

CONTENT MANAGEMENT**Courts must let government work out a balanced regulatory regime for online content**

The submissions in the Supreme Court on behalf of the Tamil Nadu government in support of linking social media profiles of registered users with their Aadhaar numbers are not well-founded in the law as it now stands. It is noteworthy that a Division Bench of the Madras High Court, which is hearing two writ petitions on this matter, did not see merit in the idea. The Bench had during the hearings observed that following the Supreme Court's decision in the Aadhaar case, the unique 12-digit-number can be used only for subsidies and welfare benefits; and pointed out that Section 57 of the Aadhaar Act has been struck down to the extent that it authorised body corporate and individuals to use the number to establish someone's identity. The petitioners had approached the High Court with such a prayer on the ground that many people got away with inflammatory posts on social media because of the lack of traceability. However, the Bench has since then expanded the writ petitions' scope to examine the adequacy of the legal framework on cybercrimes and the responsibilities of intermediaries who provide telecommunication and online services. The State government is battling for better assistance from intermediaries and social media companies to trace offending messages. As two other High Courts are also hearing similar matters, Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter have sought a transfer of all these cases to the apex court so that there are no conflicting judgments.

While the Supreme Court will decide the question of transferring these cases to itself, the Madras High Court will continue its hearing. A word of caution. The Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology notified new draft rules for intermediaries last year and called for public comments. The proposed rules envisage new obligations for service providers. One of the changes proposed is that intermediaries should help identify originators of offensive content. This has created some understandable misgivings at a time when there is widespread suspicion about online surveillance. Technology companies that use end-to-end encryption have pleaded inability to open a back door for identifying originators. The issue concerns the global policy of these companies as well as the wider public interest of millions of registered users. After the K.S. Puttaswamy decision (2017) in the 'privacy' case, any state intervention in the regulation of online content has to pass the test of proportionality laid down by the court. It will be desirable if courts do not impart needless urgency to the process of introducing a balanced regulatory regime to curb content that promotes undesirable activities such as child pornography, sectarian conflict and mob violence, without affecting individual privacy. The balance must be right between protecting privacy and allowing the state leeway to curb crime.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Regime		Government, authorities, rule, reign, dominion
Content		Contented, satisfied, pleased
Noteworthy		Notable, interesting, significant, noticeable
Inflammatory		Provocative, provoking, incendiary
Traceable		Trackable
Batting		Hit, strike, beat, bludgeon, truncheon
Intermediaries		Mediator, go between, negotiator
Apex		Crest, top, tip, pinnacle, zenith, acme
Conflicting		Contentious, disputed, contentious
Call for		Demand, exact
Envisage		Foresee, predict, forecast, foretell, expect
Obligation		Duty, commitment, responsibility, onus
Misgiving		Doubt, qualms, scruples
Suspicion		Intuition, feeling, impression, inkling
Surveillance		Observation, scrutiny, watch, inspection
Encryption		Cypher, encipher, encode
Plead		beg, entreat, beseech, implore, petition
Intervention		Involvement, intercession, interceding
Curb		Control, restrain, impede, hinder
Sectarian		Separatist, dissenter, dissident, free thinker
Leeway		Freedom, elbowroom, latitude

CRISIS IN ROME

Italy's political centre is crumbling as the far-right steps into an ideological vacuum

The resignation speech of Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, with his estranged Interior Minister Matteo Salvini beside him, was an acknowledgement of all that could go wrong with an opportunistic alliance between a far-right nativist party and a professed ideology-less anti-establishment group. When the 5-Star Movement led by comedian Beppe Grillo and Mr. Salvini's League joined hands after last year's elections in which no party got majority, the plan was to keep establishment parties away and offer a populist alternative. But for Mr. Conte, the technocrat Prime Minister who is not a member of any party, governance was not easy with contradictions within the coalition often coming to the fore. While the 5-Star Movement lacked any ideological alternative to

offer other than its anger towards Italy's centre-left and conservative establishment parties, Mr. Salvini pushed for his party's "Italy-first", anti-immigrant, anti-EU agenda. As Interior Minister, he banned migrant ships. He also challenged the EU fiscal orthodoxy by calling for tax cuts and spending rises, which appealed to the electorate still reeling under the effects of the debt crisis. The League party, a junior member in the coalition, came first in Italy in the election to the EU Parliament with 34% vote.

The current crisis was triggered by Mr. Salvini's decision to withdraw from the coalition. With opinion polls suggesting that the League could get up to 38% of the popular vote if polls are held soon, Mr. Salvini is on course to become Prime Minister. But may be not immediately. The 5-Star Movement has indicated that it is open for talks with the centrist Democratic Party. If they stitch up an alliance, the League will be out of power for at least three years. But the problem is that even if another coalition is formed, it would not be the answer to the country's problems. An alliance between the 5-Star Movement and the Democrats would be another odd marriage, like the populist coalition that collapsed just now. It would also allow Mr. Salvini to pursue his hard-line nationalist politics freely from the opposition, preparing himself for the next election. In fact Mr. Salvini's rise, from a regional leader in northern Italy to a popular nationalist political figure now, is also the story of Italy's political and economic crisis. When establishment parties shy away from addressing structural economic issues, the crisis opens avenues for anti-establishment forces. Italy's political centre is crumbling. The Left is weak. The 5-Star Movement doesn't have an ideological programme. Mr. Salvini, whose hard nationalist views echo the far-right politics on the ascent in Europe, seems determined to exploit the Italian crisis.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Crumble		Disintegrate, fall down, collapse, fragment
Vacuum		Empty, space, emptiness, void, vacuity, vacancy
Acknowledgement		Acceptance, admission, granting, concession
Opportunistic		Determined, diligent, dynamic, enterprising
Alliance		Association, union, league, treaty, pact, compact
Profess		Declare, announce, herald, proclaim, assert
Contradiction		Denial, rebuttal, refutation, countering
Coalition		Alliance, union, partnership, affiliation
Conservative		Traditional, conventional, orthodox, stable
Ban		Embargo, outlaw
Migrant		Immigrant, emigrant, asylum, seeker, expatriate
Fiscal		Financial, economic

Call for	Demand, exact
Reel	Stagger, lurch, sway, stumble, totter, wobble
Trigger	Activate, set off, set going, trip
Stitch up	Manipulate a situation to one's advantage
Hard line	Uncompromising, strict, diehard, extreme
Shy away	Draw back, cringe, quail, quaver, shrink
Avenue	Line, path, direction, route
Determined	Tenacious, pertinacious, bent on / upon
Exploit	Utilize, make use of, draw on, milk