

Broadcast Services Bill 2024



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The Indian Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has proposed a new law called the Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, 2024. This law aims to put strict rules on independent news creators who share content on digital platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and X. People are worried that these rules could limit freedom of speech and expression.

Expansion of Regulatory Scope

This draft bill expands its focus to cover not just Over-The-Top (OTT) content and digital news but also social media accounts and independent content creators. It changes the definition of “digital news broadcaster” to include a wider range of online activities, explicitly including individual creators this time.

Definition of ‘Digital News Broadcaster’

The term “digital news broadcaster” now applies to anyone or any group that publishes news online as part of a business. This broad definition allows for wide interpretation, giving the government significant control.

Legal Obligations for Creators

Creators who are classified as digital news broadcasters must:

- Notify the Ministry about their activities.
- Set up Content Evaluation Committees (CECs) to review their content and pay for these costs.

If they don’t comply, they could be fined up to Rs 2.5 crore. This move aims to hold independent creators accountable, especially after their influence in the lead-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, where sensational claims about officials were spread. The goal is to create fairness between mainstream and independent news outlets. Platforms like Facebook and YouTube must follow rules about third-party content. They won’t be held liable if they meet certain criteria. There are also potential criminal penalties for not providing required information about content creators.

International Comparisons

Different countries handle media regulation in various ways. For example:

- Singapore requires OTT platforms to get licenses.
- The United States has looser regulations, focusing more on traditional broadcasting without directly controlling OTT services.