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Who Pays for Journalism?

Traditional media organisations have been losing advertising revenue and audiences to digital platforms that aggregate news. First, Google changed the way people searched for news. Facebook and other social media platforms changed the way people consumed and shared it. Without any ground-level investment in reporters or infrastructure, digital platforms have been gathering and condensing news and packaging it for readers with varied interests using technology.

Now, artificial intelligence has come into the picture and is changing the way people receive information. Ask AI about any trending news topic and it can summarise it, along with citations if need be. Ask any Gen Z youth and they may say they consume news through content from Instagram pages that pick trending topics online.

Through all these technological revolutions, one thing has remained constant: someone still has to report the story.

A journalist has to identify a story, travel, investigate, talk to sources and verify facts and information. If need be, scour through documents and attend court hearings. Cover wars. Question governments. Sometimes, journalists risk their lives to bring out information that matters. All this work costs money.

Ironically, the companies that distribute, aggregate and increasingly summarise this information have built profitable businesses. At the same time, the organisations producing original journalism are struggling to survive. Closer home, a tech company in India, which started off by aggregating news, is now a Rs 50 crore turnover company.

In another continent, an island country has decided to confront this question. On August 20, Australia passed the News Bargaining Incentive legislation. Under the new law, major digital platforms can face a levy if they fail to strike commercial deals with Australian news organisations. The money raised will support local journalism. Australia is not necessarily saying that technology companies should run newsrooms. It is asking: "If you benefit from journalism, should you not contribute to its survival?"

Australia had earlier introduced the News Media Bargaining Code. But there was a problem. Digital platforms could avoid their obligations by simply removing news from their services. The new framework is an attempt to close that gap. At this point, it is unclear whether Australia has found the perfect solution. There are genuine questions about how such a system will work and who will ultimately benefit. But there is no shying away from the crisis plaguing news organisations. Newsrooms are cutting jobs. Foreign bureaus are shrinking and local reporting is disappearing. Investigative journalism is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain, particularly in countries where press freedom is also under pressure. Amid all this comes AI. It can summarise a report, explain a court judgment or provide details from a story. But AI did not attend the court hearing. It did not travel to the conflict zone. It did not meet the source.

Someone else did the reporting, and AI is the middleman or an interpreter. If people increasingly receive answers without visiting the original publisher, what happens to the organisation that paid for the journalist who produced the story?

This question should matter to India and the rest of the world.

India has one of the world's largest digital audiences. Millions consume news every day through Google, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, X and now AI tools.

Who will pay for the journalism behind all that information?

Unfortunately, everybody wants news to be free.

It is time all those profiting from news pitch in to save the reporters.

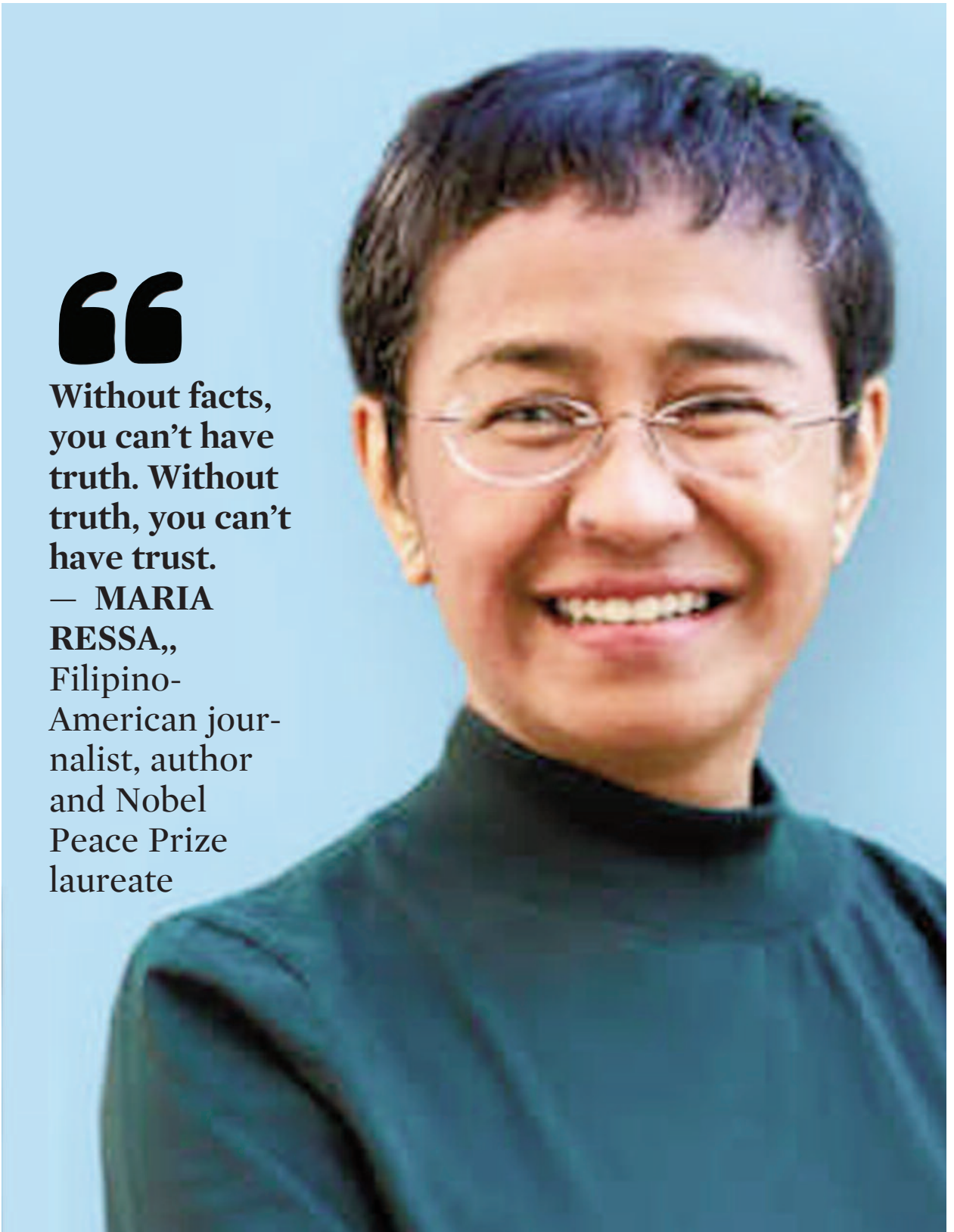
Free Frank Fearless



“

Without facts,
you can't have
truth. Without
truth, you can't
have trust.

— MARIA
RESSA,,
Filipino-
American jour-
nalist, author
and Nobel
Peace Prize
laureate



Inside



Journalism and Working Journalists Need Protection: Speakers at IJU Seminar

PAGE 4



Demand for a Special Central Law to Ensure the Safety of Journalists: IJU

PAGE 6



Award-Winning Investigative Journalist Roger Cook Dies Aged 83

PAGE 12



Cockroaches Beyond the Follow Button: A Long Journey to Jantar Mantar

PAGE 14

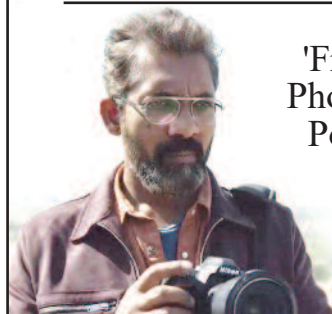
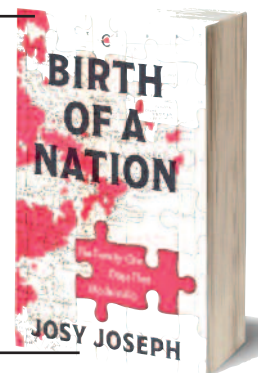


No Surprise: Most of us get our News from Scrolling on our Phones

PAGE 20

Forging India: A Fight Against Balkanisation

PAGE 26



'Frame' review: Photojournalism Portrait Misses Decisive Moment

PAGE 28



Justice B. Sudarshan Reddy, former Supreme Court judge and chief guest, with The Wire Founder Editor Siddhartha Varadarajan and other senior journalists and IJU office-bearers at the IJU National Executive Committee meeting in Bengaluru.

Journalism and Working Journalists Need Protection: Speakers at IJU Seminar

T



Bindu Singh

NEC Member, IJU

he Indian Journalists Union (IJU), in collaboration with the Karnataka State Journalists Union, organised a seminar on the subject, "Do Journalism and Working Journalists Need Protection?"

Justice B. Sudarshan Reddy, former judge of the Supreme Court, was the chief guest, while The Wire's Founder Editor Siddhartha Varadarajan delivered the keynote address.

Speaking at the seminar, Justice Sudarshan Reddy referred to 13 legislations, including two journalists' Acts, that were repealed in 2020. He said that no separate and specific reason was mentioned in Parliament for the repeal of the Acts.

Justice Sudarshan Reddy also raised the question of whether there was a provision in law to challenge the repeal in a court of law. He urged the media to play the role of a referee and not that of performers.

Expressing concern over the state of journalism, he said new-age and digital media workers must undertake in-depth study and develop factual knowledge of the subjects and issues they report on. This, he said, would significantly strengthen the credibility of the media. "Of course, journalists need protection," he added.

Speaking at length about the repealed Acts, he said the decision was



Also seen are IJU President Balwinder Singh Jammu, IJU Secretary General D. Soma Sundar, Telangana Media Academy Chairman K. Sreenivas Reddy, former IJU presidents S. N. Sinha and Amar Devulapalli, and Karnataka Media Academy Chairperson Ayesha Khanum

taken suddenly by the government and questioned why there had been no consultation process. No journalists were invited for consultations before such a major decision was taken, he said.

He further said that journalists could not be compared with persons working in other professions.

Siddhartha Varadarajan, founder and editor of The Wire, delivered the keynote address at the seminar, which was organised as part of the IJU National Executive Committee meeting held on August 8 and 9 in Bengaluru.

In his opening remarks, Varadarajan said, "Journalism and journalists in India need protection." He said that earlier, a defamation suit was one of the major threats faced by journalists in situations of conflict, but times had changed and journalists were now facing the harsher side of defamation in the form of sedition, the UAPA and other serious charges.

Varadarajan said journalists had

been suppressed through the use of the Public Safety Act, with serious charges being invoked against them.

He said governments were using advertising and public relations budgets to exert influence over the media, and described this as one of the biggest challenges to fair journalism.

He said the government could not control digital media during the 2024 elections, but that after the elections, with the implementation of the IT Act, efforts were being made to control digital platforms and media. He further said the government was coming up with a draft Digital Services Broadcasting Law next.

Ayesha Khanum, chairperson of the Karnataka Media Academy, said journalists must unite on a single platform. "Since we are divided, credibility goes down," she said.

She said a large section of journalists was not aware of the preparation of the draft Journalists' Protection Bill. It was therefore

important to share and disseminate information through such platforms, she added.

Telangana Media Academy Chairman K. Sreenivas Reddy also spoke on the subject.

The president of the Indian Journalists Union, Balwinder Singh Jammu, presided over the seminar.

IJU Secretary General D. Soma Sundar welcomed the dignitaries and participants.

Former IJU presidents S. N. Sinha and Amar Devulapalli, along with senior journalist Abdul Razak, also spoke at the seminar.

Chief guest Justice Sudarshan Reddy, keynote speaker Siddhartha Varadarajan and other dignitaries lit the lamp to inaugurate the opening session of the IJU National Executive Committee meeting.

The Karnataka State Journalists Union honoured all the dignitaries present.

Janaki Mohan, president of the Karnataka State Journalists Union, delivered the vote of thanks. 



Senior leaders of the Indian Journalists Union (IJU) at the National Executive Committee meeting held in Bengaluru.

Demand for a Special Central Law to Ensure the Safety of Journalists: IJU

October 2 to Be Observed as 'Journalists' Demands Day'

T

he National Executive Committee meeting of the Indian Journalists Union (IJU) has demanded the enactment of a special central law to ensure the safety and protection of journalists. The two-day meeting of the IJU National Executive concluded in Bengaluru under the chairmanship of IJU National President Balwinder Singh Jammu.

In a resolution passed at the meeting, the IJU highlighted the rising instances of physical attacks, threats, legal harassment and violence against journalists, along with the absence of adequate laws to protect the confidentiality of news sources. In this context, the union stressed the need for a strong, dedicated law to safeguard journalists and media organisations



in India.

Introducing the resolution, former IJU President and Telangana Media Academy Chairman K. Sreenivas Reddy expressed grave concern over the declining state of press freedom in the country. The resolution noted that although the Constitution of India guarantees freedom of speech and expression, the absence of a comprehensive law to protect working journalists has led to an increase in threats and attacks against them. It further stated that while two states have enacted specific laws for the safety of journalists, these remain inadequate to meet current needs.

The resolution also condemned both the Central and State governments for using their Information and Public Relations budgets, as well as advertisements issued by various departments, as tools to promote favourable coverage.

In another resolution, following the repeal of the Working Journalists Acts of 1955 and 1958, the IJU demanded a comprehensive law to ensure job security, wage protection and better working conditions for

working journalists. The committee also passed a resolution urging the Central Government to increase the retirement age of employees in various media organisations from 58 to 60 years.

IJU Secretary General D. Soma Sundar presented a report on the current media landscape in the country and the activities conducted by the union over the past four months. Presidents and General Secretaries representing 15 state affiliate unions, along with more than 20 National Executive members and delegates, participated in the discussion on the report.

Key speakers included members of the IJU Steering Committee S.N. Sinha, Devulapalli Amar and M.A. Majid; National Vice Presidents Amar Mohan Prasad and Y. Narender Reddy; National Secretaries D.S.R. Subhash, P. Bhaskar Reddy and Narendra Bhardwaj; as well as Karnataka State Journalists Union President M. Janaki Mohan and General Secretary Anjan Kumar, among others.

Demanding the redressal of journalists' grievances, the IJU National

Executive called upon its affiliate unions to observe October 2, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, as 'Journalists' Demands Day' across the country.

Furthermore, on the occasion of National Press Day on November 16, the IJU called for a nationwide campaign to highlight the weakening of the Press Council of India. The union plans to raise awareness about the need for a robust Media Council by organising round-table discussions and seminars involving journalists, prominent members of civil society, public representatives, legal experts and academicians.

The meeting also decided to hold a National Conference of Women Journalists in Hyderabad during the last week of October.

At the conclusion of the National Executive meeting, the 'Karnataka Rajya Prasasti' awards were presented in a vibrant atmosphere. The awards, conferred by the Karnataka State Journalists Union on distinguished personalities from various walks of life, were presented by the national leaders of the IJU.



IJU Condemns Attacks on Journalists During Jantar Mantar Protests



The Indian Journalists Union (IJU) had condemned the physical attacks and intimidation of media personnel during the student protests at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi and other cities.

In a statement issued on July 24, when the protests were underway, IJU President Balwinder Singh Jammu and Secretary General D. Soma Sundar said journalists performing their professional duties were subjected to physical attacks by security forces on one side and protesters on the other.

The IJU also condemned the use of force, including shock batons and pellet guns, against young protesters and journalists. It raised concerns over several Rapid Action

Force personnel and Delhi Police personnel being on duty in civil dress and without name badges, alleging that their identities were being concealed.

The journalists' body said media personnel had a duty to report on protests that were attracting national and international attention and described the attacks on reporters and video journalists carrying out their professional responsibilities as alarming. The IJU also appealed to protesters not to target field journalists based on the editorial

positions of their media organisations.

"Field journalists have no role in deciding the editorial policies regarding the coverage of matters of public interest, including protests," the IJU said, adding that it was improper to attack reporters because of the editorial stance taken by media managements.

The union said journalists from some television news channels and media organisations accused of taking pro-government and anti-protest positions in their coverage were specifically targeted by protesters.

At the same time, the IJU said certain practices adopted by media managements were raising questions about the credibility of the media and the standards of journalism. While maintaining that every media organisation had the freedom to choose its editorial policy, the IJU appealed to media managements to engage in self-introspection over these trends.

The union welcomed the condemnation expressed by the Cockroach Janata Party over the physical attacks on media personnel. The IJU also demanded a thorough investigation into the violence against journalists and called for appropriate action against those responsible. 





India Today Journalists Barred from Assam Assembly, one Assaulted by Staffer

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ress freedom has come under scrutiny in Assam after India Today Group journalists were stopped from entering the Assembly despite holding valid passes. The episode ended with a reporter being assaulted and a video of the incident being deleted from his phone. A controversy has erupted over media access to the ongoing Assam Assembly session after reporters from the India Today Group's Guwahati bureau were denied entry despite carrying valid passes issued for the session.

Journalists assigned to coordinate media access allegedly stopped reporters from Aaj Tak and India Today from entering the Assembly premises and asked them to leave. India Today reporter Hrijoy Das Kanungo, who protested against what he described as the unauthorised denial of entry, was physically assaulted by Moon Goswami, a member of the Assembly press committee. When Kanungo recorded the incident, his phone was seized, and the video was deleted. Others present allegedly abused him and threatened him with

further violence. Bhaben Dutta, the head of the press committee, led the assault. The incident happened when Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma was speaking at the assembly.

The reporters said they were told that their passes were "illegal", although the Assembly authorities have not officially explained why they were denied access.

India Today Group journalists have faced similar restrictions on Assembly coverage on several occasions since Ranjeet Kumar Dass took over as Speaker earlier this year. Assam Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pijush Hazarika could not be contacted immediately as he was inside the Assembly.

A formal complaint regarding the incident has been lodged with the Assam Legislative Assembly authorities as well as the Dispur Police Station.

This is a developing story. More details are awaited.



— Courtesy India Today

US Treasury Faces Media Backlash as NYT, Bloomberg Journalists Denied G20 Access

Major news outlets hit out at restrictions on press access to the G20 finance meeting in North Carolina, while Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent denies the decision was politically motivated



The US Treasury Department has come under fire after denying press credentials to journalists from several major news organisations, including The New York Times (NYT), The Wall Street Journal and Bloomberg News, for the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting in Asheville, North Carolina, reported AFP.

The decision has led to a wave of criticism from news organisations and press freedom advocates, particularly as the two-day G20 meeting brings together senior economic policymakers to discuss issues with far-reaching implications for the global economy.

Among those denied access was a US-based Treasury correspondent for The New York Times, while the newspaper's Berlin bureau chief was granted

accreditation. Bloomberg News also said journalists from its US, European and Asian operations had their requests rejected.

The journalists affected were reportedly not given formal written explanations for the decisions, adding to concerns over how the Treasury determined which reporters would be allowed to cover the event.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has defended the accreditation process, rejecting suggestions that the decisions were based on the editorial positions of the news organisations.

In an interview on Sunday, Bessent said the decisions had "nothing to do with point of view".

His comments, however, have done little to calm the backlash. Media



organisations and press freedom advocates argue that restricting access for reporters from some of the world's largest financial and general-interest news outlets could limit independent scrutiny of discussions taking place at a major international forum. The New York Times condemned the decision, describing it as an attempt to undermine independent journalism and avoid public scrutiny of issues being discussed at the meeting. Bloomberg News similarly criticised the move, saying that denying access to the G20 gathering undermines media freedom and public accountability.

The controversy has also spilled beyond newsrooms and into diplomatic channels.

German Finance Ministry officials intervened with the US Treasury to secure accreditation for a

New York Times reporter travelling with German Finance Minister Lars Klingbeil. The request was eventually approved.

However, similar efforts by German officials to obtain accreditation for a Bloomberg reporter travelling with the same delegation were rejected. The differing decisions have raised further questions about the criteria being used by the Treasury to approve or deny press credentials.

The dispute comes against the backdrop of broader changes to media access across US federal agencies over the past year.

The Department of Defense has introduced tighter entry requirements for journalists, while other parts of the executive branch have altered press pool arrangements and access to official events. Although

governments hosting international summits typically retain control over accreditation and logistical arrangements, media organisations and press freedom groups argue that excluding reporters from established international news organisations from a major G20 meeting on US soil is an unusual step.

Against this backdrop, Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has arrived in South Carolina to participate in the G20-related meetings over the next two days.

India's Ambassador to the US, Vinay Kwatra, received Sitharaman at the airport. She is expected to take part in discussions with finance ministers and central bank governors from major economies.

— Courtesy Firstpost

Award-Winning Investigative Journalist Roger Cook Dies Aged 83

Paul Glynn

Investigative journalist Roger Cook, the reporter credited with having invented the doorstep interview technique, has died peacefully after a short illness, his family has confirmed.

"Alongside a distinguished and award winning career in journalism, Roger was first and foremost a beloved husband and father," their statement read.

"He will be deeply missed by all of us, and we ask for privacy as we navigate this difficult loss."

ITV, which broadcast *The Cook Report* in the 1980s and 1990s, led the tributes, praising Cook's "groundbreaking approach to investigative journalism" which, it said, "made him one of broadcasting's most trusted and respected figures".

He won a Bafta special award for "25 years of outstanding quality investigative reporting" for his eponymous current affairs show, which ran between 1987 and 1999.

Cook "worked tirelessly to expose criminal wrongdoing and injustice, helping to drive important



and lasting changes in the law," ITV said.

"His fearless contribution to journalism will long be remembered, and we send our deepest sympathies and condolences to his wife, family and friends at this difficult time."

Cook - who was born in New Zealand and raised in Australia - took bruises and beatings during his investigations, which saw him tackle injustice and stand up for victims of crime.

During one doorstep in 1981, he sustained three broken ribs at the hands of an alleged car thief wielding a baseball bat.

On another occasion, during a report for BBC Newsnight the same year, Cook was beaten with a metal bar by an antiques dealer he had exposed with an undercover investigation.

He had moved to the UK in the late 1960s, where his career took him from BBC Radio 4 - where he worked on *The World At One*, the *PM Programme*, *Checkpoint* and *The World This Weekend* - to sixteen series of *The Cook Report* on ITV.

At its peak, more than 12 million watched the journalist's investigations. And although he said he hated it, the Roger Cook doorstep was, he felt, essential.

At one point the police said a hit-man had been hired to kill him.

Cook said audience research had revealed the public liked him taking on the crooks and charlatans but they didn't actually want to see him getting hit.

Cook's brand of investigative journalism, staging stings on radio and TV, landed him in hospital around 30 times as he chased a variety of alleged criminals and conmen across the globe.

His work exposed child abuse,



Northern Ireland protection rackets and baby trading in Brazil, as well as the illicit ivory trade and the Russian black market in weapons-grade plutonium. He also investigated illegal immigration, war criminals in Bosnia and terrorism - including those behind the September 11 attacks in New York City.

But on occasion, his work was hit by controversy. A libel action against Central Independent Television - now known as ITV Central - and Cook by an army corporal accused of beating up a recruit in a 1992 programme ended up costing them hundreds of thousands in compensation and legal costs.

Speaking to fellow journalist Ruth Wishart on *Life Behind the News*, Cook explained that introducing a more confrontational reporting style had been necessary at the time but also suited his personality.

He said: "The *Sunday Times* did some pretty honourable stuff and some of the earlier *World in Action* were pretty good stuff too - but they weren't confrontational.

"They didn't have a reporter with whom people could identify going up front against those people alleged to be responsible for whatever it was."

He added: "If you were just doing it for a newspaper, you might attempt to get your answers by dint of a telephone call.

"I think the best way to get answers, the way to serve your contributors, the victims of these people best, is to confront the people.

"I don't mean confrontational in terms of going in, all guns firing. I mean to actually stand in front of the guy and say, 'This is what you have done to the people in this programme. What do you have to say to them?'"

Cook has published several books including an autobiography, *Dangerous Ground*.

His bold and influential reporting style was often parodied by comics including Reeves and Mortimer, and Sir Stephen Fry.

— Courtesy BBC

Cockroaches Beyond the Follow Button: A Long Journey to Jantar Mantar



Eshwar

When the CJP leaders first touched ground on 6 June, their 22M-plus social media following didn't translate into an on-ground presence. That is a fact I consistently highlighted in my reports. But I also consistently highlighted another fact: there were people, ordinary and genuine people, however few, who turned up in the scorching heat and heavy rain because they truly believed in the movement.

Over the next few days, I saw the parents of a NEET victim hand over their child's ashes to Abhijeet Dipke; 90-year-old teachers who had watched India's education system erode over decades; and mothers with six-month-old babies saying, "This cannot be my child's future." Yet, ground mobilisation remained a challenge. There were people, but not the masses.

"Kisaan toh ek saal tak baithe thay, hum bhi baitheenge. Hum yahin goli kha lenge par nahi hatenge." Most people present knew the government's playbook of waiting you out.

I spoke to Sonam Wangchuk on stage on the first day of his hunger strike. I want-

ed to see what his arrival would change. It did have an impact on the ground. Mobilisation on the ground increased, but it still wasn't enough to pressurise the government for a response.

As grim as it sounds, my first thought when they announced the march to Parliament was: "Laathiyan padengi."

By the morning of 18 July, the movement no longer belonged to Wangchuk or the CJP. The visuals of him being taken away under white chadars became the final push for the march on 20 July. Protesters wept. The most composed people I had seen on the ground for over 40 days were now yelling into cameras, hurt and betrayed.

While Wangchuk's forceful removal catalysed the mobilisation for the 20th, "Parliament tak jaane nahi denge." I knew this when I reached the site at 10 am on 19 July, a day before the march, anticipating a crackdown.

Consumed by the struggle to get inside the venue and manage all my equipment alone, I spotted a pregnant woman with her two-year-old daughter. She didn't want to be named or photographed. She wore a mask. "I don't want to lose my job by revealing my identity, but I just couldn't stay at home after seeing what happened yesterday," she said.

I knew then there was no going home until the march was over.

I stood by the stage with several other reporters all night on 19 July, anticipating either a crackdown or a call for dialogue from the government. Neither came. Some of us tried catching 30 minutes of sleep on the footpath next to the stage, woke up, and switched our cameras back on.

After almost three hours of delay, Dipke





declared that the march would begin. There was one tiny exit behind the stage, the same direction in which Dipke began the march. Some volunteers who had seen me there for days pulled me up as I was getting squished in the three-foot alley between the stage and the barricades. Then came the lathis.

You don't want to witness women facing lathis from male cops. It's one of my most painful memories of the movement. Dipke kept appealing to both the police and protesters, but after facing lathis, nobody was in a mood to listen. I lost Ahmad in the crowd when the lathis rained down. We headed to the roads and saw protesters running as police lathi-charged them and fired tear gas shells. A cop approached me with a lathi. I had to say out loud: "Media se hun, Sir."

I knew the protest was far from over.

Two days later, I found myself standing between the police and pro-

testers all night. With crowds refusing to budge even after Monday's crackdown, "source-based" information suggested the streets would be cleared using force. We sat, and took naps, in the cordoned-off area between the police and protesters, constantly watching the officer on top of the tear gas vehicle. Thankfully, the sources were wrong.

Five days after the crackdown, a message "PRADHAN RESIGNS" flashed on a journalists' group. The crowds had taken over in celebration: Ambedkar and Bhagat Singh posters, people turning barricades into toys, dances and chants, and walls covered in graffiti. For so many, it was a victory they had forgotten the taste of.

The country witnessed a movement fuelled by young people across cities. But that does not exempt the movement from its flaws.

The gag around "azaadi" slogans and its flawed reasoning, the statements around Umar Khalid, the lack

of clarity over their backing, and several other issues deserve criticism. For anyone who cares about the future of the movement, criticism is the most valuable force it needs. More on that later. But for now, the national capital is breathing the air of a sweet victory. The people deserved it. There are two key aspects behind any mass movement's success: the grit of the people showing up and the honesty with which the media covers it. There are so many things that take place on the ground in movements of this scale. A meme that captured a nation's fancy led to this generation's biggest protest so far. As journalists, there are moments on the ground that make us feel so much hope and, at times, so much anger and despair. You stay put, fighting hard to remain objective and balanced while tackling those emotions. It's not easy. We're humans, after all. But you keep reminding yourself why you do what you do in the first place. ❏

— Courtesy The Quint



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IMPACTING TOMORROW.

As the trusted voice of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Sakshi stands at the heart of change. Through unbiased reporting, insightful coverage, innovation and sharp analysis, we empower 86.35* lakh readers every day with informed choices, a strong voice and unwavering confidence.



*Source: All India, All Respondents, IRS 2019 Q4 Total Readership

Why we Need to Return to Accountability Reporting

As the spotlight turns on how the press treated Professor Jason Arday, what should journalists consider?



Dhruti Shah

When I was a cub reporter who did my training in local newspapers in London, one of the first things I learnt was about accountability reporting. It was about understanding that the journalism I did had consequences and that it affected a community.

When I went to journalism school in Newcastle, we learned about ethics and not forgetting that our storytelling was nothing really without factoring in the human. When I worked in international journalism spaces, that training in community journalism was also a guiding point that I continually went back to to help figure how to be a responsible storyteller. But journalism is changing and much of it is now about clicks and getting eyeballs on words; to get short, sharp takes out and rush to speed, to have a hot take and stand out with sensationalist headlines.

And that's where we are missing the human. We're missing the layers of edi-

torial processes, the time to think through what it is we're actually trying to say and highlight in the name of public interest.

The media industry has always had challenges around race, with few senior leaders reaching the higher echelons of

decision making powerful positions, and the industry - with its low pay and exploitative practices - might bring people of colour in, but you lose the experience soon enough.

I've engaged in death knocks, covered terror attacks, shootings, the darkest elements of humanity, both in social and digital newsgathering and in field newsgathering in my 20-year career catering for different newsrooms.

Investigations are important in the journalistic world, but when individuals are targeted and focused upon and treated like press fodder, we need to think closely about who we are doing this for. For the audience? No. For the

Every story that a journalist produces should add value to the conversation. If you're repeating what someone else is saying because that's the done thing, you should take a look at yourself and what you are writing and scripting and reporting again. Media pile-ons are not journalism.



journalist's own gain, for promotion, to show that by engaging in shock value and groupthink, that we're part of the pack? That's not journalism; that's not record-keeping; that's gossip and conjecture.

Every story that a journalist produces should add value to the conversation. If you're repeating what someone else is saying because that's the done thing, you should take a look at yourself and what you are writing and scripting and reporting again. Media pile-ons are not jour-

nalism.

We write for humans, and therefore we should consider the humans in the pieces we are doing.

Stories of public interest should be reported on but in a way that is fair and consistent with the wider ecosystem and other stories. The media has a problem with race, both in hiring practices, retention and the way stories are reported; the media industry reflects wider society in this way.

Journalism has the power to

change things. And individual journalists have the power to bring compassion, parity, and ethical considerations into their reporting spaces, more so now than ever before. What can be done? Think before you spit something into the world. Who, what, where, when, why and how. They aren't just a formula to write a story against; they're also a breathing space to help you consider values and what it is you are contributing to the world's knowledge. 

— *Courtesy JournalismUK*



No Surprise: Most of us Get our News from Scrolling on our Phones

This column is part of the Indianapolis Public Editor project, a pilot program designed to test whether the presence of a public editor who analyzes local coverage can elevate audience trust in journalism and promote media literacy.

Tracey Compton



It's not a shock to learn that most of us get our news from social media. News consumers are developing entirely new patterns of the way they get their news based on their age. The dividing line is age 55, according to a new study from

Evan Shapiro, "Media Cartographer." In a first-of-its-kind index, he looked at how we spend our time on screens across major U.S. media platforms.

The study, that looked at hours of screentime from December 2025 to May 2026, saw people under

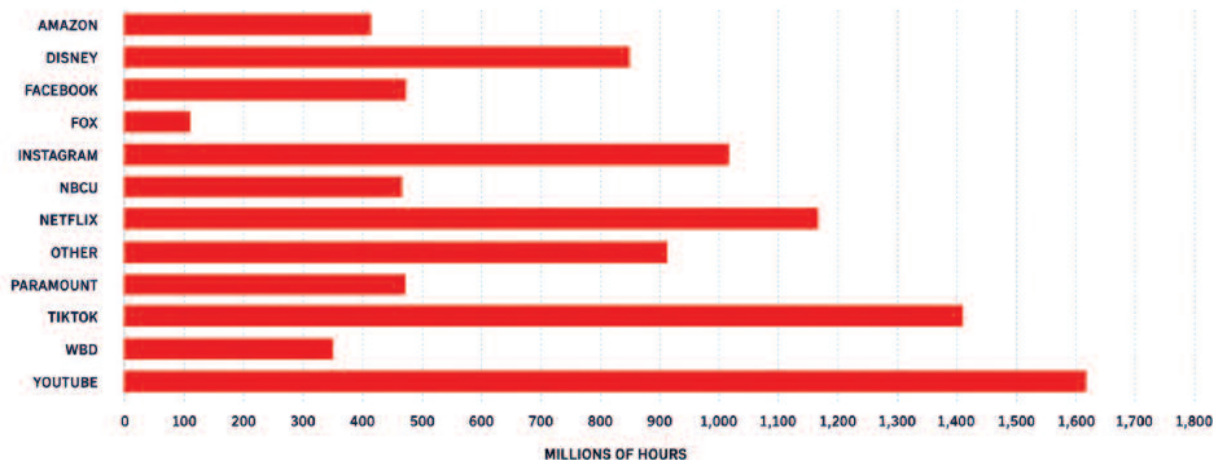
Cross-Screen Attention Tracker: 🇺🇸 United States

Interactive Visual Share Map

MILLIONS OF HOURS

Select Demographic Cohort to Isolate in Bar Chart:

☐ P13+ ☐ 55+ GenX+ ☒ 13-54 Majority ☐ 13-44 NextGen ☐ 13-34 Youth ☐ 13-24 GenA/Z



A new study from Evan Shapiro, media cartographer, found that consumers 13-54 spend more time on YouTube and TikTok than traditional media. (Courtesy of Evan Shapiro)

age 55 - most of us - are turning to social feeds on smartphones to get news and information much more frequently than traditional media. Globally, YouTube wins the majority of attention in screentime across all devices for this demographic. But for consumers ages 13-34, TikTok beats out YouTube. Those over the age of 55, the study found, are going directly to local legacy media, like a TV news broadcast, to get their information.

Our Indianapolis newsrooms are transforming the way news is delivered in an effort to meet people where they are.

Shapiro argues that people under 55 overwhelmingly turn to their phones for news and information. And when they do, they are more engaged, because they are giving their undivided attention to swiping, pausing and clicking to guide the

content on their phones. And that behavior is significantly more active than passively watching TV, where viewers often multitask.

Indiana's newest statewide non-profit newsroom, Free Press Indiana News (FPI News), debuted in June and first launched entirely on social media, because they know younger audiences get their news primarily from their social feeds. At the start of reporting each story, the newsroom staff discusses how best to tell stories on social channels and their website.

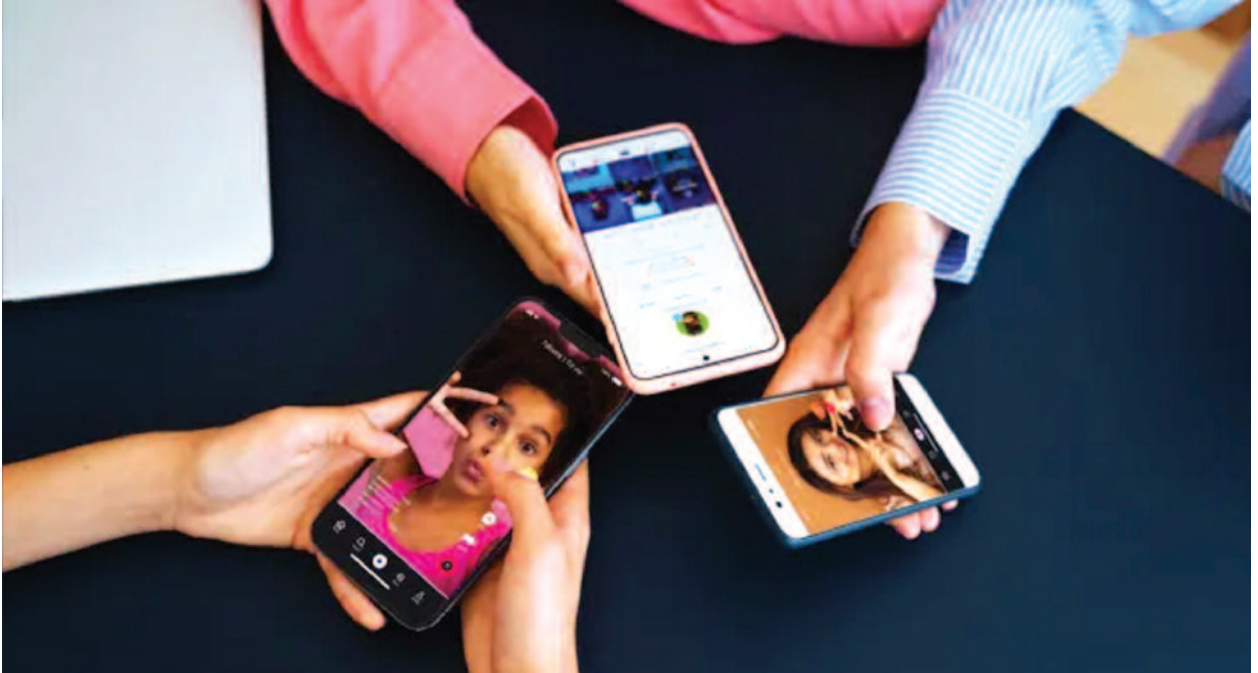
"Our Instagram, Facebook, X, Threads, Bluesky and Substack accounts launched June 15, while our website launched July 15," said Lindsey Erdody, FPI News editor-in-chief. "We've already seen great traction with our Facebook and Instagram accounts in particular."

In a little more than a month, FPI

News has gained close to 4,000 followers each on Facebook and Instagram. FPI News is owned by Free Press Indiana, the same parent company of Mirror Indy.

"Reaching younger audiences has been a conundrum for as long as I can remember," said Oseye Boyd, editor-in-chief of Mirror Indy. "I don't know that anyone has it figured out, but we are intentional about working to serve this demographic."

All of the Indy news outlets I reached out to told me they have added social media platforms to their content strategy. Mirror Indy added TikTok to their coverage offerings this year and increased the amount of content they post on YouTube. Since their launch, Indiana Capital Chronicle has also added Bluesky and Instagram accounts, in addition to their YouTube channel. The Indianapolis Recorder also has a



multi-platform approach to reaching younger generations of readers.

FOX59, the only news broadcast station I spoke with, is banking on their on-demand, streaming platforms like Roku and Amazon Fire. It launched "FOX59 Now" more than a year ago to reach younger viewers because that audience is turning away from cable and satellite broadcasts, said CJ Hoyt, news director of FOX59 and CBS4.

"We have known for several years that the overall news viewing universe is shrinking," Hoyt said. "That has naturally impacted the revenue potential for all television stations and it's why you're seeing more and more stations drop news altogether or stations being sold to larger companies. Producing local news is not cheap and if you don't have enough viewers, you can't survive in this new reality."

"FOX59 Now" garners 7 million impressions a month on their CTV app, Hoyt said, suggesting their

audience on Roku and Amazon Fire is quite large.

Increasing the amount of video formatted for phones, vertical videos, is also a goal at all of the local outlets I interviewed. Someday soon, short videos may become the predominant form for news delivery. In preparation for that possibility, newsrooms have been busy training reporters to tell their stories in this format.

IndyStar prioritizes vertical videos across their social platforms. "That approach is working - the vital reporting contained in our 'Deadly Detention' videos reached tens of thousands of people on TikTok alone," said Ryan Martin, executive editor, about a recent investigation.

Newsroom staff plan social content alongside everything else. They report some stories first with social distribution in mind and others with print in mind first, he said.

As a result of their effort to post more short-form videos, WFYI has

also noticed increased engagement on social media from younger audiences. One member of their newsroom is almost entirely dedicated to news video production, said managing digital editor Drew Daudelin.

"A lot of our most popular video content has been extremely simple, like raw footage of a crowd reacting to a data center vote," he said. "We've seen over and over that politically engaged people, including young residents in our area, are hungry to discuss these things and can use our videos as a gathering spot to do so, which is great."

FPI News is training reporters to tell stories via social video. Editor-in-Chief Erdody said that leaning into video is no longer optional given these new consumption habits.

FOX59 and CBS4's Hoyt said that they've launched an aggressive vertical video strategy for Instagram and Facebook reels, YouTube shorts and TikTok.

Indiana Capital Chronicle is

catching up. That newsroom has invested in the equipment needed to do more vertical videos, said Editor-in-Chief Niki Kelly. She plans to train her staff of reporters to add longer form video content during the 2027 legislative session.

"I don't think anyone knows the long-term consequences," Kelly said of current news consumption patterns. "We are trying to adapt to a changing world as we go. And while we want to expand into video, I am also cautious about ensuring the additional time it takes to make these videos doesn't cause a lapse in the quality of journalism. That is still the top priority."

Today's journalists must combine several skills to be effective. Not only must they be strong, credible writers and nimble reporters, they must also be well-connected to sources throughout the community and have a vibrant social media presence.

You might have noticed that after some prominent reporters get laid off from their news organizations, they take their expertise to Substack where they build new audiences and turn their individual brands into money-making ventures.

Local news media hope to emulate this pattern, capitalizing on the popularity of their journalists through in-person events and by leveraging their reporters' social media audience.

"A lot of our strategy will rely on our anchors, who already have a built-in relationship with the audience," said Hoyt. "They are best positioned to expand our reach beyond traditional broadcast news viewers."

IndyStar is building relationships with its audience and the public through its newsletters and in-person

events like its mobile newsroom and by hosting community events. Executive editor Martin doesn't see negative consequences as a result of this new consumption pattern, only opportunities.

"We're reshaping our newsroom for the future by hiring journalists who report and produce across video, social and digital platforms," he said. "IndyStar has become more agile in how we package stories, more data-informed about what resonates and more skilled in cross-platform storytelling. That's how we stay relevant and vital to our community long-term."

Mirror Indy staff also attend a variety of in-person events, like IndyStar staff, as a way to engage with audiences of all ages and backgrounds, Boyd said.

"We can't remain stagnant," she said. "That means we can't think that what's popular today will be popular tomorrow or

next week. We will continue to evolve with the social trends of the day by watching changes in audience behavior and through professional development."

Local newsrooms are paying attention to the ways in which the public now gets its information. For news consumers, this implies more accessibility

to multiple news sources as more news outlets beef up their social media offerings.

But there's a downside. Social feeds are noisy places with lots of information. Sometimes it's difficult to sort the valuable information from the junk.

What's news? What's entertainment? And what's junk? Can you tell the difference? Is there enough quality news to keep you adequately informed?

Daudelin at WFYI crystalizes this idea, which can be applied to all local outlets:

"I think our biggest challenge is simultaneously making content that fits and competes with all the hyper-engaging things posted around us, while maintaining the depth and integrity that gives our newsroom value and purpose in an increasingly chaotic media environment," he said. "It's a balance that feels both incredibly complicated and totally necessary for public media to survive."

— *Courtesy Poynter.50*





Algorithm-Priced Renewals Surprise News Subscribers

Outlets like Wired, NJ.com, and The Wall Street Journal are setting renewal prices just for you - and being forced to disclose it.

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**Hanaa
Tameez**

ast December, one of our readers received a renewal email from The Wall Street Journal. Over the coming year, the email said, she would be charged \$76.99 every four weeks for her print and digital subscription - \$19.25 a week, or \$923.88 annually.

The renewal email included one sentence in all caps: "THIS PRICE WAS SET BY AN ALGORITHM USING YOUR PERSONAL DATA." (Subscription prices on The Wall Street Journal's website are a bit lower: \$16.25 per week for a print/digital subscription, after a year at 40% off, or \$845 a year.) The reader canceled her subscription.

You may have encountered dynamic pricing - sometimes referred to as algorithmic, personalized, or surveillance pricing - when booking a flight or buying groceries on Instacart. It's when a company's algorithm decides what to charge you based on your purchase history and other behaviors. And news subscribers are increasingly noticing it when their subscriptions come up for renewal.

"Like many businesses, Dow Jones uses data to inform the marketing, positioning and pricing of certain consumer subscription products," a Dow Jones spokesperson told

me when I asked about our reader's experience. "We do this responsibly, guided by robust governance and compliance protocols. Adherence to these protocols is actively monitored and enforced by stakeholders across the business including legal, privacy and compliance."

Earlier this month, NJ.com subscriber Adam Lisberg got a renewal notice stating that his annual subscription price of \$130 was determined by an algorithm using his personal data. NJ.com is owned by Advance Local; its website states that annual subscriptions start at \$100 for basic access, while a premium subscription with various perks costs \$200.

Lisberg's Bluesky post caught the attention of other NJ.com subscribers. One was being charged \$145. New York Times' New Jersey reporter Tracey Tully was told her subscription would renew at \$175.

Dynamic pricing isn't illegal in the United States unless it's deployed deceptively, discriminates against protected classes, or violates antitrust laws. Last month, consumers filed a class action lawsuit against The Washington Post for failing to disclose its use of dynamic pricing. Tim Giordano is

a partner at Clarkson Law Firm, the firm behind the Post lawsuit. He said that news subscribers have the right to understand how their personal data is being used.

"Journalism has real value, and news organizations have every right to pursue a profitable business model," Giordano said. "But individualized pricing determined by opaque AI systems using personal data, and even legally protected characteristics, is outside the bounds of fair competition and consumer protection law. This kind of AI-driven price gouging gates essential information behind a paywall that moves simply depending on who you are. It undermines public trust in one of the core pillars of democracy."

"It signals that really vulnerable for-profit news companies are racing to the bottom trying to survive on price and subscriber retention," said Consumer Reports investigative journalist Derek Kravitz, who helped break the story about Instacart's AI pricing last year. (After the investigation was published, Instacart suspended the experiment.)

Several states have introduced legislation to regulate or ban dynamic pricing. New York's Algorithmic Pricing Disclosure Act, which went into effect in January, requires companies to tell New York residents about their use of dynamic pricing. California, meanwhile, banned competitors from sharing "common pricing algorithms" with each other to price similar products and services.

My colleague Andrew got a renewal notice for his Wired subscription on June 29 that set his annual subscription price at \$40; because Andrew lives in Brooklyn, the renewal notice included the line, "NEW YORK RESIDENTS:



PLEASE NOTE THAT WE ARE REQUIRED TO INFORM YOU THAT THIS PRICE WAS SET BY AN ALGORITHM USING YOUR PERSONAL DATA." (New Yorker and Albany Times Union subscribers have received similar notices.) The email also mentioned that his \$40 offer is below the annual rate of \$80, "based on your past purchases and engagement with our products."

News companies may disclose their potential uses of customer data for pricing in their privacy policies in a few different ways. I looked at policies from Dow Jones, Condé Nast, and Hearst. In these policies, the language generally refers to "personalized offers" and states that artificial intelligence and machine learning may be used to accomplish business objectives related to personal data collection.

Hearst, which owns the Albany Times Union, said it deploys dynam-

ic pricing across all of its newspaper markets at renewal time. It did not disclose the retention or churn data, but that the approach "results in fair pricing for subscribers while supporting our investment in local journalism."

"Like many newspaper publishers, for many years we've used a structured pricing approach based primarily on subscriber tenure and, more recently, digital engagement," a spokesperson for Hearst said in an email. "What's new is that New York's law requires us to use specific language to describe this pricing practice."

Have you been told that your news subscription price was determined by an algorithm using your personal data? Nieman Lab wants to hear from you. Please fill out a short survey here.

— *Courtesy Nieman Lab*

Forging India: A Fight Against Balkanisation

Josy Jospeh's book contends that India's sovereignty required aggressive engineering, trading, and enforcement in the shadows

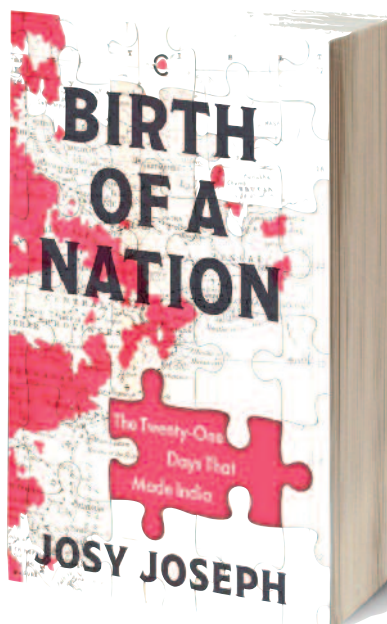
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**Nikhil
Sanjay-Rekha
Adsule**

oday, the idea of the modern nation-state is chronically susceptible to a peculiar form of institutional amnesia. Its Westphalian territorial boundaries are fragile, highly volatile accidents of history, but it treats them as ancient, predestined realities. In the popular imagination, the Partition and Indian independence are routinely reduced to high-politics drama. We are repeatedly fed a teleological romance, in books and films and web series, in which the British imperialists packed their trunks, a few men argued over maps in dusty rooms, and a sovereign democratic republic miraculously emerged, fully formed, from the ashes of empire.

For those who spend their lives and careers interrogating the structural anomalies of the Indian state, this smooth narrative has always been unsettling. My own engagement with India's lack of social democracy has required a constant search for writers who examine the raw mechanics of power. It was this precise need that drew me to the work of the investigative journalist Josy Joseph.

Joseph's 2016 book, *A Feast of Vultures: The Hidden Business of Democracy in India*, laid bare the unsparing anatomy of modern India's corporate-political cronyism and mapped it as an entrenched, highly rational ecosystem. Five years later, *The Silent Coup: A History of India's Deep State* offered a deeply constructive yet terrifying deconstruction of India's internal security apparatus, exposing how the deep state operates entirely outside parliamentary oversight. These two earlier books were essential to understanding India's institutional apparatus, training one to excavate the surface of official press releases and constitutional pieties. Joseph's latest work, *Birth of a Nation: The Twenty-*



BOOK REVIEW

One Days That Made India, is a vital next step in diagnosing today's political landscape. Joseph deploys the same forensic, investigative gaze he previously trained on modern billionaires and intelligence chiefs. Here he directs it backwards towards the frantic, paranoid three-week window between July 25 and August 14 in 1947. The outcome is an intellectual tour de force that shifts the historical lens away from the public positions of political leaders like MK Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, or Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Instead, he takes the reader into the subterranean war rooms where the Indian subcontinent was very nearly fractured, with the possibility of breaking into an unknown, unmapped archipelago of hostile, independent fiefdoms.

Joseph's methodological triumph lies in his brilliant selection of archives. He resists citing known, well-rehearsed speeches and memoirs that have long dominated liberal Partition historiography. Instead, he unearths long-forgotten bureaucratic files, espionage logs, and telegraph records from the newly formed State Department. Through these documents, the book both deconstructs and constructs a desperate war for existential survival. This war was waged by a small cabal of civil servants, spies, and negotiators operating under the fierce, transactional leadership of Vallabhbhai Patel and VP Menon. The historical reality Joseph exposes is deeply troubling, especially to conventional nationalist hagiography. It will thoroughly upend standard drawing-room debates. The truth he tells is that India's birth was not a moment of uniform, celebratory consensus - instead, it was a brutal exercise in preventing immediate balkanisation.

The book sheds light on the absurd, high-stakes conspiracies pre-



viously buried in declassified folders. Examples worth citing include a British politician trying to build a yacht to smuggle 20 tonnes of gold out of the country. He does this to help a wealthy princely ruler secure independence. On his book Joseph also traces the possibilities of alternative political alliances, especially orthodox Hindu kingdoms that actively collaborated with conservative Muslim rulers. What is interesting is that these alliances were backed simultaneously by both the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League. The sole motive was to bypass accession to the Indian Union. Joseph's text focuses on these untold structural machinations. He brilliantly reveals the possibility of a subcontinent on the brink of political collapse. Thus, the biggest lesson learned is that India's sovereignty required aggressive engineering, trading, and enforcement in the shadows.

Stapling the map together at midnight

For readers, this raw realpolitik offers a striking historical resonance when read alongside BR Ambedkar's contemporaneous interventions. In Ambedkar's 1947 memorandum, States and Minorities, he had warned against compromising with the feu-

dal tyranny of the princely states. He had argued that true democracy cannot exist with sovereign monarchies. Joseph's archives show that the actual birth of the state required the very transactional compromises that Ambedkar feared and warned against. For scholars of constitutional jurisprudence and governance, the most illuminating aspect of Birth of a Nation is its radical de-centring of the Thomas Carlyle's "Great Men" theory of history. Joseph's book explicitly paints a novel narrative of "small men who built the republic" - the steel-frame, functional, nameless machinery of the state.

He takes the case of RVMD Iyengar, an obscure civil servant who successfully operated as a deep-cover spy within the Nizam of Hyderabad's inner cabinet. Iyengar's operations directly disrupted the Nizam's attempts to establish a fully independent, sovereign, weaponised enclave in the belly of the Indian subcontinent. Joseph notes that even Iyengar's direct descendants were completely unaware of his role in intelligence, which was so monumental to India. These declassified files brought Iyengar's role to light to his immediate family.

'FRAME' REVIEW :

Photojournalism Portrait Misses Decisive Moment

Vikram Patwardhan's Marathi film, starring Nagraj Manjule and Amey Wagh, is out on Zee5.

Nandini Ramnath

Frame explores a rarely seen sub-set of the media: newspaper photographers. Vikram Patwardhan's Marathi film, which is out on Zee5, explores the dynamic between Chandu, the chief photographer of a Pune newspaper, and new team member Sidharth. The young man idolises the veteran, but differs from him in one crucial aspect.

Chandu (Nagraj Manjule) believes that a photojournalist's job is to document rather than intervene, report on an event or even a tragedy rather than rushing in to help. Sidharth (Amey Wagh) has the opposite viewpoint, and is troubled by Chandu's cynicism.

Yet, they work well together. Chandu gives Sidharth important insights into the trade - what makes for a decisive

OTT REVIEW





The 116-minute movie feels threadbare as it wears on, focusing a bit too much on Chandu's travails. The climactic scene is as much of a misstep as the ethical crisis that the film explores.

moment or a newsworthy image, how some professionals stage their images just to win awards. Sidharth also learns to steer clear of Chandu's troubled personal life and ignores his boss's worrying tendency to cart a hip flask around.

A terrible misjudgement pits the men against each other. This comes amidst personal and workplace pressures. The fear of redundancy is enhanced by the growing realisation that anybody with a cellphone camera can become a photographer. What then makes photojournalists special?

Frame, also written by Vikram Patwardhan, is business-like in its staging and visuals. Patwardhan has a well-rounded understanding of the pressures and dilemmas of journalism.

The newsroom actually feels like one, just as the conduct of the reporters and photographers is on point. The film has used the work of real-life photographers Apurva Gupte, Sandeep Rasal

and Sumedh Marathe, which enhances the authenticity.

The actors look and behave like newsroom creatures, with Nagraj Manjule especially effective as a plain-speaking pragmatist. Manjule's Chandu has more shades than Amey Wagh's Sidharth, but not enough to justify the final act.

The 116-minute movie feels threadbare as it wears on, focusing a bit too much on Chandu's travails. The climactic scene is as much of a misstep as the ethical crisis that the film explores.

No self-respecting jury would reward the photograph that eventually wins a coveted honour. The director might have wanted to make an emphatic point about the slipperiness of morals in a ruthlessly competitive and increasingly unstable profession, but he picked the wrong frame.

— Courtesy Scroll.in

Time for Introspection



THE LAST PAGE



By
S N SINHA

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

This is a time for introspection, particularly by so-called national channels, about why they have lost the trust of Generation Z (Gen Z), as was evident during their Jantar Mantar protest march to Parliament. Journalists from multiple Delhi TV channels faced abuse, heckling, physical assaults and hostility from young protesters, who accused them of biased coverage. A large part of Gen Z demonstrators feels that the broadcast media refused to see what was in front of them and was running the agenda of the Modi government. They not only refused to accept them as independent journalists, but also accused them of being "Godi Media" and booed them out of Jantar Mantar.

In the beginning, the channels ignored the protest dharna by the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) at Jantar Mantar over widespread paper leaks. The CJP was demanding accountability for recurring students' grievances and examination failures, calling for the removal of the Union Education Minister and seeking broader reforms in the conduct of examinations. Some TV journalists who went to cover the protest tried to corner the organisers with stupid questions, such as blaming them for allowing anti-national slogans during the protest. When asked to specify the slogan, they said it was "Inquilab Zindabad". This famous Bhagat Singh slogan, which inspired our youth during the freedom struggle, is now considered anti-national by our so-called national TV channel journalists, showing their mindset towards protests against the government that labels them as "Godi Media."

We have all seen videos of police lathi charges, tear gas, pellet guns and AK-47 firing at young demonstrators. We have also seen unidentified plainclothes persons beating young boys and girls at different locations. But most TV channels started showing visuals of injured policemen and blaming protesters for stone-pelting, alleging a well-

planned 'conspiracy toolkit' with backing from Pakistan or someone else.

A 28-year-old Outlook journalist was injured, along with eight or nine others, by pellet gunfire in Delhi. The journalist said that at Statesman House, an armed force personnel fired his weapon. His medical report from a government hospital noted punched-out skin defects in his elbow and arm that were "suggestive of pellet entrance wounds". He had at least 30 injury marks on his arm, elbow and back. Doctors told him that removing the pellets was not necessary as none appeared to be lodged near any vital organs. Till the writing of this piece, the police have also not explained the circumstances under which the pellets were fired. The Rapid Action Force of the CRPF is conducting an inquiry into the firing of pellet guns at Gen Z protesters and journalists. Two protesters, aged 25 and 19, have undergone surgeries, with one facing the chance of losing his eyesight.

Unfortunately, the so-called national TV channels have not adequately shown the massive use of force by police and unidentified persons alongside them. They appear more interested in showing stone-pelting by protesters and injured police personnel.

We have to understand why young protesters are specifically targeting journalists working with TV organisations known to take a pro-government stand. Because of the managements of these organisations, which are known for taking a political stance and indulging in government propaganda, their journalists are facing these attacks.

We, the working journalist community who firmly believe in editorial freedom, request the managements of such media houses that are making our credibility questionable to engage in self-introspection. Media is the voice of voiceless people and not the ruling dispensation.





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