

Government Cognisant of Growing Risks Posed by Fake, False and Misleading Content

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Freedom of speech is guaranteed under Article 19 of the Constitution. At the same time, the Government is also cognisant of the growing risks posed by fake, false and misleading information on digital platforms.

The Government has notified the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, under the Information Technology Act, 2000. Part-III of these Rules provide for publishers of online curated content (OTT platforms) which, inter alia, require the publishers not to transmit any content which is prohibited by law for the time being in force.

The Code requires them to undertake age-based classification of content into 5 categories, based on general guidelines provided in the Schedule to the Rules. The Code also provides that the OTT Platform will put in place adequate safeguards for restricting age-inappropriate content for children. The Rules, inter alia, provide for Code of Ethics to be followed by publishers of news & current affairs. It includes adherence to the Programme Code laid down under the Cable Television Networks Act, 1995, and the Norms of Journalistic Conduct under the Press Council Act, 1978. The Programme Code and Norms of Journalistic Conduct, inter alia, require publishers not to disseminate content that is inaccurate, misleading, false, or half-truths.

A Fact Check Unit (FCU) has been set up under Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in November, 2019 to check fake news relating to the Central Government. After verifying the authenticity of news from authorized sources in Ministries/ Departments of Government of India, FCU posts correct information on its social media platforms.

All programmes and advertisements telecast on private satellite TV channels are required to adhere to the Programme Code and Advertising Code laid down in Cable Television Networks Rules, 1994 framed under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995. These codes contain a wide range of parameters to regulate content on such TV channels. The Programme Code inter-alia provides that no programme should be carried which contains anything obscene, defamatory, deliberate false and suggestive innuendos and half-truths.

The information was given by Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Dr. L. Murugan in the Rajya Sabha in reply to a question asked by Shri Tejveer Singh.

Mahesh Kumar/ Vivek Vishwash

