

## **Guidelines on Broadcast of Potentially Defamatory Content**

### **Overview:**

1. Broadcasters must always be conscious of the power and impact of the audio-visual medium and the phenomenal reach of their news channels, which can cause incalculable harm if not accurate and objective.
2. Broadcasters must remain aware of the risk of being culpable in accordance with law for any defamatory matter that may be carried in their news/programmes, even if the offending matter is a repetition by them of a statement made by someone else.
3. Any sensitive matter that is broadcast in any form by the broadcaster should be strictly vetted and edited.
4. The above position makes it imperative for broadcasters to observe certain norms and caution to minimize the risk of liability in such matters.

### **Basic Guidelines:**

5. A news anchor/journalist/presenter should not make any derogatory, derisive or judgemental statements as part of reporting or commentating.
6. As a norm, a news channel should not report - live or recorded – any statement that is *per se* derogatory or derisive.
7. In the situation of a “live” broadcast, if a potentially defamatory or libelous statement is made by a person, the news channel should take immediate steps to disclaim it.
8. Before reporting any accusation or allegation the version of the person affected must be obtained and aired simultaneously with the accusation or allegation to give a complete picture to the viewer. In the event of inability to obtain the version of the affected person(s) within a reasonable period, the same should be aired simultaneously and authentic contemporaneous records of the effort made should be maintained.
9. Before broadcasting any such news/ programmes, the channel must take necessary steps to ascertain its veracity and credibility.
10. In the choice of panels for discussions, the channels must ensure that their programmes do not become a platform for spreading acrimony.

Place : New Delhi

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