

PANEL RAISES DATA PRIVACY CONCERNS IN DRAFT TELECOM LAW

Relevant for: Science & Technology | Topic: IT, Internet and Communications

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information and Technology raised several questions on implication on data privacy of citizens with vague definitions of “public interest” and “national security” in the draft Indian Telecommunication Act, 2022, at a meeting to discuss the draft law on Friday.

The members, according to sources, expressed concern about the draft law preceding the Data Privacy Bill, without providing the necessary safeguards.

“The draft law has serious loopholes that can be misused for infringing on privacy. Using ‘public interest/emergency’ and ‘national security’ as the reasons, overarching power is being vested with the administration without adequate oversight mechanism,” one of the panel members said.

The government had released the draft of The Indian Telecommunication Act, 2022, in September, wherein it proposes significant changes, including bringing over-the-top (OTT) platforms within the ambit of telecom services that require a licence to operate, and provisions for message interception in case of public emergency. The government has invited all stakeholders to share inputs by October 30.

The members also expressed reservation about the broadbase that the draft law intends to cover. Another member speaking to *The Hindu* on condition of anonymity said, “It is usurping the powers of Information and Broadcasting Ministry by bringing OTT within their ambit. The TRAI will also be rendered infructuous since the Department of Telecom is seeking to absorb all its regulatory powers. This is a dangerous trend.”

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