Business Standard

March 8, 2016
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Now, a start-up to track radio cab drivers

Not only the person behind the wheel can be traced, but also how he's driving, and what can be done about it, with the essential equipment only being a smartphone

PATANJALI PAHWA
Mumbai, 7 March

Recently, there were reports that the Karnataka government had imposed strict rules on app-based taxi aggregators and radio cab operators. A web-based tech news portal also reported that drivers will have to be trained once a year on safe driving skills. The number of hours the drivers put in will also need to be monitored.

This presents a dilemma for the likes of Uber and Ola, especially when it comes to quality monitoring of drivers. Physical driver monitoring devices have been known to be expensive.

Son, in steps Zendrive. The US-based startup, which has a tech development facility in Bengaluru and raised $13.5 million from Sherpa Capital, recently developed a machine learning system that uses sensors in smartphones to monitor driving.

Zendrive's founders, Pankaj Risbood, earlier with Google, and a former Facebook pro, Jonathan Matus, started the company after deciding travel wasn't as safe as they initially believed it to be. Both worked with big data and analytics and decided, what if there was a product that would sit in an existing app and process driving patterns? "Over 90 per cent of people think they are above average to good drivers. But, 30 per cent of fatal accidents in the US were caused by using the phone while driving," said Risbood.

The way it works sounds easy. "Smartphones have various sensors. Most games even have accelerometers. These can be turned outwards to measure the speed the vehicle is travelling at," he explained. These sensors, coupled with GPS, can give accurate data on where the car is and if the driver is speeding. "These sensors even know how many times you touched the phone," he said.

The information collected is sent to a dashboard with the fleet owners, where the driver data can be processed. The data can then be crunched to pre-empt scenarios. Based on the historical braking style, speed and road condition, the system can then send texts to the driver to slow down or maintain speed. "We even incentivise drivers by sending them goals via text to achieve," Risbood added. The results, he says, have been interesting. "Speeding was down 60 per cent.".

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T-Hub inks pact with Tat Capital

T-Hub, a public-private-partnership initiative by the Telangana government to support technology-enabled start-ups, on Monday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Tat Capital, a corporate finance advisory that facilitates trade and investment ideas between Australia, New Zealand and the Indian sub-continent through effective capital raising. The MoU will connect T-Hub's startups with Australian growth companies with next-generation innovations to explore acquisition, partnerships and strategic investment ideas, besides providing T-Hub's start-up and VC community access to Australian VC, private equity and family office investors to cross-pollinate ideas, technology and capital between the regions.

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