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PRIME TIME



Minoo Masani: Casting the first stone

Television sans vision

Two persons — a filmmaker who gave us our best serials and a venerable old man who is one of the founding fathers of the nation — feel the same way about Doordarshan.

Kundan Shah says, "It's very easy to win over people by giving them entertainment but that is not the role I envisage for television. It's like buying a newspaper and finding it full of comic strips only. Why hasn't television conducted a survey on Bofors? Anywhere in the world it would have been done. But here, it is totally government-controlled, so what do we get apart from the government's point of view? And that is why they crowd the six hours on air with entertainment so that they can avoid the darker side."

Minoo Masani, deciding to do something about it has filed a case against the Union government for denying him a licence to set up an independent broadcasting station. Even the child in the streets knows that Doordarshan parrots what the ruling party wants it to.

Hence it is surprising that there is no widespread clamour to do something about this. We have accepted that Rajivdarshan is Rajiv's birthright, that prime time is for the

Prime Minister. We have got too addicted to the sitcoms to bother about the real role of television in a developing country.

How many of us ask ourselves, like Kundan Shah, whether entertainment is the only purpose of television? And of those who do, how many get up to do something concrete about it like Minoo Masani?

How correct Kundan Shah is when

chairman of the University Grants Commission, along with P C Joshi, chairman of the working group for software development has pointed out this anomaly. And most ironically on Doordarshan itself. The occasion was the setting up of the 200th Low Power Transmitter on June 21 this year. The only logic behind this hectic pace of setting up transmitters in rural areas without any programmes aimed at villagers seems to be to save the money on Cong(I) posters. And all this is at the taxpayer's expense.

Yet another example of the ludicrous depths to which Rajivdarshan has plunged was brought out by *Shatabdi Purush*, the programme telecast on the birth centenary of Govind Ballabh Pant. It began by showing us the house where Pantji was born, his parents etc. Hardly had it gone on for a minute when Rajiv Gandhi butted in blah blating in the most boring way about Pantji. Five minutes later we were again taken to Pantji's childhood, the school where he studied. Then again Rajiv came on abruptly with his blah blah tributes. After him, Narasimha Rao (reading a text). Then Balram Jakhhar (reciting a couplet). Then R. Venkataraman (reading a text). When all had finished we were shown pictures from Pantji's album and some footage about the independence struggle. Then Rajiv Gandhi again! This time he went

on uninterrupted till the end. When he finished the audience clapped. Only six minutes of the 20-minute programme were on Pantji and the rest on meaningless blah blah about him. The best part of the joke was that Govind Ballabh Pant's son, K C Pant, the Union Minister, was kept out of the programme!

About serials. Ashok Kumar fails in the portrayal of Bahadur Shah

How many of us ask ourselves like Kundan Shah, whether entertainment is the only purpose of television? And of those who do, how many get up to do something concrete about it like Minoo Masani?

he says, "In our country there are lots of problems, lots of solutions, lots of other things that require people's participation. Television should be able to achieve that. It should be a school at a different level."

But what is Doordarshan doing now? Beaming noodle, cadbury and cola ads to starving farmers. No less a personality than Professor Yashpal,

Zafar. He is best when is required to be breezy and off the cuffish. He just can't do tragic roles. As a result Bahadur Shah Zafar comes out as an irritated, whining old man instead of the poet and philosopher he was. This really is tragedy with a tragic figure. A travesty of justice. But then that is Doordarshan for you.

Sunil Singh

Ignore Oppn. charges, Cong (I) workers told

By A Staff Reporter

BOMBAY, Sept. 12: Congress (I) leaders today exhorted their party workers to ignore "propaganda unleashed by the Opposition to tarnish the party's image."

Shivraj Patil, Union Minister of State for Defence Production said there was no substance in the accusations put forward by the Opposition on Bofors gun deal.

General G.S. Arora (Retd.), a sympathiser of the Opposition, has certified that the guns are good and that proves everything, Patil claimed.

New forest conservation bill on anvil

KANPUR, Sept. 12 (PTI): Central Government will introduce a new Forest Conservation Bill in the next Parliamentary session to save the greenery in the country as the present ecological imbalances had created havoc like drought and floods, Bhajan Lal, Union Minister for Environment and Forest said here today.

Bhajan Lal, who is here to review the Ganga Action Plan at Kanpur, told pressmen that the main reason for the present worst drought prevailing in different parts of the country was the ecological imbalances.

The proposed bill would be strictly adhered to and the bill provided penalties of Rs 10,000 and imprisonment of three years for illegal felling of trees.

LIC's novel scheme for journalists

BHOPAL, Sept. 12 (UNI): The Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India has drafted a novel a group insurance-cum-pension scheme for working journalists.

The LIC sources said the scheme submitted to the Madhya Pradesh Government envisaged an insurance over between Rs 25,000 to Rs 40,000 and a monthly pension ranging between Rs 500 to more than Rs 1,000, depending on the age and salary of the beneficiary.

The sources said the mixed group insurance and superannuation social welfare scheme for a class like journalists was necessitated because of the absence of fixed service rules or a

He was addressing, party workers at a function organised by Bombay Regional Congress Committee (I) to focus on the drought situation of the country. But surprisingly none of the leaders spoke on drought.

Patil said the Opposition parties were trying to form a united front without any similarity in their aims, programme and philosophy.

These parties are trying to divert the people's attention from the real issues, he said.

'WORK FOR POOR'

Member of Parliament, and General Secretary of All India Congress Committee (AICC-I) Oscar Fernandes appealed to the party workers to continue working for the poor people, be they in Congress or Opposition ruled State.

The people of Karnataka have come to know of the hypocritical behaviour of the Janata government and of the Chief Minister, Fernandes said.

He stressed the fact that while Rajiv Gandhi has been extensively touring the country, Ramakrishna Hegde did not go to his own people.

"We have exposed the Janata government," he added.

Sanat Mehta, Convenor of the Central Drought Relief Committee said

that the communist parties are keen on repeating their past mistakes.

He appealed to the Left parties to strengthen the hands of the Congress(I) and advised that they should not go after V P Singh, "who is not at all a force."

'NO OPTION TO CONG.'

Mehta said the Congress (I) "has no alternative until the Communist parties can build a Socialist or Communist alternative."

But today the Left front in West Bengal is diverting the Central funds to strengthen their party, Mehta charged.

"V.P. is no J.P." and he should not behave so, Mehta said and added that while Jayaprakash Narayan was a true leader, "V.P. Singh is no more than an opportunist power seeker."

Earlier, President of BRCC(I) and MP, Murlidhar Deora invited the Congress leaders and requested that the Drought Relief Committee formed by BRCC(I) should be formed into a trust so that more resources could be generated.

Other speakers at the evening function were G.K. Moopanar, MP and General Secretary of AICC, Jaffer Shariff, and V. Subramaniam, Minister for Housing.

Sena-commissioner war escalates

By A Staff Reporter

BOMBAY, Sept. 12: Civic standing committee chairman Pushpakant Mhatre today alleged that Municipal Commissioner S.S. Tinaikar "boycotted" an official function inaugurated by Mayor, Dr. Ramaesh Prabhu, but Tinaikar said he was away as he had to attend a funeral.

"It is very obvious that Tinaikar boycotted the function, though he would have us believe that he was busy with some other engagement," Mhatre told this paper.

Tinaikar however, said he had to attend the funeral this morning of Mrs. M.G. Wagh, wife of a retired State Inspector General of Police, who is a close friend of ours.

The official function was to inaugurate a beach cleaning cum levelling tractor at Juhu beach this morning.

"Mrs. Wagh passed away at

around 2 a.m. today and I had to go to the funeral," Tinaikar said. "Why should I boycott the Juhu function?"

TRACTOR INAUGURATION

The tractor was inaugurated by Dr. Prabhu, but the official civic machinery did not release a press note till late this evening.

Mhatre said Tinaikar had initially agreed to be chief guest at the function.

"But two days ago, he sent a message through his personal assistant (PA) to my PA, saying he would not be able to attend the function due to some other engagements."

Mhatre added, "As far as I know he is at present holidaying at Tansa (lake), but I am not too sure."

Countered Tinaikar, "He (Mhatre) could have asked me or even my office and he would have known where I was."

"If I had to boycott the function,