

Social media regulation

- The government has been working towards increasing the compliance burden on Internet intermediaries, in particular in the IT Rules 2021 and its later amendments.
- These Rules themselves had put the onus on social media intermediaries to arbitrate on content on their platforms with regulations that were weighted in favor of the government of the day and had invited legal appeals as digital news media platforms among others questioned the constitutionality of the Rules.



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- Meanwhile, an amendment in October 2022 provided for government- appointed committees that will adjudicate on an individual user’s appeals against moderation decisions of these intermediaries.
- In January 2023, the IT Ministry proposed an amendment on the takedown of social media/news content that has been marked as “fake” or “false” by the Press Information Bureau or any other government agency.



- Regulation of hate speech and disinformation on the Internet is a must and intermediaries, including digital news media and social media platforms, have an accountable role to play.
- The IT Rules’ specifications on giving users prior notice before removing content or disabling access, and for intermediaries to come up with

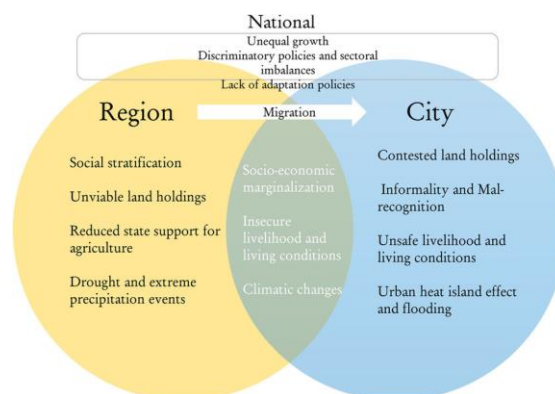
periodic compliance reports are well taken.



- While modern regulations to tackle issues related to misinformation, problematic content, and the side effects of the new form of the Internet are a must, they should still retain the first principles of safe harbor without whittling down their core.
- There is a concern on regulating or taking down critical opinion or dissent in social media/news platforms and also regulating hate speech or disinformation, which in many cases has originated from representatives of the state.
- Safe harbor provisions, in particular Section 230 of the U.S. Communications Decency Act, 1996, that explicitly provided immunity to online services with respect to user-generated content had gone a long way in catalysing the Net's development.

THE HINDU

Rural-Urban Continuum



- Urban-rural continuum- Identification of such areas would help understand urban-rural interconnections, which is important for making policy decisions across development sectors and for addressing issues related to environmental and natural resources management.

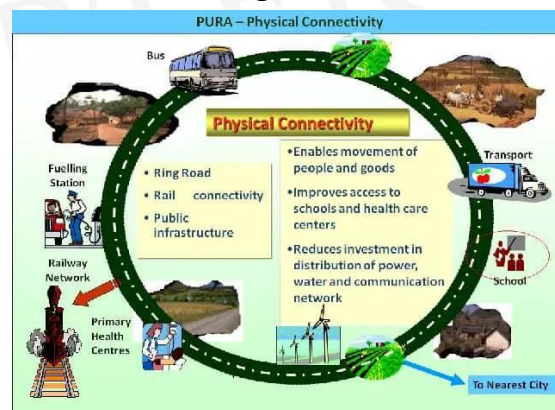
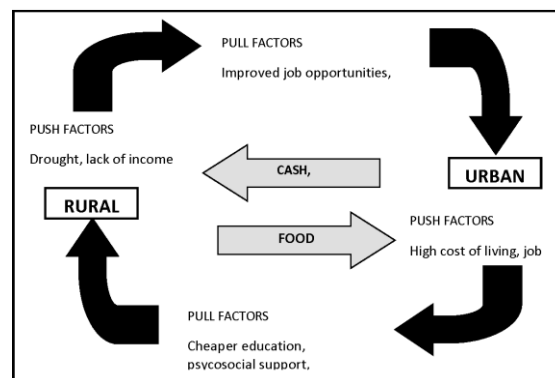


Figure 1-1: Push and Pull Factors in Rural Urban Linkages



- Geographical factors supported by affirmative public policy promoting

distributive justice and decentralization have increased rural- urban linkages and reduced rural- urban differences in major parts of Kerala.



- The extension of transport and communication systems, improved access to energy, increased affordability private and public transport as well as penetration of economic and other networks into remote areas promote a rural urban continuum.
- The rural- urban continuum areas also witness changing ecosystems. Agriculturally productive lands are being given for other uses.
- Food security zones are being reconfigured.
- Areas for pollutant filtering are declining. There is an increase in waste dump, enhanced disaster risk, and elevated vulnerability.
- The access of local people to water, food, fuel, fodder and fibre from ecosystems is reducing.

ESG Regulations

- Belief that companies have a distinct responsibility as corporate citizens, the main driver is the realization that environmental, social, and governance (“ESG”) considerations need to be included by investors in a company’s risk profile in order to accurately assess the enterprise.
- The evolution of ESG laws and regulations is, however, still at a nascent stage in India,

How ESG differs from CSR?

- India has a robust corporate social responsibility (CSR) policy that mandates that corporations engage in initiatives that contribute to the welfare of society. This mandate was codified into law with the passage of the 2014 and 2021 amendments to the Companies Act of 2013.



- ESG regulations, on the other hand, differ in process and impact.
- The U.K. Modern Slavery Act, for example, requires companies with business in the U.K. and with annual sales of more than £36 million to publish the efforts they have taken to identify and analyze the risks of human trafficking, child labor, and debt bondage in their supply chain; establish internal accountability procedures; evaluate supplier compliance and to train supply chain managers regarding these issues.

Why is ESG relevant in India?

- India has long had a number of laws and bodies regarding environmental, social, and governance issues, including the Environment Protection Act of 1986, quasi-judicial organizations such as the National Green Tribunal, and a range of labor codes and laws governing employee engagement and corporate governance practices. The penalty for violations can be substantial.
- legislation regarding ESG is likely, given the increased emphasis by the Indian government on ESG issues, which can be seen in India's more active role in global climate forums as well as in specific policy developments, such as the announcement in January by the

Reserve Bank of India that it would be auctioning ₹80 billion (\$981 million) in green bonds.

- In particular, compliance by Indian companies with the ESG regulations of the U.S., the U.K., the European Union, and elsewhere will be critical if India is to take full advantage of the growing decoupling from China and play a more prominent role in global supply chains and the global marketplace overall.

THE HINDU

Rajasthan right to Health bill

- The Bill provides rights to patients and healthcare providers, places the obligation on the government to protect these legal rights, and mandates the setting up of grievance redressal mechanisms. Rajasthan residents will be entitled to free check-ups, drugs, diagnostics, emergency transport, and care at all public health institutes, along with affordable surgeries.
- The Bill frames medical services as a public service rather than a vehicle for making money.
- If enacted, the Act will have a recurring annual expenditure of ₹14.5 crores.
- Clause 3 of the Bill lays down 20 rights a State resident will be

entitled to including the right to informed consent, to seek information (in the form of medical records and documents) regarding diagnosis and treatment, and to receive treatment without discrimination based on caste, class, age, gender, etc.

- Clause 4 of the Bill shifts the burden of responsibility in providing adequate medical services to the government.
- The government is “obligated” to provide funds, set up institutions, and constitute grievance redressal systems.
- Clause 4 mandates that the government develop a Human Resource Policy for health ensuring equitable distribution of doctors, nurses, and healthcare workers at all levels of the system across regions.



Does the Constitution guarantee a right to health?

- The Indian Constitution does not explicitly talk about a right to health.

- A “right to health”, in theory, is derived from the right to life and liberty as guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- Previously, courts have highlighted the State’s obligation to protect and promote the health of citizens, pointing to Constitutional provisions such as Article 38 (promoting the welfare of people) and Article 47 (which directs the government to meet the nutrition and health requirements of the population).

THE HINDU

Agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia

- The Saudi- Iran reconciliation in a China-brokered agreement reflects the new reality in West Asia where old rivals are warming up to each other and Beijing is increasingly willing to play a bigger role at a time when the U.S., the region’s traditional great power, is preoccupied with challenges elsewhere.
- The enmity between Iran, a Shia-majority theocracy, and Saudi Arabia, a Sunni-majority absolute monarchy, has been one of the dominant drivers of conflicts in the region

- Iran has agreed to prevent attacks against Saudi Arabia, including those from the Houthi-controlled parts of Yemen, and both countries would restore full diplomatic relations, which were severed in 2016.
- In recent years, West Asia has seen similar realignments. In 2020, the UAE was among the first Arab countries to normalize ties with Israel in a quarter century.
- The following years saw the Arab world and Israel, faced with the common Iran challenge, deepening their cooperation, despite Israel's occupation of Palestine territory.
- As the U.S. has deprioritized West Asia it is now heavily focused on Ukraine and countering China's Indo-Pacific influence its allies in West Asia have started looking out for solutions for what they see as America's diminishing security guarantees
- The agreement also marks China's arrival in West Asia as a power broker.
- China has been involved in multilateral peace talks such as the 2015 Iran nuclear deal (from which the U.S. unilaterally withdrew in 2018), but this is the first time Beijing is using its leverage directly to bring conflicting parties to reconciliation.
- Stability in West Asia, a major energy source, is essential for China, which is the world's largest oil importer.
- And unlike the U.S., which has hostile ties with Iran, Beijing enjoys good ties with Tehran and Riyadh, as a leading oil buyer and trading partner, respectively.
- This has put China in a unique position to bring two of the region's most significant powers closer.
- Saudi Arabia, which is undergoing rapid changes, wants peace in its neighborhood, while Iran, which is under U.S.-imposed sanctions, wants more diplomatic and economic openings. If the détente holds, it will have far-reaching implications on regional geopolitics, from peace in Yemen to stability in Lebanon.

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