



Dr. Piyush Chaubey



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Daily News Decoding

Current Affairs

18th January, 2023



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E-Gaming

Prelims & GS Paper - III

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Context: Over 40 Indian video games and e-sports companies have written a letter to the Ministry of Electronics, Information and Technology (MeiTY) in light of the new upcoming amendments to the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.

Current Issue:

- As part of the amendments, there is a proposal for a self-regulatory body which will certify a permitted online game in India.
- But gaming companies are worried about the lack of distinction between them and 'real money games' (RMG), which are often in the gray zone due to state rules and laws around gambling.
- The Indian video games industry is also seeking a stakeholder meeting with MeitY and wants to have a dialogue with the government over upcoming regulations.
- The main point of contention with the current draft is that the term video game and online games played for real money or stakes are clubbed in the same category. V

Online Gaming Industry in India:

- Revenue from online gaming grew 28% in 2021 to \$1.2 bn and is expected to reach \$1.9 bn by 2024.
- The gaming industry is at the cusp of exponential growth and is on the trajectory to grow by 20-30% by FY23 and expected to reach INR 380 bn by 2026.
- India has the largest fantasy sports market, with a user base of 130 mn.
- India's percentage of new paying users (NPU) in gaming has been the fastest growing in the world for two consecutive years, at 40% (2020) reaching 50% in 2021.
- Between Jan-Sep 2021, \$1.6 bn were received in funding.
- India has produced 3 gaming unicorns: Game 24X7, Dream11 and Mobile Premier League.

Online Gaming in India:

- According to a report by KPMG, with more than 400 gaming organizations and 420+ million online gamers, we stand second to only China.



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- According to reports, **India now witnesses almost equal traction from gamers in Tier 2 and 3 towns** as it does from metros.
- **Online skill gaming drives the lion's share of the revenues** from online gaming in India.
- **The industry also contributes immensely to the economy** and is one of the largest advertisers across digital mediums and television networks.

Types of Online Gaming:

- **E-sports:** These are video games that were privately played or played on consoles in video game stores in the 1990s, but are currently organized online between professional players, either individually or in teams.
- **Fantasy Sports:** In these games, you select a team of actual sports players from various teams, and you score points based on how well the players perform in actual competition.
- **Chance-based:** Online casual games can also be chance-based, where the outcome is heavily impacted by some randomized action, like rolling a die, or skill-based, where the outcome is mostly driven by mental or physical competence.

Challenges:

- **Lack of regulatory supervision:** This booming industry experiences a lack of

regulatory supervision. Even though the appropriate tax rate is being discussed in the right circles, there is no complete regulation regarding the legality of online gaming or its distinctions from gambling and betting.

- **Addictions:** A lot of people are becoming very dependent on playing online games. This addiction is ruining people's lives and breaking apart families.
 - ▶ Young boys and girls are entrapped in obsessive gaming, with many of them playing online games for up to six to eight hours per day.
 - ▶ The opportunity cost of this, according to psychologists, is enormous because the impact on health is only getting worse with time.
- **Privacy concerns:** Accidental disclosure of personal information can result in incidents of fraud, invasion of privacy, abuse, and bullying.
- **Betting and Gambling:** Accusations have been leveled against online games based on the classic board game Ludo, which is possibly the most popular online game in India.
- **Negative Externalities:** There have been numerous instances of people losing a lot of money playing online games and then committing suicide across the nation.



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Law Commission Recommendations

- **Regulating gambling and betting:** Betting and gambling is a state subject under the Constitution. Therefore, the Commission noted that state legislatures may enact a law to regulate betting and gambling.
- **Regulations governing gambling and betting:** The Commission recommended that gambling and betting should only be permitted by licensed operators from India. For participants, it recommended that there should be a cap on the number of such transactions for a specific time period, i.e., monthly, half-yearly or yearly.
- **Classification of gambling:** The Commission recommended classifying gambling activities into two categories, namely 'proper gambling' and 'small gambling'. "Proper gambling" would be characterized by higher stakes. Only individuals belonging to higher income groups will be permitted to indulge in "proper gambling". Individuals belonging to the lower income groups will only be permitted to indulge in "small gambling".
- **Prohibited persons:** The Commission recommended that certain classes of persons should be barred from participating in online or offline gambling platforms. These persons include: (i) minors, (ii) those who receive subsidies from the government, or (iii) those who do not fall within the purview of the Income Tax Act, 1961, or the Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017.
- **Amendments to FEMA:** The Commission recommended that the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 and the Foreign Direct Investment Policy be amended to encourage Foreign Direct Investment in the casino/online gaming industry, and for other purposes.
- **Amendment to IT Rules:** Under the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules, 2011, intermediaries are barred from hosting or transmitting content relating to or encouraging gambling.
- **Match-fixing and sports fraud:** The Commission recommended that match-fixing and sports fraud should be made criminal offenses with severe punishments.

The Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Online Gambling and Regulation of Online Games Ordinance, 2022

- **Prohibition of online gambling:** The Ordinance defines online gambling as wagering or betting and includes playing online games of chance for money or other stakes. Other stakes may include virtual credits, tokens, objects, or anything similar purchased in a game. Online gambling is prohibited.
- **Establishment of Tamil Nadu Gaming Authority:** The Authority shall be responsible for identifying online games of chance and recommending the state government to include them in the Schedule of prohibited games.
- **Regulation of non-local game service providers:** Game providers based outside Tamil Nadu are required to restrict access to prohibited games to users located in the state or exercise due diligence.
- **Regulation and prohibition of certain online games:** The Ordinance prohibits online games of chance specified in the Schedule, which are played with money or other stakes. These include Poker and Rummy.

Conditions of Online Game of Chance:

- The element of chance dominates over the element of skills
- Games are presented as games of chance
- The element of chance can only be eliminated by superlative skill
- Games involve cards, dice, or wheels which work on random event generators.



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Fake News

Prelims & GS Paper - II

Context: *According to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) draft proposal, any piece of news that has been identified as “fake” by the fact-checking unit of the Press Information Bureau (PIB) – the Centre’s nodal agency to share news updates – will not be allowed on online intermediaries, including social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.*

About the Guidelines:

- The **Union ministry of electronics and information technology** proposed more amendments to the contentious IT rules, 2021, inserting a clause that will need intermediaries — social media companies like Twitter and Facebook — to ensure users do not post content that has been “fact checked” by the government Press Information Bureau.
- This means that **if a piece of news has been flagged as fake or false by either the PIB or any other fact-checking agency authorized by the government**, internet service providers will also have to disable the link to that particular news piece.

- The **requirement has been added under due diligence requirements** that intermediaries need to follow to enjoy safe harbor, which is legal immunity from third-party content they host.
- **Intermediaries essentially allow users to access services on the internet**, and the proposed changes to the rules mean that not just social media platforms but internet service providers and web hosting providers – who are all classified as intermediaries currently – will have to follow the rules if notified with this provision.

PIB Fact Check Unit:

- **PIB’s fact-checking unit was set up in 2019** to verify news related to the government’s ministries, departments and schemes.
- **It routinely flags information about the government it believes is fake or misleading**, albeit rarely explaining why it has flagged a particular piece of information.
- **PIB’s fact-checking unit has itself, at times, tweeted incorrect information** – for instance, in 2020, it stamped a genuine recruitment notice of the Intelligence



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Bureau (IB) as fake, and the Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting had to point out the incorrect 'fact-check'.

Types of Fake News:

- **Clickbait:** These are stories that are deliberately fabricated to gain more website visitors and increase advertising revenue for websites. Clickbait stories use sensationalist headlines to grab attention and drive click-throughs to the publisher website, normally at the expense of truth or accuracy.
- **Propaganda:** Stories that are created to deliberately mislead audiences, promote a biased point of view or particular political cause or agenda.
- **Sloppy Journalism:** Sometimes reporters or journalists may publish a story with unreliable information or without checking all of the facts which can mislead audiences.
- **Misleading Headings:** Stories that are not completely false can be distorted using misleading or sensationalist headlines. These types of news can spread quickly on social media sites where only headlines and small snippets of the full article are displayed on audience newsfeeds.
- **Imposter Content:** When genuine sources are impersonated with false, made-up sources. This is dangerous as it relates to information with no factual basis being presented in the style of a credible news source or article to make it look like a legitimate source.

- **Manipulated Content:** When real information or imagery is manipulated to deceive, as with a doctored photo or video. This can be used to mislead people or create a false narrative about something or someone.

Fake News and Indian Political Culture:

- **The use of disinformation campaigns and fake news** are not new for Indian politics.
- **Indian political parties have a culture of denigrating opponents**, which makes it much easier for disinformation campaigns to be successful.
- **Politicians or parties perpetually label one another as liars**, or accuse opponents of spreading false information.
- **Political culture in India allows for not only the dissemination of disinformation**, but also accusing others of using disinformation tactics without being held accountable for these claims.
- **Disinformation, fake news, and its variants have become buzzwords in Indian political rhetoric**, such that voters are potentially swayed not only by fake news itself, but the attribution of fake news to parties' respective adversaries.

Democracy:

- In any democratic context, **freedom of speech and expression ensures that political parties have the space** to conduct fair political campaigns.



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- However, this **democratic system relies on public opinion and votes**.
- On one hand the democratic system protects free and fair campaigns and elections, but on the other, the very voters who make democracy possible are not always ensured complete and true information.
- It is ironic that the very democratic principles that ensure free and fair speech are compromised when the same principles allow for the spread of disinformation.
- Contentious issues in India currently include violent expressions of Hindu nationalism, Islamist radicalization, and the economic effects of demonetization.

Google's Anti-Misinformation Campaign in India:

- Google's Jigsaw subsidiary is launching a new anti-misinformation project in India, aimed at preventing misleading information that has been blamed for inciting violence.
- The initiative will use "prebunking" videos – designed to counter false claims before they become widespread – circulated on the company's YouTube platform and other social media sites.
- The experiment in India will be bigger in scope as it will deal with multiple local languages — Bengali, Hindi and Marathi — and cover diverse sections of a country populated by over a billion people.

Disinformation Law:

- With a **new controversial social media law**, **Turkish authorities** now have the **right to control** and, if necessary, **restrict online free speech** in ways.
- Turkey's parliament has **ratified a sweeping new law** that would see **those accused of spreading disinformation jailed** for up to **three years**.
- The **controversial bill**, **proposed** by the **ruling Justice and Development party (AKP)**, contains **wide-ranging provisions** intended to rein in **domestic journalism** as well as **social media**.
- The **new law** means those **found guilty of intentionally publishing disinformation** or "**fake news**" that the **authorities claim spreads panic, endangers security forces** or the **overall health of Turkish society** could be sentenced to up to three years in prison.
- The bill also specifies that **sentences** can be **increased by up to half** if **anonymous accounts** are used to **spread alleged disinformation**.
- **Turkey** currently **ranks 149 out of 180 countries** on **Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index** for 2022, and **campaigners fear** these **additional restrictions** will **affect the media's ability** to accurately cover Turkey's **forthcoming election**.
- The **new law** will also **require messaging applications** such as **WhatsApp**, also owned by Meta, to **provide user information** to the **state** when **requested** by the **country's Information and Communication Technologies Authority**.



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- Cumulatively known as **'the disinformation law'**, it **comprises about 40 articles** that would **amend about 23 different laws**.
- Of the 40, the **most contentious is Article 29**. It **designates it an offense to publicly disseminate misleading information** about the **country's internal and external security, public order and general well-being** for the purpose of causing fear or panic among the populace.





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National Security Council

Prelims & GS Paper - II & III

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Context: *Retired director general of the Border Security Force (BSF) Pankaj Kumar Singh has been appointed as deputy national security adviser.*

About:

- The National Security Council of India is an executive government agency tasked with advising the Prime Minister's Office on matters of national security and strategic interest.
- It was established by the former Prime Minister of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee on 19 November 1998, with Brajesh Mishra as the first National Security Advisor.
- The NSC is the apex body of the three-tiered structure of the national security management system in India.
- The three tiers are the **Strategic Policy Group**, the **National Security Advisory Board** and a secretariat from the **Joint Intelligence Committee**.

Strategic Policy Group:

- The Strategic Policy Group is the first level of the three tier structure of the National Security Council.
- It forms the nucleus of the decision-making apparatus of the NSC.

- The Strategic Policy Group undertakes the Strategic Defence Review, a blueprint of short and long term security threats, as well as possible policy options on a priority basis.
- National Security Advisor Ajit Doval is the chairman of the group and it consists of the following members:
 - ▶ Vice Chairman NITI Aayog
 - ▶ Cabinet Secretary (Rajiv Gauba, IAS)
 - ▶ Chief of Defence Staff (General Anil Chauhan)
 - ▶ Chief of the Army Staff (General Manoj Pande)
 - ▶ Chief of the Naval Staff (Admiral R. Hari Kumar)
 - ▶ Chief of the Air Staff (Air Chief Marshal Vivek Ram Chaudhari)
 - ▶ Governor of the Reserve Bank of India
 - ▶ Foreign Secretary
 - ▶ Defence Secretary
 - ▶ Home Secretary
 - ▶ Finance Secretary
 - ▶ Secretary (Research) (i.e. the head of the Research and Analysis Wing)
 - ▶ Director General of Defence Intelligence Agency



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- ▶ Director of the Intelligence Bureau
- ▶ Chairperson, Central Board of Direct Taxes
- ▶ Secretary, Defense Production
- ▶ Scientific Advisor to the Raksha Mantri
- ▶ Chairman of Defence Research and Development Organisation
- ▶ Secretary, Atomic Energy
- ▶ Secretary, Space and ex-officio Chairman, Indian Space Research Organization

National Security Advisory Board:

- The National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) consists of a group of eminent national security experts outside of the government.
- Members are usually senior retired officials, civilian as well as military, academics and distinguished members of civil society

drawn from and having expertise in Internal and External Security, Foreign Affairs, Defense, Science & Technology and Economic Affairs.

- It provides a long-term prognosis and analysis to the NSC and recommends solutions and address policy issues referred to it.

Joint Intelligence Committee:

- The Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) of the Government of India analyzes intelligence data from the Intelligence Bureau, Research and Analysis Wing and the Directorates of Military, Naval and Air Intelligence.
- It assesses both domestic and foreign intelligence.
- The JIC has its own Secretariat that works under the Cabinet Secretariat.

Evolution of National Security Council

- A **Defense Committee of the Cabinet** (DCC) was set up after the Junagadh crisis in September 1947 consisting of the prime minister and key ministers, and was supported by the Defense Minister's Committee, the Chiefs of Staff Committee and the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC).
- The DCC later became the **Emergency Cabinet Committee** after the 1962 India-China border war.
- The **Policy Planning and Review Committee** (PPRC) established in 1966 within the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), was modeled along these lines and consisted of secretaries from the MEA, Commerce, and Defense Ministries besides the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC).
- Rajiv Gandhi's Minister of State for Defence Arun Singh, created a "Strategic Planning Group" under the prime minister's leadership but it never met. Later on, a Defence Planning Staff was established in 1986 to streamline the armed services' planning processes, although it faced constant turnover of personnel.
- Prime Minister VP Singh, motivated by serious concerns of a potential Pakistani nuclear weapons test, organized a National Security Council to foster an "integrated approach to policy-making as it affects national security" in August 1990.



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