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1. Red Sea attacks and Op Prosperity Guardian

What happened?

The recent attacks on ships passing the Red Sea, a crucial trade route that connects the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean, have prompted many businesses to pause the movement of cargo through the region.



Yemen-based Houthis, a clan belonging to an Islamic sect, has claimed responsibility for the attacks – launched to protest Israel’s ongoing military strikes on the Gaza Strip. A ship passing by near the coast of Gujarat was also targeted via a drone last week in one such strike.

Operation Prosperity Guardian

The United States Secretary of State Lloyd Austin announced a joint maritime security initiative called Operation Prosperity Guardian on December 19 to aid the safe

movement of ships. However, a few days on, many US allies have yet to commit to the operation.

Initially, it was reported that nine countries were joining the operation – the UK, Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Seychelles and Spain. But missing from the list are other major US partners, such as Australia and Japan, as well as most Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia. But why? There are multiple factors at play here.

In the Middle East, it's about the stand so far on the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Bahrain is the only Middle Eastern nation to have joined the operations. But this is no surprise: the small nation is home to the US Navy's 5th Fleet.

While other countries are losing money with the re-routing of ships away from the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, there is an apprehension towards taking a firm stance against the Houthis.

Joining a grouping that is decidedly against the Houthis's purported protest action against Israel would potentially open these countries to criticism over their prior stand.

Why other partners are reluctant

Among other countries too, there is some reluctance to fully commit to joining the mission. Spain's defence ministry has said, "We will not participate unilaterally in the Red Sea operation."

Italy is sending *Virginio Fasan*, a naval frigate, to the Red Sea to protect its national interests in response to specific requests made by Italian shipowners. It is not being done as part of the operation. Further, The Netherlands said it would send two staff officers and Norway said it would send 10 naval officers to Bahrain. Denmark said its participation would be in the form of sending one officer.

This general lack of enthusiasm perhaps also points to countries wanting to stay away from getting deeply embroiled in a global flashpoint, even as Israel continues its offensive.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Organisations

Source: The Indian Express

2. Union government's draft Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill mean for OTT platforms and content creators

Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill

The Union government's draft Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, 2023, is designed to extend regulatory oversight to encompass OTT platforms and digital

content. The bill aims to modernize regulations, introduce self-regulation mechanisms, and establish a three-tier regulatory framework.

Key Provisions of the Bill

1. Mandatory Registration: All individuals and broadcasting companies must register with the government to provide services or operate a network.

2. Expanding Regulatory Scope: The bill replaces the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act and includes provisions for cable, satellite, terrestrial, radio, IPTV, and OTT broadcasting services.

3. Exemptions for OTT Services: Social media intermediaries and their users, as defined by the Information Technology Act, 2000, are excluded from the definition of OTT broadcasting services.

Content Quality and Accessibility

1. Programme and Advertisement Codes: Yet-to-be-defined Programme and Advertisement Codes will apply to TV, radio, and online broadcasting, excluding digital copies of newspapers and commercial newspaper publishers.

2. Content Classification and Access Control: Broadcasters must classify programs based on various criteria, and the classification should be prominently displayed.

Access control measures are mandated for restricted-viewing shows, particularly those with adult content.

3. Accessibility Guidelines: Broadcasting network operators must enhance accessibility for persons with disabilities through measures like audio descriptions, sign language translations, subtitles, and accessible applications.

Three tier regulatory structure

1. Self-regulation by operators

Broadcasters and broadcasting network operators will have to establish and maintain mechanisms for the filing and redressal of complaints. A grievance redressal officer will be appointed to handle complaints related to content and contravention of the programme and advertisement codes. In case the official is unable to decide in the prescribed period or the complainant is not satisfied with their decision, it can approach the self-regulatory organisation.

2. Self-regulatory organisations

It is a proposed body of broadcasters, broadcasting network operators or their associations, which will guide their members to ensure compliance with the broadcasting rules and deal with grievances related to content violations not resolved within a specific time frame. They can also take up appeals against the decisions of broadcasters or network operators.

If a broadcaster is found guilty of any wrongdoing, the self-regulatory organisation to which it belongs has the authority to expel, suspend, or impose penalties in the form of advisories, censures, warnings, or monetary fines, not exceeding ₹5 lakh for each violation.

3. Broadcast Advisory Council

The Centre will establish an advisory council, consisting of independent experts and government representatives, to oversee the implementation of the regulations. It will hear content violations complaints and accordingly make recommendations to the government.

The government will then, after due consideration, issue appropriate orders and directions. The Council can also form review panels to assist with its functions. These panels are assigned specific cases or appeals and provide their recommendations, considered as recommendations of the Broadcast Advisory Council as per the text of the Bill.

Inspection and Seizure of Equipment

1. Government Inspections: The government can conduct inspections without prior notice, and operators must facilitate monitoring at their own cost.

2. Equipment Seizure: Equipment can be seized if violations are suspected, with liability on operators unless they prove a lack of knowledge or due diligence.

Penalties for Non-Compliance

1. Removal and Prohibition: Penalties include removal of objectionable content, orders, apologies, off-air periods, or cancellation of registration.

Prohibition of transmission for reasons related to public interest, national security, or potential promotion of disharmony.

2. Monetary Penalties and Imprisonment: Monetary penalties and imprisonment for serious offenses, with penalty amounts depending on financial capacity.

Main Concerns and Criticisms

1. Scope and Impact on Digital Platforms: Concerns raised about the broad scope of the bill and its potential impact on freedom of speech, especially for OTT platforms.

2. Excessive Delegation and Uncertainty: Criticisms regarding excessive delegation of rule-making to the Centre, leading to uncertainty for stakeholders.

3. Threats to Creativity and Expression: Concerns expressed by digital rights organizations and experts about potential over-compliance and self-censorship affecting creativity and expression in the digital space.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

3. XPoSat: ISRO's X-ray eye in the sky



Why in news?

At 9.10 am on the first day of 2024, the Indian Space Research Organisation launched XPoSat, short for 'X-ray Polarimeter Satellite'. The satellite will study X-rays emitted by phenomena in space and their polarisation from earth-orbit.

What are X-Rays?

X-rays are electromagnetic radiation whose wavelength is 0.01-10 nanometres (where 1 nanometre is one-billionth of a metre), corresponding to energies of 100-100,000 electron-volt (eV).

X-rays can be polarised when they get scattered. For example, when an X-ray travelling through space encounters an

atom, the electric field of the X-ray can energise an electron, which will then emit a photon. Since X-rays are also photons, the new photon will give the impression that an X-ray photon has been scattered. Polarised X-rays are also produced when the path of a fast-moving charged particle is bent by a magnetic field.

Tracking how these X-rays evolve in time can reveal many things about the body producing such fields, like a pulsar.

The XPoSat satellite has two payloads to make these measurements. POLIX will study X-rays with energy 8-30 keV emitted by around 40 astronomical sources in five years. XSPECT will study X-rays with energy 0.8-15 keV and track changes in continuous X-ray emissions.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Science & Technology

Source: The Hindu

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