

# Future journalism: problems and prospects

The Muslim 20-5-85

**Ala-ud-Din Butt**

**T**HE CHANGING social scene and advancing technology have alerted all associated with the field of journalism. One of the biggest challenges to journalism is new communication technology. With the mergers in the press and the wiring of the world, television has become more powerful which has brought a revolution in the news media. The news media in the modern world is influenced by TV journalism and the entertainment world. It has a lowering effect on quality of news coverage. The use of computers, cellular and portable satellite telephones, digital audio, and fibre optic and satellite transmission have replaced the old mechanism and given rise to sensation rather than substance. It has brought a shift in general and special interests of the people round the globe. The reporting of sensational events and entertaining programmes are transmitted as news.

The coverage of early television news was undertaken by a team of correspondents, cameramen to be followed by shipment of its film and sound tape to intended place for processing and transmission. But now CNN uses microwave link between remote and far flung areas for the purpose of broadcasting. The mediamen in developed countries are planning to use a small satellite transmitting dish — as small as a briefcase — to assist themselves in journalistic operations, says a journalist based at Washington. They have also undertaken to embark upon the use of digital audio technology (DAT) in broadcast journalism in the form of laptop computer. By feeding or recording a specific programme the laptop, interalia, will be able to carrying and editing sound and script.

The elements of sensation and emotions are of interest to human beings, and nerve-centre of human attention and absorption. Perhaps its sensitivity, intensity and exploiting nature has been intensely felt by the mediamen. That is why we see an enormous rise in sensationalism in reporting. Similarly, with the rise in mundane problems, there is a huge rise in entertainment-as-news. This policy of media has gained wide popularity for newspapers,

al problems like environmental degradation, nuclear proliferation, international trade imbalance, ethnic conflicts etc. They are not only influencing nations the world over but stumbling individualism too and posing new challenges to journalism. In view of rising challenges, there is a greater need for development of pluralistic journalism. Taking the task at two levels — international and local/regional — journalists may tend to resolve them. Using means or technology already available, journalists can exchange information globally and enlighten the world more effectively. The second level of challenges to journalism encompasses local/regional coverage saving national journalists units from the shadow of transnational media. Now we will discuss each level of problem and its possible solution one by one.

**T**HE INTERNATIONAL problems posing challenges to journalism are not only international issues but regional as well at the same time and as such, require to be combated through integrated means. The efforts are to be integrated at international as well as regional level. For this purpose the international community is to pool its resources and resolve the problems together. The need is to deploy the best talents from wherever they exist, to where they are badly needed. As such the developed countries have to assume international responsibility for they are rich in potentials and resources. Being developed industrial states they have to accept international liability and compensate the remaining world, by improving the lot and expertise of journalists, for the harm done to the human environment — the vast and significant field in which journalists have to play their cardinal role. They have to provide incentives to the developing countries for international cooperation and training in the field of journalism. Opportunities are to be provided to professional journalists belonging to these states for specialised training in respective areas of their interests particularly, human environment enabling them to enlighten, educate, guide and inform the world more effectively. It is only free and truthful information that can ensure political and economic liberty. If democra-

war against hunger, fear of unemployment and insufficiency, for they sap the personality of man. And that without economic liberty freedom of opinion — one of the essentials of political liberty — becomes meaningless and illusory. Journalists have to cultivate national economic culture for sustainable development based upon international realities.

In order to keep pace with the fast moving journalistic world, the indigenous mediamen and business tycoons have to learn much more from the changes and trends in international media.

More than anything else which undermines stability of indigenous print media, is its internal division or camps; partiality or partisanship each projecting its favourite brand of politics thereby losing credibility, objectivity, impartiality and fairness. This function, consequently, not only hinders socio-political, economic and human development but also generates societal conflicts which destroy the very fibre of the society. Journalists with falling professional standards neither can accept international challenges nor can save national journalistic units from transboundary media encroachment, for the international journalistic institutions train their students in a manner of unbiased and fairness inculcating zeal for community service. Here the print students are required to work with camera and produce television reports. They are prepared to assume all journalistic roles — reporter, editor, columnist — and to become 'multilingual', which means speaking television language, computer language etc.

**N**O GOVERNMENT however democratic can preserve press freedom if the press itself does not have recourse to it. The best safeguard to freedom is the spirit of mediamen to save it and their love for it. No political, juridical or constitutional devices can make the press free unless it does not want to remain free itself. Journalists should not only love freedom but be ever ready to resist and crush all attempts to control it. Freedom lies in their hearts; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it. Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom.

popularity for newspapers, magazines, radio and television among the masses. It entails the policy of persuasion and exerts indirect influence and imparts information incidentally. It is invested with the latent feature of directing the feelings and thinking of the people towards a specified point of view. It conditions the audience and the readers in a subtle manner and puts them between the devil and the deep sea; whether they seek quality and substance or entertainment and sensationalism.

The use of advanced technology in communication has removed all the practical barriers in the way of free flow of information. But the industrial development and technical progress have also led to a rise to complex international

cy means a government guided by public opinion, the opinion of the people must be enlightened opinion.

The second level or local/regional coverage envisages prevention of diffusion of trans-boundary media, casting shadows of disruption over national journalistic units. The journalistic instruments of regional coverage are required to be fortified and protected from external encroachment or interference. It enhances the role of qualified journalism all the more. The software journalism schools; not hardware schools, specifically focus upon 'content' and upon 'core values' to create honest and able journalists. So it becomes the responsibility of the journalists to wage

Moreover, there is no such black law as PPO or RPPO (Registration of Printing Press and Publication Ordinance) which hampers freedom of press or development activities. The local press is habitually ignoring agriculture, forestry, industry, irrigation, energy, health etc devoting to it only 6 per cent of the total editorial space. It has miserably failed to create journalistic culture of development activities. It has resorted to short term policies to promote pictorial, sports, style, fashion, film and TV culture journalism for its business ends. The 'gatekeepers' are predominantly obsessed with politics, devoting 88 per cent of all headlines space to both international events and political news.