

# **OUR PRESS SHOULD BE EFFICIENT AND FEARLESS FOR THE COUNTRY TO THRIVE AND FLOURISH: VICE PRESIDENT**

Relevant for: Ethics | Topic: Strengthening of Ethical and Moral Values in Governance

Vice President's Secretariat

## **Our press should be efficient and fearless for the country to thrive and flourish: Vice President**

**Journalists should become the voice of the voiceless;**

**Media should maintain a high level of professionalism, accuracy and impartiality in their coverage;**

**More newspapers should be started in regional languages;**

**Addresses 132nd Foundation Day Celebrations of 'Deepika' Malayalam Daily**

**Also presents Business Excellence Awards**

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The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that for a democratic country like ours to thrive and flourish, our press should be efficient and fearless. He asked the journalists to serve as a mirror to society as he asked them to be the voice of the voiceless. He was addressing the 132nd Foundation Day Celebrations of 'Deepika', the first Malayalam Daily, here today.

Saying that a efficient and fearless was necessary for a democratic country like India to thrive and flourish, Shri Naidu asked the journalists to portray the reality as it is, neither magnifying nor diminishing, neither distorting nor mystifying facts.

Saying that the dignity and reputation of a newspaper rests on the degree of their loyalty to truth and fearless reporting, the Vice President said that one expects media to not just report accurately but also to highlight social and economic injustices, thus paving way for their redressal.

Shri Naidu said that it is also the duty of the newspapers and the media in general to support the government in its developmental initiatives and policies as well as to pinpoint its lapses, so as to help improve the effectiveness of the administrative setup in our country. He asked media to play a vital role in creating awareness about the legal provisions on such matters and

empowering citizens by making them aware of their inalienable rights.

Pointing that media has a crucial role to play during the time of elections, the Vice President said that the fairness and the transparency with which the elections were conducted would be determined greatly by how fairly and responsibly the media would behave.

Talking about elections, the Vice President said that a free and fair election was not just about the freedom to vote and the knowledge of why and how one should cast a vote. It is a crucial participatory process where voters take part in informed public debate, making enlightened, he said.

Opining that a democratic election could not be credible with no media freedom, or stifled media freedom, Shri Naidu said that media safeguards the transparency of the entire process.

The Vice President advised media to maintain a high level of professionalism, accuracy and impartiality in their coverage. He urged the media to do their duty during the time of the elections with great discretion. Empower the voter with information to make the best possible use of their crucial right to vote, he added.

Shri Naidu asked media to be fearless in bringing the wrongdoers to light. Never be hesitant to report positive stories and always offer appreciation and words of encouragement to those who are making a positive change. You have the significant responsibility of watching over the conduct of the most important event in any democracy and never fail to offer constructive and creative criticism wherever necessary, he added.

The Vice President opined though the media have traditionally been understood to refer to the print and electronic media, in recent years, the definition has become broader, including new media, online journalism, and social media. Social Media has immense capacity for propagating information, including fake news, he added.

The Chairman of Rashtra Deepika Ltd. Dr. Francis Cleetus, the Chief Editor of Deepika, Fr. Boby Alex Mannamplackal, the Managing Director of Deepika, Fr. Mathew Chandrankunnel, the Associate Editor of Deepika, Shri George Kallivayalil and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"I am delighted to know that 'Deepika', the first Malayalam Daily and one of our country's pioneering regional dailies is celebrating its 132nd foundation Day today.

I congratulate the management, editorial staff, the journalists and the entire Deepika Family, on having achieved this unique milestone, in spite of innumerable hardships and challenges along the way.

I understand that the founding fathers of Deepika, led by Fr. Emmanuel Nidhiry, a renowned social reformer of the times, had envisaged very noble and lofty goals while establishing the newspaper in 1887.

These included protecting and safeguarding the inalienable rights of the people as well as standing boldly on the side of truth, justice, freedom and equality among all communities and religions.

These ideals brought about a new vision and dimension to the then nascent profession of

journalism in Kerala.

I am told that Deepika also played a crucial role in the dissemination of important information during the freedom struggle. It is indeed gratifying to know that Deepika contributed greatly to the freedom movement.

My dear sisters and brothers,

India is the only market in the world where print media continues to dominate and is growing in all aspects — circulation, readership and geography.

It is believed that the growth of newspapers in India is directly related to rising literacy rates and rapid urbanization, leading to higher aspirations.

Print medium allows for greater civic and political engagement and involvement in national affairs. It is accessible, affordable and has great potential for growth due to the rising and upwardly mobile middle class.

Thus, print medium today exerts tremendous influence, power & reach and therefore, should concentrate on truthful, unbiased and timely reportage.

Journalists are perceived to be the voice of the voiceless and as the crusaders for justice, social, economic and political. They help in preventing social exploitation and aid and abet the process of empowerment of the downtrodden through the power of information and knowledge.

They also act as a bridge between the government and the governed.

For a democratic country like ours to thrive and flourish, our press should be efficient and fearless.

They should serve as a mirror to society and portray the reality as it is, neither magnifying nor diminishing, neither distorting nor mystifying facts.

The press in India has almost all through the years since independence, except for a brief dark time during the emergency, enjoyed freedom of expression, which has contributed greatly to the fortification of our democratic institutions.

The dignity and reputation of a newspaper rests on the degree of their loyalty to truth and fearless reporting.

We expect media to not just report accurately but also to highlight social and economic injustices, thus paving way for their redressal.

It is also the duty of the newspapers and the media in general to support the government in its developmental initiatives and policies as well as to pinpoint its lapses, so as to help improve the effectiveness of the administrative setup in our country.

Media thus forms the fulcrum that balances the entire edifice of democracy and gives it the required stability.

I am happy to note that Deepika has been exemplary in upholding and propagating such virtues throughout the 132 years of its dignified existence. Its track record of credible reporting is truly impressive.

My dear sisters and brothers,

Media is no longer just the conveyor of news to its readers and viewers, but also forms one of the platforms for expressing views and conducting informed debates on issues of public interest of the day.

They are powerful opinion makers.

With advances in information and communication technologies, the reach of media has increased manifold.

There is, therefore, a need for the media to handle its influencing capacity, with a deeper sense of responsibility to the nation.

It is often said that then pen is mightier than the sword. Media should wield the immense power at its disposal with great discretion and self restraint.

It should be the democracy's most potent weapon in fighting social prejudices, fundamentalism, dogmatism and social evils.

I am truly impressed to know that Deepika has been a crusader for social reform and for the removal of untouchability in Kerala since the newspaper's very inception.

It is heartening to note that it played an important role in the renaissance and reformation that took place in Kerala in the late 19th Century.

These actions do justice to its name - 'Deepika' - which means 'Torchbearer', a bringer of light into the darkest of spaces.

Adopting a socially responsible approach to create awareness in society is another essential role of the media.

Social issues, especially those relating to women, children and the elderly, should be handled with sensitivity and not sensationalized.

In India today, many social evils continue to persist even though there are strict legislations against them. Dowry, child marriage, female feticide and infanticide have crippling effects on the lives of many.

I strongly believe that the media can play a vital role in creating awareness about the legal provisions on such matters and empowering citizens by making them aware of their inalienable rights.

My dear sisters and brothers,

The biggest festival of democracy, the elections are set to happen in a few weeks' time.

Media plays several roles especially during the time of elections.

It serves as an informer and educator, a platform for public debates and discussions, a watchdog that ensures transparency, accountability and legitimacy of individuals, institutions and processes and as an effective campaign platform.

The fairness and the transparency with which the elections are conducted would be determined greatly by how fairly and responsibly the media would behave.

A free and fair election is not just about the freedom to vote and the knowledge of why and how one should cast a vote. It is a crucial participatory process where voters take part in informed public debate, making enlightened choices.

Furthermore, media safeguards the transparency of the entire process.

Indeed, a democratic election cannot be credible with no media freedom, or stifled media freedom.

In order to fulfill their roles, the media need to maintain a high level of professionalism, accuracy and impartiality in their coverage.

I urge the media to do their duty during the time of the elections with great discretion. Empower the voter with information to make the best possible use of their crucial right to vote.

Be fearless in bringing the wrongdoers to light.

Never be hesitant to report positive stories. Always offer appreciation and words of encouragement to those who are making a positive change.

You have the significant responsibility of watching over the conduct of the most important event in any democracy. Never fail to offer constructive and creative criticism wherever necessary.

Though the media have traditionally been understood to refer to the print and electronic media, in recent years, the definition has become broader, including new media, online journalism, and social media.

Social Media has immense capacity for propagating information, including fake news.

Keeping in mind that almost a third of India's 900 million voters are active on social media, global and Indian social media outlets have agreed to follow a 'voluntary code' to take down objectionable content' and to bring 'transparency in political advertising'.

It has also been proposed to set up a notification mechanism by social media platforms for action against violations under Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act.

These are indeed welcome initiatives by the Election Commission in curbing the amplification of false news through the social media grape vine and in ensuring transparency and credibility.

My dear sisters and brothers,

I have confidence that the media in India will concentrate on a constructive approach, and be an integral and responsible partner in pushing forward the agenda of inclusive and sustainable development.

Today, under the auspices of Deepika's economic and financial magazine, Business Deepika, business excellence awards are also being presented to outstanding achievers.

The private sector has been instrumental in the overall industrial, commercial and economic growth of our country

I congratulate the selected business award winners and urge them to work harder and to contribute in even greater measure to the nation's socio-economic growth and development.

Deepika has always been an innovator and trendsetter in the field of journalism as well as in introducing new technologies in newspaper publication.

I applaud the setting up of a UV printing facility at Deepika's new press, a first among Kerala newspapers.

I encourage 'Deepika' to keep up in its efforts to set a new and a positive trend in journalism, as it continues its onward journey. I am confident that this approach will take you to new heights and will make you ever more popular.

Let me reiterate that media plays a crucial role in building an aware, responsible and well-informed society so as to enable progress, development, peace and harmony in our country and all over the world.

I once again congratulate the Deepika family for this great accomplishment and wish them all the very best in their future endeavours.

Thank You.

Jai Hind!"

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