

# **RESUME**

## **Press Council of India**

### **November, 1966–September 30, 2024**

The Press Council of India was first set up in the year 1966 on the recommendations of the First Press Commission. In the discharge of its two-fold function of preserving the freedom of the press and maintaining and improving its standards, the Council performs a multi-faceted role, it acts on the one hand as a quasi-judicial authority with powers of the civil court to summon and enforce attendance of persons examining on oath or receiving evidence on affidavits and on the other, in its advisory capacity; it also guides the press as well as the authorities on any matter that may have a bearing on the freedom of the press and its preservation.

The Council is headed by a Chairperson who has by convention been a retired Judge of the Supreme Court of India. Besides, it consists of 28 other members, of whom 20 represent the press, the other eight are nominees of Government of India, among eight, five are from the two Houses of Parliament and three represent the cultural, literary and legal fields and are nominated by the (Sahitya Academy, University Grants Commission and the Bar Council of India). Twenty (20) Members representing the press are nominated from amongst various associations of journalists, editors, owners or managers of newspapers and news agencies.

It is funded by the revenue collected as a fee levied on the registered newspapers in the country based on their circulation; the deficit is made good by way of a grant from the Central Government. Though to some extent, the Council is dependent on the Government for finances, in so far as functional autonomy is concerned, it has remained completely uninfluenced by any extraneous considerations in the discharge of its quasi-judicial functions.

As a quasi-judicial body, it is being approached by way of more and more complaints every year. This is not to say that instances of violation of ethics or of threats to the press are on the increase. The Council feels that the press, as well as those holding the reins of power, is by and large responsible. The reason for the steady increase in the number of complaints lodged with it is that the Council's forum is being preferred over Courts where the proceedings, by their very nature, are costly and time-consuming. The Council strives to provide quick justice at the doorstep and to this end; it regularly meets in different parts of the country to hear cases from that region.

The complaints received by the Council broadly fall into two categories: complaints by the Press against interference with its freedom by an authority and complaints against the Press by any individual or authority for violation of the ethical canons of journalism. Any press person feeling aggrieved over a matter likely to impair or interfere with the independence of the Press may approach the Council. Similarly, anybody aggrieved by any publication or non-publication in any newspaper or journal or over the conduct of a journalist or an editor may lodge a complaint for breach of the recognized canons of journalistic ethics and public taste.

The Council is empowered to make observations in respect of the conduct of any authority, including government, if it so considers necessary, for the performance of its functions under the Act. In respect of complaints against the press, if it finds that a newspaper or a news agency has offended against the standards of journalistic ethics or public taste or that an editor or a working journalist has committed any professional misconduct, it can warn, admonish or censure the newspaper, the news agency, the editor or the journalist or disapprove the conduct of editor or the journalist.

Thus, the Council exerts high moral authority. Its decisions are final and cannot be questioned in any Court of Law. The decisions of the Council have generally been honoured and

accepted by the media and the authorities alike.

Statistics show that during the period 1966 to 1974, the Council was approached by about 600 complainants. 295 complaints were disposed of at the preliminary stage, primarily for reasons of lack of sufficient grounds for inquiry, while 250 complaints were adjudicated after detailed inquiry. **During the period April 1, 1979 to September 31, 2024--Thirty Seven Thousand Seven Hundred Sixty (37,760) complaints were filed of which Twenty Eight Thousand Three Hundred Ninty One (28,391) raised the grievance of violation of accepted norms against the press while Nine Thousand Three Hundred Sixty nine (9,369) questioned the alleged threats to press freedom by those in the authority. Out of these Thirty Seven Thousand Seven Hundred Sixty (37,760) cases filed during 01.04.1979 to 30.09.2024, Twenty eight thousand one hundred seventy six (28,176) matters were disposed of under the authority of the Chairperson of the Council while Nine thousand three hundred five (9,305) matters were adjudicated upon by the full Council through its Inquiry Committees.**

Based on its pronouncements and adjudications over the years, the Council has brought out a compilation of the principles and guidelines. It expects that these broad general principles, are applied with due discernment and adaptation to the varying circumstances of each case will help the journalist to regulate his or her conduct along the path of professional rectitude. During trying times especially when the unity of the country is at stake Press Council of India (PCI) appeals to the media and the people of the country to maintain and promote peace and harmony in the country. In the year 2002, such an appeal was issued by the PCI in wake of Gujarat violence vis-à-vis media coverage of the communal riots. It appealed to the media to refrain from publishing/telecasting pictures of mangled corpses or any other photographic coverage which may create terror, revulsion or ignite communal passions among people.

## **Advisory Role and Reports**

The Council has played a pivotal advisory role, offering its expertise to various state and central bodies on a wide range of legislative measures, both existing and proposed. It has proactively conducted studies on issues impacting press freedom and the standards of the press. Significant issues include Parliamentary Privileges, examined in 1967, 1982, and 2003; the Monopoly and Concentration of Ownership of Newspapers, dealt in 1967; and challenges faced by Small and Medium Newspapers along with the Newsprint Crisis, examined in 1981 and 1992. The Law of Defamation was explored in 1984, while the Portrayal of Women in Media was studied in 1996. Matters of Press Reporting on Defense, updated in 1993, and guidelines for Reporting on AIDS, was framed by PCI in 2008. This highlights the Council's diverse focus areas. The Press Coverage of the Election Process and Poll-Related Surveys was another significant topic, addressed in 1996.

From 1997 to 2000, the Council investigated a range of issues including Press Curbs, Problems of Urdu Newspapers, Newspaper Closures, and Journalistic Favors by Authorities. The Role of Print Media in Disaster Preparedness was a focal point in 2000, and between 2001 and 2013, the Council issued Fact-Finding Committee Reports on Press Atrocities and Incidents in various regions. Numerous reports and recommendations were also made on Press Ethics, Election Coverage, Paid News, and Media Ownership during this period. The safety of journalists, attacks on press personnel, and media regulation in different states were critically examined from 2009 to 2018. Moreover, the Council has engaged in discussions and issued recommendations for a Media Commission to address contemporary media challenges. In 2023, the Council issued reports on representation of LGBTQ+ Community by media and formulated guidelines for media persons/reporters covering news amidst natural disasters.

In 2024, up until September, the Council issued several guidelines and reports addressing issues affecting Press Freedom. Among these is the Report of the Sub-Committee on Advertisement for Print Media, which includes a rephrased set of recommendations from Shri Gaurav Khare, Joint Director, CBC & Co-opted member of the Sub-Committee, reflecting his dissent on certain points of the recommendations adopted by the Council on 27.09.2024. Further, the Report of the Sub-Committee on Accreditation was adopted by the Council on the same date. The Report of the Sub-Committee Constituted to Consider the Issue of Prescribing Essential Qualifications for Correspondents and Journalists was also adopted by the Council. Furthermore, the Report of the Sub-Committee to Evolve Guidelines for the Media, Police, and Security Forces on Reporting in Conflict Situations, particularly in North-Eastern States, Naxal-affected areas, and Jammu & Kashmir, was adopted by the Council on 27.09.2024, which includes the dissent of the Hon'ble Chairperson regarding two recommendations at points No. 11 and 12 of the report. Lastly, there is the Report of the Sub-Committee on Retrenchment of Journalists during COVID-19.

## **Opinion on Legislation**

The Press Council has provided its views/opinions on a broad array of legislative matters concerning the press by taking suo motu cognizance or in response to matters referred to it. This includes legislation that was either in the proposal stages while some other had already found their way to the statute book. Legislation/Bills, on which the Council has furnished its opinion, include a variety of significant amendments and bills. Among these were the Criminal and Election Laws Amendment Bill of 1968, the Indian Telegraph Act Amendment in 1969, and the Contempt of Court Bill of the same year. The Press and Registration of Books Act saw revisions in 1971 and 1987, highlighting ongoing adjustments to media regulation.

Further, the Andhra Pradesh (Communal Offenders) Bill of 1984, the Karnataka Freedom of Press Bill of 1988, and the Promotion of Secularism Bill, also from 1988, reflect the Council's engagement with regional legislative efforts to safeguard press freedom and promote secular values. The Right to Reply in the Press Bills across various years, the Constitution Amendment Bill of 1998, and the Abkari (Amendment) Bill of 1999 are indicative of the Council's broad legislative interest.

The Council also addressed the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance of 2001, as well as the Prohibition of Publication or Telecast of Vulgar, Obscene, and Surrogate Advertisements and Remix Songs by the Print and Electronic Media Bill in 2004. The Communal Violence (Prevention, Control, and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill of 2005 and a Private Member's Bill in 2007, further showcase the Council's dedication to a variety of press-related issues.

Further, the Council has been involved in recommending amendments to the rules under the Tobacco Control Act of 2003 and various other media laws, including The Press and Registration Appellate Board Act of 1867, The Parliamentary Proceedings (Protection of Publication) Act of 1977, The Press Council Act of 1978, and the Cinematography Act of 1952. The Council recently submitted its inputs to the Govt. through M/o I&B on the Journalist (Prevention of Violence and Damage or Loss of Property) Bill, 2022 and similar bill of 2022 that was pertaining to Govt. of Goa. These actions demonstrate the Council's comprehensive engagement with legislation impacting press freedom and regulation.

## **Code of Conduct**

The Council has consistently advised the press to exercise caution and restraint in its reporting, emphasizing the importance of self-regulation to achieve a balance between press freedom and responsibility. This balance is the fundamental goal that the Press Council aims to foster and uphold. Through its adjudications and other pronouncements, the Council has developed principles over time that journalists are expected to judiciously apply and adapt in regulating their professional conduct. In support of this objective, the Council has released the following:

- 1) A Guide to Journalist Conduct, 1995 Edition
- 2) Norms of Journalistic Conduct, 2005 Edition
- 3) Norms of Journalistic Conduct, 2010 Edition
- 4) Norms of Journalistic Conduct, 2018 Edition
- 5) Norms of Journalistic Conduct, 2019 Edition
- 6) Norms of Journalistic Conduct, 2020 Edition
- 7) Norms of Journalistic Conduct, 2022 Edition

## **National Press Day**

Since its establishment on November 16, 1966, National Press Day has been celebrated to reflect on the historical and thematic significance of the press and media landscape in India, marking milestones and discussing critical issues through various themes and events over the years. In 1997, the 30th anniversary of the Press Council was commemorated with a seminar on "50 Years of Press in India" and "Right to Information." The following year, in 1998, attention was focused on the "Role of the Media in Crisis Situations" at the Nikhil Chakravarty Memorial Seminar, and in 1999, discussions centered around "Media and Society." The year 2000 highlighted the "Role of Media in Preparing People to Cope with Disasters," while 2001 discussed the "Projection of Women by Media" and "Occupational Hazards Faced by Media Persons in Conflict Situations." In 2002, the "Future of India: Role of Media" was explored with a special acknowledgment of photojournalism, and 2003 deliberated on "Parliament, Democracy: Role of the Media." The theme for both 2004 and 2005 focused on "Democracy: People's Welfare– Role of the Four Estates."

The celebration in 2006 included an exhibition on Photo Journalism and an international symposium on "Journalism, Ethics, and Society in the Age of Globalization." In 2007, the focus was on "Media as People's Voice Pre and Post-Independence," and in 2008, the theme was dedicated to "Women and Media." The changing dynamics of Indian media was the theme for National Press Day in 2009, while 2010 focused on "Media and Corporate World: Challenges and Opportunities." The year 2011 explored "Media as an Instrument of Public Accountability," and 2012 highlighted "Freedom of the Media" with awards for excellence in journalism. In 2013, the "Role of Media in Serving the Public Interest" was the chosen theme, followed by discussions on "Transparency in Public Affairs: The Role of the Press" in 2014, and the impact of cartooning and caricature in 2015. "Reporting from Conflict Area, a Challenge to Media" was explored in 2016 as part of the Golden Jubilee celebration of the Press Council of India, and the "Challenges before the Media" was the theme for deliberation in 2017. In 2018, the focus was on "Journalistic Ethics and Challenges in the Digital Age," and in 2019, the theme was "Reporting to Interpretation: A Journey." The role of media during the COVID-19 pandemic was explored in 2020, while 2021 focused on "Who is Not Afraid of Media," and 2022 themed "Media's Role in Nation Building." Most recently, in 2023, discussions were themed on "Media in the Era of Artificial Intelligence."

## **National Awards for Excellence in Journalism**

To encourage the media to pursue its duties effectively without fear or favor following the dictum of ‘freedom with responsibility’, the Press Council of India, as the sole statutory authority with this mandate, has established National Awards for excellence in journalism to recognize outstanding journalists in print journalism across various fields since 2012. Among these awards is the prestigious ‘Raja Ram Mohan Roy National Award for Excellence in Journalism,’ named after one of the country’s greatest reformer journalists. Since 2012, the Press Council of India has honored nine eminent journalists with the prestigious Raja Ram Mohan Roy National Award for Excellence in Journalism. Further, several other journalists, photojournalists, and freelance journalists from the print media have been awarded in various categories, including Rural Journalism, Developmental Reporting, Best Newspaper Art (covering cartoons, caricatures, and illustrations), Sports Reporting/Sports Photo Feature, Financial Reporting, Gender Issue Reporting, and Reporting from Conflict Areas. Due to COVID pandemic the award of 2020 could not be conferred in same year and also in the next follow up years the awards were not instituted. The National Awards for Excellence in Journalism, 2020 and 2023 were held on February 2023 and August 2024, respectively.

## **International Interaction**

The Press Council of India in order to elevate the presence of the Indian press on a global stage and to gain insights into international policies and practices for a responsible press, it actively organizes and participates in international seminars and workshops. Following are few of the international interactions that took place over the years:

- The World Associations of Press Council (WAPC) of India decided to adopt a new Constitution and establish a permanent Headquarter at Istanbul, Turkey, in June 2006.
- The Chairman of the Press Council of India (PCI) participated in a debate in Kenya on media self-regulation, supporting the Indian Model of the Press Council. Additionally, interactions were held with the British Press Complaints Commission in London in June 2006.
- Mr. Justice G. N. Ray, as President of WAPC, attended meetings hosted by the Northern Cyprus Press Council and Nepal Press Council in 2010.
- Mr. Justice G. N. Ray served as the President of WAPC from July 2009 to October 2011.
- Representatives of the Press Council of India participated in discussions organized by the National Union of Journalists, Malaysia, in 2011, along with representatives from various countries.
- WAPC Executive Council meetings were held in New Delhi in 2011, facilitating enriching deliberations among member countries.
- The Press Council of India engaged in consultations with press/media councils globally, including visits to Hong Kong, Indonesia, and Paris, between 2011 and 2012.
- On National Press Day 2015, the Press Council of India hosted the Chairman of Bangladesh Press Council and delegation, fostering mutual understanding and discussions on press-related issues.
- A delegation from the Press Council of India visited Bangladesh in 2016 to discuss media scenarios and cooperation in peace journalism.
- Delegations from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and the Maldives visited India in 2016, discussing the formation of the South Asian Alliance of Press Councils (SAAPC).
- The Chairman of the Press Council of India visited Indonesia and Sri Lanka in 2017 to discuss media scenarios and cooperation in peace journalism.
- The Press Council of India delegation visited Sri Lanka in 2018 for an award ceremony and discussions on media studies.

- A delegation from the Press Council of India visited Bangladesh in 2019 to participate in a seminar and discuss the formation of SAAPC.
- A delegation from the Press Council of India attended the Annual General Meeting of WAPC in Azerbaijan in 2019.
- Members of the Press Council of India visited Nepal for the Golden Jubilee Ceremony of Press Council Nepal in 2019.
- The Press Council of India conducted an Interactive Session for Editors and Journalists associated with the Maldives Media Council in 2022.
- The Press Council of India held an Exchange of Views with the Sri Lanka Press Council in 2023.

## **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**

The Press Council of India, aiming to foster peace journalism, organize seminars on journalism in conflict areas, including terrorism activities, and facilitate journalism exchange programs, has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreements with its counterparts in various countries.

An MoU was signed with the Press Council of Indonesia on January 25, 2011, marking the beginning of such international collaborations. Following this, an agreement was formulated with the Press Council Nepal on September 22, 2014, during the visit of the Hon'ble Chairman of the Press Council of India to Kathmandu, Nepal. This two-year MoU was subsequently renewed on November 17, 2016, for another two years and then again for five years on November 16, 2018, in New Delhi.

The partnership extended to the Bangladesh Press Council with an MoU signed on November 17, 2016, for two years, which was later extended for another five years on November 16, 2018, in New Delhi.

A significant agreement was also made with the Myanmar Press Council on September 6, 2017, for five years. This MoU was part of a VVIP delegation visit by the Government of India, led by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India to Naypyidaw, Myanmar, along with the Hon'ble Chairman of the Press Council of India.

Further, an MoU with the Sri Lanka Press Council was signed on November 16, 2018, for five years in New Delhi. This agreement was renewed for an additional five years on November 17, 2023, strengthening the collaborative efforts between the two countries' press councils.

## **South Asian Alliance of Press Councils (SAAPC)**

On the occasion of National Press Day in 2017, a meeting was convened to discuss the establishment of the proposed South Asian Alliance of Press Councils. This alliance aimed to include representatives from Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and the Maldives. The meeting focused on advancing the formation of the Alliance by reviewing a draft Constitution and outlining a roadmap for future action.

As a follow-up to this initial meeting, the formation of the Alliance was further discussed at a meeting hosted by the Bangladesh Press Council on February 19, 2018. This meeting was attended by Hon'ble Mr. Justice Chandramauli Kumar Prasad, who was the then Chairman of the Press Council of India, along with other representatives from South Asian countries.

The discussions regarding the Alliance continued during a visit to Sri Lanka. This visit took place from October 28 to 31, 2018, and served as another platform to deliberate on the establishment of the South Asian Alliance of Press Councils.

## **Workshops/Conferences**

As a part of its mandate to create an awareness about media-related issues, the Council has been organising seminars and workshops in different parts of the country on the following themes:

### **1996:**

- "Press as a leader of the Society" on March 23-24, 1996.
- "Right to Information" on August 10-11, 1996.
- "Women and Media" on September 7, 1996.

### **1997-1998:**

- "Media and Society" on February 1, 1997, at Bhopal.
- "Problems of the Press in the North East" on March 16, 1997, at Shillong.
- "Freedom of Press and Roles of Press for Good Governance" on April 19, 1997, in Mumbai.
- "Media, Environment and Development" on May 4, 1997, in New Delhi.
- "Authorities, Media and Press. A Progressive Relationship" on February 9, 1998.

### **2000:**

- Seminar on the "Right to Information" on February 20, 2000.
- "Future of Print Media and Role of Hindi Press in Nation Building" on May 27, 2000.

### **2005:**

- Workshop on Disaster Management on August 4, 2005.

### **2006:**

- Seminar on "Trivialization of Content in Media" on February 10, 2006, at Pune
- Seminar on "Role of Media during Communal Strife" on March 25, 2006, at Ayodhya.

### **2007:**

- Seminar on "Media Ethics" on January 18, 2007, at Dhenkanal, Bhubaneswar.

### **2008:**

- Workshop on "Reporting of Court Proceedings by the Media and Administration of Justice" in March and December 2008.
- Residential Course for legal correspondence/journalists from December 7-11, 2008, at New Delhi.

### **2009:**

- Workshop on "News Coverage During Crisis: Rights and Responsibilities of Media" on January 21, 2009, in Nagpur.

### **2011:**

- International Colloquium on "Freedom of Expression and Human Rights" on April 28-29, 2011, in New Delhi, with participation from various countries.

## **Internship Programme**

As per the mandate of the Press Council Act, 1978 u/s 13(2) (c) & (d), the Press Council of India to uphold high public taste and citizenship awareness in media, while promoting responsibility and public service in journalism, has initiated the internship programme for budding journalists. It conducts two internship programmes in a year namely the Summer Internship Programme (SIP) & Winter Internship Programme (WIP) for the duration of 30 days for students pursuing Journalism. Till date the following four internship programme were conducted by the PCI:

Under the Press Council Act, 1978, specifically sections 13(2) (c) & (d), the Press Council of India is tasked with maintaining high standards of public taste and awareness of citizenship in

the media, as well as fostering responsibility and public service within journalism. To achieve this, the Council has introduced an internship program for aspiring journalists. This initiative comprises two annual internship programs: the Summer Internship Programme (SIP) and the Winter Internship Programme (WIP), each programme is conducted for a period of 30 days and designed for students pursuing studies in journalism. To date, the Press Council of India has successfully conducted the following four internship programs:

- The SIP, 2019 was conducted from June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019 to July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019 and WIP, 2020 was conducted from 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2020. Applications for the same were invited from eligible Journalism students nationwide. In response thereto, the Council received sixty-nine (69) applications for SIP and twenty-nine (29) applications for WIP. Keeping in mind the opportunity to all and promoting PAN India programme, students from different parts of country, based on the merits and fulfilment of mandatory requirements, ten (10) interns for SIP and twelve (12) interns for WIP were selected.
- Due to the Pandemic and Country wide Lockdown, the Summer and the Winter Internship Programme for the year were put on hold from 2020 to 2022.
- The WIP, 2023 was conducted from January 16 to February 14, 2023. Online Applications for the same was invited from eligible Journalism students nationwide. In response thereto, the Council received thirty-nine (39) applications. Keeping in mind the opportunity to all and promoting pan India programme, 10 students from different parts of country, based on the merits and mandatory requirements were selected.
- The SIP, 2023 was conducted from June 3 to August 1, 2023. Applications for the same were invited from the eligible students of journalism, nationwide. In response thereto, the Council received one hundred and forty six (146) applications. Keeping in mind the opportunity to all and promoting pan India programme, 15 students from different parts of country, based on the merits and mandatory requirements were selected.
- The WIP, 2024 was conducted from February 12, 2024 to March 12, 2024. Applications for the same were invited from eligible students of journalism, nationwide. In response thereto, the Council received 58 applications. Keeping in mind the opportunity to all and promoting PAN India programme, 15 students were selected.

**Publications:** following publications of the Council are available at the Website of the Council:

1. Annual Report (English/Hindi)
2. The PCI Review (English/Hindi)
3. Norms of Journalistic Conduct (English/Hindi)

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