UNIT 1 NEWS: CONCEPTS, PRINCIPLES & SOURCES

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1.0 INTRODUCTION
Human beings’ curiosity to know and comprehend as to what is happening around them is unlimited and unbound. People are always eager to know why and how are certain events and incidents taking place, who is responsible for these events, who are being affected by them; and what does the future hold for them? If these events are of recent occurrence, and are of interest to a vast majority of people, it becomes all the more important and necessary for them to look for further information about these events. By piecing together the details of all these points, some concrete, some hazy and quite often valuable and useful facts emerge. Whatever emerges from such information is quite often crucial and people need to know these and all possible details about these. Such type of information, therefore, is called “NEWS”. In this unit we shall systematically define ‘news’ and provide you with all the necessary perspectives on news.

1.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES
After you have gone through this unit, you should be able to:
• discuss the concepts and definitions of news;
• describe the principal elements of news and news writing;
• examine various news writing techniques; and
• describe various sources of news.
1.2 CONCEPT AND DEFINITION OF NEWS

It is said that news is difficult to define. However, news remains something that surprises the reader, listener and viewer, and will always remain so. Let us look at some of its definitions:

- Most dictionaries impart the meaning of ‘news’ as “an account of a recent event, or information that’s not known previously.
- According to the Random House Dictionary of English Language, the meaning of ‘news’ is: “a report of a recent event; intelligence, information.
- The Oxford Dictionary says: News is the report of recent events, or occurrences brought or coming to one as new information; new occurrences as a subject of report or talk.”
- Any important information coming from North, East, West and South, which deserve to be taken as ‘news’.
- Lord Northcliffe, the famous British editor, said of news: “News is something that somebody somewhere doesn’t want to print, wants to suppress. All the rest is advertising.”
- News is what people want to read about themselves.
- News is essentially about people, events, surrounding people, and places.
- “Get the Truth and print it,” said John S. Knight, founder of a greatest U.S. newspaper chain, adding, news is heavy on community service, and society interest and mindful of the city’s pecking order in civic and social affairs.
- When a dog bites man, that’s not news; but when a man bites dog that’s news.
- News is what affects readers directly.
- An emotional event that will make people laugh or cry.
- News is a timely account of a recent, interesting and significant event.
- Out of the ordinary, departure from routine convention.
- Change. The passing of an era, old landmarks being torn down, new lifestyles replacing old, new attitudes on old questions, anniversaries of major events.
- A journalism professor of Stanford University, USA, Chilton R. Bush, defined news as “....the report of an event that a reader can and will understand.”
- Another pragmatic view in defining news, says: “News is an account of an event which a newspaper prints in the belief that by so doing it will profit.”

After reading the above varied definitions of news, you would have understood the broad nature and concept of news. But, it is difficult to accurately define ‘news’. For, to be correctly termed as the ‘News’, any information must be factual, new and interesting. There must be facts to report; without facts, there can be no news. It is important that these facts must be new to the reader, listener and the viewer. Again, news is what’s being published on the news pages of newspapers, and magazines, broadcast on radio and telecast on television networks, or put out on the Internet. News is also about the lives, loves and scandals of the famous, the rich and the notorious.
As William Metz, professor of journalism, University of Nevada, USA, says: “While it may not be possible to describe it precisely in words, every news reporter must come to a personal understanding of nature of news, must reach some conclusion about its essence before it is possible to recognise ‘news’ when it happens.” We can also say in simple terms, as a well known British writer and author, Evelyn Waugh, wrote in his book, “Scoop”, way back in 1938 that “news is what a chap who doesn’t care much about anything wants to read. And, it’s only news until he has read it. After that it’s dead.”

Here, it’s also important to know as to what we mean by ‘news sense’, or ‘news judgment’. “Being able to identify what will interest readers is called having news sense,” said a noted American professor of journalism, Wyford Hicks.

The important dictum about the news, which is even somewhat contradictory is, bad news sells more newspapers than good news. So, what would be the news today? Given the limits of space, time and resources, what’s important, what isn’t, what’s to be left in, what’s to be left out? And in the age of Internet, infinity, who’s to say what’s news, asks Wyford Hicks.

Thus, it will not be an exaggeration to say that there are almost as many definitions of the news as there are reporters/journalists. Most news reporters will of course agree that every occurrence or event in itself is not and cannot be the ‘news’.

Activity
From the newspaper(s) or news website(s) that you read, identify three items you consider as (i) most important news; (ii) less important news; (iii) only gossip or rumour or hearsay.

1.3 ELEMENTS OF NEWS WRITING

Now that you know the meaning, definition and content of news, we will discuss the principal elements or ingredients of writing news. Because, if you are reading your newspaper carefully, you would surely have noticed that a news item or a news story as it is also called, is not written in a style or fashion we write our letters or essays or any other piece of writing.

News has to be written, presented or broadcast in such a manner or style that the reader, listener or viewer gets the most important information in a shortest possible span of time, in minimum words, without using superfluous, unnecessary and redundant words. It is often said that a news reporter should have “a nose for news”. They may have their whims and fancies of ‘smelling’, ‘sensing’, or recognising the news, but there are certain established and well known factors and ingredients which if present in the event or happening that have taken place, which for sure would be considered raising the event, happening, occurrence to the pedestals of a standard ‘news’ story. Here are some of the most important ones: Timeliness, proximity, prominence, dimension, consequence, conflict, empathy, adventure and weather, among others.

Timeliness: The time of occurrence of an event is the most important element of a news story. People want to know about the event as quickly as possible. Report of an event that happened yesterday or the day before yesterday is generally deemed stale and often not considered fit for publication, unless it is of extra ordinary nature, or extremely significant in some manner. So, the time of the event’s occurrence is immensely crucial for it to be considered news. News may cease to be news
after 24 or even after 12 hours in today’s race against time and the age of Internet and smartphones. Readers, listeners or viewers now a day, very well recognise the immediacy and perishability as profusely vital factors in ‘newsfall’ and news reporting. It is said that stale news is abhorred as stale bread.

**Proximity:** Closeness or nearness of an event or an incident to the audience has tremendous importance for reporters as well as for a newspaper. Proximity could be geographical or relevance to the audience. The more ‘local’ or closer the site where the event took place, the greater will be its importance to be termed as news. To take an example,

Kolkata, June 4 - The Kolkatans were taken aback by a series of blasts that took place in the local Park Street claiming 15 lives on Monday evening.

This story would naturally be on front page in all the local newspapers, but may be relegated to a remote corner of the inside pages by the papers in Jammu, Bhopal, Guwahati, Surat, Madurai or Chandigarh. A local angle to the news has greater appeal and greater relevance due to the fact that the victims may be known to the newspaper staff and could be its readers, buyers, and advertisers or people living close to the newspaper office.

**Prominence:** If a well-known personality happens to be involved in the event, it will invariably make news. For example, if the prime minister strains his ankle while walking to the car, or a celebrity has a bathroom fall, it makes news. The important fact is that the famous, the infamous and even the eccentric command a special appeal for audiences. This is also due to the fact that high profile families enjoy privacy and often make news for any pleasant or unpleasant event.

**Dimension:** The number of people involved or affected or losses that occur in terms of huge money by an event makes news. For example, if 500 or more people die in an earthquake in Manila, the Philippines, it makes news even in India as human lives are precious wherever these are lost. But if heavy rains flood low-lying areas in Mumbai or Patna, and 23 people are killed, and four high-rise buildings collapse, it makes much bigger news in India, and automatically gets front page treatment, possibly with tell-tales photographs from the scene. Similarly, if in a fire in Vadodra property worth lakhs is destroyed and several deaths are reported, that too will need front page featuring. Here, we see the number of people though less, but the proximity factor comes in making the news ‘local’, requiring a different, and serious way of presentation in the newspaper.

**Impact:** If the U.S. president or British prime minister announces his plans to sanction military aid to Pakistan, it’s bound to impact the Indo-US or Indo-British ties, and also Indo-Pak relations. Similarly, if the Union Government increases income tax in its annual budget, or levies a tax on purchase of cars, that make all-India news. Or, if the chief minister of a state in India abolishes state grants for the private-aided schools, the children of lower middle class or poor parents availing fee concession may be hit adversely as the consequence of the new policy, thus, it will make big news for all citizens of that state.

**Human Interest:** Quite often, newspaper reporters come across situations, which induce emotions of mercy or sentiments or sympathy. For example, if a visually-challenged person performs some daring act, such as scaling Mount Everest, or a hearing-challenged boy scores a meritorious position in a competitive examination, these are human interest stories. Again, if a bicycle-rickshaw puller’s son gets
selected in JIM / IIT admission test, or a primary school teacher’s daughter finds herself in the civil services merit list, we call these as human interest stories. You may recall the incident when a four-year-old child by the name of Prince, fell in a way-side 30-foot-deep well some years ago; the rescue work by the army personnel was put out live on many television channels. This was a live human interest story which attracted the interest of viewers all over India for many hours, till the rescue act was completed.

**Conflict:** Conflict of any type — political, social, cultural, communal, among some sections of society, difference of opinion among two or more political parties, conflict among some warring groups, or more of such conflicts always make news. As you would have seen that differences between the Bhartiya Janata Party and the Communist Party (Marxist) and the Indian National Congress on the Indo-US nuclear deal made news in India for several months. You will find that many more such issues figure in newspapers as news very often.

**Adventure:** As we mentioned earlier, tackling difficult-to-handle tasks easily or smoothly or daringly by disabled individuals always make news anywhere. When a 70-year-old Japanese woman attempted to scale the Mount Everest, the highest mountain peak in the world, and succeeded, it made international news. This was a case of adventure appearing as front page banner headline in Japan, besides making news in many other countries.

**Novelty:** Novel and rare incidents make news. When, for example, an American woman gave birth to eight children, each weighing about 200 grams, and they all survived, it made world news. Again, when an eight-year-old boy in Orissa competed in a marathon race with grown ups, and won it, that became a novel event to be deemed as news.

**Empathy:** Often, several events mirroring tragedy, humour, oddity, victory, failure take place now and then in our life. Quite a few of these happenings attract our concern or empathy: an old-age couple losing all its children in fire, flood, accident; a child falling off from the arms of its mother in a moving bus/train and getting crushed under its wheels — all make news. For, all human hearts go out in sympathy for the loved ones so affected.

**Weather / Climate / Environment:** Weather — extreme heat, cold, rain, storm, pollution affects all of us; and usually bad weather affects us badly. Remember how the Indian Ocean tsunami made news all over the world in so many countries, including India, which killed hundreds of men, women, children, and wreaked unusual, unimaginable losses of property, animals and marine life. For months together, this was considered as an extra ordinary change in weather, and was forecast to be a prodigious problem of environment for all time to come across the globe. Climatic changes, different aspects of environment degradation, pollution as well as efforts towards environment conservation make news.

Given above are some of the most important elements, which often make news. However, there are always occasions when we find new situations arising and figuring as eminent news stories in the media all over the world.

**Check Your Progress 1**

**Note:** 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.
1. Define News in brief.

2. Explain the five most important elements of a news story.

1.4  PRINCIPLES AND TECHNIQUES OF NEWS WRITING

As we mentioned earlier, news has to be written in such a manner and drafted in a style that the main or the principal information is conveyed to the audience in minimum possible words and in minimum possible time. Therefore, the first paragraph of the news story, which is called Lead or Intro (introduction), presents the gist of the event/happening in about 24 to 30 words, as far as possible. We will also briefly mention how to draft an intro/lead, and of how many kinds of leads are there for writing the news.

1.4.1 5Ws and 1H

The news stories are written using 5Ws and 1 H in the first paragraph itself. This is probably the first and the most important, and traditional principle of writing a news item. The first paragraph of news, called the Intro or Lead should contain answers to five Ws, and one H, namely, Who, What, When, Where, Why and How. This is the most cardinal principle of writing news and followed all over the world. The first paragraph of the news item must clearly state as to who is the main actor, character, object, subject or concern of the event, which needs to be told or written about. Is it the President, Prime Minister, any minister, governor, a well-known foreign dignitary, or any other prominent person? Is it a notorious criminal or any other individual of any status, whom people know in some context or the other?

The other four Ws and one H are:

- **What** happened?
- **When** did it happen?
- **Where** did it happen?
- **Why** did it happen?
- **How** did it happen?

Depending upon the nature of the event, the reporter has to decide which of these Ws is more important and crucial to the story. Obviously, politically prominent persons such as president, prime minister and other such people in government or in society will get more attention and also more space.

The time when the event occurs is also extremely significant. Any event having impact on a large majority of people will also be of great import. For example, a rail accident taking place at midnight will be the important time to be taken note
of -- both for the news reporter, for the editorial desk, and for general public also.

The venue of event also assumes great importance in a news story. For example, if the event occurs in prime minister’s office, parliament house, or in state assembly, a railway station, in mosque or temple, every place mentioned here has its own unique significance. But if it happens on the venue where a large number of people are present, the consequences can be well imagined. Therefore, each W has its own importance in the context of the event which is reported.

Incidentally, the 5W-1H formula of writing the intro or lead is attributed to the late British author who lived and worked in India, Rudyard Kipling. He wrote for the daily English language newspaper, The Pioneer, then published from Lucknow in the 1930s. Kipling’s favourite saying for writing news based on this formula was as follows:

I keep six honest serving men
They taught me all I knew
Their names are what, and why and when
And how and where and who

Given below are some examples to tell you as to how intros and leads can be drafted, based on the formula 5Ws and 1H:

**WHEN:** On coming Monday, August 15, at 8 a.m., the Prime Minister will address the nation on its seventieth Independence Day from the ramparts of Delhi’s historic Red Fort.

**WHERE:** From the ramparts of Delhi’s historic Red Fort, the Prime Minister will address the nation on August 15 this year, the seventieth Independence Day of the country, at 8 a.m.

**WHO:** Prime Minister will address the Independence Day function on Monday, August 15, at 8 a.m. from the rampart of Delhi’s historic Red Fort.

**WHAT:** On the Independence Day, on August 15 at 8 a.m., Prime Minister will address the nation from the rampart of Delhi’s historic Red Fort.

**WHY:** As August 15 marks the nation’s seventieth Independence Day, the Prime Minister will address the nation from Delhi’s historic Red Fort at 8 a.m.

**HOW:** From the ramparts of Delhi’s historic Red Fort, Prime Minister will address the nation on August 15, which marks the seventieth Independence Day, at 8 a.m.

The reporter who has to decide which of the 5 Ws is crucial and is key and really essential to the story, and of course to its overall development. It also depends on the fact as to where is the story being written from, and where is intended to be published. If, for instance, the reporter is in Delhi and the newspaper is in Jaipur, Bangalore, Guwahati, or Jammu, the story will have to be angled to suit the local audience of the newspaper accordingly.

### 1.4.2 The Inverted Pyramid

Another traditional technique of writing the news is in the form of an Inverted Pyramid. The first paragraph, i.e., the Intro or the Lead, contains the most important and main thrust of the news item. The body of the news item further expands, elaborates and explains rest of the story. Therefore, the main points stated in the
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Lead or the Intro have to be supported by the facts in the paragraphs that follow the Lead or the Intro.

Thus, if you view the story in the form of a figure or a diagram, it will look like an inverted pyramid as illustrated below. The most important point in the story should be at the top, followed by less important facts, with the least important ones coming at the bottom, one by one, depending on their importance in the overall structure and length of the news story. Such a technique of writing a story is called Inverted Pyramid.

The lead / intro of a news story which should usually be based on inverted pyramid technique is illustrated as under:

**ILLUSTRATION NO. 1: INVERTED PYRAMID**

This story (news) starts off with a great lead.

Then, short summary of the story, and

sometimes a little history for the context of story. Important stuff goes here. Becomes unimportant here. Even more unimportant
downright dull,
can be cut,
often cut,
cut,
cut,
cut.

Actually, the inverted pyramid technique is a very basic method of news writing. A question may now arise in your mind as to why should one work like this? The main argument behind it is that the new’s theme point should be wrapped up in one-sentence, or two-paragraph nutshell, with summary high up in the story. Also known as lead or ‘nutgraph’—important information near the top of the story, usually in one paragraph. This has also been illustrated by another illustration given below:

**ILLUSTRATION NO. 2: INVERTED PYRAMID**

The most important facts go here

What, who, why, where & how. Then comes the next most important facts in the story, followed by the next most important. And still some important fact that could just be cut, if need to be cut again, and and cut, cut.
1.4.3 Inverted Pyramid: A Critique

Of late, some senior journalism scholars and professional journalists have started questioning the inverted pyramid style. According to a well-known American journalism professor and author, Christopher Passante, why should pyramid be ‘inverted’ when the pyramid in its pyramid shape, i.e., the right way up, can serve the purpose perfectly and most befittingly? For, anyway, the primary objective of the pyramid as such is to show that the point in a news story is made in a descending order of importance. The news is deliberately written in a manner that the reader can stop reading when s/he has just satisfied his/her curiosity and desire to be informed about a particular event, and without worrying that it affects him/her in some way. Another implicit purpose of this style of news writing is to cut the story from bottom up without losing its important parts.

A noted critic of the inverted pyramid philosophy Professor William Metz of the University of Nevada, USA, feels that the inverted style has “over-standardised” the technique of writing news. He adds that as “it is not a natural storytelling method because its climax comes at the onset... is predictable and old-fashioned.”

A former editor of the United Press International (UPI), Roger Tatarian, has pointed out that narrative news writing style leads will be more popular over summary leads, especially in “stories reader has already heard over the air.”

Lately, the ‘featurised’ style of news writing has started gaining acceptance over the traditional and weather-beaten inverted pyramid especially in prominent American daily newspapers such as The New York Times, Washington Post, USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, The Los Angeles Times, The Chicago Tribune, etc.

As one former managing editor of The New York Times, Turner Catledge, also said about the diminishing value of 5Ws and 1 H, some time ago: “Once it will no longer be necessary, as may be, never was, to wrap up in one sentence or paragraph, all the traditional 5Ws.”

Thus, there is need to caution against intensive use of the Inverted Pyramid techniques of news writing: Don’t worship the pyramid: it’s only a way of visualising the most common structure of a traditional news story. The guiding principle in developing a story is: what does the reader needs or wants to know? If answering these questions is the meat of the story, do it. Reporting speeches is not done in this format. Thus it is time that the inverted pyramid format gave way to a more scientific, currently acceptable news writing method to meet the changing needs of the modern consumer of the news media.

1.5 NEWS SOURCES

News sources are people who journalists interview, talk to, quote, observe or meet to ‘construct’ a news story. They provide the basic information which is the building block of a news story. At the same time no two sources can lend the same meaning to a news story. Since the role of journalists is interpretational in that they infer an event for us, framing it or mapping it in a certain social or cultural context and thus making it intelligible to the audiences, the choice of one source over another is often ideological. Here, we shall discuss the different news sources.

1.5.1 News Agencies

The modern form of the press is linked to the rise and consolidation of the news
agencies. News agencies are a steady source of news for media outlets. Each news organisation subscribes to a large number of national and international news agencies or ‘wire services’ to keep a close tab on all that is happening in different parts of the world where they can neither set their own bureaus or afford to send reporters. For example, maintaining a foreign correspondent in all the capitals of the EU throughout the year will be extremely expensive indeed out of reach for most newspapers or a TV channels based in New Delhi which would otherwise mean that they cut themselves out from news developments in these places. However, subscribing to Reuters or AP would ensure a minute-by-minute update on every event that transpires in those countries with their vast network of reporters sending stories from the ground.

1.5.2 Reporters

Reporters and correspondents, as you are aware, are the backbone of any newspaper or a television news channel. They are literally the face of the channel or the newspaper. In fact, today news has become so news person or ‘reporter centric’ that news channels and newspapers market their brands in the names of their reporters. Competent, well-known and experienced reporters are thus central to any news organisation which aspires to earn its readers’ or viewers’ trust and claim to practice high quality journalism. Reporting itself is a highly specialised and demanding profession that requires years of training and commitment to journalism. Young reporters work for shifts much beyond their stipulated time to learn the ropes of their profession. They have to sit with their editor for hours and patiently learn to report, make contacts and get skilled into the fine art and craft of reporting.

News gathering requires certain acumen and as they say- ‘a nose for news’. Cub reporters are usually groomed into specialised areas of news, which has resulted into what news organisations call the ‘beat system’ categorised into national, political, metro/ city, business, sports, legal, science and environment, education, health, and entertainment desks. In this division of work between beat reporters, special correspondents and the general reporters, each are trained differently and enter into very dissimilar relationship with their sources. This also implies that the beat reporter has to spend plenty of time in the field, building contacts with key persons who will eventually be his/ her sources often resulting in a relationship of mutual cooperation with their sources. At times, this even leads to co-optation of reporters by big corporate houses and powerful politicians. For example, a city crime reporter must have adequate ‘contacts’ in the Police department, the courts and locals who will then be his/ her informers in case some crime happens. While the reporter gets to file the story, the sources attain a proximity to the Press and get free publicity when quoted in the story.

1.5.3 Individual Sources

Most news organisations insist on getting government or established sources of information to add weight to their story. Besides the institutional sources, reporters often turn to subject ‘experts’, academics or known faces in a particular field to lend a new dimension to the story. For example a story on Women’s Reservation Bill will usually consist of interviews of at least two women MPs representing two different political parties in favour of the Bill and may be another woman MP against the Bill. In addition to these ‘government sources’ the reporter must try and get a known women rights activists and a byte from the general public to flesh out the debate from different points of view. Just interviewing a couple of women MPs
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1.5.4 Online Sources and Social Media Platforms

New media and the internet have radically altered the way news is collected, disseminated and consumed. The significance of the internet as a source of news is very well documented in the literature on online news and social media. Newspapers and television news channels keep a track of what news items are posted on different news portals and websites on a daily basis. In the present day digital world, Twitter (see Hermida 2010), Facebook and other social media platforms are emerging as instantaneous and popular sources of news with almost all politicians at national and international levels, political parties, organisations, celebrities, and newsmakers having their own twitter accounts and Facebook pages to directly connect with the public and to feed reporters with the latest information. The earlier debates on whether online sources are reliable or not and does online news count as journalism is rendered irrelevant given the heavy reliance of journalists on online sources.

1.6 RELIABILITY AND CREDIBILITY OF SOURCES

Journalistic practice relies on factual information. A news story normally is made up of interview bytes or ‘talking heads’ who give their accounts or comments on an event. A journalist’s job is to pad the story with these quotes interspersed in a logical sequence with voiceovers and visuals so that the event can make sense to the audiences. The sources in that sense are the building blocks of the story. The standard of objectivity often entails verifiability of information independent of sources’ accounts. But in routine practice of fast pace news production reporters do not have the time or the resources to probe into the sources’ informational world to establish the veracity of the facts independent of the source’s account (Schlesinger 1978; Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1989).

Scholars have warned that journalism is increasingly accommodating funding and ownership patterns, work practices and routines that blur the distinction between fact and fiction, selling propaganda in the name of news. In such a scenario, many a times individual reporters find themselves torn between ethical principles they cherish, the foremost being truth telling and the pressures accruing from the corporate control of the press which dilutes such a commitment.

Government sources, party spokespersons, ministers, officials and bureaucrats are considered to be authorised sources of information and the best talking heads to give credibility to a story. The suitability of sources is adjudged through a process of bureaucratised institutional form of authority and knowledge in which editors and sometimes the management decides who will be given space in the news story and which institutions, communities and individuals will be denied such privilege. This is also partly how news maintains social status quo, representing political power as residing in formal institutions of the state and law enforcement agencies keeping the poor, the minorities and marginalised sections of society in the periphery. It is a clear categorisation between the haves and have-nots; the powerful and the voiceless.

In this process, news also tends to legitimise these institutions and the dominant power structures often neglecting civil society and oppositional groups which are represented as insignificant, worthless even illegitimate (see Golding, Murdock,
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News sources are mostly pre-determined and decided by the established practice of calling certain known sources whose contacts and phone numbers are meticulously maintained. Reporters rarely make any attempt to look beyond the established protocol and even if they do want to they do not want to take the risk as it may not be accepted by the editors or bureau chiefs. Journalism therefore develops its own ‘regime of objectivity’ flowing from its own version of social constructionism (Hackett and Zhao, 1998).

In the case of television news, visuals and footage from locations or showing the face of the eyewitness add credibility and a slice of reality to the story as the saying goes – seeing is believing. Besides, television story’s construction also involves staging of sources complete with props, lighting, sound and realistic background to make the scene as close to reality as possible. The staginess of televised news involves controlled production and other contexts which can lend their own meanings to the event. Often the emphasis is on presentation than on the veracity of information. Moreover, with visual and high end graphics used in packaging less credible information or even false information are easily passed off as fact. Publishing news not attributable to any source or under the guise of unnamed or unidentified sources is indicative of low quality journalism which should be avoided at all cost.

In the last couple of years ‘fake news’ has emerged as a major social issue faced by citizens and governments alike. As the phenomenon of fake news becomes more widespread with platforms like WhatsApp providing easy avenue for their ready dissemination, new technologies and tools are being developed to detect fake news and ensure that citizens can ensure the veracity of information they consume (Zhou and Zafarani, 2018).

The onus lies with both news organisations as producers of information and citizens as consumers of information to push for truth telling in the public domain. This will not only ensure the criticality of information in the public sphere and its concomitant strengthening of democracy (Saeed, 2013) but also serve to safeguard ethical principles that are definitive of journalism as we know it for the last 200 years.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: 1) Use the space below for you answers.

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

1. Why are reporters considered to be the backbone of a newspaper or a TV news channel?

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2. Why credibility of sourcing is important in journalism?

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1.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed the definition, concepts, principles, sources and techniques of news writing. The definition and concept of news also varies from place to place. We discussed the various techniques of news writing such as 5Ws and 1H and the Inverted Pyramid style. We also discussed the elements and ingredients that make news, and kinds of news. Intros and Leads were also discussed. Even though, there are several types of leads, only a few are used by reporters these days. The style and content of news writing are often dictated by several new type of considerations such as ideology and policy of news media organisations. News publication is also affected by advertising, audiences’ preferences for or against mixing news with entertainment, and the public opinion about certain vital issues. Apart from these, this unit also talked in detail about the various sources that journalists use to report any news.

1.8 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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- Writing For Journalists by Wyford Hicks, 1999, New York: Routledge.

1.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1. News has been defined as timely reports of significant events that concern and interest majority of people. What is news means different things to different people. Moreover, the definition and concept of news varies from place to place and time to time.
2. The five most important news elements are:
   a. Timeliness
   b. Proximity
   c. Prominence
   d. Impact
   e. Novelty

Check Your Progress 2

1. Reporters are the building blocks and the face of the news organisations. Reporting on different beats, they provide exclusives, live coverage and special reports which differentiate one news outlet from the other. Their contacts with news sources and in various departments of governments, ministries, local administration, police, locals, spokespersons, think-tank, activists and others provide the stories that fill up newspaper columns and news bulletins.

2. The credibility of sourcing is important in journalism as fake news poses a danger to democracy and journalism due to misinformation. There is a need to develop tools and fact checkers to detect fake news and prevent its wide dissemination.