

Journalist
Prem
6-2-95
Campbell's

The show

must go on!

Iftikhar Ahmed

CAN you guess which is the most depressing day for an avid newspaper reader? For him, on that day, life comes to a sudden halt, blood stops trickling in his veins and all activities appear to cease at once. Without the newspapers, breakfast becomes dull, and taste buds lose their taste of the morning tea. It seems that something very important has been taken away from life. A newspaper holiday makes the morning activities completely lacklustre. Why do we have so many newspaper holidays? Is it necessary to observe a holiday on every important day? What do newspapers holiday signify? Can't we do without them?

It is a fact that today much faster communication means are available than newspapers. News get across within no time on TV and radio. Radio and TV stations can interrupt their programmes at any time to broadcast an important news bulletin. However, the details and variety that TV and radio fail to give, are found only in the newspapers.

Newspapers, thought to be a device for amusing one half of the world with the other half in troubles, cover more stories than do any of the other news media. They cover news in greater details. They inform citizens about the events in their community, the nation and the world. They also help people form opinion about current affairs. They provide a great variety of information: crimes, disasters, and special events of human interests, editorials and columns of opinions and comment on controversial issues.

Newspapers permit readers to absorb news at their own ^{pace} and their own schedule. Readers can skip items that do not interest them and relish the ones that attract them more. This is the reason even after listening to radio and TV people resort to newspapers every morning to learn in detail about the events happening in their surroundings.

Learning about occurrences in the surroundings is man's inherent instinct and he has been doing so since time immemorial. The peoples' curiosity about things never diminished. They learned from mouth to mouth when newspapers or a similar media was not available. However, things improved as man gradually progressed towards technology. The people showed keen interest in the written news when governments started handing down information and news to people officially in the handwritten papers. Governments posted news-sheets in public places where people gathered around eagerly to get the news.

The earliest known news-sheet was probably the *Acta Diurna* (Daily events), which began in Rome in 59 BC. It reported the proceedings of the Roman Senate and such news as births and deaths. Then came out the first printed newspaper in China called *Dibao* (also spelled *Ti-pao*). It was printed during the A.D. 1000s.

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As the curiosity about the written news increased, people all over the world took more interest in publishing news. The history of newspapers can be traced as far back as 1600. The first regularly-published printed newspaper in Europe was *Avisa Relation Oder Zeitung* of Strasbourg, Germany. It started in 1609. A weekly news-sheet established in 1622 was the first newspaper regularly printed in England. The weekly *Frankfurter Journal* is generally regarded as the first real newspaper that was founded by Egenolph Emmel in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1615. The *Wiener Zeitung* is the oldest newspaper still in existence. It was first published in Vienna, Austria, in 1703 and has appeared continuously except during the World War II.

In recent times, things have changed dramatically. A large number of newspapers, covering a wide range of subjects, are published every day in the world without observing any holiday. In India alone, about 2000 daily newspapers are published in more than 80 languages. Except regional newspapers, almost all the major newspapers are published every day without having any holiday. Same is the case in other countries. There are no newspaper holidays in any advanced countries of the world. Non-publication of any newspaper on any day itself becomes a big