

**No.11013/45/2024-DM**  
**Government of India**  
**Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**  
**'A' Wing, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi-1**

Dated: 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2024

**ADVISORY**

To,  
Publishers of Online Curated Content (OTT platforms)

**Subject: Advisory for OTT Platforms on Streaming Content Related to Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances – reg**

It has come to the attention of the Ministry that certain streaming content available on OTT platforms is inadvertently promoting, glamorising or glorifying the use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances through such portrayal by the main protagonist and other actors. Such a portrayal has serious repercussion, particularly regarding the potential influence on young and impressionable viewers.

2. Attention is invited to provisions of Part-III of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, notified under the Information Technology Act, 2000, applicable to publishers of online curated content (commonly referred to as OTT platforms).

3. The Code of Ethics for OTT platforms as provided under the Rules provides that a publisher shall not transmit or publish or exhibit any content which is prohibited under any law for the time being in force or has been prohibited by any court of competent jurisdiction. The general guidelines for classification of content provides as under:

- i. Curated content may be considered in the light of the contemporary standards of the country and the people to which such content relates.
- ii. Classification decisions may take into the theme of any content but will depend significantly on the treatment of that theme, especially the sensitivity of its presentation. The most challenging themes, including drug misuse, are unlikely

- to be appropriate at the junior levels of classification.
- iii. Curated content may be judged in its entirety from the point of view of its overall impact. The tone of content can be an important factor in deciding the influence it may have on various groups of people.
  - iv. The classification of any content may also depend upon the target audience of the work, and the impact of the work on such audience.
4. Further, the issue specific guidelines for classification of content include the following considerations in respect of classification of content:
- i. Psychotropic substances, liquor, smoking and tobacco: Films or serials, etc. that as a whole portray misuse of psychotropic substances, liquor, smoking and tobacco would qualify for a higher category of classification.
  - ii. Imitable behaviour: Portrayal of potentially dangerous behaviour that are likely to incite the commission of any offence, including infliction of self-harm, and that children and young people may potentially copy, shall receive a higher classification.
5. Based on the above, and in the interest of safeguarding the general public, especially the youth, the Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms streaming content in India are hereby advised as under:
- i. **Exercise Due Diligence in Content Review**: OTT platforms must ensure that the content they host does not glamourise or promote the consumption of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in any form. Where drug use is a part of the narrative or the story, any depiction of such consumption as “fashionable” or “acceptable” in society must be avoided.
  - ii. **Adherence to Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS), 1985**: Sections 15, 16, 17, 18 and 20 of the NDPS Act penalize use of Cannabis, Poppy and coca based narcotic drugs. Further, section 27 of the NDPS Act penalizes consumption of any narcotics drugs or psychotropic substances. The promotion/glamourization of such substances through content on OTT platforms may amount to abetment of such use or consumption, being penalized under section 29 of the Act.
  - iii. **Content classification, disclaimers and user warnings**: The platforms are advised to take note of the provisions under the IT Rules, 2021, and ensure proper content classification, warnings, and disclaimers for any content that

contains depictions of drug use, highlighting the harmful consequences of such behaviour.

- iv. **Promotion of Public Health Messaging:** Platforms are also urged to consider incorporating public health messages and disclaimers, educating viewers on the dangers of drug abuse, particularly in programs where drug use is part of the storyline. It is also advised to support creation and promotion of content, including documentaries, which depicts the adverse impact on health due to drug abuse as part of the Corporate Social Responsibility.
6. The Ministry strongly urges all platforms to be mindful of their social responsibility in shaping public opinion and behavior through the entertainment content offered by them.
7. OTT platforms are requested to voluntarily conform to these guidelines in the larger public interest. Non-compliance may result in further regulatory scrutiny, especially in the light of the provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000 read with the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS), 1985.
8. Thank you for your cooperation in ensuring a safer and more responsible digital media environment.
9. This issues with the approval of the competent authority in the Ministry.



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1. Self-Regulatory Bodies of OTT platforms under the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.