

11/03/1999

Use of cliches

M. Anees Parvez

DEAR Sir,

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's strong and rightful concern over distorted and negative reports by the foreign media is shared by a vast majority of nations and societies across the world.

Developing countries in particular, are victims of regular twisted reporting by those who own the formidable print and electronic media.

While small incidents are blown up out of all proportion, positive developments are either ignored completely or sceptically presented so as to undermine their significance.

The Prime Minister of Malaysia has time and again warned against the prejudicial practices of these foreign media, especially those agencies which have a global network and reach. By taking exception to this orchestrated bias, he only voices the truth about the disconcerting situation created as a result of such reporting.

We in Pakistan, have not escaped such biased reporting. The latest instance is offered by Scott McDonald of Reuters, who in his wisdom chose to ridicule, in his despatch, the Pakistan press for using certain phrases. (The Business Times carried the report on its editorial page on March 5, 1999).

Don't laugh or be misled. The phrases/expressions which seemingly inspired the correspondent are neither from the Pakistani national language - Urdu - nor are they out of usage.

The idiomatic expressions "to breath one's last" or "wee hours" irritated him. He also insisted that "robber" rather than "notorious decoit" was apt. Similarly, he decried the expressions "flays" and "mafia". Only those more enlightened can perhaps discover any news in the report and justify its circulation.

It is all the more surprising that the responsible press in Malaysia should resort to printing such reports. It makes one wonder whether malice or the requirement to fill the pages necessitated this course of action.

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