

Current Affairs - 08 March 2026

REGULATING SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY CHILDREN - INDIA'S PROPOSED GRADED APPROACH

- The Union Government is considering a **separate legislation** to regulate social media usage among children under 18 years, adopting a graded, age-based restriction framework rather than a blanket ban.
- The move reflects rising concerns globally about **digital addiction**, harmful online content, and mental health impacts on children, while also balancing digital rights and access to information.

Government's Proposed Approach:

- **Graded age-based restrictions:**
 - The government is examining a tiered regulatory structure for different age groups -
 - **8–12 years:** Strictest restrictions with parental supervision and limited usage.
 - **12–16 years:** Moderate restrictions with controlled access.
 - **16–18 years:** Relatively relaxed restrictions but still monitored.
 - The aim is to **balance** child safety with digital exposure, acknowledging that today's children are more digitally aware than earlier generations.
- **Possible regulatory measures:**
 - **Time-based restrictions:** Limiting daily usage hours.
 - **Login restrictions:** Preventing social media access during evening or night hours.
 - **Parental consent:** For creating accounts.
 - **Platform accountability:** Social media companies may need to implement safeguards for minors.
 - These proposals draw inspiration from global models such as **China's** one-hour-per-day limit for online gaming for minors.

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Rationale Behind Regulation:

- **Mental health concerns:** Excessive social media use can lead to digital addiction, anxiety and depression, sleep disruption, and cyberbullying exposure.
- **Exposure to harmful content:** Algorithms and AI-generated content have increased the circulation of violent material, sexual content, gambling promotions, and misinformation.
- **Child safety as a policy priority:** Government sources emphasise that “citizen safety” will be the guiding principle in designing the law.

Concerns and Challenges:

- **Operational challenges:**
 - Tech companies warn about difficulties in implementing restrictions.
 - For example, **geo-restrictions** at the state level are difficult due to nationwide connectivity.
 - Different state-level rules (e.g., Karnataka vs Andhra Pradesh) may create compliance challenges.
- **Definitional issues:** States may define “child” differently. For example, Andhra Pradesh ban for children below 13, Karnataka ban for those under 16. Such inconsistencies could create regulatory fragmentation.
- **Risk of circumvention:** Industry representatives warn that bans may push teenagers to unregulated platforms, and logged-out browsing, bypassing safety protections.
- **Digital rights and freedom of expression:** Digital rights groups argue that blanket bans may violate children’s rights to information, expression, and participation in digital spaces.
- **Digital gender divide:** The Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF) cautions that restrictions framed as “protection” may reinforce patriarchal control over girls’ internet access, widening the digital gender divide, particularly in rural areas.

Conclusion:

- A **graded, age-based** system combined with digital literacy, platform accountability, and parental oversight may provide a balanced solution.
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STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF STRAIT OF HORMUZ



The Strait of Hormuz is one of the most strategically important maritime chokepoints in the world.

- It lies between Iran to the north and Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to the south, connecting the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.

- At its narrowest point, the strait is about 33 kilometres wide, making it a relatively narrow passage for global shipping traffic. Despite its small size, the strait plays a disproportionately large role in global energy trade.
- A significant share of global oil and gas shipments move through this route. According to estimates, **more than 20% of the world's oil and gas supplies are transported through the Strait of Hormuz**, making it one of the most critical energy transit routes in the world.
- Several major oil-producing countries in the Persian Gulf rely on the strait to export their energy resources to global markets. These include Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait and Qatar. Because of this, the strait has become a critical component of global trade and geopolitical strategy.

Current Situation in the Strait of Hormuz

- Recent geopolitical tensions in West Asia have severely disrupted commercial traffic through the Strait.
- Following military attacks involving the United States, Israel, and Iran, ship traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has reportedly **fallen by nearly 95%**.
- According to maritime intelligence estimates, around **600 ships are currently stranded in the region**.
- Several vessels have also faced attacks in or near the strait, increasing the risk perception among shipping companies.

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Impact on India's Energy Security

- India is particularly vulnerable to disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz because of its heavy dependence on energy imports.
- Key concerns include:
 - **Oil imports:** About **40% of India's crude oil supplies pass through the strait**, meaning disruptions could affect fuel availability and prices.
 - **Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG):** Qatar supplies **around half of India's LNG imports**, which in turn provide **about half of India's natural gas consumption**.
- Natural gas is crucial for Fertiliser production, Power generation, City gas distribution and Industrial energy use.
- Any interruption could therefore affect multiple sectors of the Indian economy.
 - **Cooking gas supply:** India imports nearly **60% of its liquefied petroleum gas (LPG)**, much of which originates from the Gulf region upstream of the strait.
 - A shortage of LPG would have serious implications for household cooking fuel availability.

Government Response and Mitigation Measures

- **Diversifying energy imports:** India is exploring alternative LNG and crude oil sources such as the United States, Russia, and Australia.
- **Increasing domestic refining adjustments:** Refineries are being encouraged to produce more propane and butane, which are key components of LPG.
- **Diplomatic coordination:** India is in discussions with the United States to secure maritime insurance support for ships transiting the region.
- These measures aim to ensure continuity in energy supplies even if the crisis continues.

Impact on Global Oil Prices

- Historically, geopolitical crises in the region have caused dramatic increases in oil prices. For example, during the Russia–Ukraine war, oil prices rose above **\$125 per barrel**.
 - Currently, global oil prices remain below **\$90 per barrel**, but prolonged disruption could lead to higher prices and inflation worldwide.
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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN



The Minister of State for Women and Child Development to participate in the 70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW-70) at the United Nations Headquarters.

- It is a functional **commission** of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), it was established by ECOSOC resolution of 21 June 1946.
- It is the **principal global intergovernmental body** dedicated to the **promotion of gender equality** and the empowerment of women.
- It is **part of the United Nations**, and works to promote women's political, economic, civil, social, and educational rights.
- **Mandate:** It is instrumental in promoting women's and girls' rights, documenting the reality of their lives throughout the world, and **shaping global standards on gender equality** and the empowerment of women and girls.
- In 1996, ECOSOC **expanded the Commission's mandate**
 - It was decided that it should take a leading role in monitoring and reviewing progress and problems in the implementation of **the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** and in mainstreaming a gender perspective in UN activities.
 - The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, adopted by 189 countries, is the most comprehensive and transformative global agenda for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.
 - **Member States:** **Forty-five Member States** of the United Nations serve as members of the Commission at any one time.
 - Member States **elected by the Economic and Social Council** on the basis of equitable geographical distribution:
 - Members are elected for a **period of four years**.



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THAAD SYSTEM



- The Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system is one of the **most advanced missile defence platforms**.
- It is developed by the **United States to counter ballistic missile threats**.
- **Key Features of THAAD System:**
 - It is **designed to intercept missiles** during the final stage of their flight,
 - It can destroy **incoming threats both inside and outside Earth's atmosphere**, providing a critical defensive layer against short-medium-and limited intermediate-range ballistic missiles.
 - THAAD uses "**hit-to-kill**" technology.
 - This means its interceptor **missiles destroy incoming targets by directly colliding** with them at extremely high speeds, relying on kinetic energy rather than an explosive blast.
 - THAAD can **engage ballistic missile targets at ranges of roughly 150–200 kilometres**.
 - The THAAD weapon system is a major element of the **broader Ballistic Missile Defence System (BMDS) architecture**.
- **Key components includes:**
 - **Interceptors** that destroy incoming missiles through kinetic impact;
 - **Truck-mounted launchers** used to deploy the interceptors;
 - Powerful **AN/TPY-2 radar**, which detects and tracks missile threats at a long range;
 - A **tactical fire control and communications** unit that coordinates targeting and engagement; and additional logistics and support equipment.
 - A typical THAAD battery includes around **90 personnel, six launchers**, and 48 interceptors, with each launcher carrying eight missiles.



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WHAT IS KOALA?



- It is an iconic **Australian animal**.
 - Often called the koala “bear,” this **tree-climbing animal** is a **marsupial**—a mammal with a pouch for the development of offspring.
- Scientific Name: *Phascolarctos cinereus*
 - It is the only extant representative of the family Phascolarctidae, and its **closest living relatives are the wombats**.
 - **Habitat and Distribution:**
 - The koalas live in **eastern Australia** and range from northern Queensland to southwestern Victoria.
 - Koalas are **arboreal**, remaining mostly in the branches of the **eucalyptus trees**, where they are able to feed and stay out of reach of their predators.
 - **Features:**
 - It is about 60 to 85 cm long and weighs up to 14 kg in the southern part of its range (Victoria and South Australia) but only about half that in subtropical Queensland to the north.
 - In both areas, they exhibit sexual dimorphism, with the **males being larger**.
 - **Virtually tailless**, the body is **stout and gray**, with a **pale yellow or cream-coloured chest and mottling on the rump**.
 - The **broad face** has a **wide, rounded, leathery nose**, **small yellow eyes**, and **big fluffy ears**.
 - The **feet are strong and clawed**.
 - They are **slow-moving** and **sleep up to 18 hours a day**.
 - **Conservation Status:**
 - IUCN Red List: **Vulnerable**



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NEW SPECIES OF FRUIT FLIES



- They are two new species of **fruit flies**.
- They were identified from the **Solan region of Himachal Pradesh**.

Pradesh.

- **Acidoxantha paratotoflava:**
 - It is a **medium-sized, greenish-yellow fly**.
 - It is distinguished from its closest relatives by having **four distinct black stripes on its thorax** and **larger black spots on its abdomen**.
 - It has unique **"hook-like" structures in the male's anatomy**.
 - Its name, paratotoflava, was chosen because of its striking resemblance to another known fly, *A. totoflava*, which the researchers now believe may have been misidentified in India in the past.
- **Hemilea suneriae:**
 - It is a **reddish-brown fly** covered in **prominent black dots**.
 - It has a **unique wing pattern**, which features a **single clear "window"** (hyaline indentation) **in an otherwise dark area**, whereas its closest relatives usually have two.

Other Findings:

- The study marked a major milestone by **recording the genus Rhagoletis in India for the first time**.
 - This **group of flies** is known worldwide for **affecting fruit crops**, yet it had remained undetected in India until this investigation.
- Additionally, the researchers finally solved a century-old mystery by capturing and describing the male of *Euphranta nigripeda*, a species where only the female had been known to science since 1913.



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KHELO INDIA TRIBAL GAMES



- The Khelo India Tribal Games are **part of the Khelo India Scheme.**

- The Games will **feature seven medal sports** – athletics, football, hockey, weightlifting, archery, swimming and wrestling.
- There will be two demonstration sports – **mallakhamb and kabaddi.**
- **Host State:** Chhattisgarh will be the first state to host this landmark national event.
- KITG will see representation from most states and Union Territories of India.
- It will be jointly managed by the **Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Sports Authority of India (SAI), Indian Olympic Association,** National Sports Federations and the Chhattisgarh state organising committee
- **Mascot: ‘Morveer’**, derived from two powerful words — ‘Mor’, meaning mine or our own in Chhattisgarhi, and ‘Veer’, **symbolising courage and valour**

Key Facts about Khelo India Scheme

- It is a flagship **Central Sector Scheme** of the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India.
- It is aimed at promoting mass participation and sporting excellence.
- Khelo India Games have been declared an **‘Event of National Importance’** in **2020** under the **Sports Broadcasting Signals Act, 2007.**