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“Mission Gange”

National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) has partnered with Tata Steel Adventure Foundation (TSAF) to launch a month-long rafting expedition of a team of 40 members.

It will be led by the first Indian woman to scale Mount Everest Ms Bachendri Pal.

The expedition will start from Haridwar traversing a distance of around 1500 km encompassing 8 major towns including Bijnor, Farrukhabad, Kanpur, Allahabad, Varanasi and Buxar.

It will conclude in Patna in Bihar.

The expedition is aimed for public outreach to heighten the awareness for keeping cleaner Ganga. In the expedition team of 40 members, several are trained mountaineers. Seven of them have climbed Mount Everest. The team during its stay in the towns will carry out cleanliness drives at Ghats and surrounding areas by engaging and motivating more and more people.

Source: The Hindu.

Marrakesh Treaty

European Union has recently ratified Marrakesh Treaty to ease access to reading material for print-disabled people.

Marrakesh Treaty was adopted by United Nations - World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). With the ratification of European Union, the treaty now expands to 70 countries.

India was among the earliest to ratify the Marrakesh treaty in June 2014.

The governments that are party to the Marrakesh treaty are obliged to adopt laws authorising the conversion of books into accessible formats such as braille, e-text, audio and large print by designated organisations. They are also allowed to exchange these alternative formats across national borders without clearance by copyright owners.

Source: The Hindu.

Udyam Abhilasha

It is a National Level Entrepreneurship Awareness Campaign. *It is organised by Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI).*

The campaign is organised in 115 Aspirational Districts identified by NITI Aayog in 28 States and reaching to around 15,000 youth.

It provides entrepreneurship training to the aspiring youths across these districts thus encouraging them to enter the segment of entrepreneurs. It focuses on women aspirants in these aspirational districts to encourage women entrepreneurship.

The campaign will be delivered through common service centres (CSC) in these districts.

SIDBI has partnered with a CSC Special Purpose Vehicle (CSC SPV). CSC e-Governance Services India Limited is set up by the Ministry of Electronics & IT.

Source: The Hindu.

Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana Camp

The Scheme aims at providing Senior Citizens, belonging to BPL category and suffering from any of the age related disability/infirmity Low vision, Hearing impairment, Loss of teeth and Locomotor disability, with such assisted-living devices which can restore near normalcy in their bodily functions, overcoming the disability/infirmity manifested.

This is a *Central Sector Scheme*, fully funded by the Central Government.

The expenditure for implementation of the scheme will be met from the "Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund".

Under the scheme, *free of cost distribution of the devices*, commensurate with the extent of disability/infirmity that is manifested among the eligible senior citizens will take place.

In case of multiple disabilities/infirmities manifested in the same person, the assistive devices will be given in respect of each disability/impairment. Beneficiaries in each district will be identified by the State Governments/UT Administrations through a Committee chaired by the Deputy Commissioner/District Collector.

Source: The Hindu.

World's First Hyperloop Passenger Capsule Unveiled

Hyperloop Transportation Technologies Inc. unveiled its first full-scale passenger capsule, offering the world a peek at the future of travel.

The capsule, 105 feet (32 meters) long and weighing 5 tons, was shown in Spain.

Named as the Quintero One, the product is made almost entirely out of composite material. Hyperloop is a technology that gained popularity after billionaire Elon Musk touted it in 2013, prompting several companies to join the race to build a high-speed transportation system.

It envisages moving passengers in capsules at speeds of more than 750 miles (1,200 kilometres) per hour through low-pressure tubes, in order to reduce friction. The technology will be able to propel trains faster than existing methods such as the Maglev, which uses a levitation technology to lift the train cars above a track to eliminate surface drag.

Billionaire Richard Branson's Virgin Hyperloop One held discussions in India, aiming to offer passengers in the futuristic technology fares that are cheaper than local airlines.

Branson has signed a preliminary agreement in Mumbai for a broad hyperloop framework and mooted a Mumbai-Pune system that would shrink travel time to 25 minutes and save about three hours.

Source: The Hindu.

Editorial

To Read

What the majority missed

Aadhaar judgment makes a disturbing distinction between the rights of the privileged and the poor.

The prolific majority judgement upholding Aadhaar fails to deal with the complexities of the issues that have emerged since Aadhaar received the backing of law. The conundrums that emerge are philosophical, legal and problems of implementation.

My philosophical opposition essentially arises out of the helplessness of the poor, who have no say if they wish to be beneficiaries of welfare schemes of the state. In the context of privacy and choice, the court makes a distinction between those who are recipients of state entitlements and benefits and those who seek no such benefits. Aadhaar is mandatory for those who receive such benefits. Their consent to an Aadhaar identity is also mandatory. Their consent is not informed by choice but by law. I guess this is necessary fallout for all those who live below the poverty line: Widows seeking pension, farmers seeking fertiliser subsidies and poor households seeking subsidised gas cylinders. But the right to privacy and informed choice for the privileged is protected.

The concept of an intrusive state or incorporated entities using Aadhaar is anathema when it comes to the privileged. For the poor and the marginalised, it matters not. All this because the state claims that without Aadhaar it has no effective mechanism to deal with the diversion of such benefits. The logic is that if you cannot ensure that subsidies reach targeted beneficiaries, target the poor and the marginalised by stripping them of their right to privacy and informed consent. The argument that because of Aadhaar, the government will save thousands of crores through targeted delivery of benefits is also deeply flawed. There are other more persuasive reasons to account for the diversion of subsidies, which Aadhaar cannot eliminate. Not that there will be no savings but not enough to justify reducing a poor person's identity to a number. The judgment suffers from another legal flaw. Both the nature and the expanse of the discourse in the Court clearly demonstrated that Aadhaar cannot possibly be regarded as a Money Bill. Yet, the majority judgment holds it so. A bill to allocate resources for Aadhaar will be a Money Bill but not a legislation that conceptualises Aadhaar and sets up an architecture for dealing with data. The sections in the Aadhaar Act that have been struck down (Sections 57, which allowed for the use of Aadhaar for establishing the identity of an individual for any purpose by the State or a private entity; Section 47, which provided for cognisance of any offence under the Act only on a complaint made by UIDAI and Section 33(2), which allowed for disclosure of information including identity information or authentication records in the interest of national security) deal with matters unconnected with financial resources.

Article 110 of the Constitution defines a Money Bill to mean a bill which deals only with matters relating to taxes and other impositions, allocations, and every aspect of financial disbursements, receipts and obligations and matters incidental thereto, which can be legitimised through legislation passed only by the Lok Sabha, whereas all other legislation has to be passed by both Houses of Parliament. Had the Court held that the Aadhaar Act was not a Money Bill, it would have been struck down in its entirety. The matter would then have gone back to Parliament where the Rajya Sabha would have debated the issues and an appropriate legislation passed

after addressing concerns that cannot be addressed in court. Even more fundamental is the constitutional misdemeanour which resulted in the Rajya Sabha being by-passed. A constitutional court should have been sensitive to the undermining of constitutional safeguards without which no law should become effective. A precedent which allows a legislation that impacts us and future generations to be passed in this cavalier manner does not augur well for democracy.

Issues of implementation of the Act in the light of the judgment are even more complicated. By the time issues relating to Aadhaar reached court and were debated, the Aadhaar identity of individuals was being collected both by the government and the private sector and correlated with services that were unrelated to benefits and subsidies. The process of allocating Aadhaar as a form of identity had been delegated to private entities without ensuring the safety of the biometrics collected. The use of Aadhaar was being pushed by the state even for NEET and CBSE examinations.

Telecom companies and the banking sector stored this data. This data is now in the public domain and is liable to be both used and misused without consent. This has done incalculable harm and no retrieval mechanisms are in place. No one, including the state, can ensure that this data be destroyed. This apart, a person's biometrics collected by private parties has been and is in the future liable to be misused. A data protection law is no consolation, for unlike the misuse of tangible property for which redressal and recovery are possible; the same redressal mechanisms are not possible in the case of stolen data, which is intangible property.

The Court holds that no person should be deprived of the benefits connected to Aadhaar merely because the person does not possess Aadhaar or if for some reason his Aadhaar identity fails to register. In that event, the person has the flexibility to prove his identity through other acceptable documents referred to in the Act. But if the biometrics of a person gets frayed or those who deliver the benefit for spurious reasons refuse to acknowledge the person's Aadhaar identity, there is no mechanism to deal with such situations. The poor and the marginalised are not empowered enough to fight for their rights and the law and the Court's declaration, unfortunately, fails to grapple with these realities.

The minority judgment, therefore, rightly holds that a person's identity cannot be reduced only to a number. For delivering public good, the good of the Republic is far more important.

Mains Question

Q: India's drone use policy makes the possibility of a red tape-free flight very slim. Critically comment.