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Tweet OF THE DAY



AARON LEVIE
@LEVIE

Amazon is apparently testing a way to send you samples of products based on your order history. Finally, an invasion of privacy that actually benefits us

Tech Buzz
Twitter is Talking about Conversation



Las Vegas: Twitter is planning to allow users to try out new features such as status updates to encourage conversations among its users, a media report said. A top executive said that the firm would try to involve users in testing features before formally rolling them out for all. "We want to develop a service for the people that are using it, and we have to involve people in that way," said Sara Haider, director, product management at Twitter. -IANS

Quick Byte ANIRBAN BORA

IBM unveils first commercial quantum computer

Here's where we're at

\$1.22 billion
App Store spending globally between Christmas eve & New Year eve

25% Staff to Use Assistants by 2021: Study



Mumbai: Around 25% of workers globally would use a virtual employee assistant (VEA) on a daily basis by 2021 - from a mere 2% in 2019 - a Gartner report said. The VEA examples include Amazon's Alexa for Business, which is helping employees delegate tasks such as scheduling meetings and logistics operations, and Nokia's 'MIKA' helping engineers find answers as they perform complex tasks. -IANS

Jargon Buster
Antialiasing
A method used to reduce visual defects when high-resolution images are presented in a lower resolution

OYO Bulks up International Leadership with Key Hires

China to get a COO; country heads for Europe, UK & Malaysia

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New Delhi: OYO Hotels & Homes has made a slew of leadership appointments across three of its fast-growing international markets as the SoftBank Vision Fund-backed hospitality chain looks to aggressively expand its presence across these geographies.

The company is bringing on board Sam Shi as its chief operating officer (COO) for OYO Jiu-dian, its Chinese subsidiary, which over the past 12 months has emerged as its second home market after India.

Prior to joining OYO, Shi served as president of Global Consumables and chief executive at Asia Pulp & Paper Co. He also has had stints with energy drink giant Red Bull and French multinational hospitality firm Accor Group, aside of having a two decade-long tenure across roles at Pepsi China, the domestic subsidiary of the US multinational PepsiCo. Shi will report to Ritesh Agarwal, founder & CEO at OYO, who is overseeing the China market directly.

OYO has also appointed Andrew Verbitsky as head of Europe, Jere-



my Sanders as the UK head, and Tan Ming Luk as the country head for Malaysia. All of them will report to Abhinav Sinha, OYO's COO. Verbitsky has had stints at Airbnb and Delivery Hero, among others. "China is a home market and we invest in leadership there like we invest in India," Agarwal told ET. "With some of the best and brightest minds joining the leadership

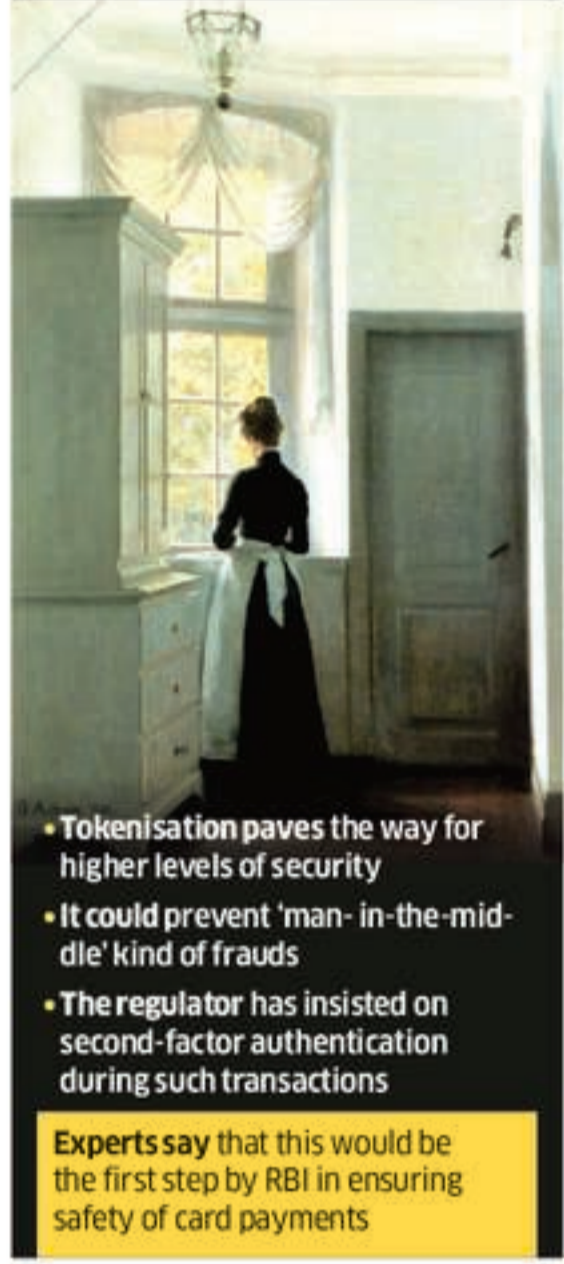
team in our home market China and high-priority markets in Southeast Asia and Europe, I am confident that they will be able to help us set new benchmarks in the hospitality industry. What we are attempting is to solve the demand-supply imbalance that characterises the global hospitality sector through technology and talent and these appointments will take us a

step ahead in this direction." Besides Shi's coming on board OYO in China, the company also recently hired Wilson Li as its chief financial officer (CFO). Li was the finance and operations head at listed car rental major Car Inc. OYO also brought in former Google and Uber executive Jia Zhou as its technology head and Tony Liang, formerly with Wanda, SF Express and Dianping, as its chief human resources officer.

ET was the first to report on the hires in its November 21 edition. According to data released by the company, OYO Jiu-dian is currently present in 280 cities across the world's second-largest economy, operating more than 5,000 hotels and 2,60,000 rooms. The latest set of appointments come a little less than two months after OYO named seasoned aviation executive Aditya Ghosh as its chief executive for India and South Asia, arguably its most high-profile hire till date. OYO has been talking about its aggressive plans for expanding into markets beyond India with China leading the way. All told, it has raised an estimated \$1.16 billion, across rounds, having recently closed \$100 million from ride-hailing major Grab in the latest tranche of its ongoing \$1 billion funding round.

Payment Firms Look to Cash in on RBI's Tokenisation Note

If implemented, users will be able to create a safe virtual card number



THE LONG WAIT

Bengaluru: The Reserve Bank of India's latest directive on tokenisation services for card payments could open a new frontier for digital payments, expand ease of use and make card payments safer, said industry executives.

On Tuesday, the central bank had said that card companies would be allowed to offer tokenisation services to third-party service providers as well and customers can avail themselves of these services by registering through a third-party application.

Following this directive, consumers will be able to create a virtual number against their original card numbers. So they will not have to share their actual card details for every transaction. This could make card payments more secure.

"Tokenisation is the foundational aspect of taking payment security and safety to the next level by devaluing data and replacing payment credentials with tokens," said TR Ramachandran, group country manager, India and South Asia, Vi-

sa. It could also prevent the "man-in-the-middle" kind of frauds where card details are captured in the course of the transaction by a bug or a hacker and later used for fake transactions.

To keep the additional level of security intact the regulator has in-

cluded on second factor of authentication during such transactions, although tokenisation adds a new layer of security.

Executives said this would be the first step by the central bank in ensuring the safety of card payments. "It could also help in developing the next generation of contactless point of sales (PoS) terminals which can read transactions from smartphones or any other de-

vice. This would pave the way for payments that can originate from wearables as well in the future. For the time being, the RBI has allowed payments only from smartphones and tablets.

"We expect this move to increase the share of digital payments in everyday use-cases, like grocery, fuel and transit. It will spur the adoption of newer devices like low cost near-field communication enabled phones and terminals with wearables and other connected devices for payments," a Mastercard spokesperson said in response to ET's queries.

Tokens have already become a popular mode of online transactions, where consumers mostly save their cards for future transactions, but with this directive it could also help spur QR code-based payments at retail points.

Snag Leaks Tax Info of Amazon India Sellers

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Bengaluru: Amazon India said it had rectified a technical glitch, which exposed the tax reports of some sellers to others on its platform.

On Wednesday, the company said the glitch affected a "minuscule number" of the 4,00,000 sellers on its platform had been rectified so-

on after sellers flagged it. Last Sunday, a merchant who sells smartphone accessories on Amazon logged onto the platform to download his tax report for December, and found that the inventory reflected in it did not tally with what he had sold. Upon closer inspection, he realised that the GST number on the report was not his, the person told ET.

"On Sunday, some sellers who attempted to download merchant tax

reports for the month of December 2018 experienced a technical issue. Our teams identified the issue and resolved it on priority and sellers were soon able to download the correct MTR reports," said an Amazon spokesperson. A company executive, on the condition of an-

onymity, said only around 0.2% of the company's seller base was exposed to the glitch.

DATA LEAK
Some of the sellers who were affected said they were able to download tax reports of different vendors up until late Monday. Amazon then took down the section for sellers to download the reports, before reopening it to them a few hours later with the issue seemingly fixed.

Telcos, Internet Firms for Lawful Interception of OTT Messages

Firms tell Trai that access is critical for investigation of criminal, anti-national and anti-social activities on internet apps & services

Surabhi Agarwal & Megha Mandavia

New Delhi: India's top telecom firms including Reliance Jio as well as homegrown startups such as Paytm and ShareChat have advocated lawful interception of messages on Internet applications and services, saying it is critical for investigation of criminal, anti-national and anti-social activities.

Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), which represents telecom firms such as Bharti Airtel, Vodafone-Idea and Reliance Jio, has also called for bringing OTT players under the same licensing conditions as telecom companies, in their submission to the telecom regulator on its consultation paper for the regulation of over-the-top (OTT) players such as WhatsApp.

"We submit that Lawful Interception (LI) of every message is a legal and critical mean provided to the security agencies for investigation of criminal, anti-national and anti-social activities," said Reliance Jio in its submission. "This along with data privacy is a license requirement for TSPs (telecom service providers) and a similar requirement should be mandated for the OTT communication services providers," Jio said adding that there should be "simple and minimalistic"

regulatory framework for OTT communication players, which can be in the form of registration.

In contrast, industry associations such as Nasscom and Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) have argued that there should not be any additional regulation for OTTs since there are enough provisions under existing laws such as the IT Act. Any more compliance burden will create an entry barrier for newcomers and hurt existing players, they said.

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) had released the discussion paper "Regulatory Framework for Over-The-Top Communications Services" in November, its second since 2015, to debate whether a regulatory framework was required to govern these entities.

Reliance Jio added that OTT Communication service providers should give full data access including decryption keys to Indian law enforcement authorities and collect and store all user information locally IAMAI, which counts firms such as Facebook and Google as its members, said that it would be detrimental to have licensing for communication applications and Internet platforms.

"Any attempt to regulate Internet companies will result in fragmented regulatory approach towards internet as the sector is regulated

by the IT Act in the country" it said. IAMAI added that the Telegraph Act permits lawful interception of all data traffic by licensed TSPs and ISPs and interception of all data traffic is already happening at international landing stations, and does not require additional intervention from the regulator. It also said regulation would increase cost to users and lead to uncertainty for application providers, a stance also advocated by software lobby group Nasscom.

Ashish Aggarwal, head, public advocacy at Nasscom told ET that there is no case for substitution since OTTs are complementing the TSPs as everything is riding on data now. "As far as consumer protection is concerned, we already have safeguards

under IT Act." In its submission, Times Internet said that efforts to draw up a regulatory classification, license OTT services or mandate requirements uniformly on them can be unreasonable distort or restrict the market. "OTTs and TSPs operate in fundamentally distinct and separate markets, and attempts to compare their services as similar or substitutable are misguided attempts to draw equivalencies where they do not exist." It added that TSPs benefit from the demand for data that OTT services drive, and TSPs should be prevented from any opportunities to encourage "double dipping" into the OTT space, particularly if network neutrality principles are upheld.

Paytm said that services provided by OTT such as messaging may be regarded as the same or similar to TSPs. "There have been instances in the past wherein an OTT provider has

Shreyas Shibulal Sets up Fund for Clean Energy Cos

Bengaluru-based Micelio fund will invest in startups in the electric vehicle space

Our Bureau

Bengaluru: Shreyas Shibulal, son of Infosys cofounder SD Shibulal, has started a fund dedicated to clean-energy startups. Bengaluru-headquartered Micelio Fund plans to invest in startups in the electric vehicle space, across areas such as mobility, software applications, energy and charging infrastructure.

"It is a ₹140-crore fund which will undertake seed investments in early-stage companies who are trying to disrupt the electric mobility business," said Shreyas Shibulal.

Shibulal, who has done his post-graduation in 'embedded systems' from University of Pennsylvania, will use the fund primarily to drive his personal interest in this space and help companies that can create mobility solutions for the future.

Besides the fund, Micelio will also create a 'Discovery Studio' on a 10,000-sq-ft workshop in South Bengaluru, where it will allow startups to design and create

BUILDING BLOCKS

We have plans to set up state-of-the-art equipment in the workshop and will invest additional money to create a suitable environment

prototypes of their products. "We have plans to set up state-of-the-art equipment in the workshop and will invest additional money to create a suitable environment for these entities to work in," he said.

Shibulal, who owns around 0.64% of Infosys, is estimated to be worth almost ₹1,900 crore as on December 31, as per the latest filings made by the company.

Using his personal wealth, he plans to fuel the fund and thereby allow it a long-gestation period, which is mandatory in a sector like e-vehicles.

Micelio has not finalised its plans around how much stake it would pick up in the companies it will invest in and how it will further help those companies to raise larger rounds. Shibulal said this would be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Having done his groundwork, Shibulal made multiple trips to startup hubs in the country and said the enthusiasm among the young entrepreneurs towards e-mobility was very high, which had driven him to create this fund.

"The best part about the Indian companies is that they are looking at creating very indigenous solutions to problems that are unique to India in the e-mobility space. A few of the startups I met have done a remarkable job in object recognition which could have implications in many other ventures," he said.



Shreyas Shibulal

Globe Trotter Meanwhile in tech...



97% Happy with Smart Speakers

NEW DELHI Smart speakers are one of the fastest adopted technologies in India and have a 97% satisfaction rate among Indian consumers, according to a report from Accenture. Half of online consumers globally now use digital voice assistants, led by emerging markets such as India with 72% adoption, said the report 'Reshape to Relevance'. - IANS

OTTs & TSPs CAN'T BE CLUBBED TOGETHER

OTTs & TSPs operate in fundamentally distinct and separate markets, and attempts to compare their services as similar or substitutable are misguided attempts to draw equivalencies where they do not exist

TIMES INTERNET IN ITS SUBMISSION TO TRAI