UNIT 2  NEWS AND FEATURE AGENCIES

Structure

2.0 Objectives
2.1 Introduction
2.2 Features of a News Agency
   2.2.1 What, after all, is a News Agency?
   2.2.2 How is it Different from Newspapers?
   2.2.3 Ownership Pattern
   2.2.4 Financial Structure
   2.2.5 The Organisational Structure
   2.2.6 How an Agency Operates?
2.3 Growth of the News Agency in India
   2.3.1 India attains Independence: State of Agencies
   2.3.2 Formation of Various Indian Agencies
   2.3.3 Emergency: The Era of Samachar
   2.3.4 Growth of Language Wings
   2.3.5 Agencies Diversify to Compete
   2.3.6 Aligning the Non-aligned
2.4 Differences in Operation of News Agencies and Newspapers
   2.4.1 Basic Differences
   2.4.2 Differences in Working
2.5 Foreign Agencies in India
   2.5.1 Main Agencies Working in India
   2.5.2 How They Operate in the Country?
2.6 Feature Agencies and Services
   2.6.1 Agencies and How They Operate
   2.6.2 Syndicated Columnists
2.7 Let Us Sum Up
2.8 Glossary
2.9 Further Reading
2.10 Check Your Progress: Model Answers

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this unit is to make you aware of the working of the news agencies, and explain how they are different from newspapers.

We are sure that you are aware that the world of the Fourth Estate (the press) is incomplete without news agencies... national and international.

We expect that by the time you complete reading this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the main features of a news agency and explain how it differs from newspapers;
- enumerate the number of news agencies in the country and describe their functioning;
- pinpoint differences in the operation of newspapers and news agencies;
- describe how the foreign news agencies operate in India;
- describe the functioning of feature agencies;
- explain how some journalists become syndicated columnists.
2.1 INTRODUCTION

Since you started this course, we have been telling you of the various means of communication. You have, we are sure, already gathered that apart from various other media the press also plays a major role in educating and informing the people. In the previous unit itself, we discussed the ownership, organization and management of the press. In this unit, we now go on to news agencies and feature agencies.

News agencies form a major part of the print media, and are in fact the mainstay, without which many newspapers would find it difficult to function. Our endeavour in this unit will be to tell you how the news agencies are indispensable in the newspaper world. We will also tell you something about the working of these agencies, and explain how they are different from newspapers.

While reading your daily newspapers, you must have repeatedly come across words like 'UNI', 'PTI', 'VARTA', 'BHASHA', 'AP', 'Reuter', and so on. You may have wondered what these agencies do and how they are different from one another. We hope to clear some of these mysteries.

Activity 1

Before we proceed further, engage yourself in an activity.

a) Visit a news agency office in your area and then go to a newspaper office which may be subscribing to that news agency. In the following space write down whatever you have observed with regard to functioning in these two offices.

2.2 FEATURES OF A NEWS AGENCY

In this section, we are going to gain some knowledge about what a news agency is, what its organisational and financial pattern is, how it functions, and how it differs from a newspaper.

2.2.1 What, after all, is a News Agency?

A news agency is an organisation which collects or gathers news and supplies it to different newspapers, magazines, radio stations and television stations subscribing to its service. News gathered/reported by reporters/correspondents is sent to newspapers via electronic teleprinters or computers. These newspapers, in turn, pay a monthly subscription to use news agencies for the news they receive.

A news agency office is always buzzing with activity, since it has to serve not only the print media within the country, but also transmit news to All India Radio and Doordarshan. It also supplies news to newspapers and other agencies all over the world. Thus, the news agency works round the clock as there may be some newspapers somewhere in the world going to the press (that is about to be printed) or some radio or TV bulletin about to go on air.

2.2.2 How is it Different from a Newspaper?

You may wonder how a news agency is different from a newspaper. Having visited a news agency and a newspaper, you must have already seen that the news agency works in a completely different fashion.
Firstly, the news agency does not publish any newspaper of its own. Whatever its reporters write/report, is transmitted to the newspapers and radio and television stations. It is then up to the newspaper to use the news item sent by one news agency or that sent by another news agency, or use the report prepared by its own reporter. In fact, at times, a newspaper may even prepare an item quoting some paragraphs from one agency, and some from another agency.

The choice of what item to use will depend on which agency sends its copy faster and which agency has sent a better written copy.

Thus, there is a constant flow of news from the news agency 24 hours a day, whereas a newspaper ‘goes to sleep’ (the printing press) after midnight every night. There are two other significant differences. Every news agency report has to be attributed to a source, unlike a newspaper story. Furthermore, there will be no comments, editorializing or interpretation in a news agency report and it will be purely a factual report.

2.2.3 Ownership Pattern

We are sure that a lot of people, including perhaps yourself, think that the news agencies are owned wholly or partly by the Government. This is not so. But, one wonders then, how the agencies run a national and sometimes an international operation without substantial financial support. In other words, who owns or finances these agencies?

Well, both the main agencies the—Press Trust of India (PTI) and the United News of India (UNI)... are trusts, registered under the Registration of Societies Act. They are owned by groups of newspapers who have bought shares to run them.

These newspapers have established Boards of Directors, each headed by a Chairman, to make the policies of the respective news agencies. The Boards have representatives of prominent newspapers as well as public figures.

As you will realise, the same newspapers may be on the Boards of both PTI and UNI. But do not forget that there is a constant professional competition between the two agencies and, therefore, the Boards may take decisions on how to keep ahead of the other agency. Naturally, it would not be appropriate to have the same person sitting on both Boards. Therefore, the newspapers assign different representatives on the Boards. For example, the Editor of "The Statesman" is on the PTI Board, the newspaper’s proprietor or some other nominee will be on the UNI Board.

But apart from meeting four or five times in a year to decide on policy matters, the Boards do not interfere in the day-to-day functioning of the agencies.

2.2.4 Financial Structure

As you have already seen, various newspapers and the electronic media, apart from government departments and private entrepreneurs, buy the news from the agencies.

For this purpose, a teleprinter/computer is installed at the office of the subscriber. This is maintained by the agency, just like the telephone in your house is maintained by the Telephone Department. Thus, any repairs are carried out by technicians of the agency concerned.

The newspapers and other subscribers pay a monthly subscription fee, plus rental charges for the computer/teleprinter, apart from the installation charges paid when the subscription was first taken. The rate of subscription is determined by specific criteria like circulation of a newspaper, and it remains the same, irrespective of whether the newspaper uses the news items sent out by the agency or not.

As we said earlier, the Government does not own the agencies. But like other subscribers, the Government—All India Radio, Doordarshan, various Ministers, Ministerial offices and other governmental departments—is also a subscriber. Ultimately, the Government is the largest subscriber.

2.2.5 The Organisational Structure

As stated earlier, the Board does not interfere in the day-to-day functioning of the agency.
The agency is run by a General Manager-cum-Chief Editor, who is assisted by Deputy General Managers or Deputy Editors.

The Editorial Desk, which we loosely refer to as the Desk, is under the charge of a News Editor, while the reporting section is under the charge of a Chief of Bureau. The reporting staff is divided into two groups: the Reporters who deal with day-to-day reporting are under a Chief Reporter and the Correspondents who deal with Ministerial or Legislative reporting are under the Chief of Bureau. Thus, the Chief Reporter is also answerable to the Chief of Bureau.

Apart from this, there are the transmission, technical, administration and account, from where it is immediately sent to the subscribers. Meanwhile, one or two reporters rush to the scene, and collect whatever facts they can get from eyewitnesses and police, and then either file the story by telephone or rush back to give their stories. (All the reporters are expected to know how to type.) Thus, within two or three minutes of the phone call by the caller, the first report would go out to the world. The other reports may also be on the wire within hours.

The agencies have offices in all the state capitals, and full-time or part-time (stringers) reporters in almost all the districts. They also have correspondents in many world capitals and at the United Nations. News agencies do not generally accept contributions from freelancers unless commissioned by the agency for particular event.

The news agencies are generally the first to get wind of a news break, be it disaster, announcement, or election result. Each agency takes pride in being the first to break the news to its subscribers; thus beating the other agency. For instance, PTI was the first to break the news of former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination. Similarly, UNI was the first to report that Mr Premdas of Sri Lanka had been killed in the blast in the island country. UNI also reported the magnitude of the earthquake of September 30, 1993, to the world about an hour before PTI. The news of the Sati by Roop Kanwar which shook the nation some years ago was also highlighted by the UNI.

So fast is the functioning of the agencies that a news report on the bomb blast at the Youth Congress office in Delhi was on the teleprinters within fourteen minutes of its occurrence in September 1993.

But we will talk more about the speed at which news agencies work, and the pros and cons of this, when we talk of differences in the operations of newspapers and news agencies.

Activity 2

Prepare a questionnaire for the General Manager of a News Agency covering the following aspects of the agency:

- day-to-day functioning of the agency
- ownership pattern
- decision making procedure
- recruitment pattern and procedure
- the weaknesses which need to be strengthened.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below to answer the questions in about five to seven sentences each.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

1) List 3 ways in which a news agency differs from a newspaper.

........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
In this section, we are going to tell you something about the history and growth of the Ownershlppatterns, organisational structures and management of mass media in India

By now, you must have got a good idea of what a news agency is and how it operates. Also you must have become familiar with its management and financial structure.

In this section, we are going to tell you something about the history and growth of the mass media in India.

2) How does a news agency work out its finances?

3) Outline the organisational structure of the reporting section in a news agency.

4) Briefly trace a story filed by a reporter in a news agency from the moment a source calls in to pass on vital information, to the time the news reaches the subscriber.

5) Tick (v) the correct answers:

5.1 PTI and UNI are owned by:
   a) the government
   b) the public
   c) Reuters
   d) the newspapers

5.2 News agencies
   a) publish daily newspapers
   b) publish monthly magazines
   c) broadcast news on radio
   d) supply news to their subscribers

5.3 News agency reporters:
   a) get their news in their office
   b) receive the news on the teleprinter
   c) have to go out to collect news

2.3 GROWTH OF THE NEWS AGENCY IN INDIA

By now, you must have got a good idea of what a news agency is and how it operates. Also you must have become familiar with its management and financial structure.
Indian news agencies from their inception to the present day. We will describe the state of news agencies at the time of Independence. Further, we will tell you their development plans for the future.

As you know by now, there are two main English news agencies operating in the country—the United News of India and the Press Trust of India—and they have also established their language wings. There are a few other smaller English and Hindi news agencies too, but more of that later.

2.3.1 India Attains Independence: State of Agencies

When India attained its independence from British rule on August 15, 1947, some vestiges of the British remained behind. The news agencies operating in the country at that time were either foreign agencies with offices in India or British-owned Indian agencies.

The foreign agencies operating in India then, which are still reporting from India, include Reuter, the United Press International, the Agence France Presse etc. The Associated Press came sometime later. This structure has no doubt changed and we will discuss that later.

In addition, there were India-based news agencies like the United Press of India and the Associated Press of India, both of which had owners who were only too willing to leave the country for their homeland at the time of Independence. They soon began winding up operations.

2.3.2 Formation of Various Indian Agencies

The Government of Independent India, under Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, had begun encouraging Indians to start their own Indian news agencies, so that these would give a more balanced picture of the developmental activities going on at the time.

Encouraged by the Government, some major newspapers joined together to form a trust, and then set up independent India's first news agency, the Press Trust of India (PTI) in 1949. It took over the business of the Associated Press of India, which was in the process of winding up. The API had been a subsidiary of the Reuters.

The PTI functioned as the only agency for the next eleven years. It will surprise you to know that although both PTI and the United News of India (UNI) are professional rivals, the UNI owes its birth to PTI.

Since PTI has little competition, its working was not considered good enough for the standard of a news agency. The PTI Board of Directors felt that something needed to be done to pull it out of its lethargy. One immediate solution was that another Indian agency should be set up to compete with the PTI.

Thus the United News of India was formed in 1961 and registered under the Societies Act. Like PTI, the UNI was also lucky to inherit the assets of the United Press of India, then in the process of winding up.

The PTI had headquarters in Bombay, though the main administration continued to be in Delhi, while UNI has its head office in Delhi.

Earlier, in 1948, a Hindi news agency had come into being. Called the Hindustan Samachar, it was backed by some political and private groups. Later, in 1966, another Hindi agency, the Samachar Bharti, came into being. Although both agencies had limited subscribers confined to certain areas of the country, they functioned more or less on the same lines as PTI and UNI. Another news agency, the Asia News International (ANI) came up in the late eighties, but is yet to start all-India operations.

2.3.3 Emergency: The Era of Samachar

All the four agencies saw their ups and downs. The PTI, being the oldest, was more stable than the others. The Hindi agencies were never on a very solid ground, financially, since their inception. The UNI started gaining its strength, since 1969.

Several political events were happening in the mid-seventies, after the then Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi had signalled certain changes. Following the events that took place as a consequence of the Supreme Court judgement in an election petition against Mrs. Gandhi,
Ownership patterns, organisational structures and management of mass media in India

the Prime Minister suddenly promulgated a National Emergency in the entire country on June 25, 1975.

One of the stipulations of the Emergency was imposition of press censorship in the entire country. For the agencies, this functioned in a very special way. A Censor Office was established in the Press Information Bureau—which is the publicity wing of the government—and the news agencies were directed to send all their copy (news items typed by reporters) to this office every hour. After the Censor Officers had gone through the news items and used their red pencil to cut out what should not go, the rest was sent back, to be used.

From time to time, the Government also issued certain directives about what to report and what not to report. For example, the Government asked the news agencies to stop reporting cases relating to the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) pending in various High Courts or in the Supreme Court.

However, the Government felt that not all the agencies were following these directives, and the impression began to gain ground that one agency was less controlled than the other.

Consequently, in a surprise action, the government decided to merge the news agencies into a single unit so that it would be easier to control.

On February 16, 1976, orders were received by the agencies that all of them had ceased to exist and a new news agency called Samachar had been created. The surprise order said that the UNI and the two Hindi agencies would be shut down, and Samachar would operate from the building of the former PTI. The managerial and editing staff was also reorganised, and the topmost posts were given to the staff of the PTI.

The Hindi agencies, which were not doing well financially, welcomed this merger. However, the UNI staff felt let down. But the situation was accepted and the agency continued to work as one, under a new regime. Naturally, parity was brought in the wages of the staff, since the PTI salaries were higher than the salaries in the other agencies. For this purpose, the Government gave financial help on a tapering basis.

Late in 1977, circumstances forced Mrs. Gandhi to order General Elections, and she was thrown out of power. The Janata Party, led by Mr. Morarji Desai, was swept to power.

After the new government came to power, large sections of the staff of Samachar, mostly
belonging to the former UNI, demonstrated with the Government. After much deliberation, in April, 1978, the Government announced that Samachar would cease to exist from September, 1978 and the former four news agencies would be brought to life again.

Thus, you can see that the news agencies saw some very interesting changes in the mid-seventies.

The four news agencies came back to life in September, 1978. But the Hindi agencies, whose general income was low, began to crumble under the weight of the increased wages and higher costs.

2.3.4 Growth of Language Wings

With the two existing Hindi agencies not being able to work efficiently to meet the demands of the newspapers, the UNI in 1982 launched UNIVARTA, its Hindi wing.

Since it was a wing of UNI, it worked initially only on translated stories. However, it gradually built up its own staff for both editing and reporting.

Naturally, the emergence of a new Hindi agency further damaged the existing Hindi agencies, since the staff came mostly from Samachar Bharti and Hindustan Samachar.

A couple of years later, the PTI also started its Hindi wing, called PTI Bhasha.

Today, both the Hindi wings are serving the majority of language newspapers in the country, and the Hindustan Samachar and Samachar Bharti, are virtually shut down, though they continue to work in pockets in the country.

In May 1992, the UNI took one other step, by introducing the world’s first Urdu News Service. Thus, for the first time in the world, Urdu news is being transmitted by teleprinter/computer using Arabic script.

2.3.5 Agencies Diversify to Compete

As the agencies grew in size in terms of subscribers, it was felt that supplying the teleprinter service to the newspapers was not enough. Both the agencies felt the need to diversify, and as one came up with an idea, the other was sure to come up with another to keep up the competition. This also became necessary to keep pace with the advancing communication technology.

Thus, besides the news services, both the news agencies are now providing several other services, some of them aimed at specialised business interests.

Some of the services being given by the PTI are:

- **News Scan**: Display of news on the television screen, just like the Teletext service of Doordarshan.
- **Comscan**: Display of news of a commercial nature meant for banks and business houses on the TV screen.
- **Features**: Sent as mailer (by post) service weekly in English and Hindi on various subjects.
- **Economic Service**: Fortnightly mailers carrying news and features of a commercial nature.
- **Science Service**: Fortnightly mailer on science features.
- **Stockscan**: A national stock exchange network for display of share prices.
- **Photo Service**: The first photo wire service in the service.
- **PTI TV**: A service mainly for supplying news and features to Doordarshan. Registered as a news agency with Doordarshan.
- **NITEL**: A joint venture with the Madhya Pradesh State Electronic Transmission Ltd.
Ownership patterns, organisational structures and management of mass media in India

The UNI has not lagged behind. Apart from being the first to start the Hindi service and the Urdu service, it was also the first to earn foreign exchange by selling news abroad to the Gulf countries, Singapore and Mauritius via teleprinter and satellite. It has a separate editorial desk for these services.

Some of the other additional services of UNI are:

- **Stock Exchange Service**: Teleprinter service for business houses
- **Financial Service**: Teleprinter service for business houses
- **UNICON**: Economic mailers issued weekly
- **UNEN**: Energy Service mailers issued weekly
- **Agriculture Service**: Agriculture mailers issued weekly
- **Feature Service**: Weekly features by mailer
- **Backgrounder Service**: Weekly printed mailer on different subjects of national interest, always topical
- **UNICAN**: Display of news and commercial information on the TV Screen. As this service came after PTI, it has some new features like colour screen
- **Photo Service**: UNI was the first to introduce this
- **Unidarshan (TV)**: News and feature service for Doordarshan and other parties
- **Videotex**: An information service that provides visual information in an interactive manner, jointly with the Department of Telecommunications, the Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited and the Tele-Communications Consultants India Limited.
- **UNI Graphics**: Sent by Courier/mail

### 2.3.6 Aligning the Non-Aligned

As you are aware, India is one of the founder members of the Non-Aligned Movement, and has always played a leading part in this movement. In case you are beginning to wonder how this movement finds a place in this piece on news agencies, the answer is not difficult to find.

In the late seventies, the non-aligned countries, at one of their summits, discussed how the international news agencies and visual media were damaging the understanding amongst peoples by misrepresenting facts. It was suggested, and commonly adopted by all, that the non-aligned countries should have their own news agency. It was agreed that before such an agency could be set up, one national news agency would coordinate on behalf of each member country to present and disseminate news on behalf of a Non-aligned Newspool.

In India, this task is being performed on by the PTI on behalf of the Government. The PTI gets an annual grant from the Government for this purpose. The aim is to receive the news from other newspool member agencies and disseminate it to newspapers in the country, and to send news to other member news agencies.

### Check Your Progress 2

**Note**: i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

I) Match the following items in column A with the correct items in column B.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) PTI</td>
<td>(a) India’s first Hindi news agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) UNI</td>
<td>(b) Started in 1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Hindustan Samachar</td>
<td>(c) News agency which came first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Samachar Bharti</td>
<td>(d) Launched the world’s first Urdu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>news agency service.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II) Answer in 2 or 3 sentences each.

1) What was the rationale behind the decision to merge the four existing news agencies during the Emergency period?

   ............................................................................................................................................................

   ............................................................................................................................................................

   ............................................................................................................................................................

2) List any 3 services being provided by the PTI’s specialised department.

   ............................................................................................................................................................

   ............................................................................................................................................................

   ............................................................................................................................................................

3) List any 3 special services that the UNI provides.

   ............................................................................................................................................................

   ............................................................................................................................................................

   ............................................................................................................................................................

4) In what way had the birth of the PTI and UNI become possible?

   ............................................................................................................................................................

   ............................................................................................................................................................

   ............................................................................................................................................................

III) Tick (v) the correct answers in the given multiple choice questions.

3.1 The four news agencies were merged during Emergency to form:
   a. Reuters
   b. Samachar
   c. United News Agencies

3.2 The merger of the news agencies occurred on:
   a. June 25, 1975
   b. April, 1978
   c. February 16, 1976

3.3 The UNI started a Hindi Wing called:
   a. UNI Hindi Service
   b. Hindustan Samachar
   c. UNIVARTA
3.4 The UNI and PTI also have services catering to:

- architects
- engineers
- business houses

### 2.4 DIFFERENCE IN OPERATION OF NEWS AGENCIES AND NEWSPAPERS

By now, you must have formed a clear idea of what a news agency is, and how it functions. Now let us ask a question: Apart from the fact that news agencies collect news and send it to other newspapers, what are the other differences the agencies and newspapers have? Here, we will try and find out the answers to this question.

#### 2.4.1 Basic Difference

Well, we have already seen that a news agency works for newspapers, collecting news on their behalf. It is, in fact, financed by newspapers. Unlike newspapers which may be owned by an individual or a company, a news agency is owned by a trust jointly formed by newspapers. Unlike newspapers which may be owned by an individual or a company, a news agency is owned by a trust jointly formed by newspapers. A news agency, furthermore, does not publish any newspaper of its own.

#### 2.4.2 Differences in Working

Apart from these basic differences, there are some other differences in the working. These may be summed up as below:

1. In the first place, the news agencies work round-the-clock. Whereas, a newspaper may “go to sleep” (go for printing) after midnight or soon afterwards, the news agencies are setting and receiving news twenty four hours a day. Thus, its sub-editors, and reporters, have to be alert all the time.

2. For the news agencies, it is deadline every-minute. Since a newspaper goes to the press after midnight, a reporter knows that he has plenty of time to file his report. But a news agency reporter must file his report immediately, since he may have to catch a newspaper deadline, in India or abroad, a radio or a television bulletin. And, since there is keen competition, each agency tries to outdo the other, as we have already seen.

3. Accuracy and speed being very essential for a news agency, it becomes important that a news agency report should be crisp, precise, and to-the-point. In fact, news agencies apply the 'Inverted Triangle' principle. This means that the first paragraph gives the crux—the main gist—of a news story. The second paragraph will add more details and the third and subsequent paragraph will give details in order of diminishing importance. The aim is to answer the five Ws and the one H—what, where, when, who and why, and how—in the first two or three paragraphs.

4. Since there is no time for a news agency reporter to confirm or re-confirm facts, it is important that there is an eye on accuracy. The newspaper reporter gives a report in the morning, but has the whole day to correct any mistake. But a news agency reporter will not get another chance.

You might remember that when the Janata Dal came to power in December, 1989, a meeting of the party's Parliamentary Party had unanimously elected Mr. Devi Lal as the leader. Well, the news agencies immediately flashed that Mr. Devi Lal was to be the next Prime Minister. But you will recall that at the end of his speech, Mr. Devi Lal had pleaded that the burden should be placed on younger shoulders and had proposed Mr. V.P. Singh's name! Thus, you can see how speed can be a boon, as also a bane.

5. Because a news agency's news is considered the last word, it is necessary that every news item is attributed to a source. In other words, every news item has to be quoted from someone, unlike in a newspaper where a reporter can give his/her own version.
Proper sourcing generally results in truthful reporting.

vi) A news agency is not serving the city in which it works, but the whole nation and beyond. Therefore, its news will not be purely from a local perspective. What is more, it will often ignore a purely localised event and will prefer to report something which will be of interest to readers elsewhere. However, every newspaper devotes lots of space to local news stories, reporting the events in great detail.

vii) A news agency generally avoids publicity of commercial units. Of course, this is only a general guideline, and the decision is taken on the merit of each situation. A newspaper of course may not mind publicising an individual.

viii) A news agency always gives its news without any comment or personal opinion. This is unlike a newspaper which may be permitted not only to give a news item without a source, but also to put in reasonable comments. Objectivity is the buzzword for news agencies.

To make you understand the way in which a news agency writes a news item compared to how a newspaper does it, here is an example. We give below two styles of writing the same news:

V.P. Singh is Prime Minister

"New Delhi, December 10 (UNI) Mr. Vishwanath Pratap Singh was today elected Prime Minister of the country, after Mr Devi Lal, who had been chosen unanimously leader of the Janata Dal, proposed Mr. Singh’s name as he could not “shoulder such a heavy burden.”

In the meeting held at the Central Hall of Parliament, Mr. Devi Lal surprised everyone by first accepting the honour done to him, and then at the end of a thanks giving speech, proposing Mr. Singh’s name.

Mr. Singh’s name came as a surprise to party members, since it was known that large sections of the party were opposed to his candidature.”

Now we see the same news story as done by a newspaper correspondent:

Tau-Ji Does a Double Take
Names V.P. Singh

by Our Staff Correspondent

New Delhi, December 10: In what must have come as a surprising master stroke in politics, the Janata Dal today accepted the Raja of Manda, Mr. Vishwanath Pratap Singh, as its leader after the Haryana Tau, Mr. Devi Lal got himself elected to avoid possible defeat for Mr. Singh.

As the party wags put it, a carefully conceived plan led to the party unanimously electing Mr. Lal as its leader. But after a thanks giving speech which lasted about seven minutes and had most members tittering, the Tau did a volte face and said that his shoulders were too old to take such a heavy burden, and so he wanted to give the mantle to younger shoulders. He then left party members stupefied by proposing the name of Mr. Singh, even as Mr. Chandrashekhar looked on, dumb founded.

Party sources said this could lead to a fresh fight within the party, and signal the early end of a government which has just been brought to power.

But the drama enacted on the floors of the Central Hall of Parliament put newspapers, and especially news agency, reporters in a fix. In fact, the news agencies had already announced Mr. Devi Lal as the new Prime Minister when he backed out.”

Notice the difference in style? And see how the newspaper report is full of comment and cynicism, whereas the news agency item is a straight forward reporting of events.
Check Your Progress 3

Note:  
1) Answer in two sentences each.
2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) What is the style of writing adopted in any news agency report?

2) Which items would make news for a local newspaper and yet be of secondary importance to a news agency?

3) List the guidelines to be followed by a news agency reporter when filing a copy.

2.5 FOREIGN NEWS AGENCIES IN INDIA

Now, we know just about everything that there is to know about Indian agencies. But when we read our newspapers, we find a mention of 'Reuters', and initials like AFP, AP, UPI, and others. So we must learn how these are operating in India.

2.5.1 Main Agencies Working in India

Before we learn how the foreign news agencies operate in our country, it is necessary to know which news agencies are still operating in India.

Reuters is a private British news agency named after its founder, Paul Julius Von Reuter. It was founded in 1851.

Associated Press (AP) is a news agency that was established in New York in 1848.

Agence France Presse (AFP) was established in Paris in 1944.

United Press International (UPI) was founded in the United States in 1907. It has been facing financial problems and so has restricted its operations.

Other agencies working in India include Tass of Russia, DPA of Germany, and the Italian ANSA.

A new entrant is the India Abroad News-Service. This is owned by Mr. Gopal Raju, a non-resident Indian in New York, who brings out a newspaper called 'India Abroad' from that city.
2.5.2 How They Operate in the Country

Soon after the country became independent, it was decided that the foreign agencies will not operate directly in the country: they had to enter into collaboration with Indian agencies as subscribers. Thus, Indian newspapers get news transmitted by AP or DPA through UNI, and that transmitted by AFP, Reuters or UPI through PTI. Similarly, while they do have their own bureaus here, they depend mostly on the Indian agency they subscribe to and then add their own background before transmitting any news abroad. However, some news agencies have now sought permission to operate directly, especially with regard to commercial news, and this is being considered by the government.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Answer each of the following questions in one sentence each.
   ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Name the foreign news agencies that have collaborated with UNI.

2) Which foreign news agencies have entered into collaboration with PTI for transmitting their news items?

3) How does a foreign news agency report reach the columns of our newspapers?

4) Name an Indian-owned foreign news agency.

5) Which place serves as the headquarters for the (a) Agence France Presse (b) PTI?

2.6 FEATURE AGENCIES AND SERVICES

Having learnt a lot about news agencies, it is also important that we know something about the feature agencies in the country, and how they operate.

2.6.1 Agencies and How They Operate

A feature is something that finds its impact outside or beyond the realm of the straight news story. It is, thus, not bound by restrictions of time, though it must be topical.

There are numerous feature agencies operating in the country today. The oldest and best known among them is the Indian News and Feature Alliance (INFA). Others include the
Indian Press Agency (IPA), Compass Features, Gemini Features, National News Services, Newsmen's Features and UFO Features.

These agencies depend solely on free-lance writers. The writers may be aligned to some of them on a regular basis or work on a piece to piece basis. The agencies then mail these features to all their clients, thus leaving the clients free to choose. Thus, it may happen that the same feature may be published by more than one newspaper or magazine. However, most feature agencies try to avoid selling the same feature to more than one journal in a city.

2.6.2 Syndicated Columnists

Some of the senior-most journalists in the country today are so popular that there is a demand for them from many newspapers. The result is that most newspapers do not mind publishing the same article provided it can add to their prestige by including the name of the well known journalist in their columns. Such journalists become syndicated columnists. Some well known names in our country are Mr. Kuldip Nayyar, Mr. B.G. Verghese, Mr. Nikhil Chakravartty, Mrs. Amita Malik, Mr. S. Venkat Narayan, Mr. M.J. Akbar and Ms. Tavleen Singh.

Check Your Progress 5

Note:  

i) Answer the question in one or two sentences.  

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Who contributes features to a feature agency?

..............................................................................................................................................
2) Who is referred to as a ‘Syndicated Columnist’?

3) Name 3 feature agencies that operate in India.

4) Tick (✓) the correct answer of the given alternatives.
   The Associated Press is:
   a) a British agency
   b) a Swiss agency
   c) an American agency

2.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we learnt about Indian news agencies, including their history and development. We learnt as to how they are different from newspapers. We have also become familiar with the working of foreign agencies in India. Besides, we have had a glimpse into the world of feature agencies and syndicated columnists.

- A news agency collects and sells news to newspapers. It does not bring out its own newspaper.
- It is vastly different from newspaper in its ownership and its target readership. It also serves business houses/radio/television.
- The government does not own news agencies. Newspapers own them collectively.
- The news agency owners are also its customers, since the agency serves the newspapers.
- The PTI was born in 1949, and the UNI came in 1961.
- The agencies were merged into Samachar six months after Emergency was promulgated in mid-1975, but split again in 1978 when the Janata Party came to power.
- The UNI and PTI diversified their activities in several ways, including the establishment of language wings.
- The PTI manages the non-aligned news pool on behalf of the government.
- Foreign agencies work in India through the UNI and PTI.
- Feature agencies work as mailer services.

2.8 GLOSSARY

Backgrounder: A document containing the entire background to news.
Bureau: The reporting unit of newspapers/news agencies comprising Special Correspondents.
Copy: The news item filed by a reporter.
Desk: The editorial section of a newspaper/news agency.
File: To send or prepare a report.
Freelancers: Reporters who are not employed by any newspaper or news agency.

Goes to Sleep: Goes for printing, enabling reporters/editors to take some rest.

Mailers: News material sent by post.


Source: The person/place from where a news is received or can be attributed to.

Stringers: Part-time reporters.

Syndicated Columnists: Writers who send the same article to several newspapers/journals.

Takes: The page of a news report by a news.

2.9 FURTHER READING

1) Raghaven GNS, 1987 *PTI Story* Published by PTI, New Delhi.

2) Lewis James, 1969 *Active Reporter*, Press Institute of India, New Delhi.


5) *A Manual for News Agency Reporters* IIMC, 1980 Published by Allied Publisher Ltd.

2.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS : MODEL ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1) A news agency does not publish a newspaper to carry its own reports. It sends news reports to various newspapers and to the radio and television organisations, for the news to be carried in their newspapers and bulletins. A news agency works round-the-clock but a newspaper rests after midnight once the next day’s paper goes to the printing press. A news agency report is completely factual and identifies the source of the news item. A newspaper report provides comments on and analysis of the facts and does not necessarily attribute the news to any source.

2) A news agency is paid by its subscribers for its reports at a rate fixed on the basis of their respective circulations. Also, a monthly rent is collected for the teleprinters and computers that the news agency installs in the offices of its subscribers. As the government media of AIR and Doordarshan together with the ministerial and other departments, hold the largest share of subscribers, the news agency gets a major part of its income from government subscriptions. The newspapers and periodicals too contribute a substantial portion of the news agency’s income.

3) A news agency’s reporting section is headed by a Chief of Bureau. Staff members who report on day-to-day matters are called reporters. A Chief reporter heads them and, in turn, is answerable to the Chief of Bureau. The staff who concentrate on specialized reporting on ministerial and legislative matters are called Correspondents. They report directly to the Chief of Bureau.

4) Upon receiving information on the telephone from some source about a fight having broken out between two communities, a reporter first confirms the event on the phone with the police station in that zone. He or she then files a short report after consultation with the Chief Reporter. The typed story is then passed on to the Desk. The subeditor present edits the story and sends it along to the Editor-in-charge for final approval. The story is then ready for transmission from the concerned section. It then reaches the subscriber. More details may follow after another reporter files copy after visiting the scene of the event. He or she may either rush back to the office or may report to the office by telephone.
Check Your Progress 2

I) 1-c, 2-d, 3-a, 4-b

II) 1) The Central Government headed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi decided on the merger so as to make it easy to exercise Press censorship on news items. This move would take care that no unfavourable news reports would be printed in the press.

2) i) News Scan: Display of news on the television screen, just like the teletext service on Doordarshan.
   ii) Stockscan: A National stock exchange network for display of share prices.
   iii) Science service: Fortnightly mailer on science features.

3) i) Backgrounder Service: Weekly printed mailer on different subject of national interest, always topical.
   ii) UNEN: Weekly mailer on Energy reports.
   iii) UNI Graphics: Sent by Courier/Mail.

4) When it began its news service in 1949, the PTI took over the business and property of Associated Press of Indian. Similarly, in 1961, UNI "inherited" the property left behind by the United Press of India.

Check Your Progress 3

1) A crisp and precise to the point report is prepared by a news agency. The first paragraph gives the salient facts. Details come in the subsequent paragraphs. The thumb-rule is to answer the queries of "5Ws and 1H".

2) Local specific events would be projected as important news items in a local newspaper. A news agency on the other hand would prefer to give the go-by to localized news in favour of news of national significance.

3) A news agency reporter is required to stick to the standards of impartiality, objectivity, accuracy, factual information or truth, and proper sourcing. The report has to be filed with great speed.

Check Your Progress 4

1) AP, DPA

2) AFP, Reuters, DPI

3) A report originating from a foreign news agency is distributed to Indian Newspapers by the Indian News Agencies UNI & PTI.

4) India Abroad News Services, New York, USA. It is owned by Mr. Gopal Raju, a Non-resident Indian (NRI).

5) a) Paris, France.
   b) Bombay, India.

Check Your Progress 5

1) Free-lance writers contribute their features to a feature agency for distribution by the agency in the print medium.

2) A syndicated columnist is a senior journalist whose much sought opinions, views and analyses are distributed by feature agencies. The feature agencies undertake to sell such articles to one or more newspapers.

3) Indian News and Features Alliance, UFO Features, Composs Features.