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A GNLU CENTRE FOR LAW AND TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE

Monthly Newsletter - TechTalk



Gujarat National Law University



Welcome to the GNLU Centre for Law and Technology Newsletter! Serving as the conduit to the dynamic intersection of science, technology, and the law, our mission is to provide updates on the latest developments, promote academic excellence, and empower legal professionals to navigate this ever-evolving landscape. Join us in bridging the gap between these crucial fields and shaping the future of legal practice in our interconnected world.

↓ Enclosed in this newsletter are the following highlights:

Updates on law and technology, showcasing the latest developments in this ever-evolving field. Our curated content might just spark your next research topic idea. Stay informed and stay inspired and keep reading!

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HEADLINES

**VLC MEDIA PLAYER WEBSITE
BANNED IN INDIA: MYSTERIOUS
REASON REMAINS UNKNOWN, RTI
REVEALS** 04

**INDONESIA BLOCKS YAHOO,
PAYPAL, AND GAMING WEBSITES
FOR LICENSE VIOLATIONS,
SPARKING BACKLASH** 05

**EU ANTITRUST REGULATORS
PROBE GOOGLE'S APP PAYMENT
POLICIES, SEEKING DEVELOPER
INPUT** 06

**GOOGLE OPPOSES FACEBOOK-
BACKED SELF-REGULATORY BODY
PROPOSAL IN INDIA** 07

**FACEBOOK'S META AGREES TO
SETTLE DATA PRIVACY LAWSUIT** 08

OF
THE
MONTH

01

VLC MEDIA PLAYER WEBSITE BANNED IN INDIA: MYSTERIOUS REASON REMAINS UNKNOWN, RTI REVEALS

The VLC Media Player website has been banned in India since March of this year, but the exact reason behind the ban remains a mystery. VLC Media Player is a widely popular application for video streaming, known for its popularity in the 90s and early 2000s. An RTI request filed by the Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF) sought information about the ban from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (Meity). However, Meity responded that they had no information regarding the ban. The IFF has filed an appeal, arguing that the response demonstrates a lack of proper evaluation and is illegal and demonstrates non-application of mind. The ban prohibits access to the VLC Media Player website, but the app can still be downloaded from app stores and used on laptops. VLC Media Player's official Twitter account has also expressed confusion and called for help regarding the ban. The hope is that there will be some clarity regarding the inaccessibility of the VLC Media Player website in India in the near future.

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INDONESIA BLOCKS YAHOO, PAYPAL, AND GAMING WEBSITES FOR LICENSE VIOLATIONS, SPARKING BACKLASH

Indonesia has implemented a block on search engine website Yahoo, online payment platform Paypal, and several gaming websites due to their failure to comply with licensing regulations. The move has triggered a significant backlash on social media in the country. As Indonesia boasts an estimated 191 million internet users, with a young and social-media savvy population, it represents a crucial market for various tech platforms. The registration requirement, introduced in November 2020, grants authorities extensive powers to compel platforms to disclose specific user data and remove content deemed unlawful or disruptive to public order. Urgent takedown requests must be addressed within four hours, while non-urgent requests have a 24-hour deadline. Numerous tech companies hurriedly registered leading up to the extended deadline, including Alphabet Inc's Meta Platforms Inc (Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp) and Amazon.com Inc. However, some platforms failed to comply, resulting in their blocking.

Semuel Abrijani Pangerapan, a senior official at Indonesia's Communications Ministry, confirmed that the blocked websites include Yahoo, Paypal, and gaming sites such as Steam, Dota2, Counter-Strike, and Epic Games, among others. Indonesian Twitter witnessed trending hashtags like "BlokirKominfo" (block Communication Ministry), Epic Games, and Paypal, with many users expressing criticism of the government's actions, highlighting the negative impact on Indonesia's online gaming industry and freelance workers reliant on Paypal. Given Indonesia's sizable online population and its tech-savvy youth, the country represents a significant market for various tech platforms. The government's move to block non-compliant websites has sparked widespread debate and calls for reconsideration, particularly concerning its potential adverse effects on the gaming industry and freelance workers in Indonesia.

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EU ANTITRUST REGULATORS PROBE GOOGLE'S APP PAYMENT POLICIES, SEEKING DEVELOPER INPUT

European Union (EU) antitrust regulators have questioned app developers regarding Google's threat to remove apps from its Play Store if they utilize payment options other than Google's billing system. Critics argue that the fees imposed by Google and Apple on their mobile app stores are excessive, signaling their monopoly power. The European Commission sent questionnaires to developers, seeking insights on the impact of Google's policy change on their business. Developers were asked about the effect on app distribution, the specific apps affected, and their ability to acquire users on Android devices.

The survey also inquired whether developers were forced to abandon alternative payment options in favor of Google Billing and how this migration impacted existing users and data access. The questionnaire assessed whether developers believed they could offer a better service with alternative payment systems and explored their concerns about payment method security. The EU competition enforcer also inquired about Google's allowance of alternative payment systems, any associated service fees, and developers' perception of platforms like Stripe, Adyen, and Braintree. Google recently announced reduced fees for non-gaming app developers switching to rival payment systems, complying with upcoming EU regulations. The European Commission declined to comment, while Google did not provide a response. The investigation reflects growing scrutiny on Google's app payment practices and aims to address concerns raised by developers within the EU.

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GOOGLE OPPOSES FACEBOOK-BACKED SELF-REGULATORY BODY PROPOSAL IN INDIA

Google is strongly opposed to the development of a self-regulatory body for the social media sector in India to address user complaints, despite support from Facebook and Twitter, according to sources familiar with the discussions. In June, India proposed the appointment of a government panel to handle content moderation grievances but also expressed openness to a self-regulatory body if the industry agreed. However, the lack of consensus among tech giants increases the likelihood of a government panel being formed, a scenario that Facebook's Meta Platforms Inc and Twitter aim to avoid due to concerns about government and regulatory overreach. During a closed-door meeting, a Google executive reportedly expressed skepticism about the merits of a self-regulatory body. The executive highlighted that external reviews of content decisions could potentially force Google to reinstate content that violated its internal policies, setting a dangerous precedent. Representatives from Snapchat, ShareChat, and other social media platforms also attended the meeting, with concerns raised about the need for broader consultations, including with civil society.

Self-regulatory bodies for content moderation in the social media sector are uncommon, and tension over content decisions has been particularly contentious in India. Social media companies often face takedown requests from the government or proactively remove content. Google's YouTube, for example, removed 1.2 million videos in Q1 2023 for guideline violations, the highest in any country. The Indian government is concerned that users lack a proper system for appealing content removal decisions, forcing them to resort to legal action. The proposal for a government panel was open for public consultation until early July, with no fixed implementation date set.

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FACEBOOK'S META AGREES TO SETTLE DATA PRIVACY LAWSUIT

Meta Platforms Inc's Facebook has reached an initial agreement to settle a four-year-old lawsuit filed in a San Francisco federal court. The lawsuit accused Facebook of violating consumer privacy laws by allowing third parties, including Cambridge Analytica, to access users' private data. The court filing requested a 60-day hold on the class action to allow both plaintiffs' lawyers and Facebook to finalize a written settlement. The financial terms of the settlement were not disclosed in the filing.

The lawsuit claimed that Facebook's actions were in breach of consumer privacy laws, alleging that the company shared users' personal data with third parties without their consent. Facebook, however, has consistently maintained that its privacy practices align with its disclosures and do not support any legal claims. Further details regarding the settlement were not immediately available. Facebook and its legal representatives from Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher did not provide immediate responses to inquiries seeking additional information. Keller Rohrback and Bleichmar Fonti & Auld, the two law firms representing the plaintiffs, either refrained from commenting or declined to provide a statement. The settlement agreement signifies a step toward resolving the data privacy lawsuit against Facebook, which stemmed from concerns over the unauthorized access and usage of users' personal information. By reaching an agreement, Facebook's Meta aims to address the allegations and move forward with a resolution.

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SPOTLIGHTING RESEARCH TOPICS: EMPOWERING RESEARCH PAPER ASPIRATIONS

We understand that embarking on a journey to create impactful research papers can be both exciting and daunting. As you navigate through your academic pursuits, we're here to help illuminate your path and fuel your scholarly ambitions. This section presents a curated selection of broad research paper topics designed to spark your intellectual curiosity and inspire your next paper based on the latest developments of this month. Each topic represents an opportunity for exploration, discovery, and the potential to contribute to the ever-evolving landscape of law and technology. We believe that a well-chosen research topic is the cornerstone of a successful publication, and our aim is to empower you to make informed choices.

- *Digital Rights and Internet Censorship*
- *Licensing Regulations and Tech Companies*
- *Antitrust Regulations and App Store Monopolies*
- *Social Media Regulation and Freedom of Expression*
- *Data Privacy and User Rights in the Digital Age*
- *Internet Governance and Content Moderation*
- *Tech Industry Monopolies and Their Impact on Innovation*
- *Legal Challenges in the Age of Digital Technology*
- *Online Gaming Regulations and Their Societal Impacts*

MESSAGE FROM THE NEWSLETTER TEAM

Dear readers, the news articles discussed or included in this newsletter represent the views of the respective news websites. We do not endorse or assume responsibility for the content or opinions expressed in these articles. Our purpose is to bring recent developments to your knowledge, providing a diverse range of information for your consideration. Your input matters to us, and we'd love to hear your thoughts. If you have any suggestions, ideas, or feedback on how we can improve the newsletter or if there's something specific you'd like to see in future editions, please don't hesitate to reach out. Your insights help us grow and ensure we're delivering the content you want. Thank you.

Stay curious, stay informed!



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