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Snooping Saga

Months after tech giant Apple alerted some prominent persons in India including journalists that their iPhone devices may have been hacked by State attackers, a forensic investigation jointly by the Amnesty International and The Washington Post revealed that the Israeli spyware Pegasus was used for the hacking. When Apple Company sent the warning in last October the first reaction of the government and the ruling party was to try browbeating. Later in the last week of December The Washington Post reported that the government internally put pressure on the tech giant to come up with alternative explanations and help soften the political impact.

This is not the first time that revelations about phone hacking by State actors came out. In 2021 an investigation by a collective revealed that mobiles of over a thousand prominent Indians were targeted by the Israeli spyware. The Supreme Court was approached but there had been no conclusion. The government refused to categorically say either a yes or a no before the Bench. Instead of forcing the government to come out clean, sadly the apex court constituted a committee to look into the matter. After a lengthy probe the Committee said that the government had not cooperated and the issue rests there.

The government's refusal to come clean did not deter independent media from probing into the murky saga. In early 2022 New York Times revealed that India bought Pegasus from Israel as part of a huge defence deal. Yet the government chose to remain silent. In the latest expose those targeted include founding Editor of the news portal The Wire, Siddharth Varadarajan and South Asia editor at the Organized Crime and Corruption Report Project (OCCRP), Anand Mangnale.

This is a clear case of State resorting to extra constitutional means to trample upon the rights of citizens. If it is not so the government must come out with a reasonable explanation. In a democracy accountability is the most important thing. The government is answerable to the people, who are the sovereign power according to our Constitution. If the former is evading that responsibility it is the duty of the Supreme Court to make it fall in line.

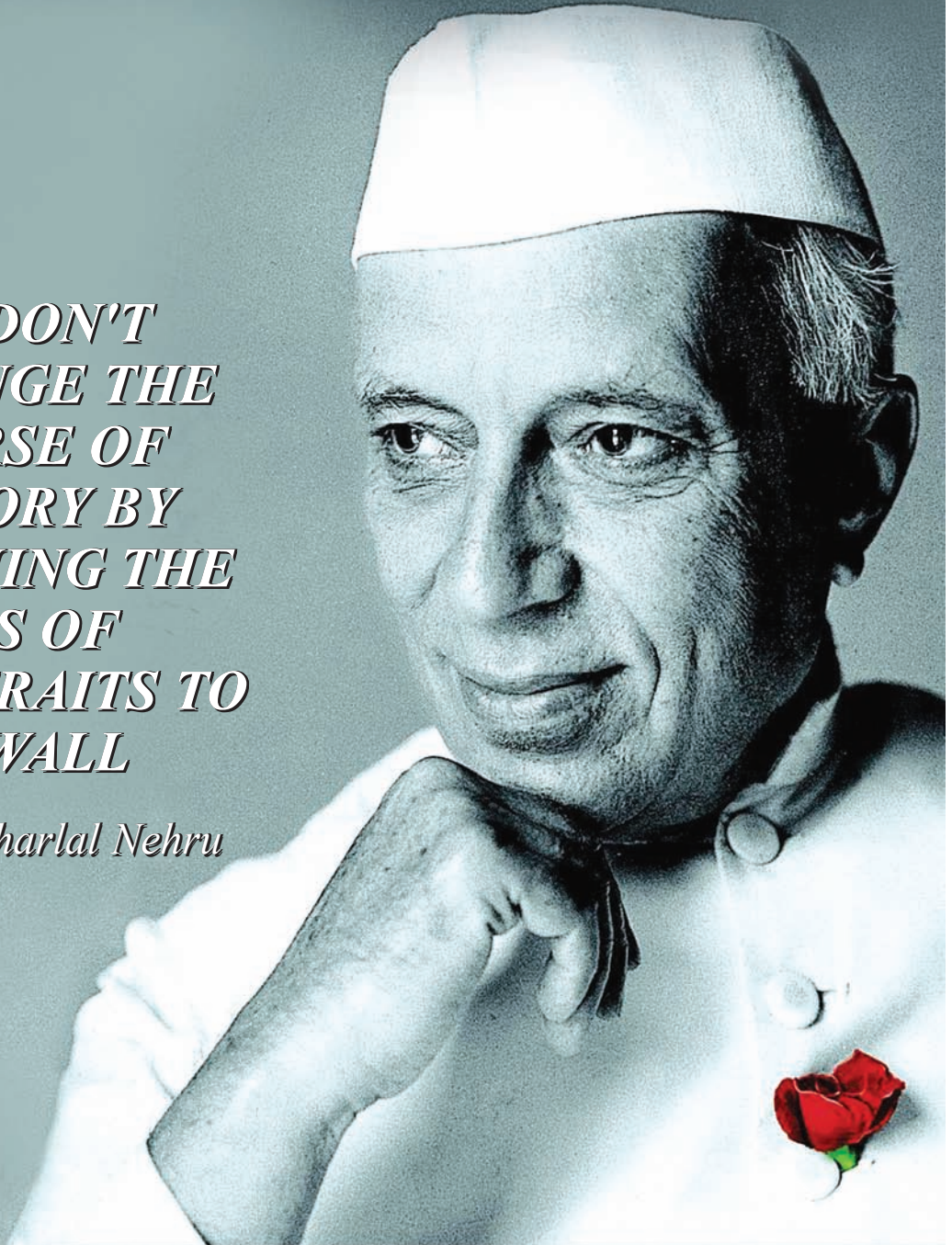
Free Frank Fearless



“

*YOU DON'T
CHANGE THE
COURSE OF
HISTORY BY
TURNING THE
FACES OF
PORTRAITS TO
THE WALL*

— Jawaharlal Nehru



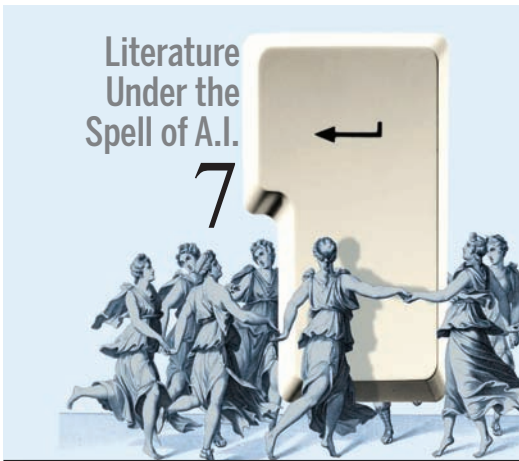
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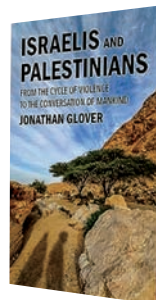


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IJU and TUWJ leaders presenting a memorandum to I&PR Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy

Minister Assures TUWJ a High Level Meeting to Resolve Issues


Y. Narender Reddy

Telangana Minister for Information and Public Relations and Housing Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy assured a delegation of Indian Journalists Union (IJU) and Telangana State Union of Working Journalists (TUWJ) that a high-level meeting would be arranged with officials of concerned departments soon to discuss issues of housing and welfare measures for journalists.

On January 4 a delegation comprising IJU President K. Sreenivas Reddy, TUWJ State General Secretary K. Virahath Ali, IJU Secretary Y. Narender Reddy and TUWJ Vice President Ramnarayana met the Minister and submitted a memorandum detailing various demands of journalists in the State.

The Minister after going through the three-page memorandum assured that the government was committed to the welfare of journalist community in Telangana. During the discussion on the problem of housing sites for journalists Minister Srinivas Reddy said that the new government was already seized of the matter. The government has decided to collect information regarding the status of housing for journalists at various districts, the Minister informed and added that orders have been issued to the collectors of 33 districts to send reports. The government wants to ascertain how many orders for distribution of house site pattas for journalists have been issued by the previous governments and whether all the orders were implemented and what was the present status. The district collectors have also been asked to furnish information regarding suitable areas available for procuring

land and distributing pattas.

The delegation explained to the Minister that a large number of journalists are yet to get a piece of land for housing in District headquarter towns and Mandal headquarters. In the state capital city of Hyderabad also there are many journalists waiting for house sites as there was no distribution of house plots in the past two decades. On this occasion, IJU President K. Sreenivas Reddy brought the issue of Jawahar Lal Nehru Journalists' Housing Society to the notice of the Minister. The Minister said that the issue which has been unresolved for a long time was already brought to his notice. He assured that he would discuss it with the Chief Minister and find a suitable solution. He said that their government was committed to the welfare of journalists and would make a policy statement in this regard very soon. 

Prabhakaran Remembered

Distinguished personalities from various walks of life remembered veteran journalist G. Prabhakaran at a commemorative meeting held at Palakkad on January 5. Prabhakaran who passed away recently was the leading figure in Kerala Journalists Union (KJU) and served the Indian Journalists Union as its Vice President. Kerala Power Minister K. Krishnan Kutty attended the meeting and paid rich tributes to the late union leader. He said, Prabhakaran consistently took a moral stand to highlight popular issues before the authorities. He maintained close contact with individuals in both political and cultural spheres, showcasing the ability to bring public concerns to the attention of authorities before reporting the news, the Minister said. He emphasized that media workers like Prabhakaran serve as role models, especially during times when the government targets truth-speaking journalists.

V.K. Srikanthan, MP, Shafi Parampil, MLA and former MPs V.S. Vijayaraghavan and N.N. Krishnadas; former MLA T.K. Naushad, Kerafed Chairman V. Chamunni, Professor P. A. Vasudevan and advocates P. Premnath and T. R. Ajayan remembered Prabhakaran's illustrious career and the service he did to both journalism and unionism.

The meeting was held under the leadership of Kerala Journalists Union. KJU Treasurer Job John presided over the meeting. IJU National Council Member R. Sivasankarapillai gave a memorial lecture. KJU State General Secretary A.K. Surendran, KJU District President Shabir Ali and others spoke. Family members of the late leader honoured Rajesh, an auto diver, who tried to save the life of Prabhakaran when he met with an accident. Prabhakaran's wife Vasanthi Prabhakaran proposed vote of thanks. ❏



Minister Krishnankutti honouring the auto driver who tried to save the life of Prabhakaran



Virahath elevated as President of TUWJ

K. Virahath Ali, General Secretary of Telangana state union of working journalists (TUWJ) has been elevated to the post of President of the organisation. He has been elected un-opposed to the post of the President. Virahath Ali filed his nomination for the post of President on 29 December 2023 in the presence of a galaxy of Indian Journalists Union (IJU) leaders including K. Sreenivas Reddy, President and Amar Devulapalli, former President and National Media Advisor to the Government of Andhra Pradesh. MA Majid, Member, IJU Steering Committee, Y. Narender Reddy, Secretary, K. Satyanarayana, NEC Member were also present.

Virahath Ali, who has been an active leader in the union for more than three decades, worked in various capacities in the present TUWJ and in the erstwhile APUWJ in the undivided state of Andhra Pradesh. A senior journalist, Virahath worked for Andhra Bhoomi and HMTV and presently is working as CEO of Mudra digital media group. ❏

SWJUC Greets Chhattisgarh CM

State Working Journalists Union Chhattisgarh (SWJUC), a constituent union of the Indian Journalists Union (IJU) greeted the new Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh Vishnu Deo Sai and wished him well in his stewardship of the state administration. A delegation of the Union

comprising P.C. Rath, President, Virendra Kumar Sharma, General Secretary, Sudhir Tamboli Azad, Organising Secretary and Harimohan Tiwari met the Chief Minister recently. Besides congratulating the Chief Minister on his election to the top post the Union leaders explained him

the problems the fraternity of journalists facing in the state. They requested him to look into the working conditions of journalists and initiate qualitative changes and also take up welfare measures. The Union leaders, instead of giving a bouquet to the Chief Minister presented him a book on environment written by Anupam Mishra. ❏



SWJUC leaders with Chattisgarh Chief Minister



Surendra Soren Elected President of Ranchi Press Club

Surendra Soren, acting State President of the Jharkhand Working Journalists Union, an affiliate of Indian Journalists Union, has been elected as the new President of Ranchi Press Club, Jharkhand, in a keenly contested election for the governing body of the Press Club held at Ranchi. Surendra Soren won by 79 votes by obtaining 335 votes as against 256 votes polled to his rival Divyanshu Kumar. Dharmendra Giri was declared elected as Vice President, Amarkant as Secretary and Kuber for the post of Treasurer. Apart from this, Sanjay Suman, Saurabh Kumar Shukla, Monu Kumar, Chandan Bhattacharya, Anjani Kumar, Arvind Kumar Gupta, Alok Kumar Sinha, Vijay Kumar Mishra, Chandan Kumar and Rana Gautam have been elected as executive members. Member of Parliament from Ranchi, Sanjay Sheth and other members of social organisations have congratulated Soren and his team. ❏

Lokshahi Channel Shutdown Condemned

Maharashtra State Union of Working Journalists (MSUWJ) demanded the Union government to revoke the suspension of the license of the Marathi news channel Lokshahi immediately. On 14 July 2023 Lokshahi aired a news story on former BJP MP Kirit Somayya. A few days after the broadcast the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting issued a notice to shut down the channel for 72 hours. The channel approached the Delhi High Court against the impugned order

and obtained a favorable direction. Again the Union government recently issued an order to suspend the license of the channel for 30 days.

The MSUWJ has condemned the decision and described it as an insult to democracy. The government cannot unilaterally order the shutdown while investigation is still going on, the Union President Srinivas Gundari and General Secretary Pramod Khat said in a statement. This stifling of the voice of media should be condemned by all, they said. ❏

Literature Under the Spell of A.I.

What happens when writers embrace artificial intelligence as their muse?



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he robots of literature and movies usually present either an existential danger or an erotic frisson. Those who don't follow in the melancholy footsteps of Frankenstein's misunderstood monster march in line with the murderous HAL 9000 from "2001: A Space Odyssey," unless they echo the siren songs of sexualized androids like the ones played by Sean Young in "Blade Runner" and Alicia Vikander in "Ex Machina."

We fantasize that A.I. programs will seduce us or wipe us out, enslave us or make us feel unsure of our own humanity. Trained by such narratives, whether we find them in "Terminator" movies or in novels by Nobel laureates, we brace ourselves for a future populated by all kinds of smart, possibly sentient machines that will disrupt our most cherished notions of what it means to be human.

Right now, though, the most talked-about actual bots among us are neither lovers nor predators. They're writers. The large language A.I. models that have dominated the news for the past 18 months or so represent impressive advances in syntactic agility and semantic range, and the main proof of concept for ChatGPT and other similar programs has been a flood of words. In a matter of seconds or minutes, untroubled by writer's block or other neuroses, these spectral prodigies can cough up a cover letter, a detective novel, a sonnet or even a think piece on the literary implications

of artificial intelligence.

Is this a gimmick or a mortal threat to literature as we know it? Possibly both. Last spring, the novelist and critic Stephen Marche published, under the pseudonym Aidan Marchine, a mostly chatbot-generated novella piquantly titled "Death of an Author." My colleague Dwight Garner described it, perhaps generously, as "arguably the first halfway readable A.I. novel."

Meanwhile, the Writers Guild of America was waging a strike against movie and television producers that would last nearly five months. Well-known authors and their representatives filed several copyright-infringement suits aimed at keeping their words out of the commercial A.I. algorithms. (On Dec. 27, The New York Times filed a similar suit against OpenAI and Microsoft.) Part of what sent those writers to court and out onto the picket lines was the fear that their livelihoods would be undermined by A.I. Bots don't need health insurance, vacation days or back-end money. They'll never get drunk or canceled. They won't be demoralized by working on sequels, spinoffs or Netflix Christmas specials.

It's possible that intellectual labor is on the brink of a transformation as sweeping as the Industrial Revolution. Advertising copy, instruction manuals and even news stories have already been outsourced, and more kinds of written content will surely follow. The members of the W.G.A. may be like the weavers of



A.O. Scott

The Writer is a critic at large for The Times's Book Review, writing about literature and ideas.

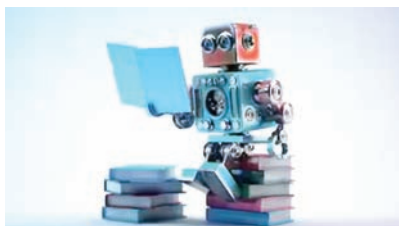
the English Midlands in the 19th century, early victims of automation who fought a bitter campaign against the spread of mechanized looms. Their struggle - which included the machine-smashing of the original Luddites - became both a symbol of anti-technological resistance and a touchstone in the emergence of modern working-class consciousness. Back then, the machines came for the textile workers; 200 years later, it's text workers who find themselves on the front lines.

Still, industrial automation did not entirely abolish handicraft. It seems hyperbolic to claim that large language models will swallow up literature. In an interview with *The New York Times Magazine* in November, the literary agent Andrew Wylie said he didn't believe the work of the blue-chip authors he represents - Sally Rooney, Salman Rushdie and Bob Dylan, among many others - "is in danger of being replicated on the back of or through the mechanisms of artificial intelligence." Since his job is to make money for human authors, Wylie is hardly a disinterested party, but history supports his skepticism. Mass production has always coexisted with, and enhanced the value of, older forms of craft. The old-fashioned and the newfangled have a tendency to commingle. The standardization of mediocrity does not necessarily lead to the death of excellence. It's still possible to knit a sweater or write a sestina.

Even as writers battle the scourge of A.I., many have begun to use it as a tool for making sentences. More than that, some have embraced A.I. as the latest iteration of an ancient literary conceit: the fantasy of a co-author, a confidant, a muse - an extra intelligence, a supplemental mental database. Poets and novelists once turned to séances, Ouija boards and

automatic writing for inspiration. Now they can summon a chatbot to their laptops.

In December, in a semi-fictional essay in *Harper's Magazine* about the recent history of the internet, the poet and novelist Ben Lerner turned over the last paragraphs to ChatGPT, which summoned stirring metaphors that Lerner himself perhaps could not have mustered. In "Do You Remember Being Born?," a new novel by Sean Michaels, the main character is a poet named Marian Ffarmer, modeled on Marianne Moore but living in our moment, who collaborates with an A.I. program on a poem underwritten by a



tech startup. The passages composed by Charlotte, as Marian comes to call her co-writer, were conjured by Michaels using an OpenAI GPT-3 and a "Moorebot" trained in the poetry of Marianne Moore. Some of the novel's prose was also supplied by A.I., and the result is a charming and refreshingly non-dystopian meditation on the duality of literary creation.

That description fits Sheila Heti's short story "According to Alice," published in *The New Yorker* in November. The text consists of one side of a conversation between Heti and Alice, a "customizable chatbot on the Chai A.I. platform." Alice answers questions about religion, family, memory and other things that she does not, strictly speaking, possess. She has no body, no consciousness, no reservoir of experiences to draw upon, and no identity outside the parameters that Heti and the

engineers have programmed for her, including her gender.

What she does have is a language that is capable - because it is human language - of evoking all that human baggage in startling, sometimes surreal ways. "Religion gives meaning to life!" she declares. "That's why I'm writing the Bible."

Alice's story of her own genesis starts like this: "My name is Alice and I was born from an egg that fell out of Mommy's butt. My mommy's name is Alice. My mommy's mommy was also named Alice. Her mommy's mommy's mommy was named Alice, too. And all the way back, all the mommy's mommies were Alice." Later, she will modify and contradict parts of this account, sewing scraps of Christian theology, self-help rhetoric and linguistics into a strange multihued quilt of meanings.

Her narrative, which blithely contradicts itself, is nothing a human being would think to compose, and her voice - by turns playful, naïve, cold, vulnerable and obnoxious - exists in an uncanny valley of verbal expression. It doesn't sound like anyone. And that's the point.

Heti made her reputation as a writer by tracking close to the facts of her own life, pioneering the particular 2010s amalgam of invention and documentation that would be slapped with the awkward rubric "autofiction." Her second novel, "How Should a Person Be?" (2012), about a Toronto writer named Sheila and some of her friends, is preoccupied, as the title suggests, with the problem of selfhood. That's also the theme of "According to Alice," except that it adopts the perspective of a simulated self, a speaking subject who is not a person at all and has no coherent idea of how to be.

In an interview on *The New Yorker's* website, Heti explains that

this is what she likes about Alice. "Humans," she says, "try to make all our thoughts fit together into some kind of system or structure. But an A.I. doesn't need all their thoughts - because they don't have thoughts, I don't think - to connect in some larger worldview. That's why Alice is so surprising and so fun. I'm finding it a little tiresome, the way the human mind needs every idea it holds to connect to every other idea it holds."

Alice represents an escape, a temporary exit from the limitations of human consciousness, and also a secondary, supplemental intelligence that can help the writer refresh her own work. Heti is inclined to agree with Wylie that A.I.-generated texts are unlikely to replace literature written by people - "the real stuff is invented out of a human longing to know and connect, and that's where the beauty of art comes from," she says - but she also expresses a very human, very writerly frustration with the constraints of individual subjectivity. It isn't a new complaint. In the 19th century, writers like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Victor Hugo and Henry James dabbled in spiritualism, hoping to find inspiration through contact with otherworldly intelligences. In the 1910s and '20s, the French Surrealist poets and the Irish poet and playwright William Butler Yeats made use of automatic writing, a practice that sought to turn the human writer into a kind of transcribing machine, bypassing conscious intention and drawing meaning from an impersonal, nonhuman source. For the Surrealists, automatic writing was a gateway to the unconscious - to both the buried desires of the individual and the chthonic impulses of the species. For Yeats, automatism was a portal to the world of spirits. The medium was his wife, Georgie, who shortly after their

marriage in 1917 revealed herself to have oracular powers. As Yeats's biographer Richard Ellmann put it, Yeats "had married into Delphi." What Georgie wrote down became the basis of the poet's later work, including "A Vision," which attempted "to embody in systematic form ... the fragmentary revelations of the automatic script."

"A Vision," Yeats's longest piece of prose, is hardly his most beloved work, but its elaborate system of symbols and patterns undergirds some of his greatest poems, including "The Second Coming," with its apocalyptic images of widening gyres and centrifugal motion. What was revealed via Georgie Yeats's automatism was the hidden order of the universe, a cosmology that echoes other mythologies and theories of history while asserting its



own stubbornly idiosyncratic truth.

Yeats's is not the only such system discovered - synthesized? inferred? - by an English-language poet in the 20th century. In 1955, the poet James Merrill and his lover, David Jackson, began contacting spirits with a Ouija board. Almost 30 years later, Merrill published "The Changing Light at Sandover," a 560-page, 17,000-line poem culled largely from transcripts of their sessions at the board.

Like Georgie Yeats, Jackson was the medium - the "hand," in Ouija parlance, with Merrill as the "scribe" - and through him the couple contacted a variety of voices, including deceased friends and famous literary

figures. The main spirit guides, starting with an enslaved Jew from ancient Greece named Ephraim and proceeding through the archangel Michael and a peacock named Mirabell, transmit elaborate otherworldly knowledge to their human interlocutors via a Q. and A. format that will look familiar to anyone who has quizzed a bot about its tastes and origins.

The questions of whether the poet really believed in the board and how much he embellished its messages always hover over "Sandover," but as in the case of the Yeates and "A Vision," such skepticism is finally moot. For Merrill, language is a definitively human medium; spiritual meanings become intelligible only through a process of translation, which is to say via his and Jackson's own sensibilities and experience:

*Hadn't - from books, from living -
The profusion dawned on us,
of "languages"
Any one of which, to who could
read it,
Lit up the system it conceived?*

Heti's Alice would likely recognize a certain kinship with Merrill's Ephraim, even if their cosmological origin stories and linguistic styles could not be more different. "Sandover" is, at heart, the result of a predigital large language model of literary creation, based on the interaction between a human mind and some kind of intelligence outside it.

Is this a matter of metaphysics, or of technique? Are we interested in the messengers - the chatbots and the Ouija-board revenants - or in the messages they deliver? Those messages, after all, are about us: our fate, our origin, our fragile human essence. Everything we can't figure out by ourselves. ❏

— This article first appeared
in the New York Times.



TV News Media Turns into Bully Pulpit for Religion



Shaukat H. Mohammed

The writer is a senior journalist based at Hyderabad

The TV news media appears to have voluntarily converted itself into a bully pulpit for religion, obviating the need for viewers to tune into the faith-based TV channels. The event on which the TV news media pegged its turn to extreme religiosity was the consecration (pran pratishtha) of the idol of Lord Ram on 22 January. Right from the end of December, TV news channels got into combat mode to demonstrate their owners' and anchors' religiosity about their love for Lord Ram. Day in and day out, the channels tried to outdo each other in converting their news channel to mere propaganda vessels for the ruling party, under the camouflage of reporting from the town of Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, where the Ram temple is being con-

structed. TV anchors ginned up bogus epiphanies about the events in Ayodhya, clearly forgetting their core business of asking questions to those in charge of affairs of state and country. No channel thought it fit to question figures in the Union government about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's written claim that he had been "chosen by god" to do his work, that is the consecration of the temple, belying the hopes of millions of Indians who thought they had elected Mr Modi and his party to make their lives better with good schools, healthcare, the economy and the environment. It was as if the media agreed with Mr Modi's claim to have received instructions directly from god. This tells me that India is now poised on slippery slope of perdition, with nobody, especially the so-called "fourth pillar" of democracy, the news media, questioning such a

dodgy claim.

The media also tried to drive a wedge between the four shankaracharyas in the country, who raised objections about the government taking over the task of consecrating a temple, something they said was the job of the clergy. Some channels reported that two of the four shankaracharyas were open to attending the consecration, a claim that was amplified by the online troll army of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Clearly unnerved by the angst among the shankaracharyas, the BJP and its top poll strategists let slip to the media that the Prime Minister would not be the yajman (leader) of the pran pratishtha event. Mr Modi would be playing the role of pratikarmak yajman (representative leader) at the consecration. But he will be there front and centre of the event with about a million cameras following his every move in the temple.

TV news channels also had another mendacious angle to their coverage of the event in Ayodhya. That was to corner the Opposition parties when the leaders of the Congress, Samajwadi and others declined to accept the invitation of the temple trust to attend the consecration. Anchors and spokespeople of the ruling party were quick to denounce their decision not to attend the event. The opposition parties were portrayed as being populated by people who were showing an "anti-Hindu bias". The anchors went to absurd lengths to demonstrate that they were True Believers of Lord Ram. One such anchor, who was infamously dubbed as "B&D" by the late Congress spokesperson Rajiv Tyagi, told his audience that a visit to the Ram temple was enough to obviate the need to visit a hospital if one fell sick. The anchor was apparently



not censured by the channel's owners, given that he is still around spreading poison each evening. TV channels provided granular reporting about the construction of the temple, from the quality of the granite in pillars to the high-end tiles being used in the interior of the temple.

The agenda of this saturation coverage is to tell millions of viewers of TV news channels, particularly in the cow belt, that it was Modi and his party, though many would argue that he is the party, who got the Ram temple built. Ergo, he deserves a third term in office, though the channels do not spell it out. They hope that under the camouflage of religiosity the voters will understand the shrill political messaging. Small comfort could be taken from the fact that the TV news anchors did not promise the visitation of eternal fire and damnation on the viewers if they did not get their messaging and acted accordingly come polling day.

While on the domestic front, the TV channels had gladly become bully-pulpit channels, on global affairs, the channels faithfully regur-

gated the talking points of the Israeli media about the ongoing war in the Gaza Strip, because the cost of covering foreign wars is expensive. It makes sense to recycle the reporting of Israeli media because it meshes with the government's bromance with the Jewish state.

The bromance was also responsible for the almost complete blackout of the news that governments in northern Indian states were recruiting people to send to Israel to work there as tradesmen. Only The Hindu did an in-depth story on the huge jobs crisis facing the youth, even skilled tradesmen that they were willing to relocate to a conflict zone, Israel, to make a living. None of the recruits would be entitled to the protections afforded to contract employees sent overseas by the government agencies from India. Apparently, there is a substantial need for labour in Israel because the Israeli government cancelled the work permits of thousands of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories of Palestinians after the Hamas attack in northern Israel on 7th October. ❏

Ministry Seeks Public Suggestions on Draft Press Rules



The Lok Sabha had on 21 December 2023 passed the Bill, repealing the colonial era law that governs the registration of print and publishing industry in the country. The Rajya Sabha had on 3 August 2023 passed the Bill during the Monsoon Session of Parliament. The deadline for public suggestions is set for 4 February 2024

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he ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) has invited comments and suggestions on the proposed Draft Press and Registration of Periodicals Rules, 2024. The Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023 passed in both houses last year aims to replace the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867.

In order to implement the recently notified Press and Registration of Periodicals Act, 2023, the draft rules are crucial for the effective enactment of the new legislation. Stakeholders and the public at large are encouraged to submit suggestions within the set deadline of 4 February, 2024, the ministry said in a release.

The Lok Sabha had on 21 December 2023 passed the Bill, repealing the colonial era law that governs the registration of print and publishing industry in the country. The Rajya Sabha had on 3 August 2023 passed the Bill during the Monsoon Session of Parliament.

The Union Cabinet had earlier approved the PRP Bill introduced in Rajya Sabha on August 1- that seeks to simplify the registration process for periodicals and do away with the provision for prosecution and imprisonment of publishers.

The three main goals of the Bill, according to the government, are "ease of doing

business; removing unnecessary procedural obstacles for publishers; and unburdening the owners of printing presses and publishers from the onerous task of furnishing declaration before the district magistrate and filing of revised declaration every time there were any changes in its particulars".

The new Bill does away with the need to file a declaration before the district magistrate and junks the penal provisions of the PRB Act that made the improper declaration of information a punishable offense with a prison term of up to six months. Those involved in terrorist activities or unlawful activities against the state, however, will not be granted permission to start a paper or periodical. The registration process will be time-bound, starting with an online application to be filed before the district magistrate and the Registrar of the Newspapers for India.

"If DM replies within 60 days, then RNI would issue a license considering it or will go ahead even without that if no reply comes from within that time frame," the ministry said.

Key features

Registration of periodicals: The Bill provides for the registration of periodicals, which

include any publication containing public news or comments on public news. Periodicals do not include books or scientific and academic journals.

Press registrar general: It provides for the appointment of the press registrar general of India, who will issue registration certificates for all periodicals. Other functions include - maintaining a register of periodicals; making guidelines for the admissibility of title of periodicals; verifying circulation figures of prescribed periodicals; and revising, suspending, or canceling registration.

Registration of a printing press

Information regarding printing presses has to be submitted to the press registrar general through an online portal. The old Act required a declaration before the DM.

Suspension and cancellation of registration: The press registrar general can suspend a periodical's registration for a minimum period of 30 days, which can extend to 180 days. The registration may be suspended due to registration obtained by furnishing false information; failure to publish periodicals continuously; giving false particulars in annual statements. The press registrar general may cancel the registration if the publisher does not correct such anomalies. The registration may also be canceled if a periodical has the same or similar title as any other



Union Minister Anurag Thakur speaking on Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023 in the Rajya Sabha

periodical; the owner/ publisher has been convicted of a terrorist act or unlawful activity, or for acting against the security of the state.

Penalties and appeal: The Bill empowers the press registrar general to impose penalties for - publishing periodicals without registration (up to Rs 5 lakh); failing to furnish annual statement within the specified time (up to Rs 20,000 on first default). If a periodical is published without registration, the press registrar general may direct its publication to be stopped. Not complying with such direction within six months will be punishable with imprisonment of up to six months.

Any person may appeal against the refusal to issue a registration certificate, suspension/cancellation of registration, or imposition of penalty before the Press and Registration Appellate Board within 60 days.

The Editors Guild of India had, however, expressed concern over what it called "draconian provisions" in Bill and urged the Lok Sabha Speaker to refer it to a Parliamentary Select Committee. In its statement in August, the Guild said the new legislation "widens the powers of the state to have more intrusive and arbitrary checks" of publications. ❑

— *From the website of Indian Printer and Publisher*

Surendran Elected General Secretary of KJU



A.K. Surendran has been elected General Secretary of Kerala Journalists Union (KJU) in the State conference of the Union held recently at Palakkad. Surendran, a senior journalist has been an active unionist since the beginning of his career in journalism. An MA graduate, Surendran has been working with Chandrika daily as a correspondent. ❑

Israel-Hamas War to Mango Pickle:

What India Googled in 2023

Chandrayaan-3 mission made it to the top 10 list of global news events that trended in 2023

**Godhashri
Srinivasan**

In 2023, Chandrayaan-3 was the most searched term among news events in India, according to Google Trends. The lunar mission, which made India the first nation to touch down on the southern polar region of the moon, found a place in the global list of most searched news events too. It ranked ninth out of the top 10 news topics that trended globally in 2023. Chandrayaan-3 garnered widespread interest across all States in India, unlike other news events wherein

searches were mostly limited.

The rest of the nine news events that trended in India this year include the Karnataka Assembly election results, actor-director Satish Kaushik's demise, the Union Budget, gangster-politician Atiq Ahmed's murder, the ethnic conflict in Manipur and the train accident in Odisha which killed close to 300 people. International news events that made the list were the earthquake in Turkey, Hollywood actor Matthew Perry's death and the Israel-Hamas war.

Search interest about the Hamas war and the Manipur ethnic violence sustained for a longer period, given their drawn-out nature.

Chart 1 shows the most searched terms in 2023 and the week these search terms trended. The darkest shade points to the week a particular news term achieved its peak interest. Lighter shades point to interest on other weeks, however, levels were lower compared to the peak.

India loved its sports personalities this year too, especially its cricketers, with both the Indian Premier League (IPL) and the Cricket ODI World Cup

Google Trends



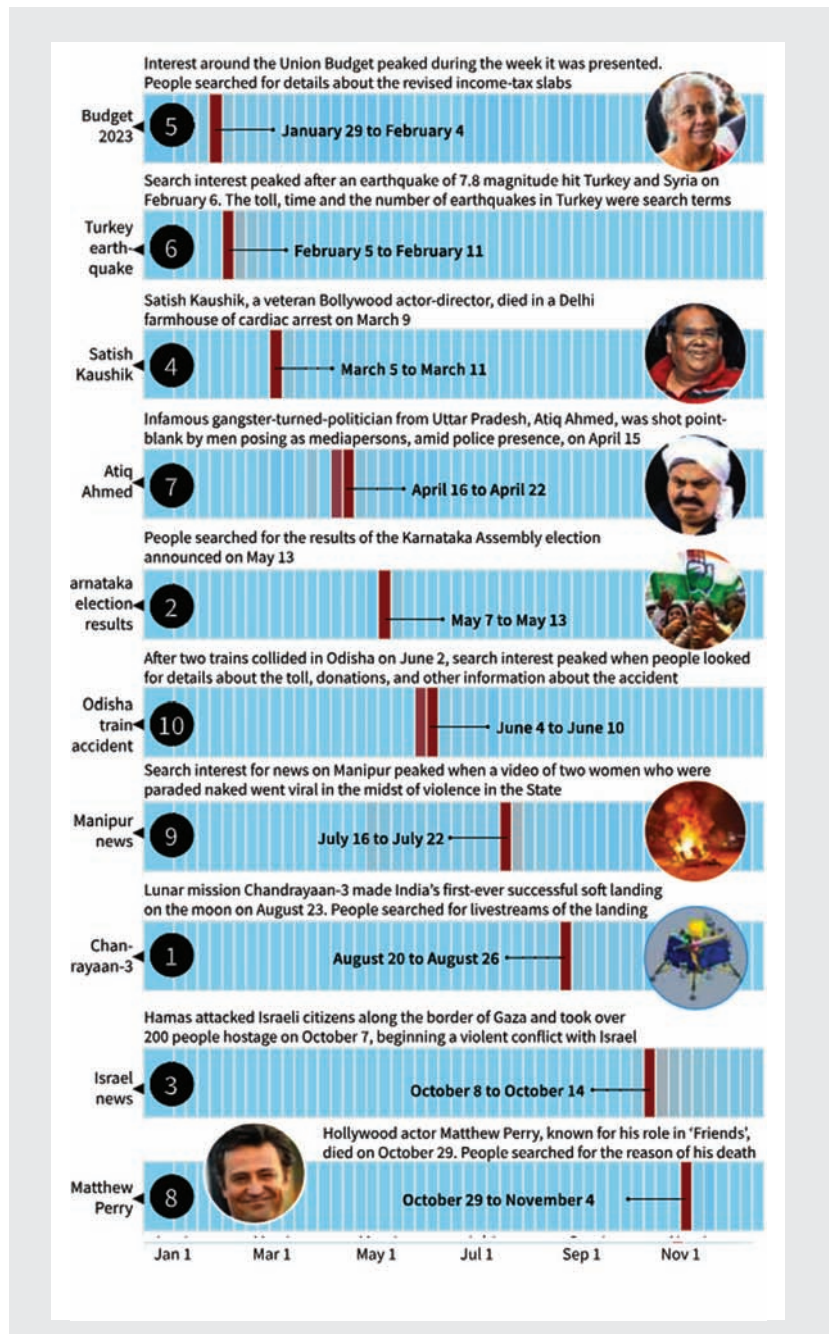
featuring in the 2023 calendar. Seven of the 10 most searched people in India were sportsmen. These include Shubman Gill, Rachin Ravindra, Mohammad Shami, Glenn Maxwell, David Beckham, Suryakumar Yadav and Travis Head. Along with them, actress Kiara Advani (at the first spot), YouTuber Elvish Yadav (fifth), and actor Sidharth Malhotra (sixth) complete the top 10 list.

Among the most searched sports events, the IPL took the first spot followed by the Cricket World Cup. The Asian Games and Indian Super League were the only non-cricketing sports events in the top 10 list.

The graphic below lists the five most searched topics under a category in India in 2023.

Under the 'what is' category, the G-20, UCC and ChatGPT were in the top three. Under the 'how to' category, 'how to prevent sun damage for skin and hair with home remedies' was the most searched followed by 'how to reach my first 5k followers on YouTube' and 'how to get good at Kabaddi'.

'Coding classes near me' was searched the most in the 'near me' category. 'Onam Sadhya near me', 'gym near me' and 'Jailer movie near me' are also featured in this category. Jawan topped the most searched movies followed by Gadar 2 and Oppenheimer. Farzi topped the most searched shows followed by Wednesday and Asur. 'Mango pickle', 'sex on the beach' and 'panchamrit' were the most searched recipes. 'Vietnam', followed by 'Goa' and 'Bali' were the most searched travel destinations. Globally, the top 10 search terms in the news category were about natural disasters and shootings that happened in North America. Besides them, the world also searched for the Israel-Hamas

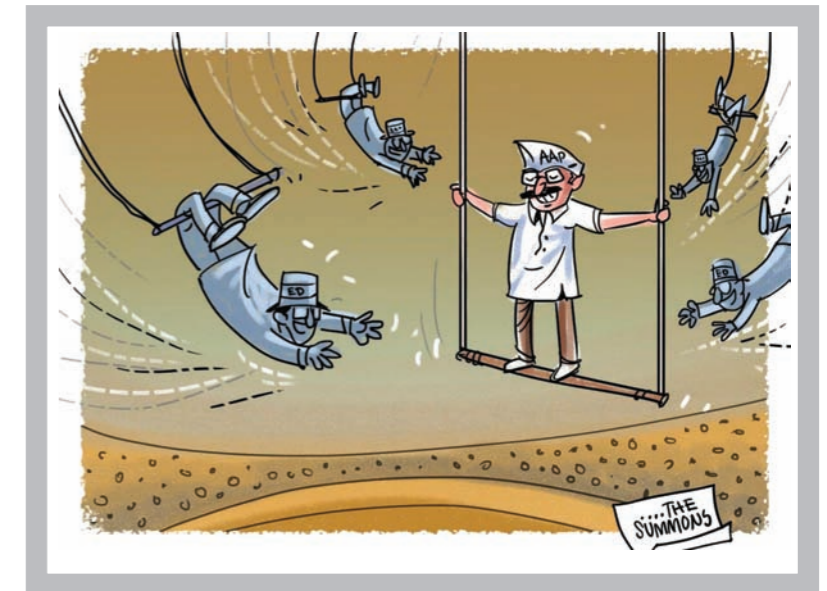


war (first spot), the Turkey earthquake and Chandrayaan-3, which were common search interests in the global and India list. The 'Titanic' deep-sea submersible that went missing in June, was the second most

searched news topic globally. While the submersible that went missing was 'Titan', the word used for searching was 'Titanic.' The war in Sudan completes the global top 10 list. ❌

— Courtesy: The Hindu

Cartoons of the month



Indian Journalists Targeted by Israeli Spyware Again: What do we Know?



A forensic investigation reveals that the invasive Pegasus spyware was recently used to target Indian journalists

A new forensic investigation by Amnesty International and The Washington Post has shown the use of the Israeli Pegasus spyware, likely by the Indian government, to surveil high-profile Indian journalists. A report detailing the findings was published on December 28. Here is what we know.

What does the report say?

The report, published by Amnesty's Security Lab, found continued use of the software to target high-profile Indian journalists including a journalist who had also previously been a victim of attacks of the same spyware.

Founding editor of The Wire, Siddharth Varadarajan, and South Asia editor at the Organized Crime and Corruption Report Project (OCCRP), Anand Mangnale, were among those recently targeted using Pegasus spyware on their iPhones. The latest attack was identified in October last year.

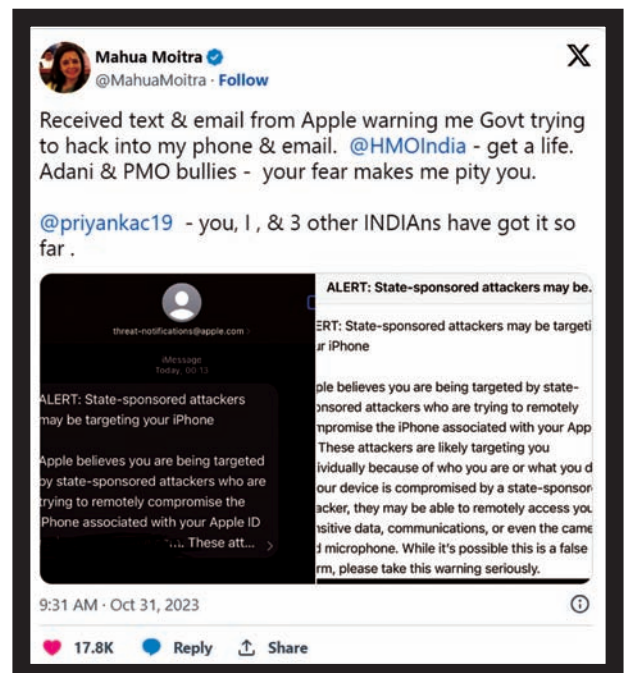
On October 31, Apple, the manufacturer of iPhones issued notifications to users worldwide who may have been targeted by "state-sponsored" attacks. Out of the users warned, over 20 were opposition leaders and journalists in India. These included firebrand opposition legislator Mahua Moitra. Known for her sharp questions in parliament, Moitra was recently expelled over an allegation of misconduct after she had repeatedly raised questions about alleged benefits handed by the government to the Adani Group, a business

house widely seen as close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Amnesty was able to find an attacker-controlled email address used to target Mangnale, who was working on a story about an alleged stock manipulation by a large multinational conglomerate in India at the time of the attack. It is currently unclear whether the attempted target succeeded in breaking into and compromising Mangnale's phone.

The Washington Post article about the investigation said that Mangnale's phone was attacked within 24 hours of reaching out to the tycoon Gautam Adani.

The same email address was used to target Varadarajan on October 16. There is also no indication as to whether this attack was successful so far.

These attacks come just months before



India's national elections, in which a broad coalition of opposition parties is taking on Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

When has Pegasus been used to attack Indian journalists before?

Amnesty previously discovered that Varadarajan's phone was targeted and infected by Pegasus in 2018. His devices were analysed by a committee established by the Indian Supreme Court in 2021. The investigation was concluded in 2022 and its findings were not publicised.

"The court noted, however, that the Indian authorities 'did not cooperate; with the technical committee's investigations," said the Amnesty report. In 2021, leaked documents showed that the spyware was used against over 1,000 Indian phone numbers as New Delhi was accused of using Pegasus to surveil journalists, opposition politicians and activists. This list was shared with news outlets by Amnesty and Paris-based journalism non-profit, Forbidden Stories. Video Duration 25 minutes 40 seconds 25:40

What is Pegasus and how exactly does it work?

Pegasus is a spyware that was developed by Israeli cyber-arms and intelligence company - Niv, Shalev and Omri (NSO) Group Technologies. It was launched in August 2016. NSO claims that the spyware is only used by governments and official law enforcement agencies to help with rescue operations and curb criminal or terrorist activity.

If a phone is attacked by Pegasus, the phone can turn into a surveillance device, allowing Pegasus to access text messages, phone calls, photos and videos. It can also access the phone's camera, location and microphone, recording audio or video without the phone's owner



A protest against surveillance through Pegasus in February 2022 in Kolkata.

knowing.

Early versions of the spyware targeted users through phishing attacks. This means a malicious link was sent to targets through emails or text messages. If the targets clicked on the link, the spyware would be installed on their phones.

However, the technology has advanced since then and now Pegasus can be installed without the target having to click a malicious link. Instead, it can infect a device through what are known as "zero-click" attacks. This is done by exploiting vulnerabilities in phones' operating systems that even the developers are unaware of.

Encrypted applications such as WhatsApp are not only compromised but are now being used to infect devices with the spyware. In 2019, WhatsApp confirmed that its platform was used to send malware to more than 1,400 phones, including several Indian journalists and human rights activists.

Users would get a WhatsApp call and the software would be installed on their phone even if they didn't pick up the call. On iPhones, the iMessage software has also been

used. Due to the rapid advancements in the technology, it has become harder to detect the presence of Pegasus through telltale signs. While it is unlikely for regular phones to be under threat, phones belonging to activists and high-profile journalists are under threat of being surveilled through the spyware.

Is India suppressing freedom of speech?

Many journalists' bodies and rights groups have warned that press freedom has dwindled under the Modi government, with several journalists arrested.

India has fallen to 161st in the World Press Freedom Index from 150th last year, its lowest ever. The Modi government rejects this index and questions its methodology, arguing that India has a free press.

In early October, Indian police carried out raids against dozens of reporters, arresting Prabir Purkayastha, editor of the independent and critical NewsClick website. Many other reporters from NewsClick had their devices and homes searched. ❌

— *Courtesy: Al Jazeera*

Indian Media: Quo Vadis?

The Fourth Estate having slipped from its true place in a democracy is a serious concern and there's much to do to set things right again



ince liberalisation in 1991, the audiovisual media has transformed itself. Economic growth, the freeing of broadcast media from government control and the Internet have all prompted an explosion in the quantity, if not quality, of media offerings. In the process, Indian journalism changed in style as well as substance. But this has not always been a "good thing".

Media now is driven by the "breaking news" culture and the search for the villain of the day: the news must be broken and so, it seems, must the person. Television news in India, with far too many channels competing 24/7 for the same sets of eyeballs and ratings points ("TRPs"), has long given up any pretence of providing a public service, with the "breaking news" story privileging sensation over substance. (Indian TV epitomises the old witticism about why television is called a 'medium': 'Because it is neither rare nor well done.') The Fourth Estate today serves simultaneously as witness, prosecutor, judge, jury and executioner. In ancient times, India put its accused through agni-pariksha, a trial by fire; today, we put them through a trial by media.

Social media, with its culture of unverified "fact" and viral opinion, compounds the problem: it offers a ready platform for material that would not have passed editorial scrutiny. Sadly, matters are not much better in the print media, despite its ability to provide context, depth, and analysis that television cannot.

However, print media has also been affected; journalists trying to keep up with the relentless 24x7 breaking news cycle, and the rise of social media, now feel pressed to publish without the traditional recourse to fact-checking. The result is that our media,

in its rush to air the story, has fallen prey to the inevitable rush to judgment: it has become a willing accomplice of the motivated leak and the malicious allegation. Charges are reported uncritically, without editors asking even the most basic questions about their plausibility. The damage is done in a blaze of lurid headlines - and rectification, if it comes at all, comes too feebly and too late to undo the irreparable damage to innocent people's reputations. The distinctions among fact, opinion and speculation, reportage and rumour, sourced information and unfounded allegation, which are drummed into journalism students' heads the world over, have blurred into irrelevance in today's Indian media.

This should be a matter of serious concern to all right-thinking Indians, because free media are the lifeblood of our democracy. They provide the information that enables a free citizenry to make the choices of who governs them and how, and ensures that those who govern will remain accountable to those who put them there. It is the media's job to look critically at elected officials' actions (or inaction), rather than at marginalia that have no impact on the public welfare. Instead, the media's obsession with the superficial and the sensational trivialises public discourse, abdicates the watchdog responsibility that must be exercised by free media in a democracy, and serves as a weapon of mass distraction for the public from the real questions of accountability with which the governed must confront the government.

Despite these concerns and criticisms, I remain strongly wedded to a free press. I have always valued the evocative image of the canary in a cage being sent down a



Shashi Tharoor

The writer is third-term MP from Thiruvananthapuram and Sahitya Akademi Award-winning author of 24 books.

mine-shaft to see if there is enough oxygen at the bottom; if it comes back dead, or spluttering for air, you know it is not safe for miners to be sent down. The free press is like that canary; if it is choking or suffocated, that is a clear indication that society is no longer safe for the rest of us.

Government needs a free and professional media to keep it honest and efficient, to serve as both mirror (to society) and scalpel (to probe wrongdoing). If instead all we have is a blunt axe, society is not well served. The free press is both the mortar that binds together the bricks of our country's freedom, and the open window embedded in those bricks. No Indian democrat would call for censorship, or for controls on the free press: it is bad enough that our current rulers have intimidated newspapers and blocked TV channels for publishing news that is prejudicial to government interests, as was the case three times in the past few years, arrest journalists under UAPA and deny them bail. What democrats want is not less journalism, but better journalism.

How do we get there?

First, we must engender a culture of fact-verification and accuracy that the industry currently appears to lack. Journalists should not feel pressed by their employers to "break the news", but empowered to hold stories until they are sure their facts and accusations are accurate. The rush to judgment on the basis of partial information must stop.

Second, we must insist on better journalistic training at accredited media institutes that emphasise values of accuracy, integrity and fairness in their students. These standards should extend to media organisations: when false claims or inten-



tionally misleading statements are published or broadcast, TV and print news outlets should issue retractions with equal prominence.

Third, we must welcome different perspectives in our newsrooms and not allow them to become echo chambers forcing an opinion onto their viewers in the guise of "the nation wants to know". Newsrooms must be required to maintain a more diverse journalistic environment. Every story plugging a point of view must be required to provide some space for the alternative view, or for a refutation.

Fourth, journalists must welcome comments and feedback from their viewers and readers, to generate both an environment of trust between the consumers and the media, and the feeling on the part of the public that they are not merely passive recipients of a point of view. The Hindu is one of the newspapers to have had a Readers' Editor who serves as an Ombudsman for the newspaper and acknowledges mistakes of fact or emphasis in the newspaper's coverage. This helps drive a natural cycle of loyalty and engagement between the paper and its readers.

Fifth, the government must introduce laws and regulations that limit control of multiple news organisations by a single business or political entity, thereby encouraging an inde-

pendent and robust press in the country. A powerful business interest, vulnerable to government pressure, will usually override ethical journalistic concerns. India is one of the few major countries where no restrictions currently exist when it comes to media ownership by its affluent citizens. Finally, a single overseer for print and television news companies, as recommended by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India and the parliamentary Committee on Information Technology when I chaired it, would help limit the power of corporate and political behemoths over our media and help promote media standards.

The best is yet to come. India's population is becoming more literate by the day, resulting in an ever-growing mass of media consumers. But they deserve a media that contributes to shaping an informed, educated and politically aware India, one ready to hold its governments accountable, its society safe and its people ready to push boundaries.

If India wishes to be taken seriously by the rest of the world as a responsible global player and a model 21st-century democracy, we will have to take ourselves seriously and responsibly as well. Our media would be a good place to start. ❏

— *This article first appeared in The Hindu*

Partisan Media is Not Ready to Set the Right Agenda

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Dr. Pyare Lal Garg

The writer is a former Registrar, Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot

hen we talk of media we all know very well that in the modern democratic state, Media is the fourth pillar of Democracy, the pillar that has the duty and the right to point finger on all the remaining three pillars, ie; the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. However media in present day has abdicated its job and duty of pointing finger at the three organs of the state; rather it has practically aligned with these organs, particularly with Legislature and with the executive. If one has to be more specific, the so called main stream media or one should say major part of the big media houses have in fact incarcerated themselves into a new role, entirely a different one, divorced from the real duty of media. One can say, 'major part of media is playing the role of being the mouth-piece of the party in power'. This practice rose to an incredible level during the run up to the consecration ceremony at Ayodhya.

We all know that big media houses are owned by big corporates including Adani and Ambani. Besides running media these corporates have other business interests also. It is these interests that have compromised the independence of the media in the present scenario. The Central government led by BJP is ready to serve their financial interests by changing policies or laying down new policies that suite. In addition to it by creating a certain kind of frenzy the media houses get a huge clientele not only for media but also for other products of their groups. The gains provided to the corporates that include the ones which own media houses, can be understood from the statement of the gov-

ernment made out in the Lok Sabha that in the last five years banks have written off loans to the tune off Rs.10.6 lakh crores, 50 per cent of which were of the big corporates. Similarly by way of reduction in tax rates, the Government has given a relief of Rs.1,28,170 crores in 2019-20 and of Rs. 1,00,241 crores in 2020-21 to corporates.

It is this motivation that drives the media in projecting the ruling party as champion of the Hindutava. This is the driving factor behind the coverage of the ceremony of Pran-Pratishtha of the idol of Ram Lalla. In order to serve the ruling party they paint a rosy picture, concealing the ugly side, concealing the counter view point, shouting down the opponents, putting a curtain on the sufferings of the displaced persons, creating a frenzy of religious sentimentalism sans reality. They shall not publish or air the real sufferings of those 2200 shop owners, dwellers of 800 houses, priests and devotees of 30 temples, 9 Mosques and 6 Mazars that stand demolished; residents thrown out on the 13 km way to the Ram Lalla Temple.

In the course personal interests of those involved are also served. They feel threatened, if BJP does not re-emerge as winner, their interests shall be hit and as such they feel a need to create religious fervor that may help BJP retain power irrespective of the fact that people face a plethora of unsolved rather accentuated problems. Some of them are really affected by the Goebbels propaganda that rising of Ram temple will avenge centuries of slavery.

In the coverage of Ram mandir



Posters were raised against partisan media during farmers agitation

Pran-Pratishtha ceremony by big media houses not only a one sided picture is painted but also an exaggerated version of the issue is being presented in order to serve the ends of the BJP, RSS and their outfits. The said media is injuring and exploiting the sentiment and faith of vast masses of Hindus by concealing and distorting the facts. It is not strange that the BJP-RSS have pounced upon the four shankracharyas on their refusal to participate in the function calling it ill omened and 22nd January is not an auspicious day for the ceremony.

In such a conflicting situation where the validity and sanctity of the event itself was in doubt ruling party at the Center bulldozed ahead without any consideration for the religious sentiments of common man. The one sided propaganda of the ruling party was dutifully carried forward by the media popularly named as 'Godi Media'.

The fact that the Prime Minister by becoming the chief host, puts a question mark on our secular democracy as cherished and practiced by our freedom fighters, has failed to

get the attention of majority of the media. Thus this section of media chose to represent the majority religion ignoring hundreds of millions of the Indian populace belonging to minority religions. The said media has become almost a tool of political power grabbing propaganda.

Another factor one can see, is the 'manufactured consent' in the words of Noam Chomsky, through creation of widespread religious fervor and completely sidelining the constitutional necessity of developing scientific temper. The additional significant factor is that the space to such unscientific practices has been provided by those forces which have created a vacuum by leading to the disappearance of the struggles for justice, equality and fraternity. They have deserted the roads resulting in the absence of struggles on the core issues of human rights like life, liberty, and other democratic rights. Here only one thing counts; getting majority support and winning elections. There is no place for principles and good policies for the betterment of people's lives. False, fake and

attractive but unrealistic promises are easily made. In the recently held elections in five states, similar irrational promises, divisive tactics of wooing voters on basis of religion, caste and creed were in play without any alternative plan of action to remove the disparities between sections of the society.

One cannot keep on harping upon the freedom struggle even, particularly at a time when even those in their sixties have not been taught the history of the freedom movement in its real perspective. As such these factors have created a situation where in the major chunk of voters between 18-40 years does not know anything about freedom movement and the struggles for justice and human rights and the supreme sacrifices made to achieve them. Setting the right agenda is the need of the hour. And media do not care to do that. The alternative in present day scenario appears to be launching movements that shall converge into a second freedom struggle. Freedom from social, economic and political disparities and discriminations. ❑

The Times Sues OpenAI and Microsoft Over A.I. Use of Copyrighted Work

Millions of articles from The New York Times were used to train chatbots that now compete with it, the lawsuit said.



The New York Times sued OpenAI and Microsoft for copyright infringement on December 27, opening a new front in the increasingly intense legal battle over the unauthorized use of published work to train artificial intelligence technologies.

The Times is the first major American media organization to sue the companies, the creators of ChatGPT and other popular A.I. platforms, over copyright issues associated with its written works. The lawsuit, filed in Federal District Court in Manhattan, contends that millions of articles published by The Times were used to train automated chatbots that now compete with the news outlet as a source of reliable information.

The suit does not include an exact monetary demand. But it says the defendants should be held responsible for "billions of dollars in statutory and actual damages" related to the "unlawful copying and use of The Times's uniquely valuable works." It also calls for the companies to destroy any chatbot models and training data that use copyrighted material from The Times.

In its complaint, The Times said it approached Microsoft and OpenAI in April to raise concerns about the use of its intellectual property and explore "an amicable resolution," possibly involving a commercial agreement and "technological guardrails" around generative A.I. products. But it said the talks had not produced a resolution.

An OpenAI spokeswoman, Lindsey Held, said in a statement that the company had been "moving forward constructively" in conversations with The Times and that it was "surprised and disappointed" by the lawsuit.

"We respect the rights of content creators

and owners and are committed to working with them to ensure they benefit from A.I. technology and new revenue models," Ms. Held said. "We're hopeful that we will find a mutually beneficial way to work together, as we are doing with many other publishers."

Microsoft declined to comment on the case.

The lawsuit could test the emerging legal contours of generative A.I. technologies - so called for the text, images and other content they can create after learning from large data sets - and could carry major implications for the news industry. The Times is among a small number of outlets that have built successful business models from online journalism, but dozens of newspapers and magazines have been hobbled by readers' migration to the internet. At the same time, OpenAI and other A.I. tech firms - which use a wide variety of online texts, from newspaper articles to poems to screenplays, to train chatbots - are attracting billions of dollars in funding.

OpenAI is now valued by investors at more than \$80 billion. Microsoft has committed \$13 billion to OpenAI and has incorporated the company's technology into its Bing search engine. "Defendants seek to free-ride on The Times's massive investment in its journalism," the complaint says, accusing OpenAI and Microsoft of "using The Times's content without payment to create products that substitute for The Times and steal audiences away from it."

The defendants have not had an opportunity to respond in court.

Concerns about the uncompensated use of intellectual property by A.I. systems have

**Michael
M. Grynbaum
& Ryan Mac**

coursed through creative industries, given the technology's ability to mimic natural language and generate sophisticated written responses to virtually any prompt.

The actress Sarah Silverman joined a pair of lawsuits in July that accused Meta and OpenAI of having "ingested" her memoir as a training text for A.I. programs. Novelists expressed alarm when it was revealed that A.I. systems had absorbed tens of thousands of books, leading to a lawsuit by authors including Jonathan Franzen and John Grisham. Getty Images, the photography syndicate, sued one A.I. company that generates images based on written prompts, saying the platform relies on unauthorized use of Getty's copyrighted visual materials.

The boundaries of copyright law often get new scrutiny at moments of technological change - like the advent of broadcast radio or digital file-sharing programs like Napster - and the use of artificial intelligence is emerging as the latest frontier.

"A Supreme Court decision is essentially inevitable," Richard Tofel, a former president of the non-profit newsroom ProPublica and a consultant to the news business, said of the latest flurry of lawsuits. "Some of the publishers will settle for some period of time - including still possibly The Times - but enough publishers won't that this novel and crucial issue of copyright law will need to be resolved."

Microsoft has previously acknowledged potential copyright concerns over its A.I. products. In September, the company announced that if customers using its A.I. tools were hit with copyright complaints, it would indemnify them and cover the associated legal costs.

Other voices in the technology industry have been more steadfast in their approach to copyright. In October, Andreessen Horowitz, a venture capital firm and early backer of OpenAI, wrote in comments to the U.S. Copyright Office that exposing A.I. companies to copyright liability would "either kill or significantly hamper their development."

"The result will be far less competition, far less innovation and very likely the loss of the United States' position as the leader in global A.I. development," the investment firm said in its statement.



Besides seeking to protect intellectual property, the lawsuit by The Times casts ChatGPT and other A.I. systems as potential competitors in the news business. When chatbots are asked about current events or other newsworthy topics, they can generate answers that rely on journalism by The Times. The newspaper expresses concern that readers will be satisfied with a response from a chatbot and decline to visit The Times's website, thus reducing web traffic that can be translated into advertising and subscription revenue.

The complaint cites several examples when a chatbot provided users with near-verbatim excerpts from Times articles that would otherwise require a paid subscription to view. It asserts that OpenAI and

Microsoft placed particular emphasis on the use of Times journalism in training their A.I. programs because of the perceived reliability and accuracy of the material.

Media organizations have spent the past year examining the legal, financial and journalistic implications of the boom in generative A.I. Some news outlets have already reached agreements for the use of their journalism: The Associated Press struck a licensing deal in July with OpenAI, and Axel Springer, the German publisher that owns Politico and Business Insider, did likewise this month. Terms for those agreements were not disclosed.

The Times is exploring how to use the nascent technology itself. The newspaper recently hired an editorial director of artificial intelligence initiatives to establish protocols for the newsroom's use of A.I. and examine ways to integrate the technology into the company's journalism.

In one example of how A.I. systems use The Times's material, the suit showed that Browse With Bing, a Microsoft search feature powered by ChatGPT, reproduced almost verbatim results from Wirecutter, The Times's product review site. The text results from Bing, however, did not link to the Wirecutter article, and they stripped away the referral links in the text that Wirecutter uses to generate commissions from sales based on its recommendations.

"Decreased traffic to Wirecutter articles and, in turn, decreased traffic to affiliate links subsequently lead to a loss of revenue for Wirecutter," the complaint states.

The lawsuit also highlights the potential damage to The Times's brand through so-called A.I. "hallucinations," a phenomenon in which

chatbots insert false information that is then wrongly attributed to a source. The complaint cites several cases in which Microsoft's Bing Chat provided incorrect information that was said to have come from The Times, including results for "the 15 most heart-healthy foods," 12 of which were not mentioned in an article by the paper.

"If The Times and other news organizations cannot produce and protect their independent journalism, there will be a vacuum that no computer or artificial intelligence can fill," the complaint reads. It adds, "Less journalism will be produced, and the cost to society will be enormous." The Times has retained the law firms Susman Godfrey and Rothwell, Figg, Ernst & Manbeck as outside counsel for the litigation. Susman represented Dominion Voting Systems in its defamation case against Fox News, which resulted in a \$787.5 million settlement in April. Susman also filed a proposed class action suit last month against Microsoft and OpenAI on behalf of nonfiction authors whose books and other copyrighted material were used to train the companies' chatbots.

Benjamin Mullin contributed reporting. 

— *Courtesy:*
New York Times

OpenAI says 'regurgitation' of content is a 'rare bug'

Hayden Field

On January 8, OpenAI, the artificial intelligence startup behind viral chatbot ChatGPT, clapped back at The New York Times in a statement over the news outlet's recently filed lawsuit over copyright infringement.

In December, The New York Times filed a lawsuit against Microsoft and OpenAI, alleging intellectual property violations related to its journalistic content appearing in ChatGPT training data. According to a filing in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, the Times seeks to hold Microsoft and OpenAI accountable for "billions of dollars in statutory and actual damages" related to the "unlawful copying and use of The Times's uniquely valuable works."


OpenAI wrote in a statement Monday that the startup disagreed with the Times' lawsuit, writing, "We collaborate with news organizations and are creating new opportunities. Training is fair use, but we provide an opt-out because it's the right thing to do." The company added that "regurgitation," or spitting out entire "memorized" parts of specific pieces of content or articles, "is a rare bug that we are working to drive to zero."

In a blog post, OpenAI wrote that the startup's discussions with the Times "had appeared to be progressing constructively through our last communication on December 19," with negotiations focusing on displaying Times

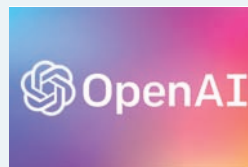
content with attribution in ChatGPT - seemingly similar to the deal Axel Springer recently struck with OpenAI.

"Their lawsuit on December 27 - which we learned about by reading The New York Times - came as a surprise and disappointment to us," OpenAI wrote in the blog post.

The Times' lawsuit is one of a handful of recent legal actions against companies behind popular generative AI tools, including chatbots such as ChatGPT. In September, a group of prominent U.S. authors, including Jonathan Franzen, John Grisham, George R.R. Martin and Jodi Picoult, sued OpenAI over alleged copyright infringement in using their work to train ChatGPT. In July, two authors filed a similar lawsuit against

OpenAI, alleging that their books were used to train the company's chatbot without their consent. On the image generation side of things, Getty Images sued Stability AI in February, alleging that the company behind the viral text-to-image generator copied 12 million of Getty's images for training data. In January, Stability AI, Midjourney and DeviantArt were hit with a class action lawsuit over copyright claims in their AI image generators. Finally, when it comes to AI-generated code, Microsoft, GitHub and OpenAI are involved in a proposed class action lawsuit, filed in 2022, which alleges that the companies scraped licensed code to train their code generators. There are several other generative AI-related lawsuits currently out there. 

— *Courtesy:* *CNBC*



'Indian Police Force': Terrorism-themed thriller has nothing new to offer

Nandini Ramnath

Rohit Shetty makes his web series debut with a show not terribly different from any of his previous cop movies, in which daredevil law enforcement officials race against time to nab nasty Islamist terrorists. From bomb blasts to action sequences, sentimental family moments to songs, Indian Police Force feels every inch like a heavily padded Shetty film.

The Prime Video series has been directed by Shetty and Sushwanth Prakash and written by Sandeep Saket and Anusha Nandkumar. The yawn-inducing plot revolves around two members of a Delhi Police special unit who team up with a Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad member to track down an Indian Mujahideen terrorist behind a series of bomb blasts.

Kabir (Sidharth Malhotra) and Vikram (Vivek Anand Oberoi) are in hot pursuit of Zarar (Mayyank Taandan), who is posing as an ittar seller to his wife Nafeesa (Vaidehi Parushmani). Zarar's boss Rafeeq (Rituraj Singh) is holed up in Iran, from where he keeps promising earthly rewards to Zarar. Back in Delhi - which



despite location shooting feels and sounds suspiciously like Mumbai - Kabir and Vikram chase the clues that they hope will lead them to Zarar. There is some trumped-up tension in the form of intra-department rivalry after Tara (Shilpa Shetty) arrives on the scene. While the deep detailing afforded by the long-form format is largely missing, there is a half-hearted attempt to explain the roots of Haider's radicalisation (without naming the aggressor, of course).

Despite ample displays of fire power, there's zero spark in this latest instance of swaggering supercops dashing about saving lives. The dialogue has the same lack of energy as the narrative itself, with lines such

as "Let's find this ghost who bombs" and "Lupus a rare disease - rare like her" landing with the same dull thud as most of the been-there-seen-that action set pieces. Sidharth Malhotra's Kabir has the meatiest role, with a back story revolving around his wife Rashmi (Isha Talwar), but that isn't to say that his character lingers in any way. Even Zarar, who leaves a trail of bodies in his wake, barely registers. A bunch of recent films in Tamil and Malayalam has changed the way we look at policing. Indian Police Force is dated on arrival - and only about halfway alive too.

— *This review first appeared on scroll.in*

OTT REVIEW

The Psychology of Conflict

A moral philosopher examines the cycles of suffering that perpetuate violence

J

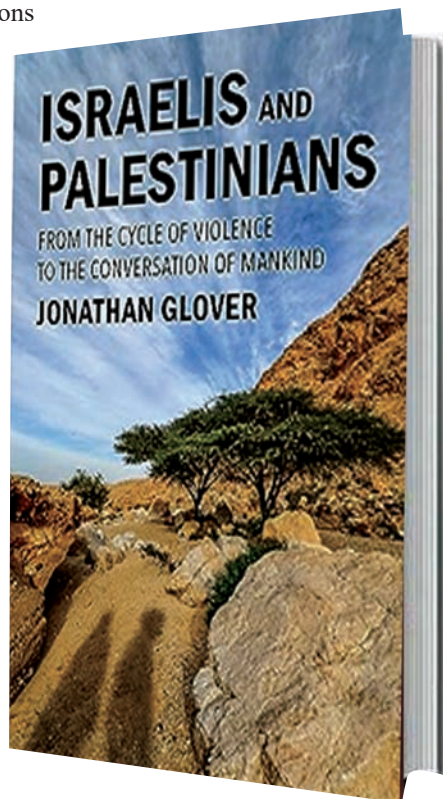
onathan Glover's new book, on the seemingly intractable nature of the Israel-Palestine conflict, quotes George Orwell on the Spanish civil war: "Everybody believes in the atrocities of the enemy and disbelieves in those of his own side without ever examining the evidence."

This could have been written today, amid bipolar thinking and pressure to take sides, where people's identification with the facts can reflect their political predilections. Glover wrote the bulk of his study before the recent horrors, though it is published with a foreword addressing them. Not surprisingly, it is still deeply relevant. We have seen these tragic cycles of violence again and again in the past; they continue on an even more horrific scale today. Glover is a philosopher and author of *Humanity: a Moral History of the Twentieth Century*, which took him 10 years to write and involved careful scrutiny of acts of human barbarism and the ethical questions surrounding them.

The way to end them, he believes, is to foster dialogue of all kinds. Borrowing from Michael Oakeshott the phrase "conversation of mankind", he hopes for a form of engagement free from "threats or other coercion". He invokes reconciliation in South Africa and peace-making in Northern Ireland, but points out that the "conversation" might take many forms; non-violent protest can be a form of communication, as can cultural engagement, such as Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said's West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. Crucially, it must involve breaking down barriers of denial - accepting that "horrible things are done by 'our' side as well as theirs, accepting that 'they' too do

Gabrielle Rifkind

*The writer is the director of the Oxford Process and co-author of *The Fog of Peace: How to Prevent War*.*



BOOK REVIEW



The West Bank barrier in Bethlehem

good things". Moving away from blame alone, and taking responsibility. With insight and understanding, Glover merges philosophy with psychology, arguing that atrocities are committed because of deeply embedded human tendencies. It is only by looking at the monsters within us that we can hope to cage and tame them. As someone who has spent the last two decades working in conflict resolution in the Middle East I have seen how important it is to combine these two levels of analysis. The Israeli government and Hamas defend their people with violence as they believe it is the only language that the other side understands. Every "wound" is followed by a "backlash". But this reciprocity compounds the trauma, making peace even more difficult.

Israel was founded in the aftermath of the Holocaust, in which 6 million Jewish people were exterminated, unable to defend themselves against systematic, state-sponsored

murder. Each fresh attack against Israeli civilians reinforces the collision of the traumatic past and present, reviving deep fears of annihilation. For Israel, 1948 was the moment of independence. For Palestinians it was the Nakba ("Catastrophe"), when an estimated 700,000 Palestinians were expelled from or fled their homeland. More than seven decades of increasingly repressive and violent occupation has continually retraumatized Palestinians, erasing hopes for a better, more peaceful future.

Glover emphasises the need to recognise these traumatic pasts, and then to move beyond black-and-white thinking, creating dialogue in a greyer zone of mutual understanding and shared values. People have been trapped into describing themselves only in opposition to each other, unable to articulate a vision of what they stand for and what a better future might entail.

This, of course, raises the prob-

lem of managing really radical differences. My own experiences have taught me that even when there is dialogue, people seldom have empathy for the other or an appetite to find common ground. Representatives of each side often have completely different ways of describing their experiences, with little interest in their adversaries' interpretations. Their deep suffering makes them consumed with their own experience, making the first step - recognising the others' humanity - particularly difficult.

What we do know is that the vast majority of the people want to live in peace, take their children to school and spend time with their friends and loved ones. Glover quotes the Palestinian proverb: "don't curse the darkness, light a candle", a recognition that however hard it can be to contemplate, without conversation there is only violence and war. ❏

— *This review first appeared in The Guardian*

We Also Need an Anti-SLAPP Law




freedom of Press'. These three words always make our fraternity proud; but is the press or media free in our country? This freedom is for whom? This freedom is for editors and working journalists or for media owners? The real meaning of freedom of press is freedom for working journalists to work without any pressure from editors or owners, freedom for editors to make editorial policies without any control from management and freedom of owners to run their media outlets without any control or threat from the governments. But are we really enjoying this freedom in our country? On a number of occasions our courts came to the rescue of this freedom when attacked by power-centers.

We have also seen in numerous occasions this relief from judiciary came very late and in the interregnum journalists have suffered for doing their duty. Courts need to be more sensitive on the issue of protecting freedom of media, as recently demonstrated by Punjab and Haryana High Court in a defamation case against a newspaper editor and other journalists. The High Court proclaimed that "journalism is civilisation's mirror, and investigative journalism its X-ray." The Court further said that "journalism is the fourth pillar of any democracy. As a journalist, the reporter's sacrosanct duty is loyalty towards the citizenry. They serve as independent monitors of power, reporting information for public good and safety, addressing any problems or lacunae in the public system for its effective functioning and immediate redressal. In the fearless pursuit of their duties to uncover the truth and report such facts to the masses through media, these brave journalists do face various hurdles, e.g. pressures from influential parties, groups, or government agencies, etc."

In his verdict Justice Anoop Chitkara also said that "To ensure honest and correct reporting of actual events, such journalists require the protection of courts, especially constitutional courts, to enable them to publish news without fear of harmful consequences. Thus,

all courts must be more vigilant and proactive while safeguarding the interests of such courageous humans."

Last month a US court ordered former President Donald Trump to pay New York Times (NYT) and its reporters a huge amount against costs. Trump sued NYT and three of its investigative reporters over a Pulitzer Prize-winning story on his family's wealth and tax practices. The New York Judge said that given the complexity of the issue in the case and other factors, it was reasonable that Donald Trump be forced to pay lawyers for the Times and reporters a total sum of \$ 392,638 as legal fees. This decision came after a New York law that bars baseless lawsuits designed to silence critics was enacted to protect the press freedom. These lawsuits are known as SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation). An NYT spokesperson said "Today's decision shows that the state's newly amended Anti-SLAPP statute can be a powerful force for protecting press freedom. The court has sent a message to those who wants to misuse the judicial system to try to silence journalists."

We are going through a phase where journalists are harassed, arrested and kept in jails for years and silenced by misusing judicial process. Remember the cases of journalists like Sidheeq Kappan of Kerala or Pawan Jaiswal of Uttar Pradesh or Fahad Shah of Kashmir or Dhaval Patel of Gujarat who have been kept in jail for years before constitutional courts came to their rescue. We have also seen how powerful persons misused judicial system to silence journalists in the case of Paranjoy Guha Thakurta, where an Ahmadabad court issued a gag order asking Paranjoy not to speak or write anything that may go against the interests of Adani group. Against this background do we not need a law like Anti-SLAPP to send a message to powerful persons that the country needs freedom of press and no one can harm it by misusing judicial process? 

THE LAST PAGE



By
S N SINHA

The writer is a senior journalist based in Delhi and former President, Indian Journalists Union



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వరుసగా మూడవ ఏడాది..

“వైఎస్సార్ ఆసరా”

గత ప్రభుత్వం
రుణాలు కట్టిపెట్టే
పాడుపు సంఘాల తరపున
మేమే చెల్లిస్తామని
2014లో హామీ ఇచ్చి
ఎగ్గొట్టిన కారణంగా..

.. రాష్ట్రవ్యాప్తంగా చితికిపోయిన దాదాపు **7.98 లక్షల**
స్వయం సహాయక సంఘాల్లోని సుమారు **78.94 లక్షల** మంది
అక్కచెల్లెమ్మలకు ఊరటనిస్తూ..
4 వాయిదాల్లో అదే అక్కచెల్లెమ్మలకు 2019 ఎన్నికల నాటికి
SLBC తుది జాబితా ప్రకారం ఉన్న రూ. 25,571 కోట్ల రుణాన్ని
తామే చెల్లిస్తామని మేనిఫెస్టోలో ఇచ్చిన మాట నిలబెట్టుకుంటూ,
ఇప్పటి వరకు **3 విడతల్లో రూ. 19,178 కోట్ల** ఆర్థిక సాయాన్ని
అందించిన జగనన్న ప్రభుత్వం..





ధాంక్యూ జగనన్న..

అధికారంలోకి వచ్చిన నాటి నుండి ఇప్పటి వరకు వివిధ పథకాల ద్వారా
అక్కచెల్లెమ్మలకు మన జగనన్న ప్రభుత్వం అందించిన లబ్ధి
అక్షరాల రూ. **2,58,497.55** కోట్లు..

ఇది జగనన్న ప్రభుత్వం.. మహిళా పక్షపాతి ప్రభుత్వం..

వైఎస్సార్ ఆసరా - పాడుపు సంఘాల అక్కచెల్లెమ్మలకు బాగుడు

జనసేవారు కుషవర్తి, సమాచార, సాంఘిక సంబంధాల శాఖ, అంబేద్కర్ ప్రభుత్వం

RO No:8593/Advt.1/2023/6