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Report on Future of News in India: Vidhi

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Why in News

Recently, the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy (Delhi based independent think-tank) released a report examining the **future of news in India**.

Key Points

- **Findings:**

- The worsening economic health of print journalism threatens its ability to credibly inform the public and act as an institutional check upon power.
- The environment of digital news operates in a vacuum of regulation. The emergence of a **post-truth paradigm in public communications** and the **widespread proliferation of misinformation** are barriers to realising the benefits of digital news distribution.

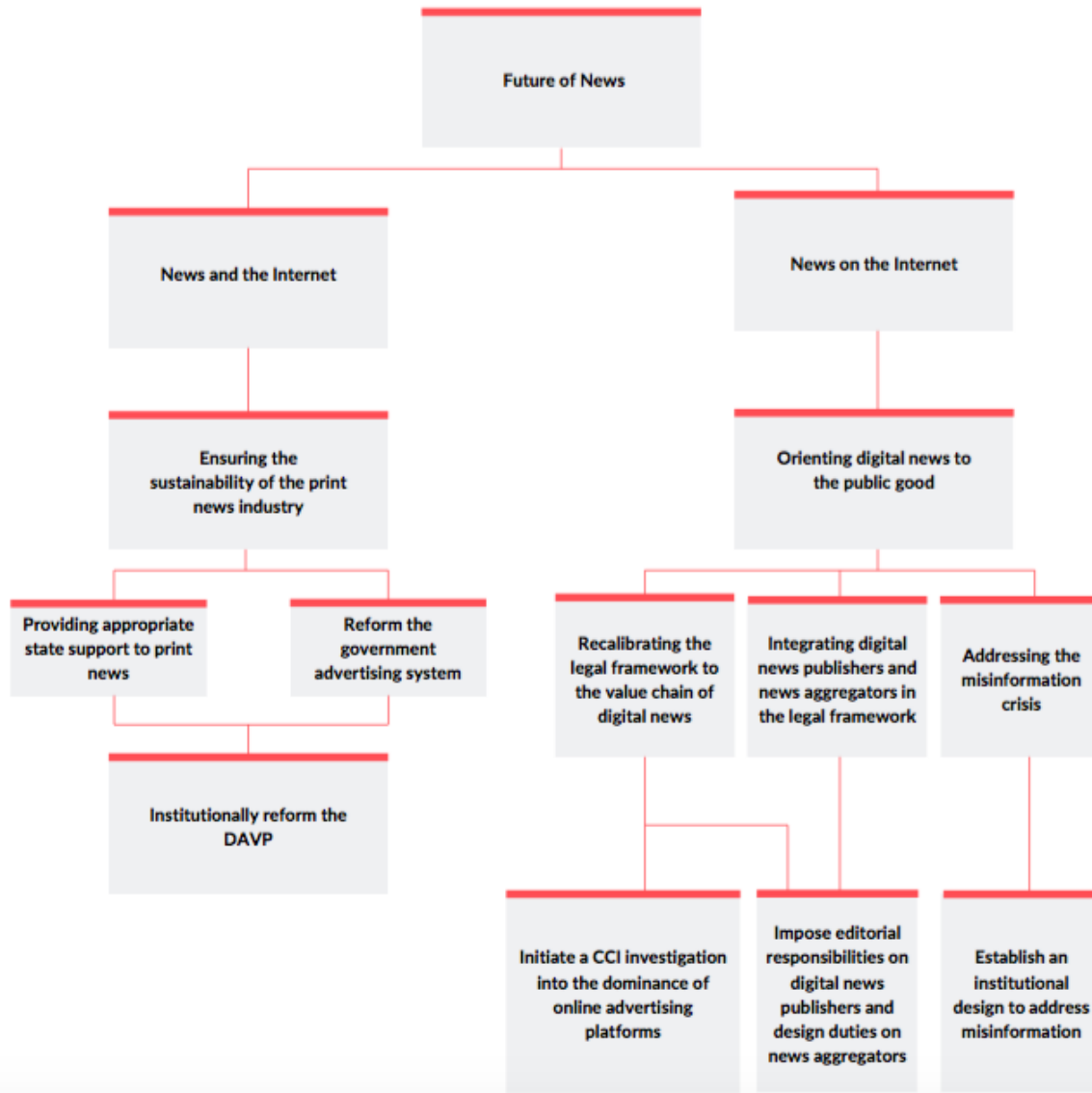
Post-truth includes circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.

- **Recommendations:** The report has drawn a roadmap of legal reforms to facilitate the transition of high-quality print journalism into the era of digital communications in a manner that benefits the public good.
 - **Checking the Dominance of Online Advertising Platforms:**
 - The **advertisement-revenue model** for digital news may be displaying indications of market failure.

In an advertising-revenue model, the online companies publish free content that drives hundreds, thousands or millions of visitors to the site on a monthly basis. Advertisers pay the online companies to get in front of these visitors, this helps Businesses generate their revenue from the fees advertisers pay for this access.
 - To orient the market for digital news towards the public good, the **role and practices of online advertising platforms must be systematically studied by a specialised authority.**
 - The report has recommended the **Competition Commission of India** to investigate the dominance of online advertising platforms.
 - **Enacting Comprehensive Measures to Address Misinformation:**

It suggests a range of legislative, co-regulatory and voluntary measures which provide an integrated framework to prevent the spread of misinformation and enhance reader literacy. Example:

 - Development of industry standards to identify misinformation.
 - Use of analytics to identify patterns of misinformation, etc.
 - **Appropriate Responsibilities on Digital News Entities:**
 - The report calls to fill the legal vacuum for digital news in a manner which is sensitive to the nuances of online discourse.
 - It recommends granting limited powers to the **Press Council of India**, in conjunction with a voluntary registration procedure and the development of a brief, accessible **code of conduct** as a mechanism for the imposition of **editorial responsibility.**
 - The role of online platforms in the distribution of news should be addressed through targeted interventions based on the design aspects of such platforms.



Source: TH