Need for a data protection law

Why in news?

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Former chairman of the UIDAI has called for a new data protection and empowerment law.

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What is the need for a data protection law?

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- The present time period is said to be the **'age of data'** as private companies store huge volumes of information, a lot of it outside India's borders.
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- **Data-colonising** companies like Facebook, WhatsApp use the collected information in numerous ways about which individuals have limited control.
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- **Digital India** roll-out, push on digital payments and rising **e-commerce** penetration mandates a stronger data protection regime to foster trust in the data ecosystem.
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- **Cybercrime** and data breaches are also on the rise.
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- Cross-border data flows are increasingly becoming a key determinant for claiming a country's share in the **global digital trade.**
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- A stronger data protection regime would act as an enabler for business growth and **employment** opportunities especially for the Indian IT industry.
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- Collection of data by governments and agencies could be used by criminals for illegal trade, trafficking and money laundering apart from recruitment to various terror outfits.
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- Lack of a stringent legal framework for data protection has led to privacy violations going unpunished, limitations on consumers' rights to claim compensation and constrains in government's ability to impose fine and penalties.

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What should be done?

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- The present Information Technology (IT) Act 2008 is not a substitute for a data protection regime.
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- Most government departments and agencies do not come under the regulation of the act.
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- India should develop a data-protection regime that suits the Indian context and safeguards against privacy violations, but does not stifle technology innovation.
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- India should address the issue of privacy, data colonisation and competition.
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- It is important to look at the issue from both privacy as well as national security perspectives.
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Source: The Hindu, Livemint

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