

**POLITY AND GOVERNANCE****❖ A Setback for Data Privacy Rights**

**Context:** The pullback of the Personal Data Protection Bill (PDP Bill), 2019 has nullified the multi-year efforts put in by various stakeholders that have gone into shaping the bill. The promise of a “comprehensive legal framework” to protect the citizens’ data is a hollow one, coming with no clear deadlines or underlying principles.

**❖ Background of the bill:**

- PDP Bill was an attempt by the government to bring “big tech” (meaning the handful of dominant tech multinationals) to heel. The last version to be withdrawn by the union government is the third iteration of the PDP Bill starting with the one proposed by the Justice B N Srikrishna Committee back in 2018.1
- The justification offered by the union minister for electronics and information technology on the floor of Parliament, that in light of the recommendations made by the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) a comprehensive legal framework is being worked on.

**❖ The JPC Report:**

- The PDP Bill that was referred to the JPC was not the first version of a data protection law for India. It was based on the draft law proposed by the B N Srikrishna Committee in its report. The changes made to the draft proposed by the committee were criticised by the commentators, including Justice B N Srikrishna himself.
- The criticism had to do with the way in which the law seemed to give a free pass to government agencies in the context of data protection. While the B N Srikrishna report had attempted to give a limited exception to certain government agencies, it did not concern itself with the reform of surveillance laws in India.
- However, the PDP Bill, as modified by the government, seemed to have expanded the scope of such expansion giving potential to create what Justice Srikrishna called “an Orwellian state.”
- The pushback against the bill also came from “big tech” specifically against the requirement of data localisation. The US government even described it as a “barrier to trade”
- PDP Bill sought to increase the scope of the law to include “non-personal data.” The committee recommended this because of the apparent difficulty in distinguishing between the two and the need to prevent the duplication of the work done by the Data Protection Authority (DPA).

**❖ Challenges:**

- The physical location of the data is argued to be not that relevant in the cyber world as the encryption keys may still be out of reach of national agencies.
- National security or reasonable purposes are open-ended and subjective terms, which may lead to intrusion of the state into the private lives of citizens, leading to State Mass Surveillance.
- Technology giants like Facebook and Google are against it and have criticised the protectionist policy of data localisation as they are afraid it would have a domino effect in other countries as well.
- It had too many loopholes to be effective and beneficial for both users and companies.
- May have a detrimental effect on India’s own young startups that are attempting global growth, which are based on free access to users’ data.
- The Bill was also seen as being too “compliance intensive” by startups of the country.
- The revamped bill will be much easier to comply with, especially for startups.
- Too Many Amendments suggested by the Joint Committee of Parliament (81) many of which go against the spirit of data protection as laid down by Srikrishna committee.

**❖ Issues with Data Localisation:**

- Under data localisation, it would have been mandatory for companies to store a copy of certain sensitive personal data within India, and the export of undefined “critical” personal data from the country would be prohibited.
- The activists had criticised that it would allow the central government and its agencies blanket exemptions from adhering to any and all provisions of the Bill.
- It is a matter of grave concern that India does not have a basic framework to protect people’s privacy.

❖ **Way forward:**

- Given its background, the detailed inputs of stakeholders already taken into account and the place where the discourse was at, the suggestion that the PDP Bill needed to be withdrawn and the effort started afresh based on the JPC recommendations does not make much sense. The changes suggested could have been easily incorporated if the government so willed.
- Whatever its flaws, a PDP Bill would have still provided a modicum of protection to Indian citizens' data, much better than the limited framework available under the Information Technology Act, 2000 (Bhandari 2022).
- Data Protection Authority provision must be retained in the new bill.
- In terms of Data Localisation, the data should be stored in a region that is trusted by the Indian government, and that data should be accessible in the event of a crime.
- The government may also consider allowing cross-border data flows only to "trusted geographies".
- The new Bill could also do away with classification of personal data from the perspective of data localisation, and only use classification for awarding damages to people whose personal data may have been compromised by an entity.
- The new PDP Bill must push back from the global South the power of big tech.

**PRELIMS**

1. **Photobombing Effect**

- Photobombing refers to a situation when someone is taking picture, suddenly a random person came into the frame and ruin by taking away attention from the main subject.
- Similarly, photobombing effect would also impact a space telescope's ability to observe habitable exoplanets.
- According to a new NASA study, when a telescope is pointed at an exoplanet, the light reflected by the planet could be contaminated by light from other planets in the same system.
- For example, consider someone is looking at Earth sitting next to Mars or Venus from a distant vantage point.
- Depending on the observation, an exo-Earth could be hiding in [light from] what we mistakenly believe is a large exo-Venus.
- Venus has surface temperatures hot enough to melt lead and is therefore considered hostile to life.
- This kind of mixing could lead to scientists missing out on potentially habitable planets.

❖ **Point-spread function (PSF)**

- This phenomenon stems from the "point-spread function" of the target exoplanet.
- PSF is the image created due to the diffraction of light coming from the source and becomes larger than the source for very distant objects, like an exoplanet.
- The PSF's size depends on the aperture of the telescope and the wavelength at which the image was captured.
- For distant exoplanets, the PSF may resolve in such a way that multiple planets or planets and satellites could seem to morph into one.
- When that happens, the data gathered about the exoplanet would be affected by whatever objects were photobombing it.

2. **Exercise Vinbax 2022**

❖ **Context: Vietnam-India Bilateral Army Exercise VINBAX 2022 concluded at Chandimandir recently.**

- It ended with an impressive display of Multi Agency Humanitarian Assistance in Disaster Relief (HADR) demonstration and an equipment display showcasing the Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat initiatives.
- The exercise was focused on deployment of Army Engineer and Medical teams in UN Peacekeeping operations.
- What made the exercise unique was the fact that it was the first time ever that the Vietnam People's Army (VPA) was undertaking a Field Training Exercise with any foreign Army.

- Vietnam has deployed a contingent in UN peacekeeping operations for the first time in South Sudan while India has a long and rich tradition of contributing to UN peacekeeping operations.
- The final validation exercise nicknamed 'Men in Blue' was built around the setting up of a base in a remote African location faced with myriad challenges.
- The next edition of VINBAX will be hosted in Vietnam in 2023

### 3. **NIDAAN Portal**

#### ❖ **CONTEXT: India's first portal named NIDAAN' on arrested narco offenders' gets operational.**

- The National Integrated Database on Arrested Narco-offenders portal has been developed by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).
- It is part of the narcotics coordination mechanism (NCORD) portal that was launched in July 2022 during the national conference on 'Drug trafficking and national security'.

#### ❖ **Key Features:**

- It sources its data from the ICJS (inter-operable criminal justice system) and the e-Prisons (a cloud-based application) repository and it is planned to integrate it in the future with the crime and criminal tracking network system or CCTNS.
- The ICJS, an initiative of the Supreme Court e-committee, was created to enable seamless transfer of data and information among different pillars of the criminal justice system, like courts, police, jails and forensic science laboratories, from one platform.

#### ❖ **Significance:**

- It is a one-stop solution for all narcotics offenders' related data and will help investigative agencies as an effective tool to connect the dots while probing narcotics cases.
- It hosts data about those accused who have been arrested and jailed for drug offenses and those who are "directly or indirectly involved in any narcotics or psychotropic substance.
- Any agency can search for the crime history, personal details, fingerprints, court cases and appeals made etc. with regard to a drug offender from any part of the country.

### 4. **Har Ghar Jal**

#### ❖ **Context: Goa and Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu (D&NH and D&D) becomes the first 'Har Ghar Jal' certified State and UT in the country respectively.**

- Jal Jeevan Mission, a central government initiative under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, aims to ensure access of piped water for every household in India.
- The mission's goal is to provide to all households in rural India safe and adequate water through individual household tap connections by 2024.
- The Har Ghar Jal Se Jal programme was announced in Budget 2019-20.
- This programme forms a crucial part of the Jal Jeevan Mission.
- The programme **aims** to implement source sustainability measures as mandatory elements, such as:
  - recharge and reuse through grey water management,
  - water conservation, and
  - rain water harvesting.
- The Jal Jeevan Mission will be based on a community approach to water.
- Key components of the mission will include:
  - information,
  - education
  - communication
- **The objectives of the Mission**
  - To provide Functional Tap Connection (FHTC) to every rural household, schools, Anganwadi centres, GP buildings, Health centres, wellness centres and community buildings
  - To monitor functionality of tap connections.
  - To promote and ensure voluntary ownership among local community by way of contribution in cash, kind and/ or labour and voluntary labour (shramdaan)
  - To assist in ensuring sustainability of water supply system, i.e. water source, water supply infrastructure, and funds

- To empower and develop human resource in the sector
- To bring awareness on various aspects and significance of safe drinking water and involvement of stakeholders in manner that make water everyone's business.

**5. Endosulfan**

❖ **CONTEXT: The Supreme Court directed the Kasargod District Legal Services Authority in Kerala to inspect the medical and palliative care facilities provided to endosulfan victims.**

- Numerous complaints have been filed regarding the Kerala state government's failure to offer adequate health care infrastructure to Endosulfan victims.
- The State government claims that 98% (over 3700 people) of the victims have received 5 lakh compensation as per the apex court's 2017 judgment.
- The Kerala government also argued that it has provided victims with access to the required medical facilities.

❖ **About:**

- Endosulfan is a pesticide. It is a cream- to brown-coloured solid that may appear in the form of crystals or flakes.
- It smells like turpentine but does not burn.
- It does not occur naturally in the environment
- It is sold as a mixture of two different forms of the same chemical (referred to as  $\alpha$ - and  $\beta$ -endosulfan).
- It is used to control insects on food and non-food crops and also as a wood preservative
- Endosulfan can be released into the air, water, and soil in areas where it is applied as a pesticide.

❖ **Effects:**

- The health effects of the chemical include neurotoxicity, late sexual maturity, physical deformities, poisoning, among others.
- People, especially newborns, have suffered deformities, health complications and loss of family members due to exposure to agrochemicals.
- Endosulfan pesticide was used widely on crops like cashew, cotton, tea, paddy, fruits and others until 2011 when the Supreme Court banned its production and distribution.
- In 2012, when there was the threat of endosulfan leaks from old godowns, they were transferred to new godowns through a scheme called Operation Blossom Spring.
- It aims to restore organic farming practices back in the district and preserve the ecological balance.

**6. Scientists formulate model to trace elusive exo-moons from JWST data**

**Context: Scientists have developed a model to trace the so far elusive exomoons – natural satellites that revolve around exoplanets (planets orbiting stars other than the Sun) with the help of the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST).**

- This may also help detect habitable exo-moons in the future and understand new worlds beyond our own.
- So far, five thousand exoplanets (planets orbiting stars other than the Sun), have been discovered by using several ground-based and space telescopes such as Kepler, CoRoT, Spitzer, and Hubble space telescopes.
- However, the natural satellites or exomoon around any of these planets still remain untraced.
- The Solar system is constituted of a large number of natural satellites with various sizes and mass, and many of them influence the ambient environment of the Solar planets.
- Therefore, a large number of exomoons are expected to be present, and they may play a crucial role in the habitability of rocky exoplanets in the habitable zone of their host stars.
- While most exoplanets are detected through photometric transit method, signals from exo-moons are too weak to detect mainly because of their extremely small size.
- The newly launched James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) is sufficiently powerful to detect the transit signal of exomoons in the photometric light curves of moon hosting exoplanets.
- According to the researchers, an exo-moon around a gas giant planet like Jupiter in the habitable zone of the host star where temperature is appropriate for water to exist in liquid state may harbour life.

- Under favourable alignment of moon-planet-star, such exomoon may also be detected by JWST.

**ANSWER WRITING**

**Q. How do you justify the view that the level of excellence of the Gupta numismatic art is not at all noticeable in later times? (2017)**

Gupta coins are among the most remarkably detailed coins from ancient India featuring exquisite artistic details. They stand out from coins crafted during the reign of other dynasties on following counts:

- Achievement of remarkable craftsmanship was evident by the finesse of the variety of images carved on both faces of the coin and its smooth and even wedges.
- Detailed carvings ranged from Chandragupta riding a horse to Samudragupta playing a Veena and the Goddess Lakshmi to a sacrificial horse for Ashvamedha ceremony and so on.
- Apart from these detailed images, there were inscriptions as well, often adding details of the image inscribed on the coin.
- Also, most of the important kings of Gupta dynasty are now believed to have had multiple coin-types during the course of their reign, in which older designs were dropped and newer motifs were adopted.
- Scholars have pointed out that such designs were made possible by use of clay-molds by skilled mint-masters.

In the post-Gupta period, not only the quality of gold coins fell, but also the numbers of gold coins being issued dropped drastically. Due to systemic economic distresses, town-based artisans producing good quality coins were forced to migrate to the countryside causing a decline of craft production and a decay of townships. Without urban centres and foreign trade, and with increasing decentralisation of political power which had resulted from the urban to rural migration of artisans, the excellence of Gupta numismatic art could not be sustained or recreated in the times that followed.

**MCQs**

1. Consider the following statements
  1. Endosulfan is an organochlorine insecticide which was first introduced in the 1950s and its trade name is Thiodan.
  2. It is classified as a yellow label pesticide by the Central Insecticides Board.
  3. It is listed under both Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

Which of the above statement/s is are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
  - b) 2 and 3 only
  - c) 1 and 3 only
  - d) **All of the above**
2. "Exercise VINBAX 2022" is between India and which of the following country?
    - a) Vatican City
    - b) **Vietnam**
    - c) Venezuela
    - d) Vanuatu
  3. Which of the following scheme/s is/are can be associated with poverty reduction in India
    1. National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM):
    2. Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM):
    3. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA):

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 and 2 only
  - b) 2 and 3 only
  - c) 1 and 3 only
  - d) **All of the above**
4. 'SWAYAM', an initiative of the Government of India, aims at
    - a) Promoting the Self Help Groups in rural areas

- b) Providing financial and technical assistance to young start-up entrepreneurs  
c) Promoting the education and health of adolescent girls  
d) **Providing affordable and quality education to the citizens for free**
5. Which of the following statement is correct about NIDAN portal?  
a) **It hosts data about those accused who have been arrested and jailed for drugs offences**  
b) It maintain generic drug distribution data to BPL families  
c) It provides health insurance data to BPL and APL families  
d) It is a child care guidance information portal
6. Which of the following statements is/ are correct regarding Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)  
1. It is a statutory body.  
2. It functions directly under the PMO.  
3. It provides assistance to the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) and Lokpal.  
Select the correct option using the code given below:  
a) 1 only  
b) 1 and 2 only  
c) 2 and 3 only  
d) **3 only**
7. UMANG App recently seen in news can be associated with?  
a) **e- Governance**  
b) Health care  
c) Teacher training  
d) Children learning
8. The book titled “Gambling on Development: Why Some Countries Win and Others Lose” is in news recently, written by which of the following?  
a) Udit mishra  
b) **Stefan Dercon**  
c) James Robinson  
d) Daron Acemoglu
9. Which of the following countries are part of 'Pitch Black' defence exercise,  
1. India  
2. China  
3. Australia  
4. Japan  
Select the correct answer using the code given below.  
a) 1,2 and 3 only  
b) **1,3 and 4 only**  
c) 2,3 and 4 only  
d) 1 and 4 only
10. Recently which state launched 'Krishna Kunj', a plantation drive aimed at creating urban forests?  
a) Odisha  
b) **Chhattisgarh**  
c) Bihar  
d) Uttar Pradesh