UNIT – 4 : NEWS

UNIT STRUCTURE

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4.1. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- define news
- explain the types of news
- define sources of news
- explain the structure of a news story
- discuss news writing
- define 'objectivity' and 'authenticity' of news

4.2. INTRODUCTION

The recent time has witnessed a kind of news revolution. News has acquired increasingly important place in the wake of the emergence of a 'global village' by which is meant a net-worked world. The emergence of new technologies

has facilitated the instant flow of news across the world. Hence, we can see the proliferation 24 - hour television news channels and ever expanding daily newspapers and target-specific magazines. Radio has shown the highest growth during 2008 but the government has not yet permitted news to be broadcast on private channels. Radio news is still confined to the domain of All India Radio.

It is important to develop a comprehensive understanding of the different aspects and concepts of news. This will help you become better journalists/ media professionals. In order to develop journalistic skills you will need to know more the various aspects of news. After going through this unit, you will be able to acquire clarity on basic concepts of news.

4.3. CONCEPT OF NEWS

News is a term that we are very much familiar with. And interestingly, over the years most of us have developed such a relationship with this concept that we have become somewhat ‘addicted’ to the media, whether print or electronic, to know the news of the events that occurs around us and across the world. The morning newspaper has become a necessity like the morning cup of tea. Don’t you feel somewhat restless and uneasy if you fail to get the newspaper early in the morning? After the emergence of 24x7 (24 hour in a day and 7 days in a week) concepts of news we are curious to know what has happened at any point of time convenient to us and again there are the days of major events when we want news update throughout the day.

News is a happening which is new and of interest to a good number of people. It is presumed that most of the major news items would be of common interest but there are some news items of special interest for some people only.

We all know that there are hundreds and thousands of events that occur every day, every hour in the world but only a few of them make it to the news. The prevailing news concepts define the newsworthiness of an event. Again, every news organisation receives large number of news and it uses only the selected few. A large number of news items are rejected because of the lack of space and appeal. Sometimes they also do not fall within the

parameters of the news concepts of a news organisation. The newspaper or news channel offices the world over are flooded with so many hundreds of news items with varying amount of uniqueness and novelty value in them. But it is impossible to publish or broadcast all of them as there is limited amount of space in the bulletins and newspapers. So, only a handful of them are actually picked up for publication or broadcasting/ telecasting after a thorough selection is exercised, leaving out the majority in the process.

Now, let us go for a few definitions from experts regarding what is News. It will make it easier for you to understand the concept of News better.

4.3.1. Definition of news

It needs to be mentioned at the outset that it is quite difficult to provide an all-encompassing definition of News as majority of the definitions do not cover all the criteria involved with news. Another fact is that the outlook of the people towards the concept of news has been changing with the passage of time and definitions formulated earlier need to be refined or redrafted again and again in the light of the new developments taking place in the modern times.

You should remember that one of the key elements of news is unusualness. When everything goes on normally, there is no news in it; but the moment something unexpected happens, the news is born. So we can say that the gap between “How things work” and “How things are supposed to work” is the news.

Only when something happens which is not normal, it generates a good amount of interest among the people – the intended masses or the targeted audiences.

Now the question that may arise in our mind is how we consider something as interesting and new for all the people when we read a particular newspaper or watch a specific TV channel.

Yes, it is true that what is interesting for some people may not be so for all. But the underlying principle is that the news items in the newspaper or TV bulletin should be of such nature that is of interest to the maximum possible number of people.

Besides, there are a few other characteristics which a news item must contain. These are: freshness of an event and its immediate reporting to the audience, how relevant is the news to the people of the place where it is published or broadcast. Another important point to consider regarding news is that local news has equal importance as the national news.

An event will lose its value if not reported with the minimum loss of time. Otherwise, more the delay more will it lose its news value and it will become stale. So, timeliness is another defining factor of news.

A few examples will give you a clear idea about news. An accident, fire incident, natural disaster, a new weapon defense system developed by our indigenous science and technology research institutions, a discovery or a scientific invention which may have far-reaching impacts upon human lives etc. - all these are apt to make news.

From here we can attempt a simple definition of news. News is something which affects directly or indirectly the lives of the majority of the people in a society. News also possesses significant values for them. To further elaborate the point we can say news is a report of any current event, idea or problem which interests a large number of people.

Apart from the attributes discussed while defining the news, it is also important to understand the factors that play a key role in evaluating the newsworthiness of an event. We have already discussed that timeliness and uniqueness are two key elements by which we can decide some events as newsworthy. Apart from these factors the target audience of a particular news organisation also plays a role as per their preferences and tastes.

The impact or consequence of an event is also a key factor in evaluating the importance of an event and its newsworthiness. It is said that 'near is dear' so, the proximity factor also acquire extra importance. An event in Guwahati is more important for a newspaper published from Guwahati than for a newspaper published from, say, Lucknow and vice- versa.

Again, the newsworthiness also depends on who are the people involved in the event. More prominent people involved means more important is the event. There is again the crucial factor of context. The news value depends on what is being said in what context. For example a statement of the Prime Minister in a particular context may be big news while the same statement

in some other situation may not be of that importance.

There are some events which may have specific information value for a section of the audiences. For example, a news item regarding awarding of fellowships in journalism has an informational value only for the students of journalism.

Lastly every news organisation is governed by certain news values. Newspaper editors and owners try to develop standards of value for determining which events and issues are newsworthy, and, accordingly decide as to what space is to be given to such theme in the newspaper. News values differ from community to community, country to country and from news organisation to news organisation.

4.3.2 Types of News

In a general classification there can be **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 is 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?



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.

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.



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 and features. Also known as Edit Page.

4.3.3. Sources of News

Every bit of information in a news story has to be attributed to a source but in some situations the reporter may himself or herself be the source of information if he or she is a direct witness to the event. But the major chunk of news reporting is based on sources (secondary information) and it is vital to have a reliable source and the source has got to be competent enough to give information on the subject in hand. Here comes the role of **Attribution.** Attribution is stating who has said something. Attribution is essential in all the media, including radio and television. Journalists attribute a statement to somebody so that the readers or the listeners can know who is speaking or where the information in the story comes from. You can use attribution for both spoken and written information, so that you attribute information gathered from interviews, speeches, reports, books, films or even other newspapers, radio or television stations.

How is it that some media organisation scores over others because of the quality of news coverage and exclusive news stories. It is the reporters and the correspondents who make all the difference between a good coverage and a shoddy one. A reporter gets good and exclusive news stories only if

he or she has a variety of reliable and highly placed contacts. Some of the news sources are common for all the reporters, such as, press conference, news briefings, public meetings, radio and television channels, newspapers, magazines, seminars and other functions, etc.

Even while reporting such events there may be difference between one reporter and another. One reporter may introduce a new angle or perspective while reporting such events. But the reliable contacts are the sources of exclusive news stories. Such sources make a reporter and news organization different.

Let us discuss how a reporter presents a report on something without being present on the occasion. We know that every minute of each day something newsworthy is happening somewhere around us, in the country and in the world.

A journalist has to get information on those events and present it to the varied audiences. But a reporter may not be a witness to those events and has to depend on secondary sources of the information. So, when someone or something provides the reporter with information, we call them a source.

Sources are very important if you want to report on events or issues and explain it to your audience. Reporters try to work as much as possible from their own observations, but this is often not possible. Some events or issues are over before the journalist gets there. The reporters who only report what they see can miss much of the news unless they have sources to tell them of more details or other aspects which are out of sight.

Reporters have to deal with facts; so it is important that the sources you use for writing stories can give you accurate information about what happened. But just as there are lots of different news events, so there are many different sources of information. Some of them will give you very accurate information and we call these sources reliable (because we can rely on what they say). Others are less reliable, but still useful, while some others can hardly be trusted at all. The main thrust for judging the sources of information should be on their reliability.

You must always try to give precise facts and attributed opinion. If you cannot do that, you can use phrases like “It is believed that ...” or “It appears that ...”. It is better to do this than to leave your readers/viewers/ listeners believing

that what you have said is a proven fact.

Often the source is someone at the centre of the event or the issue. We call such people **primary sources**.

Written sources mean the information that is already in the public domain. However, just because the information is printed, it does not mean that it is reliable. With typewriters, computers and modern technology, it is relatively easy to produce printed material. You must look at who has produced the document. Are they in a position to know enough about the topic and have access to the reliable facts? Do they have a reputation for reliability?

This is especially important with information on the Internet. Anyone can put information onto the Internet and unless you know how trustworthy they are you cannot judge the reliability of what they write.

Secondary sources are also those people who do not make the news, but who pass it on. The official police report of an incident or comments by someone's press officer can be called secondary sources. Secondary sources are not usually as reliable as primary sources.

Most eyewitnesses should be treated as secondary sources by reporters because, although they may be able to tell what they think they have seen, they are often not trained for such work and can be very accurate.

You have to assess the reliability of the secondary sources and, if necessary, tell your readers, viewers or listeners where the information came from.

There are three levels of attribution:

(a) On the record, which means you can use both their words and their name;

(b) Non-attributable, which means you can use the information, but not the source's name; and

(c) Off the record, which means you cannot use either the information or the source's name.

Sources of news mean those potential places or people where there is the possibility of generating an interesting news story. In an informal classification sources may be divided into following two categories:

I. **Personal sources** are those with which the reporter develops a close personal relationship and from which he can get important news from

time to time whenever something happens or is about to happen. These sources are cultivated over a period of time and it is a relationship of trust between the source and the reporter.

II. Official or impersonal sources are the ones from whom the news organization is anyway going to get the news items. Major chunk of news stories originate from the official sources. Some of such sources may be common, such as, official press releases, statements, press conferences, public meetings etc. but exclusive news stories only originate from exclusive sources of a reporter.

However, you should always keep in mind that as far as positive news stories are concerned the source is more than willing to give the information. The story is bound to benefit the source or the organisation the source represents. Hence it is imperative to question the source; to grill if needed; and try to get that what is being concealed rather than confining to what is being revealed. Remember "what is being revealed is not such big news as compared to what is being concealed."

But when there is something wrong and the organization may be shown in a negative light these sources may refuse to provide any information as it will not have a positive impact on the organization. The professional skills of a reporter are tested in such situations. This is because when the formal or official sources refuse to cooperate, the reporter must have already developed such a relationship and rapport with the sources that they won't mind divulging the information to him, even if it is negative in nature.

The sources can also be identified on the basis of: (a) who are directly affected by the problem? (b) who are directly involved in the problem? (c) who are directly involved in the dealing with the problem? (d) who are indirectly affected and who are not involved, but aware of the problem? Besides, who are inspecting the problem on behalf of the public.

First of all, one has to start with getting familiar with the sources and then to develop the personal relationship and rapport and finally to win the trust of the source, so that the source may feel confident on the journalist's ability to present the facts properly and will not compromise with or endanger the source's official position.



LET US KNOW

Some Interesting 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.' *– Gloria Borger*



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS- A

1) Attempt a definition of news in your own language.
2) Which of the following news items will be relevant for news media in Assam. Tick Yes or No.
   - Indian Prime Minister's visit to Bhutan (Yes/ No)
   - Links in the insurgency activities of North-East with others in India (Yes/ No)
   - IPL T20 league match (Yes/ No)
   - HSLC exam paper is leaked (Yes/ No)
   - Unusually high pass percentage in HSLC and HSSLC (Yes/ No)
   - Flyover inaugurated in Guwahati and Dibrugarh (Yes/ No)
   - Major earthquake in China and Myanmar (Yes/ No)
   - Cotton College students' union elections held (Yes/ No)
3) What do you mean by attribution? What are the three levels of attribution?
4) What is source in news? Explain primary and secondary sources of news.
5) Why is it important to cultivate sources for news?
6) Explain what is hard news and soft news.



ACTIVITY- A

1) Watch the news bulletins of one or two TV channels for 10 / 20 days regularly. Make a list of the news items given in each of them. How many of these do you feel are interesting for a majority of the people and how many of them may be interesting to a lesser number of people.
2) Again out of this same exercise find out how many news items are of local importance and how many of them have issues not directly linked to us.
3) Regularly read two newspapers – one English and the other in a regional language and compare the lead news items for 20 days. Are the lead news items in both of them almost the same or otherwise. Note down whatever you have found.
4) Read today's newspaper and identify:
   a. 5 hard news items.
   b. 5 soft news items

4.4 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.

4.4.1 Structure of a News Story

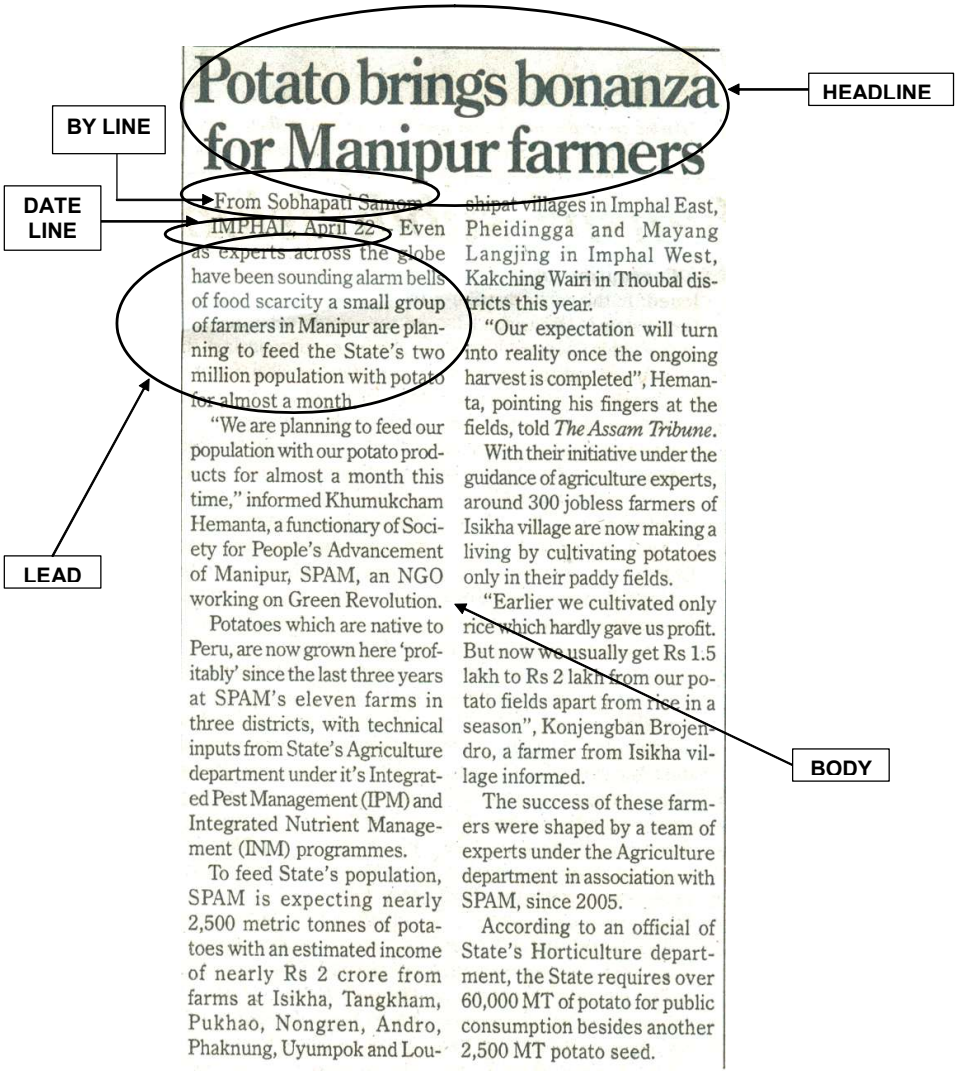
In the most basic sense, a news report has the following elements:

- ✓ 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.



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 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

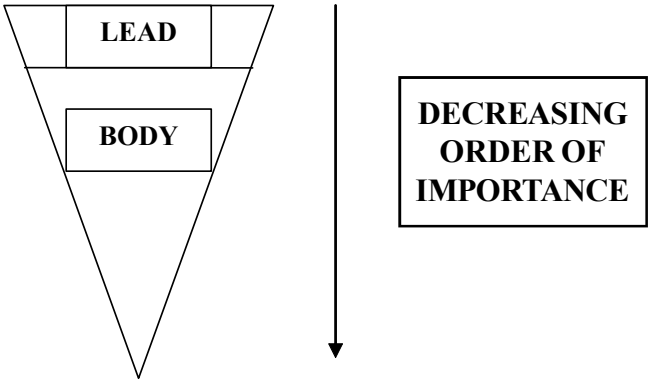
newsworthy in the story. But, you have to identify and decide which is the most important or the sharpest angle of the story- it is at this point that your professional skills will face the test. If you pass the test, we can say you have written a good intro.

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 - Who? What? Where? When? Why? And How? - will all need to be answered in your news story, but all of them need not to be answered in the intro.

4.4.2 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.

4.4.3 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.



Style Book: A booklet or list of rules stating a newspaper's preference, where there are choices, of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, abbreviations and use of numerals

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. Say, *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 – B

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.

4.5 OBJECTIVITY, IMPARTIALLY AND AUTHENTICITY OF NEWS

In the previous section we have explained that the duty of a journalist is to present the facts and figures as well as the happenings exactly as they are — nothing less nothing more. This is called Objectivity which means stating only what is true and to the point devoid of anything extra which are not directly linked to the event being reported. Mass media is a highly powerful instrument of influencing people. So a media person must do his or her best to present the things in the right perspective so that no confusion, controversy or sensation is created. Otherwise there will be far-reaching implications.

Objectivity, is not forcing your own personal opinions on the news. The opposite of objectivity is subjectivity. Impartiality means not taking sides on an issue where there is a dispute. Impartiality also includes presenting all sides of an argument fairly, what we call balance.

Even if you have strong feelings about an issue, you must not use the news to put over your own arguments; you must not try to give extra time or better coverage to the people you agree with and less time or worse coverage to those you disagree with.

For the good journalist, objectivity and impartiality are the two sides of the same coin. If you can be objective and control your personal feelings on an issue, you can also be even-handed in your treatment of all sides.

Although impartiality or bias can enter all areas of journalism, the greatest dangers lie in communal and ethnic conflicts when people have very strong feelings that can lead to conflict and to bias in reporting the issue.

The same general principles which govern objectivity can also help you to be impartial. Forget your personal preferences while working on a story — stand back from it and try to look at the issues through the eyes of people both for and against. That may not change your personal opinion that something is wrong, but it will help you to be fair.

If you do believe very strongly in a particular cause, you must develop two personalities - the You-at-Home and the You-at-Work - and keep them separate. Many journalists have sympathies for one or the other cause but the challenge is to keep a reputation as an unbiased journalist, not allowing their sympathy to influence their news judgment. The sympathy must be kept to the You-at-Home; the objective, impartial journalist is the You-at-Work.

Being objective is only one part of the battle against bias. The other part involves recognising when one side in a dispute is applying unfair pressure to get their case in the news (or another side is not getting its fair share of coverage). This can be obvious and easy to correct, or more subtle and much harder to put right. Fairness is the hardest to define, but it has a lot to do with avoiding bias, treating people equally and allowing people to have equal chances to do things or express themselves.

There are several ways one can allow the personal bias to destroy objectivity and impartiality in the way one handles news. You should be aware of the dangers at each stage of the process of news production, from the first decision to cover a story through to its presentation on a page or in a bulletin.

Even if you have to overcome a personal prejudice and decide to cover a story you find disagreeable, you must still take care that you are fair in your choice of sources of information. It is not fair to choose to interview an attractive personality for a cause you support but an unattractive or muddled person for a cause you oppose.

Having taken care of all these factors, media has a certain amount of social responsibility to discharge. Media also has to live up to the expectations of its being the Fourth pillar of democracy – that is being the watchdog of the government on behalf of the people.

A reporter's utmost duty is to present the facts of a happening as they have actually happened without any ambiguity.

Of course, we all know that it is quite difficult to remain 'objective' as we all have our biases; but a Journalist can be objective by being fair to those concerned with a particular news and by following the professional process of information gathering that based on fairness, completeness, and accuracy

The events have to be presented by a journalist who is part of the society whose signature, style, preferences etc. will be reflected in the writings. Yet one must do his or her best to remain as much to the point as possible.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS- C

1) What is Objectivity in news?
2) What a journalist needs to do to be objective?

4.7 LET US SUM UP

1. News is something which affects directly or indirectly the lives of the majority of the people in a society. It is a report of any current event, idea or problem which interests a large number of people.
2. Timeliness and uniqueness are two key elements by which we can decide some events as newsworthy. The impact or consequence of an event is also a key factor in evaluating the importance of an event and its newsworthiness.
3. When someone or something provides the reporter with information, we call them a source.
4. Often the source is someone at the centre of the event or the issue. We call such people primary sources.
5. Secondary sources are also those people who do not make the news,

but who pass it on. Personal sources are those with which the reporter develops a close personal relationship and from which he can get important news from time to time whenever something happens or is about to happen.

6. Official or impersonal sources are the ones from whom the news organization is anyway going to get the news items. Major chunk of news stories originate from the official sources.
7. News can be of two basic types — hard news and soft news.
8. A news story has six basic elements – headline, dateline, credit line/ byline, lead, body and conclusion.
9. Headline is that part of a news story which first catches the eye of the reader. It is the title of the news story and is the most visible element.
10. The byline or the credit line identifies the source of the story.
11. 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.
12. The first paragraph of the news story is called the lead. The lead usually tells the story in a nutshell and gives the important information, particularly the most important of the 5W's and H.
13. The body is the part where the actual story is narrated. It gives the elaborate details of the event including all the 5W's and H and the related explanations of the event.
14. 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.
15. Objectivity, impartiality and authenticity are three things a reporter must always adhere to while writing a news report.



4.8 FURTHER READINGS

1) **Journalism** — *N Jayapalan, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi.*
2) **Magazine article writing: substance and style** — *Betsy P. Graham, Holt Rinehart and Winston*

3) **Essentials of practical journalism** — *Vir Bala Agarwal, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi*

4) **News Writing –** *George A. Hough, Kanishka Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi.*

4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

A)

1) News is something new, interesting and relevant for the majority of the people in a society. It must have the capacity to influence a large number of people in the country or anywhere around the world to qualify to be called a news in the true sense of the term. It must be reported in the media on a timely basis.

2) All the are directly as well as indirectly relevant as news items for the state of Assam because all of them have some relationship and relevance to the state.

3) Attribution is stating who has said something. Every bit of information in a news story has to be attributed to a source. Journalists attribute a statement to somebody so that the readers or the listeners can know who is speaking or where the information in the story comes from.

There are three levels of attribution:

(a) On the record, which means you can use both their words and their name;

(b) Non-attributable, which means you can use the information, but not the source's name; and

(c) Off the record, which means you cannot use either the information or the source's name.

4) When someone or something provides the reporter with information, we call them a **source**.

Often the source is someone at the centre of the event or the issue. We call such people **primary sources**.

Secondary sources are those people who do not make the news, but who pass it on. The official police report of an incident or comments by someone's press officer can be called **secondary sources**. Secondary sources are not usually as reliable as primary sources.

5) Cultivation of sources for news means developing a personal rapport and relationship with the personal or individual sources in order to find out information which might be difficult to get otherwise under normal circumstances. It is important to remember that even though government officials are actually not supposed to divulge official information to journalists yet majority of news items emanate from the official sources. And this is possible only when the journalist has a close relationship with the sources.

6) When a news item states plain, simple facts, it is called hard news. When apart from the facts, opinions, views, interpretations and analysis are also voiced, it is called soft news.

B)

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.

C)

1) Objectivity in news means presenting only the facts and exactly describing what has happened in an event, nothing more nothing less. A news item must also not carry any personal comment of the journalist or the newspaper house. The responsibility of coming to a decision – whether negative or

positive should be left best to the audiences and the journalist must never assume this responsibility on his own. Otherwise the objectivity will not be there and it will be a biased news item.

2) Objectivity is important for the journalist because if he or she continues to present non objective news items, after some time his employers and the audiences will lose faith on him and his or her personal reputation will go down steeply, endangering his professional career.

It is important for the newspaper organization because if it continues presenting such news items to the audiences, people will also lose faith upon it and gradually they will stop subscribing to it causing a vital blow to its very survival.



4.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

1. What are the characteristics of an event for making it newsworthy? Explain with examples.
2. What do you mean by sources of news? Briefly discuss various sources of news.
3. What are the different parts that make a news story? Explain the significance of each.
4. Which part of a news story do you think is the most important? Give reasons for your answer.
5. Do you think that the Inverted Pyramid style is the most appropriate style for news writing? Why?
6. What is the importance of a headline in a news story?
7. A news story will be crippled without a good lead. Comment.
8. What are the basic differences between hard news and soft news?