

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

STARRED QUESTION NO:69  
ANSWERED ON:27.11.2012  
PAID NEWS  
Jaiswal Dr. Sanjay

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

- (a) whether instances of paid news in the media are on the rise in the recent past;
- (b) if so, the details of such cases;
- (c) whether the Government has formulated or intends to formulate any guidelines on publication of paid news;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the views expressed by the Press Council of India, the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and the Editors Guild of India regarding the publication of paid news in the media?

**Answer**

THE MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION & BROADCASTING (SHRI MANISH TEWARI)

(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. 69 REGARDING PAID NEWS FOR ANSWER ON 27.11.2012

There have been 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". This has been commonly referred to as 'paid news'. While this is not a new phenomenon, it is being widely discussed and debated across the country.

The Press Council of India (PCI), an autonomous body to maintain and improve the standards of press, received 17 complaints of paid news in the year 2009-10, 2 complaints in the year 2010-11 and 11 complaints in the year 2011-12 whereas it has received 9 complaints till date in the current year. The details of the complaints are annexed at Annexure-I. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has also taken note of this unethical practice during the election time and of late, has initiated several measures to check the menace. The ECI received 155 cases of paid news during the State Assembly elections in the year 2011 and 750 cases in 2012. The number of cases, State-wise is annexed at Annexure-II.

Taking cognizance of the wide ramifications of the issue and expressing concern over the instances of paid news in the media, the PCI has deliberated upon the issue and released its 'Report on Paid News' on 30th July 2010. The PCI, in the Report has recommended amendment in the Representation of the People Act to make incidence of paid news a punishable electoral malpractice and also amendment in the Press Council Act for more powers to PCI. The Report has also suggested various other measures to curb the menace of paid news, which includes 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.

The recommendations made by PCI in its Report were submitted to the Group of Minister (GoM) on Paid News for examination and for suggesting a comprehensive institutional mechanism to check the menace of paid news. The issues were deliberated upon by GoM, however the recommendations of the GoM could not be finalized.

However, the Election Commission has 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 the Commission level to examine references from State level MCMCs and to support policy formulation on issues related to Paid News and those related to usage of electronic and print media for campaigning by parties and candidates.

The Editors Guild of India has condemned the unethical practice of paid news and called upon all editors of the country to desist from

publishing any form of advertisements which masquerade as news. The Guild has also advised the news organizations to clearly distinguish between news and advertisements, with full and proper disclosure norms so that no reader and viewer is tricked by any subterfuge of advertisements published and broadcast in the same format, language and style of news. The Chief Election Commissioner also had strongly condemned the publication of paid news on various occasions as it adversely affects the level playing field during elections, circumvents the election expenditure laws and causes undue influence on voters.