



SEPTEMBER 2022

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

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## INDIAN GOVERNMENT URGES AMAZON TO CEASE SELLING SEATBELT ALARM BLOCKERS FOR ROAD SAFETY

The Indian government has requested that Amazon discontinue the sale of devices designed to disable car seatbelt alarms, citing potential safety risks, according to Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari. While the sale of these metal clips is not illegal, their availability has attracted scrutiny following a recent car crash involving Indian tycoon Cyrus Mistry, who was reportedly not wearing a seatbelt at the time of the accident.

Gadkari highlighted that the metal clips, which can be purchased on Amazon, are inserted into seatbelt slots to bypass the audible alarm system that reminds occupants to fasten their seatbelts while driving. The government has issued a notice to Amazon, urging them to halt the sale of these devices. Amazon has yet to respond to the request for comment. Gadkari emphasized the importance of road safety measures, noting that vehicle accidents claimed approximately 150,000 lives in India in 2021. In response to these concerns, the Indian government intends to make seatbelt alarms mandatory for rear seats, expanding the requirement beyond just the driver and front passenger seats. Amazon's India website featured several listings for small metal clips advertised as products capable of "eliminating" seatbelt alarms across various car models. These devices were available at prices starting as low as 249 rupees (\$3.12). The push to cease the sale of seatbelt alarm blockers on Amazon aligns with India's commitment to enhancing road safety and reducing the number of fatalities caused by accidents. By addressing this issue, the government aims to encourage greater adherence to seatbelt usage and ensure the well-being of road users.

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## EU COURT RULING ON GOOGLE'S RECORD FINE MAY SET PRECEDENT

The General Court of the European Union's ruling on whether Google should face a record antitrust fine of €4.34 billion (\$4.4 billion) for leveraging its Android mobile operating system to stifle competition could establish a precedent for other regulators investigating the company's business practices. The outcome of this case is crucial for both Google, aiming to reverse previous losses in antitrust challenges, and Margrethe Vestager, the EU's competition chief, who seeks a victory after recent setbacks involving tech giants Intel and Qualcomm.

Vestager has taken a strict stance against Big Tech, imposing hefty fines to promote a level playing field across the 27-country European Union. Beyond the Android case, Vestager is investigating Google's digital advertising business, its agreement with Meta, Apple's App Store rules, Meta's marketplace, and data usage, as well as Amazon's online selling and market practices. The judgment against Google, a dominant player in the phone market alongside Apple, could have implications for these cases, particularly regarding the consideration of rivalry between the two tech giants by the EU antitrust watchdog. In its 2018 decision, the European Commission concluded that Google utilized Android to solidify its dominance in internet search through payments to major manufacturers and mobile network operators, as well as imposing restrictions. Google defended its actions, claiming they were common among businesses and contributed to maintaining Android as a free operating system. The Pan-European consumer group BEUC, supporting the Commission, emphasized the importance of the court's ruling to ensure a more open and innovative digital environment for consumers.

Regardless of the outcome, Google will be required to cease the practices identified by the Commission under the Digital Markets Act, landmark tech rules set to take effect next year, aimed at restraining the power of U.S. tech giants. Both parties involved in the case have the option to appeal matters of law to the EU Court of Justice, the highest court in Europe. The judgment holds significant implications for Google, regulators, and the future of antitrust enforcement in the EU. The case reference is T-604/18 Google vs European Commission.

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## U.S. APPEALS COURT UPHOLDS TEXAS LAW LIMITING BIG TECH'S CONTROL OVER ONLINE SPEECH

A U.S. appeals court has upheld a Texas law preventing large social media companies from censoring or banning users based on their "viewpoint," a blow to technology industry groups that argue the measure could turn platforms into hubs for dangerous content. The 3-0 ruling by the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals sets the stage for a potential Supreme Court review of the law, supported by conservatives who believe it curbs "Big Tech" from suppressing their perspectives. The law, passed by Texas' Republican-led legislature, received support from Republican Governor Greg Abbott.

The ruling conflicts with a decision by the 11th Circuit, making it more likely for the case to reach the Supreme Court. Opponents of the law, including NetChoice and the Computer & Communications Industry Association, representing Meta Platforms' Facebook, Twitter, and Alphabet's YouTube, argue that such regulations impede their ability to regulate user content, citing concerns about extremism and terrorism. The industry association stated that it is unconstitutional to force private businesses to treat all viewpoints equally, as even contradictory statements like "'God Bless America' and 'Death to America'" are considered viewpoints. Critics of social media companies' practices point to instances like Twitter permanently suspending former President Donald Trump following the Capitol attack in January 2021. The Texas law prohibits social media platforms with over 50 million monthly active users from engaging in "viewpoint" censorship and allows users or the Texas attorney general to file lawsuits to enforce the law. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton celebrated the ruling as a "massive victory for the constitution and free speech." Given the divergence between circuit rulings, there is a stronger possibility of the case being presented to the Supreme Court. The 11th Circuit previously declared that most of a similar law in Florida violated companies' free speech rights and could not be enforced. The conflicting decisions increase the likelihood of the matter reaching the Supreme Court for a final resolution.

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

Twitter has presented its case to the Karnataka High Court, asserting that the Indian government cannot block Twitter accounts without first issuing notices to both users and Twitter itself. The social media platform cited guidelines set by the Supreme Court and Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, in support of its argument. This legal battle stems from a petition filed by Twitter against orders from the Ministry of Electronic and Information Technology to block 39 accounts in 2021. Twitter's legal counsel, Arvind Datar, argued that the government had issued blocking orders for seemingly innocuous messages, emphasizing that such orders should align with Section 69A of the IT Act and should primarily target objectionable tweets rather than entire accounts, except in cases of repeated offenses.

Datar stressed the importance of due process, highlighting that when the government finds a tweet objectionable, a specific procedure should be followed. Notice must be given to both the account holder and Twitter, with reasons documented in writing. Twitter emphasized the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression within the norms of criticism. In response, the government contended that Twitter, as a foreign platform, cannot claim the same rights available to Indian citizens for its users. It argued that the majority of the blocking orders issued under Section 69A are related to national security and public order issues. The government's stance centers on safeguarding the openness, safety, trust, and accountability of the Internet, especially given the significant number of Indian internet users. It maintained that if Twitter is dissatisfied with any government order, it should first comply with the order and then seek review or approach the courts. Failure to do so may result in the withdrawal of Twitter's intermediary status. This legal dispute reflects broader tensions between social media platforms and governments regarding content moderation, free speech, and national security.

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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.

- *Regulation of E-commerce Platforms in India: Balancing Safety and Innovation*
- *Antitrust Enforcement in the European Union: Implications of the Google Android Case*
- *Freedom of Speech and Social Media Platforms*
- *Comparative Analysis of International Approaches to Online Speech Regulation on Social Media*
- *Global Perspectives on Seatbelt Safety Regulations*
- *Cross-Border Content Moderation: Legal Challenges and Solutions*



## 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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