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AI 4 All Global Hackathon

With the vision to further expand the idea of *Artificial Intelligence, AI for All* articulated in the National AI Strategy, NITI Aayog has organized hackathons. The Hackathon was announced at the AI conference organized by NITI Aayog, in partnership with the ORF, held in Mumbai in November 2018.

It aims to source sustainable, innovative and technologically-enabled solutions to address various challenges in the development space.

NITI Aayog has partnered with Perlin – a Singapore-based AI start up – to launch the Hackathon. It is inviting developers, students, start-ups and companies to develop AI applications to make significant positive social and economic impact for India.

Objective of the Hackathon: The challenge question seeks to develop solutions in Distributed Computing and Privacy Preserving techniques, such as multi-party computation, in AI. The objective of this hackathon is to promote awareness and subsequently develop solutions that deliver the twin benefit of efficient computing to address the infrastructure challenges, while also not compromising on privacy of data for training AI algorithms.

Phases of Hackathon: The hackathon will be run two stages with Stage One ending 15 January 2019 and Stage Two, which will only include shortlisted participants from the previous stage, will conclude on 15 March 2019

The first stage will invite ideas for use cases of multi-party computation in areas such as Healthcare, Education, Agriculture, Urbanization, and Financial Inclusion. The second stage will call for these ideas to be matured and developed, with a focus on privacy preserving AI and distributed computing.

Winners will share in a prize pool worth USD \$50,000 in both cash and non-cash rewards. Participants will also get mentorship and support from the hackathon co-sponsors, including the opportunity to scale and implement their AI applications.

Source: PIB.



Varanasi Freight Village

The Ministry of Shipping has given its nod to develop Rs 156 crore freight village in Varanasi adjoining the inland waterways terminal on river Ganga that will boost the logistics industry in the holy city.

A freight village is a designated area where facilities for various modes of transportation, distribution of goods and other logistics are available in a synchronized manner on a large scale.

It links and brings together different transport modes (road, rail), transport companies (forwarders, warehousing), supplementary transport service (vehicle services, consultancy services) as well as industrial and trading companies.

Varanasi freight village is proposed to be developed over a land area of about 100 acres. A World Bank pre-feasibility study has found Varanasi to be a suitable site for the freight village.

It will be developed by the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI). It will serve as a cargo hub, and a centre for aggregation and value addition. It will also provide support to stimulate development of a professional logistics industry in Varanasi.

Source: Internet.

SMART

The SMART project is being undertaken will cover almost one-fourth of Maharashtra. The project SMART will be assisted by the World Bank.

The focus is clearly on villages which are reeling under the worst agriculture crisis compounded by lack of infrastructure and assured value chains to channelize the farm produce.

The objective of the project is to:

- Create and support the value chains in post-harvest segments of agriculture,
- Facilitate agribusiness investment,
- Stimulate SMEs within the value chain,
- Support resilient agriculture production systems,
- Expand access to new and organized markets for producers and
- Enhance private sector participation in the agribusiness.

Source: The Hindu.

Sri Brihadeeswarar temple, Thanjavur

HC stays Art of Living event at Sri Brihadeeswarar temple in Thanjavur, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The iconic Great temple was over 1,000 years old and by allowing private parties to put up temporary structures within its premises, the authorities were showing no regard for heritage.

It is a Hindu temple dedicated to Shiva located in Thanjavur in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. It is also known as Periya Kovil (Great Temple), RajaRajeswara Temple and Rajarajeswaram.

It is one of the largest temples in India and is an example of Dravidian architecture during the Chola period. Built by emperor **Raja Raja Chola I** and completed in 1010 AD, the temple turned 1000 years old in 2010.

The temple is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site known as the “Great Living Chola Temples”, with the other two being the Brihadeeswarar Temple, Gangaikonda Cholapuram and Airavatesvara temple.

Source: The Hindu.

End this long trauma

It is time to repeal the Habitual Offenders Act, which has only ended up re-stigmatising marginalised communities

Consider this. Fifteen crore individuals, better known as the Denotified Tribes (DNT) of India, continue to be considered 'criminal by birth'.

The term, 'De-notified and Nomadic Tribes', can be traced to the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) of 1871. The colonial government notified nearly 200 tribal communities to be hereditary criminals, cementing their societal identity as outcasts and subjecting them to constant harassment by the administration. After India gained Independence, these tribes were 'de-notified' from the list of Criminal Tribes, and, hence, the term.

Many reasons

Several reasons can be ascribed to state-sanctioned stigmatisation of the DNTs in India under British rule, including the strategy to identify their allies and at the same time, subdue and monitor activities of rebellious tribal communities in India.

The CTA allowed for close supervision and control over the mobility of the tribes which were notified by the provincial governments. The Act was amended in 1897, 1908 and 1911 to give sweeping powers to the authorities, some as draconian as allowing the state to remove any child of the age of six and above from its 'criminal' parents. By 1924, certain provisions were amended, and the Act was finally applicable to the whole of British India. Along with the introduction of laws such as the Forest Acts and the Salt Tax Act, the British threw a noose around the the lives of DNTs using stringent regulations.

It is only in independent India that the need was felt to shift the collective burden of criminality to the individual, which led to the CTA being repealed and the Habitual Offenders Act (HOA) being enacted in various States. Not all States enacted it, Currently, a variant of the HOA Model Bill as proposed by the Union Government then stands enforced in 10 States across the country, having been enacted in many more.

However, the HOA functioned as a mere extension of the CTA. Nomadic and semi-nomadic communities continued to face harassment at the hands of law enforcement agencies. Certainly, the mere repeal of the CTA could not change the mindset of government officials or members of society. The fact is that even in the 21st century, DNTs continue to face ostracisation by society at large. Given their centuries-old tradition of constant movement, they often do not possess any residential proof, which leaves them out of the majority of the government's developmental schemes. Those deemed eligible for such schemes were randomly grouped under the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes or Other Backward Classes categories. As a result, most members of the DNTs continue to be out of the orbit of steps being taken to end discrimination.

To address these issues, the first National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-nomadic Tribes (NCDNT) was constituted in 2003, and reconstituted two years later under the chairpersonship of Balkrishna Renke, which submitted its report in 2008. The recommendations found an echo in the Idate Commission, constituted with the similar mandate in 2015, and currently withholding public release of its report. However, denied funding by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in fulfilling its mandate of carrying out survey and field validation work, the Idate Commission Report lacks the scientific data necessary to introduce reforms to address the plight of DNTs.

The NCDNT report clearly recommends repealing the various HOAs. This has also been the constant refrain of community leaders, representatives and civil society organisations — as the Act still casts its shadow of the state on communities. The onus is thus upon us, lawmakers at the helm of democratic institutions that govern the country, to finally bring

down the curtains on this age-old, state-sanctioned stigmatisation, and act upon the demands put forth by the DNTs.

A chance to make amends

However, it is important to learn from previous mistakes. A mere repeal of the law will not address their need for establishing society-wide changes to gain access to political-social-economic welfare. Thus, the repeal of the HOA has to be accompanied by a slew of legal reforms to address the multitude of issues DNT communities face. Their unique lifestyle requires positive affirmation and development policies that cater to their long-standing and overlooked needs. It should be the duty of the government to be proactive and reach out to the DNTs since the latter would understandably refrain from seeking state help. As the sun sets on the 16th Lok Sabha, let us ensure that it also marks an end to the oppression of the nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes of India.

Mains Question

Q: A robust witness protection scheme will strengthen the criminal justice system. Comment.