



Declaration for the Future of the Internet

For Prelims: Internet, Declaration for the Future of the Internet, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, human rights

For Mains: Internet Freedom in India and related issues

Why in News?

Recently, the **United States and 60 other partner countries signed a political declaration called the "Declaration for the Future of the Internet"**.

- **India, China and Russia** are among the large nations that are **not part of this declaration**.
- **India also did not sign the [Budapest Convention on Cybercrime](#), 2001.**

What is the Declaration for the Future of the Internet?

- **About:**
 - In an era of "state-sponsored or condoned malicious behavior," the Declaration aims to foster "an interconnected communications system for all humanity."
 - The Declaration is an **inclusive initiative**, and the partners under the declaration will continue to reach other governments to involve them in the Declaration.
 - All partners **will reach out to the private sector, international organisations, the technical community, academia, and civil society, and other relevant stakeholders worldwide to work in partnership to achieve the vision of an open, free, global, interoperable, reliable and secure Internet.**
 - The Declaration and its guiding principles are **not legally binding**.
 - It should be **used as a reference point for public policy makers**, as well as citizens, businesses, and [Civil Society Organisations](#).
- **Aim:**
 - **The Internet must reinforce core democratic principles, fundamental freedoms and [human rights](#)** as reflected in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#).
 - **Internet should operate as a single, decentralised network of networks**, where digital technologies are used in a trustworthy way, avoiding unfair discrimination between individuals and allowing for contestability of online platforms, and for fair competition among businesses.
 - The aim is to **protect human rights, promote a single global internet**, promote trust and inclusivity, and protect a multistakeholder approach to internet development.

What are the Concerns Raised?

- There has been a recent rise in **repression of Internet freedoms by some authoritarian governments**, the use of digital tools to violate human rights, the growing impact of [cyberattacks](#), the spread of illegal content and disinformation and the excessive concentration of economic power.

- The world is witnessing a **global trend of rising digital authoritarianism**, with countries such as Russia and China have acted to repress freedom of expression, censor independent news sites, interfere with elections, promote disinformation, and deny their citizens other human rights.

What is the State of Internet Freedom in India?

▪ About:

- A total of **182 internet crackdowns** were reported globally in 2021.
 - Out of 106 shutdowns in India, 85 were reported in Jammu and Kashmir.
- India was one of 18 countries that blocked mobile internet during protests.
- The number of countries that shut down the internet in 2021 has increased to 34 from 29 in 2020.

▪ Related Court Judgements:

- In **Anuradha Bhasin versus the Union of India, 2020**, the Supreme Court ruled that an undefined restriction of internet services would be illegal and that orders for internet shutdown must satisfy the tests of necessity and proportionality.
- In **Faheema Shirin versus the State of Kerala, 2019**, the Kerala High Court declared the right to Internet access as a fundamental right forming a part of the Right to Privacy and the Right to Education under Article 21 of the Constitution.

[Source: BL](#)

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