

2. Privacy Rights & Wrongs

Prelims: Cyber Space Challenges.

Mains: GS-III: Challenges to internal security through Communication Networks.

Why in News?

- ▶▶ TRAI had commenced a process of consultations to bring over the top (OTT) services like WhatsApp and Telegram under “lawful interception”.

Objectives:

- ▶▶ The objective of the exercise is public security since criminals and terrorists are known to use end-to-end encryption offered by such services to fly under the radar.
- ▶▶ Parity has always been an issue since telecom providers complain that they are regulated and must respond to requests for information from governments and agencies. But the OTT sector is untrammelled.

Is Interception Technologically Feasible, at all?

- ▶▶ Technology companies have argued that end-to-end encryption is completely private between the correspondents in the conversation. It is encrypted by a pair of security keys which their devices exchange, and which are available to no one else, not even the OTT provider. Providers are unable to provide governments with any communications content, except metadata like the frequency of contact.
- ▶▶ The US Attorney General’s, along with his counterparts in Australia and the UK, has requested Mark Zuckerberg not to deploy systems that preclude any form of access to content, even for preventing or investigating the most serious crimes.

Need for Such Technologies:

- ▶▶ Concerns about crime, terrorism and lethal mischief-making using encrypted communications are legitimate.
- ▶▶ Worldwide, the pressure is developing on providers and platforms to make content available for inspection.

Against privacy:

- ▶▶ Privacy concerns are equally legitimate because compromising security would degrade privacy across platforms. Blackberry had kept a copy of encrypted communications and provided it to the governments of India, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Now, it is an inconsequential player. Privacy is now recognised as a right. It would open the door to situations like the NSA mass surveillance scandal.