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# MPs' panel flags delay in revamping film certification

With previous reports ignored, archaic processes are followed with only superficial improvements

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A parliamentary panel pulled up the Union government for dragging its feet on overhauling the archaic film certification and censorship mechanism, bringing only incremental changes to the Cinematograph Act that was first introduced in 1952.

The Standing Committee on Information and Technology, headed by Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, which will table its report on the Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill, 2019, on Monday in Parliament, said that the government was being "unambitious".

The Cinematograph Amendment Bill, 2019, is a

belated measure by the government to tackle the issue of piracy. It seeks to introduce two Sections to the Cinematograph Act, 1952 - one, prohibiting illegal recording in cinema halls to make a "pirate copy" of the film, and the second, prescribing punishment of up to three years or a fine of up to ₹10 lakh for the said offence.

The Bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha in February last year and referred to the Standing Committee.

**Limited scope**

The committee, according to sources, has found the scope of the Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill, 2019, limited.



Congress leader Shashi Tharoor led the panel.

"Piracy can happen at various levels. The Bill only tackles illegal recording at cinema halls. Also, the punishment prescribed in the Bill is

too little when compared with the losses that a pirated film can lead to," a member said speaking on condition of anonymity.

The committee has suggested that with the average budgets of films going up, even up to ₹200 crore-₹300 crore, the fine for creating a pirated version of it should be a percentage of the total budget instead of the ₹10 lakh prescribed in the Bill.

**Efforts at reworking**

The committee has noted the two recent efforts at reworking the Central Board of Film Certification, which in common parlance is referred to as the Censor Board. In 2013, the Informa-

tion and Broadcasting Ministry, under the United Progressive Alliance government, had instituted a committee under justice Mukul Mudgal.

The report was forgotten by the National Democratic Alliance government, which in 2016 formed a committee under filmmaker Shyam Benegal.

Mr. Benegal recommended that the CBFC only be a film certification body.

Nearly four years on, the committee said, the government has done little to implement either of the two reports, and continues to follow archaic processes with only superficial improvements.

...routinely