



Public Diplomacy, Access to Information, and Media Freedom

When the Government assumed power in 2008, its foremost challenge was to fulfill the commitments made by the Prime Minister in his first speech on the floor of the National Assembly on March 30, 2008, to fight the menace of terrorism and to reverse the impact of the draconian decisions – particularly against the media -- taken by the last authoritarian regime while imposing emergency in the country in November 2007.

Since then, the People's Government has placed unprecedented importance on enhancing public diplomacy and access to and dissemination of information, to ensure unprecedented media freedom and articulate a clear and strong message for the people of Pakistan that invokes hope, courage and confidence in the nation.

In the last two years, therefore, the national media has witnessed an unprecedented freedom due to the People's Government's tolerance for democratic dissent. The Government has not imposed any restriction on the media; rather, it has nurtured a culture of constructive criticism.

The general public and the media had not been responsive to the last authoritarian regime's policy on terrorism. There was trust deficit between the regime and the media on sharing information. There was no effort by the regime to address and mitigate the heightened Inter-provincial disharmony.

One of the first decisions of the People's Government was to repeal the infamous Pakistan Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) Ordinance 2007 and restore media freedom. As the Government's spokes ministry, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (Mol&B) has led dynamic and

transparent information and public diplomacy initiatives to create public awareness, and develop consensus on issues of national importance, such as the fight against terrorism, Federal-Provincial relations, and development schemes for the people.

Major Initiatives of Mol&B and its Departments

Some of the major initiatives of Mol&B and its departments undertaken during 2008-2010 include:

- Promotion of the concept of self-regulation for media through a voluntary Code of Conduct
- Awareness, sensitization and campaigning on Pakistan's sacrifices and efforts in its fight against terrorism
- Amendments in media laws to promote vibrant electronic and print media
- Initiation of the legislative Bill to repeal and substitute Freedom of Information Ordinance, 2002
- Constitution of Tripartite commission to resolve 7th Wage Board Award issues
- Relationship building with media representative bodies like All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS), Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE), Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), All Pakistan Newspapers Employees Confederation (APNEC) and Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA) to promote democracy and democratic governance
- Creation of fund for financial assistance to the families of journalists martyred in the line of duty

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- Payment of long outstanding Government sector advertisement dues to newspapers
 - Promotion of public interest projects initiated by other Ministries, Departments and Agencies
 - Articulation of Government stance and messaging on issues of national importance
- Facilitation of public interest stakeholders dialogue on electronic and print media
- Engagement of national political leadership in dialogue through Inter-Provincial Information Ministers' Conferences and briefings
 - Broadcasting of Prime Minister's monthly address and Minister of Information's weekly public interaction on Radio Pakistan to disseminate the Government's message to every corner of the country
 - Establishment of National Press Club in Islamabad to facilitate the media
 - Promotion and development of women's issues and the media through MoI&B's Gender Reform Action Plan
 - Establishment of state-of-the-art Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Media University in Islamabad to: 1) provide trainings to media and GoP officials; 2) facilitate stakeholders dialogues; 3) provide peer-led education on media studies, communications, public and cultural diplomacy; 4) create industrial linkages; 5) develop free and competitive media; and 6) promote peace, democracy and pluralism in Pakistan.

Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC)

The following developmental projects were

completed by PBC during 2008-2010:

- Installation of new FM transmitters at: Bhit Shah, Islamabad, Mirpur, Karachi, Hyderabad, Lahore, Muzaffarabad, and Abbottabad
- Launching of National Broadcasting Service through a new network of current affairs programs on August 28, 2008 with five major PBC stations based in each provincial capital, including Islamabad
- Up-gradation of transmitter of PBC Lahore
- Launching of new FM-101 station in Sialkot
- Launching of new FM-94 English language channel in Islamabad-Rawalpindi
- Establishment of state-of-art digital production house in National Broadcasting House Islamabad, to produce quality music and commercial programs
- Launching of South Asian Broadcast Service in three regional languages -- Sinhala, Tamil and Nepali -- in PBC's external services

Associated Press of Pakistan Corporation (APPC)

Associated Press of Pakistan Corporation (APPC) is the premier national news agency mandated to transmit multi-lingual news to print and electronic media in Pakistan and abroad. APP has played pivotal role in media by providing authentic and credible news, round-the clock.

The number of daily news reports released to print and electronic media in English, Urdu, Sindhi and Pushto languages doubled during 2009. The APP's Photo Service has specifically shown tremendous increase and display. Its Photo Service has also achieved

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excellence in producing human-interest photographs.

APP activated its Video News Service, to cater to the needs of TV channels. This was a major step forward to expand the agency's role in a free flow of information. APP projected national events, Government policies, development plans and socio-economic activities, both at home and abroad.

The agency has recently expanded its professional network by up-grading its offices at Hyderabad, Sukkur, Faisalabad, Gujrat, Sahiwal, and Muzaffarabad. It has established new bureaus in Sialkot, D.I. Khan and Abbottabad while also enlarging its network of correspondents at district and tehsil levels across the country.

Pakistan Television Corporation

During 2008-2010, PTV produced hundreds of programs in the fields of entertainment, education and information through drama serials, music shows, women programs, children programs, religious programs, news and current affairs programs, which were aired through the bouquet of six PTV channels including PTV-Home, PTV-News, PTV-Bolan, PTV-National, PTV-Global (U.K.) and PTV-Global (U.S.A.). PTV played a very important role in promoting the culture of Pakistan.

In order to create public awareness on terrorism and to bring peace in the country, a special project, Media for Peace, was launched in April 2009. This project includes dramas, music shows, sufi music, international telethon, and a wide range of other programs.

Better financial management has enabled PTV to return all its loans. Improved cash flow situation has enabled PTV to clear large outstanding payment to its suppliers and staff. PTV saved Rs.32 crores in cricket rights. Services of 800 employees were regularized.

PTV has started televising the national

anthem from January 1, 2010 daily at 7am to sensitize the youth for its honor and respect.

A six-camera OB Van was fabricated, commissioned and put on air for News, Sports and other Live coverages. A modern and state-of-art Chaghi Studio with tapeless and paperless technology was commissioned and inaugurated by Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on November 26, 2008 with direct satellite reach for incoming and outgoing News gatherings. A Digital TV Studio and Control Room was established to enhance audio-video quality during Live programs from PTV Home.

For viewers in U.S.A., a separate Control Room with independent beam was established as PTV-Global in September 2009. An Earth Station was installed at Multan for telecast of Seriaki language programs for Southern Punjab and satellite. Rebroadcast Stations have been inaugurated in Umer Kot (Sindh) and Qila Saifullah (Balochistan). In Gilgit-Baltistan, seven Rebroadcast Stations and in AJK two RBS have been installed.