IAMAI Submission on Initiatives Taken By Social Media Platforms to Curb False News/ Misinformation on Corona Virus

The Internet and Mobile Association of India [IAMAI] on behalf of its member social intermediary service providers, would like to submit to MEITY the measures undertaken by various platforms to Curb False News/ Misinformation on Corona Virus.

IAMAI would like to highlight that in response to the coronavirus outbreak, our Members have taken a significant number of steps in order to support the Government and public health community's work to keep people safe and informed and are taking a comprehensive approach to help prevent the spread of misinformation on their platforms.

The different platforms have taken independent initiatives as per scope and capacity depending on the type of service offered, the medium of interactions etc. however, there are two broad themes under which the wide range of activities can be classified.

Dissemination of Critical Information for Users: All platforms adopted special mechanisms to communicate critical information, to-dos, notifications and precautions as suggested by proper authorities to their users. This involved the platforms actively associating with Ministries, Departments, and various national or international agencies working to mitigate the COVID-19 crisis.

Restricting misinformation: During the present period of crisis and insecurities, the platforms have taken extra caution to enable users to make more informed choices on the kind of information available to them. This includes collaboration with fact checking partners, making official sources of information easily accessible, reducing discoverability of problematic content and public awareness campaigns, and more.

A detailed submission of initiatives taken by key social media platforms follow as annexure to this document.
Summary of efforts by ByteDance family of apps in India to stop misinformation related to COVID-19

a. Helo Initiatives

Helo has taken proactive steps to promote dissemination of authentic information on the platform and curb false news/misinformation on the topic. Given below is a comprehensive understanding of the steps taken to ensure user safety, get content straight from the official sources and weed out problematic content that may spread panic or misinform users.

In-app action for promoting authentic and safe content, and weeding out misinformation:

Since the beginning of the outbreak, Helo has made several announcements in the app and has even evolved the app to promote authentic and safe content and weeding out false information.

i. Made a public service announcement in the first week of Feb directing users to official advisories by government and WHO and asking them to not share fake news. The announcement was made in 10 regional Indian languages.

ii. In February and early March, we ran a page on Daily updates and Preventive steps on Covid-19. The page is now further evolved and linked to all relevant official government accounts on Helo and discussion forums for authentic and credible information.

iii. Helo has come up with a specific content moderation policy for Covid-19 related content to curb any kind of misinformation, fake news and conspiracy theory on the subject.

iv. Helo has hired fact-checking services from the Jagaran group to consistently weed-out fake content from the platform. Helo has intensified fact checking efforts with much higher volume of content that is fact-checked and getting further support from the fact-checkers to highlight the news that is not correct.

v. Helo is leveraging “#HeloLivePeMilo” and a series of in app awareness campaigns to spread positivity and educate people. 45 celebrities are lined up for the live stream.

vi. Launched “Safety Announcement Pin” under all corona related hashtags and corona related search.

vii. Launched an initiative to provide free ad inventory to governments and NGOs globally to assist in combatting this crisis.

Promote dissemination of authentic information through credible sources:

Helo has been engaging with governments, official and credible organizations and celebrities to disseminate authentic information on the platform.

a. Collaborated with WHO to release their official advisories in video format on Helo. The advisories contained topic like:

• How to protect yourself from Covid-19
b. Disability considerations for Covid-19 safety information on the topic of Covid-19 supported several state governments (namely Kerala, Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and UP) to push out their advisories and notices on a real-time basis, in their regional language.
   - For example, Hindi in Delhi, Malayalam in Kerala, Telugu in Andhra Pradesh, Marathi in Maharashtra.

c. Helo has also forged deeper collaboration with Delhi government and Kerala government where they are running a hashtag campaign on Helo.
   - The Chief ministers’ teams do the livestream of their press address every day on Helo.
   - Helo is also providing them with in-app banners and space on the app for directing users to their pages for credible information.
   - Kerala government is running #BreakTheChain campaign. Delhi government is running #DelhiAgainstCorona.

d. Helo did a live broadcast of the Prime Minister’s address to the nation on March 19, with translations/ subtitles in six Indian languages (namely, Hindi, Malayalam, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali and Tamil). This was done in collaboration with the media partners on the platform.

e. Helo invited eminent medical professionals like Padma Shri Dr. KK Agarwal (a cardiologist and past national president of the Indian Medical Association) to talk about the significance of following official advisory and washing hands through livesreams on Helo.
   - Celebrities like Shipla Shetty, Malaika Arora, Tamannah Bhatia used Helo livestream to emphasize on self-isolation and conduct fitness, dance and yoga sessions for people at home.

1. Public Service Announcement in 10 Indian languages
2. PM’s address on Helo with translation/ subtitles in different languages

3. Campaigns by Delhi and Kerala governments, and experts talking
ii. TikTok initiatives on Covid-19

TikTok is taking a comprehensive approach to help prevent the spread of misinformation on the platform and are focused on supporting users by providing access to accurate information and resources from public health officials in the app, just as users continue to support, encourage, and uplift each other during this time.

TikTok has optimised our content moderation process and revised the content moderation policies to fight against spreading misinformation about COVID-19. TikTok partnered with the World Health Organization (WHO) on an informational page in the app that provides users with answers to common questions, offers tips on staying safe and preventing the spread of the virus, and dispels some of the myths around COVID-19.

They are also surfacing a link to this informational page on videos that may relate to coronavirus, reminding users to seek accurate information from credible sources.

Additionally, there is an in-app notice that points to trusted sources and reminds users of the Community Guidelines, which prohibit misinformation that could cause harm to an individual’s health or wider public safety. PSA in 9 regional languages including English:

_TikTok values creativity and expression, but also authenticity and integrity. When creating, viewing, or interacting with coronavirus-related content, please remember:

a. Verify facts using trusted sources, including the WHO (https://www.who.int/) or resources from your local government (www.tiktok.com/lhr)

b. Report content that you think may violate our Community Guidelines._
New product features to promote accurate information on COVID-19:

- For TikTok users who explore hashtags related to the coronavirus, there is an in-app notice that provides easy access to the WHO website and other trusted resources.
- A dedicated page in our Safety Centre detailing all efforts around COVID-19.
- If users come across content they believe contains intentionally deceptive information, they can report it by selecting the Misleading Information category, and these reports are sent to a dedicated, highly-trained team of moderators that reviews reported accounts and videos in accordance with our policies on misleading information.
- Launched an initiative to provide free ad inventory to governments and NGOs for public service announcements related to the COVID-19 situation.
- Optimised content moderation and fact checking content. At TikTok, they have heightened their moderation efforts, and have been monitoring and systematically removing content from their platform that violates their Community Guidelines. In India, they have removed thousands of videos that have contradicted legitimate advice about COVID-19 from credible authorities, as well as content that could cause imminent harm to public health and safety. As their practices, they suspend or ban user accounts that violate their policies; when necessary, they even report miscreants to relevant authorities to ensure public safety.
Partnerships:

- TikTok is working with WHO to provide trusted information to our community. They have joined TikTok and started posting informative videos. Hosted 2 livestreams with the WHO that took place on March 17th & 19th and featured information about COVID-19 and the WHO answering questions to common questions. Livestream was watched across 70 markets by almost 350K users.
- Partnered with WHO to promote a global #SafeHands challenge to help encourage hygienic habits.
- The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is on TikTok as well. On Feb 28 the IFRC’s director of health hosted a livestream explaining what the coronavirus, what’s happening around it, and safety advice regarding it.
- Partnered with UNICEF India for the in-app Covid-19 info section and the #safehands campaign

Law Enforcement Agencies on TikTok:

Law enforcement agencies such as Kerala Police, Bangalore Police and Durg Police are using TikTok as a platform to spread awareness around Coronavirus effectively with thousands of engagements on their posts.

In-app campaigns:

- Launched in-app campaigns i.e. #JanataCurfew and #TheBraveHearts asking the people to co-operate and push the PM’s message and support Janata Curfew from 7:00 am - 9:00 pm on 22nd March.
- Launched in-app campaign #GharBaithoIndia to keep our larger community safe during this time.
Summary of efforts by Facebook family of apps in India to stop misinformation related to COVID-19

Facebook has taken a significant number of steps on its family of apps - Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp in order to support the Government and public health community's work to keep people safe and informed.

i. **Coronavirus Information Center on Facebook:**

   Coronavirus Information Center provides the latest news and updates from MyGov Corona Hub, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MOHFW) and global health organizations, as well as helpful content about social distancing and preventing the spread of COVID-19.

   a. Coronavirus Information Center, is featured at the top of News Feed, to provide a central place for people to get the latest news and information as well as resources and tips to stay healthy and support their family and community.

   b. In addition, anyone searching for information related to COVID-19 on Facebook is shown educational pop-ups on top of search results connecting them to expert health organizations including the World Health Organization (WHO). People can also follow the Coronavirus Information Center to receive updates from health authorities directly in their News Feed.

ii. **WhatsApp Partnership with MyGov India and MoHFW, Government of India.**

   a. The MOHFW and MyGov, along with WhatsApp, have launched a helpline number to raise awareness and answer questions about COVID-19. WhatsApp users across the country can reach out to the Ministry of Health on +91 9013151515 for credible information and to verify any uncertain information on precautionary measures or treatment practices.

   b. To contact the helpline, users should save the WhatsApp number in their phone, and then start a chat by typing “Hi” and sending it to the number, which will prompt them to either type in a query or choose from a list of frequently asked questions. The experience is automated as a chatbot would be providing all the information as per the query selected by the user in real time. Depending on the question, users will receive verified information in the form of a video, infographic or text. The service is currently available in English and Hindi.
c. WhatsApp has also partnered with various state governments with a view to provide a helpline WhatsApp account that can be accessed by users to receive COVID-19 related information. The helpline accounts will also be available in regional languages, which will help in expanding the reach of information on the pandemic. Through this account, users would be able to access accurate information on COVID-19 including state specific advisories and other relevant information such as a list of health centres for testing etc. Facebook is currently working with State governments to implement this solution.

iii. Messenger Partnership with MyGov India and MOHFW, Government of India

a. Together with MOHFW and MyGov, Facebook has facilitated Corona Helpdesk Chatbot on Messenger to raise awareness, provide authentic and accurate information and bust fake news about Coronavirus.

b. Facebook users can start accessing the Corona Helpdesk Chatbot and reach out to MOHFW for authentic news, official updates, precautionary measures and emergency helpline numbers through this Chatbot.

c. The Chatbot has both English and Hindi language capabilities. To contact the Chatbot, users can go to the Facebook page on MyGov Corona Hub and then start a chat by typing ‘Get Started’, which will prompt them to either type in a query or choose from a list of frequently asked questions. Depending on the question, users will receive verified information in the form of a video, infographic or text. This combined effort by The Ministry of Health, MyGov and Facebook will help contribute to the safety and well-being while providing information from reliable and credible sources.
iv. Training sessions with local governments and emergency health organizations

a. With the increasing need to get timely and accurate information to local communities, our teams are also imparting training to local governments and emergency health organisations. These trainings cover the aspect of designing impactful health campaigns, accurate messaging with a special focus on COVID-19.

b. So far they have trained the Governments of Kerala, Maharashtra, Telangana and Odisha.

v. Facebook Profile Picture Frame and Instagram Stickers

a. Facebook has launched #ImStayingHome badge for people to use in their Facebook profile pictures to support social distancing, and help create awareness about the importance of staying home and for people to express solidarity, care and responsibility towards the community.

b. Instagram has launched a sticker to spread the message of staying home and encourage responsible behavior as we navigate COVID-19. When the sticker is added to a Story, it can be featured in the “Stay Home” story, customized in India to also read ' घर पे रहो ' in Hindi. Once you use the sticker, you'll be added to a multi-author Story (which will show up right next to your Stories icon) and add you to a stream of Stories featuring content from the people you follow who have also used your sticker! These stickers are available on iOS and Android.

Limiting the Spread of COVID-19 Hoaxes and Misinformation

1. Community Standards Enforcement: Facebook and Instagram continue to enforce policies that prioritize preventing and disrupting harm across the platforms. They remove COVID-19 related misinformation that could contribute to imminent physical harm. The platforms remove posts that make false claims about cures, treatments, the availability of essential services or the location and severity of the outbreak. For example, Facebook recently started removing claims that physical distancing doesn’t help prevent the spread of the coronavirus.
2. **Ads Enforcement**: banning ads and commerce listings for masks, hand sanitizer, surface disinfecting wipes and COVID-19 testing kits, even from organic posts. They also banned ads and commerce listings that imply a product guarantees a cure or prevents people from contracting COVID-19.

3. **Fact-checking**:
   
a. Facebook has 8 independent third-party fact-checking partners covering 11 Indian languages as well as English. On Facebook and Instagram, we reduce the distribution of content that these partners label as false.
   
b. If users still see this content appear on their news feed, we attach a warning label that is misinformation together with a link to a fact-check article. If a user has already shared misinformation that is subsequently fact-checked, they will get a notification in their inbox alerting them that something that they shared has been fact-checked as false.
   
c. Images and videos that are fact-checked get stored in a central misinformation bank. If users upload these images and videos in the future, these posts will automatically get flagged as misinformation by the systems and the same visual labels as above will apply.
   
d. Misinformation labels and central image bank applies for across Instagram and the fact-checking partners are also able to tag content as false on that platform too.

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**Impact on Content on Facebook**

- **Content Demotion**
- **Sharing Interstitial**
- **User Notifications**
- **Misinformation Labels**

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False information overlay on Facebook - close up

Fact-Checking on Instagram

Fact-Checking on Instagram
Google’s commitments around helping people stay informed about Coronavirus

Google has been putting extensive efforts around COVID-19 to help people stay safe, informed and connected, Google is committed to helping users in India especially during these critical times. We are particularly grateful that Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has endorsed¹ our efforts. His positive endorsement has encouraged our team tremendously, and we will continue leveraging our technology to help keep people safe and informed.

Google has convened a dedicated internal response team that is working around the clock to provide timely and helpful information about COVID-19, to provide tools and resources to keep schools and businesses operating online, and to help curb the spread of COVID-19. This team is working in close partnership with the Prime Minister’s Office, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, and various State Governments and law enforcement agencies. Some of the key initiatives are:

a. Promoting authoritative government-backed information: Google is working closely with various Ministries, including the PMO, to better enable people to find useful information across our products and platforms. They have rolled out an India-specific website on COVID-19 to share comprehensive information such as key helpline numbers, educational content, and a running snapshot of global and Indian statistics. On Google Search and YouTube, they are giving prominence to official information from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), in response to searches for ‘coronavirus’ or ‘COVID-19’. Google is also using the YouTube homepage to direct users to the MoHFW website for the latest information about COVID-19.

Google has partnered with MyGov to map Public Food Shelters and Public Night Shelters for 31 cities on Google Maps. More shelters are being added. Users can find this information by searching on Google Search or Google Maps for “Food Shelter Near Me” or “Night Shelter Near Me” to find the closest shelter. Google Pay now has a Spot that aggregates all pertinent information on COVID-19 into a single resource, with official updates from the MoHFW. Currently, the Google Play Store’s India landing page for coronavirus related search terms has apps from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and various State Governments, including Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Goa, Punjab and Kerala.

b. Helping users in India find authentic and useful information: For users looking for specific information about symptoms, prevention, or treatments, Google has added a COVID-19 Knowledge Panel with information from the WHO. This information is also available on mobile devices via Google Assistant and the Discover Feed. YouTube has also added an information panel that appears on the YouTube homepage, at the top of search results for COVID-19 content, and immediately below

¹ https://twitter.com/narendramodi/status/1241255717165617153
the video on the watch pages of videos relating to COVID-19. These COVID-19 information panels are launched in many countries around the world and are helping people quickly access authoritative information about the virus. As of March 26, YouTube has delivered more than 5B impressions of these information panels globally. To spread awareness among children, Google is sharing COVID-19 prevention tips in comic form on the Bolo app, which is used by thousands of children in India to enhance their reading skills. Google’s product features and resources are available in English, Hindi and few other languages. There is significant work underway to cover more Indian languages.

c. **Information on public transportation and business closures:** Google Maps now informs passengers of ‘no-service’ alerts for trains, buses, metros, taxis and autorickshaws in India. It is also providing information on which businesses are open or closed on the basis of government advisories on what constitute “essential services”. In the coming days, it will be possible for businesses to easily mark themselves as “temporarily closed” in Search and Maps using Google My Business.

d. **Providing ad grants to the Government of India:** Google has provided MyGov a substantial package of Google Ads credits to further help communicate information to the public. Ads from MyGov are now live and have already seen tens of thousands of clicks from users in India.

e. **Protecting users from misinformation and abuse.** Google is taking action against COVID-19 misinformation across their platforms. In addition, YouTube is reducing recommendations of content or videos that could misinform users in harmful ways and is showing fact-checking panels to users in India seeking certain types of information related to COVID-19. Our global Trust and Safety teams have been working around the clock to safeguard users from phishing, conspiracy theories, malware and misinformation, and are constantly on the lookout for new threats.

f. **Prohibiting profiteering:** Google is blocking ads on Google from companies seeking to profit from the pandemic. Since January we have blocked hundreds of thousands of ads attempting to capitalize on the crisis, and recently announced restrictions on ads containing or targeting keywords related to Coronavirus with exceptions for legitimate government organizations and health agencies.

g. **Highlighting public interest journalism:** On Google Search, when users make a coronavirus-related query, they will see a carousel containing multiple links to recent news stories by prominent media organizations. In addition to authoritative news sources, the panel will also feature information from relevant government agencies, where appropriate. Similar efforts have been made to surface authoritative COVID news on YouTube. We are also supporting journalists and fact-checking organizations across the globe including in India.
Initiatives across Google Products

a. Google Search

When COVID-19 was declared a public health emergency by the World Health Organization (WHO) in late January, launched an SOS Alert with resources and safety information from the WHO, along with the latest news. Eventually, Google linked the SOS/OSRP alert to MoHFW website along with WHO to provide access to local and relevant information to our users.

Google has now rolled out a new, improved Search experience in response to COVID-19 queries. This feature merges existing SOS Alerts with a Knowledge Panel which contains authoritative information on COVID-19 symptoms, prevention, and more.

Google educated people to “Do the Five” steps and follow five simple practices to help stop the spread of COVID-19. The video Doodle outlines WHO recommended guidelines to proper handwashing. We have activated Google homepage to educate users through MoHFW content.

A revised version of Do The Five was launched to make it more relevant to the current lockdown situation in the country.
Homepage Promotion on Google Search Homepage: Google is creating Search homepage links to promote MoHFW content. For example, we did a homepage link recently to a segment of the Prime Minister's speech on Social Distancing hosted on MoHFW's YouTube channel. This provided immediate visibility and link to the importance of social distancing during the lockdown.

Supporting coronavirus fact-checking and verification efforts: We’re providing $6.5 million in funding to fact-checkers and nonprofits fighting misinformation around the world, with an immediate focus on coronavirus. The Google News Initiative (GNI) is stepping up its support for FirstDraft. The nonprofit is providing an online resource hub, dedicated training and crisis simulations for reporters covering COVID-19 all over the globe. We’re also supporting Data Leads in partnership with BOOM Live in India to leverage data from Question Hub. This will be complemented by an effort to train journalists across India to spot health misinformation.

Dedicated Covid-19 website to help users find useful resources: In addition to launching new features on Google Search that provide easy access to more authoritative information, we’ve roll outed an India specific website—available at google.com/covid19—focused on education, prevention and local resources. The site is intended for the users to find Covid-19 related authentic information, safety and prevention tips, search trends related to COVID-19, and further resources for individuals, educators and businesses.

2 https://www.google.com/covid19/
b. YouTube

YouTube is committed to providing timely and helpful information at this critical time. Over the past few years, YouTube has made significant investments in policies, resources, and products to protect the YouTube community from harmful content, and these efforts apply to COVID-19 related content on the platform. YouTube is working actively to remove policy violative content relating to COVID-19; reduce borderline or misleading content about COVID-19; and raise authoritative content from local and global health authorities on YouTube, through product features and via video ads on YouTube at no cost.

Removing harmful content

YouTube’s Community Guidelines³ prohibit videos that promote medically unsubstantiated or dangerous treatments. YouTube has consulted with the health authorities to get timely feedback on policy and enforcement guidelines to ensure global policies adequately address new trends and content related to COVID-19. Content that discourages someone from seeking medical treatment or content that promotes medically unsubstantiated methods in place of seeking medical treatment is prohibited, as well as content that encourages users to flout social distancing guidance from WHO and/or local health authorities, is not allowed on YouTube. YouTube continues to work quickly to remove any videos that violate these policies. YouTube has manually reviewed and removed thousands of videos related to dangerous or misleading COVID-19 information since early February 2020.

Raising authoritative information

- Information panel and home page promotions on COVID-19: YouTube is elevating authoritative sources—such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and local health authorities—across homepage, search, watch pages, and recommendation systems to drive users to these authoritative sources for information about COVID-19. In India, YouTube launched an information panel that directs users to the

³ https://www.youtube.com/about/policies/#community-guidelines
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW). The information panel displays on the YouTube homepage and also at the top of video results for users searching for videos about COVID-19. YouTube also displays the information panel on the watch pages of videos containing COVID-19 content that directs viewers to a relevant health authority for the latest authoritative information.

- **WHO Health Panels:** YouTube recently launched health panels that contain more information from the WHO about COVID-19 symptoms, prevention, and treatment. In India, the WHO health panels will display beneath the information panel pointing to the MoHFW for users searching for videos related to COVID-19 on mobile devices.

- **Fact checking:** Last year, to improve news comprehension and enhance YouTube’s credibility as a trusted source for news, YouTube launched a fact checking feature for users in India. Fact checks—available in Hindi and English—appear in response to queries seeking information on any topic which there is a relevant fact checking article from a vetted fact checking organization. When we have high confidence that the query seeks information on a specific claim, we present a fact checking information panel. Fact check panels have been shown to users in India seeking certain types of information related to COVID-19—for example, in response queries about home cures such as “lemon for coronavirus”. The fact check corpus includes prominent Indian publishers such as India Today, Jagran, and Times of India.

- **MoHW promotion:** YouTube has proactively verified MoHFW's YouTube Channel, a designation that helps distinguish official channels from other channels with similar names on YouTube. YouTube has also amplified MoHFW videos to help prominently surface authoritative information to users.
Top and Breaking News Shelves: Another way YouTube aims to prominently surface authoritative sources is via the Top News shelf, which highlights videos from news sources in search results, and the Breaking News shelf, which highlights videos from news organizations about an event directly on the YouTube homepage. The videos in these shelves are populated algorithmically, using hundreds of signals including relevance, freshness and region. YouTube has also launched a COVID-19 news shelf on the homepage to help users find fresh and authoritative content on COVID-19 during this time. Similar to the existing news features, the COVID-19 shelf features news stories about COVID-19 from a variety of authoritative news publishers and is populated algorithmically. Users may also see videos from local health authorities in the COVID-19 news shelf.

YouTube’s COVID-19 Stay Home #WithMe Initiative: As COVID-19 continues to spread, YouTube is committed to both raising authoritative health sources and supporting global leaders to urge users to stay home and help flatten the curve of COVID-19. YouTube launched the Stay Home #WithMe initiative in 17 countries, including India, engaging hundreds of YouTube creators and influencers across the globe to film public service announcements to get people to stay home and work out, study, learn, craft, and listen to music with their favorite YouTube creators virtually.
Reducing borderline content

Using recommendation systems to prevent the spread of harmful misinformation: YouTube works to limit the spread of misleading COVID-19 related information by reducing recommendations of borderline content or videos that could misinform users in harmful ways. This involves human evaluators and experts who use public guidelines and provide critical input on the quality of videos, which helps to train the machine learning systems that generate recommendations. This process adapts to new issues and trends (e.g., COVID-19) to ensure continuous improvement to the accuracy of YouTube’s systems.

c. Assistant

Similar to Google Search, rendering of COVID-19 related information is activated on Google Assistant including on Reliance Jio feature phones. A similar knowledge panel is also available on Assistant, triggered for covid-related queries.

d. GPay

We have activated a Google-created Spot on GPay, which will aggregate existing information that has been released by official sources (Govt of India, WHO), and link to other relevant parts of GPay (MoHFW Spot, Donations). The COVID-19 Hub contains Do’s and Don’t and important updates from MoHFW, and will continue to evolve as and when Google is able to aggregate additional information relevant to our users, and obtained from a verified official source.

e. Google Maps

Google has partnered with MyGov to map Public Food Shelters and Public Night Shelters for 31 cities on Google Maps. More shelters are being added. Users can find this information by

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4 https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/9230586
5 https://twitter.com/mygovindia/status/1246782699827654656?s=20
searching on Google Search or Google Maps for "Food Shelter Near Me" or "Night Shelter Near Me" to find the closest shelter.

Google ensured the Map service is reflecting disruptions in ride-sharing services. Google Maps has a tab for ride-sharing. With services being shut down, they have updated results to turn off the results and disabled the tab completely. It has launched for major taxi services in India.

On Google.com or Google Maps, above the map results, Google surfaces an alert communicating to users to call before visiting the health center in an effort to prevent the spread of Covid. Generally we will remain vigilant to inappropriate user content related to the coronavirus appearing on Google Maps.
f. **Google Play Store**

When users make Covid-related searches on Google Play, it shows a WHO message and government apps including those from the government agencies in India. Google Play also prohibits developers from **capitalizing on sensitive events**\(^6\), and the long-standing content policies **strictly prohibit**\(^7\) apps that feature medical or health-related content or functionalities that are misleading or potentially harmful.

\(^6\) [https://play.google.com/about/restricted-content/inappropriate-content/#!\?zippy_activeEl=sensitive-events#sensitive-events](https://play.google.com/about/restricted-content/inappropriate-content/#!\?zippy_activeEl=sensitive-events#sensitive-events)

\(^7\) [https://play.google.com/about/privacy-security-deception/deceptive-behavior/#!\?zippy_activeEl=misleading-claims#misleading-claims](https://play.google.com/about/privacy-security-deception/deceptive-behavior/#!\?zippy_activeEl=misleading-claims#misleading-claims)

g. **Google News**

On top of its extensive programme of collaboration and support of the news ecosystem, for which efforts have re-doubled in the wake of Covid, the **Google NewsLab Trends** team has
launched a site\textsuperscript{8} to make it easier to understand queries and trends around COVID-19. This includes information on top search questions as well as geographic interests.

On March 22nd, we launched a \textit{COVID special experience} in English on Google News (Web, Android and iOS) that curates and surfaces COVID-19 news from authoritative sources to guide users through healthcare, travel and economic coverage. It also links out to the Search Results experience for more detailed healthcare information.

h. Ads: Blocking bad content

Google Ads on Search and Play are restricting ads containing or targeting keywords related to the coronavirus under the sensitive events policy\textsuperscript{9}. We make exceptions for ads from legitimate government organizations and health agencies, and are looking to expand these exceptions shortly as we realize that COVID-19 is becoming a crucial subject for many sectors – all while continuing to protect users by otherwise enforcing our policies. We’ve blocked tens of thousands of ads over the last six weeks (see CNBC article\textsuperscript{10}).

Google Merchant Policy Guidelines\textsuperscript{11} ban advertising/listings for “products that may be deemed as capitalizing on or lacking reasonable sensitivity towards a natural disaster, conflict, death, or other tragic event.” Google is blocking all products/listings that refer to the Coronavirus in Shopping in order to prevent the sale or promotion of items claiming to “cure” or “prevent” coronavirus without evidence, such as “coronavirus prevention masks” or “anti-corona virus length gowns,” and often at exorbitant, exploitative prices.

\begin{itemize}
  \item[8] \url{https://trends.google.com/trends/story/US_cu_4Rjd3ABAABMHM_en}
  \item[9] \url{https://support.google.com/adspolicy/answer/6015406?hl=en}
  \item[10] \url{https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/10/google-bans-ads-for-medical-face-masks-amid-coronavirus-outbreak.html}
  \item[11] \url{https://support.google.com/merchants/answer/6149990?hl=en}
\end{itemize}
Initiatives by Sharechat

With the spread of the COVID-19 virus in India, there have been a number of misinformation campaigns that were tried by various actors using offshore based platforms to spread divisive hate content in India. Sharechat ensured that any such content is continuously removed from our platform as it violates both Indian law as well as our community guidelines.

In addition, ShareChat has partnered with IFCN accredited fact checkers such as NewsChecker, BoomLive, FACTLY and NewsCrescendo to fact check content that is reported by users to be possibly untrue.

These fact checkers work across 13 languages (more than any other platform in India today) to debunk conspiracy theories, fake news and misinformation campaigns.

Sharechat also instituted algorithmic changes to ensure the trending feed on the platform does not display any content that have been marked by our fact checkers to have content that is verifiably found to be untrue by third party fact checkers.

In addition to the above, they have ensured a trending tag is displayed at launch which would provide users with the latest official updates from MoHFW.

Sharechat is also continuously running a number of campaigns through the past few weeks to encourage our users to practice social distancing, regular washing of hands and other precautions to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Besides their own campaign, they have a large number of verified accounts operated by various police forces, elected officials and others government agencies that are also running similar campaigns and these are being promoted on the platform.

Last week, Sharechat also launched a chatbot service on the app which would answer user questions about COVID-19. The aim of this chatbot is to provide authentic information from various government and global health sources within the app. While this service is currently available in Hindi, we are looking to expand this resource to other languages as well.

As an Indian domiciled platform, ShareChat is continuously monitoring the platform to ensure strict compliance, both with our internal community guidelines as well Indian law.
Steps taken by Twitter in India to tackle misinformation related to COVID-19

The power of a uniquely open service during a public health emergency is clear. The speed and borderless nature of Twitter presents an extraordinary opportunity to get the word out and ensure people have access to the latest information from expert sources around the world.

We understand our role as an essential service for both the government to communicate with citizens and for the public to stay connected with each other. We are ensuring that everyone on the service has access to the latest and credible updates as we all navigate the COVID-19 crisis. Online communities and conversations have never been more important and we are committed to protect and serve the public conversation and support the authorities as they navigate this unprecedented moment. In India, we are working with trusted partners, including the India public health authorities, organizations, and the Government to inform our approach. Here are the top-level updates around the work we are doing.

Working closely with the Government of India and relevant stakeholders

We have open lines of communication with the relevant authorities in the central and state governments and public health officials, to ensure they can troubleshoot account issues, and seek strategic counsel as they use the power of Twitter to mitigate harm and connect with the public at large.

- We’re working with the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, various State Governments to upskill various departments on COVID response management.

- We have also supported and enabled the Govt of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh to set-up dedicated COVID-Response accounts. Govt. of Karnataka, Maharashtra; Follow them here: DIPR Karnataka, Maharashtra Control room, Jharkhand COVID Helpline, UP Covid helpline.

- We have also published a Twitter List of key police accounts on Twitter for latest and credible information on #Lockdown21. People can Tweet to them for any queries. A strong example of this was @DelhiPolice using the service to host a Tweet Chat, addressing public queries and concerns related to the Lockdown. Similarly we saw @MumbaiPolice and @assampolice reach out to citizens through the service for addressing queries of citizens.

- We are also providing ad support on the platform for campaigns to various ministries including - Ministry of Health, Government of India; Government of Karnataka; Government of Maharashtra and Government of Kerala.

- We are also supporting a large number of NGOs through ads credit helping them leverage Twitter for driving focussed programs around donation drives, mental health awareness campaigns, and campaigns to stop stigmatisation of communities affected by COVID-19.
COVID-19 Search Prompt

Twitter is dedicated to ensure people have uninterrupted and real-time access to the conversations that matter. To this end, Twitter offers a dedicated COVID-19 search prompt. When people come to the service to search for related COVID-19 conversation, the search prompt offers content from credible sources such as national health agencies and the World Health Organisation (@WHO). To make the search prompt as useful as possible, Twitter has partnered with local agencies in countries across the world. In India, the search prompt directs people to the official Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (@MoHFW) and @WHO websites.

The feature is being constantly monitored by the Twitter team to ensure that all related keywords, including common misspellings, generate the proactive search prompt.

Dedicated Bilingual Events Page

Twitter has launched an events page dedicated to COVID-19 information. The page, called “Coronavirus Tweets from Indian authorities”, is essentially a timeline of Tweets from
verified Indian officials such as the Prime Minister Narendra Modi (@narendramodi), Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan (@drharshvardhan) and other state and central ministers, as well as public health agencies. Launched in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (@MoHFW), this page is an attempt to share the latest facts from verified sources. Every account holder in India can see this page on the top of their home timeline. If someone has their settings set to Hindi, then they will see the same page with Hindi Tweets. The timeline also let’s people track developments around the latest social distancing and healthcare information.

Tweet link: https://twitter.com/narendramodi/status/1241256468801716227

**Fight against misinformation around COVID-19**: We are committed to working with the Government of India and focused on protecting the public conversation. We have expanded our safety rules and broadened our definition of harm to address content that goes directly against guidance from authoritative sources of global and local public health information. In
addition to reports, we will enforce this in close coordination with trusted partners, including public health authorities and governments, and continue to use and consult with information from those sources when reviewing content. Under this new guidance, we will require people to remove tweets that include:

- Denial of global or local health authority recommendations to decrease someone’s likelihood of exposure to COVID-19 with the intent to influence people into acting against recommended guidance, such as: “social distancing is not effective”, or actively encouraging people to not socially distance themselves in areas known to be impacted by COVID-19.

- Description of treatments or protective measures which are not immediately harmful but are known to be ineffective, are not applicable to the COVID-19 context, or are being shared with the intent to mislead others, even if made in jest, such as “coronavirus is not heat-resistant - walking outside is enough to disinfect you” or “use aromatherapy and essential oils to prevent COVID-19.”

- Description of harmful treatments or protection measures which are known to be ineffective, do not apply to COVID-19, or are being shared out of context to mislead people, even if made in jest, such as “drinking bleach and ingesting colloidal silver will cure COVID-19.”

- Denial of established scientific facts about transmission during the incubation period or transmission guidance from global and local health authorities, such as “COVID-19 does not infect children because we haven’t seen any cases of children being sick.”

- Specific claims around COVID-19 information that’s intends to manipulate people into certain behavior for the gain of a third party with a call to action within the claim, such as “coronavirus is a fraud and not real - go out and patronize your local bar!!” or “the news about washing your hands is propaganda for soap companies, stop washing your hands” or “ignore news about COVID-19, it’s just an attempt to destroy capitalism by crashing the stock market.”

- Specific and unverified claims that incite people to action and cause widespread panic, social unrest or large-scale disorder, such as “The National Guard just announced that no more shipments of food will be arriving for 2 months - run to the grocery store ASAP and buy everything!”

- Specific and unverified claims made by people impersonating a government or health official or organization such as a parody account of an Italian health official stating that the country’s quarantine is over.

- Propagating false or misleading information around COVID-19 diagnostic criteria or procedures such as “if you can hold your breath for 10 seconds, you do not have coronavirus.”
○ False or misleading claims on how to differentiate between COVID-19 and a different disease, and if that information attempts to definitively diagnose someone, such as “if you have a wet cough, it’s not coronavirus - but a dry cough is” or “you’ll feel like you’re drowning in snot if you have coronavirus - it’s not a normal runny nose.”

○ Claims that specific groups, nationalities are never susceptible to COVID-19, such as “people with dark skin are immune to COVID-19 due to melanin production” or “reading the Quran will make an individual immune to COVID-19.”

○ Claims that specific groups, nationalities are more susceptible to COVID-19, such as “avoid businesses owned by Chinese people as they are more likely to have COVID-19.”

We continue to collaborate with various trusted partners for them to also flag content for us in accordance with our updates rules for COVID-19.

**WHO’s #SafeHands / #Handwashing Emoji and #SafeHandsChallenge 🧼**

In partnership with the World Health Organisation (@WHO), Twitter launched a #handwashing emoji to create awareness around the importance of cleaning hands in the current time and emphasize the importance of ‘washing hands frequently’ to curb spreading of the virus. People can unlock the emoji using any of the following hashtags #handwashing, #SafeHands, #HandWashChallenge, #WashYourHands, #हाथधोलेना, #हाथकीसफाईमेंभलाई, #हाथधोया.

Twitter’s Public Policy team is connected directly to the WHO team to offer advice on how best to use the service to connect their critical updates with the world.

**Increasing the use of Machine Learning and Automation**

We are increasing the use of machine learning and automation to take a wide range of actions on potentially abusive and manipulative content. While we work to ensure our systems are consistent, they can sometimes lack the context that our teams bring, and this may result in us making mistakes. As a result, we will not permanently suspend any accounts based solely on our automated enforcement systems. Instead, we will continue to look for opportunities to build in human review checks where they will be most impactful. We appreciate your patience as we work to get it right – this is a necessary step to scale our work to protect the conversation on Twitter.
How are we using automated technology during this time?

- To help us review reports more efficiently by surfacing content that’s most likely to cause harm and should be reviewed first.

- To help us proactively identify rule-breaking content before it’s reported. Our systems learn from past decisions by our review teams, so over time, the technology is able to help us rank content or challenge accounts automatically.

- For content that requires additional context, such as misleading information around COVID-19, our teams will continue to review those reports manually.

What you can expect if you file a report during this time:

- If you've reported an account or Tweet to us, it will take longer than normal for us to get back to you. We appreciate your patience as we continue to make adjustments.

- Because these automated systems don't have all of the context and insight our team has, we'll make mistakes. If you think we've made a mistake, you can let us know and appeal here.

We appreciate your patience as we work to keep our teams safe, while also making sure we're protecting everyone on Twitter. You can always continue to use hide replies, mute, block, reply filters, and the other tools we offer you to control conversations on the service.

More links to update you about efforts and actions from Twitter:

- An update on our continuity strategy during COVID-19
- Our working guidance to our employees and partners to keep them safe
- Our partnerships and public engagement strategies