



**Research Unit**  
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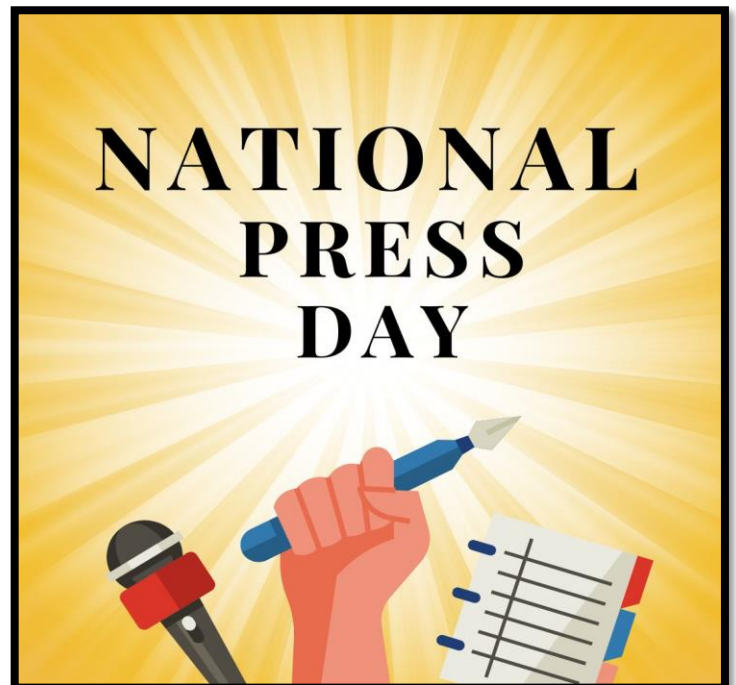
## National Press Day 2024 “Changing Nature of Press”

(Ministry of Information & Broadcasting)

15<sup>th</sup> November, 2024

### Introduction

The media is often referred to as the fourth pillar of democracy, playing a crucial role in shaping public opinion, driving development, and holding power to account. As a powerful tool for progress, it is essential that the press remains free from bias and upholds its duty to inform and educate the masses. For years, the media has been at the forefront, safeguarding the interests of millions and fostering transparency. To recognize its vital contributions, National Press Day is celebrated every year on November 16<sup>th</sup>, honoring the essential role of a free and responsible press in our society.



### Roots of National Press Freedom<sup>1</sup>

National Press Day, observed on November 16, marks the day the Press Council of India (PCI) began its operations in 1966. Established as an independent body, the PCI's primary role is to ensure that the press maintains high standards of journalism while remaining free from external influences. The idea for the Council was first proposed by the **First Press Commission in 1956**, which emphasized the need to protect press freedom and promote ethical reporting. Since its formation, the PCI has played a crucial role in safeguarding the independence of the press, even holding authority over state actions to ensure that the media can operate without fear or

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.presscouncil.nic.in/ResumeOfPCI.aspx>

interference. This day symbolizes a free and responsible press, central to democracy. It is commemorated through various activities, including the **National Awards for Excellence in Journalism** and the release of a **Souvenir**.

- ❖ National Award for Excellence in Journalism to honor outstanding contributions in print media. These awards, presented annually on National Press Day, recognize exceptional journalists across various fields, with the prestigious **Raja Ram Mohan Roy Award** serving as the highest honor.
- ❖ Souvenir is a compilation of goodwill messages from prominent leaders and opinion pieces from media experts and academics on the theme of the year. Released on National Press Day, it also highlights the achievements of awardees, showcasing their outstanding work through articles and photographs honored each year.

Each year, National Press Day highlight's important themes that reflect the evolving challenges and responsibilities of the media.<sup>2</sup>



### Celebration of National Press Day 2024<sup>3</sup>

This year, National Press Day will be celebrated on 16th November 2024 at the National Media Centre in New Delhi, starting at 4:00 PM. The theme for this year's event is "**Changing Nature of the Press**", reflecting the

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.presscouncil.nic.in/NationalPressDay.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.presscouncil.nic.in/ViewPdfContent.aspx?Page=PressRelease&Title=1105#:~:text=P.C.I.%20will%20be%20observing%20National,and%20Broadcasting%2C%20Shri%20Ashwini%20Vaishnav.>

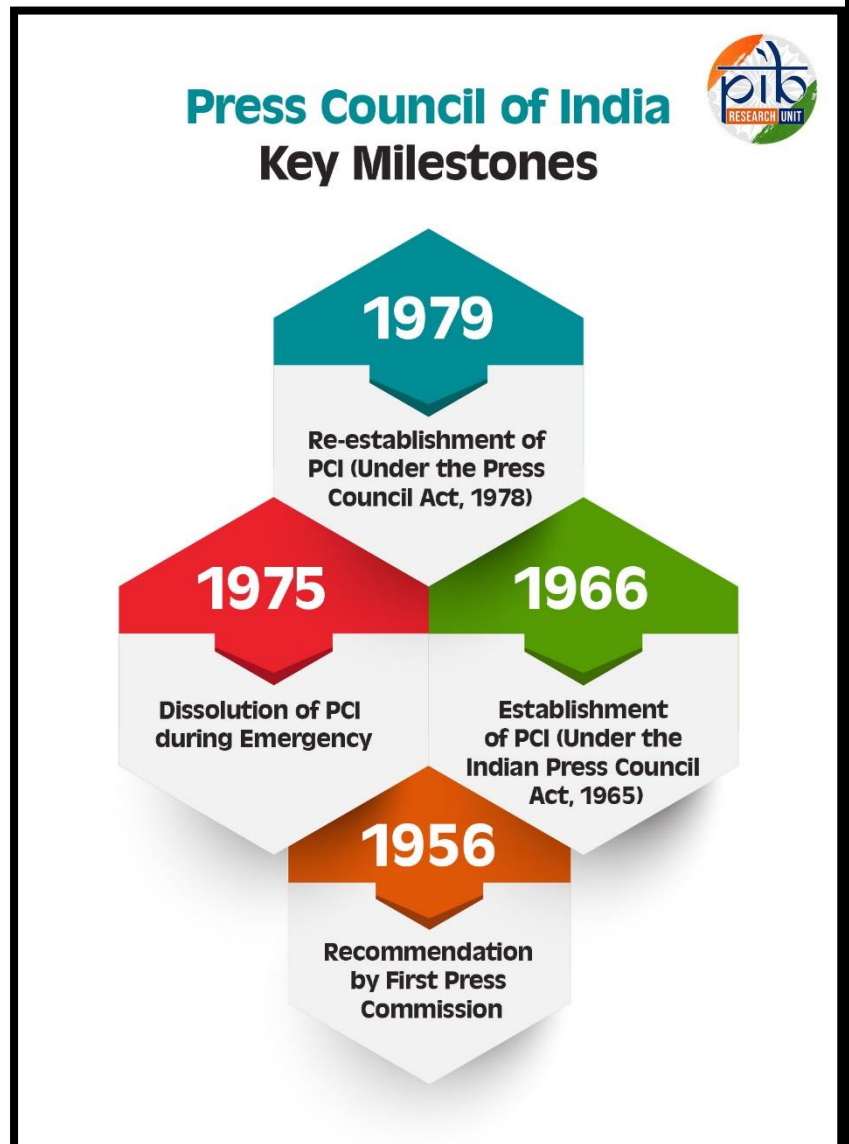
evolving dynamics of the media landscape. The event will be graced by the Hon'ble Minister of Information and Broadcasting Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, with Dr. L. Murugan, the Hon'ble Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, and veteran journalist Padma Bhushan Shri Kundal Ramanlal Vyas as guests of honor. The function will be presided over by Smt. Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai, Hon'ble Chairperson of the Press Council of India.

## Strengthening Media Democracy: The Press Council's Impact <sup>4</sup>

The Press Council of India (PCI) was first established in 1966 under the Indian Press Council Act, 1965, following the recommendations of the First Press Commission. Its primary objectives were to preserve press freedom and maintain high standards of journalism in India. However, the Council was dissolved during the Emergency in 1975, and a new Act, the Press Council Act, 1978, re-established the PCI in 1979, reaffirming its role as a quasi-judicial body with statutory authority.

The Council consists of a Chairman (usually a retired Supreme Court judge) and 28 members, including journalists, media owners, and representatives from Parliament, education, law, and literature. It is empowered to arbitrate on issues related to press freedom, journalistic ethics, and public taste, offering recommendations on laws affecting the press.

It can take suo-motu action or investigate complaints related to unethical reporting or interference with press freedom. Its decisions are final and cannot be challenged in any court. Over the years, the PCI has played a crucial role in shaping the ethical framework of Indian journalism and safeguarding the independence of the media.



<sup>4</sup> <https://www.presscouncil.nic.in/IntroductioPCI.aspx>

## Initiatives to Empower Press<sup>5</sup>

The **Press Council of India (PCI)**, since its inception, has taken significant strides in shaping the landscape of press freedom and ensuring that the media in India upholds high ethical standards while remaining independent. Here's a brief overview of the Council's key developments and initiatives over the years:

### 2023:

**Representation of LGBTQ+ Community:** The PCI adopted a report on the representation of the LGBTQ+ community in the media, promoting fair and responsible coverage.

**Guidelines for Reporting on Natural Disasters:** The Council formulated guidelines for media professionals covering news during natural disasters, emphasizing sensitivity and accuracy in reporting.

### 2022:

The PCI continued its advocacy for journalistic ethics by updating its Norms of Journalistic Conduct, ensuring that journalists adhere to professional and ethical standards.

### 2004-2000:

Throughout these years, the PCI focused on a range of issues such as media ethics, democracy, media's role in disaster management, and freedom of expression.

### International Engagement:

- The PCI has been an active participant in global forums and international exchanges. It has engaged with media councils in countries like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Indonesia, and Myanmar, aiming to promote cross-border cooperation on press freedom and peace journalism.
- The South Asian Alliance of Press Councils (SAAPC) was also established, fostering collaboration between press councils in the region.

### Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs):

- The PCI has signed MoUs with press councils from countries like Indonesia, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, aimed at fostering mutual cooperation and advancing press freedom globally.

### Internship Programs and Educational Initiatives:

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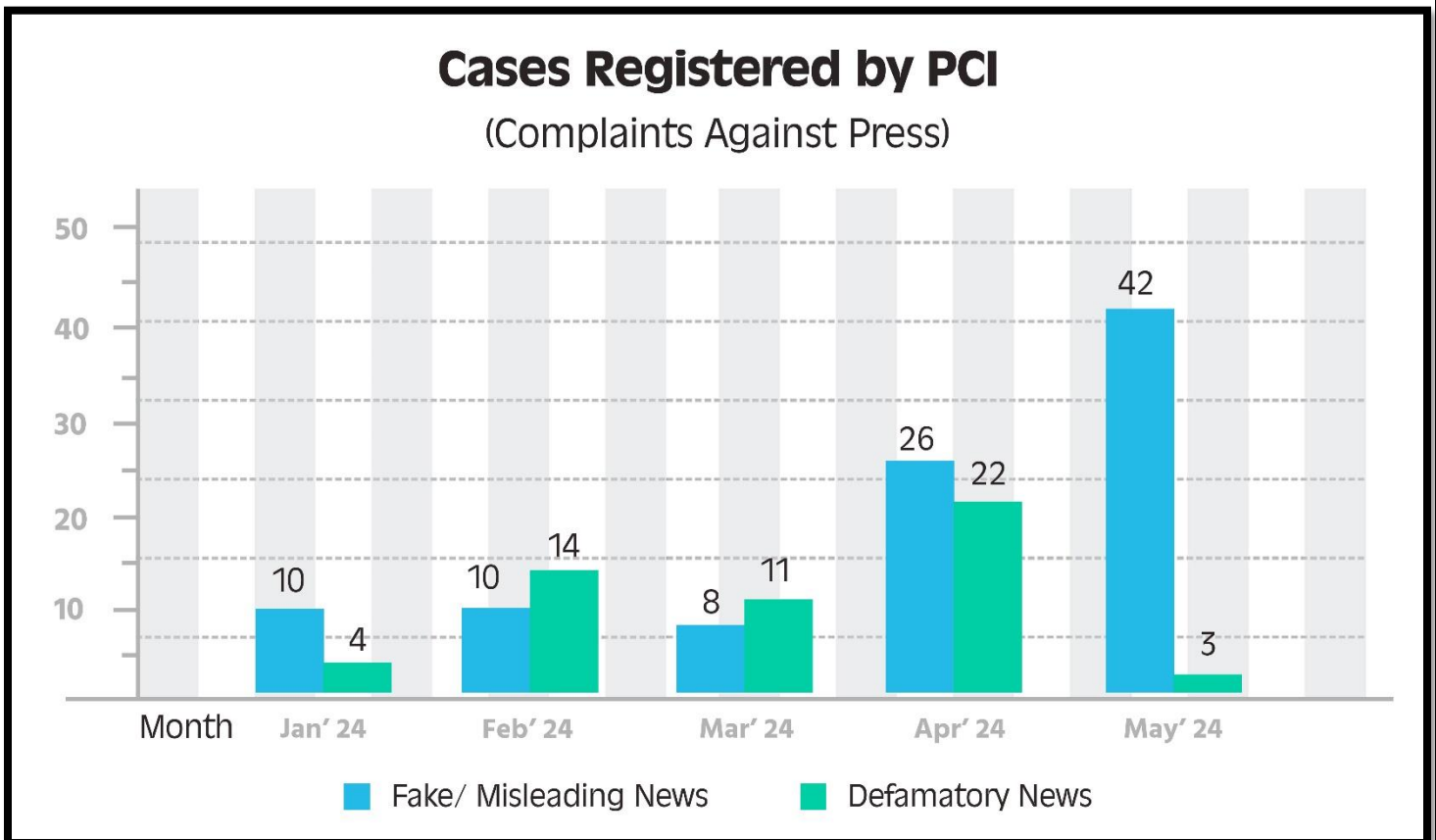
<sup>5</sup> <https://www.presscouncil.nic.in/ResumeOfPCI.aspx>

- The PCI introduced merit-based internships for journalism students to foster a sense of responsibility and awareness regarding press freedom. The Summer Internship Program (SIP) and Winter Internship Program (WIP) offer students an opportunity to engage with the PCI's work.

The PCI's activities and initiatives reflect its ongoing commitment to protecting press freedom, upholding ethical standards, and supporting the professional development of journalists across India and internationally.

### Issue Resolved by the Council over the years<sup>6</sup>

The **Press Council of India (PCI)** has played a vital role in safeguarding press freedom and maintaining ethical standards in journalism. Over the years, it has resolved a wide range of issues, including addressing complaints related to violations of press norms and threats to press freedom, with over **37,000 complaints filed between 1979 and 2024**. The Council has been instrumental in issuing guidelines and principles to help journalists regulate their conduct and has consistently appealed for media responsibility during times of national crisis. Additionally, the PCI has conducted studies on key topics like election coverage, press reporting on defense, and the safety of journalists, contributing to the ongoing development of media standards in India.



<sup>6</sup> <https://www.presscouncil.nic.in/ResumeOfPCI.aspx>

## Conclusion

National Press Day serves as an important reminder of the vital role that the press plays in shaping our democracy. Since its establishment, the Press Council of India has worked tirelessly to uphold press freedom, maintain journalistic standards, and address challenges facing the media. From tackling issues like media ethics and press safety to adapting to the digital age, the Council continues to guide and support the media in its mission to inform, educate, and empower the public. National Press Day not only celebrates the achievements of the press but also reinforces the responsibility it carries in building a more informed and transparent society, ensuring that the future of journalism remains strong, free, and responsible.

## References

- <https://www.presscouncil.nic.in/NationalPressDay.aspx>
- <https://www.presscouncil.nic.in/ViewPdfContent.aspx?Page=PressRelease&Title=1105#:~:text=P.C.I.%20will%20be%20observing%20National,and%20Broadcasting%2C%20Shri%20Ashwini%20Vaishnav.>
- <https://www.presscouncil.nic.in/IntroductioPCI.aspx>
- <https://www.presscouncil.nic.in/ResumeOfPCI.aspx>
- <https://presscouncil.nic.in/MonthlyStatistics.aspx> (Month Wise Case Registered)

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