

**THIRTY-FOURTH REPORT
COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS
(SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA)**

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING

(Presented to Lok Sabha on 2.08.2022)



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

August, 2022/Sravana, 1944 (Saka)

CPB No. 1 Vol. XXXVI

© 2022 BY LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT

Published under Rule 382 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha (Sixteenth Edition).

CONTENTS

	PAGE
COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS	(ii)
INTRODUCTION.....	(iii)

REPORT

Action Taken by the Government on the recommendations made by the Committee on Petitions (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) in their Fifteenth Report on the representation of Shri Manohar Singh and others regarding introducing reforms in Journalism in the country and other important issues related therewith.	1
--	---

APPENDIX

Minutes of the 21 st sitting of the Committee on Petitions held on 19.5.2022	27
---	----

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS

Shri Harish Dwivedi - *Chairperson*

MEMBERS

2. Shri Anto Antony
3. Shri Hanuman Beniwal
4. Dr. Sukanta Majumdar
5. Shri Sanjay Sadashivrao Mandlik
6. Shri P. Ravindhranath
7. Shri Brijendra Singh
8. Shri Sushil Kumar Singh
9. Shri Manoj Tiwari
10. Shri Prabhubhai Nagarbhai Vasava
11. Shri Rajan Vichare
12. Shri Arvind Sawant
13. Vacant
14. Vacant
15. Vacant

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri T.G. Chandrasekhar - Additional Secretary
2. Shri Raju Srivastava - Director
3. Shri G. C. Dobhal - Additional Director
4. Shri Surender Kumar - Assistant Executive Officer

**THIRTY-FOURTH REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS
(SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA)**

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson, Committee on Petitions, having been authorised by the Committee to present on their behalf this Thirty- Fourth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) of the Committee to the House on the Action Taken by the Government on the recommendations made by the Committee on Petitions (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) in their Fifteenth Report on the representation of Shri Manohar Singh and others regarding introducing reforms in Journalism in the country and other important issues related therewith.

2. The Committee considered and adopted the draft Thirty-Fourth Report at their sitting held on 19 May, 2022.

3. The observations/recommendations of the Committee on the above matters have been included in the Report.

NEW DELHI;

**HARISH DWIVEDI,
Chairperson,
Committee on Petitions.**

19 May, 2022

28 Vaishaka, 1944 (Saka)

REPORT

ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS (SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA) IN THEIR FIFTEENTH REPORT ON THE REPRESENTATION OF SHRI MANOHAR SINGH AND OTHERS REGARDING INTRODUCING REFORMS IN JOURNALISM IN THE COUNTRY AND OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES RELATED THEREWITH.

The Committee on Petitions (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) presented their Fifteenth Report to Lok Sabha on 11.2.2021 which had dealt with the representation of Shri Manohar Singh and others regarding introducing reforms in Journalism in the country and other important issues related therewith.

2. The Committee had made certain observations/recommendations in the matter and the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting were asked to implement the recommendations and requested to furnish their action taken replies thereon for further consideration of the Committee.

3. The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting *vide* their communication dated 21.01.2022 have furnished their Action Taken Replies, in respect of the observations/ recommendations contained in the aforesaid Report. The recommendations made by the Committee and the replies furnished thereto by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting have been detailed in the succeeding paragraphs.

4. In paras 20 to 27 of the Report, the Committee had observed/ recommended as follows :-

"Setting up of Media Commission and converting 'Press Council of India' into 'Media Council'"

The Committee note from the submissions made by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting that there exist regulatory mechanism in the form of regulatory Bodies/Associations, viz., Press Council of India, News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA) under News Broadcasters Association (NBA), Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC) under Indian Broadcasting Foundation (IBF), Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), Electronic Media Monitoring Centre (EMMC) and an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) to professionally deal with the affairs of Print and/or Visual Media.

The Press Council of India (PCI), established in July, 1966 under the Press Council Act, 1965 is a Statutory, quasi-Judicial Authority functioning as a watchdog of the Press to preserve the freedom and to improve the standards of Newspapers and News Agencies in the country. It adjudicates the complaints against and by the Press for violation of ethics and for violation of the freedom of Press. In this connection, the Committee also note that the PCI has formulated 'Norms of Journalistic Conduct' and in case of violation of journalistic ethics or public taste or a professional misconduct, the PCI, on receipt of such complaint or otherwise, after holding an inquiry, could warn, admonish or censure the Newspaper, the News Agency, the Editor or the Journalist or disapprove the conduct of the Editor or the Journalist, as the case may be.

The Committee further note that for News and non-News Television Channels, a self-regulatory regime has also been established in the form of News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA) under News Broadcasters Association (NBA) and Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC) under Indian Broadcasting Foundation (IBF), whereby, the advertisements are looked after by the Advertising Standards Council (ASCI). The NBA has also formulated a Code of Ethics in Broadcasting Standards and the NBSA has issued an Advisory dated 12.05.2016 to its members to the effect that manufacturing, drawing, tailoring, and tutoring or creating any kind of false or fake news or an attempt to do so will be considered as a serious misconduct on the part of the Broadcaster.

In the year 2008, the Government of India has set up an Electronic Media Monitoring Centre (EMMC) to record and monitor Channels on a 24x7 basis and an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) also looks at the specific complaints regarding violation of Programme Content by Private Television Channels and recommends appropriate action in case of violation of the programmes code(s).

The Committee also find that there are various Legislative Regulatory Mechanism(s) in respect of the 'Visual and Electronic Media'. The Content Broadcast (Programmes/Advertisements Telecast) on Television Channels is regulated in accordance with the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 and the Cable Television Network Rules, 1994. Further, there is also a provision under the Information Technology Act, 2000, administered by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology for removal of objectionable online content on the Social Media. Also, the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules, 2011 notified under section 79 of the IT Act requires that the Social Media Platform(s), being intermediaries, shall observe due diligence while discharging their duties and shall inform the users of computer resource not to host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, updated or share any information that is harmful, objectionable, affect minors and unlawful in any way on case-to-case basis.

Notwithstanding the fact that there exist various Legislative and Institutional Regulatory Mechanisms and most of them being self-regulatory in nature, to look into the affairs of different types of Media Platforms, the Committee are of the view that with the existing powers and mandate, the Authorities concerned could only exert moral and ethical pressure on the Media Platforms and cannot take any visible punitive action against them in case of any grave violation. The Committee, therefore, feel that these Regulatory Mechanism, without any adequate Legal Regulatory Framework, would not be able to meet the current challenges being witnessed by the Society until and unless some stringent penal provisions in respect of errant Media Houses, etc., are put in place.

The Committee are also not convinced with the averments made by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting that setting up of a Media Commission would serve a limited purpose, especially, keeping in view the fact that a Commission which has a primary role to collect information about the current scenario in any Sector or to make projections/ recommendations for the future, etc.

The Committee, while considering the rapidly changing media landscape in the country, feel that there is now a need to look into the various inter-related aspects with an entirely new perspective for the usefulness of a unified Regulatory and Governance Mechanism for facilitating an independent, impartial, and responsible News and non-News Media in the country. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting should conduct a feasibility study for setting up of a 'Media Commission' and for appropriately restructuring the Press Council of India."

5. The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, in their action taken reply, have submitted as follows:-

"The Ministry had earlier received a proposal from the Press Council of India regarding constitution of Media Council encompassing various Media Platforms. The Ministry is of the view that at present, separate regulatory mechanisms already exist for different media platforms – Press Council of India under the Press Council Act, 1978 for print media, Cable TV Network (Regulation) Act, 1995 for television and the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 under the Information Technology Act, 2000 for digital news publishers and OTT platforms. Each platform is unique and distinctive in its own way and unifying and merging them under one regulatory framework may not be desirable."

6. In paras 28 to 31 of the Report, the Committee had observed/ recommended as follows:-

"Safety of Journalists"

On the basis of the submissions made by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the Committee acknowledge the role of Press Council of India with respect to the safety of Journalists by way of initiating suo motu action on specific complaints received from the affected Journalists, in accordance with the provisions of the Press Council Act, 1978. In this context, the Committee also take note of the fact that the total number of suo motu actions initiated by the PCI from 2015-16 to 2019-20 comes to 95.

On the aspect of safety of Journalists, the Committee take note of the fact that on 19.09.2011, the Press Council of India had constituted a 'Sub-Committee on Safety of Journalists' to examine the issue of safety of Journalists and for ensuring a safe and secured working environment for them in the country. The Sub-Committee had submitted its Report on 'Safety of Journalists' inter alia containing various recommendations with regard to safety and security of Journalists on 08.07.2015, which was adopted by the Council on the same day. Thereafter, the said Report was forwarded to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and other States/UTs for taking further consequential action on the recommendations of the sub-Committee. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting examined the said Report and forwarded the same to the Ministry of Home Affairs for initiating further necessary action.

In pursuance thereof, the Ministry of Home Affairs has informed that 'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India and the existing laws in the country are adequate for protection of the citizens including the Journalists. Further, the Indian Penal Code is intended to cover all substantive aspects of Criminal Law. Besides, Special Fast Track Courts also exist and the States could conveniently refer cases of attack on Journalists to Fast Track Courts.

Based on all the relevant information furnished by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the Committee find that the Report on 'Safety of Journalists' inter alia containing various recommendations with regard to safety and security of Journalists was formulated and finalised by the Press Council of India way back on 08.07.2015. Thereafter, the said Report was forwarded to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and other States/UTs for taking further consequential action. The Report was again forwarded to the Ministry of Home Affairs for its final implementation. However, the Ministry of Home Affairs, while referring to the relevant provisions of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India, emphasised that the existing laws in the country are adequate for protection of the citizens including the Journalists. In other words, no tangible action has been taken by any of the Authorities concerned. The Committee are not satisfied that the recommendations contained in the Report have not been implemented even after a lapse of more than five years. It appears to be Committee that had the water-tight implementation of the provisions contained in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution been informed to the Press Council of India, they would not have formulated any such Sub-Committee and finalized the Report which broadly concerns the safety of Journalists. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, in consultation with the Ministry of Home Affairs, should persuade all the States/UTs to at least implement some of the major recommendations contained in the Report which could ensure the safety of Journalists in the country."

7. The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, in their action taken reply, have submitted as follows:-

"Central Government attaches highest importance to the safety and security of every citizen of the country including journalists. As Police and Public Order are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India and State Governments are responsible for prevention, detection, registration and investigation of crime and for

prosecuting the criminals through their law enforcement agencies. Ministry of Home Affairs has issued advisory to State/UTs time to time to ensure law and order. An advisory specifically on Safety of Journalist was issued to States/UTs on 20.10.2017 requesting them to strictly enforce the law to ensure safety and security of Media personnel. In view of the observations/recommendations of the Committee, the matter was taken up with Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Home Affairs informed that advisory dated 20.10.2017 is considered adequate."

8. In paras 32 to 34 of the Report, the Committee had observed/recommended as follows :-

"Ensuring social and financial security of the Journalists

From the submissions made by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the Committee note that the Ministry administers a 'Journalist Welfare Scheme' to provide one time ex-gratia relief, on urgent basis, to the Journalists or their families, wherein, the funding is made through Budgetary provisions (i.e., the Consolidated Fund of India). The Financial Assistance, under the Scheme, is as under:-

- (i) Up to Rs. 5 Lakh to the family under extreme hardship on account of death of the Journalist;*
- (ii) Up to Rs. 5 Lakh to the Journalist in case of permanent disability rendering the Journalist incapable of earning a livelihood;*
- (iii) Up to Rs. 3 Lakh towards the cost of treatment of major listed ailments; and*
- (iv) Up to Rs. 2 Lakh in case of accidents causing serious injuries necessitating hospitalization.*

The Committee further note that the following facilities are also being provided to the Journalists accredited by the PIB:-

- (i) Railway concession for self and family, administered by the Ministry of Railways;*
- (ii) CGHS facility for self and family administered by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare;*
- (iii) Access to Central Government Offices/Ministries located in Delhi and NCR for the purpose of Press Conferences/Interviews and Media events; and*
- (iv) Utilization of Media Work Room, Library, Press Lounge, Cafeteria, etc.*

While acknowledging the intricate nature of job being performed by the Journalists, which is becoming more and more challenging now-a-days, the Committee are of the considered view that one time ex-gratia relief under the 'Journalist Welfare Scheme' is insufficient to cater to the functional needs of the Journalists or their families in various emergent situations. The Committee, therefore, recommend the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to consider a reasonable enhancement in the amount of one-time ex-gratia relief/financial assistance under the 'Journalist Welfare Scheme'. The Committee also desire that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting should work out modalities for providing Life/Medical Insurance to the Journalists, in consultation with the Ministry of Finance."

9. The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, in their action taken reply, have submitted as follows:-

"This Ministry administers a Journalist Welfare Scheme to provide one time ex-gratia relief, on urgent basis, to the Journalists or their families.

The Government undertook a special drive for providing financial assistance to the families of journalists who succumbed to COVID-19. On the basis of applications received by the Press Information Bureau (PIB) and which fulfill the criteria laid under the Journalist Welfare Scheme (JWS), a sum of Rs. 6.15 Crore has been approved during financial years 2020-21 and 2021-22 for financial assistance @ Rs. 5,00,000/ family to the families of 123 journalists who died due to COVID-19.

The Ministry constituted a Committee in September, 2021 to review the existing guidelines of Journalist Welfare Scheme (JWS) and to make appropriate recommendations for changes therein. The Committee submitted its report on 22 December, 2021 which is under consideration of the Government."

10. In paras 35 to 37 of the Report, the Committee had observed/ recommended as follows:-

"Implementation of the recommendations of Majithia Wage Board

The Committee note that the recommendations contained in the Majithia Wage Board were made in November 11.11.2011 and as per the Working Journalists and Other Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1955, the respective State Government/UT are enjoined to implement these recommendations by every Newspaper Establishments. The payment of wages, as per the recommendations of the Wage Board is obligatory on every Newspaper Establishment and the respective State Government/UT has the primary responsibility of its implementation.

The Committee also note that due to non-implementation of the recommendations of Majithia Wage Board, the Supreme Court vide its judgement dated 07.02.2014 in W.P.(C) 246/2011 had categorically directed that the wages as revised/determined shall be payable from 11.11.2011 when the Government of India notified the recommendations.

The Supreme Court also directed that all the arrears up to March, 2014 shall be paid to all eligible persons in four equal instalments within a period of one year and continue to pay the revised wages from April, 2014 onwards.

Notwithstanding the fact that quarterly reports on the status of implementation of the recommendations of Majithia Wage Board are being sought from all States and UTs under the Central Level Monitoring Committee Mechanism, the Committee are constrained to point out that no visible headway has been made by any of the Authorities concerned in regard to implement the recommendations of the Majithia Wage Board even after the intervention of the Supreme Court of India. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting should ensure that all the recommendations contained in the Majithia Wage Board are scrupulously implemented in all the States and UTs without any further delay."

11. The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, in their action taken reply, have submitted as follows:-

"The matter was taken up with Ministry of Labour & Employment which has stated that primary responsibility for implementation of recommendations of Wage Board lies with the State Government/UTs in terms of Section 17 of the Working Journalists and Other Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1955".

Ministry of Labour & Employment has undertaken the following activities:

- (i) Concerned Principal Secretaries (Labour & Emp.) of all States have been requested to take strict action to ensure full implementation of the recommendations of Majithia Wage Board.

- (ii) Holding of Central Level Monitoring Committee (CLMC) meetings to review the implementation of recommendations of the Majithia Wage Board with the approval of competent authority. The next meeting of CLMC is scheduled to be held in January, 2022.
- (iii) All States/UTs have been asked to make Tripartite Committee/Special Cell functional, if not done yet.
- (iv) State/UT Governments have taken the following actions:
 - (a) State/UT Governments have created Tripartite Monitoring Committee/Special Cell to gear up the State Labour enforcement machinery and to monitor and ensure speedy and prompt implementation of the recommendations of the Wage Boards.
 - (b) State/UT Governments have appointed Inspectors for conducting regular inspections in the light of the Working Journalist Act and taking action as per law on regular basis.
 - (c) On receipt of complaint by any employee or authorized representative of employee against any defaulting newspaper establishment, the Labour Department of the State/UT Governments takes action as per WJ Act, 1955.

Ministry of Labour & Employment has also informed that 'Working Journalists and Other Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1955 has been subsumed into "The Occupational, Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020".

The definition of "Working Journalist" under "The Occupational, Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020" has been broadened as under:-

"Working Journalist" means a person whose principal avocation is that of a journalist and who is employed as such, either whole-time or part-time, in, or in relation to, one or more newspaper establishment, or other establishment relating to any electronic media or digital media such as newspaper or radio or other like media and includes an editor, a leader-writer, news editor, sub-editor, feature-writer, copy-tester, reporter, correspondent, cartoonist, news-photographer and proof-reader, but does not include any such person who is employed mainly in a managerial, supervisory or administrative capacity."

12. In paras 38 and 39 of the Report, the Committee had observed/ recommended as follows:-

" Proposal for repealing of archaic Press Laws

The Committee were informed by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting that the Government has proposed to repeal the archaic Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867 and to replace it with a Statute which is consistent with the current media environment and upholding the spirit of Article 19 of the Constitution. The Committee also note that the Cable Television Networks (Regulations) Act 1995 has also been proposed to be amended and the proposed amendments have been placed in public domain for seeking comments/suggestions of various stakeholders. In this sequel, the Committee were also informed that the 'Up-linking' and 'Down-linking' Guidelines of 2011, which regulates various aspects of approvals for private Satellite Television channels, has also been proposed to be amended.

The Committee are happy to note that taking into account the current media environment and its functional requirements, proposals to repeal the archaic Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867 and to amend the Cable Television Networks (Regulations) Act 1995 are under active consideration of the Government. However, in this connection, the

Committee desire that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting should carefully examine and consider the comments/suggestions of various stakeholders in regard to the proposed amendments. The Committee, therefore, urge the Ministry to put in their concerted efforts in a time bound manner and notify the Rules/Guidelines made thereunder, in the right earnest."

13. The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, in their action taken reply, have submitted as follows:-

"The Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867 lays down cumbersome procedure for registration of printing presses and newspapers published in the country, which involves making declaration before the jurisdictional District Authority and also making separate application by newspapers to RNI for registration. The process is to be repeated for any change in the certificate of registration.

To put in place a simple process of registration of periodicals/newspapers and to make it more consistent with contemporary requirements of the print media, this Ministry prepared a draft of new legislation titled 'Registration of Press and Periodicals (RPP) Bill, 2019' to replace the existing PRB Act, 1867. The Draft 'Registration of Press and Periodicals Bill, 2019 was placed on the website of the Ministry on 25th November, 2019 for inviting comments/ suggestions from stakeholders and general public. After considering the suggestions/comments received, the Draft Bill was revised and the 'Registration of Press and Periodicals Bill, 2020' was circulated on 20.05.2020 to the concerned Ministries/Departments/ organizations for inter-ministerial consultation. After taking into consideration the comments/suggestions as part of inter-ministerial consultation and other views, the Bill was further revised and Registration of Press and Periodicals Bill, 2020 has been prepared in consultation with Ministry of Law and Justice, which is under consideration in the Ministry.

Further, with regard to Cable Television Network (Regulation) Act, 1995 the Central Government has notified the Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules, 2021 vide notification No. G.S.R. 416(E) dated 17.06.2021. These rules provide for statutory mechanism for redressal of grievances/complaints of citizens related to content broadcast by Television channels in accordance with the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995. The Rules also provide that the self-regulating bodies of the broadcasters would be registered with the Central Government. The Rules provide three level complaint redressal mechanism as under:-

- (i) Level I - A self regulation by broadcaster,
- (ii) Level II - Self regulation by the self regulating bodies of the broadcasters, and
- (iii) Level III – Oversight mechanism by the Central Government.

The notification is significant as it paves the way for a strong institutional system for redressing grievance while placing accountability and responsibility on the broadcasters and their self regulating bodies."

OBSERVATIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS

Setting up of Media Commission and converting 'Press Council of India' into 'Media Council'

14. The Committee, while examining the instant representation of Shri Manohar Singh had highlighted the rapidly changing media landscape in the country and in this context opined that there is a need to look into the various inter-related aspects with an entirely new perspective for the usefulness of a unified Regulatory and Governance Mechanism for facilitating an independent, impartial, and responsible News and non-News Media in the country. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting should conduct a feasibility study for setting up of a 'Media Commission' and for appropriately restructuring the Press Council of India.

15. Pursuant to the above recommendation, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, in their action taken reply, have submitted that the Ministry had earlier received a proposal from the Press Council of India regarding constitution of Media Council encompassing various Media Platforms and informed that at present, separate regulatory mechanism(s) already exist for different media platforms such as Press Council of India under the Press Council Act, 1978 for print media, Cable TV Network (Regulation) Act, 1995 for television and the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 under

the Information Technology Act, 2000 for digital news publishers and OTT platforms. In this sequel, the Ministry have contended that each platform is unique and distinctive in its own way and unifying and merging them under one regulatory framework may not be desirable.

16. The Committee are unhappy to note that the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting have not provided details of necessary steps taken or proposed to be taken in the direction of undertaking a feasibility study for setting up of a 'Media Commission' and for appropriately restructuring the Press Council of India. The Committee have acknowledged the fact that there already exist separate regulatory mechanism(s) in respect to News and non-News Media in print, electronic and online media platforms. However, while partially endorsing the proposal of the Press Council of India regarding constitution of Media Council encompassing various Media Platforms, the Committee wish to urge the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting that a quick study for assessing the workability of an Umbrella Statute covering the entire Broadcasting Sector thereby conceptualizing a 'Media Commission' in order to equip it with statutory powers to enforce its directives and also for appropriately restructuring the Press Council of India so as to have wider representations involving media experts as well as stakeholders, may be undertaken at the earliest. Based on the findings of the said quick study, a conscious and workable decision could be taken by the Ministry under intimation to the Committee

of Petitions, Lok Sabha. The Committee would like to be kept informed of the progress made in this regard.

Safety of Journalists

17. Based on the relevant information furnished by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the Committee found that the Report on 'Safety of Journalists' *inter alia* containing various recommendations with regard to safety and security of Journalists was formulated and finalised by the Press Council of India way back on 08.07.2015. However, the Committee were not satisfied that the recommendations contained in the Report have not been implemented even after a lapse of more than five years. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, in consultation with the Ministry of Home Affairs, should persuade all the States/UTs to at least implement some of the major recommendations contained in the Report which could ensure the safety of Journalists in the country.

18. In this regard, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, in their action taken reply, have submitted that the Ministry of Home Affairs have issued advisory to State/UTs from time to time to ensure law and order. The Ministry have informed that an advisory specifically on the Safety of Journalist was issued to States/UTs on 20.10.2017 requesting them to strictly enforce the law to ensure safety and security of Media personnel. Besides, in view of the observations/recommendations of the Committee,

the matter was taken up with Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry, in turn, have informed that advisory dated 20.10.2017 is considered adequate.

19. Notwithstanding the fact that the Ministry of Home Affairs had issued an advisory on Safety of Journalist to the States/UTs on 20.10.2017, the Committee are unhappy to note that the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting have not taken any tangible steps towards implementation of the recommendations with regard to safety and security of Journalists contained in the Report on 'Safety of Journalists' formulated and finalised by the Press Council of India on 08.07.2015. The Committee, therefore, would like to once again recommend that the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, in consultation with the Ministry of Home Affairs, should ask all the States/UTs to implement some of the important recommendations contained in the Report of the Press Council of India which could ensure the safety of Journalists in the country. The Committee would like to be apprised of the steps taken by the Ministry in this direction.

Ensuring social and financial security of the Journalists

20. While acknowledging the intricate nature of job being performed by the Journalists, which is becoming more and more challenging now-a-days, the Committee were of the considered view that one time ex-gratia relief under the 'Journalist Welfare Scheme' is insufficient to cater to the

functional needs of the Journalists or their families in various emergent situations. The Committee had, therefore, recommended the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to consider a reasonable enhancement in the amount of one-time ex-gratia relief/financial assistance under the 'Journalist Welfare Scheme'. The Committee had also desired that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting should work out modalities for providing Life/Medical Insurance to the Journalists, in consultation with the Ministry of Finance.

21. The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, in their action taken reply, have submitted that the Ministry administers a Journalist Welfare Scheme to provide one time ex-gratia relief, on urgent basis, to the Journalists or their families. The Government undertook a special drive for providing financial assistance to the families of journalists who succumbed to COVID-19. On the basis of applications received by the Press Information Bureau (PIB) and which fulfil the criteria laid under the Journalist Welfare Scheme (JWS), a sum of Rs. 6.15 crore has been approved during financial years 2020-21 and 2021-22 for financial assistance of Rs. 5,00,000/family to the families of 123 journalists who died due to COVID-19. The Ministry have further informed that the Ministry had constituted a Committee in September, 2021 to review the existing guidelines of Journalist Welfare Scheme (JWS) and to make appropriate recommendations for suggesting changes therein. The said Committee

submitted its report on 22 December, 2021 which is under consideration of the Government.

22. While acknowledging that the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting had constituted a Committee in September, 2021 to review the existing guidelines of Journalist Welfare Scheme (JWS) and to make appropriate recommendations for suggesting changes therein, the Committee note with concern that in pursuance of the recommendations relating to providing Life/Medical Insurance to the Journalists, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting have not initiated any action. The Committee, therefore, recommend to the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting to consult with the Ministry of Finance for formulation of Scheme having provisions for Life/Medical Insurance to the Journalists at the earliest. The Committee would also like to know the status of implementation of the recommendations of the Committee which reviewed the existing guidelines of Journalist Welfare Scheme (JWS) and submitted their Report thereon to the Ministry.

Implementation of the recommendations of Majithia Wage Board

23. Notwithstanding the fact that quarterly reports on the status of implementation of the recommendations of Majithia Wage Board are being sought from all States and UTs under the Central Level Monitoring Committee Mechanism, the Committee were constrained to point out that no visible headway was made by any of the Authorities concerned in

regard to implement the recommendations of the Majithia Wage Board even after the intervention of the Supreme Court of India. The Committee had, therefore, strongly recommended that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting should ensure that all the recommendations contained in the Majithia Wage Board are scrupulously implemented in all the States and UTs without any further delay.

24. In reply thereto, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, in their action taken reply, have submitted that the matter was taken up with Ministry of Labour & Employment which has stated that the primary responsibility for implementation of recommendations of Wage Board lies with the State Government/UTs in terms of Section 17 of the Working Journalists and Other Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1955. The Ministry have further informed that the Ministry of Labour & Employment has undertaken the following activities:-

- (i) Concerned Principal Secretaries (Labour & Employment) of all States have been requested to take strict action to ensure full implementation of the recommendations of Majithia Wage Board.
- (ii) Holding of Central Level Monitoring Committee (CLMC) meetings to review the implementation of recommendations of the Majithia Wage Board with the approval of competent authority.

- (iii) All States/UTs have been asked to make Tripartite Committee/Special Cell functional, if not done yet.
- (iv) State/UT Governments have taken the following actions:-
 - (a) State/UT Governments have created Tripartite Monitoring Committee/Special Cell to gear up the State Labour enforcement machinery and to monitor and ensure speedy and prompt implementation of the recommendations of the Wage Boards.
 - (b) State/UT Governments have appointed Inspectors for conducting regular inspections in the light of the Working Journalist Act and taking action as per law on regular basis.
 - (c) On receipt of complaint by any employee or authorized representative of employee against any defaulting newspaper establishment, the Labour Department of the State/UT Governments takes action as per WJ Act, 1955.

25. The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting have further informed that as per information of the Ministry of Labour & Employment 'Working Journalists and Other Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1955 has been subsumed into "The Occupational, Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020" and the definition of "Working Journalist" under "The Occupational, Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020" has been broadened.

26. The Committee are dismayed to note that the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting have not taken any steps to ensure implementation of the

recommendations contained in the Majithia Wage Board by all the States and UTs. Notwithstanding the fact that primary responsibility for implementation of recommendations of Wage Board lies with the State Government/UTs in terms of Section 17 of the Working Journalists and Other Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1955, the Committee reiterate to the Ministry to persuade the States and UTs to implement the same without any further delay. The Committee would like to await the positive outcome in this regard.

Repealing of archaic Press Laws

27. The Committee had observed that taking into account the current media environment and its functional requirements, proposal(s) to repeal the archaic Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867 and to amend the Cable Television Networks (Regulations) Act 1995 are under active consideration of the Government. In this context, the Committee had desired that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting should carefully examine and consider the comments/suggestions of various stakeholders in regard to the proposed amendments. The Committee had, therefore, urged the Ministry to put in their concerted efforts in a time bound manner and notify the Rules/Guidelines made thereunder in the right earnest.

28. Pursuant to the above recommendation, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, in their action taken reply, have submitted that the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867 lays down cumbersome procedure for

registration of Printing Press and newspapers published in the country which involves making declaration before the jurisdictional District Authority and also making separate application by Newspapers to RNI for registration. The process is to be repeated for any change in the certificate of registration. To put in place a simple process of registration of periodicals/newspapers and to make it more consistent with contemporary requirements of the print media, the Ministry prepared a draft of new legislation titled 'Registration of Press and Periodicals (RPP) Bill, 2019' to replace the existing PRB Act, 1867. The Draft 'Registration of Press and Periodicals Bill, 2019 was placed on the website of the Ministry on 25th November, 2019 for inviting comments/suggestions from stakeholders and general public. After considering the suggestions/comments received, the Draft Bill was revised and the 'Registration of Press and Periodicals Bill, 2020 was circulated on 20.05.2020 to the Ministries/Departments/Organizations concerned for inter-ministerial consultation. After taking into consideration the comments/suggestions as part of inter-ministerial consultation and other views, the Bill was further revised and Registration of Press and Periodicals Bill, 2020 has been prepared in consultation with Ministry of Law and Justice, which is under consideration in the Ministry.

29. Further with regard to Cable Television Network (Regulation) Act, 1995, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting have stated that the Central Government has notified the Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules, 2021 *vide* Notification No. G.S.R. 416(E) dated

17.06.2021. The Notification paves the way for a strong institutional system for redressing the grievance while placing accountability and responsibility on the broadcasters and their self regulating bodies. These Rules provide for statutory mechanism for redressal of grievances/complaints of citizens related to content broadcast by Television Channels in accordance with the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995. The Rules also provide that the self-regulating bodies of the broadcasters would be registered with the Central Government. The Rules provide three level complaint redressal mechanism as under:-

Level-I - A self regulation by broadcaster;

Level-II - Self regulation by the self regulating bodies of the broadcasters; and

Level-III - Oversight mechanism by the Central Government.

30. The Committee are satisfied to note that the Registration of Press and Periodicals Bill, 2020 has been prepared in consultation with Ministry of Law and Justice and is presently under consideration in the Ministry. The Committee are also happy to note that the Central Government has notified the Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules, 2021 vide notification No. G.S.R. 416(E) dated 17.06.2021, in pursuance of the Cable Television Network (Regulation) Act, 1995. However, in this regard, the Committee urge to the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting to finalise

the Registration of Press and Periodicals Bill, 2020 so that it could be introduced in the Parliament at the earliest. The Committee also urge the Ministry to ensure that the Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules, 2021 are scrupulously followed by all the stakeholders.

NEW DELHI;

HARISH DWIVEDI,
Chairperson,
Committee on Petitions.

19 May, 2022

28 Vaishaka, 1944 (Saka)

**MINUTES OF THE TWENTY FIRST SITTING OF THE COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS
(SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA)**

The Committee met on Thursday, 19 May, 2022 from 1100 hrs. to 1300 hrs. in Committee Room 'B', Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Harish Dwivedi - Chairperson

MEMBERS

2. Shri Hanuman Beniwal
3. Dr. Sukanta Majumdar
4. Shri Arvind Ganpat Sawant
5. Shri Brijendra Singh
6. Shri Sushil Kumar Singh
7. Shri Manoj Tiwari
8. Shri Prabhubhai Nagarbai Vasava
9. Shri Rajan Baburao Vichare

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri T. G. Chandrasekhar - Additional Secretary
2. Shri Raju Srivastava - Director
3. Shri G.C. Dobhal - Additional Director

2.	***	***	***	***	***	***
3.	***	***	***	***	***	***
4.	***	***	***	***	***	***
5.	***	***	***	***	***	***
6.	***	***	***	***	***	***
7.	***	***	***	***	***	***

8. *** *** *** *** *** ***

9. *** *** *** *** *** ***

10. The Committee, thereafter, took up for consideration the following two draft Reports:-

(i) *** *** *** *** *** ***

(ii) Action Taken Report on the action taken by the Government on the recommendations of the Committee on Petitions (17th Lok Sabha) made in their Fifteenth Report on the representation of Shri Manohar Singh and others regarding introducing reforms in Journalism in the country and other important issues related therewith.

11. After discussing the above mentioned two draft Reports in detail, the Committee adopted these Reports without any modification(s). The Committee also authorised the Chairperson to finalise the draft Reports and present the same to the House in the next Session.

12. *** *** *** *** *** ***

13. *** *** *** *** *** ***

The Committee, then, adjourned.

*** Does not pertain to this Report.