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VLC media player banned in India

- The VideoLAN Client (VLC) media player website has been banned in India.
- Whereas VLC says that according to its data its website is banned in India since February 2022.

VLC and the restrictions imposed on it:

VLC:

- VLC gained popularity in India in the late 90s when advances in information technology led to the entry of personal computers into India.
- In addition to being free and open source, VLC easily integrates with other platforms and streaming services and supports all file formats without the need for additional codecs.

Restrictions on VLC:

- The VLC website has been banned, yet the VLC app is available for download on the Google and Apple stores.

- Several Right to Information (RTI) applications have been filed by civil society organizations with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) regarding the ban on the VLC website.
- However, in response to these applications, the Ministry has said that "no information is available".
- When the website was accessed earlier, the message "The website has been blocked as per the order of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology under the Information Technology Act, 2000" was displayed.

Reason for the ban:

Chinese intervention:

- A report by cyber security firm, Symantec, in April 2022 suggested that a hacker group allegedly backed by China was using VLC media player to activate Cicada malware.

Secure Server:

- The VLC website has been banned; Its app, available for download as the App Store's servers where mobile apps are hosted, is considered safer than the servers where desktop versions are hosted.

When can the government ban online content for the public?

There are two routes through which content can be blocked online:

Executive:

Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000:

- Section 69A grants any arbitrator to the Government the sovereignty and integrity of India, the defense of India, the security of the State, "Access by the public" any information generated, transmitted, received, stored or hosted in any computer resource in the interest of friendly relations or public order with foreign States or to prevent the commission of any cognizable offence for blocking".
- Section 69A derives its power from Article 19(2) of the Constitution which allows the government to impose reasonable restrictions on the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression.

Judiciary:

- Courts in India have the power to direct the arbitrators to make the content unavailable in India in order to provide effective remedy to the victim/plaintiff.

- For example, courts can order internet service providers to block websites that provide access to pirated content and infringe on a plaintiff's copyright.

What is the process to block content online?

- The Information Technology (Procedure and Security for Blocking Access to Information by the Public) Rules, 2009 (IT Rules, 2009), framed under section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, provided detailed procedure for blocking of content.
- Only the Central Government can exercise the power to direct intermediaries to block access to online content and not the State Government.

Process:

- The Central or State agencies appoint a "Nodal Officer" who will forward the orders of the Central Government to the "Designated Officer".

The designated officer as part of a committee scrutinizes the request of the nodal officer.

- The committee includes representatives from the Ministries of Law and Justice, Information and Broadcasting, Home Affairs and CERT-IN.
- A notice is given to the creator/host of the content under consideration for clarification and submission of reply.
- The committee then recommends whether the request of the nodal officer should be accepted or not.
- If this recommendation is approved by the MEITY, the Designated Officer may instruct the arbitrator to remove the content.

Swadeep Kumar

Is moral policing the newest deterrent to female labour force participation?

- Form and extent of work, political participation, level of education, health status, representation in decision-making bodies, access to property are some of the relevant indicators, which reveal the status of individual members in society. However, not all members of society, especially women, have equal access to the factors that constitute these indicators of status.
- Patriarchal norms limit or restrict Indian women's education and employment options, ranging from education options to entry into the workforce and the nature of work.
- In this scenario, it would be relevant to consider the position of women holding almost half of the country's population and citizenship, where they currently stand in the struggle for freedom, dignity, equality and representation.

What does the constitution say about women empowerment?
- The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution.
- The constitution not only guarantees equality to women, but also empowers the state to take measures of positive discrimination in favor of women so as to reduce their cumulative socio-economic and political disadvantage.
- Women have the fundamental right not to be discriminated on the basis of sex (Article 15) and equal protection before the law (Article 14).
- It is a fundamental duty for every citizen in the constitution to renounce the degrading practices prevalent against the dignity of women.

What are the areas in India where women have performed exceptionally well?

- Over the years women have faced the injustice and prejudice of the society. But today with the changing times, she has made a mark for herself, she has broken the shackles of gender stereotypes and stands strong for the achievement of her dreams and goals.

For example we can look at some women and their recent achievements:

Social worker:

- **Sindhutai Sapkal** (Padma Shri 2021)- Raising orphans

Environmentalist:

- **Tulsi Gowda** (Padma Shri 2021)- She is called 'Encyclopaedia of Forest'

Defense Sector:

- **Avani Chaturvedi –** the first Indian woman to fly a fighter aircraft (MiG-21 Bison) solo

Sports area:

- **Mary Kom-** the first woman in the country to win a medal in boxing in the Olympics.
- **PV Sindhu-** First Indian woman to win two Olympic medals (Bronze – Tokyo 2020) and Silver (Rio 2016).
- **Indian Women's Cricket Team-** Finalist (Silver Medal), Commonwealth Games 2022

In International Organization:

- **Gita Gopinath-** the first woman chief economist at the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Space technology:

- **Tessy Thomas-** Revered as 'Missile Woman of India' (affiliated with Agni-V missile project)

Education field:

- **Shakuntala Devi-** Guinness World Record for the fastest human computation.
- **Shanan Dhaka-** AIR 1 in National Defense Academy Entrance Examination (First Women's Batch of NDA)
- Top 3 All India Ranks secured by female candidates in UPSC Civil Services Examination 2021.

Current Areas of Concern for Women in India

Difference in Male Female Literacy Rate:

- Despite the government's efforts to ensure equality of education opportunity for both men and women in our society, the literacy rate of women in India, especially in rural areas, is still worse.
- Schools in rural India are remotely located and in the absence of strong local law and order, it is unsafe for girls to travel long distances for schooling.
- Traditional practices such as female feticide, dowry and child marriage have also contributed to the problem where many families find it economically impractical to educate the girl child.

Stereotypes regarding gender roles:

- Still a large section of Indian society believes that it is the role of men to carry out financial responsibilities and work outside.
- Stereotypes regarding gender roles have generally led to prejudice and discrimination against women.
- For example, women are perceived as less reliable as workers/workers because of their child-rearing work.

Differences in the Socialization Process:

- In many parts of India, especially in rural areas, the norms of socialization for men and women still differ.
- Women are expected to be soft spoken, calm and quiet. They are expected to walk, talk, sit and behave in certain ways. In comparison, a man can display any behavior he wants.

Representation of Women in Legislature:

- The representation of women in various legislative bodies across India has been low.
- According to a report by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations-Women, India was ranked 148th among 193 countries in terms of the number of elected women representatives in Parliament?

Security concerns:

- Despite continuous efforts in the field of security in India, women have to face various situations like feticide, domestic violence, rape, and trafficking, forced prostitution, honor killing, sexual harassment at workplace.

'Period Poverty':

- Period Poverty is a matter of serious concern in many countries of the world, especially India. Period poverty refers to a lack of access to hygiene products, menstrual education, and hygiene and sanitation facilities needed to properly manage menstruation.
- A study conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the year 2011 revealed that only 13% of girl children in India were aware of it before going through the first menstruation.

'Glass Ceiling':

- Women not only in India but across the globe face a social barrier that prevents them from getting promoted to the top jobs in the management sector.

Major government schemes related to women empowerment

- Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Scheme
- Ujjwala Yojana
- Swadhar Greh
- Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana
- Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra Yojana
- One Stop Center

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