# Blocking Mobile Apps

## Why in news?

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The Department of Telecom (DoT) is evaluating the possibility of blocking some mobile applications during emergencies.

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## What is DoT's move?

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- The DoT has written to telecom service providers (TSPs) and internet service providers (ISPs).
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- It noted that issues had been raised by Ministry of Electronics and IT, and Law Enforcement Agencies for blocking.
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- TSPs/ISPs were thus asked to explore possible ways to block mobile applications.
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- This would be as per the provisions of the IT Act, 2000.
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- It includes Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram and such other mobile applications.
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## What is the need?

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- The reasons are, reportedly, to stop child abuse/pornography and to curb the spread of fake news.
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- It comes as a move to deal with emergencies, especially when national security and public order are under threat.
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- The growing incidence of lynchings across the country invariably based on some fake news is the immediate reason.
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- The move aims at blocking the applications in an emergency, rather than blocking access to the Internet as a whole.
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- However, MeitY has informed DoT that blocking such apps during emergency situations was difficult.
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- This is because they work through multiple IP addresses and on different protocols, and hence the request for other possible ways.
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## What are the concerns?

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- **Cause** - Violence triggered by spread of fake news is not purely a law and order issue.
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- It is indicative of the social malaise of intolerance and prejudice in the society.
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- So using blunt instruments of state censorship such as blocking applications would miss the real problem.
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- **Rights** - Any such ban would violate the fundamental right of free speech.
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- It would further dent India’s image as a modern society that values and protects democratic principles.
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- It would, in fact, penalise majority of the users and withhold services for most genuine consumers.
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- Also, it would ignore the efforts of the industry to self-regulate and make such social media platforms less prone to being misused.
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- **Loss** - According to estimates, internet shutdowns cost the Indian economy over $3 billion between 2012 and 2017.
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- Some of the recent examples are the bans in Jammu & Kashmir and Rajasthan.
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- The better option thus would be for the government to work with the companies concerned instead of banning the apps.
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**Source: Business Standard**

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