

**Report**  
**On**  
**National Press Day**  
**“The Media’s Role in Nation Building”**

The Press Council of India celebrated National Press Day 2022 at SCOPE Convention Centre, SCOPE Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi on November 16, 2022 on the theme **“The Media’s Role in Nation Building”**

Hon’ble Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Youth Affairs & Sports, Shri Anurag Singh Thakur was the Chief Guest and Dr L Murugan, Hon’ble Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying was the Guest of Honour in the ceremony. Eminent Journalist, Shri Swapan Dasgupta delivered the Keynote Lecture and Hon’ble Chairperson, Press Council of India, Mrs. Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai presided over the function.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Anurag Singh Thakur, Hon’ble Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Youth Affairs and Sports, congratulated the media fraternity for their untiring contributions to nation-building for ages. He encouraged young aspiring journalists to use the media as a tool to bring positive changes in society. He mentioned that affordable smartphones and easy access to the internet have facilitated the dissemination of information rapidly to the masses. However, this rapid progress in receiving and broadcasting information to a certain extent has aggravated the spread of information and misinformation that has consequently eroded the media’s credibility. Like the pandemic, infodemic has plagued the media arena. Therefore, restoring media credibility is a necessity. He further stressed the simultaneous existence of free and responsible media and requested the journalists in metro cities to respect and work in coordination with the regional journalists as their news that is more people oriented, entails national attention. While speaking on the importance of grassroot journalism, the Hon’ble Union Minister stated that ‘the story should matter, not the location’. He further requested the media house to acknowledge, reward and award the work of stringers to make the media landscape more vibrant. While addressing PCI, he mentioned that the Council needs to work towards the promotion and protection of women journalists and Transgender representation. He further expressed his concern over the issues of Paid News, Fake

News and the enormous damage that “click-bait” journalism has done to the nation’s image with zero contribution to nation building.

The Union Minister further said that as with all things that expand with speed, the expansion of media in India merits a cautionary note. Much of the media governance structure is self-regulatory. But self-regulatory does not mean licence to err and err intentionally. That would erode media credibility. Bias and prejudice must be abjured. It is for the media to reflect and self-introspect on how to immunise itself against the virus of Infodemic which continues to inflict malicious disinformation on societies across geographies. A related twin-concern is that of paid news and fake news. Similarly, click-bait journalism, made fashionable by social media, contributes very less to media credibility; it contributes even less to nation-building. Media must not allow the space for responsible, fair and balanced journalism to be occupied by others.

Dr L. Murugan, Hon’ble Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying congratulated the media fraternity and praised the role of media during the freedom struggle in India. While expressing his concerns over the menace of false news and spread of misinformation, he shared that the government has established fact check unit to monitor and keep under review any coordination between the government and the press so as to enable timely reach of essential information to the public and building a progressive India especially when India is celebrating its Azadi Ka Amrit Mohatsav with the motto “sabka-saath-sabka-vikas-sabka-vishwas-sabka-prayas”.

Smt. Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai, Hon’ble Chairperson, Press Council of India stated that National Press Day is important not just to journalists but to all those with ambit value of freedom of press. She further stated that it is necessary for the media to examine what positive role it has played during oppressive foreign rule when India was struggling to get independence in shaping Indian Democracy and also what role India played in 75 years after India attained independence, in shaping Indian democracy and also what role it has played during infamous emergency when the media was sought to be gagged. She further expressed that the media must also think of the future and

decide what positive role it can play in strengthening India's democracy. She applauded the media for its tenacity and unrelenting efforts in voicing the plight and rights of the underprivileged and the courage, passion and dedication of journalists when it comes to safeguarding the constitutional guarantee of free speech and expression. She commended the work of regional language newspapers in educating millions of Indians who are not conversant with English. She praised the media for its commendable role during the covid pandemic. The Chairperson while being critical of fake, paid, biased and unverified news asked the media house to publish content with caution and utmost care. She further stated that the profession of journalism is sacred, media has an immense capacity to mould public opinion and hence the pen should be used carefully. She requested the press to use its enormous power with responsibility.

Shri Swapan Dasgupta, Eminent Journalist in his keynote lecture while emphasising the immense transformation of Global media in the past few decades expressed that with the onset of digital media an exponential amount of information has been made available in the public domain, making it difficult for the public to differentiate between the correct and not so correct information. The easy access to information in the public domain has led to the declining importance of investments in news gathering in media. Consequently, this has affected the high standard of Indian journalism and affected the quality of news. Shri Swapan Dasgupta suggested a serious relook into the Press Council Act and its present-day relevance in the digital media era as a major fraction of grievances these days are raised against the electronic or social media content as it does not come under the mandate of PCI.

Marking the occasion, the Hon'ble Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Youth Affairs & Sports, released the Norms of Journalistic Conduct, 2022 (updated edition).

The event witnessed active participation from the VIP's, Eminent Journalists, students of journalism, Senior Government Officers etc.

The function concluded with the vote of thanks by the Secretary, Press Council of India, Shri Nungsanglemba Ao.

The Press Council of India also sent letters to all states proposing to observe the National Press Day at the State Level. The then Governor of Meghalaya Brig. (Dr.) B.D. Mishra (Retd.) conveyed his good wishes to the Media Fraternity and urged them to promote peace, progress and democratic values in the society. The Press Communiqué from Raj Bhavan, Shillong regarding the same was shared with Press Council of India as well via email dated 16.11.2022.

As per the news reports in the Sentinel, Guwahati and the Assam Tribune Guwahati the celebrations of the National Press Day, 2022 were observed throughout the state of Assam in various districts.

The occasion was celebrated in many other districts throughout the country. Many reputed Press Clubs/Associations and Ministers appreciated and encouraged the hard work of media persons and many senior journalists were felicitated on the occasion.

**Output:**

1. The Press Council has often stressed upon the need of upliftment of an important section of mass media that plays a major role in bringing the plights of the people, particularly in remote areas to light-the Stringers. On the occasion of National Press Day, discussing the importance of paying off the Stringers well and awarding them turned out to be a good initiative.
2. The menace of Fake news/Paid news as well as click-baits was also discussed. Dr Murugan also shared that the fact check unit under PIB, set up to control the spread of fake news, has received over one lakh reference and 1,400 news items have already been verified as fake. The role of Press Council in ensuring that correct information reaches the people was lauded. The debate shall surely give an insight to the industry to self correct the wrong which has the potential to become a malaise in the society.

3. It was concluded that it is for media to reflect and self-introspect on how to immunise itself from the virus of Infodemic which continues to inflict malicious disinformation on societies across geographies.
4. It was highlighted during the deliberation that mainstream media no longer has monopoly on providing news with advent of digital/social media. Thus, the Press Council Act having jurisdiction only in print media covers a fraction of media which needs to be amended to include digital/electronic media as well under the purview of the Council.
5. The need of more investment in Journalism, both, Investment in people as well as investment in news gathering has been brought to force.
6. It was also emphasised that the Press council needs to play a major role in promotion of diverse views and protection of women in news, along with transgender representation.
7. The celebrations of National Press Day by PCI further motivated other states to celebrate and cherish the Press freedom in their respective states namely Assam and Meghalaya.
8. Finally, the Constructive contribution of the media in nation building was applauded in the highest possible platform for discussing the press freedom. The Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting and the Chairperson, PCI encouraged the media to keep up its good work.

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