

Bill Summary

The Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023

- The Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023 was introduced in Rajya Sabha on August 1, 2023. It repeals the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867. Key features of the Bill include:
 - **Registration of periodicals:** The Act provides for the registration of newspapers, periodicals, and books. It also provides for the cataloguing of books. The Bill provides for the registration of periodicals, which include any publication containing public news or comments on public news. Periodicals do not include books or scientific and academic journals.
 - The Act provides that a declaration specifying the printer/ publisher be made to the District Magistrate (DM). The DM sends the declaration to the Press Registrar, who then issues a certificate of registration. Making such declaration and authentication by the DM is necessary for the publication of the newspaper. The Bill allows the publisher of a periodical to obtain a registration certificate by filing an online application with the Press Registrar General and specified local authority. A person who has been convicted of a terrorist act or unlawful activity, or have acted against the security of the State will not be allowed to publish a periodical.
 - **Foreign periodicals:** An exact reproduction of a foreign periodical may be printed in India only with the prior approval of the central government. The manner of registration of such periodicals will be prescribed.
 - **Press Registrar General:** The Act provides for the central government to appoint a Press Registrar who maintains a register of newspapers. The Bill provides for the Press Registrar General of India who will issue registration certificates for all periodicals. Other functions of the Press Registrar General include: (i) maintaining a register of periodicals, (ii) making guidelines for the admissibility of title of periodicals, (iii) verifying circulation figures of prescribed periodicals, and (iv) revising, suspending, or cancelling registration.
- **Registration of a printing press:** The Act requires a printing press to be declared before the DM. The Bill allows for information regarding printing presses to be submitted to the Press Registrar General through an online portal.
- **Suspension and cancellation of registration:** The Bill allows the Press Registrar General to suspend a periodical's registration for a minimum period of 30 days which can extend to 180 days. The registration may be suspended due to: (i) registration obtained by furnishing false information, (ii) failure to publish periodicals continuously, and (iii) giving false particulars in annual statements. The Press Registrar General may cancel the registration if the publisher does not correct such defects. Registration may also be cancelled if: (i) a periodical has the same or similar title as any other periodical, (ii) the owner/publisher has been convicted of a terrorist act or unlawful activity, or for acting against the security of the state.
- **Penalties and appeal:** The Bill empowers the Press Registrar General to impose penalties for: (i) publishing periodicals without registration (up to five lakh rupees), (ii) failing to furnish annual statement within the specified time (up to Rs 20,000 on first default). If a periodical is published without registration, the Press Registrar General may direct its publication to be stopped. Not complying with such direction within six months will be punishable with imprisonment of up to six months.
- Any person may appeal against the refusal to issue a registration certificate, suspension/ cancellation of registration, or imposition of penalty. Such appeals may be filed before the Press and Registration Appellate Board within 60 days.

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