



July 1st 2024

Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar,
The Hon'ble Chairman,
Rajya Sabha
Sansad Bhawan
New Delhi

Subject: Removal of access restrictions on media to cover the proceedings of Parliament

Hon'ble Chairman Dhankar Ji,

We wish to draw your attention to the continuing practice of the Secretariat to limit access of journalists to cover the proceedings of Parliament. The practice of restricting the number of media persons, including those holding permanent accreditation and Long and Distinguished category was re-introduced after it was removed during the 2022 Winter session about which we had written to you during October 2023.

Limiting access adhering to Covid19 protocols could be appreciated but now that the country has battled the scourge and moved on, the idea of restricting access to journalists and when some 1,000 were accredited to Parliament cannot be understood. This is when the capacity of the Media Gallery in the new Parliament building has been increased as compared to the old building.

Sir, you are aware, journalists from print and electronic medium, have been admitted to cover the proceedings since the first session in May 1952 with the objective of keeping the people abreast with the work of representatives, developments inside the House and the dynamics outside. The interaction is vital in a parliamentary democracy. Unhindered access to media is also a point that the prestigious body like Inter-Parliamentary Union and allied institutions stresses upon. India, as one of its important member, should stand out as a beacon. (Annexures provided for your perusal and reference)



At this time, our request is to restore complete access to all accredited media persons to the House without the need for them to secure additional access passes, which only adds to bureaucratic work at a time when your effort is to reduce the load.

We also request you to reconstitute the Media Advisory Committee, which was there to assist the Secretariat in the task of peer review and accreditation of members from our fraternity.

Yours sincerely,

Anant Nath
President

Ruben Banerjee
General Secretary

K Ve Prasad
Treasurer



Annexures:

1. IPU and other allied institutions on media access

<https://www.ipu.org/impact/democracy-and-strong-parliaments/criteria-democratic-parliaments>

Criteria for democratic parliaments

There are five core values that are applicable to all parliaments, whatever their diverse cultures and traditions. The ability to put these core values into practice is the hallmark of a democratic parliament.

A democratic parliament is one that is representative, open and transparent, accessible, accountable and effective.

Representative parliaments are both socially and politically inclusive. They allow members to carry out their mandates freely, and their hallmarks include: free and fair elections; the presence of women and men; open and democratic systems within political parties; and guaranteed rights. These might cover freedom of speech and equality of opportunity for all MPs, including those from opposition parties.

Open parliaments conduct their business transparently. Proceedings are open to the public and the media. Debates are publicized in advance and documents are published on the Internet. Open parliaments have their own public relations teams, and make effective use of technology to put information in the public domain.

<https://www.ipu.org/impact/democracy-and-strong-parliaments/ipu-standards/indicators-democratic-parliaments>

Indicators for democratic parliaments

The *Indicators for Democratic Parliaments* are a multi-partner initiative led by the IPU in partnership with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Directorio Legislativo Foundation, Inter Pares / International IDEA, National Democratic Institute (NDI), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women and Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD).

The *Indicators* provide a framework for parliaments to self-assess their capacity and performance. They support parliament's learning and development by raising key questions about the effectiveness, accountability, transparency and other characteristics of parliament.

Our ambition is for the *Indicators* to become a common tool for the parliamentary community that is widely used by parliaments to identify priorities for strengthening their institution.



The *Indicators* can be viewed, explored and downloaded in English, French and Spanish at www.parliamentaryindicators.org. The website also provides detailed guidance on to how to carry out an assessment, as well as case studies and online resources. For more information, please contact standards@ipu.org.

<https://www.parliamentaryindicators.org/indicators/transparent/access-parliament/media-access-parliament>

Dimension: 3.3.3 Media access to parliament

This dimension concerns provisions and arrangements for media access to the parliamentary premises. The media has a special role in democratic societies in reporting on parliament's activities. Parliament needs to guarantee free and unfettered access to its proceedings to the media, and to provide adequate space and conditions for journalists and technicians to work.

Where parliament applies a media credentialing system, it should provide for permanent registration of media outlets and facilitate access to parliament. Credentialing should not be used to limit the diversity of media outlets reporting on parliament, or to exercise political control.

It is also important that media outlets have reasonable space, infrastructure and technical support to carry out their work, including Wi-Fi, cables, plugs, monitors and microphones.

Relations between parliament and the media may be facilitated by parliament's media relations unit, or by dedicated staff tasked with liaising with the media. Such units and/or staff should work in a non-partisan manner. Parliaments sometimes provide training or informational material to journalists to familiarize them with parliamentary procedures.