



CIVIL

Government Issues Advisory to OTT and Social Media Platforms on Content Regulation

AUTHOR Rahul Sundaram

PUBLISHED 24 February 2025

The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB), Government of India, has issued an advisory to OTT platforms and social media platforms regarding the publication of content on their platforms. The advisory highlights the need to follow Indian laws and the Code of Ethics prescribed under the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (Rules) .

The advisory has been issued in response to concerns raised by Members of Parliament, statutory organizations, and public complaints regarding the increasing presence of obscene, pornographic, and vulgar content on digital platforms. Many people have expressed concern over the type of content being made available online and its potential impact on society, especially on young viewers.

Under the Rules, OTT platforms are required to follow certain guidelines while publishing content. They must ensure that no content prohibited by law is published on their platforms. They are also required to classify content based on age restrictions, as mentioned in the Schedule to the Rules. Content rated as 'A' (for adults only) must have an access control mechanism in place to prevent children from viewing such material. Platforms must exercise due caution and discretion when publishing content to ensure that it does not violate any legal or ethical guidelines.

Self-regulatory bodies of OTT platforms are central to enforcing these rules. These bodies are responsible for monitoring and ensuring compliance with the Code of Ethics. The advisory reminds these self-regulatory bodies that they must take proactive steps to ensure that all content published on their platforms follows the required standards.

The advisory also highlights various Indian laws that prohibit the publication of obscene or pornographic content. These include the Indecent Representation of Women Act, 1986, the Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS), 2023, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, and the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000. Under these laws, the publication of such content is a punishable offense, and violating these rules can lead to legal consequences for the platforms involved.

OTT and social media platforms have been asked to strictly follow the Code of Ethics under the said Rules. They must take extra precautions when classifying content based on age groups. This is especially important to protect minors from being exposed to inappropriate material.

The government has also directed self-regulatory bodies of OTT platforms to take proactive measures in handling violations of the Code of Ethics. These bodies must ensure that platforms follow the law and do not publish content that can be deemed obscene, vulgar, or inappropriate under Indian regulations.

This move by the government is seen as an effort to bring more accountability to digital platforms and ensure that they act responsibly while publishing content. With the rise of digital media, concerns over unregulated content, exposure of minors to adult material, and the promotion of obscene content have grown. The government is now taking strict measures to ensure that platforms comply with existing Indian laws and ethical guidelines.

By issuing this advisory, the government has sent a strong message to OTT and social media platforms. They are expected to comply with content regulations and make sure that their platforms remain safe and responsible digital spaces. If they fail to do so, they may face legal action and penalties under Indian law.

For further details write to contact@indialaw.in