

1. Overview of the Draft Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, 2023

Introduction

The Information & Broadcasting Ministry recently unveiled the draft Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, 2023, aiming to overhaul the regulatory framework of the broadcasting sector in India. This bill, comprising six chapters, 48 sections, and three Schedules, is designed to replace the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act of 1995 and existing policy guidelines.

Broadening Regulatory Scope

An essential aspect of the draft Bill is its expansion of regulatory provisions to encompass various broadcasting services, including OTT content, digital news, and current affairs. This move marks a departure from the previous focus on traditional cable television networks and aligns with the evolving landscape of broadcasting technologies.

Key Features of the Bill

Comprehensive Definitions: The Bill introduces comprehensive definitions for contemporary broadcasting terms, along with crucial technical terms defined within the statute for the first time.

Self-regulation Mechanisms: It establishes 'Content evaluation committees' for self-regulation and a 'Broadcast Advisory Council' to advise the central government on program and advertisement code violations.

Statutory Penalties: The Bill introduces statutory penalties, such as advisory, warning, censure, or monetary penalties, for operators and broadcasters. Serious offenses may incur imprisonment and/or fines, with penalties tailored to the financial capacity of the entity.

Inclusivity Measures: Emphasizing inclusivity, the Bill promotes accessibility for people with disabilities through subtitles, audio descriptors, and sign language. Additionally, it mandates the appointment of a "Disability Grievance officer."

Infrastructure Sharing: The Bill includes provisions for infrastructure sharing among broadcasting network operators and the carriage of platform services. It streamlines the 'Right of Way' section to address relocation and alterations more efficiently and establishes a structured dispute resolution mechanism.

Government's Call for Feedback

The Information & Broadcasting Ministry has invited stakeholders to provide feedback and comments on the draft Bill within 30 days from its release, fostering a collaborative approach in shaping the future regulatory landscape of India's broadcasting sector.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Indian Express and PIB

2. Understanding Stubble Management with Baler Machines

Introduction to Baler Machines

In the face of increasing concerns about farm fires and stubble burning, the demand for effective stubble management solutions has risen in Punjab. Baler machines, designed to facilitate ex situ (off-site) stubble management, have gained prominence in addressing this agricultural challenge.



Figure 1 Baler Machine in operation

Baler Machines: A Decade-Long Solution

Baler machines, operational for over a decade, play a crucial role in managing crop residue. Presently, approximately 2,000 balers are in operation in Punjab, with 1,268 of them benefiting from substantial subsidies ranging from 50-80% under the Centre's Crop Residue Management (CRM) scheme.

The Stubble Challenge

After harvesting paddy crops, stubble remains on the fields, posing a challenge for farmers who traditionally resort to burning it, contributing to significant air pollution. Environmentally friendly methods like in situ management using machines such as super seeders come with their own set of challenges, pushing farmers towards ex situ management methods.

Baler Machines in Action

Baler machines efficiently compress agricultural residue into compact bales, making them manageable and easy to transport. The process involves cutting the crop residue with a tractor-mounted cutter, arranging the stubble with a rake, and then using a tractor-mounted baler machine to compress the stubble into bales, which are subsequently transported to factories or dumping sites.

Benefits of Baler Machines

In fields where balers are utilized, farmers can promptly plough the field and sow the next crop, minimizing downtime. Most balers in Punjab produce cylindrical or rectangular bales weighing 25-30 kg, although larger machines are also available.

Challenges and Current Scenario

While baler machines prove effective, the current count of 2,000 units in Punjab falls short of meeting the demand. A single baler costs around Rs 14.5 lakh without subsidies. With approximately 32 lakh hectares of rice fields in Punjab, only a fraction can be covered by the existing balers. Despite government efforts, including subsidies, the sales of balers faced initial challenges, with a notable increase in the last three years.

In summary, while baler machines present a promising solution to stubble management, addressing the gap in their availability and ensuring widespread adoption remain critical for sustainable agricultural practices in Punjab.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: The Indian express

3. WHO's report on TB in India

Introduction

Although several positive strides have been made by India towards the goal of eliminating tuberculosis by 2025, five years ahead of the global target, it continues to have the highest incidence of the bacterial infection. India accounts for 27 per cent of the total TB cases in the world, according to the recently released Global TB Report 2023 by the World Health Organisation.

The report noted two positive trends for India. One, there was an increase in reporting of TB cases, crossing even the pre-pandemic high with 24.2 lakh cases in 2022. Two, the coverage of treatment for the infection increased to 80%. The most important data point for India, however, was mortality due to TB.

What does the 2023 report say about mortality in India?

A sudden drop in mortality due to TB was noted in the 2023 report. This was owing to the WHO report accepting India's Sample Registration System dataset as the basis for the calculations instead of the Global Burden of Disease report.

With the change in dataset, India's TB mortality dropped from 4.94 lakhs in 2021 to 3.31 lakhs in 2022. This resulted in a reduction in India's contribution towards global mortality from 36 per cent in the previous years to 26 per cent in 2022.

India presented newer evidence, the in-country mathematical modelling for estimating burden, and data from the government's Ni-Kshay portal that captures data for the entire duration between a person being diagnosed with TB and completing their treatment. NI-KSHAY-(Ni=End, Kshay=TB) is the web enabled patient management system for TB control under the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP).

How many people get TB in India?

Nearly 2.82 lakh people got TB in India in 2022, meaning one person gets TB every 11 seconds in India, according to the report. India's contribution to the global burden is 27%, which is down one percentage point from the previous year's 28%.

What is more important is that there has been an increase in reporting of TB cases. The estimated number of cases in a country is based on a mathematical model, and there is a gap between that and the number of people who actually get diagnosed and put on treatment in a country.

What does the report say about coverage of TB treatment in India?

The report acknowledged an increase in coverage of TB treatment in India, increasing by 19 per cent over the previous year. In fact, India was among only four countries among the 30 high-burden countries in the world that were able to achieve more than 80 per cent treatment coverage.

What is India's TB elimination target?

India has set a target of 2025 for eliminating TB in the country. The national strategic plan 2017-2025 sets the target of no more than 44 new TB cases per lakh population by 2025. The 2023 report pegs this number at 199 cases per lakh. Achieving this target is a big task as the plan had envisaged an incidence of only 77 cases per lakh population by 2023.

The programme also aims to reduce the mortality to 3 deaths per lakh population by 2025. Even with the WHO accepting the lowered estimates for India, this stands at 23 per lakh population.

	Pre-pandemic (TB Report 2020)	Previous TB Report 2022	Present TB Report 2023
Estimated TB cases	26.4 lakh	29.6 lakh	28.2 lakh
Percentage of global burden	26%	28%	27%
Mortality	4.36 lakh	4.94 lakh	3.31 lakh
Percentage of global deaths	36%	36%	26%
Drug-Resistant TB	1.16 lakh	1.19 lakh	1.10 lakh
Percentage of global drug-resistant TB	27%	26%	27%

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper I; Social Issues

Source: The Indian express