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Press Statement

Dt: 24.04.2024

New Delhi: We have noticed with concern reports about Australian journalist Avani Dias being compelled to leave India as she was denied extension of her visa by the government.

She was the South Asian Bureau Chief of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). She left India on April 19, the first day of polling in the ongoing multi-phase Lok Sabha elections. She claimed that she was not allowed to cover elections.

Foreign correspondents, based in India, have also voiced their concern over circumstances under which ABC Bureau Chief was forced to leave India.

We demand that the government should come clear on this issue and state the reasons behind denial of visa extension to her.

Press Club of India feels that such actions at the time of general elections, the world's largest democratic exercise, cast aspersions on the democratic traditions of our country. It may be noted that the government itself has invited international observers from many countries to witness the general elections. Foreign journalists also discharge their duties of carrying news and information to all corners of the world. Any uncalled for curbs on this only sullies our country's image on international platforms and puts a blot on the working of free press in India, described by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as "mother of democracies."

We would also like to recall the circumstances under which French journalist

Vanessa Dournac, who had been the longest serving foreign correspondent in India, announced her departure from India on February 16 this year, after the Indian government issued a revocation of her Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) card for alleged concerns over her reporting.

ENDS

Sd/-

Gautam Lahiri

(President, Press Club of India)

Neeraj Thakur

(Secretary General, Press Club of India)