

## Draconian rules: On the impact of the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023

The new **amendment rules** on **intermediary** guidelines **amount to** censorship

With the **advent** of social media — the product of the **evolution** of the Internet into a **sphere** of communication that allows for relatively **unfettered** user-generated content — the **problem of misinformation has** taken a **grotesque** form. Express **measures** to **curb** misinformation, called “false news” and the **somewhat** inaccurate “fake news”, **are** a must. However, this raises the question whether the Union government or its **divisions** can be the **regulating** entity. In the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023, the Union government has added a provision of a fact-check unit to identify fake or false or **misleading** online content related to the government. Against such content identified by this unit, **intermediaries**, such as social media companies or net service providers, **will** have to take action or **risk** losing their “**safe harbour**” protections in Section 79 of the IT Act, which allows intermediaries to avoid **liabilities** for what third parties post on their websites. This is unacceptable and **problematic**. Also, Section 69A of the IT Act, 2000 **elucidates** the procedure to issue **takedown** orders, which these notified amendments could **bypass**. They also **run afoul of** *Shreya Singhal vs Union of India (2015)*, a **verdict** with clear guidelines for blocking content.

Without a right to appeal or the allowance for judicial **oversight**, the government cannot **sit on** judgment on whether any information is “fake” or “false” as the power to do so can be misused to prevent questioning or **scrutiny** by media organisations. Takedown notices have been issued by the government for critical opinion or **commentary** on social media platforms, with several having to **comply with** them and only a few such as Twitter **contesting** them in courts. By **threatening** to remove a platform’s **immunity** for content that is **flagged** by a government unit, it is clear that the Union government intends to create a “**chilling effect**” on the right to speech and expression on online platforms. To **keep the establishment** — which includes the **executive government** of the day — **on its toes** and to speak truth to power is a **non-negotiable** and **salient** role of journalism in a democracy. In India, freedom of the press is guaranteed through Article 19 of the Constitution, with media rights and public right to free speech **derived** from this Article. It **stands to reason** that any **relationship** between the government and the media **should** be one **kept at arm’s length**, with the media having sufficient freedom. The **government** being the **arbiter** on what **constitutes** “false” or “fake” news and having the power to **act upon** platforms for publishing these **will** amount to draconian censorship. **[Practice Exercise]**

- Red/blue coloring of words in the sentence indicates subject verb relationship; where ‘red’ denotes ‘subject’ and ‘blue’ denotes ‘verb’.

## Vocabulary

1. **Draconian** (adjective) – Harsh, oppressive, severe, strict, austere कड़ा, निर्दय
2. **Amendment** (noun) – Modification, revision, alteration, change, improvement, संशोधन
3. **Intermediary** (noun) – it refers to social media companies or internet service providers that enable and manage the exchange of information between users.
4. **Amount to** (phrasal verb) – Be equivalent to, add up to, be tantamount to, के बराबर होना
5. **Censorship** (noun) – Suppression, restriction, control, restraint, curtailment, नियंत्रण
6. **Advent** (noun) – Arrival, emergence, inception, appearance, onset, आगमन
7. **Evolution** (noun) – Development, growth, progression, maturation, unfolding, विकास
8. **Sphere** (noun) – Domain, area, field, realm, territory, क्षेत्र
9. **Unfettered** (adjective) – Unrestricted, unrestrained, unconstrained, unbridled, अनियंत्रित
10. **Misinformation** (noun) – Disinformation, false information, distortion, fabrication, गलत जानकारी
11. **Grotesque** (adjective) – Bizarre, distorted, deformed, unnatural, abnormal, विकृत
12. **Curb** (verb) – Restrain, control, limit, check, suppress, नियंत्रण करना
13. **Somewhat** (adverb) – Slightly, moderately, relatively, fairly, कुछ हद तक
14. **Division** (noun) – Department, section, branch, unit, विभाग
15. **Regulating** (adjective) – Controlling, managing, directing, overseeing, नियमित करनेवाला
16. **Misleading** (adjective) – Deceptive, false, inaccurate, incorrect, भ्रामक
17. **Risk** (verb) – Endanger, jeopardize, imperil, hazard, खतरे में डालना
18. **Safe harbor** (noun) – it refers to Section 79, which grants intermediaries immunity from liabilities for the content that third parties post on their platforms, as long as they adhere to certain guidelines and act upon unlawful content when notified.
19. **Liability** (noun) – Responsibility, obligation, accountability, दायित्व
20. **Problematic** (adjective) – Troublesome, difficult, contentious, debatable, समस्यात्मक

21. **Elucidate** (verb) – Clarify, explain, illuminate, expound, interpret, स्पष्ट करना
22. **Takedown** (noun) – Removal, deletion, erasure, suppression, withdrawal, हटाना
23. **Bypass** (verb) – Circumvent, avoid, evade, sidestep, skirt, टालना
24. **Run afoul of** (phrase) – Violate, infringe, breach, break, contradict, उल्लंघन करना
25. **Verdict** (noun) – Judgment, decision, ruling, resolution, determination, निर्णय
26. **Oversight** (noun) – Supervision, surveillance, inspection, monitoring, scrutiny, निगरानी
27. **Sit on** (phrasal verb) – Suppress, stifle, restrain, hold back, withhold, दबाना
28. **Scrutiny** (noun) – Examination, inspection, analysis, evaluation, investigation, छानबीन
29. **Commentary** (noun) – Explanation, interpretation, exposition, annotation, review, टिप्पणी
30. **Comply with** (phrasal verb) – Adhere to, abide by, conform to, follow, obey, पालन करना
31. **Contest** (verb) – Challenge, dispute, oppose, question, resist, विरोध करना
32. **Threaten** (verb) – Intimidate, menace, terrorize, alarm, warn, धमकी देना
33. **Immunity** (noun) – Protection, exemption, freedom, impunity, privilege, छूट
34. **Flag** (verb) – Signal, indicate, point out, draw attention to, identify, संकेत करना
35. **Chilling effect** (noun) – Deterrent, discouragement, intimidation, inhibition, constraint, डराने वाला प्रभाव
36. **Establishment** (noun) – Institution, organization, system, regime, order, संस्था
37. **Keep someone on one's toes** (phrase) – Alert, attentive, watchful, vigilant, on guard, सतर्क रखना
38. **Non-negotiable** (adjective) – Unalterable, inflexible, fixed, unchangeable, immutable, अचल
39. **Salient** (adjective) – Prominent, important, significant, noticeable, striking, प्रमुख
40. **Derive** (verb) – Obtain, gain, acquire, attain, secure, प्राप्त करना
41. **Stands to reason** (phrase) – Logical, rational, reasonable, sensible, coherent, युक्तिसंगत
42. **Keep at arm's length** (phrase) – Maintain distance, avoid closeness, be detached, be aloof, दूर रखना
43. **Arbiter** (noun) – Judge, adjudicator, referee, mediator, negotiator, मध्यस्थ

44. **Constitute** (verb) – Comprise, make up, form, compose, establish, बनाना

45. **Act upon** (phrasal verb) – take action according to or in the light of. पर कार्रवाई करना

## Practice Exercise

- What is the purpose of the fact-check unit added in the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023?** [Editorial page]
  - To generate more fake news
  - To protect social media companies from liabilities
  - To identify and report fake or false or misleading online content related to the government
  - To promote freedom of speech on social media platforms
- What is the consequence for intermediaries if they fail to take action against content identified by the fact-check unit?**
  - They will receive additional funding
  - They will be promoted by the government
  - They will lose their "safe harbour" protections under Section 79 of the IT Act
  - They will gain additional legal protections
- Which of the following statements best describes the impact of the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023 on the freedom of the press in India?**
  - The amendment rules ensure accurate and reliable information by establishing a fact-check unit.
  - The amendment rules strengthen the relationship between the government and the media, leading to better journalism.
  - The amendment rules make no significant impact on the freedom of the press in India.
  - The amendment rules empower the government to become the sole arbiter of "false" or "fake" news, potentially leading to draconian censorship.
- What is the tone of the passage regarding the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023?**
  - Supportive
  - Critical
  - Neutral
  - Enthusiastic
- According to the passage, what is the primary concern with the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023?**
  - Encouragement of misinformation
  - Government overreach and potential censorship
  - Strengthening the right to free speech
  - Encouraging collaboration between media and government
- What is a **synonym** for the term "**draconian**" as used in the passage?
  - Lenient
  - Severe
  - Easygoing
  - Tolerant
- Which of the following is an **antonym** of "**unfettered**" as mentioned in the passage?

- A. Unrestricted  
B. Unbound  
C. Hindered  
D. Unbridled
8. Select a **synonym** for the term "**grotesque**" used in the passage.  
A. Attractive  
B. Distorted  
C. Pleasing  
D. Delightful
9. Choose an **antonym** for the word "**salient**" in the context of the passage.  
A. Insignificant  
B. Prominent  
C. Conspicuous  
D. Noticeable
10. **Which idiom best describes the relationship between the government and the media according to the passage?**  
A. To bury the hatchet  
B. To keep at arm's length  
C. To have an axe to grind  
D. To go hand in hand
11. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph**  
P. NOC from parents, copy of father's PAN card, letter from a "local guardian" and so on.  
Q. As one young person ruefully observed, it's gotten to the point where landlords could demand to see your "janam kundli" and you'd be happy to give it just to be allowed to rent a house or flat.  
R. Others sighed in commiseration, sharing their own stories of the peculiar demands of homeowners —  
S. When a Bengaluru man recently posted on Twitter the demands that a prospective landlord had made before renting him a flat — LinkedIn profile and a "small write-up" about himself — the response his story got fell into two categories.  
T. One set of Twitterati expressed great astonishment over the incident, exclaiming about the unreasonableness of landlords.  
A.STRPQ                      B.SPQTR                      C.RPSQT                      D.PQRST
12. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph**  
P. On the flip side, a consequence of this deepening contraction is that the country's  
Q. Trade data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry last week showed that India's merchandise exports and imports continued to contract in February, pointing towards slowing momentum across both the global and domestic economies  
R. Merchandise exports fell by 8.8 per cent in February, after declining by 6.6 per cent in January and 3.1 per cent in December, while imports declined by 8.2 per cent in February, after falling by 3.6 per cent in January

- S. merchandise trade deficit narrowed further to \$17.4 billion in February  
 T. Especially worrying is the deepening of the pace of contraction in both exports and imports  
 A.RTSPQ                      B.QTRPS                      C.RPSQT                      D.PQRST

**13. Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph**

- P. In his introduction to *The World Is What It Is: The Authorised Biography of VS Naipaul* (2008),  
 Q. I wrote then that the aim of the biographer should not be to sit in judgement, but to expose the subject with ruthless clarity to the calm eye of the reader... Sometimes, a critic or biographer can see things that an author cannot."  
 R. There's a thin line that separates a good biography from a hagiography, a discretion at the disposal of only the most discerning of biographers.  
 S. Patrick French wrote, "My approach to writing biography is what it was when I began my first book  
 T. As many writers have attested, the art of the biography is notoriously difficult to pin down.  
 A. RTSPQ                      B.SPQTR                      C.PSQTR                      D.PQRST

**14. Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph**

- P. A former prime minister, elected to office on the back of the support of the Pakistan military, turns against his patrons.  
 Q. The military and those who run the country now fear he might win the next election.  
 R. The spectacle around the attempted arrest of Imran Khan was the coming together of all of Pakistan's dysfunctions, all at once.  
 S. Ousted from office, he mobilises his supporters into frenzied crowds.  
 T. The election commission gets the memo.  
 A. RTSPQ                      B.PQTRS                      C.RPSQT                      D.PQRST

**15. Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph**

- P. But perhaps most common, and most irritating of all for the regular commuter,  
 Q. are the joy riders who spoil it for everyone  
 R. There's something distinctly urban and urbane about the unspoken contract between commuters on public transport  
 S. It is rude, for example, to stare into the book or phone of the person sitting next to you on the bus or loom pelvis-first when you are standing, facing a seated fellow passenger  
 T. It is a shared space, and there is an expectation of decency, even privacy  
 A. RTSPQ                      B.PQTRS                      C.RPSQT                      D.PQRST

**Comprehension**

India's long-delayed, refreshed Foreign Trade Policy has finally been \_\_\_\_1\_\_\_\_. The new policy, announced on Friday by the Union Minister for Commerce, Industry and Textiles Piyush Goyal, has made bold to set an ambitious target of reaching \$2 trillion in total exports (goods and services combined) by 2030. With the government currently estimating exports to have crossed \$760 billion in the fiscal year just ended on March 31, the policy projects a near tripling in outbound shipments of goods and services over the course of seven years. And when one compares this growth goal with the 75% expansion achieved over the last seven years since 2016, the magnitude of the aspiration suggests \_\_\_\_2\_\_\_\_ ambition. To be sure, the last

three years have been unprecedented, with first the COVID-19 pandemic and then Russia's invasion of Ukraine disrupting global trade momentum. Still, the last three years, when India put its trade policy reset on hold, also provided policymakers a unique opportunity to take a fresh approach to \_\_\_\_\_3\_\_\_\_\_the \_\_\_\_\_4\_\_\_\_\_ of its trade policy goals. The end result is long on statements of intent. The National Trade Facilitation Action Plan, for instance, lists aims to achieve that are essential and \_\_\_\_\_5\_\_\_\_\_ but in no way novel: an improvement in the ease of doing business through reduction in transaction cost and time, a reduction in cargo release time, and a paperless regulatory environment.

16. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 1.**

- A. Aailed
- B. Unveiled
- C. Becalmed
- D. Settled

17. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 2.**

- A. Enabling
- B. Looming
- C. Vaulting
- D. Pressing

18. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 3.**

- A. Delineating
- B. Inciting
- C. Expediting
- D. Substantiating

19. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 4.**

- A. Clamour
- B. Bellwether
- C. Adoption
- D. Contours

20. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 5.**

- A. Inevitable
- B. Laudable
- C. Fragile
- D. Mobile

**Directions (21-23): In the following questions, out of the four alternatives, choose the one which can be substituted for the given words/sentence.**

21. **Incapable of being justified or excused**

- A. Inexcusable
- B. Partisan
- C. Peninsula
- D. Emeritus



**22. Act of forecasting by examining present condition**

- A. Ode
- B. Nocturnal
- C. Prognostication
- D. Proselyte

**23. Food agrees with one's taste**

- A. Actuary
- B. Carnivorous
- C. Palatable
- D. Protocol

**Directions (Q24– Q25): Find out the error, if any –**

- 21. His assistants have (A)/ and are still doing (B)/ excellent work for the organization. (C)/ no error(D)
- 22. They were having (A)/ a birthday party at home (B)/ next week. (C)/ no error(D)

## Answers

1. C    2. C    3.D    4. B    5. B    6. B    7. C    8. B    9. A    10. B    11. A  
 12. B    13.C    14. C    15. A    16. B    17.C    18.A    19.D    20.B    21.A    22.C  
 23. C    24.A    25. A

[\[Practice Exercise\]](#)

## Explanations

1. C) To identify and report fake or false or misleading online content related to the government  
 Explanation: According to the passage, the Union government has added a provision of a fact-check unit in the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023, to identify fake, false, or misleading online content related to the government.
2. C) They will lose their "safe harbour" protections under Section 79 of the IT Act  
 Explanation: As stated in the passage, if intermediaries such as social media companies or net service providers do not take action against content identified by the fact-check unit, they risk losing their "safe harbour" protections provided by Section 79 of the IT Act, which allows intermediaries to avoid liabilities for what third parties post on their websites.
3. D) The amendment rules empower the government to become the sole arbiter of "false" or "fake" news, potentially leading to draconian censorship.  
 Explanation: In the last paragraph, the passage highlights the potential consequences of the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023 on the freedom of the press. It emphasizes that the government's ability to determine what constitutes "false" or "fake" news and act upon platforms that publish such content could result in draconian censorship. This situation is problematic because it may infringe on the media's ability to question or scrutinize the government, which is a crucial role of journalism in a democracy.
4. B) The tone of the passage is critical of the IT Amendment Rules, 2023. The author expresses concern about the potential misuse of the regulations by the government, the potential negative impact on freedom of speech and expression, and the possibility of the rules leading to draconian censorship.
5. B) The passage's main theme is the concern that the IT Amendment Rules, 2023, grant the government excessive power in regulating online content. The author argues that this could lead to misuse of power, a chilling effect on the right to speech and expression, and ultimately draconian censorship, which goes against the principles of democracy and freedom of the press
6. B) "Draconian" refers to extremely harsh or strict laws, rules, or measures. In this context, "severe" is a synonym for draconian as it implies a similar level of strictness or harshness.
7. C) "Unfettered" means free from restrictions or restraints. In this context, "hindered" is an antonym of "unfettered" as it means to be limited or obstructed.
8. B) Grotesque" refers to something that is distorted, bizarre, or strangely repulsive in appearance or character. In this case, "distorted" is a synonym for grotesque.
9. A) In this context, "salient" refers to something that is very important or noticeable. "Insignificant" is an antonym for salient as it means unimportant or not noticeable.

10. B) The idiom "to keep at arm's length" refers to maintaining a safe distance or avoiding becoming too closely involved with someone or something. In the passage, it is mentioned that the relationship between the government and the media should be kept at arm's length to ensure sufficient freedom for the media.
11. Answer: A) **STRPQ**  
When a Bengaluru man recently posted on Twitter the demands that a prospective landlord had made before renting him a flat — LinkedIn profile and a "small write-up" about himself — the response his story got fell into two categories. One set of Twitterati expressed great astonishment over the incident, exclaiming about the unreasonableness of landlords. Others sighed in commiseration, sharing their own stories of the peculiar demands of homeowners — NOC from parents, copy of father's PAN card, letter from a "local guardian" and so on. As one young person ruefully observed, it's gotten to the point where landlords could demand to see your "janam kundli" and you'd be happy to give it just to be allowed to rent a house or flat.
12. Answer B) **QTRPS**  
Trade data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry last week showed that India's merchandise exports and imports continued to contract in February, pointing towards slowing momentum across both the global and domestic economies. Especially worrying is the deepening of the pace of contraction in both exports and imports. Merchandise exports fell by 8.8 per cent in February, after declining by 6.6 per cent in January and 3.1 per cent in December, while imports declined by 8.2 per cent in February, after falling by 3.6 per cent in January. On the flip side, a consequence of this deepening contraction is that the country's merchandise trade deficit narrowed further to \$17.4 billion in February.
13. Answer: C) **PSQTR**  
In his introduction to *The World Is What It Is: The Authorised Biography of VS Naipaul* (2008), Patrick French wrote, "My approach to writing biography is what it was when I began my first book. I wrote then that the aim of the biographer should not be to sit in judgement, but to expose the subject with ruthless clarity to the calm eye of the reader... Sometimes, a critic or biographer can see things that an author cannot." As many writers have attested, the art of the biography is notoriously difficult to pin down. There's a thin line that separates a good biography from a hagiography, a discretion at the disposal of only the most discerning of biographers.
14. Answer: C) **RPSQT**  
The spectacle around the attempted arrest of Imran Khan was the coming together of all of Pakistan's dysfunctions, all at once. A former prime minister, elected to office on the back of the support of the Pakistan military, turns against his patrons. Ousted from office, he mobilises his supporters into frenzied crowds. The military and those who run the country now fear he might win the next election. The election commission gets the memo.
15. Answer: A) **RTSPQ**

There's something distinctly urban and urbane about the unspoken contract between commuters on public transport. It is a shared space, and there is an expectation of decency, even privacy. It is rude, for example, to stare into the book or phone of the person sitting next to you on the bus or loom pelvis-first when you are standing, facing a seated fellow passenger. But perhaps most common, and most irritating of all for the regular commuter, are the joy riders who spoil it for everyone.

16. **Unveil** (verb) – reveal, disclose, present, announce, make public उद्घाटन करना
- **Avail** (verb) – utilize, make use of, employ, take advantage of, benefit from लाभ उठाना
  - **Becalm** (verb) – immobilize, still, stall, make motionless, bring to a standstill शांत हो जाना
  - **Settle** (verb) – resolve, establish, arrange, determine, decide
17. **Vaulting** (adjective) – soaring, sky-high, ambitious, lofty, high-reaching उच्चाकांक्षी
- **Enabling** (adjective) – empowering, authorizing, permitting, facilitating, supportive सक्षम करने वाला
  - **Looming** (adjective) – to be imminent, often in a threatening way मंडराता
  - **Pressing** (adjective) – urgent, critical, crucial, acute, desperate, serious अत्यावश्यक/ महत्वपूर्ण
18. **Delineate** (verb) – outline, describe, define, depict, portray रेखांकित करना
- **Incite** (verb) – ignite, inflame, stimulate, instigate, provoke, excite भड़काना
  - **Expedite** (verb) – accelerate, hasten, speed up, facilitate, quicken “त्वरित करना” या “शीघ्र करना”
  - **Substantiate** (verb) – prove, validate, give proof of, support पुष्टि करना
19. **Contour** (noun) – shape, form, outline, line, profile रूप-रेखा
- **Clamour** (noun) – demand, request, appeal मांग
  - **Bellwether** (noun) – a person or thing that leads or indicates a trend
  - **Adoption** (noun) – acceptance, embracing, endorsement, taking on, integration ग्रहण
20. **Laudable** (adjective) – praiseworthy, commendable, admirable, meritorious, deserving praise सराहनीय
- **Inevitable** (adjective) – unavoidable, inescapable, bound to happen, sure to happen अपरिहार्य
  - **Fragile** (adjective) – weak, delicate, frail, debilitated, tottery, shaky कमजोर
  - **Mobile** (adjective) – able to move or be moved freely or easily. चलती-फिरती
21. **Inexcusable** – Incapable of being justified or excused अक्षम्य

- **Partisan** – Someone who supports a person or something Without any thinking समर्थक
- **Peninsula** – Area of land almost surrounded by sea प्रायद्वीप
- **Emeritus, voluntary** – One who is honourably discharged from service अवकाशप्राप्त, स्वैच्छिक

22. **Prognostication** – Act of forecasting by examining present condition भविष्यवाणी

- **Ode** – A poem in praise संबोधन-गीत
- **Nocturnal** – Active at night रात्रिकालीन
- **Proselyte** – One who persuades someone to accept a particular belief धर्मांतरित

23. **Palatable** – Food agrees with one's taste स्वादिष्ट

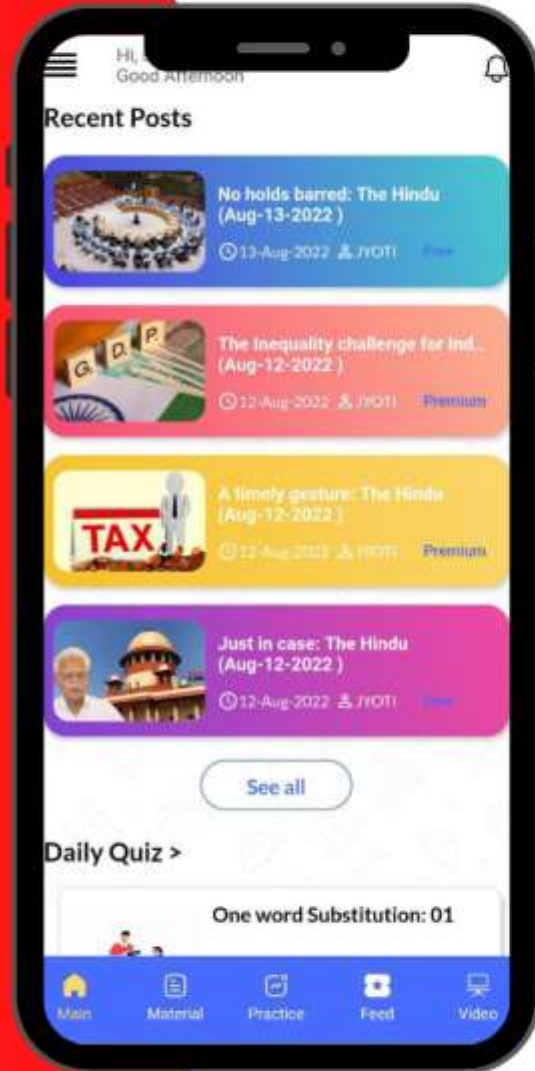
- **Actuary** – One who calculate premium बीमांकक
- **Carnivorous** – One who eat flesh मांसाहारी
- **Protocol** – Rules of behaviour in a formal situation शिष्टाचार

24. (A) 'have' के साथ 'done' का प्रयोग करना पडेगा।

- 'have' has to be used with 'done'.

25. (A) 'were having' के बदले 'will have' या 'are having' का प्रयोग करना पडेगा क्योंकि part(c) में 'next time' का प्रयोग है जिससे पता चलता है कि कार्य future में होने वाला है।

'will have' or 'are having' has to be used instead of 'were having' because in part (c) 'next time' is used which shows that the work is going to happen in future.



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English Madhyam

