AP Government Collaborates with IBM to Offer 'Watson Assistant for Citizens' to Provide Responses to COVID-19 Questions

The National Health Mission, Department of Health, Medical and Family Welfare, Government of Andhra Pradesh, in association with IBM has created a virtual agent to share information related to COVID-19 response efforts

Hyderabad, June 4, 2020: The National Health Mission, under the Government of Andhra Pradesh, and IBM announced today that a virtual agent that provides COVID-19-related information for citizens on the response efforts and measures by the Andhra Pradesh Government has been launched at the Andhra Pradesh National Health Mission portal of Department of Health, Medical and Family Welfare - **http://covid19.ap.gov.in/covid19/** - a website under the auspices of the Andhra Pradesh Government.

The Watson virtual agent (called Watson Assistant for Citizens) on the IBM public cloud brings together Watson Assistant, Natural Language Processing capabilities from IBM Research, and state-of-art enterprise AI search capabilities with Watson Discovery, to understand and respond to common questions about COVID-19 in English, Telugu and Hindi.

Shri Bhaskar Kattamneni, Mission Director, National Health Mission and Commissioner of Health, Medical & Family Welfare Department, Andhra Pradesh said, "IBM has been a trusted partner to the Government of Andhra Pradesh for a long period of time in enabling better delivery of citizen services. I appreciate the collaborative efforts of IBM in disseminating meaningful information to citizens of Andhra Pradesh in this pandemic situation. While the government is putting all resources available at its disposal to use, efforts like these go a long way in helping citizens meet their information needs. I also appreciate the quick turnaround time of the IBM team to include Telugu, the official language of state, into the Watson virtual agent."

Commenting on the announcement, **Sandip Patel, General Manager, IBM India/South Asia said** , "In these unprecedented times, access to accurate information plays a critical role in allaying fears, dispelling myths and building trust among citizens. We are honoured to collaborate with the Government of Andhra Pradesh and to contribute to the prompt measures they have taken to provide their citizens with easy access to relevant information from reliable sources in local language. IBM is the innovation partner to businesses, governments and citizens across the world, and is committed to marshalling its resources, technology and expertise towards initiatives that help to manage COVID-19 outbreak."

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the police helplines and call centers of other relevant bodies have received a large number of calls from citizens asking to be informed on matters relating to COVID-19. In order to reach as many citizens as possible and meet their information needs, the National Health Mission, under the Government of Andhra Pradesh has collaborated with IBM to set up a Watson - based virtual agent that has been designed and trained to understand natural language and interact with users.

Based on the information provided by all the relevant ministries of the Central Government and the Andhra Pradesh Government for the prevention & treatment related guidance, citizen welfare schemes and consolidated at the main portal of the Department of Health, Medical and Family Welfare, Andhra Pradesh. The virtual agent can answer citizens' questions, asking for clarification or redirecting the user to specific

information on the portal or to other websites of related ministries and official bodies. The virtual agent is deployed in a web browser and it is built in a way that it safeguards the privacy of the users.

The objective of this type of advanced technologies (chatbots or virtual agents) is to help reduce the waiting times for calls that users make to the telephone lines of state services relating to the novel coronavirus with an aim to best serve them.

To access the AP Government Citizen Chat Assistant visit: http://covid19.ap.gov.in/covid19/

For more information about IBM efforts around COVID-19, visit https://www.ibm.com/covid19 and https://newsroom.ibm.com/covid-19.

For more information about Watson Assistant for Citizens, visit https://www.ibm.com/watson/covid-response.

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