Chapter 7

Press and Emerging trends

Print media in India is witnessing a significant increase in circulation while developed countries of North America and Europe are seeing a declining. The Indian Media and Entertainment Industry Report 2011 stated that 'India is one of the largest newspaper markets with more than 107 million copies circulated daily, more than China, and accounting for more than 20 per cent of all dailies across the world'. It has also been expected that this trend would therefore sustain over the next couple of years. Thereby, no threads of new development in terms of new media platforms are likely to have an effect. (Hooke)

It has also put a lot of effort into boosting its literacy rate as pointed out by Robert Picard. As per the census of 2011, the adult literacy level had increased nine percent to that of the last census recorded. 'As soon as a person becomes literate, what they get is a newspaper – even before they buy a phone, it's the first luxury a man affords', said A.S. Raghunath, in a report by 'The Globe and Mail'. Mr Raghunath, a veteran editor who advises new entrants in regional markets said that the newspaper retains an aura of respect in India and the newly literate like to be seen with one. “And with a cover price of one, two or at most four rupees, new-reading households will often subscribe to not just one paper, but two or three,” says the report. (Hooke)
India press scenario

Table 7. India newspaper circulation figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDIA NEWSPAPER CIRCULATION FIGURES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Total number of newspaper registered as on 31st March 2010-2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Number of new newspaper registered in 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Total number of circulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Largest number of newspapers registered in any Indian language (Hindi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Second largest of newspaper registered (English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. State with largest number of newspapers (Uttar Pradesh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. State with second largest number of newspapers (Delhi)</td>
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</table>

Source: www.thehoot.org

The total numbers of newspapers that are registered under RNI (2010-2011) are 82,222. Among the Indian languages, Hindi has the highest number of registered newspapers in India. Before independence, newspapers were not able to generate good profits as they were born either for a cause or for the policy and they came with the British law to restrict the freedom of the press. During the Second World War, there were basic changes in the newspaper industry. The newspapers like ‘National Herald’, ‘The Herald’, ‘The Aaj’ and many newspapers were suspended during the Quit India Movement session. Then the restriction of emergence of new publications. The agreement of then Home Minister, Mr. Maxwell and the India Press which assured a one third increase in government’s advertisement rates, adequate newsprint supplies and the protections from the competitors had increased the interest of the capitalist class in the newspaper industry. At the time of Independence, it was known
that British Government had to leave India, so the British industrialists sold their share to Indian capitalists. Thus the 'Times of India' Group and 'The Statesman' were the two newspaper organisations which had changed hands.

The prominent newspapers formed organisations for the welfare of the journalist group, i.e., Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society in 1939, All India Newspapers Editors Conference in 1940. These organisation efforts had resulted in the corporation with the government of India in enforcing censorship on the press under the Press Advisory System.

The promulgation of a new Constitution on January 26, 1950 introduced freedom of speech and expression and later the Supreme of Court held that these included the freedom of press also. This had affected the content of the newspapers to a great extent. In the first report of the Indian Press Commission describes that in 1952 there were 330 daily newspapers in India and their circulation was more than 25 lakhs. In the report it included that North Eastern newspapers gave considerable influence to local affairs. The English newspapers however drew larger amount of advertisements and revenue.

Though the Constitution gave the freedom of press, the reporters and journalists are not able to report faithfully the proceeding of the parliament because of the law of defamation. The Feroze Gandhi Act of 1955-56 which explains whenever any charges were made either in speeches, reports or documents that has been laid down in the table of the House of the Parliament can be published in spite of its charge of being defamatory. This resulted in the exposure of the many malpractices which brought out a new segment of reporting called investigative journalism. Sensational news became necessary elements which could greatly affect the popularity of the newspapers. Before independence, the newspapers became known for the editorial and the powerful editorials were called journalism of influence. However, after
independence this concept of the editorial has changed. The editorials were written by a group of writers and if the editors wanted his views to be known then a separate articles gets published. The period has also seen several structural changes in Indian journalism. The newspapers which once voiced for one had changed and become commercial. At times, a single newspaper of a particular language is usually owned by a single owner. But now the trend of newspaper ownership had changed which had developed into a chain of newspapers. With new technology, a single newspaper under a banner is published from two three stations. There were changes in the functioning of the news agencies like Reuters which has a subsidiary company called Associated Press of India which supplies foreign news. Even the Indian News Agency had fallen under the name of United Press of India. Later, the Indian newspapers had taken over the Associated Press of India under the name of Press Trust of India. Besides, two news agencies were started for supplying news in Hindi. On 29th October 1950, All India organisation of Working Journalists was formed for the welfare and betterment of the journalist and reporters. With the report of the first press commission under the chairmanship of Justice G. S. Rajadhyaksha, certain suggestions and acts was passed for the improvement of the working conditions of journalists. One of the results of the Commission’s recommendations has been the appointment of Press Council and Press Registrar; however it was not entirely successful in protecting or keeping a watch on the concentration of the ownership. (Chaturvedi, 1992)

**Scenario of the Press in the North East**

In North East India, newspapers continue to act as a platform of expression unlike in mainland India, where the media emerged into a major industry.
After the post-reorganisation period (1970-90), there is a greater change in the socio-economic and the living style of the indigenous tribes in the hill areas of North East India. The spread of education and political awareness had enhanced the concern over the issues that affected the daily lives of the people. Many English and vernacular newspapers and periodicals came in for the service of people of the region.

The dailies like ‘The Shillong Times’, ‘U Nongsain Hima’, ‘The Assam Tribune’ and many others had already celebrated their golden jubilees. Nevertheless, there were newspapers and other publications which also ceased down owing to different constraints. According to the RNI (Register of Newspaper of India) there are 1497 periodicals in North East India. The weekly periodicals have the highest number of publications with 33%, followed by monthlies with 22% and dailies with only 18%. The least percentage of periodicals that are circulated includes bi-weekly with only 2% and bi-monthly with 3% respectively.

Graph 1. Number of newspapers and periodicals of North East India

(Source: RNI)
In the North East, there is hardly any economy activity besides the regular government development programmes. Even the newspapers which are published from the region are area-centric, which do not go beyond the boundaries of the state. There is limited circulation and marginal private advertisement support. The revenue generally comes from the government advertisements, tenders, official notifications which also includes job openings. Besides this, the newspapers are also supported by various interest groups and politicians. There is however a growth of media in the different regions of the North Eastern state, as there has been a constant attempt to redefine a new regional perspective. After the fragmentation of Assam, newspapers like ‘The Assam Tribune’ could not hold the interest of the entire region. Therefore, a few other newspapers tried to represent a new regional perspective like ‘The North East Times’, ‘The Northeast Observer’, and ‘The Northeast Daily’. But they too failed to occupy the space of a single newspaper for the entire North Eastern region. The newspapers in the North Eastern region never had good real investment in developing professional infrastructure. For a quality newspaper, the basic
infrastructure has to be good, whereas most of the newspapers organisations that exist are on a small scale. Therefore, there is very little scope for attaining professional skills and to grow with the experience for a long term. Most of the employees working for the newspapers organisation are not paid well. Besides this, most of the newspaper organisations do not issue any appointment letters or any written contract to the journalists. Because of the financial constrains smaller newspapers run with only one or two persons employed on a fulltime basis. However, the newspapers in the North East despite the shortfalls and lacking in many aspects stood up against the crises when even the government remain to keep silence. The small newspapers across the region are the ones mostly who expose the various lapses of the administrations and the cases of corruption. The literacy rate in the North East region is higher than the national average. The English and the vernacular language newspapers have better readership rate than any other newspapers as the Khasis in Meghalaya and Mizo in the Mizoram have grown in numbers and in readership. (Chakraborty, 2000)

**Meghalaya press scenario**

Many state dailies and weeklies comprise the press today in Meghalaya. Besides the English newspapers, the state also has regional language newspapers which serve the people of Meghalaya. Because of its strategic prominence in the British administration of North East India, Shillong, the capital of the present day state of Meghalaya is proud of having the presence of correspondents of some of the best national level dailies who have been actively rendering their services for a long time now.
In the initial state of news and information, the people would depend a lot on the print media, especially the newspapers. These demands encouraged the introduction of newspapers which would satisfy the readers. It was more of a mission to bring about a positive change in the society. This was also the period when the conscientious citizens and leaders needed a platform to disseminate their views and opinions on the issues related to the struggle of the Hill State. So the newspapers from the different parts of the region were brought out to serve the people.

Most of the vernacular newspapers in Meghalaya are owned by the private individuals and especially by the middle class or upper middle class intellectuals. They did not publish newspapers primarily for making profits like a businessman. Instead the move to start a newspaper was made in the spirit of ushering in social reforms and gaining independence of the country. Even the circulation of the newspapers was also quite moderate in those days. However, the news contents and
The formation of a separate state has paved the way for the development of language press in the region which has made a significant contribution in the development programmes of the government. Earlier newspapers were patronized by the political parties, especially those political parties who were at the forefront of the struggle for the hill state. *Democratic review*, *Young India* ‘Shillong Observer’ were the organs of the communist party which had more of a political ideology and political programs. In the late 1980s, with the advent of the dailies, *Rupang* and *Ka Lympung Ri Lum* were the leading newspapers which were patronised by the leaders of the APHLC. Before the coming of the daily, *Dongmusa* was the largest circulated Khasi paper. Billy P Domes, Editor *Dongmusa* said that ‘*theses newspapers read not only by the Khasis of Meghalaya but also by those Khasis who were living in the plains of Assam like Cachar. In market days people will buy two three copies and distribute these among their relatives and friends. These newspapers were passed from one person to the other person in the family and sometimes among neighbours*.

**Newspaper circulation**

According to the Audit Bureau of circulation (ABC), the daily circulation of English newspaper has been rated at 55.87% which is the highest among the other regional language newspapers. Following which is the Khasi with 34.49% and the least number of newspapers that has been circulating in the state of Meghalaya is the Bengali newspaper with the rating of 0.51%.
Table 8. Language newspapers in Meghalaya

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Total number of newspaper circulation average per day as per ABC</th>
<th>Percentage of total number of ABC daily circulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assamese</td>
<td>3129</td>
<td>3.87 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>0.51 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>45151</td>
<td>55.87 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>4248</td>
<td>5.26 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khasi</td>
<td>27876</td>
<td>34.49 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80816</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source – Audit Bureau of Circulation)

Changing trend of Newspaper periodicity

After the first quarterly newspaper which was brought out by the Welsh Presbyterian missionaries in 1889, the number of newspapers increased till 1992 which saw 36 new publications which served the people of Meghalaya with news and information.

Table 9. Quarter century-wise initiation of Newspapers and Journals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>No. of publication of the Christian Organisation</th>
<th>No. of publication of the Secular Newspapers and Journals</th>
<th>Total number of publications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1889 – 1914</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1915 – 1940</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1941 – 1966</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1967 – 1992</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>1993 – 2012</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


232
The journey of newspapers in Meghalaya started with the religious publication ‘U Nongkit Khubor’ from the Welsh Presbyterian Missionary. The newspaper was introduced mainly to spread the Christian religious belief among the indigenous people of Meghalaya. The missionaries had translated and published the teachings of the Bible into the different vernacular journals. The Christian denominations regularly tried to generate funds for the purpose of printing. Subsequently, it had reached the people and created a cementing force between the different groups of people, religious, cultural and linguistic boundaries.

It was in the first quarter of the century that religious journals had the highest number of publications while the secular papers were very few in numbers. There was a decline of the religious publications to only 3 publications in the next quarter century whereas the secular publications increased and had been growing till the year 1993. The first secular newspaper ‘U Khasi Mynta’ (The Khasi Today) enabled the public to share their opinion and thoughts on the different issues that confronted the society. Issues that revolved round the farmers, religious laws and customs and various social issues were discussed in the columns. This was the time which mostly emphasised on constructive journalism which maintains a high standard of ethical values.

However, after 1993, the establishment of publications decreased in the state of Meghalaya. The secular newspapers dwindled from 36 publications to only 8 publications and there were hardly any new religious newspapers were left.

**Recent trend**

The recent trend of news presentation is that it describes the news as it is. A majority of the reporters report the news without cross checking and take reporting at face
value. There is no routine cross check on the information provided by the
government on their plans and decisions, NGOs or other organisation. This is mainly
due to the monetary involvement as the reporter has to go to the area in order to
verify the information, in the process he has to spend money for transport, printing of
documents etc. As the news organisation cannot pay the reporters well, they do not
encourage following up the story the next day unless it is big news. The daily
newspapers also have to keep up with the deadlines and a reporter has to cover
almost all kind of news in a day. Therefore, the necessity to file the stories in time
does not give the reporter the luxury of time to follow up on the stories and cross
check the information provided. The manpower in Meghalaya is very limited in
comparison to the big organisations in mainland India. The reporters from the big
organisations usually follow one story in a day and they are able to verify the
information on the respected story. Also, each reporter has a specific ‘beat’ and only
covers stories that have to do with his personal ‘beat’. This is not seen in Meghalaya
where a reporter will cover anything ranging from sports events to funerals of
reputed persons to political news and so on and so forth.

The news organisations in Meghalaya are not financially sound as the source of
revenue is very limited. They mostly depend on the Government advertisements to
run the newspaper. R. M. Shabong, the editor of ‘U Rupang’ pointed out that the
Government of Meghalaya is giving a lot of support to the newspapers outside the
state as opposed the local publishers of Shillong. The other issue with the
Government is that the payment for the advertisement bill always gets delayed and
sometimes the bill reaches the other districts of the state. All these issues hinder the
proper growth of the newspaper organisations in Meghalaya. Therefore, it is difficult
to engage a professional and well established reporter/journalist who can serve a
particular newspaper for a long duration.
In vernacular newspapers most of the reporters are not well qualified; they learn their skills in the field itself. These reporters are paid according to the whims of the newspaper owner and if they get a better job opening, they move to the other newspaper organisations. Due to the low wages, the reporters engage themselves in the electronic media as well.

**Content**

Since technology has brought in many developments in accessing news and information. So also has it opened the horizon for a wide variety of options to choose for the different publications.

Looking back to the initial stage of newspapers and journals, Phillip Marwein, the editor of *Youth Today* in his statement said that *'Earlier newspapers included social and political issues, nothing much in business, or economy related, but today we have all kinds of issues like development, economics and social issues. Sometime in some corner of the publication we get to see stories relating to the cultural aspect as well.'* The news today has more of sensational stories. After the statehood of Meghalaya, crime reporting has gained more prominence than any other genre of reporting. This helps to fulfil the desire and satisfy the curiosity of the particular news or events. Dr. K. K. Jhunjhunwala, the Editor-of-Chief, Eastern Panorama, gave his opinion that *'For a journalist, bad news is a good news and the media here gives more importance to the negative news. Somehow the mindset has been developed that people like to read the negative news and once you give negative news, the circulation goes up. There is a need for the change in this trend'.* During his stay in USA, Jhunjhunwala found that newspapers in the developed countires gave more emphasis on education, achievements and health, stories on which are
published in the front page. The political views or news relating to crimes were only placed on inside pages and that too in the corner areas of the newspapers. Negative news is not prominent in the development countries, in India it is not and in Northeastern region there are no exceptions.

Investigative journalism had taken a new phase into the field of journalism. It has acquired a powerful position which helps to enhance the image of the press as the watchdog of the society. Unfortunately, presently in Meghalaya, this kind of reporting is seen very rarely. B.P. Domes, a senior journalist (Dongmsua) said that the ‘The Shillong times’, ‘Meghalaya Times’, ‘Mawphor’ to some extent had done investigative reporting. In the late 90s, The Meghalaya house scam in Kolkatta where some sort of investigative reporting was going on and subsequently there were other scams also which took place on which news reports were published which boost the newspaper circulations. However, these kinds of stories are very rarely seen in the newspapers. Serious efforts have to be made by people who have the resources to bring out a standard Khasi newspaper.

These days the increase of sport news has also been seen in the newspapers in Meghalaya especially, during the I-League where even the ‘Shillong Lagong’, the football team from Meghalaya, had entered into the league. Emphasis has been given to sports and agencies also do make special effort to cover the I-League matches in Shillong. In this way we can see that even the national newspapers started covering the sports news from the region.

**Development of Technology**

Technology had changed the media scenario and even the mode of media coverage. The usage of pen, pencils, notebooks or shorthand is being replaced by electronic
equipment in news gathering, recording, transmission and compilation of information. As the proverb questions – Is science a boon or a curse? So also the question arises as to whether technology is a boon or a curse for journalism. Some journalists of Meghalaya have appreciated technology development in the field of journalism as it enables them to file or send the reports for the publication on time. For news coverage, earlier the journalists had to run from pillar to post as there were limited telephone connections. Sometime the reporters had to walk 7 to 8 miles to cover an event as road connectivity was bad in most areas. At times, the news would appear in the newspapers after 2-3 days of the actual event whereas now news is instantly updated with the help of technology. In a lot of ways, news gathering is much easier and faster. Nowadays the flow of information is very fast, anything that takes place anywhere reaches the desk in a fraction of second. Photos can be sent by mobile phone immediately either by reporters or sometimes by the public. Citizen journalism also plays a role in this regard as the concerned citizen try to reach the journalists to report an event. However, though there are many advantages of having technological development, there are also certain disadvantages to be seen. Now everyone is getting the stories as it has become like a clone, the stories are shared and this is the reason that people these days do not buy too many papers. If they buy one newspaper, they do not like to buy another, as they get the same kind of news in almost all the newspaper of the state. Before the reporters used to hunt for news, now for varied reasons such as low wages and no travel or daily allowance, the reporters share their news. Therefore there is hardly any kind of exclusive news coverage in Meghalaya.

The area printing technology is the other area which has improved tremendously in Meghalaya. There was a time when the newspapers distributed in Meghalaya were handwritten. With the introduction of the printing press, the development of the press
also advanced. This difference can be measured in terms of presentation, the layout of the paper etc. Prior to 1980 many of the print media had been brought out in letter presses and published as weekly issues. From letter press this switched over to linotype, the electronic typewriter. After the introduction of the electronic typewriter, the trend of the print media changed to a daily, like ‘U Rupang’, ‘Mawphor’, ‘U Nongsain Hima’, ‘U Peitgnor’, and the recently introduced paper ‘Kynjatshai’. However, now the vernacular weekly newspapers are very few in the market.

This development made it easily feasible and economically viable to print more multi edition copies faster at a lesser cost which enabled the press to cater to more readers stationed at different locations. The transport system which is also another form of technological development had facilitated news reporting from near and far places. This had also helped in the quick transmission and dissemination of news which led to a wider circulation of the newspapers.

The designing and layout of the newspaper add attractiveness to the presentation of the papers. However, the layout of the newspaper is not that good as the national papers. ‘In most cases, there is an artist who usually does the layout designing but in local newspapers sometimes the reporters themselves and sometimes the people who do the separation of colors do the layout, who actually do not know the art but know the techniques of arranging the object in the software, whereas in national papers this is done by the artist’ says Syndor Singh Syiem, Editor ‘U Peitgnor’.

**Online News**

The press now is going through a drastic change as the electronic media has compelled the print media to adapt new technologies, with a more professional outlook and sensitivity to the market forces.
This development in the field of journalism is also seen in the state of Meghalaya which has brought a new trend of online news portal. The news of recent events is updated in the websites which can be accessed from every hook and corner of the world. This has become especially handy in places where transportation becomes a problem which adds to the difficulty in distribution leading to the availability of ‘stale news’. Here, the alternative way a person prefers is to get news at the earliest through the use of the internet either by using a the mobile phone or computer, this is another advantage that that technology has afforded us. However, unlike newspapers which give detailed information about the news and events, in online websites, due to lack of space the news and information is composed of only important information. One advantage of the online website is that people can access the updated news throughout the day which differentiates itself from the traditional newspapers.

Starfing Pdahkasiej, the owner of S.P. Agency had given his opinion about the impact and the changing environment of electronic media as, ‘There was a time when a person cannot read and write, he is called illiterate, while at this age when a person cannot operate a computer he is called illiterate. When people have more information in themselves that is the power they have’. This had rightly described the current situation where online news and the growth of technology development had affected the people in their day to day life.

The newspapers which are popular among the readers have realised this importance and they have also started uploading the whole content of their newspapers on the web. This has proven to be one of the quickest ways to communicate on a large scale in a split second. Producing news online has created better opportunities for the newspapers as this is the best way to compete with broadcast journalism in providing breaking news timely. In India,
‘The Hindu’ under the editorship of N. Ravi was the first newspaper to come up with


the online news in the year 1995.

In Meghalaya, most of the newspapers had also launched their online e-papers which also helped in earning revenue from the advertisements that are aired. This e-paper is uploaded in the website after the layout of the newspaper is done. Few among them
are ‘The Shillong times’, ‘The Meghalaya Guardian’, ‘Meghalaya Times’, ‘The Mawphor’, ‘U Nongsain Hima’, ‘Achik songbad’. Besides, there are also true online only papers which do not have any hard copy versions. An example of this is the independent web only newspapers that were introduced in Meghalaya namely ‘Oh Meghalaya’, ‘S.P. News Agency’.

With social networking which has become very popular among the people, news of recent events is updated at any moment of the day and by anyone who has access to the internet. Unlike online news, the social networking sites like twitter, face book, and the blogs also provide news but in a nutshell or sometimes the story is shared through the links from the different news websites. This is a double edged sword however because anyone can be a news provider in social networking. Therefore the validity and the reliability of the news can be put in question.

We can therefore come to the conclusion that the barrier between the print and the broadcasting sectors of the media is getting blurred. The different features of online news are somewhat comparable to that of broadcast news. As both provide the latest updates of the events, live broadcast or live streaming of panel discussions or debates are becoming popular among internet users. Views and comments are invited from both the audience and from the experts thereby making it an interactive medium.

Besides this, mobile users can access news websites from anywhere and at any time of the day. Now the journalists need to have digital knowledge in order to know where to move for the news. Digital training is a necessity and digital journalism is constantly developing; tools and methods are changing every day. Today’s reporters have only a fraction of the skills needed to survive in the modern newsroom. Digital storytelling is a must to survive in the long-run. (Bjerager, 2012)
Online news websites in Meghalaya

Oh! Meghalaya

The website was inaugurated on the 1st of August 2012. The main person behind the website is a senior journalist of the state named Tilak Rai who started "Oh! Meghalaya", as a source of online news. Beside it pertain to tourism website which attempts to showcase Meghalaya to the outside world. The website is also empanelled with the Directorate of Information and public relations, Government of India. This is the first news website in the state where the latest events and information are updated in real time. Presently the website has more than nine lakhs visitors. The management includes both from the professional and trainee with the IT experts.

SP News Agency (Starfing Pdahkasiej News Agency)

SP News Agency was established in 2009 as a news provider to the various news organizations of Meghalaya. The editor and the owner, Starfing Pdahkasiej had initiated the agency with the motive of starting his own online news website which however came into being on 29th October 2012. The website is Government recognised and presently the total number of visitors of the website had crossed over 13 lakhs on 29th October 2013. Despite having a good number of visitors of the website, the agency was not able to draw good profits and revenue due to the lack of industries etc.

However in next couple of months, the press (Print & Electronic) from Meghalaya is hoping to be in a good shape, as the Government of Meghalaya is taking an initiative to introduce the Advertisement policy. Before this advertisement policy covered only the print media of Meghalaya, however the recent amendment of the policy had also included the electronic media where both the broadcasting and online websites would also be benefited. Besides this, by 2016 the Government of India has taken the
initiative to provide internet facilities to all the villagers which will give more power to the people. While in Meghalaya, wi-fi facilities will be installed in all the colleges and schools. Therefore, all these technological developments will accelerate the online news websites to a point where updated news will reach each and every individual in the region.

**Wage board**

There are certains guidelines, norms and once the board is implemented then there will be a standard fixed pay scale for the employees of newspaper houses. The board has recommended for newspapers with a turnover of less than one crore rupees in a year, the publisher will have to pay five thousand rupees to people working in the field. In the north eastern region, this may be a little difficult because there are very few industries in the region, the amount of advertisemnt generation is lesser than in the other parts of the country and the professional people who can do handle marketing properly and not easily found here. Though certain facilities are provided to a few newspapers like Contributory Provident Fund (CPF), Employee State Insurance (ESI),and the correspondents of national newspapers working in the state are getting some facilities but no job security.

**Outstation reporters**

Earlier there were quite a lot of newspapers which came from outside the state like 'Sentinel', 'Telegraph', 'Ambika Patrika' and 'Assam Tribune', but now the numbers have dwindled considerably. The newspapers which are outside the state have their reporters from the state itself or appoint somebody who is already in the field. They are appointed because they are more familiar with the state's issues and
concerns as opposed to reporters who are brought to the state from outside as the account of the events are represented differently. The national newspapers at times do not understand the news and the relevance of a particular story that is sent from the region so they do publish the news which happens to be a very important matter of the state. They give very low coverage to the North Eastern issues and modt of the stories they highlight are the negative stories. They do not give any space for development news or stories that describe what the North East is in reality. For example a girl named Wansuk Myrthong from Shillong had climbed Mt. Everest but how many national newspapers have actually reported on this? These are the issues that are of concern to the people of the North East region.

**Journalism Institutes**

To work in the field of journalism, certain knowledge in the field is required and to meet this demand various college, universities and private institute have offered journalism courses at both the undergraduate and post graduate level. Specialised courses have been also been introduced with the boom of Mass Communication. The pioneer in introducing the media related course in Meghalaya was St. Anthony's College. Besides this, many other universities like English and Foreign Language University, Shillong Centre, North Eastern Hill University and private institutes like the Sikkim Manipal University, University of Technology and Management had started such courses in the respective institutions. The profession has attracted a large number of students, particularly political, financial and investigative journalism partly because of tremendous power that journalists have. However, in last couple of years, there were very few students who had opted for a career into the field of journalism. The students who had cleared their examinations in the respected courses
prefer to go the metros either for higher studies or for the better job opportunities. Beside, the mass communication department in Shillong has given more emphasis to electronic media as opposed to print. This is one of the reasons the students find it a little difficult to work in the field of journalism. The young people do go for journalism, but the prospects here in Shillong are not as good as in other metros. The newspapers are not able to give adequate salary to the reporters, so most of them prefer to go out for better opportunities.

**Ethical values**

“News”, according to the Press Council of India (PCI), is meant to be factual, neutral, fair and objective, whereas information and opinion from “Advertisements” are paid for, by corporate entities, Governments, organisations or individuals. However, of late, a trend of presenting paid information as news content has spread at a remarkable pace in some sections of the media. There have been a number of media reports which state that sections of the electronic and print media have received monetary considerations for publishing or broadcasting in favour of particular individuals or organisations or corporate entities, what is essentially “advertisement” disguised as “news” and this has been commonly referred to as the “Paid News Syndrome”. (LARRDIS, 2013)

Malpractices and corruption have also crept into journalism in Meghalaya. These kinds of malpractices run in implicit forms which cannot be directly charged. The ‘paid news syndrome’ which usually serves certain interests of some political parties during elections and suppression of news and concerns of other interests can be trace in the press today. As discussed time and again, the main revenue of any publication house is the advertisement generation from both the private and government
organisations. However, the state does not have good and big companies so also the returns are very minimal.

Under such circumstances, a newspaper has to survive especially in the present market/competition. They have to balance between the economy sides and as well as service side. Phillip Marwein said that ‘Until and unless press is economically sound, the big talk of being the 4th pillar of democracy is in vain. Ethics comes to only those who are professional and those organisations that are economically sound then only they can balance the economic and social service to the public. The social aspect side cannot sacrifice at the hands of the economic side and vice versa. Both have to be strong in order to justify the profession.’

In the monetary deals sometimes the newspaper organisation agrees to publish only the views of some politicians but not as advertisements but as news items, thereby ignoring the views of other candidates and even publish news items against rival.

Therefore, the news fraternity or the journalist bend towards the givers while reporting or advocating their concerns in spite of knowing very well that such are not beneficial to the society at large.

**Safety and security**

Reporting from the fragmented and ethical sensitive polity is a great challenge for a journalist. In the north-eastern region, a reporter has to work with the threat from both militancy and the political leaders. Reporting for or against is another difficult decision a journalist has to make. As the journalist has to balance both options, this is a tricky job to perform while serving the society. At times while going deep into a particular story, the reporter has to face different hurdles which also come back in the form of assault and death threats. There were many instances in Meghalaya that the
journalist safety and security was put into question. The following cases reveal a few of the incidents that the reporters had encountered while unearthing a story.

**Case study: 1**

In Shillong, a journalist was assaulted by a Government officer. Through his sources he came to know about certain fake appointment letters to some unemployed youths in exchange for money. The journalist went to meet the officer for a clarification on the alleged malpractices involving the department. When he met the Director and enquired about the fake appointment of the youths, the officer refused to give any explanation and in return questioned him of his right to do any investigation regarding the issue. The journalist even tried to make the officer identify the issue concerning his department but instead the officer got furious and assaulted the journalist. The officer also forced him to sign on a blank piece paper in front of other officials. Though the journalist filed an FIR against the officer for the humiliation he had faced, there was no action taken against the officer. (Chakraborty, 2000)

**Case study: 2**

In a similar incident a journalist was put behind bars on account of his enquiry into the matter of some departmental issues. The journalist had only made a phone call to a very senior IAS officer and the Chairperson of Meghalaya State Electricity Board enquiring about the irregularities in the purchase of computers in the department. The officer however did not reply to any of the questions that the journalist asked and instead got engaged in talking about the role of the media. Since the officer was not clarifying the matter, the journalist reminded him that this might be reflected badly in the report. Therefore, the officer got annoyed with the journalist’s questions. The officer called up the local police station and called for the arrest the reporter. The journalist was picked up by the police at midnight without any warrant of arrest.

(Chakraborty, 2000)
Case study: 3

A photojournalist, Walton Lytan Jyrwa was allegedly assaulted by a Member of the Legislative Assembly, Meghalaya. The reason for the journalist’s assault was because a photograph of the legislator was published in local newspapers showing him sleeping while the Assembly session was in progress. The senior photo journalist was severely injured in the incident and was treated at the Shillong Civil Hospital. The Press Council of India Chief, Markandey Katju criticized the incident which is a violation of the freedom of the Press which was guaranteed under Article 19 (1)(a) of the Constitution. In a letter to Meghalaya Assembly Speaker Charles Pyngrope, Katju requested a response to the letter describing the incident so that further action could be taken by the council. This assault on a journalist within the premises of the Legislative Assembly has been widely condemned by the political parties, students unions and the journalist fraternity including the Leader of the Opposition party in the state, the Khasi Students Union, Indian Journalist Union besides the Guwahati and Mumbai Press Clubs. (The Shillong Times, 2013)

Case study: 4

In another incident a photojournalist from a vernacular daily, ‘Salantini Kurang’ was allegedly assaulted by SOT personnel at Digranggre near Asanang in West Garo Hills. Dalseng A Sangma, the photojournalist and his companion were returning to Tura from a work related journey. While returning the vehicle fell into a ditch after avoiding a collision with another vehicle, Sangma shouted at the errant driver when some SOT personnel riding a gypsy turned up and accused them of trying to rob the passengers and beat them. While reaching the Rongram Police Outpost, the In-Charge refused to accept their FIR against the SOT personnel. Instead the police official started beating them and also warned them of the consequences if anything concerning the incident was reported in the newspaper. (The Shillong Times, 2013)
These were the only few incidents which explains how the journalist are harassed by the people in power. They were either beaten up in the name of law and order or attempts were made to try and suppress issues that concern the society. In spite of these incidents, the journalists of Meghalaya are unified in their approach towards those threatened. ‘We are safe... we are very vocal if a simple threat comes to the journalists over here. In 1998, when Mathew R. Marak, editor of ‘A Chik Mikasal’ was threatened by an armed militant outfit, we walked out to the streets and they had to apologize’. - M. Sameer Sohliya, correspondent, ‘The Sentinel’ says.