I&B Ministry's Move on Fake News

Why in news?

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The Information and Broadcasting Ministry withdrew its order which was earlier issued to regulate fake news.

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What did the order specify?

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- I&B ministry recently released a notification on fake news.
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- Under it, accreditation of any journalist found guilty of disseminating "fake news" could be cancelled.
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- The complaints would be referred to the Press Council of India if they pertained to the print media.
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- It would be referred to the News Broadcasters Association (NBA) if they are related to the electronic media.
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- The regulatory agencies would have 15 days to dispose off a complaint.
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- During the period of probe, the journalist's accreditation would be suspended.
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- The note further said that on first violation, the accreditation would be suspended for 6 months.
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- The suspension on the second violation would be for a year and, on the third violation, it would be cancelled permanently.
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What are the concerns with this?

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- Many media stakeholders and opposition agitated against this.
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- The move was seen as draconian since it paves the way for government’s interference in press freedom.
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- The notification released by the ministry did not define the phrase “fake news”.
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- The I&B order will only affect the accredited journalists.
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- Various news portals were not covered by the government’s accreditation policy.
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- It is also said that government did not consult on “Media Ethics” with organisations like the PCI and NBA before passing this order.
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- Following the outrage from the media and the Opposition, the Ministry has decided to withdraw its order.
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Source: The Hindu

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Quick Fact

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News Broadcasters Association (NBA)

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- The News Broadcasters Association (NBA) represents the private television news and current affairs broadcasters.
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- It is an organization funded entirely by its members.
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- The NBA presents a unified and credible voice before the Government, on matters that affect the growing industry.
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Press Council of India

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- The Press Council of India is an autonomous, statutory, quasi-judicial body.
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- It governs the conduct of the print media.
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- It is also empowered to hold hearings on receipt of complaints and take suitable action where appropriate.
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