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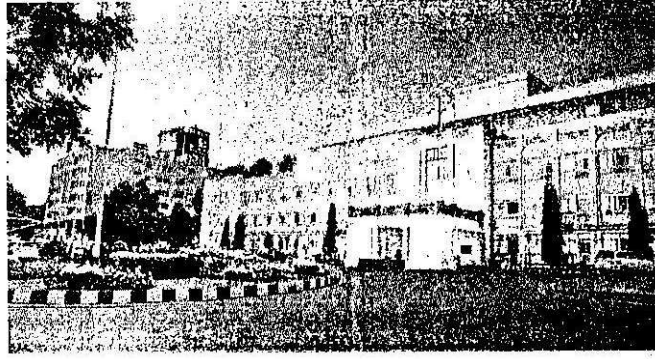
After Soudha, Speaker restricts media at LH

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
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AFTER restricting the media from covering the ongoing session at Vidhana Soudha, Speaker Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri has put more curbs on the Fourth Estate. Now, he has curbed the media from entering the Legislators Home, a move that has been slammed by opposition leaders.

The Legislators Home, known as LH, is located right next to Vidhana Soudha. It has five buildings and around 600 rooms, along with a food court and other facilities.

On Friday, a letter was sent to the LH police inspector from the Karnataka Legislative Assembly secretary, stating that legislators should be given privacy post their working hours. The letter reads that if the media wants to interact with MLAs, they must do it outside the gate, and



Legislators Home next to Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru | NAGARAJA GADEKAL

therefore, journalists from print and electronic media are not allowed inside the LH.

Opposition leaders came down hard on the Speaker's decision. Former minister and senior MLC Basavaraj Horatti told TNIE that though there are more than 600 rooms for legislators, hardly 10 to 15 MLAs from outside Bengaluru stay there. Most

rooms are occupied by MLAs' personal assistants, gunmen and outsiders. "Because these non-legislators are staying at LH, water and electricity bills are running high. Legislators have taken two rooms each, though they don't stay there. The rooms are used by others. When this is the case, what is wrong in the media coming inside, es-

pecially for work," he asked.

Former Speaker K B Kolivad said, "In a democracy, why should we hide these things? First it was Vidhana Soudha, now LH. Why only restrict the media? What about others who are misusing it? I am going to talk to our party leaders and urge them to bring this up during the session."

Senior Congress leader Ramalinga Reddy also slammed the move. "If a particular media person has done something wrong, let them take action against him or her. Why ban the entire media," he asked.

Some leaders, however, welcomed the move. Former Chairman of the Legislative Council D H Shankarmurthy said, "It's a home for leaders. a lodging area, so media should not be allowed," he said, adding that non-MLAs residing there should be asked to vacate.