



19 April 2021
New Delhi

To
Mr Uddhav Thackeray,
Honourable Chief Minister of Maharashtra,
Mantralaya, Mumbai
Maharashtra.

Subject: Vaccinations for Journalists/Media Persons, and Status as 'Frontline Warriors'

Respected Sir,

It has been over one year since COVID-19 has hit the headlines across India and the world, claiming thousands of lives and affecting every human being on this Earth. Journalists and Media Persons who bring to us these headlines are highly vulnerable and are exposed to the same dangers posed by the pandemic.

We bring to your notice the grim facts of deaths of journalists who are on the field covering COVID-19. India has the highest fatalities among journalists dying due to COVID-19 across Asia and the second highest across the world. The latest tragedy was the death of veteran journalists – Kapil Datta, who passed away earlier this month and, Vinay Kumar Srivastava, who passed away yesterday because treatment was unavailable.

Rate The Debate (RTD), an initiative of the Institute of Perception Studies, New Delhi, has been at the forefront of reforms in the media, specifically the conduct of news debates, and television anchors. In these times of extreme distress, *Rate The Debate* demands that ***all Media Persons should be vaccinated immediately*** across the country.

Following are the main demands of Rate The Debate:

1. All Journalists and Media Persons must be vaccinated;
2. Journalists and Media Persons must be considered as 'Frontline Warriors';
3. Definition of 'Journalists and Media Persons' must include editorial staff, photographers, videographers, cameramen, technicians, technical staff and all assistants, etc;
4. No age-limit restriction for vaccination for Media Persons as Frontline Warriors;
5. Media organisations to produce mandatory certificates of vaccination of employees;

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6. Vaccination of all Freelance Journalists, Digital Journalists, Columnists and Part- Time Media Persons;
7. Press Clubs in every state should be used as COVID-19 Care Centres;
8. Families of Journalists and Media Persons who have lost their lives should be offered compensation.

To know is to conquer.

News is critical to win the battle against COVID-19. *Rate The Debate* believes that these measures will save lives, not just of Media Persons but also of every citizen in India. The hands that hold the mikes, cameras, pens or notebooks, are recording history. They too must support their families and shoulder responsibilities back home. Let us acknowledge the services of journalists from small and big cities, rural or urban areas – who make us care for fellow citizens and take action.

Save Media, Save India.

In anticipation of a swift response to this critical request.

Sincerely,

Kota Neelima

Dr. Kota Neelima

Founder, *Rate The Debate*

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CC:

1. Honourable Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India
2. Honourable Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India
3. Press Council of India, New Delhi
4. News Broadcasters Association, New Delhi