



CURBING FAKE NEWS IN INDIA

Standing Committee on Communications and IT has proposed measures to curb the spread of fake news and misinformation, citing the potential harm to public order and democracy.

Recommendations

- ⌘ **Fact-checking Mechanisms:** Mandatory fact-checking mechanism and internal ombudsman to oversee editorial content.
- ⌘ **Penal Provisions:** Amend laws to increase fines and hold media accountable for misinformation.
- ⌘ **Definition of Fake News:** Support clear definition and regulation of fake news without infringing on freedom of speech or individual rights.
- ⌘ **Strengthening the Press Council:** Create a complaint portal and independent monitoring body.
- ⌘ **Regulation of AI-generated Content:** Licensing for AI content creators and mandatory labeling of AI-generated material.

Challenges in Regulating Fake News	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Defining Fake News: No universally accepted definition, making it hard to distinguish from opinions or satire.● Freedom of Speech: Excessive regulation risks curbing free speech under Article 19, balancing regulation with freedoms is complex.● Rapid Spread on Digital Platforms: Social media allows fake news to go viral before fact-checking; platforms based outside India complicate enforcement and accountability.● Technological Complexity: AI-generated content, deepfakes, and bots create hard-to-detect misinformation, outpacing laws.● Low Digital Literacy: Many people lack the skills to critically evaluate online information, making them vulnerable to misinformation.● Risk of Government Overreach: Heavy regulation may be seen as censorship, undermining trust in authorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Legal & Regulatory Frameworks: Clearly distinguish fake news from opinions or satire, using models like Singapore's laws & EU's self-regulatory code.● Institutionalize Fact-Checking: Certify fact-checking organizations with regular audits, following models like European Fact-Checking Standards Network.● Platform Accountability & Regulation: Ensure platform transparency in algorithms and content removal, as seen in EU Digital Services Act, and label AI-generated content.● Leverage Technology: Use AI tools with human oversight; integrate BHASHINI for linguistic diversity & context-specific misinformation.● Promote Public Awareness: Integrate digital literacy into school curricula and use local influencers and NGOs for outreach.● Inter-Ministerial Coordination: Align MeitY, MIB, MHA & Consumer Affairs for unified action & ensure content removal or penalties are reviewed to prevent misuse.

Initiatives to Prevent Spread of Fake News

- ✍ **PCI:** Provides guidelines for ethical journalism.
- ✍ **IT Act, 2000:** Empowers govt. to regulate intermediaries & online content.
 - ◆ Under IT Rules, 2021, intermediaries must not host, publish, or share unlawful content.
- ✍ **PIB Fact-Check Unit:** Counters government-related misinformation.
- ✍ **Ministry of Information & Broadcasting Advisory (2024):** Prohibits promotion of online betting & surrogate ads targeting Indian users.
- ✍ **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)**
- ✍ **National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal**

US SANCTIONS ON CHABAHAR PORT

Trump administration revoked the **sanctions waiver for Chabahar Port**, impacting India's access to Afghanistan and Central Asia and weakening its strategic position in the region.

- ⌘ The waiver, **granted in 2018 under Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act**, supported India's plan to develop Chabahar as a gateway to these regions.

Implications for India

- ⌘ **Strategic Implications:** Revocation limits India's regional leverage, affecting its counterbalance to Gwadar Port & integration into INSTC, and its influence in Afghanistan and Central Asia.
- ⌘ **Economic and Trade Implications:** Disruption of exports to Iran & Afghanistan, with risks to USD 120 Mn investments and USD 250 Mn commitments.
 - ❖ Revocation coincides with **India-US trade talks & 50% duties** on labor-intensive goods, pressuring India's **export strategy**.
- ⌘ **Operational and Legal Risks:** Exposure to US sanctions for companies like Indian Ports Global Limited (IPGL), potentially delaying or halting Chabahar projects.
- ⌘ **Geopolitical Implications:** Strains India-US relations and hinders India's plan to use Chabahar as a key trade and humanitarian gateway.

Chabahar Port

- ⌘ **About:** It is a **deep-water port** in **Sistan-Baluchistan, Iran**, on the **Makran coast** near the **Gulf of Oman**, outside the **Strait of Hormuz**.
 - ❖ Iran's only **deep-sea port** with **direct open-ocean access**, providing **India** secure & direct access for **large cargo ships**.
 - ❖ Two main terminals—**Shahid Beheshti** & **Shahid Kalantari**—with India actively involved in developing the **Shahid Beheshti Terminal**.
- ⌘ **Development & Management:** 2016 **Chabahar Agreement (India, Iran & Afghanistan)** established the International Transport and Transit Corridor; IPGL took over port operations in Dec 2018.
- ⌘ **Operational Performance:** Chabahar Port has **trans-shipped 2.5 Mn tonnes of wheat, 2,000 tonnes of pulses to Afghanistan**, and supported humanitarian aid, including locust control in Iran & Covid-19 relief.



Significance of Chabahar Port for India

- ⌘ **Alternative Trade Route:** Provides India access to Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan, and links to Iran & INSTC via shorter routes from Kandla Port.
- ⌘ **Ensuring Connectivity:** Reduces dependence on disrupted maritime routes, offering an **alternative to the Strait of Hormuz**.
- ⌘ **Economic Benefits:** Strengthens trade with Central Asia and Afghanistan, enhancing access to Russia, Europe, Iran, and India's markets, **cutting trade costs by 30% and transit time by 40%**.
- ⌘ **Humanitarian Assistance:** Key entry point for humanitarian aid and reconstruction in Afghanistan.
- ⌘ **Strategic Influence:** Enhances India's presence in the Indian Ocean, **counters China's Gwadar Port and BRI**, and boosts anti-piracy capabilities.

INDIA ADDS 7 NATURAL SITES TO UNESCO TENTATIVE LIST

India has added **7 natural sites** to **UNESCO's Tentative List of WHS**, bringing its total to **69 (49 cultural, 17 natural & 3 mixed properties)**.

As of Sept 2025, **India has 44 WHS**, with the **Maratha Military Landscapes** being inscribed as the **44th site**.

Newly Added Sites	Description
Deccan Traps, Maharashtra	Home to preserved lava flows, part of Deccan Traps, within Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary (UNESCO WHS).
Geological Heritage of St. Mary's Island, Karnataka	Known for rare columnar basaltic rock formations dating back to Late Cretaceous period (101 to 66 million years ago).
Meghalayan Age Caves, Meghalaya	Cave systems, including Mawmluh Cave , serving as global reference for Meghalayan Age in Holocene Epoch.
Naga Hill Ophiolite, Nagaland	Rare exposure to ophiolite rocks , representing oceanic crust uplifted onto continental plates.
Erra Matti Dibbalu (Red Sand Hills), Andhra Pradesh	Red sand formations near Visakhapatnam, showcasing paleo-climatic & coastal geomorphological features; declared GeoHeritage Monument by GSI in 2016.
Natural Heritage of Tirumala Hills, Andhra Pradesh	Features Eparchaeon Unconformity & Silathoranam (Natural Arch), representing 1.5 Bn+ years of Earth's history .
Varkala Cliffs, Kerala	Cliffs exposing the Warkalli Formation of the Mio-Pliocene age with natural springs and erosional landforms.

NE-SPARKS

Union Minister of Development of North Eastern Region interacted with school students from **NER** who participated in **North East Students' Programme for Awareness, Reach, and Knowledge on Space (NE-SPARKS)**.

- ⌘ A flagship initiative to promote **STEM** from **NER**.
- ⌘ Supported by **Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER)** in collaboration with **8 North Eastern States, North Eastern Space Applications Centre (NESAC)-ISRO**.
- ⌘ Funded by the **MDoNER and state Govt.** (60:40 ratio); **NESAC is the nodal agency**.
- ⌘ Aims to facilitate **exposure visits** for **800 meritorious science students** (100 from each **NE state**) to **premier ISRO centres**.

BONNARD STANDARD

SC reaffirmed the Bonnard standard, **emphasizing strict conditions for granting pre-trial injunctions in defamation cases** involving journalists to protect freedom of speech and public interest.

Bonnard Standard

- ⌘ **About:** Established in **Bonnard vs Perryman (1891, UK)**; states that an injunction can only be granted if the court is satisfied the defendant cannot justify the defamation claim, not just based on suspicion.
 - ❖ Injunction is a **court order that requires someone to do or stop doing a specific action**.
- ⌘ **2024 Bloomberg Case:** SC upheld this principle/standard, striking down an ex parte injunction against Bloomberg, emphasizing free speech & public debate.
- ⌘ **Violation in Adani Case:** Delhi trial court's order barring journalists from publishing defamatory content violated this standard by **issuing an ex parte injunction without hearing defenses** and acting as prior restraint on publication, violating Article 19(1)(a).
- ⌘ **Legal Framework: Article 19(2)** allows reasonable restrictions on free speech, but ex parte injunctions without trial are criticized for infringing on freedom of speech & public interest.