

INDIAN JOURNALISTS UNION (IJU)

(Regd No. 40001)

Website : www.indianjournalistsunion.org

5 Central Lane, Bengali Market, New Delhi - 110001

PRESS RELEASE

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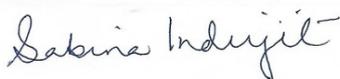
IJU demands withdrawal of information black out on International Day for Access to Information.

Indian Journalists Union (IJU) today on the Universal Access to Information Day reiterates its concern at the continued internet and communication shut down in Kashmir valley. The government of India is increasingly blocking internet to stop organizing protests rallies and other democratic agitations in India. On 17 November 2015, UNESCO adopted a resolution (38 C/70) declaring 28 September of every year as International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI). Government of India recently has diluted the Right to Information Act (RTI) by amending transfer procedure for the post of Chief Information Commissioner at the centre and state Information Commissioners at the state. Such dilution of the RTI Act will enable the party in power to exert pressure on the top RTI officers. IJU once again demands rescinding amendment to RTI Act.

It is ridiculous that while the communication shut down enters 53rd day government of India is claiming everything normal in the valley. The report of the fact finding women activists' team which recently travelled the valley reflects IJU's concern of communication blockade. IJU earlier has issued statement that communication shut down and restriction on local media in covering news in Kashmir is against the freedom of press and constitutional right of expression and is not acceptable. IJU also take up the matter with the Press Council of India (PCI) which is a quasi judicial statutory body to uphold freedom press. However PCI backed the government in communication black out and restriction on local press in Kashmir. IJU criticized the PCI's role and staged demonstration throughout the country. IJU said that the people of India has the right to know what is exactly happening in Kashmir and local media should be allowed to work with unhindered communication facilities.

IJU Interim President Geetartha Pathak and Secretary General Sabina Inderjit on the occasion of Universal Access to Information Day said "The government must stop gagging media and curbing people's right of free speech and information in India especially in Kashmir. Pushback on the fundamental right of citizen to free access to information by the government is not acceptable. Access to information is a non – negotiable right in any democratic country."

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(Sabina Inderjit)

Secretary-General