

MPs' panel looking into Aarogya Setu

Work must and will continue: Tharoor

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After several failed attempts to organise a meeting, both online and offline, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information and Technology has started working on the various questions of privacy and data security of the government's Aarogya Setu app, which was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Chairperson of the committee Shashi Tharoor said the committee's work "must and will" continue, even though the panel members can't meet in person or via videoconference.

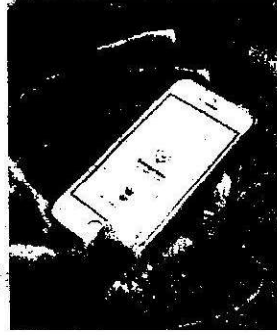
"Due to restrictions on movement and various other functional challenges, the physical occurrence of committee meetings is proving to be a challenge. Despite that, its work must and will continue, as there are a host of critical matters that need to be addressed," he said.

Forwarding questions

For now, the committee is forwarding all the questions raised by the members on the Aarogya Setu app to the government and other stakeholders concerned. These replies are then circulated amongst the members for further deliberations.

Mr. Tharoor refused to delve into details about the deliberations but sources indicated that the committee will also look into the legality of the government's mandatory imposition of the app on various categories of persons.

"Despite the considerable challenges the current situation imposes on us as elected representatives, we will continue to carry out our duties of parliamentary



The panel has started working on the questions of privacy and data security.

oversight of the government, by providing a constructive check and balance to the working and functioning of the various Ministries under our jurisdiction," he said.

Budget session

The Budget Session ended abruptly hurrying through the debates on the Finance Bill on March 23. Since then no department related standing committee has met. Mr. Tharoor, on April 20, announced on Twitter that the panel would meet via videoconference. He was later informed by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla's office that videoconferences cannot be used as a medium to hold parliamentary panel meetings till the rules are approved by both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha since it violates the confidentiality clause.

After much to and fro, a meeting was called for June 10 at the Parliament complex but it had to be deferred to June 17. On both days, the committee could not meet because of varied quarantine rules and travel restrictions for out of State travellers since most of the members are in their respective constituencies.