

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

ACCOUNTABILITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Recently, the Centre told the Delhi High Court that social media platforms must be held accountable for subjugating rights.

About

- A petition was filed by a Twitter user whose account was suspended by the microblogging site for alleged violations of platform guidelines.

Centre's stand

- Social media platforms must be held accountable for subjugating and supplanting fundamental rights like the right to freedom of speech and expression, otherwise the same would have dire consequences for any democratic nation.
- When a Significant Social Media Intermediary (SSMI) such as Twitter takes a decision to suspend the whole or part of a user's account "on its own accord" due to its policy violation, it should afford a reasonable opportunity to the user to defend his side.
- The exception where the SSIMs could take such a decision includes certain scenarios such as rape, sexually explicit material or child sexual abuse material, bot activity or malware, terrorism-related content etc.
- If an SSMI fails to comply with the above, then it may amount to a violation of IT Rules 2021.

Exception for suspension

- A social media account can be suspended or de-platformed only in cases such as in:
 - ❖ The interest of sovereignty,
 - ❖ security and integrity of India,
 - ❖ friendly relations with foreign States or
 - ❖ public order or
 - ❖ pursuant to a court order or
 - ❖ the content is grossly unlawful such as sexual abuse material etc.

Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021

- The term 'intermediary' is a broadly defined term in the IT Act covering a range of entities involved in the transmission of electronic records.
- The Rules introduce two new sub-categories, being:
 - ❖ **Social media intermediary** is defined (in Rule 2(w)) as one who "primarily or solely enables online interaction between two or more users and allows them" to exchange information; and
 - ❖ **Significant social media intermediary** (SSMI) comprising social media intermediaries with more than five million registered users in India (following this Government notification of the threshold).
- The Government may order any intermediary to comply with the same obligations as SSIMs (under Rule 6) if their services are adjudged to pose a risk of harm to national security, the sovereignty and integrity of India, India's foreign relations or to public order.
- SSIMs have to follow substantially more onerous "additional due diligence" requirements to claim the intermediary safe harbour (including mandatory traceability of message originators, and proactive automated screening as discussed below).
- These new requirements raise privacy concerns and data security concerns, as they extend beyond the traditional ideas of the platform "due diligence", they potentially expose the content of private communications and in doing so create new privacy risks for users in India. identified over-exploited and water-stressed areas fall in the States of Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

BRICS MEDIA FORUM

- Recently, leading media groups from the five BRICS countries held the first joint training programme for journalists.

About

- It is the first initiative of its kind.
- **Objective:**
 - ❖ To resolve the issue facing a shared challenge of how media organisations in emerging markets can innovate and stay relevant in their unique contexts.

- **Topics covered:**
 - ❖ Podcasts in modern media,
 - ❖ A conceptual framework for professional journalism,
 - ❖ Skills for digital journalism, and
 - ❖ The BRICS New Development Bank.

BRICS Media Forum

Established:

- ❖ The Forum was established in 2015 by media organisations from the five countries, including The Hindu, Brazil's CMA Group, Russia's Sputnik, China's Xinhua and South Africa's Independent Media.

Objective:

- ❖ The Forum was conceived and developed so that it can function as an independent initiative and set of practical activities undertaken within the broad framework of BRICS cooperation.

Vision:

- ❖ A shared future and a strong commitment to innovate in the media, especially digital media, and related technology fields.

BRICS

Origin:

- ❖ The leaders of BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) countries met for the first time in St. Petersburg, Russia, on the margins of the G8 Outreach Summit in July 2006.
- ❖ Shortly afterwards, in September 2006, the group was formalised as BRIC during the 1st BRIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting, which met on the sidelines of the General Debate of the UN Assembly in New York City.

Meetings:

- ❖ After a series of high level meetings, the 1st BRIC summit was held in Yekaterinburg, Russia on 16 June 2009.

Renamed:

- ❖ The BRIC group was renamed as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) after South Africa was accepted as a full member at the BRIC Foreign Ministers' meeting in New York in September 2010.
- ❖ Accordingly, South Africa attended the 3rd BRICS Summit in Sanya, China on 14 April 2011.

Facts:

- ❖ BRICS is an important grouping bringing together the major emerging economies from the world, comprising:
 - 41% of the world population,
 - 24% of the world GDP
 - over 16% share in world trade.
 - Total combined area of 29.3% of the total land surface of the world
- ❖ BRICS countries have been the main engines of global economic growth over the years.

Issues dealt:

- ❖ Over a period of time, BRICS countries have come together to deliberate on important issues under the three pillars of:
 - ❖ political and security,
 - ❖ economic and financial and
 - ❖ cultural and people to people exchanges.

New Development Bank:

- During the Sixth BRICS Summit in Fortaleza (Brazil) in 2014, the leaders signed the Agreement establishing the New Development Bank (NDB - Shanghai, China).
- They also signed the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement to provide short-term liquidity support to the members.

Three pillars of intra-BRICS cooperation:

- **Political and Security:** It aims to enhance cooperation and dialogue on issues of global and regional security, developments in the global political space for peace, security and prosperity. The priorities under this pillar are:
 - ❖ Reform of the Multilateral System
 - ❖ Counter-Terrorism Cooperation

- **Economic and Financial:** It aims to promote economic growth and development for mutual prosperity through the expansion of intra-BRICS cooperation in sectors such as trade, agriculture, infrastructure, small and medium enterprises, energy and finance & banking. Recognizing the advantages of using technological and digital solutions for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals in BRICS countries with a special focus on:
 - ❖ Implementation of the BRICS Economic Partnership Strategy 2020-25.
 - ❖ Operationalization of the BRICS Agriculture Research Platform.
 - ❖ Cooperation on Disaster Resilience.
 - ❖ Innovation Cooperation.
 - ❖ Digital Health and Traditional Medicine.
- **Cultural and People to People:** It aims to qualitatively enrich and enhance intra-BRICS people to people contacts in cultural, academic, youth, sports, business, through regular exchanges. Exchanges among Parliamentarians, young scientists etc. are also held.

Significance of BRICS

- A platform for global issues: India along with Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa actively engages on issues of global importance through BRICS. E.g.
 - ❖ Global financial and security situation, countering terrorism, climate change, sustainable development, reform of the multilateral system, reform of WTO and institutions of international governance, ways to promote Intra-BRICS cooperation including in science & technology, trade, health, information and communication technology, people-to-people exchanges.
- Drives Economic Growth: BRICS countries have been the main engines of global economic growth over the years. From inception, finance and trade have been a major area of Intra-BRICS Cooperation.
 - ❖ The New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) are the major outcomes in this area.
- Counter-Terrorism: Counter-Terrorism Working Group in BRICS has set up subgroups to cover various aspects of countering terrorism.
 - ❖ At the same time, BRICS has emerged as a major factor in a peaceful, prosperous and multipolar world.
 - ❖ BRICS Leaders have been supporting India's stand on countering terrorism and that terrorism is not acceptable in any form and manifestation.

Challenges for BRICS

- Cooperation among Members: Whether it can manage the internal contradictions among its members while also simultaneously expanding its agenda to become a more consequential voice at the international level, will determine its success in the coming years.
- Domestic Economic Growth: The increased intra-BRICS cooperation in areas like health, science and technology, environment, finance, trade, agriculture, etc. will be difficult to sustain if the member states cannot provide the levels of domestic economic growth that 'provides the basis for their international positions.'
- Containing Assertiveness of China: The rise of China and its resultant impact on the world order has raised questions about the impact of a rising power on multilateral processes.
- The negative impact of other Global Institutions: Given that BRICS countries on their own are not in a position to mount global efforts to deal with large-scale crises, paralysis at the level of other multilateral institutions negatively affects agenda formation in BRICS.
- Role of other Nations: The role of other emerging powers, their foreign policy choices in an evolving global order and response to the US-China equation will affect multilateral behaviour, including that of BRICS.

Way Ahead

- BRICS are committed to extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, and oppose hegemonic bullying and zero-sum games.
- India will receive a lot of help from BRICS if the relations amongst the countries remain good.
- Such initiatives like the Media forum help the countries remain connected.
- Also, in the backdrop of COVID 19, digital media has gained more importance than ever

New Development Bank

- It is a multilateral development bank operated by the BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa).
- Establishment: Agreed by BRICS leaders at the 5th BRICS summit held in Durban, South Africa in 2013. Later, it was established in 2014, at the 6th BRICS Summit at Fortaleza, Brazil.
- It was established with an initial authorized capital of USD 100 billion.
- **HQ:** Shanghai, China.
- Aim & Objectives: To foster greater financial and development cooperation among the five emerging markets.
 - ❖ To mobilise resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries.
- In 2018, the NDB received observer status in the United Nations General Assembly, establishing a firm basis for active and fruitful cooperation with the UN.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

1. MATLAB ON I-STEM NATIONAL PORTAL

- For the first time in the country, academic users in India will be able to access the MATLAB software suite at no cost through the Indian Science Technology and Engineering facilities Map (I-STEM) portal.

About

- The MATLAB software suite is hosted on the cloud server of I-STEM to provide user-friendly access from anywhere in India.
- MATLAB is a proprietary multi-paradigm programming language and numeric computing environment developed by MathWorks.
- It is expected to assist many students and researchers in the country, especially those in the more remote and less-endowed institutions, thereby enhancing learning outcomes and promoting R&D efforts across India.

I-STEM Portal

- **About:**
 - ❖ I-STEM stands for Indian Science, Technology and Engineering Facilities Map.
 - ❖ Launched in January 2020. It is an initiative of the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India (PSA, GoI) under the aegis of the Prime Minister Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC).
 - ❖ It is a National Web portal for sharing R&D (Research and Development) facilities.
 - ❖ The portal facilitates researchers to access slots for the use of equipment, as well as to share the details of the outcomes, such as patents, publications and technologies.
 - ❖ In July 2021, the I-STEM project was accorded an extension for five years, until 2026 and entered its second phase with added features.

Phase-II:

- ❖ The new phase will be designed as a dynamic digital platform that will provide a boost to research and innovation, especially for 2 tier and 3 tier cities and also for the emerging start-up ecosystem.

Significance of I-STEM

- ❖ Optimal Usage of R&D Resources
- ❖ Linking Researchers and Resources
- ❖ Strengthen the idea of "Equal Opportunities to All".
- ❖ This will minimize the downtime of the precious equipment/tools.
- ❖ Strengthen the initiative "Local to Vocal"

2. UAE GOLDEN VISA

- Recently, Bollywood actor Ranveer Singh has been awarded the UAE Golden Visa by the Abu Dhabi Department of Culture & Tourism.
 - ❖ So far, more than 10 Bollywood actors have got their UAE golden visas.

Golden Card Visa of UAE

- It is a long-term residency programme that was announced in May 2019.
 - ❖ In 2019, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) implemented a new system for long-term residence visas, thereby enabling foreigners to live, work and study in the UAE without the need of a national sponsor and with 100 per cent ownership of their business.

- It provides a rainbow of benefits to cardholders and their families and creates an attractive environment for business and growth.
- The Golden Visa system essentially offers long-term residency (5 and 10 years) to people belonging to the following group investors, entrepreneurs, individuals with outstanding talents the likes as researchers, medical professionals and those within the scientific and knowledge fields, and remarkable students.
- The main benefit of the visa will be security as, through the issuance of the Golden Visa, the UAE government has made it clear that they are committed to providing expatriates, investors and essentially everyone looking to make the UAE their home an extra reason to feel secure about their future.

Reasons Behind the Move

- The economy of the UAE has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and low oil prices have prompted many expatriates to leave.
- The decision intends to bring them back now and keep the “talented people and great minds” in the Gulf country and help in nation-building.
- It will also increase the UAE’s competitiveness and reaffirms the country’s position as a global incubator.
- It will attract talented professionals from various domains and further encourage innovation, creativity and applied research which will help the nation in its recovery of crawling industries and economy.

Benefits for India

- It would attract more Indian professionals and businessmen to the Gulf nation and strengthen India-UAE Relations.
- It will also facilitate the return of Indians who want to resume work after the relaxation of Covid-19-related restrictions.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Q1. India and Australia, two of the largest powers among the littoral states of the Indian Ocean, play important geopolitical roles in the security and stability of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Elaborate. (250 words)

Introduction

- India and Australia have several commonalities, which serve as a foundation for closer cooperation and multifaceted interaction, on lines similar to what India has developed with other Western countries. Both are strong, vibrant, secular and multicultural democracies.
- The relationship has grown in strength and importance since India’s economic reforms in the nineties and has made rapid strides in all areas – trade, energy and mining, science & technology, information technology, education and defence.

Body

- India-Australia cooperation in Indian Ocean Region
- Technology and Research: The two nations are working on a new and renewable energy partnership, to support the development of technologies such as green hydrogen and ultra-low cost solar.
 - ❖ Australia is also supporting research and investment to unlock Australian critical minerals for Indian advanced manufacturing.
- Defence and security cooperation: Both signed Strategic Partnership, including a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in 2009.
 - ❖ Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement was signed 2014 between two, enabling India to secure uranium from Australia.
- On China: Chinese aggression and assertive foreign policy are common concerns and has brought both the democracies closer.
 - ❖ Both have shared interests in vision of a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific region.
 - ❖ Both are part of QUAD, and also proposed Supply Chain Resilience Initiative.
 - ❖ Australia’s Pacific Step Up and India’s Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) reaffirm their cooperation in the South Pacific region.

Issues that persist

- Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) still remains inconclusive after 9 rounds of negotiations.

- India opted out from Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).
 - ❖ Among other things, India and Australia could not agree regarding market access over agriculture and dairy products.
- Australia's economy is heavily dependent on China, with China being Australia's largest trading partner, accounting for 26 % of its trade with the world.

Conclusion

The prospects for bilateral relationship are recognized in both countries as strategically useful, economically productive and aligned with each other's new agenda. However, it is recognized that the natural synergy has so far not been exploited fully. Countries should conclude CECA at the earliest, to realize the economic opportunities.

Based on several commonalities and closely aligned values in principles of democracy, liberty, the rule of law, human rights, freedom of speech, free press and multiculturalism both shall enhance the bilateral relationship by expanding engagement in various sectors like defence industry and commercial cyber activity etc.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. OPEC was established at the Baghdad Conference.
2. India is a member nation of the OPEC+.
3. India imports 85 per cent of its oil needs.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) **1 and 3 only**
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 2 only
- (d) only 1

Q2. Which of the following statements is NOT correct regarding the BRICS Group?

- (a) It contributes 24% of the world's GDP.
- (b) It has a 16% share in world trade.
- (c) It has a total combined area of 29.3% of the total land surface of the world.
- (d) **An agreement for establishing a New Development Bank was signed at the summit held at St. Petersburg.**

Q3. Which of the following are Significant Social Media Intermediaries (SSMI) in India?

1. Youtube
2. Facebook
3. Whatsapp
4. Twitter

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 2 only
- (d) **1, 2, 3 and 4**

Q4. The "Fengyun-1C satellite" sometimes seen in the news belongs to which country?

- (a) USA
- (b) South Korea
- (c) Japan
- (d) **China**

Q5. With reference to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), consider the following statements

1. The convention was opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.
2. The United States is the only UN member state which has not ratified the convention.
3. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD) is based in Geneva.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) **1 and 2 only**
- (d) only 1