

Annex II
Quarterly Media Monitoring Report



Executive Summary

This quarterly (Feb-April) media monitoring is aimed at gauging the coverage focus of mainstream and regional print and electronic media in Pakistan. This monitoring is limited to the main pages in the newspapers, front-back and the editorial, and the prime time bulletins and talk shows on TV channels.

A total of 25 issues have been identified for this monitoring.

Of them, ten have been termed as the people-focused issues. Water, climate change, food security, gender, education/students, labor and peasants, art, culture and literature, science and discovery, and agriculture are critical to every aspect of Pakistan's collective political, social, and economic life. They may come across as apolitical but they are very much political and are critical to Pakistan's future as a stable and democratic country.

The other 15 issues – politics, government, foreign affairs, economy, foreign affairs/international, parliament, judiciary, terrorism, crime, military, entertainment, sports, advertisement, energy, and other – have been classified as media-focused issues. These issues are also critical but the media focus on them is so dominant that news agenda does not go beyond them.

The people-focused issues do not get the space or airtime they deserve on the main pages or the prime time bulletin/talk shows of the day. The focus of the print and electronic media in Pakistan remains on politics, statements, political developments, court cases, economy, and the government. The people-focused issues only get space on the front-back pages or a mention in the main bulletin/talk shows when there is a crisis, a scandal, or a clash that leads to the loss of life or property.

It is important to highlight that as this monitoring is limited to the front-back and editorial pages and the main bulletin/talk show, the news about the people-focused issues get space and time on the city and national pages and other bulletin/talk shows. However, that coverage is also limited to reporting of events about the people-focused issues such as the launch of a report on water, health, education, climate change etc.

In the first quarter (Feb-April), the people-focused news on the front and back pages of the three leading newspapers – Dawn, The News, and Tribune – was less than 5% of the total news. The people-focused issues only get to the main pages when there is a loss of life or property or a shocking report highlighting the respective issue's miserable situation in Pakistan. It may be the controversy over administration of anti-polio drops, which led to protests in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, or the medical negligence case in Karachi resulting in the death of minor Nashwa. A report highlighting the alarming drop in the quality of education in Pakistan also finds a mention on the front and back pages of English newspapers.

However, on the editorial pages, the English newspapers give relatively more space to the people-focused issues. The number of editorials on the people-focused issues can be termed substantial – 23% of all the editorials during the quarter. Similarly, 18% of the articles and 25% of the letters to the editor were on the people-focused issues.

The share of news regarding people focused issues (6%) on the front back pages of three leading Urdu newspapers is slightly higher than the English newspapers. However, this share of the people

focused news on the front-back pages of leading Urdu newspapers is minimal when one takes into account the number of news on these two pages.

Overall, out of the 10,286 news items on the front-back pages of the Urdu newspapers, only 665 news were regarding the people-focused issues. In Urdu newspapers, the editorial pages also give the people focused issues relatively more coverage than on the front-back pages. Around 13% of the editorials, 9% articles, and 20% letters to the editor in the three Urdu newspapers are about people-focused issues.

The situation in the two regional newspapers is disappointing. Out of the total 6117 news items on the front-back pages of two regional newspapers (One Sindhi and one Pushto), only 557 or 9% were about the people-focused issues.

Surprisingly a one-third of the articles in the two regional newspapers were on the people-focused issues, especially on the art, culture, and literature. In March 2019, Pushto daily there were 52 articles on art, culture and literature. However, most of these articles are published repeatedly. It shows that the regional newspapers are facing a survival crisis, as they find it difficult to fill the space with new content every day. Our monitors found that a number of news on the front-back pages are also repeated. Electronic media also did not give the people-focused issues airtime in the bulletins and talk shows. Out of the 6296 news items in the main bulleting of the day, only 814 or 13% were about the people-focused issues. In other words, the people focused issues only got 11% of the bulletins' airtime. As in the case of print media, the focus was of the electronic media was also on the political statements or developments.

The regional TV channels were slightly better in giving airtime to people-focused issues. Out of the total 3616 news items, 506 or 14% were about the people-focused issues. Allocation of airtime was also better. The people-focused issues got 16% of the bulletins' airtime.

The talk shows discussed the people-focused issues occasionally and superficially. Importantly none of the monitored talk shows exclusively discussed any of the people-focused identified for this monitoring. Additionally a curious trend is that the host may announce to discuss a people-focused issue during the show but would not take it up.

The hosts of the talk shows would take up an issue concerning the people only when it makes it to the daily news agenda. Mostly the controversy forces the talk shows to discuss a people-focused issue. It can be the Aurat March, cases of typhoid in Hyderabad, domestic torture, cheating practices in exams in Sindh, deaths of infants in Sindh, Supreme Court proceedings on fee structure of private educational institutions, loss of crops due to untimely rains in March, negative propaganda about the effects of anti-polio drops on children, increase in the prices of medicines, etc.

Methodology

The objective of this monitoring is to gauge the coverage trends in the mainstream and regional print and electronic media, especially on the issues that are critical to Pakistan's political, social, and economic outcomes.

A total of 25 issues have been identified for this monitoring. Of them, ten have been termed as the people-focused issues. Water, climate change, food security, gender, education/students, labor and peasants, art, culture and literature, science and discovery, and agriculture are critical to every aspect of Pakistan's collective political, social, and economic life. They may come across as apolitical but they are very much political and are critical to Pakistan's future as a stable and democratic country.

The other 15 issues – politics, government, foreign affairs, economy, foreign affairs/international, parliament, judiciary, terrorism, crime, military, entertainment, sports, advertisement, energy, and other – were termed as the Media-focused issues. These issues are also critical for the people of Pakistan but the focus of media on them is so dominant that news agenda does not go beyond them.

For this monitoring, a team of six monitors, headed by a supervisor, has been employed. For the print media, the monitors are provided hard copies of the newspapers. While for the electronic media, recorded bulletins and talk shows are provided to the monitors.

While monitoring the media, we wanted to see if these ten issues get any coverage on the front and back and editorial pages in the print media. Front/back and editorial pages have been monitored five days a week. The most important news and issues, in line with the editorial policy of the paper, are given space on the front-back and editorial pages.

Overall, three mainstream Urdu and English newspapers – Dunya, Express and Nawa-e-Waqt and The News, Dawn and The Tribune – were monitored. From the regional media, Pushto and Sindh newspapers were monitored. Similarly the main bulletin of 9-10pm of four mainstream TV channels along with one talk show were selected for monitoring. As in the case of print media, the main news bulletin of 9-10pm of a Pushto and a Sindhi TV channel along with a talk show each were monitored.

For the first quarter of 2019, the following TV channels and talk shows were monitored.

| TV Channel | Talk show |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| Geo News | Capital Talk |
| Dunya News | Dunay News with Kamran Khan kay Sath |
| Dawn News | Zara Hatt kay |
| Aaj News | Faisal Aap ka |
| ARY News | Off the Record |
| Hum News | Live with Nadeem Malik |
| Saama News | Muqabil |
| 24 News | Nasim Zehra @ 8 |
| Express News | Kal Tak |
| PTV News | Sach Tau Yeh Hai |
| GNN | G for Garida |
| KTN News | Issues with Naz |
| Khyber News | Dateline Islamabad |

Why these ten issues

As stated above the ten issues have been selected keeping in view their critical importance in the governance of the country. In a way, these issues can be termed as the issues of the people unable to find space in the ever-expanding news media in Pakistan. A brief look at these issues highlights the fact that there is a need for making them priority urgently.

Today Pakistan has become a water-deficit country, with a per person annual availability of water at 1.017 cubic meters.¹ Pakistan is one of the ten countries which have been most affected by climate change from 1997 to 2016.² According to globalfoodsecurityportal.org, “despite the growth in production of staple crops, Pakistan has experienced a sharp decline in food security in recent years due to a combination of militant activity, natural disaster, and economic instability.”

On the World Economic Forum’s gender index 2018, Pakistan is the second worst country in terms of gender parity.³ Education in Pakistan presents a confused picture, torn between a class-based system trying to find a balance between “traditional and modern education” and with a “clear separation of religious and secular educational content”.⁴

Over the years, the labor and peasants have been conspicuous by their absence from the mainstream media. Their voice and their issues seem to be no longer a story for the news media. Art, culture and literature, science and discovery have also taken a back seat in terms of getting media coverage in Pakistan.

¹ Ebrahim, Zofeen. Is Pakistan running out of fresh water? Dawn, March 30, 2018 [available at <https://www.dawn.com/news/1398499>]

² Global Climate Risk Index 2018. Who suffers most from extreme weather events? Weather-related loss events in 2016 and 1997 to 2016, German Watch, [available at <https://germanwatch.org/sites/germanwatch.org/files/publication/20432.pdf>]

³ Ahmed, Amin. Pakistan among worst performers on gender equality: WEF, Dawn, December 19, 2018 [available at <https://www.dawn.com/news/1452284>]

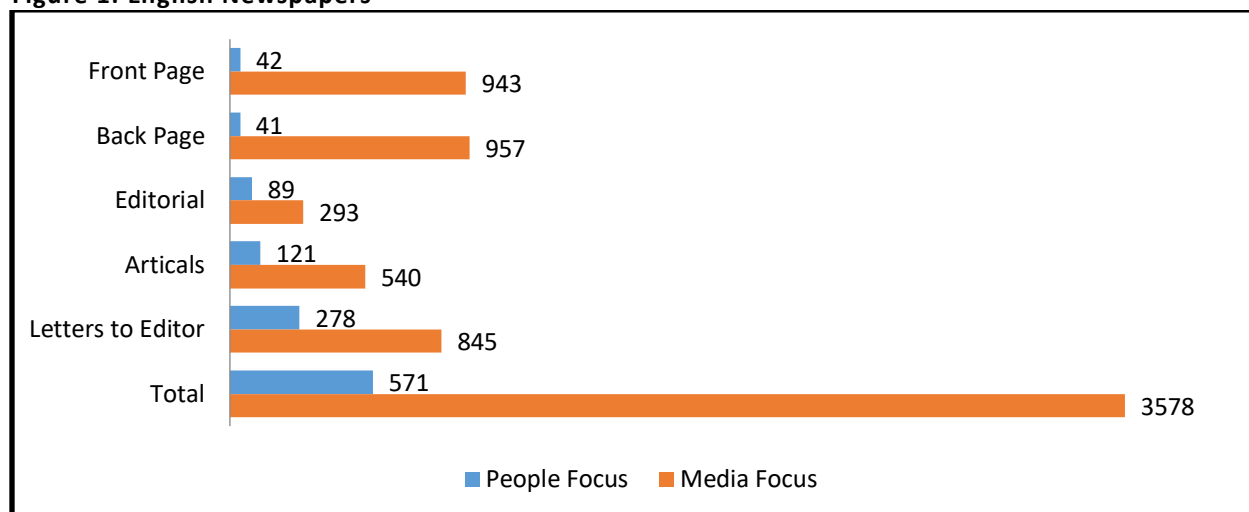
⁴ Hoodbhoy, Pervez. Why attempts to reform Pakistani education fail, Dawn, October 27, 2018 [available at <https://www.dawn.com/news/1441704>]

4. Findings

4.1 Print Media

4.1.1 English Newspapers

Figure 1: English Newspapers



Three leading newspapers – Dawn, The News, and The Express Tribune – were monitored for five days a week during the quarter. In the first quarter (Feb-April), the people-focused news on the front and back pages of the three leading newspapers was less than 5% of the total news. The people-focused issues only get to the main pages when there is a loss of life or property or a shocking report highlighting the respective issue’s miserable situation in Pakistan. It may be the controversy over administration of anti-polio drops, which led to protests in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, or the medical negligence case in Karachi resulting in the death of minor Nashwa, or the Aurat March around the international women’s day. A report highlighting the alarming drop in the quality of education in Pakistan may also find a mention on the front and back pages of English newspapers.

There seems to be no space for investigative stories on issues such as health, education, gender, food security, agriculture, etc. on the front back pages. Almost all the news regarding science and technology are about developments made outside Pakistan. News regarding and culture only make it to the front-back pages when there is a literary festival or there is a death of known literary figure.

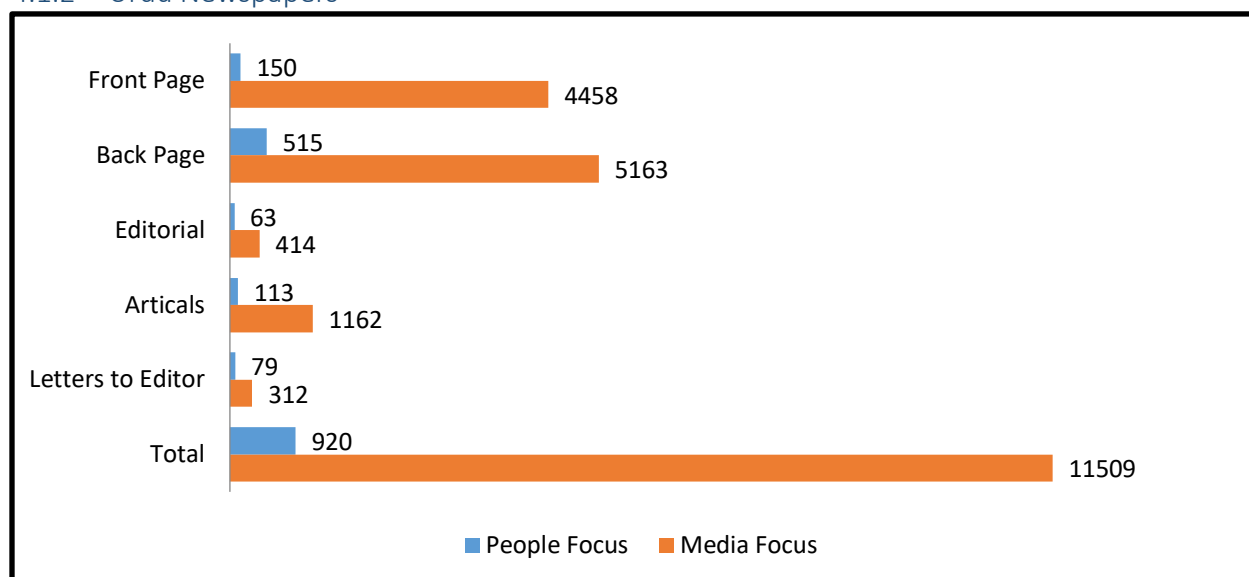
The front and back pages seem to be focused on politics, political statements, court/judiciary, international affairs, etc.

However, the number of editorials on the people-focused issues can be termed substantial – 23% of the all the editorials in the three leading English newspapers – Dawn, The News, and Tribune. This may attributed to three issues during the first quarter – controversy over anti-polio drops in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, death of Nashwa because of wrong injection in a private Karachi hospital, and the women’s international day. Similarly, 18% of the articles and 25% of the letters to the editor in the three English newspapers were on the people-focused issues.

The people-focused issues get more space and mention on the editorial pages than on the front and back pages. It is evident that the readers of the English newspapers want to highlight issues regarding health, education, food security, climate change, water, agriculture, science and technology, etc. Overall out of the total news (4149) monitored in the three English newspapers' front-back and editorial pages, only 571 or 14% were regarding the ten people-focused issues identified for this monitoring.

It is important to highlight that the newspapers do give space to the people-focused issues but on the city and national pages. Here again most of the stories on the people-focused issues are in the form of reporting of events on these issues. These may be seminars, workshops, or launches of reports NGOs or donor-funded projects.

4.1.2 Urdu Newspapers



Three leading Urdu dailies – Nawa-e-Waqt, Dunya and Express – were monitored five days a week during the quarter. The share of news regarding people focused issues (6%) on the front back pages of three leading Urdu newspapers is slightly higher than their share in the English newspapers. However, this share of the people focused news on the front-back pages of leading Urdu newspapers is minimal when one takes into account the number of news on these two pages.

Overall, out of the 10,286 news items on the front-back pages of the Urdu newspapers, only 665 news were regarding the people-focused issues. Compared to the front page, the Urdu newspapers have given more space to people-focused issues on the back page.

On the front-back pages in the Urdu newspapers, the emphasis is on giving space to political statements.

As in the case of English newspapers, here also the news regarding issues such as health, water, education, climate change, agriculture, food security etc. makes it to the front-back pages when there is a crisis, resulting in a national scandal or loss of life and property. The issue of locusts attack in Sindh, medical negligence leading to Nashwa's death, women's day, and the controversy over the anti-polio drops made to the front-back pages of the leading Urdu newspapers.

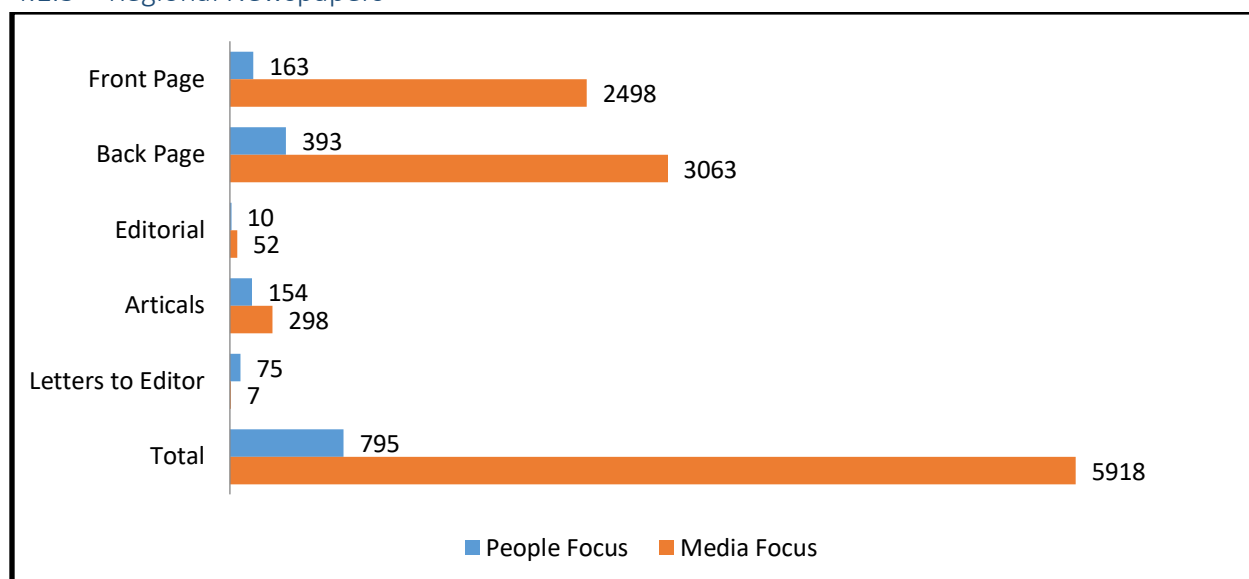
In Urdu newspapers, the editorial pages also give the people focused issues relatively more coverage than on the front-back pages. Around 13% of the editorials, 9% articles, and 20% letters to the editor in the three

Urdu newspapers are about people-focused issues.

Though the space for letters to the editors in the Urdu newspapers is much less than English newspapers, the people-focused issues still get mention here. Clearly, the readers of Urdu newspapers want to discuss issues regarding health, education, water, agriculture, climate change, food security, art and culture and science and technology.

There is almost no investigative story on the people-focused issues in the leading Urdu newspapers. The issue of climate change is adversely affecting Pakistan but none of the Urdu newspapers seems to be least bothered about it

4.1.3 Regional Newspapers



Two regional newspapers – Khabroona and Awami Awaz – were monitored for five days a week during the quarter. The situation in the regional newspapers is disappointing.

Out of the total 6117 news items on the front-back pages of two regional newspapers (One Sindh and one Pushto), only 557 or 9% were about the people-focused issues. There was more space for the people-focused issues on the back page than on the front page. Political statements and political developments dominate the front pages.

The people-focused issues get more space on the editorial pages than on the front-back pages in the regional newspapers. It is also important to highlight that the letters to the editor section is irregularly published in the regional newspapers.

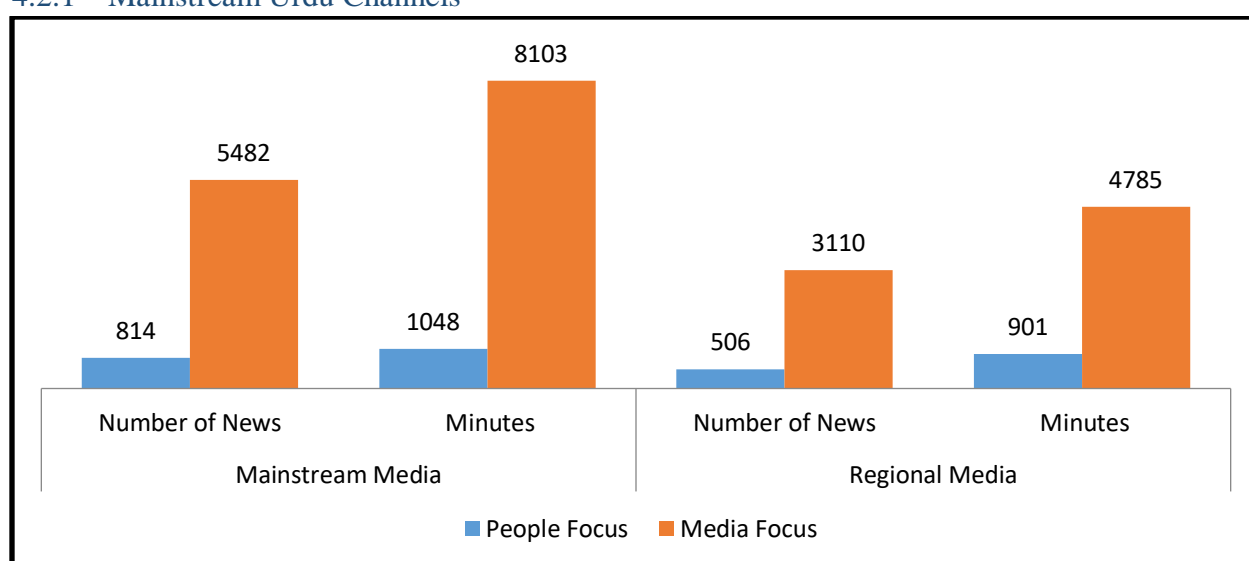
This section is completely missing in the Pushto newspaper – Khabrona. In the Sindh newspaper, it has been published irregularly.

Out of the 62 editorials published, only 10 or 16% were about the people-focused issues. Surprisingly a one-third of the articles in the two regional newspapers were on the people-focused issues, especially on the art, culture, and literature.

In March 2019, Pushto daily there were 52 articles on art, culture and literature. However, most of these articles are published repeatedly. It shows that the regional newspapers are facing a survival crisis, as they find it difficult to fill the space with new content every day. Our monitors found that a number of news on the front-back pages are also repeated.

4.2 Electronic Monitoring

4.2.1 Mainstream Urdu Channels



Twelve mainstream private and public Urdu TV channels – Geo News, Dunya News, Dawn News, Aaj News, ARY News, Hum News, Samaa News, 24 News, Express News, PTV News, and GNN – were monitored in the first quarter. Apart from monitoring the main news bulleting for five days a week, 12 talks shows – Capital Talk, Dunay Kamran Khan kay Saath, Zara Hat Kay, Faisal Aap ka, Off the Record, Live with Nadeem Malik, Muqabil, Sawal, Nasim Zehra @ 8, Kal Tak, Sach to Yeh Hain, and G for Garida were monitored. Electronic media also did not give the people-focused issues airtime in the bulletins and talk shows. Out of the 6296 news items in the main bulleting of the day, only 814 or 13% were about the people-focused issues. In other words, the people focused issues only got 11% of the bulletins’ airtime. As in the case of print media, the focus was of the electronic media was also on the political statements or developments.

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4.3 Talk Shows

The talk shows discussed the people-focused issues occasionally and superficially. Importantly none of the monitored talk shows exclusively discussed any of the people-focused identified for this monitoring. Additionally a curious trend is that the host may announce to discuss a people-focused issue during the show but would not take it up.

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Holding of an event about the people-focused issue ensure that it would be discussed during the talk shows. This includes the literary festivals in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad, or the events at Islamabad's Lok Virsa, or the seasonal events such as the Besakhi mela.

However, politics, statements, political developments, and economy remain the focus of the talk shows. For the hosts of talk shows discussing politics remains the top priority. The critical issues that concern the lives of people are ignored. In a talk show on March 4, the host announced to discuss the increase in the prices of fertilizers.

However, the issue was never taken up as the talk show continued to discuss politics. It seems that the talk shows are not inclined to put in extra effort to probe issues related to health, education, climate change, art, literature, food security, etc. The emphasis is on discussing the issue(s) of the day. Climate change would only come into discussion when there is news about untimely rains damage crops.