

**Proceedings of the 'Workshop on Parliament and Media'
held on Wednesday, the 4th November, 2009 in the Main
Committee Room, Parliament House Annexe.**

SHRI VIJAY NAIK: I welcome all of you to this workshop on the subject of "Reflection of Parliament in the Media". I specially thank honourable Chairman of Rajya Sabha, Shri Mohammad Hamid Ansari, honourable Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha, Shri K. Rahman Khan, the Secretary General, Rajya Sabha, my colleagues, Mr. N. Ram, Mrs. Mrinal Pandey and Mr. Vinod Sharma. I would now request the staff to present bouquets.

(Bouquets were then presented to hon. Chairman, Rajya Sabha, hon. Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha, Secretary General, Rajya Sabha, Mr. N. Ram, Mrs. Mrinal Pandey and Mr. Vinod Sharma)

SHRI VIJAY NAIK: I would now request the Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha, Mr. Rahman Khan to make the opening remarks. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. Chairman, Shri Hamid Ansariji, Secretary General Dr. V.K. Agnihotri, Mr. Vijay Naik, Mr. N. Ram, Mr. Vinod Sharma, Mrs. Mrinal Pandey, friends from media, officers of Rajya Sabha Secretariat and others, I am delighted to be here with you this morning. I extend you all a warm welcome to this three-day Workshop on Parliament and Media.

It is indeed heartening that the honourable Chairman has been gracious enough to inaugurate this Workshop. He has always been a great votary of building a healthy and effective interface between Parliament and Media for promoting values of democracy. It is due to his initiative that, for the first time, the Media Advisory Committee of Rajya Sabha has been set up in the year 2008. He is keen to enhance the profile of Rajya Sabha by positively harnessing the power and influence of Media. Friends, in a democracy, Parliament and Media share a common responsibility to contribute towards political, economic and social development in the

ways consistent with the democratic principles. It is a fact that Media plays a key role for the effective functioning of Parliament in more ways than one, particularly in providing feedback to the Parliament through effective articulation of public concern and also providing feedback to the people to evaluate their representatives through critical reflection of the performance of Parliament and the Parliamentarians. At a time when there is an apparent disconnect between public and the democratic process in the Parliament, the role of Media has assumed even greater importance. Both Parliament and Media are the embodiment of the public opinion in our democracy. It is necessary that both work in tandem and respect each other's role in serving the people. Both of them have a high sense of public responsibility and are answerable to the people for serving the democracy. While a free and fair media can supplement and complement the mandate of Parliament as a responsible and responsive institution, the media should report the development in these higher democratic fora in a true and unbiased manner.

The objective of holding this workshop, I believe, is to harness the positive power and influence of the media to help sustain the people's faith in and respect for democratic institutions, especially Parliament, the country's highest legislative body. For this, it is essential that the media persons be given adequate opportunities to know varied nuances of reporting sensitive parliamentary matters besides facilitating easy access to parliamentary information and fair idea about parliamentary practice and procedure.

In view of this, this workshop has been organised with four lectures by eminent parliamentarians and experts on important matters such as practice and procedure of both the Houses, the budgetary process, the reporting of discussion on foreign policy issue in the House and parliamentary privileges and ethics. Besides the highlights of this event is a panel discussion which is scheduled for today on the

theme 'Parliament - Reflection in media.' The distinguished panellists, no doubt, would be able to generate an intense and interesting discussion on this very important theme.

Given the presence of a vast segment of the print and the electronic media here today, I am sure, this three-day workshop would be a resounding success. I, once again, welcome all the participating journalists and the panellists to this workshop and look forward to the enthusiastic participation from all. I would now invite the hon. Chairman to deliver his inaugural address.

MR. CHAIRMAN: K. Rahman Khan sahib, Secretary-General, Rajya Sabha, distinguished panellists, friends from the media, ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to inaugurate the first workshop organised by the Media Advisory Committee on "Parliament and the Media." It is an important opportunity to engage in discussion on this topical subject.

At the outset, I wish to place on record the excellent work done by the Media Advisory Committee in the last year and a half, first, under the Chairmanship of Dr. Harish Khare and now under Shri Vijay Naik. It has rendered excellent advice to the Rajya Sabha Secretariat and has formulated transparent policies to guide the admission of media organisations to the Press Gallery.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate the media for excellent coverage of the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha, especially during the last two sessions. It is a matter of some satisfaction that the enhanced focus on the deliberative functions of the House, as evidenced through an increase in Short Duration Discussions and Calling Attention Motions, has been extensively covered by both the print and the electronic media. Our media fraternity deserves our deep appreciation for this.

Friends, the last few years have witnessed an amazing growth in the media industry. We have seen huge investments and the emergence of media conglomerates. New technologies and products such as IPTV, Mobile TV and Community Radio have emerged alongside new media genres such as reality TV and advertorials. The phenomenon of convergence between news media, entertainment and telecom has meant that the demarcation between professional journalistic output, public relations, advertising and entertainment is rapidly eroding.

Growth always has a price. We can evaluate the price paid for this rapid growth of the media along two dimensions.

One, lack of a concerted effort to train media professionals at the same pace as the growth of media organisations has meant that quality has suffered and there is extensive competition for existing media professionals. Media groups are trying to tide over the problem by instituting in-house media training institutes. But the results so far have not been encouraging.

Two, the explosive growth in the media sector has highlighted the fact that the Fourth Estate is the only one amongst the pillars of democracy that has an identifiable commercial and explicitly pro-profit persona. While the primary professional duty of media organisations is to keep their readership informed and apprised of news, views and ideas, the commercial logic brings in a new set of stakeholders in the form of shareholders of these companies.

These developments have brought into focus new considerations that guide professional media decisions. Today, the demands of professional journalists are carefully balanced with the interests of owners and stakeholders of media companies and their cross-media interest. The interplay of these conflicting demands is evident and a subject of public debate.

Eminent journalist P. Sainath has recently exposed the extensive malpractices of 'paid news' and 'coverage packages' that were deployed during the recent elections in some States. The Press Council of India's guidelines to media call for 'not accepting or publishing any advertisements at the cost of public exchequer regarding achievements of a party or Government in power.' They also state that 'the press shall not accept any kind of inducement, financial or otherwise, to project a candidate or a party.' The Press Council has noted that 'paid news' could cause double jeopardy to Indian democracy through a damaging influence on press functioning as well as on the free and fair election process. It underscores the urgent need to protect people's right to information, so that it is not misled in deciding the selection quotient of the candidates contesting elections.

Ladies and gentlemen, professional training of journalists can be imparted with greater ease and today's workshop is one such effort. The difficult part is to resurrect the professional and ethical dimension of journalism. An initial step is to bring back the decisive role of the editor of a media organisation and to dampen the interference of activist marketing departments in news content and coverage.

Most of those attending the workshop have been covering Parliament and are aware of the functional issues of parliamentary coverage by the media. I am confident that you would find the workshop helpful in understanding parliamentary matters and procedures better and to commit yourself to journalistic excellence.

With these words, I am very happy to inaugurate the workshop and I wish it a success.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Hon. Chairman, Rajya Sabha, hon. Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha, distinguished panellists and guests, Shri Vijay Naik, Chairman, Media

Advisory Committee, and its members, participants of the workshop, officers of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat, ladies and gentlemen,...

..it is my pleasant responsibility to propose the Vote of Thanks. First of all, I express my sincere gratitude to the hon. Vice-President of India and the Chairman of Rajya Sabha who has been very kind to spare his valuable time for inaugurating this Workshop on Parliament and Media, and addressing the media persons present here. I also express my deep gratitude to the hon. Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha for gracing this occasion. We are privileged to have distinguished panelists in Shri N. Ram, Shrimati Mrinal Pandey and Shri Vinod Sharma amidst us here today. They have made immense contribution in the field of journalism and are eminently suitable to generate stimulating discussion on the theme: Parliament -- Reflection in Media. I extend my sincere thanks to all of them. I am also grateful to our other eminent guest lecturers to come -- Shri Arun Jaitley, the hon. Leader of Opposition, Rajya Sabha; Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal, hon. Minister for Parliamentary Affairs; Prof. M.S. Swaminathan, Member, Rajya Sabha; Shri Nilotpal Basu, former Member, Rajya Sabha; and Shri M. Damodaran, former Chairman, SEBI for agreeing to share their insightful thoughts and firsthand experience on varied issues which could be of immense value to the media persons present here. I am also grateful to all the participants and guests from the media assembled here. With their distinguished presence, the profile of this workshop has been significantly enhanced. I would also like to thank the Chairman, office bearers and Members of the Media Advisory Committee of Rajya Sabha for their proactive efforts in organising this workshop. Their guidance and suggestions have ensured participant-friendliness of this workshop. The Training Cell, the Media, Education and Audio-Visual Unit and Parliament Security Service of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat deserve our thanks for their contribution to the organisation of this workshop. CPWD, the Horticulture Department and all the agencies involved in this workshop also deserve our special

thanks. Once again, I express my gratitude to all of you for your gracious presence. I, now, request you to join in the group photograph on the staircase adjacent to the Committee Room 'D' and the tea in the Banquet Hall thereafter. We shall re-assemble for the panel discussion at 12 noon. Thank you.

(The workshop then adjourned for tea.)

**THE WORKSHOP ON PARLIAMENT AND MEDIA
CONTINUED AFTER TEA-BREAK AT 11.50 A.M.**

SHRI VIJAY NAIK: Thank you all for being present here, including the Panel. On behalf of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat and also on behalf of the Press Advisory Committee, I welcome Mr. N. Ram, Chief Editor of the Hindu, Smt. Mrinal Pandey, Former Editor of the Hindustan (Hindi), a prolific writer, author and commentator, and Mr. Vinod Sharma, a Senior Journalist and Associated Editor of the Hindustan Times here to discuss the topic of Parliament Reflections of Parliament on the Media. We are also thankful to the Deputy Chairperson who is here to listen to our debate for some time and also Dr.V.K. Agnihotri, who is the Secretary-General of Rajya Sabha and Mr. N.C. Joshi, Secretary in the Secretariat of Rajya Sabha. Friends, the topic today is, Reflections of Parliament in the Media. I have already introduced the eminent journalists on the pane. They would be commenting on the functioning of Parliament and other Legislatures. I would also request them reflect on the subject in the light of the observations which have been made by the Chairman in his speech. He has actually pointed out to certain lacunae in reporting and what is happening in the field of journalism in the light of exposure recently by Shri P. Sainath. He mentioned about it also. Actually, I would like to quote one observation of the former Speaker, Shri Som Nath Chatterjee also while delivering his Eighth Pranabesh Sen Memorial Lecture in Kolkata on 12th January 2009 on the subject, Parliament, People and the Media. He said: "Unfortunately, media coverage of

Parliament has transformed significantly in recent years with the newspapers going in size, numbers, parliamentary activities were expected to get larger print space. But it is a matter of concern that today, very inadequate, if not miniscule, space is allowed to parliamentary coverage. What is more disturbing is that even this past coverage is primarily limited to the disruptions and disturbances in the Parliamentary proceedings. It is but rarely we get to see media reports on the important debates that are held in the Parliament. He continued to say that it will be worthwhile to undertake a study about the proportion of space provided to serious issues discussed in Parliament and to the matters that have crucial bearing on the future of our democratic polity." With these words. I would request the panellists to start the discussion. May I request Mr. N. Ram to start the debate? I would request also that they have 15 minutes for their speeches. So, kindly abide by the time so that we can finish in time. Thank you very much. Shri N. Ram.

SHRI N.RAM: Thank you hon. Deputy Chairman, Secretary-General, Smt. Mrinal Pandey, Sh. Vinod Sharma, friends from the Rajya Sabha Secretariat and Media friends, this is useful set of issues to take up and we should try to go beyond the formal and really get a focus on few issues so that some change in the works. My entry point is Parliament and Media. Parliament in India is not supreme, but I think, it is pre-eminent. The Constitution is supreme because, unlike in Britain, where Parliament is supreme, India has a written Constitution and there is separation of powers between the three main branches or arms of the State, the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. That is the scheme. Secondly, India has a Federal or at least a Quasi Federal set up where these institutions or arms are replicated at the State level with some nuances. But under our constitutional scheme, I think, we must recognise, the Media must recognise that it is Parliament that is pre-eminent, not supreme, but pre-eminent.

Sometimes, legislators make their mistake. And I know a Speaker in the Tamil Nadu Assembly, who claims "Sky High Powers" literally, the doctrine of "Sky High Powers". In Tamil, it is called "Van Alavia Adhikaram". Sky is the limit of my power. And this kind of delusion does appear on the scene, but, by and large, I think it is recognised that Parliament is not supreme but pre-eminent. In an elective democracy, even if, in practice, States are grown prominent and assertive over time and the Centre has become weaker over time, States have got empowered through the political process. That is the first point to note and, I think, the media should appreciate and reflect this in full measure, in earnest measure. That is my first point.

Traditionally, the Press, in India, has covered parliamentary proceedings extensively and factually. Just have got a look at old newspaper files, your archives of old newspapers, to see how much space and attention was given to reporting parliamentary proceedings. Even at a time when Parliament was not the Parliament we know today, when India was not a democracy but under alien rule, to the extent legislative proceedings were relevant and issues were raised, there was, I would say, superb coverage, extensive factual coverage. Of course, some of us used to say that is 'stenography' and you just took down 'verbatim' what happened and so on. But I have a great deal of respect and affection for our Parliamentary Reporters and Correspondents of the old days. Some of them I knew when I entered the field. This tradition, I think, is a very valuable tradition, and I was very pleased to hear the hon. Chairman and Vice-President of India saying that the Media has done pretty well, based on his own experience, because he knows journalism. In fact, he is a very fine columnist, and I am proud to say for "The Frontline" and "The Hindu" for many years. And today, unfortunately, he feels imprisoned! These are the words he used, jokingly, when he can't write on this, but he knows the Media feel better than most statesmen and most functionaries in our system. When he says

that the last two Sessions in particular, the Rajya Sabha Sessions, were covered well, -- and we look forward to the views of our Deputy Chairman who would also speak about this -- I am, rather, heartened. So, this tradition of newspapers of record, of factuality and, to some extent, comprehensiveness, apparently survives although I do not follow it on a day-to-day basis; I do not have the opportunity for that. But, by and large, also, I think, relations are good with our Parliament. I have not come across any case of intolerance of the kind we witnessed in some States where, in the name of parliamentary privilege or contempt of legislative privilege or contempt of the legislature, they have sent the police after journalists; they have imprisoned a journalist, a friend of mine, for publishing a cartoon, an editor, and so on. But these are aberrations; they happen; they bother us. But, at the Central level, I think, relations are much more healthy and cooperative, it appears. But we can't leave it to those informal things. I would seriously reiterate, again, the need to codify legislative privilege and contempt not because any of us here feels a threat from the people, in place, in Parliament, people in positions of influence or authority, but because, institutionally, that has to be done. And our legislators -- this, I think, we can say frankly -- have failed in their historic duty, constitutional duty, of codifying their privileges, and if they do not do it, there will be a suspicion that you are also like that Speaker of the Tamil Nadu Assembly after "Sky High Powers", undefined powers. And this, I think, has to be done. It is forgotten. That is why we have brought it back on the agenda.

The second thing is -- this is for the Media -- it is sensible to keep those lines between reporting, i.e. factual reporting, news analysis and commentary. The United Kingdom coverage of the House of Commons and, to some extent, the House of Lords, I think, it is very worthwhile to study. I want to quote here from an article, written in "The Guardian" of May 21, this year, by Shri Ian Aitken, about this tradition, the change in the game of reporting, what the gallery correspondent

does. I quote what he says in his column called "The Press and the Parliament". "The gallery correspondent -- he says -- is virtually extinct ". This is in the U.K. "Instead, there are sketch writers whose job is to be funny about Parliament, which mostly means making mock of MPs. If a newspaper is going to make a fun of MPs' foibles, it owes it to Parliament to report what actually happens -- which means, rather more than recording the twice-weekly slapstick of the Prime Minister's questions. Obviously, most of the reforms needed to restore confidence in Parliament must come from MPs. But this is one which could come from the Press, and it is crucial not just to restoring the perception of Parliament but also to reviving its actual function as the watchdog of the nation. You cannot be a successful watchdog if no one can hear you bark." So, there also, a decline in this tradition of factual and extensive reporting has been noted. There are some very fine parliamentary correspondents. All of you can read them in The Guardian, The Times, The Daily Telegraph, The Independent, and so on, BBC also. This trend has been noted in the U.K; we do not want this to come here. I think, it is all right to be satirical about parliamentary proceedings and we get a plenty of that on television. But, on the other side, we also need to report seriously. And apparently, in India, we still have a good part of the old, worthwhile traditions. This is a point that I wish to make here: keep the lines clear; even if it sounds old fashioned, don't editorialise in the guise of news; keep the lines between reporting, news analysis and commentary fairly clear and clean. That is a good recipe, I believe, for serious journalism, particularly in this area.

Now, a few points quickly on the changing media. The hon. Chairman referred to a very important thing, the rapid growth of the Media, the terrifically rapid growth of the Indian Media, particularly the Indian Language Press and also broadcast television in various Indian languages. This, I think, is important, but I wish to point out that even in the old days, in the early days of Independence, the

Press, in India, learned to act like a player in the major league, in the political and socio-economic arena, despite the well-known limitations it had. They were in terms of reach and scope, financial viability, professional training and entrepreneurial and management capabilities. In fact, the First Press Commission noted, in 1953, that the circulation of dailies for 1,000 people in the population was 5.4 against a backdrop of an all-India literacy level of 16.4; a very, very thin spread of newspapers in India. And from such a low base, we have climbed phenomenally. But even then, this is the merit of Indian democracy. I think most leaders in the political system, particularly parliamentarians, took the Press fairly seriously without which we would have no tradition of the kind of parliamentary reporting that we are all proud of. But today, the game has changed. We are more than 200 million readers of newspapers in India. We have 130 million TV-owning households. About 80 millions of them are served by a cable. We get a variety of offerings. But you also have a growth of radio. You now have the Internet; maybe, there are 80 million users of the Internet. Those are the ballpark figures. A long way to go; a lot of space for you to grow, but still a huge presence. The Media are a huge factor in India's polity, and I applaud the hon. Chairman for his comments in such a concise speech for focussing on these issues. One is hypercommercialisation in the Media, and this relates to Parliament or, at least, how you get to Parliament. These coverage packages, marketed aggressively and systematically by newspapers, and also by private TV channels, used to criticise the Government-owned broadcast Media.

Now you are doing much worse by selling news. Due to hyper commercialisation in this area, many managements do not see any difference between selling ad space to political parties during election campaigns and selling news and editorial content. One of my colleagues told me that just before last year's Assembly elections in Chhattisgarh, four television channels came up and several publications started up in

honour of the election season and, I think, it is worth investigating. We thought first that this is confined to Chhattisgarh. After Mr. Sainath's article appeared in The Hindu, we learnt about the practice in Andhra Pradesh and we thought that this was largely confined to Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. But now we know that it is very extensive. Mr. Prakash Karat went on record the other day saying that he noticed it during the 2007 Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh and the practice is quite widespread now in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh *inter alia*. This is not an exhaustive list. It is for all of us to find out where we are going. Where are we going in terms of values in journalism? How can you reflect the values of democracy or what the Parliament is supposed to be if this is the direction that some of us, at least, the influential sections, not the marginal sections, are taking? I think that this is worth debating in this context even though it has only a tangential connection or association with what Parliament does because this is to do with the business of electing the Parliament and the Legislative Assemblies. The Andhra Pradesh Union of Working Journalists deserves a lot of credit for doing some investigation in West Godavari district and it has actually estimated that major newspapers in that State, the largest State in South India, netted something like Rs.350-Rs.400 crores. Maybe, it is an exaggerated figure. I don't know. But the kind of indicative figures that they put out is quite disturbing and the Press Council has set up a two-member committee to look into it in Andhra Pradesh. Why does only in Andhra Pradesh? It seems to be all over the place right now and let us find out what is happening. I am glad that the Chairman put his finger on it among other things because these are the things that we need to discuss.

I think that I have exhausted my time and I hope that in the interactive session there will be time to take up some more issues. Thank you.

SHRI VIJAY NAIK: Thank you, Mr. Ram, for a very frank kind of a discussion and for the frank views which you have expressed. You have talked about the news

and the views. You don't want the news to be editorialised which is happening. I think there is a lot of mix up between the news and the views. When the news is printed, most of the correspondents, when they write particular stories, mix their views with the news and it looks as if it is a kind of editorial which is going in news.

Secondly, you have said that the Parliament and the Legislatures have to codify their privileges. This is not happening over the years. There had been committees of Parliament. There had been the Committee of Dr. Karan Singh which had gone into it. There had been the Committee of Mr. Chandra Shekhar also. There have been committees. But, I think, the Parliament and the Legislatures have to think about it that they have to codify their privileges. The Press Council of India has, of course, a kind of code of conduct for the Press. It is there. I think, by and large, the Press is trying to observe that. At the same time, the Parliament, both the Houses, as also the Members of Parliament have to think whether they should codify their privileges so that the people are aware about the privileges that they do have because we think that they have now unbound kind of privileges.

Now, I would request Mirnal Pandeyji to throw some light on the issues from her experience in the newspapers for such a long time. You have observed the Parliament and the reporting through the reporters who are working with you and whom you are sending to the Parliament. I would like you to take up from where Mr. Ram has left and enlighten us with your views.

SHRIMATI MRINAL PANDEY: Thank you, Mr. Vijay. Hon. Deputy Chairman, the Secretary-General and all my friends on the dais and in the hall, I am very happy to hear the speech of the hon. Chairman because he, in a way, put the finger on the nerve that has been throbbing for some time; and I am also glad that Mr. Ram took it further and connected it with reporting in Indian languages. I often use the word "vernacular" and people tell me "vernacular" is a pejorative and I should not use the

word because "vernacular" means the language of the slaves. However, there is a subtle distinction. In ancient Rome, a vernacular slave was a *khandhani* slave, a slave whose parent had been bought by a family, who had been groomed, who was bilingual, who spoke the language of the masters and the language of the slaves and thereby became a kind of a bridge between the haves and the have-nots. To that extent, I think, the term "vernacular" is not entirely inappropriate for Indian languages.

For some time I have been very concerned about the Hindi print media. As has been pointed out, our problems today are not the problems of scarcity, but the problems of plenty. All of a sudden, the entire horizon has opened up before the Indian language newspapers because the readership for English newspapers is diversifying pretty fast through the Internet, and this has happened abroad and it is now beginning to happen in India. But the readership for Indian languages is growing because that is where our literacy campaigns and all the efforts being put to educate people are taking root. So, millions of new literates are coming up in every State in India. Hindi has, as you know, the largest footprint. It covers no less than eleven States. Literacy levels in the southern States may be higher, but in sheer demographic terms the readership of Hindi is enormous. Given the demographic facts, the number of Parliamentarians that the Hindi belt sends is, perhaps, the largest. That is why one needs to monitor, with special concern and also with interest, what is happening in the Hindi media because, on the one hand, it is giving news about the parliamentary happenings to the largest number of readers and viewers if it is television channel, and, on the other, it is also connecting up, in their own language, to a large number of our Parliamentarians who wish to go on record in Hindi so that they can reach out to their electorate very quickly. Therefore, the role of Hindi media in particular now bears a very close analysis. All the good and the bad points about the Hindi belt's psyche get

reflected in our reporting and in our journalism. All of you are, perhaps, aware that the ten most read dailies -- the list comes out every six months -- in the country does not feature any English language paper any more. Till about two years ago, The Times of India used to be at No.10. दसवीं पायदान पर था। That is what they say. Now the field is old. The first four largest read dailies are in Hindi and then, of course, in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Bengali. So, this is a fact which, somehow or the other, falls between two stools because if you talk about the importance of language journalism very often people blame you for being xenophobic. They say, "Hey, you are talking like this because you are a Hindi journalist and you carry a permanent chip on your shoulder about injustice". I am not talking about justice or injustice. I am just talking about professional sense. When I was an active member of the Editors' Guild I used to often tell the then senior editors that whenever they talked about the national media it was always the English media. What is our national media? You know English is after all read by, maybe, 10-12 per cent of the electorate. But the rest of the field, almost 90 per cent of the field, is controlled today by the language media. That is why it is also very worrisome about some of the developments. Mr. Ram talked about what is happening in the field of Telugu journalism.

Similar things are happening in the field of Hindi journalism. The process started slowly during the last Lok Sabha elections. First came the rumours as always happens. मैडम, ऐसा हो रहा है I refused to believe them. I said, "We are all in the business of spinning stories; this is just another smart story you are spinning." Then they began to bring actual examples. There were newspapers who were publishing their front page in several colours. The headlines were in different colours and the colours denoted which was a paid for news item and which was not. On the same page, on some days, one candidate's chances were very big and another day his chances were negligible. Pullouts were brought out about

independent candidates, whose names the local electorate had not heard and passed off as part of the main paper because the words advertisement or special supplement or paid for supplement were not prominently displayed and the same font and the same colour scheme, as in the main book, were used. So these were things that were beginning to be done. I said, "Look, this is being done by cheapskate small town newspapers; this will soon die out and this cannot happen." But then I also met somebody from a very major political party who told me very excitedly that he had been to the war room of his party and he met four or five managers from eminent Hindi language dailies who had brought in Power Point Presentation telling them what was available and I shall forward you the kind of packages, one of those packages, which I have smuggled out. It was really like being pushed in the chest. Yes, we believe that we had problems. You know something so vast and so closely intertwined with the actual mechanism of bringing out the paper was really a great shocker. Then I was told in the last elections that the total kitty had been worked out and Rs. 200 crores were available to a paper who was willing to use. The larger the paper, the more important the house, the better the price, somewhat ironically like the DAVP advertising rates. The greater your footprint, the greater your reach and the higher you are on the readership scale, the more you can charge. This is done by many political parties, but the party that really tipped me off was one. I was tipped off by one. Subsequently, I discovered from my own sources that, practically, every major political party was involved. Independents were big time players in this because, as you know, independents are no longer who have conscience and therefore, they are contesting. These are people with a certain agenda who are rebel candidates or who have been put up for certain reasons. They are big time paymasters. That is a very major challenge that one has to face. Naturally, you know, you co-opt a lot from journalism just as in feminism you find that the advertising world has co-opted a lot

of feminist ideas and now they pass them as commercially viable ideas about a working woman looking good, looking fair and lovely and doing certain things or a diamond being a girl's best friend. Likewise, things like patriotism, things like certain phrases, which have been co-opted from mainstream journalism are being blatantly used to build what is politely termed as advertorials. I would not pick out any one particular newspaper because we all know that when these things begin to happen, they happen across the board because the mindset is if he will not, someone else will. One reason which I feel, of late, bothering me also, for a long time, is that slowly we are seeing the basic lines, the dividing lines between the editor and the owner disappearing. In the last 10 years, practically, every editor of an English Daily has become an owner and practically, every owner of a Hindi Daily has become an editor. I was an exception, but notice the word 'was'. This is happening and this is going to be there for some time to come. If the editor becomes an owner and the owner becomes an editor then the dividing lines of interest between English and Vernacular also go away. I have noticed under the table exchange of notes and information. I mean, one wanted parity but certainly not at this level. So these are the two things which I thought I must point out today. Then the Chairman pointed out another very important factor, that is, lack of training. We find that in the Annual Budget, I do not know about the English language papers, the component for training journalists has been shrinking. Training is very vital because the media is changing so fast. We will always need news collectors. But newspapers are the only one who are actually paying for the news that is being collected. The Internet is just happily taking away from the newspapers whatever is the day's news and displaying it. They are not incurring much by way of newsgathering cost. The cover price being low, the newspapers are in a corner and they need money to cover up with this. I think there needs to be a free and frank debate among owners/editors about how this is eventually going to, like an ingrown

toe nail, eat into the vitals of good reporting. So we come to smaller newspapers in Hindi. They have a major problem. They cannot very often have a full time correspondent in daily reporting on Parliament. So they are practically fully dependent, if they have an English daily, on the English daily, otherwise, they are fully depending on news agencies. Then the news agency scene has also become fast monolithic. So this is also something to worry about because the Parliament and the Constitution are supreme and the language papers, given their enormous growth, they must have access to good, well trained, intelligent and seasoned journalists who can really understand the trends and who can understand what they are reporting. I think given the various handicaps, Hindi has done a pretty good job. In the 1930s when the Hindustan first started, for example, they had no correspondents. They only had sub-editors, Chief-sub editors and the editor and the entire copy came from the Hindustan Times and was translated. But then in 1940s things began to change. So Hindi journalists in a way have learnt on the job, whether it is corporate reporting, whether it is reporting regarding trade, whether it is reporting regarding various new technologies, they have practically learnt on the job. A lot of them come from very small towns. They need training. They are extremely intelligent. In my 25 years of dealing with vernacular journalists, I find them an extremely intelligent lot. Given the handicaps also, they are willing to be honest and clean. It is only because, time and again, they have been pushed into situations where they have to do things which are unprofessional. Then some of them turned rogue and began to act as agents of specific parties or individuals or whatever. But I would say in my dealing with vernacular journalists, there is great hope. If we can arrange for good, clean training, we can see to it that the reporting that is done is imbued with perspective, imbued with knowledge and then good handbooks should be available to them in Indian languages. I find most of the reading material brought out by various Ministries or thrown up by their websites or even the good

research papers written by knowledgeable people are seldom made available unless an old crown like me yells about getting it available or making it available in Hindi. I remember, till the 80s, even the UNICEF did not bring out its State-of-the-World Children Report in any other language except English. I yelled, and I said, "I will not publish your Report until you make it available in Hindi also." And, today, they bring it out in all the Indian languages, because those are the children who need to be saved. Likewise, we have to get news of Parliament across to people, who are actually going out and voting. It is not your South Delhi or South Mumbai people who are voting Parliamentarians; it is somebody sitting in Bulandshahr or Khurja or Hapur, and whose lives are more directly affected by the acts, or the lack there of, of their selected candidates. Therefore, we really need to emphasise on the need for training of our Hindi journalists, for making available good handbooks and informative material to them, both in India and in English. I think we must realise the importance of Indian languages and the information that they carry to the vital segment of our population.

Finally, when we are talking about the Code of Ethics or codifying the privileges of Parliament, we also need to really debate the code of ethics for both the print media and, in particular, the visual media. In the visual media, journalists are even less trained and because it speaks through images, very often, images beamed leave much better impact on the minds of the people. Also, the visual media cuts through the illiteracy barrier. So, even in villages, where your vernacular newspapers do not reach, reality shows with Rakhi Sawant, or, half-baked reports or excitable newsbreaks or newsflashes from language media do reach them. So, some kind of a monitoring body is the need of the hour.

With these thoughts, I conclude. Thank you very much.

(Ends)

SHRI VIJAY NAIK: Thank you, Mrinalji, for emphasising the importance of the language Press. All the time when we talk of the national Press, only five or six newspapers in Delhi are considered national Press, and others, -- of course, they are not anti-national -- are considered as Papers from local languages. And, you have said about the importance of Hindi as well as other languages, the newspapers of which are increasing in circulation phenomenally because, as you said, literacy rate is growing, and most of the newspapers have reached the remotest parts of the country. That is why you find that they have crossed the circulation of English language dailies. Secondly, I think, you have put a finger on a very important thing, that is, about coverage packages of newspapers, especially during elections. I have known some of the correspondents who were directed by the management, and they were given targets of, say, 5 lakhs or 10 lakhs. They were told, "You have to take this particular package. You have to go to the candidates and find out what their requirements are." And then, one can give publicity in favour of, or, against. That kind of a thing has happened, and the Elections in 2004 as well as the recent elections in three States are examples. And, we have also talked about Mr. Sainath's reporting.

The other point, which you have mentioned is very important, and it is that the editor and owner line is disappearing. That is a very important thing. Most of the owners have become either Managing Directors or Managing Editors thereby reducing the importance of an independent Editor. And that has got a reflection not only on the organisation but also on the reporting, on the Pressmen. It is a kind of pressure which is put on the correspondents, as to how he should report and what line he should take. I do not know how to solve this particular problem because there is going to be more and more newspapers that the Managing Directors, Managing Editors and the Management are taking over the work of the Editors, and the Editors are left to fend for themselves. Then, you mentioned about training for

Hindi journalists, and you also expressed concern about Hindi journalists. We can discuss it also during the Question Answer Session. In the meanwhile, I would request my friend, Shri Vinod Sharma, to speak. He is a very senior journalist, who has observed Parliament for over 20-25 years or even more than that. I must say here that he has agreed to come at a very short notice. We had invited Shri M.G. Akbar and Shri Prabhash Joshi, both of whom have fallen ill. We made a request to Shri Sharma to kindly come and join us in the discussion. He agreed to that. I thank you, Mr. Sharma, and I request you to speak on the subject.

SHRI VINOD SHARMA: Thank you, Shri Vijay, for letting people know that I have a lot of time. But, I think, it is the subject which is close to my heart and that of so many audiences present here this morning. To set record straight, I wish to say that I would like to speak in my personal capacity and not as the Political Editor of the Hindustan Times because that way I shall be more blunt than balanced. I think that this issue needs to be tackled head on because it is really striking at the very roots of the concepts, which we cherish, and the culture that we have always aspired to have in our profession and in Parliament. That would make both these institutions blossom. I would preface my presentation with a quote from Alexander Comfort. He was a British author who died in 2000. He is known better for his work on sexual behaviour; but he was a man of eclectic taste. I quote from his book written in the 1950s titled 'The Authority and Delinquency in the Modern State'. It says: "We have now to contend less with the delinquent whose success and energy silence opposition than with the widespread incorporation of delinquent patterns of conduct into the actual structure and mechanism of society." I think if we start the debate on what is going wrong in Parliament and in media, then, this observation of the late author is very apt, though he made these observations in a different context. But, then, with apologies to him, I am using it in order to take this debate forward. You may kindly see how his observations apply to Parliament and

to media. The speakers, before me, have talked about space being sold in newspapers. What does it mean? It means that journalists are not carrying out their basic duty of being purveyors of facts and their basic duty of empowering public opinion because only an empowered public opinion can strengthen and sustain democracy. So, we have sold our basic privilege in order to gain some profits, and that is where journalism today is, largely, with a few honourable exceptions, a commercial venture, and what we are doing by way of selling space or news packages or editorials or whatever, is no different than Members of Parliament selling their basic privilege of asking questions to make Government accountable. Are we any better off than those Members of Parliament? I am deliberately raising this question in order to shock you all because without realising the gravity of it, we cannot really look for solutions. To start with, editors, today, are owners. They are proprietors. We have one sitting on this dais though he is different. He is a trained journalist and he runs a newspaper, which is, perhaps, much better in terms of credibility than most of its contemporaries.

But, then, there are newspapers and newspapers which are led, essentially, by businessmen who acquire the role of editors or editorial persons under different nomenclatures. So, where do we go from here? One may argue with at cost is the press freedom if newspapers are not economically viable. Of course, a newspaper has to be economically viable in order to continue publication. But, then, what is the point if a newspaper's economy is totally mortgaged to the big business?

This all began in the early 90s when we engaged in circulation wars and refused to raise cover prices of our products. We are spending about ten to twelve rupees, or, may be, fifteen rupees in producing the newspapers that we do and that we deliver at the doorsteps of the people. And we are selling it for two or three rupees. On every single copy that you sell, you are making a loss of ten to twelve rupees. So, the economy is effectively mortgaged to the big business; and who

does hanky-panky in a free-market economy situation? So, the big question that we have to answer is that, though we can, perhaps, do a sting against a lowly bureaucrat or a small-time politician or, maybe, some big-time Members of Parliament, we can do sting on them and catch them taking money for asking questions, but can we do a sting on people or business houses whose odd spends are the lifeline of your newspapers? This raises the basic question: how pure is the freedom of the press, derived from the freedom of speech, or, how honestly is it being exercised? One is not seeking a judicial intervention here to set things in order. But, is there even a suggestion of a debate within? And when we are talking about the debate which would be fruitful and which would correct the aberrations, it is not going to do with debates in the committee rooms of Parliament; I think, the debate has to be initiated with the participation of the owners, the editor-owners and, perhaps, the people who are their *annadaataas*, the big business.

Now, it is not just about taking money from political parties; it has been said that it started with 2004. No. It started much earlier. It started with elections in Gujarat which Narendra Modi won before 2004. And it started with Punjab elections which first Amrinder won and, thereafter, the Akali Dal won. And, indeed, the mofussil correspondents of certain vernacular dailies -- whether you want to call them Hindi language dailies -- were called in a meeting by the proprietors and the suggestion that was made, according to one person who was part of that meeting, was that you are, in any case, making money; so, why don't we institutionalise it, you take a commission and we take the rest. Now, the audience which was given this *fait accompli* had little choices because there are newspapers in this country who do not pay salaries to their journalists; they only given them identity cards. And you have such newspapers in a prosperous State like Punjab. And, then, once a journalist gets his identity card, he is told, "जाओ बेटा! अब कमाओ और खाओ". It is that bad. And, I am not imagining these quotes! If you know the person, if you

know that paper, he is the editor of that paper and if you put that quote to his face, you would realise that he is quite capable of saying worse, not just this quote. These are the people who are your leaders in the profession. I don't think it does really lie in the mouth of an average journalist today to be questioning the leadership of various political parties because there is a lot to be achieved and improved at our front, at our end, because we are actually struggling for a good leadership at every level within the profession. For instance, I was never trained as a journalist. I was trained on the job by my seniors. They were my *paathshalas* of journalism. And, they were pretty honest! They knew their job. They were the single-window-clearance for the subject they covered in the newspaper offices that I have worked in. How many of us can claim that privilege or that exalted position today? Just very few! That tribe is fast diminishing.

Having said that, I would come to why Parliament and its proceedings do not get adequately reflected in newspapers. That is, perhaps, the subject of this workshop, 'Parliament and Media'. If Parliament, if Members of Parliament, are the interface between the people and the Government, then, the media is the interface between the people and Parliament. We need to inform the people as to whether the Member of Parliament elected by them is contributing or adding value to debates that are happening on issues of grave national importance. Parliament, in recent years, has been enabled to evolve consensus on major national issues and one reason for that is that it has chosen not to debate those issues in the first instance. There have been problems of legislation. There have been problems of debate within Parliament. And, consequently, there have been problems of adequate scrutiny of Government's work which the Parliament is assigned to do, which is the duty of Parliament. The press needs to be blamed because the Zero Hour actually turns Parliament into a big zero. At a recent conference organised by the newspaper for which I work, Sushma Swaraj and Sitaram Yechury wanted that there

should be no live coverage of Zero Hour and if, at all, there should be deferred coverage of the Zero Hour because it is the Zero Hour which turns the rest of the work done in Parliament into a big zero. Now, indeed, there is some gravitas to this argument because it is the job of the Speaker to determine whether certain remarks being made in the heat of the moment need to be kept on record or they need to be expunged. But, then, no such authority of the Speaker can be exercised if the proceedings are being telecast live. But, I think, this problem needs to be addressed from the Members' end, that why do Members need to shout if they have a valid point to make in the House and how much truth is there to the allegations of the Opposition that it does not get adequate talking-space in Parliament to make its points to put the Government on the mat. These are questions that need to be debated by the political class themselves. But, whether the media is being a facilitator or not in the arrival of such consensus, I think, the answer is in the negative, because, first of all, the media is not interested; the media is more interested today in knowing when Kareena is planning to marry Saif Ali Khan or whether SRK will come and sing at the Commonwealth Games or not. I think he has made an announcement that he is going to sing or do something there. There is nothing wrong in it because they too are national icons. But there has to be some order of priority. There has to be some judicious mix of news. There has to be adequate reflection on a good debate happening in Parliament in various newspapers. I know newspapers like the Hindu are doing it. And I know that a couple of other newspapers are also doing it. But it is not being done adequately enough. If a Member of Parliament who delivers a good speech in Parliament does not find a single line attribution in the newspapers, and if he feels like a good reporter whose excellent story has been spiked or not printed, I think his grievance is valid.

And an average Member of Parliament today is like a News Reporter whose news stories are not seeing the light of the day. And, if we, as Working Journalists, can appreciate this fact and also our responsibility, I think, newspapers do need to make money, but if they take themselves as a corporate entity then they have a corporate social responsibility. If they cover Parliament, if they reflect the views of the people elected by the people of this country adequately in their newspapers, even as part of the corporate social responsibility, I think, we should be happy and there would be some reflection of what is happening in Parliament. But, until the new Lok Sabha was sworn-in, I think, when the parties put their act together, the Chairman said that there was good coverage -- there was good coverage because there was debate happening -- because in this Parliament, it is started off well. There has been some debate, there has been some order in the House and that order and that debate is conveying the message and the media seems to be showing the signs of picking it up. But, whether this would sustain, given the very deeply divided polity in this country, I think the hiatus is further widened by the business interests and by the market compulsions, as the marketing managers like to put it. So, I think, these are the issues that need to be taken up, maybe by the INS, the Indian Newspaper Society, which is a body of proprietors because debating them at such seminars is not going to give us the results that we are seeking.

And, finally, look, what is happening in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. These are the people who perhaps must have given the advertisement packages to newspapers, and these are the people who now plan to bring the two national political parties on their knees in these two respective States. One of them also runs a media empire. And, of course, as was pointed out by one of my predecessor speaker that some people are launching media ventures before elections. There is a lot of dirty money coming in. You know a reality contractor who had made some money in some big projects and he has got about Rs.100 to 150 crores or Rs.200

crores to spare. Then, he launched a news channel or a newspaper. Now, is there any check on this kind of money which is flowing into the media business? And what is the objective of these people, except for picking up a couple of influence paddling instruments. They treat the newspapers as influence paddling instruments. Now, it is not just a scam but also a big business. But, if this is the kind of role which the media is going to play that just to amass wealth, not to educate or empower public opinion, then the day is not far away when we shall be as despised as unfortunately today the political class is. I leave you with this question. It may haunt you. If it haunts you, it is better because then, perhaps, you may join forces and maybe, at least, it may persuade Mr. N. Ram to set the ball rolling in the INS and other matching forums where the people who had to do these correctives are sitting. But, so long as we among ourselves debate it, we can only part company after complimenting each other for having delivered good speeches and having put good questions. But the answers shall be eluding us, unless the people who own the newspapers, the people who employ us are serious about putting things back on rails. Thank you very much.

SHRI VIJAY NAIK: Thank you, Mr. Sharma for very frank opinion. You really put your finger on the very important aspect of the debate. You said that the newspapers economy is mortgaged to the big business. This is what is happening now in a big way. You also talked about the Correspondence of *Kamao aur Khao* kind of a category, which is there in Punjab. You also said about coverage of Zero Hour in Parliament, which has become a very important time in the Parliament. But, you said that that zero has become a big zero because there is so much cacophony in the House that it is impossible to listen and hear the viewpoints of various Members who raise very important issues whether it is a national issue or a regional issue or maybe an issue of his constituency. But I feel that so far as the major debate is concerned, as you have said, there were very good debates in the

Parliament. The debates on the Indo US Nuclear Agreement was there. For that matter, the issues related to farmers suicide in Maharashtra and other States and also some of the very important issues have been discussed very thoroughly in Parliament and they have been reflected very well in the newspaper columns also in the past few months.

Now, I would like to come back to Shri K. Rahman Khan, the hon. Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha. He would like to express his views on certain matters, and I would like to request him to do so.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Really, I would not like to take your valued time between you and the Panelists. But, I would like to offer two-three clarifications. As far as the codification of privileges are concerned, the debate is going on, and I need the media to carry on this debate for codification of the privileges. I have had the privilege of being the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha's Privileges Committee for almost five years, and we have taken up several matters. I can tell with all humility at my command that the Privileges Committees, both of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, have worked with all sincerity and with lot of responsibility. We know that the privileges are not codified, and that cast more responsibility on the Privileges Committee to be more responsible not to use that argument. As Mr. N. Ram has rightly said, one of our colleagues, the Speaker of the Tamil Nadu Assembly said, "We have unbound powers". It is not so. No Presiding Officer or no Privileges Committee can arrogate unbound powers. I fully agree with Mr. N. Ram's view that in a constitutional system, the Parliament is not the supreme, but it is pre-eminent. There is no doubt about it. At the same time, I would like to say that there should be a responsibility also. We had one instance, which I would like to quote and share with you. One of the papers, a vernacular newspaper, made a sarcastic remark on the Presiding Officer. He actually made a remark which was derogatory on the Presiding Officer. The Chairman of Rajya Sabha suo motu referred the

matter, after seeing the newspaper, to the Privileges Committee. The Privileges Committee took up this matter and when the journalist was asked to appear before the Privileges Committee, he said, "I have deliberately done it because I want publicity." He refused even to say 'that yes, I know, what I have reported is wrong, but now I would like you to take privilege action on me so that I can get publicity'. Then, the Committee in its wisdom said that we cannot play to his hands and we said that the matter may be closed.

SHRI N. RAM: Closed with contempt.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, with contempt. And the second instance which came is on the MPLADS. It came on one particular news channel. The concerned Member wrote to the Privileges Committee that he was not involved, and his name has been wrongly mentioned along with those who have taken. The Privilege Committee took up the matter and we called the editor of that particular channel. We went through the whole issue. In fact, the channel did commit a mistake of combining the names of those who had taken money with those who had not taken. We just confronted the channel representatives and asked, "Why did you do it? You have a responsibility. You have combined the names of those who have not taken money with those who have taken. Who would take the responsibility for the innocent Members of Parliament because his name is already announced on the channel?" Later on, he just apologised before the Privilege Committee. We then closed the matter. But they never apologised on the channel! Such problems do arise. Both, the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, Privilege Committees work with responsibility because the privileges are not codified. This non-codification enhances the responsibility of the Privilege Committees. I just wanted to report this.

Another important thing which our hon. Chairman has mentioned, for the last two Sessions, our reporting is better. Mr. Vinod Sharma rightly mentioned about Zero Hour. In Parliament, particularly in Rajya Sabha, we have evolved a system to

see to it that the Zero Hour is no more a free for all, which would give you a lot of reasons to cover which had a lot of *tamasha*. We have stopped it now. We have made it compulsory for any Member to finish his submissions within three minutes. If any Member would like to raise a matter, we allow it, but within three minutes. As soon as three minutes are over, the mike goes off and his time is over. For the last two Sessions, the Members are strictly following it. You would have observed that even on a single day there had been no disturbance in the Zero Hour submissions since the last two Sessions. Earlier, we used to provide opportunity to more than two Members and one matter used to take one hour. Now, we are giving just 30 minutes for 10 Members. We also should make certain structural changes in our working, I agree.

The last thing I would like to say is on a common complaint by the Members of Parliament to the Presiding Officers. There are two portions of any day's Session. The first two hours are taken by Question Hour and Zero Hour. Then there is a lunch break. After that, we take up serious business of the House. Except certain disturbances on major issues, the afternoon Session goes on peacefully all the time. For the last five years, this is my experience as the Presiding Officer. Good debates go on, particularly on Bills and Short Duration Discussions. I have discussed this matter with the media friends also. In the afternoon Session, firstly, there is no attendance in the Press gallery. Secondly, very many Members put all efforts to speak on the floor of the House to place their points of view on various issues. Hardly any issue, except the issues like the Indo-U.S. Nuclear Deal, as Mr. Naik said, is reflected in the media. There are so many things which are discussed. Except one or two known Members of Parliament, the debates of other Members, who do a lot of homework and contribute a lot to the debate, are not covered. Their names do not appear. Members ask, 'What is the alternative? How do we reach out to the media so that people see the Members speak seriously on their issues?' This

needs to be communicated to the people. These are the issues which, I hope, this workshop would address.

As far as the last point on packages, I would not like to name anybody. I had the experience of the recent Maharashtra election. I have seen. But this is very bad for the democracy and we would not be able to win elections by judging the parties on how much money they have spent on packages. This trend should be stopped and a debate is very essential not only in this workshop but also on a larger platform. Thank you.

SHRI VIJAY NAIK: Thank you Mr. Rahaman Khan for enlightening us on the working of the Privileges Committee. You also talked about Zero Hour which is now regulated in Rajya Sabha. I know, in Lok Sabha, it was Mr. Shivraj Patil, who was the Speaker of Lok Sabha, at the end of his tenure, would not allow the Members to go on having an issue raised in a manner which would stall the proceedings of the House. After that, the next Speaker, Mr. Balayogi and Mr. Somnath Chatterjee, allowed Zero Hour in Lok Sabha and we see a very frank and free discussion on issues where the House became tumultuous and it became very difficult for the Speaker to bring the proceedings of the House in order. I think, In Lok Sabha also, the example which you spoke about Rajya Sabha, could be brought---10 Members speaking one after another, finishing it in just 30 minutes. It is a very good suggestion and a very good practice which we have got.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I have another point to add. Our experience is that previously, when it was not regulated, a Member would take half-an-hour to convey what he wanted to convey; now he finishes whatever he wants to convey in less than 3 minutes!

SHRI VIJAY NAIK: On the last point which you have mentioned, about Members who prepare seriously to speak on matters and who would like to reach the people through media, I think, there is a big gap actually which we should also understand

and reflect on it. I thank you, Mr. Rahaman Khanji, for telling us whatever you had in your mind. I would now throw this session open for questions and answers. Thank you.

श्री मुकेश कुमार सिंह (जी न्यूज़) : महोदय, मैं इस esteemed panel के सामने दो बातें रखना चाहता हूँ। एक प्रिविलेज की बात आई। आजकल हम देख रहे हैं कि मधु कोड़ा जी ने हम लोगों के बीच बहुत नाम कमाया है। क्या प्रिविलेज कमेटी ऐसे मामलों में सुओ मोटो कुछ कर सकती है या उसे कुछ और चीज़ों की ज़रूरत पड़ती है?

दूसरी बात मैं यह कहना चाहता हूँ कि यह सही बात है कि हम लोगों से भी बहुत सारे एम.पीज़ मिलते हैं, जिनको हम उनके पार्टिसिपेशन के बावजूद प्रॉपली रिपोर्ट नहीं कर पाते हैं। एक छोटा सा सुझाव हो सकता है क्योंकि अगर कोई डिबेट पांच-छः या आठ घंटे चल रही है, तो निश्चित रूप से रिपोर्टर के लिए भी सबको सुन पाना और सबको प्रॉपली रिपोर्ट कर पाना मुश्किल होता है। क्या हम कुछ ऐसा कर सकते हैं, जैसे हम क्वेश्चन ऑवर के लिए स्टार्ड क्वेश्चन पिक करते हैं, वैसे ही हम various parties के number of speakers के लिए उनमें से चार-पांच लोगों को पिक कर लें, चाहे उसके लिए कोई लॉटरी सिस्टम ढूँढा जा सकता है, so that कि वे पांच-छः लोग ठीक से prepare होकर आएँ और उन्हें मीडिया की प्रॉपर रिपोर्टिंग मिल पाए, ये दो बातें मैं पैनल के सामने रखना चाहता हूँ।

श्री उपसभापति : आपके एक प्रश्न का जवाब मैं यह दूँगा, जैसा आपने कहा कि जो डिबेट्स होती हैं, तो हमारी पार्लियामेंट में debate के end में synopsis दिया जाता है कि हर मैम्बर ने क्या-क्या कहा। Synopsis is a well-contained, precise text.

Please listen to me. We can make available that synopsis. If we can work out a procedure, then you can definitely publish it.

SHRI N. RAM: I think this can be carried, if there is space constraint in the Internet edition, in the online edition of newspapers, which has absolutely no limit. I think we have got to people used to feeling that it is worthwhile putting it online because many people hold back their reservations for both by journalists and MPs and legislators must be persuaded that it is a worth, that is a good resource. We can

provide links on our websites and there is no excuse by media that there is no space.

SHRI N.C. JOSHI: Actually, our synopsis of debate is put on the website on the same day and it is in the MS Word form, it is not in PDF. So, whatever you want you can just select and use it for your purpose. This is just by way of information.

SHRI VINOD SHARMA: This relates to the operational issues. There is a space limitation. To condense a debate which lasted four or five hours into 700 words, which is the maximum limit and which most of the newspaper have these days for important stories, it requires a degree of writing skill. If you have adequate writing skill, then you can perhaps condense that debate into 700 words. It is a difficult task, but you can perhaps do it, but not every person can be individually quoted and the solution to this is that these Members of Parliament make sure that what they are saying, what is their take on the issue under debate gets published in the newspapers which are circulated in their areas. They have a solution to that but otherwise it is only the Internet, the web where too the reporter has to write about 2500 words in order to quote every single Member of Parliament. Most Members of Parliament, you know, are also repetitive. They are repeating only in order to become part of institutional memory of Parliament that they participated in this debate and they could tell the newspapers catering to their area that look this is what we said. It is a difficult task but can be managed but not with 100 per cent satisfaction of anyone.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Our synopsis is not the entire debate. It is our Reporters who are doing the full version. The synopsis is not of more than 100 or 150 words.

SHRI VINOD SHARMA: In important debates individual parties are there and one person from that party is quoted. So, for instance, in No Confidence Motion you would see that in blurbs newspapers are carrying the views of one Member per

party, that is, the main speaker. So, I think that within the limitation of space and time we try and do a good job but not always.

SHRI N. RAM: I think we can provide links, I am sure many newspapers will be willing to provide links to what you put out in addition to the reporting, highlighting of what they said. I think this can be taken advantage of. We will certainly make our website available in this and I am sure many others will do it. It is a question of persuading journalists and politicians that it is worthwhile going online.

QUESTION: My question is about training of journalists. I think there will be a sense of frustration because they will not be able to carry out the kind of ethics they are going to be taught. We know where the problem lies. The question is where lies the answer. I for one know that a lot has been said about the formation of the Media Council because for electronic media you have not any kind of rules and there is no governance. Is it time for us to have another Press Commission because things have changed? We are talking about traditional reportage of the Parliament. As the Deputy Chairman was revealing that he has problem because his Members are not being reported. Vinodji has really said a very good thing about IMS being tapped. It is very good that we journalists are here and we are speaking our hearts out. But the people who have to change this are the editors, are the proprietors. Why does the Parliament Media Advisory Committee not have a session of editors and media owners with parliamentarians to tell them what the problem is? My question is: is it time for another Press Commission?

SHRI VIJAY NAYAK: Your suggestion about the editors and media owners, it is a welcome suggestion. We can think about it in future because the Committee once thought of like this. But we have not actually implemented anything so far. But the suggestion is welcome and we can definitely think about it in the near future.

SHRI N. RAM: There have been discussions in seminars and colloquial and I also participated in some of them where these questions have been raised. There have

also been TV discussions. I think one possible suggestion lies in the direction what in the UK has been worked out. They have the Press Complaints Commission. If you talk to journalists there, they are eventually dissatisfied with the outcomes but they do have code of practice, it is called the code of practice by the Press Complaints Commission. It is worked out with editors and publishers and yet you see how tabloids behave. So, there are problems. But they have laid down the rules fairly, clearly how do you cover violence, how do you cover suicides, conflicts of interests which are bound in the Indian media. This is only going to be a small part of the solution. The Press Commission will be a fact-finding exercise, it will be useful but it will not be able to resolve this question. I think the only answer is to campaign and raise awareness. We are notorious for not writing about each other. In this competitiveness I do not think it happens with political parties. But here we cover up for each other most of the time. Corrupt practices in the media are not quoted even by their rivals. Some consort is there. So, I think this has to be brought into open. Unfortunately, we do not have journalisms reviews of the kind, which expose these things as in the United States or even the UK. We do not have much media criticism anywhere. But we do have some good journalism schools. I am associated with one of them. We also have several now. There are schools of journalism, which can take it up. We have to do exposes in the public arena and effectively getting whatever media space we can get, and by going out to cyber space and putting it there, getting politicians to speak up. I think that is the only real answer. There should be pressure on media to end their delinquencies, their conflicts of interests, their corruption. Now take the question of these coverage practices as a concrete example. I think the Election Commission of India has done it. It is not that they are not aware of it and they have expressed concern about it. Press Council is formally seized of the matter. I think they are thinking of some high level conference for media people and politicians to raise the issue, but it will

take a long time. It has to be sustained and continuous and you really whistleblowers in the media. Why is there no survey done on this? We have several organizations, which have ways and means of collecting information, but if it comes to Parliament in some way or some forum here, I think, that will be very useful addition to our resources in taking this up really. Instigate the public to put pressure on the media, use twitter, use face-book, and use all the social media to do this sort of thing.

People are afraid of legal risk. Subject to that, I think, a lot can be done and we must do a report or a Press Commission, provided it is done seriously. The first Press Commission which was best by far, and better by far. I think, we can achieve something but not just through formal, partial solutions.

SHRI VINOD SHARMA: I think, Mr. Ram has not addressed this question, I have known the Indian Newspaper Society each time the newsprint prices go up or there are shortages or they want revision of tariff rate of DAVP, they do get together and make a case before the Government and I think that the editors who are on the job can get together and they make a case before INS. But unfortunately, like in every other sphere the Trade Union Movement in newspaper industry is also greatly weakened. So the right to association and collective bargaining is grossly restricted in our profession. But, still I think, there could be peer pressure built upon the newspapers. I think, a strong case can be made out that, 'look in the longer run you are going to be loser because your credibility in this profession might go down' Mind you, if you go to cyber space these days, people who come to various blogs on newspapers and similar subjects are very cynical about media persons. Perhaps they are as cynical as they are about politicians. So, let us save ourselves from being in the same boat as political class, which is now trying to salvage the lost crown. While we still have some ground, let us keep it and salvage the one which we have lost and we cannot do it unless we are able to convince the proprietors.

SHRI N. RAM: Since the INS has been brought in here; I think the INS does not have the capability given its conflict of interest to address this question honestly. I think, nobody is going to disagree with that.

QUESTION: We have seen that there are some bigger scams in the Ministry, particularly, the Telecom Ministry. There are a number of scams which happened in the Telecom Ministry. We have seen during Sukh Ram's time, in Ram Vilas Paswan's time and this time also we have seen in A. Raja's time. Very bigger scams are there. All the newspapers have exposed the entire scam very nicely. But, one Minister from Maharashtra is a very big hi-fi Minister in the UPA Government and his name also figured in the scam. Can the Privilege Committee take some action against that Minister and intercede in the matter?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Just now I said, we have not codified but the principle we follow is, if a Member's right to express his views in the Parliament is curtailed, to that extent his functioning as a Parliamentarian is curtailed. This is not within the purview of the Parliament. If some Minister is involved in a scam, it has nothing to do with the Privilege Committee.

QUESTION: I just want to ask the Panel, Mr. Ram specifically, have questioned the political economy of the present media. What are the ground realities and how do you think it can be tackled in proper steps, in a short run?

SHRI VINOD SHARMA: In one of the earlier seminars I attended, I was amongst the audience. Mr. N. Ram had cited the example of the Guardian that it has Scot Foundation, which makes investment in various businesses, and all the profits which are earned are ploughed into the Guardian newspaper so that it can keep its editorial freedom. Now, we already have newspapers in this country which are owned by big business groups with interest in other businesses. Unfortunately, what happens is -- there are exceptions -- in most cases, newspapers are used as influence pedalling and for reaping more benefits for other businesses rather than

enriching public opinion through no nonsense purveying of facts. That is where the problem arises. If the ownership pattern has to be debated I don't know if it is possible and whether any Government will have the political will or whether the Government would be strong enough to take on the entire newspaper lobby which in any case is very strong and which can co-opt with other people very easily in order to pursue its interest. So, it is a very difficult task.

SHRI N. RAM: May I add that you can have some self-regulatory mechanisms both for the industry and also within the media organisation. Take for example, the institution of the readers' editor. If you take that from Guardian, The Hindu imported it, and I would not dare use the word vernacular, I will play safe and say, Indian Language Newspapers, although it is a very learned explanation by way of digression that Mrinal gave us. Thank you for that. Why is there no demand for doing this? Don't you see some benefit coming out of that? At least airing of complaints, correction of mistakes and raising certain issues won't solve all the problems but these good practices based on international experiences have to be brought in through friendly coercion in the Indian media. Purely voluntarism is not going to work. You have got to demand it.

SHRIMATI MRINAL PANDEY: I would like to go back to Sabina's original question. There are two or three things. One is, the Hindi papers have high cover price. It does not entirely cover the production cost but still it is much better at getting that from the readers. To that extent cross subsidy pressures are less on Hindi. For example, if one sells a 24 page Hindi paper for Rs. 5 in Bihar which is a poor State but the sister daily sells for Rs. 1.50 which is twice as plump. Then, that also creates a kind of a market situation. If they both belong to the same house, sooner or later, pressures are going to come on the plump and thin alike because it is just one house. I often compared Hindi papers of houses which have plump English dailies to the daughter and son syndrome in the Hindu family. When the daughter

starts growing everybody from the grandmother start saying, 'she is growing like grass' and, then, they look at the son and say, 'poor thing.' They feed him with milk and butter and say, 'he is just not growing, he is looking so pale and thin'. There is a mindset which I regret is very much there is India. If you analyse you will find that most of the vernacular dailies which have done extremely well and have grown in the last few years do not have a brother. They are brother-less sisters who have then been given the milk and almonds. But wherever there is an English daily that connects to the ownership pattern, if you are selling a paper for Rs. 5, your readers are also more discriminating because unlike many of the English paper readers, the readers of a Hindi paper at least pay out of their pockets. It is not company expense account. So, they are more discriminating. I think, we need to appeal more and more to their sense of buying a good paper and we need to really go to town about which is a good paper and which is flouting against the basic ethics of a newspaper industry. I think, it is still possible to bring out a good Hindi daily and sell it on its merits.

I did that. I am proud to say when I took over the paper it was selling 4.5 lakh copies. Today, it sells 1.8 million copies. So, it is possible; maybe, somebody else would have dug in her heels and stayed on. I think, the younger generation has a right to come in and take it from there. But, it is possible also to sell in some of the poorer States, because people crave for good newspapers. It is not that your average Hindi reader is not a discriminating consumer. He is very discriminating, very demanding consumer. You see some of the letters come to us on columnists who wrote for us like Suchitha Dala, Y.S. Rangarajan, etc. You opened fora to them. They translate and place in the newspaper. People appreciate them. They want best from all Indian languages and from all over the place. They will buy your newspaper over others, because they say, हमें इसमें यह पढ़ने को मिलता है, वह पढ़ने को मिलता है। They write back to the columnists if their column does not appear. Ms. Suchitha Dalal had a letter from 85 year old man from Samastipur, Bihar, saying, बेटी सुचेता बहुत दिनों से तुम्हारा कॉलम नहीं छपा है, क्या बात है, तुम्हारी तबीयत तो ठीक है। She said that she never so touched in her life. That is the kind of readership and consumer sitting there. So, we owe it to the consumer or man to whom we are selling a newspaper for Rs. 5. He may be living almost at the level of poverty line. But, still he is buying a newspaper. He is catching a bus to Samastipur, compare the prices of newspapers and buying the best paper available. I think, there is hope, at least, for newspaper.

SHRI PRABHU DUTT: The discussion was whether we want more coverage of Parliament in media. But, I have a suggestion, you should tell the politicians that they should be better come prepared and speak better things. I don't feel that we need better coverage for them in media. You tell us one speech which should be replaced with the speech of another politician. You will not find. I have been covering the Rajya Sabha for the last one-and-a-half years. I find even senior

leaders are saying the same thing. There is repetition. There is nothing new. How can you find a new point? In one-and-a-half years, I feel frustrated. There is no new point. Even the senior leaders are doing the same thing. But, then, you are trying to find space in media! It is just not justified. My request to the Dy. Chairman is to tell his MPs to prepare better and tell something new which should be exciting for the journalist then it will be reported.

SHRI VINOD SHARMA: Now, the subjects debated in Parliament are very complicated. For example, climate change, WTO talks, etc. You mentioned about the Indo-US Nuclear Deal. Now, tell me how many MPs had read and understood that Deal. There are just one or two or three in each party. All told that there would have been a dozen Members. In many case, that did not include the floor leaders. There are some other Members who are reading and taking part in the debate. So, I think, the party system earlier was a kind of *patshala* for MPs where they were guided adequately and taught how to pick up specialization on various subjects. Only the Left Parties are doing it, to some extent, these days. No other party doing it. I think political parties which are representing in Parliament owe it to the Parliamentary System to inculcate the specialization amongst the MPs in order to make the debate robust. About the standards mentioned by our friend from the PTI, two years is too short a period for you to reach to this conclusion.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I would like to intervene. I would not fully agree with what my friend from PTI said. We are attempting to see that MPs are giving adequate inputs to speak on Parliament. We have LAARDIS. If a Member is participating in a debate, he may not have all the information with him. Then, he can go to LAARDIS, say that he would like to speak on a particular subject. The LAARDIS will provide information in a dossier and made available to the Member. Most of the Members utilize this. Sometimes, repetition is unavoidable, because emphasis has to be there. Your experience is 2 years. But, according to my

experience, as a Parliamentarian, you have to experience much more to come to that conclusion. From the speeches made by our Members, particularly in Rajya Sabha, you cannot delete even a single word if you sincerely report.

श्री अनिल चमड़िया : मैं मृणाल पांडेय जी की बात से सहमति जताते हुए, अपनी बात आगे बढ़ना चाहता हूँ। यह जो लैंग्वेज के mind set का सवाल है, यह बहुत इम्पोर्टेंट सवाल है। मुझे लगता है कि इसको गंभीरता से लेना चाहिए। जिस तरह से मीडिया आर्गनाइजेशन में mind set actively काम करता है, उसी तरह से पार्लियामेंट में भी इस mind set को पहचानने की जरूरत है। मैं पिछले कई वर्षों से पार्लियामेंट में आ रहा हूँ और मैं यह समझता हूँ कि हमारी संसद का भारतीय भाषों के साथ जिस प्रकार का गहरा रिश्ता होना चाहिए, वह गहरा होने की बजाए, वह रिश्ता खत्म हो रहा है, टूट रहा है। यह रिश्ता कैसे बने, इस पर गंभीरता से विचार करना चाहिए। मैं अपना एक सजेशन देना चाहता हूँ। मैं यह कहना चाहता हूँ कि पार्लियामेंट के भीतर अब जो हिन्दी की स्थिति दिखाई देती है, वह बहुत अच्छी नहीं है। जो हिन्दी में अनुवाद होते हैं, जो कमेटीज़ की रिपोर्ट्स आती हैं, आप उनको उठाकर देखिए। पार्टिकुलरली जो Rajya Sabha की कमेटीज़ की रिपोर्ट्स आती हैं। मैं क्वेश्चन नहीं पूछ रहा हूँ, बल्कि एक सजेशन दे रहा हूँ और मैं अपनी बात रख रहा हूँ। अगर आप कहेंगे कि केवल क्वेश्चन ही करना है, तब तो मेरे पास क्वेश्चन नहीं है। जो मेरे आब्जर्वेशन्स हैं, मैं वे रखना चाहता हूँ। मैं mind set का यह सवाल इसलिए करना चाहता हूँ, जैसे आज चेयरमैन साहब ने एड्रेस किया, पी साईनाथ ने "हिन्दू" में लिखा। अब हिन्दी पट्टी में प्रभात जोशी कितने दिनों से यह अभियान चला रहे हैं, बात कह रहे हैं, लेकिन कोई भी इसको नोटिस नहीं करता है, कोट नहीं करता है। यह तो एक छोटा सा example है कि जब भी आप कोट करते हैं, तो आप इंग्लिश के पेपर को कोट करते हैं, इंग्लिश रिपोर्टिंग के कुछ पोज़ों को कोट करते हैं। हिन्दी में क्या काम हो रहा है, इंडियन लैंग्वेजेज़ में क्या काम हो रहा है, चूंकि आपका उसके साथ कोई रिश्ता नहीं बन पाता है, आप उसको देख नहीं पाते हैं, तो आप उसको कोट भी नहीं करते। मेरा यह मानना है कि आपका जो यह mind set है, आप इसको जब तक set नहीं करेंगे, जब तक आप उससे रिश्ता नहीं जोड़ेंगे, तब तक बहुत से सवाल सोल्व नहीं हो पाएंगे। जो आप कवरेज की चिंता कर रहे हैं, सोमनाथ चटर्जी जी ने कई बार कहा कि इंडियन लैंग्वेजेज़ के पेज़ में ज्यादा कवरेज़ होता है। ऐसी

बात उनके सुनने में आई थी। मैं कहता हूँ कि इसकी स्टडी करवाई जाना चाहिए, उसका अध्ययन होना चाहिए। यदि वाकई में वहां हो रहा है, तो कैसा हो रहा है, किस तरह का हो रहा है, यही बात मैं कहना चाहता हूँ।

श्री उपसभापति : हमारे चेयरमैन साहब ने in the morning session has said that there is a need for some survey as to which newspaper, whether it be Hind or language newspaper, is reporting Parliament. This is a very good suggestion made by the hon. Chairman in his inaugural speech and that can be taken up.

श्री कुमार राकेश : सर, मेरा एक छोटा सा सवाल डिप्टी चेयरमैन साहब से है। अभी दो बातें सामने आई हैं। अभी इन्होंने भारतीय भाषा की बात कही है, हिन्दी के साथ यह बात चिंताजनक बात तो है ही। अभी विनोद जी ने भी हमारे किसी साथी को कहा कि आप डेढ़ साल से पार्लियामेंट को कवर कर रहे हैं, ठीक से देखिए। रहमान साहब ने भी कहा है कि वे पिछले 16 साल से पार्लियामेंट की स्थिति को देख रहे हैं। मैं पिछले 18 वर्षों से पार्लियामेंट को देख रहा हूँ और मैंने दोनों हाउस, राज्य सभा और लोक सभा कवर किए हैं। यदि 18 वर्षों की कम्पेरेटिव स्टडी देखी जाए, तो भाषण का स्तर भी गिरा है और अध्ययन का स्तर भी गिरा है। इसमें पहली बात तो यह है कि आपने लाइब्रेरी की बात कही है, आप लोक सभा सचिवालय या राज्य सभा सचिवालय का सर्वे उठाकर देख लीजिए, पिछले पांच वर्षों में कितने मेम्बर्स लाइब्रेरी की तरफ गए हैं। आपको यह जानकर आश्चर्य होगा, चूंकि मैंने कुछ सर्वे किए हैं.....। मुश्किल से चार-पांच का भी रेशो नहीं है। साल में पचास मेम्बर्स ने भी लायब्रेरी की तरफ रुख नहीं किया है। यह मैं आपके यहीं का डाटा दे रहा हूँ। मेरा सवाल इन सवालों को जोड़ते हुए यह है कि पिछले दस-पंद्रह वर्षों में ट्रेंड देखा गया है in the Parliament. Different types of businessmen are coming to the Rajya Sabha from different political parties. There should be some thinking on it in the media as well as in the Parliament. There should be some parameters whether they should come in the Upper House or not.

श्री विनोद शर्मा : कुमार राकेश जी, आप जरा देर से आए, लेकिन यह बात सच है कि you don't have the hang of the entire discussion. We have admitted the falling standards in journalism and also in the parliamentary practices amongst

parliamentarians. But you are right that when the Parliament was debating the 'office of profit' issue, it failed to take notice of the growing influence of business lobbies in the Upper House. The issue to be discussed today is not the office of profit because Government, in a free-market economy, is not a major player any more. It is not the biggest employer; it is not the biggest advertiser; it is not the biggest investor. But, I think, they should have debated that. And, that is where Parliament is not doing a job which is wholesome that takes into account the ground realities of the time. But may I put you a question? Would your newspaper publish, for instance, a report that you have honestly written about certain lobbying being done by a Member of Parliament, who owns a company that gives you advertisement worth Rs. 5 crores every year? Would you be able to publish it? That is the hang of the debate here that how to get around this challenge, how to keep your newspapers economically viable and, at the same time, honest and objective.

श्री उपसभापति : आपकी इन्फॉर्मेशन के लिए अभी-अभी हमारे सेक्रेट्री साहब ने कहा कि , barring a few Members, हमारा जो एल.आर.डी.एस. का मैम्बर्स का जो व्यूज होता है that runs into thousands. All the Members of Parliament may not be going and sitting in the library, we are encouraging Members to use internet. Even in our lobbies, we have given *wifi* system. In addition to that, the LRDS runs into thousands, which is what my Secretariat has informed.

श्री कुमार राकेश : विनोद जी ने हमारे मीडिया की तरफ से जवाब दे दिया है, मैं रहमान खान जी से जानना चाह रहा था, हमारा जो सवाल था about 'businessmen in Rajya Sabha and politics'.

SHRI VIJAY NAIK: Now, we are on the close of the session. I would like to thank all the panellists sitting on the stage, the Deputy Chairman, the Secretary-General, the Secretary and all of you who have really spared time to be here. I hope the

same presence tomorrow also. I thank you all for attending this workshop. Now, I would like to request the Secretary-General to present mementos to the panellists.

(The Workshop then adjourned for the day)