

Information technology: needs to rewind the course of events

Re Muslim Mass communication 19-6-97

Col Ghulam Sarwar (Retd)

A CENTURY or so is a very short span of time when viewed in the context of the epochs that contribute towards evolving social norms. Not surprisingly until recently the concept of the freedom of expression virtually meant freedom of the press.

Then came radio which was followed by television and now global media network is at our doorsteps which may aptly be called information technology. This information technology comfortably aligns and adjusts itself with the media that enjoys the air of freedom. No one challenges its bona fides and its antecedents and no one bothers about its intensity, effectiveness, swiftness, as well as, propensity, intimacy, capacity and vastness of its dimensions.

It is now taken for granted that the new incarnation of the media would behave with responsibility as the press did in the past. It is expected to be sincerely responsive to the needs of the society whose leadership and guidance is urgently called for.

It is, however, a matter of concern that the information technology, contrary to the traditional media, is not reaching the masses according to their choice. As such, it may be termed as non-media. It is, however, all pervading, overwhelming and invading from all sides. It has, in fact, influenced all segments of the society. It is knocking out every barrier and is seen busy

making inroads everywhere. It is now no longer possible to check its onward march. We feel that now it is high time for protagonists of the freedom of expression to ponder if the devil of the non-media which has encroached upon the

individual, guaranteed by all constitutions and enshrined in all ethical codes and accepted as a norm of civilised behaviour.

WITH reference to conditions now operative in the Muslim World, we see that most countries in the Muslim World have yet

We feel that now it is high time for protagonists of the freedom of expression to ponder if the devil of the non-media which has encroached upon the privacy of the individual, could be confined within its proper limits or let it go to any extreme. Now is the time to redefine 'media' and to distinguish it from the 'non-media'. The vested interests successfully made the world believe that the technology was media and that it was privileged to enjoy all freedom even at the cost of freedom of the individual, guaranteed by all constitutions and enshrined in all ethical codes and accepted as a norm of civilised behaviour.

privacy of the individual, could be confined within its proper limits or let it go to any extreme. Now is the time to redefine 'media' and to distinguish it from the 'non-media'. The vested interests successfully made the world believe that the technology was media and that it was privileged to enjoy all freedom even at the cost of freedom of the in-

to reconcile with the freedom of the press as defined and generally agreed to in principle. As such, they are obviously perturbed over and scared of the emerging phenomenon. There are many other societies governed under various system where the press is not accorded all-out freedom. But they are not losing their nerves over the media explo-

sion or the invasion of the media technology. Muslim societies have been made to believe that there is some sort of offensive against their culture, their cherished values and all that they stand and strive for. This assumption is obviously horrifying.

Peeping into the past, we see that whenever, the British colonisers captured power and established colonies, they introduced the English language. It was followed by the print media and later, by other means of communication, such as radio and telephone. Added to that were faster means of transportation such as motors, railways and aeroplanes. It was all technology of various sorts. In the Indo-Pak subcontinent, English language and the technology could do little harm to the causes dear to the inhabitants. Muslims, too, were safe. On their part, they provided useful links to bring the Indian people of diverse languages, religions and cultures closer and to export their ideas and aspirations to the intelligent-sia overseas.

Now, every person — sane and peace loving — is worried about the unlimited expansion of the irresponsible and soulless media technology. Rulers and administrators too are disturbed by this capacity to awaken the masses without leading them into the right direction. In view of this, the Muslim World should make concerted efforts to rewind the course of events. Failing this, it will tell badly upon the moral and cultural aspects of our society.