

Suo motu action dated 30.5.2012 – Telecast of a programme titled “How serious is the ammunition shortage for our defence services” on CNN IBN on 5.4.12 in their programme India at 9

NBSA noted that from a viewing of the captioned programme, prima-facie it appears that the above broadcaster had committed breach of the Guidelines relating to “National Security” and had also completely ignored the advisory dated 29.3.12, regarding reportage relating to the defence establishment of the country by NBA members. Accordingly, NBSA decided to take suo motu cognizance of the aforesaid breach and to call upon the broadcaster to respond within 14 days of receipt of the communication as to why action be not taken against them for broadcast of the captioned programme under the NBSA Regulations by filing a written statement along with any documents or material they may wish to rely upon in their defence in relation to the matter.

The response was received from the broadcaster vide letter dated 23.4.12; and the NBSA had considered the response given by the broadcaster. NBSA had further opined that in order to understand the complete details and intricacies of the matter as stated in the reply to enable the NBSA to take a view in the matter, the broadcaster be directed to be present at the meeting of the NBSA for a hearing on 30.5.2012.

Accordingly, the channel was represented by the following individuals:

1. Mr. Radhakrishnan Nair - Executive Editor
2. Mr. Gautam Dubey – Manager – Legal

NBSA heard the broadcaster, which presented its views on the complaint and also explained the editorial procedures put in place by the broadcaster before airing sensitive stories which may impinge on national security of the country. Mr Nair explained that the broadcaster has put in place strict procedures and that the decision to air sensitive stories was taken at the highest editorial level in which the senior editors and the editor in chief is involved. He stated that thorough verification is done of the documents which are received to ascertain their veracity and multiple cross-checks are initiated to ensure that the facts are reliable. Furthermore the broadcaster explained that in telecasting the story in question, it was never the intention to sensationalize the matter and the story was carried since it was believed that airing of the story was in public interest.

NBSA generally approved of the procedures that are in-place as explained by the broadcaster for telecast of stories on sensitive subject matters. However, the NBSA suggested that broadcaster should also incorporate in their vetting procedure another aspect, whereby in matters of serious and sensitive nature, the reasons for airing such story/ies with documented references also recorded and retained, for possible future evaluation. NBSA decided that in view of the satisfactory explanation given by the broadcaster, no further action was called for and the suo motu action initiated against the broadcaster be closed.
