



Current Affairs of the Day

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Twitter must follow Indian laws: Centre

News: With the government and Twitter at loggerheads over issues related to content removal and freedom of expression, the Centre on Wednesday expressed “deep disappointment” over the microblogging platform’s partial compliance of its orders “grudgingly” and with substantial delay.

Highlights:

1. The Centre said while Twitter was free to formulate its own rules and guidelines, Indian laws, which are enacted by Parliament, must be followed irrespective of Twitter’s own rules, according to a Ministry statement.
2. Twitter, however, said that no action had been taken against the accounts of news media entities, journalists, activists and politicians. To do so, we believe, would violate their fundamental right to free expression under Indian law.
3. The Ministry statement added that India had a robust mechanism for protection of freedom of speech and expression, freedom of expression is not absolute and it is subject to reasonable restrictions as mentioned in Article 19 (2) of the Constitution of India.
4. The firm has been under fire over non-compliance to block 250 accounts using hashtags related to “farmer genocide”, and about 1,178 accounts that security agencies suspect are backed by Khalistani sympathisers and Pakistan.

Background section 69A:

Section 69A of the IT Act, 2000, allows the Centre to block public access to an intermediary “in the interest of sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognisable offence relating to above”.

It gives the Central government the power to block public access to any information online — whether on websites or mobile apps.

Recent Uses:

1. The government blocked 59 Chinese Apps using this law

Blocking procedure



Section 69A mandates that every ministry in central, state and Union Territory governments must have a nodal officer, to receive complaints about websites that host ‘offensive’ content. Once **the nodal officer** sees merit in the complaint, he/she then forwards it to **a designated officer**, who chairs **a committee** to examine the grievance.

This committee includes representatives from the Ministries of Law and Justice, Home Affairs, Information and Broadcasting and the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), and give the intermediary a hearing. Once this procedure is over, the designated officer can issue directions to block a website, **only** after the approval of the **secretary of the Department of Information Technology** — in ordinary circumstances.

Section 69A also makes space for an event of an “**emergency nature**”, during which the designated officer examines the blocking request, and submits recommendations to the secretary of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, who, as an interim measure, can issue directions to block a website. In such cases, the aggrieved party does not get a hearing.

However, within 48 hours of the interim orders being passed, the designated officer must bring the blocking request before the committee. The designated officer will then issue a notice to the website, asking its representatives to appear before the committee at a specified date and time. The website is given at least 48 hours to prepare for the hearing. The recommendation of the committee is conveyed to the IT secretary who has the final say and may approve the request. The secretary has the power to disapprove the blocking request and give directions to unblock the website. Section 69A also has a provision for **a review committee**, which meets once in two months to review directions issued to block a website. It may set aside the blocking order if the procedures in law have not been followed.

In the interest of national security

A feature of Section 69A is that it includes terms such as “security of the state, emergency nature, sovereignty and integrity of India and public order”, which are common for national security determinations across Indian laws. The Section mandates strict confidentiality about complaints and action was taken. Due to the presence of this clause, Right to Information (RTI) queries are not applicable to



the law. Moreover, the committees to examine requests and review appeals comprise entirely members of the executive.

Supreme court upheld the law

In its 2015 judgment in the landmark Shreya Singhal v/s Union of India case, the Supreme Court of India upheld the validity of Section 69A and the extant blocking procedures. The court said that the law was constitutional and a website could be blocked only on the basis of reasoned order. The Supreme Court also emphasised that the law has sufficient safeguards under which the order can only be issued with the committee's approval to block a website after it has heard the aggrieved party. As mentioned in the Rules, in all cases, whether emergency or not, the reasons to block the website have to be recorded in writing.

Freedom of speech and expression and reasonable restriction:

Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India guarantees to all its citizens the right to freedom of speech and expression. The law states that "all citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression". However, Article 19(2) of the Constitution provides that this right is not absolute and 'reasonable restrictions' may be imposed on the exercise of this right for certain purposes.

Grounds contained in Article 19(2) show that they are all concerned with the national interest or in the interest of the society. The first set of grounds i.e. the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States and public order are all grounds referable to the national interest, whereas, the second set of grounds i.e. decency, morality, contempt of court, defamation and incitement to an offence are all concerned with the interest of the society.

Furnace oil from Titanium factory spills into the sea

An emergency clean-up was launched along the coast in Kerala to mitigate the fallout of a furnace oil leak into the sea from the Kerala government undertaking Travancore Titanium Products Ltd. (TTP) at Kochuveli, near the State capital.

Highlights:

1. After the alarm was raised in the morning, the district administration declared the coastal stretches off-limits to the public and tourists for two days.



2. Fishing activities along these regions also stand banned as a precautionary measure.
3. Locals, largely comprising the fishing community, expressed outrage over the oil leak, blaming the TTP for negligence. They alleged that the oil leak would have a prolonged impact on marine resources, and consequently, their livelihood.
4. The Coast Guard is closely monitoring the situation using a ship and a Dornier aircraft.

Background:

The Indian Coast Guard, part of the Ministry of Defence, is the designated national authority for oil spill response in Indian waters under the National Oil Spill-Disaster Contingency Plan (NOS-DCP) promulgated in 1996 and last updated in 2014.

Nodal Ministry for Management / Mitigation of Different Disasters

	Disaster	Nodal Ministry/ Department
1	Biological	Min. of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)
2	Chemical and Industrial	Min. of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)
3	Civil Aviation Accidents	Min. of Civil Aviation (MoCA)
4	Cyclone/Tornado	Min. of Earth Sciences (MoES)
5	Tsunami	Min. of Earth Sciences (MoES)
6	Drought/Hailstorm/Cold Wave and Frost/Pest Attack	Min. of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (MoAFW)
7	Earthquake	Min. of Earth Sciences (MoES)
8	Flood	Min. of Water Resources (MoWR)
9	Forest Fire	Min. of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change (MoEFCC)
10	Landslides	Min. of Mines (MoM)
11	Avalanche	Min. of Defence (MoD)
12	Nuclear and Radiological Emergencies	Dept. of Atomic Energy (DAE)
13	Rail Accidents	Min. of Railways (MoR)
14	Road Accidents	Min. of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)
15	Urban Floods	Min. of Urban Development (MoUD)



What is Furnace oil?

Furnace Oil is one of the cheapest fuels available for industrial use. It is a by-product of petroleum refineries. While processing the CRUDE Oil, FO (Furnace Oil) is one of the products along with other petroleum fuels like HSD, Petrol etc. Furnace oil, also called fuel oil, is consisting mainly of residues from crude-oil distillation. It is used primarily for steam boilers in power plants, aboard ships, and in industrial plants.

Uses of Furnace Oil are:

1. As fuel for Power Generation in DG Sets
2. As fuel for Boilers/ Furnaces/ Air preheater/ Any other Heaters
3. Fuel for Bunkering
4. Fuel/ Feedstock in Fertilizer Plants
5. The furnaces which are used mainly for heating or pre-heating a large quantity of metal, are the main users of FO.

Titanium (Ti)

1. Titanium, a metal as strong as steel but much lighter, is resistant to extreme temperatures and corrosion. It is of great use in aeronautics, defence and atomic energy. India has 30% of the world's reserves of titanium (third largest in the world), said to be the metal of the future.
2. However, the raw material for aerospace-grade Titanium alloys with high purity Titanium sponge (min. 99.7% Titanium) was being imported from countries like Russia, Japan and China despite the fact that India is endowed with the third largest reserve of Titanium bearing minerals.
3. ISRO took the initiative to set up a Titanium Sponge Plant (TSP) in Kerala in the country to meet the requirements in strategic areas. With this, India has become the seventh country in the world producing Titanium sponge commercially.
4. The plant in India is the only one in the world which can undertake all the different activities of manufacturing aerospace-grade titanium sponge under one roof. The material is an alloy product which is produced through the Kroll process which includes leaching or heated vacuum distillation to make the metal almost 99.7% pure.



5. The tsunami that hit south India in 2004 brought with it tons of titanium ore from the depths of the ocean. Titanium - Usually produced from placer deposits on river banks and beaches, the ore minerals are rutile, ilmenite, and leucoxene.

'Himalayas host to complex processes'

Bottom Line: Our knowledge of glaciers is limited and inadequate.

Cause of floods

On February 7, a flash flood hurtled down in Chamoli, Uttarakhand killing many and destroying two hydropower projects. The trigger for the floods is believed to be either a glacial lake being breached or a broken mountain peak falling on a glacier.

Scientists are about 90% certain that this was caused by a combination of a large piece of rock, possibly from a mountain peak, breaking off. It fell on a hanging glacier, probably perched off a cliff. The impact from the falling rock broke the glacier causing landslides, flooding and deluge. This was different from a situation like Kedarnath in 2013. There, multiple cloudbursts in June led to a torrent of snow and water that resulted in a flash flood.

The Himalayas need constant monitoring

1. This is still to be determined. What is likely is that this is a result of decades of freezing and thawing that would have led to weaknesses and cracks forking in those mountain structures.
2. It was not a sudden event, and this underlines the reasons why we need to keep monitoring the Himalayas.
3. They are fragile and host to several complex processes that need to be monitored. Global warming contributes to the weakening of the glaciers.

Background:

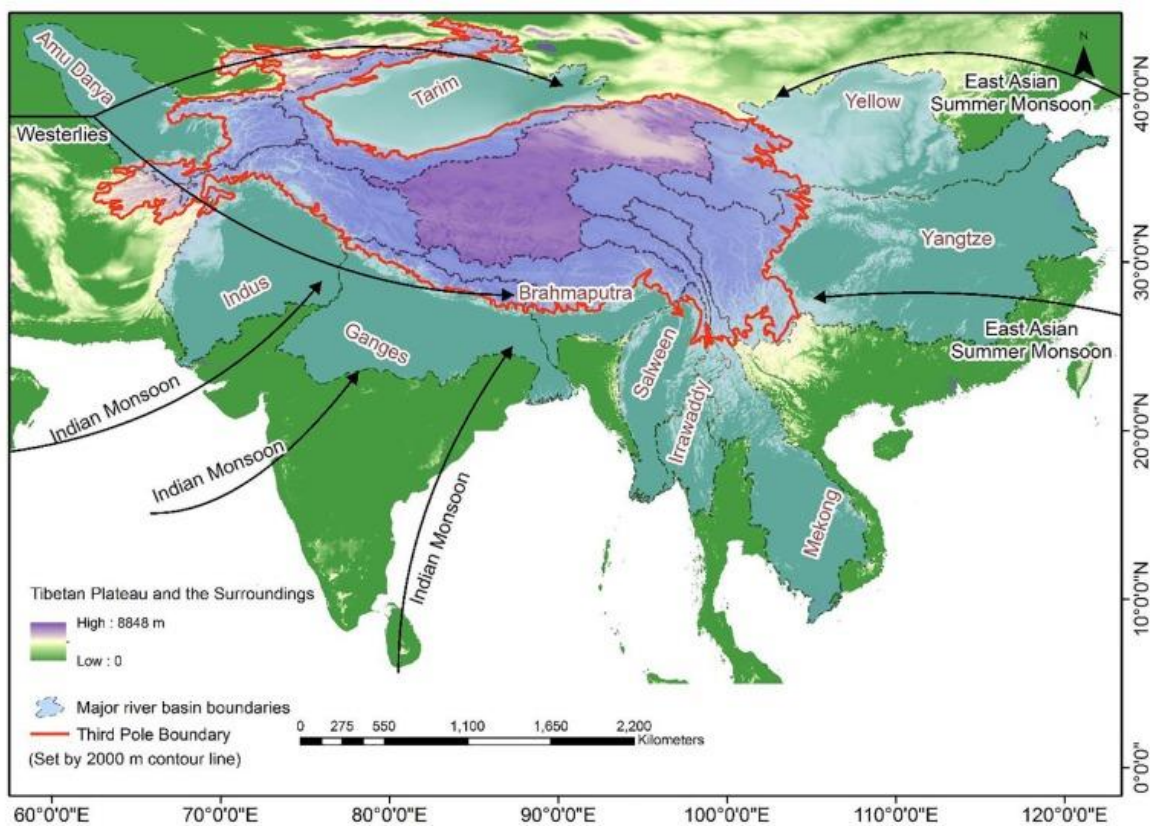
Full coverage: Impacts of climate change on Hindu Kush Himalayan region (The Third Pole)

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) assessed the ecologically important but fragile region for the very first time. Here's all you need to know about it



1. Hindu Kush Himalayan region warming faster than the global average
2. Number of glaciers in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region is rising
3. Besides global warming, pollution also impacts glaciers

Hindu Kush Himalayan region warming faster than the global average



The Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region also known as the Third Pole— spread over 3,500 square kilometres across eight countries including India, Nepal and China — is warming faster than the global average. The HKH region — part of the Third Pole due to its largest permanent snow cover after the North and South poles — sustains the livelihoods of 240 million people living in the mountains and hills. It also houses the origin of 10 river basins that include the Ganga, Brahmaputra and the Mekong. Some 1.5 billion people depend on these basins for sustenance.

The assessment establishes HKH region firstly as an incredibly important asset for Asia and the world. It is a key source of water, energy, carbon stocks, as well



as rich biodiversity. For example, the rivers starting from HKH are home to about 2 billion people, with 500 GW of hydropower potential.

Mountains are warming up faster than the global averages. Even if we could limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, mountain temperatures would rise above 2 degrees Celsius, and if current trends continue temperatures could go up by 4 to 6 degrees Celsius. Although the climate of the region has changed significantly in the past, it is projected to change more dramatically in the near future. In 1998-2014, when global warming slowed down, this region continued to warm.

Impact of unusual warming in the HKH

1. Warming may be good news for agriculture. The length of the growing season has increased by 4.25 days per decade — a positive change for agriculture.
2. Warming in the HKH region has ramifications for the global climate. **This region is a heat source in summer and a heat sink in winter.** Along with the Tibetan Plateau, this influences the Indian summer monsoon.
3. So, any changes in this region would have a bearing on the monsoon itself that already shows signs of changes in spread and distribution.
4. Such large warming could trigger a multitude of biophysical and socio-economic impacts, such as biodiversity loss, increased glacial melting, and less predictable water availability—all of which will impact livelihoods and well-being in the HKH.
5. Faster snow and glacier melting due to warming is already manifesting in the formation of glacial lakes. Glacial lake outburst floods (GLOF) are becoming frequent and causing huge casualties and loss to local infrastructures.
6. Glaciers in HKH have been retreating faster, and consistently causing greater water flows in rivers. In Tibetan Plateau, river runoff has increased by 5.5%. Most of the lakes in high altitudes have also reported water level rise by 0.2 m/year besides their surface areas expanding.

Number of glaciers in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region is rising

1. The increase in the number of glaciers is primarily due to glacier fragmentation — that big ones are splitting into smaller ones. And this is happening due to consistent loss in areas the glaciers occupy.



2. According to ICIMOD's assessment, in a 1.5 degree Celsius world, about a third of glaciers in HKH region will disappear by 2100, and under the current emission scenario, the region will lose two-third of glacier volumes.
3. Overall, snowfall and accumulation have been coming down in this region. Since 2000, the snow-covered area of HKH has reported a decline.

Besides global warming, pollution also impacts glaciers

1. The region is under threat from climate change plus a host of other changes including ecosystem degradation, outmigration, and air pollution.
2. Many major cities in and near the HKH have annual average PM2.5 concentrations almost 10 times higher than WHO guidelines. In addition to negative health impacts, this also adds to glacier melt.

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is an intergovernmental knowledge and learning centre working on behalf of the people of the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH). The organization is based in Kathmandu, Nepal, set up by and works in eight regional member countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan

'India to better its disaster management'

Prime Minister inaugurated the World Sustainable Development Summit, 2021, organised by The Energy Resources Institute, in Delhi.

Highlights:

1. We must enhance our disaster management capabilities. The way to do this is to improve our human resources as well as technology," he said.
2. India is part of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI). We are working in this direction. We are working towards whatever needs to be done to achieve this. Our human-centric approach could act as a force multiplier to achieve this," the PM said.

About CDRI:

It is a partnership of national governments, UN agencies and programmes, multilateral development banks, financing mechanisms, private sector, and



knowledge institutions will promote the resilience of new and existing infrastructure systems to climate and disaster risks, thereby ensuring sustainable development. It is headquartered in New Delhi.

CDRI thus aims to enable the achievement of objectives of expanding universal access to basic services and enabling prosperity as enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals, while also working at the intersection of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Established as a platform for generating and exchanging knowledge, CDRI will conduct country-specific and global activities. CDRI will provide member countries technical support and capacity development, research and knowledge management, and advocacy and partnerships to facilitate and encourage investment in disaster-resilient infrastructure systems.

Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi announced the global Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), at the UN Climate Action Summit 2019 held in New York City, USA, on September 23, 2019.

The World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS)

The World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) is the annual flagship event of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). Instituted in 2001, the Summit series has marked 20 years in its journey of making 'sustainable development' a globally shared goal.

Over the years, the Summit platform has brought together thought leaders, heads of state and government, scholars, corporates, youth groups, and civil society representatives from across the world. The Summit series has established itself as a responsible and effective platform for mobilizing opinion-makers to identify and advance pioneering actions to address some of the most relevant issues concerning sustainable development.

Perhaps the only Summit on global issues, taking place in the developing world, WSDS now strives to provide long-term solutions for the benefit of global communities by assembling the world's most enlightened leaders and thinkers on a single platform.



Rethinking run-of-the-river hydro projects

Bottom Line: We recognise hydropower is a low-emission energy source, but by design, these projects are not environmentally benign.

Run-of-the-river

ROR projects are seen as a “green” alternative to high-dam hydropower projects such as the Tehri Hydropower Project. This is because a ROR dam diverts the river flow in a controlled environment to generate electricity and sends the water back to the river, whereas a high-dam project stores river water in a reservoir.

Problems:

1. One, ROR projects are not green. This is because the river water is diverted for power generation, and this destroys the riverine ecology. The blasting and tunnelling that happens while building a dam dry up mountain springs, which provide water for drinking and agriculture.
2. Dams led to so many landslides in the region that villagers practically have no roads left. Access to villages has become a nightmare.
3. Second, due processes for clearance of the project are often not followed. People are often under pressure to give their nod for the project, but it is not an informed choice since they do not have adequate information about its impact on the environment and their lives.
4. Third, the fragility of the Himalayas and earthquakes, landslides and other climatic events and disasters severely impact the dam and the people.
5. The Supreme Court directed the environment ministry not to clear hydropower projects in Uttarakhand, expressing concern about their proliferation and impact on the Bhagirathi and Alaknanda.
6. The cumulative impact of those project components like dams, tunnels, blasting, powerhouse, muck disposal, mining, deforestation etc on the ecosystem, is yet to be scientifically examined.

IPCC report on climate change and High Mountains

There is no doubt that the glacial avalanche in Chamoli Uttarakhand that destroyed everything in its wake was climate-induced. Over the years, numerous reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) — including



the latest one, Special Report on Oceans and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate — point out the climate risks in high-mountain regions. Scientists strongly feel that projects such as hydropower must be weighed against its benefits. IPCC assessed that the climate crisis has altered the frequency and magnitude of the natural hazards in high mountain regions of the world. Globally, in some regions, snow avalanches involving wet snow have increased while the rain on snow floods have also increased at lower elevation in spring.

Development with a Greener face

1. We recognise hydropower is a low-emission energy source, but by design, these projects are not environmentally benign. Development with a greener face is possible. We need to take each sector and start conversations on its environmental impact.
2. Nature-based solutions, which mean the use of nature to tackle socio-environmental challenges, can also fuel green growth if proper strategies are in place. They can also be linked to the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative.
3. For example, the solar industry is dependent on China for photovoltaic cells. If more such cells are made in India at a lower price, with green audits to protect the environment base, it will boost the shift from fossil fuel-based electricity generation to solar power and also provide jobs.