

Coronavirus & Digital Solution: RSTV- Big Picture

What's in the News?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has asked people to share technology-driven solutions for coronavirus.
 - In a tweet, PM Modi said, a lot of people have been sharing technology-driven solutions for [COVID-19](#).
 - The Prime Minister urged them to share it on the citizen engagement platform MyGov.in saying the efforts can help many.
- The Prime Minister has remarked that innovation should be harnessed for a healthier planet.
 - MyGov in a statement said innovative solutions, Bioinformatics, datasets, and Apps for diagnosis can be leveraged for strengthening the fight against Corona.
 - The submitted solutions will be evaluated for adoption and those selected will be suitably rewarded.
- Meanwhile, to ensure the safety of citizens amid the coronavirus outbreak, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor, Shaktikanta Das, asked customers to use digital banking facilities as far as possible.
 - He also added, "In the context of COVID 19, RBI and the government together are giving emphasis on encouraging digital payments. And over a period of time, various measures have already been taken to establish safe, secure, stable and affordable retail payment systems such as the National Electronic Fund Transfer (NEFT) and the Immediate Payment Service (IMPS)."

What kind of digital measures can we expect to tackle this pandemic?

- The first measure to be taken is to ensure the research collaboration for better utilization of datasets.
 - The **Chinese** researchers have uploaded the data sets on repositories such as github, and are being used by researchers across the world for data visualization.
 - This dataset includes time-series data tracking the number of people affected by COVID-19, including:
 - confirmed tested cases of Coronavirus infection
 - the number of people who have reportedly died while sick with Coronavirus
 - the number of people who have reportedly recovered from it
- The **EU** is using apps which could be utilized for simple tasks such as for indicating the nearest medical facility.
- **Apple** has launched a COVID-19 screening app to evaluate the symptoms, provides information about the disease and guidance from the Centre for Disease Control (CDC).
- **UK** has launched an automated screening system that could be used by the patients to check if they're displaying any symptoms of COVID-19.
- **Israel** is exploring options to track the post-treatment status of patients with coronavirus.
 - It could also prove to be quite useful in contact tracing.
- **Singapore** has been utilizing cell tower data to analyze the movement of a person who has tested positive meanwhile South Korea and Israel have utilized GPS tracking apps.
- There are endless possibilities to the advantages that technology could provide in these challenging times, therefore India should utilize the open data sets available and AI technology to make the citizens pre-screen themselves as the first measure.

Can India draw inspiration from the neighboring countries in the crisis and replicate the same model that could be effective for India?

- India would be able to replicate any model of a digital solution being utilized by a neighboring country given its technological support system and the dire need of such technologies, owing to the current situation.
- The hurdles for India in tackling this issue would be the large population of the country and the digital infrastructure in certain parts of the country, which may not be up to the mark.
- Many places in India have problems which might be region-specific. Therefore one size fits all approach might not work. This will require solutions as per local conditions.
- Thus better coordination and utilizing all resources at the disposal of the country is the way to tackle the COVID-19.

How important is it to give the “[Digital India](#)” a push, given the situation now?

- The current situation has highlighted the importance of working from home, cashless digital transactions, and online shopping. In general, the situation has highlighted the importance of a digitized economy.
- This situation has also offered a new perspective on digitizing the economy. It is not just a way to promote accountability and transparency but can also help the public maintain high levels of hygiene, and allow them to carry on with their essential needs even during such times.
- The current situation is emphasizing the importance of digitizing India.
 - The SBI report has mentioned that the Microbiology and applied sciences department at the Tirunelveli Medical College, during a study in 2016 found currency notes to be carrying a plethora of microbes.
- Tele-medicine and online consultations have gained importance in recent times and have been found equally effective.
- The current age of technology has also ensured the prevention of an information vacuum, which was present during the time of the SARS outbreak.

For more information on this, refer to [28th March 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

Are e-commerce companies such as Grofers and Bigbasket the solution to this problem?

- E-commerce companies such as Bigbasket are partial solutions that prove to be highly useful during the lockdown period.
 - Such companies have also helped in containing the panic amongst the public, by providing the quintessential things, eg. hand-sanitizers and groceries.

How much of an economic impact would this have on India’s economic ecosystem?

- It will affect the predicted GDP growth rate for India and bring it down from 5 percent.
 - Since India’s share in the global trade and supply chain is less than 3 percent, it would not be as affected as other countries that have a major share in the global supply chain.
- The current situation might also act as an opportunity for India to focus on R&D and develop its own supply of raw materials which has been imported in huge numbers from its neighboring countries.

For more information on this topic, refer to the [Coronavirus & Impact on Economy](#).

What position of importance do privacy laws garner in this situation?

- At a time of emergency such as this, technologies such as GPS tracking and contact tracing are important to ensure the containment of the virus.
- [Privacy](#) certainly takes a back seat in the present situation when one looks at the bigger picture, which is the safety of the nation, hence the public must understand and cooperate with the Indian Government.
- However, there are endless possibilities as to how much of the information may be collected by apps to track a person during such times, and hence, the government must keep a periodical check to ensure that the collected data does not fall into wrong hands.

Way Forward:

- The public will have to adopt better lifestyle practices and support the government in their efforts by cooperating with them.
- The society as a whole should also be more sensitive towards the people in quarantine and avoid branding them with names and isolating them as a social stigma, as it would affect the person mentally. This is a curable disease, as the evidence has indicated and thus, the public must be patient and more sensitive to the other's needs and feelings.
- The public must be very careful regarding the sharing of information on social media as it could lead to the spread of misinformation. One must always refer to credible sources of information and play their part in the country's battle against COVID-19.