

GUIDELINES FOR COVERAGE OF ELECTIONS BY AIR AND DOORDARSHAN

General

1. All personnel in AIR and Doordarshan engaged in coverage of elections must familiarise themselves with the provisions of the Representation of the People Act and the rules issued there under. Strict adherence to the legal provisions must be ensured.
- 2.1 AIR and Doordarshan should, in close coordination with the Election Commission and Chief Electoral Officers, arrange programmes and broadcasts with a view to:
 - a) Explaining to the voters their rights and duties in connection with the election;
 - b) Urging every voter to exercise his/her democratic right to vote;
 - c) Help create a climate of opinion in which free, fair and peaceful elections are possible;
 - d) Assuring the weaker sections of society and minorities of the steps taken for their protection during and after the elections;
 - e) Informing the voters about procedural matters and arrangements that are being made for the conduct of the elections;
 - f) Explaining the arrangements made to ensure that there is no intimidation of voters or coercion during and after the election and complete secrecy of voting is maintained.
- 2.2 For this purpose, AIR and Doordarshan should arrange broadcasts, in the general programmes as well as special audience programmes; by the Chief Election Commissioner, Chief Electoral Officers and prominent non- political personalities.
- 2.3 The text of these broadcasts might be released to the local Press through the Information Department of the State Government and the Regional Information Office of the Press Information Bureau and also utilized as part of the comparing material in special audience programmes.

COVERAGE OF NEWS AND GENERAL INFORMATION

1. AIR and Doordarshan should treat all election news factually, objectively and impartially.
2. TALKS AND BROADCASTS
 - i) Ministers, MPs, MLAs, MLCs, political leaders, election candidates or their agents, and persons who are closely identified with political parties, even though they may not be holding any office in a party organization, should not be invited by AIR and Doordarshan to broadcast on any subject that is related to elections.
 - ii) ‘Spotlight’, ‘Current Affairs’, ‘Newsreel’ and the corresponding programmes in Hindi and other languages will continue to deal with topical issues and problems.

3. NEWS

The following may be noticed by AIR and Doordarshan for news coverage:

a) Election manifestoes

- i) Election manifestoes of political parties recognized as all-India parties by the Election Commission should be given fair, impartial and adequate coverage in the central news bulletins. The manifesto of each party should be noticed only once in the major English, Hindi and other Indian language news bulletins.
- ii) Election manifestoes of parties recognized at the State level will be noticed in similar manner in the regional news bulletins and the central bulletins concerned.
- iii) Election manifestoes, if any, of regional units of all- India parties will be covered only in the regional bulletins of the area concerned.
- iv) Manifestoes will be covered when they are released to the Press and only a brief summary with amendments, if any, will be given when formally and finally adopted.

b) Party alliance

Alliances between various parties for election purposes, when announced officially, should be covered in the central news bulletins. Regional news bulletins may also carry such announcements when covered in the central news bulletins. Adjustments made at the state level may be noticed on news value.

c) List of candidates

- i) Both English and language news bulletins broadcast from Delhi should notice final lists of candidates whether in part or as a whole, when officially release by the Central committees of the various political parties. Only the total number of candidates filed by the party should be announced. The news of prominent and well-known personalities contesting the election may be noticed in central and regional news bulletins. The name of the constituency may also be mentioned if it has some special significance. Notice may also be taken, if any prominent person decides not to contest the election.
- ii) After the withdrawal stage, wherever the name of any one candidate is mentioned, names of other candidates contesting from the same constituency should be given.

d) Speeches and announcements

- i) Speeches made by Central and States Ministers of prominent leaders of political parties may be noticed on the basis of their news value, with the provision that

- portions which are in the nature of party propaganda or electioneering, should be kept out.
- ii) Policy announcements or decisions of government even when these are made at election meetings will continue to be noticed. AIR and Doordarshan will continue to provide coverage of Government activities, programmes and achievements. Sober criticism of Government policies and their implementation may also be covered.
 - iii) Attacks or criticism of personal nature should scrupulously be avoided.
 - iv) Constructive activities and programmes unrelated to election will continue to be noticed by AIR and Doordarshan on their news and information value.

e) Coverage of Polling

Central and regional news bulletins will try to present a picture of the polling scene, giving the various interesting features. The percentage of polling should be reported, but after due verification. The pre-election scene in a state or the country as a whole may also be covered by AIR and Doordarshan, but without expressing views or comments, one way or the other.

f) Election Incidents

Any serious election incident, if it is of sufficient news value, should be reported but the facts and seriousness of such incidents should be checked with district authorities.

**GUIDELINES FOR POLITICAL COVERAGE/BROADCAST AND CODE
OF CONDUCT FOR TELEVISION/RADIO BROADCAST IN
CONNECTION WITH ELECTIONS**

PART ONE

POLITICAL COVERAGE (GENERAL)

- Political activities should be covered strictly on the basis of news value. An event/statement will have news value if it contains a point or contributes to a better understanding of a political trend/problem.
- It should be ensured that in political reporting, there is no bias in favour of any party and accuracy and impartiality is maintained.
- Impartiality in political reporting will meet the commitment if it is fair, accurate and maintains a respect of truth.
- On controversial political/public issues, the views of all sides should be presented. An effort should be made to give various viewpoints in the same news bulletins but if a particular viewpoint could not be covered. It should be included

in the subsequent news bulletins. Editorial discretion must, however, be exercised whether it is appropriate for a range of views to be included within a single item/bulletin or they could be covered in the subsequent bulletins.

- Sometimes, in order to achieve impartiality it may be appropriate, to put out a series of news based programme during the period a particular controversy is active to allow various viewpoints to be brought out. Listeners should normally be informed of the follow-up programmes when the first programme is broadcast.
- Utmost accuracy must be maintained in reporting any event/development. Wherever possible, first-hand information should be gathered by being there and when that is not possible by talking to those who were there. News should normally be picked up from recognized channels/sources. In other cases, special care should be taken to ensure authenticity.
- Be on guard against propaganda slant in news.
- When a serious factual error does occur, it is important to admit it frankly and carry an effective correction in the subsequent news bulletins.
- Apart from treating news factually and objectively, AIR and Doordarshan should provide, where necessary, a background to the events and happenings in order that listeners in any part of the country are able to place such events and happenings in proper perspective.
- A staffer may express a professional, journalistic judgement in such matters but not a personal opinion. Apart from getting the facts right, exaggeration should be avoided. The language used should not suggest a value judgement/commitment or lack of objectivity. Where necessary, comments and opinions should be sourced. However, comments should be distinguished from legitimate interpretation of facts.
- Give due place to a rejoinder of any statement broadcast by AIR/Doordashan, if the author of the rejoinder is someone of similar stature to the author of the original statement or the official spokesman of the party issuing the rejoinder. Rejoinders should be judged on professional consideration.
- The activities of the Prime Minister should be given due importance. Press Conferences, addressed and speeches of the Prime Minister have news value in as much as they are Government policy statements or indicative of new emphasis on national issues.
- Treatment of news items about the President must conform to the dignity of the august office. This also applies to news about Parliament, State Legislatures, Courts of Justice and State Governors.
- Items concerning Ministers at the Centre/States and their statements on Government policy should be covered on the basis of news value.

- Whenever the Prime Minister or the Chief Minister of a State uses the electronic media purely for highlighting the achievements or programmes of his Government, the Leader of the Opposition may also be allowed to air his or her views on the performance of the Government.
- Statements by political parties/groups that tend to promote/provoke feeling of enmity or hatred among people on the ground of religion, race, caste, community or language should not be covered.
- In case of any inter-state dispute, as far as practicable the view points of all the States involved should be given.
- In case of public meetings, do not try to estimate the number of people present and use words such as huge, big, massive, only if warranted.
- Giving labels e.g. progressive, communal etc., to any party should be avoided.
- AIR/Doordarshan should be on guard against encouraging secessionist activities even if promoted by a recognized political party. But this does not mean suppression of facts.
- In case of strikes and bandhs sponsored by political parties/other groups, AIR/Doordarshan should be guided by the people's interest and eschew any build-up or advance publicity for such events. Where authorities such as the Railways and Transport make announcements on arrangements made for public convenience, these should be noticed.
- Statements containing objectionable material of the following categories should be avoided:
 - i) News on views that would arouse communal passions or incitement to violence to subvert the State established by the Law and Constitution; and
 - ii) Information or opinion calculated to bring individuals into hatred or contempt or disrepute.

PART TWO

COVERAGE DURING ELECTIONS

The Election Commission's guidelines listed below should be adhered to during election coverage.

(a) DON'Ts

- (i) There should be no coverage of any election speeches or other material that incites violence, one religion against another, one caste against another, one language group against another, etc.
- (ii) In any constituency only one candidate should not be projected. While it is not necessary to cover every single candidate (as some constituencies may have

several candidates) at least the more important candidates should be covered in any report from one constituency.

(b) DO's

(i) The following could be covered in a balanced manner:

- Campaigning and excerpts from campaign speeches.
- Symbols, banners, flags and other campaign material of parties.
- Results of opinion polls by non political, professional organizations with a proven track record. Opinion/Gallop polls are not to be published/broadcast during the period of 48 hrs before each phase of polling till the completion of the phase of polling. Exit poll results are not to be published/broadcast before the completion of each phase of polling.
- Party manifestoes (critical analysis of which is perfectly legitimate).
- Candidates and their views in different constituencies across the country.
- The position taken by main parties on different issues important to the electorate.
- Debates between major parties and candidates.
- Analysis of previous voting patterns, victory margins, swings etc.

(c) BALANCED AND FAIR COVERAGE

By balance and fair it is meant that among the major political parties:

- No one political party should be given substantially more coverage than the others. This balance need not be achieved in any single day or in a single story, but over a reasonable period of time say one week.
- Balance does not mean each party must get exactly the same air time to the last second, but parties should be broadly given the same amount of time.
- Balance implies that to no reasonable person should it appear that one political party is being projected to the exclusion of others.

(d) PROCEDURES

- All procedures must record a copy of their programme off air for use as reference in case of any disputes.
- The Election Commission shall be the final arbiter in any dispute.

(e) EDITORIAL CONTROL

The editorial control of the election broadcasts by political parties will remain with Prasar Bharati.

PART THREE

Major riots/clashes normally tend to acquire communal or political colouring.

- When riots and communal clashes occur in any part of the country, AIR/TV broadcasts should help defuse the situation and restore amity, confidence and order.
- If riots are of a communal nature, the identification of the communities concerned should be totally avoided. Further, the details of the areas in which these communities are involved in riots, should not be given.
- Information about clashes, such as casualties should be put out after verification. They should be attributed to a dependable source. Only such views as would defuse the situation should be highlighted.
- Unconfirmed reports and hearsay in disturbed situations are best ignored.
- The reports about such events should be balanced, accurate and should avoid causing unnecessary distress or anxiety while providing swift and factual news.
- Extreme close ups of victims should be avoided. Gory visuals should be eschewed. Natural sounds are an essential complement of TV. But, these should be taken with care so that they do not disturb or distress.
- People's privacy should be respected. AIR and DD should not be obtrusive. The traumatized people should not be pressurized to give interviews.
- Coverage of terrorist and subversive activities should be handled with care so that there is no promotion or undue projection of such activities. However, suppression of facts will be avoided.

MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE GUIDANCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND CANDIDATES

I) General Conduct

- a) No party or candidate shall indulge in any activity which may aggravate existing differences or create mutual hatred or cause tension between different castes and communities, religious or linguistic.
- b) Criticism of other political parties, when made shall be confined to their policies and programmes, past record and work. Parties and candidates shall refrain from criticism of all aspects of private life, not connected with the public activities of the leaders or workers of other parties. Criticism of other parties or their workers based on unverified allegations or on distortion shall be avoided.

- c) There shall be no appeal to caste or communal feelings for securing votes. Mosques, churches, temples or other places of worship shall not be used as forum for election propaganda.
- d) All parties and candidates shall avoid scrupulously all activities which are ‘corrupt practices’ and offences under the election law, such as the bribing of voters. Intimidation of voters, impersonation of voters, canvassing within 100 metres of polling station, holding public meetings during the period of 48 hours ending with the hour fixed for the close of the poll, and the transport and conveyance of voters to and from polling station.
- e) The right of every individual for peaceful and undisturbed home life shall be respected, however, much the political parties or candidates may resent his political opinions or activities. Organising demonstrations or picketing before the houses of individuals by way of protesting against their opinions or activities shall not be resorted to under any circumstances.
- f) No political party or candidate shall permit its or his followers to make use of nay individual’s land, building, compound wall etc., without his permission for erecting flag staffs, suspending banners, pasting notices, writing slogans, etc.
- g) Political parties and candidates shall ensure that their supporters do not create obstructions in or break up meetings and processions organized by the other parties. Workers or sympathizers of one political party shall not create disturbances at public meetings organized by another political by putting questions orally or in writing or by distributing leaflets of their own party. Posters issued by one party shall not be removed by workers of another party.

II) Meetings

- a) The party or candidate shall inform the local police authorities the venue and time of any proposed meeting well in time so as to enable the police to make necessary arrangements for controlling traffic and maintaining peace and order.
- b) A party or candidate shall ascertain in advance, if there are any restrictive or prohibitory orders in force in the place proposed for the meeting. If such orders exist, they shall be followed strictly. If any exemption is required from such orders it shall be applied for and obtained well in time.
- c) If permission or licence is to be obtained for the use of loudspeakers or any facility in connection with any proposed meeting, the party or candidate shall apply to the authority concerned well in advance and obtain such permission or licence.
- d) Organisers of a meeting shall invariably seek the assistance of the police on duty for dealing with persons disturbing a meeting or otherwise attempting to create disorder. Organisers themselves shall not take action against such persons.

III) Processions

- a) A party or candidate organizing a procession shall decide beforehand the time and place of the starting of the procession, the route to be followed and the time and place at which the procession will terminate. There shall ordinarily be no deviation from the programme.
- b) The organizers shall give advance intimation to the local police authorities of the programme so as to enable the latter to make necessary arrangements.
- c) The organizer shall ascertain, if any restrictive orders are in force in the localities through which the procession has to pass, and shall comply with the restrictions unless exempted specially by competent authority. Any traffic regulations or restrictions shall also be carefully adhered to.
- d) The organizers shall take steps in advance to arrange for passage of the procession so that there is no block or hindrance to traffic. If the procession is very long, it shall be organized in segments of suitable lengths, so that at convenient intervals, especially at points where the procession has to pass road junctions, the passage of held up traffic could be allowed by stages thus avoiding heavy traffic congestion.
- e) Processions shall be so regulated as to keep as much to the right of the road as possible and the direction and advice of the police on duty shall be strictly complied with.
- f) If two or more political parties or candidates propose to take processions over the same route as parts thereof at about the same time, the organizers shall establish contact well in advance and decide upon the measures to be taken to see that the processions do not cause hindrance to traffic. The assistance of the local police shall be availed of for arriving at a satisfactory arrangement. For this purpose the parties shall contact the police at the earliest opportunity.
- g) The political parties or candidates shall exercise control to the maximum extent possible in the matter of processionists carrying articles which may be put to misuse by undesirable elements, especially in moments of excitement.
- h) The carrying of effigies purporting to represent members of other political parties on their leasers, burning such effigies in public and, such other forms of demonstration shall not be countenanced by any political party or candidate.

IV) Polling Day

All political parties and candidates shall:

- a) Cooperate with the officers on election duty to ensure peaceful and orderly polling and complete freedom to the voters to exercise their franchise without being subjected to any annoyance or obstruction.
- b) Supply to their authorized workers suitable badges or identity cards;

- c) Agree that the identity slips supplied by them to voters shall be on plain (white) papers and shall not contain any symbol, name of the candidate or the name of the party;
- d) refrain from serving or distributing liquor on polling day and during the twenty four hours preceding it;
- e) not allow unnecessary crowds to be collected near the camps set up by the political parties and candidates near the polling booths so as to avoid confrontation and tension among workers and sympathizers of the parties and candidates;
- f) ensure that candidate's camps shall be simple. They shall not display any posters, flags, symbol or any other propaganda material. No eatables shall be served or crowds allowed at the camps; and
- g) cooperate with the authorities in complying with the restrictions to be imposed on the plying of vehicles on the polling day and obtain permits for them which should be displayed prominently on those vehicles.

V) Pooling Booth

Excepting the voters, no one without a valid pass from the Election Commission shall enter the polling booths.

VI) Observers

The Election Commission is appointing observers. If the candidates or their agents have any specific complaint or problem regarding the conduct of the elections they may bring the same to the notice of the observer.

VII) Party in Power

- I) The party in power whether at the Centre or in the State or States concerned, Shall ensure that no cause is given for any complaint that it has used its official position for the purposes of its election campaign and in particular-
 - a) The Ministers shall not combine their official visit with electioneering work and shall not also make use of official machinery or personnel during electioneering work;
 - b) Government transport including official aircraft, vehicles, machinery and personnel shall not be used for furtherance of the interest of the party in power.
- II) Public places such as maidans etc., for holding election meetings, and used of helipads for air flights in connection with elections, shall not be monopolized by itself. Other parties and candidates shall be allowed the use of such places and facilities on the same terms and conditions on which they are used by the party in power;
- III) Rest houses, dark bungalows or other Government accommodation shall not be monopolised by the party in power or its candidates and such accommodation shall be

- allowed to be used by other parties and candidates in a fair manner but no party or candidate shall use or be allowed to use such accommodation (including premises appertaining thereto) as a campaign office or for holding any public meeting for the purposes of election propaganda;
- IV)** Issue of advertisement at the cost of public exchequer in the newspapers and other media and the misuse of official mass media during the election period for partisan coverage of political news and publicity regarding achievements with a view to furthering the prospects of the party in power shall be scrupulously avoided;
- V)** Ministers and other authorities shall not sanction grants/payments out of discretionary funds from the time elections are announced by the Commission; and
- VI)** From the time elections are announced by the Commission, Ministers and other authorities shall not:
- Announces any financial grants in any form or promises thereof; or
 - Lay foundation stones etc., of projects or schemes of any kind; or
 - Make any promise of construction of roads, provision of drinking water facilities etc.; or
 - Make any ad-hoc appointments in Government, public undertakings etc., which may have the effect of influencing the voters in favour of the party in power.
- VII)** Ministers of Central or State Government shall not enter any polling station or place of counting except in their capacity as a candidate or voter or authorised agent.

AIR CODE

Broadcast on All India Radio by individuals will not permit:

1. Criticism of friendly countries;
2. Attack on religions or communities;
3. Anything obscene or defamatory;
4. Incitement to violence or anything against maintenance of law and order;
5. Anything amounting to contempt of court;
6. Aspersions against the integrity of the President, Governors and the Judiciary.
7. Attack on a political party by name;
8. Hostile criticism of any State or the Centre.
9. Anything showing disrespect to the Constitution or advocating change in the Constitution by violence; but advocating changes in a constitutional way should not be debarred.
10. Appeal for funds except for the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund, at a time of external emergency or if the country is faced with a natural calamity such as floods, earthquake or cyclone.
11. Direct publicity for or on behalf of an individual or organization which is likely to benefit only that individual or organization.

12. Trade names in broadcasts which amount to advertising directly (except in commercial services).

Footnote:

1. The code applies to criticism in the nature of personal tirade either of a friendly Government or of political party or of the Central Government or any State Government. But it does not debar reference to and/or dispassionate discussion of policies pursued by any of them.
2. If a Station Director finds that the above Code has not been respected in any particular manner by an intending broadcaster he will draw the latter's attention to the passage objected to. If the intending broadcaster refused to accept the Station Director's suggestions and modify his script accordingly, the Station Director will be justified in refusing his on her broadcast.
3. Case of unresolved differences of opinion between a Minister of State Government and the Station Director about the interpretation of the Code with regard to a talk to be broadcast by the former will be referred to the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India who will decide finally whether or not any change in the text of the talks is necessary in order to avoid violation of the Code.

AIR CODE DURING ELECTIONS

Broadcast on All India Radio will not permit:

1. Criticism of friendly countries;
2. Attack on religions or communities;
3. Anything obscene or defamatory;
4. Incitement to violence;
5. Anything amounting to contempt of court;
6. Aspersions against the integrity of the President and Judiciary;
7. Anything affecting the unity and integrity of the nation;
8. Any criticism by name of any person;
9. Sponsored programme by political parties to telecast/broadcast during election period.
10. Songs sung by cine artists themselves in films who have joined politics.
11. Telecast/broadcast of programmes of the Prime Minister/Chief Minister/Ministers having a direct relation or bearing on elections. However, telecast/broadcast of programmes on official activities of the Prime Minister/Chief Ministers will be permitted.