

April 1, 2020

Members and Editors of NBA

Re: Advisory on Reporting COVID 19 Crisis

As you are aware, the Hon'ble Supreme Court passed an Order dated 30.3.2020 after hearing Writ Petition(s)(Civil) No(s).468/2020 Alakh Alok Srivastava (Petitioner/s) vs Union of India (Respondent/s). This Order has been circulated to all Members and Editors of NBA with the advice that they should go through the entire Order and in particular the paragraphs relating to media reporting.

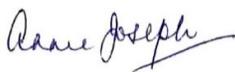
Undoubtedly, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has recognized the media in so far as the freedom of speech is concerned, at the same time, it has reminded the media of its responsibility as well, which assumes much more significance in the context namely of tackling the pandemic of the COVID 19 crisis. It is the duty of all stakeholders to contribute positively in this crisis.

The issue that the Hon'ble Supreme Court has touched upon relates to "fake news" whether intended or not, published either by electronic, print or social media which will cause panic in the society. The Hon'ble Court observed that the media should maintain a strong sense of responsibility and ensure that unverified news capable of causing panic is not disseminated.

News media plays a critical role during public health emergencies by providing reassurance, bringing calm, motivating people to overcome the crisis and in bringing their lives back to normal. Inaccurate information can lead to rumours and misinformation, resulting in panic and chaos.

Members broadcasters are therefore advised that any content used from social media platforms in their news programmes should be thoroughly verified at the highest editorial levels before being telecast.

In these circumstances member broadcasters could also consider telecasting the positives steps being taken by various individuals/ persons/ entities / governments and all medical personnel in order that objective, balanced, accurate and impartial news gets telecast.



Annie Joseph
For and on behalf of the
News Broadcasting Standards Authority

CC: Legal Heads of NBA