

ORDER

In the matter of Appeal against TV show 'Dragon Ball Z' on Cartoon Network

This Council has received an APPEAL against the programme '*Dragon Ball*' telecast on **Cartoon Network** (episode of 22/10/2024).

The Appellant had alleged that the above cartoon show has shown adult magazines containing nudity and is inappropriate for children's viewing.

BCCC forwarded the grievance to the channel (Tier-1).

Upon receipt of the grievance, the Channel (Tier-1) made the following points:

- Cartoon Network is a leading child entertainment channel featuring content that spans multiple genres from comedy to action. The channel has an in-house 'Content Compliance Department' (Standards & Practices Team) dedicated to review all the on-air content beforehand with utmost vigilance. The highly experienced team makes sure that the content is not in violation of the 'Self-Regulatory Content Guidelines' prescribed by IBDF and 'The Code for Self-Regulation of Advertising Content In India' prescribed by the ASCI, in addition to the Programming and Advertising Code of Cable Television Network Act, 1994 and its Rules. The content scrutiny is also carried out in adherence to Indian cultural and religious sensitivities, organization's internal 'Content Guidelines', Global Network Policies of Warner Bros. Discovery, as well as permissible industry standards. Especially the content aired on our channels dedicated to kids' entertainment is treated with high surveillance to cater to the sensibilities and sensitivities of the younger target group.
- "*Dragon Ball Z*" is one of India's top animated series that follows the adventures of Goku who, along with the Z Warriors, defends the Earth against evil. The action adventures are entertaining and reinforce the concept of good versus evil. "*Dragon Ball Z*" teaches valuable character virtues such as teamwork, loyalty, and trustworthiness. The 'adult nude magazine' referred by you in your complaint is a regular magazine with a cover showing a picture of woman posing. Also, no attention is brought to the magazine or the picture separately in the story. However, we respect your expressed concern and care to keep your child away from any ill influences; and therefore, as responsible content creators have decided to modify the content before airing it again. Our motive is to only deliver high quality entertaining content for children and '*Dragon Ball Z*' is a prime example of it.

- In the light of the above, please consider this complaint resolved and closed. Rest assured, we will continue to do our best to ensure that all compliances pertaining to the content being aired on our network adhere to all applicable rules, codes, guidelines and laws.

Not satisfied with the Channel's response, the Appellant submitted:

Master Roshi does a lot of obscene acts towards the girl. This can have a very bad impact on children. The appellant also alleges that since the channel has aired adulterated content, which should not be watched by children, he has unsubscribed Cartoon Network.

On going through the Appeal and watching the said episode, the Council issued a NOTICE to the Channel and called it for a HEARING in its 122nd BCCC meeting.

CHANNEL'S RESPONSE TO BCCC's NOTICE

- In the said episode, a character expresses his willingness to learn martial arts from 'Master Roshi' in exchange for magazines that the latter prefers to read. These magazines feature images of seemingly nude women on the cover and back flap.
- The channel submits that the inclusion of this scene was unintentional and not meant to cause any discomfort or violate any regulations set forth by any regulatory body. It is stated that the channel and the organization remain committed to upholding the highest standards of responsible broadcasting and ensuring compliance with all applicable rules under the Cable TV Network Act and guidelines/advisories issued by MIB and IBDF. While there was no intent to feature content that could be deemed inappropriate, the channel acknowledges the concerns raised and deeply regret any inadvertent oversight.
- In response to the complaint, it is stated that the channel reviewed the matter thoroughly and have removed the referenced scenes from the episode. Although the series concluded its telecast in November 2024, the channel has claimed to have proactively undertaken a comprehensive review of all episodes to ensure alignment with regulatory and content guidelines. Moving forward, it is assumed that the series will only be aired after undergoing a stringent content assessment to uphold the sensitivities and expectations of our audience.
- The channel has stated that it remains dedicated to ensuring that the content aligns with the expectations of its audience and adheres to all regulatory and ethical standards. The channel also assures that its commitment to responsible broadcasting remains unwavering, and it would continue to take all necessary measures to ensure all applicable guidelines, rules, advisories, and laws are followed.

BCCC DECISION:

The Council viewed the episode and found the content to be explicit and offensive. In the HEARING, the channel's representative emphasised that this was an inadvertent oversight and all future telecasts of the episodes of the programme have been sanitized for repeat broadcasts. The Council questioned as to know how for a cartoon channel, such a programme meant for children and impressionable minds could muster the clearance of the channel's Standards and Practices team. The channel representatives acknowledged the

fact that they were cognizant of the mistake and made their intent categorical of not allowing such slippages to recur.

After hearing the channel's representative and taking the channel's explanation and clarification on record, the Council is of the view that a grave mistake had been committed which cannot be overlooked or excluded before making a final decision.

The Council decided to invoke Theme-2 of IBDF's self-regulating guidelines dealing with Sex, Obscenity and Nudity. Category-G of the impugned theme says, 'Highly coarse language dealing with explicit sexual connotations' and 'Show nudity with full exposure of lower abdomen or sexual organs or posterior or full female breasts'. The programme was found in contravention to the above theme.

The Council also called upon the channel to send in writing as to what steps have been taken to repeat such mistakes from recurring.

In its submission, dated 11/03/2025 after the Hearing, the channel has made the following assertions:

- The channel has taken immediate and comprehensive steps to ensure compliance and further prevent recurrence of such concerns.
- **Removed the airings of the Show (Season):** With immediate effect upon receiving the complaint, the channel has instructed the Programming Team to pull out the airings of the said episode. The season has not aired since its last airing in November 2024.
- **Removed the referenced portions:** The channel has edited out the highlighted sensitive sections from the episode along with other highlighted sections.
- **Re-Vetted the Season:** The channel has conducted a thorough review of the entire season to identify and address any similar content that might be borderline sensitive to younger viewers and offensive with respect to the representation of women. The channel intends to bring the show back on air only after ensuring that the content is 100% compliant. The channel has also initiated re-S&P of the other Seasons of '*Dragon Ball Z*' to ensure that the title is not in violation of any relevant guidelines and laws.
- **Strengthen sanitization process:** The channel has instructed its S&P team to be extra vigilant on similar content to ensure stricter approach to align with regulatory standards, cultural sensitivity, viewers expectations and laws, especially 'The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act of 1986' and 'The Protection of Children against Sexual Offences Act, 2012'.
- **Revisit Content Selection approach:** The channel has initiated communication with the programming team to ensure heightened sensitivity when acquiring such content; and also liaise with the S&P Team for regulatory and compliance review before acquisition of similar content, especially the foreign language content.

The Council is of the view that the channel has taken extra safeguards and precautions for re-airing the show which should leave very little scope for such errors in the future.

However, the Council directs the channel Cartoon Network to run an APOLOGY SCROLL twice at the same time as the telecast of the impugned programme 'Dragon Ball Z' on Cartoon Network for one day in the week from 2nd June 2025 to 8 June 2025.

The text of the Apology Scroll shall be:

'In compliance with BCCC's directions of 3rd March 2025, Cartoon Network apologises for the depiction of inappropriate content in the programme Dragon Ball Z for the episode dated 22/10/2024. This was found to be in violation of IBDF's self-regulating guidelines. The channel regrets the error.'

The Council also directs the channel to submit to the BCCC Secretariat a compliance report with the actual recording of the APOLOGY SCROLL after it has been aired.

For & on behalf of

Broadcasting Content Complaints Council


Justice Gita Mittal (R)
Chairperson

New Delhi
22nd May 2025