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NBA CONCERNED ABOUT GOVERNMENT ROLE IN NEWS MEDIA

New Delhi: September 21, 2007 — The recent sting operation aired by TV channel Live India and events following it have raised substantial and serious issues.

The News Broadcasters Association (NBA) unequivocally condemns any attempt by anyone to fabricate news and to attempt to gain popularity at the cost of journalistic integrity. Such acts risk discrediting television news, and indeed the news media, as a whole.

This does not mean that sting operations are wrong in principle. The NBA believes that sting operations are a legitimate journalistic tool and means of investigation, but like all powerful tools they have to be used with care and responsibility.

However, the NBA continues to question the role of government in media.

Regrettably, the present instance is only the latest in a series of government interventions in media content in the recent past, including several cases of suspension of licensed TV channels. In each instance the key question left unanswered was how and by what process it was determined that there was an offence; and on what basis the penalty was determined.

A free and independent media is the cornerstone of India's powerful democracy, and it behoves an elected government to support and strengthen that freedom.

The NBA knows that with freedom comes responsibility, and respects the role of government in ensuring such responsibility. However, it also believes that to do so requires a transparent and codified process. Government intervention in news content without a transparent, codified process and basis is nothing short of censorship, and a threat to the freedom of the press – and in turn to the health of the democracy.

In acknowledgement of the responsibility of the press, a committee of Editors of member channels of the NBA is framing guidelines for self-regulation for news and current affairs channels, for implementation at the earliest.

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