

## Media should be accountable to remain credible

*Vernacular media in Punjab, India, had resorted to practice of accepting money for publishing the news of various political parties, which became the focus of criticism and hence the seminar to focus on the degradation and unfair practices.*

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The growing unethical practices and commercialisation of news was flayed by senior journalists at a seminar on 'Media Accountability' held here today at the ICSSR complex by Chandigarh Chapter of Public Relations Society of India.

Former Editor of the Panjabi Tribune, Mr. S.S. Bhullar, pointed out that in the recent elections many vernacular media had sold out front page news space to publish news-stories of political parties on payment that drastically affects the credibility of the newspapers.

It is unfortunate, he lamented, that the Fourth Estate which was respected for its accuracy and truthfulness has now been reduced to a commodity, and the emphasis is on publishing sensational and negative news only at a cost of the more positive and developmental stories that abound around us.

Mr. V.P. Prabhakar, advisor to Dainik Bhaskar, emphasised that the commercial interests of the newspapers must not be allowed to interfere with the editorial freedom of the journalists, and the practice of pushing political opinions and vilification campaigns in the garb of news, by paying for it needs to be discouraged.

He agreed that more space was now being utilised for inconsequential items and Bollywood trivia without realising the larger need of the readers and responsibility of a journalist towards society.

Former chairman of the department of mass communications, Punjab University, Prof. H.S. Dilgir, said that media men must look within and become accountable to his readers through honest reporting of the facts, because, he averred, the greatest strength of any journalist is the truth.

Mr. Jayant Pethkar, chairman of the department of mass communication, asked for more teeth to Press Council of India in order to take action against the erring media.

Others who spoke on the occasion included a senior journalist from overseas, Mr. N.S. Shergill, Prof. Arun D.Ahluwalia, Mrs. Renuka Salwan, Chairperson, PRSI, former information officer of PIB Mr. Chaman Lal, amongst others.

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Chandigarh Chapter of Public Relations Society of India is one of the 34 chapters of this apex body of Public Relations practitioners in the country. PRSI is an affiliate of International Public Relations Association and Global Alliance of PR.

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