

THE BEGUR BULLETIN

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MEDIA, ENTERTAINMENT & GAMING

FEBRUARY 2026

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***MONTHLY REGULATORY UPDATE***



## WELCOME TO THE BEGUR BULLETIN!

India's media, entertainment and gaming ("**MEG**") sector witnessed significant regulatory and policy developments in February 2026, reflecting a continued shift from broad policy articulation to accelerated enforcement, institutional recalibration and rights-focused governance. During the month, the Central Government notified amendments to the intermediary due diligence framework under the Information Technology Act, 2000, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting ("**MIB**") advanced reforms in film certification and accessibility standards, Parliament received disclosures regarding enforcement action against OTT platforms, and High Courts delivered important rulings on personality rights, media restraint and journalistic accountability. Collectively, these developments underscore a more technology-driven and compliance-intensive regulatory environment.

A key development was the notification of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2026. The amendments introduce formal recognition of synthetically generated or AI-altered content and require intermediaries to mandate user declarations, deploy verification tools and prominently label such content. Most significantly, takedown timelines have been sharply compressed, with certain categories of unlawful or sensitive material requiring removal within two to three hours of official notice. Compliance with these due diligence obligations is expressly tied to retention of safe harbour protection under Section 79, signalling a decisive move toward proactive platform accountability and real-time moderation preparedness.

In the film sector, MIB invited comments on discontinuing the Priority Scheme under the Cinematograph (Certification) Rules, 2024 to restore procedural equity and avoid a two-tier certification system. At the same time, continued digital processing under the Cinematograph Act, 1952 through the e-Cinepramaan portal has reportedly reduced certification timelines, reinforcing administrative efficiency. Accessibility regulation also advanced through guidelines framed in furtherance of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, mandating phased integration of captioning, audio description and accessible interfaces for OTT platforms.

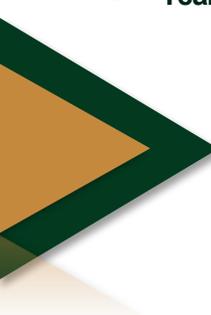
Judicial forums played a parallel role in shaping digital norms. The Bombay High Court granted interim protection to Shatrughan Sinha against unauthorised exploitation of his persona and signature dialogue, reflecting evolving recognition of personality and publicity rights in the AI era. The Delhi High Court declined to impose a blanket gag order in a case involving a minor, reaffirming the high constitutional threshold for prior restraint while emphasising responsible reporting standards.

This February 2026 Regulatory Update summarises the principal notifications, policy proposals and judicial interventions shaping the MEG ecosystem. It seeks to equip media companies, OTT platforms, digital intermediaries and content creators with a clear understanding of emerging compliance expectations and associated legal risks in an increasingly enforcement-oriented environment.

**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](mailto:communications@begurs.com). Your input helps us keep this platform insightful.**

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- Team Begur





## LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

### 1. NOTIFICATION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (INTERMEDIARY GUIDELINES AND DIGITAL MEDIA ETHICS CODE) AMENDMENT RULES, 2026

The Central Government on 10 February 2026, notified the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2026 (“**Amendment Rules**”), effective from 20 February 2026. These amendments are aimed at tightening platform accountability, accelerating content takedowns, and regulating AI-generated or synthetic content within India’s digital ecosystem.

#### Key Provisions

#### a) Recognition & Regulation of Synthetic Content

The Amendment Rules introduce a statutory definition for Synthetically Generated Information (“**SGI**”) content that is audio, video or audio-visual, created or altered algorithmically to appear real. Platforms must:

- Require users to declare whether a piece of content is AI-generated.
- Deploy technical tools to verify such declarations.
- Prominently label AI-generated content before it is made public.

#### b) Shortened & Strict Takedown Timelines

One of the most significant changes is the compression of action deadlines for digital platforms:

- 3 hours to remove unlawful content upon court or government notification (down from 36 hours).
- 2 hours for particularly sensitive content (e.g., non-consensual deepfake intimacy imagery).
- 7 days to acknowledge and 7 days to

resolve general grievances (previously 15 days).

- 36 hours for other urgent removal requests (down from 72 hours).

These accelerated timelines reflect concern that longer windows allow harmful content to spread widely before platforms can act.

### 3. Transparency & Reporting

Intermediaries must publish regular compliance reports detailing:

- Content removals/actions taken.
- Government or court-ordered takedowns.
- Grievance redressal performance.

Platforms must also notify users more frequently about terms, conditions and potential consequences of non-compliance.

### 4. Enhanced Traceability & Metadata

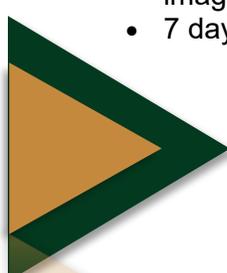
Platforms are expected to embed provenance markers or unique identifiers into synthetic content to assist with authenticity checks and traceability across services. Such metadata should persist even when content is re-shared.

### 5. Safe Harbour & Liability

Safe harbour protection under Section 79 of the Information Technology Act, 2000 has been clarified:

- Compliance with AI labelling, verification, and rapid removal timelines is now expressly conditioned on retaining safe harbour protections.
- Failure to meet due diligence obligations can expose intermediaries to civil or criminal liability as if they were the content creator.

The Amendment Rules reflect a shift from a largely reactive “notice-and-take-down” model to a more proactive, high-accountability



governance framework, especially for synthetic content and misinformation. Major platforms like Meta, Google (YouTube), and X now face heightened operational demands to:

- Staff real-time moderation teams
- Build robust AI-content detection and labelling systems
- Reduce timelines for responding to official orders markedly (to just hours instead of days)

**B&P View:** The Amendment Rules significantly strengthen user protection by embedding rapid response mechanisms and clear regulatory expectations for synthetic content and unlawful material. Requiring prominent AI labels and traceability can improve transparency in the digital information ecosystem.

However, the aggressive compression of takedown timelines from 36 hours to as little as 2–3 hours impose practical compliance challenges, especially on intermediaries without extensive moderation infrastructure. The stringent deadlines also risk over-moderation and pre-emptive takedowns, as platforms may err on the side of removal to avoid liability. Finally, imposing conditional safe harbour based on compliance performance shifts a traditionally balanced liability framework toward greater risk for intermediaries. Balancing swift enforcement with procedural safeguards, operational feasibility, and protections for legitimate speech will be pivotal for the long-term success of this regime.

## 2. UNION BUDGET 2026-27: MAJOR PUSH FOR ORANGE ECONOMY AND CREATIVE EDUCATION

The Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman, on 1 February 2026 presented the Union Budget 2026–27 in Parliament, outlining a strategic push to strengthen India’s Orange Economy and creative education ecosystem. The

Budget places particular emphasis on the animation, visual effects, gaming and comics (“**AVGC**”) sector, which is projected to require nearly 2 million professionals by 2030.

To support this demand, the Finance Minister proposed assistance to the Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (“**IICT**”), Mumbai, for establishing AVGC Content Creator Labs in 15,000 secondary schools and 500 colleges across the country. The initiative aims to create a future-ready creative workforce, expand employment opportunities for youth, and integrate skill development into mainstream education. Addressing the media, the Union Minister for Information & Broadcasting, Ashwini Vaishnaw, described the Budget as “duty-driven” and inspired by Yuva Shakti and Nari Shakti. He noted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has elevated India’s creative economy globally through the WAVES initiative, and stated that IICT Mumbai modelled on premier institutions like IITs and IIMs will connect schools and colleges through Creators’ Labs, potentially generating up to 20 lakh new jobs.

### About the Orange Economy

The Orange Economy refers to economic activities driven by creativity, culture, intellectual property, and artistic expression, where value is derived primarily from ideas and knowledge rather than physical goods. The Budget’s focus on AVGC and creative education signals a strategic effort to position India as a global hub for digital content creation and creative industries.

**B&P View:** The Union Budget 2026–27 signals a decisive policy shifts toward institutionalising the creative economy within India’s education and skills framework. By linking IICT-led infrastructure with school- and college-level labs, the Government has aligned economic growth objectives with skilling reform, potentially strengthening India’s competitiveness in global content and digital innovation markets.



## MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (“MIB”)

### 1. MIB INVITES COMMENTS ON PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE PRIORITY SCHEME UNDER CINEMATOGRAPH (CERTIFICATION) RULES, 2024

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (“MIB”) on 16 February 2026, has invited public comments on its proposal to amend the Cinematograph (Certification) Rules, 2024 to discontinue the existing Priority Scheme for film certification. The proposed amendments seek to restore equity and orderly processing within the statutory certification framework, with a particular emphasis on ensuring fair access for small and independent filmmakers.

The Priority Scheme was originally introduced to facilitate certification in cases of exceptional urgency. However, the Ministry has observed that routine invocation of the scheme has diluted its intended purpose and contributed to systemic delays in the regular certification queue. According to the MIB, such practice undermines the principles of fairness and structured processing that are integral to a statutory certification regime.

The Ministry has further noted that increasing reliance on priority processing risks creating a two-tier certification system, wherein applicants with greater financial resources are able to secure expedited clearances upon payment of enhanced fees, potentially to the detriment of other applicants. In this context, the immediate discontinuation of the Priority Scheme is proposed as an interim corrective measure to restore equity, predictability, and procedural discipline in film certification.

#### Proposed Amendments

- **Rule 33(2):** Deletion of the provision permitting priority screening upon payment of three times the prescribed examination

fee.

- **Rule 37(3):** Removal of the proviso empowering the Regional Officer to alter the order of examination based on priority applications.

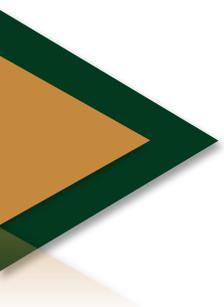
**B&P View:** The proposed amendments reflect a policy shift towards reinforcing procedural equality within the film certification process. By eliminating the financial premium attached to expedited review, the Ministry appears to be prioritising structural fairness over commercial urgency. If implemented, the move is likely to standardise processing timelines and reduce perceptions of preferential treatment within the certification regime.

### 2. MIB NOTIFIES ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES FOR OTT PLATFORMS

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (“MIB”) on 6 February 2026, issued an Office Memorandum notifying the Guidelines for Accessibility of Content on Platforms of Publishers of Online Curated Content (OTT Platforms) for Persons with Hearing and Visual Impairment. The Guidelines have been framed in furtherance of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 and align with India’s obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The framework mandates OTT platforms to progressively incorporate accessibility features such as Closed Captioning (“CC”), Open Captioning (“OC”), Indian Sign Language (“ISL”) interpretation, and Audio Description (“AD”) to ensure inclusive access to audio-visual content.

Under the phased implementation schedule, OTT publishers must, within 36 months,



ensure that all newly published content carries at least one accessibility feature each for hearing- and visually-impaired viewers. They are further required to display accessibility indicators prominently, integrate accessible functionalities across user interfaces, and submit periodic “Accessibility Conformance Reports” upon completion of the initial 36-month period and thereafter on a quarterly basis.

The Guidelines also provide for certain exemptions, including live and deferred live content, standalone short-form content (such as advertisements), and purely audio content like music and podcasts.

For oversight and enforcement, the Ministry will constitute a Monitoring Committee and implement a three-tier grievance redressal mechanism comprising self-regulation by publishers, oversight by self-regulatory bodies, and final review by the Central Government.

**B&P View:** The Guidelines mark a significant step towards institutionalising digital accessibility in India’s OTT ecosystem. By introducing measurable standards, phased compliance timelines, and structured grievance redressal, the Ministry has signalled a shift from advisory-based encouragement to a compliance-oriented accessibility regime, reinforcing the principle of equal access to cultural and recreational content.

### **3. GOVERNMENT REAFFIRMS OVERSIGHT OF PRIVATE TV CHANNELS AND STRENGTHENED STATUTORY GRIEVANCE MECHANISM**

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (“MIB”) on 13 February 2026, issued a notification clarifying the existing regulatory framework and grievance redressal mechanism applicable to private television channels and online curated content platforms. The

notification reiterates that content governance in India operates through a structured statutory and self-regulatory model rather than prior certification for OTT platforms.

#### **Key Provisions**

##### **a) Programme & Advertising Code Compliance (Television):**

Private TV channels remain governed by the Programme Code and Advertising Code under the Cable Television regulatory framework. Content that promotes communal disharmony, attacks religions or communities, defames individuals, or violates public order standards is prohibited.

##### **b) Governance of OTT Platforms:**

Online Curated Content (“OCC”) providers are regulated under Part III of the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. OTT platforms are not subject to certification by the Central Board of Film Certification (“CBFC”) but must adhere to the prescribed Code of Ethics.

##### **c) Three-Tier Grievance Redressal Mechanism:**

The framework provides a structured complaint mechanism:

1. **Level I:** Self-regulation by the publisher through an internal grievance officer.
2. **Level II:** Oversight by an independent self-regulating body of publishers.
3. **Level III:** Government oversight by MIB for unresolved grievances.

##### **d) Age Classification & Access Controls:**

OTT platforms must follow age-based content classification standards and implement parental locks and access control mechanisms for adult content.

##### **e) Government Oversight Powers:**

MIB retains supervisory authority to issue

advisories, warnings, or appropriate directions in cases of non-compliance with the Code of Ethics or statutory provisions.

**B&P View:** This notification reinforces India's hybrid regulatory model combining industry self-regulation with structured government oversight. While the three-tier mechanism provides institutional clarity and accountability without pre-certification, its effectiveness will depend on consistent enforcement and maintaining a balance between creative autonomy and statutory content standards.

#### 4. CBFC STREAMLINES FILM CERTIFICATION THROUGH E-CINEPRAMAAN PORTAL

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting ("MIB") through Press Information Bureau on 13 February 2026, released details in response to a question raised in the Rajya Sabha regarding timelines for film certification in India. The response clarified the steps taken by the Central Board of Film Certification ("CBFC") to streamline and modernise its certification process under the Cinematograph Act, 1952 and the Cinematograph (Certification) Rules, 2024.

The Government highlighted that film certification is now processed entirely through the e-Cinepramaan portal, a fully digital platform introduced to enhance transparency, reduce delays, and standardise procedures. Under Rule 37 of the Cinematograph (Certification) Rules, 2024, films are required to be certified within 48 working days. However, with the operationalisation of the online system, the average time taken for certification has reportedly reduced to approximately 18 working days for feature films and around 3 working days for short films.

The digitised framework is intended to address long-standing industry concerns regarding procedural delays and lack of predictability in certification timelines. By leveraging technology and defined statutory timelines, the CBFC seeks to ensure faster decision-making while maintaining regulatory oversight over film content.

**B&P View:** The transition to a fully digital certification process marks a significant administrative reform in India's film regulation landscape. Reduced processing timelines enhance ease of doing business for filmmakers while improving transparency and accountability in certification. Continued monitoring of performance benchmarks and stakeholder engagement will be essential to ensure that efficiency gains are sustained without compromising regulatory scrutiny.



## MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (MeiTY)

### 1. GOVERNMENT REAFFIRMS PUSH FOR SAFE INTERNET; 25 OTT PLATFORMS BANNED IN 2025

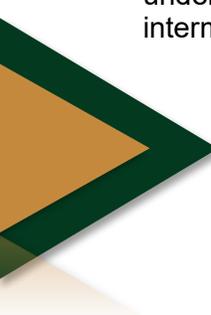
in the evolving online ecosystem.

The Union Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology on 11 February 2026, Jitin Prasada, informed the Lok Sabha that the Government remains committed to ensuring an open, safe and accountable internet, with particular emphasis on protecting women and children from harmful online content. It was stated that 25 OTT platforms were banned in 2025 for streaming inappropriate material.

The regulatory framework is primarily governed by the Information Technology Act, 2000 and the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. The IT Act prescribes penalties for offences such as identity theft, impersonation, privacy violations, and publication or transmission of obscene or sexually explicit content, while empowering authorities to investigate cyber offences. The IT Rules, 2021 mandate intermediaries to exercise due diligence, remove unlawful content upon notice, establish grievance redressal mechanisms, and comply with takedown timelines failing which safe-harbour protection may be withdrawn.

The Government also referred to complementary safeguards under the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, which collectively address data protection, online obscenity, misinformation, and child sexual exploitation.

**B&P View:** The action against 25 OTT platforms reflects a firmer enforcement approach under India's digital regulatory framework, underscoring the Government's focus on intermediary accountability and user protection



## JUDICIAL UPDATES

### 1. UTTARAKHAND HIGH COURT CAUTIONS DIGITAL MEDIA TO ADHERE TO ETHICAL STANDARDS

The Uttarakhand High Court on 12 February 2026 underscored the responsibility of digital and social media journalists to comply with established journalistic norms while publishing content online. The observations were made in proceedings concerning the circulation of an unverified “media bite” on social media, which allegedly caused reputational harm to a bank official.

During the hearing, the Court emphasised that digital dissemination does not dilute professional accountability. Referring to the Norms of Journalistic Conduct, 2010, the bench noted that media practitioners are required to verify facts prior to publication and exercise due caution, particularly where content may adversely affect an individual’s reputation. The Court observed that failure to conduct pre-publication verification may attract legal consequences, especially in cases involving defamation or misinformation.

The matter arose from a petition alleging that a social media post was shared without adequate fact-checking, leading to reputational damage. The Court stressed that journalists and digital content creators cannot rely solely on the speed and reach of online platforms but must uphold standards of fairness, accuracy, and responsibility traditionally expected of the press. By reiterating adherence to ethical codes, the High Court signalled that digital media actors are equally bound by journalistic discipline and may face legal scrutiny where content breaches established norms.

**B&P View:** The ruling reinforces judicial insistence on responsible digital journalism in an era of rapid online dissemination. While

freedom of expression remains a cornerstone of media practice, the decision highlights that ethical verification and accountability standards apply equally to digital platforms. Clear compliance with journalistic norms will be essential to balance press freedom with protection against reputational harm and misinformation.

### 2. BOMBAY HIGH COURT GRANTS INTERIM PROTECTION TO SHATRUGHAN SINHA’S PERSONALITY RIGHTS OVER ‘KHAMOSH’ CATCHPHRASE

The Bombay High Court on 16 February 2026, granted ad-interim legal protection to Shatrughan Sinha against the alleged unauthorised exploitation of his identity, including his iconic dialogue “Khamosh” and other distinctive attributes, on digital platforms.

In his suit, Sinha a veteran actor and Lok Sabha MP complained that his name, image, likeness, voice, vocal mannerisms and signature catchphrase have been used across social media, e-commerce sites, AI-generated content and other online mediums without consent for commercial gain. He sought urgent interim relief restraining various entities, including unnamed “John Doe” respondents and digital platforms, from using or exploiting his personality rights.

A single-judge bench led by Justice Sharmila Deshmukh observed that Sinha’s dialogue “Khamosh”, delivered in his unique style, is exclusively associated with his persona and prima facie merits protection against misuse. The Court noted that unauthorised use of his identity including deepfakes, morphed images, impersonations, fake endorsements and related AI-generated material likely infringes his personality, publicity and privacy rights. Accordingly, the interim order restrains



websites, social media platforms and other online entities from exploiting or distributing such content and directs takedown of infringing material.

The injunction remains in force until a detailed hearing of the interim application on 30 March 2026.

**B&P View:** This interim ruling underscores the judiciary's increasing willingness to protect personality and publicity rights in the digital age, especially where AI-driven manipulation and unauthorised commercial use threaten to dilute a public figure's distinct identity. Recognising catchphrases and mannerisms as protectable elements reflects evolving legal norms around celebrity branding and digital exploitation. At the same time, the final outcome will need to balance enforcement with broader questions about free expression and platform responsibility.

### 3. DELHI HIGH COURT REFUSES BLANKET GAG ORDER IN ROAD ACCIDENT CASE INVOLVING MINOR

The Delhi High Court on 20 February 2026 has declined to grant a blanket gag order restraining the media from reporting on a road accident allegedly involving a minor. The order was while hearing a plea seeking comprehensive restrictions on reportage relating to the incident.

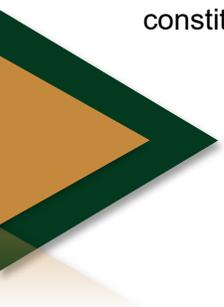
The petitioner sought wide-ranging directions to prohibit media platforms from publishing or broadcasting any content connected with the case, citing concerns over prejudice, privacy, and the potential impact on ongoing proceedings. However, the Court refused to impose a sweeping restraint, observing that such blanket prohibitions on media coverage would be inconsistent with established constitutional principles governing freedom of

speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.

At the same time, the Court underscored that reportage must remain responsible and within the bounds of law, particularly where a minor is involved. It reiterated that statutory safeguards protecting the identity of children in conflict with law or in sensitive proceedings must be strictly adhered to. The bench indicated that while the media cannot be completely barred from reporting, publication of identifying details or speculative narratives that could prejudice the investigation or trial would not be permissible.

The Court thus balanced competing interests freedom of the press, the right to a fair investigation and trial, and the privacy and protection of a minor refusing prior restraint while cautioning against irresponsible reporting.

**B&P View:** The order reflects judicial reluctance to impose prior restraints on the media except in exceptional circumstances. By refusing a blanket gag order, the Court reaffirmed the high threshold required to curtail press freedom. Simultaneously, its emphasis on statutory protections for minors signals that freedom of expression is not absolute. Media houses must exercise heightened diligence in cases involving juveniles, ensuring compliance with child protection laws and fair trial principles.



## STATE SPECIFIC UPDATES

### 1. TAMIL NADU GOVERNMENT ISSUES AMENDMENTS TO CINEMAS REGULATION RULES TO STRENGTHEN STRUCTURAL SAFETY

The Government of Tamil Nadu on 11 February 2026 issued amendments to the Tamil Nadu Cinemas (Regulation) Rules, 1957, strengthening structural safety compliance requirements for cinema theatres across the State. The amendment has been given retrospective effect from 11 July 2023.

The revised Rule 40(4) introduces a more structured and risk-sensitive framework for issuance of structural soundness certificates. Under the amended provision, an Executive Engineer is required to issue a certificate of structural soundness in Form 'N' accompanied by a detailed technical report in Form 'O'. While such certificates will ordinarily remain valid for three years, the validity period is reduced in the case of older buildings. Cinemas constructed with framed structures that are more than 35 years old, and those built with load-bearing structures exceeding 20 years in age, will be granted certificates valid only for two years.

The amendment also expands the inspection powers of the Executive Engineer. The officer may examine any portion of the cinema building, conduct necessary structural probing, and call for detailed information relating to construction materials and structural integrity. Where deficiencies are identified, the authority may refuse to issue the certificate, provided reasons are recorded in writing. This introduces a stronger layer of documented accountability within the certification process.

The revised framework reflects an enhanced emphasis on public safety, particularly in the context of ageing cinema infrastructure. By differentiating validity periods based on structural type and age, the State has

adopted a calibrated regulatory approach aimed at mitigating risks associated with structural fatigue and material degradation.

**B&P View:** The amendments signify a proactive step toward strengthening infrastructure safety standards in cinema halls. Shorter certification cycles for older buildings and expanded technical scrutiny improve regulatory oversight and reduce structural risk exposure. While the framework enhances public safety safeguards, its success will depend on consistent technical inspections and efficient administrative implementation to avoid operational disruptions or certification delays for theatre operators.

### 2. KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT WEIGHS SOCIAL MEDIA & MOBILE PHONE BAN FOR CHILDREN UNDER 16

Chief minister Siddaramaiah on 22 February 2026 sought the opinion of vice chancellors of the state on imposing a ban on social media and mobile phones for children under 16 as part of wider efforts to address concerns about addiction, mental health and academic distraction among minors. The proposals were discussed with the state's political leadership seeking extensive feedback before taking a final decision.

At a recent meeting with vice-chancellors of state universities, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah raised the issue of excessive screen-time and its impact on children's behavior, physical well-being and academic focus. Citing examples of international approaches, including restrictions adopted in countries such as Australia and several European nations, the CM solicited opinions from education leaders on whether similar curbs should be considered in Karnataka.

Officials emphasized that the discussions remain at a consultative stage. The government is exploring the idea of banning mobile phone use for under-16s within school and college environments, and is also examining policy frameworks from overseas where age-based restrictions on social media have been legislated to protect young users. In Australia, for instance, legislation now prohibits those under 16 from establishing accounts on certain major social media platforms as part of an online safety law amendment.

While parents, educators and policymakers share concerns about rising addiction to smartphones and social media, a range of stakeholders have urged caution. School management bodies and child rights advocates have pointed out practical challenges, noting that mobile phones are increasingly integrated into education systems for sharing assignments, communication and safety purposes, making a blanket ban potentially difficult to implement. They recommend that any regulation should balance digital literacy and safety rather than imposing outright prohibitions.

To that end, the government is reportedly considering the formation of an expert committee comprising representatives from education, mental health, technology and child welfare sectors to study the implications and frame appropriate policy recommendations. This panel is expected to assess the impact of digital content on minors' academic performance, mental health and overall development before guiding future legislative or regulatory action.

While no formal ban has yet been enacted, the debate in Karnataka reflects a growing recognition of the challenges posed by pervasive mobile phone use among children,

and a desire to align public policy with emerging global trends aimed at safeguarding youth wellbeing.

**B&P View:** The Karnataka government's deliberations underscore a complex policy challenge: protecting children from the documented harms of excessive screen time and social media exposure, while also preserving access to digital tools that have become indispensable for modern education and social interaction. By seeking expert input and learning from international examples, policymakers are attempting to strike a balance between regulation and practical implementation. The outcome will likely hinge on designing nuanced frameworks that prioritize child safety, digital literacy and developmental needs over simplistic prohibitions.

### **3. BIHAR GOVERNMENT CONSIDERS POLICY TO CHECK SCREEN TIME AND SOCIAL MEDIA EXPOSURE AMONG CHILDREN**

The Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary told the Assembly on February 23 2026 that Bihar Government is contemplating a comprehensive policy to regulate screen time and social media exposure among children, as part of a wider initiative aimed at safeguarding youth mental health and developmental wellbeing. The proposal, discussed in early March 2026, reflects growing concerns about the impact of pervasive digital media use on children's academic performance, sleep cycles, and psychological health.

During consultations with child welfare experts, educators, and mental health professionals, senior officials emphasised that unregulated screen usage and social media engagement have been linked to distraction from studies, reduced physical activity, and



increased risk of anxiety and addictive behaviour among minors. The discussions also highlighted challenges faced by parents in monitoring digital consumption, particularly with the widespread use of smartphones and social applications among children.

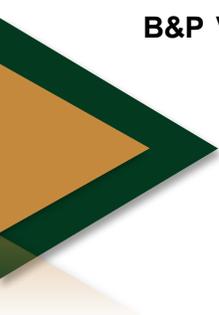
According to state officials, the envisaged policy framework could include recommended daily screen time limits, strategies for parental controls, digital literacy campaigns in schools, and clear guidelines for educational institutions to integrate technology responsibly into learning without contributing to excessive recreational use. While specifics are still under development, there are indications that the policy may draw insights from successful international models where governments have instituted age-appropriate digital usage standards and educational programmes to mitigate harmful effects.

Stakeholders from the education sector have welcomed the focus on child wellbeing but emphasised that any regulatory policy must balance digital safety with the legitimate educational benefits of technology. They have also underscored the importance of empowering parents with tools and awareness, rather than relying solely on restrictive norms. Advocates for children's rights have reiterated that any policy must be grounded in evidence-based research and should prioritise children's holistic development.

As the state government continues to refine the proposal, it plans to engage with civil society organisations, paediatric health experts, and digital safety educators to ensure a well-rounded approach. The policy draft is expected to be presented for broader public consultation before any formal adoption.

**B&P View:** The Bihar government's initiative

to contemplate a policy on children's screen time and social media exposure highlights a growing recognition of digital wellbeing as a public policy concern. While the intention to protect children from the documented adverse effects of excessive screen use is commendable, effective implementation will depend on crafting balanced, practical, and context-sensitive measures that respect educational needs, parental autonomy, and children's rights. Drawing from international best practices while ensuring local relevance could help develop a policy that not only addresses risks but also promotes safe, informed, and constructive engagement with digital media.





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## Latest Awards and Recognitions

### RSGI Resight (RSG India)

#### IBLJ A List

A List (2023-2024)

### ALB India Law Awards 2025

Notable Firm (2024)

### Legal 500

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### IFLR1000 (34th Edition) 2024

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

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### Asia Law 2022

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### Global Law Expert 2021

Cross Border Private Equity Transactions Law Firm of the year

### RSG Consulting 2019

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