

TV & VIDEO WATCH 3

By Anthony D'Silva

THERE is no existing law, nor any law enacted by Parliament, restricting the rights of citizens to carry on the business of establishing and running broadcasting stations. Hence, the complete restraint on all citizens of India from exercising their right to

Writ puts govt. in tight spot

freedom of speech and expression through the medium of setting up broadcasting stations for radio and

television is clearly ultra vires, Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution of India. That is the gist of the writ petition

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Mr. Minoo Masani (above) and Mr. P.C. Chatterjee have challenged the government's monopoly over the medium of broadcasting. The petition has put the government in a tight spot as all along it has been running the two media, radio and TV, as a monopoly without the backing of the constitution of law.

filed by two eminent persons, Mr. Minoo R. Masani, former Swatantra MP and member of the constituent assembly and Mr. P.C. Chatterjee, former director-general of All-India Radio. The petition was admitted by Justice Varava of the Bombay high court last Friday but the date of hearing is yet to be fixed.

The petition challenging the government's monopoly over the medium of broadcasting has put the government in a tight spot as all along it has been running the two media, radio and television, as a monopoly without the backing of the Constitution or the law. The admission of the petition has led a heated debate among commentators and people working in the media as to whether individuals can establish and run their own broadcast-

company for the purpose. It is proposed that the board of directors of this company shall comprise men and women of high standing and integrity, as also with a knowledge of the technical aspects of broadcasting. Initially, the headquarters of the proposed broadcasting station will be in Bombay.

The writ petition is a sequel to an exchange of long correspondence between government agencies and the two personalities. It began in September 1986 when the petitioners addressed a letter to Mr. V.N. Gadgil, the then minister of information & broadcasting, applying for a licence to establish two broadcasting stations, one for radio and the other for television, to function alongside AIR and Doordarshan. The letter pointed out

that the purpose of establishing these broadcasting stations was to supplement what the government agencies were doing in a manner that would be objective, and not committed, as the government agencies are, to the official point of view.

Either the minister did not understand the portents of the letter or sought to sidetrack the issue by sending a copy of the proforma for application for the grant of a licence under the Indian Telegraph Act, 1985. Mr. Masani pointed out that the proforma had been forwarded due to a misunderstanding regarding the nature of the request. As the letter had stated that the petitioners' letter had been forwarded to the I&B ministry for 'necessary action', Mr. Masani then wrote to Mr. Ajit Pant, minister of information & public relations, on



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EXPRESS 601

"Radio and Television are as much a medium of expression as the written and spoken word," says Mr. Masani, who was a member of the advisory committee on Fundamental Rights and an MP from 1945 to 1970 and has, at all times been a champion of individual freedom and human rights. "There is nothing in the Statute that gives the government monopoly of radio or television."

Mr. Masani and Mr. Chatterjee are not just toying with the 'loopholes' in the Constitutions; they are seriously considering the possibility of setting up independent television and radio stations. As Mr. Masani puts it, "We intend to establish a public limited

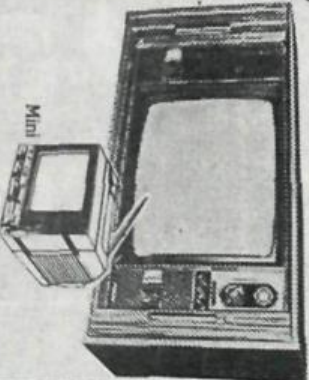
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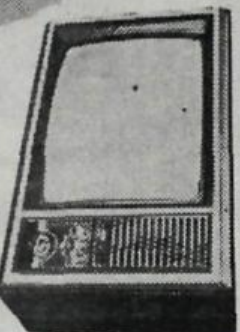
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Subsequent letter

In a subsequent letter Mr. Panja passed the buck to another ministry. He wrote, "The licence to own and operate a broadcasting transmitter has to be issued by the Ministry of Communication under the Indian Telegraph Act, 1985."

Accordingly, the petitioners addressed a letter to Mr. Arjun Singh, minister for communications, on March 10, giving details about the past correspondence. They submitted that, as far as they were aware, there was no form in existence to ask for facilities for broadcasting, nor had the time to complete such a form, in any existed. They urged the minister to consult his colleagues in the Cabinet and give a suitable reply whether or not the government of India was agreeable in principle to permit the setting up of private broadcasting stations. Seventeen days later Mr. Singh informed Mr. Masani that he was "having the matter examined."

Mr. Arjun Singh's final reply was that "it would not be possible to grant a licence for setting up a private broadcasting service in any part of the country." And the matter ended there.

In other parts of the world independent radio and TV stations are allowed. In the United States there are hundreds of radio stations and several TV stations functioning independently. But in some countries there are specific laws conferring monopoly of television and radio on certain bodies; for example, in Britain there is an act of Parliament which confers the right exclusively on Independent Television Authority (ITA) and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). But in India, neither the British nor the framers of the Constitution bothered to have any



"One ball to go.
Two runs to win."



"Imran races in and bowls."



"Kapil flicks past a
diving square leg."



"The batsmen take one.
Turn for the second."



"They'll have to hurry."



"The return comes in."



"Kapil dives for his crease."



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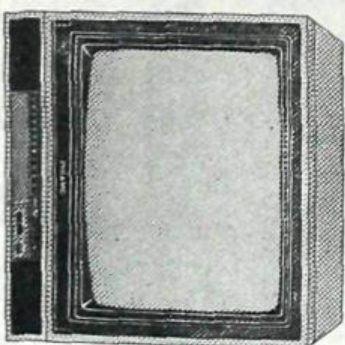
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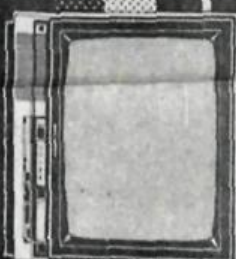
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AMIES

LIFE sure is full of surprises. Take the case of Jackie Shroff. There he was, this rather strange-looking hero, who displayed about as much emotion as a two-tonne truck. Stuck in roles that required little more than the narrowing of his already narrow eyes and the flexing of his macho muscles, Jackie had been reduced to something of a joke — an actor who



JACKIE OH!!

OFF THE CUFF

Shobha Dé

knuckle-clusters on his hands. There was something very different about him even then. He wasn't just another roadside "dada" with his own gang of toughs — he was special. This was his beat and he protected his territory with chains and *chakras*. Or so the terrified locals insisted. I recall his dramatic entry into the tiny pastry shop across the *bidiwalla*. I was ordering a birthday cake when I heard a sharp noise and noticed the counter boys and accountant freeze suddenly. I turned around and there was Jackie. In the best Clint Eastwood/Charles Bronson tradition he had barged through the glass doors by kicking them aside and using his elbows — not hands, to separate them. It was one hell of an entry just to use the public phone near the cash counter. Like dem bad guy honchos bursting into a dusty saloon in Hollywood Westerns. But it said a lot for his standing in that area. I forget now whether he paid for his call.

Hottest model

The next time I saw him was on boardings all over the city. He was advertising some cigarettes. Suddenly, this street tough had become the hottest model in town. We decided to feature him in *Celebrity*. He was on the fringes of filmdom... and keen on publicity. The idea was to project him as India's answer to Burt Reynolds — a male pin-up. He was game... but decidedly shy. That was surprise number one. The photography session was set up at his girlfriend's (and now wife's)

at his photographs he turned up at the office a few days later. Forget about the prudish young reporter, even the rest of us were stunned. He arrived in a pair of backed-off denim shorts which were so dangerously brief that it was a problem whether to ask him to sit down without him getting booked for indecent public exposure.

We really didn't know quite where to look. The young lady blushed a deep shade of rose pink and was so flustered that we considered sending out for smelling salts. Jackie seemed oblivious to all the *di-ki-dhak-dhak* he had generated. He tried to pursue her over the next few weeks, but the whole thing was far too much for the young girl to handle — overpowered and puzzled, she retreated into her protective shell and refused to take his calls. He gave up soon enough and that's the last we saw of him. Recently, while driving past Teen Batti, I noticed a small crowd of ruffians surrounding someone at a *bidi* shop. That someone turned out to be Jackie. He looked right at home on that crowded street corner... for that is where he actually belongs... *Kaash* or no *Kaash*.

A film with everything

SINCE this has turned out to be a film column of sorts, I might as well continue in the same strain... it was *Kaash* in the afternoon and *Sabarna* in the evening. As they'd say in Hindi *phillium* dialogue: *Zameen-azmaan ka difference, yaar, Sabarna is*

and goes straight to the heart? William Holden as the debonair playboy-tycoon, Bogart as his workaholic older brother — and Hepburn as their chauffeur's elfin daughter who steals both their hearts and the show, so effortlessly makes for pure entertainment! Nothing appears ridiculous — the cardboard Eiffel Tower or studio moon, the painted clouds and skyscraper backdrops. At the end of the film, only the melodic lingers... *La Vie En Rose*... hummed by the incomparable Sabarna as she and Bogey speed along in a spiffy-looking sports car. The film has everything — romance, humour, style, pace. No, they don't make movies like that any more. But then, they don't make audiences like that any more, either.

No laughing matter

HEY guys! Noticed something? We don't have a single woman columnist, who qualifies as a humorist. *Pouquoi?* Don't women have a sense of humour? For that matter, why don't we have a single woman columnist on the political front either? There are several excellent reporters and feature writers, but no columnists. Is nobody willing to take us gals seriously, or what?

Yes, there are quite a few senior female columnists writing on "soft" subjects like the arts, radio, television, cinema. Or on burning social issues of the day. But there too they restrict themselves to commenting on topics like dowry deaths or *dhoti ghats*. There is the odd feminist writer churning out the standard stuff on the status of women in Indian society. And that's about it.

How much can one take on sunsets over Pindri glacier and sunrise at Ratanagiri? The amount of copy devoted to describing the chirping of nesting birds or the travails of a female rickshaw-puller in Ambedkar is enough to put you off feathered friends and oppressed labour forever.

What we could do with is a few chuckles, some giggles and plenty of fresh perspectives from a new generation of female writers. There are several very bright, very witty, very articulate women in media today — it's

couldn't act. Critics had dismissed him off as a plastic Ham years ago... which was bad enough. But even the public refused to accept him as anything more than an upgrated stuntman whose historic prowess began and ended with an eyebrow twitch. His range was so limited, said film makers who had included him in their

smoothly from one scene to the other, breathing credibility into every line. How shrewdly Bhatt has tapped and exploited the very qualities that had become Jackie's biggest liabilities — his brooding, sullen strength and extreme tenderness that had been mistaken for a Big Moose kind of "Dub-ness". Cast as a fallen, frustrated

sical the show from this wooden apology of an actor.

And then along came *Kash* ... I wonder if these very same people are now hastily gobbling their words. Jackie has come up with a performance that is so stunning in its quiet impact that even he must be reeling from it. One should give equal credit to Mahesh Bhatt for a piece of amazingly shrewd casting. He dared to sign on Jackie for a role that required extremely fine tuning. And there was Jackie moving



Twenty-year-old Shahina Hameed made a winning debut in motor sport when she steered her Premier Padmini to victory in Goodyear's women's car rally last Sunday. A graduate in philosophy Shahina had Asif Haidery as navigator for the 380-m Bombay to Knapoli and back course.

■ contd. from p. 12

laws concerning the rights of broadcasting.

Mr. Masani contends that the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act bars private individuals from setting up broadcasting stations. "The act makes it abundantly clear that it was enacted not with a view to create in favour of the government a monopoly in broadcasting to the exclusion of all citizens of India, but with a view to regulate the possession of wireless and telegraphy apparatus in India and with a view to ensure that the Indian State Broadcasting Service is not deprived of its fees for licences for wireless apparatus."

Govt. in a tight spot

The petitioners contend that AIR and Doordarshan has not been set up under the provision of the Indian Wireless and Telegraphy Act, but as departments of the I&B ministry.

Basic to democracy

Mr. Masani feels that the freedom of speech and expression, including the freedom of the press and the freedom to express oneself through other means such as broadcasting on radio and television are not only valued freedoms in themselves, but are basic to a democratic form of government which proceeds on the theory that the problems of government can be solved by free exchange of thoughts and by public discussion.

Aysha's house. A lovely young reporter went along with the photographer for the interview. Since she wasn't a brazen Bombay journalist, she wasn't prepared for anything like this. Perhaps it was the novelty of the experience, but I rather think it was the 'Jackie Effect'. She came back after the session in an absolute daze, which took weeks to wear off.

Jackie, in turn, was also pretty taken up by her. Maybe he had never met such a prim and proper young lady before. On the pretext of looking

TELLY VIEW...

■ contd. from p. 13

Chunauti. It set itself less ambitious goals than *Subah* and *Nai Dishayen* and perhaps for that very reason was almost an instant success. However it did not skip the drug scene altogether. Although no emotional involvement came into the picture, the manner in which Raju is hooked and subsequently killed comes as a chilling shock unequalled by anything in *Subah*. My only complaint to the producers is that the promised involvement of Anand Bandhu with the pecky journalist never came about. The alibi of course will be shortage of time. The

next time Doordarshan draws up a contract it must be firmly and clearly stated that all loose ends will have to be tied up and tucked away within the stipulated 13 weeks. Particularly romantic involvements.

Fortunately the absence of *Chunauti* will be less keenly felt because of *Manoranjan* and *Malgudi Days*. *Manoranjan*, but for its occasional sentimental streak is very watchable and *Malgudi Days* continues to main-

amongst the most delightful films ever made - like a light and frothy soufflé. In fact, the soufflé features in a charming sequence in the film when a very haughty French chef describes a perfect soufflé with a poetic image: "It should be like two butterflies waltzing." But *Subarna* belongs to Audrey Hepburn - the original genuine. Even Bogart pales into a push-pash nobody in their scenes together - and that's tough to achieve. What is it about older-goddies that cuts through all the layers of cynicism

MINI-CRYPTIC - 665



ACROSS:
1. Rottier about to reply (6). 6. Resolute novelist (5). 7. The silencers are funny (4). 9. Button hole to do something about a Greek Island (6). 11. Even a pup can be more than a help (5). 13. Not only soldiers may be bored by it (5). 16. Wanted urgently (6). 19. Finished more than one (4). 20. Pay out starting odds before finish

(5). 21. There's nothing to be said for keeping it (6).

DOWN:

1. Edger, with his heart broken, was the butt of banter (6). 2. Rose to put on a classical outfit (4). 3. Cast worth another order (5). 4. Creature of crude force (5). 5. Yes, always in the pay envelope (3). 8. Climb up on a fish? (5). 10. Reacted like a startled horse and threw (5). 12. It's obvious it mustn't be infringed (6). 14. It's on the target (5). 15. The best parts of a play (5). 17. There could be an opening for you here (4). 18. Enquire in the basket department (3)

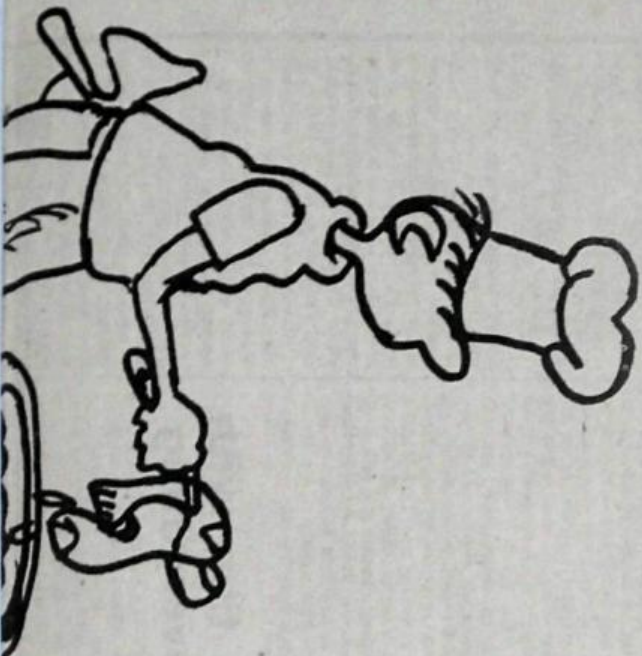
SOLUTION TO NO. 664

ACROSS: 1. Treises. 4. Wear. 6. Vivid. 7. Babel. 9. Entail. 11. Sird. 13. Trail. 15. Parli. 16. Item. 17. Station. DOWN: 1. True. 2. Skirt. 3. Eliminate. 5. Enactment. 8. Led. 10. Net. 12. Idiot. 14. Rain.

KIDS KORTER



By Rupesh A. Jambhale, 10, Std. V, G.A. Kulkarni School, Khar.



RIP KIRBY



ON THE FASTRACK

by bill holbrook



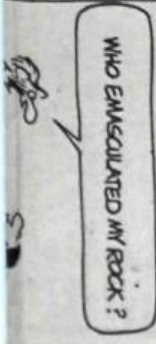
WINSTON

by burnett & sajem

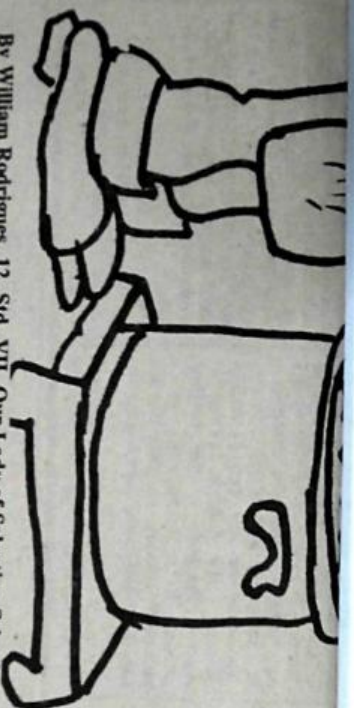


B.C.

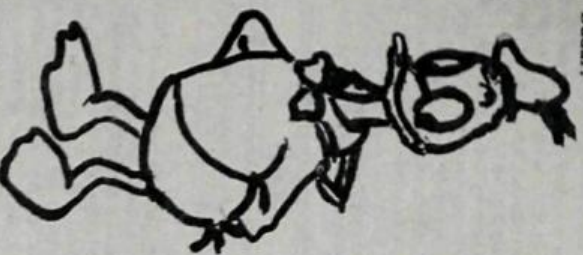
by johnny hart



By William Rodrigues, 12, Std. VII, Our Lady of Salvation School, Dadar.



By Jaishankar P., 12, Std. VII, OLPs School, Chembur.



By Kiran C. Palan, 13, Std. VIII, Young Men's Night School, VT.



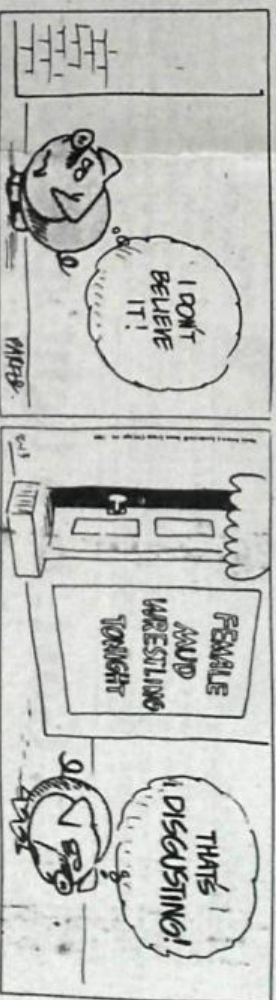
TIGER

by bud blake



WIZARD OF ID

by parker & hart



FRED BASSET

by graham

