

N1. Covid-19: PM Modi explains why India needs more downloads of Aarogya Setu App

Hindustan Times- 11 April 2020

... technology, algorithms and artificial intelligence,” *Neeta Verma*, director general, *national informatics centre*, government of India had said after its launch.

Covid-19 in India: Aarogya Setu app has been developed by the government to track the progress of coronavirus in the country through its users and alert those who may have either come into contact with a positive case or a suspect by using location tracking technology.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday requested for downloading of the Aarogya Setu App in large numbers and said that for the App to be effective in preventing rise of coronavirus infections, it was important that more and more people used it.

Aarogya Setu app has been developed by the government to track the progress of coronavirus in the country through its users and alert those who may have either come into contact with a positive case or a suspect by using location tracking technology. The App also provides important and credible information on the containment of the disease.

“Aarogya Setu is an important step in our fight against COVID-19. By leveraging technology, it provides important information. As more and more people use it, its effectiveness will increase. I urge you all to download it,” PM Modi tweeted on Friday night.

Earlier this week, the prime minister had urged all BJP workers to spread the word about Aarogya Setu, which was launched at the beginning of the month. “At least 40 people should be told about this and how to use this,” he had said on April 6.

Approximately 5 million people had downloaded the App within the first few days of its launch and the number of downloads went beyond 10 million by April 8, as per the data available on the Google playstore.

Developed with the public-private partnership, the Aarogya Setu App is available for installation in both android and ios based smartphones.

“The app will calculate the risk score based on their interaction with others, using cutting edge bluetooth technology, algorithms and artificial intelligence,” **Neeta Verma, director general, national informatics centre**, government of India had said after its launch.

Once installed it asks users to switch on the Bluetooth technology on the phone and to turn location sharing feature to “always”. The App uses technology to detect other devices that have Aarogya Setu installed on them and that have come in the bluetooth/GPS proximity range of the user to assess the risk one runs of contracting the disease by applying the principle of contract-tracing.

Apart from its primary function, the app also encourages people to donate to PM CARES Fund, which was set up especially after the coronavirus outbreak to invite donations to generate resources to deal with crisis of this magnitude.

News Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/covid-19-pm-modi-explains-why-india-needs-more-downloads-of-aarogya-setu-app/story-603Mgoh3ZC2JcbYH0S4PPO.html>

N2. HC panel recommends use of app

The Hindu- 10 April 2020

“Unlike other video applications, the Vidyo software works through centralised National Informatics Centre server. So, we can feel safe and secure. The app also ...

Computer committee asks trial court judges to read e-book brought out by civil judge

The Madras High Court’s computer committee, chaired by Justice T.S. Sivagnanam, has urged judicial officers across the State to make best use of Vidyo app, a video interaction platform, provided in their official laptops for conducting court proceedings through video-conferencing.

The chairperson has also urged the trial court judges in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry to carefully go through an e-book prepared by R. Arulmozhiselvi, civil judge (Senior Division), now serving as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) at the Tamil Nadu State Judicial Academy, on how to use the application.

“Taking note of the fact that almost all courts and prisons in the State are well equipped with video conferencing facility, this Vidyo app can be put to best use in the current scenario (of nationwide lockdown to fight COVID-19) as well as in future by the courts, jail authorities and police,” he said.

Commending the OSD’s effort, the judge said she had taken pains to lucidly explain, through screenshots, the salient features such as possibility of sharing documents during video conferencing.

“It is my earnest appeal to all judicial officers in the State to make best use of the technology which has been made available by the honourable e-committee (of Supreme Court) using substantial funds allocated for e-governance in the State of Tamil Nadu,” he added.

Courts well-equipped

On her part, Ms. Arulmozhiselvi, a tech-savvy judicial officer who had brought out similar user guides in the past for other software used by the courts, said nearly 90% of the courts and prisons in the State were well connected with video-conferencing facilities.

“All official laptops given to judicial officers throughout the country have the Vidyo video conferencing software installed in them. Vidyo user ID is provided to every High Court by the e-committee of Supreme Court.

“Unlike other video applications, the Vidyo software works through centralised National Informatics Centre server. So, we can feel safe and secure. The app also provides for PIN protected meetings and sending invitations through e-mail along with the agenda.

“The app can be used by the judicial officers for remand extension of prisoners, examination of witnesses from far off places, holding one-to-one meeting of judges and so on. It would be nice if all judicial officers get a hands-on experience in using the app,” she said.

News Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/hc-panel-recommends-vidyo-app/article31311530.ece>

N3. Not Zoom, Vidyo is govt's app of choice during Covid-19 lockdown

Hindustan Times-10-Apr-2020

... a video conferencing application vetted by the *National Informatics Centre* (NIC). ... Talking about Vidyo, **NIC director Neeta Verma** said: "All the videos are ...

Privacy concerns about government meetings came to the fore on April 1, when defence minister Rajnath Singh posted pictures on Twitter of his video conference with Chief of Defence Staff Bipin Rawat using Zoom.

A host of privacy concerns related to virtual meetings of top government officials during the Covid-19 pandemic has made them turn to Vidyo, a video conferencing application vetted by the National Informatics Centre (NIC).

The app developed by a US-based firm was first used by NIC in 1995 to host studio-based video conferencing. In 2009, the app was used for desktop-based video conferencing. It is the same secure channel that has been extended to officials at home to communicate. NIC data shows that from March 20, four days before the 21-day lockdown began, to April 9, a total of 79,405 calls lasting more than 37,909 hours have been made using the app.

Privacy concerns about government meetings came to the fore on April 1, when defence minister Rajnath Singh posted pictures on Twitter of his video conference with Chief of Defence Staff Bipin Rawat using Zoom.

Also read: [Zoom CEO Eric Yuan addresses privacy, security issues in first webinar](#)

Zoom's popularity in the government and private sectors surged during lockdowns in many countries. However, numerous security concerns related to the app have emerged. Authorities in Singapore, the US Senate and the German foreign ministry have barred the use of Zoom.

From "zoombombing" or hackers entering private chat rooms to selling of user data, the app has faced criticism. On April 8, Google asked its employees to stop using Zoom.

Talking about Vidyo, NIC director Neeta Verma said: "All the videos are stored on a secure government server and cannot be accessed by anyone else...The app is hosted on our own data centre and is end-to-end encrypted ensuring complete security."

She added that most ministries and departments were using the Vidyo app for official purposes, although officers may have been using others for their personal calls.

"Although the software is external, all the videos are stored on our own server and cannot be accessed by anyone else. The app is hosted on our own data centre."

Most ministries, she said, are using Vidyo for official purposes, though officers may have been using other apps for personal calls.

Experts say Zoom could potentially expose the country to security risks.

"The main challenge is if parts of the government, like the military and the home ministry, are using the software, it exposes the country to the risk of sensitive information being routed through foreign infrastructure," said Sunil Abraham, former executive director of the Centre for Internet and Society.

Abraham said Zoom's lack of end-to-end encryption is the reason for this exposure. "The call is only encrypted between the user and Zoom, unlike end-to-end encryption. The company still has access to the information," he said.

Also read: [Zoom's latest update hides meeting ID numbers from the title bar](#)

"Keeping in view security concerns, the ministry of defence has since refrained from using the app for video conference," a person familiar with developments told Hindustan Times.

The department of personnel and training (DoPT) has been using Vidyo since virtual communications began. "There were security concerns around Zoom that we too read in media reports," an DoPT official said. "We were sent a link by the NIC on WhatsApp for Vidyo and have been using that. They must have vetted it to ensure it stays confidential."

On Tuesday, the official said, DoPT secretary C Chandramouli held a meeting with senior officials on Vidyo to "review the present situation and formulate an action plan for the coming week".

According to a second DoPT official, meetings with the minister of personnel, grievances and pensions, Jitendra Singh, are exclusively held on Vidyo.

"Work has been carrying forth as usual, but security has been our only concern," the second official said. "Vidyo is the only app used for high-level meetings."

According to Abraham, however, even Vidyo is not completely secure.

Also read: [Google bans Zoom from employee laptops](#)

"The government has eliminated 50% of the risk by hosting it," he said. "But at the same time, you don't have complete control over the software. You don't know what the software is doing exactly. It will have to be very closely monitored. It's okay for low-level ministries but not the top level ones. If you use open source software Jitsi, you can avoid that risk too."

News Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/not-zoom-vidyo-is-govt-s-app-of-choice-during-covid-19-lockdown/story-8195JqwxqD5rQ7oORoxSuN.html>

M1. View from India: AI skills essential to be future ready

E&T Magazine-09-Apr-2020

... *Ajay Prakash Sawhney*, secretary, Ministry of *Electronics and Information Technology*, ... AI and other emerging technologies are imperative to build a digitally ...

Nasscom, in partnership with MeitY, has launched a training course on Artificial Intelligence (AI), free to all users for the next month.

Industry body National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom) - in association with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) - has launched an on-demand courseware on AI. As part of the Nasscom FutureSkills initiative, the AI course will allow individuals to upskill themselves over the next few weeks.

To put things in perspective, Nasscom FutureSkills has curated deep-learning programs for their partner ecosystem that will be available for free on the Nasscom website for all users. The Foundational Artificial Intelligence course from SkillUp Online is aligned to the industry's recommended Foundation AI curriculum (retail price Rs 6,800) free for everyone until May 15 2020. The Foundational Big Data Analytics course from Digital Vidya, aligned to the industry's recommended Foundation BDA curriculum will also be soon made available free of cost (retail price Rs 5,000). Besides deep skilling, the website will also include micro-learning content on AI as quick knowledge bytes.

“Covid-19 has thrown unprecedented challenges for the world and industries alike. While we continue to fight these challenges as a nation, it's important to use this opportunity to upgrade our skills, in order to remain industry relevant and future ready,” said *Ajay Prakash Sawhney*, secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India. This campaign will urge IT professionals, students and everybody else interested in technology to enhance their understanding of emerging tech.

“We are starting with artificial intelligence, as this is one skill that every professional will need. We hope to see many users signing up to avail these courses,” reasoned *Sawhney*.

AI and other emerging technologies are imperative to build a digitally powered tomorrow. It is essential that the workforce is ready with the required capabilities while dealing with AI to execute functions using technology more efficiently in the future.

“The novel coronavirus has thrown up exceptional challenges across the world and industries alike. While we continue to fight these challenges as a nation, amidst lockdown and remote-working scenarios, it is extremely important that we continue harnessing our skill sets on emerging technologies to become future ready,” added *Debjani Ghosh*, president, Nasscom.

Through Nasscom and MeitY's 'Unlock your skills during the lockdown' campaign, stakeholders are encouraged to use this opportunity of working from home to upskill themselves in the skills of the future. “We are confident that together we will be able to overcome this phase and emerge stronger, post the crisis,” said *Ghosh*.

The course comes at a time when the industry has migrated to adopt processes wherein employees work from home during these exceptional times. That's when a greater need is felt for them to

continue their efforts in enhancing their skill sets and remain future ready. The course aims to enhance AI readiness among all individuals in the country.

This initiative will allow subscribers to learn, become familiarised with AI enabled technologies and practice AI tools. It will happen through micro-learning content, which will be free of cost to the users. Going forward, in the coming weeks, Nasscom also plans to provide learning modules on other technologies such as Big Data, IoT and cyber security along with live webinars for participants to create more interactive learning on these themes.

AI will revolutionise industries like automobile, environment, healthcare and just about everything in our lives in the near future. In the AI era that we are in, we operate in a data-centered manner. What makes AI commercially viable is that AI algorithms are being tapped to derive emerging trends from data as well as to regulate backend operations in organisations.

For all this, we need to upgrade skills and equip individuals for AI-ready jobs. What's required is to invest in AI skills. Contrary to the belief that AI will remove jobs, it will change the nature of jobs. Professionals will have to reinvent themselves as they need to integrate AI tools for productive usage in their work.

AI applications are diverse - facial recognition in offices is likely to become as prevalent as automated check-ins in airports. Consequently, human and technical skills will merge to make organisations competitive. All this will cumulatively help create a robust digital economy.

News Source: <https://eandt.theiet.org/content/articles/2020/04/view-from-india-ai-skills-essential-to-be-future-ready/>

M2. CM launches IVRS facility for COVID-19

The Hindu-09-Apr-2020

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Union Minister for Communications, *Electronics and Information Technology* Ravi Shankar Prasad launched the ...

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Union Minister for Communications, Electronics and Information Technology Ravi Shankar Prasad launched the IVRS facility through videoconferencing. The Chief Minister said this was one more step towards controlling COVID-19 pandemic. The advantage of this system is that it does not require internet connection and people can converse in their mother tongue, a press release said.

According to the release, anyone can give a missed call to 94999 12345. The system would call them back and ask simple questions. Based on the replies provided by them, it would give the appropriate advice on COVID-19. People can provide information on their health status, symptoms of COVID-19, and if they had conditions such as diabetes and hypertension.

Based on the replies and by analysing their place of residence, the initiative would facilitate transfer of information for further action. The district emergency control room would step in for providing appropriate assistance including despatch of ambulance depending on the condition of the callers.

It would categorise them as low-risk beneficiaries, medium-risk beneficiaries and high-risk beneficiaries. For those in the low-risk category, health advice on hand washing, physical distancing and keeping surroundings clean would be provided. For those in the medium-risk category, the district emergency control room would provide required medical assistance. Disease prevention and control measures would be carried out through the control room for high-risk category persons.

Mr. Prasad said “Arogiya Sethu IVRS” was already launched but was confined only to smart phones. Now, it was available for non-smart phones too, the release said.

News Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/cm-launches-ivrs-facility-for-covid-19/article31303525.ece>

Other IT News

O1. Google and Apple are joining hands to bring COVID-19 tracking system to your Android and iOS devices

Financial Express. 11 April 2020

Apple and Google are finally joining hands to build something together, in this case, a privacy-preserving COVID-19 tracking system that will be available, in the coming days, for all iOS and Android

O2. Microsoft Edge leapfrogs Firefox, becomes second-most widely-used web browser

Economic Times. 08 April 2020

Edge has overtaken Firefox, after only being in existence for less than three months.

O3. Home Ministry suggests cyber security tips for people working from home

Hindu BusinessLine. 11 April 2020

Keep the remote access disable until and unless required, suggests Home Ministry. The Ministry of Home Affairs, along with Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre have come out with some cyber security tips, as most of the people are working from home.

O4. Nasscom urges Centre to reimburse “paid leave” given to staff during lockdown

Hindu BusinessLine. 10 April 2020

IT and ITeS industry body Nasscom has urged the Centre to reimburse the payroll cost of employees who were on “paid leave” on account of any Covid-19 related lockdown measures till March 31, 2021, among other concessions and facilities.