Undermining Media Freedom in Tamil Nadu

What is the issue?

\n\n

In recent times Tamil Nadu government is acting against the right to free expression by misusing the control of cable networks.

\n\n

What recent incident proves draconian administration in TN?

\n\n

\n
- In recent times the state government’s attempt to stifle free speech have taken a new and even more dangerous turn.
\n
- The proximate cause for this new controversy was a ruckus during the recording of a discussion show on a private news channel on recent protests in the state such as those against the Sterlite plant in Tuticorin.
\n
- The discussion, being filmed at a private college in Coimbatore, was disrupted apparently by right-wing cadre following remarks by two of the participants on the programme.
\n
- In response, the police did not book the protestors but instead filed charges against the participants and the news channel even before the programme had been broadcast.
\n

\n\n

How state government misuses state owned cable network?

\n\n

\n
- Arasu Cable is a state-run enterprise revived with injections of government money.
\n
- Using subsidised rates Arasu Cable expanded quickly to a majority of

households.
\n
- Now it provides the government with the power essentially to cut off access to news channels it deems problematic to its preferred political narrative.
\n
- Earlier this month, the Arasu management directed its officials to stop the transmission of all 25 channels belonging to the opposition parties.
\n
- Other channels have also been arbitrarily taken off air for hours or days, allegedly after they broadcast programmes that displeased the government.
\n
- This is a severe threat to media freedom, free speech, and the democratic structure itself.
\n

\n\n

What is the way forward?

\n\n

\n
- The Editors Guild of India has pointed out that recommendations of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of India disallow a government from owning a television channel distribution company, Such regulations should be implemented.
\n
- To retain its regulatory status, Arasu Cable should be privatised, there should not be no economic or social welfare justification for public ownership of a cable TV distribution network.
\n
- Thus the regulator should step in quickly and firmly or this is a malaise that will soon spread from Tamil Nadu to other states.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: Business Standard

\n



SHANKAR
IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering