



NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

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Blockchain startup New Street Technologies raises \$2 million

Today's View

AI Hardware Opportunity

With advancements in architecture and software layers of the technology stack, the software has been the star of emerging tech till now but the exploding use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is ushering in a new era for AI hardware.

AI has started impacting semiconductor design with its capabilities to improve performance and reduce power, setting the stage for a number of foundational shifts in how chips are developed, manufactured and updated in the future. With AI, data is required to be processed as patterns rather than individual bits, effectively raising the abstraction level for computing and increasing the density of the software. It allows processing and memory read/writes to be done as a matrix, greatly speeding up those operations.

A new battle for leadership among chip manufacturers has begun with the hope to claim a piece of the AI chip market that **UBS** has forecasted to hit \$35 bn by 2021, up from just \$6 bn in 2016.

While **Nvidia** has a dominant position with regard to hardware pertaining to AI training applications, a host of global tech giants such as **Google, Microsoft, Apple, Amazon** and **Facebook** are working feverishly to increase processor speeds for supporting AI applications such as facial and speech recognition, search, and custom image recognition to improve personalization and robotic

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Amazon plans 100 mall kiosks across India

Amazon plans to roll out more than 100 kiosks in malls across the country that will sell its devices such as the Kindle e-book reader, the Echo speaker and the Fire TV dongle by the end of the year.



Source – The Economic Times

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Date – 26th Mar 19

assistance. Chinese giants such as **Baidu** and **Alibaba** are investing a vast amount of time and money in this transformative sector.

In addition to AI chips from traditional IC companies such as **Intel** and **Qualcomm**, more than 45 start-ups are working to develop new AI chips, with VC investments of more than \$1.5B — at least five of them have raised more than \$100 million from investors, according to **CB Insights**.

Start-ups such as **Mythic**, **Wave Computing**, **Cambricon** and **Syantiant** are showing great potential in AI semiconductor space. For instance, **Graphcore** develops accelerators for AI and machine learning. It aims to make a massively parallel Intelligence Processing Unit that holds the complete machine learning model inside the processor. Another AI Hardware start-up **Cerebras** hardware is tailor-made for ‘training’ the AI. Similarly, **Silicon Catalyst** is an incubator focused to help semiconductor start-ups succeed.

We believe that the result of such innovation in hardware would be enhancement in usage of power AI into anything – right from fitness bands and hearing aids to flying cars and agricultural drones.

Today's News

BOB set to develop digital Agri platform for farmers

Bank of Baroda has signed a memorandum of understanding with agriculture services companies to develop an agriculture digital platform, Baroda Kisan, which will provide solutions for agricultural requirements. The initiative is being executed by ITCoE of Bank of Baroda, in partnership with IBM India. The platform intends to make a holistic approach towards solving agricultural plights by means of providing reliable and customised information, inputs for use, convenience of renting farm equipment, and market linkage for sale of agriculture produce. Bank of Baroda has signed the agreement with Skymet Weather Services, Weather Risk Management Services, BigHaat, Agrostar India, EM3 Agri Services, and Poorti Agri Services.

Source – *Businessline*

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Blockchain startup New Street Technologies raises \$2 million

Bengaluru-based blockchain start-up New Street Technologies has raised \$2 million (about Rs. 14 crore) in a series-A round led by Unitus Ventures and a clutch of businessmen who participated in their personal capacities. The company, founded by former Citibank senior executive Sajeer Vishwanathan and Mohit Davar, chairman of the International Association of Money Transfer Networks, in August 2017 is in the business of connecting stakeholders in the financial services industry through a blockchain network. “We have already disbursed loans of around Rs. 30 crore for one of our bank partners in collaboration with business correspondents and have a mandate to do around Rs. 1,000 crore for them through a three-year contract,” said Vishwanathan.

Source – *The Economic Times*

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This News Letter has been prepared with the assistance of **G Balakrishna** and **Aparna Anand**

UniPropitia to acquire 51% stake in Infibeam's Dubai subsidiary for \$25M

Infibeam Avenues Ltd (IAL) is venturing into Arab League countries via a strategic alliance with Dubai based UniPropitia Group, to accelerate its international growth and revenue share. UniPropitia will also acquire 51% stake in IAL's subsidiary Infibeam Global EMEA FZ-LLC for \$25 million.

Infibeam, India's first listed e-commerce entity is the only profitable and publicly-listed e-commerce company in India. Recently, it had increased its focus on its fintech play as the company is building & developing its blockchain capable payment solution on LinuxOne platform, in collaboration with IBM.

Source – *The Economic Times*

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NBFC Finova Capital raises \$15 million in round led by Faering, Sequoia

Non-banking financial company (NBFC) Finova Capital on Monday said it has raised \$15 million in a series B round led by new investor Faering Capital and existing investor Sequoia Capital.

Finova lends to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and service providers in Tier II and III towns and rural areas. It caters to loans of Rs. 5-6 lakh for a period of up to seven years. Founded in 2016 by Mohit and Sunita Sahney, it claims to have disbursed Rs. 250 crore to over 4,500 customers till date. It operates 52 branches across Rajasthan, and plans to expand to over 75 branches across Rajasthan, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh by the end of this year.

Source – *Mint*

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RBI working on regulatory norms for Fintech companies

The Reserve Bank of India will issue guidelines for a regulatory sandbox for financial technologies in the next two months, governor Shaktikanta Das said. He will meet Fintech companies this week to understand the issues they face. The regulatory sandbox will provide Fintech start-ups a framework to conduct live experiments in a controlled environment under supervision. “A regulatory sandbox would benefit Fintech companies by way of reduced time to launch innovative products at a lower cost,” Das said at a Fintech conclave organised by the NITI Aayog. “Going forward, the Reserve Bank will set up a regulatory sandbox, for which guidelines will be issued in the next two months.”

A working group on Fintech and digital banking set up by the RBI had in November 2017 suggested the regulatory sandbox saying it would provide a well-defined space and duration to experiment with Fintech solutions, where consequences of failure could be contained and reasons for failure analysed.

Source – *The Economic Times*

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Digital lending industry asks RBI to allow direct debit for loan repayment

The digital lending industry has suggested that the RBI allow direct debit for loan repayment through the instant inter-bank funds transfer mechanism UPI, extend the ‘Udaan’ scheme to fintechs and non-banking finance companies, and make bank funding mandatory for early-stage fintechs. The country's central bank, in its notification dated March 18, had sought the industry's recommendations on what would help the micro-small-and-medium industry come out of challenging times.

Udaan is a central government-run credit guarantee scheme under which small enterprises can access loans from institutions without any collateral. Several fintech lending players to understand the difficulties in the MSME financing space and how things could be changed. Players like Capital Float, Lendingkart, Aye Finance and Flexiloans, which are disrupting the way small businesses access finance, play a critical role in changing the way the sector operates.

Source – *The Economic Times*

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Indian start-ups backer Naspers to list international biz

Naspers, the largest shareholder in some of the biggest Indian internet companies like online travel portal MakeMyTrip and food delivery player Swiggy, has said it is listing the international investments — including the India portfolio — on Euronext Amsterdam. The development comes as Naspers emerged one of the most aggressive investors in India in 2018, deploying \$1 billion across Swiggy and education technology company Byju's. Naspers will own 75% in the new listed company, which is yet to be named, and is expected to be the largest consumer internet company listed in Europe. The listing is expected to be completed by the second half of 2019.

Source – *The Economic Times*

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Alibaba, Tencent, car makers set up \$1.5B China ride-hailing venture

Alibaba, Tencent, Suning, and car makers including Chongqing Changan Automobile have set up a \$1.5 billion Chinese ride-hailing venture, a move that could test the dominance of ride-sharing giant Didi Chuxing.

Chongqing Changan Automobile said on Friday that it has invested 1.6 billion yuan (\$238.36 million) in the Nanjing-based investment company alongside partners such as the investment units of Alibaba, Tencent and retailer Suning.Com, and automakers FAW and Dongfeng Motor.

Source – *The Economic Times*

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Low on incentives, electric 2-wheelers may lose million units race

Manufacturers of electric two-wheelers raised doubts about meeting India's dream of having a million such vehicles on road in the next three years, due to a reduction in incentives given under the second phase of the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME) programme.

In a letter to the NITI Aayog and the Department of Heavy Industry, industry body Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicles (SMEV) said with the government slashing incentives on city-speed electric two-wheelers (speed 40 km per hour, range 60 km, battery 1 kWh) under FAME-II, the vehicles have become costlier by Rs 10,000-12,000.

Source – *The Economic Times*

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