



**For Immediate Release
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Paid News Phenomenon: Protective Measures and Corrective Operations

New Delhi: The disturbing phenomenon of paid news is attaining monstrous proportions in Indian media, raising several legitimate questions regarding the role of media as the upholder of democratic values. To discuss and debate on this extremely important issue, CMS Academy of Communication and Convergence Studies organized a colloquium on January 16, 2010 at RESEARCH HOUSE, Saket. Organized as a part of the 2010 Colloquium series on paradigm shift in media operations, the seminar dwelled upon protective measures and corrective actions that should be taken to curb the growing tendency of sale of news space. More than 60 students from 18 different media schools participated in the colloquium.

The eminent speakers in the colloquium were Kuldip Nayyar, eminent journalist, Ajit Bhattacharjea, former director of Press Institute of India, Subhash C Kashyap, noted constitutional expert, KC Jacob, former head of Media Net, The Times of India, Rahul Dev, CEO, CNEB TV Network, Pragya Sharma, senior Vice President, INX, Sumit Chakravarty, editor-Mainstream and Dr N Bhaskara Rao, chairman, CMS.

Introducing the broad contours of the topic of colloquium, Dr N Bhaskara Rao said, "The practice of paid news is not a recent phenomenon. But earlier, it was limited to a few journalists, and covertly. While today, it has become an overt and institutionalized affair as if there is nothing unusual or deviant about." He said that the situation calls for protective measures and corrective initiatives by news media themselves on their own and in their own interest and by other stakeholders in the civil society. Ajit Bhattacharjea, who chaired the colloquium, was of the view that resolutions and appeals for self-regulation have little influence on those who rate making money higher than professional ethics. He said that regulations must have teeth. Bhattacharjea was of the view that, "unless effective remedies are prescribed and administered, people will stop believing what they read and see, with disastrous effects on the democratic system." He suggested that the provisions of Right to Information Act (RTI) should be extended to media houses as well.

While giving the keynote address, eminent journalist, Kuldip Nayyar wondered where is the idealism associated with the media gone? "TV channels and newspapers avoid debates on issues. They present a point of view of their own or of the vested interests. They deny a voice to those who do not tally with their bias or prejudice. In fact they are the most undemocratic species talking in the name of democracy." He expressed his disappointment over the attitude of journalists and

politicians who know that there is a problem of lessening integrity, yet they prefer to sweep it under the carpet.

KC Jacob presented the marketing point of view. "As times are changing, media has to be accepted as a product, which needs investment and investors expect profit. Accepting that, one cannot compromise with issues of national importance. But when it comes to lifestyle, fashion and entertainment there is no harm in selling space," he was of the opinion. Pragya Sharma was of the view that marketing people should be trusted when they bring a positive story from corporate sector including PSUs, without taking money, as part of the prospective PR exercise. Rahul Dev suggested that some compromise for media, otherwise, it cannot exist. But the blatant selling of edit space cannot be accepted. Noted constitutionalist, Subhash C Kashyap shared his worry that if media starts selling news space democracy will be in danger. Sumit Chakravarty apprised that the Editor's Guild of India has taken a bold initiative by asking all the editors of print and electronic media to make a statement that they will not accept paid news. It is to make them morally committed against this trend.

About 2010 Colloquium series

The year 2010 has special significance to CMS. It enters its third decade of independent and tumultuous operations. Continuing 20 years of tradition, CMS Academy is organizing a series of colloquia (on a number of issues). The first in the series was on 'paid news phenomenon' and was organized on January 16. The second seminar would be organized on February 27 on the theme 'Ratings vs Plurality in Media'. The third colloquium is 'Movers and Shakers' and has been scheduled for March 27. The last in the series would be on April 29 on the topic 'Media Agenda: Setting Redefined'

About CMS Academy

CMS Academy of Communication & Convergence Studies is a communication school aimed at developing communication and media leaders through excellence in education and research. The Academy is a uniquely designed, research driven, practically relevant and futuristically oriented educational institute. CMS Academy is an initiative of Centre for Media Studies (CMS), a multi-disciplinary research organization in the country. CMS Academy is associated with over 160 reputed national and international organizations through its 20 years experience of research, strategic planning and managing of over 500 projects. With campuses in NOIDA (UP) and Saket, Delhi, it provides a world class infrastructure that includes media lab, prototype lab, research library, audio visual resource centre, etc.

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