

## Canvas student app now available offline

INSTRUCTURE Holdings, Inc. has launched an offline access feature for its student mobile application Canvas Learning Management System (LMS), making it accessible to learners with limited Internet access.

Instructure said in a statement last week that the feature allows users to download content on their devices and access it anytime and anywhere, regardless of service availability.

Through this feature, educational institutions can let their students access content and vital course information outside the classroom, "fostering a more equitable experience" for all learners.

"The LMS is the single most important tool a student uses outside the classroom to learn and engage with course content," Instructure Chief Product Officer Shiren Vijiasingam said.

Providing offline access to course content offers learners more flexibility in how and where they choose to learn, supporting Instructure's mission to make education more accessible and equitable, he added.

While real-time communication is not possible when using the offline mode, the platform will automatically update with changes to course content once they go online.

The feature also has interactive in-app navigation and lets users download content on the multiple devices, allowing them to have access to educational materials on shared devices, the company said.

"The availability of this feature can be customized at the institution level, allowing for a tailored user experience," Instructure added. — **A.R.A. Inosante**

# Startup seeks more funding for 'smart' healthcare backpacks

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE Rise Rural Philippines is tapping nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and nonprofit groups to help expand the reach of its solar-powered healthcare "smart backpacks."

"We're looking for partnerships with NGOs and nonprofits in order to reach more communities [with our smart backpacks]," Rise Rural Philippines Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer Mark Virgil C. Jamer told *BusinessWorld* on the sidelines of the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Youth Co:Lab forum last week.

Rise Rural Philippines was founded in 2022 by a group of undergraduate students and is known for its solar-powered "smart backpacks" that aim to improve healthcare access in the countryside.

Each "smart backpack" has a solar panel and battery, a com-

partment for medical tools and equipment, a patient information database, and a vaccine and medicine storage, Mr. Jamer said.

Partnering with NGOs and nonprofit groups would help it reduce the expenses to build its "smart backpack," which costs around P16,000 each, according to the group.

The group has delivered two backpacks: one to the municipality of Tanay, Rizal in Luzon, and another to Siargao.

The organization aims to distribute one "smart backpack" in five Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDAs) this year, with its priority locations being in the Southern Tagalog region.

"These GIDAs don't have access to electricity or if they have, it's very challenging, and that affects healthcare access," Mr. Jamer said.

"If they don't have reliable electricity, then these [healthcare] equipment and tools won't work."

"We want to partner with suppliers based in the Philippines because most of our materials are outsourced from other countries. So, that's what our product development team has been working on — reaching out to companies that are working on solar solutions and stuff," he added.

The group is also working on an advanced version of the backpack, taking into consideration the different needs of rural healthcare units, Mr. Jamer said.

"When we were interviewing healthcare professionals and did different community immersions, we realized that these communities are very different in terms of what they need," he said.

"Considering the differences in each community, we're look-

ing at a common denominator and then integrating that into the design of the bag so it can be used by any community in the Philippines," Mr. Jamer added.

However, the delivery of backpacks has also been hampered by some local government units' (LGUs) permitting processes and requirements, he said.

"When we were talking to one LGU, although they were very interested in accepting a proposal from us, they were requiring a lot of papers, which is something that I think startups, especially those that are youth-led and at a very early stage, won't be able to like provide immediately," Mr. Jamer said.

In the medium term, Rise Rural Philippines aims to deliver its smart backpacks to at least 10,000 GIDAs, he added. — **B.M.D. Cruz**

## How the Philippines can protect itself from a rising tide of ransomware attacks

By Scott Hesford

RECENTLY, the Department of Information and Communications Technology announced that the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) and the Department of Science and Technology suffered cyberattacks, which were confirmed as ransomware attacks. Faced with an increasing number of sophisticated cyberattacks, government agencies in the Philippines are racing to strengthen their security measures to protect their core systems and data.

Many of the cybercriminals behind these attacks are using leaked ransomware builders. Their goal appears to be to cause disruption of core government services and, in turn, problems for citizens.

There are a range of ransomware builders in use, including Vice Society, Clop, ALPHV, and LockBit. Interestingly, the

notes received by victims of many of the ransomware attacks appear to have been copied from the original LockBit template and do not include contact details.

This indicates that cybercriminals have little interest in actually extracting ransom payments, but are instead focused purely on causing disruption and losses. In many cases, attackers are also posting details of their successes on discussion boards and social media sites in an effort to gain notoriety.

Outside the Philippines, LockBit is also proving to be a popular option for cybercriminals. During the past 12 months alone, notable victims have included The Royal Mail (UK), Hospital for Sick Children (Canada), Managed Care of North America (US), and Center Hospital Sud Francilien (France).

### THE ORIGINS OF LOCKBIT

Since first being discovered in 2019, LockBit has grown to become one of the most successful cybercrime operations in the

world. In 2022, it was estimated to account for 44% of all ransomware campaigns.

LockBit operates as a ransomware-as-a-service operator. This means it focuses on delivering ransomware attack capabilities for a fee to criminals who lack the technical knowledge to undertake attacks alone.

LockBit attacks also regularly use a "double extortion" technique, where data is stolen before it is encrypted on a victim's systems. This allows the attacker to threaten to publish the data on the Internet if the ransom is not paid.

### TACTICS AND TECHNIQUES

Ransomware attacks make use of a range of different tactics to successfully penetrate a victim's IT infrastructure. These include:

- **Privilege escalation:** This approach often makes use of local administrator privileges to abuse elevation control mechanisms. LockBit is regularly observed performing user account control bypass techniques.

- **Defensive evasion:** To evade detection, LockBit regularly disables security tools and clears Windows Event logs. These actions require the attacker to have at least local administrator privileges on the endpoint and the ability to execute code.

- **Credential access:** LockBit attackers sometimes use OS Credential Dumping tools, such as ExtPassword and LostMyPassword, to access the credentials of other users accessing an endpoint device. This allows them to capture the credentials of potentially privileged domain users and escalate their access.

- **Lateral movement:** LockBit attackers sometimes use administrator accounts and SMB (Server Message Block) to achieve lateral movement within an IT infrastructure.

### DEFENDING AGAINST LOCKBIT ATTACKS

To avoid falling victim to a LockBit-powered ransomware attack, organizations need to focus on a number of security fundamentals.

Together, they can significantly enhance existing protective measures. They include:

- **Keep software patched:** Keeping operating systems and application software up to date is vital, particularly for public-facing systems. Known software vulnerabilities often provide attackers a way to execute code on a victim's systems.

- **Enforce a policy of least privilege:** Ransomware attackers rely on gaining access to accounts with admin access rights. By using an endpoint privilege management tool, local admin rights can be removed without affecting user experience.

*Scott Hesford is the director of Solutions Engineering for Asia-Pacific and Japan at BeyondTrust.*

### FULL STORY



Read the full story by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or by typing the link [tinyurl.com/rsedpmbt](https://tinyurl.com/rsedpmbt)

## Shell to pause Dutch biofuels project as market sags

LONDON — Shell will pause construction work at one of Europe's largest biofuel plants due to weak market conditions, the latest low-carbon project to suffer a setback as chief executive officer Wael Sawan strives to boost returns.

While it is rare for companies to suspend development of projects underway, rival BP also said last week it was pausing two biofuel projects in Germany and the US.

Under Mr. Sawan, who took office in January 2023, Shell has scrapped and sold renewable and hydrogen projects, retreated from European and Chinese power markets and sold refineries in order to focus on the most profitable operations, primarily in oil and gas.

Shell shares were up 1.3% at 1106 GMT, and have gained more than 12.5% so far this year.

The company gave the green light for the development of the 820,000-ton-a-year plant in the Netherlands in September 2021, with plans to bring it online in 2025. The project is now expected to start production towards the end of the decade.

The facility at Shell's chemicals park in Rotterdam was slated to produce sustainable aviation fuel and renewable diesel made from waste.

Biofuel prices have come under pressure in recent months due to weaker demand in Europe, including after Sweden cut a biofuel mandate, and rising supplies in the US. — **Reuters**

## Biden administration revoked 8 licenses for China's Huawei in 2024, document shows

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration has revoked eight licenses this year that had allowed some companies to ship goods to Chinese telecoms equipment giant Huawei, according to a document seen by Reuters, as it seeks to pressure the resurgent company.

The Commerce Department, which oversees US export policy, said in May it had revoked "certain" licenses, as first reported by Reuters, but did not specify the name or number of suppliers that were impacted. Licenses for Qualcomm and Intel were among those revoked, Reuters reported at the time.

"Since the beginning of 2024, (the Commerce Department) has revoked eight additional licenses involving Huawei," the agency said in the document, prepared in response to an inquiry by Republican Congressman Michael McCaul.

Huawei did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Qualcomm and Intel did not immediately respond to requests for comment outside of business hours.

The details shed new light on measures the Biden administration is taking to thwart Huawei, as the company has started to rebound despite Washington's efforts to cripple it on national security grounds. Huawei has denied it is a security risk.

It also comes amid pressure from Republican China hardliners in Congress to hammer the company, which shocked industry last August with a new phone powered by a sophisticated chip manufactured by Chinese chipmaker SMIC despite US export restrictions on both companies.

The phone helped Huawei smartphone sales spike 64% year on year in the first six weeks of 2024, according to research firm Counterpoint. Its smart car component business has also contributed to Huawei's resurgence, with the company notching its fastest revenue growth in four years in 2023.

Huawei was placed on a US trade restriction list in 2019 amid fears it could spy on Americans. Being added to the list means the company's suppliers have to seek a special, difficult-to-obtain license before shipping.

But Huawei suppliers have received licenses worth billions of dollars to sell Huawei goods and technology, thanks to a policy introduced by the Trump administration that allowed a much broader swathe of items to flow to the firm than is typical for an entity-listed company.

According to the document, set to be sent to Mr. McCaul on Tuesday, license approvals for Huawei include "exercise equipment and office furniture and low-technology components for consumer mass-market items, such as touchpad and touchscreen sensors for tablets," which are widely available in China from Chinese and foreign sources, Commerce said.

The summary also states that from 2018 to 2023, the agency approved \$335 billion worth of licenses out of a total \$880 billion applications seeking permission to sell to Chinese parties on the entity list. Of those approvals, \$222 billion worth came in 2021, President Biden's first year in office, out of \$560 billion in applications received that year, the agency added. — **Reuters**

## Artificial intelligence coding startup Magic seeks \$1.5-B valuation in new funding round

MAGIC, a US startup developing artificial intelligence (AI) models to write software, is in talks to raise over \$200 million in a funding round valuing it at \$1.5 billion, just several months after its last capital raise, three sources told Reuters.

Investors including Jane Street are expected to participate in the round, which could triple Magic's valuation from its last round, despite earning no revenue and having no product for sale, according to sources who requested anonymity to discuss private matters.

The startup, which has about 20 employees, was last valued at \$500 million after the previous February fund raising, according to PitchBook data. It has raised \$140 million since it was founded in 2022, from backers including Nat Friedman and Daniel Gross' NFDG Ventures, as well as Alphabet's CapitalG.

Magic's new round is the latest fundraising in one of the most promising applications of generative AI technologies. Software developers represent a significant cost for tech companies, and tools that can generate code or assist developers in more efficient programming are highly attractive.

The early success of Microsoft's GitHub has further stoked investors' enthusiasm. In April, coding-assistant startup Augment raised \$252 million, while Cognition, developer of the AI-powered coding assistant Devin, secured \$175 million in a round led by Founders Fund at a \$2-billion valuation.

Investors say they see GitHub Copilot's success as proof of how large the market is. GitHub reported 40% higher year-over-year revenue in the latest quarter, driven by Copilot, which has 1.3 million paid subscribers.

While commercially available products like GitHub Copilot or OpenAI's ChatGPT

can suggest how to complete lines of code, the next frontier for coding assistants is to design and write entire software applications without human help.

Magic and a few other startups are trying to achieve this by training their own large language models for coding-specific tasks. This effort is cost-intensive, however, for purchasing data, chips and electricity.

Magic plans to spend its funding on improving its own models that support long-context windows, which refer to AI systems that can process more data in one query, the sources added.

Magic's ability to understand and process a large amount of context at once is due to an innovative design that goes beyond the traditional "transformer model" commonly used in large language models such as OpenAI's GPT models, according to one of the sources. — **Reuters**



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### NOTICE

#### EXTRAJUDICIAL SETTLEMENT OF ESTATE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late KARTAR HARCHANDRAI CHHUGANI was extrajudicially settled among the heirs Sarla Kartar Chhugani, Sapna Ahuja & Jai Chhugani.

The parties have do hereby adjudicate unto themselves the bank account amounting Ten Thousand Dollars (USD10,000) deposited in Philippine Retirement Authority (PRA) as per Extrajudicial Settlement Estate executed on 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2024 before Luisa Fernanda Rojas-Moreno, Notary Public, Connecticut, USA.

### JOB HIRING

**5 Customer Service Representatives – Korean Account**

- College Graduate
- At least 1 Year experience
- Able to read, write and speak (KOREAN & ENGLISH)
- Advance working knowledge in shipments, insurances, duties and taxes

**5 Marketing Officer**

- Graduate of BS Management/ Accounting
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- College Graduate
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**2 Sales Agent**

- High School graduates are most welcome
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- Strong passion for selling and ability to communicate well

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