

Editorial

Imphal Saturday, May 6, 2017

Meddling with the media

The advancement in information technology has made today's world a 'Global village' - the term first coined by Canadian-born author Marshall McLuhan. Man born at the extreme corner of Far East Asiatic countries knows, cry and pray for the kind of disasters that happen in Middle East countries or in Latin America. Installation of internet technologies to cell phones which every human being can afford makes the people of our Earth - whose circumference is estimated at about 40,075 Kilometer staying at a communicable distance. Now every human being equipped with cell phone can now talk or stay in touch with any of their friends or relatives staying thousands miles away. Point bringing here is about the changes in the theory of mass media in relevance to today's journalism. The very concept at which the older generation considered 'proximity' as a characteristic of news is somewhat losing its foot.

Professor M.L Stein, the then chairman of Department of Journalism, California State University, Long Beach, California in his book "Shaping the News" in 1974 wrote that people are more interested in what happens in their neighbours. The one time presumption that "a dog fight on Main Street is of more interest to our readers than fifty thousand foreign troops killed in battle somewhere" seems to have no relevance in today's society. Readers are now interested about happenings at distance places if the subject matters is his or her interest. However, another characteristic of news - 'Prominence' on the hand is becoming a matter of more interested subjects for almost all readers. People now want to know what had happen to their leaders, celebrity or the bureaucrats irrespective of where they stay or which country they reside. Every news readers are eager to know the story of successful personality.

Points bringing up here are not to lecture on what is news and what should be reported but this is an attempt to make some of our critic to understand on why the newspaper especially the kind of ours often published story about real heroes or events that happen far far away from our state. Sometimes a mere insignificant event at which some people are of vested interested are often left of and the result is not always good for we in the media fraternity of Manipur state in particular. The other kind of pressure that the media persons sometimes remain helpless is their intentions to get publish their story. Manipur or say Imphal is not a safe place for even VIPs who are escorted by security personnel days and night. It is an open secret that almost all the politicians including MLAs or Ministers or even the Chief Ministers have linked with the UGs, the only thing we don't have is the proof.

So, what would be the security of those working with the media if in case, some of the individuals or rebels force us to publish stories of their interest. Being taken up this profession, we always stand with our ethics and there is no question of compromising our ethics while publishing stories. But when the government said that this should not be published and this should be published then where is the freedom of speech provided under the constitution of our country. Government machineries can invite news editors and can discussed about the content on objectivity reason but should in no way dictate the media on what or what not to publish. Calls of bandh or blockade by any organisation are in some way an essential news items for media houses living in conflict zone - because it is for the safety and security of the common people that the government machineries cannot guarantee safety. We have PCI guidelines, local code of conduct and this should be respected. Bottom line is that media should not be harassed at any cost for any reason because we chose this profession not merely to earn for living but with full intention to serve our nation.

Kashmir: Cash transactions stopped in 40 bank branches in Pulwama, Shopian

PTI Srinagar, May 6: In the wake of militants targeting banks in south Kashmir, cash transactions at nearly 40 branches in sensitive areas of Pulwama and Shopian districts in south Kashmir have been stopped. The step has been taken following an advisory issued by security agencies asking the banks operating in the two districts to stop cash deliveries at the

branches located in these areas as they apprehend more such attacks. The cash transactions have been stopped at the branches belonging to the Jammu and Kashmir Bank and Ellaiquai Dehati Bank, which were targeted by militants recently. A senior official of Jammu and Kashmir Bank said all other banking operations including ATM services would continue in these areas.

Urban Transformation through Pathbreaking Reforms

By: Vinod Behl

The three-year term of Modi government is marked by its commitment of ensuring development for all through its progressive approach of 'Reform, Perform & Transform', putting an end to years of policy paralysis, through good governance.

Fully realizing that urban development by way of boosting real estate, housing and infrastructure, is key to economic development, NDA government's major focus on these vital sectors, with a view to reform economy and ensure long-term sustainable growth, is showing visible results. A number of landmark reforms and policy initiatives taken by the government in line with its vision, have paid rich dividends, belying the claims of critics that the government's economic development programmes have largely remained on ground and their benefits are not reaching people. The government's intention to give a fillip to urban development, was clearly reflected in its first full-fledged budget in which allocation for infrastructure development was hiked by Rs 70000 crore besides creating Rs 4000 crore National Investment & Infrastructure Fund and earmarking Rs 22000 crore for housing and urban development. And in the following budget, a massive Rs 2.31 lakh crore was made available for roads, highways and railways. And in this year's budget, in a bid to put housing especially affordable housing on fast track, the government undertook a far reaching reform to accord it the status of infrastructure.

It is significant to mention that over the last three years, central assistance of Rs 18500 crore per annum was given for urban infrastructure development as against Rs 9850 crore a year during 10 years of UPA regime. In fact, immediately after taking over in May 2014, NDA government set out on its reform agenda by addressing the long pending issue of liberalising FDI in real estate and construction sector to ensure better access to foreign funding

for housing. As the government has done away with unnecessary restrictions on flow of NRI and foreign capital, the liberalised FDI policy has helped boost fund flows in a big way. According to United Nation's World Investment Report 2016, India has attracted a record \$5.7 billion of FDI inflows in real estate besides receiving \$32 billion in private equity funding. The ushering of Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) reform, is set to further bring in the much needed funding to the sector.

In the backdrop of India facing a massive urban housing shortage of 18.78 million units, the government took a major reform initiative- 'Housing for All by 2022', focusing on affordable/low-cost housing. This mission for urban housing is aimed at promoting affordable housing and housing for weaker sections through credit-linked subsidy, PPP, subsidy for beneficiary-led individual house construction, besides slum rehabilitation. And for this purpose, a special provision of Rs 4000 crore was made for National Housing Bank, besides tax breaks for home buyers and property developers. Hundred percent service tax exemption was extended to affordable housing developers, besides providing income tax incentives. With the inclusion of EWS and slum redevelopment under CSR, developers got entitlement to 100 percent tax deduction.

The government complimented it with mortgage reforms to give further push to affordable housing. In addition to effecting over 150 bps cut in interest rates, the RBI introduced a new Marginal Cost of Funds Based Lending Rate (MCLR) for speedier transmission of rate cuts to home buyers. The new Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS) under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) broadened the scope of interest subsidy to cover those having an annual income of Rs 18 lakh and availing maximum home loan of 12 lakh, with a view to benefit more middle income people. In the context of Housing for All, the real game changing reform

done by Modi government is Real estate Regulation Act (RERA) that had been hanging fire for almost a decade. RERA (operationalised from May 1, 2017) that empowers and protect property consumers, will help make homes affordable to masses. Aimed at regulating real estate, with fair and transparent transactions, it will also boost investors' confidence. The passage of Benami Transaction Prohibition Bill, together with measures to check influx and circulation of black money, including demonetisation, not just had a sobering effect over land and property prices but also boosted investor sentiment.

There is a paradigm shift in government's strategy for urban transformation by improving urban governance through focused reforms for better service delivery. The focus is now on achieving better resource utilization and targeted result through area based development against open-ended and project based approach in past. This new urban development approach has shown results. Over the last 3 years, central assistance of 18500 crore per year was given for urban infrastructure development as against 9580 crore in a year during 10 years of UPA government. As part of this strategy to accelerate urban infrastructure for inclusive and sustainable development, urban missions like AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation & Urban Transformation), PMAY, Smart City Mission, Swachh Bharat Mission, City Development & Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY), Urban Transport, have been launched which have made considerable progress.

Under AMRUT, projects worth over Rs 10000 crore have already been awarded for execution, out of a total of 77000 crore, approved for entire mission till 2019-20 for providing drinking water to 2 crore urban households in 500 mission cities, besides augmenting water supply to 135 litres per capita per day, expanding sewage and drainage systems and non-motorised transport. The Smart City Mission

aimed at improving the quality of life of 13 crore urban people in 100 cities, has made good progress. A total investment of Rs 133368 crore has also been approved in 60 mission cities, about 150 projects worth Rs 1600 crore in 20 cities are close to completion and projects worth Rs 30000 crore would be either under execution or awarded by June 2017. Swachh Bharat Mission, being implemented at a cost of Rs 62009 crore to benefit 32 crore urban people in terms of improved sanitation, has already succeeded in making 633 cities Open Defecation Free (ODF) out of statutory 4041 cities and towns to be made ODF by October 2019. Already 31 lakh individual and 1.25 lakh community toilets have been constructed and a target of 100 percent door to door collection and transportation of municipal waste achieved in 3995 out of a total of 81015 urban wards. As part of Urban Transport Mission, about 68 km of new metro section has been opened and 5 new metro projects, spanning over 143 km have been sanctioned in Anmedabad, Nagpur, Lucknow, Chennai Extn and Pune, at a cost of Rs 41571 crore. Plans are afoot to build metros in 50 cities.

Notwithstanding all these achievements, the challenge before Modi government is to not just ensure that the reforms undertaken so far reach at a grass root level, to benefit a common man but also to carry out its unfinished agenda. The immediate challenge is to ensure smooth take off of RERA and GST. Equally significant is the effective implementation of 'Housing for All', to meet the target of building 50m houses by 2022, besides ushering in new reforms like single window mechanism to fast track clearances for promoting ease of doing business, rental housing and reforms related to labour, stamp duty and registration of property. *Author is a Delhi based senior journalist. Regularly writes for major dailies on real estate and infrastructural issues.*

National and International News

85 students hospitalised after gas leakage in south-east Delhi

PTI New Delhi, May 6: Eighty-five school students were hospitalised today after they complained of irritation in eyes due to gas leakage from a container depot near their school in southeast Delhi's Tughlaqabad area. The Delhi government has ordered a magisterial probe into the incident. According to the police, a call was received at around 7:35 AM about some chemical leakage at customs

area of Tughlaqabad depot, which is located near Rani Jhansi School for girls run by the city government. Following the incident, teams of police and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) as well as CATS ambulance reached the spot. "Some chemical leakage at customs area of Tughlaqabad depot has caused eye irritation to the girl students in Rani Jhansi school," DCP (Southeast) Romil Baaniya said.

The students were admitted to three hospitals. The police said that the source of leakage is yet to be ascertained. According to Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, the students are fine. "85 girl students, who had complained of irritation in their eyes due to gas leakage, have been admitted to three hospitals. I spoke

to doctors who told me that they are normal," Sisodia, who also holds the education portfolio, said. He said that he has ordered the area district magistrate and SDM to launch a probe into the gas leakage incident at the container depot. "There was an exam in the school which we have cancelled following the incident," the deputy chief minister said.

Army arrests 12-year-old PoK boy along LoC in Rajouri

PTI Jammu, May 6: A 12-year-old boy from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir has been arrested by the Army after he crossed over into the Indian territory along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district, an Army official said on Saturday.

Army strongly suspects that he was sent by the Pakistan Army along with terrorists to conduct probe of infiltration routes and patrol track of the Army. "A patrol of the Indian Army along the Line of Control (LoC) apprehended a 12-year-old intruder from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) who had crossed over to this side of LoC late on Friday evening in Nowshera sector of Rajouri district", defence spokesman said. The boy named Ashfaq Ali

Chauhan, who is the son of a retired Baloch Regiment soldier of Dunder Pel village in PoK, was found moving suspiciously near the LoC on our side, he said. On being challenged by the Army's patrol party, the boy immediately surrendered, the spokesman said. It is suspected that the boy was sent by the terrorists in connivance with the Pakistan Army to probe routes for infiltration across the Line of Control. Army sources said. This exposes Pakistan on the human rights front as to how a 12-year-old child has been pushed by them into the Indian territory to probe LoC areas seeded with minefields in a highly militarised belt, Army sources said. The boy will be handed over to the police by the Army for further investigation.

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