

1. TDSAT Asserts TRAI Cannot Regulate OTT Platforms like Hotstar

Introduction

The Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) recently ruled that over-the-top (OTT) platforms such as Hotstar fall outside the jurisdiction of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). TDSAT argued that OTT platforms are outside the purview of the TRAI Act since they do not require any permission or a licence from the Department of Telecommunications.

Instead, they are governed by the Information Technology Rules, 2021, under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). This decision has significant implications and raises questions about the regulation of OTT services in India.

Context of TDSAT's Order

The TDSAT's decision stemmed from a petition filed by the All India Digital Cable Federation (AIDCF), which alleged that free streaming of ICC Cricket World Cup matches on Star India's Disney+Hotstar platform was discriminatory under TRAI regulations. On the other hand, AIDCF argued that the matches could be accessed for free on Star Sports TV channels only if viewers subscribed through monthly payments. Thus, AIDCF sought to restrain Star India from offering free access on mobile phones as such a practice by Star India is against the interest of cable operators.

Significance of the TDSAT Ruling

The rejection of AIDCF's plea by TDSAT is significant because TRAI, the statutory telecom regulator, and the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) under the Union Ministry of Communications, are attempting to regulate OTT services. However, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has disagreed with Ministry of Communications, citing that internet-based communication services do not fall under DoT's jurisdiction. This disagreement highlights the complexity of regulating OTT services in India.

Why the IT Ministry Disagrees with DoT?

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) asserts that internet-based communication services, such as WhatsApp, do not fall within DoT's jurisdiction as per the Allocation of Business Rules. Despite DoT's initial draft Telecommunication Bill, MeitY's objections have led DoT to revisit and reframe portions of the Bill, particularly those related to regulating OTT communication services.

Conclusion

In conclusion, TDSAT's recent ruling reinforces the complexity of regulating OTT platforms in India, with differing opinions between regulatory bodies and stakeholders. The ongoing debate raises questions about the future regulatory landscape for OTT services in the country.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance
Source: The Indian Express

2. Hamas: Militant group that has attacked Israel

Introduction

Recently, Israel declared a state of war after Palestinian militants, Hamas, launched barrages of rockets which killed at least 22 Israelis and injured more than 500 people. This article provides a concise overview of Hamas, the Palestinian militant group responsible for recent attacks on Israel. It explores Hamas's origins, formation, and key moments in its history.

Hamas: A Major Palestinian Militant Group

Hamas is the largest Palestinian militant Islamist group and a significant political entity in the region. It currently governs over two million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and is recognized as a terrorist organization by Israel, the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, and other nations.



Formation and Origins of Hamas

Hamas was established in the late 1980s during the first Palestinian intifada (uprising) against Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It evolved from the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, a non-confrontational organization that aimed to Islamize Palestinian society. However, the first intifada prompted Hamas to transform itself into a group focused on confronting Israeli occupation.

Reasons for Hamas' Creation

Hamas emerged due to a sense of failure within the Palestinian national movement during the late 1980s. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), representing most Palestinians, had recognized Israel's right to exist and abandoned armed struggle in favor of a negotiated settlement. In contrast, Hamas advocated a military strategy, leading to its rise as a resistance force.

Hamas' Opposition to Peace Accords

Hamas gained prominence by opposing the Oslo Peace Accords in the early 1990s, which aimed to adopt a two-state solution, State of Palestine alongside Israel. The

group believed this approach would forfeit the rights of Palestinian refugees displaced in 1948. In response, Hamas conducted suicide bombings and bus attacks, derailing the peace process and escalating violence.

Hamas' Political Rise

In 2006, Hamas achieved a remarkable victory in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Several factors contributed to its success, including its violent tactics, social services, and the failure of the peace process. This electoral triumph marked Hamas's entry into mainstream Palestinian politics.

Notable Conflicts Between Hamas and Israel

Throughout the years, Hamas and Israel have engaged in recurring conflicts. The deadliest confrontation occurred in 2014, resulting in significant casualties on both sides. In May 2021, clashes at the Al Aqsa compound in Jerusalem led to an 11-day exchange of rocket attacks and air strikes, causing casualties in Gaza and Israel.

Conclusion

Hamas's history is marked by its transformation from a non-confrontational organization to a militant resistance group. It has played a pivotal role in shaping the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, with recurring confrontations that have had significant humanitarian consequences.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: The Indian Express and The Hindu

3. Hezbollah's Role in Israel-Hamas Conflict

Introduction

The recent Israel-Hamas conflict has raised concerns of escalation, with the presence of Hezbollah, a Shiite Lebanese militant group. This article delves into who Hezbollah is, its origins, aims, military capabilities, and why its involvement is a cause for worry in the ongoing conflict.

Who is Hezbollah and How was it Founded?

Hezbollah, also known as the 'Party of God,' is a Shiite Islamic militant organization based in Lebanon. Formed during the Lebanese Civil War, it emerged due to tensions stemming from the presence of Palestinian refugees and Israeli interventions in southern Lebanon. Inspired by Iran's Islamic government in 1979, Hezbollah received support from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), symbolizing the rivalry between Sunni-dominated Saudi Arabia and Shia-dominated Iran.

Hezbollah's Aims

Hezbollah opposes Israel and Western influence in the Middle East. It has supported President Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria and has become a prominent player in Lebanese politics.



Hezbollah's Military Capabilities

Hezbollah's arsenal includes a vast stockpile of unguided artillery rockets, missiles, and other weaponry. Western governments and organizations like the Gulf Cooperation Council (which includes six West Asian countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE) label it a terrorist organization. It previously engaged in conflicts with Israel, notably in 2006, and is known for its extensive rocket force.

Concerns Regarding Hezbollah's Role

The presence of Hezbollah in the current Israel-Hamas conflict raises concerns due to its military capabilities and the potential for escalation. Due to presence of Hezbollah, Israeli government is likely to

intensify its actions.

Western support for Israel's security adds to the tension. Hamas shares common goals with Hezbollah and opposes recent diplomatic engagements between Israel and other Middle Eastern governments. This situation complicates regional stability.

Conclusion

The involvement of Hezbollah in the Israel-Hamas conflict adds complexity to an already volatile situation. Understanding Hezbollah's origins, aims, and military

capabilities is crucial in assessing the potential for further escalation in the conflict-ridden Middle East.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: The Indian Express and The Hindu

PrepMate