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Trai Website Attacked by Hackers

Email IDs of over a million people, who wrote to the regulator on net neutrality, made public through a downloadable file

Our Bureau

New Delhi: The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's (tra) website was hacked on Monday afternoon after it displayed details, including e-mail IDs and names of around a million people who wrote to it on the issue of net neutrality.

Hacker group Anonymous India claimed responsibility for bringing down the website, saying Trai could not be trusted with anyone's data. The website has since been revived.

"Trai Down! XXXXXXXX Trai for releasing email IDs publicly and helping spammers. Boom Boom! #TRAI "; "Host is down" all over

my terminal. Thank you! Boom Boom #TRAI "; "#TRAI forgot about us hahaha! We reminded them that we are still here. BOOM http://tra.gov.in" were some of the tweets from the hacker group after bringing the site down for what it believed was violation of privacy of over a million Indians.

While there are no such privacy laws in India, the regulator was severely criticised through the day Monday all over social media for disclosing the e-mail IDs of people who had written to it over the ongoing consultation on whether to regulate app providers.

Netizens panned the regulator for revealing the e-mail IDs which

exposed over a million people to potential spamming and unsolicited marketing e-mails. The Trai website allowed for downloading the entire document with the e-mail IDs.

Experts say that since the consultation process requires transparency, the names needed to be disclosed but publishing the e-mail IDs was unnecessary.

"The regulator has to make the comments and names of the people public, it is a part of the process but it needn't have revealed the e-mail IDs, which can be harvested by spammers," Prasanth Sungathan, counsel at Software Freedom Law Center, told ET.

Trai didn't respond to an e-mailed query seeking comment.

The regulator revealed the names to facilitate counter-comments, the deadline for which is May 8, after which it will hold an open-house consultation before making its recommendations.

"While there cannot be anonymity in public consultations and Trai is obliged to reveal all responses, they must not reveal the e-mail IDs/contact unless they can prove that petitioners provided no other form of identification, including a name," Rajeev Chandrasekhar, an independent lawmaker and a vocal supporter of net neutrality, said in a statement.