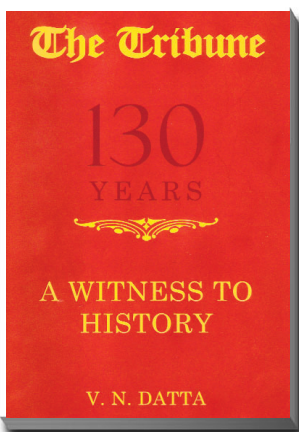


PM: Good journalism is very serious business, and very difficult work

Full text of PM Manmohan Singh's address at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi

"I AM delighted to be in the midst of The Tribune family once again. The last time I was involved in your celebrations, I had the pleasure of releasing an anthology of selected writings to commemorate 125 years of this magnificent paper. Today marks the release of a comprehensive history of The Tribune, on completion of 130 years of its publication. It is truly pleasant to go down the memory lane with the newspaper of my choice, which has been my staple reading every morning for decades. 'A Witness to History' is an apt title of a book that records the 130 year old history of The Tribune. Indeed, this history stands closely intertwined with the story of our country's journey during this turbulent period. Sardar Dyal Singh Majithia, the newspa-



There are efforts to report constructively on subjects that are of vital national importance.

Serious Business

BUT we also see sensationalism, driven by a desire to sell a story at any cost. There are stories without a clear understanding of the underlined issues. There is reporting which is prejudiced. There is trivialisation of important matters. There is corruption. The prevalence of the practice of 'paid news' exposed recently has come as a shock to all right-thinking people. It has been our government's avowed belief that the Fourth Estate is an essential pillar of our democracy. We believe in complete independence of the media from external control. It is true that sometimes irresponsible journalism can have serious consequences for social harmony and public order, which the public authorities have an obligation to maintain, but censorship is no answer.

It is for the members of the Fourth Estate themselves to collectively ensure that objectivity is promoted and sensationalism is curbed. It is for them to introspect how best they can serve our country and society and advance their well-being, and how best they can earn the respect of our common citizens. Those in the media should come together to exercise a degree of self-regulation to combat perversions like paid news. It is an important responsibility of the media to expose corruption and other ills in our polity and society. It should also advise the government and even reprimand it, when it goes wrong. But let me also suggest that it should not be all gloom and doom all the time. The world is looking up to us today and it would be but fair that positive news is also given its due share. The Indian development story is an exciting one and should be told through the print and visual mediums. I believe that good journalism is very serious business and a very difficult work. The responsibilities that journalists carry are onerous - to inform and educate the public, to keep a watch on the government's work and to highlight issues of critical importance. It is hard to be a good journalist - ever willing to learn, ever alert to new developments, objective, fair, sensitive, balanced and constructive in approach. However, I also believe that collectively the country's journalists have acquitted themselves reasonably well. I am convinced that the Indian media is on the balance responsible and attuned to serving national interest. I am also sure that the coming years will see even higher standards from our media. I thank you for inviting me for this fine occasion. Let me end by saying that I look forward to many more milestones in this newspaper's onward march. Sardar Dyal Singh Majithia had charged the future generations of Tribune's editors and other journalists with the mandate to "act for the public weal". I am sure that advice will remain the guiding principle for The Tribune in the years to come. May God bless its path."

Gandhiji considered The Tribune as the best 'views paper'



The Tribune Trust president RS Talwar pointed out that the book, 'A Witness to History', released by the Prime Minister on Thursday, does not confine itself to the history of the newspaper but also critically evaluates whether it has lived up to the ideals formulated by its visionary founder. The full text of the address:

"IT is a matter of great pride for us that The Tribune has completed one hundred and thirty years of uninterrupted publication. The Tribune was founded by the late Sardar Dyal Singh Majithia, a progressive social, political and educational reformer far ahead of his times. In its first issue published from Lahore on 2nd February 1881, Majithia sahib enunciated the guiding principles of The Tribune. He wanted it to be an independent, objective, constructive and fearless newspaper, free from any sectarian, political or commercial bias, not aligned to any dogma or religion. Before his death in 1898, Majithia sahib willed that The Tribune be run by a public Trust comprising persons of integrity and wide experience who would ensure that it continued to maintain its independence, objectivity and the vision he had laid down for it.

On behalf of my brother trustees, I would like to say that it has indeed been a privilege and an honour to serve on the Tribune Trust and always strive to come upto the ideal set by the Founder.

In these 130 years, The Tribune has been a witness to the tumultuous history of the sub-continent, chronicling the ongoing events and movements and guiding its readers through the historic changes while voicing their concerns.

From the early twentieth century, it has consistently and courageously supported Indian nationalism and the freedom struggle. It is with great pride that we recall Gandhiji's comments on its role, saying he considered The Tribune as "the best views paper". After Independence also, The Tribune has continued to retain its distinctive char-

acter and preserve its autonomy, objectivity, fairness and liberal and independent way of thinking, whatever the odds. Today it gives me great pleasure to say that The Tribune is one of the most widely respected and read newspaper in North India. In Punjab, Haryana and Himachal, it is the largest circulated newspaper and also has a sizeable number of readers in Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir and Uttarakhand. To chronicle the 130 momentous and exciting years of The Tribune, the Trust decided that it would be appropriate to bring out its history from inception to the present. The project was entrusted to the then distinguished Editor-in-Chief, Shri H.K. Dua. He approached Professor V.N. Datta, Professor Emeritus, Kurukshetra University, who has a distinguished record as a historian and has authored many acclaimed books. Professor Datta readily consented to research and write the history of The Tribune and the Trust is grateful to him for his labour of love. Apart from tracing The Tribune's history, Professor Datta's work critically evaluates whether the paper has lived up to the high standards of objectivity and fairness expected of it and be the voice of the people it serves. On behalf of The Tribune Trust, I would like to express our deep appreciation of Professor Datta's painstaking and incisive effort. We are greatly honoured, Prime Minister, that you accepted our request to release the book and also address us on this occasion. You have made known your attachment to The Tribune on a number of occasions and said you are a regular and avid reader. We fervently hope we have come upto your expectations and will continue to enjoy this privilege."

Reprimand us, if necessary, but it should not be gloom and doom all the time

per's founder was a man of rare foresight and a great reformist. He was inspired by high ideals and wanted The Tribune to be free of any sectarian or commercial bias, and unaligned to any dogma or political party. I am happy that the newspaper has by and large lived up to its founder's vision. While being an effective watchdog of the interests of the people, it has practiced responsible and credible journalism. The Tribune has also been a wonderful example of what good trusteeship is about. Its Trustees have been men and women who have distinguished themselves in their respective professions and who embody the spirit of The Tribune very aptly. The newspaper is one of the very few in the country, where the editor is insulated - as much as is possible - from managerial demands and proprietorial interests. But even more importantly, the newspaper has always been blessed with Editors of impeccable credentials. My friend Raj is one of them, with many very illustrious names before him and some of them are present on this happy occasion. I compliment all those who have helped shape The Tribune into the newspaper it is today - the generations before us and the current torch-bearers of

this fine institution. I congratulate the author of 'A Witness to History', Professor V.N. Datta, for writing such a fine book. Prof Datta recounts how in the early years of the 20th century The Tribune became passionate as a patriotic and nationalist newspaper. He elaborates how from 1920 onwards, as events began moving at a fast pace and as communal tensions began building up, the newspaper's sober and reasoned approach attempted to bridge the divide between the Hindus and the Sikhs on the one hand and the Muslims on the other. The Tribune was opposed to the dismemberment of India and made sincere efforts to prevent it, but in vain.

Heart beats again

GLANCING through the pages of 'A Witness to History' I was struck by the words of an avid Tribune reader who wrote to the newspaper on September 25, 1947, the day The Tribune resumed publication from Shimla, after Partition had forced it to move out of Lahore. And he wrote: "The heart of

Punjab has begun to beat again, though the pulse is yet faint." On May 13, 1948, to mark the Tribune's shift to Ambala, the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in a special message to the newspaper in his inimitable style: "You have passed through many difficulties and have stood many tests. I trust you will not be carried away by momentary passions but will function with a vision of the future before you." We have come a long way from the early years of The Tribune. Today, while India sits at the high table of nations and is looked upon and heard with respect, a vibrant media is crucial to our needs - a media that informs and educates, a media that is inspired by public interest and not guided by sectarian or commercial considerations. The Indian media of today has its inevitable highs and lows. Every day we see examples of journalism of a very high calibre. There are instances of fair and accurate reporting, free of biases. There are stories with painstaking research to back them up. Journalists often expose wrongdoings even at considerable risk to themselves.

Well-wishers of The Tribune tradition come together

Tribune photos: Mukesh Aggarwal



(L-R) Punjab Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Badal makes a point with Haryana Chief Minister Bhopinder Singh Hooda and his J&K counterpart Omar Abdullah.



Russian Ambassador Alexander Kadakin with Pakistan High Commissioner in India Shahid Malik (R).



The Tribune Trustee Justice (ret'd) SS Sodhi (L) greets Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi (R) while The Tribune Editor-in-Chief Raj Chengappa looks on.



(L-R) Telecom Minister Kapil Sibal, Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram, Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation Minister Kumari Selja, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ambika Soni and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pawan Bansal.



Marshal of the Indian Air Force Arjan Singh (L) with Punjab Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Badal.



(From right) The Tribune Trust president RS Talwar and Trustee Naresh Mohan with former Editors-in-Chief of The Tribune Group of Newspapers Hari Jaisingh and HK Dua.



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