

'We don't sell people's data'

Says Facebook CEO

AFP, San Francisco

Facebook co-founder and chief Mark Zuckerberg on Thursday renewed his defence of the social network's business, arguing that targeting ads based on interests was different from selling people's data.

"If we're committed to serving everyone, then we need a service that is affordable to everyone," Zuckerberg said in an opinion piece published in the Wall Street Journal.

"The best way to do that is to offer services for free, which ads enable us to do."

2018 was a horrific year for Facebook, marked by a series of scandals over data protection and privacy and concerns that the leading social network had been manipulated by foreign interests for political purposes.

Despite the scandals, Facebook revenue and user numbers have continued to grow.

Making ads relevant, and less annoying, involves understanding people's interests, according to Zuckerberg.

Facebook uses "signals" such as pages users "like" and what they share about themselves to target advertising.

"Sometimes this means people assume we do things that we don't do," Zuckerberg said of the business of supporting the social network with targeted ads.

"For example, we don't sell people's data, even though it's often reported that we do."

Selling user data would not only undermine essential trust in the social network, it would go against Facebook's business interests because rivals could use it to compete for advertising, he reasoned.

Facebook also provides users with controls regarding information used for ad targeting and lets them block advertisers, Zuckerberg pointed out.

Criticism of Facebook has included the social network being used as a platform to spread divisive or misleading information, as was the case during the 2016 election that put US President Donald Trump in the White House.

"Clickbait and other junk may drive engagement in the near term, but it would be foolish for us to show this intentionally, because it's not what people want," Zuckerberg wrote.

"Another question is whether we leave harmful or divisive content up because it drives engagement. We don't."

Facebook has been investing in artificial intelligence and adding employees devoted to ferreting out content that violates the social network's rules.

The expense could weigh on its quarterly earnings, due for release next week.

"The only reason bad content remains is because the people and artificial-intelligence systems we use to review it are not perfect -- not because we have an incentive to ignore it," he said.

Modi's ratings at all-time low; Rahul closing in

Reveals survey

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ratings have dropped to their lowest-ever level, but he still leads in popularity before a national election expected in the next few months, an India Today poll showed yesterday.

Modi is facing discontent over lack of jobs for young people and a weak farm economy, and polls have forecast his ruling alliance will fall short of a majority in the election due by May.

The India Today poll, which was conducted from Dec 20 to Jan 8, showed his popularity rating at 46 percent. That's down from 65 percent in January 2017, a little over a month after he announced a nationwide ban of 500- and 1,000-rupee notes.

Nearly 900 million people will be eligible to vote in the election and surveys to predict how they will vote have often gone wrong.

Rahul Gandhi, the main challenger

Youth killed

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year. He was an assistant manager of Sarmin Group, a readymade garment factory in Palli Bidyut area, said his friend Mohammad Zinna.

Munir had changed his Facebook profile picture on August 2 last year in support of a widespread protest for safer roads that received global attention following the deaths of two students in Dhaka.

He had also demanded tougher punishment for reckless driving.



Shehabul Munir

"Munir got brain injuries and was taken to the ICU at the hospital. But he died," said Nandita Sarker, a lecturer at the Department of Environment Sciences in Jahangirnagar University, quoting the doctors.

Rezaul Haque, officer-in-charge of Ashulia Police Station, told The Daily Star that Munir's relatives filed a case against the driver.

"We have arrested the driver and sent him to the court. We have also seized the vehicle," he said.

Pranab chosen

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wisdom and intellect have a few parallels. Delighted that he has been conferred the Bharat Ratna," Modi said in a separate Twitter post.

Pranab, who was one of the senior most Congress party leaders for decades, was India's 13th president from 2012 to 2017. He had also held the key portfolios of finance, defence and external affairs ministers under

Earth's oldest

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moon because it was three times closer to Earth at the time.

The rock contains quartz, feldspar and zircon, which are very common on Earth but not so much on the moon.

An analysis of the rock revealed that it formed at temperatures associated with Earth and in an Earth-like setting combined with oxygen. It crystallised between 4 billion and 4.1 billion years ago, when the Earth was young, about 12.4 miles below the surface.

If it had formed on the moon, it would have reflected different temperature conditions. It would also be highly unusual for a lunar sample, the researchers said. It would have formed deep within the moon in the mantle, where scientists think different rock compositions can be found.

But if the rock formed so far beneath the Earth's surface, how was it jettisoned? The researchers believe that one or more impact events to the planet's surface revealed the rock before it was launched. At the time, Earth would have been experiencing asteroid impacts capable of creating craters that were hundreds of miles wide.

On the lunar surface, the rock mixed with other materials. The new analysis revealed that it may have been impacted and even partially melted 3.9 billion years ago, burying it under the surface and creating a "new" rock -- essentially a time capsule from the early days of the solar system.

Then, 26 million years ago, an asteroid hit the moon and created the Cone Crater, which is 0.2 miles across. This helped toss the rock back to the moon's surface.

So when the Apollo 14 astronauts collected it almost exactly 48 years ago -- between January 31 and February 6, 1971 -- they thought it was an organic sample that would provide information about the moon and its composition.

The international research team that analysed the rock developed techniques to find impact fragments in the moon's soil. David Kring, principal investigator for the Center for Lunar Science and Exploration, challenged his team to find a bit of Earth on the moon. And he believes that more may be found.

"It is an extraordinary find that helps paint a better picture of early Earth and the bombardment that modified our planet during the dawn of life," Kring said in a statement.

Myanmar still forcing

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"The campaign of violence against the Rohingya continues, with the security forces slowly bleeding the remaining Rohingya population and continuing to force them to flee to Bangladesh," said Yanghee Lee.

Some 750,000 Rohingas fled a brutal military crackdown and came to Bangladesh since August 2017.

Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a bilateral repatriation deal in November 2017. Last year, Myanmar signed a deal with the UNDP and UN Refugee Council. However, repatriation could not be started yet because the refugees were not volunteering for return.

In the recent months, Arakan Army, a Rakhine ethnic community, and Myanmar army got engaged in conflicts, leading to killings and displacement of some 6,000 civilians.

Government rhetoric characterising the Rakhine community as sympathisers, collaborators and associates of the Arakan Army (AA) threatens only to increase tensions in the region and divisions between ethnic communities, Lee said.

Describing her visit to the no man's land, where some 4,000 Rohingya refugees have been living, near Naikkharghchari in Bandarban, she said security forces on the Myanmar side are engaging in an intimidation campaign, in the apparent hope of driving this group out and into Bangladesh territory.

It is clear that Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh cannot return to Myanmar in the near future, she said, adding: "Now that the election in Bangladesh has concluded, I encourage the government to begin to engage in longer-term planning and prepare the local population for this reality."

A failure to do so will not only have negative consequences for the refugee population but also for Bangladesh, including most significantly, the host community, who have already given so much to accommodate the refugees."

She urged India and Saudi Arabia to ensure that Rohingya people within their borders are protected and not

forcibly deported.

On Rohingya relocation to Bhashanchar, Lee said there should be no rush to relocate them.

Asked about relocation of the Rohingyas to other Southeast Asian countries, she said, "I don't think that's a possibility."

About a UN-led safe zone for the Rohingya in Rakhine state, she said such safe zones are not actually safe. She suggested a sustainable solution to the crisis by holding Myanmar accountable.

She said there were instances in the history that refugees were told to stay in safe zones, but then killed together.

PROSECUTE MYANMAR ARMY CHIEF

In an interview with the Reuters in Bangkok, Lee said Myanmar's army chief should be prosecuted for genocide against the Rohingya Muslim minority.

"Min Aung Hlaing and others should be held accountable for genocide in Rakhine and for crimes against humanity and war crimes in other parts of Myanmar," said Lee, referring to the military's commander-in-chief.

Her interview on January 18 marked the first time Lee has publicly called for the army chief to be prosecuted for genocide against Rohingyas.

"For any repatriation to happen ... the perpetrators must be held to account, because sending the refugees back with no accountability is going to really exacerbate or prolong the horrific situation in Myanmar.... And then we'll see another cycle of expulsion again."

The UN Security Council in September voted to approve the establishment of an "ongoing independent mechanism" for Myanmar that would collect, consolidate, and preserve evidence of crimes that could be used in an eventual court case.

Lee said the independent mechanism would provide funds for "victim support", including money for criminal cases.

Myanmar, which is not a party to the Rome Statute that established the ICC, has said it "absolutely rejects" the Hague-based court.

Police not following

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Medical College Hospital (DMCH). The victim lost six days before receiving medical attention and examination at the OCC.

WHY IS PROMPT MEDICAL EXAMINATION NECESSARY?

The Daily Star approached a forensic expert, who has experience in the field of more than 25 years, to get an answer. He said evidence, for example, semen and DNA, found immediately after rape can help identify the perpetrators. With time, those might get destroyed and doctors are unlikely to get proper results.

For married women, a delay could also wipe out signs of rape in many cases, he added.

It was already two days late when Shaila's mother filed a case. The police should have promptly taken her to a government hospital for medical examination, added the expert, wishing not to be named.

Police are accountable for further delay, according to a High Court order passed in April last year.

Any failure to take a rape victim to the nearest hospital for medical test after filing of a case "would be a punishable offence", the court said.

It issued a set of directives to ensure justice and protection of rape survivors, responding to a 2015 petition filed by five rights organisations, including Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust and Ain o Salish Kendra.

The petition had been filed following a rape similar to Shaila's.

Final Assam

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verification of the 36.2 lakh claimants would begin from February 15. The claimants would be issued notice 15 days ahead of their scheduled hearing, giving them ample time to prepare for it. These hearings are expected to span over a 100 days, possibly till June 30. That is well past the Lok Sabha elections.

Top government source in the Supreme Court, who is part of the legal proceedings, said those who have filed claims and objections are eligible to cast their vote for the parliamentary elections due in May, provided their names are on the voters' list. A call would be taken only after the final NRC list is published, the source clarified.

Meanwhile, the court made it clear that the NRC verification process should not stop for the elections.

Hajela had expressed doubts in court about getting enough manpower for the NRC work at the time of the elections. He said officers involved in the NRC work may be deputed for poll work. Around 5,000 government officers and staff are currently involved in the NRC process.

Hajela submitted that the election work may delay the publication of the final NRC to September-end.

But the court put its foot down. "We are not in a position to think of an NRC beyond July 31... We are not prepared at this stage to go beyond July

31," Chief Justice Gogoi observed.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, for the Assam government, initially explained to the Bench that State cannot do much but bow to the Election Commission's demands for manpower during poll time. "The State has no say. That is our predicament," Mehta submitted.

"Predicaments may be many, but we have to overcome them. Both processes -- NRC and parliamentary elections -- have equal importance and should simultaneously go ahead without affecting one another," Chief Justice Gogoi observed.

The court agreed to Mehta's suggestion to organise a meeting among the Assam Chief Secretary, Hajela and the Election Commission of India to work out an arrangement on the optimum use of State employees and their deputisation for NRC and poll work. The court ordered a report on the issue in seven days and posted the case for hearing on February 5.

The court further asked Hajela to consider and act according to a suggestion made by Attorney-General KK Venugopal that the officers who had heard the original claims and excluded people in the earlier draft NRC should not hear the same cases this time too.

"We will do a randomisation of the officers... we will inter-change the local registrars," Hajela responded in court.