The following is a selection of global COVID-19 developments compiled by the Thomson Reuters Data Privacy news team. This news bulletin covers technology developments, cybersecurity, proposed legislation, and other key data privacy updates relating to COVID-19.

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Technology Developments

**COVID-19 Hastens Fintech Adoption While Industry Seeks Guidance** U.S. (October 6, 2020)

Unique circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic forced more Americans to get comfortable with financial technology, while leaving the industry wondering whether regulators will devise a reliable legal framework to support it. Plaid Inc., which offers products to power fintech apps, commissioned a survey by The Harris Poll. The survey showed that a large majority of Americans relied more than ever on digital applications to manage their money after the COVID-19 outbreak.

**COVID-19 Alert App Slowly Starting to be Used in Province** Canada (October 5, 2020)

More than two weeks after its debut, a handful of Saskatchewan people have used the federal government's COVID Alert app, which warns close contacts after someone using the app tests positive for COVID-19. The lack of information beyond that, however, raises questions of whether the application is actually helping people navigate the pandemic.

**COVID-19 App Passed Privacy Assessment** Malta (September 30, 2020)

A privacy assessment was carried out on a new health ministry COVID-19 contact-tracing app over doubts raised about its privacy safeguards. Commissioner Saviour Cachia said a data protection impact assessment was submitted to the IDPC before the government's COVID-19 contact tracing app was launched. Cachia said that based on a legal and technical analysis, the app was given a favourable option to go live, saying the data controller had mitigated any possible risks with the appropriate measures.

**Quebec to Launch COVID Alert App Support, Ditch Creating Its Own** Canada (September 29, 2020)

The province of Quebec has announced it will officially support Canada's COVID Alert app, and abandon the idea of making its own exposure notification app. The Quebec government did not give a specific timeline for when the COVID Alert app support was coming, but confirmed that it would no longer try to make its own app.
Cybersecurity

Financial Firms Battle Surge in Cybercrime  China (October 5, 2020)

Cybercriminals are using the unprecedented disruption in daily life brought on by COVID-19 to try to breach systems and dupe employees and customers of banks, payment providers, online retailers, and other businesses at an alarming pace, according to cybersecurity experts and regulators.

Will Personal Privacy Become a COVID-19 Casualty?  Cayman Islands (October 2, 2020)

Worldwide we have seen governments harness data collected from mobile phones, thermal imaging cameras, drones, and facial recognition software to identify at-risk individuals and track their location, movements, and other data points, including body temperature. As the world enters the second wave of COVID-19, there is a growing risk that the erosion of personal privacy will become another casualty of the pandemic.

Why Cyber Resilience is The Need of The Hour in The Age of COVID-19  Saudi Arabia (October 1, 2020)

With COVID-19 becoming the new reality, organizations around the globe must respond proactively to cyber threats that have seen a spike during the pandemic. For this reason, cyber resilience, which refers to an organization's or sector's ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from cyberattacks, has become an absolute necessity rather than a mere option in the current scenario.

Proposed Legislation

House OKs Three Katko Bills to Boost COVID-19 Response, Cybersecurity, TSA Benefits  U.S. (October 2, 2020)

Three bills backed by U.S. Rep. John Katko received final approval in the House of Representatives. The House passed the COVID Prepare Act, which would require federal government agencies to develop plans for responding to surges in COVID-19 cases. The plans, according to the legislation, must detail how the agencies will consult with Congress and measurable goals.

California Governor Vetoes Bill to Establish the Genetic Information Privacy Act  U.S. (September 29, 2020)

California may still see a DTC genetic testing law soon. Governor Newsom stated in his message accompanying the veto that he shares the perspective that the sensitive nature of human genetic data warrants strong privacy protections, but is concerned that the broad language in the bill risked unintended consequences. For example, he recognized that the "opt in" provisions of the bill might interfere with laboratories' reporting requirements related to COVID-19 testing.

Other Key Data Privacy Updates

Big Brother is Watching Your Social-Distancing! Over 1,000 AI Scanners Are Monitoring How Close Pedestrians Are Walking to Each Other in major UK cities  U.K. (October 9, 2020)

More than 1,000 AI scanners are monitoring how close pedestrians get to each other in London, Manchester and other British cities to supply the government with data on social distancing. The sensors were initially intended to track the flow of traffic, cyclists and walkers to work out how roads were being used, but after lockdown in March were fitted with the new feature. The data is used to 'inform policy decisions', and in response to
privacy concerns it has been acknowledged none of the footage is saved, streamed or used for enforcement purposes.

_U.K._ (October 8, 2020)

Ever since the government announced their "world beating" test and trace system, concerns have been raised over its ability to properly handle the masses of sensitive medical and location data involved. It has brought the entire arrangement into question, casting serious doubts over the privacy and security of personal information harvested from thousands of Brits each day.

_U.S._ (October 6, 2020)

As the nation tries to control the pandemic, the question being asked is how much of our individual freedoms are we willing to give up? This article analyzes the various student surveillance techniques designed to protect campuses, ranging from apps that monitor students' movements to asking students to wear a quarter sized disc called a BioButton which when applied to the chest tracks a person's temperature, heart rate, and respiratory rate.

_Australia_ (October 1, 2020)

Australians stranded overseas due to COVID-19 have been the victims of a data breach as a result of another clumsy email bungle by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

_Asia_ (September 30, 2020)

Asia has become the world’s surveillance hotspot and is at risk of serious privacy breaches as measures rolled out to contain the spread of COVID-19 become permanent in many countries. For example, China took the biggest steps to track the virus using mass surveillance, mandatory health apps, and an increase in use of facial recognition technologies.

_Guam_ (September 30, 2020)

The download rate of Guam's COVID-19 Alert app is still far below what's needed to make it effective. The app, which is free to download and available for iPhones and Androids, can notify users who have been exposed to a person who tested positive for COVID-19 and who also has the app. Janela Carrera, Public Health information officer has stressed that the app is not collecting data on residents and a Download-A-Thon event has been organized to address residents' privacy concerns.