Draft broadcasting Bill threatens creative freedom, warn experts

Say proposed uniform content regulation risks 'standardising' content across platforms

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The government's proposed changes to broadcasting regulations could potentially impede creative expression and restrict freedom of speech, according to experts. The draft Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, 2023, which was released last week for public consultation, seeks to enforce government-mandated programming and advertising rules on broadcasting platforms, including over-the-top (OTT) services.

Ranjana Adhikari, partner at IndusLaw, expressed concerns that subjecting creative media, such as OTT, to government-prescribed programme and advertising codes could "stifle creativity and have a chilling effect on the cherished freedom of speech and expression". She also noted that the heavy compliance burden proposed in the draft Bill could overshadow the continuation of the self-regulatory mechanism for compliance monitoring and grievance redress.

The draft Bill proposes the setting up of Content Evaluation Committees (CECs) and a Broadcast Advisory Council (BAC) to oversee content. However, experts believe the requirements under the proposed regulation to set up CECs under the government-prescribed criteria to self-certify every content is likely to pose significant hurdles to the ease of doing business for OTTs. Adhikari further said: "In addition to original domestic content, most OTT platforms license content from abroad. Subjecting each such creative content to CEC scrutiny will impose burdens on the OTT platforms and impact user experience."

According to the draft Bill, a BAC will oversee content at the third tier of the proposed regulatory structure. Though the BAC would have a majority of independent domain experts, it would still be an advisory body. The ultimate decision in the event of a breach of the codes shall rest with the central government.

"The consultative nature of BAC may pose a potential threat to free speech, especially because the draft Bill seeks to extend its jurisdiction to include digital news," Adhikari explained.

Furthermore, the proposed uniform content regulation risks "standardising" content across platforms, leading creators towards broadly appealing themes to meet compliance, risking the diversity and creativity currently seen, said Shruti Shreya, senior programme manager, The Dialogue.

ON THE ANVIL

- The draft Bill aims to create a consolidated legal framework for the broadcasting sector, including OTT players
- It proposes setting up of content evaluation committees
- A Broadcast Advisory Council (BAC) to oversee content at the third tier of the regulatory structure
- Ultimate decision in case of a breach rests with the govt
- The regulations may impose hurdles on the ease of doing business for OTTs, say experts

'Switch Mobility keen to get external investment'

Hinduja Group flagship firm Ashok Leyland is keen to get external investments for its electric vehicle arm Switch Mobility but only from 'the right strategic partner', and it will not shy away from investing on its own till such an ally is found, according to its Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Shenu Agarwal.

While Switch India is likely to be cash neutral or cash positive going forward, on an operating level at least, for Switch UK some more investments may be required in FY25, with the European and UK markets still not going that strong, he told analysts. PTI

Dabur plans to open unit in south India

Dabur is planning to set up a new factory in south India in less than a year's time, as its business scales in the region, according to its chief executive officer Mohit Malhotra.

Dabur, which now gets 20 per cent of its domestic sales from south India with its business there doubling in the last 5-6 years, is identifying gaps and usages to launch products customised to the markets, he told *PTI* in an interview. The company, having 13 manufacturing units across the country, is augmenting its capacity further to meet the demand and is diversifying its manufacturing activities by adding new lines, he added. PTI

E-Auction – Punj Lloyd Limited (in Liquidation)

Sale of assets of the Company pursuant to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code,2016, as amended

The Liquidator of Punj Lloyd Limited (**"Company"**) is announcing the 3rd round of public e-auction for sale of the movable assets owned by the Company and located in the Country of Oman on a collective basis: on 'as is where is basis', 'as is what is basis', 'whatever there is basis', and 'without recourse basis'; in accordance with the provisions of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016, as amended and the rules and regulations made thereunder.

Interested applicants may refer to the detailed E-Auction Process Information Document uploaded on website of the Company http://www.punjlloydgroup.com/liquidation-documents and also on E-Auction website www.eauctions.co.in.

The Auction Sale will be done through the E-Auction platform: www.eauctions.co.in.

Asset Description	Manner of Sale	Date and time of E-Auction	Reserve Price (in INR)	EMD Amount (in INR) & Submission deadline
Movable Assets owned by the Company and located in the Country of Oman	Collective Basis	18 December 2023 from 10:00 GST to 18:00 GST	INR 230,173,140/- (Approx US Dollars equivalent USD 2,765,215/-)	INR 23,017,314/- (Approx US Dollars equivalent USD 276,521/- O or before 15 December 2023

Further, as per the provisions of the IBBI (Liquidation Process) Regulations, 2016, as amended, all interested bidders are required to submit the Expression of Interest along with the requisite eligibility documents on or before **05 December 2023** as provided in the E-Auction Process Information Document.

The Liquidator reserves the right to amend the key terms of the sale process including timelines for the e-auction to the extent permissible under the applicable laws and regulations. Any information about amendments /extension of any of the timelines will be available on the Company's website and communicated to the Qualified/ Successful Bidder.

Nothing contained herein shall constitute a binding offer or a commitment for sale of assets of the Company pursuant to this e-auction.

Please feel free to contact Mr. Ashwini Mehra at LQ.PUNJ@in.gt.com or Mehra.ashwini@gmail.com or Mr. Surendra Raj Gang at Surendra.raj@in.gt.com (representative of GT Restructuring Services LLP, IPE appointed as professional advisors to the Liquidator) in case any further clarification is required.

Sd/-
Ashwini Mehra
Liquidator
(Regn No: IBBI/IPA-001/IP-P00388/2017-18/10706)
Punj Lloyd Limited - in Liquidation
Authorization for Assignment valid till -23 March 2024
Correspondence Address:
Mr. Ashwini Mehra, Liquidator
Punj Lloyd Limited
C/O Mr. Surendra Raj Gang,
GT Restructuring Services LLP
L-41, Connaught Circus, New Delhi - 110001, E: LQ.Punj@in.gt.com

Date: 20 November 2023
Place: New Delhi