



**PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**New Delhi: November 12, 2019** ..... Mr. Rajat Sharma, President, News Broadcasters Association (NBA), has addressed a letter dated 11.11.2019 to the Shri Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, which is reproduced below, regarding the Government of Andhra Pradesh, General Administration (I&PR) Department – Order dated 30.10.2019, by which it has delegated powers to Secretaries of respective Departments to lodge complaints and to file appropriate legal cases through Public Prosecutor against false, baseless and defamatory news items published/telecast/posted in Print/ Electronic/ Social Media.

Annie Joseph  
Secretary General

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Speed Post / Email <email: cm@ap.gov.in>

November 11, 2019

**Shri Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy**  
Hon'ble Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh  
Building #1, First Floor, A.P. Secretariat,  
**Velagapudi – 522 238 [A.P.]**

Dear Shri Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy Ji,

The News Broadcasters Association (NBA) is the only association exclusively of 24x7 news broadcasters in India i.e. broadcasters which are dealing with broadcasting purely news and news-based current affairs programmes. As of date, the NBA has as its Members 29 leading national and regional news broadcasting companies, which own and/or operate 71 English, Hindi and Regional language news channels throughout the country. It is verily believed that Members of the NBA collectively enjoy almost 80% of the viewership of all news channels in the country.

The NBA is extremely concerned to note that the Government of Andhra Pradesh, General Administration (I&PR) Department –has issued Govt Order dated 30.10.2019 (said Order) by which it has delegated powers to Secretaries of respective Departments to lodge complaints and to file appropriate legal cases through Public Prosecutor against false, baseless and defamatory news items published/telecast/posted in Print/ Electronic/ Social Media and the said order has also given powers to order enquiries to establish the veracity of news reports / posts on print, electronic and social media are and to issue rejoinders, file complaints and lodge appropriate cases.



As you are aware, media/press, particular media dealing with news and current affairs have a fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression under Article 19 (1)(a) of the Constitution of imparting information to the public just as the public has a right to receive information. The media plays a very important role in protecting the fundamental rights of the people, including the public's right to know and it is often termed as "the fourth pillar" of democracy. The news media is considered to be an integral part of democracy and its existence is considered to be of grave importance to public interest. Journalists and media workers provide a service that is essential for any democratic society. It plays an indispensable role in enabling citizens to hold open debates, make informed decisions, expose the misdeeds, wrongdoings, criminality and transgressions of the law. The media keeps the public informed and provides a service that is essential for any democracy to survive. An independent, fearless and dynamic media is a critical ingredient of a true democracy and any curb on media independence or freedom whether direct or indirect, is a serious threat to the democratic process itself and must not be countenanced.

The NBA is aware that with freedom comes responsibility, and respects the role of government in ensuring such responsibility. NBA condemns motivated, malicious reporting, attempts to fabricate news and any to attempt to gain popularity at the cost of journalistic integrity. Such acts, NBA believes puts at risk the credibility of electronic media including televisions news and indeed, the news media, as a whole.

However, if stipulations as have been prescribed by said Order become the norm, the possibility of the news media being targeted at every instance, to prevent it from reporting important news will become a reality and therefore the said Order will lead to a 'chilling effect' on the media which in turn will affect the very survival and existence of the news media. Criminal intimidation of journalists and preventing them from performing their duties are violations of the freedoms enshrined in and guaranteed by the Constitution. Government intervention in news content without a transparent process is nothing short of censorship, and a threat to the freedom of the media/press.

A free and independent media is the cornerstone of India's powerful democracy, and it behoves an elected government to support and strengthen media independence rather than throttle it and thereby affect a robust democracy.

Further, it is a matter of great satisfaction and privilege to inform you that NBA had set up the News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA) in 2008, which looks into complaints of its member broadcasters and the Chairperson of NBSA is Justice A. K. Sikri, former Judge of the Supreme Court of India, along with eight members.

The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MoI&B) and the Electronic Media Monitoring Center (EMMC) has been referring to NBSA several complaints received by MoI&B the in relation to broadcasts made by NBA's member channels. In relation to such referred matters, NBSA has endeavored to resolve the issues involved and to adjudicate upon the complaints to the satisfaction of the complainants/viewers and in a fair manner. Election Commission of India (ECI) and other government authorities have also approached NBSA from time to time in relation to complaints that they have had/received in respect of news broadcasts telecast by member channels of the NBA.



We would also like to bring to your notice that the Hon'ble Supreme Court in its Order dated 12.01.2017 in WP (C) 387 of 2000 titled 'Common Cause Vs. Union of India & Others the UOI' records the submission made by the counsel for the Union of India that the MoI&B has EMMC and is assisted by self-regulatory bodies like NBSA, Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC) and Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) to monitor adherence to the Programme and Advertising Codes.

We request you as an elected representative who has won the recently concluded elections with a huge mandate, to withdraw the said Order to restore the confidence of the media and allow them to work in a free and fearless manner.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,

Sd/-

Rajat Sharma  
President

CC: *Shri Neerabh Kumar Prasad, Chief Secretary, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, Building #1, A.P. Secretariat, Velagapudi – 522 238 [A.P.] <email: cs@ap.gov.in>*  
*Shri T. Vijay Kumar Reddy, Ex-Officio Spl. Secretary to Govt (I&PR), Information and Public Relations Department, 2nd Floor, NTR Administrative Block, Pandit Nehru Bus Stand, Vijayawada, Krishna District 520013 Email: <commissioner.ipr.ap@gmail.com>*