

CHAPTER 3

**ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF
NEWS AGENCY JOURNALISM IN
INDIA**

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First newspaper to publish news from Reuters by mail in India was the Bombay Times. On 21 March 1866, Henry Collins' landed in Bombay to set up Reuters operations in India. Representing the interest of Reuters in India and the Far East, he set up his two-roomed office on Hornby Road in Bombay.

The purpose was to catch the big newspapers by feeding commercial intelligence about the eastern as well as foreign markets to businessmen and speculators in India and abroad. Political stories filed from the sub-continent were in great demand abroad. Herbert Reuter remarked at the outbreak of the Anglo-Afghan War in 1878, "this Afghan War has created such an interest in India that we cannot afford to let Indian politics drop". The output initially was 77 words a day from India, and the rate was one pound sterling per word.

In fact, Reuters followed the British cable system to mend its own empire. News from England and the news from the rest of the world as viewed from London, was received promptly enough through the telegrams of Reuters ever since the establishment of electrical means of communication on 23 June 1870 when the London-Bombay submarine telegraph cable was inaugurated. It was only in 1885 that the emphasis began to shift towards Indian news. In those days, Reuters was essentially a part of the British scheme of things. With the appointment of Edward Buck as the Reuters correspondent, the agency started expanding and consolidating.

3.1 API (ASSOCIATE PRESS OF INDIA)

Keshab Chandra Roy, a journalist from Calcutta went to Simla, the summer capital of the Government of India, and became special correspondent of several Indian newspapers. As early as 1908, Roy saw the possibilities of starting a national news agency. He learnt in 1906 that England had adopted the multi-address telegraph system, enabling newspapers to send press telegrams and receive them at special rates. Along with some British journalists, he persuaded the viceroy, Lord Minto, institute a similar system in India which proved a boon and paved way for syndication of news messages.

Roy was an admirer of the AP and dreamt of starting a similar agency in India. In 1910 he launched an agency the Press Bureau, with offices at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. He argued that Indian newspapers could not pay separate telegraphic rates and no correspondents' messages to The Press Bureau offices would be copied and distributed. By 1913 the Press Bureau had worked for three years and was in red because the Indian newspapers were not paying the bills. Its subscribers included the Statesman and the Madras mail. Roy had to sell his property to keep the agency going.

About this time, Edward E. Coates, the representative of the Statesman of England and Reuters, was persuaded by the Finance Member of Viceroy's Executive Council to start an Indian news agency as he could know of failure of a bank in Madras full one week later. This agency supplied Indian news to about a hundred officials all over the country and entered into an agreement with Reuters for the supply of foreign news. Sir Roderick Jones, Reuters' chairman persuaded Roy to amalgamate his agency with Coates and form a new one, which he called Eastern News Agency.³ It was, however, called the Associated Press of India (API)⁴. Coates sold his interest and retired while Roy took charge of the news operations in 1919 under the overall control of the Reuters general manager based in Bombay.⁵ Roy is credited with great persuasive skills.

The Indian Telegraph Act was amended, at Roy's instance, to secure for registered news agencies the facilities available to registered newspapers. It was again Roy who persuaded Hugh Keeling, the chief engineer, to allot to the agency the site in New Delhi's Parliament Street on which the Press Trust of India building was to come up many years later. Reuters' outward service from India was supplemented by Reut-Buck providing amplification of certain messages, which the Government was interested in and Globe-Rent provided for similar amplification worldwide. The British Government started the British Official Wireless, compiled by the British Foreign Office. Messages were relayed on wireless between Rugby in England and Kirkee in India.

These were also distributed by Reuters. By the early twenties, Reuters and its subsidiary, the API, were well under official control. Payment to Reuters/API was shown in the budget under the heading, "Miscellaneous-Subscription to periodicals". Invariably reply to questions on the payment in the legislative assembly was that it

was not a subsidy to Reuters or the API but payment for the services rendered. The teleprinters were introduced in 1937 by the general manager of Reuters in India, W. J. Moloney. It revolutionised the system of transmitting news and made it possible to provide agency service at reasonable rates to small newspapers throughout the country. Moloney, who also ran the API from 1923 to 1937, said, in a memorandum to the Board of Reuters in 1944, "Of my work in India, the most important features were the substitution of Indians for Europeans in the various branches... the supply of Reuters news to the vernacular newspapers to none of whom in virtue of our contracts with the English newspapers could Reuters deliver any service.

The contracts were renegotiated so as to permit of a service to the vernacular papers. Another development during my time in India was the establishment of the 'Reuterian' Wireless Commercial Service from Rugby direct daily to our office in Bombay within a couple of minutes of the quotations on the New York and Liverpool exchanges. The year 1937 saw the inauguration of the teleprinter service. The first circuit was from Bombay to Calcutta direct; the full service of our other branches was not completed till 1938. (Read, Donald (1999) Power of the News: The History of Reuters, Second Edition Oxford University Press PP. 176-177: The Eastern News Agency, Started by Reuters in 1910, had absorbed the Associated Press of India (API)

3.2 THE FREE PRESS

The combination of Reuters and the Associated Press meant official control and this became apparent in the early twenties with Gandhi's Movement. S. Sadanand launched the Free Press Agency (FPA) in 1927. He said in his statement of objects and reasons that public opinion was moulded entirely by news supplied from day to day and it was "difficult if not impossible to mould healthy public opinion owing to the monopoly held in the supply of news by subsidised news agencies. The FPA had its foreign section as well. Cables of some of the leading news agencies of the world were selected and pooled by the London office and sent out to India. Reuters often lost this race. The full weight of the imperial authority was deployed to thwart this enterprise. Official pressure was exerted on Sadanand's fellow directors and four of them resigned in 1929 and the fifth did so in 1930.

The Press Ordinance of May 1930 came down with a heavy hand on newspapers publishing FPA news. The Free Press telegrams were subjected to a strict censorship and newspapers grew reluctant to publish news supplied by the agency for the fear of offending the Press Ordinance or other emergency press laws. API aim exerted pressure by insisting that its service would not be available to newspapers subscribing to the other agency. Sadanand sought other ways of continuing the borne, and he started the Free Press Journal⁷ as a morning daily in June 1930 from Bombay; associated newspapers were started,⁸, publishing Free Press news elusively. In 1930 a smuggled copy of the Free Press Journal was the cause of much concern in the Reuters office in Bombay and cables were sent home of Reuters being beaten by the opposition. Important FPA scoops included the Chittagong armoury raid case in February 1933. K. Rama Rao, one of the most respected journalists of his times. dug up the background of the case and printed the story of the arrest of Surya Sen, the leader. There was a protest against a news agency running newspapers, and when his directors arrived at an agreement with the Associated Press. Sadanand had to give up his chain newspaper enterprise.

In 1935, when his newspapers securities were confiscated, Sadanand had to close down his agency. Sadanand went bankrupt through the forfeiture of the heavy securities he had to pay repeatedly for the violation of the imperial code. Penalty had to be paid for an editorial entitled "Swaraj is the only remedy" in the agency's paper Free Press Journal and for publishing extracts from an article by Mahatma Gandhi and for a report of Vithalbhai Patel's speech; in New York. If Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was a freedom fighter, journalist Swaininath Sadanand was a journalist freedom fighter. He fought for the freedom of the press not only when the British were riding India but also after independence when he could warn about the dangers of dominance of the world news by a few news agencies. He did not invent the phrase "new world information and communication order" but he could see the problem from which the world is suffering even today.

In his early journalistic career, Sadanand worked with Reuters (rather, in subsidiary Associated Press of India) for a while. Hardly anything is available on that period but it is clear that his desire to have an independent Indian news agency was born during that time. He had also been to Burma before coming back to Bombay to launch Free Press of India News Agency. S Trikannad, a former Assistant Editor of the Free Press

Journal has this to say: "He had started his career in a low paid job in the Associated Press of India (API), then gone to Allahabad and joined the Independent the very day Pandie Motilal Nehru' was arrested, then migrated to the Rangoon Times It was there that his ambition was first fired to start a news agency of his own that would present Indian news to the world at large.

There different versions about the beginning of Free Press of India (FPI) but Sadanand himself wrote, "Free Press of India is an independent national news agency planned in 1923, founded in 1925 and in active existence till 1935... Free Press of India had the support of the entire national press of India while it was functioning. It maintained a comprehensive internal service. It was the first Indian news agency which organised and maintained an efficient world news service to the press of India during the years 1932 - 35."11, Started a few years before the Second Round Table Conference, the Free Press news service provided many scoops during the conference but even nationalist papers were afraid of publishing Sadanand's reports. Some did pay subscription but refused to print any of his news. It was then that he started a chain of newspapers in many languages, which would make use of his news service.

K Rama Rao wrote about Sadanand, "The honours of the freedom fight of 1930 - 1933 went equally to Swaminath Sadanand and the Free Press Journal on the press front. The paper was waging an epic fight against the Government; in fact, it was the head and front of the journalistic onslaught. Sadanand was in high mettle and in much affluence too then. The Journal was the dauntless bark he sailed and he was the pilot who weathered myriad storms. The bark was often near going down but he somehow held it on its course. Sadanand is dead, but he has left behind him a legendary fragrant reputation for gallant audacity and several institutions firmly established and exceedingly useful to the country. Rao worked with him in that fateful period and having seen him from close quarters had given a description of the character of the man, "Made of tempered steel he did not have an atom of fear in him. He was courageous to the point of being inventive and original so the point of being unpredictable. Security after security was forfeited for defiance of law, blow after blow fell, but he did not bat an eyelid he did not budge an inch from rho firing line. With head bloody but unbowed, he went on attacking. No risk was too big, no adventure too reckless.

He revelled in rises, some self-created. A soldier every inch of him, now he fought and won, now he fought and los, but he never ran away from danger or difficulty. About the Free Press Agency, Rao wrote, The Free Press news agency, which he founded in 1927, was intended to cover the nation's political activities, which the Associated Press. with its pronounced official bias and peculiar affiliations could not do or was neglecting to do. The agency did good patriotic work during the time it lived; it made revelations inconvenient to the Government: it fought bitterly against the ruinous ratio fixed between the rupee and the pound sterling and the Ottawa agreement. The agency died in 1935 for want of support, the opposition of rho foreign Government of the day and of the vested interests. Sadanand's gallant attempt to establish an Indian news agency also included a foreign section parallel to Reuters. It certainly deserved to succeed but did not. Even apart from the service it provided, the sheer brilliance of his modus operandi should have earned it the enthusiastic loyalty of the cut re Indian press. Cables of some of the leading news agencies of the world were bought by the London office and pooled, and the choicest of them were sent out to India. Often, Reuters was left standing. A smuggled copy of the desk edition of the Free Press Journal caused daily pain and hourly perturbation in Hornby Road and doleful on cables went home of being beaten by the opposition. It proved it worth as I can vouch from personal experience. But the Indian press did no support him and Sadanand ruined himself bearing the burden.

Sadanond wrote. By combined action on the part of the alien Government, Reuters and the loyalist press and public-men, the activities of Free Press of India and Free Press Journal were brought to an abrupt end in July 1935. The Free Press Journal resumed publication in December 1937, soon after the advent of the popular ministries in the Provinces. Free Press of India resumed its activities in 1945. It paid considerable attention to the collection and dissemination of world news to the Press of India. Free Press of India deputed special correspondents and opened offices in Nanking, Cairo, Singapore, Batavia, London and New York in implementation of its plans for a world news service primarily for India and secondly for the world press.

Sadanand was given an assurance that teleprinter lines would be leased to the Free Press of India but later this facility was denied." On 30 April 1947, it was made clear to Free Press of India that it could not rely on receiving the facility of leased teleprinter channel for its news agency activities. Free Press of India, thereupon,

suspended its activities until such time as the policy of the Government of India crystallized and was implemented." Sadanand was a member of the negotiating team of Indian Press for negotiations with Reuters. In this minute of dissent¹² to the Indian and Eastern Wits Society. Dated 23 July 1949, one finds clarity of his mind:

"A news agency is the machinery which collects and disseminates world news to India and which makes available news of India to the world press. Freedom of information, namely the right of free access to news and equally free access to the machinery for the distribution of the news, has engaged the attention of the best mind of the world. A series of international conferences have been held and vital decisions have been taken in regard to the fundamental principles of collection and dissemination of news. India is a party to the conventions adopted by the International Conference on the Freedom of Information. The control of wireless and the teleprinter channels in India regulate and influence the operations of indigenous and foreign news services by Britain before the advent of a National Government and by the National Government after it came into power, is the subject of criticism in the responsible circles of world press."

The story about why S. Sadanand failed to get leased teleprinter lines for Free Press of India was written years after Sadanand was dead and gone. B. C. Dutt, a Naval Mutely man, whom Sadanand gave a job at Free Press Journal, did a story on movement of armed forces after independence. Other newspapers reproduced that scoop. Next day, the editor, S. Natarajan, did not congratulate B. C. Dutt but said, "Our hero has known only naval prison. This time he has earned himself a few years in a civil jail." Then looking at him, Natarajan smiled, don't worry. I shall keep an eye on you there. Being the editor, I shall be GOI's¹³ guest first, then you." In all innocence, Dutt asked, "what have I done, Boss? No one can repudiate the story,"

"Yes, Sardar Patel, the Home Minister, did not actually say your story was wrong. But the correct spellings of names of all ships, of the army units and the ranks of senior officers taking part, have given your identity away." For, only an Ex-fighting force man could have the names and ranks right. Dutt was the only one "Sardar has found that out. He only wanted to know who leaked it to you." Natarajan continued: "He's furious that we published the news about the armed forces without official clearance. The phone almost burnt-up by the time he hung up on Sadanand last night." However,

nothing happened to Dun or Natarajan. Duct wrote in his Golden Jubilee contribution to the Saga of the Free Press Journal, "Many years later, when I was no longer a journalist and Sadanand was no more, Natarajan told me the consequences of my scoop. Sardar cut Sadanand dead. He refused him all facilities to launch his news agency Free Press of India. This shocking news Natarajan himself learnt much later. According to Natarajan, long after the Sardar had black balled him, Sadanand mentioned casually, 'Free Press Journal will go on even after I am gone, but FPI will remain unborn.' He did not blame anyone or me that was the man, Sadanand." (Trikanad,S.(1948) "The Free Press Fiver" in The saga of A Newspaper and the City it Grew with, Indian National Press, Bombay)

(Sadanand,(1948) S.Facts About Reuters: Indian Agreement,Sadanand, Bombay.

3.3 UNITED PRESS OF INDIA

The United Press of India was started from Calcutta in 1933 by B. Sen Gupta, who had resigned from the Free Press. Sen Gupta was the Managing Director and Dr. B. C. Roy, Chairman of Board of Directors. The news agency had financial and other difficulties from the beginning. The competition was with the Associated Press with its speedy teleprinter transmission. When Dr. Rajendra Prasad inaugurated the United Press teleprinter services in 1948, the news agency had a fresh lease of life. The agency finally closed down in 1958, as newspapers were unwilling to keep it alive. C. Raghavan wrote about the collapse in 1977, "At that time, on behalf of the Indian Federation of Working Journalists, I repeatedly met the Home Minister, the late Govind Ballabh Pant, in an effort to prevent the closure. Pandit Pant was willing to declare a moratorium on UPI's debt to the Post and Telegraph Department-quite a substantial sum-provided he was assured by the owners and newspapers that they would meet the other debts, including the Provident Fund dues of employees, and assure that the service could be run economically. The newspapers were unwilling and the owners were unable to do anything and on the United Press of India (UPI) collapsed."

3.4 UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

The Press Commission Report (1952– 1954) had spoken of the need to have "at least two news agencies each competing with the other and also acting as a corrective to the other the newspapers shared this feeling. The United News of India (UNI) was sponsored by eight newspapers, Hindu, Times of India. Stotrotron, Antrit Bazar Patrika, Hindustan Times, Hindustan Standard, Derean Herald and Aryavarta.

It was registered as a company on 19 December, 1959. On the first day of its operations, 21 March 1961, the UNI sent out just 2 messages to its subscribers from its cabin in the IENS building: a message from Dr. B. V. Keskar, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting and another one from Mr. Alfred Charlton, former editor of the Statesman. For some time the agency had to make do with old UPI teleprinter machines, rusted through disuse. From this modest start, the UNI grew into an important rival agency within a decade.

The number of UNI subscribers in 1961 was 13. It had risen to 50 by 1964, 109 by 1967 and to 223 in 1971. In 1971, UNI had 249 teleprinters and 43 center by 1975, the 53 UNI bureaus across the country had been linked up by 408 teleprinters. Within 10 years of its existence. The UNI was earning a revenue of Rs. 54.31 lakhs. It registered an increase from Its. 67.73 lakhs in 1974 to Rs. 87.14 lakhs in 1975. It Was a five-man office when UNI began. By 1975, it had a staff of 697, which included 139 journalist 392 non-journalist and 166 stringers. The pace of growth was rapid in the case of UNI, but in absolute terms and in relation to the country 's requirements, its coverage was still inadequate. The UNI had launched a number of specialiesd services. In 1968, it introduced a weekly backgrounder service of well-documented, in-depth backgrounders on current topics. In 1970, the UNI Agriculture News and Feature Service was launched, a pioneering effort in the field of agricultural journalism. The financial and commercial service provided trend reports on Indian and foreign markets. The last in the series was the UNI Airmail News Service (1971) designed to ensure a steady flow of processed and factual information on a variety of themes to periodicals. UNI was also the first to venture into the field of science reportage with a full-time science correspondent.

For world news, the UNI had arrangements with the Associated Press (USA), Deutsche Press-Agentur (West Germany), Agenziz Nazionale Stamps Associate

(Italy). Agerpress (Rumania), Ceteka. (Czechoslovakia), Jiji (Japan), the Eastern News Agency (Bangladesh), Rashtriya Sambad Satniti (Neprd) and Tanjug (Yugoslavia). The UNI had four stringers. one each in Hong Kong, Singapore, Kabul and Colombo and one staffer each in Dacca and Kathmandu. To supplement foreign agency coverage, it had a radio monitoring unit to pick up the news from the major world radio networks.

3.5 HINDUSTAN SAMACHAR

India's first multilingual agency, the Hindustan Samachr, was set up in Bombay as a private limited company in 1948 by S. S. Apte. Its avowed aim was to educate the masses to take part in national development and to strive for national integration through the promotion of all Indian languages. This early effort was limited to the distribution of news among local newspapers through Devanagari telegrams.

The situation improved somewhat with the advent of Devanagari teleprinters (teleprinter service was inaugurated by Purshottam Das Tandon in 1954), but the heavy transmission costs forced Mr. Apte to hand over the agency to a cooperative society of workers. In 1957, it become a society called the Hindustan Samachar Cooperative Society, with its headquarters in New Delhi. Being workers' cooperative, it remained free of the control of both the government as well as the big newspaper proprietors. In 1975, it had a teleprinter circuit of 14, which connected its network of 21 bureaus. It also had at one time bureaus in Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. Financially, it was better off than Samachar Bharati. The agency's revenue nose horn Rs. 7.96 lakhs in 1971 to Rs. 10.771216s in 1975. It had a staff of 162, of whom 74 were journalists, 68 non-journalists and 20 stringers. The agency fed news to its more than 135 subscribe. in 10 languages — Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali, Oriya, Assamese, Telegu and Malayalam. It had teleprinter services in Hindi and Marathi. Copies filed by correspondents to headquarters would be put out after editing to the regional centres where they would be translated into local languages for transmission to local subscribers. It ran special feature services to tap additional sources of revenue and explore new fields in reportage It used to bring out a year book in Hindi entitled Varshiki. A monthly feature service named Yugvarta was also brought out containing a minimum of 15 news features on themes tropical interest.

3.6 SAMACHAR BHARTI

The second language agency, the Samachat Bharat', was registered as a company in 1962, was inaugurated on 2 October, 1966, and commenced commercial distribution of news to newspapers from January 1, 1967. In 1970, the agency was converted almost into a government company with the State governments of Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Karnataka holding more than 50 percent of the company's shares. Its first chairman was the governor of Bombay, Sri Braltasa. Jayaprakash Natatin served as its chairman for several years. In spite of its heavy share-capital, the Samachar Bharati remained financially weak. Even in 1976, its salary arrears came to Rs. 1.60 lakhs. in addition to the uncovered liabilities of Rs. 9.57 lakhs. Its revenue during 1975 was Rs. 5.50 lakhs only.

The number of teleprinters stood is at 49 between 1971 and 1975, connecting a network of 13 bureaus. There had been no marked increase in the strength of the staff, either. In 1975, it had 138 employees. Of these, 40 were journalists, 48 non-journalists and 50 stringers. In 1971, the staff had numbered 141, including 41 journalists, 50 stringers and 50 non-journalists. However, despite the financial handicaps, the agency rendered valuable services in supplying news to the language papers most of them small and medium newspapers, not merely in Hindi but also in Marathi, Gujarati, Kannada, Urdu and Punjabi. Among its subscriber, were 50 newspapers, the AIR and state information agencies.

In 1973, it started an annual reference manual in Hindi called Desh, our Duniya. It also had a feature service — Bbarati The agency had at various organised seminars and workshops to give professional training to language journalists and stringers.

3.7 SAMACHAR

The four agencies, PTI, UNI, Hindustan Samachar and Samachar Bharti merged their separate identities into what came to be known as "Samachar" in February 1976. The decision to "restructure" the four teleprinter news agencies had been taken by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi at a meeting held in her office on 26 July 1975. The minister of Information and Broadcasting, V. C. Shulda, discussed several time with the heads and representatives of the four agencies his proposal for all the agencies merging

together to form a single agency. In December 1975 the Government considered a proposal to set up, under an Act of Parliament, a corporate body which would take over the four agencies.

The governing council was to be nominated by the President of India. Since the finances of all the agencies were in the red, they were not entitled to any compensation but only to a solatium. The proposal to incorporate the news agency under an Act of Parliament was not approved by the Cabinet which instead discussed other methods to bring about a merger of the four agencies. It was decided subsequently that a registered society should be created. While efforts were made to 'persuade' the heads of the agencies to agree to the merger, several other steps were taken by the Government. The All India Radio, then a government department, on 2 January 1976, served notices on PTI and UNI that the subscription would cease with effect from 1 February 1976. The formal agreements had expired as far back as 1973, and thus, there was no legal problem in serving such notices. The teleprinter services taken by different government departments and at the residence of ministers were terminated. The type of response from the agencies varied although under the circumstances each one had to fall in line. The employees' unions of the four agencies passed resolutions accepting the idea of a single national news agency.

The employees legitimately believed that belonging to a larger size all-India body could in no way be disadvantageous to them. Indeed, there is a section of opinion which holds that the country should have only one major news agency such an evidence was laid before on by several eminent journalists, including some who had themselves suffered during the Emergency as a result of the creation of Samachar. On 21 January 1976, V. C. Shukla made a statement in the Lok Sabha saying that the Government welcomed the initiatives taken by the news agencies towards merger. As against the proposal for a statutory corporation owned by the government, which had been considered in December 1975, a society was registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, on an application signed by seven persons on 24 January, 1976. The applicants were: G. Kssturi, P. C. Gupta, Dr. Ram S. Tarneja, Abid Ali Khan, Dr. L M. Singhvi, N. Rajan and B. K. Joshi. The credit line of Samachar had started appearing from 1 February 1976, following an agreement signed by the four agencies on 29 January 1976. Thereafter, the agencies gave power of attorney to the Samachar managing committee to transact all business on their behalf; their general

bodies approved this in due course. With effect from 1 April 1976, the Managing Committee of the Samachar started functioning and carrying on business, which had belonged to the four agencies. Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool (NANAP) came into existence in 1976. Samachar was the Indian partner in the arrangement. Before the initiation of the Non-aligned Pool idea, the Samachar relied for the bulk of its international news on Reuters (UK), AP (USA) and AFP (France).

In addition, it had bilateral agreements with the following TASS (Soviet Union), PAP (Poland), ADN (GDR), CETEKA (Czechoslovakia), Kyodo (Japan), Agerpress (Romania), ANSA (Italy), PRENSA LATINA (Cuba), Antara (Indonesia), VNA (Vietnam), Tanjug (Yugoslavia) and BSS (Bangladesh), the last five being national agencies of non-aligned countries. After the New Delhi Conference in July 1976 and the acceptance of the News-Agencies Pool Scheme, the Samachar started arrangements for exchange of news with the following nine news agencies from the non-aligned world: QNA (Qatar), INA (Iraq), SUNA (Sudan), ALPRESS (Algeria), MAPRESS (Morocco), KNA (Kenya), ENA (Ethiopia), ZANA (Zambia) and BERNAMA (Malaysia). In course of the year 1976 - 1977, "arrangements" were started with another seven news agencies of non-aligned countries: MENA (Egypt), ARNA (Libya), GNA (Ghana), SHIHATA (Tanzania), NOTIMEX (Mexico), RSS (Nepal) and SLBC (Sri Lanka). Samachar reorganised the Hindi Wing and recruited more staff for this purpose. It started offering a complete service to the subscribers, and many Hindi papers which were earlier taking the English service switched over to the Hindi service. A Marathi service was also launched. Samachar became a major issue in 1977 elections, and after the defeat of Indira Gandhi, the fate of this entity was selected. (IFWJ(1977) Slaughter of Samachar, IFJW Publication New Delhi, p 42-43.)

3.8 SAMACHAR AND KULDIP NAYAR COMMITTEE REPORT

The four agencies were merged by the government on 1 February 1976 during the Emergency and a single news agency 'Samachar' was formed. Samachar was expected to collect and disseminate news within the country and abroad, and to provide what it called complete, impartial, objective, accurate, and countrywide news service. After the formation of the new government in March 1977, an Expert Committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Mr. Kuldip Nayar to examine the functioning of

Samachar, taking into consideration the freedom of the press, independence of news agencies and possibilities of competitive service freely available to all users. The Committee recommended that Samachar be dissolved and restructured by creation of two news agencies as 'Warta' and 'Sandesh'. These, in their turn, should jointly set up an organization for international news services which may be called 'News India'. The News India will buy foreign agency services and make it available to subscribers of Varta and Sandesh.

This whole set-up should be covered by an Act of Parliament. While Varta was suggested as a news agency to organize and develop news services in Indian languages, along with an English news service, Sandesh was visualized as an exclusively English news agency. News India would not be a separate news agency as such, but would be financed and managed in partnership by the two agencies jointly. News India was to be a monopoly in foreign news. The Committee also recommended that an interim body be set up by the government to bring about the reorganization within a period of three months. Two of the members, Mr. C.R. Irani and Mr. A.K. Sarkar, differed from the recommendations on the issue of proposed restructuring of news agencies.

They suggested that Samachar should be split into two news agencies primarily in English language, since, in their view, the service is demanded in this language. These agencies should also be given back their previous names. As regards news services in Hindi and other Indian languages, these two agencies should be left free to develop them as they may consider best. They should also be free to organize international services separately on their own. They were opposed to granting a monopoly to News India in international news coverage. For the services given by news agencies to All India Radio and Doordarshan, the Kuldip Nayar Committee recommended a formula of payment based on the number of radio and TV licences (Re. 1 per radio licence and Rs. 5 per TV licence). The acceptance of Kuldip Nayar Committee report, it was argued by the critics, would create three monopoly news agencies—on each in the field of English language, Indian languages, and international news service. In fact, the critics said that each would be a monopoly in its field News India in foreign news, Sandesh in English news at home, and Varta in Indian languages.

There could hardly be any competition between Sandesh, because it will be only in English and therefore faster, and Varta in a number of languages and, therefore, will have to take to time-consuming translation at each major centre. The set-up will not have the merit of competition. Also, if the government has to make up the budget deficit of Rs. 1.7 crores every year in respect of the proposed three agencies, the agencies would hardly enjoy any independence. As such, they would also not be self-supporting agencies. Thus, the objective of having news agencies 'completely independent of the government and are not given the right to monopoly' would not be fulfilled. Some of the other important recommendations of the Committee on news agencies (Kuldip Nayar Committee) on the role and functions of news agencies in India are given below:

- Objectivity, adequacy, and independence are the three main attributes needed for the news agency system of the country.
- The news agency system should adequately cover all aspects of the country's life and not merely political events and the news from urban areas. The rich milieu of contemporary Indian life should be fully reflected.
- Consequently, the dissemination of news by the agencies has to take place increasingly through the different Indian languages.
- Government must follow a self-denying policy of not interfering in any way with the work of news agencies.
- It is necessary that the news agency system also covers news which is not only outside the orbit of government functioning, but which may imply criticism of authority. It is essential in a democracy that dissent should get adequate coverage.
- The news agency system should not get identified with any vested interests: economic, social, communal, or political. The news agencies should maintain a high standard of performance, which would itself be a protection against interference from outside sources, including government.
- News agencies, even during such situations as hostilities or international tensions and disputes, should strive to keep the people informed of the

realities of the situation and not confine themselves only to the so-called popular view of events.

- Different techniques of internal checks and supervision, as well as evaluation of the news supplied to the subscribers, should be developed by news agencies in order to maintain a high standard of performance.
- Specialization should be developed in reporting system in terms of subject matter and styles of reporting. Expertise should also be promoted to achieve higher ranges of reporting keeping in view new and modern techniques of writing.
- Programmes for professional training of the staff should be organised on an adequate scale. These should include training in managerial functions also.
- Since news-reporting is a creative activity, selection of personnel should always be made strictly on merit, and there should be opportunities for promotion of talent.
- News-gathering and distribution is a necessary adjunct of modern society. No modern state can survive without an adequate set-up of information-collection and its judicious dissemination. The democratic society derives strength from wide-ranging debates on various issues before the community. A good news agency set-up should be capable of ensuring a continuous flow of information from and to people.
- An element of social responsibility in the building and functioning of a news agency system has to be recognized as a part of concept of freedom of press.
- A news agency system cannot by itself be the instrument of social change. However, when a community is in throes of social change, a news agency system, adhering to the principle of objectivity, has to cover or reflect the unfolding of such social change; and to that extent, as a medium of mass communication, it induces and supports the process of social change. (A.Raghvan (1977) Kuldip Nayar Committee Report, IFWJ Publication Slaughter of Samachar,IFWJ, New Delhi,p9 .)

3.9 NEWS AGENCY OR AGENCIES

The decision of the Government of India (14 November 1977) to split up Samachar and restore the status quo ante prior to four news agencies' so-called voluntary merger into Samachar on 24 January 1976 was criticised on the following grounds :

The decision indicates that the government has no responsibility, whatsoever, in the matter. It is argued that media should be treated as public utility and the government must frame its policy towards media as it has done in the case of science, technology and other subjects. In the name of freedom of press, government should not abdicate its responsibility in such an important matter. (The four agencies started functioning separately with effect from 15 April 1978.)

- In the name of competitive news agencies, there will be lot of duplication in respect of dissemination of news which the country, at this stage of development with meager financial resources, can hardly afford.
- For foreign news coverage, the country will have to depend on foreign international news agencies with all its drawbacks such as poor coverage of Indian news, slanting, etc. Samachar had only five correspondents located in London, New York, Moscow, Kathmandu, and Colombo. It was proposed to appoint 25 more correspondents, particularly in South-East Asia, Latin America and other countries. This scheme would now become non-starter. The decision will also create difficulties in the functioning of non-aligned news agency pool.
- The government decision is contrary to the Press Commission's recommendation that the news agencies should be converted into a public corporation under Parliamentary enactment.
- Different news agencies will be more subject to the pressure of big newspapers and other vested interests. This will not be conducive to their proper functioning.
- None of the news agencies will be viable as they will depend either on subsidy and/ or support from the government or big business.
- It will retard expansion of news agencies' network, both within the country

and abroad, which is badly needed in the present stage of country's economic development.

- The split will badly affect development of Hindi and other Indian language news services.
- The employees of Samachar will be adversely affected in regard to their emoluments and other service conditions.
- The country needs a national viable news agency, and Samachar could have been restructured so as to make it independent of government or other control. The leading newspapers could have set up their own competitive news agencies, if they so desired.
- Competition is a misnomer as newspapers are free to publish or not to publish news items and reports from news agencies. Also, many newspapers have their own correspondents who can act as a check on one-sided news stories emanating from a single news agency.

A contrary view on the subject is held by equally eminent personalities in the newspaper profession. Their reasonings are as under:

- The government's decision to split up Samachar is intended only to undo 'merger' of the erstwhile news agencies effected under duress during the Emergency. The decision is part of a larger commitment of the government to allow free and unfettered atmosphere for the functioning of all democratic institutions, including the news agencies. The Samachar was a product and a symbol of Emergency. As such, it was necessary to remove this aberration. The decision, however, does not rule out voluntary cooperation or coming together or merger of news agencies, if they so desire.
- The question of resources is not a valid argument as Samachar, during its one year of existence, was given about Rs. 75 lakhs by the government. The merger of news agencies, therefore, did not result in viability.
- The argument that Hindi and Indian language services would suffer with the revival of a number of news agencies is also not correct. They can certainly develop as a part of the main news agencies in the country. For instance, PTI

and UNI can have effective Hindi and language wings. In any case, news agencies have to be based on actual demand of news from news enterprises, and not on any other considerations. The government has, however, announced that it would extend financial help for the development of news services in Indian languages.

- It is true that wherever there is more than one news agency, it does result in certain amount of duplication in the dissemination of news. This is avoided in dictatorial and totalitarian countries where there is only one official news agency. Ours is a democratic society and we have to pay this price.
- In 1951 the Press Commission recommended: "However objective a news agency strives to be, there are certain drawbacks which arise from monopoly, and which, could be obviated only by competitive service available freely to all users." The Government of India, on 22 July 1971, accepted this recommendation as evident from the reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha by the then Minister of Information and Broadcasting.
- India is in the process of rapid economic development, and there is considerable scope for more than one news agency to develop. It is true that democratic countries such as the U.K. and France have only one news agency. Considering the area, population, geography, language and other factors there is ample scope and future for more than one news agency in India.
- The basic criteria of news agency services in a democratic set-up are competition and independence. Effective competition is possible only if there is more than one agency. The agency cannot be independent if it is controlled financially or otherwise by the government or other vested interests. The payment for services rendered by the news agencies to TV and AIR is, however, a different matter. This is purely commercial transaction and not financial subsidy.
- The decision to split Samachar is not going to affect India's participation in news agency pool of non-aligned countries. The agencies can participate individually or jointly through some cooperative arrangement in the pool,

and the government has announced its willingness to consider giving financial help for this purpose. The projection of India's image abroad can perhaps be better done by independent news agencies rather than a single officially-sponsored news agency.

- The Kuldip Nayar Committee had suggested that the government should pay subscription, under an automatic formula, at one rupee per licence of radio set and Rs. 5 per TV set. The collection should be shared between Varta and Sandesh. Since the government is committed to give AIR and Doordarshan an autonomous status, it is extremely doubtful if this formula finds acceptance by the proposed new corporation. The corporation may like to develop its own news-gathering sources.
- The emoluments of Sarnachar employees are to be protected by the government through grants-in-aid on a tapering basis for a period of six years. In any case, this cannot be a justifiable argument for retaining one news agency.
- The via media can be on the lines of French news agency. For the news supplied by the news agencies to official organs such as AIR, TV, government departments, External Affairs Ministry, the government can give matching grants to the agencies equivalent to their income from the non-official sources.

3.10 GOENKA COMMITTEE

The minister of state for information and broadcasting convened a meeting of the leading editors and proprietors of language newspapers for the purpose of obtaining consensus for formation of an Indian language news agency for dissemination of news in Indian languages on 25 - 26 June 1985. At the outset the minister made it clear that the government did not propose to start any agency nor did the government want to get involved in the management or functioning of any agency. The consensus at the meeting was that there is a need for an Indian language news agency to meet the requirements of newspapers in Hindi and other Indian languages.

The participants also recognised that there is no possibility of reviving Hindustan Samachar and Samachar Bharati. The meeting was of the unanimous view that it is for the proprietors and editors of newspapers themselves to operate such a news agency service. The proprietors and editors agreed to examine the possibility of raising resources for setting up a viable news agency service in Indian languages. It was also agreed at the meeting that if it was not considered possible to raise adequate resources to set up a separate Indian language news agency, an alternative could be for the existing English language news agencies to start services in Indian languages also. Consequent thereto, a committee of eminent newspapermen, under the Chairmanship of Ramanath Gocnka, was constituted to examine the various aspects of the matter. The following were the members of the committee: Ramanath Gocnka (convenor), K. Narendra, Ramesh Chandra, Narendra Mohan, P. Mohapatra, Somuundaram and S. M. Agarwal. The committee found, that the creation of a full-fledged news agency with adequate technological backup would require at least Rs. 3 crore. for capital expenditure and in addition, recurring expenditure of Rs. 1 crore per year. The Indian language newspapers were not at all in a position to raise even 50 percent of this capital. Further, the running cost of Rs.1 crore per year could not be recovered from Hindi/Indian language subscribers.

On the other hand, if Indian language service is added to the infrastructure of an existing news agency, the additional annual cost would be only Rs. 50 lakhs per year. There would be practically no capital cost. This level of annual expenditure could be managed both by newspapers and other subscribers like AIR and Doordarshan. If, however, there is still any deficit, the news agency concerned could bear it. Recommendations of the Gocnka Committee led to the death of Hindi agencies, both Hindustan Samachar and Samachar Bharti. Gocnka then was Chairman. of PTI. UNI already had launched a Hindi service UNIVarta in May 1982. PTI launched its Hindi service Bharha in April 1986. K.M.Srivastava(1991)News Reporting and Editing, Sterling Publication, New Delhi.P126)

3.11 ASIAN NEWS INTERNATIONAL (ANI)

Visnews Bureau Chief in India, Prem Prakash, launched Asian News International (ANI) as a separate business when Reuters took over Visnews. While he became Chief of Reuters TV in India, his son Sanjiv Prakash took charge of ANI, which supplied South Asian stories to Reuters. ANI has now developed into South Asia's leading multimedia news agency with over 50 bureaus in India and across the globe. Its range of products encompass loosely edited news feeds and customised programmes for television channels, audio bytes for radio stations, live webcasting and streamed multimedia/text content for websites and mobile carriers and wire services for the print section. ANI also provides a range of facilities for foreign and domestic channels to package their reports in India and uplink by satellite.

These include provision of professional crews, editing and post-production facilities, access to our archives, which are the most comprehensive collection of South Asian news videos anywhere in the world, up linking facilities and providing fixers, coordinators, producers and correspondents, if required. ANI delivers 3 subcon (subcontinent news) feeds via Reuters all over the world. About 18 top stories of the day from the subcontinent are cut to 3 minutes duration each with natural sound track. Scripts with translations are provided instantaneously. A full ANI TV Service is also put together in New Delhi which include about 25 other news and feature items which may not figure in the subcon. These are longer duration cuts and include interviews with experts, features from remote corners of the subcontinent along with translations and detailed scripts. These items are delivered via tape two or three times a day depending on the individual client's requirements. Subcon and TV service of ANI is picked up by almost every broadcaster in Asia including BBC, CNN, NHK (Tokyo), CNA (Singapore), MBC (Middle East Broadcasting), Doordarshan and PTV (Pakistan TV).

The shelf life of many of the feature items is for weekend programming use and hence the service is picked up by many ethnic television channels in the US and UK. Multimedia News Service has customised product offering for the web publishing community to offer their visitors a rich experience of video, audio, text and picture content. It is ideally suited for horizontal and vertical portals, corporate/niche websites, online editions of newspapers and magazines and TV channels, who seek to

provide their visitors, a rich multimedia experience in news and general interest features. Breaking news events as well as other happenings in the spheres of culture and entertainment, sports, lifestyles or business are digitally captured, processed and provided to the websites as fully voiced-over capsules for an enhanced user experience. The processing can be in Real media, ASF or Quick time formats in various speeds. tailor-étude to the requirements of varied clientele.

The streamed files are delivered via the FTP route to the client's end. Content is continuously updated and offers a comprehensive view of news and events as they happen. ANI also provides high quality "live webcasting" facilities of events from Delhi. ANI has also introduced its SMS/MMS services, comprising text and video content for use in mobile applications, aimed at keeping users visually informed, even while on the move. ANI has a number of ready to air weekly programmes on a variety of subjects for audiences interested in trends and happenings in South Asia. Some of the programmes are specific in subject like business and industry, which would deal with stock markets, product launches, joint ventures, interviews with visiting delegations; or entertainment, which would deal with film launches, music videos, restaurant launches, fashion, etc. They come anchored and voiced-over. These can be dubbed and anchored in Hindi or Punjabi. The shows can also be anchored with client specific chromakey background and/or microphone logo. These ready-to-air shows are cost effective as they are tailored to suit broadcaster needs without the broadcaster having to make any changes. Some of the programmes available are: South Asia News line a 5 days 15 minutes anchored news bulletin available via satellite in UK; US Correspondent Notebook a 10-minute report anchored in English with specific logo, twice a month Dateline Punjab a half hour anchored weekly feature based programme in English and Punjabi; India's World a half hour English programme on features from India; This Week in India a half hour round up of issues of Indian interest Kashmir Now features and news from Indian Kashmir, available in Hindi and Kashmiri Dateline South Asia half hour in English, round up of week's events in South Asia Hello Bollywood an anchored half hour programme on Hindi films and film stars. Balls Punjab Anchored half hour programme on Punjab in Punjabi; Ghoom Aina an anchored half hour Hindi programme on karma and investigative reports, ANI Text News. ANI text news targets newspapers, websites and radio stations as its primary client. The ANI wire service offers wide ranging content on

politics, social issues, science, health, business and entertainment besides unique features that bring out the extremely interesting, yet unknown richness of the South Asian cultural tapestry. To add depth CO its coverage in today's business conscious global economy, it offers commodity prices as well as frequent news analysis of major events in India and overseas.

The hallmark of the ANI wire service is its flexibility. It enables users to request a unique tailor-made package, to suit their editorial needs. Once the parameters are laid, ANI seeks to meet those and offers its subscribers the desired customised content. To provide a global view, ANI has its correspondents and representatives based in strategic locations across South Asia, Europe, the Middle East and America, while its vast domestic network enables it to churn out unique national content from across India. The ANI wire service is delivered as per the specific requirements of the subscribers through e-mail or FTP.

3.12 CREW HIRE

Asian News International (ANI) TV has crews in more locations in South Asia than any other news agency or television channel. There are over a hundred well-equipped camera crews in strategic locations in South Asia who can move quickly to cover news. This also includes remote corners of the region which are difficult to access and expensive to reach. It makes better business sense to use ANI crews for facilitating coverage. Many foreign broadcasters send their reporters to New Delhi and further to other parts of the region using local ANI crews. This service is made very inexpensive for ANI-TV subscribers which include BBC, NBC, ZEE TV, CNN, PBS (USA), NHK, ZDF.

3.13 INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE (IANS)

Indo-Asian News Service , formerly India Abroad News Service, was conceived by Gopal Raju, founder of the India Abroad weekly newspaper, in 1986, to enhance the flow of news and information between India and North America. As a multinational and multilingual wire service, it has carved a niche in reporting India and South Asia and events of interest to this region around the world. Every major newspaper group

in India subscribes to the service. IANS has subscribers in many countries, including the United States, Britain, Australia, South Africa, Pakistan and Gulf countries like the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. In the next few months and years, the IANS network will spread wider, enabling more countries to access news, features and analytical writing from India and other South Asian countries.

IANS reporters have broken numerous headline-grabbing stories and done many sensational interviews. In 1995, IANS started a Hindi service. Today its subscriber base encompasses all leading newspapers in Hindi. IANS has a Gujarati service and has plans for other languages as well. It is perhaps the only South Asian media organisation to have an Arabic website www.alhindelyom.com that helps to bridge the information gap with a region that has a large Indian and South Asian population. The IANS service offers media organisations a cost-effective support system in comparison to more expensive news bureaus. News, features and insight from the subcontinent can also serve as powerful information backup for non-media organisations, international bodies, multinational companies and think tanks with an interest in this part of the world. IANS gets news from all over South Asia, North America, Europe, Australia and regions from where newspapers have rarely got India-relevant news in the past.

3.14 NEWSPAPER PRODUCTION

IANS has entered a new area of business activity not usually associated with a news service: newspaper production. IANS is now not only geared to provide content to newspapers outside India but has the expertise and the technology to produce entire pages, even entire newspapers, outsourced to it, at a fraction of the cost. The division was producing newspapers (four in the United States and two in Britain) in three languages – English, Gujarati and Punjabi – at the end of 2004. TV Division A natural progression of its growth has been the addition of an audio-visual dimension: IANS TV. The TV division produces quality documentaries that tell unusual and riveting Indian and South Asian stories for audiences in the country and abroad.

3.15 IANS SOLUTIONS

IANS Solutions is a newly formed unit of the organisation that provides all solutions needed for the development of an Internet strategy. TANS Solutions blends design, technology and marketing expertise to create a Web presence that delivers the results you are looking to achieve. Its talented Web designers collaborate with our technology group to create a personalised website that is graphically superior and functionally sound.