

## **N1. Why are you so dependent on Sprinklr, HC asks Kerala govt**

*The New Indian Express- 25 April 2020*

*Sprinklr should return the data as soon as their contractual obligations are over, the court said. In fact, the **National Informatics Centre** could process and analyse big data if the state makes such a request, he argued. The court posted the hearing of the case ...*

KOCHI: Expressing concern over the confidentiality of people under surveillance for Covid-19, the Kerala High Court on Friday directed the Kerala government to anonymise the personal details of the individuals before allowing US-based company Sprinklr to access them. While admitting a batch of petitions, including those by Opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala and BJP state president K Surendran, a division bench comprising Justice Devan Ramachandran and Justice T R Ravi restrained Sprinklr from committing any act which will be directly or indirectly in breach of confidentiality of data entrusted with it as per the contract.

Sprinklr should return the data as soon as their contractual obligations are over, the court said. The court orally asked the government: “Why is the Kerala state so dependent on Sprinklr?” and added, “It’s the state government’s duty to protect the collected data.” The court also asked the state to explore the Centre’s submission that the Union Ministry of Information and Technology is capable of providing service similar to that of Sprinklr if the state government made a request.

The bench held that the government should inform individuals that the data would be accessed by the third party -- that is Sprinklr -- and that the individuals’ specific consent should be obtained for the same. The court also restrained the company from using the name or logo of the Kerala government for its promotional activities. Any residual or secondary data with Sprinklr shall be immediately deleted, it said.

### **Data being stored in Mumbai, not abroad: Lawyer**

“The state has taken the view that without Sprinklr it can’t combat Covid-19. So, we don’t want to interfere now. That’ll be interpreted as court interfering with Covid-19 control measures,” the court said. The state government fielded Supreme Court lawyer N S Nappinai, an expert in cyber law, to justify its contract with Sprinklr and to explain the technicalities involved. The lawyer submitted that Sprinklr is not in possession of data as of now and all data has been transferred to the state. According to her, the data is stored in Amazon cloud in Mumbai and not abroad.

The company would not retain data beyond the period of the agreement. She also argued that as the data is being retained in India, criminal action could be initiated under the Information Technology Act 2000 for any breach. Meanwhile, when the state pointed out that Sprinklr is also a pro-bono participant with the World Health Organisation in developing its dashboard for providing Covid-19 updates, the bench observed that it is only a dashboard which anybody can do and is different from ‘SaaS’.

The court also asked, “How do you know the company will not commit a breach of contract in future?” Assistant Solicitor General of India P Vijayakumar submitted that the sensitive personal data such as health data should not be shared with any third party service provider. In fact, the state should have anonymised the personal data before sharing it with third party service providers like in this case for a due cause. In fact, the National Informatics Centre could process and analyse big data if the state makes such a request, he argued. The court posted the hearing of the case after three weeks.

*News Source: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2020/apr/25/why-are-you-so-dependent-on-sprinklr-hc-asks-kerala-govt-2134895.html>*

## **N2. Five slots for documents' registration**

*Herald Goa- 25 April 2020*

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PANJIM: The National Informatics Centre (NIC) Goa has been now informed to provide five appointment slots per day for registration of documents in the National Generic Document Registration System (NGDRS) with a time gap of 30 minutes from April 27 till further orders.

Similarly, the services of marriage registration with five appointments and other services of the department resumed considering limited staff in the office. All the norms of social distancing for the offices shall be strictly followed.

The Civil Registrar-Cum-Sub Registrar shall take utmost care by providing hand sanitisers at all entry and exit points and common areas of the premises for public staff. Also mandatory thermal scanning of every one entering and exiting the work place will be done.

*News Source: <https://www.heraldgoa.in/Goa/Five-slots-for-documents%E2%80%99-registration-/159799>*

### **N3. Anonymise COVID-19 data before handover, HC tells govt.**

*The Hindu- 24 April 2020*

*The State government would take a call on utilising the services of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) for data analysis. Assistant Solicitor General of India P.*

#### **Sprinklr told not to breach confidentiality, to return data once contract expires**

A Division Bench of the High Court on Friday directed the State government to anonymise the data on COVID-19 patients and those in home quarantine and to allow Sprinklr, the U.S.-based data analytics firm with which the government has entered into a contract, to access the data only after these are anonymised.

The Bench of Justice Devan Ramachandran and Justice T.R. Ravi restrained Sprinklr from committing any act that will breach the confidentiality of the data. The court directed the government to obtain the consent of the citizens before collecting the data. The company was asked not to hand over the data to a third party and to return them as soon as the contractual obligations were over.

The court passed the directives while admitting a batch of public interest litigations filed by Balu Gopalakrishnan of Thiruvananthapuram, Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala, and BJP State president K. Surendran, among others, challenging the agreement.

The court directed Sprinklr to immediately transfer the residual or secondary data back to the government. Sprinkler has been restrained from advertising the project and using the name and emblem of the government.

#### **Govt. argument**

N.S. Nappinai, a Mumbai-based cyber lawyer appearing for the government, submitted that the privacy policy of the company and the international data protection norms ensured a high level of confidentiality of data. The agreement prevented Sprinklr from using the data for other purposes. The data were stored in an encrypted form in Amazon Cloud in Mumbai. Besides, the period of the agreement was for six months, beyond which the company could not retain the data. As the data were in India, criminal prosecution could be initiated under the provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000 for breach of confidentiality.

#### **On NIC services**

Additional Advocate General K.K. Raveendranath submitted that none of the government institutions were capable of doing big data analysis within a short time. The State government would take a call on utilising the services of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) for data analysis.

Assistant Solicitor General of India P. Vijayakumar submitted that sensitive personal data should not be shared with a third party service provider. The State should have anonymised the data before sharing it. In fact, the NIC could process big data if the State had made the demand. The agreement did not safeguard the privacy rights of COVID-19 patients.

The court adjourned the hearing on the petition by three weeks.

#### **CM's reaction**

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the court had handed the government a moral victory. Its rejection of the plea for cancelling the agreement was a forceful rebuttal of all falsehoods. The government would continue to engage Sprinklr and use its insight into COVID-19 occurrence and

spread to inform the State's containment strategy. The charges had not gained any traction with the public. The Opposition had attempted to distort the queries raised by the HC as observations against the government.

### **'Vindicated'**

However, the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party claimed the HC had vindicated their allegations of nepotism and corruption. The court had handed down a harsh judgment and set norms to protect the personal medical records of citizens from being stolen by Sprinklr.

Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee president Mullappally Ramachandran said Mr .Vijayan's defence of the fraudulent deal had fallen like a palace of playing cards under judicial scrutiny.

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News Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/anonymise-covid-19-data-before-handover-hc-tells-govt/article31427909.ece>

#### **N4. NIC's e-counselling services benefit 89 lakh candidates for eligibility test in educational institutions**

*Express Computer -24-Apr-2020*

*Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology's (MeitY) technical arm, National Informatics Centre (NIC) has been spearheading counselling and admission ...*

NIC collaborates with over 35 examination and counselling agencies like National Testing Agency; CBSE; Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Technical University, Lucknow; Odisha Joint Entrance Examination; GGS Indraprastha University, New Delhi; among others for exams like JEE (Main/Advanced), UGC/CSIR-NET, CTET, NEET, CMAT, GPAT, IIFT

Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology's (MeitY) technical arm, National Informatics Centre (NIC) has been spearheading counselling and admission services, which are considered data sensitive, time bound and policy driven, across the country.

A battery of senior scientists of the NIC have got tremendous success in devising a project like e-counselling services, which is a one-stop online solution for all examinations, results publication, counselling and admission needs, capturing the entire lifecycle for admissions on a single platform to provide a streamlined stepwise process for application filing.

The project has benefitted millions of students across the country who used to face difficulties in participating in the different counselling processes largely, because of offline application processes.

Counselling services are provided to national/state education boards for admission to over 3,000 academic institutions such as IITs, NITs, medical colleges and Central/state funded universities/institutions in various disciplines like engineering, medical, architecture, pharmacy, agriculture, management, catering to over 89 lakh candidates from 8th/10th pass to post graduate level.

The automated system has simplified the selection process facilitating admissions as per merit and the candidate's preferences. NIC has made efforts in maintaining transparency and standardisation of IT systems operating in the Indian education sector. The Centre is also working with the governing bodies to incorporate latest technologies to overcome challenges and adapt as per evolving expectations.

Notably, NIC has collaborated with over 35 examination and counselling agencies like National Testing Agency, CBSE, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Technical University, Lucknow; Odisha Joint Entrance Examination; West Bengal Joint Entrance Examinations Board; GGS Indraprastha University, New Delhi; among many others in facilitating central and state level examinations such as JEE (Main/Advanced), UGC/CSIR-NET, CTET, NEET, CMAT, GPAT, IIFT.

In an interaction with Express Computer, Deputy Director General, NIC, Rajender Sethi says, "There are wide variations in the eligibility criteria, process and seat allotment for different national/state level counselling. The e-counselling services have been designed as a service suite with provisions of configurability and extensibility to provide a customised solution for client support. At NIC, we ensure that counselling projects are executed with zero error as the entire process has been composed into a chain of events having direct implication on a student's career prospect. Deep understanding of counselling process acquired over two decades of experience and holistic approach to problem solving has helped us gain a level of trust for being the best-in-class solution for counselling and admission services."

The services include application form filling, multimode online fee payment, e-Admit card, answer key and recorded response challenge, e-Score card, institute/course choice filling, mock counselling,

seat allocation, document verification, admission, seat withdrawal and MIS and exception reports. Audit trail is maintained to capture and store changes made by users in application ecosystem. Candidates get updates via SMS and e-mails because of digital interventions of the NIC.

Counselling and admission services have transformed manifolds since its inception from manual processing along with offline mode of payment. Earlier, the entire process required significant time efforts and manpower requirement for postal work, application scrutiny and document submission. In order to conduct a holistic review of applications, stringent regulatory checks and exception handling algorithms have been introduced to conduct multiple counselling simultaneously. Round the clock available services have overcome the geographical boundaries by replacing multiple instances of physical reporting. Candidates from remote and rural parts of the country, non-resident Indians and foreign nationals can also participate in the admission process without any travelling woes. It eliminates inconveniences caused by ailments and exigencies and provides deserving candidates ease of application and participation that was earlier not possible a few years ago.

Admission services have been re-engineered to create a common admission process bringing together multiple institutions to assess candidates based on rank(s) with diverse eligibility criteria.

According to NIC, digital exchange of information is supported at all instances and requirement for institutions to print and store forms have been removed due to online web forms. The services have enabled board/university officials to conduct bulk processing of application forms with maximised transparency, efficiency, credibility and minimised cost, time and human involvement. Digital enablement of admission process has led to enhanced transparency in the system by achieving 100 per cent compliance with policy guidelines and allotment of seats as per merit and course priority, informs an official.

Emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and data analytics need to be incorporated to provide greater insights to candidates for course and institute selection. Centrally managed directories can act as a single source of truth for authentic and reliable data leading to integration of multiple standards with multilingual support. Data analytics on the information obtained over the years can be used to identify the trends in preference choices of candidates and provide recommendation to various concerned organisations. Digital counsellor can be developed and rolled out to users in the form of a mobile application to provide effective guidance during counselling phase. Digital counsellor would run on learning algorithms executing test runs on existing database and identifying patterns between test data and target attributes.

News Source: <https://www.expresscomputer.in/egov-watch/nics-e-counselling-services-benefit-89-lakh-candidates-for-eligibility-test-in-edu-institutions/53910/>

## **N5. USDMA launches Covid-19 portal 'Drishti'**

*Daily Pioneer-24-Apr-2020*

*The USDMA has prepared the platform in association with the National Informatics Centre (NIC), Uttarakhand using Geoinformatics system technology.*

In an endeavour to provide a common platform to the general public and State administration for correct information on COVID-19 pandemic, the Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority (USDMA) launched 'COVID-19-Drishti portal' on Thursday. The USDMA has prepared the platform in association with the National Informatics Centre (NIC), Uttarakhand using Geoinformatics system technology. In the portal daily status of COVID-19, district wise sample status, relief camps, data related to law and order and the data of state and district control rooms would be available with a click of a mouse. For clarity, different data are exhibited with the help of geospatial maps and information about relief camps, COVID-19 hot spots, tests centres, quarantine centres, hospitals are presented with facts.

The additional Chief Executive Officer (ACEO) of USDMA, Ridhim Aggarwal said keeping in view of the sensitivity of the COVID-19 in the state, the team of the USDMA has developed this platform. She said that with this portal the data of the patients and suspected patients of the disease would be available at one place. Similarly the platform would be beneficial in the assessment of the management of those living in camps and distribution of relief material. Aggarwal claimed that the team of USDMA is regularly updating the data on the portal.

The platform will help in all activities related with COVID-19 and proper execution of polices on the ground. She said that dissemination of correct information in the general public and preventing misconceptions about the disease is one of the objectives of the platform.

The USDMA has also undertaken an awareness campaign on social distancing, home quarantine, salute to Corona warriors and way to prevent the spread of virus. The team of USDMA which developed the portal includes, Girish Chandra Joshi, B B Gadanayak, Surbhi Kundalia, Amit Sharma, Pooja Rana and Jyoti Negi.

News Source: <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2020/state-editions/usdma-launches-covid-19-portal---drishti---.html>

### **M1. WhatsApp new feature lets 8 people join video, audio calls, now in Beta version**

*Livemint. 21 April 2020*

*WhatsApp rival, Zoom has been a popular option for users who look to add more than four members in a call. The government has also realized the demand and has setup an innovation challenge to build India's own teleconferencing app. The Ministry of **Electronics and Information Technology** is accepting applications from interested developers till 30 April. The winner will receive ₹1 ..*

Usage of [WhatsApp's teleconferencing feature](#) has seen a surge in usage across the globe. To cater to the demand, the instant messaging application has been testing to add more members in video conference call. Currently, the application allows a maximum of four participants. The new beta version has been spotted with up to eight members during a video conference.

The new version was spotted by WABetaInfo. According to the report, the latest WhatsApp beta update has revealed the company is set to soon extend the limit of participants in a voice or video group call for its 2 billion users, including over 400 million in India.

"WhatsApp is rolling out the new limit of participants in groups calls, for iOS and Android beta users. The new limit is: 8 participants in group calls," tweeted WABetaInfo.

The feature was spotted on the update version 2.20.50.25 iOS beta update from TestFlight and the 2.20.133 beta from Google Play Store. To use the feature, the call recipients will also need the latest version or else they won't be added in the group call.

While you're in a call, WhatsApp also shows a new header, informing that the call is end-to-end encrypted.

WhatsApp rival, Zoom has been a popular option for users who look to add more than four members in a call. The application, however, has been under scrutiny for various security issues. The Ministry of Home Affairs cautioned citizens against the use of Zoom. The government has also realized the demand and has setup an innovation challenge to build India's own teleconferencing app. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology is accepting applications from interested developers till 30 April. The winner will receive ₹1 crore as reward and a 4-year contract from the government.

**News Source:** <https://www.livemint.com/technology/tech-news/whatsapp-s-new-beta-version-gets-support-for-8-member-video-call-11587474091970.html>



## **M2. IIT Roorkee launches advance online certification course on Deep Learning**

*Times of India. 20 April 2020*

*IT body Nasscom along with the Ministry of **Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY)** has launched an on-demand courseware on Artificial ...*

NEW DELHI: To promote e-learning during the COVID-19 lockdown, IIT Roorkee has launched an advanced certification course on Deep Learning at Cloudxlab.com. The course is a new addition to a host of pre-existing courses such as Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Data Science and many more. It will be delivered by the faculty of IIT Roorkee and other experts from the industry. The classes will be streamed online through a live video. Upon completion of the course, users will receive a certification from IIT Roorkee.

This course follows the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between IIT Roorkee and Cloudxlab.com, a US-based ed-tech company.

“COVID-19 has triggered a nationwide lockdown. This is the best time for the youth as well as others to upskill themselves. This initiative will be attractive for users who aim to excel in the technical field. The partnership with CloudxLab.com will amplify our reach to offer the latest knowledge in tune with the needs of the industry,” said professor Ajit K. Chaturvedi, Director, IIT Roorkee.

IT body Nasscom along with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) has launched an on-demand courseware on Artificial Intelligence. This would be under the Nasscom FutureSkills initiative and will allow individuals to upskill themselves over the course of the next few weeks.

The Foundational Artificial Intelligence course from SkillUp Online, is aligned to the industry’s recommended Foundation AI curriculum (retail price Rs 6800) free for everyone till 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 5000). Besides deep skilling, the website will also include microlearning content on AI as quick knowledge bytes.

Meanwhile, TCS iON, a unit of Tata Consultancy Services, is offering a 15-day self-paced digital certification programme. Called Career Edge, the digital certification programme is completely free of charge. The two-week certification is designed for both college-going students as well as professionals across the globe. NEW DELHI: To promote e-learning during the COVID-19 lockdown, IIT Roorkee has launched an advanced certification course on Deep Learning at Cloudxlab.com. The course is a new addition to a host of pre-existing courses such as Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Data Science and many more. It will be delivered by the faculty of IIT Roorkee and other experts from the industry. The classes will be streamed online through a live video. Upon completion of the course, users will receive a certification from IIT Roorkee. This course follows the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between IIT Roorkee and Cloudxlab.com, a US-based ed-tech company.

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News Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/gadgets-news/iit-roorkee-launches-advance-online-certification-course-on-deep-learning/articleshow/75254590.cms>

### **M3. 4 crore users may be without mobile phones by May-end if curbs not lifted, says ICEA**

*Deccan Herald- 25 April 2020*

*... Commerce & Industry Minister, Secretary DPIIT and Secretary MeitY (also currently the chair of the Empowered Group on Technology and Data Management) ...*

**4 crore users may be without mobile phones by May-end if curbs not lifted: Handset makers**

*Economic Times. 25 Apr 2020*

An estimated 4 crore mobile phone users in the country are expected to be without handsets due to faults and breakdowns by May-end if restrictions on the sale of handsets and spare parts continue, an industry body said on Friday.

At present, more than 2.5 crore mobile customers are estimated to be with non-functional devices due to non-availability of components in the supply chain and the restriction on sales of new handsets due to the lockdown to contain coronavirus infection, the India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA) claimed. The government has allowed sales of only essential goods and services during the lockdown which has entered into the fifth week.

Operations of telecom, internet, broadcast and IT services are permitted but not for mobile devices that are pivotal for accessing these services. The ICEA, whose members include leading handset makers like Apple, Foxconn, and Xiaomi, said on an average, approximately 2.5 crore new mobile phones are sold every month and the active population of mobile phones is 85 crore currently.

**News Source:** <https://www.deccanherald.com/international/coronavirus-4-crore-users-may-be-without-mobile-phones-by-may-end-if-curbs-not-lifted-says-icea-829648.html>

#### **M4. Have sought firm's response: Centre on banning online game**

Times of India- 25 April 2020

CHANDIGARH: The Union ministry of *electronics and information technology* (MEIT) said it has sought response from PUBG on ban on the game in India and a ...

CHANDIGARH: The Union ministry of electronics and information technology (MEIT) said it has sought response from PUBG on ban on the game in India and a decision would be taken after receiving a reply. Information was provided to advocate H C Arora by MEIT additional director Dhawal Gupta in response to a representation sent by Arora to the ministry seeking ban on the game.

“MEIT has sought response from PUBG to ensure that the principles of audi alterm partem (listen to the other side) are followed. A formal proper response is awaited from PUBG. MEIT is obligated to ensure that both parties are heard fairly and properly by granting them the right to place their submissions. The ongoing Covid-19 issue has slightly delayed the process. MEIT is currently in process of observing the due process of law, by having approached PUBG for its response,” says the ministry’s mail.

News Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chandigarh/have-sought-firms-response-centre-on-banning-online-game/articleshow/75367352.cms>

## **M5. Govt gets started to make WFH process smooth**

*Economic Times. 25 April 2020*

*In discussions with industry to get better software, hardware solutions and define basic parameters. MeitY has called for a meeting of major software and hardware companies and industry bodies on Monday.*

Efficient [software](#) and hardware solutions for ‘[work from home](#)’ and a set of parameters defining the practice. The Centre, recognising that WFH is here to stay, has started industrywide consultations to make the process easier, more rigorously defined and more secure.

A senior [government](#) official who spoke off the record told ET: “There are two aspects to WFH. One, how to use technology to allow seamless experience... essentially an array of products... software suits and hardware that don’t compromise data security, and second, defining basic parameters of working from home.”

The telecom ministry and ministry of electronics and information technology ([MeitY](#)) are working on the first aspect, the department of personnel and training could work on the second.

Telecom and IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad has asked telecom and IT ministries to talk to industry to identify roadblocks and discuss possible solutions. The government will encourage industry to design products, and then make policies around them, the official said.

MeitY has called for a meeting of major software and hardware companies and industry bodies on Monday. Internet and Mobile Association of India and Nasscom are among the invitees for the meeting which will be chaired by MeitY secretary Ajay Sawhney along with telecom secretary Anshu Prakash.

### **Secure Platform for Video Calls**

The official explained: “When someone wants to work from home, the person has to use a dedicated machine which has dedicated hardware and software to eliminate security risks.” “To smoothen this process, make it seamless and easier for the user without compromising security is the first step...we are trying to work in a time-bound manner to come up with solutions,” the official added.

Cybersecurity experts have noted a sharp increase in concerns over data security among other concerns, as most of India Inc adopted WFH after the lockdown.

Using personal devices to access official documents and increased app downloads for Covid-19 related news or entertainment purposes have added to vulnerabilities that would otherwise have been detected in cyber-secured office premises.

This government effort comes in tandem with DoT and MeitY’s move to launch a challenge for Indians to come up with secure alternative [video conferencing](#) to platforms such as Zoom, which has been deemed unsafe by the MHA.

The contest has a prize money of ₹1 crore and is divided into three stages — ideation, prototype and solution building. The contest is open till April 30.

News source: <https://cio.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/government-policy/govt-gets-started-to-make-wfh-process-smooth/75367980>

**O1. No budget for IT security? Get these tools for free**

*Economic Times. 25 April 2020*

*WFH phase is making employees left unarmed and vulnerable to hackers. IT [security](#) vendors are extending their support in this fight and here are some tools that you can deploy right now without worrying about budgets. Leverage these offers to up your security game without spending a bomb.*

**O2. HCL to offer tech support to TN govt in tackling Covid-19**

*Hindu BusinessLine. 25 April 2020*

*The Tamil Nadu government has joined hands with HCL to strengthen its response to Covid-19 pandemic by setting up a Disaster Management-Data Analytics Centre in the city.*

**O3. We spoke to Zoom about its privacy issues and how it plans to convince the Govt of India that it's safe**

*Financial Express. 23 April 2020*

*Zoom could well be one of the few tech companies in the world right now to acknowledge — even apologize — for its problems. But what do you when the government deems you unsafe? We're about to find*

**O4. President's secretary Sanjay Kothari appointed Central Vigilance Commissioner**

*Economic Times. 25 April 2020*

*The post of the chief of the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) had been lying vacant since June last year after completion of K V Chowdary's tenure.*

**O5. C-DOT and TSPs develop COVID quarantine alert system**

*Economic Times. 25 April 2020*

*The software application automatically triggers an email or SMS if any identified corona positive person moves away for their quarantine location.*