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Indian Budget 2016 – A digital flavour

March 10, 2016, 3:39 PM IST   **Pavan Duggal** in **Cyber Laws in Today's Times** | Economy, India | ET

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Annual Budgets are always awaited keenly in the country and this year's budget was no exception. The Finance Minister of India presented his third consecutive Union Budget 2016 on the floor of the Lower House of the Indian Parliament on 29th February, 2016. While much about the Indian Budget has written in the sense that the Budget will help India, however, lot of aspects pertaining to the Budget has not been highlighted. I now look at those aspects of the Budget which impact the digital ecosystem.

Given the thrust of Government of India on implementing the Digital India Program and trying to transform India into a knowledge economy and society by the year 2018, the Union Budget has focused on the need to derive greater benefit from Indian demographic advantage. The Budget has noted that almost 12 crores (120 million) households in India do not have computers and hence are unlikely to have digital literate persons. In this light, the Budget has approvingly noted two schemes to promote digital literacy — National Digital Literacy Mission and Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (DISHA). The Budget has planned to launch new digital literacy mission scheme for rural India to cover around 6 crore additional households in the next three years.

The Budget has recognized the significance of India as growing economy and hence ,concentrated its thoughts on modernization of land records. As per the Budget, the National Land Record Modernization Program has been revamped under the Digital India Program and will be implemented as a central sector scheme with effect from 1st April, 2016. The Budget has allotted 150 crore (1500 million INR) for building of an integrated land information management system.

Further, the Budget has focused on creation of digital depositories for School Leaving Certificates, all College Degrees, Academic Awards and Mark sheets, on the pattern of a Securities Depository. The depository is aiming to validate authenticity, safe storage and easy retrieval of School Leaving Certificates, all College Degrees, Academic Awards and Mark sheets.

The Union Budget has also allocated moneys for Urban Rejuvenation Mission As such, the power of the digital format to

transform the nation's growth and progress has been recognized in the Budget.

However, it needs to be appreciated that despite the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's focus on cyber security, the Budget is completely silent on allocating any specific moneys for protection and preservation of cyber security. In fact, cybersecurity as a word does not find mention in the Budgetary Speech of the Finance Minister of India. As such, the Budget fails to match the imaginative wisdom and vision of the Indian Prime Minister, in terms of focus on protection and preservation of cyber security.

We as a nation need to note that the Digital India Program in order to be successful, has to have its homework done on protection and preservation of cyber security. There is a need for India to come up with dedicated legislation on cyber security.

While it is heartening to note that the Budgetary Speech of Finance Minister of India has focused on the significance of Aadhaar Scheme(national biometric identity programme) and promised that the Government is going to come up with a new dedicated legislation to grant legality to Aadhaar, appropriate focus on protection and preservation of cyber security is distinctly missing in the said Budget. It is pertinent to note that the government has acted swiftly with regard to the announcement made in the Budget Speech. The new Aadhaar Bill being The Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery Of Financial And Other Subsidies, Benefits And Services) Bill, 2016 has already been tabled in the Lok Sabha.

However , the present Budget from the perspective of the digital ecosystem, does not allocate the sufficient funds for protecting and preserving the Indian networks and Indian digital ecosystem. Hopefully, the Government sees the significance of the critical issue of Cyber security, and comes up with more allocations towards protection and preservation of cyber security.

The author Pavan Duggal, Advocate, Supreme Court of India, is Asia's & India's leading expert and authority on Cyberlaw & Mobile Law and has been acknowledged as one of the top four cyberlawyers in the world. He can be contacted at his email addresses pavan@pavanduggal.com and pavanduggal@yahoo.com.

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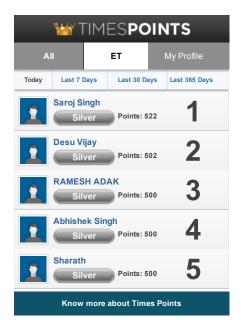| Most Discussed	Most Read
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