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# Chinese smartphone maker Xiaomi cleans up its act

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Leading Chinese smartphone maker Xiaomi, which recently sold 1,00,000 units in India on a single day, has begun moving the data of users from servers in China to data centres in the US and Singapore amid concerns in the Indian military and other authorities that the information could be accessed by Chinese authorities.

Xiaomi has emerged as a leading player in the Indian market with flash sales on an e-commerce site of its Redmi 1S smartphone priced at ₹5,999. But F-Secure, a Finland-based digital security research firm, recently established in tests that every Redmi 1S phone, on startup, was sending the service provider's name, the phone's IMEI and number to the server api.account.xiaomi.com in China. The number of contacts added to the phonebook and from SMSs received too were forwarded to the same server.

These concerns led to the Indian Air Force issuing an alert to its personnel and their families not to use Xiaomi smartphones. The alert also cited a report on the popular PhoneArena website as saying the server in China could have links with CNNIC, an agency under the Chinese Ministry of Information Industry.

Xiaomi issued an update that allowed users to opt out of certain services that sent data to China-based servers but following the concerns expressed by Indian authorities, the firm said in a post on its official Facebook page on October 22 that it had begun moving the data of non-Chinese users to servers in the US and Singapore. It further said that future plans include the migration of the data of Indian users to servers within India.

The post by Hugo Barra, in charge of Xiaomi's products and operations in all markets outside China, said: "Earlier this year, our e-commerce engineering teams started migrating our global ecommerce platforms and user data for all international users from our Beijing data centers to Amazon AWS data centers in California (USA) and Singapore."

Concerns have also been expressed about the security of data linked to Xiaomi's Mi Cloud service and the MIUI Cloud Messaging function of its smartphones, and

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Amazon AWS data centres in Oregon (USA) and Singapore. This migration includes Mi Account, Cloud Messaging and Mi Cloud services."

Barra said the server and data migration process would be done in three phases. The e-commerce migration would be completed by the end of October while the MIUI services migration would be finished by the end of the year. In 2015, Xiaomi

will work with local data center providers to set up service infrastructure in India and Brazil, two of its fast-growing markets.

With Xiaomi describing India as its most important market after China and more Chinese smartphone manufacturers lining up to enter the domestic market, experts believe the Indian government needs to move quickly to protect the privacy and data of consumers.

"This is a much bigger problem than it appears to be. Both state and non-state actors outside India have tremendous interest in Indian data as it will allow them to do things like track economic growth patterns," Pavan Duggal, a cyberlaw and e-commerce expert, told Mail Today.

India has a poor legal regime for data and privacy protection even after amendments to the IT Act of 2000. There is no dedicated data protection law," he said. Duggal pointed out that under Section 79 of the IT Act, "intermediaries" or service providers are required to exercise due diligence while discharging their obligations.

Experts like Duggal believe the ultimate solution lies in "data localisation", or ensuring that the data of Indian citizens is retained in servers within the country. "The culture of cybersecurity is non-existent in the minds of lay Indians but such data harvested by other countries can play havoc on their lives and the collective interests of the nation," Duggal said.

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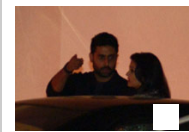
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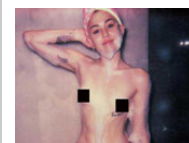


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