

**“Mout ka shanivar” telecast on News 24 Channel on 29.6.11 at 19:27 hrs.**

**Summary of the Complaint:**

Ministry of Information & Broadcasting brought to the notice of the NBSA regarding telecasting of a report about a village namely Gopalapur, in Rohtak, Haryana, where on every Saturday one person commits suicide. This has been happening since last 6 weeks; the villagers are perplexed and are resorting to avoid this through ways which promote blind faith and superstition.

**Decision:**

After viewing the CD and also perusing the reply given by the broadcaster, the Authority observed that the programme in question appeared prima facie to be in violation of the Code of the Ethics and Guidelines issued from time to time and amounted to irresponsible reporting and decided that the broadcaster be called upon to appear before the Authority at its meeting to be held on 18.4.12. The broadcaster was represented at the hearing by Mr Kaushik Moitra, Legal Head, Mr. Rahul Mahajan, Sr. Executive Editor and Mr. Nakul Grover, Company Secretary.

During the hearing the broadcaster was asked to respond to the prima-facie view that the programme violated the NBA Code of Ethics & Broadcasting Standards and Specific Guidelines Covering Reportage dated 10.2.09 relating to “Refraining from advocating or encouraging superstition and occultism” and “Supernatural, Occultism and Paranormal”; to explain why the programme sensationalized and dramatized the issue and how did it serve any public purpose?.

In response the broadcaster contended that the programme was aired with the intention to educate the viewers regarding the superstition prevailing in the concerned village. However, it was admitted by the broadcaster that the presentation of the programme should have been less dramatic to avoid sensationalisation of the subject matter which appeared to present a fatalistic and alarming picture of what was clearly a superstitious belief entertained in the village. The broadcaster assured the NBSA that you would be more careful in the future.

The Authority after deliberations decided that in view of the broadcaster admitting the mistake and giving the assurance as aforesaid, the Authority would forbear from taking any stringent action against the broadcaster, even though otherwise called-for in the case; and the broadcaster be directed to air an apology on its channel as per the text, and on the date and time, as would be decided by the Chairperson, which would be intimated to the broadcaster. The broadcaster was also warned that any repetition of such aberration would be viewed more strictly.

In view of the above decision of the Authority, the broadcaster was requested to telecast an apology by running the following text (static) **on full screen in large font size with voice over (in slow speed) expressing regret for the said telecast on your channel News 24, prior to the commencement of the telecast of the 9 p.m. news on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2012, stating the following:**

“न्यूज 24 पर 29 जून 2011 को शाम 7:27 बजे “मौत का शनिवार” नाम से एक कार्यक्रम प्रस्तुत किया गया था, जिसके लिए चैनल क्षमाप्रार्थी है क्योंकि यह कार्यक्रम एक मिथ को तथ्य के रूप में प्रस्तुत करता हुआ और अन्धविश्वास को बढ़ावा देता हुआ प्रतीत हुआ। न्यूज 24 को खेद है कि हरियाणा के रोहतक जिले के गोपालपुर गाँव में शनिवार को हो रही मौतों को लेकर एक बेबुनियाद अन्धविश्वास को सनसनीखेज और दैववादी ढंग से दिखाया गया। चैनल का किसी भी अन्धविश्वास को फैलाने या किसी भी प्रकार से बढ़ावा देने या उसे कोई विश्वसनीयता प्रदान करने का कोई इरादा नहीं था। इस कार्यक्रम से हुई किसी प्रकार की किसी क्षति के लिए हमें गहरा खेद है।”

Proof of compliance of the above to be sent to the Authority immediately thereafter by the broadcaster by submitting a Compact Disc containing the telecast of apology with particulars of the time and date of the telecast.

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