



Accuracy, Balance, Seeking Accountability and Separation of News from editorial and advertising are key standards for journalism: Vice President

Presents 12th Ramnath Goenka Awards for Excellence in Journalism

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The Vice President of India, Shri. M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that the four key standards for journalism are: Accuracy, Balance, Seeking Accountability and Separation of News from editorial and advertising. He was delivering the key note address after presenting 12th Ramnath Goenka Awards for Excellence in Journalism, here today.

The Vice President said that Ramnath ji was a great patriot who embodied the finest qualities of journalism of courage and commitment and he was a fighter with courage. He further said that the courage was based on deep conviction and that conviction was born out of character. In fact, he was a man with character, caliber, capacity & conduct, he added.

The Vice President said that discussion and dialogue, exchange of ideas, the process of trying to reconcile seemingly irreconcilable differences to achieve consensus, are fundamental to the parliamentary democracy. Democracy is not about numbers but to understand and appreciate each other's point of view. "We must debate, discuss decide and deliver," he added.

The Vice President said that journalism is all about conversation of the people, and for the people and this is possible in an environment of freedom of expression. He further said that Media's role in his view should be empowerment of people with information required, social mobilization, building partnerships, catalyzing individual and collective actions for betterment of lives and promoting peace and harmony and supporting national reconstruction. Every news and report shall result in enhanced level of understanding and inspired actions, he added.

The Vice President said that a soft and simplified journalism has emerged which is characterized by three Cs - Crime, Cinema and Cricket. He further said that sensational and yellow journalism is another dark side of this noble profession which needs to be addressed to. News and views shall be kept separate and Media need to highlight the facts and leave it to the judgment of the readers or viewers, he added.

The Vice President said that Media should rise to the occasion by ensuring strict and effective self-regulation. He further said that external regulations can be countered with quality journalism which is based on facts, independent, objective, balanced, sensitive and journalism that seeks out the news wherever it may be and puts it on the front page of the country's attention pan. Journalism is all about conversation of the people, and for the people and this is possible in an environment of freedom of expression, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"I am extremely delighted to be with all of you here today to recall and applaud the spirit of journalism of courage piloted by Shri Ramnath Goenka Ji and particularly when the nation passed through trying times. These awards instituted in the name of such a doyen of freedom of speech and expression has rightly emerged as the largest and the most coveted journalism awards in the country.

It is because Ramnath Goenka Ji embodied the finest qualities of journalism of courage and commitment: fierce independence, relentless pursuit of facts, robust determination to withstand pressures, to constantly ask questions and to uphold the principles of freedom of expression in the face of every challenge. These attributes also constitutes the highest principles of citizenship and are necessary for strengthening our democracy.

There is a saying that "those who wrestle with us strengthen our arms" Goenka embodied this ideal. He was a fighter all his life, wrestling with complex issues. He was a fighter with courage. The courage was based on deep conviction and that conviction was born out of character. In fact, he was a man with character, caliber, capacity & conduct.

He went by the moral compass to guide his decisions. He fought the British. He fought the emergency. He championed the causes which were good for the country and this led him to support the JP Movement. He fought to win. He fought to the finish.

2. It is indeed my privilege to be here this evening to celebrate the legacy of Goenka Ji by recognizing the talented journalists who through their work symbolize the true spirit of Ram Nath Ji. Another reason for my being here is that I have had the privilege of knowing him and to be with him (to recall association through Goenka Ji)

3. What I learnt from him and during my 40 years in public life is that in a democracy you are first and foremost a humanist. Your party affiliation and your beliefs are very vital to public discourse but most important of all, is your faith in justice and humanity. I am now an all party-man and as the Chairman of Rajya Sabha, I need to fulfill my obligations of impartiality and neutrality which apply to good quality journalism as well. I have also learnt that discussion and dialogue, exchange of ideas, reconciling seemingly irreconcilable differences to achieve consensus are fundamental to the vibrancy and health of parliamentary democracy. Democracy is not only about numbers but also to understand and appreciate each other's point of view. We must debate, discuss, decide and deliver. I am happy that the Rajya Sabha is on track after the first two days of adjournments.

4. We have adopted parliamentary democracy and our Constitution has given all of us the 'right to freedom of speech and expression'. In democracy, people have to make informed choices about the parties and the candidates who claim the patronage of the people. For making right choices, citizens need to be informed of issues that confront them in the daily lives and in the life of a nation struggling with multifarious problems of tremendous complexities as democratic system strive to ensure better lives for the citizens.

5. Historically, the media have been organs of the people against the feudal oppression. In Europe, the media played an important role in transforming a feudal society into a modern one. The print media played an important role in preparing for, and during the British, American and French revolution. The media has played a critical role in the fight against feudalism and despotism. The media became powerful tool in the hands of the people then because people could not express themselves through the established organs of power, as they were in the hands of feudal and despotic rulers. It is for this reason that the print media became known as the 'fourth estate'. We are well aware of the role played by the nationalist media during the freedom struggle.

6. Journalism is all about conversation of the people, and for the people and this is possible in an environment of freedom of expression. This freedom should not be tampered with as was done during the Emergency, when the Indian Express under the leadership of Shri Ramnath Goenka Ji stoutly protested and opposed by offering blank editorials instead of submitting to censorship. Indians love their personal freedoms and its fierce manifestation was witnessed when they voted overwhelmingly against the dark days of Emergency in 1977.

7. We also need to understand the scope and the nature of the freedom of speech and expression. Can this be an absolute right? Since every one of us is entitled to such freedom, my freedom obviously ends as it touches the boundary of your freedom. So, it cannot be an absolute freedom. Accordingly, freedom comes along with certain responsibilities and restrictions. The Constitution of India has, accordingly, imposed certain reasonable restrictions on the freedom of speech and expression in the interest of sovereignty and integrity of India, public order, decency or morality and is also qualified with respect to defamation words or deeds amounting to inciting violence or causing disaffection against the State.

Friends !

8. Let us now briefly look at the rules and responsibilities of the media. Media's role in my view should be empowerment of people with information required, social mobilization, building partnerships, catalyzing individual and collective actions for betterment of lives and promoting peace and harmony and supporting national reconstruction. Every news and report shall result in enhanced level of understanding and inspired actions.

9. To a great extent, media shares the three core functions of parliamentary democracy which are representative, deliberative and oversight functions. Media shall bring out the hopes and aspirations of the people, promote conversation for the betterment of the lives of the people and examine accountability of the decision making and governing institutions.

10. Media is growing rapidly in our country. We have over one lakh registered periodicals and close to a thousand TV channels, besides the rapidly expanding internet platform. The Cumulative Annual Growth Rate of Entertainment and Media industry in our country during 2011-16 was 17 per cent estimated at \$21 billion. We are among the top 15 in this regard sharing honors with countries like the USA, Japan, China, Germany, UK, France, etc.

11. The rapidly expanding universe of Media in our country has come to acquire its share of concerns. The question being often raised in several quarters is whether Indian media is getting its priorities right? Is our media driven by the needs of the society or only by the profit concerns and TRPs (Television Rating Points)? In this competitive, free for all media environment, the power of communication is being exercised without responsibility or accountability. This has given a section of the media a bad name and allowed the questions to be raised on its trustworthiness. You would agree with me that many times hard news is ignored for needless controversies and too much time and space is spent on trivial issues in a nation where inequality, injustice and ignorance still impact the lives of millions.

12. A soft and simplified journalism has emerged which is characterized by three Cs – Crime, Cinema and Cricket. Sensational and yellow journalism is another dark side of this noble profession which needs to be addressed to.

13. I have always held the view that news and views shall be kept separate. Media need to highlight the facts and leave it to the judgment of the readers or viewers. The four keys standard for journalism are: Accuracy, Balance, Seeking Accountability and Separation of News from editorial and advertising.

14. The Parliamentary Committee on Information and Technology has recommended a statutory regulator for both the print and electronic media. To avoid such contingency, media should rise to the occasion by ensuring strict and effective self-regulation. External regulations can be countered with quality journalism which is based on facts, independent, objective, balanced, sensitive and journalism that seeks out the news wherever it may be and puts it on the front page of the country's attention pan.

15. The tagline of Indian Express is 'Journalism of Courage'. The legendary Shri Ramnath Goenkaji is the guiding spirit behind this brand of journalism. The Indian Express is holding aloft excellence in journalism as a major ingredient of a healthy democracy and with Ramnath Goenka Awards, we celebrate journalism at its best. The awards recognize journalism that challenges the frivolity of sensationalism with in-depth analysis and investigation. The winners tonight have shunned the temptation of instant breaking news and instead they have asked compelling questions of those in power and dug deep to seek answers. They have strived to separate fact from fraction and to shed light on our little victorious and big defeats.

16. The Ramnath Goenka Awards represent the true spirit of journalism of courage. So please join me in applauding the best and the brightest.

17. In the end, I thank Shri Vivek Goenka Ji and the Indian Express management for giving me this opportunity of celebrating quality journalism. I once again compliment the award winners.

Thank you. Jaihind!

BK/RK

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