

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING  
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:97

ANSWERED ON:01.03.2011

PAID NEWS

Hegde Shri Anant Kumar;Yadav Shri Dinesh Chandra

**Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:**

- (a) whether a number of cases of paid news have been reported in the recent past ;
- (b) if so, the details alongwith the reaction of the Government thereto;
- (c) the details of the action taken by the Government on such cases during the last one year;
- (d) whether the Government has held deliberations/taken action on the recommendations made in the report of the sub-committee of the Press Council of India on Paid News; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof?

**Answer**

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SMT. AMBIKA SONI)

(a) to (e) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) to (e) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.97 REGARDING PAID NEWS FOR ANSWER ON 01/03/2011

(a) to (e): There have been a number of media reports that sections of the electronic and print media have received monetary considerations for publishing or broadcasting in favour of particular individuals or organizations or corporate entities for what is essentially "advertisement" disguised as "news".

The Government, in pursuance of the objective of preserving the freedom of press, does not interfere in functioning of the press. However, Press Council of India (PCI), an autonomous body has been set up under the Press Council Act, 1978 to maintain and improve the standards of newspapers in India and also to inculcate the principles of self regulation among the press. The PCI takes cognizance, suo moto or on complaints, of contents in print media and adjudicates on such cases under section 14 of the Press Council Act, 1978. The PCI has received 19 complaints regarding 'Paid News' during the year 2009-10 and processed the cases in accordance to the Press Council (Procedure for Inquiry) Regulations, 1979. The details of the cases alongwith the action taken on such cases are annexed.

Besides, the PCI, taking cognizance of the wide ramifications of the issue, has deliberated upon the issue and released a 'Report on Paid News' on 30th July 2010. The Report has defined the 'Paid News' as, 'Any news or analysis appearing in any media (Print & Electronic) for a price in cash or kind as consideration.' The PCI has made following recommendations in the Report,

1. Representation of the People Act 1951 be amended to make incidence of paid news a punishable electoral malpractice.
2. The Press Council of India must be fully empowered to adjudicate the complaints of "paid news" and give final judgment in the matter.
3. Press Council Act be amended to make its recommendations binding and electronic media be brought under its purview, and
4. Press Council of India should be reconstituted to include representatives from electronic and other media.

In addition, the Report has also suggested various other measures to curb the menace of paid news, which include setting up of a Special Cell in Election Commission for action against complaints of paid news; self-regulation by media, education of voters and awareness generation amongst the stakeholders to enable them to differentiate between paid news items from genuine news.

A Group of Ministers has been constituted to examine the report on 'Paid News' prepared by the Press Council of India and to give its views on a comprehensive policy and institutional mechanism to address this phenomenon.