

National Health Authority

Press Rebuttal

It is to bring to the urgent and immediate attention of the Editor of Malayalam Manorama. This is a rebuttal issued by the National Health Authority, mandated with the implementation of the National Digital Health Mission (NDHM), in response to the report published in the Malayalam Manorama on August 29, 2020 and accessible at <https://www.manoramaonline.com/news/latest-news/2020/08/28/central-government-health-id.html> .

The report is false and is factually incorrect, which misinforms about the NDHM and has the potential to mislead members of the general public and create false perception.

NHA has a Google translation (as follows) of the report originally published in Malayalam and is issuing the following clarification. It is requested that Malayalam Manorama should immediately remove the story and publish a corrigendum acknowledging the false report and provide correct information on the NDHM scheme.

Translation of the news article in Malayalam Manorama (as per Google translate)

New Delhi: Health ID with controversial terms. As part of the data collection, the Central Government recommends that the **caste** and **political affiliation** of individuals be reported, as well as the **sexual interests** and **financial status** of individuals. **Credit card and debit card details** should also be reported. The draft proposal is ready and people will be able to comment until 3rd of next month.

On the eve of Independence Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that every Indian will be issued a health ID like Aadhaar and calling it a revolution in the health sector. The same is now in controversy.

All medical examination of a citizen Reports, Notes, Disease Information, Testing, Medications, etc. will be in the database. AICC Generala secretary G Venugopal said he would oppose the proposal strongly. At the same time, BJP state president K Surendran said there was nothing wrong with asking caste for health ID.

The opposition also opposes the move to **privatize telemedicine and e-pharmacy** under the scheme. The National Digital Health Mission has released a draft policy on health ID data security. The public has time until September 3 to comment. **The draft policy states that the information provided for the Health ID will be controlled by individuals. It's up to the individual to check it out, including the doctors.**

Clarification

National Digital Health Mission has been announced by Hon'ble Prime Minister on 15th Aug 2020. The mission aims at creation of Digital Health Ecosystem for efficient healthcare delivery. The fundamental modules of Health ID, Digi-Doctor, Health Facilities Registry have been made live in six pilot Union Territories including Mahe (Puducherry).

NDHM aims to create a national digital health ecosystem which provides timely and efficient access to inclusive, affordable, and safe healthcare to all citizens. NDHM will significantly improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency of health service delivery.

The NDHM is a holistic, voluntary digital healthcare programme that will reduce the existing gap between various stakeholders such as doctors, hospitals and other healthcare providers, pharmacies, insurance companies, and citizens by bringing them together and connecting them in an integrated digital health infrastructure.

The Health Data Management Policy has been drafted keeping in mind the core tenets of privacy, security, and consent. The provisions of the policy have been developed to ensure that citizens' interests are safeguarded, and the confidentiality of any sensitive personal data is assured. There are only four types of information required for the creation of the Health ID i.e. Name, year of Birth, State/UT & District, Gender, in addition to the Aadhaar number or mobile number. No other type of data such as religion, caste, political affiliation, sexual orientation, financial status, credit/debit card details are part of the requirements for the creation of Health ID.

Various terms defined in the definition section of draft policy draw from various laws and bills such as Personal Data Protection (PDP) bill. The terms are always defined in generic manner so as to cater to overall scope of the policy and this should not be misconstrued to mean that all the fields under "sensitive personal data" will be part of the data collected. Furthermore, individual's informed consent and decision-making powers will remain a paramount part of the ecosystem, and any request for information may be declined by the individuals, and they may decline to enter any such information as well, based on their discretion. All records pertaining to an individual's health conditions and treatments will also be treated as "sensitive personal data" under the policy.

Transparency has also been ensured, with individuals retaining rights to decide which information associated with them is stored and review the information at any point of time. Individuals can choose to edit their information, revoke consent or erase their data all together, if they so desire. As envisaged in the policy, no entity will have access to an individual's data without their express and informed consent.

The draft policy has been shared for public consultations and feedback to ensure due consideration of all concerns before finalization of the policy.

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GENDER *
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