

**GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS**

**Online Gaming Draft Rules**

- ❖ Recently, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) proposed an amendment to bring online gaming under the ambit of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.

**About Draft Rules**

**Dispute resolution mechanism:**

- A three-tier dispute resolution mechanism, similar to that prescribed under the Information Technology Rules, 2021 for online streaming services, consisting of:
  - ✓ A grievance redressal system at the gaming platform level
  - ✓ Self regulatory body of the industry and
  - ✓ An oversight committee led by the government.

**A self-regulatory body:**

- Online games will have to register with a self-regulatory body and only games that are cleared by the body will be allowed to legally operate in India.
- The self-regulatory body will have a board of directors with five members from diverse fields including online gaming, public policy, IT, psychology and medicine.
- It must ensure that the registered games don't have anything which is not in the interest of sovereignty and integrity of India, defense of India, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states or public order, or incites the commission of any cognizable offence relating to the aforesaid.
- There could be more than one self-regulatory body and all of them will have to inform the Centre about the online games they have registered, along with a report detailing the criteria for registering a certain game.
- Online gaming companies will not be allowed to engage in betting on the outcome of games, as per the proposed rules.

**Online Gaming in India**

- The country is the biggest market for fantasy sports globally, with over 13 crore users playing across over 200 platforms.
- The government noted that the number of people involved in playing online rummy is on rise.
- India mainly puts the games into two broad categories to differentiate them.
- The two categories are that the game is either a Game of Chance or a Game of Skill.
  1. **Game of chance (Gambling):** Games of chance are all those games that are played randomly. These games are based on luck. A person can play these games without prior knowledge or understanding. For instance, dice games, picking a number, etc. Such games are considered illegal in India.
  2. **Game of skill (Gaming):** Games of skill are all those games that are played based on a person's prior knowledge or experience of the game. A person will require skills such as analytical decision-making, logical thinking, capability, etc. Some games might also require some initial training to win. Such games are considered legal by most of the Indian states.

**Need for such Rules in India**

- ❖ **Safeguarding the Users:** Safeguarding users against potential harm from skill-based games. The attempt is to regulate online gaming platforms as intermediaries and place due diligence requirements on them. It will promote the online gaming sector and encourage innovation.
- ❖ **Safety of Women:** Around 40 to 45 percent of the gamers in India are women, and therefore it was all the more important to keep the gaming ecosystem safe.
- ❖ **Revenue generating, so need to be regulated:** The revenue of the Indian mobile gaming industry is expected to exceed \$1.5 billion in 2022 and is estimated to reach \$5 billion in 2025.
- ❖ **Transparency & Credibility:** This framework will boost the legitimate domestic online gaming industry, ensuring greater transparency, consumer protection and investor confidence.
- ❖ **Encouraging Startups:** Online gaming is a very important piece of the start-up ecosystem and a part of the goal of the 1-trillion dollar economy.

**Issues with Online Gaming**

**Addiction issues:**

- ❖ Many social activists, government officials and those in law enforcement believe that online games like rummy and poker are addictive in nature; and when played with monetary stakes may lead to other issues.

- ❖ Some people are losing money and falling into a debt trap. Some of the victims took their own lives. The study shows that online games are addictive whether these games really involve skill or mere tricks.

**Social Risks:**

- ❖ Reportedly, there have been a few instances where youngsters, faced with mounting debts due to losses in online games have committed other crimes like theft and murder.

**Loss of revenue:**

- ❖ Shifting of users to grey or illegal offshore online gaming apps not only results in loss of tax revenue for the State and job opportunities for locals but results in users being unable to avail remedies for any unfair behavior or refusal to pay out winnings.

**Manipulative websites:**

- ❖ Some experts also believe that online games are susceptible to manipulation by the websites operating such games. There is a possibility that users are not playing such games against other players, but against automatic machines or 'bots', wherein there is no fair opportunity for an ordinary user to win the game.

**Legality of Online Games in India****Gaming:**

- ✓ Law laid down by the Supreme Court in 1957 (Chamarbaugwala cases) — competitive games of skill are business activities protected under Article 19 (1) (g) of the Constitution. Rummy and horse racing have been classified by the courts as games of skill that do not come under the purview of gaming laws

**Betting and Gambling:**

- ✓ Gambling is a non-cognisable and bailable offence in India. Betting and gambling can be found in Part II of the State list. They have been mentioned in detail in the seventh schedule of the Indian Constitution. In other words, this simply means that the state government can exercise full control over betting and gambling practices in their state and can also formulate their state-specific laws.

**Others:**

- ✓ Any online gaming platform – domestic or foreign– offering real money online games to Indian users will need to be a legal entity incorporated under Indian law. These platforms will also be treated as 'reporting entities' under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002. They will be required to report suspicious transactions to the Financial Intelligence Unit-India.

**Way Ahead**

- Similar to social media and e-commerce companies, online gaming platforms will also have to appoint a compliance officer who will ensure that the platform is following the norms, a nodal officer who will act as a liaison official with the government and assist law enforcement agencies, and a grievance officer who will resolve user complaints.
- The government will work hard to ensure all opportunities are provided to Indian start-ups. Gaming companies will also have to secure a random number generation certificate, which is typically used by platforms that offer card games to ensure that game outputs are statistically random and unpredictable. They will also have to get a "no bot certificate" from a reputed certifying body.

**PRELIMS****1. Preventing animal cruelty is a duty of the state:-**

- ✚ Recently, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court of India will deliver its verdict on the validity of Tamil Nadu's law permitting the practice of jallikattu in the State. Usually held during the Pongal season, jallikattu is a sport where men compete against each other to hold on to the humps of agitated bulls that are released into an open arena.
- ✚ In 2014, in Animal Welfare Board of India vs. A. Nagaraja, a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court declared jallikattu illegitimate. The court found that the practice was cruel and caused the animal unnecessary pain and suffering. Since then, Tamil Nadu has made efforts to resurrect the sport's legality. It is that act of revival which is now at stake.
- ✚ On any reasonable reading of the Constitution, it might be difficult to hold that animals are Promised rights to life and personal liberty under Article 21 and equality under Article 14 Conclusion to that effect could well lead to bizarre consequences. Arguments in favour of personhood invariably spring out of a belief that animals, especially certain kinds of animals such as apes, elephants, and whales, share much in common with human beings.



- The index is prepared by examining these four principles through eight factors: constraints on government powers, absence of corruption, open government, fundamental rights, order and security, regulatory enforcement, civil justice, and criminal justice.

#### **4. NO RHINOS POACHED IN ASSAM IN 2022**

##### **Context:**

- Assam Chief Minister announced that no rhinos were poached in the state in 2022. Indian rhinoceros
- The Indian rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) is found only in the Brahmaputra valley, parts of North Bengal, and parts of southern Nepal.
- It has a single black horn that can grow up to 60 cm, and a tough, grey-brown hide with skin folds, which gives the animal its characteristic armour-plated look.

**IUCN status:** The Indian rhino is listed as vulnerable in the IUCN Red List.

##### **Rhino poaching**

- Rhinos have been poached for their horn, which is prized in some cultures.
- Ground rhino horn is used in traditional Chinese medicine to cure a range of ailments, from cancer to hangovers, and also as an aphrodisiac.
- In Vietnam, a rhino horn is considered a status symbol.
- In 2019, the Assam government constituted a Special Rhino Protection Force to keep a check on rhino poaching and related activities at Kaziranga National Park (KNP).

#### **5. AHILYABAI HOLKAR**

**Context:** The Maharashtra government is now contemplating renaming Ahmednagar in Western Maharashtra to 'Punyashlok Ahilyadevi Nagar' (after Ahilyabai Holkar).

##### **About**

- Ahilyabai was born on May 31, 1725, in the village of Chaundi in Maharashtra's Ahmednagar district. Ahilyabai Holkar (1725-1795) was the Queen of the Kingdom of Malwa and a famous ruler.
- 'Rajmata Ahilyadevi Holkar' was her popular name.
- She married Khand Rao and became the bride of the Holkar Maratha caste.
- Her father-in-law Malhar Rao Holkar exposed her to the administrative and military forces of the State after her husband died in the battle of Kumbher in 1754.
- Rani Ahilyabai became the ruler of Malwa in 1766 after her father-in-law died.
- She fought in numerous wars, guarding her realm against Bhils and Gonds as a valiant warrior and great archer.
- Ahilya Fort was built on the banks of the Narmada River in the 18th century.
- Her contributions to society earned her the title of Queen, and she was well-liked and revered by the populace.
- She is well-known for her work on Hindu temple construction and refurbishment.

### **ANSWER WRITING**

**Right to Information (RTI) is considered a sunshine legislation but is not without its own challenges. Highlighting the changes made by RTI (Amendment) Act 2019, discuss the statement.**

- Right to Information (RTI) is an Act of the parliament which confers entitlements upon citizens to seek information from a public office in a time-bound manner. RTI is considered a 'sunshine legislation' for bringing about a culture of transparency and disclosure in place of a culture of secrecy in government offices.

The RTI Act plays the role of sunshine legislation in the following manner:

- RTI has institutionalised transparency through a public information officer in every public office, prescribed time limit for providing information and grievance redressal mechanism.
- Suo moto disclosures under Section 4 of RTI have resulted in proactive disclosures, making public offices more transparent, while also preventing RTI applications from becoming an administrative burden.
- RTI has helped to create an active citizenry which can hold government agencies accountable for delivering entitlements such as public services, scholarships, pensions etc.
- RTI has helped to shed light on corruption such as Adarsh Society Scam, 2G scam etc.
- RTI has given a fillip to civil society organizations in holding the government answerable for improving the lot of the poor through transparency about outlays and outcomes.

Despite RTI's salutary impact as a sunshine legislation, the Act is also faced with following challenges:

- The changes brought about by RTI (Amendment) Act 2019 have undermined independence of Central and State ICs by making the terms of their office subject to Union executive's rules instead of legislative provisions.
- The Act gives central government power to notify tenure and salaries, which may lead to arbitrary removal, extension, lure of changes in remuneration. This can result in politicization of the ICs.
- Control of central government over SICs goes against federal spirit. It could reduce the status of SICs from a transparency watchdog to centre's handmaiden.
- There is large pendency of appeals before the ICs due to denial of information by PIOs. It is often seen that ICs are sympathetic to the officials. Enforcement of CIC's decisions remain pending due to challenge in courts.
- Whistle-blower protection is a challenge. As per Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, more than 85 RTI activists have been killed since the enactment of the Act in 2005.
- National security exemption under section 8 of RTI is overused as a blanket criterion to reject requests for information. Frivolous requests also tend to overburden government offices affecting their ability to do regular administrative work.
- RTI has brought about a shift in administrative culture of secrecy, but much needs to be done to preserve the culture of transparency. Public officials need to be bound by an oath of transparency as recommended by the 2nd ARC, while government interference in transparency should be curtailed for institutional independence.

**MCQs**

1. Recently Lachin Qorridor is in news, it is located in which Country?
  - a) India
  - b) Azerbaijan**
  - c) China
  - d) Japan
2. Consider the following statement about BRO (Border Roads Organisation).
  1. It functions under the control of the Ministry of Defence.
  2. BRO Raising day is observed on JUNE 7.
  3. It works all over India and neighboring countries.
 Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?
  - a) 1 & 2 only
  - b) 1 only
  - c) 2 & 3 only**
  - d) All are incorrect
3. Panchpatmali hills of Koraput district (Odisha) are famous for which of the following minerals?
  - a) Bauxite mines**
  - b) Coal mines
  - c) Gold mines
  - d) Dolomite
4. Recently, Pele (Edson Arantes do Nascimento) was in news, he was related to which of the following Field?
  - a) Sports**
  - b) Nobel prize winner
  - c) Politician
  - d) Social activist
5. With reference to Ahilyabai holkar witch statement is correct.
  1. Ahilyabai holkar ruled in the malwa region during the 18th century.
  2. The Sanskrit scholar Khushali Ram was a courtier of her dynasty.
  - a) 1 only
  - b) 2 only
  - c) Both 1 & 2**
  - d) Neither 1 nor 2
6. Consider the following statements about Wassenaar Arrangement.
  1. It has 42-member including France, Germany, Japan, Russia, the UK and the USA.
  2. The European Union and NATO are member states.

3. India joined the Wassenaar Arrangement in 2017 as its 42nd participating state.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 & 2 only
- b) 1 only
- c) 2 & 3 only
- d) **All of the Above.**

7. Consider the following statements about Demonetization.

- 1. In November 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the demonetization of 500 and 1000 notes.
- 2. Demonetisation is the process under which the government of a country legally bans any currency (note) of its country.
- 3. In January 1978, the Indira Gandhi government made a law banning 1000, 5000 and 10,000 notes.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) **Both 1 & 2**
- d) All of the Above

8. Consider the following statements about National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.

- 1. It is a statutory body in India that works to protect the rights and interests of Scheduled Tribes (STs).
- 2. The NCST conducts inquiries, investigates complaints and makes recommendations to the government on issues related to STs.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) **Both 1 & 2**
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

9. Consider the following statements.

- 1. The 108th annual session of ISC will be held at Rashtasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University
- 2. Indian Science Congress 2023 is organized by the Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA)
- 3. The focal theme of the Indian Science Congress 2023 is "Science and Technology for Sustainable Development with Women Empowerment"

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 & 2 only
- b) 1 only
- c) 2 & 3 only
- d) **All of the Above.**

10. Consider the following statements about Jallikattu.

- 1. The bull-taming sport is popular in Madurai, Tiruchirappalli, Theni, Pudukkottai and Dindigul districts known as the Jallikattu belt.
- 2. Jallikattu is celebrated in the second week of January, during the Tamil harvest festival, Pongal.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) **Both 1 & 2**
- d) Neither 1 nor 2