

# **AWARENESS INITIATIVES & WEBINARS ON DIGITAL MEDIA ETHICS CODE**

**UNDER THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (INTERMEDIARY  
GUIDELINES AND DIGITAL MEDIA ETHICS CODE) RULES, 2021**



**Ministry of Information  
and Broadcasting**  
Government of India



## From the Hon'ble Minister of Information & Broadcasting

### Registration is not needed for digital news platforms under IT Rules, says Anurag Thakur

*The minister added that 1800+ digital news publishers have furnished information sought by the ministry*



by exchange4media Staff  
Updated: Aug 2, 2021 7:40 AM



Information & Broadcasting (I&B) minister Anurag Thakur has said that the digital news platforms don't have to register with the ministry under the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. He also said that the rules only provide furnishing of certain information by digital news publishers. The minister added that 1800+ digital news publishers have furnished information sought by the ministry.



## STAKEHOLDERS SPEAK

*"The webinars have been very informative and built a lot of confidence with the industry."*

Gourav Rakshit, COO, Viacom 18  
Digital

*"I had a couple of questions listed down but the presentation has already answered those questions."*

Venky Mysore, CEO, Red Chillies  
Entertainment

*"The webinar has answered all the queries, and the way they have been answered has been very open, very clear, and with a desire to move forward"*

Punit Misra, President-Content & International Business, Zee, and Chair, FICCI Broadcast Committee

*"A very big 'thank you' for this initiative which has given us confidence as well as clarity on the Digital Media Ethics Code"*

Kranti Gada, COO, Shemaroo  
Entertainment Ltd

“ मंत्रालय सभी सवाल और सुझाव ले रहा है, और सारी  
*information* सीधे हमें मिल रही है।  
यह एक सराहनीय कदम है। ”

Ms. Sushama Shiromanee,  
General Secretary (FMC), Indian Motion  
Picture Producers Association

*“I am glad that the Rules call for self-certifica-  
tion at the first level, and self-regulation at the  
second level.”*

Sam Balsara,  
Chairman, Madison World, and Former  
Chairperson, ASCI

*“As a publisher, we take complete responsibil-  
ity for the live stream (of news channels) on  
OTT platforms.”*

Salil Kumar,  
CEO, TV Today

“ ये बहुत अच्छी बात है कि कोविड के समय में  
जब लोगों को *Fake News* से बहुत परशानी थी  
इस समय में भारत सरकार ये नियम लायी। ”

Dr. Bala Lakhendra,  
Associate Professor, Journalism and  
Mass Communication, Banaras Hindu University

“ मैं आपका आभार व्यक्त करना चाहता हूँ क्योंकि 7 जून के *interaction* में मैंने आपसे निवेदन किया था की FAQs को अन्य क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं में *translate* कीजिये और आपने *translate* करवा दिया। इसके लिए आपका धन्यवाद। ”

Sarman Nagele,  
Founder and Editor, MP Post (Madhya Pradesh)

“ यह बहुत ही अच्छा *session* था। जब मेरे *editor* ने मुझे ये *assign* किया तो मुझे लगा ये मैं कहाँ फंस गया हूँ लेकिन अब मुझे अच्छा लग रहा है कि मैं अच्छी जगह आया और मुझे इतनी जानकारी मिली।..

Ananad Mishra, Navbharat  
(Maharashtra)

*“We have no questions as our doubts and questions have already been answered”*

Rohit Jain,  
Managing Director South Asia, Lionsgate

“ आप लोग बहुत सही समय में ये नियम लाये हैं जहाँ *Self-Regulating Body* का बहुत महत्व है। मंत्रालय को इसे Motivate करने की ज़िम्मेदारी लेनी चाहिए जिससे की लोग अपने मूल कर्तव्यों का पालन सही तरीके से कर सकें और उन्हें बेहतर से समझें । ”

Seema Gill, Executive Editor,  
Khabar fast News Channel  
(Himachal Pradesh)

“ हमने पहले भी ये नियम पढ़े हैं और समझने की कोशिश की है।  
कुछ बातें जैसे शिकायत निवारण तंत्र या फिर  
*Code of Ethics* काफ़ी लोगों को समझ नहीं आई थी।  
वेबिनार के द्वारा काफ़ी आसान भाषा में नियम समझ आ गए हैं। ”

Om Prakash,  
Journalist from Bihar

“ हम 182 *publishers* ने मिलके *Maha Digital Media Association (MDMA)* नाम की  
*Self Regulating body* बनाई है। अभी हमने सरकार को  
रजिस्ट्रेशन के लिए *Proposal* भी भेजा है। ”

Aadvait P. Chauhan,  
Nodal Officer, MDMA (Maharashtra)

“ मैं मंत्रालय का धन्यवाद करता हूँ इस वेबिनार के  
ज़रिये आम जनता और मीडिया की लोगों को  
के बारे में जानकारी देने के लिए ”

Prof. Sanjeev Bhanawat,  
Head and Professor, Centre for Mass  
Communication, University of Rajasthan

*“Digital Media Ethics Code speaks of  
self-regulation and self-classification of  
films (on digital media)”*

Prof. B.K. Ravi,  
Department of Communication,  
Bangalore University



“ लोगों में जागरूकता बढ़ाने के लिए मैं मंत्रालय की इन कोशिशों की सरहाना करता हूँ। जिस तरह से ये वेबिनार आयोजित किया गया और सभी को अपने सवाल पूछने का पूरा-पूरा मौका दिया गया इसके लिए सभी आयोजनकर्ता बधाई के पात्र हैं ”

Dr Indu Kant Dixit,  
Correspondent, Press Trust of India (Uttar Pradesh)

*“Government of India should be more strict for implementation of the Code of Ethics to curb misinformation”*

Mr. David Laitphlang,  
President, Shillong Press Club (Meghalaya)

## ***LIST OF WEBINARS ON DIGITAL MEDIA ETHICS CODE***

S. No	Webinar	Date	No. of Participants
1	Collaboration with FICCI	7 June 2021	175
2	Collaboration with CII	15 June 2021	100
3	Gujarat Region	8 April 2021	75
4	Southern Region (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka)	26 June 2021	240
5	Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan	30 June 2021	260
6	Gautam Budha University	2 July 2021	50
7	Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand	7 July 2021	448
8	Maharashtra, Goa	12 July 2021	320
9	West Bengal, Odisha, North-Eastern Region	14 July 2021	278
10	Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Punjab, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh	20 July 2021	341
11	Collaboration with IIMC	20 August 2021	160
Total			2,447

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**Key Takeaways, Suggestions & Learnings**



**Digital Media Ethics Code**



**Awareness Initiatives**



**Virtual Interactive Webinars**



**Q & A Session**



**Media Coverage**

## KEY TAKEAWAYS, SUGGESTIONS & LEARNINGS

With a multi-pronged campaign during the challenging times of COVID-19, the initiatives conducted for sensitization regarding the Digital Media Ethics Code under Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 led to pan-India awareness among the various stakeholders. The virtual interactive meetings played a significant role where a free-wheeling discussion between the Ministry and representatives of digital media publishers led to knowledge sharing, even on aspects beyond the subject of IT Rules, 2021, and emergence of multiple ideas and suggestions on the broader digital media sector.

### Responsiveness Towards Suggestions

Some of the inputs received from the various stakeholders have already been acted upon and implemented. These include :

- *Release of booklet on Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) in multiple regional languages:* The FAQs, earlier released in English and Hindi, have been made available in 12 regional languages.
- *Conducting virtual interactive meetings at regional level:* Various regional level webinars have been conducted for interaction with the stakeholders and reflection of regional perspectives with respect to digital media.
- *Providing acknowledgements to the publishers who have furnished information to the Ministry:* The publishers which have furnished information to the Ministry have been given acknowledgements in this regard.
- *Clarifying on the coverage of digital platforms of traditional news media (TV and newspaper) entities within the ambit of the Rules:* The Ministry issued a comprehensive and reasoned clarification on this aspect on 10 June, 2021.

## *Countering Fake News*

One of the main concerns raised during the webinars was the need for countering fake news. It was suggested that the publishers who regularly spread false and/or misleading information should be held accountable, and a mechanism for identification and redressal of disinformation may be developed. In this regard, the stakeholders were made aware of the Fact Check Unit within the Press Information Bureau, along with the relevant provisions of the Digital Media Ethics Code. The participants also suggested that a campaign may be carried out by the Government for empowering the citizens with capabilities to identify and prevent spread of fake news.

## *Coordination with States/UTs*

Various participants and stakeholders expressed the need for greater coordination between the Government of India and the State Governments/UT Administrations on various aspects such as:

- Recognition and accreditation of journalists working exclusively for digital news media organizations, with the State/UT Governments along with facilitation for access to media events;
- State level policies for advertisements on digital media; and
- Protection of journalists working for digital news portals from frivolous FIRs and cases through greater awareness among local authorities about the three-tier grievance redressal mechanism established under the Rules.

All suggestions of the participants were positively received and noted by the Ministry. The participants were informed that the Ministry welcomes all suggestions from the various stakeholders as well as the general public, and the same can be communicated on the email ids provided in the presentation.

## **DIGITAL MEDIA ETHICS CODE**

Under the Information Technology Act, 2000, Government of India notified the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code Rules) 2021 on 25th February, 2021. The Digital Media Ethics Code, contained in Part III of the Rules, pertains to digital news publishers and OTT platforms, and is administered by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB).

The Digital Media Ethics Code keeps the citizen at the heart of the institutional framework for publishers of news and current affairs content, and publishers of online curated content, on digital media. It provides for a Code of Ethics for digital media publishers, and a three-tier grievance redressal framework for effective and time-bound redressal of grievances related to violation of the Code of Ethics. The Rules establish a soft touch co-regulatory architecture with two levels of self-regulation by the publishers- Level-I being the publisher itself, and Level-II as the self-regulatory bodies to be constituted by the publishers. The residual grievances which remain unaddressed at the first two levels would be resolved by the oversight mechanism at Level-III. The Code also provides statutory recognition to digital media publishers through the provision related to the furnishing of information by the publishers.

Digital media being a relatively technical subject, with the publishers ranging from large multinational companies to small individual publishers, the Ministry considers hand-holding and sensitization of the diverse range of stakeholders to be of great importance for achieving the full potential of the various provisions under the Rules. Being a citizen-centric mechanism based on redressal of grievances, awareness among various stakeholders and citizens is crucial to empower the citizens to make informed choices about content, get their grievances redressed in definite time frame and protect children/youth from obnoxious content as well as help to fight the menace of fake news on online/digital media.



## AWARENESS INITIATIVES

The significance of creating awareness about the Digital Media Ethics Code was emphasised by the Hon'ble Minister of Information & Broadcasting from a time even before the notification of the Rules. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology, in its 25th Report on the Demands for Grants (2021-22) of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting had also observed the need for an awareness campaign regarding the provisions related to digital news publishers and OTT platforms. The Secretary, I&B, played a pivotal role in conceptualizing and implementing the various efforts taken by the Ministry in this regard.

Addressing a joint press conference on 25 February, 2021, the crucial task of making people aware about the Digital Media Ethics Code was led by the Hon'ble Minister of Information & Broadcasting, and the Hon'ble Minister of Electronics & Information Technology. The press conference was live-telecast by DD News and various private news channels, while also being live web-casted on social media by the Press Information Bureau (PIB).



The Government  
Announces  
**Intermediary  
Guidelines &  
Digital Media  
Ethics Code  
Rules, 2021  
to Safeguard  
Users' Rights**

#ResponsibleFreedom  
#OTTGuidelines



Infographics on various aspects of the Digital Media Ethics Code were released on social media by MyGov, PIB and media units of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting. A two-page article highlighting various aspects of the Rules was published in New India Samachar, the Government of India fortnightly published in 13 languages reaching physically to over 4 lakh recipients, and through email to about 6.5 crore people.

Representatives from the Ministry made presentations before the Hon'ble Members of Parliament on the various aspects of the Digital Media Ethics Code on 9 March, 2021. In the month of March, the emails were sent to over 500 publishers regarding implementation of the Rules. An advertisement was also issued in major national and regional newspapers on 25 March, 2021.



The Hon'ble Minister of Information & Broadcasting held multiple interactions directly with the stakeholders. In this regard, the Hon'ble Minister held a virtual conference attended by representatives of various OTT platforms including from Alt Balaji, Hotstar, Amazon Prime, Netflix, Jio, Zee5, etc. on 4 March, 2021. An interaction with representatives of Digital News Publishers Association (DNPA) was held on 11 March, 2021. The Hon'ble Minister also had an interaction with representatives of Producers Guild of India on 26 March, 2021 with representatives of Producers Guild of India on 26 March, 2021.

The Ministry has also published a booklet on the basic features of the Digital Media Ethics Code, and one booklet on the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) related to the Rules. The FAQs have also been made available in Hindi, English, and 12 regional languages. Both booklets have been made available on the website of the Ministry.



These initiatives were followed by a series of webinars conducted by Shri Vikram Sahay, Joint Secretary (P&A), Ministry of Information & Broadcasting to reach out to the diverse stakeholders, explain various aspects related to the Rules, and clarify doubts, misconceptions, and misapprehensions related to the Digital Media Ethics Code.

  
**Ministry of  
Information and Broadcasting**  
invites you for a Virtual Interactive  
meeting on

**DIGITAL MEDIA ETHICS CODE- 2021**  
Part III of IT rules related to digital news publishers  
and OTT platforms

 : 20 July, 2021  
 : 3 pm Onwards  
with  
**Shri. Vikram Sahay**  
Joint Secretary  
Ministry of I & B  
Government of India

Please send your confirmation to Kshitij Aggarwal at [kshitij.aggarwal@gov.in](mailto:kshitij.aggarwal@gov.in)

## VIRTUAL INTERACTIVE WEBINARS

With the goal of reaching out to even the smallest digital media publishers, including organizations run by single individuals, the Ministry organized a string of webinars beginning from the month of April, 2021. These virtual interactive meetings turned out to be the most significant initiatives conducted for the purpose of sensitization and awareness generation among the stakeholders, clarifying their doubts and apprehensions, and learning from their perspectives with respect to fighting the menace of fake news and harmful content.



## Organization & Participation



The first webinar for engagement with digital media publishers April, 2020, and involved participation of a range of diverse stakeholders invited for the interaction by the regional office of the Press Information Bureau, Ahmedabad.

Due to the disruption caused by the second wave of COVID-19 during the months of April and May, the series of webinars planned by the Ministry was resumed in June. The Ministry, in collaboration with the PIB, conducted seven regional level webinars

spanning across various States/UTs of the country. One national level webinar each was organised by industry bodies- CII and FICCI. The Ministry also participated in a knowledge sharing event at Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida.

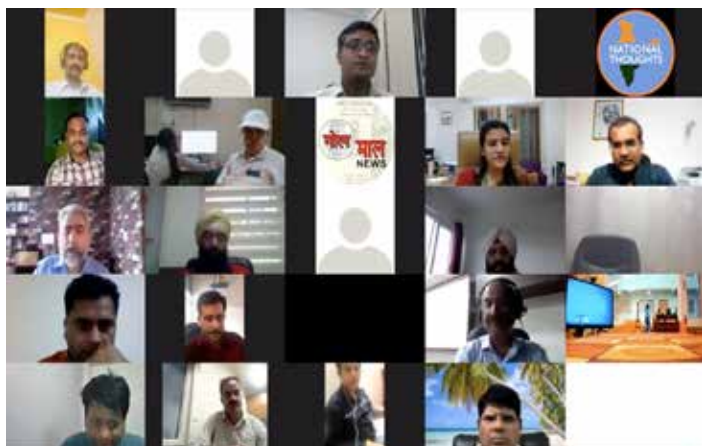
### ***List of Webinars on Digital Media Ethics Code***

The webinars, with an overall participation of close to 2,400 stakeholders, were attended by a diverse group of participants. These included:

- Representatives from OTT platforms including content managers;
- Editors and management representatives from various national and regional media outlets;
- Representatives from standalone digital news media publishers;
- Journalists and media persons;
- Officials from Departments of Information & Public Relations of States/UTs;
- Faculty and students of institutes of mass communication;
- Representatives from associations of digital media publishers;

Witnessing a very enthusiastic participation from small publishers, the webinars provided a unique opportunity for exchange of perspectives, knowledge and ideas between the industry, academia, and the Government.

The virtual interactive meetings were usually conducted in a two-phase format, beginning with a presentation on the various aspects of the Digital Media Ethics Code by a senior official of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, followed by Q&A session.



## *Presentation by the Ministry*

The Ministry intended to make the publishers aware of the various aspects related to the Digital Media Ethics Code. Additionally, the webinars sought to sensitize the stakeholders regarding their responsibilities with respect to the adherence to the Code of Ethics, time-bound redressal of grievances related to the violation of Code of Ethics; and furnishing of information to the Ministry in accordance with the provisions of the Rules. For this purpose, the Joint Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting made a presentation (approximately 25-30 minutes) at the beginning of the webinar. The presentation made during the various webinars is as under:



# Structure of Presentation

- 01** Background
- 02** Digital Media Rules
- 03** Further Steps

## 1

### BACKGROUND – ISSUES INVOLVING DIGITAL MEDIA



## Background



## Growth of Digital Media

In last 6 years data usage in India increased 43 times (TRAI)

### Over the Top (OTT) streaming platforms

- India is the [world's fastest growing OTT market](#) (PwC, 2020)
- Market to reach [\\$2.9 billion by 2024](#) (28.6% annual growth)
- Around [40 OTT](#) platforms in India

### Online News

- Main source of news among Indians [under 35](#) (Reuters, 2019)

### Impact of COVID-19

- 41% increase in time spent on news apps
- 55-60% growth in OTT subscribers in 2020

# 2

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (INTERMEDIARY GUIDELINES AND DIGITAL MEDIA ETHICS CODE) RULES, 2021

*under*

**Information Technology Act, 2000**

### BACKGROUND

Large number of Grievances

Representations from Elected Representatives

Court Cases –Supreme Court/High Courts

Opinions/views in Media



## UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

Liberal approach, upholding media freedom

Based on Existing Statute

Co-regulatory architecture

Utilizing experience of existing practices and procedures –  
Domestic and international

## Coverage

Intermediaries

Publishers



- News and current affairs on online platforms
- Online Curated Content (OTT Platforms)

## Key Features

Due diligence by intermediaries

Code of Ethics for Publishers

Three-tier co-regulatory framework

Furnishing and Disclosure of information

## Code of Ethics

### ONLINE NEWS PUBLISHERS

- **Norms of Journalistic Conduct** under Press Council Act, 1978
- **Programme Code** under Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Rules, 1994
- **Prohibited Content** not to be transmitted

### LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

## Code of Ethics

### OTT PLATFORMS

**General Principles** - Not to display content which is **Prohibited**:

- prohibited under any law for the time being in force
- promotes and encourages disrespect to the sovereignty and integrity of India
- encourages and promotes terrorism or other forms of violence against the State
- detrimental to India's friendly relations with foreign countries;
- endangers or jeopardizes the national security

Reasonable restrictions under the Constitution

## Code of Ethics

### OTT PLATFORMS

- Content Classification (By publishers → SELF-CLASSIFICATION)
- Display of Classification
- Display Content Descriptor
- Access restriction to a child – age gating, parental controls, etc.

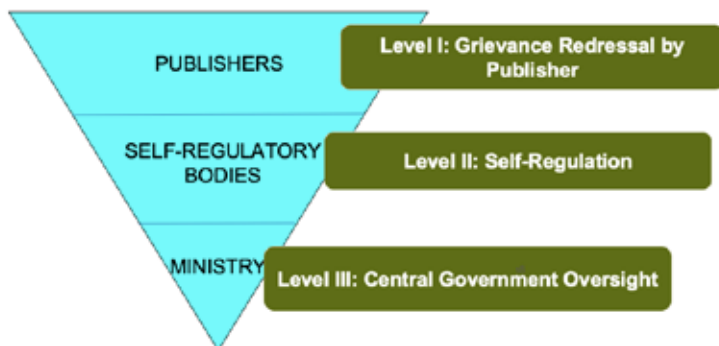
### Content Classification

	Nature of Content (suitable for)	Classification
1	unrestricted access, regardless of age, and is family friendly	U
2	for persons aged 7 years and above, and can be viewed by a person under the age of 7 years with parental guidance	U/A 7+
3	for persons aged 13 years and above, and can be viewed by a person under the age of 13 years with parental guidance	U/A 13+
4	for persons aged 16 years and above, and can be viewed by a person under the age of 16 years with parental guidance	U/A 16+
5	which is restricted to adults	A

### Content Classification based on international practice

## GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL MECHANISM

### Three-Tier Co-Regulatory Mechanism



### Level I- Publisher

- Appoint a **Grievance Officer**
- Time bound **acknowledgement and disposal** of grievance **relating to Code of Ethics**
- **Provide users with reasons** for any action taken/not taken
- **Display all details** related to its grievance redressal mechanism

## Level II – Self-Regulating Body

### STRUCTURE

- Independent body/bodies constituted by publishers
- Headed by retired judge of Supreme Court or a High Court/person of eminence;
- Members - experts from various fields
- Publisher to be a member of a self-regulating body

### FUNCTIONS

- Oversee adherence to Code of Ethics by publisher
- Address grievances/appeals unresolved at Level I
- Issue guidance/advisories to a publisher, ensuring compliance

## Level II – Self-Regulating Body

### GUIDANCE/ADVISORIES

- Warning card/disclaimer
- Warning/censure/admonish/reprimand/apology
- Reclassify ratings/modifications in content descriptor, age classification, edit synopsis of content.
- Refer to Ministry cases involving content which may incite commission of a cognizable offence relating to public order or circumstances covered under section 69A of the IT Act

## Oversight Mechanism – Level III

### FUNCTIONS OF MINISTRY

- Constitute an Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC)
- Publish a charter for self-regulating bodies
- Issue appropriate guidance and advisories to publishers
- Issue appropriate orders and directions to publishers for adherence to Code of Ethics
- Take action for non-compliance of its directions

### Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC)- Composition

- To be chaired by **Authorized Officer** appointed by Ministry of I&B
- **Senior representatives** from Ministries of Women and Child Development, Home Affairs, Law and Justice, Electronics and Information Technology, External Affairs, Defence
- **Domain experts**

### Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC)

To hear **complaints**

- Arising out of **grievances in respect of decisions taken at the Level I/II**, including where no such decision is taken within the time specified in the grievance redressal mechanism;
- Referred to by **the Ministry**.



## Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC)

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Warning card/disclaimer
- Warning/censure/admonish/reprimand/apology
- Reclassify ratings/modifications in content descriptor, age classification, edit synopsis of content.
- Delete/modify content which may incite commission of a cognizable offence relating to public order;
- Block content for circumstances covered under section 69A of the IT Act

## Action by Central Government

### ORDERS AND DIRECTIONS

- Issue orders and directions based on recommendations of the IDC
- Suo motu interim order of blocking content in emergency cases on matters covered under section 69A of the IT Act
- Suo motu action to be placed for consideration of IDC within 48 hours
- All orders of blocking to be placed before a Review Committee

### Furnishing/disclosure of Information

- Publisher to [furnish basic information](#) to the Ministry
- [Disclosure of information](#) in public domain regarding grievance redressal by publisher and self-regulating body

## 3

### FURTHER STEPS

### Steps taken by I&B

- Interaction by Hon'ble I&B Minister with OTT Platforms (4<sup>th</sup> March, 2021) and digital news publishers (11<sup>th</sup> March, 2021) and Producers Guild of India (26<sup>th</sup> March, 2021)
- Rules placed on website, along with FAQs, various Press Releases
- Advertisement in Print Media for informing all stakeholders
- Webinars for outreach
- E-mails sent in March, 2021 to over 500 publishers regarding the rules
- Formats for furnishing information by publishers announced on 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2021
- E-mail with the format sent to over 1,200 publishers

### Response of publishers

- Over 1,800 publishers have submitted information in the formats
- Several bodies/associations have sent communication regarding constitution of self-regulating body
- Representations received regarding certain concerns/timelines, etc.

## Expectations from publishers

- Adhere to the [Code of Ethics](#)
- [Furnish information](#) to Ministry in requisite format ([26<sup>th</sup> May, 2021](#))
- Develop a [grievance redressal mechanism](#)/appoint [grievance officer](#)
- Constitute [self-regulating body](#) through mutual consultation/dialogue
- [Information disclosure](#) of grievances disposed

## Contact us

[Website : mib.gov.in](http://mib.gov.in) —————> Digital Media

### [Contacts](#)

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## Q & A SESSION

After acquainting the stakeholders and other participants with the Digital Media Ethics Code, all the webinars had a dedicated time-slot for the Q&A session for clarification of doubts as well as providing the participants an opportunity to make open-minded suggestions with respect to the implementation of the Rules.

The Joint Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, gave specific instructions to the moderators of each webinar that no question should be declined, and the participants should be given full opportunity to complete their question, clarification or suggestion without interruptions from the moderators. The liveliness and vibrance of the Q&A session is evident in the fact that although the dedicated time slot for each Q&A session was 1 hour 30 minutes, these sessions often went on for over two hours till there were no further questions, doubts and suggestions.

Some of the questions which were asked multiple times during the webinars, and responded to are as under:

**Q1. Who can be a Grievance Redressal Officer? Can a digital media publisher appoint anyone from outside as Grievance Redressal Officer? Will it be enough for any employee of an online media/OTT platform to be nominated as Grievance Redressal Officer?**

**Ans.** Rule 11 provides that a publisher “shall appoint a Grievance Redressal Officer based in India, who shall be responsible for the redressal of grievances received by him”. In this regard, the Grievance Redressal Officer may be appointed from within the publisher organisation. It is expected that the officer shall be responsible for handling grievances on behalf of the publisher. Therefore, even an existing employee, working in any capacity within the organization, can be nominated as the Grievance Redressal Officer. In case of digital publishers run by single individuals, the same individual can also perform the role of the Grievance Redressal Officer.

**Q2. Will the information furnished by the publisher be rejected if the publisher fails to mention the details of the self-regulatory body?**

**Ans.** The Ministry has received information from over 1,800 digital media publishers, and acknowledged the receipt of information through emails. For any particulars in the form that may be missing or require elaboration, the Ministry has also intimated the concerned publishers. Since many publishers are currently in the process of forming self-regulating bodies, information regarding the same may be updated by the publisher in future.

A blue poster for a webinar titled "Webinar on Digital Media Ethics Code". The title is in white text at the top. Below it, there are two bullet points in white text. To the right of the text is an illustration of a hand pointing at a smartphone screen, with various digital icons floating around it. In the top right corner, there is a small logo for "pitb" (Public Information for Transparency and Better Governance).

Webinar on  
**Digital Media Ethics Code**

- Digital Media Ethics Code for OTT platforms and digital news publishers keeps the citizen at the heart of the grievance redressal mechanism
- Rules establish a soft touch co-regulatory architecture involving a Code of Ethics and a three-tier grievance redressal framework for publishers on digital media

**Q3. If a publisher has more than one news website, should the information be provided for all the news websites?**

**Ans.** Rule 18, of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 provides for furnishing of certain information by the publishers. If a publisher operates more than one news website, the publisher should furnish the information regarding all the websites in the applicable format separately.

**Q4. Can a publisher having multiple digital media websites/platforms appoint common Grievance Redressal Officers for more than one website?**

**Ans.** An entity having more than one digital media websites/platforms can appoint a common Grievance Redressal Officer for such websites/platforms.

**Q5. Is the content on OTT platforms which is not produced in India but made available in India covered under the Rules?**

**Ans.** The Digital Media Ethics Code applies to the publishers which operate in the territory of India, or conduct systematic business activity of making their content available in India.

**Q6. Will OTT platforms have to add descriptors for old films that have been classified by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC)?**

**Ans.** In respect of the films which have already been classified by the CBFC, the OTT platforms can use the classification rating as provided by CBFC, and modulate wherever considered necessary with the five level classification. The OTT platforms may add content descriptors for such films to help the viewer make informed choices about the content that is made available by the OTT platform.

**Q7. Can the publishers club multiple grievances received pertaining to a specific content and redress them together?**

**Ans.** A publisher may receive multiple grievances related to a specific news or online curated content. In this regard, the publisher may club all grievances related to a specific content, which may be redressed together through a single decision by the publisher. Such a decision may be communicated to all the complainants.

**Q8. Where should the Grievance Redressal Officer send the monthly compliance report?**



**Ans.** As per the provisions of the rules, a publisher and a self-regulating body, shall make monthly disclosure of grievances received by it, and consequent action taken. The publisher should display such information publicly on its website or interface to ensure transparency in the redressal of grievances. There is no requirement of sending the monthly compliance report to the Ministry.

**Q9. How can few online media/OTT in a state form a self-regulatory body ?**

**Ans.** Publishers, or their associations, may in coordination among themselves establish self-regulating bodies as per the provisions of the rules. After constitution, the self-regulatory bodies shall register with the Ministry.

**Q10 . What shall be the role of the OTT platform with respect to grievances related to feeds of TV news channels on their platforms?**

**Ans.** “Online curated content” as defined under the Rules specifically excludes “news and current affairs content”. When any news and current affairs content of a digital news publisher is transmitted on an OTT platform, such content would be outside the regulatory responsibility of that platform. However, if the OTT platform receives a grievance related to such news and current affairs content, it may transfer the same to the concerned publisher of that content. This position has also been clarified through a clarification issued on 10 June, 2021, and is available on the website of the Ministry.

**Q11. Where to register complaints against any fake news published on any digital media platform?**

**Ans.** The digital news publishers are required to establish a grievance redressal mechanism, and appoint a Grievance Officer based in India. The publisher shall also display the contact details related to its grievance redressal mechanism and the name and contact details of its Grievance Officer at



an appropriate place on its website or interface. The grievances related to fake news published on any digital news publisher may be submitted to the Grievance Redressal Officer of the concerned publisher.

**Q12. Does the livestream of news channels or live sporting events on OTT platforms need to be classified into age-based categories?**

**Ans.** The Rules provide separate guidelines under the Code of Ethics with respect to news and current affairs content, and online curated content. The requirement for age-based classification of content is only applicable for the online curated content. The livestream of news channels or sports on OTT platforms need not be classified into age-based categories.

















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