

Cable TV network rules amended

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In news

Recently, the Central Government issued a notification amending the Cable Television Network Rules, 1994.

Current mechanism

- At present, there is an institutional mechanism by way of an Inter-Ministerial Committee to address grievances of citizens relating to violation of the Programme/Advertising Codes under the Rules.
- Similarly, various broadcasters have also developed their internal self-regulatory mechanism for addressing grievances.
- However, a need was felt to lay down a statutory mechanism for strengthening the grievance redressal structure.
- Some broadcasters had also requested for giving legal recognition to their associations/bodies.
- At present there are over 900 television channels which have been granted permission by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting all of which are required to comply with the Programme and Advertising Code laid down under the Cable Television Network Rules.

Supreme court order

The Hon'ble Supreme Court in its order of 2000 in the matter of **"Common Cause Vs Union of India & Others"** while expressing satisfaction over the existing mechanism of grievance redressal set up by the Central Government, had advised to frame appropriate rules to formalize the complaint redressal mechanism.

Key amendments

In the aforementioned background, the Cable Television Network Rules have been amended, they are;

- The amendment provides a statutory mechanism for redressal of grievances/complaints of citizens relating to content broadcast by television channels in accordance with the provisions of the Cable Television Network Act, 1995.
- The statutory mechanism would be transparent.
- As per the amendment, the self-regulating bodies of broadcasters would be registered with the Central Government.
- **The Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules, 2021** provides for a three-level grievance redressal mechanism:
 1. Self-regulation by broadcasters
 2. Self-regulation by the self-regulating bodies of the broadcasters, and
 3. Oversight by an Inter-Departmental Committee at the level of the Union government

Grievance redressal mechanism under new rules

- According to the new rules, a viewer can file a complaint directly to the broadcaster, who will have to respond within 15 days.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, the complaint can be escalated to the self-regulating bodies set up by TV channels, which should deal with the case in 60 days.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the self-regulating body, he may, within 15 days of such decision, prefer an appeal to the Central Government for its consideration under the Oversight Mechanism.
- Such appeals will be dealt with by the Inter-

Departmental Committee set up under the Oversight Mechanism.

Inter-Departmental Committee

- The committee will be headed by the Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting,
- It will have members from the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and representatives of other Ministries and organisations, including experts, as the Centre may decide.
- This third tier is not only kept aside to hear the appeals, it can take up complaints that come directly to the Centre.

Significance of amendment

It paves the way for a strong institutional system for redressing grievances while placing accountability and responsibility on the broadcasters and their self-regulating bodies.

This will bring the television's self-regulatory mechanism at par with that being set-up for OTT players and digital news publishers, as envisaged in the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.