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## 6

## WHAT IS NEWS?

All of you must be reading newspapers. Why is it called a newspaper ? Because it contains news. Have you ever thought about how we get news? There are various sources of news . You can hear it on the radio, view it on a television channel, read it in a newspaper or surf it on internet in a computer. News is something that you come across everyday in your life.

What makes news? John Bogart has given this comment that became synonymous with news . When a dog bites a man, that is not news, because it happens so often. But if a man bites a dog, that is news. Though this may seem true, sometimes, when a dog bites a man that can also become news. Suppose a dog bites a famous filmstar, it definitely makes big news.

It is said that the letters in the word “NEWS” is derived from the four directions as indicated below:

N	orth
E	ast
W	est
S	outh

This shows that news can come from anywhere. News is the report of a current event, something that was not known, information of recent events and happenings.



### OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to do the following :

- define the term NEWS ;
- differentiate between news and information ;
- explain news and news values ;
- identify the different types of news ;
- discuss the importance of credibility of news ;
- list the sources of news



Notes

## 6.1 DEFINITION OF NEWS

News is a report of a current event. It is information about something that has just happened or will happen soon. News is a report about recent happenings in a newspaper, television, radio or internet. News is something that is not known earlier. From all these, we can safely define news as a development that has happened in the past 24 hours which was not known outside and which is of wide interest to the people and that which generates curiosity among listeners.

Let us consider a few examples.

You have heard a news broadcast on the radio. Twenty people died in a train accident. You don't consider it as news concerning you. Lots of accidents happen in various places every day. But after some time you hear that passengers in the compartment which met with the accident are from your village. Now you become more alert. The news becomes important for you. You are anxious to know the condition of passengers. Are they safe? Is anyone hurt or hospitalised?

### 34 dead in Punjab train mishap

*December 14, 2004*

At least 34 people were killed and around 50 injured in a head-on collision between two passenger trains in Hoshiarpur district of Punjab on Tuesday.

The collision occurred between the Jammu Tawi Ahmedabad express and Jalandhar-Pathankot Diesel Multiple Unit passenger train at Mansar, around 40 km from Jalandhar, at noon.

Sources said both trains were given the green signal on the single-line Jalandhar-Pathankot section of the Northern Railway. While the local train was cleared from the Bangara railway station, the Ahmedabad-bound express train was given the go ahead from Chak Kalan.

General Manager, Northern Railway, Satish Mohan Vaish, said: "It's obvious that one of the two stations involved goofed up."

Paramjit Singh Saraho, DIG (Jalandhar range), told NDTV India from the spot that 28 bodies were removed from the wreckage. The injured, he said, were admitted to the Civil Hospital in Mukerian and Army Hospital in Pathankot.

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, in a statement in the state assembly, put the number of fatalities at 50.

**Fig 6.1: Accident Report**

You are in no way connected with the presentation of the central budget in parliament. But when the Finance Minister, while presenting the budget, announces a hike in the prices of petroleum products, you suddenly become interested in the news. You want to know how much is the increase. Will it affect your pocket? How much is the increase for a cooking gas cylinder? The news becomes quite important for you.

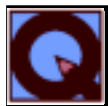


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Fig 6.2: News item : Budget proposal

Counting of votes is going on in your constituency. Election to the state assembly is going on. As the counting progresses, you become eager to know the lead positions. At the end of the counting, you want to know who has won the seat. So it is news which you wanted to know without delay.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.1**

1. Name any four sources of news.
2. What does each letter of the word NEWS stand for.
3. Define news.

**6.2 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NEWS AND INFORMATION**

In the railway station, you might have noticed the board displaying the train timings. That is not news. That is information. But information becomes news when news value is added to it. For example, if a new train time table is issued by the railways replacing the existing one with changes in train timings, that becomes news.



Similarly, the different slabs of income tax rates is not news. But when the government decides to increase or lower the rates, it becomes news.

You might have seen weather reports in the newspapers. It gives the day's temperature or rainfall. It does not make news. It becomes news when there is a sudden change in weather, or when heavy rains lead to floods or when continuous absence of rain leads to drought.

So information is different from news. News should give something new to the readers, viewers or listeners.

### 6.3 WHAT MAKES NEWS ?

It is generally said that if a news report provides answers to six questions, then it is a perfect news item. These six questions include five Ws and one H. The five Ws are When? Where? What? Why? and Who?. The H is How?

Suppose you hear a news like this. A boy is kidnapped while coming back from the school. Naturally the first question that arises in your mind will be when it had happened and where? Then you are keen to know what the full story of the incident was. Then you ask the question, why has it happened? Also you want to know about the kidnappers. Who were they? And finally the news becomes complete only when you get from the news how the kidnapping happened. Unless a news item satisfies all these six questions of the reader or listener, the news is incomplete.

#### A tragic end for kidnapped Delhi child

Staff Reporter

**NEW DELHI:** A 10-year-old school boy who was kidnapped from Rohini in Delhi this past Monday for a ransom of Rs.1.5 crore had a gruesome end: he was strangled by his kidnapper who developed cold feet on discovering the child unconscious in the boot of his car. The police have recovered the child's body at Sonapat in Haryana and arrested the kidnapper.

Vipul Kansal, a Class IV student of G. D. Goenka Public School in Rohini, went missing on Monday afternoon soon after he was dropped near his house in Neel Kanth Society by the school van. Even as his relatives launched a frantic search for Vipul, his mother received a phone call saying he had been kidnapped. The caller made the child talk to his mother and demanded Rs.1.5 crore for his release.

Fig 6.3: News item : Kidnapping



#### INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.2

1. Which are the six questions that makes a perfect news item.
2. Consumer Price Index is .....( news, information).



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### 6.4 NEWS VALUES

Journalists are the best judges about what is news and what is not. They take this decision based on certain news values. The following are the salient points to judge the newsworthiness.

- **Timeliness:** News is something new. So timeliness is a great factor in deciding news. An incident that happened one month back will not make news for today's newspaper. Also timeliness varies from publication to publication. For a newspaper, events that had happened on the previous day is news. But for a weekly, events of the previous one week can make news. For a 24-hour television news channel, every second is a deadline. They can break the news anytime. So their timeliness is different from that of a newspaper.
- **Impact :** Impact of an event decides its newsworthiness. When the tsunami waves struck several parts of the world, thousands of people were affected. It became major news for the whole world. But if a cyclone kills 20 people in Bangladesh, it may not have any impact on other parts of the world. When dengue fever affects 100 people in Delhi, it makes news not only in Delhi but in other states also because the impact is more wide and people become more alert about the news.

#### Tremors and Tidal Wave Hits South India

**Tremors and Tidal waves hits South India, large Scale devastation reported.**

**Over 1000 killed as Tsunami hits Eastern and South coastal areas in India. Over a thousand people have been killed in tidal waves in Tamil Nadu, Guntur and Tamil Nadu.**

**Tamil Nadu was the "worst affected" with possibly over 800 people killed.**

**At least 350 people have been confirmed dead in Tamil Nadu with over 100 people dead in Chennai alone.**

**As many as 239 people have been killed in Cuddalore in Tamil Nadu, while in Nagapatnam, the number of dead has been confirmed as 273.**

**The Nuclear Power station in Kalapakkam near Chennai has been safely shut down after water entered it. The casualty figure could rise further as many fishing villages were submerged in seawater.**

**About 500 tourists are reportedly stranded in the Vivekananda Memorial in Kanyakumari.**

Fig 6.4: News item : Tsunami

- **Proximity :** "Bird flu spreading and hundreds of chicken dying in England". Does it make news for you? You may read it but do not worry about it. But bird flu spreading in West Bengal will make you alert. This is because it is in your proximity. A plane crash in Peru will not be big

news in India, but if an aircraft crashes in India, it will be headlines everywhere. So proximity decides the news.

**ALMOST HALF OF BENGAL NOW BIRD FLU AFFECTED**

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Wednesday, January 23, 2008

**Kolkata, January 23:** Cooch Behar and Hoogly were on Wednesday declared bird flu hit, taking the number of affected districts in the state to nine even as authorities set a target of culling three lakh chicken daily.

Samples of chicken sent from Cooch Behar and Hooghly districts to the Highrisk Security Disease Laboratory (HSDL) in Bhopal yesterday tested positive," Animal Resources Development Minister Anisur Rahaman said.

"We have been informed by the Centre. Steps will be taken accordingly," he said.

"Steps are being taken to officially notify both Cooch Behar and Hooghly districts bird flu affected, for the next course of action including culling," Rahaman said.

The samples which tested positive were from Dinhata in Cooch Behar district and Balagarh in Hooghly district, he said.

There was, however, no case of humans beings being affected, the minister said.

The target of culling which was set at 20 lakh was also likely to increase, he said.

The daily target now was three lakh with 600 teams on the job from today, he said.

About 150 technical teams from eight states, including Haryana, Assam, Maharashtra, Orissa and Jharkhand would soon join to monitor the culling.

Fig 6.5: News item : Bird Flu

- **Controversy:** - People like controversies. Anything that is connected with conflicts, arguments, charges and counter-charges, fights and tension becomes news. All of you might have heard of Kargil. It was a conflict between India and Pakistan. It became great news all over the world. Many of you may remember the controversy about the Indian and Australian cricket teams. It was news for all the media. When terrorists crashed their plane into the World Trade Centre in New York it was lead news everywhere.
- **Prominence:** If a prominent person is involved in any event, it becomes news. If an ordinary person's car breaks down and he has to wait for ten minutes on the roadside till the vehicle is repaired it makes no news. But if the Prime Minister's car breaks down and his motorcade has to stop for five minutes it becomes news. A person visiting Rajghat and paying homage to Gandhiji may not be a news item, but when the US President visits Rajghat it becomes news.



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### Pope Visits Turkey in First Trip to Muslim Country

ANKARA, Turkey — **Pope Benedict XVI** began his first visit to a Muslim country Tuesday with a message of dialogue and brotherhood between faiths, and Turkey's chief Islamic cleric said at a joint appearance that growing "Islamophobia" hurts all Muslims.

Benedict also said guarantees of religious freedom are essential for a just society and urged all religious leaders to "utterly refuse" to support any form of violence in the name of faith — carefully avoiding a direct reference to Islam, but citing the "disturbing" violence in the Middle East and raising worries of more bloodshed and terrorism around the world.

The pope's comments on religious freedom also risk bringing the Vatican into conflict with some Islamic nations that allow only Muslims to worship openly or impose restrictions on religious minorities. The views could be reinforced later during the four-day visit when the pope meets in Istanbul with **Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I**, the spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians.

Fig 6.6 : News item : VIP visit

- **Currency:** News is about current events. Suppose the Olympic Games are held in India. It becomes news because everybody is interested in it. Likewise when SAARC leaders meet in Delhi to formulate future action plans, it becomes the current news. Similarly, if extreme cold weather continues for a week and fog disrupts air, rail and road traffic, it becomes news.
- **Oddity :** Unusual things makes news. Extraordinary and unexpected events generate public interest. You might have seen box items in newspapers about such happenings . A man pulls a car by his hair, a woman gives birth to triplets, a singer enters the Guinness Book by singing non-stop for 48 hours, the painting of a famous artist is auctioned for a very expensive price . All such odd stories evoke much public interest.



Fig 6.7: Odd Story





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- **Emotion:** Stories of human interest make good news items. For eg. the police rescue a school boy kidnapped by mischief makers after a search of two weeks. The parents meet the boy in an emotionally surcharged atmosphere. The story of this meeting with a photograph makes a good human interest report. Doctors advise a girl in Pakistan to undergo a heart surgery urgently. But her parents cannot afford the expenses. The Rotary Club of Delhi east offers help through their scheme of 'Gift of Life'. The girl comes to India and undergoes surgery successfully. While going back she and her overwhelmed parents narrate their experiences in India. This makes a good human interest story.
- **Usefulness:** Sometimes news items help the public in various ways. You must have noticed that weather forecasters warn fishermen not to go to the sea for fishing on certain days because of rough weather. Newspapers give the phone numbers of police stations, hospitals, ambulance services etc. to help people. You might have seen in newspapers, requests from relatives to donors of blood for a patient in a critical condition. Newspapers also raise funds from the public to help victims of disasters and natural calamities, like tsunami and earthquake.
- **Educational value:** News has also an educational value. In almost all newspapers, you can find columns about educational and job opportunities. These guide you about different educational courses, career options available, opportunities for higher studies etc. These news items help you become more knowledgeable.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.3

1. What do you mean by currency in news?
2. List five points used by a journalist to judge newsworthiness.
3. Find out two odd news items.

### 6.5 TYPES OF NEWS

Given below are headlines that appeared in the day's newspaper.

- a) Campaign for U.S. presidential elections begins.
- b) The Prime Minister of India to address the nation tonight.
- c) The State Government declares a holiday tomorrow.
- d) House owner killed by servant.





## Notes

All these four are news items. But are they of the same category? Could you make out any difference between them?

We can categorise these into four different slots respectively.

- a) International news
- b) National news
- c) Regional news
- d) Local news.

**Activity 6.1**

*Take any day's paper and identify news items coming under these categories. You may find them interesting.*

In addition to the above, in any day's newspaper, you will find a variety of news items such as reports about politics, about sports, about economy, about entertainment, about crime etc.

News can further be classified as hard news and soft news.

"India and Pakistan to have bilateral talks on the Kashmir issue" is hard news.

Similarly, the Prime Minister making a statement in parliament about the Indo-US nuclear deal is also hard news.

But there are soft news items also. The wedding celebration of a film star is soft news. A popular cricketer visiting an orphanage and taking lunch along with the inmates is another heart-warming soft story.

### 6.6 CREDIBILITY, OBJECTIVITY AND FAIRNESS

Journalists not only collect information but verify them before printing. This is called cross-checking. Journalists do it because they want their reports to be fair, objective and credible.

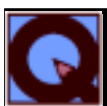
By *objectivity*, we mean without any bias. A journalist while reporting news is working under heavy pressure. There is every likelihood of the journalist being influenced by some personal, political or corporate bias. So while reporting, the journalist should keep away from such prejudices and present the story in as objective a way as possible.

*Fairness* is another quality required for a journalist. It is said that every story has two sides. While presenting the story, the journalist should not take sides. If it is a story against an individual or an institution, before writing the story, the journalist should seek their version also. The story should have balance.

*Credibility* of news is the most important virtue for any publication or channel or radio service. A reader trusts a newspaper mainly because of its credibility. If a newspaper continues to publish non-credible, unfair and non-objective stories, readers will start rejecting that paper. A news item published by a paper will be read by hundreds of thousands of people. If that news is wrong, a correction can be given the next day. But many readers may not see that correction. The newspaper gets a bad reputation if it is not credible.



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### INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.4

1. Give two examples each of international news and national news.
2. Give two examples of regional and local news.
3. What do you mean by credibility in news?

### 6.7 NEWS AS A TOOL - POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE

News are a powerful tool. These can be positive as well as negative. You may have read the news about an eighth standard school boy in Gurgaon near Delhi killing his classmate by shooting. This was a shocking news. It was a negative news also.

You might have seen news like this in papers. Two people died in a communal clash in a small town. This is also negative news. This news can further provoke communities in other parts of the country. Negative news creates a negative impact.

But if you closely watch the news items in a day's newspaper, you will find that there is a mix of positive and negative news. Students of a school visiting a nearby village and offering them voluntary service in road building is a positive news. A feature about an NGO devoted to uplift the condition of street children is another positive item.

News can also be an instrument for development. Many a time it carries a message to the people. For e.g. a news item such as "Government to give fee concession to all students up to graduation". It is a development news. This enhances the chances of education for millions of students who cannot afford it and are thus deprived of higher education.



### Activity 6.2

*Find out from a week's news paper some positive and negative news reports.*



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## 6.8 WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

→ Definition of news.

Difference between news and information

What makes news?

- when ?
- where ?
- what ?
- why ?
- who ?
- how ?

News values

- timeliness
- impact
- proximity
- controversy
- prominence
- currency
- oddity
- emotion
- usefulness
- educational value

Types of news

- national
- international
- regional
- local
- hard
- soft

Objectivity, fairness and credibility of news

News as a tool - positive and negative

**6.9 TERMINAL EXERCISES**

1. Define news. Describe the main types of news.
2. Differentiate between news and information
3. Describe news values.
4. Elaborate the terms of credibility, fairness and objectivity in news .
5. Explain how news acts as a powerful tool.

**6.10 ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS**

- 6.1**
1. (i) News Papers (ii) Radio (iii) Television (iv) Internet (v) any other
  2. North, East, West, South.
  3. Refer to Section 6.1
- 6.2**
1. (i) When? (ii) Where? (iii) What ? (iv) Why ? (v) Who? and (vi) How?
  2. information.
- 6.3**
1. Refer to Section 6.4
  2. Refer to Section 6.4
  3. The answer would vary from learner to learner.
- 6.4**
1. Select from current news items.
  2. Select from current news items.
  3. Refer to Section 6.6

**Notes**