

06 DEC 2005

# BJP accuses Cong of politicising arts & artistes

**PRESS Trust of India**  
New Delhi, December 5

THE SAMAJWADI Party on Monday accused the Congress of politicising "arts and artists" and said denial of the honour of inaugurating the International Film Festival of India at Goa to Amitabh Bachchan was an insult to the mega star, who dominated the film industry for decades and has nothing to do with party politics.

Calling it "low level and bad", party leader Amar Singh told reporters here that this was against the very traditions of India and it would be better to stop organising such events if the government had such an opinion about artists. Displaying a copy of the invi-

tation letter to Amitabh Bachchan from Goa chief minister Pratap Singh Rane, Singh said shortly after his arrival in Goa, the mega star was told that he could not be invited to the IFFI.

"The irony is that it has happened when S Jaipal Reddy was the minister for information and broadcasting, who had earlier been a spokesperson of V.P. Singh and had made accusations against Rajiv Gandhi and Amitabh Bachchan in the Bofors case.

"He (Reddy) has been the chief spokesperson of V.P. Singh and now speaking as spokesman of Sonia Gandhi", he said and regretted that there has been no words from the government to clarify the matter.

He declined to comment on media

reports that it had happened at the behest of Sonia Gandhi but said "it was unfortunate that big posts are now occupied by mean people".

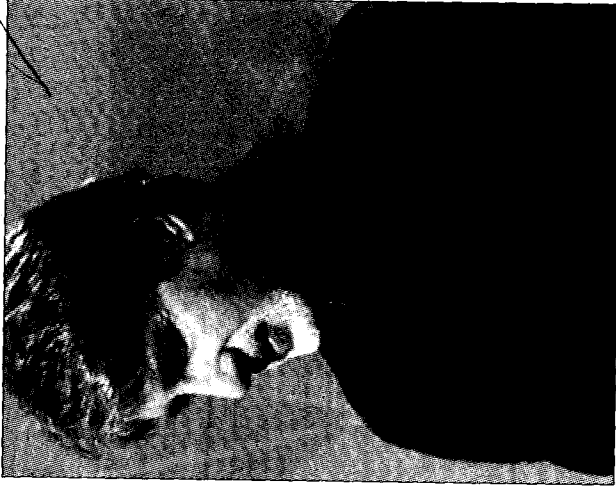
Singh said his party never branded an artist with party politics. "We never said Dilip Kumar was a Congress MP, Sunil Dutt a Congress minister or Hema Malini a BJP MP nominated by the President". Singh said Bachchan had nothing to do with the Samajwadi Party nor was he its member. He has only been helping the party.

About his belated comments on the issue, he said because the film festival was on till Sunday which was attended by artists from all over the country and abroad and "we never wanted to leave a bad taste".

## Amitabh on liquid diet

MEGASTAR AMITABH Bachchan -- recuperating at Laxmi Hospital after a surgery for an intestinal ailment -- on Monday started taking liquid diet, signalling a speedy progress towards recovery. Veteran comedian Asrani, who visited Amitabh at the hospital, told reporters that the superstar has begun taking liquid diet and also read the morning newspapers. Apart from Asrani, the Sahara group chief, Subrato Roy, also visited the Big B, who is recovering from diverticulitis of small intestine. He will be kept in the ICU for some more days on the request of his family members though doctors at the hospital said he was fit.

PTI, Mumbai



# The UN and the Internet

Let's set aside fears of UN designs on the Internet. The UN wants only to promote dialogue and consensus among all stakeholders, and ultimately to see that all people share in the Internet's benefits, says **Kofi A Annan**

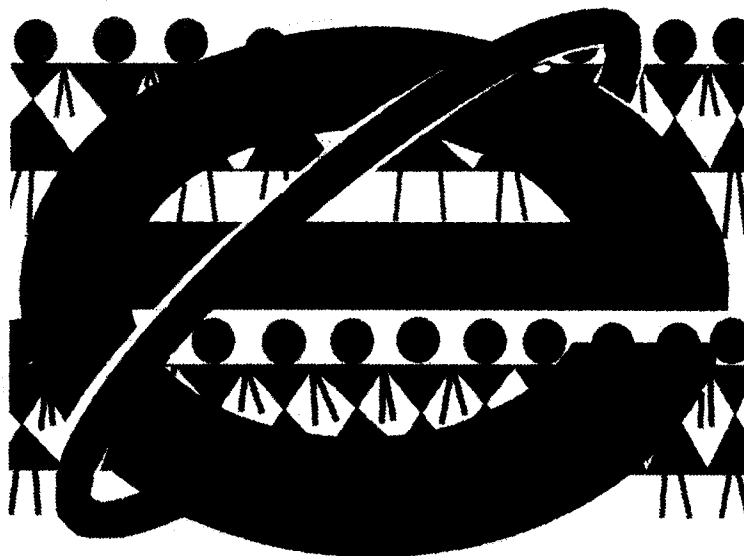
**T**HE main object of the 'World Summit on the Information Society', held in Tunis recently was to ensure that poor countries get the full benefit that new information and communication technologies "including the Internet" can bring to economic and social development. Initially, there was a growing chorus of misinformation about it.

One mistaken notion, heard with troubling frequency, was that the United Nations wants to "take over", police, or otherwise control the Internet. Nothing could be further from the truth. Far from plotting its capture, the UN wants only to ensure its global reach. That effort was at the heart of the Tunis summit.

Strong feelings about protecting the Internet are only to be expected. In its short life, the Internet has become an agent of dramatic, even revolutionary change in realms ranging from health and education to journalism and politics. In the UN's own work for development, we have glimpsed only the beginnings of the benefits it can provide: for victims of disaster, quicker, better coordinated relief; for poor people in remote areas, life-saving medical information; and for people trapped under repressive governments, access to uncensored information, an outlet to air their grievances and appeal for help.

There are also legitimate concerns about the use of the Internet to incite terrorism or help terrorists, disseminate pornography, facilitate illegal activities or glorify Nazism and other hateful ideologies. But censoring cyberspace, compromising its technical underpinnings, or submitting it to stringent governmental oversight, would mean turning our backs on one of today's greatest instruments of progress. To defend the Internet is to defend freedom itself.

To date, governance of matters related to the use of the Internet, such as spam and cyber-crime, is being dealt with in a dispersed and fragmented manner, while the Internet's infrastruc-



BONNY THOMAS

ture has been managed in an informal but effective collaboration between various institutions, with private businesses, civil society, and the academic and technical communities taking the lead. But developing countries find it difficult to follow all these processes and feel left out of Internet governance structures.

The US deserves our thanks for having developed the Internet and making it available to the world. For historical reasons, the US has the ultimate authority over some of its core resources and many say this authority should be shared with the international community. The US, which has exercised its oversight responsibilities fairly and honourably, itself recognises that other governments have legitimate public policy and sovereignty concerns, and that efforts to make the governance arrangements more international should continue. The need for change is not a reflection on the past or even the present; rather, it is a reflection of the future, when Internet growth will be most dramatic in developing countries.

What we are seeing is the beginning

of a dialogue between two different cultures: the non-governmental Internet community, with its traditions of informal, bottom-up decision-making; and the more formal, structured world of governments and intergovernmental organisations. The Internet has become so important for almost every country's economy and administration that it would be naive to expect governments not to take an interest, especially since public service applications in areas such as education and health care will become even more widespread.

**T**HEY need to be able to get their Internet policies "right", and to coordinate with each other and with the Internet community. But governments alone cannot set the rules. Governments must learn to work with non-state stakeholders. They, after all, are the ones that have played critical roles in building and coordinating the Internet; and they will remain the driving force of further expansion and innovation.

At the previous summit, two years ago in Geneva, discussions on Internet

governance reached a stalemate. So the UN member states asked me to establish a working group to examine the issue further. This Working Group on Internet Governance presented its findings in a report that reflects the views of its members, but not of the UN. It proposed the creation of a "new space for dialogue" a forum that would bring all stakeholders together to share information and best practices, and discuss difficult issues, but would not have decision-making power.

The working group also offered several options for future oversight arrangements, with varying degrees of government involvement and relationship to the UN. None says the UN should take over from the technical bodies now running the Internet; none proposes to create a new UN agency; and some suggest no UN role at all. All say that the day-to-day management of the Internet should be left to technical institutions, not least to shield it from the heat of day-to-day politics. These, and other, suggestions are now being considered by the UN member states.

Everyone acknowledges the need for more international participation in discussions of Internet governance issues. The disagreement is over how to achieve this. So let's set aside fears of UN "designs" on the Internet. Much as some would like to open up another front of attack on the UN, this dog of an argument won't bark. The UN wants only to promote dialogue and consensus among all stakeholders, and ultimately to see that all people share in the Internet's benefits.

Pre-Summit proceedings reaffirmed the human right to "seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers". The digital divide needs to be bridged we have to be ready to build an open, inclusive information society that enriches and empowers all people; ready to take this remarkable gift from the 20th century fully into the 21st.

*(The author is Secretary-General of United Nations)*

# Google cash for digital library

San Francisco, Nov. 22 (Reuters): The US Library of Congress has kicked off a campaign today to work with other nation's libraries to build a World Digital Library, starting with a \$3 million donation from Google Inc.

Librarian of Congress James Billington said he is looking to attract further private funding to develop bilingual projects, featuring millions of unique objects, with libraries in China, India, the Muslim world and other nations.

This builds on major existing digital documentary projects by the Library of Congress — one preserving an online record of Americana and another documenting ties between the US and Brazil, France, the Netherlands, Russia and Spain.

"The World Digital Library is an attempt to go beyond Europe and the Americas... into cultures where the majority of the world is," Billington said.

As an example, Billington said the Library of Congress is in discussions with the national library of Egypt to include a collection of great Islamic scientific works from the 10th through the 16th century in the World Digital Library.

"We are trying to do a documentary record of other great cultures of the world. How much we will be able to do will depend on how many additional partners we attract."

Over the past decade, the American Memory Project of the Library of Congress has digitised more than 10 million items to create a documentary record of Americana.

These include manuscripts, maps, audiovisual recordings, cartoons, caricatures, posters, documentary photographs, music, and, to a lesser extent, historic books. The digital library would have a similar variety of multimedia objects.

A second project, called the Global Gateway and introduced in 2000, involves collaborations with five national libraries in Europe and Brazil that focus on documenting ties between each of those countries and US culture.

By contrast, the digital library will focus on creating records of global cultures. The Library of Congress will contribute its own body of works to a blended collection with other countries. More than half of the printed volumes in the library are in languages other than English.

"It will deal with the culture of those people rather than with our contacts as Americans with those cultures," Billington said.

Web search company Google has agreed to work with the Library of Congress on developing standards for indexing the digital collections and by providing computer equipment.

23 NOV 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

## US Library of Congress plans world digital library

ERIC AUCHARD  
SAN FRANCISCO, NOV 22

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"We are trying to do a documentary record of other great cultures of the world. How much we will be able to do will depend on how many additional partners we attract," he said. —Reuters

# “Freedom lifeblood of digital revolution”

The Tunis summit of the Information Society has put the bigger users and developed nations on alert that the Net is not anyone's personal property.

Anand Parthasarathy

**T**HE WORLD needs the Internet to unleash the true potential of its people, but the lifeblood of the digital revolution is freedom, says United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan — a gentle hint to nations who tout their advanced Net infrastructure while denying their own people full access on political or other grounds.

“The United Nations does not want to ‘take over,’ police or otherwise control the Internet,” Mr. Annan added, putting the lid on the controversy about who “owns” — and who should control the Internet. His remark that the U.S. “has exercised its oversight responsibilities fairly and honourably” has also ensured that the three-day summit on the Information Society, which ended in the Tunisian capital of Tunis on Friday, can move on to tackle bigger challenges than the nitty-gritty of who gets to allocate web addresses.

Responding to a question from this correspondent at the event's main press conference, on what was the next step forward, Mr. Annan clarified that with the Tunis summit, the process begun in Geneva was over; there would be no more summits. He agreed, however, that the U.N. would closely monitor progress on the 1212-point “Tunis Agenda” that was hammered out only hours before the summit began. “We tend to do things in ‘five year plans’ and I think it will be the same this time — though we will not wait for five years before we look at the road map,” he added.

Talking to *The Hindu*, during a background session organised by the London-based Panos agency, Paul Twomey, president and CEO of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers — the entity at the centre of the “who owns Internet” controversy — said the mechanism for reform had been built into ICANN and it would continue to be broad-based and global in outlook. “We will never interfere in the way any country administers its Top Level Domain,” he said. TLD is the mechanism by which a nation such as India for example, operates its own corner of the world wide web — with the “in” web address. To address concerns of developing nations, the summit will see the creation of an Internet Governance Forum to ensure that all stakeholders including governments, corporates, civil society, and lay citizens have a say in how the Internet is run. This is seen as a small step

for the people of the world, but a giant leap in the mindset of those who hitherto ran the Net in a unilateral fusion.

Tunis may not have changed too much on the ground but it has put the bigger users and developed nations on alert that the Net is not anyone's personal property.

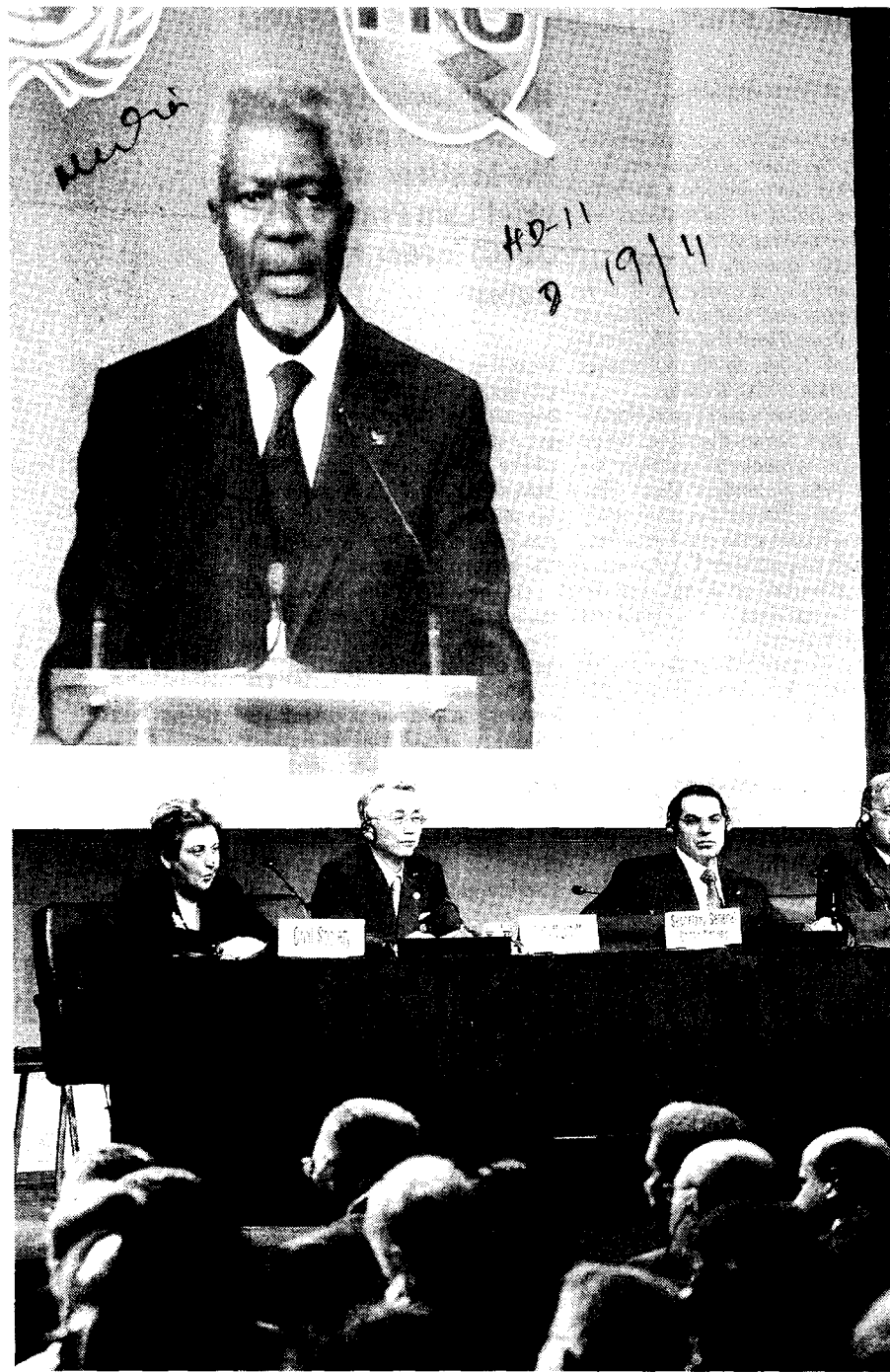
## Strong Indian impact

The summit saw Indian participants receive a good response from the global community. The telemedicine live link established by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) was a big draw: One half of a large TV screen showed a patient seated in the Malabar Cancer Care Centre in Kannur, Kerala. She was describing her symptoms. An inset video showed a specialist at the Regional Cancer Centre in Thiruvananthapuram talking to her. And the other half of the screen was filled with a blow-up of an x-ray image that was being evaluated. The loudspeaker relayed audio from both locations. C-DAC director N. Krishnan told *The Hindu* that the Mercury “affordable” health networking, arguably the first full-video and sound backed system harnessing the Net, had visitors mainly from Africa, seeking details of availability and cost. Also interesting, albeit for a more specialised audience, was the complete decision support system for ayurveda practitioners, “AyuSoft” that had its first ever airing in Tunis. The product would become available in India by March next year.

The India stall also saw ITC showcase its award winning “e-chaupal” rural e-biz solution; NIIT draw many visitors with a glimpse of its “Hole in the Wall” experiment to teach computer usage to children, and Chennai-based Midas Communication Technologies join hands with n-Logue, another city based player, to show how broadband base station equipment could be used to fuel single PC kiosks and telemedicine patient data collection systems. TCS, networking company Tejas, and the Telecom Consultants India Ltd (TCIL) were also part of the Indian pavilion.

“Made in India” solutions such as an intuitive gesture-based keyboard for Indian and South Asian languages and a solution that printed out text to accompany educational programmes on TV were showcased by the Bangalore-based Hewlett Packard Labs.

Dozens of Indian volunteer agencies also participated in the summit's IT exhibition — giving a *desi* feel to many corners of the exposition hall.



**WHO OWNS THE NET?** A giant screen shows U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan addressing the opening session of the World Summit on the Information Society at Kram, near Tunis, on Wednesday. — PHOTO: AP

# Battle for the Web

They are five letters you have probably never heard of: Icaann, acronym for the hitherto obscure Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, a public-private, non-profit organisation based in the pleasant Los Angeles suburb of Marina del Rey, and operating under the very loose supervision of the United States Department of Commerce.

But that obscurity is about to end. Since 1998 Icaann has been the nearest thing that exists to a governing body for the internet, regulating domains and protocol numbers, and allocating addresses. The debate over its future now pits the USA against most of the rest of the world, and the increasingly bitter argument is set to come to a head at a United Nations conference in Tunis next week.

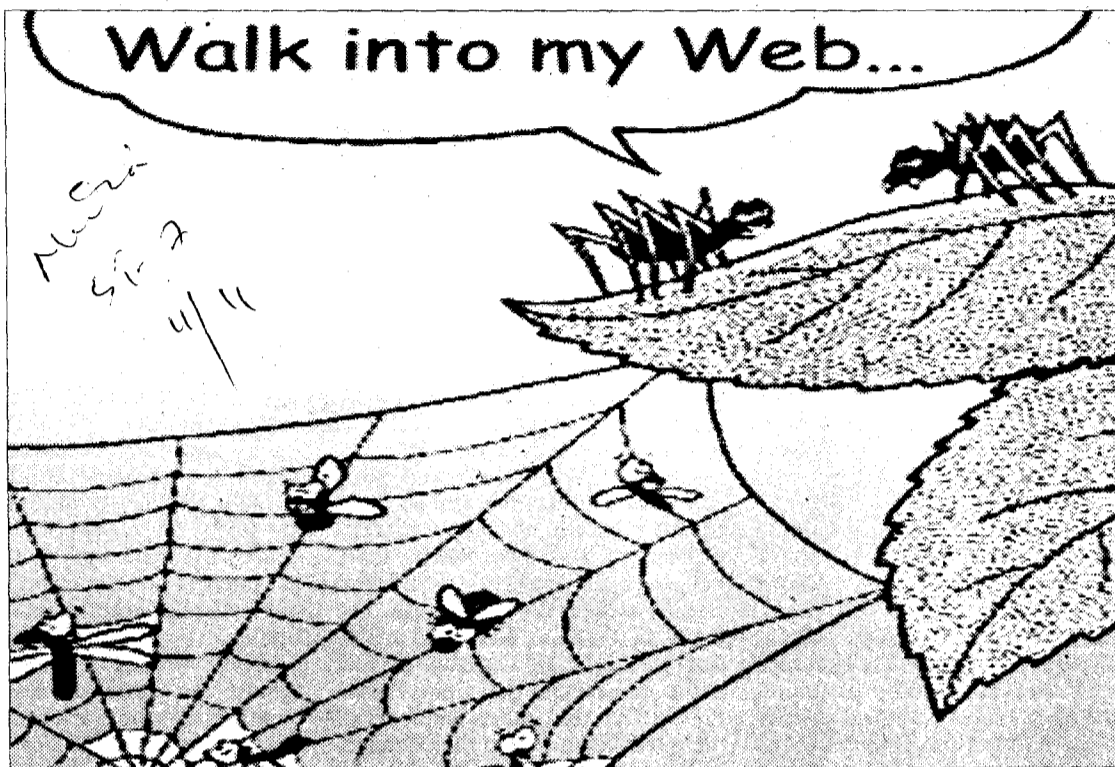
The gathering — the World Summit on the Information Society — comes at an especially critical moment. Originally, the focus was to be on extending affordable internet access to all. But Icaann's existing statute is just a few months from expiry. Suddenly, the very control of the internet is at stake.

The Bush administration has made it clear that it plans to turn Icaann into a private corporation, but one remaining on US soil and subject to US law. Many other countries, however, most of them in the developing and newly industrialised world — but as of last month the European Union as well — think otherwise.

Uneasy that the world's lone superpower effectively has its hands on the levers of an entity on which the entire global economy relies, they want the governance of the internet to be transferred to a body under the aegis of the UN, in which everyone would have a say.

Beyond argument, the internet has been a colossal boon for humanity, an instantaneous, frontier-eradicating network that the world now takes for granted. It has revolutionised communications. It has made possible access to information and thus the spread of knowledge on a scale previously unimaginable. It has undermined tyrannies. Undeniably, it has brought big problems, too: among them an erosion of individual privacy, cybercrime and an explosion of pornography. But the benefits outweigh the drawbacks, and most important of all, the internet is here to stay. The question is, how will it be run, and by whom? America has no doubts on that

Who do you think is in charge of the internet? America, of course. But now the UN wants to muscle in. A very bad idea, says RUPERT CORNWELL



score.

The internet, after all, originated on US soil as a Pentagon research project dating back to the 1960s, before it passed into civilian hands and ultimately to Icaann. The latter has deftly supervised the breathtaking expansion of the internet over the past decade.

At least until very recently, the hand — if any — of its host government in Icaann's workings has been undetectable. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," is the mantra in Washington, and it is hard to disagree.

A UN solution, moreover, contains further dangers, American backers of the status quo argue. The internet has been a tool for free expression and democracy the world over. Ominously, among the countries pressing most strongly for a more internationalised and governmentalised structure are such beacons of liberty as China, Iran and Saudi Arabia, all of them concerned to limit the flow of information to their restless citizens.

Then there is the instinctive dislike of America's Republican establishment for the UN and all it works. On the arch-conservative op-ed pages of the *Wall Street Journal* this week, Norm Coleman, the

Republican senator for Minnesota, wrote of a possible "digital Munich" in Tunis. "The internet faces a grave threat," warned Coleman, who has built his political career in Washington on UN-bashing. "We must defend it ... we cannot allow the UN to control the internet." He went on to castigate the "shameful" volte-face of the EU at the recent planning meeting for the Tunis summit, as it backed a plan drawn up by Brazil, China and others, leaving the US all but isolated. It would be "wantonly irresponsible" to allow any expansion of the activities of the "abysmally managed and sometimes corrupt" UN, he thundered.

In good measure, of course, America has only itself to blame for its internet predicament. The Bush administration has made unilateralism its watchword, seemingly going out of its way to snub most of the rest of the world on issues from arms control to Iraq and global warming. Theoretically, Washington could do the same with the internet, using Icaann to punish, say, France for some act of insubordination by expunging the .fr domain name.

So crude an act of political retaliation is naturally unimaginable. But Third World countries in particular

have specific grievances. Some are merely irritating: why is it, they argue, that a US-based firm can buy a domain name like [www.southafrica.com](http://www.southafrica.com), which ought to belong automatically to the South African government as the logical first port of call for people seeking information about that country? Others' complaints are more fundamental. Icaann does have non-American directors, as well as four offices outside the US. But critics say that other countries are ultimately denied a real say in its operations.

After all, a mere non-profit group in southern California has little power to deal with the most contentious internet issues: child pornography, spam, cross-border gambling, financial scams and the like. But Icaann's defenders retort that these are matters for individual governments to resolve within their own borders, not for an overarching world authority — which, in any case, does not exist.

Alas, however, the US undermined its own case by getting involved in the proposed creation of a new .xxx domain for pornographic sites. Outraged foes of the plan, led by the influential conservative pro-

family lobby in America, bombarded the Department of Commerce with protests, and the department sent a letter to Icaann, urging that the idea be reconsidered. Probably it was going nowhere in any case; even pornography groups objected to it. But the damage was done. The episode was seeming proof of what critics have long maintained, that when push came to shove, America dictated how the internet is managed.

But the European Union has blundered, too, with its endorsement in September of more governmental control. Its proposal, for an international umbrella organisation that would draw up guidelines for domains and routing numbers, was intended as a compromise. Instead, it played into the hands of China, Iran, and others.

Last week, Kofi Annan stepped into the row in person, denying that the Tunis gathering was a dark plot by the world body to gain control. The aim, the UN Secretary-General declared in an article in the *Washington Post*, was merely to "ensure the internet's global reach".

However, the latter had now become so important to every country that "it would be naive to expect governments not to take an interest". His op-ed piece in the *Washington Post* was intended as an olive branch; instead, it merely fanned the fears of Coleman and America's other UN-phobes.

The worst-case scenario is that the Information Society Summit ends in disagreement, with the USA alone against the rest. This would create the prospect of separate countries or regions going their own ways, setting up parallel systems and generating only fragmentation, duplication and chaos.

Surely common sense will prevent such an outcome. But it is equally obvious that things cannot go on as they are. Some decision on Icaann's own future must be taken as soon as next year.

Either some fig-leaf of international supervision must be devised, or the entire problem will have to be kicked into the long grass — perhaps by the creation of some new bureaucratic forum that would spend years examining the issue while today's arrangements quietly continued. Once upon a time, "benign neglect" was a lousy way for the USA to run the dollar. But for the internet that approach has worked just fine.

— *The Independent*.

# Internet governance and development

**N**early two years after the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) took up the question in Geneva, the international community is yet to arrive at a consensus on creating a framework to manage the Internet. All countries today recognise the fundamental and growing role of the Internet as a facilitator of governance, commerce, and communication. Many nations want a multilateral model of management for the Internet and also see a role for themselves in it. Their demand has grown stronger since the Geneva summit, much to the disappointment of the United States, which is attempting to retain its historical control of ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers), the apparatus that controls the assigning of addresses and names to domains such as ".org" and ".com". Though it may be slow in coming, change appears to be inevitable. The European Union has now broken ranks with the U.S. to support the view that an alternative administrative structure is needed. U.S. opposition to a global cooperative model for Internet governance is on weak ground since it rests mainly on its apprehension that the "root servers" at the core of the Net, which make it possible to operate the domain name system, may be rendered insecure. America has also discounted suggestions for the handing over of this essentially non-profit and technical function to an appropriate agency under the United Nations. Such opposition is unlikely to convince China, India, Brazil and resource-poor countries that will press for a wider, development-oriented role for the Internet at the November meeting of the WSIS in Tunis.

The widely publicised debate on control of the Internet has unfortunately overshadowed discussions on several key challenges that countries must overcome to bridge the digital divide. The Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) set up in Geneva has identified critical areas for action: reduction of Internet access costs for countries located away from international network backbones; standardised protocols for stability and security of the Net; recognition of the right to freedom of expression; data protection and privacy; consumer rights; and encouragement of multilingualism. The World Summit has also acknowledged that many countries need help to build the capacities necessary to use the Internet for improved delivery of healthcare, education, and citizen services. Any effort to overcome such severe constraints requires active assistance from a multilateral body equipped with the requisite resources. The WSIS agenda for the Tunis summit rightly emphasises such concerns. National governments must heed its call to all stakeholders – the administration, the private sector and civil society – to share ideas, technological solutions and resources towards this unified vision of progress. The least that they should hope to achieve at Tunis is the creation of a permanent global forum that will aid countries in the use of Internet and information technologies for development.

# Gyanendra presses ahead with curbs on media



King Gyanendra

## Statesman News Service

Oct. 22. — Within a fortnight of clamping down fresh curbs on the media, Nepal's government this week swooped down on the largest media house, seizing transmission equipment in a late-night raid.

Policemen went to the office of *Kantipur FM*, the radio station run by Kantipur Publications that also runs several print mediums, and delinked it from

its relay station in eastern Nepal. The night raid followed an afternoon visit by security forces and government officials to the radio station with the same mandate. However, they withdrew after journalists and civil society members, including senior opposition leaders, gathered at the office to show support.

The raid came on the eve of the FM station's seventh anniversary. Kantipur has been one of the most out-

spoken critics of the royal coup in February when King Gyanendra seized power and installed royalists as ministers. It has been consistently exposing rights violations and corruption in the new regime and earlier this year, reported receiving threats. The government says *Kantipur FM* has been violating the decree by the king on 9 October that forbids any electronic media from simultaneous transmission

from more than one place. With the relay station in eastern Nepal, *Kantipur FM* had been airing its programmes in the east as well. Earlier this week, Communications Corner, and a radio network in Hong Kong was told by its satellite link provider that the connection would be withdrawn. The action is believed to be dictated by the government whose displeasure with the agency stems from an earlier inter-

view it did with underground Maoist leader and spokesman Mr Krishna Bahadur Mahara.

The Kantipur raid came even as hundreds of journalists took out a rally in Kathmandu, vowing to defy the new media ordinance.

A day before, *Reporters Sans Frontieres* published its World Press Freedom Index for 2005 where Nepal ranked 160th among 167 countries.



# Cabinet okays 17 proposals

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 20.—The Cabinet today approved a slew of proposals, including modification in raising of sectoral cap for FDI in telecom sector and a review of the uplinking policy for news and current affairs TV channels.

"A total of 17 proposals were cleared by the Cabinet," the I&B minister, Mr Jaipal Reddy, said at the end of the meeting chaired by the Prime Minister.

The Cabinet had on 2 February approved raising the FDI cap in telecom from 49 per cent to 74 per cent. Today, the Cabinet approved certain modifications and relaxation to allow Indian public sector banks and Indian public sector financial institutions to be treated as "Indian" holdings.

In another major decision, the Cabinet approved the uplinking and downlinking guidelines, which were finalised by the Group of Ministers.

News channels earlier required event-based permissions. Now, only a permission with a pre-designated teleports needs to be sought, Mr Reddy said.

The applicant company must operationalise the channel within one year of the date the permission is granted.

TV channels and teleports would be permitted to uplink in Ku Band through Indian satellites only, subject to it being not being used to run or operate DTH service without proper licence.

The ceiling on foreign equity holding for the news and current affairs channels remains to be 26 per cent of the paid-up equity of the applicant company. However, the entity making portfolio investment in the form of FII or NRI deposits shall not be "persons acting in concert" with FDI investors as defined by the SEBI.

While calculating the foreign equity, the foreign holding component, if any, in the equity of the Indian shareholders would be duly reckoned on a pro-rata basis, so as to arrive at the total foreign holding in the applicant company.

Among the other proposals cleared is for the renaming of Varanasi airport after late Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. This is part of the centenary celebrations.

21/10/2005

# NDA 'saffronised' Bollywood: Benegal

## PATRIOTISM OR JINGOISM?

Press Trust of India

ALIGARH, Oct. 4. — Bollywood reflected the Saffron agenda during the NDA regime, popularising a misconception by tying Pakistan and Muslims on a single string, eminent filmmaker Shyam Benegal said here today. "Saffronisation of the polity during late 1990s was sharply reflected in popular Hindi cinema made in that period. Some of the Hindi films made during that period displayed an intransigence where Pakistan and Muslims are made synonymous," he said while delivering the annual Sir Syed Memorial Lecture at Aligarh Muslim University.

Speaking on "Secularism and Indian Popular Cinema," the well-known pro-Left director said: "Nationalism, and by implication secularism, was considerably narrowed down and made an exclusive preserve of the Hindu community." "You can see this in JP Dutta's hit film *Border*. Excessive jingoism is even more crudely

depicted in another film, *Gadar*," Benegal, whose latest film on Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose kicked up another kind of a controversy, said.

However, Benegal said, the same period also gave rise to successful films like *Lagan*, *Fiza* and *Bombay* which equated an "inclusive secular unity with nationalism". The filmmaker, who was among the pioneers of the "new wave" of cinema in the country, said the horrific riots in Gujarat "aided by the non-action of the State" had threatened to dangerously divide the polity and the entire edifice of the Indian society. Urging filmmakers to confront the challenges faced by the Indian society, Benegal said: "Imaging of the minorities in popular cinema constitutes an excellent barometer of the attitudes in the cinema. It can easily be considered the coal miners' canary of Indian society." Benegal also expressed hope that the UPA government would "now herald a fresh outlook" in popular cinema which would promote values based on social justice and communal harmony.



This, he felt, could play a constructive role in undoing the damages done to the society by the riots in Gujarat. "If the minorities in any society is insecure, then it cannot be considered a healthy society," Benegal concluded.

31 AUG 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Ransom fixed over Net, paid via ATM

**RAHUL Das**

Kolkata, August 30

RANSOM DEALS in the chat room, payment on the ATM — kidnappers have never been more cyber-savvy. Their latest modus operandi should give some food for thought to the Centre, which has set out to crack down on IT crimes.

When the kidnappers of two insurance officials recently drew their ransom on the ATM, they never faced any danger of being traced. The money was paid into the hostages' accounts, not theirs. They had simply snatched

the hostages' ATM cards and asked for the PIN. They then invited the victims' families into a chat room and instructed them to pay into these accounts.

The cards and the PIN gave them access to the money anywhere. Bajaj Allianz Insurance Company officials Rakesh Shankar and Prem Prakash had been kidnapped from Patna on August 12, the ransom deposited in their hometown, and the money withdrawn from ATMs in Bangalore, Mumbai and Hyderabad.

The first step was to get the families into the chat room. The kidnappers had asked the

asked for the ransom to be paid into the hostages' accounts.

"After withdrawing the money, they freed manager Shankar and sales manager Prem Prakash in Patna," senior SP N.H. Khan said from Bihar.

There also was a Kolkata connection. "They chatted with the hostages' families through a server based in Kolkata," DGP (Bihar) Ashish Ranjan Sinha said.

The server was identified too late. The kidnappers knew the process is tedious and had enough time to travel elsewhere.

"It was a novel method," DC (DD-1) Gyanwant Singh admitted.



hostages for their relatives' e-mail IDs and then sent mails to the families, setting a date on a chat site. During the chat, they

REDDY MULLS MEDIA REGULATORY BODY

# Central notice to 14 channels

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, Aug. 8. — Sharing MPs' concern over the "gory contents" appearing in TV channels, the Centre said it had served notices to 14 channels and temporarily suspended up-linking facility of a broadcaster to check the trend.

I&B minister Mr Jaipal Reddy today indicated the possibility of a media regulatory authority on the lines of the Press Council of India but "with some teeth".

Replying to a Calling Attention motion in the Rajya Sabha, led by Congress member, Mr Anand Sharma, the minister said the authority must be credible and seen to be judicious, with either a sitting judge or retired justice from the Supreme Court heading it. "Members in both Houses across the spectrum have

expressed the need for a regulatory authority," the minister added.

Mr Reddy did not name the channels which had been served notice but said it had been made clear to them that they must strictly abide by programme and advertising code guidelines. He said in another case "an offending news and current affairs channel" was asked to telecast a warning issued to it by the I&B ministry for a period of three days.

Members cutting across party lines expressed concern at the adverse effect of TV programmes and media content on the state of mind of children and adolescents in the country. While self regulation was the best, there had to be some form of check on the media, particularly electronic, which broadcast programmes that had a detrimental effect on impressionable young minds.

"Media is a very sensitive subject with two competing priorities," Mr Reddy responded. "On one side is the inalienable freedom of media. There is concern on the other hand, of the salutary impact on society." The issue, he added, was a universal one and a "classic dilemma".

Mr Reddy referred to the exploding technology, which made it possible to bring detailed and gory pictures to the public. However, the same technology can be tapped to invent new methods to install filters. In India, such filters had not been fully developed.

Maintaining that censorship could only work up to a point, the minister said at the end of the day, parents could not escape responsibility. In this he reflected the sentiment of the House, as members spoke of various means to block such programmes.

**SECURITY** ■ Breach 'not major', but Defence to revive exercise to secure computers

# Navy orders probe into e-leak

SHIVAROOR

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 1

**W**ITH the Navy inquiring into a security breach of one of its high-security computers two weeks ago, the Defence Ministry has decided to revive a long-postponed exercise to secure all its computers with new generation upgraded encryption and security systems.

Top South Block sources told *The Indian Express* today that the new Defence Secretary Shekhar Dutt had "taken a very serious view" of the security lapse at the Navy Operations Room earlier this month and would "direct some MoD funds towards securing South Block computers better". Although it admitted that there had

been a security breach in one of its Headquarters computer systems, the Navy debunked reports that the information accessed was of an operationally sensitive nature.

Dismissing reports that information may have been leaked to groups with Pakistani ties, the Navy said the lapse was minor and, if at all, may have been passed on to parties interested in selling equipment to the government.

Naval HQ has ordered a board of inquiry to investigate the lapse, which it suspects may have allowed non-inflammatory data about the parameters of its acquisition procedure to reach commercially interested individuals or companies.

"One of the information apparently accessed pertains to operational fleet plans or submarine movements," the

spokesperson said. Sources said the information apparently accessed was still being investigated, though the board of inquiry, headed by a Rear Admiral, is understood to have already communicated to the Naval top brass that the lapse would just need a more stringent "information movement monitoring system" and even better encryption systems to safeguard even non-inflammatory data.

Under the Defence Ministry's revamp plan, the terminals used by the three Armed Forces chiefs could also be up for a "health check-up".

Most "low-security" computer terminals at South Block are stand-alone systems with access to the internet at the very most. However, specialised networked terminals like those in the Ops Rooms of the three Armed

Forces are reinforced with encryption algorithms that generate access codes after a stipulated period. These codes are known only to authorised officers and shared on a sanctioned "need to know" basis strictly within the force and up to a certain level—operational data is never allowed to remain on their hard drives.

Top sources said there was technology in the market now that had progressed far ahead of what South Block systems are currently protected by.

"There have been some minor lapses in the past, one with the IAF as well, though that was solved quickly and found to be nothing major. There is no real guarantee, but there is a definite need to make theft of any information, sensitive or normal, impossible," the South Block official said.

12 AUG 2002

EX-100

# Journalists injured in Srinagar attack

## Two militant organisations claim responsibility for the strike

Shujaat Bukhari

**SRINAGAR:** In an attack in the heart of the city on Friday, militants killed one person and injured 14 others, including seven journalists.

### Grenades hurled

Around 5 p.m. when the Budshah Chowk area was bustling with life, the militants hurled a grenade on a police vehicle, which caught fire. They followed it up with indiscriminate firing. Police and Border Security Force (BSF) personnel, posted

in the area in large numbers, retaliated.

### Gun fire

As the city centre reverberated with the sound of gunfire, people ran helter-skelter to save themselves. Five civilians and a policeman were injured. "Please save me. I have lost my leg," a civilian cried.

Another grenade exploded as mediapersons arrived on the scene to cover the incident. Ejaz Ahmed and Aamir Ahmed (ANI), Manzoor Ahmed (India TV), Muzamil Rashid (Srinagar Mail),

was admitted to hospital after he sustained bullet injuries in his abdomen. Staffers of

*The Hindu*, who were also present, had a miraculous escape.

Senior police officials, including Inspector General of Police (Kashmir zone) Javed Mukhdoomi, rushed to the area to supervise operations. The militants, believed to be two in number, took shelter in nearby buildings and engaged security forces in a gunfight, that continued till late in the night.

### Area sealed off

BSF Deputy Inspector General K. Srinivasan said that the area had been sealed off and that the security forces were trying to close in on the militants. "We

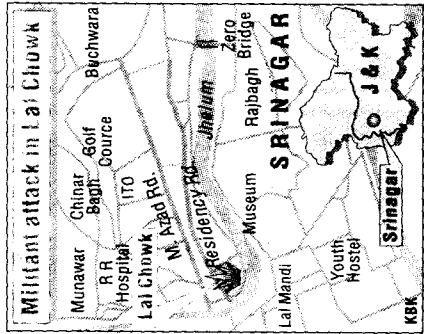
have evacuated the civilians to ensure that they are not caught in the crossfire."

He said that one BSF jawan had been killed and two others injured.

The entire area had been sealed off and heavy deployment of BSF and Special Operation Group (SOG) of J & K Police had been made.

Sources said that the operation could be suspended till morning. Special commandos had been brought in for flushing out the militants.

Two militant outfits, Al Mansoorian and Jamiat-ul Mujahideen, have claimed the responsibility for the attack in separate statements to a local news agency.



Firdous Ahmed (Zee Kashmir) and Amir Hussain (Subhe Kashmir) sustained injuries and were shifted to hospital. Sahara TV cameraman Muzaffar Ahmed

30 JUL 2005

THE HINDU

CR IRANI PASSES AWAY

# END OF AN ERA

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, July 23. — Cushrow Russy Irani, Chairman of the Board of Directors of The Statesman Ltd. and Editor-in-Chief of this newspaper, died today. He was 74.

Mr Irani had been moved to the Rabindranath Tagore International Institute for Cardiac Sciences on 5 July following indisposition. He remained in the ICU for 18 days, fighting an uphill battle for his life. The end came at 4.15 p.m. with his family around him.

Over a span of 37 years, Mr Irani, who had joined The Statesman as Managing Director in 1968, fought fiercely to ensure that this newspaper remained independent and immune to external influences. In 1991, he took over as Editor-in-Chief. In 2003, he stepped down from the post of Managing Director but agreed to head the board of directors as Chairman.

Mr Irani was at the helm of affairs in The Statesman during tumultuous times. He is best remembered for his role during the Emergency, imposed by Mrs Indira Gandhi, when this newspaper was happy to be part of a miniscule minority that resisted assaults on the freedom of the Press. A decade later, he was in the vanguard of the movement to resist Rajiv Gandhi's infamous Defamation Bill.

In nearly four decades in journalism, there were few positions of distinction that Mr Irani did not occupy. He was chairman of the International Press Institute in 1980-81 and in 1990-91, and the first Indian to hold this position. He was twice chairman of the Press Trust of India, and at the time of his death had been a member of its board for two decades. He was vice-president of the World Press Freedom



Committee, a member of the advisory board of the International Center for Journalists, and a member of the Governing Board of the Advertising Standards Council of India.

Earlier, he had served as president of the Indian Newspaper Society, chairman of the Audit Bureau of Circulation, member of Unesco's advisory group on Press freedom and as member of the jury to select the winners of the prestigious Unesco/Guillermo World

Press Freedom Prize from 1997 to 2000.

Mr Irani was also a member of the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution of India.

In 1977, and to recognise The Statesman's and his role in resisting the Emergency imposed by Mrs Indira Gandhi, Mr Irani was given the Freedom Award by Freedom House, New York, and the Astor award of the

## 1930~2005

Commonwealth Press Union for "distinguished service in the cause of press freedom". In 1983, he was made a Knight Commander of the Order of Isabella Catholica by the King of Spain for "highest loyalty to democracy".

Mr Irani wrote several books, including *Bengal — the Communist challenge*; *Pax Americana — the war that lost Iraq its freedom*; *Ayodhya — Demolishing a Dream* and *In*

*Pursuit of Freedom*. Four compilations of his widely-read column, *Caveat*, have also been published.

Born on 29 October 1930, Mr Irani spent his early years in Mumbai, and studied in that city's St Xavier's College and Government Law College. But for nearly five-and-a-half decades, he was a Kolkatan, both fiercely proud of and intensely possessive about the city he chose to call home.

Mr Irani is survived by his wife, Threety, three daughters and six grandchildren.

## LOADED NOTES



# Where ringtones serve as killer codes

**RAHUL Karmakar**  
Guwahati, July 19

IF *BHEEGE honth tere...* doesn't make you die for Mallika Sherawat's body, its ringtone avatar very well can — though under altogether different circumstances.

Banned underground outfits in the Northeast have discovered mobile ringtones based on popular Bollywood — a few local ones too—numbers as an effective communication tool. Subversive messages are conveyed through these ringtones and tasks are accomplished without tapping and jamming specialists getting any wind.

The modus operandi, police say, is simple: Field operatives of militant outfits are SMS-ed a certain ringtone for a specific operation. The receiver downloads the ringtone in his or her handset and plays it to know when, where and how to strike.

For instance, the *Dum maro dum* ringtone could be the go-ahead for a few strategic blasts while *Babuji dheere chalna* could mean, "lie low". A mix of such old and new Bollywood hit songs was found in the handset of an

Ulfa explosives specialist named Utpal Das, who died here in an encounter last month. "There were at least a dozen downloaded ringtones, each possibly conveying a message. But it's difficult to say which was the code for which specific assignment," a senior police official said.

The handset found on Das had led the cops to Sangeeta Medhi, sales agent for a private mobile service provider, who had issued six other SIM cards against fictitious names — all believed to be Ulfa operatives. A few ringtones were SMS-ed to Das' handset from a couple of these six mobiles.

The police believe the militants have switched to ringtone signals since conversations on cell phones can be recorded. "SMS-ing a ringtone can seem to be an innocuous thing and is absolutely risk-free," the official said.

Notably, Ulfa had earlier devised a clever way of communicating with its cadres. They would relay a series of Assamese folk stories entitled *Burhi Aair Khadhu* (old lady's tales) via radio transmitters, and cadres would get the message.

20 JUL 2017

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES



# Salman takes voice test

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

**Mumbai, July 17:** Mumbai police today questioned Salman Khan and recorded his voice three days after the purported phone conversation between him and Aishwarya Rai was reported in the media.

The police are likely to summon Rai, too, for questioning and collect her voice sample.

Transcripts and audio clips of the conversation — apparently tapped by the police and reported by the media — show a man addressed as “Salman Khan” abusing and threatening a woman he refers to as “Ash”.

To shield Salman from the media, which has been camping at the Crawford Market police headquarters, the police summoned him to the crime intelligence unit of the crime branch at Andheri today.

Officers refused to give any details of the three-hour grilling, but Khan’s lawyer Dipesh Mehta said: “Salman completely cooperated with the police during the interrogation and gave his voice sample.”

The sample will be mat-

ched with the tapes played on television. The police have two days to tell deputy chief minister R.R. Patil, who holds the home portfolio, if the tape is genuine. Patil is likely to make a statement in the Assembly on July 20.

Police sources revealed that the crime branch has tapes of Salman’s conversations with various female actors, but none of any between him and the underworld dons mentioned in the controversial tape.

The man in the tape says he works as pointsman for Dawood Ibrahim and knows Chhota Shakeel, Chhota Rajan, Guru Satam and Abu Salem.

He claims he “had full information about every one of the bomb blasts”, which some have linked to the March 12, 1993, serial explosions.

The sources, however, refused to confirm if the tapping had been illegal.

Under the law, a proposal to tap a mobile or landline phone must come from a deputy commissioner and be cleared by the joint commissioner, the police commissioner and the home department.

# Cyber security a big challenge: Nasscom

Statesman News Service

CHANDIGARH, July 15. — Cyber security and privacy is the greatest challenge for the IT professionals in the country today, said Mr Kiran Karnik, president, Nasscom.

Participating in the two day mega IT event that began here he said data security and protection, are major concerns with the companies outsourcing their work to India. This is because it is the responsibility of the IT industry here to ensure security as an ethical responsibility. He

Nasscom is sensitizing the police and the judiciary on this issue to set up world class Gold Standards for security for IT services

sensitizing the police and the judiciary on this issue to set up world class Gold Standards for security just as we have developed Gold Standards for our IT services.

He pointed out that the second most challenging task before the IT industry was to have the quality human resources for which Nasscom has signed an MoU with the UGC

together with the

potential to develop the local market to enable and empower the common citizens", he said. He requested the state governments to create an enabling environment, set up incubation facilities, offer grants and other supporting infrastructure for the IT entrepreneurs.

He also said that Nasscom had been looking at development of alternate locations in the country to spread the benefits of IT, as well as tap the talent in newer areas.

He expressed happiness that Chandigarh has been joined by two other states of Panjab and Haryana in developing a tri-city metro in this region, just

like NCR around Delhi. He commended Chandigarh administration for being e-ready region in the country today and emerging as a leader.

However, he recommended the need for more speedy and better connectivity with Delhi and other parts of the country through more air connections, upgraded airport facilities, and even putting into place a rapid transit system.

This is not only essential for the growth of the industry but also for tourism promotion in the neighbouring state of Himachal Pradesh, MrKarnik said.

16 JUL 2005

THE STATESMAN

# First the tapes, now a picture

**RAJNISH Sharma**  
New Delhi, July 15

INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES do not think Salman Khan is bragging about his underworld connections. They believe him. And wonder why the Mumbai police did nothing about the many alerts sent to them about this.

One intelligence agency advised Mumbai police in 2002 to place Salman on their watch-list. The immediate provocation was the actor's presence at a party hosted by Dawood Ibrahim in Dubai.

On the tapes of his conversation with Aishwarya Rai — first revealed by *HT* — Salman says he knows Dawood, Chhota Shakeel and Chhota Rajan.

In one conversation he tells Aishwarya, "Underworld people call me up. I am their main man in Bombay." Then, he says: "I know Abu Salem, Chhota Shakeel, Dawood and Chhota Rajan." Then the big brag: "Do you know the underworld is controlled by me?"

That's a boast. Intelligence agencies believe the underworld controls him.

Going back to that Dubai bash, there are pictures of the actor with with Noora, Dawood's younger brother who reportedly controls the D-Company's narcotics, film financing and construction operations. Dawood was of course present at this party, and so was Chhota Shakeel.

It could not be confirmed whether the picture obtained by *HT* (and reproduced above) was sent to Mumbai police. But they were told that Salman did not only put in an appearance at the party but enjoyed Dawood's hospitality through his Dubai stay.

More on Page 4

A protester pulls down a poster of a Salman Khan movie in the city on Friday.

PHOTO: SUBHANKAR CHAKRABORTY



**HT EXCLUSIVE**

**FREEZE FRAME:** Salman Khan with Noora, Dawood Ibrahim's younger brother, at a party in Dubai in 2002.



presents

# Salman kyun kiya



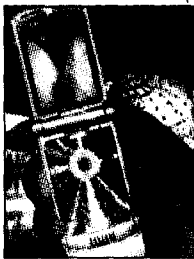
# MMS porn sexes up cell cos' figures

By Manu Joseph/TNN

**Mumbai:** When it comes to pornography, men are socialists. They believe in its free and benevolent distribution. This sentiment, today, is best favored by multimedia messaging service (MMS) which transfers photographs or video images from cell phones to other cell phones or from computer terminals to cell phones.

The video of Mallika Sherawat's alleged look-alike having sex with a white man has spread so fast and so famously that cell phones are emerging as the future of slander.

Just a few months ago, the clip of a schoolgirl being nice to her boyfriend, shot by a phone camera, found its way to auction site baazee.com. Photographs of unsuspecting girls bathing or in various stages of nudity are regularly passed on from phone to phone as fast as chain mails.



"Such images are taken for fun or to get back at a girl who probably rejected the boy. It's a cause of concern," says additional commissioner of police Hemant Nagale. "Any person who sends an obscene MMS can be arrested under Section 292. The origin of the MMS too can be sourced from the logs of the service provider."

The only gainers of MMS porn are grateful boys and mobile phone service providers. Today in India, MMS messages are believed to be less than 1% of the total number of text messages sent. But on days when a porn clip, either of an innocent girl or a willing actress, is the rage, the traffic increases dramatically. With most service providers charging Rs 3 to Rs 5 per MMS transfer, the money is not insignificant. The success of text messaging is a pointer to the prospects of MMS.

► Are service providers planting porn messages? Page 12

15 JUL 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

# News & NGOs to stay out of FM

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, July 13: The Centre today liberalised norms for investment by private FM radio that will now span the length and breadth of the country with an estimated 336 stations to begin in 90 cities and towns.

Foreign direct investment will be allowed up to 20 per cent but news and current affairs on FM radio will continue to be a no-no.

The policy to liberalise investment in FM radio was cleared by the cabinet on June 30 but the rules were notified by the Union information and broadcasting ministry today.

The 336 FM radio stations that are expected to start in the second phase of the FM radio expansion programme have been divided in four categories.

In the metros — Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta and Chennai — a company bidding for an FM radio licence must have a minimum net worth of Rs 3 crore. A firm wanting to set up a chain of FM radio stations across the country would need to have a minimum net worth of Rs 10 crore. At the lowest end, in the D category, an FM licencee must have a net worth of Rs 50 lakh.

Ministry sources said proposals had been received for news and current affairs programmes but the home ministry had advised against allowing such programming in the absence of a monitoring mechanism.

The norms also forbid religious and political organisations, advertising agencies and non-government organisations from bidding for licences.

The information and broadcasting ministry said the permission for FM radio stations will be granted on the basis of one-time entry fees quoted by bidders under a closed tender system. This is a departure from the policy for the first phase of FM radio programming where fees were quoted under an open bidding system.

Bidding will be conducted in Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta and Chennai and the dates will be notified later.

The government will charge an annual fee at the rate of 4 per cent of gross revenue or 10 per cent of the reserve one-time entry fee, whichever is higher. An applicant will be allowed to run only one channel per city.

On foreign investment, the policy allows FIIs to pick up not more than a 20 per cent stake in Indian FM licence holding companies.

# Salman Khan threatened Aishwarya: media report

**Deshmukh says there will be an inquiry**

Prachi Pinglay

MUMBAI: Salman Khan is back in the news, and as usual, for the wrong reasons. Even as he prepares to stand trial in a hit-and-run case, a media report that appeared on Wednesday morning suggests his involvement in murkier issues.

The report excerpted the transcript of a taped conversation purported to have taken place between Khan and fellow Bollywood actor Aishwarya Rai, in which he threatens her with dire consequences unless she performs for the Dubai-based gangster Abu Salem.

In the conversation, allegedly taped in August 2001, a male voice, said to be Khan's, boasts of his associations with the underworld, talks of the pressure under which he acted in the film 'Chori Chori Chupke Chupke,' and even mentions his alleged foreknowledge of the Mumbai blasts of 1993. A female voice, said to be Rai's, warns him that his telephone is tapped and accuses him of being drunk. The conversation, generously peppered with swear words, has caused a stir among the media, the police and the people of Mumbai.

This is only the latest in a series of trysts with notoriety that have found Salman Khan on the wrong side of the law. Apart from the hit-and-run case in Mumbai (in which one person was killed and four injured), he is also being judicially tried for a 1998 case of poaching, when he is alleged to have killed a black buck using unlicensed arms. Complaints of misbehaviour have been made against him, in the recent past, after he is said to have threatened Aishwarya Rai and actor Vivek Oberoi. Khan has also been summoned as a witness in high-profile cases such as the Gulshan Kumar murder and the matter of film financier Bharat Shah's involvement with the underworld.

## Mixed reactions

With regard to the present tape, however, there are mixed reactions from legal experts and police officials. Ujjwal Nikam, special public prosecutor in many high-profile cases,

**"Voice samples of both the parties will have to be taken and a spectrography test conducted. However, such tapes are weak evidence"**

says, "It will have to be verified if the tapes are genuine. Voice samples of both the parties will have to be taken and a spectrography test has to be conducted. However, such tapes are weak evidence, as there is a possibility of mimicry. Legally speaking, it is weak evidence."

Deputy Commissioner of Police Dhananjay Kamlakar on Thursday told the media that the police will verify the authenticity of the four-year-old tape, and that they are checking their records. A senior police official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said: "If the tapes were in the possession of the police, and not produced or acted upon, then strict action can be taken. But one must see whether the tapes were with the police, or it is an external recording and so on. Nothing can be said at the moment."

Under Section 39 of Cr.P.C., it is mandatory for anyone who has knowledge of such a taped conversation to inform the nearest police station immediately. Thus, experts say, it must be asked why this information has been kept under wraps for four years, especially when the trial against Bharat Shah and Nazim Rizvi was going on in the Special Court.

When the issue was raised in the Maharashtra Legislature, Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh said there would be an inquiry. The BJP has demanded an investigation into Khan's alleged underworld links and foreknowledge of the Mumbai blasts.

Advocate Dipesh Mehta, representing Salman Khan, has termed this conversation as fabricated. There has been no statement from Salman Khan or Aishwarya Rai. Nor has there been any formal complaint by Rai in the last four years regarding this conversation.

15 JUL 2005

THE HINDU

# Foreign funds, 330 FM channels

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, June 30

THE GOVERNMENT will open up radio broadcasting services to foreign radio channels, but retain the 20 per cent foreign investment cap.

I&B minister S. Jaipal Reddy announced on Thursday that bidding for 330 radio stations spread across 90 cities by private companies would open next week. Kolkata can have up to 10 of these. Tender documents, letters of intent, grant of permission agreements and other documents as well as norms were ready, Reddy said.

Though the new private FM radio channels will not have any news content as of now, Reddy did not rule out the possibility of allowing news broadcast by them in future. "We have not made up our minds on this," he said.

Till now, only NRIs, foreign in-

## Freeing the airwaves

- \* Bidding for 330 broadcasting channels in 90 cities to open next week
- \* Foreign radio channels can pick up stake in domestic broadcast firms within 20% cap
- \* No single company can own more than one channel in a city.
- \* Broadcasting companies will have to pay a one-time entry fee
- \* FM radio channel owners must



- share 4% revenues with govt
- \* Radio operators in smaller cities given flexibility in terms of networking

stitutional investors and overseas bodies were allowed to invest within the 20 per cent cap. Now, the government has allowed foreign radio channels to pick up equity in Indian FM broadcasting service companies.

The new radio companies will be allowed to enter broadcasting services on payment of one-time

ny will be allowed to take more than one channel in a particular city. In all, no single entity will be able to own more than 15 per cent of the total number of channels allowed.

The existing players will also be required to pay a one-time entry fee that will be equivalent to an aggregate of the fees quoted by new entrants in the same city. A-plus cities like Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai will be allowed 10 FM radio stations.

Those in the A category have been allowed to have six to eight stations each. B-category cities can have six radio channels. C-category cities can have four and D-category cities two.

The AIR-FM channel will beef up its content to take on competition from private players entering cities across the country. Even companies that have gone to court against the government on licensing fee issues will be allowed to bid for new channels.

## PM for tougher cyber law

NEW DELHI, June 29. — Concerned about the alleged selling off of confidential data by a call centre worker, Karan Bahree, the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, today has called for tougher cyber laws even as the IT ministry said a probe is now on to find out "the truth".

Speaking at a high level meeting, convened at his behest, Dr Singh asked the department of information technology and Nasscom to change the cyber laws in the country. "Any breach of secrecy, any illegal transfer of commercial or other privileged information or any other form of cyber crime should be made punishable offences," opined Dr Singh.

Nasscom assured Dr Singh that the Indian BPO industry was committed to highest security standards of data privacy. The Nasscom chief, Dr Kiran Karnik told Dr Singh that the Karan Bahree case might have

been a sting operation to give the \$5.2 billion Indian BPO industry a bad name. The IT secretary, Mr Brajesh Kumar said that the ministry was looking into the case. "We are trying find out the truth. If anybody is found guilty during enquiry, existing laws will be allowed to take its own course. Nobody shall be spared," he said.

An employee of a Gurgaon-based web-marketing firm, Karan has allegedly leaked credit card, banking and other privileged information of many British nationals to an undercover reporter of a London tabloid for \$5,000. The IT worker, however, said he did not know that the information provided by him was classified. His company Infinity e-Search, which has since sacked him, said that Karan, in his explanation letter, had said he was offered a job and \$5,000 by a UK daily in return of some information. — SNS

30 JUN 2005

THE STATESMAN



# Let a thousand filters bloom

Aided by US technology companies, Beijing has tightened its control on information flow over the Internet, writes

REBECCA MACKINNON

In early June in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Chinese trying to create blogs on a Microsoft-hosted service using words like "democracy", "freedom," or "human rights" in the title received a rude reminder: "The title must not contain prohibited language, such as profanity. Please type a different title," said a message.

This warning equating democracy and freedom to profanity marks a new milestone in the continuing battle for free expression in China, with a Western software behemoth openly throwing its weight behind government censors. And this is only the tip of the iceberg.

More insidious than the open restriction on the blogging site is the invisible but fine mesh of censorship that China has installed, thanks to the assistance from leading Western firms. China is now engaged in an even larger investment in technology that would help control what its citizens can read on the web and what they can express. This system of censorship has undermined earlier optimism about the Internet ushering in an era of free expression in China.

How effective is this system? Not 100 per cent, by any means, because tech-savvy users can always find ways around Internet blocks. But experts who have studied China's system conclude that, as far as the Chinese Communist Party is concerned, it is effective enough to be worth the money and effort.

A recent study by the Open Net Initiative (ONI), in conjunction with Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society, reveals an increasingly sophisticated set of mechanisms through which Chinese Internet users are prevented from accessing material deemed off-limits by the Chinese government.

See: <http://www.opennetinitiative.net/studies/china>.

Though government statements emphasise anti-pornography crackdowns, ONI found the primary focus of China's filtering system to be on political content. Public security organs and Internet service providers employ thousands of people - nationwide, at multiple levels - as monitors and censors. Their job is to monitor everything posted online by ordinary Chinese people and to delete objectionable content.

The key to the filtering system, however, is automated technology - equipment and software courtesy of US companies - enabling China's service providers to enter



THE ALL-SEEING EYE: China now boasts invisible, granular Internet censorship to shape citizens' web experiences!

hundreds of thousands of banned keywords and web addresses for automatic blocking.

And this automation is where the true power lies. The Cisco routers sold to China have the ability to block not only the main addresses for websites, but also specific sub-pages while leaving the rest of the site accessible. So, for instance, Chinese censors can allow access to most areas of Stanford University's website, <http://www.stanford.edu>, while blocking a sub-section within that domain, <http://www.stanford.edu/group/falun/>, a page for Stanford's followers of Falun Gong, a religious group banned in China.

The same capability allows access to Google's main search page, while blocking specific search results based on banned keywords or web addresses.

Promotional material for the routers - which can deploy up to 750,000 filters - emphasises the "granularity" of Cisco's filtering capabilities. This granularity of censorship enables China - to a larger degree than previously thought possible - to have its cake and eat it too. China has plugged its citizens into the Internet connectivity they need to trade and

communicate with the world.

But at the same time, the picture of the world as seen by most Chinese Internet users is heavily skewed in the regime's favour. Information showing the Chinese government in a positive light, or at least being responsive to admitted problems, is easily accessed. Critical information exists online, but it is kept at the level of specific complaints and relatively tame localised gripes.

Only the most determined and tech-savvy Internet users will succeed in accessing web pages about Chinese authorities' human rights abuses, or information relating to the Taiwan secession movement. On the other hand, information about Japanese atrocities, US abuses at Abu Gharib, and belligerent vitriol supporting attacks on Taiwan if it declares independence are easily found in Chinese cyberspace.

Thanks in part to this filtered view of the world, nationalism and xenophobia have found fertile breeding ground in Chinese cyberspace, while the pro-democracy movement has not.

China is clearly not sitting on its current success. It has undertaken a massive Internet infrastructure

upgrade with a \$100 million project called ChinaNet Next Carrying Network, or CN2. The project is big business for the companies awarded CN2 contracts: Cisco Systems and Juniper Networks, France's Alcatel, and China's only major player in the Internet router market, Huawei Technologies.

Over the next 12 months, new routers will be installed in 200 cities throughout China. The more state-of-the-art the router, the more "granular" its filtering mechanisms become. Thus, experts predict the new network will enable the Chinese government to control and monitor online speech even more tightly.

Are US companies responsible when the Chinese government deploys their technology to stifle free speech on the Internet? If the Internet is going to change China in the long run anyway, how much does their complicity really matter?

A heated debate continues in the media and in cyberspace: Robert Scoble, a Microsoft employee who maintains a popular technology weblog, rose to his company's defence against a storm of criticism.

"We must comply with the local laws if we want to do business

there," he wrote, claiming to have encountered an "anti-free-speech" stance from students, professors, and officials in China.

Outraged Chinese bloggers called for a boycott of MSN Spaces. One of China's most famous bloggers called Microsoft "evil". A few days later Scoble backed down, admitting that he was wrong. Microsoft as a company, however, has stuck to the following statement: "MSN abides by the laws and regulations of each country in which it operates."

Human rights groups want to hold such companies responsible for facilitating restrictive government policies. Others point out that by hooking China up to the World Wide Web, Cisco has ultimately done much more to expand freedoms in China than to stifle them.

Cisco spokespersons say they are merely selling technology to China and cannot control how it gets used. But the ONI's authors say, "It is unlikely that Cisco would choose not to provide customer support or training for specific functionality of their products."

This spring, US Congressman Christopher Cox re-introduced the Global Internet Freedom Act, legislation that would support the development of technologies to foil attempts by non-democratic governments to "jam" or filter the Internet. The proposed text declares, "The success of United States policy in support of freedom of speech, press, and association requires new initiatives to defeat totalitarian and authoritarian controls on news and information over the Internet."

The Act says nothing, however, about the role played by American technology companies in the creation of these controls - passively or actively. According to ONI, it is difficult to believe that Cisco, Nortel Networks, Sun Microsystems, Juniper, and 3COM do not know how their products will be used by certain customers.

There needs to be greater public examination of exactly how US technology companies are conducting their business. What do they know, and when do they know it? There should be consequences for companies found to be deliberately aiding censorship and political repression.

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30 JUN 2005

THE STATESMAN

## শান্তিযোগ্য হচ্ছে সাইবার অপরাধ, জানাল কেন্দ্র

নয়াদিল্লি, ২৯ জুন: ওয়েবসাইটের তথ্য ফাঁস হওয়া রুখতে এ ধরনের অপরাধকে শান্তিযোগ্য করা হচ্ছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ আজ এ কথা জানিয়েছেন। সম্প্রতি একটি ওয়েবসাইট বিপণন সংস্থার তথ্য পাচার হওয়ার ঘটনারও একইসঙ্গে তদন্তের নির্দেশ দিয়েছে কেন্দ্র। অন্য দিকে, তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি সংক্রান্ত আইন ঢেলে সাজার জন্য আগামী মাসের শেষেই মন্ত্রী দয়ানিধি মারানের কাছে একটি রিপোর্ট পেশ করবে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের বিশেষজ্ঞ কমিটি।

তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি সচিব ব্রিজেশ কুমার জানান, তথ্য পাচারের ক্ষেত্রে দোষী ব্যক্তি কখনওই ছাড়া পাবে না। তবে তদন্ত কবে শেষ হবে, সে ব্যাপারে কোনও সময়সীমা জানায়নি কেন্দ্র।

উল্লেখ্য, গুরগাঁওয়ের ওয়েব বিপণন সংস্থা ইনফিনিটিটি ই-সার্চের মাধ্যমে ব্যক্তিগত ক্রেডিট কার্ড সংক্রান্ত সিডি-র তথ্য ফাঁস হয়ে যায়। সংস্থার জনৈক কর্মী করণ বাহরির মাধ্যমে ব্রিটেনের সংবাদপত্রের জনৈক সাংবাদিকের হাতে তা পৌঁছে যায়। বিনিময়ে ওই সংবাদপত্র করণকে মোটা বেতনে চাকরির প্রস্তাব দিয়েছিল বলে অভিযোগ। সংস্থা ইতিমধ্যেই করণকে বরখাস্ত করেছে।

তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি আইন সংশোধনের ক্ষেত্রে তথ্য সুরক্ষার ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে। কমিটি তাদের রিপোর্টে সেই সুপারিশই জানাবে বলে ইঙ্গিত মিলেছে। কোনও ব্যক্তিগত তথ্য যাতে বাইরে প্রকাশ না হয়, সে ব্যবস্থাও থাকবে নতুন আইনে। — পি টি আই

10 JUN 2005

ANADABAZAR PATENKA

# \$5,000 and a job: That's what hooked Bahree

New Delhi, June 27

GURGAON-BASED IT worker Karan Bahree was promised a job apart from \$5,000 for helping *The Sun's* undercover reporter with information, according to fresh details emerging out of the scam involving leakage of client details of British banks.

On Monday, Infinity e-Search, the company for which Bahree used to work — he has been sacked now — gave details of the letter he wrote to the management. It said Bahree was paid \$5,000 for a "presentation to an UK-based person



called Oliver" at a meeting arranged by a Fayaz Rizvi, who was already working with Oliver.

"I was introduced to a person called Fayaz Rizvi by an acquaintance called Sameer... Fayaz wanted me to give a presentation to a UK person. The UK person was Oliver. Fayaz wanted me to give a presentation about the call centre operation in India and he taught me how to present the information and what I should tell Oliver. He told me do it and collect the payment," Bahree wrote.

"I was told to ask him (for) £3 for each (piece of) information and the total sum which he paid was \$5,000 (Rs 2.15 lakh). We had three meetings and gave the presentation about the process. I gave him the CD provided to me by Sameer," the letter said.

"When the meetings and payments were over, Oliver offered me the role of a consultant for his new call centre in Gurgaon... I was hired only to give a presentation and have nothing to do with this incident."

Infinity e-Search also questioned the authenticity of the sting operation by *The Sun*. It said it could be an attempt to discredit the booming Indian IT and BPO sectors.

PTI

# Kerala bans camera cellphones in educational institutions

Bar on fashion shows, cinematic dances too

*Media 26/7  
110-11*

Special Correspondent

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM:** The Kerala Government has banned fashion shows, cinematic dances and mobile phones with camera facility in educational institutions in the State.

An official press note said here on Saturday that conventional art and cultural programmes could be organised with the approval of the ethics committee of the institutions.

The use of the mobile phone has been banned in schools and higher secondary schools. The

teachers have also been disallowed from taking mobile phones to classes.

In the institutions of higher education, the mobile phones should be switched off in class rooms and within the campuses.

The Government has empowered the heads of the institutions and the ethics committees to take exemplary action against students and teachers who violate the ban.

The head of the department will have the authority to cancel the recognition and take action

against the authorities of institutions which do not enforce the Government order.

The ethics committees will supervise the enforcement of the order and send the monthly report on the tenth of the following month to the State-level committee.

The State committee should submit the consolidated report to the Education Minister on the 15th of the month.

The Minister or secretary-level meeting to review the implementation of the order will be held once in two months.

24 JUN 2005

THE HINDU

## BPO SCANDAL

# Missing link: Source of British bank data

**VIJAY Dutt & Agencies**  
London/New Delhi, June 24

KARAN BAHREE is a junior employee at Infinity eSearch and has no access to sensitive documents. And Infinity has no British banking clients.

So where did Bahree get the account numbers, bank card details, secret passwords and other personal details of 1,000 British bank clients, which he sold to *The Sun* reporter Oliver Harvey? One possible source is contacts at various call centres. British banks suggest that

Bahree may also have got the data from other companies doing business in India, such as mobile phone networks. The London police are trying to make sure.

"Bahree has been working with us as a junior content writer for three months. He had no access to sensitive or confidential data," Infinity lawyer Deepak Masih said.

Bahree (24) had written to the company, saying a person named Sameer approached him, gave him a CD and asked him to make a presentation to Oliver from the UK. Bahree did so and was paid some money,

which he shared with Sameer. "Bahree has not come into office today. He has not been sacked because he hasn't done anything against Infinity. If he does something in his individual capacity, we are not responsible," Masih said.

In London, the police said the probe would try and track the source of the information and pass on the findings to the Indian police.

A spokesman for the Royal Bank of Scotland said the bank was co-operating with the London police, while Barclays Operations said: "We have investigated every piece

of data and it is clear that this could not have come from Barclays Operations. All the indications are that these data have come from a third party."

Halifax would not even confirm if the information was genuine.

If it were found that the information was not leaked by a group of call centre workers, it would help erase the suspicion about the security of information handled by Indian call centres.

Most banks are repeatedly assuring their customers that their details are safe.

# Call centre denies it handled any classified financial information

Employee "admits" he showed a compact disc to a foreigner

Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI:** The company at the centre of the Indian "call centre scam", in which an employee allegedly sold secret information about British bank account holders to an undercover British journalist, on Friday denied that it handled financial information of any kind.

In his reply to the Gurgaon-based company, Infinity e-Search, the employee purportedly admitted that he had shown a compact disc to a foreigner and the money received was shared between him and a go-between, "Sameer".

"We have no bank clients in the U.K. We don't deal with any

• **"We have no bank clients in the U.K."**

• **"Employee does not have access to confidential data"**

• **Company not to initiate disciplinary action against employee**

information that is classified. We are into things like web development," Infinity e-Search Managing Director Rahul Dutt told a press conference in Gurgaon near here. *The Sun*, a British tabloid, had reported that its journalist "bought top-secret in-

formation" on 1,000 accounts from a "crooked" Gurgaon-based call centre employee. It said passwords and addresses were shown to a security expert who claimed that the details were genuine. It also published a photograph of the person alleged to have "sold" the information to a middleman.

The company on Friday said the employee, Kiran Bahree, "admitted" that he had shown a CD to the journalist on a request by Sameer. He was not aware that the information was classified and said he acceded to the request because he knew how to make a "presentation" from a CD. Mr. Dutt said Mr. Bahree joined the company recently. He

denied that the British police had approached the company for information about the "scam".

The company declined to initiate disciplinary proceedings against Mr. Bahree as he had not violated any company procedure.

The company's lawyer, Karan Masih, supported Mr. Dutt's contention that the employee was in a junior position and did not have access to any confidential data. "We learnt about this data theft from the newspapers like everyone else. We have not contacted the police because we are not the complainants. No one has contacted us. We are not hiding and we have nothing to hide."

# তথ্য বেচে কাঠগড়ায় দিল্লির কলসেন্টার

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, কলকাতা ও নিজস্ব প্রতিনিধি, লন্ডন, ২৩ জুন: পুনের পরে এ বারে দিল্লি। সিটি ব্যাঙ্কের ভারতীয় কলসেন্টার থেকে দু'লক্ষ পাউন্ড তহরুপের পরে এ বারে অভিযোগ, মোটা অঙ্কের অর্ধের বিনিময়ে ছদ্মবেশী ব্রিটিশ সাংবাদিকের হাতে বহু গ্রাহকের ব্যক্তিগত তথ্য তুলে দিলেন এক ভারতীয়।

এই চুরি ফাঁস করেছে এক ব্রিটিশ পত্রিকা। এর জেরে প্রলম্ব উঠেছে ভারতীয় কলসেন্টারগুলির বিশ্বাসযোগ্যতা নিয়ে। সংশ্লিষ্ট মহলের আশঙ্কা, যে বিশ্বাসের উপরে গ্রাহকদের যাবতীয় গোপন তথ্য জমা থাকে কলসেন্টারগুলির কাছে, তা নষ্ট হলে ব্যবসা বড় ধাক্কা খেতে পারে। ভারতের অর্থনীতিতে কলসেন্টার বা বিজনেস প্রসেস আউটসোর্সিং (বিপিও) এই মুহূর্তে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ কর্মসংস্থান ক্ষেত্র। ২০০৪-০৫ আর্থিক বছরে ২৫ হাজার কোটি টাকার ব্যবসা করেছে

কলসেন্টারগুলি। এর সঙ্গে জড়িত প্রায় সাড়ে তিন লক্ষ ছেলেমেয়ের ভবিষ্যৎ। পরিস্থিতির বিচারে কপালে ভাঁজ পড়েছে অনেকেরই। সফটওয়্যার সংস্থাগুলির সব থেকে প্রভাবশালী সংগঠন ন্যাসকম জানিয়েছে, অভিজ্ঞ ব্যক্তি কোথা থেকে এই তথ্য পেয়েছে তা তদন্ত করে দেখবে তারা।

দিল্লিতে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় ও অর্থমন্ত্রক সূত্রে অবশ্য বলা হয়েছে, “বিষয়টি বেসরকারি সংস্থার ব্যাপার। আমরা এখনও কিছুই হাতে পাইনি।” বিপরীত দিকে ব্রিটিশ পুলিশ জানিয়েছে, এই ঘটনার তদন্তে তারা ইন্টারপোলের সাহায্য চেয়েছে।

কলসেন্টারগুলির কাছে সংশ্লিষ্ট ব্যবসায়িক সংস্থাগুলির গ্রাহকদের বিস্তারিত তথ্য থাকে। গ্রাহকদের নামধাম, বয়স, টেলিফোন নম্বর, ক্রেডিট কার্ড, ব্যাঙ্ক অ্যাকাউন্ট, জাইভিং লাইসেন্স নম্বর, এমনকী গোপন ‘পাসওয়ার্ড’ পর্যন্ত। ব্যবসায়ী পরিচয়

দেওয়া ব্রিটিশ সাংবাদিকের কাছে এই ধরনের এক হাজার গোপন তথ্য ‘বিক্রি’ করেছে দিল্লির কলসেন্টারের কর্মী এক যুবক। নাম করন বাহরি। প্রতিটি তথ্যের জন্য সে তিন পাউন্ড নিয়েছে।

ভারতে আউটসোর্সিং করে, এমন ব্রিটিশ সংস্থার সংখ্যা কম নয়। এই তালিকায় রয়েছে এইচএসবিসি, বার্কলেস, লয়েড টিএসবি ইত্যাদি। ১৮৩৭ সাল থেকে ইংল্যান্ড ও ওয়েলসের সব বাসিন্দার জন্ম-মৃত্যু-বিয়ের তথ্য নিয়ে ব্রিটিশ প্রশাসন তৈরি করছে জনতথ্যভাণ্ডার। এটি তৈরি হবে ভারতেই। এমপি থেকে ফ্রেড ইউনিয়ন নেতা, রাজনৈতিক মহলের একটি বড় অংশের আপত্তি সত্ত্বেও ব্রিটিশ প্রশাসন এ ব্যাপারে চুক্তি স্বাক্ষর করবে এক পক্ষ কালের মধ্যে। চুরির ঘটনা ফাঁসে এই সংক্রান্ত সব ব্যবসাই ধাক্কা খেতে পারে বলে আশঙ্কা।

ভারতের কলসেন্টারগুলিকে নিয়ে ব্রিটিশ আপত্তিও নতুন নয়। সেই

ক্ষেত্রে যি ঢালল এই কেলেঙ্কারির খবর। এর মধ্যেই ব্রিটিশ ফিনান্স ট্রেড ইউনিয়ন অ্যামিকাস জানিয়েছে, তারা বহু দিন ধরেই এই ব্যাপারে হুঁশিয়ার করছিল স্লেয়ার সরকারকে। হুঁশিয়ারির সব থেকে বড় কারণ, তথ্যের সুরক্ষা নিয়ে ব্রিটেনের মতো নিশ্চয়তা ভারতীয় সংস্থাগুলি দিতে পারে না।

ব্রিটিশ সংস্থাগুলির মধ্যে এই মনোভাব তীব্র হলে ভারতের সমস্যা বাড়বে। বৃশ প্রশাসনও আউটসোর্সিং নিয়ে বিধিনিষেধ আরোপের পথে। যদিও কলকাতার কলসেন্টারগুলি শুধু এই ঘটনার জন্যই ব্যবসা নষ্টের কথা ভাবছে না। তবে তথ্য পাচারের নিন্দা করেছেন সকলেই। ডেসকন সফট-এর সুদর্শন রাধাকৃষ্ণন জানিয়েছেন, “এই ধরনের ঘটনা হওয়া উচিত নয়।” গ্রাহকদের গোপন তথ্যের সুরক্ষার উপরে জোর দিয়ে একই মন্তব্য বি এন কে সলিউশনের ম্যানেজিং ডিরেক্টর অজিত খাণ্ডেলওয়ালেরও।

24 JUN 2005

ANADABAZAR

# UK sting: Delhi call centre worker sold residents' bank info

Media

5/1  
29/6

By Rashmee Roshan Lal/TNN

London: In a massive, real-time PR disaster for the sunshine call-centre sector, Britain is convulsed by claims that a worker in Delhi hawked confidential banking, passport and credit card details of 1000 UK residents whose banks had outsourced tasks to India.

British police said on Thursday that they had launched an investigation into the damaging claims, presented to them as a dossier by the UK's best-selling tabloid The Sun. The tabloid, which set up a sting operation with an undercover reporter Oliver Harvey sweet-talking Delhi call-centre worker Karan Bahree into selling Briton's confidential financial details for as little as £3-a-head, trumpeted the news on Thursday with the headline 'Your life for sale.'

Within hours of the damaging allegations leading the airwaves and water-cooler conversations in thousands of offices up and down the land, there were calls for the Indian authorities to institute fool-proof safeguards to protect Western customers from the greed of



A blow for booming call centre industry?

crooked call-centre workers.

In an assertion thought to bolster the anti-outsourcing campaign led by British trades unions, the strapline on the newspaper story read, 'Indian IT worker offers The Sun thousands of names and bank, passport and credit card numbers all obtained from call centers.' The paper, editorialised with funereal gravity, how crooked computer experts at Indian call centres have created a lucrative market in sensitive information.

Customers of British banks Barclays, Natwest and HSBC are said to have been victimised by the Delhi call-centre worker, who is quot-

ed to boast he could regularly supply the reporter with the confidential details of up to 200,000 British clients a month. But a spokeswoman for Barclays almost instantly picked holes in the story by pointing out that her bank had never sent customers personal details over to India. She said she would be surprised if the company was involved as no personal customer data was held in India.

Even so, Barclays's clarification was barely heard over the growing hubbub of an outraged Britain, grappling on Thursday with the further news that the biggest contracting deal ever to India is to be signed by the UK government by the month-end. The digitization deal will transfer 250 million details of British births, deaths and marriages to India in an attempt to keep Britain's population data updated.

Meanwhile, in an unexpected shot in the arm for Indian call centres, a British police spokesperson admitted the allegations were very serious but that people needed to remember incidents of this kind were still relatively rare.



# 'Patriotic' Gujarat rejects film *Netaji*

RATHIN Das  
Ahmedabad, June 4

THOUGH THE BJP-ruled state government had extended warm patronage to 'patriotic' films such as *Gadar* and *Border*, Shyam Benegal's take on the life of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose has surprisingly generated a lukewarm response in Gujarat.

Last week, the film on Netaji was quietly withdrawn from theatres for want of popular audience, a sharp contrast to the tremendous response films like *Gadar* and *Border* had received in the state.

When *Gadar* and *Border* were released in Gujarat, special screenings of these films were held in the city's multiplexes for the chief minister, his Cabinet colleagues and their family members.

Not only that, these high-profile screenings of *Gadar* and *Border* were well publicised through the state information department's

press releases which also talked about the government's support to patriotic themes.

But no such privilege was extended to Benegal's film though Subhas Bose fits well into the BJP's definition of 'patriotism' that talks of 'cultural nationalism' and Netaji's legacy having been usurped by one political family (read Nehru) that claims sole credit for freedom struggle.

The reason behind the differential responses to films like *Gadar* and *Border* on one hand and Benegal's 'Netaji' on the other, actually lie elsewhere, opine social scientists here.

"The main ingredient of BJP's patriotism in *Gadar* and *Border* was Muslim-bashing in the garb of anti-Pakistan tirade", said eminent social scientist Achyut Yagnik pointing out that, in contrast, Benegal's biopic shows Netaji Subhas Bose marching along with close associate Shahnawaz Khan.



A scene from *Netaji*

JUN 2005

JUN-2005

THE HINDU

# Smoking to be banned in movies, television serials

Amendments to the Tobacco Control Act notified

Staff Correspondent

**NEW DELHI:** Smoking scenes in television serials and movies will be banned from August 1.

The Government on Tuesday notified amendments to the rules and regulations of the Tobacco Control Act seeking a ban on the display of tobacco products or their use by characters in movies and television programmes.

Speaking at a function here on "World No Tobacco Day," Union Health and Family Welfare Minister Anbumani Ramadoss said a high-power committee had been constituted to look into surrogate advertisements.

The amendments had been made to plug the loopholes in the Act. Cropping or masking the brand name or logo of tobacco products in pictures printed or broadcast is also included.

The amendments also ban the sale of products through vending machines and insist on the mandatory display of prominent scroll containing health warning when programmes produced before the notification having scenes with smoking situations and the use of other forms of tobacco are screened.

## Company liable

While the sale of tobacco is banned, there were reports of violations, which will now make the tobacco company liable for penalty.

Only one advertisement board will be displayed at the place of sale of tobacco products.

The display of promotional messages and pictures should be avoided and the board should not be backlit or illuminated.

The committee, consisting of MPs, officials of the Ministry and voluntary organisations, were looking into complaints of surrogate advertisements.

He said a scientific report was being prepared in the Ministry which was examining the content of non-smoking tobacco products and also whether such products could be banned under the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act or the Tobacco Control Act.

The Minister said that the States were empowered to implement the Tobacco Control Act and violations had been brought to the notice of the



**TENDER MESSAGE:** An awareness walkathon on 'No Tobacco Day' in Bangalore on Tuesday. - PHOTO: V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

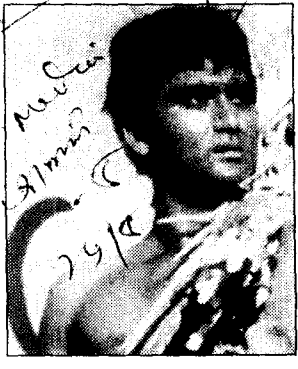
State Governments.

Earlier, addressing the inaugural session of a workshop for health professionals, the Minister defended the Act saying that while the tobacco in-

dustry was worth about Rs. 35,000 crores, the Government and the private sector spent an equal amount treating people suffering from tobacco-related diseases.

01 JUN 2005

THE HINDU



## ঘুমের মধ্যেই চিরনিদ্রায় সুনীল দত্ত

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, মুম্বই, ২৫ মে:  
ঘুমের মধ্যেই চলে গেলেন সুনীল  
দত্ত। ৭৬তম জন্মদিনের মাত্র ১২ দিন  
আগে।

প্রতিদিন সকাল ৭টায় ঘুম থেকে  
ওঠা ছিল তাঁর দীর্ঘ দিনের অভ্যাস।  
কাল অসুস্থ ছিলেন। তাই আজ বাড়ির  
লোকজন তাঁকে বিরক্ত করতে চাননি।  
শেষে ১১টার সময় তাঁরা খোঁজ নিতে  
গিয়ে দেখেন, ঘুমের মধ্যেই হৃদরোগে  
আক্রান্ত হয়ে মৃত্যু হয়েছে তাঁর।  
কালই কানপুর থেকে ফিরেছেন  
সুনীল দত্ত। রাতেই তাঁর সঙ্গে  
কংগ্রেসের বর্ষীয়ান নেতা মুরলী  
দেওয়ার কথা হয়। আজ মুরলী বলেন,  
“সুনীল তখনই অসুস্থ বোধ  
করছিলেন। সম্ভবত উত্তর ভারতে  
প্রচণ্ড গরমে কাজ করতে গিয়ে তিনি  
অসুস্থ হয়ে পড়েছিলেন। সে কারণেই  
দিল্লি না গিয়ে মুম্বই ফিরে আসেন।”

কেন্দ্রীয় ক্রীড়া ও যুবকল্যাণ মন্ত্রী  
সুনীল দত্তের আকস্মিক মৃত্যুতে ফিল্ম  
দুনিয়ার সঙ্গেই সমান খাতা লেগেছে  
রাজনৈতিক মহলেও। কেন্দ্রীয়  
মন্ত্রিসভা এক দিনের রাষ্ট্রীয় শোক  
ঘোষণা করেছে। মৃত্যুর খবর পাওয়ার  
পরেই তাঁর ৫৮ নং পালি হিলের  
বাড়িতে তারকা সমাগম হতে শুরু  
করে। সপরিবার অমিতাভ বচ্চন,  
শাবানা আজমি-জাভেদ আখতার,  
অনিল কপুর, ওম পুরী, অনুপম খের,  
হাজির হন অনেকেই। শেষ যাত্রায়  
সুনীল-পুত্র সঞ্জয় দত্তের সঙ্গে কাঁধ  
লাগান অভিষেক বচ্চনও। দিল্লি থেকে  
আসেন সনিয়া গাঁধী ও প্রধানমন্ত্রী  
মনমোহন সিংহ। শেষকৃত্য সম্পন্ন হয়  
সান্তাক্রুজ শ্মশানে।

১৯২৯ সালের ৬ জুন তাঁর জন্ম  
অবিভক্ত পঞ্জাবের বিলম জেলায় খুর্দ  
গ্রামে। সেই গ্রামটি এখন পাকিস্তানে।  
পাঁচ বছর বয়সে তিনি বাবাকে হারান,  
২৩ বছরে মাকে। দেশভাগের সময়  
ছিন্নমূল হয়ে এসেছিলেন মুম্বইয়ে।  
সেখানে জয় হিন্দ কলেজে পড়াশোনা।  
পাঁচের দশকে রেডিওয় ঘোষকের  
কাজে যোগ দেন। বিখ্যাত ব্যক্তিদের  
সাক্ষাৎকারও নিতে শুরু করেন।

মজার বিষয় হচ্ছে, এখানেই  
নার্গিসের সঙ্গে তাঁর প্রথম পরিচয়।  
নার্গিস তখন বলিউডের চোখ ঝলসে  
দেওয়া তারকাদের অন্যতম। আর  
সুনীল তরুণ বেতারকর্মী। এরও বেশ  
কয়েক বছর পরে ‘মাদার ইন্ডিয়া’য়  
দু’জনে প্রথম বার একসঙ্গে অভিনয়ের  
সুযোগ পান। সুনীল হয়েছিলেন  
নার্গিসের ছোট ছেলে। সেই ছবিরই  
সেটে বিধ্বংসী আগুন থেকে নার্গিসকে  
বাঁচিয়েছিলেন তিনি। ‘মাদার ইন্ডিয়া’র  
কিছু দিনের মধ্যেই তাঁদের বিয়ে হয়।

সুনীল দত্তকে জীবনে বহু বার  
কঠিন পরিস্থিতির মুখে দাঁড়াতে  
হয়েছে। বাবা-মায়ের মৃত্যু, নার্গিসের  
ক্যান্সার, দেশভাগের সময় ছিন্নমূল  
হয়ে এ দেশে চলে আসা এবং পুত্র  
সঞ্জয়। ছেলেকে নিয়ে বার বার  
সমস্যায় পড়েছেন তিনি। প্রথমে  
মাদকাসক্তি, তার পরে ১৯৯৩ সালে  
মুম্বই বিস্ফোরণের পরে সঞ্জয়ের কাছ  
থেকে এ কে-৫৬ রাইফেল পাওয়া  
যায়। টাড়া মামলায় জড়িয়ে পড়েন  
সঞ্জয়। সব ক্ষেত্রেই দায়িত্ববান বাবার  
মতো সুনীল দত্ত ছেলেকে সঠিক পথে  
আনার চেষ্টা চালিয়েছেন। কিন্তু অন্যায়  
করলে ছেলেই শাস্তি পাবে, তিনি  
পাশে থাকবেন না—এই কথা  
বলতেও তাঁর গলা কাঁপেনি।

রেডিওতে কাজ করার সময়ই  
ডাক পান সিনেমায়। ‘৫৫ সালে  
‘রেলওয়ে প্ল্যাটফর্ম’ দিয়ে শুরু।  
দু’বছর পরে ‘মাদার ইন্ডিয়া’ তাঁকে  
নিয়ে আসে সামনের সারিতে। তার  
পরে সাধনা, সুজাতা, ম্যাগ টুপ রহঙ্গি,  
খানদান, পডোশন, হামরাজ, ওয়াক্ত,  
গুমরাহ, জখমি হয়ে যাত্রা শেষ পুত্র  
সঞ্জয়ের সঙ্গে, ‘মুন্নাভাই এমবিবিএস’-  
ছবি দিয়ে।

রাজনৈতিক জীবন শুরু রাজীব  
গাঁধীর সময়ে। ১৯৮৪ সালে উত্তর-পূর্ব  
মুম্বই কেন্দ্র থেকে প্রথমবার  
লোকসভায় নির্বাচিত হন। তার পরে  
‘৮৯, ‘৯১, ‘৯৯ এবং ২০০৪ সালে  
পুনর্নির্বাচিত। এর মধ্যে ছেলের জন্য  
ভোটের দাঁড়াননি ‘৯৬ ও ‘৯৮ সালে।  
মন্ত্রী হয়েছেন ৩ বছর।

26 MAY

DABAZAR PATRIKA

কাল অসুস্থ হলে। তাহ আজ বাড়র  
লোকজন তাঁকে বিরক্ত করতে চাননি।  
শেষে ১১টার সময় তাঁরা খোঁজ নিতে  
গিয়ে দেখেন, ঘুমের মধ্যেই হৃদরোগে  
আক্রান্ত হয়ে মৃত্যু হয়েছে তাঁর।

কালই কানপুর থেকে ফিরেছেন  
সুনীল দত্ত। রাতেই তাঁর সঙ্গে  
কংগ্রেসের বর্ষীয়ান নেতা মুরলী  
দেওরার কথা হয়। আজ মুরলী বলেন,  
“সুনীল তখনই অসুস্থ বোধ  
করছিলেন। সম্ভবত উত্তর ভারতে  
প্রচণ্ড গরমে কাজ করতে গিয়ে তিনি  
অসুস্থ হয়ে পড়েছিলেন। সে কারণেই  
দিল্লি না গিয়ে মুম্বই ফিরে আসেন।”

কেন্দ্রীয় ক্রীড়া ও যুবকল্যাণ মন্ত্রী  
সুনীল দত্তের আকস্মিক মৃত্যুতে ফিল্ম  
দুনিয়ার সঙ্গেই সমান ধাক্কা লেগেছে  
রাজনৈতিক মহলেও। কেন্দ্রীয়  
মন্ত্রিসভা এক দিনের রাষ্ট্রীয় শোক  
ঘোষণা করেছে। মৃত্যুর খবর পাওয়ার  
পরেই তাঁর ৫৮ নং পালি হিলের  
বাড়িতে তারকা সমাগম হতে শুরু  
করে। সপরিবার অমিতাভ বচ্চন,  
শাবানা আজমি-জাভেদ আখতার,  
অনিল কপূর, ওম পুরী, অনুপম খের,  
হাজির হন অনেকেই। শেষ যাত্রায়  
সুনীল-পুত্র সঞ্জয় দত্তের সঙ্গে কাঁধ  
লাগান অভিব্যক্তি বচ্চনও। দিল্লি থেকে  
আসেন সনিয়া গান্ধী ও প্রধানমন্ত্রী  
মনমোহন সিংহ। শেষকৃত্য সম্পন্ন হয়  
সান্তাক্রম শ্মশানে।

১৯২৯ সালের ৬ জুন তাঁর জন্ম  
অবিভক্ত পঞ্জাবের ঝিলম জেলায় খুর্দ  
গ্রামে। সেই গ্রামটি এখন পাকিস্তানে।  
পাঁচ বছর বয়সে তিনি বাবাকে হারান,  
২৩ বছরে মাকে। দেশভাগের সময়  
ছিন্নমূল হয়ে এসেছিলেন মুম্বইয়ে।  
সেখানে জয় হিন্দ কলেজে পড়াশোনা।  
পাঁচের দশকে রেডিওয় ঘোষকের  
কাজে যোগ দেন। বিখ্যাত ব্যক্তিদের  
সাক্ষাৎকারও নিতে শুরু করেন।

মজার বিষয় হচ্ছে, এখানেই  
নাগিসের সঙ্গে তাঁর প্রথম পরিচয়।  
নাগিস তখন বলিউডের চোখ ঝলসে  
দেওয়া তারকাদের অন্যতম। আর  
সুনীল তরুণ বেতারকর্মী। এরও বেশ  
কয়েক বছর পরে ‘মাদার ইন্ডিয়া’য়  
দু’জনে প্রথম বার একসঙ্গে অভিনয়ের  
সুযোগ পান। সুনীল হয়েছিলেন  
নাগিসের ছোট ছেলে। সেই ছবিরই  
সেটে বিধ্বংসী আগুন থেকে নাগিসকে  
বাঁচিয়েছিলেন তিনি। ‘মাদার ইন্ডিয়া’র  
কিছু দিনের মধ্যেই তাঁদের বিয়ে হয়।

সুনীল দত্তকে জীবনে বহু বার  
কঠিন পরিস্থিতির মুখে দাঁড়াতে  
হয়েছে। বাবা-মায়ের মৃত্যু, নাগিসের  
ক্যানসার, দেশভাগের সময় ছিন্নমূল  
হয়ে এ দেশে চলে আসা এবং পুত্র  
সঞ্জয়। ছেলেকে নিয়ে বার বার  
সমস্যায় পড়েছেন তিনি। প্রথমে  
মাদকাসক্তি, তার পরে ১৯৯৩ সালে  
মুম্বই বিস্ফোরণের পরে সঞ্জয়ের কাছ  
থেকে এ কে-৫৬ রাইফেল পাওয়া  
যায়। টাড়া মামলায় জড়িয়ে পড়েন  
সঞ্জয়। সব ক্ষেত্রেই দায়িত্ববান বাবার  
মতো সুনীল দত্ত ছেলেকে সঠিক পথে  
আনার চেষ্টা চালিয়েছেন। কিন্তু অন্যায়  
করলে ছেলেই শাস্তি পাবে, তিনি  
পাশে থাকবেন না—এই কথা  
বলতেও তাঁর গলা কাঁপেনি।

রেডিওতে কাজ করার সময়ই  
ডাক পান সিনেমায়। ‘৫৫ সালে  
‘রেলওয়ে প্র্যাটফর্ম’ দিয়ে শুরু।  
দু’বছর পরে ‘মাদার ইন্ডিয়া’ তাঁকে  
নিয়ে আসে সামনের সারিতে। তার  
পরে সাধনা, সূজাতা, ম্যাগ চুপ রহস্মি,  
খানদান, পডোশন, হামরাজ, ওয়াক্ত,  
গুমরাহ, জখমি হয়ে যাত্রা শেষ পুত্র  
সঞ্জয়ের সঙ্গে, ‘মুম্বাই এমবিবিএস’-  
ছবি দিয়ে।

রাজনৈতিক জীবন শুরু রাজীব  
গান্ধীর সময়ে। ১৯৮৪ সালে উত্তর-পূর্ব  
মুম্বই কেন্দ্র থেকে প্রথমবার  
লোকসভায় নির্বাচিত হন। তার পরে  
'৮৯, '৯১, '৯৯ এবং ২০০৪ সালে  
পুনর্নির্বাচিত। এর মধ্যে ছেলের জন্য  
ভোটাই দাঁড়াননি '৯৬ ও '৯৮ সালে।  
মন্ত্রী হয়েছেন এ বারেই। পাঁচ বারের  
সাংসদ, কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী, সর্বোপরি চার  
দশকের বেশি চুটিয়ে অভিনয়— সব  
ক’টি পরিচয়েই উজ্জ্বল সুনীল ছিলেন  
খাঁটি মানুষ। তাঁর কাজে, পরিচিতদের  
কথায় তাই ধরা পড়ে।

তিনি ছিলেন দেশভাগে বিধ্বস্ত  
এক জন মানুষ। তাই বার বার দক্ষিণ  
এশিয়ায় শাস্তি চেয়েছেন। শিখ দাঙ্গা  
থেকে মুম্বই দাঙ্গা, বস্তিবাসী থেকে  
বারডাঙ্গার, সব ক্ষেত্রেই তিনি তাঁর  
পথে লড়াই চালিয়েছেন। মৃত্যুর  
কয়েক দিন আগেই উত্তরপ্রদেশের  
দরিদ্র বিধবার মেয়ের বিয়েতে ২৫  
হাজার টাকা সাহায্য করেন তিনি।  
১৯৮১ সালে নাগিসের মৃত্যু হয়  
ক্যানসারে। তার তিন বছর পরে  
পাকাপাকি ভাবে রাজনীতিতে আসার  
আগেই সামাজিক কাজে নিজেকে  
জড়িয়ে নেন তিনি।

ক্যানসার নিয়ে সুনীল দত্ত ‘দর্দ কা  
রিস্তা’ ছবিটি তৈরি করেন। সে সময়  
সানফ্রান্সিস্কোয় ক্যানসার রোগীদের  
সাহায্যার্থে শো করেন শ্মিতা পাটিলের  
সঙ্গে। সেই অনুষ্ঠান থেকে ১৭ হাজার  
ডলার তোলেন। ইমরান খানের  
ক্যানসার হাসপাতাল তৈরিতেও  
সাহায্যের হাত বাড়ান সুনীল দত্ত।

Cinemas across the country pull out *Jo Bole So Nihaal* after blasts, police yet to establish film link

# Mumbai stands alone as screen scare spreads

## THE FALLOUT

- Delhi: Withdrawn
- Bengal: Stopped
- Ahmedabad: Stopped
- Chennai: Suspended
- Bangalore: Stopped
- Dehra Dun: Withdrawn
- Lucknow: Stopped
- Nashik: Stopped
- Pune: Suspended
- Indore: Suspended
- Hyderabad: Stopped
- Goa: Stopped
- Ranchi: Stopped

A guard stands outside a hall in Mumbai. (Reuters)



## OUR BUREAU

May 23: The agents are unknown and the motive unproven. Yet whoever carried out the blasts in Delhi last evening, killing one person and injuring about 50 in two theatres screening *Jo Bole So Nihaal*, has cinemas across India in the grip of fear.

Delhi police tried to play down any connection between the blasts and the film, but theatres shut their doors on the Sunny Deol-starrer that has angered Sikh religious bodies.

From Dehra Dun to Chennai and from Ahmedabad to Varanasi, hall-owners needed neither prompting from their associations nor prodding from governments to impose their unofficial ban on the film.

Bengal went one better, with the Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee government taking the initiative to get the movie off cinema screens. "I have asked the police commissioner to ensure that screening is stopped. We haven't received any directive from the Centre... We are doing this as a precaution," Bhattacharjee said this evening.

All seven halls showing the film in Calcutta have stopped

screening it. Home secretary Amit Kiran Deb said anti-sabotage checks had been ordered in halls in the city as "we are not ruling out subversive activities in Calcutta".

But Mumbai, which suffered a series of bomb attacks in 1993 and 2003, bucked the trend.

In the home of Bollywood, only two of the 29 theatres showing the film yanked it off, citing their location in heavily crowded areas. Joint commissioner (law and order) Ahmad Javed, however, said the police have decided to provide protection to Sunny Deol on their own.

Bollywood, too, stood firm. At a news conference organised by the Association of Motion Pictures and Television Programme Producers, the industry pledged to stick by the film and not allow "politics" to hijack filmdom.

Producer Babloo Pachisia and director Rahul Rawail told reporters they would neither withdraw the movie from cinema nor change its title — a line lifted from a Sikh prayer — which has angered even the community's highest body, the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

# Screen scare

FROM PAGE 1

"Yesterday's incident is tragic and the film industry is grieving," said Pehlaj Nihlani, who heads the association. "But we can't step back. There were calls from individuals to the makers of the film prior to the blast, too, intended to blackmail them."

But the Delhi police ruled out a Sikh hand in the blasts, saying the explosives used point to a Kashmiri militant group.

Defence minister Pranab Mukherjee suggested the attacks were linked to the anniversary of the UPA government rather than the film.

These views were echoed by the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management which saw in the blasts a conspiracy to malign the Sikhs.

"There have been no protests over the movie in Delhi, whereas in Punjab and Haryana the film had already been withdrawn from theatres. So these blasts cannot be linked to the movie," committee chief Paramjit Singh Sarna said.

The Central Forensic Science Laboratory is investigating the explosions. "A plastic explosive was used in the blasts. These are malleable and escape metal detectors. This kind of explosive is used by all major militant outfits and is aimed at causing maximum terror in crowded areas," a police officer said.

Some major militant groups that have used these IED devices and are operating in Delhi include Lashkar-e-Toiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Harkat-ul Jehadi Islami,

Harkat-ul Ansar and Jammu and Kashmir Islamic Front.

Unconvinced theatre owners in Delhi, however, removed the movie from their listings. They seemed to be in tune with the mood of the public, which largely avoided cinemas despite today being a government holiday.

The fear was compounded by a mild explosion at Nand Nagri area of northeast Delhi, triggered when a man tried to open a wallet lying close to a railway crossing. He sustained injuries in the hands and face and was admitted to hospital.

24 MAY 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

# BBC live on the blink as strike kicks in

London, May 23 (Reuters): Britain's revered public broadcaster, the BBC, suffered its most serious strike in over a decade today as staff walked out to protest plans to cut 20 per cent of its workforce.

The 24-hour strike forced the BBC to cancel or curtail most of its live radio and TV news programming, including the BBC World Service. Unions have threatened three more strikes if their demands — including a 90-day moratorium on job cuts and a guarantee that all redundancies will be voluntary — are not met.

Instead of the agenda-setting *Today* programme on BBC Radio 4, listeners woke up to a selection of jazz records and a documentary on engineering marvels.

Gone too were flashy graphics and special effects as technicians walked out, sometimes leaving newsreaders with just little more than a single camera and a desk.

The corporation's 24-hour television news channel, BBC News 24, and World Service radio were running large blocks of pre-recorded pro-



An anti-management poster at the strike in London. (Reuters)

gramming this morning. Some regional radio programmes were presented by managers, and staff for the foreign language service of the World Service also joined picket lines.

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and two other unions were striking to protest against plans by BBC director general Mark Thompson to eliminate about 4,000 jobs.

Thompson's "value for money" drive came in the lead-up to the renewal of the broadcaster's 10-year governing charter, at a time when the BBC was still nursing wounds from a bruising fight with the British government over the Iraq war. NUJ general secretary Jeremy Dear said he expects about 11,000 BBC employees to be involved in the strike.

Wilfred Darlington, who has worked for 36 years as a BBC sound engineer, was manning the picket line in Manchester today.

"We're concerned that 80 per cent of the workforce will be required to do 100 per cent of the current work. I can only guess at what kind of stress levels will result," he said.

The BBC said it regretted the strike action and would do everything it could to produce the best possible service. "We are keen to get back around the table with the unions and continue negotiations," a spokesman said.

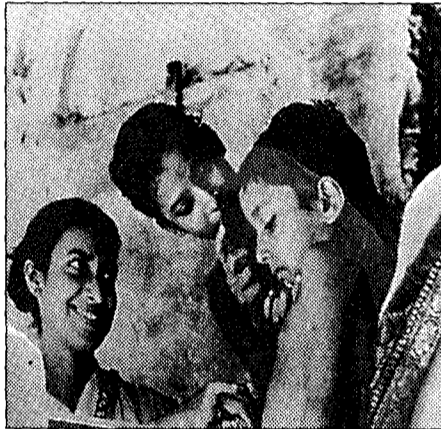
The NUJ along with the other unions voted on May 12 to authorise four strike days.

# Apu Trilogy among Time's great films

PRESS Trust of India  
New York, May 23

SATYAJIT RAY'S Apu Trilogy which redefined Indian cinema in the 1950's, Guru Dutt's classic *Pyasa* portraying a poet's disenchantment with the material world and Mani Ratnam's *Nayakan*, based on a Mumbai gangster's life are on the *Time* magazine-complied list of 100 all-time great films.

Put together by *Time* critics Richard Schickel and Richard Corliss, the list includes *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Casablanca*, *Lord of the Rings* (trilogy) and *Pulp Fiction*. Posted on the magazine's website, the list, which would be published in Monday's issue, also names the best film from each decade since *Time* began to come out: *Metropolis* (1927), *Dodsworth* (1936), *Citizen Kane* (1941), *Ikiru* (1952), *Persona* (1966), *Chinatown* (1974), *Decalogue* (1988), *Pulp Fiction* (1994) and *Talk to her* (2002).



A still from *Pather Panchali*

The critics say that the Apu Trilogy — *Pather Panchali* (1955), *Aparajito* (1956) and *Apur Sansar* (1959) — which traces the life

of Apu as he moves from childhood in a rural village through his youth in Varanasi where the family later shifts, to manhood and marriage in Kolkata, shows "Ray's filmmaking is direct in manner, simple in its means and profound in its impact."

They describe *Pyasa* as a soulful romantic film, noting that the writer-producer-director star painted a glamorous portrait of an artist's isolation through dappled imagery and sensitive filming of S.D. Burman's haunting songs. "Waheeda Rehman in her screen debut is sultry, radiant — a woman to bring out the poet in any man, on screen or in the audience," they say.

*Nayakan*, which is Ratnam's second film, has been described by the *Time* critics as a defining work in his career. "His movies, often dramatising social unrest and political terrorism, churns with narrative tension and camera energy that would be the envy of Hollywood directors, if they were to see them", the critics say.

# 'Jo Bole So Nihal' withdrawn in Punjab, Haryana

media #10-1 20/5

Distributor tells theatres to stop screening following SGPC demand for ban

**CHANDIGARH:** Within hours of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) demanding a ban on the controversial Hindi film "Jo Bole So Nihal", its distributors withdrew the movie from theatres across Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh on Thursday.

"We have sent out telegram messages to the theatres running this film to stop its screening immediately," said I. P. S. Chadha, brother of liquor baron Ponty Chadha and producer of the film, on behalf of Ginny Arts film production company. He said all objectionable scenes in the film had already been removed. About the title of the film, he said it would not be possible to change it immediately.

"As a result of this we have thought of stopping its screening," he added. He said Ginny Arts was ready to face the losses on account of the stoppage of screening.

Any further suggestions from SGPC about the film were welcome, Mr. Chadha added.

In Mumbai, "Jo Bole So Nihal" director Rahul Rawail said the film was not aimed at belittling the Sikhs or hurting the community in any way. The decision to withdraw it from theatres in Punjab was taken solely by the distributor for the region, he added. "The court has not given any such direction in the matter. The decision to withdraw the film has been made by the distributor alone," Mr. Rawail told PTL. "I do not know the reasons why the distributor has chosen to do so. He has communicated the same to the producer, who has been unhappy over the decision," Mr. Rawail added.



**WRITING ON THE WALL:** "Jo Bole So Nihal" hero Sunny Deol in front of a poster of the film earlier this month. - AP FILE PHOTO

About the controversy surrounding the film and the objections raised to certain portions in it, he said: "There was no intention to hurt the Sikhs." "The hero of the film is a Sikh and it would be stupid to even attempt to belittle Sikhs," Mr. Rawail said pointing out that he himself was a member of the community.

He said that when the film first came up for release, there were statements in Punjab about it. "At that point we invited a committee of the Akal Takht, the supreme body of the Sikhs, to come and see the film and even deleted a dialogue which they found objectionable."

Refusing to comment further on the film, Mr. Rawail said that "the matter is sub judice."

Earlier in the day, the SGPC had demanded an immediate ban on the film saying it was "damaging the Sikh psyche". The Sikh religious body had also set up a five-member committee to prepare a report on the film within two days which would be submitted to the Union Cultural Affairs Ministry, the Home Ministry and the Film Censor Board.

"A meeting of the SGPC committee here unanimously resolved that the screening of the film should be stopped till it was finally approved by SGPC," said SGPC chief Bibi Jagir Kaur after the meeting.

UNI adds: A fresh list of objections to the film was filed in the Punjab and Haryana High Court during resumed hearing on Thursday on petitions seeking a ban on the film for allegedly hurting religious sentiments of the Sikh community.

The Court's division bench comprising Chief Justice D. K. Jain and Justice Hemant Gupta, however, adjourned further hearing to May 23 as counsel for the respondent producer and director of the film wanted time to file response to the applicant's viewpoint. - PTI / UNI.

See also Page 3

2 M THE HINDU



# Newsweek apologises, blames Imran for riots

S. Rajagopalan  
Washington, May 16

media  
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NEWSWEEK ON Monday apologised for errors in its report on desecration of the Quran by US interrogators at Guantanamo Bay, but blamed Imran Khan for triggering the Afghan riots that left 15 people dead.

"The spark was apparently lit at a press conference held on Friday, May 6, by Imran Khan, a Pakistani cricket legend and strident critic of Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf," the magazine said in its latest issue.

Imran, it said, had held up a copy of the *Newsweek* issue and read out the report which said US interrogators had placed the Holy Quran on toilet seats and even flushed one. "This is what the US is doing...desecrating Quran," the magazine quoted Imran as saying.

"His (Imran's) remarks, as well as the outraged comments of Muslim clerics and Pakistani government officials, were picked up on local radio and played throughout neighbouring Afghanistan," it said, adding that radical Islamic foes of the pro-US Hamid Karzai regime promptly exploited the issue.

Apologising for its own reportage, *Newsweek* editor Mark Whitaker said: "We regret that we got any part of our story wrong, and extend our sympa-



Imran Khan

thies to victims of the violence and to the US soldiers caught in its midst."

Whitaker maintained that the magazine's information had come from "a knowledgeable US government source" and that before the report's publication, comment had been sought from two Pentagon officials. While one declined to respond, the other challenged another part of the story, but not the bit about the Quran, he said.

Pentagon spokesman Lawrence Di Rita termed Whitaker's apology "very tepid and qualified" and said: "They owe us all a lot more accountability than they took." National security adviser Stephen Hadley told CNN on Sunday that the allegations were being investigated "vigorously", adding: "If it turns out to be true, obviously we will take action against those responsible."

MAY 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Nepal journalists take out march, demand press freedom

Sit-ins, U.N. conference mark World Press Freedom Day

**KATHMANDU:** In a massive show of strength, over 1,500 journalists from across Nepal on Tuesday marched through the streets of the capital, demanding immediate lifting of press censorship, release of their detained colleagues and restoration of democracy and civil liberties.

Organised by the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) to mark its Golden Jubilee and the World Press Freedom Day, the marchers carrying placards and banners shouted slogans like "End press censorship", "Restore democratic rights", "Guarantee journalists' rights" and "Release all detained journalists."

They had a brief scuffle with police before converging at the

Royal Nepal Academy hall here.

The FNJ said at least six journalists remained under detention and more than 2,000 had lost their jobs since the February 1 royal takeover.

The former Prime Minister

and Nepali Congress President, Girija Prasad Koirala, inaugurating the 21st National Convention of the FNJ, said "We cannot imagine democracy without a free press."

Pointing towards the impor-

tant role played by media in the democratic movement, he said parties were discussing to chalk out a common minimum agenda to launch an agitation would be published. — PTI

## Grim time

AP reports from Paris: Press freedom advocates came together around the world at a grim time when reporters face rising threats of killings, kidnappings, jailings and other abuse just for doing their jobs.

Sit-ins, human-chain demonstrations and a U.N. conference were under way or scheduled in countries from the Philippines to Senegal for the 15th annual World Press Freedom Day. — PTI, AP

## First Lady raids newspaper

**NAIROBI:** World Press Freedom Day? Not if you ask the Kenyan President's wife, who stormed into the newsroom of the nation's largest newspaper on Tuesday, demanding journalists be arrested for "biased coverage" and slapping a cameraman. The midnight-to-5

a.m. confrontation followed reports by newspapers of allegations the First Lady acts like highhanded royalty.

The takeover of the newsroom of *The Daily Nation* "sends shivers down your spine," said Mwangi, the newspaper's editorial director. — AP

04 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

# Remembering them on Press Freedom Day

There have been hundreds of unresolved murders of journalists in their line of duty around the world in the last decade. Here are details of a few of the instances, as compiled by the World Association of Newspapers to mark World Press Freedom Day, May 3:

## Bangladesh: Dipankar Chakrabarty, in 2004

The editor of the Bangladeshi daily *Durjoy Bangla* and vice-president of the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists, he was hacked to death and decapitated on October 2, 2004. He was walking home from work after midnight when neighbours heard his screams and motorcycles speeding away. One neighbour came out to the street to find Chakrabarty's headless body. The police called his brutal killing the work of "professionals," but they have not identified any motive or suspects in the case. Chakrabarty, 59, had previously told Reporters Without Borders he was being threatened due to some exposés he had done on local gangsters receiving the protection of politicians in Sherpur. Local Bangladeshi newspapers left blank space on the first page for the three days following the murder in protest. No arrests or developments have been reported by the administration since his murder.

## Belarus: Dmitry Zavadsky, in 2000

A Belarusian cameraman with the Russian public television network *ORT*, abducted at Minsk Airport on July 7 and declared dead on November 28, 2000. Zavadsky, a former official cameraman of President Alexander Lukashenko, was reported missing when he failed to meet his *ORT* colleague and friend Pavel Sheremet at Minsk Airport. Sheremet and Zavadsky had travelled to Chechnya to film *The Chechnya Diaries*, a documentary about the war in Chechnya. Upon return to Belarus, Zavadsky received threatening calls from an unknown man, who insisted on meeting with him. On July 16, 2002, the Belarus Supreme Court charged Valery Ignatovich, former head of special units at the Interior Ministry and a subordinate, Maxim Malik, with a life sentence for the abduction and disappearance of the young cameraman, but the proceedings were closed to the public. The process failed to address the question of what had happened to the journalist after his disappearance. Prosecutors announced that the case was reopened on December 10, 2003. Despite new developments, triggered by a press conference held by Mr. Lukashenko on July 20, 2004, appeals of Zavadsky's family to reopen to case have been rejected by the General Prosecutor's Office.

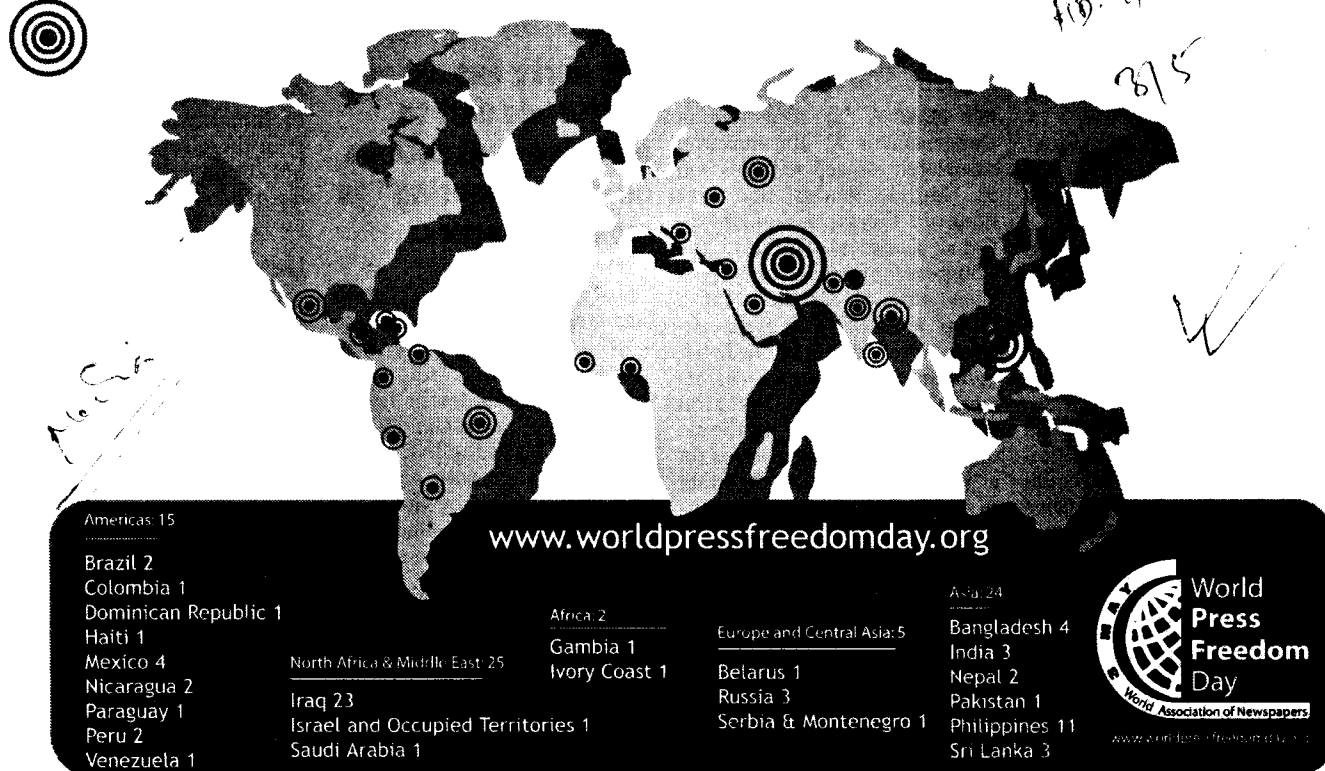
## Belgrade: Slavko Curuvija, in 1999

The publisher of *Daily Telegraph* and *European*, he was assassinated on April 11, 1999 in Belgrade. Both newspapers had been sanctioned for criticising the Milosevic Government. In December 1998, Curuvija had conducted a testimonial on Milosevic's rule before the U.S. Congress's Helsinki Commission in Washington. Upon his return, Curuvija was sentenced to five months in jail for "spreading false information." Curuvija was assaulted along with his girlfriend Branka Prpa in an alleyway that lead to their apartment in central Belgrade. Prpa identified the assassins as two men dressed in black wearing facemasks. Dusan Velickovic, a fellow journalist, released a report of the Yugoslavian State Police, leaked to him, which describes the surveillance of "a target" detailing the hours before Curuvija's assassination. Alexander Tijanic, former columnist of the *Daily Telegraph*, said in an interview that Curuvija had powerful enemies. The assassins have not been officially identified and investigations into the case have not been conducted.

## Canada: Tara Singh Hayer, in 1998

The editor of the Punjabi-language newspaper *Indo-Canadian Times*, he was assassinated in the garage of his home in Surrey, British Columbia on November 18, 1998. Ten years earlier Hayer had been the victim of an assassination attempt, which left him partially paralysed. Despite continued death threats Hayer continued his work. He was an outspoken critic of fundamentalist Sikh movements in India as well as abroad, and campaigned tirelessly for a greater intercultural understanding. In spite of investigations undertaken by Canadian authorities, no concrete suspect has been found to this day. Hayer was killed shortly before his testimonial against suspects in a fatal Air India bombing. Other murders cases of outspoken

## 71 Journalists killed in 2004



critics of hard-line Sikh organizations have been linked to this case.

## Indonesia: Sander Thoenes, in 1999

A Dutch journalist on assignment for the *Financial Times* and the *Christian Science Monitor*, he was killed covering the landing of the U.N. peacekeeping mission in the city of Dili on September 21, 1999. Thoenes had arranged with a motorbike rider to take him to the Becora area, a strongly pro-independent area of East Timor. They encountered the militant Battalion 745, which was retreating from Dili following the arrival of Australian-led U.N. Peacekeeping forces. The battalion fired on the motorbike and caused Thoenes to fall. The driver of the motorbike escaped. Sander Thoenes body was found by Peacekeeping Forces on September 22, shot in the back and bearing grave marks of torture, with his left ear sliced off and several cuts in his face. The U.N.-Sanctioned International Force in East Timor conducted a report into the killing and established that Thoenes was most likely murdered by the Battalion 745. Despite overwhelming evidence and testimonials, the Indonesian Attorney-General on June 19, 2002, declared the case to be closed due to insufficient evidence to prosecute and the unreliability of the key witness. Despite offi-

cial protest of the Dutch Government, Thoenes' killers have not been brought to justice to this day.

## The Philippines: Gene Boyd Lumawag, in 2004

The photo editor for *MindaNews* newspaper, he was shot dead on a street in downtown Jolo on November 12, 2004. The gunman fired one bullet killing Lumawag, 26, before leaving the scene. Days later, a task force was created specifically for the investigation into the slaying of Lumawag. The report of one eyewitness lead investigators to file a complaint on November 17 for two suspects, brothers Omar and Iting Sailani. *MindaNews* colleagues say Lumawag, 26, may have been in Jolo working on a corruption story with a journalist from Mindanao Island who was not present at Lumawag's attack. No motive has been established behind the killing of Lumawag though the Sailani brothers are reportedly on the most wanted list of Abu Sayyaf. Since the task force filed the complaint, no formal charges have been brought against Lumawag's suspected killers.

## Russia: Natalya Skryl, in 2002

A business reporter for the *Nashe Vremya* newspaper based in Rostov-on-Don, southwestern Russia, she was beaten to death

when returning to her home in the city of Taganrog late on the night of March 9, 2002. She was discovered unconscious from repeated blows to the head by a heavy, blunt object, and died shortly after being taken to a nearby hospital. A large sum of money was found in Skryl's handbag at the time of her death, suggesting robbery was not the motive behind the attack. *Nashe Vremya's* editor-in-chief, Vera Ioujanskaia, said she thought it was connected to sensitive information Skryl had obtained about the business activities of several companies struggling to get control over a local metallurgical plant. No suspect has been arrested.

## Sierra Leone: Kurt Schork, in 2000

A veteran Reuters correspondent, he was killed by rebels of the Revolutionary United Front in an ambush on May 24, 2000. Schork was a well-known war correspondent. Richard Holbrook, former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., said: "Kurt Schork was one of the bravest, smartest and finest journalists I have ever worked with over the last 35 years. He was almost always right. He showed no bias. He was cheerful no matter how awful the situation. He believed journalists could be a force for good in the world while reporting the truth as they saw it." Schork's family in cooperation with Reuters News Agency has established a memorial fund honouring achievements of local and freelance journalists every year. Kurt Schork's murderers have never been brought to justice.

## The Philippines: Edgar Damalerio, in 2000

The managing editor of the weekly *Zamboanga Scribe* and radio host on DKKP radio station on the island of Mindanao, he was killed on May 13, 2002. He was shot in the chest by an unidentified gunman as he was driving home from a press conference in Pagadian City. Before his death Damalerio wrote an exposé on the failure of the Lanao del Sur Electric Cooperative (Lasureco) to complete any of its projects during the administration of former Philippine President Fidel Ramos.

The story, which appeared in the *Mindanao Gold Star* on April 19, 2002, claimed that the company lied when it reported that the projects had been completed. The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) arrested policeman Guillermo Wapille last May 17. He was identified by two witnesses who were with Damalerio at the time of the killing. However, Wapille managed to escape from custody.

One of the witnesses, Amoro, was recently killed despite being placed under special witness protection. Damalerio's widow Gemma, is still in hiding.

# SC asks media for restraint

Agencies  
New Delhi, April 25

THE SUPREME Court has sounded a stern warning against reporting of unwarranted criticism of judges and judiciary. It said on Monday, that the freedom enjoyed by the media was no licence to indulge in sensationalism and a mechanism should be devised to check the criticism from "crossing the limits".

This judgement was given by a Bench comprising Justice Y.K. Sabharwal and Justice Tarun Chatterjee while sentencing Rajendra Sail, a close associate of slain trade union leader Shankar Guha Niyogi, for seven days for committing contempt of Court by his "scurrilous" criticism of a Madhya Pradesh High Court a that the publication, publisher, or electronic media, all concerned have to see whether any such criticism has crossed the limits and if it has, then resist every temptation to make it public." Noting the tremendous reach of newspapers and electronic media, the court said, "it should not be treated as a licence to denigrate other institutions. Sensationalism is not unknown.

## Niyogi aide jailed for contempt

THE SUPREME Court has reduced the six-month jail term awarded by Madhya Pradesh High Court to Rajendra Sail, associate of slain trade union leader Shankar Guha Niyogi, for contempt of court for his "unfair" criticism of its judgment in the murder case. The apex court reduced the sentence to a week keeping in mind his public work. Sail had at a public rally, shortly after the high court verdict in the case, made adverse remarks about the judgment and also given interviews to the same effect. While stating that the court's judgments are "open" to criticism, the SC observed



that such criticism needs to be kept within "the limits of reasonable courtesy and good faith". "Such criticism may fairly assert that the judgment is incorrect or an error has been committed both with regard to law or established facts", the Bench said.

HTC, New Delhi

Any attempt to make news out of nothing just for the sake of sensationalism has to be deprecated."

"When there is an attempt to sensationalise, particularly at the expense of those institutions or persons who from the nature of office cannot reply, such temptations has to be resis-

ted and if not it would be task of the law to give clear guidance as to what is and what is not permitted," Justice Sabharwal said.

Terming the confidence of people in judiciary as an asset that needs to be preserved at any cost, Justice Sabharwal said any act that has a tendency to cause of

loss of confidence in judiciary "deserves to be firmly curbed". The apex court said the present matter brought to fore the issue that right to freedom of media was to be exercised responsibly and it was for the media to devise the mechanism for such exercise.

"Regarding the institution like judiciary, which cannot go public, media can consider having an internal mechanism to prevent these type of publications," he said. The apex court said, "There can be an efficient and stringent mechanism to scrutinise As already noted such publications are likely to be believed as true."

While the media could, in public interest, resort to reasonable criticism of a judicial act or the judgment of a court for public good or report any such statements, it should refrain from casting scurrilous aspersions on, or impute motives or personal bias to the Judge, the Court said.

"Nor should they scandalise the court or the judiciary as a whole, or make personal allegations of lack of ability or integrity against a Judge," Justice Sabharwal said.

26 APR 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

## সংবাদ চ্যানেলেও বেড়ি পরাতে চাইছে কেন্দ্র

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২১ এপ্রিল: এর আগে গণ্ডি টানা হয়েছিল শুধু ফ্যাশন চ্যানেল বা ওই ধরনের কিছু বিনোদন চ্যানেলের জন্য। বিভিন্ন চ্যানেলে ‘অশ্লীলতা’ প্রদর্শনের বাড়াবাড়ি নিয়ে বৃহস্পতিবার লোকসভায় বিভিন্ন দলের সাংসদেরা ফের যে ভাবে সরব হলেন, তাতেও তেমন নতুনত্ব কিছু নেই। যেটা নতুন, তা হল, এ বার লক্ষণ রেখার আওতায় আসতে চলেছে সংবাদ চ্যানেলও। কারণ সরকারি বিচারে সংবাদ চ্যানেলেও নানা ভাবে অশ্লীলতার প্রদর্শন হচ্ছে। যেমন অপকর্ম ফাঁস করার অজুহাতে লুকনো ক্যামেরা দিয়ে অশ্লীল ছবি তুলে তা দেখানো। তাই সেটা ঠেকাতে এ বার সক্রিয় হচ্ছে কেন্দ্র। সরাসরি সেন্সর না করলেও, অশ্লীলতার অভিযোগ পেলেই এ বার সংশ্লিষ্ট চ্যানেলের বিরুদ্ধে কড়া ব্যবস্থা নেবে সরকার।

তবে এ সব করতে গিয়ে শেষ পর্যন্ত স্বাধীন চিন্তাভাবনার প্রকাশ ও সংস্কৃতির স্বতঃস্ফূর্ত বহিঃপ্রকাশের পথে যেন কাটা না পড়ে, সে ব্যাপারেও নানা টানাপোড়েন রয়েছে। সংসদে তথা ও সম্প্রচার মন্ত্রকের পরামর্শদাতা কমিটির সদস্য তথা সি পি এমের সাংসদ হাম্মান মোল্লার কথায়, “একটা চিন্তা থেকেই যায় যে বিধিনিষেধ আরোপ করতে

গিয়ে শেষ পর্যন্ত সরকার যেন ‘কালচারাল পুলিশের’ ভূমিকা না নেয়। সাহিত্য-সংস্কৃতি-চলচ্চিত্র তো বটেই, সংবাদ মাধ্যমের স্বাধীনতাও যেন ক্ষুণ্ণ না হয়।”

বৃহস্পতিবার লোকসভায় প্রসঙ্গটি উত্থাপন করেন লোকসভায় কংগ্রেস সদস্য অধীর চৌধুরী। তাঁর বক্তব্য ছিল দু’টি। প্রথমত, যৌনতা বা হিংসা যে ভাবে নানা চ্যানেলে চাকচৌল পিটিয়ে সম্প্রচারিত হচ্ছে, তাতে বয়স নির্বিশেষে মানুষের নৈতিক ‘অধঃপতনের’ রাস্তা প্রশস্ত হচ্ছে। তাঁর অনুযোগ, “শিশু-কিশোরদের মনেও প্রভাব পড়ছে।” পাশাপাশিই, তহলকার মতো ‘তদন্তমূলক’ সাংবাদিকতার জেরে সংশ্লিষ্ট সাংবাদিকেরা সমস্যার মুখে পড়ছেন কি না, তা-ও তিনি জানতে চান। পরে টি ভি চ্যানেলে অশ্লীলতা নিয়ে সরব হন সি পি এমের মিনতি সেনও।

অধীরবাবুর বক্তব্যের দ্বিতীয় বিষয়টি নিয়ে সরকারের মনোভাব অবশ্য বিভাগীয় মন্ত্রী জয়পাল রেড্ডির বক্তব্য থেকে স্পষ্ট। তিনি বলেন, “তদন্তমূলক সাংবাদিকতা হতেই পারে। ক্যামেরার লেন্সেও তা ধরা পড়তেও পারে। তবে, একটা সীমারেখা তো মানতেই হবে।” ফ্যাশন

এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

## বেড়ি পরাতে চাইছে কেন্দ্র

প্রথম পাতার পর

চ্যানেল বা রি-মিক্সের নামে নানা ধরনের অশ্লীলতার প্রদর্শন চলতি আইনি কাঠামোয় বন্ধ করা সম্ভব কি না জানতে চান সি পি এমের মিনতিদেবী। জয়পাল বলেন, “আমরা একটি আইনি কাঠামোর কথা ভাবছি। তবে, তা কবে তৈরি হবে, তা বলতে পারছি না।”

সরকারি সূত্রের খবর, কেন্দ্র একটি ‘সম্প্রচার নিয়ন্ত্রণ কর্তৃপক্ষ’ গঠন করেছে। যারা অশ্লীলতা সংক্রান্ত

অভিযোগ পেলে, তবেই ব্যবস্থা নিতে পারে। জয়পাল সাংসদদের বলেন, “অভিযোগ দায়ের করুন সম্প্রচার নিয়ন্ত্রণ কর্তৃপক্ষে।” ইতিমধ্যেই সংবাদ চ্যানেল-সহ আটটি চ্যানেলের বিরুদ্ধে অশ্লীলতার অভিযোগ জমা পড়েছে। পাশাপাশি, আমেরিকার সম্প্রচার আইন অনুসরণ করে ভারতেও লুকনো ক্যামেরার মাধ্যমে সংবাদ পরিবেশনের ব্যাপারে বিধিনিষেধের কথা ভাবা হচ্ছে বলেই মন্ত্রক সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে।

22 APR 2005

# 'Black Friday': SC issues notice to blast-accused

New Delhi: Dashing hopes of an early screening of the movie 'Black Friday', based on the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts, the Supreme Court on Thursday issued notices to the accused persons who had successfully stalled the release of the movie, already cleared by the censor board.

The makers of the movie - Mid-day Multimedia Pvt Ltd had filed an appeal in the Supreme Court challenging the Bombay high court order staying the release of the film till the judgment was given by the Tada court hearing the cases.

A bench comprising Chief Justice R C Lahoti issued notices to Mustaq Musa Tarani and other accused after hearing the counsel for petitioner, senior advocate Harish Salve.

Salve contended that the film was based on a book 'Black Friday - The True Story of the Bombay Bomb Blasts', and that the book was available in the market as it was not banned by the authorities.

"If the book was available in the public domain, then why could anybody not produce a film on that basis and how the film alone, and not the book, could create a bias in public mind against the accused," he wondered.

However, the court did not pass any interim orders and asked the respondents to file their replies within three weeks while posting the matter for further hearing after four weeks.

Meanwhile, the trial in the designated Tada court has concluded and arguments have also ended. The court is now in the process of writing the judgment, which is expected by the year-end.

The Supreme Court felt that it would be better to wait till the judgment was written in the case. Agencies

22 APR 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6, 2005

## UNDERCOVER JOURNALISM AND ETHICS

INDIA TV'S STING operations, ostensibly aimed at exposing the prevalent sexual exploitation in the entertainment industry, raise knotty but important issues relating to journalistic ethics. Hidden cameras captured a Bollywood actor and a TV game show host seeking sexual favours from a young woman reporter of the news channel, who posed as an aspiring starlet seeking a break in the industry. If there is a deep sense of distaste about the two undercover 'investigations,' it is partly because the television channel went out of its way to entice the individuals into behaving inappropriately before capturing them on videotape. India TV's Editor-in-Chief Rajat Sharma's justification for carrying out the sting — exposing the casting couch menace in the entertainment industry — has a hollow ring to it. All that was exposed by India TV, which carried out the stings with offers of whiskey and invitations to hotel rooms, were the frailties of two sad and susceptible men. It was sordid ensnarement, not enlightening investigation.

Undercover journalism is not a new phenomenon in India. In 1981, a newspaper reporter bid for and bought a young woman, 'Kamala', for Rs. 2,300 at a 'sale' in Madhya Pradesh to establish trafficking in women and the involvement of bigwigs in the racket. More recently, Tehelka used deception and hidden cameras to expose 'match fixing' in cricket and, more importantly, to show how easily penetrable and corruptible a section of the defence establishment was. Some of the methods used by Tehelka to acquire information were rightly criticised, particularly, the use of call girls in a flagrant exercise of entrapment. But the investigation, which revealed how deeply entrenched corruption was in the process of defence procurement, did have a serious public purpose. In contrast, the India TV sting operations were widely perceived to be ploys to attract more eyeballs and increase the profile of the news channel.

The central point is that investigative journalism that insists on going after information through deception and invasion of privacy can have only one serious defence: a larger social purpose. Undercover investigations by journalists go back a long way. It was in 1887 that the celebrated Nellie Bly feigned illness, got herself admitted to a notoriously ill-administered New York lunatic asylum, and wrote a powerful expose that hastened legal reforms relating to the treatment of the mentally ill. It was socially purposeful and impactful undercover journalism at its best. Three decades ago a Pulitzer Prize for journalism was awarded to a reporter who concealed his identity in order to write a series of articles on voting irregularities in Chicago. These investigations have won admiration within the profession and from the public, which suggests that relevant and purposeful undercover journalism is not merely acceptable under certain conditions but is an indispensable force for the social good.

Journalism that relies on active deception and, more typically, 'passive' misrepresentation to acquire information must satisfy at least the following three professional ethical requirements. First, the information pursued must be directly and strongly linked to a larger social purpose. Secondly, the public value of such information must clearly outweigh the injury caused by the deception and the privacy violation. Thirdly, undercover methods must not be resorted to where the information can be gathered by straightforward means. The problem with the India TV sting operations is that they fulfil neither the first nor the second condition. The lukewarm public response suggests there is a reflexive understanding of this in Indian society. Yellow journalism should provoke those in the profession to think more deeply about the purposes and methods of journalism, and to take a clear stand on the interface between freedom of expression, and professional and social responsibility.

06 APR 2005

THE HINDU

## চাই দ্রুত মীমাংসা

কলিকাতা সহ সমগ্র উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলের টেলিফোন ব্যবস্থা বিপর্যস্ত হইয়া পড়িয়াছে। সপ্তাহ কাল ধরিয়া প্রথমে ভারত সঞ্চার নিগম-এর অফিসারদের ধর্মঘট, পরে নিয়মমাফিক কাজের আন্দোলন এই বিপর্যয়ের কারণ। আন্দোলনের ফলে শুধু যে সাবেক টেলিফোন পরিষেবাই বিপর্যস্ত তাহা নয়, সেই সঙ্গে মোবাইল ফোন, ইন্টারনেট, ব্রডব্যান্ড, ফ্যাক্স ইত্যাদি যাবতীয় পরিষেবাই ব্যাপক ভাবে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত। ক্ষতি ব্যবসাবাণিজ্যের, শেয়ারবাজারের লেনদেনের। সর্বোপরি হাসপাতাল, দমকল প্রভৃতি যে সব অত্যাবশ্যক পরিষেবা টেলিসংযোগ ছাড়া সৃষ্ট ভাবে সঞ্চালন করা অসম্ভব, সেগুলিও ধাক্কা খাইতেছে। সর্বত্রই হয়রানি সাধারণ মানুষের, যাহারা কোনও ভাবেই এই আন্দোলনে কোনও পক্ষ নহেন এবং যাহাদের বিরক্তি, অসহায়তা কিংবা সমর্থন বা শুভেচ্ছায় কাহারও কিছু যায় আসে না। এই আন্দোলন যত দ্রুত প্রত্যাহত হয়, ততই মানুষের মঙ্গল। কিন্তু আন্দোলন যাহারা করিয়া থাকেন, তাহারা সচরাচর নিজেদের গোষ্ঠীস্বার্থকেই অগ্রাধিকার দেন, মানুষের মঙ্গলের কথা অনেক দূরবর্তী।

আন্দোলনকারীদের সর্বদাই কিছু দাবিদাওয়া থাকে। এ ক্ষেত্রেও আছে। দাবিগুলি অযৌক্তিক বা অন্যায্য, আগে হইতেই এমন কথা ধরিয়া লইবার কোনও কারণও নাই। টেলিসংযোগ দফতর হইতে এই অফিসাররা যখন ভারত সঞ্চার নিগমে স্থানান্তরিত হন, তখন সেই কাঠামোগত সংস্কারের অঙ্গ হিসাবেই তাহাদের পদোন্নতি ও বেতন-ভাতা বৃদ্ধি বিষয়ে কর্তৃপক্ষের কিছু প্রতিশ্রুতি ছিল। সেই প্রতিশ্রুতিগুলি কেন্দ্রীয় প্রশাসনিক ট্রাইবুনালের প্রধান বেকের রায়েই কর্তৃপক্ষের উপর বর্তায়। অর্থাৎ স্বতঃপ্রসঙ্গিত হইয়া কর্তৃপক্ষ ওই প্রতিশ্রুতিগুলি দেয় নাই, মামলা করিয়া অফিসাররা তাহা আদায় করিয়াছিলেন। এখন প্রতিশ্রুতিগুলি পালিত না-হওয়াতেই অফিসাররা আন্দোলনের পথে। আন্দোলনের আগে তাহারা যথারীতি কর্তৃপক্ষকে নোটিশ দিয়াছেন, কিন্তু কর্তৃপক্ষ তাহাতে আমল দেয় নাই। এখন যখন আন্দোলনের ফলে বিস্তীর্ণ অঞ্চলে টেলি-যোগাযোগ বিপন্ন, তখনও কর্তৃপক্ষের তরফে প্রতিশ্রুতি পালনের কিংবা আলোচনার মাধ্যমে বিরোধ মিটাইয়া ফেলার কোনও লক্ষণ দেখা যাইতেছে না। উপরন্তু নিগমের তরফে আন্দোলন ভাঙিবার জন্য আন্দোলনকারীদের চাকুরি হইতে বরখাস্ত করার হুমকি দেওয়া হইতেছে, বিশেষত নবীন অফিসারদের কাছ হইতে মুচলেকা আদায়ের চেষ্টা চলিয়াছে। এই ধরনের পরিস্থিতি অতীব দুর্ভাগাজনক, জনজীবনে অত্যাবশ্যক এবং অর্থনীতির পক্ষে অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ একটি পরিষেবার পক্ষে ভয়ানক ভাবে ক্ষতিকর।

ধর্মঘট বা নিয়মমাফিক কাজের আন্দোলন গণতন্ত্রে আন্দোলনকারীদের মৌলিক অধিকার। তাহার অর্থ এই নয় যে কথায়-কথায় ধর্মঘট করিতে হইবে। এ দেশে ধর্মঘটে হাত-পাকানো বামপন্থীরাও এখন ধর্মঘটকে আন্দোলনের সর্বশেষ এবং চূড়ান্ত হাতিয়ার বলিয়া মনে করেন, যাহা বেশি ব্যবহার করিলে কার্যকারিতা হারাইবার সম্ভাবনা। কিন্তু সুস্থ গণতান্ত্রিক উপায়ে যাহাতে দ্বন্দ্বের মীমাংসা হয়, সে ব্যাপারে কর্মীদের যেমন দায় থাকে, তেমনই দায় থাকে কর্তৃপক্ষেরও। বস্তুর মর্যাদা বা জেদের লড়াই না লড়িয়া, বিরোধ বা মতানৈক্যকে চরম অবস্থায় পৌছাইতে না দিয়া তাহার শান্তিপূর্ণ নিরসনের কৌশল বা নীতিই একটি কুশলী এবং বিচক্ষণ প্রশাসনের অন্যতম প্রধান চরিত্রলক্ষণ। এ ক্ষেত্রে সেই বুদ্ধি ও বিবেচনার নমুনা দেখা যাইতেছে না। প্রসঙ্গত, দেশের শ্রম আইনে সংস্কারের যে প্রস্তাব বারংবার স্থগিত হইতেছে, তাহাতে সংস্থা চালু রাখিতে পরিচালক তথা কর্তৃপক্ষের দায়ের দিকটিও অন্তর্ভুক্ত হওয়া এ জনাই প্রয়োজন। আন্দোলনকারীদের এমন জায়গায় ঠেলিয়া দেওয়া উচিত নয়, যেখান হইতে ধর্মঘট ছাড়া প্রতিবিধানের আর কোনও উপায় অবলম্বন করা যায় না। পশ্চিমবঙ্গের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী উদ্যোগী হইয়া আন্দোলনের ব্যাপারে খোঁজখবর লইয়াছেন, বিরোধ মীমাংসায় কেন্দ্রীয় যোগাযোগমন্ত্রীর হস্তক্ষেপ প্রার্থনা করিয়াছেন, রাজ্য হইতে নির্বাচিত সাংসদদেরও তৎপর হইতে বলিয়াছেন। পশ্চিমবঙ্গ আন্দোলনের ফলে সর্বাধিক ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত রাজ্যগুলির অন্যতম। তাই আন্দোলনের দ্রুত অবসানে তাহার তাগিদও সর্বাধিক।





- এস টি ডি এবং আই এস ডি অমিল
- জেলায় মোবাইল পরিষেবা বিস্তৃত
- ৯৫ নম্বরেও যোগাযোগ হচ্ছে না
- আন্তঃজেলা শেয়ার লেনদেনে বিপত্তি
- রেলের টিকিট সংরক্ষণ করা যাচ্ছে না
- ডব্লিউ এল এল ফোন পরিষেবা বন্ধ

## টেলিফোন অফিস ভাঙচুর

প্রথম পাতার পর

২৭ জন বৃথ-মালিক বি এস এন এলের সঙ্গে সম্পর্ক ছিন্ন করেছেন। বেসরকারি ফোন সংস্থার উপরে বৃথ-মালিকেরা যাতে আরও নির্ভরশীল হন, সে-জন্যই আন্দোলন কি না, এই প্রশ্ন উঠেছে।

গ্রাহকেরা যে তাঁদের আন্দোলনের ফলে অসুবিধায় পড়েছেন, তা স্বীকার করছেন আন্দোলনকারীরাও। তাঁদের সংগঠন ইউনাইটেড ফোরাম ফর বি এস এন এল এগজিকিউটিভসের রাজ্য কমিটির মুখপাত্র দিলীপ সাহা বলেন, “সংগঠন সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে, নিয়ম মেনে কাজের মধ্যেই উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক পরীক্ষা সংশ্লিষ্ট কোনও ফোন খারাপ হলে সেটা অগ্রাধিকারের ভিত্তিতে সারিয়ে দেওয়া হবে। আমাদের আন্দোলন পরিচালনা করতৃপক্ষের বিরুদ্ধে গ্রাহকদের বিরুদ্ধে নয়। এই আন্দোলনে যাঁরা যড়যন্ত্রের গন্ধ পাচ্ছেন, তাঁদের বলি, অতীতেও আমাদের আন্দোলনের বিরুদ্ধে এই অবাস্তব, ভিত্তিহীন অভিযোগ উঠেছে।”

টেলি-বিপর্যয়ে সমস্যায় পড়েছে টেলি-মার্কেটিং নির্ভর কলসেন্টারও। স্থানীয় এবং অন্যান্য শহরের অফিসের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ প্রায় বিপর্যস্ত। সপ্টালেকের বি এন কে কলসেন্টারের প্রতিনিধি জানান, দেশের বাইরে যে-সব ‘ক্লায়েন্ট’ আছেন, তাঁদের সঙ্গে আই এস ডি-তে যোগাযোগ করা যাচ্ছে না। ফলে অসুবিধা হচ্ছে। কলকাতার

আর একটি কলসেন্টার সংস্থা জানাচ্ছে, দিন দুয়েক আগে চেম্বাইয়ের সঙ্গে তাদের সংযোগ বিচ্ছিন্ন হয়ে যায়। তবে বি এস এন এল ছাড়াও বিকল্প মাধ্যম থাকায় অসুবিধা হয়নি। একটি শেয়ার ব্রোकिং সংস্থার মুখপাত্র জানান, তিন-চার দিন ধরে উত্তরবঙ্গ, বর্ধমান ইত্যাদি জায়গা থেকে তাঁদের শাখা সংস্থার কর্মীরা লিজড লাইন থাকার সঙ্গেও সদর দফতরে যোগাযোগ করতে পারেননি।

এই আন্দোলনে গোটা দেশ থেকে কার্যত বিচ্ছিন্ন হয়ে পড়েছে উত্তর-পূর্ব ভারত। পরিস্থিতি এমনই যে, সমস্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ পরিষেবা কার্যত শিকয়ে উঠেছে। আন্দোলনকারীরা হাসপাতাল, দমকল, রেল, বিমান, নিরাপত্তার মতো ক্ষেত্রগুলিকেও রেহাই দেননি। শুক্রবার থেকে টানা এই অবস্থা চলতে থাকলেও মঙ্গলবার পরিস্থিতির কিছুটা উন্নতি হয়েছে বলে আন্দোলনকারী ও কর্তৃপক্ষের তরফে দাবি করা হয়েছে।

এ দিকে, আন্দোলনের প্রতি সহানুভূতি জানিয়ে যোগাযোগ ব্যবস্থা স্বাভাবিক রাখার জন্য বি এস এন এলের পদস্থ অফিসারদের উদ্যোগী হতে বলেছেন সি পি এমের রাজ্য সম্পাদক অনিল বিশ্বাস। কর্তৃপক্ষকেও উচ্চ পর্যায়ের কর্মীদের সঙ্গে আলোচনা করতে বলেছেন তিনি। নাগরিকেরা যাতে অসুবিধায় না-পড়েন, সে-দিকে নজর দিতে বলেন অনিলবাবু।

# দুর্ভোগে ক্ষুব্ধ জনতার ভাঙচুর টেলিফোন অফিসে

আসন সংরক্ষণ করতে গিয়ে চার-পাঁচ দিন ধরে অসুবিধায় পড়ছেন। রেলের কমান্ডিং অফিসারের কর্তারা জানান, বিশেষ করে বি এস এন এলের ব্রড ব্যান্ড পরিষেবা বিস্তৃত হওয়ায় ওই গোলমাল। সারা দিনে পূর্ব রেলের ৩১টি আসন সংরক্ষণ কেন্দ্রে গণ্ডগোল হয়। মঙ্গলবার গভীর রাত পর্যন্ত তার মধ্যে ১৯টি বিকল হয়ে রয়েছে।

বৃথ-মালিকদের সংগঠন জল ইন্ডিয়া এস টি ডি, আই এস ডি বৃথ ওনার্স ওয়েলফেয়ার অ্যাসোসিয়েশনের সভাপতি রতন মজুমদার অভিযোগ করেছেন, গ্রাহকদের সঙ্গে বৃথ-মালিকদের বিরোধের জেরে এ দিন রহড়া, মাইকেল নগর, বরাহনগর ও হরিপালে বৃথ ভাঙচুর হয়। এ দিনও এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

সকাল থেকে কলকাতা, দিল্লি ও গুয়াহাটীর মধ্যে টেলি-যোগাযোগ বিচ্ছিন্ন হয়ে পড়ে। বিকেলের দিকে ওই দুই শহরের সঙ্গে কলকাতার টেলি-যোগাযোগ ব্যবস্থা স্বাভাবিক হয়। বি এস এন এলের পলিমবঙ্গ সেক্টরের মোবাইল পরিষেবার ভারপ্রাপ্ত জেনারেল ম্যানেজার চন্দ্র মিত্র বলেন, “গ্রাহক-স্বার্থ সব সময়েই রক্ষিত হবে। গণ্ডগোল না-মোটা পর্যন্ত রিচার্জ কুপনের মেয়াদ বৃদ্ধির সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়েছে।”

টেলিকম-কর্মীদের আন্দোলনের ফলে এ দিনও রেলের আসন সংরক্ষণ কেন্দ্রে পরিষেবা বিস্তৃত হয়। রেল সূত্রের খবর, বেশি বিদ্যুৎ ঘটেছে উত্তর-পূর্ব সীমান্ত রেলের কেন্দ্রে। সকাল থেকে রাত পর্যন্ত সেগুলি প্রায় বন্ধই থাকছে। অসম ও উত্তরবঙ্গের যাত্রীরা

এম সাংসদ নীলোৎপল বসুকে দায়িত্ব দেন, মারানোর সঙ্গে দেখা করে তিনি যেন ত্রিপাক্ষিক বৈঠক ডাকার ব্যবস্থা করেন। মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বলেন, “কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী প্রথমে বৈঠকেই বসতে চাইছিলেন না। নীলোৎপল আমাকে জানিয়েছেন, মন্ত্রী শীঘ্র বৈঠক ডাকতে রাজি হয়েছেন। সেখানে কয়েক জন সাংসদ ও ধর্মযাজী ইউনিয়নের প্রতিনিধিরা থাকবেন।”

এস টি ডি যোগাযোগ গত কয়েক দিন বিপর্যস্ত ছিল। জেলার সঙ্গে টেলিফোনে যোগাযোগের মাধ্যম ছিল ৯৫ নম্বর। মঙ্গলবার থেকে সেই ব্যবস্থাও পুরোপুরি বিপর্যস্ত হয়ে পড়ে। ল্যাণ্ডলাইন থেকে মোবাইলে ফোন করা যাচ্ছিল না, মোবাইল থেকে মোবাইলে মিলছিল না লাইন। জেলার মোবাইল পরিষেবা পুরোপুরি বিপর্যস্ত। মঙ্গলবার

*Journalism is not about invading the personal space of private individuals*

# Peeping Toms

BY VIR SANGHVI

I HAVE not seen India TV's much-discussed 'sting' operation involving Shakti Kapoor, a female journalist and a concealed camera. This is not because I don't want to see it but because, like most people I know, I don't get India TV at home and the few friends who do get the channel say they never watch it.

Even as I write this, a TV actor called Aman Verma has filed a criminal complaint against India TV, accusing it of framing him in yet another sting and then threatening him. The details of that case have yet to emerge, so I will concentrate on the Kapoor exposé.

Sting operations with concealed cameras constitute a huge black hole at the moral centre of Indian journalism and it is important for us to sift fact from fiction and wrong from right.

But first, a few disclaimers. My interest is in the ethics of the story, not in the individuals who feature. I do not know Shakti Kapoor or Aman Verma personally.

Second, I do know Suhaib Ilyasi, the host of the show on which the exposé appeared. In fact, two days before the first telecast, Suhaib phoned, told me about the Shakti Kapoor story and asked if I would comment on the issue. I declined his offer but I suppose my advance knowledge does make me a marginal accessory to the exposé.

And finally, having only seen India TV intermittently at hotels, I have no strong views for or against the channel and no axe to grind. I do know that it is among the least-watched Hindi news channels in the country and I am aware that Shakti Kapoor has suggested that the exposé emerges out of its desperation to find an audience: when news fails to attract viewers, why not try sleaze and sensationalism? Perhaps this is true; perhaps it is not. For our purposes, however, let us remember that the easiest way to discredit any story is to attribute motives to journalists, publications or channels.

Now for the exposé itself. As far as I can tell, the channel secretly filmed Shakti Kapoor visiting a woman posing as a Bollywood aspirant at her hotel room late at night. After some alcohol, Kapoor said unpleasant and untrue things about a host of film luminaries, including Preity Zinta, Subhash Ghai etc.

Kapoor also told the girl "I want to make love to you" and then apparently went over and tried to embrace her. When she protested, he returned to his seat and did not per-



CROSSING THE LINE: Suhaib Ilyasi

sist with the advance. But he did say that anyone who hoped to make it in Bollywood should expect to sleep around.

The channel has used this footage to make two points, one of which has hit home. The first is that Kapoor is a loose talker and is willing to badmouth Bollywood bigwigs. Most people agree. There is talk of boycotting him, and his career, already on its last legs, may now come to a sad end.

The second point is the more controversial one. The channel says that it has used the secret camera to prove the existence of the casting couch in Bollywood and expose the likes of Kapoor who prey on struggling aspirants.

It is this second claim that has been the subject of controversy. The exposé has been attacked by a wide variety of commentators, ranging from designer Ravi Bajaj to Bhawna Somaya, the editor of *Screen*. Even Tarun Tejpal, the high priest of sting journalism (and the man whose face appeared on India TV's first posters), has said that he has problems with the story, among them his concern that a man's private life is not an appropriate subject for such an exposé.

Then there is Kapoor's own version — for what it is worth. According to him, the girl had been phoning him for months, making obscene suggestions and insisting that he come to visit her. Believing that he was being offered sex on a platter, he went along to her hotel. The girl, he says, encouraged him to come on to her but the telecast version of the encounter cut out her inducements while keeping his own bad behaviour. As for the things he said about Preity, Ghai and the rest, he attributes these — in the manner of Bangaru Laxman before him — to camera and audio trickery.

Even if you discount much of Kapoor's story as self-serving, here's what emerges:

■ The reporter did lead him to believe that he might get some sex. Many men, when invited to a hotel room at night by a girl they've never met, might jump to the conclusion — as Bhawna Somaya wrote in *The Indian Express* — that it was sex not spirituality that was on offer.

■ Shakti Kapoor did not rape her or make a serious attempt to force himself on her. Once she rebuffed his advance, he was reconciled to not getting any. His attitude suggests that he believed that the sex would be consensual. When he realised that this was not the case, he gave up.

■ Shakti Kapoor is not a big-time producer. He is hardly the most obvious choice for a Godfather in film. Given the state of his own career, he is not in a position to give anybody else a role. So why did the channel choose him to check if there was a casting couch in Bollywood? Could it be because the journos believed that he was a nobody who would disgrace himself?

■ The outrage in Bollywood is not about Kapoor's behaviour with the girl. It is over the things he said about Preity, Ghai etc. Certainly, these were offensive things to say, nauseating even. But let's not be confused here: there's little outrage over his advances to the girl. In fact, many people appear to have sympathy for him.

Which leads directly to the moral centre of this story: when does a sting constitute entrapment? And, what is an appropriate subject for a sting?

The story's defenders point to Tehelka. Didn't its journalists approach the likes of Bangaru Laxman and offer money on their own initiative? And if that was okay, then why is the channel's approach to Shakti Kapoor any different?

Well, the broad answer to that is that politicians, bureaucrats, generals, etc. are responsible — at some level — to the people. If a politician accepts a bribe then any favour he does in return is done at public expense. So it is with an army officer. If he takes a bribe to sanction an arms purchase, then the country loses out because our army ends up with a substandard or improperly selected gun.

But a film actor is his own man. He is not responsible to you and me. If Shakti Kapoor sleeps with an actress and then recommends her to his producers, he is not doing you and me a disservice. If the girl does not deserve to be a heroine, then the film will flop and the producer will suffer. You and I are not affected.

That, I think, is the distinction that Tarun Tejpal and others have tried to make. Whether a producer sleeps with his stars is not a matter of public concern; it constitutes his private life (and the private lives of the women he sleeps with). You cannot use the same standards you apply to a public servant who takes a bribe to sanction a weapons purchase for two private individuals who engage in consensual sex, even if one of the parties hopes that the sex will advance her career.

The objection that many journalists have to the Shakti Kapoor story is that it takes methods (hidden cameras, stings etc.) that most of us would use reluctantly and only when there was no other way of exposing corruption, and applies them to areas that are not in the public domain, solely as a means of generating sensational footage and creating a scandal. In the process, it demeans the very basis of sting journalism and transforms it into a Peeping Tom approach to cheap thrills.

That, I think, is the reason why so few serious (or non-serious, for that matter) journalists have come out in support of this story. You can argue about Kapoor's behaviour (if he expected consensual sex from a stranger, his wife can mind but why should we care?), about whether he was entrapped (which, by the way, I think he probably was) but you can't argue about the basis of all journalism: it is about the public's right to know. It is not about using hidden cameras to invade the personal space of private individuals.

So, good luck to India TV. The controversy has given it much publicity and I wish the channel well. But let us not pretend that this is journalism or that it is morally defensible.

# Govt toys with TV watchdog

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

**New Delhi, March 14:** The Centre is mulling the creation of a regulatory body to monitor television content as too much violence and vulgarity are being aired on private channels, I&B minister S. Jaipal Reddy said today.

There has been rising public concern about the increasing instances of violence and obscenity beamed these days.

While films have the censor board to answer to, television, a relatively new medium in the country, comes under no such regulatory authority.

This has resulted in some channels offering programmes with heavy doses of violence and vulgarity to gain popularity.

However, the middle class response, especially those of parents, teachers and social workers, has been against such displays.

The issue came up during question hour in the Rajya Sabha when several members, including C. Ramachandriah, Jaya Bachchan, Sushma Swaraj, Ram Jethmalani and Ravi Shankar Prasad, questioned Reddy on possible censorship for television.

Reddy made it clear that while the Centre would not bring in censorship for television, his ministry was considering a regulatory authority to deal with all these issues. The bill, though, is yet to take final shape.

The government seems to have been aware that middle-class viewers have been worried about the effect violence and sex would have on children, who form a sizeable chunk of TV viewership.

The ministry, therefore, had arranged a round-table of stake holders, including chan-

nels, media heads, cable operator federations, NGOs, educationists and women and consumer organisations, to find a solution to the problem of content regulation.

The meeting yielded several suggestions, but all were against censorship, preferring self-regulation till a regulatory body is in place.

Several media advocacy groups suggested that remixes

of film songs, sometimes accompanied by lewd dancing, must not be shown during prime time.

The timings of adult shows should be shifted to late at night.

The I&B minister said the government had no definite view yet on whether there would be one "grand super regulator" or separate ones. "We are considering this as-

pect..." he said, adding the violation of the law "will be visited with some kind of punishment".

Reddy said action would also be considered against channels airing obscene programmes.

He said the government had taken notice of some "porn stuff" being shown in the garb of sting operations on some private channels and the

ministry was considering taking steps.

He said there was also an advertisement code that banned showing children in any kind of obscene scenes.

Reddy also told the House that in print and electronic media, FDI inflows received by the government between January 2000 and December 2004 in the telecommunications sector was Rs 540.89 crore.

# Green light for *Sins* release

SEEMA GUHA

New Delhi, Feb. 24: Director Vinod Pande's *Sins*, a film that has triggered protests from Christians across the country, will not be banned despite an appeal by the National Commission for Minorities that the government review the film again.

*Sins*, which reportedly tells the story of a priest who falls in love with a woman, is slated for an all-India release tomorrow. Catholic priests are not allowed to marry and must remain celibate after joining the Church.

Tarlochan Singh, the chairman of the commission, had written to information and broadcasting minister S. Jaipal Reddy to review the film after the archbishop of Delhi, Vincent Concessao, lodged a complaint.

The government is relieved that the matter is now out of its purview. The film's producers had gone to Bombay High Court to ensure that *Sins* is not banned. Today, the court passed orders saying that the film can be screened.

*Sins* was passed by the censor board in July 2004, with four cuts and an adult certification. The film's producers approached the appellate tribunal, headed by a retired chief justice, asking for the cuts to be restored. The tribunal passed the film in October, upholding the censor board's decision on three cuts but allowing one scene that had been deleted by the censors to be retained. The high court has upheld the decision of the appellate tribunal and said that *Sins* can be screened.

Singh admitted he had not seen the film but had written to Reddy because the archbishop, a highly respected religious leader, had filed a complaint before the commission. "No, I had not asked the government to ban the film. All I had said in my letter to the minister is for the ministry to take a second look at *Sins* and decide what should be done," Singh said.

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# See no evil

22/2

## Censoring television by another name?

It is disturbing that social activists and academics at a conference convened by Information and Broadcasting Ministry have allowed themselves to be convinced that a regulatory body is needed to check violence and obscenity on television. The small screen has been spared the scissors which are applied for feature films leading to arguments and counter-arguments on the purpose of censorship. In an era of open skies, censorship is somewhat redundant; even in practical terms the Indian censors have failed to ensure meaningful adherence to guidelines throughout the country. Inclusion of channel managers, advertisers, film-makers, academics and social activists may not lead to the kind of consensus that Jaipal Reddy expects after the proposed authority is endorsed by Parliament. He himself argues for self-regulation, which sounds more sensible. The same representatives are seen in censor panels now headed by a personality from the film industry. It has not solved the problem. It has also not ensured that ruling parties and bureaucrats do not have the final say when sensitive issues crop up.

The concern is over the poisoning of young minds by commercial advertisements now aired on television, many of which are seen to cross the *lakshman rekha*. Television does have evil influences. The question is whether the answer is a regulatory authority which sets out to check violence and obscenity but which holds the seeds of censorship of all areas of broadcasting. News bulletins have been kept out of the purview of the regulatory authority. But once the genie is released, there is the chance of authority being abused. Those with vested interests often tend to pursue slogans rather than examine the ultimate consequences of acceding to official control. It may be worthwhile to explore the use of existing laws to check offenders. Scrutiny, in any case, can take place at Mandi House. But there can be no case for killing with a weapon that has become an evil in itself.

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Media  
SFI

# FII<sup>V</sup>s in print media and TV 16/2

**Sudesh K Verma in New Delhi**

Feb. 15. — The information and broadcasting ministry has decided to allow foreign institutional investors (FIIs) up to 26 per cent equity in print and audio-visual news media. Earlier, this concession was available to individual foreign investors. A decision may come soon.

The information and broadcasting minister, Mr S Jaipal Reddy, said the decision of the previous NDA government to allow FDI up to 26 per cent but disallowing FIIs "was not correct". There was no reason to pre-

vent participation by FIIs, he added.

In view of foreign funds not coming contrary to expectations, an impression has gained ground that FIIs have the wherewithal to assess the viability of a good investment. Also, individual foreign players may prefer to come through the FII route, a source said.

When the NDA government formulated the policy, it was generally believed that FIIs may not be interested in investing in news in view of the long gestation period and uncertainties, leading to lots of risk.

It was also thought that individual

investment would make it clear who was interested and who were investing. In the case of FIIs surrogate investment was also possible, a source said.

When asked to comment on whether the Left would agree to allow FIIs, particularly as it had raised the bogey of security issues while objecting to the hike in foreign equity in telecom, Mr Reddy said: "Why should the Left object? The equity cap was not being raised."

He has already declared that the government did not plan to raise the foreign equity cap in this sector.

THE STATESMAN

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# CD case to raise a storm in House

HT Correspondent  
Jammu, February 12

THE SENSATIONAL case of the porn CD allegedly featuring former Miss Jammu Anara Gupta is likely to create a storm during the upcoming Legislative Council session, if the government agencies fail to come up with a White Paper on it.

The president of the Dogra Sadar Sabha and member, Legislative Council, Gulchain Singh Charak said that the Anara Gupta CD episode leading to her being hauled up and the protracted investigation has caused ripples and resentment among the public in Jammu.

Charak told a Press meet that "the inept handling of the case and the underhand tactics adopted have brought a slur on the government machinery and investigating agencies in particular, besides the humiliation caused to Jammuites.

Charak said that "if the investigating agencies failed to come up with a White Paper on the entire episode, the issue would be raised in the coming State Legislative Council session."

"Who are the promoters of the porn CD? Who are the bigwigs and politicians and bureaucrats actively involved in this trade of exploiting the innocent women folk?" He also asked what steps have been taken to check circulation of such porno CDs in the market.

"What is the final outcome of these two different forensic tests, one in Hyderabad and the other at the Chandigarh Forensic Science Laboratory?" Charak asked at the Press conference.

On a query, Gulchain Singh Charak said that Dogra Sadar Sabha had not raised the issue earlier as it wanted to give adequate time to government agencies to complete the investigation and throw light on the real picture.

But, with recent reports of the two forensic lab tests contradicting each other, it is feared that the investigations are not going in the right direction.

# Second lab test a bid to fix Anara?

Rashpal Dasgotra  
Jammu, February 11

THE CASE under which the Jammu and Kashmir police sent a CD allegedly featuring Anara Gupta for testing to the Central



Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) in Chandigarh has nothing to do with Anara.

After investigations by the *Hindustan Times*, it was found that the case against which Jammu SSP Kamal Saini had dispatched the porn CD to Chandigarh was registered against one Krishan Singh, a resident of Bari Barhmana, for allegedly selling pornographic material. Anara Gupta is not mentioned anywhere in the complete FIR.

While the police are tightlipped over this particular FIR, Krishan Singh told HT that the police raided his shop on December 15, seized all the CDs there and booked him. "There was no Anara CD in my shop but there were some English film CDs," he said.

After studying the porn CD sent to them, scientists at CFSL concluded the girl in the film was the former Miss Jammu.

Earlier, scientists at the Hyderabad-based Forensic Science Laboratory had examined a porn CD and concluded the woman in the CD was not Anara. In view of that report, the Crime Branch had closed the case against Anara last Friday. The question is why the Jammu SSP still probing the Anara case after the Crime Branch closed it.



MADRAS  
FEB-10

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2005

## THE NEWS ABOUT AL JAZEERA

FOR A SATELLITE channel that broadcasts only in Arabic, *Al Jazeera*'s reach and influence extend far beyond its immediate audience. Since September 11, 2001, when the United States launched its "war on terror," the network has established itself worldwide as a credible counter to Western, especially American, news channels, some of which functioned as willing accomplices of the Bush administration in 'manufacturing consent' for its international policies. During the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003, *Al Jazeera*, which had just then launched its English language website, was among the most searched for terms on the Internet search engine Google. It not merely refused to toe the Pentagon line on the war; it often set a news agenda that media organisations worldwide scrambled to follow. So the report that acting under U.S. pressure, the Qatar Government, which funds *Al Jazeera*, has fast-tracked plans to sell the channel comes as no surprise. The network has denied any hidden U.S. hand in the proposed sale. Senior Bush administration officials have publicly accused *Al Jazeera* of airing "vitriolic, irresponsible kinds of statements," of "inciting violence," and of "endangering the lives of American troops" in Iraq. In August 2004, the network's Baghdad bureau was shut down to "protect the Iraqi people." For all its boast of building democracies in West Asia, the U.S. has desperately attempted to stifle the sole independent news network in the region.

The real surprise is that the Emir of Qatar, Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani — who, in 1996, did the people of the region the signal service of founding *Al Jazeera* with Arabic broadcasting professionals from the BBC — resisted the U.S. all this while to keep the network functioning. The channel is based in Doha, the capital of

Qatar, and the Emir has been the ideal, non-interfering owner. Much before *Al Jazeera* fell foul of the Bush administration, it antagonised virtually every ruler in West Asia with its inquisitiveness, its factuality, and its exposure of opaque and autocratic ways of governance. Alone among media organisations in the region, it continues to perform this role. The Emir, who abolished Qatar's Ministry of Information and dismantled censorship soon after taking power from his father in 1995, gave \$140 million to finance the network for five years, after which it was supposed to start funding itself. In spite of its massive following in the Arab world, the channel has failed to acquire commercial viability as advertisers, anxious not to rub the region's ruling elites the wrong way, kept away. *Al Jazeera* has survived thanks to the Emir, to its spirited stable of journalists, and to their resourcefulness and cultivation of unusual sources. Unprofitability might be a cause for the proposed sale but it does appear that the Emir is no longer in a position to rebuff the U.S. for the sake of freedom of expression.

The move to sell *Al Jazeera* raises worrying questions about its future. Will it be able to continue presenting the news and views with the same freedom it has so far enjoyed? A name recently voted by marketing professionals as the fifth most influential brand in the world should have no dearth of potential buyers. It is at least a long shot that privatisation could turn out to be a positive development for the network. That of course will depend on who the buyer is. All those interested in the welfare of the peoples of the Arab world will hope that *Al Jazeera*'s next owner will not trade its independence for profit, and will maintain its reputation as a free and fearless challenger to the domination of the world's airwaves by Western media organisations. //

# Nepal gets tough on press

## 2 journalists held, third vanishes after grilling

Agencies  
Kathmandu, February 6

A BBC stringer has "disappeared" after questioning by the army. Two top officials of a Nepalese journalists' body have been arrested. The crackdown on the media, already handcuffed by censorship, has got worse in the past couple of days.

The International Federation of Journalists said today that BBC representative Netra K.C. had "disappeared" after being called to the army barracks in Nepalgunj. It also said Tara Nath Dahal, president of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) was arrested on Saturday while trying to enter the UN offices to seek asylum. Bishnu Nisthuri, FNJ general secretary, was arrested a day before from his home.

BBC Radio's World Service had broadcast an interview with Maoist leader K.B. Mahara, who was critical of Gyanendra for dismissing the Deuba government. The BBC anchor had mentioned its Nepal stringer by name. He also mentioned that since phone lines were disconnected in Nepal, Netra K.C. was nipping across the border into India to make calls. Soon after that, there were reports that Netra K.C. had gone missing.

**Indian TV:** Though Indian news channels have been off the air since Gyanendra seized power (while PTV, BBC and CNN have been beaming as usual), the Nepalese army today denied blocking Indian TV networks. Cable operators may have "stopped the news channels because of their own nationalistic feelings", a senior army officer said.

The government, however, forced schools and colleges in Kathmandu to reopen and warned of stern action against political parties and Maoists if they called general strikes.

\* **More reports on Page 13**



Nepalese soldiers stand guard outside the office of Kantipur, Nepal's largest privately-run publishing and broadcasting house, in Kathmandu.

### Closer home

\* Delhi has directed its border police not to restrict entry of Nepalese leaders, including Maoist leaders, fleeing their country for fear of persecution by the Nepalese army

\* Many cadres of the Communist Party of Nepal have slipped into Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand, where they could begin extorting money from people, sparking clashes with local Naxalite groups, say central security agencies

See Page 3

# Anara to file defamation case

Rashpal Dasgotra  
Jammu, February 4

FORMER MISS Jammu Anara Gupta will file a defamation case against the Jammu and Kashmir Police for falsely accusing her of featuring in a pornographic CD.

Speaking to *Hindustan Times*, Anara's brother Kumar Sambhav said that she has decided to file a case against the state police for forcing her to confess that she had featured in the CD and giving her a bad name not only in the state but the entire world.

"We are already fighting a case against the state po-



Anara Gupta

lice for her illegal confinement. Now we are filing another case in which, we will demand compensation for defaming her," he said.

"If Anara was not in the CD then why did they tor-

ture her and all of us. We will demand compensation from the police for not only defaming Anara but also the entire family," said Raj Rani, Anara's mother.

Anara's advocate Rahul Pant said that his client has already filed for compensation for illegal confinement and they are currently collecting documents to calculate the losses of Anara and her family after police rounded her up. "We are preparing to file a suit against the police department soon," said Pant.

On December 8, Anara's family filed a writ petition, demanding Rs 1 crore as compensation from the po-

lice for illegal confinement.

The case is under trail and the court has demanded the status of Anara Gupta from October 24 — the day she was rounded up — to November 3, the day of the case was registered.

Crime Branch of the Jammu and Kashmir Police closed the case against Former Miss Jammu Anara Gupta, accused of featuring in a pornographic CD, in the Jammu and Kashmir High Court on Friday. IG Crime P.K. Gupta said investigations had failed to establish prima facie evidence against Anara. The court was adjourned till February 17.

# National e-governance plan drawn up

By Our Staff Reporter

*Media*  
*Feb. 15*

**BHUBANESWAR, FEB. 3.** The Union Communications and Information Technology Minister, Dayanidhi Maran, today said that the United Progressive Alliance Government had drawn up a national e-governance action plan to ensure that all citizens had access from their village to economic opportunities within the country and outside.

Inaugurating the three-day 8th National Conference on e-governance here, Mr. Maran said that the mission incorporated numerous mission mode projects principally focussed on improving service delivery to citizens and businesses. These projects were being taken up by

the Centre and the States for implementation in a phased manner in the next three to four years.

Although the conference was an annual event, Mr. Maran said that the current year's focus was on 'Capacity Building.' "Additional competencies would be needed in areas such as performance management, accountability frameworks, cooperation and collaboration across departments and public-private partnership frameworks."

Mentioning that technology has become affordable, Mr. Maran said the myth that ICT was for the rich had given away to an understanding that they afforded huge opportunities for the

economically weaker sections of society as well.

The Minister hoped that the IT kiosks in villages, which numbered about 8,000 at present, would reach the one lakh mark within 2-3 years. "If we leverage e-governance appropriately, it can be done."

The Orissa Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik, said that with the use of ICT tools the government could provide services to common man in his own locality ensuring efficiency, transparency and reliability at an affordable cost.

A number of IT majors and delegate from the Centre and different State governments and industry are participating in the conference.

# Govt clears 74% FDI in telecom

## Imposes Security Conditions, Takes Left Parties Into Confidence

**New Delhi:** The government on Wednesday cleared the long-discussed proposal of hiking the FDI cap in the telecom sector to 74% from the current 49% but imposed stern conditions to address security concerns.

According to the approved policy, majority of directors on the board, including chairman, MD and chief executive officer, shall have to be resident Indian citizens, finance minister P Chidambaram told reporters after the cabinet meeting.

Chief technical officer/ chief finance officer should also be resident Indian citizens. The licensor or department of telecom (DoT) shall be empowered to notify any key position to be held by resident Indian citizens, he said.

"The total composite foreign

holding, including but not limited to investments by FIs, NRI/overseas commercial borrowing, FCCB, ADR, GDR, convertible preference shares, proportionate foreign investment in Indian promoters/investment companies including their holding companies etc, will not exceed 74%," he said.

Thus, 74% foreign investment can be made directly or indirectly in the operating company or through a holding company, he said.

The licensee (company) will have to disclose on a half-yearly

basis the status of such foreign holding and certify that the foreign investment is within the ceiling of 74%.

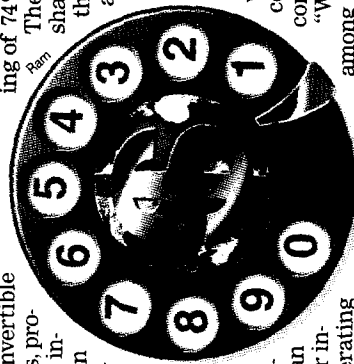
The FDI, as defined, shall be subject to the laws of India and not any other country, he said, adding that the new conditions should be applicable to new as well as existing licensees in the telecom sector.

"We worked closely among the concerned ministries as well as allies, including the Left parties. We have told the Left parties that all security concerns will be addressed after exten-

sive consultation with the technical officers in the home and defence ministries," Chidambaram said.

"And I am happy to inform you that after consulting national security adviser, security agencies, scientific personnel from home and defence ministries, these conditions have been imposed," he added. Commenting on the stern security clauses imposed, he said, "These conditions are necessary irrespective of any FDI cap."

In case of not adhering to licence conditions, now being imposed for addressing security concerns, the licensee(s) granted to the company shall be deemed as cancelled and the DoT shall have the right to encash the performance bank guarantees and it shall not be liable for loss of any kind. <sup>PH</sup>



# Telecom FDI cap raised to 74%

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, February 2

IGNORING opposition from the Left parties, the government today decided to increase the foreign direct investment limit in the telecom sector from 49 per cent to 74 per cent. Finance minister P. Chidambaram said the security-related concerns articulated by the Left allies had been adequately addressed.

All industry chambers — including Ficci, Assocham, PHD-CCI and Nasscom — hailed the move; but the CPI(M) politburo described it as “unfortunate” and having “serious security

## SAFEGUARDS

- Joint ventures with foreign investment must declare shareholding pattern details twice a year
- Domestic partner to have management control; most directors to be Indians
- Chairman, MD, CEO, chief financial officer and chief technical officer to be Indian residents

implications”. It said the party would oppose the decision “both inside and outside Parliament”. To blunt the Left’s objections

and acting on home minister Shivraj Patil’s suggestions, stringent norms have been put in place for private telecom players. Joint ventures with foreign investments must declare shareholding pattern details at least twice a year to the government.

To ensure the sway of the Indian partner, the new norms stipulate the domestic partner will have management control and that the majority of board directors will be Indians. The chairman, managing director, chief executive officer, chief financial officer and chief technical officer will have to be Indian residents.



**FREE** Kidnapped schoolboys Kislay Gupta of Patna (above, centre) & Deepak Kumar of Bhagalpur returned home on Wednesday

**...BUT FAIR?** The timing of the release — a day before the Bihar polls — prompted the BJP to allege an RJD-kidnapper nexus **(See P4)**

# Telecom FDI norms to set off equity recast, IPOs HF-4

Siddharth Zarabi  
New Delhi, February 2

OVERNIGHT A new set of tough conditions has been imposed on all private telecom service providers in India. Analysts say the move will increase appetite for smaller outfits, as they can adapt to suit the new conditions more easily. Larger firms like Hutch and Idea may have to make changes to accommodate new clauses. "Many operators have foreign personnel in key positions. That and existing equity structures will have to change", an official said.

Singapore Technologies Telemedia and Telekom Malaysia International, the foreign shareholders in Idea Cellular, said they will evaluate the option to purchase additional shares in the company, but will have to meet the new norms. Idea is also looking at an IPO in the near future.

Bharti Tele-Ventures will now push ahead with its \$ 240 million ADR. "Its valuations will improve further. Existing strategic in-

vestors are firmly in support and will continue to be so", analysts added.

Joint MD Rajan Mittal said the move would allow greater FDI inflows to fund the massive expansion to reach 250 million telecom users by 2007.

Hutchison's Asim Ghosh said the move was good for the Indian consumer. The company is working on an IPO, which may see Indian shareholders like the Ruias, Analjit Singh and Uday Kotak make a profitable exit. Incidentally, Essar is believed to have taken five new telecom licences for circles like Orissa recently.

The Tatas feel that the decision will bring in more inflows. MD Kishore Chaukar said investment opportunities in India in the telecom sector would get higher priority with several potential investors from the international business and investment community. Both Reliance and Tata's CDMA telecom ventures do not have any foreign shareholders.

## Foreign shareholding

### Bharti Tele-Ventures

Singapore Telecom	<b>28.0</b>
Warburg Pincus	<b>12.2</b>
Others including GDR holders	<b>7.6</b>

### Idea Cellular

STT and Telekom Malaysia (in the ratio of 60:40)	<b>47.7</b>
BPL Communications (holding co) Foreign financial portfolio investors	<b>22.0</b>
BPL Mobile (operating co) Foreign investors in operating subsidiaries	<b>16.1</b>

### Hutchison Essar Telecom

Hutchison International	<b>42.0</b>
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(Figures in per cent)

# SC dismisses 'Black Friday' makers' plea

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** The producers of *Black Friday* the film based on a book on the 1993 serial bomb blasts, could get no relief from the supreme court on Monday.

The court rejected the plea for allowing its release in theatres across the country and asked the petitioner to move the Bombay high court. The film was slated for release on January 28. But a day before that, the high court stayed the release on a petition by some accused in the bomb blasts case. They contended that its release would prejudice their ongoing trial.

Dismissing the petition filed by Mid-Day Multimedia Ltd, the producers of the movie based on a book of the same title, the apex court bench of Chief Justice R C Lahoti and Justice G P Mathur observed that it did not want to interfere with the HC's interim order.

While staying the release of *Black Friday*

on January 27, the high court had said its screening could influence public opinion even though the producers had given an undertaking before the designated TADA court, which is trying the case, to display a disclaimer, "not a true story", before screening of the film.

After the Mumbai TADA court allowed screening of the movie, accused Mustaq Moosa Tarani and others challenged its order before the high court. The apex court noted that the high court has fixed February 3 for hearing the petition filed by the accused and that its interim order was in force till then. It asked the petitioner to appear before the high court for modification of its interim order.

*Black Friday* was given censorship certificate on the condition that its makers would insert a disclaimer right at the beginning of the screening of the movie that it was based on a book and did not impute any innocence or guilt on any of the personalities depicted in the film.



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২০১২

# সম্মেলন

১৩১৩৩

আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকা ২২ জানুয়ারি ২০০৫



শ্রীমতী উম্মেদা মালিকের মত। আপনাকে চান না। আপনি  
কোনকি আপনাকে মৌলিকভাবেই পছন্দ করেন। আপনাকে উত্তেজিত করে  
রাখতে চান। নিখিলেশ্বরী মৌলিক চক্রবর্তী।

# সাবধান

## নজরবন্দী

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আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকা ২২ জানুয়ারি ২০০৫

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আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকা ২২ জানুয়ারি ২০০৫

# নজরবন্দি

প্রথম পাতার পর

কাগজেও এখন পেজ খিঁতে যা বার হয়, দশ-বারো বছর আগে ভাবা যেত না। অর্থাৎ, সমাজ মেনে নিয়েছে। কিন্তু সেলিব্রিটিরা নিজেরা আপত্তি তুললে, সমাজের এই আপাত-সর্বসম্মত নিয়মটা তৈরি হত কি না, তা নিয়েও সন্দেহ আছে,” বলছেন পার্থ।

তা, শুধু সেলিব্রিটিদের প্রাইভেসিতে ধস নামলে না হয় মেনে নেওয়া যেত। কিন্তু আসল সমস্যা তো অন্যত্র। সেলিব্রিটি না হওয়া সত্ত্বেও প্রতি মুহূর্তে আপনি, আমি, হাসিম শেখ, রামা কেবর্তও তাঁক নজরদারিতে। টাকা ভাঙতে এ টি এম মেশিনে ঢুকেছেন, ঢুকেছেন মাল্টিপ্লেক্স সিনেমা দেখতে, কিংবা ঢুকেছেন বহুমূল্য কোনও রেস্টোরাঁয় খাওয়াদাওয়া সারতে। কোথাও নিস্তার নেই। অপেক্ষা করছেন মেট্রো স্টেশনে, স্ট্রীকে গমনা কানে দিতে ঢুকেছেন অলঙ্কারের দোকানে... লুকনো ক্যামেরা প্রতি মুহূর্তেই চোখ রাখছে আপনার ওপরে।

তা হলে? সহজ যুক্তি, নিরাপত্তার খাতিরেই এ সব দরকার। এ টি এম মেশিনে ঢুকে আমি টাকা লুট করছি কি না, মাল্টিপ্লেক্স গোপনে বোমা রাখছি কি না এই ৯/১১-উত্তর পৃথিবীতে তা নিয়ে নিশ্চিত হওয়া সম্ভব নয়। আর সে কারণেই এত নজরদারি।

অতএব, রাষ্ট্রের নিরাপত্তার কারণেই খর্ব হতে থাকবে আপনার-আমার প্রাইভেসি? ফোনে ধরা গেল সমাজতান্ত্রিক শ্রদীপ বসুকে। “৯/১১ এই প্রাইভেসি

দমনের ব্যাপারটাকে একটা ডিভি দিয়েছে ঠিকই, কিন্তু আমাদের দেশে ‘প্রাইভেসি’ ব্যাপারটা বরাবরই পশ্চিমের থেকে কম ছিল।” বলতে বলতে আমাদের গ্রাম, শহর, মফসসলের পাড়া-সংস্কৃতিতে ঢুকে যাচ্ছেন তিনি, “পাড়ায় দেখবেন, অনেকেই খবর রাখেন, আপনি কী চাকরি করেন, কখন বাড়ি ফেরেন। কোনদিন একটু-আধটু টলতে টলতে ফেরেন। আজকের মোবাইল ক্যামেরা বা ইন্টারনেট হয়তো ছিল না, কিন্তু পাড়াভিত্তিক নজরদারিতে আমরা বহুদিনই অভ্যস্ত। হ্যাঁ, এখন নামারকম যন্ত্রপাতি সেই নজরদারি বাড়িয়েছে।”

হ্যাঁ, নজরদারি। রাষ্ট্র, সমাজ বা ক্ষমতা বরাবরই অলক্ষ্য থেকে আপনার ওপর নজর রাখে। কী ভাবে রাখে, তা নিয়ে জেরেমি বেঙ্হাম বা মিশেল ফুকোর মতো দার্শনিকেরা ‘প্যান অপ্টিকন’ মডেল তৈরিও করেছেন। প্যান অপ্টিকন মানে? মনে করুন, উঁচু একটা মিনার থেকে প্রহরী দেখছে। দেখছে জেলখানার অলিন্দে এক রাশ ঘুপটি ঘর এমনভাবে সাজানো যে সেখানে যথেষ্ট আলো-হাওয়া নেই। বন্দিরা একে অন্যকে দেখতে পাচ্ছে না, দেখতে পাচ্ছে না মিনারের ওপরে-থাকা প্রহরীকেও। কিন্তু মিনারবাসী প্রহরী বন্দিদের সবাইকেই লক্ষ্য রাখছে।

ক্ষমতার চরিত্র এ রকমই। নিজেকে বিভিন্নভাবে সে আড়ালে রেখে দেয়, কিন্তু তার সর্বগ্রাসী নজরে সবাই বন্দি।

তা হলে আশ্চর্যটা কোথায়? আশ্চর্য একটাই জায়গায়। তা হল, মোবাইল-ক্যামেরাই বলুন বা ওয়েবক্যাম...নতুন নতুন এইসব প্রযুক্তির সঙ্গে আজ রাষ্ট্র, আইন ইত্যাদি ‘ক্ষমতা’ ঠিকঠাক পালা দিতে পারছে না। বস্তুত, ক্ষমতা তার জাল যত ছড়াবে, জালের ফাঁক কেটে বেরিয়ে আসার তত নতুন রাস্তাও তৈরি হবে। উদাহরণ? দিল্লি পাবলিক স্কুলের এক ছাত্রের সঙ্গে তার বান্ধবী, আর এক ছাত্রীর শরীরী মিলনের ঘটনাটা। মোবাইলে ছবি তুলে অন্য দু’ চারজনকে এম এম এস পাঠায় ছাত্রটি, ব্যাস। রে রে কান্ড। আজকের উত্তর-আধুনিক সমাজে যন্ত্রের কাছে ক্ষমতা যে কতটা অসহায়, নিশ্চয় পরিষ্কার। তহেলকা কান্ড মনে করুন। সে সময়ের রাজনৈতিক ক্ষমতার অন্যতম স্তম্ভ বঙ্গুরু লক্ষণ জানতেনই না, তাঁর সামনে বসা সাংবাদিকের সঙ্গে রয়েছে লুকনো

ক্যামেরা। রাজনীতি, আইন...ক্ষমতার প্রতিটি উপাদানই আজ যন্ত্রশাসনের নতুন রাস্তা খোঁজায় ব্যস্ত। ফোনে প্রায় অসহায় শোনাচ্ছে আইনজীবী গীতানাথ গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়ের গলা, “এ সব সাইবার-ক্রাইম নিয়ে তো এখনও উপযুক্ত নতুন আইন তৈরি হয়নি।”

সাইবার ক্রাইম মানে? ইন্টারনেটে অপরাধ। ব্যক্তিগত অভিজ্ঞতা থেকে একটা মামলার ঘটনা শোনালেন গীতানাথ। স্ত্রী স্বামীর বিরুদ্ধে বিচ্ছেদের মামলা করেছে। স্বামী প্রায়শ নেটে পর্নোগ্রাফিক সাইট খুলে চ্যাট করে। “এটাকে তো বিবাহ-বহির্ভূত প্রেম বা শরীরী সম্পর্কে বাঁধা যায় না। তাই মামলাটা করতে হল অন্য ধারায়। স্বামীর অসহনীয় নিষ্ঠুরতার শিকার হচ্ছেন স্ত্রী।”

ঘটনাটা তা হলে পরিষ্কার। একদিকে বাস্তব দুনিয়ায় যন্ত্রগুলির ওপর নজরদারির যথেষ্ট আইন নেই। অন্যদিকে, বাস্তবের বাইরে, ইন্টারনেটের ‘হাইপার-রিয়াল স্পেসে’ অন্য খেলা। চ্যাটরুমে আপনি যখন ক্লিক করছেন, সেক্স-সাইটে বৃন্দ হয়ে থাকছেন, একই সঙ্গে সেখানে ক্লিক করে ঢুকে

পড়তে পারেন আরও যে কেউ। অনবরত এটাই ঘটছে, আর বাস্তব দুনিয়ায় তারই প্রভাব। পাল্টে যাচ্ছে ‘ব্যক্তিগত’ সংজ্ঞা। ক্ষমতা অবশ্য এই নতুন সংজ্ঞাকে প্রাণপণ আটকানোর চেষ্টা চালাচ্ছে। গীতানাথবাবুরা ভাবছেন নতুন সাইবার-আইনের কথা। পুলিশ বলছে, কোন কম্পিউটার থেকে কে কী সাইট দেখেছে, সেটা তারা বের করে ফেলতে পারে।

তবু লুকোচুরির খেলাটা চলছে। আগে আড়ালে

আবডালে বিক্রি হত পর্নোগ্রাফি, এখনও তাই। তবে, এখন ফুটপাথে লুকিয়ে-চুরিয়ে থাকা পর্নো বইয়ের পাশাপাশি তৈরি হয়েছে আরও একটা বাজার। চাঁদনি মার্কেটে ডিভিডি কিনতে গেলেই বিক্রেতা জিজ্ঞেস করবেন, “বাইরের মাল আছে। সুইডেনের ব্লু। দেব, স্যার?” আগে পর্নোগ্রাফি ছিল শুধুই ছাপা অক্ষরে এবং ছবিতে। এখন, ডিভিডি, ইন্টারনেটে চলমান শরীরী ক্রিয়া।

এই যে ছাপা ছবি থেকে ডিজিটাল ইমেজে চলে এল পর্নোগ্রাফি, রাষ্ট্র বা আইন এটা স্বপ্নেও ভাবতে পারেননি। ভাবতে পারেনি আরও অনেক কিছু। ইন্টারনেটের এত বহুল ব্যবহার। ইন্টারনেট ব্যাপারটা অবিকারই হয়েছিল মার্কিন সেনাবাহিনীর এক প্রকল্পে। সেখান থেকে আজ? বিশ্বায়নবিরোধী আন্দোলনে, তথ্য আদানপ্রদানে ইন্টারনেটই ভরসা। ক্ষমতার নজরদারির যন্ত্রই তৈরি করে দিয়েছে অন্য এক স্পেস। আর সেটাই প্রভাব ফেলছে এই দুনিয়ায়। বদলে যাচ্ছে ‘প্রাইভেসি’র সংগুপ্ত সীমানা। “প্রাইভেসির ধারণা ক্রমাগত বদলায়। প্রাচীন গ্রিসে প্রাইভেট মানে ছিল ঘরবাড়ি এ সব। আর পাবলিক লাইফ মানে রাজনীতি। প্রাইভেট লাইফ বা প্রাইভেসি যে একান্তই আমার, সে ধারণাটা এসেছে অনেক পরে। বাণিজ্যসভ্যতার উত্থানের সময়। ফলে, এই নতুন সময়ও প্রাইভেসির ধারণাটাকে পাল্টে নেবে। প্রাইভেট মানে শুধুই আমার, শুধু তাই পবিত্র যা ব্যক্তিগত...বিশ শতকের সেই চিন্তা এখন আর থাকবে বলে মনে হয় না,” বলছেন ইতিহাসবিদ গৌতম ভদ্র।

এবং কী আশ্চর্য! তত্ত্বপৃথিবীর সঙ্গে পরতে পরতে মিশে যাচ্ছে বাস্তব পৃথিবী। মোবাইল-বিরক্তি নিয়ে প্রশ্ন করেছিলাম জুন মালিয়াকে। নায়িকার সটান উত্তর: “ইউস পাট অব দ্য গেম। মোবাইলের উল্টোপাল্টা কল কিংবা স্প্যাম মেল আমি সঙ্গে সঙ্গে ডিলিট করে দিই। আগে বিরক্তি লাগত। এখন অভ্যাস হয়ে গিয়েছে।” কিন্তু আচমকা কেউ মোবাইলে ছবি তুললে? “তোলে তো। আমার সঙ্গে বন্ধুবান্ধবরা অনেকে বিরক্ত হয়। ভাবে, ওদের প্রাইভেসি নষ্ট হচ্ছে। আর আমি? ও সব ভাবিই না। অভ্যস্ত হয়ে গিয়েছি।”

প্রাইভেসির, ব্যক্তিগত জীবনের নতুন সীমানা, নতুন সংজ্ঞা। নতুন পরিসর। আজকের পৃথিবী আস্তে আস্তে এতেই অভ্যস্ত হয়ে উঠছে।



TUESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2005

NO-10 (81) **MAKING SPEED WITH BROADBAND** Media

FOR THE TELECOM sector, price cuts, and substantial ones at that, have become a familiar routine that has seen domestic long distance and international telephone call charges dropping to just one-tenth of what they were ten years ago. With the reduction in the access deficit charge announced by the telecom regulator from February 1, call charges will drift even lower. Mobile phone call rates, fancifully high at over Rs.12 per minute for even a local call when the service was introduced, are now down to less than a rupee, among the lowest in the world. Consumer response to the price cuts has been appropriate: the number of mobile subscribers has grown from zero to over 47 million in just nine years.

It is such dramatic price-induced growth that the Government would like replicated in the Internet access business. In the 16 years that it has been around, the Internet has not evoked the kind of mass participation it was meant to. Data from the National Readership Survey 2003 put the number of people using the Internet at just over 9 million — the number put out by Nasscom, the software industry's apex body, is much higher at about 20 million — and they do so largely from cyber cafes and workplaces rather than from their homes. The minority that does so from home or office uses dial up; only 0.3 million are connected by dedicated leased lines, fewer by broadband. China, which plugged into the Internet in 1994 (six years after India did), has more than 95 million users, of whom 25 million use a broadband connection. Keen to re-write this dismal Indian scorecard, the Communications and Information Technology Minister, Dayanidhi Maran, launched last week a new broadband initiative by the two public sector telecom units, Bharat Sanchar Ni-

gam Limited and Mahanagar Telecom Nigam Limited. What they set off was a salvo of a kind that rarely emanates from public sector units, which typically have been conservative and slow moving in a competitive situation. With the promise of a minimum access speed of 256 kilo bits per second at just Rs.500 a month, the initiative has set a new price benchmark for the market. Not only has the going price been halved, the minimum speed has been quadrupled from 64 kbps. To stay in the race, service providers in the private sector need to match the new offering, and that should set the stage for a rapid expansion of the customer base.

Matching the growth of the mobile telephone might still not be easy. Making Internet access through broadband affordable is only one aspect of the challenge. Enhancing its utility is equally important. Most users of the Internet in this country still find e-mail the most valuable offering, not all the content it has. The prime reasons for the dissatisfaction are the inadequacy of domestic content, especially entertainment, on the web, and the paucity of material in Indian languages. The potential is obviously much larger in Indian languages; some satellite television channels that started out in English found their viewership multiplied once they switched to Hindi. Much more institutional effort needs to go into getting computer operating systems and browsers to support Indian languages, and porting material in print into the web. Another pre-requisite for Internet connectivity is the availability and widespread use of personal computers. Their population in India is still barely 13 million, the growth having been stunted by the high cost of ownership, made higher by taxes. Price cuts on computers may also be needed to enlarge access to the Internet,

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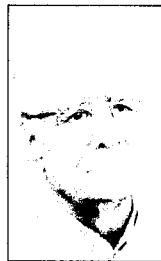
THE HINDU

# Read the small print

I DON'T see any rationale in the proposal to increase foreign equity in the print media. The present limit of 26 per cent has already given sufficient participation to outsiders in a field where they should be least welcome. They are not Indian citizens and they have no stake in the country's ethos of responsible journalism. That some of our newspaper magnets have spoiled it by reducing newspapers to a commodity like soap or talcum powder does not mean that we have abandoned the ethos. It may mean that discriminating readers have not yet asserted themselves.

When India became independent its first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, saw to it that all foreign-owned newspapers were transferred to Indian hands. Not only that, he had the Cabinet pass a resolution in 1955 banning foreign participation in the print media. It is comical that the Congress was the first party to try and change the resolution. Some 12 years ago, the P.V. Narasimha Rao government set up a committee to go into the question of foreign participation. Congress ministers Manmohan Singh, Pranab Mukherjee and N.K.P. Salve were members of that committee and it decided to allow foreign investment in the print media and undo Nehru's legacy. I remember meeting Salve on behalf of the Editors Guild of India at that stage. With great difficulty I was able to persuade him to postpone the implementation of the committee's recommendations until after the elections, which were due a few months from then. The Congress never returned to power to implement the decision. The BJP-led government did so.

It is, however, ironical that the decision to open the door to foreign investment was announced on June 25-26, the dates when the emergency was imposed 27 years ago. It was an interregnum when the press was gagged, free infor-



## Raising foreign equity in the print media will undermine Indian democracy

KULDIP NAYAR

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media 75-8

mation blacked out and an array of journalists detained without trial. The BJP-led government, which approved the 26 per cent equity, never saw the writing on the wall. The press was responsible for its recent defeat. Most newspapers never liked the dangers to which they were exposed because of foreigners who might have their own axe to grind. Freedom of expression was guaranteed under the Constitution to the Indian citizens, not to outsiders.

Strangely, the BJP-led government had assured the nation at the beginning of its tenure that it would not allow foreign entry in newspapers or current affairs magazines. But it went back on that

Indian newspapers. Some of them have already acquired equity in a few newspapers.

It is more than a coincidence that the BJP-led government opened the print media to foreigners through an order it issued after the Gujarat carnage. Was it because the press had vehemently criticised the party? With 26 per cent share, NRI stake-holders will have a veto power on the board of a newspaper and can influence it. Maybe the Vajpayee government felt that this was one way to chastise the press which was critical of it.

Suppose some terrorist outfit abroad acquires shares in a newspaper under a false name and have Indians as their editors and man-

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**In India, the printed word is sacrosanct. People's faith in what appears in print is overwhelming. That is why newspapers cannot be compared with TV**

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promise. Foreign newspapers benefitted considerably under the NDA government. Today, they are bringing out Indian editions of their publications. Nehru was so particular that he did not allow the New York Times to print the paper in India. They can now print here and also have their own editorial content. They have their agenda or politics and are generally opposed to our point of view. In fact, some foreign papers are said to be considering bringing out their own publications. One only hopes that they are not in Indian languages. Still more disconcerting is the "anxiety" of NRIs to buy shares in

agers? In the hawala case, there was an Indian as the kingpin. He was the one who was behind financing terrorists in Kashmir and in some other parts of India. The government's proposal to enhance foreign equity further is fraught with dangers, the consequences of which may harm the nation. This may also have disturbing implications for the quality of democratic discourse in India.

I may not like it, but I can understand the government bringing foreign capital to a field which requires high-grade technology. There is no such justification in the case of the print media. The Indian

press has the best of machines. Our journalists are inferior to none. What is foreign capital supposed to do except interfere in the running of newspapers? It looks as if the government's agenda is different. The whole operation has been mounted without any public debate. That was the case when the BJP-led government decided to allow 26 per cent foreign equity and that is the case now, when the Congress-led government wants to enhance the quantum. Not surprisingly, the ministry of information and broadcasting, always willing for a hatchet job, has been made the authority to permit investments in the print media.

There is an argument that when TV channels have not been stopped from having foreign investment, there is no reason why the print media should be. Newspapers fall in a different category. TV discussions are like fleeting pictures and make very little impression on viewers. The printed word is taken far more seriously. Readers digest articles, mull over the problems discussed, and then make up their mind. In India, the printed word is sacrosanct. People still say: *woh akhbar mein nikla tha* (it appeared in the newspaper). Their faith in what appears in print is overwhelming. That is why newspapers cannot be compared with TV.

Why is this Congress-led government — despite having the Left as an ally — suddenly thinking of increasing foreign equity? What could be the reasons? One could be the pressure of the World Bank which is promoting globalisation without concern about the harm it is causing in various developing countries. Another reason could be the anxiety of the ruling establishment to ensure that the press is no longer a profession but an industry. But what about the government's supposed commitment to strengthening democracy? That, obviously, is no longer a priority.

# Democratic deficit

5/16 8/11 2. Medin  
Freedom of information still hanging fire

**D**emocracy is not just about voting, widespread access to information is a prerequisite to an effective exercise of democracy. Less than widely recognised in India, there seems little point voting if one doesn't know what one is voting for. Sweden enacted freedom of information laws a couple of centuries ago, other rich countries have followed suit. The latest to join the bandwagon is the UK, from whose earlier Official Secrets Act our bureaucracy derives its ethos of obsessive secrecy. They now have a Freedom of Information Act, with an independent tribunal to hear appeals in case information is delayed or refused. Instituting such an act in India would be key to switching from a Fabian socialist model of governance to a liberal democratic model, as information about what the government is doing should not come as a favour to the governed. It is glibly assumed that corruption in India is beyond redemption, that it has become a second nature. What the political class doesn't want to tell us is that there are more prosaic reasons. Where our revenues and expenditures are not transparent, corruption breeds widely.

A Freedom of Information Act that was proposed in 2002 lacked teeth. There were, for instance, no penalty clauses, nor an independent regulatory authority in case requests for information are denied. A draft put forward by the National Advisory Council, which suggests the appointment of autonomous information commissioners with 5-year terms, appointed by the President at the Centre and Governors in states, is a better proposal. The legislation, however, is hanging fire in Parliament. It remains to be seen whether vested interests succeed in scuttling the Act in the form put forward by the NAC. Objections have been filed emphasising that staff have to be diverted to the maintenance of these new records. This is specious. It can be nobody's case that the vast armies of government employes are dangerously overworked, and a little more will make them keel over. Costs will be minuscule, much less than we spend on elections. In any case given that public access to information will pay for itself many times over, it is difficult to agree that costs are a factor.

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# India gains a domain, shifts to India.in

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, January 6

INDIA HAS acquired a national identity in the web world. On Thursday, the government formalised the .in domain name for Indian entities, which will go a long way in keeping internet traffic within India. This will enable Indians to have the option of choosing a .in domain name rather than a .com registration.

Spearheading the Brand India campaign, the minister for communications & IT, Dayanidhi Maran, said: "The objective of creating a .in registry is to make the .in domain registration easier, faster and more transparent and reflect India's global dominance in the IT field."

With the accreditation of four entities — Direct 1, Good Luck Domains, Net4India and Online NIC — as registrars, the ministry has facilitated the adoption of the ".co.in" and ".org.in" domain registrations. Applicants can now get registered online in 24 hours.

The .in domain names have been made available by the National Internet Exchange of India promoted by the IT department and Internet Service Providers Association of India.

Maran today presented a registration certificate to *Hindustan Times*. The certificate recipients included Tata group's Ratan Tata, Bharti group's Sunil Mittal, *Hindustan Times* group's vice chairperson Shobhana Bhartia, N. Ram of *The Hindu* and Aroon Purie of the India Today group.

This newspaper will soon make the change-over from the *hindustantimes.com* to the *hindustantimes.in* domain name.

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## THE NET FOR INDIA

THE NEWLY LIBERALISED norms for registration of '.in' Internet domain names that came into effect on January 1, 2005 represent another welcome step forward in India's quest for a national identity in cyberspace. For a variety of reasons the Internet has not realised its full potential in the country, although it has attracted a user base of nearly five million and has tremendous scope for e-governance, education, and e-commerce. The record of web domains registered with the '.in' suffix is quite underwhelming: approximately 7,000 such registrations have been made so far, an inconsequential drop in an ocean comprising 60 million domain names worldwide. The generally poor response to the '.in' country code Top Level Domain (ccTLD) has been attributed to a rigid bureaucracy, complicated procedures laid down by the registering authority, and, most important, the absence of any perceived benefit accruing from an Indian domain.

Registering an Indian presence has finally become easier for all. The Union Communications Ministry's liberalisation of the relevant norms signals its recognition of the need for a more efficient system that is truly international in character. Under the revamped scheme, it will be possible for anyone to register a '.in' domain, including one with a prefix such as .co.in, .org.in, or .net.in, through one of the registrars accredited by the newly constituted INRegistry of the Government. It is important that the credibility of such a process is, especially in the Indian context, complemented by the ease of use that has come to characterise the Internet. Other domains such as .com and .net remain very popular to this day because they can be registered online using nothing more complex than a credit card. The revised minimum fees of Rs.250 and Rs.500 for different categories of domains have been well received. The registration

process is open initially to owners of trademarks and salesmarks who can opt for the '.in' suffix until January 21 during a "sunrise period," after which others including individuals can apply.

If the Internet has to make significant strides, as the Communications Ministry thinks it will, more needs to be done to upgrade the quality of information technology infrastructure. A reduction in domestic bandwidth prices is a prerequisite for both content development and consumer access. The global Internet experience makes it amply clear that a mere web presence in a widely accepted domain is no indication of success. In the matter of developing content, the new medium — for all its openness, accessibility and reach — has been left largely untapped by universities, scientific institutions, public sector organisations, and government departments in India. This serious weakness has to be addressed in the same proactive spirit that has guided the simplification of the domain name registration procedure. A calibrated policy to expand the base of servers to host the '.in' domains and the availability of domestic and international bandwidth to meet a rise in Internet traffic will encourage institutions, big and small, to exploit the potential of the new medium for content development. The reliability of server farms in the United States — with safeguards against power outages, disasters, and cybercrime — has attracted many Indian companies and even official agencies to host their websites from that country. Many other nations are emulating the American example and developing infrastructure to attract new business. India's own modest start with the National Internet Exchange of India is laudable. It promises a better browsing experience and a cut in bandwidth demand by reducing the traffic that it routed to and from servers abroad — for accessing Indian content.

# GoM on print media meets

10-11-02

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, DEC. 31.** After two abortive efforts, the Group of Ministers (GoM) on print media met for the first time today to plug loopholes in the existing provisions that allowed the publication and printing of the International Herald Tribune (IHT) from India "in violation of existing guidelines". Besides possible amendments to the Press and Registration of Books (PRB) Act, 1867, the GoM also looked at the existing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) cap in newspapers and the demand for allowing foreign newspapers to print in India.

Though the Union Cabinet had decided on September 29 to set up a GoM to take a 'comprehensive look' at the print

media policy and "the violations that may have occurred" over time, this was the first time it met. Headed by the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, the GoM also looked at the existing ceiling on syndicated material in Indian publications dealing with news and current affairs.

The other members of the GoM are the Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Minister, S. Jaipal Reddy, the Law Minister, H. R. Bhardwaj, the Communications and Information Technology Minister, Dayanidhi Maran, and the Science and Technology Minister, Kapil Sibal.

### PRB Act changes

In particular, the GoM discussed the changes suggested

by the I&B Ministry in the PRB Act to ensure adherence to various guidelines governing print media. These had been placed before the Cabinet in September-end after which it was decided that a GoM ought to be set up to take a "comprehensive look" at the emerging scenario, complete with the decisions taken by the previous regime in 2002.

Among the provisions under the GoM's review are the Cabinet resolution of 1955 which was against the publication of foreign magazines and newspapers in India, and the three decisions taken by the Government in 2002 allowing 26 per cent FDI in periodicals and newspapers dealing with news and current affairs and 74 per cent FDI in journals and

speciality magazines while restricting syndicated content in any publication to 7.5 per cent of the total printed area of that issue.

The Ministry had proposed the amendments to the PRB Act primarily to empower the Government to deal with the printing and publication of IHT from India. Of the view that the publication of IHT violates the guidelines prescribed for syndication and the 1955 Cabinet Resolution, the Ministry had asked it to stop publication on June 4.

Since last May-end, the IHT is being published from the Decan Chronicle Press in Kondapur near Hyderabad by T. Venkatram Reddy on behalf of Midram Publications Private Limited.