



Current Affairs of the Day

GS Paper I

- Cyclone Yaas makes landfall in Balasore, triggers heavy damage

GS Paper III

- WhatsApp approaches Delhi HC to challenge new IT rules
- Panel to investigate charges of illegal construction in Mekedatu
- Centre seeks compliance report from intermediaries
- Quad targeting China: Consul General



Cyclone Yaas makes landfall in Balasore, triggers heavy damage

The 'Very Severe Cyclonic Storm' Yaas that made landfall south of Balasore in Odisha on Wednesday tore into the border regions of West Bengal and Odisha and weakened into a cyclonic storm, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake on the eastern coast.

Highlights:

1. National Disaster Response Force and Army personnel joined the rescue and relief operations.
2. In Odisha, 128 villages in Balasore and Bhadrak districts were inundated following seawater ingress. The cyclone caused extensive damage to power transmission lines in coastal areas. Hundreds of thatched houses were ravaged.
3. Yaas battered the tree cover while passing through Balasore and Mayurbhanj districts. Thousands of big trees were uprooted.

WhatsApp approaches Delhi HC to challenge new IT rules

Instant messaging app WhatsApp has approached the Delhi High Court challenging the Central government's new Information Technology Rules, 2021, which include a requirement for social media platforms to compulsorily enable "the identification of the first originator of the information" in India upon government or court order.

Highlights:

1. The Facebook-owned company argued that this provision forces it "to break end-to-end encryption on its messaging service, as well as the privacy principles underlying it, and infringes upon the fundamental rights to privacy and free speech of the hundreds of millions of citizens using WhatsApp to communicate privately and securely".
2. While this is the first major tech company to challenge the new IT rules, the Delhi HC is already seized of petitions by several news portals, such as The Wire, The News Minute, Quint Digital Media Limited and the Foundation for Independent Journalism, over its attempt to regulate digital news media. The petitions claimed that the new rules seek to regulate online news portals by imposing a vaguely worded "Code of Ethics".



3. WhatsApp, in its plea, has contended that the new IT Rules violate the fundamental right to privacy guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. It highlighted the landmark judgment of the Supreme Court in the K.S. Puttaswamy case, where it held that the right to privacy is a fundamental right guaranteed under the Constitution. More recently, the Supreme Court affirmed that the right to privacy included the right to anonymity, it argued.

'Violation of rights'

■ WhatsApp has filed a plea contending that the new IT rules violate the fundamental right to privacy, and the right to freedom of speech and expression. It highlighted the landmark judgment of the Supreme Court in K.S. Puttaswamy case where it held that the right to privacy is a fundamental right

■ "Requiring intermediaries to enable the identification of the first originator of the information in India on end-to-end encrypted messaging services constitutes a dangerous invasion of privacy," WhatsApp said

■ "Privacy is inextricably intertwined with the right to freedom of speech and expression because it protects people from retaliation for expressing unpopular but lawful views," it argued



4. This eliminates the right of the hundreds of millions of Indian citizens using WhatsApp to maintain the privacy of their messages, which is antithetical to end-to-end encryption and the core privacy principles underlying it, the plea argued.
5. It further said enabling the identification of the first originator of information in India results in significant harm, including "breaking end-to-end encryption and chilling lawful speech".

Panel to investigate charges of illegal construction in Mokedatu

The National Green Tribunal (NGT), Southern Zone, has appointed a joint committee to look into allegations of unauthorised construction activity taking place in Mokedatu, where the Karnataka government had proposed to construct a dam across the Cauvery River.

Highlights:

Considering the allegations made in the news report, it said, "We are satisfied that there arises a substantial question of environment, which requires the interference of this Tribunal."



Centre seeks compliance report from intermediaries

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has written to all significant social media intermediaries who have over 50 lakh registered users in the country, requesting details of compliance with the new guidelines, despite several requests for extension from the industry.

Highlights:

1. In a letter dated May 26, the Ministry sought confirmation and details, including contact details of the chief compliance officer, nodal contact person and resident grievance officer, “ASAP and preferably today itself”, from all significant social media intermediaries (SSMIs).
2. Over the past two months, various industry bodies have written to the government seeking up to a one-year compliance window in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. They stated that transition to the new rules required extensive capacity building, new operational models, product redesign, and personnel onboarding.

Quad targeting China: Consul General

China’s Consul General said it was “self-contradictory” to ask China to keep supply chains open, amid a current surge in Indian imports of supplies, while at the same time “threatening decoupling” between the Indian and Chinese economies.

Highlights:

1. He also hit out at the India-United States-Japan-Australia grouping, known as the Quad, describing it as “an attempt for containment”.
2. As two of the world’s largest vaccine producers, China and India have every reason to join hand and work for the final victory against the pandemic in our region and the world.
3. Since early April, Chinese firms had received orders for more than 60,000 oxygen concentrators from Indian firms, of which around half have been exported, in addition to more than 5,000 ventilators.



4. China's government has criticised India's recent moves to not include its telecom firms in 5G trials and to place more stringent curbs on FDI coming in from countries that share a border with India, seen widely as being aimed at Beijing.

RCEP deal

1. The integration and development of East Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia are unstoppable. RCEP has always opened its door to India, he said.
2. He said China's experiences in poverty reduction, particularly its rural revitalisation strategy, offered lessons for India, with the government last year announcing the eradication of absolute poverty.
3. Poverty eradication was premised on the idea that "China does not simply 'transfuse blood' to the poor, but to encourage them to work hard and 'make blood' themselves".