

Complaint dated 21.2.09 made by parents against the electronic media for false, baseless, derogatory, defamatory, sensational and inhuman reporting of an accident that took place on February 24, 2008 in which their children died.

Summary of Complaint:

Sneha Kapoor and Anirudh Rawat died in an accident that took place on 24.2.08, near India Gate. The parents of the deceased Mrs. Anuradha Bhattacharya (mother of Sneha Kapoor) and Mr. Vijai Rawat & Mrs. Anita Dighe (parents of Anirudh Rawat) complained to the Authority on 21.2.09, rather than reporting that the accident had occurred due to the drunken driving of their friend, the media gave only the police version and reported that all the four occupants of the car were drunk. By constantly playing and replaying the video clips that emphasized that all of them were drunk, the TV channels conveyed to the viewers that the two dead young adults deserved the death they got and were not worthy of any sympathy or grief. The sheer tragedy of two young lives being snuffed out was thus completely sidelined and underplayed by the electronic media.

Decision:

The complaint was considered by the NBA Authority in its meeting held on 20.3.09. The Authority viewed the telecast of the news item in ten member channels of the NBA i.e. Aaj Tak, Dilli Aaj Tak, CNN IBN, India TV, Live India, NDTV, NDTV India, NDTV Metronation, Delhi, News 24 and Zee News as received on compact disc (CD) from the parents. The Authority noted that while reporting the accident, the broadcasters had relied upon the police version for which they could not be faulted. Accordingly, the Authority was of the considered view that it had not been established that any of these channels had violated the Code of Ethics and Broadcasting Standards.

However, being conscious of the poignant nature of the episode and in view of the sentiments expressed by the parents and also as a matter of propriety, the Authority directed that, a clarification be aired by the respective channels with prior information to the complainants of the date & time of the telecast. A CD of the telecast would also be sent to the parents by the concerned broadcasters.

The Authority also advised that the members of the NBA should take special precaution and thoroughly verify facts when reporting tragic incidents.

The Authority also noted that India TV on receipt of the Advisory from the Ministry of I&B with the copy of the complaint filed by Mrs Anuradha Bhattacharya (mother of Sneha Kapoor), had already telecasted a clarification, which incidentally happened to be on the first death anniversary. On request, a copy of the CD had also been sent to Mrs Anuradha Bhattacharya.
