

THE BEGUR BULLETIN

MEDIA, ENTERTAINMENT & GAMING

JANUARY – DECEMBER 2025

YEARLY REGULATORY UPDATE



WELCOME TO THE BEGUR BULLETIN!

India's media, entertainment and gaming ("MEG") sector underwent a decisive phase of regulatory consolidation in 2025, marked by a transition from broad policy signalling to detailed rulemaking, clarified institutional roles, and active enforcement. Across digital media, OTT platforms, online gaming, broadcasting, advertising and platform governance, regulators focused on strengthening accountability frameworks while recalibrating the balance between creative freedom, consumer protection, public order and national security.

A consistent theme through the year was the formalisation of platform obligations. Content governance standards were tightened, grievance redressal mechanisms were operationalised through structured three-tier systems, and compliance expectations were clarified through targeted advisories, draft guidelines and enforcement actions. In parallel, legacy regulatory frameworks were modernised to respond to platform convergence, cross-device audience measurement, accessibility for persons with disabilities, and the evolving economics of digital distribution.

The judiciary also played a critical role in shaping the regulatory perimeter. Courts examined the boundaries between state and central competence in online gaming, scrutinised platforms allegedly disguising betting as e-sports, reinforced child safety and misinformation controls, and clarified proprietary and fiduciary concepts in digital and virtual assets. Together, these developments signal a shift from fragmented oversight to a more integrated, enforcement-oriented regulatory architecture for the MEG ecosystem.

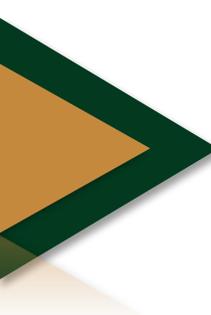
- **OTT Accessibility Guidelines:** Draft rules mandate audio description, subtitles, sign language, and accessible interfaces for persons with disabilities, backed by reporting and oversight mechanisms.
- **TV Rating Amendments:** New norms require Companies Act registration, Rs. 5 crore net worth, stricter cross holding limits, and rapid expansion of audience panels to modernize and safeguard measurement integrity.
- **Online Gaming Regulation:** Supreme Court issued notice on disguised e-sports betting, signaling tighter judicial scrutiny of gambling under digital formats.

This Yearly Regulatory Update captures the most consequential legislative actions, policy advisories, regulatory consultations, enforcement measures, and judicial developments from January to December 2025. It is designed to help media companies, digital platforms, gaming operators, investors, and advisors understand not just what changed, but how these changes interact and what they mean for risk management, strategy, and compliance going forward.

We value your thoughts and suggestions. If there is feedback on how we can improve The Begur Bulletin, we'd love to hear from you on communications@begurs.com. Your input helps us keep this platform insightful.

Enjoy reading, here's to staying informed, compliant, and capital-ready!

- Team Begur





LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

1. NOTIFICATION OF PROMOTION AND REGULATION OF ONLINE GAMING RULES, 2025

The MeitY on 2 October 2025, notified the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Rules, 2025 (“**Rules**”), establishing the operational framework under the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025 (“**Act**”). The Rules provide detailed guidance on classification of online games, registration requirements, enforcement mechanisms, grievance redressal processes and the institutional structure for regulation of the online gaming ecosystem in India.

Key Provisions:

a) Online Gaming Authority of India (“OGAI”): The Rules establish the Online Gaming Authority of India as a statutory regulator with civil-court-like powers under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908. Composition includes Chairperson (Additional Secretary, MeitY); Members from Information & Broadcasting, Youth Affairs & Sports and Financial Services; and Two senior officers, including at least one legal expert. The Authority is empowered to summon individuals, examine evidence, issue binding directions and impose penalties.

b) Classification of Online Games: The Rules formally recognise three categories: i) Online Money Games: Games involving stakes, deposits, entry fees or winnings convertible to money; ii) Online Social Games: Games offered without monetary stakes or winnings for entertainment, learning or recreation; iii) E- Sports: Competitive digital sports based solely on skill and strategy.

c) Registration Framework:

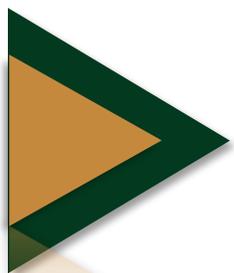
- Mandatory registration for e-sports platforms. Voluntary for social game providers.
- Applications processed digitally and decided within 90 days.
- Registration certificates valid for up to five years.
- Material changes in ownership, game structure or revenue model must be disclosed.

d) Grievance Redressal and Appeals: A three-tier mechanism has been introduced:

- Platform-level grievance redressal;
- Appeal to the Grievance Appellate Committee within 30 days; and
- Further appeal to the Online Gaming Authority within 30 days.

e) Enforcement: Authority may direct banks, advertisers, and intermediaries. It can impose penalties, suspend/cancel registrations, block unlawful games, and coordinate with enforcement agencies. Transitional relief allows repayment of user funds collected before commencement.

B&P View: The Rules provide long-awaited operational clarity by defining permissible gaming categories, introducing a structured registration regime and establishing a specialised regulator with strong enforcement powers. While the framework decisively eliminates real-money gaming in India, it brings regulatory certainty to e-sports and online social games, signalling clear policy support for permissible digital gaming formats. However, the sudden prohibition has triggered substantial commercial disruption, forcing several platforms and investors to rapidly restructure operations or consider exits. The regime’s long-term success will hinge on consistent classification, predictable enforcement and continued stakeholder engagement.





2. COMPLETE PROHIBITION ON OFFERING REAL MONEY GAMES (RMGs) ACROSS THE COUNTRY

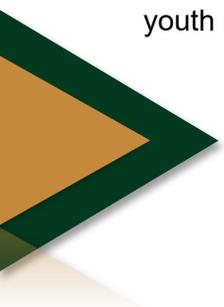
The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025 (“**Act**”) was passed by both houses of the Parliament and received presidential assent in August, 2025, classifying all online games into the following:

- a. **Online Money Games** – Online games, whether based on skill or chance, played by a user through the deposit of money with an expectation of returns and involve any element of betting or wagering on the outcome of an event.
- b. **E-Sports** – Multi-sports, competitive and multiplayer contests between individuals or teams whose outcomes are based solely on skill (eg. Physical dexterity, mental agility and strategic thinking) and exclude any forms of betting and wagering
- c. **Online Social Games** – Online games played without staking money, valuables or any expectation of a monetary gain; may be accessed via subscription or one-time fee and offered solely for the purposes of entertainment, recreation and skill development.

The Act prohibits the offering, aiding, abetting, inducing, or participating in any online money game. It further bans any advertisements promoting such games and restricts banks and financial institutions from facilitating transactions related to payments for these games, with violations attracting fines, imprisonment, or both. On the other hand, the Act seeks to provide a major push to e sports and online social games given their rapid growth in India in recent years.

B&P View: The Act addresses important social issues such as increasing addiction among the youth resulting in significant financial

in the right direction towards protecting public well-being. Moreover, the judiciary has the task of adjudicating on the legality of the Act, addressing issues stretching from legislative competence to individual rights to broader implications for an entire sector. For the investment community, however, the abrupt change has resulted in complete mayhem. Portfolio companies which were viewed as winning bets suddenly face having to completely pivot to a different business model or wind up operations, potentially resulting in a write off of billions in market value.





MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (“MIB”)

1. GOVERNMENT CLARIFICATION TOWARDS REGULATION OF OTT CONTENT UNDER IT RULES 2021 WITH THREE TIER GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL, OUTSIDE CBFC JURISIDCTION

The MIB on December 17, 2025 clarified that the Central Board of Film Certification is a statutory authority under the Cinematograph Act, 1952 for certifying cinematographic films for public exhibition, and does not cover OTT content. OTT platforms are regulated under Part III of the Information Technology Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code Rules, 2021. The Code of Ethics requires platforms to avoid publishing content prohibited by law and to undertake age based classification of content as per the Rules.

The Rules also establish a three tier grievance redressal system comprising self-regulation by publishers, self-regulation by their bodies, and Central Government oversight. Grievances related to OTT content are forwarded to the concerned platforms for appropriate action under Level I.

B&P View: This press note draws a clear boundary between film certification under the Cinematograph Act and OTT oversight under the IT Rules. Part III’s Code of Ethics and the three-tier mechanism convert platform responsibilities into defined processes, from age classification to grievance handling.

2. GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE ON ACCOUNTABILITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA & OTT PLATFORMS UNDER IT ACT, IT RULES 2021 AND BNS, 2023

The MIB vide press release dated December 17, 2025 consolidated the legal framework for tackling obscenity, misinformation, and cyber offences online. The note emphasises that the

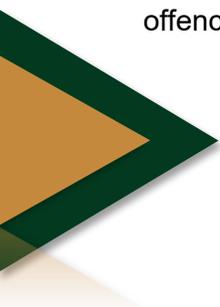
66E, 67, 67A, 67B, 78, 80, and the safe-harbour provision under Section 79), the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (Rules 3 and 4, including Rule 3(1)(b) on restricted content, grievance timelines of 24-72 hours, and obligations for Significant Social Media Intermediaries), and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (Sections 294 and 296 on obscene material and acts) together form a stringent accountability framework.

The release highlights that intermediaries must appoint grievance officers, publish compliance reports, assist law enforcement with traceability, and act expeditiously on unlawful content. Significant platforms with over 50 lakh users are required to maintain local compliance infrastructure and deploy automated tools to detect harmful content. OTT platforms, under Part III of the IT Rules, 2021, are bound by a Code of Ethics prohibiting transmission of unlawful material, with enforcement already resulting in the disabling of 43 OTT platforms for obscene content.

B&P View: By anchoring responsibilities in the IT Act (Sections 66E, 67-67B, 78, 80, and the safe-harbour clause under Section 79), the IT Rules, 2021 (including grievance timelines and obligations for significant intermediaries), and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, the compliance perimeter is clearly defined. Grievance redress timelines, traceability requirements, and reporting duties are positioned as binding mandates rather than discretionary safeguards.

3. GOVERNMENT ISSUED ADVISORY ON IT RULES EMPOWER CITIZENS AGAINST MISLEADING CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The MIB vide press release dated December 12, 2025, emphasized that free speech under



Article 19(1) coexists with safeguards against fake, false, and misleading information across digital media. The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, notified under the IT Act, 2000 on February 25, 2021, mandate a Code of Ethics for publishers of news and current affairs in Part III, requiring adherence to the Programme Code under the Cable Television Networks Act, 1995 and the Press Council Act, 1978 Norms of Journalistic Conduct.

The Rules provide a three-tier grievance redressal mechanism for Code compliance, and Part II places obligations on intermediaries such as YouTube and Facebook to prevent dissemination of patently false, untrue, or misleading information. A Fact Check Unit under PIB, set up in November 2019, verifies Central Government related content and posts corrected information, while Section 69A of the IT Act authorizes blocking of websites, social media handles, and posts to protect sovereignty, integrity, defence, security of the State, and public order.

B&P View: This press note clarifies that citizen protection against misinformation is operationalized through specific statutory hooks. Part III's Code of Ethics links digital publishers to legacy broadcast and press standards, while Part II extends a duty on intermediaries to curb misleading content. With the FCU's corrective role and Section 69A's blocking powers, enforcement is both preventive and remedial.

4. AMENDMENTS TO POLICY GUIDELINES FOR TELEVISION RATING AGENCIES

The MIB vide notice dated November 6, 2025, invited stakeholder comments by December 5, 2025, for the draft amendments to the Policy Guidelines for Television Rating Agencies in India, originally notified in January 2014. The draft proposes that only companies registered under the Companies

Act, 2013 may seek registration, with mandatory safeguards against conflicts of interest and restrictions on directors engaged in broadcasting. A minimum net worth of Rs. 5 crores, certified by a statutory auditor, is required. Cross holding restrictions are strengthened, prohibiting substantial equity (20% or more) across rating agencies and broadcasters, or in more than one agency in the same area, with applicability extended to promoters.

Provisions require technology-neutral ratings across platforms including connected TVs, and expansion of audience panels to 80,000 within 18 months of registration, rising by 10,000 annually to 1,20,000, with existing agencies required to reach 80,000 within six months. Agencies may exceed this figure as per business needs. Panels must exclude broadcaster employees, and landing page viewership is excluded from measurement, permitted only as a marketing tool. The amendments take immediate effect and apply to existing registered agencies.

B&P View: These changes bring governance and independence of rating agencies while modernizing measurement standards. They also push for scale and integrity through rapid expansion of audience panels, exclusion of broadcaster employees, and removal of landing page viewership from ratings, reflecting a clear intent to modernize and safeguard the reliability of India's audience measurement ecosystem.

5. GUIDELINES FOR ACCESSIBILITY OF OTT CONTENT FOR PERSONS WITH HEARING AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

The MIB vide proposal, dated October 7, 2025, invited stakeholders' comments for the issued draft guidelines to ensure accessibility of OTT content for people with hearing and visual impairment. The framework is grounded

in constitutional equality under Article 14, India's obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Accessible India Campaign, and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. It builds on Section 29 (cultural participation), Section 40 (standards of accessibility), and Section 42 (access to information and communication technology), and aligns with the Code of Ethics under Part III of the IT Rules, 2021.

The Guidelines define access services such as audio description, subtitles, closed captioning, and Indian Sign Language interpretation, and prescribe standards for accuracy, synchronization, completeness, grammar, positioning, and legibility. Platforms must also ensure accessible user interfaces compatible with assistive technologies. Publishers must submit baseline and quarterly progress reports, publicize accessible content, and collaborate with accessibility organizations. Oversight will be provided by a committee chaired by a Joint Secretary, meeting quarterly to monitor compliance and address grievances.

B&P View: This draft operationalizes disability rights into measurable duties for OTT publishers. By tying RPwD Act provisions to IT Rules obligations, accessibility becomes a compliance requirement with phased targets and reporting. A critical view would note that while the Guidelines are progressive in intent, they may pose implementation challenges.

Smaller OTT platforms could struggle with the cost and technical expertise required to provide high-quality access services consistently. While the Guidelines align with IT Rules and disability law, they may need stronger integration with broadcasting and telecom regulations to ensure seamless enforcement across the digital ecosystem.

6. GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE ON CREATIVE FREEDOM, OTT OVERSIGHT UNDER IT RULES 2021, AND THREE TIER GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL

The MIB on August 06, 2025, reaffirmed that freedom of expression, including creative freedom, is protected under Article 19, while oversight of OTT content is enforced through the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 notified under the IT Act, 2000. Part III of the IT Rules prescribes a Code of Ethics for digital news publishers and OTT platforms and requires that no content prohibited by law be transmitted, with a three tier grievance redressal mechanism comprising self-regulation by publishers, self-regulation by their bodies, and Central Government oversight; complaints received by the Ministry are forwarded to concerned OTT platforms for resolution under the Rules. Following consultations with relevant Ministries, forty-three OTT platforms have been blocked for displaying obscene content.

B&P View: This press note affirms that creative freedom operates within defined statutory boundaries. The Code of Ethic under Part II of the IT rules, 2021, together with the three-tier grievance redressal mechanism, establishes clear obligations for OTT platforms. Enforcement of these obligations is demonstrated by the blocking of forty-three platforms for non-compliance.

7. GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE ON PCI NORMS, PROGRAMME CODE AND IT RULES TO CURB FAKE AND DEFAMATORY CONTENT ACROSS PRINT, TV AND DIGITAL PLATFORMS

The MIB vide press release dated July 30, 2025 outlined measures to counter fake news and defamatory content across media. For print, newspapers must adhere to the Press Council of India's "Norms of Journalistic Conduct", with inquiries and sanctions under Section 14 of the

PCI Act. For television, channels must comply with the Programme Code under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995. For digital media, publishers of news and current affairs must follow the Code of Ethics under the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. A Fact Check Unit under PIB (set up in November 2019) verifies and posts correct information on social platforms

B&P View: This press note stitches together sector-specific accountability. Newspapers must follow PCI's Norms of Journalistic Conduct, TV channels are bound by the Programme Code with a three-tier grievance system, and digital/OTT platforms must comply with the Code of Ethics under Part III of the IT Rules, 2021. Section 69A of the IT Act empowering the Government to block websites and social media handles in the interest of sovereignty and public order, and Section 79(3)(b) requiring intermediaries to remove unlawful content when notified. Enforcement is active, as shown by the blocking of forty-three OTT platforms for fake news, misinformation, and inappropriate content.

8. DRAFT TRP GUIDELINES TO MODERNISE TV AUDIENCE MEASUREMENT

The MIB on July 02, 2025 released draft amendments to the 2014 Policy Guidelines for Television Rating Agencies, proposing to, remove restrictive clauses that barred new entrants, modify conflict of interest provisions to allow more flexible corporate structures and opening the sector to multiple agencies beyond the Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC). These changes aim to foster competition, encourage investment by broadcasters/advertisers and enable adoption of technologies that capture connected TV, streaming and mobile viewership. Public and stakeholder feedback has been invited within 30 days.

B&P View: The draft amendment marks a decisive shift towards democratising India's TRP system. By lowering entry barriers and enabling new players, it could deliver more accurate, platform-agnostic data aligned with evolving viewing habits. For broadcasters and advertisers, this opens opportunities for better audience insights and revenue planning. That said, the impact will hinge on how quickly new agencies are licensed and whether industry stakeholders invest in robust measurement infrastructure.

9. ADVISORY ON OTT PLATFORMS DIRECTED TO DISCONTINUE PAKISTAN-ORIGIN CONTENT CARRYING CONTENT HAVING ITS ORIGINS IN PAKISTAN

The MIB On May 08, 2025 issued an advisory directing all OTT platforms, digital streaming services, and intermediaries operating in India to immediately discontinue hosting or transmission of any content originating from Pakistan. This includes web series, films, songs, podcasts, and other curated media content. Citing concerns over India's sovereignty, security, and public order, the advisory invokes the IT Rules, 2021, specifically Part II and Rule 3(1)(b), which mandate that no content no content threatening the unity, integrity, defence, or friendly relations of India may be published or transmitted.

B&P View: Issued in the wake of recent terrorist incidents, including the April 22, 2025 Pahalgam attack, this advisory reflects the government's heightened focus on content regulation in the interest of national security and public order. It underscores the need for platform-level vigilance and compliance to prevent dissemination of content perceived as detrimental to India's sovereignty and external relations.

10. ADVISORY TO REFRAIN FROM LIVE COVERAGE OF DEFENCE OPERATIONS

The MIB on April 26, 2025, issued an advisory



directing all media outlets, digital platforms, and individuals to refrain from real-time coverage or broadcasting of visuals related to defence operations or security force movements, citing national security concerns. The advisory, referencing past incidents like the Kargil war, 26/11 attacks, and Kandahar hijacking highlights the risks of unauthorised source-based reporting and live visuals, which could compromise operational safety. Citing Rule 6(1)(p) of the Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules, 2021, the MIB reiterates that live telecast of anti-terror operations is prohibited, and only official briefings by designated officers may be reported.

B&P View: The advisory signals the government's intent to balance press freedom with operational security. Given the potential risk of live media exposure during sensitive defense operations, this underscores the need for editorial prudence and regulatory compliance.

11. **MINISTRY OF INFORMATION & BROADCASTING ISSUES CORRIGENDUM ON RULE 18 FILING DEADLINE FOR DIGITAL MEDIA**

On April 24, 2025, the MIB has issued a corrigendum to its earlier Public Notice dated May 26, 2021 (F. No. A50013/31/2021-DM), issued under Rule 18 of the IT Rules, 2021. The corrigendum amends Paragraph 5 of the original notice, clarifying that: "Publishers must submit the required information within 15 days of issuance of the notice in PDF format, duly signed by an authorized signatory, and email it to digital-media@mib.gov.in." All other aspects of the original Public Notice remain unchanged. The appended formats continue to apply, specifying filing requirements for digital news publishers with traditional media presence, digital only news publishers, and OTT platforms.

B&P View: The corrigendum signals the MIB's continued emphasis on enforcing Rule 18 compliance and streamlining the registration process for digital publishers and OTT platforms. It reflects an intent to bring greater administrative oversight and accountability within the digital media ecosystem.

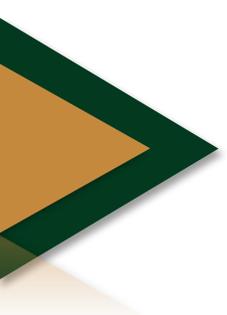
12. **GOVERNMENT ISSUES ADVISORY ON OTT PLATFORM ACCESSIBILITY TO STRENGTHEN COMPLIANCE WITH DISABILITY AND IT RULES 2025**

The MIB vide advisory dated April 22, 2025, issued an advisory to online OTT content providers, citing a Delhi High Court order dated 19 Dec 2024 in the matter of *Akshat Baldwa & ANR vs Maddock Films Private Limited and Ors.* It reminded platforms of their obligations under Indian laws – specifically the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016 and the IT Rules 2021 Code of Ethics, to make content accessible to users with disabilities (e.g. captions, audio description). The advisory directs self-regulatory bodies and OTT platforms to fully comply with these laws when publishing content.

B&P View: This advisory reinforces existing legal duties under the IT Rules 2021 and RPwD Act. It effectively implements the Delhi High Court's directive that online content platforms enhance accessibility features. OTT providers should audit compliance (e.g. verifying caption/subtitle availability, sign-language options) to avoid violations. The government's emphasis on accessibility signals stricter enforcement ahead; platforms may need to update content-development processes and contracts to include disability-friendly features.

13. **CABLE TELEVISION NETWORKS (AMENDMENT) RULES, 2025**

The MIB on January 17, 2025, notified the Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules, 2025 ("Rules") amending the registration process for Local Cable Operators ("LCOs") under the





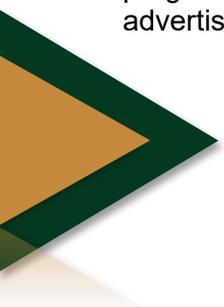
Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995. Previously, LCO registration was done offline, with a validity of one year and a fee of Rs. 500. The Rules mandate online registration through the Broadcast Seva Portal and extend the validity of LCO registration to five years, providing operators with more long-term stability. The processing fee has been raised to Rs. 5000, and applicants will need to provide PAN and Aadhaar details for identity verification, with Aadhaar being optional. LCOs will also receive a unique National Registration Number, which will be valid nationwide. Additionally, the renewal process has been updated, with LCOs required to apply for renewal at least 90 days before the expiration of their registration. The Rules also address the transition for existing LCOs, who must now shift to the new online system for renewal. Operators with registrations expiring within 90 days must immediately apply for renewal through the Broadcast Seva Portal, while those with pending applications at local post offices are advised to withdraw and reapply online. **B&P Comments:** While the transition to an online system is beneficial in streamlining the process, the steep rise in fees might be a burden for smaller operators. The extended registration validity is a positive change. Further, clear guidelines and support during the transition period will be key to ensuring smooth compliance for all LCOs.

14. PROHIBITION OF TRANSMISSION OF PROGRAMME/ADVERTISEMENT FOR NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THE PROGRAMME AND ADVERTISING CODE

The MIB vide notification dated January 2, 2025, inserted a new sub rule 7 and sub rule 12 under Rules 6 and 7 of the Cable Television Network Rules, 1994 (“Rules”) respectively to provide that the Central Government may, after giving the cable operator an opportunity of being heard issue a written order prohibiting the transmission or retransmission of the channel or program, if it is satisfied that the program or advertisement of any channel is not in

compliance with the requirements prescribed under the Programme Code and Advertising Code mentioned in the Rules.

B&P View: The amendment shall ensure stricter adherence to the Rules, promoting responsible content broadcast. By providing cable operators with an opportunity to be heard before issuing a prohibition order, the Rules ensure fairness and transparency in enforcement.





MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (MeitY)

1. MEITY NOTIFIES AMENDMENTS TO INTERMEDIARY GUIDELINES

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (“MeitY”) has notified amendments to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (“IT Rules 2021”), strengthening due-diligence obligations applicable to intermediaries under the Information Technology Act, 2000 (“IT Act 2000”). The amendments primarily modify Rule 3(1)(d) and introduce procedural safeguards to ensure that content removal is undertaken in a transparent, proportionate and accountable manner.

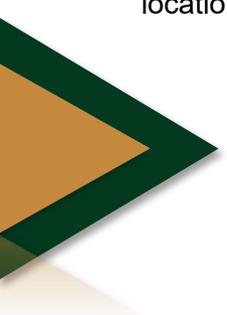
Under the amended framework, content removal intimations may be issued only by senior authorised officials, namely an officer not below the rank of Joint Secretary (or equivalent). Where such rank does not exist, a Director-level officer may issue the intimation. Authorized agencies may act through a single designated officer, provided such agency has been formally notified. In the case of police authorities, only an officer not below the rank of Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) may issue removal intimations.

The Amendment Rules also introduce substantive requirements mandating that every intimation clearly specify:

- (i) the statutory provision under which removal is sought;
- (ii) the nature of the unlawful act rendering the content liable for removal; and
- (iii) the precise URL, identifier or electronic location of the content.

The revised language replaces the earlier reference to generic “notifications” with a requirement for “reasoned intimation”, aligning the IT Rules 2021 with the “actual knowledge” standard under Section 79(3)(b) of the IT Act 2000, and providing intermediaries with greater clarity while preserving safe-harbour protections. In addition, all removal intimations issued under Rule 3(1)(d) are now subject to monthly review by an officer not below the rank of Secretary of the Appropriate Government.

B&P View: The amendments significantly tighten procedural discipline around content takedown directions, addressing long-standing concerns regarding opaque and overbroad removal requests. By introducing senior-level authorisation, reasoned intimations and periodic oversight, the framework strengthens intermediary safeguards. The changes are likely to improve transparency and accountability in platform regulation, particularly for digital media and online content intermediaries.



PRESS COUNCIL OF INDIA

1. ADVISORY TO PRINT MEDIA ON PAID NEWS DURING BYE-ELECTIONS

On June 16, 2025, the Press Council of India (“PCI”) issued an advisory to all print media outlets, urging strict adherence to the Norms of Journalistic Conduct, 2022, particularly with respect to paid news during the upcoming bye-elections in Gujarat, Kerala, Punjab, and West Bengal. Defining paid news as any content published in exchange for payment in cash or kind, the PCI highlighted common indicators such as misquoting leaders, caste or political profiling of voters, identical political content across publications, verbatim reproduction of political material, biased headlines or photographs, premature electoral predictions, celebrity campaign coverage disguised as news, and unverifiable or one-sided reporting. While fact-based editorial assessments are permissible under Election Commission of India (ECI) guidelines, media houses have been cautioned to ensure fair, balanced, and independent coverage.

B&P View: The PCI’s advisory reinforces the need for editorial integrity during bye-elections. Though not legally binding, these guidelines act as a self-regulatory framework to stop paid news and uphold fair reporting, to promote fair bye elections.

2. ADVISORY ON PUBLICATION OF PREPOLL AND EXIT POLL RESULTS DURING BYE-ELECTIONS

On June 16, 2025, the PCI issued an advisory directing all print media to comply with Section 126A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and the PCI Norms of Journalistic Conduct, 2022, during the

upcoming bye-elections in Gujarat, Kerala, Punjab, and West Bengal prohibits the print media to refrain from publishing any pre-poll or exit poll results during the 48 hours preceding the bye-elections in Gujarat, Kerala, Punjab, and West Bengal, scheduled for 19.06.2025, with violations attracting penalties of up to two years' imprisonment, fine, or both. The PCI also cautioned against misuse of media platforms for casteist, religious, or sponsored pre-poll propaganda, and mandated full disclosure of survey methodology and sponsorship.

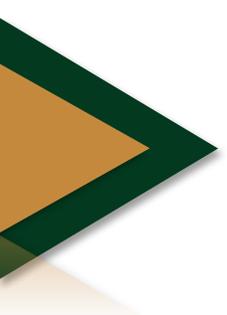
B&P View: The PCI’s directive reinforces Section 126A compliance and imposes stricter obligations on print media during the pre-poll period, aiming to enhance transparency, curb sponsored reporting, and safeguard electoral integrity.

3. GOVERNMENT ENFORCES REGULATORY NORMS TO CURB MISINFORMATION; BLOCKS 43 OTT PLATFORMS

On July 30, 2025, the Union Minister of State for Information & Broadcasting informed the Lok Sabha that the Government has blocked 43 OTT platforms to date for spreading fake news and hosting inappropriate content. The Government fulfills its sovereign duty to tackle misinformation through a multi-sectoral framework: the Press Council of India (PCI) oversees "Norms of Journalistic Conduct" for print media; television channels are governed by the Programme Code under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995; and digital media is regulated by the IT Rules, 2021. Key measures include a Fact Check Unit (FCU) under the Press Information Bureau to verify central government-related news and the use of Section 69A of the IT Act to block content in the interest of national security and public order.



B&P View: This update signals a tightening regulatory grip on the digital ecosystem, shifting from advisory oversight to active enforcement under the IT Rules, 2021. The blocking of 43 platforms emphasizes that the Government is prioritizing "zero-tolerance" for content that violates sovereignty or public decency. For OTT and digital publishers, this necessitates immediate investment in robust self-classification and age-gating technologies to ensure compliance and avoid the risk of platform-wide blocks.



JUDICIAL UPDATES

1. MADRAS HIGH COURT HOLDS CRYPTOCURRENCY IS PROPERTY AND GRANTS INTERIM PROTECTION AGAINST ASSET FREEZE

On 20 December 2025, the Madras High Court held that cryptocurrency constitutes “property” under Indian law and granted interim protection to a WazirX user whose digital assets were rendered inaccessible following platform-level wallet freezes.

The dispute arose after withdrawal restrictions were imposed on the WazirX platform following a July 2024 cyber-attack, which resulted in the theft of approximately USD 234 million worth of crypto assets and led to restructuring proceedings before the Singapore High Court, which approved a scheme of arrangement on 13 October 2025. The platform contended that user claims were governed exclusively by the Singapore restructuring process and arbitration seated in Singapore.

Rejecting this objection, the Court held that Indian jurisdiction was attracted as the user had transferred fiat currency from an Indian bank account and accessed the platform from within India.

Key Findings

- Cryptocurrency, though intangible, is property capable of ownership, possession and trust-based holding.
- Under Indian law, crypto assets are treated as virtual digital assets, not speculative transactions.
- Assets unaffected by cyber breach cannot be diluted to offset losses suffered by other

users.

- Crypto exchanges owe fiduciary duties to users in respect of assets held in custody.

Interim Relief: Pending arbitration, the Court directed the platform to either:

- furnish a bank guarantee of INR 9.56 lakh, or
- deposit the equivalent amount in an escrow account,
- to protect the applicant from erosion of her crypto holdings.

B&P View: The ruling provides strong judicial recognition of cryptocurrency as property under Indian law and affirms custodial and fiduciary obligations of crypto exchanges. It limits the ability of platforms to impose blanket asset freezes or dilute unaffected holdings during restructuring, and clarifies that foreign insolvency or restructuring proceedings may not override Indian jurisdiction where user transactions occur domestically.

2. KARNATAKA HIGH COURT EXAMINES ED’S FREEZING OF WINZO ACCOUNTS AMID POST-PROGA TRANSITION

On 18 December 2025, the Karnataka High Court issued notice to the Enforcement Directorate (“ED”) in a writ petition filed by WinZO Games, challenging the freezing of its bank accounts under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (“PMLA”). The challenge arose in the context of regulatory uncertainty following the enactment of PROGA 2025.

During the hearing, WinZO submitted that continued attachment of its accounts was impairing its ability to process user refunds under the new gaming framework and offered to furnish a bank guarantee for the frozen amounts. The ED sought time to obtain instructions on whether such security could be accepted. The Court adjourned the matter to 7 January 2026 for further hearing.

The ED had earlier conducted searches at WinZO's offices in Delhi, Gurgaon and Bengaluru and frozen bank accounts containing approximately ₹43 crore, alleging retention of user funds post-ban, algorithmic manipulation and cross-border fund transfers of nearly USD 55 million to WinZO US Inc. The proceedings also raise issues regarding the interaction between PMLA enforcement powers and the 180-day refund transition period contemplated under the draft Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Rules, 2025.

B&P View: The case highlights enforcement complexities during the transition to the new gaming regime. Judicial guidance on proportionality of attachment powers and interim relief may influence similar proceedings across the sector.

3. RAJASTHAN HIGH COURT DENIES BAIL IN ₹95 CRORE GST EVASION CASE LINKED TO ONLINE GAMING PLATFORM

On 11 December 2025, the Rajasthan High Court rejected a bail application in a case involving alleged GST evasion of approximately ₹95 crore, arising from an online gaming operation accused of fraudulently claiming input tax credit through shell entities and fabricated invoices.

The Court observed that the allegations disclosed a systematic and organised economic offence causing substantial loss to public revenue. In dismissing the bail plea, the Court relied on the magnitude of the alleged fraud, the complexity of the financial trail involving multiple entities, and the risk of evidence tampering and witness interference during the ongoing investigation.

The ruling follows intensified tax enforcement against online gaming platforms since the imposition of 28% GST on gross gaming revenue in October 2023, with authorities increasingly invoking both civil recovery and criminal prosecution mechanisms.

B&P View: The decision reinforces the judiciary's strict stance on tax compliance in the gaming sector and reflects the increasing convergence of taxation, criminal enforcement and sector-specific regulation.

4. SUPREME COURT NOTICE ON DISGUISED E-SPORTS BETTING

On 3 November 2025, the Supreme Court took up a petition filed by the NGO Centre for Accountability Systemic Change seeking a nationwide ban on online betting platforms allegedly operating under the guise of e-sports. The petition contended that several platforms misuse the recognition accorded to e-sports to conduct real-money gambling activities and sought directions to the Union Government to block unlawful applications under the Information Technology Act, 2000, restrict payment systems from processing transactions for unregistered games, recover taxes from offshore operators, and strengthen safeguards for children's personal data.

A Bench comprising Justices J.B. Pardiwala and K.V. Viswanathan issued notice to the Union of India and relevant regulators, noting the overlap between the issues raised and the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025. The Court agreed to examine whether platforms allegedly offering disguised betting under the e-sports label warrant immediate regulatory intervention.

B&P View: The Court's intervention reflects increasing judicial scrutiny of platforms blurring the distinction between legitimate e-sports and online betting. For regulators, the proceedings underscore the need for coordinated enforcement under the new gaming framework. For industry participants, the case highlights the importance of transparent licensing structures and a clear separation between skill-based e-sports and wagering models.

5. MADRAS HIGH COURT URGES UNION TO CONSIDER AUSTRALIA-STYLE CHILD INTERNET LAW

On 9 December 2025, the Madras High Court, in *S. Vijayakumar v. Union of India (W.P.(MD) No. 23323 of 2018)*, disposed of a public interest litigation concerning children's easy access to pornographic content on the internet. A Division Bench comprising Justices G. Jayachandran and K.K. Ramakrishnan directed authorities to intensify awareness programmes and suggested that the Union Government consider legislation similar to Australia's law restricting internet access for children below 16 years of age.

The petition sought enforcement of parental control obligations by internet service providers under the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005. The Court found the counter-affidavits filed by authorities inadequate, observing that awareness initiatives in schools were insufficient and that device-level parental

controls could play a significant role in limiting children's exposure to harmful online content.

B&P View: The decision highlights heightened judicial concern regarding child online safety and the perceived inadequacy of existing safeguards. By recommending consideration of an Australia-style statutory framework, the Court signals potential movement towards stricter regulation of children's access to digital platforms in India.

6. DELHI HIGH COURT UPHOLDS PERSONALITY RIGHTS OF SEVERAL BOLLYWOOD CELEBRITIES

The Delhi High Court, on September 12, 2025 granted an interim injunction in favour of Bollywood actor, Abhishek Bachchan, restraining websites, e-commerce platforms and YouTube channels from unauthorized use of his name, image, likeness and persona. The Court held that such misuse amounted to infringement of his personality rights and directed blocking/removal of infringing products and AI-generated content. This order follows a similar one passed in favour of Aishwarya Rai Bachchan on September 09, 2025, underscoring the judiciary's consistent recognition of celebrities' personality rights.

B&P View: This order highlights the growing judicial emphasis on safeguarding personality rights in India, especially in the age of digital platforms and AI-generated content. With increasing misuse of celebrity personas for commercial and reputational harm, such rulings reinforce the economic and moral value of one's identity. Going forward, we expect more litigation and policy focus in this area, with Personality Rights becoming a critical aspect of brand protection, reputation management, and IP strategy for public figures.

7. ALLAHABAD HIGH COURT ORDERS COMMITTEE TO EXPLORE ONLINE GAMING REGULATION

On June 12, 2025, the Allahabad High Court directed the Uttar Pradesh government to form a High-Powered Committee to assess the need for legislation regulating online gaming and betting. Headed by Prof. KV Raju, Economic Advisor to the state, the committee will include senior bureaucrats and domain experts. The Court observed that the Public Gambling Act, 1867, is outdated and ineffective in addressing digital gambling, fantasy sports, and cross-border gaming operations. It flagged issues like minimal penalties, jurisdictional gaps, and the lack of legal clarity on online games' status. Citing psychological and social harms, particularly among youth, and risks of money laundering and financial fraud via offshore platforms, the Court called for a technology-driven, robust legislative framework. While the Court quashed the pending proceedings against the accused due to procedural lapses, it permitted a fresh investigation in accordance with law.

B&P View: The Allahabad High Court's directive reflects judicial recognition of the inadequacy of colonial-era gambling laws in addressing the modern digital gaming ecosystem. By pushing for a high-level expert committee the Court underscores the urgency of creating a unified, contemporary legal framework. This move is likely to increase state-level legislative reforms.

8. MADRAS HIGH COURT UPHOLDS TNOGA'S BAN ON LATE-NIGHT REAL MONEY GAMING AND AADHAAR MANDATE

On June 3, 2025, the Madras High Court upheld the Tamil Nadu Online Gaming Authority's (TNOGA) decision to ban Real Money Games (RMG) between 12 a.m. and 5 a.m., and to mandate Aadhaar verification for all players. The ruling came in response to petitions challenging Sections 5(2) and 14(1)(c) of the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Online Gambling and Regulation of Online Games Act, 2022 and its 2025 regulations. It was ruled that the State is constitutionally empowered to regulate online games under Entries 6 (public health) and 26 (trade and commerce) of the State List.

B&P View: The Madras High Court judgment affirms state-level regulatory authority over digital RMGs on public health grounds, endorsing a paternalistic yet targeted approach. It could encourage similar measures in other states and intensify demands for a centralized online gaming regulatory framework.

9. DELHI HIGH COURT AFFIRMS RIGHT OF INFLUENCERS TO CRITIQUE BRANDS BACKED BY EVIDENCE

On April 28, 2025, the Delhi High Court upheld the right of social media influencers, including Arpit Mangal and others, to publish evidence-based criticism of brands. The case arose after the influencers posted lab-test-backed reviews alleging that San Nutrition's whey protein products contained less protein than advertised. San Nutrition sought an interim injunction, alleging defamation and trademark misuse. The Court refused, holding that truthful, evidence-supported consumer reviews fall within the scope of free speech and consumer rights. It further clarified that such reviews do not constitute trademark infringement or unauthorized commercial use. While the matter will proceed to trial, the ruling reinforces the legitimacy of fact-based influencer content and could shape future advertising and consumer protection standards in India.

B&P View: The Delhi High Court's order affirms that fact-based influencer speech is a protected extension of consumer rights and free expression. It sets a key precedent for brands, influencers, and regulators like ASCI, highlighting the growing importance of transparency and accountability in digital consumer advocacy.

STATE SPECIFIC UPDATES

1. KARNATAKA NOTIFIES CINEMA TICKET PRICE CAP UNDER CINEMAS (REGULATION) RULES

The Government of Karnataka, vide Notification No. HD 26 TMR 2025 dated 13 September 2025, notified the Karnataka Cinemas (Regulation) (Amendment) Rules, 2025, introducing a statutory cap on cinema ticket prices across the State. The amendment modifies Rule 55(6) of the Karnataka Cinemas (Regulation) Rules, 2014, and inserts a maximum ticket price applicable to film screenings across all languages and theatre formats.

Key Provisions

- The maximum ticket price for all film screenings in Karnataka has been fixed at INR 200 per ticket (exclusive of all applicable taxes).
- The price cap applies uniformly to single-screen theatres and multiplexes.
- A specific exemption has been introduced for premium cinema formats, recognising differentiated viewing experiences.
- Multi-screen cinemas offering premium facilities with a seating capacity of 75 seats or less are expressly exempted from the INR 200 price ceiling.
- The amendment has been notified with immediate effect and is binding on all licensed cinema operators in the State.

B&P View: The notification reflects continued State intervention in cinema pricing with the objective of maintaining affordability for moviegoers. While the limited exemption for small-format premium screens provides some operational flexibility, the uniform price ceiling may constrain revenue optimisation for multiplex operators, particularly for large-format and peak-time screenings. The amendment is likely to require recalibration of pricing strategies across Karnataka's exhibition sector.

2. GOA NOTIFIES MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES ACCREDITATION RULES, 2025

On April 10, 2025, the Government of Goa notified the Goa Media Representatives Accreditation Rules, 2025, establishing a structured framework for accrediting journalists, editors, correspondents, and cameramen associated with recognized media organizations in the state. The Rules constitute a 14-member Press Accreditation Committee (PAC), chaired by the Director of Information & Publicity, with representation from the print, television, digital, and magazine sectors. Accreditation entitlements vary by media type: up to 10 for newspapers/TV channels, 3 for periodicals, and 1–4 for digital platforms, based on web traffic and IT Rules, 2021 compliance. Eligibility requires five years of journalistic experience or one year with a journalism degree, with special provisions for freelancers with 25+ years of experience. Accreditation is valid for two years, with procedural safeguards against arbitrary cancellation to protect press freedom.

B&P View: The Rules formalize press accreditation in Goa, ensuring structured media access to government information

and events, while balancing eligibility on experience, qualifications, and digital reach metrics. Administered through the PAC, the framework offers accredited journalists official ID cards and potential access to benefits like medical and transport support, reinforcing both professional accountability and freedom of the press.

3. HARYANA NOTIFIES HARYANA PREVENTION OF PUBLIC GAMBLING ACT, 2025

On April 9, 2025, the Haryana Government notified the Haryana Prevention of Public Gambling Act, 2025, aimed at curbing physical and digital gambling, including sports betting, within the state's territorial limits even without the operator's physical presence. It criminalizes games of chance while carving out a conditional exemption for games of skill, defined as those where success primarily depends on knowledge, training, and expertise. The law imposes strict penalties for match and spot-fixing, with imprisonment ranging from three to seven years and minimum fines of ₹5 lakhs. Liability extends beyond players to coaches, officials, and other match personnel. The Act also grants the State Government sole discretion to notify which games qualify as skill-based, rather than recognizing those already upheld by courts.

B&P View: While the Act seeks to curb gambling and enhance accountability in sports, its lack of a clear framework for recognizing online skill games has led platforms to suspend services in Haryana. The Act's discretionary provisions create legal ambiguity, clashing with central IT Rules, 2021, which advocate self-regulation. In the absence of a unified central mechanism, India's gaming industry faces an uneven regulatory landscape. Until clarity emerges, platforms and users must handle this uncertainty with caution, especially in states like Haryana.



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3. Southern Asia, Australasia and Central Asia Ranking: Highly Regarded

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