Inflammatory Journalism

Why in news?

Supreme Court has questioned the central government on its measures to curb the communally slanted television coverage.

What is the case about?

- There was communal colour (hate against Muslims) given by some TV channels to the incident of large clusters of COVID-19 infections among those who attended a **Tablighi Jamaat** event in New Delhi.
- So the Supreme Court's is keen to know what action has the government taken under the **Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act** against offending broadcasters.
- The Court also warned that if the government fails to explain its mechanism to deal with the problem, it would create one on its own.

What is the stand of Central government?

- It stated that media coverage struck a balanced and neutral perspective.
- It is committed to media freedom.

What Supreme Court's rationale?

- SC is unconvinced with the present mechanism of self-regulation under the **National Broadcasting Standards Authority.**
- The government is empowered under the Act to prohibit transmission of programmes that violate the **programme or advertising codes (Section 19)** and even an entire channel, in public interest (Section 20).
- Though the violations of norms are common but there is a class of violation of norms in broadcasting that needs to be curbed.
- In the past, channels have been asked by the I&B Ministry to take some programmes off the air.
- In the **Sudarshan News case**, which began a series that propagated hate against Muslims.
- The government has merely administered a 'caution' to the channel and asked it to moderate the content of future episodes and avoid breaching the Programme Code.
- Later the court ordered the suspension of further episodes & it distinguished

between free speech and hate speech.

What are the key takeaways?

- The court is involving in the process of judicial overreach in recent times.
- Its intention to create a mechanism on its own to deal with will set a wrong precedence.

Source: The Hindu

