

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:911

ANSWERED ON:27.11.2012

OBSCENITY IN MEDIA

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

- (a) whether the Government has taken note of increasing incidents of depiction of vulgarity/obscenity in the print as well as the electronic media;
- (b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto along with the number of complaints received and the action taken thereon during each of the last three years and the current year, media-wise;
- (c) the number of times the Inter-Ministerial Committee/Press Council of India have made recommendations to control/check such incidents during the said period;
- (d) whether the Government proposes to set up any regulatory body to keep a check on the depiction of such incidents in the media; and
- (e) if not, the reasons therefor and the corrective measures being taken by the Government to curb the proliferation of such depiction of obscenity in the media?

Answer

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

(a) to (e): Some instances of obscene/objectable pictures in print media and also on TV channels have been reported.

The Government, in pursuance of its policy to uphold the freedom of press, does not exercise any control on the content in print media. However, the Press Council of India (PCI), a statutory autonomous body has been set up under the Press Council Act, 1978 to maintain and improve the standards of newspapers and news agencies in India and also to inculcate principles of self-regulation among the press. The PCI in furtherance of its objective under Section 13(2) of the Act has been mandated to build up a code of conduct for newspapers, news agencies and journalists in accordance with high professional standards. Accordingly, the Press Council has formulated 'Norms of Journalistic Conduct' for adherence by the media. The relevant norm 17 relating to 'Obscenity and Vulgarity, is annexed at Annexure-I. The PCI, on specific complaints/suo moto adjudicates under section 14 of the Act and if satisfied that any violation of norms has taken place, it takes action to warn, admonish or censure the publication/journalist concerned.

The details of such cases/incidents reported to PCI during each of the last three years and the current year along with the action taken thereon is annexed at Annexure-II

In so far as electronic media is concerned, the Ministry has set up an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) headed by Additional Secretary, Ministry of I&B and consisting of officers from various Ministries. The IMC functions in a recommendatory capacity and has met 20 times in the last 3 years and the current year. The details of action taken during the last three years and the current year in cases of programmes and advertisements showing obscenity and vulgarity in violation of Programme Code and Advertising Code prescribed under the Cable Television Network (Regulation) Act, 1995 and the rules framed thereunder in pursuance of the recommendations of Inter Ministerial Committee are annexed at Annexure-III.

As part of self-regulating complaints redressal mechanism, News Broadcasters Association (NBA) - a representative body of news and current affairs channels - has set up News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA) to consider complaints against or in respect of broadcasters in so far as these relate to the content of any news and current affairs broadcast. The NBSA is headed by a retired Chief Justice of India. Similarly, Indian Broadcasting Foundation (IBF), which is a representative body of non-news & current affairs TV channels, has set up Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC) to examine the complaints about general entertainment programmes. The BCCC is headed by a retired Chief Justice of Delhi High Court. Complaints can be sent directly to BCCC and NBSA about the television programmes for appropriate action by them. These self-regulatory bodies complement the content regulation by this Ministry in electronic media through the mechanism of Inter-Ministerial Committee as detailed above.

Besides the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 comprehensively deals with the subject relating to effective prohibition of the indecent representation of women through advertisements etc.