

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 regulations 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 quarters 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-Waqt 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 Awaami 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

pluralistic medium which functions as a free market place of ideas. The development augurs well for the prospects of democratisation of society.

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 growing 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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with the threat to submerge national 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.



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

A notable development of the recent era has been the expansion of Sindhi press both in Karachi and Hyderabad which have assumed the status of major publishing centres of Sindhi dailies and journals. 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 national and international issues expressed not only in the editorial columns of the newspapers but also in the writings of regular columnists, special writers and general contributors. The press thus presents the attributes of a