



Global Fact 7
June 2020

With support from WhatsApp and Facebook

End-to-End Fact-Checking

Platform Development for 5 Global
Fact-Checking Organizations Working
on the WhatsApp Business API

The Task

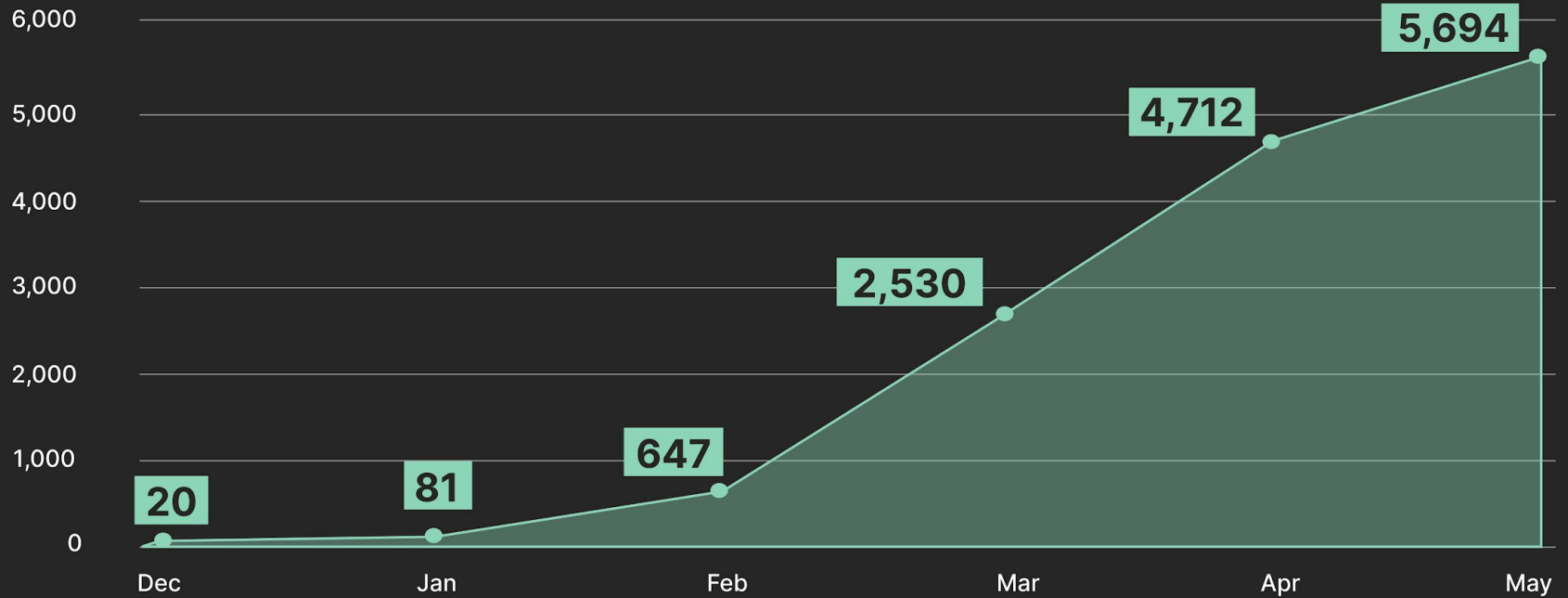
Scale up Check, Meedan's verification and fact-checking platform, to serve as a workflow management and content toolkit for 5 global newsrooms running fact-checking tiplines on the WhatsApp Business API.

From October 2019 through a global pandemic, Meedan has been pushing code, running field studies and testing workflows in concert with AFP (India and Brazil), Africa Check, BOOM and India Today.

Nearly 5,700 fact-checks later, here's what we learned.

Nearly 5,700 fact-checks in 5 months across India, Brazil, South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria

Cumulative number of unique fact-checks



Executive summary

Over 5 months, the Meedan team, working with WhatsApp, Facebook, AFP (India and Brazil), Africa Check, BOOM and India Today learned key insights in how to run effective fact-checking tiplines on WhatsApp while respecting end-to-end encryption.

- 1. Bots are the new audience engagement paradigm.** A WhatsApp bot can serve three purposes: (1) help audiences understand how to interact with the fact-checking team and see commonly-requested content, (2) serve as a bridge between a human editor and someone submitting content to a tipline and (3) cut down on unactionable content.
- 2. Machines in the loop augment quality human efforts.** Already designed for human work, Check now automates everything from content matching to intake, helping fact-checkers do their jobs more efficiently and therefore more effectively.
- 3. Follow the news cycle.** Newsrooms learned that a topic-oriented approach to tipline promotion following the news cycle yields stronger audience engagement and submissions. After the outbreak of COVID-19, we saw an uptick in the percentage of quality, actionable content, in turn generating better fact-checks.
- 4. Fact-checkers need no-nonsense, no-code interfaces.** Over the course of field studies and through weekly working calls, we steadily adapted our toolkit to help fact-checkers focus on the fact-checking rather than technical tasks. This enabled teams to customize their workflows.



Balkrishna

Fact-checking Editor
India Today



We used to get inundated by the thousands of messages that people would send us on WhatsApp.

Check has not only made it possible for us to sift through the fact check requests quickly, it also helped deliver most of our readers with fast and personalized responses.

This helps us build a direct bond of trust with our audience.



**86,974 messages received and triaged
since January by 2 full-time fact checkers**

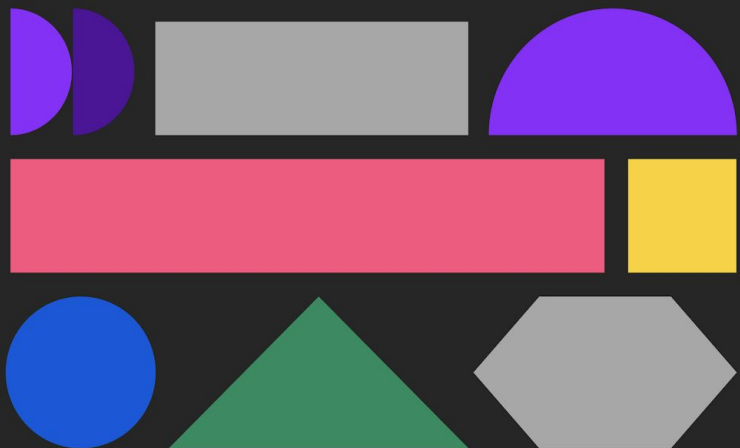
Meedan = Journalism + Software

Founded in 2006, Meedan has been working at the intersection of open source technology, digital journalism, and social change to tell stories and improve societies with extraordinary global partners.

Check, our flagship collaborative collaborative verification and fact-checking tool, has powered three of the last four years' Online Journalism Awards winners for collaborative journalism. Our workflows and tools have powered Electionland, Verificado, and Checkpoint, among others.



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Govindraj Ethiraj

Founding Editor
BOOM



The Check tool has helped increase our direct engagement with audiences and shown the path for substantial scale-up and impact in our fact-checking endeavours.



13,236 unique WhatsApp users interacted with the tipline bot

The Check Platform

Check is a web application for journalists to verify and annotate online information, creating datasets to structure open-source investigations.

During this pilot, Meedan developed and designed key features to support scaled-up work on tiplines running on the WhatsApp Business API.

Check Components

Multilingual bot

Customizable bot conversations and menus in multiple languages

Workflow automation

Triage system to categorize, review and prioritize claims and responses

Similarity analysis

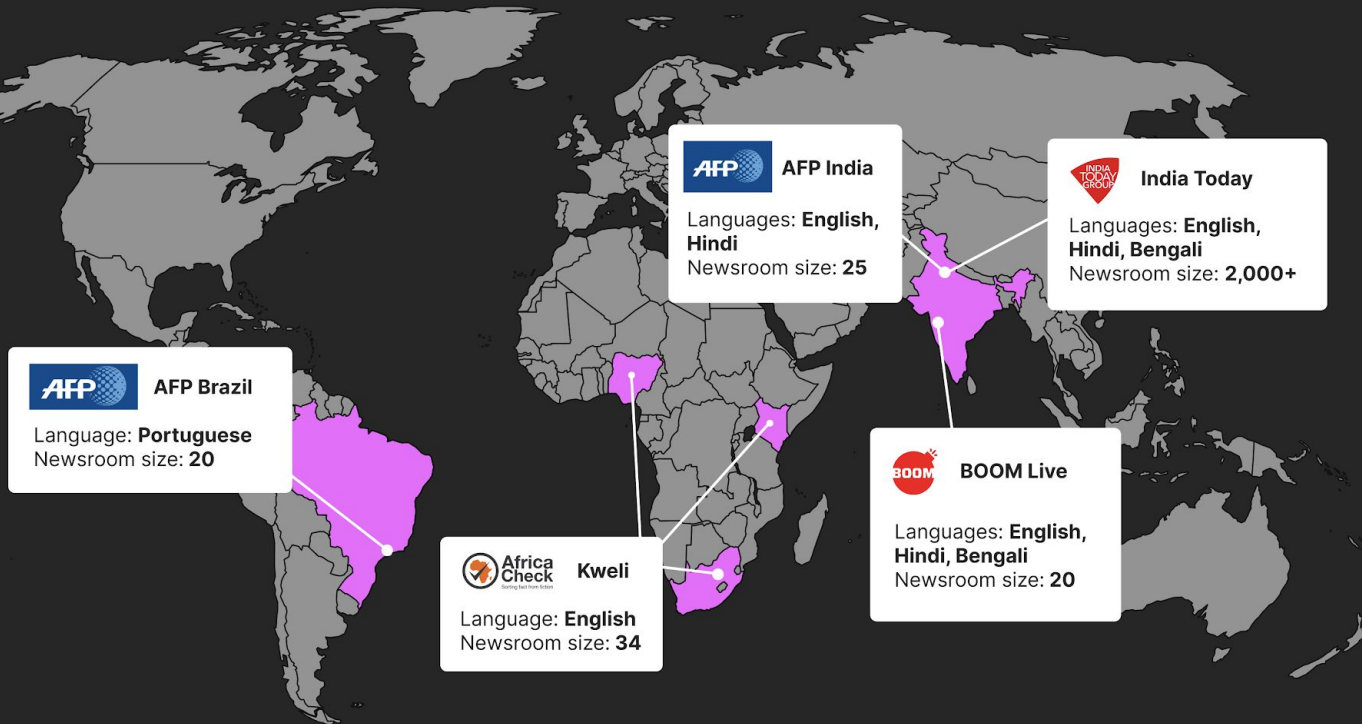
Algorithms detect patterns in content for variations of the same claims and present trends

Response at scale

Publishing system integrated to messaging platforms in order to circulate fact-checks among end-users

5 countries and 4 languages

Pilot partners represent a range of newsroom and audience sizes and target audiences, spread across multiple languages and continents.





Kate Wilkinson

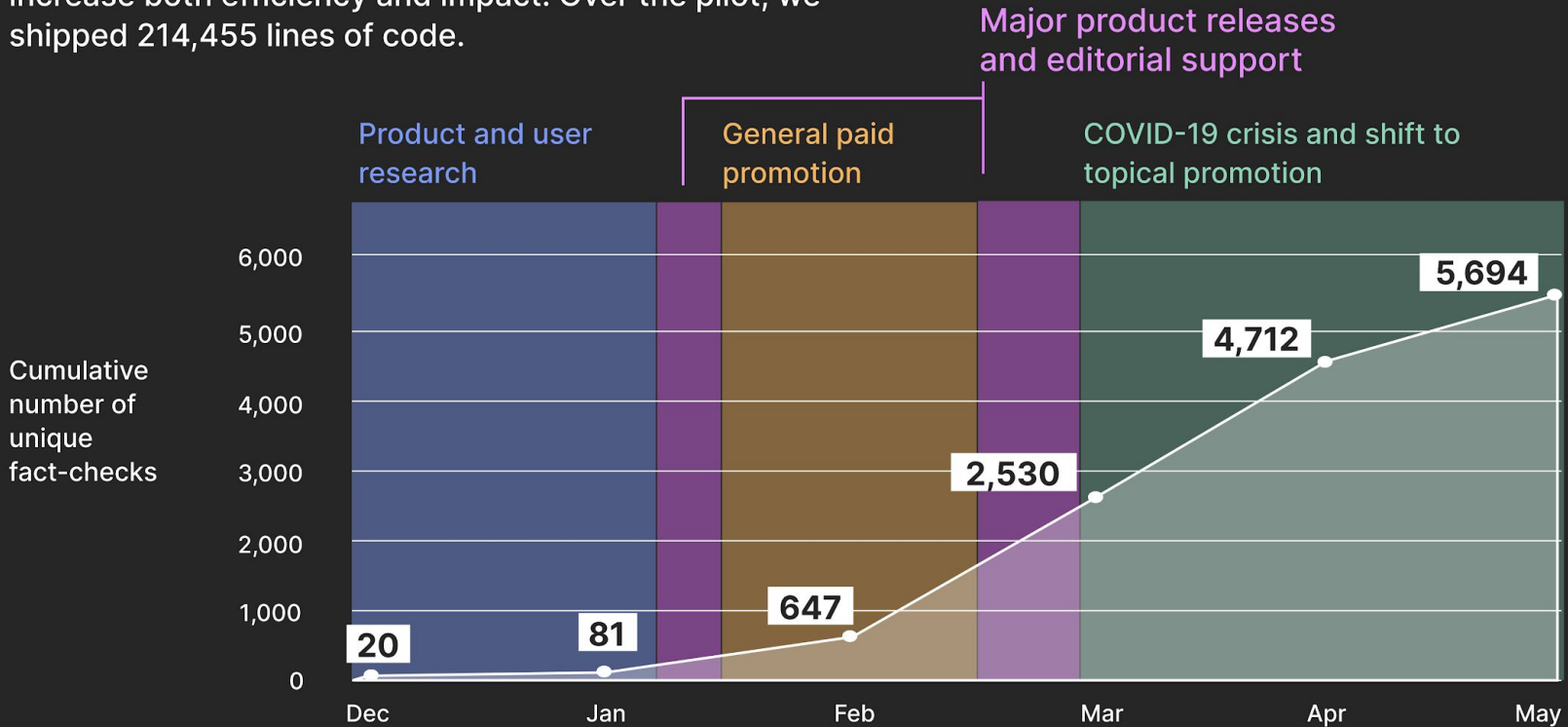
Deputy Chief Editor
Africa Check



Africa Check operates a tipline across three countries. The Check workflow allows fact-checkers across all our teams to collaborate and follow the same methodology.

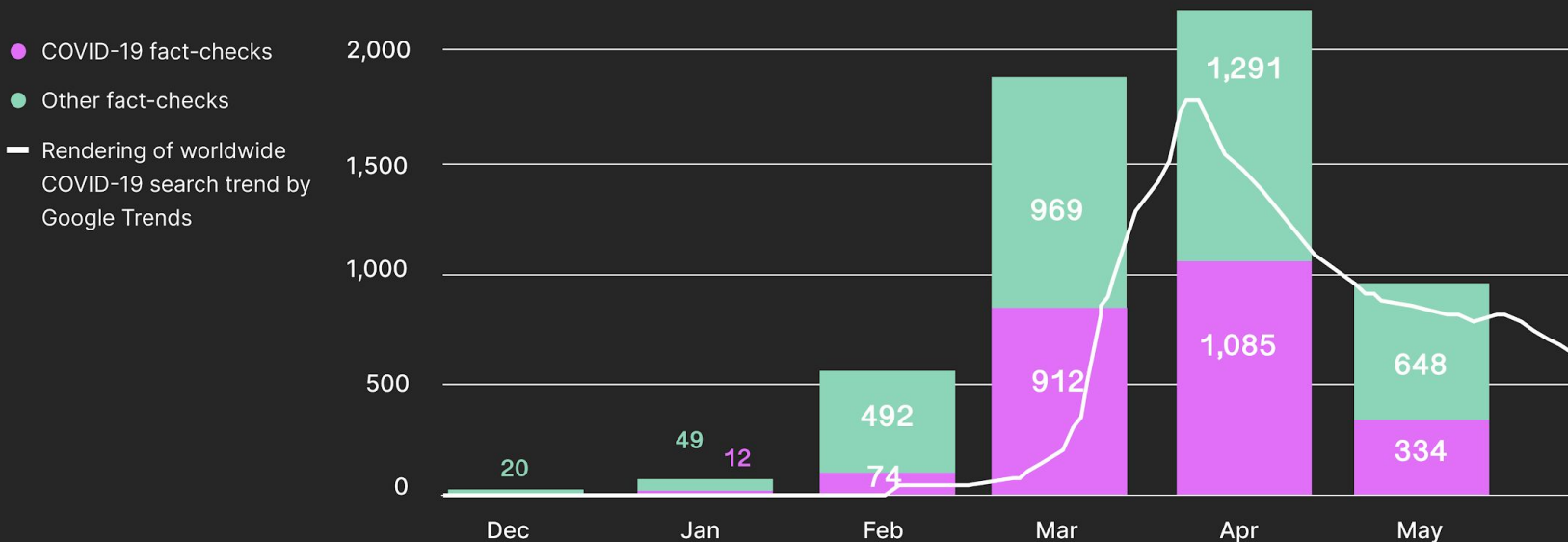
Three phases of impact

Over three major phases, we enabled new workflows through product development and editorial strategy to increase both efficiency and impact. Over the pilot, we shipped 214,455 lines of code.



COVID-19: Follow the news cycle

Fact-checks have tended to follow the news cycle, as evidenced by COVID-19 topical submissions. While the percentage of disease-related fact-checks grew, the information crisis also gave more exposure to the tiplines, and many more queries were sent on other topics.



Fast forwarding claims to newsrooms

With enough volume of inbound queries coming through the tiplines, journalists have first spotted trending pieces of misinformation on Check – leading to more investigation, followed by publishing articles on their main websites.



Uzair Rizvi
Fact-checker
AFP India



In the Indian context, we spot misinformation first on WhatsApp. With Check, we were able to immediately send users a report, while also writing longer blog posts on that claim that will be read across different platforms."



Check



COVID-19 Topic Highlights

Some of the top-requested fact-checks ranged from conspiracy theories about the origins of the virus, types of cures, and restrictions on movement.

Government

April 3 No, WHO did not release a COVID-19 lockdown protocol

April 4 The Indian government did not ban reporting on COVID-19

Cures

March 23 No, tea is not a cure for COVID-19

March 23 WHO report does not say Coronavirus stays in cabbage

Conspiracy Theories

March 14 The world isn't coming to an end on April 29

March 2 Chinese state conspiracy theory on the origin of COVID-19



Jency Jacob

Editor
BOOM



We've been running a tipline for two years, and this is the tool we have been waiting for.

One that can make the newsroom process of finding misinformation more efficient and automate the responses.



628 fact-check reports automatically matched and sent in response to duplicate user queries

Insight: Machines in the loop augment human fact-checking efforts.

We had a difficult task: empowering fact-checkers, who have the best instincts, know-how and training to deal with complex topics, to work at the scale of WhatsApp. The Meedan development team worked on a machine-in-the-loop system that automated key repetitive tasks, saving people time and energy for higher-order work and research.

In our research, we found that the most time-consuming task for journalists is to parse through large volumes of inbound queries to find the one that need prioritization. Text and image clustering in particular proved essential to triaging content by demand, helping teams prioritize items for response.

At the same time, we've built our database to integrate inbound content from the tiplines with newsrooms' existing databases of fact-checks, thus augmenting previous work they've done.

“

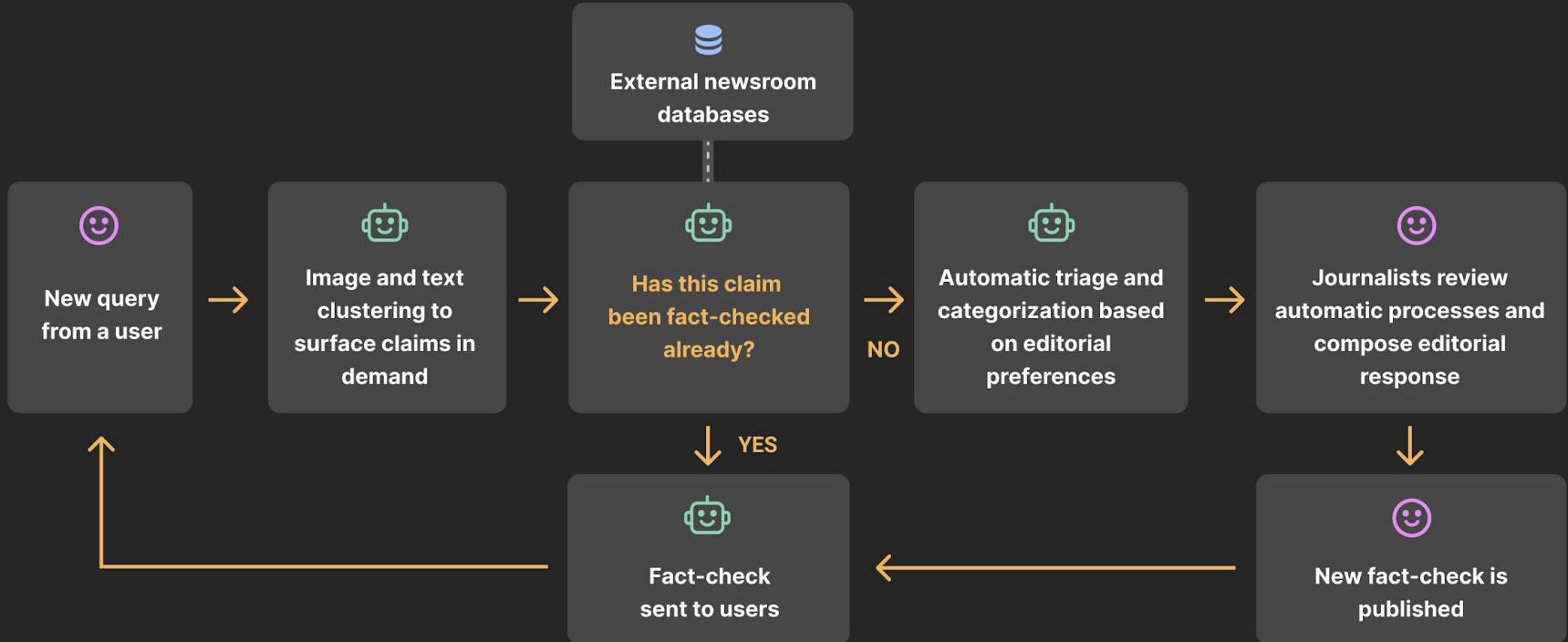
Glad to inform we have addressed 500 verification reports using Check. Big milestone for us!



Anmol Alphonso
Fact-checker, BOOM

Feature: Hybrid human and machine system

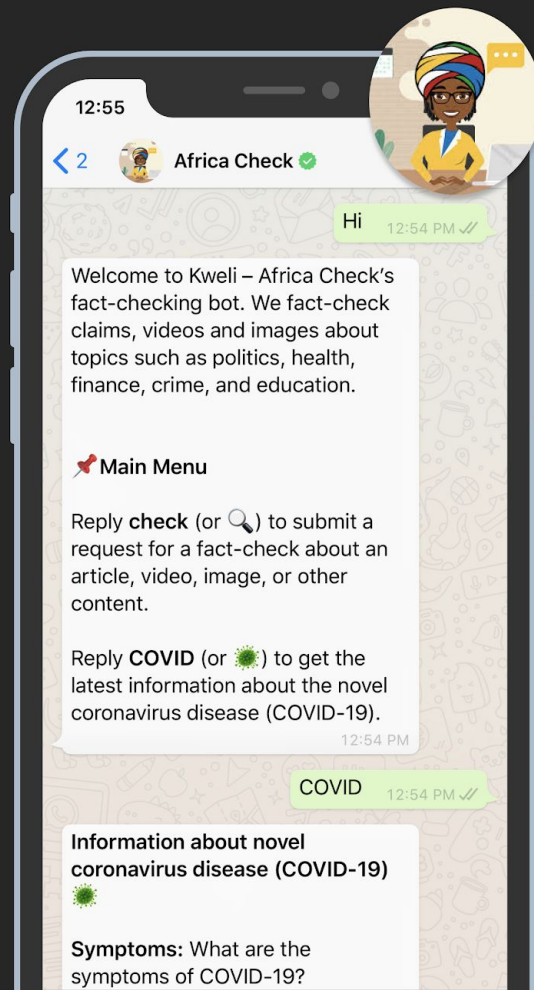
Bots and algorithms take care of the most repetitive and generic tasks, helping journalists focus on high-level editorial tasks.



Insight: The bot editor is the new audience engagement editor.

In a mobile-first world, bot editors are newsrooms' front lines. Especially in low-bandwidth settings, WhatsApp is a key vector for building trust with audiences. Tiplines enable newsrooms to understand the evolution of demand directly from their communities and detect emerging topics and concerns even before they hit social media networks.

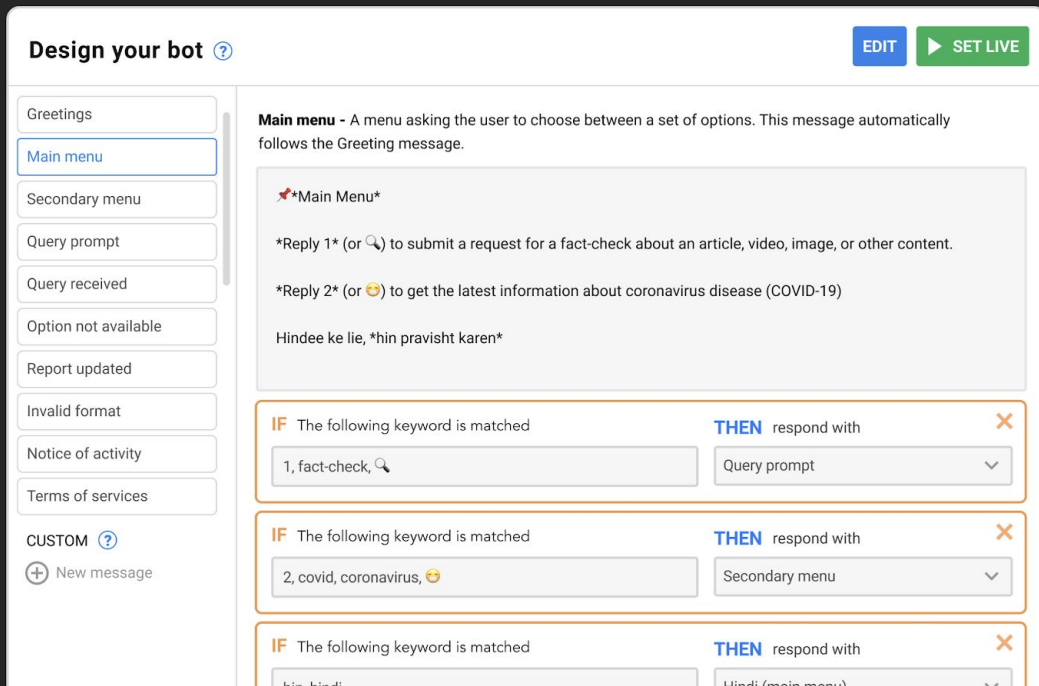
News cycles are fast – this is nothing new. What's new is that we've tailored our bots and bot editing interfaces to allow newsrooms to present newsworthy content at users' requests. Bots need to be customized with local content in local languages in order to engage and serve audiences with content that matters to them. Tiplines are more than an opportunity to collect tips: they're an opportunity to build community.



Feature: Deploy multilingual bots in minutes.

Recognizing the possibilities of automating responses to commonly-requested content, we developed both a bot and a bot interface, allowing for quick testing, customization and deployment of content across multiple languages.

English (default) Hindi Portuguese French Tamil Telugu + ADD MORE



Design your bot ? EDIT ▶ SET LIVE

Greetings

Main menu

Secondary menu

Query prompt

Query received

Option not available

Report updated

Invalid format

Notice of activity

Terms of services

CUSTOM ?

+ New message

Main menu - A menu asking the user to choose between a set of options. This message automatically follows the Greeting message.

✳️*Main Menu*

Reply 1 (or 🔍) to submit a request for a fact-check about an article, video, image, or other content.

Reply 2 (or 📰) to get the latest information about coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

Hindee ke lie, *hin pravisht karen*

IF The following keyword is matched **THEN** respond with ✕

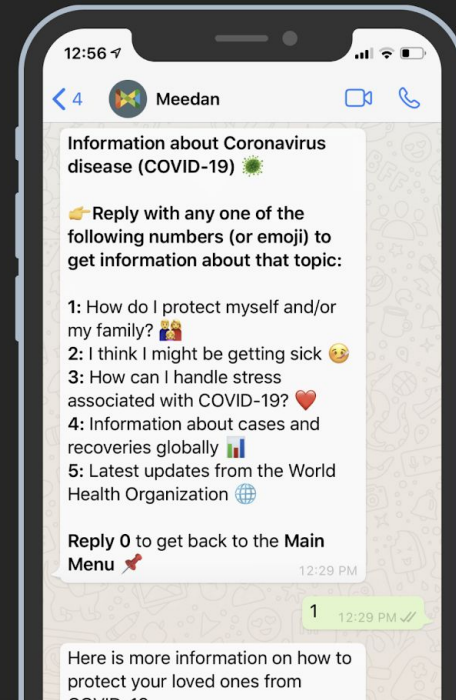
1, fact-check, 🔍 Query prompt

IF The following keyword is matched **THEN** respond with ✕


2, covid, coronavirus, 📰 Secondary menu

IF The following keyword is matched **THEN** respond with ✕

hin, hindi Hindi (main menu)



12:56 📶 🔋

< 4  Meedan 📺 📞

Information about Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) 🦠

👉 Reply with any one of the following numbers (or emoji) to get information about that topic:

- 1: How do I protect myself and/or my family? 🧑🏠
- 2: I think I might be getting sick 😷
- 3: How can I handle stress associated with COVID-19? ❤️
- 4: Information about cases and recoveries globally 🌐
- 5: Latest updates from the World Health Organization 🌐

Reply 0 to get back to the Main Menu 📌

12:29 PM

1 12:29 PM ✓

Here is more information on how to protect your loved ones from COVID-19

Insight: Newsrooms need a plug-and-play, customizable workflow suite.

Journalists are working at all hours of the day in rapid cycles. The last thing they need is a tool that requires extensive technical skill or consultations with an engineering team. The Meedan team prioritized developing no-nonsense, no-code interfaces that enable journalists to organize, analyze and prioritize their work without technical support.

Each newsroom needs to tailor the logic of their workflows based on their own editorial decisions and priorities, languages, audience demands and the needs of the news cycle. After hours in on-site research in India, Brazil and South Africa followed by weekly calls and near-daily chats, we developed workflows that have enough structure to work out of the box and enough flexibility to enable journalists to customize their workflow accordingly.

“

Check really improved the way we communicate with our readers on WhatsApp.

Now, we can be sure anyone who reaches out through the app will have an immediate and consistent reply, while having time to dedicate ourselves to other parts of the verification process.”



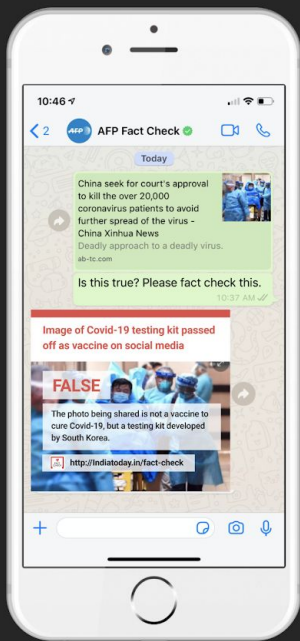
María Clara Pestre
Fact-checker, AFP Checamos



Feature: Customize editorial workflows

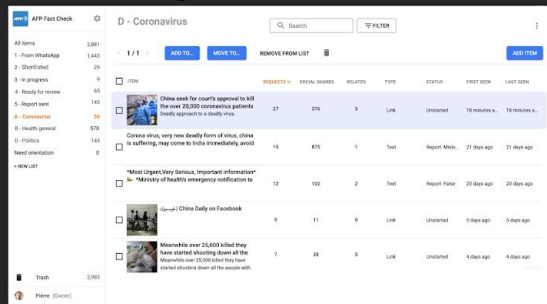
Each fact-checking team customized every step of their workflow, building from a base set of features that they could easily tailor to their unique contexts.

Claim collection

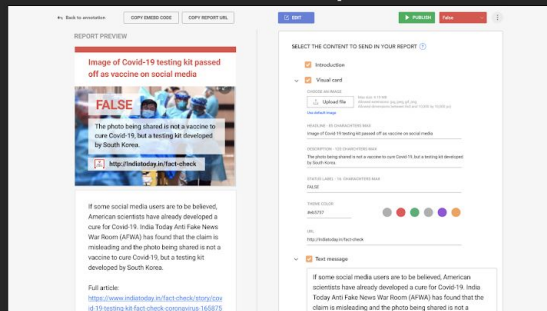


Distribution

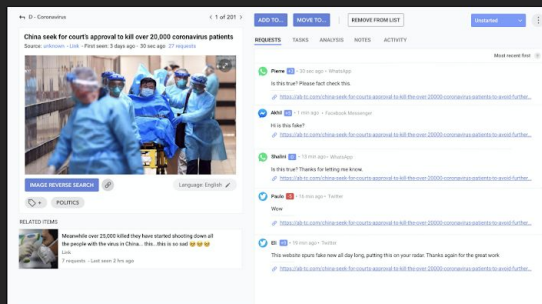
Triage and Prioritization



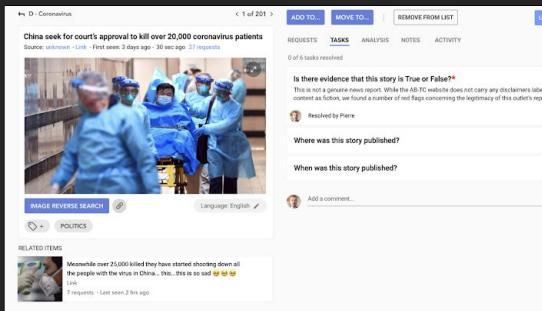
Editorial Response



Contextualization and Research



Annotation






Feature: Publish fact-checks at WhatsApp speed

Teams customize the visual appearance and content of their fact-checks before sending them back to users. This allows these items to be readily shared and forwarded with URLs back to the newsrooms' web sites.

REPORT PREVIEW

Regarding the query you sent us on 03/25/2020:
Our team found the claim to be **FALSE**.

Image of Covid-19 testing kit passed off as vaccine on social media



FALSE

The photo being shared is not a vaccine to cure Covid-19, but a testing kit developed by South Korea.

<http://indiatoday.in/fact-check>

If some social media users are to be believed, American scientists have already developed a cure for Covid-19. India Today Anti Fake News War Room (AFWA) has found that the claim is misleading and the photo being shared is not a vaccine to cure Covid-19, but a testing kit developed by South Korea.

Full article:
<https://www.indiatoday.in/fact-check/story/covid-19-testing-kit-fact-check-coronavirus-1658750-2020-03-23>

Fact-checked by the India today team

EDIT **PUBLISH** False

English (default) French Edit bot language

SELECT THE CONTENT TO SEND IN YOUR REPORT

- Introduction
- Visual card
 - CHOOSE AN IMAGE
 - Upload file (Max size: 4.19 MB, Allowed extensions: jpg, png, gif, mp4, Allowed dimensions between 500 and 10,000 by 10,000 px)
 - Use default image
 - HEADLINE - 85 CHARACTERS MAX
Image of Covid-19 testing kit passed off as vaccine on social media
 - DESCRIPTION - 120 CHARACTERS MAX
The photo being shared is not a vaccine to cure Covid-19, but a testing kit developed by South Korea.
 - STATUS LABEL - 16 CHARACTERS MAX
FALSE
 - THEME COLOR
#eb5757
 - URL
<http://indiatoday.in/fact-check>
- Text message
 - If some social media users are to be believed, American scientists have already developed a cure for Covid-19. India Today Anti Fake News War Room (AFWA) has found that the claim is misleading and the photo being shared is not a vaccine to cure Covid-19, but a testing kit developed by South Korea.
 - Full article:
<https://www.indiatoday.in/fact-check/story/covid-19-testing-kit-fact-check-coronavirus-1658750-2020-03-23>



4:20

Meedan


Regarding the query you sent us on: 27 May 23:13:

Hi, is this true?

<https://ab-tc.com/china-seek-for-courts-approval-to-kill-the-over-20000-coronavirus-patients>

We reached the conclusion that it is **False**. 4:19 PM

Image of Covid-19 testing kit passed off as vaccine on social media



FALSE

The photo being shared is not a vaccine to cure Covid-19, but a testing kit developed by South Korea.

[Indiatoday.in/fact-check](http://indiatoday.in/fact-check)

9:12 AM

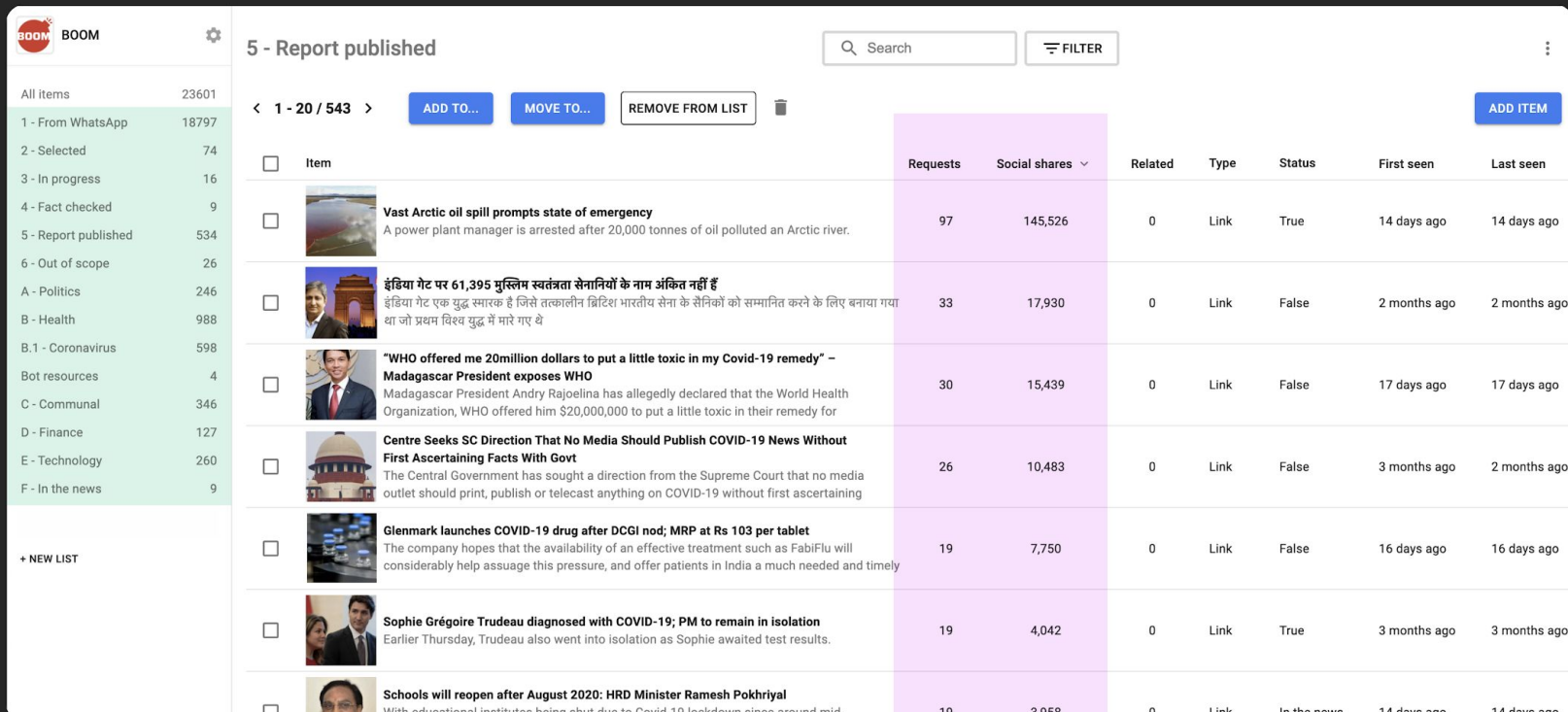
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Feature: Triage content on a custom dashboard

Create lists to automatically categorize inbound requests based on editorial preferences and access all stages of the fact checking pipeline in seconds.

Assess the virality of content submitted to the tipline using key metadata points such as the number of tipline requests and the number of Facebook shares.



The screenshot shows a dashboard titled "5 - Report published" with a search bar and a "FILTER" button. On the left, there is a sidebar with a list of categories and their counts. The main area displays a table of news items with the following columns: Item, Requests, Social shares, Related, Type, Status, First seen, and Last seen. The items are listed with their respective images and titles.

Item	Requests	Social shares	Related	Type	Status	First seen	Last seen
 Vast Arctic oil spill prompts state of emergency A power plant manager is arrested after 20,000 tonnes of oil polluted an Arctic river.	97	145,526	0	Link	True	14 days ago	14 days ago
 इंडिया गेट पर 61,395 मुस्लिम स्वतंत्रता सेनानियों के नाम अंकित नहीं हैं इंडिया गेट एक युद्ध स्मारक है जिसे तत्कालीन ब्रिटिश भारतीय सेना के सैनिकों को सम्मानित करने के लिए बनाया गया था जो प्रथम विश्व युद्ध में मारे गए थे	33	17,930	0	Link	False	2 months ago	2 months ago
 "WHO offered me 20million dollars to put a little toxic in my Covid-19 remedy" – Madagascar President exposes WHO Madagascar President Andry Rajoelina has allegedly declared that the World Health Organization, WHO offered him \$20,000,000 to put a little toxic in their remedy for	30	15,439	0	Link	False	17 days ago	17 days ago
 Centre Seeks SC Direction That No Media Should Publish COVID-19 News Without First Ascertaining Facts With Govt The Central Government has sought a direction from the Supreme Court that no media outlet should print, publish or telecast anything on COVID-19 without first ascertaining	26	10,483	0	Link	False	3 months ago	2 months ago
 Glenmark launches COVID-19 drug after DCGI nod; MRP at Rs 103 per tablet The company hopes that the availability of an effective treatment such as FabiFlu will considerably help assuage this pressure, and offer patients in India a much needed and timely	19	7,750	0	Link	False	16 days ago	16 days ago
 Sophie Grégoire Trudeau diagnosed with COVID-19; PM to remain in isolation Earlier Thursday, Trudeau also went into isolation as Sophie awaited test results.	19	4,042	0	Link	True	3 months ago	3 months ago
 Schools will reopen after August 2020: HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal With educational institutes being shut due to Covid-19 lockdown since around mid	10	2,058	0	Link	In the news	14 days ago	14 days ago

Sample Fact-Checks by Team

FALSE

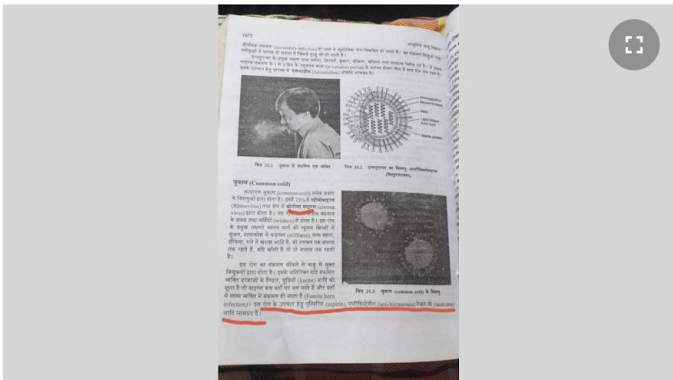
This school textbook in India does not mention a cure for COVID-19.



Type: Image - 411 Requests

वायरल तस्वीर के साथ किया जा रहा दावा भ्रामक है

Image - First seen: 3 months ago - Last seen: 22 days ago -



Reverse image search

GOOGLE



REQUESTS

TASKS

ANALYSIS

NOTES

ACTIVITY



3 months ago • Whatsapp

Hello

भाइयों काफी किताबों में ढूँढ़ने के बाद बड़ी मुश्किल से कोरोना वायरस की दवा मिली है, हम लोग कोरोना वायरस की दवा ना जाने कहां-कहां ढूँढ़ते रहे लेकिन कोरोना वायरस की दवा इंटरमीडिएट की जन्तु विज्ञान की किताब में दी गई है जिस वैज्ञानिक ने इस बीमारी के बारे में लिखा है उसने ही इसके इलाज के बारे में भी लिखा है और यह कोई नई बीमारी नहीं है इसके बारे में तो पहले से ही इंटरमीडिएट की किताब में बताया गया है साथ में इलाज भी। कभी-कभी ऐसा होता है कि डॉक्टर और वैज्ञानिक बड़ी-बड़ी किताबों के चक्कर में छोटें लेवल की किताबों पर ध्यान नहीं देते और यहां ऐसा ही हुआ है।
(किताब- जन्तु विज्ञान, लेखक- डॉ रमेश गुप्ता, पेज नं-1072)
भाइयों यह कोई फेक न्यूज नहीं है इसलिए मेरी आप से यह विनती है कि इस दवा को ज्यादा से ज्यादा शेयर करें ताकि किसी कोरोना वायरस से ग्रसित मरीज का इलाज हो सके। 🙏🙏🙏🙏

This is true sir
Pls check me file
I m

Smooch 3 months ago



3 months ago • Whatsapp • Slack channel

भाइयों काफी किताबों में ढूँढ़ने के बाद बड़ी मुश्किल से कोरोना वायरस की दवा मिली है, हम लोग कोरोना वायरस की दवा ना जाने कहां-कहां ढूँढ़ते रहे लेकिन कोरोना वायरस की दवा इंटरमीडिएट की जन्तु विज्ञान की किताब में दी गई है जिस वैज्ञानिक ने इस बीमारी के बारे में लिखा है उसने ही इसके इलाज के बारे में भी लिखा है और यह कोई नई बीमारी नहीं है इसके बारे में तो पहले से ही इंटरमीडिएट की किताब में बताया गया है साथ में इलाज भी। कभी-कभी ऐसा होता है कि डॉक्टर और वैज्ञानिक बड़ी-बड़ी किताबों के चक्कर में छोटें लेवल की किताबों पर ध्यान नहीं देते और यहां ऐसा ही हुआ है।
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Smooch 3 months ago

Sample Fact-Checks by Team

FALSE

China's whistleblower Dr. Li Wenliang did not suggest tea as a cure for COVID-19.



Type: Text - 5 Requests

*Breaking News from CNN :-* *Dr. Li Wenliang*, China's hero doctor who was punished for telling the...

Text - First seen: 3 months ago - Last seen: 3 months ago - 5 requests

*Breaking News from CNN 🗣*

Dr. Li Wenliang, China's hero doctor who was punished for telling the truth about Corona Virus and later died due to the same disease, had documented casefiles for research purposes and had in the casefiles proposed a cure that would significantly decrease the impact of the COVID - 19 Virus on the human body. The chemical **Methylxanthine**, **Theobromine** and **Theophylline** stimulate compounds that can ward off these virus in a human with atleast an average immune system. Whats more shocking is that these complex words that were so difficult for people in China to understand is actually called **Tea** in India, YES, our regular Tea has all these chemicals already in it. The main Methylxanthine in tea is the stimulant caffeine. Other Methylxanthines found in tea are two chemically similar compounds, Theobromine and Theophylline. The tea plant creates these chemicals as a way to ward off insects and other animals. Who would have known that all the solution to these virus would be a simple cup of TEA. and that is the reason so many patients in China are being cured. The hospital staff in china has started serving tea to the patients 3 times a day, And the effect is finally in **Wuhan** "The centre of this Pandemic" has been contained and community transmission has almost stopped.

Please Share this message to your friends and family to make them aware about this blessing in the form of TEA in your kitchen.

Forwarded as received.

[LESS](#)



Language: English

REQUESTS

TASKS

ANALYSIS

NOTES

ACTIVITY



3 months ago ● Whatsapp

*Breaking News from CNN 🗣*

Dr. Li Wenliang, China's hero doctor who was punished for telling the truth about Corona Virus and later died due to the same disease, had documented casefiles for research purposes and had in the casefiles proposed a cure that would significantly decrease the impact of the COVID - 19 Virus on the human body. The chemical **Methylxanthine**, **Theobromine** and **Theophylline** stimulate compounds that can ward off these virus in a human with atleast an average immune system. Whats more shocking is that these complex words that were so difficult for people in China to understand is actually called **Tea** in India, YES, our regular Tea has all these chemicals already in it. The main Methylxanthine in tea is the stimulant caffeine. Other Methylxanthines found in tea are two chemically similar compounds, Theobromine and Theophylline. The tea plant creates these chemicals as a way to ward off insects and other animals. Who would have known that all the solution to these virus would be a simple cup of TEA. and that is the reason so many patients in China are being cured. The hospital staff in china has started serving tea to the patients 3 times a day, And the effect is finally in **Wuhan** "The centre of this Pandemic" has been contained and community transmission has almost stopped.

Please Share this message to your friends and family to make them aware about this blessing in the form of TEA in your kitchen.

Forwarded as received.

Smooch 3 months ago



Sample Fact-Checks by Team

FALSE

No, the Indian government did not ban reporting on COVID-19.



Type: Linked article - 93 Requests

Centre Seeks SC Direction That No Media Should Publish COVID-19 News Without First Ascertaining Facts With...

Link - First seen: 2 months ago - Last seen: 2 months ago - 97 requests

The Central Government has sought a direction from the Supreme Court that no media outlet should print, publish or telecast anything on COVID-19 without first ascertaining facts from the mechanism...



<https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/centre-seeks-sc-direction-that-no-media-should-publish-covid-19-news-without-first-ascertaining-facts-with-govt-154601>

REQUESTS

TASKS

ANALYSIS

NOTES

ACTIVITY



2 months ago • Whatsapp • Slack channel

Group admin is requested to close group for 2days as police can take action against admin & group members vide section 68, 140 & 188 if anyone even by mistake post joke on corona. Everyone could be in trouble. Hence I draw the attention of group admin to take necessary steps.

Dear All,

Mandate for All:
Tonight 12 (midnight) onwards Disaster Management Act has been implemented across the country. According to this update, apart from the Govt department no other citizen is allowed to post any update or share any forward related to Corona virus and it being punishable offence.

Group Admins are requested to post the above update and inform the groups.

Please adhere this strictly.

<https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/centre-seeks-sc-direction-that-no-media-should-publish-covid-19-news-without-first-ascertaining-facts-with-govt-154601>

Smooch 2 months ago

...



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Dear All,

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Tonight 12 (midnight) onwards Disaster Management Act has been implemented across the country. Ac-

Sample Fact-Checks by Team

Misleading

No, this woman from Australia was not spitting on fruits.

AFP

Type: Video - 9 Requests

Esta mulher foi presa por discutir com funcionários e o vídeo mostra dois incidentes diferentes

Video - First seen: 3 months ago - Last seen: 2 months ago -



Reverse image search

GOOGLE

REQUESTS

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ACTIVITY



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No message was sent with the request

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...

Built by a team with firsthand experience of the problems we are solving for journalists.

Ed Bice

CEO

Pierre Conti

Director of Product

Shalini Joshi

Program Director, APAC

An Xiao Mina

COO

Wafaa Heikal

Program Manager, Africa

Karim Ratib

CTO

Dr. Scott Hale

Director of Research

Isabella Barroso

Program Manager, Latin America

Tom Trewinnard

COO, Fathm



Shalini Joshi, Program Director, APAC, and Pierre Conti, Director of Product, in meetings and site visits with India Today, BOOM and AFP India.

About Meedan

Meedan is a global technology not-for-profit that builds software and programmatic initiatives to strengthen journalism, digital literacy, and accessibility of information online and off. We develop open-source tools for creating and sharing context on digital media through annotation, verification, archival, and translation.

We work with technologists, newsrooms, fact-checkers, public health professionals, NGOs and academic institutions on award-winning projects from election monitoring to pandemic response to human rights documentation. This work supports our vision of a more equitable internet.

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