

PRESS RELEASE

Karachi, October 2: Pakistan Broadcasters Association strongly refutes all allegations that any of its member broadcasters have broken the rules and regulations laid down in PEMRA ordinance. Secretary General Arshad Zuberi, in his letter to respond to a warning letter that PEMRA has written to various news channels, strongly reiterated the Association's point of view that the members have not gone beyond limits and bounds of freedom that is allowed in the Constitution.

“Airing of discussions, current affairs programmes / talk shows are not prohibited under any law, and freedom of expression, speech and information is basic right of every citizen of Pakistan”, he said. In this perspective, the warning letter issued by PEMRA is flagrant violation of Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and PBA reserves its right to challenge it in the competent court of law.

The current affairs programmes / talk shows are merely exchange of different views and thoughts on Constitutional provisions, its interpretation and implications. The participants simply deliver their opinions and views in a academic manner. The hosts / anchors are just facilitating the talk shows and only placing different questions for collecting the opinions from both sides. No anchor had ever assumed a role of judge and no judgment was delivered by any host as wrongly alleged in the warning letter.

In fact a wrong picture was painted by the Attorney General about certain current affairs programs before the Supreme Court and the honorable judges had passed certain comments in this regard. Immediately thereafter you issued this notice as was planned between you and the Attorney General. It is significant to note that only after few days of issuing the said notice the media people were brutally beaten up in Islamabad.

It was also pointed out in the letter that PBA has come to know that the government is intending to amend the PEMRA ordinance and it is expected that no amendment will be brought into the ordinance without consultation and recommendation of PBA. PEMRA was reminded that negotiations and deliberations between PEMRA and PBA regarding various provisions of the ordinance and code of conduct for programmes and advertisements are still in progress and have not so far been finalized.

We have noted that since the date when PEMRA was given under the control of Ministry of Information, the quantum of various explanation letters, show cause notices on petty matters have been increased massively just to pressurize and harass the electronic media. Being a Regulatory Authority, PEMRA should not become instrumental in the hands of Ministry and they must apply their independent mind prior issuing such types of warnings or show cause notices. This is quite unfortunate that the laws of PEMRA are only applicable to private enterprises, but the state owned televisions and Radio Station are immune from the clutches of PEMRA under the garb of “National Broadcasters”. PBA has repeatedly taken up this matter with Government of Pakistan and now intends to approach the court of law for redress.

_____ ENDS _____