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The innumerable sources of news can be classified into various categories depending on the criteria applied. Similarly, there is no fixed source that is proper for all kinds of stories. A particular source, however highly placed, may be relevant for one kind of story but totally irrelevant for another.

This makes it necessary to determine in each case the appropriate source or sources. The source should always be named in the stories except in special circumstances. Sources can be hard or weak. A source is hard when the facts of a report come from the horse's mouth, where they are ascribed to the concerned person or persons by name. On the government policies, for example, the prime minister or other minister, top officials of the concerned ministries of departments, etc. are the hard sources.

But they are not hard enough with regard to matters that do not fall within the purview of their own functioning. Equally hard are official press releases and briefing by "spokesman" even if not identified by name. If the name of the source is not given because of certain reasons but the same is authentic enough to be considered as a hard source the following phrases are used to indicate authenticity: It is authoritatively learnt means that the source is as good as official. According to knowledgeable or informed sources means that the source is not official but has access to official information. According to a source (or quarter) close to X would mean that information may be taken as if it is coming from X. Often, especially in diplomatic matters, as official spokesman discloses an authentic piece of information on the understanding that it is released without attribution, that is, on what is called understood basis. The press publishes it with, "it is understood" or "... is understood to be," etc.

When a general opinion within a particular group with a wide base is to be given, the practice is to quote “circle” for example, political circles, trade circles. Such sourcing can relate to reactions, comments, etc., but not to any hard news.

These are considered weak sources. There are other phrases that constitute weak sourcing: “It is learnt”, “it is believed”, “it is stated”, “it is gathered”, “it is reliably learnt”, or “according to reliable sources”, “according to political observers”, or “according to political circles.” Sources can also be classified as government sources and nongovernment sources. Government sources include legislative, executive, and judiciary and institutions attached to them. Nongovernment sources include political parties, voluntary and other non-government institutions and members of public.