



Present day journalists should follow core values of accuracy, fairness, objectivity, news worthiness and independence:

Vice President

Addresses Valedictory of Golden Jubilee celebrations of Press Council of India

Posted On: 16 NOV 2017 8:08PM by PIB Delhi

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that present day journalists should follow core values of accuracy, fairness, objectivity, news worthiness and independence. He was addressing the Valedictory of Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Press Council of India, on the occasion of the National Press Day, here today. The Union Minister for Textiles and Information & Broadcasting, Smt. Smriti Irani and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that when the struggle to gain independence from the British began gathering momentum, the press became an important vehicle to inspire the people and voice their aspirations. He further said that several newspapers and journals, particularly the vernacular ones, played a crusading role in the freedom movement. The press was the main source of propaganda for the freedom fighters even as the British rulers tried to suppress it at every conceivable opportunity, he added.

The Vice President said that the nationalist role played by the newspapers and journals contributed in no small measure to influencing and moulding the public opinion during the freedom struggle. He further said that the following Independence, the press in India continued to play the role of watchdog and held a mirror to people's problems and their aspirations. It remained one of the main pillars in protecting and strengthening democracy in the country, he added.

The Vice President said that the contours of journalism have changed over the years. He further said that Watergate scandal in the USA was a memorable example of how a free and fearless press can cause the downfall even a powerful President. In India too, we have had an instance in which a Chief Minister had to resign after the press highlighted a scandal relating to cement industry, he added.

The Vice President said that deliberate slanting of news, providing disproportionate coverage to issues, organizations or personalities, while relegating hard news to single columns or fillers or giving prominence to a non-issue that creates more tensions among people are some of the dangerous trends that have crept into the newsrooms of both the print and electronic media. He further said that the haste to beat your rivals or competitors should not lead to inaccurate reportage. Journalism is a noble profession and all of you as flag-bearers of this vocation must ensure that people are correctly informed and not become captive receivers of biased and partisan information, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"First let me convey my hearty congratulations to all the winners of national awards for excellence in journalism.

The press in India has a long and illustrious history ever since the first newspaper, 'Bengal Gazette' was started by James Augustus Hickey in 1780.

When the struggle to gain independence from the British began gathering momentum, the press became an important vehicle to inspire the people and voice their aspirations. Several newspapers and journals, particularly the vernacular ones, played a crusading role in the freedom movement. The press was the main source of propaganda for the freedom fighters even as the British rulers tried to suppress it at every conceivable opportunity.

Several journals and newspapers rose to the occasion, including Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Sambad-Kaumudi in Bengali in 1821, Mirat-ul-Akbar in Persian in 1822, Kesari, Mahratta, The Hindu, Amrita Bazar Patrika, Bande Mataram, Al-Balagh and Al-Hilal, Young India and Hindustan Times.

Undaunted by the ironclad restrictions imposed by the British, the press remained fearless and the same indomitable spirit continued to be a prominent feature of the Indian media ever since, barring a temporary aberration during the infamous Emergency when the press behaved like the handmaiden of the government. Of course, there were a few exceptions like the 'Indian Express', The Statesman and 'The Mainstream'.

The nationalist role played by the newspapers and journals contributed in no small measure to influencing and moulding the public opinion during the freedom struggle. In fact, the press during those times was the main instrument of bringing together people from different backgrounds to fight for the noble cause of attaining independence. It indeed was the biggest mission for journalists, who left no stone unturned in propagating the cause of freeing India from the clutches of British yoke.

Following Independence, the press in India continued to play the role of watchdog and held a mirror to people's problems and their aspirations. It remained one of the main pillars in protecting and strengthening democracy in the country, except during the period I mentioned earlier. Today, the media landscape is dotted with thousands of journals and newspapers, hundreds of TV channels and scores of radio stations. Of course, you also have social media, which has become one of the main drivers of information in the Digital Age.

Friends, I am sure you all will agree that the contours of journalism have changed over the years, although it continues to cast a huge influence in moulding public opinion and decision-making by the governments, especially in democracies. Watergate scandal in the USA is a memorable example of how a free and fearless press can cause the downfall even a powerful President.

In India too, we have had an instance in which a Chief Minister had to resign after the press highlighted a scandal relating to cement industry.

I have cited these examples just to highlight the crusading role a free press can play in a democracy.

However, over the years, it appears that the core values which guided journalism in the past are not being observed and news is being increasingly coloured with views which are consistent with the line taken by the management of the news organization. Is this a healthy trend for a democracy? I don't think so and all of you, who have gathered here today on National Press Day must do a serious introspection.

Deliberate slanting of news, providing disproportionate coverage to issues, organizations or personalities, while relegating hard news to single columns or fillers or giving prominence to a non-issue that creates more tensions among people are some of the dangerous trends that have crept into the newsrooms of both the print and electronic media. This needs to be curbed so that the pristine role played by the press earlier is restored. Commercial interests alone should not become the motive for running a newspaper or news channel. I am not asking newspapers and TV channels to become charitable organizations overnight but some balance needs to be struck between societal obligations and business endeavors.

I feel the present-day journalists should return to the core values of accuracy, fairness, objectivity, news worthiness and independence. The haste to beat your rivals or competitors should not lead to inaccurate reportage.

In these days of sting operations, under-cover journalism and rapid expansion of social media platforms, I think there is a need to bring all media organizations under a single watchdog body with a new nomenclature.

Of course, the Press Council of India has been playing a major role in promoting responsible journalism in the country. With the changing contours of journalism, I feel that the time has come for prescribing a minimum educational qualification for aspiring journalists. This is absolutely necessary to ensure that the standards and ethics of journalism are maintained and not compromised.

Friends, journalism is a noble profession and all of you as flag-bearers of this vocation must ensure that people are correctly informed and not become captive receivers of biased and partisan information.

Thank You and Jai Hind!”

KSD/BK

(Release ID: 1509901) Visitor Counter : 76

