

NORMS & GUIDELINES ON PAID NEWS

Members/ Associate Members of the News Broadcasters Association(NBA) do not indulge in the malpractice of “paid-news”. However, since “paid news” is a critical “ethics” issue, it is in the highest interest of the public and of our democracy, and equally in the best interest of maintaining the credibility of the news broadcast industry, that strict norms and guidelines be laid down to pre-empt and prevent this malaise.

In this regard, the following norms and guidelines have been framed which all Members/Associate Members of NBA are required to adhere to strictly:

1. **Definitions:**

For purposes of these norms and guidelines,

- 1.1 **“Entity”** shall mean and include a person (whether natural or legal), company, partnership firm, sole proprietorship concern, society, trust, political party, association of persons and any other organisation of like nature;
 - 1.2 **“Immediate Relatives”** shall mean and include immediate relations of Persons-in-Charge i.e. spouse, parents, siblings, children, dependents and significant others;
 - 1.3 **“Paid News”** shall mean and include news (whether political news, business news, sports news, entertainment news or news relating to any other field) reported or omitted to be reported (whether by way of news bulletins, current affairs programmes, special programmes or any other programmes by whatever name called), in consideration of, or as *quid pro quo* for, any financial or non-financial benefit or reward whatsoever;
 - 1.4 **“Persons-in-Charge”** shall mean and include members of the Board of Directors, persons holding positions of monitoring and control over the editorial, publication and/or management functions of a news broadcasting organization, including without limitation executive directors, chief executive officers, editors and producers, of the news broadcasting organization (and its singular shall be construed accordingly);
2. No news broadcasting organization shall broadcast or be associated in any manner with the broadcast of Paid News.
 3. Every news broadcasting organization and every Person-in-Charge shall disclose to the public on the web-site/s of the news broadcasting organization any shareholding, investment, other equity participation or financial interests or conflict of interest of any nature whatsoever (including specifically any “private treatise”), in or with, any Entity. Disclosure shall also be made by every Person-in-Charge of such shareholding, investment, other equity participation or financial interests or conflict of interest of any nature whatsoever (including specifically any “private treatise”) of Immediate Relatives in respect of any Entity.

-2-

4. A news broadcasting organization and/or Person-in-Charge of the news broadcasting organization shall not accept any financial or non-financial interest, benefit or reward of any nature whatsoever, whether in or as cash, loan, gift, discount, hospitality or entertainment etc. from or on behalf of, any Entity, for or in consideration of, reportage of any news of, or relating to, such Entity.
5. Every news broadcasting organization shall disclose on their website the names of their nominee/s or representative/s on the Board of Directors, Managing Committee or Governing Body etc. of any Entity.
6. Every news broadcasting organization shall disclose conspicuously in an appropriate manner during broadcast of a program, on their television channel/s and on their website/s, including during a news, current affairs, sports, entertainment or promotional broadcast as to whether the content of such broadcast has been paid for by or on behalf of the Entity that is subject matter of such broadcast in any manner whatsoever ; and whether such broadcast is an “advertorial” or other media marketing initiative.
7. Considering the singular importance of the electoral process in a democracy, a news broadcasting organization shall not accept any financial or non-financial consideration, benefit or reward (including sponsorship) from any Entity, for or in relation to any news (including opinion polls or other similar programs) relating predominantly to elections or to any candidate or political party in relation to any elections;

Provided that a news broadcasting organization may broadcast any special reportage or program, of or relating to, any candidate or political party in relation to any elections, which special reportage or program may be sponsored or otherwise paid-for, so long as it is prominently and clearly disclosed during such special reportage or program that it is so sponsored or paid-for.
8. All news, reportage or other programs relating predominantly to elections shall be monitored and supervised by a person holding the senior-most executive editorial post (by whatever designation called), who shall be responsible for any misreporting or other violation of these norms and guidelines.
9. The above norms and guidelines shall apply equally to all journalists, reporters and stringers, working for or associated with, a news broadcasting organization except that such journalists, reporters and stringers shall furnish such information in writing in respect of any shareholding, investment, other equity participation or financial interests or conflict of interest of any nature whatsoever, which exists with regard to any subject matter on which he/she/they is/are reporting to the person holding the senior-most executive editorial post at the channel. It shall be the prerogative of such editor to permit a journalist, reporter or stringer to continue working on such subject matter or to get him/her to recuse from reporting on such subject matter.

10. It is clarified that any violation of these norms shall be subject to the procedure and consequences provided under the News Broadcasting Standards (Disputes Redressal) Regulations, including all provisions of Regulation 7.1 of the said Regulations.

Provided however that the limit of fine that may be imposed under Regulation 7.1 of the Regulations for any breach or violation of these norms and guidelines shall not be restricted to Rs.1 lac and in case of any such breach or violation, the News Broadcasting Standards Authority shall be entitled to impose upon a news broadcasting organization, fine of upto ten-times the financial or non-financial consideration, benefit or reward (including sponsorship) received for the broadcast of Paid News.

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