

With 'Nazi news', blog played super prank on media

A blog run out of Goa anonymously has claimed credit for misleading large sections of the Indian media by planting an untrue story about a 'Nazi' being held along the state's border with Karnataka.

By Tuesday evening, the blog, penpricks.blogspot.com, which often pillories the functioning of the media, claimed credit for unveiling 'one of the most telling stories on the Goan as well as the Indian media'.

The hoax saw large sections of the Indian media pick up and reproduce a story - circulated via a 'press note' - saying an absconding, 88-year-old Nazi war criminal named 'Johan Bach' had been arrested on the Goa-Karnataka border while trying to sell a stolen piano.

While the story, in hindsight, looks as unbelievable as they come, the large number of details it included fooled a number of unsuspecting journalists, and resulted in stories being printed within India and abroad about the 'Nazi's' arrest.

Coming from 'Perus Narkp' (an anagram for 'Super Prank'), the statement claimed that the Nazi had lived in Goa, and was responsible for the killing of 12,000 Jews in a non-existent concentration camp in 'East Berlin'.

Penpricks, mostly targeting what it sees as the excesses of journalists here, argued that it was making the point that sections of the Indian media 'accept as fact' any stray piece of information.

It pointed to examples emerging from the reporting on schoolgirl Aarushi Talwar's murder in Delhi and earlier suspected murder of 16-year-old British tourist Scarlett Keeling in Goa.

'Several Indian newspapers fell victim to a hoax about the arrest of a supposed Nazi war criminal. Apart from the media's alarming ignorance, the episode also reveals our fascination for unconfirmed news from 'intelligence' sources,' commented The Hindu newspaper Sunday.

On the penpricks.blogspot.com blog, readers were surprised by the impact of the hoax claims.

'Brilliant!' commented one reader. Blogger Raghavendra Bhat said: 'Excellent lesson for the media.'

Some noted that even the Pakistani media had picked up the story, while another reader calling himself Miklos said: 'Any reader of literature will have been reminded of George Steiner's novel, 'The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.,' of which this hoax is really no more than a pale imitation...'

Frederick Noronha (© IANS / India eNews)