# Perplexes with Geo-spatial Information Regulation Bill, 2016

## What is the issue?

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- Ministry of Home Affairs in 2016 had released the draft Geospatial Information Regulation Bill (GIRB).
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- Strict regulations imposed on geospatial information by this bill has concerned tech services sector.
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## What does geospatial information mean?

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- Geospatial imagery or data acquired through space or aerial platforms such as satellite, aircrafts, airships, balloons, unmanned aerial vehicles.
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- Graphical or digital data depicting natural or man-made physical features, phenomenon or boundaries of the earth.
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- Any information related thereto including surveys, charts, maps, terrestrial photos referenced to a co-ordinate system and having attributes.
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## What is the purpose of geospatial information regulation bill?

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- After the January 2016 Pathankot attack, Ministry of Home Affairs made a regulatory attempt in the geospatial industry for maintaining national sovereignty over India’s geospatial data.
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- According to the draft, it will be mandatory to take permission from a government authority before acquiring, disseminating, publishing or distributing any geospatial information of India.
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- In simple terms, any addition or creation of anything that has to do with any geospatial information within the territory of India will need the permission of the government.
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- A Security Vetting Authority will be setup for this purpose, it grants licenses to organisations/individuals who want to use geospatial data.
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- It will check the content and data provided and make sure it is well within national policies.
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## What are the strict limitations imposed by the bill?

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- **Illegal acquisition of geospatial information of India -** Fine ranging from Rs. 1 crore to Rs. 100 crore and/or imprisonment for a period up to seven years.
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- **Illegal dissemination, publication or distribution of geospatial information of India -** Whoever disseminates, publishes or distributes any geospatial information of India shall be punished with a fine ranging from Rs. 10 lakhs to Rs. 100 crore and/or imprisonment for a period up to seven years.
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- **Use of geospatial information of India outside India -** Fine ranging from Rs. 1 crore to Rs. 100 crore and/or imprisonment for a period up to seven years.
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## What are few shortfalls with the bill?

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- The home ministry made its attempt to draft the bill soon after the 2016 Pathankot attack and it was drafted with a short sighted view.

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- Usually any mapping process in India will be taken care by the Survey of India (SOI) and digital approaches regarding those lies with the department of science and technology (DST).
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- This draft bill was made with a negligible role of SOI, but much of its initial framework comes from bureaucrats within the defence ministry.
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- The MOD has a large number of grievances when it comes to mapping and geospatial data.
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## What are the concerns of tech industry over the draft bill?

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- In India, location services are very dynamic and the ecosystem is still evolving as most of the commuters solely believe in mapping and navigation apps for their day today commute.
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- In this stage Satellite-makers, online map companies and GPS providers are bemused with the manner in which the draft GIRB was drafted.
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- It is also said that once implemented the bill could negatively impact some of the key programmes of Union government which entirely rely on location based inputs.
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- Thus the only demand of the tech industries is that any new regulation on location-based services should ensure that the pace of innovation is not impacted.
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## Source: The Hindu, the Wire

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