

# ‘Journalists need protection against sedition charges’

## SC quashes case against Vinod Dua

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The Supreme Court on Thursday quashed a sedition case registered against senior journalist and Padma Shri awardee Vinod Dua for his critical remarks against the Prime Minister and the Union government in a YouTube telecast, underscoring its 59-year-old verdict that “strong words” of disapproval about the ruling regime did not amount to sedition.

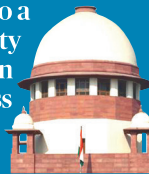
A Bench, led by Justice U.U. Lalit, upheld the right of every journalist to criticise, even brutally, the measures of the government with a view to improving or altering them through legal means. The free speech of a journalist should be protected from charges of sedition.

The time is long past when the mere criticism of governments was sufficient to constitute sedition. The right to utter honest and reasonable criticism is a source of strength to a community rather than a weakness, the judgment said.

It upheld the spirit and intent of the 1962 Kedar Nath Singh verdict, which said, “Commenting in strong terms upon the measures or acts of government, or its agencies, so as to ame-

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liorate the condition of the people or to secure the cancellation or alteration of those acts or measures by lawful means, that is to say, without exciting those feelings of enmity and disloyalty which imply excitement to public disorder or the use of violence is not sedition”.

Justice Lalit declared, “Every journalist is entitled to protection under the Kedar Nath Singh judgment.”

The 1962 judgment said Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (sedition) was intended only to punish subversion of a lawfully established government through violent means.

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