Ill Effects of Online Gaming

Why in news?

Online gaming in India has the potential to be a multi-billion-dollar industry, but it comes with negative consequences such as addiction, health problems etc.

Status of Online Gaming in India

- The online gaming industry is one of the major sunrise sectors of India.
- **Revenue** - The revenue of the Indian mobile gaming industry is estimated to reach *5 billion dollar in 2025.*
- **Growth rate** - The Indian gaming industry is likely to grow at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 28-30% in 2025.
- **Online gamers** - It is expected that the number of gamers in India will increase from 42 crore in 2022 to 50 crore by 2025.
    - *71% of urban population* are engaged in casual or professional games.
- **Industry** - As per a latest study by Statista and Kepios, India has even produced *three major unicorns in the online gaming industry* - DreamSports, Games 24x7 and MPL.

What are the causes of online gaming?

> *As per Statista, India's internet penetration is around 48.7%.*

- **Internet penetration-** It enhanced the network connectivity and easy access to online games.
- **Young consumer base-** Youngsters now-a-days feel socially isolated and they use computer as a means to manage their mood.
- **Lifestyle changes -** Intense lockdown during pandemic forced people to spend more time in social media and online game.
- **Family setup-** Rising trend of nuclear families and less interaction with the family members, use online game to free from boredom.
- **Escapism factor-** Youngsters indulge in online games, find it fascinating and as an escapism factor away from school work and education.

What are the consequences of online gaming?

As per the State of India Gaming Report 2022, the average Indian gamer spends around 40 minutes a day playing casual games, and in FY22 the average time spent on mobile games was 8.5 hours per week.

- **Passivity phenomena**- Behaviour is controlled by external factors and if they are stopped from playing online games, they become aggressive.
- **Internet gaming disorder-** As per the data published in the Indian Journal of Community Medicine and Public Health 2020, about 3.5% Indian adolescents suffer from Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD).

Emotional symptoms	Physical symptoms
• Restlessness • Irritability • Time spent more on gaming • Social Isolation to play games	• Fatigue and Migraine • Carpel tunnel syndrome- Pain in finger and hands.

- **Poor personal hygiene-** Focusing fully in online game leads to lack of proper personal hygiene.
- **Poor academic performance**- There will be lack of concentration which affects the academic performance of the students.
- **Debt trap**- Online gaming lure the participants with monetary rewards which may result in debt trap and finally lead to suicide.

In 2019, the World Health Organization officially voted to include 'gaming disorder' as a behavioural addiction under the International Classification of Diseases.

What are the steps taken to reduce ill effects of online gaming?

Initiatives of Central Government

- **GST on online gambling -** The government plans to increase GST to 28% for online gambling to check on addiction.
- **Better regulation-** Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (nodal ministry related to online gaming) notified the amendments to IT Rules 2021 to provide more clarity and better regulation on the online gaming sector.

Initiatives of State Government

- **Digital de-addiction centres**- Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Telangana have established digital de-addiction centres.
- **Meghalaya-** *Meghalaya Regulating of Gaming Ordinance 2021* seeks to regulate

games of skill and games of chance within the state by envisaging a licensing regime for all forms of gaming.

- **Kerala-** In 2021, the Kerala state government issued a notification making online rummy illegal when played for stakes.
- **Tamilnadu**- Based on the recommendation of *K. Chandru committee*, Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Online Gambling and Regulation of Online Games Ordinance, 2022, was passed.
- It proposes to ban online gambling and online games of chance and to regulate other online games.

Online gaming falls under ***State list in the 7th Schedule***

What lies ahead?

- **De-addiction infrastructure**- There is a need to finance the infrastructural gap and ramp up de-addiction infrastructure to prevent the youth from harmful effects of gaming.
- **Awareness-** There must be a massive public education programme in both rural and urban areas.
- **Responsibility of gaming companies-** This can be done in lines with the successful Extended Producer Responsibility in eradicating plastic from waste.
- **Record maintenance**- There is a need to maintain official record of the number of addicted people in various districts/States of India.
- **Multipronged approach-** Gaming companies, NGOs, Parents and teachers must help adolescents set healthy recreational limits and channelise the potential of India's youth in the right direction.

References

1. Business Line- Ill effects of gaming
2. WHO- Addictive Behaviour

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