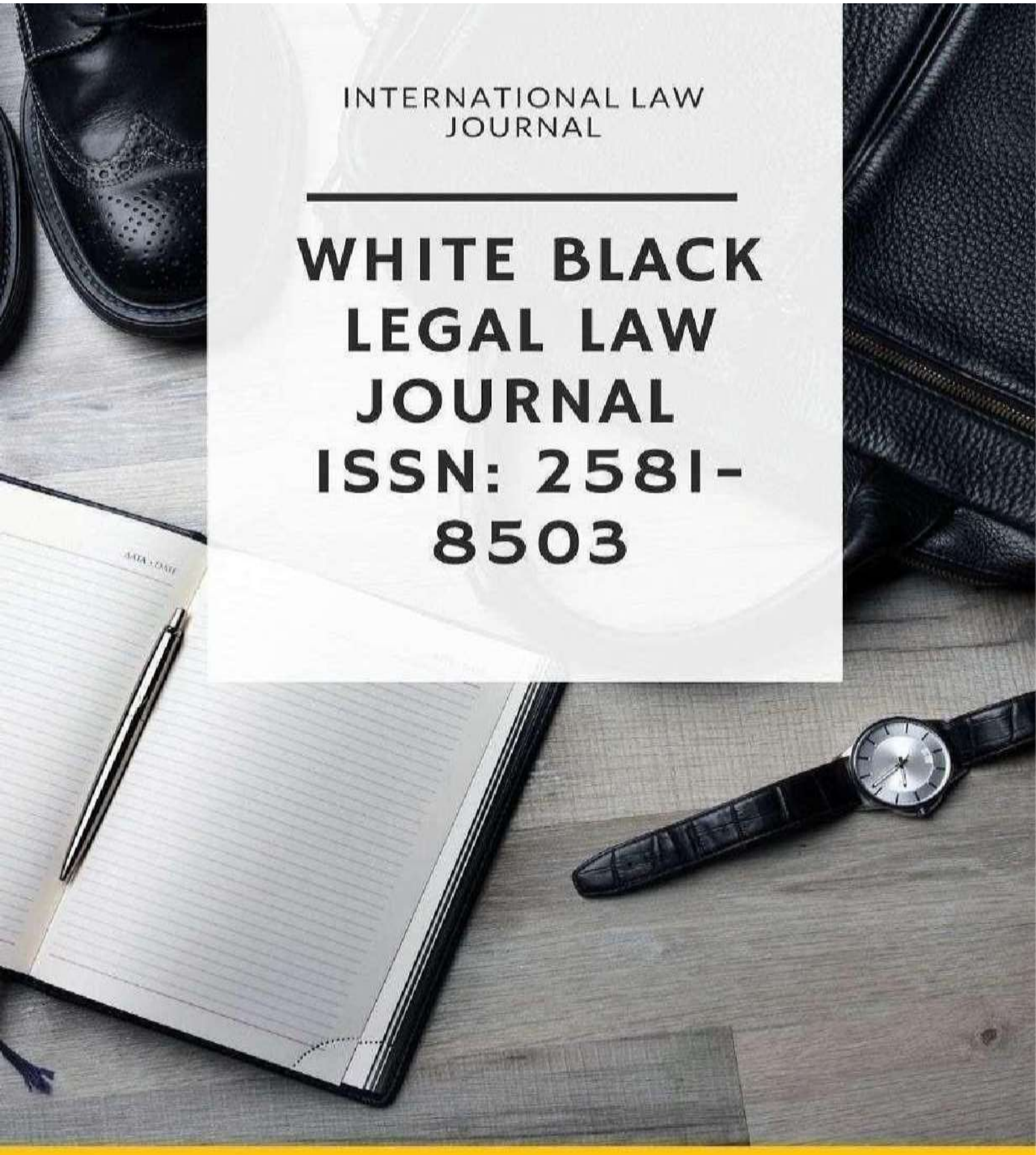

INTERNATIONAL LAW JOURNAL

WHITE BLACK LEGAL LAW JOURNAL

ISSN: 2581-8503

Peer - Reviewed & Refereed Journal

The Law Journal strives to provide a platform for discussion of International as well as National Developments in the Field of Law.

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ABOUT US

WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal providededicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

DIGITAL PRIVACY AND SURVEILLANCE: BALANCING STATE SECURITY AND INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS

AUTHORED BY - DHARSHIKA SANJAY SURANA

Abstract:

In today's world i.e. a digital world, digital privacy, and national security have been a controversial topic. It has been a challenge for the government to digitally balance national security with individuals' privacy. National security is essential for national safety, integrity, stability, etc. This cannot be compromised. On the other hand, individual freedom plays an important role for individual citizens of the nation. It is a fundamental right of every citizen in our democratic country under Art 21 to have a right to privacy. It could be in real life or digitally. Due to advanced technology, there has been sophisticated interference through surveillance in individual data and other communications. Due to various security methods such as its tech or agencies which involve cyber attacks etc. This tension between individual's privacy and state security is a threat to the smooth functioning of the digital age ahead. Thus keeping this in mind policymakers have been making various policies to handle this situation more keenly by making such policies and legal framework which would help to regulate govt surveillance and provide transparency in their surveillance not affecting privacy. It is very important and crucial to maintain a balance between the two causes one is related to the nation and the other is related to the nation's individual.

Keywords: Data security, privacy, surveillance, rights, balancing, analysis, development.

Methodology:

The widespread use of mass surveillance techniques and the exponential expansion of monitoring capabilities have a significant impact on digital rights and personal privacy. Questions arise about the potential data misuse, abuse, and unauthorized access due to the massive amount of personal data gathering, storage, and analysis. The lack of transparency and accountability surrounding monitoring programs and the sometimes covert nature of government intelligence operations has further eroded

public trust. Reveals of large-scale surveillance programs, such as those disclosed by Edward Snowden in 2013, have shed light on the extent to which governments were collecting and utilizing people's personal information without their knowledge or consent. Mass monitoring not only intrudes on the privacy of individuals but also has broader societal implications. It poses a threat to the ideals of democracy and the open exchange of ideas, as the fear of continuous surveillance and its chilling effect have the potential to undermine the right to free speech and dissent. This article mainly revolves around digital privacy, surveillance, their issues, their conflicts, and the importance of maintaining a balance between the two.

Introduction:

In history, surveillance is considered to be the right of the State to apply measures against citizens with minimum checks and balances of the State. During the British era through postal and telegram services, they monitored the Raj i.e. State. Even the Supreme Court in PUCL Vs Union of India SCC 1997 passed guidelines for safeguarding the citizens against illegal and extensive interference through surveillance in India. Thus this created a need for a legal framework for governing the surveillance.

Privacy has been an important essence of human life mainly after India was a democratic country. At first, there was British rule which mainly believed in controlling every activity throughout the state and interfered in it. They even tried to curb the activities which were not in their favor. After independence and India was established as a democratic country the fundamental rights for every citizen had been introduced in the constitution. One of these rights are right to privacy. Every citizen had the right to maintain their private affairs safely among themselves and should not be any interference of the state. This helped the companies to build their roots stronger and exercise their functions freely which will help them to grow but with certain reasonable restrictions. Even citizens have the right to freely express their views and opinions or keep it private.

As technology came to light the world has accepted it and made it an essential part of every person's life. As the world evolved with this change so do laws had formulated according to the needs and changes. Thus now people have digital privacy as their right.

Growing technology for government surveillance:

In recent years, governments have significantly enhanced their surveillance capabilities through technological advancements, enabling widespread monitoring and extensive data collection. Key breakthroughs in surveillance technology have empowered governments to acquire and analyse vast amounts of personal data using sophisticated methods such as wiretapping, data interception, and advanced surveillance tools. This shift towards broad data collection has sparked debates regarding the boundaries of governmental monitoring practices and the potential intrusiveness into individuals' privacy.

A pivotal development driving this capability is the evolution of powerful data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI). These technologies enable governments to process and interpret massive datasets efficiently, allowing for the identification of patterns, potential threats, and even predictive assessments. Such automated analysis facilitates proactive security measures but also raises concerns about the ethical implications and civil liberties impacts of mass surveillance.

The advent of ubiquitous monitoring technologies like CCTV cameras, facial recognition software, and location tracking tools has further expanded the surveillance landscape. These technologies create a comprehensive surveillance ecosystem that spans various aspects of individuals' lives, leveraging the growing interconnectedness of devices through the Internet of Things (IoT). This interconnected environment extends surveillance beyond physical spaces to encompass digital interactions and personal behaviour’s, profoundly impacting notions of privacy and autonomy.

The widespread adoption of these surveillance technologies has significant implications for digital rights and personal privacy. The extensive collection, storage, and analysis of personal data pose risks of misuse, abuse, and unauthorized access, highlighting critical concerns about transparency, accountability, and the safeguarding of individual freedoms. These developments underscore the need for robust legal frameworks, ethical guidelines, and oversight mechanisms to ensure that surveillance practices align with democratic principles and respect fundamental rights.

In conclusion, while technological advancements in surveillance offer capabilities to enhance security and public safety, they also raise complex ethical and legal challenges. Balancing the benefits of enhanced surveillance with the protection of privacy rights requires careful consideration of the

societal implications and the development of comprehensive regulatory frameworks. Addressing these issues effectively is crucial to navigating the evolving landscape of surveillance technology responsibly in the digital age.

Challenges for digital privacy:

One of the most significant difficulties confronting India's internet privacy landscape is the lack of a robust data protection law. Citizens are subject to possible data misuse because there is no such regulation in place. Furthermore, the Aadhaar system, which was supposed to improve identification verification efficiency, has raised worries about the security and privacy of individual information due to centralized data collecting.

Social media platforms, which are frequently portrayed as sanctuaries for free expression and connection, have become battlegrounds for misinformation and hate speech. These platforms employ user data for targeted advertising and manipulation, resulting in an atmosphere where individual privacy is constantly jeopardized.

Information security and data protection are ever-changing topics that are constantly challenged and influenced by advancements in digital era technologies and corporate practices. The ICT development reflects on the laws for data protection organization and affects the understanding of personal data definition, cross-border data transfer management, user privacy in the digital age, user rights, and data controller obligations. According to an Internet user poll, 74% of residents believe that personal data discovery is becoming an increasingly important aspect of the digital world. On the other hand, only 26% of social computing users and 18% of online consumers believe they have full control over their personal information. Many questions might be posed concerning how and where ever our personal data are held, who may assess them, who is accountable for data protection, what policies are in place to preserve personal data and maintain their secrecy, and what is the guarantee of correct data movement between different nodes via the worldwide network.

There are numerous examples available on the internet. For example, the "Privacy Notes" provided on a company's website state that the collected categories of personal data are "name, gender, birthday or age, homepage, profile photo, time zone, mail address, country, interests, and comments and content you have posted/shared". Many of these categories are unrelated to the company's primary

area of focus.

Digital Privacy:

Communication has always been an important aspect of human development; now digital means are used for communication such as mobile, social media, and other platforms. There are various things that a person does digitally such as online transactions, banking, health-related, professional; work, etc for which a person needs privacy. Privacy means the protection of data which has to be handled safely and with security.

Data privacy refers to the right of individuals to have control over how their personal information is collected, used, and shared by others. It encompasses the measures and practices that ensure sensitive data, such as names, addresses, financial details, and online activities, remains secure and confidential. Essentially, it's about safeguarding the privacy and autonomy of individuals in an increasingly digital and interconnected world.

In the era of digital advancement, various illegal activities like data fraud, fraudulent communication, cyberbullying, and more have become prevalent. Users often find their private information compromised when they share it on digital platforms for networking, business transactions, intelligence gathering, government agencies, and other purposes. Currently, there is a lack of comprehensive national legislation that specifically regulates the collection, storage, monitoring, retrieval, processing, distribution, and maintenance of data.

To ensure data privacy, it's crucial to implement robust technologies. Access control is essential as it restricts data and system access to authorized individuals, preventing unauthorized access and data leakage. Combining access control with data loss prevention (DLP) enhances security.

Two-factor authentication is a critical technology for average users. By requiring two forms of identification, such as a password and a unique code sent to a mobile device, it significantly increases the difficulty for hackers to gain unauthorized access to user accounts.

Encryption is another vital technology for data privacy. It involves converting information into a scrambled format, making it appear as random data, and can only be decrypted by someone with

the encryption key. This ensures that sensitive information remains confidential and secure.

Rights by The Constitution:

In Indian Constitution under **Article 19** of the Constitution provides_Freedom of Speech and Expression freedom. In which freedom of speech which is the right to express one's opinion freely without any fear through oral/written/electronic/broadcasting/press. Freedom of expression including freedom of press.

Landmark case: **Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India:** Freedom of speech and expression has no geographical limitation and it carries with it the right of a citizen to gather information and to exchange thought with others not only in India but abroad also.

The Indian constitution, under **Article 21**, guarantees every citizen the right to life and personal liberty. This fundamental right has been extensively interpreted by the Supreme Court of India. One significant interpretation is the recognition of the right to privacy and information. While the Constitution of India does not explicitly acknowledge the "Right to Privacy" as a fundamental right, the Supreme Court ruled in August 2017 that it is indeed a fundamental right. Despite several administrative efforts, there is currently a lack of specific legislation protecting data and a dedicated data safeguarding agency in India. Nevertheless, India has made significant strides in acknowledging and protecting the privacy of individuals.

The court took a firm stance against the surveillance of individuals, emphasizing that in a democratic society, the act of spying on individuals should not be permitted except through established constitutional procedures with adequate statutory safeguards. Unlawful surveillance has widespread implications for society and infringes upon the fundamental rights of individuals. The primary right that is infringed upon is the right to privacy, as one of the key aspects of privacy is the freedom from observation, interference, and intrusion. Surveillance violates privacy in multiple ways, as it subjects individuals to constant observation. This contravenes Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, which grants individuals the integral and fundamental right to privacy.

Unlawful spying not only violates the right to freedom of speech and expression, safeguarded by the Indian Constitution under Article 19(1)(a), but it also encroaches upon individuals' privacy and sense

of security. By subjecting individuals to unwarranted surveillance, governmental authorities impede the free exchange of ideas and opinions on social and political matters. This intrusion hinders the dissemination of vital information within society, as certain content may be censored, and citizens may refrain from expressing their thoughts due to the fear of reprisal from state entities.

The Indian Supreme Court's ruling in **M.P. Sharma v. Satish Chandra** initially did not guarantee the right to privacy by the Indian Constitution. However, the dissenting opinion in **Kharak Singh v. State of Uttar Pradesh** recognized privacy as a fundamental right protected by the constitution. The later case of **K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India** firmly established privacy as a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. This judgment clarified the wide scope of data and its nationwide utilization by the state and businesses. It also emphasized specific provisions, such as Section 43-A and 72-A of the Information Technology Act, and the recently enacted Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, which impose requirements on companies to safeguard private data.

In the case of **Manohar Lal Sharma vs Union of India,** also known as the Pegasus case, a committee of experts was appointed to review and propose amendments to the existing surveillance laws. The purpose of these amendments is to enhance the protection of the right to privacy within the legal framework governing surveillance activities.

On the 27th of October 2021, the highest court in India issued an order to establish an independent expert committee. This committee's primary objective is to investigate the disturbing allegations of surveillance targeting politicians, activists, journalists, and constitutional authorities through the use of the notorious Pegasus spyware. Notably, the committee will be led by Justice RV Raveendran, a distinguished former Supreme Court judge.

Pegasus, a spyware developed by the Israeli cyber firm NSO, has reportedly infiltrated hundreds of phones in India, raising significant concerns about privacy and security. The spyware's insidious nature allows it to penetrate a device without the user's awareness by masquerading as a legitimate application and transmitting itself through notifications via the application's server. Consequently, numerous users have lodged complaints about their mobile phones being compromised by this intrusive virus.

In a landmark decision in October 2021, the Supreme Court took a decisive stance in safeguarding the fundamental right to privacy of citizens by implementing measures to prevent unauthorized surveillance. The court emphasized the critical importance of shielding journalistic interventions as an integral component of upholding freedom of the press. It cautioned that any failure to do so would result in a substantial detriment to the citizens of India, as it would impede the critical process of disseminating accurate and authorized news to the public.

A balance between government surveillance and digital privacy:

The purpose of these voluntary and non-legally binding Guiding Principles is to provide a framework for governments to demonstrate their commitment to upholding democratic principles, human rights, and fundamental freedoms while responsibly utilizing surveillance technology. The overarching goal is to ensure that governments adhere to their international obligations and commitments while using surveillance technology. These Guiding Principles are designed to address three primary areas of concern, aiming to prevent the inappropriate use of surveillance technologies by governments and those acting on their behalf.

In recent decades, the world has undergone transformative technological advancements, particularly with the exponential expansion of the internet, connecting an ever-increasing number of individuals and devices globally. Responsible and lawful use of surveillance technologies plays a crucial role in safeguarding national security, public safety, and the integrity of critical infrastructure. Furthermore, these technologies are instrumental in supporting the conduct of criminal investigations. When these tools are utilized appropriately, they contribute to ensuring that individuals can fully exercise their rights and liberties within a secure and protected environment.

Governments are increasingly utilizing digital technologies to control and limit access to information, thus impeding the exercise of certain human rights and fundamental freedoms. This often takes the form of targeting journalists, human rights defenders, activists, workers, union leaders, as well as political opposition members, or other perceived dissidents and critics. Consequently, this can result in an unequal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, with a disproportionate impact on women and girls, as well as on individuals or groups in marginalized or vulnerable situations. These marginalized groups encompass Indigenous Peoples, LGBTI persons, individuals belonging to national, racial, ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities, as well as persons with disabilities, who

are already significantly excluded from civic spaces, both online and offline use of surveillance technologies by governments can, in certain instances, infringe upon the right to privacy, as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). In the most severe cases, these technologies can be utilized as part of a broader oppressive state machinery, leading to violations of various human rights and fundamental freedoms. This includes restrictions on freedoms of expression, religion or belief, association, and peaceful assembly, as well as the right to equality before the law and protection from discrimination. These actions can also impact procedural rights, ultimately leading to the constriction of both online and offline civic spaces.

The responsible use of surveillance technologies aims to improve safety and security while respecting the rule of law and protecting individual privacy, personal data, and human rights. Governments should ensure the lawful and responsible use of surveillance technologies, with safeguards in place to foster transparency and accountability, while pursuing legitimate law enforcement, public safety, and national security objectives. There should be certain principles that should guide the government during surveillance.

The Guiding Principles aim to address three main concerns:

1. Using Internet controls to suppress human rights and limit access to information.
2. Combining advanced video surveillance with AI-driven tools to continuously monitor individuals without legal basis.
3. Using big data analytic tools to enforce discriminatory laws and target specific individuals or groups.

Governments should not use these surveillance technologies to unjustly interfere with freedom of expression, discourage human rights and fundamental freedoms, perpetrate gender-based violence or discrimination, perpetuate harmful norms and stereotypes, or unlawfully collect and distribute personal health data. These principles are not legally binding and can vary by country. Other similar non-legally binding instruments promoting responsible use of surveillance tools and data include the OECD Recommendation on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence.

Thus there are certain techniques that the government can implement while surveillance Legal

Protections for Surveillance Technologies: The use of surveillance technologies must comply with domestic and international laws, be aligned with democratic values and the rule of law, and not violate human rights or fundamental freedoms. Oversight, transparency, and redress processes should be clearly defined and consistently enforced, ensuring access to effective remedies for individuals. Mechanisms for accountability must have the necessary authority and resources to address potential abuses.

Nondiscrimination: Surveillance technology should not be used to target individuals or groups based on protected classifications. Governments should strive to mitigate any disparate impact from surveillance technologies. Automated technology systems, such as AI, should be developed using equitable and transparent design practices to prevent unintended bias and disparate impact. Deployed systems should be routinely evaluated to ensure outcomes are consistent with applicable law and policy.

Governments should ensure that surveillance technologies are governed in a manner that mitigates risks of misuse, with access to judicial or administrative review. They should adopt oversight mechanisms, including human oversight, to ensure compliance with human rights obligations and domestic laws. Feedback from stakeholders should be considered, and the uses of surveillance technologies should be documented for meaningful oversight and monitoring.

- Transparency: Governments should ensure transparency on the legal basis for using surveillance technology, including safeguards to prevent abuse or discrimination, data processing consistency, and procurement policies. Transparency mechanisms should balance the public's right to information with the need to protect law enforcement, national security, and public safety objectives..
- The use of surveillance technology should be limited to what is necessary to achieve legitimate public interest objectives and must comply with domestic and international laws regarding safeguarding personal information and confidentiality of communications. Biometric tools like fingerprint scans, DNA analytics, facial recognition, speech recognition, gait recognition, and iris scans should only be used when lawful and appropriate, taking into account the context of collection and use.

  Secure data: When acquiring data through surveillance technology, there should be procedures to ensure its appropriate use, processing, retention, and sharing in compliance with laws and

regulations. Private sector entities involved should have safeguards, breach disclosure requirements, and data misuse penalties.

- Governments should ensure that surveillance technologies respect human rights, including privacy, by incorporating data retention, minimization procedures, and privacy-enhancing technologies.
- Governments should ensure that their surveillance technologies are secure, effective, compliant with the law, and mitigate adverse outcomes. Testing should closely resemble anticipated deployment conditions and account for the technology used as well as human roles. Regular assessments should be conducted to ensure ongoing integrity.

The training for government officials on surveillance systems should cover appropriate and lawful use, technical limitations, data protection best practices, privacy, and human rights considerations. Officials should also have ongoing access to legal advice and training on the ethical use of surveillance technology. Consider peer-to-peer learning mechanisms to prevent problematic practices.

The following principles have been created collectively by the 36 Member States of the Freedom Online Coalition. These states are committed to upholding Internet freedom and safeguarding human rights and essential freedoms online on a global scale.

Conclusion:

Fortunately, answers to these issues are emerging. The proposed Personal Data Protection Bill has the ability to provide much-needed protections to individuals. If properly implemented, this legislation has the potential to create a framework for protecting citizens from data exploitation and privacy violations. Awareness of data privacy rights is critical in enabling citizens to make informed decisions regarding their online activity. Education campaigns and advocacy actions can help individuals understand their rights and take steps to preserve their privacy. Technological breakthroughs also present promising solutions. The use of blockchain technology and encryption can greatly improve data security and allow people more control over their personal information. These tools can contribute to a more resilient and secure digital infrastructure.

A multipronged approach Navigating India's internet privacy landscape necessitates a thorough, multifaceted approach. A strong legislative framework, such as the Personal Data Protection Bill, is

required to create clear standards and penalties for privacy abuses.

Empowering citizens through education and awareness campaigns will enable them to actively participate in protecting their own privacy. Furthermore, supporting ethical tech practices among enterprises and service providers is critical to fostering an atmosphere that values consumer privacy. A observant civil society is critical in holding the government and commercial institutions responsible. Continuous monitoring and activism can assist guarantee that India's data revolution empowers its people rather than exploits them.

To summarize, harnessing the potential of big data in India while protecting the fundamental right to privacy requires a collective effort. With a strong legal framework, informed citizens, ethical technology practices, and an active civil society, India can boldly enter the digital age, maximizing the benefits of the data revolution while maintaining individual privacy as a non-negotiable right.

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