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## Facebook's Data Partnerships Scandal

### Why in news?

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

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### What is the deal about?

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

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## **What are the concerns?**

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

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## **What is the present tussle?**

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- The FTC had in 2011 noted that third party developers had access to nearly all of a user's data.
- It had pulled up Facebook over the so called "Verified Apps" programme.

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- The programme did not verify the security of participating apps, and for handing over users' personal information to advertisers.  
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- Facebook has however refuted the accusation of violation of the deals.  
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- It says that all deals were tightly controlled.  
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- Also, that the partnerships were not the same as the ones it had with app developers.  
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- Partnerships prevented Facebook information from being used for any other purpose than to recreate Facebook-like experiences.  
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- The smartphone makers have also denied these allegations.  
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- Nevertheless, the concerns over these deals cannot be brushed aside.  
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- This is especially given the Facebook's record with third party apps.  
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**Source: Indian Express**

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