

## **Press After independence**

The establishment and bureaucracy of the new born state was mostly comprised of British trained officials. So in a way the same approach regarding the freedom given to press travelled down to Pakistan from Raj. Quaid-e-Azam addressed the opening session of Pakistan's Constituent Assembly on 11th Sep. 1947 which was presided by Jugindhar Nath Mandal. In this session Quaid-e-Azam took an oath of the president of the Assembly and after that delivered a speech in which he announced his policy and the shape of the constitution that this assembly will form, and along with this he also defined the to be structure and form of the political scene of Pakistan. A part of the speech was:

“...you are free to go to your mosques, you are free to go to your temples or to any other place of worship. It has nothing to do with the business of state and politics. By pursuing this policy you will realize after sometime that Hindus will cease to be Hindus and Muslims will cease to be Muslims not in religious sense because religion is a matter of personal faith for everyone. But as citizens of Pakistan for political purposes, all citizens will have equal rights in Pakistan...”

A press advice was issued to radio and newspapers in which they were asked not to publish the complete text of Quaid's speech. Dawn's editor Altaf Hussain did not like the idea as he was very close to Quaid, he called PID to find out who is behind it and what part of the speech they don't want to be published but the true source could not be located. This is how the press-govt relationship began in Pakistan.

## **Development of Press**

### **1947-1958**

When Pakistan appeared on the map of world, cold war or ideological war was going on between Soviet Union and America and the channel being used was media; whole world was divided in two blocks i.e. Communist block and American block. When Pakistan came into being it also has to choose between the two, so leaders of the nation decided to be a part of American block and after that numerous actions were taken against those newspapers, magazines and journalists who were more bent towards communist school of thought.

Progressive Papers Limited (PPL) was an important organization that was formed by Mian Iftikharuddin, a former member of a communist party of India, when Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah asked Muslim journalists of sub-continent to publish newspapers from different places to spread the message of Muslim League and to support the Pakistan Movement. The intellectuals in PPL were mostly those that took part in Progressive Writers Movement (1936) and it is the only organization in the history of Pakistan that gathered such a huge number of laureates and intellectuals under its roof.

After joining American Block the first newspapers and publications that were targeted by the government were PPL's publications. In 1953 Communist Party was banned; from 1947-53 almost 58 magazines and books were banned by the establishment and removed from the market.

### **1958-1969**

On October 7, 1958, President Sikander Mirza abrogated the Constitution and declared Martial Law in the country. This was the first of many military regimes to mar Pakistan's history. With this step, the Constitution of 1956 was abrogated, ministers were dismissed, Central and Provincial Assemblies were dissolved and all political activities were banned. General Muhammad Ayub Khan, the then Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, became the Chief Martial Law

Administrator. The parliamentary system in Pakistan came to end. Within three weeks of assuming charge on October 27, 1958, Sikander Mirza was ousted by General Ayub Khan, who then declared himself President. Ayub Khan within the first week of his coup detained Syed Sibte Hassan, editor of weekly Lail o Nihar, Ahmed Nadim Qasmi, editor of Imrooz and Faiz Ahmed Faiz, editor of Pakistan Times who worked for Progressive Papers Limited (PPL) and went a step further and took over the PPL's papers on April 18,

1959, this move was aimed at reining the PPL (publishing Pakistan Times, Imrooz, Lail-o Nihar, Sports Times) from roaming in the "*DISTANT ORBITS AND ALIEN HORIZONS*" as the PPL backed Progressive Ideology. Board of directors of PPL was dissolved and an administrator was appointed.

### **Press and Publications Ordinance (PPO)**

In 1961 Press and Publications Ordinance was formed and enforced to keep the newspapers under government's control. It was a black law completely boycotted by media organizations and journalists. According to one clause stated in this ordinance all newspapers were ordered to publish DPR's or PID's published handouts as it is which is simply against freedom of press.

In 1963, the provincial governments introduced West Pakistan Press and Publications Ordinance and East Pakistan Press and Publications Ordinance, the pressure built by these provincial laws resulted into an amendment in PPO but even after that, its harshness remained same. In 1964, National Press Trust was established and all the PPL papers were given to this monster. NPT had right to take over any such newspaper, magazine which is apparently financially not able to run the newspaper or is dangerous to country's security. Apparently, it was an independent body but actually it was state-controlled. After PPL's publications Daily Mashriq was also handed over to NPT, Sindhi paper Hilal-e-Pakistan was also taken over, Morning News, which was being published since 1936 first from Calcutta and after partition from Karachi and Dhaka was also taken over. Some Bengali newspapers were also taken over by NPT. Dawn, Jung, Nawa-e-waqt were the only papers that were not taken in government's custody but they still had a tough time in Ayub's time as they were not liked by government.

Another harsh action taken against press by Ayub's government was the condition imposed on international news agencies that they cannot directly send news to their subscribers in Pakistan. They were asked to send their news via APP or PPI. This action was taken to control and restrict the news and information coming from international media from reaching to Pakistani people.

### **1969-1971**

In March 1969 second Marshal Law was enforced in Pakistan by General Yahya Khan. After taking over he accepted all the political demands that were being asked by the political parties for quite a time now. Press was also given complete freedom and on PPO a moratorium was put that it cannot be used against press any further.

Although freedom of press was enjoyed by the media and newspapers but still General Yahya's period is not considered as a flourishing period of journalism as in this period no ethics were observed by the newspapers, with an exception to few reputable papers. Many dummy papers were revived; free insulting and even abusive language was being used. Other than state owned papers and some private newspapers journalistic scenario was quite dark, this time, out of freedom given to the press.

In this period some actions were taken against journalists. First target was again PPL, 24 journalists were fired from Imroz, Pakistan Times & Lail-o-Nihar. These fired

journalists formed Journalist United and revived a dummy paper Azad. A rebellion case was filed against the editorial board of Azad in the Marshal Law court as they were favoring the Majority Party that won the election. This action made it clear that even in General Yahya's government freedom was restricted to immorality, not to the truth.

### **1971-1977**

In 1971 crisis, journalists and newspapers were under strict observation and no journalist or newspaper was permitted to write about situation or incidents happening in East Pakistan, to keep the people blind of the situation. Freedom of press that was bestowed on newspapers and journalists was for obscene and immoral things, not for objective or unbiased reporting. People's right to know was an unacceptable thing to the government.

Later, nation's anger over country's humiliating defeat by India boiled into street demonstrations throughout country. To forestall further unrest, General Yahya hastily surrendered his powers to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan People's Party.

After Dhaka fall media played a great role in re-boasting nation's morale that were very disappointed over country's division into two parts and brought them back to the real life. Even then Draconian law, PPO was revived again and used against the press by the new government. Weekly Outlook and Punjab Punch were closed down using this ordinance despite the fact that Punjab punch and outlook were among those papers that supported PPP in election. Different governments used different actions against newspapers and journalists in different times. However most actions usually taken by the governments against newspapers to show their anger and to punish them are:

- Quota of Official ads is reduced or abandoned.
- Newsprint quota is reduced.
- Ending up subscription of newspapers in public institutions.
- Not inviting journalists to official functions and not to let them cover official meetings, seminars or functions.

**In Pakistan three major organizations have been formed to secure the journalists', newspapers' and editors' rights. They are discussed below:**

#### **APNS**

All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) is the organization of the Pakistani newspapers' owners. Its election is held every year; three major groups of newspapers are the major players of APNS that are: Jang Group, Dawn Group and Nawa-i-Waqt Group. These groups are accused for bribing the smaller newspapers and getting benefit at large from the successive governments. This is the major body which refuses to give the Wage Board Award to the working journalists. According to the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists, the labor laws are violated in the Pakistani newspaper industry but no government dares to take action against these powerful elite of the country. It was founded in 1953 by the major, pioneering editors and publishers of they day to facilitate the exchange of views between the editors of the major publications of Pakistan and to protect the rights of newspapers by giving them a voice to appeal unfair decisions against them.

Today, the APNS is a clearing house of sorts for its member publications, safeguarding the commercial interests of newspapers under its membership (including tax payment). For example, if a company advertises in a publication but refuses to pay, the publication complains to the APNS. The APNS gives the agency an ultimatum: pay or get blacklisted.

Its founders were: Hamid Nizami, Altaf Hussain – all the important, pioneering editors of the day.

Before APNS in 1950, the Pakistan Newspapers Society (PNS) was founded (to emerge the existing publishers), when the editors of the time realized that the print media needed organization and needed a clearing house. However, the PNS didn't last for very long as it didn't receive much support from publishers, advertisers or authorities.

Three years later in 1953 the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) came into being. It was badly needed to 'facilitate the exchange of views amongst newspaper owners on matters of common interest.

APNS successfully gave newspaper owners the means to watch over, protect, preserve and promote the rights and interest of the newspaper industry on matters directly or indirectly affecting its rights and interests.' The Daily DAWN was the founding member.

#### **CPNE**

A couple of years later after APNS came into existence, in 1955, the Council of Pakistan Newspaper's Editors (CPNE) was established as a representative body of the editors of the publications of Pakistan. Both the CPNE and the APNS struggled against black press laws that trampled over the freedom of the press.

#### **PFUJ**

Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) is located in Islamabad, Pakistan. PFUJ is arguably South Asia's first association representing the journalists of an entire country. To its credit, in the 50-odd years since its inception it has always stood out as a symbol of freedom of speech. The battles it waged for press freedom and for a democratic dispensation in the country will always remain etched in the collective memory of Pakistanis.

To this day, PFUJ remains committed to the ideals for which it was established in 1950. Set up primarily to work towards a better working environment for Pakistani journalists, it didn't remain isolated from the struggles and campaigns launched by the civil society. In fact, it was in the vanguard whenever sacrifices needed to be made and freedoms were to be won.

Pakistani journalists are although following some code of ethics on their own as different media organizations and newspapers have their own code of ethics but there is no unanimous written code of ethics for the country's press which is mainly because PFUJ has always stood on the demand that the government should first abolish the black laws against press and after that talk about the code of ethics. In established democracies, press and media have their own independent bodies, court of honours and code of ethics to keep the media, press and journalists accountable. Among the laws that are used against press, newspapers and journalists, other than press/ media laws, are laws of defamation and liable. Another law of contempt of court is also used against press and journalists particularly in case of court reporting.

#### **1977- till date**

General Zia-ul-Haq came to power by overthrowing Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, after widespread civil disorder, in a military coup on July 5, 1977 and imposed Martial Law. He assumed the post of President of Pakistan in 1978 which he held till his death. He was assassinated in a planned aircraft crash on August 17, 1988 under mysterious circumstances.

18 magazines and newspapers were closed down and almost 150 journalists were arrested and given different punishments by the Marshal Law courts in this period. For a long time pre-censorship was also imposed on the newspapers, no newspaper

could publish anything without prior approval from the Information department. In protest for quite a time newspapers kept publishing leaving an empty space for censored news but then they were ordered by the Information Department to publish or give some other news in place of censored news. Till 1988 these restrictions continued. In 1988, General Zia-ul-Haq died in a planned aircraft crash. After that the new caretaker government repealed PPO and introduced a new and a better ordinance Registration of Printing Press and Publications Ordinance (RPPPO). RPPPO was a sigh of relief for the journalists and newspapers since then press is comparatively enjoying and working in a better environment and did not have a major clash with the government. It was just in 1997-99 Nawaz Sharif's government had some problems with the Jang Group of Newspapers.

On 12h October, 1999 General Musharraf took over but no new law or additional restrictions were imposed on the press rather Musharraf's government appreciated the private sector and gave them a chance to invest more in electronic media which resulted into many new radio and TV channels.

Now PTV is facing competition not only at national level in the form of private channels but also internationally with other channels some of which are very popular among people. It is not possible for a person to watch all channels; generally people adopt short listing policy in which either they short list channels or short list programs that they want to watch. Now almost all channels are commercial therefore they also have to fight to get ads because without ads no channel could exist in the market.

Due to the cable technology now people are having more variety in entertainment and information available to them. Therefore it can be said that the private channels and satellite/cable technology has given some liberty to the people for making a better choice that did not have before.