

Google fined \$42.7 million for deceiving users

Australia's Federal Court has penalised Google for A\$60 million (US\$ 42.7 million), on accounts of misleading users and collecting personal location history without proper consent.

As per a recent report by Reuters, Google was charged with collecting personal location data through several users' Android smartphones from January 2017 to December 2018.

The court stated that Google misled users into believing that the location history setting is the only way Google could collect local data from users.

However, according to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), smartphone features that monitored browsing activity and application usage also collected location data from users. ACCC predicts that about 1.3 million Australian Google account owners were affected in this way.



In 2018, Google reportedly sent ACCC an email in which they stated that location collection information was simple and easy to understand, dismissing the matter as resolved. This led to ACCC filing proceedings against Google in October 2019.

Reuters reports that over the past year, Google has been involved in other legal matters in Australia, including a recent law that makes Google and Facebook pay media companies to run content on their platforms.

WhatsApp to reportedly launch animated avatars

WhatsApp is planning on launching avatar profile photos for users, according to reports derived from the latest WhatsApp beta version.

Reports regarding the beta WhatsApp state that when this new feature rolls, users will be able to set a custom avatar as their profile display photo. Earlier reports suggested that WhatsApp is working on letting users answer incoming video calls on WhatsApp using animated avatars.

The animated avatar feature is still in an early development stage. Currently, there has been no official



confirmation from Meta regarding the release of this feature.

Meta, the parent company of

WhatsApp, is currently keen on building its virtual online universe, or metaverse, as a commercial space for users everywhere. Reports predict that WhatsApp moving to animated avatars for users would fall in line with Meta's current vision as a company.

Aside from such rumoured customisation features, WhatsApp has recently launched a slew of new privacy features, including hiding the user's online status, leaving groups without notifying anyone and blocking screenshots for selected messages.

YouTube plans to launch streaming service: reports

Popular video sharing platform YouTube is planning on launching its own video streaming service, as per a recent report by Wall Street Journal.

According to the report, Alphabet Inc., the parent company of Google and YouTube, has been in talks with some unnamed entertainment companies regarding opening a "channel store" for online videos.

The report adds that the plan has been in motion for at least 18 months, and that the official announcement could come this year.

Reports predict that if YouTube does launch its own brand of video streaming store, it could potentially rival companies such as Apple, Roku Inc. and even Netflix to join the currently congested market of streaming content.

To note, no official confirmation regarding an online video store or any such entity has been made by Alphabet Inc. as of yet.



EDITOR'S NOTE

All charged up

The gas price hike has been a heated topic in the past few weeks. While we scramble for methods to somehow survive this rising inflation, there are some alternatives that may be worth considering. As such, this week's Cover Story discusses the viability of electric bicycles as a transportation option for daily commuters.

If you're looking for some easy tips on managing your car's fuel economy, turn to Shift for a simple guide that addresses just that. In Bytes, we compiled a list of Wi-Fi routers, and in Next Step, some beginner-friendly platforms to learn programming.

Stay safe everyone. See you next week. Until then.

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