



Role of Media in Promoting Health

For Prelims: Asia Media summit, Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD)

For mains: Role of Media during pandemic, Media as fourth pillar of democracy

Why in the News?

Union Information and Broadcasting at the **17th Asia Media Summit** applauded the Indian media for its role during the Covid-19 pandemic.

What was the role played by the Media during Covid-19?

▪ Positive Role:

- It ensured that **awareness messages on Covid-19**, important **government guidelines** and **free consultations** with doctors reached everyone in the country.
- It strongly fought **against the menace of fake news** and misinformation on a real time basis.
- The media has significantly delivered on their mandate of public service by setting the trend through prompt coverage, ground reports and organising programmes on public health.

▪ Negative Role:

- **Social media** has played a crucial role in spreading awareness and knowledge about public health, however, it has also been misused for spreading fake news, hatred and creating racism during epidemics.
- Even before the detection of the first case of Covid-19 in India, the epidemic of social media panic hit India, which led to stock out of masks and sanitizers from the market.
- The fake claims about transmission of virus through air and its survival on different surfaces created a panic.
- An unwarranted use of N95 masks by common people during travelling and daily activities resulted in the shortage for frontline healthcare workers who actually needed those.
- Due to existing multiple media houses in India, messages containing fake claims about use of herbal and immunity-booster medicines, religious and spiritual ways for prevention and treatment were widely circulated which added to the confusion.
- The panic was escalated by fake news such as the possibility of extending the lockdown , which resulted in individuals fleeing from quarantine or isolation facilities and unnecessary travel prior to lockdown or even during lockdown for returning to their hometown.

What is the Role of the Media as the Fourth Pillar of Democracy?

- **Source of Information:** For a democracy and its development, impartial information is critical. The media helps to provide people with important knowledge. For example, data on economics, health, education, etc.
- **Educate:** To educate people on topics of paramount importance to society, the media is vital. An growing number of incidents of rape are a concern to society. It is necessary to disclose the exact

number of cases and to help raise society's awareness.

- **Awareness:** The media reminds society of their democratic rights and the media helps in maintaining checks and balances.
- **Ensuring Fairness:** The media plays a vital role in ensuring justice and the benefits of the government policies reaching the weaker sections of the society.
- **Watchdog:** For a stable democracy, Media reporting on public affairs and investigations into wrongdoing in the administration of public affairs is must. This means exposing circumstances of fraud or abuse that favour politicians directly. This makes people vote for the best government to defeat a corrupt and dishonest government.
- **Good Governance:** In auditing government policies and spending, the media plays an important part. An unbiased media is important for transparent reporting.
- **Accountability:** An informed person, based on facts and statistics, can challenge government policies to ensure accountability and answerability.
- **Dissemination of government policies:** In order to propagate and disseminate different government policies and initiatives, the media is relevant. In spreading awareness of [Swachh Bharat](#) and [Beti Bachao Beti Padhao](#) etc the media played an important role.
- As a fourth pillar, the media plays an important part in achieving the true meaning of democracy.

What is Asia Media Summit?

- **Asia Media Summit** is the **annual conference** organised by **Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD)** in collaboration with its partners and international organisations.
- The Conference is attended by Decision makers, media professionals, scholars, and stakeholders of news and programming from **Asia, Pacific, Africa, Europe, Middle East, and North America.**
- Asia Media Summit provides a unique opportunity for broadcasters in the region to share their thoughts on **Broadcasting and Information** and is supported by all regional and International Broadcasting Unions.

What is AIBD?

- **About:**
 - The **Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD)** was established in 1977 under the auspices of **UNESCO**.
 - AIBD is a unique regional intergovernmental organisation servicing countries of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) in the field of electronic media development.
 - Its secretariat is situated in **Kuala Lumpur** and is hosted by the Government of Malaysia.
 - The AIBD is mandated to achieve a vibrant and cohesive electronic media environment in the **Asia-Pacific region** through **policy and resource development.**
- **Founding Members:**
 - The International Telecommunication Union (**ITU**), the United Nations Development Programme (**UNDP**), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific Cultural Organisation (**UNESCO**) and The **Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU)** are founding organisations of the Institute and they are non-voting members of the General Conference.

[Source: TH](#)