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

With social media permeating every aspect of modern human lives, there is a need to tackle problems of online disinformation, overexposure of children's data and hate speech. However, lack of reliable data from social media and tech companies creates challenges for regulators to respond to these threats. It is in this context that Lubos Kuklish and Ben Wagner propose setting up of single European institution, which could act as an auditing intermediary to ensure that the data provided to regulators by social media companies is accurate. While, writing for the New York Times, Kara Swisher suggests that Facebook will continue to take a hands off approach to political advertisements. Nila Bala, also writing for the New York Times explains the perils of exposing children's health data including genetic information by parents with public websites. Meanwhile, Byron Mühlberg explains how an individual's smartphone has become a permanent tracking device since users provide multiple mobile apps permission to access their location data sometimes without a clear understanding of the terms of use of such data.

The future of a global and open internet seems bleak with China seeking to establish a separate root system for their share of the internet. Robert K. Knake foretells the end of a global internet era over the next decade and predicts that at some point in the future the Chinese government, with the support of Russia and other authoritarian regimes, will move forward with plans to establish a separate root system for their share of the internet.

South Korea passes eased data regulation Bill
South Korean parliament has passed three Bills seeking to soften regulations on the use of personal information, amidst objection from privacy advocates within the country. The Bills enable the use of personal information offered under alias and processed technologically to conceal the provider's identity, without the user's consent, for the purposes of industrial research and compiling statistics.

Cybersecurity research firm exposes multiple vulnerabilities in TikTok

Cookie consent tools are being used to undermine EU privacy rules
According to a new study by researchers at MIT, UCL and Aarhus University most cookie consent pop-ups served to internet users in the European Union are likely to be flouting regional privacy laws. Findings from the research have been published in a paper entitled "Dark Patterns after the GDPR: Scraping Consent Pop-ups and Demonstrating their Influence".

New cybersecurity rules give China extraterritorial reach
China's new cybersecurity rules are likely to have significant repercussions for foreign companies operating in China. According to the new rules, companies will be required to hand over encryption keys, which are crucial to protect the confidentiality of information transmitted and stored on networks, making networks transparent to the Chinese regime. Once Chinese officials gain access to the network of a foreign company, the Chinese authorities will then be able to penetrate the networks of that company outside the country as well.

With 1.14 billion users APAC region to lead 5G adoption by 2024
The Asia pacific (APAC) region will lead 5G adoption with 65% of global 5G subscriptions and about 1.14 billion users based out of this region by 2024, according to a report released by GlobalData. The APAC countries anticipated to lead mobile data traffic growth over the forecast period include South Korea, China, Japan and Australia.

Study: Tinder, Grindr and other Apps share sensitive personal data with advertisers
A report published by the Norwegian Consumer Council found a number of mobile apps including popular dating apps such as Grindr, Tinder and OkCupid to be sharing personal information with advertising companies. The research found that these mobile apps collect sensitive personal information including a user's exact location, sexual orientation, religious and political beliefs, drug use and other information and then transmit this personal information to at least 135 different third-party companies without the user's consent. Following the report, a group of civil rights and consumer groups is urging federal and state regulators to examine these apps.

INDIA

The importance of internet in today's day and age cannot be overstated and in a recent order, the Supreme Court has recognised internet access as a fundamental right, which cannot be muzzled arbitrarily. Even though, individuals around the world are giving their personal data to tech corporations such as Facebook, Amazon and Google, data protection laws leave a lot to be desired thereby giving these companies the wherewithal to invade user privacy. Nonetheless, police force in India is seeking to leverage emerging tech such as Artificial Intelligence, facial recognition tools to replace manual processes.

Writing for the Financial Express, Nandan Nilekani clarifies how the Indian 'account aggregator' system gives users control over the use of their financial data – a stark contrast with the practices in the US and EU.

Indian Government plans to pay for use of non-personal and anonymous data
The Indian government may pay companies for any non-personal and anonymous data about consumers sought from them. As per reports, it will also be revealing acquisition details of data sets to the public. Further details regarding the issue are likely to be resolved upon the finalisation of the Personal Data Protection Bill and notification of the corresponding rules.

Proposed changes to intermediary guidelines may put India's digital future at risk: ISOC
In an open letter written to Indian IT Minister Mr. Ravi Shankar Prasad, the Internet Society (ISOC) has stated that making intermediaries liable for monitoring communications "would limit the use of end-to-end encryption and encourage others to weaken existing security measures". ISOC has also urged the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)

Power Plant (KKNPP) and Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) fell prey to some of the biggest cyber hacking incidents last year, while startups including Nykaa Fashion, Bounce, Vedantu and Oyo, also witnessed attacks that exposed consumer data.

India lost US$1.3 billion due to 4196 hours of internet shutdowns in 2019

An estimated 4,196 hours of internet blackouts in India cost the economy close to US$1.3 billion in 2019, according to a study carried out by a UK-based tech research firm Top10Vpn. As per the study, India was the third worst hit economy worldwide after crisis-hit Iraq and Sudan due to state-imposed shut downs across Jammu & Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, UP and other regions.

DPIIT to hold consultation on data storage rules in draft e-commerce policy

Amidst demand from foreign e-commerce companies to reconsider rules regarding data storage, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) was scheduled to meet representatives from Information Technology and e-commerce sectors on January 14, 2020 to discuss the merits and de-merits of draft e-commerce policy on data storage. Representatives from different companies including Facebook, Google, Intel, Microsoft, Accenture, Adobe, Genpact and local IT companies such as HCL, Infosys and TCS are expected to participate in the deliberations to discuss the merits and demerits of the draft policy.

Relief for financial firms as RBI allows video KYC

Reserve Bank of India has approved Video-based Customer Identification Process (V-CIP) as a consent-based alternate method of establishing the customer's identity for customer onboarding. The RBI notification allows an officer of a financial institution such as banks, non-banking financial companies, wallets and other financial institutions to remotely vet a customer's identity through PAN or Aadhaar cards and a series of queries. The agent will also be required to verify if the customer is physically present within the country by capturing their geo-coordinates.

CCI warns e-commerce platforms of investigation into 'unfair' practices

The Competition Commission of India warned dominant e-commerce platforms of investigation into charges of opaque behaviour and unfair practices such as exclusive tie-ups with certain sellers on items like mobile phones if they do not refrain from these methods.

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