



## SC Calls for Stronger Discipline Mechanism for TV News Channels

**For Prelims:** Freedom of speech, [Supreme Court of India](#), [News Broadcasters and Digital Association \(NBDA\)](#)

**For Mains:** Supreme Court advocates for Effective Self-Regulation of Media.

**Source:** [HT](#)

### Why in News?

The [Supreme Court \(SC\) of India](#) has expressed its **concern over the lack of discipline and accountability among TV news channels** and has called for **stronger self-regulation**.

- The SC has asked the two representative bodies of TV news channels, [the News Broadcasters and Digital Association \(NBDA\)](#) and the **News Broadcasters Federation (NBF)**, to suggest ways to strengthen the mechanism for dealing with errant channels.
- This issue started with **NBDA's** petition against the **Bombay High Court's decision not to give legal recognition** to the **self-regulatory mechanism** used by news channel associations.

### What are the Problems with the Current Self-Regulation Mechanism of TV News Channels?

- **Balancing Freedom of Speech and Accountability:**
  - The Supreme Court acknowledges the importance of protecting the right to **free speech and expression, as enshrined in Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution**.
    - Striking a balance between this fundamental right and ensuring accountability and discipline among news channels poses a challenge.
- **Ineffectiveness of Current Self-Regulation:**
  - The current self-regulation mechanism of TV news channels is based on the guidelines issued by the **NBDA and the NBF**, which are voluntary associations of the broadcasters.
  - The NBDA has a regulatory overseer called the **News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA)**, headed by a former Supreme Court judge, which can **impose a penalty of ₹ 1 lakh on violations**.
    - The fines imposed by self-regulatory bodies **may not be seen as a sufficient penalty** for channels **engaging in unethical or sensationalized reporting**. Channels may be willing to pay these fines as a cost of doing business, rather than changing their practices.
  - The **NBF, which claims to represent half of the news broadcasters**, has **not framed any regulation so far** and is not registered with the government.
  - The court says the current system doesn't stop TV channels from breaking rules effectively.
    - The court observed that news channels sometimes become overly excited and **sensationalize sensitive topics** like criminal cases before the investigation is

complete.

- **Registration and Recognition:**
  - The government's [Cable Television Networks \(CTN\) Amendment Rules in 2021](#) require **registration of self-regulatory bodies**.
    - NBSA has refused to register while the self-regulatory body of NBF, called the **Professional News Broadcasters Standards Authority (PNBSA)**, is **registered and it is the only statutorily recognised self-regulatory body for news channels**.
- **Monopolistic Concerns:**
  - There are concerns that self-regulatory bodies, such as the NBDA, could be **perceived as trying to create monopolistic control** over the complaints redressal mechanism of news broadcasters, bypassing government or statutory oversight.

## What are the Implications of the Case?

- The case will have a direct impact on the TV news channels, which are facing **various allegations and complaints of violating the norms and ethics of journalism**, such as spreading misinformation, sensationalism, hate speech, and defamation.
  - Depending on the outcome of the case, they may **face stricter regulations and penalties**, or continue to enjoy their immunity and autonomy.
- The case will have an indirect impact on the **functioning and integrity of the media and the democracy**, as well as the **rights and interests of the public**. Depending on the outcome of the case, it may **strengthen or weaken the accountability and transparency of the media** and may encourage or discourage the **practice of responsible and ethical journalism**.

## What are the Media Regulatory Bodies in India?

- **Conventional Media:**
  - Print:
    - The [Ministry of Information and Broadcasting \(MIB\)](#) is responsible for disseminating information about government policies and programs.
    - The MIB regulates print media through its Information Wing.
    - The [Press Council of India \(PCI\)](#) is the apex body for regulating print media in India.
  - **Cinema:**
    - **The [Central Board of Film Certification \(CBFC\)](#) was established by the Cinematographic Act of 1952. The CBFC regulates the certification and exhibition of films for public exhibition.**
  - **Telecommunication Sector:**
    - [Telecom Regulatory Authority of India](#).
  - **Advertisement:**
    - Advertising Standards Council of India (a self-regulatory body).
- **Digital Media:**
  - These are regulated under the provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000 and the rules framed therein under section 69, which are called [Information Technology \(Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code\), Rules 2021](#) (from now on, **IT Rules, 2021**).

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### **Mains:**

**Q.** Religious Indoctrination via digital media has resulted in Indian youth joining ISIS. What is ISIS and its mission? How can ISIS be dangerous to the internal security of our country? **(2016)**

**Q. What are social networking sites and what security implications do these sites present? (2013)**

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