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Date: - 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2024

## Resolution

### **We the undersigned endorse this resolution:**

This meeting held on May 28, 2024, resolves to intensify the demands of media and digital rights organisations and urges the government to withdraw laws that are aimed at curbing the freedom of press.

1. The sweeping provisions under laws such as the proposed Broadcast Services (Regulation) Bill, 2023, the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, the Press and Registration of Periodicals Act, 2023, and more importantly, the Information Technology Amendment Rules, 2023, which grants authority to the government to remove any online content pertaining to its business that it deems to be false or misleading, are meant to silence the press.
2. Broadcast Services Regulation Bill, 2023, expands regulatory oversight to include OTT platform and digital content. It will replace Cable TV Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995. It proposes mandatory registration, content evaluation committees for self-regulation and a three-tier regulatory system.
3. The meeting notes that there are apprehensions of control and regulation and may place unreasonable restrictions on the citizens' right to know. The government must ensure that the right to know of the people is not trampled upon. The practice of repeated Internet shutdowns impedes both the citizens' right to information and journalists' ability to report news.
4. This meeting notes that the press in the country must stand up for its rights granted under Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution so that it continues to act as an important pillar of our vibrant and inclusive democracy.
5. Similarly, the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, attempts to define the digital space which it regulates while trying to put more emphasis on data handling. It seeks to protect data from unauthorised access. This meeting notes that breaches and misuse have become a critical concern in the modern digital age. However, amendment to Section 8(1)(j) of the Right to Information Act, 2005, to align it with Section 44(3) of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, curtails the crucial section of RTI, which has served as a vital tool for journalists for ferreting out critical information about the functioning of governments and public servants in public interest.
6. This meeting demands that the government should either delete or amend all such provisions of the Digital Personal Data Act, 2023, that are intended to weaken the Right to Information Act, 2005.
7. This meeting demands that the Press Council of India, established by an act of Parliament, be replaced by a Media Council to include the broadcast and digital media. The Media Council should be empowered to deal with the challenges emanating from a constantly changing media landscape. It should comprise working journalists, representatives of unions, owners



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and the government. It should be empowered to pass strictures on media houses, publications, broadcast and digitally published content and owners and take other such measures.

8. This meeting also notes with concern the move to repeal the Working Journalist Act and Other Newspaper Employees (Condition Of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1955 and Working Journalists (Fixation of Rates of Wages) Act, 1958, which cover a wide range of issues, including wages, working hours, leave, holidays, termination of employment, and redressal of grievances as well as mandate Wage Boards to fix and revise the wages of journalists and other newspaper employees. The Act gave protection to journalists, including security of service. These Acts have been subsumed by the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSH) Code, 2020, be withdrawn immediately. We demand that the two Working Journalists Acts be restored and amended to include broadcast journalists and digital media.
9. With internet users in the country having risen to a whopping 850 million, this meeting appreciates the need for a modern legal framework for protection of personal data, freedom of expression and quick and easily accessible grievances redressal mechanism.
10. To address the challenges of a rapidly evolving digital landscape, the government has declared its intent of bring in Digital India Act, which is intended to replace the Information Technology Act, 2000. On 09-03-2023, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, released a presentation outlining the scope of the proposed act. [This presentation can be accessed here.](#)
11. This meeting demands that the government should clearly articulate what they perceive as harms/risks, benefits to people in India on the internet. The government has so far not provided clear articulation of definitions of an Open, Safe, Trusted, and Accountable internet.
12. Government should state/clarify/document where the current legislative framework falls short, especially since we are in the midst of reforming the criminal justice system laws with legislations that were passed after 146 opposition MPs were suspended. The government must state clearly whether state intervention required to protect people of India should take the form of new laws or better redressal mechanisms or improvement of state capacity or a combination of these and other aspects.
13. This meeting feels that the government will have to ensure that proposed future laws should not impede press freedom, while upholding the right to privacy of citizens. The exiting laws and future legislations should not be leveraged to block or takedown legitimate news content across platforms viz. print, television and internet.
14. This meeting resolves to urge the government to ensure that all stakeholders are taken on board through an institutional processes that will ensure wide consultation when it intends to prepare the working draft of the proposed Digital India Bill.



# PRESS CLUB OF INDIA

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15. This meeting resolves that press bodies will continue to seek remedial measures collectively or individually, including legal remedies.

Gautam Lahiri  
President, Press Club of India

SD/-

Gurbir Singh <b>Chairman</b> <b>Press Club of Mumbai</b>	Snehasis Sur <b>President</b> <b>Press Club Kolkata</b>
Umesh Sharma <b>Secretary</b> <b>Press Club of Chandigarh</b>	Prateek Waghre <b>Executive Director</b> <b>Internet Freedom Foundation</b>
M Radhakrishnan <b>Secretary</b> <b>Trivandrum Press Club</b>	Shams Tabrez Qasmi <b>President</b> <b>Cogito Media Foundation</b>
Sujata Madhok <b>President</b> <b>Delhi Union of Journalists</b>	SN Sinha <b>President</b> <b>Working News Cameramen's Association</b>
Dhanya Rajendran <b>Chairperson</b> <b>DIGIPUB News India Foundation</b>	Parul Sharma <b>President</b> <b>Indian Women's Press Corps</b>
C.K. Nayak <b>President</b> <b>Press Association</b>	Geetarth Pathak <b>President</b> <b>Indian Journalist Union</b>
Balbir Singh Jandu <b>Secretary</b> <b>Indian Journalist Union</b>	Suhas Borker <b>Convener</b> <b>Jan Prasar</b>