

Geospatial Info Regulation Bill will hurt start-ups, small firms

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The Geospatial Information Regulation Bill, 2016, whose draft outlaws the acquisition of geospatial information without the government's permission, is expected to impact smaller companies rather more than the large ones.

Experts said that the law is being created to keep large corporates in check, but if implemented in its current form, its biggest impact would be on start-ups and smaller firms that use or create geospatial data.

"While companies such as Uber and Google can survive by getting all their maps vetted by the government, smaller companies will be impacted. This will act as a big entry barrier in favour of the dominant players such as Google and Microsoft," said Sumandro Chattapadhyay, research director at Centre for Internet and Society.

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President, Association of Geospatial Industries

geospatial information they can store and what they cannot. Moreover, if a start-up requires three months to get approvals for your data before you can use it, it'll be as good as dead," Chattapadhyay said.

Google declined to comment on the draft Bill.

U-turn by Centre

Sanjay Kumar, president of the Association of Geospatial Industries, recalled that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had in a speech in September last highlighted the importance of geospatial data in everyday life

of the common man. "But now, the government seems to be taking a U-turn," he said.

The Association has hundreds of members, including Google, offering various geospatial services.

"The PM's campaigns on skill development, digital India and enhancement of the transport sector are heavily dependent on geospatial data. There are several private sector companies that provide services for these projects. If this Bill is passed as drafted, all this development process will be stalled," said Kumar.