

## **N1. India turns to location surveillance to contain spread of Covid-19**

*Livemint. 29 March 2020*

... (NDMA) has used the **National Informatics Center's (NIC) Bharat Maps platform** to input data from hospitals through the NDMA into the platform.



Apps allowing citizens to track whether they came in contact with infected people are quickly increasing on the Google and Apple app stores.

- The apps are used to identify viral hotspots
- These apps can alert users if they come in contact with anyone who has been infected with the virus and direct them to stay indoors

**NEW DELHI :** The authorities are using location-tracking on smartphones to identify possible Covid-19 infections or to keep people indoors. Apps allowing citizens to track whether they have come in contact with infected people are quickly increasing on Google and Apple app stores.

Most of these apps use smartphone locations and tally them against government databases of infected personnel. They can alert users if they come in contact with anyone who has been infected and direct them to stay indoors.

An example of this is Corona Kavach, launched by the ministry of electronics and information technology. However, while Corona Kavach seems to depend on users to voluntarily enter their information, the government think tank Niti Aayog has reportedly been planning a more advanced app, called COWIN-20. This also uses location and Bluetooth access to understand proximity between users, said reports.

Delhi-based Innefu Labs has created an app, called Unmaze, which can also inform the authorities if a quarantined user breaks isolation. Innefu Labs is the company that created the Delhi Police's Automated Facial Recognition System, which was used to track down perpetrators during the recent riots.

The app is available to the authorities for free and at least three police departments plan to launch it under their own banners this week, said Tarun Wig, founder of Innefu Labs.

Apps are one way for companies and governments to use location data to handle the health crisis, but many have also used geo-location data to create informative maps about Covid-19 infections.

These maps are not just representative but can also be used by relief workers and authorities to plan their activities, said Nikhil Kumar, country head of Here Technologies.

For instance, a real-time feed of people going to testing centres could be used to track which centres are more inundated with patients and allocate more resources to them. Here Technologies has built a real-time map of Covid-19 infections around the world that is accessible to everyone.

The data for such maps is sourced from government sources. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has used the National Informatics Centre's Bharat Maps platform to input data from hospitals through NDMA into the platform, Kumar said. It then asked Here Technologies to integrate this service into the company's databases.

However, such apps work best if they can track the location data continuously. This has raised questions about government surveillance.

News Source: <https://www.livemint.com/technology/tech-news/india-turns-to-location-surveillance-to-contain-spread-of-covid-19-11585466140031.html>

## **N2. Coronavirus fallout: It's 10 to 5 work from home for most government officials**

*Economic Times-27-Mar-2020*

*The ministry of electronics and IT followed up with an identical format on March 24. It also asked all officials to be available for a meeting via video conference at one hour's notice. ... and offices lining up at the National Informatics Centre (NIC) for enabling e-office and allowing Virtual Private Network access to more and more officials*

NEW DELHI: While it is work from home for all central government departments, the officials across several ministries are moving to the 10 am to 5 pm working hours and even beyond.

The ministry of social justice and empowerment was the first to announce a clear cut work from home protocol requiring all officers to fix targets and specify work for their subordinates over email or at E office at 10 am, list out tasks for the day and dispose files by 5 pm every day- the ministry cleared over 400 files through E-office on day one.

The ministry of electronics and IT followed up with an identical format on March 24. It also asked all officials to be available for a meeting via video conference at one hour's notice.

ET gathers that the University Grants Commission is also set to demand a 10 am to 5 pm work schedule from home . It has already its personnel to report via email and Whatsapp to the bureau heads on their progress on the task for the day, officials told ET. Election Commission of India has setup the online meeting platform using Zoom to connect with officials and hold discussions from home.

The Central Pollution Control Board which is also monitoring collection and disposal of COVID-19 waste has asked all divisional heads to allocate clear work areas for those under them. All officials have also been told that they may be asked to report in office if such a need arises.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet Secretariat issued a fresh communication to all union ministries as well as Chief Secretaries of all states and Union Territories on Thursday, asking them to switch to the NIC backed virtual/video conferencing meeting format for the next three weeks for inter ministerial meetings.

While some ministries have smoothly moved into the E-office format, having made that transition months before, there are several departments and offices lining up at the National Informatics Centre

(NIC) for enabling e-office and allowing Virtual Private Network access to more and more officials.

The Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan that runs the chain of central schools across the country is now scrambling to get Virtual Private Network access for its employees to process governmental work even from home. The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances got VPN access for 17 Under Secretaries this week while the Social justice department sought it for a near hundred personnel.

NIC in fact is working at full throttle and has relaxed the procedure considerably in view of the unprecedented situation.. It is gathered that over a 1,000 uses of E- office were on boarded on day one of the lockdown itself and the number and usage is only increasing.

Ministries of Environment, Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Social Justice & Empowerment, Culture and Human Resources Development were among ministries fully functioning through e-office by Thursday, officials in the know said.

While most ministry offices have nearly emptied out, there are, however, officials at work still- especially to clear expenditure bills and release funds before March 31.

The Income Tax department has issued directions to all its Drawing and Disbursal Officers (DDOs) to come to office for the same. It has assured transport availability for them and full security as well and has emphasised that they “must not stay in office after completion of essential work”.

Every ministry has a small team of administrative/financial team coming to work to process pending bills and receipts to meet the March 31 deadline and they are currently designated as ‘essential st ..

Ministries manning ‘essential services’ are on full throttle work mode even more home. The likes of the Press Information Bureau are also overextended into late nights issuing clarifications and statements on the Coronavirus situation as it develops.

News Source: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/coronavirus-fallout-its-10-to-5-work-from-home-for-most-government-officials/articleshow/74837095.cms>

### **N3. Coronavirus | No curbs on essential goods: Centre**

*Hindu. 24 March 2020*

*The guidelines said offices of the government of India, its autonomous subordinate offices and public corporations shall remain closed. But the offices of defence, Central armed police forces, treasury, public utilities (including petroleum, CNG, LPG, PNG), disaster management, power generation and transmission units, post, the **National Informatics Centre and early warning agencies would be exempted.***

**States will act against those violating measures, will send a daily report to Union government**

The Ministry of Home Affairs issued a slew of guidelines to be followed by the States to contain COVID-19 and asked all “enforcement authorities to note that these strict restrictions fundamentally relate to the movement of people, but not to that of essential goods.”

Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said in a tweet that the “list of essential services remains unchanged since March 22nd Janata Curfew.”

The Ministry of Home Affairs said all commercial and private establishments shall be closed, except “ration shops (under the PDS), dealing with food, groceries, fruits and vegetables, dairy and milk booths, meat and fish, animal fodder.” “However, district authorities may encourage and facilitate home delivery to minimise the movement of individuals outside their homes,” the guidelines said.

The Ministry said “delivery of all essential goods, including food, pharmaceuticals and medical equipment through e-commerce” would be allowed.

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) issued an order asking the States to act against any person violating the containment measures as per provisions of Section 51-60 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, besides legal action under Section 188 of the IPC, punishable by up to two years in jail and a fine.

In another letter addressed to the Chief Secretaries, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla asked the States to send daily reports on the implementation of the strict measures as “lack of uniformity in the measures adopted as well as their implementation may not serve the purpose of containing the spread of the virus.” The guidelines were similar to the measures being taken by the States. According to the guidelines, the district magistrates will deploy executive magistrates as “Incident Commanders” in the respective local jurisdictions for the enforcement of the 21-day lockdown as announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The guidelines said offices of the government of India, its autonomous subordinate offices and public corporations shall remain closed. But the offices of defence, Central armed police forces, treasury, public utilities (including petroleum, CNG, LPG, PNG), disaster management, power generation and transmission units, post, the **National Informatics Centre and early warning agencies would be exempted.**

“Hospitals and all related medical establishments, including manufacturing and distribution units such as dispensaries, chemist and medical equipment shops, laboratories, clinics, nursing homes and ambulances, will continue to remain functional. The transportation for all medical personnel, nurses, para-medical staff, other hospital support services be permitted,” the Ministry said.

It said hotels, homestay, lodges and motels, which are accommodating tourists and perso

ns stranded because of the lockdown, medical and emergency staff, air and sea crew and establishments used/earmarked for quarantine shall remain open. “All places of worship shall be closed for the public. No religious congregations will be permitted without any exception,” the Ministry said.

In case of funerals, a congregation of not more than 20 persons will be permitted, it said. “All persons who have arrived in India after February 15, 2020, and all such persons who have been directed by health care personnel to remain under strict home/institutional quarantine for a period as decided by local health authorities, failing which they will be liable to legal action under Section 188 of the IPC,” the Ministry said.

News Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/coronavirus-no-curbs-on-essential-goods-centre/article31156707.ece>

#### **N4. Government working on CoWin-20 app that will help people find Covid-19 test centres**

*India Today-25-Mar-2020*

*The government is likely working on an app called CoWin-20 that will help Indians ascertain risk of catching Covid-19 on the basis of their travel history as well help them find nearest Covid-19 tests centres. ... required to share their device UDIDs with the **National Informatics Centre** to get a unique download link while the app is under beta testing.*

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Reports suggest that the CoWin-20 app will help the government check travel history of individuals.
- The app will be available for both Android and iOS users.
- CoWin-20 will also help users identify Covid-19 tests centres near them.

The government may soon roll out an application called CoWin-20 to take on Covid-19, an infectious disease caused by coronavirus. According to reports, the app will have several components to it, and it is possible that with its features it may help Indians stay safe and away from Covid-19 infections, and it may help the government contain the disease.

But how? Details are scarce right now, but there will be three key components to the CoWin-20. One, it will help the government track the travel histories of individuals who are infected with coronavirus. This the app will be able to do by tracking the location of an individual. While this raises privacy issues, currently it is not clear how the government will handle it. But the idea is that with CoWin the government will likely be able to track people who are infected or people who have been quarantined.

The second part is contact tracing and sharing that information with public. Because the CoWin-20 app may know where the Covid-19 cases are, it will be able to help the government determine how many people came in contact with virus and what routes and places Covid-19 infected people took. The app is likely to share some of this information with users so they will also know what places they should avoid.

The functionality is similar to what is provided in an app that Singapore government recently made. That app too allows public to see the Covid-19 infections and then avoid the relevant areas.

The third big feature of the CoWin-20 is likely to be information about nearest Covid-19 centres, again based on location data. This could be somewhat similar to information provided by a Google-made website in the US. The app will also highlight updates from the government, government advisories and safety recommendations.

The app is currently being tested by a select group of users, according to reports. It will be made available for both android and iOS devices. Android users can access the app through an APK and the users of iOS devices will be required to share their device UDIDs with the National Informatics Centre to get a unique download link while the app is under beta testing.

The app will see its stable builds released on Google Play Store and Apple's iOS App store in the near future, sources close to the government told News18. Starting March 25, India went into a complete lockdown for 21 days. The development was announced by PM Modi in order to contain coronavirus. As on Wednesday, 9 people have died in India because of Covid-19 and the country has over 500 positive cases.

News Source: <https://www.indiatoday.in/technology/news/story/government-working-on-cowin-20-app-that-will-help-people-find-covid-19-test-centres-1659502-2020-03-25>

## **N5. Central govt works from home through e-office tool**

*Hindustan Times-25-Mar-2020*

*Last week, some senior officials in a key social sector ministry had to prepare their minister's written answers for a reply in Parliament. For those working from home, the e-office can be accessed through a VPN provided by the **National Informatics Centre**, which manages the entire e-office.*

Last week, some senior officials in a key social sector ministry had to prepare their minister's written answers for a reply in Parliament.

There was a problem, though.

Most of them were at home amidst the Covid-19 outbreak and even a briefing meeting on the questions could not take place in the ministry.

That was last week.

This week, there's a near-complete lockdown, although at least 5% of government officers are still at office; the rest are working from home.

Not surprisingly, the focus is on a tool developed back in 2014-15, the Centre's e-office.

This was developed to accelerate the movement of files through the bureaucracy and make the latter more accountable.

Now, it has become the veritable lifeline of the Centre as the country scrambles to fight the coronavirus outbreak.

From creating government files online to uploading scanned letters—the e-office is mandated not only to replace physical files but also to keep a tab on which officer is sitting on a file for how long.

“The system also allows colour coding in files to ascertain priorities. If a file needs to be cleared immediately, we mark it in red—a colour which we are using too often over the past two weeks,” said a secretary-level officer in a ministry who asked not to be named.

With travel restrictions and social distancing guidelines in place, the Modi government's e-office is busier than ever. While decisions are pushed through digital files, consultations happen through video-conferencing.

“It’s not the same government structure anymore,” said another secretary-level officer who asked not to be named. “The Indian bureaucracy dons a corporate set-up.”

Almost 70% inter-ministerial video conferences or files are related to Covid-19, according to officials.

“The system gives you the opportunity to draft a letter or modify one,” said another senior bureaucrat, “Some circulars or guidelines for the states are also drafted online.

The system also records any changes.

“From the author to the date and the content, any amendment is recorded in the system,” said the secondsecretary-level officer.

For those working from home, the e-office can be accessed through a VPN provided by the National Informatics Centre, which manages the entire e-office.

The virtual office network is used extensively in most of the ministries barring a few that deals with security-related issues or extremely sensitive subjects.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during whose tenure the e-office was turned into the government’s fully functional digital establishment, had regularly advocated use of technology in governance.

In 2015, he even addressed a national conference on e-governance through twitter.

“E-Governance is an essential part of our dream of Digital India. The more technology we infuse in Governance, the better it is for India,” Prime Minister Modi had told the conference that year.

News Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/central-govt-works-from-home-through-e-office-tool/story-wANWAJFBJriocpamFV0acP.html>

## **N6. Govt’s Plan B to keep working during lockdown**

Hindustan Times. 25 March 2020

As the lockdown became certain, the *National Informatics Centre* worked urgently to configure software and fix remote access to dedicated management ...

It was an office memorandum with an innocuous title: “Preventive measures to contain the spread of Covid-19”. In reality, though, it was a critical notice -- of curtailed but effective government functioning that applied not just to ministries but all public-sector undertakings and autonomous institutions.

And it detailed the government’s Plan B to keep the business of governance going.

In these uncharted times, when whole communities have been shut down and the Union government itself is hunkering down, the country’s leaders and bureaucrats are not flying blind in the fog of a globally unprecedented pandemic.

In running a nation of its size and to remain effectively in charge, while enforcing social distancing within the government, the Centre is working off the plan.

The plan, which enforces social distancing, was vetted at multiple levels and signed off on by the two top bureaucratic establishments, the Cabinet secretariat and the ministry of personnel, according to details provided by at least five government officials, all of whom spoke on condition of anonymity.

HT reviewed some routine tasks, such as agenda-setting and approvals, performed during normal times by departments, but more onerously now, to gauge how a heavy-set central government is still running its business.

The “highest priority” in day-to-day administration is to “assist states”, keep some of the largest federally funded “national programmes running” and run all divisions involved in financial decision-making, one official said. Steering schemes, such as PM-KISAN in agriculture (a cash transfer scheme aimed at farmers) and metro rail under urban development ministry, has been classified as “essential”.

As the lockdown became certain, the National Informatics Centre worked urgently to configure software and fix remote access to dedicated management information softwares (MIS), the massive IT platforms that run the largest national schemes, such as PM KISAN, direct benefit transfers, subsidies and national pensions. Lockdown or no lockdown, people dependant on such payments have to get them.

The remote access is through internet connections from state-owned telecom firms, but private-owned leased lines have been kept as back-up, a second official said.

In India’s federal structure, subjects are divided by the country’s Constitution to be divided between states and the Centre. It’s the official work on the long list of “central subjects”, from aviation to national security, that various ministries and their line departments must keep going.

Yet, in important fields with a dual Centre-state jurisdiction, such as agriculture and health, the Centre’s role is no less critical.

“Information during this critical time may be imperfect. Working hours may be longer. Staff may be less. But the government is not flying blind,” a third official, at the level of additional secretary-level , said.

The first step in devising the plan mentioned above, which was given shape starting March 14-15, was to prune the “unessential” or “non-critical”, a fourth official said. One example is tasks that don’t involve financial approval.

Second, each ministry communicated its own plans to the Cabinet Secretariat; these were vetted several times before the final roadmap was sent to the “highest levels” for approval, the second official said.

On March 20, the ministry of personnel (order no. “F.No. 11013/9/2014-Estt A-III), following up on two trial orders issued by it on March 17 and 19, asked a set of intermediate-level employees known as group B and C to be rostered to work in alternating batches.

This was the start of a trial in social distancing within the government. In that notice, all consultants, who provide critical inputs for decision-making and many of whom are retired bureaucrats, above the age of 60 (and therefore considered vulnerable to the disease), were asked to work from home.

Finally, came the definitive notice to all ministries, the Prime Minister’s Office and the National Informatics Centre, the government’s IT arm, was sent out from North Block on March 22. Sujata Chaturvedi, who is “additional secretary to the government of India”, signed off on it.

This was the Plan B.

It asked heads of departments to “draw up a roster of staff (all officers and employees, including consultants/contract and outsourced employees) who are required to render essential services within each department”. “They alone may be asked to attend office from 23rd March to 31st March, 2020”. What is considered “essential” was the discretion of each secretary of departments functioning under each Union minister, who was also required to approve it. The order did not apply to any employee on the Centre’s rolls tasked with any activity directly or indirectly related to fighting the coronavirus outbreak.

What the rest of India didn’t know at the time was that this notice would be followed by a similar “advisory” to all states through chief secretaries from the Centre. It is this advisory that became the basis of many states going into nearly simultaneous lockdowns till March 31, the federally determined cut-off date for the first phase of the shutdown, the third official said.

So, how has government day-to-day functioning changed and how are decisions being taken now in a rapidly alarming public-health scenario?

A mandatory daily task in all ministries, critical because it involves agenda-setting, decision-making and review, is a conference known as “senior officers’ meeting”. The jargon for it in ministries is SOM. Usually, it’s one of the first businesses in a ministry although it can be held any time of the day. Decisions taken there are passed down to line units and departments.

These meetings are usually called by the secretary or sometimes delegated to additional or special secretaries. One ministry usually has several departments under it. For example, the agriculture ministry also has the department of agri-research. The finance ministry has the departments of economic affairs and revenue, among others.

These meetings are taking place as usual but with some participants on video call, depending on who has been allotted “work from home”. In every room, entry gates and conference halls, sanitisers have been placed and it is mandatory to use them before any meeting.

A fifth official, at the joint secretary level, said he was dictating decisions and minutes of meetings to be “put up” on file over the phone for note-making and drafting. In normal times, he would summon the note-taker into his room.

The government already runs fully on e-governance platforms, but a crucial rule requires that all decisions are physically signed. This practice hasn’t changed because government memorandums (as decisions are formally known) mandatorily require the hand and seal of the competent authority according to central office rules.

“Functioning will not be affected at all because of the rostering. About 90% of decisions are usually in the nature of approvals, financial or otherwise. These can still be taken via emails and the sign can be put on a later date. That’s no issue,” said SK Pattanayak, former agriculture secretary who is currently the director of the Hyderabad-based Administrative Staff College.

“Video-conferencing is the key know. When the final matter is ready, it is printed, signed physically and then faxed and mailed to relevant officials,” the fifth official added.

Some practices are so ritualistic and a legacy of the colonial British era that e-governance doesn’t mean everything. Each decision has to be manually filed in paper and a “true physical copy” still needs to be sent out to each recipient, whether downwards to a junior official or to a higher authority in the same building or in other establishments within the capital.

This means that essential vehicles, drivers and courier personnel are functioning as they otherwise do, but only in a limited number. “The current staff strength is down to about 15%,” the second official said, but most secretaries heading departments are attending their offices.

“Understand that government people are working, whether in office or from home, just like you,” Pattaniak said.

The lockdown may be on, but the state is working.

News Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/govt-s-plan-b-to-keep-working-during-lockdown/story-O9gIMA8D2e1yHxsQXhBwBP.html>

## **N7. Poor compliance with norms forces police to intensify drive**

*The Hindu. 26 March 2020*

*The national Informatics Centre would soon come up with an online service to apply for such road passes, officials said. They also warned youths who ...*

**Kozikode:** Vehicles seized at picket points taken to police stations

The number of police pickets has been increased in the city and rural areas following poor compliance with lockdown norms by a section of the motorists.

All vehicles, except those for emergency or essential services, will be stopped at picket points for checking as part of intensifying the drive.

Some of the vehicles which were blocked at picket points on Thursday were taken to nearby police stations. Vehicles seized for violation of norms will be released only after the lockdown period.

The total number of such cases registered in Kozhikode city was 338 on Wednesday, which was the highest in the State.

Policemen posted at one of the picket points said some of the motorists were giving silly reasons for roaming around. There were also incidents in which drivers tried to tell lies and escape from legal action, they said.

Officers coordinating enforcement actions said private vehicle owners would be allowed to go only after the submission of the prescribed self-declaration form explaining the purpose of travel, address and other details. Those who do not keep the declaration form would not be allowed to resume their journey, they said.

### **Road passes**

According to officials, road passes too would be made mandatory for those in need of daily travel by private vehicles. The national Informatics Centre would soon come up with an online service to apply for such road passes, officials said.

They also warned youths who were found on roads in the name of charity work without the authorisation of the district administration. Vehicles used for charitable purposes would be allowed to proceed only on production of certificates issued by local body secretaries concerned. For inter-

district or inter-State travel, the certificate issued by the District-level Transportation Committee should be produced, they said.

News Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/poor-compliance-with-norms-forces-police-to-intensify-drive/article31175455.ece>

## MeitY in News

### **MI. Govt forms empowered groups, task force to deal with Covid-19 outbreak**

Hindustan Times. 29 March 2020

### **Covid-19: Task force to map technologies to fund nearly market-ready solutions.**

Economic Times

*Ministry of electronics and information technology secretary Ajay Sawhney leads the panel on technology and data management and Amit Khare, ... The groups will consult frequently over video conferencing or meetings to provide suggestions to the government.*

Ten empowered groups and a strategic task force comprising senior civil servants was formed to deal with coronavirus outbreak.

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government on Sunday formed 10 empowered groups and a strategic task force comprising senior civil servants to deal with the Covid-19 outbreak and its aftermath.

The setting up of the groups and the task force, which together have 68 bureaucrats, is an attempt to forge a planning and implementation machinery that acts in concert to minimise the impact of the disease the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared a global pandemic.

It underlines the recognition by the Narendra Modi government of the need for a more comprehensive approach towards tackling the outbreak, which has posed an unprecedented public health crisis, and its aftermath, expected to bring wide-ranging social and economic consequences.

The groups will consult frequently over video conferencing or meetings to provide suggestions to the government. They will also monitor their areas of ambit daily and are empowered to take decisions, indicating the pace with which the Centre wants these groups to act.

The six-member strategic task force will deal exclusively with issues related to the lockdown announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for three weeks starting March 25. Dr. VK Paul, a member of the policy think tank Niti Aayog; home secretary Ajay Kumar Valla; secretary (coordination) VP Joy and three officials from the Prime Minister's Office —AK Sharma, Arvind Srivastava and Abhishek Shukla —will be part of the team.

The first empowered group will oversee “the medical emergency management plan” and is headed by VK Paul. It also has four other members—representatives of the health ministry, the National Disaster Management Authority and the department overseeing direct benefit transfer.

The second group will look into “availability of hospitals, isolation and quarantine facilities, disease surveillance and testing and critical care training”. Headed by CK Mishra, secretary of the ministry of environment, forests and climate change, the panel comprises Vinod Yadav, chairman of the Railway Board; Dr. Randeep Guleria, director of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi; and one senior official each from the defence and health ministries.

All the 10 empowered groups have a representative each from the cabinet secretariat as a member.

The biggest group will deal with “facilitating supply chain and logistics management for availability of necessary items such as food and medicine”, indicating the importance of the supply chains in making the lockdown successful. Headed by Parameswaran Iyer, secretary of the department of drinking water and sanitation, the panel has 10 other members including consumer affairs secretary Pawan Agarwal; Guruprasad Mohapatra, secretary of the department for promotion of industry and internal trade; textiles secretary Rajeev Kapoor and senior officials from the Prime Minister’s Office, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, the ministry of external affairs, ministry of health and department of health research.

With a large section of the political establishment worried about the social and economic fallout of Covid-19 —as evident from tens of thousands of migrant workers heading home from the cities and the shutdown of commercial and industrial establishments —the government has also formed a separate group on “economic and welfare measures.”

News Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/govt-forms-empowered-groups-task-force-to-deal-with-covid-19-outbreak/story-mq8y4SjvLgb74v07359WDJ.html>

## **M2. How two startups from Bengaluru, Gurgaon are fighting against COVID-19**

*Livemint. 29 March 2020*

*... helping in tracking the cases," Dr Ajai Kumar Garg, Senior Director at Ministry of **Electronics and Information Technology** (MeitY) said in a statement*

**NEW DELHI** : Two start-ups incubated at the Nasscom Centre of Excellence IoT and AI -- DronaMaps and BlinkIn -- are working with governments and administrative bodies to combat challenges posed by the deadly coronavirus that has claimed thousands of lives globally. DronaMaps has developed a live dashboard to track COVID-19 patients and their activities, and is working with Haryana and Punjab governments.

The start-up from CoE Gurugram also offers an administrative dashboard with advanced features like location tracking, geofencing and predictive analytics.

BlinkIn from CoE Bengaluru has provided remote tech support to install air handling units at the [COVID-19](#) field hospital in Wuhan at a time when the city was locked down.

"When these young start-ups help fight a pandemic by using the latest technologies, we realise that the efforts of Nasscom CoE towards Digital India are moving in the right direction. I would like to congratulate the team of DronaMaps and BlinkIn for their products that are helping in tracking the cases," Dr Ajai Kumar Garg, Senior Director at Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) said in a statement.

Utkarsh Singh, co-founder of DronaMaps, said to flatten the curve of the number of cases with the disease, it is important to track the positive cases, suspected cases, quarantined individuals, hospitalised cases, among others.

He said all suspected cases are constantly monitored through social media or VLR (call records).

"This ensures officials are aware of the places they could have visited and by detecting the mobile phones close to the patient's phone, the people who have been in close physical proximity with the patient.

"In addition, predictive spatial analysis based on granular spatial and temporal data can be used to estimate which areas would need additional resources," he added.

BlinkIn's remote technology helped the Huoshenshan Field Hospital in Wuhan fight coronavirus.

Its technology XCare was used to remotely monitor and manage air handling units in Huoshenshan Hospital, an emergency field hospital constructed to specifically cater to patients.

The industrial province of Wuhan was the first major city to report a massive outbreak in cases earlier this year.

Since then, coronavirus has spread across the world and claimed thousands of lives. The number of COVID-19 cases climbed to 979 in India on Sunday, with the death toll rising to 25, according to the Union Health Ministry.

"BlinkIn's intelligent visual-assistance company played a key role by providing its tech support to address the crisis. It helped service engineers of Huber-Ranner to install air ventilation systems in two hospitals in Wuhan, remotely," Harshwardhan Kumar, co-founder of BlinkIn, said.

Nasscom Center of Excellence – IoT and AI is part of the Digital India Initiative to jumpstart and drive the emerging technologies ecosystem in India.

The main objective of the CoE is to help Indian deep-tech start-ups and companies leverage cutting-edge technologies to build market-ready products.

Nasscom CoE was set up in July 2016 as part of the Digital India initiative of MeitY, and has centres in Bengaluru, Gurugram and Gandhinagar.

News Source: <https://www.livemint.com/companies/start-ups/how-two-startups-from-bengaluru-gurgaon-are-fighting-against-covid-19-11585480795421.html>

### **M3. WHO working on MyHealth app to help curb spread of COVID-19 misinformation**

*The Indian Express 28 March 2020*

*To curb all of this misinformation about coronavirus, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has announced that it is working on an app that will provide people with correct tips, news, alerts and other crucial information. It is expected to launch on March 30. India's Corona Kawach app. The Indian government in partnership with the **Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**, and the Union ...*

With the rising [COVID-19](#) cases around the world unverified information related to the virus are also flooding the internet. To curb the spread of misinformation several companies are taking measures to provide only verified details. Previously we have seen [Facebook](#), WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter launch features that will show only authentic [coronavirus](#) information and block the unverified ones. World Health Organisation (WHO) is now working on an app to provide tips, authentic news, alerts and other crucial information related to COVID-19.

A report coming from *9to5Google* suggests that the app will be called “WHO MyHealth”. It will be available on [iOS](#), [Android](#), as well as the Desktop. The report stated that the app is expected to launch on Android and iOS on March 30. The app code is already available on GitHub.

The development of the WHO MyHealth app was proposed by the group named ‘WHO Covid APP Collective’. This group consists of former employees of [Google](#) and [Microsoft](#) along with WHO advisors and industry experts. Developers from outside of the group will also be able to sign up to contribute to the app by [clicking here and filling up the form](#).

The report also stated that the WHO MyHealth app currently only consists of tips around COVID-19 disease in a similar to the [WHO’s WhatsApp chatbot](#). The app’s homepage currently offers users travel advice, myth-busters, and ways to protect themselves.

### [Goa students make web app to keep track of Coronavirus cases](#)

### [Reliance Jio’s MyJio App lets you check if you can get coronavirus or not](#)

In addition the WHO MyHealth app will also provide consumers with location-based notification alerts and tools to help diagnose symptoms. The app basically wants to trace COVID-19 positive cases for a better understanding of the virus spread. However, it might not release this feature at launch due to privacy concerns.

### **India’s Corona Kawach app**

The Indian government in partnership with the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, and the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has developed a coronavirus risk-tracking app, called ‘Corona Kavach’. This app is currently only available on Android and is currently in beta. The app uses the user location to assesses if whether they are at high-risk geographical zone or not. It also tracks users every hour to alert them of whether they have crossed paths with infected persons.

**News Source:** <https://indianexpress.com/article/technology/social/who-myhealth-app-launch-march-30-help-curb-covid-19-misinformation-6334751/>