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Digital India Act, 2023

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Why is in news? How the Digital India Act will shape the future of the country's cyber landscape

Nations worldwide are grappling with the need to update their legal frameworks to adapt to the evolving digital landscape. India, with its ambitious 'Digital India' initiative, is no exception.

The recent announcement of the Digital India Act 2023 (DIA) represents a significant step towards establishing a future-ready legal framework for the country's burgeoning digital ecosystem.

This move by the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology** (MEITY) signals a proactive approach to regulating and shaping the digital future of the nation.

About the act:

The Digital India Act 2023 is a proposed legislation that **aims to replace the Information Technology Act 2000 and provide a comprehensive framework for regulating the digital space in India.**

According to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, the Act will cover topics such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), cybercrime, data protection, deepfakes, competition issues among internet platforms, and online safety.

The Act will also **reconsider the concept of safe harbour**, which is the principle that allows social media platforms to avoid liability for posts made by users.

The Act will be **implemented along with the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill 2022**, which was proposed in November 2022 and will deal with data privacy rights.

The Act is expected to help India **achieve the target of a \$1 trillion digital economy by 2026.**

Key Provisions of the Act:

It places a **strong emphasis on online safety and trust**, with a commitment to safeguarding citizen's rights in the digital realm while remaining **adaptable to shifting market dynamics and international legal principles.**

The Act would **create new laws to protect children** from online abuse and exploitation. It would also require social media platforms to take steps to remove harmful content from their platforms.

The Act would **create a new data protection framework** for India. This framework would give individuals more control over their personal data and would make it more difficult for companies to collect and use data without their consent.

The Act would create **new laws to combat cybercrime**. These laws would make it easier for law enforcement to investigate and prosecute cybercrimes.

Kamaraj IAS Academy

Plot A P.127, AF block, 6 th street, 11th Main Rd, Shanthi Colony, Anna Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600040

Phone: **044 4353 9988 / 98403 94477** / Whatsapp : **09710729833**

The Act would **create a new regulatory body**, the Digital India Authority. The Authority would be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Act and for ensuring that digital technologies are used in a safe and responsible manner.

Recognising the **growing importance of new-age technologies** such as artificial intelligence and blockchain, the DIA **provides guidelines for their responsible utilisation**.

It upholds the **concept of an open internet**, striking a balance between accessibility and necessary regulations to maintain order and protect users.

Additionally, the DIA **mandates stringent Know Your Customer (KYC) requirements** for wearable devices, accompanied by criminal law sanctions.

Benefits of the Act:

It will **promote the growth of India's digital economy**, which is likely to cross \$1 trillion by 2023.

It will **foster the development and deployment of digital technologies across multiple sectors**, such as education, health, agriculture, and e-governance.

It will **address various challenges related to cybersecurity and data privacy**, both of which are critical issues in the digital age.

Challenges in implementation:

One **key concern** is the potential **impact on innovation and the ease of doing business**.

It may **face resistance from some social media platforms and intermediaries** who may not agree with the proposed **changes in the safe harbour principle and the moderation policies**.

It may **require a robust infrastructure and skilled manpower** to ensure effective enforcement and adjudication of online offences and disputes.

It may have to **balance the interests of various stakeholders**, such as users, businesses, government, and civil society, while ensuring transparency and accountability.

It may have to **deal with the complexities and uncertainties of emerging technologies**, such as AI, deepfakes, and distributed ledger technology, and their potential risks and benefits.

It may have to **overcome the challenges of low internet speed and limited Wi-Fi hotspots** in some parts of the country.

Digital India Act 2023 affect on citizen:

The Digital India Act 2023 will affect you as a citizen in various ways, such as:

It will give you **more choice and diversity in accessing online services and platforms**, and promote fair competition among digital players.

It will protect your **freedom of expression and fundamental speech rights** on social media platforms, and provide you with a grievance redressal mechanism for content complaints.

It will **safeguard your personal data and privacy rights**, and empower you to exercise control over your data through the DPDP Bill.

It will **enhance your online safety and security**, and protect you from cybercrimes and malicious activities such as doxxing, cyber stalking, trolling, and deepfakes.

It will **enable you to benefit from the innovation and growth of emerging technologies** such as AI, machine learning, internet-of-things, distributed ledger technology, etc., which may improve the quality and efficiency of various sectors such as education, health, agriculture, and e-governance.

Conclusion:

The Digital India Act 2023 represents a progressive step toward a secure, accountable, and innovative digital future for India. It acknowledges the dynamic nature of the digital age and has the potential to shape the nation's digital landscape for generations to come. As consultations and discussions continue, vigilance and adaptability will be essential to mitigate unintended consequences and ensure a balanced approach to regulation in the digital arena.