

Data protection hasn't advanced alongside e-commerce

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In a recent forum, leading IT and legal experts revealed that on par with the growing e-commerce activities in Sri Lanka, the country does not have adequate legislation and intuitional framework to protect consumer data being abused and misused by third parties.

An Attorney at Law of the Supreme Court Thishya Weragoda said, "Sri Lanka does not have the legal regime to prevent information being shared wrongfully" Programme Director and Legal Advisor for the Information and Communication Technology Agency (ICTA), Jayantha Fernando said "Sri Lankan consumers are in great danger of third parties acquiring their personal data without their consent." These remarks were made at a forum held by the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka to mark World Consumer Rights Day on 15 March.

Speaking further, Thishya Weragoda said, "We give out all our personal details – there's much value in that information as vendors know what our preferences are." He further added that this valuable information could be passed freely to third parties without consumers' consent under the current law.

Jayantha Fernando suggested that the government should bring necessary legislation with an institutional framework to protect consumer data.

He proposed an institutional framework which is similar to Right to Information Act should be adopted, allowing the institution to act more independently.

It's reported that during the year of 2016, Sri Lankans have subscribed to additional 1.5 million cellular mobile connections and over 300,000 broadband and dial-up internet connections, increasing Sri Lanka's internet penetration to a 30 per cent and total internet users to a 6.1 million.

A survey carried out by Takas, a leading local e-commerce firm found that e-commerce would rapidly expand by 71 per cent to reach \$4 billion by 2020.