

GOVT PROPOSES POLICY ON ONLINE GAMING; WAGERING NOT ALLOWED

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Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar interacting with mediapersons in New Delhi on January 2, 2023. | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology on Monday proposed an amendment to bring [online gaming](#) under the ambit of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. The changes, released for public consultation, would require all online games to register with any self-regulatory body approved by the Ministry.

This model is similar to the rules in place for digital news sites and streaming services under the IT Rules. "Any game that allows or permits wagering on its outcome is effectively a no-go area," Union Minister of State Rajeev Chandrasekhar said in an interaction with the media. "If you bet on the outcome of the game, it is prohibited."

"It is the SRO [Self Regulatory Organisation] that will determine what constitutes prohibited wagering," Mr. Chandrasekhar said. "If there is a practice where some foreign betting websites are permitted to advertise on Indian intermediaries, it is certainly our intent that it must not be permitted."

It's not clear if those games that have been recognised in courts as games of skill will continue to be able to operate under this policy. "This [framework] will boost the legitimate domestic online gaming industry, ensuring greater transparency, consumer protection and investor confidence," Trivikraman Thampy, co-founder and co-CEO of Games24x7 said in a statement. The firm publishes rummy and fantasy sports games that allow players to stake real money.

The All India Gaming Federation (AIGF), whose members typically offer such games, welcomed the publishing of the draft amendment. "We believe this is a great first step for comprehensive regulation for online gaming and [it] will hopefully reduce the State-wise regulatory fragmentation that was a big challenge for the industry," AIGF CEO Roland Landers said in a statement, alluding to attempts by States like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka to ban real-money gaming platforms, which require players to risk real money to play.

In response to a query by *The Hindu* on whether AIGF member companies would continue to be able to offer games that allow wagering on outcomes, Mr. Landers said, "We at AIGF already follow a similar process for our members. However, we will study the rules and standards and

reprocess all the members and their games accordingly.”

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