"Instead of complaining about the problem and blaming others, start finding the solution."

Roy T. Bennett

NATIONAL

INDIA TO GIVE FLASH-FLOOD WARNING TO ASIAN NATIONS

The world metrological organization (WMO) designated India as a nodal centre for preparing flash-flood forecasts.

It implies that India will have to develop a customized model that can issue advance warning of floods in Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand.

IMD would be working   to customize a weather model, developed by the United States and donated to the WMO, to warn of flash floods at least six hours in advance.

The test version for the same was carried out by the IMD recently.

Flash flood guidance system:

Use of satellite mapping and ground based observations.

It aims to provide forecasts six hours in advance.

It provides forecasts by computing the likelihood of rainfall and the soil moisture levels to warn of possible floods.

According to WMO, flash floods account for 85% of flooding incidents across the world, causing some 5,000 deaths each year.

Like India, several Southeast Asian countries also depend on the monsoon and are prone to its vagaries.

Pakistan had refused to participate in the Scheme.

India currently has a warning system for Tsunami that also doubles up a warning system for several Asian countries.

The Central Water Commission, monitors India's dams, warns of rising water level in the reservoirs.

The CWC recently tied up with Google to develop a software application to visualize rising water levels during the heavy rains.

GOLD COUNCIL TO AID EXPORTS ON THE ANVIL

The Centre has decided to set up a Domestic Council for Gold to aid exports of jewellery

This will also help in creating an ecosystem to harness the true potential for jewellery-making in the country

This council will represent all the jewellers of India who will be the electoral college

They will form different interest groups and elect those who will sit in the council

A Coordination Committee will be set up comprising senior officials of the Ministry and the gem and jewellery industry, who will meet monthly to ensure that industry concerns are addressed on priority

The council would work towards

- o   industry development
- o   job creation
- o   the building of regional clusters and
- o   strengthening of value chains

Exports is a priority for India but not marked for priority sector lending for the banking sector.

The government has asked RBI to consider bringing exports in PSL category.

INDIA'S LOW RANK ON E-GOVERNANCE INDEX

Despite the astonishing pace of digitization in India, it continues to rank a relatively low 96 in the United Nation's E-Government Development Index, whose 2018 rankings were released last week.

With an EGDI index score of 0.5669, India is just above the world average of 0.55.

India's score is also shy of Iran (0.6083) and even in the SAARC region, Sri Lanka is ahead of India.

The UN E-Government Development Survey is the only global initiative to measure and track how governments are faring on the e-governance front.

1

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The report looks at how e-government can facilitate integrated policies and services across the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Reasons for low ranking:

In areas like public health and land records, the progress has stopped with putting up some downloadable forms online.

Many government departments still insist on physical forms and signatures, despite the near universalisation of an identity instrument like Aadhaar, which allows simple and foolproof authentication.

India does rank very high in one sub-index. It moved up 12 places in the E-Participation Index, from 27 in 2016 to 15 in 2018.

The EPI looks at issues like e-information, e-consultation and e-decision making to arrive at a score.

India's high ranking does signify two things:

That the government is making more information available online and that more people are in a position to access that information, and also electronically participate in policy formation and decision-making.

The reason the UN compiles this index and urges member countries to focus on e-government initiatives is that there is a clear link between greater e-governance and easier public access to government services and a reduction in poverty and inequality.

One of the biggest reasons our poverty alleviation measures have failed to achieve the desired impact (apart from corruption and leakage) is inefficient targeting, and lack of information with the intended beneficiaries about plans and schemes meant to assist them.

Way Forward:

Knowledge is power, but access to knowledge is another kind of power and this is where digital can be a great disruptor.

With the India Stack (Aadhaar, UPI, etc. aimed at ensuring presence-less, cashless and paperless service delivery), and the ongoing mobile and broadband revolution, India can become a world leader in e-governance.

DATA PROTECTION BILL RECOMMENDATIONS THROW UP QUESTIONS OF ACCEPTABILITY, FEASIBILITY

The Committee of Experts under the chairmanship of Justice B N Srikrishna has submitted its proposed law on data protection.

Guided by the principles laid down by the Supreme Court in Justice K S Puttaswamy (retd.) and Anr. vs Union Of India And Ors, the framework seeks to empower individuals to protect their personal data.

In the past few decades, data protection has emerged as a hotbed of legislative action globally.

The European Union has implemented its General Data Protection Regulation recently.

The crux of the proposed legislation is that the personal data of individuals (data principals) can be processed (i.e. collected, used, stored, disclosed to third parties, etc.) by entities (data fiduciaries) only if the individual has given her free, informed and specific consent

Such consent is capable of being withdrawn

Personal data may also be processed under certain specific circumstances such as state function, emergent health and safety situations, compliance with a judicial order etc.

However, in each case, data fiduciaries, be it the government or private entities, will be required to strictly comply with principles such as collection limitation, purpose limitation, security safeguards, and measures of transparency and accountability that are laid down in the law

The law provides heightened safeguards for processing of sensitive personal data, such as financial data, health data, sex life and sexual orientation, caste or tribe, official identifiers such as Aadhaar, religious and political beliefs or affiliations, etc.

The proposed law will be applicable to both private and public entities

2

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Concerns related to these provisions:

The proposed law contains exemptions for the processing of personal data for certain purposes, such as journalistic activities, law enforcement, security of the state, etc.

It has been pointed out that the exemption may be too broad and may not effectively address the issue of surveillance and systematic access to citizens' data by the state

The proposed data protection law ensures that state surveillance agencies attempting to access personal data or sensitive personal data without the authorization of law will not be able to avail of this exemption

Current status of data protection in India:

As of now, there is no statutory framework that holistically protects the informational privacy of individuals in India

The Information Technology (Reasonable Security Practices and Procedures and Sensitive Personal Data or Information) Rules, 2011 were a small but significant step in this direction

However, these Rules are selectively applicable to certain body corporate and suffer from poor implementation

There are scattered oversight mechanisms laid down in statutes such as the Telegraph Act of 1885

Principles laid down in Puttaswamy case:

It held that to allow a restriction on privacy, three requirements ought to be fulfilled:

First, the restriction must be by law

Second, it must promote a legitimate state interest of which national security is an example; and

Third, it must be necessary and proportionate

Applicability still an issue

Many of the recommendations made by the committee throw up important questions of acceptability and feasibility for the industry, stakeholders and allied sectors

The stance on cross-border flow of personal data heightened organizational measures on data fiduciaries, and individual participation rights have sparked a debate on compliance burdens on data fiduciaries and perceived impediments to a free and fair digital economy

Way Forward:

The committee has set the ball rolling on several issues concerning the protection of personal data by setting out a proposed law

The proposed data protection law, after taking into account the existing gaps in the current framework and global best practices, creates a novel framework tailored to India's constitutional, economic, and socio-political realities

It is expected that through further consultations and dialogue, citizens and stakeholders will build on this foundation by giving suggestions to strengthen the legal framework and ensure that an effective data protection regime is set up in India

INDIA PLANS TO BUY MISSILE SHIELD FROM U.S.A

India is in talks with the U.S. to procure an advanced air defence system to defend the National Capital Region (NCR) from aerial attacks.

The process for procuring the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System-II (NASAMS-II) has been initiated.

India is deploying a multi-tiered air defence network to fully secure its airspace from incoming fighter aircraft, missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV).

NASAMS is a "highly adaptable mid-range solution" for any operational air defence requirement and provides a tailorable, state-of-the-art defence system.

It can maximize the ability to quickly identify, engage and destroy current and evolving enemy aircraft, UAV or emerging cruise missile threats.

NASAMS-II is an upgraded version of the NASAMS and features new 3D mobile surveillance radars and 12 missile launchers for quicker reaction.

3

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India is also in an advanced stage of talks with Russia for the procurement of very long range S-400 air defence systems.

India is also developing an indigenous Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system.

GOVT TO ROLL OUT DIGIYATRA OFFERING FOR AIR PASSENGERS SOON

The Ministry of Civil Aviation is close to rolling out DigiYatra service at airports in a few months.

Under this initiative, the moment you will enter the airport, your images will be captured and then you will be able to go through the full lifecycle of your travel in a seamless manner.

DigiYatra is an industry-led initiative coordinated by the Ministry of Civil Aviation in line with Digital India programme.

It aims to transform the flying experience for passengers and position Indian Aviation amongst the most innovative aviation networks in the world.

The facility will use digital technology to enhance air passenger experience all the way from ticket booking to airport entry check, security check and aircraft boarding.

For this, a passenger needs to enrol into DigiYatra program through AirSewa app and a DigiYatra verified passenger will get hassle free entry at the airport through E-Gates.

At the entry gate, a single token for the passenger will be created.

This will also facilitate walk-through security scanners swiftly owing to advanced biometric security solutions.

This facility will be optional for passengers.

If somebody does not want to disclose the identity, there will be a separate provision for them.

It is not just Aadhaar based but is beyond Aadhaar.

The ID verification will be done by the BCAS-approved Government ID.

FACULTY NUMBERS DIP 2.34 LAKH IN 3 YEARS

According to the All India Survey on Higher Education Report 2017-18, total number of faculty members in higher educational institutions in India has come down.

The All India Survey on Higher Education Report 2017-18 pointed out:

Total number of teachers in higher education institutions in India has come down by about 2.34 lakh in the last three years.

As per the figures, total number of teachers stood as:

In 2017-18: 12.84 lakh

In 2016-17: 13.65 lakh

In 2015-16: 15.18 lakh

Between 2011-12 and 2015-16, the number has been rising from 12.47 lakh to 15. 18 lakh.

Reasons for decline in teachers' numbers:

Retiring professors are not being replaced.

Sanctioned post not being filled in State universities.

In Central universities, these posts are not being filled by the universities despite availability of sanctioned posts and funds.

As per the 2017-18 figures, the teachers who provided their Aadhaar numbers were shown as teachers from this year on wards.

In this context, the MoHRD said "occurring and filling up of vacancies is a continuous process. Universities being autonomous institutions, the onus of filling up vacant teaching posts lies with them".

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4

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