

# CURRENT AFFAIRS

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**#DAILY UPDATES**

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**2023**

## 1. 'Selective ban' of messaging apps may be looked at: TRAI: The Hindu – Page 10

Why is it in news?	The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) put out a consultation paper asking if it would be possible for messaging apps such as WhatsApp to be brought under a licensing framework, and whether such apps can be banned “selectively” in places where an Internet shutdown would otherwise have been imposed.
UPSC SYLLABUS RELEVANCE for prelims and Mains	<p><b>Prelims:</b> Current events of national and international importance – Science and Technology.</p> <p><b>Mains:</b> General Studies-III: Technology - Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.</p>
Important concepts	Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Today's prelims practice question:</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> Consider the following statements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The “OTT communication services” is the term used for such apps that provide only entertainment services.</li> <li>2. Net neutrality is the concept that all traffic on a network should be treated without discrimination in speed or pricing.</li> </ol> <p>Which among the statements mentioned above is/are incorrect?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. 1 only</li> <li>B. 2 only</li> <li>C. Both 1 and 2</li> <li>D. Neither 1 nor 2</li> </ol> <p>Correct answer: A</p> <p>Explanation: “OTT communication services” is the term used for such apps that allow calling and texting over the Internet, often with encryption that makes it difficult for</p>	

anyone to access the content of a conversation. Net neutrality is the concept that all traffic on a network should be treated without discrimination in speed or pricing.

**Today's mains practice question:**

Explain the evolution of the concept of 'net neutrality' from its origin.  
What are the potential benefits of net neutrality?

## DETAILED EXPLANATION OF IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

### Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI):

- The entry of private service providers brought with it the inevitable need for independent regulation.
- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) was, thus, established with effect from 20th February 1997 by an Act of Parliament, called the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997, to regulate telecom services, including fixation/revision of tariffs for telecom services which were earlier vested in the Central Government.
- TRAI's mission is to create and nurture conditions for growth of telecommunications in the country in a manner and at a pace which will enable India to play a leading role in emerging global information society.
- One of the main objectives of TRAI is to provide a fair and transparent policy environment which promotes a level playing field and facilitates fair competition.
- In pursuance of above objective TRAI has issued from time to time a large number of regulations, orders and directives to deal with issues coming before it and provided the required direction to the evolution of Indian telecom market from a Government-owned monopoly to a multi operator multi service open competitive market.
- The directions, orders and regulations issued cover a wide range of subjects including tariff, interconnection and quality of service as well as governance of the Authority.
- The TRAI Act was amended by an ordinance, effective from 24 January 2000, establishing a Telecommunications Dispute Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) to take over the adjudicatory and disputes functions from TRAI.

- TDSAT was set up to adjudicate any dispute between a licensor and a licensee, between two or more service providers, between a service provider and a group of consumers, and to hear and dispose of appeals against any direction, decision or order of TRAI.

## 2. 'Words like fake, false, misleading in IT Rules problematic': The Hindu – Page 10

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	The Bombay High Court said words like, “fake, false and misleading” that are part of the new Information Technology Rules were “problematic”.
<b>UPSC SYLLABUS RELEVANCE for prelims and Mains</b>	<b>Prelims:</b> Science and Technology <b>Mains:</b> General Studies III - Awareness in the fields of IT
<b>Important concepts</b>	IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023

### Today's prelims practice question:

**Q.** Consider the following statements about the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023:

- These rules derives the authority from the Information Technology Act, 2020, which gives legal recognition to electronic commerce in India.
- To protect the safety and trust of the Digital Nagriks, the Ministry of Electronics and IT, Government of India recently notified amendments to the IT rules, 2021.

Which among the statements mentioned above is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Correct answer: B

Explanation: The new IT (Intermediary

Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023 derives the authority from

the Information Technology Act, 2000, which gives legal recognition to electronic commerce in India. One of the aims of the amendments to these rules is to enable the Indian online gaming ecosystem to expand and grow and become an important catalyst to India's One trillion-dollar Digital economy goal by 2025-26. To protect the safety and trust of the Digital Nagriks, the Ministry of Electronics and IT, Government of India recently notified amendments to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, related to online gaming and spread of false and misleading information regarding government business.

**Today's mains practice question:**

What are the major characteristics of the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023? Discuss the concerns associated with it.

## DETAILED EXPLANATION OF IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

### IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023:

- The IT Rules derives the authority from the Information Technology Act, 2000, which gives legal recognition to electronic commerce in India.
- As far as the obligatory for Intermediaries are concerned, no platform can allow harmful unapproved online games and their advertisements.
- They should not share false information about the Indian government, as confirmed by a fact-checking unit.
- An online intermediary – including social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter and internet service providers like Airtel, Jio and Vodafone Idea – should make “reasonable efforts” to not host content related to the Central Government that is “identified as fake or misleading” by a “fact check unit” that may be notified by the IT Ministry.
- Platforms providing online gaming will have to register with a Self-Regulatory Body (SRB) that will determine whether or not the game is "permissible."



- The platform should ensure that online games do not involve any gambling or betting elements.
- They should also comply with legal requirements, standards, and safety precautions such as parental controls.
- If any piece of information is marked as fake by the upcoming fact check unit, intermediaries will be required to take it down, failing which they would risk losing their safe harbour, which protects them from litigation against third-party content.
- Social media sites will have to take down such posts, and internet service providers will have to block URLs of such content.
- The Key IT Rules, 2021 mandates social media to exercise greater diligence.
- Broadly, the IT Rules (2021) mandate social media platforms to exercise greater diligence with respect to the content on their platforms.
- To ensure online safety and dignity of users, intermediaries shall remove or disable access within 24 hours of receipt of complaints of contents that exposes the private areas of individuals, show such individuals in full or partial nudity or in sexual act or is in the nature of impersonation including morphed images etc.
- To educate users about the privacy policies, the privacy policies of the social media platforms must ensure that users are educated about not circulating copyrighted material and anything that can be construed as defamatory, racially or ethnically objectionable, paedophilic, threatening the unity, integrity, defence, security or sovereignty of India or friendly relations with foreign states, or violative of any contemporary law.
- The new IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023 require social media intermediaries to censor or otherwise modify content that relates to the Union government if a government-mandated fact checking unit (FCU) directs them to do so.
- The wordings of the IT Rules where words like fake, false and misleading are problematic. Those are the only three criteria [to flag content as false].

- We don't know the business of the Central government. The expression like fake is extremely problematic.
- One might argue something is false. Falsity puts us in a binary, fake doesn't even attempt to do that.
- The word 'misleading' in the Rules is an extremely problematic area since it is an opinion.
- Calling something 'misleading' is subjective, what is misleading for one may not necessarily be misleading for another.
- The aim of these amendments are:
  - i. To enforce greater due diligence by online gaming and social media intermediaries.
  - ii. To protect the safety and trust of the Digital Nagriks and provide every opportunity possible to create startups and innovate.
  - iii. Enable the Indian online gaming ecosystem to expand and grow and become an important catalyst to India's One trillion-dollar Digital economy goal by 2025-26.

### 3. Sri Lanka counting on Indian tourists to bolster economic recovery: The Hindu – Page 11

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	Sri Lanka is counting on tourists from India, its primary source market, to boost foreign exchange earnings and aid economic recovery, as the island expects fewer tourists from Europe amid the ongoing recession.
<b>UPSC SYLLABUS RELEVANCE for prelims and Mains</b>	<b>Prelims:</b> Current events of national and international importance. <b>Mains:</b> General Studies II - India and its neighbourhood- relations.
<b>Important concepts</b>	BIMSTEC
<b>Mains PYQ exercise:</b>	India is an age-old friend of Sri Lanka.' Discuss India's role in the recent crisis in Sri Lanka in the light of the preceding statement. (2022)
<b>Today's mains practice question:</b>	Discuss the recent trends in the bilateral relations between India and Sri Lanka.

## DETAILED EXPLANATION OF IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

### BIMSTEC:

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional organization that was established on 06 June 1997 with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration.
- Initially known as BIST-EC (Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation), the organisation is now known as BIMSTEC and comprises seven Member States with the admission of Myanmar on 22 December 1997, and Bhutan and Nepal in February 2004.
- On 06 June 1997, representatives of the Governments of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand came together in Bangkok, and signed the 'Declaration on the Establishment of the Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation (BIST-EC)'.
- With Myanmar joining on 22 December 1997, the group was renamed BIMST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Cooperation), and with the admission of Nepal and Bhutan during the 6th Ministerial Meeting in Thailand in July 2004, the grouping was renamed during the First Summit in Bangkok on 31 July 2004 as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).
- The Chairmanship of BIMSTEC rotates according to the alphabetical order of the English names of the Member States.
- During the Third BIMSTEC Summit, the Secretariat was established in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

### 4. Govt. to share PM Gati Shakti data: The Hindu – Page 12

Why is it in news?	The government is working out a mechanism to share data with industry and potential investors about multi-
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	modal connectivity as well as other physical and social infrastructure captured on the PM Gati Shakti platform
<b>UPSC SYLLABUS RELEVANCE for prelims and Mains</b>	Prelims: Economic and Social Development.  Mains: General Studies: Economic & Social Development.
<b>Important concepts</b>	PM Gati Shakti Yojana
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Today's prelims practice question:</b></p> <p><b>Q.</b> Consider the following statements about the PM Gati Shakti Yojana:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It was launched to exclusively develop infrastructure of rural roads.</li> <li>2. The major goal is to make products manufactured in the country more competitive by cutting down the logistics costs and improving supply chains.</li> </ol> <p>Which among the statements mentioned above is/are correct?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. 1 only</li> <li>B. 2 only</li> <li>C. Both 1 and 2</li> <li>D. Neither 1 nor 2</li> </ol> <p>Correct answer: B</p> <p>Explanation: The PM Gati Shakti Yojana was launched to develop holistic infrastructure in India. With the broad objective of making products manufactured in the country more competitive by cutting down the logistics costs and improving supply chains, the Pradhan Mantri Gati Shakti scheme will help India attract investment from all over the world for improving the infrastructure of the country.</p>	
<b>Mains PYQ exercise:</b>	“Investment in infrastructure is essential for more rapid and inclusive economic growth. ”Discuss in the light of India’s experience. (Answer in 250 words) (2021)
<b>Today's mains practice question:</b>	Examine the potential of PM Gati Shakti yojana in achieving its objective of developing holistic infrastructure in India.
<b>DETAILED EXPLANATION OF IMPORTANT CONCEPTS</b>	

## PM Gati Shakti:

- PM Gati Shakti or the Pradhan Mantri Gati Shakti National Master Plan is a Central government project, aimed to revolutionise infrastructure in India.
- Prime minister Narendra Modi announced the launch of the Gati Shakti Yojana, a Rs 100 lakh-crore project for developing 'holistic infrastructure' in India on the 75th Independence Day.
- On October 13, 2021, PM Modi launched the Pradhan Mantri Gati Shakti (PMGS) scheme, aimed at breaking inter-ministerial silos and to integrate the planning of infrastructure projects.
- It is the plan which is likely to cut delays in infrastructure projects and make India a more competitive market.
- With the broad objective of making products manufactured in the country more competitive by cutting down the logistics costs and improving supply chains, the Pradhan Mantri Gati Shakti scheme will help India attract investment from all over the world for improving the infrastructure of the country.
- It mentions that logistics and supply chain costs account for around 12% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in India at present.
- This is much higher when compared to the global average of 8%.
- Factors that lead to this higher expense are excessive dependence on transportation by road, and under-utilisation of waterways, air and rail networks.
- Overall, these factors hike rates of Indian produces when compared to other countries, making them less competitive globally.
- With the broad objective of making products manufactured in the country more competitive by cutting down the logistics costs and improving supply chains, the Pradhan Mantri Gati Shakti scheme will help India attract investment from all over the world for improving the infrastructure of the country.

**MODEL MAINS ANSWER FOR TODAY'S EXPECTED MAINS QUESTION**

**Q. What are the major characteristics of the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023? Discuss the concerns associated with it.**

<p><u>First step is to understand the demand of the question</u></p>	<p>Question has two parts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the characteristics of the IT rules, 2023?</li> <li>2. What are the concerns associated with the rules?</li> </ol>										
<p><b>Introduction</b></p>	<p>The new IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023 derives the authority from the Information Technology Act, 2000, which gives legal recognition to electronic commerce in India. As far as the obligatory for Intermediaries are concerned, no platform can allow harmful unapproved online games and their advertisements. They should not share false information about the Indian government, as confirmed by a fact-checking unit.</p>										
<p><b>Body</b></p>	<p><b>Characteristics of the IT rules, 2023</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Dimension</th><th>Content</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Characteristics</b></td><td>Derives the authority from the Information Technology Act, 2000.</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>No platform can allow harmful unapproved online games and their advertisements.</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>They should not share false information about the Indian government, as confirmed by a fact-checking unit.</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>The platform should ensure that online games do not involve any gambling or betting elements.</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Dimension	Content	<b>Characteristics</b>	Derives the authority from the Information Technology Act, 2000.		No platform can allow harmful unapproved online games and their advertisements.		They should not share false information about the Indian government, as confirmed by a fact-checking unit.		The platform should ensure that online games do not involve any gambling or betting elements.
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		They should also comply with legal requirements, standards, and safety precautions such as parental controls.
		To ensure online safety and dignity of users, intermediaries shall remove or disable access withing 24 hours of receipt of complaints of contents that exposes the private areas of individuals.
	<b>Concerns associated with the rules</b>	
	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Content</b>
	<b>Concerns</b>	The wordings of the IT Rules where words like fake, false and misleading are problematic.
		It undermines free speech.
		Intermediaries will remove information deemed false by the Fact Check Unit, leaving only the state to determine what is true.
		It does not provide a clear definition of fake news.
		The IT Rules, 2023 don't specify what qualifies as false or misleading information or the qualifications and procedures for the fact-check unit.
		It violates the judgement of the Supreme Court in the Shreya Singhal vs Union of India case of 2015, where the Supreme Court

	held that a law that limits speech can neither be vague nor over-broad.	
<b>Conclusion:</b>	<p>While there are positive aspects about the said guidelines, there are some challenges that appear to be in conflict with the basic tenets of democracy and constitutional values. Thus, the Government should engage all the stakeholders involved.</p> <p>To combat misinformation and fake news, the government and intermediaries can use technology solutions like algorithms and fact-checking websites.</p> <p>Intermediaries can also implement self-regulatory measures such as monitoring content and working with fact-checking websites.</p> <p>Additionally, raising public awareness about the dangers of censorship and promoting free speech can be achieved through social media campaigns, workshops, and discussions in public forums.</p>	