

Press Release
23rd June, 2010

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The National Commission for Women today organized a meeting with representatives of the News Broadcasters Association (NBA) and Broadcast Editors Association (BEA) in order to share and discuss concerns of the Commission on issues related to indecent representation of women in the media and the need for self-regulation. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Girija Vyas, Chairperson, National Commission for Women (NCW), said that the Commission strongly favours self – regulation by the media as the preferred mode of regulation in keeping with the Right to Freedom of Speech as enshrined in the Constitution. She said that while the news channels are by and large, responsible in their behaviour, the entertainment channels do require some sort of regulation to ensure propagation of right content. She said the Commission is very concerned about the increasing trend of indecent representation of women in the electronic media and would like to evolve a method of arresting this trend through regular dialogue with the media. She further appreciated that the NBA has prescribed a Code of Ethics and hoped that this system will work well for enabling the News Broadcasters to act, responsibly in the coverage of news while at the same time being sensitive to the social churning which the country is under going, the sensitivities of law and order for the security of the nation and other such concerns. However, she felt that the system of lodging a complaint must be made easier.

Dr. Vyas also applauded the emergence of the BEA which is the only organization of its kind in the world and is using the rapid means of communication available today, to regularly share, discuss and take decisions regarding reporting of all sensitive matters of national interest. She expressed the hope that BEA would go on to develop high journalistic standards to be respected by all.

Dr. Vyas made a strong appeal to the News Broadcasters that while reporting crime, and especially crime against women, due care must be taken in the tone and choice of words so that crime is not glorified. She made a strong plea for shunning the term “*honour*” killing and coining another suitable term which highlights the heinousness of the crime without any element of “*honour*”.

A suggestion was made by Dr. Girija Vyas that when news is broken about a particular crime, a ticker may also be made to run publicizing the penalties available for it and who to approach for redressal. Publicizing of penalties in this way would not only spread awareness but also act as a strong

deterrent for would be delinquents. The suggestion was unanimously welcomed by the media and they assured its immediate implementation. A synopsis of legal provisions and available penalties was circulated by the NCW to facilitate the process. Ms. Annie Joseph, Secretary General, NBA while appreciating this initiative of the Commission said that they would be happy to collaborate with NCW for organizing training workshops for crime reporters.

In the case of Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, Chairperson, NCW said that the provisions need to be amended to effectively prohibit the indecent representation of women in advertisements, etc in the electronic media which have the effect of denigrating women and are derogatory to them. She said that the Commission strongly objects to the treatment of women as commodities and would definitely like to see some mechanisms put in place to prevent this. Commodities and would definitely like to see some mechanisms put in place to prevent this.

Mr. Shazi Zaman, President, Broadcast Editors Association appreciated the confidence expressed in the news media and assured that news channels would get more and more ethic centric as they evolve and it cannot be denied that there has been a substantive change in the standard of news reporting over the past 2 years. The discussion also covered issues like need to establish legitimacy and acceptability of laws, the corruption free implementation and the need to train and sensitize the police and judicial authorities. The need to strengthen NCW and other Commissions was also voiced and a joint discussion with the NHRC, Law Commission and NCW was mooted. Dr. Girija Vyas appreciated the enthusiasm with which the present representatives participated in the discussion and said that this was the beginning of an ongoing dialogue and she would next hold a one to one discussion with the entertainment channels.

Sd/-
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