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Swecha Press Release on Dharani Portal

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Hyderabad.

Telangana's new Integrated Land Records Management System/Dharani Portal is set to start registrations of properties from today. The Dharani Portal has been experimentally being used since 2018 across few districts of the state and has already caused problems for farmer Dharani is part of the new revenue bill passed by Telangana assembly in September 2020, which is waiting for assent from the Governor and yet to be notified as an act. The following are some of the key concerns we want to raise regarding this system.

1. The rules and guidelines for functioning of Dharani portal have not been notified. The hurry in pushing this new system without holding public consultations is problematic.
2. There is no provision for appeals in the new revenue bill and there is lack of clarity for grievance redressal mechanisms regarding errors that are likely to pop up during digitization.
3. At a time when the data protection bill is still pending in the parliament, the bill allows sharing of data with credit agencies. This is happening without any regard for people's right to privacy and ignoring their consent for sharing their data. These need to be ideally disclosed in the law and subsequent rules and regulations.
4. Apart from the revenue bill, the new amendments made to municipal act also demands electricity and water bill details to be linked to Dharani for urban property registration. This also violates citizen consent as the government obtains their utilities bill data and there is a possibility for credit agencies to have access to this data.
5. The government is violating the supreme court judgment of Puttaswamy vs Union of India (WRIT PETITION (CIVIL) NO. 494 OF 2012) by demanding mandatory Aadhaar for property registration.
6. The government intends to store all land records using block chain part of the Dharani portal. There is no clarity on this and with no rules on blockchain, digitization induced input errors which potentially can cause permanent property loss.

The digitization of land records as an activity was being attempted in Hyderabad since 1998 with the Computer Aided Registration of Deeds (CARD) project. This has been a long term activity for the state and has had its fair share of problems. While the Chief Minister hopes to start with a clean slate with the new revenue system, this will also face challenges.

While the set goal of "eradicating corruption" in land registration is laudable, technology by itself will not solve this problem without public on-boarding and consultations in the entire process. Handing over the linked data to credit agencies gives rise to a possibility to new kinds of usury and will adversely effect the commons. The government should put this process on hold through Dharani portal until rules and procedures are clearly laid out.

General Secretary
Bhuvan Krishna