

Cable Operators Federation of India (COFI)

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Broadcasting Bill at a Glance

October 1994 – The Cable Television Networks (Regulations) Ordinance was passed by the Parliament.

9th February 1995 – SC judgment directing the government to create an autonomous public body to regulate the use of air waves.

March 1995 – Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Bill passed by the Parliament. Onus of adhering to the Programme Code and Advertising Code by all satellite channels lay on the cable operators.

May 1995 – Indian Services Broadcasting Bill mooted by the government that laid down the guidelines and rules about each aspect of the broadcasting industry in detail.

23rd August 1995 - Delhi HC directed the government to stop the telecast of TV programmes which were full of sex, violence and indecent exposure of women.

13th February 1997 - The then I&B Minister, Mr. CM Ibrahim assured that the Bill will be introduced in the Parliament in the Budget Session of the year 1997.

18th February 1997 - A Cabinet Subcommittee headed by the then Prime Minister Mr. HD Devegowda okayed the proposed bill with some modifications.

20th March 1997 – The Cable Operators Action Committee presented a memorandum to Mr. Devegowda highlighting their views on the draft bill.

11th April, 1997 - Government falls due to elections and the Broadcasting Bill gets delayed for the monsoon session.

29th April 1997 – The Cabinet approved the Broadcasting Bill and denied any major changes in it stating that the bill would be introduced in the monsoon session of the parliament.

16th May 1997 - I&B Minister, Jaipal Reddy tabled the Broadcasting Bill in the Lok Sabha for the first time.

17th May 1997 – The Broadcasting Bill was presented to the Parliamentary Select Committee for its consideration.

1997's Monsoon Session – At a seminar organized by ASSOCHAM, Sh. Jaipal Reddy said that the introduction of Broadcasting Bill had been deferred to the Winter session.

November 1997 – Broadcasting Bill again delayed.

December 1997 – COFI President Mrs. Roop Sharma presented a memorandum that highlighted the major objections that the cable industry had in regard to the Broadcasting Bill.

2000 - The industry welcomed a similar announcement about the introduction of the Broadcasting Bill in the Budget session. But as usual nothing happened.

31st August 2001 - Convergence Bill introduced in the Parliament

October 2002 - The parliamentary standing committee headed by Sh. Somanth Chatterjee, which had entrusted a sub-committee with the task of undertaking clause by clause considerations of the Convergence Bill, deemed its introduction as premature at this stage, in view of low teledensity of 4.6% coupled with lack of telecom facilities in many villages.

2003 - Broadcasters come together to set up their own body called the Indian Broadcasting Standards Council (ISBC) to formulate its content regulatory code and guidelines for programmes.

August 2003 - Government constituted an inter-ministerial committee under the Cable Act to look into violations of the programme code by TV channels or on receipt of a specific complaint.

10th August 2004 - The Indian Broadcasting Foundation announced the setting up of a sub-committee to look into matters related to broadcasting.

18th March 2005 - Mr. Jaipal Reddy, the then I&B Minister informed the Lok Sabha that the government has proposed to set up a Quasi-judicial regulatory authority to check the growing obscenity on private TV channels.

9th May 2005 – Reddy told the Rajya Sabha that a core group had been set up in the I&B Ministry to draft a bill that would propose to set up a regulator for monitoring contents on television.

30th June 2005 – A meeting under the chairmanship of the then Secretary of I&B Ministry was held to discuss the issues pertaining to remix film songs and music videos broadcast on TV channels.

3rd October 2005 - Government appointed a Committee to review Content Code. Since then I&B Ministry has held six meetings in three years for the same.

21st December 2005 - Bombay High Court passed an interim order in the case of Pratibha Naitthani v/s Union of India & anr. directing all cable operators in Maharashtra, Goa and Daman & Diu not to telecast 'adult films' in violation of existing Indian laws. This case once again gave a spark to the issue of Broadcasting Bill.

May 2006 - I&B Ministry announced that the Broadcast Bill would be tabled in the monsoon session.

6th June 2006 – I&B Ministry finalized a draft of Broadcasting Services Regulation Bill, 2006 with a proposal to introduce it in the Monsoon Session of 2006.

August 2006 – The Government informed the Lok Sabha about its decision to set up an electronic Media Monitoring Centre (EMMC) for content monitoring of private television channels.

8th September 2006 - ASSOCHAM organized a National Conference of all the stakeholders to discuss and understand better the proposed broadcast bill.

January 2007 – I&B Minister, PR Dasmunshi announced that the bill would be tabled in 2007's Budget Session.

March 2007 - Promises made about the tabling of the bill in 2007's Monsoon Session. But as always, the bill was deferred for further deliberations.

May 2007 - The I&B Ministry issued a draft that laid down the Self Regulation Guidelines to guide the broadcasters in offering their services in India.

June 2007 - I&B Ministry issued guidelines regarding content treatment for news and current affairs channels.

20th July 2007 - I&B Ministry's meeting held where the news broadcasters strongly opposed the Content Code chapter drafted separately for them by the Ministry.

23rd July 2007 - FICCI Seminar held, where only the broadcasters were invited.

3rd August 2007 – COFI gave comments to the I&B Ministry on the draft Broadcasting Services Regulation Bill.

3rd week of August 2007 - Intervention by Prime Minister's Office on the draft Broadcast Bill signaling the I&B Ministry to go slow until all stakeholders agree on the need for any further regulation on TV and Radio.

18th August 2007 - I&B Ministry calls for a meeting of stakeholders on 21st August to discuss the controversial bill.

1st April 2008 : NBA submits 'Code of ethics and Broadcasting Standards'.

1st Oct08 : News Broadcasting Standards Regulations made by NBA.

10 February 2009 : At the meeting of the NBA Authority under the Chairmanship of Justice(Retd) J. S. Verma former Chief Justice of India & former Chairperson, NHRC the Specific Guidelines Covering Reportage were finalized

14th Sept 2009 : I&B minister Ms Ambika Soni met the representatives of Indian Broadcasters Federation (IBF) and News Broadcasters Association (NBA) over the content code issue in New Delhi.

18th Sept 2009 : I&B Secretary Mr Raghu Menon met the Cable Operators led by Mrs Roop Sharma President, COFI over the proposed Broadcast Bill in New Delhi.

19th Sept 2009 : I&B minister Ms Ambika Soni met the representatives of Broadcast Editors Association over the content code issue.