

In Journalism Training, There's Much to Learn from China; and Let's Forget a Few Cliches in Reporting

Should "Sea of Japan" be Called "East Sea"?

THE professional training for journalists carries a price tag. It also involves a commitment to free press, careful planning and minimum possible interference from the government.

During his recent visit to China, my good friend, Devapriya Barua, the Chief Editor of the Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), the country's so-called national news agency, must have seen for himself how Xinhua has progressed over the years as a credible operation with an expanding international network, serving its clients in different continents in six languages.

The article by Barua, published elsewhere in this issue, deals with the growth of China's national news agency. If the trip combined for him business with pleasure, it must have also left him pretty frustrated when he compared the two services — BSS and Xinhua — and felt sad about the dismal situation in which the BSS is placed today.

True, it will be unfair to compare the two news agencies, considering their size and resources available at their disposal. It is understandable why BSS cannot have the kind of massive multi-storied structure now occupied by Xinhua. But it is a shame that Bangladesh news service cannot be housed in some decent premises, instead of in its present rundown building which, as a journalist once put it, gives one an idea as to what a sick industry looks like from outside. It probably looks the same from inside as well.

For Xinhua, the present impressive structure where it is now housed is something new. During the decade of the eighties when I visited it almost every year, during my professional trips to China, the service operated from austere but comfortable and spacious rows of buildings, all humming with activity.

A part of one such building was occupied by the Xinhua training centre where new entrants and even mid-level reporters, feature writers and sub-editors went through well-planned courses, each one running for six to nine months, on subjects ranging from the use of English to journalistic techniques. During each visit, I would spend a couple of hours at the centre, talking to trainee journalists, going over their curriculum and chatting with the instructors. At one stage, the two of the trainers were Australian young journalists who took time off from their newspapers for a year or two they spent with Xinhua. Later, they were from Canada and then from England. And so it went on, without a break in the continuity, with one group of trainees completing the course to make room for another.

Impressed as I was with the programme, I had little problem in identifying what made it such a success. It was the kind of success rarely achieved by a news service in a developing country, despite some political constraints

inherent in China. In the first place, the whole programme was designed and conducted by the Thomson Foundation of the United Kingdom which, notwithstanding some ups and downs in its

When it comes to training for journalists, the media here is indeed in a sad situation. There is no in-house training programme within BSS. One does not see any sign of any long-term planning at the Press Institute. Sadly enough, professional bodies of editors, publishers and working journalists show little interest in what goes on in this field.

funding position, continues to be one of the best, if not the very best, in journalism training.

of BSS. The response from me was deliberately cold. That won't make that much difference unless you produce better copy, your staffers work harder and you exercise a total editorial autonomy."

In this respect, the performance of the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) is, to be charitable, a somewhat mixed one. To put it bluntly, it comes close to being a failure.

Judging from inside, PIB plans its short courses — seldom does any of its programme run for more than a week to ten days — somewhat on an ad hoc basis, depending on the availability of a grant, usually from an external source. It is, therefore, unable to work out in advance an annual calendar of activities, in consultation with newspaper editors, based on continuity and follow-up course. Hence, a week-long course on parliamentary reporting may be followed by a programme environmental writing. If PIB is in no position to set up follow-up course in these two subjects until new grants are available, it is also unable to lend a trainer to a newspaper if it wants one on cost-sharing basis. It must be part of general cynicism that

visitor to Dhaka. First, a rhetorical exhortation by a national leader at a public rally, usually asking people to work hard, must be dismissed as a lead for a report. If the leader does not deserve the intro, he or she (as the case maybe) hardly needs to be quoted in direct narration in long paragraphs, if there is no news in what he or she (again, as the case may be) says.

Secondly, would our Dhaka reporters leave out thunderous when (and if) the leader is greeted by applause at a rally where his or her call need not be taken on? Or should the call be then a stirring one? Again, would the leader just criticise the opposition or last out at it or blast it? (Of course, it can be the other way around, that is, the opposition lashing out at the government).

He had a few other expressions picked up from our reports, which he felt might stem from our habit of over-statement or our political culture, if not both. However, his final observation was an astute one, although many of us have noticed this phenomenon — what else can we call it? — in reporting, in speeches delivered by ministers or even in committee meetings.

Is it always the "dynamic leadership" of the head of the government (the prime minister or the president) who is responsible for whatever "achievement" made in the country? Can't we attribute any success to any other factor or, for that matter, to any other mortal.

What is this due to? asked the visiting journalist. "This is part of our sycophantic culture which transcends politics," my reply.

If my contemporaries would remember their reporting days in the sixties, it all started in the days Ayub Khan, when every success, if any, achieved in Pakistan was attributed to the "dynamic leadership of President Ayub." Then, successive governments in Pakistan and Bangladesh kept the expression in vogue, making sure it is used only in the right context. If one is confused about the context, there can be trouble, real trouble, under one kind of black law or another. So, watch out.

MY WORLD

S. M. Ali

Secondly, as far as I gathered, Xinhua paid for the programme from its own resources, although it would have been delighted to obtain some financial support from an international organisation. It was part of its "human resources development", the expression we hear in all different countries, although it means different things to different governments.

prevails within media in the country today that while PIB carries on with its activities in the way it can — with its Director General changing perhaps every two to three years — professional bodies of editors, newspaper owners and working journalists seem to be playing little part in using this potentially useful organisation in raising the level of journalism in Bangladesh.

WHEN it comes to training for journalists, the Bangladesh media is indeed in a different — and, indeed, a sad situation. In its long history, BSS never had an in-house training programme. There might have been one or two short courses, but we are not sure in the absence of any confirmation. Yet, as the so-called national agency of a Least Developed Country (LDC), BSS is in a pretty strong position to obtain a sizable grant, not to mention the services of trainers, from an international organisation to set up a well-planned programme. A few years ago, the then Chief Editor of the news agency had confided me most enthusiastically that Japan was showing some interest in the computerisation

We are grateful to Barua for writing a piece for *The Daily Star* on his China trip. If I had anything to do with PIB, I would have invited him to the Institute to give a talk on the growth and expansion of Xinhua or on journalism training in Beijing.

If a professional instructor in journalism does end up in BSS to conduct a six-month in-house training programme, his first job will be to make the reporters unlearn some of the established guidelines they have been used to for all these years. Here are a few examples, most of them picked up from the conversation of a foreign journalist, a recent

By now, a number of our visiting friends, some connected with the media, have asked me if the CNN coverage that we have been seeing almost every morning, especially during the US presidential campaign, has made any impact, especially on our own electronic network.

Has any of our readers given any thought to it? How would I answer the question myself? Well, we will be back after the next commercial — next week!

IMAGES OF PAIN AND PANG



SELF PORTRAIT: Ganesh Pyne



CRY: Manu Parekh

CHINA REVISITED

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departmental stores were heavily crowded. Local protocol officer in Shanghai from Xinhua thoughtfully took me to visit a famous 300-year-old Buddhist temple with jade images of Buddha sculptured on Burmese model. I was also taken to the 1,700-year-old Longhua Buddhist temple where I found Lamas and monks engaged in prayers and chanting hymns in Chinese. Reconstruction was being carried out by the government for renovation of these two historic temples. Attached to Longhua Temple, which is inhabited by 90 monks headed by the Chief Abbot, also a Vice President of the Chinese Buddhist Association, is a Buddhist hotel with 160 air-conditioned guest rooms and attached vegetarian restaurant.

and experienced that we are going to see a modern pros-



Bamboo Garden Hotel, the first major Sino-foreign hotel built in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone.

We had nearly two hours' flight to Guangzhou on China Eastern Airline on September 13 evening. Our programme on the next day included a visit to an agro-based Pharmaceutical General Factory, about 30 miles from the city. The Director of the Company said that it manufactured traditional Chinese medicines and had been developed by the Chinese without any Government support. The Company developed subsidiary business enterprises and plans to build an industrial village on joint venture. The same day I was taken to visit a 700-year-old Buddhist temple, the local Museum and a Hall with a large lawn dedicated to the memory of San Yat Sen who hailed from this province. Next day I was taken to a Sino-British joint venture producing coffee.

perous China in the coming years setting a unique model for all developing countries. Photos: Courtesy — the China Today and the Beijing Review

The Chinese friends whom I had met were frank to say that there are still remote areas and mountainous regions which remain to be developed. Benefits accruing from modernisation shall be filtered down to the people of these regions who constitute about 10 per cent of the total population.

WRITE TO MITA

BBC's New Daily "South Asia Report"

ONE of the region's most prestigious current affairs programmes, the BBC's *South Asia Survey* goes daily from the end of October, and will be relaunched as the *South Asia Report*.

A New look, and two daily transmissions offer listeners more in-depth analysis, and even more up-to-date news.

New features include a weekly round-table discussion, chaired by the BBC's ex-Sri Lanka correspondent Chris Morris, tackling controversial issues such as nuclear proliferation, or the role of the IMF in South Asia.

During its 15-year history,

South Asia Survey has gained a reputation for excellent, balanced coverage of current affairs, provided by some of the best-known journalists in the region.

It began as a weekly programme, but since last year it has been broadcast five days a week, covering current affairs in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and Afghanistan. Virtually all the leaders and senior politicians of those countries have been heard on the programme. Many are among its regular listeners. In recent months, GP Kofrala, Ranasinghe Premadasa, Nawaz Sharif, Narasimha

Rao and Begum Khaleida Zia have all featured on the programme. There have also been probing interviews with Dr Manmohan Singh and Saifur Rahman.

"Going daily was the next logical step," says *South Asia Report* Editor Alexander Thomson. "We certainly are not complacent, and we aim to carry on improving and increasing our coverage. We hope," Alexander Thomson added, "that new listeners will come to regard us as their first and most reliable source of news and analysis for the region, a programme that tells them what's happening and why."

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The BBC South Asia Report Team, from left: Solmaz Dabiri, Mani Rana, George Arney, Alexander Thomson, Pam Milner, Arasan Arulliah, Sarah Smith and Larry Jagan.

I left Guangzhou (Canton) in the afternoon of September 15 and boarded a train for Kowloon (Hong Kong) for a pleasant three-hour journey. On both sides were lush green villages with farmers irrigating their fields. Pattern of new housing was the same as elsewhere in the countryside. The air-conditioned train passed through China's Shenzhen Economic Zone which with numerous high rises resembled Hong Kong but Hong Kong was on the other side across a bridge over a small river dividing China and the present-day British Hong Kong awaiting to be integrated with China in 1997.

My 11-day visit to China came to an end but as I look back, I know from what I saw

Dear Mita,

Long time ago you answered some letters to women who had been abused by their husbands, I do not remember your advice and would like to present this problem to you. My sister has been beaten by her husband for the last ten years till she finally left him. Recently that wicked man has become very ill and needs her. She is very confused and thinks that it is her duty to go back to him. I think it is disgusting that she should even think of going back to him after the way he has treated her. What is your idea about this. My sister is a wonderful person and I want to give her the right advice.

Laila, Bakshi Bazaar, Dhaka.

Dear Laila,

Your sister is in a very difficult situation where she is being pulled in two directions. Our traditional values tell a woman that her place is with the husband — no matter what her memory is of the horror she has endured. Probably her husband is really sick and needs her now but will revert to his previous habit once he recovers. You can try to tell your sister that he is just trying to get her attention and sympathies. The point to consider here is that she might be using this as an excuse to go back to him. It is very difficult for a woman in our culture to break away completely and as time passes one tends to forget the unpleasant and remember only the pleasant. Perhaps the memory of his cruelty is fading and she is again thinking of starting afresh with him. The only thing you can do is to advise her that people seldom change and that she might be going back to the same life that she has so bravely left.

Dear Mita,

I never thought I would have in-laws problems but here I am complaining about my mother-in-law. She is not a bad person basically, but is complaining about everything. As soon as she sees us she starts about her aches and pains, her frail health, the servants, the weather, the other daughter-in-laws etc. etc. Thank God I don't live with her, she would have driven me crazy. I try to avoid visiting her but my husband insists that we visit her every. Second day with our children who are also tired of her complaining. What can I do stop her from complaining?

Shahant, New Eskaton, Dhaka

Dear Shahanta,

You will not like my answer, but there is nothing you can do or should do to stop your mother-in-law from complaining. She is old and has developed certain habits over the years which will not change just because of you. Moreover, since you do not live with her, I am sure the problem is not unbearable. What you can do is to try to make her life easier if possible.

At the 6th UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in New York in August, 1992, Ambassador Byung Yong Soh of the Republic of Korea emphasised that judging from the evidence of history, geography and archives, the sea in question should be renamed as "East Sea". His statement was instantly seconded by the North Korean representative.

HISTORICALLY, three names, "Sea of Korea," "Oriental Sea" and "Sea of Japan" have appeared in world maps to refer to the sea between Korea and Japan.

SEA OF KOREA: Beginning in the early 17th century, cartographers and geographers in the West employed the name "Sea of Korea" or its equivalent as the designation of the sea. In 1615, Godinho de Heredia named the sea "Mar Coria" on his map of Asia. In 1647, R Dudley (1573-1649), an Englishman, denoted it as "Mare di Cora" on his map "Carta particolare della Grande Isola de Giapone di lezo con il Regno di Cora et altre isole in torno."

Subsequently, "Sea of Korea" or its equivalent in other languages appeared on many other maps such as: Tavernier's "Carte des Isles du Japon" of 1679 (Mar de Corer), Bowen's "A New and Accurate Map of the Empire of Japan" of 1747 (Sea of Korea), Robert de Vaugondy's carte de l'Asie de 1750 (Mer de Corer), and sayer's "The Empire of Japan" of 1794 (Corean Sea).

The common usage of the name "Sea of Korea" by cartographers was reflected in the first and second editions of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published in 1771 (volume II, Plate LXXXIX) and 1778, which used the name to indicate the sea in question in an illustration of China.

"Sea of Korea" was also widely used by Japanese cartographers in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Notably, the name "Chosunhae," literally meaning "Sea of Korea," appeared on Kasragawa's map of Asia of 1794, Takabashi's world map of 1810 and Kasaku's world map of 1847. An official map of the Japanese Government published circa 1840 named the area close to Korea as "Chosun Hae" (Sea of Korea) and the area close to Japan as "Nihon Kai" (Sea of Japan).

SEA OF JAPAN: "Sea of Japan" seems to have been first mentioned by Matteo Ricci, an Italian missionary who settled in China, on his world map of 1602. In 1708, Witsen used "Mer Orientale ou du Japon" in his publication, "carte Nouvelle de la Grande tartarie." French cartographer D'Anville's "A Map of China" and "General Map of Eastern and Western Tartary," published in 1738, and 1741, respectively, also named the sea "Sea of Japan."

In 1797, La Perouse published the results of his explorations of the sea around Korea, Japan and Sakhalin conducted earlier in 1787, in which he named the sea "Mer du Japon". Because they were the first scientific explorations of the area, La Perouse's observations were considered the most precise and reliable. Hence "Sea of Japan" prevailed in cartographers' works such as English geographer A. Arrowsmith's "Chart of the Pacific Ocean" of 1798 and Russian Navigator AJ Krusenstern's "Mer du Japon" of 1815.

ORIENTAL SEA OF MIXED USAGE: "Oriental Sea" was another name used for the sea in the 17th and early 18th centuries. It appears that Briet (1601-1668), a Jesuit Missionary, first used the "Ocean oriental" on his "Royaume de Japon" of 1650.

Delisle's "Carte des Indes et de la Chine" published in 1705 also designated the sea as "Mer Orientale ou Mer de Corer," and Witsen's "Carte Nouvelle de la Grande Tartarie" published in 1708 as "Mer Orientale ou du Japon." It is interesting that Robert de Vaugondy's "L'Empire du Japon" used "Mer du Japon" to denote the area close to Japan and "Mer de Corer" to denote the area close to Korea. Bowen, who named the area "Sea of Korea" on his "A New and Accurate Map of the Empire of Japan" of 1747, called in "Sea of Japan" on his "A New and Accurate map of China". These are some examples of the overlapping use of names.

SUMMARY: Old maps reveal that such names as "Sea of Korea," "Sea of Japan" and "Oriental Sea" had been used to designate the sea between Korea and Japan from the early 17th century.

It was Japanese expansionism that played a decisive role in spreading the usage of "Sea of Japan". In particular, Japanese predominance in the region since the late 19th century contributed to the wider acceptable of "Sea of Japan" in the West.

The Russo-Japanese war of 1904 contributed to the consolidation of "Sea of Japan" by drawing the West's attention to the geography of the Far East. Finally, the fall of Korea to Japanese rule in 1910 resulted in the complete disappearance of "Sea of Korea" from world maps.

Since Korea gained independence from Japanese occupation in 1945, the Korean people have referred to the sea as "East Sea" in English, corresponding to the name in the Korean Language "Tong Hae."

By A Correspondent

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