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Current Topics

IT is hard to understand why Mr. P. C. Sethi, Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, is so allergic to newsmen covering the proposed surrender of Chambal valley dacoits to Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan. If he feels that such a procedure does damage to the normal processes of law and order, he should have the courage to disallow it completely. If he thinks that the surrender of so many outlaws may do some good, then he should have no objection to responsible newsmen being present.

Mr. Sethi would have a case if it was Mr. Narayan or the dacoit leaders who were averse to the glare of publicity. If this were so, care could have been taken to avoid any photographic coverage until the negotiations succeeded or failed. But it is stupid to try to deny the press access to the scene of an event of such social significance.

In any case it is doubtful whether the Chief Minister has the legal right to keep newsmen away from the venue altogether. All he can do is to deny them proper facilities or refuse to take official responsibility for their safety. Even so many newsmen would take the risk—as some have done already.