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Framing the Media — Pamela Philipose's book launch becomes a call to defend Press Freedom

At the book launch, panelists highlight how state control, policy gaps, and digital laws are reshaping the boundaries of press freedom in India.

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From Left to Right - Pamela Philipose , Vivek Mukherji, Mahtab Alam, Apar Gupta and Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty at the panel discussion.

The launch of Framing the Media: Government Policies, Law and Freedom of the Press in India written by senior journalist Pamela Philipose sparked a critical and timely discussion on the intersection of media, governance, and constitutional freedoms. The event, held on July 30 at the Press Club of India, New Delhi, brought together legal experts, senior journalists, and media scholars for an engaging panel.

Moderated by journalist and researcher Mahtab Alam, the panel featured Apar Gupta (lawyer and Founder-Director of the Internet Freedom Foundation), Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty (Deputy Editor, The Wire), and senior journalist Vivek Mukherji and Philipose.

Introducing the book, Alam described it as a critical interrogation of how government policies and legal frameworks are used to shrink media space. Philipose's work, as echoed by the panelists, goes beyond contemporary issues. "Why this book is important is because it tells us not just what's happening now but what happened [during the British era](#) and in the Constituent Assembly," said Pisharoty. She also pointed to how recent laws have created ambiguity around who qualifies as a journalist. "We were told that journalistic exemption was removed from the DPDP (Digital Personal Data Protection Act) because they couldn't define who is a journalist. But how can the government define that? It is our job to question them, not the other way around," she said.

Apar Gupta highlighted how structural exclusion is being driven by state-controlled digital platforms. "We are surrounded by platforms that we don't control. The state's refusal to define journalists is not administrative confusion — it's a deliberate tactic to limit protection," he said.

Mukherji took a historical view, discussing how public broadcasters like AIR and Doordarshan were used to control narratives during the Emergency. "The urge to control the press has always existed. The only thing that's changed is the sophistication of the tools — AI, algorithms, and digital laws," he noted.

The discussion concluded with a call for structural protections for all journalists, including freelancers and regional reporters. The book and the panel both highlighted the clear message — press freedom in India is under sustained pressure, and legal reform must be grounded in democratic values, not state convenience.