

N1. CIC holds online hearing of appeals for first time ever

THE WEEK- 16 April 2020

*The commission heard 18 cases on April 15 through audio and visual means. However, the CIC plans to adopt the Vidyio app developed by the **National Informatics Centre**, and which is being used by the Supreme Court, for its future ...*

Joining the growing list of institutions that are using technological means to conduct their functioning, the Central Information Commission has begun online hearing of appeals given the restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown.

In a first for the Commission, it heard 18 cases yesterday through audio and visual means. The video-conferencing app Zoom was used by the Commissioners to hear the matters. However, the CIC plans to adopt the Vidyio app developed by the National Informatics Centre, and which is being used by the Supreme Court, for its future hearings during the lockdown period since security concerns exist concerning Zoom.

The Commission had, on March 23, held its first internal meeting through Zoom, where it was decided that it would conduct online hearings to deal with the pending appeals. The CIC held a video meeting with RTI activists on April 7 to discuss the issue and seek their views. It also held a meeting with former commissioners on April ten, again through video-conferencing, to seek their inputs.

Amongst the decisions taken was that maximum possible efforts will be made with the help of technology for early conduct of hearings under the prevailing circumstances arising due to lockdown. It was decided that notices may be issued by e-post, if required.

It was reiterated that the Registrar will continue to train all the deputy registrars periodically to provide support and ensure that the scheduled hearings commence through audio or digital mode by April 15, in larger public interest.

The e-office platform has been extended to the home computers of the CIC officers in the hierarchy of the channel of submission of files. It was also decided that pending claims should be settled expeditiously because of availability of e-office at home computers of CIC officers.

“The good thing about the decision taken by the CIC to conduct online hearings is that audio hearings will also be possible. So if a person does not have the facility of taking part in an audio-visual hearing, he can still take part in the hearing through just audio means on basic phones,” said RTI activist Commodore Lokesh Batra (Retd).

The Commission is working with a strength of seven commissioners, including the Chief

Information Commissioner, against a sanctioned strength of 11. As many as 36,000 RTI appeals are pending before the CIC.

News Source: <https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2020/04/16/cic-holds-online-hearing-of-appeals-for-first-time-ever.html>

N2. Are you 'ArogyaSetu'pped yet?

The New Indian Express- 16 April 2020

Unless you are living under a rock, and not at home, as you should be, then you would have definitely heard of the Indian government's ArogyaSetu app. ArogyaSetu, a mobile app (Android and iOS) developed by the National Informatics Centre, a part of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology ...

HYDERABAD : Unless you are living under a rock, and not at home, as you should be, then you would have definitely heard of the Indian government's ArogyaSetu app. Even the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday while addressing the nation urged Indians to use the ArogyaSetu application and "inspire others to download the app as well".

We at Hyderabad Express decided to check out the app to see what the hullabaloo is all about. ArogyaSetu, a mobile app (Android and iOS) developed by the National Informatics Centre, a part of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India is said to help citizens identify their risk of contracting Coronavirus. It has notched up more than 10 million downloads since its launch six days back.

The app interface is available in 11 languages, and alerts users, without disclosing identity, if they are in the vicinity of someone who's tested positive. The data collected from the app helps the government trace contacts of those infected to execute quarantining. It is designed to keep a user informed in case they crossed within 6-feet of someone who has tested positive. The tracking is done through a Bluetooth and location generated social graph.

This is where the privacy issue crops up. There is very little clarity on who will have access to this data. There is such a dearth of information that it isn't clear how the main objective, of alerting people about positive cases, will work. However, the ArogyaSetu app has also raised privacy concerns. Some experts have pointed out that since the app uses GPS, in addition to Bluetooth, for identifying the potential spread of the infection, it could be used for exactly revealing the location of users. Says Som Chebolu, CEO, Bridgesoft Solutions Pvt Ltd, "There is nothing to use in the app. We just register and take the health assessment once in a while. I'm not comfortable when someone tracks my location all the time."

ArogyaSetu's terms of use were unclear on several aspects including how long data would be stored, what would happen to it once the pandemic ceased, or who else the data would be shared with. About the key feature of detecting a Covid-19 patient, another user, a journalist from a leading newspaper commented, "I don't know about the privacy part. I have downloaded the app, but I haven't stepped out to see if I have crossed paths with anyone who has the infection."

A photographer from the city said though he has the app installed and was at King Koti Hospital on Tuesday in close vicinity of a victim of the virus, but the app did not alert/beep him. He reckons, "Perhaps, the app is not doing what it is meant to."

Haseeb Anwar, a mutual fund distributor, registered on the app says, "I will definitely leave the bluetooth 'on'. I would like to know if I come across any person with Covid-19."

As per the statement by PMO, the app could also "subsequently act as e-pass to facilitate travel". Zainuddin Aarif, a businessman commented on this, "After I entered my information, it said I am safe. Probably, this is more useful for those who have to go out daily. Maybe, later it will act like 'a pass' to go to public places, if you have the 'safe tag'."

Ease of use

The app itself is pretty uncomplicated to use. It has a self-assessment section where questions on one's health and travel history in the past 30 days are asked for. In case some of the answers suggest

Covid symptoms, the information will be sent to a government server. The data will then help the government take timely steps and initiate the isolation procedure, if necessary. The app also offers recommendations about social distancing, Covid-19 Do's & Dont's, safety measures and helpline numbers of each State. Overall, we found the ArogyaSetu app to be simple and straightforward to use. The user experience is also clean and self-explanatory.

Steps for registration

- Search for Arogya Setu in the App Store or Google Play Store. Download the app onto your phone
- Once you open the app you will find the below screens
- Scroll to the left till you find the 'Register Now'. Once you click on 'Register Now', you will be prompted for your mobile number
- You will receive an OTP to your mobile. Once you enter the OTP, the user will be prompted to 'Allow Notifications' followed by Language preference
- The 'Terms of Service and Privacy' screen gives an overview about the App permissions required, data sharing and other privacy policy conditions
- Once you agree to the terms mentioned, you will be asked a set of personal questions which have to be answered honestly
- Once you Submit the answers, you will be prompted to take the Covid-19 Risk Assessment questionnaire
- Based on the answers, the infection risk is shown and necessary steps are advised

News Source: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/hyderabad/2020/apr/16/are-you-arogyasetupped-yet-2130639.html>

N3. In Kurukshetra, app to cater to essential needs of locals

The Tribune- 16 April 2020

E-market for Kurukshetra residents during second tenure of lockdown, district divided into zones for home delivery of essentials

Times of India.

The officials told the e-market app has been prepared with the efforts of district information officer (DIO) from national informatics center (NIC) Vinod Singla.

Kurukshetra : The National Informatics Centre (NIC), Kurukshetra, has developed a mobile app 'eMarket Kurukshetra' to ensure residents get groceries, medicines, vegetables and dairy products on the doorstep. Soon, they'll also be able to order books through it.

Only essential service providers who have agreed to home delivery will be found on the app. Thanesar has been divided into nine sectors, while the remaining areas including Ladwa, Pehowa, Shahabad and Ismailabad have been identified as one zone each.

Technical director-cum-DIO, Kurukshetra, Vinod Singla said, "The app has been developed on the DC's directions, in which four options of goods is provided. These are medical, grocery, fruit, vegetable and bakery, dairy. The option to order books for students is also being included."

He said the app was available on Google Play Store and a team had been appointed to identify more essential service providers. A feedback feature allows users to share their experience and the service provider will be removed if found unsatisfactory.

"The app is being shared with locals and shopkeepers are also being motivated to promote it as it will continue even after the lockdown."

News Source: <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/haryana/in-kurukshetra-app-to-cater-to-essential-needs-of-locals-71739>

N4. Govt staffers to resume office from April 20

Daily Pioneer- 16 April 2020

*Besides, defence, central armed police forces, health and family welfare, disaster management and early warning agencies, **national informatics centre**, food corporation of India, NCC, Nehru yuva kendras and customs to function without any restrictions, the guidelines said.*

Govt asks all deputy secretaries, above level officers to join offices. Greater Kashmir. 16 April 2020

Almost the entire Government staff will be able to work from their respective offices from April 20.

As per the MHA's consolidated guidelines released on Wednesday, all deputy secretaries and above level officers will resume work in their offices after having been confined to work from home for almost a month now due to the lockdown imposed to check the spread of coronavirus.

Earlier this week, all the Union Ministers and the joint secretaries of the Central Government and above level officers had joined their respective departments, a day before Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced an extended lockdown.

“Remaining officers and staff to attend up to 33 per cent as per requirement,” the guidelines for the lockdown issued by the Home Ministry maintained further.

All the Ministries and departments, and offices under their control are to function with 100 per cent attendance of Deputy Secretary and levels above that, it said.

Besides, defence, central armed police forces, health and family welfare, disaster management and early warning agencies, national informatics centre, food corporation of India, NCC, Nehru yuva kendras and customs to function without any restrictions, the guidelines said.

With respect to offices of the state and union territories, the Home Ministry said district administrations and treasury (including field offices of the accountant general) will function with restricted staff.

“However, delivery of public services shall be ensured, and necessary staff will be deployed for such states,” it said.

All other departments of state and UT Governments will work with restricted staff, it added.

“Group A and B officers may attend as required. Group C and levels below that may attend up to 33 per cent of strength, as per requirement to ensure social distancing,” the guidelines issued by the ministry said.

Police, home guards, civil defence, fire and emergency services, disaster management, prisons and municipal services will function without any restrictions, it said.

News Source: <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2020/india/govt-staffers-to-resume-office-from-april-20.html>

N5. India's Aarogya Setu becomes world's highest downloaded app in just 13 days

Livemint- 15 April 2020

Developed by the National Informatics Centre that comes under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, the 'Aarogya Setu' tracking app, which is ...

- Aarogya Setu app has reached 50 million users in just 13 days-fastest ever globally for an app, tweeted NITI Aayog CEO
- Developed by the National Informatics Centre that comes under the Ministry of Electronics and IT, Aarogya Setu tracking app is already available on both Android and iOS smartphones

With the country entering the second phase of lockdown from today to combat the spread of the novel [coronavirus](#) spread in India, the government's recently launched [Aarogya Setu](#) application that tracks Covid-19 cases around and helps in fighting the virus on an individual level, reached 50 million downloads just 13 days, making it the world's fastest downloaded app, said NITI Aayog CEO, Amitabh Kant.

"AarogyaSetu, India's app to fight COVID-19 has reached 50 mn users in just 13 days-fastest ever globally for an App," Kant tweeted.

Earlier, Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) had also urged the citizens to download the application in order to keep themselves safe during the pandemic outbreak. Modi also said that the tracking app is an essential tool in Covid-19 fight and is possible to use it as an e-pass to facilitate travel from one place to another, according to Press Trust of India report.

Developed by the National Informatics Centre that comes under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, the 'Aarogya Setu' tracking app, which is already available on Google Play Store on Android smartphones and App Store for iPhones, will help track the coronavirus infection by using the smartphone's GPS system and Bluetooth and provide information that will help in determining if you have been near a Covid-19 infected person or not.

Ensuring the data is encrypted, the app uses your location to know of the area you are around comes under the infected areas of the database and also needs an activated Bluetooth to determine if you have been within six feet from the infected person.

The Aarogya Setu app supports 11 languages. Once you have downloaded the app, you need to register with your mobile number. Later, the app will have an option to enter your health stats and other credentials. To enable tracking, you need to keep your location and Bluetooth services on.

District administration has been asking all educational institutions, departments etc to push downloading of the app.

Furthermore, citing sources, PTI reported that Tata Consultancy Services is also working on testing and some of the other aspects while Tech Mahindra and the Mahindra group is working with the committee on the next version of this application and leveraging next generation technologies like AI, machine learning, data science to expand the reach of the app on all types of phones apart from only smartphones.

Meanwhile, with the confirmed coronavirus cases in India breaching 1, 100-mark in last 24 hours, the total Covid-19 cases in the country have surged to 11,933, according to the Union Health Ministry data. As many as 392 deaths have been reported in the country so far.

News Source: <https://www.livemint.com/technology/tech-news/india-s-aarogya-setu-becomes-world-s-highest-downloaded-app-in-just-13-days-11586954392024.html>

M1. World Health Organisation has launched a new service on Messenger to curb spread of fake information on Covid-19

Times of India. 15 April 2020

the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has asked social media platforms like TikTok, Helo and Facebook to remove rogue messages spreading misinformation and weakening the government's effort to fight against the coronavirus.

World Health Organisation (WHO) and social media platforms are continuously trying to stop the spread of misinformation related to Covid-19 being circulated by launching several new features such as chatbots, setting up forward limits and more. WHO has now launched a new chatbot interactive service on Messenger to provide people with correct information and timely updates about the Covid-19 pandemic.

The service was launched with support from Sprinklr and users can access the service via WHO's official Facebook page by tapping on Send Message option or via dedicated Messenger link to get answers related to Covid-19 using WHO's Health Alert interactive service.

According to the official announcement made on the official Facebook blog page, "The WHO Health Alert service has already reached more than 12 million people through WhatsApp. And now, through Messenger, WHO will be able to expand their reach as they continue to provide people everywhere with important information. This is critical as widespread misinformation can create unnecessary fear and panic in this already trying time".

Apart from this, over 20 other government health organisations such as UNICEF, Argentina's Ministry of Health, the Government of France, the Government of India, and Pakistan's Ministry of National Health Services have launched Messenger experiences to curb the spread of misinformation.

In other news, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has asked social media platforms like TikTok, Helo and Facebook to remove rogue messages spreading misinformation and weakening the government's effort to fight against the coronavirus.

News Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/gadgets-news/world-health-organisation-has-launched-a-new-service-on-messenger-to-curb-spread-of-fake-information-on-covid-19/articleshow/75161846.cms>

M2. E-commerce firms welcome govt's order, some seek more clarity

Hindustan Times . 15 April 2020

*On March 24, the Union Ministry of **Electronics and Information Technology** (MeitY) asked states to exempt some key essential services, including ...*

The e-commerce companies on Wednesday welcomed the government's decision to ease the ongoing nationwide lockdown restrictions from April 20 by allowing some sectors such as farm activities, constructions of roads and buildings in rural areas, information technology and all interstate goods transport to function while maintaining a greater vigil in coronavirus disease (Covid-19) hotspots.

Several e-commerce companies faced initial challenges in catering to their customers because of delivery snags after the nationwide lockdown was enforced on March 25 to contain the spread of Covid-19 outbreak and since further extended till May 3, despite the government's exemptions to them.

On March 24, the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) asked states to exempt some key essential services, including e-commerce providers, and said that they be provided passage on the basis of evidence like a copy of orders, waybills, invoices, etc. The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) also put out additional guidelines two days later, which specified that e-commerce companies delivering essential commodities would be allowed to operate during the lockdown.

A company spokesperson of Walmart-owned Flipkart said that they have been collaborating with the retail ecosystem, including local kirana stores, to ensure the doorstep delivery of essential items. The company said that it would scale up its supply chain while taking all necessary precautions and making optimum utilisation of its resources.

"In line with the guidelines announced by the government and also in collaboration with all state governments and local authorities, we'll continue to serve consumers to promote social distancing through our sanitised supply chain, contactless deliveries and healthy and safe last-mile delivery process," said the spokesperson.

An Amazon India spokesperson said that they are evaluating the guidelines and have sought clarifications from the authorities on its implementation.

"The resumption of economic activity from April 20 is a welcome step that will depend on unhindered availability of labour that is critical to deliver essential products to people across the country and ensure they can stay home safely," Amazon said in a statement.

The hyperlocal delivery start-up, FreshToHome, which was facing logistical issues over deliveries, as meat products were not exempt, said its operations have resumed across the country.

"Chicken products and freshwater fish are available. But sourcing mutton and seafood is still an issue," said Shan Kadavil, chief executive officer (CEO), FreshToHome.

"We appreciate the government's bid to prioritise the movement of food and other essential items and also the resumption of farming, fisheries, and livestock, which will ensure daily sustenance of the workforce involved in these sectors," Kadavil said, adding that most of his company's deliveries are done through a contactless mechanism.

BigBasket, an online supermarket, said that though it faced initial delivery disruptions because of lockdown restrictions, the situation has vastly improved a spike in its orders. "We have a massive backlog of orders because of exceptionally high demand over the last few days. We have increased our server capacity by 50%, as we're facing a high volume of queries to our customer service team," said a BigBasket spokesperson.

News Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/e-commerce-firms-welcome-govt-s-decision-to-resume-services-some-seek-more-clarity/story-rW3hrK82B9YwaJpccQ5iVP.html>

M3. Govt constitutes Tech experts team under PM's guidance to tackle COVID-19 pandemic

All India Radio-15-Apr-2020

A set of around 20 experts working on pro bono basis under the guidance of Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology developed the Aarogya App.

In its fight against COVID-19, Centre has left no stone unturned. In its multi-pronged approach, government under the direct guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi constituted a team of tech experts to come up with a technological solution to tackle the Corona menace.

A set of around 20 experts working on pro bono basis under the guidance of Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology developed the Aarogya App. This technological solution has already earned laurels for the country including from World Health Organisation and World Bank.

Aarogya Setu is an app which works on a set of complex radio signal algorithm for contact tracing of COVID positive patients. The finest tech brains involved in its development have made sure that this app has a user friendly interface. The app identifies people who have come in contact with a COVID-19 patient which ensures swift quarantine procedure ruling out possibilities of error.

As highlighted by health experts, COVID patients remain asymptomatic for first few days even after contracting the infection. Once the infection surfaces, it sometimes difficult for them to remember everyone they came in contact with. This issue is aptly addressed by Aarogya app as it s every such person who came in close proximity to the COVID patient even at a much later stage as the data remains stored in the handsets of all users till thirty days. On the other hand, through a set of questions, user can self-analyse their health status at any time.

NITI Aayog member Dr. V K Paul said that the App keeps the data of every user safe and urged everyone download the app. In just 12 days since its launch more than four crore users have already downloaded the app. Prime Minister himself on a number of occasions urged every citizen to download Aarogya Setu for better its better efficacy fortifying nations fight against the global pandemic.

News Source: <http://newsonair.com/Main-News-Details.aspx?id=385628>

M4. MeitY asks home ministry to let rural service kiosks function

Economic Times. 15 April 2020

The usage of data accessed through WiFi and fibre connections through the centres has also doubled from 2.7 terabytes earlier to 4.9 terabytes per day.

New Delhi: The Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) has requested the home ministry to allow more digital kiosks to function in rural areas during the nationwide lockdown that has now been extended till May 3.

There are 3,70,000 such digital kiosks — called Common Service Centres — across the country. They can help in disbursing essential services such as withdrawals of government subsidies sent directly into Aadhaar-linked bank accounts under schemes such as the PM-Kisan. Currently, only 50,000 of these centres are operating due to restrictions by the police. Union minister for electronics and IT, Ravi Shankar Prasad, told ET that the strong network of the CSCs can be helpful in times like these, especially in rural areas.

“The only problem is that police are stopping them. We are working on it. We are taking it up with the home ministry,” he said.

At present, only around 18,000 CSCs carry out banking-related services while 15,000 of them process transactions through the Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AEPS). Dinesh Tyagi, CEO of CSC e-Governance Services, told ET that the centres that are operational are already processing 1,00,000 withdrawals through AEPS, totalling transactions worth ₹ 13 crore in a single day. “Around 2,60,000 CSCs are enabled to carry out AEPS transactions. If all centres are given the go ahead, it will help those living in far-flung areas to access government money and services without going too far from their homes during the Covid-19 crisis,” said Tyagi.

The centres also help in telemedicine, undertaking 300-400 sessions every day with a total of 10,000 sessions in a month, including free of cost sessions for animals as well. Some of the centres, which house units for making female hygiene products, have turned to making face masks for ..

Tyagi said CSCs, which also function as the last-mile connection point for the government’s fibre network BharatNet, have seen requests for 3,20,000 new fibre to home connections compared to just 50,000 earlier.

Read more at:

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/tech/internet/meity-asks-homemin-to-let-rural-service-kiosks-function/articleshow/75147905.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

01. Coronavirus Risk Assessment tool to help people assess possibility of getting infected by COVID-19

Hindu BusinessLine. 16 April 2020

DocsApp, the 24/7 digital healthcare platform, has launched a Coronavirus Risk Assessment Tool to help individuals assess the level of possibility of them being affected by the ongoing pandemic. The tool is based on simple inter-active questions that generate a risk score based on an individual's symptoms.

02. Microsoft adds five new Indian languages to its Microsoft Translator service

Hindu BusinessLine. 16 April 2020

Microsoft India on Thursday announced that it will be adding five new Indian languages to its Microsoft Translator. The Microsoft translator now supports ten Indian languages with the addition of Gujarati, Marathi, Kannada, Malayalam and Punjabi.

03. AMD sets up Covid-19 high-performance computing fund

Hindu BusinessLine. 16 April 2020

Joins consortium to offer computing nodes to researchers fighting the virus. AMD, a high-performance computing and graphics technologies company, has announced a Covid-19 HPC (high-performance computing) fund to provide research institutions with computing resources to accelerate medical research on Covid-19 and other diseases.

04. Govt of India issues advisory, says Zoom not secure video conferencing platform

Financial Express. 16 April 2020

Controversy-ridden video conferencing platform Zoom has 'eventually' come under the radar of the Government of India. The Ministry of Home Affairs on Thursday put out a detailed two-page long advisory for Zoom users in India, to safeguard their 'virtual' meetings from prying eyes, deeming the video conferencing platform 'unsafe.'

05. CERT-In issues warning on cyberattack threats on VPN, also suggests methods to tackle it

Financial Express. 15 April 2020

It also suggested some counter-measures and best practices for using VPNs, including increased monitoring of illegal activity using log review, prompt identification of attacks and reaction to incidents.