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# TV CHANNELS TO BE REINED IN

Government to introduce bill that provides for independent regulator

K P Sai Kiran | ENS  
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## Advisory to broadcasters

**New Delhi:** With the first anniversary of the Mumbai terror attacks less than a week away, the government has issued an advisory to all television channels urging them to do balanced reporting while showing programmes on the incident as trial related to it is still on ■ PTI

THE Mumbai terror strike of November 26, 2008 was the first event of its kind to be telecast live, with minute-by-minute coverage for all the days it lasted.

The coverage made people realise the gravity of 26/11, but along with this was another story — did the media cross the limit while providing coverage?

Already it has prompted calls for regulations on the media — particularly electronic — for causing stress to the security forces and compounding the chaos of the situation. “Unlike print, there is no independent regulator for electronic media,” notes Ra-

ghu Menon, secretary of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. “The government is implementing the regulatory framework, and tabling a Broadcast Regulation Bill.”

Supreme Court lawyer Prashant Bhushan explains what a “sensationalist, TRP-driven and totally irresponsible” media can do. “They have these embedded

journalists. It creates a whole atmosphere of siege and terror where innocent people are often named and victimised.” The industry accepts some of the criticism — but not all. “The media has to draw the distinction between valid feedback and motivated venom,” says Barkha Dutt of NDTV.

In a bid to impose self-restraint, the News Broadcasters Association (NBA) has set up a disputes redressal authority and worked out guidelines to be followed during news telecast relating to sensitive matters.

But Bhushan feels self-regulation is “nonsense”. “If you need reasonable regulation, it has to be through an external body.”