

BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE, PILANI

First Semester (2022-23)

GS F243: Current Affairs

Mid Semester Test (Open Source)

Time: 90 minutes

03 November 2022

Max Marks:60

Q1. Answer the following questions in not more than 50 words. (4x5=20)

- a) What is the controversy related to Global Hunger Index widely covered in Indian media?
- b) What was the reason for Liz Truss' resignation as UK prime minister just after 44 days in office?
- c) What is the recent decision of BCCI which can have a major social impact?
- d) Why did Rajasthan Chief Minister decide not to contest the party's national president election held recently?

Q2. Recent newspaper reports mention, "Sixty-nine of the top 100 JEE-Advanced rank-holders have secured a seat in the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bombay, continuing the trend of past several years. Of these, 68 have chosen Computer Science Engineering while one has opted for Engineering Physics. Twenty-eight candidates among the top 100 have got admission in IIT Delhi and three in IIT Madras (ToI, 24 September 2022)." What kind of socio-educational reflection of science and engineering education in India do you get from this report? Do you think this is a healthy trend for a developing country like India? Substantiate your answer with appropriate examples. Write your answer in about 300 words. (20)

Q3. Read the following news item and identify the issue which it relates to. Write your views in about 300 words on the identified issue. While writing your views you must keep Elon Musk's taking over Twitter and EAM, Mr. S Jaishankar's statement at the United Nations Security Council's Counter Terrorism Committee (CTC) meeting recently held in India, "Social media turning into 'toolkit' of terrorist". (20)

New IT rules to put greater obligations on social media platforms to act against unlawful content, misinformation: Rajeev Chandrasekhar

In a strong message to Big Tech companies, the minister asserted that community guidelines of platforms, whether they are headquartered in US or Europe, cannot contradict constitutional rights of Indians when such platforms operate in India.

By: PTI New Delhi | October 29, 2022

The government sees internet and online safety as a shared responsibility of all, Chandrasekhar noted.

IT Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar on Saturday said the **latest amendment of IT rules** will put more definite due diligence obligations on social media companies to make efforts that no unlawful content or misinformation is posted on their platforms.

The government on Friday notified rules under which it will set up appellate panels to redress grievances that users may have against decisions of social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook on hosting contentious content.

On the formation of three-member Grievance Appellate Committees (GACs), the minister said the move was necessitated as the government is aware of lakhs of messages from citizens where grievances were not responded to by social media firms despite complaints. “That is not acceptable,” Chandrasekhar said at a briefing. He further said the government wants social media companies to work as partners to ensure the interests of ‘digital nagriks’ are ensured. “The obligations of intermediaries earlier were limited to notifying users of rules but now there will be much more definite obligations on platforms. Intermediaries have to make efforts that no unlawful content posted on platform,” he said.

In a strong message to Big Tech companies, the minister asserted that community guidelines of platforms, whether they are headquartered in US or Europe, cannot contradict constitutional rights of Indians when such platforms operate in India. He said platforms will have obligation to remove within 72 hours of flagging, any “misinformation” or illegal content or content that promotes enmity between different groups on the grounds of religion or caste with the intent to incite violence.

Chandrasekhar said that he personally is of the view that 72 hours was too much, and advocated that while the rules lay down such timelines, platforms must act on unlawful content immediately and urgently. “We will start with 1-2 GACs...Government is not interested in playing role of ombudsman. It is a responsibility we are taking reluctantly, because the grievance mechanism is not functioning properly,” the minister said. The idea is not to target any company or intermediary or make things difficult for them. The government sees internet and online safety as a shared responsibility of all, he noted.

On whether penalties will be imposed on those not complying, he said the government will not like to bring punitive actions at this stage but warned that if the situation demands in future, it will be considered. Social media companies are currently protected under Section 79 from any prosecution relating to content on their platforms, enjoying a blanket safe harbour. “If you violate the rules or you are not in compliance with the rules, the consequential impact is not punitive, not financial as of now... is that you lose your safe harbor status. Which means that if I’m aggrieved by a content on your platform and you are the intermediary, I can then go to the courts and get natural justice through the court system. You have no protection that IT Act has so far provided you,” the minister said.

To continue as an intermediary there are certain obligations cast by IT rules. “And those obligations include...making it very clear what type of do’s and don’ts you have for your platform...making sure that if there is illegal content as defined in the rules, you are making reasonable effort to make sure those content are removed and even if you are unable to do it with your content moderation algorithms, when reported that content has to come down in 72 hours,” Chandrasekhar said.

The intermediaries now will be expected to ensure that there is no uploading of content that intentionally communicates any misinformation or information that is patently false or untrue hence entrusting an important responsibility on intermediaries. The minister outrightly dismissed claims by some critics that tweaks in social media rules would increase the ability of the government to influence content-moderation decisions. “We are not addressing content at all,” the Minister said when asked about concerns that formation of grievance appellate committees may strengthen Government control over content-related decisions.

“We are not overriding anything. The Grievance Appellate Committees are here to sit as appellate body in the event that consumers who are the most important stakeholders of internet, are dissatisfied with grievance process run by intermediaries,” he explained. There will be one Government member, and two independent members in these committees.

On Friday, the digital rights advocacy group Internet Freedom Foundation had tweeted: “The notified Amendment Rules cause injury to the digital rights of every Indian social media user.” In a detailed statement, Internet Freedom Foundation had said Grievance Appellate Committee “is essentially a government censorship body for social media that will make bureaucrats arbiters of our online free speech”.

“Given that the GAC would hear appeals against the decisions of social media platforms to remove content or not, it will incentivise platforms to remove/suppress/label any speech unpalatable to the government, or those exerting political pressure,” it had said. Internet Freedom Foundation had added: “Opaque and arbitrary methods of choosing appeals for their review, the lack of trust in an all Executive body, the ability of the government to influence content moderation decisions in a non-transparent manner are just some of the concerns arising from the IT Amendment Rules, 2022”.
