

July 28th news:

International:

PM Modi calls for investment in digital infrastructure

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 27th July said the digital revolution has offered new opportunities to the members of the BRICS grouping and other emerging economies and it is essential to invest in artificial intelligence and big data analytics to reap the benefits.

Addressing the BRICS Outreach Session in Johannesburg, Prime Minister Modi called for more investment in the digital infrastructure and skill development in the area of digitization.

Emphasizing on India's historic and deep links with Africa, the Prime Minister said his government has accorded the highest priority towards maintaining peace, freedom and development in Africa. India's ties with Africa are time-tested and the Government of India has deepened its engagement with the continent he said.

The prime minister said in the last four years, more the 100 bilateral talks and visits at the level of head of states and government have taken place which has taken bilateral cooperation and economic ties to a new level. He said 118 lines of credit worth USD 11 billion have been extended to over 40 African countries. He said that India welcomes the effort for regional economic integration by the countries in Africa.

He said free trade and commerce in the last three decades has helped hundreds of millions people come out of poverty. To take the benefits of globalization to them is the most important task, he said. Highlighting the challenges of globalization, he said that inclusive development must remain at the core of all efforts. He said after the financial crisis of 2008, the threats of protectionism are hovering over this fundamental aspect of the globalization.

National:

Govt allows sugar mills to manufacture ethanol directly from sugarcane juice

The government has decided to allow sugar mills to manufacture ethanol directly from sugarcane juice or intermediate product called B-molasses. The sugarcane control order of 1966 has been amended in this regard as notified by the Union Food Ministry. The move would help mills divert cane juice for ethanol manufacturing during surplus years. So far, mills were allowed to manufacture ethanol from by-product called C-molasses, after sugar was taken out while processing raw cane juice

Female student enrolment lowest in institutes of national importance: AISHE report

The enrolment of female students is lowest in the institutions of national importance, followed by state private open universities and government deemed universities, according to the All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE).

The report, which was released by Union Minister of Human Resource Development Prakash Javadekar, said the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education in the country is 25.8 per cent, which is calculated for 18-23 years of age group.

Economy:

Loans and deposits of Indians in the Swiss Bank decreased by 34.5%

Union Minister Piyush Goyal says according to data released by Swiss National Bank, loans and deposits of individual Indians in the bank decreased by 34.5% in the last year compared to the previous year; adds the amount deposited in Swiss National Bank has reduced by 80% between 2014 and 2017 after Modi Government came to power.

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Srikrishna panel submits report on data protection, gives privacy a leg-up

Recognizing privacy as a fundamental right, the draft personal data protection Bill has mandated that explicit consent must be taken for processing sensitive personal data like biometrics, sexual orientation, and religious or political belief.

Also, at least a copy of such personal data should be stored in India. The Justice B N Srikrishna-led panel submitted the Bill along with the recommendations on personal data protection to the government on 27th July, after deliberating on the issue for one year. The panel was formed in July 2017 after the Supreme Court delivered a verdict that privacy was a fundamental right.

The Bill has proposed stringent penalties in case of any violation or misuse of personal data by public or private entities. For instance, if a data fiduciary, which can be a person, company or state, processes personal data in contravention of the Act, it would be liable to a penalty of up to Rs 150 million or 4 per cent of an entity's total worldwide turnover in the preceding financial year, whichever is higher.

If the data fiduciary fails to take prompt action in response to a data security breach, it would be liable to pay up to Rs 50 million or 2 per cent of its total worldwide turnover, whichever is higher.

The proposed legislation contains a provision for the 'Right to be Forgotten', which is in line with the European data privacy laws such as GDPR (general data protection regulation).

While the draft Bill does not insist on personal data of residents of India to be stored only in India, it has made an enabling provision where the government can notify categories of personal data as critical data, which would be only stored in India.

According to the Bill, processing of personal data should be done only for the purpose it was collected or for compliance of any law, employment and for any function of Parliament or any state legislature.

The 10-member panel has identified a list of 50 statutes and regulations which have a potential overlap with the data protection framework. The panel recommended certain other enactments which require to be amended simultaneously with a data protection regime. Three such enactments have been identified — Aadhaar Act, RTI Act and IT Act.

The bill, based on the recommendations of the panel, has put in strong conditions for cross-border transfer of personal data.

Only the Central government can prescribe the permissibility of transfers where it finds that the relevant personal data shall be subject to an adequate level of protection. The mandatory localisation of personal data has drawn mixed reactions with privacy advocates cheering the move but industry, especially in the field of information technology, terming it as a trade barrier.

The Srikrishna panel differed with telecom regulator Trai in defining data ownership. The Justice said the whole idea of ownership of the data was a concept that had something to do with property.

Data fiduciary can be any person, state, company, any juristic entity or any individual who alone or in conjunction with others determines the purpose and means of processing of personal data. Data principal has been defined as a natural person to whom the personal data relates.

The bill will now go through inter-ministerial consultations before being taken up by the Union Cabinet. It would require Parliament's nod to become a law. Justice Srikrishna said privacy had become a burning issue and therefore every effort had to be made to protect data at any cost.

The bill proposes that a data protection authority should be set up. The authority, which will be equivalent to a civil court, will consist of a chairperson and six whole-time members. Also, an appellate tribunal has to be established.

Environment:

NGT red flags pollution in Ganga

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) expressed concern at the level of pollution in the Ganga, between Haridwar and Unnao in Uttar Pradesh, and said "the water is unfit for drinking and bathing".

A Bench, headed by NGT Chairperson Adarsh Kumar Goel, directed the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) to install display boards at a gap of 100KM, indicating whether the water is fit for drinking and bathing, to make devotees aware of the level of pollution.

Further, it added, "It is of utmost necessity to comply with the right to life of persons using Ganga water, and that they are put to notice about the fitness of water."

Meanwhile, the Central Pollution Control Board and the NMCG have been asked to indicate, on their websites, the areas where the water is good for bathing and drinking.