

# INTERNATIONAL PRESS CORPS

INMUN 2019

## IMPROVING THE CENTRAL BOARD OF FILM CERTIFICATION

The International Press Corps is the primary media organ of INMUN 2019. We report on the debates, record the events that transpire in the committee sessions, and analyse its consequences. Each delegate in the IPC is a journalist representing a news agency from anywhere in the world. They are expected to provide factual, insightful, and thought-provoking reports on the events in their assigned committee and produce submissions, keeping in mind the political stance, bias, writing style, and voice of their assigned news agency.

Prior to the conference, journalists are expected to write a Pre-Summit Report. This report requires the journalist to give us their own opinion on the topic in their own writing style; for the Pre-Summit Report, **they will not have to echo the voice of their news agency.**

We expect our journalists to submit a Pre Summit Report of no less than **400 words**. The report **must have a title and a by-line containing the journalist's name, school, and agency.**

This piece is simply for the Executive Board to assess the quality of the journalist's writing skills and their ability to highlight their own perspective on the topic in a concise manner. This topic will also be debated on in the Press Debates (check out the Background Guide!) This year our topic is:

**“How can the CBFC (Central Board of Film Certification) be improved?”**

The Central Board of Film Certification (can be referred to as CBFC or the Censor Board) is a statutory censorship and classification body under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. In India, the CBFC was set up to regulate the public exhibition of films under the provisions of the Cinematograph Act 1952. Films can only be released and exhibited on television in India after they have been certified by the Board. It is composed of actors, writers, composers, scholars, industrialists, and politicians.

India has the largest film industry in the world: over 1000 feature films and short films are made every year. There are over 13,000 cinema theatres all over India, not to mention the millions of televisions used daily. A rough estimate of 15 million people in

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India watch films every day, which means that every two months, an audience as large as India's entire population watches a film. Films are so popular since they provide entertainment, regardless of language, literacy, caste, class, gender, race, you name it, it doesn't discriminate. Since they are viewed by literally every single person in India, films can be a vehicle for creators to promote their own agenda. It is the job of the CBFC to make sure that that agenda doesn't incur violence or hatred or offend the sensibilities of certain peoples, a job that's especially difficult because India is so so diverse and very very large.

The Supreme Court has ruled that "film certification becomes necessary because a film motivates thought and action and assures a high degree of attention and retention as compared to the printed words...it has as much potential for evil as it has for good and has an equal potential to instill or cultivate violent or good behavior. It cannot be equated with other modes of communication. Certification by prior restraint is, therefore, not only desirable but also necessary." (taken from the CBFC website)

Over the years of its existence, there have been many controversies between the CBFC and other entities, primarily due to the former's choice of cutting scenes from films before being cleared to get their certificate. Once such case was with the film 'Udta Punjab'.

In 2016 when the film *Udta Punjab* was made, the CBFC demanded an outrageous amount of 94 cuts, including the demand that there should be no mention of Punjab and their cities, politics and elections, thus making the film set in a fictional state, rather than Punjab. This film mainly focuses on the drugs problem in Punjab.

This film's co-producer, Anurag Kashyap had waged war on social media, saying that: "It's my fight vs a dictatorial man sitting there operating like an oligarch in his constituency of the censor board, that's my North Korea". The filmmakers even approached the Bombay High Court, where each cut was discussed, and it was found out that many of the cuts were done for no valid reason. On June 13th, 2016, the film was finally cleared with 13 cuts and an 'A' rating.

Another example is the film *Lipstick Under My Burkha*. The CBFC refused to pass the film and described it as 'female-oriented.' After widespread backlash and criticism of the CBFC, the film was taken to the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal (FCAT) and was released with an 'A' certificate and a few cuts.

In 2017, Pahlaj Nihalani was removed as the Chairperson of the CBFC. In an interview following his removal, he revealed that the Government of India had, on at least two occasions, directed the Board to block or delay the release of particular films.

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These examples are just some of the many times where the CBFC has failed to achieve its objectives effectively. So, there is clearly room for improvement.