



**July 1<sup>st</sup> 2024**

Shri Om Birla,  
The Hon'ble Speaker,  
Lok Sabha  
Sansad Bhawan  
New Delhi

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

Hon'ble Speaker Birla Ji,

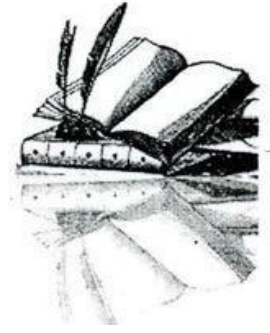
Congratulations on assuming the office as the Speaker of the Lok Sabha for the second successive term.

Through this communication we wish to draw your attention to the continuing practice to limit access of journalists to cover the proceedings of Parliament. The Guild had brought this to your notice through our letter during October 2023 on this aspect and on the non-constitution of the Press Advisory Committee for the last several years.

The practice of restricting the number of media persons, including those holding permanent accreditation, came into force when Covid19 protocols were in place. The country has fought the scourge and moved on and we hope limiting access is also done away with.

As you are aware, some 1,000 media persons from print and electronic medium, have been admitted to cover the proceedings of Parliament. Now, only a fraction of them are provided access without transparent process or procedure.

The decision to provide unfettered access to journalists was in practice since the Constituent Assembly and continued by the first Parliament. The objective was to keep the people abreast with the work of their representatives, developments inside the House and dynamics outside, through media, which is vital in a parliamentary democracy.



It is unfortunate that the Press Advisory Committee has not been reconstituted for the last few years. The Committee has an historical background and was founded in 1929 under the guidance of the President of the first elected Legislative Assembly, Vithalbhai Patel.

Grant of temporary and visiting journalist passes, which had been suspended in the past, puts the young members of the media fraternity at a great disadvantage. The process allows youngsters to acquaint themselves with the procedures and processes and pick-up nuances under guidance of seniors. It is only after a specified period of coverage that media persons qualify to apply for permanent pass.

For accreditation under various categories, applications are screened by the Press Advisory Committee appointed by the Speaker. The Lok Sabha Press and Public Relations Committee conducts due diligence as per guidelines approved by the General Purpose Committee.

The above role was envisaged by your illustrious predecessor G.V. Mavlankar, who in 1946 decided the Committee should among other things discharge advisory functions including examination of temporary and permanent admissions to the press gallery and that applications for such admission would be referred to the Committee for its opinion and advice. Since then the process remained in place till it was abandoned a few years ago.

That this practice was stopped when Parliament completed 70<sup>th</sup> year of its existence tells its own story. We are certain under your guidance, these restrictions will be lifted and members of the media admitted will have unhindered access in the temple of democracy.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union, the prestigious body of similar institutions, highlights access to media as an indicator of parliamentary democracy, and India as its important member should shine like a beacon. We are attaching relevant citations along with this letter for your perusal.

We hope that our communication will receive your attention and remove all restrictions on media that are now in place.

**Yours sincerely,**

**Anant Nath**  
President

**Ruben Banerjee**  
General Secretary

**K Ve Prasad**  
Treasurer



## Annexures:

1. Hyperlink of relevant IPU and other bodies on media access

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

## Criteria for democratic parliaments

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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

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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](http://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](mailto: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.