

Adhering to the Ethics of the Media at the Reporting of COVID - 19 News and Accountability in Utilizing the Media.

This has reference to the discussion held with all the media heads of news reporting electronic media channels with the chairing of Hon. Minister of Mass Media, Keheliya Rambukwella on 12.10.2020 on the above matter.

02. The Hon. Minister appreciated the special mission carried out by all the media institutions for educating the Public on the spread of the pandemic throughout the island as well as how to be protected from the COVID - 19 pandemic developing within the country.
03. It was emphasized at the meeting that it has been observed with the complaints already lodged with us, that the individuals are being held socially responsible and their privacy was drastically affected due to telecasting the recordings on those infected or quarantined due to COVID - 19 sometimes.
04. It was agreed to implement a responsible media utilization during this global pandemic, since the privacy of the individuals infected by COVID - 19 as well as their family members and other dear ones should be assured while not giving away their identity, addresses, family backgrounds, personal records and medical reports or any tips on them as well as the photographs and video clips of the patients without permission.
05. Therefore, it was decided to telecast videos without damaging the privacy when reporting news on COVID - 19 in the future and the Hon. Minister informed that appropriate measures would be taken to clear the obstacles confronted by the electronic media heads in obtaining news.
06. While appreciating your assistance rendered in implementing a positive and responsible media handling adjusting to the media ethics; you are kindly informed to pay utmost attention on the following recommendations introduced by the Ministry of Health joined with COVID - 19 Prevention Task Force.

- i. Utilizing only the accurate and assured sources for reporting on COVID - 19 at all times.
- ii. Refraining from revealing nationality / ethnicity and religion when reporting individuals / patients under quarantine process and death.
- iii. Refraining from defining the infected individuals as those “spreading the disease” but only as “patients”
- iv. Reporting the extent of the pandemic / risk only based on the technical and scientific data and refraining from socializing opinions of various individuals.
- v. Refraining from exhibiting photos / videos of individuals under quarantine and the patients without their permission.
- vi. When broadcasting sensitive photos or videos of the funerals of the deceased, it is appropriate to blur them and broadcast. In addition, telecasting only the videos of delivering the body to the crematorium if essential for avoiding any disrespect to the deceased individual caused by the video clips of removing and putting the protective clothes and gloves into the furnace before start burning when the coffin is inserted in during the instances of broadcasting videos of delivering the coffin and cremation.
- vii. Utilizing the scenes avoiding any revelation of the identities of the family relatives during the cremations.
- viii. There will be certain conflict situations among the individuals to be quarantined and the Health Inspectors at times. If the incidents are essential to be reported, they should be reported securing the respect and dignity of all the parties.
- ix. Avoiding the reporting of any information arouse hatred.
- x. Report and educate the public about the COVID - 19 pandemic to restore positive expectations about the future as well as corporation between among each other avoiding any stress agony or uncertainty among the Public.

Jagath P. Wijeweera,
Secretary,
Ministry of Mass Media