Facebook's Data Partnerships Scandal

Why in news?

\n\n

Facebook is facing fresh scrutiny over its data-sharing deals with smartphone manufacturers across the world.

\n\n

What is the deal about?

\n\n

\n
- Facebook entered into "**data sharing partnerships**" with over 60 smartphone makers.
\n
- They include brands like Apple, Samsung, Microsoft and BlackBerry.
\n
- Major Chinese players Huawei, Lenovo, Oppo, and TCL are also in the list.
\n
- Facebook gave smartphone makers "**deep access" to data** on users and friends.
\n
- The deals facilitated APIs (application programming interfaces), the ones from Facebook.
\n
- These have allowed device makers to create the FB experience on their operating systems.
\n
- The deals helped **Facebook** expand its **reach**.
\n
- This was through features such as the 'like' and 'share' buttons being integrated into the operating systems of many devices.
\n
- The deals remained in place for over a decade until recently, when it started to wrap up some of them.
\n

\n\n

What are the concerns?

\n\n

\n
- There is lack of clarity on the sort of deals struck with different players.
\n
- But the API would have given most manufacturers access to some data.
\n
- They have given rise to concerns over how Facebook handles user data and privacy.
\n
- There is fear that device makers got a free hand to collect user data.
\n
- Users' friends’ relationship statuses, political leanings, locations, etc. became accessible.
\n
- It has also been alleged that Facebook’s partnership deals with the device makers violated a consent decree.
\n
- It is signed by the social networking company with the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC).
\n
- Under this, Facebook was required to obtain explicit consent from users before sharing their data with a third party.
\n
- Consent is also required before changing or overriding users’ privacy settings.
\n
- If found in violation of this decree, Facebook can face legal action.
\n

\n\n

What is the present tussle?

\n\n

\n
- The FTC had in 2011 noted that third party developers had access to nearly all of a user’s data.
\n
- It had pulled up Facebook over the so called “Verified Apps” programme.
\n
- The programme did not verify the security of participating apps, and for handing over users’ personal information to advertisers.
\n

- Facebook has however refuted the accusation of violation of the deals.
  \n
- It says that all deals were tightly controlled.
  \n
- Also, that the partnerships were not the same as the ones it had with app developers.
  \n
- Partnerships prevented Facebook information from being used for any other purpose than to recreate Facebook-like experiences.
  \n
- The smartphone makers have also denied these allegations.
  \n
- Nevertheless, the concerns over these deals cannot be brushed aside.
  \n
- This is especially given the Facebook’s record with third party apps.
  \n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: Indian Express

\n

