

Media must constantly review and revalidate its role



Pratibha Patil
President of India

Journalism should remain anchored in some basic principles and criteria.

Journalism's first obligation is to truth, its first loyalty is to the citizens, its essence is the discipline of verification of a news story before it being published or broadcast and its practitioners must exercise their personal conscience.

Media is, indeed, operating in a dynamic environment that characterises the contemporary world. Globalisation has created a situation where events can no longer be viewed as isolated occurrences. Issues like terrorism, climate change, rapid communication systems and financial integration are some of the indicators of the global village concept. Terrorists have woven a complex network across the world, posing a threat to innocent lives and to peace and stability of societies. Nabbing of consignments of weapons and drugs in one part of the globe can reveal a conspiracy of a much larger dimension. For the media, it implies that even though it is covering certain local events, it must necessarily look at other linkages. Needless to say, "journalists have a stake in building a better and safer world".

The growth of journalism in India has been intrinsically linked with our freedom struggle. Indian publications and Indian journalists, of that period, joined in the efforts to give expression to the collective aspirations of the people for freedom and also participated in the freedom struggle. For Gandhiji, his journals *Navjeevan*, *Young India* and *Harijan* were platforms through which he communicated his ideas on a range of issues. His association with journalism made a deep impact on him. He said, "My newspapers became for me a training ground in self-restraint and a means for studying human nature in all its shades and variation. Without newspapers, a movement like Satyagraha could not have been possible." These words capture the essence of journalism and the power of media. If at that time the objective was freedom from colonial rule, today the vision of a progressive India, a developed India and a nation with a leading voice in the world, inspires the entire nation. Journalism and the media are important participants in this process of nation building. I am confident that the media which is a vehicle for disseminating news and for shaping an enlightened public opinion will play its role of a catalyst for positive change. While doing its work, I hope that the media will always keep national safety and security

interests in the forefront.

As we all are aware, the reach of media in the country has increased dramatically since Independence. Today, India is the second largest market in the world for newspapers. Our electronic media industry has been growing at a fast rate, and last year we had the 4th largest number of television stations in the world. The powerful voice of media has thus, been further amplified with an augmentation in its speed and spread.

With a long tradition of freedom of press in the country and high professional standards, contemporary journalism can draw strength from this legacy. Its role as a promoter of goodwill in society and of creating awareness is enormous. There are many instances where media has highlighted the work and achievements of ordinary men and women who had deeply influenced society. I can frankly state that it is through your work, that I first came to know about the girls from Purulia in West Bengal, who stood-up against child marriage, about a young environmentally conscious girl from Chhattisgarh who found a useful way of recycling plastic materials, and about a man with meager income in Jharkhand, who was educating a group of orphans, to cite a few examples. Through such reporting, media has demonstrated its social conscience. To appreciate and encourage such commendable individual actions in society and this positive trend in media, I invited them, along with the reporters of these stories, to Rashtrapati Bhavan. I am sure that such good work will continue and media will cover social issues which impede progress and, in this context, profile the ability of ordinary people to overcome challenges.

Journalistic accounts are important chronicles of our time. Media should, therefore, encapsulate events objectively. Utmost care should be given to project the correct facts without sensationalising information. While our media is doing good work, it like other professions, is operating in a dynamic environment and must constantly review and revalidate its role. There is also always scope for improvement in every