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Live-streaming the Supreme Court's Proceedings

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The Supreme Court has stated that it is ready to go live on camera while the government has mooted a separate TV channel for live-streaming of court proceedings.

- The court said a live stream is only an extension of the 'open court' system, where the public can walk in and watch court proceedings. However, with court proceedings beamed live on air, litigants, law students and the public can watch them as they happen and in their own comfort.
- The government has proposed a dedicated channel like the Rajya Sabha TV and the Lok Sabha TV for the Supreme Court.

Benefits

- A live stream **would help litigants follow the proceedings in their case** and also **assess their lawyers' performance**. People from far-flung States such as Tamil Nadu and Kerala do not have to travel all the way to the national capital for a day's hearing.
- It would keep a **check on lawyers' conduct** inside the courtrooms. With the entire country watching them, there would be fewer interruptions, raised voices and adjournments from the lawyers.
- Live-streaming will **bring transparency and access to justice**.

Concerns

- Live-streaming cases can involve national security concerns and can amount to a violation of the fundamental right to privacy in matrimonial disputes and rape cases.
- Concerns have also been raised about the commercial aspect of the whole issue. The agreements with broadcasters should be on a non-commercial basis. No one should profit from the arrangement.
- The unauthorised reproduction of the live streaming videos is another cause for concern as its regulation will be very difficult at the government's end.

Way Forward

Citizens have the right to information and technology exists to make matters of constitutional and national importance available for the public viewership. Moreover, if a live stream of the top court's proceedings is not possible, alternatively video recording of the proceedings should be allowed.