

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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### NEWS IN SHORTS

POEM-3

## INTERNET SHUTDOWNS IN INDIA

### In Context

- The **Supreme Court** questioned the **Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir** about the nonpublication of orders for the suspension of Internet services in the UT.

### About

- In the past few years India had gone through several violence acts as a result of certain legislations by the Union Government such as **The Citizenship Amendment Act, abrogation of Article 370 etc.** which could have resulted in **Internal Aggression**.
- Due to which it becomes the need of the hour to **shut down the internet services to maintain peace**.
- It has become very common practice for law enforcement agencies and even for the Government to cut down the internet during the moment of tension.

### Legal Provisions

- Till the year 2017, shutdowns were imposed largely **under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)**.
  - ♦ Section 144 of CrPC gave the police and the District Magistrate the powers in order to prevent unlawful gathering of people and also to direct any person to abstain from a certain activity.
- However, in 2017 the law was amended and the Government promulgated the **Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rule 2017**.
  - ♦ Under the 2017 Rules, telecom/internet shutdowns may be ordered on **grounds of public emergency and public safety**.
  - ♦ Public emergency and public safety **have not been defined in the 1885 Act or the 2017 Rules**.

### Arguments in Favour of Internet Shutdown by the Government

- **National Security:** The government may assert that suspending internet services is a temporary and targeted measure to prevent the spread of misinformation, coordinate unlawful activities, or address security threats.
- **Preventing Unrest and Violence:** Suspending online communication helps prevent the organization of protests, riots, or other forms of civil unrest.

- **Counteracting Fake News and Disinformation:** During times of crisis or conflict, false information circulating online can exacerbate tensions and contribute to misinformation.
- **Temporary and Targeted Measures:** Supporters may emphasize that internet shutdowns are intended to be temporary and narrowly focused.
  - ♦ These measures are not meant to infringe on long-term access but rather to address specific and immediate concerns.

### Arguments Against the Internet Shutdown by the Government

- **Impact on Freedom of Expression:** Internet shutdowns infringe upon the freedom of expression guaranteed by the Indian Constitution.
- **Economic Disruptions:** India has a rapidly growing digital economy, and internet shutdowns can lead to significant economic losses.
  - ♦ The perception of frequent internet shutdowns may impact tourism and trade, as a stable and accessible digital environment is crucial for business operations and attracting visitors.
- **Educational Challenges:** With the increasing use of online platforms for education, internet shutdowns can severely affect students' access to learning resources, online classes, and communication with teachers.
- **Healthcare Consequences:** Access to healthcare information, telemedicine services, and health-related updates can be hampered during internet shutdowns.
- **Social and Political Implications:** Internet shutdowns are often associated with attempts to control social unrest, protests, or political opposition.
  - ♦ Critics argue that such measures can stifle democratic dissent and limit the right to peaceful assembly.
- **Global Image and Investment:** Frequent internet shutdowns can impact India's global image, raising concerns among investors and international partners.
  - ♦ A perceived lack of digital freedom and stability may deter foreign investments and collaborations.
- **Human Rights Concerns:** Critics assert that internet shutdowns raise human rights concerns, including the right to access information, freedom of speech, and the right to peaceful assembly.
- **Lack of Transparency:** Some critics argue that the government needs to provide clear justifications for such actions and communicate transparently about the duration and reasons for the shutdown.

- **Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India Case:**
  - ♦ In 2020 the Supreme Court by **ruling on Jammu and Kashmir Internet shutdown** held that **indefinite internet shutdowns** by the State is not permissible under Indian Constitution.
  - ♦ The apex Court further stated that **imposition of Section 144** can not be used as a mechanism to avoid genuine protest which is permitted under the Constitution.
    - **Section 144** has very specific parameters, only if those parameters are satisfied then only a Magistrate can pass the orders.

#### Key Highlights of the orders:

- ♦ Usage of the Internet is the **Fundamental Right under Article 19** of the Indian Constitution.
- ♦ Internet shutdowns can be of **temporary period** but not for indefinite period.
- ♦ Government to publish all orders imposing restrictions under Section 144.
- ♦ The Court had also said that any order with regard to Internet Shutdowns will come under **Judicial Scrutiny**.

#### Conclusion

- In a democracy Governments should provide a rationale for disrupting the internet services in a periodic manner.
- The publications of all the orders must be made to maintain transparency.
- Indiscriminate shutdowns have high social and economic costs and are often ineffective.
- A proportionality and necessity test analysis to determine the proper course of action are essential at this juncture.
- For better internet governance the Indian civil society needs to push for a transparent and accountable system.

Source: TH

## ODISHA GOVERNMENT'S TRIBAL OUTREACH

#### Context

- Recently the Odisha government announced measures for the welfare of tribal Population.

#### About

- The Odisha government announced the launch

of **LABHA (Laghu Bana Jatya Drabya Kraya) Yojana**, for minor forest produce (MFP).

- It has also approved the establishment of a **Commission for the Preservation and Promotion of the Tribal Languages** of the Scheduled Tribes of Odisha.

#### LABHA (Laghu Bana Jatya Drabya Kraya) Yojana

- It is a **100% State-funded minimum support price (MSP)** scheme for minor forest produce (MFP). The MSP will be determined every year by the State government.
- Under the scheme, a primary collector (a tribal person) will be able to sell the MFP.
- It will be collected at the procurement centers by the **Tribal Development Cooperative Corporation Limited** of Odisha (TDCCOL).
- These procurement centers will be managed by SHGs and any other notified agencies assisted by TDCCOL.
  - ♦ As 99% of primary collectors are tribals and the majority of them are women, the LABHA Yojana will integrate the efforts with **Mission Shakti's Women SHGs** (self help groups).
- **The procurement automation system** will be set up to capture the total collection of MFPs, the details of the primary collectors, and the procurement point.
- **Significance:** The LABHA Yojana will also eliminate the possibility of distress sale of produce to middlemen

#### Commission for the Preservation and Promotion of the Tribal Languages

- The Commission will encourage multilingual education, document and preserve tribal languages, promote the use and protect linguistic rights.
- The Commission will make efforts for inclusion of tribal languages like Ho, Mundari, Kui and Saora in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution

#### Tribal Population in Odisha

- Odisha is home to 62 distinct tribes, including 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG).
- The Scheduled Tribes in Scheduled Areas constitute approximately **68.09%** of the total tribal population in the State.
- It ranks as the third largest concentration of a tribal population, trailing behind Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.
- There are 21 tribal languages in Odisha.

Source: TH

## STATE ANTHEM OF MEGHALAYA

### In Context

- Marking **Meghalaya's 52nd statehood day** on January 21 this year, the state government released an official state anthem.

### About

- The anthem was not performed or played anywhere in the state on Republic Day.
- The government said that the anthem should not be played as the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for it is still being prepared.
- **Controversy:** The two-minute-long anthem features segments in three languages – **Khasi, Garo and English**.
  - ♦ Soon after it was launched, there was a discontent over the Jaintia or Pnar language not being represented in it.
  - ♦ On the other hand, the inclusion of English, the Jaintia Students' Union accused the state government of "**promoting a foreign language**", and said it should instead "**include dialects of all three tribes – Khasi, Jaintia and Garo.**"

### Demography in Meghalaya

- Meghalaya is understood to have three major matrilineal communities – **Khasis, Garos and Jaintias**.
- But the **Jaintias are clubbed along with the Khasis** in the state's **Scheduled Tribes (ST) list**, along with tribes such as War, Bhoi and Lynggam.
- Together, they make up 14.1 lakh of the state's population (based on 2011 Census data).
  - ♦ The Garos number around 8.21 lakh, with the state's total population being 29.7 lakh.

### Ethnic Groups in Meghalaya

- Meghalaya is inhabited by many distinct tribes, the most **prominent being the Khasis, the Garos, and the Jaintias**.
  - ♦ The Garos inhabit the western area, the central area by the Khasis and the eastern area by the Jaintias.
- **The Khasis:** 'Hynniewtrep' as they call themselves signifies 'the seven huts' which constitute about **50 percent of the population of the state**.
  - ♦ The Khasi tribe follow the culture, rituals and norms of **matrilineal community**.
- **The Garos:** They are habitants of Garo Hills and call themselves Achik-mande.

- ♦ In the Garo language 'achik' means 'hills' and 'mande' means 'man'. Hence, Achik-mande means the hill-people.
- ♦ The Garos are also one of the few tribes in the world who follow a **matrilineal societal system**.
- **The Jaintias:** This tribe is also called Pnar or Synteng. They belong to the Hynniewtrep sect of the Austric race whose kingdom was the oldest and most widely spread around Jaintia Hills.
  - ♦ Like the other two, this tribe also is matrilineal where the youngest daughter of the family inherits the family property.

### Meghalaya State Language Act of 2005

- The Government has said that the anthem's languages were selected based on the **Meghalaya State Language Act of 2005**.
- The Act designated **English as the state's official language** and also designated **Khasi** as the 'Associate Official Language' for all purposes in the districts of East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, South West Khasi Hills, East Jaintia Hills, West Jaintia Hills and Ri Bhoi.
- **Garo language** was given the same status in the districts of East Garo Hills, West Garo Hills, South Garo Hills, North Garo Hills and South West Garo Hills.

Source: [IE](#)

## RISING TENSIONS IN THE KOREAN PENINSULA

### Context

- The ongoing tensions in the Korean peninsula have raised concerns about the deterioration of the international security environment.

### Background

- **The Korean peninsula** was divided into two by the end of **World War II**, after imperial Japan who occupied the territory was defeated.
- The North went under the ambit of the **Soviet Union** and the South under the U.S., resulting in the creation of two ideologically different regimes which mirrored either sides of the **Cold War divide**.

### The Korean war (1950-53)

- **The Korean war** broke out as a result of the North's attempt to take over the South — the first "hot war" of the Cold War.
- Today even after the cessation of active conflict and the end of the Cold War, the two countries are still divided over ideology and political leanings.

- The North Korea being an authoritarian dynastic regime allied with China and Russia, and the South Korea being a liberal democracy allied with the U.S.
- **India's role in the Korean war:** During the War, both the warring sides accepted a resolution sponsored by India, and the ceasefire was declared on 27 July 1953 with the **Korean Armistice Agreement**.

### Recent tensions in Korean Peninsula

- Over the past couple of decades, North Korea has demonstrated its nuclear weapons capability by testing several missiles.
- The key external stakeholders of the Korean peninsula are the very same nuclear powers who are locked in a global strategic competition — the U.S., China and Russia.
- Russia and China have boosted its engagement with North Korea. China has always been consistently supportive of North Korea, being the single largest trading partner of the country.
- On the other hand South Korea, has enhanced its military alliance with the U.S., hosting not just U.S. troops, but also advanced missile defense systems.

### Threat to International security

- North Korea has conducted **provocative actions** ranging from military drills to shelling South Korean islands and even threatening nuclear attacks.
- It supposedly has the ability to even target the U.S. mainland with its nuclear arsenal, and it has also become a **major source of cyber-attacks** across the world.
- Currently the World is witnessing the activation of historically rooted conflicts such as **Russia-Ukraine** and **Israel-Palestine**.
- Now the nuclear ambitions of North Korea are posing security challenges to the international community.
- Also Russia and China are gaining from North Korea by creating a distraction for the U.S. by opening a "third front".

### Way ahead

- There is a growing concern among the international community that the tensions between North and South Korea may be heading towards conflict.
- Hence to ensure the global security interest and peace in the region denuclearisation of North Korea is necessary along with ending the US hostile Policy towards it.

### India-Republic of Korea Bilateral (ROK) Relations

- **Diplomatic relations:** They established diplomatic relations in 1973.
  - ♦ Both countries formed a "Strategic Partnership" in 2010, which was elevated to "Special Strategic Partnership" in 2015.
  - ♦ **Economic Relations:** Trade and economic relations gathered momentum following the implementation of CEPA in 2010.
  - ♦ India and ROK launched an initiative 'Korea Plus' to promote and facilitate Korean investments in India.
  - ♦ Bilateral trade in 2022 reached record levels of US\$ 27.8 billion. India's import volume stands at US\$ 18.8 billion, while the export volume is US\$ 9 billion.
- **Defense Relations:** The Defence Ministers of ROK and India have been interacting regularly since 2015.
  - ♦ Service level talks across the three arms of the military are held annually
  - ♦ A Roadmap for Defence Industries Cooperation was signed between the two countries in 2019.
- **Indian Community:** The total number of Indian nationals living in ROK is estimated to be around 15,000.
  - ♦ During the past few years, many professionals mainly in the areas of IT, shipping and automobile have come to ROK.

Source: [TH](#)

### RBI RESTRICTIONS ON PAYTM PAYMENTS BANK

#### Context:

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently barred Paytm Payments Bank** from offering all its core services, including accounts and wallets.

#### More about the News

- The action is technically **not a cancellation of Paytm Payments Bank's licence**, it practically constricts the **company's operations to a great extent**.
- It has been discovered that **Paytm Payments Bank** and its parent company, One97 Communications, were investigated by the

RBI revealed persistent non-compliances and continued material supervisory concerns in the bank

### Payments Banks

- **About:**
  - ♦ Payments banks in India are a relatively new type of financial institution **introduced in 2014**.
  - ♦ They were set up on the recommendations of the **Dr Nachiket Mor committee**, which was set up to study '**Comprehensive financial services for small businesses and low income households**'.
- **Aim:**
  - ♦ To provide basic banking services to the **unbanked and underbanked population**, primarily focusing on digital payments and remittances.
  - ♦ **To widen the spread of payment and financial services to small business, low-income households, migrant labour workforce** in a secured technology-driven environment.
  - ♦ With payments banks, **RBI seeks to increase the penetration level of financial services** to the remote areas of the country.
- **Key Features:**
  - ♦ **Limited Services:** Unlike traditional banks, payments banks **cannot offer loans, credit cards, or issue demand drafts**.
  - ♦ They **primarily focus on: Accepting deposits up to ₹200,000**.
    - It can accept demand deposits in the form of **savings and current accounts** and the received deposits can be invested in **secure government securities** only in the form of Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR).
  - ♦ **Remittance services, mobile payments** and other banking services like **ATM/debit cards**, net banking and third party fund transfers.
  - ♦ Providing **debit cards and mobile banking** services.
  - ♦ **Technology-Driven:** Payments banks heavily leverage technology to offer convenient and accessible services, often through partnerships with telecom operators and fintech companies.
  - ♦ **Wider Reach:** They target geographically remote areas and financially excluded segments, aiming to promote financial inclusion.

### Impact and Benefits

- **Financial Inclusion:** They have played a crucial

role in bringing more people into the formal financial system by providing easier access to basic banking services.

- **Cashless Economy:** By promoting digital payments, they contribute to the government's initiative of transitioning towards a cashless economy.
- **Financial Literacy:** Educating customers about digital payments and responsible financial practices.
- **Competition and Innovation:** Their entry has increased competition in the banking sector, potentially leading to improved services and lower costs for customers.

Source: [IE](#)

## NEURALINK IMPLANTS

### Context

- The **first human patient** has received an implant from **brain-chip startup Neuralink** recently.

### About

- Initial results show promising **neuron spike detection**.
  - ♦ Spikes are **activity by neurons**, which the National Institute of Health describes as **cells that use electrical and chemical signals to send information** around the brain and to the body.
- It gives hope that the startup technology will help **patients overcome paralysis and a host of neurological conditions**.

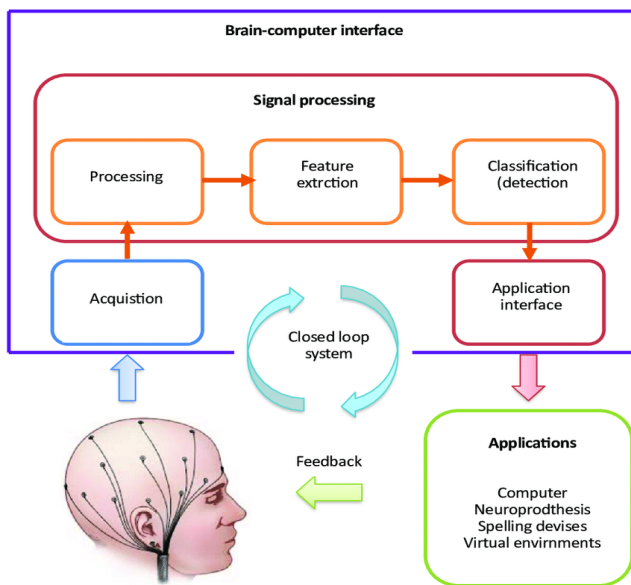
### Neuralink

- Neuralink is a **neurotechnology company** founded by Elon Musk in 2016.
- The company's main goal is to **develop brain-computer interfaces (BCIs)** that can be implanted in the human brain.
  - ♦ These BCIs would allow people to **control computers and other devices with their thoughts**, and could also be used to **treat a variety of neurological conditions**.
- Neuralink's BCI is a small, flexible device that is implanted in the **motor cortex of the brain**.
- The device contains thousands of **tiny electrodes** that can detect the electrical activity of neurons. This activity is then processed by a computer, which can interpret it as commands or intentions.

### Brain-computer interfaces (BCIs)

- BCIs are systems that **bridge the gap between human thought and external technology**.

- **Working:** BCIs capture and translate brain activity into signals that computers can understand. Different approaches exist:
  - ♦ **Non-invasive BCIs:** These use sensors like EEG (electroencephalography) to measure brain waves from outside the skull. They offer good portability but lower resolution.
  - ♦ **Partially invasive BCIs:** These use electrodes implanted under the scalp or skull, providing higher resolution but limited to specific brain areas.
  - ♦ **Fully invasive BCIs:** These like Neuralink's implant directly interface with brain tissue, offering the highest resolution but raising ethical and safety concerns.



**with the implants on monkeys included paralysis, seizures and brain swelling.**

- **Ethical concerns:** Some worry that the device could be used to hack into people's brains or to control their thoughts.
- **Superhumans:** Others worry that it could create a new class of people who are enhanced with technology.
- **Privacy and Security:** Ensuring brain data remains secure and used ethically.
- **Accessibility and Equity:** Ensuring equitable access to BCI technology.
- **Human and Machine Integration:** Defining the boundaries between human thought and machine control.
- **Brain Enhancement:** Considering the implications of cognitive and sensory augmentation.

### Way Ahead

- BCI research is rapidly evolving, driven by **advancements in neuroscience, engineering, and artificial intelligence.**
- While challenges remain, BCIs hold **immense potential to transform healthcare, communication,** and our understanding of the brain-computer interface.

Source: [TH](#)

### POEM-3

## NEWS IN SHORT

### Application of Brain Computer interface

- **Human-technology interface:** BCI has the potential to revolutionize the way we interact with technology.
- **Communication and Control:** Helping people with paralysis control assistive devices, prosthetics, or even computers directly with their thoughts.
- **Sensory Restoration:** Restoring sight or hearing loss due to injuries or diseases.
- **Neurological Treatment:** Treating conditions like epilepsy, Parkinson's, and chronic pain by modulating brain activity.
- **Augmentation and Enhancement:** Potentially amplifying cognitive abilities or memory in the future.

### Challenges/Concerns

- **Safety:** The Neuralink company has faced calls for scrutiny regarding its **safety protocols.**
  - ♦ Veterinary records showed **problems**

### In Context

- As per the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), **POEM-3** has successfully achieved **all its payload objectives.**

### About

- The PSLV Orbital Experimental Module-3 (POEM-3) is a **space platform.**
- It is a **three-axis-attitude controlled platform** with power generation and telecommand & telemetry capabilities, for **supporting Payloads.**
- It used the spent **PS4 stage of the PSLV-C58 vehicle** which launched [XPoSat](#) on January 1, 2024.
- After achieving all objectives, more experiments with POEM-3 are planned for **generating data for future missions** including upcoming POEM configurations.
- With the orbital decay and reentry of POEM-3 in three months, **PSLV-C58 XPoSat mission will be leaving zero debris in space.**

Source: [TH](#)