

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:7518

ANSWERED ON:22.05.2012

PAID NEWS

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

- (a) whether the Chief Election Commissioner has expressed concern over the issue of paid news during the recently held Assembly elections and forwarded several cases of spending crores of rupees on paid news to the Press Council of India;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government is aware of a number of cases of paid news reported during the Municipal Corporation of Delhi Election held in the recent past;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the steps taken/efforts being made by the Government to stop this menace including election reforms?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. JATUA)

(a) & (b): The Election Commission of India has expressed its concern over the issue of paid news during the recently held general elections to the Legislative Assemblies of five States as also in some previous elections. However, the Chief Election Commissioner has not forwarded any case of paid news during the recently held assembly elections to the Press Council of India so far.

(c) & (d): No case of Paid News in election of Municipal Corporation of Delhi has been brought to the notice of Government by any election body including Chief Electoral Officer, Government of Delhi and ECI.

(e): The Election Commission has taken cognizance of the phenomenon of Paid News and initiated measures to check incidents of election time paid news. The Commission has issued instructions to Chief Electoral Officers of all the States for constituting the District level and State level Media Certification and Monitoring Committees (MCMC) for scrutiny of paid news. These Committees have been instructed to do vigorous scrutiny of electronic media, print media and other modes of mass communication in order to locate political advertisement in the garb of news coverage appearing during the election period. In addition, the Commission has also constituted a Committee at its own level to examine references from State level MCMCs and to support policy formulation for issues related to Paid News and those related to usage of electronic and print media for campaigning by parties and candidates.

The PCI has cautioned the media to refrain from publishing news masquerading as advertisements and vice-versa. The Council has also adjudicated on complaints of Paid News and a case where the Council held respondent newspapers guilty of ethical violations, was also sent to the Election Commission for necessary action. The Election Commission, on the basis of adjudication by PCI disqualified the elected representative.

The PCI has also examined the issues related to paid news and released its Report on Paid News making recommendations including amendment of Representation of People Act, 1951. However, since the recommendations made in the PCI's Report on Paid News have wider ramifications, it was decided to set up a Group of Ministers to examine the matter. A GoM, has accordingly been constituted to examine the Press Council of India's 'Report on Paid News' and to give views for a comprehensive policy and institutional mechanism to address the phenomenon of Paid News.