

## Fast forward at DD News

**Shailaja Bajpai** Posted online: Thu Feb 14 2013, 03:01 hrs

*For now, it is behaving more like a public broadcaster and less like a government loudspeaker*

In recent weeks, Kashmir has been in the news for one reason alone: the weather. We have been shown the Valley resplendent in white, with tourists enjoying the snow; then the snow hardened into ice as temperatures fell below freezing and you were glad to be able to admire the scenery from afar.

Now, suddenly, the stain of blood has seeped into the idyllic scene like ink on blotting paper, taking us back to a place and time we had thought was behind us: “Just in: curfew in Kashmir”, “Just in: violent clashes in Sopore” (NDTV 24x7), “Just in: Yasin Malik shares platform with Hafiz Saeed. Should his passport be taken back?” Cable news, internet and mobile services have been suspended in the state since Afzal Guru was hanged on Saturday to prevent people from learning about events in the state. You wonder, for how long can the authorities contain a people thus?

Over the weekend, TV channels also handled with utmost care any news coming out of Kashmir of protests against Guru’s hanging, lest they became the next victims of government censorship. So, although all the channels reported the general sense of outrage in the Valley and his family’s reactions, although they allowed politicians from the mainstream to express their anguish — Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, PDP leaders like Mehbooba Mufti — we did not see or hear from the “common” man and woman, or directly from Guru’s family. The protests since then have received similar treatment. At best, there’s a correspondent standing in a deserted street, recounting the day’s events. All the noise has been in the TV news studios. What else is new, or what else is news nowadays but the clashes in the studios?

One channel where you never expect to hear anything more violent than a cough is DD News. But do we have news for you. DD News has changed and suddenly, it is looking all too familiar and rather like the other news channels. In the evening, the news bulletins are no longer manned by the usual newsreaders. Now the likes of Ajai Shukla, who used to be a face on NDTV, host News Night with lively discussions on the day’s news — yes, even on Afzal Guru’s hanging — featuring all shades of opinion. Saw a discussion with Muhammad Shafi (National Conference), Nizamuddin Bhat (PDP), Prakash Javadekar (BJP) and academic Varun Sahni, on Monday.

The taglines for the channel are “Khabar vahi jo ho sahi” and “Bharosa Bharat ka”. Most of us will have a problem accepting such tall claims although it must be said, DD eschews the hysterical tone and repetitive quality of private TV news channels. DD’s news is the news of the day, it’s just that it tilts windmills to the government’s news. Take your pick.

Not quite sure what has prompted this sudden urge to be more open, nor how long the experiment will last with elections looming on the horizon. But anything that encourages DD News to behave more like a public broadcaster and less like a government loudspeaker must be applauded. Applause.

Emotional Atyachaar (Bindass) also seems to have had a makeover in its new season. Two recent episodes featured young women who had been duped by men in real life, recounting their experiences, with reconstructed flashbacks putting us in the picture. As a sympathetic, almost hand-holding, anchor Pravesh Rana prompts them to reveal all, the ladies talk about their own naivete, the duplicity of the men concerned and how they, finally, settled scores with them. Earlier, if you remember, men and women would watch footage of their beloved betraying them and their affections with actors sent out to seduce them. Perhaps the gangrape of a young woman in Delhi has stirred the conscience of the producers of Emotional Atyachaar.

CNN-IBN’s big break with the audio CD on alleged conversations between the CBI’s public prosecutor in the 2G scam and Unitech MD Sanjay Chandra was fascinating to listen to. Quite a coup. Applause.

Applause rang out at the Grammy Awards (VH1) and the BAFTAs (PIX) on Monday. The Grammy show is a superbly mounted mix of music and celebrity with performances and well known singers, from old timer Sting to current heartthrob, Kelly Clarkson, combining for a great music fest.

[shailaja.bajpai@expressindia.com](mailto:shailaja.bajpai@expressindia.com)