

Catch-all approach to Net freedom draws activist ire

ANNIE JOHNNY

The Internet has revolutionised the way we socialise, date and even protest. Online activism is a faster, more effective way to get more people to react to a cause. But at the same time it is this speed that makes Internet-generated protests a far graver danger than of-line protests. Egypt faced an Internet shutdown when the protest started gaining steam and China has been throttled with heavy cyber censorship for years. Unfortunately, silencing the voices of dissent online is as easy as raising them.

A workshop recently conducted at the Constitution Club in New Delhi brought together human rights activists, bloggers and techies and explored the challenges faced by online activists. "When the Internet was in its nascent stage, there was the Utopian belief that the government would not have the same role to play as it does offline. However, the Internet is being increasingly regulated by the government," says

Dr. Anja Kovacs, fellow, Centre for Internet and Society, Bangalore.

The Binayak Sen and Pink Chaddi campaigns provide a picture of how fast and efficient online activism is. "Initially, the campaign was restricted to a centralised network of people and was a way for me and my friends to vent out our thoughts. But it grew beyond our expectations. Between March 2008 and May 2009, we had about 1.5 million visitors. Our experience with the Internet as an effective tool in mobilising people has been very positive," says Satya Sivaraman, one of the initiators of the Free Binayak Sen Campaign website.

Blocking websites that promote child pornography and hate speech is acceptable. Activists, however, are concerned about the mysterious disappearances of blogs and the vague explanations given to justify them. "There is a provision for spam in the IP act. While the rule is meant for only for spam, it is extended over a much wider area. According to it, anything that is deemed objectionable can



Activists are concerned about the mysterious disappearances of blogs and the vague explanations given to justify them

be blocked. Instead of targeting offensive material, the act should target harmful content. Child pornography and hate speeches cause harm, whereas what is 'offensive' is subjective," says Pranesh Prakash, programme manager, Centre for Internet and Society.

Bloggers in countries like Thailand and Singapore face serious consequences for posting anti-state views online. However, very few

The Binayak Sen and Pink Chaddi campaigns provide a picture of how fast and efficient online activism is

people all over the world are standing up against the curtailing of the right to freedom

of expression online. "There are ways to access blocked sites but most people do not bother to do that. If a site is blocked, they will simply accept it. The government in India is becoming increasingly restrictive. While their reason for concern is valid as the restrictions are in place to protect national security, the way they are dealing with this is inappropriate. Drafting vague rules related to 'objectionable content' without

specifying whom the content is objectionable to, is not going to help. There needs to be clearly defined categories for banning sites," says Kovacs.

Rising against the growing restrictions and the wide gaps in Internet accessibility, The Internet Rights and Principles coalition, which works on Internet rights, is coming up with a Charter for Human Rights and Principles for the Internet.

The charter, which is still being drafted and has been put online for suggestions, emphasises that human rights apply the same way online as they do offline, and lays down rules and Internet policies necessary to protect human rights.

Another interesting observation is that most online protests don't always spark parallel offline protests. The Meter Jam protest against the high auto fares in Mumbai is one such example. "While it helped the middle class vent their frustration, on the day of the actual offline protest, hardly anyone boycotted autos. Business went on as usual," says Kovacs.

Online travel journal explores Delhi

VANDANA SEBASTIAN

Whether you're passing through Delhi on a business trip or whether you've lived here all your life, you'll never know enough about this glorious city. This is why Delhi is the first city to be featured in *Bring Home Stories*, a newly-launched online travel video journal. The travel journal

Home Stories was started by Sapna Bhatia, a freelance journalist and globetrotter. "People don't know much about the real India. Most travel guides are outdated and colloquial. For example, they describe monuments and festivals in a way that expects the reader to already know the basics of the city's history and traditions. But



One of the shots at Nehru Park

focuses on exploring places through the eyes of two people — a local from the area and a foreigner. The website tries not to be a clichéd travel guide that focuses on historical monuments and popular eating joints. It delves into slightly more out-of-the-box Delhi experiences, like getting visiting cards made, enjoying the sights at Nehru Park and trying out the roadside fruit *chaat*, which according to the website is a healthier, tastier option than *aloo chaat* or *golgappas*. The website has an online travel show called *My 24 Hours*, where two people explore Delhi. The show is non-scripted and spontaneous, which makes it both informal and natural. *Bring*

when a person is visiting, especially from abroad, they will in most cases not be aware of the city's history. *Bring Home Stories* was started to be a fun way to learn about the place you're visiting," says Bhatia. Bhatia and her staff have been working hard on the project since its inception last month. They also have freelancers who contribute. Readers can also contribute by writing in about their experiences. The journal also helps locals know more about their city. There are a couple of unique shops in Delhi featured on the website with location details. "We decided to showcase Delhi first because it's the only city with such a rich history spanning over 5000 years," says Bhatia.

FIGHT NIGHT CHAMPION

MOOSA KHAN

This game is a total KO

You seldom expect a sports game to be about anything beyond the sport itself, but after playing EA's *Fight Night Champion*, chances are you won't be saying that again. In this latest boxing franchise, EA Sports has taken an altogether new approach to refresh the franchise and produced a gritty game with a gripping storyline that takes you by surprise. The developers have worked hard on smoothing the gameplay kinks that marred the last couple

of titles, and have improved on the already lifelike graphics to make *FNC* a game worth watching out for.

Fight Night Champion is a definite improvement over its predecessors. In addition to the old free play mode and legacy mode, it has an improved roster and a full spectrum punch control handled with the right analog stick. The new system is easy on the thumbs and makes stringing combinations easier. But what takes the cake in this version

of *Fight Night* is the new Champion mode, where you play Andre Bishop, an amateur boxer whose rise to fame, subsequent decline and comeback unfold in front of you. The story paces comfortably without being monotonous as you indulge in fights where you use all your faculties in different capacities — From no holds barred prison brawls with white supremacists to pro championship matches. Each fight will test you differently which may mean avoiding an opponent's nasty left hook in one game or knocking out your opponent after tiring him. Whether you play on the defensive or offensive, box inside or outside you'll learn to mould your strategy according to each opponent. So no more complaints of static gameplay.

The graphics of *FNC* are the most real I've ever seen. Every detail on the boxers from the way they move, to the way their bodies react to punches to the way the light reflects off them is done to perfection. Though occasional frame rate hiccups during cutscenes do occur.

To sum up, *Fight Night Champion* is a one of a kind heavy weight title that packs a powerful punch; One that'll leave you and your opponent equally stunned.



The graphics of *Fight Night Champion* are the most real. Every detail on the boxers from the way they move to the way their bodies react to, is done to perfection

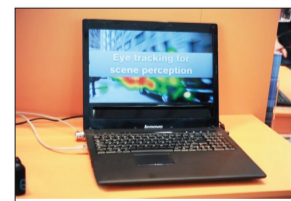
Eye control is the next step?

JEAN-BAPTISTE PIGGIN

A futuristic idea emerges in computing and either takes the world by storm or vanishes amid general derision. The latest idea is a laptop controlled by the eyes instead of a mouse. Tobii, a Swedish company's device, a sleek

black Lenovo laptop, has a keyboard and users must also use their hands to operate it. "You still use the mouse to click, but the eyes are ideal for pointing," explained Anders Olsson, business development manager at Tobii.

The device uses tiny video cameras to track eye move-



A new beginning. But the challenge is to make it cheap enough to in-

roduce in mass-market and kick off an "ecosystem" in which thousands of creative software engineers try their luck by devising new apps that take advantage of it.

An eye-controlled computer will enable some actions impossible with just a keyboard and mouse. DPA

GEEK EMPIRE

ZAHID H. JAVALI



Media player streams music wirelessly



The Creative Zen Touch 2 (with GPS) beats Apple's iPod Touch hollow with a host of amazing features. You can wirelessly stream music to Bluetooth headphones or speakers and store more with its micro SD slot (in addition to its 8GB inbuilt memory). And it's got a FM radio and the battery life is much better than any Apple's device available. Also, it is way more economical than the iPod. Lightweight and slim, Creative boasts of high fidelity sound and sharp videos and its display and inbuilt graphics will surely make you drool. Available in Android 2.1 OS, you can download apps and games from the internet too. Costs Rs 9,000 (8GB).

HD theatre projector that is easy to carry



The new, light-weight BenQ W1000 is quick and cool. Coming from the World's No 1 DLP projector brand, this full HD home theatre projector is designed for portability. It easily fits into a briefcase, making it a handy and suitable presentation tool. With two HDMI ports, you don't need to switch cables to play a movie on your Blu-ray player or indulge in gaming on your PS3. Besides, it supports all video formats, including 1080i, 1080p, HDMI and Blu-ray; offers five times better resolution than traditional projectors, brightness of 2000 ANSI lumens, contrast ratio of 3000:1 and the colour matching technology that competes with the colour quality of your notebook screen. Costs Rs 48,000.

Monitor kids with proximity sensor



Zicom's Personal Anti-Loss alarm allows parents to keep an eye on their kids even when they are not at home. This device alerts them when the child moves away from their safe orbit. It consists of a transmitter and a receiver designed like a key chain. The transmitter is attached to the child and the receiver is kept with the parent. A safe distance is set through the receiver (up to a max of 25 metres). If the distance between the transmitter and the receiver exceeds the pre-set limit, it will beep thrice to alert the parents that their child is no longer within the safe distance. But if the child comes back into their safety orbit, the device stops beeping. Set the alarm for Rs 795.

Zahid H. Javali is part-columnist, part-photographer, part-gadget guru and a full-time custom publisher.

UK to get new political social network

LONDON: Jolitics, a new political social network from Michael Birch, famed for founding Bebo, is making its on March 15. People in the UK will be able to join the service, which he hopes will play host to "constructive political debate" globally and attract the world's top politicians. Jolitics mem-

bers can join debates about current political issues and nominate others, who they deem more knowledgeable on a particular subject, to cast their vote for them — either agreeing or disagreeing with the motion. This system, Birch hopes, will produce genuine opinions on politics of the world.

Kinect sells faster than iPhone & iPad

LONDON: Kinect, Microsoft's hands-free interface for the Xbox 360 console, has been confirmed as the fastest-selling consumer electronics device in history by Guinness World Records. The global authority on record breaking reports that the Kinect sensor sold an average of 133,333 units per day in its first 60 days



on sale from 4 November 2010 to 3 January 2011. These sales figures are significantly larger than those for both the iPhone and iPad in the same time-frame after launch.

Camera that can show inner objects

Researchers at Missouri University of Science and Technology under engineering professor Reza Zoughi have developed a patented device that can show the inner structures of objects by using millimeter and microwave signals. Potential applications include the detection of cancerous skin cells, ter-

mite damage to buildings, or concealed weapons at secure zones like airports. It can also be used for finding "defects in thermal insulating materials that are found in spacecraft heat insulating foam and tiles, aircraft radomes and composite-strengthened concrete bridge members," Zoughi said.

Now, avail postal transaction online

NEW DELHI: Communications Minister Kapil Sibal on Wednesday launched the 'e-Post Office' — the e-commerce portal of India Post which will provide postal transaction and tracking facilities to customers online, a statement said. The portal will enable the customers to transact postal business any

time and from anywhere using debit or credit cards. "In the changing world, the ways we live are changing. Launch of e-Post is a step in this direction offering a bouquet of services to the consumers. This is in line with shift in marketing trend of service provider reaching the consumers," he said. AGENCIES