

Parties make cosmetic changes to information bill

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: There is an all-party consensus on limiting citizens' right to information as much as possible. This is evident from the parliamentary standing committee's clearance of the ironically named 'Freedom of Information Bill, 2000.'

The proposed legislation is extremely protective of state secrecy and the all-party panel cleared it with just mild recommendations to liberalise the provisions.

Section nine empowers a disclosure officer to reject any request if the information sought involves a "disproportionate diversion of the resources of a public authority." The committee merely replaced the word "disproportionate" with "unreasonable" and cleared this section.

There are other such minor changes to the bill suggested by the all-party panel. But effectively, it has cleared a bill which empowers the state to keep anything it wants under

wraps, ironically, under the name of Freedom of Information.

Sections of the bill that have been cleared without any reservations include section eight which forbids any disclosure of any information that might affect India's sovereignty, integrity, security, scientific or economic interest, conduct of international relations, Union-state relations, internal file notings of ministers or officials and such like.

Votaries of citizens' rights from the Left and the left-of-centre parties and persons such as L.M. Singhvi and Kuldeep Nayar were on the panel.

Other signatories to the report include panel chairman Pranab Mukherjee, Sanghpriya Gautam, C.M.Ibrahim, Joyasree Mahanta, Hansraj Bharadwaj, N.Janardhana Reddy, Beni Prasad Verma and Raghuvansh Prasad Singh.

The bill was referred to the 45-member panel (30 from the Lok Sabha and 15 from

the Rajya Sabha) last September (it was tabled in the Lok Sabha two months before that) for scrutiny.

Their let-it-pass report has been now tabled in both houses.

A number of influential figures had officially lobbied with the panel to considerably liberalise the bill — Madhav Godbole, A.G.Noorani and Manubhai Shah from the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, as also ex-cabinet secretary B.G.Deshmukh, Press Council of India chief P.B.Sawant and heads of Rajasthan's Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, who waged a relentless grassroots campaign on the issue there.

This has had some effect. The committee report says it feels, "Many of the important suggestions of the (above) experts/organisations have not been covered in the Bill..(we), therefore, recommend that the government consider these views..and incorporate them in the Bill to make it comprehensive."

CANCERY SHOWS HIS BAT BUT REFEREE RULES 'BAD SHOW'

THE TIMES OF INDIA

28 JUL 2001

Anti-India hackers deface 1,200 sites

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HYDERABAD, Nov. 17. — SilverLords, Anti-India hacking group, defaced about 1,200 websites this week to post pro-Al-Qaida messages.

The group said they were supporters but not part of the Al-Qaida Alliance Online. While defacing *sac-c.gov.in*, it wrote: "Indians, stop taking advantage of the situation on Afghanistan, we know how to defend ourselves."

In the mass defacement that followed, any URL having the word "India" was hit.

"We are currently defacing a lot of sites REGARDLESS of their origins or to whom they belong to, because our reason is to create awareness among the world community to take note of the events happening in Palestine, Chechnya and KASHMIR", Mirinda of SilverLords said in an e-mail interview with this correspondent. They said they would target more and more websites.

They call themselves freedom fighters. "Osama bin Laden is a holy fighter, and whatever he says makes sense. While Sharon murders innocent Muslims in Palestine, Bush has dinner with him. Now what's that supposed to mean? And is that not terrorism?" their message read. They echoed Bin Laden's demand to take back US troops from Saudi Arabia.

Interestingly, this group's activity suddenly picked up this week while the Al-Qaida Online Alliance remained quiet. On 20 October, the group said it would deface 1,500 sites — Indian, American and British — within a month.

So far there have been more than 330 defacements, said Mr K Srijith who documents anti-India hacking activity.

Also, the biggest mass defacement in the history of Indian sites happened when Anti India Crew, part of the Al-Qaida Alliance, ripped apart 197 sites hosted on servers belonging to *indianhosting.com* last week. The problem with Indian sites is the lackadaisical attitude towards security.

CPI(M) against entry of foreign print media

NEW DELHI, NOV. 4. Vehemently opposing the entry of foreign print media into the country, the CPI (M) today said the Government was paving the way for it by proposing to allow non-news foreign technical journals. "We are strongly against the entry of foreign direct investment in the print media. It is a very powerful medium and we don't want it to be controlled by outside forces. It would go against India's interests," the politburo member, Mr. Sitaram Yechury, said.

As the debate over allowing foreign equity in the print media rages, several Opposition parties including the Congress and the Left have attacked the Government alleging it was trying to go back on the 1955 Cabinet resolution against allowing foreign equity in news and current affairs.

Mr. Yechury said the media was responsible for building public opinion and several countries had not allowed entry of foreign print media.

About entry of non-news technical and medical journals, a proposal which the Government is at present considering, Mr. Yechury said "that is the beginning of FDI in the news sector. Even non-news journals that enter the

country should not have complete foreign-ownership but should be with Indian collaboration." *Media*

On the question of investment by FIIs and NRIs besides overseas commercial borrowings in print media, he said this would just mean opening up an avenue for "foreign forces" to come into the country. "Who would be interested in investing in the sector? It would finally be parties with vested interests who enter the sector," he added.

The Information and Broadcasting Minister, Ms. Sushma Swaraj, who opened up the issue for debate soon after she assumed office last year, later ruled out the option saying the consensus went against turning down the 1955 Cabinet resolution.

However, the entire issue of the entry of foreign media and FII, NRI investment has been referred to the Standing Committee of Parliament. The Government recently proposed allowing of non-news technical and medical journals saying that these could then be cheaply available in the country but decided to await the committee's report before taking any further steps. — PTI

THE HINDU

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DEATH OF AN IT PROJECT

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THE DEATH OF Sankhya Vahini, which is what the withdrawal of the U.S.-based IUNet implies whatever the Department of Telecom Services may claim about reviving it in another form, means that yet another opportunity to make good use of public sector assets has been lost. Sankhya Vahini was to be a joint venture between IUNet, the Department of Telecom and a few educational institutions that would have built on unutilised optical fibre capacity with the DoT/Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. to create a high-speed internet backbone in the country. This would have been available for educational and commercial purposes. The joint venture should have succeeded and added considerably to BSNL's profitability. But now it is just a question of time before the assets of BSNL gradually depreciate in value and they are snapped up for a song in a privatisation exercise. The range of criticism and the vociferousness with which it was made meant that few in the Government wanted to take the project through; no matter that the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, himself supported the proposal and Sankhya Vahini had been cleared by the Union Cabinet in 2000. This naturally left IUNet, which was promoted by Carnegie Mellon University of the U.S., no choice but to opt out from a project in a field where changes take place by the day.

In retrospect, almost all the criticism of Sankhya Vahini was unwarranted. The allegation that the presence of a foreign partner would have threatened national security by allowing tapping of phones have been dismissed by independent technologists and data experts as completely false. SV was to be a network for data and not voice traffic. The allegation that the Government had signed an MoU with IUNet in late 1998 even before it came into being was also incorrect since IUNet did, according to U.S. law, have the legal standing to enter into agreements at that time even if it was formally incorporated only in early

1999. The allegations that the DoT would have benefited more by auctioning off its dark fibre and that IUNet had no expertise in the area did not hold water since at that time there were no international firms suggesting an approach of an exclusive data network and Carnegie Mellon did have considerable expertise in information technology. The only criticism with some validity was that the Government task force which first mooted the joint venture on the suggestion of IUNet had bypassed the Telecom Commission; but this by itself did not warrant the storm of motivated criticism, which caused irreparable damage to the project before the allegations could be refuted.

An unusual aspect of the storm that ultimately felled Sankhya Vahini was that the attacks came as much from within the Government as from the political Opposition or moral allies such as the Swadeshi Jagran Manch. The Ministry of Information Technology, then headed by Mr. Pramod Mahajan, lost no opportunity to express its opposition while Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan at the Ministry of Communications supported Sankhya Vahini. The ultimate irony is that Mr. Mahajan, who now heads both Ministries, has spoken of going ahead with the project. Sankhya Vahini was conceived well before private plans were announced to lay cable across the country to profit from the expected demand for broadband connectivity. There was, therefore, always the strong suspicion that much of the criticism of Sankhya Vahini was fanned by commercial interests anxious about the joint venture acquiring first mover advantage in this field. As expected, after Sankhya Vahini was stalled a number of private ventures were indeed announced and some have made considerable progress. Those who opposed Sankhya Vahini on grounds of "national interest" will now have to ask themselves if they unwittingly or knowingly collaborated in the running down of public sector assets.

THE HINDU

Al-Qaida gets at atomic energy board site

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

HYDERABAD, Oct. 25. - Al-Qaida line procured documents and maps after hacking Atomic Energy Regulatory Board's website and left a message for Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee at another site. The organisation has hacked eight more websites.

G-Force took away three documents, including maps, from www.aerb.gov.in. They didn't disclose the details of the documents. G-Force's Dr Nuker thus carried out his threat of attacking this site when he defaced www.zeenews.com on Tuesday. He had again threatened to target Zee News.

Anti-India Crew left a message for Mr Vajpayee on the department of molecular reproduction development

and genetics defaced site www.mrdg.iisc.ernet.in. Claiming that Indians carried out "lame attacks" on Sialkot, recently they said: "You don't really want to push us Mr Indian Prime Minister? We proved you lame everywhere...even in real or this cyber world...admit it!"

The sites which were hacked this evening include www.serc.iisc.ernet.in of Bangalore's Supercomputer Education and Research Centre, Indian Institute of Science, and Integrated Library System's www.libsys.co.in.

They used the defaced sites to settle scores with Mr Kim Schmitz and his anti-terror hacking group, Yihat. It disclosed G-Force's co-founder's identity and contact information to the FBI on Monday. Mr Schmitz, alias Kimble,

earlier shot to fame for his \$ 10-million reward for capturing Osama Bin Laden. Yihat is the abbreviation for Young Intelligent Hackers Against Terrorism. The other defaced sites include www.aiims.ac.in of All India Institute of Medical Sciences, hamsadvani.serc.iisc.ernet.in, mxns.leverjohnson.co.in of Lever Johnson and www.criclive.com. At criclive.com, G-Force listed 19 more sites which they defaced that day.

G-Force's message for Yihat at criclive.com was: "Hi, you pathetic pieces of hypocritical script kiddies. All they want is attention. They gave some information on one of our members! We are shivering! Aren't we scared! We are catch me baby! Watch attacks on kill.net and kimble.org. You asked for it

you pathetic neophytes".

The Anti India Crew on the defaced AIIMS site said: "Hacked again as promised. You see this is serious." At the Department of Molecular Reproduction site they left a message for Mr Schmitz - "We will own (hack) you. Is that the best way to gain attention, by reporting fellow hackers to FBI? You can't really stop all the online Muslim hackers to unite. And you can't even secure yourself from us. Don't push us...this is not even a threat. Try me!" The G-Force's own website was removed by the owner. Their site www.gforcep.addr.com was hosted at the free hosting provider addr.com. It publicised their hacking, carried their propaganda and also provided hacking tips.

Pak. proxy war spills over to cyberspace

By K. Srinivas Reddy

HYDERABAD, OCT. 24. Tension between India and Pakistan is no longer confined to diplomatic exchange of words. It has spilled over to the cyberspace what with Pakistani hackers defacing two major Indian news websites, besides a webpage of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and a site owned by a corporate group, in the last two days.

The hacking forced the major news site, india-today.com, to go off the server for hours on Tuesday before it was repaired and uploaded again. So was the case with zeenews.com. While GForce Pakistan ripped through the firewalls of the India Today group, the 'Pakistan Hackerz Club,' (PHC) represented by the infamous Doctor Nuker, managed to maul the zeenews site.

While the GForce and the PHC are two known Pakistani hacker groups targeting the Indian websites, another new group, Anti India Crew (AIC), has made its presence felt in the cyber attacks by defacing a webpage of the IISc. The page giving details of the Department of Molecular Reproduction and Development and Genetics (www.mrdg.iisc.ernet.in) has been removed and anti-India messages posted.

The AIC also defaced the homepage of a corporate house with URL mxns.leverjohnson.co.in and posted a message warning the Indian websites of more such attacks. The GForce inserted messages ridiculing the External

Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, and the former Bihar Chief Minister, Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav, in the indiatoday site.

The messages are full of anti-India rhetoric. While one AIC message says that the hackers had 'proved that India is lame,' another threatens that the 'major Indian websites will be compromised in the coming week' and pledges support to the GForce. The PHC, on its part, threatens to target the Indian Atomic Research, the U.S. and the U.K. military and Government sites.

Tension in Nasik following idol desecration

NASIK, OCT. 24. Tension prevailed in new CIDCO locality here on Tuesday after unidentified persons desecrated an idol of Hanuman by applying black colour on it, police said today. On hearing the news, an enraged mob gathered near the temple and registered its protest.

Prohibitory orders were issued as a precautionary measure. Thirty-one persons were rounded up for defying orders.

All commercial establishments, shops and hotels were closed down, and people abandoned plans for 'Dandiya' in many places. The situation was well under control and peaceful, police said.

— PTI

Action clouds horrors of war in the media

By Rachna Subramanian
Times News Network

NEW DELHI: "America went to war in the darkness of an Arabian night," reported CNN from *USS Enterprise*, a day after the U.S. began raining bombs and bread on Afghanistan. In the seven days that have gone by, little light has emerged from this darkness except a fluorescent green screen with intermittent blips.

The only shots from Afghanistan have been of some rubble and people fleeing. And if it hadn't been for Al Jazeera, the world would still be seeing archival footage of a black-bearded bin Laden at an Al-Qaida training camp. The theatre of the millennium's new war is large, and one of the main fronts on which it is being fought is the media.

Newspapers have been dedicating an immense amount of column space to the war, complete with extensive details of the capability of American fighter aircraft, the cruise missiles and what went inside the 37,500 canary yellow food packets that were airdropped in Afghanistan.

A Centre for Media Studies report suggests that Indian newspapers are devoting more space to the U.S. and its war against the Taliban than they did to the Kargil war. "Our study shows that while Kargil grabbed 20 to 30 per cent of news space, the 'new war' is getting 45-60 per cent," says CMS chairman Bhaskar Rao.

But it is mainly television that is in the business of 'breaking news'. However, with journalists and photographers unable to enter the war zone, there is no real war footage. No pictures of destroyed Al-Qaida camps, nothing about terrorist casualties, and very little about civilian deaths. And there are no answers to a question commonly being asked in drawing-room discussions: "Has no American died in the war yet?"

Among American news channels, CNN is becoming controver-

sial with its repeated telecast of Bush's Hollywood-like speeches: "The gaping hole in the Pentagon wall will never be filled, but we will slowly build it back brick by brick." So much so that it is fast gaining the reputation of a mouthpiece. A President who claimed that the WTC attack was a war 'against the American way of life', a 'terror attack against freedom', has pleaded against bin Laden soundbites being telecast on the grounds that they are inflammatory.

Indian news channels, including Zee, Star and Aaj Tak, have been devoting some two-thirds of news time to the war. Says Mr Rao, "Overall the major channels have increased their viewership by two or three times in the last two-three weeks." But what they show is not very different from CNN.

Pakistan's PTV may be different but not very illuminating. While its news broadcasts show some scenes of disturbance on the streets of Quetta and Karachi, there are no reports from the refugee camps along its Afghan border. Discussions centre around Musharraf being in control of the situation, even as CNN and Indian channels repeatedly show Bush rebuffing him.

Are patriotic games then clouding over the real horrors of war?

Media expert Bhaskar Ghosh views it differently: "What we are seeing is horrific enough. Seeing buildings like the WTC coming down was traumatic. We didn't need to see the bodies. No civilised society telecasts mangled bodies as we do."

Defending the coverage Akhila Sivadas of the Centre for Advocacy and Research says: "It is true that CNN and other American channels are trying to develop a consensus, but they are not reducing the war to just images of military achievements. They are dealing with real fears in civil society such as fear of flying, of going to work and so on."

CONVERGENCE BILL / LAW LIKELY TO BE IN PLACE IN 2002

Mahajan hints at merger of IT, Communication Ministries ^{HA 13}

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, SEPT 2. The Minister for Information Technology and Communications, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, today gave a broad hint that the move to make him the Minister for both these Ministries was a step towards convergence. "One of us had to go to a different Ministry," he said referring to Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan being moved from Communications to Coal and Mines, while handing out to Mr. Paswan 'a good performance' certificate.

The Convergence Bill, already introduced in Parliament, would be given top priority and he hoped the new legislation would be in place by August 15 next year. Taking charge of his new portfolio of Communications, he said he had been expecting the convergence of the two Ministries for some months now.

However, it was being indicated that the merging the two Ministries would be a stupendous task, and it could be several years before it is accomplished. Moreover, the Information and Broadcasting Ministry would also have to be merged with the other two if convergence is to become a reality, and that was not going to happen in a hurry. Mr. Mahajan himself chose to be non-committal about the convergence of Information and Broadcasting Ministry with the other two — perhaps because the portfolio is held by Ms. Sushma Swaraj.

Another view, expressed guardedly by some was that the Prime Minister would have kept in mind the possibility of yet another major Cabinet induction and re-



The new Communications Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, at Sanchar Bhavan in New Delhi on Sunday.

— Photo: S. Subramaniam

shuffle at a later period. The exercise undertaken yesterday largely involved the BJP Ministers. The allies are waiting their turn.

It cannot be overlooked that

Mr. George Fernandes, the Samata Party leader, is waiting to be given a clean certificate by the Venkataswami Commission looking into the Tehelka affair.

Already the National Democratic Alliance leaders let it be known at their last meeting that they would like the Commission to complete its probe as early as possible. Although it was not added that this was because they would like to see the end of the compulsory waiting period imposed on Mr. Fernandes, this was very much the sense of it.

That Mr. Jaswant Singh continues to hold charge of two heavy Ministries — the External Affairs and Defence — is a clear pointer that the Defence Minister's seat was being kept warm for Mr. Fernandes.

The PMK and the Trinamool Congress leaders are also waiting to be accommodated, not withstanding the assertions by some of their leaders that their "re-entry" into the NDA was "unconditional". Whenever their inductions take place, the Prime Minister will have to find suitable berths for them, and Ms. Banerjee certainly will not settle for just anything. Since she cannot get back her Railways portfolio, now back with Mr. Nitish Kumar of the Samata Party, Communications was being kept with Mr. Mahajan for her, it was suggested. For the 'convergence' of Information Technology and Communications could take longer than the framework suggested by Mr. Mahajan.

THE HINDU

- 3 SEP 2001

CONVERGENCE BILL

One step forward, two steps back

THANKS to digital technology different kinds of communication such as telephone, television, computer data can now be transmitted by the same medium, whether wireless, cable, optic-fibre or others. For developing countries, the advent of digital communication creates the prospect of "leap-frogging" technologies; at one bound, India can give itself a telecommunications infrastructure comparable to that in advanced countries with possibilities for increasing business volumes and participatory development. The good news is that government is seized of the problems posed by convergence — it has introduced the Communications Convergence Bill, under which many functions of the current information and broadcasting and IT ministries will be subsumed under an omnibus Communications Commission of India (CCI) to regulate information, communications and entertainment. Anything that tames the proliferation of ministries and jurisdictions, besides replacing archaic legislation, is welcome. The bad news is that the Bill proposes to extend to the new media rules that applied to the old media, causing grave prejudice. That this is due to misunderstanding the fundamental nature of new media is no consolation.

Dotcoms, for example, have to be licensed just like TV channels are, when dotcoms could number in the thousands while there are at most 60 or 70 TV channels. By their very nature dotcoms have to implement new ideas quickly in order to succeed; the new bill conjures up visions of dotcommers spending their time genuflecting before ministerial desks instead of sniffing market opportunities. In addition, the Internet and other new media are international; the new rules will handcuff dotcoms and other service providers based in India relative to their competitors abroad. Another draconian provision, comparable to totalitarian countries like China, is that service providers can be held responsible for the content of messages when the nature of new media makes such monitoring impossible. The CCI is supposed to uphold quality of content on networks. But the criteria for assessing these are nebulous, accumulating enormous discretionary power in the hands of a few communications czars. Censorship could come the way of news portals disseminating news inimical to the government: is this the government's way of getting back at Tehelka? The new categories for which licences will be granted are also unnecessarily complex: network infrastructure facilities, content application services, networking services, network application services, and value-added network application services. The distinction between the last three categories is fuzzy, militating against the spirit of convergence. Overall, the new legislation seems inspired by a fear of the new media rather than a desire to take advantage of them. It displays a dirigiste mentality — the result of a convergence between licence raj interests and elements of authoritarian Hindutva within the government. Legislation in this area needs to limit licensing only to necessary areas, keep the licensing process open and transparent, keep entry barriers low. The Convergence Bill, as it stands, may be the surest way to kill the goose capable of laying golden eggs.

E-ntering the WTO paradigm

E-commerce will play an important role in the next round of WTO talks.

Aashit Shah and Annapoorna Ogoti study the characterisation of these

transactions within the WTO framework

WHILE the countdown for the Doha Ministerial Rounds of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to be held in November has begun; governments of countries world-over have accelerated their preparatory pace. One of the focal points of these discussions is going to be the issue of bringing e-commerce into the WTO paradigm. This issue was highlighted in '98, given the impact e-commerce is expected to have on international trade. In September, '98, the General Council of the WTO established a comprehensive work programme on e-commerce for the relevant WTO bodies, namely, the Council for Trade in Services, the Council for Trade in Goods, the Council for TRIPS and the Committee for Trade and Development Issues.

While these councils have been labouring to find appropriate solutions, an important issue for consideration has been the characterisation of e-commerce as 'goods' or 'services' for the purpose of international trade, which in turn would have several implications. There are certain important issues pertaining to characterisation that may arise from the industry point of view.

Characterisation of e-commerce: The inherent nature of e-commerce has blurred the boundary between 'goods' and 'services' and makes the categorization of electronic transmissions difficult. The General Agreement on Tariff and Trade, 1994 (GATT) regulates international trade in goods, while the General Agreement on Trade in Services, 1994 (GATS) regulates international trade in services. Where it has been characterised as goods, GATT would be applicable and for services, GATS would apply.

However, the GATT does not define 'goods' and the GATS provides a very broad definition of 'services' to include all services except those supplied in the exercise of government authority. Traditional definitions of 'goods' or 'services' may not be satisfactory with

the emergence of new technologies. An illustrative example would be that of an application service provider who actually provides software products that are used by different customers; this position could also be considered as a service, since the use of the software is dependent upon the supply by the service provider. In the absence of any well-defined meaning, it has been suggested that electronic transmissions may be 'goods' if they have some value that can be owned, if it exists independently of their owners and can be traded. Contrastingly, 'services' may be defined as things purchased by consumers that do not have physical characteristics, that is, they cannot be possessed and have no independent existence from the owner. For example, audio and video streaming services on the internet.

The challenge lies in developing a set of characterisation factors for electronic transmissions to distinguish them as goods or services. At the same time, while determining these factors at the WTO level, in addition to purely legal propositions, characterisation as goods or services would also depend upon strategic benefits it may bring to the industry.

Implications of characterisation as 'goods': By characterising electronic transmissions as 'goods', there would be an effect on the businesses of software and e-commerce companies.

Imposition of customs duties: Companies that are currently selling music over the internet, for

instance, will have to pay customs duties, which are presently not levied on them. Thus, they may have to factor the cost of customs duties in their sales price. Though the imposition of customs duties on e-commerce seems unworkable, the companies must be prepared to pay if governments develop suitable mechanisms to levy them.

Anti-dumping provisions: Furthermore, though anti-dumping pr-

visions may levy in cross-border trade to protect public morals and secure compliance with laws and regulations that are not contrary to the GATT. Some of these compliances relate to the effective protection of intellectual property rights (IPRs) and prevention of oppressive and deceptive trade practices. These restrictions will also apply to e-commerce.

IPRs: Another issue is the ownership of IPRs. Let us consider an example of an Indian company providing e-commerce services to an offshore company, which in turn uses those online services to manufacture products. In such a case, the IPRs would vest in the offshore company. However, if e-commerce services are treated as electronic goods, the Indian company could argue that part of intellectual property in the end-product vests in it, as it has significantly contributed to the end-product.

Excise duties: Besides the WTO considerations, at the domestic level, another issue that will need to be addressed is with respect to imposition of excise duties. For example, a website that offers downloading of MP3s may incur only a one-time manufacturing cost as compared to a traditional music company that has to incur costs on each compact disc that is manufactured. However, if downloading MP3s is equated to manufacture, companies may have to pay excise duties on every download!

Implications of characterisation as 'services': If e-transmissions were to be classified as 'services', they would attract the provisions of the GATS. Under the present classification of services within the GATS framework, digitised services can fall within the scope of various

services, some of them being computer and related services, communication services, distribution services, financial services, tourism and travel related services and other services not included elsewhere.

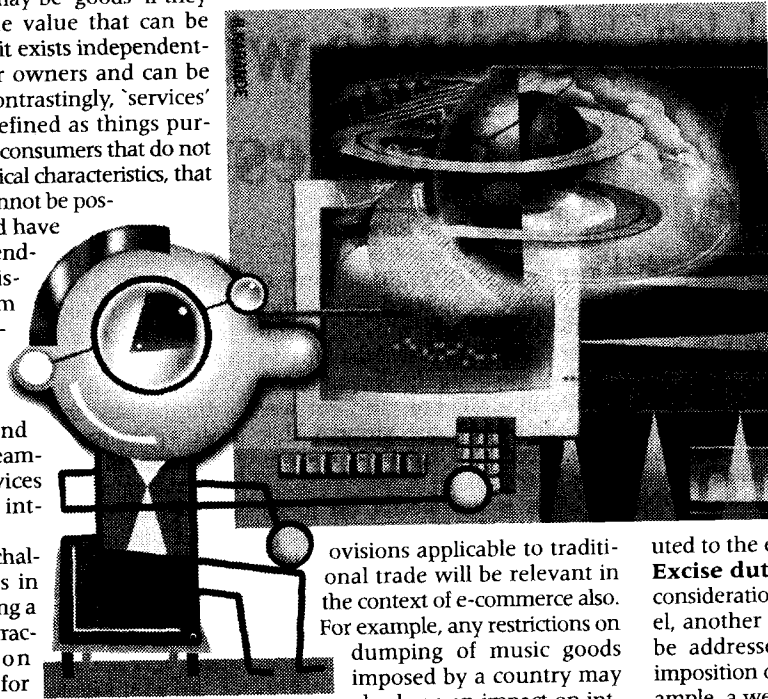
Modes of supply of services: Under the GATS, specific commitments on the supply of services are scheduled on the basis of four 'modes of supply': cross-border supply of services without the physical movement of the service supplier; consumption of services abroad; commercial presence and temporary presence of the service supplier. E-commerce services that are offered will have to comply with the liberalisation commitments of India according to the GATS schedule. This may limit/extend the provision of certain services. Moreover, market access into other countries may also need to be relaxed accordingly to promote international trade.

Service tax: E-commerce services would typically be subject to service tax. As this may be difficult to levy, an alternative could be the levying of service tax based upon the location/incorporation of the service provider company.

Content regulations: However, if electronic transmissions are considered as services, they may have to comply with strict content regulations.

Content regulations in case of services are even more stringent than in case of goods. For example, if movies are displayed over the internet by a company as a broadcasting service, they may have to follow the restrictions (cultural *et al*) imposed on broadcasting of foreign movies in India. Measures that are adopted by member nations according to the general exceptions under GATS with a view to protecting public morality and order and complying with laws and regulations pertaining to privacy and deceptive trade practices will have to be borne in mind while supplying online services.

Courtesy: Nishith Desai Associates



Of self-propagating worms, viruses



The Indian government has declared 2001 as the Year of e-Governance but India does not even have an information security policy in the event of an attack, says STANLEY THEODORE. Code Red is a sign of the way wars will be fought in future. Wise men learn from others' follies. On 6 August, 17 days after the Code Red threat forced the White House website to move and the powerful Pentagon shut its site to visitors, a new worm has been reported

CODE Red - something about the name reminds one of the Cold War. And the past two week's reports about its character, duplicity and capabilities of even causing the Internet's meltdown - "Is this the apocalypse?" - evoked feelings of the world being at war with itself. Advisories from the FBI and others may have sounded paranoid or exaggerated it but at the end of the day, Code Red, SirCam and their kind of self-propagating worms and viruses have shown how wars would be fought and revenge sought through the Internet.

Code Red has been named after a high-caffeine, cherry-flavoured soft drink popular with software programmers. China's ministry of public security has issued a national alert in response to Code Red II and some Internet links in Seoul has been suspended.

The Net has been hurt in a manner that it hurt - losses caused are estimated in excess of \$1.2 billion and counting. The only attack that wrought more havoc was the May 2000 ILOVEYOU virus, \$8.7 billion, but it failed to inflict the present fear that the Internet would crackle and crash. Despite one million users rushing to various websites to download a mind-boggling two billion patches to cover Microsoft servers' vulnerabilities from Code Red, the danger is far from over.

On 6 August, 17 days after the Code Red threat forced the White House website to move and the powerful Pentagon shut its site to visitors in sheer terror, a new worm has been reported. The American Federal Bureau of Investigation confirmed the presence of at least two more variants. Code Red II scans for vulnerable computer systems faster, bombards it with data to make it reel and if it fails to cripple its target, it leaves behind a Trojan, a camouflaged virus, that gives hackers total control of the system.

It is reported to be 4,000 times faster than its predecessor and an estimate on Sunday said some 400,000 systems were infected. The worm on the one hand targets a computer and at the same time commands it to look for others having similar vulnerabilities. It is coded to scour and infect till 19 August, after which it is programmed to fire massive amounts of junk data to bring down the White House website which has since changed its address.

The computer, till the other day a window to a world of opportunity, has become the latest lethal ultimate precision-guided weapon. Code Red by swarming the Net for victims was expected to slow down the Internet worldwide - the meltdown - and an initial sluggish bandwidth, caused by the Baltimore train accident that damaged fibre optic lines, was attributed to it.

On 6 August, *Vmyths.com*, dedicated to eradicate the computer virus hysteria, wrote in its ranting section, "What a coincidence. Today is the anniversary of another infrastructure meltdown, you simply know it as Hiroshima. Beware Code Red folks, Heaven help us - we are talking Hiroshima on a global scale. This worm has enough oomph to send us back to...to...the transistor age. Enjoy your tap water while it lasts."

On 30 July, the eve of Code Red's phase-two

attack, FBI director Ron Dick in an unprecedented move held a televised Press conference with IT representatives, including Microsoft, whose servers are the main targets, with the hope that the event succeeds in warning thousands of users in time.

The exercise is nothing short of a siren before a conventional air raid. But in the event of a real information warfare, a country does not have the luxury of sounding a siren for the simple reason that no one knows how and where from the attack is coming. As of now, the FBI has admitted that Code Red's origin or author or motive is not known.

In June, the CIA admitted that it was losing ground in the battle to protect the USA's computer infrastructure despite investing heavily into information warfare (IW). "I don't feel very good about our ability to anticipate," the CIA's Lawrence Gershwin said in a congressional testimony before the Joint Economic Committee.

He also said foreign governments were the biggest threat over the next decade as hackers and small terrorist groups lack the skills to mount an attack on US online institutional infrastructures such as communications networks, power grids, airways, railways, water works and banking, among others.

The USA, among the 20 countries having secret military departments dedicated to information warfare, is concentrating on defence systems designed to protect their networks from being ravaged in the event of an attack. Avenues to carry out such attacks are indeed aplenty and had it not been so, cyber vandals would not be able to launch 4,000 known attacks a week.

Online attacks have gone to a point that *attribution.org* - that monitors hacking activity - put its hands up and stopped reporting website defacements in May.

A disaster survey by *DLTape.com* said, in Silicon Valley's heart, California, 72 per cent of the companies are inadequately prepared for disaster recovery and 82 per cent don't have a disaster recovery plan. As more and more individuals and institutions go online, avenues for attack can only keep increasing.

Significantly, Mr Gershwin in his congressional testimony named China and Russia as appearing to develop computer-based tools capable of causing significant and long-term damage to the US economy.

The picture that can be drawn is spine-chilling in the event of China succeeding in damaging the USA's computer infrastructure.

The concept of war includes the ability to strike as the enemy does and choose a point that hurts the most, perhaps the Three Gorges Project, a century-old proposal, and close to the Chinese establishment's heart. Currently being built across the Yangtze River, the world's third longest river, it will be the world's biggest dam standing 605 feet tall and more than two kilometres wide.

The project is so awesome that it is likened to the Pyramids of Egypt. On completion in 2009, it will generate 18,000 MW of hydel power after displacing 1.2 million people and submerging 13 cities, 140 towns, 1,352 villages and 650 factories. To monitor the

project, China in 1994 signed with Canada's Agra Monenco an agreement to provide hardware, software and training of 160 Chinese project managers.

In 1999, the company offered to develop and install systems to measure and monitor the dam's strength. In effect, the monitoring of the project and later its routine schedules will be managed by high-end computer systems.

Should President George W Bush authorise a strike back, Pentagon's Central Command could choose Three Gorges. It would enter its networks and reschedule commands on the reservoir regarding the time and the quantity of water to be released. The time lag between



entering the system and issuing the commands would be brief, to avoid the risk of detection and it would ensure that a huge quantity of the Yangtze bursts out without warning.

In the course of inundating major provinces, it would wipe out from the map several towns and cities killing hundreds and thousands of families. The damage to China's economy would be unimaginable and the country may at least go back by 20 years, when it embarked on economic reforms. The USA would have achieved something that in comparison would make Hiroshima-Nagasaki seem just a nightmare.

If this is mere hypothesis, one ought to consider the year 2000 information war scenario, "The Day After ... in Cyberspace" against the USA and its allies simulated in 1996 by American policy think-tank Rand Corporation, in which senior US officials participated. The USA considers moving its forces to help Saudi Arabia against Iran after they have a spat over oil prices. Iran chooses not to challenge, keeping Operation Desert Storm in mind. But in the USA, a pattern of computer mayhem emerges.

As White House officials present evidence of Teheran dealing in information war, telephone services in two states go haywire. A computerised call-in attack jams telephone systems at American bases affecting its troop movement. Soon after the US President's National Security Council meeting, a high-speed passenger train - at 320 km an hour - is misrouted to crash into a goods train at Maryland.

The CIA suspects that Islamic fundamentalists have infiltrated the railways computer systems. At the same time, a loud explosion shatters a refinery at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, as Iranian battle ships move towards the kingdom.

Scotland Yard informs the British Prime

Minister that three viruses are affecting funds transfer at the Bank of England. CNN reports, "Iran has hired Russian computer experts and Indian software writers to threaten the entire economic fabric of the USA and Western Europe."

Pentagon's Phased Force Deployment List, having details of troops, arms deployment, ration and clothing, among others, finds its software corrupted. Reports of Georgia Bank's ATMs going berserk create a wave of domestic panic with people rushing to ATMs and banks to remove their money. The cockpit of a Boeing blacks out as it is about to touch down at Heathrow Airport killing all 402 people on board.

The next day, the President's call to reconvene the NSC is hampered as Washington's telephone network, including cellular phones, crashes. As the war game ended, participants were asked to draw an immediate action plan for the Commander-in-Chief. A participant said, "This was a strange, new type of conflict for which we are ill prepared. This was not something that carpet bombing is going to solve."

Rand listed the lessons learned: "Anybody can attack you ... You may not know who is under attack and who's in charge ... You may not know what is real ... You may not know who your adversary will be or what his capabilities will be ... You may not know you are under attack, who is attacking or how ... You will lose the USA as a sanctuary."

Rand conducted the exercise six times in evolving versions between January and June 1995. What is good for the USA is good for India, too, especially as it has positioned itself to be a superpower in information technology. Recently, Goldman Sachs, investment research leader, predicted India would be among the top five Internet-user bases by 2003 with an estimated 70 million online users.

Institutions like the Indian Railways are using Country Wide Network for Computerised Enhanced Reservation and Ticketing (CONCERT) - one of the largest software projects to be implemented in India. National Informatics Centre (NICNET) is the designated government network linking 540 district administrations, 32 states and Union Territory administrations.

The Indian Army's Radio Engineering Network, the Navy's Enterprise Wide Network and the Air Force's Air Defence Ground Environment System are dedicated, fully automated communication systems. The

National Stock Exchange is the country's largest Wide Area Network. Disruption of any of these networks is not an exaggerated threat, says Lieutenant-Commander Prashant Bakshi, Research Fellow, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses.

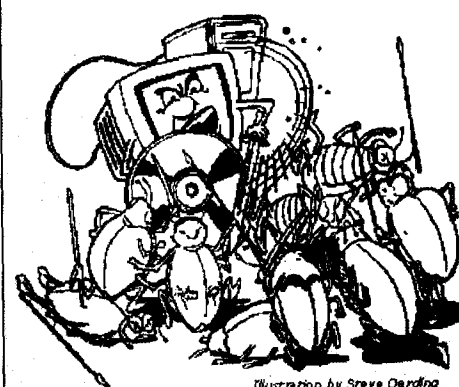
His April 2001 paper, "Security Implications For A Wired India: Challenges Ahead", narrates China running simulated attacks, similar to Rand's, on the telecommunication, power and finance sectors from India, Taiwan and South Korea.

The "Chinese IW centre established in 1996 lays down offensive computer attacks on the enemy's critical systems as its primary mission. The Chinese IW doctrine includes economic and industrial espionage, and the 'doctoring' of chips and software that can plant viruses or 'trap-doors' in enemy information systems," he wrote.

This is apart from the well-experienced attacks from Pakistan's G Force. The Indian government has declared 2001 as the Year of e-Governance but India does not have an information security policy in the event of an attack.

If the presumption is that it could be in the distant future, then it is ridiculous. The good thing is that the armed forces have encryption

Cyberwar weapons



LOGIC BOMB: A software programme that detonates at a specific time, or when certain instructions are executed to destroy or overwrite data to make a function go haywire.

HERF GUN: A high-energy radio frequency weapon that shoots a high-power radio signal at an electronic target and disables it.

SNIFFER: An eavesdropping programme that will monitor communications or commercial transactions, allowing the hacker highly sensitive information.

COMPUTER WORM: A self-replicating programme that uses up disk space and memory to eventually shut down a computer system.

THE TARGETS

Airplanes: Destructive software could cause plane crashes by making on-board avionics malfunction. High-energy weapons, in theory, could also cause crashes by disabling computer systems.

Power stations and water works: Logic bombs or worms could knock out power grids and drinking water networks causing local or regional blackouts or dry-ups.

Banks and stock exchanges: Sniffer programmes can track fund transfers. Logic bombs could cripple the markets and destroy records of transactions. Hackers, on receipt of secret information, can crack into banks and transfer funds into their accounts.

Weaponry: Sophisticated computer controls are vulnerable to destructive software as it can debilitate weapons from tanks to spy aircraft. The damage could also be to armed forces' communications.

Trains: Logic bombs in traffic-control networks could cause crashes by misrouting trains.

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technologies in place and one can only pray that they have enough steel when the nation is attacked.

Code Red is a sign of things to come and wise men learn from others' follies. India need not wait to be kicked in its teeth before bracing itself for the wicked, unknown, unreal attacks whose prospects are as certain as sunshine today.

(The author is The Statesman's Hyderabad-based Special Representative.)

HACKERS AT THEIR INFECTIOUS BEST

1969: Arpanet, the precursor of the Internet, is founded.

1980: In October, Arpanet comes to a crashing halt because of virus distribution.

1981: Ian Murphy, known to his friends as Captain Zap, broke into AY&T's computers and changed its internal clocks on billing meters. People got late-night discount rates when they called during daytime. He is the first hacker to be tried and convicted as a felon. At present, the CEO of a company, he was the inspiration for the film *Sneakers*.

1986: First PC virus "Brain" originated from Pakistan and contained the "stealth" capability to avoid detection.

1988: In March, the first anti-virus code was written to contain "Brain". "Cascade" was detected in Germany. By being encrypted, it was coded against deletion.

Robert Morris, a graduate student at Cornell University, sets off an Internet worm programme later named after him, which replicated itself to over 6,000 hosts bringing almost the whole network to a halt. Morris is sentenced to three

years on probation. Morris Senior was a computer security expert with the National Security Agency.

"Jerusalem virus family" - among the most virulent - stays in the computer's memory and reinfects it again by deleting files. Programmed to get active on Friday the 13th, it deleted any programme when opened.

Viruses start getting media attention. 1989: "AIDS Information" package's 10,000 copies landed with medical establishments. After hiding for a while, it surfaced on computers demanding the establishment to send payment for the package to PC Cyborg Corporation.

Kevin Mitnick is convicted of stealing software and codes for long-distance lines. He is the first person convicted under a new law against gaining access to an interstate computer network for criminal purposes. He was sentenced for one year.

1990: Many companies start offering anti-virus software. Many viruses with different characteristics are spotted.

1992: "Michaelangelo" in March creates havoc.

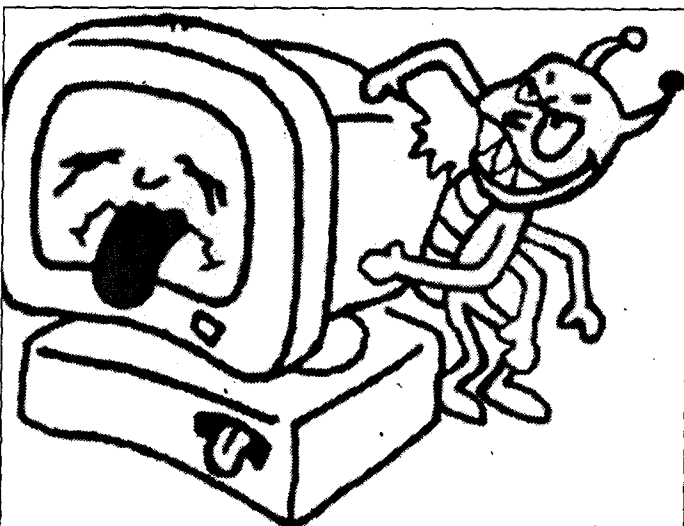
Though it did not infect, predictions of damage created panic and boosted anti-virus sales.

1993: "Satan Bug" virus detected in Washington. The industry helped the FBI track down its author - a kid.

1994: A 16-year-old music student, Richard

line mentor, "Kuji", is never found.

A group directed by Russian hackers breaks into the computers of Citibank and transfers more than \$10 million from customers' accounts. Eventually, Citibank reportedly recovered all but \$400,000 of the pilfered



Pryce, better known by the alias Datastream Cowboy, is arrested and charged with breaking into hundreds of computers, including those at the Griffiths Air Force base, Nasa and the Korean Atomic Research Institute. His on-

money. 1995: Windows 95, to become the most popular operating system, is launched giving hope of safety against viruses. Soon to be spotted were "macroviruses" designed to cripple even Windows

95, like "Concept" then notorious for spreading rapidly.

In February, Kevin Mitnick is arrested for a second time. He is charged with stealing 20,000 credit card numbers. He eventually spends four years in jail and on his release, parole conditions demand that he avoid contact with computers and mobile phones.

He was the first hacker to be on FBI's "most wanted" posters.

1996: Popular websites are attacked and defaced to protest against the treatment of Kevin Mitnick.

The Internet now has over 16 million hosts and is growing rapidly.

"Laroux" is the first virus to successfully infect Microsoft Excel spreadsheets.

1999: In March, the "Melissa" virus goes on the rampage and wreaks havoc with computers worldwide. After a short investigation, the FBI tracks down and arrests the writer of the virus, a 29-year-old New Jersey computer programmer, David L. Smith.

2000: In February, a Canadian kid called MafiaBoy is arrested for launching an unprecedented denial of service attacks that

brought Internet giants like Amazon.com, yahoo.com and ebay.com, among others, to their knees. He ran a computer script that slammed the sites with garbage data.

In May, the "ILOVEYOU" virus is unleashed and clogs computers worldwide. Onel De Guzman admitted to cooking the virus but could not be punished because of inadequate laws in the Philippines.

Over the coming months, variants of the virus are released that manage to catch companies that did not do enough to protect themselves.

In October, Microsoft admits that its corporate network has been hacked and the source code for future Windows' products has been seen.

2001: "NakedWife" and other viruses continue to surface. A wave of attacks is carried out on American sites allegedly from Russian soil after the US spy plane incident.

Asiaweek lists Onel De Guzman among the top 50 communicators in the continent and called him the icon of the Internet Age.

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And not forgetting, corporate e-fraud

made 5.7 9/18

SUPPOSE, a quarter million computer-users wake up one morning to find their websites defaced with the words: "Hacked by Chinese". Precautions, including installation of protective softwares, save the White House and the Pentagon websites from the attack of the dreaded "worm", named "Code Red". This is mid-July.

Cut back to early May. The Indian ministry of external affairs' website is found defaced with graffiti by a group called "Hackactivist GFORCE", which also left a warning - all major Indian official websites would be "manned" by the 'GFORCE' in a few weeks. But if you thought websites of key government departments and prominent political parties were the hackers' only favourite targets, think again. For, e-commerce has revolutionised not only interconnectivity among organisations and efficient service from companies, but also opportunities for corporate e-fraud.

According to a 2001 global survey on e-fraud, conducted by the international consultancy firm KPMG, India leads the world in e-commerce fraud, followed by the UK and Germany. The unique survey received 1,253 responses from CEOs and senior executives from some of the world's largest public and private companies in Australia, Hong Kong and India from the Asia-Pacific belt, and Italy, Canada and the USA among other countries.

According to the survey, respondents from India reported the highest rate of security breaches to their e-commerce systems, at 23 per cent, with the UK and Germany tied at 14 per cent. But what is more significant is that the number and nature of e-frauds are believed to be grossly understated by the companies, primarily to protect their reputation. But what form can e-frauds take? From the consumer's point of view, the most common abuse is that of credit cards. A popular website, for instance, had refused to pay \$100,000 to an intruder who claimed to have stolen credit card numbers. Soon after, nearly 25,000 credit card numbers appeared on the site. Last year, American Express had to re-issue an undisclosed number of credit cards as a website was compromised by a hacker.

E-commerce has revolutionised opportunities for corporate e-fraud as well. CHIRANJIB SENGUPTA studies a global survey in which India leads the world as the most 'crackable' country, followed by the UK and Germany

Squad disclosed that hackers had penetrated the online divisions of at least four British banks last year and stolen billions of pounds.

Corporate respondents to the KPMG survey assessed the risk of e-fraud greater from system crashes, virus attacks and copying or deletion of customer database than from copying or deletion of credit card numbers. But as far as the consumers' perceptions about e-commerce securities were concerned, the companies overwhelmingly indicated that the security of credit card numbers and personal information were the most contentious issues for their customers. Though only 21 per cent of the respondents had their e-business limited to web-page exposure, they considered the defacement of websites, very common nowadays, as amounting to e-fraud and having detrimental impact on the companies' reputation.

Unlike traditional fraud cases, the greater risk perceptions from so many varied areas in e-business stems from the fraud perpetrator's ability to maintain anonymity in an e-commerce environment. Another problem affecting detection and spread of awareness about e-fraud is what may be termed the sweeping-under-the-carpet syndrome - perhaps, because of a reluctance to report information on fraud or breaches having occurred.

Though in India most companies admit that their e-commerce system is more of a target for fraud than their traditional "brick and mortar" business, hardly any composite data is available on the extent of e-fraud. While 72 per cent of the Indian respondents to the KPMG survey rated the threat of e-fraud higher through the Internet

than their internal systems, nearly 70 per cent of the companies also did background checks on their e-commerce system suppliers. But that is only a part of a sustainable security system. The financial loss arising out of e-fraud in India remains undisclosed. According to another KPMG survey, covering all forms of fraud in India, the total corpus of loss from corporate frauds, including e-fraud, stood at Rs 94 million for the survey respondents.

On the global scale, 83 per cent of the survey respondents felt their e-commerce system was a more attractive target than their traditional systems. The survey sounds another warning for e-business - "Many companies are complacent when it comes to issues related to e-fraud and security breaches. The reality is that all companies that have embraced e-commerce will be exposed to e-fraud."

But even when an e-fraud has been detected and reported, the survey found that 83 per cent of the CEOs and senior executives were reluctant to pursue legal action against hackers because of reasons ranging from inadequate legal remedies to out-of-court settlements. An executive from Denmark, whose company had faced a security breach, stated that legal action was not taken against the hacker as he had exposed vital gaps in the company's information technology group. Similarly, another respondent from the UK said a hacker had notified his company of the potential to deface its website, but did no damage, and was hence not punished. But not all companies are that lucky.

Many companies have woken up to the reality. The current trend in e-business is thus towards e-assurance and implementing information system (IS) governance. While e-assurance is a framework - reviewed by an independent third party - that defines the parameters of security

control in a borderless world, IS governance, which includes IS audit and IT due diligence, outlines how an organisation can better understand its technological risks and improve performance. In another survey conducted by CyberSource, an Internet fraud detection portal, it was found that while there were so many security checks in real-life stores, when it came to e-commerce, virtual merchants could do little against unscrupulous web operators who stole credit card numbers, made false claims to get free goods and peddled substandard products, digital or otherwise.

The survey shattered another myth in the dictum that the customer is always right. Rather, it discovered that the customer was sometimes the crook. Which brings us to the security aspect of e-commerce. The implementation of cyber laws, particularly in India, is still in a nascent stage. Parliament had passed the Information Technology Bill on 16 and 17 May 2000, and the Act came into force in October 2000. But there has been no firm decision as yet on the issue of digital signature, a system which, when enforced, might considerably reduce chances of e-fraud. The Centre had announced its plans to appoint certifying agencies who would issue digital signature certificates and be responsible for security of online transactions. A committee was also established by the Controller of Certifying Authorities to prepare guidelines for the evaluation of the CAs. But it is yet to decide upon a draft legislation on digital signature.

Paying heed to the warnings on e-commerce fraud, countries like France, Germany, Italy, Australia and Malaysia have adopted the digital signature regime through legislation, while in the UK, rated second on the KPMG survey, an E-commerce Act is in force. Worried by the rise in e-fraud cases, the UK has also set up the National Hi-Tech Crime Unit, a new British police squad formed to battle cybercrime.

The division, which consists of software professionals and police officers, is being seen as the country's main defence against e-fraud and other cybercrimes.

(The author is on the staff of The Statesman, Kolkata.)

Pentagon closes public access to web sites

San Francisco/Singapore
THE 'CODE RED' worm finally squirmed. After playing dead since it was supposed to attack Tuesday night, the computer worm spread on Wednesday to more than 150,000 computers and forced the Pentagon to shut down public access to many of its web sites for the second time in two weeks.

But the worm didn't create nearly as much havoc as earlier feared. No slowdown in Internet traffic or damage to web sites — the biggest threats of the worm — were noted.

The FBI's National Infrastructure Protection Center now says it expects the worm to hit 350,000 computers, about as many as it did on July 19 when it first surfaced. The worm isn't spreading as quickly as some observers feared because businesses inoculated their computers with security software.

Still, it may take days before the full damage is known. The worm is intended to deface Web sites — not to infect consumers' personal computers. "People feared a rapid worm sprinting across the Internet," says Elad Yoran, co-founder of network-security firm Ripstech.

But that's not how Code Red spreads. It infiltrates computers the first 19 days of a month, then goes into attack phase for 9 days, then rests until the next month.

Code Red first appeared in a July 19 assault on the White House Web site. The attack was blocked, but it overwhelmed thousands of business computers. Code Red primarily infects computers running Windows NT, Windows 2000 and Microsoft's Internet Information Server software. The White House Web site was not affected by the latest siege, presidential spokesman Ari Fleischer said. The Code Red worm had minimal impact on

the flow of Internet traffic on Thursday, one day after reawakening to target tens of thousands of Web servers and the Pentagon's computer network. There were few reports of worm infection in Asia but computer security experts in the US said it was still too early to assess the full impact of the revived bug.

"We see no significant performance changes on either high- or low-bandwidth connections, or internationally," a statement from Internet performance monitoring firm Keynote Systems Inc said in the United States after assessing Wednesday's impact.

Code Red, named after a cherry-flavored caffeinated soft drink favored by programmers, first appeared on July 19 in certain Microsoft operating systems, went dormant on July 20 and was programmed to have remained that way. It began spreading again after midnight GMT on Tuesday as a result of incorrect

clock settings on some infected computers and would continue infecting vulnerable computers and spreading until August 20, experts said.

"The worm has a full 19 days to sit here and propagate, which is twice as long as last time," said Marc Maiffret, chief hacking officer at eEye Digital Security of Waltham, Massachusetts. "In four days we'll have a better gauge of where this thing is going." Computers running Windows 95, 98 and Me are not vulnerable to the worm.

For infected computers, turning the machine off and then on gets rid of the worm but does not provide immunity from future infection.

Computer security experts in the US highlighted the potential dangers of the worm. "This is already one of the largest automatic infections in the history of the Internet," said Alan Paller of the System Administration, Net-

working and Security Institute in Maryland. The worm disturbed the Pentagon's computer networks on Wednesday and officials predicted it could eventually infect as many systems as it did in its first outbreak in July.

"The worm is an ugly thing," US Army Major Barry Venable said. "Here at DoD (Department of Defence), we've observed several disturbances to our networks, but we've seen no significant degradation to DoD." Overall, an estimated 80,000 Web servers were infected in the first day of the worm's renewed attack, according to Roman Danyliw, an Internet security analyst at the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) at Carnegie Mellon University.

It was the same story in China, where the great majority of computers have Chinese-language operating systems, and Hong Kong.

Reuters/USA Today



The reawakened "Code Red" worm disturbed the Pentagon's computer networks on Wednesday.

After US, Code Red eyes global PCs

FROM BERNHARD WARNER

London, Aug 2 (Reuters): The Code Red worm, its impact so far confined mainly to the US, could start to target vulnerable computers in other parts of the world over the next few days, experts said today.

Some 120,000 computer servers had been corrupted by the worm, the vast majority of them in the US, according to Internet Security Systems, an Atlanta-based company that tracks the spread of computer viruses. One casualty was the Pentagon's computer network.

However, fears that the Internet could grind to a halt have not been justified so far.

"We reckon that there are another two million potential targets," said Kenneth De Spiegeleire, manager of security assessment services in ISS's London office. He added that the worm may begin to seek potential targets outside the US once that region was exhausted.

Today, there were few reports of worm infestation in Asia, and

no known reports in Europe, but computer security experts in the US said it was still too early to assess the full impact of the revived bug.

"We see no significant performance changes on either high- or low-bandwidth connections, or internationally," a statement from Internet performance monitoring firm Keynote Systems Inc said in the US after assessing yesterday's impact. Code Red, named after a cherry-flavoured caffeinated soft drink favoured by programmers, first appeared on certain Microsoft operating systems on July 19, becoming most active in that period, infiltrating 350,000 computer servers.

A separate computer virus, dubbed Sircam, continues to live on out of the spotlight of the Code Red worm.

A Ukrainian website said today it had received secret documents from President Leonid Kuchma's administration after the Sircam virus infected government computers and e-mailed it the files. The Code Red worm

began spreading again after midnight on Tuesday and would continue infecting vulnerable computers and spreading until August 20, experts said.

"The worm has a full 19 days to sit here and propagate, which is twice as long as last time," said Marc Maiffret, chief hacking officer at eEye Digital Security of Waltham, Massachusetts. "In four days we'll have a better gauge of where this thing is going."

Computers running Windows 95, 98 and ME are not vulnerable to the worm. For infected computers, turning the machine off and then on gets rid of the worm but does not provide immunity from future infection. A free software patch is available at (www.digital-island.net/codered/).

Computer security experts in the United States highlighted the potential dangers of the worm.

"This is already one of the largest automatic infections in the history of the Internet," said Alan Paller of the System Administration, Networking and Security Institute in Maryland.

THE TELEGRAPH

10 AUG 2001

Red alert today for 'Code Red' second coming

Soumendra Sahu/ Kushan Mitra
New Delhi, July 31

THE 'CODE Red' worm, which on July 19 wrecked nearly 12,000 servers the world-over and sent several US Government websites crashing, could invade websites in India around 5.30 am on Wednesday.

India could well be one of the countries to be hit by Code Red's second coming. As per the International Data Corporation (IDC), around 50 per cent of servers in the country run on Microsoft's Windows NT and Windows 2,000. Both versions are at peril from the worm. Unlike a virus, a worm doesn't eat up data and files. It attacks servers. It is nothing like the I Love You or the Chernobyl viruses, which deleted important files from computers. Code Red won't affect PCs that run on Windows 95/98/ME. But, if someone has Windows NT/2000 running, he'd better watch out.

The worm gets its name from a high-caffeine cola made by Pepsi. But, if a different story is to be believed, the 'Red' is because it originated in China. The worm's modus operandi is simple. It exploits a known vulnerability in ida.dll, a component programme in Microsoft's IIS (Internet Information Server) 4.0/5.0, an integral component of Windows NT/2000.

Microsoft discovered the worm on June 18, and a patch was posted on the Microsoft TechNet website on June 19.

However, many webmasters didn't download it on time and nearly 12,000 servers were affected in the first attack.

The worm replicates itself easily, selecting 100 IP addresses (Internet Protocol addresses, an individual number assigned to every machine), scanning machines associated with those numbers for the flaw and then defacing websites hosted on that server with the following message, 'Welcome to <http://www.worm.com>! Hacked By Chinese!'. Every hacked server then begins a new scanning process, and the worm spreads.

Microsoft shut down 'www.worm.com', thinking the site would collect information of servers that had been attacked. Experts say this would have little effect as Code Red is programmed to allow anyone to make a list of all system that's compromised.

At 5.30 am on August 1 the new more virulent form of the worm will start affecting machines. This would compromise data such as credit card numbers, email and other confidential information on the affected servers.

Removing the worm isn't complicated. Simply reboot the affected server and the worm will be deleted. But this won't prevent the worm from resurfacing later. To ensure foolproof safeguard for machines, server administrators must download the security patch available from Microsoft.



E-commerce is alive and kicking in India

Companies are spending on e-biz initiatives despite negative sentiments, but the government needs to help, reports R Subramanyam

THE LAST two years were glorious for Internet startups. They were the most talked about and got market valuations that caused ulcers to older and well established firms. The dotcom bubble burst and skepticism replaced optimism, with e-commerce getting branded as a non-workable proposition. Companies began to ask if the Internet was just hype.

Dotcom bust or not, the Internet does provide benefits for individuals, companies and the government. With this as a backdrop, the National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom) commissioned The Boston Consulting Group (BCG) to conduct a comprehensive study on the e-commerce scenario in India.

At the recently held annual E-Biz India 2001 seminar in Bangalore, Nasscom released the findings of the study which covers the impact, threats and opportunities created by e-commerce.

James Abraham, vice president and director BCG India, says that over 150 interviews were carried out across industries and companies of various sizes. The research has revealed interesting pieces of information. For instance, although valuations of companies that focused on the e-commerce space have crashed, the spending on e-commerce continues to happen.

Online spending on both B2B and B2C continues to grow. Several companies in India are spending money to be e-enabled. While the overall IT spend has come down, the spending on e-solutions and e-initiatives has not dipped.

The study also reveals that while corporates are building up capabilities for e-commerce, not many are aware of the benefits they expect to derive.

Phiroz Vandrevalla, chairman, Nasscom says that companies that

lag in their e-commerce implementation plans will lose competitive advantage.

The study has shown that the Indian IT industry has taken several steps to grab the opportunity arising of implementing e-solutions, says Abraham.

Based on the outcome of this study, Nasscom has put out a 10 point action plan to the government on what it needs to do to further the growth of e-commerce in the country, says Vandrevalla.

Pure-play dotcoms (companies that have purely virtual business model not supported by offline assets) in many industries are not likely to be successful. No surprises there. For instance there are seven portals focused on online steel trading. BCG estimates that the market by 2005 can support only two.

Though at a nascent stage, e-commerce transaction volume in India is expected to grow to Rs 195,000 crore by 2005. Bulk of the volume is expected to come from B2B transactions.

Due to the multiple barriers to e-commerce adoption, overall estimates, says Abraham, vary from a low Rs 120,000 crore to a significant Rs 270,000 crore.

Multiple external factors impeding e-commerce adoption include: limited Internet access (five million Internet users in India), poor telecom and communication infrastructure (slow Internet connectivity and high access costs), multiple gaps in legal and regulatory framework and lack of payment gateways.

Internal barriers too slow the rate of adoption of e-commerce. While some companies have reservations on the return on investment front, others did not feel the



need to adopt e-commerce as there is very little competitive pressure. Some companies that had just completed expensive ERP implementation felt that they did not want additional investment in technology till they could reap benefits from existing investments.

Purchase managers who consider the procurement department as their kingdom see e-commerce as a threat to their power.

The BCG report points out that the impact of B2B e-commerce will vary across industries. While online procurement will be a major source of savings, companies can expect greater benefits from efficiency gains and collaborative efforts leading to wider and faster information sharing. The automotive sector, for instance, which has complex supply chain flows, will tend to reap considerable benefits.

The speed at which e-commerce can be adopted and the value realised from them would to a large

extent depend on the industry structure, its supply chain characteristics and its IT adoption.

BCG research states that while many businesses are mobilising for rapid e-commerce adoption, several are lagging behind. BCG estimates that by the end of 2001, some companies in the consumer durables space will have web-enabled almost 90 per cent of their procurement and 80 per cent of their sales to distributors and dealers.

While in the short to medium term, savings that accrue from e-commerce initiatives will be shared between the company and its business partners, over the long term it will be passed on to consumers.

BCG estimates that the total online users are expected to be 35 million in 2005. Despite this the Internet will not be a key sales channel in any industry in the country. The study indicates that B2C e-commerce is expected to have a transaction volume of Rs

all e-solutions services market) by 2010.

Although the business opportunity is immense and ready for picking, Indian companies need to convince clients about the value that can be created from implementing e-commerce solutions. To do this, companies need to invest heavily on hiring domain experts in select industry verticals and build applications to demonstrate the value it will bring to the clients.

They also need to rejig their marketing and implementation process to suit e-solutions. What they need to do is to have a customer oriented marketing approach, an ability to work in small, short phases (as opposed to year-long projects) and build capabilities to deliver towards lower time to market requirements.

Although the domestic market (\$50 million in 2005) is small when compared to global opportunities (\$640 billion in 2005), companies should use it as a training ground to build capabilities to win in the global market.

Indian IT firms which do not have a reputation in product development space can build this reputation through developing e-solutions products. The Indian IT industry should set itself a target of \$ 1 billion to come from overall e-solutions products market.

In order to reap the full benefits of e-commerce, the government has to take several initiatives. One is the need to resolve the legal and regulatory issues for e-commerce transactions and accelerate development of communication infrastructure. The other is to address the unfinished agenda in e-governance — such as evolving a common e-governance architecture for all governments at all levels and improve citizens' access and awareness about these services.

Watchdog to check smut on the net

Siddharth Zarabi and
Anju Sharma

New Delhi, July 19

THE PROPOSED Communications Commission of India (CCI) will have powers to censor content on the internet and in the electronic media.

A Group of Ministers (GoM), which met here today to finalise the Communication Convergence Bill, decided to create a specialised 'content bureau' under the proposed CCI to 'police' the electronic media and the internet. The purpose is to stop proliferation of pornography, hate speech and other objectionable material.

Once this happens, the need for a separate Media Council will fall redundant, with the content bureau addressing all these concerns. I&B Minister Sushma Swaraj told the 'Hindustan Times' that the proposed bureau would be staffed by eminent people from different fields, including academia.

In addition, the GoM has retained a draconian proposal vesting unlimited censorship powers in the CCI against non-accredited journalists. In other words, the commission will be able to intercept and monitor "press messages, data or information intended for publication in India".

Not just journalists, even service providers (like internet access providers) who fail to assist the interception of such objectionable content will be liable to a seven-year prison terms.

Contacted on the need for such



harsh provisions, a senior minister in the GoM said there was a possibility that the matter would be looked into.

Thankfully, the GoM decided to drop a regressive clause that had sought to make licencing mandatory for some value-added services such as internet services, unified messaging services, infotech-enabled services, including call centres, e-commerce, tele-banking, tele-medicine and video conferencing.

Such a step would actually introduce a 'licence raj' for the burgeoning infotech industry.

No new licences would be required for these services, Law Minister Arun Jaitley said. However, existing licencing requirements for services like mobile telephony and direct-to-home (DTH) will continue.

The Bill will be given final touches on Saturday by a group of senior officials from various ministries. After the Bill gets Cabinet clearance, "it will be tabled in the forthcoming monsoon session of Parliament," Swaraj said.

THE HINDUSTAN

Kashir channel's woes continue

By Shujaat Bukhari X9-17
SRINAGAR, JULY 8. The Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has withstood the campaign launched by vested interests to get the Kashir channel shifted here and is looking into the "grave irregularities" in Srinagar Doordarshan.

The much-hyped channel in the Kashmiri language was set up to counter Pakistani propaganda but has failed to have any impact. With the authorities in Srinagar DD controlling the unlimited allocation of funds, the channel virtually became a money-minting machine. As no criteria is followed in allotting programmes, only those with access to top officials get slots.

This not only resulted in degradation in the quality of programmes but also turned the DD Kendra into a den of corruption, and also had its effect on Radio Kashmir. Srinagar DD earned the dubious distinction of having at least 30 people staying back even after transfer

orders were served on them. "They moved the court in connivance with top officials who chose not to contest the cases", an official said.

Ironically, the head of the Kendra himself has moved the court against his transfer; he was supposed to file objection on behalf of DD against himself. Since the deadline lapsed, the transfer order became obsolete; he now continues to call the shots. "This is the first instance in DD history that an official is supposed to fight the case filed by himself," an official said, accusing the top officials in Delhi of being hand in glove with the local officials.

Good sense has since prevailed in Mandi House. Acting on complaints, the Union Ministry has asked the Director, Srinagar Kendra, to furnish the accounts for the Rs. 14.50 crores the Kendra spent on inhouse production in 2000-2001. But the Director avoided the same saying he did not have sufficient staff. However, the fact remains that the Kendra has sur-

plus staff in all seasons, a majority of casual staff is also employed.

Recently, the Centre decided to shift the channel to Srinagar, reportedly on the advice of the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, and the Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Ms. Sushma Swaraj, was to inaugurate it here on June 6. However, intelligence agencies worked overnight to give a "clear picture" to the Ministry and said it would lose credibility if the channel was shifted to Srinagar. The move could result in more irregularities, the Ministry was told. This resulted in the programme being cancelled at the last moment.

Though efforts are on to shift the channel, artistes and media professionals resent it. "The channel has been spoiled with a majority of programmes being beamed through the Srinagar Kendra. Shifting it to this place will mean its end," said Mr. Ghulam Ali Majboor, a folk theatre artiste.

Print media on stock market route

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, July 6: The Centre is considering a suggestion from the newspaper industry to allow "market access" — listing on the stock exchanges after raising capital — that will not bar foreign direct investors, foreign institutional investors and non-resident Indians from investing in Indian print media companies.

The suggestion, which has been made by five editors, marks a substantive change from the earlier approach where clearance was sought for foreign direct investment in media companies, which would have enabled foreign media giants to control Indian newspapers and magazines.

"What we are seeking is meant to strengthen the Indian print media companies. We want to be permitted to enter the capital market without restrictions. The only restriction that is needed is that control should be in Indian hands," Narendra Mohan of *Dainik Jagaran*, one of the five, explained. At the same time, it will mean allowing foreign investment in the sector.

Union information and broadcasting minister Sushma Swaraj said today that she had asked the law ministry for a definition of "foreign ownership and control" as mentioned in a 1955 Cabinet resolution. That resolution barred foreigners from owning Indian print media companies.

Swaraj wrote to the law ministry after receiving a letter from the five editors that wanted Indian print industry companies to be allowed to raise capital like corporations in other sectors.

THE TELEGRAPH

Journalists disagree over media council *Media*

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 5. - Various journalist associations failed to reach a consensus on the Media Council when asked for their views over the issue by the information and broadcasting ministry.

While some organisations like the Indian Journalists Union (IJU) insist that the electronic media representatives be included in the existing Press Council of India, others like the Indian Broadcasting Foundation (IBF) and the Editors Guild don't want the clubbing together

of the electronic and the print media. Meanwhile, the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference (AINEC) is strongly opposed to any regulatory council at all.

The issue was placed before the Parliamentary consultative committee for information and broadcasting yesterday and though MPs were unanimous about having a regulatory body, there seems to be no agreement about a structure. With everyone agreeing to disagree, the ministry may have problems creating any consensus on the subject.

The IJU has criticised the ministry's plans to have a new media council and wants to know why a new media council has been proposed. It wants electronic media to join the existing Press Council. It has called for a working paper on the subject before asking different organisations for a view.

The All India Small and Medium Newspapers Federation also wants the press and electronic media together, but unlike the IJU want a new organisation to be formed. It also wants the Centre to nominate top media professionals as the

chairman and members. The Working News Camera-men's Association has called for a nationwide debate on the subject and the circulation of a position paper before any meetings are held.

On the other hand, the AINEC has strongly opposed the idea of a media council either as a separate entity or as part of the current Press Council. It said that such a body is totally unacceptable as it "only enlarges the scope of intervention, interference and invasion of the freedom of the press, print and electronic." The organisation

added that it will only lead to chaos and declared that the council is an effort by the government to maintain its grip on the media and influence it.

The Editors Guild finds separate councils for the press and broadcast media more acceptable but has strongly criticised the idea of appointing a former Supreme Court judge as the council's chairman. Instead senior media specialists and academics with a media background should be appointed and it should have powers to enforce its decisions, it added. Moreover, the councils

should be set up after a full discussion in Parliament, the guild said.

The IBF also doesn't approve of a media council to cover both electronic and print media. It said such a feature is unviable as print and electronic media are governed by different sets of rules and have separate ownership structures as electronic media is partly foreign owned.

Meanwhile, The I&B ministry has spoken of consultations before any decision but officials said such a divergence in views has come as a surprise.

CURBING DISSENT

Ominous trends in Nepal and Pakistan

POLITICAL changes in Pakistan and Nepal have prompted crackdowns on journalists. In Nepal Yubaraj Ghimire, editor of the Nepali newspaper *Kantipur*, has been put on trial for treason along with two of his associates. Ghimire's crime? Publishing an article by Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai claiming that the massacre of the royal family was the handiwork of the RAW and the CIA. While this may sound typical of the kind of conspiracy theory that organisations like Bhattarai's like to peddle, the point is that thanks to the inability of both the Koirala and previous governments to make much headway against either poverty or corruption in public life, Maoists have gained prominence in Nepal's polity, and their views need to be heard. Two points have to be noted here: there is no provision in Nepal's democratic 1991 Constitution for trying anybody on charges of treason. Secondly, the offending article did not appear under Ghimire's name, but under Bhattarai's, without any suggestion that the newspaper endorsed the views expressed in the article.

55-6217
Sinister as Ghimire's imprisonment may be, the news from Pakistan is worse. Rehmat Shah Afridi, the respected editor of *The Frontier Post* who had been picked up two years ago by the army run Anti-Narcotics Force, on charges of possession of hashish, has now been sentenced to death. The Paris-based Reporters sans Frontieres suspects that he has been framed, the reason for his arrest and sentencing being his critical reporting of the activities of the ANF. The nexus between proceeds of the narcotics trade and funding for *jihad*, whether to arm the Taliban against its Afghan opponents or send militants into Kashmir, is well known and attested by independent Western agencies. As a result of this trade Pakistan's border towns are awash with drugs, yet the ANF chooses to ignore this and pick on Afridi supposedly for the possession of some cannabis, a "soft" and relatively harmless drug. This is clearly malice aforethought, and designed to intimidate journalists — the old-fashioned mailed fist inside a velvet glove. A fair hearing of Afridi's appeal against his sentence is called for — the world will be watching what happens to him and to Ghimire.

Wheels of Injustice

It is not merely that a chief minister went on the rampage on the weekend in Tamil Nadu. The disturbing events around M Karunanidhi's arrest raise more fundamental questions — relating to abuse of power and the use of official machinery for highly partisan ends. After Ms Jayalalitha lost the elections in 1996, she was charged with corruption along with a number of top civil servants, including the then chief secretary. The charges resulted in convictions in a few cases. Now, in a reversal of situations, Mr Karunanidhi has been arrested along with some top civil servants who served in his government. All of them have, in turn, been charged with corruption. It is remarkable how speedily a new set of freshly posted officials within days of taking charge have been able to file cases against their former masters and colleagues. Not long ago, the Tamil Nadu police was rated among the best in the country. After the shocking brutality of Saturday's events, so graphically brought out on the screen by various TV channels, the state is being compared to Bihar. Mr Karunanidhi deserved to be treated better, if not for his status as a former chief minister, then, for the sake of his age. That the Tamil Nadu police didn't show even this small courtesy indicates the extent to which civil services have been subverted for political ends. It would appear that the state machinery has got completely enmeshed with the intensely adversarial party politics of Tamil Nadu. Nothing else explains the arrest and detention of 23,000 people when no external or internal emergency has been declared.

Every little vendetta at local, district and state levels appears to be getting settled through politically inspired criminal cases with the near-certain prospect that when electoral fortunes change there will be similar acts of revenge at all levels. If politics carries on in this manner, the logical next step is for the party in office to try and stay on for as long as possible. In other words, this is an open invitation to rigging. Partisan governance militates against democratic norms, of course. Far worse, there is a real danger that this culture will seep through to the subordinate judiciary. Partisan appointments are already a feature at the basic and middle level judicial posts. The parliamentary system of democracy is premised on an apolitical system of bureaucracy, an impartial judiciary and parliamentary norms of behaviour for its legislators. All these principles appear to be under challenge in Tamil Nadu, otherwise known for its many positive features, including a sound industrial base and high human development indices. Indeed, it is only in the last decade that Tamil Nadu's highly reputed apolitical system of administration has seen this kind of deterioration. Unfortunately for those holding office in the state, there may come a time when administration becomes impossible. No IAS or IPS officer who cares for his reputation will want to risk serving in a state where survival, especially at the most levels, depends on abject loyalty to the political masters.

Errant Chinese newspapers face instant closure

BEIJING: China has ordered a new crackdown on newspapers and magazines that publish "politically incorrect" articles which go against the interests of the ruling Communist party, its leaders and endangers social stability.

"A purge of errant publications and editors has been ordered in a party document issued to tighten mainland censorship in the run-up to the 16th party congress next autumn," Hong Kong's leading newspaper *South China Morning Post* reported.

At the 16th Communist party congress late next year, many of the party's top leaders, including general-secretary Jiang Zemin, are expected to step down to make way for a new generation of Chinese leaders. "The key document, which spells out curbs on politically incorrect articles and rules on other me-

dia restrictions and ownership, is scheduled to come into effect on Sunday, but the measures have already begun, with the closure or temporary suspension of eight publications this month," the report said.

"Leaders were alarmed about active thinking among intellectuals and feared that critical essays, especially those calling for political reform at the 16th party plenum, would muddle the minds of cadres and the public," a senior official of the central publicity department told the newspaper.

According to the document, publications will be shut permanently without further warning if editors break rules or express opposition to the party line. The document forbids the publication of articles and reports speculating on leadership changes or calling for political re-

forms at the 16th party congress, articles and reports violating the "cardinal principles of Marxism."

Material contradicting the main party and state policies, containing pornography, violence, military or other state secrets, threatening social stability or going against Beijing's policies towards ethnic minorities have been forbidden. The rules ban news gathering on major corruption scandals, major criminal cases and human and natural disasters. All the publications are required to use only dispatches from the state-run Xinhua news agency. "We have always made it clear he should stand trial in respect of the allegations we have always made against him," he said, adding that Britain had "made a continual effort" to bring those accused of war crimes to justice. (PTI)

Sena tiger growls over *Gadar*, but is anybody scared

HT Correspondent
Mumbai, June 27



THE DAY the Maharashtra Government turned down demands to ban *Gadar*, Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray took some time off to watch Sunny Deol and Amisha Patel play out their romance on screen against the backdrop of partition.

He may see much that is objectionable in the film, but he is holding back his fire against its makers (and refraining from calling for a ban). Instead, Thackeray has now trained his guns on the Union Government, rather than the State. In a clear attack on Union IT

Minister Pramod Mahajan, Thackeray described the Government as "gutless" and only "good for Media Labs and laptops". "Do they have the guts to boot these 'green rats' (Muslims) out of the country?" he asked.

Thackeray has once again renewed his call to Hindus to take up arms, described secularists as "eunuchs" and said their tolerant attitude towards fundamentalist Muslims, encouraging pro-Pakistan sentiments in the film will soon find them having a heavy price to pay.

"There is not even one *mai ka lai* (son of the soil) who can come forward to defend his own homeland?" Thackeray questioned and criticised Dilip Kumar and Shabana Azmi, both members of the Rajya Sabha, who had opposed his campaign against Deepa

Mehta's *Fire*. Thackeray is being taken less and less seriously by friends and enemies alike who prefer now to ignore his ranting than act upon them. So it is not surprising that he has threatened to serialise some harsh views he holds about them in the Sena mouthpiece, *Saamna*, beginning July 1. The threat has gone almost unnoticed.

Now, though, Thackeray, speaking through the *Saamna*, is critical of the Government's inability to act against "rats in their holes", referring to the ISI, Lashkar-e-Tayyeba, Taliban and Bangladeshis. "The day they come out of their bills (burrows), these people (the Government) will know. But while they are eating away at the core of the nation, none of these people in Government care," he says.

Farida Shaikh
Mumbai, June 27

ACTRESS SHABANA Azmi and husband Javed Akhtar today condemned the violent protests against *Gadar* and said the film had every right to be screened. Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray had earlier criticised the couple for ignoring the matter even as they had protested the opposition to *Fire*.

"Though *Gadar* is a provocative film, under no circumstance should it be banned. There are certain sections in the movie, which are very inflammatory. At one point in the film, the villain tells the hero that until he says *Hindus-tan Murtadabad*, he cannot be a good Mus-

Stop cultural policing, say Shabana & Javed



This is cultural policing on the lines of violence during the screening of *Fire* and Valentine's Day celebrations."

Poet and lyricist Javed Akhtar said there could be no excuse to resort to violence even in a protest. "I have not seen *Gadar* so I do not wish to discuss its merits or demerits. What I would like to say, however, is that everyone has a right to protest in a civilised society as long as it is within the parameters of law and order."

"A similar situation was created during the screening of *Fire*. But the cherry of the cake was *Water*, a film, which was not even made. It was opposition to something that never was. This kind of vandalism cannot be tolerated."

lim. This, I think, is very inflammatory and reinforces the canard that any Muslim is pro-Pakistan," said Shabana.

"However, *Gadar* has been cleared by the Censor Board and I defend its right to be screened. Even if it is provocative, there is no explanation for getting into theatres and resorting to vandalism.

55-8
29/6

Maharashtra refuses to ban *Gadar*

PTI & SNS

MUMBAI, June 26. — The Maharashtra government today said those opposing the screening of *Gadar — Ek Prem Katha*, should approach the censor board as Mr Bal Thackeray lamented government's inaction against the protesters disrupting the screening of the film.

On the demand for a ban on the film by certain religious groups and Janata Dal (S), the chief minister, Mr Vilasrao Deshmukh, told reporters that the government has no authority to do so.

Expressing concern over the protest, Mr Thackeray, in a statement, asked whether the government had the guts to take action against Muslims expressing their loyalty to Pakistan by protesting against *Gadar*.

As the sporadic protest against *Gadar* reached Mumbai, police have been kept on alert. The joint commissioner, Mr YC Pawar, has asked all police stations to tighten vigil.

The alert followed a protest note to the chief minister by the Muslim League's Mumbai unit demanding a ban on *Gadar* "within 48 hours". The ultimatum expires on Wednesday evening.

The movie had a normal run in Mumbai and other centres in Maharashtra till Monday evening when some protesters attacked Ratan cinema at Bhiwandi in Thane. Mr Farooq



Youths queue up to book tickets for *Gadar* in Mumbai on Tuesday.— AP/PTI

Azam, Mumbai ML general secretary, said the movie with a theme of love between a Sikh man and a Muslim girl "offended the sentiments of the community".

The Shiv Sena, through its mouthpiece *Saamna*, has been criticising "pro-Pakistani elements" for disrupting the screening of the film. Raza Academy, another Muslim organisation, however, has refused to join the ban chorus. The film producer Nittin Keni too has

not received any complaints.

According to the protesters, they have objected to scenes like Amisha Patel offering *namaz* wearing *sindoor* which is associated with a married Hindu woman.

Attacks condemned: Sahmat, a socio-cultural organisation, today condemned the recent attacks on cinema halls in Bhopal, Lucknow and Delhi screening the film, *Gadar*, saying "the incidents are highly disturbing", adds PTI from Delhi.

It's Gadar Again ^{(1/10) Medi}

Reports that some Muslim groups have taken to the streets protesting against the screening of the Hindi film *Gadar* because it is alleged to have "hurt the religious sentiments of the community" evokes a depressing sense of *deja vu*. That a section of the aggrieved have also resorted to violence and vandalism to prevent the screening of the film will occasion no great surprise too. After all, isn't it all part of a by-now familiar pattern? In the specific case of *Gadar*, the offence is an ostensible injury to religious sensibilities. Others have indulged in comparable acts of hooliganism on grounds that are far less tangible. When the James Bond film, *Golden Eye*, was being shown in the Capital some years ago, radical left-wing student activists picketed the theatre demanding a ban on the screening. Their case: the film had perversely cast the communist movement and its venerable idols, such as Lenin, in a poor light. More recently, self-styled cultural vigilantes have violently targeted not just films but birthday celebrations, the sale of Valentine's Day cards, young women wearing 'western' clothes in public or taking part in beauty pageants and much more besides. In a word, the cultural and life-style choices of law-abiding citizens. The message is as simple as it is disturbing: whoever has the will and wherewithal, not to mention political patronage, to unleash public terror, has also the right to enforce self-imposed codes of censorship. The glaring paradox underlying all this should not be lost on even a cursory student of Indian politics and public culture. Namely, that even as India's experiment in democracy has matured and struck surer roots, the public culture which must nurture and sustain that system is rapidly degenerating into mindless, almost hysterical, intolerance.

A large part of the blame for this state of affairs must rest with the Indian state — not just elected governments but also law enforcement authorities. In case after case where a particular individual or the general public has been held to ransom by motivated groups, the state has displayed, if not complicity, a cavalier indifference to protecting the rights of the victims. Whether it be the simple constitutional right to freedom of expression or the right to carry on lawful commercial activity. However, the dereliction of its constitutional duties by the Indian state is not the only reason for the growing incidence of intolerance in our public life. In a sense, what we are witnessing in India is part of the larger global phenomenon of identity politics, whether the basis of that identity is a political community called nation or homologous identities based on religion or ethnicity. As the project of Enlightenment and cultural modernity has soured, groups and communities have turned for succour to modes of being that are rooted in some supposedly pure way of life, based on some fundamentalist conception of religion, national culture or ethnicity. In this scheme of things, anything or anyone that raises doubts or questions about the chosen way of life is not merely to be disagreed with but violently put down. This larger context and its 'multicultural' implications have induced many liberals to bend backwards in their stand that extra care and sensitivity is needed in the depiction of minority and ethnic groups. Even allowing for that, such recurring episodes of violence must still raise troubling questions about where to draw the line.

Lights, camera, off-screen action: religious bodies target *Gadar*

The Times of India News Service
and PTI

MUMBAI: The Mumbai Regional Muslim League on Monday gave a three-day ultimatum to the state government to ban the Sunny Deol starrer *Gadar*. It threatened to resort to an agitation if the ban is not imposed.

League president Mohammed Faruque Azam listing the objections said one of the actresses in the film is called Sakina which is the name of Prophet Mohammed's daughter. "Sakina marries a Sikh and renounces her religion, Islam, as if she detests it. This is a direct assault on Prophet Mohammed. No Muslim will tolerate this. Also while the sufferings of the Hindus during the Partition have been depicted the agony experienced by Muslims has been ignored. The film is early an attempt to create communal

tensions and hence it should be banned," Mr Azam claimed.

The film's producer Nitin Keni countered: "So far nobody has told me which specific scenes they find objectionable. In fact, many of those protesting have not even seen the movie. The film has been cleared by the censor board and nobody should have any valid objection to it. I hope the government will not succumb to pressure from vested interests and ban the movie. In Bhopal, it was clear that the violence was the outcome of local politics and had little to do with the film."

The protests have come even as the controversy over the film has snowballed. In Lucknow the Shia cleric and vice-president of the Muslim Personal Law Board Kalbe Sadiq, denied that he had given permission to shoot some scenes of the film inside the Asafi Imambarra.



A bike set afire by miscreants at a theatre in Ahmedabad on Sunday night.

The Maulana, who was abroad and returned on Saturday, strongly defended the statement issued by his son Kalbe Hussain Naqvi on Friday demanding a ban on the screening of the film as it hurts the sentiments of the minority community. The Maulana claimed his son's state-

ment was not a personal opinion but reflected the sentiments of the entire community.

Denying that he had given his assent to using his name in the acknowledgements of the film he said, "I have come to know that some scenes in the film are highly objectionable. This will be investigated and, if found true, I will place the matter before the Muslim Personal Law Board, the highest decision-making body concerning Muslims."

Some organisations instead of seeking a total ban wanted the objectionable scenes to be cut. At a meeting of the Youngmen's Muslim Association in Lucknow, an umbrella organisation of Shia youths, the district administration was given three days' time to cut objectionable portions of the film. The meeting, held inside the Bara

Imambarra, was attended by representa-

tives of the Hussaini Ekta Organisation, the Hussaini Welfare Society, the Hussaini Shia-Sunni Ekta Manch, the Khomeini Force and others.

The Muslim Jagriti Manch, of which Maulana Kalbe Sadiq is the patron, termed the film as an attempt to create a wedge between the Muslims and the Sikhs. The Manch termed the film prejudiced and parochial.

In Gujarat the state government warned all those trying to target the cinema halls and ordered tight security for cinema halls where the film is being screened.

Minister for social justice and empowerment Fakirbhai Vaghela justified the film and said the picketing of *Gadar* was the "handiwork of ISI elements and goondas of Dawood Ibrahim and other anti-

(Reuters)

Nepal to hold editor for 3 more days

AA-1 13/6
BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

Kathmandu, June 12: The Nepal government on Tuesday won a three-day extension of its decision to detain prominent Nepali journalist Yubaraj Ghimire and two of his colleagues.

A three-judge panel at Kathmandu's special court, set up some months ago to try Maoist-related cases, granted the three-day judicial remand on the request of government lawyers. But the judges warned the government that it had only up to Friday 9.30 am to press charges against the detained journalists, failing which the three would be freed.

The development is being seen here as a victory of sorts for the journalists because the government had requested a 25-day remand but the court gave it only three.

"This is a favourable development for us," Mr Daman Nath Dhungana, a prominent constitutional lawyer and former Speaker of Nepal's Parliament, said. Mr Dhungana is one of the defence lawyers representing Mr Ghimire and his colleagues. "We believe the government has no case and the three journalists will be freed on Friday."

Tuesday was Mr Ghimire's

■ Turn to Page 2

Jaya hits DMK with rotten rice

BY R. BHAGWAN SINGH

Chennai, June 12: Tamil Nadu chief minister on Tuesday ordered a police probe into the rotting of rice worth Rs 65 crores which was procured during the DMK regime for distribution through the public distribution scheme.

Ms Jayalalitha told a press conference that her government had to throw away the rotten rice "as it was found non-issuable."

The state directorate of vigilance and anti-corruption would conduct a comprehensive probe into the procurement of the rice and also the functioning of the civil supplies department, she said.

She said the probe would be completed before the coming budget session to enable her to place a white paper on the issue before the Assembly during the session.

Europe moves toward global cyber crime fight

London

HF-10
11/6

THE COUNCIL of Europe has drawn up the first ever international plan to combat cyber crime by harmonising criminal policy and procedure across all member States.

The draft treaty - which will be presented to the European committee on crime problems (CDPC) on 18 June - will bring in a number of new computer-related offences, including online fraud and hacking, and will extend search and seizure laws. If these offences are not already illegal under member States' laws, they will have to add them to their criminal codes. The council wants to avoid a situation such as that which occurred in the Philippines, where it was unable to prosecute the creator of the destructive "I love you" virus because the country had no criminal charge that fit the dissemination of viruses.

The draft treaty creates nine criminal offences: illegal access, illegal interception, data interference, system interference, misuse of devices, computer-related forgery, computer-related fraud, online child pornography and offences related to copyright and neighbouring rights.

The Guardian

THE HINDUSTAN

Nepal newspaper pays price for taking a stand

AJAY SURI
KATHMANDU, JUNE 9

FOR a government plagued with problems, this was the last thing they needed: Loud, united protests over the arrest of three top journalists. Prime Minister G P Koirala and his ministry misread the situation and today, their credibility already in doubt, are paying the price.

As the management of *Kantipur Times* begins consultations with legal eagles to fight the treason charge slapped on its three top staffers, including editor Yubaraj Ghimire, they've become a focal point of protest against the authorities.

Ghimire, managing director Kailash Sirohiya and director Binod Raj Gyawali have been technically detained at Hanuman Dhoka police station.

Koirala could not have chosen a more obvious target for censure: The daily has published a series of exposes on the allegedly corrupt deeds of the Prime Minister and several of his Cabinet colleagues and the government had taken advantage of current political turmoil to hit out at Kantipur.

Speaking to *The Indian Ex-*

press, News Editor Narayan Wagle said his paper was the first to bring out details of Landa Air deal in which Koirala is implicated.

Another series of front-page articles that rattled the Koirala Government some time ago concerned his absolute failure to tame the Maoist militants. The publication highlighted two massacres executed by the Maoists in which

The daily has published a series of exposes on the allegedly corrupt deeds of the PM and several of his Cabinet colleagues

over 80 people died. This hit Koirala hard, as he had replaced his predecessor Krishna Prasad Bhattarai on the express promise of putting brakes on the Maoists.

It wasn't Koirala alone that bore the brunt of Kantipur's brand of journalism, which is quite rare in Nepal. The paper didn't spare the palace either. As Wagle recalled,

the Kantipur was the first — and only — paper to highlight the news, several months ago, when a car driven by Gyanendra's son Paras knocked down a leading singer. The resulting public outrage forced the palace to intervene and ask Koirala to launch a thorough probe into the incident.

Four days ago, Kantipur again pushed the palace in limelight when its sister publication *The Kathmandu Post* urged the Koirala government to assert its superiority over the monarchy and bring out the real truth behind the assassinations to the people. The article two days ago by a senior Maoist leader turned out to be the last straw for Kantipur.

Ghimire, when contacted, said in all probability they would be produced before a court on Monday. He, however, didn't say much as any statement could be used against him by the prosecution.

With the Government still not disclosing how far it wants to pursue the Kantipur case, Monday's court proceedings could be revealing. As of now, however, a powerful section of the ruling Nepali Congress as also the entire opposition and country's press have condemned the arrests as a dastardly act.

INDIAN EXPRESS

7 0 JUN 2001

Pakistani media backs Musharraf

Islamabad, June 8

PAKISTANI MEDIA has rallied behind military ruler Gen Pervez Musharraf for his attack on religious groups despite threatening reactions from fundamentalists.

The media, which studiously avoids criticism of the Ulema and the Jihadis, prominently displayed Gen Musharraf's tirade against the clerics for making "falsified claims" to hoist the Islamic flag over the Red Fort and extended tacit editorial support to him.

They ignored violent reactions from extremist groups such as the Lashkar-e-Toiba, which warned the military ruler of dire

consequences for making such remarks. Extending support to the military ruler, The Dawn in an editorial said, "Gen Musharraf's speech deserves to be applauded for its candour, inclusiveness and boldness."

"The speech provides food for thought for the large majority of the thinking section of the people who are increasingly troubled by the growing manifestations of religious and other forms of bigotry and intolerance affecting various layers of society and the implications of these for the country's future," it said.

The editorial said, "Gen Musharraf specifically referred to irresponsible talk (by religious hardliners) with regard to India

and the adverse effect it has on India's Muslim minority. This bravado, out of proportion to harsh realities, also affects Pakistan's image in the outside world, especially the west, and helps those anti-Pakistan's lobbies which are very keen to have this country declared a rogue State".

The Nation daily said, "Anyone aware of how a particular section of Ulema had opposed the creation of Pakistan and defamed its founding fathers would readily concede that the practice of using religion for ulterior political motives must be stopped".

"No investor will risk money in a country where terrorist outfits not only can kill with

impunity senior Government administrators and policemen, but also threaten judges trying their cases," it said, adding "this has gone on too long and there is a need to put a stop to it now".

Gen Musharraf's speech also received support from the Urdu press. *The Jung* daily said, "We should realise that the claims of raising flag on the Red Fort are contrary to the dignity of Islam and the nation. Such statements distort Pakistan's image".

Another Urdu daily Pakistan said religious leaders should identify such elements in their parties and groups, which have been damaging country's image abroad and fulfill their responsibility towards the nation.

Net is dumb, boring and isolated: report

STANLEY THEODORE
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

HYDERABAD, June 1. - The Internet will die this year bringing to a close an era where information was a click of the mouse away.

"The web's days are numbered" says a latest report from the prestigious Forrester Research, an 18-year-old emerging-technology research firm. The Internet has been unable to reach its true potential because, "it's dumb, boring and isolated." "The death of the Web is inevitable," the report says, on the most euphoric invention.

The report, released recently in Massachusetts, is with **The Statesman**. The report is the most sensational development to hit the Internet, just past its tenth birthday. "Last year's dot com bubble that burst proves they have failed to deliver the "real world experience", the report says.

According to the report, static web pages presenting news and weather have hardly been able to improve on the same content presented in newspaper. They have not been able to take advantage of powerful technologies that are delivering them. The present Internet experience is "more like reading in a dusty library than basking in the birth of a new medium."

On the Net's ironic "isolation", the Forrester report is hardhitting. "Today's Internet is so far away from the real world that the media calls it by a different name - cyberspace." People are beginning to "tire of the Web." The novelty of online reading has faded and they are returning to reading newspapers, watching televisions and seeing plays, it said.

The report observes that today's web

X-INTERNET TO ARRIVE ON SCENE SHORTLY

sites "create terrible user experiences". Of the 117 B2C (Business to Commerce) sites reviewed, the average user experience score was -3 on a scale of -50 to 50 when +25 was the passing grade. B2B (Business to Business) sites that were reviewed were worse scoring -9.

The report, however, says e-commerce would boom to yield revenues globally in excess of \$ 1.2 billion this year and will cross \$ 6.4 billion in 2004. Still, the web will not confine itself to just showing information and enabling transactions on PCs.

The Internet has sounded the death knell for content providers. Of 5000 online consumers, not even 10 per cent were willing to pay for content despite a quarter of the respondents saying the content was "good" or very good".

Forrester report grimly says, "The bottom line: Today's web isn't good enough to pull money out of consumers' pockets".

Interestingly, while making the requiem, Forrester predicts a new digital and exciting replacement. The net, as we know it, would evolve into the "X-Internet" that will be its second round of expansion.

"The web was about connecting people to computers through browsers. But two new innovations will eclipse the web: an executable Net that greatly improves the online experience, and an extended Net that connects the real world", the report said.

The scenario would be cloaked in intelligence making the Internet interactive, rich and rewarding.

The report gives a highly interesting analogy. If one was to build a house and try to find out how to frame a window

■ See NET: page 8

Media NET: 528
(Continued from page 1)

on the Net, the web sends back a page on how to do that. On the other hand, the executable Internet would give a step-by-step process on how to frame a window. The process instead of being static would be a two-way conversation with the X-Internet offering tools and suggestions to frame the window.

The new era with the executable Internet will start soon and the extendable Internet will begin to take charge from 2005. The difference between now and then, Forrester CEO, Mr George F Colony, says is, "between reading a book and talking to a friend."

The report's chief author, Mr Carl D Howe says, "\$1 chips will have all the power and networking capabilities of a circa-1990 PC". Users will be connected to net-based services on the X-Internet and the firms that provide them on an interactive and friendly platform.

Four years hence, people will begin living with networked geysers, airconditioners, refrigerators, ovens, cookers, heaters, stoves and security systems and all sort of gizmos containing web-enabled chips. Embedded networks will be in clothing and car tires too.

For instance, you can turn your lawn sprinklers on in your Kolkata home while attending a conference in California and ask your refrigerator to e-mail your supermarket on the groceries that need to be stocked before you return.

Significantly, the Forrester report says the X Internet will continue to be "PC centric" with the PC number being 450 million and growing. It will push applications and further Internet population. Today's \$ 600 billion Internet devices and services will cross \$ 2.7 trillion world wide in 2010.

The market will boom to 14 million devices - about three devices for every human being on the planet. This will make the power consumption soar and the Forrester report predicts a new energy crisis for networked chips with governments trying to cut down consumption through such devices. But that will be another entirely different story.

Nasscom moots 10-point IT agenda

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 31. — The National Association of Software and Service Companies (Nasscom) today presented a ten point call for action for the government and industry to help India emerge as a sustainable hub for IT enabled services.

The action plan, drafted by a panel of leading international and Indian experts at Nasscom's two-day conference in Chennai, called for an immediate dialogue between the government and industry to clearly define the parameters for each segment of the IT enabled services sector and applicability of international standards in telecom infrastructure.

The parameters include interconnectivity of international

call centres, setting up of international gateways for captive need in IT enabled services, permission to freely purchase bandwidth from international markets and services like toll free numbers to encourage domestic call centre activities.

The IT enabled services industry also called for a single window clearance, support from state governments for starting units, flexibility to call centres to merge domestic and international business in the same facility, setting up of IT enabled service training infrastructure and involvement of ITIs and polytechnics for call centre management and degree-level courses for IT enabled services industry.

The sector also called for initiation of 'One' industry standard for Indian IT enabled serv-

ices industry as a tool to certify quality and global standards, creation of an 'India Brand' Marketing fund by government and industry, for promoting India as a preferred destination for the IT enabled services Sector and establishment of a \$100 million venture capital fund for the IT enabled services sector.

Mr Arun Seth, chairman, programme committee, IT enabled services Sector in Nasscom, said though the sector recorded its highest ever growth of 70 per cent last year, it had the potential to emerge as the much-required catalyst driving the growth of the Indian IT industry.

This sector had received \$300 million of investment, which was expected to rise further to \$500 million in the next one

year.

He said the country needs to look at this industry as a profession rather than a part-time activity.

It is going to be critical for the industry and government to work together to overcome challenges in areas like standards, infrastructure, quality and human resources.

"As a first step in this direction, we will work with the government and educational institutes to introduce structured courses and certifications for employees in this sector which will provide them with the requisite skill sets to make the most of this opportunity and help ensure that India achieves its projected target of generating one million jobs by 2008 in the IT enabled sector," he said.

Pak media backs General's visit

SONIA TRIKHA
NEW DELHI, MAY 25

GENERAL Pervez Musharraf finally has the invitation he has been waiting for and the Pakistani media seems to be in readiness to send him on his way to India. Less than 24 hours after India invited Musharraf *The Nation* newspaper has a poll on its website asking the cyberworld 'Should Musharraf accept Vajpayee's offer for talks?' The answer, an overwhelming 76 per cent are saying Go, Musharraf Go.

This poll is only another indication of the enthusiasm across the



Optimistic till date

border for Indo-Pak talks.

The pro-government *The News* wanted Musharraf to "jump" at the opportunity to go to India. The spirited response was in some measure because *The News* saw the talks offer as a failure of Indian

policy in Kashmir. "It is a breakthrough of sorts but also breakdown of the Indian policy, reflected in the scrapping of the six-month-old ceasefire in Kashmir," said its editorial. Pakistan's leading daily *The Dawn* called the offer an effort to "get down to real business" while calling the end of the ceasefire the "end (of) a sham in Kashmir".

The Dawn said, India "called off a farcical ceasefire in the Himalayan region and proposed to invite Pakistan's Chief Executive Gen Pervez Musharraf for talks with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee".

The Nation, meanwhile, described the invitation as the first opportunity for a real dialogue between the two countries since former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto came to Shimla for talks with Indira Gandhi after the 1972 Indo-Pakistan war.

But it cautioned the Pakistani regime against adopting a superior tone before India.

It said Pakistan would be "making a mistake if it sent the military ruler to Delhi in a triumphalist mood of having forced the Indians to their knees". It called the invitation the greatest challenge of Musharraf's career.

Indian IT firms must face up to China threat'

Prerna K Mishra
New Delhi, May 20

MOVING UP the value chain should not be the main concern of the Indian infotech companies today. They should first try and secure their margins in the lower-end jobs from the Chinese threat. Though a little away from the league, this is TechSpan India chairman & CEO Arjun Malhotra's advice to the Indian IT companies.

And, as far as \$67 million

worth Tech Span is concerned, Malhotra has managed to steer the e-services company gently to prepare for a soft landing in these testing times.

Talking to *Hindustan Times*, Malhotra said that while visibility right now does not permit a company to look beyond the next quarter, TechSpan is doubling up to achieve 35 per cent compound annual growth rate by 2003.

"Our strategy to fight the slump in the US market is to generate more revenues from our

Noida facility in India by shifting works here. While presently we have 5 per cent of our works in India, we plan to bring nearly 15 per cent here in the next one year," says Malhotra.

Presently, nearly 40 per cent of TechSpan's projects are being handled from the India facility, which also contributes nearly 15 per cent of the total revenues of the company.

TechSpan, which sees its Indian revenues increasing almost three-fold from Rs 12 crore to Rs 32

crore this year, will invest Rs 15 crore in the Noida facility to handle the influx of projects. A major part of this investment will go into establishing a 128 K satellite link at the Centre of Excellence at Noida. It is also doing the leg work for the second facility in India, the location for which has yet to be finalised.

Smelling the slowing down of the US economy early, TechSpan has put a freeze on recruitment from October last. But, the company is now recruiting in India.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 MAY 2001

Move to put IT services under licence regime

Purna K. Mishra
New Delhi, May 15

THERE IS a serious move afoot to bring Internet, e-commerce and all the Information Technology-related services under a licence regime.

According to sources, the proposal has been incorporated in the revised draft Communication and Convergence Bill, likely to be introduced in the monsoon session of Parliament.

The Bill is reported to have added Internet-based content on websites to the list of content application services that will now require licences to operate. This would mean that anyone wanting to post content on the Net will have to seek a licence.

To add to this, other services like Internet, unified messaging, IT-enabled services like call centres, tele-banking, e-commerce, tele-trading, tele-medicine and video conferencing will also require a licence.

The government's rationale for such a move is to safeguard public interest.

However, experts say that such a move will prove harmful to the infotech industry. Such a step will bring with it bitter memories of the redtape and licence-fee fiasco associated with the licensing regime introduced for cellular services in the country, they point out.

They further opine that the licensing system will discourage Indian IT firms to provide value-added services or even embark upon e-commerce. It is also expected to discourage foreign companies to shift works to India.

Analysts point out that logically, if Indian companies are required to obtain a licence to transact electronically or even provide content services on the Net, they would rather invest or host their servers abroad, where no licences are required.

According to sources, the Bill will be referred to the Group of Ministers before being tabled in Parliament. This revised version of the Bill incorporates the comments and suggestions received after posting the draft Bill on the Net in January 2001.

Students hurt as truck rams into classroom

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, May 15

FIVE STUDENTS and a teacher were injured this afternoon when a truck hit a shed under which a class was on at Adarsh Hindi High School near the Mominpur Road-Ekbalpore Road crossing.

Mohammad Shahid, an eight-year-old boy, was admitted to SSKM hospital. The incident took place around 12.20 pm when the class was on, attended by six or seven students. DC (Port) Harmanpreet Singh said the shed was an improvised one and the truck that hit it was carrying rice for the children's mid-day meal.

The truck had just entered the school and was turning back when it hit the post propping the shed. The shed immediately collapsed, injuring the children, all in the 6-10 age group.

While the rest were discharged after being given first aid at SSKM, Shahid is in a critical condition. The driver has been arrested.

Photograph on Page 4

Ten enemies of press named

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW YORK, May 3. — The Committee to Protect Journalists today named the 10 worst enemies of the press for 2001, focussing attention on individual leaders who are responsible for the world's worst abuse against the media.

This year, repeat offenders Ayatollah Ali Khamenei of Iran and Chinese President Mr Jiang Zemin are joined by Liberian President Mr Charles Taylor at the top of the CPJ's annual accounting of press tyrants.

Khamenei, the religious leader who exercises enormous influence over key institutions in Iran, is the instigator of a relentless campaign that has shuttered the country's vibrant reformist press by closing dozens of newspapers and jailing outspoken journalists. In Liberia, Mr Taylor has used censorship, prison, and threats of violence to silence virtually all independent media. China's Mr Jiang appears on CPJ's list for a fifth straight year, for maintaining the Communist Party's obsessive control over information, enforced in part via harsh prison sentences that have now made China the world's leading jailer of of journalists.

In addition to Mr Taylor, three other press offenders, each using very different methods to intimidate the media in their countries, are also new to CPJ's list this year: President Mr Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, President Mr Vladimir Putin of Russia, and Colombian paramilitary leader Mr Carlos Castano. CPJ put Ukraine President Mr Leonid Kuchma back on the list (he last appeared in 1999), and once more named perennial press freedom offenders Cuban President Mr Fidel Castro (a seven-year veteran of the press enemies list), President Mr Zine Al-Abdine Ben Ali of Tunisia (listed for four years), and Malaysian Prime Minister Mr Mahathir Mohamad (listed for three years).

THE STATESMAN

Global campaign against press curbs planned

WINDHOEK (NAMIBIA), MAY 3. The World Conference on Press Freedom on Thursday decided to launch a global campaign against censorship with the U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, asking Governments to ensure that journalists pursued their professional work unhindered.

Representatives of Governments, the U.N. and media organisations, meeting on the opening day of the conference on the World Press Freedom Day, decided to launch the campaign against restrictions on free flow of information, to fight racism and discrimination while looking for ways to check the use of ~~Internet~~ for spreading communal hatred.

"We all know that censorship has been used to suppress political dissent and enforce status quo rather than to protect society or minorities. On the other hand, no jurisdiction considers freedom of speech an absolute right," Mr. Jyoti Shankar Singh, executive coordinator of the U.N. Commission for Human Rights, said.

The three-day conference is being held in the Namibian capital where the 'Windhoek Declaration' on press freedom was adopted 10 years ago.

Mr. Annan, in a joint message, said: "We call upon decision-makers at all levels to do whatever they can to ensure that journalists can pursue their work unhindered and undeterred."

The Namibian Information Minister, Mr. Theo-ben Gurirab, asked journalists to assess the challenges and prospects before them professionally.

Other signatories to the joint message included the UNESCO director general, Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, and the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Mary Robinson.

~~Experience~~ has shown that even the most heinous regimes can gain popular support if they manage to muzzle the media or manipulate it to arouse fear and hatred among their citizens," the message read out at the conference said.

It said the scribes had an "indispensable role to play in rooting out racism and xenophobia." Stating that freedom of expression was "always fragile" and journalists were liable to suffer intimidation, violence, prison terms and even execution, it said press freedom was "threatened by political, economic,

financial, military, religious or even criminal interests".

Mr. Matsuura gave away the 2001 UNESCO-Guillermo Cano world press freedom prize to the senior Myanmar journalist, Mr. U. Win Tin, who is currently serving a prison sentence in Yangon. Mr. Tin was arrested in 1989 and sentenced to 14 years imprisonment for his membership of the banned Communist Party of Myanmar.

Mr. Singh said the rights to express and receive information without prior restraint from any public authority remain the basic pillars of democratic freedom and choice.

The advent and spread of the World Wide Web, he said, had "further sharpened the dilemma between free speech and non-discrimination" and cautioned about the "alarming proliferation of Internet hate sites" which were targeting the youth and attempting to persuade them to adopt blatantly racist attitudes.

The conference is being attended by over 300 journalists from across the globe, officials of U.N. agencies, Government representatives and media organisations. — PTI

Freedom of expression at risk in Asia: Amnesty

Journalists across the world are being targeted by governments for carrying out their legitimate investigative reporting work. Amnesty International said today, ahead of World Press Freedom Day (May 3).

"Journalists have been harassed, tortured, and even killed for reporting the news, and their work is often censored. Democracies and authoritarian regimes have neglected to protect the right to freedom of expression," the organisation said.

Across the Asia Pacific region, Amnesty International has recorded dozens of cases of human rights abuses against journalists in recent years.

In Myanmar, the media is strictly controlled by the military authorities, and the law imposes draconian restrictions on the right to freedom of expression. Journalists, writers and editors are among the more than 1800 political prisoners currently held in the country's prisons.

Seventy-one year old journalist, Mr. U Win Tin is serving a 20-year-sentence in Insein prison, Yangon. Initially arrested during the military authorities 1989 crack

down for allegedly urging the opposition party, the National League for Democracy to adopt a civil disobedience campaign, he has been behind bars since then, and is in failing health.

In 1996, Mr. U Win Tin was accused of passing on information about prison conditions to the United Nations. Together with a group of other men, he was held in tiny military dog cells, made to sleep on cold concrete floors and denied visits from his family. Mr. U Win Tin is suffering from a heart condition and spondylitis (inflammation of the vertebrae). Amnesty International is calling for his immediate release.

In countries where there is armed conflict, journalists are often on the frontline, and risk being caught in the crossfire, or being targeted for their reporting, captured, tortured and "disappeared".

During the years of armed conflict in Sri Lanka, journalists have been subjected not only to censorship from the government, but to attacks from both the security forces, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Mylvaganam Nimalrajan, a corre-

spondent for several newspapers and international agencies, was killed in his home in Jaffna on 20 October last year, allegedly by members of the Eelam People's Democratic Party, allied to the security forces. Before he was killed, he had reported allegations of vote-rigging and threats during the October elections.

In the state of Jammu and Kashmir, India, journalist, Mr. Surinder Oberoi was one of the first on the scene at a bomb attack near his office in Srinagar in January this year. When Special Operations Group Police arrived, they accused him of being there quickly because "journalists are hand in glove with the militants." The Superintendent of Police allegedly threatened to kill Mr. Oberoi, and joined three other policemen beating him with rifles. He has since been asked by the same policemen to withdraw his official complaint of ill-treatment.

The rise of "new media" through the use of Internet technology and the opportunities this presents to journalists to disseminate information to a global audience is seen as a threat by repressive governments.

In China, Mr. Huang Qi founded a website in June 1999. Postings on the site increasingly drew attention to alleged corruption and human rights violations. A year after he set up the site, Mr. Huang Qi was detained on charges of subversion.

At the opening hearing of his trial in February, Mr. Huang Qi fainted, and the proceedings were postponed. Mr. Huang Qi's wife claims he has been beaten in detention, has lost a tooth, has a scar on his head and suffers from pain in his testicles. Mr. Huang's wife is denied permission to see him and his lawyer has difficulty visiting him. On the eve of World Press Freedom Day, Amnesty International is calling on governments across the Asia-Pacific region to make a public commitment to upholding the right to freedom of expression, and to guarantee protection for journalists.

"Journalism is a profession, not a criminal offence," Amnesty International said. "Governments must face up to their responsibilities and protect the right to freedom of expression."

THE HINDU

3 MAY 2001

Court eases curbs on media reporting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

THE Delhi High Court today allowed a plea by six top ranking editors and media personalities and modified its order restraining the media from reporting the proceedings of a contempt case against newsmagazine *Wah India*.

The court, however, said proceedings should be reported in a fair and accurate manner. Contempt proceedings were initiated against the magazine's editor, publisher and three journalists for a write-up grading the Delhi High Court judges on the so-called basis of their integrity and other qualities, following two writ petitions.

Hindustan Times' vice-chairperson Shobhna Bhartiya, *Times of India*'s managing executive edi-

tor Dilip Padgaonkar, editor-in-chief of *The Indian Express* Shekhar Gupta, *Outlook* Editor Vinod Mehta, *Punjab Kesri*'s resident editor Ashwani Chopra and former *The Indian Express* Editor Kuldip Nayar had sought removal of the restriction on reporting the proceedings of the case. Some of these media personalities were personally present in the court during an hour-long proceeding in the case.

"We are not in any way concerned with the article. It is in fitness of things that the press must have the right to report it in all fairness," their counsel Gopal Subramaniam said. The court, issuing notices to *Wah India*'s editor Madhuchan and publisher Rahul Mishra and its three journalists on April 26, had imposed restriction on reporting the proceedings

**WAH INDIA
CASE**

INDIAN EXPRESS

- 3 MAY 2001

Govt rejects MTNL, BSNL licence plea

ALOKE TIKKU ^{SFI 385}
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 2. - The government is all for competition but not in the family. The department of telecommunications has rejected 21 applications from public sector undertakings for basic telephony licences, reportedly because it didn't want its right hand to fight with the left.

A DoT official said allowing public sector telecom firms to compete one another was neither the kind of a situation envisaged in the New Telecom Policy 1999 nor desirable. "It would not be the kind of a competition which would benefit anyone," the official said.

The list of 21 includes nine from Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited which was convinced that a saturation had been reached in Delhi and Mumbai. And it was time to put its experience of operating basic telephony services in the two metros to some good use.

MTNL had filed applications in February for licences in nine circles - Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh (West), Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. MTNL was slated to be up for disinvestment in the current fiscal and had hoped that licences in states near the two metros would help it expand coverage and generate new sources of revenue.

But that's not where the gov-

ernment decided it should be looking. Not when another PSU - Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited - had the mandate of providing telecom services in these circles. BSNL was well-prepared to send the message that it would not take MTNL's intrusion into its territory lying down and filed applications, laying its stake for licences in MTNL's home turf, Delhi and Mumbai.

The monopoly international telephony service provider, VSNL - set to lose its monopoly status next year - has plans to diversify to ensure that deregulation of the international telephony service does not push it underwater. It started the process of diversifying a few years ago but 90 per cent of the income still comes from handling international telephony traffic.

That it's cash-rich would ensure that it won't need to borrow from the market to finance its ambitious projects. VSNL had asked the government for a waiver of the licence fee and reduction in revenue-sharing ratio as part of the compensation package for giving up its monopoly. VSNL had applied for licences in the six category A circles - Delhi, Maharashtra, TN, AP, Karnataka and Gujarat - after its calculations suggested returns from basic telephony could be "quite good."

But that's not what DoT had in mind for them. An official said the utilities should target at exploiting the domestic experience beyond the country's boundaries.

THE STATESMAN

- 3 MAY 2001

Sushma rules out FDI in print media

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Information and broadcasting minister Sushma Swaraj has ruled out opening the print media to foreign participation, emphasising that the government took the decision after careful consideration of its implications.

Speaking at the Foreign Correspondents' Club here on Wednesday, Ms Swaraj said that for the government the 1955 cabinet decision was still valid because it drew a clear line between the print and electronic media. She said newspapers were not just another



Sushma Swaraj

trade as they played an important role in influencing views. Replying to a question, she said that the 1955 decision was still "sacrosanct" because of the validity of the concerns that had guided it.

On the other hand, the government has permitted 100 per cent foreign-owned channels to uplink from India, provided the country's programme and advertising code was adhered to, she said. The minister said that in the second phase of privatising FM radio channels, the scope would be expanded to incorporate the smaller cities on FM map.

She denied that the move to replace the Press Council by a new media council had anything to do with the bribe-on-tape scandal. "We decided

it long time back," she remarked.

Meanwhile, the parliamentary standing committee on Information Technology in its latest report criticised Prasar Bharati for allowing former defence minister George Fernandes to make a "personal statement" in the wake of the scam. The committee pointed out that at the time Mr Fernandes had appeared on DD, he had ceased to be a minister.

The committee asked the I&B secretary as to why the leader of the Opposition had been denied an opportunity to make a statement on DD, particularly when Mr Fernandes had criticised the Opposition. Prasar Bharati, according to the report, has agreed to frame guidelines to deal with such cases in future.

পাসোয়ানের উইল

১৪/৪/২০০৮

রামবিলাস পাসোয়ানের 'উইল' সম্বন্ধে বাগবিতণ্ডার কোনও আশু মীমাংসার আশা দেখা যাইতেছে না। উইল শব্দটি যে অর্থে সচরাচর ব্যবহার হইয়া থাকে, এ ক্ষেত্রে সেই অর্থে ব্যবহৃত হইতেছে না। ইহার তাৎপর্য 'অয়ারলেস ইন লোকাল লুপ' বা 'লিমিটেড মবিলিটি'। অর্থাৎ সীমিত এলাকায় বিনা তারে যোগাযোগের প্রকল্প। এই উইলের ধাক্কায় সরকার রীতিমতো আক্রান্ত বোধ করিতেছে। বিদ্যুৎকর সূত্রপাত ১৯৯৯ সালে ঘোষিত নতুন দূরসংযোগ নীতি হইতে। ওই নীতিতে মোবাইল বা অস্থিত দূরভাষ পরিষেবা ও ফিক্সড বা স্থিত দূরভাষ পরিষেবার মধ্যে তফাত করা হইয়াছে। নানা কারণে অস্থিত পরিষেবার অগ্রগতি হইয়াছে অপেক্ষাকৃত দ্রুত গতিতে, আনুমানিক ৪০,০০০ কোটি টাকার ব্যবসা চলিতেছে। স্থিত পরিষেবার জন্য টেলিফোন লাইনের প্রয়োজন, সুতরাং ইহার অগ্রগতি হইয়াছে স্তিমিত গতিতে। কিন্তু স্থিত ও অস্থিতের এই ধ্রুপদী বিভাজনের হিসাব গোলমাল করিয়া দিয়াছে নতুন প্রযুক্তি: উইল। ১৯৯৯ সালের নীতিতে ইহার সম্ভাবনা ভাবা হয় নাই। উইল ও অস্থিত পরিষেবার মধ্যে পার্থক্য আছে, কারণ অস্থিত পরিষেবায় যে সব অতিরিক্ত সুবিধা (ভ্যালু অ্যাডেড সার্ভিসেস) সরবরাহ করা সম্ভব তাহা উইলের মাধ্যমে করা সম্ভব নয়। তা ছাড়া, উইল পরিষেবা অল্প পরিধির মধ্যেই সরবরাহ করা সম্ভব, সর্বত্র নয়। অস্থিত পরিষেবার দুই-তৃতীয়াংশ উপভোক্তা অতিরিক্ত সুবিধা চাহিতেছেন না। কুড়ি কিলোমিটার বৃত্তের ভিতরে কথাবার্তা চালাইতে পারিলেই তাঁহাদের কাজ চলিয়া যায়। সুতরাং উইল পরিষেবার ফলে অস্থিত পরিষেবার বাজারে টান পড়িবে, বিশেষত যখন উইল-এর মাসুল অস্থিত পরিষেবার তুলনায় কম। উপভোক্তা লাভবান হইবেন। বিতর্ক সেই বিষয়ে নয়।

যে ভাবে উইল পরিষেবা শুরু করা হইয়াছে, বিতর্ক তাহা লইয়াই। অনেকেই বলিতেছেন, স্থিত ও অস্থিত পরিষেবার মধ্যে কৃত্রিম পার্থক্য বজায় না রাখিয়া কনভার্জেন্স লাইসেন্স বা একীভূত অনুমতিপত্রের ব্যবস্থা করার প্রয়োজন। সংসদের তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি বিষয়ক স্ট্যান্ডিং কমিটি বলিয়াছিল, সব দিক বিচার করিয়াই উইল শুরু করা উচিত। উপভোক্তার স্বার্থে স্বচ্ছতা বিসর্জন দেওয়া যায় না। পরিবর্তে যাহা পাওয়া গিয়াছে তাহাতে স্বচ্ছতার চিহ্ন নাই।

সংসদীয় কমিটির অভিমত সম্বন্ধে ২৫ জানুয়ারি তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি মন্ত্রক উইল শুরুর কথা ঘোষণা করিয়াছে। অনুমতিপত্র প্রদান করা হইবে 'প্রথমে আসিলে প্রথমে পাওয়া যাইবে' ভিত্তিতে। উইল পরিষেবায় যে রেডিয়ো স্পেকট্রাম আবশ্যিক, তাহা দেওয়া হইতেছে বিনামূল্যে। ওই তারিখেই, কোনও সরকারি ঘোষণা ছাড়াই, দরখাস্তের ফর্ম ও অনুমতিপত্র সংক্রান্ত খসড়া চুক্তি পাওয়া গেল ইন্টারনেটে। পরবর্তী তিনটি দিন ছিল ছুটি। এই বিশেষ উইল নীতি সম্বন্ধে অধিকাংশ সংস্থা জানিল ২৯ জানুয়ারি। ইতিমধ্যে তিনটি কম্পানি দরখাস্ত করিয়াছিল তাহাদেরই অনুমতিপত্র দেওয়া হইয়াছে। যে ভাবে সিদ্ধান্ত লওয়া হইয়াছে তাহা লইয়া সংশয়ের কারণ বিলম্ব। তিনটির মধ্যে একটি কম্পানি শেষ পর্যন্ত কিছু সরবরাহ করিবে কি না তাহাতেও সংশয় আছে। সেই কম্পানি আপন অনুমতিপত্র অন্য একটি বিশেষ কম্পানিকে বিক্রয় করিয়া দিতে পারে। সে ক্ষেত্রে ওই বিশেষ কম্পানিই শেষ পর্যন্ত লাভবান হইতে পারে। অস্বচ্ছতার সংকেত স্পষ্ট।

রামবিলাস পাসোয়ান বলিতেছেন, উইল ব্যবহারের ফলে গ্রামাঞ্চলে কম খরচে টেলিফোনের প্রসার দ্রুততর ও ব্যাপকতর হইবে। এই প্রস্তাবনায় বিশ্বাস করা শক্ত। উইলের অধিকার প্রদান করা হইয়াছে তাঁহাদের, যাঁহারা বর্তমানে স্থিত পরিষেবার অনুমতিপত্র পাইয়াছেন। স্থিত পরিষেবার সরবরাহকারীদের গ্রামাঞ্চলে লাইন বসাইবার কথা বলা হইয়াছিল। তাঁহারা সে কাজ করিয়া উঠিতে পারেন নাই। উইলের ক্ষেত্রেও যাবতীয় দরখাস্ত শহরাঞ্চলের জন্য। উইল সরবরাহের মূল্য কম হইবারও কারণ আছে। অস্থিত পরিষেবার সরবরাহকারীরা শুধু 'কল'-এর মূল্য নিজেরা রাখিতে পারেন, যাবতীয় এস টি ডি'র মূল্য তাঁহাদের প্রদান করিতে হয় ভারত সঞ্চার নিগমকে। অপর পক্ষে উইল সরবরাহকারীরা এস টি ডি'র মূল্যের ৬০ শতাংশ নিজেরা রাখিতে পারিবেন। শোরগোলের ফলে ৬ এপ্রিল সরকার ঘোষণা করিয়াছে, আপাতত উইলের প্রথম মূল্যু বি রাখা হইবে। দূরসংযোগ এবং তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি সমন্বয় সম্পর্কিত বিশেষ গোষ্ঠী বিষয়টি পর্যালোচনা করিবে এবং এপ্রিল মাসের মধ্যে রিপোর্ট দিবে। অস্বচ্ছতার অভাবে রাষ্ট্রীয় স্বয়ংসেবক সঙ্ঘও নাকি ক্ষুব্ধ। আর একটি তহলকা কাণ্ড প্রতিরোধ করিবার দায় ও দায়িত্ব সরকারের।

Elían saga wins a double Pulitzer for Miami daily

New York

THE STORY of Elián Gonzalez, the Cuban boy who became the centre of an international custody battle, earned prestigious Pulitzer Prizes on Monday for the Miami newspaper that reported the drama and a photographer who captured it on film.

The Pulitzer Prizes in Journalism, Letters and Drama and Music are awarded annually at Columbia University in New York. The staff of the Miami Herald won the Pulitzer Prize for breaking news reporting for its coverage of the raid that led to the 6-year-old Cuban child being reunited with his father.

The Pulitzer Board cited the newspaper "for its balanced and gripping on-the-scene coverage of the predawn raid."

Herald Managing Editor Mark Seibel said what made the story special was that it took place on the newspaper's home turf.

"Usually, you're parachuting into someone else's troubles," he said. The Pulitzer for breaking news photography was awarded to Alan Diaz of the Associated

Press for his picture of the armed agents who seized the boy from his Miami relatives' home in a dramatic predawn raid on April 22, 2000.

"I have no way of describing how I feel," Diaz said after winning the award. A freelance photographer at the time of the raid, Diaz was later hired as a staff member by the AP.

Although the photograph has won other awards, Diaz said he was still surprised it captured a Pulitzer, even though he knew it was a good shot the moment he snapped it. "When I took it I knew I had accomplished a good photo of the moment that went down," he said.

Elián survived a doomed voyage from Cuba in which his mother and 10 others died. His father wanted him in Cuba but his Miami relatives tried to keep him in the United States.

In other categories, The Oregonian won two of the coveted awards, including the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for Public Service Journalism.

The Portland, Oregon-based newspaper was cited for a "detailed and unflinching exam-



The photo, taken by Alan Diaz (inset), which has bagged the Pulitzer Prize shows six-year-old Cuban refugee Elián Gonzalez and Donato Dalrymple in a bedroom closet as federal agents rush to take custody of the boy in his Miami relative's home on 22 April, 2000.

ination of systematic problems" within the US Immigration and

Naturalisation Service, including "harsh treatment of foreign

nationals and other widespread abuses, which prompted various

reforms."

Editor Sandy Rowe said the paper's investigation found the INS was holding 20,000 people in a secretive network of jails.

The Oregonian also won in the feature-writing category for Tom Hallman Jr.'s profile of a disfigured 14-year-old boy who opted to have life-threatening surgery. "It is obviously a very fine day in Portland, Oregon," Rowe said.

The prize for investigative reporting was awarded to David Willman of the Los Angeles Times for his coverage of unsafe prescription drugs approved by the US Government.

Since his series, the drug Rezulin, suspected in 391 deaths, has been withdrawn from the market, as has the drug Lotronex, which was linked to five deaths, he said.

The prize for explanatory reporting went to the staff of the Chicago Tribune for a look at the US air traffic system.

David Johnston of The New York Times won the prize for beat reporting for his articles on inequities and loopholes in the US tax code, while the national

reporting prize went to the Times staff for a series on racial experiences and attitudes.

The international reporting award was split between Ian Johnson of The Wall Street Journal for stories about China's crackdown on the Falun Gong movement and Paul Salopek of the Chicago Tribune for reporting on political strife and disease in Africa. Dorothy Rabinowitz of The Wall Street Journal won the Pulitzer Prize for commentary, and the Pulitzer Prize for criticism was given to Gail Caldwell of The Boston Globe.

Matt Rainey of The Star-Ledger in Newark, New Jersey, won the prize for feature photography for his photographs of two students burned in a dormitory fire at Seton Hall University.

"The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay" by Michael Chabon won the prize for fiction, and the drama prize was awarded to "Proof" by David Auburn, 31, from Little Rock, Arkansas, whose play about the struggles of a mathematician's gifted daughter opened on Broadway last year.

Reuters

DoT opposes cellular firms' stand

By Sandeep Dikshit

NEW DELHI, APRIL 16. The Communications Ministry today punched holes in the arguments advanced by cellular companies who are opposing granting of limited mobility facility in phones operated by basic phone companies. On the other hand, highly-placed sources suggested that the Government may prefer to wait for the verdict by the Telecom Dispute Settlement & Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT), which is hearing a petition filed by cellular companies on this issue.

The Department of Telecom (DoT) made its opposition to the stand taken by cellular companies clear in a presentation at the Group on Telecom and IT's (GoT-IT) first meeting on the "limited mobility" controversy that has split the telecom industry into two warring camps. The Prime Minister had directed the GoT-IT to examine the controversy after both sides began lobbying furiously in support of their points of view.

The stand taken by the DoT indicates that the country's dominant operator of basic phones has decided to cast its lot with the pro-WLL section. Cellular companies are expected to respond to the DoT's position when they are invited for a presentation by the GoT-

IT this weekend.

Meanwhile, emerging from the meeting of the GoT-IT, the Minister of Information Technology, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, said the report on limited mobility through the wireless in local loop (WLL) route may be submitted by the DoT had made a detailed presentation on various aspects of limited mobility.

The DoT presentation said the National Telecom Policy '99 had envisaged the award of WLL frequency to basic phone companies. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India too had noted that the existing licence for basic service stipulates wireless as the preferred technology for local loop. Significantly, the first terms of reference for the GoT-IT is to probe whether granting of WLL was envisaged in NTP '99.

Defending the TRAI, the DoT said it had followed a transparent procedure while making recommendations on this controversial issue and the point of view of cellular companies was also heard. The Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Mr. Brajesh Mishra, had been informed of these decisions nearly six months ago, it said. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on IT in its report on

WLL "has nowhere commented that limited mobility is outside the purview of NTP '99" though it did stress on the need for a level-playing field for both cellular and basic phone companies.

Despite the observation by the Standing Committee for a level-playing field, the DoT claimed that the issue had been addressed adequately. The licence fee for cellular as well as basic phone companies had been brought at par, cellular services and spectrum charges for use of frequencies for both sides were based on the same formula. It leaned on the TRAI's opinion to assert that differential demarcation of areas does not disturb the level-playing field between cellular and basic phone companies.

Responding to the charge that spectrum was not auctioned in case of basic phone companies while cellular companies were asked to pay a hefty fee, the DoT said spectrum had never been auctioned in India. "Even for the fourth cellular operator, spectrum is not being auctioned. Any auctioning of the spectrum apart from payment of entry fee for grant of licence will increase the cost of service," it said.

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THE HINDU

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E-libraries hoping to profit from term paper blues

By Eric Lai

SAN FRANCISCO: With the development of electronic books, or e-books, still stymied by numerous roadblocks, a number of Internet companies are now starting to take a similar but different route. These firms are building digital collections of books, or e-libraries. But rather than offering fiction and other general works that users pay to download and read on pricey e-book devices, e-libraries are primarily collecting academic texts that readers can search and view via the Web on any PC.

And, instead of aiming at the general book-buying public, e-libraries are aiming at the 15 million college students who are cramming for tests or researching term papers. College students are "very attractive to us because of the photocopying and research they do," said Christopher Warnock, chief executive of ebrary (<http://www.ebrary.com>), one of half-a-dozen firms in this arena.

The players range from the Internet arms of long-established education publishers like Encyclopedia Britannica to well-funded startups that are slowly convincing publishers to overcome their fears about piracy and cannibalizing their print revenues in order to reach this budding market. "Digital publishing in the education industry will become a major force in five years," said Yegin Chen, an analyst with Eduventures.com, a Boston-based market research firm.

Eduventures.com estimates that the current market for e-library services already totals about \$250 million per year. It predicts that will more than triple by 2004 to more than \$850 million per year. That contrasts with what analysts say is the better-publicized—but less-promising—market for e-books.

Sales of e-books are expected to generate just \$70 million in revenue this year, according to market research firm Jupiter Media Metrix—a tiny drop in the estimated overall \$70 billion book publishing market.

For one thing, reading an e-book generally requires the use of an expensive reading device—really a

computer with a large, flat-screen—that costs between \$300 and \$800.

And the experience of squinting at a hefty e-book reader can also be off-putting. An e-book "is really not what you want to curl up in bed with," said M J Rose, an author and columnist for online news site Wired.com who writes about Internet publishing. Sales of e-book readers have been meager so far by most reports. Jupiter estimates only 1.9 million devices will be sold by 2004.

E-libraries attempt to sidestep many of the problems associated with e-books. Take ebrary, which will allow users to freely read on-screen any page from any of the "tens of thousands" of books stored in its archive. The Mountain View, Calif., startup hopes to profit by charging users small fees—15 cents to print a page, 25 cents to cut-and-paste it into a word processor—that will be split between ebrary and the book publishers themselves.

It's a model that Warnock compares to the photocopying of books, which he estimates was worth \$4 billion in the United States alone last year. Ebrary is ameliorating piracy fears by using proprietary security and encryption software to protect the books from being printed or downloaded. At the same time, all of ebrary's content will be searchable via mainstream search engines like Google or Alta Vista, Warnock said, making it easily reached by students.

Ebrary offers features tailored for students. Its software automatically creates a bibliographic reference whenever content from a book is pasted into a Microsoft Word document. With publishing giants such as Random House, Pearson and McGraw-Hill among its financial backers, ebrary has generated a fair amount of industry buzz, despite delaying its launch more than once. It now hopes to be ready by mid-year.

"Ebrary is well positioned," said Eduventures.com's Chen. "If they can execute well, it's quite compelling." Despite the lack of publicity, e-library startups have not had much trouble attracting venture capital interest. (Reuters)

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104
13/4
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Death of an information technology evangelist

HYDERABAD, April 12. — Nasscom chief Dewang Mehta's death is a great loss. The recent World Economic Forum describing him to be among 100 Global Leaders of Tomorrow is an indication of the loss.

For a country still in the nascent Information Technology stage it's hard to overcome the 38-year-old visionary's death. For those who knew his potential, his ability to forecast the growth of industry, his certainty that IT alone could eradicate poverty and illiteracy and his constant urging of people, governments and organisations to get along and get connected, he was the IT evangelist.

Those who saw him speak with passion and conviction on TV talk shows and at seminars on the Internet, its future and specifically what it means to India he was the country's first IT celebrity and arguably the first IT visionary.

Extremely talented people like Mr NR Narayanamurthy of Infosys and Mr FC Khohi of Tata Consultancy Services preceded him at Nasscom, but Mehta's impact while holding the organisation's main office is nothing short of revolutionary.

In December 2000 the prestigious Chief Information Officers' publication wrote on him:

"In the last decade, the non-profit group has become the single voice of India's IT sector, guiding the government, sponsoring seminars and conferences, and churning out rosy forecasts for Indian technologies."

The chartered accountant during his stay in London took interest in graphic arts while working as a fast food cook at Wimpy's and graduated in the subject from London in 1985.

His subsequent work on Ray Tracing and Fractals fetched him the *Computer Graphics*

Man of the Year Award in 1991. Since then, he has written over 1,000 articles especially on software and the Internet.

The person who impressed him the most was, the Microsoft chief, Mr Bill Gates, and Mehta is perhaps the only Indian who had met him seven times in the past four years. Every time he met Mr Gates he found him to be passionate. "That passion is not going. Instead, it's increasing each year," he had said in an interview.

It was with this passion that he

was working for literally an e-critical to private parties becoming Internet service providers and in the government agreeing to break VSNL's monopoly on the Internet gateway.

He was critical towards last year's successful negotiations of a joint venture between Massachusetts Institute of Technology and India Media Lab that would work as a development centre for regional language software and low-cost technology projects, with Microsoft, Infosys Techno-

logies and Wipro.

Among the top awards he cherished was the *IT Man of the Year* in 1997 by *Dataquest Magazine*. More than that could be *Software Evangelist of the Year Award* he won for three successive years from 1997.

In May 1998, Mehta was appointed a member and spokesman of the high-power National IT Taskforce set up by the Prime Minister to draft a national IT policy. Since then he has been on advisory boards of various state governments, willing to use IT in their administration.

In his Delhi office, his awards were lined alongside books by

John F Kennedy, a Bill Gates biography and a book on yoga and meditation. A portrait of Shirdi Sai Baba hung on a wall and the Bhagwad Gita always occupied a corner of his desk.

Sadly his passionate dream of making a masala Hindi film will remain unfulfilled. The only possible tribute to pay to this man, so terribly bullish that Internet would make India a super power, is to ensure that his other dreams are realised: Internet and e-mail at every STD-ISD booth in the country and Internet through cable TV to 15 million homes by 2003, Internet connectivity to every school and college and telemedicine in every village by 2008. Failure to achieve these targets would be letting down the visionary.

DEWANG WAS AMONG '100 GLOBAL LEADERS OF TOMORROW'

13 APR 2001

IT guru found dead in Sydney hotel

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, April 12. — The doyen of India's information technology and chief of National Association of Software and Service Companies, Mr Dewang Mehta, was found dead in a Sydney hotel room today.

The Union information and technology minister, Mr Pramod Mahajan, told UNI over the phone from Sydney: "I was informed by the Indian high commissioner here around 8 p.m. that Mr Dewang Mehta had been found dead in his hotel room around 5 p.m. (12.30 p.m. IST)"

Police after carrying out the preliminary investigations in the hotel took the body for medical examination around 10 p.m. Mr Mehta and Mr Mahajan were staying in the Park Hyatt and were scheduled to leave for India around 6.30 this

evening.

But when the Nasscom chief didn't check out of the hotel till 5 p.m. and later didn't respond to several calls by the hotel's tele-board to remind him of his flight, the apprehensive staff forced open his door to find him dead.

Mr Mahajan said prima facie his death appears to be because of natural causes. "But the exact cause could be confirmed only when the report is available."

A shocked Mr Mahajan, as part of whose delegation Mr Mehta was in Australia, said over the phone from Sydney that the 38-year-old Nasscom chief was "hale and hearty" when he last met him at 10.30 p.m. last night. "There was no sign of any illness. He was smiling as ever."

The minister described Mr Mehta's death as a "huge loss" to the IT sector. "If there was any one person who

deserved credit for promoting information technology in the country it was Dewang," he said.

Will Mr Mehta's body be flown to India? Mr Mahajan said he would make all efforts to bring back the body with him tomorrow. "But it all depends on the police investigations. Police will hand over the body to the Indian high commission only after all procedural formalities are completed."

It was not clear whether a post mortem would be conducted in Sydney, for most of the government medical staff are on Easter holidays.

The Nasscom chief hadn't come out of his hotel room since late last night when he returned from a party, hosted by Indians in Australia, preliminary investigations have revealed.



A file photograph of Nasscom chief Dewang Mehta at an Infotech Conference in Bangalore on 12 March 2001. — AP/PTI

■ More reports on pages 8 & 10

Sushma: New media council Bill draft soon

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 11. — A new media council Bill will be drafted, the information and broadcasting minister said today, dissociating herself from the earlier draft prepared by Press Council chairman, Justice PB Sawant.

The earlier Bill was sent to Mrs Sushma Swaraj in November 2000; she had forwarded it to Prasar Bharati, Press Information Bureau and Indian Newspaper Society. Today she said her ministry had not worked on the Bill, which the media had criticised.

Mrs Swaraj said she had had spoken of a media council but her ministry had "no hand in it". Why is a media council needed? She said the press is regulated by a Press Council but there is no check on the electronic media. Nor is there any possibility of a broadcast or convergence Bill for the electronic media going through Parliament in the near future.

She said she had spoken to Mr Somnath Chatterjee, CPI-M MP and chairman of the standing committee on communications, on the Bill. Mr Chatterjee reportedly told her that it was a good idea and asked her to go ahead with it. A concept paper on the subject will be prepared after consulting working journalists, editors and owners and broadcasting organisations.

"I've an open mind on the subject," Mrs Swaraj said. The results of the consultations will be put before the parliamentary consultative committee on information and broadcasting. At the moment, all agree only on the desirability of a media council. Other issues, including its funding, composition, functions and powers will be decided after consultations.

Will Internet too be included? She said its regulation was not a feasible proposition. In any case, Justice Sawant's Media Council Bill was prepared well before the Tehelka expose.

When will new members to Prasar Bharati board be appointed? She said Justice Sawant, part of the three-member committee that appoints the board members, will retire four months later. But the decision will be taken earlier.

THE STATESMAN

11 APR 2001

THE Internet — the most democratic and empowering of inventions known to man — is still far from enabling democracies to go online. Legal and security risks apart, the Internet, famous for cutting costs, would cause a manifold increase in election expenditure for any country should it venture to choose its government online.

An e-election has the potential to corrupt the democratic process rather than enhance it.

The Democratic Party's Arizona primaries for the US presidential race in 2000, the recent global election for the Internet Corporation for Names and Numbers' executive board and several colleges, unions and societies in the West did conduct their elections on the Internet.

They were largely successful in spurring many private organisations to choose online voting and generating enormous interest and hope in e-voting for the near future.

Especially in the USA, bewildered by the Florida recount last November, it was hoped that problems would be overcome if the whole exercise was done on the Net. Politicians and voters tended to ask — Why can't we vote, when we can buy on the Net? But public voting, where people's will is exercised for choosing their government, is a different ball game with safety, integrity and credibility of the voting procedure of prime national concern.

In December 1999, the then US President, Bill Clinton, while asking his administration to gear up to go totally electronic, asked the National Science Foundation to examine the feasibility of Inter-

World not yet ready for e-democracy

Countries need to enact strong domestic laws and international treaties to deter fraud and attack on online voting systems. And these are not enough to reassure that elections, the heart of a democracy, when online, cannot be destabilised by someone if not a hostile country, writes STANLEY THEODORE

net voting. The Internet Policy Institute and the University of Maryland held a workshop last October, involving election officials, Internet security experts, social scientists, among others. The report was published in March.

It proved to be a wet blanket for those hoping to vote from the comfort of their homes rather than queuing up at dusty polling booths. The report shot down the concept of remote voting, that is, from their homes or offices, as it involves a significant risk to the polling process and ought not to be fielded in public elections until technical and social issues are addressed.

But a look at it makes risks like the prospects of rigging and booth capturing in the forthcoming West Bengal and Tamil Nadu elections appear like a kindergarten party when compared to the security risks of an Internet poll.

Any online voting system has a specific communication path from the computer from where a vote is cast to a server where it is stored and tallied. The path has to be trusted, secure and confidential, given the sanctity and secrecy of the ballot. Confidentiality can be assured to a substantial degree if digital signatures and a reliable Public Key Infrastructure is in place.

It is recommended that Internet-based voter registration be barred because fake enrollment is possible through public

databases. At present, this has to be done physically till registration on authentication through retinal scans and fingerprints by biometric devices are possible.

If online election is started, hackers would be tempted to test their capacities to destabilise the process or, worse, make it useless. The hackers' natural target should be the server to which he will send a malicious payload in the form of a Trojan, like an e-mail virus.

The Trojan, once executed, will spy on votes cast and then prevent voters from exercising their franchise. It can also change ballots according to instructions.

The other method that can be employed is a remote control programme activated by a timer device or a particular activity on the computer. If this is distributed and executed on election day, voters will be disenfranchised or have their votes modified.

This is more dangerous as it can be targeted specifically at a particular community.

As on today, this can be accomplished without difficulty as the available security encryption technologies in the IPT's words are impotent. From an Indian perspective, such a stealth attack can come from across the border, the case in point being the defacing of the Science Congress sites by Pakistani hackers last year.

The key communications path is pathetically vulnerable. The hacker or a group of them from several computers can flood it with data at one go, making the system collapse. An analogy could be 10 people with sticks thrashing a person at the same time.

Last February, Internet giants like Yahoo!, Amazon, E-Bay and CNN were left reeling by denials of service attacks. The IPI says, though research is being done to limit this threat, no solution has been found.

The only way, perhaps, is to just shut down the system when an attack is carried out. But that would leave the voter baffled about how, when and where can he vote. As a safeguard, the election authority could simul-



Polling officers test an electronic voting machine in Kolkata. Internet voting through specially installed kiosks at malls or department stores could be implemented over the next several election cycles. — Rajib De

taneously have traditional polling booths with ballot papers as another facility for the voter to exercise his franchise. By then, however, the voters' trust in the election process may have taken a solid beating and he may choose not to go to the booth at all.

The story gets more intriguing here. A spoof site or an impostor site mimicking the official poll site can be created with the capacity to lure a voter who is ready to vote from his computer while having his morning coffee.

Though there are protections, the online voting process has to make a hazardous assumption that all voters will have them in place before poll day.

In the absence of protection, a vote could be lost or remain undetected. Worse, the site can attempt to place itself as an intermediary between the voter and the official voting site and use this position to alter votes at will.

Added to this are social factors. Voting would be made easier for those who have computers in an Internet poll scenario.

The fact is computers, despite reduction in duties and taxes, are still an expensive item, not to forget high Internet and telephone access costs. Anywhere in the world,

unique requirements. Systems have to be acquired with foolproof hardware and software, strong and shrewd technical support and importantly, the ability to upgrade themselves in their lifecycle.

In the true Internet voting scenario where one can vote from home, despite the risks involved, special devices are needed.

One of them should be a platform that accepts votes from any operating system, Windows of Unix, or any browser, Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator.

These systems and their maintenance require money, apart from the costs involved in acquiring and executing authentication methods like digital signatures.

It's unfair to expect the voter to pay for those costs and even more because it may not be a one-time payment given the rapidity with which systems and computer criminals change.

It is equally unfair to expect

there is a higher number of rich people getting connected than those with lower incomes.

This apart, cyber access and facilities could also be plenty for a certain demographic group and too little for others.

For instance, in the USA, there are more whites than any other race having Internet-linked computers. And a greater number of youngsters have more access than their parents.

Though these factors are fast changing to a more uniform level of access, the concept of remote Internet voting tends to make things easier for a certain group — the more affluent.

Democracies cannot accept such tendencies, as a polling booth sees no difference when an owner or an employee arrives to vote.

The IPI is, however, optimistic about online polling booths with systems designed to function even if the communication path between the booth and the server are disrupted by attacks.

The report suggested that these systems must include the functionality of an electronic voting machine so that the systems, when attacked, can revert to the electronic format without losing a single vote.

The aspect here is not to rely on the communication path between the poll site and the server. On this reason alone, this method does not entirely contain the concept of Internet voting.

It, however, concluded that Internet voting through specially installed kiosks at malls or department stores could be implemented over the next several election cycles. But these systems will require an environment like that of the traditional polling booth to provide safeguards against voters being coerced, bought or intimidated.

It is ironical that the medium beloved for saving money acts to the contrary when democracies want their primary function online.

There is no study done as of now about the relative cost impact between traditional methods like paper ballots and electronic voting machines and Internet voting.

But Internet voting has its

the administration to pay for the costs as it would be a significant budget expenditure that could go up in each life cycle of the system and would again burden the voter through fresh taxes.

Countries need to enact strong domestic laws and international treaties to deter fraud and attack on online voting systems.

Before e-mail, there was snail mail by the still humble postal department and even before that was the nice face mail.

Since then, there have been laws but crime survived. Laws and treaties are not enough to reassure that elections, the heart of a democracy, when online, cannot be destabilised by someone if not a hostile country.

The sadder part is that this system will affect the voters' trust as it has vulnerabilities that can harm a sacred process.

In the Indian context, it may not be in our lifetime to exercise our franchise online. Hopefully, it would be for generation next.

(The author is The Statesman's Hyderabad-based correspondent.)

THE STATESMAN

1 2 APR 2001

Fraud fear stalks e-business

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

Bangalore, April 10: E-commerce companies, beware of e-fraud.

A global survey conducted by KPMG, the professional consultancy firm, has sounded an alarm, saying that as e-commerce revolutionises business, it also revolutionises business fraud.

The report, released today, states that about 80 per cent CEOs of top 12 private and public companies fear a breach in their e-commerce system through the Internet.

The third international KPMG Fraud Survey focused entirely on e-fraud and security-related issues in view of the growth of the e-commerce phenomenon. Nine per cent respondents said a security breach had occurred in their organisation in the last one year, said Deepankar Sanwalka, KPMG India's executive director.

Indians, however, can draw cold comfort from this interesting bit of statistics — only 33 Indian companies responded to the questionnaire as e-fraud had yet to catch up in the country.

"Respondents indicated that security of credit card numbers and personal information were by far the most important concerns of their customers," Sanwalka said.

And customers had reason to be worried: less than 35 per cent of the respondents confirmed that security audits were carried out on their e-commerce systems while only 12 per cent of their websites had passed a security audit.

On the brighter side, about 50 per cent of businesses have identified hackers and the poor implementation of security policies as the greatest threats to their e-commerce systems.

The report said security related risks affected all businesses, cutting across national and geographic boundaries. The countries covered in the survey are Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Italy, South Africa, Switzerland, the UK and the US.

The report also shows that e-commerce still has a way to go. Most of the respondents said they were going slow on implementation of a full e-commerce system because of a lack of demand.

Around 88 per cent of respondents felt that the public perceived the traditional businesses as being more secure and that their e-commerce activities accounted for less than 10 per cent of their company's total revenue. Cost was identified as a major hurdle in implementing a full e-commerce system by 50 per cent of the participants.

Internet can open — and close — doors for Muslim women living in seclusion

SOFIA MCFARLAND

As a Muslim convert, Sumayyah, a 20-year-old Finn who lives in the American Midwest, wears a face veil, or niqaab, for her rare ventures out. But sometimes she drives where no one can see her, "heading for the countryside so that I can lift my niqaab and feel the air on my face," she says in the Niqaabi Club chat room for fully veiled Muslim women.

For many Muslim women who have adopted the veil and a secluded lifestyle, or purdah, the Internet has changed what such a life means — providing new ways to communicate and conduct business online. But some experts say the Net could close doors for Muslim women as well, depriving them of the few reasons they have to leave the house.

"It has the potential to cut both ways," says Shakira Hussein, an Australian National University sociology scholar researching Islam in cyberspace. As online activities become more widely known and accepted, some secluded Muslim women may wind up staying home even more than they ordinarily would. For these women, Hussein says, the Internet

could become a "substitute for physical mobility, a way to enforce segregation."

For many Muslims in chat rooms, however, a common theme is the happiness, not the isolation, that living in purdah brings. Sister Noor, a devout Muslim in Scotland who takes vitamin supplements because she gets natural sunlight only rarely, says on a site called Living in Purdah, "Since going online, I have written to many sisters and have made some wonderful friends — but I would like to stress that living in purdah was all that I wanted before I got my computer."

Nonetheless, a handful of websites are aimed at getting women out of their seclusion. The Revolutionary Association of the Women in Afghanistan (www.rawa.org), for instance, has a site that opposes Taliban restrictions that keep women in the home. While the Afghan site has won women invitations to speak at functions around the world — as well as support from the "Oprah" television talk show in the US — the focus in chat rooms is often not on restrictions, but on subjects such as where to find an Afghan-style burqa, a flowing cover that some women see as more comfortable than tie-on face cov-

ers. Clearly for many secluded Muslim women, life continues the way it has for centuries: Only the wealthiest and most educated segments of the society have computers at home, and among those active in cyberspace, Muslim converts are overrepresented. Still, the online purdah community's Web postings offer insights into these women's lives: While Sumayyah tells her online contacts that she is hesitant to leave her apartment to go to the building's laundry room, she says she branches out socially online, talking to Muslim women from all over the world or maintaining a dialogue about Islam with a Christian e-group.

As Muslims increasingly enter cyberspace, Islamic scholars are fielding a slew of queries about proper online behavior, such as whether it is acceptable for women and men to have e-mail contact and whether online shopping is permissible in Islam. In general, Muslim scholars say that real-world rules also apply in cyberspace. Consequently, many matrimonial Web sites require women

to register along with a chaperone, and cybercontact between unmarried men and women is recommended only for business purposes.

Sociology scholar Hussein says that many Muslims see cyberspace as a zone where there is no distinction between the veiled and the unveiled, since the computer itself acts as a form of veil.

As Muslims increasingly enter cyberspace, Islamic scholars are fielding a slew of queries about proper online behaviour, such as whether it is acceptable for women and men to have e-mail contact and whether online shopping is permissible in Islam.

But she says that women often feel a need to signal whether they are covered by choosing user names such as "niqaab—sara", "I4niqaab" and "veiled—shiva", or by tagging their postings with quotations about veiling.

Hussein adds that one woman's forum was closed by the moderator for

two weeks because the arguments over veiling got so heated. Meanwhile, the Proper Hijaab news/group (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/properhijaab) invites only fully veiled women to participate or those "interested in wearing the full hijab SHORTLY". It also asks that all discussions be related to wearing hijab, or full cover, and be inspirational and encouraging.

In traditional Muslim societies, women observing purdah laws often have a social network of extended family, neighbors and friends. But as many Muslims relocate for jobs or school, and as Islam attracts new converts, a Muslim woman could easily find herself in a place where she is the only veiled woman for miles. For these women, the Internet can serve as a support system.

For Anja Seuthe, a German who moved to Egypt six years ago after her conversion to Islam, the Internet is where she found friends in her new country. "It's easier on the Net," says Seuthe, who has worn hijab for several years. "In real life, it's harder to find common interests."

A participant in the Proper Hijaab news/group, Khairiya S. found similar companionship. Online, she voiced worries about putting her face veil back on after breathing difficulties had prompted her to remove it during pregnancy. She said that while she had been veiled, people had talked behind her back at Wal Mart, and a boy had asked if she was a ninja. In one posting she said, "I didn't mind being asked if I was a ninja... he was just curious and my husband is the one who answered him. But I HATED being talked about behind my back." A few days later, after other participants offered encouragement, she posted a triumphant photo of herself — with full face cover restored.

Many women, such as Sister Noor — who wears a veil when she leaves her bedroom and exits the house only for doctor visits — use the Internet to become better observers of Islamic rules. "I am new to the Net, as this is my first computer. It was a present from my father who believes that it will do me good to meet other sisters who believe the same things as I and my family do. It is a temptation to go surfing, but I allow myself only to visit decent Islamic sites, and to meet proper

sisters." Sister Noor says on the Living in Purdah site.

There are of course other Muslim women who use the Net to circumvent Islamic rules by chatting with men or looking for advice from non-Muslims on health or legal issues. For women who have been excluded from their local Muslim community due to some transgression, such as leaving their husbands, the Internet can offer an alternative Muslim community.

On the Niqaabi Club forum (http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/theniqaabiclub), one discussion is prompted by the question, "What do you do for fun in purdah?" posed by a woman who says she sleeps all day and that the purdah atmosphere is getting to her. Replies pour in suggesting activities related to doing handicrafts or baking. A woman with the handle "forevermodest" suggests bike riding, which, leads to a heated debate over whether this is acceptable. Then, Sumayyah, the Finnish woman, goes a step further, advocating snowboarding on a secluded slope, and the debate zooms in on the issue: Does purdah mean staying at home, or does it mean simply remaining where you can't be seen?

(From The Wall Street Journal)

Sushma Swaraj seems to be in a hurry to get the Media Council Bill through Parliament. The letter from the Chairman of the Press Council to her, forwarding the Bill is dated 22 November 2000 but there has been no noticeable interest in the matter until very recently. Perhaps the Minister sees opportunities to ease the pressure of the tehelka tapes!

The suspicion arises because the Bill, with due respect to the author, is founded on nothing more than the urge to extend the horizons of the Press Council without a case being made out for it. Justice P B Sawant, the Chairman, says in his letter that he has been unable to find a ready-made model anywhere. This occasions no surprise as countries with established democratic traditions recognize that the written press and electronic media are two dif-

ferent kinds of animal and must be treated differently when it comes to self-regulation. He has found 19 countries where the two are mixed in a single Council but has been able to obtain copies of only four such laws and adds that none of them is suitable for us. He has therefore drafted a brand new Bill learning from the four models. They are Denmark, Portugal, Tanzania and the Cameroun. Denmark is a highly disciplined country, its ethos is wholly different from ours and it combines texts, pictures, sound programmes, posters and bills in a single legislation whose purpose is not self-regulation at all. For that they have the Ombudsman system, which works well and on which Justice Sawant is silent. The salient features of

... the written press and electronic media are two different kinds of animal and must be treated differently when it comes to self-regulation

Leave The Media Alone!

the Danish Act is that it leaves decisions to the public prosecutor, and requires that all dissenting opinions (not clear on what subjects) be published. Portugal's brush with democracy is recent in historical terms, but it provides for a High Authority for Press and Broadcasting whose functions are to vet programme applications for broadcast licences, ensure compliance with government regulations on foreign capital in print and broadcast media and has power to compel press and broadcast companies to publish data of any kind. In addition the High Authority exercises supervisory powers, which are not elaborated except that *inter alia*, it can interfere with appointment and discharge of directors of press and broadcast organs. The Tanzanian Media Council demands verdicts within a month. It also forbids open ridicule of the underdog and bans sensationalism whatever these may mean. The Cameroun have a National Council for Communication, whose distinguishing feature is that of 16 mem-

bers, three are religious figures. Before I comment on the draft presented by Justice Sawant, there is one striking feature that must be noticed. His proposed Media Council has two more members than the already bloated Press Council - 30. Denmark has seven, Portugal 13, of which five are legislators and three government appointees, Cameroun 16 of which in addition to religious leaders, four are government appointees and Tanzania 13 of which five are public figures.

Justice Sawant's Bill is largely to add electronic media to the empire of the Press Council; it provides that its Chairman shall have the same salary and privileges of a sitting Supreme Court judge, power to commit for contempt of itself like a High Court of justice, power to levy fees on media in its discretion, subject only to government approval, in addition to grants it currently receives from government and power to direct that bills for advertisements in newspaper not be paid without a NO DUES certificate from the pro-

If the Ministry must be seen to be doing something about a problem that has nothing to do with self-regulation, it must declare the purpose first

between editors and their staff and tries its hand at codes of conduct and of ethics.

The Minister would be well advised to leave well alone. If the Ministry must be seen to be doing something about a problem that has nothing to do with self-regulation, it must declare the purpose first. Why must we lead the democratic world in having a single self-regulatory body for print and broadcast media and by what process of reasoning is it sought to argue that a self-regulatory body should seek penal powers instead of leading by example? Sushma should go to London where the Press Complaints Commission does an admirable job without making heavy weather over it. Its guide to complainants provides inter

The Commission cannot consider legal or contractual matters, advertising or broadcast matters....

I see no purpose in being asked to fall between Tanzania and the Cameroun!

Few hopes from proposed information law

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 6. — Unless Parliament's select committee springs a surprise on the government, don't expect too much out of the proposed freedom of information law.

State governments seem to be in the race for coming up with the "worst practice", says right to information activist, Ms Abha Joshi of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative.

As things stand, it will be the government — may be a different set of bureaucrats — who will hear your appeal against a bureaucrat's decision to refuse access to information. And forget about approaching the courts against the government under this proposed law. It specifically bars courts from coming to your rescue.

The Centre's Bill on the subject is not the only one which has Ms Joshi wondering whether the law makers were really serious about enabling people to access information. Four states enacted a right to information law after Goa. "The Goa model is still the best out of the available one."

she said.

Tamil Nadu came next and went ahead to categorise 24 exemptions to the law as compared to six in the Goa model. Activists contend some of the exemptions are so broad that they could be interpreted to include almost any information a bureaucrat wanted to hide. Not that the law in other states or the Centre is any better. "They are almost as deadly," a CHRI official said, pointing out "the provisions do not seem to reflect the title (Right to Information)".

The way state governments are jumping in to pass legislations does not still reflect a will on the government's part to reveal information, the CHRI official said. Other than Goa and Tamil Nadu, the other states to have come up with a right to information law include Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. The latter's Bill was sent to the Centre for clearance but never came back. Madhya Pradesh, however, found a way out and came out with an executive order, empowering people to demand information from 50 specified departments.

Uttar Pradesh, probably, did not want to

lag behind in this race and too came up with similar executive orders. But could not gather the courage to open up. Their set of administrative orders gave people access to information regarding just two departments.

Delhi adopted a different strategy. Instead of issuing administrative orders as it had planned earlier, the chief minister, Mrs Sheila Dikshit, went ahead this week to introduce a Bill in the state Assembly. Of course, she knew that the bill would end up in some dark corner of the Union home ministry. The Centre obviously will not clear the Bill, specially when it is working on its own and had stalled Madhya Pradesh's Bill. But she can always claim credit for trying to enact the law.

Officials said the chief minister had been told way back in mid-2000 that she should not expect to enact a new law since the Centre will not approve it. The government is reported to have been given two choices. If it was as sincere as it appeared to be in bringing about transparency, it should issue administrative orders just like Madhya Pradesh had.

THE STATESMAN

7 APR 2001

Bollywood caught in award crossfire

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 1

THE CONTROVERSY over the national film awards may have polarised into pro-BJP and anti-BJP positions, but there is one set of people who have been caught in the crossfire: the Mumbai film industry. Even those members of the industry with a traditional antipathy to the BJP have come out strongly on the role of the awards. Says Javed Akhtar: If the awards were rigged by a saffron lobby, then how come I got one? Adds director Mahesh Bhatt: It is the usual battle of the jholawallahs against the establishment. We are just pawns in the game.

Much of the industry's anger is caused by the perceived injustice to actress Raveena Tandon, who won the Best Actress award for Kalpana Lajmi's *Daman*. It has been alleged that Tandon was rewarded for campaigning for the BJP's Vijay Goel; that one



of the jurors, Macmohan, who is her uncle, favoured her; and that because she knew she was getting the award, the celebrations at her Mumbai residence started the night before.

Every one of these claims is a lie. Raveena has never campaigned for the BJP; she has never met Vijay Goel in her life. Macmohan did not participate in the voting for Best Actress because of his relationship with Raveena, so he could not have

favoured her. And there have been no celebrations at her Mumbai home, before or after the award.

Apart from a rushed trip to Mumbai to appear on a Zee show, Raveena has spent the last week in Hampi shooting for an unusual film: *Agnivarsha*, based on a play by Girish Karnad and directed by playwright Arjun Sajani, who is making his debut as a film director with a hefty budget from Channel Nine and such stars as Raveena, Jackie Shroff and Amitabh.

Says Raveena: I was in Hampi when I heard about the award. And I haven't really felt the urge to celebrate because I have been so stressed out by this controversy. Raveena's irritation showed during a Zee News discussion when she asked dissenting jury member Pradeep Krishen to substantiate his claim that she campaigned for the BJP. Krishen conceded that he had been misinformed and apologised to her.

Movie directors feel that the lines between art cinema and commercial cinema are blurring. Despite Raveena's megastar presence, *Daman* cost only Rs 70 lakh. (She accepted no payment.) Her principal rival for the award was Karisma Kapoor, who acted in Shyam Benegal's *Zubeida*, again a cross between commercial and art cinema. Among the other nominees was Tabu for *Astitva*, another off-beat movie.

Says Bhatt: I have had my battles with the establishment over censorship. I have fought communalism. But I think it is criminal that talented artistes are being slandered and bad-mouthed just because they are caught in the crossfire between the saffron lobby and its rivals.

For the record, though, Raveena says she is upset but not discouraged. She will continue to act in off-beat films for a fraction of her usual fee regardless of whether she wins any awards or not.

THE HINDUSTAN TIME

- 2 APR 2001

THERE are those who declare that the National Film Awards committee has had "political" jury members for years. They are right. And wrong.

It is true that T Subbirami Reddy, chairman on two occasions, was a Congress MP. It is also true that on many occasions, juries had the odd person or two who didn't quite fit in. In the past, the Congress government seriously interfered in the affairs of the information and broadcasting ministry — the stories about Vidya Charan Shukla during the Emergency being a case in point.

What makes the 48th National Film Awards jury different are two major developments: the revolt of four members or a fourth of the jury. Rightly or wrongly, director Pradeep Krishen, cinematographer Shashi Anand, dancer Madhumita Rout and actor Dhritiman Chatterjee have either walked out, resigned or been critical of the process — an unprecedented event. The decision by Goutam Ghose, last year's chairman of the National Film Awards jury and Soumitra Chatterjee, one of India's most distinguished actors, to return their awards, heaps more embarrassment on the government.

In their statements to the media, Krishen and others have spoken of the "cabal," which influenced decision-making. He felt there were many people who were linked to the BJP or directly to minister Sushma Swaraj. They, he said, had a separate agenda and wanted certain films to win. This had nothing to do with a commercial cinema vs art cinema fight, it was about ensuring that certain decisions were taken.

Usually, there are one or two political oranges in this basket of apples. This year, the dissidents claim there were six or seven, while Mrs Swaraj admits there were four people, apart from the chairman, with BJP links.

Vyjanthimala Bali was once a Congress MP but is now with the BJP. Mrs Swaraj has spoken of Nivedita Pradhan, a BJP MLA from Orissa; Parvathi Indushekar, her "supporter" and not, her campaign manager from Bellary, her constituency; Tarun Vijay of *Panchajanya* and Shashi Ranjan, known for his documentary on BJP leader and actor Shatrughan Sinha.

Of the four, the two gentlemen had links with the cinema; the other two had none, though that is not necessarily important. A writer, a thinker, a dancer or a statesman can contribute more than just another actor or director but Pradhan, according to reports, did not; nor did Indushekar, an advocate. Nor are the two ladies people of great eminence.

Surely, there are more esteemed BJP-linked people who could have

Oranges in a basket of apples

SF-9 *1/4*
The responsibility of nominating the jury rests with the minister, who does have a point that there shouldn't be double standards about political affiliation.

Meo
SRINJOY CHOWDHURY wonders how some of the jurists, who clearly did not fit in, were chosen

been invited. Mrs Swaraj has said she wanted an ordinary housewife. Sure, why from Bellary? It's certainly not illegal to appoint Indushekar, but it leaves her open to charges like the ones Krishen has made.

The other two people Mrs Swaraj did not acknowledge in her press briefing are Pawan Kumar, also close to Sinha and Madhumita Rout, who may not be a political person, but is reportedly the minister's daughter's dance teacher. This was something the minister did tangentially refer to. Rout, she said, came from a family of distinguished artistes, apart from being an established figure in the world of performing arts. That is certainly true — but again, why appoint someone who is so close to the minister's house-hold?

Rout did walk out with Krishen and Anand, something Mrs Swaraj pointed out during her successful press briefing and Krishen said: "It was doubly brave for Madhumita Rout to walk out with us — being the minister's daughter's dance tutor."

Six or even seven out of 17 is not a majority (Mrs Swaraj had jocularly spoken of getting nine people who could have rubber-stamped her agenda) but every committee has fence-sitters who know which way the wind is blowing. And as for the Leftists in the committee, Pradeep Krishen, himself one, has called his inclusion "window dressing." The political leanings of Dhritiman Chatterjee and Shashi Anand are not known except that their names, according to rumours, were suggested by a Leftist, director Mrinal Sen.

In the end, whether they are pro-BJP or pro-Left, the responsibility

Mrs Swaraj, who does have a point that there shouldn't be double standards about political affiliation. This time, the people who have protested, have done it in a way that was rarely done before. By refusing national awards, Chatterjee and Ghose, for whatever reasons, have also made a statement.

The protesters have said the jury was rigged so that certain people could be made to win certain awards. They claimed Raveena Tandon's best actress award was a payoff for campaigning for the BJP. This, Mrs Swaraj has denied as untrue. For, Pooja Batra had campaigned for Vijay Goel, she said.

Those who walked out should have got their facts right, and whether certain people were appointed to stage-manage the awards, is hard to prove. Mrs Swaraj said she could have appointed nine of her supporters to ensure that the right people won awards. And she has shown that films that were dumped need not have been if they had been sent to committees that didn't have Krishen. Also, some films that have won awards aren't necessarily BJP-oriented.

On the other hand, the ministry never knew there would be such an uproar. The ministry may never have nominated these people if it knew this would happen. It is possible the protesters — at least three of them — have strong awareness of the cinematic language and based their judgements on that. Many of their adversaries, including stars, may not have had that and judged films on the basis of a person, moderately interested in films or lay-persons. And the two groups can then have diametrically different views about the film.

Which brings one to the bit about Mac Mohan being related to Raveena Tandon. The minister has clarified he is "distantly related" and did not participate in the voting for best actress. The larger question is why Mac Mohan, not a big star, distinguished actor or great intellectual was on the jury at all?

A final point relates to the awards. There are too many of them. Are feature film awards on family welfare and on other social issues such as prohibition, women and child welfare, anti-dowry, drug abuse and environment necessary? Certainly, documentaries on the subjects can have a place. And what if some great Indian director produced a film on drug abuse — a sort of superior *Trainspotting*, an award-winning British film? Would it be denied of an award?

(The author is Special Representative, The Statesman, New Delhi.)

THE STATESMAN

1 APR 2001

10

NEEDS OF THE TIME

119

When Ms Sushma Swaraj takes upon herself the business of keeping the nation entertained, it is time for alarm. The basilisk eye of *Hindutva* prudery and the dangerous illogic of *swadeshi* pseudo-economics have now, it seems, fixed their gaze on the film industry. The information and broadcasting minister has extended her nurturing thoughts to the risky business of making films. She was the master of revels at a recent global convention, in Mumbai, on the entertainment sector, organized by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The Ficci secretary-general has even called her a "can-do" minister, and it is this image of determined and empowered purposiveness that ought to strike a chill.

The first incongruity in the situation is the prominence given to the information and broadcasting ministry at a convention the tenor of whose concern was primarily economic. Its purpose was to review the state of the cinematic art in properly industrialized terms and to devise strategies of corporatization which would give it stability and respectability in the eyes of lawful investors. This would, of course, involve reviewing the current policy on entertainment tax, and therefore require a kind of open-mindedness from the Central and state governments. But the problems of the film industry and their solutions, inasmuch as they require the initial intervention of the state, ought to be the legitimate concern of the finance ministry. The information and broadcasting ministry's fingers should be nowhere near this particular pie. Amitabh Bachchan and Subhash Ghai have both converged on the notion of corporatization as the only means of redemption for the film industry, and the Industrial Development Bank of India has very sensibly decided to start the salvaging work. But the existence of Ms Swaraj's ministry should be redundant to the functioning of either these individuals or this financing body. And this is what is particularly bizarre about her ministry's growing officiousness.

It is perhaps time for Ms Swaraj to ac-

The information and broadcasting ministry should stay out of the Indian film industry, and perhaps not exist at all

knowledge that a liberalizing state could, and ought to, do without her ministry. The principles behind liberalization or disinvestment logically imply a corresponding bureaucratic streamlining that should render ministries like hers quite useless. Almost all functioning democracies, with thriving entertainment industries, have done away with the notion of an information and broadcasting ministry. Ms Swaraj must be canny enough to understand this. But her reaction is to get furiously busy and create a range of preposterous functions for her ministry that would keep up the impression of necessary bustle. This meddling also takes for granted its own in-

dispensability in matters gravely national. And the range of such matters is extensive. In this, the most perceptible tendency is to conflate the language of progressive and pathbreaking reforms with an insidious and thoroughly regressive nationalism based on the most invented of traditions. Ms Swaraj is therefore a "reformer" in more

senses than is good for the nation, and the sole point of her ministry seems to be to justify these dubious energies. It is also significant that her reforming vision of New Indian Cinema goes straight to the Constitution, with the possible placing of the film industry in the concurrent list.

In this case, too, she has assured her Mumbai audience that she is "responding to the needs of the times". By taking cinema under her wings she sees herself as a champion of modernity. But Ms Swaraj's views and actions on a whole range of contemporary issues — censorship, fashion, the foreign media — should have alerted most of her Mumbai audience (or at least those who have managed not to have been arm-twisted into assorted bigotries by the local Shiv Sena) to the dubiousness of her promised nurture. The implications are drastic. The government should stay out of films after initiating the necessary fiscal reforms. And before meddling with the fabric of Indian modernity, the information and broadcasting ministry should seriously wonder if it — that is, the ministry, and not modernity — ought to exist at all.

THE TELEGRAPH

1 APR 2001

1 APR 2001

Govt. plans single licence system for entertainment industry

Business Times Bureau
MUMBAI: Union minister for information technology Pramod Mahajan said the government was contemplating bringing in a single licence system for the entertainment industry by 2002.

The minister said the entertainment industry should seek to understand technology advances and adapt its systems accordingly. Dwelling on the demand for television, he said that in rural areas, where there was no proper water supply, people asked for a television set instead of a well for drinking water.

The minister was speaking at the valedictory session of 'Frames 2001', a two-day global convention on the business of entertainment organised by FICCI, which was attended by leading stars of the entertainment industry.

Maharashtra chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh assured the film industry that the government would initiate action against unauthorised films being telecast on cable TV as well as pirated films in circulation. To encourage the film industry, Mr Deshmukh said that the government was planning a centre for training in films at film city.

Well-known film director Shekhar Kapur asked the film industry to reconsider the issue of going corporate, as in Western tra-



Union minister for Information Technology & Parliamentary Affairs Pramod Mahajan (left) and film star Shahrugh Khan at the Frames 2001 global convention in Mumbai on Saturday. On right is film-maker Shekhar Kapur.

come at a price. Once the brand is established, you have to refurbish your image.

"I want everyone to love Shah Rukh Khan, so my packaging has to be the best, I'm not talking of looks but the whole team which works with you, people like Subhash Ghai, Yash Chopra and Mani Ratnam."

The star added on a lighter note, "I am my son's trusted brand, I look after his needs and feed him. On the other hand, my wife thinks of me as a punching bag, sometimes as someone whom she can shout at." He readily admitted that he was not good at brand equity. "My house was up for auction recently, I'm not good at this," he laughed.

Film star and activist Shabana Azmi pointed out that problems often occurred because creative people in the film industry did not connect with those on the business side. "There should be a balance between the two," she said.

Touching on the role of women in films, she observed that the distinction between a vamp and a heroine had blurred in recent years. She lashed out at the term 'Bollywood' frequently used for the Indian film industry. "We make twice the number of films compared to the U.S., so why Bollywood? Are we following Hollywood?" she asked.

Talking about his film 'Elizabeth', he called it a Hindi film in English. This is what gave it appeal. "Don't impose Western norms on us, our culture embraces chaos," he said fervently to loud cheers from the audience.

Film star Shah Rukh Khan, speaking on brand building in the industry, said, "To develop a brand, you have to spend, good things

producer/director teams and what keeps these hits going is entrepreneurial talent. So, the Western corporate tradition will not work in the Indian environment.

"We, as the largest film-making nation in the world, should go forward, not tie ourselves up. Instead of being West-centred, we should be reaching out to China and Japan in films," he said.

His outburst was in stark contrast to superstar Amitabh Bachchan's call at the same event for the corporatisation of film companies.

"We don't need IDBI and insurance, you are welcome to join us, but we don't need you," Mr Kapur said and went on to explain his stand. "Unlike the West, in India, 90 per cent of the hit films come from

Zee backs tape telecast

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, March 29: Zee today said its decision to show the Tehelka tapes was an editorial one without any vested interests.

"A short while ago the channel was accused of being saffron. But in the post-Tehelka scenario it is being linked with the Congress and accused of being funded by foreign agencies," Zee corporate communications network chief Ranjan Bakshi said at a news conference.

"It is a Catch-22 situation," he said, regretting the "whisper campaign" against the channel, which has been accused of having "vested interests". Zee, he said, wanted to be transparent and he had called the conference "to clear the polluted air".

Bakshi said Zee, a public holding company, had editorial independence like all newspapers and airing the Tehelka tapes was a collective editorial decision.

Claiming that the tapes were a hit with 30 million viewers who had watched them over four days on 15 channels, he said Zee could show more such spycam operations depending on their credibility.

Raju Santhanam, content head of Zee News, said it was an "editorial decision" to show the tapes

simultaneously on 15 channels. He said the response from viewers across the country was "amazing". "We have got some 10,000 e-mails from people talking about corruption at all levels," he said.

Asked if the channel would sue *Organiser*, the RSS mouthpiece, for its write-up which showed the network in a poor light, he said: "We are looking at some legal options."

Santhanam said the tie-up with Tehelka was a sound business decision. Terming the exposé as "the biggest journalistic story since Independence", he said the scoop needed coverage. "We have been lucky to get it," he said, but refused to say how much Zee had paid for the tapes.

Asked if Zee had a 26 per cent equity stake in Tehelka, Santhanam said: "We hold no stake as of now. But due diligence (economic evaluation) is going on. If it makes good business we will think about it."

Santhanam said Zee had been "complacent" about increasing competition from the TV Today promoted channel, Aaj Tak, but added that it was chalking out a strategy to maintain its lead in news programming. A decision was likely within the "next 15-20 days", he said.

THE TELEGRAPH

30 MAR 2001

Sushma denies 'saffron cartel' slur, Goutam Ghosh returns award

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 29 MARCH

THE CONTROVERSY over the National Film Awards refused to go away. While information & broadcasting minister Sushma Swaraj de-bunked any notions of a 'saffron' plot, Goutam Ghosh, winner of the best regional film (Bengali) award for Dekha, decided to return his award, not wishing it to be tainted by allegations of impropriety.

The central issue of whether the nine films were recalled by only the 'saffron cartel' took another twist with the disclosure that all the four dissenters — Pradeep Kishen, Dhritiman Chatterjee, Shashi Anand and Madhumita Raut — had signed on the request for their recall. Recalling films, according to jury members, was part of the course, because it is physically impossible to make a judgement based on single viewing. The other film which was recalled was Bharathi, which won three awards. Last year, Sarfarosh and Kaho Na Pyar Hai, which had to be recalled,

went on to win awards.

"The controversy raked up over the awards is very sad and unfortunate. It is an unnecessary controversy over a very prestigious award of the nation," said Ms Swaraj on Thursday, describing the charges as "baseless, malicious and untrue."

In Kolkata, Mr Ghosh said: "This year's National Film Award has become farcical with reports of rigged results in a section of press indicating that the names of some

winners had been decided even before the official declaration. I don't want my film to be clubbed with an award tainted with controversies." He added that he would write an explanatory note to the President, who would actually be giving away the awards.

The controversy rages around

the issue that the selection of the jury was not independent, and that it was a saffronised 'cartel' which decided the awards in a surreptitious manner. But several arguments against the accusations were put forward.

First, Ms Swaraj said, it was funny that the dissenters waited until the last day to register their protests, which they could have done anytime in the preceding three weeks. Pradeep Kishen, the

most vocal of the protesters,

served on the jury as well as approved the recall of the films.

The jury members affiliated to the BJP, Ms Swaraj said, numbered only four, who could not possibly have rigged the voting. Also, the votes were 13-3, which indicates otherwise. The 'BJP' members in the panel are: Shashi

Ranjan, friend of Shatrughan Sinha and producer of The Shotgun Show; Parvati Indusekhar, Bellary campaign manager for Sushma; Nivedita Pradhan, BJP MLA from Cuttack; and Tarun Vijay, editor of the RSS magazine, Panchjanya. "If the jury had to be saffronised, then what stopped it from having more such members?" asked Swaraj. Denying that Indusekhar was her campaign manager in Bellary, she said: "She was my supporter there... We wanted housewives to be represented." Tarun Vijay, she said, was an accredited film critic and had previously worked with the likes of Basu Bhattacharya.

Jury chairperson Vyjayanthimala Bali has only recently joined BJP, but she was nominated to the Rajya Sabha by Congress. Congress too had Subbirami Reddy as chairman of the jury twice in succession in the mid-1990s, and then too charge of impropriety had dogged the panel, with Vijay Mulay and Mik Pandey stating pretty much the same things as now.



Sushma, Ghosh: Eyes Of The Storm

The Economic Times

30 MAR 2001

A commission is to probe Tehelka's credentials. Is this the first step to muzzle the media?

Stop press

BY A.G. NOORANI

HIS 2/13

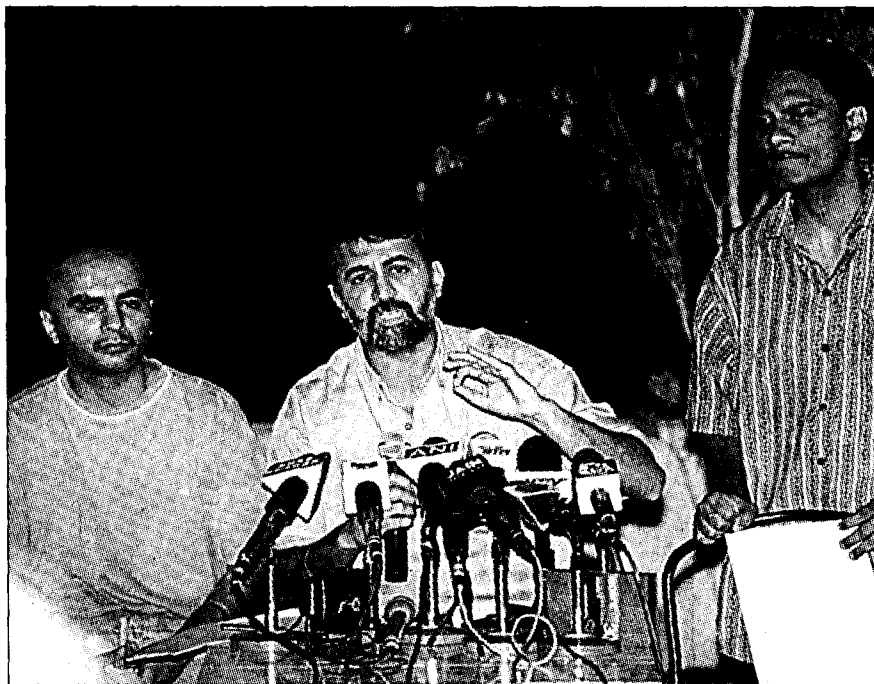
IT IS most unfortunate that Chief Justice of India A.S. Anand agreed to nominate Justice K. Venkataswamy, a retired judge of the Supreme Court, to head a commission of inquiry on the tehelka.com exposé. If a sitting judge could not be spared for 'such inquiries', a retired judge should not be given such a task either. A retired judge who conducts a political inquiry does no little harm to the prestige of the judiciary, as the Kudal and Jain Commissions demonstrated.

The context and the remit proclaim the true nature of an inquiry. As the head of the judiciary, the Lord Chancellor, Lord Hailsham, strongly opposed a proposal to refer some legal aspects of Britain's obligations on arms supplies to South Africa to the Privy Council for an advisory opinion. "Judges must be kept, so far as possible, out of political controversy," he had stated. Judges are not deterred by cries of the 'political thicket' when they decide cases in courts of law even if their judgments have political consequences. But it is not proper for them to undertake the extra burden of conducting inquiries outside "in a highly charged matter between the rival views of two highly political parties".

The utterly unprecedented and last term of reference (d) of the Tehelka Commission, announced on March 24, boldly proclaims the political nature of the exercise: "...to inquire into all aspects relating to the making and publication of these allegations or any other matter which arises from or is connected with or is incidental to any act, omission or transaction referred to in terms of reference (a) and (b)".

These two terms of reference require the commission to inquire into (a) the defence deals referred to in the tapes to ascertain whether they conformed to "the prescribed procedures and imperatives of national security" and (b) whether "illicit gains" were made in them "by persons in public office, individuals or any other organisation alleged". These are standard remits, as is (c), which invites suggestions for "action" against the guilty. Not so, remit (d). Note, the notification refers to allegations which received coverage "in the print and electronic media".

Hitherto, inquiries were instituted only into charges which had caused public disquiet. Never in the half century of the Commission of Inquiry Act, 1952, was the body ever asked to probe into the credentials of those who had made the charges. The focus was on the message, never the messenger. If this move is allowed to pass muster, the press will be



FORGET THE MESSAGE, SHOOT THE MESSENGER: The Tehelka team addressing the media

effectively muzzled. Any time it publishes an exposé, the government will retaliate by setting up inquiries not only into the truth of the charges, but also into the motives, finances and sources of the journal which published them. The widely-worded remit (d) includes everything except the kitchen sink.

The opposition will face the same peril. Feroze Gandhi's exposures in Parliament in 1958 led to the establishment of the Chagla Commission on the LIC's deals with Mundhra. Beginning with the Kairon case in 1962, commissions of inquiry have looked into charges by the opposition leaders against men in power; never into "all aspects relating to the making of these allegations".

It is not only invidious to single out the press for discriminatory treatment, it is also unconstitutional to do so. A precedent illustrates that. In 1962, the British press went to town after the conviction for espionage of Vassall, a clerk in the admiralty. It was alleged that he had escaped security vetting because of "the sponsorship of two high ranking officials". Prime Minister Harold Macmillan appointed a three-member tribunal headed by Lord Radcliffe under the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) Act, 1922, on which our Act of 1952 is modelled.

The tribunal analysed some 250 news

reports, not all of which were fair. Even so, the probe was restricted to the charges against the head of admiralty, service chiefs, concerned naval officers, ministers and civil servants; the security aspects and neglect of duty. The reportage was in issue, not the credentials of the reporters.

The tribunal was explicit on the functions of the press. "At no time have we regarded it as part of our function to express judgments as to whether this or that newspaper ought or ought not to have published any particular statement on the basis of the information before it or the deductions it felt qualified to make. Newspapers have their own methods of operation and they cannot always be expected to proceed on the kind of factual basis that justifies an assertion before a court of law or a tribunal or inquiry.

"If their comments or deductions led them beyond what the law will permit, the law of libel is open to the injured individual; where, as here, it is an institution or a department that has been the main object of criticism, and wounding, though unwarranted, assertions of fact have been made, which just reflect, though indirectly, on responsible individuals, it is to be hoped that the public itself will make up its mind as to the rights or wrongs or particular

publications.

"Our only function... is to try to report on the facts coming before us in the course of our inquiry, and for this purpose to examine and to accept or to reject any relevant allegations or assertions that have been brought to our attention.

"There remained, however, certain statements of fact that had appeared in press publications, which proved on inquiry to have been based on material supplied to reporters by their own independent sources." The tribunal tried to ascertain those sources. Two journalists refused to reveal them and were imprisoned for contempt of court.

The Venkataswamy Commission is practically instituted to demand the sources.

A ruling by the European Court of Human Rights in 1996 which holds such compulsion to be unconstitutional is of high persuasive authority on our courts. On December 4, 1995, Justice M.C. Jain confidently demanded disclosure of sources from a daily.

The Supreme Court's judgment in the *Nakkeeran* case laid down two propositions: "In the case of public officials, the remedy of action for damages is simply not available with respect to their acts and conduct relevant to the discharge of their official duties. This is so even where the publication is based upon facts and statements which are not true, unless the official establishes that the publication was made with reckless disregard for truth.

"In such a case, it would be enough for the defendant (member of the press or media) to prove that he acted after a reasonable verification of the facts, it is not necessary for him to prove that what he has written is true... So far as the government, local authority and other organs and institutions exercising governmental power are concerned, they cannot maintain a suit for damages for defaming them."

By remit (d) the government seeks deviously to do through a commission of inquiry what it cannot in a court of law in a libel case. It is, therefore, unconstitutional.

As Lord Keith ruled in the House of Lords, demand for proof of the truth of its accusations have "the chilling effect" on press freedom. "Quite often the facts which would justify a defamatory publication are known to be true, but admissible evidence capable of proving these facts is not available."

Justice Venkataswamy said on March 24: "I have not yet seen the terms of reference of the inquiry." He should opt out when he does.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

31 MAR 2001

Sushma sets up panel to review entertainment tax structure ^{Media} _{SM}

Business Times Bureau
MUMBAI: Union minister for information and broadcasting Sushma Swaraj on Friday announced the setting up of a committee of nine ministers from nine states to look into various issues plaguing the Indian entertainment industry. It will consider bringing films into the Concurrent List and tackle the high and diverse rates of entertainment tax, among other issues.

Disclosing this at the inaugural session of a global convention on the entertainment business organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in the city, the minister said, "Entertainment tax rates should be realistic, low and uniform throughout the country." She acknowledged that the present tax structure was hindering



Film and TV superstar Amitabh Bachchan talks to Union minister for information and broadcasting Sushma Swaraj at Frames 2001 in Mumbai on Friday.

the growth of film theatres all over India. In view of the inelastic demand for cinema, she felt that "if taxes were lowered, the declared tax receipts were likely to be higher, thereby raising government revenue". She offered to take up the issue with the finance minister.

Ms Swaraj said the government had identified lack of corporatisation, finance and insurance, copyright, listing and foreign neutralisation norms as some of the key impediments facing the industry. While appreciating the IDBI's decision to finance films, she pointed out that the institution would need to frame policies such that even a small film-maker could be financed. "Insurance and finance programmes should be strengthened and become more customer-friendly," she said.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

31 MAR 2001

Film awards jury members quit over Hindutva issue

New Delhi, March 27

CONTROVERSY BROKE out over National Film Awards today with two leading members quitting the jury, accusing it of "toeing the Hindutva line," as Bollywood stars Anil Kapoor and Raveena Tandon were declared best actor and actress for this year.

While Anil and Raveena bagged the 48th National Film Awards, Malayalam film 'Shantham', addressing the contemporary issue of political rivalry and violence in society, was declared the Best Feature Film and Rituparna Ghosh the Best Director for 'Utsab'.

Anil gets the award for 'Pukar' and Raveena for 'Daman.' Shyam Benegal's 'Zubeidaa' was adjudged the best Feature Film in Hindi.

Director Pradeep Krishan (writer Arundhati Roy's husband), and cinematographer Shashi Anand quit the jury saying "a political cartel" had "prejudged and bulldozed" its decisions to favour those in tune with the Hindutva line. Odissi dancer

Madhumita Raut walked out of the jury meeting which finalised the awards on Sunday.

Krishan said Raveena was picked as she had campaigned for the BJP during the elections. Besides, her uncle, Macmohan was on the panel.

Announcing the 48th Awards, jury chairperson Vijayanthimala Bali, who too was attacked for her BJP links, denied the allegations, saying, "nothing was fixed". She said the three walked out, as they did not like the majority decision.

The decision to give the Nargis Dutt Award for the Best Feature Film on National Integration to 'Pukar', which deals with terrorism, has also met with protests.

Another jury member, Dhritiman Chatterjee, signed the citations but said he had sought written clarification from the ministry and jury, which "have vitiated the adjudication".

Chatterjee said he had given a note of "dissent" on the selection of English film 'Pandavas' for the award, alleging such selection was purely guided by "the philosophy of Hindutva".

Other award winners include Anu Malik for best music direction in 'Refugee', which also fetched Yusufali Kechery and Javed Akhtar the best lyrics awards.

The award for the Best Supporting Actor was given to H G Duttareya for the Kannada film 'Munnudi' and the Best Supporting Actress to Kpac Lalitha for Malayalam film 'Shantham'.

R Sarath received the Indira Gandhi Award for Best First Film of a Director for his Malayalam movie 'Sayahnam', which deals with complex issues like political honesty and nuclear disarmament.

The Best Child Artiste Award went to Master Udayaraj for his portrayal of Pulli in the Tamil film 'Nila Kalam'.

Shankar Mahadevan bagged the Best Male Playback Singer Award for his Tamil number "Ilai, ilai, solla oru kanaanu ponnam" in the film 'Kandukondan'.

The Best Female Playback Singer Award has gone to R Bhavatharini for 'Mail Poala Pattu' in the Tamil film 'Bharati'. Tamil film 'Vanathaippola

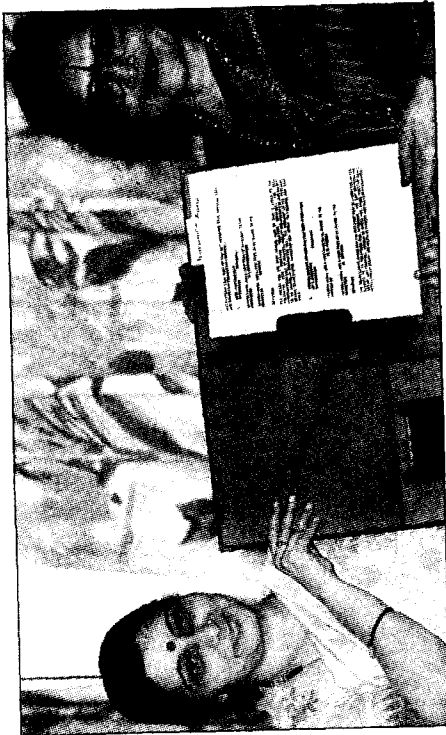
directed by Vikraman has bagged the award for the best popular film, providing wholesome entertainment for its projection of values of a joint family.

The award for Best Cinematography was given to Ashok Mehta for Hindi film 'Moksha' which also fetched Anup Dev the Best Audiography Award, while the Best Screen-play Award went to Bharathi Raja for Tamil film 'Kadal Pookal'.

The Best Choreography Award was given to G Kaia for the Malayalam film 'Kochu Kochu Santhoshangal' for a classical dance number.

Announcing the awards for the non-feature section, jury chairman John Mathew Mathan said the award for the Best Film in the category went to Arun Vasant Khopkar's 'Rasikpriya' for its sensitive treatment of Hindustani music. The award for the Best First non-feature film by a director was given to Anjalika Sharma for 'Meena Jha' for its innovative approach in narrating a story of adolescent human experiences.

PTI



VIRENDRA SINGH/HINDUSTAN TIMES

Chairperson of the jury Vijayanti Mala submitting the report of the 48th National Film Award to Information Minister Sushma Swaraj in New Delhi on Wednesday

han, who said her only association with these films was "having seen them", and Parvati Indusekar, who had campaigned for Sushma Swaraj at Bellary.

Meanwhile, the Special Jury Award has gone to noted Bengali actor Soumitra Chatterjee for his role in the film 'Dekha'.

Vaijayanthimala agreed that nine of the films rejected earlier, including 'Pukar', were recalled because some members had not seen them.

Others on the jury included Tarun Vijay, editor of RSS mouthpiece 'Panchjanya', BJP MLA from Orissa Nivedita Prad-

Dissenting jury paints film awards with 'saffron' brush

■ Anil Kapoor
Raveena bag
national awards

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

CONTROVERSY broke out today over the National Film Awards with two leading members quitting the jury accusing it of "toeing the Hindutva line" as Bollywood stars Anil Kapoor and Raveena Tandon were declared best actor and actress for this year.

Director Pradeep Krishan, husband of writer Arundhati Roy and cinematographer Shashi Anand quit the jury saying a "political cartel" had "prejudged and bull-dozed" its decisions to favour those in tune with the Hindutva thinking. Odissi dancer Madhumita Raut walked out of the jury meeting which finalised the awards on Sunday.



Veteran actress and chairperson of the jury Vyjayanthimala presents the reports for the 48th National Film Awards to Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Sushma Swaraj in Delhi on Tuesday - PTT

Krishan said Raveena was picked for her campaigning for BJP during elections and her uncle, Macmohan, was on the panel.

Announcing the 48th National Film Awards, jury chairperson Vajayanthimala Bali, who was herself

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Jury paints film awards...

attacked for her BJP links, denied the allegations saying "nothing was fixed". She said the three did not like the decision of the majority and walked out.

While Anil Kapoor was adjudged the best actor for his performance in Pukar, Raveena Tandon was given the award for Daman.

Jayaraj's Malayalam film 'Shantham', addressing the contemporary issue of political rivalry and violence in the society, was declared the best feature film and Rituparna Ghosh bagged the best director award for his Bengali film Utsab, a gripping and entirely credible narrative.

The special jury award has gone to noted Bengali actor Soumitra Chatterjee for his role in the film dekha.

The decision to give the Nargis Dutt award for the best feature film on National integration to Pukar, which deals with terrorism, has also met with some dissensions.

Another jury member, Dhritiman Chatterjee, signed the citations but said he had sought written clarifications from the ministry and the jury which "have vitiated the adjudication".

Vyjayanthimala agreed that nine of the films rejected earlier were recalled including Pukar because some members had not seen them.

Also on the jury are tarun Vi-

jay, editor of RSS mouthpiece Panchjanya, BJP MLA from Orissa Nivedita Pradhan, who said her only connection with films was "having seen them", and Parvati Indusekar, who had campaigned for Sushma Swaraj in Bellary.

Chatterjee said he had given a note of "dissent" on the selection of English film Pandavas for the award alleging such selection was purely guided by "the philosophy of Hindutva".

Other award winners include Anu Malik for best music direction for the film Refugee, which also received the best lyrics awards for Yusafali Kechery and Javed Akhtar.

The award for the best supporting actor was given to H G Duttareya for Kannada film Munnudi and the best supporting actress went to KPAC Lalitha for Malayalam film 'Shantham'.

The Indira Gandhi award for best first film of a director went to R Sarath for Malayalam movie 'Sayahnnam', which deals with complex issues like political honesty and nuclear disarmament.

Shankar Mahadevan bagged the best male playback singer award for his Tamil number "Illai, illai, solla oru kananu ponthum" in the film Kandukonden Kandukonden. The best female playback singer award has gone to Bhavatharini for Mail Poola Patu in the Tamil film Bharati.

NACO finds 12 AIDS hotspots

INDIAN EXPRESS

28 MAR 2001

A QUESTION OF CREDIBILITY

226/9 AFTER HAVING PERMITTED Mr. George Fernandes to use Doordarshan to make offensive political remarks as part of his explanatory statement, the Government cannot shirk its responsibility to ensure that those whom the former Defence Minister castigated are given equal opportunity to defend themselves on the same medium. The so-called clarification from the Prime Minister's Office that Mr. Fernandes was still holding the defence portfolio when he made the statement on DD last week and the explanation by anonymous sources in the PMO that Prasar Bharati was an autonomous body and that consequently the Government had no role in granting permission to any party or person to use the medium are extremely unconvincing. The question whether Mr. Fernandes was still a member of the Cabinet or not is only half the story. The other, more pertinent half is why and how was he allowed to make such disparaging remarks against the Opposition on an official channel. Instead of resorting to untenable and lame excuses, the same authority that granted Mr. Fernandes permission to use DD — whether DD is under the thumb of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry or not is another matter — must immediately permit whichever party wants to rebut the remarks that he had made in the statement telecast on March 15. The rejection of the demand made by the Congress(I) for its representative to be given time on DD smacks of political partisanship. It is time the NDA partners who had sworn to ensure autonomy for Prasar Bharati, under which Doordarshan functions, demonstrated that their words, given on the floor of Parliament, are not empty rhetoric.

For, not even a semi-autonomous institution, eager to have its credibility restored, would have allowed Mr. Fernandes, Minister or exiting Minister, to make polemical remarks

410-12 against the entire Opposition. The damning preface in the long statement that he made would have been excised by an independent media organisation. Having failed to do that, the authority that permitted this unethical act should have readily given an opportunity of rebuttal to those whom Mr. Fernandes maligned. This is what in part the first paragraph of Mr. Fernandes' statement said: "... by blocking Parliament, thereby preventing me from telling the truth; by taking to the streets when a discussion in Parliament would have brought out the facts, the Opposition parties have caused immeasurable harm to our national security. That is why I am here before you." The imperious arrogance this conveys could be dismissed as being characteristic of Mr. Fernandes. But it must be political naivete of the extreme sort for the BJP Government or its abrasive Minister of Information and Broadcasting to argue that an autonomous body, run by professionals, would first of all have allowed such remarks to get aired and having done that let them go unrebuted.

Instead of hiding behind the PMO and its sources, Prasar Bharati must grant the demand of the Congress — and the NDA Government must see beyond the old habit of using the State-owned media as tools of propaganda. The fundamental goal of years of relentless and untiring all-round effort to evolve an autonomous Prasar Bharati was the building of a wholesome democratic culture of plurality on which DD and All India Radio would regain their credibility for the national good. With their enormous reach and unparalleled potential in this age of increasing transparency and competition, healthy and otherwise, there is today even greater urgency for ensuring their autonomy. Any effort to whittle it down should be resisted and condemned.

THE HINDU

Congress rejects TV debate challenge

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 21

A WEEK has lapsed since George Fernandes made a live television address to the nation before resigning, but the side-show continues.

The special favour Doordarshan extended to him raised many eyebrows in the political circles. The Congress called it a blatant misuse of the electronic media and a mockery of Prasar Bharati's claims to autonomy.

But the government remains unfazed by the Opposition attack. Today, it responded to Sonia Gandhi's demand for equal telecast time for her party by

offering the Congress a slot for panel discussion.

The BJP challenged Sonia to a "one-to-one" debate on DD instead of an exclusive slot to address the nation. But the Congress spokesman saw the offer as a "tactical ploy".

"We are demanding action and not debate... Government has been harping on a debate in parliament with a view to avert criminal action and investigations," Jaipal Reddy said.

The Congress President's letter was forwarded Sushma Swaraj. But the I&B minister said the government had not interfered in the functioning of the Prasar Bharati.

She said George's statement was telecast in view of its high news value and exclusivity. "This was reflected from the fact that within minutes other channels picked up the statement."

But the Congress found Sushma's claim that the Prasar Bharati is as an autonomous body to be a "humourless body".

"The defence given by the minister is nothing but an essay in escapism... If an accused (Fernandes) can be given an opportunity on DD, the Congress should also be given a similar chance," Congress spokesperson Reddy said.

Rubbishing Sushma's argument of exclusivity, Reddy said:

"George's statement is construed as exclusive but the explosive tehelka revelations did not find any mention on DD."

He alleged that the Prasar Bharati is being run illegally by a person illegally appointed by the government.

CPM leader, Hannan Mollah, too echoed similar views. He said the Prasar Bharati's decision to censor the tehelka tapes was part of the major cover-up operation by the government.

He said the investigating authorities should take suo motu action against the accused. "If arrests are necessary as per law let the authorities take recourse to it."

'Direct-to-Home e-mail services by next month'

BANGALORE: The department of posts (DoP) would launch "Direct-to-Home" e-mail services in 200 centres around the country next month by forging an alliance with a private Internet Service Provider (ISP), a top government official said on Monday.

"It will be a substitute to e-mail. Those who don't have PC at home, can use post-offices, where PCs would be made available to them. They will be given user ID," DoP secretary, B.N. Som told reporters here. He said the new initiative is a joint venture between the DoP and the ISP based in Andhra Pradesh, which he declined to name, but said the plan is to offer the services in 10,000 locations in the country.

Also next month, Mr Som said, the DoP would launch a web-based "track and trace system" by which the customers will be able to trace the DoP's premium products such as speed posts and express parcels sent within the country as well as abroad.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

2 11 MAR 1999

Media must restrain itself while reporting military matters: PM

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Saturday told a media-organised seminar that the press, "which normally plays the role of a watchdog on other institutions of a democracy, has to accept restrictions in covering military matters."



A.B. Vajpayee

He justified his call by emphasising that national security "overrides all other considerations" and requires "a higher level of protection". "Military decisions are not dragged into political controversies in a democracy," Mr Vajpayee said in his key-note address at a seminar on "The role of military in Asian democracies". The day-long seminar was organised by Asia News Network (ANN), a combine of leading Asian newspapers and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

At the same time, he urged the military to move with the times and "constantly raise the standards of probity, transparency and accountability."

The current developments appeared clearly in the focus with Mr Ravindra Kumar, a member of the executive board of the ANN in his welcome address said: "Recent events may have lent a tinge of

irony to the question of the military's role in Asian democracies. But even labels — blue or black — need to be viewed in perspective..."

Mr Vajpayee did not have a prescription for those in public life, but observed that democracy with its variations was the order of the day. "In the era of globalisation, when nations are becoming increasingly inter-dependent, we need to also strengthen institutions of global democracy."

Mr Vajpayee emphasised that the military was "neither expected, nor oriented to intervene in politics." In a mature democracy, people had their well-defined ways to express their discontent against bad governance by voting one set of people and electing another set. "They know they need not turn to military for effecting such a change."

Defining the specific relationship between the armed forces and the civilian authority thus "does not in any way belittle the importance of the military," he observed. Rather, it provided "a protection to the military as an institution, whose integrity should not, in any way, be weakened by its stepping into the roles of other institutions of governance." Constitutional provisions actually protected the institution of the military from "individual adventurism," he said.

This was so in India, where the relationship between the democra-

tic polity and the armed forces had evolved "on healthy lines". Praising the role played by the Indian military, he said it has made "a significant contribution to our efforts to build a strong and self-confident nation, proud of its open and pluralistic ethos, secular in outlook and forward-looking."

Far from indulging in political role, the Indian military had rushed to assist the civilian authority in a myriad of calamities like floods, earthquakes. At the same time, it had come to occupy "a prominent role in then popular imagination."

The seminar was attended by several serving and retired civilian and military officers and media personalities from India and speakers came from Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore.

Mr Vajpayee favoured a global conference to deal with the "deadly menace" of religious extremism aided by cross border support saying proxy wars were a threat to democracy.

"In recent decades terrorism has emerged as a global menace and become deadlier when combined with religious extremism that receives cross-border support," he said. Without naming any country, he said military dictatorship would not be tolerated for long as men in uniform were neither expected nor oriented to intervene in politics.

Fiji awaits step toward democracy

Suva, Fiji, March 17

WITH A new president and prime minister dedicated to holding democratic elections, Fiji is looking forward to an end to months of political and social turmoil triggered by last year's nationalist coup.

Saturday's edition of the *Fiji Post* reported on celebrations aimed at promoting reconciliation between Indian and Fijian communities. The President and Prime Minister attended a prayer meeting in the capital, Suva. Political and economic rivalry between indigenous Fijians and the large Indian minority helped spark last May's coup, which toppled the country's first Indian-led Government. On Friday, new president Josefa Iloilo swore in a caretaker Government led by Prime

1873
Minister Laiseenia Qarase, which has pledged to hold democratic elections in August to restore the troubled Pacific nation to constitutional rule.

Qarase's appointment ended a roller-coaster week in which he resigned as interim prime minister, a post to which he was appointed by the army after the coup, was replaced for 19 hours by Iloilo's nephew, and was then reappointed in maneuvering designed to give Qarase's administration a veneer of constitutional respectability. Mahendra Chaudhry, the Prime Minister ousted by armed rebels condemned the machinations as "unconstitutional and unlawful". He described the 19-hour prime ministership of Iloilo's nephew as "unlawful, farcical and fraudulent. It made a mockery of the

Constitution itself". Australian labour unions are considering re-imposing sanctions on Fiji to force Chaudhry's reinstatement but international observers in Suva expect the international community to accept Qarase's appointment as the best way of returning the country to democracy.

Following the coup, labour unions refused to handle Fijian imports and exports and also targeted postal and airline services.

In the Dawasamu neighbourhood of Suva, Indians and Fijians mingled freely on Friday for the first time since the coup, the *Fiji Post* reported.

"This is a great day for humanity", Fijian Akata Matavotu said as she greeted her Indian friend Manjula Bi, whose house was torched in anti-Indian rioting that followed the coup. AP

THE HONORABLE

7 1 MAR 2001

FIJI / QARASE IN RACE

PM announces polls in Aug.

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17/3

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, MARCH 16. Fiji will go to the polls in August, the caretaker Prime Minister, Mr. Laisenia Qarase, announced in Suva today.

Mr. Qarase, who was sworn in as caretaker Prime Minister (after serving in an interim capacity for the last eight months) by the President, Mr. Josefa Iloilo, today said he will be a candidate in the forthcoming elections.

Earlier, Mr. Iloilo stated that Parliament had been dissolved with effect from March 15. In what appeared to be open defiance of the Court of Appeal verdict, which had declared the Qarase interim administration illegal, the whole team of Ministers returned in their new "caretaker" capacity.

In a statement, Mr. Qarase said the President had reminded Fijians of moving the country forward in a united manner. "I take that reminder very seriously and I shall be making a further submission to His Excellency (the President) on the appointment of representatives from our Indian community in Cabinet."

In a related development, the former Prime Minister, Mr. Mahendra Chaudhry, said the actions of the President since the March 1 Court of Appeal judgment were illegal, unconstitutional and unlawful.

"It is clear that Ratu Josefa and his advisers never had any intention of action within the bounds of the Constitution or the rule of law," Mr. Chaudhry was quoted as saying. "Their undertaking to do so was a



Laisenia Qarase

mere stage show to mislead the people of Fiji and the international community".

"His own appointment as President and that of the Vice-President are unconstitutional because the chairman of the Great Council of Chiefs did not consult me as the constitutionally appointed Prime Minister, as required under Section 90 of the Constitution," Mr. Chaudhry maintained.

"Fiji had the option of dealing with its political crisis within the law. But those in authority chose to take the unlawful path. They chose not to listen to the good counsel of a majority of our people, our courts and the international community. Sadly, the innocent people — the poor and the disadvantaged will have to pay the price for the decision of those in authority not to act responsibly," Mr. Chaudhry said.

THE FIN...

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FIJI / MANOEUVRE TO EASE OUT CHAUDHRY SUCCEEDS

President orders fresh polls

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, MARCH 15. The President of Fiji, Mr. Josefa Iloilo, today dissolved Parliament and ordered fresh elections under the 1997 Constitution while re-appointing Mr. Laisenia Qarase to head a "caretaker" Government.

Mr. Iloilo, who himself was sworn in President in Suva today, appointed Mr. Qarase again following the "resignation" of the man he appointed only yesterday as "caretaker" Prime Minister — Mr. Tevita Momoedonu.

As the game of Prime Ministerial musical chairs continued, it was clear that the President had appointed Mr. Momoedonu only to ease out Mr. Mahendra Chaudhry and then be able to re-appoint Mr. Qarase.

There appeared to be a grudging acceptance of the Court of Appeal verdict on Mr. Iloilo's part — his re-appointment of Mr. Qarase after swearing in another Prime Minister yesterday without reconvening Parliament — will also be open to legal question. The March 1 judgment had declared the Qarase Government illegal and held that the 1997 Constitution remained the supreme law of the land.

"The caretaker Prime Minister (Mr. Momoedonu) has fully concurred with my own judgment that this objective (of returning the country to constitutional rule) can best be served by going back to the people through general elections. I have accepted his advice for Parliament to be dissolved and I have also accepted his resignation to open the way for election preparations to begin," Mr. Iloilo said in an address to the nation.

Appealing to the international community for "cooperation", Mr. Iloilo said as President, he was committed to the verdict of the Court of Appeal.

"The approach I have adopted is about dealing in the most effective manner with the uncertainties and realities of Fiji's position. It is about choosing a middle way of moderation, reasonableness and common sense. These elements are vital if we are to find a way through our crisis. What I offer is an opportunity to move to full constitutional rule in the shortest time," the President stressed.

Going against the letter and spirit of the Court of Appeal verdict, the President said a process of Constitution review, which had



Mr. Ratu Josefa Iloilo signs the official documents during his swearing-in ceremony in Suva, Fiji, on Thursday. — AP

been barred by the courts, would resume. "It will be for the newly-elected Parliament to deal with the Review Commission report and recommendations," Mr. Iloilo said.

While accepting the court's declaration that the 1997 Constitution was the supreme law, the President added in the same breath: "But let us also recognise that it (the 1997 Constitution) has become an object of dissent rather than unity."

The Court of Appeal, he said, did not provide a solution to Fiji's political dilemma. "This is for us to deal with... these were perhaps not anticipated by the 1997 Constitution. It does not, in my view, provide complete and realistic answers to the misfortunes caused by an armed insurrection and revolution in a racially-split nation."

Rejecting the possibility of forming a Government of National Unity, Mr. Iloilo said there was no "cohesion among the parties and no consensus".

"... I believe that going back to the people through fresh elections is the most sensible and democratic way to resolve the existing disunity and confusion among the political parties in Parliament. I remind ourselves, too, that we cannot pretend that the attempted coups of May 19 last year, never happened.

"It happened because Fijians came out in mass public demonstrations against a leadership and Government which they felt were insensitive to their interests..." the President said.

"An early election will give us a new start..." Mr. Iloilo, making a direct appeal to divided ethnic Fijians to unify in order to capture political power.

"The Fijians should also be concentrating now as never before on attaining political unity. If they are united, democracy will work in their favour. Our modern history clearly shows what happens when the Fijians are politically fragmented.

"They (ethnic Fijians) must seek protection in their own unity. No Constitution, no matter how it is worded, can provide that. Let me repeat: the ultimate guarantee of the protection of Fijian interests lies not in the Constitution, but in the political unity of the Fijians themselves," the President said.

Taking a view diametrically opposite to the verdict of the court, Mr. Iloilo said there was "plenty of evidence" that a large number of Fijians had "confidence" in the interim Government of Mr. Qarase. "There was unanimous support for the interim administration and the interim Prime Minister at the GCC (Great Council of Chiefs) meeting. Taking all this, and other factors into account, I have decided, in the national interest, to invite Mr. Qarase to head a caretaker administration..." the President said.

"The mandate of the caretaker administration for its short term in office centres on a number of critical issues. It will consider and advise me on the timing of the general elections," he said.

Fiji gets new PM

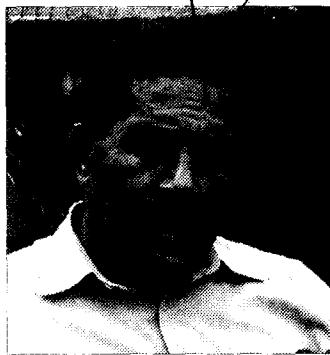
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SUVA, March 14. - A member of Fiji's post-coup government, Ratu Tevita Momoedonu, was appointed Prime Minister today in a move by the acting President that threw the country into renewed confusion.

News of the appointment came after the deposed Prime Minister, Mr Mahendra Chaudhry, was formally dismissed as the first step by newly reappointed President Mr Josefa Iloilo in the country's return to constitutional rule.

Mr Momoedonu was sworn in, apparently in a caretaker role, but the acting Prime Minister, Mr Laisenia Qarase, appeared to think he still held office.

Mr Momoedonu was the labour minister in Mr Qarase's interim government installed after last year's coup, but ruled illegal by the court of appeals' decision on 1 March.



Mr Tevita Momoedonu

The swearing-in ceremony took place at Mr Iloilo's home in Vuda, on the west of the main island of Viti Levu, a three-hour drive from the capital Suva, where Mr Qarase remained in the prime ministerial office.

A reporter from *Fiji News* said Mr Qarase was still issuing statements in the belief he remained acting Prime Minister.

Mr Chaudhry told AFP he had

received a letter from Mr Iloilo, notifying him of his sacking. The decision came after the Fiji appeals court declared the interim administration illegal and gave the Great Council of Chiefs until tomorrow to formally confirm Mr Iloilo's appointment or replace him.

The powerful 55-strong council said it had also agreed that Parliament should be dissolved and the interim government formally appointed in a caretaker role pending new polls.

Why Mr Qarase was replaced remained unclear.

Mr Chaudhry said he regarded his dismissal as unconstitutional and had written to Mr Iloilo, asking him to reconsider.

He believed he was still the legal Prime Minister. Radio Fiji reported earlier that Mr Chaudhry had been dismissed because, in Mr Iloilo's opinion, he no longer commanded majority support in the Parliament.

THE STATESMAN

15 MAR 2001

Chaudhry 'sacked'; Momoedonu sworn in

By Amit Baruah *g. n. n. n.*

SUVA (FIJI), MARCH 14. Mr. Ratu Tevita Momoedonu, Labour Minister in the interim civilian administration, was sworn in today as the new Prime Minister of Fiji shortly after Mr. Mahendra Chaudhry was "sacked" from office by the President, Mr. Josefa Iloilo. *HD-16*

"The Permanent Secretary of the President's Office, Jeremaia Waqanisau, confirmed that the President had earlier accepted the resignation of the Interim Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase, before swearing in Ratu Momoedonu," an official statement said. "A statement with regards to a caretaker Government will be issued once appropriate decisions are made," the announcement added.

The President's moves come after the Great Council of Chiefs confirmed his continuance in office and apparently upheld the 1997 Constitution as well following the March 1 Court of Appeal verdict restoring constitutional rule in the country. They also resolved that early elections be held in the country. *15/3*

In the meantime, the "sacked" Prime Minister, Mr. Mahendra Chaudhry, today described his formal ouster from office as unconstitutional and illegal.

"The purported appointment of Ratu Tevita Momoedonu as Prime Minister is unconstitutional and unlawful because, firstly, I have not vacated the office of the Prime Minister. Secondly, Ratu Tevita has not been nominated by the People's Coalition nor has his entitlement to the position been tested on the floor of the House of Representatives," Mr. Chaudhry said.

However, the President told Mr. Chaudhry in a letter that he was being dismissed since, by advising him to dissolve Parliament, Mr. Chaudhry had accepted that he no longer had the mandate of



Ratu Tevita Momoedonu

Parliament. According to Mr. Chaudhry, the President's letter said: "Therefore, acting in my own judgment under Section 109 (1) of the 1997 Constitution...I hereby notify you that I have decided to dismiss you from your appointment as Prime Minister with effect from March 14, 2001."

The "sacked" Prime Minister conceded that he had advised the President to dissolve Parliament and call fresh elections. "It is correct that I had conveyed to His Excellency that I was prepared to advise a dissolution of Parliament. I had done this in order to assist him find a way out of the constitutional difficulties confronting him. My offer of assistance was made in good faith and with a view to helping him find a solution to the nation's problems which was within the law," Mr. Chaudhry added.

Despite the announcement that a "new" Prime Minister was sworn in, not all the confusion has cleared in the country. It remains to be seen what further steps the President takes, presumably on the advice of the Great Council of Chiefs and his Prime Minister.

THE HINDU

15 MAR 2001

'Naked Wife' strips Windows

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San Francisco, March 7 (Reuters): A new e-mail virus that promises an eyeful to Internet users but instead cripples Microsoft Windows swept through companies worldwide yesterday, as anti-virus experts found evidence that linked the worm-type virus to the Brazilian division of a global French insurance giant.

Dozens of companies reported infections by the virus, dubbed "Naked Wife" for the salacious lure it uses to hook unsuspecting users. Anti-virus companies offered cures for the virus on their websites by the afternoon.

This destructive worm appears as a forwarded e-mail with "Naked Wife" in the Subject line. Readers who click on the attached file, called Naked Wife.exe, will not get a nude picture, but will instead see a short cartoon followed by a vulgar message, signed by "BGK (Bill Gates Killer)."

All the while, the virus is deleting key Windows and system files on the user's PC, rendering the computer unable to start up properly, according to Susan Orbuch, a spokeswoman for anti-virus software maker, Trend Micro Inc., similar to earlier worm-type

viruses like Love Letter and Melissa, Naked Wife can spread quickly by e-mailing itself to everyone in a user's Microsoft Outlook e-mail address book.

Security software maker Symantec Corp. reported that at least 30 corporations, mostly in the US but also some in Canada and Europe, had been infected by the virus. By examining the code of the virus programme, Symantec researchers discovered that the virus was apparently written on Monday on a personal computer owned by a company called "AGF Brasil Seguros" registered to a user named "MH Santos".

AGF Brasil Seguros SA is a subsidiary of Centrale des Assurances Generales de France, a leading French insurance conglomerate. Users who receive the e-mail should not click on the attachment and should delete it immediately. The virus, written in the Visual Basic language, deletes files ending in .bmp, .com, .dll, .exe and .ini in the Windows and Windows Systems directories. It leaves files outside of those directories, including most application programmes and data files, untouched.

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Desperate Napster tries music filter

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SAN FRANCISCO, March 3. — The wildly popular song-swapping website Napster, was preparing this weekend to install a filtering system that would allow it to remove millions of copyrighted songs from its network — an eleventh-hour bid to avoid being shut down by US officials.

Napster lawyer, Mr David Boies said today that Napster would install a filtering system that the company hopes will convince the US District Judge Ms Marilyn Hall Patel to allow the service to survive, albeit in a radically altered form.

Ms Patel said at a court hearing yesterday that she would soon decide "not if, but what an injunction should look like."

The District Judge asked Napster and the whole music industry for suggestions, but the warring sides in the almost two-year battle could not agree on how a Napster copyright filtering system should work.

Mr Boies said the music industry should shoulder the burden, providing the company with digital versions of their record lists. But recording industry lawyers said Napster, not the industry, should be responsible for finding and weeding out protected material.

"Napster has an affirmative obligation to police its system," said music industry lawyer Mr Russell Frackman, arguing that record companies are not obligated "to expend huge amounts of time or money" giving

Napster lists of artists and song titles.

Mr Boies countered that a heavy-handed screening of copyrighted songs would slow, and possibly shut down the system.

Depending on how a new injunction is fashioned, it could sound the death warrant to a site that quickly became one of the most popular destinations on the Internet, attracting some 60 million users.

Court records state that three out of four songs on Napster are copyrighted.

Mr Boies said Napster employees had been working around the clock for the last two-and-a-half weeks to develop filters to block an estimated one million files, which the company said are copyrighted songs.

"There's no real way of telling how many protected songs we can keep off the system, but we're committed to doing it," said Mr Hank Barry, Napster CEO.

Ms Hilary Rosen, the head of the Recording Industry Association of America, a record industry trade group, was critical.

"Napster needs to simply abandon its copyright infringement ways, and try to strike licensing agreements with the industry," Ms Rosen said. "Until that happens, they're going to be fighting a lost cause."

Despite Napster and the plaintiffs last gasp bid to negotiate an out-of-court settlement, sources close to the case said talks have not come close to producing an agreement.

Court questions monopoly case on Microsoft

FROM PETER KAPLAN

Washington, Feb. 27 (Reuters): An appeals court has questioned the logic of the US government's antitrust case against software giant Microsoft, saying the destruction of its monopoly may just lead to another firm dominating the market.

The chief judge presiding over Microsoft Corp.'s appeal of the case criticised what many legal experts had seen as the strongest part of the trial court's ruling for the government — that Microsoft had illegally tried to maintain its monopoly in personal computer operating systems.

"You're going to replace one monopoly with another if you're right," US court of appeals chief judge Harry Edwards told government lawyers on the first day of a two-day hearing before a seven-judge panel.

Edwards also questioned some of the facts found by the trial judge in the case, an unusual step for appellate courts that normally review how the law should apply to the facts.

District court judge Thomas Penfield Jackson branded Microsoft a predatory monopolist which led to his break-up order against the company.

But Edwards said some of the findings did not appear to be supported by evidence presented during the trial.

"When I find factual findings, and there's no citation, I don't think my obligation as an appeals court [judge] is to defer to them," Edwards said. "It's got to be supported by something other than the statement of the District Court." Shares of Microsoft rose \$2-13/16 to close at \$59-9/16 on the Nasdaq market. They have recovered from a 12-month low of \$40 last December but remain well off

their high of \$115 last March.

The appeals court, which could take months to rule, spent the first half of Monday's session hearing arguments over whether Microsoft maintained its PC operating system monopoly by crushing a rival Web-browser made by Netscape.

Microsoft, the world's largest software company, has already said in written filings that its behaviour was lawful, the lower court judge was biased and the breakup remedy radical and inappropriate.

But the US department of justice and 19 states argue the findings of district court judge Thomas Penfield Jackson should stand, citing evidence presented during 78 days of trial.

Legal experts present in the court said they had expected the government to come under fire from conservative judges on the panel but the attack by Edwards was significant.

"I think the intriguing thing in the afternoon was the chief judge led the charge (against the government's case) on some of these issues," said William Kovacic, a professor of antitrust law at George Washington University.

The judge's questions "did much more damage to the government than they did to Microsoft," said Robert Lande, a law professor at the University of Baltimore.

Many legal analysts believe the US court of appeals, which ruled for Microsoft in a related matter in 1998, represents the best chance for Microsoft to overturn or substantially weaken Jackson's ruling.

The landmark antitrust case is the biggest since the government took AT&T to court, resulting in the 1984 breakup of the company into regional telephone companies.

THE TELEGRAPH

28 FEB 2001

Asia poised to lead wireless Web phone race

By REGAN MORRIS

Telecommunication companies are taking heat for paying tens of billions of dollars for rights to high-speed wireless Internet services in Europe, which some consider a colossal gamble on an unproven future market.

But in Asia — where speedy Web phones are about to make their world debut — there is little talk of impending disaster.

Because of cheaper licenses and more technically advanced and uniform digital phone networks across the region, many believe Asia's business risks will be fewer and that Asians will get a cheaper and better product than most Europeans and North Americans.

The arrival of so-called third-generation, or 3G, mobile phone technology has created both rational and irrational exuberance across the globe, with telecoms spending billions on the technology they say will put wireless Internet in the palm of our hands at speeds 100 times faster than what's currently available.

"Wireless technology is probably better positioned to be rolled out in Asia," says Steven Yap, director of communications at iamasia.com, a Hong Kong-based Internet research company. "There's greater standardization in Asia than the US or in Europe."

Third-generation mobile phones will in fact be handheld computers — capable of making phone calls, sending e-mail, broadcasting movies, playing video games, even taking digital photographs.

So a tourist on the Great Wall of China can snap a digital photo of herself, send it via e-mail to her mom in Pittsburgh and then call to confirm reception — all with the same gadget. She can also use it to ask directions to the Starbucks cafe in Beijing's Forbidden City.

There are concerns, though, that only the rich

will be able to afford such devices. And some analysts worry that 3G's chances of becoming dominant may be hurt by a current technology, that of Japan's wildly popular 'i-mode' phones, or by a steppingstone technology.

ing money to upgrade to 3G.

In theory, 3G will be so fast it will seem instant. But in reality, 3G networks in big, busy cities like Tokyo and Bangkok could eventually become clogged just with phone calls, said Geoff Johnson,

research director of Gartner Group Pacific.

Meanwhile, Japan's i-mode technology could build up a worldwide constituency that could hurt 3G's chances. More than 17 million Japanese already use i-mode phones to exchange text messages, send animated figures and surf Web sites, and NTT DoCoMo is working to take i-mode global this year.

But i-mode has limited bandwidth and can't do streaming video. So DoCoMo is banking on 3G, too. The company will be the first in the world to launch 3G services — this May in the Tokyo area.

More than \$100 billion was spent in Europe last year for the rights to airwaves necessary to implement 3G services. Analysts say it will cost another \$80 billion to upgrade Europe's existing digital phone networks.

Most expect it to be cheaper to upgrade in Asia, but costs are difficult to estimate.

In Asia, auction prices will be significantly lower and many countries, including Japan, are opting instead for "beauty contests" that allocate licenses to what regulators deem the most qualified companies.



Mobile phones are fast turning into handheld computers.

Most telecommunications companies are now upgrading networks to the steppingstone system, known as Global Packet Radio Service (GPRS). It is designed to transmit data four to six times faster than the current standard, or about as fast as a 56K modem on a personal computer.

Unlike today's wireless phones, handsets using this technology will be able to play news and movies through streaming video. And that has some analysts predicting it may become such a hit that consumers won't want to bother spend-

In South Korea, where half the population has a mobile phone, two licenses were sold in December for \$1 billion each and the government has plans to allocate another for a similar sum.

Singapore is due to auction four licenses in April or May at the starting price of \$86 million. Taiwan plans an October auction and Hong Kong is still debating its timing. Singapore, Hong Kong and South Korea plan to launch commercial services early in 2002.

Steppingstone GPRS services will be launched gradually throughout the region this year in what Lucas Chow, CEO of Singapore's leading mobile phone operator, SingTel Mobile, says is "to give people a taste" of what's to come.

Asia has the advantage of having the world's newest digital phone networks, which will be cheaper and easier to upgrade than those in Europe and North America.

In the US, 3G services will likely be two years behind Asia because of its "severely fragmented wireless market," said Gartner's Johnson.

Some US carriers are currently upgrading their networks to offer higher speed wireless services, but others need additional capacity before they can start delivering fast wireless Internet and video. Many will have to wait for another set of US licenses to go on the auction block this fall.

Chow, of SingTel, believes 3G's most compelling application will be "voice portals" that let people command wireless gadgets to surf the Internet. A recorded voice will ask questions like "What city?" or "What stock?" and then read results. Chow believes voice portals will be popular with Chinese speakers, whose handsets seldom have Chinese characters for text messages. (AP)

Napstered forever

WHEN THE photocopier was invented in 1937, people expected the publishing industry to go into a blue funk. The scenario was that publishers would come out with books only to find leather-bound photocopies stacked up in people's bookshelves. It was only logical that people would prefer photocopying at a fraction of the cost it took to purchase a book. More than half a century later, books are still being bought and the publishing industry lives. The same sense of doom has invaded the music industry today and the culprit seems to be a two-year-old company called Napster.

HC-10 20/1 ✓
Last week, the US court dealt the online song-swapping service a blow by deciding that Napster was violating copyright laws. Since the court first started proceedings to pull the plug last summer, record companies have been furiously arguing that musicians are being ripped off by malevolent technology. The court has obviously listened to their complaint and has told Napster to turn itself into a paid service or pack up. Napster is expected to work harder with its partner Bertelsmann (one of the largest record labels which joined hands with its former 'enemy' last year) to come up with a 'working business model'. But turning the 'anarchic' music swapping system into a pay-service will definitely see users dumping Napster for other online services such as Gnutella, Toadnote and Freenet.

There is a law (the Audio Home Recording Act of 1996) which stops the police from barging into American houses each time someone is copying a song on a blank tape. As long as the copied music is not sold, no law is broken. Napster argues that most of its 60 million users are music lovers who have no intention of pirating the music they download. The court thinks otherwise. The real cause for record companies breaking into a sweat is that even with Napster not around, they will no longer call all the shots. As the chief executive of Sony admitted, "The Internet is a kind of power shift. Now the consumer has more power than the company." As with the devilish photocopying technology of yore, record companies too would be better off embracing the new technology than fighting it.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

20 FEB 2001

Paperless courtroom

N.R. MADHAVA MENON

The object of all governance is the improvement of the quality of life of the people. Quality of life is interlinked with the development of many sectors — economic, social, political, cultural, scientific and managerial. These sectors, in turn, depend on the status of science and technology, the degree of human development and the stability of institutions and structures in society. Thus perceived, governance is a product of several factors rooted in the history, culture and developmental status of a given society.

Governance in India is organized on the basis of democracy and republicanism under the Constitution of India. Political power resides with the people and is exercised through periodical elections to representative legislatures. Administration is carried out by the civil services working under the council of ministers accountable to the legislatures. To ensure that the executive government acts according to the laws of the country, an independent judiciary can review administrative action and compel compliance through writs and orders. Finally, the entire state apparatus is obliged by the Constitution to uphold the basic rights of the people.

An understanding of the system of governance in the country is essential to appreciate the changes which the digital revolution might bring about through what is called "e-governance".

Without doubt, the information technology which is sweeping across the world and making it smaller is bound to impact on the way we do business, the way we perceive the world outside, the way we govern our institutions and the way we enjoy our leisure. People fear that IT might upset the inherited value system and the moral and ethical codes which they hold dear in their interaction with others. In an age where the human genetic code is open to scientific manipulation and where large scale integrated circuits are revolutionizing electronic and communication technologies, it is not possible to hold on to past value systems and institutional arrangements unless they are perceived necessary by the majority of people for improving the quality of life.

People's perception and their capacity to adapt to changes are important factors in governance. What are the perceptions of people in respect of governance in contemporary times? First, people perceive the bureaucracy as corrupt and as an agent of exploitation rather than an efficient provider of service. Then they find the administration neither transparent nor responsive and accountable. Also, people perceive the government to be so large that it eats up scarce resources without comparable benefits in improving the quality of life. There is even a perception that today the government itself is part of the problem rather than its solution.

The question is whether "e-governance", which is emerging, is likely to influence people's perception and provide solutions to the problems which are

seen to have their source in the government. That is, e-governance will grow so that it can bring about greater efficiency and accountability, less corruption, higher transparency and responsiveness in the delivery of services, keeping the focus on people's quality of life.

In the above context, let me place before you some thoughts on how administration of justice, which is one of the most important concerns of every government, is likely to respond when im-

proved by e-technology. Computerization of the registry, record room and court halls has the potential to reduce delay and enhance the quality of justice in many ways. Computers will ease the burden of mounting litigation by simplifying the filing of cases, the management of case flow, monitoring bottlenecks, enabling easy access to the status of litigation, and producing efficient copies of documents whenever needed. Documents are better protected from loss and theft through computerization. They occupy less space and need less people to manage court administration.



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This, in turn, guarantees greater transparency, wider access, greater speed, less scope for corruption and ultimately better quality of justice to the litigant public. Paperless courtrooms are a distinct possibility in the future. People can file their petitions and affidavits from their homes, get an acknowledgment electronically, amend or add to the documentation without having to come to the courts, manage electronic movement of documents, and seek dates for hearing at mutually convenient timings.

Legal research through electronic data and processes is more efficient and accurate. Litigants can seek legal advice at little or no cost and get to know the prospects of decisions in their favour on

the basis of software developed for the purpose by e-savvy legal experts. Disabled persons and people living in remote areas will be immensely benefited by e-governance of the justice system. Digital technology has immense potential to change the way evidence is advanced in courts and inferences drawn. With litigation becoming complicated by technological developments, lawyers and judges can no longer afford to perform their roles without sufficient tech-

Computerization ultimately guarantees better quality of justice to the litigant public

nological expertise.

For example, video-conferencing has become an effective tool for gathering evidence, connecting the judge with evidence located in remote places and in linking the judicial fraternity for consulting each other on technical issues. Very recently, the Calcutta high court has allowed a petition to examine a doctor in the United States by the medical council through the electronic medium.

The Andhra Pradesh high court has allowed the examination of witnesses with the accused remaining in jail but participating in the trial through close circuit television. Judges are able to appreciate technical and scientific evidence by consulting electronically the expert witnesses without their presence in court and observing what they do and how they do in their laboratories through the video screen. All these are potentially capable of reducing the time taken and enhancing the efficiency of judicial institutions to the advantage of

the litigant public.

Again, trials in future can become close to real-life situation with prospects of computer-generated evidence replacing paper documents and eyewitnesses. The scene of crime can be re-created in every detail giving the judge, prosecutor and defence counsel the benefit of understanding what happened and how. This is particularly beneficial to litigations involving an air crash, a shipwreck, a hotel fire, a multiple road accident or a gas tragedy like that in Bhopal.

It is impossible for the human mind to comprehend complex fact situations involving multiple technologies unless assisted by equally advanced technologies capable of re-creating the experience. This is what computer generated electronic evidence can offer for investigation and trial. Forensic sciences would become a powerful tool to prevent the depredations of cyber criminals.

E-governance may help in saving costs and time; but brings problems of its own. The new technology has led to an information glut which, in turn, has brought about more confusion. It threatens our ability to be informed because it is constantly expanding. Furthermore, it increases the already existing divisions and inequalities in society by enabling those in power to improve their positions and those who are not, left with diminished power of being in control of their own lives. There is a danger of erosion in social cohesion and national solidarity. IT has tremendous power to become exploitative in societies where knowledge is still the monopoly of a few and education is not available to many.

If not properly organized, the infinite possibilities for good governance with the new technology can bring its own share of problems in administration too, including administration of justice. What happens to people's right to privacy when all types of information concerning their health, litigation and economic status are available on the internet? If copying becomes easy and cheap, how will you protect ownership rights over them? If digital signatures including those of judges are open to manipulation and reproduction, what is the security of the rights and duties involved?

When cyber crimes can be committed with impunity from one's own home in any part of the world, what about jurisdictional issues relating to prosecution and trial? Detection will become difficult and enforcement costs considerable. These are powerful challenges coming in the way of the adoption of the new technology in governance. Perhaps scientists will find solution tomorrow and allow the technology its onward march.

Digital technology and the resultant information and communication revolution are indeed potentially capable of doing good, but the transition is difficult and painful for a country like India. Perhaps industry, commerce, defence, education, health and scientific research will be among the important sectors which will go for the new technology in the beginning. The rest of governance may have to wait till the people are prepared to absorb the change and are in a position to make use of it, without being overwhelmed.

The author is vice-chancellor, West Bengal University of Juridical Sciences, Calcutta

Print bar muddles investment norms

OUR BUREAU

Feb. 16: Prodded by an eleventh-hour government scramble, the RBI today withdrew permission for foreign investment in print media, sealing the hint of a crack in a 46-year-old iron curtain.

The RBI had last year approved investments by foreign institutional investors (FIIs) in a public offer by Mid-Day Multimedia, whose stable includes the Mumbai evening *Mid-Day*. The group planned to raise Rs 50 crore through the offer and issue shares to FIIs along with other institutional investors.

However, a controversy broke

out over whether FIIs could be allowed to invest in print media when foreign investment was barred in the sector under a Cabinet resolution in 1955.

The Centre finally stepped in this week with information and broadcasting minister Sushma Swaraj writing to the RBI as well as the finance ministry.

Swaraj, who had encouraged a debate on opening up the print media soon after her return to the ministry, informed the two that the RBI permission would be seen as a "total clandestine affair" as it went against the government's policy of not allowing foreign investment in print media. The fi-

nance ministry also wrote to the central bank, echoing Swaraj.

In a notification amending its approval, the RBI said today the investment restriction would also apply to non-resident Indians and overseas corporate bodies.

Swaraj said tonight that Mid-Day has informed her ministry and the government that it does not intend to go in for FII funds in view of the government's policy.

After the controversy, the group's issue-handler had given an undertaking to capital markets watchdog Sebi that it would not accept bids from FIIs nor allot shares until the matter is clarified.

But the RBI's somersault has

opened a legal can of worms involving foreign investment.

The new Foreign Exchange Management Act (Fema) allows FIIs to invest in firms, subject to a ceiling on total investment, without any sectoral exclusion. But another clause (Schedule 2) of the Fema prevents foreign direct investment (FDI) — not foreign institutional investment — in 13 sectors, including "broadcasting".

FIIs are investors which put in money for returns from the movement of stock prices of a company. But a foreign direct investor pools money along with the rest of the promoters. Such investors have a direct say in operations and their

rewards come from the profits the company makes.

If the RBI based today's bar on Schedule 2, the party affected can argue that the distinction between foreign institutional investment and foreign direct investment no longer exists. This means FIIs, which now have significant exposure in several of the 13 sectors, could also be barred from investing in the Schedule 2 firms.

If the hypothesis turns real, it would rock the markets as Schedule 2 is packed with the movers and shakers of the economy. The schedule includes banking, civil aviation, petroleum, infrastructure and housing and real estate.

TIP-1 Goodnight Napster ^{Music}

Is it time to sing Napster's dirge? It seems that way, following a US appeals court's order to the path-breaking song-swapping service to stop users from trading copyrighted material. Millions of Napster fans, fearing the worst, are frantically trying to download as many songs as soon as possible. Meanwhile, the recording industry is hailing what it describes as a blow to electronic shoplifting. To understand these extremely diverse reactions, it is necessary to recapitulate Napster's meteoric path. In mid-1999, a teenager called Shawn Fanning spent several sleep-deprived days writing the source code for a music file-sharing program. Fanning was out to create a program that would let computer users swap digitally compressed songs with one another directly. This would eliminate the need for a centralised file server. To make his idea work though, Fanning would have to combine a music-search function with a file-sharing system as well as instant messaging. Fortunately or otherwise, he didn't have the good sense to realise that, in theory, it couldn't be done. And so the fastest-growing website in history took shape, passing the 25-million users mark in less than a year. Music fans were delirious, but the giant record labels saw red. A suit followed, with Napster being called a haven for piracy that could cost companies billions of dollars in lost music sales. Last July, US district court judge Marilyn Hall Patel ordered an injunction against Napster. The appeals court decision has now upheld this injunction, but stated that music companies must identify which of their copyrights are being infringed. Napster must then pull these songs out of the site.

Napster may yet survive by reinventing itself. In fact, it is working with Bertelsmann to transform itself into a secure subscription service. But the info-anarchic spirit that made it a phenomenon has been crushed forever. Sure, several other song-swapping services like Gnutella and Aimster still exist. But the Napster verdict is an important landmark in the commercialisation of cyberspace, the taming of the virtual Wild West. Before business woke up to the Net, idealists perceived it as a modern-day Garden of Eden, unpolluted by greed. There were hopes that it would empower individuals by making information freely available to anyone who wanted it, that it would be a force for disintermediation. Even after businesses flocked to the Web, they initially concentrated on getting big fast by giving away their offerings free of cost. This created the heady feeling of being part of an exciting new economy where boring old rules no longer applied. But with online advertising faltering, more and more sites are being compelled to worry about how to 'monetise eyeballs'. The Napster verdict provides further affirmation that even on the Net, there can be no such thing as a free lunch. Pragmatic commercialism has clashed with idealistic, freewheeling culture for the soul of the Net, and commercialism has won hands down. Interestingly, Tim Berners-Lee, the father of the World Wide Web, has made very little money from his pioneering work. Berners-Lee is content to be the director of the World Wide Web Consortium, which coordinates Web development globally. Today, many geeks still admire his idealism. A few years from now, will they laugh at his naivete?

THE TIMES OF INDIA

17 FEB 2001

FTV team flying in to negotiate content

FROM ELLA DATTA

New Delhi, Feb. 16: Action on the French fashion channel FTV is gathering momentum.

On Monday, February 19, a high-level delegation of the FTV management is flying into Delhi to meet senior officials of the information and broadcasting ministry at Shastri Bhavan around late afternoon.

The three-member team will comprise FTV director general Francois Thiellet, content creator Paule Jensen and FTV Asia managing director Malone.

Union minister for information and broadcasting Sushma Swaraj has expressed her willingness to meet the team. However, it is not quite certain whether she will be able to meet the delegation as the Budget session of Parliament starts on Monday.

Yesterday, the Parliamentary Consultative Committee of the information and broadcasting ministry had given the green signal to Swaraj to negotiate with FTV to modify the content instead of resorting to outright banning of the channel.

The majority of Parliamentarians who were shown the monitored clips of FTV telecasts felt that the amount of nudity shown did not fit in with our ethos.

But they felt that banning the channel would contravene the principle of freedom of expression. The team appears ready to negotiate on the content.

The French government, it is understood, is waiting on the sidelines and watching with concern, as are other bodies closer to home. Says Sumeet Nair, executive director of the Fashion Design Council of India, the channel is very useful to the Indian design community and to the garment industry.

Every day, the channel shows one to two hours of Indian fashions, says Nair. This gives Indian designers tremendous international exposure.

What is more, the channel's contents give both the design industry and, more importantly, the garment industry what the international trends are in styles, feels, colours, textures, material, he adds.

Both the industries profit enormously from the channel. Earlier, these people would have to invest a lot of money and travel abroad to find out the trends and ground realities. Today, FTV helps them bridge this gap and get into the international market. A ban of the channel would affect these industries and the exports.

THE TELEGRAPH

17 FEB 2001

RBI trims bank rate to revitalise sagging economy

Loans, deposits to attract lower interest

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, FEB 16

IN A pre-budget move aimed at making cost of funds cheaper for both the industry and the common man, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday announced cuts in the benchmark bank rate and in banks' cash reserve ratio (CRR) in two tranches. While the RBI move will make bank deposits cheaper, personal loans and home loans would attract lower interest rate, thus helping the common man.

Signalling a reduction in interest rates to kick-start the faltering economy, the central bank said the bank rate — at which the RBI offers its refinance to the banking system — was cut to 7.5 per cent from eight with effect from the close of business hours on Friday.

The RBI also said it had decided to reduce banks' CRR by 50 basis points to eight per cent via

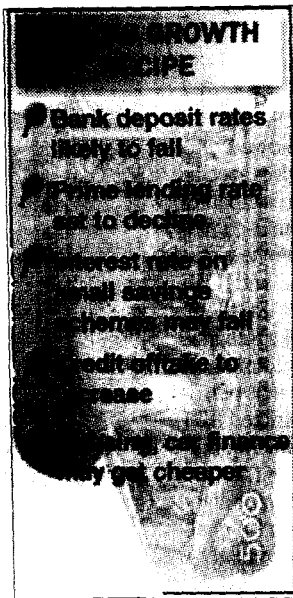
two cuts of 0.25 percentage point each, to take effect from February 24 and March 10.

With the reduction in key benchmark rates, bankers are expecting a reduction in the interest rates on small savings schemes like Post Office Savings Schemes and National Saving Certificates as well. Commercial banks are also expected to reduce the prime lending rates and deposit rates. The rate cut is expected to ease the pressure on the economy which is expected to grow by six per cent in 2000-01, down from 6.4 per cent a year earlier and 6.6 per cent in 1998-99.

The CRR reduction will be executed in two equal instalments of 25 basis points

effective from the reporting fortnights beginning from February 24 and March 10, and will release a cumulative amount of Rs 4,100 crore. The central bank said that the measures were being announced "after a review of recent

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Govt volte face on FII in print media

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, FEB 16

THE government today bowed to strong pressures from vested interest groups, and instructed the Reserve Bank



of India (RBI) to withdraw the permission allowing foreign institutional investors (FIIs) to invest in the print media sector. An RBI directive to this effect was issued today, despite the fact that the central bank had itself earlier cleared Mid-Day Multimedia's application to sell shares to FII.

The RBI decision was expected since yesterday, when Information & Broadcasting minister Sushma Swaraj indicated that she was against the permission — Mid-Day, in fact, wrote to her saying it would not sell its shares to FIIs since the ministry was against it.

The government's decision to withdraw the permission was justified by Swaraj who today said the earlier permission was a 'total clandestine affair' as it went against the government's declared policy of not allowing entry to foreign investment in print media.

Despite what Swaraj said today, however, it must be pointed out that the earlier RBI clearance — given to Mid-Day on November 17 — was anything but clandestine. The permission, in fact, is in keeping with Schedule 2 of the Foreign Exchange Management

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



INDIAN EXPRESS

17 FEB 2001

Kournikova virus creator

is arrested

Amsterdam, Feb. 14 (Reuters): Dutch police in the northern town of Sneek said today they had arrested the self-proclaimed creator of the Anna Kournikova computer virus after he turned himself in.

The 20-year-old man allegedly posted a letter on the web yesterday saying he was the creator of the virus which, disguised as a digital photo of the Russian tennis star, e-mailed itself around the world. It slowed down e-mail systems and caused some servers to be shut down.

"When it became clear what the virus was causing, and after consulting his parents, he decided to turn himself in," Dutch police said in a statement. A police spokesman said that the man referred to himself as "On The Fly". In the letter (at http://members.tripod.nl/on_the_fly), the self-confessed virus creator claimed inspiration in equal parts from devotion to the 19-year-old tennis star and evidence that Internet users were not taking measures to protect themselves from viruses. The man, who has been released pending a court appearance, could face a prison sentence of up to four years.

THE TELEGRAPH

16 FEB 2001

I&B ministry seeks RBI clarification in FII issue

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, February 15

THE INFORMATION and Broadcasting Ministry has written to the Finance Ministry and the Reserve Bank of India seeking clarifications over the latter's decision to permit investment by Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) in the Mumbai-based Mid-Day group.

The RBI's decision has come as a surprise to the I&B Ministry which has consistently stressed the validity of the 1955 Cabinet resolution against foreign equity in the print media.

I&B Minister Sushma Swaraj has asked the Finance Ministry as to how Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) was different from investments by FIIs. "As far as we are concerned there is no difference. Such investments should not be allowed in the print media," remarked a Ministry official.

This issue was also raised by a few MPs at the I&B's consultative committee meeting here today. Mrs Swaraj reportedly informed them that there was no change in

the Government's position that the 1955 Cabinet decision prevailed in the matter. She also told the members that her Ministry had the assurance of the concerned group that it would accept FII only if Government rules permitted it.

Earlier, after taking over, Mrs Swaraj had encouraged a debate on the question of foreign equity in the print media. After several rounds of consultations with representatives of various newspaper groups and organisations of journalists, she concluded that the opinion was overwhelmingly against opening up the newspaper sector to foreign investment.

Subsequently, she also discussed the matter with the Prime Minister. Her final verdict on the issue was that the 1955 position needed to be maintained on account of the newspapers' crucial role in shaping public opinion on issues of national importance.

"The concerns voiced 45 years ago remain valid even now. We cannot throw the doors open for FDI in the print media," she had told newsmen a few weeks after taking charge as Minister.

CPI(M) leader Somnath Chatterjee who heads the Parliamentary Standing Committee looking into the foreign investment issue, has also sought a thorough probe into the circumstances in which RBI permission for investment by FIIs was obtained by the Mid-Day group.

In a statement, Politburo member Prakash Karat called for a revision of the RBI decision, especially when the Government has not reversed its policy prohibiting foreign equity in the print media.

Mr Karat found the RBI clearance most surprising because it sought to differentiate between FDI and FII. "The difference is really very thin. The point is that foreign investors can influence such publications," he said.

The CPI(M) leader further argued that it really did not matter whether the control was directly in the hands of individual shareholders (as in the case of FDI) or was exercised through a mutual fund (at the disposal of FIIs). He felt the case under dispute could be a precursor to a trend that needed to be arrested.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 FEB 2001

Napster users defy copyrights: court

By Sue Zeidler *pluto*

LOS ANGELES: In what the recording industry hailed as an end to 'electronic shoplifting' on the Web, an appeals court on Monday ordered the wildly popular song-swap service Napster to stop its millions of users from trading copyrighted material.

Calling the decision a major victory, recording industry officials and legal experts said the ruling by a three-judge panel on the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals could destroy Napster as a free song-swapping service.

"This decision pretty much writes Napster's epitaph. Its days as an instrument of electronic shoplifting are over," said Chuck Cooper, a lawyer for the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA).

Napster, a company formed around a computer program developed by a teenage college dropout, ~~was~~ gloomy. "Napster is not shut down, but under this decision it could be. We are very disappointed in this ruling by the three judge panel and will seek appellate review," the company said.

News of the ruling immediately set off a feeding frenzy on the service as millions of users tried to download as many songs as possible before the looming shutdown.

"The activity is absolutely voluminous, and if you read the chatrooms, people are very disturbed," said Aram Sinnreich, senior analyst with market research firm Jupiter Media

Metrix.

11-15 1472
The appeals court decision comes four months after an October 2 hearing in which the recording industry asked the appeals court to lift its stay on an injunction ordered in July against Napster by U.S. district court judge Marilyn Hall Patel.

"The District court correctly recognised that a preliminary injunction against Napster's participating in copyright infringement is not only warranted but required," the appeals court said.



Napster's Shawn Fanning

It said Napster may be held liable for copyright infringement by its users to the extent that it knew of specific material on its system and failed to act to prevent its distribution.

But the appeals court instructed the lower court judge to modify her earlier ruling by requiring music companies to identify which of their copyrights were being infringed. Napster, to avoid liability, must then patrol its system for infringing material and block access to those songs in its search index.

"It's clear that it's up to the record companies to give notice to Napster on what songs are

being infringed and Napster will be required very quickly to pull them off the site," said Robert Schwartz, an entertainment lawyer for O'Melveny & Myers.

Mr Schwartz added that the decision was monumental: "It not only says that Napster is going to be relegated to the dustbin, but it's a real shot across the bow against other Internet sites that hope to profit without acquiring the rights to the content they hope to use."

Napster lawyer David Boies said it could take days or weeks for the district court to issue a modified injunction. Boies, famed for his work with the justice department in the Microsoft anti-trust case, vowed to pursue every avenue in the courts and Congress to keep Napster operating.

Asked about Napster's financial resources, chief executive Hank Barry said, "I think Napster has the financial resources to carry this matter forward. I am confident about our ability to mount a good defense," he said.

With many other copycat song-swapping services such as Gnutella and Aimster out on the Internet, music fans can still surf the Web for free songs, but some believe they may be more hesitant to do so.

"It's impossible to change this behaviour once it has started, but this kind of song-swapping will probably move further underground and a smaller percentage of fans will do it," analyst Mr Sinnreich said. (Reuters)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Music dies for Napster fans

NEW YORK, FEB. 13. The death knell sounded on Monday for Napster, the popular but controversial online music swapping service.

An appeals court in California ruled that the upstart company could no longer knowingly trade in copyrighted material. It found that it could be held liable for users of the service who swap copyrighted songs — the vast majority of the material it makes available. In a victory for the record industry, the ruling from the three judges on the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals will end a thrilling ride for Napster and its 50 million users.

Over the weekend, millions took advantage of what they feared would be Napster's final hours of existence, exchanging and downloading more than 250 million songs, which would cost millions of pounds to buy on conventional CDs or tapes. "This is a clear victory," said Ms. Hilary Rosen, president of the Recording Industry Association of America. "The court of appeals found that the injunction is not only warranted but required. And it ruled in our favour on every legal issue presented. For the time being, however, the service will remain available. The judges refused to grant the record industry's request to shut down Napster immediately."

Last year, a lower court judge imposed an injunction on Napster, stopping it from operating. That injunction was suspended on appeal. The suspension was upheld in yesterday's ruling, but only until the original injunction is rewritten to focus more clearly on the copyright issues at stake. The appeals court said it was apparent that "Napster has knowledge, both actual and constructive, of

direct infringement of copyright law". It added that the record companies' efforts to adapt to the internet era were being hurt by Napster.

"Having digital downloads available free on the Napster system necessarily harms the copyright holders' attempts to charge for the same downloads," the court ruled. Napster's convoluted passage through the courts reflects the lack of precedent in the area of internet copyright law. Napster, founded in May 1999, offers software which makes it easy for computer users to find and swap songs stored as computer files in the MP3 format. This format breaks down songs into units which can be easily transmitted by a normal personal computer without any loss in sound quality.

Anyone could place their CD collection online available for others to download. What the computer users saw as an ideal way to build a free music collection, the record companies saw as the death of their industry. Suddenly their copyrights seemed worthless. At its simplest, Napster argued that its service was no different from the video recorder, which allows people to copy films and television programmes. But whereas copying films using a video recorder and then distributing them is a laborious process, not performed by most video owners, downloading and swapping an internet music file is quick and easy.

The appeals court said in its 58-page ruling that Napster knew its users were swapping copyrighted songs. Napster said it was "disappointed" by the ruling and promised to appeal. — ©Telegraph Group Limited, London, 2001.

THE HINDU

14 FEB 2001

Is FTV banned? So thinks one minister

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI/RAIPUR, FEBRUARY 13

WHILE Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Sushma Swaraj has asked a consultative committee of Parliament to decide on the future Fashion TV in India, her deputy claims the government has already banned the channel.

The committee members are supposed to meet on February 15 to review the contents of the channel.

Minister of State Ramesh Bais told reporters in Raipur today that the decision to ban FTV was taken yesterday in New Delhi.

He said the Government will not tolerate anything against the Indian culture, including adver-

tisements of cigarette, tobacco and vulgarity. "Because of this, an advertisement of Sony TV was banned," he said.

He added that any programme which is against the Indian culture and tradition will not be allowed to air in the country.

Swaraj has been a vocal critic of the channel. She had asked a panel of senior officials to look into the contents of FTV and had registered her discontent



Selective vision

with the French Ambassador to India.

She is also likely to meet Michael Richards, director of FTV, shortly.

Even before Swaraj sought the help of the consultative panel, she had asked the Central Monitoring Cell at Aya Nagar, New Delhi, a wing of the Information & Broadcasting Ministry, to monitor the channel.

It was based on their recordings that senior officials were asked to review the channel.

While it is learnt that the officials are divided in their opinion about the contents of the channel, they have indicated that a decision on the future of the channel has been left to the Parliament members.

INDIAN EXPRESS

9 1 1998

U.S. federal court verdict on Napster's status likely today

By Sue Zeidler

LOS ANGELES: The fate of Napster, the wildly popular online song-swapping service, could be decided on Monday when a federal appeals court issues its long-awaited ruling on whether or not to slap an injunction on it that could effectively shut it down.

The decision from a three-judge panel of the ninth circuit court of appeals in San Francisco comes more than four months after an October 2 hearing on the landmark copyright infringement case in which the recording industry asked that Napster be ordered to stop enabling users to swap songs for free.

At the hearing, Napster squared off against the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), which requested the court lift a stay on an injunction ordered last July against the service, which has attracted over 50 million users.

"We're confident that the ninth circuit understands the severity of our claim and will uphold the decision of the U.S. federal court," said

Hilary Rosen, president and chief executive officer of the RIAA in a statement late on Friday.

Mr Rosen added that Monday's decision may finally clear the way for a legitimate online marketplace to thrive in an environment that encourages both creativity and a respect for copyright.

"We'll study the decision and comply with whatever the court rules," Hank Barry, chief executive officer of Redwood City, California-based Napster said earlier on Friday. The big music companies claim that Napster is a haven for piracy and they want an injunction to stop it from operating pending a final decision in their landmark copyright lawsuit.

"The first thing that would happen if the injunction is reinstated is a consumer backlash. When something speaks to millions of consumers, it turns into an issue for Congress," said Eric Scheirer, an analyst with Forrester Research.

Industry observers expect that if an injunction is ordered, it could

take days or weeks to take effect and that Napster's legal team — led by David Boies, the lead justice department attorney in the Microsoft anti-trust case who also represented the campaign of former vice-president Al Gore in last year's disputed U.S. election result before the Supreme Court — would likely request a hearing before the entire ninth circuit court of appeals.

They could also immediately petition the Supreme Court, which may or may not take the case," said Ric Dube, analyst with Webnoize, a research firm.

Conversely, if the injunction is overturned, the plaintiffs, or the recording companies in this case, could take it to the Supreme Court.

Since the lawsuit was first filed in December 1999, Napster's service has continued to gain popularity. To date, it has amassed nearly 60 million users who use it to swap songs for free by trading MP3 files, a compression format that turns music on compact discs into small computer files. (Reuters)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

9 2 45 11

CYBER WARFARE

New Threats In The Information Age

By GURMEET KANWAL

FIFTEEN January 2015, 10 AM. The mellow rays of the winter sun glinted off the drum major's baton as the colourfully attired brass band marched past the Chief of the Army Staff to the stirring strains of *Deshon ka sartaj Bharat* at the end of the Army Day parade. In the speech that followed, the chief exhorted the army to be ready to resolutely face the new challenges being constantly posed to national security by inimical neighbours. As the chief walked across to join the foreign diplomats and other guests for tea, his military attache (MA) received a message on his secure cellular phone that the army's command information and decision support system had gone on the blink since 9.45 AM. He was told that the systems engineers were working furiously to make it operational again. The MA decided to keep the news to himself for the time being and posted an aide de camp to keep in touch with the military operations directorate at the army headquarters.

10.30 to 11.15 AM. A series of seemingly unrelated and unprecedented events shook the nation's security, information, financial, trade, communications and transportation infrastructure. At 10.30 AM, the finance minister and the Governor of the RBI were informed that the inter-bank inter-city operations master control network had collapsed and no business could be transacted. The computers were automatically crediting and debiting millions of rupees from one account to another in an unpredictable manner.

FAULT

At 10.45 AM, the National Stock Exchange and the Bombay Stock Exchange screen-based online trading system malfunctioned; trading was postponed till the fault could be rectified. A computer logic bomb, set to activate at a predetermined time, was suspected.

At 10.50 AM, the air traffic control national computer network began generating false tracks and had to be shut down. The controllers at Palam Airport switched to manual control to assist flights circling overhead to land: take-offs and all other operations were suspended and chaos reigned in the air as well on the ground. At 11 AM, the telecommunications minister was informed that the computers controlling the telephone networks were behaving erratically and that all telephone and videophone calls, fax and e-mail messages and telegrams were being corrupted and directed to wrong destinations; software engineers were analysing the problem.

At 11.15 AM the minister's permission was sought to shut down the nation's telecom networks and to implement the contingency scheme to provide limited emergency services on standby circuits. Efforts commenced to isolate the computer virus suspected to have zapped the automatic electronic switching stations and purge it from the system.

11.30 AM. Suddenly, without warning, the railways' telecom and traffic control networks stopped responding to commands and electronic routes went on the blink, throwing into jeopardy the fate of thousands of passenger trains and goods trains hurtling over the rails. Trishul, the tri-service armed forces communications and command and control network, also began spewing meaningless gibberish on all control console screens; the vital command and control

The author is a former Senior Fellow, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.

operations planning centre of the chief of defence staff and the Agni-I and Agni-II missile control and launch centres was broken.

Simultaneously, the national power grid began to trip and the lights went out one by one in all the north Indian states. The Prime Minister and the defence minister, who were formulating political strategy for the impending elections at their respective party head-

quarters, could be reached only by VSAT satellite phones, courtesy a multinational company providing commercial service over a private geostationary satellite network. They were informed about the seamless crisis enveloping the nation.

12.30 PM. Due to the extensive communications breakdown, only a few members could be rounded up for the hurriedly convened meeting of the national security council in the underground national command post just outside Delhi. For once, the crisis management group had swung into action within minutes of the major national networks having crashed and a damage limitation exercise was soon under way. Even as the national security adviser to the Prime Minister stood up to commence his briefing regarding the magnitude of the ongoing crisis, the extent of damage, the effect on vital national interests, the immediate vulnerabilities, the political, diplomatic and military options to deal with the situation and his tentative recommendations, news came in that the Indian Air Force's newly-installed, ultra modern Air Defence Ground Environment System had crashed, rendering the nation's air defences prone to a virtually undetectable air offensive by the enemy.

SOMBRE MOOD

It was in a sombre mood that the top brass of the national security planning apparatus, including the chief of defence staff and the three services chiefs and their directors general of operations, heard a visibly embarrassed national security adviser outline the contours of the pre-emptive cyber-offensive launched by a wily and ruthless adversary. Clearly, India had been caught off guard as its traditional adversary had demonstrated an unanticipated ability to wage war without a shot being fired. The electronic equivalent of the Pearl Harbour disaster had struck the nation.

THE STATESMAN

11 FEB 2001

11 FEB 2001

P. T. O.

Besides conflict at land, sea, in the air and in space, one of the primary dimensions of future wars will be the invisible cyberspace medium linking computers and information networks. Such wars in the fourth dimension have come to be known as "cyberwars". In the coming decades, the ability to wage war in cyberspace is likely to acquire a deterrent value that will rate between the threat of a conventional military attack and a nuclear strike. Regardless of what term

is used to describe the war-form of the future — besides cyberwars, the other terms in vogue include knowledge warfare, information warfare and command and control warfare — it is clear that an information and knowledge driven new type of war-form has emerged.

Future cyber wars between contending protagonists are likely to be all encompassing. The distinction between peace and war will be blurred as cyber warfare is a game that even non-state actors and terrorist organisations can play with impunity. Since the aim will be to subdue the adversary without fighting, cyber operations may be launched to cripple a society and to deny it the ability to wage war by wrecking its information grids and systems, banking and telecom systems, transportation and traffic control systems and power grids and computer networks. At the core of the new military doctrine for fighting what Alvin and Heidi Toffler have called "Third Wave" wars, will be the concept that the control and manipulation of the adversary's military, industrial, diplomatic, political, civic and cybernetic assets, with a view to paralysing them without actual fighting, will be essential pre-requisites for success. The weapons of choice will be computer "logic" bombs set to "detonate" at a particular time, electronic viruses to infect enemy computers, non-nuclear high-energy electro-magnetic pulses (EMP) to "fry" the components of radars, electronic networks and computers and sophisticated hacker techniques to gain access to the enemy's computer networks and manipulate them to own advantage.

CAPABILITIES

The emergence of the cyber-war battlefield will be both an evolutionary and a revolutionary development. In so much as this new war-form will build upon existing military concepts, weapons systems and organisations, it will be evolutionary. It will be revolutionary in that it will seek to provide new capabilities to military commanders to influence and subvert the will of their opponents through imperceptible but nonetheless debilitating non-violent means as a prelude to more conventional operations, should they become necessary — a type of cybernetic intelligence preparation of the battlefield. In cyberwars the endeavour will be to turn the balance of information and knowledge in one's favour, especially if the balance of forces is not. The aim will be to dislocate, paralyse and incapacitate the opposing commanders' minds to force the enemy to capitulate without fighting. The results that are likely to be achieved will be decisive and out of all proportion to the effort applied.

The military is generally characterised as an extremely conservative part of society — a rigidly hierarchical organisation that is resistant to change and does not take kindly to revolutionary new doctrines. Military revolutions, particularly evolutionary ones, require detailed analysis, thorough study and meticulous experimentation before their lessons can be absorbed into the doctrinal lexicon and implemented at the functional level. It is in this context that a peep into future history has been posited as a plausible scenario in the megamedia age ahead. Only forward looking and innovative armed forces will be able to take up the challenges of integrating information-age technologies into military operations.

Fortunately, India has the best software brains in the world. It can take a lead in this new software-driven war-form.

THE STATESMAN

11 FEB 2001

Innovative e-governance

Gyandoot programme in Dhar district of MP shows how strategic innovation can help achieve success in e-governance, says N Vittal

THIS year, 2001, is being observed by the government of India, as the year of e-governance. E-governance means application of information technology for all government functions. In other words, ensure that the government becomes itself an IT enabled service. Different states are in the race to get on to the e-governance bandwagon. States like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Gujarat, Maharashtra are hitting the headlines more frequently than some other states especially the BIMARU states. However, a quiet revolution is apparently taking place in Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh where the Gyandoot programme, a community owned, self-sustainable and low-cost rural intranet model has been eminently successful and had also attracted worldwide attention. It won the Stockholm Challenge Award 2000.

The Gyandoot experiment holds an important lesson to achieve success in e-governance. The lesson is that it is not tactical automation of government functions but strategic innovation that is the secret of success. Tactical automation would mean computerising the existing government functions and improving the quality of service. Strategic innovation calls for a lot of imagination and overcoming constraints like lack of infrastructure, financial resources, illiteracy, poverty, etc.

One can have access to computers, just as in the case of telephones. The STD booths, which provided access throughout the country, have been a remarkable success and have become a model for the rest of the developing world. The Gyandoot programme implemented in the tribal district of Dhar operates on this principle.

Computers in 31 village centres have been wired through an Intranet network. Local rural youth act as entrepreneurs for running cyber cafes-cum-cyber offices on commercial lines without salary or stipend. The computers in the network have been established in Gram Panchayats. They have been called Sookhnalayas (information kiosks). The Sookhnalayas provide user-charge-based services to the rural people. The person operating the Sookhnalaya is a local matriculate operator and is called Sookchak. He needs only maintenance and numeric data entry skills. He needs very limited typing skills since most of the Intranet software is menu-driven. The entire expenditure for the

Gyandoot network has been borne by Panchayats and the community with no expenditure burden on the government. The network has been set up at a total cost of Rs 25 lakh. The average cost incurred by the village committee and community in establishing a single kiosk was Rs 75000. The services of the network cover wide-ranging information needs of the villages like:

- * Agriculture produce auction centre rates
- * Copies of land records
- * Online registration of applications
- * Online public grievance redressal
- * Rural e-mail facility
- * Village auction site
- * Online matrimonial site
- * Information regarding govern-



ment programmes

* *Sawaliram se puchiye* programme in which the school children can ask interesting questions regarding career counselling

* Ask the expert programme in which farmers and villagers can inquire about the latest techniques, new technologies, etc., regarding agriculture, animal husbandry, health and related to legal opinion

* Free e-mail facility on social issues

* *Avedan Patra* — online application formats required by local administration

Out of the present 31 kiosks, the village committee and the community started the first 20 centres. Private entrepreneurs started the rest 11. The policy adopted at the inception of the project to expand only

when local youths start new centres as private enterprise has paid rich dividends. In the 11 centres started as private enterprise, the Sookchak is the owner of the establishment who pays Rs 5000 as a licence fee for one year to the district council. Each Sookchak is expected to earn a net income of at least Rs 36000 per annum at conservative projections. The Gyandoot Samiti, a registered society to support the project, has developed software to run the intranet and various services. It is very simple and menu-driven software, which requires minimum data entry at the client end. The software is in Hindi. Strategic innovation in Gyandoot thus includes use of the local entrepreneurship overcoming the finance problem and of course the language problem.

Gyandoot has brought tangible benefits to the villages. For example, the farmers in Bagadi village were getting Rs 300 per quintal from local traders for their potato crop. On knowing that the prevailing market rate at the Indore mandi was Rs 400 per quintal from the Sookhanalaya, they took their potato produce to Indore mandi and earned better profits.

In any discussion about e-governance, invariably the issue of infrastructure facilities and the perennial non-availability of power figure prominently. Mr Kanti Shroff of Excel Industries has shown a few years ago in Kalali village of Baroda in Gujarat how by using four bullocks that go round an oil press type mechanism, power can be generated to charge batteries. If we can develop such systems, these batteries can be used to run computers and other related systems.

Innovation is therefore the key for e-governance, but a fundamental problem remains. How can we build a culture of innovation in a bureaucracy, which is rigid and unimaginative? This calls for a change in culture.

Fortunately, in IAS and other services a lot of technocrats, IIT, IIM qualified youngsters are entering in recent years. Government should focus on this pool of talent, which is available with it, and let them loose on the system so that with their innovative approach the young officers can make e-governance in India a reality. All that is expected of the seniors is not to interfere with new initiatives but play a supporting nurturing role.

(The author is Central Vigilance Commissioner)

The Economic Times

10 FEB 2001

Internet-linking mobile phone takes Japan by storm

By YURI KAGEYAMA

In some parts of the world, cellphones are made for debonair business-types. In Japan, they're for giggly, goofy, gadget-loving teenagers.

That's why "i-mode", the Internet-linking mobile phone service that's caught this nation by storm, is a snap to use.

Unlike other cellphone-based Web services, i-mode places a lot of emphasis on catchy graphics and music. And though it thrives on kitsch, i-mode also offers more practical functions like short news articles, city maps and weather forecasts.

In just two years, the service has attracted more than 18 million subscribers, or one in every seven Japanese.

The key to that popularity is that i-mode is geared toward people who aren't familiar with using a personal computer or the Web.

In fact, i-mode doesn't pretend to offer the same infinite span of online information available through a PC. Instead, it's a very limited, strictly guided roadmap to Web information specially designed for a mobile phone.

Even my 76-year-old mother, who would cringe using a PC, has an i-mode phone. She frequently sends e-mail to me and my sister, who also owns an i-mode.

I-mode also has made me a big hit with my 14-year-old niece, who was absolutely tickled to receive e-mail with pictures of Tarepanda, a droopy panda-bear mascot.

"I-appli," which launched last month, is an

upgrade based on Java, the programming language developed by Sun Microsystems. In addition to popular i-mode features such as short animation, vivid color and music, i-appli adds an alarm and calculator to the scheduling planner, which is still adorned with Hello Kitty, Japan's feline mascot.

I-appli is not as major an upgrade as the high-speed data service based on about \$90 a month for calls, data transmission and other fees. No wonder NTT DoCoMo is forecasting \$3 billion in profits for the fiscal year ending next month.

The service is a bit more complicated than a TV, but not by much. The manual for my \$260 P503i, the i-appli phone made by Matsushita, or Panasonic, is 464 pages long. But it's mostly for trou-

bleshooting, filled with diagrams to walk users through every step of every feature. There are thousands of i-mode Web sites.



In just two years, the service has attracted more than 18 million subscribers in Japan.

I-mode can be turned on by simply pushing one button. In a matter of seconds, the business-card-size screen lights up to show the "i-mode menu", a simple four-item list that serves as a gateway to Japan's mobile Net.

Cyber-navigating and downloading on i-mode and i-appli are easy managed using a button or a combination of several buttons that work as a mouse or scroller.

Entering text with cellphone buttons takes getting used to, but i-mode is more than sufficient for brief e-mail. The phones also have pre-stored messages like, "I'm running late", and dozens of cutesy icons like a broken heart, snowman or frowning face that can be clicked on for a kind of i-mode shorthand.

My i-appli phone can store 500 telephone numbers, 700 e-mail addresses, 50 bookmarks,

seven i-appli programs and 30 electronic melodies.

It also comes with voice-recognition capabilities so all I have to do is say "Associated Press" for the phone to start dialing our Tokyo office. It lets me play disc jockey, combining dozens of riffs stored in the machine to piece together my own techno groove. One of my favorite i-mode sites is called "expedition club in front of the train station," which allows you to punch in the train station where you are and the train station where you want to end up. Within seconds, the service responds in text with several possible train routes - exactly what you need to navigate Tokyo's myriad of railroads and subways.

The electronic banking was less satisfying, requiring registration with my bank by old-style postage.

You also can download electronic tunes to serve as the ringer when a call or e-mail comes in. The downloads are simple, though it's hard to find a tune of preference among a selection heavy on Japanese Top 40 pop-rock.

But after 15 minutes of searching, I found Chick Corea's *Spain*, the theme song from *Mission Impossible*, and *Smoke on the Water* by Deep Purple, among others.

They all sound as though they're being played on toy instruments. But they're certainly good for laughs. And with i-mode becoming such a prevalent part of Japanese life, it helps to tell if the phone that's ringing is really yours. (AP)

Extremists plan encrypted war on the Internet

REUTERS

WASHINGTON, FEB 6

Media
96-10
217



MUSLIM extremists, including Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, are posting encrypted — or scrambled — photographs and messages on popular web sites and using them to plan attacks against the US and its allies, *USA Today* reported on Tuesday.

The e-mails and images can only be decrypted using a "private key," or code, selected by the recipient. *USA Today* said officials cited security concerns in declining to name sites where such material had been hidden.

Experts said, however, it was difficult for law enforcement agencies to intercept the messages.

INDIAN EXPRESS

19 2001

Sebi moves closer to e-governance, plans to process complaints online

Yassir A Pitalwalla
MUMBAI 4 FEBRUARY

THE E-GOVERNANCE bug has finally bit Sebi. The regulator is working on realising its dream to establish a system to receive and process investor complaints on-line. It also plans to set up a call centre facility where investors can discover the status of their complaints.

Speaking to ET, Sebi executive director Ashok Kacker said: "Our attempt is to respond to investor complaints via the web or telephone. We have received a few proposals from solution providers in this area but we have yet to decide what parts of the exercise will be carried out internally and what will be out-sourced."

The move towards e-governance is part of a move by Sebi to further reduce the number of investor complaints outstanding and increase the redressal rate which has already hit a high of 95.52 per cent for the first nine months of the current fiscal.

"The steps taken to institutionalise the capital markets have resulted in investor complaints received, dropping from a high of 5.11 lakh in 97-98 to 0.71 lakh in the first nine months of 00-01 fiscal," said Sebi chairman D.R. Mehta. The cumulative redressal rate of complaints over the same period has gone up from 91.74 per cent to 95.52 per cent.

"During this period while introduction of compulsory dematerialisation for a majority of the top turnover stocks has done away with share transfer related problems, the number of complaints relating to collective investment schemes has actually increased as investors saw us taking action against errant players," said Mr Mehta.

In order to streamline the process of investor grievance redressal, Sebi has also appointed two independent data processing entities; one for its Northern Regional Office and the other for its head office in Mumbai which between them received 87.51 per cent of total complaints during 00-01.

"These agents help us process the complaints, issue the acknowledgement number to the investors and forward the complaints to the respective companies or the registrars for necessary action," said Mr Kacker.

Sebi is also using its web-site to display the names of the top 50 companies who have the maximum number of complaints outstanding at the end of each month. In addition compliance officers of such companies are also summoned by Sebi to find out

why adequate action is not being taken for investor redressal.

In some cases Sebi has even initiated prosecution proceedings against such companies. "We have also granted recognition to 10 investor associations to help them act as the first level agencies who can seek redressal for investors. If the companies fail to respond to their attempts, we will take up the matter ourselves," said Mr Kacker.

To enable investor associations to perform this role, Sebi has distributed copies of a quick reckoner for capital market investors in addition to getting some of the top companies in terms of shareholder base to send the reckoner to their shareholders.

"We have also decided to reimburse each registered association an amount of up to Rs five lakh per year to conduct investor education programmes," said Mr Mehta. Sebi has also offered to bear part of the expenses incurred by the registered associations in translating the quick ready reckoner

into regional languages. "In addition we also bear a one time expenditure of up to Rs one lakh for capital expenditure by the associations of purchase of office equipment and databases," said Mr Kacker.

According to Mr Mehta the steps taken by Sebi have resulted in Rs 2,300 crore being paid out by sponsors of assured return schemes.

"Tough entry norms for IPOs have further reduced the incidence of investor complaints. Further, about 200 companies are now facing prosecution by Sebi due to violations," said Mr Mehta. In order to highlight the major problem areas requiring maximum attention, Sebi also recently undertook a reply paid mailing exercise to investors whose complaints had been outstanding for a very long time.

"This has resulted in weeding out of a lot of complaints which have been redressed while at the same time highlighting the problem cases," said Mr Kacker.

No more default on NAV front, watchdog warns mutual funds

Yassir A. Pitalwalla
MUMBAI 4 FEBRUARY

THE SECURITIES & Exchange Board of India (Sebi) is all set to crack down on defaulting mutual funds (MFs) who have yet to comply with its verbal directive to disclose the net asset values (NAVs) of their schemes, on a regular basis.

Since the NAV is one of the fundamentals which an investor needs to know before investing in a mutual fund, the capital markets regulator has been miffed at the fact that many MFs were not seen to be disclosing the NAVs of their open-end schemes on a daily basis. Sebi had, therefore, asked the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) to work on a proposal where

MFs could post their NAVs on a daily basis on the Amfi web-site.

Sebi had also warned MFs that it would monitor compliance with its verbal directive on a daily basis and would take stern action on defaulters. Speaking to ET, Sebi full-time board member J.R. Varma said: "While the compliance with our verbal directives has improved, with most MFs declaring their NAVs on a daily basis, some MFs are still not complying."

Sebi is annoyed that when large funds like Unit Trust of India (UTI) can declare their NAVs on a daily basis others are acting in a seemingly reticent manner. Sebi had also made its position on this issue very

clear, in meetings with MFs.

"We will now tell MFs that this is not on and, if necessary, even issue warning letters to defaulters. If funds are not complying with the directive because of the absence of a circular from us, we shall go ahead and issue the circular," Mr Varma said.

The initiative under Amfi's auspices has seen both the number of schemes for which NAVs are reported and the timeliness of NAVs improve for the majority of the industry. "We have given defaulting mutual funds enough benefit of doubt about whether or not the daily upload of NAVs electronically, is technically possible," said Mr Varma.

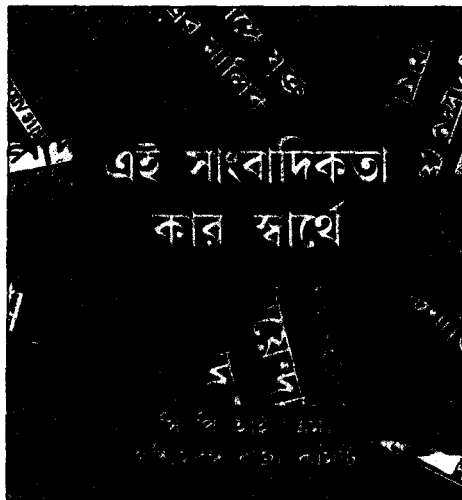
CPM aims poll gun at the media

Saugata Roy
Kolkata, February 2

THE "BOURGEOIS" press, a permanent nightmare for communists, has returned to haunt the West Bengal CPI(M) on the eve of its toughest electoral battle in a long time. Jyoti Basu's favourite dig—at the "distortion of facts by a section of the press"—has been taken a yard or two deeper by his boys at Alimuddin Street. Unlike Basu who attacked 'news' alone, comrades at the helm have now swivelled the gun on views too, slamming the contents of editorial columns of newspapers.

The patriarch had, after the Left Front's victory in the panchayat elections, told reporters: "It is a victory against you all." Today, CPI(M) State secretary Anil Biswas released the first of his party's election series publications—*Ei Sangbadikata Kar Sarthe*—as if the media were its arch rival.

The slim booklet seeks to establish the manner in which a section of the press has allegedly tried to malign communists since 1948. It has



resorted to all means to dislodge the Left Front Government, the pamphlet says. "Some (in the media) are acting as crusaders of a right-wing

Mahajot. It appears that they are active partners of the proposed *Mahajot*." The booklet contains copious quotes from reports and editorials to buttress its claim.

The publication lists a series of reported rapes and murders that it claims never took place. The alleged rape of Champala Sardar is apparently a case in point.

This apart, the booklet refers to editorials that allegedly advocated investigation of the Nanoor killings by the US Consulate in Kolkata and the "abusive language used against Jyoti Basu and Anil Biswas" who opposed the move. The CPI(M) fears that this section of the media might be receiving funds from the US Central Intelligence Agency.

The media has also failed to uphold secular principles, if the party is to be believed. On quite a few occasions recently, some newspapers had betrayed communal overtones, the booklet says. On why the party has attacked editorials, Anil Biswas said: "The editorials we have referred to are based on false reports."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

3 FEB 2001

VSNL starts uplinking of digital TV channels

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Feb. 2. - The Vishesh Sanchar Nigam Limited has, for the first time in the country, started uplinking of digital television channels using the digital uplinking system.

The digital uplinking provides highly efficient utilisation of transponders space and a corresponding lowering of uplinking costs.

The VSNL chairman, Mr S K Gupta, said the broadcasting market in India is set for a major transformation with the availability of high quality uplinking and conditional access facilities within the country. "VSNL expects this new trend to gather strength and recreate India as a major uplinking country in the Asia Pacific re-

gion," he said.

VSNL has also commenced conditional access to the broadcasters which will support their business in offering secured uplinking broadcast facility from Indian soil, a VSNL official said.

The official said three conditional access systems, based on Irdeto technology, have been successfully installed in Chennai, Delhi and Mumbai. The initial uplinking undertaken by VSNL will be free to air.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Jamie Styles, said: "This is an exciting project for both VSNL and Irdeto. VSNL is starting a new business venture with this initiative and Irdeto is proud to support VSNL in developing that business with Irdeto technology."

THE STATESMAN

3 FEB 2001

Phone calls even cheaper

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

Kolkata, Jan. 25: The tariff for telephone calls within a radius of 200 km has come down drastically. This is the West Bengal telecom circle's Republic Day gift to the state, with the new rates coming into effect from midnight.

One call will be charged for every two minutes and there will be one universal rate throughout the week at all times, chief general manager S.P. Chakraborty said.

"The existing 15-second pulse will be changed to 120 seconds for distances between 50 and

100 km. That means one call will be charged every two minutes. The 15-second pulse will be changed to a 30-second pulse. There will be no off-peak rates for calls, which means a flat rate for all days and times. All categories of subscribers with or without STD facilities will enjoy this facility," Mr Chakraborty said.

Telecom department sources said the service, however, will be restricted to BSNL subscribers in the circle, which comprises West Bengal and Sikkim. Charges for STD calls above 200 km will remain the same as implemented on

October 1.

To avail this concessional tariff, subscribers will have to dial 95 and the SDCA code without 0, and then dial the telephone number. For example, to get Krishnanagar (STD code 03472), the subscriber has to dial 953472 and then dial the telephone number.

Department officials said with the introduction of this new tariff, customers can make calls to distant exchanges at a much lower rate. Two-minute pulse rates will be valid between all exchanges in the circle which includes Kolkata, Kharagpur, Malda, Siliguri and Gangtok.

THE ASIAN AGE

26 JAN 2001

Cop & mouse: Police lay cyber trap for criminals

Girish Kuber

MUMBAI 21 JANUARY

CLICK, MATCH, gotcha. The age of the lathi is over. Indian cops are all set to grab the mouse, moving into the cyber age with one of the most ambitious network projects yet. Enter POLNET, a pan-Indian network linking all records across 15,362 police stations and 1,128 jails spread across the country.

Photographs, fingerprints and imaging through specialised software will give the Indian police access to uniform crime data and help track down criminals. The total bill: Rs 332 crore.

The National Crime Records Bureau, a Delhi-based organisation under the Union home ministry, has roped in microchip giant Intel to develop POLNET — the largest networking application in the country — to connect all the district police stations, jails and security agencies.

The network will allow uniform access to crime data, and software which will enable sleuths to crack down on criminal activities all over the country.

The dedicated network POLNET will connect all police stations across the country, important jails,



CAUGHT IN THE NET

major security agencies including the Border Security Force (BSF), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) besides developing software to detect various new age crimes," Sharada Prasad, director NCRB, told ET.

■ Criminal information system being networked nationally: Page 6

The Economic Time.

22 JAN 2001

CASTING THE NET

Police just don't get IT *Media*

IT was only a matter of time before terrorists operating in India got wise to the potential of information technology. Security services in the West, especially the United States, have long suffered nightmares of the lethal potential of the Internet in wrong hands. Frightful scenarios have been painted by professional doomsdayers in America. The FBI, to the chagrin of US civil libertarians, now has the power to monitor suspicious goings on in cyber space. Needless to say Indian police, including the Delhi Police, are behind in imagination and action when it comes to cyber terrorists. Which is why the capital's uniformed men, despite having discovered that cyber cafes are being used as both the front and back ends by Lashkar-e-Toiba, are clueless as to the next step. Obviously, police cannot raid every cyber cafe in a city. Or even if they could, such indiscriminate action would be extremely undesirable in a country where civil liberties are, in any case, at a discount. Covert ground level intelligence is one time-tested remedy. And it is pertinent to ask why Delhi Police always gets so smart post-facto — the cyber cafe revelation came in the wake of investigations into the Red Fort raid — and seldom before the event.

However, it is the nature of the net to defeat old-fashioned methods. If good tip offs lead the police to catch several terrorists masquerading as cyber entrepreneurs, the former will simply disappear as 'ordinary' PC-owning citizens. Some may be doing that now, and they and their future colleagues will make it almost impossible for the police to rely on search and seizure methods, never mind that the Information Technology Act gives officers of the ranks of DCP and above the power to enter homes virtually at will. That draconian power is more likely to be used for harassing the harmless. The only viable method is to copy Americans and set up net savvy, specialised, hi-tech units, which can monitor cyberspace from their desktops. Policemen as they are trained now are hopelessly incapable of doing this. Even retraining may not help, since many of them are too set in old ways and/or lack intellectual capacity. New recruits and a radical, new system are the answer. Given the way Indian policing works — we are still effectively running the same system the British devised for keeping natives under control — such a change will come, if it comes at all, long after cyber terrorism becomes a part of Indian life.

THE STATESMAN

6 JAN 2001

BSNL extends local call facility up to 200 kms, hikes rental

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JAN 5

BHARAT Sanchar Nigam (BSNL) today increased the monthly rental by upto Rs 30 for rural subscribers and upto Rs 70 for urban low calling subscribers while the call charges have been slashed for different distance slabs.

The new call tariff scheme would enable the customers to make calls upto 200 kms in the same manner as that of local call thereby enabling STD-barred customers also to make calls upto 200 kms without getting their STD facility restored, Communication Minister Ram Vilas Paswan told reporters here.

Due to the new call charges, BSNL would stand to lose upto Rs 600 crore annually of which the loss of Rs 450 crore would be made up by increase in

MTNL cell phone by January 31

■ NEW DELHI: MAHANAGAR Telephone Nigam Ltd today announced the start of its much-awaited mobile services in Delhi on January 31 and in Mumbai on February 28, for which the registration would start from January 15 and February 15 respectively.

"MTNL would start the services by the end of this month and the tariffs will be announced after taking approval from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India," Communication Minister Ram Vilas Paswan told reporters here. To begin with, MTNL has created a capacity of upto one lakh subscribers each in Delhi and Mumbai, Paswan said, adding the services would be competitively priced.

monthly rentals, the Minister said.

The call charges in the distance slab of 50 to 100 kms being reduced to one-eighth compared to the existing rate by increasing the pulse of call from 15 seconds to 120 seconds.

Similarly in the slab of 100 to 200 kms, the rates shall be reduced to half of the prevailing rate by increasing the pulse rate from 15 seconds now to 30 seconds, the Minister said, adding that "new package is expected to further strain the revenue receipts of BSNL already under pressure and therefore to partly balance the loss rentals have been marginally increased."

For the rural subscribers, the rental has been hiked ranging from Rs 10 to Rs 30 based on the exchange system capacity, whereas for urban low calling subscribers

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

The Economic Times

6 JAN 2001

Enron to reduce tariff

Indian Oil Corporation (IOC).

This was almost half of its last import consignment from international supplier Glencore, bought at USD 310 per tonne.

"With naphtha being procured at USD 170 per tonne and the foreign exchange rates remaining constant, we would be able to

charge a tariff below Rs four per unit at 90 per cent PLF or below Rs five per unit with PLF being 60 per cent," Enron sources said.

Enron officials also discussed payment of Rs 130 crore dues for October out of the pending approximately Rs 200 crore with MSEB, they added.

BSNL extends local call facility

the hike would range between Rs 20 to Rs 70, the Minister said.

For other urban subscribers, the rentals have not changed.

The revised rentals in rural areas are still lower than the rentals announced by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

In respect of low calling urban subscribers, rentals have been brought at par with those announced by TRAI 21 months back, Paswan said.

The long distance call charges during this period have already been reduced by an average of 36 per cent, Paswan said adding that with the implementation of today's order the total reduction in the average STD call charges would be to the extent of 42 per cent.

Samata split official

residence in Delhi on being asked by Fernandes to find an amicable solution but Nitish talked about everything except the merger.

"We were on the same flight to Patna yesterday but Nitish slept all through only to enact a high political drama at Patna airport announcing his resignation from the Union Cabinet."

"We have full faith in the leadership of Fernandes and we will explain the position to him when we meet in Delhi."

Stating that the rebels did not want to precipitate the issue, Jha said Digvijay Singh met him early this morning at the behest of Fernandes and requested him to postpone their (rebels') convention. Jha agreed on the condition that the official convention too be deferred and Fernandes be authorised to arbitrate to avoid a split.

But Singh did not turn up again with the feedback and attended Kumar's meeting, Jha said.

INDIAN EXPRESS

5601812001

6 JAN 2001

Cyber cafes: A safe-haven for ultras?

SIDDHARTHA KUMAR
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Jan. 4. — The information highway is being used by terrorists to both fuel and conceal their activities, recent investigations have revealed. This has made the police apprehend that the lavishly-funded Lashkar-e-Taiyaba activists are setting up cyber cafes as "perfect covers" for their operations.

Cyber cafes, Delhi police officers said, had been set up by the key operatives of two Lashkar-e-Taiyaba "modules", or groups of terrorists, that were nabbed recently — one responsible for the strike at the Red Fort and the other, active in Mumbai.

With cyber-cafes and computer centres mushrooming in towns and cities nationwide, the militants have devised an effective strategy, police observed. "They can pose as youthful entrepreneurs. The cyber cafes also serve perfectly for their purpose in communicating with their bosses across the border," said a senior Delhi Police officer.

Ashfaq Ahmed, who is said to have masterminded the Red Fort strike and had received nearly Rs 35 lakh for

organising operations in the country, had opened a computer centre, 'Knowledge Plus' in Gafoor Nagar.

Police officers said a group of Lashkar militants led by Abu Hamza which was arrested in Mumbai recently, had a plan to kill Shiv Sena leaders. "Abu Hamza was also running a cyber cafe and operating out of it".

"This is a perfect foil for them as there are so many cyber cafes mushrooming in the country. Even in non-descript towns and cities there are many cyber cafes. This is perhaps a new way in which they have planned their terrorism in the country. They can contact their bosses through e-mail and transmit information without being detected", said the officer.

Ashfaq's interrogation also revealed that some other militant organisations in Pakistan had joined hands with the Lashkar-e-Taiyaba to create major trouble in India. Pooling of funds had ensured that there was no dearth of money at their disposal. "Money given to the militants has multiplied, about five-fold after an assembly of terrorist groups last year" said the officer.

The Lashkar modules are believed to have fanned out across the country and

have mingled with the local populace. Assam and Bihar are states in which such modules have the highest concentration in the country.

The Lashkar militants in the country are working in tandem with the Al-Badr militants. "There could be several modules in the Capital and elsewhere which have to be uncovered", another officer said.

There is no restriction on opening a cyber cafe. An operator said: "If you have the money, you can set up the computers and open a cyber-cafe. There is no need for licence or any permission".

Police seldom monitor the functioning of such cafes. A Station House officer said: "We are supposed to tell the cafe owner to give us a list of e-mails and about frequent cafe-users. But that is hardly any check as there is already so much to police".

The DCP's are also unaware of their powers under the IT Act 2000 to enter and search any place used by the public and arrest any person who is "reasonably suspected of having committed, or of committing or of being about to commit any offence under the Act". A DCP who was asked what the IT Act meant replied, "I don't think this Act has been circulated. I have not read it".

THE STATESMAN

5 JAN 2001

E-commerce may come under tax net

By Our Special Correspondent *M. Srinivasan*

NEW DELHI, JAN. 3. The Union Minister of State for Finance, Mr Gingee N. Ramachandran, today hinted that this year's budget might contain proposals on taxation of E-commerce, the insurance business and also for transfer pricing.

With the world becoming increasingly inter-dependent and integrating with non-linear development, complex issues were coming up, he told a conference of corporate managers and tax executives here. "The Government is aware of the complexities involved in transfer pricing, taxation of insurance business, E-commerce, etc.

It has already appointed committees to look into these issues and we hope that before the budget, the committees will submit their recommendations so that they could be considered while preparing the budget." However, while looking at ways and means of improving the tax to Gross Domestic Product ratio, the Government would keep in mind the interests of the masses.

Mr Ramachandran said the views of industrialists on the Competition Bill and the Prevention of Money Laundering Bill would be given due consideration. Both are being opposed by various sections.

The Revenue Secretary, Dr S. Narayan, said the Government was working towards widening the tax base and increasing the number of direct tax payers to 60 million in three years from the current level of 25 million. *HP-15*

To achieve this, it would be important to ensure that the tax paying exercise became user-friendly as well as attractive, adopting various methodologies.

He, however, said there were gross irregularities in the claim of export incentives, running into a loss of hundreds of crores every year. This needed to be curbed.

UNI reports:

Mr. Narayan said he was asked to appear before the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament over the issue. The disquiet was not only at the official level but also felt in Parliament.

Rs.1,46,000-crore revenue target

In his address, the Chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes, Mr. A. Balasubramanian, said despite the industrial slowdown, the Government would achieve the Rs. 1,46,000-crore revenue target this fiscal with direct taxes surpassing the target. The direct taxes grew by 34 per cent from April to December last.

THE HINDU

4 JAN 2001

China, US firm in Net turf war

Beijing, Jan 2 (AP): Cyberspace has long been a seamless world, where data packets' only allegiance is to the imperative of quick transmission. A centrally administered addressing system has kept it so.

Now, however, a tug-of-war is threatening to disrupt that system and snarl efforts to make the Internet universal. The struggle pits VeriSign Inc. — the US company that keeps track of addresses with those well-known endings like ".com" and ".org" — against China's government.

The issue: Who has the right to register Chinese-language Internet addresses?

Last month, VeriSign an-

nounced it would begin accepting Web addresses written in Chinese as well as Japanese and Korean.

The China Internet Network Information Centre, the government agency that oversees the registry in China, quickly responded by unveiling a competing system. Officials quoted in state-run media called the system China's sole legal cyber-registry.

State-run newspapers, ever given to nationalistic passions, stoked the controversy. They proclaimed that the Chinese language belonged to China and that VeriSign was trampling on Chinese sovereignty.

There was even talk in the press of blocking access in China

to addresses using VeriSign's system, as Beijing does now for websites of some foreign media and critics of Communist rule.

That raised the prospect of China cutting itself off from the rest of cyberspace.

"This could confuse or even fracture the Internet. It poses real problems," said Bjorn Stabell, technology director at Beijing-based Web Technology Solutions, a consulting firm. Here's the rub: The Chinese government's system threatens to use the same domain names as one of VeriSign's partners, a Singapore-based start-up called i-DNS.net. That means users in different geographical locations who type in the exact same

address might be led to different websites.

That would occur if the computers on the Internet that direct traffic — they are called domain name servers and they are everywhere — begin disagreeing on the individual numerical Internet addresses associated with each name. China could have its computers point to one set of servers, while the rest of the world uses another. The US government has historically been the ultimate arbiter, but it is trying to wean itself of that role. It designated the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers in 1998 to oversee the Net's addressing system.

THE TELEGRAPH

3 JAN 2000

19-1

BSNL cuts STD rates by 60 per cent 29/12

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 28. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) today joined the price war in national long distance rates by announcing rate cuts up to 60 per cent.

From January 14 (Pongal), there would be two time slabs and fewer distance rates. The peak period from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. would remain but with hefty discounts, while the three off peak slabs have been merged with marginal or nil reductions.

The four distance slabs are being reduced to three — between 50 and 200 km., from 200 to 500 km., and 500 km., and above. The present slab of above 1000 km., is being abolished.

For the first distance slab of 50-200 km., the STD tariff has been halved from Rs. 4.80 per minute to Rs. 2.40 during peak hours while the Rs. 1.20 off-peak rate will continue.

A major reduction is slated in the 200-500 km., slab where the rate has been reduced to Rs 4.80 per minute from the present one of Rs. 11.60. The off-peak rate has been marginally reduced from Rs. 3 to Rs. 2.40. In the third distance slab of 500 km., and above, the proposed peak rate is Rs. 9 while the off-peak rate has been maintained at Rs. 4.50. Currently, the peak rate in the 500 km.-1000 km slab is Rs. 17.56 and in the (abolished) over 1000 km. slab, it was Rs. 24 per minute.

The off peak rates were Rs. 4.50 and Rs. 6, respectively.

The Communications Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, said BSNL would initially suffer losses but the revenue loss would be made up by higher traffic. "I hope that people will start making more STD calls from Pongal itself," he observed.

BSNL had faxed the new rates to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) before beginning the news conference in keeping with its newly-found status as a corporation. "I am sure that TRAI will approve these rates because they are in customer interest," he said.

Asked why the Minister was making the announcement on

behalf of a company which was in competition with several other corporations, Mr. Mahajan said that the initiative to cut the rates was taken solely by BSNL and he was gracing the occasion on its invitation.

Mr. Mahajan said the STD rate cut was a tough decision for BSNL to make because of its huge size and scale of operations whereas it was easy for upcoming companies to offer attractive price discounts.

Unlike last time when the cut in STD rates was partially made up by hike in rentals, Mr. Mahajan said the rate cut from January 14 was not tied to a hike in either local call charges or rentals.

Monopoly out, cheaper STD in

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Dec. 17: The government's monopoly over the nationwide STD (subscriber trunk dialling) services ended today.

Telecom company Bharti launched the country's first private-sector national long-distance telephony service and said it would be cherry-topped with deep discounts, raising the possibility of a rate war.

"Currently, we are offering our services to all basic and cellular service providers and not directly to consumers. However, we expect this to impact the STD rate which should come down," Bharti group chairman Sunil Mittal said.

"I am not at liberty to give our tariff rates here, but we will be offering deep discounts. It will not be 10-20 per cent cuts... it could be deeper," Mittal said.

The Bharti group chief, however, conceded that as yet no telecom service provider other than his own group companies, which market the Airtel services, have signed up for his STD service. He said the company is negotiating with others.

Besides a fibre-optic link that girdles its telecom circles, Bharti has leased a line connecting Delhi with Calcutta from the state-run Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd, which will be buttressed with back-up lines from Gail and PowerGrid.

Reliance and Bharti are the

only two private-sector telecom players that had bid and got the government's approval to start its national long-distance telecom service.

Bharti's launch today is aimed at stealing a march over Reliance which is still tying up its connectivity lines.

Mittal said he aims to grab at least 5-6 per cent of the estimated Rs 7,000 crore STD phone call market. "I hope to make this pay for itself within the next two years," he said.

The Bharti group chief executive said his group had already invested Rs 800 crore out of a budgeted Rs 1,400 crore in the service.

Around 12,000 km of optic fibre cables have already been

laid out covering some 50 cities. Another 14,000 km of cables are to be laid out over the next 10-12 months, company executives said.

The service, called IndiaOne, now has switches in nine major cities and nodes in another 50 smaller cities. "By phase II, we will get Carrier Access Circle codes and will be able to offer any telephone user pre-paid STD cards," Mittal said.

He said there would be only two time-zone rates — the first being a full rate 9 am to 9 pm time zone, and the other a night discounted rate from 9 pm to 9 am. Similarly, there would be only three distance bands — less than 500 km, 500-1000 km, and over 1,000 km.

THE TELEGRAPH

18 DEC 2001

TAKING A STAND: Journalists Kuldip Nayar (right) and Tarun Tejpal and CPI leader D. Raja (left) at a march against Poto near the Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Tuesday. (Saab Press)

Journalists, politicians protest against Poto

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Dec. 4: People from all walks of life went on protest march in the city on Tuesday against the promulgation of Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance.

The march was organised by the Delhi Union of Journalists and co-sponsored by the Democratic Teachers Front, Jamia Teachers Association, Jamia Hamdard Teachers Association, IGNOU Teachers' Association, All-India Lawyers' Union, Indian Association of Lawyers, Janwadi Lekhak Sangh, Sahmat and Democratic Youth Federation of India.

The participants demanded the immediate scrapping of the draconian Poto, since it is "anti-press, anti people and has total disregard for human rights."

The protest march started from Mandi House

at Safdar Hashmi Marg and ended at Parliament Street with the participants carrying placards saying: "Withdraw Poto in Toto," "Reject Poto in Toto," "Poto-a draconian law" and "Poto, a political tool of BJP."

They raised slogans calling on one and all to unite and oppose the draconian ordinance. At Parliament Street, the participants were addressed by senior politicians opposing Poto, human rights activists and journalists.

The speakers included Congress spokesperson S. Jaipal Reddy, Rajya Sabha MP Kuldip Nayar, retired judge of Delhi high court Rajinder Sachar, CPM politburo member Prakash Karat, CPI leader D. Raja.

A unanimous resolution seeking the immediate scrapping of Poto was passed. The speakers termed the ordinance as a dangerous state weapon designed to destroy the secular fabric

of the country and snuff out democratic dissent. They also called upon the entire Opposition to ensure the law is not passed in the Parliament.

It was stated that Poto is being enacted by the BJP-led government with an eye on the coming Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh.

Mr Reddy described Poto as "structurally defective" and Mr Raja while questioning its intent said it is "anti-democratic, fascist and draconian" since it treats every citizen as a "potential terrorist" and every organisation as a "potential terrorist organisation."

Tehelka editor-in-chief Tarun Tejpal said that the exposed are back in business and are ensuring through Poto that those who criticise them face a tough time. It was pointed out that the present government is trying to bring back a draconian law like TADA under the pretext of combating terrorism.

THE ASIAN AGE

5 DEC 2001