

N1. Each, make 40 people download Aarogya Setu App: Nadda to BJYM

Outlook India

It was developed by the National Informatics Centre. Nadda told this to members of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) during a video ...

New Delhi, April 16 (IANS) BJP President JP Nadda on Thursday appealed to his Yuva Morcha colleagues to ensure that each of them makes 40 individuals download the Aarogya Setu App that the government has come up with for all information on Covid-19 and alerts.

The App which was launched on April 2 is meant to alert users if they have come in contact with a Covid-19 positive patient. In fact, the App has reached 50 million users in just 13 days - the fastest ever globally in comparison to other Apps.

Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had urged the citizens to download the Aarogya Setu application. The tracking App is an essential tool in the Covid-19 fight, insisted Modi. It was developed by the National Informatics Centre.

Nadda told this to members of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) during a video conference. While the meeting was mostly attended by the next gen of the BJP which included Poonam Mahajan, Rohit Chahal, Amit Malviya, it was also attended by a few senior leaders of the party. General Secretary (Organization) BL Santosh and Muralidhar Rao were also present.

During the conference, Nadda also stressed on the importance of feeding the poor while highlighting that the party is already feeding 5 crore people each day during the lockdown period.

India recently extended its shutdown till May 3, after Covid-19 cases continued to rise. The first leg of the shutdown ended on April 14.

News Source: <https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/each-make-40-people-download-aarogya-setu-app-nadda-to-bjym/1804770>

N2. Andhra to add int'l touch to skill development courses

Outlook India. 16 April 2020

*A government release stated that the Chief Minister instructed that courses should be at least of six months in duration, and should be conducted through the **National Informatics Centre (NIC)**. "The teaching faculty should be upgraded by conducting coaching sessions in the skill centers itself," ...*

Amaravati, April 16 (IANS) Aiming to ramp up the state's competencies in professional skills, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has mooted collaborations with overseas organisations so that the courses in Skill Development Universities (SDUs) meet the international standards.

In a review meeting on Thursday, the Chief Minister directed officials to enter into tie-ups with international organisations for training all students in the state, who have completed professional courses such as ITI, diploma and graduation in engineering, and even in the medical field.

The state government plans to set up SDUs in all the parliamentary constituencies of the state to train graduates and diploma students in the fields of their interest. The ultimate goal of the SDUs is to sharpen the students' skills by giving them one-year apprenticeship and by helping them secure a job.

A government release stated that the Chief Minister instructed that courses should be at least of six months in duration, and should be conducted through the National Informatics Centre (NIC).

"The teaching faculty should be upgraded by conducting coaching sessions in the skill centers itself," the Chief Minister said as he asked officials to plan for a university in Visakhapatnam to train on high-end skills.

IT Minister Goutham Reddy and several senior officials were among those present at the review meeting.

News Source: <https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/andhra-to-add-intl-touch-to-skill-development-courses/1805060>

N3. 'Zoom' is not a safe platform, says MHA advisory

Hindu. 17 April 2020

... National Informatics Centre (NIC) and they were cautious to not use Zoom. ... whether or not their data is routed through specific data center regions.

'Zoom app is not safe for private persons/entities': MHA *Hindustan Times*

Software used is said to be made in China; several ministries, including Defence, have been using it since lockdown began

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued an advisory that Zoom video conference is not a safe platform.

The advisory was issued on April 12 and the MHA shared it with journalists on Thursday.

U.S. based Zoom video communication has seen an exponential rise in usage in India as office-goers remain at home owing to the lockdown triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. The software used in the online platform is said to be made in China and some calls were being routed through servers in China.

The Cyber Coordination Centre of the MHA issued a set of guidelines for its safe usage by private individuals. It was not for use by government offices and officials, the MHA noted.

CERT-In's 2 advisories

The advisory said the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) issued two advisories on February 6 and in March, cautioning on the use of Zoom for office meetings.

The March 30 note on the CERT-In website said, "Zoom is a popular videoconferencing platform. Insecure usage of the platform may allow cyber criminals to access sensitive information such as meeting details and conversations."

Another note posted by the CERT-In on April 2 said that multiple vulnerabilities had been reported in the videoconferencing platform "which could allow an attacker to gain elevated privileges or obtain sensitive information."

The Ministry asked the users to set strong passwords and enable "waiting room" feature so that call managers could have a better control over the participants. It also asked the users to avoid using personal meeting ID to host events and instead use randomly generated meeting IDs for each event and asked to not share links on public platforms.

Use by Ministries

Several Ministries have been using the platform to convene official meetings. On Thursday, Sports Minister Kiren Rijju and Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda posted pictures of interaction with sports coaches on Zoom.

On Thursday, even after the advisory was issued, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) used the platform for a videoconference with around 60 journalists.

An MHA official said that all official video conferences were arranged by National Informatics Centre (NIC) and they were cautious to not use Zoom.

The Union Health Ministry, which is coordinating with the States on COVID-19, has also been using Zoom for videoconferences. A Ministry official said it would discontinue using Zoom.

Ministries of Civil Aviation, Road Transport and Small and Medium Industries also used Zoom since the lockdown began on March 25.

On April 1, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh posted pictures of a virtual meeting with officials where he was seen using Zoom.

BJP chief J.P Nadda has also been conducting meetings through Zoom.

Citizen Lab findings

On April 3, Citizen Lab, based at the University of Toronto, found “significant weakness” in Zoom’s encryption that protects meetings done using the teleconference app. It also identified potential areas of concern in Zoom’s infrastructure, including observing the transmission of meeting encryption keys through China.

The Citizen Lab highlighted that while Zoom was a Silicon Valley-based company, it appeared to own three companies in China through which at least 700 employees were paid to develop Zoom’s software. “This arrangement is ostensibly an effort at labor arbitrage: Zoom can avoid paying US wages while selling to US customers, thus increasing their profit margin. However, this arrangement may make Zoom responsive to pressure from Chinese authorities,” it noted.

According to a blog dated April 1 by Zoom Founder and CEO Eric S Yuan, the usage of Zoom ballooned overnight, including from over 90,000 schools across 20 countries. The maximum number of daily meeting participants of approximately 10 million at the end of December 2019 on Zoom grew to more than 200 million daily meeting participants in March.

“However, we recognize that we have fallen short of the community’s – and our own – privacy and security expectations. For that, I am deeply sorry, and I want to share what we are doing about it,” Mr. Yuan had written.

Some lapses

Mr. Yuan admitted some lapses and committed to addressing two primary topics raised by the Citizen Lab — geo-fencing and meeting encryption.

As per the latest company blog, dated April 15, which follows the second weekly session of a webinar, wherein Mr. Yuan gives updates on Zoom’s ongoing privacy and security efforts, Zoom has added additional features such as placing a new security icon in the meeting controls, changing Zoom’s default settings and enhancing meeting password complexity, among others.

It has also added that starting April 18, account admins will have the ability to choose whether or not their data is routed through specific data center regions

News Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/zoom-is-not-a-safe-platform-says-mha-advisory/article31355460.ece>

N4. Supreme Court issues standard procedure for e-filing

The Tribune- 17 April 2020

... hearings via video conferencing will be conducted on the VIDYO platform hosted on the servers of National Data Centre of National Informatics Centre (NIC).

New Delhi, April 16

Amid regular technical glitches witnessed during its proceedings conducted via video-conferencing, the Supreme Court has issued a fresh standard operating procedure to be followed by for mentioning of urgent matters, e-filing and hearing during the lockdown.

A circular issued by the top court said the hearings via video conferencing will be conducted on the VIDYO platform hosted on the servers of National Data Centre of National Informatics Centre (NIC).

The fresh circular — which supersedes the earlier one issued last month — is based on the experience of using VIDYO app so far the recommendations made by lawyers and Bar bodies.

The new SOP advised Advocates on Record (AOR) or the petitioners in-person to file their petition through the e-filing channel provided on the main website of the court.

It contains detailed step-by-step instructions for joining a hearing via video-conferencing conducted on the VIDYO platform hosted on the servers of National Data Centre of NIC.

News Source: <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/supreme-court-issues-standard-procedure-for-e-filing-72335>

M1. Govt waives off 4 months rental for 200 small IT companies based in STPI

Livemint . 16 April 2020

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has decided to provide rental waiver to these units housed in STPI premises in the country from 1 March till 30 June which amounts to four months as of now

In a major boost to the information technology (IT) and IT-enabled services (ITeS) sector, the government of India on Thursday said it will provide relief from payment of rental to the small IT units operating out of the Software Technology Parks of India (STPI), in view of the challenges due to the covid-19 outbreak and consequent lockdown. "Most of these units are either MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) or startups," the release stated.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has decided to provide rental waiver to these units housed in STPI premises in the country from 1 March till 30 June which amounts to four months as of now.

STPI, an autonomous society under Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, government of India, has 60 centres across the country including a mix of tier 1 cities like Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai, and Kolkata and tier 2 cities like Nagpur, Warangal, and Surat.

The initiative to provide rental waiver to the units located in these centres will provide relief to the industry in this crisis situation emerged due to covid-19 pandemic. This initiative will provide benefit to nearly 200 IT-ITeS MSMEs, operating from these 60 STPI centres.

The total cost of the rental waiver provided to these units during the four-month period is estimated to be around ₹5 crore. "This effort is also in the larger interest of around 3,000 IT-ITeS employees who are directly supported by these units," the statement said.

News Source: <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/govt-waives-off-4-months-rental-for-200-small-it-companies-based-in-stpi-11587049246743.html>

M2. Govt of India kicks off 'innovative' challenge to build local Zoom-rival, here's how you can participate

Financial Express . 17 April 2020

*The Ministry of **Electronics and Information Technology's** (MeitY) 'Innovation Challenge for Development of a Video Conferencing Solution under the ...*

*[Post Zoom privacy woes, Centre seeks indigenous video conferencing software by end of July](#) *The Indian Express**

The Government of India wants Indians to build the country's own video conferencing platform.

The Government of India wants Indians to build the country's own video conferencing platform, something that will take on the likes of the controversy-ridden Zoom, and also more high-profile solutions like [Google](#) Meet and [Microsoft](#) Teams. Not only will this help promote local expertise, it will also possibly ensure greater transparency when it comes to privacy and data handling.

As opposed to giving some x, y, or z company a contract to chalk out and build a home-grown video conferencing platform, the Government of India is offering a level playing field for all developers through a first-of-its-kind 'innovation' challenge under the [Digital India](#) initiative.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology's (MeitY) 'Innovation Challenge for Development of a Video Conferencing Solution under the Digital India Programme' will be conducted in three stages, ideation, prototype, and solution building.

Would-be competitors have until April 30 to apply for the programme. At this stage, they are not required to be registered Indian Companies or startups. They have until May 7 to submit their ideas. An 'unspecified' jury will shortlist 10 top ideas (on May 14), moving them to the next stage, that is prototyping. At this stage, they are required to register themselves as Indian Startups or Company. Each team will receive a funding of Rs 5 lakh to build their prototype. The jury will then shortlist three top prototypes (in mid-June), moving them to the final stage, that is building the solution. Each team will receive a funding of Rs 20 lakh to build their solution.

The winner will be picked on July 29 and receive a contract to deploy their video conferencing solution for use by the Government of India and State Government entities for a period of 4 years. MeitY notes that competing solutions will be judged on the basis of "scalability, market reach and domestic value addition." There are also a few other requirements including encrypted network communications, that you can read here. The Government contract will entail a fixed amount of Rs 1 Crore (for deployment) for the first year and further support of Rs 10 lakh per year towards operations and maintenance.

Scores of people are using video calling/conferencing apps around the world for work, for education, or simply staying connected with their near and dear ones in the wake of the novel coronavirus outbreak leading to a surge in demand for such solutions. But with the surge in usage, there has also been a rise in privacy concerns. On Thursday, the Government of India came out with a detailed advisory to secure Zoom video calls deeming the service as 'not safe.' Whether or not India's own solution will be secure enough is something only time will tell.

News Source: <https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/technology/govt-of-india-kicks-off-innovative-challenge-to-build-local-zoom-rival-heres-how-you-can-participate/1931276/>

M3. Delhi Startup's AI-Powered Exoskeleton Can Help The Specially-Abled Walk Again

The Better India. 16 April 2020

*Funded and supported by the Indian government's Ministry of **Electronics and Information Technology**, the startup's technology will soon help people ...*

When John Ignatius Kujur was working on his final year engineering project in 2013, he found out that his senior from college was unable to find a job because of his locomotor disability.

Displeased, he began researching the latest technological solutions that could assist specially-abled persons, alongside working on his project. Despite finding work in the education sector, he maintained his research into technological solutions that would one day ensure people like his friend wouldn't have to miss out on job opportunities because of their disabilities.

In 2015, he quit his job, and research work took precedence. After three further years of intense research and development, he founded GenElek Technologies, in March 2018. The New Delhi-based startup develops Exoskeletons: an externally worn robotic support system that enhances a human's limbic capabilities.

Funded and supported by the Indian government's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, the startup's technology will soon help people suffering from paralysis, stroke, spinal cord injury (SCI) and other neurological conditions to face their daily obstacles with confidence and ease.

Approved for manufacturing by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), the national regulatory body for medical devices, the Exoskeleton was undergoing a rigorous testing process in-house with paraplegic patients, before the COVID-19 related lockdown came into force.

Initially, the plan was to commence commercial production at the beginning of July 2020, with deliveries slated for the third quarter of the current financial year. But due to the lockdown, their plans have been postponed, and are waiting for the situation to return to normal.

What is the Exoskeleton?

“The Exoskeleton is a light-weight, affordable, and wearable robotics device that will assist specially-abled people to walk again. It essentially acts as a mobility device for the wearer and assists in recovering the gait pattern of the person naturally, besides assisting them in the rehabilitation process. It will also help them become self-reliant, independent, and possibly increase their chances at obtaining employment. The device we are developing has a long battery life and fast response speed. Their system will be designed to read data from multiple sensors and deliver it to the physicians who can then analyze their patient's progress,” claims Kujur.

One key feature of the system is the array of sensors used to track a patient's gait. These sensors provide essential feedback to the Exoskeleton about how the person walks. This data is processed by their AI algorithm, which takes it and adjusts the functioning of the Exoskeleton. Thus, the device adjusts to the needs of each individual and is designed to read data from multiple sensors. This data is subsequently delivered to physicians to analyze their patient's progress.

“The more you use it, the better it gets at assisting you and determining the best adjustments to improve rehabilitation. Another essential technology is the use of cloud-based solutions. The data collected and interpreted by the AI is sent to the cloud where it is processed, and a proper real-time progress report of the patient is generated for doctors who can then adjust their treatment,” says Vivek Pandey, the co-founder of GenElek Technologies.

While the AI adjusts the Exoskeleton to improve efficiency, the battery management allows for longer run-time per session. Secondly, automatic adjustments to its functioning by the AI enhance the effectiveness of treatment cutting down on rehabilitation time.

Lastly, real-time monitoring of the patient's progress makes it easier for the doctors to make decisions regarding treatment, allowing for improved quality of treatment. A core objective of the device was the improvement in the patient's rehabilitation. The AI works through feedback from the sensor array and adjusts the treatment accordingly.

News Source: <https://www.thebetterindia.com/223933/delhi-innovation-startup-exoskeleton-specially-abled-person-genelek-technologies-india-nor41/>

M4. Covid-19 lockdown: Postal department to step up delivery of food and essentials

Hindustan Times . 16 April 2020

*Union minister for Communications, **Electronics and Information Technology**, Ravi Shankar Prasad has instructed chief post master generals and chief ...*

From trekking to Gauchar in a remote part of Uttarakhand to deliver lifesaving drugs to transporting ventilators from Puducherry in the South to Gujarat in the East, the postal department has emerged as a frontline delivery agent at a time when the Corona pandemic is raging globally.

In the absence of mass transport systems, during the nationwide lockdown that will end on May 3, the postal department has had to not just transport tones of medicines and equipment, but has also had to step in to ensure government benefits are reaching the beneficiaries.

Given the postal department's experience at running primary savings services, the department was given the task of opening new accounts so that direct benefits could be transferred to those in need. It has also been tasked with the responsibility of doorstep delivery of pension in remote parts of Jammu and Kashmir, Leh, Gujarat, Telengana, Karnataka, tribal areas of Jharkhand, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.

According to the functionary quoted above when the lockdown was first announced on March 24, a group of migrant workers in Meghalaya, found themselves stranded with little money and food. Shifted to various relief camps in Shillong, these workers had no bank accounts, which made it difficult for the government to reach out with aid.

“In order to provide timely relief, the department of posts in coordination with India Post Payments Bank organised an account opening camp in the relief camp at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Shillong,” said the functionary quoted above,

After the lockdown began on March 25, all businesses and production came to a grinding halt, except essential services.

News Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/postal-department-to-step-up-delivery-of-food-and-essentials/story-c3Ur1gdGTGJWvNWDBb1WdJ.html>

01. [Mobile phone makers welcome Govt's move to allow sales of non-essential items from April 20](#)

Hindu BusinessLine. 16 April 2020

Mobile phone manufacturers have said the decision of the government to allow e-commerce platforms to sell non-essential items from April 20 was a welcome move.

02. [Google sees surge in Covid-19 related phishing, malware emails in the past week](#)

Hindu BusinessLine. 17 April 2020

Google on Thursday said that the company saw more than 18 million daily malware and phishing emails related to Covid-19 in the past week on its platform.

03. [One step closer to commercialisation: Intel's big breakthrough will allow quantum computers to work at warm temperatures](#)

Economic Times. 16 April 2020

Quantum computers are difficult to operate due to reliance on low temperatures. Quantum computers have long been touted as the next breakthrough in computing, but such machines have largely been the preserve of researchers at large corporations and academic institutions. While they are extremely expensive to develop and maintain, their mainstream adoption has been encumbered by practical reasons, one of them being the inability of qubits – the fundamental unit of quantum computing – to function at temperatures that aren't extremely low.

04. [Google capitalises on Zoom security concerns; their video tool 'Meet' gets similar layout. Gmail integration](#)

Economic Times. 17 April 2020

OAKLAND: Google will allow business and education users on Gmail.com to directly take calls on its video conferencing tool Meet starting Thursday, a new feature being offered as the Alphabet Inc unit seeks to capitalize on security and other concerns with rival services.