management, giving utilities full visibility and control of its IoT-connected smart meters. The solution also allows for instantaneous two-way communication leading to cost optimisation and seamless experience by helping improve collections and efficiencies and eliminating service delays.

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