

Perplexes with Geo-spatial Information Regulation Bill, 2016

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- Ministry of Home Affairs in 2016 had released the draft Geospatial Information Regulation Bill (GIRB).

\n

- Strict regulations imposed on geospatial information by this bill has concerned tech services sector.

\n

\n\n

What does geospatial information mean?

\n\n

\n

- Geospatial imagery or data acquired through space or aerial platforms such as satellite, aircrafts, airships, balloons, unmanned aerial vehicles.

\n

- Graphical or digital data depicting natural or man-made physical features, phenomenon or boundaries of the earth.

\n

- Any information related thereto including surveys, charts, maps, terrestrial photos referenced to a co-ordinate system and having attributes.

\n

\n\n

What is the purpose of geospatial information regulation bill?

\n\n

\n

- After the January 2016 Pathankot attack, Ministry of Home Affairs made a regulatory attempt in the geospatial industry for maintaining national sovereignty over India's geospatial data.

\n

- According to the draft, it will be mandatory to take permission from a government authority before acquiring, disseminating, publishing or distributing any geospatial information of India.
\n
- In simple terms, any addition or creation of anything that has to do with any geospatial information within the territory of India will need the permission of the government.
\n
- A Security Vetting Authority will be setup for this purpose, it grants licenses to organisations/individuals who want to use geospatial data.
\n
- It will check the content and data provided and make sure it is well within national policies.
\n

\n\n

What are the strict limitations imposed by the bill?

\n\n

- **Illegal acquisition of geospatial information of India** - Fine ranging from Rs. 1 crore to Rs. 100 crore and/or imprisonment for a period up to seven years.
\n
- **Illegal dissemination, publication or distribution of geospatial information of India** - Whoever disseminates, publishes or distributes any geospatial information of India shall be punished with a fine ranging from Rs. 10 lakhs to Rs. 100 crore and/or imprisonment for a period up to seven years.
\n
- **Use of geospatial information of India outside India** - Fine ranging from Rs. 1 crore to Rs. 100 crore and/or imprisonment for a period up to seven years.
\n

\n\n

What are few shortfalls with the bill?

\n\n

- The home ministry made its attempt to draft the bill soon after the 2016 Pathankot attack and it was drafted with a short sighted view.

\n

- Usually any mapping process in India will be taken care by the Survey of India (SOI) and digital approaches regarding those lies with the department of science and technology (DST).

\n

- This draft bill was made with a negligible role of SOI, but much of its initial framework comes from bureaucrats within the defence ministry.

\n

- The MOD has a large number of grievances when it comes to mapping and geospatial data.

\n

\n\n

What are the concerns of tech industry over the draft bill?

\n\n

\n

- In India, location services are very dynamic and the ecosystem is still evolving as most of the commuters solely believe in mapping and navigation apps for their day today commute.

\n

\n\n

\n

- In this stage Satellite-makers, online map companies and GPS providers are bemused with the manner in which the draft GIRB was drafted.

\n

\n\n

\n

- It is also said that once implemented the bill could negatively impact some of the key programmes of Union government which entirely rely on location based inputs.

\n

\n\n

\n

- Thus the only demand of the tech industries is that any new regulation on location-based services should ensure that the pace of innovation is not impacted.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu, the Wire

\n\n

\n\n

\n

