Internet Ban in India:

- India, the fastest growing Internet market in the world, is the global leader in cutting off internet access.
- It is now commonplace during moments of tension for law enforcement and government officials to cut off the Internet as both an early and a preventive response.
- Over the past five years, some 16,000 hours of Internet shutdowns cost the economy a little over $3 billion, according to estimates in a report by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER).

Major events in 2019

Citizenship Act:

- West Bengal – North Dinajpur, Malda, Murshidabad, Howrah, North 24-Parganas and parts of South 24-Parganas districts
- Several Districts if UP – Aligarh, Meerut, Saharanpur
- Arunachal Pradesh
- Tripura
- Assam
- Meghalaya
- Ayodhya verdict:
- Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh saw the largest numbers of suspensions of Internet services.
- Jammu and Kashmir:
- Jammu and Kashmir shutdown began on August 5
- Jammu and Kashmir had earlier experienced a 133-day shutdown between July 8 and November 19, 2016; Darjeeling went 100 days without access to the Internet between June 8 and September 25, 2017.
States with most shutdowns

- Jammu and Kashmir:
  - The erstwhile state has seen 180 Internet shutdowns since 2012.
  - The most commonly offered reasons for cutting access have been “encounter between security forces and militants”, “massive search operations”, “gunfights”, and “attack on CRPF men”.

- Rajasthan:
  - The state has had 67 shutdowns since 2015, from hyper-local ones to those extending to districts or specific areas.
  - Several have been “preventative measures after communal tensions broke out” or “to prevent the spread of rumours”.
  - Rajasthan has also seen shutdowns in order to prevent cheating in examinations

- Uttar Pradesh:
  - UP has seen 19 shutdowns since 2015. “Internet services were suspended to defuse the tension prevailing due to protests by Muslims against lynching of a man.

Authority to shutdown:

- Home Departments in the states are mostly the authorities that enforce shutdowns, drawing powers from The Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017.
- The decisions are reviewed by a state government review committee.
- The central government also has powers under this law, but has not used it.
- Other relevant laws are Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 and The Indian Telegraph Act, 1885.
- Section 144 has enabled many of the shutdowns in the recent past, especially until the time the telecom suspension Rules came into force in 2017.
• Section 144 CrPC gives the District Magistrate, Sub-Divisional Magistrate or any other executive magistrate empowered by the state government the power to issue orders to “maintain public tranquility”.
• Less frequently used is The Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, whose Section 5(2) allows central and state governments to prevent the transmission of messaging during a “public emergency or in the interest of public safety”, or “in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state”, etc.

Source: Indian Express