

MeitY notifies the IT Amendment Rules 2026

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Introduction

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) notified the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2026 (Amendment Rules) to amend the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (IT Rules). The Amendment Rules come into force on 20 February 2026.

The Amendment Rules regulate synthetically generated information (SGI) and aim to curb deepfakes and misinformation on online platforms. They follow MeitY's draft proposal released in October 2025 (Draft Rules). Our analysis of the Draft Rules is available [here](#).

Taking stakeholder feedback into account, the Amendment Rules adopt a more targeted approach by narrowing the scope of SGI to exclude routine and good faith uses and by introducing enhanced compliance obligations (particularly for Significant Social Media Intermediaries (SSMIs)) including imposition of proactive technical verification duties and shorter timelines for takedown and grievance redressal. The Amendment Rules provide intermediaries 10 days to implement technical and operational changes to ensure compliance with the new framework.

What is synthetically generated information?

SGI includes audio, visual, or audio-visual information created or altered artificially or algorithmically using a computer resource, to appear 'real, authentic or true' and 'indistinguishable' from a natural person or a real-world event.

Addressing concerns raised by stakeholders in respect of the definition of SGI under the Draft Rules, the Amendment Rules define SGI in a very specific manner and exclude good-faith use cases of AI such as : (a) text-only content, (b) routine or good-faith editing, (c) preparation of documents, and (d) use of tools for improving accessibility, clarity, quality, translation, description, searchability, or discoverability, without manipulating any material part of the underlying content.

The Amendment Rules, albeit intended to curb the misuse of AI-generated content, particularly deepfakes, define SGI in technology-neutral terms and do not restrict SGI only to AI-generated content. MeitY released a Frequently Asked Questions on the Amendment Rules (FAQ) that categorically states that SGI refers, simply, to synthetic media that '*realistically appear like a real person or a real world event*' and is capable of deceiving viewers. The definition, therefore, focuses on the content rather than the method of creation.

What obligations are imposed on intermediaries?

- Due diligence for platforms enabling creation / modification / dissemination of SGI: Intermediaries permitting or facilitating the creation, modification, publication, dissemination of SGI are required to inform users that directing or causing a computer resource to create, publish SGI in contravention of applicable laws may attract penalties under such applicable laws, suspension of access, removal of non-compliant content, and reporting of offences.

Such intermediaries are also required to deploy reasonable and appropriate technical measures, including automated tools, to not allow a user to generate, disseminate content that: (a) contains child sexual abuse material, non-consensual intimate images, obscene, vulgar or sexually explicit content, (b) results in creation of a false document, (c) relates to preparation or procurement of arms and ammunition, and (d) falsely depicts a person or real-world event.

- **Labelling requirements for visual and audio SGI:** The proposed '10% surface area' watermarking mandate for all SGIs that was suggested by the Draft Rules has been replaced in the Amendment Rules with a qualitative standard for permitted SGI. Visual SGI must now carry labels that are prominent, easily noticeable, and adequately perceivable, while audio SGI are required to carry a prominently prefixed audio disclosure. This will ensure that SGI is identifiable, without prescribing specific standards that may not apply to all categories of SGI.
- **Due diligence applicable to all intermediaries:** All intermediaries are mandated to issue periodic user advisories, at least once every three months, clearly setting out the consequences of non-compliance with the terms of use and privacy policy of the intermediary. These include: (a) the intermediary's right to suspend or terminate user access or remove unlawful content for breach of platform policies, (b) the user's exposure to penalties under applicable laws for legal violations, and (c) the intermediary's obligation to mandatorily report certain offences, including those under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012, to the appropriate authorities. Earlier, intermediaries were required to annually inform users about consequences of non-compliance with policies which has now been reduced to 3 months. The obligation to report offences under applicable criminal law existed independently, but now this has been explicitly stated within the IT Rules and now it is part of due diligence requirement.
- **Shorter Takedown Timelines:** The Amendment Rules significantly reduce response windows for intermediaries, whereby the Amendment Rules reduce the timeline to act upon a court order or government reasoned intimation for takedown of unlawful content from 36 hours to 3 hours. For sensitive content involving non-consensual nudity or morphed imagery (including deepfake pornography), the removal window has been reduced from 24 hours to 2 hours. This will impact all intermediaries, including social media intermediaries.
- **Grievance Redressal Overhaul:** The timeline given to intermediaries for: (a) resolving user grievances has been reduced from 15 days to 7 days, (b) for addressing grievances in relation to unlawful content has been reduced from 72 hours to 36 hours, and (c) for addressing grievances in relation to content that depicts nudity, child sexual abuse material etc has been reduced from 24 hours to 2 hours; requiring all intermediaries to overhaul their internal adjudication processes.

What additional responsibilities apply to SSMLs?

SSMLs are required to obtain a declaration from users regarding whether the content is SGI, deploy technical measures to verify the accuracy of such declarations having regard to the nature, format and source of information, and ensure that in case of SGI, the content is appropriately labelled disclosing its SGI status. Failure to act against 'knowingly permitted' unlawful SGI will be deemed a failure of due diligence, threatening the platform's safe harbour status.

The Amendment Rules have also replaced "**endeavour to deploy** technology-based measures, including automated tools or other mechanisms" with the words "**deploy appropriate** technical measures, including automated tools or other suitable mechanisms". This indicates a shift from a 'best-effort' framework to strict compliance for SSMLs. This is also supported by MeitY's FAQ, which categorically states that it intends to create a clearer and stronger technological compliance obligation for SSMLs. In practice, rather than a one-time implementation, the Amendment Rules require SSMLs to continuously upgrade and refine their automated technical measures to ensure compliance with the new standard, particularly as evolving technologies may be used to bypass existing safeguards.

Conclusion

The Amendment Rules signal a fundamental shift towards proactive, technology-enabled compliance. For businesses, the key takeaway is operational urgency. The shortened takedown and grievance redressal timelines require intermediaries to strengthen internal processes, staffing, and tooling (including through automation and real time monitoring). For legal and compliance teams, the mandatory SGI verification measures for SSMLs and the explicit threat to safe harbour status elevate compliance from a procedural task to a core risk management function. This essentially makes proactive compliance and technological readiness the new cornerstones of intermediary safe harbour.

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