



NEWS DIGEST

MEITY Chair on Internet Policy

ICRIER's Internet Policy News Digest is your update on Indian and global developments in cyber-security, digital economy, and Internet governance. We have recently re-designed the news digest to include opinion pieces covering issues both global as well as focused on India. We sincerely welcome your valuable feedback and comments at www.internetpolicy.in. Please email your valuable feedback and comments to internet.news@icrier.res.in.

GLOBAL

Writing for *The Washington Post*, Karen Leigh, Stepan Kravchenko, and Saritha Rai consider [global approaches to cybersovereignty](#), covering both cybersecurity, the protection of things such as transportation networks, electrical grids and election systems; and censorship, the suppression of information for political or other purposes. Assessing the key differences in the internet policy platforms of Canada's two major political parties, Michael Geist, writing for *The Globe and Mail*, explores the pertinent question: [Who owns the Internet?](#) Meanwhile, in the midst of e-commerce figuring as a major feature of regional trade talks such as Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), Rahul Nath Choudhury, writing for the Lowy Institute's *The Interpreter*, probes [free trade deals and whether they in fact expand the digital divide](#). He cautions developing countries to be wary of the pitfalls of such agreements. Siobhan O'Flynn cautions that Google has recently agreed to pay a USD 170 million fine for illegally gathering children's personal data without parental consent, and explores [whether enough is being done to 'data-proof' children](#).

[Vietnam plans to narrow data localisation requirements under its cybersecurity law](#)

Vietnam's Ministry of Public Security has stated that data localisation requirements of the Law on Cybersecurity will be narrowed, as reported by *The Business Times*. This Law came into effect on January 1, 2019, and there were concerns among foreign and Vietnamese enterprises that they would be caught under the law's data localisation requirements despite not having a physical presence in Vietnam.

[Popular VPN service NordVPN confirms data center breach](#)

NordVPN said it was the victim of a data breach in 2018, and that so far the impact from the hack was minor. It released details of the data breach, reported earlier by *TechCrunch*. An unauthorized user accessed a lone server in a Finland data center that NordVPN was renting from an unnamed provider, which didn't disclose the hack. NordVPN says no username or passwords were intercepted.

[The UK porn block has been scrapped by Boris Johnson's government](#)

A planned new law which would have imposed age verification on porn websites viewed in the UK has been scrapped by the Johnson government, after considerable pushback from privacy campaigners. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport confirmed to the Huffington Post that the objectives of the Digital Economy Act will be delivered through its proposed online harms regulatory regime.

Russia will test its ability to disconnect from the internet

Russia will test its internal RuNet network to see whether the country can function without the global internet, the Russian government has announced. The tests will begin after November 1, recur at least annually, and possibly more frequently. This is the latest move in a series of technical and policy steps intended to allow the Russian government to cut its citizens off from the rest of the world.

Online surveillance in Pakistan

A new report on Pakistan's internet surveillance, published by investigative agency Coda, has once again sounded the alarm on the long-standing issue of the state spying on its citizens, revealing that the Pakistan government has acquired a "web monitoring system" from Canada-based company Sandvine. However, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has sought to dismiss fears of an invasion of privacy.

Australia sues Google over alleged misuse of location data

Google has been accused of misleading Australian consumers over how it collected and used personal location data, adding to growing regulatory pressure on the company around the world. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission filed a lawsuit against Google, alleging that it "engaged in misleading conduct and made false or misleading representations to consumers" related to location data.

INDIA

A *Livemint* op-ed explores the [gender digital divide in India](#), and cites recent research which reveals that a large proportion of Indian women remain cut off from the world's most significant phenomenon of recent decades. Smriti Parsheera, writing for *BBC News*, looks at the problem from a wider perspective, arguing that [India's digital sprint is leaving millions behind](#), as India has more than 630 million internet subscribers, but for every Indian who has access to the internet, there is at least one who does not and that person is most likely living in a rural area. In the *Hindustan Times*, Arun Mohan Sukumar, while explaining the rationale behind a global stack, makes a case for [elevating digital cooperation to an inter-ministerial level](#), to promote India's advancements globally.

In the context of the new Information Technology Intermediaries Guidelines (Amendment) Rules, slated for release on January 15, 2020, an op-ed in *The Hindu Business Line* argues that India, with its abysmally low levels of data privacy, ought to [regulate the internet and should not wreck it with control](#). Meanwhile, Parminder Jeet Singh contends that India must take national data seriously and [must not trade away its national data rights](#) at the RCEP negotiations. Rohan Seth conducts a round-up of the [direction in which the Indian debate on data privacy is headed](#), and finds that even as India pushes for data decryption access from Big Tech for better law enforcement, there is a larger issue of how Big Tech is not quite the paragon of virtue when it comes to upholding user privacy.

Sebi issues cybersecurity framework for KYC Registration Agencies

Amid concerns over possible data breaches, markets regulator Sebi put in place a detailed cybersecurity framework for KYC registration agencies, requiring them to define responsibilities of employees, including outsourced staff, who have privileged access to networks. Besides, the watchdog said that no person should have any intrinsic right to access confidential data by virtue of their rank or position.

India's among the world's top three surveillance states

India is among the world's top three surveillance states, according a global survey by UK-based research firm Compritech, which ranked countries based on constitutional protection, privacy enforcement, biometrics, and data sharing. Only Russia and China fared worse than India. The surveillance index score of 2.4 out of 5 on the privacy index indicates a systemic failure to maintain data privacy safeguards.

YouTube witnesses surge in video consumption in Indian languages

Video-sharing website YouTube is experiencing a "staggering growth" in consumption of content in Indian languages with more than 1,200 video creators in the country crossing the million-subscriber base, a top company official said on Thursday. The website currently has over 265 million users per month in India and 60 per cent of content consumption is outside the metro cities, the official announced.

TechSagar, national repository of India's cyber tech capabilities launched

The National Cyber Security Coordinator's office, in partnership with Data Security Council of India launched TechSagar – a consolidated and comprehensive repository of India's cyber tech capabilities which provides actionable insights about capabilities of Indian industry, academia, and research across IoT, AI, ML, blockchain, cloud, virtualisation, robotics, automation, AR/VR, wireless, and networking.

Government may wait for panel report before taking Data Bill to Parliament

The government may wait for the committee on non-personal data to submit its report before placing the draft Personal Data Protection Bill before Parliament, people familiar with the development told *The Economic Times*. The government formed a panel led by Infosys cofounder S (Kris) Gopalakrishnan in September 2019 to make recommendations on how non-personal data should be governed.

Day after Centre appeals to SC, civil society experts advocate for constitutional rights, consumer choice on internet

While the Centre appealed to the Supreme Court for more time to hold inter-ministerial discussions on the effective regulation of social media platforms, civil society experts held parallel discussions on the need to protect constitutional rights and consumer choice on the internet, in light of the amendments proposed by the Centre to hold intermediaries accountable for the content shared on their platforms.

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