# UNIT - 5 : NEWS

## UNIT STRUCTURE


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## 5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- define news
- analyze different news values
- classify the different types of news
- name the different sources of news
- discuss about writing of news
- explain Objectivity and Authenticity of news

## 5.2 INTRODUCTION

With the boom of the news media viz. newspapers, news channels and news portals, news has become an important part of our daily lives. The term news must be familiar to all of you. But as a student of Mass Communication, your understanding of the term 'News' has to be deeper and more comprehensive than what the common man understands by this term.

In this unit you will learn about news not just from the point of view of a layman, but from the point of view of a journalist. Here we will introduce you to the concepts of news, the different types of news, qualities of news, sources of news etc.

We hope, after going through this unit, you will be able to have the basic concepts of news clear to your mind. So let us concentrate on the sections given below.

## 5.3 CONCEPT OF NEWS

"News" is probably one of the most commonly used terminologies in our day to day lives. All of us invariably use this term quite often while talking to our friends, families, relatives and other people, without perhaps, knowing what actually constitute news. Innumerable activities and events are happening simultaneously round the clock across the world. But have you ever thought why the news bulletin of the day carries only a handful of the events or activities that have taken place during the day, which we call as news? Have you ever tried to understand why out of the hundreds only a few items find a place in the newspaper that you read everyday and you invariably call them news? What about the rest of the happenings that fail to make it to the news media?

In a country of billions like India, why your television channel is obsessed with only a few faces, probably a few politicians, a few film stars, models, scientists, bureaucrats, etc. Why only a few people and events get reported, and not the rest? Why don't the media inform us about every little detail of whatever is happening at any place in the world and at any point of time as part of its responsibilities?

Well, in journalistic parlance the word "news" has certain connotations. All events, incidents, activities or happenings around the world can not qualify as news. In order to call something news there has to be certain elements present in that event or activity or incident. Therefore, let us first understand what can be called news.

## 5.3.1. Definition of news

It has been impossible to formulate one common and all encompassing definition of news which is universally acceptable. This is because the meaning and scope of news has been changing with the passage of time and also differs according to the political structure of the state.

Perhaps, the simplest way to define news is that, news is all that is happening around us in the different directions, north-east-west-south, and together all these make news. However, if one is to believe this statement then he or she will have to maintain that every incident happening in our society, no matter how big or small or whether emanating from a renowned person or common men, must be considered as news. Yet, when we see the different news media, we can probably question the validity of this statement. Therefore, we need to reconsider this statement and modify it by saying that -

News is something new, something relevant and important, something immediate or something unusual happening in our world that concern us or our society in some way or the other.



**News Story:**
News report or material which goes into the newspaper. Not to be confused with tale or novel or fiction.

Now does this explain all the doubts creeping in your minds? There should be something fresh or new about the event like a discovery, an invention, an innovation, a new project taken by the government for the uplift of people, an impending danger, a natural disaster, an accident, a crime taking place in the society and so on and so forth. They always make good **news stories**. A new fashion in vogue, announcement of new products in the market, a change in habit or in taste of people of the society, etc are also news as they signify changing trends, eventually making them relevant for larger segments of the society.

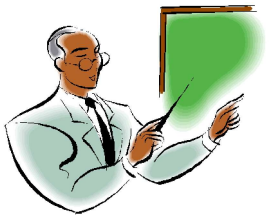
In fact, everything can be called ‘news’ provided it holds immense value for or affects the lives of larger masses. An unusual event like

the records of the Guinness Book may also qualify for news. The actions and activities of members of Parliament or Legislative Assemblies is also of concern to people as they are people's representatives conferred with the power to rule and guide the masses.

**The Oxford English Dictionary** defines news as 'the report or account of recent events or occurrences, brought or coming to one as new information, new occurrences as a subject of report or talk.

Therefore, having discussed all these we can draw a conclusion by defining news as information about an event that happens in the society, which affects the lives of the people or has the tendency to affect the lives of the people, directly or indirectly, or has immediate value for larger segments of the society.

However, what we have discussed so far are only some of the characteristics of news. Apart from these, there are some other qualities as well, by which we can identify news. In journalistic parlance these qualities are called News Values.



**LET US KNOW**

**Some Interesting Definitions and Quotes**

- 'NEWS is what interests a good newspaperman.'
  - Geraid Johnson, The Sun, Baltimore
- 'When a dog bites a man it is not news, when a man bites a dog it is news.' - John Bogart
- 'News is something someone somewhere wants suppressed. All the rest is advertising.' - William Randolph
- 'For most times no news is good news, for the press, good news is not news.'



**ACTIVITY- A**

1) Think of 10 major news items that were covered by the media in the past two days and identify which news value or values are found in each of these news items. Note down which news value was found in the maximum no of news items.
2) Open today's newspaper and go through the news items on the first page- Identify the news items having the following news values. Name the news value which is common to all the news items on the first page.
   1) Timeliness
   2) Conflict
   3) Prominence
   4) Importance
   5) Impact

## 5.3.2. News values



**News Desk:** Desk where news is edited and processed. Also known as **Copy Desk**. In Journalism, Copy means the material written by a journalist or news supplied by a news agency or correspondent.

News values are the characteristics of news. As mentioned earlier they are the qualities by which events qualify as news. And it is expected that all journalists regardless of whether they are involved in on-the-field reporting or placed at the **news desk**, have a clear idea about all the values that constitute news. Therefore, let us now try to understand the characteristics of news one by one.

**Timeliness**

News essentially has to be new, recent, on time. Old news is stale news and, therefore, of no value. Timeliness, however, is defined by the publication cycle of the news medium in which the information will appear.

- For a weekly news magazine, events that happened during the previous week are timely.
- For a daily newspaper, however, events that happened during the 24 hours since the last edition of the paper are timely.
- For the broadcast media, events that happened during the past few hours upto the last half hour are timely.

A timely presentation of events and happenings is a consideration that every newsman strives to achieve. Otherwise news loses its credibility and essence. Readers do not find it interesting to read stale news. Therefore, it is said that news is the most perishable commodity in the world. And that is the reason why the happenings of the day, including the major events taking place in the evening and late at night, will find a definite place in the morning newspaper.

This concern for immediacy has become more prominent in today's era of evolving technology. The television has reduced this time gap to an unbelievable 'news as it is happening now' situation. And the viewers are boggled by watching the seamless unfolding of events taking place at far flung places of the world the moment they break on their television screen. The online newspapers also keep on updating information or the content of the paper as and when events break out and simultaneously more and more information keeps on pouring in throughout the day adding more highlights and insights into a single event. Now-a-days news updates can be received through sms also.

**Importance**

Significant events that hold importance for the masses must be considered as news. Any important event like the presentation of railway or fiscal budget at the Parliament or in the State Assemblies, announcement of any kind of development project by the government, visits of Foreign ministers to our country or vice versa, a military threat by the neighboring countries, crime related stories etc. are all important events, information about which needs to be delivered immediately to the people.

**Conflict**

Conflicts are parts of every society. When a society comprises multiple ideologies, multiple organs, innumerable ethnic communities, multiple languages, geographical terrains etc. then conflicts are bound to happen. The entire North east region, including Assam, is a testimony to conflicts of different nature and magnitude plugging at different points of time fueled by innumerable reasons. Nuclear war, terrorist activities,

communal clashes, political turmoil, struggles for identities have become cause of concern for every society the world over and there have been excessive reporting about such incidents in every news media. Reports about such happenings are widely covered by local as well as national media because they are news worthy and arouse heightened emotions among masses. One, however, needs to exercise a lot of caution and restrain while reporting conflict as these issues are very sensitive. Media reports portraying the incident in an improper way can flare up the situation and cause further damage. At times the media also has to hold back from revealing certain information in order to help maintain peace.

**Proximity**

Similar to relevance the local news is always interesting for the masses, irrespective of where they stay. When a local event is featured in the newspapers or electronic media news bulletins, the readers find it engrossing because local events affect their immediate life and surroundings – weather, events, traffic, communication, market, health facility etc. It is a general tendency of people to remain abreast with what is happening in their locality, in their local markets, in their neighborhood and with the local people. That is the reason why all the newspapers devote a considerable amount of space for regional affairs. Also, to capitalize on the readership base, there has been a tendency of all the big national newspapers, in the past couple of years, to have local editions in probably every state of the country to cater to the needs and interests of the people of that particular state. Proximity, however, means more than a simple measure of distance. Psychological proximity is also important. So, if, say, an Indian is awarded or gains recognition in a foreign country, it makes important news for us.

**Prominence**

Prominent persons, prominent events and prominent places always make news. You must have always been wondering as to why you always see the same faces — same politicians, same celebrities or the same places making inroads into the newspaper space and bulletin

time. Popular politicians, popular film stars, sports persons, celebrities, socialites—they always make news. This is because the readers or the viewers adore them and want to know more about them, about their life styles, their likes and dislikes. They are the role models for many and hence, when their activities are covered by the media it is bound to draw the attention. Political bigwigs like the President, the Prime Minister, the Leaders of different political parties, spiritual gurus, sports persons, film stars, business barons etc, are always in the news.

Sometime, even prominent places make news. Like the metros of India-Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and other major cities of India and abroad, make news. The events happening in these places are matters of concern for many and, hence, they raise curiosity. Prominent events like International Trade Fairs, Expos, Fashion shows, film festivals, international summits and conferences etc also make news.

**Impact or consequence**

The kind of impact an event is going to have on the minds of the people is also another characteristic of news. An event that causes or is capable of causing a great sequence of events affecting many persons is obviously newsworthy. Massive disasters, earthquake, floods, natural calamities, political debacles, economic turmoil, major accidents, crashes, inflation, hike of fuel prices, political party coming to or moving out of power, union budget, reservation or any shift in policy etc are all able to create greater impact on the lives of the common people. Similarly, consequence may measure disaster or progress. A fire that destroys a private dwelling is of small consequence in comparison to tsunami which killed thousands of lives in the coastal regions of India recently. When news about such incidents appear in the newspaper pages people become emotionally aroused and such incidents affects the lives of the people in more ways than one.

**Progress**

Information relating to a country's development and prosperity always

makes news. Every society has problems and issues that need to be highlighted by the media. Such information is always newsworthy. Therefore, success stories of individual or the society, victories and progress- they all make news.

**Disaster**

Any kind of disaster makes news. Disasters like earthquakes, flood, fire, erosions, volcanic eruptions, cyclones, etc. make news as such occurrences affect the lives of the majority. When such incidents occur they take away human lives, damages property and break the ecological balance. Such incidents stir the emotions of the larger segments of the society.

**Human Interest:**

These are stories that arouse some emotions in the audience - stories that are ironic, bizarre, uplifting or dramatic. For example, when a person saves another's life risking his own, it becomes news worthy or when a person achieves something big despite being a handicap it makes news.

**Novelty**

Stories that are unique, something that is new or unusual make news. For instance, when a couple got married underwater, it created news. Similarly Guinness world record events make news.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS- A**

1) Define 'news'.

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2) What do you mean by news values? Name some important news values.

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3) Which of the following events have no news value for the media-

i) Indian Prime Minister visits China

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ii) Foreign tourists visit India

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iii) Price of commodities increase in Assam

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iv) India wins football match against Pakistan

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v) Your elder sister gives birth to a child

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vi) Aishwarya Rai gives birth to a child

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vii) You go to watch a football match

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viii) Boy dies in Juvenile home

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ix) Prime Minister goes to watch cricket match

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x) HSLC examination begins

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## 1.4 TYPES OF NEWS

Having discussed about the characteristics of news let us now understand the different types of news found in news media. News is basically of two types-Hard News and Soft News.

1. **Hard News:** Hard news is a news item which states plain, simple facts as it has happened. It usually answers the basic questions of 5W's and H
   - ✓ Who
   - ✓ What
   - ✓ When
   - ✓ Where
   - ✓ Why
   - ✓ How

   Normally, a standard technique is followed while writing hard news. In case of print media, the inverted pyramid style is followed, i.e., the most important information is placed towards the beginning of the story and the less important ones are placed thereafter. In the broadcast media, the less important information are simply left out. The hard news writing style is usually followed while writing news about important public events, government actions, international events, economic and social affairs, crime, science and technology, environment etc.

   If a fire breaks out in any part of Guwahati causing considerable damage to the property of the dwellers, including human lives, the information about this unprecedented devastation needs to be given immediately. Who, what, when, where, why, how?

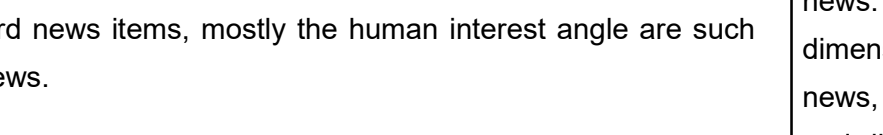
   Similarly when a bomb blast takes place, the news about it would be immediately flashed in the news media in the form of hard news stating straight facts like where it happened, casualty, action taken etc. .

   In today's parlance Hard news are also called spot news or breaking news, because the news organizations break out the news as soon as it happens, without delaying.

2. **Soft News:** Soft news includes a wide variety of news items. **Features**, editorials, articles, etc fall under this category. Reactions and views are included in soft news apart from the plain facts. Stories that deal with human interest angles can rightly be termed as soft news. Soft news mostly emanates from the hard news. Normally the **follow up stories** of a major event, highlighting the angles not covered in the hard news items, mostly the human interest angle are such type of news.

The idea of such news stories is to arouse curiosity among the readers or viewers and heighten emotional appeal by presenting it in an interesting manner. Therefore the conventional news writing formula is not applied while dealing with soft news stories. The writer has the liberty to be extremely innovative and create an item that would attract as many readers as possible and at the same time create an impact in the minds of the people.

Let us take the example of a plane crash, say, in India. The media would definitely cover the event with due emphasis on the number of deaths, time, place and a narration of how the crash may have taken place and, if possible, also highlighting the cause of the crash. All this information will be immediately covered in the form of hard news. However, as the days progress, a newer set of information may surface and reach the hands of a reporter working on the story. After investigating on the incident the reporter may find out there was a child of, say 3 years, who was traveling with his parents, and the child has survived the crash and could escape with minor injuries. Such news will be covered as Soft news.



**Feature:** A story with news value, but not hard core news. It gives new dimension to news, examines and dissects news giving opinions and comments



**Follow up stories:** A sequence of news events that follows after a news break. Also known as Folo.



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS- B

1) What is the difference between hard news and soft news? Answer in about 50 words.

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2) What are the other terms by which hard news is also known?

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3) What are the 5Ws and H.

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**ACTIVITY- B**

1) Read todays newspaper and identify:
   i) Five hard news items.
   ii) Five soft news items.

## 1.5 SOURCES OF NEWS

Source in journalistic parlance means the contacts or the people from whom the reporter receives valuable information for news. It is impossible for a reporter to keep track of every activity or happening in and around him and also collect the information for reporting in the media. In such a situation the reporter has to rely on people outside the periphery of the media organization he/she is working for to retrieve information. These people supply information and facts about events to the reporter, which is otherwise impossible for the reporter to dig out. Normally the reporters have reliable people at different places like the government or other offices, hospitals, municipal body offices, state secretariats, assemblies, Deputy Commissioner's office, police headquarters, educational institutes and so on and so forth. The sources may range from politicians, government officials, Public Relations Officers, police personnel to even the peons or other junior employees of different organizations.

The sources can be of different types – primary or secondary, official or unofficial. When the news organisation's own set of reporters or

correspondents collect the news from the sources or go to the spot and cover the event, then the news can be said to have come from primary sources. On the other hand, news coming in from news agencies can be said to be coming from secondary sources. Sometimes broadcast media use newspaper reports also as sources of information to supplement their own information or the print media may supplement their information about an event with what has been shown in the broadcast media. In such cases the print media becomes a secondary source of information for the broadcast media and vice-versa.

When the media receives information directly from the organization in the form of official **briefing, press release, press note, press communiqué', handout** etc, then we say that the news has come from official sources. (You will learn about all these terms in detail in your course on Public Relations). On the other hand, if the news is received from the **grapevine**, and is not confirmed by any official source and the source cannot be disclosed then the source is said to be unofficial.



**Grapevine:** The informal transmission of information, gossip, or rumor from person to person

Sources are not built in a day or two. It takes time to develop sources, bring them to your confidence and elicit correct response in the time of need. With experience and time these sources are gradually built. And with time the network of sources also widens. It is said that a reporter is known by the volume of sources he keeps. Sources are considered to be the reporter's prized possessions. Therefore it becomes extremely important for the reporter to maintain a good vive and rapport with the network of sources he or she has.

However, it is important to mention here that the reporter should be careful while building contacts. In the pursuit of developing a strong chain of sources the reporter should not forget that the sources should be reliable ones. They should be able to provide the reporter with authentic information. There should not be any malice or personal bias acting behind the willingness of the sources to share information with the reporter.

Another important aspect is that the sources are for keeps, not for destroying after he or she has given a piece of information to the reporter. So the reporter

should be able to keep them in good faith and shoulder their responsibilities in the truest possible manner. This, in turn would take the reporter a long way in future.

**How To Judge Source Credibility:**

**Previous Reliability:** Past track record goes a long way to show if a source is reliable or not. If he has been a good source earlier, he has good chance of being a reliable source now.

**Confirmability:** If the information which has been passed on by the source can be confirmed by other sources then the source can be said to be credible.

**Proximity:** The proximity of the source to the place of event determines the credibility of the source to a certain extent. The more proximate he is to the event, greater is his credibility as a source.

**Motive:** The credibility of a source can also be judged from his motive of passing on the information. A source may pass on wrong information in order to fulfill his own selfish motives. As such it is advisable to find out the motive.

**Contextuality:** The credibility of the source also depends on the contextuality of the information. If it fits into the context in which it has been said, then it is credible or else the credibility of the source is questionable.

**Believability:** Believability of the information also determines the credibility of the source. The information that the source passes on must be believable and as such must seem possible to happen.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS- C**

1) What is news source? Why is it important to have a good network of reliable sources?

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2) What are the criteria by which one can judge source credibility?

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## 5.6 NEWS WRITING

News writing is a skill that every journalist is required to develop and hone it with experience. There are certain techniques or parameters upon which news writing is based. And every news organization follows these basic techniques despite the fact they may all have individual styles of news presentation. The very first step towards learning this technique is to learn the structure of a news story or news report.

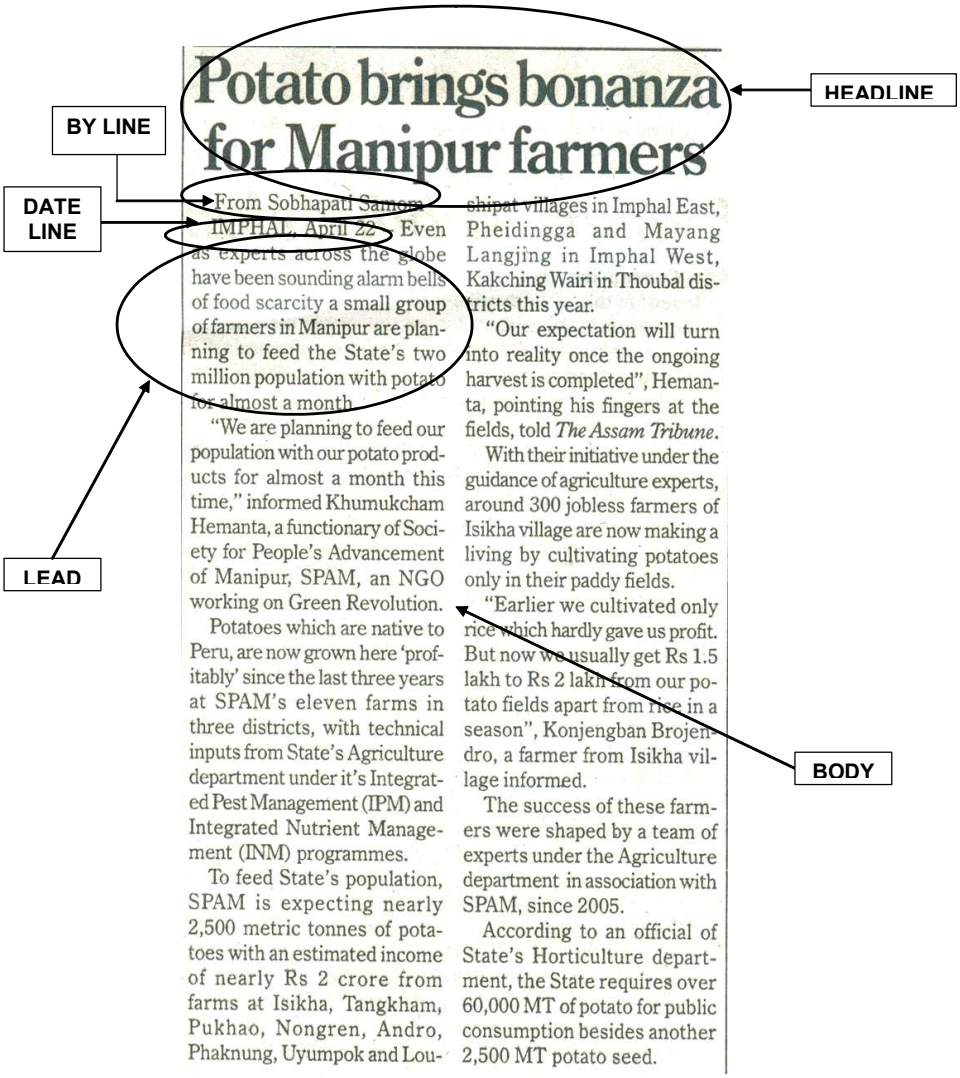
### Structure of a News Story

In the most basic sense, a news report has the following elements:

- ✓ Headline
- ✓ Byline/ Credit line
- ✓ Dateline
- ✓ Lead
- ✓ Body
- ✓ Conclusion

The last element, i.e., conclusion is present in case of soft news stories only. Hard news reports do not have conclusion.

Now consider the following two news reports. The different elements have been marked with arrows for your benefit.




# Potato brings bonanza for Manipur farmers

From Sobhapati Samom

IMPHAL, April 22. Even as experts across the globe have been sounding alarm bells of food scarcity a small group of farmers in Manipur are planning to feed the State's two million population with potato for almost a month.

"We are planning to feed our population with our potato products for almost a month this time," informed Khumukcham Hemanta, a functionary of Society for People's Advancement of Manipur, SPAM, an NGO working on Green Revolution.

Potatoes which are native to Peru, are now grown here 'profitably' since the last three years at SPAM's eleven farms in three districts, with technical inputs from State's Agriculture department under it's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and Integrated Nutrient Management (INM) programmes.

To feed State's population, SPAM is expecting nearly 2,500 metric tonnes of potatoes with an estimated income of nearly Rs 2 crore from farms at Isikha, Tangkham, Pukhao, Nongren, Andro, Phaknung, Uyumpok and Loushipat villages in Imphal East, Pheidingga and Mayang Langjing in Imphal West, Kakching Wairi in Thoubal districts this year.

"Our expectation will turn into reality once the ongoing harvest is completed", Hemanta, pointing his fingers at the fields, told *The Assam Tribune*.

With their initiative under the guidance of agriculture experts, around 300 jobless farmers of Isikha village are now making a living by cultivating potatoes only in their paddy fields.

"Earlier we cultivated only rice which hardly gave us profit. But now we usually get Rs 1.5 lakh to Rs 2 lakh from our potato fields apart from rice in a season", Konjengban Brojendro, a farmer from Isikha village informed.

The success of these farmers were shaped by a team of experts under the Agriculture department in association with SPAM, since 2005.

According to an official of State's Horticulture department, the State requires over 60,000 MT of potato for public consumption besides another 2,500 MT potato seed.




# Action plan to generate jobs: CM

By A Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, April 24 — Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi today said that the State Government would be implementing an action plan aimed at generating employment avenues in different sectors in the next ten years.

"We are going to implement a ten-year action plan which will seek to create employment opportunities in diverse areas such as IT, tourism, fishery, dairy, agriculture, etc. As we need trained personnel and expertise in different fields, the plan would be linked to education and training," Gogoi said at a press conference.

Asserting that the Government was according top priority to education, Gogoi said that a world-class university would soon be set up near Guwahati for which the Government was in the process of acquiring a plot of 700 acres. "The Centre is keen to start the university at the earliest," he added.

Citing agriculture, food processing, irrigation and power as other areas of priority, the Chief Minister said that an Agricultural Commission would

(See page 3)

In the above examples, all the elements of a news story have been identified for you. Let us now learn about these elements in detail and understand the significance of each of them.

**Headline:** You all must be familiar with the term headline. It is that part of a news story which first catches the eye of the reader. As you can see in the examples, it is the title of the news story and it is the most visible element. It is always written in a font few sizes bigger than the rest of the news story. The headline identifies the reader's area of interest and introduces and summarizes the story. It is usually after reading the headline that the reader decides whether or not to read the rest of the story. Sometimes headlines try to create curiosity through interesting use of language and prompt the reader to read the full story. There are different types of headlines based on nature and significance of the story. We will be discussing these in later units.

**Byline/ Creditline:** You must have seen that below the headline, on the left hand side, it is written 'From Sobhapati Samom' in the first example and in the second example it is written 'by a staff reporter'. This is called the byline or the credit line and it identifies the source of the story. In the first example where the person's name is written, it is called the byline. In the second example, there is no mention of the person's name, but simply that it is from a staff reporter. This is called the credit line. It could also be 'by our correspondent' or 'our bureau' or 'by our special correspondent' etc as applicable.

**Dateline:** Below the credit line or byline, just before the actual news story begins, you would have seen the date of the story along with the name of a place. This is the dateline. The date mentioned is the date on which the event has taken place and on which the reporter has filed the story and the place mentioned is the place from where the reporter has filed the story.

**Lead or Intro:** Just where the dateline ends, starts the main part of the report. The first paragraph of the news story is called the lead. It is usually written in bold or in a font larger than that used in the rest part of the story. However, this varies from publication to publication. The lead usually tells

the story in a nutshell and gives the important information, particularly the most important of the 5W's and H.

**Body:** It gives the elaborate details of the event including all the 5W's and H and the related explanations of the event. The body is the part where the actual story is narrated. The body describes what the story is all about. Usually the lead provides just the gist of the actual event, the body gives a description in order of importance of information and finally the story is drawn to an end with a concluding paragraph, probably threading the important parts of the story or giving a general conclusion.

Of all these elements, the most powerful element is the lead. Because it is the lead or intro that leads one individual into the news story. So, let us now discuss the qualities of good introduction:

- The 'intro' is the most important part of any news story. It should be direct and attention-grabbing. It should contain the most important aspects of the story. The details are covered later. It should arouse the interest of the reader or listener, and be short. Normally it should be one sentence of not more than 20 words for print media, and fewer for radio and television.

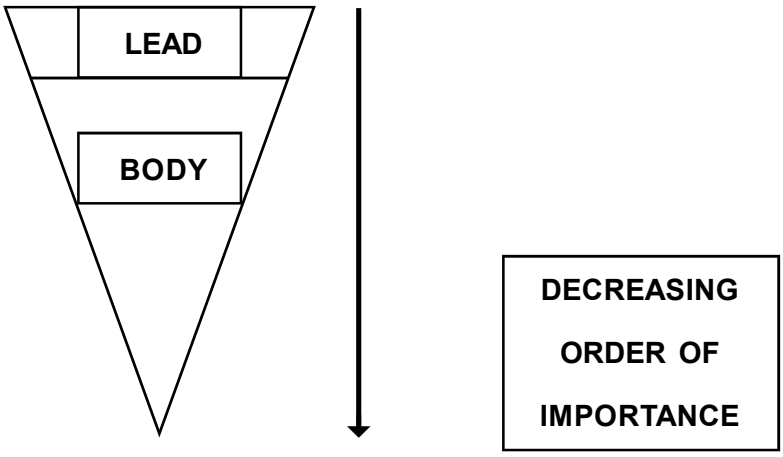
- The intro should be based on the most newsworthy aspect of the story, the essence of the story, the sharpest angle of the story. Hence the intro should be kept short (ideally around 40 words), uncluttered and relevant to the main story. The intro should make the reader want to read the rest of the story. To write an intro, you must first decide what makes the story a news. There may be several things which are newsworthy in the story. But, you have to identify and decide which is the most important or the sharpest angle of the story- it is at this point that your professional skills will face the test. If you pass the test, we can say you have written a good intro.

  In this way, your readers or listeners will be provided with the most important information straight away. Even if they stop reading or listening after the first one or two sentences, they will still have an idea of what the story is about.

- Another point to note is that you should not try to give too much detail in the intro. The six main questions which journalists try to answer are– Who? What? Where? When? Why? And How? and these will need to be answered in your news story, but all of them need not to be answered in the intro.

**The Inverted Pyramid style**

News stories are constructed in the **Inverted Pyramid style** in order of importance. This is a formula used by all media organization. Inverted Pyramid style is mostly applicable to hard news stories and most hard news stories follow this structure religiously. However, on rare occasions feature stories and other soft stories can be written in this style as well. In this style the most important points of a story are told in the beginning, that is, in the lead itself, followed by the body in which the rest of the relevant information are presented in descending order of interest or order of importance. Of course in this style there is no conclusion. The most important or interesting facts are arranged in the lead or immediately after the lead and the least important points are narrated in the end.




A news story is expected to follow the principle of “5 W’s and H”. And according to the Inverted Pyramid structure, the lead or intro contains the most important of the 5 Ws. The less important Ws and the H is answered in the body. In the process of writing the news care has to be taken that

once the intro captures the essence, rest of the questions are to be addressed in the following parts of the story. If these questions are not addressed adequately the reader/viewer/listener will not get his or her curiosity fully satisfied:

Generally this standard technique is followed while writing the news. If the news is to be classified in form of straight and interpretative reporting then, it can be said that the first four Ws- Who, What, When and Where- reflect the hard facts of the story (straight news or the hard news) and while answering the- Why and How -an element of interpretation is introduced. In this context it is important to mention that contrary to the "hard news" the concept of "soft news" pertains more to the background information and it attempts to capture not only the event but also the process that goes behind the happening of an event.

**The concept of "soft news"** is also associated with the emergence of infotainment when all news, at times, are treated as "soft" to the extent of entertaining. In nutshells, we can say that hard news is "event- centric" while the soft news is "process centric"; hard news is 'hard event' and soft news can be a feature capturing human angle of the event. Another differentiation can also be that hard news are spot news or breaking news, because the news organizations break out the news as soon as it happens, without delaying.

**How to Write the Copy**

Now that we have learnt about the structure of a news story, let us now deal with actual news writing, which is, in journalistic terms, called 'writing the copy' or 'copy writing'. If we understand the basic principles for writing each of the elements that make a news story, we will be able to write the entire news story easily and with confidence. So, let us deal with them one by one.

**Principles of News Writing:**

**Headline:**

The headline has to be written keeping in mind that it not only introduces and summarizes the news story, but also serves the purpose of attracting

the reader's attention. As such it has to be crisp and precise must clearly give an appropriate perception of the story, and should also convey the maximum meaning by using the least number of words. Here are a few basic rules for writing good headlines:

1. Build the headline around a strong verb
2. Avoid articles and helping verbs like a, an, the, is are, were etc.
3. Never use the feel of the past. Use present tense and future tense Use active voice. It helps cut out extra words and also helps give the feel of the present.
4. Do not over abbreviate. Although headlines permit limited space, do not in any case use arbitrary or rare abbreviations.
5. Mention the subject in the headline wherever it is known. If the name is known, then use the name, otherwise another title that identifies the subject.
6. When certain parts of direct speech are significant enough to be used in the headline, then it is put in quotes. Unlike the use of double quotes in the main body of the news story, in the headline, only single quotes are used.
7. The 'period' or 'full stop' is not used at the end of the headline.
8. The headline should always try to summarize the story and highlight the most important/striking element in it.
9. While attempting to write attractive/smart headlines, clarity of information should not be compromised.

**Byline/ Credit Line**:

Different newspapers follow different rules for writing the byline or credit line depending on their own **style book**. Credit lines within the same newspaper may also vary. Some of the common styles are – 'by a staff reporter', 'from a staff reporter', 'from a correspondent', 'by our special correspondent', 'by our reporter', 'from our correspondent', 'by Manosh Das', 'from Bikram Mitra' etc. Some newspapers omit the words 'by', 'from' etc. They simply write 'our correspondent', 'Manosh Das', 'Bikram Mitra' etc.

Usually, it is placed on the left hand side of the report, below the headline. In some cases it is kept left aligned, while sometimes it may be aligned center above the first paragraph.

**Dateline:**

In almost all cases, the dateline has two parts — the place and the date. The place comes first, and then comes the date. For instance, 'Guwahati, April 7'. However, some newspapers now-a-days have started omitting the dateline also, or only mentioning the place in the dateline. This is done mainly in case of feature news or other soft news stories where the time element may not be very significant. It is also done when there are multiple editions of the same paper where the news item may be carried on a different date.

**Lead**:

Usually the lead should possibly be containing all the elements-five Ws and an H. However, in some cases when it is impossible to club all the elements in the lead then the rest of the elements should be carried in the next paragraph. But the reporter must try to include as many elements as possible in the first paragraph itself. If the incident is big in terms of effect and importance then it becomes difficult to incorporate all the elements in the lead itself, as it may end up cluttering of the lead. In such a situation, the body should deal with the rest of the elements, mostly the 'why' and 'how' elements.

However, when it comes to detailing the event in the body of the news story then the inverted pyramid style is followed invariably, where the more important points are told in the beginning, followed by the lesser important details.

Therefore, in a way, the lead summarizes the story in three to four sentences. Ideally, the lead should not contain more than 30 to 40 words, within which the summary of the event should be given. And within those 30 to 40 words the lead should attempt to contain all the five Ws and an H as much as possible. Otherwise normally the 'how' element is carried forward to the following paragraphs in the body as it deals with detailing of the story.

**Body:**

As stated earlier, the body is the middle part of a story and it deals with the detailing of events. After having summarized the story in the lead, still many relevant points are left to be elaborated regarding the story which the readers might be interested to know about. And this is done in the body part.

Similar to the lead, the body is designed using the inverted pyramid style. That is, playing down the facts in chronological order of importance and relevance. The most necessary aspects are highlighted in the beginning of the body followed by the lesser essential facts, in a descending order.
However, since the body deals with the description of the event, most of the readers get wary of reading the whole detail and skip to other news item, having skimmed through the lead. But a clever writer would know how to retain the interest of the readers until the last line of the story. For that the writing should be interesting and beautifully treated so that the readers find it hard to leave it half way through. Also the reporter should always attempt to say more with fewer words due to space restriction in newspapers.

One has to remember that one basic feature that differentiates news from other write ups is its language. Here are a few very basic guidelines to be followed in case of the language of news.

1. Always use very simple language and short sentences.

2. Avoid the use of complicated words, metaphors, figures of speech, adjectives and clichés. Explain technical jargons.

3. Write in active voice wherever possible. It makes sentences shorter and direct.

4. Spell numerals up to 9 and beyond that write in numerals.

5. Identification that follows a name, viz., age, address, job description or other information are to be set off by paired commas. Honorific titles like Mr., Mrs., Dr. etc are not to be used.
6. While reproducing speech directly, place it within double quotes unlike in the headline where it is placed in single quotes. Sometimes you can write full sentences in direct speech or also write just significant words or phrases in direct speech.

7. The time element in a news story is very important. News stories about events that have already taken place are written in the past

tense. As such they use active verbs like *elected, injured, killed, damaged, awarded* etc. or passive verbs *like was elected, was injured, was killed, was damaged, was awarded* etc.

**8.** Present tense is often used in order to emphasize timeliness. E.g. *Refusing to lie down, Avian Flu, that bounced back in parts of West Bengal for the second time in a month, broke out in Jalpaiguri district prompting the aurhorities today to order mass culling.*

**9.** In stories where the actual time of an event is not known or is not important, the present perfect form of the verb is used. *For example, has been named, has said, has announced* etc.

**10.** For news stories that speak about events that will take place in the future are expressed by the use of the auxiliary verb will – *will come, will speak, will arrive etc.*



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – B

1. What are the main parts of a news story?
2. What is the significance of the
    a. Headline
    b. Credit line
    c. Dateline
    d. Lead
3. Explain the following:
    a. Inverted Pyramid Style
    b. Pyramid Style
4. Which style of writing is used for news writing?
5. Which part of the news story contains the maximum and the most important information?
6. Mention five important points to be followed while writing headline.
7. Mention five important points to be followed while writing a news story.



**ACTIVITY – C**

**1. Develop a news story from the points given below. The news story should be complete with all the different elements and following all the principles of news writing.**

- Road accident on highway
- 4.30 pm, Dec 6
- Head-on collision between truck and over speeding motor cyclist
- Motor cyclist dead on the spot
- Truck lost control and stopped after hitting a tree. Front part of truck damaged.
- Truck driver badly injured but alive, taken to hospital.

## 5.7 OBJECTIVITY AND AUTHENTICITY OF NEWS

Journalism is a profession of news and news is a serious business. Newsmen, therefore, are required to present facts as they happen without tampering or adding any personal views or opinions. News means factual presentation of information without being judgmental. Objectivity is of prime importance in journalism. Objectivity in reporting and objectivity in news presentation is a virtue that every professional in this field should strive to achieve. One needs to remain cautious and well guarded against any kind of personal bias or opinions that might creep in while dealing with news.

The reporter has to remain more objective while reporting. Because when an incident occurs, it is the reporter who is sent first to the field to collect information. He not only gathers first hand information at the field, but also interviews people who have probably witnessed the incident and investigates by going deeper into the event in the pursuit of unearthing any hidden facts. Therefore, it is expected that the reporter does not temper with facts and figures and also remains cautious against biased opinions of the interviewees. He or she should not, at any cost, let his/her personal opinion to be reflected in the report.



**Editorial:**
The newspaper's opinion and comment on current news published every day along with the news.



**Editorial Page:**
Page which carries the editorial along with articles features and letters to the editor. Also known as Edit Page.

There are specific columns in the newspaper such as the **editorial page** where comments or views of writers find place. If the reporter wants to give any personal judgment on any event he or she can very well write an opinionated piece for the editorial page. The reporter should not inter-mix news and views while making his report. If the reporter deviates, ethically, from his objectivity, the image of the newspaper gets diluted. Therefore, the reporter should strive to attain complete objectivity in reporting.

However, it may not always be possible for the reporter to remain absolutely unbiased or objective. As a human being, the reporter is vulnerable to various kinds of emotional as well as professional hazards, and can easily fall victim to subjectivity. And more often than not the reporter's personal opinion or bias is reflected in the newspaper. On some such occasions, the reporter's authenticity and even the reputation of the entire newspaper might be at stake. Nevertheless, the reporter should, as much as possible, try to achieve objectivity in his work.

Sometimes it may happen that when the reporter is investigating a particular happening and requires views of other people who may have been witness to that particular incident, the other person may try to pass his own judgment. In such cases the reporter should always check and cross check information, probably verify it from other sources so that the readers receive the truth and only the truth. Thus, objectivity is maintained at any cost.
Being objective also helps in being authentic. Facts are supposed to be authentic information. If the reporter, or for that matter any person in the news business, strives to achieve maximum objectivity, then this, in turn, also helps in being authentic as far as information is concerned. Facts are sacred in journalism. So the journalist should not try to dilute it by mixing it with personal opinions.

In today's era of profit driven media domain, there is an increasing tendency of the media organizations to try and influence the presentation of facts or news. The owners of the media houses always look at profit while dealing with news. They do not want to sacrifice their sources of profit generators by writing against them, even if they have proper proof of their involvement in any kind of mischievous activities. The media organizations may also have a favored brigade of people in the society, whom they do not want to

offend at any cost, crucifying the concept of objectivity. On the other hand, the news organizations may also attempt to nullify the image of the people who do dot come under their good book by writing maliciously against them. This kind of action on the part of the organizations sends a very bad message across to the people and in the long run there is every possibility of losing faith in the society.

Therefore, objectivity and authenticity are the virtues that every media organizations and also the professionals working in this field should try to achieve if they are looking for long time sustenance in the field.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS- D**

1) What is Objectivity in news?

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2) How can the authenticity of a news item be ascertained. In a media house, whose responsibility it is to ensure that the news which are carried are authentic?

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## 5.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have been introduced to the basic concepts of news. Let us quickly recapitulate these concepts once.

- News is a true account of events, happenings and incident. News is something which has an immediate value for the larger segment of the society.
- There are some basic qualities by which we can identify news. They include prominence, proximity, disaster, progress, impact, importance etc.

- There are two types of news, hard-news and soft-news. A news item which states plain, simple facts as it has happened is called hard news. Features, editorials, articles, etc fall under the category of soft news. Reactions and views are included in soft news apart from the plain facts. Human interest is an important concern in soft news.
- A news report should basically have six basic elements-who, what, when, why, where and how, popularly called 5 W's and 1 H.
- News sources can be primary or secondary, official or unofficial.



## 5.9 FURTHER READINGS


- **Journalists Handbook**, *M. V. Kamath, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi*
- **Professional Journalism,** *M. V. Kamath*
- **Handbook of Journalism and Mass Communication**, *V B Agarwal and V S Gupta, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi*




## 5.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - A**

1) News is information about an event that happens in the society, which affects the lives of the people or has the tendency to affect the lives of the people, directly or indirectly, or has immediate value for the people at large.

2) News values are the qualities by the presence of which an event qualifies as news. They are the basic characteristics of any news item.

   The news values are- Timeliness, importance, conflict, Relevance, proximity, prominence, impact or consequence, progress, disaster, human interest and novelty.

3) i) Yes
   ii) No

iii) Yes
iv) Yes
v) No
vi) Yes
vii) No
viii) Yes
ix) No
x) Yes

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - B**

1) A news item which states plain, simple facts as it has happened. It usually answers the basic questions of 5W's and H. On the other hand, reactions and views are included in soft news apart from the plain facts. Features, editorials, articles, etc fall under the category of soft news. Human interest is an important concern in soft news.

2) Spot news or breaking news.

3) 5Ws- Who, What, Where, When, Why
H- How.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - C**

1) News source means the contacts or the sources from which a news reporter gets valuable information for news.

It is important for a reporter to have a good network of reliable sources because news can happen anywhere, but it is not possible for a reporter to be present at all places at all times. Moreover, it may not be possible for the reporter to have direct access to all places. So reporters usually build up some contacts in important places like govt. departments, secretariat, court, police stations, hospitals etc so that they can regularly get information about what is happening there.

2) The different criteria by which one can judge source credibility are- previous reliability, conformability, proximity, motive, content readibility and believe ability.

## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - D

**1)** The main parts of a news story are – headline, dateline, credit line/ byline, lead, body and conclusion.

**2)**

a. **Headline:** The significance of a headline is great. The headline identifies the reader's area of interest and introduces, precedes and summarizes a news story. Most people merely glance at the newspaper headlines and arrive at judgements based on this. The headline is that part of a news story which first catches the eye of the reader.

b. **Byline/ Credit line:** The byline or the credit line identifies the source of the story.

c. **Dateline:** The dateline indicates the date on which the event took place and on which the reporter had filed the story and the place from which the reporter had filed the story.

d. **Lead:** The lead serves as the intro to the news story.The lead usually tells the story in a nutshell and gives the important information, particularly the most important of the 5W's and H.

**3)**

a. **Inverted Pyramid style**: It is the style of writing used for writing news stories. In this style the most important points of a story is told in the beginning that is in the lead itself, followed by the body in which the rest of the relevant information are presented in descending order of interest or order of importance.

b. **Pyramid Style**: It is the classic style for academic writing. It starts by laying the foundations. It starts with less significant details and builds up the story towards a climax leaving the most important information for the end. It is exactly the opposite of Inverted Pyramid Style.

**4)** Inverted Pyramid Style

**5)** The Lead

**6)** 5 important points to be remembered while writing 'headline' are:

a. Build the headline around a strong verb

b. Drop articles and helping verbs like a, an, the, is, are, were

etc. wherever possible

c. Try to avoid the feel of the past. Use present tense and future tense

d. Use active voice. It helps cut out extra words and also helps give the feel of the present.

e. Do not over abbreviate. Although headlines permit limited space, do not in any case use arbitrary or rare abbreviations.

**7)** 5 important points to be remembered while writing a news story are:

**I.** Always use very simple language and short sentences.

**II.** Avoid the use of complicated words, metaphors, figures of speech. Explain technical jargons.

**III.** Write in active voice wherever possible. It makes sentences shorter and direct.

**IV.** Spell numerals up to 9 and beyond that write in numerals.

**V.** The time element in a news story is very important. News stories about events that have already taken place are written in the past tense. As such they use active verbs like elected, injured, killed, damaged, awarded etc. or passive verbs like was elected, was injured, was killed, was damaged, was awarded etc.

## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - E

1) In news, objectivity is presentation of news as it has happened without the addition of any colour or personal opinion to it, so that the audience is left to form their opinion and an opinion is not imposed on the audience.

2) Authenticity of a news item can be ascertained in the following ways-

- Collecting first hand information instead of relying on rumors.
- Taking the information from reliable and credible source only.
- Checking and cross- checking the given information with other sources also.

In a media house, the entire news team is responsible for ensuring the authenticity of the news. It includes the reporter, the sub-editor, the editor and in case of radio and TV, the news producer and to a certain extent the news presenters also have to bear a part of the responsibility.



## 5.11 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

1. “When a dog bites a man it is not news, when a man bites a dog it is news” – discuss.
2. What do you mean by the sources of news? Briefly discuss various sources of news.
3. Explain the concept of news value.
4. What are the basic differences between hard news and soft news?
5. What is the importance of objectivity and authenticity in news?

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