New IT Rules for Removal of Harmful Online Content

Why is in News?

The government is strengthening laws to fight cybercrimes, especially obscene and child abuse content, ensuring better online safety.

Key Provisions for Digital Content Regulation

IT Act, 2000

- Punishes publishing/transmitting obscene or sexually explicit material online.
- Stricter penalties for content involving children in sexually explicit acts.

IT Rules, 2021 (Intermediary Guidelines & Digital Media Ethics Code)

- Intermediaries (including social media platforms) must follow due diligence, or they lose legal protection from third-party content.
- Messaging platforms must identify the first originator of content in cases related to *rape, sexually explicit material, or child sexual abuse material (CSAM).*
- Intermediaries must remove explicit content *within 24 hours if it exposes private areas, nudity, or sexual acts.*
- *Grievance Appellate Committees* established to hear user appeals against social media decisions.

Film & OTT Content Regulation

- *CBFC (Central Board of Film Certification)* regulates film content under the *Cinematograph Act, 1952* and *Cinematograph (Certification) Rules 1983*.
- Films unsuitable for minors are certified for adult audiences only.
- OTT Platforms must follow a code of ethics under IT Rules, 2021:
    - Classify content into age-appropriate categories.
    - Restrict access for children to inappropriate content.
    - Implement age verification for adult content.

Government Measures to Strengthen Cybercrime Prevention

- **National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal -** Allows citizens to report all types of cybercrimes, with a special focus on crimes *against children.*
- **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) -** Established to handle cybercrimes in a coordinated manner.
    - Financial assistance provided to States/UTs under the Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children Scheme for:
    - Setting up cyber forensic-cum-training labs.

- Training law enforcement personnel, public prosecutors, and judicial officers.
- Websites containing ***child sexual abuse material (CSAM)*** blocked based on Interpol lists received through the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).
- Internet Service Providers (ISPs) directed to implement the *Internet Watch Foundation (UK) & Project Arachnid (Canada)* lists to block CSAM websites dynamically.
- Department of Telecommunications (DoT) instructed ISPs to
    - Spread awareness on parental control filters.
    - Block certain websites containing CSAM.
- Cybercrime awareness initiatives by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)
    - Twitter handle *(@cyberDost)* for spreading awareness.
    - Radio campaigns.
    - Handbook for Adolescents/Students on cyber safety.
- MoU signed between National Crime Records Bureau (India) & National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (USA) to share Tipline reports on child sexual exploitation and explicit online content with States/UTs for further action.

Reference

PIB - Government of India Taking Measures against Online Pornography

