

# '97 a successful year for PTV despite tough competition

By **Arsian Rafiq Bhatti**

DESPITE tough competition with the private and satellite channels, 1997 was a successful year for the PTV as a large number of its drama serials did an excellent business.

Most of the programmes aired by the PTV and private channels including dramas, music programmes, quiz competitions, etc. were related to Pakistan movement as 1997 was being celebrated as the Golden Jubilee year of the country's independence.

Despite receiving good response, the production standard of the programmes was not up to the mark as modern production and direction techniques were not used and that was why the PTV had failed to compete the satellite channels in this field.

The most notable thing of the last year was that a large number of PTV artistes drifted towards direction following the foot-steps of Abid Ali and Talat Hussain, who were directing different programmes for the PTV and private channels.

During the year, Abid Ali's serial 'Pinjra', Zulkarnain Haider's 'Aag', Ali Ijaz' 'Roog' and Abdullah Qudwai's serial 'Panchwan Mausam' were aired by the PTV. All these serials were liked by the viewers and also 'Panchwan Mausam' did a record business.

TV artistes Rubina Ashraf, Saba Hameed, Shakeela Qureshi, Jeevan

Sultan, Tauqeer Nasir and others also directed several plays, mini serials and serials. Famous playwright Asghar Nadeem Syed and seasoned artiste Sohail Asghar has also hinted at directing serials, whereas writer Dr Tariq Aziz has already been directing a play produced by TV artiste Muhammad Zubair.

With the entry of these artistes-turned-directors, a visible change had been seen as new ideas and talent was introduced by them. It is hoped that more television artiste would opt for the field in 1998.

In 1997, Karachi Centre once again took lead in producing successful serial, namely 'Jinnah Sey Quaid Tak', 'Haye Jeedi', 'Saach', 'Ajaib Khana' and 'Angaray'. Besides these 'Wafa Key Peekar' and 'Nisf Saadi Ka Kisa' were also among the successful serials of the Centre.

Last year, the Lahore Centre had produced almost 60 per cent of the total programmes aired by the PTV. Some famous plays like 'Permeeshwar Singh', 'Ayia Kathia', 'Muharram Khan Lak', 'Kora Khan', 'Master Barkat Wazirabadi', 'Parcham', 'Jallianwala Bagh', 'Aapna Aasman', 'Girti Hui Deewar' and 'Paani', were the popular dramas produced by the Lahore Centre. In the serials 'Nisf Saadi Ka Kisa' and 'Wafa Key Peekar' were worth mentioning.

The Lahore Centre also aired a special play 'Naya Qanoon' based on Saadat Hassan Manto's short story

and produced by PTV's Script Controller Sarmad Sehbahi and a telefilm on Quaid-e-Azam written by Ashfaq Ahmed and produced by PTV Controller Bakhtiar Ahmed was also telecast by the Centre on December 25.

'Ranjish' was the most successful play of Lahore Centre which was produced by Saleem Tahir, whereas mini-drama serial 'Yeh Kahani Nahin Hay' by senior producer Yawar Hayat and written by Munno Bhai was also appreciated by the viewers.

Viewers also liked drama serial 'Rait' of Islamabad Centre written by Amar Jalil and produced by Ghazanfar Bokhari.

Programme about the activities of the film industry 'Filmaria '97' written by Sajjad Haider and produced by Syed Shakir Uzair was also popular among the viewers.

The only serial from Quetta Centre which was appreciated by the viewers was 'Wapsi' which was written by Shakil Adnan and produced by Dost Muhammad Kashgori.

In music programmes, the PTV Lahore Centre aired 'Teeray Naam', 'Goonj', 'Sur Tasweer', 'Naghma Gar' and 'Music Room' while Karachi Centre aired 'Komal Teewar'. As far as the music programmes are concerned the PTV needs a lot for improvement.

The Lahore Centre added another feather to its cap when it started the stage show 'Show Jawaan' for the youth. Tariq Aziz Show which was

banned in 1996 by the then PTV managing director Ra'ana Sheikh was re-launched in 1997.

'Ameer Moawia', a drama serial for children, was also aired by the Lahore Centre, which was the most popular serial after 'Ainak Wala Jin' written by A Hameed. Some people were of the view that the serial 'Ainak Wala Jin' should be restarted due to its popularity amongst the children.

A private channel also aired some of the successful drama serials in 1997. The most famous among those were: 'Aag', 'Panjwan Mausam', 'Sammandar Hay Darmian', 'Kalaash', 'Izlam', 'Roog' and 'Kala Dayra'. Besides these serials the two-hour cartoon network was also very popular among children.

The successful playwrights of 1997 were Asghar Nadeem Syed and Mustansar Hussain Tarar. Asghar Nadeem's two plays 'Sammandar Hay Darmian' and 'Sammandar Jaag Raha Hay' gained popularity. 'Sammandar Jaag Raha Hay' was produced by Pakistan Navy and is still going on air on PTV.

Mustansar Hussain Tarar's drama serial 'Shepar' for Pakistan Air Force was also highly appreciated by the viewers. Beside this his drama serial 'Kalaash' also did a good business.

In 1997, Munno Bhai and Ashfaq Ahmed wrote for PTV after a long period. Ashfaq Ahmed penned down a special drama in connection with

'Iqbal Day' which was produced by Nusrat Thakur.

Abid Ali's 'Pinjra' which was written by Asif Ali Poota — again took the lead in introducing new faces.

In 1997, the PTV for the first time in its history allocated one hour (10pm to 11pm) for private production. During the hour some of the good serials were aired. The most famous among them was 'Anhoni' in which beside Humayun Saeed, Mahnoor Balooch, Shakeel and several new faces were also introduced.

The viewers also appreciated the performance of Nauman Ijaz, Tauqeer Nasir, Mehmood Aslam, Ayub Khoso, Mishi Khan, Marina Khan, Saba Hameed, Abid Ali, Firdous Jamal, Muhammad Qavi Khan, Shafi Muhammad, Zehra Farooq, Sohail Asghar, Humayun Saeed, Shabbir Jan, Hassam Qazi, Huma Mir, Jehangir Jani, Behroz Sabzwari, Sher-yar Jehangir, Sajida Syed, Qaiser Khan, Fazila Qazi, Ghulam Chandio, Laila Zubairi, Nabeel, Nayyar Ijaz, Rustam, Rasheed Naz and Javed Babar. The PTV producers who received appreciation are: Saleem Tahir, Ayub Khawar, Yawar Hayat, Muhammad Azeem, Tariq Jameel, Farrukh Bashir, Hafeez Tahir, Shaukat Zainul Abideen, Qasim Jalali, Dost Muhammad Kashgori, Iqbal Ansari, Kh Najamul Hassan, Syed Mohsin Ali, Muhammad Baksh Sami-jho, Manzoor Qureshi, Ghazanfar Bokhari and Sved Shakir Uzair.

# Smuggling the press

F.P. 14/2  
M.A. —

## Ahmed Shah

government which last year with a massive celebration its first Feb 17th. Having worthy fellow to the getting rid of Chief Ali Shah, Nawaz a happy man. After overpowering the Parliament and judiciary turned his batteries is the only hurdle left establishing an auto-

on Monday last an was reached between of Information and papers regarding a Code of Ethics for ons, news agencies il. On the very face sed law smacks of ions on part of the The proposed law t of the government g sway over all the cluding Legislative, ss.

isages the formation bers Press Council ck the violation of by the newspapers and can even recom- n or the cancellation of a newspaper. A of the proposed law ts that if it is imple- the papers having an plicy will either to y or to face closure. ssuming power the st of all brought the onal Amendment esidential powers of onal Assembly were ough the 14th Amendment the free- pressions of the s was curtailed and

Presidency and the Parliament the Nawaz family turned towards the judiciary — the third organ of a democratic state — as the then chief justice was in no way in a mood to allow passage of such pieces of legislations which were in conflict with the basic rights of an individual as enshrined in the Constitution. With the help of some members of superior judiciary the Nawaz government overcame the judicial hurdle. Now it's the turn of the press.

The meeting on Monday last was presided over by Federal Minister for Information, Mushahid Hussain and attended by delegations of All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) and Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE). The meeting was in continuation of the agreement arrived at on Aug 23 last year between both the parties. It was decided in principle to establish the controversial press council, completely overlooking Article 19 of the Constitution which guarantees freedom of expression and press.

While the draconian law of Press and Publication Ordinance, 1963 of military dictator Ayub Khan has still been haunting minds of independent journalists the present government came up with the novel idea of the press council for curbing independence of the press. The electronic media is already under the control of the present government and playing important role in concealing facts from general public. Through the press council the print media will be completely subjugated by the government, making it difficult for the newspapers to pursue its policy independent of government influence.

After the meeting an impression was created as if the representatives of the journalist community have agreed upon formation of the Press Council. Interestingly, till now the government has only taken into confidence the owners of newspapers,

Federal Union of Journalists (FUJ) and All Pakistan Newspaper Employees Confederation (APNEC) — the two apex bodies of journalists and newspapers employees across the country — were completely ignored due to the apprehensions that it will never support such an atrocious law.

Under the proposed code of ethics for press, publications, news agencies and Press Council Act a code of ethics has been given which has to be followed by the newspapers and news agencies. Section 3 of the law deals with code of ethics. In this section such a vague terms have been used which makes it easy for

**It will be appropriate that the government instead of imposing a draconian law over the press should forthwith take into confidence the chosen representatives of the journalists community so as to remove existing loopholes from the proposed law and Press Council.**

the government to suspend declaration of a paper on any pretext.

The most controversial provisions in section 3 are (vi) and (vii) which are aimed at completely plunging independence of press. Section 3(vi) states, "the Press shall refrain from publishing anything likely to bring into hatred or contempt any friendly government/ the head of any friendly state/ government or report in a manner that may jeopardize Pakistan's foreign relations or national security interests."

ing anything likely to undermine the image, role, morale or loyalty and allegiance of the defence forces or the civil armed forces."

Looking at section 3(vi) question arises as to who will to prepare of friendly states against which ries shall not be published. Since inception of Pakistan every successive govt has considered the United States of America (USA) as a friendly state. If this section is implemented than even the scandals of Clinton including that of Lewinsky could not be published here. It will be an interesting situation as the scandal will hit Pakistan in USA whereas the readers of Pakistan would be deprived of

The same section of law will result in non publication of conferences of most of the political parties as they always disclose USA. Similarly the highness of the US government need not be criticised.

Till recent past the members were considered sacred instants against which criticism was discouraged. But in this age of enlightenment now an ordinary person has been questioning the defence expenditure along with alleged activities received in various military departments. The presence of this section will be appropriate to newspapers have to say good-bye to their defence correspondents.

Furthermore, under section 3(i)(c), the allegations, commonly known to be false and malicious against public figures have been avoided in any form of publication such as news items, articles, editorials, features, cartoons, photographs and advertisements. Sub-section 3(vii) directs the avoidance of any publication which arise from a draconian law, parochialism, provincialism or class hatred.

If these two sub sections are interpreted in its broader sense than the existing loopholes

Bhutto can not be the nationalist party cornered and autonomy will be

proposed law envisaged members council will have a retired or serving Supreme Court or chairman. He will be the government in the Chief Justice. Two members shall be the government; the government; working journalist professional standing shall be a prominent remaining two members by the APNS

imposition of the court of the government past track record government it is und government its own persons on the two senior journalist and prominent members CPNE always look against which criticism was discouraged. These two organizations and editors have been questioning the defence expenditure along with alleged activities received in various military departments. The presence of this section will be appropriate to newspapers have to say good-bye to their defence correspondents.

Furthermore, under section 3(i)(c), the allegations, commonly known to be false and malicious against public figures have been avoided in any form of publication such as news items, articles, editorials, features, cartoons, photographs and advertisements. Sub-section 3(vii) directs the avoidance of any publication which arise from a draconian law, parochialism, provincialism or class hatred.

# Electronic media freedom day

News  
14/2

Mass communication

## Javed Jabbar

Three initiatives taken in recent months are converging today. First, a meeting of the founder members of Citizens' Media Commission is being held in Islamabad. Second is the decision by the commission to observe the day (February 14) as Electronic Media Freedom Day. Third, the holding of a seminar in the capital city to explore the linkage between democratic governance and freedom of electronic media.

The Citizens' Media Commission was established in the last week of December 1997 by a group of private citizens. Its main objective is to serve as an independent forum to conduct analysis of media-related laws, policies and issues and to monitor media content from the public interest viewpoint.

In view of the immense impact of mass media and their important role in information, education and entertainment, many citizens are of the opinion that there is need for a body which is separate from both media and government viewpoints to serve as an objective, independent monitor.

Exactly one year ago today, on February 14, 1997, the caretaker government promulgated the Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Ordinance 1997 (EMRA) which, for the first time in the 50-year history of Pakistan, acknowledged two fundamental principles: one, that the airwaves of the country are a national, public asset and not a government monopoly and, two, that any interested, eligible private citizen or organisations have an equal right to operate their own radio and TV channels, just as private citizens have a right to publish and edit their own newspapers and maga-

zines. This freedom of expression over several decades and in some respects helped many to achieve excellence. Without these two media, hundreds of gifted individuals would not have had the chance to enhance their potential and achieve distinction. On a more functional level, the two media have provided employment opportunities to thousands of people.

It is true that as official electronic media the mandate of the electronic media has been to project as far as possible a 'positive' image of the government of the day and of conditions in general. But the radio and TV have, in a curious and perverse way, also rendered some service by either ignoring out-

standing or by providing a proportional representation in the elected legislatures. Now, they are being promised the benefit of reserved seats through future constitutional amendments (by which the party holding a large majority will be able to add only those women who are willing to be compliant and conformist members of the ruling party). There is a longstanding peculiar electoral agreement in many parts of NWFP and Balochistan: the candidates in elections at all levels observe a prior arrangement that no woman voter on behalf of any candidate will exercise her right to vote. The governance process in Pakistan, both in its electoral and its executive facets, is dis-

---

**By refraining from identifying the ethnic or sectarian character of an attack by one group against another, the official media may have prevented the spread of animosity into areas where such attacks had not yet occurred. They have generally also refrained from projecting news about the scandalous private life of public figures**

---

right or downplaying events and trends which are divisive, violent and frivolous in nature, and whose projection in the news may well have sparked damaging repercussions on a larger scale.

For example, by refraining from identifying the ethnic or sectarian character of an attack by one group against another, the official media may have prevented the spread of animosity into areas where such attacks had not yet occurred. They have generally also refrained from projecting news about the scandalous private life of public figures which is standard fare for tabloid print journalism. In a country

which is ethnically diverse and discriminatory and repressive.

To stress democratic governance is to also call for enforcing the equality of civic and political rights that accrue to both male and female citizens of Pakistan. The forums which represent the people's interest in media should be strengthened through active participation of citizens, professional associations, philanthropists, local and overseas Pakistanis and other sections of the society. This process will shape a public interest perspective on a continuous basis to secure democratic governance and to achieve effective and socially responsible freedom of electronic media in Pakistan.