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# CYBER *Digest*

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## WhatsApp's new Privacy Policy

WhatsApp recently updated its terms of service and privacy policy leading to confusion amongst users as to whether Facebook, its parent company would get access to user messages. WhatsApp subsequently clarified that nothing had changed when it comes to personal messaging, only new messaging with business accounts was affected but this still led to disquiet about how business data would be treated and customer/user privacy.<sup>1</sup> For instance, many companies use this platform to deliver lab reports, air tickets, and other confidential information to customers.

Despite these clarifications, the new policy lead to a spike in the number of users shifting to Telegram and Signal messaging apps.<sup>2</sup> The government has also asked for clarifications from Whatsapp and said that users in India should be accorded privacy on par with users elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> Despite these strictures, WhatsApp has not rolled back the policy changes, but only delayed its implementation by 15 days.

## DSCI report on Indian Cybersecurity Product Landscape

The Data Security Council of India has recently released a report titled 'Indian Cybersecurity Product Landscape 2.0— An Emerging Next-gen Cybersecurity Product Hub', focussing on the growth of Indian cybersecurity product companies. It looks at the global presence of these companies, their go-to-market strategies and their achievements.

The report finds that the cybersecurity product landscape has evolved and grown from around 175 companies in 2018 to a current base of a little above 225

companies. In terms of revenue too, the industrial growth has doubled in the last two years. From a growth perspective, 24% of the product companies that were analysed have expanded their global presence in the last two years. Technologically, 63% of the analysed products have leveraged artificial intelligence and machine learning capabilities and 78% of the analysed products are cloud ready.<sup>4</sup>

This evolving Cybersecurity Product Landscape in India would enable the Global ecosystem to maintain business resiliency by emerging as a cybersecurity hub amid the growing wave of cyberattacks.

## Twitter suspends Trump's account permanently

Twitter, on January 8th, after reviewing the contents of the recent Tweets from the @realDonaldTrump account, decided to suspend it permanently. According to a post by Twitter, the language used in the Tweets were against its 'Glorification of violence' policy which aims to prevent the glorification of violence.<sup>5</sup>

The decision came after the Capitol violence that took place in the U.S. on January 6<sup>th</sup>. Trump's Twitter ban was followed by the removal of more than 70,000 accounts affiliated with the 'QAnon ideology', which played a key role in Capitol chaos. According to Twitter executives, Trump's comments appeared to incite the mob for further replication of violence.

Twitter suspended Trump for 12 hours on the evening the Capitol violence took place and made him delete the offending tweets. On the following morning, Facebook suspended him indefinitely. A

blog post from CEO Mark Zuckerberg said 'the risks of allowing the President to continue to use our service during this period are simply too great'.<sup>6</sup>

Interestingly, a research by the San Francisco-based analytics firm Zignal Labs recently found that misinformation about election fraud dropped by 73 per cent across several social media sites in the week after Trump's account was suspended.<sup>7</sup>

This incident has also shown the kind of power dominance certain social media companies have gained over the period on such important public spaces.

### **Public-Private partnership to skill students in Cybersecurity**

In a new initiative, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has decided to partner with CyberPeace Foundation, an NGO and the Ministry of Education to skill 5 lakh students in the country in Cybersecurity. AICTE has announced the launch of two training programmes to impart cyber skills.

As a part of the program, digital rights and responsibilities, cyber ethics and digital etiquette, cyber hygiene and healthy online practices, cyber laws, managing online risk, becoming responsible netizens and new technologies such as block chain, IoT security and AI will be taught to students.<sup>8</sup>

In the wake of technological advancements, many serious issues have emerged like cybercrimes, online harassment, misinformation, fake news, radicalisation and many others. The main motive of this program is to tackle these issues by empowering the youth in cybersecurity and help build a secure cyber ecosystem in the country where

the internet will be a strength instead of a liability.<sup>9</sup>

### **Permanent ban on TikTok and 58 other Chinese apps**

The Indian Government has imposed fresh notices for the permanent ban of TikTok and 58 other apps from Chinese companies after they failed to provide satisfactory explanation to the government with regards to the privacy and security of data collected by them.

TikTok however has stated that it has continually strived to comply with local laws and regulations and has ensured the privacy and security of all users. It has been evaluating the notice and will respond to it as appropriate.<sup>10</sup>

The apps were earlier banned by the government in June 2020<sup>11</sup> under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology had stated that the apps were prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity of India and security of state and public order. The decision was taken based on comprehensive reports received from Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre of the Ministry of Home Affairs.<sup>12</sup>

The move has been taken in the interests of crores of Indian mobile and internet users and to ensure safety and sovereignty of the Indian cyberspace, according to the government.

### **Google threatens to exit Australia**

A proposed law in Australia aims to make it mandatory for Google, Facebook and other tech companies to pay for the news that appears in search or is shared on their platforms. In response to the proposed law, Google has warned that it would have no choice but to withdraw

its search engine since the laws were unworkable.<sup>13</sup>

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison has said that the Parliament is committed to progressing the laws this year and would not respond to threats.<sup>14</sup> Through the law requiring payments for any links to news on the search engine, the country hopes to regulate tech firms and also extract revenue from them as financial support is needed for Australia's media industry.

World Wide Web founder Tim Berners-Lee has stated that the proposed media code could impact the fundamental principles of the free and open web.<sup>15</sup> Amidst the row on the proposed law, Microsoft which runs search engine Bing, has stated that it is committed to supporting Australia's national security and is ready to fill the void if Google withdraws its services.<sup>16</sup>

## Jeff Bezos to step down as Amazon CEO

Amazon CEO Mr. Jeff Bezos is planning to step down from his post later this year. Andy Jassy, the company's top cloud executive will take over the new role. Bezos in a letter to his employees

has announced that this Q3 he would transition to the Executive Chair of the Amazon Board.<sup>17</sup>

Amazon's chief financial officer, Brian Olsavsky stated that the executive change was aimed more towards a restructuring of the company and was decided in consultation with Amazon's board of directors.<sup>18</sup>

Mr. Bezos will remain Amazon's biggest shareholder with 10.6 percent of shares of the company. He would continue to work on Amazon projects but shift the focus more towards Amazon's future and on his personal projects- the Bezos Earth Fund, his Blue Origin spaceship company, The Washington Post and the Amazon Day 1 Fund.

Mr. Andy Jassy, the upcoming CEO, had joined Amazon back in 1997 and has led Amazon's Web Services, its cloud computing business since the beginning. Mr. Bezos has stated that Amazon after the restructuring would be better positioned for the future, and more flexible to learn new institutional skills as and when required.

<sup>1</sup> New WhatsApp policy worries even companies at <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/international-business/new-whatsapp-policy-worries-even-companies/articleshow/80320696.cms>

<sup>2</sup> Explained: Why is WhatsApp giving users more time to accept its privacy policy? at <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/whatsapp-privacy-policy-explained-7149191/>

<sup>3</sup> Government writes to WhatsApp, asks it to withdraw new privacy policy at [https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/government-writes-to-whatsapp-asks-it-to-withdraw-new-privacy-policy-](https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/government-writes-to-whatsapp-asks-it-to-withdraw-new-privacy-policy-101611046410921.html#:~:text=Government%20writes%20to%20WhatsApp%2C%20asks%20it%20to%20withdraw%20new%20privacy%20policy,-It%20has%20also&text=The%20government%20has%20written%20to,the%20messaging%20service%20for%20users.)

[101611046410921.html#:~:text=Government%20writes%20to%20WhatsApp%2C%20asks%20it%20to%20withdraw%20new%20privacy%20policy,-It%20has%20also&text=The%20government%20has%20written%20to,the%20messaging%20service%20for%20users.](https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/government-writes-to-whatsapp-asks-it-to-withdraw-new-privacy-policy-101611046410921.html#:~:text=Government%20writes%20to%20WhatsApp%2C%20asks%20it%20to%20withdraw%20new%20privacy%20policy,-It%20has%20also&text=The%20government%20has%20written%20to,the%20messaging%20service%20for%20users.)

<sup>4</sup> Indian Cybersecurity Product Landscape 2.0- An emerging next-gen Cybersecurity Product Hub at <https://www.dsci.in/content/indian-cybersecurity-product-landscape-2.0>

<sup>5</sup> Permanent suspension of @realDonaldTrump at

- [https://blog.twitter.com/en\\_us/topics/company/2020/suspension.html](https://blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/company/2020/suspension.html)
- 6 How Twitter, on the front lines of history, finally decided to ban Trump at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/01/16/how-twitter-banned-trump/>
  - 7 73% drop in election misinformation since Trump's Twitter ban: Report at [https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/73-drop-in-election-misinformation-since-trump-s-twitter-ban-report-121011800211\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/73-drop-in-election-misinformation-since-trump-s-twitter-ban-report-121011800211_1.html)
  - 8 Govt joins hands with CyberPeace to skill 5 lakh students in cyber security skills at <https://indianexpress.com/article/education/govt-to-skill-5-lakh-students-in-cyber-security-skills-7143650/>
  - 9 Govt joins hands with CyberPeace to skill 5 lakh students in cyber security skills at <https://www.cyberpeace.org/govt-joins-hands-with-cyberpeace-to-skill-5-lakh-students-in-cyber-security-skills/>
  - 10 TikTok India Ban Now Permanent, Along With 58 Other Apps: Reports at [https://gadgets.ndtv.com/apps/news/tiktok-wechat-ucbrowser-india-permanent-ban-meity-sources-pubg-relaunch-2358127#:~:text=A%20permanent%20ban%20for%20TikTok,later%20either%2C%20like%20PUBG%20Mobile.&text=TikTok%2C%20WeChat%2C%20and%20a%20total,\(MeitY\)%20according%20to%20reports](https://gadgets.ndtv.com/apps/news/tiktok-wechat-ucbrowser-india-permanent-ban-meity-sources-pubg-relaunch-2358127#:~:text=A%20permanent%20ban%20for%20TikTok,later%20either%2C%20like%20PUBG%20Mobile.&text=TikTok%2C%20WeChat%2C%20and%20a%20total,(MeitY)%20according%20to%20reports)
  - 11 Government Bans 59 mobile apps which are prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity of India at <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1635206>
  - 12 Permanent Ban On TikTok, 58 Chinese Apps In India From June at <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/permanent-ban-on-tiktok-58-chinese-apps-in-india-from-june-2358169>
  - 13 Google, Facebook lock horns with Australian govt over 'pay-for-content' digital news code at <https://www.businesstoday.in/technology/news/google-facebook-lock-horns-with-australian-govt-over-pay-for-content-digital-news-code/story/428898.html>
  - 14 Google threatens to leave Australia – but its poker face is slipping at <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/jan/22/google-threatens-leave-australia-but-poker-face-slipping>
  - 15 Australia's proposed media code could break the world wide web, says the man who invented it at <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2021/jan/20/australias-proposed-media-code-could-break-the-world-wide-web-says-the-man-who-invented-it>
  - 16 Microsoft offers to step in if rival Google quits Australia at <https://www.livemint.com/companies/news/microsoft-offers-to-step-in-if-rival-google-quits-australia-11612325787773.html>
  - 17 Jeff Bezos to step down as Amazon CEO, Andy Jassy to take over in Q3 at <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/02/02/jeff-bezos-to-step-down-as-amazon-ceo-andy-jassy-to-take-over-in-q3.html>
  - 18 Jeff Bezos to Step Down as Amazon C.E.O. at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/02/technology/jeff-bezos-amazon.html?referringSource=articleShare>