On road to press freedom

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derstandable that the draconian press laws, inherited from the colonial rulers, continued to be operative until very recently. This situation made the press to mount a united struggle for the abolition of arbitrary press laws and regualtions and contribute to the ushering in of a democratic order in the country.

The press now functions in a climate of far more independence and openness and does not look for any patronage from any guarters to safeguard its liberty whose sustenance is guaranteed by its own will and self-assurance.

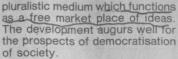
The present democratisation initiated in 1985 has witnessed a robust orientation in the press which is visible in all three major language sectors. We have now a moderately developed English press catering to the business and political cities. Karachi with three morning dailies, Dawn, The News,

Business Recorder and a number of eveningers alongwith a large periodical press continues to be the centre of English journalism in the country. Lahore and Rawalpindi-Islamabad have The Muslim, The Pakistan Times, The Nation, The News, The Frontier Post and the Pakistan Observer, Peshawar with Frontier Post and Quetta with the Balochistan Times have also joined the national grid of English journalism.

Urdu press, in addition to the established dailies like Jang and Nawa-i-Wagt which publish from four major cities has many new comers with promise to become influential organs of public opinion. Urdu press undoubtedly is the

lished dailies, Ibrat and Hilal-e-Pakistan we now have dailies Awami Awaaz, Jaago and Kaavish also taking part in the projection and enlightenment of Sindhi readers.

Along with circulation and physical improvement. Pakistani newspapers have also shown growing diversity and maturity in their content. The present 16 to 20 pages daily marks a real change from a 4 to 6 page daily in the early years of Pakistan's existence. The advertisement columns speak of the progress in diverse fields of business and industry Pakistan has been able to achieve. In addition to the consumer goods and service of various kinds we also have advertisements of capital goods



Besides political instability and authoritarianism, backwardness in education has been a real bane of the Pakistan society. Massive illiteracy has not only obstructed the inculcation of democratic norms and liberal ideas in the society, it also has been a major impediment in the expansion of newspaper circulation.

For a country of 130 million souls daily newspaper circulation of less than two million is a shame. There is of course arowing realisation that illiteracy has to be conquered through a revolutionary programme otherwise Pakistan will find itself among the very backward nations of the world.

As remarked above, the Pakistani press sure of its own energy and

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barometer of national public opinion and claims more than eighty per cent of national daily circulation.

assumed the status of major publishing centres of Sindhi dailies and iournals. In addition to the estab-

and joint ventures with multinationals appearing side-by-side.

Another distinctive feature of the Pakistani press is the variety of opinions and perceptions on nanotable development of the tional and international issues ex-A recent era has been the pressed not only in the editorial expansion of Sindhi press both in columns of the newspapers but Karachi and Hyderabad which have also in the writings of regular columists, special writers and general contributors. The press thus presents the attributes of a

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with the threat to submerge naional media system requires the Pakistan government to give a careful thought to the development of national press because it is not the government controlled electronic media of radio and television but the private enterprise of national press which promises to play decisive role in the preservation and promotion of national culture and ideologies. Both the government and private enterprise have a shared stake and responsibility towards the future development of the press.